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Research Article

ETHNOBOTANICAL SURVEY OF SOME OF THE HERBS USED IN JORHAT DISTRICT, ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

An attempt has been made to prepare a list t of folk medicines used by Ahoms, Chutiyas and Deuris for the treatment of 9 different diseases namely, asthma, blood dysentery, hairfall, dandruff, jaundice, headache, piles, sore eyes, ear pain which are prevalent in Chenijan, Jorhat District (Assam).

Keywords: Ethnobotany, Traditional knowledge, Folk medicine, Jorhat, Assam

INTRODUCTION

Plants are the basis of life on earth and are central to people's livelihoods. Tribal people are the ecosystem people who live in harmony with the nature and maintain a close link between man and environment. Indian subcontinent is being inhabited by over 53.8 million tribal people in 5000 forest dominated villages of tribal community and comprising 15% of the total geographical area of Indian landmasses, representing one of the greatest emporia of ethno-botanical wealth. The northeastern states of India that comprises of eight sister states viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram , Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura harbors more than 130 major tribal communities of the total 427 tribal communities found in India[1] .

The medicinal properties of plant species have been made an outstanding contribution in the origin and evolution of many traditional knowledge systems have started to disappear with the passage of time due to scarcity of written documents and relatively low income in these traditions. Over the past few years, however, the medicinal plants have regained a wide recognition due to an escalating faith in herbal medicine in view of its lesser side effects compared to allopathic medicine in addition the necessity of meeting the requirements of medicine for an increasing human population[2].

Jorhat district is in the eastern part of Assam state and lies between 25° 49' and 27° 17' north latitude; 93° 18' and 95°26' east longitude. It is surrounded by the district Lakhimpur on the north, by the district of Sibsagar on the east, by the state of Nagaland on the south and by the district of Golaghat on the west. The district has a population of about 0.87 million. About 84.7% of the population lives in rural areas, while 15.3% of the population lives in the urban areas. Assamese is the main and connective language of the region. Heavy rainfall, high humidity, fertile soil and moderate temperature are suitable factors for the cultivation of rice, mustard, oil seeds[3].

Methodology

A survey was carried out during 2005-2006 to collect information on the plants found in the Ahoms, Chutiyas and Deuris inhabited villages of Chenijan, Jorhat District (Assam). Efforts have been made to see the plants in wild and collect plant specimens. The data collected has been compared with the literature, viz. (i) The wealth of India: A Dictionary of Indian raw material series [4] (ii) Handbook of Medicinal plants[5] and (iii) Supplement to glossary of Indian Medicinal Plants[6].The specimens have been deposited in the Herbarium, Department of Pharmacognosy, K.L.E.S's College of Pharmacy, Belgaum, Karnataka. Folk medicines used for the treatment of different diseases by the rural people of Jorhat district are given below:

Asthma

About 10 g seed of *Jaiphal*, Myristica fragrans Houtt. (Myristicaceae), 10 g fruit of *Chotti Elaichi*, Elettaria cardamomum Maton. (Zingiberaceae), 10 g of *Laung,* Eugenia caryophyllus Linn. (Myrtaceae), 5 g fruit of *Pipoli*, Piper longum Linn. (Piperaceae) and 5 g bark of *Dalchini*, Cinnamomum zeylanicum Blume. (Lauraceae) are grinded finely and boiled with 1 litre of water to get the extract and given to take twice daily for a week.

Blood Dysentery

About 5 g bark of *Muhurian*, Psidium guajava Linn. (Myrtaceae), 2 g bark of *Am*, Mangifera indica Linn. (Anacardiaceae) and 2 g fruit of *Hilikha*, Terminalia chebula (Combretaceae) are crushed finely with a pinch of black salt and given to take once daily in the early morning with empty stomach for three days.

Hairfall

Friut juice of *Amluki*, Emblica officinalis Gaertn. (Euphorbiaceae) is applied over the scalp.

Dandruff

Leaf exudates of *Outenga*, Callistemon citrinus (Curt.) Skeels. (Myrtaceae) and leaves of *Jetuka*, Lawsonia intermis Linn. (Lythraceae) are mixed and applied over the scalp for half an hour.

Jaundice

Fruits of *Jalook*, Piper nigrum Linn. (Piperaceae) are crushed and mixed with two teaspoonful leaf extracts of *Bel*, Aegle marmelos Corr. (Rutaceae) is given to take orally thrice daily in the early morning with empty stomach until cure.

Headache

The extract obtained from the leaves of *Changeritenga,* Oxalis corniculata Linn. (Oxalidaceae) is applied on the forehead.

Piles

Equal amount of stem of *Zergul*, Calendula officinalis Linn. (Compositae) and fruit of *Pipoli*, Piper longum Linn. (Piperaceae) is mixed with small amount of misri is given to take twice daily until cure.

Sore Eyes

The leaves of *Zergul*, Calendula officinalis Linn. (Compositae) are crushed and applied on the affected area of eye.

Ear Pain

The extract obtained from the leaves of *Bhang*, Cannabis sativa Linn. (Cannabinaceae) is dropped into the ear daily for five days.

CONCLUSION

The information generated from the present study is that both wild and cultivated plant species are used for the preparation of folk medicines by the inhabitants of study area. Most of the medicinal plant species used by these local people like *Elettaria cardamomum, Eugenia caryophyllus, Piper nigrum, Terminalia chebula,*

Emblica officinalis, etc. are being used for the preparation of various Ayurvedic as well as Homeopathic medications. Even most of the plant species which are mentioned in this paper are also reported in earlier research paper by various authors. For example *Elettaria cardamomum* for antimicrobial activity[7], *Terminalia chebula* for antioxidant activity[8] and *Piper longum* for hepatoprotective activity[9].

India is having a rich ethnic diversity of which many aboriginal cultures have retained traditional knowledge with respect to the utilization of medicinal plants from the native flora. Traditional knowledge of these plants needs to get importance in terms of ethnomedicne. Therefore, it is suggested that these indigenous practices should be scientifically screened to immense the ethnobiological and ethnomedical area.

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