

TRADITIONAL THERAPEUTICAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF PANCH PARGANA (JHARKHAND) ON SACRED PLANT

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The plants, used in religious ceremonies, are referred to as sacred plants. The present study reveals the traditional therapeutical properties of 24 sacred plants of PanchPargana (Jharkhand), which are used in religious rites, rituals and ceremonies by the indigenous people, both, tribes and non-tribes of the area. These plants don't only have sacred utility but also have medicinal potential and are used for curing different ailments in folk uses. The use of leaves of *Aegle marmelos* for cough and stomachache, roots of *Achyranthus aspera* for gynecological problems, twigs of *Cynodon dactylon* for relief during painful menstruation for stop profuse bleeding and leaves of *Clitoria ternatea* applied on forehead for eye pain, bark and leaf decoction of *Ficus religiosa* for spermatorrhoea and flower of *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* for leucorrhoea are some of the most specific and significant observations.

Keywords : Gynecological; Menstruation; Pahan; PanchPargana; Sacred plants; Spermatorrhoea; Therapeutical.

Introduction

The name of PanchPargana is derived from of five Parganas, namely Bundu, Sonahatu, Tamar, Eariki and Rahe, consists of four community blocks i.e. Bundu, Sonahatu, Tamar and Eariki under Ranchi Districts of Jharkhand. It lies between 22°50' - 23°15' N to 85°30' - 85°50'E, covering an area of 1669.33 sq.km. These community blocks are dominated by varied ethnic groups of indigenous origin, both tribes and non-tribes. The region have a large population of different tribal communities, namely Munda, Oraon, Kharia, Ho, Mahali, Santhal, Bhumij, Gond, Asur, Birhor, Karmali, Bedia, Chick Baraik, Lohar, Paharia etc. Their taboos, lifestyle and culture have been a matter of research¹.

The area PanchPargana is rich in plant diversity and is well known for its forest dwelling tribal. The indigenous people of this region both tribes and non-tribes are expertise in therapeutical uses of different sacred plants. Scientific works on the medico-religious aspects of plants of this region have not yet been done in details. Almost no work has been done to identify and document the specific religious purposes for which the plants are utilized and to ascertain the medicinal values of such plants².

There is a very close and intricate relationship in between the indigenous people and the plants in the area of PanchPargana. Plants have a special role in almost all the religious as well as social ceremonies of different tribal

and non-tribal indigenous communities^{3,4}. The sacred groves around the religious places of the area (the Sarnasthal and the Temple) are small plots of lands with rich natural flora. Keeping this idea in mind the present work was conducted, which is aimed at the collection, identification and documentation of plants related with different religious ceremonies and their medicinal utilities by the indigenous people of the area.

Material and Methods

All the relevant informations were gathered through frequent and extensive ethnobotanical field survey during the year 2004-2006. During the field survey contact with Pahans, Kotwars, Mukhiya, Pramukh and other indigenous knowledgeable people were made to collect the informations. The informations were collected and documented through interviews and dialogues.

All the information regarding their religious belief, the details of the plants and plant parts used, botanical names, family names, vernacular names, method of collections were collected and recorded. Such knowledgeable person (both male & female) was taken into the field, the plant identified and collected⁵.

The identified plants were put in Herbarium sheets and systematic enumeration of the plants have been arranged in alphabetical sequence of their botanical names followed with family names in capital letter and the local names given in italics, a very short description of the plants and the voucher specimen No. The uses of the

plans in religious ceremonies are followed by their medicinal uses.

Enumeration

1. *Abutilon indicum* L. MALVACEAE. "Kanghi". Big herbs to small shrubs. PP/EB-019.

Religious uses- Fruit used by tribal people on Diwali festival for sculpture of wall.

Medicinal uses- Fresh leaves ground with garlic and black pepper then infusion given once a day up-to a week for malarial fever. Dried leaves is made into powder and mixed with very small amount of white kattha then taken for cure leucorrhoea.

2. *Achyranthus aspera* L. ACANTHACEAE. "Chirchit". Herbs to small shrubs. PP/EB-013.

Religious uses- Whole plant used by local people on Bandhna festival (Diwali).

Medicinal uses- 50g root is boiled with jaggery made as tea is given orally for abortion. For facilitated delivery during labour pain, the plant is uprooted in single breath and tied by a string then it is touched from head to feet in single breath 3 times and tied in the heap. After childbirth root is removed immediately otherwise can do harmful effect.

3. *Adina cordifolia* (Roxb.) Benth. & Hook. RUBIACEAE. "Karam". Medium sized to big trees. PP/EB-0142.

Religious uses- Long twigs used by ethnic people on tribal famous festival Karma Puja as a God.

Medicinal uses- One teaspoonful bark juice taken orally twice a day upto 5-7 days for Anthelmintic. Bark root and stem ground with water then used on wounds or burning place.

4. *Aegle marmelos* L. RUTACEAE. "Bel". Medium sized to big trees. PP/EB-0163.

Religious uses- Leaves used by people on worship of God and Goddess.

Medicinal uses- 4-5 fresh leaves chewed every day morning in empty stomach for relief cough. Half cup juice extracted from leaves mixed with pinch of salt then warm up in iron metal then taken orally once daily at morning 5-7 days to cure stomachache.

5. *Alocasia indica* L. ARACEAE. "Mankachu". Rhizomatous shrubs with large leaf. PP/EB-093.

Religious uses- Leaf used on Sohrai (Diwali) festival.

Medicinal uses- One tea spoonful dry stem powder mixed with one tea spoonful of cow butter and small amount of sugar candy then taken orally twice daily 7-10 days to cure piles.

6. *Artocarpus heterophyllus* Lamk. MORACEAE. "Kathal". Medium size to large trees. PP/EB-084.

Religious uses- Leaves used by local people on Satyanarayan puja.

Medicinal uses- Leaves make paste and used in swelling and boils.

7. *Butea monosperma* L. FABACEAE. "Palash". Big shrubs to medium size trees. PP/EB-0111.

Religious uses- Flowers are used by indigenous people in Holi festival.

Medicinal uses- Young leaves decoction taken orally twice a day for night sweat. Seed paste mixed with latex of *Calotropis gigantea* externally used on scorpion bite for relief pain.

8. *Calotropis procera* (Hut.) R.Br. ASCLEPIADACEAE. "Akand". Small to large shrubs. PP/EB-089.

Religious uses- Flowers are used on marriage ceremony as garland of bride and bridegroom.

Medicinal uses - 14 flower with 21 black pepper crushed and make 21 pills and dry in sunlight then taken orally one pill every day morning with cold-water upto 21 days for cardiac asthma. Milky juice obtained from this plant and applied externally for skin disease.

9. *Clitoria ternatea* L. PAPILIONACEAE. "Aprajita". Small to large climber. PP/EB-0133.

Religious uses- Flowers used on worship of Goddess Durga on Durga Puja.

Medicinal uses- 8-10 leaves make paste then applied on forehead for eye pain. 5 gm of blue *C. ternatea* root make paste mixed with two-spoonful honey then taken one teaspoonful daily up to one month for stomachache and body ache.

10. *Cynodon dactylon* L. POACEAE. "Dubghas". Small to large grasses. PP/EB-0109.

Religious uses- Twig used by local people on worship of God and Goddess and also used on funeral work.

Medicinal uses - One handful young twigs are grounded with rice water and mixed with sugar candy than taken orally once a day during painful menstruation for stop profuse bleeding.

11. *Datura metal* L. SOLANACEAE. "Dhatura". Small to large shrubs. PP/EB-001.

Religious uses - Flowers are used by local people to worship Lord Shiva.

Medicinal uses- Seeds are fried with mustard oil to black fumes inhaled through mouth to cure toothache and mouth ulcer.

12. *Desmostachya bipinnata* L. POACEAE. "Kushghas". Small to medium sized grasses. PP/EB-012.

Religious uses- Whole plant used as a ring on Puja or Hoom. (Function of marriage ceremony and worship of God).

Medicinal uses: - 100 ml root decoction mixed with little amount of sugar candy taken orally once a day to cure spermatorrhoea.

13. *Ficus benghalensis* L. MORACEAE. "Bargad". Large trees. PP/EB-065.

Religious uses:- Local people worship this tree as a God. Twigs are used on Jeeta Astami (Jeetia).

Medicinal uses:- Stem bark of *F. benghalensis*, stem bark of mango and root bark of *F. religiosa* are mixed in equal proportion and crushed into paste with 8-10 drops of lemon juice are also mixed. 4-8g of the drug is taken orally with honey every day morning and evening 5-7 days to treat ailments like body ache, body swelling and loss of appetite.

14. *Ficus religiosa* L. MORACEAE. "Pipal". Large trees. PP/EB-043.

Religious uses:- Local people worship this tree as God & twig used on Jeeta Astami (Jeetia).

Medicinal uses:- Ripe fruits are dried and powdered. 5g of this powder is taken in the morning with warm water up to one month for reduce asthmatic problems. Decoction of bark and young leaves used by tribal people for spermatorrhoea.

15. *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* L. MALVACEAE. "Udhul". Medium to large shrubs. PP/EB-024.

Religious uses:- Flowers offers by local people on Kali Puja (Dewali), as worship of Goddess Kali.

Medicinal uses:- 50g dried flowers mixed with 8 black pepper and powdered. Dose- 5g powder with cold water thrice daily for 10-15days is prescribed against bleeding piles. Petals are made into paste mixed with sugar candy. About 5g are taken twice a day in empty stomach for leucorrhoea.

16. *Maduca indica* (L.) J.C. Ger. SAPOTACEAE. "Mahua". Medium to large size trees. PP/EB-027.

Religious uses:- Tree worship by local people on marriage ceremony. Branches and leaves with that of *Shorea robusta* is used for making Madawa (Mandap) for marriage.

Medicinal uses:- 5g flower of this plant is made paste then it is mixed with two cup of water. The decoction taken twice-daily 5-6 days for cold and cough.

17. *Nymphaea nouchali* Burm.f. NYMPHEACEAE. "Saluk". Rhizomous large aquatic herbs. PP/EB-052.

Religious uses:- Flowers used by tribal people on Garaiya puja (Diwali).

Medicinal uses:- Two teaspoonful juice of flower mixed with half cup of cow milk twice a day for leucohorea. 3-4 teaspoonful juice of stem mixed with half-cup milk taken ones daily for 7days against diabetes.

18. *Ocimum sanctum* Gaert. n.t. LAMIACEAE. 'Tulsi'. Erect, much branched softly pubescent under shrubs. PP/EB-005.

Religious uses :- Tribal and non-tribal indigenous people use leaf to worship Gods & Goddess and also uses on funeral

work. Leaves used in all the religious rites and rituals.

Meditional uses :- 3-15 leaves are taken with honey in empty stomach one hour before breakfast, continue until cure for fever, cold & cough and post natal complaints. 3 teaspoonful juice of the leaves taken thrice in a day before meal for constipation, dropsy, cholera and paste of leaves used on wound place for leprosy.

19. *Oryza sativa* L. POACEAE. "Dhan". Annual herbs. PP/EB-008.

Religious uses :- Dhan (grains) used in ghat on worship of Gods & Goddess. Rice used on 'Laxmi Puja'. A special drink called Haria (Rice-beer) is prepared by the indigenous people, mostly tribes and is used in almost all the religious ceremonies. Haria is offered to the Deities during worship by the Pahans (Priests) to please them. After the puja Haria is served to every body as prasad.

Meditional uses :- About 10 gm of rice is soaked in one glass of water for whole night. This water is taken orally in next morning on empty stomach for leucorrhoea. Haria [Rice beer] is used against various gastro-intestinal problems.

20. *Plumeria rubra* L. APOCYNACEAE. "Gulaichr". Small to medium size branched tree. PP/EB-118.

Religious uses :- Flower is used in different religious ceremonies, specially used in the Shringar Puja of Lord Shiva and Manda Puja.

Meditional uses :- Bark juice or decoction is used 1-2 tea spoonful twice a day for 5-7 day against diarrhea and 20-25 day against cholera. For Ulcerous wound at the finger tips called as chichni in local language is treated with young tips of branches- young stem tips cut into pieces of 2-3 inches. Removing the sub epidermal tissues makes cylindrical holes. The hollow cylinders are put on the affected fingers as a cap. Cap is changed every day. It gives complete relief after 4-6 days.

21. *Semecarpus anacardium* L. ANACARDIACEAE. "Bhelwa". Medium size to large trees. PP/EB-007.

Religious uses :- Twigs are used by local people on Bhelwa gari festival, next day of karma puja.

Medicinal uses:- Oil extracted from fruit is used externally in leprous nodules and rheumatism. Tribal in snakebite and scorpion sting uses ashes of plant.

22. *Shorea robusta* L. DIPTEROCARPACEAE. "Sakhua". Medium sized to big trees. PP/EB-011.

Religious uses :- Flowers used on tribal famous festival Sarhool. Leaves and twigs used during marriage ceremony in preparing Madawa [Mandap].

Medicinal uses:- 25 ml resin taken orally twice a day with water for blood dysentery. 20gm of young stem decoction taken two spoonfuls twice a day continue 15-20 days for leucorrhoea.

23. *Vitex negundo* L. VERBENACEAE. "Sindhuwar". Large shrubs to small trees. PP/EB- 0101.

Religious uses :- Twig used by local people on Rohin festival.

Medicinal uses:- Juice of leaves mixed with sesamum oil decoction then applied externally for skin disease. 3-4 gm leaves decoction taken orally twice a day for rheumatism.

24. *Zea maize* L. POACEAE. "Janhar". Annual rhizomous shrubs. PP/EB- 0133.

Religious uses :- Fruits used by local people on Mansa Puja.

Medicinal uses:- 5-7g hair like fibers are kept in a container with warm water at night, next day morning the water taken in empty stomach upto 5-7 days to cure urinary problems.

Discussion

Mainstay of the indigenous people of the PanchPargana, both tribes, non-tribes is agriculture and forest produces. They are very expertise in utilizing different plants, both wild as well as cultivated to meet their requirements, such as food, fodder, housing materials and for therapeutical needs. The most significant observation was that the indigenous people are expertise in using the sacred plants for medicinal uses for the treatment of various ailments. They know the medicinal value of many plants used in different religious rites and rituals. They conserve a large number of such plants around their dwellings for medicinal as well as religious purposes⁸. Sacred plants like *Aegle marmelos*, *Datura metal*, *Ocimum sanctum*, *Ficus religiosa*, *Hibiscus rosa-sinesis*, *Vitex nugundo*, *Shorea robusta*, *Cynodon dactylon* are either usually found in and around most of the houses or near sacred groves. These plants serve as a source of therapy for the treatment of different diseases. The present study of the sacred plants of PanchPargana accounts the documentation of 24 plant species under 23 genera, 17 families which includes 10 trees, 6 shrubs, 4 herbs, 3 grasses and 1 climber having high medicinal potentiality and are used for the treatments of different ailments ranging from simple cold and cough, fever to gastro-intestinal problems and various gynecological disorders^{1,7-9}.

During the field survey, it has been noticed that many of these sacred plants with rich medicinal value, which were very common in past few decades, are presently not so common and some of them are going to be put under the category of endangered species. These situations have come most probably due to industrialization and urbanization in the area. Under this condition, this alarming situation invites immediate attention for protection and conservation of natural plant genetics resources in general and the ethno-religious

medicinal plants in particular.

Such studies on sacred grooves and the traditional therapeutical knowledge about the folk medicines by the indigenous population is an important components of ethno-medico-botany and it needs wider publicity so that such important therapeutical methods can be adopted by other people also^{3,4}.

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