

ETHNOMEDICINALLY IMPORTANT PLANT- *MORINDA CITRIFOLIA* L.

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The present paper aims to explore the ethnomedicinal importance of *Morinda citrifolia*. Ethnomedicinal uses of *M. citrifolia* practiced by the tribals of Akole and Sangamner talukas are compared with the medicinal uses of valid publications.

Keywords : Ethnomedicinally important plant; *Morinda citrifolia* L.

Akole and Sangamner talukas are the parts of Sahyadri ranges, which are rich in ethno-medicinal wealth. It is the highest part of the district, averaging about 800m in height, the mean sea level, and situated at 19° 15' N-74°20'E. The maximum temperature of these talukas is about 35°-41°C and minimum of 4°-15°C. Ghatghar area of Akole taluka receives 2000-3000 mm of rain every year. Kalsubai-Harishchandragad wildlife sanctuary, declared by Government of Maharashtra in 1986, is a part of Akole taluka. Forest is of moist deciduous type including some semi-evergreen.

Thakars, Bhils, Mahadev-kolis and Ramoshies are the tribes residing in these talukas. Tribals are having tremendous ethno-medicinal knowledge. They use certain plant species in the treatment of various diseases. One of the most important ethnomedicinal plants of these talukas is *Morinda citrifolia* L. The name *citrifolia* is because the leaves of the plant are similar to the leaves of *Citrus*. It is a medium sized tree. Fruits fuse into a large compound structure and are edible with a pungent aroma when ripe. Fruits are known as Noni or Bartondi and show various medicinal properties. The plant is found only in the area of Uncha-khadak (Akole) and in Chandanapuri ghat (Sangamner). It is not reported in the local flora, Flora of Ahmednagar District¹, from these areas. So, it could be the new report from these areas.

Study areas were frequently visited during the year 2003-2005. A questionnaire containing the information about the tribal Vaidya, their living style, their style of disease treatment was prepared and plant species was collected with the help of tribal vaidyas. Plant was correctly identified with help of Pradhan and Singh¹, Cooke², Singh *et al.*³ and was verified from Dr. V. N. Naik, a senior taxonomist of Maharashtra state. Photographs of plant were also taken during the fieldwork with Nikon Digital Camera of 3 mega pixels.

The tribals of Akole and Sangamner talukas



Fig.1. *Morinda citrifolia* plant.

commonly call *Morinda citrifolia* L. as Bartondi. In other parts of India it is called as Noni fruit tree. It is reported from Chandanapurighat (Sangamner taluka) and from Unchakhadak (Akole taluka). Fruit juice is rich in Vitamin B₂, B₆, B₁₂, C and E. Heartwood consist anthraquinones- (Rubiadin-methyl ether, alizarin, moridone) and its glycosides, *nor*-damnacanhol. The leaves contain ursolic acid and β - sitosterols. Fruits consists of asperuloside and caproic acid⁴. The tribals of these talukas use this plant in the treatment of various diseases and ailments effectively.

Leaf and roots are febrifuge and are used in gout⁵. Leaves are used as tonic. The fruits are emmenagogue and are used in leucorrhoea, asthma, dysentery, in spongy gums and throat complaints⁴. Leaves are considered to have healing effect in wounds and ulcers. Leaf juice is applied to relieve pain in gout⁶.

Ethnomedicinal uses practiced by Tribals of Akole and Sangamner talukas-Leaf decoction is used as a remedy in the treatment of diarrhea and dysentery. The leaf paste is applied on wounds and ulcers. Fruit juice is used to gargle in sore throats. The fruits are edible and used in the treatment of asthma.

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