

# **Ethnomedicinal Observations Among the *Bheel* and *Bhilal* Tribe of Jhabua District, Madhya Pradesh, India**

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## **Abstract**

The paper highlights uses of 15 ethnomedicinal plants traditionally utilized by the *Bheel* and *Bhilala* tribes of Jhabua district. The plant species are used as herbal medicines for treatment of various ailments and healthcare.

**Keywords:** Ethnomedicine; Jhabua district; tribal.

## **Introduction**

Human culture has been augmented by plant and plant products since time immemorial. Perhaps ethnobiology is the first science that originated with the evaluation or existence of man on this planet. Natural products as medicines, although neglected in the recent past, are gaining popularity in the modern era. On a global scale, the current dependence on traditional medical system remain high, with a majority of world's population still dependent on medicinal plants to fulfil most of their healthcare needs. Today, it is estimated that about 64 percent of the global population remain dependent on traditional medicines (Farnsworth 1994; Sindiga 1994). Nearly 8000 species of plants were recognized as of ethnobotanical importance (Anonymous 1994).

Jhabua district is situated in the western most part of Madhya-Pradesh state. Most of the village inhabitants of Jhabua district belong to tribal communities. Major part of the district is covered by dense forest area in which various tribes, like *Bheel*, *Bhilala* and *Pataya* are living in majority. Out of these tribes *Bheel* and *Bhilala* stand high in strength, scattered in most of the villages of the district. These tribal's live close to the forest and are largely dependent on the wild biological resources for their livelihood. They utilize various plant parts like root, bark, leaves, fruits, etc. to make themselves

comfortable and prepare simple formulations with single plants or combinations of two or more plant resources which are easily available. Literature survey of medico-ethnobotanical work done in Madhya Pradesh was done (Jain 1962, Bhall *et al.* 1986, Jain 1988, Maheshwari 1990, Singh 1993, Sikarwar 1998, Jain and Patole 2001, Samvatsar and Diwanji 2004 and Jain and Vairale 2007). The present communication gives result of ethnobotanical survey done in western Madhya Pradesh covering 15 herbal remedies used against various disorders among the *Bheel* and *Bhilala* tribe of Jhabua district.

## **Material and Methods**

Ethnobotanical surveys were conducted during June 2007- May 2010 in tribal inhabitant forests localities of Jhabua district for recording first hand information regarding the therapeutic properties of wild plants in the area. The collected information was cross checked with the help of available literature. Detailed information regarding local names, part used and mode of administration was recorded in field note books. The specimens were collected from the field and identified with the help of local/ regional floras and deposited at herbarium of School of Studies in Botany, Jiwaji University, Gwalior.

## **Enumeration of plant species**

The species are arranged below alphabetically with family in parenthesis, local name, followed by folklore claim.

### 1. *Achyranthes aspera* L. (Amaranthaceae)

Local name: Chirchita

Plant twig is used as a toothbrush in toothache and also in mouth disorder.

### 2. *Albizia odorattisima* (L.F.) Benth. (Mimosaceae)

Local name: Chichwa

The dried leaf powder is sprayed on the wound for healing soon.

### 3. *Bombax ceiba* L. (Bombacaceae)

Local name: Semala

Flower is used for making curry and given in mouth ulcers.

### 4. *Cassia abcus* L. (Caesalpiniaceae)

Local name: Chaksu

The seed powder is put it in eye in eye disorder.

5. ***Cassia tora* L.** (Caesalpiniaceae)

Local name: Puadiya

The decoction of *Cassia tora* and *Plantago ovata* (Isabgol) is given orally twice a day in constipation.

6. ***Desmodium gangeticum* (L.) DC.** (Fabaceae).

Local name: Rinzado

Fresh leaf juice is applied on a affected part in scabies and ringworm.

7. ***Euphorbia nerifolia* L.** (Euphorbiaceae)

Local name: Hathlo thubar

The latex of plant is given with *Piper betel* leaf in asthma.

8. ***Gloriosa superba* L.** (Liliaceae)

Local name: Kalihari

Tuberous root powder is given to the cattle in stomach disorder.

9. ***Jatropha curcas* L.** (Euphorbiaceae)

Local name: Ratanjyot

Root bark decoction is given in diarrhea and dysentery.

10. ***Mitragyna parviflora* (Roxb.) Korth.** (Rubiaceae)

Local name: Kalam

Seed paste is applied on forehead in half headache.

11. ***Momordica charantia*** (Cucurbitaceae)

Local name: Karela

Seed pounded in water overnight, the extract is given to expel the intestinal worm.

12. ***Ocimum basilicum* L.** (Lamiaceae)

Local name: Safed Bhabdi

Fresh leaf juice is put in eye in eye disorder.

13. *Pongamia pinnata* (L.) Pierre. (Fabaceae)

Local name: Kanji

Seed oil is rubbed on affected part in joint pain.

14. *Solanum nigrum* L. (Solanaceae)

Local name: Makoi

The fruits are eaten thrice a day in jaundice.

15. *Wrightia tinctoria* R. Br. (Euphorbiaceae)

Local name: Kueda

Plant latex is given with water in Malaria.

## Result and Discussion

The present communication documents 15 plant species belonging to 12 families under 14 genera that are traditionally valued. The plants used are found growing and are available in the vicinity and in many cases are immediately available as therapeutic, edible, fodder and fibre. The herbal remedies are effective against cuts and wounds, fever, joint pain, headache ache, constipation, diarrhoea, eye disorder etc.

This survey revealed that the tribals and other inhabitants of the area have sound knowledge about the uses of medicinal plants available in the region. Unfortunately, the tribals are not interested to share their traditional knowledge with others and their lore ends with the end of their life. However, after developing intimacy with some knowledgeable and experienced medicinemen and other traditional healers, some information on medicinal uses of the plant species has been reported earlier. Although a brief account on ethnomedicinal uses of documented plant species has been verified by cross-checking with the medicinemen, knowledgeable persons, healers and experienced informants of the region, even then further investigations on pharmaceuticals, therapeutic as well as safety aspects are very much desired for human welfare.

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