Some Phytotherapeutic Claims by Tribals of Rayagada District, Orissa, India

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Abstract

The present paper reports with 30 plant species belonging to 23 families, mostly used by the tribal people of Rayagada district, Orissa. The tribal population of the region primarily depends upon these plants for curing various diseases. They are enumerated with binomial, family, habit, local name, parts used and ethnomedicinal uses. Further studies on chemical and pharmacological actions are suggested to validate the claims.

Key Words: Phytotherapeutic claim, Ethnomedicine, Tribes, Herbal healer, Orissa.

Introduction

Use of plant based drugs and chemicals for curing various ailments and personal adornment is as old as human civilization. In India, the sacred Vedas dating back between 3500 B.C and 800 B.C give many references of medicinal plants. One of the remotest works in traditional herbal medicine is "Virikshayurveda", compiled even before the beginning of Christian era and formed the basis of medicinal studies in ancient India. “Rig Veda”, one of the oldest Indian literatures written around 2000 B.C. mentions the use of Cinnamon (Cinnamomum verum Prel.), Ginger (Zingiber officinale Rose.), Sandalwood (Santalum album L.) etc. not only in religious ceremonies but also in medical preparation (Bentley and Trimen, 1980).

Plants and plant-based medicaments are the basis of many of the modern pharmaceuticals we use today for our various ailments (Abraham, 1981; Atal & Kapur, 1982). At one time, nearly all medicines were derived from biological resources. Even today they remain vital and as much as 67%-70% of modern medicines are derived from natural products (State of the Environment Report, 2001). Nearly 80% of the world populations rely on traditional medicines for primary health care, most of which involve the use of plant extracts (Sandhya et al., 2006). In India, almost 95% of the prescriptions are plant-based in the traditional systems of Unani, Ayurveda, Homoeopathy and Siddha (Satyavati et al., 1987).

Ancient ethnic communities around the world had learnt to utilize their neighbourhood herbal wealth for curative as well as offensive purposes (Subramoniam and Push pangadan, 1995). Due to lack of literacy, their knowledge on plants developed often at the cost of their dear life through centuries old experience could not be perfectly documented and it had rather descended from one generation to another as a domestic cultural heritage. As the ethnic groups migrated from place to place in search of their livelihood, their folklore knowledge also became fragmented and travelled with them often with ‘additions and deletions’. Their findings in course of time have become basic leads for chemical, pharmacological, clinical and biochemical investigations, which ultimately gave birth to drug discovery. The present paper is an attempt to
collect all the information available on ethno-medicinal uses of plants commonly used by different tribes for combating various ailments.

**Study area**

Rayagada district is situated in southern part of Orissa. Earlier it was a part of Koraput district. It is located between 18° 56' N to 19° 58' N latitude and 82° 53' E to 84° 02' E longitude, the elevation of the area ranges from 700 m to 1300 m. It occupies an area of 7,584.7 sq km. The district has a population of 8,32,019, out of which 4,73,379 are tribals. In other words, the district is predominantly a tribal populated district with 57.52% of tribal population. The physiography of the district gives a perfect platform for the tribals in sustaining their ethno-cultural identity. Tribal people are mostly inhabited in the forest area, depend on the forest resources for their livelihood (food, fodder and medicine). Forest area covers an extent of 4785.36 sq. km out of which 777.27 sq. km is reserved forest. The district has been the homeland of various tribal communities with their sub-tribes, who are found in different level of development depending upon their assimilation with the so called mainstream or modern communities. The Kondhas and Souras are the predominant tribes found in the interior forest, where as other sub-tribes like Kotia kondha, Relli, Ghassi, Jhodia, Jatapu and Konda Dora are found in the fringe areas of the forest. The soil type is loamy but in higher elevation the soil is rocky with small to big boulders. The temperature ranges from 15° C during winter and about 35° C- 40° C in summer. The mean annual rainfall is 1516 mm. The bulk of the rain is in the month of August to October, while March to May is the driest months.

**Materials and Methodology**

A literature survey was carried out on the study area before the field work started (Das and Misra, 1987; Das and Misra, 1988a; Das and Misra, 1988b, Hemadri and Rao, 1989; Hemadri, 1991; Dash, 1994; Das and Misra, 2000). Most of the works were based on taxonomic survey. Very few works were done on ethnobotanical study. The present work is the outcome of extensive survey of different tribal villages of Rayagada district undertaken during 2004-2005 to collect information on the medicinal uses of different plant species. During field work, interviews were conducted with local knowledgeable villagers, the herbal healer called ‘Vaidyas’ (local physicians in Indian System of Medicine), old woman and medicinal plant vendors. Plant specimens were collected and identified with local flora (Saxena and Brahmmam, 1996). The medicinal value of each plant was enumerated in the following pattern: a) Binomial, b) Family, c) Habit, d) Local name, e) Parts used and f) Ethnomedicinal uses.

**Results and Discussion**

The data on medicinal plants, which was collected from local inhabitants in Rayagada district, were analysed. The enumeration and utilization of these plants are described below.

   Family : Rutaceae
   Habit : Tree
   Local name : Bela
   Parts Used : Stem Bark
   Ethnomedicinal Uses : **For Stomach & Dysentery:** The bark is pounded and made into paste with mustard seeds and used for diarrhoea, dysentery and other stomach disorders.

2. Binomial : Alangium salvifolium (L.f.) Wang
   Family : Alangiaceae
Habit: Tree
Local name: Ankul koli
Parts Used: Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses: For Chronic wounds: The leaves and tender shoots are made into paste with salt and applied to boils.

3. Binomial: Andrographis paniculata (Burm.f.) Wall. ex Nees
Family: Acanthaceae
Habit: Herb
Local name: Bhuin nimba
Parts Used: Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses: For Headache: Leaf paste is applied on the forehead for 2-3 hours to relieve continuous headache.

Family: Asparagaceae
Habit: Herb
Local name: Iswar jata
Parts Used: Tuber
Ethnomedicinal Uses: For Stomachache: Tuber is made into paste and taken daily twice for three days.

5. Binomial: Barleria cristata L.
Family: Acanthaceae
Habit: Herb
Local name: Daskaranda
Parts Used: Root
Ethnomedicinal Uses: For Anaemia: A decoction of the root with Barleria strigosa and dry fish is given in anaemia.

6. Binomial: Boerhavia diffusa L.
Family: Nyctaginaceae
Habit: Herb
Local name: Atikapudi saga
Parts Used: Root
Ethnomedicinal Uses: For Asthma: Root powder mixed with black pepper powder daily once for a fortnight.

Family: Papilionaceae
Habit: Tree
Local name: Palasa
Parts Used: Seed
Ethnomedicinal Uses: For preventing Pregnancy: Seed after removing the seed coats are made into powder and mixed with country liquor and given for three days after menstruation as medicine to prevent pregnancy.

Family: Asclepiadaceae
Habit: Shrub
Local name: Arakha
Parts Used: Root
Ethnomedicinal Uses: For Diarrhoea: Dried root powder is taken orally with cold water to cure diarrhea.

9. Binomial: Cassia fistula L.
Family: Caesalpiniaceae
Habit: Tree
Local name: Sunari
Parts Used: Fruit
Ethnomedicinal Uses: For Constipation: The fruits are crushed and the paste is taken orally in very small quantity in case of constipation.
10. **Binomial**: *Euphorbia hirta* L.  
**Family**: Euphorbiaceae  
**Habit**: Herb  
**Local name**: Jhuntikhuntia  
**Parts Used**: Whole plant  
**Ethnomedicinal Uses**: *For Cuts*: The crushed plant is fried and applied to cuts.

11. **Binomial**: *Flacourtia indica* (Burm.f) Merr.  
**Family**: Flacourtiaceae  
**Habit**: Shrub  
**Local name**: Kontai koli  
**Parts Used**: Stem Bark  
**Ethnomedicinal Uses**: *For Dysentery*: The stem bark paste with about two gms mustard seed is heated in earthen pot and given with curd twice daily for dysentery.

12. **Binomial**: *Gymnema sylvestre* (Retz.) R.Br.  
**Family**: Asclepiadaceae  
**Habit**: Climber  
**Local name**: Gudmari  
**Parts Used**: Leaves  
**Ethnobotanical Uses**: *For Diabetes*: Dried leaves are pounded together with Coriander fruit (*Coriandrum sativum* L.), juice is extracted and given orally.

13. **Binomial**: *Hybanthus enneaspermus* (L.f.) F.v. Muell.  
**Family**: Violaceae  
**Habit**: Herb  
**Local name**: Madan mastaka  
**Parts Used**: Whole plant  
**Ethnomedicinal Uses**: *For Siphillis and Dysentery*: The paste of two to three entire plants with seven black pepper is given once daily for siphillis and dysentery.

14. **Binomial**: *Mallotus philippensis* (Lam.) Muell.  
**Family**: Euphorbiaceae  
**Habit**: Tree  
**Local name**: Sundari  
**Parts Used**: Seed  
**Ethnobotanical Uses**: *For Constipation*: Decoction of seed is taken daily twice before food.

15. **Binomial**: *Mimosa pudica* L.  
**Family**: Mimosaceae  
**Habit**: Herb  
**Local name**: Lajakuli lata  
**Parts Used**: Root  
**Ethnomedicinal Uses**: *For Snake-bite*: The root is made into paste in the water collected after washing raw rice and given orally for snake-bites.

16. **Binomial**: *Plumbago indica* L.  
**Family**: Plumbaginaceae  
**Habit**: Herb  
**Local name**: Raktachita  
**Parts Used**: Root  
**Ethnomedicinal Uses**: *For Abortion of Pregnancy*: The root is made into paste along with the root of *Michelia champaca* and given once daily in the morning for three days to induce abortion.
   Family: Papilionaceae
   Habit: Tree
   Local name: Piasal
   Parts Used: Wood
   Ethnobotanical Uses: *For Diabetes*: The wood is kept in water overnight. In the morning the water is taken for cooling effect. This is also recommended to cure diabetes.

18. Binomial: *Rauvolfia serpentina* (L.) Benth. ex Kurz
   Family: Apocynaceae
   Habit: Shrub
   Local name: Patala garuda
   Parts Used: Root
   Ethnomedicinal Uses: *For Snake-bite*: Paste from root is taken orally in snake-bite.

   Family: Sapindaceae
   Habit: Tree
   Local name: Kusum
   Parts Used: Seed
   Ethnomedicinal Uses: *For Eczema*: The oil obtained from seed is applied in eczema area.

   Family: Dipterocarpaceae
   Habit: Tree
   Local name: Sala
   Parts Used: Stem Bark
   Ethnomedicinal Uses: *For Curing Wounds*: The powdered bark of the tree is used for treatment of wounds specially those infected and lacerated ones forming pus.

   Family: Meliaceae
   Habit: Tree
   Local name: Rohini
   Parts Used: Stem Bark
   Ethnomedicinal Uses: *For Rheumatism*: Paste made from the grinded bark is applied to get relief from muscular and joint pain.

   Family: Sterculiaceae
   Habit: Tree
   Local name: Genduli
   Parts Used: Gum
   Ethnomedicinal Uses: *For Dysentery*: The gum mixed with sugar is administered to patient suffering from dysentery.

23. Binomial: *Strychnos nux-vomica* L.
   Family: Loganiaceae
   Habit: Tree
   Local name: Kochila
   Parts Used: Stem Bark
   Ethnomedicinal Uses: *For Epilepsy*: The infusion of bark is given in epilepsy.

   Family: Combretaceae
   Habit: Tree
   Local name: Asana
Parts Used: Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses: *For Dandruff:* Paste made from petiole of the leaf is used against dandruff.

25. **Binomial:** *Terminalia bellirica* (Gaertn.) Roxb.
   **Family:** Combretaceae
   **Habit:** Tree
   **Local name:** Bahada
   **Parts Used:** Fruit
   **Ethnomedicinal Uses:** *For Ophthalmia:* Fruit decoction along with honey is used to cure ophthalmia.

26. **Binomial:** *Terminalia chebula* Retz.
   **Family:** Combretaceae
   **Habit:** Tree
   **Local name:** Harida
   **Parts Used:** Fruit
   **Ethnomedicinal Uses:** *For Cough & Cold:* Dried fruit is taken for cough and cold.

27. **Binomial:** *Tridax procumbens* L.
   **Family:** Asteraceae
   **Habit:** Herb
   **Local name:** Bishalya karani
   **Parts Used:** Leaves
   **Ethnomedicinal Uses:** *For Headache and stop Bleeding:* Leaf juice is applied externally on injuries to arrest bleeding and a poultice of the leaves is applied on the forehead to treat headache.

28. **Binomial:** *Woodfordia fruticosa* (L.) Kurz
   **Family:** Lythraceae
   **Habit:** Shrub
   **Local name:** Dhataki
   **Parts Used:** Root
   **Ethnomedicinal Uses:** *For Gastro-intestinal disorder:* Root paste is useful against gastro-intestinal disorder and loose motion of children.

29. **Binomial:** *Wrightia tinctoria* (Roxb.) R.Br.
   **Family:** Apocynaceae
   **Habit:** Tree
   **Local name:** Pita karuan
   **Parts Used:** Latex
   **Ethnomedicinal Uses:** *For Toothache:* Milky latex is used as an external application on base of teeth.

30. **Binomial:** *Zingiber montanum* (Koenig) Dietr.
    **Family:** Zingiberaceae
    **Habit:** Herb
    **Local name:** Bano ada
    **Parts Used:** Rhizome
    **Ethnomedicinal Uses:** *For Cholera:* The rhizome mixed with black pepper is used in cholera and for extraction of intestinal worms.

The investigations revealed the medicinal plants of 30 species of 28 genera belonging to 23 families. Combretaceae is the dominant family (3 spp.), followed by Apocynaceae, Aanthaceae, Asclepiadaceae, Papilionaceae, Euphorbiaceae and Sterculiaceae, each with two species. The other families contributed with one species. Among all the species, trees are found to be more (15) followed by herbs (10), shrubs (4) and climber (1). The use of plant resources as remedies is probably an ancient as man himself. The aforesaid uses are the ones practiced in day-to-day life of tribals living in forests. The use of the traditional medicine is widespread in this region with higher percentage of the population relying on it. This is because of lack of modern medical facilities available in this region and the expensive Medicare system which these tribal
people are unable to afford.

**Conclusion**

Traditional healthcare practices of indigenous people pertaining to human health are termed as ethnomedicine. Ethnomedicine is the mother of all other systems of medicine. Recently the importance of these traditional medicines has been realized worldwide as some of them proved to be very effective (Marini-Bettolo, 1980) and some other prescriptions of these traditional healers may be of benefit to human kind when thorough scientific analysis is conducted into their properties. The study revealed that whatever knowledge on plants exists with the people of Rayagada district, they are on fast declining because lack of interest of local youth to learn the traditional knowledge from the old herbal healer. The highly interesting findings require further research, while the efficacy of the various indigenous practices will need to be subjected to pharmacological validation. Therefore, greater efforts are required to document traditional knowledge of the local people so as to prepare a comprehensive account of it, which will open new vistas in plant research.

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