An ethnobotanical survey was conducted in and around Vellore district to study the various medicinal plants used by the people for the treatment of their ailments such as fever, cold, cough, diabetes, jaundice, diarrhoea, rheumatism, snake bite, and headache. The study also covered the methods used in plant extraction, and the doses, durations and mode of application.

Introduction

Plants have always played a major role in the treatment of human traumas and diseases worldwide (Principe et al., 1991). They have been used as sources of modern drugs, either by providing pure compounds, serving materials for partial synthesis of useful compounds or models for synthesis of new drugs (Hanai and Szwien, 1972). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), as much as 80% of world’s population depends on traditional medicine for their primary health care needs (Aminud et al., 2005). The knowledge of medicinal plants has been accumulated in the course of many centuries based on different medicinal systems such as Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha. In India it is reported that traditional healers use 2500 plant species and 100 species of plants serve as regular sources of medicines (Pratap, 2001).

Ethnopharmacological information is an important tool in drug discovery (Bidulien et al., 1995). The ethnobotanical survey can bring out many different classes for the development of drugs to treat human diseases. Safe, effective, and inexpensive indigenous remedies are gaining popularity equally among the people of both the urban and rural areas, especially in India and China (Kareva et al., 2004). Ethnobotany and ethnomedical studies are today recognized as the most visible method of identifying new medicinal plants or reconstituting on those earlier reported for bioactive constituents. It is interesting to note that most of the drugs derived or originally isolated from higher plants were discovered in an ethnobotanical or ethnomedical context. Several studies have revealed that tribal population, not only depend on plant based resources for medicines, food, firewood and fuel, but also play a vital role in natural resource management that forms the core aspect of conservation biology (Gigaron et al., 2006). Today, many indigenous herbal remedies remain largely undocumented or recognized as potential forms of treatment and consequently continue to be used by only small groups of indigenous populations. The present work was carried out to explore the medicinal remedies of some medicinal plants used by the tribal people of Vellore district in Tamilnadu for the treatment of human ailments.

Materials and Methods

The entire area of Vellore District lies between 12°15’ to 79°50’ North latitudes and 78°20’ to 79°50’ East latitudes in Tamilandra state. The district is spread over an area of about 8077 km2 and is bounded on the North and Northeast by Tiruvannamalai District, on the South and Southeast by Kanchipuram District and on the South and north by Andhra Pradesh state. The district receives an annual rainfall is about 446.8 – 1544.6 mm. The maximum and minimum temperature varies between 26.3º and 38.2º.

Ethno-botanical data were collected according to the methodology suggested by Jain (2001). The ethno-botanical data were collected using questionnaires, interviews and discussions in their local tribal people. A totally more than 150 interviews were conducted with local people, including herbalists, traditional healers and elderly tribal people. A total of 37 families were studied and folk lore were collected. In each family the study was carried out in an excursion flora of central Tamilnadu (Matthew, 1991) were used to ascertained the nomenclature of the plant species used for identification and authentication of the plants. Folklore medicinal plant are arranged in alphabetical order in Table 1 which represents their botanically names followed by the family, vernacular name.

Results and Discussion

In this paper, we focused mainly on plant species reported by the local people in and around the study area for their medicinal uses. Presented data are the general results of the ethnobotanical survey conducted from March 2008 to January 2009. In the present investigation 75 medicinal plants are used for the treatment of various diseases like asthinitis, piles, diabetes, snake bite, skin disease, ulcer, stomach pain, cough, headache, blood pressure, amenorrhea, tumor, amenorrhea, cancer, wounds, dysentery, jaundice, antifertility, leprosy, laxative, antirentgent, urinary disorders, paralysis, diarrhoea and diarrhea etc. Some of them are used as antihelmintics, liver and antimitotic also. Seventy-five plant species belonging to 37 families are reported. Ten species of plants serve as regular sources of medicines either for self-medication or for treating others. The flora of Presidency of Madras (Gamble, 1935 and Ramakrishna, 1942) were used to ascertain the nomenclature of the plant species used for identification and authentication of the plants. Folklore medicinal plant are arranged in alphabetical order in Table 1 which represents their botanically names followed by the family, vernacular name.

Table 1: Medicinal plants used by local people from Vellore district of Tamilnadu.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Botanical Name</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Local Name (Tamil)</th>
<th>Plant Parts used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Albizia lebbeck (L.), Benth</td>
<td>Mimosaceae</td>
<td>Neermalneruppu</td>
<td>Leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Akepa nontupiul, Cont ex Roxb.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ammannia baccifera L.</td>
<td>Lythraceae</td>
<td>Peithumbai</td>
<td>Leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Alstonia venenata (R.Br).</td>
<td>Apocynaceae</td>
<td>Paalai</td>
<td>Latex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Aegle marmelos Corr.ex Roxb</td>
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In Vellore district, on the Southwest by Krishnagiri District and on the northwest and north by Andhra Pradesh state. The district is spread over an area of about 6077 km² and is bounded on the North and Northeast by Tiruvannamalai District, on the South and Southeast by Kanchipuram District, on the South by Thiruvaluvar District, on the Southwest by Kattiyur District and on the northeast and north by Andhra Pradesh state. The district receives an annual rainfall is about 446.8 – 1544.6 mm. The maximum and minimum temperature varies between 26.3º and 38.2º.

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<td>Andrographis paniculata (Burm.f.)</td>
<td>Acanthaceae</td>
<td>Nilambaru</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Acanthaceae Nilavaembu Leaves</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Abrus precatorius L. Fabaceae</td>
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<td>Kundumani Seeds</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>Aloe vera, (Linn.) Burm. Liliaceae</td>
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<td>Chotthukatalai</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Achyranthes aspera L. Amaranthaceae</td>
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<td>Nayuruvi Leaves</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Acalypha indica L. Euphorbiaceae</td>
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<td>Kuppaimeni Leaves</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>Alternanthera sessilis L. Amaranthaceae</td>
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<td>Ponaganikerai Leaves</td>
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<td>Acacia catechu (Linn.) Willd Mimosaceae</td>
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<td>Karunkali Leaves</td>
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<td>Aloe vera, (Linn.) Burm. Liliaceae</td>
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<td>Aloe vera, (Linn.) Burm. Liliaceae</td>
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<td>51.</td>
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<td>Species</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Part Used</td>
<td>Use</td>
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<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>Musa paradisiaca L.</td>
<td>Musaceae</td>
<td>Leaves</td>
<td>Tender leaves</td>
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<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>Mangifera indica L.</td>
<td>Anacardiaceae</td>
<td>Leaf paste</td>
<td>To heal wounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>Mangifera indica L.</td>
<td>Anacardiaceae</td>
<td>Leaf paste</td>
<td>To cure diabetes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>Murraya koenigii L.</td>
<td>Rutaceae</td>
<td>Fruits, leaves,</td>
<td>Flower and bark</td>
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<tr>
<td>57.</td>
<td>Momordica charantia L.</td>
<td>Cucurbitaceae</td>
<td>Bark</td>
<td></td>
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<td>58.</td>
<td>Melia azedarach L.</td>
<td>Meliaceae</td>
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<td>Meliaceae</td>
<td>Bark</td>
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<tr>
<td>60.</td>
<td>Neolamarckiana marnierii (L.)</td>
<td>Euphorbiaceae</td>
<td>Leaves and root</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>61.</td>
<td>Phyllanthus amarus, Schum. &amp; Thonn.</td>
<td>Euphorbiaceae</td>
<td>Leaves and root</td>
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</tr>
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<td>62.</td>
<td>Polycarpaea corymbosa L.</td>
<td>Caryophyllaceae</td>
<td>Leaves</td>
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<td>63.</td>
<td>Syzygium cumini L.</td>
<td>Myrtaceae</td>
<td>Rhizome</td>
<td></td>
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<td>64.</td>
<td>Zingiber roseum (Rosc).</td>
<td>Zingiberaceae</td>
<td>Leaves</td>
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</table>
Cassia auriculata L.  
Dried and powdered flowers are used for clearing the hair, reducing body heat and cures diabetes.

Cynodon dactylon (L.) Pers.  
The juice of the whole plant is used to reduce body heat and to lower the blood pressure.

Catharanthus roseus G. Don.  
Whole plant is powdered and mixed with cow's milk and taken orally to treat diabetes.

Cissus quadrangularis L.  
A paste of the whole plant is taken for improving the digestion and inducing appetite.

Caesalpinia pulcherrima (L.) S. W.  
A seed paste is applied to inflamed teeth to ease toothache.

Cardiospermum halicacabum L.  
A leaf paste is applied for joint pains or leaves are prepared in the form of a soup and consumed to cure rheumatic pains.

Carnella asiatica L.  
The dried plant is powdered and this powder, mixed with hot water, is taken for gastrointestinal, theidal plants are used in the diet of children for improving their memory.

Carnarvonus paullus (Marr).  
A leaf paste is applied externally for tumors.

Cassia tinctoria, (Linn).  
A decoction of the leaf is used as a nutritious tonic.

Celtis nigra, (L.). Br.  
Milky latex is applied on the wounds on legs of livestock.

Clitoria ternatea L.  
Root powder is mixed with water and taken orally to treat indigestion, eye diseases and headache.

Caesalpinia bonducella, (Flem).  
A decoction of the leaf is used as nutritional tonic.

Calotropis gigantea, (L.) R. Br.  
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Carica papaya L.  
The milky latex of the plant is applied to teeth in order to relieve inflammatory pain.

Coccinia grandis (L.) J. Voigt  
The leaf extract, mixed with milk, is used in cases of jaundice.

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Clitoria ternatea L.  
Root powder is mixed with water and taken orally to treat indigestion, eye diseases and headache.

Cissus quadrangularis L.  
A paste of the whole plant is taken for improving the digestion and inducing appetite.

Carica papaya L.  
The milky latex of the plant is applied to teeth in order to relieve inflammatory pain.

Coccinia grandis (L.) J. Voigt  
The leaf extract, mixed with milk, is used in cases of jaundice.

Caesalpinia bonducella, (Flem).  
A decoction of the leaf is used as a nutritious tonic.

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The leaf extract is taken internally to cure piles; it is applied to the hair of the head to blacken grey hair.

Morinda citrifolia Roxb.
The leaf extract is used to cure dysentery.

Moringa oleifera .Lam.
The boiled leaves and flowers are eaten to increase fertility in men. A handful of bark juice of the plant is used to cure stomach pain.

Musa paradisiaca L.
The plant extract is given for snake bite and also for burns.

Mangifera indica L. Mixture of ½ of the seed ground with cow’s milk is taken to arrest excess bleeding during menstruation.

Murraya koenigii   L . Sprengel Juice of tender leaves is taken orally to arrest vomiting. Juice taken tender leaves, is taken orally to arrest vomiting.

Mimosa pudica L.
Local peoples uses for the fruit, seeds, vine and leaves include gastroenteritis, diabetes, tumors and some viral infections.

Melia azedarach L.
The juice of the bark is taken internally in the early morning for three days in order to relieve stomach pain; it is also employed as an anthelmintic.

Nutmeg (Juniperus (Sal.) Juice prepared from the stem bark Is boiled with gingelly oil and two drops are poured into ear to treat ear pain.

Ocimum americanum, L.
Leaf juice is taken for stomach upset.

Prosopis cineraria L.
The plant flowers is powdered, mixed with sugar and used during pregnancy as safeguard against miscarriage. The bark is used as a remedy for rheumatism in snake bite, asthma. The bark is prescribed for scorpion sting.

Pongamia pinnata L.
The seed oil is used to cure rheumatic pains and swellings.

Phyllanthus amarus, Schum. & Thonn. Leaf juice is administered to cure fever and jaundice.

Prosopis corylifolia L.
Roots leaves paste is applied externally.

Solanum trilobatum,L.
The leaf juice is used to treat cough and cold.

Sida cordata, (Burmn. f.) Borssum
The leaf juice is effective in treating diarrhoea during pregnancy. The pounded leaves are applied locally to relieve cuts and bruises.

Sida rhombifolia (L.) Roxb.
A paste of the seed coat is applied to a scorpion bite to relieve pain or the scratched seed is placed in a warm condition on the area of a scorpion bite to relieve pain.

Thespesia populnea (L.) The tender fruit mixed with castor oil and made into a paste applied externally for skin disease.

Vitex negundo L.
Inhale boiled leaves vapour to relieve headache.

Zingiber roseum (Rosc). The juice of the rhizome, mixed with honey, is taken internally to improve digestion and to relieve gas.

Acknowledgements
The authors are cordially grateful to the people inhabiting in different localities of Vellore District because of their kind support and co-operation during the field surveys.

References


