

ETHNO MEDICINAL PLANTS USED AS MEDICINE BY THE CHOLAVAR TRIBE IN KATHIRIMALAI REGION OF SALEM DISTRICT, TAMILNADU, INDIA.

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ABSTRACT

Medicinal plants are playing an important role in treating and preventing a variety of diseases throughout the world. India is one of the most medico-culturally diverse countries in the world. The present report deals with some significant medicinal plants utilized to cure diseases by tribal (*Cholavar*) people in the *Kathirimalai* region of Salem District, Tamilnadu. In India, Ancient methods of treatment by various types of Trees, Shrubs and Herbs were used to cure Jaundice, Asthma, Osteo arthritis, Skin diseases, Intestinal worms, Snake bite, Scorpion sting, Cold and Cough. The study deals with more than 20 species of medicinally important plants used by *Cholavar* tribe in *Kathirimalai* region. Scientific names along with local Tamil name, plant part used, method of medicine preparation has been documented.

Keywords: Herbal medicine, Ethno botany, Tribes, Tamil Nadu

INTRODUCTION

In India, Medicinal plants are widely used as folk medicine to cure a number of diseases for several thousand years¹. Drugs obtained from plants are believed to be much safer and exhibit a remarkable efficacy in the treatment of various ailments. Documentation of the indigenous knowledge through ethno botanical studies is important for the conservation and utilization of biological resources². Ethno botany is the study of the relationship between plants and people by “ethno” study of people and “botany” study of plants. The focus of ethnobotany is how plants are used, managed and perceived in human societies³⁻⁸. World Health Organization estimates that more than 80% of health care need in developing countries is met through traditional health care practices⁹.

The tribal communities of Eastern Ghats have been using plant parts of various species as therapeutic agents¹⁰⁻¹⁴. The practice of using plants as medicine is still prevailing not only among the tribal group in Easter Ghats

but also among other people living in the surrounding rural areas. This knowledge of medicinal plants of tribal communities was accumulated in the course of many centuries into different medical systems such as Siddha and Ayurveda in India¹⁵⁻¹⁸.

In the recent years, number of reports on the use of plants in traditional healing by either tribal people or indigenous communities of India particularly Eastern Ghats of Tamil Nadu is increasing¹⁹⁻²⁴. But there is no such comprehensive ethnobotanical study conducted in *Kathirimalai* region particularly on *Cholavar* tribes and also hills as whole. Therefore, the present study is aimed to identify knowledgeable resource persons among the *Cholavar* tribes in *Kathiri malai* of Eastern Ghats in Tamil Nadu, India and to document their indigenous ethno medicinal knowledge on the utilization of medicinal plants available in that region²².

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To conduct study on ethno medicinal plants used by *Cholavar* tribe in *Kathiri malai*, Southern part of Eastern Ghats, Salem district, Tamilnadu by field visits and documenting the knowledge of resource persons by questionnaires.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was undertaken in *Kathirimalai*, Salem district, Tamilnadu. *Kathirimalai* is situated near to the *Sathyamangalam* forest and under the *Anthiyur* forest range of Southern part of Eastern Ghats (Fig - 1). Relevant information was collected from tribal community, *Cholavar* residing in *Kathirimalai*. During the period of study (July, 2016–February, 2017), frequent field surveys were conducted throughout the hills at different seasons so as to get more information on the utility of the plant species by the tribe. The information was gathered through questionnaires, personal interviews and discussions among them. The interview was conducted with the people who were having sound knowledge on medicinal plants found in their area and used by their families and neighbours. The interview, and discussions were conducted in their local language (Tamil). The questionnaire contained questions on the details of the plants, parts used, medicinal uses and mode of preparation of remedies in Tamil. The ethno botanical data were collected according to the methodology suggested.

In the study, 27 knowledgeable elders (12 men and 8 women between the ages of 35 to 70) were chosen with the assistance of local administrators and community leaders served as key informants. Each informant was visited three times in order to verify the reliability of the data obtained. If what was said during the first visit concerning the use of particular medicinal plants by any informant did not agree with what was told during the further visits, the information was considered unreliable and was discarded. The medicinal plants were also collected during the field survey, identified²⁵. The taxonomic identification of the plant specimens were done with the help of local and regional floras such as *Flora of Presidency of Madras*²⁶ *Flora of Tamilnadu Carnatic*, *Flora of Tamil Nadu*²⁷⁻³².

Fig.1: Location of Kathirimalai Hills Taminladu, India.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study identified that 33 plant species under 20 families (Table.1) are used by *Cholavar* tribe for medicinal purposes. The plants are used for treatment of cold, cough, stomach ache, dysentery, skin disease, poisonous bites, cut and wounds, diabetes and sexual disorders.

Table No: 1 List of commonly used medicinal plants used by Cholavar tribe in Kathirimalai.

| S.NO | BOTANICAL NAME | FAMILY NAME | VERNACULAR NAME | PART USED | USES AND MODE OF PREPARATION |
|------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------|------------------------------|
|------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------|------------------------------|

| | | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------------|---|
| 1 | <i>Abrus precatorius L.</i> | Fabaceae | <i>Kundrimani</i> | Leaf | Leaf paste is applied on affected places to treat swellings. |
| 2 | <i>Acalypha Indica L.</i> | Euphorbiaceae | <i>Kuppaimeni</i> | Leaf | Leaf juice is applied externally for curing body itching |
| 3 | <i>Aerva lanata L.</i> | Amaranthaceae | <i>Poolai poo</i> | Whole Plant | Decoction used for treatment of Renal calculi |
| 4 | <i>Albizia amara Roxb.</i> | Mimosaceae | <i>Oonjamaram</i> | Leaf | Leaf paste externally applied for promoting Hair growth and get rid of dandruff |
| 5 | <i>Aristolochia bracteolata lam.</i> | Aristolochiaceae | <i>Aduthinnapalai</i> | Leaf | Decoction used internally for the treatment of Scorpion sting, Skin diseases |
| 6 | <i>Aristolochia indica L.</i> | Aristolochiaceae | <i>Perumarunthu kodi</i> | Leaf | Decoction used internally for treatment of Scorpion sting, Snake bite |
| 7 | <i>Asparagus racemosus L.</i> | Liliaceae | <i>Thanithan Kilangu</i> | Fresh Tuber | Consumed internally for the reduction of body heat and cure Urinary tract infection |
| 8 | <i>Azadirachta indica A.</i> | Meliaceae | <i>Veepamaram</i> | Leaf | Leaf paste is used as external application to cure skin diseases |
| 9 | <i>Cardiospermum halicacabum L.</i> | Sapindaceae | <i>Mudakathan</i> | Leaf | Boiled Leaf applied for Arthritic pain |
| 10 | <i>Cassia auriculata L.</i> | Caesapiniaceae | <i>Avarai</i> | Flower | Dry flower powder used for internally for treatment of Menstrual problem |
| 11 | <i>Carissa Spinorum L</i> | Apocyanaceae | <i>Kala</i> | Flowers | Eye diseases |
| 12 | <i>Cissus quadrangularis L.</i> | Vitaceae | <i>Pirandai</i> | Stem | Bone fracture |

| | | | | | |
|----|---|----------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|---|
| 13 | <i>Cleistanthus Collinus</i> (Roxb) | Phyllanthaceae | <i>Oduvan</i> | Leaf | Boiled leaf applied externally to reduce arthritic Swelling |
| 14 | <i>Cleome pentaphylla</i> | Cleomaceae | <i>Nalvellai</i> | Leaf | Leaf juice used to cure migraine, fever Eye diseases |
| 15 | <i>Gloriosa superba L</i> | Liliaceae | <i>Kanvali</i> <i>Kizhalangu</i> | Flower Rhizome | Eye diseases, Arthritic pain |
| 16 | <i>Commelina benghalensis, Linn</i> | Commelinaceae | <i>Kanam</i> <i>vazhalai</i> | Leaf | Leaf paste applied externally for Rheumatoid arthritis |
| 17 | <i>Corallocarpus epigeus</i> (Rottl. & Willd.) Clarke | Cucurbitaceae | <i>Aagasa</i> <i>kizhalangu</i> | Tuber | For the treatment of Scorpion sting, Skin diseases |
| 18 | <i>Curculigo orchioides</i> Gaertn. | Amaryllidaceae | <i>Nilapanai</i> <i>kizhalangu</i> | Tuber | Dry powder mix with cow milk used for the treatment of male infertility |
| 19 | <i>Decalepis hamiltonii</i> Wight & Arn. | Apocynaceae | <i>Mahali</i> <i>kizhalangu</i> | Tuber | Internally used for the treatment Stomach pain |
| 20 | <i>Dodonace viscosa, Linn</i> | Sapindaceae | <i>Virali</i> | Leaf | Boiled leaf used externally to reduce joint swelling |
| 21 | <i>Gymnema Sylvestre L.</i> | Asclepiadaceae | <i>Sirukurinjan</i> | Leaf | Eye diseases Diabetes |
| 22 | <i>Hemidesmus Indicus L.</i> | Asclepiadaceae | <i>Nannari</i> | Rhizome | Consumed internally for the reduction of body heat and cure Urinary tract infection |
| 23 | <i>Lepidagathis cristata willd</i> | Acanthaceae | <i>Porikarpan</i> <i>poodu</i> | Flowers | Flower ash is mixed with coconut oil applied externally on Infantile eczema |
| 24 | <i>Leucas aspera</i> (Willd.) Link. | Lamiaceae | <i>Thumbai</i> | Leaf Flower | Juice used in the treatment of Ear infection, bites and Sinusitis |

| | | | | | |
|----|--|---------------|--------------------|-------------|---|
| 25 | <i>Mangifera indica L.</i> | Anacardiaceae | <i>Maa maram</i> | Leaf, Seed | Decoction used to cure Stomach pain, Diarrhoea |
| 26 | <i>Melia azedarachta L.</i> | Meliaceae | <i>Malai vembu</i> | Leaf | Juice used in the treatment of Female infertility Skin diseases |
| 27 | <i>Ocimum tenuiflorum L.</i> | Lamiaceae | <i>Thulasi</i> | Leaf | Leaves used in the treatment of Cold, Cough |
| 28 | <i>Phyllanthus Amarus Schum. &Thonn.</i> | Euphorbiaceae | Keelanelli | Whole plant | plant extract mixed with goat milk used in the treatment of jaundice |
| 29 | <i>Phyllanthus Emblica L.</i> | Euphorbiaceae | Nelli | Fruits | Dry powder mixed with hot water for constipation, jaundice |
| 30 | <i>Pongamia pinnata (L.) Pierre.</i> | Fabaceae | Pungamaram | Latex | Used in the treatment of Skin diseases |
| 31 | <i>Syzygium cumini L.</i> | Myrtaceae | Naval maram | Leaf | Decoction used internally for the treatment of Menstrual problem, Diarrhoea |
| 32 | <i>Terminalia chebula Retz.</i> | Combretaceae | Kadukai | Fruit Rind | Decoction used internally for the treatment of Jaundice, constipation |
| 33 | <i>Urginea indica kunth</i> | Lamiaceae | Kaatvu vengayam | Tuber | Externally used in the treatment of Corn Foot |

CONCLUSION

The present study revealed that the knowledge and usage of traditional medicine for the treatment of various ailments among the *Cholavar* tribes is still a major part of their life and culture. They have a strong belief in the efficacy and success of traditional medicine and the results of the study provide evidence that the medicinal plants continued to play an important role in the healthcare system of this community. The new claims recorded from the study area showed that still much can be learned from investigating herbals available

abundantly in the forests. These plants may indicate the possible occurrence of valuable phytochemical compounds and it requires a search for potential new drugs to treat various ailments.

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