



TRIBALS OF JHARKHAND: CULTURE, FESTIVALS CUISINE AND MEDICINAL PLANTS OF ORAON AND SANTHAL TRIBES

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ABSTRACT: The present paper describes the culture, festivals, cuisine's and the medicinal plants used to cure various diseases mainly by two tribe of Jharkhand, the Oraon and the Santhal tribe. Almost 31-32 tribe community are found in Jharkhand. It is richly biodiverse state as compared to the other states. Maximum area is covered with the forests, which act as a very good hotspot of various plants which the tribal use to consume as foods, cuisines, household use and mainly as medicinal plants. The tribal here and also the locals of Jharkhand depend mainly on traditional medicine not only for health care but also for various ailments. This project reports an ethnobotanical study that focused on traditional medicinal plants used by tribal of Jharkhand to treat human diseases.

Keywords: Tribal, Jharkhand, Agriculture, Oraon, Santhals , medicinal plants.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of civilization, people have used plants as medicine. Perhaps as early as Neanderthal man, plants were believed to have healing powers. The earliest recorded uses are found in Babylon circa 1770 B .C Ethnobotany is the study of how people of a particular culture and region make use of indigenous plants. Ethnobotanists explore how plants are used for such things as food, shelter, medicine, clothing, hunting, and religious ceremonies. Ethnobotany is a distinct branch of natural science dealing with various aspects such as agricultural instruments, household implements and several other disciplines. The term "Ethnobotany" was coined by John.W.Harsberger, a botany professor at the University of Pennsylvania in 1895 to indicate plants used by primitive and aboriginal people: From "ethno"- study of people and "botany"- study of plants. It deals with the study and evaluation of plant human relations in all phases and the effect of plant environment on human society. Since time immemorial plants have been used for the treatment of various ailments. Even today several important drugs used in the modern system of medicine are obtained from plants. The use of medicinal plants has figured in several ancient manuscript like the Rig Veda, the Bible, the Iliad, and the history of Herodotus .Traditional medicine is defined as indigenous medicine that is used to maintain health and to prevent, diagnose and treat physical and mental illness differently from allopathic medicine based on theories, beliefs, and experiences. Traditional medicine has been used for thousands of years with great contributions made by practitioners to human health. This project reports an ethnobotanical study that focused on traditional medicinal plants used by tribals of Jharkhand to treat human diseases.

II. HISTORY OF JHARKHAND

Humans have lived since the Stone Age in the area now occupied by the Indian state of Jharkhand. Copper tools from the Chalcolithic period have been discovered. This area entered the Iron Age during the mid-2nd millennium BCE. According to writers, there was already a distinct geo political, cultural entity called Jharkhand even before the Magadha Empire. The region came under control of the Maurya Empire and much later (17th century) was later conquered by Mughal emperors Jahangir and Aurangzeb.

a) **Prehistoric Era** – Stone tools and Microliths have been discovered from Chota Nagpur plateau region which are from mesolithic and Neolithic period. There are ancient cave paintings in Hazaribagh district which are from Meso-Chalcolithic Period (9,000-5,000 BC). There is a group of megaliths found close to Barkagaon that is about 25 km from Hazaribagh at Punkri Barwadih, which has been proven to date back to beyond 3000 BCE.

b) **Early Modern Period** – In Akbarnama the region of Chota Nagpur is described as Jharkhand (Jangal Pradesh). During the Mughal period the Jharkhand was known as khukhra, was famous for its diamond. Till the reign of Akbar, Chota Nagpur had not come under the suzerainty of the Mughals and the Nagvanshi rulers had been ruling over this reign as independent rulers. By the advent of reign of Jahangir, Nagvanshi Raja Durjan Sal had come to power in Chota Nagpur. By order of Jahangir Ibrahim Khan attack kokhra. There was also another reason behind the invasion. This was acquisition of the diamonds found in the bed of Sankh River in the region.

c) **British Raj** – After the Indian rebellion of 1857, the rule of the British east India company was transferred to the crown in the person of queen Victoria, who, in 1876, was proclaimed empress of India. Between 1895 – 1900, a movement against the British raj was led by Birsa Munda (born 15 november 1875). In 1914 the Tana Bhagat resistance movement started, which gained the participation of more than 26,000 aadivasis, and eventually merged with Mahatma Gandhi satyagraha and civil disobedience movement .

d) **Post-Independence**:- After Indian independence in 1947, the rulers of the states all the states all choose to accede to the dominion of India. On 15 November 2000 Jharkhand was formed becoming 28th state of India with 18 district.

III. TRIBALS IN JHARKHAND

The tribes of Jharkhand consists of 32 tribes inhabiting the Jharkhand state in India. The tribes in Jharkhand were originally classified on the basis of their cultural types by the Indian Anthropologist, Lalita Prasad Vidyarthi . His classification was as follows:-

- Hunter gatherer type – Birhor, Korwa, hill Kharia.
- Shifting agriculture - Sauria Paharia.
- Simple artisans - Mahli, Lohra, Karmali, Chik Baraik.
- Settled agriculturist – Santhal, Munda, Oraon, ho, Bhumij.

The Scheduled Tribe (ST) population of Jharkhand State is as per 2001 census 7,087,068 constituting 26.3 percent of the total population (26,945,829) of the state. The Scheduled Tribes are primarily rural as 91.7 percent of them reside in villages. .Jharkhand has 32 tribal groups:

Munda

- Kol
- Banjara
- Birjia
- Karmali
- Korwa
- Sauria-Paharia
- Santhal
- Kanwar
- Bathudi
- Chero
- Kharwar
- Lohra
- Bhumij
- Oraon
- Savar
- Bedla
- Chick-Baraik
- Khond
- Mahli
- Kharia
- Asur
- Bhinjhia
- Gorait
- Kisan
- Mal-Paharia
- Gond
- Baiga
- Birhor
- Ho
- Kora
- Parhaiya



IV. FESTIVALS OF JHARKHAND

1. SARHUL - Sarhul is celebrated during spring season and the Sal (*Shorea robusta*) tree get new flowers on their branches. It is a worship of the village deity who is considered to be the protector of the tribes. The village priest or Pahan fasts for a couple of day. At the Pooja, Pahan offers three young roosters of different colors to the one for the almighty god i.e. the Singbonga or Dharmesh, as the Mundas, Ho and Oraons respectively address him; another for the village deities and the third for the ancestors. The Pahan offers saal flowers to her wife and villagers. These flowers represent the brotherhood and friendship among villagers and Pahan the priest, distributes saal flowers to every villager. He also puts Saal flowers on every house's roof which is called "phool khonsi". At a same time Prasad, a rice made beer called handia, is distributed among the villagers and the whole village celebrate with singing and dancing this festival of Sarhul. It goes on for weeks in this region of Chotanagpur.

2. KARMA - Karma is held on the 11th day of the phase of moon in bhadra month. The youth of villages get together in the forest where they dance, sing and collect fruits and flowers for the worship of the deity known as karma Devta. The entire plateau sounds with dance of damsel, song of spirit and joy of juvenilia. It is indeed rare example of such a vital and vibrant youth festival.

3. SOHRAI - Sohrai is a cattle festival of Jharkhand. It is celebrated during the Amavasya of the month of Kartik. It coincides with the Diwali festival. People fast throughout the day, and bathe their cattle. In the evening, sacrifices are offered to the cattle deity.

4. PHAGUWA - Phagwa or Holi, is the spring festival which falls in the month of Phalgun. In spring, people collect Sal flower blossoms and place them on their roofs. There are special songs and dances for this festival.

5. TUSU PARAB - On the last day of Poush month, people of Bundu, Tamar, and Raidh in Jharkhand, celebrate the harvest festival or Tusu Parab. It is also a festival in which unmarried girls engage in singing and dancing. Their simplicity and end enjoyment of the simple joys of life are certainly worth watching.

7. HAI PUNHYA - It is the festival that marks the beginning of the fall and winter. As the first day of magh month, it ushers the beginning of ploughing. The farmers start the festival celebrations through ploughing a section of their land and mark the auspicious beginning of this season. Indeed a festival of happiness and prosperity and feature among the most awaited festivals in Jharkhand.

V. CULTURE

Many treasures of relatively new state of Jharkhand situated in the chotanagpur plateau is still less known to most of the people. The journey of their life is reflected in the rhythm of the different tribal and folk dances of the state. Many rivers like damodar, brahmi, karkhi & subarnrekha, flow gently adding to the natural charm of Jharkhand. As the tribal communities gave up their gypsy life styles, they began clearing forest for settlement. The Indian state of Jharkhand is located in the eastern part of country and is known for its distinct paintings, traditions & festivals.

a) LANGUAGE

Although Hindi is official language of Jharkhand there are many languages spoken by tribal. The regional language that belongs to Indo-Aryan branch in Jharkhand, there are khortha, nagpuri and kudmali spoken by sadan. The language that belongs to Austroasiatic branch are Mundari by Mundas, Santhali by Santhals, and Ho. The languages that belong to the Dravidian language family are Kurukh by Oraon, Malto/Paharias

b) HOUSE INFRASTRUCTURE

Adivasi's of Jharkhand are not much social, they feel comfortable within their tribal society .they usually live in joint family. Generally the 1st room is drawing room including a side kitchen consisting of stove (known as chulha) where food is cooked with the help of woods, twigs, and leaves collected by them



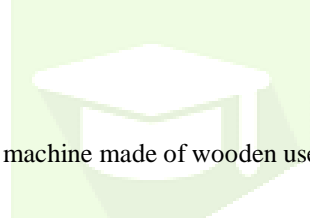
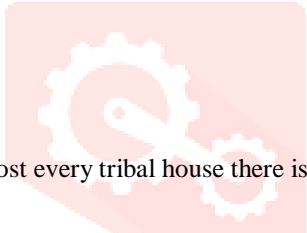
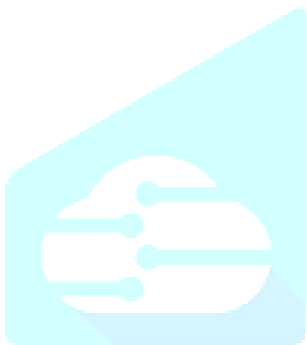
The mattresses used in bed is generally made of straw. Courtyard is common in every tribal house which is meant for their dancing, singing , for drying lentils , woods etc.



House must contain a store room where the grains are kept after cultivation and harvesting. The tribal who domesticate cattle a separate rooms are made for them. Generally hen, goat, cows, bulls are kept as domestic animal for their food consumption i.e. eggs, milk, meat and farming.



They also use to store dry leaves, twigs and woods for their burning and cooking purpose. Houses are made of bricks, straw and mud and upper shade is made of asbestos or khapra .



At almost every tribal house there is a machine made of wooden used to crush the rice grain into flour which is known as dheki.



VI. JHARKHAND'S CUISINE

Jharkhand cuisine encompasses the cuisine of Indian state of Jharkhand. Staple food of Jharkhand are rice, dal, vegetable and tubers. Common meals often consists of vegetables that are cooked in various ways, such as curried, fried, roasted, and boiled. Traditional dishes of Jharkhand may not be available at restaurants .However, on a visit to local village, one can get a chance to taste such exotic foods. Some dish preparations may be mild with a low oil and spice content, although pickles and festive dishes may have such characteristics.

a) **RED RICE** - It is not the white polished rice that we are used to seeing but red rice, these have more fibers and contains the best that rice can offer. To be more specific the husk are removed from the rice using the thresher (Dheki) that most houses will have in their backyard. Earthen pots are used to boil the rice and wood fire is used to heat them. Firewood is quite in abundance thus it is the most common source of fuel.

b) **ARHAR DAL /TOOR DAL** - With red rice the most staple dish is arhar dal /toor dal (pigeon pea).most of the families does not have the luxury to have another side dish thus rice and daal are the most common food that is consumed .pigeon pea is scientifically known as *Cajanus cajan*.

c) **MUNGA SAAG** - Chotanagpur region is mostly covered in forest with some patches of cultivating the land. Though vegetables are grown in these cultivating land but the production is usually sold in the wholesale markets. Thus, the local does not usually get to eat what we eat. The best example would be that of munga saag (Drumstick-*Moringa oleifera*), the leaves, flower as well as its fruit is consumed by washing , then smashing &then cooking.

d) **KOINAAR SAAG** - There is also the Koinaar saag (*Phanera variegata*), similarly like drumstick both the leaves and flowers are eaten.

e) **SANAI FLOWER** - Sanai flower are also fried and eaten along with rice. These are actually flowers of jute (*Chorchorus*) plant.

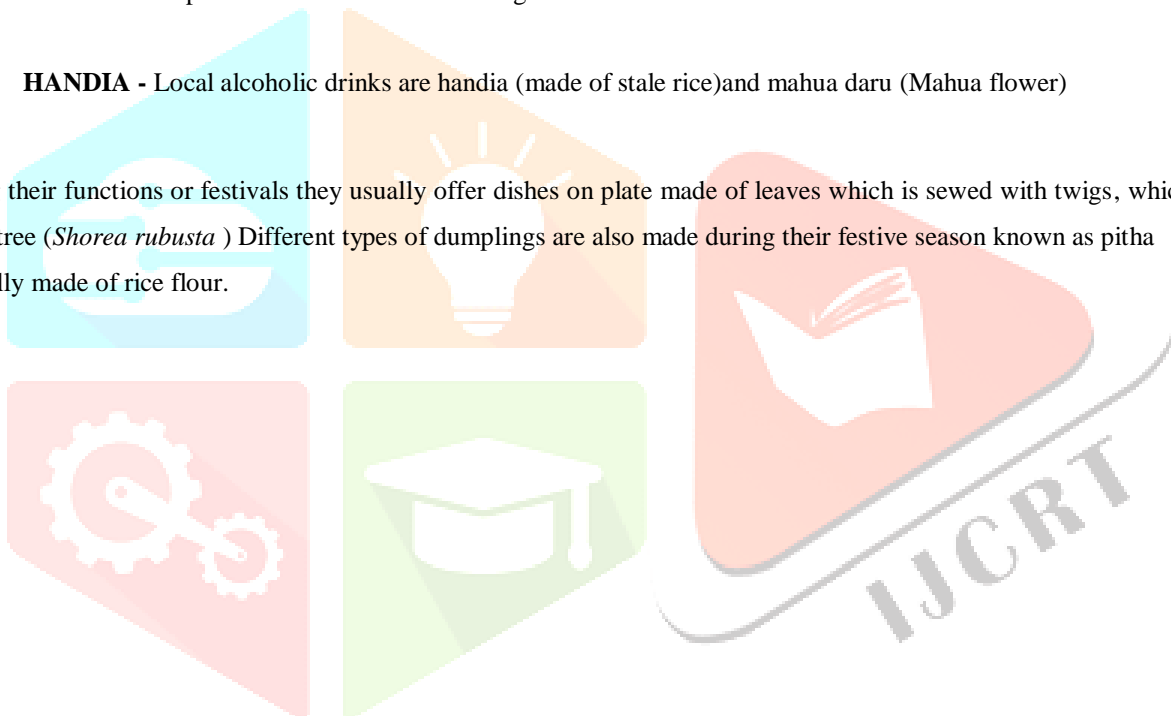
f) **BAMBOO SHOOT PICKLE** - Another interesting side dish is bamboo shoot pickle. It is only a misconception that bamboo is only popular in northeastern part of country but it is also quite famous in Jharkhand .it seems that tribal love the bamboo shoot pickle which has been marinated in various spices and then left in the sun to dry

g) **RED ANT CHUTNEY** - During the season the locals like a good dollop of this chutney with their rice. It is made by mashing the egg, Larvae & adult of an ant which is very sour in taste.

h) **ARU** - It is a potato that grows on the tree, locally known as the Aru (*Dioscorea Bulbifera*) is from the yam family and grows in quite an abundance in some regions these are boiled and made a curry and eaten along with rice .

- i) **Marwa** - Marwa which most of us know by the name of Ragi or Finger Millet (*Eleusine Coracana*).these are used in making flat breads as well as used in baking also.
- j) **Dhuska** - Dhuska is most common snack, these are made of wet ground Rice and Chana Daal (chickpea) .the wet mix is then deep fried and eaten along with potato or meat curry .
- k) **TRIBAL NON-VEG** - Finally coming to the non -veg part, we all know pork is the favorite meat and when cooked with right spices it's amazing. And the other one is puti fish (*Puntius Sopheore*) tribal use to catch it directly from river /pond and they sell it fresh in the market.
- l) **ARSA** - Jharkhand is famous for its Arsa, this snack is more prominent in the villages of eastern india, made with rice flour, coconut, fennel seeds, etc. These comes in 2 varieties one made with white sugar and the other made with jaggery. The mixed concussion is deep fried in oil and served to the guests
- m) **HANDIA** - Local alcoholic drinks are handia (made of stale rice)and mahua daru (Mahua flower)

During their functions or festivals they usually offer dishes on plate made of leaves which is sewed with twigs, which is made of Sal tree (*Shorea rubusta*) Different types of dumplings are also made during their festive season known as pitha generally made of rice flour.



VII. DANCE AND MUSIC

Jharkhand traditional costume indicate the state nature, culture and simplicity of the people .Previously the state was part of Bihar but on November 2000 Jharkhand was born as a new state. The Adivasi's of Jharkhand (mundas , santhals and oraon)are born dancers and singers . Their songs and music are joyous and depict the festive spirit that prevails whenever there is an occasion for people to get together. The indigenous musical instruments and the traditional tribal costume and jewelry worn by the dancers, add to the beauty of the dance.

- a) **PAIKA** - The Munda community of Jharkhand performs the Paika dance. It is a stylized representation of the rituals connected with the preparation of war. The dancers hold bows, arrow, spears, swords, and shields and dance is, in fact a stylized worship of arms. The dancers display their skills in handling the sword and shield. Previously the dance was performed to welcome guests, but nowadays it is also performed to welcome guests.
- b) **HUNTA DANCE** - The hunting dance of santhals who live in the hilly plateaus of the Chotanagpur region of the santhal parganas of Jharkhand is known as hunta dance.
- c) **MUNDARI DANCE** - The Mundari dance is a very common and popular dance of the Mundas. This dance is generally performed to celebrate the newlyweds. The Mundas songs are often mixed with other tribal songs in such a way, that one can rarely identify the pure Mundari elements in their songs.
- d) **BARAO DANCE** - The richness and variety of the barao dance and music is remarkable. The Oraon community of the state, who are mainly concentrated in the Hazaribagh , Gumla area, performs this dance. Every village has akhara (dancing stage) in which in the month of April and may all groups of the village organize a jatra (small fair) or dance festival.
- e) **JHUMAR** - The santhal community mainly performs the jhumar dance .it is a traditional dance of the tribal women of Jharkhand performed mainly during the period of cultivation in the rainy season .this is time of year when every member of tribal community is hopeful of a good harvest. Actually, there is no fixed season for this dance form , it is performed throughout the year , to mark all the happy occasions and festivities.
- f) **DOMKACH** - The domkach is a distinctive folk dance of the chotanagpur area of Jharkhand. The women of the bride groom family performs this ceremonial dance after leaving for the Bride's house. Through this dance they keep themselves awake and entertained. Moving in circles, they poke fun at each other and crack jokes through their satiric songs.
- g) **SERAIKELLA CHHAU** - The seraikella chhau is one of the three chhau dance form prevailing in eastern India, chhau dance is an art form , which combines popular appeal with sophistication.

VIII. TRIBES

a) SANTHAL TRIBE

i. Religion:-

In the santhal religion , the majority of reverence falls on court of spirit (Bonga) , who handle different aspect of the world and who are placated with prayers and offerings in the order to ward off evil influence. These sprits operate at the village, household , ancestor , and sub clan level, along with evil spirit that cause disease and can inhabit village boundaries , mountains, water , tigers, and the forest.

Sacred groove - A characteristic feature of Santhal village is a sacred groove known as jaher the edge of the village where it is believed that many spirits live and where series of annual festivals take place.

ii. Dress :-



Fig: A .Tribal dress of Santhali women



B. Tribal dress of santhali men

iii.Marriage:-

In marriage bride wears a yellow cotton sari which is generally dyed with turmeric and groom wears Dhoti-kurta and Pagri (Turban). Bride is made to sit in tokri (Basket) and her face is hidden with dupatta .In dowry Groom family offer cattle as gift to Bride family.

iv.Main cuisine:--

dal pitha, patra pitha, dumbu pitha

v. Festival :-

Sohrai (main festival), Baha, Karam, Dansai, Sakrat, Mahmore , Rhundo, Magsim.

vi. Language :-

Santhal (ol chiki). Ex. Mother (gogo), father (baba), brother (boyha), sister (dai)

vii. Famous personalities –

- Tom Murmu (Music artist)
- Draupadi Murmu (9th governor of Jharkhand)
- Hemant Soren (9th & 11th Chief Minister of Jharkhand)

b) ORAON

The Kurukh or oroan are an ethnic group inhabiting in indian states of Jharkhand, Orissa and Chhattisgarh. They predominantly speak Kurukh as their native language, which belongs to the the dravidian language family.

i. Origin - According to indian Anthropological society, Konkan is said to be the original home of the Kurukh tribes from where they migrated to Northern India. A Kurukh substratum is very prominent in th eKonkani language.

ii. Festival - karma , sarhul , jatra , jani shikaar

iii. Food - Maar bhaat (rice water), sukti (dried vegetables), gulgula, dumbu, hariya (kind of drink made of stale rice)

iv. Dress -



Tribal dress of Kurukh women



Tribal dress of Kurukh men

v. Music - Since time immemorial the Oraon people have rich range of folk songs, dance and tales, as well as traditional musical instrument. Both men and women participate in dance, which are performed at social events and festivals. The mandar, nagara and kartal are the main musical instrument. Some Kurukh folk dance, karma dance, kaddi or sarhul dance, phagua,.

IX. USES OF PLANTS

Sacred plants - Jharkhand tribal are known to worship deities with local flowers and tree species. Religious sanctity is attached to trees like Peepal (*Ficus religiosa*), Neem (*Azadirachta indica*), Banyan tree (*Ficus bengalensis*), Bel, Mango (*Mangifera indica*), Asoka (*Sarca asoca*), Tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*) Sarhul and karma are two such example where tribes worship trees over a weeklong festival. Sarhul literary means 'Worship of Sal' Sal tree is the most important tree which is worshipped by Jharkhandi adivaasi.

Sacred grooves - Sacred groove or sacred woods are any groove of trees that are of special religious importance to particular culture. The tribals of Jharkhand worship their sacred groove. 29 sacred grooves have been documented in the state.

Plants used other than worship - There are some plants which are much important than the plants which are worshipped or have medicinal properties. Tribal are mostly dependent on their agriculture. In most of the tribal houses it is the only source of income, mainly they cultivate Paddy, Wheat, Finger millet, Maize and some vegetables. Many dried plants and woods are used as burning fuel in earthen stove while cooking food. Many plants and trees provide timber which is used to make tools and furnitures. Dried palm leaves and bamboo shoots are used for making mats, ornaments, tokri, etc.

Medicinal plants used by tribals are:-

- Aloe (*Aloe vera*)
- Semal (*Bombax ceiba*)
- Palash (*Butea monosperma*)
- Karanj (*Pongamia pinnata*)
- Neem (*Azadirachta indica*)
- Dhatura (*Datura stramonium*)
- Aakwan (*Calotropis procera*)
- Baeng saag (*Bacopa monnieri*)
- Tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*)
- Amla (*Emblica officinalis*)
- Ashoka (*Sarca asoca*)
- Bael (*Aegle marmelos*)
- (*Solanum nigrum*)
- Mexican poppy (*Argemone mexicana*)
- Giloe (*Tinospora cordifolia*)

In some of the houses instead of going to doctors tribal people use medicinal plant because of no cost or there might be a village doctor (vaidya) who treat people by making medicine from plants. They have learnt the various methods and different types of medicines from plant through their ancestors or through their daily experiences. But nowadays tribals are not interested in making these anymore as it is not the source of their income, and also due to increased medical facilities. Now they are much more reliable on doctors instead of vaidya and homemade remedies from plants.

X. PLANTS AND THEIR MEDICINAL VALUE

a. *ANDROGRAPHIS PENICULATA*

It is an herb. It is commonly known as *chirata*. People use the aerial parts to make medicine. Treatment -

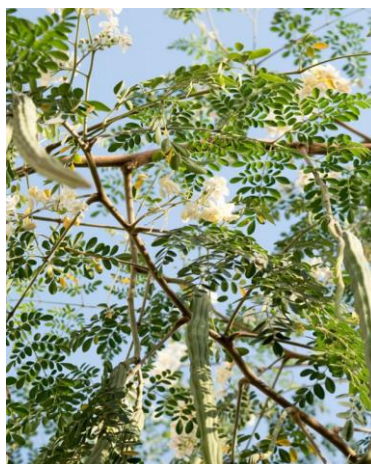
- Poison bites - the leaf of plant is taken and crushed. In mortar a paste is made which is applied on bitten areas.
- Diabetes - The plant is dried in sun. The dried leaf is taken out. It is made into fine powders. Then it is boiled and consumed. It is very bitter in taste. So, it becomes hard for many people to consume.
- Malaria - In India, it has been used for malaria.
- Upset stomach, loss of appetite, intestinal worms, skin diseases some people use it as “bitter tonic”



b. *MORINGA OILEFERA*

It is a tree. It is often called drumstick tree, the miracle tree. Moringa has been used for centuries due to its medicinal properties and health benefits. It also has antifungal, antiviral, antidepressant and anti-inflammatory properties. Its leaf, flower and fruit is consumed as vegetable. Treatment -

- Treating edema - Edema is a painful condition where fluid builds up in specific tissue in the body. The anti-inflammatory properties of moringa may be effective in preventing edema from developing.
- Protecting liver - Moringa appears to protect the liver against damage caused by anti-tubercular drugs and can quicken its repair process.
- Treating stomach complaints- Moringa leaf help to treat some stomach disorder, such as constipation, gastritis, and ulcerative colitis.



c. ZIZYPHUS MAURITIANA

It is a shrub or small tree. It is known as *baer*. Treatment

- Constipation - the fruit of Zizyphus is consumed to reduce symptoms of constipation such as bloating, stomach pain, and difficulty having bowel movement in adults with constipation.
- High cholesterol - Early research shows that taking Zizyphus can lower total cholesterol.
- Neonatal jaundice - Giving Zizyphus to infants with jaundice doesn't seem to reduce level of bilirubin. But zizyphus might shorten the length of time for which the infants need to be hospitalized.



d. CASSIA TORA

it is the wild annual herbal crop known as '*Chakod*' in Jharkhand, distributed throughout tropical and sub-tropical regions of the world. the plant is widely consumed as a potent source of laxative and enlisted in WHO 'List of medicines'. Treatment:-

- The leaves, seed and even root of this plant is found to contain medicinal value through which it helps to cure many skin problems.
- It helps in curing skin problems like ring worm, leprosy, skin infection, etc.
- It is also used to treat liver disorder.
- It also helps in proper functioning of pancreas for insulin secretion.
- The gum powder that is obtained from seeds of cassia tora is called as "panwar gum" in Ayurveda and this gum powder is used for its emulsifying property.



e. CENTELLA ASIATICA

It is a colonial, perennial herbaceous creeper belonging to family Umbelliferae. It is commonly known as 'baeng saag' among tribal. Treatment:-

- The whole plant is used for medicinal purposes. It is widely used as blood purifier as well as for treating high blood pressure, for memory enhancement and promoting longevity.
- The leaf ointment, cream, and gel is applied in wounds which increase the tensile strength of newly formed skin,
- These are found to be effective in treatment of venous hypertension.
- It is also recommended for various skin condition such as leprosy, lupus, varicose ulcers,eczema,psoriasis, diarrhea, fever, amenorrhea, and diseases of the female genitourinary tract.



CONCLUSION

Through this project I came to know the different tribes present in Jharkhand, about their food tradition and culture. How they depend on natural materials instead of artificial. It is superstition that tribal have less knowledge, they might have not been facilitated with their education, but still they know much about the plants and their uses. Ethnobotany is not only avenue for new drug discovery, nor the only source of models for conservation, but the body of knowledge. It can be concluded by saying that the division created by expanding economies and advancing technologies has served to separate the demand for natural products or traditional knowledge from the protection of their source. There is still so less known about the biological diversity.

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