

AN ETHNOBOTANICAL STUDY OF THE TRIBALS OF BARWANI DISTRICT OF MADHYA PRADESH

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A B S T R A C T

Ethnobotanical survey of the tribals of Barwani district has been done during 1999 - 2000. In all 18 species belonging to 17 genera and 15 families are reported which are used by the tribal people. The juice of young leaves of *Ficus religiosa* to cure any type of heart disease is of considerable importance and noteworthy.

INTRODUCTION

Barwani district (22°10' N Latitude; 74° 55' E Longitude and 165.50m above msl) is one of the recently formed tribal districts of Madhya Pradesh. Formerly, it was a part of West Nimar district of Madhya Pradesh. The total area of the district is 3,69,639 ha. It is the home of many tribals. Nearly 30% of the population is tribal or forest dwellers. The main tribes of the district are Barela, Tadvi and Bhilala. The fascinating story of the tribal people, their practices, their tradition and the dynamics of their society have attracted sensitive minds like Verrir Elwin who was a great friend of Nehru and a past General President of Indian Science Congress Association. According to him the tribal people must have developed, over the ages, ways to cure various diseases and combat natural disasters which need to be cashed upon so that others can be profited by them.

Although sufficient amount of Ethnobotanical work has been done in India in general and Madhya Pradesh in particular (Jain, 1963; Jain & Tarafdar, 1963; Kaushik, 1983; Mukherjee, 1984; Maheshwari & Dwivedi, 1988; Oomachan & Masih, 1991) but in M.P. it has been mostly limited to the North-East part of the state covering districts like Balaghat, Sidhi, Mandla and allied districts. Some Ethnobotanical work has also been done in West Nimar district (Mahajan, 1990, 1995, 1998). But still there is a wide gap. Hence the present investigation, which deals with the Ethnobotanical study of the tribals of Barwani district of M.P. has been taken up to fill this gap.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present work was done during 1999-2000 in Pati and Bokrata tribal areas. In this connection field work was done in order to collect those plants which are used by the tribals to cure various diseases. The information was gathered from old tribal persons and tribal medicine-man called as 'Barwa'. The plants were identified after consulting the standard literature (Duthie, 1952; Chopra *et al*, 1956; Maheshwari, 1963 and Solanki, 1984). Herbarium sheets are deposited in the Botany Department, Govt. P.G. College, Barwani for record. The following is the list of plants arranged in alphabetical order with their local names their synonyms if any and names of families to which they belong. The plant part used as medicine has also been mentioned.

ENUMERATION OF PLANTS

Achyranthes aspera (Hathijhara) Amaranthaceae. Its leaf juice is applied on forehead in headache while root juice is used in urinary troubles.

Aegle marmelos (Bilwa) Rutaceae. Its fruits are used in dysentery.

Amaranthus spinosus (Kateli chaulai) Amaranthaceae. Its root is used in stomach trouble and skin disease.

Butea monosperma (=B.frondosa) (Khakhra). Papilionaceae. Its seeds are powdered and used with milk and sugar in leucorrhoea, sterility and menopause conditions.

Calotropis procera (Akav) Asclepiadaceae. Its leaves are used in swellings.

Cassia fistula (Amaltas) Caesalpiniaceae. Its fruits are used as purgative.

Cassia tora (Charota) Ceasalpiniaceae. Root paste mixed with lime juice is used in the treatment of ringworm.

Cuscuta reflexa (Amarbel) Convolvulaceae. Plant juice is used in treatment of skin diseases.

Cynodon dactylon (Durba) Poaceae. The plant juice is used in hysteria, insanity, vomiting and in case of irritation in the urinary system.

Euphorbia hirta (Badi dudhi) Euphorbiaceae. The decoction of this plant is used by the tribals to cure dysentery and stomach trouble especially of children.

Ficus religiosa (Peepal) Moraceae. Leaf juice mixed with honey is used successfully to cure any type of heart trouble.

Gynandropsis pentaphylla (= *G. gynandra*) (Hurera) Capparidaceae. Seeds are used to kill intestinal worms.

Ipomoea fistulosa (Tamesar) Convolvulaceae. Fruit paste mixed with latex of *Calotropis* is applied over dog-bite wound.

Moringa oleifera (Sarjana) Moringaceae. Its tender flowers and fruits are used in killing intestinal worms and also in the treatment of articular joints.

Ocimum basilicum (Ban Tulsi) Lamiaceae. Its leaves are used in cold and cough and also in chronic fever.

Peristrophe bicalyculata (Pitpapra) Acanthaceae. The plant paste is applied to cure bone fractures.

Solanum xanthocarpum (Bhatkatai) Solanaceae. The decoction of the plant is used to cure cough, asthma and fever.

Tinospora cordifolia (Gulvel) Menispermaceae. The juice of fresh plant is used in urinary troubles especially in stone trouble.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study revealed 18 taxa belonging to 17 genera and 15 families that are used by the tribals in curing various human diseases. Important plant species used by the tribals of Barwani district are *Cassia tora* (Charota), *Ficus religiosa* (Peepal), *Ocimum basilicum* (Tulsi), *Cassia fistula* (Amaltas), *Butea monosperma* (Khakhra), *Moringa oleifera* (Sarjana), *Solanum xanthocarpum* (Bhat katai), *Euphorbia hitra* (Badi dudhi), *Calotropis procera* (Akav), *Cynodon dactylon* (Durba) and *Gynandropsis pentaphylla* (Hurera). If 10g of juice of young leaves of *F. religiosa* is mixed with 20g of honey and given continuously for 21 days daily in early morning, it is very effective for curing the heart patients. If in future the patient dies then the cause of death would never be due to heart diseases but it would be due to some other reason. Further research work in this direction is in progress.

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