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HERBAL MEDICINES AND TRIBALS: A REVIEW

Sociology

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1.1 INTRODUCTION:

India has ancient history of use of plants in the indigenous system of medicine (Ayurveda, Unani, Sidha) in the dates back over 5000 years. Ayurveda records over 8000 herbal remedies. India officially recognizes over 2500 plants as having medicinal value and it has been estimated that over 6000 plants are used in traditional folk and herbal medicines. It is a peculiarity of the tribal life is their holistic herbal medicines. Having lived in harmony with nature for centuries the tribes have identified various herbs which can heal a variety of diseases. This indigenous stream of herbal medicines get increased now-a days and more and more people not only belonging to tribal community but those from the outside civilized world approach the tribal medical expert to take the medicines.

Throughout history, from the Bible, Koran, Vedas and other old texts, the medicinal benefits of herbs are quoted. Herbs have a variety of uses including culinary, medicinal, or in some cases even spiritual usage. General usage differs between culinary herbs and medicinal herbs. In medicinal or spiritual use any of the parts of the plant might be considered "herbs", including leaves, roots, flowers,





seeds, resin, root bark, inner bark (cambium), berries and sometimes the pericarp or other portions of the plant.

1.2 METHODOLOGY :

Statement of the Research Problem :

To Review the available information on Herbal Medicines and Tribals and find out anthropogenic unsustainable activities such as deforestation, habitat destruction, urbanization etc. may pose a serious threat to species and suggest some remedies.

Objectives : 1. To understand the role of Herbal medicines in tribal's life

2. To Study various diseases and medicines used by Tribal.

Data Collection : Data collected from Articles in books and Journals, So Article is Purely based on Secondary Sources.

1.3 A BRIEF REVIEW:

The authors C. R. Sahu*, R.K.Nayak , N .K. Dhal had pointed out the Ethno botanical work in Madhya Pradesh, Guarat and Rajasthan, with regard to the geographical locations, tribal populations and the plant species recognized and utilized for their medicinal potential. The authors highlight the importance of India as a major Asian country in terms of the diversity of systems for the traditional knowledge, a wide variety of species (17,000), including 7,500 as known as medicinal plants, and possessing the oldest and richest cultural traditions associated with the use of traditional folk herbs. The authors C. R. Sahu*, R.K.Nayak , N .K. Dhal extend the working definition of traditional medicines to integrate diverse health practices, knowledge and beliefs, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises applied to maintain well-being, treat, diagnose or prevent illness. They describe the districts and their characteristics, the healers, and the central importance of plants both to traditional medical practices, and more recently, as sources of plant-derived drugs by the pharmaceutical industry. The authors cogently argue and describe how it would be possible to





conserve traditional medicine knowledge, how plants with medicinal and commercial potential value can be identified and how the entire structure of tribal communities, healers and the coming generations could be established as Traditional Medicine Centres by Governments.

According to Biswas and Mukherjee (2003), 70% of the wound healing Ayurvedic drugs are of plant origin, 20% of mineral origin, and the remaining 10% consisting of animal products and these drugs are stated to be effective in different conditions such as *Vrana* (wounds or ulcers), *Nadivrana* (sinuses), *Vidradhi* (abscess), *Visarpa* (erysipelas), *Upadamsha* (syphilitic ulcers), *Vranajakrimi* (maggots in wounds), *Dustavrana* (septic wounds), *Vranashotha* (inflammatory changes of wounds), *Vranavisha* (cellulitis), *Ugravrana* (purulative ulcer), *Netravrana* (hordeolum or styne sepsis), *Pramehapidaka* (diabetic carbuncle), and *Bhagandara* (fistula-in-ano). Sussman (2007) reported that, haemorrhologics, pentoxifylline (*Trental*), other methyl xanthenes, retinoids, phenytoin, prostaglandins, Vitamin A and C, zinc and some growth factors are the drugs which are having the potential of improving the healing of wounds. Also, nitrofurazone ointment is used as a standard drug for comparing the wound healing potential of the extract in the animal studies. Some of the commonly available drugs used in the healing of wounds are, NSAIDs ibuprofen (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug), colchicine, corticosteroids, antiplatelets (aspirin), anticoagulants (heparin), warfarin and vasoconstrictors e.g., nicotine, cocaine and adrenaline (Grey and Harding, 2006).

Our preliminary survey among the Kani tribals in Tirunelveli hills (Ayyanar, 2008) demonstrated that wounds were one of the major problems among these tribals and they prepared herbal medicines with a number of plants to heal wounds. Although some ethnobotanical studies have been accomplished in and around Tirunelveli hills among the tribal people by some earlier researchers (Janaki Ammal and Nagendra Prasad 1984; Nagendra Prasad et al., 1996; Ignacimuthu et al., 1998; Viswanathan et al., 2001; Ayyanar and Ignacimuthu, 2005a, b); no systematic ethnotherapeutic studies have been undertaken to assess the traditional management of wounds. The present study was performed with the aim of producing an inventory of the plants used by traditional healers in Tirunelveli hills to document the traditional therapies practiced for various wound and related injury conditions along with major active compounds and related pharmacological activities of each wound healing plant.





Traditional herbal medicine (THM) is practiced in several parts of the world, specially in Australia, Africa, Bangala desh, Brazil, China, Caribbean States, Europe, Spain, North and South America, Russia, Pacific islands where large ethnic community still live in. History has revealed that most of the people of the world have been using plants, animals, micro -organisms and minerals for treating their illness. A traditional herbal medicine in last one decade has gained importance in various developed countries. One-Third of the American adults, Seventy four percent population of United Kingdom, sixty percent population of the Netherlands and Belgium are now utilizing alternative herbal medicinal therapies (WHO, 1996).

India is blessed with rich and diverse heritage of cultural traditions. These traditions are associated with use of wild plants as medicinal herbs. The use of medicinal herbs is still a tradition adopted by ethnic communities who are living in undulating plains and at foothills of dense forest.

The Central India comprises states like Madhya Pradesh, Chhatisgarh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Jharkhand. The ethnic people of this region are Baiga, Bhariya, Bhil, Gond, Hill korwa, Birhor, Khairwar, Rawat and Sahariyas. They use wide range of wild plants for their health care.

1.4 VARIOUS DIESEASES AND MEDICINES:

1. Fever :

In tribal communities whenever the patient is suffering from fever, the first step taken is to avoid intake of solid food. The patient is given only liquid diet for 1-2 days. The root and tuber decoction of *Asparagus racemosa* Willd (Shatavri) is prepared by the tribal medicine- man and given to patient twice a day of for a period of five to six days. In case of high fever pods of *Cassia tora* Linn. (Charota) are collected and seeds are crushed. The seed extract is boiled and filtered with a piece of cloth and given to patient twice a day for about a week. The stem and bark decoction is prepared of *Bauhinia purpurea* Linn. (Kelor bhaji) and given twice a day to patients for control of intermittent fever and fever with acute body pain. The leaves and stem of *Cuscuta reflexa* Roxb. (Akashbeal) is boiled with water and vapours are inhaled to cure body pain and swellings.





2. Headache:

The tribals prepare paste of several herbal plants and apply them on fore head for obtaining quick relief from severe pain. The paste of *Zingiber officianilis* Ross. (Dry Ginger) is applied on forehead for 2-3-days for relief in headache. The mucilage of leaves *Aloe barbadensis* Mill. (Ghrita Kanwar) is applied on forehead for a week to cure severe headaches. The paste prepared of *Santalum album* Linn.(sandal wood) is also applied to cure headache. A bandage is tied with leaves of *Vitex negunda* Linn. for obtaining relief in pain in the scalp region of forehead.

3. Toothache, Ear ache, Body ache:

The gum of *Pterocarpus marsupium* Roxb. (Bija Sal) is applied in gums to cure toothache. The root extract of *Phoenix sylvestris* (Linn.) Roxb. (Chhind) is also useful in toot ache. The seeds extract of *Terminalia chebula* (Gaertn.) Retz . (Harra) is used to cure wound of gums and bleeding . The twigs of *Azadirachta indica* A. Juss. (Neem) are used as brush to cure toothache. The leaf extract of *Cardiospermum halicacabum* Linn. (Kapal phodi) is applied on ears to cure ear ache.

The leaf paste prepared from *Sida acuta* Burm. .f. (Banmethi) is applied on body to cure body pain.

4. Liver Disorder :

The liver ailments are very common in different tribal pockets. The infection in liver is caused due to contaminated water and food. There is always lack of wells and tube wells in tribal localities. They use to drink water from ponds, river and streams . The viral hepatitis is also common in tribal localities.

To cure liver ailments, tribals collect rhizomes of *Acorus calamus* Linn (Buch) which is dried and powdered and consumed with water. When patients are suffering form jaudice, the leaves of beetle vine and of *Andrographis paniculata* (Burn .f.) Nees (Kiryat) are given to the patients to chew for few days . In case of acute jaundice, patients are asked to chew daily 4-5 fresh leaves of *Phyllanthus niruri* Linn. (jar amla) for 20 -25 days . The same has been found to be very useful in





case of severe jaundice but the patients are asked to chew 4-5 leaves twice a day i.e. once in morning and second time in evening for 40 -45 days. The seeds of *Cassia tora* Linn. (Charota) and leaves of *Azadirachta indica* A. Juss. (Neem) are also chewed to cure liver ailments . Paste of *Cuscuta reflexa* Roxb. (Amarbeal) is prepared and applied on stomach to get relief from liver disorder.

5. Cold, Cough, Bronchitis:

Tribals use many plants for cure of cold, cough and bronchitis. Fruits of *Amaranthus tricolor* Linn. (Arak gandhiri) and *Tamarandus indica* Linn. (Imli) and rhizomes of *Acorus calamus* Linn (Safed Buch) are chewed by tribals for cure of cold and cough. The decoction of *A. calamus* Linn (Safed Buch) rhizome is prepared which is filtered with cloth and half cup of it is given to drink for atleast a fortnight to patients suffering from acute case of bronchitis. The bark decoction of *Acacia catechu* Willd. (Khair) half cup thrice a day for atleast one week is also given to patients suffering from bronchitis.

6. Asthma :

When cold, cough and bronchitis persists for longer period patients suffer from asthma. The paste prepared from rhizome of *Curcuma longa* Linn.(Kali haldi) is applied externally on lungs and affected parts to cure asthma . The flowers of *Calotropis procera* (Willd .) ex. W. Ait (Maddar) and *Calotropis gigantea* (Linn.) R.Br. ex. W.Ait (Aak) are dried , powdered and decoction is prepared . The filtered decoction liquid is given 50 ml thrice a day for atleast fortnight to patient suffering from acute case of asthma. Rhizome of *A. calamus* is also chewed for obtaining relief in asthma. The bark decoction of *Ailanthus excelsa* (Mill.) Swingle (Mahaneem) is also given to patients suffering from chronic stage of asthma.

7. Bone fracture :

The root, stem, tuber and leaves of plants are powdered and paste is prepared by traditional bone setter of tribal community. The same is applied on broken bone portion. For this purpose , the





roots of *Bauhinia purpurea* Linn. (stem) , *Solanum torvum* Swartz (Ringi)and tubers of *Curcuma angustifolia* Roxb. (Tikhur) are powdered and paste is prepared and applied by the tribals.

8. Snake bite and Scorpion Sting :

The tribals roam in dense forest in which various poisonous snakes and scorpion are inhabited. They are affected by snake - bite and scorpion sting . In case of snake bite the traditional herbal healer first tie with a knot a piece of cloth just above the wound so that poison does not move into the entire body with flow of blood. The place of wound is properly cut from all the sided and infested blood is made to ooze out from the human body Then the paste prepared from the herbal plant material and is applied for a week for cure of wounds due to snake bite . Such pastes are prepared from rhizomes, stem, leaves etc. of plant species as per availability in the locality. The paste prepared from rhizome of *A. calamus* Linn. (Safed buch) is applied on wounds in case of snake bite. The stem and bark of *Buchnanian lanzan* Spr. (Achar) is pounced and applied on the inflammation as antidote of snake -bite. Shoot and leaves of *Bombax ceiba* Linn. (Semul) and *Moringa oleifera* Lamk. (Munga) are crushed and paste is prepared . This paste is applied on wounds caused by snake bites.

The roots of *Cieba pentandra* (Linn.) Gratean (Kapok) are crushed and paste is prepared which is applied for 4-5- days for cure of wounds due to scorpion - sting. Similarly paste is prepared from shoot and leaves of *Achyranthus aspera* Linn.(Chirchita)and *Clemone Gynandra* Linn. (Hurhar) and applied at places of scorpion sting for instant healing of wounds. The seed oil of *Madhuca indica* Gmel (Maui) is applied on wounds due to snake - bite and scorpion sting for instant healing.

9. Healing of wounds and Skin infection :

The skin of small children and women of tribal community is normally delicate and sensitive . In case if the skin is exposed due to cut, it gradually filled with mucus and the pain persits on wound. Traditional medicine man of tribals apply latex extracted from leaves, stem of *Argemone mexicana* Linn. (Pilli - Katai) on infected skin for cure and healing of wounds. The root paste of *Argyreia nervosa* (Burm .f.) Boj (Ghabel) is also applied on wounds developed as eruption on skin.





10. Problems for tribal women in urinary infection, menstrual disorder and bowel infection.:

The tribal women are mostly suffering from urinary infection with white discharge in urine . Tribals use root decoction prepared from Bombax ceiba Linn. (Semul) and Curculigo orchioides Gaertn. (Kali musli). This root decoction is filtered by a piece of cloth and 50 ml of this preparation is given to the patient twice a day for a period of 10 -15 days for cure of infection.

The World Health organization (WHO) in 1996 has advised the various nations to take up major initiative on ethnobiological studies on plants being used by tribals for medicinal uses. The traditional healers from India,. Asia, Australia, Pacific, South and North America, Africa are being consulted by ethnobotanical team of WWF and IUCN to collect information on uses of plants by them. (Dr Deepak Acharya and Dr Anshu Shrivastava:2009 :29 to 42)

➤ **According to Traditional Herbs and Medicines :**

11. Lower Blood Sugar –

Gymnema sylvestre is found naturally in central and southern India, where it has been used in traditional Indian medicine for almost two thousand years. It is known as 'gurmar' in ancient Indian texts, a word meaning 'sugar destroyer', which gives an indication of its uses in medicine.

12.Echinacea a Herbal Cure For Immunostimulator :

Echinacea is popularly believed to be an immunostimulator, stimulating the body's non-specific immune system and warding off infections. Echinacea root is the part which has been used historically in European and American herbalism.

13.Herbal Soft Drinks for Combating Sun Stroke Heat Stroke and Loo

The Patalkot valley in Satpuda plateau is abode of Gonds and Bharias tribes. During summer season, temperature of this region reaches up to 45 degree Celsius. At that time for protection from heat the use Herbal Drinks. The Use castor leaves on the Heads, which protects them from heat.





14.General Constipation

Herbal Medicine for General Constipation - Bhumkas (local healers) are treasure of herbal medicinal knowledge. During constant surveys in Patalkot valley, authors came across many herbal practices which are potential as well as tried and tested ones.

15.Roasted Garlic Recipe with Antiviral Powers –

If a little garlic each day keeps the doctor away, what's the best way to get it? Cooked or raw, all forms have health benefits, but raw garlic has the edge. It's simple to add it to a variety of dishes.

16 Aloe Vera Gel : Minor wounds, Laxative,

I remember my Mother grabbing a piece off her aloe Vera plant and applying its gel to a burn or minor wound. The aloe Vera gel comes from the inner portion of the leaves. For pharmaceutical use as a laxative, the aloe juice is taken from the tubules just beneath the outer skin of the leaves.

17.Herbal Formulations for Curing Piles –

Piles, due to irregular life style, has become a common ailment today.

18. Herbs and Anxiety –

A class of herbs called nervines helps to turn off the sympathetic nervous system by gently facilitating the functioning of the parasympathetic nervous system - the part of the nervous system that prompts relaxation - helping us to wind down and come off "high alert".

19.Adapt to Stress with Herbal Adaptogens –

Adaptogens help us to adapt to the environment and withstand the stresses of modern life. The term was first used by Russian N.V. Lazarev in 1947 who defined an adaptogen as a substance meeting three specific criteria: it should cause a minimal disruption to the normal physiological function of the body, it must work by means of a range of chemical, physical and biochemical factors rather than through one specific action and must have an overall effect of normalization, so that no condition is aggravated to improve another.





20. Natural Anxiety Relief Remedies –

During an anxiety attack is not the time to be testing a new anxiety relief remedy. Before an attack occurs, the first step is to understand what natural remedies are available. Most importantly, you want to know their history in terms of effectiveness, as well as any potential safety concerns.

21 Herbs for Womens Health –

When it comes to herbs for women, that is to specifically address women's problems, there are three important medicinal herbs, each of which have a long track record of use and effectiveness.

22.Is Devils Claw the Answer to Inflammation –

Many native African tribes have been using devil's claw for centuries. Found in the Kalahari savannas and Namibian forests of southern Africa, locals use it to treat fevers, blood diseases, dyspepsia and postpartum pain. Additionally, they make an ointment for treating sores, ulcers, and sprains.

➤ **Patakot: Valley of Miraculous herbs and tribal culture –**

Deep in the heart of Central India there is a wild, forest surrounded by sheer, 1,200 foot cliffs. The Patakot forest is so well hidden that people on the outside didn't even know it existed. It is a very special place, rich with plants and animals. The natives who live there know how to collect and grow the plants they need for food, clothing and building their homes.

➤ **Cinnamon Spice for Good Health –**

The aromatic scent of cinnamon is powerful because it makes many people feel warm and fuzzy. The health benefits of cinnamon have taken the backseat in favor of its spice properties. Many health experts claim that a dash of cinnamon can be a way to add flavor to many dishes and at the same time improve one's health in many ways.

➤ **Lower Cholesterol and Boost Liver Function with Ayurvedic Herb Guggul -** Guggul is gum resin that can be used to lower cholesterol and boost your liver function, though it has been used





for thousands of years in India to treat a number of diseases and conditions. However, its mode of action is completely different to that of most other cholesterol lowering agents.

➤ **Chinese Green Tea –**

Dating back more than 4,000 years, Chinese diet green tea has been long revered as a tasty drink that can ward off diseases and improve one's well-being.

➤ **Benefits of Emu Oil – Arthritis**

Through Scientific Studies, Emu Oil is being proven to be amazing in the healing of pain and inflammation caused by Arthritis and many other ailments.

➤ **Vitamins and Herbs for Fighting Infections and Diseases –**

Today, the use of herbal remedies and vitamins to fight infections is commonplace, and the science behind their use is much better understood.

➤ **Herbal Medicine for Liver –** To understand the value of Biodiversity for providing health services through medicinal plant utilization and conservation in the Patalkot valley, systematic ethno-medico-botanical studies have been carried out with the herbal practitioners of the area.

➤ **Dental Diseases -** Tribals in Central India have been using herbs for curing their ailments from time immemorial. Bhumkas of Patalkot treat patients with their herbal expertise. - The tribals in Patalkot believe in magic, witchcraft, and sorcery, along with their many tribal gods and Hindu deities. They believe that the supernatural world contains both good and evil. Their constant fear of the spirits keeps them revolving around a circle of prayers, rituals, offerings, and sacrifices.

➤ **Hair Problems -** Patalkot valley is situated at Chhindwara- Tamia road about 79 km away from Chhindwara. Gonds and Bharias are the main inhabitants of the valley. These tribals still practice herbal medicines. The knowledge of these medicines is age old. For them, use of herbs is the cheapest way for cure of various health disorders.

➤ **Herbal Medicine for Migraine –**





This series of traditional medicines of Gonds and Bharias deals with herbal formulations used by Bhumkas. We aim to bring the Bhumka knowledge on the global platform so that herbal pharma companies find a direction for development of cheaper, safer and eco-friendly medicines. The current article deals with the treatment of Migraine.

➤ **Herbal medicine for Piles –**

Tribals and indigenous people in India are real powerhouse of traditional herbal knowledge. Author Dr Deepak Acharya and Dr Sanjay Pawar have their own experience of working among the tribals of Patakot in central India. These indigenous people have been involved in doing herbal practices from the time immemorial for curing various health disorders.

➤ **Medicine for Hyper Acidity**

Deep in the heart of Central India there is a wild, forest surrounded by sheer, 3000 foot cliffs. The Patakot forest is so well hidden that people on the outside didn't even know it existed.

➤ **Herbal medicine for Brain Tonic**

Major population of Gond and Bharia community reside in Patakot valley where life-supporting facilities are lacking. But they usedherbal medicineslike shatavari, musali as Brain Tonic.

➤ **Medicine for Chronic Fever**

Dr Acharya and friends have extensively documented the indigenous knowledge of the tribals of Patakot. These tribals are experts in curing health disorders. They use herbs in the treatment of various ailments. But, so far, just like so many, biodiversity of Patakot is also threatened.

➤ **Obesity –**

The current series of article deals with a few important practices performed by these tribals. In each of the article, we would discuss one common traditional practice, which is being performed by Gonds and Bharias of Central India.





➤ **Asthma Bronchitis –**

The current article is on herbal medicine for curing Asthma Bronchitis. Tribals collect herbs and prepare medicine by their own. The aim of the current article is to document their knowledge and share it with the modern world. It is advised to take proper guidance from your family doctor before taking this formulation.

Herbal Remedies for Natural Healing - As modern medicine evolved around pharmaceutical concepts, it neglected herbal remedies for years. However now, in many nations, herbal remedies are being re-integrated into mainstream medicine and the Western approach to herbs for healing follows the conventional model of Western medicine.

Benefits of White Tea - Both White tea popularity and research are still in its early stages although it's been produced for over one thousand years (first in China). Early research shows promising effects on its anti-viral/anti-bacterial properties, its protection against skin cell damage, and colon cancer.

1.5 Conclusion :

It has been realized that medicinal herbs are going to play an important role in tribal life. These herbal drugs provide strength to the body organs and stimulates normal functioning. The herbal drugs act selectively and gently without disturbing other system. Whereas, modern medicine affects several metabolic activity in the human system and has side effects which makes body more susceptible to other diseases.

Due to the growing importance of ethno botanical studies, it is necessary to collect the informations about the knowledge of traditional medicines, preserved in tribal and rural communities before it is permanently lost. The anthropogenic unsustainable activities such as deforestation, habitat destruction, urbanization etc. may pose a serious threat to species. Hence, priority should be given to the following three measures.

1. Initiation of conservation action works with appropriate measures involving local participation;





2 Implementation of awareness activities with integrated approach for sustainable development.

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