

Traditional Medicinal Practices among The Sri Vaishnavas of Doddakyanahally Village, Mandya District of Karnataka State

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Abstract

A survey was carried out to study the traditional medicinal practices among the Sri Vaishnavas of Doddakyanahally village of Mandya District of Karnataka State, India. A total of ten plant species that are locally available in the village were reported with the help of an interview schedule among the three Sri Vaishnava families practicing the traditional medicine. The use of the medicines of the plants among the people shows the originality and uniqueness and restoration of importance in traditional medicines. The medicinal plants used by Sri Vaishnavas of Doddakyanahally village are depicted by botanical name, local name, parts used, administration, method of preparation and specific indications of the medicine.

Key words: Traditional medicine, Sri Vaishnavas, health care, medicinal plants

Introduction

The traditional medicines are practiced in our country since time immemorial. These medicinal practices are a part of our culture and this traditional medicine varies from community to community depending on the geographical area. India, a land known to be wealthy in traditional knowledge originates about 85% of the traditional medicines from plants in rural India that are used for health care³. In India, it is reported that approximately 8000 of 17209 different plants have high medicinal values in treating a range of communicable and non communicable diseases⁴. India is one of the twelve megabiodiversity countries of the Globe having rich vegetation with a wide variety of plants with medicinal value¹⁰. There are over 45,000 species of vascular plants reported from India, of which, the folk medicine system use about 5000 plant species with about 25,000 formulations to treat various ailments. The classical indigenous systems of Indian medicines prescribe 10,000 designated formulations¹². Several local and indigenous populations meet their ends from the practice of traditional medicines even in present day scenario⁸. Herbal medicines are found to be safer to a large extent and provide evidence in the treatment of various health problems⁹. Dependency on plants for food, medicines, fodder and fuel by rural people is well known fact, but they have developed system of storing and fostering plants that can be called world's essential habitation⁵. Medicinal plants have contributed significantly to the health care practices of rural and tribal people. It is important to note that most of the population believes in traditional medicinal practices for health care even today. Although some traditional healers are still practicing the traditional medicines as a system of health care, the knowledge is gradually being lost². Though, centuries old experience could not be perfectly documented due to the lack of literacy and it had rather descended from one generation to another as a domestic practice¹¹. It is important to conserve the knowledge of biological resources and their utilization through ethnobotanical studies⁶. The survey was carried out to provide an account of these plants having medicinal value in order to conserve and spread the knowledge of their utilization and cultivation for proper planning and also to collect and prepare database on a variety of aspects of medicinal plants and traditional practices. In this paper, a report has been given on the information gathered on the plants used for treatment of various diseases among Sri Vaishnavas of Doddakyanahally village of Mandya District of Karnataka State, India.

Methods

The survey was conducted among Sri Vaishnavas of Doddakyanahally village of Mandya District of Karnataka State, India. The families were visited to know about their knowledge of traditional medicines, plants, experience in the preparation of medicines, way of acquiring knowledge about medicinal plants and preparation of medicines. The interview schedule was framed in such a way that it

permitted descriptive responses on the plant, such as part of the plant used, medicinal uses, detailed information about mode of preparation (paste, powder, juice etc.), and form of usage either fresh or dried and method of administration. The collected plant species were identified with their botanical name.

Findings

Sri Vaishnavas are basically from Perambalur in Tamil Nadu. They migrated to Karnataka during the reign of the Hoysala King Vishnuvardhana. Alvas founded this religion and Sri Ramanujacharya familiarized this in Karnataka^{1, 7}. Doddakyanahally is located in K. R. Pet taluk, Mandya district of Karnataka State. This village is situated 22kms away from K. R. Pet. Three Sri Vaishnava families with only 30 members are seen in 3000 total population in Doddakyanahally. Traditional medicines are being practiced by these families since 200 years. The family is of Apasthambha suthra Shandilya gothra. The practice is descended from generation to generation in the family. As of now, there are only two members who are practicing these traditional medicines. The family is basically an agricultural family. The traditional medicinal practitioners in the family have education only up to middle schooling. About 30 patients come for treatment weekly. Medicines are given for three days in a week that is Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. People from all most all parts of Karnataka come to them for treatment. Apart from Karnataka people belonging to other cities such as Mumbai and Chennai also visit them to take medicines for various health problems. They are practicing this medicine because of their own good will. Their main motto is to cultivate the medicinal plants in order to continue the traditional methods of treatment. Medicine is given for the treatment of many diseases and health problems, table – 1 shows the list of medicinal plants used for various ailments.

Table – 1 List of medicinal plants used for various ailments

Botanical Name	Common Name (in Kannada)	Parts used	Method of preparation	Administration	Specific indications
Pongamia Pinnata	Hongemara	Barks	Syrup	Oral	Infertility
Euphorbia Antiquorum L.	Jadekalli	Stem and Leaves	Extraction of juice (white in colour)	External application	Skin disease
Caesalpinia bonduc (Callicarpa lantana)	Gejjagagida	Leaves	Powder extraction	External application	Skin disease (Wet Eczema)
Erythrina indica	Parivalamara	Leaves	Powder extraction	External application	
Piper Longum Linn	Hippali	Seeds	Powder extraction	Oral	Cold
Solanum xanthocarpum	Gullsundae	fruit	Paste	Oral	Cough
Argemone mexicana	Datturi Plant	Stem and leaves	Juice	Oral	Menstrual problems
Agave cantala ROXB	Kalnaru	Leaves	Juice	Oral	Menstrual Problems
Terminalia chebula	Aralekayi	Skin of the fruit	powder	Oral	Menstrual Problems
Oxalis corniculata	Hulisoppu	Leaves	Juice	Oral	Stomach ache

Mode of medicine preparation: *Conception: Pongamia Pinnata (Hongemara)* – The medicine is prepared from the bark of this tree. Three pieces of the tree bark measuring 2.5” width and 5.0” length is taken. The bark is crushed and mixed in clean water. This water is filtered with clean white cloth. The filtered water comes up to 300ml. This juice is given to the females during first menstrual cycle day. This 300ml of juice is taken at the time of menstrual period for a year. Strictly, bland diet has to be maintained by the patients.



Pongamia Pinnata (Hongemara)

Dry Eczema: Euphorbia Antiquorum L. (Jadekalli) and blanket made of sheep wool – The milk of this cactus is extracted on one side of woolen blanket and dried. The same method is followed on the other side of the woolen blanket until the milk is thickly spread on the blanket. Later, the blanket is burnt with oil lamp. The ash that comes from blanket is mixed with coconut oil and is applied on the affected areas of the skin. The wound should be washed with soap nut powder before and after applying the ash. It is for external use only.



Euphorbia Antiquorum L. (Jadekalli)



Blanket made of sheep wool

Wet Eczema: Caesalpinia bonduc (Callecarpa lantana) (Gejjagagida) tender stem, Erythrina indica (parivalamara) tender stem and tobacco leaves – all the mentioned leaves and stem have to be crushed and should be mixed well with castor oil in a cup. Boil the mixture and apply on the affected areas of the skin. This is for external use only.

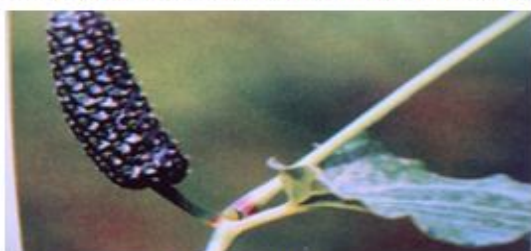


*Caesalpinia bonduc (Callecarpa lantana)
(Gejjagagida)*



Erythrina indica (parivalamara)

Cold: Piper Longum Linn (Hippalibija), cinnamon, clove, pepper and cardamom – The first four ingredients have to be roasted very well in equal measures. The unroasted cardamom should be added and powdered. The powder has to be given to eat along with honey in a particular proportion. This has to be taken twice a day in the morning and evening.



Piper Longum Linn (Hippalibija)

Cough: Solanum xanthocarpum (Gullsondae fruit), pepper, Cumin, tamarind and salt to taste – A paste has to be prepared and eaten in a small proportion until the cough is controlled.



Solanum xanthocarpum (Gullsondae fruit)

White Discharge and Bleeding for women: Argemone mexicana (Dhathuri Plant), Almond (Badam), sugar block, Agave cantala ROXB (kalnaru) and cardamom – Three tender stems with five leaves of Argemone mexicana (Dhathuri plant) should be grinded with 250ml of milk. Further, 150gm of sugar blocks, 50gm of Agave cantala ROXB (Kalnaru), three Almonds (badam seeds) and three cardamoms with out skin should be grinded along with Argemone mexicana (Dhathuri) and milk mixture. After filtering, the juice should be given to the patient in empty stomach. When the juice is given a bland diet has to be maintained strictly for 10 days. The juice that has been made should not be stored. The juice has to be prepared each day freshly and should be taken for three consecutive days.

Terminalia chebula (Aralekayi) – The skin of Terminalia chebula (Aralekayi) has to be dried and powdered. The powder should be mixed with jaggery and should be crushed until it becomes a hard ball in the size of a small finger. Small tablets are made out of it. Daily two tablets morning and evening should be taken for 48 days. These tablets should be taken after three days of consuming Argemone mexicana (Dhathuri) and milk mixture juice for three days. After completion of 10 days bland diet the patient can use normal diet with soft food until 48 days.



Argemone mexicana (Dhathuri Plant)



Terminalia chebula (Aralekayi)



Small tablets made of Terminalia chebula (Aralekayi) and Jaggery

Stomach-ache: Oxalis corniculata (Hulisoppu) – It is given for stomach-ache. The juice is extracted after grinding the leaves and stems of the plant and taken for 3 days in the morning only.



Oxalis corniculata (Hulisoppu)

Conclusion

The present survey revealed that traditional medicines and plants are still fundamental in the health care practices of the people. In recent times this culture is slowly losing its importance showing possibility of losing this wealth of knowledge in the near future due to lack of interest among the younger generation because of socio-economic changes, lack of encouragement and economic upliftment of these practitioners. The investigation reveals that there is a need for further explorations so that the proper uses of these medicinal plants are propagated. Further, the rich heritage and knowledge of the traditional medicines among the rural and tribal people should be conserved and supported to sustain by establishing industries to process and collect the plant/herbal medicines, so that the younger generation will learn and gain insight into these traditional medicines and avoid the erosion of values of traditional medicines.

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