

Ethno medicinal practices against common ailments among the inhabitants of Ratua block of Malda district

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Abstract

An ethno-botanical survey was conducted in the Ratua block of Malda district of West Bengal to gather information and necessary knowledge regarding the medicinal practices of the inhabitants of that area who are far away from the medical facilities of hospitals. The natives of these area practices an age old tradition of folk medicine to cure a wide array of diseases and ailments in daily life. The present study encompass diverse medicinally important plants used by the rural inhabitants of 5 different villages in Ratua block of Malda.

Key words : Malda, ethno medicine, Ratua, ailments, folk medicine.

Ethno medicine is the area of anthropology that studies different societies in relation to their health including how people think and interact regarding their illness and well-being. The basic goal of studying ethno medicine is to examine the health related theories and knowledge that people inherit and learn by living in a culture. The relationship between man and the environment in general has never been static. But this is not the case with tribal or natives communities who have remained almost undisturbed and static for ancient traditions and cultural heritage. Use of ethnobotanical information in medicinal plants research has gained considerable attention in segments of the science

community. The plant based traditional medicine system plays a very essential role in human health care⁶. Chandel *et al.*,² reported that nearly 70% of the Indian population depends on herbal medicines for various ailments. Almost all the developing countries have greater value of traditional healing treatments these days. According to Sur⁴, there are two levels of medicine system in India, the first one is classical well documented system of Ayurveda, Siddha and the other is folk medicine of system which is information shared that exists in communities. Such informations are generally passed orally from generation to generation and this folk system has survived for thousands of years because

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of their common use with cultural beliefs¹.

The present investigation was focused at Ratua block of Malda district situated in the state of West Bengal. The district lies between 24°40' 20" N to 25°32' 08" N Latitude and 87°45' 50" E to 88°28'10" E Longitude, covering an area of 3733 sq km. The area is surrounded by Bangladesh and South Dinajpur in the east, Jharkhand state in the west, Uttar Dinajpur in the north and Murshidabad in the South. The district can be divided into two broad zones namely 'Rarh' and 'Barind' region. 88% of the tribal population concentrated in the Barind area³. The district comprised mainly 38 sub-communities, of which Santala, Oraon, Mores, Mundas and Malpaharias are main tribal communities. The climate of the study area remains hot and sultry during summer with annual rainfall. The district has floristically rich

vegetation with a number of fresh water bodies that are distributed uniformly throughout the district.

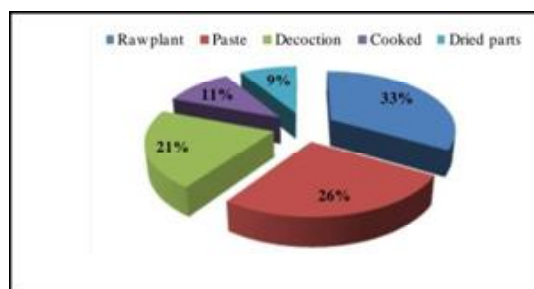
Informations regarding ethnomedicinal practices were collected from the traditional medicinal practitioners (Kobrej) or resource persons (Kwack) in five villages during the months of June & July 2022 from Ratua through direct interviews/oral conversations. Field data sheet was prepared to record plant details and the plants were identified using standard herbarium and literatures. Information on local name of plant, plant parts used for curing, mode of preparations, any other plants/agents used as ingredients, modes of administration etc. were recorded. The information regarding 21 medicinally important plants were gathered which are depicted in the table-1 given below-

Table-1. List of plants commonly used by inhabitants of Ratua block of Malda district along with their uses

Local name	Plant's name	Family	Parts used	Uses
Atheshwe r	<i>Glycosmis pentaphylla</i> (Retz.)	Rutaceae	Stem, Leaf	Treatment of sprained bone, to cure hair line fracture
Kalmegh	<i>Andrographis paniculata</i> (Burm. f.) Wall. ex Nees	Acanthaceae	Leaf, Root	Cures cough and cold, reduce stomach pain.
Basak	<i>Justicia adhatoda</i> L.	Acanthaceae	Leaf	Acts as a bronchodialotor, removes constipation, reduces stomach pain.
Neem	<i>Azadirachta indica</i> A. Juss.	Meliaceae	Stem, leaf, bark	Decoction of the leaf is administered to pateints suffering from Diabetes Mellitus, used as an antiseptic against serious wounds, used in treating sore gums and for washing teeth.

Arhar	<i>Cajanus cajan</i> L.	Leguminosae	Leaf	Leaf decoction are effective in case of patients suffering from obstructive jaundice
Junjunia	<i>Senna sophera</i> (L.) Roxb.	Leguminosae	Leaf, Root	Helps in treatment of patients suffereing from acute pain, cures joint pain.
Tentul	<i>Tamarindus indica</i> L.	Leguminosae	Fruit	Used to control serum glucose level in patients suffereing from diabetes, restores homeotic balance in patients.
Ghagra	<i>Vigna unguiculata</i> (L.) Walp.	Leguminosae	Fruit	Used in treatment of menstrual cycle related problems in women, reduces vaginal discomfort in periodic discharge.
Pepe	<i>Carica papaya</i> L.	Caricaceae	Fruit, Latex	Latex is effective in treating patients suffering from eczema, also fruit is administered orally to treat common liver realted problems.
Nayantara	<i>Catharanthus roseus</i> Linn	Apocya-naceae	Leaf	The decoction of leaf shows anti helminthic property. Used to lower glucose and cholesterol level in patients suffereing from diabetes.
Thankuni	<i>Centella asiatica</i> (L.)	Apiaceae	Leaf	Used to cure amoebic dysentery and also helps to reduce stomach ache.
Dhone pata	<i>Coriandrum sativum</i> L.	Apiaceae	Whole plant	It is used in treatment of indigestion and cures gastric related problems.
Telkuch	<i>Coccinia grandis</i> L.	Cucurbitaceae	Root	The bark of the root is used to treat the rheumatoid arthritis and joint pain among elderly persons.
Narkel	<i>Cocos nucifera</i> L.	Arecaceae	Fruit	Effective to remove kidney stones, also used in curing acne as well as skin spots.
Dhutra	<i>Datura stramonium</i> L.	Solanaceae	Root, Leaf	The leaf decoction is effective for releiving ear pain, also effective in treatment of stomach pain.
Monñosa	<i>Euphorbia hirta</i> L.	Euphorbiaceae	Whole plant, Latex, Leaf	It is used as primary aid against snake bite. The latex is effective

				in case of eczema and related skin disorders.
Dumur	<i>Ficus racemosa</i> L.	Moraceae	Fruit	Useful for treatment of asthma, cures menstrual related problems in females, acts as hematonics and removes weakness.
Sojne	<i>Moringa oleifera</i> Lam.	Moringaceae	Leaf, Bark, Roots	Snake repellent, reduce pain in legs and arms, effective against headache, reduce blood pressure.
Amla	<i>Phyllanthus emblica</i> L.	Phyllanthaceae	Fruit	Dried fruits are effective for curing gastric ulcers and to cure acute acidosis.
Halud	<i>Curcuma longa</i> L.	Zingiberaceae	Root	The paste of the root is a potent antiseptic and is used to cure sore wounds, mixed with lime to cure muscular spasms. The powder of the root is effective against cough and cold



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