

SOME COMMON PLANTS IN UNCOMMON USES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

There are still large number of species being employed by rural masses whose records of exploitation is not exhaustively available in the published literature. The authors have collected data on uncommon uses reported in Newspapers and from other indigenous resources which are presented in this paper.

INTRODUCTION

Ethnobotany, is the study of the use of plant material by tribals and villagers and this has gained tremendous importance in the present times due to the importance of the potential plants that are getting lost due to the alleopathic medicine making inroads in tribal culture. The adverse effects of antibiotics and various other synthetic drugs on human beings is very well known throughout the world and thus the search of newer sources of plant material for the treatment of human diseases has become almost the necessity. The authors for the last few years have been collecting data on plants being exploited by villagers from the villages and published reports in the Newspapers. Some of the areas are so interesting that the plants can be used in case of emergency for difficult diseases. More exhaustive search for alternative plant material for a single disease is useful as the man is a product of nature like plants. Therefore one species may be found useful in one case may not be effective in the other's case. In this paper therefore authors have presented the most of the uncommon uses of plants for effective treatment in various diseases and in day to day life's requirements. This paper deals

with 38 species with their trade name, family, botanical name, uses and the methods employed in using the material besides their distribution in India. Such uses are most commonly recorded from North and East Indian regions. Some of the uses of plants have also been put to commercial exploitation like "Mehndi" (*Lawsonia inermis*) whose extract is used in Himani Cold anti-septic cream but hardly employed by masses in skin diseases.

Achyranthes aspera L. (Amarantaceae)

Vern. : **Apang.**

Distribution : A weedy herb or under-shrub in all provinces of India upto 3000 ft. of way sides and in coastal areas.

Uses : In wounds.

Agave sisalana Perr. (Amaryllidaceae)

Vern. : **Sisal.**

Distribution : Xerophytic perennial found in Assam, Bihar, West Bengal, Maharashtra and South India.

Uses : Wax obtained from sisal is used as a substitute for carnauba wax for polishing shoes, cars etc.

Allium cepa L. (Liliaceae)

Vern. : **Piyanj.**

Distribution : Largely cultivated.

Uses : Antidote for scorpion sting.

Allium sativum L. (Liliaceae)

Vern. : **Lasun.**

Distribution : Native to Central Asia, widely cultivated in India.

Uses : Reduces blood-cholesterol, cures gastric troubles, controls blood-pressure, heart disease and long lasting cough, prevents weight gain, purifies blood, useful in rheumatism, arthritis, backache and facial paralysis. The Vallabh Bhai Patel chest Institute in Delhi has found that garlic also contains a substance which is active against tuberculosis bacilli.

Amaranthus spinosus L. (Amaranthaceae)

Vern. : **Kanta-netey.**

Distribution : Found in cultivated fields, waste places and along roadsides.

Uses : In diarrhoea.

Angelica glauca Edgw. (Umbelliferae)

Vern. : **Chora.**

Distribution : Western Himalayas, Kashmir to Simla (8,000 to 10,000).

Uses : Good cordial, stimulant, useful in flatulence and dyspepsia ; aromatic plant in flavouring curries.

Anogeissus latifolia Wall. (Combretaceae)

Vern. : **Gum-ghutti.**

Distribution : Deciduous tree mostly in Central and South India.

Uses : Gum from stem bark known as 'gum-ghutti' is used as substitute of gum acacia in pharma-petroleum and explosive industry.

Artocarpus integrifolia Forst. (Urticaceae)

Vern. : **Kanthal.**

Distribution : Large evergreen cultivated throughout India, mainly in W. Bengal, Bihar and Assam.

Uses : Timber is used for making the image of Gods in Kerala. Green fruits used in curries, ripe fruits are honey flavoured, extremely sweet. Seeds are also edible.

Azadirachta indica Linn. (Meliaceae)

Vern. : **Neem.**

Distribution : Common throughout India.

Uses : Young stems used as tooth-brush to prevent teeth from infection and pyorrhoea, the boils may get quick relief by bandaging with the pulp of green leaves as poultice, decoction of leaves used as lice repellent. Neem oil is useful in leprosy, the mixture of paste of leaves, green mung and black-pepper (8/10) mixed with 1/2 litre water if taken daily cures piles, warm neem oil used in ear to prevent deafness, dried leaves and flowers if smoked as cigarettes minimise pain in scorpion sting. Black-pepper, mineral salt mixed with double quantity of neem flowers alongwith few drops of honey is used to destroy snake-venom. The leaves, flowers, fruits and barks in equal quantity is made into paste to make about 360 globules, one such globule if used daily for one year keep the hair black. Roasted fruits used in itching.

Bauhinia acuminata L. (Papilionaceae)

Vern. : **Swet-kanchan.**

Distribution : Small ornamental tree indigenous to Central India.

Uses : Leaves in dysmenorrhoea.

Boerhavia repens L. (Nyctaginaceae)

Vern. : **Punarnava.**

Distribution : Throughout India.

Uses : Anti-inflammatory and in urogenital disorders, useful in cough and rheumatism, the juice of the root of *Boerhavia* sp. and Bhringaraj in equal portions used in curing leucorrhoea, leaf juice used in gonorrhoea, useful in eye troubles, root paste with honey applied as 'Surma' along the border of the eye lids removes redness of eyes, and with water applied along the eye-lids removes darkness of eyes, cures constipation and increases blood-volume, root powder with sugar used in dry coughs.

Brassica nigra Koch. (Cruciferae)Vern. : **Sarisha.***Distribution* : Cultivated in various parts of India and Tibet.*Uses* : Rubbing on sole of feet with mustard oil improves eye sight, the paste of black pepper with oil is applied on the spot of dog-bite for palliation, instilling a few drops of warm oil after boiling with garlic relieves ear-ache.**Buchanania lanzan** Spreng (Anacardiaceae)Vern. : **Piyal.***Distribution* : Throughout India in deciduous forests.*Uses* : Seed kernel's paste in water applied on dry skin and face to remove blemishes.**Cajanus cajan** L. (Papilionaceae)Vern. : **Arabar.***Distribution* : Cultivated throughout India.*Uses* : Leaves in diabetes.**Carica papaya** L. (Caricaceae)Vern. : **Papita.***Distribution* : Cultivated chiefly in Assam, Bihar, U.P., Maharashtra, Gujarat and West Bengal.*Uses* : Consumption of green papaya increases lactation.**Carum copticum** Benth. (Umbelliferae)Vern. : **Joan.***Distribution* : Widely cultivated in India.*Uses* : *Joan* with honey is anti-inflammatory, paste of *joan* with water is painted on scrotum in orchitis. *Joan* extract cures pain in chest, liver, spleen, hiccough, vomiting, water-brassing, sour eructation, roaring in abdomen and warm infection, colic pain is relieved by applying hot fomentation with *joan*. Corrhiza is relieved by inhaling *joan*-dust, the paste of *joan* with water is painted twice daily on the spot of eczema, any typeof itching or on burn-spot gives good result. *Joan* oil is useful in such cases also.**Commiphora mukul** (Hook. ex Stocks) Engl. syn. **Balsamodendron mukul** Hook. ex Stocks. (Burseraceae)Vern. : **Guggul.***Distribution* : Mysore, Deccan, Khandesh, Kathiawar, Rajputana desert, Sind and Baluchistan.*Uses* : Reduces blood-cholesterol.**Dioscorea prazeri** Prain & Burkil (Dioscoreaceae)Vern. : **Chupri Alu.***Distribution* : Western parts of E. Himalayas upto 5,000 ft., N. Bihar, N. Bengal, Nepal, Sikkim & Naga hills.*Uses* : Rhizomes used in manufacturing oral contraceptives.**Eichhornia crassipes** Solms (Pontederiaceae)Vern. : **Kachuripana.***Distribution* : All over India.*Uses* : The juice taken twice daily together with a poultice by the pulp of the plant for three months could totally dissolve the swelling in goitre.**Eucalyptus globulosus** Labill (Myrtaceae)Vern. : **Eucalyptus.***Distribution* : Introduced in India.*Uses* : The oil extracted from the plant is used in preparing perfumes and mosquito-repellents.**Gossypium arboreum** L. (Malvaceae)Vern. : **Kapas.***Distribution* : Cultivated all over India.*Uses* : Cotton seeds yielding linters, hulls, oils, soap-stock and cake, leaf paste with mustard oil is applied on the spot of snake bite as first aid.**Hibiscus rosa-sinensis** L. (Malvaceae)Vern. : **Java.**

Distribution : Cultivated throughout India.

Uses : The flowers are used to prevent pregnancy.

Lawsonia inermis L. (Lythraceae)

Vern. : Mehndi.

Distribution : All over India.

Uses : Leaf-paste in water is given in skin diseases and in leprosy.

Mangifera indica Linn. (Anacardiaceae)

Vern. : Am.

Distribution : U.P., Punjab, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, W. Bengal, Tamil Nadu.

Uses : Mango can prevent cancer of colon and other diseases caused by lack of roughage in the diet.

Mantha arvensis L. (Labiatae)

Vern. : Paudina.

Distribution : W. Himalayas, Kashmir, Punjab, Kumaon and Garhwal.

Uses : Yields on extract for mint oil.

Nyctanthes arborescens Linn. (Oleaceae)

Vern. : Harsinghar or Sephali.

Distribution : Small tree cultivated throughout India.

Uses : Leaf paste in water with honey is used in cough and throat irritation.

Ocimum sanctum L. (Labiatae)

Vern. : Tulsi.

Distribution : Grown as a sacred plant and runs wild in waste places throughout India.

Uses : Leaf juice with honey used in throat pain, the paste of leaves and roots in water is given daily in snake-bite., the oil extracted from leaves inhibit the growth of tubercle bacilli.

Piper nigrum Linn. (Piperaceae)

Vern. : Kali mirich or Black pepper.

Distribution : Cultivated in India.

Uses : The paste of black pepper and

tulsi leaves-applied to gums relieves tooth-ache, powdered black pepper and dried ginger mixed with curd used in cough, dry cough is improved by regular use of powdered black pepper with honey, water boiled with powdered black pepper and sugar, cooled, mixed with some honey is taken in warm condition improves corrhiza in cold, fresh cow milk with little ghee and some powdered black pepper is used in headache due to cold, water after boiling with cardamon and (8-10) black pepper is used in chest pain, headache will improve by applying the poultice of the paste of black pepper with veneager on forehead, paste of black pepper with water is applied on the spot of dog-bite for palliation, to an unconcious subject, the dust of black pepper and dried ginger bring its consciousness by inhalation.

Ricinus communis L. (Euphorbiaceae)

Vern. : Arandi.

Distribution : Cultivated mainly in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Orissa.

Uses : The dehydrogenated oil obtained from castor seed is used for making white and pale colour paints and enamels. It is particularly suited for providing white finishes to referigerators, the hydrogenated oil is used in the production of insulating materials, coating composition for paper-textile and leather.

Raphanus sativus L. (Cruciferae)

Vern. : Mula.

Distribution : Herb, cultivated all over India.

Uses : The juice used in urinary complaints (in case of calculi formation).

Rauvolfia serpentina (L.) Benth. ex Kurz (Apocyanaceae)

Vern. : Sarpa-gandha.

Distribution : Throughout warmer parts of India.

Uses : Used as an ingredient of drug for the treatment of hypertension.

Saccharum officinarum L. (Gramineae)

Vern. : **Ganna** (H), **Akh** (B), **Sugarcane** (E).

Distribution : Tall perennial grass in U. P., Bihar, Punjab.

Uses : Wax and alcohols are obtained.

Solanum khasianum C. B. Cl. (Solanaceae)

Vern. : **Katili Mokoi**.

Distribution : Much branched prickly undershrub in the Himalayas, Assam, Khasi hills, W. Bengal and W. Ghats.

Uses : Berries are used in the manufacture of oral-contraceptives.

Syzygium aromaticum (L.) Merr & Perry (Myrtaceae)

Vern. : **Lavanga** (B), **Clove** (E).

Distribution : Evergreen tree cultivated in Tamil-Nadu and Kerala.

Uses : Repellent of foul-odour from mouth by putting only one clove inside the mouth daily, clove oil relieves pain in caries-teeth, helps in digestion, used in pyorrhoea, choaked voice, warm paste of turmeric and clove is used as local application in fistula, improves corrhiza in cold by taking warm water after boiling with 3-4 cloves.

Trigonella foenum-graecum Linn. (Papilionaceae)

Vern. : **Methi**.

Distribution : Herb, cultivated in India.

Uses : Leaf paste used externally as poultices in swelling, leaves and seeds reduce obesity, acts as appetiser, helps in digestion,

fried seeds used in stomach-ache and flatulence, seeds soaked in curd cure dysentery, the seeds fried in ghee and then mixed with rice is nutritious and tasteful, leaves fried with butter cure biliousness, dullness and nausea, leaves fried with mustard oil used in frequent sneezing and pain in waste.

Tagetes erecta L. (Compositae)

Vern. : **Genda**.

Distribution : Herb, grows in gardens in India.

Uses : Leaf-paste applied on forehead in headache.

Vinca rosea L. (Apocynaceae)

Vern. : **Sadabahar** or **Nayantara**.

Distribution : Throughout India.

Uses : Alkaloid extracted from the roots and stems used in drugs to prevent tumour.

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