

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE ETHNOBOTANY OF DHULE AND THANE
DISTRICTS OF MAHARASHTRA STATE (INDIA) - A PRELIMINARY REPORT

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A B S T R A C T

Native medicinal uses of 11 plants common among Tadvi, Kokni & Gavit tribes inhabiting Dhule district and Katkari, Varli & Koli tribes of Thane district of Maharashtra State are reported. These plants have either not been reported by earlier workers or their uses mentioned here are unrecorded. Information is given on local name, locality, voucher number, native uses and mode of administration of doses.

Key words : Ethnobotany, Tribals of Dhule and Thane districts, Medicinal plants.

INTRODUCTION

The therapeutic hints from the tribals even today hold key to treasures of medicinal knowledge. The ethnic populations have their own medical lore and some of their therapeutic practices have found place in today's medical knowledge especially in Ayurveda. The information on the use of drugs and therapeutics are found in abundance in Atharvaveda. This indigenous knowledge have been handed over from generations to generations and the ethnobotanical investigators today have to make best use of this.

The present investigation was undertaken with the objective of collection of vast and varied important folklore from the tribes of Dhule and Thane districts of Maharashtra State. Earlier investigations in the State include the work of Janardhanan (1963), Malhotra & Moorthy (1973), Vartak & Gadgil (1976, 1981), Kamble & Pradhan (1980), Padhye *et al.* (1991), Chatterjee and Pakrashi (1994), Choudhary (1995), Tiwari *et al.* (1995).

The research project on Ethnobotany of Maharashtra State sanctioned by DOE, New Delhi was undertaken by Botany Department of Nagpur University, Nagpur. In the preliminary survey the medicinal plants of Dhule & Thane districts were studied. This study was also undertaken by Yadav & Bhamare (1989). The aim of this investigation was also to study the social life with reference to customs and traditions of the tribal people in these districts. Special emphasis was laid on the collection of information about the plants used by the tribals in medicine.

The Dhule district of Maharashtra State is considered to be comprising largest tribal population (Census 1981), especially tehsil of Sakri, Dhadgaan, Nawapur, Shahad, Akkalkuwa. The tribes Tadvi, Kokni, Gavit are dominant in these regions. The Thane district with tehsils of Dahanu & Kasa were also surveyed and noticed that the tribes Katkari, Varli, Koli, Bhils, Kokni, Kokna, Thakur are dominant tribes. During the investigation it was found that tribals still follow their traditional

way of life. They mainly depend on forest and minor forest products. A large number of plants are used as food, fodder, fibres, fuel, medicines and for ceremonial functions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The method adopted for the ethnobotanical survey was same as that adopted by Schultes (1962) and Jain (1981). During the survey more than 20 (twenty) remote villages were visited during 1994-1996. The knowledge persons, village leaders (Sarpanch), villagers, Vaidu or Bhagat (Medicine men) were invited and interviewed. Voucher specimens of the species collected are deposited in the Herbarium of

Botany Department, Nagpur University, Nagpur. The data was collected on various aspects like food, medical and health practices.

RESULTS

From the above survey, it was noteworthy to find that there were some plants used by the tribes which had no documentation, even though these plants were in common medicinal use for some other ailments. (Malhotra and Moorthy, 1973 ; Sawant, 1974 ; Saxena and Vyas, 1983 ; Ramachandran *et al.*, 1985 ; Chopra *et al.*, 1992 ; Naik, 1998).

Table 1 shows the plant names, their novel uses and other recognised uses of the plants.

Table-1 :

S.No.	Name of the Plant & Family	Voucher No.	Vernacular Name	Novel Use	Earlier Use
1.	<i>Achyranthes aspera</i> L. (Amaranthaceae)	1080	Chinjoda	Root juice of plant given for heat	Astringent
2.	<i>Bauhinia recemosa</i> Lamk. (Caesalpiniaceae)	3117	Apta	Bark decoction given in tuberculosis	Bark for billiousness leprosy, asthma
3.	<i>Butea monosperma</i> (Lam.) Taubert (Fabaceae)	1502	Palash	Bark paste applied on swelling	Snake bite, astringent, piles
4.	<i>Calotropis gigantea</i> (L.) R.Br. (Asclepiadaceae)	4567	Mandar, A.K.	Root decoction given after child birth for lactation	Expectorant, diaphoretic, elephantiasis
5.	<i>Cassia alata</i> L. (Caesalpiniaceae)	6503	Dadmardan	Plant extract given in leprosy	Bronchitis, asthma, skin diseases
6.	<i>Ceiba pentandra</i> (L.) Gaertn. (Bombacaceae)	6324	Havare	Bark paste applied on swelling	Gum tonic, astringent
7.	<i>Nyctanthes arbor-tristis</i> L. (Oleaceae)	3366	Parijat	Leaf juice is used in earache	Fresh leaf juice given with honey in chronic fever.
8.	<i>Pogostemon heyneanus</i> Benth. (Lamiaceae)	6502	Karav	Bark decoction given to the patient suffering from tuberculosis	Roots astringent
9.	<i>Pterocarpus marsupium</i> Roxb. (Fabaceae)	1596	Bija	Bark decoction given in tuberculosis	Bark astringent, dysentery, diarrhoea
10.	<i>Rhinacanthus communis</i> Nees (Acanthaceae)	3734	Gajkarni	Paste of roots and leaves applied for leprosy	Roots for skin diseases
11.	<i>Ricinus communis</i> L. (Euphorbiaceae)	6111	Yerand	Seeds are chewed for stomachache	Seeds purgative

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