

Important ethnobotanical data

The forest areas all along the eastern boundary of Gujarat State are predominantly inhabited by a tribal population, which constitutes 13.5 % of the total population of the state, as against the all India percentage of 6.81. Gujarat State, therefore, ranks fourth in India in its tribal population.

Out of the total population of 1, 89, 000 of the Chhota-udepur taluka, nearly 85 % is tribal. The Kawant range forests are a part of Chhotaudepur taluka and have a tribal population of 95 % or even more.

These forest inhabitants are to a large extent, cut off from the civilized urban societies mainly due to lack of proper communication systems. Illiteracy and various superstitions born out of it are very widespread. All these factors have to a large extent contributed to the continued existence of these uncivilized populations, which are solely dependent upon primitive agricultural practices and forest products for food, fiber, medicine etc. for their sustenance.

Due to constant companionship with forest environs, tribals have by the trial and error methods gathered fairly good information about the utility of plants. This knowledge is well preserved and kept a secret to be passed on from generation to

generation. Tribals have implicit faith in plants and their remedial properties. Their medicine-men, locally known as 'Badvas' or 'Vaidyas' use plants or plant products for curing diseases and ascribe magical healing powers to many of them. Certain plants are used as sources of food especially during famine. These uses of plants are 'local' in the strictest sense of word for, at times different uses are attributed to the same plants by different tribals in the same area.

With the process of civilization and urbanization rapidly advancing, there is an imminent danger of losing forever these valued treasures of information. Because of large-scale mining for fluorspar in these areas, there has been, of late, lot of urban influence on the local population. The communication systems,--transport and educational facilities are also gradually improving. The natural consequence of all these developments would be a partial or total loss of the botanical folk-lore. " What does interest us academically and practically, is how to salvage some of the medico-botanical lore before it shall have been forever entombed with the culture that gave it the birth " (Schultes, 1960). It is desirable, therefore, that a co-ordinated approach by ethnologists, botanists and chemists be made to explore the vast lore available with these primitive societies.

In India significant work has so far not been done in this direction. However, mention may be made of the works of Jain

(1963 a, b, c, 1965); Chavan et al. (1963); Jain and Tarafdar (1963, 1970). The data presented here have been collected mostly from tribal medicine-men and local foresters who wield considerable influence in these communities. Tribals were always reluctant to part with this information as it was considered to be a secret treasure. Worthwhile information, therefore, could be collected only after intimate contacts and lot of persuasion. Only a proper scrutiny of this information by a team of specialists in different disciplines would ultimately decide whether it would be significant enough to be of any commercial value.

In all 120 entries have been made in the local use index-cards, of which the more important ones have been presented here.

Abbreviations : L. N. - Local Name

Loc. - Locality

1. Acanthospermum hispidum DC. (ASTERACEAE)

L. N. - Kuturu Dantiyu Loc. - Kawant, Ambadungar.

The spiny fruits are crushed made into ash applied on prickly heat and other skin eruptions. Flowers are put in the ear rings. This is supposed to relieve toothache.

2. Achyranthes aspera L. var. porphyristachya Hk. f.  
(AMARANTHACEAE)

L. N. - Kantalo Zinzdo Loc. - Luni.

Fruit ash is applied on the forehead as a remedy against migraine.

3. Amaranthus viridis Linn. (AMARANTHACEAE)

L. N. - Zino Zarakalo Loc. - Rangpur.

Leaves are used as a vegetable and the root paste given to children to remove constipation.

4. Anisomeles ovata R. Br. (LAMIACEAE)

L. N. - Kuturpad Loc. - Kadipani, Ambadungar.

Leaves are powdered and put on cattle wounds to expel worms. Plant juice rubbed on the body brings down body temperature. Plant juice is given to cattle in cases of breathlessness due to extreme fatigue.

5. Atylosia scarabaeoides Benth. (FABACEAE)

L. N. - Itora velo Loc. - Luni.

Seeds are eaten by the native population.

6. Barleria prattensis Santapau (ACANTHACEAE)

L. N. - Gulmavlu Loc. - Kawant, Kadipani.

Roots are eaten by the local population.

7. Bergia odorata Edgew. (ELATINACEAE)

L. N. - Ratwanu Mul Loc. - Rangpur.

Root paste is applied on boils and burns.

8. Bidens biternata (Lour.) Merr. & Sherff (ASTERACEAE)

L. N. - Rinchhada Bukeli Ghas Loc. - Chikhli.

Roots are rubbed on stone and then applied on wounds to heal them.

9. Biophytum sensitivum DC. (OXALIDACEAE)

L. N. - Lajwani Loc. - Raisingpura, Kadipani.

Leaf decoction given to children to cure fever. Juice of nearly 2 to 3 plants is given internally to children in cases of convulsions.

10. Caesulia axillaris Roxb. (ASTERACEAE)

L. N. - Bothadi, Ganthiyum Loc. - Kadipani, Mogra.

Leaves are applied on wounds or cuts for early healing. The whole plant is crushed and applied on the forehead to relieve headache.

11. Centrathrum phyllolaenum Benth (ASTERACEAE)

L. N. - Ghodojirum Loc. - Ambadungar.

Seeds are powdered and made into pills, given internally to cure fever.

12. Cleome monophylla Linn. (CLEOMACEAE)

L. N. - Deru Loc. Ambadungar.

Root paste is applied on sties (inflamed swellings on the edge of eye-lids).

13. Corchorus aestuans Linn. (TILIACEAE)

L. N. - Rajghar, Saraniyo Loc. - Ambadungar, Kawant.

Roots are crushed and applied externally in the treatment of scorpion bites.

14. Dendrocalamus strictus Nees (POACEAE)

L. N. - Vans Loc. - Ambadungar, Mahudabari.

The seeds are like wheat and are made into flour and then into bread, which is quite delicious and nutritive. It is generally believed that the general flowering of Bamboos causes famine in the locality.

15. Desmodium gangeticum DC. (FABACEAE)

L. N. - Moti Murdi Loc. - Kadipani, Ambadungar.

Root paste applied externally for relieving pain in any part of the body.

16. Dioscorea hispida Dennst. (DIOSCOREACEAE)

L. N. - Vaj Loc. - Luni

Tubers are eaten after repeated boilings.

17. Dregea volubilis (Linn. f.) Benth. (ASCLEPIADACEAE)

L. N. - Kadva dodi                      Loc. - Rangpur, Mogra.

Flowers are eaten as a vegetable.

18. Echinops echinatus Roxb.                      (ASTERACEAE)

L. N. - Kathalo                      Loc.- Amirpura.

Plant is made into paste and mixed with boiling water and filtered. This water is used for a bath to reduce body swellings.

19. Cassine glauca (Pers.) O. Kuntze (CELASTRACEAE)

L. N. - Bhutako                      Loc. - Ambadungar.

Oil from the seeds used for removing lice from hair. The leaves are crushed and applied on septic wounds.

20. Derris indica (Lamk.) Bennet (FABACEAE)

L. N. - Karanj                      Loc. - Mahudabari.

Oil from the seeds <sup>used</sup> for expelling worms from the wounds of cattles. Bark is mixed with salt and applied to relax pulled muscles.

21. Euphorbia fusiformis Buch.-Ham. (EUPHORBIACEAE)

L. N. - Chitarvada                      Loc. - Luni.

Root paste is applied on the forehead to relieve headache or on contusions.

22. Helicteres isora Linn. (STERCULIACEAE)

L. N. - Maradsingi Loc. - Mahudabari.

Root paste is applied on cuts as an antiseptic.

23. Hibiscus lobatus (Murr.) O.Kuntze (MALVACEAE)

L. N. - Baporiyo Chano Loc. - Luni, Kadipani.

Flowers invariably open in the after-noon. So on cloudy days in monsoon, this used to indicate time. Plant juice in water is given internally to regulate urination in humans.

24. Holarrhena antidysenterica Wall. (APOCYNACEAE)

L. N. - Kudo, Inderjava. Loc. - Kadipani, Hampheshwar.

The flowers are used as a vegetable by the local tribes. The latex, when added to fresh milk, turns it into curd within a very short time. The milky latex applied externally on wounds.

25. Lagerstroemia microcarpa Wight (LYTHRACEAE)

L. N. - Kakad Loc. - Mohangadh.

Leaf juice in very small quantities is used to remove cataracts.

26. Mallotus philippensis Muell. (EUPHORBIACEAE)

L. N. - Kali Kadamba Loc. - Ambadungar.



Bark paste is applied on wounds and to be taken internally as an antidysenteric.

27. Martynia diandra Glox. (MARTYNIACEAE)

L. N. - Vinchhu. Loc. - Ambadungar, Kadipani.

Oil extracted from the seeds is used in the treatment of burns.

28. Milletia auriculata Baker (FABACEAE)

L. N. - Gorad. Loc. - Ambadungar.

Leaves are eaten by the cattle. Root decoction acts a very effective fish-poison.

29. Pueraria tuberosa DC. (FABACEAE)

L. N. - Zezwano velo. Loc. - Ambadungar.

Roots are edible and are especially given to prospective mothers for increased lactation. They are sweet in taste.

30. Sesbania bispinosa (Jacq.) Fawc. & Randle (FABACEAE)

L. N. - Dhedhan Loc. - Moti Chikhli.

Seeds when rubbed, produce a gum-like substances, which is used as an adhesive.

31. Sida alba Linn. (MALVACEAE)

L. N. - Chhikaniyo. Loc. - Kawant, Ambadungar.

Stems are used as tooth brushes for cleaning teeth.  
 Root paste applied on the forehead to relieve migraine.  
 This plant forms a part of the last rites of these tribal population.

32. Solanum indicum Linn. (SOLANACEAE)

L. N. - Bhot Rhingni. Loc. - Kadipani.

Seeds are used as a cure for fever.

33. Solanum surattense Burm. f. (SOLANACEAE)

L. N. - Rani Ringani. Loc. - Moti Chikhli.

Seeds ash applied internally to relieve toothache.

34. Tacca leontopetaloides (Linn.) O. Kuntze (TACCACEAE)

L. N. - - Loc. - Luni.

The root paste is applied externally on contusions.

35. Tephrosia purpurea Pers. (FABACEAE)

L. N. - Zanzetni. Loc.-Rangpur, Kadipani.

Root decoction is given internally as an antidyenteric.  
 Leaves are crushed and applied on fractured bones. Root  
 paste is used to fill cavities in the teeth.

36. Tinospora cordifolia (Willd.) Miers. (MENISPERMACEAE)

L. N. - Galo, Nagar velo. Loc. - Kadipani.

The plants are fed to cattle for increase lactation. Leaves are fed to cattle to increase milk. Plants are immersed in water overnight and the water is given internally in the treatment of jaundice.

37. Vicoa indica (Willd.) DC. (ASTERACEAE)

L. N. - Sanseri.

Loc. - Hampleshwar, Saidivasan.

Leaves are crushed and smoked to relieve cough.

38. Plumbago zeylanica Linn. (PLUMBAGINACEAE)

L. N. - Chitarwad.

Loc. - Ambadungar.

Leaves and flowers are crushed and applied on the forehead to relieve headache.