



## REGULAR ARTICLE

## Ethnomedicinal Plants Used in the Treatment of Various Human Afflictions in Shirpur Taluka of

Shirpur, District Dhule (M.S., India)

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## Introduction

Dhule and Nandurbar districts of Maharashtra are investigated floristically by Patil (2003). These districts are predominantly tribal. There are few publications on record from ethnobotanical point of view (*cf.* Bhamare, 1995, Ahirrao and Patil 2007; Tayade and Patil 2005). However, the region is still underexplored. The present authors have attempted to tap information on this line from one such taluka *viz.*, Shirpur of Dhule district (Maharashtra). Role of common culinary or common botanicals have been studied recently by Patil *et al.* (2010) and Tayade and Patil (2010). These contributions also prompted the present authors to tap information from hitherto unstudied region. The results of this study are being communicated in this paper.

## Methodology Adapted

The present authors visited tribal and rural region. The visits were aimed at tapping ethnomedicinal data from them. Elder or heads of tribal, women and other rural informants of 40-65 ages were interviewed. The reports were cross-checked during subsequent field visits. Plants or their parts or botanicals used for culinary purposes were collected. They have been deciphered by using district regional and state floras (Patil, 2003; Kshirsagar and Patil, 2008; Naik 1998; Cooke 1958; Sharma *et al.*, 1996; Singh and Kartikayen 2000-2001). Local plant names, medicinal recipes, doses and mode of application, besides diseases treated, were noted during different field visits. They are arranged alphabetically followed by plant families (in parenthesis) and vernacular plant name. Ethnomedicinal data is provided separated below.

## Ethnomedicinal Enumeration

1. *Ocimum tenuiflorum* L. (Lamiaceae) Tulsi:

The present authors investigated Shirpur taluka of Dhule District (Maharashtra) for the ethnomedicinal plants used to combat various human afflictions. Botanicals used in the region are common and commonly grown in homestead gardens are documented for their medicinal properties especially against common afflictions. This paper includes information on 21 species belonging to 21 genera and 15 families of angiosperms. The medicinal recipes are in the form of decoction, infusion, extract, juice, oil, powder, paste and ash. Domestic substances are also added while preparing recipes. Raw parts or cooked ones are also employed in few cases. They are administered to benefit in about 17 different human afflictions. The medicines consist usually of sole drug, except few. Botanicals commonly used as spices, edibles and locally religious or ornamental ones also find place in the local remedies. Majority of them are under cultivation, while few others are purchased from markets. This paper highlights secondary applications of these botanicals, although they are employed principally for other purposes. The veracity of these indigenous drugs is desirable for further scientific examination.

A cup of decoction of leaves is prepared in water. Spoonful of juice of rhizome of *Zingiber officinale* mixed in it. It is taken orally twice a day for three days to treat cold.

2. *Cuminum cyminum* L. (Apiaceae) Jire:

Seeds are crushed in cow-milk. Few drops of animal-ghee are added in it. Spoonful of mixture is administered to children twice a day for two days to control dysentery.

3. *Mangifera indica* L. (Anacardiaceae) Amba :

Unripe fruit is boiled in water. A pinch of seed powder of *Elettaria cardamomum* L. is added in a cup of pulp of boiled unripe fruit. This mixture is taken orally with a glass of water once a day to treat sun-stroke. It is practiced till cure.

4. *Coriandrum sativum* L. (Apiaceae) Dhane :

Juice obtained from entire plants is applied on body at night. Cup of juice is also drunk at early morning for seven days to reduce body heat.

5. *Lagenaria siceraria* (Molina) Standl. (Cucurbitaceae) Dudhi-bhopala :

A glass of fruit juice is taken orally at early morning for 30 days to reduce body weight.

6. *Ficus carica* L. (Moraceae) Angir :

Single fruit is deeped in water for a night. This fruit is consumed at morning for 15 days to overcome weakness.

7. *Trigonella foenum-graecum* L. (Fabaceae) Methi :

Seeds are powdered; sweat balls are prepared with jaggery. One ball is consumed daily to treat rheumatism.

**8. *Triticum aestivum* L.** (Poaceae) Gahu :

Extract of entire young plants, about a cup, is consumed for seven days at early morning to control hair loss.

**9. *Citrus aurantifolia* (Christm.) Sw.** (Rutaceae) Limbu :

Fruit juice is diluted in water. A spoonful of black salt is added in a glass of it. It is taken orally to treat stomach-ache.

**10. *Allium sativum* L.** (Liliaceae) Lasun :

About 4 to 5 bulbets are consumed daily once a day for three days to treat cough.

**11. *Centella asiatica* (L.) Urb.** (Apiaceae) Bramhi :

Entire plants are crushed. A spoonful of juice is taken orally twice a day. Paste is also applied on forehead to treat head-ache.

**12. *Hibiscus caesioides* (L.) Garcke** (Malvaceae) Ambadi :

Leaf paste is mixed with flour. A bread is prepared and consumed for seven days to reduce body – heat

**13. *Mentha spicata* L.** (Lamiaceae) Pudina :

Leaves are crushed. Cup of juice is taken orally once a day to ease constipation.

**14. *Sesbania grandiflora* (L.) Poir.** (Fabaceae) Hadga:

Flowers are cooked and consumed daily for 15 days to treat night blindness.

**15. *Semecarpus anacardium* L.f.** (Anacardiaceae) Biba:

A spoonful of seed oil is added in a glass of water. It is advised once a day in case of stomach-ache.

**16. *Acacia concinna* (Willd.) DC.** (Mimosaceae) Shikakai:

Fruits are kept in water overnight. Infusion obtained is used for hair-wash to control hair loss.

**17. *Myristica fragrans* Houtt.** (Myristicaceae) Jayphal :

Fruits are rubbed in water. About 2-3 ml is mixed in a glass of water to treat throat infection.

**18. *Zea mays* L.** (Poaceae) Maka:

The cobs, after removal of grains, are burnt. A spoonful of ash is dissolved in a glass of water. It is drunk thrice a day till cure to reduce troubles during urination.

**19. *Nicotiana tabacum* L.** (Solanaceae) Tambakhu:

Dried leaves are burnt and ash is obtained. This ash is applied on wounds. It is practiced till cure.

**20. *Annona squamosa* L.** (Annonaceae) Sitaphal:

Seeds are crushed and paste is prepared in coconut oil. It is applied daily at night on head to kill lice. It is practiced till cure.

**21. *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* L.** (Oleaceae) Parijat:

Decoction of leaves is prepared. A cup of decoction is taken with about two spoonful of leaf juice of *Ocimum tenuiflorum* L. twice a day for three days to treat rheumatism.

**Discussion**

The present authors documented botanicals used especially for culinary purposes apart from the ones cultivated for edible fruits, vegetables, ornamentals or religious uses. All of them are in vogue for their various principal uses in the ambient societies. However, their secondary applications were mostly unknown or rarely known to elites. As many as 21 plant species

are presently being communicated useful for various common human afflictions such as cold, cough, dysentery, sunstroke, body – heat, excessive weight, general weakness, stomach-ache, head-ache, constipation, night blindness, throat infection, wounds and lice. They are administered in the form of decoction, infusion, extract, juice, oil, powder, paste or ash. Sometimes they are used raw or cooked. Sole drug is a common practice except few in which they are supplemented by other species or botanicals viz., *Zingiber officinale*, *Elettaria cardamomum* and *Ocimum tenuiflorum*. Domestic substances like animal ghee, cow milk, black salt, jaggery and coconut oil, etc. are added in ethnomedicinal recipes. Some of them belong to spices and condiments. Tayade and Patil (2010) revealed the role of spices and condiments from the adjacent region. However, our observations do vary from their reports. Secondary functions of spices are also well known (cf. Pruthi 1976, 1993; Patil 2008). The data accrued on this group of botanicals may divulge some additional medicinal utilities or even drugs. These, however, need further scientific scrutiny.

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