

Hyptis suaveolens (L.) Poit. (Lamiaceae) - a source of edible oil among tribals of Orissa, India

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ABSTRACT

The tribal use of *Hyptis suaveolens* (Lamiaceae) as a source for edible oil purpose in cooking medium is reported for the first time from Gandhamardan hill areas of Bolangir district in Orissa, India.

Key words : edible oil, *Hyptis suaveolens*.

Gandhamardan hills (21° 0'-21° 45'N and 82° 45'-83° 5'E) are located in Bolangir and Sambalpur districts of Orissa, India. The hills extending over a length of about 16 km and width of 2.5-3.2 km are inhabited by a number of aboriginal tribes like Gond, Kondh and Saora. They depend solely on the surrounding forests for most of their requirements including food and medicines. A number of tribal uses of plants were recorded during ethnobotanical field trips to Gandhamardan hill areas. A scrutiny of literature in ethnobotany (Brahmam & Saxena 1990; Mukherjee & Namhata 1990; Jain 1991) revealed that tribal use of the aromatic species *Hyptis suaveolens* (L.) Poit. (Lamiaceae) seed oil for edible purpose is not reported so far. Therefore, an attempt has been made to document its new ethnobotanical data which may provide a clue for further research on lesser known oil yielding aromatic plants. During ethnobotanical survey among tribals of Bolangir district the authors camped at

various field stations like Lathore, Harishankar, Kantabanji and Mahakhand. Elderly persons having knowledge of local flora and its uses were contacted and first hand information about the tribal use of plants were recorded. The information was further confirmed from other areas/groups of people from the region. Plant specimens were collected in the company of at least one key informant to make sure that the proper plant was obtained. The plant species were confirmed at Central National Herbarium, Howrah. Voucher specimens of the plant species were preserved at the herbarium of Regional Research Institute of Unani Medicine, Bhadrak.

Gond, Kondh, Manjhi and Saora tribal and other rural inhabitants of the region collect *H. suaveolens* locally known as 'bantulsi' from surrounding forest areas for medicinal, edible and other uses. Some of the medicinal uses are already reported (Jain 1991). The seeds

are collected as a minor forest produce by the tribals and sold to the local traders at Rs. 1.50 per kg to supplement their income. The same use was reported by the Khodia tribe in Sundargarh district of Orissa. According to an informant belonging to Gond tribe in Soliabahal village of Lathore forest range in Bolangir forest division, the seeds yield an edible oil. The seeds are dried in shade and the oil is extracted by crushing them in a wooden oil press. This crude oil is used in the cooking medium. The information was confirmed from Harishankar, Mahakhand and Chandli forest areas from tribal groups.

The tribal use of *H. suaveolens* seed oil for edible purpose is a first report of its kind and needs further confirmation from other parts of India. Reports on the chemistry of this species are available in literature. Analysis of seed, leaf, seed coat and stem and its essential oil and protein has been reported. Ethanolic extract was devoid of tannin, alkaloids, flavonoids and saponin; essential oil

exhibited antimicrobial activity (Anonymous 1987).

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