



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Observations on Bioculture and Medicinal Practices in Akkalkuwa Tehsil (Nandurbar District) In Maharashtra

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ABSTRACT

An inventory was conducted in a tribal dominated tehsil Akkalkuwa in Nandurbar district of Maharashtra. It was aimed at knowing role of plants in the life of tribal people from the standpoint of concrete and abstract relationship with the ambient plant world. Total 12 angiospermic species belonging to 12 genera and 11 families have a considerable role in their bioculture and healthcare. All these species are used to combat various human afflictions in the form of different recipes. A considerable diversity of diseases is recorded in the area under study. Plant species interwoven with indigenous culture should also be examined for concrete relationship for the welfare of mankind.

Keywords: Bioculture, Ethnomedicine, Akkalkuwa Tehsil, Maharashtra.

INTRODUCTION

In Indian culture, plant life figured prominently. Literary sources confirm that plants have been central not only as a commodity but also as powerful and enduring symbols (Patil, 2020). Particularly, trees are on the upper levels among the plants as they offer nourishment and protection to other living beings. They are often thought of abodes of deities. At this backdrop, the present authors studied plant species particularly in Khandesh region of Maharashtra which comprises three districts viz., Dhule, Nandurbar and Jalgaon. The ranges of Satpura mountain extend in this region which harbour dry deciduous forests. This region is also studied by tribal communities such as Bhil, Pawara, Kokani, etc. This paper particularly focuses a few plant species which have a prominent role in bioculture in Akkalkuwa tehsil in Nandurbar district.

METHODOLOGY

The Akkalkuwa tehsil (Nandurbar district) was visited for ethnobotanical studies. Enquiry was made to tap down bioculture with particular emphasis on sacred plants in the region. The tehsil is predominantly tribal and these people were interviewed w.r.t. sacred plant species and their employment as native medicinal source. They were identified consulting local floras (Cooke, 1958; Patil, 2003; Kshirsagar and Patil, 2008, etc.). They are enumerated systematically in the Table-I.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Our inventory on bioculture and ethnomedicinal utilities in Akkalkuwa tehsil (Nandurbar district) in Maharashtra yielded interesting results. Some sacred plant species have a major role in culture of tribal people in this region. These plant species have also utilitarian significance especially in native healthcare. This paper projects total 12 Angiospermic species belonging to 12 genera and 11 families. The dicotyledonous species play a considerable role (11 species, 11 genera and 10 families). However, a single plant species viz. *Musa paradisiaca* found place in religious worship of a local deity. Interestingly, indigenous trees are found to have major share (09 species) as compared to other habital groups (herbs 02 species, shrubs 01 species). Wild as well as cultigens are also noted having religious significance. Total 07 exclusively wild and exclusively 03 cultivated ones are recorded. There are few species (05) which are either wild or found also under cultivation. A single species viz., *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* L. is an exotic element. It is native of China (Patil, 2003).

Mankind has dual relationships with plant world viz., abstract and concrete. The tribal people of this tehsil have deep faith in their religious rites, festivals and ceremonies. They have their own deities as well. They observe for some kind taboos and avoidances of plant species. Various plant

parts are offered ceremonially to local gods and goddesses. They also use plant parts to avoid evil spirits to protect their lives. Apart from these abstract relationships with the local plants, they also utilize them for treating various diseases viz., ringworm, rheumatism, swellings, head-ache, tooth-ache, body-pain, joint-pains, dysentery, snake-bite, ear-complaints, cuts and wounds, menstrual problems, foul smell of mouth and hair-tonic, etc. Various plant parts are employed in the form recipes such as paste, decoction, extract, ash, powder, oil and plant products like latex and gum.

It is to be noted that indigenous systems of medicine continue to be widely practiced on many accounts. India, in particular, has been known to be rich repository of medicinal plants. Medicinal species are solutions to cure a number of health-related problems and diseases. Their medicinal know-how is traditional in many Indian cultures. Even they are interwoven with the religious sanctity and held sacred (Patil, 2020). Some sacred plant species are routinely used by the native communities combating various human diseases e.g., Tulsi, a sacred plant species to Hindus. It is used from birth to death in various rituals and rites, apart from medicinal utilities (Patil and Patil, 2013).

In modern period, our lifestyle is getting techno-savvy and therefore we are being distanced from 'Nature Mother'. We are forgetting that we are a part of nature. There are still some tribal communities who have not yet changed their lifestyle and depend on ambient bioresources especially which are important in their bioculture. A wave of blind dependence on synthetic medicine is over and the green medicine is begin again favoured in its place and gaining more and more importance in the present day. It is hence needless to state that the ethnomedicinal practices hailed from tribal communities should be secured. It is a time to promote them for the welfare of mankind.

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Table-I: Bioculture and Ethnomedicinal Practices

Sr No. 1	Botanical Name 2	Vernacular Name 3	Family & Status 4	Scared Purpose 5	Use-Reports 6
1.	<i>Ficus benghalensis</i> L.	Vad	Moraceae W, C	It is known as Vriksha-devta and not cut and burn as fuel.	1. Latex is topically used for ringworm until cure. 2. Leaf paste used as an antiseptic on cuts and wounds.
2.	* <i>Hibiscus rosa-sinensis</i> L.	Jasvand.	Malvaceae C	Flowers are offered in worships.	1. A cup of decoction of flowers recommended, a teaspoon twice a day, in the treatment of cough until cure. 2. A cup of floral extract diluted with water and recommended before sunrise with empty stomach for ladies to regularize the menstrual cycle.
3.	<i>Limonia acidissima</i> L.	Kaith, Kavath	Rutaceae W, C	Fruits are not collected at night.	Decoction of root administered, two spoonful thrice a day, to treat body pain and dysentery.
4.	<i>Madhuca longifolia</i> (Koen.) Macbr.	Moh	Sapotaceae W	Liquor is served to all the people or guests who are participated in various religious ceremonies.	1. Seed oil used in chest-pain topically and also on rheumatism. 2. Ash of leaves mixed with coconut oil and used on cuts and wounds.
5.	<i>Mallotus philippensis</i> (Lamk.) Muell.-Arg.	Shendri	Euphorbiaceae W	Dye obtained from fruits walls is applied on forehead by married women.	Decoction of seeds drunk on snake-bite.
6.	<i>Mangifera indica</i> L.	Amba	Anacardiaceae C	1. Fruit juice is used for food offering to god as Naivaidya 2. Twigs are placed in windows or doors at the time of marriage ceremony. Being auspicious, this is also thought a sign of invitation to the house owners.	1. A teaspoon of dried gum powder mixed in a cup of water administered in the treatment of the tooth-ache.
7.	<i>Musa paradisiaca</i> L.	Kel	Musaceae C	Flowers are offered to lord Mahadeva.	Leaf paste applied to treat boils.

Sr No. 1	Botanical Name 2	Vernacular Name 3	Family & Status 4	Scared Purpose 5	Use-Reports 6
8.	<i>Ocimum tenuiflorum</i> L.	Tulasi	Lamiaceae C	1. For the invitation to all gods, the plant is planted in front of the main door. 2. Inflorescence of the plant is used in the worship of Goddess Yahamogi Mata, Goddess Devgovi Mata and Goddess Kali Mata.	1. Two drops of leaf decoction are recommended in ear problems thrice a day. 2. Leaf paste applied on head in head-ache.
9.	<i>Pongamia pinnata</i> (L.) Pierre	Karanj	Papilionaceae W,C	Flowers are used to worship Gramdevata especially on an occasion of Bhandara	Seed oil applied to treat scabies till cure.
10.	<i>Pterocarpus morsupium</i> Roxb.	Bibla, Bija	Papilionaceae W	Fruits are tied on body of babies to avoid evil spirits	Decoction of wood is recommended, 2-3 spoonful with honey, to treat joint pains for a week.
11.	<i>Salvadora persica</i> L.	Pilu	Salvadoraceae W	Ripe fruits are offered in worship of local deity Marimata.	Stem pieces used as tooth-brush to treat tooth-ache and foul smell of mouth.
12.	<i>Tectona grandis</i> L.	Saag	Verbenaceae W, C	1. Leaves are used to cover the roof of a house to avoid the entering of evil. 2. Vagdev festival is celebrated by the tribals. A branch of this tree is placed erect in a place. If a tiger looks at it, then it is believed that the tiger will not disturb anybody.	1. Paste of wood powder topically applied on the rheumatism and swellings. 2. Seed oil used as a hair tonic.

N.B.: (i) *: Exotic, (ii) C=Cultivated; W=Wild; W & C: Wild and Cultivated.