

Use of ethno-medicinal plants by Jaintia Tribe of North East India

MUKUL KUMAR BARUAH

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SUMMARY

The "Jaintia tribe" of Cachar district of Assam mainly confined to remote villages and they have migrated from Jowai district of Meghalaya of North East India about 100 years ago. The tribal people have very much knowledge on traditional ethno-medicinal plants and the Jaintia tribe is also no exception to this indigenous system ethno-medicines. An attempt has been made to study plants used by this tribe for controlling and curing various diseases and in the present paper, a total of 45 ethno-medicinal plants, belongs to 34 families are recorded which are used by the tribe for treatment 17 different diseases viz., Arthritis, asthma, cuts and wounds, dysentery, eye diseases, fever, gastric and indigestion, gynaecological problem, hypertension, insects and snake bite, jaundice, rheumatism and rabies, skin diseases, stomachache, toothache, tuberculosis, urinary problem etc. Out of these some established important ethno-medicinal plants can be utilized to a potential revenue earner source for the district and some potential medicinal plants should be screened and scientifically preserved.

Key words : Ethno-medicine, Jaintia tribe, North East Region

North East India popularly known as the land of seven-sisters (Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh) is predominantly tribal region has a tremendous scope for ethno-medicinal works or study. Some of the tribal medicines have been incorporated in the organized system of medicine. However, much larger number of the folk medicines has remained endemic to certain tribal pockets of North East India. Therefore, ethno-medicinal study in this region may proceed a meaningful way for promotion of traditional herbal medicinal plants for the benefit of mankind at large.

Geographically, Cachar district South Assam or Barak Valley of North East India is surrounded by North Cachar Hills and Khasi and Jaintia in the north, in the south by the state of Mizoram, in the east by the state of Manipur and in the west by Tripura state. The area is on altitude of 26-27m above sea level and this falls under 24.8' and 25.8' N latitude and 92.15' and 93.15' E longitude. Barak, Jiri and Siri are the main river of the district. The soil type is alluvial. Soil texture is sandy, loamy and stilt type depending on their on their silt and sand content. The pH of the soil varies 5.0- 6.5 or around neutral. The climate of the district is very hot with dry cold seasons. The average temperature of the district lies in between 15-35^o C. The average annual rainfall of the district is around 300mm and average atmospheric humidity is 75- 85%.

Jaintia people of Cachar district of South Assam

mainly came from Jowai district of Meghalaya about 100 years ago. Their migration seems to be mainly due to the infertility of soil in jhum field, transport problem, business, transaction etc. At that time, this area was found to be very much favourable for Jhum cultivation and from that time these people have self managed system of folk medicine based on herbal remedies. Since modern medical facilities are yet to reach in many remote parts of district, ethnic people in this area has deep believe in the traditional system of folk medicines for remedies and rely extensively on their own herbal cures.

Study of plants having medicinal value have been carried out from time to time in different parts of India by several workers as Nayar *et al.* (1979), Rawat and Choudhury (1998) and several others. Although in North East India, the study on ethno-medicinal plants and their importance has already been emphasized by several workers (Borthakur, 1976, 1961, 1992) not much work in this aspect has been done in this area.

The people belonging to modern societies are not aware of this knowledge of tribal folk medicine, so it has become imperative to collect information and document the same to study them scientifically. Moreover, due to the available modern facilities the culture of using indigenous knowledge for the treatment of common ailments is also rapidly disappearing. Thus, keeping in view the importance of above facts, the present survey work to enlist the medicinal plants used by the Jaintia tribes of South Assam of North East India has been undertaken. Also emphasis has been given to collect information about the mode of preparation of ethno-medicine and their application.

Correspondence to:

MUKUL KUMAR BARUAH, Department of Botany,
Cachar College, SILCHAR () INDIA