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Research Article

Use of medicinal plants to serve mankind: a key study of local health traditional practices of piles in western Assam

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Abstract: The tribal dominated North Eastern part of India is well known for rich traditional health care practices from time immoral. These local health traditional practices are found to be very significant and have scientific background. In this paper an attempt has been made to find out various such traditional knowledge that are practice in some parts of Western Assam to cure one of the prominent disease that is Piles or Hemorrhoids. The present work was conducted during the year of 2012-2013.It was found that the practices are having significant effect which helps to cure the diseases and serve the mankind from generation by generation.
Keywords: Traditional health practices, Piles, western Assam

INTRODUCTION

The tribal dominated North eastern part of India is well known for traditional health care practices. North East India is a rich diversified part of Indian subcontinent which is rich by its ethno -cultural diversity. Traditional health care practices are very common among the different tribes and communities of this region for human welfare. Assam is known for its rich flora and diverse forests and vegetation due to its unique topography, climate and altitude patterns [1].This region of India is also a homeland of people belong to more than 100 ethnic tribes and sub tribes[2]. All this tribes have their own traditional method of treatment based on herbal drugs. These medicines are practiced by the local people since generations with a notable degree of efficiency in preventing or in controlling different diseases.

The World Health Organization has estimated that about 80% population in the developing countries depends directly on plants for medicines[3,4]. WHO defines medicinal plants as any plant which is one or more of its organ Contain substance that can be used for the therapeutic purpose or which are procure for the synthesis of useful drug. The present work focuses on few medicinal plants which are being widely used by the local tribes of Western Assam for curing piles**.** This is a very common disease in which the blood vessels around the anus and in the rectum stress under pressure and may swell or bulge which is a very painful disease.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Western Assam is located at the extreme western part of Assam it extends from $89^0 49' 20''$ E to $91^0 48' 16''$ longitude and $25^0 27'$ N to $26^0 54''$ latitude covering lower Brahmaputra valley. . It covers eight districts-Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Goalpara, Barpeta and Nalbari, Chirang and Baksa. Out of which Barpeta and Nalbari districts were visited for extensive data collection. Nalbari with a longitudinal extension of $91^0 15' 8''$ E to $91^0 30' 52''$ E and latitudinal extension of $26^0 12'$ N to $26^0 45' 10''$ N latitude and an area of 2257 sq. km. Barpeta district $90^0 45' 11''$ E longitude to $91^0 50' 4''$ E and $26^0 25' 5''$ N to $26^0 45''$ E latitude with an area of 3345 sq. Km. This region is Inhabitant of several ethnic tribes like-Bodo kachari, Sarania kachari, Hajong, Rabha ,Koch and Modahi which are Indo-Mongoloid racial stock.

The present work was carried out during the year of 2012-2013. The data were collected using a specially designed questionnaire and ultimately data were analyzed. So, for primary data collection the different locations of the study area were visited frequently to meet the local people specially those people who are well experienced with the knowledge of local health practices. Sometimes data was also collected from common villagers like ploughman, Fishman, cowboy, old aged man and women. The fresh herbal specimens were collected from the study area and were dried and made into herbarium specimens by following the standard herbarium method [5]. The identification of the dried specimens was done with the help of local floras and herbarium of Botanical Survey of India, Shillong

RESULT

The present study demonstrated that traditionally the tribes of this region use about eight (8) species of ethno medicinal plants (distributed in 7 genera belonging to 7 families) to cure piles. Among these the family Piperaceae includes two species which is followed by Rutaceae, Amaranthaceae, Nympheaceae, Verbinaceae, Agavaceae, Crassulaceae that represented one species only. Data obtained from this survey is compiled in 4 Tables, which are commonly mention here as Item1, 2, 3 and 4. For its plant species botanical name, family, local name, part used and quantity are provided. Different plant parts are used to cure piles. Among this leaf (37.5%) is found to be most used than other, bark (25%), fruit (25%) and flower (12.5%).

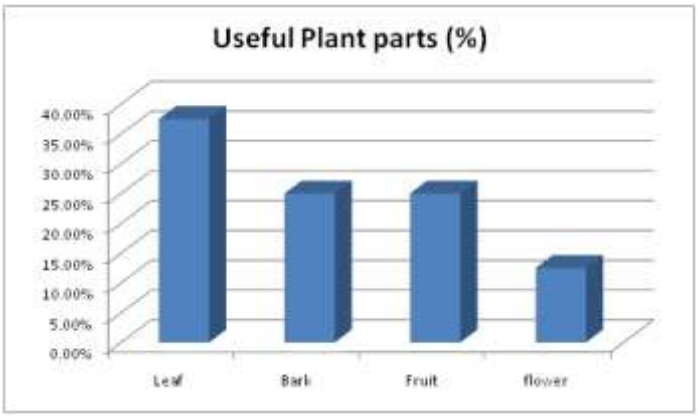

Fig-1: Distribution of medicinal plants parts used in the treatment of Hemorrhoids.

Fig-2: *Clerodendrum viscosum*

Fig-3: *Cordyline terminalis*

Table-1: The Medicinal plants used in item 1 to cure piles in Western Assam

Sl.No	Scientific name	Family	Local name	Parts used	Quantity
1	*Glycosmis arborea* (Roxb.) DC., Syn. *G. pentaphylla* Corr.	Rutaceae	Chauldhoa	Stem bark	50 gm
2	*Piper longum* L.	Piperaceae	Pepoli	Fruit	10 numbers
3	*Piper nigrum L.*	Piperaceae	Jaluk	Fruit	10 numbers

Mode of preparation:

50 grams of stem bark of *Glycosmis arborea* grinded along with ten (10) numbers of fruits of both *Piper longum* and *Piper nigrum* to make a paste. Then the paste is mixed with 1 litre of water and allowed to boil to make the volume about half litre. Half (½) cup of this juice is prescribed to the patient, twice daily for 10-12 days.

Table-2: plants used in item 2 against piles.

Sl.No	Scientific name	Family	Local name	Parts used	Quantity
1	*Iresine herbstii* Hook. Lindl.	Amaranthaceae	Bishohari	Leaves	1 kg (Fresh)
2	*Nelumbo nucifera* Gaerth	Nympheaceae	Podoom phul	Dry flower	1/2 kg

Mode of preparation:

For preparation of this medicine two plant ingredients are necessary i.e. *Iresine herbstii* and *Nelumbo nucifera*. In this case one kilogram of leaves of *Iresine herbstii* is collected which is a very common medicinal plant often planted for its beautiful reddish habit. ½ kg dried flowers of *Nelumbo nucifera* is also an indispensable component in this preparation. Here all the ingredients are boiled in 3 liters of filtered water where 25 grams of black salt is added. The mixture is allowed to boil till the volume reaches about 2 liters. Then it is allowed to pass through a sieve to get a clean uniform juice which is a very significant medicine that bears the capacity to cure piles. One cup of this juice is prescribed to take thrice a daily before food for three days continuously.

Table-3: The Medicinal plants used in item 3

Sl. No.	Scientific name	Family	Local name	Parts used	Quantity
1	*Clerodendrum viscosum* Vent.	Verbenaceae	Vetmali	Leaf	45-50 gm

Moe of preparation:

45-50 grams of fresh leaves of *Clerodendrum viscosum are* crushed and filtered to get a green leaf extract. The extract or the leaf Juice is mixed with ½ glass of water and a pinch of salt. The liquid mixture is allowed to take internally at the rate of 1 cup thrice daily before lunch continuously for three days. If the disease is detected at very early stage then it is allowed to take at a rate of ½ cup only. The patients are advised not to take spicy food; rather they are allowed to have boiled food only as far as possible.

Table 4: The Medicinal plants used in item 4

Sl. No	Scientific name	Family	Local name	Parts used	Quantity
1	*Cordyline terminalis* Kunth	Agavaceae	Horisankar	Stem bark	10 gm
2	*Kalanchoe pinnata (*Roxb.) Pers.	Crassulaceae	Duportanga	Leaf	2 nos.

Mode of preparation:

This is a very simple preparation where only two plant species are required that are *Cordiline terminalis and Kalanchoe pinnata. Here* 10 grams of bark of *Cordiline terminalis* Kunth and two matured leaves of *Kalanchoe pinnata* are crushed finely. The liquid extract is allowed to take internally at the rate of 2 tea spoonful thrice daily continuously for three days. Patients were reported to get rid from severe piles by consuming this herbal preparation.

CONCLUSION

Thus in the study area there is immense use of various plants to prevent or to cure Piles and these practices are transmitted from generation to generation as local health traditional practice.

The scope for analysis, research, modifications and refinements in such secrecy maintained family based occupation are very limited. Such secrecy restricted the growth of Indian Traditional

Medicinal System besides absence of sustained research and development and gradual erosion of knowledge about medicinal plants have contributed to the decline of traditional herbal health care practices.

So, it is very much essential to document such types of practices as it is concerned from the property right point of view. Steps should be taken to enhance these practices, if necessary scope of modification regarding preparation and other aspects should also be given importance.

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