

Ethnobotanical Study of Traditional Medicinal Plants Used by Indigenous Tribal People of Kodagu District, Central Western Ghats, Karnataka, India

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Abstract : Kodagu district which is situated in Central Western Ghats regions falls in one of the hottest of hot spots of biodiversity which is recognised by UNESCO. The district has one of the highest densities of community managed sacred forests in the world with rich floral and faunal diversity. It is a habitat for more than ten different types of Ethnic Indigenous tribal groups commonly called 'Girijanas' (Soligas, Yarvas, Jenukuruba, Bettakuruba etc.), who are having the rich knowledge of medicinal value of the plants that are commonly available in the forest. The tribal men of this region are the treasure house of the traditional plant knowledge and health care practices. An ethnobotanical survey was undertaken in tribal areas of the district to collect information about some of the indigenous medicinal plant knowledge of tribal people by semi-structured interviews, ranking exercises and field observations on their native habitat in order to evaluate the potential medicinal uses of local plants. The study revealed that, the ethnobotanical information of 83 plant species belonging to 45 families, of the total 83 species documented, most plants used in the treatment were trees (11 species), shrubs (41 species), herbs (22 species) and rarely climbers (9 species) which are used in the treatment of Hyperacidity, Respiratory disorders, Snake bite Abortifacient, Anthelmintic, Paralysis, Antiseptic, Fever, Chest pain, Stomachic, Jaundice, Piles, Asthma, Malaria, Renal disorders, Malaria and many other diseases. Maximum of 6 plant species each of Acanthaceae, Apiaceae and were used for drug preparation, followed by Asclepiadaceae, Liliaceae, Fabaceae, Verbenaceae, Caesalpiniaceae, Bombaceae, Papilionaceae, Solanaceae, Rubiaceae, Myrtaceae, Amaranthaceae, Asteraceae, Asclepidaceae, Cucurbitaceae, Apocyanaceae, and Solanaceae etc. In our present study, only medicinal plants and their local medicinal uses are recorded and presented. Information was obtained by local informants having the knowledge about medicinal plants. About 23 local tribes were interviewed. For each plant, necessary information like botanical name, family of plant species, local name and uses are given. Recent trend shows a decline in the number of traditional herbal healers in the tribal areas since the younger generation is not interested to continue this tradition. Hence, there is an urgent need to record and preserve all information on plants used by different ethnic/tribal communities for various purposes before it reaches to verge of extinction. In addition, several wild medicinal plants are declining in numbers due to deforestation and forest fires. There is need for phytochemical analysis and conservation measures to be taken for conserving medicinal plant species which is far better than allopathic medicines and these do not cause any side effects as they are the natural disease healers. So, conservation strategies have to be practiced in all levels and sectors by creating awareness about the value of such medicinal plants, and it is necessary to save the disappearing plants to strengthen the document and to conserve them for future generation.

Keywords : diseases, ethnic groups, folk medicine, Kodagu, medicinal plants

Conference Title : ICETM 2017 : International Conference on Ethnomedicine and Traditional Medicine

Conference Location : Amsterdam, Netherlands

Conference Dates : May 14-15, 2017