

# Ethnomedicinal claims of some botanicals sold by vendors in North Maharashtra (India)

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## Abstract

Ethnobotanical surveys were carried out since June 2008 and information was gained through open discussions and interviews with the tradipractitioners. The present paper deals with the botanicals sold by the vendors in Nasik, Dhule, Nandurbar, Jalgaon and Buldhana districts of North Maharashtra (India). The objective of investigation was to gather and document information on application of botanicals by the tradipractitioners in the region. Presently, 29 plant species belonging to 29 genera and 24 families are being informed. Of these, 21 species are noted for the first time from Indian region. The data accrued is evaluated by cross-cultural comparisons with other Indian claims to bring out veracity and additional claims. These are administered in the form of decoction, infusion, paste, oil, juice, powder, extract, etc. In many applications, they use a sole drug or occasionally supplemented by other botanicals or substances like sugar, honey, oil, cow-ghee, cow, goat-milk, etc. These are administered to combat common diseases such as snake-bite, sperm count, diabetes, sun stroke, eczema, bleeding, body heat, heart problem, rheumatism, stomach complaints, migraine, ulcer, asthma, abdominal pain, whiteness of eyes, sexual power, tooth-ache, menstruation, impotency, leucorrhoea, bone fracture, piles, jaundice, heart attack, etc.

**Keywords:** Ethnomedicine, Vendors, North Maharashtra

## INTRODUCTION

Since time immemorial, medicinal herbs have been crucial in sustaining the health and welfare of mankind. Major section of population especially in developing and underdeveloped nations receive healthcare from bio-sources other than conventional medicines. Our ancients had a profound understanding of healing virtues of plants. They used to apply and test local plants for a range of healthcare. These ancient healing practices are still in practice in a period when various organized systems of medicine are being used worldwide. Their experience has been transmitted orally over centuries. India is one such country having the oldest system of healing. Moreover, tribal and rural communities in India still have their alternatives from indigenous drug selection and application. A literature resume suggests the 'Herbal Vendors' (Jadibutiwalas) and their traditional knowledge about plant drugs has remained unexplored. Their practices have been overlooked in our country. The present paper is an attempt to document their knowledge and experience. The present authors investigated districts of northwestern Maharashtra, the results of which are being published (*cf.* Ahirrao *et al.* 2010). Data on 29 plant species employed for different human afflictions are being presented in this paper.

## METHODOLOGY

The herbal vendors practicing in north Maharashtra are interviewed w.r.t. plant drug, recipe, administration, plant names, precautionary measures and diseases treated are documented. Plants samples, parts or products are purchased / collected and studied scientifically. They are deciphered by using different regional, state and national floras in India. (Cooke, 1958; Naik, 1998; Sharma *et al.* 1996 Singh *et al.* 2000; Patil 2003 and Kshirsagar and Patil 2008) Repeated visits were paid to different villages, towns and cities of North Maharashtra. Information regarding human remedies was recorded. The data gained is based on personal interviews, observations and experiences of vendors in the region. The information is compared with the classical literature (Anonymous, 1948-1976; Ambasta, 1986; Jain, 1991; Watt, 1889-1893; Prajapati, 2006 etc.) Asterisk (\*) to the plant indicate reports in classical literature. Medicinal plants are arranged alphabetically with their botanical names, family, common names, parts used, disease treated along with the formulations, doses and duration. These are presented in the following:

## ENUMERATION

1. *Achyranthes aspera* L. (Amaranthaceae) Aghada : Decoction of roots with honey, one spoon two to three times is advised to a person suffer of snakebite as antidote.
2. \**Albizia stipulata* Boin. (Mimosaceae) Uddali : Tuber powder one spoon with a cup of milk daily at morning is advised for one month to increase sperm count.

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3. *\*Andropogon pumilis* Roxb. (Amarlydiaceae) Bedki-pala: Leaf powder is boiled in water in a copper vessel. Decoction, after cooling, two spoons for one month are advised to diabetic person as a remedy.
4. *\*Barleria montana* Nees (Acanthaceae) Banya : Decoction of roots half cup daily for a week is advised to treat sun stroke.
5. *\*Capparis zeylanica* L. (Capparidaceae) Waghati, Pachangalivel : Leaf paste for seven days is applied against eczema.
6. *\*Careya arborea* Roxb. (Lecythidaceae) Kubha, Kumbhai : Stem bark is crushed in milk, one spoon cow ghee and one spoon leaf powder of *Abrus precatorius* L. is mixed together, and half cup of mixture for four nights is advised to a pregnant woman to control bleeding.
7. *\*Cissus quadrangularis* L. (Vitaceae) Kandvel : Leaf juice, half cup for seven days in morning and evening, is advised orally against diphtheria. Leaf extract is also applied on body to reduce body heat.
8. *\*Citrullus colocynthis* (L.) Schrad. (Cucurbitaceae) Kadu-indrayan : 'Sharbat' is prepared by adding fruit juice and it is administered to a person suffering from breathing complaints and heart problems.
9. *\*Clerodendron serratum* (L.) Moon. Cat. (Verbenaceae) Barandola : Infusion of leaf powder, 1-2 spoonful, is administered for seven nights before sleeping against rheumatism.
10. *\*Clitoria ternatea* L. (Fabaceae), Phandhri-gokarna: 'Churna' is prepared from seed powder by adding jaggery into it. Decoction is prepared and one spoon twice a day for three to four days is administered to a child against stomach complaints and to release stools.
11. *\*Crinum latifolium* L. (Amaryllidaceae) Ran-kanda : (i) Bulb is crushed. Two drops of juice daily twice for seven days are dropped into nose to treat migraine. (ii) Pieces of a bulb are fried in cow-ghee and advised for seven nights to treat ulcer.
12. *\*Cullen corylifolia* (L.) Medik Bhapada, Bhanpancha : Fresh leaves are boiled in black tea and advised daily in morning to treat asthma.
13. *\*Eulophia herbacea* Lindl. (Orchidaceae) : Amarkand, A bulb is crushed in milk, alongwith cardamom, clove, almond, and sugar. 'Khir' is prepared. It is advised for one month to treat abdominal pains.
14. *\*Ficus benhaglensis* L. (Moraceae) Wad : Latex and camphor are mixed and 'anjan' is made. This is applied in morning and evening for three days to control whiteness of eyes.
15. *\*Hemidesmus indicus* L. (Euphorbiaceae) Anantmul : Decoction of roots, 15-20 ml orally in morning and evening for seven days increases sperm count.
16. *\*Holarrhena pubescens* (Buch.-Ham.) Wall. ex G. Don (Apocynaceae) Kala-kaduka : (i) Leaves of this species and leaves of Ashvagandha [*Withania somnifera* (L.) Dunal] are powdered and one spoon powder with water is advised daily in morning and evening for ten days against rheumatism. (ii) Decoction of stem bark, half cup at morning, for a month is advised for a diabetic patient. (iii) Leaf powder is boiled in water containing a copper vessel. Decoction after cooling, two spoons for one month, are advised to a diabetic person as a remedy.
17. *\*Martynia annua* L. (Martyniaceae) Wagnakhi : Stem powder one spoon with a cup of milk, help increase sexual power.
18. *\*Mimosops elengi* L. (Sapotaceae) Bakul : (i) Leaf juice is applied on gums to treat tooth-ache till cure. (ii) Seven seeds are embedded separately in wheat flour (*Triticum aestivum* L.). Seven pellets are prepared. One pellet at night is consumed for seven days prior to menstruation period. This helps to conceive successfully.
19. *\*Nyctanthes arbotristis* L. (Oleaceae) Parijat : Juice of five to seven fresh leaves is mixed with two spoons of sugar. It is advised for thrice a day for three days to treat influenza.
20. *\*Selaginella ciliaris* (Retz.) Spring (Selaginaceae) Sanjeevani: Entire plants are powdered. Half spoon of powder and two fruits of cardamom and clove each and a pinch of turmeric powder is boiled. This decoction is advised for twenty one nights against cough, cold and asthma.
21. *\*Tribulus terrestris* L. (Zygophyllaceae) Gokharu: Fruits of this plant and seeds of *Sesamum orientale* L. are crushed together. This mixture, goat-milk and honey in equal ratio are mixed thoroughly. The mixture, about half cup for twenty one days, is administered to cure impotency.
22. *\*Vernonia cinera* (L.) Less (Asteraceae) Safed-shadar: One spoon leaf powder and half cup of cow-ghee or milk is advised in morning for eleven days to control leucorrhoea.
23. *Blepharis repens* (Vahl) Roth (Acanthaceae) Haadsan : Stem pieces are ground into powder, one spoon powder is mixed in a cup of milk is advised for 21 days to treat bone fracture.
24. *Corchorus depressus* L. (Tiliaceae) Harankhuri : Decoction of leaves of these plant and leaves of *Tectona grandis* L. is taken orally with curd. It reduces body heat.
25. *Gomphrena globosa* L. (Amaranthaceae) Ardh-supari : Seed is rubbed on stone with water. The paste is applied on forehead for four to five nights to treat migraine.
26. *Mirabilis jalapa* L. (Nyctaginaceae) Gulbakshi : Roots are rubbed on stone and paste is applied on anal opening for three nights to break the sprouting peaks of piles.
27. *Phyllanthus amarus* Schumacher & Thorne. (Euphorbiaceae) Bhuivavala : Leaf juice, half cup in morning and evening, is advised for seven days against jaundice.
28. *Pongamia pinnata* (L.) Pierre (Fabaceae) Karanj : Half spoon leaf powder is added in one glass of water and advised to a person in morning and evening against piles till cure. Sour, bitter, pungent and oily food is to be avoided.
29. *Terminalia arjuna* L. (Combretaceae), Arjun-sadada : Bark powder is added in a cup of milk and advised daily in morning and evening for twenty one days to control blood pressure. This treatment prevents heart attack.

## DISCUSSION

The present authors noted some botanicals employed by the vendors to cure various human diseases in north Maharashtra. Presently, botanicals belonging to 29 plant species, 29 genera and 24 families are communicated. All are angiospermic except one, which is a pteridophyte. Comparison of ethnomedicinal claims showed that 26 species form additional reports for India. These are administered in the form of decoction, infusion, paste, oil, ash, juice, powder, extract, slurry, etc. They are also used raw or sometimes simply warmed. In majority of cases, they administer them as a sole

drug or occasionally supplemented by other botanicals or domestic substances like lump-sugar, honey, oil, cow-ghee, cow-urine, etc. They advise these to combat diseases such as rheumatism, arthritis, acidity, scabies, wounds, jaundice constipation, diarrhea, dysentery, cough, menstrual complaints, stomach-ache, tooth-ache, ear-ache, paralysis diabetes, piles, impotency, kidney-stone, dropsy, nocturnal emission, goiter, leucorrhoea, abortion, fever, etc.

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