ABSTRACT: The indigenous medical practices and the herbal system have an important role in the development of modern medicines. The medicinal plants used in this system are locally available, relatively cheap and also safe and effective. This bioresources can be harnessed for the pharmacological investigation in the modern system of medicine.

INTRODUCTION

The Indian region is well known for its native wealth of ethobotanical importance (Arora, 1985). There is a growing interest on the importance of medicinal plants and traditional health practices in solving health care problems. Rana & Chandel (1992) have estimated that the herbal medicine component possess some 1200 plant species of therapeutic value used in the traditional medicine by native population and constitute an important resource with tremendous future prospects. At present, the traditional knowledge which can be used for medicinal and other beneficial purposes is disappearing at an even faster rate than the disappearing of plant species every day throughout the world. The traditional medical practices, although threatened by the modern pharmacopoeia, remain alive, especially among the elderly population, the inventoring and documenting the various plants which are used to treat common diseases among each tribes at the regional and national level is necessary. It will be helpful in tracing of new and underutilised plants as source of medicine and also help to identify the habitats that must be put under strict regulation to foster conservation.

The State of Tamil Nadu (8°5′1-N: 76°15′-80°20′E) harbours a very rich biological diversity and ancient ethnic history. The tribal population of this state are Irular, kadar, kanikaran, kattunayakan, kurumbar, malayali, madhuvan, palliyan, paniyan, sholigas, Thodar and others, the belong to the early groups mainly inhabit the western Ghats, neither isolated nor independent, their economic pursuits being governed by the reciprocal relationship with their neighbors (Nair & Henry, 1983). They have accumulated extensive ethnomedical knowledge by their long association with the diverse plants, this knowledge is an integral of their culture and more deeply roots in its environments.

The ethnobotanical studies were carried out in the unexplored tribal pockets in coimbatore, Madurai, Nilgiris and Tirunelveli hills of southern western Ghats and considerable information as been gathered and documented. The tribes inhabited in these regions are the sole custodian of the wild plant resources and rely on the use of wild plants when they are ill or to keep/enhance their health. All tribes generally recognize the medicinal
value of the plants and aware of the techniques and methods of preparation. There are also a few persons who specialize in treating only a particular diseases. Besides being readily available and inexpensive to collect, severe financial constraints, lack of medicinal facilities and increase in the cost of medicine, still to a great extent the adhere to their native medicines largely using various plants and other ingredients.

**METHODOLOGY**

The data presented there are the out come of a series of intensive and extensive exploration trips over a period of two years. Every attempt was made to locate these plats and voucher specimens were collected. Besides, data on the local names have been collected which vary form place to place and tribe to tribe. All the specimens collected were identified on MH (Madras Herbarium) of southern circle, botanical survey of India, Coimbatore.

**EMUMERATION**

In the enumeration the botanical name of the genus and the species are arranged alphabetically followed b the family name in capital letters. The tribes who use them and finally information on local uses. This information as been gathered from the traditional healers, village heads, particularly for most ancient and knowledgeable inhabitants and these were cross-checked and critically analysed and documented.

1. *Actiniopteris radiate* (S.W.) Link - PTERIDACEAE
   **“MAYIL KAAL PACHCHILAI”**-Palliyan
   Rhizome suberect, subglobose, 1-2 cm, tick densely covered b scales. Te scales ground with a piece of turmeric and boiled in castor oil (*Ricinus communis*) and tat oil applied to bone fracture by palliyan.

2. *Anaphyllum wightii schoot* – ARACEAE “KAARIKILANGU” – Kanikaran
   a tall slender herb in evergreen forests. Te root make into paste applied for snakebite b kanikaran.

3. *Andrographis serphyllifolia* (Vahl) Wight –ACANTHACEAE
   a densely hispid prostrate herbs. The leaf past applied for snakebite by kanikaran.

4. *Anisochilus dysophylloides bent* – LAMIACEAE
   **“CHALINDI VERU CHEDI”** – Irular a stout undershrub in ill regions. The root paste applied on chronic blisters irular.

5. *Artemisia nilagirica* (Clarke) Pamp-ASTERACEAE
   **“PACHCHA POOVU”** palliyan a profusely branched, aromatic bus shrub. The leaf extract orally administered for diarrhoea by palliyan.

6. *Begonia malabarica lam.* – BEGONIACEAE
   **“PAARAIVAATTI”** –Palliyan
   Subshrubby, common in moist forests. The leaf paste applied all over the body for fever b palliyan.

7. *Brugmansia suaveolens* (Willd.) Bercht & presl SOLANACEAE
   **“MALAROOMATHAI”** palliyan
   An evergreen leafy shrub. Dried fruits of capsicum annuum rolled in a white clot smeared with neem oil, kept inside the corolla tube of this flower and smoked for migraine by palliyan.

8. *Canscora diffusa* (Vahl) R.Br. ex Roem & Schult. – GENTIANACEAE
“ARIVAA VETTU PACHCHILAI”- Palliyan
Gregarious erect, profusely branched herb. Leaves ground with a pinch of calcium and the paste applied on cuts for 4 time in 4 days b palliyan.

9. Colocasia esculenta (L) schott- ARACEAE
“SAMBAANGIKEERAI” Palliyan
Perennial thberous herb. Boiled leaves and petiole mixed with cooked rice and eaten for kidney stones b palliyan.

10. Galactia longifolia benth – FABACEAE
“KAAYAPACHCHILAI”-Palliyan
A slender climber. Laves ground with calcium and the pate applied on cuts by palliyan.

11. Lantana indica Roxb- VERBENACEAE
“VELLA PARALAI” Irular
An erect unarmed shrub in hilly regions. Leaf juice administered orally once in the morning to cure fits in children b irular.

12. Impatiens balsamina L. – BALSAMINAEAE
“PODDHAPACHAI”-Palliyan
Succulent herb leafy twig ground with onion and the paste applied on boils b palliyan.

13. Pachygone ovata (Poir) Hook F. & Thoms – MENISPERMACEAE
“ALVASKODI”-Kanikaran
Branched straggler. Leaf paste applied on head and taken bat to reduce body heat b kanikaran

14. Pandanus thwaitesii martelli-PANDANACEAE
“KAITHA” – Kanikaran
A small under shrub in evergreen forests, Tender apical meristem eaten twice a day for 3 days for jaundice by kanikaran.

15. peperomia tetraphylla (forst. F.) Hook & Arm – PIPERACEAE
“ ALIGULCHEDI” Irular
An epiphytic herb leaf juice applied for mouth sores and nasal blisters by irular.

16. Plectranthus urticifolis Hook F.- LAMIACEAE
“PADAPPANTHALAI” –Palliyan
A succulent herbs in hill areas. Leaf extract orally administered by palliyan for boils and blisters.

17. Pyrrosia porosa Hovenkamp- POLYPODIACEAE
“PAARAIPACHAI” –Palliyan
Rhizome stout, creeping upto 5 mm, thick, densely covered by scales. The scales ground with arecanut and onion, applied externally for rheumatism by palliyan.

18. Sansevieria roxburghiana schults & schultes F. – AGAVACEAE
“PAAMBUPIRAI” Kanikaran
A stout fleshy herb. Tubes eaten raw to recover from snake bite by kanikaran. Leaf paste applied on boils and blisters by kanikaran.

19. Sonerila tinnevelliensis fischer- MELASTOMATAEAE “KALPULI” – Kanikaran
An erect undershrub in the ills. Leaf extract orally administered to cure body swelling by kanikaran.

20. Scleria levis Ret. – CYPERACEAE
A tufted perennial. Roots paste diluted in 100 ml of cow’s milk, orally administered 3 to 4 times for dysentery by kadars.

21. *Spermacoce ocyroides* Burm.F. - RUBIACEAE
   “SIRUMULLAI” – Palliyan

Sparsely pubescent, erect herb in hilly regions, leaf paste applied and taken hot water wash for insect sting by palliyan.

22. *Vernonia albicans* DC. – ASTERACEAE
   “SIRU SANGA CHEDI” – Palliyan

A white tomentos undershrub in open forests in hills. Leaves ground with a pinch of calcium and the paste applied on burns by palliyan.

23. *V. anthelminticum* (L) Wild – ASTERACEAE
   “KATTU SEERAGAM” – Irular

A large erect annual. Leaf powder used for snakebite by irular.

24. *Nephrolepis auriculata* (L) TRIMEN - NEPHROLEPIDACEAE
   “MOOTHIRA KILANGU” – Palliyan
Rhizome erect, about 2 cm thick fresh rhizome eaten as diuretic by palliyan.

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