ABSTRACT

The present paper represents the results of an ethnobotanical survey conducted in Mundakunnu village of Gudalur taluk, Nilgiri district of Tamil Nadu, India. It has been observed that the plant species are used to various ailments of analgesic, antidiarrhoeal, piles, antidiabetic, gynecological problems, vermifuge, antifungal, venereal diseases, bone fracture and as vegetables. A total of 52 plants species belonging to 51 genera (33 dicot & 6 monocot) have been discussed.

Key Words: Mundakunnu, Gudalur Taluk, Paniya Tribes, the Nilgiris, Tamilnadu, ethnobotany.

INTRODUCTION:

The Nilgiris is situated North of Mysore and East of Coimbatore and lies at 11º 24’ North Lat. and 76º 44’ East long. The Nilgiris is the meeting place of their important mountain system eg: the Western Ghats, the Eastern Ghats and the Southern Ghats. There are different types of vegetations, which are evergreen forests, mountain shola forests, moist deciduous forests, dry deciduous forests with bamboo grass lands, savannah woodland and shrub savannah. The soil types are commonly clay and clay-loan. The region experiences an average minimum and maximum temperature of 10.4 ºC and 18.4 ºC respectively.

The present investigation was undertaken with a view to study the traditional uses of plants by Paniyas especially distributed in Gudalur Taluk. Accordingly to 2001 census, the total population of Paniya tribes was 7,460 (Anonymous, 2001). During the recent past some medico-botanical studies from the Nilgiri district have been made by Abraham, (1981); Cyrilnayagam, (1998); Hosagowder & Henry, (1996); Rajan, (1992) and Sashi Kumar et al., (2001). The present investigation was carried out Mundakunnu (Gudalur Taluk) Paniya settlement. Normally Paniya tribes dwell in border of the forests. The Paniyas are a short dark skinned tribe with broad noses and such curly hair. They speak corrupt patios of Tamil and Malayalam, live the dirty little huts made of bamboo wattle plastered with mud and thatched with grass.

METHODOLOGY:

During the field trips discussions were held with experienced tribal medicine man.
The information’s were collected from elderly persons, who still remember some of the medicinal plants which have started vanishing due to their access to modern medicines. The field trips were conducted between November 2002 -April 2003. The collected plants were identified by comparing authentic herbarium of Survey of Medicinal Plants and Collection Unit, Udhagamandalam. The herbarium sheets were deposited at the Herbarium, Department of Botany, Government Arts College, Udhagamandalam for future reference. The plants are arranged as per the alphabet. Each plant botanical name is followed with citation, vernacular name, herbarium number, family, a short description of plants and their medicinal uses were also described.

TRADITIONAL MEDICINAL PLANTS AND THEIR USEAGES:

**Acorus calamus** Linn. Vasambu, 012. [Cyperaceae] Creeping herb, flowers white, common. Rhizomes are used in epilepsy and itching. The rhizome is crushed and applied on forehead to get relief from headache.

**Adatoda zeylanica** Nees. Adatoda, 015. [Acanthaceae] A shrub, flowers cream white, common. The leaves are boiled with water for bathing to relieving body pain. The Leaves are used to cures asthma.

**Allium cepa** Linn. Velluli, 032. [Liliaceae] Bulbous herbs, flowers white, cultivated. The bulb past is mixed with (q-s) salt. The paste is used for cure stomachache.

**Allium sativum** Linn. Mulluli, 038. [Liliaceae] Bulbous herbs, flowers white, cultivated. Rhizome paste is taken internally for arresting whooping cough.

**Anacardium occidentale** Linn. Athemankae, 043. [Anacardiaceae] A small tree, flowers greenish with red stripes, cultivated. The seeds are roasted and eaten. Locally washer man use the fruit as a marking ink.

**Anisochilus carnosus** Wall. Karpooravalli, 026. [Lamiaceae] A herb, flowers purple, common. The leaf juice is used by the Paniyas to cure whooping cough.

**Annona squamosa** Linn. Seethapazham, 02. [Annonaceae] A shrub or tree, flowers greenish yellow, common. The root paste is taken internally as a remedy for snakebite.

**Areca catechu** Linn. Adikamara, 072. [Areceae] A tall tree, flowers unisexual, yellow, cultivated. The seed is used a masticatory.

**Basella rubra** Linn. Kodipasalai, 058. [Basellaceae] A climbing herb, flowers white or red, common. The leaves are cooked and given to pregnant women to decrease the hip pain during child birth.

**Bauhinia variegata** Linn. Mantharam, 046. [Caesalpiniaceae] A deciduous tree, flowers light pink, upper one dark variegated, cultivated. Flowers are cooked, which is considered effective against diarrhoea. Root bark Is used for ulcers and leprosy.

**Brassica juncea** (L.) Hook. Bettagida, 013. [Brassicaceae] A herb, flowers yellow, cultivated. The root paste is applied on forehead to cure fever and headache.

**Bryophyllum pinnatum** Kurt. Makarani, 023. [Crassulaceae] A herb, flowers greenish, common. The leaf juice is taken internally for cough.

**Calotropis gigantea** (L.) R. Br. Erakku, 048. [Asclepiadaceae] A branched erect shrub, flowers white-purplish, common. The latex is applied on corn region (thorn) for quicken healing.
Canna indica Linn. Kovae, 064. [Cannaceae] A herb with tuberous root stock, flowers bright red, common. The tubers are used as vegetables.

Carica papaya Linn. Papali, 078. [Caricaceae] A small tree, flowers yellow, cultivated. Milky juice of unripe fruits is used for skin diseases.

Centella asiatica Urban. Vallarai, 060. [Apiaceae] A slender creeper herb, flowers pink, common. The leaf paste is taken as tonic for improving memory. The whole plant paste is useful in syphilis, skin diseases.

Chenopodium album Linn. Peruppuseegae, 033. [Chenopodiaceae] A sub shrub, flowers green, cultivated. The cooked leaves are eaten as purgative.

Clematis gouriana Roxb. Elivallu, 088. [Ranunculaceae] A climber, flowers white, rare. The leaves are crushed and applied on the wounds for quicken healing.

Cocos nucifera Linn. Thangamara, 092. [Arecales] A tree, flowers unisexual, yellow, cultivated. Coconut oil is mixed with root paste of Berberis tinctoria is useful for paralysis. The fibres of the pericarp are used for cordage and matting.

Curcuma longa Linn. Manjal, 08. [Zingiberaceae] A herb, flowers pale yellow, cultivated. Rhizome paste is used as antiseptic when applied to sprains and wounds. It is applied for skin diseases.

Cymbopogon flexuosus (Steud.) Wats. Thylapillu, 076. [Gramineae] Perennial slender herb, flowers gray green to pale yellow, rare. Oil extracted from these leaves is used to cure headache.

Cynodon dactylon Pers. Arugampillu, 056. [Poaceae] A perennial slender creeping prostrate herb, flowers green or purplish, common. The leaf juice is used to cure stomachache. Leaf paste is applied on wounds and scabies for rapid healing.

Dalbergia latifolia Roxb. Eatti, 095. [Dalbergiaceae] A tree, flowers white, wild. The eastern side bark of the stem is found with milk, filtered extract is taken to get rid of severe skin diseases.

Datura stramonium Linn. Umathu, 049. [Solanaceae] A small shrub, flowers white, common. The leaf paste is applied on the swollen part of body to reduce swelling and pain.

Elettaria cardamomum (L.) Maton. Ellakai, 025. [Zingiberaceae] A herb, flowers white, cultivated. Seeds are used as condiments. Seed powder is mixed with tea decoction, taken Internally to induce appetite.

Emblica officinalis Geartn. Kattunelli, 029. [Euphorbiaceae] A tree, flowers white, wild. Dried crushed fruit is to be soaked in 25 ml. of water for the whole night. The filtered juice is taken orally in morning as a refrigerant. The imbibed fruit is ground and the paste is applied on head for curing headache.

Eucalyptus globulus Labill. Kalpuramara, 017. [Myrtaceae] A lofty tree with aromatic plant parts, flowers white, wild. The leaves are pounded and boiled in water. The concentrated decoction is applied externally to cure headache and fever.

Hemidesmus indicus R. Br. Magali, 085. [Euphorbiaceae] A herb, flowers yellow or purple, rare. Root decoction is administered orally to reduce heat in body and as refrigerant.

Hydrocotyle asiatica Linn. Gottala, 102. [Apiaceae] A prostrate herb, flowers red,
common. The leaves are crushed and dipped in river or water bodies rich with fishes, so that the fishes become unconscious and are easily caught. The whole plant extract is taken and kept on tooth to get rid of toothache.

**Lawsonia inermis** Linn. *Mylangi*, 109. [Lythraceae] A shrub, flowers yellowish, common. The leaf paste is applied on corn region to reduce pain.

**Linumphila heterophylla** (Roxb.) Benth. *Nerugida*, 059. [Scrophulariaceae] An erect herb, flowers purple, common. The plant leaves are crushed with coconut oil and applied on the wound to Quicken healing.

**Leucas aspera** (Willd.) Link. *Thumbae*, 081. [Lamiaceae] A herb, flowers white, common. Leaf paste is applied externally in psoriasis, chronic skin eruptions and painful swellings. Flower paste is given with honey for cough and colds. The whole plant paste is applied on cattle wounds for quick healing.

**Ludwigia octovalvis** (Jacq.) Raven. *Karamigida*, 045. [Onagraceae] An undershrub, flowers yellow, common. The whole plant paste is applied externally as a remedy for venereal diseases.

**Mimosa pudica** Linn. *Thottavadi*, 010. [Mimosaceae] An undershrub, flowers pink, common. The root paste is given to scrofula. It is recommended to snakebite and scorpion sting.

**Momordica charantia** Linn. *Kaippanakai*, 037. [Cucurbitaceae] A slender annual herb, flowers yellowish red, cultivated. The whole plant paste is applied externally to scabies and other cutaneous Diseases. The fruit juice is given orally as vermifuge. Male flowers in catkin-like spikes. Female flowers in short ovoid spikes, cultivated. The stem bark paste is used as purgative and vermifuge.

**Murraya paniculata** Linn. *Chedimaram*, 022. [Rutaceae] A shrub, flowers white, wild. The leaf paste is used to treat bone fracture. The equal amount of leaves with root barks is crushed. The paste is taken internally as a cure for paralysis.

**Ocimum sanctum** Linn. *Thulasi*, 021. [Lamiaceae] An erect, branched undershrub, flowers white, common. The juice of 4 leaves is mixed with honey and lime water, given for 25-30 days in an empty stomach for abortion (within two months pregnancy).

**Oxalis corniculata** Linn. *Pulichanseegae*, 075. [Oxalidaceae] A diffuse annual herb, flowers yellow, common. The whole plant paste is used for curing dyspepsia, and piles. The leaf paste is applied externally as antidandruff. The leaves are chewed to arrest chronic cough.

**Passiflora edulis** Sims. *Covaikodi*, 105. [Passifloraceae] Lianous with axillary tendrils, flowers white or yellow, common. Fruit is edible. The green leaves are crushed and applied on swellings for quick Remedy.

**Phyllanthus rheedi** Wt. *Araenalli*, 086. [Euphorbiaceae] A slender branching erect herb, flowers greenish, common. The root paste is internally taken as a cure for jaundice.

**Portulaca oleracea** Linn. *Kannae*, 082. [Portulacaceae] A prostrate herb, flowers yellow, common. The leaves are cooked and eaten as a remedy for vermifuge.

**Psidium guajava** Linn. *Koyyapazham*, 019. [Myrtaceae] An evergreen small tree, flowers white, common. The leaf decoction is taken orally as antidysentric and anti-
diarrhoeal. The young Leaves are ground with buffalo milk and taken internally for burning sensation of stomach.

**Santalum album** Linn. *Sannamara*, 098. [Santalaceae] A tall tree, flowers brownish purple, rare. Seed oil is used in skin troubles. The wood powder is used as refrigerant.

**Sida cordata** Burm. f. *Arattae*, 090. [Malvaceae] A subshrub, flowers pale yellow, common. The paste of flower and fruit along with sugar is taken orally for burning sensation in stomach. The leaf paste is used as a local shampoo.

**Solanum indicum** Linn. *Barhanta*, 044. [Solanaceae] An armed shrub, flowers white, common. The root paste is used as a treatment against blood vomiting. The fried fruit powder is kept in mouth to cure mouth ulcer and toothache.

**Stephania japonica** Miers. *Bettali kodi*, 065. [Menispermaceae] A slender twinning glabrous herb, flowers greenish yellow, common. The root decoction is useful in spermatorrhoea. Hot infusion of root mixed with Ginger powder is orally administered for piles and dysentery.

**Syzygium jambolanum** DC. *Novalpazham*, 051. [Myrtaceae] A large tree, flowers white, common. The stem bark paste is taken orally for sore throat, dysentery and ulcer. The fruit is given for purifying blood. The fresh juice of bark with goad milk is given as antidiarrhoeal. The seed powder mixed with *Salvia officinalis* leaf is given as antidiabetic.

**Tectona grandis** Linn. *Theku*, 055. [Verbenaceae] A woody tree, flowers yellow, common. The stem bark is powdered and mixed with water, given to women at the time of delivery to reduce hip pain.

**Vernonia conyzoides** Wt. *Communista*, 063. [Asteraceae] A shrub, flowers pink, wild. The crushed leaves are applied on wounds to arrest bleeding.

**Zingiber officinale** Rose. *Ingi*, 035. [Zingiberaceae] A perennial herb, flowers yellow, cultivated. Rhizome paste is ground with pepper is given for abortion.

**Zizyphus jujuba** Lamk. *Elenthapazham*, 079. [Rhamnaceae] A much branched erect shrub, flowers white, common. Stem bark paste is applied externally as an antidote to aconite poison and for abdominal pain in pregnancy women. A spoonful of powdered cotyledon is mixed with butter milk is administered internally twice a day to cure jaundice.

**DISCUSSION:**

In India the medicinal flora is very rich. Many tribal populations have a deep faith on herbal drugs. The present survey records herbal plants used by the Paniya tribe of Nilgiri district. Most of the drugs are prepared from the wild plants. Most preparations are used internally or applied externally in the form of paste, infusion and decoctions. A detailed pharmacological research is required to determine the effective active principles and biological activities of aforesaid herbal plants.

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