RESEARCH ARTICLE

Medicinal Plants in Local Health Traditions (LHTs): Dharmanagar Sub-division, Tripura, India

N Shiddamallayya1, Binod B Dora2, Anjana Janardhanan3, Gyati Anku4, T Borah5, Ashish K Tripathi6, Chinmay Rath7, Anupam K Mangal8, Narayanan Srikanth9, Kartar S Dhiman10

ABSTRACT

Aim: Tripura is a small state of the northeastern part of India. The floral biodiversity is playing an important role in the traditional system of treatment in tribal and rural population. The research pertaining to the use of medicinal plants in ethnomedicobotany and formulations of study area is limited. The Medico Ethno Botanical Survey (MEBS) team of Regional Ayurveda Research Institute (RARI), Itanagar, documented the local health traditions (LHTs) from traditional healers of rural and tribal pockets of Dharmanagar sub-division, North district, Tripura.

Materials and methods: The MEBS has been conducted in tribal pockets and villages of Dharmanagar Range, Damchera Range, and Paniagar Ranges of Dharmanagar sub-division of Forest, North Tripura district, Tripura. Local health traditions (LHTs) were documented through discussion and interview with traditional healers in the prescribed format along with global positioning system (GPS) location and digital photography of healer and plant raw drugs used in the traditional medicine and also prepared formulations. Medicinal plants were identified by using local and regional flora followed by processing, mounting, and preservation. Documented information has been processed for scientific validation and Ayurvedic names were provided to medicinal plants.

Results and discussion: The MEBS conducted and documented six folk claims with six medicinal plants in prescribed formats to conserve traditional knowledge. The data presented systematically as botanical name, family, Sanskrit name, part used, morphological description of the plant, method of formulation, indication, and information of folk healer.

Conclusion: Folk healers of Dharmanagar sub-division, Tripura collects and use medicinal plants from surrounding area in the treatment of Sarpa Danstra (snake bite), Kamala (jaundice), Stanyajanan (galactagogue), Udasarala (acute abdomen), Alpamaturata (oliguria), and Vrana (fresh wound) popularly. Further, scientific validation is required to understand the useful therapeutic benefits and large-scale medicine production for the treatment.

Clinical significance: The MEBS team noticed that some medicinal plants are used in the treatment of human diseases, such as Alstonia scholaris (L.) R. Br. in snake bite, Cuscuta reflexa Roxb. in jaundice, Euphorbia herita L. in galactagogue, Scoparia dulcis L. in acute abdomen, Sida acuta Burm. f. for oliguria, and Mikania micrantha Kunth for fresh wound. These plants need to be studied in detail in order to harvest the maximum benefit for the mankind.

Keywords: Dharmanagar, Folk claim, MEB survey, Traditional, Tripura.

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INTRODUCTION

Health is an important index for a society toward the development of nation. Individually, as family, and as a society together contribute toward a healthy nation. Local lifestyle regimens and biodiversity of the study area have a greater impact on the habitants and human life. Treatment of health disorders by the traditional system is playing an important role in tribal and rural population. The traditional Indian system of treating diseases is considerably cheap and economic. Most of the herbs used in the single or compound drug formulations are collected from the surrounding forest. The area selected for study was ruled by several emperors and the name of Dharmanagar is from the name of zamindar Dharmajeet Singh under the king of Tripura. About 70% of the geographical areas are comprised with the hilly terrain covered by dense forests and about 25% are plain area. The terrain is mostly undulating, hilly with small water streams, rivers, and fertile valleys. Forest is an integral part of the local population. The usage of fresh and wildly available medicinal herbs from the foothills of Dharmanagar is unique in its action. The use of genuine plant materials is an important factor for the treatment of diseases and maintaining good health.

Tripura is a small landlocked state belonging to the northeastern part of India. Varied tribes of Tripura live in the foothills of the forests and depend on the flora and fauna for medications, food, shelter, and ritual practices. Dharmanagar is in strategic location and well connected with different parts of Tripura state. It is vital to ensure the medicinal flora that popularly benefits a large group of population for the treatment in health issues.

Several studies have been conducted to explore the traditional knowledge on healing practices of tribal and rural people of Tripura.
Documentation of 19 herbs used in the treatment gastrointestinal disorders and anti hemorrhagic by tribes namely Halam, Tripuri and Chakma tribes of North Tripura. Naturally origin 48 folk medicinal plants are used to treat different disease conditions by using 20 single and 28 compound formulations by the rural traditional healers of North district, Tripura.

Reports on the Medico Ethno Botanical Survey (MEBS) in the remote hills, forests, and rural areas of Tripura and collected information from tribes regarding antifertility, pain, and fever by using medicinal plants are available in their surrounding forests. Similarly, listing and preliminary documentation of medicinal plants used by tribes for the treatment of human illness and suffering has been also noticed. Some researchers worked with the Tripuri, Reang, Chakma, Manipuri, and Koloi tribal communities and enlisted the medicinal plants used for the treatment of various human health disorders. Few researchers from scientific community have conducted the ethnomedicinal survey and enlisted medicinal plants with the uses and formulations used by the tribal, nontribal, and rural populace of Tripura state.

Reviews of research pertaining to the documentation of ethnomedicinal plants and formulations of Dharmanagar, Tripura state, is not in detail in respect of medicinal plants. Therefore, the Regional Ayurveda Research Institute (RARI), Itanagar, conducted MEBS to document the LHT from traditional healers of rural and tribal pockets of Dharmanagar forest sub-division of North district for the present study.

Study Area
The study area is predominantly covered with mountains and valleys and has a stable climate throughout the year. The mountain ranges to the north experience heavy rainfall and in the south it falls close to the coastal area. Currently, the geography of the district is surrounded by Karimganj district of Assam in east, Unakoti district in the west, Bangladesh in the north, and Mizoram in the south. Dharmanagar sub-division of North Tripura lies in 24° 22' 0.01" N and 92° 10' 0.01" E (Fig. 1).

Materials and Methods
A systematic MEBS has been conducted during the period of 2018–19 to document the local health traditions (LHT) in tribal pockets and villages of Churaibari and Sanicheraa forest beats of Tripura district.
Dharamanagar Range, Rahum Chera and Khedachera forest beats of Damchera Range, and Bagbassa and Haplang forest beats of Panisagar Ranges of Dharmanagar sub-division of Forest, North Tripura district, Tripura.

The information was collected and documented through discussion and interview with available traditional healers in the study area as per the LHTs format provided by the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India, along with global positioning system (GPS) location and digital photography of the healer with name and address, plant raw drugs used in the traditional medicine, and prepared formulation. Collected medicinal plants were identified by using digital photographs of a plant, local and regional flora, and provided with description. The nomenclature of plant species was updated as per the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature (ICBN) principles and rules. Identified specimens were processed, mounted, and preserved in internationally recognized herbarium with the acronym of ARRI (Ayurveda Regional Research Institute) at Regional Ayurveda Research Institute, Itanagar, and nomenclature of species updated as per the ICBN principles and rules. Ayurvedic names have been provided to the plants collected and diseases with reference to the classical literature. The collected folk claims were validated with the classical and scientific literature.

**Results**

Medico Ethno Botanical Survey was conducted to document the LHT through interview of traditional healers in tribal and non-tribal habitats and documented 6 folk claims with 6 medicinal plants in prescribed formats to conserve traditional knowledge. The collected data have been presented systematically and are self-explanatory as botanical name, family, Sanskrit name, part used, morphological description of the plant, method of preparation, dose and duration, indication, and information of folk healer.
### Euphorbia hirita L. (Acc. No. ARRI-3064; GPS data: 25° 58’ 27” N 91° 32’ 95” E)

**Family:** Euphorbiaceae  
**Sanskrit name:** Bala (bheda)  
**Part used:** Whole plant  
**Indication:** Stanyojanana (galactagogue)  

**Morphological description of the plant:** Annual herb, hispid with long often yellowish, crisped hairs, stems terete, ascending branches, quadrangular, leaves opposite, inflorescence with many mane male florets are surrounded with female florets in involucres at axillary or terminal, minute capsules, reddish brown seeds.

**Method of preparation, dose, and duration:** Whole plant is used to prepare 100 mL decocotion by adding water. Decocotnion is orally administered three times a day for 4 days.

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### Saptaparni A. Wight & Arn. (Acc. No. ARRI-3851; GPS data: 24° 22’ 00” N 92° 13’ 42” E)

**Family:** Apocynaceae  
**Sanskrit name:** Bala (bheda)  
**Part used:** Whole plant  
**Indication:** Stanyojanana (galactagogue)  

**Morphological description of the plant:** Perennial herb with rootless and leafless twining parasite, long stem with yellowish, rough; branches whorled; young branchlets copiously lenticellate, flowers greenish-white, fruit with two long follicles, seeds oblong with brown hairs at both ends.

**Method of preparation, dose, and duration:** Fresh root bark is grounded with water to prepare required quantity of fine paste. This is applied for half an hour. Similarly, the root is also used to prepare 50 mL fresh juice, which is administered orally, three times in first hour.

**Information of folk healer:** Porsat Bum Halam, Age-96, Male, Zoitang, Panisagar Range, North Tripura District.

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### Mikania micrantha Kunth (Acc. No. ARRI-2760; GPS data: 25° 39’ 18” N 94° 09’ 14” E)

**Family:** Compositae  
**Sanskrit name:** Vrana  
**Part used:** Leaf  
**Indication:** Udarasula (acute abdomen)  

**Morphological description of the plant:** Annual, glabrous, extensive, twiner, leaves ovate-triangulate, petiolate, pubescent, heads four flowered at axil, white, achnes blackish-brown, pappus reddish.

**Method of preparation, dose, and duration:** Quantity sufficient fresh leaves are used to prepare fine paste and applied on affected area for every 2 hours till the wound heals.

**Information of folk healer:** Abdul Basir, Age-41, Male, Halflong Beat, Panisagar Range, North Tripura District.

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### Scoparia dulcis L. (Acc. No. ARRI-3754; GPS data: 24° 15’ 05” N 92° 15’ 28” E)

**Family:** Plantaginaceae  
**Sanskrit name:** Alpamutrata (scoliosis)  
**Part used:** Root  
**Indication:** Alupah (scoliosis)  

**Morphological description of the plant:** Annual erect much branched under shrub, hairy, simple opposite glandular leaf with short petiole, small white flowers at axillary or racemose. Capsule globose, many angled seeds.

**Method of preparation, dose, and duration:** Decocition is prepared with fresh leaves and 100 mL is administered orally once daily for 3 days before food.

**Information of folk healer:** Lalchung Monihalan, Age-39, Male, Zoitang, Panisagar Range, North Tripura District.

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### Mikania schirastis Kunth (Acc. No. ARRI-3616; GPS data: 25° 39’ 18” N 94° 09’ 14” E)

**Family:** Malvaceae  
**Sanskrit name:** Bala (bheda)  
**Part used:** Leaf  
**Indication:** Khobhah (snake bite)  

**Morphological description of the plant:** Annual, under shrub, branched, hairy, leaves linear, serrate, glabrous on both sides, flowers at axil, two to three in cluster, fruit 5–6 mm, toothed on the dorsal margin, two awns, seeds smooth and black.

**Method of preparation, dose, and duration:** Fresh leaves are used to prepare decoction and 100 mL of prepared decoction administered orally thrice daily before food for 1 week.

**Information of folk healer:** Lalchung Monihalan, Age-39, Male, Thangnang, Panisagar Range, North Tripura District.
DISCUSSION

Plants have their own phytochemical properties and play a very important role in curing of various health disorders. Alstonia scholaris (L.) R. Br. (Saptaparni) is having properties like tikta, kasaya rasa, laghu and snigdha guna, usna virya and katu vipaka used as kushthagña and raktoosadhaka.26 The plant has shown antivenom activity in the recent research work.22,28 Thereby, this plant is used in the cases of snake bite.

The Sida acuta Burm. f. (Bala bheda) is tridosahara, deepona, sothahara, and useful in fever, daha (burning sensation of the body). It is regarded as sheeta, kasaya rasa pradhaana and useful in nervous and urinary diseases.29 The plant is reported for its antiurolithic activity in animal model.30 Therefore, this plant is helpful in the cases of oliguria.

Similarly, the herb Cuscuta reflexa Roxb. (Amaravela) is bitter in taste, expectorant, carminative, anthelmintic, purgative, and diuretic. It purifies the blood and cleanses the body. It reduces inflammation (Sotha) and useful in jaundice (Yokrit vikara) and pain in the muscle and joints.31 It is proved that the plant is having hepatoprotective activity by using the animal model.32 It is widely used in diseases of the liver and spleen as it acts on blood.

The plant Euphorbia hirta L. (Dugdhika) is chiefly used by nursing mothers when the production of milk is inadequate.33 An aqueous extract of the plant has been studied on the animal model to establish the galactagogue effect.33 Healers commonly refer this plant to increase the lactation.

The herb Scoparia dulcis L. decoction is used in the acute abdomen.31 The ethanolic extract of whole herb of Scoparia dulcis L. and Ficus racemosa L. showed the analgesic activity in Swiss albino mice. This study helps to confirm the treatment of the acute abdomen.34

The Mikania micrantha Kunth is widely used in the treatment of fresh wounds. It may be due to its anticoagulation and granulation properties.35 The experimental study of fibroblast cells by the starch assay and external application of the ointment prepared from leaf juice powder with Vaseline (1:1 w/w) have shown wound healing activity.36,37

CONCLUSION

The use of medicinal plant in traditional healing by the folk healers of Dharmanagar, Tripura, is very scattered and plants found are very common in revenue and forest lands. These are used in treatment of Sarpa Danstra (snake bite), Kamala (jaundice), Stanyajanjan (Galactagogue), Udarasula (acute abdomen), Alpamutrata (oliguria), and Vrana (fresh wound) popularly. Apart from Mikania micrantha Kunth, remaining plants are referred in the classical literature. Many more research work has been carried out on selected medicinal plants. A very limited study has been carried out on luxuriantly growing wild weed plants. This is the time to find the alternative source of raw drugs to the pharmaceutical industry to meet the required demand of the medicine. It is necessary to study listed medicinal plants scientifically to validate the claim mentioned by the healers to reach all needy population.

CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The MEBS team noticed that some medicinal plants are used in the treatment of human diseases, such as Alstonia scholaris (L.) R. Br. in snake bite, Cuscuta reflexa Roxb. in jaundice, Euphorbia hirta L. in galactagogue, Scoparia dulcis L. in acute abdomen, Sida acuta Burm. f. for oliguria, and Mikania micrantha Kunth for fresh wound. These plants are to be studied in detail in order to harvest the maximum benefit for the mankind.

The scientific validation of these medicinal plants may help as a primary or substitute for rare and endangered medicinal plants in preparation of disease-specific formulations.

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हिंदी सारांश

स्थानीय स्वास्थ्य परंपराओं (एलएचटी) में औषधीय पदार्थ: धरमनगर उप-भाग, त्रिपुरा, भारत

उद्देश्य: त्रिपुरा भारत के पूर्वोत्तर भाग का एक छोटा सा राज्य है। आदिवासी और ग्रामीण जनसंख्या में उपचार की पारंपरिक पद्धति में पूष्प विविधता एक महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाती है। अध्ययन के प्रजातीयचिकित्सा पद्धति और औषधीय के पारंपरिक चिकित्सकों के उपचार करने के लिए अनुसंधान सीमित है। लेकिन आयुर्वेद अनुसंधान संस्थान (आरएआरएआई), इंदौरगर और ग्रामीण जनसंख्या के पारंपरिक चिकित्सकों से स्थानीय स्वास्थ्य परंपराओं (एलएचटी) का प्रलेखन किया।

सामग्री और विधियां: एमईबीएस ने धरमनगर उप-भाग , त्रिपुरा जिला, त्रिपुरा के धरमनगर रेंज, दमथा रेंज और वादिसगरेंज के आदिवासी क्षेत्रों और गाँवों में सर्वेक्षण किया। स्थानीय स्वास्थ्य परंपराओं (एलएचटी) का प्रलेखन एक विनिर्देश प्राप्त में ग्लोबल पोर्टलिंग प्रोजेक्ट के में प्रयुक्त भाषा अनुवाद और निभाती औषधीय के साथ पारंपरिक चिकित्सकों के विचार-विषयों की साक्षात्कार और व्यापक संस्थान के माध्यम से किया गया। पारंपरिक कार्य, माउंटिंग और संस्करण के साथ-साथ स्थानीय और लेखनीय पुष्प का प्रयोग कर औषधीय पदार्थों के पहचान की गई। वैज्ञानिक विषयवस्तुक्रमण के लिए प्रलेखित जानकारी को भेज दिया गया। पारंपरिक औषधीय पदार्थों का आयुर्वेदिक नाम दिए गए।

परिणाम और विचार-विषय: एमईबीएस ने पारंपरिक प्रभावों को संरक्षित करने के लिए विनिर्देश प्राप्त में छह लोक दावों के साथ छह औषधीय पदार्थों का सर्वेक्षण किया और उनका प्रलेखन किया। आंकड़ों में वानतरणामी नाम, कुल, संक्षेप मान, प्रयुक्त भाषा, पदार्थ का मोर्फोलॉजिकल विवरण, औषधीय की विधि, चिकित्सकीय उपयोग और लेखक चिकित्सक की जानकारी दर्शित रूप से दी गई।

निष्कर्ष: धरमनगर उप-भाग, त्रिपुरा के लेखनीय कस्तुर के नुमत्वत्व सर्प दंश (स्लेक बाइट) और कामाता (जोडित) स्तन्यजनन (ग्लेटाटोगोमा), अलसपुर (एक्सुट अडोमेना), अलपुद्ध (अल्लिगुरिया) और तन (फ्रेश थूड) के उपचार के लिए आस - पास के रूप से स्थानीय पदार्थों को एकत्रित किया और उनका प्रयोग किया। इसके अतिरिक्त , उपचार के लिए सामाजिक चिकित्सकीय लामों और व्यापक पैमाने पर औषध उत्पादों को समझने के लिए वैज्ञानिक विषयवस्तुक्रमण की आवश्यकता है।

नैदानिक प्रारंभिकता: एमईबीएस दूर ने यह देखा कि कुछ औषधीय पदार्थों का प्रयोग मानव रूपों में सर्पमाण एवं वायुस्थितिया स्कोर्टरिसिस (एल.) और मूर्तियों के लिए कस्तुर का रोशनक्रम, स्तन्यजनन के लिए मूवरबिया हॉरिट एल., उदरशुल के लिए अलसपुर अकांसिस एल., अलपुद्ध के लिए सिटो एक्स्युटा एल., और तन के लिए निफारनिया निफारन एल के उपचार में किया गया। मानवता के अधिकतम लाभ के लिए इन पदार्थों के अध्ययन को विस्तार में किया जाने की आवश्यकता है।

मुख्य शब्द: धरमनगर, लोक दावा, एमईबीएस, सर्वेक्षण, पारंपरिक, त्रिपुरा।