

Ethnomedicobotanical uses of endemic and RET plants utilised by the *Korku* tribe of Amravati district, Maharashtra

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Ethnomedicobotanical uses of 13 plant species belonging to 12 families used by the *Korku* tribe are given with their botanical name, local name and family. Efforts for their conservation, cultivation and afforestation for sustainable utilization of such plants in future have also been discussed.

Keywords: Ethnobotany, Ethnomedicine, *Korku* tribes, Maharashtra

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Amravati district situated towards the North-eastern side in Maharashtra lies between latitudes 21°15'–21°45' N, and longitudes 76°57'–77°33' E in the eastern Satpura ranges (Fig. 1). This part is also known as Melghat and consists of hills and valleys showing much variation in the gradient and altitude. The area also harbours the Melghat Tiger Reserve (MTR), which is distributed in two talukas, namely Achalpur and Chikhaldara of Amravati district with 2027.41 Km² of the total area in the Gavilgarh hills of Satpura¹. The floristic study of this area has been worked; the forests in this region are of dry deciduous type¹⁻⁴. The district is predominantly recognized by tribals such as *Korku*, *Gond*, *Nihal*, *Gawali* and *Gavlan*, of which the population of *Korku* tribes is the major one. Traditional healers in the *Korku* tribes are known as *Bhumka*'s. *Korku*'s are still dependent on the medicinal plants for their primary healthcare and treatment of various diseases. Earlier surveys reveal the practice of local herbal medicine by the *Korku*'s and other tribes of the Melghat area⁵⁻⁸. Ethnopharmacognostic study and use of some plants for antisterility and urinogenital disorders are available⁹⁻¹¹.

The aim of the study was to evaluate medicinal uses of plants used by the *Korku* tribes in their traditional practice and focus on the endemic and RET (Rare, Endangered and Threatened) plants occurring in the study area utilized by the *Korku* tribes in ethnomedicine¹²⁻¹⁵. Efforts have been made to create awareness among the *Korku*'s for the need of conservation and sustainable utilization of endemic and RET plant species. Cultivation of some important plant species that are endemic and in RET category has also been initiated with the help of *Korku* tribes and the state forest department for the conservation and afforestation programme (Figs 2-8).

Methodology

The ethnobotanical surveys were carried out since February 2000 to May 2004. Field trips were organized in different tribal villages and forest areas at regular intervals in all the three seasons. The local, efficient, knowledgeable individuals (*Korku*'s) cum mediators were identified in order to understand and collect the traditional information of the medicinal plants, which are endemic and in RET category, from the traditional healers *Bhumkas*. The collected data was confirmed and compiled after frequent visits in the different areas. The plant specimens were not collected from the areas; only photographs were taken and identified¹⁶⁻²⁰.

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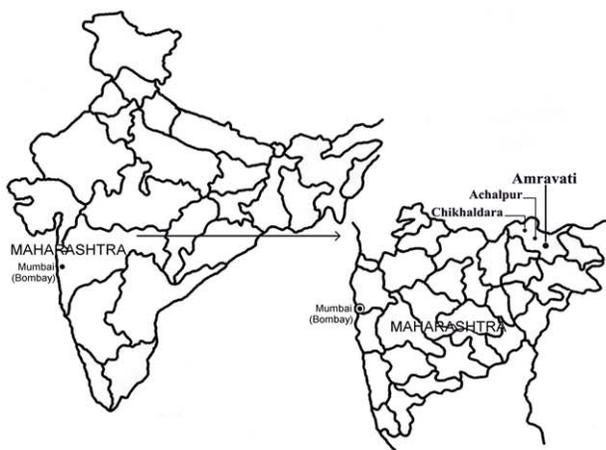


Fig.1 Location map of the study area



Fig.2 *Boswellia serrata*



Fig.3 *Eranthemum roseum*



Fig.4 *Chlorophytum borivilianum*



Fig.5 *Curcuma pseudomontana*



Fig. 6 *Ceropogia bulbosa* var. *lushii*



Fig.7 Cultivation plot of *C.borivilianum*



Fig.8 Development of nursery stock

Enumeration

The present investigation revealed that the *Korku* tribe is using 390 plants to cure various ailments and diseases from which 66 new ethnomedicinal uses of different plants have been recorded. Only new and less known ethnomedicinal and ethnobotanical uses of the 13 plants, which are endemic and / or in the RET category are enumerated. The plants are arranged alphabetically according to their botanical name,

followed by family; RET category, local name and uses. All the plants are endemic to India, except *Rotala floribunda*, which is endemic to Maharashtra.

Abelmoschus manihot (L.) Medik. (Malvaceae);
Local name: *Ranbhendi*

Uses: Decoction of fresh roots is given twice a day for 6-7 days as an aphrodisiac. Root paste prepared in

coconut oil is applied on skin burns. Fresh roots are chewed for curing dog bite.

Aspidopterys cordata (Heyne ex Wall.) A. Juss.
(Malphiaceae)

Uses: Leaf paste is applied externally to heal and recover bone fracture.

Bosewellia serrata Roxb. ex Colebr. (Burseraceae);
Local name: *Mawai / Halayo*.

Uses: Paste of fresh leaves is applied on skin burns.

Ceropegia bulbosa (Grah.) Hook var. *lushii*
(Asclepiadaceae);

Local name: *Dewas rodga*

Uses: Tubers are consumed as vegetable.

Chlorophytum borivillianum Sant & Fernand
(Liliaceae);

Local name: *Kuwalo*

Uses: Root powder is taken with a glass of milk daily as an aphrodisiac. A spoon full of root paste prepared in cow ghee and coconut pulp is taken daily to cure stroke.

Clematis heynei M.A. Rau (Ranunculaceae);

Local name: *Ranchameli*

Uses: Fresh leaf paste prepared in fresh cow urine is used to treat skin diseases. Fresh leaf juice is dropped in eye to cure opacity.

Cucumis setosus Cogn. (Cucurbitaceae);

Local name: *Mekha*

Uses: Mature fruits are consumed as vegetable.

Curcuma pseudomontana Grah. (Zingiberaceae);

Local name: *Mukus*

Uses: Fresh tubers are eaten raw as blood purifier.

Ensete superbum (Roxb.) Cheesm. (Musaceae),

Local name: *Jangali Keli*

Uses: Seeds are crushed and taken with a glass of water to get relief from stomachache. Fresh root juice is applied on body thrice after every fifteen minutes for enhancing easy delivery. Half a spoon of seed powder is taken with milk once in a week to increase the semen production. Hot and salty food is avoided during the course. Seeds are crushed and taken with a glass of water in case of dog bite. Fresh leaves are used to serve food in ceremonies.

Eranthemum roseum (Vahl.) R.Br. (Acanthaceae),

Local name: *Karav*

Uses: Odour of crushed fresh roots is inhaled and the root paste is applied on head to cure vertigo.

Habenaria foliosa Rich. (Orchidaceae)

Uses: Fresh tubers are consumed as vegetable.

Haplanthodes tentaculata (L.) R.B.Majumdar
(Acanthaceae)

Uses: Root powder is applied to enhance the healing of wounds.

Rotala floribunda (Wight) Koehne (Lythraceae)

Uses: Whole plant is burned to ash and is applied for healing of wound.

Discussion

Even today, tribals and certain communities practice herbal medicine to cure a variety of diseases and disorders. They collect and preserve locally available wild species, unaware of the fact that some of the species are endemic to India and/or Maharashtra and/or some in the RET category. They are not at all aware of the importance of such species, which need protection and conservation. The use of traditional medicine is widespread in this region with higher percentage of tribals relying on it. The main reason for this is lack of modern medications, their expensive nature to which tribal people are unable to afford and moreover, strong faith and belief in their communities traditional healers.

Efforts were made to create awareness among the *Korku's* by organizing seminars, group discussions, field visits and for promoting conservation of such RET plants with the help of Forest Department of Maharashtra state. Some of the *Korku's* were trained for proper cultivation of some important endangered plant species such as *Chlorophytum borivillianum* Sant. & Fernand & *Cucumis setosus* Cogn. along with *Ceropegia bulbosa* Roxb., etc. to give them an additional source of income. This probably shall lead to prevent the species from total extinction from the area and provoke their sustainable use in traditional medicine by the *Korku* tribe in near future.

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