Folk remedies for insect bites from Gundlabrahmeswaram Wild Life Sanctuary,
Andhra Pradesh

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The investigation provides information on folk remedies used for different insect bites by the tribal people inhabiting in and around the forests of Gundlabrahmeswaram wild life sanctuary. A list of hitherto unknown and little known crude drugs used for different insect bites along with mode of administration is provided.

Keywords: Ethnomedicine, Folk remedies, Insect bite, Gundlabrahmeswaram Wld Life Sanctuary, Chenchus, Yanadis

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From ancient times man is depending on plants for their daily needs like food, shelter and cloth. Apart from primary needs, the plants are very useful for human health. The use of plants as medicine in traditional systems is well known in rural areas. The indigenous knowledge of medicinal plants has been well documented. Today, it is estimated that about 80% of the global population remains dependant on traditional medicine1. Nearly 8,000 plant species were recognised as of ethnomedicinal importance2. Gundlabrahmeswaram wild life sanctuary is one of the biggest tiger reserves in India. It is situated in the central Nallamalais, often called nucleus of Eastern Ghats. Geographically, it is located between 15° 25'-15° 50’ E latitude 78° 53’-79° 50’ N longitude. The vegetation is represented by shrub, dry deciduous and moist mixed deciduous forests3. Chenchus and Yanadis are common tribes in the area, possessing sound knowledge on different crude drugs used for their ailments. There are several reports on ethnobotanical studies of general ailments like skin diseases, cuts, wounds, leucorrhoea, menorrhoea, veterinary diseases, etc4-8. Very little attempts were made on folk remedies for snake bites, but comprehensive data on insect bites is scarce9. The investigation is focused on documentation of first hand information on crude drugs used for insect bites.

Methodology

Intensive ethnobotanical trips were made in the forests of Gundlabrahmeswaram Wild Life Sanctuary to collect first hand information regarding the therapeutic properties of wild medicinal plants. Repeated interviews were conducted in the tribal pockets/gudems/pentas to collect more information about the therapeutic properties of medicinal plants from the herbal healers/local vaidhyas. Based on the information the plants were collected and identified with the help of regional & local floras and authentic specimens housed at (Anantapur) and Madras Herbarium (Coimbatore)10-12. Voucher specimens were deposited in Department of Botany, Sri Krishna-Devaraya University, Anantapur.

Results and discussion

The taxa rare enumerated in alphabetical with plant name, family, local name(s), and uses. The medicinal uses against the bite of insect, scorpion, centipede and poisonous spider are described with details of part(s) used, method of preparation and combination with other samples if any (Table 1). The study was focused on Gundlabrahmeswaram Wild Life Sanctuary to collect first hand information regarding medicinal plants from local herbal practitioners. Tribal people inhabiting in and around this sanctuary have been using 10 crude drug samples, belonging to 9 genera and 9 families of flowering plants. Mostly the samples consist of leaves, stem bark, root, seed, endosperm

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Table 1—Folk remedies used by Chenches and Yanadis tribes for insect bites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant name</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Local name</th>
<th>Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anogeissus latifolia (Roxb. ex DC.) wall</td>
<td>Combretaceae</td>
<td>Thirmanu</td>
<td>Stem bark paste is applied externally in Ramana panta in scorpion bite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassia auriculata L.</td>
<td>Caesalpiniae</td>
<td>Tangedu</td>
<td>Juice of fresh macerated leaves is dropped into ears in Diguvametta in scorpion bite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coelosia argentea L.</td>
<td>Amaranthaceae</td>
<td>Gurugu</td>
<td>Fresh leaf paste is applied externally on scorpion bitten area in Velgodu-GBM road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloroxylon swietenia DC.</td>
<td>Flindersiaceae</td>
<td>Billudu</td>
<td>Fresh stem bark paste ground in urine is applied on affected part in scorpion bite in Isakagundam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dioscorea oppositifolia L.</td>
<td>Dioscoriaceae</td>
<td>Paralagaddalu</td>
<td>Powdered root mixed with cow urine is applied on scorpion bitten area in GBM road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gmelina arborea Roxb.</td>
<td>Verbenaceae</td>
<td>Gummudu</td>
<td>Fresh leaf paste is applied externally scorpion bitten area in Isakagundam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strychnos potatorum L.</td>
<td>Loganiaceae</td>
<td>Chilla ginjalu</td>
<td>Seeds paste is applied externally and is also given orally (GBM) during scorpion bite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassia fistula L.</td>
<td>Caesalpiniae</td>
<td>Rela</td>
<td>Wood paste is applied externally on bitten area for any insect bite in Gacchu vagu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gyrocarpus americanus Jacq.</td>
<td>Hernandiaceae</td>
<td>Poliki</td>
<td>Fresh stem bark infusion is given orally during spider bite in Diguvametta.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sapindus emarginatus Vahl.</td>
<td>Sapindaceae</td>
<td>Kunkudu</td>
<td>Infusion of endosperm mixed with small amount of tamarind is given orally for three times a day during centipede bite in Diguvametta.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and wood used in the form of paste or infusion as remedies against various insect bites. Among the insect bites, scorpion bite is most common in the area. Maximum crude drugs (7 sp), viz. Anogeissus latifolia, Cassia auriculata, Celosia argentea, Chloroxylon swietenia, Dioscorea oppositifolia, Gmelina arborea and Strychnos potatorum were used for scorpion bite. Spider having hairs on body causes irritation and its bite causes severe problem. To overcome this problem, the tribal people using Gyrocarpus americanus stem bark as remedy. Among the enumerated taxa Cassia fistula, Chloroxylon swietenia, Gyrocarpus americanus, Sapindus emarginatus and Strychnos potatorum species are hitherto not reported, hence, reported as new information.

Acknowledgment

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References

3. Champion HG & Seth SK, A revised survey of forest types of India, (Government of India, New Delhi), 1968.