**Dicentra scandens** (D.Don) Walp.—A highly potent ethnomedicinal plant against malaria, high blood pressure and diabetes

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**Dicentra scandens** (D.Don) Walp. syn **Dicentra thalictrifolia** (Wall.) Hook. f. & Thoms. is a climbing perennial herb, belonging to the family Fumariaceae. The plant thrives well in moist sandy loam or loamy or forest soils very rich in organic matter. The plant has been used for years by Naga ethnic tribal communities living in eastern Nagaland state for treating various diseases including a number of fatal diseases like malaria, high blood pressure and diabetes. Therefore, it is warranted that step needs to be taken up for laboratory research to probe for validity test as claimed by herbalists and ultimately evolve a system for bio-prospecting and bio-partnership in bringing about cultivation.

**Key words:** Malaria, High blood pressure, Diabetes, Ethnomedicine, Nagaland

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The local traditional herbal healers of the Naga possess incredible knowledge of medicinal plant resources and ethnomedicine folklore, which serves as lifeline in their primary healthcare system. The wealth of this medicinal information is preserved as an unwritten *Materia Medica* of this tribal folk. However, the advent of allopathic medicines coupled with rapidly acquiring modern culture and custom by this tribal community, has resulted in eroding this rich traditional knowledge. In view of this the present study was aimed to:

1. identify the potential of ethnomedicinal properties of *Dicentra scandens* used by different Naga ethnic tribal communities,
2. sensitize and create awareness among the local people about the importance of medicinal plant resources in today’s patent regime, and application of local indigenous traditional knowledge (if any), useful for bioprospecting of new sources of herbal drugs, and
3. document the untapped Traditional Knowledge System vulnerable to increasing threat from biopiracy for commercial interest.

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**Methodology**

A number of ethnomedicinal field surveys were conducted across Senapati district in Manipur and adjoining Phek district of Nagaland state inhabited by different Naga tribal communities. During the survey, a number of queries and discussions were conducted...
with local herbalists. Pre-designated format and standard questions were prepared and the information extracted from the discussion were collected and recorded. From the discussion, the herbal practitioners disclosed the curative properties of this plant in the treatment against different diseases including a number of fatal or dreaded diseases. From the sample of the plant material collected a standard herbarium was made, and got it identified from Botanical Survey of India (BSI), Shillong, Meghalaya. Further, a good number of planting materials were collected and successfully planted in the field to study the cultivation methods, and practices and explore the possibility for bringing into cultivation.
Results

The ethnomedicinal therapy plays a vital role in the primary healthcare of tribal and rural population, and has a potential for the discovery of new drugs of herbal origin, which are metabolized in the human body having no side effect\(^1\). The local people particularly the herbalists use this medicinal plant in the treatment against different types of diseases like malaria, typhoid and other common viral fevers, diabetes, pneumonia, high blood pressure, diarrhoea, dysentery, flatulence, gastritis, cut or injury, and shows very effective and successful results. The method of application is very simple that involves:

1. Juice from fresh tuberous roots or tubers (Fig. 3) is taken orally, 2 spoonfuls each twice a day.
2. Fresh tuberous roots or tubers cut into small pieces (about 5 gm each) is taken.
3. Whole root tubers are dried under partial shade and crushed into fine powder. 1gm of this dried powder is taken orally twice a day.
4. About 3 spoonfuls decoction of fresh leaves or tender stem or branches is taken thrice a day.

In addition, the juice extracted from fresh leaves, and leaf paste is applied to cut or injury to control bleeding. In short, the whole plant is used locally in the treatment against 11 different diseases or ailments.

Discussion

*Dicentra scandens* exhibits highly potent medicinal properties. The plant has been in use for years by section of Naga ethnic tribal communities living in eastern Nagaland state. However, until recently the use of this plant as medicine has not been known to other parts of the region mainly because of the endemic nature of the plant coupled with inaccessibility of the region on the one hand and transmission of information particularly use of medicinal herbs through oral tradition with utmost secrecy on the other hand. This traditional knowledge system of the tribal communities needs to be studied, documented, preserved and used for the benefit of mankind\(^2\). Moreover, the tribal people are rapidly acquiring the modern culture and custom. Thus, there is an urgent need to record their empiric and endemic knowledge before it all vanishes\(^3\).

It has been reported that *Dicentra scandens* from Khasia hill is deposited in the herbarium specimen in the New York Botanical Garden\(^4\). The finding of this medicinal plant that has been used for treating various human ailments or diseases by the Naga tribal communities opens scope to validate claims made by local herbalists and identification of bioactive compounds responsible for curative effect, leading to cultivation for commercialization.

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References