Report on the treatment of dysmenorrhoea by the tribes of Nalbari district, Assam

Nikhil Jyoti Das*, Kamala Devi and Satya Ranjan Goswami
Department of Agronomy, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat-785013, Assam; Department of Botany, Ananda Ram Dhekial Phookan College, Nagaon-781001, Assam; Department of Soil Science, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat-785013, Assam

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The paper describes the use of *Jatropha curcus* Linn. collected through personal interview with local herbal practitioner for the treatment of dysmenorrhoea by the Koch-Rajbongshi tribe in Nalbari district of Assam. Botanical description of the plant, local name and method of administration have been described.

Key words: Abdominal pain, Koch-Rajbongshi Tribe, Dysmenorrhoea, menstrual problem.

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The North-East India is a unique place not only for diversity of flora but for the different tribes and sub-tribes as well. The state Assam alone harbours twenty three tribes. A thorough ethnomedicinal study of tribes inhabiting the state can bring out many efficient herbal drugs for the human illness.

The Nalbari district of Assam is situated between 26°41′ to 26°15′ North latitude and 91°0′-15′ to 91°45′ East latitude. The district is bounded by the Bhutan hills on the North and the Brahmaputra river on the South and flanked by Kamrup and Barpeta district in the East and West, respectively (Fig. 1). The district comprises many tribes such as Bodo, Rabha, Santhal with a major population of Koch-Rajbongshi. The Koch –Rajbongshis of Assam belong to Mongoloid races with their own dialect.

An ethnobotanical exploration was conducted during the year 2003 among the people of Koch-Rajbongshi tribe of Assam. During this period, many unexplored traditional medicinal information was collected from various parts of the state. In this survey, the Koch-Rajbongshi people inhabiting in the foothills of Bhutan in the Nalbari district of Assam, were found to use *Jatropha curcus* Linn. (Fig. 2) in their different menstrual problem particularly for dysmenorrhoea. Ethnomedicinal information was collected through local herbal practitioners though they were reluctant to disclose the medicinal properties of the species.

The information was compared with the available literature sources¹³ and was found that the medicinal properties for the menstrual problem have not so far been recorded. The voucher specimen was processed and deposited in the Weed herbarium of Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, Assam.

*Jatropha curcus* Linn. (Family Euphorbiaceae)

Local names: Assamese-Bhotora, Hindi-Bagbherenda, Sanskrit-Kanan eranda.

It is a perennial, pantropical, deciduous shrub or treelet. It flowers during rainy season with concentrated flowering from late July to late October. It is monocious and protandrous. Inflorescences dichasial cyme; male flowers small, odourless and salver shaped; sepals and petals five each, free; the latter connivent at the flower base, forming a short tube; stamens ten, diadelphous, arranged in two tires of five each; style and stigmas three each, the latter bi-fid; floral base villose and contains five yellow elliptical glands under the ovary. The flowers are open in synchrony in male flowers.

Observations

Pain during menstruation is a very common problem known as dysmenorrhoea. This leads to lower abdominal cramping, nausea, vomiting and headache. This kind of menstrual problem mostly affects young girls when they first begin to menstruate. Painful constriction may occur as the uterine walls release prostaglandin. This is a common health problem for women all over the world.

*Bej* or *Ojas* collect adventitious roots (Fig. 3), approximately 250 gm by digging with spade, which are creeping towards the north side. The epidermis
portion of the root is sliced off with knife. Then, the roots are ground in a traditional wooden grinder, called *Dheki*. From this ground portion, approximately 100-150 ml of juice is extracted. The juice is administered up to 3 days from the date of starting of menstruation, early in the morning. Up to an hour of taking the medicine, the patients are advised not to take any food. The medicine is prescribed up to consecutive 3 times of the menstruation period.

**Discussion**

According to the herbal practitioner, the efficacy of the treatment is almost cent percent. The local people of the Nalbari district are highly dependent on the herbal remedy. The plant species is commonly available in the area and the people use it in making fencing. The *Ojas* or *Bej* do not take any fee from the patient. There is an urgent need for ethnopharmacological screening of the drug to formulate and standardize the medicine for sustainable use.

**References**
