The present study has been carried out in Grizzled Giant Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuary, Western Ghats, Srivilliputhur, Tamil Nadu. Palliyar, the predominant tribal community has their settlements in different areas of this Sanctuary. Twenty-eight medicinal plants belonging to 22 families are identified which have been employed by this section of tribal community in mother and child care. The plants have been enumerated in alphabetical order of botanical names followed by the family name, local (Palliyar) name, parts of plant used, mode of administration and dosage.

Keywords: Palliyar tribe, Traditional medicine, Antenatal and Post-natal care, Mother and child.

Abstract

The present study has been carried out in Grizzled Giant Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuary, Western Ghats, Srivilliputhur, Tamil Nadu. Palliyar, the predominant tribal community has their settlements in different areas of this Sanctuary. Twenty-eight medicinal plants belonging to 22 families are identified which have been employed by this section of tribal community in mother and child care. The plants have been enumerated in alphabetical order of botanical names followed by the family name, local (Palliyar) name, parts of plant used, mode of administration and dosage.

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Introduction

Plants have fed the world and cured ailments from time immemorial. The knowledge about medicinally important herbs exists in oral tradition and the practitioners normally are reluctant to share their knowledge with others and roughly a third of such treasure of knowledge about folk medicine is scientifically documented. Tribals living in harmony with the biosphere have been using herbal medicine to cure their illness. In the recent past one could notice a global trend for the revival of interest in the traditional systems of medicine. WHO has recently voiced its concern and has called upon people to encourage traditional systems of medicine as viable supportive/alternate systems of medicine for a disease-free world.

The Palliyars are the predominant hill tribe of Western Ghats, Tamil Nadu. They are familiar with several herbs and well-versed in using herbs to cure various ailments. Their reliance on the herbs for medicinal value has prompted the present study. Herein an
attempt is made to bring into light the traditional medicinal practices adopted by this section of tribal community to ensure antenatal and post-natal care of mother and child.

Observations

With the primary objective of interacting with the Palliyar tribes settlements like Athikoiil, Ayyanar koil, Thanniparai and Shenbagathoppu were surveyed and the information was gathered by interviewing elderly and experienced individuals practicing indigenous medicines. Information was considered only after confirmation through two or more informants. Based on the information provided, plant specimens were collected, air-dried and mounted on herbarium sheets and identified by using various Floras (Flora of Madras and Flora of Tamil Nadu). Voucher specimens are maintained at the P.G. Department of Botany, V.O.C. College, Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu.

Plants are enumerated here in alphabetical order of the botanical names followed by the family and local (Palliyar) name (in parenthesis) and a brief note on plant parts used, mode of utilization, dosage, etc.

Plants used for mother care

Alstonia scholaris (Linn.) R. Br. (Apocynaceae; Ezhilai palai)

Ten grams of the fresh stem bark is made into paste with few drops of water. This paste is mixed with 100 ml of cow's milk or fermented rice water and taken by the feeding mother twice a day for 7-10 days to improve lactation.

Cleome viscosa Linn. (Cleomaceae; Naaikkadugu)

Five to ten grams of seeds are soaked in 100 ml of water for 10-12 hours. The seeds are removed and the water is taken orally or same quantity of seeds is made into paste with little water and taken empty stomach for a week to arrest over bleeding after delivery.

Euphorbia hirta Linn. and E. rosea Retz. (Euphorbiaceae; Amanpatcharisi)

Few drops of stem latex of either species are applied around the breast 10 minutes before feeding the baby to improve lactation.

Polygala javana DC. var. angustifolia Thw. (Polygalaceae; Palpiranthai)

Five to ten grams of fresh leaves are made into paste and applied on the breast twice a day for 2-3 days to check lactation and to get relief from the pain developed while stopping mother feeding.

Portulaca pilosa Linn. subsp. pilosa (Portulacaceae; Pillaivalarthikilangu)

Four or five clean fresh tubers are taken as such in empty stomach by women from the 4th day of menstrual cycle for a period of 20 days to prevent natural abortion.

Sterculia urens Roxb. (Sterculiaceae; Vennaali, Senthanakku)

Twenty-five grams of endosperm obtained from the dried seeds is roasted with ghee and taken twice a day for one week by the feeding mother to improve lactation.

Plants used in child care

Asparagus racemosus Willd. (Liliaceae; Neer valli)

Five to ten grams of the skin peeled raw or boiled tuber is given to children in empty stomach in the morning for about one week to stop bed-wetting.

Basella alba Linn. var. alba (Basellaceae, Chenopodiaceae; Kattupasali)

Five grams of fresh stem is cut into small pieces and soaked in 10-15 ml of water for 5-6 hours. The filtered extract is given to children in single dose for two days as a laxative.

Cassia auriculata Linn. (Caesalpiniaceae; Avarai)

Five to ten grams of sepals and petals removed flowers is ground with little amount of asafoetida and poppy seeds (Papavar) using hot water and the mixture is given orally for two days in single dose to relieve colic pain.
Cissus quadrangularis
(Frutescens; Perandai)

One teaspoonful of the powder made from four to five fresh leaves is given to children with a pinch of asafoetida in single dose at bedtime for two days to get relief from colic pain.

Ceropegia juncea Roxb.
(Asclepiadaceae; Thiralankodi)

Five grams of the fresh stem is ground in little water to obtain juice. One to two teaspoonful of this juice is given to children as vermifuge for removing intestinal worms.

Dioscorea tomentosa Koen. ex Spreng. (Dioscoreaceae; Noolvalli)

Ten grams of the boiled skin peeled tuber is given to children once a day for three days to get relief from bowel complaints.

Cissus quadrangularis Linn.
(Vitaceae; Perandai)

A pinch of powder made from the dried fruits is given to children with water in single dose for two days to improve digestion.

Foeniculum vulgare Mill.
(Apiaceae; Sombu)

Ten grams of powdered endosperm is mixed with 100 ml of cow's milk and it is allowed to settle for about half an hour. The filtrate is given orally to children once a day for three days to improve digestion.

Givotia rottleriformis Griff.
(Euphorbiaceae; Vandalai)

Ten grams of the powder made from the dried fruits is given to children with water in single dose for two days to improve digestion.

Globba marantina Linn.
(Zingiberaceae; Kattumanjal)

Ten grams of fresh rhizome is made into a paste with equal amount of fresh or shade dried rhizome of
Strychnos nux-vomica Linn.
(Loganiaceae; Theathankottai, Kanjirai)

The ash obtained by burning the seeds is mixed with a few drops of castor oil and applied on the forehead of the child as a spot (bindhi) daily to avoid rickets/rachitis.

A dried seed is tied to a thread after making a small hole into it and worn around the neck of the child as necklace to avoid rickets/rachitis.

**Symlocos cochinchinensis**
(Lour.) Moore subsp. laurina (Retz.) Nooteb. (Symlocaceae; Tulsimaniram)

The ripe fruits are boiled in water for three minutes. The boiled fruits are left in the same water for three days. Then, the pericarp is removed by rubbing the fruits on a rough floor to get the seeds. Using a thread the seeds are made into a necklace and worn around the neck of the child to avoid rickets/rachitis.

**Plectranthus barbatus.** This paste is applied all over the body of the child few minutes before bath to get glowing skin.

**Jasminum roxburghianum Wall.**
(Oleaceae; Kattumalli)

One gram of fresh root of the above plant and one gram of fresh rhizome of *Curcuma longa* are made into paste with little water. This paste is given to children twice a day for two days to get relief from colic pain.

**Moringa concanensis** Nimmo ex Gibs.
(Moringaceae; Kattu moringai)

One tablespoonful of fresh leaf juice is given to children in single dose to treat bowel disorder.

**Plectranthus barbatus** Andr.
(Lamiaceae; Poolankilangu)

Ten grams of fresh or shade-dried rhizome is applied regularly all over the body of the child before bath to get glowing skin.

**Pterocarpus marsupium** Roxb.
(Fabaceae; Vengai)

The resin obtained from the stem is soaked in water for 24 hours in a small container. A small drop of this resin is placed as a spot (bindhi) on the forehead of the child daily to avoid rickets/rachitis.

**Ricinus communis** Linn.
(Euphorbiaceae; Amanakku)

Two ml of castor oil is given to children in a single dose as laxative.

**Sansevieria roxburghiana**
Schultes & Schultes (Agavaceae; Maurl)

For inducing teeth growth in young children tender leaves are given them to bite.
Tephrosia purpurea (Linn.) Pers. (Fabaceae; Kolingi)

One teaspoonful of juice prepared from the fresh root bark is mixed with a pinch of asafoetida and given to children in single dose to get relief from bowel disorders.

Terminalia bellirica (Gaertn.) Roxb. (Combretaceae; Tani)

Two or three grams of the powder made from the shade dried pericarp is continuously boiled in one litre water along with equal quantities of the powder made from the shade dried pericarp of Emblica officinalis Gaertn. syn. Phyllanthus emblica Linn., Terminalia chebula Retz., rhizome of Zingiber officinale Rosc., Alpinia calcarata Rosc., root powder of Piper longum Linn.; fresh leaves of Ocimum tenuiflorum Linn., Mollugo

cerviana Ser., Mukia maderaspatana (Linn.) Roem., Evolvulus alsinoides Linn.; and 50 g of palm jaggery to get 200 ml decoction. The feeding mother takes one teaspoonful of filtered decoction twice a day for two days to treat/control fever in her breast-fed baby.

Trachyspermum ammi (Linn.) Sprague (Apiaceae; Omum)

One or two teaspoonful of juice obtained by grinding 10 mg of dry seeds 1. is given to children once a day for 2-3 days to improve digestion.

References


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Home made baby food

A nutritious baby food called Sneha is prepared by village women of Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal for domestic and marketing purposes. It is healthful and contains essential components for the good growth of 1-6 year old children.

For preparing Sneha, good quality wheat (Triticum aestivum Linn.) and green gram, Vigna radiata (Linn.) Wilczek, (Hindi- Mung) are taken in 4:1 ratio. They are washed and dried in sunlight then roasted separately and mixed. The mixed grains are then grinded and stored in packets. It is cheaper and supplied by self-supporting women group in the village (Contributed by: Ashis Ghosh and Jhuma Karan, Eco-Club, Saraswati Vidyamandir, P.O. & Dist. Paschim Medinipur- 721 101, West Bengal).