

Ethnobotanical studies on Notchimalai village, Thiruvannamalai district, Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

During the years 2009-2010 several field trips were conducted to document the ethnomedicinal remedies for various diseases with 100 plant species mentioned by the village people community resides at Notchimalai, Thiruvannamalai dt., Tamil nadu, India, who were traditionally using herbs from the childhood periods onwards. The plants were deposited as herbarium specimens in Department of Botany, Government Arts College, Tiruvannamalai. The value of medicinal plants to the mankind is very well proven. It is estimated that 70 to 80 per cent of the world population rely chiefly on traditional health care system and largely on herbal medicines (Shanley and Luz, 2003). Only 15 per cent of pharmaceutical drugs are consumed in developing countries (Toledo, 1995). The affluent people have little alternative to herbal medicine, and they depend on traditional health care system (Marshall, 1998).

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INTRODUCTION

Some tribes are adhering to traditional way of life, native culture and customs, the tribal have vast store of information and knowledge on potentially useful medicinal plants. The traditional knowledge system in India is fast eroding due to steady decline in human expertise capable of recognizing various medicinal plants. Much of this wealth of knowledge is totally becoming lost as traditional culture is gradually disappearing because it is mostly oral (Hamilton, 1995). Therefore, effort should be initiated for

the documentation and computerization of useful medicinal plants and their traditional knowledge (Mehrotra and Mehrotra, 2005).

From the ethnomedicinal point of view Notchimalai village, Thiruvannamalai district remained unexplored and no comprehensive account particularly on folklore of this region is available. Banerjee (1977) published a note on ethnobotanical observations of Araku valley. Rao *et al.*, (2001) reported 160 medicinal plants that occur in the same region. There is urgent, immense need to inventories and record all ethnomedicinal information among the diverse ethnic communities before the traditional cultures are completely lost (Rama Rao and Henry, 1996). Ethnomedicinal activities on different aspects in Indian sub-continent has been put forth by Jain (1981). Therefore, continuous efforts should be made to collect this information which will provide avenues for future generation. It is thus paramount importance that the native plant genetic wealth need to be maintained for posterity.

All the more, several wild medicinal plants are fast disappearing due to the destruction of forest by inhabitants, invasion of exotic flora and introduction of new crops. Hence, there is an urgent need for exploration and

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