



Ethnobotanical studies on Thiruvannamalai district, Tamil Nadu, India

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ABSTRACT

The people of in and around area of Thiruvannamalai district, Tamilnadu has been using numerous herbs of therapeutic purpose since time immemorial. Villagers chiefly depend on the herbs for all diseases. They are aware of the plant remedies for common ailments like diarrhoea, jaundice, rheumatism, dyspepsia, asthma, diabetes, dysentery, leprosy, antipyretic, gonorrhoea and skin diseases. They are also very familiar with the antidotes for snake bites and scorpion sting. Pharmacological and clinical traits will help in the confirmation of the efficacy of the report herbs. The use of the reported plant species were collected from the regional people, who use them as tradition. Therefore, it is not advisable to use them without consulting an experienced Siddha medicine practioner. For the benefit of the community the recorded plant species should be taken care of and also steps be taken for conservation as well as cultivation of these plant species.

Key words : Ethnobotanical studies, Plant species, Fungi, Aromatic plant, Bryophytes, Tradional knoweldge

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INTRODUCTION

Herbs are staging a comeback and herbal 'renaissance' is happening all over the globe. The herbal products today symbolise safety in contrast to the synthetics that are regarded as unsafe to human and environment. Although herbs had been priced for their medicinal, flavouring and aromatic qualities for centuries, the synthetic products of the modern age surpassed their importance, for a while. However, the blind dependence on synthetics is over and people are returning to the naturals with hope of safety and security. Over three-quarters of the world population relies mainly on plants and plant extracts for health care. More than 30 per cent of the entire plant species, at one time or other, were used for medicinal

purposes. It is estimated that world market for plant derived drugs may account for about Rs.2,00,000 crores. Presently, Indian contribution is less than Rs.2000 crores. Indian export of raw drugs has steadily grown at 26 per cent to Rs.165 crores in 1994-'95 from Rs.130 crores in 1991-'92. The annual production of medicinal and aromatic plant's raw material is worth about Rs.200 crores. This is likely to touch US \$1150 by the year 2000 and US \$5 trillion by 2050 (Joy *et al.*, 2001).

India is represented by rich culture, traditions, and natural biodiversity, and offer unique opportunity for the drug discovery researchers. Utilization of plants for medicinal purposes in India has been documented in ancient literature (Samvat; Charak, Drdhabala, 1996). India is blessed with two (Eastern Himalayas and Western Ghats) of the eighteen worlds' hotspots of plant biodiversity and is seventh among the sixteen Mega diverse countries, where 70 per cent of the world's species occur collectively. In India, there are over 17,500 species of higher plants, 64 gymnosperms, 1,200 pteridophytes, 2,850 bryophytes, 2,021 lichens, 15,500 fungi and 6,500 algae are reported. India is rich in its own flora that is, endemic plant species (5,725 angiosperms, 10 gymnosperms, 193 pteridophytes, 678 bryophytes, 260 liverworts, 466 lichens, 3,500 fungi and 1,924 algae) (Sanjappa, 2005).

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