

**INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE: ITS ROLE IN THE HEALTH CARE
PRACTICES OF THE ANAMALAI HILLS OF COIMBATORE
DISTRICT, TAMILNADU, INDIA.**

A.RAJENDRAN & S.RAJAN*.

Botanical Survey of India (Southern Circle), Coimbatore – 641 003, India.

And

**Survey of Medicinal Plants & Collection Unit (Homoeopathy),
Udhagamandalam – 643 002, India.*

Received: 12th October, 1997

Accepted: 11th January, 1998

ABSTRACT: *The communication deals with 9 plant species used as a traditional medicine and the application of indigenous beliefs, knowledge is concerned with their health care practices by the Anamalai hills aborigines.*

INTRODUCTION:

Anamalai hills of southern Western Ghats is a unique tropical island of subtropical and temperate flora, lies between 76° 43' and 77° 26' E and 10° 13' and 10° 32' in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu. The elevations vary from 100-2750m (Fischer, 1921). It is a fertile land for studying the ethnological and biodiversity due to its occupancy by aboriginal tribal groups of anthropological significance.

Intensive field studies were undertaken and different tribal pockets of Anamalai Hills (Udumanparai, Willoni, Maanampalli and Parambikulam submerged areas). The tribes inhabiting in this region are Kadars, Malasars, Pallias and Muthuvans. All tribals have a vast indigenous knowledge on utility of the various medicinal plants. They are living in isolated hilly areas, valley and adjacent plains. They depend on the plant kingdom to treat different diseases and ailments. Due to close association with the natural resources they are generally knowledgeable about the utility of the plants. They live in remote areas where practically no organized medical aid is

available. With increasing cost of medical treatment through modern medicine that tribals have been practicing their own methods of treatment for curing various ailments. In Kadars the traditional medicinal knowledge is shared among members of the tribal group and in Malaimalasar is just rest with one person or one family. Unlike the Kadars, the tribals in this area are very secretive about their native medicine.

The data presented here are the outcome of the series of explorations conducted over a year. The trips were conducted in different seasons in a year.

The information on the plant/plant part(s) used, mode of application and dosages were gathered from local people and village head and these are cross checked and critically analysed and documented (Jain, 1991). Every attempt was made to locate these plants and voucher specimens were collected. Besides, data on the local names if any have been collected which vary from place to place and tribe to tribe.

LIST OF PLANTS:

The plants are arranged alphabetically. Each species includes its correct name and their family name in capital letters, the local name(s) of the plants, mode of application and followed by the names of tribes who use them.

Allophyllus serratus (Roxb.) Kurz – SAPINDACEAE. Leaves ground with turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) and made into paste, applied on ulcers by Kadars.

Asparagus racemosus Wild, - ASPARAGACEAE. Satha vanni. Tuber grind with black pepper (*Piper nigrum*) and sugar (*Saccharum officinarum*) and taken orally for boils and blisters by Malasars.

Bridelia retusa sprengel – EUPHORBIACEAE. 'Karu Vailimaram'. Stem bark crushed with that of *Butea superba* and *Lamea coroman-delica* and the extract administered for fever one spoon twice a day for three consecutive days by kadars.

Cassia occidentalis L. CAESSALPINIACEAE. Root extracts mixed with a pinch of salt, administered as an antiemetic two spoon thrice a day by kadars. Dried root mixed with that of *tephrosia purpurea* grind with jaggery (*saccharum officinarum*) and the paste administered for paralysis by malasars. Roots grind with black pepper (*Piper nigrum*) and the extract orally administered for epilepsy by mudhuvass two spoon thrice a day till cure. Roots crushed with stem bark of

Syzygium cumini and the extract given orally for stomach pain by palaiyas. Leaf juice mixed with butter milk given for jaundice by kadars ten spoon thrice a day for a week.

Centella asiatica (L) Urban-UMBELLIFERAE. 'Manja Kamalai chedi' the whole plant crushed with turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) and black pepper (*Piper nigrum*) and the extract gargled for mouth ulcers by kadars.

Firmiana colorata (Roxb) R.Br. STERCULIACEAE. Leaf or flower juice with that of cassia tora and poured in to eye for eye infections by Muthuvans.

Hemionitis arifolia (Burm.F) Moore-HEMIONITDACEAE. 'Manthaanarai' Fronds grind with long pepper (*Piper longum*) and the paste applied on wounds and ulcers of domestic animals by Palaiyas.

Momordica dioica Roxb ex willd – CUCURBITACEAE. 'Kuruvithalai Pakal'. Tubers crushed with tamarind juice (*Tamarindus indica*) and the decoction given orally for fib muscle pain and stomach pain two spoon twice a day until cure by Kadars.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

We thank Dr. A.N. Henry scientist Emeritus, botanical survey of India, Coimbatore and Dr. R. Shaw, Director central council for research in Homeopathy, New Delhi for their encouragement during this study. From North Parur, Ernakulam, Kerala.

REFERENCES:

Fischer, C.E.C. 1921

A study of the flora of the Anamalai Hills in the Coimbatore District, Madras Presidency Rec. Bot Surv. India 9(1): 1-218

Jain, S.K. 1991 Dictionary of Indian Folk Medicine and Ethnobotany. Deep Publications, New Delhi.