

Hidden Treasury of the indigenous people: Reflections on the ethnomedicine of the Baiga tribes of Central India

Dr. Ramesh B

Assistant Professor,
Department of Social Work,
Indira Gandhi National Tribal University,
Amarkantak, M.P.

Abstract

The tribes, Adivasi, are often termed as the nature protectors. India is home to more than 720 tribal communities, stretched across the south to north and east to west. Each tribe has its way of lifestyle and way of living style. Similarly, Madhya Pradesh is the largest tribal populated state of India where 42 tribal communities' dwell upon in the state. The Baiga tribe is one among the 42 tribal communities of Madhya Pradesh. It is recognized as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Communities (PVTG) the literal meaning of Biaga refers as Vaidya, the traditional healer, which is a unique way of living. They have rich ethnomedicine practices. In the present study, a detailed account of the ethnomedicine practices of the Baiga was discussed. This paper is based on an ethnographic study. The study was carried out among the Baiga tribal community in the Maikal hills of M.P. The researcher adopts the qualitative approach for a better understanding of the subject. The descriptive study method was adopted for this paper. The data had collected through personal interviews, observation, focus group discussion, and content analysis. The study identifies 43 varieties of ethno medicines. These medicines are said to be great potential to cure many diseases, however, due to non-documentation, many are extinct, and there is a great need to preserve the hidden treasury of the Biaga knowledge.

Keywords: Baiga, ethnomedicine, traditional healer, Maikhal hills.

Introduction:

India is the rich source of the natural wealth, having the rich diversity of medicinal plants so for it is usually called as botanical garden of the world (Vedavathy et al., 1997). It used to say that every plant is a medicinal plant, in India more than 181,460 flowering plants are reported as the medicinal plant (Pushpangadan, 1995). The ancient literatures are also describing the uses and the importance of the medicinal plants. The Ramayana, Mahabharat and other Vedic literature have many examples of the use of the ethnomedicine. Nearly 70 percent of the world population is dependent on the traditional medicines for primary healthcare (Bhosle, et al., 2009). The impact of the globalization and industrialization, the demand of the ethno medicine in market is continuously increasing. The Covid-19 pandemic realizes the importance of the herbal medicine. The forest are the key source of the herbal medicines, Madhya Pradesh having 9.38% forest of total geography (IFS, 2019). The Maikal hills are spread over the eastern part of the state, it covers five districts namely Anuppur, Dindori, Mandla, Shahdol and Umaria districts of the state. The Maikal hills connecting the Vindhya and Satpura mountain ranges. The Maikal range has rich biodiversity having conducive environment for plenty of flora and fauna. There is Achanakmar biosphere reserve area covering the Amarkantak forest range. The Maikal range having the high concentration of the tribal population, mainly Gond, Baiga, Pardhan, Panika and Agariya community is found in this region. More than 80 per cent of the tribal population are fully or partially dependent on the ethno medicine for healthcare. According to Singh (2018) the ethno-medicine can be considered as a tribal medicine, the tribes follow their customary laws for treating themselves and others also.

Baiga: The medicine man

The Baiga tribe is considered as the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) community. They are mainly found in the Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The Maikal range having high concentration of the Baiga tribal community. The Amarkantak hills (Anuppur) and the Baigachak (Dindori) having high density of the Baiga tribal community. The Baiga community is the regular medicine practitioner for the neighboring tribal community. The word Baiga is derived from the Vaidya, which means 'medicine man' (Chandel, 2019). The Baiga community mainly resides in the dense forest area in a scattered manner. Along with Baiga community other forest

dweller community is also far away from the modern healthcare facility. The world-wide Covid-19 pandemic didn't affect to the tribal community because of their isolated environment and the strong immune system which is the result of traditional healthcare practice. The traditional knowledge of herbal medicine is orally transmitting from one generation to another generation among the Baiga community. These tribal communities used to worship Mother Nature and they believe that without the blessings Vandev and Van devi, no one can cure. Before using of any medicinal plant they used to tack permission which shows the respect toward the nature, this community practiced sustainable use of the shrubs, herbs and trees and are responsible toward the forest and environment.

Methodology:

The study was carried out among the Baiga tribal community in the Maikalhill range of M.P. The researcher adopts the qualitative approach for better understanding the subject. The descriptive study method adopted for this paper. The primary and secondary data had collected through personal interview, observation, focus group discussion, and content analysis. The researcher collected data through both participatory and non-participatory observation and through in-depth interview. The researcher is working in this field since last 5 years as a part of NGOs. The secondary data was collected from the books, journal, websites, etc.

Discussion

The Baiga tribal community is being practice the herbal medicine since their origin. According to the Baiga mythology of origin, the first man in the earth is Naga Baiga and first women is Naga Baigin. They have knowledge of medicinal plant by birth, it's transmitted genetically. The Baigacommunity has two different healers first one is Guniya who's healing through exorcism (Jhad-phook and Mantra) as well as ethno-medicine, another healer is Vaidya who only gives herbal medicine. It commonly found in every Baiga Vaidya (traditional healers) that before taking any medicine they used to get permission from the Van Dev and Van Devi (Mother Nature). They compulsory practice to prey the Vanaspati and Dhartimata (Mother earth) to cure the patient. The Maikal hills have a rich bio-diversity found significant flora and fauna. The local traditional healers are using these herbals since generations. The flowing medicine are commonly using by the Baiga community.

Herbal and medicinal plant products used by Baiga tribes.

Scientific name	Family	Local name	Uses
Achyranthesaspera L.	Amaranthaceae	Chirchira	1. Roasted and powdered seeds are useful in asthma. 2. Brush of stem is useful in pyria. 3. Root paste with heeng is given to cows and oxen for bronchitis.
Acoruscalamus Linn.	Araceae	Bach	1. Root gives relief on pyria and halitosis. 2. Root powder is highly effective in bronchitis and asthma. 3. Leafs pest is useful for black hair.
Aegle marmelos L.	Rutaceae	Bel	1. Ripe fruit pulp is give relief in diarrhea and dysentery. 2. Its Sharbat (syrup) control body heat.
Aloe barbadensis Mill.	Liliaceae	Ghritkum ari	1. Leaf pest if very much effective in burn. 2. Leaf pulps is effective in remove to dark circle, pimples and other skin disease. 3. Leaf pulps is recommended for digestion related issues.
Asparagus racemosusWilld	Asparagaceae	Shatavar/ jogilati	1. Root powder is useful for the masculine power. 2. Root powder is also useful for arthritis.
Cassia fistula L.	Fabaceae	Amaltas	1. Seed powder is useful for skin rash, ringworm, itching, and diabetes and burning. 2. Stem bark have anti oxidant quality used for immunity booster. 3. Leaf is useful for joint pain, Arthritis pain and back pain etc.
Chlorophytum arundinaceum Baker.	Chlorophytum arundinaceum Baker.	Safed Musali	1. Root powder is useful for increasing the sex stamina, premature ejaculation, erectile dysfunction, impotence, nightfall etc. 2. It is useful for the bodybuilding, boos immunity, UTI and Arthritis.
Cissus quadrangularis L.	Vitaceae	Hadjod	1. The green stem juice is used for boon joint. 2. It is useful for digestion, ulcer, in cramps, Gout ad piles.
Citrullus colocynthisSchrad.	Cucurbitaceae	Indrawan	1. Root powder is useful for the kidney stone.
Cordia macleodii Griff.	Boraginaceae	Dahiman	1. Bark and leaf powder is used for BP control, people used to carry its stem during morning walk for BP control. 2. Leaf pest is used fill the skin injury. 3. Bark juice is useful cancer, snakebite, jaundice etc. 4. This plant is recognized as ‘Sanjivani plant’ among tribal community.
Curcuma	Curcuma	Van Haldi	1. This is useful for joint pain, blood

aromaticaSalisb	aromaticaSalisb		purification, swelling and itching etc.
DilleniapentagynaRoxb	Dilleniaceae	Karkat	1. Leaf juice is useful for the joint the cells and muscles cut. 2. Bark juice is useful for body pain. 3. Root juice is useful for the bone disease.
Dryopteris sp.	Aspidiaceae	Jatashankari	1. Root pest is useful for hairfall and baldness. 2. It is useful in cough, heart disease, eye disease and headache
Eclipta alba Hassk.	Asteraceae	Bhringraj	1. Leaf juice and powder is useful for black hair, immunity, liver and jaundice. 2. Powder is useful for cough and vata disease, skin infection, digestion, constipation and stomach problem.
Ficus religiosa L.	Moraceae	Peepal	1. Bark powder is useful for respiratory disease. 2. Leaf is used in gastric disease.
Hitachiyam		Gulbakawali	1. Extract of flowers is highly effective for the eye disease.
Kalanchoe pinnata	Crassulaceae	Bhasmpatti	1. Leaf is used in indigestion and gastric disease. 2. Leaf pest is also useful in kidney stone.
Limoniyaasidisma		Kaitha/kavit	1. It is useful for to treat eyes disease, ear pain, throat disease, kid's abdominal pain. 2. Fruit is useful for the Asthma, diabetes, skin disease and piles.
Sterculia urens var.	<u>Malvaceae</u>	Kullu	1. Gum is useful for the cancer, heart disease 2. It is cool and nutritious so for it is useful for the heat.
Litciyagrutinasa	<u>Lauraceae</u>	Maida	1. Bark is useful for dysentery,
Bacopa monnieri	Plantaginaceae	Bramhi	1. Leaf powder is used for the brain and memory. 2. It is also used as an immunity booster.
Mangifera indica L.	Anacardiaceae	Aam	1. Bark is useful for jaundice. 2. Mango juice is for digestion and a healthy stomach.
Nyctanthesarbortristis L.	Oleaceae	Hadsangari	1. Root decoction is useful for bone fracture.
Oxalis corniculata	Oxalidaceae	Changeri	1. Leaf pest is use for fever, dysentery, and skin disease. 2. Flowers is useful for vaginal disease. 3.Its leaf's is also used as germicide
Phyllanthus emblica L.	Euphorbiaceae	Amla	1. Amla is one of the key components of trifala powder which is useful for the digestion and immunity. 2. Amla juice is useful for eye vision, hair, skin, blood purification.
Polygonum hydropiper L.	Polygonaceae	Gondila	1. Stem and root powder is used as anti-poison component. 2. In case of any poison insect bite it is also

			useful.
Psidium guajava L.	Myrtaceae	Bihi/ Amrud	1. Fresh leaf is useful for the mouth ulcer. 2. Stem brush is useful for teeth pain. 3. Fruit is useful for weight loss, constipation, digestion, piles etc.
SapindusmukorossiGae rtn.	Spindaceae	Ritha	1. Root powder is useful for the piles. 2. Fruits are useful for the hair.
Semecarpus anacardium L.	Anacardiaceae	Bhelma	1. People of some tribal communities' burn it around the house after having a child so that any kind of germs do not reach the woman and child. 2. Fruit is useful for skin disease, immunity.
Solanum xanthocarpum	Solanaceae	Bhatkatalai ya	1. Fruit is useful in asthma, cough, cold, dysentery, fever, worm and toothache. 2. Fruit and leaf is useful for bladder stones.
Sphaeranthus indicus L.	Asteraceae	Gorakhmu ndi	1. Flower and fruits are commonly use for toothache and pyorrhea.
Syzygiumcumini L.	Myrtaceae	Jamun	1. Bark is useful for jaundice. 2. Fruits are useful for digestion, dysentery, pimples and blood purification. 3. Useful in teeth pain, mouth ulcer and piles.
Terminalia arjuna	Combretaceae	Arjun	1. Stem bark powder is used for diabetes, blood pressure and arthritis. 2. Decoction of stem bark is very much effective in heart disease.
Terminalia belliricaRoxb.	Combretaceae	Bahera	1. Fruits are useful in eye, hair, blood impurity, heart disease and anemia. 2. It is also useful for asthma, jaundice and laryngitis
Terminalia chebula Retz.	Combretaceae	Harra	1. Fruits are asthma, bladder stone, UTI and mouth ulcer. 2. Root pest is useful for conjunctivitis, 3. Tribal women eat its fruit paste for abortion and also use it for chronic ulcers.
Tinospora cordifolia Miers	Menispermaceae	Gurij/ Giloy	1. Giloy decoction is immunity booster. 2. It's useful in fever, diabetes, blood pressure, arthritis.
Vitex negundo	Lamiaceae	Nirgundi	1. Fruit and seed powder is useful in fever. 2. Leaf juice helps in wound healing, eye disease, toothache, cough etc.
Gymnemasylvestre	Apocynaceae	Gudmar	1. Leaf is use to treat diabetes, eye, asthma, gastric, infection and indigestion. 2. It is used for the cholesterol, blood pressure control and skin disease.
Clilorealnada		Aparajita	1. Leaf is useful for hair fall and skin disease. 2. It is very much useful heart disease.
CurkomaAmeda	Zingiberaceae	AamaHal	1. Powder is useful for the toothache and

		di	skin disease. 2. it is useful for the gastroenteritis and inflammation.
Curcuma caesia	Zingiberaceae	Kali Haldi	1. It is useful to cured asthma, bronchitis, pneumonia and other lungs disease. 2. This is effective in leucoderma, skin disease, teeth pain, stomach pain, osteoarthritis etc.
Calotropis gigantea	Apocynaceae	Akman/ Akwan	1. Fruit juice is useful for jaundice. 1. Whole plan is highly poisonous so it also harmful. 3. Leaf milk made kajal (soot) which is useful for eye.
Hibiscus rosa-sinensis	Malvaceae	Gudahal	1. Fresh flower is useful in cough and ulcer. 2. Flower powder is used for regular menstruation, helps in pregnancy.

Result

The study identify 43 specise of medicinal plants of 31 families of plant kigdom. The data have getherd from the traditional healer of Maikal hills. They using above mentioned plants to cure different kind of disease like, blood disease; anemia, jaundice, blood pressure, kidney stone, bladder stone, women related disease; irregular menstruation, white discharge, UTI, skin disease; leucoderma, pimples, skin rash, ringworm, itching, burning, bone disease; osteoarthritis, arthritis, fracture, cut, respiratory disease; asthma, bronchitis, pneumonia, lungs disease, cough, heart disease, diabetes, sex related disease; masculine power, premature ejaculation, erectile dysfunction, impotence, nightfall, general disease like eye disease, snakebite, fever, teeth pain, stomach pain, gastroenteritis, inflammation, digestion, dysentery, worm, pyria, mouth ulcer etc.

The unreached medical facility, lack of transport facility, easy availability of ethno medicine and traditional healers, and the strong community belief on herbal medicine is the key reason for the significant use and practice of ethno medicine among the tribal community (Kareti, et al. 2022). The tribal community have a deep belief in their native folklore medicine for remedies (Debbarma et al, 2017). The herbal medicine knowledge is transmitting orally which need to documentation bt the researcher and practitioners so that this ethnic knowledge may useful for the mankind.

Conclusion

The ethno-medicine is the source of income for many Baiga tribal healers but this is not a business for them this show the responsible consumption of nature. They know very well to sustainable use of the medicinal plants. The tribal community are concerned about the conservation of forest and medicinal plants, continues degradation create problem for them, they have travel more in forest to search the medicinal plants (Uniyal, et al. 2006&Dwivedi, et al. 2019).They have adequate knowledge and culture of herbal medicine. The Baiga community considered themselves as Prakriti Putra (son of nature). The traditional healers use these shrubs, herbs and trees for all most every disease. This ethno-medicine saves the life of tribal as well non-tribal people from general disease to fatal disease like cancer. Many medicine are used alone while mostly medicine used combined with many other medicine. The traditional healers of Baiga community are the example of nature conservation, religion, spirituality and sustainable use of resources. The number of study had done on ethno medicine from time to time (Ahirwar, 2017., Pandey, 2021., Narayan, 2017., Kosalge&Fursule, (2009) still many parts are untouched which further need to explore.

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