

Remedial measures of human ailments by *Oxalis corniculata* (Linn.)

Manjulla Srivastava and S.C. Tripathi

Department of Post Graduate Studies and Research in Botany

Kisan P.G. College, Bahraich

Abstract

The communication deals with the traditional knowledge of khath metthi (*Oxalis corniculata*) (Linn.) used by tribal people of our study area i.e. Mihinpurwa block of tehsil Nanpara of Bahraich, a terai district of U.P. This tehsil is very rich in ethnic as well as floristic diversity. The inhabitants of the area have inherited a rich traditional knowledge of the use of this herbaceous flora for cure and care of various human ailments. Important ethnomedicinal uses of herbs, parts utilized, local name and mode of treatment has been included in this paper.

Keywords: *Herbaceous flora, Oxalis corniculata* (Linn.), *Tribals*

Introduction

Study of ethnobotany is in itself a very intricate or convoluted process. Our country represents one of the most important center of knowledge with special reference to use of plant species for various ailments. Examples are the Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha system of medicinal care. To lessen the burden on both human and environment and to make our mother earth safe for future generations, indigenous or inherent technical knowledge should be given more emphasis and prominence. The geological area of Bahraich is 5026.6 km² and it is located at 27°04' to 28° 24' N latitude and between 81°03' to 83°13' E longitude. The surveyed villages of Mihinpurwa block i.e. Phakeerpur, Aama, Lohari, Sahoni and Baligaon of Nanpara tehsil is having good population of tribal people i. e. mainly "Tharus". These villages are situated very near to Katernia forest and the tribal are original settlers (Jain, 1987). It is also important to quote here that the knowledge of tribals regarding plants has descended from one generation to another, as a domestic practice (Brahmam, 2000).

Materials and Method

The study is based on field survey which was conducted during July 2006 to July 2007. During survey out of 60 collected plants, a wild herbaceous flora locally called as "Khath metthi" by tribal people was collected. The tribals helped us a lot in telling local name and folk remedial properties of flora regarding various human ailments. The conversations and discussion with tribal and local elder people regarding these herbaceous flora used in their daily life for disease treatment were also noted in field diary. The collected plant was identified correctly with the help of available literatures i.e. Cooke (1908), Maheswari (1986), Jain (1987), Singh (1991), Duthie (1994), Singh *et al.* (2000), Joshi (2000), Jain (2003). The herbarium of plant species was prepared scientifically following the method described by Jain and Rao (1976). The collected plant specimens were deposited in the P.G. Department of Botany, Kisan P.G. College, Bahraich of U.P. for record and reference.

Results and Discussion

Oxalis corniculata Linn. is a small, perennial herb frequently growing as a weed and belongs to family Oxalidaceae. The leaves are eaten, they are good source of vitamin C. The herb possess astringent, vermifuge and antiseptic properties. Fresh leaves are boiled in butter milk and two teaspoons of it is taken twice in a day

i.e. in morning and evening it is a good remedy for piles, anaemia, dyspepsia and tympanitis. An infusion of leaves is used to remove opacity of cornea. Leaves are used in fever, dysentery, scurvy and biliousness and for removing corns, warts and other excrescences of the skin. An infusion of leaves is used to remove opacities of cornea. The extracts of leaves are used for mouth wash and it is helpful in diseases of gums. Two to three leaves if chewed twice or thrice in a day *i.e.* in morning, noon and evening it relieves the foul smell of mouth. Dried powder of leaves is recommended for cleaning the teeth. The vegetable is locally called as sag, whole plant is made in ghee and it help in curing piles. 2-5 gm extract of whole plant, if taken twice in a day helps in curing diarrhoea and dysentery. 10-15 leaves are grinded with water and its poultice, if bandaged the swelling and burning sensation is reduced. The poultice of leaves is helpful in curing skin eruption, carbuncle, pimples, giddiness and insanity. The indigenous knowledge system of herbal practice is still very rich and available among tribal/rural community of north western terai region of U.P. *i.e.* Bahraich. The establishment of modern medicinal health centers is in progress in many rural areas and that may gradually change the existing pattern of indigenous knowledge system of health care. Hence, it is necessary to document the traditional knowledge of useful plants and their therapeutic uses before being lost forever from the community.

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