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SOME COMMON PLANTS USED BY THE PEOPLE OF KOVILPATTI, TAMIL NADU, INDIA TO TREAT RHEUMATISM

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ABSTRACT

An ethnobotanical survey was carried out in Kovilpatti, Thoothukudi District, Tamil Nadu, India, for the documentation of important medicinal plants used for the treatment of rheumatism. The plants were collected according to their family, local name, vernacular name and useful parts and medicinal uses. There are eight plants are mostly used in this area to treat rheumatism.

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INTRODUCTION: Traditional people around the world possess unique knowledge of plant resources on which they depend for food, medicine and general utility including tremendous botanical expertise. Traditional medicine based on herbal remedies has always played a key role in the health systems of many countries. Ethno-medicinal plants, as a group comprise approximately 8000 species and account for about 50% of all the higher flowering plants species in India¹.

India is blessed with two (Eastern Himalaya and Western Ghats) of the eighteen world's hot spots of biodiversity and is seventh among the sixteen mega diverse countries, where 70% of the world's species occur collectively². About 60% of world's population and 80% of developing countries populations rely on traditional medicine, mostly plant drugs for their primary healthcare needs³. Ethnomedicinal studies are a suitable source of information regarding useful medicinal plants that can be targeted for domestication and management⁴. Although, different workers have documented the uses of

various medicinal plants from different parts of Tamil Nadu^{5, 6}. Information on the traditional and cultural practices of the varied people residing in and around kovilpatti is unavailable.

Therefore, a need and gathering of knowledge and documenting the plants used by these people is important because of modernization and cultural practices. The present study is aimed to look into medicinal plants that are used by the people for curing Rheumatism and the principle objectives of the study were

- 1) To Identify and documenting medicinal plant species used by the people of kovilpatti for curing Rheumatism
- 2) To record the traditional knowledge of the uses of these plants

It is important to document the valuable information because of the transmission of knowledge from the old to new generations.

Methodology: This present study was done in and around kovilpatti, Thoothukudi District, Tamil Nadu. Frequent field survey was carried out during June 2010- January 2011. The interview was done with the people who are having the sound knowledge on medicinal plants found in their area and used by their families and neighbors in their local language (Tamil).

The questionnaire contains the details of the plants, parts used, medicinal uses, mode of preparation i.e. (decoction, paste, powder and juice, form of usage either fresh or dried)

The collected plants were identified taxonomically using the regional floras ^{7, 8} to ascertain the nomenclature. The voucher specimens were deposited in the herbarium of Botany Department G. V. N. College, Kovilpatti, Tamil Nadu, India.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: The present investigation revealed that the ethnomedicinal knowledge of people in and around Kovilpatti region were used eight species of plants belonging to seven families. Among these two were trees, 5 were herbs and one plant is a shrub, the family liliaceae represented two plants when compared to other families to treat rheumatism. This is consistent with general observations made earlier in relation to ethnobotanical ⁹ and the most of the given plants listed below are widely used in other parts of Tamil Nadu ¹⁰.

Among different plant parts used by this people, the leaves are used most frequently to treat rheumatism and they applied mostly on the external surface of the body. Generally fresh plant/part of the plant can be used for the preparation of medicine. When it is not in available condition the dried one are also used especially in tubers and rhizomes.

From this present study is clear that the people of Kovilpatti possess the ability to know and treat rheumatism and medicinal value of plants and plant parts. Similar surveys were reported for various diseases in other parts of India ^{11, 12, 13}.

The list of the plants and their description and uses were described given below;

Vitex negundo (L.) (Family: Verbenaceae) Local Name: Notchi. This is a tree commonly found in the areas of

dry and also found all parts of India. The leaf extracts are taken orally or it will mix with coconut oil /Caster oil and boiled well and then it was applied in the part where to treat rheumatism.

Cardiospermum helicacabum (L.) (Family: Sapindaceae) Local name: Mudakkathan. It is a climbing tender bearing herb found in the areas of watery areas. The leaf of this plant was boiled in water and the extract /paste is applied on the part of the body to treat and relieve rheumatic pain.

Strychnos nux-vomica, (L.) (Family: Loganiaceae) Local Name: Etti maram. It is a tree commonly found in a deciduous forest or hilly and cool region. The leaf of this plant is make it in a paste and applied to the body to treat rheumatism.

Cynodon dactylon (L.) Pers. (Family: Poaceae) Local name: Arugampullu. It is a grass commonly found in all part of the south India and also in the study area. It is one of the ritual plants. The whole plant is used for various diseases especially the paste of leaf is used to treat rheumatism externally.

Enicostemma littorale Blume. (Family: Gentianaceae) Local Name: Vellarugu. The perennial herb found all parts of India especially in black soil. The leaf extract was used to cure rheumatism.

Asparagus recemosus Wild. (Family: Liliaceae) Local Name: Thanneervittan kilangu. It is a shrub commonly found in all parts and also in garden for decoration. The tuber of this plant is made into a paste and applied to the affected parts to treat rheumatism.

Gloriosa superba (L.) (Family: Liliaceae) Local Name: Kalappaikilangu/Kan vali poo. The climbing herbs found common in all areas also grown /cultivated as a hedge plant. It is a state flower of Tamil Nadu, India. The powdered leaf/flower is taking orally or the tuber paste is applied externally on the affected to treat rheumatism.

Dodonea viscosa (L.) (Family: Sabiaceae) Local Name: Virali. It is a small herb found in common and more in red soil areas and also planted as a hedge plant. The leaf was boiled in a hot water or the leaf was boiled with coconut oil and the extract was applied to the body to treat rheumatism.

CONCLUSION: This present study revealed that the vital role of medicinal plants in human healthcare. This information is useful for future generation. The abundance of ethnomedicinal information on plant uses found in the some of these people but there is no interest among the younger generation. It is necessary to preserve the traditional system by proper documentation.

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