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FOLKLORE MEDICINAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE PEOPLES IN PATHINETTAMKOTTAI VILLAGE, SIVAGANGAI DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU, INDIA

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ABSTRACT: Since ancient times, man has been looking for plants to rescue from diseases and improve immunity. He may find the right choice of plants by trial and error, observing nature and following theories, and passing that information to the next generation by word of mouth. Folklore medicine combines traditional healing practices, spirituality, and therapies to diagnose and prevent ailments. In the present study, a survey was carried out about the traditional usage of medicinal plants in herbal healers, old and native peoples of Pathinettamkottai village, and its surrounding areas of Sivagangai district in Tamil Nadu. The study explored 65 medicinal remedies from plants used to treat 41 different illnesses. The predominant part used to prepare medicines is a leaf. The medicines are prepared in the form of powder, paste, decoction, and vapor, and they are used to cure 31 health problems like cold, fever, asthma, diarrhoea, diabetes, jaundice, rheumatism, wounds, cuts, stomach pain, *etc.*, The survey provides rich source of knowledge on plants and, thus new drugs.

INTRODUCTION: The relationship of mankind with plants may start from primeval period. The entire life of man, his culture, and the development of civilization depends on plant sources. The usage of plants in healing ailments has inveterate history and is documented in Rig and Atharva veda¹. The indigenous practices of medicinal plants are based on values and personal experiences developed². Most of developing countries use traditional medicine as the first line of therapy. The ethnobotanical information is the key to developing many new drugs and helps to protect the intellectual property of the plants of a particular region³.

The intrusion of the modern medical system, loss of biodiversity, and lack of authentic knowledge and preparation methods of herbal drugs lead to the destruction of natural medicine. The impacts of deforestation, urbanization, and modernization are also shifting people from their natural habitats, and knowledge, particularly regarding herbal drugs, is slowly disappearing. So, some approaches are needed to preserve and develop traditional knowledge. Documentation of indigenous knowledge through folklore studies is important for the conservation of biological resources as well as their sustainable utilization.

It is also necessary to collect information about the knowledge of traditional medicines preserved in tribal and rural communities of various parts of the world before it is permanently lost. In recent years herbal medicine has been considered a fast-growing worldwide industry. Out of the 70,000 species of plants,⁴ more than 10 percent are used in various pharmaceutical preparations. Based on some

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statistical estimates, it was expected that global marketing of medicinal plants may reach \$5 trillion by 2050⁵. There was an increasing interest in using herbal products and remedies globally. So the values of traditional knowledge and worthy information are cherished⁶.

India is known for its rich biodiversity, with several endangered and endemic medicinal plants in its hotspot. Among the 400 flowering plants worldwide, 315 families are presented in India⁷. India is a vast repository of traditional knowledge and provides sources for several medicines. Even now, rural communities and households practice folklore medicines to cure common ailments. The current study focuses on disclosing the folklore knowledge of Pathinettamkottai village, Sivagangai district of Tamilnadu.

Geographical Details of the Study Area: The floral and ethnomedicinal studies were conducted in Pathinettamkottai in the village of sivagangai district in Tamil Nadu. The entire area of Pathinettamkottai is lies between 9° 45' 40.8" N latitude and 78° 23' 23.6" E longitude. The altitude of the study area is about 70 meters above the Mean Sea Level. The Temperature scarcely fluctuates in the year and ranges from 20°C during winter to 40°C during summer. Pathinettamkottai has the highest rainfall during the monsoon period (October, November and December). While March, April, and May are the driest months. Summer showers will be there during April and May. The annual rainfall of the study area reaches 500 – 650mm.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

Interview with Informants: To document the utilization of the plants present in Pathinettamkottai as medicine, the local inhabitants of Pathinettamkottai and its surrounding regions includes pacheari, idaikkattur, sambarayanentel and puthukkulam were interviewed. The survey was spread across the seasons so as to get maximum information. Field visits were made for about 60 – 180 minutes. A questionnaire was used in interviews, and variations were introduced during the interviews. The questionnaire used in this study allowed descriptive responses on the plant prescribed, such as part of the plant used, medicinal uses, mode of preparation (*i.e.*,

decoction, paste, juice, *etc.*) and administration, a form of usage, either fresh or dried and mixtures of other plants used as ingredients and complications if any. During the survey, two interviewing methods were followed. The first was the 'specimen display' method. Plant species were shown to traditional healers and households to elicit any medicinal information. The same plant was shown to the different informants to confirm the accuracy of the results. When convenient to the locals, the second method of field walk took place. A walk into the Pathinettamkottai with the interview persons allowed for both plant identification and detailed information gathering. The informants interviewed numbered 25 (13 men, 12 women), which included both households and herbal healers who had strong links with traditional activities of the area were interviewed.

The questionnaire items also included each household's and healer's current age, and their experience of school education was recorded. In the case of herbalist healers, his/her age at the first practice of herbal therapy was also noted. All the plants recorded during this study were botanically identified with the help of Flora of Tamil Nadu Carnatic⁸ and An Excursion Flora of Central Tamil Nadu⁹.

RESULT:

Characters of Interviewers: According to the survey, the age of herbal healers were above 50, males (100 %) and female (66.7%). Most of them started their herbal healing practice at 40-45, and none attained their high school education. In the case of households, most of the interview personalities (53.6%) who have tremendous knowledge of the use of plants as medicine came under the age category of below 50 years, and the majority (60 %) were educated

Medicinal Plant Diversity and Uses: The present investigation in Pathinettamkottai village and its surrounding areas of Sivagangai district in Tamil Nadu explored 65 medicinal remedies from plants, based on the use of a single plant species, used to treat 41 different illnesses were recorded. It was observed that the use 60 species of angiospermic plant belongs to 59 genera under 44 botanical families. According to species habit, most of the taxa cited were herb, comprised of 23 species;

shrubs represented by 6 species, 23 tree species, and 8 climbers were reported. The percentage of plant parts used for drug preparation was depicted in **Fig. 1**.

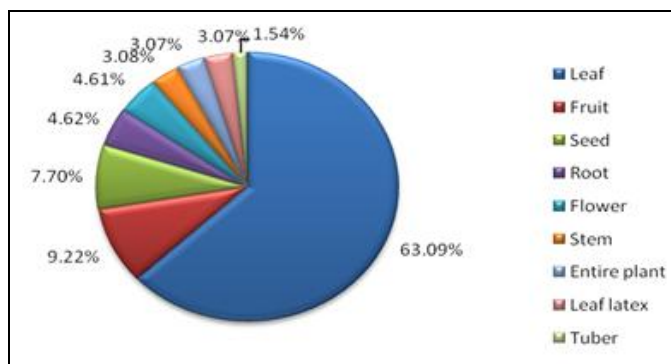


FIG. 1: PLANT PARTS USED FOR TREATMENT

The paste was prepared by grinding the fresh or dried plant material, usually with water or occasionally with oil. The extract was prepared by grinding the plant with some water and filtering. The juice was extracted by filtering from grounded fresh material. A decoction was made by boiling the plant material in water until the volume of water was reduced to half of its original volume. The powder was prepared by grinding the shade-dried raw materials. Vapour was prepared by boiling the plant material in water, and the

generated fume was inhaled. Similar to our study, several ethnobotanical surveys revealed paste as one of the commonly used methods of herbal drug preparation among ethnic and rural communities all over the World ^{10, 11, 12}.

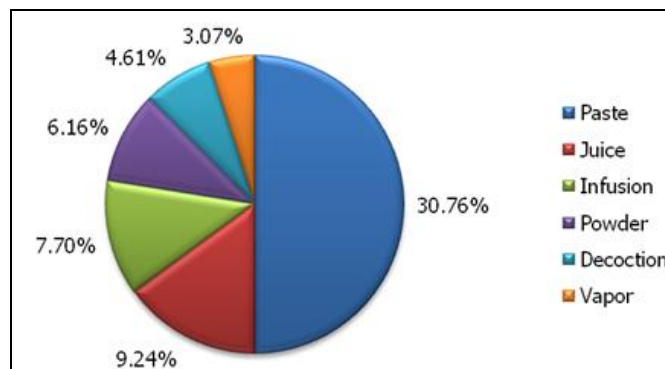


FIG. 2: FORMS OF DRUG USED

From the study, it was inferred that medicinal preparation is mostly in the form of paste followed by raw, cooked, juice, infusion, extract, powder, decoction, and vapor **Fig. 2**. Some plants were also used in exudates form (1.54%) to cure a particular disease. The comprehensive data of plant parts used in a different drug preparation in the study was given in **Table 1**.

TABLE 1: PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF THE PARTS USED AND MODE OF TREATMENT

S. no.	Parts used	Mode of treatment										Total
		Cooked	Decoction	Extract	Exudates	Infusion	Juice	Paste	Powder	Raw	Vapour	
1	Entire plant	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.07	-	-	-	3.07
2	Flower	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.07	-	1.54	-	4.61
3	Fruit	1.54	-	1.54	-	-	-	-	-	6.14	-	9.22
4	Leaf	9.24	3.07	4.62	1.54	3.07	9.24	20	4.62	4.62	3.07	63.09
5	Leaf latex	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.07	-	3.07
6	Root	-	1.54	1.54	-	-	-	1.54	-	-	-	4.62
7	Seed	-	-	-	-	4.62	-	1.54	-	1.54	-	7.7
8	Stem	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.54	1.54	-	-	3.08
9	Tuber	1.54	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.54
	Total	12.32	4.61	7.7	1.54	7.69	9.24	30.76	6.16	16.91	3.07	100

The local people used a good number of the collected plants for the treatment of multiple diseases. *Ocimum sanctum* was used for the treatment of three diseases (cold, cough and fever); 12 plants viz., *Ocimum basilicum* (pimple and scar), *Tinospora cordifolia* (fever and intestinal worm), *Centella asiatica* (memory power and burn), *Pisonia alba* (joint and back pain), *Andrographis paniculata* (intestinal worm and fever), *Abutilon*

indicum (burn and wound), *Calotropis gigantea* (tooth-ache and thorn sting), *Cissus quadrangularis* (bone fracture and snake bite), *Psidium guajava* (diarrhea and constipation), *Cyanodon dactylon* (body heat and blood pressure) and *Lawsonia inermis* (body heat and foot crack) were used for two diseases and the rest of 47 plants are used to treat only one diseases. In support of the study, Balamurugan ¹³ have enumerated that a total of 41

plant species of 39 genera belonging to 23 families were found in Vaigai river of Manamadurai region possess medicinal values and are used to cure various ailments and diseases like diarrhoea, asthma, fever, jaundice, wounds, stomach pain, cough, cold, poisonous bites etc. Shanmugam *et al.*,¹⁴ enumerated the medicinal uses among the rural people inhabiting different localities of Sivagangai

district in Tamil Nadu. The present study revealed that 60 genera of angiosperm belonging to 36 families were used to cure 31 different illnesses like diarrhoea, diabetes, asthma, fever, jaundice, rheumatism, wounds, cuts, stomach pain, cold, cough etc. The traditional uses of surveyed medicinal plants were enlisted in **Table 2**.

TABLE 2: PLANTS USED FOR MEDICINAL PURPOSES IN PATHINETTAMKOTTAI VILLAGE

S. no.	Botanical Name	Medicinal uses
1	<i>Tinospora cordifolia</i> (Willd.) Hook.f. & Thomson Family Name: Menispermaceae Vernacular Name: Seenthilkodi	Hand full of leaves was extracted, taken orally to cure fever and expel intestinal worms
2	<i>Mimosa pudica</i> L. Family Name: Mimosaceae Vernacular Name: Thottalsuringi	Seeds were soaked in water for overnight and ground. The paste was applied to cure heel pain
3	<i>Centella asiatica</i> (L.) Urban Family Name: Apiaceae Vernacular Name: Vallarai	Leaves were cooked with some ingredients like green gram and eaten to improve memory power. Leaf paste was applied for burning sensation of foot
4	<i>Argemone mexicana</i> L. Family Name: Papaveraceae Vernacular Name: Pirammathandu	The boiled roots were filtered and applied for joint pain
5	<i>Sida acuta</i> Burm.f. Family Name: Malvaceae Vernacular Name: Arivalmanaipundu	Leaf paste was mixed with coconut oil and applied to heal wound
6	<i>Tribulus terrestris</i> L. Family Name: Zygophyllaceae Vernacular Name: Nerungil	Seeds were dried and soaked in rice water for overnight. The infusion was given as drink for kidney stone
7	<i>Ficus benghalensis</i> L. Family Name: Moraceae Vernacular Name: Alamaram	Stem bark was ground and the paste was applied for gastric pain. Leaf latex was applied for heel crack
8	<i>Ocimum basilicum</i> L. Family Name: Lamiaceae Vernacular Name: Pachilai	Leaves were crushed and the juice was applied to cure pimples and to remove scars
9	<i>Ocimum sanctum</i> L. Family Name: Lamiaceae Vernacular Name: Nallathulasi	Leaf extract was prescribed to cure cold, cough and fever
10	<i>Achyranthes aspera</i> L. Family Name: Amaranthaceae Vernacular Name: Naayuruvi	Leaf paste was applied to treat dog bite and heal wound
11	<i>Pisonia auclata</i> L. Family Name: Nyctaginaceae Vernacular Name: Latsakattai	Leaves were cooked with goat's blood and eaten to get relief from joint pain and back pain
12	<i>Acalypha indica</i> L. Family Name: Euphorbiaceae Vernacular Name: Kuppaimeni	Leaf paste was applied to treat itching
13	<i>Jatropha curcas</i> L. Family Name: Euphorbiaceae Vernacular Name: Kattamanaku	Leaf latex was applied to cure throat pain
14	<i>Solanum trilobatum</i> L. Family Name: Solanaceae Vernacular Name: Thuthuvelai	Leaves and fruits were fried with rice flour and eaten to cure whooping cough
15	<i>Opuntia dillenii</i> (Ker Gawler) Haw. Family Name: Cactaceae Vernacular Name: Sappathikkalli	Flower paste was applied for tumor
16	<i>Crateva religiosa</i> G. Forst. Family Name: Capparaceae	Decoction of matured leaves was given to drink to cure piles

17	Vernacular Name: Mavalingham <i>Coccinia grandis</i> (L.) J. Voigt Family Name: Cucurbitaceae	Unripe fruits were roasted in sesame oil with salt and eaten to treat diabetes
18	Vernacular Name: Kovai <i>Catharanthus roseus</i> (L.) Don Family Name: Apocynaceae	Flowers were eaten as raw to maintain blood pressure
19	Vernacular Name: Nithyakalyani <i>Aloe vera</i> L. Family Name: Liliaceae	Internal potion of the leaf was eaten raw to cool the body and expel the intestinal worms
20	Vernacular Name: Katalai <i>Plumbago zeylanica</i> L. Family Name: Plumbaginaceae	Decoction of root was taken orally to get relief from piles
21	Vernacular Name: Chithiramoolam <i>Andrographis paniculata</i> (L.) Nees Family Name: Acanthaceae	Leaf juice was taken orally to cure intestinal worms and fever
22	Vernacular Name: Nilavembu <i>Phyla nodiflora</i> (L.) Green Family Name: Verbenaceae	Leaves were ground with seeds of fenugreek soaked for overnight. The paste was applied on head to check hair fall.
23	Vernacular Name: Poduthalai <i>Azima tetracantha</i> Lam. Family Name: Salvadoraceae	Leaf juice was given to drink for a child to get relief from stomach pain
24	Vernacular Name: Sangalai <i>Abutilon indicum</i> L. Family Name: Malvaceae	Leaf paste was mixed with lime paste and applied to heal the wound. Flower paste was applied to treat burns
25	Vernacular Name: Thuthi <i>Erythrina variegata</i> L. Family Name: Fabaceae	Leaves were roasted with rice flour and eaten to get relief from cold and cough
26	Vernacular Name: Mulmurungai <i>Eucalyptus polycarba</i> F. Muell Family Name: Myrtaceae	Leaves were boiled, and the vapor was inhaled to get relief from headache
27	Vernacular Name: Aaraspathi <i>Sesbania grandiflora</i> (L.) Poiret Family Name: Fabaceae	Leaf decoction was taken orally to cure stomach ulcer
28	Vernacular Name: Agathi <i>Phyllanthus amarus</i> Schum. & Thonn. Family Name: Euphorbiaceae	Leaf juice was taken orally to treat jaundice.
29	Vernacular Name: Keelanelli <i>Boerhavia diffusa</i> L. Family Name: Nyctaginaceae	Root paste applied for gastric pain
30	Vernacular Name: Saranathi <i>Pergularia daemia</i> (Forsskal) Chiov. Family Name: Asclepiadaceae	Leaf paste was applied for gastric problem
31	Vernacular Name: Veliparuthi <i>Azadirachta indica</i> Adr. Juss. Family Name: Meliaceae	Leaf paste was applied to heal the wound. Leaf paste also mixed with turmeric powder and applied to cure smallpox
32	Vernacular Name: Vempu <i>Calotropis gigantea</i> (L.) R. Br. Family Name: Asclepiadaceae	Leaf latex was applied on the spot to get relief from toothache and thorn sting
33	Vernacular Name: Yerukku <i>Cissus quadrangularis</i> L. Family Name: Vitaceae	Tender leaf paste was applied for bone fracture. Leaf juice was poured on the spot to treat the snake bite
34	Vernacular Name: Pirandai <i>Ipomoea hederifolia</i> L. Family Name: Convolvulaceae	Leaf paste was mixed with lime powder to get relief from swelling and inflammation.
35	Vernacular Name: Thalikodi <i>Lawsonia inermis</i> L. Family Name: Lythraceae	Leaf paste was applied on the head for body cooling and also applied to heal foot crack
36	Vernacular Name: Maruthani <i>Croton bonplandianus</i> Baillon Family Name: Euphorbiaceae	Leaf infusion was taken orally to treat dysentery
37	Vernacular Name: Mannanakolachedi <i>Moringa oleifera</i> Lam.	Stem bark was dried, powdered and mixed with

38	Family Name: Moringaceae Vernacular Name: Murungai <i>Tamarindus indica</i> L.	cow milk and given orally to cure infertility in men Seeds were soaked and ground. The paste was mixed with rice water and tied with a clean cloth for bone fracture.
39	Family Name: Caesalpiniaceae Vernacular Name: Puliyamaram <i>Eclipta prostrata</i> L.	Entire plant paste was applied for hair growth
40	Family Name: Asteraceae Vernacular Name: Karisalankanni <i>Cardiospermum helicacabum</i> L.	Leaves are cooked and eaten to cure rheumatism
41	Family Name: Sapindaceae Vernacular Name: Mudakkaruthan <i>Carica papaya</i> L.	Ripened Fruits were eaten raw to improve eye vision.
42	Family Name: Caricaceae Vernacular Name: Pappali <i>Vitex negundo</i> L.	Leaves were boiled, and the vapor was inhaled to get relief from a headache
43	Family Name: Verbenaceae Vernacular Name: Nochi <i>Prosopis juliflora</i> (SW.) DC.	Leaves were fried in coconut oil and tied on the spot to get relief from swelling due to thorn sting
44	Family Name: Mimosaceae Vernacular Name: Seemai Karuvelam <i>Adhatoda vasica</i> Nees	Leaves were dried and powdered. The powder was mixed with cow milk and taken orally to cure cold
45	Family Name: Acanthaceae Vernacular Name: Adathodai <i>Cynodan dactylon</i> (L.) Pers.	Leaf juice was taken in an empty stomach for body cooling and blood high blood pressure
46	Family Name: Poaceae Vernacular Name: Arugampull <i>Annona squamosa</i> L.	Tender fruit was eaten raw to get relief from continuous dysentery
47	Family Name: Annonaceae Vernacular Name: Seetha <i>Psidium guajava</i> L.	Leaves were chewed raw to treat diarrhoea. Fruits were eaten raw to get relief from constipation
48	Family Name: Myrtaceae Vernacular Name: Koiya <i>Cocos nucifera</i> L.	Liquid endosperm obtained from tender fruit was taken orally to reduce body heat and also get relief from the burning sensation during urination
49	Family Name: Rubiaceae Vernacular Name: Manjanathi <i>Morinda tinctoria</i> Roxb.	A crushed leaf was placed on the spot to reduce tooth pain
50	Family Name: Rubiaceae Vernacular Name: Manjanathi <i>Thespesia populnea</i> (L.) Sol. ex Corr.	Leaves were burned, and the ash mixed with coconut oil was applied for the itch.
51	Family Name: Malvaceae Vernacular Name: Poovarasu <i>Euphorbia hirta</i> L.	Whole plant paste mixed with soaked rice was eaten to get relief from stomach pain
52	Family Name: Euphorbiaceae Vernacular Name: Amman pacharisi <i>Pedaliium murex</i> L.	Seeds were soaked in water for about one day, and the infusion was taken orally to treat kidney stone
53	Family Name: Pedaliaceae Vernacular Name: Yaanainerunchi <i>Cyperus rotundus</i> L.	Tubers were cooked and prescribed for old age people to eat for memory loss
54	Family Name: Cyperaceae Vernacular Name: Korai pull <i>Musa paradisiaca</i> L.	The exudates obtained stem was taken orally for kidney stone
55	Family Name: Musaceae Vernacular Name: Vazhai <i>Mangifera indica</i> L.	Inner portion of the seed was eaten raw to cure stomach ache
56	Family Name: Anacardiaceae Vernacular Name: Mamaram <i>Ziziphus jujube</i> (L.) Gaertner, non Miller	Leaves were soaked for the whole day, and infusion was given to drink to check body weight loss
	Family Name: Rhamnaceae Vernacular Name: Elanthai	

57	<i>Datura metal</i> L. Family Name: Solanaceae Vernacular Name: Oomathai	Leaf paste was applied to wound
58	<i>Citrus lemon</i> (L.) Burn.f. Family Name: Rutaceae Vernacular Name: Yelumichai	Leaves and fruit peel were crushed, and the smell was inhaled to arrest vomit
59	<i>Murraya koenigii</i> (L.) Sprengel Family Name: Rutaceae Vernacular Name: Kari vepillai	Leaves were dried and powdered. The powder was mixed with coconut oil and applied to remove scare
60	<i>Aristolochia indica</i> L. Family Name: Aristolochiaceae Vernacular Name: Aadutheendaapalai	Leaf juice was applied on the spot to treat snake bite

There is always an in-depth and matchless association between the indigenous people and their living environments, which has been established over decades. They better understand natural sources, and from that evolved novel systems of practices, they benefit.

This is the time to secure our knowledge of natural resources to conserve them, and they provide roots to identify promising drugs and products without side effects. The present study also stands to prove the traditional knowledge of medicinal plants.

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