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RESEARCH ARTICLE

INDIGENOUS MEDICINE USED FOR TREATMENT OF HEPATO-PROTECTIVE AND OTHER RELATED PROBLEMS BY THE HALAM TRIBE OF KARIMGANJ DISTRICT, ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

The present paper documents the wealth of medicinal plant species used by the Halam tribes of Karimganj district for various hepato-protective and other related disorders. A field study carried out by interviewing the traditional herbalists and several other elderly man and women. In the earlier days ethnic communities do not approaches of hepato-protective disorders. So they use some medicinal plants for the purpose of hepato-protective disorders are enumerated with their botanical name, family, vernacular name, parts used and their application has been provided in this paper.

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INTRODUCTION

The Karimganj district is situated in the Southern part of Assam state. It is bounded on the northeast by Cachar district, on the south by Mizoram state, on the south-west by Tripura state and on the west and north-west by Bangladesh. The geographical area of Karimganj district is 1,809 sq km. longitude 92° 15'- 92°35' East and latitude 24°15'- 25°55' north. The distance of the district from state capital Guwahati is 338 kms. The main river is Kushiara, Longai, Singhla and Barak. Total forest cover by the district is 54,504 ha. of which 30% of total land area. It is attained a district of Assam in the year 1983. According to 2011 population census, total population is 1,217,002 of which Male- 620,722 and female-596,280. Bengali dialect that is used in Karimganj is known as "Sylheti". Manipuri is spoken by the minority Bisnupriya and Meitei communities. There are also some tribal communities like Hrangkhoal, Sakachap, Halam, Chori, Tripuri, Kuki and Khasi are settled in the forest and hilly area of district. Ethnobotany is a branch of research that deals with ethnic communities and medicinal plants in their environment for betterment of life's. Vast ethno botanical knowledge exists in India from ancient time. Even today 80% of the world's population relies on traditional plant medicines including various tribal and rural communities in India through Indian system of medicine and other undocumented traditional practices (Khan *et al.*, 2004, Mashelkar, 2002). The knowledge of the uses of ethnomedicine for the cure of various

ailments is being used since time immemorial. The maximum numbers of medicinal plants are used by tribal communities survived on their traditional knowledge base (Kumar, 2012) and maintained of their health and daily life is based on the traditional medicines derived for their plants. Northeast Indian states are the store house of medicinal plants which are naturally grown and available in the forests (Das, 2006). It is known for high ethnic and biological diversity and is often referred to as biological hotspot (Ramakrishnan, 1984). Southern Assam is a varietal emporium of medicinal plants which are naturally grown and available in the southern Assam did not receive much attention; however, some related reports are available India (Borthakur, 1997; Sajem and Gosai, 2010; Das and Dutta 2008; Das and Sharma 2004, Bora *et al.*, 2013).

About tribe

Halam is one of the Tripura tribes which is believed to have been originated from the kuki clan, they are also known as Mizo, while some people called them Ranglong. The historical archives of Tripura state that the Kukis who accepted the dominion of the Raja of Tripura later known as Halams. The people of Halam tribe are known to follow the Visanava faith and the Saka cult. The Halam people are one of the Kukish peoples, who are said to have lived in Tripura before the Tipra came to that land. Those of the Kuki who submitted to the authority of the Tipra Raja came to be known as Halam. Folklore have the Halam people come from Khurpuibabum, somewhere in Manipur. Mual huam, Kaihpeng and Bawngcher are the first group to enter Tripura, they are in record during the reign of Raja Omar Manikya, 1584–1586 A.D. Other sub-

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groups have immigrated from Cachar district of Assam, Mizoram and Chittagong Hill Tracts. It is evident from their folktales and folksongs that Halam people once passed through Mizoram on their way to reach Tripura.

Originally, there were 12 groups found in Halam tribe. However, today there are 16 sub-sections in which the Halam community is divided viz- Hrangkhoh, Malsum, Kaipeng, Kalai, Rupini, Bongcher, Karbong, Langkai, Chori, Monsophang, Ronglong and Thangachep. The people of the Halam tribe in Tripura are quite superstitious by nature and believe in the spiritual powers. While offering prayers to their holy Deity, the Halam people expect that no evil spirit attacks their crop field. Unlike other Kuki clans, majority are Hindu, while worshipping their traditional religions. According to 1961 census, Hindu numbers 16,044 while Christian are only 253. Matai-Katar is the principal deity of the state of Tripura as identified with Siva Mahadev. The word Matai means God and Katar mean great or supreme. Halam tribes too worship her.

Festivals and fairs are part and parcel of these Halam tribes there by enriching the tradition and culture of the whole society, also interesting about these Halam tribes is that though they have the tradition of feting all the festivals of national importance, these Halam tribes have integrated their indigenous customs and norms to it. For example, the two brothers Goraiya and Kataiya are revered on Chaitra Sankranti, i.e. the last day of the Hindu year. Amongst various religious festivals, Bara puja is the main festival of the Halam tribes which is organized once in four or five years with great splendor and vivacity. The integrity among the various sub-groups of Halam tribe is quite inspiring. Apart from harmonious co-existence the sections of Halam community also gathers during major festivals. These festivals become occasions of social meeting when the groups of Halam community solve the various disputes.

They also prefer to practice horticulture in their Jhum land. The Hai- Hak dance of Halam tribe is performed by the people to worship goddess Lakshmi. Specially performed when the harvesting of crops is over, the Hai-Hak dance of Halam has become a major culture attraction of the state. The other two significant pujas feted by both tribal and the non-tribal people, including the Halam tribes, are namely Kharchi puja and Ker puja. The Kharchi is feted for a week in the month of Ashada (June to July) mainly at puran Agartala before all the fourteen Gods. Fourteen days after the Kharchi puja, the Ker puja is feted. In fact this puja is a must for all the Halam tribes. Ker Puja has got a history behind it. Actually it was started by the kings of the Tripura and is feted in the Bengali month of Ashada with a vision to ward off all threats. Amongst these Halam tribes special rules are being ardently followed till date.

During the Ker Puja, all entrance to the capital city, Agartala, are blocked for 2 days and a half. At the time of the fest, each and every one including the king, is subjugated to several limitations. For example, all people are bound to stay in their houses and are permitted to go outside only two times and that too for a only a couple of hours. Other restrictions include no permission for putting on shoes to ignite a fire. To top it all these Halam tribes also are barred from doing any kind of

dancing and singing, all who breach these norms are bound to pay fines. However, over the years, these changes have been brought in by these Halam tribes and limitations also have become quite less. Halam tribe with its rich historical past and flourishing present state, is rapidly coming into the forefront of tribal communities of Tripura and from Tripura they migrate to different parts of southern Assam and settled in tribal areas. The recent work an attempt has been made to collect and documents this vanishing knowledge of the medicinal properties of the plants used by Halam tribes of Southern Assam.

METHODOLOGY

Extensive field work has been carried out during July 2012- August 2013 covering almost all the seasons of the year. The information was mainly gathered from the village chiefs (Goan Burahs), traditional herbalists, local elderly men, women and forest dwellers, while collected the information on ethno-medicines on the basis of standard approaches and methodologies have been followed (Jain, 1987, 1989, Schultes 1962). The authentic identification of the plants were done with the help of the available floristic literature such as Flora of British India vol.1-7 (Hooker, 1872 – 1897); Flora of India, vol. 1– 3 (Sharma *et al.*, Edt. 1993); Flora of Assam, vol. 1-4, (Kanjilal *et al.*, 1934 – 1940); (Bor, 1940); Flora of India, vol. 12 – 13 (Hajra *et al.*, 1995). Information regarding vernacular name, plant parts used, process of preparation of medicine for treatment of particular diseases was collected from the Halam tribes- Hrangkhoal, Chori, Sakachap communities, for authentication different flora and monograph have been consulted. Identification Herbarium sheets were deposited to the department of Ecology and Environmental Science, Assam University, Silchar. Then medicinal plants were arranged by disease wise and provided correct nomenclature for all round study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the study area documented only 29 plant species belonging to 24 families for particular Hepato-protective medicinal purpose which includes of Jaundice, diarrhoea, Stomachache, indigestion, dysentery, liver stimulant and stomach stimulant. During field studies, information have been collected from different communities and then informations are cross checked with the information provided by another informants of the same tribal communities. During the study, it has been found that tribal communities were facing hepato-protective problems are the common among the rural people because of poor hygienic condition, sanitation facility along with contaminated food and water. A total of 07 nos. of plant species were prescribed as dysentery, 06 nos. of plant species prescribed as diarrhea remaining plants were used in the treatment of stomach stimulant, jaundice, liver stimulant, indigestion and stomachache.

The most cited plant family Casealpinaeae has 3 no. species. Followed by 2 no. of species by Rutaceae, Euphorbiaceae, Arecaceae and 1 no of species followed by Apiaceae, Acanthaceae, Anacardiaceae, Bombaceae, Bignoniaceae,

Table. These are the following plants are used for Hepato-protective related disorders

Disease/ Disorders	Scientific name with Families	Local Name	Parts used	Mode of preparation
Dysentery	<i>Aegle marmelos</i> Corr. (Rutaceae)	Bael	Fruit	Fruit extract mixed with water, along with common salt taken twice daily for three days.
Stomach stimulant	<i>Carica papaya</i> Linn. (Caricaceae)	Koipol	Fruit	Unripe fruit taken made with curry for enhancing the stomach.
Diarrhoea	<i>Centella asiatica</i> (L.) Mart. (Apiaceae)	Perup	Leaves	Leaves juice (5ml) mixed with considerable amount of common salt then given orally for twice a day for 3-days.
Dysentery	<i>Psidium guyava</i> Linn. (Mythaceae)	Sapri	Young leaves	The young leaves juice (10ml) taken orally early in the morning for 5-days.
Diarrhoea	<i>Tamarindus indica</i> Linn. (Casalpinaceae)	Thanthrai	Seeds	Seeds powered (2ml) mixed with (10ml) of worm water then taken once a day for 7-days.
Diarrhoea	<i>Musa paradisiacal</i> Var. (Musaceae)	Motkung	Pseudo stem	Juice of pseudo stem (5ml) mixed with black salt taken early in the morning for 7-days for treating diarrhoea .
Dysentery	<i>Adathoda vasica</i> Mill. (Acanthaceae)	Vasok	Roots	Root powered (2gm) with leaf juice (5ml) of <i>Zizipus jujaba</i> then mixed gently then taken orally for 15-days.
Jaundice	<i>Leucas aspera</i> Spreng. (Lamiaceae)	Durbasi	Leaf twing	Leaf twig juice 3ml mixed with equal amount of honey then taken orally for 10-days.
Jaundice	<i>Oroxylum indicum</i> Vent. (Bignoniaceae)	Kaak-rakung	Bark	Bark powered 3gm mixed with 10ml of warm water taken early morning for 7-days.
Dysentery	<i>Zingiber officinalies</i> Rose. (Zingiberaceae)	Ithing	Rhizome	Rhizome juice (10ml) mixed with 5ml of honey then given orally once early morning taken until cure of dysentery.
Liver stimulant	<i>Euphorbia nerifolia</i> L. (Euphorbiaceae)	Sairapal	Root	Root decoction are taken orally twice for 3-days for stimulating the liver.
Jaundice	<i>Aloe vera</i> L. (Liliaceae)	Gritokomari	Leaves	Leav juice 5ml given orally for treating jaundice regularly 1 month.
Diarrhoea	<i>Callicarpa arborea</i> Roxb. (Verbenaceae)	Hnahkiah	Bark	Bark powered mixed with warm water taken twice daily for curing diarrhoea.
Diarrhoea	<i>Phyllanthus emblioca</i> L. (Euphorbiaceae)		Stem	Stem powered 5gm mixed with Terminalia chebula 5gm mixed gently then given orally twice a day.
Jaundice	<i>Cajanas cajan</i> (L.) Mill.	Khoklaing	Leaf	Leaf juice mixed with considerable amount of water then taken for jaundice early in the morning.
Indigestion	<i>Corcharous capsularis</i> L. (Tiliaceae)	Nalia	Leaf	Tender leaves are boiled with water then taken orally for increase the digestive capacity.
Stomach stimulant	<i>Cassia alta</i> L. (Coesalpinaceae)	Dadmari	Leaves	A decoction of leaves are useful for stomach stimulant.
Stomach stimulant	<i>Moringa oleifera</i> Lam. (Moringaceae)	Sajana	Fruit	Fruit warm with water for 20-25mnts. Then taken regularly to increase the stomach function.
Stomach stimulant	<i>Nyctantus arbortristis</i> Linn. (Oleaceae)	Sepali	Seeds	Seeds powered 2gm taken with warm water once a day regularly to increase the liver function.
Dysentery	<i>Citrus lemon</i> (L.) Burm.f. (Oleaceae)	Labu	Fruit	Fruit juice mixed with considerable amount black salt taken regularly.
Jaundice	<i>Calamus tenuis</i> Roxb. (Arecaceae)	Jalibeth	Pseudo stem	Pseudo stem juice taken for 7days to control the jaundice.
Diarrhoea	<i>Bombex ceiba</i> L. (Bombaceae)	Impangpat	Trunk exudation	Trunk exuding mixed with water then taken for immediate check of diarrhoea.
Liver stimulant	<i>Solanum nigram</i> L. (Solanaceae)	Bonmantha	Young leaves	Young leaf juice given once a day at considerable amount to get better result.
Dysentery	<i>Cocas nucifera</i> L. (Arecaceae)	Narkel	Fruit water	Fruit water 100ml taken twice a day for curing dysentery.
Liver stimulant	<i>Momordica cochinchinensis</i> (Lour) Spreng (Cucurbitaceae)	Moithemtolok	Unripe fruit	Unripe fruit juice 2ml mixed with honey 3ml then taken regularly for five days for enhancing the liver function.
Dysentery	<i>Celrodendrum viscosum</i> Vent. (Verbenaceae)	Poisi	Young leaves	Young leaves juice 5ml taken orally twice a day.
Liver function	<i>Cassia occidentalis</i> L. (Casealpinaceae)	Meitarbi	Young leaves	Leaf juice taken once a day before food for the improvement of liver function.
Stomachache	<i>Spondias pinnata</i> (Linn.f.) Kurz. (Anacardiaceae)	Thaitho	Fruit	Fruit juice taken to get quick relief of stomach pain.
Stomachache	<i>Terminalia chebula</i> Retz. (Combretaceae)	Bukhala buthai	Unripe fruit	1 teaspoon extract is administrated trice a day for instant relief.

Cucurbitaceae, Combretaceae, Caricaceae, Liliaceae, Moringaceae, Myrtaceae, Musaceae, Lamiaceae, Oleaceae, Papilionaceae, Solanaceae, Tiliaceae, Verbanaceae, verbenaceae, Zingiberaceae. Several parts of a plant such as Leaves, Fruit, Stem, Pseudo stem, Leaf twig, Bark, Trunk erudition, Unripe fruit, Fruit water, Seeds, Rhizome and Roots are used as medicine. The most frequently employed route of administration was Leaves in herbal preparation about 31.03%, while other parts were used including fruits 17.24%, Bark 6.86%, Root 6.89%, Seeds 6.89%, unripe fruit 6.89%, rhizome 3.44%, leaf twig 3.44%, pseudo stem 3.44%, fruit water 3.44%, trunk erudition 3.44% and stem 6.89%. The herbal practioners usually collect the plants from wild as and when there is a need. In some cases, a few of them maintained small herbal gardens for the purpose. There is a great need to create awareness among the communities about endangering medicinal plants, also improved awareness of conservation issues is need.

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