Ethnomedicinal Plants used against Gastrointestinal problem in 
Gingee Hills of Villupuram District, Tamil Nadu

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INTRODUCTION

Life on Earth mainly depends on plants and it is very important for survival of human beings. Plant and plant products are used by human beings from time immemorial. But very few people realize the importance of plants and it is also a part of our environment. The use of plants as medicine is widespread throughout the world because of increase in the side effects caused by synthetic drugs. Nearly 80% of world population depends on herbal medicines for primary healthcare (Kamboj 2000). The Indian Materia Medica includes 2000 drugs are plant base, which are derived from different Indigenous knowledge and folklore practices (Narayana et al 1998). The tribal and rural people mainly depend on medicinal plants for curing various ailments. Just like allopathic medicine system, the traditional system uses various combinations of plants to cure diseases. Several workers reported uses of plants to cure various ailments by rural and tribal people inhabiting various regions of Tamil Nadu (Eluvakkal 1991; Alagesaabopathi et al 1999; Sankarasivaraman 2000; Ganesan et al., 2003; Muthukumarasamy et al., 2003a; 2003b; Rajendran et al., 2003; Ignacimuthu et al., 2006; Ayyanar et al., 2008; Kottaimuthu 2008; Shanmugam et al., 2011.) The present study was carried out to document ethnomedicinal plants to cure gastrointestinal problems like dysentery, diarrhoea, constipation, piles, stomach ache and Indigestion.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Tamil Nadu is situated in Southern end of India, east of Kerala, South of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka States. The study area of investigation is pakkamalai hill one of the hill range of gingee hills, which is located in villupuram district, Tamil Nadu. There are about 14 villages present around the hill. The study area was surveyed randomly in villages surrounding the hill with the prime objective of gathering information about community knowledge used to treat gastro intestinal problems. The villagers use these plant sources either for self – medication or for treating others. Ethno botanical data were collected according to the methodology suggested by (Jain et al., 1995). A standard questionnaire was used to collect data, which includes local name of the plants, plant part used, mode of administration.
The collected plant species were identified using The Flora of Presidency of Madras (Gamble, 1956) and The Flora of Tamil Nadu Carnatic (Matthew, 1983) and Plant Resources of Tiruvannamalai District (Vijaysankar et al., 2012).

RESULTS

28 species of plants were used to cure gastrointestinal problems like stomach ache, Indigestion, Constipation, Dysentery, Piles and Diarrhoea. These plants are belonging to 22 Dicot families. Plants are arranged alphabetically with their family name, local name (Tamil), parts used, gastro-intestinal problem and mode of administration in the following Table 1:

DISCUSSION

Different plant parts were used as medicine to treat against gastro intestinal problem. Among the different plant parts Leaves were most frequently used (18 plant species) followed by bark, stem, root, seeds and tuber. Gastro – intestinal problems like dysentery 11 plant species were used; for indigestion 6 plant species stomach ache 5 plant species, diarrhea 3 plant species,constipation 2 plant species, piles 2 plant species were used. The study shows that among various gastrointestinal problems dysentery is the major ailments this may be because of unhygienic food habits. Saurosus bacciformis & Morinda pubescens leaves are exclusively used to cure indigestion and dysentery for children. Vicoa indica leaves are used to cure both indigestion and dysentery and the mode of administration is same for both ailments.

CONCLUSION

Active compounds extracted from these plants may leads for pharmacological and biochemical investigations, which may leads to discovery of novel drug.

Therefore, pharmacological values of these plants should be tested. Moreover, over exploitation of plants in the name of medicine will sometimes leads to extinction of some plant species. So proper monitoring and conservation is very much needed.

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19. *Ocimum tenuiflorum* L.<br>Leaves Indigestion Leaves are powdered and mix with water and drink.<br>
20. *Pergularia daemia* (Forssk.) Chiov.<br>Root Stomach ache Roots ground with turmeric, *piper nigrum* made into paste taken orally.<br>
21. *Phyllanthus nodiflorus* (L.) Greene<br>Leaves Piles Leaves are made into chutney and eaten to cure irritation of piles.<br>
22. *Phyllanthus reticulatus* Poir.<br>Leaves Dysentery Leaf is made into paste and given 2 times a day.<br>
23. *Saururus bacciformis* (L.) Airy Shaw<br>Leaves Indigestion Leaves are ground with *piper betel* and administer orally to children for 2 days.<br>
24. *Scutia myrtina* (Burm. f.) Kurz<br>Leaves Indigestion Leaves are cooked and eaten.<br>
25. *Spondias pinnata* (Burm. f.) Kurz.<br>Bark Stomach ache Bark is powdered and boiled in water the decoction is taken orally.<br>
26. *Toddalia asiatica* (L.) Lam.<br>Leaves Dysentery Leaf is crushed and mixes with lime and drink.<br>
27. *Vicia indica* (L.) DC<br>Leaves Indigestion and Dysentery Leaf is boiled in water and the decoction is administered orally.<br>
28. *Ximenia americana* L.<br>Bark Diarrhoea Bark is ground with turmeric made into paste and mildly heated administered orally.

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