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Traditional Botanical Knowledge of Baiga Tribe of Nemna, Dist- Sonbhadra, Up

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Abstract- The village Nemna is situated in the southern part of district Sonbhadra of the UP state of India. Since time immemorial, it has been famous for its elegant environment and forest products. Several tribal communities like Kol, Gond and Baigas dwell in the forest area and utilize a wide variety of plants for food, fodder, fuel, medicine, dye, gum, tannin and household and farm implements. Nowadays, NTPC Rihand and its associates have opened the doors for employment, all for good but as the young generation is seeing a shift in their income pattern, it is feared that the vast expanse of ecological knowledge the Baigas had mastered would be lost for ever.

Keywords: *diseases, nemna, traditional knowledge, tribals.*

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Traditional Botanical Knowledge of Baiga Tribe of Nemna, Dist - Sonbhadra, Up

Ajay Kumar Srivastava [α] & Ashutosh Kumar [σ]

Abstract- The village Nemna is situated in the southern part of district Sonbhadra of the UP state of India. Since time immemorial, it has been famous for its elegant environment and forest products. Several tribal communities like Kol, Gond and Baigas dwell in the forest area and utilize a wide variety of plants for food, fodder, fuel, medicine, dye, gum, tannin and household and farm implements. Nowadays, NTPC Rihand and its associates have opened the doors for employment, all for good but as the young generation is seeing a shift in their income pattern, it is feared that the vast expanse of ecological knowledge the Baigas had mastered would be lost for ever.

An ethnobotanical study was carried out with a view to properly document the human plant interaction which was till now propagated orally only from generation to generation. The first hand information on medicinal uses of plants by Baiga tribes senior medicine men viz. mode of preparation, administration, duration of the treatment etc. was collected using a questionnaire.

The study revealed that the Baigas of Nemna are rich in ethnobotanical diversity. For treating Bilani, a disease of the eyes, they use Mangifera indica. Sihula, a skin disease is treated using the bark of Kurli. Sarphonk is effective against snakebite while Gainthi increases immunity. The bark of Koraya is used thrice a day to cure malaria.

As a custodian of these and many more practices the traditional knowledge of the Baigas need to be conserved. Let us save them both- the Baigas and these plants.

Keyword: diseases, nemna, traditional knowledge, tribals.

I. Introduction

Baiga is an ancient tribe found in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Chattisgarh and Jharkhand of Central India. It is a fast dwindling nature loving tribe having sub castes like Bijhawar, Nahar, Narotia, Raibhaina and Khadbhaina. They do lead a semi nomadic life and practice Jhum cultivation which they call Dahiya, as they believe that ploughing the land would be like scratching the mother's body. Chromosome wise, they have been reported to be very close to some aboriginal tribes of Australia. The Baigas do not like to mix with the outside world and yet have survived through the ages. This is due to their deep understanding of the nature- the seasons, the calamities and the trees and other plants.

Village Nemna is situated in the southern part of district Sonbhadra of the UP state of India. The tribal villagers inhabiting there are Kol, Gond and Baigas. The Baigas have their own ecosystem approach and have garnered a sizeable wisdom through generations in this regard. Their knowledge regarding the flora and fauna is not limited to their harnessing it but also about their toxicity, palatability, distribution and time of availability.

The reason for the present study are manifold. One, the outside world is oblivious of their wisdom. Two, the extent of their knowledge on food and medicine supplementing plants would mean a lot to the outside world. Above all since the knowledge passes orally only, it is under threat. Thus eventually perhaps, they will be taken over by the spree of modernization of the outside world and lose all the knowledge or, they would lose their existence fighting the outside world.

II. Material and Methods

Ethnobotanical study attempts to underline intricate relationships between the plants and ethnic tribes like Baigas. Many villages in Sonbhadra and some parts of Chattisgarh were taken into account of which the Nemna village showed the greatest biodiversity and interactions. Between the years 2006 and 2009, several visits were made to Nemna to take the tribals to confidence. The village chieftain who happens to be the wisest person of the clan, was interviewed several time. Since the Baigas are introrse and inward looking and do not wish to open out, it took several more visits to interact with the womenfolk. The informations gathered from different families were compared and cross verified .

III. Results and Discussion

The Baigas are the repository to a vast expanse of traditional knowledge and their wisdom is remarkable with regard to the plants use. Their knowledge has been sought to be enumerated in Table 1, encompassing the plants names, local as well as scientific; family and distinctive uses. Medicinal use of some plants have been found to be new and it needs some more investigation. Since the tribe had remained in isolation for generations, they have emerged with some traditions in the innovative use of plants found in their areas. Some plants treated as wild elsewhere are used as efficient food supplements. However before jumping to make similar uses elsewhere care should be taken, but it would certainly open new vistas in the world of nutrition.

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Table 1

S No	Scientific name	Family	Local name	Usage
1.	*Mangifera indica*	Anacardiaceae	Aam	Leaves used to cure an eye infection called Bilani.
2.	*Tribulus terrestris*	Zygophyllaceae	Dashmool	Used in curing ear-pain.
3.	*Momordica subangulata*	Cucurbitaceae	Kheksa	Roots durable source of energy. Used during fasts.
4.	*Calycopteris floribunda*	Combretaceae	Kurli	Bark used to cure skin disease, sihuli.
5.	*Bellis perennis*	Asteraceae	Gursankar	Wound maturing and healing.
6.	*Diospyros melanoxylon*	Ebenaceae	Tendu	Edible fruits and bidis giving leaves. Enduring bulbils store a large no. of alkaloids and cure various stomach ailments.
7.	*Calotropis giganteum*	Asclepiadaceae	Madar	Latex as cure for dental ailments.
8.	*Vetiver zizanioides*	Poaceae	Khasas	Roots cure snake bite. Bark in migraine.
9.	*Tephrosia purpurea*	Leguminoceae	Sarphonk	Mixed with black pepper, it is used in snake bite. Also scorpion bite.
10.	*Cissus quadrangularis*	Vitaceae	Hadjore	Root sap consumable. Rejoins fractured bones.
11.	*Phyllanthus emblica*	Euphorbiaceae	Amola	Leaves teeth whitener. Smoothens still births in cows.
12.	*Anogeissus latifolia*	Combretaceae	Dhawa	Dried bark cures asthama.
13.	*Butea monosperma*	Papilionaceae	Palash	Cures stomach inflammation. Teeth and gum strengthening. Flower bath prevents post parturition women from infection.
14.	*Dioscorea bulbifera*	Dioscoreaceae	Gainthi	Anti malaria. Promotes immunity.
15.	*Wrightia tomentosa*	Apocyanaceae	Dudhi	Crushed roots used in curing fever.
16.	*Asparagus plumosus*	Alliaceae	Satavar	Cures reproductive illness. Promotes lactation.
17.	*Platycladus orientalis*	Cupressaceae	Marmakhi	Tonic for weak children. Leaf anoints cures headache.
18.	*Carissa carandas*	Apocyanaceae	Karonda	Root sap beneficial in treating pneumonia.
19.	*Pterocarpus marsupium*	Fabaceae	Lakda	Bark powder cures diarrhea.
20.	*Holoptelea integrefolia*	Ulmaceae	Chilbil	Leaf extracts cures eczema. Leaf paste on animal's neck cures infections.
21.	*Zizyphus mauritiana*	Rhamnaceae	Jhadi ber	Leaf extract bath used against prickly heat.
22.	*Phoenix dactilyfera*	Palmaceae	Khajur	Burnt roots mixed with mustard oil cures itching.
23.	*Holoptelea grandis*	Ulmaceae	Nakwa	Food supplement.
24.	*Coccinia indica*	Cucurbitaceae	Kunroo	Food supplement.
25.	*Solanum surattense*	Solanaeae	Bhangraiya	Soaked seeds expels germs from the teeth.
26.	*Solanum nigrum*	Solanaceae	Makoi	Edible fruits. Mixed roots decoction with Dhadsa used as anti venom.
27.	*Cassia tora*	Caesalpiniaceae	Chakvad	Food supplements- seeds. Leaves lowers blood sugar.
28.	*Tinospora cordifolia*	Menispermaceae	Banwar	Root decoction expels poisons.
29.	*Lagerstroemia parviflora*	Lytheraceae	Sidha	Straight poles used in functions.
30.	*Adina cordifolia*	Rubiaceae	Haldu	Useful timber.
31.	*Holarrhena floribunda*	Apocyanaceae	Koraya	Twigs used as tooth brush. Root decoction used thrice a day to cure malaria.
32.	*Butea superba*	Papilionaceae	Dhadsa	Aphrodasiac. Root extract mixed with Koraya used as anti venom.

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