

***Andrographis Paniculata* Nees in Tribal Medicine of Tamilnadu**

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ABSTRACT: *The present communication deals with medicinal uses of Andrographis paniculata Nees by the tribals in Tamilnadu. Hitherto unreported uses are presented based on the Malayali tribals of Tamilnadu.*

INTRODUCTION

Andrographis paniculata Nees is a medicinal perennial herb belonging to the family Acanthaceae and grow wildly throughout the plains and hills of India and Sri Lanka. *Andrographis paniculata* is well known under the name *Kalmegh* as a common bitter tonic, prescribed for children in liver troubles (Kirtikar and Basu, 1935). It is used by traditional medical practitioners as stomachaches, anti-inflammatory, antipyretic, antiperiodic and intermittent fevers (Anonymous, 1948; Chopra *et al.*, 1956; Kirtikar and Basu, 1975; Toner *et al.*, 1982; Balu and Alagesabooopathi, 1993; Balu *et al.*, 1993).

Lack of medical aid from external agencies due to inaccessibility of the area with difficult terrain and the desire to survive, have made the tribals to search for cures and remedies of their own from the very environs with the result, they could find multifaceted uses of a single plant as well as use of many plants for single ailment. Based on these observations recorded during the Ethno-Botanical explorations undertaken in the tribal pockets, the authors present, in this article, the therapeutics of *Andrographis paniculata* – one of the most common herbs of the Flora of Tamilnadu.

Andrographis paniculata is very familiar to the practitioners of Ayurveda in South India the names 'Bhunimba' and 'Kiratatika'. However, this herb has nothing to do with *Swertia chirayita* (Roxb.) Karst. of temperate Himalayas and Khasi Hills, which is accepted by the elite of Ayurveda as the true 'Kiratatika'. *Andrographis paniculata* is called by Tribals by various names such as Nilavembu, Sيريyanangai and Periyangai.

The tribals use this herb for a variety of ailments like Infantile diseases, Dysmenorrhoea, Leucorrhoea and Menorrhagi, Prenatal and postnatal care complicated diseases such as Malaria, Jaundice and Gonorrhoea and general ailments like wounds, cuts, boils and other skin diseases. They also use in cattle diseases in large doses and addition toddy, in small quantities to enhance its quality.

METHODS OF STUDY

The materials for the present investigation was collected from the villages inhabiting tribals in the Shevaroy Hills, Kolli Hills and Panchamalais of Tamilnadu. Several trips were made to the localities from 1997 to 1998

and the mode of uses described in the present paper were gathered from these tribal of the region. As far as possible, attempts were made to collect information on various diseases and the method of their treatment.

OBSERVATIONS

For malaria 20 gms of whole plant is pounded, mixed in water, filtered and given internally. Alternatively, the plant is cut into small pieces and kept over night in 100 ml of water. Of the cold infusion thus obtained, 40 ml. is given internally, twice a day (Shevaroy Hills, Malayali).

To postnatal women, 25 gms. of powdered herb is boiled in 400 ml of water, reduced to 50 ml., cooled filtered and given internally to arrest unusual thirst. This decoction is also given to alleviate burning sensation in the palm and foot of the subject (Shevaroy Hills, Malayali).

In dysmenorrhoea, 10 gms. of leaf together with 3 black peppers is ground well and given once a day for 7 days (Kolli Hills, Malayali).

As preventive measure for various child diseases, extract of 5 gms. Of plant together with some powdered ginger, ajwain and asafetida is given internally, once a day for 15 days (Shevaroy Hills, Malayali).

To expel intestinal worms and to alleviate stomach due to intestinal worms, two gms. each of root and stem along with 7 numbers of mustard are made into paste, mixed in mother's milk and given internally. Alternatively, paste made of 5 fresh leaves or juice extracted from 5 gms. of root is mixed in hot water and given internally (Kolli Hills, Malayali).

In eczema, powdered herb is mixed in oil and applied on the lesions. 2 gms of powder is

also given internally once a day for 40 days (Pachamalais, Malayali).

For leucoderma, 2 gms of powdered herb is given, once a day for 40 days (Pachamalais, Malayali).

For jaundice, water extract of 10 gms of the herb together with equal quantities of stem bark extracts of *Azadirachta indica* and *Holarrhena antidysenterica*, which is heat-treated by dropping a hot sante is given 3 times a day for 6 days, in dose of 30ml (Kolli Hills, Malayali).

For abscess, 10 gms. of leaf paste is given internally. Some paste is also applied externally (Shevaroy Hills, Malayali).

For gonorrhoea, 10 gms. of paste of the herb is given internally, once a day for 10 days (Shevaroy Hills, Malayali).

For fresh and infected wounds, powdered herb mixed in oil is applied externally. Alternatively, plant juice is applied on the wounds. In addition 2 gms. of the powder is also given internally (Shevaroy Hills, Malayali).

For boils, the herb is ground into paste together with turmeric and applied externally. Alternatively, leaf paste is smeared on the affected parts and kept for two days (Kolli Hills, Malayali).

For constipation in cattle, juice extracted from 100 gms. of herb is given internally (Shevaroy Hills, Malayali).

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