



SINCE 2010



NAAS Rating

2012:1.3; 2013-16: 2.69

2017-2020: 3.98



CiteFactor

IMPACT FACTOR

2019-20: 2.40; 2021:1.09



Indexing Portal

IPI Value 2.78

SJIF 6.783

Received on:15th August 2024Revised on:25th August 2024Accepted on:26th August 2024Published on:1st September 2024Volume No.

Online & Print

173 (2024)

Page No.

11 to 14

*Life Sciences Leaflets
is an international
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e journal, peer
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abstract listed,
published every month
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ETHNOMEDICINAL TRADITIONS OF GUJAR COMMUNITY FOR INFANT AILMENTS IN NANDURBAR DISTRICT, MAHARASHTRA (INDIA)

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ABSTRACT:

The Gujar community in Nandurbar district used plants and their parts for combating different ailments and diseases in infants. The objective of the present study was to document ethnomedicinal traditions employed by the Gujar community for infant ailments in Nandurbar district. Methodology adopted to study ethnomedicinal traditions include structural interviews of Gujar community people of study area. Present study revealed that people of Gujar community in the Nandurbar district are usually employing 20 plant species belonging to 13 families of angiosperms. Of these, 4 species of Liliaceae are used in fever, ear pain, cough, cold and burns. Followed by two species, each of the family Lamiaceae, Rutaceae and Zingiberaceae are applicable for cough, cold, stomach ache, fever, asthma, wound and skin diseases. The remaining species of 10 families are useful for hiccups, diarrhoea, typhoid, constipations etc. Generally, leaves, as a plant part is used in most of the infant ailments. Fruits, roots, seeds, stem bark and bulb are found useful in 1 to 3 types of infant ailments.

KEYWORDS: Ethnobotany, Infant ailments, Gujar community, Nandurbar District, Maharashtra.

INTRODUCTION:

Ethnomedicine is a traditional healing practice that has been used by

various cultures and communities around the world for centuries. It involves the use of natural remedies, such as herbs, plants, and minerals, to treat various ailments. The practice has been passed down through generations and is deeply rooted in the culture and traditions of the communities that use it (Mahapatra *et al.*, 2019). Nandurbar is an administrative district in the northwest corner (Khandesh Region) of Maharashtra state in India. The district occupies an area of 5955 km. Nandurbar district is bounded to the south and south-east by Dhule district, to the west and north is the state of Gujarat, to the north and north-east is the state of Madhya Pradesh. The northern boundary of the district is defined by the great Narmada river (<https://nandurbar.gov.in>). The Gujar community is one of the dominant communities in Nandurbar district, which is located in the northern part of the Indian state of Maharashtra. The community has a rich cultural heritage and is known for its traditional art, craft, music, and dance forms. The Gujar community in Nandurbar district is primarily involved in agriculture, with most people being farmers or farm labourers. They cultivate crops like jowar, bajra, wheat, sugar cane, chilly and pulses. The Gujar community of Nandurbar district has a rich tradition of using ethnomedicine, which refers to traditional healing practices that have been passed down through generations. These practices involve the use of natural remedies, such as herbs, plants, and minerals, to treat various ailments. The community has a deep knowledge of local plants and their medicinal properties, which have been used to treat a variety of ailments for centuries. (Gujars in Maharashtra, 2023).

METHODOLOGY:

Structural interviews of Gujar community people were conducted following the method suggested by Jain (1987). The area under study included Shahada, Akrani, Akkalkuwa, Taloda and Nandurbar tehsils of Nandurbar district. Prior to initiation of actual field work, rapport was established with few persons preferably the chief of a community in village under the study. Contact was then established with other informants and their guidance was sought. The author acknowledged well with social standing, geography and such other essential aspects, besides the local language and dialects. Experienced people usually ranging between 50-65 years of age, healers, medicine-men and women, headmen, elder farmers and farm labourers, etc. provided useful information on locally employed medicinal plants. Also, personal observations on different visits or occasions were particularly helpful for verification of the data provided by the aforesaid informants and patients treated from different places. In view of authenticity, plant specimens were collected along with the useful parts or products. Herbarium specimens have been prepared using standard methods (Jain and Rao, 1977). Determination of botanical name and family was completed using state, regional various district floras (Cooke, 1958; Patil, 2003; Kshirsagar and Patil 2008; Singh and Karthikeyan 2000, 2001).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

In all total 20 angiospermic taxa are enumerated for infant ailments by Gujar community in Nandurbar district of Maharashtra. Of these, 4 species of Liliaceae are used in fever, ear pain, cough, cold and burns. Followed by two species, each of the family Lamiaceae, Rutaceae and Zingiberaceae are applicable for cough, cold, stomach ache, fever, asthma, wound and skin diseases. The remaining species of 10 families are useful for hiccups, diarrhoea, typhoid, constipations etc. Generally, leaves, as a plant part is used in most of the infant ailments. Fruits, roots, seeds, stem bark and bulb are found useful in 1 to 3 types of infant ailments.

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Systematic Enumeration:

Sr. No.	Botanical Name	Family	Vernacular Name	Plant Part Used	Infant Ailment/Disease	Preparation
1.	<i>Achyranthes aspera</i> L.	Amaranthaceae	Aaghada	Leaves	Fever	Decoction
2.	<i>Aegle marmelos</i> (L.) Correa	Rutaceae	Bel	Leaves	Fever and Asthma	Decoction
3.	<i>Allium cepa</i> L.	Liliaceae	Kanda	Bulb and Leaves	Fever	Paste
4.	<i>Allium sativum</i> L.	Liliaceae	Lasun	Bulb	Ear pain, Cough and Cold	Juice
5.	<i>Aloe Vera</i> (L.) Burm. f.	Liliaceae	Korphad	Leaves	Burns	Paste
6.	<i>Anethum graveolens</i> L.	Apiaceae	Shepa	Seeds	Hiccups and Stomach ache	Powdered
7.	<i>Azadirachta indica</i> A. Juss.	Meliaceae	Neem	Leaves and Bark	Fever and Skin disease	Decoction, Paste
8.	<i>Bryophyllum pinnatum</i> (Lam.) Oken	Crassulaceae	Panfuti	Leaves	Asthma	Decoction
9.	<i>Cinnamomum verum</i> J. Presl	Lauraceae	Dalchini	Stem and bark	Typhoid, Fever	Decoction/ Powder
10.	<i>Citrus aurantifolia</i> Swingle	Rutaceae	Nimbu	Fruit	Cough	Juice
11.	<i>Cuminum cyminum</i> L.	Lamiaceae	Jeera	Seeds	Stomach ache	Decoction
12.	<i>Curcuma longa</i> L.	Zingiberaceae	Halad	Root	Cough, Wounds and Skin Diseases	Decoction with milk/ Paste
13.	<i>Gardenia gummifera</i> L. f.	Rubiaceae	Dikamali	Seeds	Diarrhoea	Powder
14.	<i>Justicia adhatoda</i> L.	Acanthaceae	Adulsa	Leaves	Asthma, Dental Ailments	Decoction
15.	<i>Mentha spicata</i> L.	Liliaceae	Pudina	Leaves	Fever	Paste
16.	<i>Mimosa pudica</i> L.	Fabaceae	Lajwanti	Roots, Leaves	Diarrhoea	Decoction
17.	<i>Myristica fragrans</i> Houtt.	Myristicaceae	Jaiphal	Fruit	Stomach ache	Powder
18.	<i>Ocimum tenuiflorum</i> L.	Lamiaceae	Tulsi	Leaves	Cough and Cold	Decoction
19.	<i>Phyllanthus emblica</i> L.	Euphorbiaceae	Amala	Fruit	Constipations	Decoction with jaggery
20.	<i>Zingiber officinale</i> Roscoe	Zingiberaceae	Aale	Root	Cold	Decoction