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THE INDIGENOUS MEDICINAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE RABHA TRIBE: A CASE STUDY IN THE CHIRANG DISTRICT OF ASSAM, NORTH-EAST INDIA

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ABSTRACT:

In the present study 23 species of medicinal plants have been documented which is used by the Rabha tribe of Chirang District. It is also seen that the use of above ground plant parts(86%) was more than the underground plant parts(14%).Of the above ground parts, leaf constituted the major plant part used.

KEY WORDS: *North-East India, Rabha tribe, Kakragaon, Chirang District, Assam.*

INTRODUCTION:

The tribes of North East India have been categorized into two broad ethnic communities-Khasi and the Jaintia tribes of Meghalaya, who belong to 'Monkhemar' culture of Austric dialect and the rest of the tribal groups are basically Mongoloid, who belongs to Tibeto-Burman subfamily of Tibeto-Chinese group [1]. The Rabhas are one of the indigenous tribes of Assam and is found throughout the state of Assam besides its adjoining states like West Bengal, Meghalaya and in a few areas of Bangladesh. Linguistically the Rabhas belong to the Tibeto-Burman sub-family within the Sino-Tibetan family of languages. The Rabhas have some clan groups which consists of Rongdani, Maitori, Koch (or Pani Koch), Hana, Pati, Dahuri, Totla, Bitalia etc. The first three groups are the major socio-linguistic group. They are maintaining their inherent language and culture in comparison to the other minor groups [2]. In the present work an attempt has been made to collect and document the indigenous medicinal knowledge of the Rabha tribe of Chirang

District of Assam.

The present study was conducted in Rabhapara area(26.44359^{0}N latitude and 90.47224^{0}E longitude) of Kakragaon village from October, 2013 to January, 2014. The data were collected through informal interview and discussion with the local men, women, village old person, cultivators and traditional healer. The medicinal plants collected were identified with the help of floras and manual as per the standard taxonomic procedure with the preparation of herbarium.

RESULTS:

The present study revealed that 23 plant species belonging to 16 families have been used by the Rabha tribe of Chirang district as medicinal plants for curing various common ailments. The detailed observation is presented in the table-1 enumerating the scientific name, family name, local name, part used, medicinal uses and preparation. Leaf constituted the major plant part used(12 species), followed by bark and root(4 species each), latex(2 species) and flower(1 species) Fig. 1. The results of the present study also shows that 4 plant species are utilized in cough, 3 species used during jaundice, 3 species used for deworming, 2 species each used for the treatment of dysentery, malaria, toothache, antibleeding, stomach pain and eye allergy. One the other hand, 1 species each are found to be utilized for curing boils, gastric problem and ringworm Fig. 2. From the study, It is also seen that the use of aboveground plant parts(86%) are more than the underground plant parts(14%).

CONCLUSION:

The present study highlights the rich medicinal knowledge of the Rabha people and their indigenous healthcare practices.The formulations used by these people for most of the common ailments need further clinical trial and phytochemical investigation to test their efficacy so that they can be conserved and utilized for the welfare of the mankind at large.The present work will also help in protecting their rich medicinal knowledge from extermination.

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Table 1. The medicinal plants used by the Rabha tribe of Chirang District, Assam

Sl. No.	Botanical name with family	Native name	Part used	Medicinal uses and preparation
1.	*Allium sativum* L. (Alliaceae)	Loshun	Leaf	The leaves(3-4) are eaten raw in the early morning to cure cough problem.
2.	*Alstonia scholaris* (L.) R. Br. (Apocynaceae)	Saitan	Bark	The juice of the bark(1 spoon) is mixed with the juice of tender leaves (1spoon) of *Clerodendrum viscosum* and is taken early morning in an empty stomach to malaria.
3.	*Cajanus cajan* (L.) Huth (Papilionaceae)	Ahor	Leaf	Juice of the raw leaves (1 spoon) is taken orally 2-3 times daily before meal against jaundice.
4.	*Cassia alata* L. (Caesalpiniaceae)	Daduhati	Bark	Juice of the bark is applied externally for treating ringworm infection.
5.	*Centella asiatica* (L.) Urban (Apiaceae)	Godak Manimuni	Leaf	The fresh raw leaves(3-4) are eaten in the early morning to cure gastric problem.
6.	*Clerodendrum viscosum* Vent. (Verbenaceae)	Bhatomali	Leaf	Juice of the crushed tender leaves are taken twice before meal during stomach pain.
7.	*Cynodon dactylon* (L.) Pers. (Poaceae)	Dubur	Root	The root paste is applied on fresh cuts to check bleeding.
8.	*Euphorbia nerifolia* L. (Euphorbiaceae)	Siju	Latex	The latex is applied at night during bed time for early suppuration of boils.
9.	*Justicia adhatoda* L. (Acanthaceae)	Parchinkou	Leaf	Luke warm juice of the raw leaves (1spoon) is taken orally 2-3 times daily before meal to cure jaundice.
10.	*Leucus plukentii* (Roth) Spreng (Lamiaceae)	Kanshisa	Leaf	Juice of the leaves(3-4) mixed with the leaf juice of *Andrographis paniculata* and given to children once in the early morning for deworming.
11.	*Mikania micrantha* Kunth. (Asteraceae)	Kulibon	Leaf	The leaves are crushed and used directly on cuts and wounds to check bleeding.
12.	*Mimosa pudica* L. (Mimosaceae)	Lejumalati	Root	Juice of the root is taken twice daily during dysentery.

13.	*Nyctanthus arbor-tristis* L. (Oleaceae)	Chipriteeta	Leaf	The juice of the tender leaves are taken once daily in the early morning to get relief from worms.
14.	*Ocimum sanctum* L. (Lamiaceae)	Tulsi	Leaf	Juice of the raw leaves (2-3 drops) is applied on the eye to cure eye allergy.The juice of the (4-5) fresh leaves mixed with honey is taken orally(1- spoon) twice daily to get relief from cough.
15.	*Oroxylum indicum* (L.) Vent (Bigoniaceae)	Zamlok	Bark	Juice of the bark (1-2 tea spoonful) is taken orally 2-3 times daily against jaundice.
16.	*Phlogocanthus thrysiformis* (Hardw) Mabberley (Acanthaceae)	Parchinkou	Leaf	Boiled extract of the bark mixed with the root(2inch) extract of *Clitoria ternatea* and is given twice daily to cure cough.
17.	*Psidium guajava* L. (Myrtaceae)	Supur	Leaf	The young premature leaves are taken thrice daily before meal to cure dysentery.
18.	*Jatropha curcas* L. (Euphorbiaceae)	Bhenda	Latex	The latex of the leaf petiole is used in affected area during tooth ache.
19.	*Spilanthus paniculata* DC. (Asteraceae)	Oshni	Root	Flowers are crushed and applied on the affected area twice daily to relieve tooth ache .
20.	*Tabernaemontana divericata* (L.) R.Br. (Apocynaceae)	Tokou	Flower	Juice of the flower (2-3 drops) is applied externally on the eye to cure allergy.
21.	*Terminalia arjuna* (DC) W.& A. (Combretaceae)	Arjun	Bark	Crushed stem bark juice is taken orally 3 times a day before meal against stomach pain.