

Ethnobotanical Study in the Village Melapattam in Tirunelveli District in Tamilnadu

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KEY WORDS Ethnobotany. Plant Products. Expecto-
rant. Carminative. Gastric Stimulant
Vegetables.

ABSTRACT Ethnobotanical study was made in Melapattam - a village in Tirunelveli District of Tamilnadu. The researcher collected information about the interaction of people with plants. The vernacular names, botanical names, morphology of the useful parts of plants and their uses are given. The uses of plants in various ceremonials, rituals and festivals are also described. The study throws light on the understanding of the importance of plants in the welfare of human beings and for their better exploitation.

INTRODUCTION

The most complete modern definition of ethnobotany is "The study of direct interaction between human beings and plants; the study "concerned with the totality of the place of plants in culture" (Ford, 1978). As reported by Bhattarai (1989) 49 species of plants are used by Helamby people for various ailments. Chobra (1989) made a survey of traditional herbs in eastern Tanzania. Murty and Ramakrishnan (1990) collected six plants which are used as narcotics by the tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh. Use of plants for twelve common ailments by the tribals of Bankura district of West Bengal had been given by Namhata and Mukerjee (1989) Alam (1989) made a survey of medicinal plants in Hasdai and Sitapur districts of Uttar Pradesh. Use of plants may vary from culture to culture according to their locations, environment and needs. The ethnobotanical studies are helpful for the better use of the plant resources. The present study aims at studying the traditional, cultural and medicinal uses of plants at Melapattam.

METHODOLOGY

Melapattam is a small village near Tirunelveli town in Tirunelveli District of Tamilnadu with a population of 2400 people. The researchers regularly visited the village and interviewed the people, attended various festivals, ceremonies and collected information about the interaction of people with plants. The useful plants were collected and the botanical names were identified.

ANALYSIS

The uses of plants in food, medicine, rituals, festivals and agricultural practices are given in tables 1, 2, 3 and 4

The four tables give the information about the availability of various plants in Melapattam and their uses. Besides these plants people of this village also use many other plants, plant parts and plant products for various purposes. Though they have free access to the allopathic medicines they prefer to use plants and plant products as medicines. Thatching, making carts and agricultural implements and furnitures, construction of houses and basket making, all are done with the help of the plant materials available in the village. Table 2 gives the list of plants or crops cultivated in the villages for various purposes. They also purchase other products and use them as sources of food. A villager experiences various rituals and ceremonies in his/her life time in which plants have important roles to play. For example, in most of the festivals and ceremonies banana fruits, betelnuts, coconut and flowers are used. Their

Table 1 : Plants of medicinal importance

| S. No. | Vernacular Name | Botanical name | Morphology of parts used | Diseases to be cured |
|--------|-------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| 1. | Nayuruvi | <i>Achyranthes aspera</i> L. | Leaves | Piles and boils |
| 2. | Ponnanganni Kirai | <i>Alternanthera sessilis</i> | Leaves | Heart discases |
| 3. | Mullukirai | <i>Amaranthus spinosus</i> L. | Leaves | Ulcers and urinary diseases |
| 4. | Erukku | <i>Calotropis gigantea</i> L. | Leaves | Used as pain killer |
| 5. | Arugampul | <i>Cyanodon dactylon</i> | Leaves | Fever, chronic diarrhoea |
| 6. | Korai Kizhangu | <i>Cyperus rotundus</i> | tubers | Acute abdominal pain, diarrhoea, vomiting, Chloera, gastric trouble and intestinal disorders. |
| 7. | Tuduvalai | <i>Solanum trilobiatum</i> | Leaves | Cough and fever |
| 8. | Kuppaimen | <i>Acalypha indica</i> | Leaves | Itching, skin diseases |
| 9. | Dhulasi | <i>Ocimum sanctum</i> L. | Leaves | Used as expectorant, to cure dysentery, fever, to check vomiting and gastric diseases of children |
| 10. | Vembu | <i>Azadirachta indica</i> L. | Leaves | For intestinal worms, used as antiseptic, small pox, skin diseases. |
| 11. | Keevanalli | <i>phyllanthus niruri</i> | Leaves | For jaundice |
| 12. | Vengayam | <i>Allium cepa</i> , L. | Bulb | Used as diuretic and expectorant for cough |
| 13. | Inji | <i>Zingiber officinale</i> | Rhizome | For digestive disorders, cough and headache |
| 14. | Veliparuthi | <i>Peruculaniam damia</i> | Leaves | Dysentery, stomach trouble |
| 15. | — | <i>Anisomales malabarica</i> | Leaves and stem | Scurvy |
| 16. | Adhathodai | <i>Adhathoda zeylanica</i> | Leaves | Cough and cold |
| 17. | Vazai | <i>Musa paradisiaca</i> | Stem flower and fruits | Kidney trouble and intestinal disorders |
| 18. | Manjal | <i>Curcuma longa</i> L. | Rhizome | Diarrhoea, fever, jaundice used as carminative. |

Table 2 : Plants of agricultural importance

| S. No. | Vernacular name | Botanical name | Morphology of plants uses | Uses |
|--------|-----------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. | Arisi/Nellu | <i>Oryza sativa</i> L. | Grains | Source of plant food for man |
| 2. | Cholam | <i>Sorghum vulgare</i> Pres | Grains | Source of plant food for man and cattle |
| 3. | Ulunthu | <i>Phaseolus mungo</i> Roxb. | Seeds | To make vadai idli and dosai |
| 4. | Thennai | <i>Cocos nucifera</i> L. | Kernel inflorescence leaves | Edible To make today For thatching |
| 5. | Vengayam | <i>Allium cepa</i> . | Bulb | Condiment and flavouring substance Serves as a carminative and gastric stimulant |
| 6. | Kirai | <i>Amaranthus blitum</i> L. | Leaves | Vegetable |
| 7. | Thakklai | <i>Lycopersicon esculentum</i> Mills | Fruits | Vegetable |
| 8. | Vendai | <i>Abelmoschus esculentus</i> L. | Fruits | Vegetable |
| 9. | Mamaram | <i>Mangifera indica</i> L. | Timber | To make household articles |
| 10. | Vazai | <i>Musa paradisiaca</i> L. | Fruits stem inflorescence and leaf | Edible Vegetable Used as plate |
| 11. | Milagai | <i>Capsicum annum</i> L. | Fruits | Spices and condiment and flavouring. |

Table 3 : Woody plants and their uses

| S. No. | Vernacular name | Botanical name | Morphology of plants uses | Uses |
|--------|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| 1. | Mamaram | <i>Mangifera indica</i> L. | Wood | To make household articles |
| 2. | Vembu | <i>Azadiracta indica</i> L. | Wood | Construction and joinery works, To make agricultural implements |
| 3. | Poovarasu | <i>Thespecia purpurea</i> L. | Wood | Used in construction works to make carts and implements |
| 4. | Thennai | <i>Cocos nucifera</i> L. | Leaves | To make hand fan, window curtain, broom, basket, roof and in construction work. |
| 5. | Panai | <i>Borassus flabellifer</i> L. | Leaves | To make hand fan, basket, roof, and in construction work |
| 6. | Karuvelai | <i>Prosopis spicigera</i> L. | Stem | Sources of fuel |
| 7. | Moongil | <i>Bambusa vulgaris</i> L. | Stem | To make fences. Also used in construction works |
| 8. | Nanal | <i>Saccharam</i> | Stem | Basket making and to make fences |

Table 4 : Plants of cultural and religious importance

| S. No. | Vernacular name | Botanical name | Morphology of plants uses | Uses |
|--------|-----------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| 1. | Manjal | <i>Curcuma longa</i> | Rhizome/entire plant | |
| 2. | Nellu | <i>Oryza sativa</i> L. | Grains | |
| 3. | Ullunthu | <i>Phaseolus mungo</i> | Seeds | Pongal and temple festivals |
| 4. | Sembaruthi | <i>Hibiscus rosasinensis</i> | Flower | |
| 5. | Vera | <i>Musa paradisiaca</i> | Fruit/entire plant | |
| 6. | Vembu | <i>Azadiracta indica</i> | - | For goddess amman |
| 7. | Arasamaram | <i>Ficus religiosa</i> | - | For god Genesan |
| 8. | Alamaram | <i>Ficus bengalensis</i> | - | For god ayyanar |
| 9. | Puliamaram | <i>Tamarindus indicus</i> | - | For god munian |
| 10. | Manjal | <i>Curcuma longa</i> | Rhizome | Birth ceremony |
| 11. | Thennai | <i>Cocos nucifera</i> | Fruit/leaves | |
| 12. | Vazai | <i>Musa paradisiaca</i> | Fruit/leaves entire plant | |
| 13. | Vettrilai | <i>Piper betle</i> | Leaf | Studding and Marriage ceremonies |
| 14. | Pakku | <i>Areca catechu</i> | Seed | |
| 15. | Ullunthu | <i>Phaseolus mungo</i> | Seeds | |
| 16. | Thennai | <i>Cocos nucifera</i> | Leaves | Death ceremony |
| 17. | Malligai | <i>Jasminum officinarum</i> | Flowers | To make garland for varoious ceremonies |
| 18. | Roja | <i>Rosa damascena</i> | Flowers | |

uses express sentiments and feelings of the people. A few trees are attributed to different gods. These have many superstitions and beliefs behind them.

CONCLUSION

From this study it is well known that the people of Melapattam use various kinds of plants in their day to day life for multiple purposes. Thus ethnobotanical studied help the botanists to understand the interaction between plants and human beings and for the better exploitation of plants for the welfare of the human society.

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