Some Traditional Folk Formularies Against Fertility in Kerala

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INTRODUCTION

Kerala has a valuable heritage of herbal remedies. Its rural people living in remote areas still depend to a great extent on indigenous systems of medicine. Along with the modern system of medicine, homeopathy, ayurveda and unani systems are practiced. Other than these there still exists a traditional folk system. This traditional knowledge is being orally perpetuated. Knowledge of indigenous system is now getting worldwide importance. Documented information on folk formularies is scarce. With rapid modernization the knowledge on indigenous system is being eroded.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Survey of the traditional usage of medicinal plants for antifertility was conducted at Nemum and Vellanad blocks of Thiruvananthapuram district. The respondents were women who had crossed 45 years of age. This age group was purposely selected. Women of this age group might have had the opportunities to use herbal medicines and because of this fact were able to explain in clear terms the practices of folk medicines. 100 respondents from selected villages were intervieowed over a well structured and pre-tested interview schedule for collecting necessary facts and figures for this study. The data so collected were grouped, analysed and presented, along with botanical names (in italics), local names and the families (in parenthesis) for the formularies collected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Formularies

1. Juice of the roots of *Abrus precatorius* (Kunni; Family- Fabaceae) is taken orally for seven days after menstrual periods.
2. Juice of the roots of *Amaranthus spinosus* (Mullankeera; Family- Amaranthaceae) is mixed with rice washed water and administered orally for three days after menstrual periods.
3. Fine paste of the leaves of *Azadirachta indica* (Veepu; Family- Meliaceae) is used as vaginal paste before coitus.
4. Seed powder of *Brassica indica* (Kadugu; Family- Brassicaceae) mixed with milk is administered orally for ten days after periods.
5. Seed paste of *Butea monosperma* (Plas; Family- Fabaceae) is used as vaginal paste before coitus.
6. Flower buds of *Careya arborea* (Pizh; Family- Lecythidaceae) ground with milk is taken orally for seven days after menstrual period.
7. Fruit juice of *Carica papaya* (Papaya; Family- Caricaceae) is taken orally for seven days before menstrual periods.
8. Root decoction of *Datura metel* (Ummath; Family- Solanaceae) mixed with honey is taken orally three times a day for ten days before menstrual period.
9. Root decoction of *Dioscorea bulbifera* (Kuttukachil; Family- Dioscoreaceae) is administered orally throughout menstrual periods.
10. Seed powder of *Embelia ribes* (Vizhlari; Family- Myrsinaceae) mixed with milk is administered orally throughout the menstrual period.
11. Decoction of the bark of *Erythrina indica* (Murukku; Family- Fabaceae) is administered orally for seven days after menstrual periods.
12. Purified rhizome juice of *Gloriosa superba* (Manthonni; Family- Liliaceae) mixed with rice washed water is administered orally for three days at the menstrual periods.
13. Flower juice of *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* (Chempurattai; Family- Malvaceae) mixed with jaggery and fermented rice water is taken orally for fifteen days after menstrual period.
14. Fresh leaf juice of *Lawsonia alba* (Malanchi; Family- Lythraceae) is administered orally throughout the periods.
15. Leafy juice of *Mimosa pudica* (Thottavadi; Family-Mimosae) is taken orally for fifteen
days after menstrual periods.

16. Seed powder of *Piper longum* (Pippalli; Family- Piperaceae) mixed with milk is administered orally throughout the menstrual cycle.

17. Purified root juice of *Plumbago zeylanica* (Koduveli; Family- Plumbaginaceae) mixed with milk is administered orally for seven days after menstrual cycle.

18. Leafy juice of *Vitex negundo* (Karunochi; Family- Verbenaceae) mixed with milk is administered orally for seven days after menstrual periods.

Many of the plants recorded in this study find place in the scientific list of modern investigations too. Chaudhary et al. (1990) and Harsa and Chinov (1996) reported the use of gum of *Butea monosperma* as herbal contraceptives by tribals of Gujarat and Rajasthan. Kishore et al. (1982) reported the antifertility effect of *Carica papaya*. They also reported the use of *Datura metel* as oral contraceptive by the tribals of Orissa. Tewari et al. (1981) reported that the tribals of Assam use *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* and *Mimosa pudica* for temporary birth control. The antifertility effect of the above plant was reported by Harsha and Chinov (1996) also. Bhargava (1994) and Umadevi et al. (1997) reported the antifertility, anti-implantation and abortifacient activity of *Plumbago zeylanica*. Kishore et al. (1982) reported the antifertility effect of embelin through *Embelia ribes*, anti-fertility effect of pyrrolidine amide of piperic and pipronylic acid of *Piper* species.

**KEY WORDS** Folk. Formularies. Antifertility. Thiruvananthapuram.

**ABSTRACT** The present paper includes 18 folk formularies which had long been used traditionally against fertility among the rural women folk of Thiruvananthapuram district, Kerala.

**REFERENCES**


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