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Indigenous healthcare practices of rural women for digestive disorders in Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

The indigenous system of medicine namely Ayurvedic, Siddha and Unani have been in existence for several centuries. These systems of medicine cater the needs of nearly 70% of population residing in the villages. In Indian context two parallel streams are carrying the indigenous healthcare system from generation to generation. One is at household level, through grandmas. The other is through local folk healers. These two streams form a very significant part in India's indigenous healthcare system. An attempt is made to find out the indigenous knowledge of rural/tribal women of Andhra Pradesh with regard to preventive and curative measures against digestive disorders. The digestive disorders covered are constipation, diarrhoea, dysentery, stomachache, vomiting, indigestion, enlargement of spleen and jaundice. It was found that folk healers and rural women for the purpose of preventing and curing the above digestive disorders uses nearly 40 medicinal plants. The collected information was scientifically validated with the help of Ayurvedic experts and by referring the scientific literature.

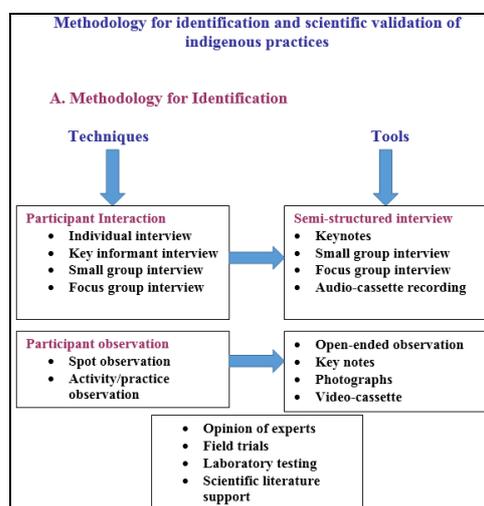
Keywords: Indigenous healthcare, Digestive disorders, Rural women, Andhra Pradesh.

Introduction

Herbal medicine has been widely practiced from ancient time throughout the world. Herbal drugs obtained from plants are believed to be much safer in the treatment of various diseases. The indigenous knowledge of medicinal plants has been well documented in ancient literature like Charaka Samhitha, Vaidya Ratnakaram and Atharva Veda. It is very common in rural areas, women use products of medicinal plants for various digestive disorders. To conserve this information, a project has been envisaged with an objective, to collect identify, scientifically validate and document the indigenous healthcare practices of rural women with specific reference to digestive disorders.

Methodology

It was proposed to carry out the investigation in all the 7 agro-climatic zones of Andhra Pradesh in order to get the information throughout the state. The research staff was trained in collection of data on local healthcare practices at Foundation for Revitalization of Local Health Traditions (FRLHT) located in Triptur which is near Bangalore, Karnataka. A semi structured schedule was developed to collect the data on medicinal plants used with regard to digestive disorders from rural women and folk healers. The techniques used for data collection and identification are shown below. The scientific validation was done with the help of Ayurvedic experts and scientific literature.



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Results and Discussion

S.No.	Disease	Plant name	Parts used	Mode of preparation and administration
1.	Constipation	<i>Bacopa monnieri</i> Linn Sanskrit-Brahmi Thyme leaved gratiola Local name-Neli sambrani Hindi- Safed chamni	Leaves	8-10 ml of leaf juice of <i>Bacopa monnieri</i> Linn is taken twice daily to get relief from constipation.
2.	Constipation	<i>Ficus benghalensis</i> Sanskrit- Vata/Bahupada Banyan tree Local name-Marrichettu	Fruits	Four fruits of <i>Ficus benghalensis</i> tree are soaked in a cup of milk overnight. The fruits and milk are taken on the next day before going to sleep.
3.	Constipation	<i>Cassia fistula</i> . Sanskrit-Argvadha Indian laburnum/Pur Local name –Rela Hindi-Amaltas, Kivali	Fruits	Few fruits (3-4) of <i>Cassia fistula</i> are crushed and mixed with a tsp. of leaf paste of <i>Cassia angustifolia</i> and is taken with a glass of butter milk, daily once in constipation as a laxative.
		<i>Cassia angustifolia</i> Sanskrit-Bhupadma Indian senna Hindi-Sanai	Leaves	
4.	Constipation	<i>Asparagus racemosus</i> Sanskrit-Sathaavare Wild asparag Local name-Pillithuga veru Hindi-Sathaavar	Rhizome	During constipation and for controlling blood discharge while passing stools, small rhizome of <i>Asparagus racemosus</i> is boiled in 100 ml of water and the obtained decoction is taken with little sugar daily once for one week.
5.	Diarrhoea	<i>Aristolochia indica</i> Sanskrit-Eshwari Indian birth wort Local name-Nalla Eshwari	Roots	Decoction is prepared with root of <i>Aristolochia indica</i> and 10-15 ml is consumed daily once for three days.
6.	Diarrhoea	<i>Phyla nodiflora</i> Sanskrit-Jalapipali purple Lippia Local name-Bokkenaku	Leaves and young shoots	Decoction is prepared with leaves and young shoots of <i>Phyla nodiflora</i> plant and 4 -5 tsp. of decoction is taken twice daily along with little honey to control diarrhoea and indigestion in children.
7.	Diarrhoea	<i>Cassia auriculata</i> Sanskrit-Avarttiki Tanner's cassia auriculata Local name-Tangedu	Leaves & seeds	To control diarrhoea, one tsp. of leaf paste of <i>Cassia</i> is mixed in a glass of buttermilk and given twice daily for 3-4 days. Or seeds of <i>Cassia auriculata</i> are slightly roasted and powdered and half a gm of this powder is taken with a glass of butter milk twice daily.
8.	Diarrhoea	<i>Ficus racemosus</i> Sanskrit-Udumbhara Cluster Local name-Atti chettu/ Medi	Fruits	Two fruits of <i>Ficus racemosus</i> are powdered and mixed with fig, one tsp. of honey and given once daily to control diarrhea.
9.	Diarrhoea	<i>Azadirachta indica</i> Sanskrit-Nimbha Neem tree Local name-Vepa chettu Hindi-Nim	Leaves	Tender budding leaves of <i>Azadirachta indica</i> (250 gms), <i>Aegle marmelos correa</i> (250 gms), <i>Syzygium cumini</i> (250gm), <i>Tagates erecta plant</i> (Mari gold), <i>Ocimum Sanctum</i> (5 gms), <i>pepper</i> (5 gms), <i>turmeric powder</i> (5gms) are grinded. Tablets/pills of the size of red gram are prepared, dried and stored. For a person suffering with diarrhea, two pills are given per a day.
		<i>Syzygium cumini</i> Sanskrit- Jambul Black plum Local name-Neredu Hindi-Jamun	Leaves	
		<i>Tagates erecta</i> Mari gold Local name-Banti	Leaves	
		<i>Ocimum Sanctum</i> Sanskrit-Aijaka, Haripriya sacred basil Local name- Tulasi	Leaves	
10.	Diarrhoea	<i>Phyllanthus emblica</i> Indian goosberry Sanskrit-Amlaki	Leaves	Tender budding leaves (50gms) of <i>Phyllanthus emblica</i> tree are grinded along with a glass of buttermilk and consumed once in a day. Drinking this preparation will cure severe and acute diarrhoea.
11.	Diarrhoea	<i>Syzygium cumini</i> Sanskrit- Jambul Black plum Local name-Neredu Hindi-Jamun	bark	For controlling diarrhoea, decoction is prepared with bark of <i>Syzygium cumini</i> tree and 50ml of decoction is taken daily.
12.	Dysentery	<i>Saraca indica</i> Sanskrit-Asokha Asokha	Flowers	Flowers (5 gms) of <i>Saraca indica</i> tree are pounded and mixed with a glass of water and taken daily once to control hemorrhagic dysentery.

		Local name-Asokamu. Hindi-Asok		
13.	Dysentery	<i>Syzygium cumini</i> Sanskrit- Jambul Black plum Local name-Neredu Hindi-Jamun	Stem bark	Small piece of stem bark of <i>Syzygium cumini</i> tree and cumin seeds are powdered together and taken along with lemon juice to cure dysentery.
		<i>Cuminum cyminum</i> Sanskrit-Jiraka Cumin Local name-Jeelkarra	Fruit	
14.	Dysentery	<i>Holarrhena pubescens</i> Sanskrit-Kutaja/Kalinga Local name- Kolamukhi/Pala kodasa	Stem bark	Stem bark of <i>Holarrhena pubescens</i> is crushed and mixed with equal quantity of pulp of <i>Aegle marmelos correa</i> fruit and made into decoction. Decoction of <i>correa</i> about 20 ml. is taken twice daily to control dysentery.
		<i>Aegle marmelos</i> Sanskrit-Bilwam Bel Fruit T elugu-Maredu Hindi-Bael	Fruit	
15.	Dysentery	<i>Leucas aspera</i> Sanskrit-Drona pushpi Thumbe Local name-Tummi	Tender leaves	Handful (2-3 gms) of tender leaves of <i>Leucas aspera</i> tree are boiled in 100ml of water till they become one fourth and taken daily once.
16.	Dysentery	<i>Punica grantum</i> Sanskrit-Dadimasara Pomegranate Local name-Dhanimma	Leaves	Leaf paste prepared with handful of leaves of <i>Punica grantum</i> is mixed with a cup of curd (100gms) and taken once in a day for a minimum of one week. Even eating pomegranate fruit also gives relief from dysentery.
17.	Dysentery	<i>Aegle marmelos correa</i> Sanskrit-Bilwam Bael Local name-Maredu Hindi-Bael	Fruit	One gram of pulp of <i>Aegle marmelos correa</i> fruit is taken with a glass of buttermilk for every four hours to control dysentery. The beal fruit is valuable chiefly for its mucilage and pectin it is very useful in chronic diarrhoea and dysentery, particularly for patients having diarrhoea alternatively with spells of constipation.
18.	Enlargement of spleen	<i>Ficus religiosa</i> Sanskrit-Aswath Peepal Local name-Raavi chettu	Bark	Inner bark of <i>Ficus religiosa</i> tree is dried under shade and later burnt into ash. Equal quantity of potassium (Pettluppu) is added to ash and preserved. Four gms of this powder is kept inside a plantain and eaten daily during enlargement of spleen.
19.	Enlargement of spleen	<i>Calotropis gigantean</i> Sanskrit-Arkah Gigantic swallow wart Local name - Tella jilledu	Root	Root of <i>Calotropis gigantea</i> is dried and finely powdered. One tsp. powder is taken with a glass of water daily once during enlargement of spleen.
20.	Enlargement of spleen	<i>Gymnema sylvestre</i> Sanskrit-Mehashring Periplaca of wood Local name-Podapatri	Leaves	Leaf paste of <i>Gymnema sylvestre</i> is prepared and mixed with equal quantity of castor oil and is applied to swollen glands and on the abdomen for enlargement of spleen and liver.
21.	Enlargement of spleen	<i>Canavalia ensiformis</i> Sanskrit- Maha-sibhee Jack been tree Local name- Thamba	Root	Root paste (½ tsp) of <i>Canavalia ensiformis</i> plant is taken along with a glass of rice gruel.
22.	Indigestion	<i>Calotropis gigantea</i> Sanskrit- Arkah Gigantic swallow Wart Local name- Tella jilledu	Leaves	Tender budding leaves (40 gms) of <i>Calotropis gigantea</i> are finely ground along with 20 gms of pepper and 50 gms of rock salt. Pills of size of ½ inch diameter are prepared with this mixture and stored. One tablet is taken daily once along with little water for few days.
23.	Jaundice	<i>Ficus religiosa</i> Sanskrit-Aswath chladal Peepal sacred fig, Local name-Raavi chettu	Bark	A piece of fresh bark of <i>Ficus religiosa</i> tree (6"x2"x1") is pounded or crushed and soaked overnight in water. The water is, taken on the next day on empty stomach for few days.
24.	Jaundice	<i>Phyllanthus emblica</i> Sanskrit-Amlaki Indian gooseberry Local name-Usirica	Fruit	Equal quantities of peels of <i>Phyllanthus emblica</i> and <i>Terminalia chebula</i> (both dried under shade) are taken and powdered finely together and sieved through a cloth. One tsp. of the powder is taken daily twice (morning and evening) with hot milk for ten days.
		<i>Terminalia chebula</i> Sanskrit-Harethake Hebulic myrobalan Local name-Karakkaya Hindi-Harad	Fruit	
25.	Jaundice	<i>Andrographis paniculata</i> Sanskrit- paniculata Bhunimba/kalamegha King of bitters Local name-Nelavemu	Leaves	For liver troubles and jaundice, few leaves of <i>Andrographis paniculata</i> are crushed with equal quantities of leaves of <i>Aristolochia indica</i> and roots of <i>Hemidesmus indicus</i> and made into fine paste and then pills (size of red gram) are prepared and dried under shade. Pills are taken orally once in a day for one week to ten days. This treatment can be followed even for anaemia.
		<i>Aristolochia indica</i>	Leaves	

		Sanskrit-Eshwari Indian birth wort Local name-Nalla Eshwari		
		<i>Hemidesmus indicus</i> Sanskrit-Sariva India sarsaparilla Local name-Sugandhapala	Roots	
26.	Jaundice	<i>Azadirachta indica</i> Sanskrit-Nimbha Neem tree Local name-Vepa chettu Hindi-Nim	Flowers	Few flowers of <i>Azadirachta indica</i> tree are roasted, crushed and taken along with a spoon of honey for controlling jaundice.
27.	Jaundice	<i>Boerhavia diffusa</i> Sanskrit -Punamava weed Hog Local name-Atika mamidi Hindi -Punamava, Gadaha- poorna, Saant	Roots	Half spoon of root paste of <i>Boerhavia diffusa</i> is prepared and is mixed with a glass of coconut water and is given to children in jaundice
28.	Jaundice	<i>Evolvulus alsinoides</i> Sanskrit-Nila pushpi/vishnugandhi Local name- Vishnukrantha	Leaves	Hand full of leaves of <i>Evolvulus alsinoides</i> are crushed and paste is prepared. The paste is mixed with onion juice (two small onions) and taken once daily for jaundice.
29.	Jaundice	<i>Phyllanthus amarus</i> Sanskrit- Bhudhatri/ Bahupatra Local name-Nela usiri	Whole plant	One tsp. of whole plant paste 20- 30 ml. of leaf juice of <i>Phyllanthus amarus</i> is taken with a glass of buttermilk on empty stomach once a day for 20- 25 days.
30.	Jaundice	<i>Tinospora cordifolia</i> Sanskrit-Gudooche Gulanacha Tinospora Local name- Tippateega Hindi-Giloa, Gulanacha	Leaves	Leaves of <i>Tinospora cordifolia</i> are crushed and one tsp. of paste is taken with a glass of buttermilk, thrice a day for one week.
31.	Jaundice	<i>Ricinus communis</i> Sanskrit-Eranda Castor Local name-Amadamu Hindi-Arandi	Leaves	Leaf juice (20-30ml) from leaves of castor plant is mixed with 1-2 gms of pepper powdered and taken with buttermilk twice daily for 5-6 days.
32.	Jaundice	<i>Adathoda vasica</i> Sanskrit- Vasa/ Sinhaparni/ Bhishangmata Mulbar nut tree Local name- Addasaramu Hindi-Adusa, Bansa vasika	Leaves	Leaf juice (25ml) of <i>Adathoda vasica</i> is mixed with 100ml of honey and taken daily for one week.
33.	Jaundice	<i>Eclipta prostrata</i> Sanskrit-Bhringaraja Trailing eclipta Local name-Guntagalagara	Whole plant	Whole plant juice (20-30 ml) of <i>Eclipta prostrata</i> is mixed with a pinch of pepper and taken once in a day on empty stomach for ten days. Diet and other regimen during jaundice Sweet substances and liquids like sugarcane juice, fruit juice and dry grapes are the main stay of the patient's diet. Spices, fats, alcohol and tobacco are avoided. Buttermilk is the best drink for jaundice.
34.	Stomach ache	<i>Cassia auriculata</i> Sanskrit-Avarttaki Tanner's cassia/Charmaranga Local name- Tangedu	Bark	Bark decoction (50 ml) of <i>Cassia auriculata</i> is taken daily twice to get immediate relief from stomach pain.
35.	Stomach ache	<i>Tephrosia purpurea</i> Sanskrit-Kalika Wild indigo Local name-Vemapli	Root	Root decoction of <i>Tephrosia purpurea</i> plant is prepared and 25 ml of root juice is taken with a pinch of ginger powder twice daily for stomachache.
37.	Vomiting	<i>Ficus religiosa</i> Sanskrit-Aswath, chladal Peepul Local name-Raavi chettu	Bark	The inner bark of <i>Ficus religiosa</i> tree is dried under shade and burned and one spoon of the resultant ash is mixed in a glass of water, strained and taken during vomiting.
38.	Vomiting	<i>Ficus benghalensis</i> Sanskrit-Vata Banyan tree Local name-Marrichettu	Roots	Tender aerial roots of <i>Ficus benghalensis</i> tree are crushed and juice is extracted and 25 ml of juice is given twice a day.

Images of medicinal plants mentioned in study



Discussion

In the present investigation about 40 plants belonging to different families were found to be used by rural women in traditional medicine system for the treatment of digestive disorders. Leaf paste of *Bacopa monnieri* Linn and *Ficus benghalensis* are used for prevention of constipation. Fruits of *Ficus benghalensis* and *Cassia fistula* are also used for the treatment of constipation. Kirithikar K.R & Basu B.D (1996) observed that Aloe Vera is useful in tumors, enlargement of spleen, liver complaints, vomiting and fever. Bhattacharjee S.K (1998) [7] observed that the flowers, seeds, and dried bark of *Saraca indica* flowers mixed with water are given for hemorrhagic dysentery. *Aristolochia* is used in treatment of indigestion and *Emblica officinalis* is useful in treating indigestion, jaundice, anemia, diarrhea and dysentery. Deokar A.B (1998) [8] stated that the pulp from semi ripe fruits of *Aegle marmelos correa* is prepared into syrup and administered in diarrhoea and dysentery. In our investigation it was found that to treat diarrhoea, leaf paste of *Syzygium cumini*, *Azadirachta indica*, *Casia auriculata*, and *Phyllanthus nodiflora* and fruits & seeds of *Ficus religiosa* are used. Stem bark of *Syzygium cumini*, fruits of *Aegle marmelos correa*, leaves of *Punica granatum* and flowers of *Saraca indica* are used in treatment of dysentery. Ranjay and Anamika (2009) [2] state in their study that to control the blood dysentery, mixture of mango kernel powder and banana root extract is used once daily for 4-5 days to get complete relief. Mango bark extract is prescribed thrice daily to control loose motion.

In the treatment of enlargement of spleen roots of *Calotropis gigantea*, *Canavalia ensiformis*, bark of *Ficus religiosa* and leaf paste of *Gymnea slyvestre* are used. Leaves of *Calotropis gigantea* with pepper and rock salt are used to treat indigestion. Jiwan Jyoti and Sukhjeet Kaur (2016) [1] were

found in their study that the medicinal plants percentage of respondents who always used for treating digestive problems like Nimbu (46.25 %), Sounf (42.50 %), Pudina (42.08 %) and Ajwain (38.75 %) were always used by the respondents. Fruit of *Phyllanthus emblica*, *Terminalia chebula*, leaves of *Aristolochia indica*, *Evolvulus alsinoides*, *Tinospora cordifolia*, *Resinus communis*, *Adatoda vasika*, *Eclipta prostrata*, and roots of *Hemidesmus indicus*, *Beorahavia diffusa* are the mostly preferred medicinal plants in the treatment of Jaundice. For the treatment of stomach ache, bark of *Casia auriculata* and roots of *Tephrosia purpurea* are used.

Conclusion

The present study highlights the status of uses of plants and presents baseline data on the use of plant resources by communities as indigenous knowledge from folk healers. These results will allow to form a knowledge base for long-term for future generations use. These compositions may provide direction for home level use of many plants which were available at home and nearby. Resources are fading gradually and should be conserved by sustainable techniques. There is an urgent need to aware local people about the conservation status of the local indigenous plant life on scientific lines and to document traditional knowledge and uses of native flora. In addition to the compilation, various conservation strategies need to be implemented for future conservation of this traditional knowledge of Indian folk healers.

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