

Herbal Remedies Among The Mizo Traditional Healers And The Village Folks In Mizoram, India

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Abstract:

Indigenous peoples possess valuable traditional knowledge about wild medicinal plants, often with local names and significant medical or cultural importance. This knowledge serves as a valuable foundation for effective in situ conservation efforts. 'In situ conservation' requires accurate information on the status of medicinal plant populations, the extent of plant use by local communities, and the resource base's capacity to support various economic activities. Utilizing this traditional knowledge can aid in evaluating the importance of medicinal plants and raising awareness, as cultural significance is often more relatable to the public than scientific trial results. The study identified 35 plant species from 34 genera and 29 families, which are used for treating conditions several illnesses. Understanding human impacts on biodiversity and the driving forces behind these influences is crucial for prioritizing conservation efforts and promoting sustainable use of medicinal plants.

Keywords: Mizoram, biodiversity, conservation, treatment, wild medicinal plants

Since ancient times, people have utilized natural materials to treat illnesses and enhance their well-being. Nature serves as the sole reservoir of medicinal resources. Many contemporary medications are derived from natural origins, drawing upon their historical use in traditional healing practices. Traditional medicinal systems rooted in plants continue to be crucial in healthcare, with approximately 80% of the global population primarily relying on traditional remedies for their health needs (WHO 2002-2005). Ethnomedicine encompasses the interdisciplinary study of biologically active substances traditionally observed by humans. India boasts extensive ethnomedicinal knowledge dating back to antiquity, originating from the esteemed traditional Ayurvedic system (Holmstedt and Bruhn:1983).

India, renowned for its vast biological diversity, stands as one of the world's countries with immense ecological richness (Mondal et al.:2002) Home to ancient traditional healing practices and a plethora of ethnic groups with deep-rooted indigenous wisdom, India has a history of utilizing medicinal plants for treating a wide array of ailments spanning centuries. Throughout history, plants and their components have been harnessed for medicinal purposes, with over 1200 herbal plant species documented in various ancient Indian texts. Presently, traditional medicine remains a cornerstone for 80% of the global population. Particularly in India, rural and tribal communities heavily rely on traditional medicinal practices, playing a pivotal role in the rural healthcare system (Raid et al.: 2006, Berkes: 2018)

Indigenous communities, predominantly forest inhabitants, have amassed extensive knowledge on the utilization of diverse forests and forest resources over generations. India is home to 427 tribal communities, with over 130 major tribes residing in North East India, encompassing the states of Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura, Sikkim, Assam, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh. These major tribal communities in North East India are further divided into sub-tribes, increasing the total number of tribal groups to around 300 (Rai and Lalramnghinglova: 2010). Generally, the tribes in North East India are classified into two main ethnic communities: the Khasi and Jaintia tribes of Meghalaya, who follow the 'Monkhemar' culture and speak an Austoic dialect, while the other tribal groups are primarily of Mongoloid descent, belonging to the Tibeto-Burman subfamily within the Tibeto-Chinese linguistic group (Mandal et al: 2002)

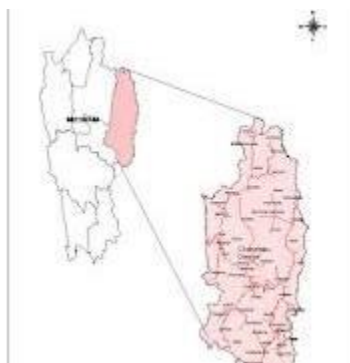
The northeastern part of India is renowned for its rich cultural and biological diversity. This region is home to over 200 ethnic groups, with more than 130 of the country's 427 tribal communities residing here. It serves as a treasure trove of medicinal plant species, and the indigenous communities rely entirely on herbal remedies for treating a variety of illnesses. However, the methods of use and application vary from one locality or community to another. The local residents of the region follow their own customs, traditions, and medicinal practices, primarily depending on forests and forest resources for their daily needs. Over time, they have accumulated extensive knowledge on the therapeutic properties of plants and plant-based products for curing different ailments (Sharma and Borthakur:2008).

A literature review indicates that many tribal regions and communities in the eastern Himalayan region of India have not been thoroughly explored in terms of their diverse plant resources used for medicinal purposes. The Mizo community in

the Champhai district of Mizoram is one such area that has received limited attention. Therefore, there is a necessity to gather comprehensive data on the plant species utilized by this tribal community and advocate for similar studies to be conducted among different tribal groups for comparative analysis and to preserve knowledge that may be at risk due to modern influences. This study aims to document and emphasize the traditional knowledge of the Mizo tribe concerning the use of medicinal plants found in and around their habitats.

Study area

Champhai district, situated in the northeastern region of Mizoram with Champhai as the district headquarter It is bordered by the Churachandpur district of Manipur to the north, while Aizawl and Serchhip districts lie to the west, with Myanmar to the south and east. Positioned at a Latitude of 23.4 and a Longitude of 93.3, the district capital sits at an elevation of 1678 meters above sea level. Covering an area of 3128.398 square km, forest spans across most of the district, marking the easternmost boundary of India with Myanmar. Despite being the highest district in terms of elevation among the eight in the state, it is renowned for its extensive flatlands utilized for wet rice cultivation, earning it the moniker "Rice Bowl of the State." This area holds a significant place in the history of Mizoram and its inhabitants.



Mizoram map showing Champhai district.

Methodology

The research was conducted in the Champhai district of Mizoram, India, utilizing primary sources for information gathering. Ethno-medicinal knowledge was obtained through field surveys and discussions with local informants in their native language (Mizo), identifying experienced traditional healers with expertise in herbal medicine. A structured questionnaire was used to gather details on the prescribed plants, specific plant parts utilized, medicinal applications of each part, preparation methods (such as decoction, paste, powder, and juice), mode of usage (fresh or dried), and any supplementary plants used as ingredients. The gathered information was recorded in a notebook for documentation.

Findings

Scientific name: *Hodgsonia macrocarpa* Cogn.

Local name: Kha-um

Family: Cucurbitaceae

Use: The crushed leaves' juice is used to stop bleeding and treat wounds on fresh cuts. Powdered leaves are applied externally for the treatment of ulcers or septic conditions.

Scientific name: *Homalomena aromatica* Schott

Local Name: Anchiri

Family: Araceae

Use: The rhizome is utilized as a fragrant stimulant, while the juice of the entire plant is applied as a topical treatment for skin ailments.

Scientific name: *Inula cappa* (Buch.-Ham. ex D.Don) DC.

Local Name: Buarthau

Family: Asteraceae

Use: The leaves of *Plantago erosa* Wall. ex Roxb. and *Lobelia angulata* G. Forst. are crushed together, and the resulting juice is consumed three times a day to treat diabetes and jaundice.

Scientific name: *Jasminum nervosum* Lour.

Local Name: Hruikha

Family: Oleaceae

Use: Leaves are used for the remedy of stomach ache & fever.

Scientific name: *Jatropha curcas* L.

Local name: Kangdamdawi

Family: Euphorbiaceae

Use: The fruit nut is utilized as a laxative. The leaves are employed as a treatment for scabies, eczema, and ringworm. Additionally, branches are utilized as a toothbrush to address swollen gums.

Scientific name: *Juglans regia* L.

Local name: Khawkherh

Family: Juglandaceae

Use: Branch and leaf are used as anthelmintics. Leaves are used as astringents & tonics. Fruit is used as an antirheumatic.

Scientific name: *Justicia adhatoda* L.

Local name: Kawldai

Family: Acanthaceae

Use: The juice extracted from crushed leaves is used externally to halt bleeding from cuts and wounds. Boiling the leaves and consuming 20 ml of the resulting water twice a day for three days is employed as a remedy for malarial fever. A paste made from the leaves is applied to the entire body for a duration of 24 hours, and the patient then bathes on the third day to address acute or chronic malaria.

Scientific name: *Lagerstroemia speciosa* (L.) Pers.

Local name: Chawnpui

Family: Lythraceae

Use: A root decoction is taken for jaundice. A bark infusion is taken for diarrhoea & dysentery.

Scientific name: *Lepidagathis incurva* Buch.-Ham. ex D. Don

Local name: Vangvattur

Family: Acanthaceae

Use: Crushed leaves are used to stop bleeding

Scientific name: *Lepionurus sylvestris* Blume

Local name: Anpangthuam

Family: Opiliaceae

Use: A leaf decoction is taken as a treatment for diabetes.

Scientific name: *Litchi chinensis* Sonn.

Local name: Theifeihmung

Family: Sapindaceae

Use: Fruit aril is used as a tonic. Leaves are used to treat animal bites.

Scientific name: *Litsea monopetala* Pers.

Local name: Nauthak

Family: Lauraceae

Use: The bark is utilised for its astringent, antidiarrheal, and stimulant properties. It is also employed in the treatment of stomach aches and fractures.

Scientific name: *Melocalamus compactiflorus* Benth.

Local name: Sairil

Family: Poaceae

Use: Stem juice is used to treat influenza.

Scientific name: *Melastoma malabathricum* L.

Local name: Builukham

Family: Melastomataceae

Use: Grilled bark is used as wound healer. Leaf is used as an antidiarrheal & antiseptic.

Scientific name: *Myrica esculenta* Buch.-Ham. ex D.Don

Local name: Keifang

Family: Myricaceae

Use: The bark is utilized as a rubefacient, antiseptic, carminative, antiasthmatic, and diuretic, and is employed in the treatment of bronchitis. The fruit serves as a sedative and is utilized in the management of stomach ache.

Scientific name: *Musa acuminata* Colla

Local name: Balhla

Family: Musaceae

Use: The sap of stem is applied for antiseptic. Ripen fruit is used for healing loose motion

Scientific name: *Ocimum tenuiflorum* L.

Local name: Runhmui-dum

Family: Lamiaceae

Use: Inhaling the steam from boiling the entire plant is a remedy for hepatitis. An infusion of the entire plant is employed to address coughs, bronchitis, gastric issues, and as a mosquito repellent.

Scientific name: *Oroxylum indicum* Vent.

Local name: Archangkawm

Family: Bignoniaceae

Use: The roots and bark are used as a tonic and for managing diarrhea. The bark is employed in the treatment of rheumatism. The young fruit is employed as a carminative for alleviating stomach discomfort and addressing high blood pressure. The seeds are used as a purgative. The stem is applied as a remedy for scorpion stings.

Scientific name: *Parkia timoriana* (DC.) Merr.

Local name: Zawngtah

Family: Leguminosae

Use: A bark and twig decoction is taken orally to treat diarrhoea & dysentery. Green Fruit exocarps (pods) are ground into a paste & applied on cuts & wounds.

Scientific name: *Picrasma javanica* Blume

Local name: Thing Damdawi

Family: Simaroubaceae

Use: 25 ml of a root decoction is taken internally twice daily for fever & malaria. 50 ml of a bark decoction is taken 2-3 times daily to treat diabetes & hypertension.

Scientific name: *Plantago erosa* Wall.

Local name: Kelba-an

Family: Plantaginaceae

Use: The entire plant is crushed along with *Lobelia angulate* G. Forst. & *Inula cappa*, and the resulting juice is consumed three times a day for the treatment of diabetes and jaundice.

Scientific name: *Pratia begonifolia* Lindl.

Local name: Choak-thi

Family: Campanulaceae

Use: Crushed leaf juice is taken to treat dysentery & vomiting.

Scientific name: *Sapindus mukorossi* Gaertn.

Local name: Hlingsi

Family: Sapindaceae

Use: The fruit is utilized as an emetic and expectorant, particularly in cases of excessive salivation. It is also employed in the treatment of epilepsy and chlorosis. Additionally, the seeds are utilized for managing fevers and dental caries.

Scientific name: *Securinega virosa* (Roxb. ex Willd.) Baill.

Local name: Saisiak

Family: Euphorbiaceae

Use: Boiled leaves water is used for bathing children with scabies and measles.

Scientific name: *Solanum nigrum* L.

Local name: Anhling

Family: Solanaceae

Use: A whole plant infusion is used to treat liver problems & dropsy.

Scientific name: *Solanum torvum* Schltldl.

Local name: Tawkpui

Family: Solanaceae

Use: Crushed seeds are applied to treat a toothache & tooth decay.

Scientific name: *Spondias pinnata* (L.f.) Kurz

Local name: Tawitaw

Family: Anacardiaceae

Use: The bark is used as a cooling agent and for the management of dysentery. When combined with water, the bark is employed in the treatment of ear and muscle rheumatism.

Scientific name: *Stereospermum colais* (Buch.-Ham. ex Dillwyn) Mabb.

Local name: Zihngal

Family: Bignoniaceae

Use: A leave decoction is used as a febrifuge. Leave juice is applied to relieve itching.

Scientific name: *Syzygium cerasoides* (Roxb.) Raizada

Local name: Lenhmui

Family: Myrtaceae

Use: The fruit is used for addressing rheumatism, while the leaves are employed in compresses, and the roots serve as a rubefacient.

Scientific name: *Terminalia chebula* Retz.

Local name: Reraw

Family: Combretaceae

Use: The fruit is used for the treatment of stomach issues, fevers, asthma, dysentery, hemorrhoids, colds, sore throats, dental decay, bleeding and ulcerated gums, eye inflammation, and is employed as a purgative and anti-inflammatory agent. It is also believed to improve blood quality. The bark is employed as a diuretic and tonic for the heart.

Scientific name: *Tinospora cordifolia* Miers

Local name: Theisawntlung

Family: Menispermaceae

Use: Stem are used to treat skin diseases, stomach ache, spasms, inflammation, diabetes, diuretic, piles, anaemia, & as an emetic, aphrodisiac, & antiperiodic. Roots are used as an emetic and to treat leprosy. Fruit is used as a tonic & to treat rheumatism. Stem and fruit are used to treat jaundice.

Scientific name: *Trema orientale* (L.) Blume

Local name: Belphuar

Family: Ulmaceae

Use: Bark, leave and root are used to treat epilepsy. Roots are used to treat diarrhoea. Bark is used to treat muscular pain.

Scientific name: *Trevesia palmata* Vis.

Local name: Kawhtebel

Family: Araliaceae

Use: Crushed leave juice is taken to treat colic, stomach ache & high blood pressure.

Scientific name: *Zanonia indica* L.

Local name: Lalruanga-Dawibur

Family: Cucurbitaceae

Use: The leaves are utilized for treating inflammation and spasms, while the fruit serves as an expectorant, antiseptic, and remedy for cough and asthma. Boiled ripened fruit water is ingested to address stomach issues.

Scientific name: *Zingiber officinale* Roscoe

Local name: Sawhthing

Family: Zingiberaceae

Use: The oil extract is used to treat coughs and bronchitis, while the roasted rhizome is ingested to relieve throat discomfort.

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