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DOCUMENTATION OF ETHNOMEDICINAL PLANT KNOWLEDGE OF KANI TRIBE OF PERINGAMMALA PANCHAYATH, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, KERALA, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Documentation of indigenous knowledge through ethnobotanical studies is important for the conservation and utilization of biological resources. Ethnobotanical surveys help the suitable source of information regarding useful plants and process of domestication. The present study is an attempt to document the ethnomedicinal knowledge of two Kani tribal communities residing in the floristically rich PeringammalaPanchayath of NedumangaduTaluk, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, South India. Ethnobotanical uses of medicinal plants were obtained from them through intensive interviews from traditional practitioners and few elderly people. The present investigation revealed that the Kani tribes of Njaraneeli and Elanjium settlements of PeringammalaPanchayath were using a number of plants for curing various ailments. A total of 101 medicinal plants were documented.

Key Words: Indigenous knowledge, Ethno medicine, Kani tribes, Documentation.

Introduction

In developing countries like India, the traditional knowledge on plants are an important resource for the treatment of various illnesses, and are a major component of treatment within the primary health care systems (Ngari et al., 2010). Documentation of indigenous knowledge through ethnobotanical studies is important for the conservation and utilization of biological

resources. Ethnomedicine denotes plants, animal products and minerals used by tribal communities of a particular region or country for medicinal purposes other than those mentioned in classical streams of the respective cultures. These tribal communities draw their sustenance largely from forests for food,medicine and other requirements. Nedumangad and NeyyattinkaraTaluks of the Thiruvananthapuram district constitute the Thiruvananthapuram tribal region. Kanikkar of Travancore is the most important tribal community living in this region. As on 2011 census the tribal communities in the district numbered 26759 with 0.81 percentage of total population in the district.

The practice of traditional medicine is based on the knowledge that has been passed orally from generation to generation. Only a very few written documents are available, because the language used by the tribals are not having the script. Very few authentic reports on ethnobotanical studies are available about tribal communities of different hillocks of Western Ghats (Viswanathan et al., 2001; Ayyanar and Ignacimuthu, 2005). Preserving the knowledge of tribal community and documentation of the traditional uses of medicinal plants is the useful need of the hour. Medico botanical studies have been under taken in Kerala by a number of workers. The major references areSabu et al (2011), Shyma and Devi Prasad(2012), and Latheef et al (2014).In the preliminary survey, 26 plant species belonging to 22 families often used by Kanis of PeringammalaPanchayath for their common ailments are documented (Sarukrishna and NusaifaBeevi, 2017).The Kanis, also known as Kanikkar, an indigenous tribal community of Southern India, are well known for their healing tradition. Kani people are spread out in two South Indian states, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

The objective of this study is to document the traditional medical practices of healing the aliments and methods of plant utilization of Kani tribes in selected areas of PeringammalaGramaPanchayath of NedumangaduTaluk, Thiruvananthapuram district.

Materials and Methods

The present study was conducted in two tribal settlements, Njjaraneeli and Elanchiyam of PeringammalaGramaPanchayath of Thiruvanathapuram district. Peringammalagramapanchayth is inhabited by 1251 tribal families spread over 25 kani tribal settlements. Njaraneeli and Elanjium are the two kani tribal settlements each with 83 and 96 families respectively.

The ethno botanical information was collected from the indigenous people of different age groups by interviewing them and filling a questionnaire for documentation. The information was gathered from respondents who use plants for self-medication and from people who treat others for ailments. From the informants, information on medicinal plants with their local names, parts in use, mode of preparation and administration were obtained. The reliability of the information of the plants used was assessed after repeated verification. The plants specimens were collected and the botanical names and families were identified with the help of regional floras and finally confirmed with taxonomist. Herbariums were prepared for the studied plants and deposited at the PG Department of Botany,IqbalCollege,Peringammala.

Results

The present investigation revealed that the Kani tribes of Njaraneeli and Elanjium settlements of Peringammalapanchayath were using a number of plants for curing various ailments. A total of 101 medicinal plants were documented. The plants documented are arranged alphabetically by their botanical name,common name, family and detailed ethno medicinal uses together with parts used in Table.1.

Table 1.Ethnomedicinal plants used by the Kani tribal groups of Njaraneeli and Elanchium Tribal settlements of PeringammalaPanchayath.

S.No	Botanical Name	Common name	Family	Plant Parts &uses
1.	*Abrusprecatorius*L.	Kunni	Leguminosae	Seed powder used against vein disorders, skin diseases, rheumatism.
2.	*Acacia catechu (*L.f) Willd.	Karingaali	Leguminosae	Piece of wood, boiled in water and intaken.It promotes blood purification.
3.	*Acalyphaindica* L.	Kuppameni	Euphorbiaceae	Leaf is applied on the forehead of new born babies to prevent asthma and cough.
4.	*Acoruscalamus L.*	Vayampu	Araceae	Leaf is antimicrobial, and can be used against urinary problems. It also increases digestive power. It is used against cough also.
5.	*Adenantherapavonina*L.	Manchadi	Leguminosae	Bark decoction is used against blood rheumatism.
6.	*Adenocalymaalliaceumb*Biers.	Veluthulliched i	Bignoniaceae	Leaf and root, used as antidote.
7.	*Adhatodavasica*Nees	Adalodakam	Acanthaceae	Intake of half boiled leaf extract in honey will help to cure respiratory disorder and asthma.
8.	*Aeglemarmelos*(L.)	Koovalam	Rutaceae	15 ml of leaf extract is in taken

	Corr.			orally, twice a day to cure diabetes. Intake of the root bark extract in warm water will cure long lasting cough and asthma.
9.	*Aervalanata*(L.)Juss. exSchul.	Cherula	Amaranthaceae	Whole plant is used against urinary disorders
10.	*Ageratum conyzoides*L.	Appachedi	Asteraceae	Leaf extract directly applied to cure wound. The plant is an ingredient of steam bath.
11.	*Aloe vera*(L.) Burm.f.	Kattarvazha	Liliaceae	Fresh leaf juice is externally applied for inflammations and for skin rejuvenation. It is also used to prepare hair tonic.
12.	*Alpiniacalcarata*(Haw.) Roscoe	Chittaratha	Zingiberaceae	One teaspoon of rhizome powder mixed with one teaspoon of honey prevents indigestion. It is antibacterial also.
13.	*Alstoniascholaris*(L.) R. Br.	Eazhilampala	Apocynaceae	Milky latex is externally applied against inflammations. Latex mixed with oil, heated and is slowly dropped into the ear to cure ear pain.
14.	*Alternanthera canella*	Cherucheera	Amaranthaceae	Leaf and stem extract administered orally against spider attack
15.	*Anacardiumoccidentale*L.	Kashumavu	Anacardiaceae	Bark is used against rheumatism. Fruit extract in taken to cure vomiting and dysentery.
16.	*Andrographispaniculata*Nees	Kiriyathu	Acanthaceae	The leaf extract is used against diarrhea, dysentery, fever and throat infection. The whole plant possess antibacterial and anti inflammatory activities.
17.	*Aristolochiaindica* L.	Urithooki	Aristolochiaceae	Root and leaf paste, mixed with milk and riceand used against Snake poison
18.	*Aristolochiatagala* Cham.	Malayarayan	Aristolochiaceae	Leaf paste applied to forehead for fever.
19.	*Asparagus racemosus*Willd.	Shathavari	Liliaceae	Root tuber extract is in taken to cure stomach disorders.
20.	*Averrhoabilimbi* L.	Pulinchikka	Averrhoaceae	Fruit juice increase digestion and lower cholesterol.
21.	*Azadiractaindica*A. Juss.	Aryaveppu	Meliaceae	Leaf paste is applied externally for chicken pox. Oil obtained from fruit is used for various diseases.
22.	*Azimatetracantha*Lam.	Essanku	Salvadoraceae	Leaf paste used against chest pain
23.	*Bacopamonnieri*(L.) Pennell.	Brahmi	Scrophulariaceae	Whole plant is used against constipation. Plant extract mixed with honey, and intaken to cure obesity. Coconut oil preparation of leaf

				extract is applied on head to cure fever and epilepsy. It also stimulates hair growth.
24.	*Biophytumsensitivum*(L.) DC.	Mukkuty	Geraniaceae	Leaf and root extracts are used to regulate menstrual bleeding.
25.	*Boerhaviadiffusa* L.	Thazhuthama	Nyctaginaceae	Filtered, fresh extract of whole plant dropped in to eye thrice a day for eye diseases. Leaf made into 'thoran' is effective to cure rheumatism and swellings.
26.	*Cajanuscajan*(L.) Mill.	Thuvarappayar	Leguminosae	Leaf boiled water used as mouth wash to cure tooth ache.
27.	*Calotropisgigantea* (L.) R. Br.	Erukku	Asclepiadaceae	The stem latex is directly applied against, itching , rashes etc. on the skin.
28.	*Capsicum frutescens*L.	Kantharimulaku	Solanaceae	The ripe and unripe fruits are edible and can cure gas trouble.
29.	*Cardiospermumhalicacabum*L.	Uzhinja	Sapindaceae	A fine paste of whole plant is applied on the back and abdomen, to relieve labour pain and for easier delivery.
30.	*Cassia fistula* L.	Kanikkonna	Leguminosae	Bath in water boiled with heart wood is used to cure Psoriasis.
31.	*Catharanthusroseus*L.	Savamnari	Apocynaceae	Roots are used against diabetes, skin disease and anti-cancerous
32.	*Centellaasiatica* L.	Kudungal	Apiaceae	Leaves made into paste and intaken for the treatment of ulcer, and against worms
33.	*Cissampelos Pereira* L.	Malathangi/malaanni	Menispermaceae	The leaf preparations directly intaken by ladies after delivery to cure uterine problems. It also induces milk formation in nursing mothers.
34.	*Clerodendroninfortunatum*L.	Peruvalam	Verbenaceae	It is an ingredient in steam bath. The tender leaves grinded with salt and in taken to cure dysentery, against worms and skin diseases.
35.	*Clitoriaternatea* L.	Shankupushpam	Leguminosae	Leaf paste used for skin diseases.
36.	*Curculigoorchioids* Gaerthn.	Nilappana	Amaryllidaceae	The root is grinded and applied on swellings
37.	*Curcuma amada*Roxb.	Manga inchi	Zyngiberaceae	Rhizome is used for pickle preparation. It can cure stomach pain, skin diseases, gas trouble, constipation etc.
38.	*Cycleapeltata*Hook. f. &Thoms.	Padathali	Menispermaceae	The root powder boiled with curd, intake one teaspoon daily to cure piles. Leaf paste is applied directly against dandruff, skin diseases, and wounds.

39.	*Cynodondactylon* (L) Pers.	karuka	Poaceae	Grinded fresh leaves rubbed against injuries to stop bleeding. The leaf extract inhaled to stop bleeding from nose.
40.	*Cyperusmalaccensis*L.	Muthanga	Cyperaceae	The root tuber is used in the medicinal preparation to cure uterine diseases.
41.	*Daturastramonium* L.	Ummam	Solanaceae	Dried flower is made into powder and used as inhaler to cure asthma.
42.	*Desmodiumtrifloru m* (L.)DC.	Cherupulladi/ Nilamparanda	Leguminosae	The leaf powder mixed with gruel water and intaken to cure urinary problems.
43.	*Dioscoreatriphylla* L.	Nuuraankizhan gu	Dioscoreaceae	The root tuber is the favourite food of tribes. It is highly nutritional. It gives disease resistance ,strong muscularity.
44.	*Diospirosbarberi*	Elichuzhiyan / karakil	Ebenaceae	An ingredient in steam bath. It cure rheumatism and oedema.
45.	*Eclipta alba* L.	Kayyonni	Asteraceae	Whole plant is used for the treatment of liver and gastro-intestinal disorders. It also prevents hair loss.
46.	*Elephantopusscabe r* L.	Aanachuvadi	Asteraceae	Whole plant is used for the treatment of liver and gastro-intestinal disorders.
47.	*Emilia sonchifolia*(L.) DC.	Muyalcheviya n	Asteraceae	The leaf extract is dropped into eyes for cleaning and for cooling effect. The leaf paste mixed with salt and applied on throat and neck to prevent pain due to tonsillitis.
48.	*Ensetaesuperbum*R oxb.	Kalluvazha	Musaceae	Powdered seed mixed with milk used against Gynaec problems
49.	*Entadascandens*Be nth.	Paranda	Leguminosae	Fruit kernel is grind, mixed with milk and intake to cure chest pain.
50.	*Euphorbia hirta*Linn.	Chithirappala	Euphorbiaceae	Used for the treatment of diabetes, fever, cough and asthma. Linositol has been isolated from this plant
51.	*Ficusbengalensis* L.	Peraal	Moraceae	Bark, leaves, roots, buds, fruits and latex shows anti-inflammatory activity.
52.	*Ficusracemosa*Rox b.	Athi	Moraceae	5-10ml of bark extract boiled with gruel and intake against worms. 30 ml of fruit extract mixed with sugar, intake twice a day to cure bleeding from nose.
53.	*Ficusreligiosa* L.	Arayaal	Moraceae	Intake 30 ml of leaf decoction twice a day to control sugar. Flower bud grinded and rubbed in skin against skin rashes and also

				help to brighten skin.
54.	*Gymnemasylvestre* R.Br.	Chakkarakkolly	Apocynaceae	The whole plant is used for stimulating pancreas.
55.	*Helicteresisora* L.	Idampirivalampiri	Sterculiaceae	Root and bark are used for the treatment of diabetes, diarrhoea and dysentery. Fruit are stomachachic
56.	*Hemidesmusindicus* (L.)R.Br.	Narunandi/Nannari	Asclepiadaceae	Powdered root is mixed with milk and in taken to cure leucorrhoea.
57.	*Hemigraphiscolorata* (Blume.) Hall.f.	Murukoodipacha	Acanthaceae	The leaf extract used to stop bleeding from wounds. Leaf is antimicrobial.
58.	*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* L.	Chemparathy	Malvaceaea	The leaf extract of *Hibiscus* and *Aloe vera* mixed together and applied on scalp as shampoo to clean hair and stimulate hair growth.
59.	*Holostemmaada-kodien*R.Br.exSchult.	Adapathiyan	Asclepiadaceae	5gm of dried and powdered root tuber is mixed with milk and drink twice a day to stimulate milk formation in nursing mothers.
60.	*Hydnocarpus alpine* Wight	Marotti	Flacourtiaceae	Seed oil is used to cure skin diseases.
61.	*Indigoferatinctoria* L.	Neelaamari	Leguminosae	Coconut oil preparation of leaf extract is externally applied on head to cure head ache and also to stimulate hair growth.
62.	*Ipomeamauritiana*	Vellapalmuthakku	Convolvulaceae	It is a poisonous medicine. Root tuber is a panacea for developing strong muscularity. The medicine is intaken orally by mixing it with cow milk or coconut milk in order to overcome from poisonous effect.
63.	*Janakiaarayalpathra* Joseph &Chandrasekharan	Amruthappala	Periplacoceae	The pounded mass of fresh tuberous root is mixed with equal quantity of coconut oil, boiled to attain a semi solid form, which after cooling is administered orally, in a dose of 10-15ml. twice daily for 15-30 days.It cures all kinds of peptic ulcers.
64.	*Knemaattenuata* (Hook.f.& Th.)Warb.	Chorapyne	Myristicaceae	Global shaped seed with aril are boiled in water and intake to cure ulcer
65.	*Leucasaspera*Willd.	Thumba	Lamiaceae	Flower extract is mixed with milk and boiled to make a paste. This preparation is in taken by nursing mothers to stimulate milk formation. Two drops of leaf extract intake through the nose to cure head ache and sinus. Leaf and flower extract mixed together

				with asafoetida, to prevent vomiting.
66.	*Mimosa pudica L.*	Thottavadi	Leguminosae	Used to cure skin diseases, respiratory problems, dysentery etc. The whole plant extract mixed with 10ml of coconut milk is intaken daily morning in a month to cure Asthma.
67.	*Mimusopselengi*L.	Elanji	Sapotaceae	A decoction is prepared by using bark that is internally administrated against worm attack. It is also used against poisons.
68.	*Moringapterygosperma*Gaertn.	Muringa	Moringaceae	The root decoction in taken to cure ulcer, worm attack and gynaecological problems. Leaf grinded with salt and applied on swellings of rheumatism.
69.	*Murrayakoenigii* ex L.	kariveppu	Rutaceae	Leaves powdered, and ground in to a paste with milk. It is applied externally against skin poison. 5 gram leaf is made into paste with ginger juice. It is mixed with diluted curd and administered orally twice a day for increasing apetite and digestive power.
70.	*Ocimum sanctum* L.	Krishnathulasi	Lamiaceae	Oral administration of leaf extract helps to decrease blood glucose level.
71.	*Ocimum*sps.	kuzhimundan	Lamiaceae	The coconut oil preparation of leaf extract is used to make hair oil, which is applied on head to cure cough, and against falling of eye brow.
72.	*Oxalis corniculata*L.	Puliyarila	Oxalidaceae	The leaf extract and onion extract are mixed together and applied on "arimpara"to cure it. Leaf paste is applied in the forhead to cure head ache.
73.	*Pajanelialongifolia* (Willd.) K. Schum.	Aazhantha	Bignoniaceae	Bark is grinded and boiled with one glass of water in aearthern pot, and made in to half glass. It is intaken to cure rheumatic fever in early stages.
74.	*Phyllanthusniruri*Scham.&Thonn.	Keezharnelly	Euphorbiaceae	The whole plant grinded and mixed with coconut milk, then in taken to cure jaundice.
75.	*Phyllanthusemblica* L.	Nellikka	Euphorbiaceae	Fruit and bark are commonly used parts. Fruit extract is used against urinary infections.
76.	*Physalis minima* L.	Njottanjodian	Solanaceae	Leaf paste is applied on the inflammated portion to cure it.
77.	*Piper betle* L.	Vettila	Piperaceae	The extract of leaf and ginger

				mixed with honey then in taken twice a day to cure asthma.
78.	*Piper longum*L.	Thippali	Piperaceae	Fruit is used in the treatment of cough and fever
79.	*Piper nigram* L.	Kurumulaku	Piperaceae	Dried fruit is useful. It is digestive and carminative.
80.	*Plectranthusamboinicus* (Lour.) Sprengel.	Panikurkka\ Njavara.	Lamiaceae	Leaf extract mixed with honey. 10ml dose intake 6 times in a day to cure cough and other respiratory problems.
81.	*Plumbagorosea* L.	Koduveli	Plumbaginaceae	Root is powdered and orally taken to increase the digestive power and promote appetite.
82.	*Pterocarpusmarsupium*Roxb.	Karivenga	Leguminosae	Bark is made into powder and intaken to reduce cholesterol. It is also used to reduce weight. The inner part of wood of tree is boiled in sesame oil and applied on scalp to prevent premature hair grey.
83.	*Quassiaindica* (Gaertner) Nooteb.	karinjotta	Simaroubaceae	Bark and seeds are used to cure different type of Rheumatism. The oil preparation of bark, externally applied to cure pain and swelling caused due to rheumatism.
84.	*Rauvolfiaserpentine*Benth.ex Kurtz.	Kattusarpagandhi	Apocynaceae	Decoction of root is given at the time of labor pain.It is also used against snake bite
85.	*Rotalaaquatic*Lour.	Kallurvanchi	Boraginaceae	Root decoctions are used to treat kidney and bladder stones
86.	*Sansevieriaroxburghiana* Schult.f.	Sarpapola/ pampatti	Liliaceae	Leaves are used for the treatment of ear pain. , rhizome juice is prescribed for long lasting coughs. An alkaloid, sancevierine has been isolated from the plant.
87.	*Saracaindica*L.	Ashokam	Leguminosae Caesalpiniaceae	Dried stem bark is a remedy for uterine disorders, piles and dysentery.
88.	*Sennaoccidentalis*(L.) Link,	Oolanthakara	(Leguminosae) Caesalpiniaceae	Leaves are useful part and are used to make thoran. It shows antimicrobial property and is used to cure skin diseases and anemia.
89.	*Sesbaniagrandiflora*(L.)poirert	Agasthymuringa	Leguminosae	Powdered seed mixed with milk and applied against inflammation. Flower extract mixed with cow milk, intake orally to prevent uterine bleeding and leucorrhoea.
90.	*Sidarhombifolia* L.	Kurunthotti	Malvaceae	Root is made into decoction and used to treat rheumatism
91.	*Smilax zeylanica* L.	Kariyilanchi	Smilacaceae	The root juice is used to cure rheumatism, skin troubles and dysentery.

92.	*Solanumtorvum* Sw.	Putharichunda.	Solanaceae	The leaf paste is applied externally over wounds
93.	*Thotiasiliquosa* (Lam.) Ding Hou.	Kuttilavayana	Aristolochiaceae	The root is made in to paste and is applied to cure teeth ache. Head ache is also cured by this preparation.
94.	*Tinosporacordifolia*Willd.	Chittamruthu	Menispermaceae	Half teaspoon of leaf extract mixed with honey is in taken to prevent vomiting. A mixture of 15 ml leaf extract and half teaspoon turmeric powder is in taken to regulate diabetes.
95.	*Toreneatravancorica*L.	Kakkapoovu	Scrophulariaceae	The whole plant is made in to paste and applied on forehead to cure head ache.
96.	*Tragiahispida*Willd.	Choriyanam /chorithanam .	Euphorbiaceae	Roasted leaves are grinded with rice, administered orally to cure cough.
97.	*Tylophoraindica* (Burm.)	Vallippala	Asclepiadaceae	Daily intake of three leaves before food is effective for curing asthma.
98.	*Vernoniacinerea*L.	Poovamkurunnu	Asteraceae	The leaf extract used as eye drops against ‘chenkannu’, and cataract.
99.	*Vitexnegundo*(L.)	Karinochi	Verbenaceae	Decoction made from the leaves of *Vitex*, *piper*, and*ocimum*together intake for curing fever. Oil preparation of leaf extract is applied daily on head to cure ear related diseases. The leaves of *Adhathodavasica,* and *Vitexnegundo*are made into paste and mixed with coconut milk. It is in taken to cure cough and chest pain.
100.	*Vitisquadrangularis* Linn.	Changalamparanda	Vitaceae	It is an ingredient in the treatment of piles and rheumatism.
101.	*Wrightiatinctoria*	Dandhapala	Apocynaceae	Latex is used against tooth pain.

Discussion

The present study documented 101 medicinal plants which belong to 47 families. The most-cited families were Fabaceae and are mostly herbaceous plants. This result is in agreement with Jespin Ida and Anami (2016), who documented a total of 83 medicinal plants used by the Kani tribes in Keeripara of Kanyakumari district, South India, were majority, belonged to Fabaceae. The plants under study were utilized for curing diseases like gastrointestinal

problems, gynecological problems, leucorrea, skin disorders, cold, fever, cough, headache, wounds, rheumatism, hair falling, snake poison, jaundice and urinary problems. This is consistent with the general observations made earlier in relation to ethno botanical studies on some of the other tribal communities of Kerala and kanitribals of Tamilnadu (Viswanathan et al, 2001; Ayyanar and Ignacimuthu, 2005; Jespin Ida and Anami, 2016).According to Subitha,et al (2011), most of people interviewed by them were familiar with the species dealing with common ailments like cold, cough, fever, digestive problems, fever, headache, skin infection, and plant remedies were used on regular basis. Among different plant parts used by kanis in Njaraneeli and Elanjium settlements, the leaves are most frequently used for the treatment of fourty nine diseases. This is followed by root for eighteen, whole plant for fifteen, bark for twelve, fruit for six, seeds for five, rhizome for three and latex for two diseases each (NusaifaBeevi and Saru Krishna,2018). This is also in agreement with Subitha,et al (2011), who documented ethno medicinal plants used by Kani tribes in Pechipara forests of Southern Western ghats, in which leaves are frequently used and it was followed by fruit, root, rhizome, latex, whole plant, stem, flower, seed and tender shoot.

Earlier studies on traditional medicinal plants revealed that the economically backward local people of Kanitribals prefer folk medicine due to low cost and sometimes it is a part of their social life and culture (Viswanathan et al., 2001; Ayyanar and Ignacimuthu, 2005). The present study shows that the Njaraneeli and Elanchiyam forest areas have great diversity of medicinal plants with rich ethno medicinal uses, since this type of research must be promoted to understand the potential use of their plant resources, as well as a means to better promote basic healthcare. Due to lack of interest among the younger generation of tribals as well as their tendency to migrate to cities for lucrative jobs, the kanitribals face the possibility of losing this wealth of knowledge in the near future. The Kani tribal healers are rapidly dying of old age, and with them their traditions also. Documentation of this knowledge is valuable for the communities and their future generations and for scientific consideration of wider uses of traditional knowledge. Traditional medicines also have the potential to form the basis of pharmaceutical drugs for the treatment of a range of diseases. The wealth of this tribal knowledge of medicinal plants points to a great potential for research and the discovery of new drugs to fight diseases, obtaining foods and other uses.

Conclusion

The ethnic communities have their own pool of secret ethnomedicinal knowledge about the plants available in their surroundings which has been serving them with its superiority. They have a very good knowledge of the plant resources, based on generations of old experience. However, with the passage of time and development of technological medicine and health infrastructure, this knowledge is under serious threat. Peringammalagramapanchayth is inhabited by a group of ethnic/tribal people called kanikkar or kani tribes. They have a worthy traditional culture and way of living, and are a prominent group among the Scheduled tribes in Kerela. The study area selected for the present investigation was two important kani tribal settlements, viz; Njaraneeli and Elanjiyam in Peringammalagramapanchayat, NedumangaduTaluk, Thiriuvananthapuram District, Kerala State, India. Methods used to collect ethnomedicinal data included semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and walk-in-the-woods with local knowledgeable persons. Informants were stimulated to talk freely about their ethnomedicinal knowledge, and were asked to mention all the medicinal plants known or used.

The present investigation revealed that the Kani tribes of Njaraneeli and Elanjium settlements of Peringammalapanchayath were using a number of plants for curing various ailments. A total of 101 medicinal plants were documented. The most-cited family is Fabaceae and most of the plants documented were herbs. Most healers use plants that are easily accessible and available for the treatment of minor and common illnesses. They used these plants to cure diseases like gastrointestinal problems, gynecological problems, leucorrea, skin disorders, cold, fever, cough, headache, wounds, rheumatism, hair falling, snake poison, jaundice and urinary problems.

The present study has indicated that the current healers will probably be the final generation of traditional healers in the studied area. Traditional knowledge of plants in many tribal communities is changing because of rapid socioeconomic and cultural changes. This is particularly true in Kani tribal communities in PeringammalaPanchayath of Thiruvananthapuram district, of Kerala. The information gathered from the tribals is useful for further researchers in the field of taxonomy and pharmacology. Due to lack of interest among the younger generation of tribals as well as their tendency to migrate to cities for lucrative jobs, there is a possibility of losing this wealth of knowledge in the near future. The Kani tribal healers are rapidly dying of old age, and with them their traditions also. Documentation of this knowledge is valuable for the communities and their future

generations and for scientific consideration of wider uses of traditional knowledge. The wealth of this tribal knowledge of medicinal plants points to a great potential for research and the discovery of new drugs to fight diseases, obtaining foods and other uses. So, further scientific assessment of these medicines for phytochemical, biological and clinical studies is however greatly needed.

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