



Abortifacient Plants of Bahraich

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The present paper deals with the ethnobotanical accounts of seven plant species belonging to seven families of angiosperms. These plant species are used as abortifacient plants (to prevent pregnancy). The peculiar property was studied by personal interview, with tribal people residing in Nanpara Tehsil of district. The plant species were *Sapindus emarginatus* Vahl. of Sapindaceae, *Semecarpus anacardium* Linn. of Anacardiaceae, *Carica papaya* Linn. of Caracaceae, *Momordica Charantia* Linn. of Cucurbitaceae, *Thevetia purviana* Linn. of Apocyanaceae, *Calotropis gigantea* Linn. of Asclepiadaceae and *Cuscutta reflexa* Roxb. of Convolvulaceae.

Keywords: Abortifacient plant, Tribal people, Bahraich.

INTRODUCTION

Nature has blessed the Bahraich district and its Nanpara Tehsil (Motipur & Chafaria) with very rich botanical & Ethnobotanical wealth that has been exploited continuously by the tribals. Tribals are a distinct ethnic group living very close to forest and generally termed as Tharus and Banjara. They were referred as original settlers (Jain, 1987). The tribals cure various ailments by the use of plants found in these areas. Their knowledge of plants has descended from one generation to another as a domestic practice (Brahmam, 2000; Joshi, 2000). Tribals treat not only common ailments but certain significant disorders too and certain plants were used as abortifacient plants. The treatment given by them is found very effective.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Frequent tours were conducted throughout the year July 2004–April 2005 to the areas and the plants were collected with the help of tribal people. The information about local names and their abortifacient properties were gathered from such experienced people. The collected plants were identified with the help of Cooke (1908) and Singh *et al.* (2000). A questionnaire was prepared containing information about the tribal/Tharus of the area regarding their living style and source of

income along with educational background and style of disease treatment.

OBSERVATIONS

The personal interview with aforesaid people led following observations regarding seven plants which were selected for the study:

- 1. *Sapindus emarginatus* Vahl. (Sapindaceae).**
It is a medium sized to large deciduous tree. It is commonly known as Rithi. The fruit is sharp, hot. It is abortifacient. The *Pessasries* made of the kernel of seeds are used to stimulate the uterus in child birth and in amenorrhoea.
- 2. *Semecarpus anacardium* Linn. (Anacardiaceae).**
It is a moderate sized deciduous tree. Local name is Bhilava, Bhela. It is very commonly found in sal forest. It is prominent aurvedic medicine nut *bruised and applied* locally to procure abortion. It was also known through the resource personals that black caustic juice exudes from bark applied locally for procuring criminal abortion.
- 3. *Carica papaya* Linn. (Caricaceae).** A tree with spongy trunk & milky sap commonly known as Papita and it is cultivated in available open lands by the resource personal. The milky juice of this fruit is

collected by scarification of unripe fruits applied locally as an irritant, procure abortion. Latex is antipyretic and is used for ulcers, in abortion oral administration of powder of ripe fruits have also fertility activity.

- 4. *Mamordica charantia* Linn. (Cucurbitaceae).** Commonly known as Karella. It is very common vegetable of climbing and trailing herb nature. It is frequently cultivated in the area basically for the purpose of vegetable. The decoction of root are used for procuring the abortive systems.
- 5. *Thevatia purviana* Linn. (Apocynaceae).** It is commonly known as pili kaner. It is large evergreen shrub or small tree with bell shaped yellow flowers. The seeds are poisonous abortifacient & alternative.
- 6. *Calotropis gigantea* Linn. (Asclepiadaceae).** It is very commonly found as wild plant in grass lands & in waste places. The plant is erect shrub & locally referred as Madar. The milky juice is applied locally to procure the frequent abortion.
- 7. *Cuscuta reflexa* Roxb. (Convolvulaceae).** It is a leafless, yellow or greenish yellow, total stem parasite locally referred as Amarbel. The decoction of this plant is used as abortifacient.

CONCLUSION

For further study the above mentioned plants may be exploited for their active principles as indigenous, alternative and renewable source of natural abortifacient in contrast to several allopathic medicines which are hazardous for health.

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