

MEDICINAL PLANTS USED BY FOLK HEALERS OF AMPARA DISTRICT, SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

Traditional medicines have been used from our ancestors in healthcare. Folklore medicine of this country plays a vital role in treating many diseases. The native cultures and knowledge of plants and their use are fast jeopardizing. The present paper presents the results of an ethnobotany survey conducted in traditional knowledge in treating in health problem in Ampara district of Sri Lanka. The results show the traditional practitioners having their ancestors' knowledge to cure many diseases. There is vast knowledge of indigenous plants to maintain the health. The plant species are need for further modern scientific evaluation.

Keywords: traditional medicine; ancestors; healthcare; indigenous plants.

INTRODUCTION

Using of medicinal plants and indigenous practices for human health care is more popular nowadays in world including developing and developed countries. WHO has been recognized the role of traditional medical system and provided one of the strategic plane of health care system now. Globally about 85% of the traditional medicines used for primary health care derived from plants.^{1,2,3} This knowledge has been accumulated by folklore practitioners from many years. Over 7500 plant species are used by 4635 communities for human and veterinary healthcare. WHO has listed over 21,000 plant species used around the world for medicinal purposes.^{4,5} Nowadays plenty of modern medical systems are available, even though people

are still depending on the rich local health traditions for human health care.^{6,7} this precious knowledge when supplemented and validated which can offer new holistic models of sustainable knowledge. In Sri Lanka, traditional practices are still prevails among the rural areas. The traditional knowledge of medicinal plants of various communities, where it has been transmitted orally for centuries is fast disappearing from the face of the earth due to the advent of modern technology. The literature survey shows that a very much lack of ethnobotanical work has been done in Sri Lanka. Thus it is an urgent need to document the ethno-biological information presently existing among the diverse communities before the traditional knowledge are completely lost.^{8,9} Therefore the present study was planned to document the potable crude knowledge of folklore medicine practice for human health care by the rural people of Ampara district of Sri Lanka.

METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted in the rural area of six places of Ampara district namely: Tirukovil, Akkaraipattu, Pottuvil, Ampara, Komari and Panama. (Figure: 1) in Sri Lanka, between April 2012 and March 2013.

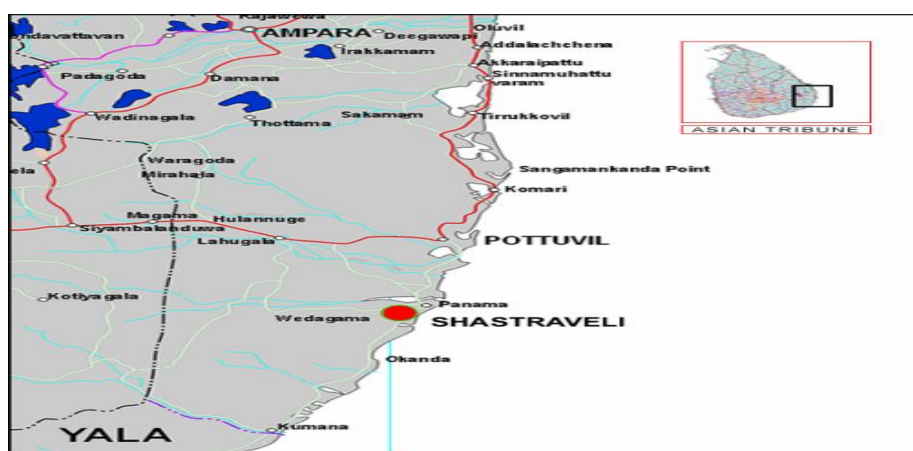


Figure: 1 Location map of study area

Local medicine men and traditional healers known as “*Vaithiyar*” and elderly people more than 60 years who knew well about the surrounding cultivated wild plants in forests were interviewed with number of visits. The survey was undertaken with the help of a systematic documentation, questionnaire and personal interviews.

The collected plants were identified by using standard floras.^{10,11} The plants were enumerated along with their botanical name, family, followed by with local name (Tamil) with ethno-medicinal uses.

The specimens and local names were collected and it was botanically identified with the help of herbarium of Botanical garden of Peradeniya, Kandy, Sri Lanka. Whenever necessary photographs were taken for correct identification.

RESULTS

In this survey majority of them are men have an average age was between 50-65 years, and have more than 25 years experience in using their local plants and explored plenty of knowledge about following folklore medicine practices in several diseases. The present study provided, information about 90 therapeutic uses were reported. Among the 90 plant species all are belonging to Angiospermic has documented. In this Angiospermic groups Solonaceae, Euphorbiaceae and Ceasalpiniaceae the dominant with 5 plant species, followed by Fabaceae with 4 plant species Malvaceae, Mimosaceae, Rutaceae, Liliaceae, Poaceae and Lamiaceae with 3 plant species, Acanthaceae, Zingiberaceae, Asteraceae, Asclepidaceae, Myristaceae and Combretaceae with 2 plant species. The rest of the families were reported only once. Some of the plants in the present study have been well recognized by Unani/Ayurveda systems. These recipes were presented through their botanical name, family, local name (bolded) and indigenous preparation and dosage in order.

Enumeration

Abrus precatorius, Fabaceae, **Gundumani** (Figure 2)

Folklore: Seeds 9g soaked in the raw cow milk for overnight and the seeds is given to women in the morning in empty stomach once a day for 15 days after delivery to cure stomach disorders. Using *Abrus precatorious* L red variety root decoction two spoonfuls is administered orally daily once before breakfast for 3 days for abortion in early months of pregnancy.

Abutilon indicum Linn, Malvaceae, **Vatta thutti**, (Figure 3).

Folklore: Leaves decoction ½ -1 cup mixed with onion paste 10 ml twice daily have to taken orally good for premature ejaculation. *Abutilon indicum* Linn especially the infusion of the root is prescribed for fevers as a cooling medicine. *Abutilon indicum* Linn root decoction mixed with little salt is good removal of gall stone. This plant leaves juice mixed with lime juice which is taken 1 table spoon orally daily for easy childbirth.

Acalypha indica Linn, Euphorbiaceae, **Kuppaimeni**

Folklore: Leaf paste with black pepper powder is made into tablets and each tablet is given thrice a day to cure cold and cough.

Acacia Arabica L, Mimosaceae, **Karuvelam**

Folklore: Fresh bark is crushed and 2gm is taken orally on the first menstrual day, 2.5gm is taken orally on the second menstrual day and 3gm is taken orally on the third day of menstruation in the treatment of menstrual pain. Seeds and bark powder mixed with honey applying twice daily for three days are very efficacious in bone fracture.

Acorus calamus Linn, Araceae, **Vasambu**

Folklore: Rhizome paste of rhizome along with betle leaves and salt applying on the forehead to cure head ache.

Aegele marmelos L, Rutaceae, **Vilvampalam**

Folklore: Fresh leaves are ground and made in the form of paste and one teaspoon of paste is mixed with one glass water taken daily in empty stomach for 7 days in ologomenorrhoea

Adathoda vesica Nees, Acanthaceae, **Adathodai**

Folklore: Dry powdered leaves mixed with honey twice a day is an excellent remedy in cough.

Albizia lebbek Benth, Mimosaceae, **Kattuvagai**

Folklore: Flowers juice applied on skin eruptions and swellings.

Allium sativum Linn, Liliaceae, **Poondu bulbs**

Folklore: Boiled in mustard oil is rubbed on head for baldness. *Allium sativum* Linn pulp 4-5 with cloves 2 are taken daily in meal. It is good remedy for flu, bronchitis and cold and it is a good remedy to use in controlling high blood pressure. *Allium sativum* Linn chopped mixed with salt and fig juice applied on warts. *Allium sativum* chopped and 2g ginger and black pepper 5g heat with ghee and powdered with 20ml of cow milk. This preparation 5-10 ml thrice daily good for bronchitis. *Allium sativum* 50g is lightly fried with mustard oil and is applied as a poultries on the affected joint (pain) of the body twice a day by traditional herbal healers.

Aloe vera, Liliaceae, **Kattalai**

Folklore: Juice mixed with turmeric powder is applied on breasts to cure swelling during early lactation and increase the milk secretion. Crushed leaf paste of *Aloe vera* is applied on burn injuries.

Andrographis paniculata Wall, Acanthaceae, **Nilavembu**

Folklore: Leaf decoction and mixed with bitter gourd juices is beneficial in diabetic. *Andrographis paniculata* leaf paste applying on the forehead for 2-3 hours to relieve continuous headache.

Ananas comosus Linn, Bromeliaceae, **Annasi**

Folklore: The crushed extract of tender shoot mixed with honey is given in asthma.

Aristolochia indica Linn, Aristolochiaceae, **Aduthinnappalai**

Folklore: Fresh leaves grounded applied externally against scorpion sting.

Argemone Mexicana, Papaveraceae, **Bramadandu**

Folklore: Stem juice is given orally in cold and cough.

Asparagus racemosus Willd, Liliaceae, **Sathawari**

Folklore: Dried powdered bark mix with cow milk 10-15 gram twice a day for one month will increase the milk secretion. Its dried root powder mixed with roasted corn powder and honey or milk to treat lactation failure.

Azadirachta indica, Meliaceae, **Vembu**

Folklore: Leaves are boiled with water and filtered. Adding pinch of water and gargle for hoarseness of voice.

Bambusa arundinaceae Retz, Poaceae, **Perumoongil**

Folklore: Shoots juice 10ml mixed with 5g ginger powder and 5g honey are mixed together and made pills. From this pill 4 daily taking good for phlegmatic cough. *Bambusa arundinaceae* leaves are ground with fresh turmeric to fine paste. This is mixed with honey and water and boiled. It is then filtered and cooled. Ten ml preparation is given every hour for epistaxis.

Bauhinia variegata Linn, Cesalpiniaceae, **Segappumandrai**

Folklore: 5ml fresh root bark decoction is taken twice a day continuously for one month in empty stomach for reducing cholesterol of the body.

Berberis aristata DC, Berberiaceae, **Maramanchal**

Folklore: Dry powdered leaves mixed with sugar useful in excessive urination. Dried root decoction is good for cuts to prevent infection.

Boerhaavia diffusa Linn, Nyctaginaceae, **Mugurattai**

Folklore: Leaf paste mixed with tanners cassia seeds and turmeric is very good to stop bleeding wound.

Boswellia serrata Roxb, Burseraceae, **Kungiliyam**

Folklore: Powdered resin is sprayed on burning charcoal and the smoke is inhaled to cure cold.

Carrica papaya, Caricaceae, **Pappasi**

Folklore: Latex mixed with grinded peacock flower seeds paste applying over the ring worm infected area daily 2-3 times for 3 days is beneficial. *Carica papaya* tender fruit paste with fresh latex is administered daily twice for 5 days to induce abortion in early pregnancy.

Cardiospermum halicacabum Linn, Sapindaceae, **Mudakkotthan**

Folklore: Whole plant paste is applied externally for swellings of joints and rheumatic pains.

Cassia occidentalis Linn, Caesalpinaceae, **Thagarai**

Folklore: Seeds and leaves paste used as externally in mouth and skin ulcers.

Cassia auriculata, Cesalpiniaceae, **Avarai**

Folklore: Roots and stem bark of margosa are taken in equal quantities and ground. Two spoonfuls of paste mixed in a glass of milk is administered daily once for 5 days to cure leucorrhoea.

Centrella asiatica L, Apiaceae, **Vallarai**

Folklore: Leaves powder, mixed with honey and puncture vine 10gram twice a day for 3 months along with ghee is good for spermatorrhoea. Leaves are grounded along with fresh turmeric and applied against skin diseases. Leaves of *Centrella asiatica* L and tender leaf

buds of guajava paste applied over infected abscess area and wrapped with banana leaf over night is beneficial.

Cicer arietinum, Fabaceae, **Kodrakkadalai**

Folklore: Powder mixed with bitter gourd juice applied in scabies as a cleansing agent.

Cinamomum zeylanicum Blume, Lauraceae, **Karuwappattai**

Folklore: Two gram coconut tender leaves ground along with water daily 2 teaspoon taking with milk is good for dysmenorrhoea.

Citrus limon, Rutaceae, **Thesikkai**

Folklore: Peels mixed with papaya latex is applied on corns.

Clerodendrum colebrookiamum Walp, Verbenaceae, **Thakarai**

Folklore: Flower 3-4 with garlic 2-3 pieces wrapped in banana leaf are roasted in the fire and eaten in empty stomach good for high blood pressure.

Cleome viscosa Linn, Capparaceae, **Kattukkaduku**

Folklore: Seeds grounded with milk and taking 1-2 teaspoonfuls daily is good for high blood pressure.

Cocus nucifera, Arecaceae, **Thenkai**

Folklore: Oil mixed with turmeric powder is giving to the women who suffering from back pain immediately after birth.

Coccinia indica, Cucurbitaceae, **Kovvai** (Figure 4)

Folklore: Fresh juice of leaves and stem is given orally once a day for a week to relieve burning sensation during urination.

Curculigo orchidioides, Hypoxidaceae, **Nilappannai**

Folklore: Root juice mixed with one glass of cow's milk, is taken orally for backache and pain after delivery. *Curculigo orchidioides* G rhizome crushed with sesame oil and made into tablets of pea size and given for three days in case of leucorrhoea.

Curcuma longa Linn, Zingiberaceae, **Manchal**

Folklore: Rhizome is boiled and its extract mixed with lime juice given against asthma. *Curcuma longa rhizome* powder is mixed with salt and honey is applied on tonsils for tonsillitis.

Cynodon dactylon L, Poaceae, **Arugam Pul**

Folklore: Whole plant ground and made in the form of paste. 5 teaspoon paste is mixed with one glass of water and taken in the morning for 3 days in hypomenorrhoea.

Eclipta alba Linn, Asteraceae, **Karisalangani**

Folklore: Fried leaves are applied on immature boils to take out pus and quick healing.

Embllica officinalis Gaerth, Euphorbiaceae, **Nelli**

Folklore: Bark are finely cut into small pieces and boiled in water. The patient is allowed to drink the water till relief from piles.

Euphorbia neriifolia L, Euphorbiaceae, **Ilaikkalli**

Folklore: Stem bark ashes dried under shade and burnt is to be given orally in 12gram dose daily for 21 days, which make the women sterile (contraceptive).

Ferula asafetida, Apiaceae, **Perumkayam**

Folklore: Giving its powder 1 teaspoon daily for one week is good for for infectious diseases in new born baby fighting against the fever, and putting honey also beneficial. *Ferula asafetida* L latex 5gm mixed with breast milk and taken for stomache to relieve dysmenorrhoea.

Ficus benghalensis Linn, Moraceae, **Aalamarum**

Folklore: Bark infusion is used in diabetes and some genital diseases.

Ficus hispida Linn, Moraceae, **Attti**

Folklore: Latex five drops mixed in one tea spoon of honey and taken once daily in the morning in empty stomach for month in irregular menstruation.

Gloriosa superba, Liliaceae, **Karthikai poo**

Folklore: Paste is applied on pubic region to promote the labor pain (Figure 5).

Gossypium herbaceum Linn, Malvaceae, **Parutthi**

Folklore: Leaves juice mixed with rice flour, wheat flour, and milk prepare “kaliya” (semi solid form) 1 table spoon daily every morning after delivery to strengthen the body.

Gymnema sylvestre Retz, Asclepiadaceae, **Kurinja** (Figure 6)

Folklore: Leaf decoction 50ml is taken internally after food continuously to reduce the high sugar level. The people cooking curry called “Sundal” with this leaves and adding coconut, believing it reducing the high sugar level.

Hemidesmus indicus, Asclepiadaceae, **Nannari**

Folklore: Root paste 10g mixed with poison nut leaves paste is administered twice in continuously for seven days against eczema. B.N: *Hemidesmus indicus* paste of root is mixed with water or cow's milk and taken internally twice a day to relieve menorrhagia.

Hibiscus rosa sinensis L, Malvaceae, **Sevvarattai**

Folklore: Flower juice mixed with sugar candy is given in delayed puberty. *Hibiscus rosa sinensis* L are boiled in cow's milk and taken once daily for 3 days along with jiggery is beneficial in oligomenorrhoea.

Hyoscyamus niger L, Solanaceae, **Omam**

Folklore: Seed powder mixed with clove oil is applied on gums to cure toothache.

Hypericum perforatum L, Hypericaceae, **Vettai Pakku**

Folklore: Taking whole plant decoction ¼ cup morning and evening. It is good for peripheral neuropathy and nerve damage in injuries.

Kalanchoe pinnata Lam, Crassulaceae, **Malaikkalli**

Folklore: Leaves along with those of *Aloe vera* and bulbs of onion are taken in equal quantities and ground. Two spoonfuls of paste mixed with cheese is administered daily twice for 7 days for menorrhagia.

Lawsonia inermis Linn, Lythraceae, **Maruthonri**

Folklore: Seeds are powdered and mixed with ghee rolled into small pills are given twice a day for dysentery. Its shoots dried powder mixed with castor oil is used in leprosy.

Leucas aspera Spreng, Lamiaceae, **Thumbai**

Folklore: Leaf juice 4-5 drops mixed with onion juice dropped in each nostril to relieve headache.

Mangifera indica Linn, Anacardiaceae, **Ma Ilai**

Folklore: *Mangifera indica* and margosa leaves boiled in water and used for bathing for 7 days after delivery if women becomes very weak. It acts as a rejuvenator. Unripened *Mangifera indica* Linn 10-20 numbers boiled water gargling is good for sore throat.

Martynia annua Linn, Martyniaceae), **Pulinagam**

Folklore: Leaves juice is gargle to relieve sore throat.

Mentha arvensis L, Lamiaceae, **Pudina**

Folklore: Leaves powder mixed with curd is given to cure cough and sore throat.

Mimosa pudica L, Mimosaceae, **Thottalvaadi**

Folklore: Tender leaves are ground well and made into pill. Daily five pills ground with milk taking daily in empty stomach regulate the menses.

Mollugo cerviana L, Molluginaceae, **Parpadagam**

Folklore: Grounded leaf with goat milk and the mixture to relieve burning sensation of legs at the time of childbirth in women.

Moringa oleifera Lam, Moringaceae, **Murungai**

Folklore: Leaves expressed juice 10ml is taken against menstrual pain.

Murraya paniculata L, Rutaceae, **Elimuchumpallam**

Folklore: 1g root paste mixed with 2ml lime water and 2ml of honey is given to children twice a day for 3 days against viral fever

Murraya koenigii, Rutacea, **Karuveppillai**

Folklore: Mixed with lime juice and curd is applied on itchy skin area. *Murraya koenigii* dried leaves powder mixed with margosa leaves dried powder mixed with latex of banyan tree is applied on the patches of psoriasis.

Musa paradisiaca, Musaceae, **Valaippalam**

Folklore: Mashed mixed with roasted chick pea powder 2g two times a day will give very excellent result in loose motion. As a diet if take rice with curd, salt without sugar should be

used. *Musa paradisiaca* ripened fruits are cooked in stem and taken during menstruation for strengthen.

Myristica fragrans Houtt, Myristicaceae, **Sathikkai**

Folklore: *Myristica fragrans* and black seeds make powder orally 1 teaspoon with honey before meal is beneficial for gastritis.

Nardostachys grandiflora, Valerinaceae, **Jatamansi**

Folklore: Dried root is purified and leaf powder is taken 1 teaspoon twice a day early in morning in empty stomach and at night after meal for one as aphrodisiac.

Nicotiana tabacum, Solonacea , **Pukai ilai**

Folklore: Leaves burnt powder mixed with barley burnt powder mixed with olive oil and to make a paste that treat the swelling and redness of a spider sting.

Nymphaea lotus, Nymphaceae, **Thamarai**

Folklore: Whole plant mix with paste of holy basil leaves, put in a banana and given to women for conception. Flower is dried over the fire and grinded to make powder. This applied in diseased area (piles) for 6-7 weeks.

Ocimum sanctum, Lamiaceae, **Thulasi**

Folklore: Juice of leaves with salt can given for cough. In case of children, they are not adding salt instead of that, they are giving honey for three days. *Ocimum sanctum* leaves paste mixed with lime juice curded milk and mustard oil is beneficial in ring worm.

Oryza sativa L, Poaceae, **Arisi**

Folklore: Cooked rice is seasoned with mustard and taken during 1st menstrual cycle.

Oxalis corniculata Linn, Oxalidaceae, **Puliyarai**

Folklore: Leaves juice instilled 2-3 dropd in case of earache.

Plumbago zeylanica, Plumbaginaceae, **Sithiramoolam**

Folklore: Fresh root 10g boiled in 5 ml of mustard oil and slowly massaged for half an hour on body for 15 days good for leucorrhoea. *Plumbago zeylanica* dried bark and drumstick seeds are powdered mixed in equal proportion. A spoonful of this powder is taken once in a day with water for cough and cold.

Piper betel, Piperaceae, **Vettrilai**

Folklore: Roasted with ghee and smeared on boil, after a few days of application boil ruptures and draining all the purulent matter. *Piper betel* leaves smeared with mustard oil are warmed and kept on chest to alleviate cough and to cure breathing problem.

Phyllanthus niruri Hook, Euphorbiaceae, **Keelkainelli**

Folklore: Whole plant is ground well and made in the form of paste. The paste is mixed in 20ml of curd and taken once daily for 3 days good for irregular menstruation. *Phyllanthus niruri* root paste is taken with filtrate of boiled rice to regulate menstruation in case of amenorrhoea also.

Psidium guajava Linn, Myrtaceae, **Koyya**

Folklore: Leaves juice 2-3 teaspoon taking daily orally for one month good for diabetics.

Pueraria tuberosa Roxb, Fabaceae, **Nilapoosani/ Karikkumad**

Folklore: 15gm of sun dried tender shoot powder is mixed with cow's milk and taken orally in empty stomach twice a day as aphrodisiac.

Ricinus communis, Euphorbiaceae, **Amanakku**

Folklore: Oil 1-2 tea spoon twice a day in empty stomach, induce the abortion, but it is beneficial if the pregnancy is within 3 months. One to two tablespoons of oil are taken before bed time, is good remedy for chronic constipation. It is also used externally for tumors of all kinds. *Ricinus communis* L warm leaves are applied on hypogastric region to relieve menstrual pain.

Rosa damascena Mill, Rosaceae, **Rosa**

Folklore: Along with saliva is applied early in the morning to reduce reddening infection on the eye.

Saraca indica Roxb, Caesalpiniaceae, **Asokam** (Figure 7)

Folklore: Leaves fresh tender leaves are crushed and 5ml of expressed juice is mixed with honey taken twice daily for 7 days to regulate the menstruation.

Sesamum indicum L, Pedaliaceae, **Ellu**

Folklore: Seeds powdered and mixed with egg well and taken orally for hypomenorrhoea. *Sesamum indicum* mixture of half grounded seeds mix with ghee is taken with milk to relieve amenorrhoea.

Solonom indicum, Solonoceae, **Kandankattari**

Folklore: Mixed with little amount of black pepper seed powder prescribed three times a day in irregular menstruation. Roots and seeds are crushed together and the paste is applied on gum to allay tooth-ache.

Solonom tuberosum L, Solonoceae, **Orulaikkilangu**

Folklore: Tuber paste mixed with curd and *Tamarindus indica* leaves juice applied on burns and loosely wrapped with woolen cloth.

Syzygium cumini, Nyrtaceae, **Navat Palam** (Figure 8)

Folklore: Seeds powdered with water and mixed with mint leaves and sandalwood powder is very good for acne.

Tamarindus indica, Caesalpiaceae, **Palappuli** (Figure 9)

Folklore: Leaves boil with milk and kept in cotton and tied on the bone dislocated part, for one week and every alternative day, for bone fracture. Curd mixed with *Tamarindus indica* leaves juice for 3-4 days is beneficial for weakness of the body. *Tamarindus indica* root bark is ground with cow's milk and taken with rice in the form of porridge and taken daily to start menstrual cycle. *Tamarindus indicua* tender leaves grind with cured given twice daily to normal attack of paralysis. Leaves of tamarind mix with acidic oil and mix well and boiled with sheep milk together with little water and tied with cotton cloth on the bone dislocated part and kept for 3-4 days.

Terminalia arjuna Roxb, Combretaceae, **Marutha maram**

Folklore: Bark powder with ghee or milk is given twice daily for 15 days to heart diseases.

Terminalia chebula, Combretaceae, **Kadukkai**

Folklore: Dried fruit burnt powder mixed with honey is applied on boils. This mixture mixed with cashew nuts is applied for suppurated boils.

Tinospora cordifolia, Menispermaceae, **Cinthal kodi** (Figure 10)

Folklore: Seeds powder 10-20g is taken orally with water daily good for diabetes.

Trigonella foenum graceum L, Fabaceae, **Uluvarisi**

Folklore: Seeds are boiled in water and taken as a drink for menstrual pain.

Vernonia cinerea Less (Asteraceae) **Mukuttipundu** (Figure 11)

Folklore: Plant juice good for amoebiasis and flowers juice washed to cure conjunctivitis.

Zingiber officinale, Zingiberaceae, **Ingii**

Folklore: Cooked milk for three days for fever after delivery. This is commonly using medicine in rural area of Ampara district. *Zingiber officinale* paste with equal amount of honey is heated on a low flame. One teaspoonful with luke warm water daily is good for bronchitis. Half a teaspoon ginger powder with a quarter spoon of black pepper powder is boiled with 100ml water for few minutes. It is then cooled and filtered. The filtered is consumed during a day after adding a spoonful honey for bronchitis.

Ziziphus mauritiana Lam, Rhamnaceae, **Elanthai**

Folklore: Root and bark decoction is useful in the treatment of diarrhea.

Figure: 2 *Abrus precatorius*Figure: 3 *Abutilon indicum*Figure: 4 *Coccinia indica*Figure:5 *Gloriosa superba*Figure:6 *Gymnema sylvestre*Figure: 7 *Saraca indica*Figure: 8 *Sygium cumini*Figure: 9 *Tamarindus indicus*Figure: 10 *Tinospora cordifolia*



Figure:11 *Vernionia cinerea*

DISCUSSION

This precious attempt has been made to collect information regarding traditional knowledge of herbal medicine which is being used by folk healers of Ampara district, Sri Lanka. A total of 90 plant species with 53 families have been discussed in this paper.

The selected area folk healers are efficient herbalist, and know ethnobotanical importance of many herbal medicines. These results were compared with available literature in different regions of India and Sri Lanka on medicinal plants^{12,13} and it was showed that many of the uses listed are not recorded earlier. The data which were collected can serve as useful markers for the development of herbal drug industries to improve the rural economy of this district.

Most villages of Ampara district, five or six elders who were familiar with this folk medicine. They practiced mainly by persons over 50 years with their long experience, are ability to treating different ailments. They were using their, medicines in various form of 'lehiyam' (confection), 'kasayam' (decoction), 'kudineer' (infusion), 'choornam' (powder) or 'pattu' (poultice) and these medicines are given orally or by external application. These people have strong faith in folkmedicine and are well versed with the utilization of plants of their surroundings through trial and error methods. These people are immemorial without knowledge their effective constituents.¹⁴ While treating most of the instances adding milk, honey or ghee was added in more preparations. This type of suggested way of taking the herbal medicines might be to enhance the efficacy of herbal remedies or to make the preparations palatable when taken orally.

Folkhealers of Ampara district, practiced this system is an autonomous, which efficiently and effectively manages the primary health care of these people; but its full potential is still not utilized scientifically.

Therefore scientific assessment of these medicines on phytochemistry, biological activity and clinical studies are necessary.

CONCLUSION

In developing countries like Sri Lanka, the indigenous system of medicine together with folklore medicine continues to play a vital role in the primary health care system. The present study revealed 90 plant species belonging to 53 families used by the folkhealers of Ampara district, Sri Lanka for various ailments. The traditional knowledge documented in the present communication will help in preparation of strategic plan for the development of medicinal plant drug industry. The aforementioned folk medicine prescriptions are practiced in day to day life and their indications along with modern system show preference for folk medicine. Therefore current study may thus prove to be of great use to the researches and people who interested in herbal medicine. Thus, pharmacological study is necessary to validate the ethnomedical claims on these plants.

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