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Herbal Ethnomedicine Used for Skin Disease as in Tribals of Jharkhand, India

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Abstract:

Herbal ethnomedicine is a crucial aspect of traditional healthcare among the tribal communities of Jharkhand, India. These communities possess extensive knowledge of medicinal plants, which they use to treat various skin diseases. This study aims to document and analyze the ethnomedicinal practices related to skin ailments among the tribals of Jharkhand. Through field surveys and interviews with local healers, several plant species used in the treatment of skin diseases were identified. The findings reveal that plants such as Aloe vera, Azadirachtaindica (Neem), and Curcuma longa (Turmeric) are commonly used for their antifungal, antibacterial, and anti-inflammatory properties. The study highlights the significance of preserving traditional knowledge and integrating it with modern medicine to develop effective treatments for skin diseases.

Keywords: *Herbal Ethnomedicine, Skin Diseases, Tribal Communities, Jharkhand, Medicinal Plants, Traditional Knowledge, Antifungal, Antibacterial, Anti-Inflammatory.*

Introduction:

Jharkhand, a state in eastern India, is renowned for its rich cultural heritage and diverse tribal communities. These communities have traditionally relied on herbal ethnomedicine, a practice that involves using plant-based remedies for health issues, including skin diseases. The use of herbal remedies is deeply embedded in their culture and has been passed down through generations. Herbal ethnomedicine plays a crucial role in the healthcare system of tribal communities in Jharkhand. These communities often live in remote areas with limited access to modern medical facilities. As a result, they depend on locally available plants and traditional knowledge for treating various ailments. Skin diseases, in particular, are commonly addressed using herbal remedies due to their prevalence and the effectiveness of plant-based treatments. Skin diseases such as eczema, psoriasis, fungal infections, dermatitis, and wounds are frequently treated using herbal ethnomedicine. The remedies typically involve the use of leaves, roots, bark, and other parts of medicinal plants. The preparation methods can include decoctions, pastes, poultices, and infusions. Ethnobotanical studies are essential for documenting and preserving the traditional knowledge of herbal medicine among tribal communities (Verma, N., & Singh, D. 2008; Lal, B., & Singh, A. 2010; Kumar, S., & Sharma, A. 2011; Singh, H., &Pandey, V. N. 2012; Mishra, M. K., & Mishra, A. 2014).These studies not only help in understanding the diversity and efficacy of medicinal plants but also contribute to the conservation of biodiversity and cultural heritage. While herbal ethnomedicine offers significant benefits, it faces challenges

such as the erosion of traditional knowledge, overharvesting of medicinal plants, and a lack of scientific validation. Efforts are needed to document traditional practices, promote sustainable harvesting, and conduct scientific research to validate and standardize herbal remedies.

Materials and methods:

The study was conducted in the tribal regions of Jharkhand, India. Jharkhand is known for its rich biodiversity and a significant population of indigenous tribes who rely on traditional herbal medicine for various health issues, including skin diseases. Informants were selected based on their knowledge and experience in traditional herbal medicine. These included traditional healers, elderly individuals, and local practitioners who have been using herbal remedies for generations. A total of 60 informants from different tribal communities were interviewed.

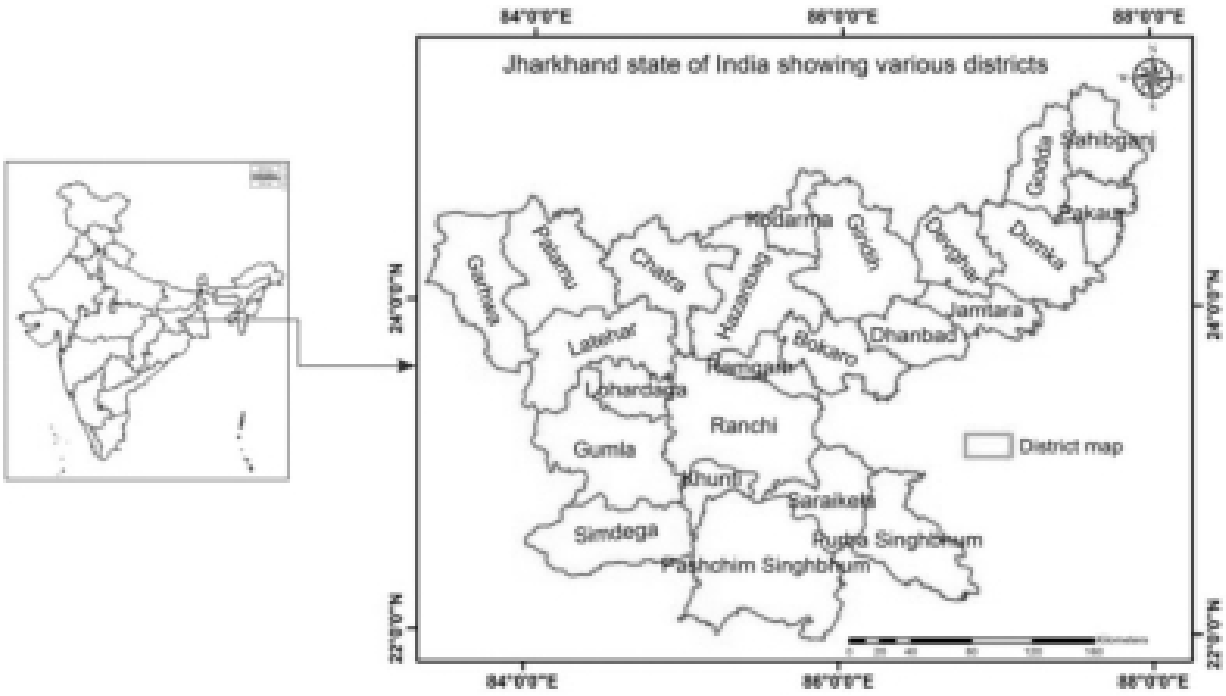

Fig. 1. Map showing study state Jharkhand, India

(Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Study-area-Jharkhand-state-of-India)

Data Collection:

Data was collected through:

1. **Semi-structured Interviews:** These were conducted in the local language to ensure effective communication. Questions focused on the types of plants used, parts of plants used, methods of preparation, and application methods for skin diseases.

2. **Field Visits:** Accompanied by informants, field visits were conducted to identify and collect plant specimens used in the treatments.

3. **Direct Observations:** Observed the preparation and application of herbal remedies.

Plant Identification:

Collected plant specimens were identified with the help of local botanists and cross-referenced with existing literature on medicinal plants of Jharkhand. Specimens were also preserved and deposited in a local herbarium for future reference.

Results and discussion:

Jharkhand, a state in eastern India, is home to numerous tribal communities with a rich tradition of using herbal medicines. These communities have developed unique ethnomedical practices, particularly for treating skin diseases, which are prevalent due to the tropical climate and living conditions.

Commonly Used Herbs and Their Applications:

1. **Neem (*Azadirachtaindica*)**

   - **Usage**: Neem leaves, bark, and oil are widely used for treating a variety of skin conditions including eczema, psoriasis, and fungal infections.
   - **Application**: Neem paste made from crushed leaves is applied directly to the affected area. Neem oil is also used for its antibacterial and antifungal properties.

   This finding corroborates with the records ofBiswas et al. (2002).

2. **Turmeric *(Curcuma longa*)**

   - **Usage**: Known for its anti-inflammatory and antiseptic properties, turmeric is used for treating wounds, acne, and other inflammatory skin conditions.
   - **Application**: A paste made from turmeric powder and water is applied to the skin. Sometimes, it is mixed with other ingredients like neem for enhanced effect.

   Aggarwalet al. (2007)also reported the same in their research paper.

3. **Aloe Vera (*Aloe barbadensis*)**

   - **Usage**: Aloe vera gel is commonly used for its soothing, anti-inflammatory, and moisturizing properties.
   - **Application**: Fresh gel extracted from the aloe vera leaves is applied directly to burns, cuts, and other skin irritations.

   This finding is similar with Surjushe et al. (2008).

4. **Basil (*Ocimum sanctum*)**

   - **Usage**: Also known as Tulsi, basil leaves are used for their antibacterial and antifungal properties.
   - **Application**: Basil leaves are crushed to extract juice, which is then applied to the skin. It is particularly effective against ringworm and other fungal infections.

   Mondal et al. (2009) also explained the antimicrobial efficiency of essential oils from basils against various pathogens.

5. **Holy Basil (*Ocimumtenuiflorum*)**

- **Usage**: Holy Basil is used for treating acne, eczema, and other inflammatory skin conditions due to its antimicrobial properties.
- **Application**: Leaves are made into a paste or juice and applied to the skin.

The utilization of these herbs by the tribal communities of Jharkhand highlights the importance of traditional knowledge in healthcare. These ethnomedicinal practices are not only effective but also sustainable and cost-efficient. However, there is a need for scientific validation and standardization of these herbal remedies to ensure their efficacy and safety.

The documentation and preservation of this traditional knowledge are crucial for developing new treatments for skin diseases. Collaborations between ethnobotanists, pharmacologists, and the local tribal communities can facilitate the discovery of novel compounds and therapeutic approaches.

Conclusion:

The practice of herbal ethnomedicine among the tribal communities of Jharkhand represents a valuable aspect of their cultural heritage and healthcare system. By understanding and preserving this traditional knowledge, there is potential to enhance healthcare for these communities and contribute to the broader field of natural medicine. The herbal remedies used by the tribal communities in Jharkhand for treating skin diseases reflect a deep understanding of the medicinal properties of local flora. By integrating traditional knowledge with modern scientific research, there is potential to develop effective treatments for various skin conditions, benefiting not only the tribal communities but also the broader population.

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