Appendix III

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SOME MEDICINAL PLANTS FROM DARRANG DISTRICT
OF ASSAM, INDIA

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Assam is located in the North Eastern part of the Indian Union. She and her surrounding territories are well-known for many medicinal plants.¹ The raw drugs prepared therefrom have been a source of perennial attraction to the medical practitioners from time immemorial and the region as a whole may be treated as an area for exploration of indigenous system of medicine in general and that of Ayurveda in particular.²

Assam is recognised from olden days for its saints, tantriks, mantriks and witch-craft. Some prevalent beliefs and sayings give reference to some plants of medicinal and allied values. Further therein it is also indicated that a lot of plants with high medicinal values are grown in the land and also reared by the nature in this region. Many tribal people, Ojhas, Beza, local Kavirajas etc. have been using medicinal plants for curing ailments and tackling the problem of Birth control.³,⁴,⁵,⁶,⁷
The district is a part of Assam lies between 26°12' and 27°08' North latitudes and 91°12' and 93°47' E longitudes. The district covered a total area of 8,7202 sq. kms.

The climate of this district is characterised by the absence of a dry hot summer season and a highly humid atmosphere throughout the year. The average annual rainfall in the district is 2,181.7 mm. June is generally the rainiest month. Fogs occur during the postmonsoon and winter seasons. January is the coldest month of the year. The highest mean daily values of temperatures are in July and August. The air is highly humid throughout the year, except during the period February to April. Winds are light throughout the year. North-easterly winds are most common throughout the year.

The general characteristic of the soil of the district is acidic and is more so in the older alluvial soil. New alluvial soils representing the lands of the river banks are less acidic. These are often neutral and even alkaline. The content of available $K_2O$ is low in some soils and moderate in others, but that of $P_2O_5$ is very high. Nitrogen content is also high.

Jute, Paddy, Tea, Sugarcane, Pulses and Mustard are the major crops and Tobacco, Potato, Vegetables and fruits like Mangoes, Oranges, Banana, Coconuts, Pineapples etc. are the crops of the district. Jute is grown on the low lying areas on the bank of the mighty Brahmaputra. Arecanut is also grown in the district.
There are altogether Eighteen Reserved Forests under the Darrang Forest Division and of these twelve fall within Darrang district. The forest of this district divided into following types - Evergreen and semi-evergreen forests, Mixed deciduous forests, Sal forests, Riverine forests, Savannah forests, Cane and Bamboo forests. Botanically the forests of the district are rich and full of herbs, shrubs and grasses.

Authors while they were on ethnobotanical study tours to Darrang district noted some medicinal plants from Ayurvedic points of view and also studied their other economic values and potentialities.

List of Medicinal Plants and their Uses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Botanical name</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Local name</th>
<th>Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Acalypha indica L.</td>
<td>Euphorbiaceae</td>
<td>Muktaborsa</td>
<td>About 10-15 leaves of the plant are taken and boiled with water (one glass). Then the cold juice/extract is given to a Asthmatic patient three times daily (one glass each) till cured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Achyranthes aspera L.</td>
<td>Amaranthacea</td>
<td>Bonsoth</td>
<td>Local teagarden labour used plant ash as a dyeing material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Barringtonia</td>
<td>Lecythidaceae</td>
<td>Hiddal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
type of vaginal diseases. (no details available)

The wood is used for boat-building.

4. **Alstonia scholaris** R.Br. Apocynaceae Chhation

Some pieces of the fresh bark are kept in water for over night. Glassful of such water may be taken orally 2-3 times daily for some days in case of Malaria.

Wood is used for tea-chest, packing box etc.

5. **Butea frondosa** Roxb. Fabaceae Palas

The alkali prepared from the ashes of this tree is used for abdominal colic. One gm of this powder is taken with milk or water twice a day for three days to get relief. (Used by Miris - a local plain tribes).

Leaves are used as fodder and are also used in worshipping Hindu Gods. Dried fls. are used as a dyeing material.

6. **Cassia sophera** Linn. Fabaceae Medelua

After squeezing some leaves, the juice is applied on the skin affected by ringworm.

7. **Calotropis gigantea** R.Br. Asclepiadaceae Akon

Bodos and Kacharis (two tribes of Assam) regarded the plant as sacred and various offerings are made at the base of the plant. Fls. are used in making garland.

Leaves juice is used both external and internals to prevent haemorrhage. A favourite lawn grass and fodder. It is also used in Hindu pujas.

9. *Centella asiatica* Linn. Umbelliferae Manimuni

It is used as vegetable by local people. Lvs. used by local Kavirajas specially for dysentery, diarrhoea etc.

10. *Ficus religiosa* Linn. Urticaceae Ahot

It is regarded as a sacred plant and planted near the temples.

11. *Leonurus sibiricus* L. Lamiaceae Rangadoronphul

Fls. are used in Hindu Pujas.

12. *Leucas linifolia* Spreng. Lamiaceae Doron

Young plant used as vegetables and the juice of the plant is inhaled as medicine for sinusits. Fls. are used in Hindu Pujas.

13. *Melia azedarach* L. Meliaceae Mahanimu

It is said that the scent of plant cannot be tolerated by the snakes. Young leaves are eaten by the Boros (a tribe of Assam).


Some dried leaves are grinded and make powders and
mixed with little water and given to the patient to drink for 3 days (twice daily) for indigestion.

Leaves juice are used as curry by the local people.

15. **Nyctanthes arbor-tristis** L. Olaceae Sewali

Dried FIs. are consumed as vegetables, planted as an ornamental plants. FIs. are used in Hindu Pujas specially Durga.

16. **Ocimum sanctum** L. Lamiaceae Tulosi

It is regarded as a sacred plant. The juice of leaves with honey is used in cough and cold.

17. **Ricinus communis** L. Euphorbiaceae Era

The fibre for famous Endi silk of Assam is obtained from the worms reared in the leaves of this plant.

18. **Solanum indicum** L. Solanaceae Tidhaghuri

Fruit is given to children for killing worms. Fruit are also edible.

19. **Solanum nigrum** L. Solanaceae Pichkati

Fruit is used as a medicine for worms. (No further details available).

20. **Vitex negundo** L. Verbenaceae Posotia

It is used as hedge by local people and the juice of young twigs (3-4) is used with the juice of rhizomes of **Polygonum decorum** for rheumatism. (This curry is taken once a day).
Authors while concluding the paper reveal that the district is a potential source for collection of many medicinal plants which have other economic values also known and or unknown.

Authors are grateful to the people of Darrang District for their kind help during the collection of medicinal plants. Mr. A. Bora and A.M. Dutta also deserve appreciation for help at their level.

References:


5. Gogoi, P., Boissya, S. and Boissya, C.L.: A Few Ethnogynaecological Records from the State of Assam, India, Presented the paper in the International Conference on Traditional Asian Medicine at Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

