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ETHNOMEDICINAL PLANTS USED BY THE VALAIYAN COMMUNITY OF
PIRANMALAI HILLS (RESERVED FOREST), TAMILNADU, INDIA. - A PILOT STUDY.

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Abstract

Herbal medicine is widely practiced from ancient period throughout the world. These medicines are safe and environment friendly. According to WHO about 80% of the world's population relies on traditional medicine for their primary health care. India, being one of the world's 12 mega biodiversity countries, enjoys export of herbal raw material worth of U.S. \$100-114 million per year approximately. Currently the Government of India, realizing the value of the country's vast range of medicinal plants, has embarked on a mission of documenting the traditional knowledge about medicinal plants and herbs. This investigation, in a small way, takes up the enumeration of plants with medicinal value, which are used by the *Valaiyans*, an ethnic group, residing in and around Piranmalai Hills, Tamilnadu, South India. This report elucidates a rich and unique profile of phytodiversity of the area surveyed, with 63 species of medicinal plants belonging to 59 genera and 38 families.

Key words: Traditional knowledge, Herbal medicines, Phytodiversity

Introduction

Mankind has been continuously using the plants in one or the other way in the treatment of various ailments. In India, the sacred Vedas dating back between 3500 B.C and 800 B.C give many references of medicinal plants. One of the remotest works in traditional herbal medicine is "Virikshayurveda", compiled even before the beginning of Christian era and formed the basis of medicinal studies in ancient India. The Rig Veda, dating between 3500 B.C. to 1800 B.C., seems to be the earliest record available on medicinal plants¹. Herbs seem to be very important component of medicine in other cultures too; Greek, African and Chinese medicines, to mention a few.

Nearly 80% of the world population depends upon traditional system of health care. Allopathic drugs have brought a revolution throughout the world but the plant base medicines have its own status. Surveys had revealed that 50% of the top prescription drugs in the USA are based on natural products and the raw materials are locked up in the tropical world –interiors of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The local uses of plants as a cure are common particularly in those areas, which have little or no access to modern health services² such as the innumerable villages and hamlets in India.

The indigenous traditional knowledge of medicinal plants of various ethnic 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 and transformation of traditional culture. The collection of information about natural flora, classification, management and use of plants by the people holds importance among the ethno botanists. The local people and researchers face the challenging task of not only documenting knowledge on plants, but also applying the results of their studies to biodiversity conservation and community development³

With a deep concern and reverence for the vast diversity of flora that our country enjoys, and with sense of realization about the invaluable therapeutic properties of this phytodiversity, the current research is undertaken. This work concentrates on ethno medicinal value of plants and herbs commonly used by the Valaiyan Community of the area surveyed.

The study area concentrates in and around the Piranmalai hills which comes under Reserved forest, located between Madurai and Siva Ganga Districts, Tamil Nadu, South India. The area lies approximately with in 77°81' - 78° 2E longitude and 9°5' - 10°5 N latitude, the elevation of the area ranges from 1000' to 2000'. It has a good content of red and loamy soil; in higher elevation the soil is rocky with small to big boulders. The temperature ranges from 18°C during winter and about 25°C to 30°C in summer. The mean of annual rainfall recorded in the study site in 1000mm of which the highest rainfall is during October to December, while March - May are the driest months⁴.

Methodology

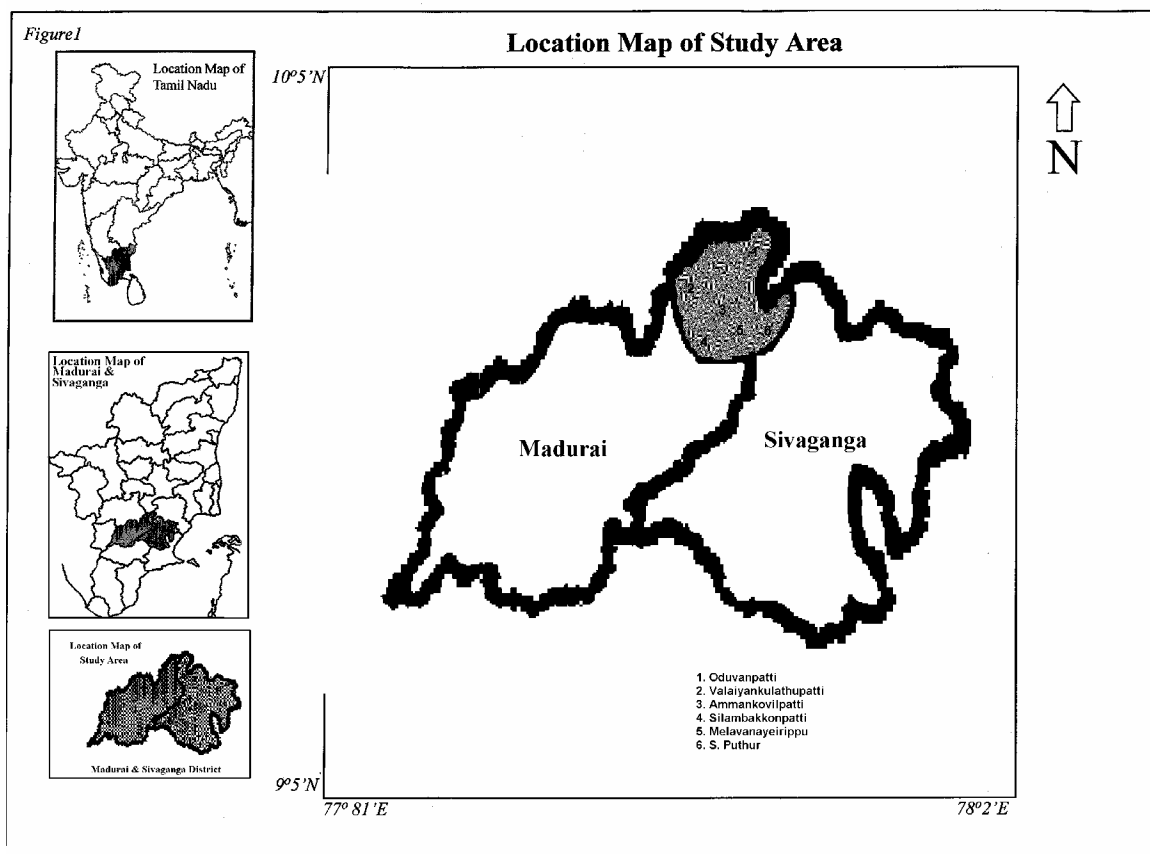
Following the method of Jain and Goel (1995), the information regarding the usage of medicinal plants available in the local area for treating various ailments and diseases, was collected by directly contacting the elders, herbal doctors and the persons who have knowledge about these medicinal plants in the Valaiyan community inhabiting the hamlets, Oduvanpatti, Valaiyankulathupatti, Ammankovilpatti, Silambkkonpatti, Melavanayeirippu, S Puthur, which are situated around the Piranmalai Hills. Regular visits to the above mentioned places were made from June 2004 to February 2005. The plant material was collected and carefully handled for identification by authenticated source .

Most of the plant materials were preserved by making herbaria and all the specimen vouchers were carefully numbered and deposited. The medicinal value of each plant was enumerated in the following pattern: a) Binomial, b) Family, c) Vernacular Name, d) Parts used and e) Ethnomedicinal uses.

The identification of plants was done using the following references.

1. The flora of Tamil Nadu Carnatic by K.M. Mathew (1981,82).

2. Flora of Tamil Nadu, India series I, Vol .I by N.C Nair and A.N. Henry (1983).
3. Flora of Tamil Nadu, India, Series-I Vol II by Henry et al., (1987).
4. Flora of Tamil Nadu, India Series – I Vol III by Henry et al., (1989).



Results

The data on medicinal plants, which was collected from inhabitants in and around piranmalai hills, were pooled and analysed. The investigation revealed the medicinal plants of 63 species and 59 genera belonging to 38 families, which are commonly used for various ailments by Valaiyans of the area surveyed. The enumeration and utilization of these plants are described Table 1 below.

Table 1: Enumeration and utilization of plants

1	Binomial	<i>Acalypha fruticosa</i> . Forssk .
	Family	Euphorbiaceae
	Vernacular Name	Sinni
	Parts Used	Leaves
	Ethnomedicinal Uses	<i>For stomach pain & Dysentery: The leaf paste mixed with salt and taken internally relieves stomach pain. Leaf decoction relieves Dysentery.</i>
2	Binomial	<i>Acalypha indica</i> L . Sp. Pl.
	Family	Euphorbiaceae
	Vernacular Name	Kuppaimeni
	Parts Used	Leaves
	Ethnomedicinal Uses	<i>For joint pains and Eczema: Handful of leaves along with small amount of salt, made in to a paste, applied externally for joint pain and eczema.</i>
3	Binomial	<i>Aerva lanata</i> (L.) Juss .
	Family	Amaranthaceae
	Vernacular Name	Kannupoolai or Kooraipoo
	Parts Used	Leaves
	Ethnomedicinal Uses	<i>Cobra bite: Leaf juice is applied externally on bitten area.</i>
4	Binomial	<i>Albizia amara</i> (Roxb.) Boivin
	Family	Mimosaceae
	Vernacular Name	Usilai
	Parts Used	Leaves
	Ethnomedicinal Uses	<i>For Dandruff: Leaves dried in shade and powdered are applied on the scalp.</i>
5	Binomial	<i>Allmania nodiflora</i> (L.) R. Br. ex. Wight
	Family	Amaranthaceae

- Vernacular Name** Mannukeerai
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *For Stomach upset: Leaves salad for cooling effect for stomach upset.*
- 6 **Binomial** *Anisomeles malabarica (L.) R . Br.*
Alangium salvifolium (L. f) Wang.
Family Lamiaceae
Alangiaceae
Vernacular Name Peythumbai
Alangi
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Chronic wounds: Mixture of the above two plant leaves made in to paste and applied externally.*
- 7 **Binomial** *Aristolochia bracteolate Lam.*
Family Aristolochiaceae
Vernacular Name Aaduthinnapalai
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Dandruff and Fungal infection: Leaf paste applied over the scalp to relieve Dandruff and fungal infection*
- 8 **Binomial** *Azadirachta indica A. Juss in Mem . Mus . Natl . Hist .*
Curcuma domestica . Valetton in Bull . Jard . Bot .
Family Meliaceae
Zingiberaceae
Vernacular Name Vaambu
Manjal
Parts Used Leaves
Rhizome
Ethnomedicinal Uses *For Chicken pox: small amount of the above two parts made in to paste , applied externally for Chicken pox.*
- 9 **Binomial** *Blepharis maderaspatensis (L.) Heyne . Ex . Roth . Nov . Pl . Sp.*
Family Acanthaceae
Vernacular Name Vaychivettuthalai
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Cuts/Wounds: Handful of leaves, mixed with Onion Bulb, made in to paste and applied externally for Cuts.*
- 10 **Binomial** *Borassus flabellifer L . Sp. Pl.*
Family Arecaceae
Vernacular Name Panai
Parts Used Male flower
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Cuts: The male flower made in to a paste is applied externally for cuts.*
- 11 **Binomial** *Cadaba fruiticosa (L.) Druce*
Family Capparaceae

- Vernacular Name** Vizhivi
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Snake Bite and fracture* : Leaf juice boiled in Castor oil applied for snake bite and fracture.
- 12 **Binomial** *Cardiospermum helicacabum L . Sp . Pl.*
Family Sapindaceae
Vernacular Name Mudakathan keerai
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Rhematic pain*: Small amount of leaves mixed with water, cummin seeds and turmeric , made into a boiled infusion, taken internally to reduce the rhematic pain.
- 13 **Binomial** *Cassia auriculata . L . Sp . Pl.*
Family Caesalpiniaceae
Vernacular Name Aavarai
Parts Used Flower and leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Body heat*: Handful of leaves made in to juice, is taken internally to reduce body heat. *Cuts*: Paste of flower with small amount of Lime for cuts.
- 14 **Binomial** *Cissus quadrangularis L . Mant . Pl .*
Family Vitaceae
Vernacular Name Pirandai
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Stomach upset and Dysentery*: Tender leaves are taken internally as curry, to relieve stomach upset and dysentery.
- 15 **Binomial** *Citrus medica (L.) Sp . Pl .*
Cleome gynandra L . Sp . Pl.
Capsicum frutescens L . Sp . Pl .
Family Rutaceae
Capparaceae
Solanaceae
Vernacular Name Elumichai
Thaiveatai
Milagai
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Tooth ache*: The above mentioned leaves mixed in the form of paste and applied on the affected area.
- 16 **Binomial** *Commelina benghalensis L . Sp . Pl .*
Jasminum angustifolium (L.) Wild . Var .
Family Commelinaceae
Oleaceae
Vernacular Name Pachai velukai
Malligai
Parts Used Leaves

- Ethnomedicinal Uses** *Rabies: The above mentioned leaves juice taken 300 ml per day for three days for Rabies.*
- 17 **Binomial** *Cortalaria pulchra . Andr . Bot . Retos .*
Family Papilionaceae
Vernacular Name Kilukilupai
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Stomach problems: Handful of leaves mixed with seeds of coriander sativum made in to the form of extract, 200 ml per day for three days to relieve stomach problem.*
- 18 **Binomial** *Croton bonpalandianum Baill in Adansonia .*
Family Euphorbiaceae
Vernacular Name Mannannaikozhai
Parts Used Latex
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Wounds: Latex is applied externally for wounds.*
- 19 **Binomial** *Curcuma domestica . Valetton in Bull . Jard . Bot .*
Buitenzorgser
Family Zingiberaceae
Vernacular Name Viralimanjal
Parts Used Rhizome
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Dysentery: Fifty gram of Rhizome paste mixed with small amount of Lime, applied on clean cloth and allowed to warm up on fire. Small amount of this ash is mixed with 25 ml of water and taken internally, three times for children.*
- 20 **Binomial** *Cymbidium aloifolium (L.) Sw . Nova . Acta Regiae . Soc . Sci .*
Upsal .
Family Orchidaceae
Vernacular Name Panaipulluruvi
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *For ear ache: The leaf juice is poured in to the ear, two-three times a day.*
- 21 **Binomial** *Dendrophthoe falcata (L.f) Eiting in Denkschr . Kaiserl . Akad .*
Wiss.
Family Loranthaceae
Vernacular Name Veppampulluruvi
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Chest Pain: The leaf juice, 200 ml, taken orally for three days.*
- 22 **Binomial** *Dodonaea viscosa (L.) Jacq . Enum . Pl . Carib .*
Family Sapindaceae
Vernacular Name Virali
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Boils: The leaf paste is applied on the boils and tied.*

- 23 **Binomial** *Dolichos trilobus* . L .
Aristolochia indica L. Sp . Pl .
Family Fabaceae
Aristolochiaceae
Vernacular Name Kozhiavarai
Thalaisurali
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses Stomach pain: Handful of leaf juice of the above mentioned plants 500 ml per day for three days to relieve stomach pain
- 24 **Binomial** *Eclipta Prostrata* (L.) L .
Family Asteraceae
Vernacular Name Karichalai
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses Jaundice: Leaf juice is taken internally for Jaundice. Tooth ache: Leaf paste is applied on the affected area for tooth ache.
- 25 **Binomial** *Enicostemma axillare* (Lam.) Raynal in adansonia .
Family Gentianaceae
Vernacular Name Vellaruku
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses Joint Pain: Small amount of leaf powder mixed with 50 ml of water, taken internally to relieve joint pain.
- 26 **Binomial** *Euphorbia antiquum* L. Sp . Pl .
Family Euphorbiaceae
Vernacular Name Kalli
Parts Used Latex
Ethnomedicinal Uses Fracture: The latex is collected on white cloth and tied around the broken bone.
- 27 **Binomial** *Euphorbia hirta* L .
Family Euphorbiaceae
Vernacular Name Amman pachcharsi
Parts Used Whole plant, Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses Stomach upset: Entire plant paste in goat milk taken internally for stomach upset. Lactation : Two teaspoon of leaf powder two times a day, improves lactation in women
- 28 **Binomial** *Evolvulus alsinoides* (L.) L. Sp . Pl . ed .
Family Convolvulaceae
Vernacular Name Vishnukanthi
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses Fever: Leaf juice is taken internally for three days for fever.
- 29 **Binomial** *Gardenia gummifera* L.
Family Rubiaceae

- Vernacular Name** Namaku
Parts Used Tender leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Dandruff: Tender leaf paste mixed with coconut oil is applied regularly to prevent Dandruff.*
- 30 **Binomial** *Gloriosa superba L.*
Family Liliaceae
Vernacular Name Kalappai kizhangu
Parts Used Tuber
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Abortifacient: The paste of tuber is used as an abortifacient*
- 31 **Binomial** *Glycosmis mauritiana (Lam.) Tanaka .*
Family Rutaceae
Vernacular Name Panchanthalai
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Eczema and skin diseases: Leaf paste is applied externally for Eczema and skin diseases.*
- 32 **Binomial** *Gmelina asiatica L . Sp . Pl .*
Family Verbenaceae
Vernacular Name Neelakumil
Parts Used Fruit
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Dandruff: Fruit juice applied externally for every three days in the morning on the scalp.*
- 33 **Binomial** *Gymnema sylvestre (Retz) . RBr . ex . Schultes .*
Family Asclepiadaceae
Vernacular Name Sirukurinchan
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Sugar in the Blood: Leaves dried in shade and powdered is taken for Diabetes to reduce Blood sugar.*
- 34 **Binomial** *Hygrophila auriculata (Schum.)Heine.*
Family Acanthaceae
Vernacular Name Neermulli
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *To relieve from Cough: Handful of leaves mixed with seeds of Cumminum cyminum and made in to the form of Juice. 500 ml per day for three days*
- 35 **Binomial** *Jasminum angustifolium.(L.)Wild.*
Family Oleaceae
Vernacular Name Malligai
Parts Used Leaves and Flower
Ethnomedicinal Uses *To remove the clot of Breast Milk: Leaves and Flowers made in to a paste and applied externally to remove the clot of Breast Milk.*
- 36 **Binomial** *Jatropha gossipifolia L.*
Family Euphorbiaceae

- Vernacular Name** Adalai
Parts Used Latex
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Stomach Pain: Latex Mixed with Goat Milk or Rice water, administered for stomach pain.*
- 37 **Binomial** *Justicia tranquebariensis.L.f.Suppl.Pl.*
Family Acanthaceae
Vernacular Name Mozhi murungai
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *For Poisonous Bites: Handful of leaves, made into juice, taken internally for 3 days . Paste made of the leaves applied externally on the swelling to reduce the pain.*
- 38 **Binomial** *Lawsonia inermis.L*
Family Lythraceae
Vernacular Name Maruthani
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *To reduce Body Heat: Handful of leaves, mixed with Onion bulb and made in to a juice, taken internally.*
- 39 **Binomial** *Leucas aspera (Wild). Link.Enum.Pl.Hort.Berol*
Family Labiatae / Lamiaceae
Vernacular Name Thumbai
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *To relieve Eye infection: (Madras-eye) The leaf extract is poured in to dried Chilly Fruit case (after removing the seeds) and left over-night , one or two drops of the juice is poured in to both the eyes.*
- 40 **Binomial** *Mukia maderaspatana (L.)M.Roem.Syn.Monog.*
Family Cucurbitaceae
Vernacular Name Bommusutai
Parts Used Root
Ethnomedicinal Uses *For Dysentry: The root is made in to a paste and taken internally. For Piles : The root paste along with Allium sativam and Zingiver officinalis, taken internally for Piles*
- 41 **Binomial** *Nelumbo nucifera. Gaertn.*
Family Nelumbonaceae
Vernacular Name Thamarai
Parts Used Dried Petals
Ethnomedicinal Uses *For Snake Bite: Dried petals, mixed with hot water and made in to paste is applied externally for Snake Bites*
- 42 **Binomial** *Notonia grandiflora. D.C.*
Family Asteraceae
Vernacular Name Muyalkathu
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Ear infection: Two or three drops of the Leaf juice is poured in to the ear for two-three days.*
- 43 **Binomial** *Ocimum basilicum.L*

- Family** Lamiaceae
Vernacular Name Nay thulasi
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *To reduce Fits:* Handful of leaves made in to juice and taken internally for three days
- 44 **Binomial** *Oldenlandia umbellata L.*
Family Rubiaceae
Vernacular Name Impural
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *For Poisonous Bites* Handful of leaves, made into paste, applied externally on the affected area to relieve from poisonous bite.
- 45 **Binomial** *Pedaliium murex . L*
Family Pedaliaceae
Vernacular Name Aaninerunji
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *To reduce Body Heat:* Handful of leaves, made in to a juice, taken internally, 50ml for three days.
- 46 **Binomial** *Pedilanthus tithymaloides (L.)Poir.in Ann. Mus. Hist. Nat.*
Family Euphorbiaceae
Vernacular Name Kandai kalli
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *To relieve fire burn:* Handful of leaves warmed on fire and tied around the affected area.
- 47 **Binomial** *Pergularia daemia (Forsskal) Chiov.*
Family Asclepiadaceae
Vernacular Name Vaeli Paruthi
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Stomach pain:* Handful of leaves mixed with salt, and made in to a paste, taken internally to relieve stomach pain.
- 48 **Binomial** *Phyla nodiflora (L.)Greene in Pittonia*
Family Verbenaceae
Vernacular Name Poduthali
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Stomach pain and Ulcer:* The leaf salad mixed with butter taken internally for stomach pain and ulcer.
- 49 **Binomial** *Phyllanthus amarus .Schum. & Thonn. In Kongd. Danske Vidensk-selsk.skr.*
Family Euphorbiaceae
Vernacular Name Kilanelli
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Jaundice:* The leaf paste mixed with buffalo urine, 200ml per day for three days, taken internally to cure juandice.
- 50 **Binomial** *Plumbago zeylanica L.*
Family Plumbaginaceae
Vernacular Name Chitramoolam
Parts Used Root

- Ethnomedicinal Uses** *To relieve Body pain and arrest frequent urination: The dried powdered root mixed with goat milk to relieve body pain and arrest frequent urination.*
- 51 **Binomial** *Polycarpaea corymbosa (L.) Lam.*
Family Caryophyllaceae
Vernacular Name Nilachadachi or Malligaimottuchedi
Parts Used Root and Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *For Cobra Bite: Root and leaves paste is applied externally.*
- 52 **Binomial** *Solanum torvum. SW. and Acalypha indica L . Sp. Pl.*
Family Solanaceae
Euphorbiaceae
Vernacular Name Malaisundai
Kuppaimeni
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *To cure Eczema: The leaf paste of the above plants, mixed with salt, applied for curing Eczema.*
- 53 **Binomial** *Sphaeranthus indicus (L.)*
Family Asteraceae
Vernacular Name Kottai Karanthi
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *For retaining pregnancy: Handfull of leaves made in to juice, taken 200 ml internally for three days to retain pregnancy.*
- 54 **Binomial** *Thespesia populnea (L.) Soland . ex correa in Ann . Mus . Nat . Hist . Nat*
Family Malvaceae
Vernacular Name Poovarasu
Parts Used Tender fruit
Ethnomedicinal Uses *For Skin disease: The tender fruit mixed with Castor oil and made in to a paste , applied externally for skin disease.*
- 55 **Binomial** *Trianthema decandra .L .*
Family Aizoaceae
Vernacular Name Mucarai
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *For Poisonous bites: Handful of leaves, mixed with Beetle wine and made in to paste and applied externally.*
- 56 **Binomial** *Tribulus terrestris . L .*
Family Zygophyllaceae
Vernacular Name Nerunchi
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *For chest pain: The leaf juice, 100 ml per day taken internally for three days.*
- 57 **Binomial** *Tridax procumbens . Linn .*
Family Asteraceae

- Vernacular Name** Venai poondu
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *For Poisonous: bites Handful of leaves, mixed with small amount of Lime and made in to paste and applied externally.*
- 58 **Binomial** *Vitex negundo . L . Sp . Pl.*
Family Verbenaceae
Vernacular Name Notchi
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *Head ache: Inhale boiled leaves vapour to relieve head ache*
- 59 **Binomial** *Wrightia tinctoria (Roxb.)R.Br*
Family Apocynaceae
Vernacular Name Nilapalai or Vetpalai
Parts Used Leaves
Ethnomedicinal Uses *To cure Eczema: The leaf paste mixed with Neem oil and applied externally for curing Eczema.*

Discussion

A number of organizations within India are concerned with maintaining India's Traditional Medicine Systems. In addition, there is a wide spread development network, an established pharmaceutical industry and a wealth of botanical experts in the country. Until now, however, there has been little effort to document the volume and impact of national or international trade in India's medicinal plants.

According to the latest figures, it costs around 800 million dollars to put a new drug on the market. When companies manufacture a product based on TK and convert it into a medicine, they “acquire” a product which is worth a few hundred million dollars (Jain, 1986). A USA based top pharmaceutical companies like MERCK and SHAMAN are the classical examples .Such is the enormous potential hidden in these plants gifted by Nature .

After lengthy discussions with the local doctors practising siddha, Ayurveda and unani (Indian alternative medical systems), it was learnt that these plants listed by the authors in this investigation are very much used by them in making various formulations for a variety of ailments. From the enumeration study, it is obvious that the Valaiyans, who either work as labourers or cultivate crops such as Paddy and Ground Nuts, inherit rich traditional knowledge about the flora investigated and apply this knowledge for making crude phyto- medicines to cure infections as simple as cold to as complicated as cancer. These crude herbal medicines are based not only on traditional knowledge but also on rituals and beliefs. For instance the treatment given by the herbal healer for a patient suffering from jaundice is paste of a particular herb and onion along with a copper coin tied religiously around the shoulder and it is believed that it has a magical cure!

Another remarkable feature of the study was the presence of sacred grooves in all the hamlets . Sacred groves are one of the most important and essential bio-resources of the country. It represents an ancient Indian conservation tradition, protected by the local people out

of reverence and respect, fear and sentiment for Nature and incarnation of Nature. They are home to local flora and fauna, a veritable gene pool and mini biosphere reserve. It is noteworthy that Tamil Nadu from South India has the maximum number of sacred groves. It is observed with a sad note that this TK which formed the basis for origin of not only alternative medicine but also paved way to evolution of a gamut of new and novel modern medicines, is facing slow and natural death as these communities are eventually oriented more towards modern medicine as they believe it gives a quick remedy, while it is paradoxical to see the modern world of late, focusing more on alternative medicine which has herbal base predominantly. Presently very few elders in the community practice herbal cure, while the young and current generation knows little or nothing about the traditional herbal medicines. If this trend continues, a few years from now, there will not be even a single elder member in this community who knows TK on medicinal plants to welcome an ethno-botanist with “EVERYTHING GREEN IS MEDICINE”.

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