

Traditional Herbal Remedies for Gynecological Disorders Among the Gond Tribe in Chhattisgarh

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Abstract

The Gond tribe, one of the most prominent and populous tribal groups in India, is particularly concentrated in various regions of Chhattisgarh. Known for their rich cultural heritage, the Gonds have preserved ancient traditions, including their folk medicine and healing practices. This study focuses on documenting the ethnomedicinal knowledge of Gond women from different regions of Chhattisgarh—specifically Bilaspur, Gariyaband, Korba, and Saraipali—who utilize a wide array of plant species to treat gynecological disorders. A total of 31 plant species, integral to their traditional healthcare system, were identified and recorded. Information regarding the medicinal uses of these plants was obtained through personal interviews with local women and supported by existing literature. The study provides a detailed account of these plants, including their botanical names, families, local names, the parts of the plant used, and their specific medicinal applications.

Keywords: Ethnogaecology, Gond women, Herbal Medicine

Introduction

Chhattisgarh, renowned for its Tropical Moist and Dry Deciduous Forests, boasts a unique biogeography with rich genetic plant diversity across its extensive protected (24,036.10 sq. km) and reserved forests (25,782.17 sq. km) (Turkey et al., 2014). This region is abundantly endowed with medicinal plants, with approximately 44% of its geographical area covered by forests rich in ethnomedicinal flora. For centuries, the tribal communities residing in these forests have relied on their natural surroundings to meet their medicinal needs, drawing from an extensive repository of traditional botanical knowledge. However, this invaluable ethnobotanical heritage is at risk. Rapid urbanization, land use changes, and the passing of elder traditional healers without adequately transmitting their knowledge threaten to erode this cultural legacy. As habitats are destroyed and modern influences encroach, the traditional medicinal practices and the plants they rely upon face the danger of disappearing. To preserve this vital knowledge and the plants associated with it, there is an urgent need to document, protect, and develop the ethnomedicinal resources of these communities before they are lost forever (Chakraborty et al., 2015).

The indigenous ethnobotanical knowledge of tribal medicinal plants represents a vital cultural heritage and an economically valuable scientific resource that urgently needs to be documented, preserved, and developed. Unfortunately, this knowledge is at risk of vanishing as rapid urbanization and changes in land use lead to the destruction of habitats where many of these valuable plants thrive. Additionally, as elder traditional healers pass away without passing on their wisdom, there is a real danger that this ancient

knowledge will be lost forever. In a rapidly changing world, the erosion of traditional medical practices is as irreversible as the extinction of plant species. To prevent the loss of this invaluable resource, it is crucial to make concerted efforts to document the therapeutic uses of these plants before the knowledge is forgotten and before the local communities abandon their traditional medicinal practices.

Treatments for ailments common to tribal women include abortion, menstrual problems, menopause syndrome, morning sickness, leucorrhoea, infertility, and delivery problems are provided by the emerging field of ethno-gynecology. (Yadav, SS & Patil, HS 2001; Sahu, PK 2010; Sikarwar, RLS 2002). Tribes treat a variety of gynecological issues, such as menstrual pain, menopause, and delivery, with their own natural or spiritual therapies (Patel, 2012; Lawal, et al., 2013). Many ethnic medicines make use of whole plants as medicine, and traditional healers think that this approach can increase the medicine's effectiveness (Hu et al., 2020).

The majority of tribal populations in Chhattisgarh live in rural areas, with the Gond tribe being the most prominent both within the state and across India. The Gonds are one of the largest non-Aryan and Dravidian forest tribes in the country, spread throughout almost every region of Chhattisgarh. Like many indigenous communities worldwide, the Gonds have diligently preserved their ancient traditions of folk medicine and healing practices. They are entirely dependent on the forest and its resources for their livelihoods and healthcare needs. The Gond tribe has developed a unique system for treating various ailments, which encompasses traditional herbal remedies, magico-religious practices, and the utilization of modern medical facilities available in nearby villages. Gond people primarily seek the expertise of traditional healers for their primary healthcare requirements due to the accessibility, availability, and affordability of these services. They have deep trust in the traditional medical system and the healers who practice it. The Gonds rely heavily on plant-based medicines, as medicinal plants and forest flora are integral to their way of life. This article aims to identify and document the indigenous knowledge of traditional medicinal plants used by the Gond tribe in treating gynecological disorders.

Material and Methods

Study area

Data for this study was gathered at random from different regions of the state of Chhattisgarh. The geographical coordinates of Chhattisgarh are 8.40 to 83.33 east longitude and 17 to 23.7 degrees north latitude. The villages of Chhattisgarh State were covered, including Karsiwa, Lohari, and Parasi in the Tehsil of Marwhi, Bilaspur district; Andora, Badmar, and Chikhli in the Tehsil of Bindranavagarh, Gariyaband district; Botarada, Kalgamar, and Mahora in the Tehsil of Kartala, Korba district; and Garra, Kalidarha, and Konkadi in the Tehsil of Sarapali, Mahasamund district. This paper focuses on the traditional medicine used by Gond women from various regions of Chhattisgarh to treat gynecological disorders.

Data Collection

A comparison of the treatment methods' similarities and differences was used to analyze the ethnomedical data that were gathered from multiple sources. Also, determining the various traditional medicinal plants that the Gond tribes of various Chhattisgarh regions have used for treating gynecological ailments. The study provides information on the local name for a species, a plant part used by traditional healers, and the therapeutic approach used by various Gond tribes in Chhattisgarh. Plant names served as the scientific means of identifying species.

Result and Discussion

Data on the medicinal plants preferred for treating various gynecological disorders were collected and analyzed, with the findings detailed in Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4. The results reveal that the tribal women in the study area place significant trust in traditional medicine, relying heavily on plant-based remedies to address a wide range of gynecological issues. These conditions include abortion, sterility, urinary disorders, conception problems, menstrual irregularities, leucorrhea, and more. Traditionally, these women do not seek help from doctors or clinics; instead, they depend on herbal treatments recommended by elderly women, often considered the chief healers, or experienced medicine men in the village.

It has been observed that for treating irregularity in menstruation, decoction of **Ashoka** root mixed with **Arjuna** bark, **Rasna** root and **Giloy** is used by Gond (Gariyaband) and **Nirgundi** is used by the Gond tribe from Bilaspur region for menstrual disorders and also to restore fertility. While the Gonds of Korba region used the dried rhizome of **Ratanjot**, **Raktmahajaal** stem is used by Gonds of Saraipali during menstrual period for sterility.

The Gond tribe across different regions of Chhattisgarh utilizes a variety of plants to address specific gynecological issues, reflecting their deep reliance on traditional herbal medicine. For instance, the Gond women of Gariyaband use **Chirchira** to facilitate easy delivery, while the Gonds in Bilaspur rely on the leaves of **Satavar** and **Sitaphal**, as well as the seedlings of **Charota**, for managing delivery complications. When treating leucorrhea, the Gonds of the Korba region use **Bans** leaves, while those in Gariyaband opt for **Dudhi** leaves and **Ashoka** bark. In Bilaspur, a combination of **Dudhi** and **Bhatkatai** leaves, along with **Kulthi** seeds, is preferred, and in Korba, the root of **Ramdatun** is used for the same condition. Interestingly, the root of **Ramdatun** is also employed by the Gonds of the Saraipali region for treating gonorrhoea (a sexually transmitted disease).

For impotence, the Gonds in Bilaspur and Korba use **Kali Musli** (root and tuber), while those in Saraipali use **Kismis** (fruit). In treating urinary disorders, the Gond tribe in Bilaspur prefers **Anantmoool** root, whereas the Korba tribe favors the whole plant of **Lajwanti**.

For abortion, the Gonds of Gariyaband use the root of **Masbandhi**, while in Bilaspur, **Sitaphal** leaves are used. The Gond people of Saraipali utilize the whole plant of **Chirayata** to address the same issue. This diverse use of plants across regions highlights the Gond tribe's extensive knowledge of ethnomedicine and their reliance on specific local flora to meet their healthcare needs.

Conclusion

Ethnomedicine involves the study and comparison of traditional medicinal plants and practices across different cultures. This study specifically examines the identification and use of plants by Gond tribal women in Chhattisgarh, focusing on their traditional folk remedies for various gynecological diseases and disorders. The research highlights the rich ethnobotanical knowledge preserved by these women and underscores the importance of their plant-based treatments in addressing gynecological health issues within their communities.

TABLE 1:- Ethnomedicinal plants used by Gond tribes of Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh.

S. No.	Name of disease	Tribes	Name of the plant and part used	Method of preparation
1	Menstrual disorders	Gond	Local Name - Nirgundi Botanical Name - <i>Vitex negundo</i> Family - Verbenaceae Used – Root	One teaspoon powder of young root along with milk is given to ladies in menstrual disorders and also to restore fertility.
2	Impotency	Gond	Local Name - Kali musli Botanical Name - <i>Curculigo orchioides</i> Family – Amaryllidaceae Used – Root	Powdered tuberous roots of plant are taken with milk as a tonic against impotency.
3	Leuchorrhoea	Gond	Local Name - Dudhi Botanical Name - <i>Euphorbia hirta</i> Family - Euphorbiaceae Used – Leaves Local Name - Bhatkatai & Satyanasi' Botanical Name - <i>Argemone maxicana</i> Family - Papaveraceae Used - Leaves Local Name – Kulthi Botanical Name – <i>Dolichos biflorum</i> Family - Leguminosae Used - Seeds	Leaves are crushed and the extract is taken orally with honey once a day in the morning for leuchorrhoea for a month. Leaves juice is given in leucorrhoea Decoction of seeds is used orally in leucorrhoea.
4	Easy delivery	Gond	Local Name - Satavar Botanical Name - <i>Asparagus racemosus</i> Family - Liliaceae Used – Leaves Local Name - Sitaphal	It is a very good antioxidant (karuna et al. 2018). Leaf juice (two teaspoon a day) is given during pregnancy for easy delivery. Leaf decoction is drunk for easy delivery.

			<p>Botanical Name - <i>Annona squamosa</i> Family - Annonaceae Used –Leaves</p> <p>Local Name - Charota, Pawar, Chaparwa</p> <p>Botanical Name - <i>Cassia tora</i> Family - Caesalpiniaceae Used – Seedling</p>	<p>Young seedling of the plants after washing is chewed by pregnant women for timely and easy delivery</p>
5	Abortion.	Gond	<p>Local Name - Sitaphal</p> <p>Botanical Name - <i>Annona squamosa</i> Family - Annonaceae Used - Leaves</p>	<p>Leaf decoction is drunk for easy delivery. One spoon of seed powder with a cup of water taken for 3-4 days for abortion.</p>
6	Urinary disorders	Gond	<p>Local Name - Anantmool</p> <p>Botanical Name - <i>Hemidesmus indicus</i> Family - Asclepiadaceae Used - Root</p>	<p>Root juice is given in treatment of urinary disorders</p>

TABLE 2:- Ethnomedicinal plants used by Gond tribes of Gariyband, Chhattisgarh.

S. No.	Name of disease	Tribes	Name of the plant and part used	Method of preparation
1	Irregularity in Menstruation	Gond	<p>Local Name -Ashoka</p> <p>Botanical Name - <i>Saraca asoca</i> Family - Caesalpinaceae Used - Root</p>	<p>Decoction of Ashoka root, Arjuna (<i>Terminalia arjuna</i>) Bark, Rasna (<i>Blepharispermum subsessile</i>) root and Giloy (<i>Tinospora malabarica</i>) stem, filter the preparation. Filtrate is taken twice daily for one month.</p>

2	Easy delivery	Gond	Local Name – Chirchira Botanical Name - <i>Achyranthus aspera</i> Family - Amaranthaceae Used - Root.	Fresh and dried root is grinded and decoction is made with water and given to a pregnant women for relief in painful delivery. Half cup decoction is given once or twice at the time of delivery.
3	Leucorrhoea (White discharge)	Gond	Local Name –Dudhi Botanical Name- <i>Euphorbia hirta</i> Family -Euphorbiaceae Used - Leaf.	One cup of decoction is prepared with milk and consumed in morning and evening for 2-4 days.
		Gond	Local Name - Ashoka Botanical Name - <i>Saraca asoca</i> Family- Caesalpinaceae Used - Bark.	Ashoka bark is Sun dried and powdered And mixed with dried power of Kachnar bark (Bauhinia veriegapa) and Rhiman bark is 1:1:1 proportion. One soon powder is mixed with one glass gruel of rice. It is consumed twice daily. For 2-5 days.
4	Menorrhoea	Gond	Local Name - Kusha Botanical Name - <i>Desmotachya Biponnata</i> Family- Poaceae Used - Root	Root is used in diuretic and dysentery and menorrhoea.
5	Abortion	Gond	Local Name -Masbandhi Botanical Name- <i>Porana paniculata</i> Family-Convulvulaceae Used - Root.	One Teaspoonful root paste with cup of milk is taken once a day for 5 days, to abort pregnancy of 3-4 months.
6	Post Delivery Vitality	Gond	Local Name- Kusum Botanical Name- <i>Schleichera oleosa</i> Family –Sapindaceae Used- Oil	Half a cup of oil given to the women after delivery, twice a day for 3 days as a tonic

TABLE 3: Ethnomedicinal plants used by Gond tribes of Korba, Chhattisgarh.

S. No.	Name of disease	Tribes	Name of the plant and part used	Method of preparation
1	Menstrual disorders	Gond	Local Name - Ashoka Botanical Name - <i>Saraca asoca</i> Family - Caesalpinaceae Used – Root Local Name – Ratanjot Botanical Name – <i>Adiantum capillus-veneris</i> Family - Adiantaceae Used – Whole plant	Decoction of Ashoka root, filter the preparation. Filtrate is taken twice daily for one month. Dried rhizome mixed with water is given to women orally once during menstrual period for sterility.
2	Leucorrhoea (White discharge)	Gond	Local Name – Ramdatun Botanical Name – <i>Smilex mecrophylla</i> Family – Smilacaceae Used - Root	A decoction is made with water and taken orally after completion of menstrual discharge.
3	Male Impotency	Gond	Local Name - Kali musli Botanical Name - <i>Curculigo orchioides</i> Family – Amaryllidaceae Used – Root, Tuber	Powder of dired Kali musli, Kalimirch and lllaichi is prepared in tablet form. Two capsule is taken in morning and evening after meal.
4	Urinary Problem	Gond	Local Name – Lajwanti Botanical Name – <i>Mimosa pudica</i> Family – Mimosaceae Used –Root	Root paste (1 tea spoonful) mixed with honey administered for 7 days early in the morning to cure vaginal and uterine complaints.
5	Contraceptive	Gond	Local Name – Gular Botanical Name – <i>Ficus glomarata</i> Family – Moraceae Used - Fruit	Flower is collected after doing rituals i.e. offer agarbatti, coconut, flower and Gangajal. Fresh fruit is used after

				contraception. Taken only once.
6	Delivery Complications	Gond	Local Name – Bans Botanical Name – <i>Bambusa angustifolia</i> Family – Gramineae Used - Leaves	Decocotion of leaves is made with water and taken orally.

TABLE 4:- Ethnomedicinal plants used by Gond tribes of Saraipali, Chhattisgarh.

S. No.	Name of disease	Tribes	Name of the plant and part used	Method of preparation
1	Menstrual disorders	Gond	Local Name -Ashoka Botanical Name - <i>Saraca asoca</i> Family - Caesalpinaceae Used – Bark	Ashoka bark is Sun dried and powdered and mixed with dried power of Kachnar bark (Bauhinia veriegapa) and Rhiman bark is 1:1:1 proportion. One soon powder is mixed with one glass gruel of rice. It is consumed twice daily. For 2-5 days.
2	Impotency	Gond	Local Name – Kismis(Raisin) Botanical Name – <i>Vitis vinifera</i> Family – Vitaceae Used – Fruit Local Name – Kaju (Cashewnut) Botanical Name – <i>Anacardium occidentale</i> Family – Anacardiaceae Used – Fruit Local Name – Nageshwar	Fruit soak in water used for fertility. Fresh fruit in powder form used for fertility. Flower bud dried and powdered used orally.

			Botanical Name – <i>Mesua ferrea</i> Family – Calophyllaceae Used – Flower	
3	For postnatal conditions	Gond	Local Name – Kharhar Botanical Name – <i>Garddenia turgida</i> Family – Rubiaceae Used – Root Local Name – Girhul Botanical Name – <i>Indigofera pulchella</i> Family – Fabaceae Used - Root	Root, together with the juice of the leaves to a fine paste is used. Dried root powder used externally in pain.
4	Postnatal stage	Gond	Local Name – Tilli/Til(Sesame) Botanical Name – <i>Sesamum indicum</i> Family – Pedaliaceae Used - Fruit (seed)	Decoction/ Powder of seeds are used
5	Abortion	Gond	Local Name – Chirayata Botanical Name – <i>Swertia Chirata</i> Family – Gentianaceae Used – Whole plant	Extract of whole plant is taken orally 4- 5 days
6	Leucorrhoea (White discharge)	Gond	Local Name – Ramdatun Botanical Name – <i>Smilax mecrophylla</i> Family – Smilacaceae Used - Root	Powdered root is taken with one teaspoon mishri with 20gms orally.

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