

SOME UNRECORDED MEDICINAL PLANTS OF THE JARAWA TRIBE OF ANDAMAN ISLANDS

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The Jarawas inhabiting the 'Jarawa Reserve' in the South and Middle Andaman Islands, belong to the Negrito Stock. They are nomadic, food-gatherers and hunters, numbering less than 300 individuals at present. They live in small groups in dense interior forests and frequent the west coast. Until quite recently, almost nothing was known about them due to their hostile nature. However, probably due to the opening of the Andaman Trunk Road constructed through the heart of the Jarawa territory, the friendly contacts and confidence-building exercises started, since October, 1997, their way of life is increasingly known.

During the years 2001 – 2002, the Directorate of Tribal Welfare, Andaman & Nicobar Administration, Port Blair organized research studies on the Jarawa tribe mainly to find out the reason behind their changing behavior towards the 'civilized local populations'. Another objective of the project was to find out the natural resources available to them. In the course of the studies, multi-disciplinary teams were sent to different Jarawa localities and settlements during December – January 2001, April – May 2002 and August – September 2002. The present authors were deputed for undertaking these studies on behalf of Botanical Survey of India (BSI). The results of these studies were released by the Administration in their website in 2003. It may be mentioned that a number of the plant samples or specimens collected by the present authors during the above stated studies were in vegetative condition which caused much delay in identification. Hence the final report submitted by BSI to the Andaman & Nicobar Administration remained incomplete to some extent. It is now found that the list of the medicinal plants of the Jarawa tribe in the '*Jarawa Reports*' (2003) needs some interesting additions as such uses of some plants by the tribe are hitherto unrecorded. The authors have had close contacts with many individuals during the studies and recorded the plants used by them in their day to day life through such contacts and collected plant samples as permanent records or photographs of the plants. One day in August 2002, in a camp at Middle Andaman one of the members of the study team was smoking and at that time a Jarawa boy visited the camp. He asked the author (in Hindi) "why are you taking smoke of leaf, have you got fever?" We took out the boy immediately to the nearby forest and he showed three plants named in their language as *Oro*, *Omiya nada* and *Keḱa*, the leaves of which they burn in fire and inhale the smoke in case of fever. Another day, a boy was vomiting and he immediately collected tender shoots of

Indau and started chewing them. Some other day, the first author visited a *chaddha* (hut/settlement) where a baby was just born and some plants used during and after the child birth were noted.

Botanical name	Jarawa name	Uses
<i>Caryota mitis</i> Lour. (Arecaceae) 4208(PBL)	Indau	Tender shoots eaten raw to cure abdominal pain and vomiting.
<i>Goniothalamus macranthus</i> (Kurz) Boerl. (Annonaceae) 19188(PBL)	Omiya nada	Leaves burnt in fire and the smoke inhaled in fever; in case of body pain, the leaf is heated and applied externally.
<i>Ixora grandifolia</i> Zoll. & Mor. (Rubiaceae) 4207(PBL)	Not known	After child birth, a separate hut is constructed and the mother with the new born baby are housed there on a wooden platform. At this point, a bark strip of the plant is heated and tied on the abdomen of the mother for quick recovery.
<i>Myristica andamanica</i> Hook.f. (Myristicaceae) 19194 (PBL)	Oro	Just after the child birth, <i>aalam</i> (red ochre; a mixture of soil, juice of <i>oro</i> , fat of boar and some red phytoplanktons) is applied on the umbilicus of the child and the umbilical cord of the mother and covered with heated leaves of the plant to stop bleeding; leaf burnt and smoke inhaled in fever; the cut bark yields a red sap. The same and the juice of the crushed leaves applied on wounds and insect/snake bite.
<i>Orophea katchallica</i> Kurz (Annonaceae) 19120(PBL)	Taopa-aath	Juice of crushed leaves applied on wounds and for snake/insect bite.
<i>Polyalthia parkinsonii</i> Hutch. (Annonaceae) 19124 (PBL)	Keka	Leaves burnt in fire and the smoke inhaled in fever; leaves heated and applied externally on throat and chest for cough and cold.
<i>Prunus martabanicus</i> Kurz (Rosaceae) 4211 (PBL)	Wate	At the time of child birth, several strips of bark are heated and kept on the abdomen of the woman to ease labour-pain.

It is found that some plants used medicinally by the Jarawas are hitherto unrecorded (Anonymous, 2003). The details of these plants and their uses are presented below.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are thankful to the Director, Botanical Survey of India for deputing us as member of the multi-disciplinary teams for carrying out studies on the *Jarawa* tribe, organized by the Directorate of Tribal Welfare, Andaman & Nicobar Administration, Port Blair.

REFERENCE

ANONYMOUS. '*Jarawa Reports*'. Released by the Andaman & Nicobar Administration, Port Blair in their website. 2003.