

## ETHNO-MEDICINAL USES OF PLANTS BY THE GUJJARS OF FOOT HILLS OF UTTARANCHAL

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### ABSTRACT

Van Gujjars, the nomadic tribals of Himalayan region, inhabit the foothills of the Himalayan ranges at an average height of 1,500 feet above sea level during the winter months (from mid-September to mid-March). When the winters recede, they migrate to high altitude in the Himalayas, at an average height 8,000 to 12,00 feet. During the study it has been revealed that the traditional practices of Van Gujjars having symbiotic relationship with forests. Since they are very close to the forest, so they are having unique traditional knowledge system. This paper presents ethnobotanical notes on 44 species of medicinal plants which are used by Van Gujjars for the treatment of various human ailments.

**Key words :** *Ethno-medicinal use, plants, Gujjars, Uttaranchal.*

### INTRODUCTION

The Gujjars traditionally practice transhumance i.e. climbing up the Himalayas in the summer with their herd. As the whole households take part in migration, they are considered Nomads. It is a long and slow journey taking around one and half month each way. To carry the loads they have ponies and they mainly follow the paved roads, using the same routes year after year. During Migration the Gujjars family join together to form a caravan called "Qafila". In movement they have a "Qafila" sardar a caravan leader. While on migration the groups respect the decisions of the sardar.

In Uttaranchal, Gujjars are found in the Tarai region of districts Nainital to Dehradun. The Gujjars in contrary to many other tribal people are not hunter, and they do not constitute any danger to wildlife. They are mostly vegetarian in food habits. The economy of the nomadic Gujjars is completely based on milk production.

Some of the important contribution on habit utilization, settlements, resettlements and social set up of Gujjars are of Munshi (1995), Verma (1983), Clark *et. al.*, (1986, Gooch (1988 to 1992 and 1994), Anonymous (1997) and Rawat (1993). But there is paucity of literature on ethnobotanical uses of plants by Gujjar tribe, While in high altitude of Himalaya Gujjars make the

use of many plant species as medicines in different ailments of human beings and cattles.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study was conducted in two steps.

Step-1- The information regarding direct use of plant and their parts as medicines for several human ailments were collected from the Gujjars inhabited in foothills of Garhwal Himalaya. The vernacular names and uses of plants as medicine were noted through questionnaire method.

Step II- The plants pointed out in step-I, were collected, identified botanically and their herbarium was prepared.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Some plant species and their medicinal uses are enumerated as under:

### **In the treatment of excessive formation of gases in stomach and intestine:**

*Acacia catechu* (L.f.) Willd. Khair, Mimosaceae.

The wood paste of khair is given orally.

*Allium cepa*., Piyaz, Amaryllidaceae.

The bulb juice of it is given with salt orally.

### **In the treatment of malaria:**

*Aconitum balfourii* Stapf, Atis, Ranunculaceae.

The root paste of it is taken with water before meal.

### **In the treatment of urinary tract infections:**

*Aegle marmelos* (L.) Correa, Bael, Rutaceae.

The pulp of fruit is mixed with water and this mixture is given orally twice a day.

### **In the treatment of Otagia (earache):**

*Allium sativum* L., Lasun, Amaryllidaceae and *Brassica campestris* L., Sarson, Brassicaceae.

Boil the fresh bulb in oil and dropped externally in the ear.

### **In the treatment of ulcer :**

*Amaranthus caudatus* L., Chaulai, Amaranthaceae and *Syzygium aromaticum*

(L) Merrill and Perry, Laung, Myrtaceae.

Boil the whole plant of chaulai with 5 laung and some salt powder (NaCl) and this prepared quath is given orally.

**In the treatment of prickly heat:**

*Taxus bacata* Linn., Birni, Taxaceae.

The quath of whole plant provides a quick relief.

**In the treatment of small pox:**

*Trigonella foenum-graecum* Linn., Methi, Fabaceae.

The seeds paste is applied externally.

**In the treatment of sore throat:**

*Viola canescens*, Wallich, Banpsha, Violaceae.

The decoction of bark is suggested orally.

**In the treatment of skin diseases:**

*Zizyphus mauritiana* Lam., Ber Rhamnaceae..

The leaves and branches is applied externally.

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