

GYMNEME SYLVESTRE(GUDMAR)

Here in urban areas of India, diabetes (locally known as Sugar disease or Madhumeah) is one of the most common disease but in tribal areas diabetes is a new disease but the number of patients are increasing at alarming rates. During my studies at different interior parts of herbal state Chhattisgarh, I have found that in tribal areas, people in touch of urban areas are the main sufferers. Surprisingly I have not seen any tribal in interiors having this ailment. According to traditional healers of the state, urban cultures and foods are responsible for this new disease in their people. Diabetes is well known to these traditional healers since centuries. They are having rich traditional medicinal knowledge about the common herbs useful in curing diabetes. This is the reason that daily hundreds of patients from urban areas visit to these traditional healers for natural and safe treatment. Although it is very difficult to get the information regarding their 'trade secrets' but with the help of my surveys and studies in dense forests of Chhattisgarh, I have gathered some valuable information about these herbs.

The Indian names of Gudmar (*Gymnema* sp.)

Languages/Regions/Countries

- 1) Bengal
- 2) Gujarati
- 3) Hindi
- 4) Kanarese
- 5) Marathi
- 6) Sanskrit
- 7) Tamil
- 8) Telugu
- 9) English

Names

Merasingi
Dhubli, Mardashingi
Gurmar, Merasingi
Sannagerasehambu
Kavali, Kalikadori, Vakundi
Meshashringi, Medhunashini
Adigam, Cherukurinja
Podapatri
Periploca of the woods, Small Indian Ipecacaunha



In their treatments, the tribal healers give more emphasis on improvement of activities of Agnashay (Pancrease). They do not rely on modern test reports. They simply ask the patient to pass urine on some local herbs and tell them to come 4 days later. By observing the behaviour of these herbs, the healers identify the severity of disease and decide the treatments. For different patients, they use different test plants. I have seen the most frequent use of *Luffa* sp. as test plant. During my three years studies and surveys. I have identified 56 traditional healers specialised in treating diabetes. Out of these fifty six, twenty five have been identified as potential healers. Most of them are over 60 years of age. I have spent two days with each of the potential healer. One most common recommendation I had observed was the use of honey in the regular diet. The traditional healer recommend honey to the sufferers. According to them honey from wild sources is a good tonic for pancrease. They recommend it with other medicines also.

The most frequently used herb for diabetes patients is the wood of tree named Bija. The traditional healers collect the wood from forest and dip it overnight in herbal solution. Next day after drying it in shade, it is given to the patients for regular use. The patients are advised to dip the part of wood in glass of water overnight and next day drink the leachate on an empty stomach. According to traditional healers this leachate is useful for all because it is general tonic specially for patients suffering from diabetes, memory weakness and anaemia. It is also useful for chronic constipation. Bija is found in abundance in Chhattisgarh. After observing miracle effect of this herb. I have gone through scientific literatures and found this information. The scientific name of Bija or Beeja is *Pterocarpus marsupium* Roxb. It is a tall ever green tree, blaze grey-streaked, then pink and finally red. Its leaflets are 5-7, elliptic - oblong to ovate, coriaceous, 7-13 cm long, obtuse or subacute, often slightly or deeply emarginate, glaucous beneath. Panicles terminals 15-30 cm long. The color of flowers is yellow. Calyx dark brown, pubescent, teeth deltoid, unequal. Corolla color yellow. Pods are orbicular and upto 4 cm in diameter. In Chhattisgarh, it is popularly used for making furniture and agricultural implements.

Common and popular names of Bija (*Pterocarpus marsupium*) around the world.

| Languages/Regions/Countries | Names |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1) Arabic | Dammul-akhvaine hindi, Damul akhvaine |
| 2) Bengal | Pitsal, Pitshul |
| 3) Kanarese | Benga, Honi, Honne, Netra, Bibla, Netturuhonne |
| 4) English | Bijasal, Indian kino Tree, Malabar Kino Tree |
| 5) French | Kino des Indes, Pterocarpe a bourse |
| 6) Gujarati | Bia, Bibla, Bio, Hiradokhana |
| 7) Hindi | Banda, Bija, Bijasal, Bijasar, Biya, Hiradokhi, Paisar, Peisar, Piasal, Pitshola |
| 8) Malyalam | Carintakara, Malantakara, Venna |
| 9) Marathi | Assan, Asana, Bibla, Dhorbenla |
| 10) Persian | Khunesiahwashan |
| 11) Sanskrit | Bandhukapushpa, Bijaka, Bijavriksha, Mahakutaja, Mahasarja, Pita salaka, Pitashala, Paramayudha, Priyaka, Sauri |
| 12) Sinhalese | Gammalu, Gummalo |
| 13) Tamil | Asanam, Kani, Pidasaralam, Pidagaragam, Sarudagam, Tamisu, Tannini |
| 14) Telugu | Peddagi, Peddegi, Pedegu, Vegisa, Yegi, Vengisa |
| 15) Urdu | Damulakhvain |
| 16) Uriya | Byasa, Piyasalo |

Gudmar is another useful herb for patients suffering from diabetes. In many parts of Chhattisgarh Gudmar found in isolated patches. Its common name Gudmar clearly indicates its use. The meaning of Gud is Jaggery, sugar and mar, to kill or destroy. It is used to destroy sugar hence useful in diabetes. Out of 56 traditional healers, I have observed ten traditional healers, all from the Bastar region, are using this herb in combination of other herbs like Chirayata (Correct name Kalmegh) etc, but main constituent is Gudmar. I have seen the common tribal chewing the leaves of Gudmar during their routine visits to nearby forests. The chewing of fresh leaves desensitise the test buds and up to few hours after chewing, you will feel no taste, even sweetest food will feel tasteless. In scientific literatures, I have read some research findings on use of Gudmar for this disease but most of researchers are using only Gudmar. They are ignoring the role of other herbs used by traditional healers in the mixture. The scientific name of Gudmar is *Gymnema sylvestris*. It is a common herb of Monsoon forests. It is a large woody climber. The herb is much branched and young stem is densely pubescent. Leaves are opposite, ovate, elliptic with rounded or cordate base. Flowers are in Cymes. Fruits are lanceolate, generally single. In Chhattisgarh, the flowering time is April to May. In Ayurveda this herb is mentioned as bitter, acrid, cooling, tonic, alterative, anthelmintic, alexiteric and useful in respiratory troubles, heart - diseases, piles, leucoderma and urinary discharges.

Sadaphooli or Sada Suhagan is well known herb in western countries also. It is used for preparing the drug for blood cancer. Although it is not indigenous to Chhattisgarh, but in almost every home you will find this herb in home gardens. It is grown as ornamental plant as it flowers in almost every month of the year. The traditional healers use the fresh flowers for the treatment of diabetes. The patients are advised to swallow this flower daily. The number of flowers depend upon the severity of the disease. In this herb, white and pink colored flowers are found. White flowered variety is preferred by traditional healers. In scientific literatures, I have not found the description of anti-diabetic properties of this herb. The scientific name of Sadaphooli or Sada Suhagan is *Catharanthus roseus* G. Don (Syn. *Vinca rosea* Linn.; *Vinca pusilla* Hook f.; *Lochnera rosea* (Linn.) R.). The family is Apocynaceae. It is an erect, slightly smelling perennial herb. Leaves are oval, obovate or oblong-elliptic, acute and

glassy. Flowers are fragrant, pinkish (var. roseus) or white (var. alba). Flowers are arranged in terminal or axillary cymose clusters. Fruits are hairy and up to 3cm long.

During my visit to traditional healer of Bastar, I have observed a special role of native species of red fire ants in identification of diabetic patient. According to this traditional healer this ant bite (when disturbed) only to healthy people, never bite (even forcefully) to diabetic patient. This is an unique diagnostic method I have never seen in my life. I have collected the specimen and sent to the experts for identification. Results are awaited.

known as Chirai Jam), Mango (Locally known as Aam), Chickpea (Cultivated as rabi crop) etc.

I have collected the list of patients from these traditional healers and met the patients to varify the healer's claim. I have found most of them healthy and free of disease. They have stopped taking Allopathic Medicines and recommending relatives to visit to the traditional healers. I personally feel that there is a strong need to document and utilise this valuable knowledge for benefit of humanity.