

## Folklores and Plants

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### Abstract

The natural geographical condition of Chhattisgarh state helps diverse plants to flourish. Many plants are used as medicine and the people here come to know about through word of mouth. This may be through folklore, folk songs, folk tales, taboos, omens, totem, totka, similies and metaphors, myth, proverb, sacred groves, etc. Folk stands for a group of people or a particular tribe or region. Folk lore stands for the unwritten literature expressed by a group of people of folk. It indicates useful and important knowledge about medicines, food, customs, cereals, spices, wood, gum, cloth, fibers, etc. The word folklore was first used by the English antiquarian William Thomas in a letter published in the London journal 'The Athenaeum' in 1846.

Tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*), a holy basil is one of the common example which is planted in almost all Indian house. It is related with folk belief as well as scientifically beneficial to human health. The plants such as Munaga (*Moringa oleifera*), Bel (*Aegle marmelos*), Amla (*Phyllanthus emblica*), Mahua (*Madhuca indica*), Chandan (*Santalum album*), Gooler (*Ficus glomerata*), Amaltas (*Cassia fistula*), Dauna (*Ocimum basilicum*), Arjun (*Terminalia arjuna*), Bahera (*Terminalia bellirica*), Mehandi (*Lawsonia inermis*) etc. are mentioned in folk proverbs, songs.

#### Folk-proverbs:

Asman se gira, khajoor pe atka – many obstacles while working hard.  
Ek phool se mala nahi banti – One flower makes no garland.

#### Folk-medicines:

- i. *Acacia catechu* – Mimosoidae (Khair) – Decoction of bark- 10 ml given in stomachache.
- ii. *Achyranthus aspera* – Amaranthaceae (Arua)

- Grinded leaves- in wounds.
- Powder of seeds – in bleeding piles.

Dadariya song for peepal is-  
 “pipar pal dolat naiye,  
 Mouni bhoye baithe ; bolat naiye.”

**Key words :** Ethnobotany, Folklore, Folk proverb, Taboos, Folk medicine.

The natural geographical condition of Chhattisgarh state helps diverse plants to flourish. Many plants are used as medicine and the people here come to know about through word of mouth. This may be through folklore, folk songs, folk tales, taboos, omens, totem, totka, similies and metaphors, myth, proverb, sacred groves, etc. Folk stands for a group of people or a particular tribe or region. Folk lore stands for the unwritten literature expressed by a group of people of folk. It indicates useful and important knowledge about medicines, food, customs, cereals, spices, wood, gum, cloth, fibers, etc. The word folklore was first used by the English antiquarian William Thomas in a letter published in the London journal *The Athenaeum* in 1846 Sims and Martine<sup>7</sup>.

Indian folklorists such as Devendra Satyarthi, Krishna Dev Upadhyaya, Prafulla Dutta Goswami, Kunja Bihari Dash, Ashutosh Bhattacharya, etc. since last 30 years have substantially contributed to the study of folklore<sup>1</sup>. Plants play an important role in livelihood, economically socially, religiously and spiritually<sup>2</sup>. Folklore gives information about the use, the prohibition, the way and season of intake as food and plantation<sup>5</sup>. Scientifically it has been proved in laboratories that these songs, tales,

believe shows correct method or way of using plants.

Folklore includes Folk-tales, Folk-songs, Folk-proverbs, Folk-medicines, etc.<sup>4</sup>. These shows the love of folk people for nature and are related to various aspects of natural, cultural, mythological, political, traditional and various other activities of the people<sup>6</sup>. Folk tales are the oral stories which are very popular among folk people of all over India and Chhattisgarh. Some famous folk tales of Chhattisgarh are, Dhola maru, Raja Nal and Mata Damyanti, Raja Bhoj, Loric Chanda, Nindriya Mundriya, Bhalnin, Khirmit, Belva Kayina, Paidhna Paidhneen, Lal Bujhakkad, etc.

Ethnobotanical survey was conducted in Raipur district including 4 villages of Abhanpur block. The plant samples were identified with the help of *Flora of British India* (Hooker, J.D. 1872-97. vol. I-VII). Information about folklores related to plants are collected from the old age people (40-80 years), family head members particularly ladies of old families of villages and urban areas and village medicine man.

During present study 10 folklores, 3

folk proverbs, 2 folk medicine, 1 folk song and 2 taboos were recorded. Folklores including 14 plants belonging to 12 families recorded: *Oryza sativa* - Gramineae; *Piper betle* - Piperaceae; *Musa paradisiaca* - Musaceae; *Terminalia chebula* - Combretaceae; *Momordica charantia* - Cucurbitaceae; *Moringa oleifera* - Moringaceae; *Madhuca latifolia* - Sapotaceae; *Saccharum officinarum* - Gramineae; *Azadirachta indica* - Meliaceae; *Trachyspermum ammi* - Umbelliferae; *Citrus aurantifolia* - Rutaceae; *Marsilea quadrifolia* - Marsileaceae; *Piper nigrum* - Piperaceae; *Calotropis procera*-Asclepiadaceae (Fig. 1).

Out of 12 families 2 belong to monocotyledonae and 9 dicotyledonae, 1 family belongs to pteridophyta<sup>8</sup>. Folk proverbs include 2 plants belonging to 2 families: *Phoenix dactylifera* (Palmae) (Fig. 3); *Azadirachta indica* (Meliaceae) Fig. 2. Folk medicine included 2 plants with 2 families: *Acacia catechu* - Mimosioidae; *Achyranthus aspera* - Amaranthaceae. Folk song included 1 plant *Ficus religiosa* - Moraceae. Taboos included 2 plants and 2 families *Ficus religiosa* - Moraceae; *Datura alba* - Solanaceae. Some of the folklores recorded were as follows:

Table-1. Number of plants with total number of families mentioned in folklore.

S. No.	Folklore	Common name	Botanical name	Family
1	Dhan, Paan au Kera, Teeno Pani ke chera.	Dhan	<i>Oryza sativa</i> L.	Gramineae
		Paan Kera	<i>Piper betle</i> L. <i>Musa paradisiaca</i> L.	Piperaceae Musaceae
2	Ek than Harra au gaon bhar ke khokhi	Harra	<i>Terminalia chebula</i> Retz.	Combretaceae
3	Kunwar karela katik dahi, marhi nahi to parhi sahi.	Karela	<i>Momordica charantia</i> L.	Cucurbitaceae
4	Munga kathe mor phal lakdi, wahu la khathe chhevari bapuri.	Munaga	<i>Moringa oleifera</i> Lam.	Moringaceae
5	Baap put ke eke naav, nati ke kachu au, Ee kahani la jan ke, pun uchahau kaur.	Mahua	<i>Madhuca latifolia</i> (Roxb.) Chevalier	Sapotaceae
6	Teen sinchai terah god, Tab dekhau ukhi ke por.	Kusiyar/ Ganna	<i>Saccharum officinarum</i> L.	Gramineae
7	Neem ma battis gun, Harra ma chhattis.	Neem	<i>Azadirachta indica</i> A. Juss.	Meliaceae
		Harra	<i>Terminalia chebula</i> Retz.	Combretaceae

8	Ajwain ko pees le, nibu sang milaay, Foda funsi dur ho, sabhi bala tal jaye.	Ajwain	<i>Trachyspermum ammi</i> Sprague	Umbelliferae
		Nimbu	<i>Citrus aurantifolia</i> (Cristm.) Swingle	Rutaceae
9	Chunchuniya bhaji chan ke, kha le wo noni man ke.	Chunchuniya bhaji	<i>Marsilea quadrifolia</i> L.	Marsileaceae
10	Kali mirch mahin pisave, Aak pushpa aur shahad milave, Chatni prathmahi khay, sukhi khansi jhat mit jay.	Kali Mirch	<i>Piper nigrum</i> L.	Piperaceae
		Fudahar	<i>Calotropis procera</i> (Ait.) Ait.f.	Asclepiadaceae

*Folk-proverbs:*

Asman se gira, khajoor pe atka - many obstacles while working hard. (Phoenix dactylifera)  
Ek phool se mala nahi banti - One flower makes no garland.

Neem na meethi hoy seencho gur ghee se - Crows are never the whiter for washing. (Azadirachta indica)

*Folk-medicines:*

- i. *Acacia catechu* - Mimosoidae (Khair) - Decoction of bark-10 ml given in stomachache.
- ii. *Achyranthus aspera* - Amaranthaceae (Chirchita)
  - Grinded leaves- in wounds.
  - Powder of seeds - in bleeding piles.

Dadariya song for peepal (*Ficus religiosa*) is-  
"pipar pal dolat naiye,  
Mouni bhoye baithe ; bolat naiye."

*Taboos:*

- i. *Datura* (*Datura alba*) (Fig. 4) flower

should not be offered to Lord Vishnu.

- ii. Peepal (*Ficus religiosa*) and Banyan (*Ficus bangalensis*) trees are considered more holistic than a saint.



Fig. 1. *Calotropis procera*

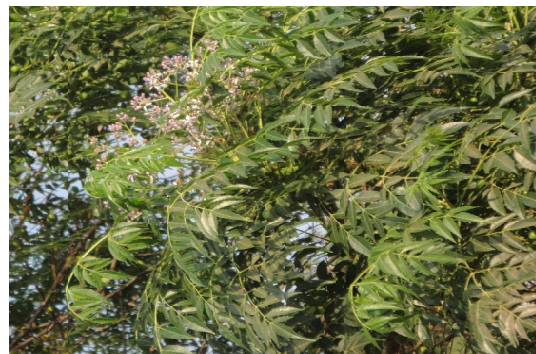


Fig. 2. *Azadirachta indica*



Fig. 3. *Phoenix dactylifera*



Fig. 4. *Datura alba*

Recorded folklores include 14 plants were of medicinally important. Total 10 folklores, 3 folk proverbs, 2 folk medicines, 1 folk song and 2 taboos were tabulated which express the utility of plant, some are in question form, some shows weather forecasting and related to method of agriculture cropping. Folk song, Folk medicine, Taboos, folk proverbs are

types of folklore. These plants have special characters and thus their conservation is necessary. Various religious and supernatural beliefs and folklores help in the conservation and prevention of destruction of plants. There are many examples of trees worship tradition in different parts of the world under all religions and beliefs.

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