

Study of some wild edible plants of Bastar District with special reference to Muriya Tribes

Mukta Shrivastava

Department of Botany,
Govt. M.L.B. Girls P.G. (Auto.) College, Bhopal-462008 (India)
email ID - mukta.shrivastava07@gmail.com

Abstract

Tribal people are undoubtedly the repository of accumulated experience and knowledge of vast indigenous flora and fauna. Bastar is the biggest district of Chhattisgarh (former Madhya Pradesh) is populated by many tribes but the *Muria* tribe has got its own importance. The present study includes 34 wild edible plants of Bastar district which are used as food by *Muria* tribe of the district.

Tribals living close to nature have over the years, acquired unique knowledge about the use of the living biological resources. The tribal knowledge system on plants and animals exists as oral tradition and only a fraction is available to science even today. India has over 54 million tribals consisting of about 7.5% of the total population. Tribal people have developed their own culture, customs, cults, religious rites, taboos, legends and myths, food and medicinal practices. Bastar in Chhattisgarh in Central India is predominantly a tribal area with *Gond*, *Halbi*, *Maria*, *Muria*, *Abhujmaria*, *Dandami maria*, *Bhatra* and *Dorla (Koya)* people living amidst thickets of natural vegetation. The flora includes hundreds of medicinal plants as evidenced from the present author. The tribals are well-versed with herbal medicines for a variety of ailments. They also practice 'Mantrik' and 'Tantrik' treatment. Verrier Elwin concludes the word *Muria* used

in Bastar to mean generally as aboriginal. It has been derived from 'mur' the Palas tree or from mur root, the term meaning aboriginal.

The *Muria* in contrast to the hill *Maria* have permanent settlements and dwelling. A large number of tribal population is living in forest fringe areas Jain³, Maheshwari⁴, Rai⁵ have conducted explorations in many parts of India⁶. The wild plants and their products are being utilised by the people of tribal areas in general and *Muria* tribes in particular. The main aim of the present survey was to search the wild plants of Bastar district specially in *Muria* tribes which form an important additional source for their livelihood. The history of search for wild plants is as old as the history of civilization. The search is still continued in developing countries like India, due to population explosion, there is an urgent need to trace out some new alternatives of

food. Contributions on this aspect were made in the recent past by some ethnobotanists^{2,7,8}. Several works on ethno-medicinal aspects in relation to utilization and conservation have been conducted in many parts of India. According to Rai and Nath⁶, the wild plants and their products are being utilized by the people of tribal areas in general and *Muriya* tribes in particular. The main aim of the present survey was to search the wild plants of Bastar district specially in areas of *Muriya* tribes which form an important additional source for their livelihood.

Periodical surveys were made for the collection of wild plants that are used as food. The first hand information was obtained from the *Muria* Tribes of the region. The local name, botanical name and the use of the plants were noted by consulting the people of the villages.

The present study records 34 wild growing plants which are eaten whole or in part by the local people. A list of these plants along with their family, local name parts used is given hereunder.

Wild edible plants of Bastar District used by *Muriya* tribes of Chhattisgarh.

1. *Aegle marmelos*, (Linn.) Corr. (Rutaceae), "Bel"
The ripe fruit is eaten by the tribals.
2. *Agaricus campestris*, Linn. (Agaricaceae) "Chhatti/Masroom"
It is consumed as vegetable by the tribals.
3. *Amaranthus spinosus*, Linn. (Amaranthaceae), "Katili chaulai"
Leaves are consumed as vegetable.
4. *Bauhinia racemosa*, Lamk. (Fabaceae), "Kathmohila"
Its ripe fruit is eaten by tribals.
5. *Boerhaavia diffusa*, Linn. (Nyctaginaceae), "Punarnava/Patharchata"
Leaves are used as vegetable.
6. *Bombax malabaricum*, D.C. (Bombacaceae) "Semar/Semal"
The young flower buds, mixed with *Mahua* flowers are eaten during food scarcity.
7. *Buchanania lanzan*, Spreng. (Anacardiaceae), "Char/Chiraunji"
The ripe fruits and its seeds are eaten.
8. *Butea monosperma*, Lamk. (Fabaceae), "Chhuela/Palas"
The young flower buds are used as vegetable along with pickled oil.
9. *Commelina benghalensis*, Linn. (Commelinaceae), "Kankaura Bhaji"
The leaves are cooked as vegetable.
10. *Dendrocalamus strictus*, Nees. (Poaceae) "Bans"
The young stem (Karil) is cooked as vegetable.
11. *Dioscorea sativa*, Thunb. (Dioscoreaceae), "Gethikanda/Girhorakanda"
The tubers are used as a vegetable along with salt after boiling.
12. *Dioscorea pentaphylla*, Linn. (Dioscoreaceae), "Khanima kanda Chheira Kanda"
The tubers are used as vegetable along with salt after boiling. Some lemon or tamarind is also added to the tuber to remove its bitterness. The tubers are collected in bulk and

- kept in shade during summer and in times of food scarcity.
13. *Diospyros melanoxylon*, Roxb. (Ebenaceae), “Tendu”
The ripe pulp is used as an ingredient in the preparation of bread by the “Baigas, Paliha, Kol” along with ripe fruit is eaten.
 14. *Emblica officinalis*, Gaertn. (Euphorbiaceae), “Amla”
The fruit is commonly eaten .
 15. *Ficus benghalensis*, Linn. (Moraceae), “Bargad/Bar”
The ripe fruits is eaten.
 16. *Ficus racemosa*, Linn. (Moarceae), “Gular/Dumar”
The ripe fruit is eaten and unripe fruit is cooked as vegetable.
 17. *Ficus religiosa*, Linn. (Moraceae), “pipar/Pipal”
The ripe fruit is eaten.
 18. *Grewia hirsuta*, Vahl. (Tiliaceae), “Gursakri”
Its young fruits are edible.
 19. *Holarrhena antidysenterica*, Wall. (Apocynaceae), “Koraya/Kurchi”
The flower bud is cooked as vegetable.
 20. *Indigofera casiooides*, Rottl. (Fabaceae), “Girhul/Birhul”
Fruit-Pod, the flower bud is cooked as vegetable & curry.
 21. *Ipomoea pestigridis*, Linn. (Convolvulaceae), “Bilariputa/Hirankhuri”
Seed is eaten by the tribal children after slight roasting.
 22. *Lycoperdon nigrum*, Lioyd. (Lycoperdaceae), “Gojaya”
Its whole plant used as vegetable by the tribals.
 23. *Lycoperdon gemmatum*, Batsch. (Lycoperdaceae), “Putu”
Wild, saprophytes, found growing in rainy season from underground, round in shape, and brown in colour.
Its whole plant used as vegetable by the tribals.
 24. *Madhuca latifolia*, Roxb. (Sapotaceae), “Mahua”
The fresh as well as dry flowers are eaten along with seed.
 25. *Momordica dioica*, Roxb. (Cucurbitaceae), “Kheksha/Padora”
The unripe fruits are used as vegetable.
 26. *Phoenix acaulis*, Buch. (Palmaceae), “Chhindi”
The ripe fruits and pulp of the root stock are eaten by the tribals.
 27. *Solanum nigrum*, Linn. (Solanaceae), “Makoi”
The young leaves are cooked as vegetable while ripe fruit is eaten (berries) as such.
 28. *Syzygium cumini*, Linn. Skeels (Myrtaceae), “Jamun “
The ripe fruits is eaten.
 29. *Syzygium heyneanum*, Wall. (Myrtaceae), “Kathjamti I Kath Jamun”
The ripe fruits is eaten by the tribals.
 30. *Tamarindus indicus*, Linn. (Fabaceae), “Imli I Amlı”
The fruit is eaten.
 31. *Terminalia belerica*, Roxb. (Combretaceae), “Bahera”

The seed of the fruit is eaten.

32. *Zizyphus jujuba*, lamk. (Rhamnaceae), “Ber” .

The ripe fruit eaten and their powder is used as spices.

33. *Zizyphus nummularius* W. & A. (Rhamaceae). “Jharberi”

The ripe fruit is eaten.

34. *Zizyphus oenoplia*, Mill. (Rhamnaceae), "Jangli Makoi"

The ripe fruits are eaten.

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