

Indigenous knowledge on some medicinal plants among the Nicobari Tribe of Car Nicobar Island

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The Nicobari tribe of Car Nicobar Island is endowed with vast knowledge of medicinal plants. They cultivate some of these plants for the treatment of various diseases. An attempt has been made to document some of the medicinal plants commonly used by these tribes. A note on the exact usage along with the local name and photographs are also provided.

Keywords: Nicobarese, Car Nicobar, Medicinal Plants, Nicobari Tribe, Ethnomedicine.

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According to World Health Organization estimate, approximately 80% indigenous populations in developing countries depend on traditional medicine for primary health care needs; a major portion of these involves the use of medicinal plants¹. Demand for medicinal plants in domestic and international markets is on increase². Thus chemical prospecting of plant resources offers huge potential in using and conserving biodiversity. At present, around 70% of the drugs used as medicines are modeled on natural compounds, yet these are derived from only around 250 plant species, when only less than 0.1% of the plant species have been examined for their medicinal value³. In the rural and tribal lives of India, medicinal plant sector has

traditionally occupied an important position in the socio-cultural, spiritual and medicinal arena. Recognizing the world's increasing concern on herbal medicines and India's rich traditional heritage and folklore in utilizing plants as medicines, the Government of India has emphasized the need to document, protect and evaluate the traditional knowledge⁴.

The use of plants for medical treatment in India dates back to prehistoric time. The practice of oral tradition is still prevalent among the tribes of India, where local communities in every ecosystem from the Trans-Himalayan region to the coastal plains regions have discovered the medicinal uses of thousands of plants found in the ecosystems. There are about 25,000 effective plant based formulations available in the indigenous medical texts. The folklore

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