

125

Uses: In relieving headache and in treating tumour, epilepsy, fits. It is reported to be antiinflammatory. The leaves are made into paste and applied on the forehead to get relieve from headache. The seeds cause dizziness. The root is chewed as an instant remedy against eating poisonous crabs and fish. The barks, seeds and young leaves are used as purgative. The leaves are crushed into a fine paste, which is subsequently applied on cuts and wounds. The juice of the bark and leaves possess depilatory properties.

6. *Kaempferia siphonantha* King ex. Baker; (Zingiberaceae); Local name: *Cekur*

Salient features: A stemless annual, up to 20 cm in height, with slender root fibres; leaves 3-4 oblique; solitary flower at the end of long slender spikes, white flowers. Found in Little Andaman and some places of south Andaman.

Uses: Decoction of the tuber is used to cure fever and stomach pain.

7. *Mallotus philippensis* (Lam.) Muell.-Arg.; (Euphorbiaceae); Local name: *Monkey face tree* (Fig. 3)

Salient features: A small tree with dark-coloured bark; leaves 11-23 cm long, ovate-lanceolate, acuminate, 3-nerved at the base, dark green; petioles up to 8 cm long, slender and thickened at the apex; flowers small, spikes; fruits covered with a red powder, found in the inland forest of Chidiyatapu, Baratang, Jarawa creek in Middle Andaman, Havelock, Long Island and Little Andaman.

Uses: The crude powder from the exterior of the fruits is found to be anthelmintic. It destroys threadworm, hookworm and roundworm. The powdery coat of the fruit mixed with water and is taken for one week to get relieve from colic pain and to expel bile. Leaves and roots are useful in the

treatment of skin diseases. The decoction of the bark is used for abdominal pain. Paste prepared from ground seeds is applied to wounds and cuts.

8. *Phyllanthus andamanicus* Balakr. & Nair; (Euphorbiaceae); local name: *Dadaura* (Fig. 2)

Salient features: A small shrubby tree (2-3m tall); leaves alternate, distichous, stipules narrow; flowers small, monocious, axillary on old nodes; males usually many fascicled, sessile, rarely few or solitary; female in the same, longer pedicelled, solitary or few and perianth free very shortly connate, imbricate and more or less distinctly 2-seriate; anthers

oblong or didymous, reniform, cells parallel or diverging dehiscence extrorsely, vertical or transverse; carpels connate, 3-celled, rarely 4-more-celled ovary; ovules two, or connate, usually bifid; dilated fruits & 4-8 celled berry or a drupe with a 3-4 celled bony endocarp; seeds trigonous; cotyledons flat or flexuous, found in Inland hill forests, rocky literite soil in North Andaman.

Uses: Antidiuretic properties are well recognized among the tribal people inhabiting Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Leaves are used for the diuretic problem. The decoction of leaves is generally used to cure this ailment.

9. *Semecarpus kurzii* Engler; (Anacardeaceae); local name: *Bara Bhilawa* (Fig. 5)

Salient features: A tree with light grey smooth bark, having black acrid juice; leaves, alternate, glabrous, oblong lanceolate, shortly acuminate; flowers small, polygamous or dioecious; fruits drupe, oblong or subglobose, oblique; pericarp resinous acrid; seeds pendulous, fleshy with convex cotyledons, found throughout forest in the Islands.

Uses: Leaf juice is applied on the infected area for treating wounds (anthelmintic). The leaf paste is applied in the forehead for the treatment of malarial fever. Resin is used for curing allergic infections on the skin. Eruptions and blisters develop on the skin upon touching the tree.

Discussion

Of 156 plants reported to have medicinal property, 58 are found to be multipurpose ones, used for more than one ailment. The most promising medicinal plants having multipurpose function are *Calotropis gigantea*, *Cyanodon dactylon*, *Centalla asiatica*, *Jatropha gossipifolia*, *Tamarindus indica*, etc. Maximum plants are available for gastrointestinal problems, skin

infection, fever, chest and joint pain. The method of usage generally varied raw extract to decoction. For skin disease, generally the plant part juice is applied. Fractured bones and sprain are treated by making a paste of the plant part either as such or mixed with egg or pig fat and then applied and bandaged tightly. In some cases, combinations of plant parts are used. About 45 species are found to be potential medicinal plants, which are being used by the aboriginals and by the people of diverse ethnic groups (Fig. 9). Use of many plants in healthcare system of aboriginals/tribals is exciting and need to be protected and documented. Documented information may help enable in carrying