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Studies on ethnobotanical plants used in the marriage ceremony in santhal community of Jharkhand

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Abstract:- India is an important biodiversity centre with over 45000 various plant species. Since ages conservation of natural resources has been an integral aspect of many indigenous communities all over the world. These people are largely dependent on their traditional system, for their information to be passed on from generation to generation through oral communication. The Santhal tribe of Dumka district of Jharkhand has preserved their ritual and culture. Santhal tribe is the leading tribe of the state of Jharkhand. They have a unique culture. Marriage is an important aspect in the life of Santhal people. The present work focuses on the plants used in marriage ceremonies. There are ten documented plants which are used during marriage ceremonies. These plants belong to nine different families. These plants are considered to be of great importance due to their religious and medicinal uses.

Key words: Ethnobotanical plants, marriage ceremony, santhal community, ethnic tribe, Jharkhand

INTRODUCTION

Jharkhand is home to 47 tribal communities, among them Santhal, Oraon, Munda, Ho and Kharia are the major tribes.¹ The Santhal tribe is the leading tribe of the state of Jharkhand. The Santhals have unique custom, culture and lifestyle.² They are mainly inhabited in the states of Jharkhand, Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal and Assam.³ The Santhal tribe utilize various plants for their daily requirements and they also maintain the natural resources. They collect different plants or plant parts based on their traditional knowledge.⁴ The Santhal tribe is aware of variety of natural resources which has developed into valuable local knowledge system which consists of widespread

knowledge about the use of plants in general, sacred purposes and domestic uses.⁵ Nearly more than ten thousand plant species are used by different tribal communities for food, fibre, spices, oil, medicine, fodder for livestock, fuel wood, ritual and ceremonies.⁶ The plants are a very essential aspect in beliefs, religion and historical context.⁷ The tribe observe three main occasions and they are birth, marriage and death ceremonies.⁸ Marriage gives a remarkable tribal feature and reflects its cultural individuality. The tribal marriage is considered as a civil contract and not a religious sacrament.⁹ There are two types of marriage the regular marriage and the irregular marriage. The regular marriages are arranged by parents and the irregular marriage is enforced through elopement, capture, intrusion and so on.¹⁰ The general marriage is

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arranged by parents which is then followed by a regular marriage ceremony. The Santhal tribe practices monogamy.¹¹ Monogamy is a type of marriage in which union of a man and women takes place. The Santhali name for marriage is called "Bapla". Marriage is always a reason to celebrate.¹² In Santhal community marriage is a sacred event of life it adds to respect in the society. It is also the start of legal relationship. There is no restriction of age. A Santhal marriage takes almost five days and it involves various complex rituals. The centre of the courtyard where marriage rituals take place is called "Mandwa". The women wear their traditional costumes and headgear made of colourful flowers and leaves.¹³ A Santhal marriage is of eleven types and they are Sadai Bapla, Golaeti Bapla, Tunki Dipil Bapla, Sangha Bapla, Jawaee Kirinok Bapla, Hiram Cetan Bapla, Or Ader Bapla, Nir Bolok Bapla, Iputut Bapla, Apangir Bapla and Kundal Napam Bapla. Sadai Bapla is the very common type of marriage found in Santhal community. Nepel, Orak Duar Nel, Horok Cikhna, Taka Cal, Gira Tol, Baplatet Reak, Jawaee Eger Seren, Balaya Seren, Bahu Jawaee Daramdak, Gidi Cumaura, Tendar Ak Sar, Lumti Baret Bida, Mandwa Otor this is the common procedure in Santhal Marriage ceremony.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study Area

Dumka is located at 24.27°N, 87.25°E. Dumka district has an area of 3716 Km². The district has a population of 13,21,096 (2011 census). Dumka has a pre-dominantly undulating terrain with hard rock's under the ground. The entire district has topography with high ridges and valleys bounded by mountains and rivers. It was made the headquarters of the Santhal Pargana region, which was carved out of Bhagalpur and Siuri districts after the Santhal Hool 1855. The Santhal revolt started in 1855. Dumka is the sub - capital of the state of Jharkhand. The east Santhal Pargana zone gets rain in summer with an average around

13.5 cm. This area comes under the highlands of Rajmahal range like Sahebgunj and Pakur. The Rajmahal ranges plays very significant role in becoming a roadblock between warm westerly winds and the moisture loaded winds of Bay of Bengal.

The present study was carried out in three villages of Dumka district namely Sujan, Kukurtoppa and Kodokicha during 2019. The three villages were inhabited by Santhal tribe. They were mostly dependent on forest and agriculture for their livelihood. The common trees found in these villages were: - *Terminalia tomentosa* Roxb. (ex DC) Wight and Arn., *Azadirachta indica* A.Juss., *Phoenix sylvestris* (Linn.)Roxb, *Mangifera indica* L., *Butea monosperma* Lam., *Madhuca longifolia* (J.Koning) J.F.Macbr, *Shorea robusta* Gaertn., *Bambusa vulgaris* Schard.ex.J.C.Wendle, *Moringa oleifera* Lam., *Aegle marmelos* L., *Syzygium cumini* L., *Haldina cordifolia* (Roxb.) Ridsdale, *Bauhinia variegata* (L.), *Ficus religiosa* Linn., *Dalbergia sissoo* Roxb., *Bauhinia purpurea* (L.). During survey interview of Manjhi Hadam (Mukhya), Naiki (Pujari), Heads of tribe, Elder man, Elder women, and knowledgeable persons was done by the help of questionnaire about plants used in the marriage ceremonies. This information was collected by personal visit to the study area. The discussion was done with the respondent with their consent. The communication with the local tribal people took an hour and above. The medium of communication was Hindi and Santhali. The Santhali names and common names were noted down. Photographs of the plants were taken. During the survey plant specimen were collected with the help of local tribal people. The collected plants were identified with the help of Flora of Bihar and Orissa by H.H.Haines in University Department of Botany, Ranchi University, Ranchi. The collected plants were also preserved in the form of herbarium.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Ethnobotanical plants used in marriage ceremonies

S.N	Botanical Name	Family	Common Name	Santhali Name	Habit	Parts Used	Mode of use
1.	<i>Shorea robusta</i> Gaertn.	Depterocarpaceae	Sal Tree	Sarjom Dare	Tree	Leaves , Flowering Twig	The branch of the plant is placed in the courtyard of the house where the rituals of marriage ceremony takes place.
2.	<i>Phoenix sylvestris</i> (Linn.)Roxb .	Palmae	Wild Date	Khajur	Tree	Leaves	The leaves are woven together to make mats which is used during Sunum Sasang (Haldi Lapan) ceremony a day before marriage.

Tudu & Kandir- Studies on ethnobotanical plants used in the marriage ceremony in santhal community of Jharkhand

3.	<i>Madhuca longifolia</i> (J.Koning)J.F.Macbr.	Sapotaceae	Honey Tree	Matkom Dare	Tree	Leaves, Flowers	The branch is placed in the courtyard on the day of Mandwa and it is worshiped.
4.	<i>Lawsonia inermis</i> L.	Lythraceae	Heena	Mehndi	Shrub	Leaves	The leaves are crushed and made into paste and it is applied on fingers as dye.
5.	<i>Mangifera indica</i> L.	Anacardiaceae	Mango Tree	Ul Dare	Tree	Leaves	The leaves are used to decorate the doors of the house and mandwa.
6.	<i>Azadirachta indica</i> A. Juss	Meliaceae	Neem Tree	Neem Dare	Tree	Leaves	It is used to decorate the mandwa.
7.	<i>Curcuma longa</i> L.	Zingiberaceae	Turmeric	Sasang	Shrub	Rhizome	The rhizome is made into paste which is applied to bride and bridegroom the day before marriage.
8.	<i>Brassica rapa</i> L.	Brassicaceae	Mustard	Turi	Herb	Seed	The oil from the seed is used in various rituals in marriage ceremony.
9.	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i> L.	Poaceae	Dhoob Grass	Dhoobi Ghas	Grass	Entire Plant	The entire plant is used as a brush to apply the paste of turmeric and mustard oil on bride and bridegroom the day before marriage.
10.	<i>Bambusa vulgaris</i> Schard.ex.J.C.Wendl	Poaceae	Bamboo	Mat	Grass	Entire plant	The entire plant is used to decorate the mandwa where the marriage ceremony takes place.

The present study focuses on the plants used in marriage ceremonies by the Santhal community of Dumka district of Jharkhand. The result of the study showed that 10 plants are used during marriage ceremonies. These plants

belong to 9 different families among them 5 plants are trees, 2 are shrubs, 1 is herb and the rest two plants belong to grass family. The most commonly used plant part was the leaves, followed by flowers, entire plant, seed and rhizome.



A. Preparation for marriage ceremony



B. Before marriage worshipping of sacred tree



C. Ritual performed by bride and bridegroom during marriage ceremony



D. Singing and Dancing with musical instruments under Mandwa

Figure 1. Picture (A, B, C and D) showing the rituals of marriage ceremony

CONCLUSION

The Santhal community of Dumka district of Jharkhand have religious belief which conserves the biodiversity of the area. Santhal Pargana is rich in

biodiversity and there is a need to conserve it. Their knowledge about plants and traditional practices needs to be preserved and appreciated.

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