

Research Documents with New Comments 11

Introductory Note

This series is an effort to present the updated research documents with information collected through recent Ethnobotanical surveys (December 2010 onwards).

Traditional Medicinal Knowledge about medicinal herb Til (*Sesamum indicum*) in Chhattisgarh, India.

Research Note - Pankaj Oudhia

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As a student of Agronomy, I have read that *Sesamum*, commonly known as Til, is one of the important edible oilseeds cultivated in India. It is grown in the country since antiquity. India is a major producer of this crop in the world. Til is rich in oil (50 percent) and protein (18-20 percent). About 78 percent of the Til seed produced in India is used for oil extraction, 2.5 percent for planting purposes and the rest is used in confections and in religious Hindu ceremonies. As a student, I was not aware of Medicinal properties and uses of Til as medicine. When I started ethnomedico surveys, I was surprised to know that although for farmers it is just oilseed crop but for the herb experts and traditional healers of Chhattisgarh, it is valuable medicinal herb.

Through these surveys, I have collected a lot of information on ethnomedico uses of Til in different parts of Chhattisgarh. I personally feel that if we give recognition to the ethnomedico uses of Til, this oilseed crop can become a potential medicinal crop and the farmers can get more higher price for their produce. In Chhattisgarh, Til is cultivated as major oilseed crop. There are many varieties, developed by research centres, suitable for different agro climatic situations. As oil seed crop the main emphasis of crop breeders is on higher production. Heavy doses of chemical inputs have been recommended and used by the scientists and farmers. The traditional healers of Chhattisgarh, do not consider these high yielding varieties suitable for preparation of drugs. They prefer organically grown traditional varieties. Their emphasis is on low yielding high quality herbs. Most of the healers specialised in using Til as medicine, grow this herb in their Badi or home gardens according to their need and use it as per need. The healers use it both externally and internally. At present, Til seeds are only important for farmers but for the traditional healers of Chhattisgarh all parts of Til are valuable and useful as medicine. According to the healers, all stages of Til herb are useful in treatment of common diseases. On the basis of seed colour, there are two groups of Til, white seeded and black seeded. The white seeded Til have less number of flowers and branches as compared to black seeded Til. Although in reference literatures, related to different systems of medicine, medicinally black seeded type is considered best as compared to white seeded type but for the traditional healers of Chhattisgarh, both types have their own importance and uses. The healers use the Til oil as base oil for the preparation of herbal oils very frequently. I have written a lot on this aspect in my previous

articles focused on herbal oils and I am not repeating all these in this article. In present article, I am describing some practical ethnomedico uses of different parts of Til herb.

The traditional healers use beautiful flowers of Til as medicine very frequently. In case of urinary troubles particularly in dysuria the traditional healers of Chhattisgarh, use Til flower successfully. They collect 40 to 45 flowers of Til and clean it with water. After washing they dip it in half glass of water. Twelve hours after dipping, the patients are advised to drink the water. The traditional healers instruct the patients to take this medicated water twice a day, one at morning and second dose at evening till relief. I have talked to the patients using this medicated water. According to them, within one month this water solves the problem. The healers informed that it is "Poor Man's herb" for the patients suffering from Sujak (gonorrhoea).

New Comments added on February 14, 2011

The Traditional Healers of Chhattisgarh Plains use herbal extract of five winter herbs before collecting Til flowers. Til plants are treated with the extract from emergence to preflowering stage. They claim that this treatment enriches Til flowers with desired medicinal properties. The flowers collected from treated plants are used in many diseases including in Type II Diabetes. As you know there are more than 35,000 cancer formulations are there in CGBD database. In atleast thirty formulations Til flowers collected from treated plants are added as important ingredients. For promising effects they prefer the rainwater of first monsoon rains. Rain water collected from leaves of different forest trees including Beeja tree having good growth of Kauagodi orchid are preferred for the patients having Gonorrhoea. I have written much about it in my report on Type II Diabetes.

The Healers using Til plant parts as medicine complained that introduction of new commercial varieties of Til are inferior in terms of medicinal properties. Most of them grow Desi types in their crop fields for year round use but due to increasing number of patients they have to depend on commercial varieties. The Healers of North Chhattisgarh have solved this problem. They add flowers of winter herbs with Til flowers in order to increase the efficacy. They are experimenting continuously and getting new results. Only promising results are included in their recommendations and others are ignored. During recent visit I showed interest in ignored formulations and they shared it without any hesitation. Now I am travelling to different parts of India with these so-called failed formulations and interacting with Healers in order to remove its negative points. After developing it as promising formulations I will return it back to the Healers of North Chhattisgarh.

The Healers of Kanker region informed that they prefer to use Til flowers with roots for more promising effects. I have collected information about over 50 Traditional Formulations in which Til flowers and roots are used as primary ingredients. Many of these formulations are used in treatment of patients having poor vitality. They claim that they have saved many cancer patients at advanced stage by using these formulations along with other formulations.

The Healers of Kanker region use combinations of 6, 7, 15, 18, 20, 55, 70 and 76 herbs to treat Til plants at vegetative stage in order to get medicinally rich Til flowers and roots. I amazed to learn their in-depth Traditional Allelopathic Knowledge.

Many healers use these Til flowers externally in treatment of eye troubles. For treatment of eye troubles they use Til (or Tlli) flower in combination with other herbs. In rural areas of Chhattisgarh, it is general practice that natives collect the dew drops from Til herb and apply one to two drops inside the eyes. According to them, it is good eye tonic. The traditional healers are also aware of this use. According to them, white seeded variety is preferred for dew collection and dew drops collected on flowers are most important and useful. This use reduces the unwanted heat from eyes. Many healers informed me that this dew is very good hair tonic also, but it is difficult to collect large amount of dew.

The traditional healers of Chhattisgarh use the Til roots (before flowering) for treatment of Pathari (Renal Calculi). The roots are collected and after drying, the healers burnt it. The patients are advised to use the ash with pure honey. The healers informed me that it is promising solution (Shartia Dava). As overdose can cause many troubles, the healers give this ash under their strict supervision.

New Comments added on February 14, 2011

Through recent surveys I collected information about over 550 Traditional Formulations in used for treatment of different troubles associated with Kidney including Renal Calculi in which raw Til roots are added in primary, secondary and tertiary ingredients. In these formulations plant parts collected from Allelopathically treated plants are collected. I have written a lot on these Formulations in CGBD database.

In urinary troubles the traditional healers also use the leaves of white seeded Til variety. The healers collect the leaves from five plants and dip it in two glass of water. After dipping they extract the juice from leaves. After extraction, they add two pinch of Kali Mirch (Black Pepper) and sugar (for taste) and the patients are advised to drink this water, till relief. According to the traditional healers of Pendra region, this medicated water is also a good sex tonic. Like in other parts of India, the sweets prepared from both black and white seed varieties are very popular in Chhattisgarh. These sweets are popularly known as Laiya, Gajak or Papdi. Both sugar and gud (Jaggery) are used to prepare the sweets. According to the traditional healers sweets prepared from black seeded variety and gud are best for health. The natives use these sweets during winter. Although most of them are not aware of its medicinal uses, but the healers informed me that these sweets very useful as medicine.

The natives also prepare "Laddus" from Til seeds. The Laddu prepared by using black seeded Til is considered as best tonic for lungs. The patients suffering from asthma and related respiratory troubles are advised to take these Laddus twice a day during whole winter season. I have tried

this Laddus for my respiratory troubles successfully. These sweets are also very beneficial for the patients suffering from chronic constipation. According to the traditional healers of Chhattisgarh these sweets are natural blood purifier and develops resistance in body. The Sweets prepared from black seeded Til are used for treatment of piles and mouth troubles. The traditional healers instruct the patients to drink plenty of water after eating the sweets. This drinking helps the patients to get rid from piles.

New Comments added on February 14, 2011

The recent surveys focused on Traditional medicinal Laddus of Chhattisgarh and surroundings regions revealed that the Traditional Healers specially seniors are aware of over 150 types of Til Laddus and through these medicinal Laddus different diseases are treated. I have noted that over 300 species of herbs and hundreds of herb parts added in these Laddus used for different purposes. Til not only acts as carrier but also play important role in treatment. This unique knowledge is yet not documented by other researchers. Also common people are not aware of it. The Healers prepare for patients at very small level. In early days when big Kingdoms were present in India the medicated Til Laddus from Chhattisgarh were in much demand. Now knowledge about these Laddus is in danger. I have written a lot on different aspects of Medicated Laddus including Til and Methi Laddus in my report on Diabetes.

In reference literatures, related to different systems of medicine, Til holds a reputed position as medicinal herb. According to Ayurveda, seeds are acrid, oleaginous, indigestible, tonic, cooling, galactagogue, diuretic, astringent to bowels, and aphrodisiac. It is useful in treatment of diarrhoea, gout, diseases of eye and urinary system. Roots are aphrodisiac, hair tonic and useful in treatment of Sore-throat, inflammations, bleeding piles, spleen troubles, and gout whereas seed oil is fattening, strengthening and useful in dry cough, asthma, lung diseases, scabies, Small-pox, syphilitic ulcers and inflammations. The scientific name of Til is *Sesamum indicum* (family: Pedaliaceae). I am describing its botany, I have noted from reference literatures. It is a herbaceous annual having height upto 2.0 meters. The stem is erect, normally square in section; Stem colour light green to almost purple, but the most common is darkish - green shade. The upper part of the stem is particularly covered with short and dense hairs; Leaves variable in size and shape; In general, the lower leaves tend to be broader while the upper ones narrow; Arrangements of leaves may be alternate, opposite or mixed; Inflorescence is a raceme and the flowers arise in the axils of the leaves and on the upper portion of the stem and branches. The flower has a two-lipped, tubular corolla with five lobes which are united at the base; The colour of Corolla varies from white to purple; Fruits capsule having two or four carpels; Numerous seeds are borne; Seeds are small, ovate, slightly flattened and some what thinner at the hilum; seed colour as mentioned earlier, black, white or in various shades.

Many traditional medicinal uses of Til as described in this article, are not mentioned in reference literatures. I personally feel that there is a strong need for documentation of such uses. These medicinal uses will help us to establish this important oilseed crop as medicinal crop in Chhattisgarh, and farmers can get additional income by selling its different parts as medicine with the help of herb traders. Recently, the traditional healers of Raipur region informed me that

they have information regarding use of Til herb with different traditional medicinal rice varieties. This is really unique and unreported information. I am focusing my surveys on this important information. I will write a separate article on this aspect very soon.

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