



Mythological Beliefs (*Desi Totke*): Healing by Plants by Local Communities of Jhalawar District, Rajasthan (India)

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ABSTRACT:

The present paper deals with the mythological beliefs of the local communities of the Jhalawar district. Their mythological beliefs are called '*Desi Totke*' in their local language. They use local plants to treat general ailments by doing '*Desi Totke*'. They don't know the reason for their belief but they do so because their last generations are doing so since ancient times. There is no scientific reason discovered for it. Here a total of 25 plant species of 18 families are described in this paper in which a maximum of three species are of both families Solanaceae and Asteraceae, two species of three families Fabaceae, Malvaceae and Poaceae, in the rest of one species in each of Verbenaceae, Menispermaceae, Zingiberaceae, Meliaceae, Liliaceae, Rutaceae, Papaveraceae, Pteridaceae, Amaranthaceae, Asclepiadaceae, Lamiaceae, Brassicaceae, and Arecaceae family. In all 25 described species only one species is a pteridophyte and the rest of all species are angiosperms.

Key word- *Desi Totke, Dogma, Bhopas, Ailment, Treatment.*

INTRODUCTION

Plants are being used as herbal medicines since time immemorial. Plant parts like roots, stems, leaves, flowers, fruits, or the whole plant are used to treat ailments because there are many phytochemicals like polyphenols, flavonoids, isoflavonoids, anthocyanidins, phytoestrogens, terpenoids, carotenoids, limonoids, phytostrerols, glucosinolates, and fibers reside in plants that regulate and control body system and heal the diseases. But there are many mythological beliefs among the tribal communities and villagers about plants. They depend to heal their ailments on the mythological beliefs of plants. It is considered that if an infant or kid is ill means it is suffering from the devil's eye/evil eye (*Najar Lagna*), so first, they try to treat them on their basis by salt-chilly (*Namak-MirchWarna*) otherwise they take him to Bhopas, Ojhas, or Jaanters of the village for the treatment. Bhopas treat them by mythological beliefs doing '*Jhada Dena*', '*Dhooni*' or '*TabeejBandhana*'. Their mythological beliefs are called '*Desi Totke*' in their local language. They use local plants to treat general ailments by doing '*Desi Totke*'. Not only infants or kids but also any person of any age or any gender suffering from any disease, are treated by '*Desi Totke*'. They don't know the reason for their belief but they do so because their last generations are doing so since ancient times. In short, it is just dogma means a belief or set of beliefs that people are expected to accept as true without question. Present communication is related with myths belief associated with plant remedies and ethnic societies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Jhalawar district is located in the west of India and the southeast part of Rajasthan. Most part of the district is covered by the borders of Madhya Pradesh state. The district is in the confines of the Malwa Plateau which is an area of shallow plains and low slopes. A few parts of the Jhalawar district are covered by Mukundara Hills Tiger Reserve. About 17.3 % of the total population of the Jhalawar district is tribal. There are many permanent and nomadic tribal communities in Jhalawar District such as Meena, Bheel, Kanjar, Sahariya, and Banjara, which Meena, Bheel, and Sahariya are permanent while Banjara and Kanjar are nomadic tribal communities. They fulfill their daily needs through plants or plant products such as food, shelter, medicine, etc. by following their traditional system. They always use plants or plant products to heal their disease. Their traditional healers are called *Bhopas, Ojhas, or Jaanters*. They have deep traditional knowledge about the uses of plants as medicines but some diseases are cured on behalf mythological beliefs doing '*Desi-Totke*' by them. The present paper is concerning with mythological beliefs (*Desi Totke*): healing by plants by local communities of Jhalawar district, Rajasthan.

Relevant ethnobotanical studies of various part of India have been made by various authors (Gadgil and Vartak, 1975; Singhand Pandey, 1982; Sharma, Shringi and Tiagi, 1990; Negi, 2005; Ranta and Pirta, 2007; Anthwal, Gupta, Sharma, Anthwal and Kim, 2010; Hegde and Bhat, 2012; Kumar, 2012; Prasad Rajendra, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2018, 2021, 2021; Nawar and Sharma, 2015 and Baswal and Sharma, 2021, Sharma, O.P. 2020, 2013) The present study was based on a field survey of the different villages and

tribal areas of Jhalawar district Rajasthan. The survey was done in about 15 different villages. During the survey, the *Bhopas*, *Ojhas*, *Jaanters*, and other local people of the area were interviewed. People age group 20 to 80 years old of both males and females were included for that. Firstly, information was obtained verbally and then interviewed through questionnaires. The information about the plant and plant parts used to heal the diseases, the local name of the plant, and other information were collected and documented. Fresh plant samples were collected and the identification of the particular plant was confirmed through the literature, social media group discussion (Plant wealth of India), and the experts. The modes of use of the plants with mythological beliefs were focused on.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 25 plant species of 18 families were studied in the area in which a maximum of three species are of both families Solanaceae and Asteraceae, two species of three families Fabaceae, Malvaceae and Poaceae. Rest one species in each of Verbenaceae, Menispermaceae, Zingiberaceae, Meliaceae, Liliaceae, Rutaceae, Papaveraceae, Pteridaceae, Amaranthaceae, Asclepiadaceae, Lamiaceae, Brassicaceae, and Arecaceae family. In all 25 described species only one species is a pteridophyte rest of all 24 species are angiosperms. The plant part which mostly used is fruit. Out of 25 plant species, fruits of 7 plant species are used to cure diseases than leaves of 4 plant species as well roots of 4 plant species, are used. The least used plant parts are bulbs, rhizomes, whole plants, and outgrowth of seeds each with only one plant species. The disease which mostly cured by mythological beliefs is the evil eye (*Nazar Lagna*) which has a frequency of 7. The diseases are cured by tying a plant part on a body part of the patient has a maximum frequency of 9. A list of 25 different plant species of different families was prepared and described as follows:

1. *Achyranthes aspera* L.

- a. Local name – Andhijhada
- b. Family – Amaranthaceae
- c. Myths belief – By tying the root of the mature plant in the mother's braids or keeping it under the pillow, the delivery becomes normal and easy.

2. *Actiniopteris radiata* (Sw.) Link

- a. Local name – Morpankhi
- b. Family – Pteridaceae (Pteridophyta)
- c. Myths belief – In the case of evil eye especially for male babies, dried leaves of the plant are burnt to cure problems. (*Dhooni*)

3. *Allium cepa* L.

- a. Local name – Kanda, Pyaz
- b. Family – Liliaceae
- c. Myths belief – It is a belief that putting an onion in the pocket protects from heatstroke.

4. *Argemone Mexicana* L.

- a. Local name – Satyanashi
- b. Family – Papaveraceae
- c. Myths belief – For the treatment of toothache, the dried fruits of this plant are burnt with cow dung cake and fumigated. This process is called '*Dhooni*'.

5. *Azadirachta indica* A. Juss.

- a. Local name – Neem, Neemdi
- b. Family – Meliaceae
- c. Myths belief – When the children are suffered from evil eye (*nazar*), *Bhopas* of the village treat them with the twigs of a Neem tree by moving up and down on the child's body. This process is called '*JhaadaDena*'. The above process is also used to cure children suffering from chicken pox (*Chhoti Mata or Shitala Mata*).

6. *Brassica juncea* (L.) Czern.

- a. Local name – Rai
- b. Family – Brassicaceae
- c. Myths belief – To remove the evil eye from the child, black mustard and salt are taken 9:9 ratio and after being moved up and down on the child's body, it is thrown outside.

7. *Calotropis procera* (Ait.) W. T. Ait.

- a. Local name – Ankada
- b. Family – Asclepiadaceae
- c. Myths belief – The twigs of the plant is used for '*Jhaada*' by the *Bhopas* of the village to treat the weakness of the kids.

8. *Capsicum annuum* L.

- a. Local name – Mirch
- b. Family – Solanaceae
- c. Myths belief – When a child is suffered from evil eye (*nazar*), to heal the disease some dried red chilies are moved up and down on the child's body and then burnt.

9. *Cassia fistula* L.

- a. Local name – Amaltash
- b. Family – Fabaceae
- c. Myths belief – The long legume fruit of the plant is kept under the pillow to heal the disease of sleep talking.

10. *Citrus limon* (L.) Osbeck

- a. Local name – Nimbu, Nimbuda
- b. Family – Rutaceae
- c. Myths belief – The fruit of the plant is spun around the head of the victim of witchcraft/evil eye and threw it away in the mid of the trijunction.

11. *Curcuma longa* L.

- a. Local name – Haldi
- b. Family – Zingiberaceae
- c. Myths belief – By tying pieces of turmeric around the neck, it provides relief in jaundice.

12. *Datura innoxia* Mill.

- a. Local name – Dhturo
- b. Family – Solanaceae
- c. Myths belief – The pieces of roots of the plant are tied with woolly thread to the waist of a pregnant woman to stop abortion.

13. *Echinopsechinatus* Roxb.

- a. Local name – Oontkanteli
- b. Family – Asteraceae
- c. Myths belief – By tying the root of the mature plant in the mother's braids or keeping it under the pillow at the time of childbirth, the delivery becomes normal and easy.

14. *Gossypium arboreum* L.

- a. Local name – Kapasya, Rui
- b. Family – Malvaceae
- c. Myths belief – A cotton piece is rolled and soaked in the oil then burn. When the cotton piece extinguishes, it is beaten with a slipper. This process is done to remove bad evil of a child.

15. *Launaea procumbens* (Roxb.) Ramayya&Rajgopal

- a. Local name – Bangobhi
- b. Family – Asteraceae
- c. Myths belief – A piece of the root of the plant is tied to the arm to avoid the sting of a scorpion and also tied to the neck to cure fever.

16. *Ocimum americanum* L.

- a. Local name – Bantulsi
- b. Family – Lamiaceae
- c. Myths belief – The whole dried plant is hung over the top of the house or the main entrance of the house to keep away evil spirits.

17. *Phoenix sylvestris* (L.) Roxb.

- a. Local name – Khajur
- b. Family – Arecaceae
- c. Myths belief – The leaves of the date palm are used to make brooms (*Jhadu/Buari*). This broom is used by Bhopas to remove the evil eye by doing the process '*Jhaada Dena*'.

18. *Solanum virginianum* L.

- a. Local name – Bhatta kateli
- b. Family – Solanaceae
- c. Myths belief – When a child suffers from cough and cold, a fruit of this plant is tied to the neck of the child with a thread to cure the disease.

19. *Sorghum bicolor* (L.) Moench

- a. Local name – Jwaar
- b. Family – Poaceae
- c. Myths belief – When a child is suffered from chickenpox, some grains (seeds) of sorghum are wrapped in a red cloth and tied to the arm of the child. By doing this the child recovers quickly.

20. *Thespesia populnea* (L.) Sol. ex Correa

- a. Local name – Paras Pipalee
- b. Family – Malvaceae
- c. Myths belief – Fruits of the plant are burned (*'Dhooni'*) to treat typhoid.

21. *Tinospora cordifolia* (Willd.) Hook. f. & Thomson

- a. Local name – Giloy
- b. Family – Menispermaceae
- c. Myths belief – High fever is reduced by tying the pieces of Giloy's stem around the neck.

22. *Trigonella foenum-graecum* L.

- a. Local name – Methi
- b. Family – Fabaceae
- c. Myths belief – The dried leaves of fenugreek are called 'Paansi' by local people. When someone is suffering from heatstroke, 'Paansi' is taken with water on a bronze plate and then this plate is moved on the patient's naked body from up to down.

23. *Triticum aestivum* L.

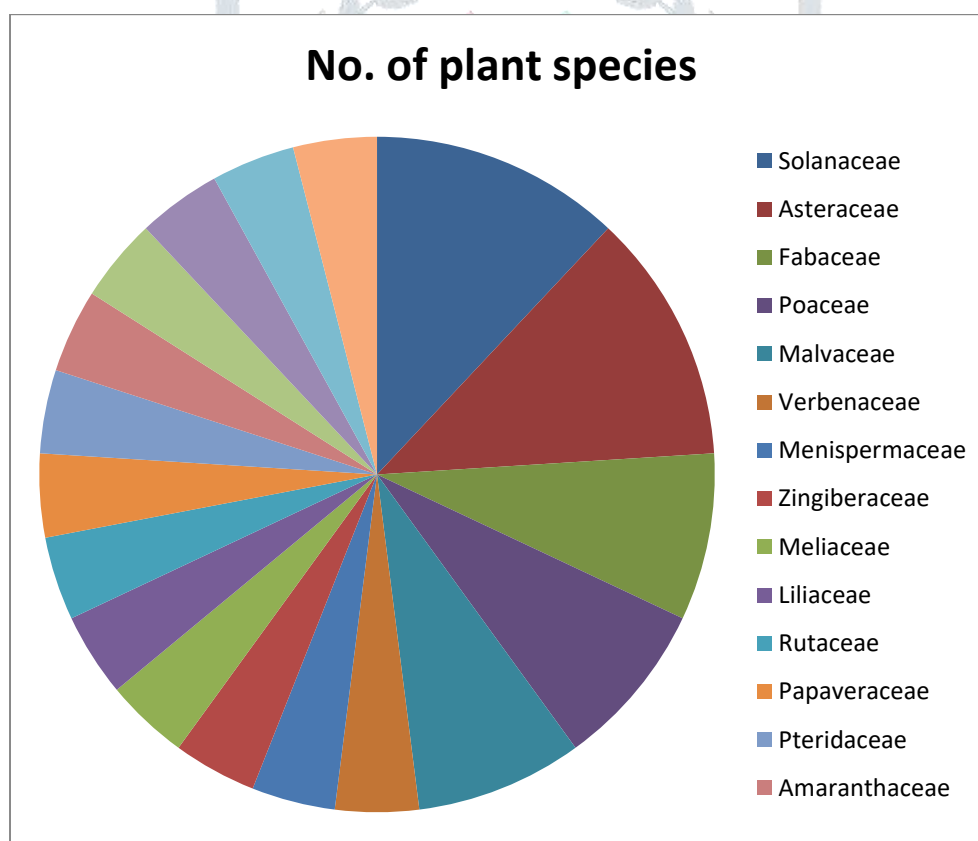
- a. Local name – Gehun
- b. Family – Poaceae
- c. Myths belief – Wheat spikelets (*baaliyan*) are baked in the burning Holi and the grains are eaten. It is believed that eating these grains does not make a person sick throughout the year.

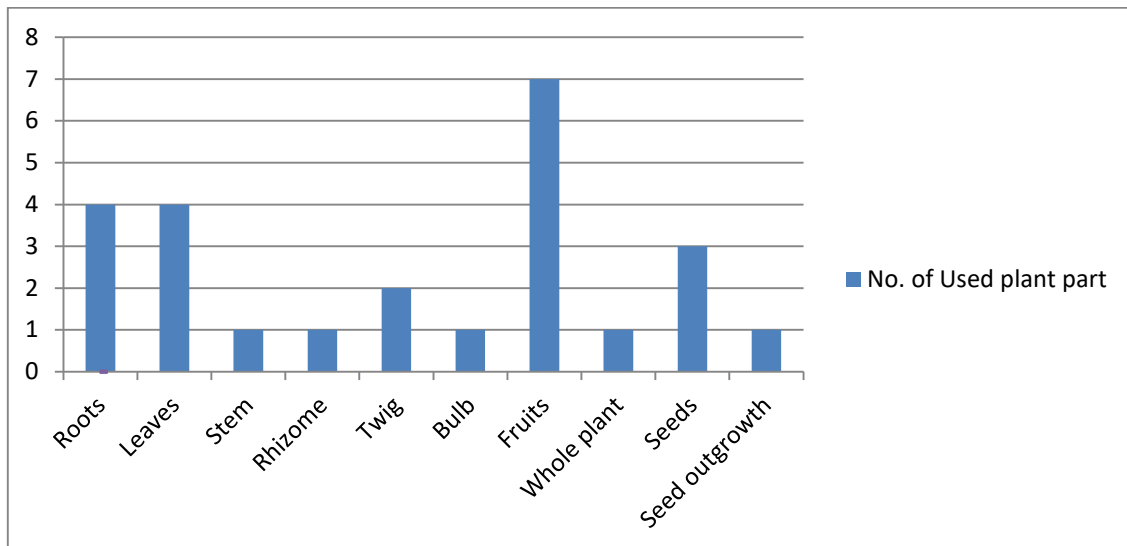
24. *Vitex negundo* L.

- a. Local name – Nirgundi
- b. Family – Verbenaceae
- c. Myths belief – By burning the leaves of this plant and giving fumigation (*Dhooni*), the headache that has been happening for a long-time cure.

25. *Xanthium strumarium* L.

- a. Local name – Adha Sisi
- b. Family – Asteraceae
- c. Myths belief – Fruits of the plant are tied with a thread on the temples (*'Kanpati'*) of the head to heal migraine.





Conclusion

The tribal community, local nomadic groups and villagers of Jhalawar district Rajasthan cure their disease behalf of mythological beliefs in the present era. They claim to be cured by these diseases and they always use these actions to treat their ailments. As they live in villages and forest far from the cities facilities so they totally depend on these mythological beliefs ('Desi-Totke') to be cured. But it seems miracle how the mythological beliefs cure them. They don't know the reason for their belief but they do so because their last generations are doing so since ancient times. No scientific reasons are seen yet but we can say that it's their profound belief that heals them and it may be a research topic for new researchers. Hence scientific validation for its attributes and principles is the need of hours.



Cassia fistula



Echinopsechinatus



Launaea procumbens



Solanum virginianum

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