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Traditional use of medicinal plant *Rubia cordifolia* L. in the preparation of Kohl

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Abstract

Rubia cordifolia is a perennial, herbaceous, prickly, cylindrical, climber, having very long roots with a thin red bark, with the common names: Manjistha, Indian madder, Manjito, Manjith, Tushuho. The plant is valued for its medicinal properties; this paper highlights the use of the plant extract of *Rubia cordifolia* in the preparation of kohl.

Keywords: *Rubia cordifolia*, medicinal use, leaf extract, kohlpreparation

1. Introduction

The Indian System of Ayurvedic medicine is as old as our history and has formed an integral part of the Indian tradition. Medicinal plants play an important role in supporting health care in India. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 80% of rural population in developing countries utilizes locally available medicinal plants for their primary health care needs. India having rich medicinal plant heritage of 7200 species along with an estimated 40,000 herbal formulations, if conserved and sustainably utilized, contribute to self-reliance of millions of primary healthcare [1]. In this regard the study and documenting of local knowledge about natural resources is becoming increasingly important in defining strategies and actions for conservation of wild medicinal plants. Traditional preparations for herbal beauty care contain several recipes, which may be applied in cosmetic industry without any side effects but fruitful results [2]. Several plants have economic qualities and are used for edible or medicinal purposes. They are being listed since time immemorial and are reported to have side benefits in place of adverse effects generally produced by the synthetic and chemical based harmful products. The plants used in cosmetics do not merely enhance beauty but have definite medicinal values [3].

Rubia cordifolia, often known as common madder or Indian madder, is a species of flowering plant in the coffee family, Rubiaceae. *R. cordifolia* is a common plant in almost all parts of south India. Indian Madder is a perennial climbing herb that can grow to 1.5 m in height. The evergreen leaves are 5-10cm long and 2-3 cm broad, produced in whorls of 4-7 star like around the central stem. Leaves are ovate-heart shaped. *Rubia cordifolia* L. which has numerous medicinal properties is widely used in the Ayurvedic system of medicine. Leaf extract *R. cordifolia* is being used during cataract of eyes, conjunctivitis and also to clean the eyes [4]. Because of the medicinal properties of *Rubia cordifolia* L. in curing cataract of eyes, conjunctivitis and in cleaning the eyes, in Kodagu region *R. cordifolia* is made use of in the preparation of Kohl which also helps in relieving watery eyes and burning (sensation) eyes. Kohl is applied to the eyelids both as medicine to eyes and to enhance the beauty of eyes.

2. Methodology

The present paper is based on collection of traditional knowledge from the native informants, Nati Vaidhyas (Ayurvedic Medicine Practitioner) and rural people of Kodagu district in Karnataka State who has knowledge of traditional medicine and herbal formulations. Oral interview were held and information's were recorded.

2.1 Method of Preparation

The leaves of *Rubia cordifolia* is collected and washed in running water, the leaves are crushed to extract the juice. The extracted juice is collected. A small piece of white cotton cloth is taken and dipped in the collected extract and sun dried continuously 5 to 6 times, so that the cloth piece absorbs and collects the extracted juice. Then wick is prepared from the same piece of cloth. Now put the cotton wick over the diya or lamp dipping it in castor oil and light it. Then place the copper plate over the flame such that the black color fume gets collected in the

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copper plate. After the castor oil in the lamp gets exhausted. The tar (black residue) collected from the copper plate is mixed with small amount of pure homemade ghee to form Kohl, and then store it in cool place.

3. Result and Discussion

The plant extracts of *Rubia cordifolia* has been used by the people of Kodagu region for the preparation of kohl because of its medicinal properties. Nowadays people are moving towards Ayurvedic medicine systems and make use of Ayurvedic products as it will not have side effects to any organs of body. The people of this region have been using it since time immemorial. The knowledge on the ethno medicinal plant presented here is further expected to add on to the gradual collection and buildup of the data bank and traditional knowledge of medicinal plant in general and of our country in particular. It would also help in understanding the traditional medicine systems based on ethno medicinal plants and its eventual integration in modern health care and medicine system for greater benefits of mankind.

4. Conclusion

Rubia cordifolia L. having numerous medicinal values, when it is used in the preparation of kohl will add to the health of the eyes. So documentation of this knowledge is valuable for future generations and also for scientific consideration of the traditional knowledge as well.

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