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ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Ethno-Medicinal Uses of Wild Edible Fruits in Pokhara Valley, Nepal

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ABSTRACT

The wild fruits are freely available as a source of food. The phytochemicals available in such fruits can be used to cure different health problems of human beings naturally. This study was carried out from July 2020 to August 2021 in different places, particularly in less populated areas like Ward No. 19, 21, 22, 23, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 and 33 of Pokhara Metropolitan City in Kaski District, Nepal. The data were collected, using a verbal questionnaire in which the respondents were locals and traditional healers. The study was conducted almost in a rural condition, but there was still a good vegetation in its core town areas. People of these areas consume wild fruits mostly as a source of nutrition, vitamins and minerals, but they take them as raw food and know less about their medicinal values. Some wild fruits like Berberis aristata (Chutro), Citrus limon (Jyamir), Cassia fistula (Rajbrikshya), Mangifera indica (Anmp), Punica granatum (Anar), Sapindus mukorossi (Rittha), Tamarindus indica (Imili) and Ziziphus jujuba (Bayar) show their tremendous medicinal values to cure various health problems. Similarly, there are other well-known fruits like Aegle marmelos (Bel), Emblica officinalis (Amala), Piper longum (Pipla), Solanum nigram (Jangali bihi), Terminalia bellerica (Barro) and T. chebula (Harro), which can be used for herbal medicines. The results revealed that 41 species of plants belonging to 24 families have been used as the wild fruits with ethno-medicinal values. Such families are Anacardiaceae, Berberidaceae, Caesalpinaceae, Combretaceae, Elaeagnaceae, Bignoniaceae, Elaeocarpaceae, Juglandaceae, Lauraceae, Moraceae, Myricaceae, Myrsinaceae, Euphorbiaceae. Myrtaceae, Papillionaceae, Piperaceae, Punicaceae, Rhamnaceae, Rosaceae, Rutaceae, Sapindaceae, Solanaceae, Trapaceae and Vitaceae. This study is the first report to show the ethno-medicinal uses of wild edible fruits in Pokhara valley, Nepal.

KEYWORDS: Ethno-medicine, health problems, non-timber forest products, wild fruits

INTRODUCTION

Plant species that are not in domestication practice and occur in a natural habitat are "wild plants." Fruits produced by such plants are called "wild fruits." In this sense, the wild plants which are growing in the waste land produce wild fruits. Some wild fruits are edible and some are not. The wild edible fruits are most important aspect of nontimber forest products (NTFPs). They are sources of food and herbal medicine since the beginning of human civilization. Now, they are the source of income nowadays. In many rural parts of Nepal, the people use wild plants to cure their health problems like root, stem, leaf and bark; the wild fruits also used for various other purposes. Such knowledge is deeply rooted in rural areas. The people like the native inhalers and traditional medicinal workers contribute a lot to conserve and explore such plants. In this regard, Katrahalli and Siddeshwari (2021) remark, "Wild edible fruits are among the most widely used non-timber forest products and play an important role in the nutrition, medicine and traditional life style of the local people." Similarly, Mahato (2014) states, "The rural people have better knowledge of wild fruits as they visit the forest regularly and have constant association and dependence on these forests" Thus, in Nepal, wild fruits are very important plants that can be used for food as well as for medicinal purposes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Pokhara Metropolitan city is geographically largest and serve as headquarter of Gandaki Province and Kaski district. Its elevation ranges from 505 m to 2650 m above sea level. It observes 7°C as lowest temperature during winter and up to 31 °C as maximum during summer. It receives about 3800 mm rainfall annually. The city is surrounded by Macchapucchre and Madi Rural Municipalities on north-east, Rupa Rural Municipality on the east, Annapurna Rural Municipality and Parbat district on north-west and Syangja and Tanahun districts on south. Due to diversity in physiography, altitudinal variation and high rain fall the valley show diversified plants with important wild fruits too.

Figure 1
Map of Pokhara Metropolitan City



Source: Google search

This paper is prepared by seasonal visits over thirteen months in the non-populated areas of Pokhara. A few questionnaires were set regarding the use and benefits of wild fruits during the field visits. A total of 30 (3 for each rural ward) traditional healers were selected as per their experience. Among them, 60% were men and 40% were women. The data were collected using a verbal questionnaire with the respondents such as local people and traditional healers. The verbal questions were asked to the respondents about wild edible fruits and their ethno-medical uses. The information collected during the field visits was documented, cross-examined, and confirmed with the help of related articles and research findings from different journals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study revealed that the local residents have a good concept of wild fruits and vegetation around them. They are more familiar with taste and nutrition values of wild fruits rather than medicinal uses. Hopefully, a discussion with them about ethno-medicinal uses gained their attention regarding another important aspect of wild fruits. In this sense, the paper aims to explore the medicinal values of wild fruits, which could be a good option for local residents. This study found 41 species belonging to 24 families that are used as ethno-medicinal fruits. Among these families, maximum species yielding such fruits are Rutaceae, Rosaceae, Anacardaceae, Moraceae and Myrtaceae respectively. The study also revealed that tree species contributed the highest (60.97%) ethno-medicinal fruits yielding followed by the shrubs (26.82%), herbs (7.31%) and climbers (4.87%).

The following are the details about the species and the families that they belong to. The list provides the scientific name, family, vernacular name, English name and its uses.

1) Aegle marmelos (L.) Correa.

Family: Rutaceae Vernacular name: Bel English common name: Bel

Uses: The fruit pulp is widely used for improving digestion in stomach due to its alterative, nutritive, digestive and tonic properties. The fruit is used for treatment of diarrhea, stomach problems, diabetes, dysentery, constipation, dyspepsia and abdominal disorder.

2) Berberis aristata DC.

Family: Berberidaceae Vernacular name: Chutro

English common name: Nepal's barbery

Uses: Fresh fruits show laxative and cooling properties and are used to cure piles and sores. Ripe fruits are used to treat in jaundice and diarrhea.

3) Cassia fistula Linn.

Family: Leguminosae Sub-family: caesalpinaceae Vernacular name: Rajbrikshya English common name: Cassia pod

Uses: This fruit shows analgesic, laxative, antipyretic, cathartic, purgative and tonic. Hence, the fruit and its pulp is useful in constipation, stomach disorder, liver disorder, leprosy, diabetes, urinary problems, diarrhea, dysentery, indigestion and biliousness. It is also used to cure rheumatism.

4) Citrus aurantifolia Swingle.

Family: Rutaceae

Vernacular name: kagati

English common name: Lemon

Uses: This fruit is of digestive, disinfectant, cooling and refrigerant properties. Therefore, the fruits are used in asthma, diarrhea, dysentery, cold, cough and urinary calculus.

5) Citrus limon(Linn.) Burm,F.

Family: Rutaceae

Vernacular name: Jyamir

English common name: Rough lemon

Uses: The fruit is of anthelmintic, stomachic and tonic properties. Therefore, it is taken to treat asthma, cough and cold, constipation, headache, scurvy, rheumatism and vomiting. Its juice is useful to remove pimples and dandruff.

6) Citrus medica Linn.

Family: Rutaceae

Vernacular name: Bimiro English common name: citron

Uses: The fruit shows astringent, anthelmintic, carminative, cooling, stomachic and tonic properties. Hence, the fruit is useful to treat asthma, constipation, cough and cold, dyspepsia, fever, headache and sciatica.

7) Elaeagnus latifolia L. sensu FBI

Family: Elaeagnaceae Vernacular name: Guyalo

English common name: Bastard Oleaster

Uses: This fruit is used to cure stomach problems.

8) Elaeocarpus sphaericus(Garten.) K. Schum.

Family: Elaeocarpaceae

Vernacular name: Rudrakshya

English common name: Utrasum Bead tree

Uses: The fruit is sour in taste and is useful to cure blood pressure problem, epileptic fits, headache and respiratory problems.

9) Emblica officinalis Gaertn.

Synonym: Phyllanthus emblica Linn.

Family: Euphorbiaceae Vernacular name: Amala

English common name: Emblic Myrobalan

Uses: The fruit has cooling, acidic, laxative, stomachic, cardiac, diuretic, astringent, tonic and refrigerant properties. In this sense, it is widely used to cure jaundice, anemia, diarrhea, sore throat, dysentery, menorrhagia, dyspepsia, hemorrhage, cough, cold, inflammation of the eyes and heart problems.

10) Eugenia jambolina Linn.

Synonym: Syzygium cumini (L.) Skeels.

Family: Myrtaceae

Vernacular name: Jamuna

English common name: Black berry

Uses: The fruit is of astringent, diuretic, carminative, stomachic and febrifuge properties. It is useful to treat ulcers, asthma and bronchitis. Its decoction and seed is useful to cure diabetes.

11) Eugenia operculata Roxb.

Family: Myrtaceae

Vernacular name: Kyamuno

English common name: NA

Uses: The fruit is useful to cure rheumatism.

12) Ficus cunea Buch.-Ham.ex.Roxb.

Synonym: Ficus semicordataBuch.-Ham.ex.Smith.

Family: Moraceae

Vernacular name: Khanayo

English common name: Drooping Fig

Uses: The ripe fruit is used to treat constipation, indigestion, headache, leprosy and

apathy complaints.

13) *Ficus religiosa* Linn.
Family: Moraceae

Vernacular name: Peepal

English common name: Peepal tree

Uses: The fruit is of laxative property and is used in asthma and other respiratory

problems.

14) Juglans regia L. var, kamaonica C. DC.

Family: Juglandaceae Vernacular name: Okhhar English common name: Walnut

Uses: The fruit and kernel are widely used to cure rheumatism and cotyledons for

heart problems, colic and dysentery.

15) Lindera neesiana (Nees) Kurz.

Family: Lauraceae

Vernacular name: Siltimur

English common name: Lindera Seeds

Uses: The fruits are used to treat stomach problems.

16) Maesa chisia Buch.Ham.ex.D.Don

Family: Sapotaceae Vernacular name: Bilaune

English common name: Wild Berry

Uses: The fruit is of anthelmintic property.

17) *Mahonia nepaulensis* DC. Family: Berberidaceae

Vernacular name: Jamanemandro English common name: Mahonia

Uses: The fruits are taken for diuretic and demulcent functions.

18) Mallotus philippensis(Lam.) Muell,-Arg.

Family: Euphorbiaceae Vernacular name: Sindhure

English common name: Kamal tree

Uses: The dried fruits are taken for scabies and eliminating intestinal worms.

19) Mangifera indica linn.

Family: Anacardiaceae Vernacular name: Anmp English common name: Mango

Uses: The fruit shows astringent, cardiac, carminative, laxative, appetizer and aphrodisiac properties. The unripe fruit is used to cure ophthalmic problems, scabies and other skin problems. The ripe fruit, on other hand, is taken to treat bleeding piles, haemorrhage from intestine, uterus and lung.

20) Morus alba Linn.

Family: Moraceae

Vernacular name: Kyun kaphal English common name: Mulberry

Uses: This fruit is of laxative, cooling, anthelmintic and acrid properties. Therefore, it is useful in different problems like stomach problem, smallpox, biliousness, diarrhea, dyspepsia, heart and spleen.

21) Myrica esculenta Buch,-Ham.ex.D.Don.

Family: Myricaceae Vernacular name: kaphal

English common name: Box Myrtle

Uses: The fruits show carminative, alternative, stomachic, sedative and stimulant properties. Thus, it is useful to treat asthma, bronchitis, inflammation and cough.

22) Oroxylum indicum (L.) Vent.

Family: Bignoniaceae Vernacular name: Tatelo

English common name: Indian Trumpet flower

Uses: The fruits are of stomachic and carminative nature and used to cure leucoderma, indigestion and stomach problems.

23) Piper longum Linn.

Family: Piperaceae Vernacular name: Pipla

English common name: Long Pepper

Uses: The immature fruit decoction is useful to cure cough and chronic bronchitis. The ripe fruit, on the other hand, is useful to treat fever, abdominal problems, leucoderma, tumors, jaundice, piles and spleen complaints.

24) Prunus cerasoides D.Don.

Family: Rosaceae

Vernacular name: Painyu

English common name: Himalayan cherry. Uses: The fruits show astringent property.

25) Prunus domestica Linn.

Family: Rosaceae

Vernacular name: Alubokhara English common name: Plum tree

Uses: The fruits are of astringent, refrigerant and laxative nature and mostly used to cure leucorrhea and irregular menstruation.

26) Prunus persicaSieb. Et Zuce.

Family: Rosaceae Vernacular name: Aru

English common name: Peach tree

Uses: The fruit is used as antiscorbutic, stomachic and demulcent.

27) *Psidium guajava* Linn. Family: Myrtaceae

Vernacular name: Amba, Belauti English common name: Guava tree

Uses: The fruit is taken as laxative, tonic and cooling for medicinal purposes.

28) *Punica granatum* Linn. Family: Punicaceae Vernacular name: Anar

English common name: Pomegranate

Uses: The unripe fruit is taken as appetizer and useful to control vomiting. The ripe fruit cures fever, sore throat, biliousness and heart problems. The rind of fruit is anthelmintic. Its powder and juice are useful to treat cough, fever, diarrhea, dysentery and bronchial trouble. The fruit pulp is stomachic and useful in cardiac problems.

29) Rhus javanica Linn.

Synonym: Rhus semilata Murray.

Family: Anacardiceae Vernacular name: Bhakimlo English common name: Sumac

Uses: The fruit is used to treat diarrhea, colic and skin diseases. Its decoction is useful to cure stomach problems.

30) Rhus parviflora Roxb.

Family: Anacardiaceae Vernacular name: Satibayer English common name: NA

Uses: The fruit decoction is widely used to treat dysentery.

31) Rubus ellipticus J.E. Smith.

Family: Rosaceae

Vernacular name: Ainselu

English common name: Raspberry

Uses: The ripe fruit is taken to cure dysentery, general debility and indigestion. The fruit juice is taken to cure cough, fever and sore throat.

32) Solanum nigram Linn.

Family: Solanaceae

Vernacular name: Kaligedi / Jangali bihi English common name: Black night shade

Uses: The fruit is laxative and tonic in nature. It is widely used to treat asthma, constipation, urinary problems, insomnia, weak appetite and excessive thirst. The fruit juice is used to treat fever and headache. The unripe fruit paste is useful to cure a skin problem like a ringworm.

33) Sapindus mukorossi Gaertn.

Family: Sapindaceae Vernacular name: Rittha

English common name: Soap nut tree

Uses: The fruit is anthelmintic, emetic, expectorant, detergent, and tonic in nature. It is therefore useful in the treatment of epilepsy, asthma, diarrhea, cholera, salvation and indigestion. The fruit is also useful to treat scorpion sting, snake bite and dandruff.

34) Tamarindus indica Linn.

Family: leguminosae / sub-family: Caesalpinoidae

Vernacular name: Imili

English common name: Tamarind

Uses: The fruit is regarded as carminative, laxative, digestive and refrigerant. It is used to cure inflammatory swelling, mild cataract, constipation, bile problems and urinary problems such as indigestion and gonorrhea.

35) Terminalia bellirica(Gaertn.) Roxb.

Family: Combretaceae Vernacular name: Barro

English common name: Belleric Myrobalan

Uses: The fruit is of laxative, digestive, anthelmintic, antipyretic, astringent, aperient and tonic properties. It is widely taken to cure stomach disorders like indigestion, gastric problem, dropsy, dyspepsia, biliousness, headache and spleen problems. Its juice obtained after boiling the fruits is useful to cure bronchitis, asthma and other respiratory disorders.

36) Terminalia chebula Retz.

Family: Combretaceae Vernacular name: Harro

English common name: Chebulic myrobalan

Uses: The unripe fruit is of astringent property and useful to treat diarrhea and dysentery. The ripe fruit, on the other hand, has carminative and purgative properties and is useful to cure diseases of eye, spleen, stomach problems, respiratory problems, ulcers, cough, cardiac problem, fever, skin problems and piles.

37) Trapa bispinosa Roxb.

Family: Trapaceae

Vernacular name: Simalkande

English common name: Water Chestnut

Uses: The spiny fruit contains white fleshy mass that is used in diarrhea, bronchitis,

urinary problems and bilious affections.

38) Vicia sativa Linn.

Family: Leguminosae Sub-family: Papilionaceae Vernacular name: Kutilkosa

English common name: Common Spring vetch

Uses: The fruits as green pods are widely taken as alterative and useful to treat insomnia.

39) Vitis venifera Linn.

Family: Vitaceae

Vernacular name: Dakh/ Jangali angoor English common name: wild grape

Uses: The fruit is diuretic, cooling, laxative, expectorant, antispasmodic and nerve tonic. It is used to cure cough, indigestion, dyspepsia, diarrhea, hoarseness and breathing problems.

40) Zanthoxylum armatum DC.

Synonym: Zanthoxylum alatum Roxb.

Family: Rutaceae

Vernacular name: timmur

English common name: Prickly ash bark

Uses: The fruit is of stomachic and carminative properties. Therefore, it is taken to treat toothache, cough and cold, gastritis, headache, piles, internal worms, diarrhea, stomach problems, fever and nervous debility. It improves appetite. The paste of

immature fruit is useful to cure wound.

41) Ziziphus jujuba Lam.

Synonym: Ziziphus mauritiana Lam.

Family: Rhamnaceae Vernacular name: Bayer

English common name: Indian Plum

Uses: The fruit is used to cure cough, blood problems, indigestion, constipation,

stomach problems, asthma and biliousness.

People living in the study area habitually used seasonal wild fruits for different purposes. In the case of thirst feeling, they take ripe fruits of *Rubus ellipticus* and root tuber of *Nephrolepsis cordifolia*. In the case of gastrointestinal problems, they use to take fruits of *Zanthoxylum armatum*. In the case of general disability, they use the fruits such as *Punica granatum, Musa paradisiaca* and *Vitis vinifera*. Similarly, in the case of urine inflammation and irregular urination, they take the fruits such as *Cassia fistula*. The consumption of such wild edible fruits helps the health condition of rural people as these are the sources of carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, etc. There is a vast hidden or not explored knowledge about wild fruits and their nutritional health benefits in the study area. These wild fruits are taken orally. The present study was conducted to document and explore such fruits. Finally, the author strongly recommends initiating certain programs by the concerned local and central governmental authorities to help the people participate in such projects like the cultivation and commercialization of wild fruits.

CONCLUSION

This study shows 41 wild edible fruits generally consumed by rural and other peoples of Pokhara mainly due to their food values and taste. Although the wild edible fruits are an important alternative source of raw food and income for local people. As an established fact, these fruits are also important as the herbal medicines to cure many diseases. The result shows that more than 50 diseases have been cured by using wild edible fruits in the study area. In this sense, the wild fruits are an important natural source for the wellbeing of the people and country, too. Therefore, the people and the government should pay attention to this aspect.

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