

# Ethnomedicinal Practices Among Munda Tribes of Khunti, Jharkhand

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Johny Ruphina Tirkey, <sup>\*2</sup>Mamta Kumari and <sup>3</sup>Sandhya Kujur

<sup>1</sup>Assistant professor, Department of Anthropology, V.B.U Hazaribagh

<sup>2</sup>Research Fellow, (ICSSR), Department of Anthropology, V.B.U Hazaribagh

<sup>3</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Anthropology, V.B.U Hazaribagh

## ABSTRACT

According to estimates from the World Health Organization, the majority of people in poor nations rely on herbal medicines for their basic healthcare requirements. In India, around 80% of the population uses herbal medicine to treat various disorders. In the health systems of several ethnic groups residing in the outlying regions of Jharkhand, traditional herbal medicine has long played a significant role. The native munda tribes of Khunti, Jharkhand, rely on the old-fashioned medical method. Overfishing of a certain species can occasionally cause the accidental extinction of other untargeted species. For the benefit of humanity and future generations, it is crucial to preserve these resources because ethnomedicinal plants and their derivatives continue to be used extensively in medical care. Khunti, one of the 24 districts in the Indian state of Jharkhand, is located in the South Chotanagpur division. On September 12th, 2007, the district of Ranchi was divided to create the district of Khunti. It has a long history of serving as the Birsa movement's hub of activity. After Lohardaga, it has the second-lowest population density of any district in Jharkhand out of 24 as of 2011. The Khunti sub-tribal division's people is largely reliant on agriculture and the forest for their subsistence. A group of ethnic Indians who speak Austroasiatic languages is known as the Munda. In this paper we use the primary and secondary method with the help of some books and internet sources. In the Jharkhand district of Khunti, a great variety of ethnomedicinal plants were identified and documented. The Munda tribals employ a few of the named plants in their rituals for birth, marriage, and death because they regard them as sacred. Along with living in neighbouring Madhya Pradesh regions, the Munda also inhabit some sections of Bangladesh and the state of Tripura. They are one of the biggest scheduled tribes in India. The Mundari language is what most of them use. Due to the inadequate state of the healthcare system, people in the munda community of Jharkhand are aware of ethnomedicine and turn to local traditional herbal healers for the majority of their ailments.

**Keywords:** *Ethnomedicine, Healthcare, Munda, Khunti, Jharkhand.*

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## \*Author's Correspondence

**Mamta Kumari**

Research Fellow, (ICSSR), Department of Anthropology, V.B.U Hazaribagh

✉ [mamta24932@gmail.com](mailto:mamta24932@gmail.com)

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## 1. Introduction

The term "ethnobotany" literally translates to "the study of the botany of the mortal race," which refers to research among ethnic and pastoral groups to document their distinctive factory wealth knowledge and to identify new sources of herbal remedies, food markets, and other factory-related resources (1). John William Harshberger used the term "ethnobotany" in 1895 to refer to the "study of shops used by primitive and endemic people." (2). Shops have long been utilised for drug use. With the advancement of our knowledge, the "Eber Papyrus" written in 1600 BC has the earliest reference to the use of pharmacies as a means of treating ailments (3). Medicine stores have been used to treat a variety of health issues since antiquity. In the conventional health care system, shops are a significant and autonomous resource for treating their ailments. The identity of the majority of ethnic groupings includes indigenous traditional knowledge. Traditional medicine is an overview of all theories and methods that can be applied to prevent, treat, and eradicate mental, internal, and social disabilities. It is based only on practical knowledge gained through observation and passed down from one generation to the next. More than 75% of people around the world rely on traditional medicine and traditional health care providers for their basic needs (4). The most recent WHO estimate states that between 70 and 95 percent of people in developing

countries and between 70 and 80 percent of those in affluent nations used complementary and indispensable drugs for their primary health care.

The study of traditional medical practises used by various ethnic groups, particularly indigenous people, is known as ethnomedicine. Sometimes, the term "ethnomedicine" is used as a synonym. Scientific studies of ethnomedicine fall under one of two categories in traditional medicine: anthropological study or drug discovery research. Anthropological studies look at how a traditional medicine is viewed in its cultural setting. The goal of drug discovery is to locate and create pharmaceutical items that can be sold.

The Ayurvedic medical method has been used for many years in India. There is a wealth of information about the therapeutic qualities of Indian medicinal plants in the Charaka Samhita and Susruta Samhita. According to the writings of Hippocrates, Aristotle, Theophrastus Pliny, Elder, Dioscorides, and Galen, many modern medications were used by the Greeks and Romans. Natural herbal medicines are abundant and can be used to treat any illness. Earlier doctors and botanists' studies of medications and drug plants have evolved into modern pharmacognosy. This article covered historical knowledge, including drug characteristics and preparation techniques, as well as drug preservation and trade.

## 2. The tribal people hold particular views concerning therapeutic herbs.

1. Plants that produce latex have therapeutic significance.
2. The use of green plants before they wilt is more effective as a dried vegetation
3. Roots are said to be a more potent form of medication than the aerial plants.
4. Plants for medicinal purposes in treating a variety of ailments should be gathered at various times, such as early in the morning, midday, or late in the day.
5. The bark for medicinal purposes is removed from the plant's side on which the sun is rising.
6. The indigenous people have the view that breaking any taboo makes the medicine ineffective.

## 3. Research Objectives:

1. To learn why indigenous people have been utilising traditional remedies to treat illness for so long.
2. To determine the applicability of ethno-medicine in the modern scientific era.
3. Records of traditionally used herbs for developing immunity and treating illnesses in adults and children.

## 4. Literature Review

Ethnomedicine, which is the study of traditional medical methods, is concerned with how different cultures perceive health, illness, and disease as well as how people access healthcare and engage in healing rituals (Krippner, 2003). Since ancient times, people have found healing through the complex multi-disciplinary discipline of ethnomedicine, which incorporates the use of plants, spirituality, and the natural world (Lowe et al., 2000). The study of traditional medicine, or ethnomedicine, is concerned with how different cultures see health, illness, and disease as well as how people access healthcare and engage in healing rituals (Krippner, 2003). Since ancient times, people have found healing through the complex multi-disciplinary discipline of ethnomedicine, which incorporates the use of plants, spirituality, and the natural world (Lowe et al., 2000). With the advancement of ethnomedicine and the efforts of contemporary scientists, there has been a significant resurgence of interest in herbal medicines throughout the world, particularly in modern societies and among health-conscious people because of their patient-friendly nature, palliative, prophylactic, and immuno-modulatory functions, efficacy in treating refractory diseases, and antioxidant properties. Additionally, ethnobotanical research has revealed edible species that can restore health while preventing and treating a number of diseases and ailments.

## 5. Interview Regarding the Healed Submitted by Baidhyas

Since the beginning of time, people have been particularly interested in the healing abilities of plants. The fact that ethno medicinal plants are natural, non-narcotic, less expensive, readily available even in underdeveloped places, without side effects, and occasionally the only kind of healthcare accessible to the lowest of the poor is what is driving up interest in them. In order to address their basic medical needs, roughly 80% of the world's population relies on a traditional system of medicines that is mostly plant-based. Over 650 wild medicinal plants that are frequently utilised by tribal cultures to treat a variety of diseases were the subject of phytochemical and biological investigations. The Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) began taking steps in 1976 to report on and chronicle the Indian Tribes' rapidly deteriorating way of life and cultural knowledge by conducting an ethno biological study. They came to fruition in 1982 when the zoological survey of India's All Indian Co-ordinated Research Project on Ethno Biology

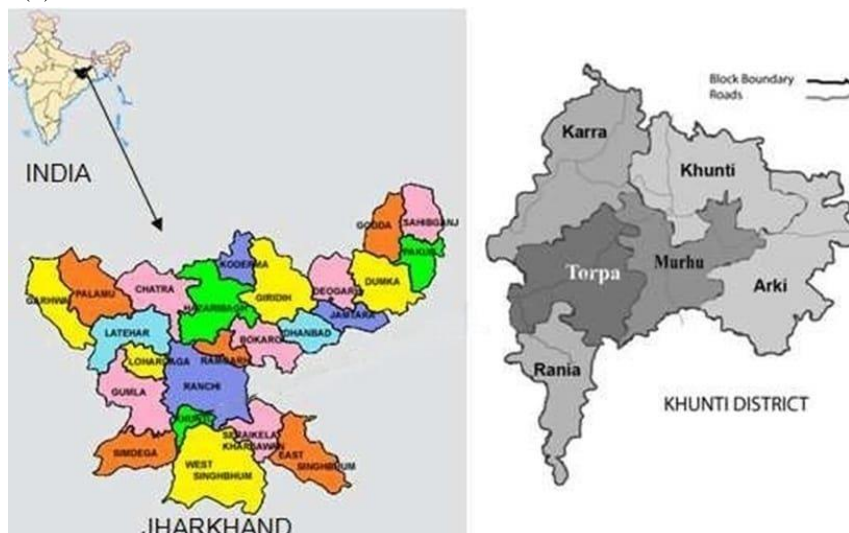
(AICRPE) conducted research in areas with a high concentration of tribal people. The Munda Tribe is a significant component of the tribal group. The Munda tribe uses a variety of ethnomedicinal herbs to treat a range of ailments. They possess specialised understanding of ethnomedicinal plants and their applications. Many Baidhyas claim that they have extensive knowledge of ethnomedicinal herbs.

According to the Mundas, Oraons, and Santhals, the remedy is more effective when combined with the fruits of black pepper (*Piper nigrum*). Five, nine, eleven, or twenty-one fruits of black pepper are used in the preparation of medicine by tribal communities such as the Santhals, Mundas, and Oraons. These numbers, according to tribal people, are significant and have a magical effect on drugs.

**Materials and Methods:** Regular visits to several rural areas of the Khunti district of Jharkhand were made to gather information and collect medicinal plants for the lengthy survey effort. Contacting herbalists, vaidyas, kabiraj, village headmen, and other people with expertise of medicinal plants allowed us to directly gather information about how the munda tribes used plants to cure various maladies and ailments. With the aid of numerous reference works, including "Botany of Bihar and Orissa," all the collected plant species were conserved as herbarium specimens and named. Ethnobotany and Medicinal Plants of India and Nepal [6], a handbook of medicinal plants [5], etc. Common Indian medicinal plant identification [7]. The information regarding the medicinal values was compared with available literature like Flora of Jharkhand [8].

**Data collection:** Personal interviews with tribal vaidhyas of various ages living in rural communities served as the basis for gathering knowledge about ethnomedicinal herbs. Along with the tribal vaidhyas who were questioned, the medicinal plants were photographed and the voucher specimens were gathered. To determine the validity, the acquired data were analysed and cross-referenced with the information found in the locally published publications on medicinal plants. It was also noted that many villagers were familiar with a number of herbs that were utilised as remedies for common illnesses such as the common cold, cough, diarrhoea, and dysentery. Additionally, some material was gathered through conversations with local Ojhas, teachers, and priests. The current ethnobotanical study used both fieldwork and written research. To gather ethnobotanical species in flowering and fruiting stages, fieldwork for the ethnobotanical survey was done over several seasons.

**Study Area:** The majority of Munda is situated in the Chhotanagpur Plateau region, which encompasses the majority of Jharkhand as well as the nearby states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and West Bengal. One of the twenty-four parts in the South Chotanagpur Division of the Indian state of Jharkhand is the Khunti District. It is the hub of the Birsa movement's efforts and traditionally regarded as the motherland of Birsa Munda. Khunti quarter has an estimated population of 1,885, which is nearly equivalent to the population of Cape Verde, according to the 2011 India tale. As a result, it is ranked 541st out of 640 overall in India. The quarter's population viscosity is 210 inhabitants per square kilometre (540 inhabitants per square mile). Its population grew at a pace of 21.96 during the years 2001 to 2011. Khunti has a knowledge rate of 64.51 and a coitus rate of 994 females for every 1000 males. Schedule Estate (SC) makes up 4.5 of the population, while Schedule Tribe (ST) makes up 73.3. During the 2011 Indian Census, 61.72 percent of the population in the quarter identified Mundari, 27.79 percent Sadri, 5.78 percent Hindi, and 2.9 percent Kurmal as their mother tongue (9).

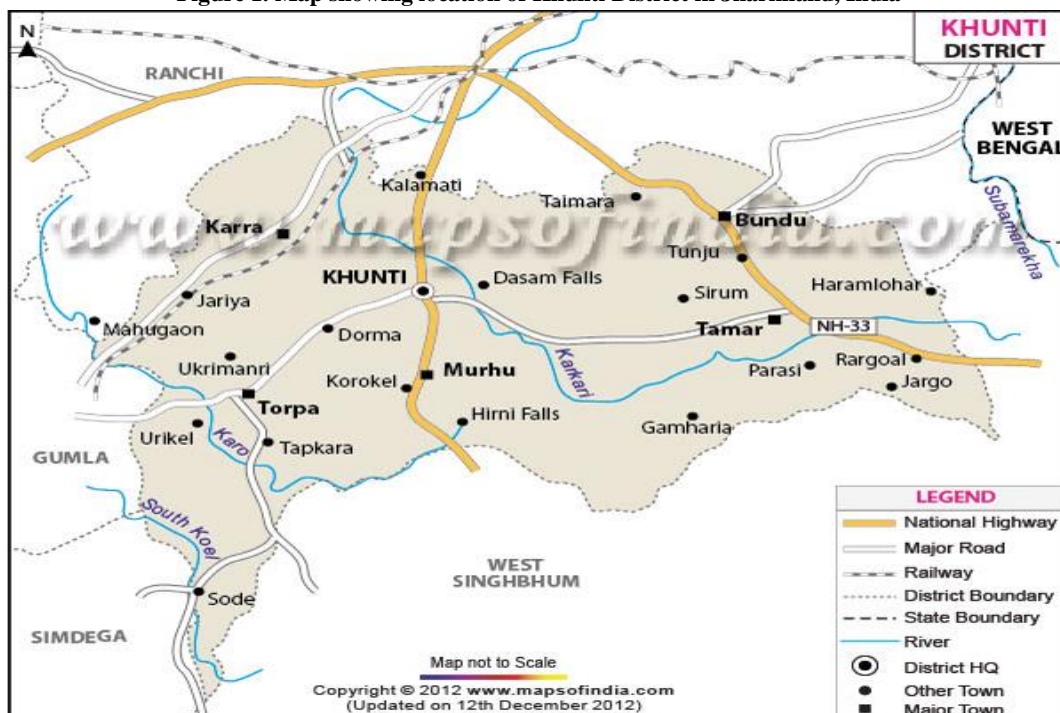


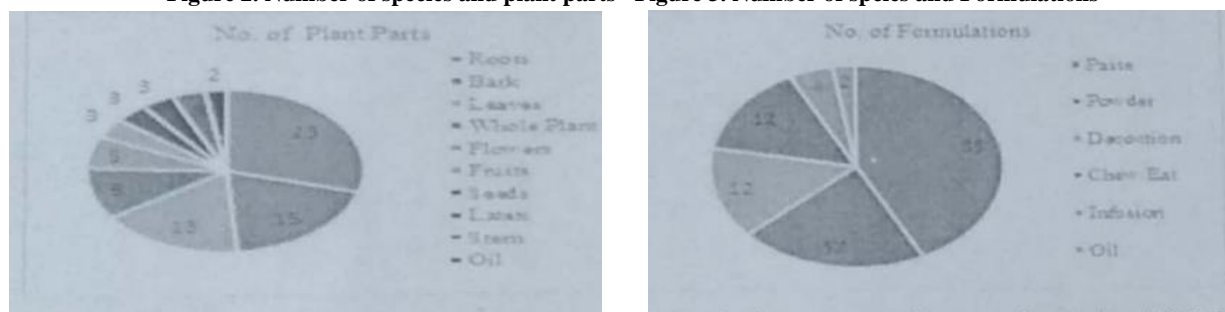
## 6. Findings and Discussion

In the Jharkhand district of Khunti, a great variety of ethnomedicinal plants were identified and documented.

The Munda tribals employ a few of the named plants in their rituals for birth, marriage, and death because they regard them as sacred. They cultivate shorearobusta (Sal) in their revered groves. Any ceremonial worship involves the use of sal leaves (leaf cups and plates). To create marriage pandals, nine Sal poles with new branches are erected in the courtyard. The *Semecarpusanacardium's* branches (Bhelwa). *Parviflora lagerstroemia* (Sidha). At the centre of marriage pandals, *Madhuca indica* (Mahua) and *Bambusabambos* (Bans) are built. The tribal people celebrate Sarhul festival, when *Shorearobustat* is in full bloom, to pray for fertile land and a plentiful harvest, and Phaggu, when *Bombaxmalabaricum* (Semal) and *Ricinus communis* are in full bloom (Erandi). In the Karam festival, *Naucleaparvifolia* (Karam) is worshipped. *Zea mays* or *Shorgum vulgaris* seedlings or *cucumissativus* (Kheera) fruits are offered to the deity as offerings for a long and healthy life, respectively. The 67 herbal Ethnomedicinal formulations that have been reported are made from 72 plant species that belong to 57 genera and 41 families and are used to treat 62 different types of human diseases. The majority of plant parts used are roots/tubers (23 species), barks (15 species), leaves (13 species), the entire plant (8 species), flowers (5 species), stems (3 species each), fruits, seeds, and latex/gum, whereas the oil is only used from 2 species in the current study (Figure 2). The tribal vaidhyas have trained with other reputable waidhwās or received their ethnomedical expertise from their forebears. According to comparative studies, other tribal groups in Jharkhand also employ the majority of the ethnomedicinal herbs that the Munda tribe uses to treat similar illnesses. According to the current survey, the Euphorbiaceae and Apocynaceae have the most species (5), followed by the Combretaceae (4). There are three species in each of the following families: Anacardiaceae, Asclpiadaceae, Malvaceae, and Asteraceae. In comparison to the other families, Celastraceae, Fabaceae, Myrtaceae, Scrophulariaceae, Solanaceae, and Verbenaceae were discovered to have two species each of the total reported medicinal plants. The Munda tribal people were found to primarily use paste compositions totaling 31 species, whereas the other formulations are as follows: infusion 4 species, pellets 3 species, powder 17 species, decoction 12 species, chewing or creating curry 12 species, and oil 2 species under the current investigation (Figure 3). A variety of formulas sweeten the remedy with black pepper, cow ghee, jaggery, or mishri. Most vaidhyas were found to use triphalachurna for stomach-related ailments.

Figure 1. Map showing location of Khunti District in Jharkhand, India



**Figure 2. Number of species and plant parts** **Figure 3. Number of species and Formulations**

Tribes of Jharkhand employ a variety of plants to treat their illnesses. The Munda community employs a huge number of ethnomedicinal plants.

According to the rigidity of the complaint and the age of the case, the medicine's lozenge is chosen (11). Patients are recommended to stay away from racy foods and beverages including rice beer (Handiya), mahua, and alcohol while receiving treatment.

## 7. Conclusion:

Of the state's total population, 26.30 percent are members of the following ethnic groups in Jharkhand. There are a total of 29 designated lines in the state, however the Munda, Oraon, Kharia, Ho, and Santhal make up the main ethnic groups. The lines are primarily located in the Santhal Parganas and Chhotanagpur Plateau, including the sections in Ranchi, Deoghar, Lohardaga, Khunti, Palamau, Hazaribagh, Singhbhum, Giridih, Dhanbad, Sahibganj, Godda, Pakud, and Gumla. The Khunti neighbourhood is typically hilly and pastoral. Our research found that nature contains a wide range of resources that are genuinely beneficial to treating human problems. The majority of people—nearly 95 percent—live in rural areas. The scheduled lines account for two-thirds of the population, but the slated estate population is only 3.25 percent. They heavily rely on ethnomedicines to cure a variety of illnesses, diseases, and afflictions. Due to modernization, the eradication of niches, and the propensity of the younger generation to reject the conventional healthcare system, this old expertise is currently only marginally surviving.

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