



RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Ethnomedicinal plants use by the *Ahom* and *Bodo* community in human health management in Charaideo district of Upper Assam, North East India

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## Abstract

Present study documents 68 species of ethnomedicinal plants used by the *Ahom* and *Bodo* communities in upper Assam, India. Data were obtained through participants observation and field interview with local informants in the fifteen villages across the Charaideo district of Upper Assam, India. The listed species were found to be widely accessible and used for the treatment of a variety of ailments including allergies, body discomfort, body aches, headaches, animal bites, heart difficulties, coughs, etc. It was found that several plant parts including seeds, leaves, bark, and roots can be used as medicinal materials. The majority of medications were prepared in mixers using other plant parts or non-plant components. The results of the present study demonstrated the cross-cultural ethnomedicinal knowledge of the *Ahom* and *Bodo* communities.

Keywords: *Ahom*; *Bodo*; Charaideo; Upper Assam; Ethnomedicobotany; Diseases; Traditional Therapy

## 1. Introduction

The state of Assam is situated in the southern section of the eastern Himalayas and is situated in the northeastern region of the India located within a geographical coordinates of latitudes 24°8' N and 28°2' N and longitudes 89°42' E and 96°E. Assam is renowned for having a wide variety of medicinal plants utilized by the tribal communities for the treatment of various ailments. Assamese ethnic groups who lived in the remote forest regions still rely on traditional medical knowledge for rural healthcare (Dutta and Dutta, 2005). Since ancient times, a variety of wild plants have also been used as food and medicine (Basumatary et al., 2014). Oral transmission of medicinal properties of ethnomedicinal plants were passed on from one generation to next. Those opinions and customs relating to disease that are a consequence of traditional cultural advancement and have not been explicitly drawn from the theoretical framework of modern medicine. A number of experts from various regions of northeast India have conducted ethnomedicinal research on various ethnic groups. Ethnomedicinal knowledge of the Northeast India is evident from the publications of Sajem and Gosai (2006), Das and Tag (2006), Konwar and Buragohain (2007), Saikia et al (2010), Buragohain (2011), Barukial and Sarma (2011), Baruah and Borthakur (2012), Baruah (2014), Deka et al (2024), Nath (2014), Abujam and Shah (2012), Gogoi and Nath (2021), Boro et al (2023). However, ethnomedicinal knowledge of the *Ahom* and *Bodo* communities have been found to be least reported which warrant detail investigations (Balung and Pujari, 2016). Therefore, present study aims to documents ethnomedicinal plants and associated traditional utilization of the *Ahom* and *Bodo* community of Charaideo district of Upper Assam.

## 2. Material and methods

### 2.1. Study area

The present study area called Charaideo extends from 27° 0' 0" N latitude and 95° 0' 00" E longitude which encompasses fifteen randomly selected villages in the Charaideo district of upper Assam, including Bengenabari, Tiok Habi, Dulakharia, Dhuniapather, Ratanpur, Jalaha, Likson Gaon, Nabari, Kakotibari, Mahmora Konwar Gaon, Sonari, Shyam Gaon, Betijan, Pohusungi Gaon and Mathurapur (Figure 1).

### 2.2. Field survey

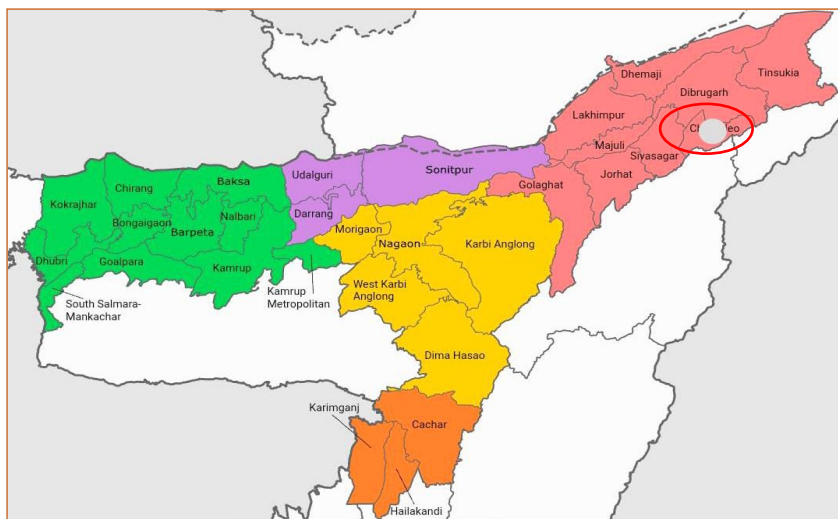
An ethnobotanical study was carried out in the several locations within the Charaideo district of Assam between January 2023 and May 2024. All the pertinent information was gathered in accordance with the code of ethics (International Society of Ethnobiology, 2006), including information on the traditional applications of medicinal plants by the ethnic communities in the Charaideo District. We gathered the data through personal interview and focused group discussions with 58 informants using the structured questionnaire format. A number of visits were made to isolated locations in the district, including Bengenabari, Tiok Habi, Dulakharia, Dhuniapather, Ratanpur, Jalaha, Likson Gaon, Nabari, Kakotibari, Mahmora Konwar Gaon, Sonari, Shyam Gaon, Betijan, Pohusungi Gaon, and Mathurapur. The main informants belonging to *Ahom* and *Bodo* were interviewed.

### 2.3. Collection of voucher specimen and plant identification

Traditional herbalists from the *Ahom* and *Bodo* communities living in the Charaideo District were interviewed and ethnomedicinal information were collected. Voucher specimens were collected during flowering and fruiting seasons. Voucher specimens were identified by consulting relevant literature, including *Flora of Assam* (Kanjilal et al., 1934–1940) and Chowdhery et al. (2008). Accepted names were verified in POWO (plant of the world online) hosted by Royal Botanic Garden Kew UK. Ethnobotanical data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel.

### 3. Results and discussion

It was noted that 68 species of ethnomedicinal plants were found to be used for curing 15 illnesses by the herbal healers of Ahom and Bodo community of Charaideo district of Upper Assam (Table 1). These species are widely accessible and used to treat a wide range of conditions,



**Figure 1.** Map of Assam showing the study area - Charaideo district of Upper Assam, India (Source: [www.googlemap.com](http://www.googlemap.com))



1. *Phyllanthus emblica* L.; 2. *Psidium guajava* L., 3. *Carica papaya* L., 4. *Dillenia indica* L., 5. *Clerodendrum colebrookeanum* Walp., 6. *Ziziphus mauritiana* Lamk., 7. *Macrosolen cochinchinensis* (Lour.) Tiegh., 8. *Hellenia speciosus* (J. Koenig) S.R. Dutta, 9. *Zanthoxylum nitidum* (Roxb.) DC.

**Table 1.** List of ethnomedicinal plants used by the people of Ahom and Bodo community in Charaideo district, Upper Assam, India.

Sl. No	Diseases/Ailments	Botanical Name	Local Name	Habit	Parts used and procedure of treatment
1.	<b>Improvement of eyesight</b>	(i) <i>Spinacia oleracea</i> L.	Palenghak	Herb	Boil leaves taken as vegetable or salad
		(ii) <i>Amaranthus viridis</i> L.	<i>Khuturahak</i>	Shrub	Shoot portion used as vegetable
		(iii) <i>Cynodon dactylon</i> (L.) Pers.	Dubori bon	Herb	Whole plant is taken as juice
		(iv) <i>Manihot esculenta</i> Crantz.	Himolu alu	Shrub	Paste of bark and exudates are used
2.	<b>Jaundice</b>	(i) <i>Erythrina stricta</i> Roxb.	Ronga modar	Tree	Leaves are taken as juice
		(ii) <i>Dracaena angustifolia</i> Roxb.	Hati-kuhiyar	Shrub	Stem portion is taken as juice
		(iii) <i>Saccharum officinarum</i> L.	Kuhiyar	Herb	Stem juice is taken
		(iv) <i>Macrosolen cochinchinensis</i> (Lour.) Tiegh.	Roghumola Pan	Shrub Climber	Leaves are taken as juice Leaves are used as infusion
3.	<b>Cough</b>	(i) <i>Piper betle</i> L.	Jetuli-poka	Shrub	Root paste is taken orally
		(ii) <i>Rubus alceifolius</i> Poir.	Cheni-bon	Herb	Leaves are taken as juice
		(iii) <i>Scoparia dulcis</i> L.	Pochotia	Shrub	Leaf paste is taken orally
		(iv) <i>Vitex negundo</i> L.	Bogori	Tree	Fruits are taken
		(v) <i>Ziziphus mauritiana</i> Lamk.	Moran-ada	Herb	Rhizome is taken as paste orally
		(vi) <i>Zingiber officinale</i> Rosc.			Fruits are taken orally or paste
4.	<b>Fever</b>	(i) <i>Piper nigrum</i> L.	Jaluk	Climber	Externally leaves paste are taken and fruits are taken orally
		(ii) <i>Tamarindus indica</i> L.	Teteli	Tree	Leaf, stem and bark are taken orally as paste
		(iii) <i>Zanthoxylum nitidum</i> (Roxb.) DC	Tezmuri	Climber	Fruits are taken
		(iv) <i>Ziziphus mauritiana</i> Lamk.	Bogori	Tree	Raw fruits are taken
		(v) <i>Allium sativum</i> L.	Naharu	Herbs	Dense juice is used
		(vi) <i>Saccharum officinarum</i> L.	Kuhiyar	Grass	
5.	<b>Stomach problem</b>	(i) <i>Paederia scandens</i> (Lour)	Bhedailata	Cimber	Leaves are eaten as vegetable
		(ii) <i>Phlogacanthus thyriformis</i> (Hardw.) Mabb	Tita phul	Shrub	Flower and leaves are taken as decoction
		(iii) <i>Polygonum Chinese</i> L.	Modhu-solang	Climber	Leaves are used as vegetable
		(iv) <i>Sarcochlamys pulcherrima</i> (Roxb.) Gaudich.	Mechaki	Shrub	Orally leaves are taken as decoction
		(v) <i>Solanum indicum</i> L.	Tita bhekuri	Shrub	Fruits are used as vegetable
		(vi) <i>Terminalia chebula</i> Retz.	Hilikha	Tree	Fruits are eaten raw
		(vii) <i>Vitex negundo</i> L.	Pochotia	Shrub/ small tree	Orally leaf paste is taken
6.	<b>Hair problem</b>	(viii) <i>Spondias pinnata</i> (L.f.) Kurz.	Amora	Tree	Leaves, fruits and barks are used as paste or eaten raw
		(i) <i>Phyllanthus emblica</i> L.	Amlakhi	Tree	Fruits are taken
		(ii) <i>Ricinus communis</i> L.	Era gos	Herb	Stems are infused with oil and used externally
		(iii) <i>Sapindus mukorossi</i> Gaertn.	Moni-chal	Tree	Stems are used as decoction
		(iv) <i>Eclipta prostrata</i> (L.) L.	Keheraj	Herb	Whole plant parts are used as paste
7.	<b>Dysentery</b>	(v) <i>Hibiscus rosa sinensis</i> L.	Joba-phul	Shrub	Externally leaf and flower paste is used
		(i) <i>Psidium guajava</i> L.	Modhuri am	Tree	Leaves are eaten raw
		(ii) <i>Sarcochlamys pulcherrima</i> (Roxb.) Gaudich.	Mechaki	Herb	Leaves are used as decoction
		(iii) <i>Spondias pinnata</i> (L.f.) Kurz.	Amora	Tree	Fruits and leaves are eaten raw
		(iv) <i>Mikania micrantha</i> Kunth.	Prem-lota	Climber	Leaves are taken as juice
		(v) <i>Mimosa pudica</i> L.	Lajuki bon	Herb	Leaves are taken as juice
8.	<b>Allergy</b>	(vi) <i>Musa balbisiana</i> Colla.	Athia kol	Herb	Raw fruits are used
		(i) <i>Dendrocnide sinuate</i> (Bl.) Chew.	Borsurat	Shrub/ small tree	Flower is used as vegetable
		(ii) <i>Azadirachta indica</i> A. Juss.	Neem	Tree	Leaf paste is used in the allergy prone area
9.	<b>Menstruation pain</b>	(iii) <i>Cucuma longa</i> Linn.	Haladhi	Herb	Rhizome paste is applied on affected area
		(i) <i>Clerodendrum colebrookeanum</i> Walp.	Nephaphu	Small shrub	Leaves are used as decoction
		(ii) <i>Curcuma caesia</i> Roxb.	Kola haladhi	Herb	Paste of rhizome are used
		(iii) <i>Cynodon dactylon</i> (L.) Pers.	Dubori bon	Herb	Whole plant part is taken as juice
		(iv) <i>Stenoclaena palustris</i> (Burm.f.) Bedd	Bonjaluk	Herb	Leaves are taken as vegetable
		(v) <i>Mimosa pudica</i> L.	Lajuki bon	Herb	Orally leaf and root juice are taken
		(vi) <i>Morus alba</i> L.	Nuni	Tree	Raw fruits are taken
		(vii) <i>Macrosolen cochinchinensis</i> (Lour.) Tiegh.	Roghumola	Tree	Leaves are taken as juice
		(viii) <i>Impatiens tripetala</i> L.	Damdeuka	Herb	Externally the paste of root, stem and leaves are used
		(ix) <i>Acacia farnesiana</i> (L.) Wild	Torua kadam	Tree	Stems are used as decoction
(x) <i>Hibiscus rosa sinensis</i> L.	Joba phul	Shrub	Externally floral and leaf paste are used		

10	<b>Gastrointestinal disease</b>	(i) <i>Acorus calamus</i> L.	Bosh	Herb	Used as pill that are prepared from the rhizome
		(ii) <i>Alternanthera sessilis</i> (L.) R.Br. Ex DC	Mati kanduri	Herb	The whole plant is used as vegetable
		(iii) <i>Capsicum frutescens</i> L.	Dhan jolokia	Shrub	Fruits are taken raw
		(iv) <i>Citrus grandis</i> (L.) Osb.	Robab-tenga	Tree	Fruit juice is taken
		(v) <i>Curcuma caesia</i> Roxb.	Kola haladhi	Herb	Orally, rhizome paste is used
		(vi) <i>Curcuma zedoaria</i> Rosc.	Borahu	Herb	Used as pill that are prepared from the rhizome
		(vii) <i>Leucas aspera</i> (Willd.) Link	Durun bon	Herb	Leaves are taken as juice
		(viii) <i>Phlogacanthus thyriformis</i> (Hardw.) Mabb.	Tila phul	Shrub/ tree	Flower and leaves are taken as decoction
		(ix) <i>Trachyspermum ammi</i> (L.) Sprague	Ajwain	Herb	Seeds are used as infusion
11.	<b>Piles</b>	(i) <i>Calotropis procera</i> (Ait.) R.Br	Akon	Shrub/ tree	Pill is used that is prepared from the leaf and also used as paste
		(ii) <i>Curcuma zedoaria</i> Rosc.	Borahu	Herb	Pill is used that is prepared from the rhizome
		(iii) <i>Dactyloctenium aegyptium</i> (L.) P. Beauv.	Bobosa bon	Herb	Whole plant is used
		(iv) <i>Drymeria cordata</i> (L.) Wild.ex	Lai-jaborihak	Herb	Whole plant is used as juice or paste.
		(v) <i>Lagenaria siceraria</i> (Molina) Standl.	Jati-lao	Climber	Fruit juice is taken
		(vi) <i>Mesua ferrea</i> L.	Nahor	tree	Bark is used as infusion
		(vii) <i>Murraya koenigii</i> (L.) Spreng	Narasingha	Tree/ shrub	Orally, leaf paste is taken
		(viii) <i>Paederia scandens</i> (Lour)	Bhedailota	Climber	Leaves are taken as vegetable
		(ix) <i>Scoparia dulcis</i> L.	Cheni-bon	Herb	Leaves are taken as juice
		(x) <i>Spondias pinnata</i> (L.f.) Kurz	Amora	Tree	Stem, fruit, leaves and bark paste are used
		(xi) <i>Syzygium cumini</i> (L.) Skeels	Kola-jamuk	Tree	Fruit is taken raw
		(xii) <i>Terminalia arjuna</i> (Roxb ex DC)	Arjun	Tree	Orally, bark is used as infusion
		(xiii) <i>Ziziphus mauritiana</i> lamk.	Bogori	Tree	Raw fruits are taken
		(xiv) <i>Vitex negundo</i> L.	Pochotia	Tree/ Shrub	Shoot paste is taken
12.	<b>Diabetic Problem</b>	(i) <i>Momordica charantia</i> L.	Titakerela	Climber	Fruit juice is taken and fruits are rubbed below the foot except the people suffered gastrointestinal disorder
		(ii) <i>Syzygium cumini</i> (L.) Skeels	Jamuk	Tree	Fruit and fruit juice are taken
		(iii) <i>Dillenia indica</i> L.	Ow-tenga	Tree	Fruits are taken as decoction and also fruits are taken
		(iii) <i>Flacourtia jangomas</i> (Lour) Raeusch.	Poniyol	Tree	Raw fruits are taken
		(iv) <i>Mangifera indica</i> L.	Aam	Tree	Leaves are taken as decoction and raw fruits are taken
		(v) <i>Elaeocarpus floribundus</i> Bl.	Jolphai	Tree	Fruits are eaten raw
(vi) <i>Phyllanthus emblica</i> L.	Amlakhi	Tree	Raw fruits are taken		
13.	<b>Blood pressure</b>	(i) <i>Clerodendrum colebrookeanum</i> Walp.	Nephaphu	Shrub	Leaves are used as vegetable or salad
		(ii) <i>Alocasia indica</i> (Roxb.) Schot	Man kochu	Herb	Rhizome is used as decoction
		(iii) <i>Tamarindus indica</i> L.	Teteli	Tree	Fruits are eaten raw
		(iv) <i>Rauwolfia serpentina</i> L. Benth. ex Kurz.	Sarpagandha	Shrub	Leaf juices are taken
14.	<b>Toothache</b>	(i) <i>Alocasia macrorrhiza</i> (Roxb.) Schot	Borkochu	Herb	Externally paste of leaf and rhizome are used
		(ii) <i>Mimosa pudica</i> L.	Lajuki bon	Shrub	Root paste is applied in the affected zone
		(iii) <i>Alstonia scholaris</i> (L.) R. Br	Chatiana	Tree	Orally, stem and bark paste are used
		(iv) <i>Azadirachta indica</i> A. Juss.	Moha-neem	Tree	Leaves are used as vegetable or paste
		(v) <i>Nicotiana tabacum</i> L.	Dhopat	Herb	Leaf paste is applied in ache zone
		(vi) <i>Mentha arvensis</i> L.	Pudina	Herb	Leaves are used as paste
		(vii) <i>Musa balbisiana</i> Colla.	Athiya kol	Herb	Rhizome is used in the affected area after slightly roast
		(viii) <i>Myrica esculenta</i> Buch.-Ham. Ex D. Don	Noga tenga	Tree	Power is used that is prepared from its bark
15.	<b>Fungal infection</b>	(i) <i>Azadirachta indica</i> . Juss.	Moha-neem	Tree	Leaf paste is used above the infected portion.
		(ii) <i>Lawsonia inermis</i> L.	Jetuka	Shrub /tree	Leaf paste is applied above the infected area.

including fever, headache, body pain, burns, animal bites, cuts, diabetes, high blood pressure, TB, heart problems, stomach issues, worms, pox, jaundice, sinusitis, reproductive issues, allergies, pimples, hair loss, sunburn, and so forth (Figure 2; Table 1). Treatments for several illnesses involve the use of various plant parts, such as seeds, leaves, bark, roots, etc. (Table 2). Present study also revealed that medications were used in the form of paste and applied topically to the affected area, as well as occasionally consumed, for treating skin conditions (Table 3). Table 1 enumerates the diseases, their respective scientific and local names, and the portion of the plant that is used as medication. It has been shown that the majority of medications are made as blends using non-plant materials or other plants. Because of their conservative views, the majority of respondents of the study area have expressed reluctance to share their information. They felt that the dissemination of their traditional knowledge would prevent efficacy of their traditional phytotherapy. Therefore, it is possible that the abrupt passing out of ethnomedicine knowledge to unknown person could result in the loss of indigenous knowledge systems. This emphasizes how crucial it is to thoroughly investigate and record the valuable indigenous knowledge system of the many ethnic communities. However, perusal of existing literature revealed that the majority of the ethnomedicinal plant species reported to be used by the Ahom and Bodo community in present studies are also reported from other tribes of North East India for same remedies such as Das and Tag (2006), Konwar and Buragohain (2007), Kalita and Bora (2008), Das et al (2008), Choudhary et al (2008), Saikia and Saikia (2010), Tanti et al (2010), Abujam and Shah (2012), Baruah and Borthakur (2012), Panda et al (2013), Thakur et al (2014), Debbarma et al (2017), Gogoi and Nath (2021), Daimary et al (2019), Das and Lungphi (2019). This reflects the cross-cultural importance of the ethnomedicinal plants used by the Ahom and Bodo community of Charaideo district of Upper Assam.

## 5. Conclusion

Present investigation has proven the fact that the traditional herbal healers of Ahom and Bodo communities of Upper Assam has a deep knowledge of ethnomedicine which has the potential to cure 15 ailments using 68 species of ethnomedicinal plants of their surroundings. The great majority of these ethnomedicinal plant species were reported to be angiosperm. The medicinal plants valuable in traditional medicine in the Charaideo area are: *Leucas aspera*, *Paederia foetida*, *Psidium guajava*, *Clerodendrum colebrookeanum*, *Musa balbisiana*, *Dendrocnide sinuata*, *Azadirachta indica* and *Cucuma longa*. These plants have received high scores utilization from traditional healers and elderly villagers. Conservation of these plants in the community forest area will help in sustenance of the age-old herbal tradition of the Ahom and Bodo communities of Charaideo of Upper Assam.

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### Authors contribution

All authors have equally contributed in concept, research design, data generation and finalization of manuscript.

### Declaration of conflict of interest

Authors have no conflict of interests.

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**Table 2** showing the different plant parts used by Ahom and Bodo community in Charaideo district, Assam.

SN	Plant part	No of species
1	Whole plant	45
2	Leaf	60
3	Stem	35
4	Root	15
5	Fruit	10
6	Seed	2
4	Flower	1

**Table 3.** Showing the forms of medication practiced by Ahom and Bodo community.

SN	Form of medication	No of species
1	Paste	55
2	Juice	41
3	Eaten raw	24
4	Vegetable	15
5	Pill	3
6	Decoction	5

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