

## Asian Journal of Pharmacognosy

Ethnopharmacological Note

### Use of *Ficus benghalensis* L. aerial roots by a folk medicinal practitioner of Bangladesh to treat blood dysentery

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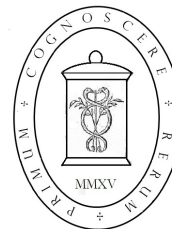
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*Ficus benghalensis* L. (Moraceae family) is a common tree native to the Indian subcontinent, known in English as the banyan tree and in Bengali as 'bot gach'. The tree produces propagating or aerial roots, which grow downwards. Various parts of the tree are considered to have medicinal values. Traditional healers of Kancheepuram district, Tamil Nadu, India, apply stem latex topically on heel cracks; young stems are used as toothbrush (Muthu et al., 2006). Infusion of stem bark is taken for dysentery; leaf infusion is taken for diarrhea by people residing in Pachalur hills of Dindigul district in Tamil Nadu, India (Shanmugam et al., 2011). In the various Indian systems of traditional medicines like Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, and homeopathy, various parts of the tree are used to treat diabetes, leucorrhea, menorrhagia, and nervous disorders (Gopukumar and Praseetha, 2015). Inhabitants of Ranchi district, India, use bark of the plant in diarrhea and diabetes as well as a tonic and astringent, seeds of the plant as tonic, and the milky sap applied topically to alleviate pain during rheumatism and lumbago (Sahu et al., 2015). Latex is applied on boils by tribal communities residing in Papikondalu Wildlife Sanctuary, Eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh, India (Rao et al., 2016). Bark and leaf is used for mouth infections, skin diseases, and diarrhea by tribal people of Kandhamal district, Odisha, India (Panigrahy et al., 2016). Local people of Central Punjab, Pakistan, use leaf and root to increase male sexual power in humans (Zereen and Khan, 2012). Bark of the plant is used for treatment of rheumatoid arthritis by the tribal people in Visakhapatnam district, Andhra Pradesh, India (Shyamala et al., 2016). Milky latex is applied topically in rheumatism and lumbago; infusion of bark is used in diabetes, diarrhea, and dysentery in Kathua district (J & K), India (Kumar and Bhagat, 2012). The tribals of Gadchiroli Reserve Forests, Maharashtra, India, use bark juice with fruits or garlic or turmeric for diabetes and bud infusion for diarrhea (Shende, 2017). The local population of Jalaun district, Uttar Pradesh, India, orally takes fresh burnt ashes of bark with water as treatment for abdominal pain (Saxena et al., 2014). In this note we report a novel use of aerial roots of *Ficus benghalensis* (a common tree in Bangladesh, Figure 1) to cure blood dysentery. The treatment method was obtained from a folk medicinal practitioner (FMP) in Naogaon district, Bangladesh. In this method, the FMP prepared a paste of aerial roots (which resembles flowers) with water in which rice has been washed. The paste was given to patients suffering from blood dysentery to be taken orally on an empty stomach. Blood dysentery is a serious problem in rural Bangladesh and this can be a simple herbal cure for this disease.

**Keywords:** medicinal plants; *Ficus benghalensis*, dysentery



Asian Journal of Pharmacognosy (2017) 1(4):35-37

## Declaration of Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest associated with this work.

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Figure 1. *Ficus benghalensis* L.