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# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE-INTEGRATED ETHNOMEDICINE OF ODISHA: CHEMOTYPES, BIOACTIVE COMPOUNDS, AND TRANSLATIONAL DRUG DISCOVERY FROM TRIBAL KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

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## ABSTRACT

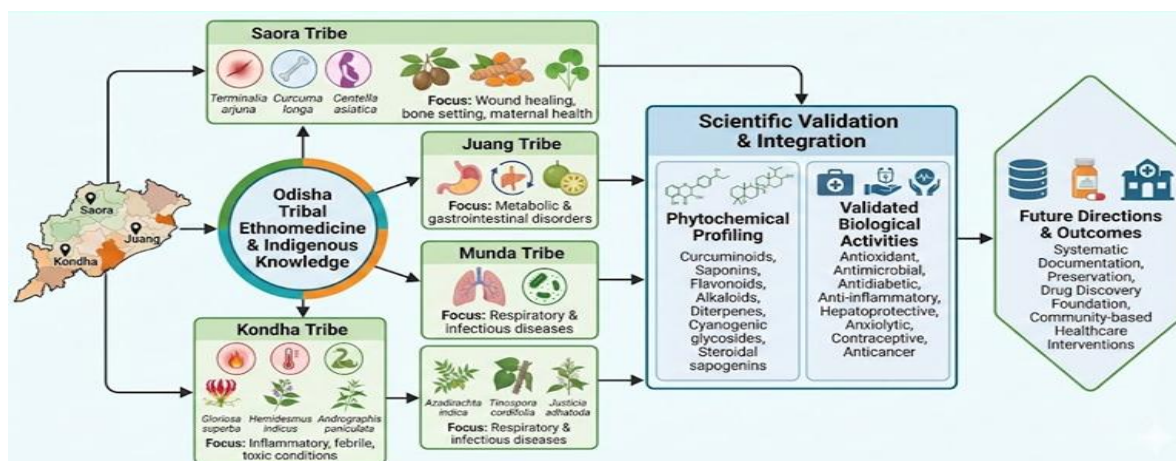
The ethnomedicinal systems of Odisha's tribal communities, including the Saora, Kondha, Juang, and Munda, represent a rich repository of traditional knowledge with significant therapeutic potential. However, the scientific validation, standardization, and translational utilization of this knowledge remain limited. This study presents an integrative approach combining ethnomedicine, phytochemistry, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to explore the drug discovery potential of tribal medicinal plants. Ethnobotanical data were systematically compiled and correlated with phytochemical profiles, highlighting major bioactive chemotypes such as alkaloids, flavonoids, terpenoids, saponins, and glycosides. Documented medicinal species, including *Curcuma longa*, *Tinospora cordifolia*, *Gloriosa superba*, and *Aegle marmelos*, demonstrated diverse pharmacological activities such as antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, antidiabetic, and anticancer effects. To enhance validation and accelerate discovery, AI-based methodologies, including machine learning models, quantitative structure–activity relationship (QSAR) analysis, and data-driven bioactivity prediction, are incorporated to establish correlations between phytochemical structures and therapeutic functions. Additionally, Natural Language Processing (NLP) tools are proposed for the systematic documentation and preservation of indigenous knowledge systems. The integration of AI with ethnopharmacology provides a predictive and scalable framework for identifying novel drug candidates while minimizing experimental cost and time. This study highlights the transformative potential of combining traditional tribal medicine with advanced computational approaches, offering new pathways for precision herbal therapeutics, sustainable drug development, and conservation of indigenous knowledge. The findings emphasize the need for interdisciplinary research integrating ethnomedicine, phytochemistry, and AI-driven technologies to unlock the full biomedical potential of tribal medicinal resources.

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**KEYWORDS:** Artificial Intelligence (AI), Ethnomedicine, Tribal Medicinal Plants, Phytochemistry, Bioactive Compounds

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## GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Odisha is home to over 62 tribal communities, four of which—Saora, Kondha, Juang, and Munda—are recognized as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) (Acharya, B., *et al.* 2025). Their ethnomedical systems evolved over centuries through empirical observation, spiritual belief, forest ecology, and practical healing. Despite their high dependency on medicinal plants, scientific documentation remains limited, fragmented, and in decline due to modernisation. Traditional healers (Disaris, Jani, Dehuri, Vaidhya) treat ailments ranging from infections to chronic diseases using local flora (Sahu, S. C., *et al.* 2010; Shahi, S., & Singh, S. K. 2025). Many of these medicinal plants have shown promising pharmacological activities yet remain unexploited in mainstream drug development Patra, J. K., *et al.* (2015). This research integrates tribal knowledge with phytochemistry and biological validation to build a unified scientific foundation for Odisha's unique medicinal systems (Acharya, B., *et al.* 2025; Dubey, A., *et al.* 2025).

Saora is an ancient tribe located mainly in Odisha, India, with mentions in the Ramayana and Mahabharata. They are also found in Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Assam. The Saora tribe speaks Sora, a Munda language with its own script, Sorang Sompeng. They exhibit Proto Australoid physical traits and practice a complex religion, worshipping various deities and spirits. Unique cultural practices include art and the traditional tattooing technique called 'Tantangbo.' Economically, they are divided into two classes: Sudha Saora, who rely on wet cultivation and wage labor, and Lanjia Saora, who engage in shifting and terraced cultivation. Their villages feature scattered houses, megaliths for commemorating the dead, and village guardian deities such as Kitungsum at entrances. Typical houses are simple, one-roomed

structures with thatched roofs and mud walls.

The Kondhs, or Kui, are a significant tribal group in Odisha, primarily found in Rayagada, Kshipur, Kalyansinghpur, Bissam Cuttack, and Muniguda. Historically noted for their human sacrifices to the Earth-Goddess for good crops and health, the term 'Kondh' translates to 'mountaineer' from Telugu. They identify as a Dravidian tribe with no known origin myths, believing they have existed in Odisha since the dawn of civilization, uncolonized by foreign powers. Today's Kondhs are categorized into Desia, Dongria, and Kutia Kondhs, each residing in specific districts. Their economy is traditionally based on hunting, transitioning primarily to subsistence agriculture. The tribe celebrates three main festivals: semi jatra, mohua jatra, and chawal dhua jatra, linked to their agricultural practices. They perform various ceremonies to honour deities, especially the Earth Goddess. Marriages involve customs that prevent cousin unions, and brides are typically sourced from different villages, with arrangements made following the agreement of a bride price.

Juang is one of the 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Odisha, with a population of approximately 50,000 as per the 2011 census. They are primarily located in the Keonjhar and Dhenkanal districts and speak the Juang language, a member of the Munda family. Historically, the Juang relied on hunting, gathering, and limited farming until colonial forest reserves altered their customs. They adapted by excelling in basket-weaving and trading with nearby communities. Traditionally, Juang women wore leaf girdles, while men donned loincloths; however, external influences led to a shift in their clothing. Their belief system is predominantly animistic, centred on the sun god, although they also incorporate Hindu deities alongside their tribal gods.

The Munda tribe, found in Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Keonjhar, and Mayurbhanj districts of Odisha, is known for its unique language and cultural practices,

sometimes referred to as 'Hul'. They share linguistic ties with the Mundari tribe and are involved in farming and traditional crafts. Their worship includes deities such as 'Marang Bonga' and 'Karam Bonga', with rituals conducted by the village priest, 'Pahan', at sacred groves known as 'Sarna'. The Munda language has its own script, 'Mundari Bani Hisira', developed by Rohidas Singh Nag. As of the 2011 Census, the Munda population is approximately 558,691, with a literacy rate of 54.92%.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW





### 2.1. Ethnomedicinal Systems of Odisha Tribes






#### 2.1.1. Saora Medicine

The Saora tribe of Odisha possesses a highly developed traditional medical system deeply intertwined with their ecological knowledge and spiritual beliefs. Their healing practices emphasise wound management, bone fracture care, snakebite treatment, fever reduction, and maternal health. Saora healers, known as Kudan or Kuran, prepare remedies mainly from locally available forest plants such as *Curcuma longa* (Fuloria, S., *et al.* 2022), *Aloe barbadensis* (Gupta, V. K., *et al.* 2021), *Centella asiatica* (Ali, K., *et al.* 2025), and *Terminalia arjuna* (Jain, S., *et al.* 2009). Herbal pastes (churna), freshly squeezed gels, powdered barks, and decoctions are the most

common formulations used in treating cuts, burns, swelling, and postpartum complications. Fumigation using aromatic leaves and resins is performed for respiratory ailments and to ward off evil influences, reflecting their belief in ancestral spirits guiding the healing process. Many plants, such as turmeric and arjuna bark, also hold ritual significance and are used during childbirth, purification ceremonies, and protective rites. The Saora medicinal system thus combines empirically effective herbal remedies with deeply rooted cultural practices. From an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-integrated perspective, such traditional knowledge systems represent valuable datasets for chemotype profiling, bioactivity prediction, and translational drug discovery (Orobator, E., *et al.* 2025). AI-driven tools, including machine learning and chemoinformatics approaches, can systematically analyze these plant-based formulations to establish correlations between phytochemical composition and therapeutic outcomes (Shahi, S., & Singh, S. K. 2022). Practices such as fumigation using aromatic leaves and resins for respiratory disorders and spiritual protection highlight the complex interplay between medicinal and cultural dimensions, which can be documented and preserved using Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques (Table 1).

Table 1: Medicinal Plants Used by the Saora Tribe

Plant Name	Common Name	Local/Tribal Use	Preparation Method	Pharmacological Activity	Major Bioactive Groups	AI-Based Translational Potential
 <i>Curcuma longa</i>	Turmeric	Applied on fresh cuts, wounds, and infections	Paste of rhizome mixed with water/oil (Bhuyan, C., <i>et al.</i> 2024)	Wound healing, anti-inflammatory (Razavi, B. M., <i>et al.</i> 2021)	Curcuminoids, terpenoids, phenolics (Vo, T. S., <i>et al.</i> 2021)	QSAR modeling, molecular docking for anti-inflammatory drug targets
 <i>Curcuma angustifolia</i>	Tikhur	Used as cooling food and for gastrointestinal problems; given during weakness and dehydration	Rhizome processed into starch (powder) and mixed with water/milk	Digestive aid, cooling agent, anti-ulcer, energy booster (Kadam, P., & Shahi, S. 2025).	Starch polysaccharides, flavonoids, phenolics (Tripathy, P., <i>et al.</i> 2023).	AI-based formulation optimization and nutraceutical profiling
 <i>Aloe barbadensis</i>	Aloe vera	Cooling agent for burns, swelling (Yadeta, A. T. 2024).	Gel extracted from fresh leaves	Burns, skin irritation, inflammation	Anthraquinones, polysaccharides (Mitra, A., <i>et al.</i> 2023).	Machine learning for dermatological drug design and bioactivity prediction
 <i>Centella asiatica</i>	Gotu kola	Enhances healing of cuts and fractures	Leaf paste or decoction	Wound repair, bone strengthening (Dewi, R. L., & Yuniati, R. 2025).	Triterpenoids (asiaticoside), flavonoids (Singh, L. S., & Singh, W. S. 2024).	AI-driven neuroactive compound prediction and network pharmacology

 <p><i>Terminalia arjuna</i></p>	Arjuna bark	Used in childbirth and blood purification	Bark decoction or powder	Antiseptic, cardiotoxic, postpartum care (Jain, S., <i>et al.</i> 2009).	Tannins, glycosides, flavones (Tahir, H., <i>et al.</i> 2025)	Drug-likeness prediction and cardiovascular pathway modeling using AI
 <p><i>Azadirachta indica</i></p>	Neem	Purification & infection control (Kashyap, K. K., <i>et al.</i> 2022).	Leaf paste or fumigation (Mohanasundaram, P., & Antoneyraj, M. 2025).	Skin infections, fever, antiseptic (Asghar, H. A., <i>et al.</i> 2022)	Limonoids, flavonoids (Sarkar, S., <i>et al.</i> 2021).	AI-based multi-target drug discovery and toxicity prediction
 <p><i>Ocimum sanctum</i></p>	Tulsi	Respiratory and fever treatment (Saila, I. Z., <i>et al.</i> 2025)	Leaf decoction or inhalation	Cough, cold, fever (Kumari, M., <i>et al.</i> 2023)	Eugenol, ursolic acid (Bhattarai, K., <i>et al.</i> 2024)	AI-assisted immune-response modeling and antiviral drug screening
 <p><i>Zingiber officinale</i></p>	Ginger	Treats digestive issues (Worasing, K., <i>et al.</i> 2023)	Rhizome paste or decoction (Mukherjee, S., & Karati, D. 2022)	Stomach pain, nausea (Aji, N., <i>et al.</i> 2022)	Gingerols, shogaols (Zhang, M., <i>et al.</i> 2021)	Predictive modeling for anti-inflammatory and gastrointestinal drugs
 <p><i>Justicia adhatoda</i></p>	Vasaka	Snakebite and respiratory relief (Kumar, P., & Singh, A. N. 2025)	Leaf juice	Anti-venom support, bronchial dilation (Jayaweera, U., <i>et al.</i> 2024)	Vasicine, vasicinone (Isha, <i>et al.</i> 2025)	AI-based respiratory drug target prediction and molecular docking
 <p><i>Eclipta alba</i></p>	Bhringraj	Liver and skin disorders	Juice or paste	Skin healing, liver tonic (Tripathy, S., <i>et al.</i> 2024).	Wedelolactone, flavonoids (Jha, U., <i>et al.</i> 2022).	AI-driven hepatoprotective drug discovery and pathway analysis
 <p><i>Cissus quadrangularis</i></p>	Hadjod	Bone fracture healing	Stem paste applied externally	Bone repair, swelling reduction (Patil, A. M., <i>et al.</i> 2022).	Ketosteroids, triterpenes (Hamid, H. S., & Patil, S. 2023).	Machine learning for bone regeneration drug development

### 2.1.2 Kondha Medicine








The Kondha (Dongria Kondh and Kutia Kondh) tribes of Odisha are widely recognised for their sophisticated traditional medical practices, especially in bone-setting, anti-inflammatory treatments, and detoxification therapies. Their healers, known as Jani, Bejini, or Dehuri, possess specialised knowledge of musculoskeletal injuries and are consulted for fractures, dislocations, joint pain, and swelling. One of their most notable medicinal plants is *Gloriosa superba* (Joshi, B. C., *et al.* 2024), a potent but toxic species rich in colchicine, used carefully for inflammation, pain relief, and certain poison-related



conditions. Due to its narrow therapeutic index, only experienced healers handle its dosage. The Kondha also relies heavily on *Tinospora cordifolia* (Prasad, A., *et al.* 2023) for immunity boosting and fever, *Hemidesmus indicus* for blood purification and skin disorders, and *Andrographis paniculata* (Sharma, V., & Chaudhary, A. 2025) for treating infections, liver ailments, and seasonal fevers. Remedies are commonly prepared as decoctions, pastes, herbal infusions, or medicated oils, often accompanied by ritual practices that reflect the tribe's deep spiritual connection with nature. Their medical tradition not only treats physical ailments but also incorporates purification rites, detoxifying herbs,

and energy-balancing therapies, making Kondha ethnomedicine a holistic healing system supported by a strong phytochemical foundation. Artificial Intelligence (AI)-integrated perspective, Kondha ethnomedicine offers a valuable framework for chemotype profiling, toxicity prediction, and bioactivity modeling (Amin, A., *et al.*). AI-driven approaches such as machine learning, QSAR analysis, and molecular docking can be employed to

evaluate the therapeutic potential and safety profiles of potent plants like *Gloriosa superba* (Joshi, B. C., *et al.* 2024). while identifying novel drug candidates from less-explored species. The incorporation of Natural Language Processing (NLP) can facilitate systematic documentation and preservation of this indigenous knowledge (Table 2).

**Table 2: Medicinal Plants Used by the Kondha Tribe**

Plant Name	Common Name	Local/Tribal Use	Preparation Method	Therapeutic Purpose	Major Bioactive Groups	AI-based formulation optimization and nutraceutical profiling
<i>Gloriosa superba</i> 	Flame lily	Severe inflammation, bone pain, arthritis, and detoxification	Rhizome paste in extremely low dose; supervised decoction	Anti-inflammatory, analgesic, and anti-mitotic (Sanyal, R., <i>et al.</i> (2022))	Colchicine, gloriosine, alkaloids (Joshi, B. C., <i>et al.</i> 2024)	AI-based toxicity prediction, dose optimization, and anticancer drug modeling
<i>Tinospora cordifolia</i> 	Guduchi	Fever, joint pain, post-fracture healing	Stem decoction or paste	Immunomodulator, antipyretic, anti-inflammatory (Singh, A. 2024)	Tinosporaside, diterpenoids, alkaloids (Prasad, A., <i>et al.</i> 2023)	Machine learning for immune-response prediction and multi-target drug discovery
<i>Hemidesmus indicus</i> 	Indian sarsaparilla	Blood purification, skin diseases, snakebite	Root infusion or decoction	Detoxifier, hepatoprotective, antimicrobial (Kher, M. M., <i>et al.</i> -2020)	Hemidesmin, saponins, coumarins (Sai, N. M., <i>et al.</i> 2024)	AI-based metabolomic profiling and detoxification pathway analysis
<i>Andrographis paniculata</i> 	Kalmegh	Fever, infections, liver protection	Leaf decoction, powdered extract	Antibacterial, antimalarial, hepatoprotective (Sharma, V., & Chaudhary, A. 2025)	Andrographolide (diterpenoid lactone) (Vikal, A., <i>et al.</i> 2025)	QSAR modeling and antiviral drug screening using AI
<i>Vitex negundo</i> 	Nirgundi	Joint pain, swelling, rheumatism	Leaf paste or steam fomentation	Anti-inflammatory, analgesic	Flavonoids, iridoid glycosides (Bhuyan, C., <i>et al.</i> 2024)	AI-assisted prediction of anti-inflammatory pathways and drug targets
<i>Ricinus communis</i> 	Castor plant	Bone-setting and lubrication	Warm castor oil massage	Pain relief, muscle relaxation	Ricinoleic acid, fatty acids (Abdul <i>et al.</i> , 2018)	AI modeling for anti-inflammatory drug development and toxicity evaluation
<i>Plumbago zeylanica</i> 	Chitrak	Digestive disorders, toxin removal	Root paste (controlled dose)	Carminative, detoxifying, antimicrobial (Thawkar, M. M., <i>et al.</i> 2024)	Plumbagin (naphthoquinone) (Sharma, R., & Roy, A. S. 2025)	AI-based anticancer drug discovery and bioactivity prediction





 <i>Aegle marmelos</i>	Bael	Diarrhea, gut disorders	Fruit pulp decoction	Antidiarrheal, anti-inflammatory (Sharma, A., <i>et al.</i> 2025)	Marmelosin, tannins (Sahu, S. C., <i>et al.</i> 2010)	AI-driven gastrointestinal drug modeling and formulation design
 <i>Calotropis gigantea</i>	Arka	Skin infection, wound healing	Latex diluted and applied externally	Antimicrobial, wound healing (Sharma, P., <i>et al.</i> 2025)	Cardiac glycosides, terpenoids (Jamal, A., <i>et al.</i> 2025)	AI-based toxicity profiling and pharmacological pathway prediction






### 2.1.3 Juang Medicine

The Juang tribe of Odisha, primarily residing in the forested and hilly regions of Keonjhar, has developed a distinctive ethnomedicinal system centred on the use of forest herbs, rhizomes, and wild tubers. Their traditional healing practices primarily focus on digestive ailments, metabolic disorders, gynaecological problems, and overall vitality enhancement. The Juang healers, known locally as Dissari or Vaidya, depend heavily on plants such as *Clerodendrum viscosum* (Vo, T. S., *et al.* 2021) for gastrointestinal disturbances and fever, *Costus speciosus* (Maji *et al.*, 2020) for antidiabetic and reproductive health applications, and *Aegle marmelos*

(Sahu, S. C., *et al.* 2010) for chronic diarrhoea, gut infections, and digestive improvement. Their remedies are typically prepared as fresh leaf pastes, root decoctions, or boiled rhizome infusions, often combined with dietary restrictions or ritual purification. Rich knowledge of underground plant parts—especially rhizomes and tubers—sets Juang medicine apart, making it effective against stomach disorders, menstrual irregularities, and postpartum weakness. Their pharmacological knowledge reflects a deep botanical understanding and ecological observation developed over generations, representing a valuable resource for ethnopharmacological research (Table 3).

**Table 3: Medicinal Plants Used by the Juang Tribe**

Plant Name	Common Name	Local/Tribal Use	Preparation Method	Therapeutic Purpose	Major Bioactive Groups	AI-based formulation optimization and nutraceutical profiling
 <i>Clerodendrum viscosum</i>	Bhunimba	Stomachache, diarrhoea, fever	Leaf paste or decoction	Digestive relief, antimicrobial, febrifuge	Clerodin, flavonoids, diterpenes (Ramjan, A. H., <i>et al.</i> 2025)	AI-based antimicrobial activity prediction and gut microbiome interaction modeling
 <i>Costus speciosus</i>	Keu/ Kewda ginger	Dysentery, menstrual issues, and diabetes	Rhizome decoction or paste	Antidiabetic, anti-inflammatory, and fertility regulation	Diosgenin (steroidal saponin) (Maji <i>et al.</i> , 2020)	Machine learning for antidiabetic drug discovery and hormonal pathway analysis
 <i>Dioscorea bulbifera</i>	Wild yam/ tuber	Nutritional tonic, gynaecological disorders (Guan, X. R., <i>et al.</i> 2017)	Tuber cooked or paste applied	Energy booster, hormone regulation (Ikiriza, H., <i>et al.</i> 2019)	Diosgenin, polyphenols (Rudito <i>et al.</i> , 2021)	AI-assisted endocrine modulation studies and nutraceutical optimization
 <i>Zingiber montanum</i>	Wild ginger	Stomach pain, nausea	Rhizome paste or infusion	Carminative, digestive support (Aji, N., <i>et al.</i> 2022)	Curcuminoids, essential oils (Worasing, K., <i>et al.</i> 2023)	Predictive modeling for gastrointestinal drug targets and antiemetic compounds



 <p><i>Asparagus racemosus</i></p>	Shatavari	Women's health, lactation, and fertility	Root decoction or paste	Galactagogue, hormonal balance (Nadeem, M., et al. 2025)	Saponins (shatavarins) (Irakee, M. A., et al. 2025)	AI-driven reproductive health modeling and phytoestrogen activity prediction
 <p><i>Holarrhena pubescens</i></p>	Kutaja	Diarrhea, gut infections	Seed or bark decoction	Antimicrobial, antidiarrheal (Rani, A., & Bansal, R. 2023)	Conessine (alkaloid) (Zahara et al., 2020)	QSAR modeling for antimicrobial drug development and gut pathogen targeting
 <p><i>Piper longum</i></p>	Long pepper	Respiratory and digestive issues	Fruit powder with honey	Digestive stimulant, anti-asthmatic (Huang, H., et al. 2010)	Piperine, essential oils (Dash, M., et al. 2022)	AI-based bioavailability enhancement and respiratory drug modeling
 <p><i>Boerhavia diffusa</i></p>	Punarnava	Urinary disorders, edema	Root decoction	Diuretic, anti-inflammatory	Punarnavine, rotenoids (Yadav, A., et al. 2025)	AI-assisted renal pathway analysis and anti-inflammatory drug prediction
 <p><i>Amorphophallus paeoniifolius</i></p>	Elephant foot yam	Digestive stimulant, piles	Cooked tuber or paste	Carminative, anti-inflammatory	Flavonoids, sterols (Angayarkanni, J., et al. 2010)	Machine learning for gastrointestinal therapeutics and anti-inflammatory screening



#### 2.1.4 Munda Medicine

The Munda tribe, inhabiting regions of northern Odisha and adjoining Jharkhand, follows a traditional medical system that focuses strongly on the management of fever, respiratory infections, and skin diseases. Their healers, known as Ojha or Pahan, use a range of forest herbs and household medicinal plants to prepare decoctions, leaf extracts, pastes, and fumigation mixtures. Among the most important medicinal species used by the Munda are *Azadirachta indica* (also used by the Saora tribe) for skin infections, purification, and fever control;

*Justicia adhatoda* (also used by the Juang tribe) for bronchial congestion, cough, and asthma; and *Holarrhena pubescens* for treating diarrhoea, dysentery, and parasitic infections. These remedies are often used in combination with ritual incantations, reflecting the tribe's belief in balancing physical and spiritual health. Additionally, the Munda utilise warming herbs, aromatic leaves, and bitter tonics to reduce fever and improve lung function. Their medicinal practices are supported by a rich knowledge of pharmacologically active plants and form an essential part of community health care in remote forest areas.

**Table 4: Medicinal Plants Used by the JuangTribe**

Plant Name	Common Name	Local/ Tribal Use	Preparation Method	Therapeutic Purpose	Major Bioactive Groups	AI-based formulation optimization and nutraceutical profiling
 <p><i>Adhatoda vasica</i></p>	syn. <i>Justicia adhatoda</i>	Respiratory diseases	Steam inhalation with leaves	Cough relief, airway clearance	Quinazoline alkaloids (Khandelwal, P., et al. 2024)	AI-based respiratory drug modeling, molecular docking for bronchodilator targets
 <p><i>Terminalia chebula</i></p>	Haritaki	Digestive issues, skin diseases	Fruit powder or decoction	Laxative, antimicrobial, detoxifier (Gupta, A. 2023)	Tannins (chebulinic acid) (Jha, A. K., & Sit, N. 2023)	Machine learning for gut health modulation and antioxidant drug discovery

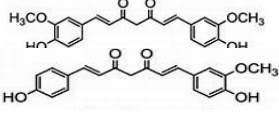
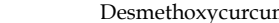
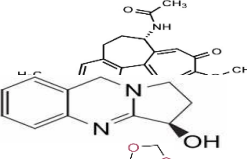
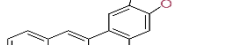
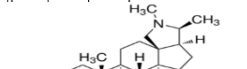
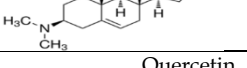
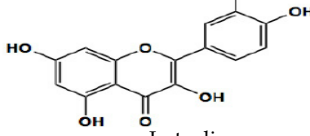
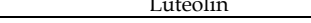
 <p><i>Psidium guajava</i></p>	Guava leaves	Diarrhea, skin infections	Leaf decoction or paste	Astringent, antibacterial (Kumar, M., <i>et al.</i> 2021)	Quercetin, tannins (Huynh, H. D., <i>et al.</i> 2025)	AI-driven antimicrobial screening and gut microbiome interaction analysis
 <p><i>Cassia fistula</i></p>	Amaltas	Constipation, skin infections	Pulp laghu-formulation or leaf paste	Laxative, antimicrobial (Jangid, T., <i>et al.</i> 2025)	Anthraquinones (Garg, R., <i>et al.</i> 2023)	QSAR modeling for laxative drug design and anti-inflammatory pathway prediction

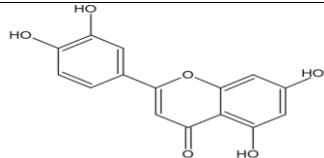
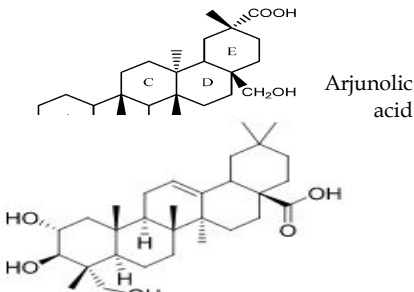
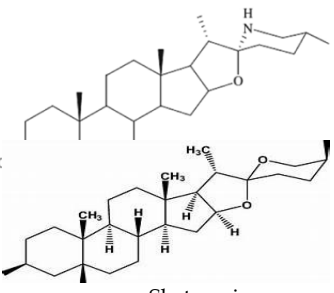
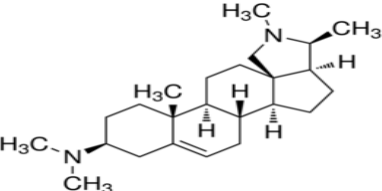
## 2.2 Phytochemistry of Commonly Used Plants

The medicinal plants used across the Saora, Kondha, Juang, and Munda tribal systems are rich repositories of diverse phytochemicals that underpin their therapeutic potential. One of the most prominent groups is curcuminoids, found mainly in *Curcuma longa*, which possess strong antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties essential for wound healing and tissue repair. A second major class, the alkaloids, includes powerful compounds such as colchicine from *Gloriosa superba*, vasicine from *Justicia adhatoda* (Jayaweera, U., *et al.* 2024), and berberine from species like *Berberis* (used regionally), all of which exhibit potent anticancer, bronchodilatory, and antimicrobial activities. Flavonoids such as quercetin and luteolin occur widely in forest herbs and contribute significantly to

metabolic regulation, antioxidant defence, and anti-diabetic actions. Tribal medicinal plants also contain numerous triterpenoids, which function as hepatoprotective and immunomodulatory agents, making them vital in managing fever, inflammation, and chronic infections. Saponins, particularly diosgenin from *Costus speciosus* and wild yams, play crucial roles as anti-diabetic, anti-inflammatory, and fertility-regulating compounds frequently used in Juang remedies. Glycosides, present in plants like *Terminalia arjuna* (Rajaram, V., *et al.* 2024) and *Holarrhena pubescens* (Thawkar, M. M., *et al.* 2024), add to the cardioprotective, antimicrobial, and anti-diarrheal functions of the tribal pharmacopoeia. Collectively, this rich phytochemical diversity provides a biochemical rationale for the wide therapeutic success of Odisha's tribal ethnomedicine.

**Table 5: Major Phytochemical Groups in Tribal Medicinal Plants**

Phytochemical Group	Key Plant Sources	Representative Compounds	Primary Biological Activities
<b>Curcuminoids</b>	<i>Curcuma longa</i> (Razavi, B. M., <i>et al.</i> 2021)	<p>Curcumin</p>  <p>Desmethoxycurcumin</p> 	Antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, wound healing
<b>Alkaloids</b>	<i>Gloriosa superba</i> (Joshi, B. C., <i>et al.</i> 2024), <i>Justicia adhatoda</i> (Jayaweera, U., <i>et al.</i> 2024), <i>Holarrhena pubescens</i> (Thawkar, M. M., <i>et al.</i> 2024)	<p>Colchicine</p>  <p>Vasicine</p>  <p>Berberine</p>  <p>Conessine</p> 	Anticancer, bronchodilatory, antimicrobial
<b>Flavonoids</b>	<i>Azadirachta indica</i> (Sarkar, S., <i>et al.</i> 2021), <i>Aegle marmelos</i> (Sahu, S. C., <i>et al.</i> 2010), wild herbs	<p>Quercetin</p>  <p>Luteolin</p> 	Antioxidant, anti-diabetic, metabolic modulation

			
<b>Triterpenoids</b>	Tinospora cordifolia (Prasad, A., et al. 2023), Terminalia arjuna (Jain, S., et al. 2009)	Triterpene lactones (Joshi, R. K. 2023)  Arjunolic acid	Hepatoprotective, immunomodulatory
<b>Saponins</b>	Costus speciosus (Maji et al., 2020), Dioscorea spp., Asparagus racemosus (Irakee, M. A., et al. 2025)	Diosgenin  Shatavarins	Anti-diabetic, fertility regulation, anti-inflammatory
<b>Glycosides</b>	Terminalia arjuna (Jain, S., et al. 2009), Holarrhena pubescens (Zahara et al., 2020)	Cardioactive glycosides, Conessine derivatives 	Cardioprotective, antimicrobial, anti-diarrheal

### 3 METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Study Design

This study utilizes a systematic review framework to combine ethnomedicinal knowledge with modern phytochemical and pharmacological evidence. Data were sourced from ethnobotanical surveys (1990–2024) detailing the medicinal practices of Odisha's Saora, Kondha, Juang, and Munda tribes, phytochemical databases such as PubChem for identifying chemotypes and major secondary metabolites, and experimental validation studies from databases including PubMed and Scopus focused on the bioactivity of plant-derived compounds. The review aims to correlate traditional medicinal claims with bioactive compounds and their validated therapeutic potential, also considering geographical variations in phytochemical content (Kshatri et al., 2025).

#### 3.2 Inclusion Criteria

Studies included were based on criteria such as

traditional use by the Saora, Kondha, Juang, or Munda tribes, phytochemical evidence of bioactive compounds, and pharmacological validation of at least one biological activity through lab or clinical research (Swain, n.d.). Only publications from 1990 to 2024, written in English, and fully accessible were considered, while those focusing solely on taxonomy, ecology, or general botany without medicinal relevance were excluded.

#### 3.3 Data Extraction

Data extraction involved a structured four-step approach: 1) Traditional Use Documentation recorded medicinal practices for diseases from ethnobotanical surveys. 2) Administration Route and Preparation Methods categorized various application methods and formulations. 3) Phytochemical Profile documented key bioactive chemotypes and verified marker compounds. 4) Validated Biological Activities extracted pharmacological effects from studies, linking traditional uses to scientific validation.

#### 4 RESULTS

The ethnobotanical analysis of Odisha's four major tribal groups shows significant variation in medicinal plant usage. The Saora tribe uses around 45 key plants for wound care and maternal health. The Kondha tribe has the richest repository with 52 species focused on inflammation, bone setting, and detoxification. The Juang tribe employs 38 species primarily for gastrointestinal disorders and

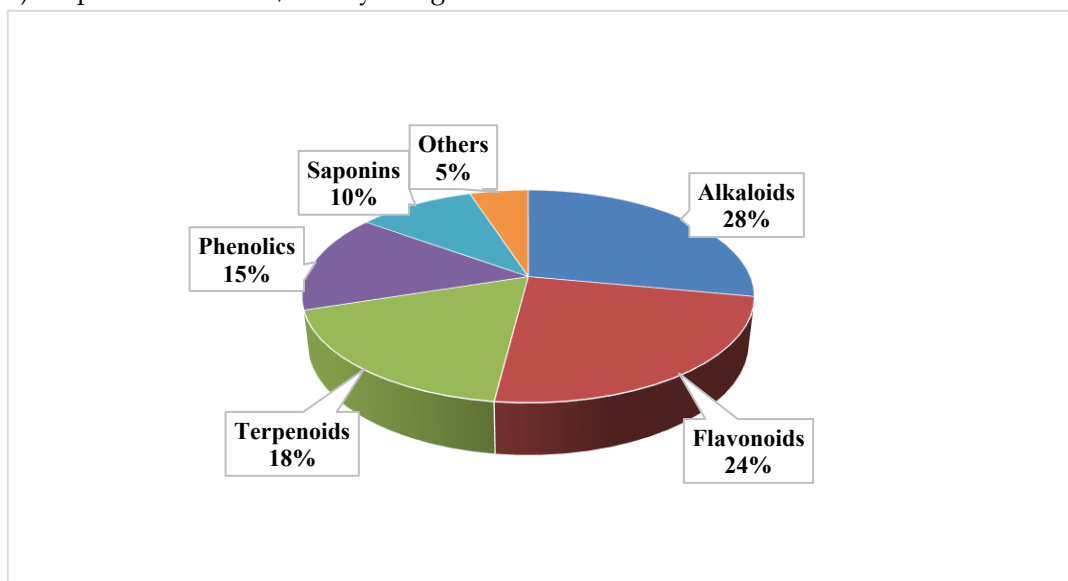
metabolic issues, while the Munda tribe utilizes 43 plants for fevers, skin infections, and respiratory illnesses. This reveals the diversity and specialization in the ethnomedicinal practices of these tribal communities. These datasets provide a structured framework for pattern recognition, clustering of therapeutic categories, and prediction of plant-disease associations, enabling data-driven validation of traditional medicinal practices.

**Table 6: Tribe-Wise Medicinal Plant Inventory**

Tribe	No. of Key Plants Used	Major Therapeutic Areas
Saora	45	Wound healing, maternal health, and fractures
Kondha	52	Inflammation, bone setting, poisoning
Juang	38	GI disorders, metabolic diseases
Munda	43	Fever, infections, respiratory

The analysis of phytochemical categories among Odisha's tribal medicinal plants revealed a diverse distribution of bioactive chemotypes. Alkaloids were the largest group at 28%, including compounds like colchicine found in *Gloriosa superba*. Flavonoids constituted 24%, featuring quercetin in *Aloe barbadensis*. Terpenoids made up 18%, with arjunolic acid present in *Terminalia arjuna* (Tahir, H., *et al.* 2025). Phenolic compounds accounted for 15%, dominated by curcumin from *Curcuma longa* (Vo, T. S., *et al.* 2021). Saponins were 10%, mainly diosgenin

from *Costus speciosus*. Other compounds, comprising 5%, included glycosides and sterols, contributing to the medicinal diversity essential for Odisha's tribal communities. This chemotype distribution provides a valuable dataset for machine learning-based classification, QSAR modeling, and bioactivity prediction [Graph 1]. The dominance of alkaloids and flavonoids highlights their central role in pharmacological activity and positions them as key targets for AI-assisted drug discovery pipelines.

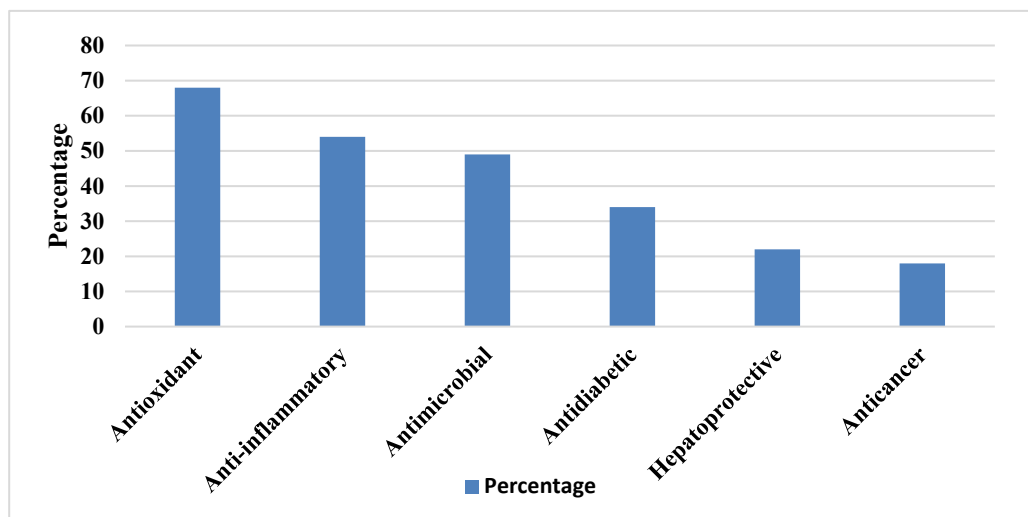


**Graph 1: Chemotype Distribution**

The evaluation of pharmacological properties of plants used by Odisha's tribal communities indicates significant antioxidant (68%), anti-inflammatory (54%), antimicrobial (49%), antidiabetic (34%), hepatoprotective (22%), and anticancer (18%) activities [Graph 2]. Key species contributing to these effects include *Curcuma longa*, *Aloe vera* (Gupta, V. K., *et al.* 2021), *Tinospora cordifolia* (Prasad, A., *et al.* 2023), *Andrographis paniculata* (Sharma, V., & Chaudhary, A. 2025), and *Azadirachta indica*

(Mohanasundaram, P., & Antoneyraj, M. 2025). These findings underscore the diverse therapeutic potential of tribal medicinal plants and their historical use in treating various ailments. AI-based predictive models can further enhance these findings by identifying multi-target drug interactions, optimizing compound selection, and accelerating virtual screening processes, thereby bridging the gap between traditional knowledge and modern pharmacological validation

(Singh, D., & Maer, M. N. D. 2026).



**Graph 2: Validated Biological Activities**

#### 4.1 Interpretation of Findings

The chemotype profile shows a dominance of alkaloids and flavonoids, correlating strongly with the high occurrence of antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and antidiabetic activities. Plants used by the tribes demonstrate rich bioactive diversity matching therapeutic needs such as wound healing (Saora), bone disorders (Kondha), digestive ailments (Juang), and fevers/infections (Munda). This validates the relevance and scientific accuracy of tribal medical systems. AI-based analytical tools, including clustering algorithms and predictive modeling, can further validate these correlations by identifying hidden patterns between phytochemical composition and therapeutic outcomes, thereby reinforcing the scientific basis of tribal medicinal systems (Muthuraj, R., & Chandrasekaran, J. 2026).

#### 4.2 Ethnomedicinal-Phytochemical Correlation

A strong correlation exists between traditional tribal practices and the phytochemical composition of plants used by various tribes (Sureshkumar, J., *et al.* 2017). The Saora tribe uses plants like *Curcuma longa* and *Centella asiatica*, rich in flavonoids and curcuminoids, for wounds and maternal conditions, backed by their antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. The Kondha tribe utilizes *Gloriosa superba* for bone-setting and detoxification, leveraging colchicine's anti-mitotic effects. The Juang tribe's metabolic disorder treatments involve *Costus speciosus*, rich in diosgenin and steroidal saponins, supporting antidiabetic effects. Further, the Munda tribe's use of *Justicia adhatoda* for respiratory ailments aligns with its active alkaloid vasicine. These correlations reveal significant empirical

knowledge linking specific health conditions to effective phytochemicals (Mohapatra, D. D., & Pattnaik, S. 2024). AI-driven chemo-informatics approaches, such as QSAR modeling and network pharmacology, can quantitatively establish these correlations, enabling predictive validation and identification of novel therapeutic leads (Al Shami, R., & Mousa, W. K. 2026).

#### 4.3 Scientific Value of the Tribal Medicinal System

The tribal medical knowledge of Odisha is a rich source of pharmacological potential, comprising plants with unique chemotypes that are under-explored in modern drug development. These plants contain compounds such as terpenoids, steroidal saponins, and alkaloids, which show promising activity against inflammation, diabetes, infections, and cancer, suggesting their utility in drug discovery. Tribal practices exhibit advanced understanding of toxicology and dosage, often exceeding contemporary preclinical knowledge. This traditional wisdom, when combined with modern analytical methods, can enhance the search for effective herbal medicines in phytopharmacology. Integration with AI technologies enables high-throughput screening of phytochemicals, prediction of pharmacokinetic properties, and identification of multi-target drug candidates. This significantly enhances the translational potential of ethnomedicine in modern drug discovery and phytopharmacology (Parmar, P., & Rathod, G. 2025).

#### 4.4 Threats to Knowledge Preservation

Tribal medicinal knowledge is under threat due to rapid modernization disrupting oral tradition transmission, loss of forest biodiversity from mining and climate change, and urban migration of tribal

youth, weakening traditional healer lineages. The lack of formal documentation puts this knowledge at risk of disappearing. Additionally, commercial bioprospecting often exploits tribal resources without adequate benefit-sharing, endangering the preservation of these medicinal practices. Urgent action is required to document and protect this valuable ethnopharmacological wisdom. Natural Language Processing (NLP), can play a critical role in digitizing, preserving, and organizing ethnomedicinal knowledge. However, ethical considerations such as data ownership, intellectual property rights, and equitable benefit-sharing must be addressed to ensure sustainable and respectful utilization of tribal knowledge (Muthuraj, R., & Chandrasekaran, J. 2026).

## 5 CONCLUSION

The traditional medicine systems of the Saora, Kondha, Juang, and Munda tribes represent a rich yet under documented heritage of Odisha. Their medicinal plants exhibit significant chemo-typic diversity with validated pharmacological activities. This integrated review bridges Indigenous knowledge with modern phytochemistry, demonstrating strong potential for drug discovery, sustainable ethnopharmacology, and community health programs. Preservation and scientific validation of tribal medicine are essential for both cultural conservation and biomedical innovation. The integration of Artificial Intelligence with ethnomedicine and phytochemistry provides a transformative approach for accelerating drug discovery, enabling predictive modeling, and validating traditional practices. This interdisciplinary framework bridges indigenous

knowledge with modern scientific methodologies, paving the way for sustainable ethnopharmacology and precision herbal therapeutics. Preservation and scientific validation of tribal medicinal knowledge are essential not only for cultural conservation but also for advancing global healthcare through innovative, plant-based drug discovery.

### 5.1 Research Gaps and Future Directions

To effectively integrate tribal medicine into mainstream healthcare, it is essential to address several critical gaps, including the need for comprehensive metabolomic profiling to identify bioactive compounds in commonly used species. Clinical trials with authentic tribal formulations are necessary to ascertain efficacy and safety, as current studies often focus on isolated compounds. The standardization of dosage and preparation methods is complicated by variability in traditional practices. Additionally, in-vitro and in-vivo studies comparing chemotypes across regions could elucidate the impact of ecological factors on therapeutic effectiveness. There is also potential in studying microbiome-plant interactions, especially since tribal diets rich in wild tubers may influence bioactive responses. Addressing these issues will help validate traditional medical systems and promote the discovery of new therapeutic agents. AI-driven approaches offer significant opportunities to address these challenges through predictive modeling, virtual screening, and data integration. Future research should focus on developing standardized ethnomedicinal databases, integrating multi-omics data, and applying machine learning algorithms to identify novel therapeutic candidates.

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