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Scientists in Guwahati reveal hidden healing power of poisonous plants

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To treat a wide array of illnesses, from fevers and colds to skin diseases and oedema



Researchers at the Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST), Guwahati, an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), are tracing the secrets held in the leaves, roots, and sap of the natural world, having comprehensively investigated various poisonous plant species and their phytochemical constituents.

The researchers emphasised that plants produce phytochemicals—natural compounds used for their own survival, which can also affect human biology. While some of these are toxic, others—when isolated and modified—hold immense medicinal promise.

The team has reviewed existing literature and identified 70 poisonous plant species which are used traditionally to treat a wide array of illnesses—from fevers and colds to skin diseases and oedema.

The findings draw upon ethnopharmacology—how indigenous cultures use plants for healing. From treating snakebites to managing jaundice, these traditional remedies are now being re-evaluated through the lens of modern science. The implications are vast. With rigorous testing, these plants could help discover novel drugs for diseases still lacking effective treatment.

The researchers have stressed the importance of rigorous scientific validation before clinical use. Toxicity must be carefully studied to ensure safety. The journey from folk remedy to FDA-approved medicine is long, but with studies like this, the first steps are being taken.