



RESEARCH ARTICLE

REFERENCE FLORA – A SOURCE OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR (WITH SPECIAL TO CHENAB VALLEY)

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ABSTRACT

Medicinal plants are the oldest known health-care products. Their importance is still growing although it varies depending on ethnological, medical and historical background of each country. From Vedic to scientific records of traditional knowledge, there are enough evidences that plants served as main medicinal source for rural populace. The medicinal knowledge and practice are passed down entirely through oral tradition and personal experience. The Chenab valley of Jammu and Kashmir is rich in flora with many rare herbs that have been used by local people since antiquity. These natural medicines render a lot of services to the community by curing many of diseases like common cold, influenza, fever, cough, asthma, head and body aches, constipation, dysentery, diarrhea, ulcers, abdominal pain, skin infections, throat infections, impotence, allergies, wounds and burns, etc. Hence the present study is to create general awareness among the people regarding the presence of a wide variety of medicinal flora in Chenab Valley of Jammu and Kashmir and its traditional use along with allopathic medicines.

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INTRODUCTION

Traditional medicine (also known as indigenous or folk medicine) comprises unscientific knowledge systems that developed over generations within various societies before the era of modern medicine. Practices known as traditional medicines include herbal, Ayurveda, Siddha medicine, Unani, ancient Iranian medicine, Islamic medicine, traditional Chinese medicine, traditional Korean medicine, acupuncture, Muti, Ifa, traditional African medicine, and other pseudo-medical knowledge and practices all over the globe.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines traditional medicine as “the health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and mineral-based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises, applied singularly or in combination to treat, diagnose and prevent illness to maintain well-being.” (Akbar 2011).

Plants have been traditionally used for hundreds of years as a source of medicine by indigenous people of different ethnic groups inhabiting various terrains for the control of various ailments afflicting humans and their domestic animals. The oldest written evidence of medicinal plants' usage for preparation of drugs has been found on a Sumerian clay slab from Nagpur, approximately 5000 years old. It comprised 12 recipes for drug preparation referring to over 250 various plants, some of them alkaloid such as poppy, henbane, and mandrake. The Chinese book on roots and grasses “Pen T'Sao,” written by Emperor Shen Nung circa 2500 BC, treats 365 drugs (dried parts of medicinal plants), many of which are

used even nowadays such as the following: Rhei rhizoma, camphor, Theae folium, Podophyllum, the great yellow gentian, ginseng, jimson weed, cinnamon bark, and ephedra. The Indian holy books, Vedas mention treatment with plants, which are abundant in this country. Numerous spice plants used even today originate from India: nutmeg, pepper, clove, etc. (Petrovska, 2012.). The Dasavataracarita and Caurpancasika refer to saffron by its present name Kesara. Bilhana too states that he was not aware of growth of saffron in any country other than that of Kashmir. It is still valued and cultivated in Kashmir and Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir. (Jamwal, 2002). During second century B. C. Kalidas also referred to the occurrence of this plant in Kashmir. Afterwards the works of Carak and Susruta were translated in Persian and Arabic, a little earlier than 800 A. D., wherein this plant is mentioned by the name of Saffron, derived from the Arabic name “Azaferon”. (Srivastava et al, 1985.) In 1500 B.C Hippocrates, a Greek physician, prescribed leaves and bark from willow tree to relieve fever and pain. (Akbar, 2012). Traditional herbal medicine plays a great role in Indian society. Although the role of medicinal herbs as a source of traditional medicine have decreased due to the introduction of allopathic drugs but still their importance as a prime source of rural healthcare is unparalleled. Chenab valley of Jammu and Kashmir, is a rich repository of medicinal flora. The climatic conditions prevailing in the region maintains an ideal habitat for the natural growth of variety of medicinal plants and herbs. These plants are the sources which provide raw materials for pharmaceutical, phytochemical and cosmetic industries. Therefore, the present study aims at exploring and

documenting the plants used for curing different diseases by different communities of Chenab Valley.

scientific names and nutritional values was compared to bring accuracy in the present study.

METHODOLOGY

Appropriate methodology was followed during the present study; usually the survey started with the interview of elderly and experienced members having knowledge of traditional medicine, locally. Besides this, common people of the surveyed localities who have used these plant species have been interviewed. The information regarding the economic value of the plant species was also gathered from local inhabitants. All the gathered information, along with information retrieved from various websites regarding the

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study revealed that the Chenab valley of Jammu and Kashmir is rich in medicinal flora and people are having the traditional knowledge of various herbs which they have received from their fore fathers. A total of 27 different plant species were found to be used as effective remedies by the local people in their day to day life to cure various human and livestock ailments. The natural plant remedies are very economical, empirical and safe enough as compared to allopathic drugs. We being a underdeveloped country have not

Table showing flora of medicinal value in Chenab Valley of Jammu and Kashmir

1.Chilgoza Pine	Pinus gerardiana	Pine nuts are used as general tonic, a nutrient and an aphrodisiac. These are used to treat chronic arthritis. Also used to treat a number of skin problems including ring worm, acne, eczema and dry skin. The seed oil is used as a dressing for sores and wounds.
2. Seski , mooyi	Artemisia maritima	Seeds are stomachic, cure indigestion, abdominal pain, mucous diarrhea. The herb is laxative, antihelmenthic, alexiteric, removes bad humours, cures scorpion sting, useful in tooth ache, griping, ophthalmia and inflammation.
3.Nag chhhatri	Trilliam govianianum	Decoction of roots used for stomach related disorders.
4.Opium (poppy seeds ,khas-khas)	Papaver somniferum	Effective in treating diarrhea, also cure stomach pain, insomnia, is effective coolant ,keeps cholesterol under control and reduces blood pressure, reduce formation of kidney stones ,increase body resistance, pain reliver in case of toothaches and cures spasms
5. Hemp.	Cannabis sativa	The main use of hemp is for easing pain and inducing sleep. The tincture helps in parturition and all painful urinary infections.
6. Fennel (saunf)	Foeniculum vulgare	Effective for indigestion and constipation.
7.Morel mushroom (Gucchi)	Morchella esculenta	These are antiviral, immunoregulatory and give resistance to fatigue.
8. Banafsha(Nun Posh)	Viola odorata	Its flowers are used in Unani medicine , as a cooling agent and in bilious disorders, it is also used in whooping cough, also effective in case , headaches, migraine and insomnia..
9. Hing	Ferula asafoetida	Used as home remedy for indigestion , good for menstrual problem ,impotency, respiratory disorders , diabetes and in case of high blood pressure, used as opium antidote , migraines and headaches.
10.Black cumin (kala zeera, zeur)	Bunium persicum	Seeds taken directly with fresh water twice a day at the time of indigestion, dysentery and as carminative.
11.Kuth	Sussurea lappa	The root oil is used to cure joint pains through external massage.
12.Apricot	Prunus armeniaca	Oil of the kernel is pain relieving in case of arthritis
13.Common Nettle(Soie/ soi)	Utrica dioica	The whole weed is considered a diuretic, an astringent, anthelmintic, useful in nephritic disease and has powerful homeostatic effect. Dried leaves powdered inhaled relieves asthma and bronchial complaints.
14.Indian sorrel/ yellow oxalis (poosh ga'si, chukambar)	Oxalis corriculata	The weed is hot, bitter, good appetizer,cures piles, astringent, good for dysentery, leaves are good source of vitamin C, whole weed is used to cure scurvy.
15.Mint (pootna, pudina)	Mentha longifolia	It is considered a carminative, stimulant and having antiseptic properties. The juice mixed with honey is used to relieve the ear pain. The oil obtained from the weed is locally used to relieve body pain, local anesthetic and as an antiseptic.
16.Common mallow (bade sochasl)	Malva sylvestris	All parts of weed are mucilaginous, cooling, good for inflammatory condition, sore throat, jaundice and enlargement of spleen..Seeds are useful for cough, in ulceration of urinary bladder, an extract of leaves stimulates smoth muscles of uterus and intestines.
17. Dwarf mallow (Sochal)	Malva rotundifolia	Leaves used in cough, in inflammation and ulceration of urinary bladder, haemorrhoides and for skin diseases.
18.Wild Turnip (shalgum, gaguj)	Brassica rapa	The oil of seed is used in skin diseases. Oil is used in Ayurvedic medicine as stomachic vermifuge, cure skin eruption, itching, leucoderma, in piles, toothache and stops vomiting.
19.Sticking May weed ...Babunah (jungali Thu, fakka gassa)	Anthemis cotula	In unani the weed is heated with oil and applied locally in bone and joint disorders. The infusion of the weed is used as an eye wash in most of the eye diseases. Sometimes it is also used in colds after crushing the leaf and put in nostrils.
20. Fenugreek (Methi)	Trigonella foenum-graecum	The seeds are used as carminative and tonic.
21.Garlic (Thoom)	Alium sativum	Powder is used as condiment and also serves as carminative and gastric stimulant. Fresh bulbs are eaten to treat hypertension and also useful in skin diseases.
22.Aloe vera	Aloe vera	Juice is cathartic and also used in piles , constipation, fever and colic. The pulp is given for female ailments like menstrual irregularity. Leaves also used in wound healing, skin burns, curing ulcers and as laxative.
23.Pumpkin (Al)	Cucurbeta pepo	To get rid of intestinal parasites. The decoction of leaves is used to reduce fever. It is also a good laxative. Pumpkin seeds have a slightly diuretic function. To soften skin dryness and roughness, can be applie for healing burns.
24.Wall nut(akhrot , dun)	Juglans regia	Leaves affective in case of itching and frost bite. good brain tonic. The kernels of fruits are aphrodisiac. Oil etracted from kernels is good for dandruffs, rheumatism, muscular pain etc. Kernal taken with boiled milk is good for eye sight. Roots mixed with mustard oil control hairfall. Root bark leaves and twigs good for toothache and tooth decay. The fruit cover is crushed and mixed with mustard oil which is good for healing wounds.
25 Wild Rose	Rosa rosa	Rose petals jam(Gulkand) is good for digestive problems, itching, corrects heat related problems.
26 Pran	Alliam sp.	Stimulant , expectorant

enough budget to spend in conventional healthcare yearly on fast growing population but on the other hand rich in natural medicinal resources. If our health professional plan to use this natural resource by binding both conventional and traditional healthcare forces together we can easily combat diseases by saving many of our national revenue. So I emphasize the fact that being a state highly rich in natural medicinal flora we should take it on priority not only for healthcare needs but require its conservation and sustainable usage. We can document our traditional knowledge by making some smart plans but we can't bring back the endangered plant species or plant gone extinct. The plant like kuth (*Sussurea lappa*) and Nag chhatri (*Trillium govanianum*) are endangered species here which are even smuggled. So therefore it is the need of the time to keep a vigil on such activities so that we can save them from extinction.

CONCLUSION

As the people belonging to various ethnic societies and rural communities have long been using plants for curing various ailments but this information related traditional medicinal uses of plants are not well documented. There is a urgent need for documenting these folklore and traditional knowledge in some form before such valuable knowledge becomes extinct.

The present investigation revealed that the native people of Chenab valley are largely dependent upon the surrounding plant resources to cure various ailments. The traditional healers and old village peoples have a sound knowledge related to medicinal uses of plants around them. These plants form an integral part of their lifestyle and hence have always been revered. Traditional herbal medicines used by the inhabitants of this region play an important role in alleviating different diseases

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