PHYTOREMEDIAL WREATH : A TRADITIONAL EXCELLENCE OF HEALING

HARI PRAKASH PANDEY AND B.K. VERMA

Duthie Herbarium, Ethnobotany Cell, Department of Botany, University of Allahabad, Allahabad - (Uttar Pradesh).

Introduction

The relationship between man and plant communities is as old as his hunger, and long before science was born, our ancestors studied the plants around them to meet their basic requirements, which laid the foundation of civilization. In due course, this knowledge appeared in ancient literature, ethnographies, commentaries and travelogues. The people of different societies of the world delivered their knowledge of plants through respective literature.

In India, our divine *Vedas* were compiled much before the commencement of the modern era. They embody a vast treasure of knowledge regarding multifarious uses of plants with major emphasis on medicinal, magico-medicinal, magico-religious and mythological aspects. *The Rigveda* (3,500-1,800 BC) appears to be oldest record available on the medicinal plants. Similarly the *Vrikshayurveda* complied by saga Parasara consists of excellent informations about plants and their medicinal properties (Sensarma, 1989). The *Charak* and *Sushrut Samhitas* were written between 700-200 BC, which include the sum and substances of discovery about medicinal plants by cowherds, goatherds, sheepherds and tribes. Therefore, the ancient Hindus should be given the credit for cultivating what is now called as enthnobotany (Kirtikar and Basu, 1935).

The enquiry of early man into nearby plant wealth was primarily to cater for basic needs like food clothing and shelter etc. But their faith in supernatural powers and to defend themselves against their anger might have compelled them to offer aromatic and beautiful flowers, fruits, leaves etc. to their gods and deities for pleasing them. They also started to present flowers and garlands to their beloved as a symbol of affection and love. Concurrently the maids started to bear beautiful wreaths of flowers and leaves to please their lovers. Incidently some of them might have proved to be curative against certain ailments, which took wider range and scope by the experimentation on human beings with different plant parts through trial and error. Thus travelling a long journey form offering, presentation and cure through devotion, love and remedy the expertise was descended to generations with little or more additions and deletions. This knowledge is still preserved in various ethnic societies. But due to urbanization and rapid industrilization, the habitats, environment and culture of these people are changing at an alarming rate, therefore, the experience and learnt lores of primitive people are fast disappearing. It is therefore, the demand of the times to explore and document

such treasure before it is lost in the glittering of modern age.

Although the curative properties of the plants mentioned in the text are available in the literature in different ways (Ambasta, 1986; Bhandari, 1951-57; Jain, 1991, 1996; Kirtikar and Basu, 1935; Maheshwari, 1996) but the present approach dealing with the unique method of remedy is very scanty only some (Pandey, 1999; Pandey and Verma, 2001) have mentioned this apprach.

Material and Methods

Based on extensive ethnobotanical survey in Sub-Himalayan Tarai region of Uttar Pradesh (Gonda, Balrampur and adjoining regions), the present communication has been compiled, which is an attempt towards the preparation of an inventory of such plants, which can cure various ailments with wreaths made from different plants/plant parts. The senior author (a Registered physician in Alternative Medicine System) has got clinical results of some informations by own clinical trials as well as clinical trials of his father and grandmother. However in some cases, help has also been taken from barefoot doctors and local medicine men. In this communication 16 plants have been enumerated alphabetically according to their botanical names, followed by families in parentheses, English equivalents of botanical names and vernacular names in italics. A brief pharmaco-gnostic feature of plants, exact method of wreath preparation and mode of application and clinical result (CR) have also been given in each case.

Enumeration

1. ***Achyranthes aspera* L.,** (Amaranthaceae), Prickly Chaff, *Latjira*
   A perennial herb upto 1m high with small flowers on long spikes.
   Uses : (i) Root; tied with the left side hair of woman in labour to achieve easy delivery, removed as soon as delivery is over.
   CR : More than hundred surgical deliveries have been turned into safe home deliveries by the senior author, his father and grandmother in last few decades.
   Uses : (ii) Root; piece worn in right ear to keep scorpions away.
   CR : Information based on counter confirmation.
   Uses : (iii) Root; of the plant growing in dry habitat made into wreath and tied in the waist to improve potency of man during coition.
   CR : Eight cases out of 17 have been completely cured in last 3 years.

2. ***Datura metel* L.,** (Solanceae), Thorn Apple, *Dhatura*
   Undershrub upto 1.5 m high with large companulate flowers and globose fruits covered with prickles.
   Uses : (i) Root : tied in the waist of pregnent woman to protect conception.
   CR : Information based on counter confirmation.
   Uses : (ii) Seed : wrapped into cloth, made into belt, tied in the waist of pregnent woman to prevent habitual abortion.
   CR : Improvement have been observed in few cases.

3. ***Elaeocarpus sphaericus* (Gaertn.) K. Schum.,** (Elaeocarpaceae), Bead Tree, *Rudrakasha*
   A medium sized tree with ornamented seeds used as beads for rosaries.
   Uses : Seed; strung into beads, worn in

arms and neck in hypertension, insomania and heart diseases.

CR : Literature based evidences.

4. ***Emblica officinalis*** **Gaertn.,** (Euphorbiaceae), Emblic, *Aonwala*
Medium sized tree with pinnately compound leaves, small greenish white, densly fascicled flowers and globose yellowish fruits.

Uses : Stem; node of twig worn in neck to treat toothache.

CR : Almost 100% uccess have been achieved by the senior author in toothache due to dental carries.

5. ***Gymnema sylvestre*** **R. Br.,** (Asclepiadaceae), *Gur-mar*
Perennial branched climbers with pale yellow flowers in corymbose cyme and solitary taperring follicles.

Uses : Leaf; made into cloth sachet, tied on arms or worn in neck in *diabetes.*

CR : Fresh leaf sachet and their frequent replacement (daily) improves sugar level in urine.

6. ***Holoptelea integrifolia*** **(Roxb.) Planch,** (Ulmaceae), Indian Elm, *Chilbil.*
Deciduous tree upto 20 m high with green flowers in numerous fasciles and obliquely elliptic samara.

Use : Stem brak; made into pouch, tied in arm(s) to cure hydrocoel.

CR : Early cases have shown wild improvement while in late cases no improvement.

7. ***Myristica fragrans*** **Moutt.,** (Myristicaceae), Nutmeg, *Jaiphal*
Medium sized evergreen tree with yellow pale flowers and apricot like golden yellow fruits kernel of seed makes nutmeg of commerce.

Uses : Seed; kernel wreath worn to children in *dentition problems.*

CR : Almost all the cases have been completely cured by senior author.

8. ***Nyctanthes arbor-tristis*** **L.,** (Oleaceae), Night Jasmine, *Harsinghar.*
Small tree with white fragrant flowers in terminal trichotomous cymes and compressed suborbicular fruits.

Uses : Leaf; 5, made into poultice, tied on forehead of children to treat *fever.*

CR : Young leaves have given mild result but paste of young leaves.

9. ***Nymphaea nouchali*** **Burm. f.,** (Nymphaeaceae), Indian Red Water-Lily, *Bhashin.*
Aquatic herb with orbicular peltate leaves and solitary bright pink flowers.

Uses : Root; made into wreath tied in the waist to avoid abortion risk.

CR : Information based on counter confirmation.

10. ***Ocimum basilicum*** **L.,** (Lamiaceae), Sweet Basil, *Bantulsi*
Perennial scented herb upto 1 m high with whitish flowers in verticillasters.

Uses : Stem; chopped into pieces, made chaplet, worn in the neck to treat breathing troubles.

CR : Gives positive response in children than olds and youths.

11. ***O. sanctum*** **L.,** (Lamiaceae), Holy Basil, *Tulsi*
Perennial herb upto 50 cm high with scented leaves and purplish flowers in verticillasters.

Uses : (i) Leaf; sachet tied over navel to protect the baby in womb from the 'evil eye'.

CR : Information based on counter confirmation.

Uses : (ii) Leaf; sachet tied over forehead in headache and insomania.

CR : Inprovement have been obseved in few cases.

Uses : (iii) Stem; chopped into pieces, made into wreath worn in neck to treat hypertension.

CR : Not confirmed clinically.

12. ***Streblus asper* Lour.** (Moraceae), Rough Bush, *Sihoor*
Profusely branched shrub with ovate irregularly toothed leaves, greyish white flowers and yellow pisiform fruits.

Uses : Stem; tender twig chooped into pieces made wreath by wrapping threads worn round the neck to treat chronic conjunctivitis and inflammatory conditions of eyes.

CR : Excellent improvement have been observed with in 2-3 days in almost all the cases.

13. ***Tamarindus indica* L.** (Caesalpiniaceae), Tamarind, *Imli*
Large evergreen tree with yellow flowers in lax recemes and linar indehiscent pods.

Uses : Stem; tender twig of virgin plant made into ring, worn into left index finger of woman in labour to achieve easy delivery and removed as soon as the delivery is over.

CR : Clinically confirmed by three generations of the senior author and counter confirmed by himself.

14. ***Tinospora cordifolia* (Willd.) Miers ex Hook.,** (Menispermaceae), Gulancha, *Gurch*
Perennial climbing shrub with cordate leaves yellowish unisexual flowers and pisiform red drupes.

Uses : Root; hanging roots cut into pieces, made chaplet by wrapping string, worn in neck in jaundice.

CR : Alongwith other remedies fastens the recovery.

15. ***Trianthema portulacastrum* L.** (Aizoaceae), *Gadapunna*
Succulent diffuse prostrate herb with white or pinkish flowers in forks of branches and scarious capsules.

Uses : Root; tied in left hand on Sunday or Tuesday to treat *quaternary* fever (Malaria).

CR : Routine remedy of tarai region, also counter confirmed.

16. ***Xanthium strumarium* L.** (Asteraceae), Burweed, *Kuthuru*
Stout hispid herb upto 1 m high with dioecious flowers and fruits covered with spines.

Uses : Seed; made into wreath, worn in neck of children on Thursday or Sunday, to treat chronic conjunctivitis.

CR : Excellent results have been observed in almost all the cases.

Conclusion

The remedial aspect of plant wreath is fairly interesting and miraculous result oriented. In some of the claims mentioned, the senior author himself has been an eye witness and other claims have been counter confirmed to have curative influence on the patients. This healing power of wreaths made from plants/their product may be attributed either due to some easily diffusible chemicals which get entry through general body surface or may release some volatile compounds, which get entry through respiratory system

and produce remedial effects against various body ailments. However, this enchating healing system requires intense scientific attention through phyto-chemistry, pharmacology and clinical trials for the final recommendation as prescription for the treatment of various sufferings of human life.

Acknowledgements

Help and cooperation of Drs. D.K. Chauhan and S.K. Chauhan, Depertment of Botany, University of Allahabad, Allahabad, is gratefully acknowledges. Senior author is also indebted to the informants and patients for information and clinical trial respectively.

SUMMARY

In India, traditional medicines have had a glorious past, an absorbing present and promise to enjoy an exciting future. Indian scholars have not only developed conventional healing methods but also acquired a great many non-conventional healing excellence. In this piece of work a marvellous aspect of ethnobotany, 'remedy through plant wreath' has been explored out from the aboriginals of sub-Himalayan Tarai region of Uttar Pradesh, India. The communication provides an enumeration of 16 plants with their pharmacognostic features and uses in a novel way with clinical confirmations in some cases.

पादपों की रोगनिवारण मात्रा – उपचार की परम्परिक उत्तम विधि

हरिप्रकाश पाण्डेय व बी०के० वर्मा

सारांश

भारत में पारम्परिक औषधियों का विगतकाल गौरवमय, वर्तमान ध्यानवर्षो और भविष्य भी रोमांचक रहने की संभावना है । उसके विद्वज्जनों ने न केवल पारम्परिक उपचार विधियां विकसित की, उन्होंने बहुत सारी, गैर - पारम्परिक रोगोपचारी उत्तम विधियां भी प्रज्ञत की हैं । इस अभिपत्र में, जाति वनस्पतिशास्त्र का एक चमत्कारी पक्ष, पादपमाला द्वारा रोगोपचार, उत्तर प्रदेश, भारत के उपहिमालयी तराई क्षेत्र के अदिवासियों से खोज करके पता लगाया गया है । इस अभिपत्र में ऐसे 16 पादप गिनाए गए है जिनमें भेषज्यज्ञान विशेषताएं मिलती हैं और एक विचित्र ढंग से उपयोग में लाया जाता है और कुछ मामलों में जिनकी चिकित्सालयों में संपुष्टि भी हुई है ।

References

Ambasta, S.P. (ed.) (1986). *The Useful Plants of India.* Pub. & Inf. Dte., CSIR, New Delhi.

Bhandari, C. (1951-57). *Vanaushadhi Chandrodaya* (Hindi) 10 Parts, Varanasi.

Jain, S.K. (1991). *Dictionary of Indian Folk Medicine and Ethnobotany.* Deep Publication, New Delhi.

Jain, S.K. (1996). *Medicinal Plants*, National Book Trust, New Delhi.

Jain, S.K. and R.R. Rao (1977). *A Handbook of Field and Herbarium Methods.* Today and Tomorrow's Printers and Publishers, New Delhi.

Kirtikar, K.R. and B.D. Basu (1935). *Indian Medicinal Plants*, 4 Vols. Lalit Mohan Basu, Allahabad.

Maheshwari, J.K. (ed.) (1996). *Ethnobotany in South Asia,* Scientific Publishers, Jodhpur.

Pandey, H.P. (1999). Ethnobotanical Studies in Uttar Pradesh, *D. Phil. Thesis*, University of Allahabad, Allahabad.

Pandey, H.P. and B.K. Verma (2001). Magico Therapeutic Plants of Uttar Pradesh, India. *Vistas in Ethnobotany* (S.S. Khan, ed.). *Ind Jour. Appl. Pure Biol.* (In press).

Sensarma, P. (1989). *Plants in Indian Puranas.* Naya Prokash Pub., Calcutta.