ETHNO-MEDICINAL PLANTS OF JHUNJHUNU DISTRICT, RAJASTHAN

R.S. Jakhar
Department of Botany, M. D. Girls Science College, Jhunjhunu – 333001 (Raj.)

ABSTRACT

In the present paper, an attempt has been made to document the precious traditional knowledge on folk lore medicines of Jhunjhunu district with special reference to treatment of cold, cough and fever. The local medicine-men have inherited good knowledge about cause and symptoms of common human ailments and the local flora with its hidden values from their ancestors which is passed from one generation to another through oral communication. This vital knowledge is needed to be scientifically and systematically documented before it is lost due to rapid changes in the community transformation in the rural area. Ethno-medicinal significance of plant species specially used for treatment of cold, cough and fever are enumerated along with their local name, botanical name, family and mode of treatment. The indigenous knowledge system of herbal practice is still very rich and available among rural community of the district. The establishments of modern medicinal health centers are in progress in many rural areas and they may gradually change the existing pattern of indigenous knowledge of useful plants and their therapeutic uses before being lost forever from the community.

INTRODUCTION

Ancient Indian and world literature on medicine suggests that primitive people used several kinds of medicinal plants for combating diseases. Plants like Ranwoljia serpentina, Papaver somniferum and Cinchona officinalis have long been used to treat diseases of body and mind. Some knowledge of ancient Indian medicine and medicinal herbs has been passed on through generations and has survived among the ethnic communities of India (Joshi 1989, Katewa and Arora 1997). The circumstances under which these people lived-about poverty, disease and hunger-combined with their natural curiosity towards their closest neighbour, the forest in which they lived and sought help in mitigating their woes and sorrows, must have been essential factor in preserving their knowledge of plants and their usefulness to mankind.

Several medicinal herbs which the tribals frequently use are found in the tribal zones of India and are adequately preserved, important ones are Cassia angustifolia, Withania somnifera, Asparagus racemosus, Tinospora cordifolia, glycerrhiza glabra, Embelica ribes, Mesua ferrea, Commpithora wightii, Tribulus terrestris, Evolvulus alsinoides, Cassia fistula, Picrorhiza kurroa, Bacopa monnieri, Gymnema sylvestre and Pueraria tuberose (Kumar and Chauhan 2005, Rai and Nath 2005). Although well preserved until now, these plants have been subjected to heavy exploitation after the modern medicine found in their chemicals with significant biological actions. As a result they are highly threatened and becoming endangered. The case of Ranwoljia serpentina is of serious concern.

Medicinal plants provide health security to rural people throughout the globe. According to WHO, over 80% of people in developing countries depend on traditional medicines for their primary health need. Herbal medicines are in great demand in both developed and the developing countries in primary health care because of their great efficacy and little or no side effects. In India, the indigenous system of medicine namely Ayurvedic, Siddha and Unani have been in existence for several centuries. These traditional system of medicine together with Homeopathy and Folklore medicine continue to play a significant role largely in the health care system of the population.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Field surveys were conducted repeatedly by the author in different seasons and areas of Jhunjhunu for the last five years. Before actually launching into the field work; rapport was established with one or two persons preferably the chief guidance sought and contact was then established with other residents of the locality. The linguistic fluency, personality and social standing are crucial to establish rapport between the participants involved. The local informants were the medicine
men, men and women working in the filed, village headman, priests and other community leaders. Field sites were visited with the local medicine man. The persons mostly above the age of 60 have accurate information regarding their old traditions.

**OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The present investigation is based on personal interviews with traditional healers who are formulating and advocating use of medicinal plants to local patients residing in villages, where modern facilities of hospitals are still lacking. The unreported plant species, their formulations and dosages as recorded are presented below.

**a. Plants used for Cold**

1. **Name** : *Amaranthus viridis*
   - **Local Name** : Chaulai
   - **Family Name** : Amaranthaceae
   - **Plant part used** : Leaf
   - **Formulation** : Extract

**Mode of Preparation of Drug**: The leaves collected are washed and sun dried for 3-4 days. The dried leaves are used to prepare extract. About 15-20 leaves are boiled in 2 litres of water till the volume reduces to 150-200 ml. The leaves are crushed and extract is filtered and stored in clean vessel.

**Dosages**: 8-10 ml of extract is given to patient 3-4 times a day for a period of 8-10 days. Immediately after taking the extract, patients gets relief from severe cold.

2. **Name** : *Moringa oleifera*
   - **Local Name** : Sejna
   - **Family** : Moringaceae
   - **Plant part used** : Stem
   - **Formulation** : Bark

**Mode of Preparation of Drug**: 10 g of stem bark is mixed with 50 ml of cow milk and paste so prepared is used to cure illness.

**Dosages**: The paste is orally administered one teaspoon thrice a day to cure severe cold for a period of 5-6 days and is restricted to a period of 2-3 days to patients suffering from mild cold.

3. **Name** : *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis*
   - **Local Name** : Harsinghar

**Family** : Oleaceae
**Plant part used** : Flower and Leaves
**Formulation** : Powder

**Mode of Preparation of Drug**: Leaves and flowers are collected, dried and powdered. The powder prepared is stored in dried place and administered as per stage of illness.

**Dosages**: One-two teaspoon of dried powder is orally administered with drinking water two to three times a day for a period of 8-10 day.

4. **Name** : *Ocimum sanctum*
   - **Local Name** : Van Tulsi
   - **Family** : Lamiaceae
   - **Plant part used** : Flower and Leaves
   - **Formulation** : Decoction

**Mode of Preparation of Drug**: Leaves and flowers are collected, dried and boiled in water. About 5-10 leaves are boiled in 250 ml of water for a period of about 20-25 minutes. The leaves are mashed and extract is filtered. The filtered extract is used to cure illness.

**Dosages**: About 20-25 ml. of leaf extract is mixed with 3-4 grains of *Piper nigrum* Linn.

5. **Scientific Name** : *Aloe vera*
   - **Local Name** : Gwarpatha
   - **Family** : Liliaceae
   - **Plant part used** : Leaf
   - **Formulation** : Juice

**Mode of Preparation of Drug**: Fresh leaves are crushed to collect juice.

**Dosages**: The freshly extracted juice (about 2-3 ml) is orally administered to patients twice a day for a period of about 3-4 day. Juice is anabolic and gives strength to body and cures illness.

6. **Name** : *Bacopa monnieri*
   - **Local Name** : Brahmi
   - **Family** : Scrophulariaceae
   - **Plant part used** : Leaves, stem, flower, fruit and seed
   - **Formulation** : Decoction.

**Mode of Preparation of Drug**: The plant is collected, dried and stored in dry place.
**Dosages:** About 15-20 g of dried plant is boiled in 2-3 L of water for about 2-3 hours. The decoction is kept overnight to ferment and then filtered and stored in another vessel.

7. **Scientific Name:** Calotropis procera
   **Local Name:** Aak, Madar
   **Family:** Asclepiadaceae
   **Plant part used:** Flower
   **Formulation:** Extract & Decoction

**Mode of Preparation of Drug:** Flowers are sun dried and stored in dry place. 50 g of dried flower is boiled in 5 liters of water for a period of 3-4 hours. Decoction prepared is filtered and stored in clean vessel.

**Dosages:** Three teaspoons of decoction is given to patient for 3-4 times a day.

8. **Scientific Name:** Ailanthus excelsa
   **Local Name:** Mahaneem
   **Family:** Simaroubaceae
   **Plant part used:** Stem-Bark
   **Formulation:** Powder

**Mode of Preparation of Drug:** Stem bark is powdered and stored in dry place.

**Dosages:** About one teaspoon of powder is orally administered with a cup of warm milk for a period of 4-5 days to patients suffering from mild cold, cough and those patients suffering from intermittent fever. If fever prevails for 6-8 days then powder is administered for 10-12 days.

9. **Scientific Name:** Calotropis gigantea
   **Local Name:** Safed Aak
   **Family:** Asclepiadaceae
   **Plant part used:** Flower
   **Formulation:** Powder

**Mode of Preparation of Drug:** The flowers are dried and powdered. The powder is used during sickness.

**Dosages:** One teaspoon of powder is given with 5 g of honey twice a day for a period of 5-6 days.

10. **Scientific Name:** Achyranthes aspera Linn
    **Local Name:** Latjira
    **Family:** Amaranthaceae
    **Plant part used:** Root
    **Formulation:** Powder

**Mode of Preparation of Drug:** The roots are washed, dried and stored in dry place. The roots are crushed and tied on hand of patient to inhale smell.

(ii) Powdered roots are boiled with water for 2-3 hours to prepare decoction which is filtered and kept overnight. Its nasal inhalation reduces fever.

**Dosages:**

(i) The root smell is inhaled by patient suffering from cold cough and fever which is tied on his arms for 2-3 days.

(ii) The decoction prepared is boiled and about 50 ml of it is given to patient for drinking 3 times a day for a period of about 3-4 days.

11. **Scientific Name:** Cuscuta reflexa
    **Local Name:** Amarbel
    **Family:** Convolvulaceae
    **Plant part used:** Whole Plant
    **Formulation:** Powder

**Mode of Preparation of Drug:** Whole plant is collected and sun dried for 3-4 days. The dried material is powdered and stored in dry place.

**Dosages:** About 5-6 g of powder is orally administered twice a day for a period of 5-6 days with half cup of warm milk which brings body temperature to normal.

12. **Scientific Name:** Ficus religiosa
    **Local Name:** Pipal
    **Family:** Moraceae
    **Plant part used:** Stem bark
    **Formulation:** Decoction

**Mode of Preparation of Drug:** The bark collected from an old tree is dark grayish to brown in colour. It is sun dried for a period of 3-4 days and powdered, and is stored in dry and cool place. About 5 g of powdered bark is boiled in 2-3 L of water for 2-3 hours and decoction is allowed to cool is given to patients.

**Dosages:** About 20 ml of decoction is given twice a day for 5-6 days to patients suffering from acute stage of high temperature to bring body temperature to normal. The patients suffering from chronic fever and intermittent fever
are given 20ml of decoction for 3-4 times a day for 10-15 days.

The local medicine-men have inherited good knowledge about cause, symptoms of common human ailments and the local flora with its hidden values from their ancestors passed from one generation to another through oral communication. This vital knowledge is needed to be scientifically and systematically documented before it is lost due to rapid changes in the community on account to rapid transformation of rural society.

REFERENCES


