Folk medicine used in gynecological and other related problems
by rural population of Haryana

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Traditionally, the rural women prefer plant medicines rather than modern medicines for abortion, menstrual trouble, conception disorders, sterility, delivery problems, etc. Some ethnomedicinal observations made from the rural areas of Haryana, revealed valuable phytotherapeutic information on the various gynecological disorders. Uses of 17 plant species for menstrual disorders, 15 species for leucorrhoea, 6 species for delivery problems, 5 species for gonorrhea, 4 species for lactation troubles, 3 species for abortion and 2 species for miscarriage have been enumerated. Information on 52 plants with their botanical and vernacular names, family, prescriptions with therapeutic doses and uses are presented. Documentation of such ethnomedicinal data on biological resources will be steps for bioprospecting.

Keywords: Folk medicine, Gynecological disorders, Haryana, Medicinal plants

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Globally, about 85% of the traditional medicines used for primary healthcare derived from plants1. Over 7500 plant species are used by 4635 communities for human and veterinary healthcare. It is estimated that of 20,000 species of agricultural forms in India alone, about 9,500 species are of ethnobotanical importance. World Health Organization has listed over 21,000 plant species used around the world for medicinal purposes. In India, about 2,500 plant species belonging to more than 1000 genera are being used in Indigeneous systems of Medicine. The majority of medicinal plants are higher flowering plants representing about 158 families2. India is tenth among the plant rich countries of the world and fourth among the Asian countries3. Much of this wealth of knowledge is totally becoming lost as traditional culture gradually disappears4. Much of the current work in ethnobotany is concerned with the loss of traditional knowledge and the preservation of biological diversity in remote parts of the world, where culture and their ecosystems are being destroyed by development. Ethnobotanical studies have become the subject of great medicinal importance. Frequent ethnobotanical surveys made during past few years, indicate that valuable information about medicinal uses of plants may be obtained by personal interviews and field visits with inhabitants of particular locality. There are valuable regional records of indigenous plants to treat different ailments. Important among them are of plants used by primitive people to affect fertility, conception and abortion, obstetrics and gynecological disorders, leucorrhoea, influenza, leucoderma, leprosy, skin diseases, piles, eye disorders, rheumatism and infectious diseases5-17.

The paper focuses on the plants used by people of some districts of Haryana for women health especially gynecological problems. The study covered Rohtak (28°54'N & 76°38'E), Jhajjar (28°59'N & 76°18'E), Bhiwani (28°50'N & 76°10'E), Mahendergarh (28°17'N & 76°14'E), Rewari (28°11'N & 76°37'E), Gurgaon (28°27'N & 77°01'E), Faridabad (29°24'N & 77°18'E) and Sonepat (28°59'N & 77°01'E) districts of Haryana. The total area and population of these districts are 18,895 Km² & 99,58,506, respectively.

Methodology
The study was conducted in eight district of Haryana and was based on interviews, informal discussions and observations. Ethnomedicinal data were recorded following the standard procedures by

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interacting with herbal practitioners and elder women of the village with the knowledge of herbal medicine. Interviews were held in the villages and the derived information was recorded. Plant specimens collected during different seasons were identified with the help of local floras and herbarium specimens of Forest Research Institute, Dehradun. The voucher specimens were deposited in the Herbarium of Biosciences Department, M D University, Rohtak.

Observations

Plants used in various gynecological disorders and other related aspects, arranged with botanical name, family, vernacular name and uses have been enumerated:

Abortion

Gossypium harbaceum L. (Malvaceae), Bari
Root bark decoction is used for abortion.

Plumbago zeylanica L. (Plumbaginaceae), Chatawar
Root decoction is used as abortificient, even in the later stage of pregnancy

Sesamum indicum Linn. (Pedaliaceae), Jangli Til
Half grounded seeds mixed with ghee & sugar are taken with hot milk.

Delivery

Achyranthes aspera L. (Amaranthaceae), Ola Kanta
Root paste is applied on hypogastrium to relieve excessive labour pain.

Bombax ceiba Linn. (Bombacaceae), Semal
Stem bark powder is given with water to increase labour and for smooth delivery.

Caesalpinia bonduc Roxb. (Caesalpiniaceae), Karanjaja
Seed powder is given to women suffering from puerperal fever.

Citrullus colocynthis L. (Cucurbitaceae), Gadumba
Root paste made with cow milk is applied on hypogastrium for easy delivery.

Ocimum sanctum L. (Labiatae), Tulsi
Leaf juice is taken with gur and cow milk to relieve pain after delivery.

Ricinus communis L. (Euphorbiaceae), Arand
Seed oil is given to relieve constipation during pregnancy.

Gonorrhoea

Bacopa monnieri Pennel (Scrophulariaceae), Brahmi
Plant extract is taken to treat gonorrhoea.

Corchorus depressus C. Chr. (Tiliaceae), Kurand
Leaf extract is applied on women genital for treatment.

Ficus glomerata Roxb. (Moraceae), Gular
Fruit powder is taken with mishri to treat gonorrhoea.

Opuntia dillenii Haw. (Cactaceae), Chhitar
Baked fruit juice is taken with honey to treat gonorrhoea.

Sida cordifolia L. (Malvaceae), Kharenti
Seed decoction is given for gonorrhoea.

Lactation

Aloe vera (L.) Burm.f. (Liliaceae), Gavarpatha
Leaf pulp and turmeric paste is applied on breasts to cure swelling during early lactation.

Asparagus racemosus Willd. (Liliaceae), Phusar
Dried root powder is taken with honey or milk to treat lactation problems.

Clerodendrum phlomoidis L.f. (Verbenaceae), Arni
Leaf paste is applied to increase lactation.

Zea mays (L.) Sweet (Gramineae), Makki
Half ripe grains are prescribed to increase lactation.

Leucorrhoea

Abutilon indicum L. (Malvaceae), Kanghi
Root powder is taken for the treatment of leucorrhoea.

Acacia arabica Willd. (Mimosaceae), Kikar
Paste made from 10 gm gum and two leaves of Amaltas is taken with cow milk. Powder of unripe fruit, flowers, and leaves mixed in equal quantity with sugar and water is taken to relieve from leucorrhoea.

Adhatoda vasica Nees (Acanthaceae), Bansa
Root bark juice is taken with honey.

Asparagus racemosus Willd. (Liliaceae), Phusar
Root decoction is given to the women suffering from leucorrhoea.

Convolvulus microphyllus Sieb. ex Sreng. (Convolvulaceae), Dodak
Whole plant paste with equal amount of misri and milk is taken.

Dalbergia sisoo Roxb. (Papilionaceae), Shisham
Tender leaves made paste are taken with misri and milk.

*Emblica officinalis* Gaertn. (Euphorbiaceae), Amla

Fruit pulp mixed with *Tribulus* fruit powder is taken with honey.

*Ficus virens* Ait. (Moraceae), Pilkahn

Leaves are boiled in water and water is used as a wash for women genital.

*Lawsonia inermis* L. (Lythraceae), Mahendi

Root bark decoction is given for leucorrhoea.

*Mangifera indica* L. (Anacardiaceae), Aam

One tablet prepared by mixing stem bark, leaves and flowers in equal quantity is put into vagina daily for two weeks.

*Pedalium murex* L. (Pedaliaceae), Bara Gokhru

Fruit powder mixed with *Khand* (powdered sugar) and *Ghee* is taken.

*Terminelia arjuna* (Roxb.) Wight & Arn., (Combretaceae), Arjan

Stem bark powder is taken with water.

*Triumfetta rhomboidea* (Tiliaceae), Bhurat

Root powder is used in leucorrhoea.

**Menstruation**

*Achyranthes aspera* L. (Amaranthaceae), Ola Kanta

Root powder is taken with cow milk to relieve menstrual disorder.

*Adhatoda vasica* Nees (Acanthaceae), Bansa

Decoction of 5-7 leaves mixed with 1 gm seeds each of *Dacus carota* and *Raphanus sativus* is taken to regulate menstrual cycle.

*Azadirachta indica* A. Juss. (Meliaceae),

Warm leaves are applied on hypogastria to relieve painful menstruation.

*Bauhinia variegata* L. (Caesalpiniaceae), Kachnar

Stem bark decoction is given in menorrhagia.

*Cardiospermum helicacabum* L. (Sapindaceae), Karavi

Leaf extract is taken to relieve menstrual disorder and irritable uterus.

*Chenopodium Ambrosioides* L. (Chenopodiaceae), Khatua

Leaf decoction given to treat painful menstrual flow.

*Convolvulus microphyllus* Sieb. ex Spreng. (Convolvulaceae), Dodak

Plant paste with equal amount of misri and milk is taken.

*Cynodon dactylon* L. (Gramineae), Doob

Whole plant paste of *Doob* and bud of *Punica granatum* is taken with filtrate of boiled rice in scanty and irregular periods.

*Gossypium harbaceum* L. (Malvaceae), Bari

Root decoction is given in amenorrhea and dysmenorrhoea.

*Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* L. (Verbenaceae), Harshingar

4-5 tender leaves are taken with pepper.

*Phyllanthus niruri* Hook. f. (Euphorbiaceae), Bhui amla

Root paste is taken with filtrate of boiled rice to regulate menstruation.

*Polyalthia longifolia* Thw. (Annonaceae), Ashok

Root bark powder is given in menstrual disorder.

*Ricinus communis* L. (Euphorbiaceae), Arand

Warm leaves are applied on hypogastria.

*Saraca asoca* (Roxb.) de Wilde (Caesalpinaceae), Asok

Stem bark decoction is taken to relieve menstrual disorder and haemorrhoids of uterus.

*Sesamum indicum* L. (Pedaliaceae), Til

Mixture of half grounded seeds, Gur and Ghee is taken with milk to relieve amenorrhea.

*Teocmella undulata* Seem. (Bignoniacaeae), Ruhera

Stem bark powder is given to women suffering from excessive bleeding.

*Withania somnifera* Dunal (Solanaceae), Asgandh

Stem bark powder is taken with misri and water to regulate menstrual disorder.

**Miscarriage**

*Butea monosperma* (Lam.) Kuntze (Papilionaceae), Dhak

One leaf is boiled in milk; the leaf is discarded and milk is given to women to clean the uterus.

*Trichodesma amplexicaule* DC. (Boraginaceae), Rani

Root juice is given to women, who have suffered a miscarriage. The recipe cleans the uterus.

**Discussion**

In most villages of Haryana, normally there were one or two elders who were familiar with the traditional medicines. These medicine men called Vaidji, Syana or Bhagat are respected in the area. Haryanavi folk medicine, practiced mainly by persons of over 50 yrs age with their long experience, are capable of treating various diseases. These people usually use dried plant parts as traditional medicines. The crude is either used singly or in combination with other materials of plant, animal or mineral origin. Such medicines are prepared under special method of heating,
roasting, extraction with water, oil, milk, fat or even animal urine, fermentation under specifically controlled condition or regulated grinding. The final products used in traditional medicines are powders (Churnas), concentrated extracts or pastes (Avalehas / Chatani), juices (Rakh), decoction (Kadahas) and oil or fats (Teil / Ghritas). The medicines are given orally or by external applications.

In majority of the cases, decoction is drunk or rubbed on the body to cure ailment(s); in some cases (skin ailments) the patient is given a bath of the decoction. Paste and oil are mostly applied externally to treat skin ailment. Paste is also plastered to set dislocated or fractured bones or for muscular pain. Powder of the plant is taken orally in majority of the cases. The powder preparations given orally are taken either with honey, crystalline sugar, Gur, cow milk or water.

The local inhabitants have strong faith in folk medicine and are well versed with the utilization of plants of their surroundings through trial and error methods. These people are using the preparations from time immemorial without knowing their effective constituents\(^1\). The collection, identification and documentation of ethnomedicinal data on biological resources are inevitable steps for bioprospecting\(^2\). To understand the therapeutic potential of the traditional medicine, there is a need for more studies of tradition healthcare practices through pharmacological and clinical research.

References
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