Traditional medicinal practices of Rajasthan

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During the course of investigation it has been observed that a particular plant is sometimes prescribed for different ailments in different localities and some Vaidyas (Ayurvedic physicians) apply a mixture of plants for remedy of diseases. The data collected from Vaidyas have been presented. However, a systematical and methodical approach is needed to collect such information.

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WHO has recognized the role of Traditional Systems of Medicine and considers them a part of strategy to provide healthcare to the masses. Folk medicines are gaining importance. Much of this wealth of knowledge is being lost as traditional culture is gradually disappearing1. Tribal people and ethnic races throughout the world have developed their own cultures, customs, cults, religious rites, and myths, folk tales and songs, foods, medicinal practices, etc. Numerous wild and cultivated plants play a very important and vital role among these cultures and this interrelationship has evolved over generations of experience and practices7. In India, Ayurvedic system evolved over 5,000 yrs ago and is still in practice. The Rigveda and Atharva veda have included more than 700 medicinal prescriptions8. Rajasthan is one of the largest state of India with about 12.44% of the population belonging to tribes such as, Bhil, Bhil-Meena, Damor,Dhanka, Garasia, Kathodi, Kokna, Kolidhor, Naikara, Patelia, Meena, and Seharia and these reside in remote areas devoid of basic infrastructure facilities. Nomadic tribes (Banjara, Gadolia-Lohar, Kalbalia, Sikligar, Kanjar, Sansi and Bagri) further enrich the ethnic heritage of Rajasthan. These ethnic groups are widely distributed throughout the state. Some ethnobotanical research work from Rajasthan has been reported9-9.

Methodology

The survey of Rajasthan state was carried out during 1999-2002. Rapport was established with local persons and the chief of the locality. Inquiries were made on the plant material used for curing different ailments. Generally two types of interviews, individuals and groups selected at random were taken from the villagers including Bhopa (village priest) or the headman. Women folk were also interviewed resulting in heterogeneity of information. Participation in their feasts, festivals, other social events, etc. was of great use in collecting information on plants and their use. The plants were identified and deposited in the Herbarium at the Department of Botany, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur10,11. During present study, information on some selected species of flowering plants were also collected from ancient hand written scripts, tickets of herbaria and from local vaids (Ayurvedic physicians). It is hoped that this effort will not only provide additional support to the earlier findings, but also provide clues for new materials having medicinal potentiality for the benefit of mankind.

Results

The tribal and rural repository of Rajasthan contains many medicines for the treatment of one ailment. The medicine varies according to the symptoms and secondary effects and with the tribe and place. For one disease, many plant are used on the
basis of availability. The plants are enumerated alphabetically in with their botanical name, local name, family, parts used and disease in which used.

**Enumeration**

Pills made from the mixture of equal parts of ginger *(Zingiber officinale* Rosc.), black pepper *(Piper nigrum* Linn.), Kapittha *(Feronia elephantum* Correa) pulp and honey slowly swallowed creates appetite.

*Isubgol* *(Plantago ovata* Forsk.) is one of the best known household remedies in chronic diarrhoea and dysentery. Root paste of tamarind and powdered black pepper is given with honey for 3 days in diarrhoea.

In dysentery with mucus, *mehandi* *(Lawsonia inermis* Linn.) seeds are efficacious; powdered seeds mixed with *ghee* rolled into small balls are given twice a day.

Powder of bael fruit, bark of *Kurchi* *(Holarrhena antidysenterica* Linn.), *Madhurikaa* or *Saunf* *(Foeniculum vulgare* Mill.), is given with *isubgol* in sub-acute and chronic dysentery.

In chronic constipation, pills made of rosebuds, senna leaves, ripe pod pulp of *Cassia fistula* Linn. *(Amaltaas)* and *haritaki* *(Terminalia chebula* Retz.) are given twice daily for 5 days.

Dry powder leaves of *Adhatoda vasica* Nees. *(Vaasaar)* with honey twice a day is an excellent remedy in cough & cold.

For immediate relief of spasmodic asthma, smoke of *Dhatura* *(Datura stramonium* Linn.) leaves as cigarettes is very efficacious.

Dry *Apaamarga* *(Achyranthus aspera* Linn.) leaves smoked in a pipe are very efficacious drug for asthma. The ash of burnt dry plants is given with honey twice a day for 7 days.

*Arjuna* tree *(Terminalia arjuna* Roxb.) bark is useful in heart diseases; bark powder with *ghee* or milk is given twice or thrice daily for 15 days.

Powder of *Katuki* *(Picrorrhiza kurroa* Royle. ex Benth.) and *Madhuyasti* *(Glycyrrhiza glabra* Linn.) in equal part is very efficacious in heart diseases.

Garlic *(Allium sativum* Linn.) given as *Kshirapaka* or decoction with milk is very efficacious in heart diseases.

Fresh ginger *(Zingiber officinale* Rosc.) juice taken with sugar twice a day checks excessive urination.

Paste made from *Berberis aristata* DC. *(Daaru haridraa)* wood, embelic myrobalan *(Emblica officinalis* Gaertn.) leaf and sugar checks excessive urination.

*Guduchi satva* (starchy dry extract of *Tinospora cordifolia* Willd.) is given with milk and sugar twice or thrice daily to check excessive urination.

*Kanghi* *(Abutilon indicum* Linn.) root decoction, *Varuna* *(Crataeva religiosa* Hook. f. & Thoms) bark decoction and decoction of leaves & seeds of *muli* *(Raphanus sativus* Linn.) is most efficacious drug to remove bladder stone.

Tender leaf paste of *Terminalia catappa* Linn. *(jangali badaama)* is applied over eczema effected parts.

Decoction of *Bavachi* *(Psoralea corylifolia* Linn.) seed powder, *Acacia catechu* Willd. and *aonla* *(Emblica officinalis* Gaertn.) is very effective for leucoderma.

Paste of *Abrus precatorius* Linn. *(gunjaa)* seeds and *Plumbago zeylanica* Linn. *(chitrak)* roots is applied for the treatment of leucoderma.

Milky juice of *Calotropis gigantia* Linn. *(Arka)* is applied on tooth to stop pain.

Bark decoction of *babula* *(Acacia nilotica* Linn.) is used as astringent gargle and mouth wash in sore throat and other diseases of throat.

*Braahmi* *(Centella asiatica* Linn.) is very efficacious drug in mental disorders. Its *swarasa* / *juice* is given with honey as a brain tonic.

*Vachaa* *(Acorus calamus* Linn.) given twice a day with honey is very effective drug in epilepsy.

*Bhumyamla* *(Phyllanthus fraternus* Webster) seed powder given twice daily with rice water and honey is very efficacious in menorrhagia.

Tender flowers of the *semal* *(Bombax ceiba* Linn.) fried in *ghee* and sugar is given early morning in paralysis.

Bark and seeds powder of *babula* *(Acacia nilotica* Linn.) given with honey twice daily for three days are very efficacious bone fracture.

A plaster prepared from *Rubia cordifolia* Linn. *(manjisthaa)* root, *mahuva* *(Madhuca indica* J.F. Gmel.) bark, and tamarind leaves applied over fracture and dislocation is very efficacious in helping the union of the broken bone.

*Chitraka* *(Plumbago zeylanica* Linn.) powder taken twice daily with honey is very effective in reducing fat.

**Discussion**

The traditional Ayurvedic physicians, in their routine treatment practices, use plants reported from

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