

TRADITIONAL PHYTOTHERAPY AMONGST THE RURAL COMMUNITIES OF NORTH WESTERN HIMALAYA

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with 73 species of medicinal plants used by the traditional communities of Kullu district of north western Himalaya, forest wealth and traditional wisdom. An attempt has been made to record interesting folk-uses and medicinal plant lore used by the people at Chhakinal watershed in Kullu district of north western Himalaya.

INTRODUCTION

Studies related to ethnobotany in India have received due attention only in the last two to three decades (Jain, 1965, 1975, 1991; Jain *et al.*, 1973; Chakravarty, 1975, Rao, 1981). These studies have brought to light numerous medicinal and other useful plants which were formerly either little known or unknown. Nonetheless, ethnobotanical evaluation regarding the usage of variety of plants is available from north east Himalayan region (Rao, 1981; Gangwar and Ramakrishnan, 1990; Maikhuri and Gangwar, 1993) and from central Himalayan region (Bhatt and Gaur, 1992; Maikhuri *et al.*, 1994; Rao and Saxena, 1996), but with regard to north western Himalaya not much work has been done (Ahluwalia, 1952; Bhattacharyya, 1991) though there is considerable scope for such studies. However, no studies related to traditional phytotherapy has been reported from the Kullu district. Thus, the present ethnobotanical inventory highlights the usage of plant parts in rural areas of Kullu district of north western Himalaya.

AREA OF STUDY

The study was carried out in Chhakinal watershed which lies between 32° 3' 30" to 30° 7' 45" N latitudes and 77° 9' 8" to 77° 15' 55" E longitudes. The study area falls in the heart of Kullu district in the State of Himachal Pradesh in north-western Himalaya. There are 10 hamlets altogether with a population of 2340 inhabited at an elevational gradient of 1500 m - 2200 m above m.s.l. The elevation of the study area ranges from 1500 m at the base of Chhakinal rivulet-Beas river junction to 4500 m above m.s.l. the highest point of the watershed.

The area is inhabited by the traditional rural communities. The landscape in general is characterized by its inaccessibility, fragility, marginality, diversity of heterogeneity and comparative advantage of human adoption mechanisms. In such diverse conditions, the people of the region have developed and adopted multiple ways of living. The use of medicinal plant is one such socio-cultural evolution tuned to the people.

ENUMERATION OF MEDICINAL PLANTS

All information presented here is based on

a participatory study and filling up the questionnaire. Detailed uses of medicinal plants as suggested by the natives are mentioned. The interesting folk-uses which are not recorded in the published literature on the medicinal and other economic plants of the country are presented in the paper.

All the medicinal plants collected and studied are enumerated alphabetically. The family names are mentioned in brackets. This is followed by detailed uses of the plants. Collected plant samples were identified by the experts and deposited in the Institute. Collection number for each species is given by the author and is mentioned at the end of description of medicinal values.

Achillea millefolium L. (Asteraceae). Chuna.

Paste of crushed leaves is applied to remove toothache problems, chewing of fresh leaves increases digestion. 01.

Aconitum heterophyllum Wall.

(Ranunculaceae). Patish, Atees, Mithipatish. Root powder is used to remove gastric problems. 02.

A. violaceum Jacquem. ex Stapf (Ranunculaceae). Methatejla. Pinch of root powder improves digestion. 03.

Acorus calamus L. (Araceae). Bauj, Buch, Bach. Powder of rhizomes is used for healing of cuts and wounds, dysentery, fever, and mental problems. 04.

Adiantum lanalatum L. (Polypodiaceae).

Dusgtuli. Half boiled young shoot is used against gastric ailments. 05.

Aesculus indica Colebr. (Sapindaceae).

Khinnaur. Powder of seeds is used as blood purifier and for cardiac problems. 06.

Ainsliaea aptera DC. (Asteraceae). Sathjalari. Sathjalori, Karvibooti. Powder of roots mixed with mustard oil is applied externally to heal cuts and wounds; one spoon is consumed internally to cure stomachache, and diuretic diseases. 07.

Allium humile Kunth. (Amaryllidaceae).

Donu, Dunu. Fresh leaves are used along with vegetables to improve digestion and gastric ailments. 08.

Anemone obtusiloba D. Don.

(Ranunculaceae). Ratanjot, Mingua. Paste/extract of leaves is applied/consumed to cure joint pain. 10.

Angelica glauca Edgew. (Apiaceae). Chorah.

Budhchorah. Powder of roots is used to cure stomach disorder. 11.

Arisaema flavum Schott. (Araceae). Kiralu.

Crushed roots of the paste is tied on infected skin. 12.

Artemisia maritima L. (Asteraceae). Kirmala,

Seski. Powder of whole plant is used as vermifuge and laxative. 13.

A. parviflora Roxb. (Asteraceae). Seski.

Pinch of shoot powder is used to remove colic pain and stomachache. 14.

Atropa accuminata Royle. (Solanaceae).

Jharka. Decoction of root and leaves is used as sedative and diuretic. 15.

Berberis aristata DC. (Berberidaceae).

Kashmal, Kashambal, Masholi. Vapour of boiled root directly cures eye diseases while root powder is used to get rid of rheumatic pain, jaundice, diarrhoea and skin diseases. 16.

B. lycium Royle. (Berberidaceae). Masholi.

Extract of root is used as eye drop to cure

pain in the eyes. 17.

Bergenia stracheyi (Hook. f. & Thoms.) Engl. (Saxifragaceae). Surgha. Powder of root is taken to cure abdomen and joint pain. 18.

Betula utilis D. Don. (Betulaceae). Bhojpatra. Extract of bark is used to cure eye diseases. 19.

Cannabis sativa L. (Urticaceae). Bhang. Oil extracted from seed is used against jaundice, fever and body pain. 22.

Chaerophyllum reflexum Lindl. (Apiaceae). Sojuga, Bhai. Seeds heated with mustard oil is applied externally to get rid of body pain, cold and cough. 24.

Codonopsis clematidea (Schrenk.) Clarke. (Campanulaceae). Katari. Crushed shoot is applied against rheumatic problems. 26.

Cynoglossum glochidiatum Wallich ex Benth. (Boraginaceae). Nerlu. Juice of leaf is used to cure eye disease. 30.

Dactylorhiza hatagirea D. Don. (Orchidaceae). Hathpanja, Hathjari, Panja. Paste of tuber is applied on cuts and wounds. 31.

Desmodium triflorum DC. (Leguminosae). Tinpatti. Paste of leaves is applied externally on wounds and abscesses. 34.

Elaeagnus umbellata Thunb. (Elaeagnaceae). Gyai. Decoction of seed is used for cold and cough, cardiac and pulmonary problems. 37.

Elsholtzia cristata Willd. (Lamiaceae). Kalasethi. Decoction of roots is used as tonic; leaves and floral parts are used in beverages. 39.

E. polystachya Benth. (Lamiaceae).

Sesasethi. Decoction of roots is used as tonic; leaves and floral parts in beverages and considered as of medicinal values. 41.

Fragaria vesca L. (Rosaceae). Bupal. Powder of root mixed with butter and honey is given to children suffering from dysentery. 48.

Girardinia heterophylla Decne. (Urticaceae). Bichhu booti. Paste of leaves mixed with black salt is applied on cramp, sprain and muscular pain. 49.

Hedychium acuminatum Wall. (Zingiberaceae). Kachri. Crushed roots are applied on boils. 50.

Heracleum canescens Lindl. (Apiaceae). Patishan. Powder of root is used to cure stomach problems and dysentery. 51.

Juglans regia L. (Juglandaceae). Akhrot. Root bark and oil of kernel is used to cure gum diseases, rheumatic and joint pain. 52.

Jurinea dolomiaca Boiss. (Asteraceae). Dhoop, Guggal. Powder of roots is used as stimulant during child birth. 54.

Leucas lanata Benth. (Lamiaceae). Hathigha. Durlugha. Leaves mixed with butter and given to cattle at the time of delivery. 55.

Mentha longifolia L. (Labiatae). Pudina. Extract of leaves is used against dysentery, stomachache and headache. 56.

M. viridis L. (Lamiaceae). Pahari pudina. Extract of shoots is used to cure stomach problems. 57.

Morchella esculenta L. (Discomycetes). Guchchhi. Entire fruiting body is used to get relief from cold and cough. 58.

Nardostachys grandiflora DC. (N. jatamansi DC.) (Valerianaceae). Balchora.

- Balchhar, Jatamanshi. Decoction and extract of roots is used as remedy for gastric problems, hysteria and epilepsy. 59.
- Oxalis corniculata** L. (Geraniaceae). Chalmori, Malori. Crushed shoot juice is given against boils, cut and wounds, fever and dysentery. 62.
- Physochlaina praealta** (Decne.) Miers. (Solanaceae). Bajar bhang, Jangali bhang, Laltang. Powder of seeds is used to cure round worm, urine disorder and as narcotic. 63.
- Picrorrhiza kurrooa** Royle. ex Benth. (Scrophulariaceae). Karo, Kodu. Powder of roots is used against stomachache, jaundice and diarrhoea. 64.
- Pistacia integerrima** Stewart. (Anacardiaceae). kakra, Kakri. Ash of fruits mixed with honey is taken for removing cough and cold. 66.
- Plantago major** L. (Plantaginaceae). Sag, Lahuriya. Paste of shoots is applied against healing of wounds, dysentery and diarrhoea. 67.
- Pleurospermum brunosis** Benth. (Apiaceae). Losar. Crushed leaves mixed with mustard oil and heated gently is applied against skin diseases.
- P. densiflorum** Benth. (Apiaceae). Losar. Shoot crushed with black salt is given against stomach problems, headache. 69.
- Podophyllum hexandrum** Royle. (P. emodi Wall.) (Berberidaceae). Powder of roots is given against colic pain and vomiting. 70.
- Polygonum amplexicaule** Don. (Polygonaceae). Doriga. Crushed leaves are applied externally on boils and skin diseases. 71.
- Potentilla nepalensis** Hook. (Rosaceae). Dori. Powder of roots is used for stomach disorder. 72.
- Primula denticulata** Smith. (Primulaceae). Palak, Jalkutra. Leaves are used against anodyne and abdomen pain. 73.
- Prinsepia utilis** Royle. (Rosaceae). Bhikhal. Seed oil is used for body pain and rheumatic problems. 74.
- Prunus communis** Huds. (Rosaceae). Alu-or alam-bukhara. Powder and oil of fruits/seed is used to remove body pain. 78.
- Pyrus pashia** Ham. (Rosaceae). Mehal. Oil of seed/kernel is used against vermifuge, ringworm and scabies. 83.
- Ranunculus laetus** Wall. (Ranunculaceae). Bariyara. Decoction/juice of shoots and flower parts is used for eye diseases. 84.
- Rheum australe** Don. and **R. emodi** Wall. (Polygonaceae). Chuchchi, Rewandchini, Dolu. Paste of roots and rhizomes is used for boils, headache; root powder is used for gastric problems and as tooth powder. 85.
- Rhododendron anthopogon** D. Don. (Ericaceae). Tangal. Aqueous extract of leaves is taken to cure cold and cough. 86.
- R. campanulatum** Don. (Ericaceae). Salgar. Paste and extract of leaves is applied on boils and other types of skin infections. 87.
- Rumex nepalensis** Spreng. (Polygonaceae). Maleri, malori. Partly cooked leaves are consumed orally to cure gastric problems. 92.
- Salvia lanata** Roxb. (Lamiaceae). Thooth, Thunt. Root powder is used as vermifuge. 94.

S. moorcroftiana Wall. (Lamiaceae). Thooth, Thunt. Root powder is used as vermifuge. 94.

Saussurea costus (Falc.) Lipsch. (Asteraceae). Kunth, Kuth. Gently heated root extract is used as decoction for cough and cold. 95.

Selinum tenuifolium Wall. (Apiaceae). Mutoshal, Benug. Root powder heated with mustard oil is massaged to remove body pain. 96.

S. vaginatum Clarke. (Apiaceae). Niyani, Nihani. Crushed leaves are applied on cuts and wounds to stop bleeding. 97.

Taraxacum officinale Wigg. (Asteraceae). Pariyara. Powder of root is used for liver and kidney malfunctioning. 99.

Taxus wallichiana Zuss. (Taxaceae). Rakhal. Leaf and bark decoction is used for cancer treatment. 100.

Thalictrum javanicum Blume. (Ranunculaceae). Pilazari, Mimiri, Mimira. Powder of roots is used as diuretic and against gastric problems. 101.

Thymus linearis Benth. ex Benth. (Lamiaceae). Banjawain. Inflorescence is taken to remove gastric problems. 102.

T. serphyllum L. (Lamiaceae). Banjawain. Powder of leaves and seeds is used as vermifuge and stomach disorder; leaves are used in beverages. 103.

Valeriana hardwickii Wall. (Valerianaceae). Nihani. Root powder is used for stomach disorder. 105.

V. jatamansii Jones. (V. wallichii DC.) (Valerianaceae). Mushkbala. Powder of roots is taken to cure gastric problems. 106.

Viola odorata L. (Violaceae). Banafsha. Decoction of whole plant is used to cure cough, cold and intermittent fever. 109.

Zanthoxylum alatum Roxb. (Rutaceae). Timru, Tiber. Young twigs are used as tooth brush for gum diseases. 110.

Z. armatum DC. (Rutaceae). Timru, Tiber, young stem and twigs are used as tooth brush to cure mouth, gum and teeth diseases. 110.

Zehneria umbellata Thwaites. (Cucurbitaceae). Charani. Fruit is boiled and eaten as blood purifier. 112.

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