

SOME UN-NOTICED MEDICINAL USES OF FLOWERING PLANTS OF SOUTH WESTERN MAHARASHTRA

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A B S T R A C T

Man in all ages has used plants to cure diseases and relieving physical suffering. Even in this age of modern medicines, Indian system of folk medicine continues to provide medicinal relief for about 75 % of our population. The studies on medicinal uses of flowering plants of south-western Maharashtra revealed that some of the medicinal uses of flowering plants have not been recorded in scientific community. In the present paper, so far unknown uses of some flowering plants of south-western Maharashtra are recorded. This will help scientific community to undertake further investigations on plants of the region.

INTRODUCTION

Primitive and ethnic populations have their own medical lore and some of their therapeutic practices have found place in today's medical science. The therapeutic hints from remote mists of time and the primitive as well as folk medical lore, even today, as in the past, hold key of the treasures of medical knowledge. Man has gathered this knowledge from time immemorial through human instincts, trial and error methods and keen observations on animal utility of plants. Larger array of hints and claims, principles and practices have been handed over from generation to generation for welfare of human beings.

The ancient Indian system of herbal medicines, "Ayurveda" is gaining popularity and is appreciated not only in India but also abroad. The ancient knowledge of herbal medicine is a great source of information for scientific community, research workers and medical practitioners.

With modernisation of India, many tribal people are getting civilised which has made them to give up their traditional ways of living. Information gathered by each tribe about the properties of herbs used to be handed down from father to son or mother to daughter. Before this information is forgotten in the process of modernisation, it is important to record this knowledge accumulated through ages of contact with forest flora.

METHODOLOGY

A detailed field survey of medicinal plants of South Maharashtra has been conducted and about 600 plants with their medicinal uses have been documented in the herbarium of the Department. Information about medicinal uses of plant species has been collected from tribal people (Dhangar), local people and from practicing doctors. During this work, it was found that uses of some plants are not recorded in the scientific literature. The present account is based on information from practicing doctors and Vaidhyas.

In India, number of books are devoted for medicinal plants (Kartikar & Basu, 1935; Chopra & Chopra, 1956; Kapoor & Mitra, 1979; Satyavati *et al.*, 1976-87; Agarwal & Ghosh, 1985; Warriar, 1996), however, there is great deal of information on medicinal properties and uses of plant unknown to scientific community. During last few decades, attempts have been made to gather information on plants of our country (Jain, 1981, 1991a, 1991b; Shivarajan & Indira, De, Philips, 1991 and several others).

Table : Some un-noticed or little known uses of medicinal plants of Maharashtra.

Sl. No.	Botanical Name/Family	Vernacular / Local names	Unnoticed / little known medicinal uses
1.	<i>Abutilon indicum</i> (L.) Sweet (Malvaceae)	Mudra, Mudrika, Karanda	Expressed juice of leaves and tender shoots along with cumin seeds and butter milk are used for renal and ureteric stones. Also cures inflammation of urinary bladder and anus.
2.	<i>Ageratum conyzoides</i> L. (Asteraceae)	Sahadevi, Osadi	Leaf juice taken internally is good for short febrile episodes. Pulp of leaves applied locally to stop bleeding from minor wounds and cuts and also acts as an antiseptic.
3.	<i>Anagallis arvensis</i> L. (Primulaceae)	Jokmari, Jidhana, Kali fuldi	It is good stimulant in small doses. It causes vomiting and loose motion and thereby reduces swelling of extreme in liver diseases and neuropathy. It has to be used occasionally, and also very helpful to modify the course of rheumatoid arthritis.

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4.	Antiaris toxicaria (Pers.) Lesch. (Moraceae)	Jasund, Karvat	Seed powder in very small doses is used in diabetes.
5.	Asclepias curassavica L. (Asclepiadaceae)	Haldi-kunku, Kurki	This herb can be used very effectively in acute asthmatic, bronchitis when associated with pharyngitis and sinusitis with expectoration of sticky, greenish sputum.
6.	Baliospermum solanifolium (Willd.) Muell-Arg. (Euphorbiaceae)	Jamalgota, Sapidi, Danti. Dantra	It is a strong cathartic. It is used in cases of dropsy to reduce body fluid overload. In the treatment of acute inflammatory arthritis of various origins, its root are useful in combination with other herbs. Roots of castors are used as a substitute for this plant and even it is sold in the market in the name of dantimula.
7.	Blumea lacera (Burm.f.) DC. (Asteraceae)	Dagadi	Pulp of leaves of this herb is applied locally on minor wounds to stop bleeding. 5 to 10 ml of juice of this herb is taken orally once a day in painful menurrahajia, bleeding piles and dysentery. It is also useful in viral fever.
8.	Bombax ceiba L. (Bombacaceae)	Kate Savar	All parts of this plant contain mucilage. Plant mucilage taken internally is good for inflammatory conditions. Dried stem is useful in the treatment of dysentery.

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9.	Clerodendrum inerme (L.) Gaertn. (Verbenaceae)	Chinai Mehandi, Koynel, Kadu Mehandi	It is very good for treatment of chloroquine resistant malaria in its own right. It cures nausea, joint pains and dry mouth in fever condition.
10.	Cuscuta reflexa Roxb. (Cuscutaceae)	Amarvel, Akash vel, Sonvel	Parasitic plants when used as medicine act to invigorate body. Cuscuta acts in the same way. Cuscuta is good for pale, sticky totter and children who crave nothing but sugar and pass stools with difficulty. It can also be used in elders as a tonic. It is also mild laxative.
11.	Erythrina suberosa Roxb. (Papilionaceae)	Pangara	In small amount of 2 gm of dried bark, it can be given to robust adults. It is emetic. It is combined with <i>Bacopa monnieri</i> , <i>Piper longum</i> and <i>Nardostachys jatamansi</i> to control hypertension and induce sleep.
12.	Eulophia nuda Lindl. (Orchidaceae)	Amarkand	It is invigorating especially in serious patients. This makes convalescence easy with improvement in fatigue and memory loss and dryness of throat.
13.	Euphorbia antiquorum L. (Euphorbiaceae)	Tindhari, Tiwara	Its latex is mildest among all Euphorbias. Constant sleepless, sticky mouth, memory loss, early morning giddiness and tingling in extremities responds well to ½ spoonful of its latex with honey taken daily.

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14.	<i>Euphorbia hirta</i> L. (Euphorbiaceae)	Dudhani, Mothi nayti	Latex of this plant is useful in allergic bronchial asthma and seasonal arthritis. It is commonly available in plenty and should be used fresh.
15.	<i>Lantana camara</i> L. (Verbenaceae)	Ghaneri	Decoction of 5 grams of root powder of this plant is greatly beneficial in bleeding painful piles and inflammatory arthritis of small joints.
16.	<i>Launaea procumbens</i> (Roxb.) Ramayya & Rajagopal (Asteraceae)	Pathri, Bhoan- pathri	It is very similar but mild in its uses and can be used as substitute for <i>Eclipta alba</i> . It does not cause nausea like <i>Eclipta</i> for chronic dermatoses and chronic liver diseases.
17.	<i>Lobelia nicotianaefolia</i> Roth ex R. & S. (Lobeliaceae)	Devnala	This very poisonous plant and handling of this plant material can induce feeling of suffocation and irritation of throat. It has to be dry in shade before use. Saturated alcoholic extract of this plant in one or two drop doses reduces asthmatic bronchitis.
18.	<i>Ludwigia octovalvis</i> (Jacq.) Raven (Onagraceae)	Panlavang	Diseases or disorders like excessive menstrual blood, per rectal bleed and bloody stools are treated with this herb. All parts of plants are crushed and its juice is given internally.
19.	<i>Michelia champaca</i> L. (Magnoliaceae)	Sonchapha, Champa, Chamba	Powdered bark is useful in chronic rheumatic complaints. It is to be combined with any of

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			the mild herbal laxative in acute rheumatic complaints. If taken for a few weeks, it creates feeling of freshness. It markedly diminishes day time fatigue and sleepiness. It can be used effectively in combination with <i>Clematis triloba</i> , <i>Rubia cordifolia</i> and <i>Cassia bonducella</i> to treat albuminosis also cures malaria.
20.	Mimulus strictus Benth. (Scrophulariaceae)		It is similar in its action like <i>Bacopa monnieri</i> . It acts as a brain tonic and enhances memory power.
21.	Pergularia daemia (Forssk.) Chiov. (Asclepiadaceae)	Utaran	It is useful in bronchitis and a form of rheumatism that recurs with every rainy season.
22.	Phyla nodiflora (L.) Greene (Verbenaceae)	Jal pimpli, Bui bhokara	Whole plant is used for curing minor skin ailments.
23.	Smilax zeylanica L. (Smilacaceae)	Chopchini, Ghotvel	The samples available in markets are generally too old to be of no use. <i>Smilax zeylanica</i> growing in Western Ghats is much useful clinically than <i>Smilax china</i> of China. It is to be used combined with <i>Hemidesmus indicus</i> and <i>Bacopa monnieri</i> in psoriasis. One can add ginger in case of arthritis to the formula. Anemia unresponsive to allopathic hematinics responds well to decoction of <i>Smilax</i> and <i>Hemidesmus</i> . It is also much useful in ulcer, neopathy, gravel in urine and spermaorrhoea.

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24.	Spermadictyon suaveolens Roxb. (Rubiaceae)	Jitsaya	It is useful in cases with indolent swellings with minimal inflammations. If it is given with <i>Chebulis myrobulon</i> , it acts well in bleeding piles. If there is itching along with bleeding, some aromatic herbs are to be added. Sun involution of uterus, weakness following illness, skin diseases are other conditions in which this herb is useful. It is also very useful in rheumatoid treatment.
25.	Swertia densifolia (Griseb.) Kashyapa (Gentianaceae)	Kadavi, Kadu, Khilajit	It is good substitute for <i>Swertia chirayita</i> . It is very bitter. It increases appetite in thin person whereas it reduces appetite in obese. It is used in fevers mostly those occurring with respiratory infections and bronchial spasm. It is usually combined with <i>Hedyotis biflora</i> , <i>Fumaria indica</i> , <i>Fagonia cretica</i> , <i>Zingiber officinale</i> , <i>Cinnamomum zeylanicum</i> and <i>Tinospora cordifolia</i> .
26.	Tectona grandis L.f. (Verbenaceae)	Sagwan	It is mild medicine. Any ailments where bleeding is concerned, juice of the flowering heads is very good remedy. Powder or even straw dust if boiled with water and taken orally, it ameliorates rheumatic pains. It is useful to cure burning in stomach as well as burning urination.
27	Thespesia populneoides (Roxb.) Kostel. (Malvaceae)	Gawbhendi, Gulbhendi.	The seeds are used for conceiving and as sex stimulant.
28	Toddalia asiatica (L.) Lam. (Rutaceae)	Ranmirchi, Jangli mirchi.	Roots are very effective in urinary troubles.

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29.	<i>Viscum articulatum</i> Burm.f. (Viscaceae)	Hadmod, Panpudu	All species of <i>Viscum</i> are of medicinal importance. Species which grows on <i>Syzygium</i> sp. is more useful. Traditionally, it is used in fevers with predominant joint pains but it is more useful in the treatment of stunted children and weakness following febrile illness.
30	<i>Celosia argentea</i> L. (Amaranthaceae)	Kurudu	Finely powered seed 2-5 grams per day taken daily with water, can reduce gravel in urine and can break up renal and ureteric stones.

DISCUSSIONS

The above information reveals that there are number of plants whose medicinal properties and uses are not known to scientific community. There is need to collect information on these plants especially from rural and tribal areas. Some of the information has been compiled and published under the title ethnobotany (Naik, 1998; Agharkar, 1953; Agarwal, *et al.* 1985; Chopra & Chopra *et al.*, 1956; Chopra *et al.* 1969; Kapoor, *et al.* 1979; Kartikar & Basu, 1935; Nadkarni, 1954; Rastogi & Mehrotra, 1993; Caius 1986; Dastur, 1962; Kunny Lall, 1993; etc.) However, there is a great need to conduct thorough survey of this vanishing information from all corners of the country.

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