Standardisation and Quality Evaluation of Centella asiatica Linn.

G.V.R. Joseph., Sachin Chaturvedi* and Deokule S.S*.
Regional Research Institute (Ayu),CCRAS, Kothrud, Pune.
*Dept. of Botany, University of Pune, Pune.

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ABSTRACT: Centella asiatica Linn. is a well-known medicinal herb used in various types of diseases, it was noticed that the herb is being heavily adulterated with the cheaper substances. A critical study of the authentic and market samples (available in powder form) was carried out to study current status of the drug in the local market. Powder analysis of the market samples shows fragments of sclerenchymatous net, which is a characteristic feature of some umbelliferous fruits. Occurrence of prismatic crystals of calcium oxalate and large number of starch grains shows that the powdered materials are heavily adulterated with some cheaper substances. Fluorescence analysis of authentic and market samples exhibits 23.28% and 12.34% - 18.13% respectively and there is a difference in curde fibre content also. Moreover there is remarkable difference in the quantitative value of Asiatic acid (3.25% - 0.12%) which is one of the chief constituents of C. asiatica.

INTRODUCTION

Centella asiatica Linn. is a well-known medicinal herb used in various types of diseases. Especially, the plant is known for its spectacular effect on the most important organ of human body, the brain. Botanical aspects of this plant have been worked out. Various workers have isolated some of the active constituents vi., Brahmoside, Brahminoside, Brahmic acid, Isobrahmic acid, Betulic acid, stigma sterol, thankuniside, thankunic acid Asiatic acid etc. Diallo have separated Asiatic aside and medecassoside by using g-speed counter-current chromatograph to thin layer chromatography. Variation in the chemical composition of Indian samples of C. asiatica was worked out. CNS effects, antianxiety profile, antibacterial activity of the plant was carried out by various workers. Since the plant is being used widely, substitutes or adulterants with a similar appearance have entered the market, but these materials do not possess the desired medicinal properties. Also at times different herbal drugs have same commercial names and same drug has different names in different localities and regions of the country. One of the best examples of such a situation is C. asiatica Linn, it is commonly known as Bramhi. In Bengal Bacopa monnieri penna Syn Herpestis monniera (Linn) Pennel is known as nrami. In present investigation efforts were made to study the different commercial samples form the local market. Critical studies of the authentic and market samples (available in powder form) were carried out to study the current status of the drug in the market.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Authentic sample was collected form the regional Research instate (Ayu) Kothrud, Pune. Market samples (tree in number)
were obtained from the local wholesale dealers viz.

1. Ambadas Ayurvedic Medicines, Pune.
2. Sahyadra Aushadhi Bhandar, Pune.
3. Abhital Ayurvedic Aushadhalaya, Pune.

These samples were labeled as MS1, MS2 and MS3 respectively. Semi permanent sections were made and stained either with toluidine blue or methylene blue. Epidermal peelings were taken from both sides of the lamina and stained with Delafield haematoxylin. Standard procedure was followed for histochemical tests (calcium oxalate crystals, tannis, starch, lignin), for counting vein islet number, crude fibre content and fluorescence analysis. Ash and extractive values of the leaves were determined by pharmacopoeial standards.

TLC identity test: for TLC identity test 5 gm of the powdered drug was refluxed in 50ml of methanol for 15min filter and evaporate the filtrate to dryness, Dissolve the residue in methanol (2ml). Umbelliferone (1mg dissolved in 20ml methanol) is used as reference solution. Apply 20 µl each of reference and test solution on two different tracks on a precoated silica gel plate, develop the plate with the equal volume of toluene: methanol (saturated with 10% acetic acid) runs to a distance of 18 cm. Observations were made under UVlight (360) and the Rf values were estimates.

RESULTS MACROSCOPY

Leaves are 1-6 cm in diameter. Several leaves spring from the rootstock and have elongated petioles. One to tree leaves arise from each node of the stems and rare orbicular, reniform, rather broader than long, more or less cupped, entire or shallowly crenate, glabrous on both sides and with numerous slender nerves from a deeply cordate base; petioles are 7-15 cm or more in length channeled, glabrous or nearly so stipules short adnate to the petioles, forming as sheathing base venation pattern is of palaenactromalous type development confirms it to be perfect marginal.

MICROSCOPY

Petiole (Fig 1&3): in transaction (TS) it shows single layered epidermis covered by a cuticle. Inner cell walls of the epidermis adjoining cortex are much thickened. 2-3 layers of collenchyma tissue follow epidermis and following this is a broad zone of parenchyma five to seven vascular bundles are located I the projecting arms of the petiole. Chlorophyll pigment is seen in the outer peripheral layers of the parenchyma. Crystals of calcium oxalate are also noticed n the parenchymatous zone.

Midrib (Fig 2&7): TS of the midrib shows single layered Epidermis. Epidermis Epidermal structure is similar to tat of petiole two to three layers of collenchyma cells are present just beneath the Epidermis. Collenchyma region is followed by 4-5 layers of parenchyma cells which do not contain chloroplast. The vascular bundle is present in central region and is differentiated into xylem towards the dorsal side and phloem towards ventral side. The xylem consists of radial rows of xylem vessels with xylem parenchyma in between.

Lamina (Fig 4): in TS the lamina shows dorsiventral structure. In surface view (Fig. 5&6) the amphistomatic leaf lamina shows paracytic and anomocytic types of stomata. Upper epidermis is followed b palisade tissue, which is differentiated, into two layers, Spongy parenchyma cells wit large
intercellular spaces, some cells of which contain crystal of calcium oxalate.

Quantitative values such as palisade ratio, vein islet number, and stomatal index are tabulates in table number 1.

**POWDER ANALYSIS**

Authentic sample: Powder is greenish-to-greenish brown in colour with bitter taste. Under the microscope the powder shows the fragments of epidermal cell (Fig 8&9), collenchyma tissues (Fig 10) fibres (Fig 11), few trichomes (fig 12) treachery elements with spiral thickening (Fig14i) and pits on their secondary wall (Fig 14ii) rosettes crystals of calcium oxalate (Fig 13etc.

Marker samples: Powder is pale brown in colour with slight bitter taste. More or less all the three market samples under the microscope have shown the following characters.

Sclereids (Fig 20) are fairly small, square to rectangular or oval in outline and are comparatively thin walled with numerous pits. Fibres (Fig 23) are tick walled lignified with an irregular lumen and few pits . Treachery elements (Fig 22) usually occur in small groups; the are lignified and usually spirally thickened but a few have small pits on their secondary wall. The prisms and cluster crystals of calcium oxalate which are found scattered as well as in the parenchymatous tissue; some of the cluster of crystals are rather irregular and appear fragmented (Fig 18). The very occasional covering trichomes (Fig 17), which are unicellular, conical and moderately thick walled and may be slightly swollen at the base. Occasional fragments of the lower epidermis in surface view show the presence of cicatrices where the trichomes have been attached (Fig 15). Fragments of parenchyma cells in longitudinal view show that the tangential walls have a conspicuously sinus outline (Fig21) The starch granules, mainly simple rather small , spherical to slightly polyhedral; compound granules also occur a small point or cleft hilum is some times visible (Fig 19). Sclrenchymatous layer (Fig 16) groups of fusiform fibres of sclerenchyma running wavy and at times crossing with each other or with thin walls lignified cells. These fragments are more in number in market sample no 1. Quantitative values such as ash values, extractive values and crude fibre content are tabulated in tables 2,3 and 4 respectively. Chemical tests are mentioned in table no. 5. Fluorescence analysis under the U.V. light at long and short wave length are given in table no 6. Alcoholic extracts of the sample when they are subjected for Asiatic acid estimation shows 3.25% in the authentic samples and 0.12-1.73% for market samples.

**DISCUSSION**

Anatomical studies described b some earlier workers12 are more or less matching with our observations. However in the present investigation nonglandular uniseriate trichomes are observed in C. asiatica Linn. Powder analysis of the market samples shows group of fusiform sclereids, which is a characteristic feature of prismatic crystals of calcium oxalate and large number of starch grains sow tat the powdered materials are heavily adulterated with some cheaper substances. Fluorescence analysis of authentic and market samples show remarkable difference in the colour. Water extractive values of authentic and market samples 3exhibit 23.28% and 12.34% - 18.13% respectively and there is a difference in crude fibre content also. Moreover there is a remarkable in the quantitative value of Asiatic acid (3.25-
0.12\%), which is one of the chief constituents of c. asiatica. From the above observations it is quite clear that all the above observations it is quite clear that all the market samples of centella assiatica Linn. Have been heavily adulterated and it is anticipated that the present investigation will certainly help is standardization of market samples.

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**Table 1**

**Microscopical observation of C. asiatica:**

|   | Palisade ratio |       |
|---|----------------|-------|
| 1 | 2-3            |       |
| 2 | Vein islet number | 8-11  |
| 3 | Stomatal index: |       |
| 4 | Lower.Epi      | 12-14 |
| 5 | Upper.Epi      | 8-10  |

**Table 2**

**Ash values**

| Sr.No | Plant material market sample | Total ash in % | Acid insoluble as % | Sulphated ash. In % |
|-------|------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1     | Centella asiatica           | 11.16          | 0.318               | 13.84               |
| 2     | Market sample 1             | 25.85          | 15.87               | 28.86               |
| 3     | Market sample 2             | 28.31          | 10.91               | 20.17               |
| 4     | Market sample 3             | 20.71          | 17.19               | 24.84               |

**Table 3**

**Extractive values**

| Sr.No | Plant material market sample | Alcohol extract in % | Water extract in % |
|-------|------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1     | Centella asiatica           | 9.52                 | 23.28              |
| 2     | Market sample 1             | 9.68                 | 15.04              |
| 3     | Market sample 2             | 10.79                | 12.34              |
| 4     | Market sample 3             | 8.34                 | 18.13              |
### Table 4
Crude fibre content

| Sr.No | Plant material               | Crude fibre content (in%) |
|-------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1     | Centella asiatica            | 20.17                     |
| 2     | Market sample 1              | 15.95                     |
| 3     | Market sample 2              | 10.17                     |
| 4     | Market sample 3              | 16.13                     |

### Table 5
Chemical tests

| Sr.No | Tests     | C. asiatica | Market sample 1 | Market sample 2 | Market sample 3 |
|-------|-----------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1     | Coumarin  | Present     | Present         | Present         | Present         |
| 2     | Strach    | Present     | Present         | Present         | Present         |
| 3     | Cholcone  | Absent      | Absent          | Absent          | Absent          |
| 4     | Tannin    | Present     | Present         | Present         | Present         |
| 5     | Saponins  | Absent      | Absent          | Absent          | Absent          |
| 6     | Alkaloids | Present     | Present         | Present         | Present         |

### Table 6
Fluorescence analysis

#### A) C. asiatica, Linn.

| Sr.no | Solvent           | Ordinary light | U.V. (sort wave) | U.V. (long wave) |
|-------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1     | Pet ether         | Amber           | Light green      | Amber            |
| 2     | Carbon tetrachloride | Amber          | Greenish yellow | Red              |
| 3     | Chloroform        | Olivaceous      | Slate purple     | Scarlet          |
| 4     | Acetone           | Dark green      | Dark green       | Scarlet          |
| 5     | Ethyl acetate     | Dark herbage green | Dark herbage green | Scarlet      |
| 6     | Ethyl alcohol     | Dark herbage green | Dark herbage green | Scarlet         |
| 7     | Methyl alcohol    | Dull green      | Dull green       | Red              |
| 8     | Distilled water   | Primorse        | Leek green       | Primorse         |

#### B) Market samples

| Sr | Solvent | Ordinary Light | U.V Short Wave | U.V Long Wave |
|----|---------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
|    | MS -1   | MS-2           | MS-1           | MS-2          |
|    | MS-3    | MS-3           | MS-3           | MS-3          |
|    | MS-1    | MS-1 Peach     | MS-2           | MS-2 Peach    |
| 1  | Pet ether | Amber         | Luteous        | Amber         |
|    |         | Light green    | Light green    | Greenish Yellow |
|    |         | Rose           | Peach          | Peach         |
| 2  | Ccl4    | Olive          | Olive          | Olive         |
|    |         | Grey           | Olive          | Grey          |
|    |         | Olive          | Grey           | Brick         |
|    |         | Olive          | Grey           | Red           |
| 3  | Chloroform | Amber        | Amber          | Amber         |
|    |         | Dull green     | Dull green     | Dull green    |
|    |         | Dull green     | Dull green     | Scarlet       |
| 4  | Acetone | Olive          | Amber          | Grass green   |
|    |         | Grass green    | Grey           | Grass green   |
|    |         | Red            | Rose           | Red           |
| 5  | Ethyl acetate | Olive      | Olive          | Olive         |
|    |         | Olive          | Grey           | Red           |
|    |         | Olive          | Red            | Scarlet       |

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ILLUSTRATION TO THE FIGURES:

Fig. 1 : Schematic diagram of the petiole through transaction (TS)

Fig. 2 : Schematic diagram of the midrib through TS

Fig. 3 : A portion of the petiole through TS

Fig. 4 : TS of the leaf lamina

Fig. 5 : Upper epidermis in surface view

Fig. 6 : Lower epidermis in surface view

Fig. 7 : TS of midrib.

Fig. 8 : Epidermis in surface view showing anomocytic type of stomata.

Fig. 9 : Epidermis in surface view at midrib region

Fig. 10 : Fragment of collenchyma tissue associated with epidermis

Fig. 11 : Fibers

Fig. 12 : Nonglandular trichomes

Fig. 13 : Rossetes of calcium oxalate crystals

Fig. 14 : Tracheary elements showing (i) Spiral wall thickenings (ii) Pits.

Fig. 15 : Epidermis in surface view showing cicatrix surrounded by cuticular striations.

Fig. 16 : Groups of fusiform sclerids

Fig. 17 : Non glandular trichomes

Fig. 18 : Crystals of calcium oxalate.

Fig. 19 : Starch grains

Fig. 20 : Sclereids
Fig. 21: Parenchyma cells showing sinus walls.

Fig. 22: Tracheary elements showing (i) Spiral wall thickenings (ii) Pits.

Fig. 23: Part of group of fibres

AC: Anomocytic type of stomata  CR: Crystals
CO: Collecnchyma  PA: Palisade tissue
LE: Lower epidermis  SP: Spongy Parenchyma
PC: Paracytic type of stomata  UE: Upper epidermis
ST: Stomata  CI: Cicatrix
VB: Vascular bundle  EP: Epidermis
CH: Cholrencyma
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