ETHNOBOTANICAL STUDY OF SOME PLANTS USED FOR CURING SKIN AFFLICTIONS

S. S. KHAN AND S. A. CHAGHTAI

Department of Botany, Saffia College, Bhopal – 462 001

ABSTRACT: Few plants which are frequently used for curing dermal diseases by the common man and are occasionally prescribed in Ayurvedic and Unani systems of medicine have been recorded from Bhopal and its suburbs, and folk lores collected. The same have been described in a brief communications along with their significant macroscopic characters and mode of administration. The environmental conditions and ecological factors which favour their optimum growth have also been studied. This study has also been endeavoured to distinguish them from adulterants so that the interested persons may easily pick up the plants of real medicinal value.

INTRODUCTION

The history of medicine and surgery dates back in the remote past. There was a time when human sufferings and oilments and their alleviations were associated with religion, myth and magic. In India the earliest records referring to curative properties of certain herbs are contained in Rigveda (3500 – 1800 B.C.) In Rigveda the references to plants are very brief while Atharvaveda abounds more detailed.

After Vedas, one finds a long gap of about 1000 years in the development of this science in India. Then came the two most important works on Indian systems of Medicine, the works of Charak and Susruta, namely the Charak Samhita and Susruta Samhita. The latter deals with about 700 drugs, some of these were not indigenous to India (Jain, 1968). However with the passing of time, scores of plants found their entry into native medicine, taking their number to more than 1,500. Much work in the field of medicinal plants has accumulated in India during the 20th Century (Dey, 1896; Basu and Kirtikar 1918; Chakraberty 1923; Chopra 1932, 1933, 1939, 1956; Kirtikar,1935; Nadkarni, 1937; Bose, 1932; Dastur 1963; Ahuja 1965).

As regards the studies on medicinal plants of Madhya Pradesh, the literature is scarce, despite the presence of a very rich flora in the state. The workers in this field are Tiwari 1954; Pathak 1965; Nath et al 1968; Chaghtai and Ahmad, 1976, 77; Chaghtai et al, 1978; Khan and Chaghtai 1979 and Khan 1980.

Hence it was endeavoured to undertake the studies on medicinal plants of Bhopal and its suburbs.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Periodic visits to various localities of the area understudy were paid, the plants collected, identified and native were asked
to explain the use of various plants prevalent among them, who resort to such use whenever suffering from an ailment. Moreover emphasis was especially laid on the queries regarding plants used for the cure of skin afflictions and the same are enumerated here under.

1. *Cassia tora* Linn.
   Hindi – Chakund; Pumar; Panwar
   Parts used – Seeds
   Folklore – The seeds are powdered & boiled in water and the filtrate is considered as blood purifier, and is given in Skin inflammations.

2. *Chrozophora prostrata* Dalz
   Hindi – Neelkanthi
   Parts used – Leaves and Tender branches
   Folklore – The leaves and branches of *C. prostrata* alongwith the flower heads of *Sphaeranthus indicus* Linn. and leaves of *Grewia tiliaefolia* Vahl are boiled in water and the extract is given orally to the person suffering from dermatitis.

3. *Cuscuta reflexa* Roxb.
   Hindi – Amarbel; Akash bel
   Parts used – Whole plant
   Folklore – Whole plant of *C. reflexa* Roxb, is boiled in water, and this water after cooling is used for taking bath the persons suffering from dermatitis and itching.

4. *Elaeodendrom glaucum* Pers.
   Hindi – Bakra; Jamrasi
   Parts used – Leaves
   Folklore – Patients suffering from eczema and other skin afflictions are given decoction of leaves as well as are advised to take bath using water previously boiled with leaves of *E. glaucum*.

5. *Ficus racemosa* Linn. Syn. *F. glomerata* Roxb
   Hindi – Gular
   Parts used – Bark and Leaves
   Folklore – The leaves and bark are applied externally on the skin in the form of poultice in cases of eczema.

6. *Jasminum arborescens* Roxb.
   Hindi – Chameli
   Parts used – Leaves
   Folklore – The leaves are applied in the form of poultice in eczema.

7. *Lawsonia inermis* Linn. Syn. *L. alba*.
   Hindi – Nina; Mehndi
   Parts used – Leaves and tender twigs
   Folklore – A decoction of the leaves and poultice is said to be very effective in cases of eczema and leprosy.

8. *Nerium indicum* Mill. Syn.
   Hindi – Kaner
   Parts used – Leaves
   Folklore – The leaves are burned in any fatty oil preferably in the oil of *Pongamia pinnata* (Linn.) Merr., and the oil is used in cases of scabies.

9. *Mallotus philippinensis* Muell – Arg.
   Hindi – Kamila; Kamala
   Parts used – Seeds
   Folklore – Powdered seeds of *M. Philippinensis* are mixed with sulphur, Saw dust of Dalbergia sisoo and sandalwood oil and the mixture thus obtained is said to be very effective when applied externally in rheumatic joints, and also in dermatitis.

10. *Psoralea corylifolia* Linn.
    Hindi – Babehi
    Parts used – Seeds
    Folklore – The seeds are powdered by the natives and administered orally with slightly warm water in a dose of 5 gms a
day in cases of eczema. A thick poultice prepared from the seeds in Pongamia glabra oil is considered as an effective treatment of leucoderma.

The information collected is nothing more than folklore and requires verification through experimental work and clinical investigations to ascertain and establish their utility and efficacy.

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