

# Herbal medicines -a safe cure for common health ailments

■ Apoorva Gupta and Meenu Srivastava

Received: 01.03.2019; Accepted: 28.05.2019

■ **ABSTRACT :** Now-a-days, attention is being focused on the investigation of the efficacy of plant in the traditional medicine because they are cheap and have little side effects. Synthetic preservatives, which have been used in foods for decades, may lead to negative health consequences (Shadia *et al.*, 2016). Increasing numbers of people have been choosing herbal medicines or products to improve their health conditions, either alone or in combination with others. Herbs are staging a comeback and herbal “renaissance” occurs all over the world. According to the World Health Organization, 75 per cent of the world’s populations are using herbs for basic healthcare needs. Since the dawn of mankind, in fact, the use of herbs/plants has offered an effective medicine for the treatment of illnesses (Si-Yuan Pan *et al.*, 2014). The probability of a real and substantial interaction between the therapeutic agents originating from different medical paradigms is likewise expanding. Whilst most of the herb-drug interactions are undoubtedly minor, benign and harmless, there are reports of more serious interactions. Possible reasons for specific herb-drug interactions are examined, particularly from the pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamics perspectives (Media Centre Traditional Medicine, 2013). This paper aims to provide a review of benefits of herbal medicines and to cure common health ailments, herbal medicines in terms of their significant contribution to the health promotion for health ailments in present scenario.

■ **KEY WORDS:** Health, Ailments, Health care, Herbal, Medicines, Traditional remedies

■ **HOW TO CITE THIS PAPER :** Gupta, Apoorva and Srivastava, Meenu (2019). Herbal medicines -a safe cure for common health ailments. *Asian J. Home Sci.*, 14 (1) : 236-240, DOI: 10.15740/HAS/AJHS/14.1/236-240. Copyright@ 2019: Hind Agri-Horticultural Society.

See end of the paper for authors’ affiliations →

**Apoorva Gupta**

Department of Textiles and Apparel Designing, College of Community and Applied Sciences, Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture and Technology, Udaipur (Rajasthan) India

**H**erbal medicine, also called botanical medicine or phytomedicine, refers to using a plant’s seeds, berries, roots, leaves, bark, or flowers for medicinal purposes. Herbalism has a long tradition of use outside conventional medicine (Herbal Medicine Omics International, 2014). The plant parts used in herbal therapy include seeds, berries, roots, leaves, fruits, bark, flowers, or even the whole plants. Man was mainly dependent on crude botanical material for medical needs to retain vitality and cure diseases (Herbal Medicine Penn

State Hersney, 2015).

## History of herbal medicine:

Plants have been used for medicinal purposes long before recorded history. Ancient Chinese and Egyptian papyrus writings describe medicinal uses for plants as early as 3,000 BC. Indigenous cultures (such as African and Native American) used herbs in their healing rituals, while others developed traditional medical systems (such as Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine) in which

herbal therapies were used (Jack, 1997).

The term “Ayurveda” combines the Sanskrit words ayur (life) and Veda (science or knowledge). Ayurvedic medicine, as practiced in India, is one of the oldest systems of medicine in the world. Three ancient books known as the Great Trilogy were written in Sanskrit more than 2,000 years ago and are considered as main texts on Ayurvedic Medicine—Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita and Astanga Hridaya (Jack, 1997). Ayurveda works by balancing the three *doshas* (*Tridosha*) i.e., *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*, which govern the internal and external health of the body. *Ayurveda* is a branch of this ancient form of medicine (Anupama, 2012 and Dhingra, 2014).

Key concepts of herbal medicine include universal interconnectedness (among people, their health, and the universe), the body’s constitution, and life forces (*dosha*), which are often compared to the ancient Greek system of biologic humors. Using these concepts, Ayurvedic physicians prescribe individualized treatments, including compounds of herbs or proprietary ingredients and diet, exercise and lifestyle recommendations (Sharma, 2014).

### History of Indian herbal medicine:

Indian medicine/material medica/herbal medicine (IM/IMM/IHM), also called Ayurvedic medicine/material medica (AYM/AYMM), belongs to the traditional health care and longevity systems. Because the belief that “everything can be a drug” is deeply rooted in Indian culture, Ayurvedic physicians made use of an extensive collection of medications, herbs/plants, even the urine of animals and described their effects meticulously. Currently, 70 per cent of Indians still rely on IM for their primary health care (*Rigveda*, <http://www.indianetzone.com>).

In India, the history of using plant resources for treating diseases can be dated back to 6,000 to 4,000 BCE, the Buddhist period. AYM has a vast literature in Sanskrit and various Indian languages, covering various aspects of diseases, therapeutics and pharmacy. The earliest references to such plants, minerals, and animal products with their usage for medical purposes are found in the *Rig veda*, an ancient Indian sacred collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns and the *Atharvaveda*, the fourth and last Veda of Hindu literature (Prasad, 2000). *Bhava Prakasha*, written by Bhava-Mishra, is the most important text on herbs/plants and is held in high esteem by modern Ayurvedic practitioners (Dev, 1988; Prasad

and Narayana, 2007 and Nagarjuna, 2013). The oldest text of AMM, the *Rasa Vaisesika* of Nagarjuna, who is considered the most important Buddhist philosopher after Buddha’s death (Ayurvedic medicine, 2013), was composed during the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE. In this text the various concepts of drug composition and action were described (Charaka Samhita, 2013). The *Charaka Samhita* is the first recorded treatise fully devoted to the concepts and practice of Ayurveda, with a primary focus on therapeutics (Singh and Vyas, 2012). In the *Charaka Samhita*, plant-derived drugs are divided into 50 groups according to their pharmacologic/therapeutic actions. The next landmark in Ayurvedic literature was the *Sushruta Samhita*. Although the text places special emphasis on surgery, it also describes 395 medicinal plants, 57 drugs of animal origin, and 64 minerals or metals as therapeutic agents (<http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in>).

India possesses almost 8 per cent of the estimated biodiversity of the world with around 126,000 species; there are about 400 families of flowering plants in the world, at least 315 of these can be found in India (Singh, 2006). Currently, about 45,000 species (nearly 20% of the global species) are found in the Indian subcontinent: 3,500 species of plants are of medicinal value; 500 medicinal plant species are used by the contemporary Ayurvedic industry; 80 per cent of the medicinal plant species are procured from wild areas and 10 per cent of medicinal plants involved in active trade are obtained from cultivation in farms (Baragi *et al.*, 2008). The western Himalayan region provides about 80 per cent of herbal drugs in Ayurveda, 46 per cent of Unani and 33 per cent of allopathic systems (Dev, 1997) 50 per cent of drugs recorded in the British Pharmacopoeia are related to medicinal plants growing in this region (Joy *et al.*, 2013). In India, approximately 25,000 plant-based formulations are used in traditional and folk medicines (Wakdikar, 2004). The number of plant species used in various IM is as follows: Ayurveda, 2,000; Siddha (a type of ancient traditional Indian medicine), 1,300; Unani (a system of alternative medicine first developed by the Islamic physician Avicenna in about 1025 CE), 1,000; homeopathy, 800; Tibetan, 500; modern, 200, and folk, 4,500 (Mukherjee and Wahile, 2006). More than 7,500 plant species are currently used in IM, including tonics, antimalarials, antipyretics, aphrodisiacs, expectorants, hepatoprotectants, antirheumatics, and diuretics (Kannappan *et al.*, 2011 and Kumar and Khanum, 2012),

**Table 1: Diseases cured by different herbal medicines**

Sr. No.	Name of disease	Disease curing properties of herbs
1.	Skin infections and allergies	<i>Aloe vera /Korphan / Ghrithumari, Amla (Embllica officinal is), Brajil wood / Pathang Bakkam Caesalpinia braziliensis, Castor/Rendi (Ricinus communis),Cateccu / kattha (Unsariagambir),Chebulic Myrobalan / Harad (Terminalia chebula),Chireta / Chirayata (Swertia chirayata),Cumin /Jeera (Cuminumcyminum), Flame of the forest / Kesu, Paksh, Dhak (Butea monosperma,GoldenChampa / Champa (Micheliachampaca), Guar Gum / Guar (Cyamopsistetra gonaloba), Henna / Mehndi (Lawsoniainermis),Hibiscus /Gurhal, Jasund (Hibiscus rosa-sinensis),Indian Basil / Tulsi (Odmum sanctum), Indian Gentian / Kalmegh (Andrographis paniculata), Indian Gooseberry / Amla (Embllica officinalis),Indian Madder / Madder (Rubiaccordifolia), Indian mulberry, Noni / Al (Morindacitrifolia), Indian Podophyllum / Bankakadi, Nirbash (Podophyllum, Emodi, Podophyllum hexandrum, Indian Senna / Senna (Cassia angustifolia),Indigo /Neel (Indigo feratinctoria), Lime /Nimbus (Citrus medica),Long pepper / Pippali (Piper longum), Mahua /Mahuva (Madhucalongifolia, Madhucaindica), Marigold / Genda, Zergul (Calendula officinalis),Margosa / Neem (Azadirachta indica ), Monkey face tree / Kamala, Kamela (Mallotusphilippinensis),Onion /pyaaj (Allium cepa), Peanut oil / Mungphali (Arachis hypogea),Pomegranate / Anar (Punicagranatum),Rose /Gulab (Rosa damascena, Rosa centifolia),Safflower / Kusum (Carthamustinctorius),Saffron / Kesar (Crocus sativas), Sandalwood / Chandan (Santalum album),The Indian laburnum / Amaltas (Cassia fistula),Tinospora / Gelqy (Tinosporacordifolia), Touch-me-not / Chhui-Mui, Lajwanti (Mimosa púdica),Turmeric/ Haldi (Curcuma longa), Woad Vat / Palash (Butea monosperma)</i>
2.	Hypertension/ Cardio-vascular diseases and stroke	<i>Anar (Punicagranatum),Arjuna / Arjuna (Terminalia Arjuna),Asian Ginseng, Basil (Ocimumbasilicum), Belleric myrobalan / Baheda (Terminalia belerica), Brajil wood / Pathang, Bakkam (Caesalpinia braziliensis), Chebulic myrobalan / Harad (Terminalia chebula),Ephedra, Fenugreek/ Methi (Trigonella -foenum- graecum), Guar Gum / Guar (Cjamopsis tetragonal),Harad (Terminalia chebula),Hogweed / Punarnava, Gadaliipuma (Boerhama different), Hawthorn,Indian Laburnum / Amaltas (Cassia fistula,Indian Mulberry, Noni / Al (Morindadrifolia),Indigo /Neel (Indigoferatinctoria),Licorice,Methi (Trigonella foenum-graecum),Myrobalan (Terminalia chebula),Onion / Pyaaj (Allium cepa),Periwinkle / Sadabahar (Catharanthus roseus. Vincarosea, Rose /Gulab (Rosa damascena, Rosa centifolia),Rosemary essential oil,Safflower / Kusum (Carthamus tinctorius), Saffron / Kesar (Crocus sativas),Serpiria / Sarpagandha (Rauwolfia serpentina),Small Caltrops/ Gokhru (Tribulus terrestris),Turmeric/ Haldi (Curcuma longa), Woad Vat/ Palash (Butea monosperma)</i>
3.	Diabetes	<i>Aloe vera / Ghrithumari (Aloe barbadensis),Bael Fruit / Bilva (Aegle marmelos,Bittergourd,Brajil wood / Pathang, Bakkam (Caesalpinibraziliensis),Champa flower (Magnolia champaca)Chireta / Chirayata (Swertia chirayata) ,Cucumber,Cumin / Jeera (Cuminumcyminum),Daruhaldi / (Berberisaristata),Fenugreek / Methi (Trigonella-foenum-graecum),Garlic,GoldenChampa / Champa (Micheliachampaca),Grape fruit ,Guar Gum / Guar (Cyamopsistetragonaloba),Hibiscus / Gurhal, Jasund (Hibiscus rosa-sinensis),Indian Basil / Tulsi (Odmum sanctum, Odmumbasilicum,,Indian Gentian / Kalmegh (Andrographis paniculata), Indian Gooseberry / Amla (Embllica officinalis),Indian mulberry, Noni / Al (Morindacitrifolia), Jamun / Jamun (Syzygium cumin), Mahua / Mahuva (Madhucalongifolia),Methi (Trigonella foenum-graecum),Mango leaves ,Margosa (Azadirachta indica) / Neem, Onion,Periwinkle / Sadabahar (Catharanthus roseus, Vincarosea),Parlane Shoe flower (Hibiscus rosa-sinensis),Tinospora / Geloy (Tinosporacordifolia,Touch-me-not / Chhui-Mui, Lajwanti (Mimosa púdica),Turmeric / Haldi (Curcuma longa)</i>
4.	Anaemia	<i>Aloe vera / Ghrithumari (Aloe barbadensis),BellericMyrobalan/ Baheda (Terminalia belerica),Chebulic Myrobalan / Harad (Terminalia chebula),Chireta / Chirayata (SwertiaChirayata),Golden Champa/ Champa (Micheliachampaca), Hogweed / Punamava, Gadaliipuma (Boerhaaviadiffusa),Turmeric/Haldi (Curcuma longa)</i>
5.	Sleep disorder (insomnia)	<i>Ashwagandha (Withaniasomnifera),Cuscus/Khus-Khus (Vetiver iaZizanoides),Lavender (Lvandula angustifolia Lavandula officinalis),California Poppy (Eschscholziacalifornica),Magnolia Bark (Magnolia officinalis),German Chamomile ( Matricariarecutita L.),Valerian (Valeriana officinalis),Passionflower (Passifloraincarnata)</i>
6.	Alzheimer` s disease	<i>Ashwagandha(Withaniasomnifera),Turmeric (Curcuma longa),Centellaasiatica, ,Macunapurriens, ,Cinnamon</i>
7.	Asthma	<i>Arjun (Terminalia arjuna),Basil (Ocimum basilicum), Erandi (Ricinuscommunis), Butterbur, Bromelain, Boswellia (Salaiguggal), Malabar nut (Adhatoda vasica Nees),, Vallipala (Tylophora indica), Myrobolon (Terminalia chebula),</i>
8.	Headache	<i>Sandal wood (Santalum album)</i>
9.	Leprosy	<i>Manjistha (Rubiaccordifolia)</i>
10.	Arthritis	<i>Curry leaves (Murrayakoenigii), Agathi (Sesbania grandiflora), Manjishta (Rubiaccordifolia)</i>
11.	Whooping cough	<i>Garlic, Ginger, Radish, Almond, Calamus</i>

as well as for the therapy of certain central nervous system disorders (Kulkarni *et al.* 2012 and <http://www.parentgiving.com>).

### Use of herbs as supplements:

Herbal medicine is used to treat many conditions, such as allergies, asthma, eczema, premenstrual syndrome, rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia, migraine, menopausal symptoms, chronic fatigue, irritable bowel syndrome, and cancer among others. It is the best way to handle herbal supplements under the guidance of a trained provider. For example, one study found that 90 per cent of people with arthritic use alternative therapies, such as herbal medicine.

### Conclusion:

Disease has been a leading cause of morbidity/mortality and it is associated with a heavy economic burden among people. People used to take allopathic treatment to prevent/cure various illnesses. Most medicines at present used are chemically synthesized and have lots of harmful side effects on the body. Herbal medicines are an integral part of Indian ancient culture and various kinds of herbal medicines have their own unique way of understanding and treating common ailments. In general, most of the herbal remedies are considered to be safe and are well tolerated because they have been successfully used for thousands of years as foods to promote health and as medicines to treat diseases. Recently, herbal medicines have become quite popular among masses due to its natural components and there seems bright potential of use of herbs as medicinal source for curing common health ailments among people.

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Authors' affiliations:

**Meenu Srivastava**, Department of Textiles and Apparel Designing, College of Home Science, Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture and Technology, Udaipur (Rajasthan) India

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