

Homeopathic Flora of Bilaspur District of Himachal Pradesh, India: A Preliminary Survey

Ajay K. Gautam and Rekha Bhadauria

School of Studies in Botany, Jiwaji University Gwalior, M.P. India

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Abstract

The present study was made in nine villages of Bilaspur district of Himachal Pradesh, a north Indian state known for its vast herbal flora. About 23 plant species belonging to 18 families used in the homeopathic system of medicine are highlighted in the present study along with their taxonomic description including botanical name, medicine name, plant part used and ailment against which the medicines are used. The collected plant specimens were identified, taxonomically defined and submitted to the herbarium for future records.

Key words: Homeopathy, medicinal plants, Bilaspur (HP).

Introduction

Homeopathy derived its name from the Greek words *homoios*, "similar" + *pathos*, "suffering" or "disease" is a form of alternative medicine first defined by Samuel Hahnemann in 1796 (abchomeopathy.com). Homeopathy came to India as early as 1810 when some German physicians and missionaries came to Bengal and started distributing homeopathic remedies. Dr. John Martin Honigberger and Hahnemann were recognised as the persons who have brought homeopathy to India. Dr. Honigberger arrived at Lahore in 1829–30, later on went to Calcutta and started practice there. This royal patronage helped the system to have its roots in India (Hpathy.com). Homeopathy is one of the alternative systems of medicines having a well documented pharmacopoeia (Ashvin and Mishra, 2007). About two percent of people in the United Kingdom and the United States using homeopathy in any one year while it is about fifteen percent in India, where it is considered part

of Indian traditional medicine. This system of medicines relies mainly on plants and mineral components as drug (Ashvin and Mishra, 2007). According to homeopaths, serial dilution, with shaking between each dilution, removes the toxic effects of the remedy while the qualities of the substance are retained by the diluent (water, sugar, or alcohol). The end product is often so diluted that it is indistinguishable from pure water, sugar or alcohol. Practitioners select treatments according to a patient consultation that explores the physical and psychological state of the patient, both of which are considered important to selecting the remedy (Hahnemann Samuel, 1833; Ernst, 2002 and Wayne et al, 2003).



Fig. 1 Map of study area (Source: Internet)

Himachal Pradesh, a hilly North- West Himalayan state, known for its wide diversity of plants. The state is situated at $31^{\circ}19'N$ latitude and $76^{\circ}50'E$ longitude. The total area of the district is 1.167 Sq. Km and average height of the area is 673 meters (map of India.com). Out of total 45,000 species found in country, 3,295 species are reported in state (Manisha Bhardwaj, 2006). District Bilaspur of the state also have wide diversity of flora. The maximum population of the district is resides in rural areas. They use folk methods to cure different diseases through folk herbal medicines. But, they are not much aware about the homeopathic uses of these folk herbal medicines. Keeping this aspect in view, we have

started a survey work on medicinal plants of district Bilaspur (H.P.) used in homeopathy system of medicine. The abundance of homeopathically useful herbal flora in the district attracted our attention to identify and highlight these herbal plants used in homeopathic system of medicine to cure diseases, so that awareness about their homeopathic importance could be enhanced and these rare medicines can be conserved.

Methodology

More than nine villages were visited during different time intervals to gather useful information about these plants. The collected specimens were identified, 23 important medicinal plants of homeopathy were selected with the help of available literature and discussion with the homeopathic practitioners. After their identification, a herbarium was prepared to preserve them under optimum climatic conditions before submitting them in herbarium records for future use. Herbariums of these plants were deposited in School of Studies in Botany, Jiwaji University, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh (India).

Enumeration

The plants were arranged alphabetically by their botanical name, family, medicine name and therapeutic potential.

1) *Achyranthes aspera* L. (Acanthaceae)

Common Name: Latjira, Aghada, Kutri, Apamarg.

Parts Used: Fruit juice

Medicine name: Achyranthes Aspera

Uses in Homeopathy: Diarrhoea, dysentery, diuretic, menorrhagia, astringent, bad effects of dog and snake bites and skin diseases.

2) *Adhatoda zeylanica* Medik. (Acanthaceae)

Common Name: Adusa, Vasaka

Parts Used: Whole Plant.

Medicine name: Justicia Adhatoda

Uses in Homeopathy: Headache and respiratory disorders.

3) *Aegle marmelos* (L.) Correa (Rutaceae)

Common Name: Beel, Belpatra, Shriphala, Bilwa.

Parts Used: Fruits

Medicine name: Aegle Folia

Uses in Homeopathy: Bleeding pills, diarrhoea, dysentery, fever with dropsy and impotence.

4) *Allium cepa* L. (Liliaceae)

Common Name: Onion, Piyaz

Parts Used: Fresh Bulb

Medicine name: Allium Cepa

Uses in Homeopathy: Cough and cold, injury, nasal polypus, diarrhoea, influenza, throat affection.

5) *Allium sativum* L. (Liliaceae)

Common Name: Garlic, Lahsun

Parts Used: Fresh Bulb

Medicine name: Allium Sativum

Uses in Homeopathy: Stomach, head, respiratory affection.

6) *Aloe- vera* L.(Liliaceae)

Common Name: Gwarpatha

Parts Used: Leaves

Medicine name: Aloe Socotrina

Uses in Homeopathy: Abdominal disorders, anal affection, colic, constipation, cough, dysentery, diarrhoea, haemorrhoids skin affections.

7) *Azadirachta indica* A. Juss. (Meliaceae)

Common: Name: Neem, Nimba, Margosa tree.

Parts Used: Whole plant and bark.

Medicine name: Azadirachta Indica

Uses in Homeopathy: Eczema, fever and stomachache, scabis, leprosy, helminthiasis, gonorrhoea, glossitis.

8) *Calotropis gigantea* (L.) R.Br. (Asclepiadaceae)

Common: Madar, Aak, Akauwa, Arka

Parts Used: Roots

Medicine name: Calotropis Gigantea

Uses in Homeopathy: Toothache, elephantiasis, purging, vomiting.

9) *Cannabis sativa* (L.) (Cannabaceae)

Common Name: Bhang, Ganja, Charas, American Hemp.

Medicine name: Cannabis Sativa

Parts Used: Whole plant

Uses in Homeopathy: Constipation, respiratory disorders, urinary affections, gonorrhoea.

10) *Centella asiatica* (L.) Urb. (Apiaceae)

Common Name: Brahmi

Parts Used: Juice

Medicine name: Hydrocotyle Asiatica

Uses in Homeopathy: Acne, eczema, uterus affection, elephantiasis, leprosy.

11) *Citrus vulgaris* Risso (Rutaceae)

Common name: Bitter orange

Parts used: fruit and fruit peel

Medicine name: Citrus Vulgaris

Uses in Homeopathy: Headache with nausea, vomiting and vertigo, facial neuralgias mostly right-sided, thoracic oppression, frequent and irresistible yawning.

12) *Cynodon dactylon* (L.) Pers. (Poaceae)

Common Name: Grandhi, Durva, Dub, Talla

Parts Used: Bukni, Juice.

Medicine name: Cynodon Dactylon

Uses in Homeopathy: Haemorrhage, dysentery, dropsy, leucorrhoea, Scabies

13) *Ficus benghalensis* L. (Moraceae)

Common Name: Banyan tree

Parts used: Hanging aerial roots

Medicine name: Ficus Indica

Uses in Homeopathy: Headache, respiratory disorders.

14) *Ficus religiosa* L. (Moraceae)

Common name: Peepal tree

Parts used: Tender leaf

Medicine name: Ficus Religiosa

Uses in Homeopathy: Headache, respiratory disorders, monorrhagia.

15) *Ocimum sanctum* L. (Lamiaceae)

Common Name: Tulsi, Shiva, Bharti, Krishna- mul.

Parts used: Seeds

Medicine name: Ocimum Sanctum

Uses in Homeopathy: Asthma, catarrh, tonsillitis, cold, ophthalmia neonatum, typhoid, worm affection.

16) *Ricinus communis* L. (Euphorbiaceae)

Common Name: Arand, Castor.

Parts Used: Seed and seed oil

Medicine name: Ricinus Communis

Uses in Homeopathy: The digestive system is the primary focus of this remedy. Typical symptoms treated include nausea, profuse vomiting, constipation. and diarrhoea.

17) *Solanum nigrum* L. (Solanaceae)

Common Name: Black night shade, Makoi

Parts Used: Whole plant

Medicine name: Solanum Nigrum

Uses in Homeopathy: Head, eye, nose, respiratory, fever, skin and stomach.

18) *Tinospora cordifolia* (Willd.) Miers ex Hook. And Thoms. (Menispermaceae)

Common Name: Giloy, Ninjara, Guluchu, Gulwali, Gharal

Parts used: Stem

Medicine name: Tinospora Cordifolia

Uses in Homeopathy: Seminal debility, fever, jaundice, splenic affections, leprosy, leucorrhoea, rheumatism, gonorrhoea.

19) *Vitex nigundo* L. (Verbenaceae)

Common Name: Nirgundi

Parts Used: Roots, root, flowers, leaves, bark

Medicine name: *Vitex nigundo*

Uses in Homeopathy: Abscess, alcoholism, anaemia, asthma, fever, heart affection, kidney, skin affection

20) *Mangifera indica* L. (Anacardiaceae)

Common name: Aam

Parts used: Seed, Bark

Medicine name: Mangifera Indica

Uses in Homeopathy: One of the best general remedies for passive hemorrhages, uterine, renal, gastric, pulmonary and intestinal. Rhinitis, sneezing, pharyngitis, and other acute throat troubles, suffocative sensation as if throat would close.

21) *Syzygium cumini* L. (Myretaceae)

Common name: Jambool

Parts used: seeds

Medicine name: Syzygium Jambolanum

Uses in Homeopathy: Diabetes mellitus and ulcer.

22) *Terminalia chebula* Retz. (Combretaceae)

Common name: Haritiki, Harara

Parts used: Fruits

Medicine name: Terminalia chebula

Uses in Homeopathy: Bleeding, pile, diarrhoea, chronic dysentery, constipation, biliary colic, glossitis, headache, vertigo, dropsy, skin disorders.

23) *Viola odorata* L. (Violaceae)

Common name: Banfasan

Parts used: fresh blooming aerial parts

Medicine name: Viola Odorata

Uses in Homeopathy: Head, eye, ear, urinary and respiratory disorders.

Conclusion

The present preliminary survey revealed that Bilaspur district of Himachal Pradesh (India) is rich in diverse medicinal flora used in homeopathic system of medicine. Unfortunately, rapidly increasing urbanization of the area posing a threat to this medicinal flora. Therefore, scientific cultivation,

conservation and sustainable utilization of plants by involving villagers would be highly beneficial in the conservation of these rare and endangered medicinally important species for the inheritance of this traditional knowledge to the coming generations.

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