

Herbal Remedies Used in the Treatment of Scorpion Sting and Snake Bite from the Malwa Region of Madhya Pradesh, India

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Abstract

Traditional medicine has a long history of serving people all over the world. Medicinal plants are an important element of indigenous medical systems in India as well as elsewhere. The ethnobotany and ubiquitous plants provide a rich resource for natural drug research and development. In recent years, the use of traditional medicine information on plant research has again received considerable interest. The circumstances under which the people lived- object poverty, disease and hunger combined with their curiosity towards their closed neighbour, the forest in which they lived and sought help in mitigating their woes and sorrows, must have been the essential factor in preserving their knowledge of herbs and usefulness to mankind. The present paper deals with the survey of 8 medicinal plant used in scorpion sting and snake bite by the aboriginal, tribal and non-tribal people of the Malwa region of India.

Key Words: Herbal medicine, Malwa region, tribals, scorpion sting, snake bite

Introduction

Herbal medicine also referred to as alternate medicine/traditional medicine, has been in use in India since time immemorial. Nearly 80% of the human population is reported to be dependent on plant-based medicines. These are not only used for primary health care not just in rural areas in developing countries, but also in developed countries as well where modern medicines are predominantly used. Though modern allopathic drugs have inundated the market in the present days but due to their side effects, peoples are attracted towards herbal medicines and their consumption thus increased (Seth et al., 2004).

Scorpion sting and snake bite are serious problems in tropical countries like India. The former may not be too dangerous, while the later can cause death. The tribal and non-tribal people prefer herbal treatment in scorpion sting and snake bite (Bakhru, 1999). There are few herbs which have magic and wonderful effects. It has been observed that a group of inhabitants called Sapera's have an excellent herbal remedies for this. Besides them, some other rural physicians have also adequate knowledge of herbs used in the treatment of these ailments and they whisper certain mantras during the courses of treatment (Dwivedi, 2004), although it has not been confirmed whether these utterings are effective or not. However the tribal and non-tribal people have deep faith

on these mantras and herbal remedies prescribed for the treatment of these ailments.

Methodology

The present survey was conducted in 5 study sites (Indore, Dewas, Ratlam, Mandsaur and Ujjain) in Malwa region, based on personal interviews between author and tribal & non-tribal peoples in formal discussion and observation. Systemic field trips of the study sites were made during the March 2008 to August 2008. Data regarding to herbal remedies were collected as per plan suggested (Varghese, 1996 and Dwivedi, 2003), specimens were discussed and identified with the help of floristic literature (Verma et al., 1995, Dwivedi S. 2008 and Oommanchan et al., 1996).

Observations

The herbal medicines used in scorpion sting and snake bite are discussed below;

For scorpion sting:

1. *Achyranthes aspera* L. (Chirchiri), family Amaranthaceae

Roots are crushed with 2 seeds of *Caesalpinia cristata* (gatayan) and externally applied on sting part. A sarbat made by 20gm root of this plant with 5 *Piper nigrum* (kali mirch) is also effective.

2. *Madhuca latifolia* Roxb. (Mahua), family Sapotaceae

Dried fruits with leaves of *Ipomea stramonium* (beshram) made into paste and applied on sting part.

3. *Martynia annua* L. (Bichhu), family Pedaliaceae

Seeds about 5 gm, soaked in the water and made paste, applied 2-3 times externally on affected area.

4. *Tamarindus indica* L. (Imali), family Combretaceae

Make a small incision on the site of scorpion sting and place the cotyledon over it. If poison are absorbed the patient get relief.

For snake bite:

1. *Eclipta alba* (L.) Hask. (Ghamira), family Asteraceae

About 20gm whole plant with equal part of root bark of *Holarrhena antidysenterica* (Kurchi) crushed and made into sarbat and drink.

2. *Moringa oleifera* Lamk (Munaga), family Moringaceae

Paste of fresh root is externally applied in the affected area and barks decoction is (25 ml) given orally.

3. *Rauwolfia serpentina* (L.) Kurra (Sarpagandha), family Apocynaceae

Spiral roots are crushed and made into a paste and applied on the bite part.

4. *Tephrosia purpurea* L. (Silpoka), family Fabaceae

About 50gm massive root grinded with 5 gm of *Piper longum* (peepar) and made into a paste by adding 2 teaspoonful honey and divided into 2 equal doses. Both doses are given at the interval of one hour.

Results and Discussion

The herbs used in the treatment of scorpion stings and snake bites are easily available, common and cheaper. The method of preparation and mode of action is also simple and convenient. The tribal and non-tribal people below poverty line can afford the treatment and their personal faith and belief gave encouraging result in the treatment. The plants used by the layman against scorpion stings and snake bites have been found to possess remarkable properties. The present paper gives detailed information on 8 plant species as herbal remedies for scorpion sting and snake bites by the tribal and non-tribal people of the Malwa region. The data indicates great importance of indigenous knowledge in therapeutic uses. One of the plant species, *Martynia annua* L., is an excellent remedy for scorpion sting. On the other hand, *Rauwolfia serpentina* (L.) Kurra and *Tephrosia purpurea* L., are excellent for the treatment of snake bites.

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