

ETHNOGYNAECOLOGICAL STUDIES OF SOME TRADITIONAL MEDICINAL PLANTS USED BY RURAL POPULATION OF PUNJAB

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ABSTRACT

Traditional system of medicine is catering to the medical needs of a major part of the global population. People show a significant inclination towards the use of traditional medicines for the cure of a variety of ailments. All over the world, reproductive health problems are increasing at an alarming rate. Women especially of rural areas are reluctant to disclose their gynaecological problems easily. However, they rely upon the traditional remedies for the cure of most of their health problems related to menstrual cycle, Leucorrhoea, pregnancy, child birth, infertility or sexually transmitted diseases etc. Ethnogaecology is emerging as a reliable approach to deal with the various issues related to women's health. During the present study, 65 plants of ethnogaecological importance have been documented. Majority of these plants are herbs used in the form of powder, juice or decoction etc. The local inhabitants, especially older ones and traditional healers possess a great knowledge regarding the use of such plants. However, detailed study for the safety and efficacy of these folk medicines is required for the proper utilization of the plant resources. A huge potential exists to explore the curative properties of these plants through pharmacological and clinical research.

Keywords: Ethnogaecology, Gynaecological problems, Pharmacological, Reproductive health problems, Sexually transmitted diseases, Traditional medicine.

I. INTRODUCTION

According to an estimate by WHO, approximately, 80% of the world population rely upon the traditional medicinal system for the cure of various diseases [1]. Traditional medicinal system has been catering to the health needs of large number of people since ancient times. Ethnomedicinally important plants are used in the cure of both the acute as well as chronic ailments. During last few decades, this system faced some set back, especially among the literate and urban people due to advent of modern systems of medicine [2]. However, due to some reliability, lack of access to the modern health facilities or economic reasons, this system of medicine is quite popular in the rural areas or some remote areas of the world. It would be inappropriate to say that use of herbal medicines is re-emerging as a major health aid in the urban areas as well due to their almost nil side effects [3]. Plants have been used to cure a number of ailments since times immemorial [4].

In modern day world, human beings suffer from a variety of diseases and disorders affecting their physical, mental and social health. The problems related to the reproductive health are of major concern. Sexual and



reproductive health problems account for approximately 18% of the total global burden of diseases and 32% of it is due to the diseases and disorders among the women of reproductive age group [5]. Women folk suffer from a number of ailments related to their reproductive health. Problems related to menstrual cycle, pregnancy, leucorrhoea, infertility, lactation, child birth, post delivery complications and urinary tract infections are commonly reported. Sexually transmitted diseases like Gonorrhoea and Syphilis are also quite common and lead to even death in some cases due to lack of proper treatment [6]. Due to ignorance or some social stigmas associated with these, some times these health problems are not disclosed to the physician and may prove fatal to the female's health. It has been observed that issues related to one's reproductive health are regarded as some taboo and people, especially of rural areas generally do not approach to the doctors. However, at the same time it is also observed that majority of the rural population rely upon the folk and traditional medicines for the cure of problems related to the reproductive health. Local traditional healers like Syanas, hakims or vaidyas possess a vast knowledge regarding the ethnomedicinally important plants and the same is generally transferred to the next generations as well.

India, due to its climate conditions and geographical position is bestowed with a variety of flora. A large number of plants with medicinal properties known to mankind are growing here. Punjab is one of the most prosperous state of India, located in the North east part of the country. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people. Majority of the people are living in rural areas. The local inhabitants depend upon local traditional healers for the cure of most of their ailments. Such local traditional healers are well acquainted with various plants and their uses. Even some of the local inhabitants also possess ethnomedicinal knowledge.

A large number of workers have reported the use of traditional medicinal plants for the cure of gynaecological problems from the different parts of the globe time to time [7-15]. In India also, various workers conducted ethnomedicinal studies of plants used in the treatment of gynaecological problems. Tiwari reported the use of medicinal plants for cure of gynaecological problems even in Medieval India [16]. Behara documented the plants used for cure of female diseases from Mayurbhanj distt. of Orissa [17]. Patel studied the prevalence of dysmenorrhoea among the females of Goa [18]. Yadav et al studied use of folk medicinal plants for treatment of gynaecological disorders from rural areas of Haryana [19]; Vidyasagar et al studied traditional herbal remedies for female diseases from the Bidar distt. of Karnataka [20]; Shukla et al studied indigenous medicines for the purpose of female health problems from Chhattisgarh [21]; Tripathi et al studied use of plants for cure of gynaecological problems by tribal people of Madhya Pradesh [22]; Panduranga et al studied use of traditional medicines by tribal women of South India [23]; Das et al conducted studies on the use of medicinal plants for treatment of sexually transmitted diseases [24] and other gynaecological problems [25] from West Bengal; Gupta et al studied use of folk remedies by the tribal women of Simalwara region, Dungarpur, Rajasthan [26]; Rekha et al documented the ethnomedicinal plants used by tribal women of South Eastern Ghats of Tamil Nadu for the cure of female health disorders [27]. There are also a number of other reports of ethnomedicinal studies for the plants used as folk medicines from the different parts of the country [28-35]. However, very little literature pertaining to the use of ethnomedicinal plants for the treatment of gynaecological disorders is available as available from the study area i.e. Punjab state, though majority of its rural population rely upon the medicinal plants for the cure of various health problems including gynaecological problems. Various gynaecological

health problems are commonly prevalent among the females of the area. Keeping this in view, the present study was commenced as an effort to fill the lacuna.

II .MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted during 2014-2016. During the study period, regular and exhaustive forays were made to the study area i.e, rural areas of the Punjab state (Fig. 1). Local people of different age groups and different literacy levels (TABLE 1) including traditional healers like syanas, vaidyas or hakims were interviewed to investigate the ethnomedicinal plants used by them for the cure of gynaecological problems including sexually transmitted diseases and infertility. To make the knowledge more systematic a semi structured questionnaire was prepared. Most of the conversation was in local language as majority of the people using traditional folk medicines were either the elders of the area or illiterate ones. It was observed that mostly knowledge regarding the medicinal plants was available to the common man, while in certain cases, specific remedial knowledge was with some traditional healers only and the same has been inherited from one generation to the another. The informants including both the local inhabitants and the traditional healers were asked for number of questions regarding the plant source, its part used and mode of administration of the remedial preparation. During the study period, various plants were collected, dried and preserved following proper methodology. Identification of the collected plants of ethnogynaecological importance was done with the help of flora of Punjab and other suitable literature. It was observed that most of the plants of ethnomedicinal importance are growing in wild.



FIG.1: Showing study area

TABLE 1. –Showing demographic details

Variable	Demographic category	Percentage
Sex	Male	37.3%
	Female	62.7%
Age	25-40 years	20.4%
	40-60 years	28.6%
	61-75 years	30.2%
	Above 75 years	20.8%

Literacy level	Illiterate	38.2%
	Primary pass	26.6%
	Secondary pass	24.8%
	Graduate or more	10.4 %

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the present study, 65 plants falling under 63 genera and 47 families were reported and the same have been documented in the form of a table (TABLE 2). Majority of the plants used in the treatment of gynaecological disorders are herbs (42%), followed by trees (30%), shrubs (25%) and climbers (3%) (Fig. 2). The documented plants are dicots as well as monocots. It was noticed during the study that some of the plants are used for one particular type of gynaecological disorder, while others are used in the treatment of more than one type of ailment. Majority of the folk medicines were reported to be used for the treatment of Menstrual disorders like amenorrhoea, dysmenorrhoea, oligomenorrhoea etc. Various plant parts used include leaves, bark, roots, flower or fruits. Different modes of administration such as powder, decoction, infusion etc are prescribed. Powder preparations are either administered with plain water, honey or cow's milk. Dosage depends upon the severity of the problem. Plant preparations are administered either solely or in combination with some other ingredient like honey, desi ghee, black pepper etc. Traditional medicines generally show no side effects, however, certain precautions are advised in some cases for achievement of better results.

TABLE 2. Plants used in the traditional treatment of various Gynaecological problems.

S.No.	Botanical Name	Common Name	Family	Habit	Part Used	Gynaecological Disorder/s
1.	<i>Abutilon indicum</i>	Kanghi	Malvaceae	Herb	Roots	Leucorrhoea
2.	<i>Acacia Arabica</i>	Kikkar	Mimosidae	Tree	Bark, Gum	Dysmenorrhoea, Leucorrhoea
3.	<i>Achyranthus aspera</i>	Puth kanda	Amaranthaceae	Herb	Roots	Menstrual Problems, Relieves labour pain
4.	<i>Adhatoda vasica</i>	Vasaka	Acanthaceae	Shrub	Leaves	Leucorrhoea, Painful and irregular periods
5.	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>	Bael	Rutaceae	Tree	Fruits	Menstrual disorders, Gonorrhoea
6.	<i>Aloe vera</i>	Ghrit Kanwar	Liliaceae	Shrub	Leaves	Menstrual problems, Hot flashes
7.	<i>Asparagus officinalis</i>	Shatawari	Liliaceae	Herb	Roots	Infertility, Dysmenorrhoea, Leucorrhoea
8.	<i>Asclepias syriaca</i>	Dhudhi	Asclepiadaceae	Shrub	Flowers, Roots	Dysmenorrhoea, Menorrhagia

9.	<i>Artemisia annua</i>	Vilyati Afsantin	Asteraceae	Herb	Leaves, Flowers	Irregular and painful periods, improves fertility
10.	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Neem	Meliaceae	Tree	Leaves, Fruits, seeds	Dysmenorrhoea, Uterine haemorrhage, infertility, Gonorrhoea
11.	<i>Bacopa monerii</i>	Brahmi	Scrophulariaceae	Herb	Whole plant	Menstrual disorders, Improves lactation, Gonorrhoea
12.	<i>Bauhinia variegata</i>	Kachnar	Caesalpinioideae	Tree	Bark, Flowers, Fruits	Oligomenorrhoea, Leucorrhoea
13.	<i>Boerhaavia diffusa</i>	Punarnava	Nyctaginaceae	Herb	Leaves	Menstrual problems
14.	<i>Bombax ceiba</i>	Simal	Bombacaceae	Tree	Bark	Dysmenorrhoea, Leucorrhoea, for easy delivery
15.	<i>Butea monosperma</i>	Dhak/ Palash	Fabaceae	Tree	Bark, Leaves	Painful menstruation, Cleans uterus after miscarriage
16.	<i>Bryopsis laciniosa</i>	Shivlingi	Cucurbitaceae	Climber	Flowers, fruits	Infertility, Pain during pregnancy
17.	<i>Cassia fistula</i>	Amaltas	Caesalpinioideae	Tree	Bark, Fruits	Menstrual problems, Leucorrhoea
18.	<i>Cassia glauca</i>	Chhotta Amaltas	Caesalpinioideae	Herb	Leaves	Oligomenorrhoea
19.	<i>Chenopodium ambrosoides</i>	Baathu	Chenopodiaceae	Herb	Leaves	Reduces menstrual pain, Oligomenorrhoea, dysmenorrhoea
20.	<i>Chlorophyton arundinaceum</i>	Safed Musli	Liliaceae	Herb	Roots	Menstrual disorders, Leucorrhoea
21.	<i>Citrullus colocynthis</i>	Kaud tumba	Cucubitaceae	Climber	Roots	Painful menstruation, For easy delivery
22.	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>	Doob	Poaceae	Herb	Leaves	Irregular and painful menstruation
23.	<i>Cyperus rotundus</i>	Nagarmotha	Poaceae	Herb	Leaves	Dysmenorrhoea, improves lactation
24.	<i>Dalbergia sisso</i>	Shisham	Fabaceae	Tree	Bark	Leucorrhoea, Gonorrhoea

25.	<i>Desmodium trifolium</i>	Khatti booti	Fabaceae	Herb	Leaves	Improves lactation
26.	<i>Diospyros melanoxylon</i>	Tendu	Ebenaceae	Shrub	Root, flower, fruit	Leucorrhoea, Infertility
27.	<i>Emblia officinalis</i>	Amla	Euphorbiaceae	Tree	Fruits	Menstrual disorders, Gonorrhoea, Leucorrhoea, improves lactation
28.	<i>Euphorbia hirta</i>	Chhotti dudhi	Euphorbiaceae	Herb	Leaves	Dysmenorrhoea
29.	<i>Ficus benghalensis</i>	Bohr	Moraceae	Tree	Fruits,Roots	Infertility,Menstrual disorders, Leucorrhoea
30.	<i>Ficus religiosa</i>	Peepal	Moraceae	Tree	Bark, fruits,roots	Dysmenorrhoea, Gonorrhoea, improves lactation,Prevents miscarriage
31.	<i>Feronia elephantum</i>	Kaith	Rutaceae	Tree	Fruits	Leucorrhoea, Menstrual problems
32.	<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	Saunf	Apiaceae	Herb	Whole plant	Irregular and scanty periods, improves lactation
33.	<i>Gloriosa superb</i>	Kalihaari	Liliaceae	Climber	Roots	Leucorrhoea, Pregnancy
34.	<i>Gossypium herbaceum</i>	Kapah	Malvaceae	Shrub	Roots, Seeds	Amenorrhoea, dysmenorrhoea, As abortifacient
35.	<i>Hemidesmus indicus</i>	Anantmul	Asclepiadaceae	Shrub	Roots, leaves	Leucorrhoea, Syphilis
36.	<i>Ixora coccinea</i>	Lal phul	Rubiaceae	Herb	Leaves	Irregular periods
37.	<i>Lawsonia inermis</i>	Mehndi/Heena	Lythraceae	Shrub	Roots, Leaves	Dysmenorrhoea, Leucorrhoea
38.	<i>Mangifera indica</i>	Aam	Anacardiaceae	Tree	Roots, Leaves, Seeds	Menstrual problems, Gonorrhoea, Leucorrhoea
39.	<i>Moringa oleifera</i>	Shahjan	Fabaceae	Tree	Roots, Fruit, seeds	Lecorrhoea, Gonorrhoea ,Syphilis, Menstrual problems
40.	<i>Nyctanthes</i>	Haar-	Oleaceae	Tree	Leaves,	Amennorrhoea, painful

	<i>arbor-tris</i>	Shingaar			fruits	periods
41.	<i>Ocimum sanctum</i>	Tulsi	Lamiaceae	Shrub	Roots, leaves, seeds	Painful and scanty periods, improves lactation, relieves post delivery pain
42.	<i>Opuntia dillenii</i>	Chhittar- thor	Cactaceae	Shrub	Roots, fruits	Gonorrhoea, menstrual problems
43.	<i>Polyalthea longifolia</i>	Ashok	Annonaceae	Tree	Roots, bark	Menstrual disorders, Leucorrhoea, gonorrhoea
44.	<i>Pedallium murex</i>	Bada Gokhru	Pedaliceae	Herb	Roots, fruits	Leucorrhoea, Amenorrhoea, dysmenorrhoea
45.	<i>Plumbago indica</i>	Chhatawar	Plumbaginaceae	Shrub	Roots	As abortifacient
46.	<i>Pueraria tuberosa</i>	Jangli Ratalu	Fabaceae	Shrub	Roots	Increases breast size, Improves lactation, relieves post menopausal symptoms
47.	<i>Rauwolfia serpentine</i>	Sarp gandha	Apocynaceae	Shrub	Roots, Bark	Promotes uterine contractions during child birth, Prevents uterine bleeding
48.	<i>Ricinus communis</i>	Arind	Euphorbiaceae	Shrub	Roots, Seeds	Relieves constipation during pregnancy, painful periods
49.	<i>Salvia officinalis</i>	Sage	Lamiaceae	Herb	Roots, leaves	Menstrual problems
50.	<i>Seasum indicum</i>	Til	Pedaliaceae	Herb	Seeds	Oligomenorrhoea, as abortifacient
51.	<i>Sida cordifolia</i>	Kharenti	Malvaceae	Herb	Leaves	Gonorrhoea, Painful periods,
52.	<i>Smilax pertifolia</i>	Ram datun	Liliaceae	Climber	Roots	Leucorrhoea, Uterine tonic
53.	<i>Szygium cuminii</i>	Jamun	Myrtaceae	Tree	Bark, fruit, seeds	Oligomenorrhoea, relieves pain ful periods
54.	<i>Tamarindus indica</i>	Imli	Fabaceae	Shrub	Roots, fruit, seeds	Relieves post partum pains
55.	<i>Tecomella</i>	Ruhera	Bignoniaceae	Climber	Bark	Prevents excessive

	<i>undulate</i>					bleeding during menses
56.	<i>Terminalia arjuna</i>	Arjun	Combretaceae	Tree	Bark	Menstrual disorders, Gonorrhoea, Leucorrhoea, Improves lactation, post partum haemorrhage
57.	<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>	Gokhru	Zygophyllaceae	Herb	Roots, Fruits	Leucorrhoea, Aphrodisiac
58.	<i>Trichodesma indicum</i>	Chhotta Kulpha	Boraginaceae	Herb	Roots	Irregular periods, Prevention of miscarriage
59.	<i>Trifolium pretense</i>	Gau-ghas	Fabaceae	Herb	Leaves	Relieves Pre menstrual syndrome(PMS), Hot flashes during menopause, breast tenderness
60.	<i>Vitex negundo</i>	Nirgundi	Verbenaceae	Shrub	Leaves	Dysmenorrhoea
61.	<i>Withania sominifera</i>	Ashwagandha	Solanaceae	Shrub	Roots, bark	Menstrual disorders, relieves PMS, leucorrhoea
62.	<i>Xanthium strumarium</i>	Chhotta datura	Asteraceae	Herb	Roots, fruits	Menstrual disorders, Leucorrhoea, expulsion of after birth
63.	<i>Zea mays</i>	Makki	Poaceae	Herb	Tender grains	Improves lactation
64.	<i>Zingiber officinale</i>	Adrak	Zingiberaceae	Herb	Rhizome	Menorrhagia, relieves PMS, Nausea and vomiting during pregnancy
65.	<i>Zizyphus mauritiana</i>	Ber	Rhamnaceae	Tree	Leaves, roots, fruits	Dysmenorrhoea, oligomenorrhoea, Infertility

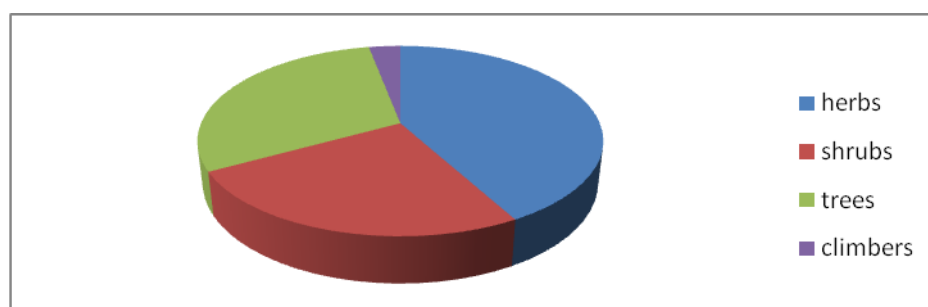


fig.2- showing diversity in habit of documented plants

IV. CONCLUSION

Traditional herbal medicines are of much help in the treatment of various gynaecological disorders. Such treatments are relied upon by a large number of people, especially, the females of the rural areas, which have either inadequate or no access to the medical facilities. More over due to certain norms in the society, womenfolk in the rural areas hesitated to seek medical aid in case of reproductive health problems. A number of traditional medicines have been used for centuries for the treatment of various gynaecological disorders. Presently, ethnomedicinal knowledge regarding various plants is declining due to increasing trend of other systems of medicine. In most of the cases, the knowledge regarding the traditional and folk remedies is generally restricted either to the elders of the area or some traditional medicine practitioners only. Younger generations have comparatively little information regarding the plant resources in the area and their medicinal uses. However, presence of certain valuable phytochemicals in certain plants used for the cure of various gynaecological disorders provide a promising approach. Efficacy and safety of the ethnomedicinally important phytochemicals can be assessed during further pharmacological studies for better future prospects. Such efforts will not only be helpful to provide safe, cheaper and effective cure for various ailments, but also boost up of socio-economic status of the local inhabitants and conservation of valuable natural plant resources.

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