

THE HOLY BASIL – “TULSI”

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, the world's oldest medical system, undoubtedly, focuses on preserving/promoting health and preventing/ curing diseases by following healthy life- style regimens, which highlights the holistic approach of Ayurveda. The use of culinary and medicinal herbs in Ayurveda draws attention towards the incredible bio-diversity of our country. One such herb used is the wonder drug-“Tulsi”, the holy basil. It is almost grown all over the world. In our country, it has a special honour and is planted and worshipped in almost every Hindu family. The plant and its medicinal value has been known from time since vedic period. The herb because of its matchless pharmacological

actions can fight physical, chemical, metabolic & psychological stress & is also protective to various organs & tissues. Tulsi bears properties like anti -oxidant, anti- depressant, anti-microbial & thus of its broad spectrum actions, it is indeed a drug of great significance & value.

KEYWORDS: Tulsi, *Occimum sanctum*, Holy basil, *Dosha*, Ayurveda.

INTRODUCTION

Science and industry both have flourished by leaps & bounds, but the world at the same time has been burdened with many life style disorders like Diabetes Mellitus, HTN, Obesity, Stress, Insomnia etc. To all these issues, Ayurveda paves a holistic path towards living & leading a healthy life. Through the holistic approach of Ayurveda people are being benefitted by the use of many different medicinal herbs. One such herb of “wonders” is Tulsi – *Occimum Sanctum*. Studies on this herb, using forced- swimming, restraint and cold-

exposure stress in laboratory animals have shown that tulsi enhances aerobic metabolism, improves swimming time, reduces oxidative tissue damage and normalizes many physiological and biochemical parameters caused by physical stressors. Apart from this, experimental studies have shown that tulsi helps reduce the effects of acute and chronic noise-induced stress in experimental animals, with enhancement of neurotransmitter and oxidative stress levels in discrete brain regions along with improved immune, ECG and corticosteroid responses.^[1,2,3,4]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. *Ayurvedic* texts were taken for Literary study.
2. Other literary review was done from authentic research journals, websites, and digital publications etc.
3. The obtained subject and data through literary study were analysed logically.

DRUG INFORMATION

Tulsi belongs to Labiatae Family, Botanical Name: *Occimum sanctum*. It is also commonly called as Tulsi, Holi basil.

The whole plant, usually dark purple coloured, has small - fragrant leaves, seeds usually flat-red, the plant measuring around 1-2 feet high.

Types: White Tulsi, Black Tulsi (best in regards with its properties), Vana Tulsi/ Wild Tulsi, Rama Tulsi, Kappori / Camphor Tulsi (camphor is extracted).^[9]

Chemical composition

The plant contains pale, yellow- green essential oil which becomes crystalline over a period. It is called basil camphor. Besides also contains.^[6] Eugenol & beta Cayophyllene, Bornyl acetate, beta Elemene, Methyl eugenol, Nerol, beta- pipene alpha – pipene, campesterol ursolic acid, stigmasterols.^[5]

Parts used

Leaves, root & seeds. Leaves becomes less potent after few days, hence should be used before they get dried.^[5]

Properties

Properties (*Guna*): *laghu* (light), *ruksha* (dry)

Taste (*Rasa*): *katu* (pungent), *tikta* (bitter)

After taste (*Vipaaka*): *katu* (pungent)

Potency (*Veerya*): *ushna* (hot)

The seeds are *snigdha* (unctuous)- *picchilla* (sticky)- *sheeta* (cold).^[5]

Action on *Doshas*^[7,8]

It reduces (*nashak*) *kapha-vata doshas* (*bioenergies of body*) and increases (*vardhak*) *pitta* (*bioenergy of life*).

DISCUSSION ON THE MEDICINAL VALUE OF TULSI

(1) **In Nervous system:** it helps fight stress and thus helps in balancing the mind, emotions, nerves etc, decoction is used in improving memory, helpful in Alzheimer, alcohol- brain syndrome^[9] etc.

(2) **In Digestive system**^[6]: helps to maintain digestive *agni* (fire)/ appetizer, increases bile secretions, useful in acidity, constipation, gastric problems, abdominal pain, intestinal Worms, its Anti Microbial Effects^[10,14] inhibits the growth of *E. coli*. Tulsi, is a remover of worms and parasites, when the fresh juice or strong tea is taken with honey; the sweetness excites the parasites drawing them out of their hiding places. Very useful in jaundice along with juice of raddish and Jaggery.

(3) **In Respiratory system:** helps to protect the entire respiratory tract disorders, maintains health of throat, chest, lungs, regular use helps curing cough, cold, respiratory diseases.^[7,8]

(4) **Tulsi And Swine Flu:** Doctors have postulated yet another benefit of tulsi that it can help prevent and also decreases the severity and duration of the swine flu. Dr. U.K. Tiwari, a herbal medicine practitioner comments, the anti flu property of tulsi has been discovered by medical experts across the world quite recently. Overall defence mechanism is improved in the body including viral diseases fighting ability. Its efficacy in combating Japanese Encephalitis and swine flu has also been proved. Tulsi increases the speed of recovery process and strengthens the immune system of the body.^[10,11]

(5) **In Circulatory system:** It is a cardiac stimulant, blood purifier, anti- inflammatory. Therefore used in cardiac- debility, *vata- kapha* disorders of blood & in inflammation.^[6,12]

(6) **In Uro- genital system:** It helps relieving burning sensation in urine, pain due to renal-calculi, it is a di-uretic, strengthens renal – functions, seeds help increasing potency, roots help in strengthening- thickening semen, improves sperms' quality.^[9]

(7) **In cutaneous diseases**^[12]: Beneficial results in diseases due to vitamin A-C deficiencies, its contents like vitamin C, carotene, calcium, phosphorus helps keeping skin, healthy and supple, removes blood- impurities, thus cures eczema, ring – worm infections (along with lemon), helps curing leprosy too.^[6]

Tulsi because of its anti- oxidant properties, is a skin- *rasayan*, helps building body – immunity, fights fever, free radicals as well. Thus plays important role in various diseases, helps delaying aging as well.

Tulsi is also known as *Apeta- rakshasi*, because of its properties of keeping the environment disease and insect- free.^[5] Tulsi has also been used in cities to combat air pollution and hundreds of thousands of tulsi plants have been planted around the Taj Mahal in Agra to help protect the iconic marble building from environmental pollution damage.^[13]

CONCLUSION

Research works done on the herb Tulsi has shown a broad usage in many psychological and physiological problems and has proved the authenticity of knowledge given in Hinduism and Ayurveda, where Tulsi is worshipped, indicated for internal use for medicinal and spiritual purposes within daily life. Hence, Tulsi can be considered as a nectar, in the present scenario where life style related chronic disorders are considered as the major cause of death & disease.

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