

**GREEN HERBS AS NATURAL HEALERS****<sup>1</sup>\*Nisreen Husain and <sup>2</sup>Touseef Hussain Trak**<sup>1</sup>Department of Zoology, Govt. Dr. W.W.P. Girls' P.G. College. Durg. (C.G.).<sup>2</sup>Department of Botany, Govt. Degree College, Bhadarwah (Jammu & Kashmir).Article Received on  
10 Jan. 2018,Revised on 01 Feb. 2018,  
Accepted on 22 Feb. 2018

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr20185-11338

**\*Corresponding Author****Dr. Nisreen Husain**Department of Zoology,  
Govt. Dr. W.W.P. Girls' P.G.  
College. Durg. (C.G.).**ABSTRACT**

A large variety of plants and herbs growing around us in our surrounding environment have been known for their medicinal importance since ages. Such medicinal plants have been the basis of traditional medicinal system, and also constitute a major part in modern drugs. Many of them are used for flavor and their nutritive value in our food as 'Green herbs' and 'Spices'. Amongst these, the green herbs can be easily grown in our kitchen gardens or as indoor plants. Hence, are easily available for the immediate use. Their remarkable ethno-medicinal uses owe to their therapeutic value that

makes them the unique 'Natural Healers' in curing of many ailments. The present review emphasizes on the medicinal importance of some of the commonly used 'Green Herbs' from the Indian cuisine.

**KEYWORDS:** Herbs, Health, Healers, Medicine.**INTRODUCTION**

Plants have always been the most richest natural resources for human beings since ages. Besides providing the basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing, plants have been utilized as traditional medicines, and also form the basis of modern pharmaceuticals. Medicinal plants and their natural products represent more than 50% of all the drugs in clinical use in the world today. Amongst such plants, the small, bushy, and leafy species, known as 'Herbs' are the most commonly used plants. The herbs are considered as any small plant-trees, bushes, and herbage that might be utilized for delight, scent, flavor, and for some of their chemical constituents with therapeutic activities. The herbs as herbal formulations and home remedies have always been the common domestic mechanism of 'Nature Cure' of many diseases, infections and early aging. It includes the medicinal virtues of all the fresh or dried herbs,

either as in its original green form, or as the spices, that are usually available in domestic kitchens, constituting the so-called ‘Grandma’s Remedies’ or Dadima’s Nuskas’. (Cragg and Newman, 2005; Samuelsson, 2004; Nisreen *et al.*, 2015; Manchish, 2018).

### **Herbs and Green herbs**

A ‘Herb’ is a plant, green and fragrant, and fit to eat. However there are also a few herbs that are not sweet-smelling and may be unpalatable. Herbs are seed producing small plants that does not develop persistent woody tissue, and dies down at the end of a growing season. In a nutshell, ‘herbs’ are the plant themselves, or plant parts used for their appetizing sweet-smelling flavours and therapeutic quality. Hence the herbs are used either as ‘Herbal Medicines’ in the treatment of illness, or added to the food during or after cooking as the flavouring agents or appetizers.

The herbs which are leafy and fresh are called ‘Green herbs’. These are usually eaten fresh and in large quantities, the best ones being Basil, Dill, Mint, and Parsley. Green herbs are used in raw condition unlike other herbs such as Oregano or Thyme. They are effective with more health benefits than the dried herbs or spices. Green herbs contain varying amounts of carotenoids, insoluble fibers, and an array of vitamins and minerals.

The green, soft parts of the green herbs, in the form of shoots and foliage, are used in food for fragrances and flavor, but not with much cooking. They are usually added post-cooking. Besides having culinary uses, the green herbal parts can also be applied externally as paste on body parts to relieve stress and infections. The antioxidant properties and pharmacological actions of Green herbs, attribute them their medicinal values for curing various ailments. Hence the ‘Green Herbs’ are known for their efficacy as ‘Naturals Healers’. (Verschaeve and Staden, 2010; Takayama *et al.*, 2017).

### **Some of the Important ‘Green Herbs’**

Some of the important ‘green herbs’ from Indian kitchens known for their medicinal value are as follows.

#### **1. Coriander**

*Coriandrum sativum* is another commonly used Indian herb. Fresh leaves and dry seeds are used almost daily in Indian homes to flavor different curries, soups, ‘dals’ and vegetable preparations. It is commonly known as ‘**Dhaniya Patti**’ or ‘**Kotmir**’. (Photoplate, A: 1).

### **Medicinal and Healing Virtues**

Fresh juices of coriander leaves are beneficial in the treatment of digestive disorders, like dysentery, hepatitis and colitis. Coriander leaves strengthen the stomach and promotes its action, also relieve flatulence and increase discharge of urine. Dry seeds are beneficial in the treatment of piles, intestinal worms and acidity. Fresh leaf juice, mixed with banana, is effective to relieve small pox infections. Dry seeds of coriander are powerful cholesterol lowering food. A decoction boiled with water, stimulate the kidneys, and thereby bring down cholesterol level. Seeds are effective in the treatment of excessive menstruation. Juice extracted from the fresh leaves, mixed with a pinch of turmeric powder, is an effective remedy for pimples, blackheads and dry skin. A 'chutney' made from coriander leaves, green chillies, grated coconuts and ginger, is considered as an effective home remedy for abdominal pain due to indigestion. (Bakhru, 2001; 2011).

## **2. Mint**

*Mentha arvensis*, commonly known as 'Podina' in India, is used extensively in Indian cooking. In olden days, it was believed that *Mentha*, the damsel lover of God, Pluto, was transferred into this herb due to the anger of wife of Pluto and Goddess of wealth. Therefore, mint is commonly known as 'Mentha' in Latin. The leaves have a strong, pungent odour and taste mildly bitter. (Photoplate A: 2).

### **Medicinal and Healing Virtues**

Mint is valued as a stimulant which relieves flatulence and forms an ingredient of most drugs prescribed for stomach ailments. It is a good remedy for liver disorders, and helps dissolve gravel in the kidneys and bladder. Mint leaves are excellent appetizer. Fresh leaf-juice helps in relieving the problems of indigestion, threadworms and morning sickness. Mint is an anti-diarrheal food. Fresh mint juice, mixed with lime juice and honey is good in the treatment of diarrhoea. Tuberculosis, asthma and bronchitis are cured with fresh mint juice, mixed with some amount of pure malt vinegar and equal quantity of honey stirred in carrot juice. Mint tea is effective in spasmodic dysmenorrhea or painful menstruation in young girls. In Ayurveda, powdered mint is regarded as a harmless herb for birth control. Skin infections, dryness and pimples are cured with the mint juice applied externally over the affected areas. Insect stings, eczema and contact dermatitis are also relieved with mint. Fresh leaves of mint, chewed daily, kills all the harmful odour-causing germs in mouth. Tooth decay and gum problems are also soothed through mint leaves. Gargling with fresh mint decoction and salt is

beneficial in the treatment of hoarseness in voice. It keeps the voice clear if used before singing. (Bakhru, 1998).

### 3. Curry leaves

*Murraya koenigii*, is a beautiful aromatic perennial shrub which is usually grown as a backyard tree in Indian homes. It is an evergreen shrub with many arching branches and dense foliage. The leaves of this tree are called 'Curry leaves' and are divided into numerous leaflets (Photoplate A: 3).

#### Medicinal and Healing Virtues

Curry leaves are used as a herbal tonic and also as a mild laxative. They are effective against digestive disorders like nausea, morning sickness and vomiting due to indigestion. Little quantity of fresh juice of leaves are mixed with some lime juice and honey is the best remedy. Leaf paste along with buttermilk taken on empty stomach is also very effective. Infusion of tender leaves is beneficial in treating diarrhoea, dysentery, vomiting and piles. Curry leaves are useful for diabetes, and the roots are valuable in relieving pain associated with the kidneys. Fresh leaves taken regularly are helpful in prevention of premature graying of hairs, and healthy hair roots. Curry leaves as poultice are effective when applied over the burns, bruises and skin eruptions. Fresh juice of curry leaves instilled in the eyes is good for vision.

### 4. Fenugreek herb

*Trigonella foenum-graecum* also known as 'Kasoori Methi' in Hindi, is an essential part of Indian herb and spices. It is used in food not only for enhancing its taste, but it also provides some prevention health benefits. In medicine, it helps to treat all these diseases. The leaves and seeds of the Fenugreek plant are widely used in Indian cuisine. The herb has been traditionally used in Ayurvedic compositions as a moisturizer, specially formulated to hydrate dry skin. (Photoplate A: 4).

#### Medicinal and Healing Virtues

Fenugreek is bitter in taste and increases lactations, soothes tissues which are irritated, stimulates uterus, reduces fever, blood sugar, improves digestion, improves relieving capacity and works as an expectorant, diuretic, laxative, anti-tumor and anti-parasitic effect. The sprouts of fenugreek are useful in promoting hair-growth in men. It works effectively in painful menstruations, in improving lactation in nursing mothers. Men related problems like painful testicles, premature ejaculations and loss of libido are relieved with the help of

fenugreek. Fenugreek is mostly used for weight reduction, poor appetite and anorexia. It is used in Chinese medicine to relieve kidney related pain such as back ache. Hernia and edema of legs is also relieved with fenugreek. In Indian traditional medical system, Ayurveda, it is used as an aphrodisiac, for rejuvenation, bronchial and digestive complaints, arthritis and gout. Fresh fenugreek leaves are cooked as a curry and the dried leaves are used for flavoring the dishes. The sprouts of the seeds are used in salads. Fenugreek is used for relieving ulcers, eczema, boils and cellulite. It is a proven fact that by consuming fenugreek cholesterol can be balanced. Fenugreek is effective in relieving type 2 diabetes. Seeds of Fenugreek contain mucilage which helps in soothing gastrointestinal inflammation. It coats the lining of intestines and stomach. Hence it works effectively against acid reflux and heartburn. (Fu *et al.*, 2013).

## 5. Basil

*Ocimum basilicum*, also known as 'Sweet Basil' or 'Tulsi', is a very common plant of India. Indians hold a widespread belief, that if 'Tulsi' is planted around homes and temples, it would ensure happiness and positivity. (Photoplate A: 5).

### Medicinal and Healing Virtues

A decoction of tender leaves, either with ginger and white pepper, or when boiled with powdered cardamom in some amount of water, act as a preventive for malaria and dengue fever. Pounded leaves with sandal wood paste can be applied on the forehead to relief headache. Leaf juice can be used as ear-drops to cure hearing dullness and ear-ache. Decoction with honey and ginger is an effective remedy for bronchitis, asthma, cough and cold. Bowel disorders, nausea and vomiting are relieved with the infusion of green leaves. Genito-urinary system disorders and bladder infections are cured with the seeds of the herb, when mixed with water and jaggery or honey. Sun-dried and powdered leaves, if used for brushing the teeth, relieves tooth pain, foul smell and pyorrhea. Ringworm and other skin infections are cured by applying externally the basil leaf juices. Chewing of few basil leaves prevents stress, as the leaves are regarded as strong anti-stress agents. (Bakhru, 1998; Linsiya, 2017).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Medicinal plants and herbs are rich in phytonutrients and antioxidants. These phytochemicals are responsible for therapeutic and pharmacological actions, and hence they are utilized as medicines or drugs. Native practices and traditions passed down orally, have enabled human

beings to eventually adopt many of the herbal remedies, that were the only source of nature cure in ancient time (Gurib-Fakim, 2006; Karim *et al.*, 2011).

The fresh green herbs possess rich nutritive value for which they are much more preferred than dried herbs or spices. Coriander is rich in minerals, fats, proteins, fibers, carbohydrates, and vitamins. Iron and carotene are present in large amounts. Coriander seeds contains volatile oil, which is made up of hydrocarbons and oxygenated compounds. Mint contains plenty of vitamins and is rich in several minerals. Also it has high nutritive contents such as proteins, fats, fibers, carbohydrates, carotene, thiamine, vitamin C and vitamin D. Peppermint oil is prepared from it. Curry leaves are high with moisture, minerals and vitamins. Carbohydrates and fibers are also present in sufficient quantities. The rectified curry leaf oil and the fruits oil are also obtained. Fenugreek herb's leaves and seeds, both are rich in resin, mucilage and albumin, besides proteins, minerals, carbohydrates and vitamins. The herb also contains choline, essential oil, saponin, volatile oil and bitter extractive and amino acids. Basil is rich in protein, fats, fibers, carbohydrates and chemical components such as phosphorous, sodium and potassium. It has high amount of vitamins such as niacin, riboflavin and ascorbic acid. Basil is good commercial sample that contains volatile oil. Coriander is rich in minerals, fats, proteins, fibers, carbohydrates, and vitamins. Iron and carotene are present in large amounts. (Bakhru, 1998, Rupam Bharti *et al.*, 2012).

Herbs are once again staging a comeback nowadays, and herbal 'renaissance' is happening all over the globe. The herbal products today are considered more safe in contrast to the synthetics that are regarded as unsafe to human and environment. Although the herbs are valued for their medical, flavoring and aromatic qualities for ages, the modern drugs and synthetic products have surpassed their importance in the modern era. However, the awareness has the use of toxic products, and have gradually inclined towards the use of naturals. Thus, the commonly used herbs in Indian homes, not only act as appetizer and flavouring agents, but also constitute the significant components of herbal drugs. The green herbs with rich nutritive and pharmacological values, are the most easy and ready to use home remedies as Natural healer from the Indian cuisine. (Newman *et al.*, 2005; Kirtikar and Basu, 2001; Linsiya, 2017; Basch 2017).



1. *Corriandrum sativum*



2. *Mentha arvensis*



3. *Murraya koenigii*



4. *Trigonella foenum-graecum*



5. *Ocimum basilicum*

**Photoplate A: Some of the Important Green Herbs of Medicinal Value**

**REFERENCE**

1. Bakhru H K (1998). Herbs that Heal. *Orient paperbacks*, New Delhi.
2. Basch M (2017). Herbs and Dietary Supplements Information. A book.

3. Cragg G M and Newman D J (2005). Biodiversity: A continuing sources of novel drug leads. *Pure Appli. Chem*, 77(1): 1-93.
4. Fu D L, Lu L, Zhu W, Li J H, Li H Q, Liu A.J, Xie C, Zheng G Q (2013). *Xiaoxuming decoction for acute ischemic stroke: a systematic review and meta-analysis*. *J. Ethnopharmacol*, 148: 1-13.
5. Gurib-Fakim A (2006). Medicinal plants: Tradition f yesterday and drugs of tomorrow. Review article. *Mol Asp Med*, 27(1): 7-24.
6. Karim AM, Nouman S, Munir Sattar (2011). Pharmacology and phytochemicals of Pakistani herbs and herbal drugs used for treatment of diabetes. *Int J Pharmacol*, 7: 419- 439.
7. Kirtikar KR, Basu BD. (2001). *Indian medicinal plants with illustrations*. Ed 2, Vol. 2, Oriental enterprises Dehradun.
8. Linsiya patrao (2017). Common Indian Herbs to grow in your kitchen. *Livespace.com*.
9. Manchishi SM (2018). Recent advances in Antiepileptic Herbal Medicines. *Ingenta connect*.
10. Newman D J, Cragg G M and Snader K M (2003). Natural products as sources of new drugs over the periods 1981-2002. *J Nat Prod*, 66(7): 1022-1037.
11. Nisreen H and Bhawana P (2015). Ethno-medicinal uses and pharmacological actions of some of the Domestically used Indian Spices- A review. *Indo Am J Pharm Res*, 5(12): 3892-3895.
12. Richard Schulze. (2003). *Healing Liver and Gallbladder Disease Naturally*. Santa Monica, California: Natural Healing Publications.
13. Rupam Bharti, Ganja Ahuja, Sujana Ganpathy PS, Shruthi Shirur Dakappa (2012). A review on medicinal plants having antioxidant potential. *J pharmacy Res*, 5(8): 4278-4287.
14. Samulelsson G (2004). *Drugs of natural origin: a textbook of pharmacology*, 5<sup>th</sup> Swedish pharmaceutical press, Stockholm.
15. Takayama S, Kaneko S, Numata T, Kamiya T, Arita R, Saito N, Kikuchi A, Ahsawa M, Kohayagawa Y, Ishil T (2017). Indian Culinary Herbs. *Am J Chin Med*, 45(7): 1345-1364.
16. Verschaeve, L., Van Staden, J. (2010). *In vitro cytotoxic and mutagenic evaluation of thirteen commercial herbal mixtures sold in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*. *S. Afr. J. Bot*, 76: 132-138.