

Indian Herbal medicine: A quick review

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Abstract:

With the onset of deleterious consequences of allopathic medicines, alternate surrogates for curing ailments are inevitable. Tens and thousands of US dollars are annually spent on drug prospecting. Global companies are now focusing on addressing the negative consequences of modern medicine. With the growing impetus in alternate form of medicines people are now banking upon herbal remedies that have been forgotten long time back. Falling in both the categories of codified and non-codified doctrines, herbal medicines are some of the finest practices of medicine in India. This review is an attempt to march on the historic legacy of Indian herbal medicine, current interests and the way ahead.

Introduction:

Lord Dhanvantari has been considered as the pioneer in advocating herbs and other natural products in codified system of Ayurveda. Dating back to the pre historic times the role of herbs in medicine has been widely quoted in Vedas. Sage Patanjali; who gave the ashtangayoga sutras, also highlighted the use of natural remedies for human well-being. Charaka and Shushrutha have been considered as few of the stalwarts in Indian codified medicine and surgery. Charaka Samhitha and Shushrutha Samhita are some of the oldest treatises that propound the importance of herbs in Ayurveda (1). Following the footsteps of these legendary figures several herbal practitioners have established unique places in the history of Ayurveda. Medicinal plants with their unique signatures of chemical compositions have a time-tested place in even non codified prescription of aboriginal, folk and grandma medicine.



Lord Dhanvantari Statue at Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Prashanti Nilayam



Ayurvedic herbal medicine practice in India (Adopted from <https://www.ancient-origins.net>)

Herbal medicines: A Reality or Speculation?

It is no wonder if somebody asks this rhetorical question. With the mass exaggeration to ground realities, herbal medicines face contemporary challenges of evidence-based science. With the societies having prejudices and science being empirical, developing proof of the concept is the most ardent expectation of the critics. Pharmacological studies

have validated the efficacy of some of the herbal medicines. Despite the progress in experimental pharmacology, herbal formulations leave sufficient room for improvement in empirical evidence. The reason for this being various chemical moieties in the formulations work in tandem and show their efficacy. Such chemical moieties may fail to express the same efficacy in their pristine forms. Leading class small molecule drugs that are used in allopathic medicines however behave otherwise the way herbal medicines do. This phenomenon of synergistic effect of chemical species has been exploited in traditional medicine (2).

Ethno medicines: the future of Indian herbal medicines:

Indian subcontinent is blessed with topo-geographic regions that are clearly demarked with anthropological outlook. Many aboriginal communities use herbs as primary source of medicine even in these modern times. Though neglected to a great degree, ethno medicine in India has been brought to mainstream research by many ethno-biologists (3). Ethnomedicine belongs to the non-codified system. But of late biologists started seriously documenting these invaluable practices of the aboriginal and folklore. With the adverse side effects of modern medication, alternate forms of medicine have been much sought after in contemporary world.

References:

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