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Medicolore of Herbal Vendors in North Maharashtra in the Perspective of Contact (Touch) Therapy

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Abstract
The present authors tapped down medicolore of herbal vendors in North Maharashtra region. The vendors were interviewed on various public places and in indifferent periods. The data regarding their name of plant or plant part, disease treated, period of treatment, etc. were enquired during field studies. Botanical determination was carried out using various floras. As many as 12 species pertaining to 11 genera and 11 families have been documented as employed for contact therapy Scientific validation of these use-reports are obviously needed for the welfare of mankind.

Keywords: Contact Therapy, Ethnomedicine, North Maharashtra.

Introduction

The term 'Ethnobotany' was defined for the first time by Harshberger (1885). This science in the present period denotes the entire realm of useful traditional relationships between mankind and plant-wealth. Although the elements of ethnobotanical studies are replete with the works of Acosta (1578), Van Rheede (1678-1693) and Garcia da Orta (1563), organized ethnobotanical researches in India are initiated after Indian independence. Dr.E.K.Janaki Ammal (1956) first studied native food resources in South India. She lit the lamp of 'Scientific Indian Ethnobotany' by starting 'Ethnobotanical Section' at the Central Botanical Laboratory, B.S.I., and Allahabad in 1960. In northern part of Maharashtra state, Patil and his associates inventorised some districts on this line (Patil and Patil, 2006; Pawar and Patil, 2008; Patil *et al.* 2011). However, investigations on medicolore of herbal vendors remained untouched. The present authors tapped their traditional medicinal knowledge in this region particularly in Dhule, Nandurbar, Jalgaon, Buldhana and Nasik districts (Map-I). Herbal vendors carry on their farm business at public places on various occasions or periods. The main objective of this communication is to focus on their medicinal knowledge with particular emphasis on contact (touch) therapy.

Methodology Adapted

The herbal vendors conduct their business of selling botanicals of medicinal importance on various public places near railway stations, bus-stands, cross-roads (chowk), highways, temples, Govt. offices or pilgrim centres, etc. We interviewed them tapping down the information w.r.t. plant name, part used, medicinal recipe, doses, method of administration, precautions if any and name of disease to be treated. The botanicals were purchased and identified using national, state, regional and district floras (Hooker, 1872-1887; Cooke, 1958; Naik, 1988; Sharma *et al*., 1996; Singh *et al*., 2000, 2001; Patil, 2003; Kshirsagar and Patil, 2008). This communication particularly projects the botanicals employed in contact (touch) therapy as advised by the herbal vendors. The data accrued is presented in the Table-I.

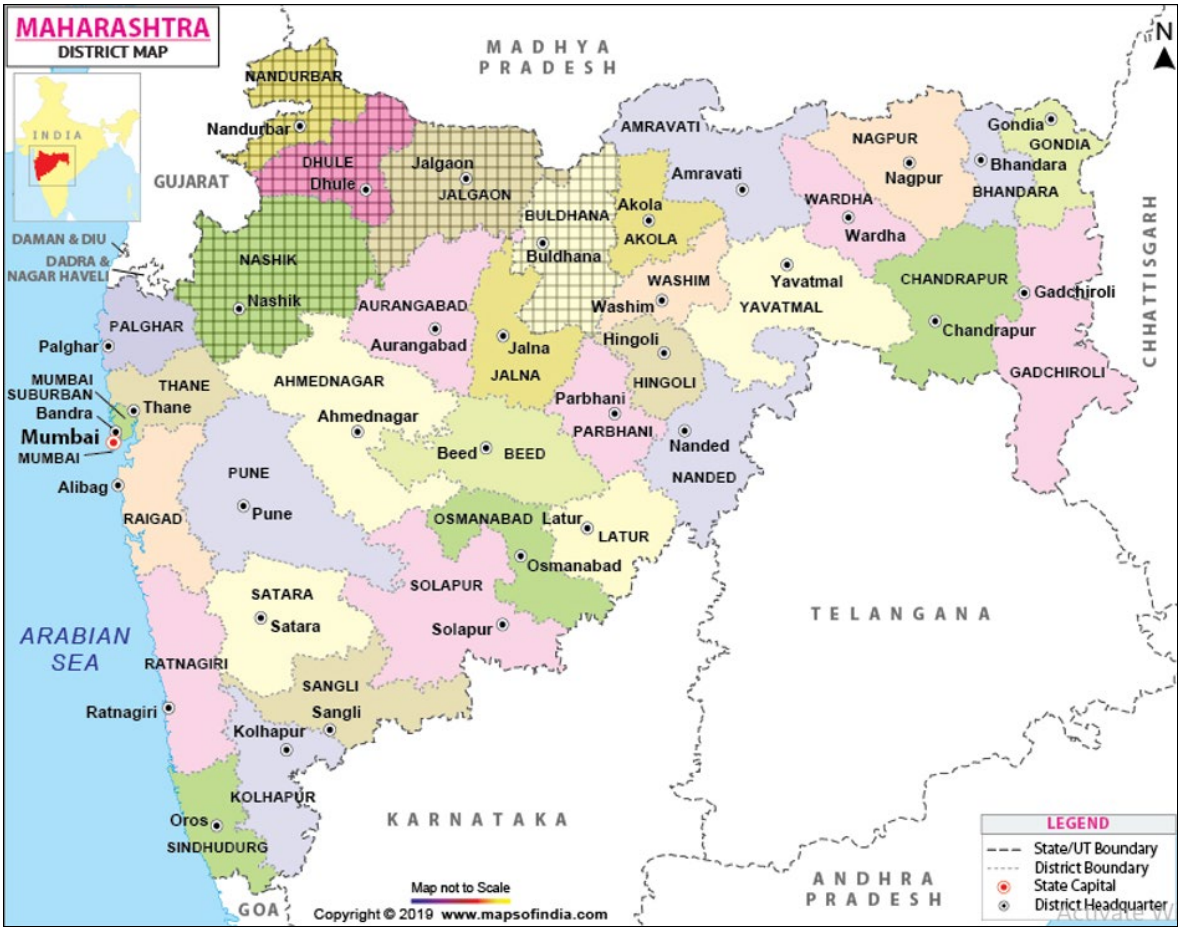

Fig 1: Map showing Nasik, Jalgaon, Dhule, Nandurbar and Buldhana districts in Maharashtra.

Table 1: Plants Used In Contact Therapy

S No.	Plant Name	Part Used	Application
1	Cucumis melo L. var. agrestis Naud.	Fruit	Placed on cloth tied on limb pain
2	Datura innoxia L.	Leaves	Tied on legs to cure cramp of legs
3	Erythrina variegata L.	Roots	Roots are tied around waste for safe delivery
4	Helicteris isora L.	Fruit	Necklace of fruit placed around neck keep baby healthy
5	Kirganelia reticulata (Poir.) Baill.	Stem bark	Tied around neck reduce miserliness
6	Phoenix sylvestris (L.) Roxb.	Fruit	Tide around forehead in black string partial head-ache
7	Phoenix pusilla Gaertn.	Fruit	Tide around abdomen against complaint of hydrosil
8	Tamarindus indica L.	Flowers	Kept on eyes at night to cure swelling
9	Terminalia crenulata Roth	Stem bark	Tied around waist to get relief from back-ache
10	Uraria picta (Jacq.) Desv. ex DC.	Entire plant	Tied in piece of cloth and applied on forehead to cure fever
11	Ventilago madraspatana Gaertn.	Seeds	Seeds are woven in a string and tied around neck to treat chicken-pox
12	Yucca aloifolia L.	Inflorescence, Stem bark	Pieces tied around neck to control blood pressure

Results and Discussion

During our ethnomedicinal investigation, total 12 species belonging to 11 genera and 11 families of angiosperms were recorded as employed in contact therapy advised by the herbal vendors in North Maharashtra. Various parts such as roots, stem-bark, leaves, flowers, fruits, seeds and even entire plants were suggested. These, in their opinion, help cure human diseases e.g. limb pain, cramp, child delivery, healthiness, miserliness, head-ache, fever, chicken-pox and blood pressure. The plant parts are made to touch the body parts or organs e.g. limbs, legs, waist, neck, forehead, abdomen, eyes, etc. During investigations on contact therapy, as a part of general ethnobotany in North Maharashtra, certain plant species have been recorded earlier. Pawar and Patil (2008, 2012) reported 17 species pertaining to 14 families combating various human afflictions. Likewise, Patil *et al*. (2011) also recorded 20 plant species. However, the plant species and diseases documented are different from those of the present account. Studies on this line have been also extended by Mishra (2017) in East Nimar (Madhya Pradesh), Jadhav (2008) in Ratlam district (Madhya Pradesh), Sen and Behara (2007) in Bargarh district (Orissa), Peter (1996) in Chotanagpur (Bihar) and Punjani (2002) in Sabarkantha (Gujarath). The cross-cultural studies indicated that the species and diseases recorded are quite different from the present accounts. Jadhav (2018) also studied the Sanskrit script *viz*., Garuda Purana and revealed nine plant species on this line, which are also different. The herbal vendors and informants expressed overall satisfactory results of such treatments. The traditional knowledge of the herbal vendors and the belief and satisfaction of informants appear noteworthy. Obviously, the botanicals suggested in contact

therapy contain certain medicinal contents. During their touch to human body parts, these contents may be diffusible and enter general surface of human body or organs or they may release some volatile compounds. Although so, these may appear conjectural and hence need to be validated through phytochemical, pharmacological and clinical investigations for the welfare of mankind.

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