

PLANT-BASED POWER: EXPLORING THE THERAPEUTIC POTENTIAL OF HOME REMEDIES

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ABSTRACT

Nature has provided humanity with several boons, such as food, water, and shelter, among which medicinal plants stand as an extra advantage. Numerous narratives exist that delineate the therapeutic properties of certain plant species. An attempt has been made to document home remedies used by rural residents in the Amritsar district. The study included 120 respondents, and the Simple Random Sampling technique was used for the purpose of data collection. A semi-structured interview schedule was prepared, and for the analysis of the data, only the statistical technique of percentage was used. The current analysis highlights the faith of respondents in the curative powers of home remedies, underscoring the need to preserve them for future generations.

Keywords: Health, home remedies, minor diseases, nature, self-healing.

INTRODUCTION

“Nature is a great healer.”

“Walk in nature and feel the healing power of the trees.” (Anthony William)

These statements effectively encapsulate the therapeutic properties of nature. The natural world has an inherent enchantment. In his work, Kusinitz (1996) highlights the significance of plants and recounts an anecdote about a teacher of folk medicine who instructed his pupils to locate a plant within an expanse of eight square miles that lacked any medical properties. Following an extensive search, the students subsequently returned and conveyed that their efforts yielded no evidence of a plant devoid of medicinal properties. The responses impressed the teacher, who remarked that you are now qualified to enter the medical field.

India has an abundance of medicinal flora. The montane area, the sub-montane region, the northern plains, and the dry region are the four principal regions in northern India that have been well-known for herbal treatments since antiquity (Shah, 1982). There are allusions to their plethora of therapeutic uses in ancient Indian literature. People learned numerous medicinal practices by trial and error. The arrangement and discipline of medical knowledge systems were a result of civilizational growth. Effective medicinal practices were categorised under ancient medical systems, including ayurveda, unani, siddha, and herbal medicine. Traditional medical practices saw a drop in popularity as modern medicine became more widely used and individuals started looking for fast fixes for their health issues. Exactly as Gerald Brom (1965) said, "every good thing comes at a price." Despite its ability to provide quick comfort, allopathic medicine eventually became known for its negative side effects (Dharmuche, 2018).

Both certified and uncertified practitioners in India observe the practice of traditional medicine. According to Kurup (2001), there are four distinct categories of practitioners seen in different regions: non-institutionally qualified traditional practitioners, institutionally qualified practitioners, tribal healers, and graduates of modern medicine who possess a belief in the ayurvedic practices. They claim that there is no disease without a cure and that all of the medications they offer are wholly natural and free of any harmful ingredients. Ayurveda also claims that whenever an individual has any ailment, the corresponding remedy may be

found within their local surroundings. Belief in the therapeutic efficacy of traditional medicine practitioners often contributes to successful healing outcomes.

Traditional methods of medicine are not only used by both professional and non-professional practitioners but also by laypeople who employ home remedies as a means of treatment. A wide array of commonly used home remedies is prevalent among laypeople for addressing many common health ailments, such as cough, cold, headache, burns, wounds, boils, ulcers, fever, skin problems, and similar conditions. These cures have been passed down through previous generations and continue to be embraced by individuals due to their association with experiential knowledge and cultural customs.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study is primary in nature and conducted in the rural areas of Amritsar district, Punjab. Out of these nine blocks, four were selected randomly: Jandiala, Majitha, Rayya, Tarsika. A total of 24 villages, six from each block, were selected through a simple random sampling technique. In all, the study included 120 respondents. Simple random sampling technique and interview method were used to collect the information.

ANALYSIS

SELF-HEALING THROUGH HOME-BASED MEDICINE

Table 1.1

Home remedies followed by respondents

S. No.	Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	93	77.05
2.	No	27	22.05
	Total	120	100.00

As evident, of the total 120 respondents, 93 affirmed that they follow home remedies for minor health problems, including colds, coughs, fevers, sneezing, nausea, abdominal pain, etc. On the contrary, a meagre 27 respondents disaffirmed following home remedies, neither for minor nor for major health problems. The above description highlights the faith of respondents in the curative powers of home remedies. A list of home remedies and methods of preparation is listed below:

Table 1.2

A list of home remedies

S. No.	Name of disease	Home remedies and methods of preparation
1.	Cough, Cold and Sneezing	1. To prepare the infusion, boil 6-7 bay leaves in one cup of water for two minutes over low heat. Once the water volume reduces by half, carefully drain the liquid and consume it consistently for a period of seven consecutive days. It is not recommended to provide this medicine to those under the age of fourteen. 2. In order to mitigate symptoms associated with a cold and cough, people consume a mixture consisting of one tablespoon of dry coriander powder and half a tablespoon of dry coconut powder. 3. For colds and sneezes, mix two pinches of black pepper with

S. No.	Name of disease	Home remedies and methods of preparation
		one teaspoon of ginger essence and consume for 3–4 days. 4. An herbal beverage is made by combining ginger, clove, black pepper, and holy basil leave and is subsequently consumed three to four times daily.
2.	Nausea, abdominal pain and headache	To prepare the solution, put 5 grammes of crushed ginger in a half cup of water. Warm the mixture for two minutes, then strain it. It is recommended to consume 3–4 sips of this solution on a daily basis until the desired recovery is achieved.
3.	Joint inflammation and diabetes	To prepare a turmeric-infused milk beverage, begin by measuring one-fourth spoonful of turmeric. Proceed to roast the turmeric until it reaches a reddish hue. Subsequently, combine the roasted turmeric with half a glass of milk. Warm the mixture for a duration of two to three minutes, ensuring it is heated adequately, and then consume it.
4.	Obesity	To prepare a cumin infusion, it is recommended to immerse one tablespoon of cumin in a glass of hot water and let it steep overnight. Subsequently, the mixture should be brought to a boil for two minutes, followed by straining. The resulting infusion is best sipped while still warm.
5.	Abdominal pain and burning	1. Soak one tablespoon of dried coriander overnight, drain the mixture, and consume it. 2. One cup of carom seeds should be boiled in one cup of water until half of the liquid has evaporated, then the mixture should be consumed. 3. Make a paste using half a spoonful of asafoetida and one tablespoon of water, then apply it around the child's navel.
6.	Chest congestion	1. In the context of children who are six months old, it is recommended to provide a mixture of ground nutmeg and honey for oral consumption. 2. For adults, combine two pinches of nutmeg with a half-glass of milk and drink. Nutmegs are advised to be consumed only in the winter.
7.	Leucorrhoea	1. Drumstick leaves may be consumed fresh or after being boiled three or four times a day. 2. Every day for 20 or 21 days, one should drink aloe vera juice with jaggery.
8.	Constipation	1. Combine isagbol husk powder with lukewarm water and consume prior to bedtime. 2. People who experience constipation also consume <i>Gulkand</i> .
9.	Dengue fever	1. To enhance the platelet count, it is recommended to take papaya leaf extract 2-3 times daily. 2. Boil 2-3 stems of the Giloy plant in water and consume it at a moderately warm temperature. 3. Consuming fresh goat milk is claimed to rapidly enhance platelet counts.
10.	Menstrual Cramps	Herbal teas containing ginger, carom seeds, and fennel are consumed as it helps in reducing inflammation in the body.

S. No.	Name of disease	Home remedies and methods of preparation
11.	Vomiting	1. Lemon juice is consumed by mixing salt and sugar. 2. To alleviate this issue, one consumes a mixture of powdered basil leaves and coriander seeds combined with honey.
12.	Anaemia	Fenugreek seeds should be immersed in a glass of water for night, and the resulting water should be consumed on an empty stomach in the morning.
13.	Burning	For treating burns, aloe vera gel and potatoes are crushed together and applied as a paste to the injured area. In some cases, coconut oil is also applied for fast recovery.
14.	Itching	In cases of itching, a combination of camphor, coconut oil, neem oil, and lemon juice are applied.
15.	Body aches	For the treatment of body pains, a mixture of grinded cloves and garlic mixed with mustard oil is applied.

Table 1.3
Source of information

N=93*

S. No.	Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	From generation to generation	40	43.01
2.	Internet	31	33.33
3.	Television	11	11.83
4.	Reading material	11	11.83
	Total	93	100.00

*N= 93 because the remaining 27 respondents do not use home remedies.

The above table reveals the source of information regarding home remedies. The majority of respondents, that is, 43.01 percent, revealed that past generations are the major source of information. The Internet emerged as a second major source of information, as stated by 33.33 percent of the respondents. Further, an equal number of respondents, that is, 11.83 percent, reported that they get knowledge about home remedies from television programmes and reading material, including newspapers and books.

Table 1.4
Stage of illness

N=93*

S. No.	Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	In the beginning	71	76.34
2.	In the end	22	23.66
	Total	93	100.00

*N= 93 because of 27 non applicable responses

It is clear from the above table that the majority of respondents (76.34 percent) preferred home remedies in the beginning, whereas 23.66 percent of respondents used home remedies in the end to supplement the recovery.

Table 1.5
Reported reasons to follow home remedies

*N=93

S. No.	Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Cost effective	33	35.49
2.	Easy to find	15	16.13
3.	No side effects	22	23.65
4.	Culturally proven effective	23	24.73
	Total	93	100.00

*N= 93 as they only use home remedies

Table 1.5 enumerates the reasons to follow home remedies. Primarily, cost effectiveness as the major reason for following home remedies is reported by the majority of the respondents (35.49 percent). Another 16.13 percent of respondents opined that it is easy to find the ingredients used in home remedies. No side effects and culturally proven effective as reasons to follow home remedies were reported by almost an equal majority of the respondents (23.65 percent and 24.73 percent, respectively).

Table 1.6
Proved effective or not

N=93*

S. No.	Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	63	67.74
2.	No	05	5.37
3.	To an extent	25	26.89
	Total	93	100.00

*N = 93 due to 27 non-applicable responses

The distribution in the table above shows that the majority of the respondents, that is, 67.74 percent, reported that home remedies have proven efficacious in mitigating the symptoms associated with various illnesses. On the other hand, 26.89 percent of respondents opined that these were helpful to some extent. Lastly, an insignificant proportion of respondents, that is, 5.37 percent, stated that home remedies did not work in their cases.

Table 1.7
Recommendations to others

N=93*

S. No.	Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	45	48.39
2.	No	48	51.61
	Total	93	100.00

*N = 93 because of 27 negative responses.

The above table clearly indicates that almost half of the respondents (48.39 percent) confessed that they recommend home remedies to others, while the other half, that is, 51.61 percent, denied the same.

CONCLUSION:

In a nutshell, natural folk medicine still holds a strong foothold and continues to win the confidence of the masses. There has been a notable comeback in public interest in traditional systems of medicine after a period of setbacks attributed to concerns around their safety and reputed efficacy in providing enduring remedies. Past generations formed the major source of information regarding home remedies for the studied people. The majority of the respondents affirmed that they have followed home remedies for minor health problems, including colds, coughs, fevers, sneezing, abdominal pain, etc., and have proven effective in mitigating the symptoms associated with various illnesses. There is a strong need for documentation and further research in this field to avoid the erosion.

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