



Psychomedicinal plants of District Udhampur, Jammu and Kashmir, India

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Abstract: People of Udhampur district in Jammu and Kashmir have been traditionally using many medicinal plants for the treatment of different psychological disorders and mental illnesses. These plants are also used in different religious practices like sorcery, rituals and ceremonies since time immemorial. Extensive and intensive field survey carried out during the period of 2017-2021 and found that there are 27 plant species are being used by local inhabitants for the purpose of psycho-medicinal uses. The information gathered from local inhabitants of the study area like old folk, tribal people, shepherds, *Vaidyas* or medicinal practitioners etc. The collected plant species are properly identified with the help of local floras and authenticated from regional herbaria like Botanical Survey of India, Northern Circle (BSD), Dehradun and Forest Research Institute (DD), Dehradun. The study enlists 27 plant species from 27 different genera belonging to 25 different families. The botanical name alongwith the local name, plant parts used and their uses is included for each plant species. The different psychological disorders or mental illnesses treated through the mentioned psychomedicinal plants are epilepsy, headache and migraine problems, hydrophobia, insomnia, weak memory, psychoneurosis and insanity. Religious ceremonies, rituals and sorcery practices, like exorcism, are performed using these plants to treat insanity, snake bite and to keep away negative energy.

Keywords: ayurveda; ethnobotany; exorcism; mental ailments; sorcery; rituals

Introduction

In India, Plants have been used for medicinal purposes and human sustenance since the Vedic age. The earliest mentioned use of plants as medicine can be found in the Rigveda (1500-400 BC), Athurveda (1500 BC) and Upanishada (1000-600 BC) (Chauhan, 1999). Documenting the traditional indigenous knowledge through ethnobotanical research studies and surveys is important for the conservation and utilization of biological resources and WHO has estimated that over 80% of the global population rely primarily on traditional medicines (Akerete, 1992). It has been stated that 80% of the world population has faith in traditional medicines for their primary healthcare, particularly plant-derived medicines (Kala *et al.*, 2006).

The medicinal plants that are traditionally used for the treatment of ailments of mind and spirit of a living being are referred to as psychomedicinal plants. The word 'psychomedicinal' comprises of two Greek words – 'psycho' meaning 'the soul, mind, spirit' and 'medicine' meaning 'cure or heal. In India, the psychomedicinal plants are being used from prehistoric times for treating various mental illnesses and disorders. These plants have also been used for performing different religious ceremonies, rituals or sorcery practices for ages as K. Harrison (2011) described in his book.

Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir, India lies in the lap of middle to greater Himalayan ranges where the climatic conditions vary from temperate to alpine



(<https://udhampur.nic.in/map-of-district>). The people of Udhampur are still relying on the traditional medicines for the treatment of varied kinds of diseases because of the geographical remoteness of the area, lack of modern medical facilities and poor socio-economic condition of the locals. The tribal people from the district continue to follow the traditional medicinal remedies and sorcery practices involving the usage of psychomedicinal plants. These factors also helped in preserving the traditional knowledge of ethnomedicinal plants in this region. The authors found lack of ample ethnomedicinal research related to psychomedicinal plants in Udhampur district and thus took the

opportunity to explore in detail the uses of such plants in this region.

Study Area

The present study was executed in district Udhampur (shown in Figure 1) of Jammu and Kashmir, India. This District comprises of 4 Sub-divisions, 8 Tehsils, 17 Blocks and 357 villages. Its area covers approx. 2,380 km² out of which 1042.06 km² falls under the forest region. The human population of the district was counted around 5,57,689 in the year 2011. Almost 80.6 % of the total area of the district is rural and only 19.4% is urban. The major languages spoken in the district are Dogri, Hindi, Urdu and Gojri. The different tribes found are Gaddi, Sippi, Gujjar and Bakkarwal.

(<https://udhampur.nic.in/map-of-district>)



Figure 1: Map showing the Tehsils of Udhampur District, Jammu and Kashmir

(<https://udhampur.nic.in/map-of-district>)



Table 1: List of psychomedicinal plants of Udhampur District, Jammu and Kashmir, India

S. N	BOTANICAL NAME	FAMILY	LOCAL NAME	PART/S USED	PSYCHOMEDICINAL USES	OTHER MEDICINAL USES
1.	<i>Achyranthes aspera</i> L.	Amaranthaceae	Parkhanda	Roots, leaves and seeds	Roots used for exorcism. Leaves used for Lord Ganesh-patra pooja. Seeds used to cure snake bite and hydrophobia. The ground root is administered with water in case of snake bite, until the patient vomits and regains consciousness.	The plant is crushed and used to treat pneumonia. Use of infusion of root as mild astringent in bowel complaints is common. Decoction of powdered leaves and adding honey or sugar candy is useful in early stages of diarrhoea and dysentery.
2.	<i>Acorus calamus</i> L.	Araceae	Barayian	Rhizome	The dried rhizome is taken as a brain tonic in case of weak memory, psychoneurosis and epilepsy.	Fresh rhizome is used as an anti-allergy inhaling medicine to stop runny nose in common cold.
3.	<i>Adhatoda zeylanica</i> Medicus	Acanthaceae	Brenker	Flower and leaves	Used in sorcery practices involving exorcism	Flower are dried in dark, crushed to powder can be consumed with jaggery (Gurh) for headache treatment. The ash of flower and honey is taken to treat whooping cough. The burning leaves used for curing asthma and cough.
4.	<i>Arisaema flavum</i> Schott	Araceae	Saap googli	Tubers	Crush the tuber, make a paste and apply against snake bite	It is also used to treat foot and mouth diseases in cattle.
5.	<i>Artemisia maritima</i> L.	Asteraceae	Mooiin	Whole plant, leaves and shoot	The whole plant is used in the treatment of insanity.	Leaves are helpful to cure stomach problems and also useful to expelling worms from the intestine.
6.	<i>Asparagus adscendes</i> Roxb.	Asparagaceae	Sainsmaya	Whole plant	The whole plant is used for the sorcery practices to remove the negative energies by chanting hymns.	The plant is used for inflammation, diabetes etc.
7.	<i>Bauhinia variegata</i> L.	Caesalpiniaceae	Karar	Roots, leaves, bark and flower	Stem is used for sorcery practices.	The root paste can be applied in wound healing. Leaves extract is taken in fever. Gargle with bark



						boiled water helps in throat infections, toothache and strengthen gums. Flower decoction is used in piles.
8.	<i>Bacopa monnieri</i> L. Wettst.	Plantaginaceae	Brahmi	Leaves and young shoot	Decoction of leaves and shoots is used as a brain tonic.	Decoction of leaves and shoots effective against asthma.
9.	<i>Berberis lycium</i> Royle	Berberidaceae	Kamblu	Leaves, fruits and roots	Leaves used for different rituals.	Decoction or boiled water of roots is used to treat rheumatism and internal wounds, especially bone fractures. Berries are used for stomach pain. Fruits are used as laxative and antiscorbutic.
10.	<i>Betula utilis</i> D. Don	Betulaceae	Bhuj, Bhojpatra	Leaves and bark	The bark is used to make amulet as a sorcery practice for the treatment of insanity.	The paste of bark is used to treat wounds, burns and infections, the diseases of blood, ear, bronchitis and leprosy.
11.	<i>Boerhavia diffusa</i> L.	Nyctaginaceae	Itt-sitt	Whole plant	The paste of whole plant is used against headache.	The paste of whole plant is used against headache, rheumatism and itch.
12.	<i>Cannabis sativa</i> L.	Cannabinaceae	Pang	Leaves	The leaves of the plants can be inhaled with cigarette for inducing sleep in patients.	Leaves powder is used in the treatment of wounds.
13.	<i>Cuscuta reflexa</i> Roxb.	Cuscutaceae	Aandal	Whole plant	The plant is used in sorcery practices involving exorcism.	The paste of plant is applied to heal the wound and bone fracture. Plant infusion is used to treat fever.
14.	<i>Emblica officinalis</i> L.	Phyllanthaceae	Ambla	Leaves and fruits	The branches of leaves are used in different rituals.	Dried fruit powder is taken for diabetes, constipation, cold cough and hyperacidity.
15.	<i>Ficus religiosa</i> L.	Moraceae	Barh, Peepal	Leaves and bark	This plant is used for religious purposes and in ritual practices.	Cardiac problems are treated consuming extract of overnight-soaked leaves thrice a day. Jaundice can be treated by taking a mix



						of extract of 2-3 leaves with water and sugar. Bark is helpful in dental care and treating skin problems. The fresh twigs are used as toothbrush (Daatun).It strengthens gums and is anti-bacterial. The paste of bark powder mixed with honey is applied to skin for freshness.
16.	<i>Grewia optiva</i> J.R. Drumm. ex Burret	Tiliaceae	Dhaman	Leaves, roots and bark	Flower is used for exorcism purposes.	The leaves used to cure infections of throat and the paste of leaves is used to cure skin allergies and itching etc. Decoction of bark is taken to relieve body pain and fever.
17.	<i>Geranium wallichianum</i> D. Don ex Sweet	Geraniaceae	Laal Jadi	Roots	Root is used for exorcism practices.	The roots are used to treat toothache and eye troubles. The paste of crushed herb is used in toothache. The herbal tea is used to cure rheumatic pain. Root extract is used in chronic diarrhoea and dysentery.
18.	<i>Mallotus philippensis</i> (Lam.) Muell.	Euphorbiaceae	Flaa, kamla	Leaves, flowers	Flowers are used for ritual purposes.	The leaves are used to cure snake bite. Leaves have antimicrobial, antiviral and anti-inflammatory action.
19.	<i>Musa paradisiaca</i> L.	Musaceae	Kela	Leaves	The leaves are used for treating insanity (Bhootkundli). It runs away the negative energies.	The peels of banana used for antibacterial activity.
20.	<i>Nicotiana tabacum</i> L.	Solanaceae	Tambaku	Leaves	The smoking of tobacco is used in sorcery practices (tantra). It is used in ritual purposes.	It is used as brain stimulant.
21.	<i>Prunus cerasoides</i> D. Don	Rosaceae	Batarn	Bark	Bark is used to make amulet to prevent the harms from bad energies.	Young twigs are used as toothbrush.
22.	<i>Santalum album</i> L.	Santalaceae	Chandan	Stem and wood	It is used for religious and ritual purposes.	The paste of stem is applied on swelling and heat rash.



23.	<i>Tagetes erecta</i> L.	Asteraceae	Gutti	Flower	It is offer to God and Goddess in the temples. It is used as spiritual and ritual plant.	Leaves are used as an antiseptic agent and also used in kidney troubles, muscular pain, piles, and applied to boils. The flowers are used to cure fever.
24.	<i>Urtica ardens</i> L.	Urticaceae	Jajuli	Leaves	The whole plants used in exorcism.	Leaves are used for headache treatment. The whole plants are used for cuts and wound healing. The leaves used for bone fracturing, cough, headache, common cold, digestive problems, fever and skin infections.
25.	<i>Verbascum Thapsus</i> L.	Scrophulariaceae	Desitmaku	Whole plant	The plant is burnt and <i>dhuni</i> (smoke) is used by <i>tantrics</i> (ritual performers) to drive away the ghostly instincts. The plant is also used for relieving migraine headaches.	The plant is useful in treating pulmonary problems, inflammatory diseases, asthma, spasmodic coughs and diarrhoea.
26.	<i>Vitex negundo</i> L.	Verbenaceae	Bana	Leaves	The exorcism practice is done by religious practitioner through chanting special mantras of local deity (<i>Nagdevta</i>) to treat snake bite. During the exorcism practice, salt is not taken in food but only milk is advised to be taken.	This plant is used to cure snake bite and headache. The smoke from the dried leaf is used to relieve headache. The whole plant is used for the treatment of asthma, cough, bronchitis and inflammation. Flowers are used to cure cholera, diarrhoea, fever and liver complaints. Leaves are used for malarian fever.
27.	<i>Zanthoxylum aromaticum</i> DC.	Rutaceae	Timbru	Bark, leaves, fruits and seeds	The wood is used for exorcism.	The fruits and seeds after crushing are used for teeth and mouth infections. Bark of tree is boiled in water and used to cure arthritis. Leaf paste used to treat in many tooth problems and skin infections.



Methodology

The extensive and intensive field survey of different villages in Udhampur district was conducted through interview with local inhabitants. The present study was carried out during the period of 2017 to 2021. The information was collected from local old-aged men and women, young knowledgeable people, sorcery practitioners, priests, religious peoples, peasants, shepherds, tribal people and housewives. The questionnaire comprised of the name of medicinal plant, their psychomedicinal and other medicinal uses, and the plant parts used.

Results and Discussions

We have enlisted 27 plant species from 27 different genera belonging to 25 different families, which are employed to treat different psychological disorders or mental illnesses in human (Table 1). Among these, some plants are also used for religious ceremonies, rituals and sorcery practices, and also for curing snake bite. The authors have toured different villages in the study area and compiled a table consisting of the botanical name of the plant, local name, family, plant parts used and its psychomedicinal and other medicinal uses. The common plant parts used from these plants for psychomedicinal uses are roots, bark, stem, leaves, fruits, seeds and flowers. In some cases, whole plant is also used for preparing medicinal recipe or for sorcery practices and rituals.

The different psychological disorders or mental illnesses treated through the mentioned psychomedicinal plants are epilepsy, headache and migraine problems, hydrophobia, insomnia, weak memory, psychoneurosis and insanity. Religious ceremonies, rituals and sorcery practices, like exorcism, are performed using these plants to treat insanity, snake bite and to keep away negative energy. The other medicinal uses of these plants are in the treatment of skin ailments, infections and allergies, burns, pneumonia, whooping cough, common cold, spasmodic cough, throat infections, asthma, bronchitis, fever, stomach and bowel ailments, intestinal worms, cardiac problems, kidney troubles, pulmonary problems, cholera, rheumatism, headache, snake bite, inflammation, diabetes, cuts and wounds, bone fracture, dental problems, eye troubles, jaundice, leprosy, piles, blood diseases and ear diseases. Moreover, the tubers from *Arisaema flavum* Schott are also used to treat foot and mouth diseases in cattles.

Conclusion

From the present study, the authors can conclude that Udhampur district, Jammu and Kashmir, has rich floral diversity of traditionally used medicinal plants. The local inhabitants have been using the psychomedicinal plants in the treatment of many mental illnesses and disorders from ancient times due to unavailability of latest medical facilities. We have also found different plants used in religious ceremonies, different rituals and sorcery practices in the



study area. The plants described in the paper may be used further for formulating synthetic medicines for commercial use. We have found that there are still some remote areas and communities hard to reach within this district. The authors are hopeful to find some more plants with undiscovered psychomedicinal uses or more psychomedicinal recipes from these areas in future. More ethnomedicinal investigations and pharmacological studies on these psychomedicinal plants must be done for the benefit of mankind.

Caution Warning: Don't follow these medicinal recipes without doctor's or expert's consultation.

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