

## **HERBAL REMEDIES PRESCRIBED BY THE STREET HERBAL VENDORS (TRIBAL MEDICINEMAN) IN THE TREATMENT OF SOME COMMON HUMAN ECOLOGICAL DISORDERS (GYNAECOLOGICAL DISORDERS IN WOMEN)**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The Herbal Vendors are the mobile tribal medicineman seen selling crude medicinal plants and their products on the busy streets of many Indian cities. They give herbal treatment for many human ailments and diseases especially the more difficult and chronic ones. They claim to have herbal remedies for some gynaecological disorders in women such as Menorrhagia, leucorrhoea and also to restore fertility among women who fall to conceive. Lodh pathani (*Symblocus racemosa*), Sema Musli (*Salmalia malabaricum*) and Jal Jamni (*Cocculus villosus*) are some of the herbs used as the drug of choice.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Women suffer from several gynaecological disorders of which menorrhagia and leucorrhoea are more common and especially in the women of poor socioeconomic society. In menorrhagia there is excessive discharge of blood during the menses which may be irregular also. In leucorrhoea there is a thick, viscous and whitish discharge from the female genital organ which has a foul smell. Infertility and failure of conception is yet another problem of many women. After getting disappointed from elsewhere many of them turn towards traditional herbal medicine and approach these street herbalists.

The street herbal vendors have a long history and tradition of herbal healing. They have inherited a wealth of knowledge about the curative properties of several plants from their forefathers who were nomadic tribal medicinemen in the remote forest of Rajasthan and Gujarat in India. They can be

seen operating on the busy streets of many Indian cities. A survey made in Delhi revealed that they have herbal ailments and diseases. Some of these plants and their products used by them in the treatment of menorrhagia, leucorrhoea and for the restoration of fertility among women were recorded and is described in this paper.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Thousands of herbal vendors live in Delhi throughout the year in temporary hutments and put their stalls of crude medicinal plants and plant products on the roadsides at several places. In a survey made in Delhi 1288 herbal vendors were approached and 049 responded positively to the study. They were interviewed about the medicinal properties of herbal drugs they sold and the nature of diseases for which they gave treatment. In several cases the users of the herbal drugs were also interviewed for

verification of the authenticity of the drugs given by the herbal vendors. A specially prepared questionnaire was used for the purpose of both the studies. The common

names of the medicinal plants and their parts used were recorded and their botanical identification was done.

## Herbal Treatment

### A. Menorrhagia

The following plants and their products are used in the preparation of the drug-

S. No.	Common Name	Botanical Name	Parts used
1	Lodh Pathani	<i>Symplocos racemosa Roxb</i>	Dried stem bark
2	Jal Jamni	<i>Cocculus villosus Linn</i>	Leaves
3	Semal Musli	<i>Salmaalial malabaricum Schott. &amp; Endle</i>	Stem bark
4	Mahee Buti	<i>Rhus coriara Linn</i>	Galls
5	Nagakesar	<i>Messua ferrea Linn</i>	Fruits & Seeds
6	Kaiphall	<i>Myrica nangi Thunb</i>	Root Bark
7	Kutki	<i>Picrorhiza Kurroa Royle (Benth)</i>	Dried Rhizome

### Phytochemistry of the herbal drugs used

#### 1. Lodh Pathani (*S. racemosa*)

Two alkaloids (Loturine and Colloturine) have been reported from the bark (Phytochemical Investigation of Medicinal plants, CCRAS, New Delhi).

#### 2. Jal Jamni (*C. villosus*)

The active ingredients are the alkaloid Cocuslin and a Biscoclaurine base called Pendulin. (Phytochem. Investig. of Med. Plants, CCRAS, New Delhi).

#### 3. Semal Musli (*S. malabaricum*)

The biologically active chemicals reported are Triterpenoids – Lupeol and a Steroid – Sitosterol. Kaemperol and Quercietin have

also been reported. (Phytochem. Investig. of Med. plants, CCRAS, New Delhi).

#### 4. Mahee Buti (*R. coriara*)

It contains tannins, resins and some essential oils. (Phytochem. Investig. of Med. plants, CCRAS, New Delhi).

#### 5. Nagakesar (*M. ferrea*)

Bala and Sheshadri (1971) reported the following biologically active chemicals. The coumarins are Mesuferron, Mammeism and Mesuanic acid. There is B-Sito sterol and a Triterpenoid – Guttiferol. There is also an antibiotic – Mesuagin and essential

oils and fatty acids. (Palmitic, Stearic, Linoleic and Oleic acids).

### 6. Kaiphal (*M. nagi*)

Desai (1973) & Nayar et. al (1979) studied the phytochemistry. There is a triterpenoid – Friedelin, Tarazerol, Myricadiol and a Steroid B-Sitosterol. Other chemicals are Proanthocyanidin and Myricanol. There are flavanoids, Glycosides, Saponins, Tannins and Reducing sugars.

### 7. Kutki (*P. Kurroa*)

Dhar et. al (1968) studied the biologically active compounds. The bitter principles are Apocyanin, Kutkin, Kurrin, Kutikiol, Kurrin. The glycosides are Picroside and Picrohizin and the steroid is kutikisterol.

### Prescription

The exact proportion of the herbal drug to be taken is their professional secrecy. Approximately 150 gms of each of No. 1 & 2 and 50 gms each of the rest is taken with 100 gms of fresh leaves of Ashok (*Saraca*

*indica*) to prepare the drug and a powdered mixture of it is taken two teaspoonful twice daily with honey preferably in empty stomach.

Another simple prescription for the treatment of menorrhagia was found to be very effective. Seven tender leaves of pomegranate (*Punica granatum*) and seven grains of Rice (*Oryza sativa*) to be chewed like bettle for seven days.

### B. Leucorrhoea

All the herbal drugs from 1 to 7 indicated for the treatment of menorrhagia is also good for leucorrhoea. To these are added the stems of Giloy (*Tinospora cordifolia*) (*Willd*) *Miers* and seeds of Ameltas (*Cassia fistula*) Linn.

### C. To overcome the problem of Infertility (Sterility) among Women

They claim 100% success. The following plants and their products are used as the herbal drug of choice –

S. No.	Common Name	Botanical Name	Parts used
1	Lodh Pathani	<i>Symplocos racemosa Roxb</i>	Dried stem bark
2	Vidarikand	<i>Pueraria tuberosa D.C</i>	Tuber
3	Kamarkas Gond	<i>Butea monosperma kuntz</i>	Gums
4	Mochras	<i>Salmaia malabaricum Schott.</i>	Gums
5	Kala Beej Bandh	<i>Sida acuta Burm</i>	Seeds
6	Asva gandh	<i>Withania Sommnifera (L) Dunal</i>	Dried Roots

### Phytochemistry of the Herbal Drug used

#### 1. Lodh Pathani (*S. racemosa*)

Two alkaloids Loturine and Colloturine have been reported from the bark (Phyto-

chemical investigation of Med. plants, CCRAS, New Delhi).

#### 2. Vidarikand (*P. tuberosa*)

Contains large amount of Starch, Crude Protein, Simple Sugars like glucose, fructose and sucrose. There is also a steroid – B. Sistolsterol (Phytochem. Investig. of Med. Plants, CCRAS, New Delhi).

### **3. Kamarkas gond (*B. monosperma*)**

The gum is rich in Tannic Acids and Gallic Acids, besides some useful enzymes and minerals (Phytochem. Investig. of Med plants, CCRAS, New Delhi).

### **4. Mocharas (*S. malabaricum*)**

It has resins and some bitter glycosides. There are free enzymes, minerals and essential oils (Phytochem. Investig. of Med. plants, CCRAS, New Delhi).

### **5. Kala Beej Bandh (*S. acuta*)**

There is an alkaloid – Ephedrene, besides mucilage, some oils and minerals. (Phytochem, Investig. of Med. plants, CCRAS, New Delhi).

### **6. Asvagandh (*W. somnifera*)**

Several biologically active principles are reported from root. The important alkaloids are Withasomine, Visamine, Tropine, Nicotie etc. The glycoside in Withaniol. There are number of amino acids and also reducing Sugars. (Phytochem. Investig of Med. Plants, CCRAS, New Delhi).

### **Prescription**

Approximately 100 gms each of the crude herbal drugs are taken to prepare the mixture. The powdered mixtures are then boiled with milk and sugar till a thick

residue is left. This is taken one teaspoonful daily, empty stomach between the menses for atleast 6 months. Pungent and sour foods are to be avoided during the course of treatment.

### **Results and Discussion**

Survey reveals that several of those herbs used in the treatment of some gynaecological disorders by the street herbal vendors are commonly available. They are also cheaper and easy to be administered. The common man can afford the treatment. Survey of people who took such treatment in their family on their personal faith and belief gave encouraging results. Most surprising results were the restoration of fertility and conception in some women who had lost all hopes to bear child after several years of their marriage.

Significantly some of the herbs used by these laymen practitioners in the treatment of gynaecological disorders have found scientific verification for the purpose they were being used by them since time immemorial.

The Vidarikand (*P. tuberosa*) and Lodh Pathani (*S. racemosa*) are their drugs of choice for the treatment of all gynaecological disorders and for restoration of fertility among women who fail to conceive. Kurup (1977) reported the great oosterogenic potentiality of these two herbs as uterine tonics. This gives some scientific credibility to the mode of herbal treatment given by these street healers which they achieved solely on account of their experience and experimentation often on themselves since several generations from their forefathers.

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