

BOOK REVIEW

Homoeopathic Materia Medica of Indian drugs

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Homeopathic materia medica of the Indian drugs¹ published by CCRH is the only source book now available which portrays the picture of 52 commonly used and available Indian drugs in a most systematic and methodical manner. An excellent addition to the book "Drugs of Hindoostan"² by S. C. Ghosh and "Special Symptomatology of New Remedies" by E.M. Hale³.

India being a tropical country is endowed with a treasure of medicinal herbs which are used as folklore medicines, phytotherapy, constituents of Ayurvedic & Naturotherapy. The vegetation of this country is said to be so rich in medicinal herbs that its Materia medica hardly could be equalized in any other country. The plants grow in a particular type of soil and environment and bear remarkable affinity to the temperament and constitution of the individual inhabiting in that locality and found to be more suitable for disease of that region. The saints of ancient India, who are very thorough and meticulous on the medicinal virtues of indigenous plants of India, believed that there was a remedy for disease rampant in the universe. So they consequently toiled themselves assiduously in probing into the medicinal virtues of the plants and eventually discovered a great number of medicines. So rightly written by Hunter⁴, in his Indian empire "The Materia Medica of Hindus embrace a vast collection of drugs belonging to the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms, many of which have been adopted by European and American physicians." It is much to be regretted that homoeopath's contribution on indigenous drugs is still knee-high though; they depend much on plant kingdom in the field of treatment. In recent past Drs. P. N. Ray, P. C. Mazumdar, S. C. Ghosh, P. P. Biswas, K. K. Bhattacharya added a few provings on indigenous drugs. There are still many herbs and plants in India whose therapeutic virtues and identities are insufficiently known to us and if they will be thoroughly prepared & proved may turn to be very useful drugs of Homoeopathic Materia medica.

Many more instances can be cited from traditional medicine practice which vindicates that these indigenous drugs could no longer be brushed aside and their curative effect could no longer be overlooked. These drugs should adorn the pages of Materia

Medica and should have an abiding place there. Many homoeopaths from the inception of this science are using these medicinal herbs gathering their knowledge from different journal, some valuable books, and also from some haphazard sources. But unfortunately a qualitative, updated literatures on this aspect for homoeopathic doctors are very much lacking.

Some time past for a proper drug proving, the essential conditions like, properly equipped laboratories, well versed, dedicated provers and an organizational set up to conduct proving were not available. Now in India, CCRH has undertaken this aspect in a very systematic, methodical, updated way to remove this long felt want & already proved some drugs. Homoeopathic Materia medica of Indian drugs published by CCRH comprises of some of these drug provings of their own and compilation from other source books.

Publication of this resource material will help the physicians by enlightening the knowledge on Indian plants which are not adequately available in the existing literature in one place. The readers will see, it as an excellent reference book & is very valuable for practitioners. A group of experts from the field of Homoeopathy, Botany, Chemistry and Pharmacology have contributed & enriched for the corresponding sections of the book.

The book is organised well with chapters on contents, a very brief but well informative, comprehensive introduction & lastly description of fifty two drugs. In each drug, attempt has been made to provide latest & exhaustive information on taxonomy, pharmacology, chemical & toxic effects of the drugs in addition to symptoms of each drug.

Each drug started with an introduction which is very fascinating; lucrative such as in *Cassia sophera* it is mentioned that the drug is named as "Kashmarda" in Sanskrit which means destroyers of cough. In *Hydrocotyle asiatica* the trial of this drug for leprosy by this medicine is completely summarized. So this part is as good as a comprehensive review of literature for the drug in discussion and helps to memorize the keynote

symptom and use of the drug.

Next to introduction to the drug, unique description on pharmacy part of the drug is delineated which comprises of botanical name, abbreviations, family, common names, distribution or habitat, description of the plants, parts used, chemical constituents, pharmacological action, toxic effects and preparation of the plant. This chapter of the book is most valuable, much informative justifying its uniqueness because of addition of some valuable data.

In this chapter, the information on botanical name, abbreviation, family, habitat and description of the plant makes the reader to recognize the plant, if not known earlier. But the uniqueness in this section of the writing, is exact information on common names or region wise local name of the plant written in thirteen languages, will help the reader to familiarize with the exact species in their locality. Another singularity in this section which comprises chemical constituent of the drug under discussion. Most of materia medica books, except a few are lacking in this aspect which are very essential for an assiduous reader to know the alkaloids to get information on action of drugs. The pharmacological action mentioned under the heading of Pharmacy is an unusual collection and helps the reader as a gate way to the inside story of the detailed proving symptoms. The toxic effect and a detailed preparation of the drug added under this heading gives a complete shape to the pharmacy section of the drug. In the available literatures on indigenous drug, these unparallel, exhaustive and latest collections like chemical constituents, pharmacological action, history and authority are not suffice in comparison to this book.

The other two top stories in each drug are clinical conditions and leading symptoms of the drug. In each drug a schematic presentation of the symptoms are portrayed in detail which is very difficult to remember. So leading symptoms will keep abreast with the memory of the practitioner for ready reference of the drug. So also clinical conditions which are very carefully abstracted will help in recapitulating a drug while prescribing for a patient.

These two sections will help the readers to put them in use as though mentioned in some other materia medica books but not found place in any book of materia medica on indigenous drug.

Schematic presentation of the drug is dealt more vividly which are compiled from different source books like J. H. Clarke's⁵, "A Dictionary of Practical Materia Medica," T. F. Allen's "Encyclopedia of Pure Materia Medica"⁶, C. Hering's "Guiding Symptoms of our Materia Medica"⁷, S. C. Ghosh's "Drugs of Hindoostan," E. M. Hales³ "Therapeutic of new remedies" and many

more including literatures in CCRH publications.

The relationship to other medicines presented at the end, helps to remember the symptoms of the drug, co-relating to other known symptoms of polychrest drugs.

References added to each drug will immensely help the reader to probe more and more in to detailed information of the drug when they need it.

Last but not least each drug is not only enriched with proving symptoms but also with clinical verified symptoms of different practitioners and also some valuable observations of the experts involved in writing this book, are immensely beneficial resource material for a practitioner. Every serious practitioner, whether novice or experienced belonging to India or Abroad are now inquisitive and eager to be conversant with the action of these indigenous drugs of India. I am sure this book will certainly gratify their passion in prescribing these fifty two indispensable drugs for their patients.

These exhaustive compilations may be very difficult to memorize but very essential for ready reference.

References

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Reviewed by:

Prof. Dr.L.K.Nanda
Former Principal-cum-Superintendent
Dr.Abhin Chandra Homoeopathic Medical College and Hospital
plot no. 409-B, Paikanagar, Delta Square,
Bhubaneswar, Odisha-751003
Email:laxmikanta.nanda@gmail.com
Mob:09861021444