



Tantia University Journal of Homoeopathy and Medical Science
Review Article

[Volume 3|Issue 3 |July- Sept. 2020]
E-ISSN : 2581-8899, P-ISSN; 2581-978X

Medicinal Uses Of Chirayata (Swertia Chirata Linn): A Review Article

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Abstract

Swertia chirayita (Gentianaceae), a popular medicinal herb indigenous to the temperate Himalayas is used in traditional medicine to treat numerous ailments such as liver disorders, malaria, and diabetes and are reported to have a wide spectrum of pharmacological properties. Its medicinal usage is well-documented in Indian pharmaceutical codex, the British, and the American pharmacopeias and in different traditional medicine such as the Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, and other conventional medical systems. This ethnomedicinal herb is known mostly for its bitter taste caused by the presence of different bioactive compounds that are directly associated with human health welfare. The increasing high usage of Swertia chirayita, mostly the underground tissues, as well as the illegal overharvesting combined with habitat destruction resulted in a drastic reduction of its populations and has brought this plant to the verge of extinction. The increasing national and international demand for Swertia chirayita has led to unscrupulous collection from the wild and adulteration of supplies.

Key word- Biological activity, conservation, medicinal plant, Swertia chirayita, traditional medicine.

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Received – 20/08/2020

Revised- 25/9/2020

Accepted – 29/09/2020

INTRODUCTION

Swertia Charaita is also known as Haima, kirata Tikta, Nidrari, Ramasenka, kairata in Sanskrit, in Urdu language it is called Charaita, Chirata in Bengal and in Arabic and Farsi called as Qasabuzzarirah. Chiretta is its market name. Usually it is

best collected when flowering (july-october) and used in dry form.

How to Cite this Article- Sharma M., Pratibha, Onkar JM., Medicinal Uses Of Chirayata (Swertia Chirata Linn): A Review Article. TU J. Homo & Medi. Sci. 2020;3(3):69-71

This ancient herb is also sometimes known as the Nepali Neem because it is annual/ biennial herb in the forests of Nepal. This plant was introduced to Europe in 1839 and has been used widely since. This annual herb is found in the Himalayas majorly between the heights of 1200 to 1500 meters and grows up to the height of 1.5 meters. There are two bitter principal constituents namely ophelic acid and chiratin which possess anti-inflammatory, analgesic, resolvent, hypoglycemic properties. Charaita which belongs to Gentianaceae family is an herbaceous plant of small height ranging as 0.5-1.25 meter. Leaves lie opposite at stem, flowers are blue, lurid and sometimes white with yellow nectaris in terminal corymbose or panicular cymes. It is found in temperate Himalayas at an altitude between 1200-1300m from Kashmir to Bhutan. Chirata has been used as drug from ancient time and usually it is used for skin diseases as in dry and wet pruritus and it also resolves the inflammation of skin as it possesses mulattif and morally and musaffi khoon.

Distribution

Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Sikkim between altitudinal ranges of 1400 – 3270 m. China; Tibet; Nepal and Bhutan.

Botanical Classification

Kingdom: Plantae
(Unranked): Angiosperms
Order: Gentianales
Family: Gentianaceae
Genus: Swertia L

Unani Description

It is mentioned in Unani classical literature as Qasabuz zarirah. It is found in India and Iran, in India northern hilly temperate areas of Himalayas, like Kashmir, Assam. It is called kartis due to used by a specific hilly people called kartis. Whole plant is used as a medicine. Mutative (demulcent) Mohallil (dissolvent). It is diuretic, blood purifier, hepatotonic and hepatoprotective. It is useful in pain of kidneys, pain due to bone origin, fever. It is useful in many skin diseases, wet and dry pruritus, leprosy. It is useful in ascites and for this it should be used with honey in empty stomach. It is useful to burn injuries when used with sirka and rogane gul.

Chemical Constituent

Two principal constituents namely Ophelic acid and Chiratin. Beside these Xanthenes, glycosides and mangiferin (Flavonoid) are also present. Xanthenes subtypes known as swertianin and swerchirin chemically trihydroxy-3-methoxyxanthone and syringaresinol, mangiferin respectively possess antifungal,

antibacterial, hepatoprotective, anti-inflammatory and analgesic property.

Hypoglycemic Effect of Swertia

Ethanollic extract and methanol fractions of leaf of Swertia Chirata have shown hypoglycemic effect on Swiss albino mice at fasting condition after some hours of drug administration. Anti-inflammatory and analgesic property Anti-inflammatory and analgesic activity of Swertia Chirata signifies the traditional use for inflammation and pain.

CONCLUSION

There is big availability of modern medicine for the treatment of skin disorders but these medicines have disadvantages like side effects, costly to common man and chance of recurrence of the disease when drug is stopped because most of the cosmetic drugs are steroid based. The medicines which are natural based have lesser side effects and easily available to patients. Charaita contain various active chemical constituents viz; swertianin and swerchirin, Ophelic acid and chiratin and flavonoids compound which have been reported as antimicrobial activity against various skin disorders

Conflict of Interest: None

Source of Support: Nil

besides this these possess hepatoprotective and antiinflammatory action by which Charaita give potentiating to immunity and resolve the local inflammation through internal environment. Further elaborative research is needed to evaluate other unknown profit of Charaita. May this review will be supportive as new possibility for the research scholars for various skin diseases.

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