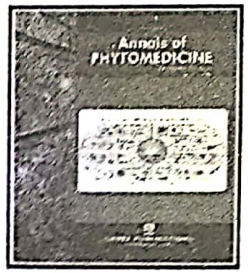
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Medicinal plants of India: Bridging traditional wisdom and modern healthcare

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Abstract

Medicinal plants play a vital role in traditional and primary healthcare systems worldwide, particularly in developing nations where access to modern medicine remains limited. India stands out as one of the world's richest centres of ethnomedicinal diversity, home to more than 7,500 plant species that are actively used within its classical healing traditions like Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani as well as in regional folk medicine practices passed down through generations. Over 50 research findings to examine the ethnobotanical significance, pharmacological properties, and therapeutic potential of Indian medicinal plants. Accumulated traditional knowledge highlights their widespread use in managing a broad range of health conditions, including inflammatory disorders, skin diseases, digestive complaints, and maternal health concerns. Crucially, modern scientific investigations have increasingly validated many of these traditional claims. Species such as *Curcuma longa* (turmeric), *Ocimum sanctum* (holy basil), *Withania somnifera* (ashwagandha), and *Azadirachta indica* (neem) have demonstrated notable antioxidant, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, anticancer, and adaptogenic activities in laboratory and clinical settings. Beyond their therapeutic value, medicinal plants make meaningful contributions to drug discovery pipelines, preventive healthcare strategies, and the economic livelihoods of rural and indigenous communities. However, their continued availability is increasingly threatened by overexploitation, habitat destruction, and the gradual erosion of traditional knowledge among younger generations. This review underscores the urgent need for rigorous scientific validation of plant-based remedies, alongside robust conservation frameworks and sustainable utilization practices. Bridging the gap between ethnobotanical heritage and evidence-based medicine is essential to preserving both biodiversity and the cultural wisdom embedded in India's rich healing traditions.

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