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Materia Medica of Tibetan Medicine: Diversity, Identification and Classification, and the Method of Checking Quality:

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Diversity of Tibetan Materia Medica:

- Classical Tibetan medical texts have recorded more than 3,000 medicinal ingredients used to treat various diseases.
- The *Shel Gong Shel Phreng* text (AD 1725) (Compact Crystal Rosary) by the great renowned Tibetan scholar and physician *Deumar Geshe Tenzin Phuntsok* comprises more than 1,000 medicinal plants.
- A Flora of Xizang, the Tibetan Autonomous Region of Tibet, survey and researched by a group of Tibetan physicians and scholars found more than 6,000 plants stretching from the north to Mongolia and beyond, and eastwards to Sichuan and Yunnan, north-west to Ladakh, and north-east towards Nepal and the Trans-Himalayas of India.

Hidden features of Tibetan Materia Medica

- In the past, Tibetan physicians have gained knowledge of medicinal plants through experiment and observing the behavior of animals.
- The classical materia medica text explained that, for the treatment of 21 kinds of wounds, finding the method of treatment efficacy came through observing the behavior of animals.
- This method of efficacy of plants for treating wounds was discovered by ancient physicians of Tibet by observing and noticing that wounded wild animals or birds search for particular plants for recovering from wounds.
- This kind of medicinal plants knowledge is highly regarded by the ancient Tibetan physicians, which gained insight and secret knowledge of medicinal plants as the supreme medicine.

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Hidden features of Tibetan Materia Medica:

- Another secret knowledge of medicine is that *Dha Ya kan* which means nectar or supreme properties of medicine.
- According the ancient medical text explained that 25 different types of medicinal plants consider as *Dha Ya Kan* which means properties and efficacy of medicine is supreme like nectar. *Dha Yak Kan*- supreme properties of medicinal plant based on effectiveness to a particular disease,
- Based on particular wound to heal by specific plant .
- It also based on adaptation of medicinal plant in particular site to boost affectivities to particular disease. This kind of medicinal plant's knowledge was accumulated by ancient physicians observing and experiencing through Mother Nature and its interconnection with human life.

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- Ancient Tibetan physicians standardized and defined the preparation of medicine based on the potency, taste, post-digestive taste, attributes and qualities of each medicinal ingredient.
- The potency of medicinal substances depends greatly on the predominance of the five great elements during their growing process.
- The value and effectiveness of plants not only arises from element power but also from their natural habitat. The power of taste of medicinal plants also depends on the five elements and has an important role in curing disease.

Classification of Tibetan Materia Medica:

According to Tibetan medicine, there are different ways of classifying Tibetan materia medica, based on different schools of thought, regions and scholars. However, *rGyud-bZhi* the fundamental Tibetan medical text, classifies Tibetan medicinal plants group based on their nature, potency, properties and qualities. They are classified in three broad groups.

1. Minerals in the form precious metals are classified into melt able and non-melt able, rock medicine and soil medicine.
2. Woody and herbaceous plants develop from its various growth factors and by the power and predominance of five elements.
3. The benefits of wild animals, birds big and small, aquatic animals, and domesticated animals-based materia medica.

Classification of Tibetan Materia Medica according to *Shel Gong Shel phreng*:

Shel Gong Shel phreng was authored by the renowned Tibetan materia medica scholar *Deuma Geshi Tenzin Phuntsok*, who traveled several times to India, Nepal and all over Tibet, and researched and thoroughly examined the medicinal ingredients. His classification is as follows:

1. Gem or precious medicines, such as gold, silver, copper and iron
2. Rock medicine, such as gold ore, silver ore, brass ore
3. Soil medicine, such as golden sand which comes from the soils.
4. Tree medicine, such as three fruits
5. Aromatic medicines are based on the aroma or fragrances from plants such as saffron
6. *Dumbu Thang sman*: Plants which have a strong root belong to biennial and perennial
7. Herbal medicine, which belong to annual plants such as rekon – *Corydalis*

8. Salt medicines which come from rocks and water bodies
9. Animal medicines: Medicine which are derived from animals such as wild animals, aquatic
10. Crop medicines: Medicines which come from cultivated fields such as wheat, barley.
11. Aquatic medicines: The medicines which originate from various sources such as drinking water, medicine water and spring water
12. Fire medicines: The medicine which have heat generating properties (*Taen pa jha mean gyi mea*) and those used for moxibustion (*Rea jha ched mae*)
13. Extracted medicine: The medicines derived from mineral ores such as essence of mineral or metals extracted in ash form (*Tsha wa mae dhus pa*) and decoction (*Sil wa chu dhus pa*)

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Gem medicine

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corallium rubrum (red coral)



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Turquoicum (turquoise)



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Pearls

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Soil medicine



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vermiculitum

Calamine

शुक्र
शुक्र
Stone medicine

शुक्र
शुक्र
Anhydrite



calcite



शुक्र
शुक्र
Hematite

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Wood medicine



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Terminalia chebula



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Punica granatum Linn



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Terminalia belarica

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Aromatic Medicine:

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Elettaria cardamomum

Syzygium aromaticum



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Saffron

धुम्बु थंगमन

Dhumbu Thang-men (Herbs with thick roots)

swertia chirata



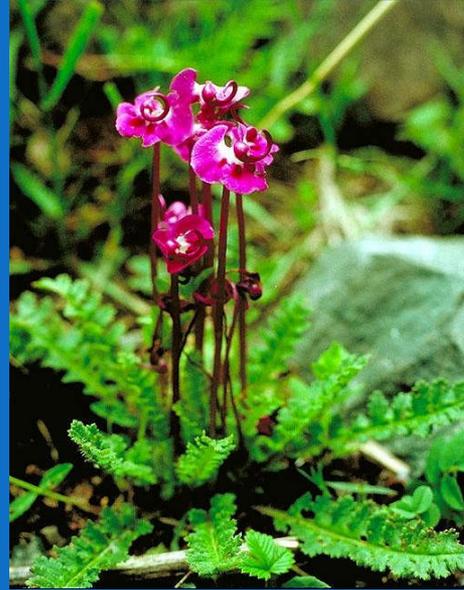
Justicia adhatoda



इनुला

Inula racemosa

Herbs



Herb

Pedicularis siphonantha



Herb

Meconopsis horridula

Picrorhiza kurrooa



Animal product

In early days animal products were used in Tibetan medicine , but today we are not using animal products in our medicine due to environmental issues.(related with endangering of species)

To understand Basic Knowledge of Tibetan Materia Medica :

- ལྷན་ བྱེད་ Correction Identification and its correct name
- ལྷན་ བྱེད་ རྒྱུ་ Classification of plant materia medica
- ལྷན་ བྱེད་ Morphological characteristic of plant.
- ལྷན་ རྒྱུ་ བྱེད་ ལྷན་ ལྷན་ Classification and Types of plants
- ལྷན་ Geographical distribution, Natural habitat and Altitudinal Ranges
- ལྷན་ ལྷན་ ལྷན་ ལྷན་ ལྷན་ ལྷན་ Period of collection and method of processing
- ལྷན་ ལྷན་ ལྷན་ ལྷན་ ལྷན་ parts use in medicine
- ལྷན་ ལྷན་ ལྷན་ Taste, potency and post-digestive taste
- ལྷན་ Medicinal uses.

The most important is correct identification of medicinal ingredients:

- The most important is correct identification of medicinal ingredients and to avoiding any mistake in identification of medicinal ingredients.
- The scientific identification of plants diverges from traditional systems of identification because each system is based on a different logic and methodology. However, the plant's morphological structure, colour and size remain the same.

The standard and correct naming of plants :

- It is very important to have a name for each plant to be able to identify it correctly.
- As Tibetan medical texts state, everything that exists in this universe as an object has a name to identify and define it, and this counts for plants as well.
- In Tibetan medicine, medicinal plant names are given based on habitat, colour, taste etc and resemblance to various objects and animals.



12 different ways naming of plant in Tibet medicine

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Naming of plant based on legendary

ལྷོ་གྲོ་

Naming of plant based on habitat or location

ལྷོ་

གྲོ་

Naming of plant based on resemble of objects

གྲོ་

Naming of plant based on tastes

གྲོ་

Naming of plants based on colours

ལྷོ་

གྲོ་

Naming of plant based their action or efficacy

ལྷོ་

ལྷོ་གྲོ་

Naming of plant based on reason

གྲོ་

Naming of plant based on their characteristic

ལྷོ་གྲོ་

Naming of plant based on India name

ལྷོ་

གྲོ་

Naming of plant based on hidden named

ལྷོ་

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Naming of plants based on

ལྷོ་

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གྲོ་

Naming of plant based relevant mixture

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Naming of plant based on legendary



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Naming of plant based on habitat or location



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Naming of plant based on
resemble of objects



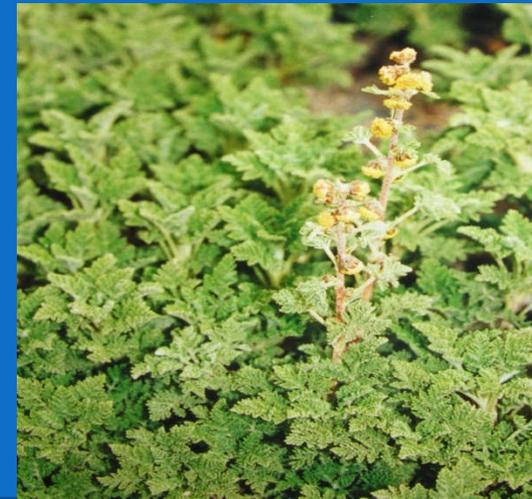
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Naming of plant based on
tastes



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Naming of plants based
on





Medicinal ingredients are obtained from Tibet, Nepal, India and Himalayan regions. Most of the herbs are from Tibet and Himalayan region, and most of the fruits and trees are from India.

Detoxification and processing

1. Kernels should be separated from fruit medicines.
2. Tree and root medicines should be peeled externally.
3. Gem medicines should be boiled.
4. Some medicines such as French bean should be heated in sand.
5. Some medicines such as calcite should be directly burned in fire.
6. Some medicines such as Clematis sp. should be burned in air tight containers.

Quality assurance

1. According to TM, ingredients are examined with its taste, odor, and color.
2. Quality of the ingredients are also analyzed scientifically.
3. The low quality ingredients are rejected.



The His Holiness The XIV
Dalai Lama Comments:

“Tibetan Medicine is far more advanced in the understanding of the nature of mind than Western medicine. In matters of understanding the physical functioning of the human body, Tibetan Medicine is less advanced than Western medicine.

Without mixing the two approaches, and without saying one is better than the other, both schools should work together in order to find ways of understanding and thus boost the effectiveness of the two healing techniques.”