

RAPID COMMUNICATION

## MEDICINAL PLANTS

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The utility of medicinal plants as described in various texts from time immemorial for treatment of human diseases is unique as much in effect as in harmless application. The world of medicine until recently exploited this source of supplies to render succour to the affected through different systems and methods.

The advent of modern medicine of chemical synthesis, with advantage of bulk production possibilities and the end product convenient to administer, set the pace of blocking the progress of plant medicine. But the many reactions found with indiscriminate use of modern drugs compelled the scientists to rethink in terms of plant medicine. The few results of evaluation encouraged the efforts to go in for more and more of experiments with different species of medicinal plants.

The following are a few species which have become very popular in Western use - not to speak of the others which are also found useful.

1. Rauwolfia Species
2. Vinca Rosea
3. Datura
4. Senna leaves and pods.

The importance, usefulness and demand of the few species was stressed by the western buyers in the International Seminar

of Medicinal Plants held in New Delhi in March 1983. The venue of the Seminar was selected due to this country's potential and involvement in the usages of medicinal plants through the different indigenous systems prevalent in India. This underlines the bright prospects for this country to develop economically in a new field such as this with vast potential.

Apart from this, with the declared objective of providing the Primary Health to the people of developing and underdeveloped countries of Asia, the WHO has launched many programmes for the development of many traditional remedies solely based on plant raw materials of the area concerned for application to the local populace.

To meet the requirements of medicinal plant raw materials in the twin areas, it has become very necessary that the present medicinal plant wealth throughout the country, surveyed and estimated and action taken immediately to develop cultivations to meet the existing vast demands.

The action in this direction can be taken up by constituting -

a) Regional Teams of Scientists to survey and assess the natural wealth with the co-operation of forest officials.

b) To encourage and assist organisations in appropriate agroclimatic areas to

develop cultivations of medicinal plant species having potential export avenue.

c) To organise natural growth collections by forest Department through tribals with-stress on regeneration.

d) To encourage tribals to revive ecology of barren forest areas by planting of commercial medicinal plant species.

A constant programme on (b), (c) and (d) will be advantageous for a regular flow of required species in quality and quantity to meet internal and external demand.

The development and production to meet the future demand must be systematically and scientifically implemented to achieve the objective.

Hence, for any consistent development in plant medicine to meet the world demand, the basic priority is the development of the Medicinal plant resources. Unless action is taken in this area, any talk of the utility of the plant medicine will be useless.

The scientific world is aware of this and absolute result can be achieved only by identify, the co-operation sector to achieve the objective.