

Good Agricultural and Field Collection Practices (GAFCP) for Medicinal Plants: Ancient notion to current venture

श्वभ्रशर्कराशमविषमवल्मीकशमशानाघातनदेवतायतनसिकताभिरनुपहतामनूषरामभङ्गुरामदूरोदकां स्निग्धां
प्ररोहवतीं मृद्वीं स्थिरां समां कृष्णां गौरीं लोहितां वा भूमिमौषधग्रहणाय परीक्षेत।
तस्यां जातमपि कृमिविषशस्त्रातपपवनदहनतोयसम्बाधमार्गेरनुपहतमेकरसं
पुष्टं पृथ्ववगाढमूलमुदीच्यां चौषधमाददीतेत्येष भूमिपरीक्षाविशेषः सामान्यः॥ (Su.Su-36/5)



Good Agricultural and Field Collection Practices (GAFCP) is not a brand new issue in the context of ancient Traditional System of medicine like Ayurveda. Recognizing the significance of plant bio-resources of varied values in ancient India, emphasis has been laid on cultivation, collection as well as conservation of medicinal flora in ancient texts like *Veda*, *Purans*, *Ramayana* etc. Systematic and detailed scientific documentation on GAFCP encompassing major issues like selection of the soil, methods of plant propagation, irrigation, plant nourishment, plant diseases and management etc. can be traced in the transcript of *Vrikshayurveda* along with ancient texts of Ayurveda like *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* etc.

Alongside, the protocols and methodology on influential concern for determining the quality and efficacy viz. suitable soil for cultivation and collection of plants, specific time and season for harvesting and collecting the requisite parts of medicinal plants have been indicated in Ayurveda texts, which certainly are the key factors for the potency of any drug. Ayurveda texts described various drugs collection practices as a part of Standard Operating procedures for pharmaceuticals. To procure best qualities of drug (*Bheshaja sampat*), Scholars of Ayurveda described the proper place of collection (*Aushadaha samgraha sthan/kshetra*), method of collection (*Aushadha samgraha vidhi*) and time of collection (*Aushadha samgraha kala*) for specific part used (*Prayojyanga*) which are very essential for achieving desired efficacy of a drug.

Flanking with larger interest and increased demand towards plant based drugs and medicinal system in recent times, it is the juncture to tap the potential of GAFCP enumerated in Ayurveda and other Vedic texts and to formulate appropriate methodology for developing interdisciplinary research protocol and package for GAFCP. This will be instrumental in quality assurance of medicinal plant materials used as the raw source in ASU systems and other traditional system of medicine as well as to improve the quality, safety and efficacy of the finished product. This is indispensable for commencement of national GAFCP guidelines for medicinal plants augmented with the merits of ancient principles and related standard operating procedure and value addition in terms of quality yield as advantages from integrated technologies.

Realizing its importance and rendering it as one of the thrust areas, the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) under Ministry of AYUSH is putting all its endeavor for validation and generation of tangible evidence for such ancient attributes related to GAFCP embodied in indigenous literatures such as exploring potential of traditional manures etc., so that this knowledge can be mainstreamed into practices. The Council is also disseminating the research outcomes of its activities related to this field like Ayurveda based seasonal collection practices for selected medicinal plants. Validation of the ancient concept was conducted by this Council through a study where in 10 systematically collected, authenticated plant materials in 6 different seasons as mentioned in the Ayurveda literature has already been published which revealed the presence of different concentration of bioactive component in different season and maximum concentration of the active constituents were found more in *Aushadha samgraha kala* (time of collection) mentioned in Ayurveda texts. Such initiative definitely stands with remarkable impact in disseminating the merits of Ayurveda fundamentals for their better utilization.

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