

Almost all ancient civilizations - the Egyptians, Indians, Chinese, Greeks and Romans, used leaves, stems, roots, flowers, fruits or seeds of certain plants for its therapeutic properties.

The ancient knowledge of herbs was handed down through the generations, and only those herbs to treat diseases and to revitalise the body system remain popular.

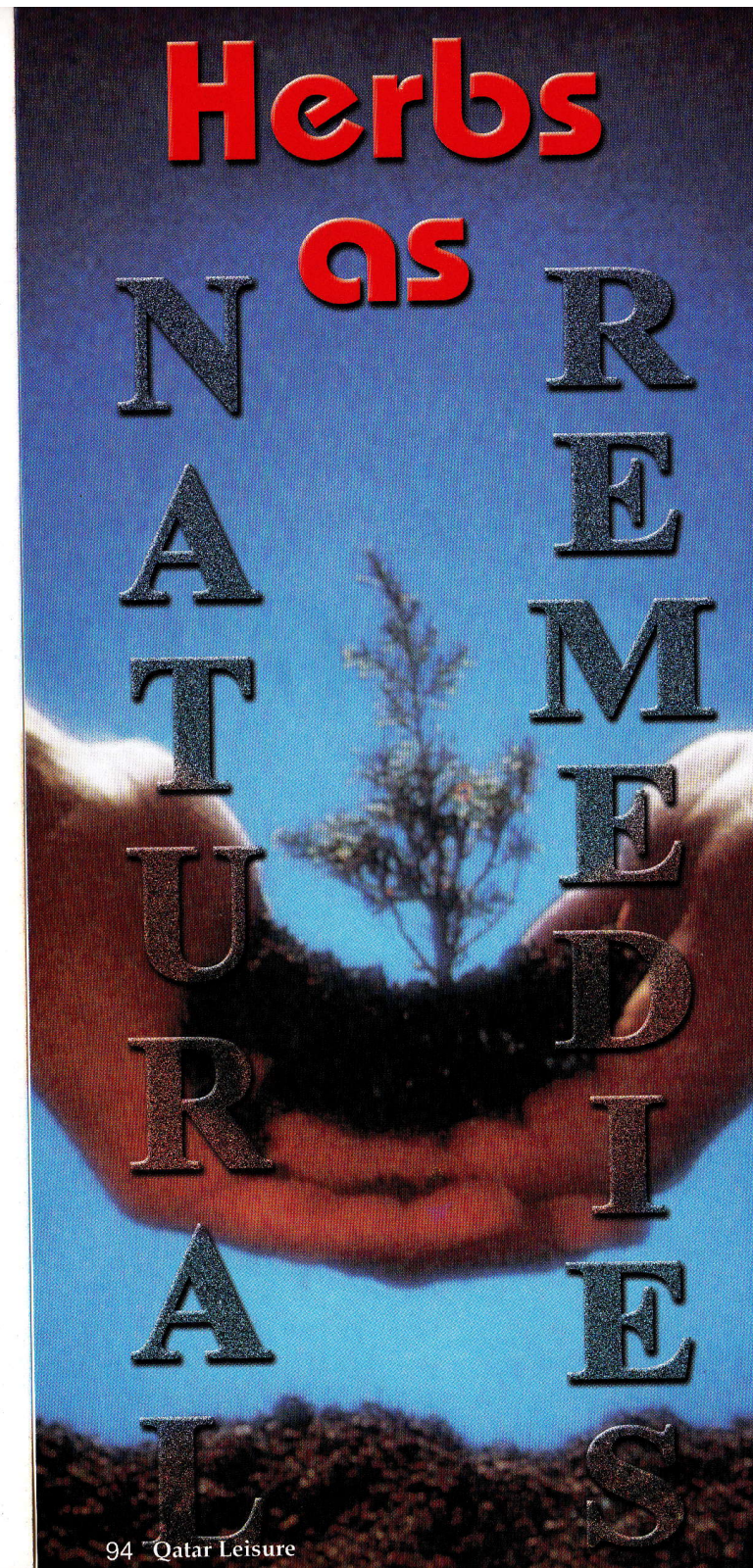
Traditional herbal remedies lead scientists to the development of certain modern drugs like aspirin. Techniques were used to extract only the active chemical components of the plants, like morphine, as an anaesthetic; ephedrine to treat breathlessness; reserpine for high blood pressure and salicylate (aspirin) for aches and pains. After testified side effects of drugs like these, people are now interested in the natural products.

Herbal remedies are specially popular to treat common ailments such as colds, coughs, aches, pains, stomach disorders constipation, diarrhea, indigestion, gastric com-

plaints, dysentery, nausea and vomiting. As substantial scientific evidence is available to confirm the advantages of these natural remedies, to treat the ailments, herbal supplements are booming. It is now packaged in labeled bottles even by the Western countries with increased standards of purity and quality.

Herbal treatments are very much a part of a cultural belief and are often used in exactly the same way. In the Arabic society, herbs are classified into elements - the water, earth, air and fire. These elements harmonise with the body in different ways. The body needs to balance its hot and cold qualities. An imbalance of either of these qualities leads to certain illnesses. Herbs are administered to counteract the imbalance.

In talking to, Mariam Ahmed Al Obaidly, I discovered that the herbs used locally are everyday foods or a combination of herbs used as food flavouring that can cause little side-effects. Let us go down this path to see what properties



the common herbs known to the Middle East countries have.

Sold in the old souq or Irani souq or popularly known as the Spice souq is *Ashrij Halool* to treat constipation. It is combination of herbs like ward (rose), Zatar (thyme), helba (fenugreek), jiljila (coriander), habithalwa (aniseed), ziyad, halila and al chilban.

\*\*\*\*\*

- Zatar (thyme) is used to treat stomachaches.
- Zamuta (bishop's weed) is effective for colic and gastro-intestinal disorders.
- Jiljilan (coriander leaves) and celery treats urinary disorders and jiljila (coriander seeds) helps promote menstrual flow.
- Zaafaran (saffron) is beneficial in the treatment of digestive disorders and regulates menstrual flow.
- After a good hearty meal, Chainana (mint tea) aids digestion.
- Photan tea is used to rid the body of stomach and intestinal gases.
- Bad breath or no, the curative and healing powers of garlic are real and make it a highly valued herb. The numerous properties of garlic such as to keep up strength, prevent infection from wounds, lowering blood pressure, treating tuberculosis, clearing skin of pimples amongst loads of other properties, are believed to be in practice for over five thousand years. This magic herb used both as food and seasoning is popular in countries across the world.
- Ginger both dry (zenchabel) and fresh cures cough, colds and morning sickness.
- Haso is used after childbirth to clean the system.
- Next time you have a headache, substitute the two Panadols for potato slices wrapped in muslin cloth and placed on the head or soak your feet in coffee water.
- What started as mild upset tummy turns

out to be several trips to the restroom! Reach out for onion juice! Well, you need to follow that with cardamom tea or chew a few cardamom seeds. It fights bad breath as well as relieves gas caused by the onion.

Some herbs are both stimulating and sedating. One such herb is lettuce. The leaves are used to treat insomnia, but also helps throw off toxic wastes.

The juice of cabbage leaves treats diabetes, spinach juice - anaemia and watermelon seeds - high blood pressure.

\*\*\*\*\*

The list is endless and around the world about 350,000 known herbs and plants have been examined and classified. Nearly 4000 new spices are added to the list yearly.

Although the healing properties of herbs are profound and more and more people turn to it, herbalists do not recommend it as a substitute for antibiotics or the contemporary medicine of allopathics to treat chronic diseases. Also, many herbs can interact negatively with the body system and, what is suitable for one, may not be suitable for another. "Natural doesn't always mean safe".

- Jyoti Ratan

**Dr. Johnny K. Kannampilly**   
B.D.S., M.D.S.

*Creating Smiles is our Business.  
Flashing it is yours ....*

**Orthodontist &  
General Dentistry**

TEL : 4434350 • P.O. Box : 3428 • Doha - Qatar  
TIMINGS : 8.30 am - 12.00 noon & 4.30 pm - 8.00 pm.