The plants have provided us with many highly potent molecules for the treatment of a wide range of ailments from minor headache to the deadly cancer. However, for some unknown reason, the chemically synthesised molecules have overshadowed the therapeutic importance of the plants and their active constituents. Over the last few decades, the toxicities and the cost of the allopathic medicines have made us realise the value of plants in the betterment of our lives. Of late, research on natural products have become an integral part of drug discovery process with the hope of finding potent and less toxic molecules. The discovery process has been made easy by the knowledge that our forefathers left behind in the form of various systems of medicine such as 'The Ayurveda'. They not only discovered the usage of plants to treat the diseases but also knew the art of preparing therapeutically effective formulations. Recent studies have revealed that they did not prepare polyherbal formulations without reason and each component of a formulation has a role to play in the effectiveness of that formulation.

The studies at Regional Research Laboratory, Jammu, India have revealed the role of black and long peppers in the polyherbal formulations as bioavailability enhancers. Piperine, an alkaloid, has been identified to be responsible for bioavailability enhancement activity of peppers. It has been shown to increase the bioavailability of several drugs as well as micronutrients. The improved bioavailability would lead
to reduced dose related toxicities and cost of the therapy. A glaring example is the reduction of the clinical dose of rifampicin from 450 mg to 200 mg with the inclusion of 10 mg of piperine in the formulation. The formulation has successfully completed phase IIIA clinical trials.

Hence, piperine, a child of The Ayurveda, needs to be used to its full potential for the betterment of lives of the ailing people. This piece of research is an attempt to advance the knowledge on the potential of piperine as a bioavailability enhancer.

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