INTRODUCTION
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Herbal medicines have a long and respected history. Many familiar medications of the twentieth century were developed from ancient healing traditions that treated health problems with specific plants. Today, science has isolated the medicinal properties of a large number of botanicals, and their healing components have been extracted and analyzed. Many plant components are now synthesized in large laboratories for use in pharmaceutical preparations.

There are over 750,000 plants on earth. Only a very few of the healing herbs have been studied scientifically. And because modern pharmacology looks for one active ingredient and seeks to isolate it to the exclusion of all the others, most of the research that is done on plants continues to focus on identifying and isolating active ingredients, rather than studying the medicinal properties of whole plants. Herbalists, however, consider that the power of a plant lies in the interaction of all its ingredients. Plants used as medicines offer synergistic interactions between ingredients both known and unknown.

The power and potency of the healing herbs are very real. Every herbal treatment has specific healing properties, carefully balanced to create a particular action within the body. Natural medicines are not like manufactured drugs. Herbal preparations work gently, so they take time to act internally. Natural herbal preparations are generally well tolerated. Most herbs are nontoxic, with few, if any, harmful side effects.

Herbal medicine has a long history, and a time-tested, valuable place in the treatment of many common health problems. Because they act gently, herbs are particularly suitable for treating children. When using herbs to treat an illness, it does not only help to alleviate symptoms, but also to address an underlying problem and strengthen the overall functioning of a particular organ or system. Herbs are readily available, they can even be grown in ones own backyard. The user can be sure of getting the best and purest product
possible. The more you use herbs, the more comfortable you will become with this gentle and effective form of health care.

With the patent bill already in the process of taking the effect, allopathic medicines are gradually getting more expensive. Things will further deteriorate once the patent law is further amended and completely implemented in the country. Modern medicines are bound to go out of reach of the common man. Consultation fee charged by qualified doctors in the allopathic system of medicine is unaffordable by many. Further with the introduction of preventive diagnosis system, instead of clinical diagnosis, the entire process of medication has become highly time consuming and expensive. Regular doses of antibiotics make a person immune to the drug thereby resulting in no positive effect on the patient. All these ills of allopathic medicines are being noticed not only in India but world over.

This has resulted in a substantial demand for traditional systems of medicines, such as Ayurvedic and Unani. The demand for these medicines has increased several folds in the last few years. *Chavan Prash* and certain cold remedies in *Ayurved* are very popular among Americans too.

On the global front we are forced to import certain herbal medicines, especially those not found in the country, to meet the emerging domestic demand. The trend of import of herbal medicines shows that in the last few years our total import of herbal medicines (including herbs and formulations in bulk and the branded forms) has gone up manifold. But considering the export figures of the same herbal medicines’ categories the problem does not pose any threat to us. Export figures of herbal medicines indicate the tremendous export potential for our producers. The present export of all the categories of herbal medicines is around four times of our total imports. In a span of last few years we have been able to increase our exports around four times. This is significant especially in the backdrop of very limited effort and focus to this category of export. Barring a few known exporters Like Dabur India Ltd. no concerted effort is made to promote the export of this particular category as a whole.
Despite this entire positive trend, there are not many companies manufacturing quality medicines in a presentable mode. The reason is the cost pressure on manufacturers who are incapable of transferring the rising raw material cost to the customers. Proper marketing, value-addition and consumer preferences are the matters mostly neglected in the whole process. Aromatic and medicinal plants also find usage in variety of consumer products like detergents, toiletries and soaps. But such problems are never faced there due to the modern approach of marketing in use.

The reason for this neglected state is the absence of any marketing effort on professional lines for the herbal medicines. In order to develop the market for indigenous medicinal formulations the expectations of the consumers in respect with product form, size, packaging, price, delivery etc. need to be studied and utilised. There is tremendous scope of value addition in such products. Due regard to the consumer needs will result in the increased demand. This consumer-friendly approach will help them switch over to herbal alternatives and therefore will have a two-pronged affect on the Indian economy:

- It will save hard cash from going abroad in buying allopathic medicines or license fee for manufacturing these medicines in India. Once the patent law is fully implemented it will provide alternate cheaper solutions by replacing the allopathic medicines with the locally produced herbal ones.
- It will help the nation in earning the hard currency by exporting the processed or raw forms of these herbal medicines to other nations.

The herbal medicines in the past had a faceless presentation and were sold on the strength of reputed and trusted Vaidas and Hakeems. They are rarely visible now. The only option today is to give them presentability by way of proper branding, packaging and value for money. Though the primary role of good packaging is to preserve the product, increasing consumerism catalysed by a fast-paced lifestyle, has lent a new meaning to the term. Manufacturers of fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) are increasingly investing in attractive packaging and designing as their marketing tool to
attract the consumer. The constantly changing convenience needs of the end users and growing awareness of consumers towards health, hygiene and multifaceted concepts have provided the dynamics of the package propped up by the state-of-the-art solutions. And meeting safety and statutory requirements has become more imperative than ever before.

Now with consumers shifting to branded products, even commodities like wheat flour, spices and salt are increasingly being packed and sold in branded form and flexible packaging is finding the market friendlier than ever before. The major differences of the Indian market when compared to its foreign counterparts are varying climates, consumer tastes and different retailing network. A packaging arrangement should hence be able to offer both a laminate which ensures shelf life and protection and at the same time be concerned about the consumer convenience and brand image of the product. High profile marketers like Hindustan Lever, Nestle and Proctor and Gamble always maintain their sway over their respective markets emphasising on the type, size and quality of their packaging. This is getting inevitable for the herbal medicine companies for their future survival.

Herbal products are presently under limited use. To popularize it, we must introduce new uses of the products. As on today herbal products are considered to be only of medicinal value. But in the past people had a lifestyle of using natural herbs for most of their needs. People switched over to synthetic items later considering the benefits of cleanliness, purity, durability, convenience and economy factors. Now the conditions are changed. People if they wish to revert again to their habit of herbal products that will be caused by another set of factors.

We therefore need to develop new set of uses of herbal products to fit the present tastes, habits and the lifestyle. Today, a number of variants of herbal products in solid, liquid and paste forms are needed for various market segments and uses of the products. Herbal products' essence, taste, nutritional value, digestive ease and medicinal value all these properties can be marketed in the form of a number of product lines of foods, beverages, cosmetics, toiletries, dentifrices, hair oils, perfumes and other consumer
goods. For this purpose the herbs can be classified and their different forms can be developed for well specified consumer and industrial uses. The products for consumer market will distinctly be different from those of the industrial market. In certain cases a particular industry will have its own preferences for the product attributes, sizes, packaging, price and distribution.

For consumer markets, careful market segmentation and targeting is needed for all the marketing decisions. In a number of product categories, a premium product and an economy product both may be required. The underlying concept is that for those who can afford paying extra for extra features, packaging and quality, a premium product with a high price tag is justified. For others an economy product is desirable.

The industrialists as well as consumers of the relevant categories are to be persuaded to use the concerned herbal products. When a number of forms, sizes and packages have been recommended, the next logical step is to suggest when, where and how to use it. It may be used somewhere to offer a herbal toothpaste or shampoo. It may be seen as a herbal nutritional hair oil. It may form the part of our cold drinks, sauces, chutneys and this way it becomes our breakfast or meal.

By popularising hundreds of such uses, the crude and simple herbs can be made a necessary component of more decent and favorite cosmetics, dishes, sweets, confectioneries and drinks. In a similar move, the industrial units in the following categories may be communicated with through the promotional efforts highlighting the profitable use of herbal products' inputs in their output:

a) Cosmetics & Toiletries  
b) Dentifrices, Hair Oils & Shampoos  
c) Perfumes, food essences & Colourants  
d) Confectioneries  
e) Jams, Jellies, Chutneys etc.  
f) Sweet Shops  
g) Bakeries
h) Processed Food Units
i) Juices & Breweries
j) Drug Manufacturers

All the above consumers and the industrial units, apart from knowing the uses, will also require enough justification for replacing other synthetic elements with herbal products. They may also require the herbs in the form of extract or essential oil or in paste form in convenient tubes/jars. This calls for not only a modern packaging arrangement but also a promotional effort to make the public opinion favorable, which is explained below.

What we need to do here is to take an offensive in the market for survival and consistent growth. This approach may be termed as Aggressive Marketing. Here the attempt will be to extend the market potential by designing an aggressive marketing plan backed by a calculated dose of advertising, publicity and other promotional means.

A long-term plan is to be adopted for changing the mindset of end users i.e. the customers. Each and every person on earth may feel that nature has given us the pure and safe things and the chemically treated ones are harmful and dangerous. A short-run plan is needed to motivate and convince the wholesalers, dealers, manufacturers and the opinion leaders about the safety and standards of the proposed substitutions. The following text of the messages will have to be passed repeatedly to the targeted public.

- **Replace your synthetic items intake with the "Herbal" alternatives**
- The manufacture of *synthetic items* involves a *cocktail of chemicals*. Moreover, the processing of synthetic items is carried on in mild steel equipment, which leads to a high dosage of Nickel in the mother liquor.
- **Why Herbal products?** Herbal products are "Natural" WITHOUT the use of any chemicals/ synthetic active elements.
- **Herbal products** contain an enormous wealth of *minerals/ protein/ vitamins.*
More importantly, herbal products have great nutritive and medicinal value. They are prescribed in the Ayurvedic and Unani systems of medicine.

Ancient Medical scriptures dating back to 2500 years state how herbal products are good for our health and well being.

It is no wonder that herbal products are regularly consumed by millions of industrial workers / rural folk who are exposed to higher levels of pollution. It helps them breathe easier and counter pollution naturally.

We, therefore, recommend the replacement (at least partially if not completely) of synthetic items in your diet/ health care items with herbal products.

Branding followed by advertising, publicity and sales promotion will be needed brand-wise. Every individual brand will be distinctly positioned and publicized in the market. But the final say will be that of the end users who will pay for the finished products. When they start demanding the more natural things, the whole scenario will get changed. The channels will be bound to honor the preferences of the consumers. This is called a pull strategy used in marketing. This will ensure the real success for those offering the herbal products in the context of the present age.