

TERAPIA HOLÍSTICA: AGRIMONIA EUPATHORA COMO FLORAL DE BACH E FITOTERÁPICO

HOLISTIC THERAPY: AGRIMONIA EUPATORIA AS BACH
REMEDY AND PHYTOTHERAPEUTIC REMEDY

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Resumo: As virtudes curativas do reino vegetal permeiam a história das civilizações há muito tempo, expondo-se por vários contextos de utilização, passando da simples nutrição do corpo até a utilização de suas propriedades químicas e energéticas para a restauração da saúde física, psíquica e espiritual. Foi refletindo sobre todas essas aplicações das plantas em benefício da saúde que se questionou neste artigo se as diversas propriedades da Agrimony (química e energética) não se assemelhavam de alguma forma, sendo passíveis, então, de serem utilizadas concomitantemente para o restabelecimento holístico da saúde. Para isso, sua indicação como fitoterápico e Floral de Bach foi analisada e discutida à luz dos princípios da Medicina Tradicional Chinesa, utilizando-se de informações sobre suas características botânicas e terapêuticas obtidas em livros e enciclopédias de botânica e farmácia, e nas bases de dados BVS e PUBMED. A partir da análise, percebeu-se que a indicação da Agrimony em ambos os contextos tratam alterações reconhecidas pela medicina oriental como decorrentes do fígado e da vesícula biliar, sendo que tanto o Floral quanto o fitoterápico obtido da *Agrimony* serão capazes de atuar sobre padrões energéticos desarmônicos desse órgão e víscera, bem como em suas alterações orgânicas, porém com influências de diferentes intensidades para cada um desses níveis de cura. Logo, a utilização concomitante do Floral e do Fitoterápico da *Agrimony*, neste caso, pode formar uma boa terapêutica para o restabelecimento holístico do indivíduo com tal padrão desarmônico.

Palavras-chave: Medicamentos fitoterápicos. Terapia floral. Medicina tradicional chinesa. Saúde holística.

Abstract: *The healing virtues of the vegetal kingdom have permeated the history of civilizations for a long time and are demonstrated by several usage contexts, from the simple nutrition of the body to the use of their chemical and energetic properties to restore the physical, psychic and spiritual health. A reflection on all the applications of the plants to benefit health led this article to discuss if the many properties (chemical and energetic) of Agrimony would be somehow similar to each other, and therefore likely to be used simultaneously in the holistic reestablishment of health. To do so, the indication of Agrimony as a Bach Flower and phytotherapeutic remedy was analyzed and discussed under the light of the Traditional Chinese Medicine, using information on its botanical and therapeutic characteristics obtained from botany and pharmacy books and encyclopedias, as well as from scientific journals from PUBMED and Virtual Health Library. The analysis showed that the indication of Agrimony to both contexts treat alterations that are recognized by the oriental medicine as resulting from the liver and the biliary vesicle. Bach flower and the phytotherapeutic remedies obtained from the *Agrimony* are capable of acting over disharmonic energetic patterns of this organ and viscera and over its organic alterations, but with influences of different intensities for each of these healing*

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levels. Therefore, the concomitant use of Agrimony as Bach Flower and as Phytotherapeutic remedy, may represent a good holistic approach to an individual bearing such a disharmonic pattern.

Key words: Phytotherapeutic drugs. Floral remedies. Medicine chinese tradicional. Holistic health.

INTRODUCTION

The healing virtues of the vegetal kingdom have been known since the most remote times of mankind's existence. The legend of the Greek god of medicine – Asclepius – showed the importance of plants in healing, as he became popular as a physician for using medicinal plants to treat ill people and resuscitate the dead.¹

The use of plants with healing properties by humans probably began in Prehistory, when their use was made by the ingestion of certain plants induced by the instinct of survival - as observed in animals to this date. Over time, humans realized that certain plants produced positive results in minimizing their illnesses and this empirical knowledge was handed down from one generation to another.²

In addition to having been used for a long time, the medicinal plants, that is, plants containing substances in one or more of its parts that can be used with therapeutic purposes, have been described by many peoples and used until today.³ Egyptian papyruses mentioned thousands of herbs from which oils were extracted and used in cosmetics and preservation of other materials. Hebrew and Chinese manuscripts described in details approximately 2000 herbs that were employed in the treatment of several pathological disorders of humans. In the 2nd century, Galenus described nearly thirty recipes with herbal extracts having medicinal purposes. The "Hungarian water," as described in 1380, was the first alcoholic rosemary extract, and was used in Europe for five centuries. Paracelsus, an alchemist of the 16th century, made an important contribution to the study of aromatic and medicinal herbs by introducing the use of herbs to hot baths, a therapy still used in the Ana Aslan Geriatric Institute in Romania and spread all over the world.⁴

In Germany of the 12th century, Abbess Hildegard von Bingen described in one of her publications the indications of natural products (plants, waters, minerals) according to their "temperaments".⁵ Paracelsus proclaimed that plants, particularly the aromatic ones, could modify the core of the inner body and that their perfumes were capable of strengthening the body, making it capable of recovering from inflammations and infections.⁶

About 2400 years ago, Hippocrates already used to recommend willow leaves to treat inflammations and birth labor. Today, the salicylic acid from the willow tree is synthesized by the pharmaceutical industry into aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) and has become the most popular pharmaceutical remedy all over the world.⁷

The way medicinal plants were used along the History of Civilizations has gone through noticeable changes: from the mere nutrition of the body with their vitamins, proteins and mineral salts, going through the use of their therapeutic and energetic properties to the harmonization of the physical, psychic and spiritual bodies, and to nowadays when the chemical properties characteristic of certain plants are isolated and administered to individuals with very specific purposes.

However, in none of these moments or in the context of its use, these properties were misguided or unprofitable. There are no reports that refute the healing or the energetic properties of plants, their nutritive power, or their chemical-pharmacological characteristics. As time went by, the method or the belief of healing was simply replaced by others.

When reflecting about this, we wondered if the many properties of each plant (nutritive, chemical, energetic) could be somehow similar to each other, being therefore possible to use them concomitantly and intentionally in the holistic reestablishment of health.

The objective of this essay is to discuss the properties of *Agrimonia eupatoria* (popular referred to as Agrimony) as a Bach Flower and as a phytotherapeutic remedy. Gathering information regarding different properties of the plants used medicinally could lead to heal a human as a whole in its triple bio-psycho-spiritual dimension.

A literature review was carried out on the botanical and therapeutic characteristics of the plant *Agrimonia eupatoria* in botany and pharmacy books and encyclopedias, as well as in scientific journals from PUBMED and Virtual Health Library. Based on the information collected, a correlation was made between the phytotherapeutic and vibrational properties of the *Agrimonia eupatoria* (Rosaceae family) in the light of the principles of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). TCM can also use phytotherapies in his healing process; furthermore, it presents two aspects that allow the correlation of phytotherapeutic and vibrational properties of the *Agrimonia eupatoria*: his root is an integrative and holistic way of understanding the human being and TCM is empirical in his practices, allowing the use of logic and deduction⁸.

Agrimony in the repertoire of Bach Flowers

Bach Flowers concretize the hard search of Dr. Edward Bach (1886-1936), a general practitioner and homeopathic physician born in Wales, England, for a simpler and more natural therapeutic method capable of healing causes in lieu of symptoms, treating the individual and not the disease.⁹ Dr. Bach believed that individuals could be grouped in several types of personalities and attitudes that are either momentary or entrenched to the being, and that each of these “types” would react to a disease in a peculiar way¹⁰, that is, the mental attitude, the personality and the actions of people would play an important role in the health status and in the recovery from diseases.

Based on this belief and on his experience with homeopathy, he prepared “remedies” from some plants in the same way as homeopathic vaccines, and administered them according to the types of personality, obtaining satisfactory results immediately. Later, seeking more plants to accomplish his ideal, he started to explore mountains, valleys, wetlands and shores in the search for flowers. He then chose to prepare the “remedies” with fresh flowers collected during the peak of the blossoming period, in the first hours of the day, period in which the sun reaches the peak of its power in the northern hemisphere. He also concluded that the sunbeams reaching the dew drops in the calyxes of the flowers should transfer the vibrational energetic mark of the flowers to the water, similarly to what happened to the dew.¹¹

Among his discoveries, Dr. Bach added flowers to a container with water and exposed it to the sun, after which he drank the elixir and experienced in his own body the physical and emotional symptoms. He noticed that drinking the solution diminished the symptoms and triggered alleviation in his patients following similar patterns. He described the existence of a real link between the emotions and the infirmities, a path through which it is also possible to heal.⁹

In this context, Dr. Bach concluded that certain flowers have a vibratory pattern related to a corresponding pattern in the human soul and psyche and, surprisingly, the botanical characteristics of the flower (color, shape, size, habitat, growth patterns) were comparable to the characteristics and gestures of the corresponding human personality.¹² For this, Bach used an old-aged concept known as Doctrine of Signatures that find parallels between the plant’s appearance, structure, biological behavior and the symptomatic disease expressions of the human body.¹³ This way, he determined the Bach Flowers repertoire with 38 essences capable of acting on certain emotional conditions by means of vibrational resonance, acting as catalysts that stimulate and energize the process of inner transformation, therefore promoting deep emotional and mental changes that could also correct physiological modifications.

Agrimony is part of this repertoire and was recommended by Dr. Bach to individuals that frequently hide their disturbances with smiles, joviality, jokes and witticism, and are seen as good friends, but are internally tormented by deep mental disturbances that are hidden from the others and from themselves.

They are afraid of being alone as they fear to be invaded by the problems and indecisions that torment their minds, and therefore tend to the vices of alcohol and other drugs in order to maintain the false happiness to cover their problems.¹⁴⁻¹⁶

In an analogy to the signature of *Agrimony*, this “type” of personality also presents an intense fear of the present and particularly of the future, which could lead the person to suicide for being incapable of making a decision to face his/her fears. These people are not concerned about danger, but are internally fearful in all senses. They are restless, active, tireless, always doing something, and during their sleep, they have to cope with deep apprehension, agitation, and insomnia because of the profusion of thoughts, which only let them sleep when they are very exhausted. According to Dr. Bach, these souls are tormented, tired of their suffering, and sometimes would prefer death as an alternative, even though they appear to be brave, willing to fight, and very lively.¹⁴⁻¹⁶

The botanical features or gesture of *Agrimony*, as described by Dr. Bach,¹⁴⁻¹⁶ that determine its use for this emotional condition include the particularities listed in the table 1.

Table 1- Analogy between botanical features of *Agrimony* and human characteristics.

Botanical Characteristics of <i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>	Symbolism related to the characteristics of a person <i>Agrimony</i> “type”
Seeds in the shape of a church bell	The church bell is related to loud laughter, simulated by the <i>Agrimony</i> “type” – delightful and loud, but false, just like the sound made by a bell, which is louder than the sound that the metal would have if it didn't have that shape.
The seeds have two little hooks that cling on to people and animal bumping on them when passing by roads and walkways, characterizing a type of dispersion of the seeds.	The person wishes a lively interaction with others to pass along his/her own seeds of wisdom. They help others to find a reason for their lives, but are unable to find a deeper perspective to their own lives.
Grow in locations where there are always other species of plants surrounding it along roads and walkways	<i>Agrimony</i> people always want to have other people around to fulfill the void they fear when they are alone.
Presence of hair on the stem (sensorial organs of the plant)	<i>Agrimony</i> people perceive everything around them, including the complexity and difficulty to live, but cannot accept that and live in a conflict with themselves.
Flowers in yellow color	The yellow in <i>Agrimony</i> reflects the yellow of the bile and urine, important excretions for the body to get rid of impurities and harmful substances. The Bach remedy of this plant helps cleaning the spiritual pains of life and to digest them healthily.
The plant is tall and has its flowers in spearlike clusters pointing upwards	<i>Agrimony</i> is a tall and spearlike plant that reaches heights that surpass the sufferings of the world.

Source: developed by the authors.

In general, the essence prepared with *Agrimony* provides the individuals in emotional condition with the honesty to themselves and to the others, without the need to simulate acts that are contrary to their feelings, as they will feel capable of facing what used to torment their minds. The *Agrimony* Bach remedy provides the awareness and understanding of these torments and conflicts, recovering the belief in one's self that empowers the individuals to face such problems.

Agrimony as a Phytotherapeutic Remedy

Inasmuch as the *Agrimony* is described in several periods of history for its wide use in the treatment of symptoms and diseases³, we can also point it as a phytotherapeutic remedy. The word Phytotherapy derives from the Greek “*Phytos*”, which means vegetal, and “*Therapeia*”, meaning therapy. Therefore, this

word transmits the idea of a treatment characterized by the use of plants of parts of plants (leaves, stem, flowers, roots, or fruits) in order to prevent, alleviate or heal a pathological process.

In the 16th century, for instance, Paracelso assigned to the *Agrimony* the astringent property capable of healing anginas, nephrites, leukorrheic discharges, and bladder disorders. He proposed that a lotion made from this plant could be used against cataracts, luxation, and wounds, and could even be effective against snake bites.¹

According to the European Pharmacopoeia, *Agrimony* – frequently found in Europe and Eastern Asia, and usually found on walls and paths all over the European continent – is used for therapeutic purposes because of the chemical substances found primarily in its flowers: catechic tannins (4 to 10%) and ellagitannins (5 to 10%), as well as triterpenic compounds, ursolic acid, silicic acid, flavonoids, bitter constituents, mucilages, and phytosteroids. Due to the amount of tannins, it is indicated by such literature to astringent purposes on the skin. Flavonoids have anti oxidant and repairing action on the skin tissue. Therefore, creams and lotions using water and glycolic extracts from the aerial parts of flowers are used on aged skin and on the “eyelid bags”, as well as in inflammations, chilblains, and skin ulcers.¹⁷

Englishmen describe the use of the infusion of branches, leaves and dry flowers of *Agrimony* in a powerful gargling that relaxes the throat, or the ingestion of this liquid, cold, three or four times a day to treat diarrhea or passive hemorrhages.

Historically, the name *Agrimony* comes from “*Argemone*”, a name given by the Greek to plants used to heal the eyes, while the name “*eupatoria*”, from the Greek “*eupatórión*” and Latin “*eupatorium*”, refers to resignation and patience. This denomination was given by king Mithridates Eupator, which officially introduced the medicinal use of this plant.

Some articles published between 1751 and 1771 recommended the decoction of *Agrimony* leaves to treat alterations of the hepatic function, such as jaundice and hepatic colic.¹⁸

In North America, the native peoples of the United States and Canada used it successfully to alleviate fevers. Some authors indicate that its root seems to have the property of the Peruvian bark (a plant that presents substances used in medicine to reduce fever), not manifesting any of its inconvenient qualities, and that rarely fails to heal the fever when taken in large doses.¹⁸

In the Middle Ages, *Agrimony* was believed to have the power to induce deep sleep just by placing the plant under the pillow, even though its chemical composition does not contain any narcotic property.¹⁶

In North America, some authors recommend *Agrimony* for topical use as oils or ointments for ulcers and bruises, and for internal use as syrups or concentrated juices for the poisoning by snakes. It also helps in the alleviation of abdominal cramps and expectoration of pulmonary secretions.¹⁹

Recently, an experimental study with rats to examine the hepatoprotective effects of *Agrimony* water extract against chronic ethanol-induced liver injury demonstrated that *Agrimony* protected the rats of the injury through suppression of oxidative and Toll-like receptor mediated inflammatory signaling.²⁰

Agrimony used in a holistic context

The comparative analysis between the use of *Agrimony* as a Bach Flower and as a Phytotherapeutic Remedy, shows some similarities that allow the following symbolic relationship:

- » It provides the person that uses the Bach remedy of this plant with the “digestion” (processing and assimilation) and “elimination”, when necessary, of problems that permeate life (pain, death, responsibilities). On the other hand, *Agrimony*, when used as a phytotherapeutic remedy, is indicated to diarrheas, vesicle, renal and hepatic disorders, favoring the digestion of food (processing and assimilation) and the elimination of toxins and substances that are unnecessary and harmful to the body by means of the feces and urine.
- » *Agrimony* Bach remedy raises in people the awareness of the “masks” created to dissimulate their real feelings towards others and themselves, providing them with emotional honesty, which is the

first step to face their problems. Likewise, the phytotherapeutic remedy obtained from this plant has a high astringent power, and therefore is used on wounds, cataracts, and anti-aging aesthetic treatments, as it demonstrates efficacy in cellular regeneration (restitution of the anatomical and functional integrity of the tissue), that is, in the replacement of an old and inefficient tissue by a new and functional one.

» As a Bach remedy, *Agrimony* is also indicated to the fear of facing problems, of being alone with one's self (such as when sleeping, for instance), as this is when people realize how fragile they are before their problems after a mental brainstorm. In this case, the Bach remedy stimulates in people the courage to face their problems without the need for distractions (intense social activities, drugs), as what used to torment their minds is no longer seen with fear, but as something that can be overcome. As a phytotherapeutic remedy, *Agrimony* has already been indicated to induce deep sleep, as this is a period when the mind gets in touch with all impressions (visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, and emotional) experienced during the day. That is, even in an induced and uncontrollable way, it stimulates people to become aware of their fears and problems, even if by means of dreams, and to find ways to deal with their realities.

Based on this description, the plurality of symptoms mentioned deal with alterations recognized by the western medicine as being related to the liver and biliary vesicle, and Bach mentions this possible relation when he points out that the color of *Agrimony* indicates, by similarity, the bile, a representative secretion of this organ and vesicle. Therefore, it is possible to say that the main analogy between the use of this plant as a Bach remedy and phytotherapeutic remedy resides in its action on the liver and the biliary vesicle, taking into consideration the bio-psycho-spiritual dimensions.

If the judgment of this relationship is made under the light of TCM, this similarity becomes even clearer and more comprehensive, justifying almost all the therapeutic indications of *Agrimony*.

TCM proclaims the cure by solving the origin of the problem, reharmonizing the energetic flow of the organ or viscus initially altered, so as to revert its desirable functioning. In this case, health is reestablished when the three dimensions of the person are normalized: the physical being (represented by the material body), the emotional being (represented by feelings and emotions), and the energetic being (represented by consciousness).²¹

According to TCM, the liver and the biliary vesicle form a pair of organ and viscus with energetic characteristics of the element Wood, one of the five Chinese elements that represent the activities of the Yin and Yang forces manifested in the cycles of change in nature, regulating the life in its many transformation stages: growth and decline, climate changes, sounds and flavors, and emotional characteristics.²²

The element Wood represents the ascension of the Yang energy, expansive and dynamic, characterized by the Spring. The Wood energy is assigned with movements, impulses, freedom, acceptance, decision power, purpose and reason for life, which are matters that, in a first glance, are already related to the functions assigned to *Agrimony*.²²

In TCM, the liver and the biliary vesicle, additionally to being the center of metabolism and digestion of some foods, coordinate and determine the distribution of blood and the rhythm of activity of muscles, tendons and aponeuroses, nails, eyes, and sexual organs (particularly the uterus, including the hormonal regulation). They are responsible for eliminating toxins and residues in all dimensions of the individual: physical, mental, and psychic, also through the emotional balance. The energy of the liver and the biliary vesicle links the material being with the ethereal world, enabling the raising of awareness and materialization of thoughts and plans, therefore allowing a person to overcome difficulties through realization.²²

Taking this knowledge into consideration, people that present hepatic and biliary alterations cannot perform well the digestion and the synthesis of proteins (including platelet proteins and other plasmatic proteins responsible for coagulation and cicatrization), the metabolism of drugs, hormones, amino acids,

lipids, cholesterol, and the elimination of toxins and other substances. They also have difficulties in making plans, making decisions, and assuming positions. Consequently, these people experience feelings of frustration, anger, jealousy, lack of reason for life, loss of motivation, and confidence problems (faith), including doubts about the values of life, which are symptoms described by Bach to designate people that need *Agrimony* Bach remedy and also found in individuals with digestive alterations resulting from the poor functioning of the liver.

Still according to TCM, a person that suffers physical aggression on the liver and biliary vesicle would present physiological dysfunctions in this organ and viscus, and also energetic dysfunctions related to the disharmony of this organ and viscus, and vice-versa.

In this context, *Agrimony* Bach remedy acts to restore the energy of the liver and biliary vesicle, providing the individual with the possibility to face the responsibilities and spiritual and physical sufferings of life with courage, hope, and determination, facing problems in a direct and ordinary way, not fearing them and without the need to hide feelings to one's self or to others for having recovered faith in one's self and in life. Still according to the Chinese medical reasoning, this interference would not exclude the consequent action of this person in the alleviation of the symptoms of physical changes in this organ and viscus (considering, obviously, how compromised these are).

On the other hand, the phytotherapeutic use of *Agrimony* would determine the physical restoration of the liver and biliary vesicle, promoting the regulation of the hepatic-biliary functions from the point of view of TCM, effectively combating diarrhea, jaundice, and hepatic colic through the simple normalization of digestion promoted by the liver and biliary vesicle. *Agrimony* may also work against the poisoning by snakes, bladder disorders related to muscle discoordination, and bruises, considering that the liver is responsible for the elimination of substances that are harmful to the body and for the distribution of the blood to muscles, adjusting their tonus and movement. It is also effective against cataract, as the liver is the organ that leads the blood irrigation in the eyes, keeping them irrigated, and effective against fever when the problem is related to excessive energy produced in the body with warm nature, or Yang, which is characteristic of that organ.

The treatment of inflammatory problems and lesions that need cicatrization may also be accomplished with the use of *Agrimony* phytotherapeutic remedy, as its action on the liver enables the synthesis of proteins and other substances that are important to the process of control of hemorrhage and cicatrization. Therefore, it is efficient against nephritis and sore throats, aged skin, chilblains, skin ulcers, and passive hemorrhages. Leukorrheic discharges and menstrual cramps may also be solved, as the liver plays a role in the female hormonal regulation, which is usually connected to this problem. Not less important, the induction of deep sleep may be due to the fact that the liver energy is capable of connecting the individual with the images from the unconscious, which are accessible primarily during the REM (rapid-eye-movement) sleep, a phase in which the integration of the daily activity occurs, that is, the separation of what is ordinary from what is important. Moreover, as in the case of the Bach remedy, *Agrimony* phytotherapeutic remedy would also and consequently act on the energetic re-balancing of the liver and biliary vesicle.²¹

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The use of medicinal herbs is recommended when it proposes not only to eliminate the symptoms of a given disorder, but also to balance the situation as a whole, harmonizing the many functions of the organism with their chemical and energetic features. Therefore, the medicinal plant is not associated to a certain disease, but to the person that lost the biological balance. From this point of view, the symptom is only one of the possible manifestations of a physical-energetic unbalance.

The handling of plants to obtain a remedy is what will determine the mechanism of action on the human body, capable of being more effective on the energetic pattern, as in the case of Bach Flowers, or

on physical alteration, which is designated to phytotherapeutic remedies. However, its chemical and energetic properties are present in all types of preparation, as any type of quantity of the sampled plant would contain its entire information, just like the human DNA, which is present even in the most remote parts of the body and contains all the information on its composition and functioning.

As described in this essay and according to TCM, *Agrimony* acts on liver and biliary vesicle disorders when prepared as a Bach Flower or phytotherapeutic remedy.

Hence, both the Bach Flower and the phytotherapeutic remedy obtained from *Agrimony* would be capable of working on disharmonic energetic patterns of the liver and biliary vesicle, and also on their chemical-physiological alterations, but would have different levels of influence for each of these levels of healing - Bach remedy with a more accentuated action on the energetic body, and the phytotherapeutic remedy with stronger influence over the physical body. Thus, the concomitant use of Bach Flower and the phytotherapeutic remedy made from *Agrimony*, or *Agrimonia eupatoria*, may represent a good therapy for patients with the liver and biliary vesicle disorders mentioned above, so as to reestablish the individual in a holistic way.

This knowledge it is important to healthcare professionals to support the working on health promotion and to lead people in their self care.

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