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Dept. Of Zoology

CHAPTER -1

INTRODUCTION

Infectious diseases are the world's leading cause of premature death, killing almost 50,000 people everyday. Although diseases are self limiting, majority of them can be life threatening demanding antibiotic therapy. Moreover in most of the developing countries people are living in less hygienic conditions and the chances of contagious diseases are undoubtedly high.

Diseases are caused by a wide variety of microorganisms. Antibiotics are considered to be important in combating diseases caused by microbes. Resistance to antimicrobial agents is emerging in a wide variety of pathogens. Multiple drug resistance is becoming common in diverse organisms such as *Streptococcus pneumonia*, *Escherichia coli*, *Klebsiella sp.*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, to name a few. Antibiotics also cause significant side effects. Apart from this increasing cost of antibiotics is posing a difficulty in the accessibility of it to common people. This has necessitated the search for new antimicrobial substances from other sources including plants. Over the past 20 years there have been a lot of investigations on plants as source of new antimicrobial novel substances active towards these pathogens.

Herbal drugs are the mainstay of about 75-80% of the world population, mainly in the developing countries for the primary health care. Problems with drug resistance of micro-organisms, side effects of modern drugs and emerging diseases, for which no medicines are available, have stimulated renewed interest in plants as a significant source of new medicine. Antimicrobials of plant origin have enormous therapeutic potential. They are effective in the treatment of infectious diseases while simultaneously mitigating many of the side effects that

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