

Host plant resistance – Importance – disease resistance, tolerance, susceptibility and disease escape. Horizontal and vertical resistance – Method of management of resistance. Immunization – Systemic acquired resistance

Host plant resistance

A physiological deviation from the normal functioning of the organism (i.e., the crop plant) caused by pathogenic organisms is a disease and may be caused by fungi, bacteria or viruses. The inherent ability of an organism (i.e., the crop plant) to resist or withstand the pathogen is called resistance. Disease resistance commonly met with in the plant kingdom relative in nature, total immunity being too rare. Its hereditary transmission from parent to off-spring is essentially “Mendelian”, but often polygenic.

The earliest demonstration of the behaviour of “disease-resistance” as a character transmissible from parent to off-spring in the “Mendelian” fashion was given by Biffen (1905) in his work on yellow rust of wheat. Since then, intensive work has been done on this aspect which has proved the value of applying genetical principles in developing disease-resistant varieties of plants for effective control of diseases.

Resistant varieties can be the simplest, practical, effective and economical method of plant disease control. The use of resistant varieties cannot only ensure protection against diseases but also save the time, energy and money spent on other measures of control. In addition to these advantages, resistant varieties, if evolved, can be the only practical method of control of such diseases as viruses, phytoplasmas wilts, and rusts etc. in which chemical control is very expensive and impractical.

In crops of low cash value, chemical and other methods of control are often too expensive to be applied. In such crops development of varieties resistant to important diseases can be an acceptable recommendation for the farmer. Pathogenicity is the ability of a pathogen to attack a host. Pathogenicity includes virulence and aggressiveness. Virulent strains of pathogen cause much severe symptoms of the disease and they carry the virulence gene that enables it to attack a particular host genotype.

Virulence is due to the action of one or a few genes. An aggressive strain of a pathogen causes severe disease on all the host genotypes which they are able to attack and aggressiveness is polygenically inherited. Host – Pathogen relationship A disease is the result of an interaction

of genes governing resistance in the host with those governing pathogenicity in the pathogen. The resistance of a crop to a physiological race of the pathogen depends not only on the genotype of the host for resistance, but also upon the genotype of the pathogen for virulence or aggressiveness. Flor (1942) proposed the gene-for-gene hypothesis, according to which, for every gene for resistance in the host, there is a corresponding gene for pathogenicity in the pathogen.

It means that there are atleast two alleles at a locus controlling resistance/susceptibility in the host (R-r) and two alleles at a corresponding locus in the pathogen (V-v) controlling virulence / aggressiveness. Out of the four possible interactions between these alleles, only one combination leads to the expression of resistance. The demonstration of gene-for-gene relationship requires genetic studies of both the host and the pathogen.

Pathogen

VI v1 + Pathogen can infect; the host is R1 -+ susceptible r1 + + -

Pathogen cannot infect; the host is resistant

The demonstration of gene-for-gene relationship requires genetic studies of both the host and the pathogen

Vertical resistance (VR) and horizontal resistance(HR)

Van der Plank (1960) has discussed the whole issue of disease resistance in a different perspective. He calls the unstable and often complete type of resistance as vertical resistance and the more stable but somewhat incomplete resistance as horizontal resistance. If resistance to some races of a pathogen is more than to other races, it is called Vertical resistance. It is also called Perpendicular resistance, Physiological resistance, seedling resistance, hypersensitivity, race specific resistance or qualitative resistance. As it is conditioned by one or a few genes, it is called major gene or monogenic or oligogenic resistance.

Resistance to more than one race of the pathogen or to many or all races of the pathogen is called Horizontal Resistance. It is non-specific resistance governed by polygenes. It is severally termed as non-specific, general, polygenic, minor gene, mature plant, adult, quantitative resistance, partial or field resistance or tolerance. HR causes reduction in the number and rate of sporulation of the pathogen on the host and slows down the infection rate. HR includes tolerance slow development of disease, escape and exclusion mechanisms besides

hypersensitive reaction. The difference between vertical resistance and horizontal resistance are given in table.

Differences between vertical and horizontal disease resistance * Detectable by analysis of variance of a suitable experiment

Feature	Vertical resistance	Horizontal resistance
Pathotype-specificity	Race specific	Race nonspecific
Nature of gene action	Oligogenic	Polygenic; rarely oligogenic
Response to pathogen	Usually, hypersensitive	Resistant response
Phenotypic expression	Qualitative	Quantitative
Stage of expression	Seedling to maturity	Expression increases as plant matures (Adult plant)
Selection and evaluation	Relatively easy	Relatively difficult
Risk of 'boom and burst'	Present (rarely durable)	Absent (durable)
Suitable for: a. Host b. Pathogen	Annuals but not perennials Immobile pathogen, e.g., Soil pathogens, but for mobile air-borne, pathogens	Both annuals and perennials All pathogens
Need for specific deployment of resistant varieties	Critical for success with mobile pathogens	None
Need for other control measures	Likely	Much less likely
Host-pathogen interaction *	Present	Absent
Efficiency	Highly efficient against specific races	Variable, but operates against all races

Vertical resistance to specific races is generally governed by a single (monogenic) dominant gene or by a few dominant genes. Some of these genes may be multiple alleles as in leaf rust gene, Lr2 that accords resistance to *Puccinia recondite tritici*. In that locus, four genes designated as Lr2a, Lr2b, Lr2c and Lr2d are present and are tightly linked. Each of these genes accord resistance to a different spectrum of races and hence can be differentiated from one another. Such multiple alleles exist on Sr9 locus of wheat for *P.graminis tritici* and gene Pi-k in rice for resistance to *Pyricularia grisea*. The tight linkage between the multiple alleles permits an efficient transfer of all these genes in one attempt.

‘Horizontal resistance’ (HR) reduces the rate of disease spread and is evenly spread against all races of the pathogen. The low terminal disease severity in HR is assumed to result from polygenic resistance. Morphological features such as size of stomata, stomatal density per unit area, hairiness, waxiness and several others influence the degree of resistance expressed. Partial resistance, dilatory resistance, lasting resistance are some other terms coined for denoting horizontal resistance.

The phenomenon of slow rusting manifested as lesser number of pustules per unit leaf area, smaller size of uredosori and increased latent period in some wheat cultivars is a typical example of this type of resistance. Although it is preferable to use varieties that have both vertical and horizontal resistance, most of the resistant varieties carry only one or few (2 or 3) major genes of vertical resistance. If varieties are resistant only to some of the races of pathogen and if the pathogen is airborne, then new races evolve easily, as happens with cereal rusts, the powdery mildew and *Phytophthora infestans*. Appearance of new races lead to breakdown of resistance of the popular, ruling genotype. As a result, varieties with vertical resistance need to be replaced at frequent intervals.

Boom and burst cycle

In varietal improvement programmes, it is easy to incorporate the monogenic vertical resistance genes. But the success of exploiting the monogenic host resistance invariably does not last long. Whenever a single gene-based resistant variety is widely adopted, the impact would be the arrival of new matching pathotypes.

These pathotypes soon build up in population to create epidemics and eventually the variety is withdrawn. This phenomenon is generally called “boom and burst”. To avoid the implications of boom and burst phenomenon, use of durable host resistance is advocated in several crops. Durable resistance remains effective even though it may be widely grown over a long period of time, in an environment that favours the disease. For example, oat variety, Red Rust Proof is still resistant against crown rust even after a hundred years. Wheat varieties, Thatcher and Lee have withstood stem rust for 55 and 30 years, respectively. Cappelle Desprez expresses at adult stage, a moderate resistance to yellow rust and this has been maintained for the last 20 years.

Two of the genes like Lr34 for resistance of leaf rust and Sr2 for resistance to stem rust have been recognized for durability. Wheat cultivars such as HD2189, HP1102, DL153-2, DL803-3 and DL802-2, which possess Lr34 with other gene combinations have a good degree of resistance and have become popular with growers. So far, there is no precise way available to identify the genetic components that are associated with durable resistance. Nor does dissociation of genes for virulence totally explain the basis of varietal durability, though it is likely to be the most plausible reason. Boom and burst cycle—a characteristic of vertical resistance. Resistance to virus and virus vectors. Resistance to plant pathogenic viruses is generally oligogenic in nature.

For example, the host pathogen reaction to the barley yellow dwarf virus (BYDV) is controlled by detectable single gene. The discovery of Yd2 gene in Ethiopian barley further confirms that against some of the viral diseases, vertical resistance is very much functional. Antibiosis is the most common phenomenon where the host plant metabolites interfere with the normal life and growth of the insects following feeding activity.

Invariably, the adult body weight, fecundity and various facets of multiplication of the insects are adversely affected. The number of life cycles completed in a given period of time is also less. Therefore, in plants that exhibit antibiosis towards crop maturity, there is marked reduction in the level of pest infestation (virus vector population) and host damage. Mechanism of disease resistance or Nature of disease resistance. Disease resistance is governed by several in-built mechanisms of the host, plants against infection by the pathogen. They are disease escape, disease endurance or tolerance and true resistance.

a. Disease escape

It is a prevention mechanism that causes the host to escape pathogenic infection. Early or late maturity of the crop may prevent physical contact of the pathogen with the host. Mechanical and anatomical barriers such as thick cuticle, waxy bloom on leaves and stem, stomatal regulation prevent penetration of spores. Ergot, a fungal disease of inflorescence in cereals caused by *Claviceps purpurea* does not affect varieties of wheat and barley in which the flowers remain closed until pollination occurs. Erect leaves of barley avoid deposition of spores of *Erysiphe graminis tritici* in contrast to prostrate leaves. Early maturing varieties of groundnut escape early leaf spot infection (*Cercospora arachidicola*) and early varieties of wheat escape rust and loose smut infection.

A change in planting season has also been successfully employed as a measure of securing escape, e.g., the leaf rust of sugarcane (*Puccinia sacchari*) in the canal areas of Bombay severely affects cane when planted in June, but is of minor importance or absent in crops sown in October. Disease escape confers pseudo-resistance.

b. Disease endurance

The host after being infected by the pathogen tolerates the infection and suffers less damage. It does not result in any substantial decrease in yield. This is brought about by influence of external factors. It is a well-known phenomenon that plants fertilized with phosphatic and potash manures are more tolerant to disease; this is the case in wheat against rust infection. Rice crops fertilized by silicates are “resistant” to blast (*Pyricularia oryzae*) in Japan. Wheat crops fertilized by potash and phosphatic manures are highly tolerant to mildew and rust infection. The fertilizers act indirectly to arrest vegetative growth and promote early maturity, better straw and strengthening tissues to protect the plant which form a bulwark against pathogenic invasion.

c. True resistance

It is the ability of the host plant to resist or withstand the attack of a pathogen. True resistance is inheritable and much less subject to environmental influence. It is specific in character. The basis of resistance may be morphological, functional, structural or protoplasmic. Functional nature of resistance is determined by opening of the stomata, time of opening of flowers and time of maturity, rate of cork formation and cambial activity.

Structural characters include the proportion of strengthening tissues, fibre content, nature of middle lamella, corky layers, number and structure of stomata and lenticels and their sizes. Protoplasmic factors controlling resistance are related to cell contents and include acids, tannins, anthocyanins, chemical constituents and their proportion, antibiotic activity and hypersensitivity present in the plant cells and in addition biological antagonism of the protoplasm of the host and the pathogen. True resistance, however, is of a specific character and is determined by the defence equipment and activities of the plant itself against the parasitic invasion and is therefore not subject to any appreciable modifications by external factors.

Methods of breeding for disease resistance

The methods of breeding varieties resistant to diseases do not differ greatly from those adopted for other characters. The following methods are used:

1. Introduction,
2. Selection,
3. Hybridization followed by selection,
4. Back cross method,
5. Induced mutagenesis,
6. Development of multilines and
7. Tissue culture techniques

1. Introduction

It is a very simple and inexpensive method. Varieties resistant to a particular disease elsewhere may be thoroughly tested in the regions in which they are proposed to be introduced. Their yield performance and disease resistance should be confirmed by large scale cultivation. It is possible that a variety resistant in one region need not be resistant in another region due to variation in the physiological race of the pathogen or due to a much different agroclimatic condition in the new location.

Introductions have served as a useful method of disease control. For example, Ridley wheat introduced from Australia has been useful as a rust resistant variety. Manila, a rice variety introduced in Karnataka from the Philippines, has tolerance to blast, bacterial leaf blight and sheath blight. Intan, a Javanica type rice variety introduced in Karnataka from Indonesia is highly resistant to blast. Munal, a rice variety introduced in West Bengal from the U.S.A. is tolerant to blast, bacterial leaf blight and leaf folder (pest). Some of IRRI rice varieties such as

IR 20, IR.24, IR.28, IR.34, IR.36 and IR .50 possess resistance to one or more diseases. Early varieties of groundnut introduced from U.S.A. have been resistant to leaf spot (*Cercosora arachidicola*).

Kalyan Sona and Sonalika wheat varieties originated from the segregating materials introduced from CIMMYT, Mexico and were rust resistant. Introductions also serve as sources of resistance in breeding programmes. For example, African pearl millet (*P. americanum*) introductions have been used for developing downy mildew resistant male sterile lines (Tift 23A cytoplasm) for use in hybrid pearl millet production. This is an important development in the hybrid pearl millet programmes since the original male sterile lines Tift 23A and 23D2A were extremely susceptible to downy mildew. The introduction of Co.475 variety of sugarcane in Mumbai has conquered red rot but brought in leaf rust and whip smut to the fore.

2. Selection

This is better method than introduction and has more chances of success in obtaining disease-resistant plants. The work of selection is carried out either in the naturally infected fields under field conditions or under artificially inoculated conditions. The resistance in such individuals will occur in nature by mutation. To ensure the resistant character of a plant, large population of crop plant may be exposed to the attack of pathogen under artificial conditions and the non-infected plants may be chosen. Suvarnamodan rice of Kerala is a pure line of ARC. 11775 and is highly tolerant to blast.

Sugandh of Bihar is a selection from Basmati rice of Orissa tolerant to bacterial leaf blight. Rice varieties Sudha (Bihar), Sabita, Nalini (West Bengal), Patel 85 (Madhya Pradesh), Janaki (Bihar), Improved White Ponni (Tamil Nadu), Ambika (Maharashtra), are some of rice selections resistant to one or more diseases. MCU 1 cotton, a selection from Co 4, is resistant to Kufri Red, a potato selection from Darjeeling Red Round is a disease resistant variety.

3. Hybridization

When selection of resistant varieties is not feasible, resistant varieties may be evolved by crossing the susceptible popular variety with resistant wild variety where in the resistant gene or genes transferred into the genetic make up of susceptible variety. Very often the F1 from crosses may be resistant but carry the other undesirable qualities of the resistant parent. The bad qualities are removed by several back crossing of F1 with the susceptible parent may ultimately yield a resistant progeny with good agronomic characteristics.

Under certain circumstances pedigree or bulk method of selection is followed to obtain a resistant variety. In this method, the crosses are made till F₂ population is got. Selections are made in F₂ generation for superior genetic traits including disease resistance. By continued selfing, selections are made through F₃ to F₅ or F₆ generations and the best variety is selected. This method is suited for small grains and beans but unsuited to fruits and vegetables.

4. Back cross method

Back cross method is widely used to transfer disease resistance from wild species. Wild species are rice sources of disease resistance. Interspecific hybridization is made to transfer the gene or genes for resistance to the cultivated species. Resistance to grassy stunt virus from *Oryza nivara* to *O.sativa*, late blight resistance from *Solanum demissum* to cultivated potato, rust resistance from *durum* to *aestivum* wheat are some of the examples involving interspecific hybridization. Depending upon the number of genes governing resistance and the nature of the gene, whether dominant or recessive, the procedure varies. The number of back crosses to the cultivated species may be five to six. Once the back cross progeny resemble the cultivated parent, then they are selfed and segregating progeny screened for disease resistance.

5. Induced mutagenesis

While following mutation breeding for disease resistance, a large number of mutation progeny should be produced and screened under artificial epiphytotic condition to select resistant plants. MCU10 cotton, a resistant variety to bacterial blight was evolved in Tamil Nadu by subjecting seeds of a susceptible variety CO4 to gamma rays followed by rigorous screening and selection 6. Development of multilines The concept of multilines was first suggested by Jensen(1952) and developed by Borlaug (1959) for evolving multiline varieties to resist stem rust in wheat. A multiline variety is a composite of genetically similar lines, except that each line possesses a different gene for resistance to the pathogen.

Lines that are genetically similar, except for one gene, are called isoline. It is assumed that gene for resistance in each isoline contributes resistance to a separate physiological race or group of races. Genes for disease resistance are transferred by backcrossing from donor varieties to a common disease susceptible, but agronomically superior, recurrent parent. Isolines are generated differing only in the gene for disease resistance. The isolines are composited to synthesize a multiline variety. The isolines are maintained for resynthesizing the multiline

whenever needed. A multiline variety is composed of a mixture of resistant and susceptible genotypes and provides a buffering effect against rapid development of disease. It will provide resistance or tolerance to a broad spectrum of races of a pathogen. If new races of the pathogen are identified at a later stage, additional isolines resistant to the newly arisen races may be constituted and incorporated.

Care should be taken to see that there is uniformity for height, maturity and other features in the multiline. Though multilines provide stability of yield due to reduction of damage by pathogens, the limitations of multiline varieties are that the yield level of multiline varieties is limited to that of the recurrent parent, 4 to 5 years are required to stabilize isogenic lines and the pathogen may produce new races at a faster rate than the development of a multiline. Multiline varieties have been developed for resistance to stem rust and stripe rust of wheat and crown rust of oats. The first multiline variety in wheat, 'Miramar 60' was developed and released in Columbia to combat the attack of yellow rust. 'Miramar 63' and 'Miramar 65' were resistant to stem rust and stripe rust. 'Yoqui 50', 'Crew' and 'Tumult' are a few other wheat multilines. Kalyan sona and Sonalika-based multilines of wheat resistant to different races of rust have been developed in India.

7. Tissue culture technique

Tissue culture techniques to produce somaclonal variation for disease are developed in different crops. Somaclonal variations for disease resistance are reported in *Zea mays* for *Drechslera maydis* race T-toxin resistance, in *Brassica napus* for resistance/tolerance to *Phoma lingam*, early and late blight resistance in potato, *Pseudomonas* and *Alternaria* resistance in tobacco, besides smut and rust disease resistance in sugarcane.

