



Genetic analysis of heat stress tolerance in Indian mustard (*Brassica juncea*)

BHAGIRATH RAM¹, V V SINGH², B K SINGH³, H S MEENA⁴, A KUMAR⁵ and DHIRAJ SINGH⁶

ICAR-Directorate of Rapeseed-Mustard Research, Bharatpur, Rajasthan 321 303

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ABSTRACT

A set of 53 Indian mustard [*Brassica juncea* (L) Czern and Coss] genotypes were evaluated for genetic variability and correlation for yield and physiological characters during the *rabi* season of 2012-13 and 2013-14 under heat stress (early sown) and normal (timely sown) environmental conditions. The study was undertaken to generate genetic information for seed yield/plant (g), population survival (%) at 10 and 25 days after sowing (DAS), membrane stability index (MSI) (%), excised-leaf water loss (%), relative water content (%), water retention capacity of leaves (%), 1000-seed weight (g) and oil content (%). Moreover, magnitude of relationships among these characters were also measured. Significant differences were observed for all the characters among the genotypes, except 1000-seed weight, which revealed the presence of sufficient variability for the characters. The phenotypic coefficient of variation (PCV) for all the characters were found to be higher than genotypic coefficient of variation (GCV). High PCV for MSI, seed yield/plant and population survival (PS) at 25 DAS obtained in the study showed the significance of additive genes. High heritability estimates coupled with high to moderate genetic advance as per cent of mean was recorded for PS at 25 DAS, WRCL and RWC indicating the significance of additive genes and the role of additive gene action for the inheritance of these characters. Moreover, it also became evident that selection may be performed for the improvement in these characters. Among the different characters oil content recorded low heritability estimates along with low genetic advance. Low heritability estimate for oil content indicated the predominance of non-additive gene effects for this trait and thus the scope of its improvement through selection might be very low. However, it may be improved through hybridization. Character association studies revealed that seed yield/plant and RWC are highly positive correlated ($r=0.407^{**}$) which could be considered as one of the important selection criteria in the improvement of seed yield under heat stress situation. Adequate genetic variability was present within available Indian mustard genotypes to allow breeding improvement of seed yield and physiological characters.

Key words: Correlation, Gene action, Genotypes, Indian mustard, Physiological character, Seed yield, Variability

Rapeseed-mustard (*Brassica* spp.) constitutes an important group of oilseed crops in India. Among the rapeseed-mustard group of crops, Indian mustard [*Brassica juncea* (L.) Czern and Coss] is the principal crop. It accounts for about 80% of the total area under rapeseed-mustard cultivation in India (Ram *et al.* 2014). Rajasthan is among the largest producers, accounting for about 50% of the total rapeseed-mustard production in India. The cultivation of rapeseed-mustard in Rajasthan is largely carried out under rainfed farming systems where sowing commences after south-west monsoon rains. Early rains may cause the farmers to sow the crop early in the season to take advantage of

conserved moisture in the soil (Venkateswarlu and Prasad 2012). However, at the time of early sowing (second fortnight of September to first fortnight of October), the average surface soil temperature may reach as high as 45°C. High soil temperature often result in seedling mortality upon initial germination which may eventually require re-sowing (Salisbury and Gurung 2011). A recent report by Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune indicates that annual mean surface temperature would rise from 3 to 5 °C by the end of century with warming more pronounced in the northern and north-western parts of India. Therefore, efforts to strengthen resilience by genetic up scaling of thermotolerance at seedling stage in Indian mustard would be vital to stabilize the productivity of the crop in the country. Since, genetic variability is a prerequisite for any meaningful selection intended at improvement of the crop, the heritability in conjunction with expected genetic advance determines its success. Furthermore, correlated response to selection depends primarily on the nature and strength of relationship between characters. Keeping these in mind, the present investigation was aimed to assess, genetic variability,

¹Senior Scientist (e-mail: bhagirathram_icar@yahoo.com),

²Principal Scientist (e-mail: vvs_71@yahoo.co.in) ⁴Scientist (e-mail: singh_hari2006@yahoo.co.in), ⁵Senior Scientist (e-mail: aruncyto@gmail.com), ⁶Director (e-mail: director.dmr@icar.gov.in), ICAR-Directorate of Rapeseed-Mustard Research, Bharatpur, Rajasthan 321 303. ³Senior Scientist (e-mail: binaybio@gmail.com), ICAR-Indian Institute of Agricultural Biotechnology, Ranchi, Jharkhand 834 010

gene action and pattern of correlations of seed yield with other physiological characters.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A set of 53 Indian mustard genotypes were collected from the Germplasm Unit of the ICAR-Directorate of Rapeseed-Mustard Research (ICAR-DRMR), Bharatpur. These genotypes were evaluated under heat stress conditions for two consecutive years (2012-13 and 2013-14) in complete randomized block design with three replications. The experiment was conducted at the experimental farm of the ICAR-DRMR, Bharatpur (77.27°E longitude; 27.12°N latitude and 178.37 m above mean sea level) having sandy loam soil with EC 1.5 dS/m, organic carbon (0.25 - 0.30%), available N (125-135 kg/ha), P (20-22 kg/ha), K (240-260 kg/ha), and pH (8.1). The crop was raised strictly under conserved moisture conditions.

Two hundred seeds of each of the 53 Indian mustard genotypes and two checks (BPR-543-2 and RH-30), were sown during the two consecutive *rabi* seasons of 2012-13 and 2013-14. On the date of seeding (26 September) of the year 2012-13, the maximum soil temperature at 0 - 10 cm depth was 40.1 °C while on the seeding date (28 September) of the year 2013-14, the maximum soil temperature at the same depth was 39.0 °C. The same set of genotypes was also evaluated under timely sown conditions under normal temperature during both the years. During the year 2012-13, the maximum soil temperature on the seeding date (23 October) at 0-10 cm depth was 31.0 °C while in the year 2013-14 the maximum soil temperature on the seeding date (23 October) at 0-10 cm depth was 30.5 °C. All genotypes were grown in two rows of 5 m length; with row to row and plant to plant spacing of 30 cm and 10 cm, respectively. The recommended package of practices was followed to raise a good crop. Different growth and physiological characters which included population survival (%) at 10 and 25 days after sowing (DAS), membrane stability index (%), excised-leaf water loss (%), relative water content (%), water retention capacity of leaves (%), seed yield/plant (g), 1000-seed weight (g) and oil content (%) were recorded on five randomly selected plants of each genotype.

Different physiological parameters including membrane stability index (MSI), excised-leaf water loss (ELWL),

relative water content (RWC), and water retention capacity of leaves (WRCL) were determined by the procedure described by Ram *et al.* (2015).

The oil content (%) was estimated using nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) following the protocol described by AOCS (1980). The average seed weight/plant was calculated after threshing and weighing all mature siliquae from five randomly selected plants.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated according to the formula described by Panse and Sukhatme (1978) and critical differences (CD) were determined at 5 and 1% probability level. Estimation of phenotypic and genotypic coefficient of variation, heritability in broad sense, genetic gain, and correlation coefficient between seed yield per plant and physiological parameters were determined using Windostat version 8.5 software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A set of 53 genotypes of Indian mustard were included in the study. Analysis of variance over the environments revealed that these genotypes vary significantly for all the growth and heat stress related characters, except 1000-seed weight (Table 1). These results indicated that selection for traits responsible for high yield potential along with heat stress tolerance characters can be made effectively in the breeding material evaluated in the present study. A wide range of variation was observed in terms of estimates of mean and range for all the characters (Table 2). The most pronounced range was obtained for PS 10 DAS (22.02 to 94.86), PS 25 DAS (16.66 to 89.12), RWC (45.23 to 91.26), MSI (8.45 to 43.43), and seed yield/plant (10.80 to 34.38). On other hand, characters like 1000-seed weight and oil content exhibited narrow range of variation. The estimates of genotypic and phenotypic coefficients of variation were considerably high for PS 25 DAS, MSI, PS 10 DAS, WRCL, RWC and seed yield/plant (Table 2). High genotypic coefficient of variation for PS 25 DAS (35.37), MSI (30.30), seed yield/plant (26.96) and WRCL (23.66) provide good opportunity for selecting desirable yield and physiological traits responsible for heat stress. The phenotypic coefficient of variation (PCV) exhibited higher values than genotypic coefficient of variation (GCV) for all the characters (Table 2), indicating close association

Table 1 Analysis of variance for different seed yield and physiological characters in Indian mustard

Source of variation	Mean squares									
	DF	PS 10 DAS	PS 25 DAS	MSI	ELWL	RWC	WRCL	1000-seed weight (g)	Oil content (%)	Seed yield/plant (g)
Replications	2	44.44	16.56	134.15	19.20	0.79	13.95	0.03	0.18	540.75
Environments	3	27.55	15.74	54.49	9.82	757.25	965.02	0.57	2.44	40.19
Interactions	6	3.95	4.36	5.14	1.99	8.21	1.77	0.01	2.83	5.96
Total	11	17.74	9.68	42.05	7.26	211.14	266.69	0.16	2.24	112.53
Treatments	52	4251.95	5249.37	785.51	154.57	1449.10	1020.47	2.56	4.37	378.30
Error	572	80.27	95.37	111.45	15.59	87.87	52.81	0.50	2.35	40.87

Table 2 Estimates of different genetic parameters of variation over four environments (pooled)

Characters	Mean \pm SEM	Range	CD		PCV (%)	GCV (%)	Heritability h ² (%)	Genetic advance as % of mean
			(P=0.05)	(P=0.01)				
PS 10 DAS	68.43 \pm 2.58	22.02-94.86	7.18	9.45	30.22	27.24	0.81	64.82
PS 25 DAS	58.59 \pm 2.81	16.66-89.12	7.83	10.30	39.10	35.37	0.82	84.47
MSI	24.72 \pm 3.04	8.45-43.43	7.46	9.13	52.35	30.30	0.53	42.31
ELWL	20.93 \pm 1.13	13.28-28.41	3.16	4.16	24.89	16.25	0.52	33.01
RWC	66.64 \pm 2.70	45.23-91.26	7.51	9.89	21.28	15.98	0.61	31.66
WRCL	37.94 \pm 2.09	21.38-54.05	5.82	7.66	30.44	23.66	0.65	48.56
Seed yield/plant (g)	19.46 \pm 1.84	10.80-34.38	4.45	5.74	42.23	26.96	0.50	45.44
1000-seed weight (g)	5.31 \pm 0.20	4.49-6.25	0.56	0.74	15.44	7.79	0.35	10.40
Oil content (%)	41.61 \pm 0.44	39.60-43.17	1.23	1.61	3.81	1.98	0.16	1.67

between phenotype and genotype. Similar pattern of high genotypic and phenotypic coefficients of variation for PS 25 DAS, MSI and seed yield/plant have also been reported by Cheema and Sadaqat (2005) in canola, and Ram *et al.* (2012) in Indian mustard. It indicates that characters showing high value of genotypic and phenotypic coefficients of variation can be improved by careful selection. The estimates of heritability act as a predictive instrument in expressing the reliability of phenotypic value. Therefore, it helps the breeder to make selection for a particular character when heritability is high. In addition to this, the genetic advance is a useful indicator of the progress which can be expected as a result of exercising selection on the pertinent population. In the present study, the estimates of heritability varied substantially from 16% for oil content to 82% for PS 25 DAS. High heritability estimates (broad sense) were observed for PS 25 DAS (82%), PS 10 DAS (81%), WRCL (65%), RWC (61%) and MSI (53%). The results indicated that these characters are less influenced by the environmental factors and direct selection for these characters would be effective for further improvement. The high genetic advance was observed for PS 25 DAS (84.47%), PS 10 DAS (64.82%), WRCL (48.56%) and for seed yield/plant (45.44%), while the remaining characters

showed moderate to low genetic advance.

Hanson *et al.* (1956) have expressed that for the purpose of predicting the effect of selection, heritability estimates along with genetic advance are of more value than heritability alone. Panse (1957) has also reported that high genetic advance may be expected when heritability is explained largely by the additive effect of genes. In the present study, heritability (broad sense) of PS 25 DAS (82%) with maximum genetic advance (84.47%) was observed. This might be due to heritability with additive gene impact and therefore selection may be effective. These results are in agreement with the results obtained by Ram *et al.* (2012) and Azharudheen *et al.* (2013) for PS 25 DAS.

High heritability estimates coupled with moderate genetic advance as per cent of mean was recorded for WRCL and RWC indicating the predominance of additive gene action for these characters. On other hand, character like oil content exhibited low heritability estimates along with low genetic advance, indicating non-additive gene activity. Such character can be improved through hybridization breeding.

The genotypic correlations were estimated for yield and heat stress tolerance characters in all possible combinations. The significant coefficient of correlation between seed yield

Table 3 Correlation coefficient among seed yield and physiological traits in Indian mustard (pooled)

Character	PS 10 DAS	PS 25 DAS	MSI	ELWL	RWC	WRCL	1000-seed weight (g)	Oil content (%)	Seed yield/ plant (g)
PS 10 DAS	1.000	0.953**	-0.271*	-0.136	-0.018	-0.094	-0.182	-0.038	-0.137
PS 25 DAS		1.000	-0.349*	-0.025	0.018	-0.094	-0.061	-0.081	-0.177
MSI			1.000	-0.184	-0.120	0.486**	0.334*	-0.099	0.024
ELWL				1.000	0.056	-0.068	-0.021	-0.300*	-0.106
RWC					1.000	0.018	0.090	-0.183	0.407**
WRCL						1.000	0.395*	-0.306*	0.164
1000-seed weight (g)							1.000	-0.368**	0.016
Oil content (%)								1.000	-0.012
Seed yield/plant (g)									1.000

* and ** Significant at 5 and 1% level of significance, respectively

and heat stress tolerance characters ranged from 0.334* to 0.953** (Table 3). Seed yield/plant showed positive and highly significant correlations with RWC ($r=0.407^{**}$). Thousand-seed weight was positively correlated with MSI ($r=0.334^{*}$) and WRCL ($r=0.395^{*}$). At the same time, WRCL was highly significantly positive correlated with MSI ($r=0.486^{**}$). Positive correlation of RWC with seed yield/plant has also been reported in earlier studies in *Brassica juncea* by Ram *et al.* (2012 and 2014). Hence, selection for this character would also help in improving the seed yield under heat stress situation in this crop. Population survival 25 DAS was significantly positive associated with PS 10 DAS at genotypic level (Table 3). Excised-leaf water loss showed negative significant correlation with oil content (Table 3). Moreover, 1000-seed weight also showed negative highly significant relationship with oil content ($r=-0.368^{**}$).

Holland (2006) observed that genetic correlations between traits are due to linkage and/or pleiotropy. He also emphasized the relative efficiency of correlations in indirect selection of traits. The present findings indicate that since the traits are highly correlated, correlations based selection may be practiced for indirect selections for higher seed yield potential (Ojaghi and Akhundova 2010).

Adequate genetic variability was observed within the genotypes evaluated in the present study. Physiological variability and association analysis conducted on the genotypes indicated that PS 25 DAS, RWC and WRCL are major physiological parameters which can be exploited for selecting high yielding Indian mustard genotypes under heat stress situation. Therefore, more attention should be paid to improve these characters while selecting high-yielding genotypes or choosing parents for heterosis breeding under heat stress conditions.

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