



Ethnomedicinal, Pharmacological and Phytochemistry of *Aegle marmelos* (linn.) Corr: A Review

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ABSTRACT

Aegle marmelos is one of the important plants with several medicinal and nutraceutical properties. It is very often known as wood apple plant. *A. marmelos* is a member of Rutaceae family. It has several medicinal properties which are used in traditional medicinal system and use to cure a variety of diseases. In last few decades this plant is extensively studied for its medicinal properties by advanced scientific techniques and a variety of bioactive compounds have been isolated from the different part of plant and were analyzed pharmacologically. The medicinal properties of this plant represent it as a valuable source of medicinal compound. This report is summarized information concerning the morphology, distribution, phytochemistry, pharmacological and ethno-botanical uses of *A. marmelos*.

Keywords: *Aegle marmelos*, traditional medicine, pharmacological activities, phytochemistry.

INTRODUCTION

Aegle marmelos, a plant of Indian origin having tremendous therapeutic potential, it belongs to family Rutaceae, it is known by the several other names in the different parts of the country and also outside of the country¹. The bael (*A. marmelos*) fruit is having lots of pharmacological activity; fruit is used to cure fever, mental disease diarrhea, dysentery and diabetes. It has several pharmacological uses i.e. hypoglycaemic, antifungal, antimicrobial, analgesic, anti-inflammatory, antipyretic, antidyslipidemic, immunomodulatory, anti-proliferative, wound-healing, antifertility, and insecticidal activities². Every part of plant such as fruit, seed, bark, leaves and root are important ingredients of several traditional formulations. Due to its curative properties, it is one of the most useful medicinal plants of India. The product obtained from bael, being highly therapeutic and is getting popularized in India and international market³.

It is subtropical plant which grows in the dry forest of hilly and plain area and found in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh⁴. Bael is scared tree of Hindu as its leaves are offered to Lord Shiva for fulfillment of wishes. The tree is symbol of fertility⁵. In bilva patra Sattva component is present due to which it emits and absorbs Sattvaik frequencies. So it reduces raja-tama particles form environment. A person suffering from distress, negative energy when brought in contact of bilva patra the black energy present within him is reduced¹. The importance of bael is mentioned in ancient system of medicine⁶. In Ayurvedic medicine the fruit is used to cure Vatha and Kaphay in the body. Mainly half ripen fruits are used in preparation of medicine then the fully ripened fruit⁷.

Classification

Kingdom	-	Plantae
Order	-	Spaindales
Family	-	Rutaceae
Subfamily	-	Aurantioidea
Genus	-	<i>Aegle</i>
Species	-	<i>marmelos</i>

Vernacular Name

Hindi	:	Bael, Bel, Belgiri
Sanskrit	:	Bilva, Shivdurma, Shivpala
English	:	Bengal Quince
Urdu	:	Belk, Belk ham
Guajarati	:	Bilvaphala
Malayalam	:	Marredy
Tamil	:	Vivla Marum Vivama

Botanical Description

Aegle marmelos is a slow-growing, medium sized tree, up to 12 to 15m tall. The stem is short, thick, soft, flaking bark, and spreading, sometimes spiny branches, the lower ones drooping. Young suckers bear many stiff, straight spines. There are sharp, axial long spikes on this tree. The leaflets are oval or lancet shaped, 4-10 cm long, 2-5 cm wide. Leaves composed of 3 to 5 leaflets in it. The lateral leaflets are without petiole and the terminal one has a long one. Tree is armed with straight sharp axillaries thorns, 2.5 cm long, terete, and leaflets 5-10 by 2.5-6.3 cm, ovate or ovate-lanceolate, flower greenish white, and sweet scented about 2.5 cm across. New foliage is glossy and pinkish-maroon in colour. Mature leaf emits a



disagreeable sour when bruised. Fragment flowers, in clusters of 4 to 7 along young branch lets, have 4 recurved, fleshy petals, green outside, yellowish inside and 50 or more greenish-yellow stamens. The fruits are round, pyriform oval, or oblong, 5-20 cm in diameter, may have a thin, hard, woody shell or a more or less soft rind, grey green until the fruit is fully ripe, when it turns yellowish. Seeds numerous, oblong, compressed, testa mucous.

Occurrence and Habitat

A. marmelos commonly known as bael, Bengal quince and wood apple is native to India. *A. marmelos* adapt wide range of habitat and can be cultivated worldwide. It is subtropical plant and can grow up to altitude of 1200 m from sea level. It is found mainly in dry forest of hilly and plain areas. It is native to India and has origin from Eastern Ghats and central India. The tree is mentioned in the writing dating back to 800 B.C.⁸. Bael is found growing along the foothills of Himalayas, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and along East coast⁹. The bael tree is also found in many South East Asian countries including Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Cambodia Thailand, Malaysia, Java, Philippines and Fiji. The trees are of great importance to the environment as they act as climatic purifier that is they release greater percentage of oxygen in comparison to other trees. They also act as a sink for chemical pollutants as it absorbs toxic gases from the atmosphere and make them inert or neutral¹⁰.

ETHNOBOTANICAL USES

Root decoction is given with sugar and boiled rice for curing diarrhoea in children¹¹. Extract of bael root, Pyaz and Haldi mixed in equal proportion and is put in ear to relieve earache¹².

Leaves are used in Abscess and backache¹³. Decoction of the leaves is used in eliminating fever and also helps in removal of mucous secretion from bronchial tubes¹⁴. Small amount of leaf is grind and taken with one glass of water in morning for few days to control diabetes¹⁵. The leaves are soaked overnight in water and this water is strained and drinks in the morning for few weeks to cure peptic ulcer¹⁶. The juice of leaf is mixed in warm water with little peeper and taken as drink to relief from wheezing cough and respiratory spasm¹⁷. The decoction of leaves is useful in jaundice¹⁸. Extract of leaves is applied on injuries caused by animal bite¹³. Paste of fresh bael leaves is kept on infected part and tied with bandage to cure¹⁹. Poultice made from leaves is used in treatment of Ophthalmia²⁰. Leaves tea is prepared and used for gastrointestinal problem²¹.

Ripe fruit juice is very useful in treating inflammation of rectum²². Dry powder of fruit is mixed with mustered oil is used in burn cases, one part of powder and two part mustered oil is mixed and applied externally²³. Fresh fruit pulp juice is prepared and taken twice in chronic dysentery²⁴. The fruit is when green, is sliced and dried in

sun, the dried fruit slices are grind to make powder and is preserved in bottle and it is taken in diarrhoea and dysentery²⁵. Ripe fruit Sharbat is prepared from pulp milk and sugar may be added and taken to relieve from constipation²⁶.

Fine powder of unripe fruit is taken with water to cure intestinal parasites like *Entamoeba histolytica*²⁷. Unripe fruit pulp mixed with boiled rice water and taken twice a day to cure vomiting in Pregnancy²⁸.

We have conducted an ethnobotanical survey communities inhabiting in Rajaji National Park, Uttarakhand and found that *A. marmelos* is being used for treating jaundice, diarrhea, fever, diabetes etc. Rural people use the extract of leaves juice in empty stomach early morning against diabetes. Leaf juice is taken with honey is helpful in prevention of fever. Fruit juice is useful in treatment of diarrhea and dysentery. Extract of bael leaves taken with honey to cure jaundice for one week. Taking a teaspoon of dried and powdered bael leaves for three days help in increasing appetite. In a teaspoon of crushed bael leaves add a pinch of black pepper and consume this mixture then drink a cup of buttermilk. Follow this treatment three times a day to cure jaundice. To reduce peptic ulcer soak few bael leaves in a cup of water over night and drink this solution early in the morning.

PHARMACOLOGICAL ACTIVITIES

Anti-inflammatory

Aqueous extract of *A. marmelos* with the help of rat paw oedema model assured that *A. marmelos* have anti-inflammatory activity²⁹. The various extracts of the leaves of bael were evaluated for anti-inflammatory activity³⁰. The alcoholic extract of bael leaves antagonized the histamine-induced contractions and demonstrated positive relaxant effect in isolated guinea pig ileum and tracheal chain, suggesting inhibition of H1-receptor activity this extract may underlie these effects³¹.

Antifertility activity

The antifertility effect of the aqueous extracts of leaves of *A. marmelos* was reported in male Albino rats. The rats were administered with aqueous extracts (250 mg/kg body weight) of leaves of *A. marmelos* for 45 days. Treatment resulted in reduction in the weights of testis, epididymes and seminal vesicle. The extract also resulted in reduction of testicular sperm count, epididymal sperm count and motility and abnormal sperm count³².

Antidiarrheal activity

Antidiarrheal activity is one of the major medicinal properties of *A. marmelos* and traditionally it extensively used to control chronic diarrhea and dysentery. Recently, several in vitro and in vivo studies have been conducted to confirm the antidiarrheal property of *A. marmelos*. The in vitro antidiarrheal activity of dried fruit pulps of *A. marmelos* was reported. The ethanolic extract showed



good activity against *Shigella. boydii*, *S. sonnies* and *S. flexneri*, moderate against *S. dysenteriae*³³.

Antioxidant activity

Antioxidant activity of this plant is due to the presence of flavones, isoflavones, flavonoids, anthocyanin, coumarinlignans, catechins and isocatechins. *A. marmelos* is extensively reported to possess antioxidant activity against a variety of free radicals. Antioxidant activity and free radical scavenging activity of the ripe and unripe fruit of *A. marmelos* was compared. Results indicate that the enzymatic antioxidants increased in ripe fruit when compared to unripe fruit extract (except glutathione peroxidase). The percentage of free radical inhibition was also high in unripe fruit than that of the ripe fruit³⁴.

The antioxidant activity of the fruit of *A. marmelos* was reported. The aqueous extract of *A. marmelos* fruit was screened for antioxidant activity by the DPPH radical scavenging. The extract showed efficient antioxidant activity³⁵.

Hepatoprotective activity

The hepatoprotective effect of the leaves of *A. marmelos* was reported in alcohol induced liver injury in Albino rats. Rats were administered with 30% ethyl alcohol for a period of 40 days. The induced rats were fed with leaves of *A. marmelos* for 21 days. The TBARS values of healthy, alcohol intoxicated and herbal drug treated animals were 123.35, 235.68 and 141.85 g/g tissue respectively. This indicates the excellent hepatoprotective effect of the leaves of *A. marmelos*³⁶.

Antiulcer activity

Bael is known to show gastro protective activity. Unripe bael fruit extract serves the purpose. When used in rats, it produces a noteworthy inhibition of absolute ethanol induced gastric mucosal damage. This activity is shown due to the presence of a particular compound in the fruit, called, luvangetin. Gastric ulcer is usually mediated by progress of oxidative stress. This compound, luvangetin might act by inhibition of oxidative stress producing compounds in the gastrointestinal tract thus preventing ulcer formation³⁷.

Antidiabetic activity

Bael extract, when administered at a dose of 250 mg/kg of body weight, shows better result than glycenamide (antidiabetic drug). This antidiabetic effect may be due to the coumarins present in the fruit which induce the beta cells of islet of Langerhans to produce insulin. Aqueous extract of bael seeds reduces blood glucose level in case of severe diabetic patients^{37,38}.

Antihyperlipidemic activity

Oral administration of aqueous extract of bael fruits and seeds separately at a dose of 250 mg/Kg of body weight to diabetes induced rats has shown significant decrease in the blood lipid level. The effect may be due to fat

mobilization from deposits which is caused due to hydrolysis of triglycerides. The extract also increases glucose utilization³⁷⁻³⁹.

Anticancer activity

Bael extract has been found successful in inhibition of *in vitro* proliferation of human tumor cell lines including Lecukenic K562, T-Lymphoid Jurat, Beta-Lymphoid Raji, Erythro Leukemic HEL⁴⁰.

Antimicrobial activity

A. marmelos has been traditionally used for the treatment of various infectious diseases and been extensively reported to inhibit the broad range of pathogenic microorganisms. Many *in vitro* studies proved the antimicrobial potential of *A. marmelos* extracts towards the pathogenic microorganisms including bacteria and fungi. The antimicrobial activity of the leaves of *A. marmelos* was performed by agar well diffusion method. The aqueous, petroleum ether and ethanol extract of the leaves of *A. marmelos* exhibited efficient antimicrobial activity against *Escherichia coli*, *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, *Salmonella typhi*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae* and *Proteus vulgaris*. The ethanolic extract shows activity against *Penicillium chrysogenum* and the petroleum ether and aqueous extract shows activity against *Fusarium oxysporum*⁴¹. The antimicrobial activity of the leaves of *A. marmelos* was reported. The antimicrobial activity was checked by disc diffusion method. The petroleum ether extract of leaves was checked against multi resistant strains of *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Bacillus subtilis*, *Escherichia coli*, *Salmonella typhi*, *Proteus vulgaris*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Klebsiella pneumoniae*. The antimicrobial activity against gram-negative strains was higher than that of gram positive strains⁴². The essential oil obtained from the leaves exhibited activity against *Aeromonas sp.*, *E.coli*, *Pseudomonas salanacearum* and *Xanthomonas vesicatoria*⁴³. The ethanolic extract of the root has shown activity against *Vibrio cholerae*, *Salmonella typhimurium*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, *E. coli*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Bacillus subtilis* and *Staphylococcus aureus*⁴⁴. The ethyl acetate extract of the plant has exhibited activity against *Vibrio cholerae*, *S. typhi*, *S. aureus*, *Pseudomonas putida* and *Bacillus anthracis*⁴⁵.

Antiviral activity

Bael has antiviral activities in the early stages of viral replication with minimum host cytotoxicity in contrast to modern virucidal chemotherapeutic agents (that is ribavirin), which usually act in the later stages of viral replication and have potent side effect⁴⁶. The 50% ethanolic extract of the fruits has shown antiviral activity against ranikhet disease virus⁴⁷.

Cytoprotective effect

The cytoprotective effect of the leaves of *A. marmelos* was reported in *Cyprinus carpio* (fresh water fish) exposed to heavy metals. *C. carpio* was exposed to heavy



metals followed by the treatment with the dried powder of *A. marmelos* leaves. Treatment resulted in cytoprotective effect by stabilization of plasma membrane and modulation of antioxidant enzyme system⁴⁸.

Anti-thyroid activity

Isolated, scopoletin (7-hydroxy-6-methoxy coumarin) from *A. marmelos* leaves and evaluate for its potential to regulate hyperthyroidism. It was observed that scopoletin (at 1.00 mg / kg, p.o. for 7 days) to levo-thyroxine treated animals, decreased serum thyroid hormones level. It was also proved that the scopoletin have superior therapeutic activity than the standard antithyroid drug, propylthiouracil⁴⁹.

Antimalarial activity

The alcoholic extracts of the Bael seeds and leaves have been tested in vivo and in vitro for antimalarial activity against the NK65 strain of *Plasmodium berghei*. The seeds have shown schizontocidal activity in both the system, whereas, the leaves have shown activity only in the in-vitro system⁵⁰.

PHYTOCHEMISTRY

A. marmelos leaves contained aegeline, rutin, lupeol, flavone, marmesinine, β -sitosterol, glycoside, oisopentenylhalfordiol and phenylethylcinnamamides⁵¹. Some isolated compounds are classified as

Alkaloids

The alkaloids are secondary plant substances. The main four alkaloids of *Aegle marmelos* leaves are N-2- [4-(3', 3'-dimethylallyloxy) phenyl] ethylcinnamide, N-2-hydroxy-2-(4-hydroxyphenyl) ethylcinnamide, Marceline and Angeline⁵². Shahidine, an alkaloid having oxazoline core has been isolated as a major constituent from the fresh leaves of *Aegle marmelos* and it showed activity against a few Gram-positive bacteria⁵³.

Terpenoids

The essential oil of *A. marmelos* leaves was studied very much extensively in India, α -phellandrene and p-cymene were extracted from its leaves oil⁵⁴. Limonene was reported as an important constituent from *A. marmelos* leaves and it was shown that limonene as marker for identification of bael soil samples⁵⁵.

Coumarins

The coumarins present in bael fruit includes marmelosin, marmesin, imperatorin, marmin, alloimperatorin, methyl ether, xanthotoxol, scoparone, scopoletin, umbeliferone, marmelide and marmenol¹⁰.

CONCLUSION

Aegle marmelos is one of the important plants with several medicinal and nutraceutical properties. It is very often known as wood apple plant. It has several medicinal properties which are used in traditional medicinal system and used to cure several diseases. In last few decades this plant is extensively studied for its medicinal properties by advanced scientific techniques and a variety of bioactive compounds have been isolated from the different part of plant and were analyzed pharmacologically. The medicinal properties of this plant represent it as a valuable source of medicinal compound. This review summarized its various ethno-botanical and pharmacological activities i.e. antibacterial, antifungal, antiviral, antidiabetic, antimalarial, antioxidant etc.

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