

Terminalia chebula – A promising multipurpose herbal medicine

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From ancient times, Ayurvedic, system of medicine is popular in India. People have been using the various different plants as the useful remedies. They have been following Sushruta, Charaka, Veda etc. for the preparation of various drugs. Thus Ayurvedic drugs are prominent even now due to their less side effects. In this age of development and progress of pharmaceutical sciences, medicinal plants have still much more importance. Medicinal plants become one of the chief objects of interest of chemistry field.

Botanical source or the plant source is main source of natural drugs and food. Nowadays many important chemicals compounds are isolated from the different plant parts having both medicinal and economical values. Pharmacognosists have main interest to study the different plant parts along with the isolation and confirmation of the different chemical constituents present in those parts, having pharmacological effects. Till now many plants have to be studied, having important medicinal constituents and pharmacological activities.

Herbal pharmaceuticals have been a part in the life style, diet and health of people. World Health Organization is promoting its inclusion in health policies because of its positive features, which include diversity and flexibility accessibility and affordability in many parts of the world; broad acceptance among many populations in developing countries, comparatively low cost and growing economic importance. Herbal pharmaceuticals are gradually eroding at a faster rate because it has no ready documentation or explanation or justification in terms of modern scientific knowledge, but there are differences at foundation level between traditional and western scientific knowledge. Therefore, traditional knowledge has to be studied and understood with reference to its foundation.

Medicinal plants are part and parcel of human society to combat diseases, from the dawn of civilization. Herbal

medicines are in great demand in the developed as well as developing countries for primary healthcare because of their wide biological and medicinal activities, higher safety margins and lesser costs. *Terminalia chebula* is a plant species belonging to the genus *Terminalia*, family Combretaceae. It is a flowering evergreen tree called in English the black myrobalan. It is also known as Haritaki (Sanskrit and Bengali), Harad (Hindi), Harada (Marathi and Gujarati).

In Indian it is distributed in the forests of Northern India, Eastern India and the Southern Peninsula. The fruit of the plant is rich in tannin and commonly known as myrobalan or chebolic myrobalan.

It is an evergreen tree growing to 30 m tall, with a trunk up to 1m diameter. The leaves are alternate to subopposite in arrangement, oval, 7-18 cm long and 4.5-10 cm broad with a 1-3 cm petiole. The fruit is drupe-like, 2-4-5 cm long and 1.2-2.5 cm broad, blankish, with five longitudinal ridges.

In India pharmacopoeia, fruit of *T. chebula* is extensively used as adjuvant to other medicines in almost all diseases e.g. jaundice, splenopathy, hiccough, cephalgia, epilepsy, leprosy, and as astringent, anti-inflammatory, digestive, cardiogenic. *T. chebula* has been found to influence dermal wound healing and shown possible inhibitory activity against HIV- I. Besides its medicinal value the *T. chebula* is of social forestry importance. The main purpose of this research work is to isolate chemical constituents present in the bark of *Terminalia chebula*.

Ayurvedic herbal compounds of terminalia chebula:

There is a large number of Ayurveda products that contain haritaki. Some of them that has chebolic myrobalan as chief ingredient are – Abhaya modaka or large tablet – very useful in constipation

Abhayaaristham – a low alcoholic auto fermented liquid preparation useful in abdominal problems, constipation and piles.

Pathadi vati or tablet – good for abdominal problems, piles.

Pathyadi decoction- useful in headaches of all kinds.

Vyaghri Haritaki – The herbal gem or electuary preparation very useful in bronchitis, cough, cold.

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