



Wood apple (Bael)- A fruit of high medicinal value

Neha Tiwari¹ and Jiju N. Vyas²

¹Krishi Vigyan Kendra (J.A.U), Amreli (Gujarat) India

²Polytechnic in Home Science, Amreli (Gujarat) India



Bael (*Aegle marmelos*), a plant indigenous to India has been used by the inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent for over 5000 years. It is present throughout Southeast Asia as a naturalized species. The tree is considered to be sacred by Hindus and is also known as “bilva” or “bilpathre”. Climatic requirements owing to its hard nature, bael tree has a wide adaptability to adverse soil and climatic conditions. It requires subtropical climate where summers are hot and dry and winters are mild. It has a reputation for being able to grow in places that other trees cannot. It copes with a wide range of soil conditions, is tolerant of water logging and has an unusually wide temperature tolerance (from -7°C to 48°C). It requires a pronounced dry season to give fruit.

Fruit properties: The bael fruit has a hard wood like rind which is pale green when unripe, changes to pale yellow peel to brown as it ripens. It takes about 11 months to ripen on the tree and can reach the size of a large grapefruit and some are even larger. Fruit is astringent and bitter in taste. The fibrous yellow pulp is very aromatic.

Nutritional composition: Bael fruit is rich in carbohydrates (30.6%). It also contains proteins (1.8%), vitamin A (186 IU) riboflavin (1.2%), iron (0.3%), potassium (0.6%) and fibre (2.2%). Its fruit contains high amount of moisture content (64.2%) which is very good particularly useful during summer season.

Religious significance: The holy bael The fruit is also used in religious rituals. In Hinduism the tree is considered to be sacred. It is used in the worship of Shiva, who is said to favour the leaves. The tri-foliolate form of leaves symbolize the trident that Shiva holds in his right hand. Its leaves are also used to worship Parvati and Viva Rupra. The fruit is used in religious ceremonies and rituals and its mentioned is also seen in Vedas and Mahabharata.

Medicinal uses of wood apple (Bael):

- *Respiratory infections:* The leaf decoction is an effective remedy to relieve asthma and bronchitis. The bitter, pungent juice from the leaves mixed with honey is given to reduce mucous discharge from nose and throat.
- *Heart diseases:* Mix the juice of ripe bael fruit with some ghee. Include this mixture in your daily diet to prevent heart related diseases like heart strokes and attacks. This can reduce blood glucose levels by nearly 54 per cent.
- *Cholesterol control:* Bael juice helps in cholesterol control and also reduces blood cholesterol levels. Bael juice controls triglycerides, serum and tissue lipid profiles.
- *Constipation:* Ripe bael fruit is regarded as best of all laxatives. It cleans and tones up the intestines. The fresh ripe pulp and the “*Sherbat*” made from it, is taken for their mild laxative and digestive effects. Marmelosin derived from the pulp is very useful as a laxative and also has a diuretic effect.

– *Antimicrobial properties*: Bael juice has antimicrobial properties. The extracted juice is used to control fungal and viral infections. They have antimicrobial properties since the juice contains cuminaldehyde and eugenol in it.

– *Diarrhea and dysentery*: The unripe or half ripe fruit is used as the most effective remedy for chronic diarrhea and dysentery.

– *Gynecological disorders*: The regular consumption of Bael helps to prevent gynecological related issues.

– *Peptic ulcer* : An infusion of bael leaves is regarded as an effective food remedy for peptic ulcer. The leaves are soaked overnight in water. This water is strained and taken as a drink in the morning. Bael leaves are rich in tannin which reduces inflammation and helps in healing of ulcers.

– *Piles treatment*: The extract of unripe bel fruit is helpful in curing of piles and hemorrhoids.

– *Skin rash*: Mix 30 ml of bay leaf juice, cumin with bael juice and drink it twice a day to cure urticaria. This can also be beneficial for skin rash and its symptoms

like pale red, raised, itchy bumps.

– *Haemorrhoids*: Tannin in the bael fruit juice is useful to cure diarrhoea, cholera, haemorrhoids and vitiligo. This is



also helpful in the anaemia, ear and eye disorders treatment. In ayurveda, the juice is mixed with turmeric and ghee and spread on fractured bones to treat fracture.

– *Scurvy*: Scurvy is a disease that occurs due to the deficiency of vitamin C.

This has harmful effects on the blood vessels. Bael juice is a good source of vitamins and cures this disease.

– *Respiratory problems*: The juice of bael fruit can cure respiratory problems such as asthma or cold. This also gives resistance to cold.

– *Control diabetes*: Bael juice contains laxatives that are helpful to control the blood sugar levels. It stimulates the pancreas and helps them in enough production of insulin that controls sugar level in the blood.

Wood apple (Bael) juice preparation:

Ingredients:

- 1 Bael
- 600 ml water
- 6 tbsp Jaggery powder
- 4 tsp crushed cloves

Method:

– Break the ripe (golden colour) bael and scoop out the pulp using a spoon into a medium-sized bowl and remove the seeds.

– In the bowl add 150 ml water and jaggery powder.

– Mix them together using hands or spoon. Then add the rest of the water and crushed cloves.

– Transfer the juice into glasses after straining it or not (optional). Refreshing BAEL juice is ready to serve.



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