



AMLA: A NOVEL AYURVEDIC HERB WITH ITS HEALTH BENEFITS

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ABSTRACT

*In the present era various wonder medicines have been invented which have been successful to treat some of the deadliest diseases like cancer and AIDS. Today most of the research studies are going on concerning how to cure similar diseases. In this process we have forgotten our ancient medicine systems like Siddha, Ayurveda and Unani Systems. There is no denying the fact that synthetic medicines like antibiotics, steroids, painkillers and other vaccines ensure faster and quicker relief. However they are responsible for causing many harmful side effects, and in some cases even death. They may be effective in curing the disease they have been manufactured to treat, but they may be harmful in other aspects for the body. This has in turn led to the decrease in average human life span. In contrast the ancient people used to live longer since their lifestyle depended mostly on nature. They searched for drugs in nature ever since the ancient times in an attempt to rescue from disease. Gradually various uses of such medicinal drugs and plants came to be discovered. An important such plant, *Phyllanthus emblica*, popularly known as the Indian Gooseberry or Amla is perhaps the most important medicinal plant in the Indian traditional system of medicine, the Ayurveda. This paper discusses various therapeutic uses of the plant and its amazing benefits to the mankind.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Amla is a medium size deciduous plant with height ranging from 1–8 m. The trunk is slightly curved and the branches are scattered around. The bark is gray with hard wood reddish in colour and the flowers are greenish-yellow. The fruit is light greenish yellow, quite smooth and hard on appearance, with six vertical stripes or furrows. The leaves are lighter in weight and smell like lemon. . A ripened Amla fruit is hard and weighs approximately between 60 and 70 grams. It wraps and splits when exposed in the sun or in excessive heat. Ripening in autumn, the berries are harvested by hand. The Indian emblic tastes sour, bitter and astringent, and it is quite fibrous.

It is planted throughout the deciduous forests of tropical India and on the hill slopes up to 2000 meters. Commercially cultivated in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, it is also grown in Middle Eastern regions, as the climate is perfect for cultivation.

II. CULTIVATION METHODS

Amla can grow in both light and heavy soils under the tropical conditions as it requires proper sunlight. It can survive up to 46 degrees in summer, but during the flowering season, the temperature should not go too high, as it may have an adverse effect on the fruits. The young plants are protected from the hot winds as they die easily.

The seeding takes place in April, and irrigation during the monsoon season. It starts bearing fruits in seven years from the day of planting.

2.1 Taxonomic Classification

Kingdom	Plantae
Class	Magnoliopsida
Order	Malpighiales
Family	Phyllanthaceae
Genus	Phyllanthus
Species	P.emblica

2.2 Other names:

Amla is commonly called as the Indian gooseberry and amalaki in Sanskrit language. Other names used include Bhumi amla, Bhumyamalki, Amlaki, adiphala, dhatri, amalaka, amali, amalakamu, usirikai, Anola, Amlika, nellikai, malacca tree, nillika, nellikya, emblic etc.

III. CHEMICAL COMPOSITION

The fruit contains high amounts of ascorbic acid or Vitamin C, (up to 445 mg per 100 g) and high density of ellagitannins such as emblicanin A (37%), emblicanin B (33%), punigluconin (12%) and pedunculagin (14%). It also contains punicafolin and phyllanemblinin A, phyllanemblin other polyphenols: flavonoids, kaempferol, ellagic acid and gallic acid.

IV. TRADITIONAL USE

According to Ayurveda, a 5000 year old natural healing system of medicine, Amla fruit is sour in taste, with sweet, bitter and pungent secondary tastes. However the post digestive effect is sweet and it acts like a coolant if taken after meals. As per Ayurveda, Amla balances all the 3 doshas. Amla is used to revitalise potency and the digestive system, rejuvenate longevity, cure stomach constipation, reduce fever, purify the blood, reduce cough and asthmatic problems, strengthen the heart, improve eyesight, stimulate hair growth, enliven the body, and enhance intellect.

The fruit, which is a diuretic, aperient, laxative and hair dye, is the richest source of Vitamin C. It cures insomnia and is useful in hemorrhage, menorrhagia, leucorrhoea and discharge of blood from uterus. Amla powder and oil are used traditionally in Ayurveda applications for the treatment of scalp. Amla powder



improves immunity and gives physical strength. It helps in improving complexion and removing wrinkles. It is also used as a cooling agent to reduce the effects of sun strokes and sun burns.

Indian gooseberry is a common constituent in various Ayurveda formulations and is notably the primary ingredient in an ancient herbal *rasayana* called *Chyawanprash*. This formula contains 43 herbal ingredients as well as clarified butter, sesame oil, sugar cane juice, and honey. The fruit is also called *yuganzi* which is used to treat throat inflammation according to the Chinese traditional therapy.

V. CULINARY USE

Maharashtra is one of the largest producers and suppliers of Indian gooseberries. Here the fruit, along with salt, oil, and spices, is used in preparing pickles. In Andhra Pradesh it is used to prepare *dal* (or lentils) and *amle ka murabbah*, a sweet dish made by soaking the berries in sugar syrup. It is traditionally consumed after meals. In the Batak area of Sumatra, Indonesia, the inner bark is used to impart a bitter taste to a traditional fish soup called *holat*.

VI. OTHER USES

The high tannin content in Indian gooseberry fruit serves as a mordant for fixing dyes in fabrics. Amla shampoo and hair oil is traditionally believed to nourish the hair and scalp and prevent the growth of grey hair. Amla is used in sauces, candy, dried chips, pickle, jellies and powder. In the dyeing industry its extract is popularly used in the ink. Amla wood is commonly used in firework.

VII. THE AMAZING HEALTH BENEFITS OF AMLA

7.1 Nutritional Value of Amla

Raw Amla provides 600 milligram Vitamin C per 100 gram.

- Pressed juice provides 920 milligram / 100ml.
- Dehydrated Amla provides 2500 to 3500 milligram Vitamin C per 100 gram.
- Dried and powdered Amla provides 1800 to 2600 milligram Vitamin C per 100 gm.

Though Indian gooseberry is sour and bitter in taste, yet it is recommended that it should be eaten raw, as the nutritional value remains intact. However there are other ways of consuming it:

- 1 tablespoonful of Amla juice and honey taken every morning provides energy and strength to the body.
- Two teaspoons of Indian gooseberry juice in half cup of water taken every morning improves your eyesight.
- Amla helps in reducing blood sugar in diabetics. 1 tablespoonful of Amla juice mixed with one cup of bitter gourd juice if taken early morning for two months, can control blood sugar.
- 2 teaspoons of dried Amla powder mixed with honey taken 3 -4 times a day cures sore throat and cold.
- Amla is considered an effective remedy for heart disease. Before going to sleep, take 500 mg of dried Indian gooseberry powder with a glass of water. It helps in maintaining cholesterol levels and good for the heart.
- Amla is helpful in tuberculosis of lungs, asthma, and bronchitis.
- Amla delays ageing process and maintains strength in old age.



- Amla helps enriching hair growth and hair pigmentation.
- Amla boosts immunity and protects from common cough and cold.

VIII. SOME MORE USES OF AMLA INCLUDE

- Treating impure blood and blood fever.
- Balancing the imbalance defective energies.
- Treating frequent urination.
- Improving immunity.
- Treating of ulcers and hyperacidity.
- Treating skin diseases.
- Accelerating the wound healing process.
- Reducing the risk of cancers.
- Protecting from bacterial, viral and fungal infections.
- Improving liver function.
- Providing nourishment to the nerves and improving paralytic conditions.
- Working as brain tonic and to increase alertness and memory.
- Lowering cholesterol and blood sugar level.
- Lowering the risk of cold, cough and other infections of respiratory tract.

IX. CONCLUSION: WHEN BITTER IS BETTER

As Indians, we are all quite familiar with amla. At some point or the other we have all enjoyed an amla pickle or chutney, or even used amla oil for hair. A person associated with Ayurveda holds this berry in reverence, because of its magical health benefits.

Amla is undoubtedly a powerhouse of nutrients. The essential minerals and vitamins that it contains are essential not only for our body's well-being, but also for preventing some of the most common diseases. Whether eaten raw, juiced, powdered or simply added in pickles, jams, dips or spreads, *amla* will always help in the well-being of our body in some or the other way.

Amla is an excellent source of Vitamin C; hence it helps boost your immunity, metabolism and prevents viral and bacterial infections, including cold and cough. It is known to be associated with a range of polyphenols which fight against the development of cancer cells. According to Ayurveda, *amla* juice balances all the processes in the body and brings to equilibrium all three *doshas* - *vata*, *kapha*, *pitta*. According to Dr. Rupali Datta, Chief Clinical Nutritionist at Fortis-Escorts Hospital, "Vitamin C is a natural antioxidant, which means that it protects you against the harmful effects of free radicals. It helps in slowing down the ageing process and is needed for collagen production, hence keeping your skin, hair healthy and supports the immune system."

One of the most effective ways to add *amla* to your diet is to consume it as juice and have it diluted with water every day with empty stomach. It clears your system, aids in digestion, and helps in maintaining clear skin, healthy hair and good eyesight. Although not very pleasant to the taste buds, it enjoys many health benefiting properties that will set your frowned faces right.



I will conclude by saying that Indian gooseberry is a 'wonder fruit' with numerous health benefits. Hence its intake in any form becomes very vital for the right functioning of the body.

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