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Review Article

A Review on the Role of Amla and Chyawanprash in Immunity Enhancement and Disease Prevention

Syed Sabreen^{*1}, Dhulipalla Curie², T. Sachin Meitei³, Thangjam Billgates Singh³, Muppuri. Venkata Gopi³, Yalagala Jaya Manoj³, Manitha kumari³, S. k. Nousheen³, Thangabalan B.⁴

¹Assistant Professor in SIMS College of Pharmacy, Dept of Pharmacology, Affiliated to Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, India.

²Associate Professor in SIMS College of Pharmacy, Affiliated to Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, India.

³SIMS College of Pharmacy, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, India.

⁴Principal, SIMS College of Pharmacy, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, India.

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ABSTRACT

Amla (*Emblica officinalis*), also known as Indian gooseberry, is a nutrient-rich fruit with remarkable health benefits supported by scientific research. Amla is exceptionally rich in natural vitamin C, which is heat and storage resistant. It also contains fiber, iron, and powerful antioxidants like gallic acid, quercetin, tannins, flavonoids, and alkaloids. This unique phytochemical profile makes it one of the most therapeutically valuable plants in Ayurvedic medicine. Amla is used in famous Ayurvedic products such as Triphala and Chyawanprash. Because of its strong nutrients and healing properties, it helps in improving health and treating many diseases. It helps slow down aging by protecting the skin and boosting collagen. Chyawanprash (CP) is an Ayurvedic health supplement which is made up of a super- concentrated blend of nutrient-rich herbs and minerals. It is meant to restore drained reserves of life force and to preserve strength, stamina, and vitality, cognition, and brain strength while stalling the course of aging. Chyawanprash is formulated by processing around 50 medicinal herbs and their extracts, including the prime ingredient, Amla (Indian gooseberry), which is the world's richest source of vitamin C. Chyawanprash preparation involves preparing a decoction of herbs, followed by dried extract preparation, subsequent mixture with honey, and addition of aromatic herb powders (namely clove, cardamom, and cinnamon) as standard.

***Corresponding Author:** Syed Sabreen

Address: Assistant Professor in SIMS College of Pharmacy, Dept of Pharmacology, Affiliated to Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, India.

Email ✉: syedsabeenfatima786@gmail.com

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The finished product has a fruit jam-like consistency and a sweet, sour, and spicy flavor. Chyawanprash has been used to help strengthen your digestive system and promote food absorption, corrects hyperacidity, dyspepsia and flatulence, peptic ulcers and gastritis, boost memory power, promote cardio fitness by supporting your heart and helps in slow down the rate of normal aging and promote longevity. The formulation has demonstrated immune-enhancing properties, with traditional preparations like Chyawanprash showing immunostimulatory effects, including enhanced natural killer (NK) cell activity and cytokine release in clinical studies. Modern research shows antioxidant, adaptogenic, and neuroprotective properties that support cognitive function and mental resilience. Studies have demonstrated that Chyawanprash can protect animals from memory impairment and may be beneficial for managing conditions like Alzheimer's disease through its antioxidant effects and pro-cholinergic actions.

INTRODUCTION

Phyllanthus emblica, commonly known as **Indian gooseberry** or **Amla**, is one of the most valued medicinal plants in traditional Indian medicine systems, including Ayurveda, Unani, and Siddha [1]. This ancient fruit has been revered for centuries as a potent rejuvenator and is extensively used in famous Ayurvedic formulations such as Triphala and Chyavanprasha [2]. Due to its remarkable therapeutic properties and widespread traditional use across multiple medical systems, Amla has become a significant subject of contemporary pharmacological research [3]. The medicinal potential of Amla is attributed to its rich phytochemical composition. The fruit is exceptionally high in **vitamin C** (ascorbic acid), which is notably resistant to storage and heat damage, making it a superior natural source of this essential nutrient [3]. Beyond vitamin C, Amla contains a diverse array of bioactive compounds including **polyphenols**, **alkaloids**, **tannins**, **flavonoids**, **quercetin**, **gallic acid**, and various other phytochemical constituents [1]. These compounds work synergistically to provide multiple pharmacological activities [2].

Contemporary pharmacological research has corroborated the traditional uses of Amla, demonstrating its impressive spectrum of therapeutic properties. Studies have documented **antioxidant**, **immunomodulatory**, **anti-inflammatory**, **antiviral**, **hepatoprotective**, **cardioprotective**, **antidiabetic**, **anticancer**, **antimutagenic**, and **radioprotective** activities [1]. Furthermore, scientific investigations have confirmed additional beneficial properties including **gastroprotective**, **neuroprotective**, **antihyperlipidemic**, and **antimicrobial** effects [3]. The clinical relevance of Amla extends to modern healthcare challenges. Recent evidence suggests that Amla exhibits potential therapeutic value in managing various lifestyle-related diseases and chronic conditions [4]. Its multifaceted health benefits have led to increased interest in developing novel value-added products and formulations that leverage its therapeutic potential [4]. This growing body of scientific evidence justifies the extensive exploration of Amla's mechanisms of action and its potential applications in both preventive and therapeutic contexts in contemporary medicine.

Anti-Inflammatory & Antioxidant Properties Amla works against inflammation at multiple biological levels by neutralizing reactive oxygen species and modulating key signaling pathways like NF- κ B and MAPKs. This helps reduce markers of systemic inflammation including C-reactive protein and erythrocyte sedimentation rate [1].

Diabetes Management Amla shows strong anti-diabetic activity by lowering blood sugar levels and improving insulin function. Clinical research has demonstrated its effectiveness in managing hyperglycemia and improving glucose metabolism [1].

Cardiovascular Health Studies show amla improves blood fluidity and endothelial function while reducing harmful lipids. A randomized clinical trial found that amla significantly reduced total cholesterol,



triglycerides, and LDL-cholesterol while increasing beneficial HDL-cholesterol [2].

Cancer Prevention Amla exhibits anti-cancer properties through multiple mechanisms, including inhibition of tumorigenic transcription factors and cancer cell growth [6]. Its bioactive compounds help prevent oxidative stress-driven cellular damage that can lead to malignancy [3].

Brain & Eye Health Phenolic compounds in amla provide neuroprotective effects, reducing β -amyloid-induced neurotoxicity. Additionally, amla has shown potential in protecting eye health and preventing age-related macular degeneration [4].

Skin, Hair & Anti-Aging Amla boosts collagen production, reduces wrinkles, and protects skin against UV damage and premature aging. It also promotes hair growth, prevents dandruff, and strengthens hair [1].

Safety Profile

A clinical study involving healthy adults found that amla supplementation improved key health markers without adverse effects, changes in liver function, or safety concerns. The fruit is non-toxic and easily tolerated at recommended doses.

Forms of Use

Amla is traditionally used in Ayurvedic products like Triphala and Chyawanprash, and can be consumed as fresh fruit, juice, powder, capsules, or supplements [5]. It's also incorporated into functional foods and beverages for convenient daily consumption.

Overview of Chyawanprash

Chyawanprash is an ancient **Ayurvedic dietary supplement** composed of around 50 medicinal

herbs, mineral, honey, ghee, and sesame oil, with **Amalaki (Indian gooseberry)** as its primary ingredient [9]. This time-tested herbal formulation has been part of the Indian diet since ancient times and is specifically designed to **boost immunity, restore vitality, and delay the aging process** [10]. The name itself carries mythological significance in Ayurvedic tradition.

Historical and Cultural Significance

The preparation is first mentioned by **Master Charaka** in classical Ayurvedic texts and has been valued for centuries as a **Rasayana**—a rejuvenative therapeutic class in Ayurveda that aims to restore **ojas** (the vital life force) and preserve **strength, stamina, and vitality** [11].

Composition and Preparation

Key Ingredients

Chyawanprash's formulation includes a **synergistic blend of over 50 medicinal herbs**, processed extracts, minerals, and aromatics such as clove, cardamom, and cinnamon [8]. The **primary ingredient is Amalaki (Phyllanthus emblica)**, which is recognized as the world's richest source of **vitamin C** and a powerful antioxidant [5].

Manufacturing Process

The preparation involves several steps: **decocting herbs**, preparing dried herb extracts, mixing with honey, and adding aromatic powders, resulting in a **jam-like consistency with a sweet, sour, and spicy flavor** [8].

Primary Health Benefits

Immune System Enhancement



Chyawanprash is renowned primarily for its **immune-boosting properties** [7]. Research demonstrates that regular consumption strengthens the immune system and enhances the body's defense mechanisms [6]. A notable clinical study showed that healthy children consuming chyawanprash exhibited **more than 2 times protection from immunity-related illnesses** compared to controls [9].

Antioxidant and Anti-inflammatory Properties

The formulation contains multiple **bioactive compounds with potent antioxidant and adaptogenic properties** [10]. Studies have shown that chyawanprash reduces pro-inflammatory cytokines such as **IL-6, TNF- α , and IL-1 β** , demonstrating strong **anti-inflammatory potential** in experimental models of inflammation [11].

Anti-aging and Rejuvenation

As a **Rasayana formulation**, chyawanprash is specifically designed to **revitalize skin cells, delay aging, and protect skin from free radical damage** [5]. Its capacity to preserve youth and vitality represents a core principle of its traditional use.

Cognitive and Neurological Benefits

Memory and Intelligence Enhancement

Chyawanprash functions as a Medhya Rasayana, promoting **intellect (Medha) and memory (Smriti)** [10]. Preclinical studies demonstrate that chyawanprash provides **antiamnesic activity** and protects against memory impairment through multiple mechanisms, including **decreased free radical generation and increased free radical scavenging** [12].

Brain Resilience and Neuroprotection

Modern research confirms the traditional claim that chyawanprash possesses **antioxidant, adaptogenic, and neuroprotective properties** that support cognitive function and **mental resilience** [10]. Limited clinical studies show **improvement in memory and reduction in oxidative stress** after regular consumption [10].

Cognitive Function in Students

A study on college students demonstrated that regular chyawanprash consumption was **helpful in improving cognition (alertness, attention, and concentration)** and also promoted **academic performance** and general well-being [13].

Respiratory and Infectious Disease Prevention

Respiratory Health

Chyawanprash is **traditionally used to improve respiratory health and strengthen the immune system** to prevent recurrence of infections [14]. It is particularly useful in treating **cough, cold, and throat infections** [5].

Protection Against Respiratory Infections

Clinical studies have demonstrated that chyawanprash provides **anti-inflammatory and immunomodulatory benefits** that protect the respiratory tract from infections and inflammatory conditions [6].

COVID-19 and Pandemic Response

During the COVID-19 pandemic, chyawanprash gained significant attention as an **immunity booster**, with market demand rising **30-40 percent** during rising coronavirus cases [5]. The formulation was used to **help maintain oxygen levels** and boost immunity during the pandemic. However, a meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials revealed a **trend in efficacy as**



prophylaxis for COVID-19, though further research with larger sample sizes is recommended [15].

Respiratory and Pulmonary Protection

Protection Against Air Pollution

Research in experimental models demonstrates that chyawanprash exerts **protective effects against particulate matter (PM)-induced pulmonary disease** through **inhibition of inflammatory cytokines** and prevention of inflammatory cell infiltration [16].

Gastrointestinal and Metabolic Benefits

Gastrointestinal Health

Chyawanprash is used traditionally for addressing **gastrointestinal issues** and supporting overall digestive health [5].

Vitamin C and Nutritional Value

The **high vitamin C content from Amalaki** serves as the formulation's core strength, helping to **correct the system, reduce bio-toxins, repair and heal the system** [17].

Clinical Evidence in Specific Populations

Benefits in Healthy Children

A significant randomized controlled trial involving 627 healthy school children (ages 5-12) demonstrated that regular 6-month consumption of chyawanprash resulted in:

- **Greater than 2 times protection** from immunity-related illnesses
- **Better improvement in energy levels, physical fitness, strength, and stamina**

- **Enhanced quality of life** as assessed through standardized questionnaires [9]

Healthcare Workers and Occupational Protection

A randomized controlled trial among healthcare workers exposed to COVID-19 found that while chyawanprash was well-tolerated with no adverse reactions, **larger trials with longer duration** are needed to fully confirm its **adaptogenic effect** as an adjunctive preventive therapy [18].

Mechanistic Insights

Bioactive Components and Pathways

Chyawanprash contains **more than 180 metabolites**, including **gallic acid, quercetin, ellagic acid, and caffeic acid**, which contribute to its **antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and immunomodulatory activities** [17].

Neuroprotection and Brain Function

The formulation's mechanism involves **targeting NF-κB signaling pathways** and reducing pro-inflammatory cytokine secretion, as evidenced by studies showing reduced **IL-6 and TNF-α production** [11].

Safety and Tolerability

General Safety Profile

Chyawanprash is **purely herbal in nature** and has been shown to be **safe for long-term use** with minimal adverse effects reported in clinical studies [14].

Clinical Safety Data

Studies evaluating safety parameters found **no clinically significant changes** in biochemical and



hematological parameters, and **no serious adverse events** were reported during clinical trials [18].

Evidence Limitations and Research Gaps

Current State of Clinical Evidence

While traditional use and preclinical evidence are robust, **most clinical studies are limited by smaller sample sizes and shorter duration**, and there is **limited scientific literature on its clinical role** compared to the widespread consumer use [14].

Need for Larger Trials

Randomized controlled trials of high quality with larger sample sizes and longer follow-up are needed to provide more significant evidence on chyawanprash's efficacy as an immunity booster [6].

Standardization and Research Opportunities

Future research should include **measurement of current biomarkers of immunity pre- and post-consumption** and explore benefits of chyawanprash as an **adjuvant to conventional treatments** [6].

Modern Applications and Market Growth

Commercial Expansion

Chyawanprash has grown from a traditional household preparation to **industrial production and large-scale commercial marketing**, with a **sharp rise of 30-40 percent in market demand** during health crises [6].

Consumer Trust and Adoption

As **one of the most revered, effective, and best-selling health supplements** of the Indian Ayurvedic system, chyawanprash maintains **high**

trust quotient among consumers, though common queries about usage and benefits persist [14].

CONCLUSION

Chyawanprash represents a **time-tested Ayurvedic formulation** with multifaceted health benefits supported by both traditional knowledge and emerging scientific research. Its **immune-boosting, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and neuroprotective properties** make it valuable for promoting overall health and vitality. While **preclinical evidence is strong and encouraging**, further high-quality clinical trials with **larger sample sizes and longer follow-up periods** are essential to conclusively establish its efficacy for specific health conditions. The formulation's **excellent safety profile and lack of serious adverse effects** support its continued use as a **preventive health supplement** in both traditional and modern healthcare contexts.

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