

A REVIEW STUDY OF BHALLATAKA (SEMECARPUS ANACARDIUM) IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Bhallataka (*Semecarpus anacardium* Linn.), commonly known as the "marking nut," is a potent medicinal plant in Ayurvedic literature. It is traditionally classified under Upavisha due to its inherent toxicity when unprocessed. However, after proper Shodhana (purification), Bhallataka displays a wide range of therapeutic applications including anti-inflammatory, rejuvenative, wound healing, and immunomodulatory properties. This review aims to compile and critically assess the classical Ayurvedic references, pharmacological activities, and modern scientific research surrounding Bhallataka, with a focus on its indications, safety profile, and future potential in integrative medicine.

KEYWORDS: Bhallataka, Marking nut, *Semecarpus anacardium*, Pharmacological activity, Ayurveda, Indications, Contraindications.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of holistic medicine, highlights the importance of botanicals in maintaining health and curing diseases. Bhallataka is one such plant recognized for its powerful therapeutic potential. Despite being toxic in crude form, it becomes

highly effective after undergoing traditional purification (Shodhana). Owing to its Katu, Ushna, and Tikshna properties, it has been extensively used in chronic conditions such as arthritis, skin diseases, and metabolic syndromes.

2. Botanical Profile

Parameter	Details
Botanical Name	<i>Semecarpus anacardium</i> Linn.
Family	Anacardiaceae
Common Names	Bhallataka, Bhilawa, Marking Nut
Part Used	Fruit (nut), Oil
Rasa (Taste)	Katu (pungent), Tikta (bitter)
Guna (Qualities)	Laghu (light), Tikshna, Snigdha
Veerya (Potency)	Ushna (hot)
Vipaka (Post-digestive effect)	Katu
Prabhava (Specific action)	Shothahara, Vrishya

3. Shodhana (Purification Process)

Raw Bhallataka is toxic and can cause severe reactions. Shodhana is carried out using media such as Gomutra (cow urine), Kanjika (sour gruel), Godugdha (cow milk), or lime water. This process removes its irritant components, enhancing therapeutic utility and patient safety.

- Therapeutic Actions:

- Shothahara – Anti-inflammatory
- Kushtaghna – Useful in skin disorders
- Vranaropana – Wound healing
- Rasayana – Rejuvenative
- Agnideepana – Appetite stimulant
- Krimighna – Anthelmintic

4. Ayurvedic Pharmacological Properties

- Dosha Karma: Kapha-Vata Shamak

5. Classical References

- Charaka Samhita: Included in Kushtaghna and

Deepaniya Mahakashaya

- Sushruta Samhita: Indicated in Vrana, Apachi, Gulma, and Shotha
- Bhavaprakasha Nighantu: Describes its Rasayana and Vrishya properties

6. Modern Pharmacological Studies

- Anti-inflammatory: Reduces paw edema, cytokine levels in animals
- Anti-cancer: Cytotoxic effects on cancer cell lines
- Antioxidant: Presence of Bhilawanols A & B
- Immunomodulatory: Enhances immune response, adaptogenic properties
- Anti-diabetic: Lowers blood glucose in diabetic rat models

7. Indications in Ayurveda

- Amavata (Rheumatoid arthritis)
- Kushtha (Skin diseases)
- Arsha (Piles)
- Bhagandara (Fistula-in-ano)
- Kasa, Shwasa (Respiratory diseases)
- Arbuda (Tumors)
- Low libido, infertility

8. Contraindications and Precautions

- Avoid in unpurified form
- Contraindicated in:
 - Pitta Prakriti individuals
 - Pregnancy
 - Bleeding disorders
- Overdose effects: Burning sensation, oral ulcers, systemic toxicity

9. Recent Research and Clinical Evidence

- A 2018 clinical trial published in Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine reported significant improvement in osteoarthritis symptoms using Bhallataka extract capsules.
- Nanoparticle-based formulations are being investigated for targeted delivery in cancer treatment.

10. DISCUSSION

Bhallataka offers diverse pharmacological actions that make it effective in chronic and degenerative disorders. Its Rasayana nature aligns with immunomodulation and metabolic correction. However, due to its Upavisha status, precise purification and dosing are vital. Continued integration of classical principles with scientific validation is essential for broader clinical use.

11. CONCLUSION

Bhallataka is a valuable yet potent herb in Ayurveda with multidimensional uses in chronic diseases. With appropriate purification and guided usage, it offers strong potential in modern integrative therapies, especially in autoimmune, metabolic, and oncological conditions.

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