



## HEPATOPROTECTIVE ACTIVITY AND MEDICINAL PLANTS- A REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

Liver plays a pivotal role in metabolism, secretion and storage and is sometimes referred as the “great chemical factory” of the body, because the body depends on the liver to regulate, synthesize, store and secrete many important proteins, nutrients, chemicals and to purify and clear toxins or unnecessary substances from the body.<sup>[1]</sup> The risk of the liver intoxication has recently increased by the higher exposure to environmental toxins, pesticides and frequent use of chemotherapeutics. Liver damage is always associated with cellular necrosis, increase in tissue lipid peroxidation and depletion in the tissue glutathione (GSH) levels. In addition, serum levels of many biochemical markers like serum glutamate oxaloacetate transaminase (SGOT/AST) and serum glutamate pyruvate transaminase (SGPT/ALT) triglycerides, cholesterol, bilirubin and alkaline phosphatase are elevated.<sup>[2,3]</sup> Hepatoprotective effect was studied against chemicals and drugs induced hepatotoxicity in rats like alcohol, carbon tetrachloride, galactosamine, paracetamol, isoniazid and rifampicin, antibiotics, peroxidised oil, aflatoxin etc. AYURVEDA, an ancient Indian system of medicine, described various plants for the treatment of hepatotoxicity. Since times immemorial plants have been used therapeutically in a variety of conditions and with the advent of modern synthetic drugs and their convenience of standardized dosage forms, dramatic efficacy in acute conditions and most of all simplicity of usage, there was a decline in the use of plant medicines till the herbal revolution. In contrast to the narrow spectrum of activity of synthetic drugs with their possible risk of side effects and also chemophobia, herbal drugs as traditionally preferred however, herbal drugs are often mild in action and need to be taken for a long period to be effective especially in chronic conditions. Herbal medicines have been used in the treatment of liver diseases for a long time. A number of herbal preparations are available in the market. The present review is aimed at compiling data on different medicinal plants with hepatoprotective activity on various models of hepatotoxicity.

**KEYWORDS:** Hepatoprotective activity, Medicinal plants, Hepatotoxicity, Liver diseases, CCl<sub>4</sub>, Thioacetamide, Paracetamol.

### INTRODUCTION

Hepatotoxicity may be defined as the effect of any agent on liver results in a deviation from normal function, morphology and implies chemical/drug/microbial-driven liver-damage.<sup>[4]</sup> As some agents lead to necrosis, steatosis, cirrhosis, carcinoma, other cause is jaundice or with little or no overt injury to the hepatic parenchyma and some agents produce degenerative or vascular lesions. Hepatotoxicity related to many drugs or their transformation to chemically reactive metabolites that may be influenced by therapeutic, physiological or nutritional factors interfering with drug elimination or formation of a reactive metabolite or their detoxification. It is caused by drug accumulation or may be due to metabolic inhibition by other drugs or liver damage.

The aspects of chemical induced hepatotoxicity include the nature of the hepatotoxic agents, character of the injury, mechanism for the hepatotoxic effects and the

circumstances of the exposure and the medical and social importance.

Domestic exposure to hepatotoxins includes accidental exposure to ccl<sub>4</sub>, phosphorous, toxic/over doses of hepatotoxic medicinal agents such as acetaminophen or ferrous sulphate, ingestion of hepatotoxic mushrooms.

Liver plays an important role in regulation of physiological processes, involved in several vital functions such as storage, secretion and metabolism. It also detoxifies a variety of drugs and xenobiotics and secretes bile that has an important role in digestion.

The liver plays a central role in transforming, clearing the chemicals and insusceptible to the toxicity from these agents. Certain medicinal agents when taken in overdoses and sometimes even when administered within therapeutic ranges may injure this organ. Other chemical

agents such as those used in laboratories, industries, natural chemicals and herbal remedies can also induce hepatotoxicity and chemicals that cause liver injury are called hepatotoxins.

Liver diseases are among the most serious ailments classified as acute or chronic hepatitis (inflammatory liver diseases), hepatosis (non-inflammatory diseases) and cirrhosis (fibrosis of liver).<sup>[5]</sup> Liver diseases are mainly caused by toxic chemical drugs e.g. paracetamol, anti-tubercular, anticancer agents or alcohol, some natural toxins such as peptides of *Amanita phalloides*, pyrrolidizines and the toxin of cycad nut. Most of the hepatotoxic chemicals damage liver cells by inducing lipid peroxidation and others by oxidative cell damage. It has been estimated that about 90% of acute hepatitis is due to viruses and major viral agents involved are hepatitis A, B, C, D, E and G. Among these, hepatitis B infection often results in chronic liver diseases and cirrhosis of liver.<sup>[6]</sup>

More than 900 drugs have been implicated in causing liver injury and it is the most common reason for a drug to be withdrawn from the market. Chemicals often cause subclinical injury to liver which manifests only as abnormal liver enzyme tests. Drug induced liver injury is responsible for 5% of all hospital admissions and 50% of all acute liver failures.<sup>[7]</sup> AYURVEDA, an ancient Indian system of medicine, described various plants for the treatment of hepatotoxicity. Since times immemorial plants have been used therapeutically in a variety of conditions and with the advent of modern synthetic drugs and their convenience of standardized dosage forms, dramatic efficacy in acute conditions and most of all simplicity of usage, there was a decline in the use of plant medicines till the herbal revolution. In contrast to the narrow spectrum of activity of synthetic drugs with their possible risk of side effects and also chemophobia, herbal drugs as traditionally preferred however, herbal drugs are often mild in action and need to be taken for a long period to be effective especially in chronic conditions.

#### LIVER DISEASES AND MEDICINAL PLANTS

In India, more than 87 plants are used in 33 patented & proprietary multi-ingredient plant formulations & about 40 polyherbal commercial formulations reputed to have hepatoprotective action are being used. It has been reported that about 160 phytoconstituents from 101 medicinal plants have hepatoprotective activity.<sup>[8]</sup>

Many herbs have been used to alleviate various liver diseases, of which the most popular ones include Silymarin from *Silybum marianum*, andrographolide and neoandrographolide from *Andrographis paniculata*, curcumin from *Curcuma longa*, picroside and kutkoside from *Picrorrhiza kurroa*, phyllanthin and hypophyllanthin from *Phyllanthus niruri*, glycyrrhizin from *Glycyrrhiza glabra*, etc.<sup>[9]</sup>

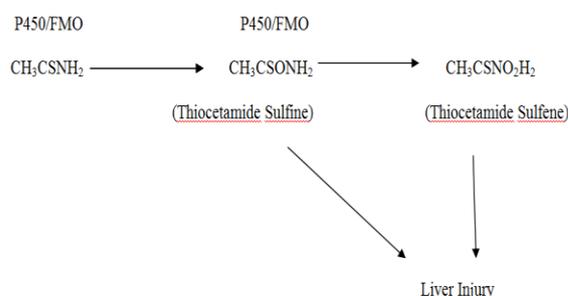
#### Mechanism of drug induced hepatotoxicity

##### 1. Thioacetamide induced hepatotoxicity

Thioacetamide, originally used as a fungicide, is a potent hepatotoxicant, bioactivated by CYP450 and/or Flavin-Containing Monooxygenase (FMO) systems to sulfine (sulfoxide) and sulfene (sulfone) metabolites, which cause centrilobular necrosis. Thioacetamide sulfoxide, a relatively stable intermediate of thioacetamide is the penultimate reactive, is obligatory for the hepatotoxic effects.<sup>[10]</sup>

Since much of the TA transformation mechanism and toxicity study was conducted largely prior to the advent of the discovery of CYP450 isozymes and information on specific isozymes involved in the bioactivation of TA has remained completely blurred and uninvestigated.

A single large dose 100 mg/kg p.o is followed by degenerative changes in 6-8 h. By 24 h this dose in rats leads to centrilobular necrosis and in 24-30 h the effect will be maximal. The pre-necrotic changes include loss of glycogen by 6 h and acidophilic degeneration of cells in the central zone by 8 h. By 9<sup>th</sup> h this is accompanied by the dilatation of sinusoids to form pathways between the central veins of contiguous lobules. Hepatocytes of central zone contain a few lipid droplets and repair begins at 37 h and the liver will return to normal by 7 days.



##### Mechanism-based thioacetamide induced liver injury

##### 2. Ranitidine induced hepatotoxicity<sup>[11, 12]</sup>

Liver injury induced by ranitidine is due to its metabolite which may lead to hepatic oxidative damage and one of its metabolites is generating an immunological reaction. Ranitidine with a dose of either 30 or 50 mg/kg also produces a reaction as reflected by infiltration of hepatocytes. Severe inflammatory changes with collagenous septa beginning to form after pronounced centrilobular and bridging necrosis. In the parenchyma there was focal liver cell necrosis with some accumulation of histiocytic elements and slight steatosis and cholestasis. Portal tract shows fibrosis, bile duct proliferation and infiltrate consisting of lymphocytes, plasma cells, polymorphs and eosinophils. Liver injury is manifested in terms of increase in levels of serum aminotransferases, modest hepatic infiltration by both lymphocytes and eosinophils and slight focal hepatocellular necrosis also causes liver cholestasis.

associated with increased plasma bilirubin and alkaline phosphatase.

### 3. Paracetamol induced hepatotoxicity<sup>[13, 14, 15]</sup>

N-Acetyl-para-aminophenol [APAP], is metabolized in the liver primarily by glucuronidation and sulfation and with therapeutic doses (<4 g daily), only 4% is converted by the cytochrome P450 system to the reactive toxic intermediate N-acetyl-p-benzoquinoneimine (NAPQI). This toxic metabolite is rendered nontoxic by binding to glutathione. In case of APAP overdose due to CYP enzyme induction and glutathione depletion or the inhibition of glucuronidation this reactive metabolite cannot be sufficiently neutralized. Instead, NAPQI reacts with the cysteine group of hepatocellular proteins which lead to the loss of cell function and cell death.

NAPQI-protein adducts, released into the circulation from the injured liver in patients who overdosed APAP, can be detected even if there are no large increases in transaminase levels. The NAPQI-protein adducts serum concentration also correlates significantly and positively with serum Aspartate aminotransferase (AST) activity. These patients had higher alanine aminotransferase (ALT) levels, a higher prothrombin international normalized ratio (INR) and a higher death rate compared with the non-APAP group, suggesting an APAP injury.

### 4. D-galactosamine induced hepatotoxicity

Galactosamine administration induces an inflammatory response in liver that biochemically and histologically resembles viral hepatitis 13. A single administration causes hepatocellular necrosis and fatty liver.<sup>[16]</sup>

It causes appearance of specific lesions in liver cells, characterized by inhibition of nuclear RNA and protein synthesis.<sup>[17]</sup>

### 5. Carbon tetrachloride (CCl<sub>4</sub>) induced hepatotoxicity

Liver injury due to CCl<sub>4</sub> in rats was first reported in 1936 and has been widely and successfully used by many investigators.<sup>[18,19]</sup> Carbon tetrachloride is metabolized by cytochrome P-450 in endoplasmic reticulum and mitochondria with the formation of CCl<sub>3</sub>O<sup>-</sup>, a reactive oxidative free radical, which initiates lipid peroxidation.<sup>[20, 21]</sup> Administration of a single dose of CCl<sub>4</sub> to a rat produces, within 24 hrs, a centrilobular necrosis and fatty changes. The poison reaches its maximum concentration in the liver within 3 hrs of administration. Thereafter, the level falls and by 24 hrs there is no CCl<sub>4</sub> left in the liver.<sup>[22]</sup> The development of necrosis is associated with leakage of hepatic enzymes into serum. Dose of CCl<sub>4</sub> that induces hepatotoxicity ranges from 0.1 to 3 ml/kg administered intraperitoneally.

## Methods of pharmacological evaluation of hepatoprotective plants

### *In-vivo* models

#### Toxic chemicals-induced liver damage

A toxic dose or repeated doses of a known hepatotoxin (carbon tetrachloride, alcohol, D-galactosamine, Allyl alcohol, paracetamol, thioacetamide, etc) is administered to induce liver damage in experimental animals. The test substance is administered along with, prior to and after the toxin treatment. If the hepatotoxicity is prevented or reduced the test substance is deemed to be effective.

Liver damage and recovery from damage are assessed by measuring serum marker enzymes, bilirubin, histopathological changes in the liver, biochemical changes in liver (eg: hydroxyproline, lipid etc) and bile flow. When liver is damaged liver enzyme such as Glutamate Pyruvate Transaminase (GPT), SGOT and Alkaline Phosphatase enter into the circulation. An increase in the levels of these marker enzymes in the serum is an indication of liver damage. Other effects of induced liver damage are reduction of prothrombin synthesis there by extended prothrombin time and reduction in clearance of certain substances such as bromsulphaphthalein can be used as some of experimental models in the evaluation of hepatoprotective plants.

The hepatoprotective effect of a drug against different hepatotoxins differ especially when the mechanism of action of toxins are different. Therefore the efficacy of each drug has to be tested against hepatotoxin that acts by different methods.

#### Reduction in drugs-induced prolongation of thiopentone induced sleeping time

This method is used to screen anti-hepatotoxic effect (thioacetamide, ranitidine, paracetamol etc.) of drugs in animals. Hepatotoxic drugs like thioacetamide, ranitidine, paracetamol etc. reduces the levels of drug metabolizing enzymes in liver. Therefore metabolism of thiopentone is reduced resulting in prolongation of its sleeping time. If a plant drug reduces this drugs-induced prolongation of "sleeping time" by improved functional status then the drug administered can be considered hepatoprotective against drugs induced hepatotoxicity.

#### Anti-hepatitis virus activity

At present, simple *in vivo* test systems are not available to determine anti-hepatitis virus activity in rodent models. However duck and monkey models have been introduced to test anti-hepatitis B activity.

#### Choleretic activity

Techniques are available to collect bile by cannulating the bile duct in anaesthetized as well as conscious animals to study the effect of drugs on the secretion.

### Regeneration of hepatocytes

The effects of drugs on hepatocyte regeneration can be tested by surgical removal of a portion of the liver in experimental animals followed by autopsy.

#### *In-vitro* studies

Fresh hepatocyte preparations and primary cultured hepatocytes are used to study direct anti-hepatotoxic activity of drugs. Hepatocytes are treated with hepatotoxin and the effect of the plant drug on the same is evaluated. The activities of the transaminases released into the medium are determined. An increase in the activity of transaminases in the medium indicates liver damage. Parameters such as hepatocyte multiplication, morphology, macromolecular synthesis and oxygen consumption are determined.

#### Biochemical assays

Since, many toxic chemicals induce liver damage by lipid peroxidation or oxidative damage to DNA and reduction in the levels of glutathione and assessment of antioxidant property is useful. Antioxidant property of plant drugs is studied using liver homogenates, isolated liver cell membranes and DNA etc. in the process leading to cirrhosis, accumulation of connective tissue and parenchymal regeneration are competing events. Therefore, the search for agents to prevent liver cirrhosis is also focused on inhibition of excessive connective tissue formation in the liver. Fibrosuppressive effects on protein hydroxylation by inhibitors also can be screened.

#### Experimental models for hepatoprotective screening

Several chemical reagents and drugs which induce liposis, necrosis, cirrhosis, carcinogenesis and hepatobiliary dysfunctions in experimental animals are classified as hepatotoxins. The following are some of the experimental models explained by employing some of the important hepatotoxins.

**1. CCl<sub>4</sub> model:** A number of CCl<sub>4</sub> models are devised depending upon its dosage through different routes of administration.

a) Acute hepatic damage: Acute liver damage, characterized by ischemia, hydropic degeneration and central necrosis is caused by oral or subcutaneous administration of CCl<sub>4</sub> (1.25ml/kg). The maximum elevation of biochemical parameters are found to be 24 hours after the CCl<sub>4</sub> administration normally administered as 50% v/v solution in liquid paraffin or olive oil.

b) Chronic reversible hepatic damage: Administration of CCl<sub>4</sub> (1ml/kg S.C.) twice weekly for 8 weeks produces chronic, reversible liver damage.

c) Chronic, irreversible hepatic damage: Administration of CCl<sub>4</sub> (1ml/kg S.C.) twice weekly for 12 weeks simulates chronic, irreversible liver damage.<sup>[23]</sup>

**2. Thioacetamide model:** Thioacetamide (100mg/kg s.c.) induces acute hepatic damage after 48 hrs of

administration by causing sinusoidal congestion and hydropic swelling with increased mitosis.<sup>[24]</sup>

**3. D-galactosamine model:** D-galactosamine (800mg/kg i.p.) induces acute hepatotoxicity after 48 hrs of administration with diffused necrosis and steatosis.<sup>[25]</sup>

#### 4. Paracetamol model

Paracetamol induces acute hepatotoxicity depending upon its dosage through different routes of administration; such as

a. Paracetamol (800mg/kg i.p.) induces centrilobular necrosis without steatosis.<sup>[26]</sup>

b. Paracetamol at a single dose of 3g/kg p.o. stimulates acute hepatic damage. It takes 48 hrs to induce the toxicity.<sup>[27]</sup>

#### 5. Chloroform model

It produces hepatotoxicity with extensive central necrosis, fatty metamorphosis, hepatic cell degeneration and necrosis either by inhalation or by subcutaneous administration (0.4-1.5ml/kg).<sup>[28]</sup>

#### 6. Ethanol model

Ethanol induces liposis to a different degree depending upon its dose, route and period of administration as follows:

a. A single dose of ethanol (1ml/kg) induces fatty degeneration.<sup>[29]</sup>

b. Administration of 40%v/v ethanol (2 ml/100g/day p.o.) for 21 days produces fatty liver.<sup>[30]</sup>

c. Administration of country made liquor (3ml/100 g/day p.o.) for 21 days produces liposis.<sup>[31]</sup>

#### Analysis of parameters to assess liver function

##### A. Functional parameter (Thiopentone induced sleeping time in rats)

After last dose of drug/extracts administration, rats were fasted for 18 h prior to recording of thiopentone induced sleeping time. Animals on 25<sup>th</sup> day all groups received thiopentone sodium (40 mg/kg, i.p.). The time interval between the loss and the regaining of the righting reflex was measured as sleeping time.

##### B. Physical parameters

###### Determination of wet liver weight

Livers isolated from the animals were washed with alcohol and dried with filter paper strips and weighed on an electronic balance (Dhona, Calcutta) and were expressed with respect to their body weight i.e. g/100 gm.

###### Determination of wet liver volume

After recording the liver weights, the livers were individually dropped into a measuring cylinder containing a fixed volume of distilled water and the volume displaced was recorded and expressed as ml/100 g body weight.

### C. Biochemical parameters

In keeping with the multiplicity of the liver function, a variety of tests are available to assess them. The choice of the test is influenced by its simplicity, reliability and sensitivity as well as the particular function, one is interested in assessing.

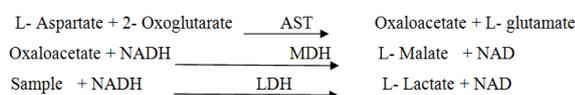
#### 1. Serum enzyme parameters Transaminases<sup>[32]</sup>

Transamination is a process in which an amino group is transferred from an amino acid to an alpha- keto acid. It is an important step in the metabolism of amino acids. The enzymes responsible for transamination are called transaminases or amino-transferases. Two diagnostically useful transaminases are glutamate oxaloacetate transaminase SGOT/AST and glutamate pyruvate transaminase SGPT/ALT. These two enzymes are sensitive markers of hepato-cellular injury.

#### A. Estimation of SGOT/AST

SGOT is an enzyme found mainly in heart muscle, liver cells, skeletal muscle and kidneys. Injury to these tissues results in the release of the enzyme in blood. Elevated levels are found in myocardial infarction, cardiac operations, hepatitis, cirrhosis, acute pancreatitis, acute renal diseases and primary muscle diseases. Decreased levels may be found in pregnancy, Beri Beri and Diabetic ketoacidosis. Its normal serum level is 5-40 units/l.

**Principle:** SGOT catalyses the transfer of amino group from L- Aspartate to 2-Oxo glutarate with the formation of oxaloacetate and L-glutamate. The rate of this reaction is monitored by an indicator reaction coupled with Malate dehydrogenase (MDH) in which the oxaloacetate formed is converted to malate ion in the presence of NADH (Nicotinamide Adenine Dinucleotide). The oxidation of NADH in this reaction is measured as a decrease in the absorbance of NADH at 340 nm, which is proportional to SGOT activity.



Where:-

AST: Aspartate amino transferase

MDH: Malate dehydrogenase

LDH: Lactate dehydrogenase

#### Procedure

Pipette	Sample (µl)
Working reagent	500
Sample	50

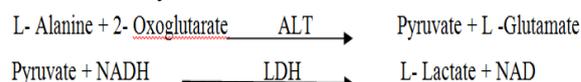
SGOT levels are 10-200 fold elevated in patients with acute hepatic necrosis, viral hepatitis and drug induced poisoning. SGOT levels are also elevated by 10 fold in patients of post hepatic jaundice, intra hepatic cholestasis and less than 10 fold in alcoholic and hepatic steatosis. Very high levels are seen in extensive acute hepatic

necrosis such as in severe viral hepatitis and acute cholestasis.

#### B. Estimation of SGPT/ALT

ALT or SGPT is a cytosolic enzyme primarily present in the liver. Its normal serum level is 7-56 units/l.

**Principle:** SGPT catalyses the transfer of amino group from L- Alanine to 2-Oxoglutarate with the formation of pyruvate and L-glutamate. The pyruvate so formed is allowed to react with NADH to produce L-lactate. The rate of this reaction is monitored by an indicator reaction coupled with LDH in the presence of NADH (Nicotinamide Adenine Dinucleotide). The oxidation of NADH in this reaction is measured as a decrease in the absorbance of NADH at 340 nm, which is proportional to SGPT activity.



ALT: Alanine amino transferase

LDH: Lactate dehydrogenase

#### Procedure

Pipette	Sample (µl)
Working reagent	500
Sample	50

As mentioned in the above table blank, standard and sample was prepared by considering 500 µl of working reagent and 50 µl each of distilled water, standard and sample respectively, later all the samples were incubated at 37<sup>o</sup>c, aspirated individually and absorbance was recorded at 340 nm.

ALT activity is predominantly associated with liver tissues followed by comparatively lower levels in heart, muscles and kidneys. Quantitation of ALT is a useful parameter in evaluating liver function. Elevated levels of this enzyme are found in liver and kidney diseases such as infectious or toxic hepatitis, infectious mononucleosis and cirrhosis. Moderate increase is also found in obstructive jaundice, metastasis carcinoma, hepatic congestion and myocardial infarction.

#### Phosphatases<sup>[32]</sup>

Phosphatases belong to the class of enzyme called hydrolases and they are characterized by their ability to hydrolyse a large variety of organic phosphate with the formation of an alcohol and phosphate ions.

Phosphatases of diagnostic significance are alkaline phosphatase and acid phosphatase. These are differentiated by their reaction in alkaline and acidic medium. The P<sub>H</sub> for measuring the alkaline phosphatase activity is 10 and for acid phosphatase are 5.

### C. Alkaline phosphatase (ALP)<sup>[32]</sup>

ALP is a membrane bound glycoprotein enzyme, produced by many tissues, especially bone, liver, intestine, placenta and is excreted into the bile. Elevation in activity of the enzyme can thus be found in diseases of bone, liver and in pregnancy. ALP levels in serum are abnormally high in biliary obstruction. Slight to moderate increase is seen in parenchymal liver diseases such as in hepatitis and cirrhosis and in metastatic liver disease. Its normal serum level is 20-100 U/L.

**Principle:** Serum alkaline phosphatase hydrolyses p-Nitro phenyl phosphate in the presence of oxidizing agent  $Mg^{+2}$ . This reaction is measured as absorbance is proportional to the ALP activity.



Where :-

ALP : Alkaline phosphatase

#### Procedure

Pipette	Sample (µl)
Working reagent	500
Sample	10

As mentioned in the above table blank, standard and sample was prepared by considering 500 µl of working reagent and 10 µl each of distilled water, standard, sample respectively, later all the samples were incubated at 37°C, aspirated individually and absorbance was recorded at 405 nm.

Increased alkaline phosphatase activity may be related to hepatobiliary and bone disease. Very high alkaline phosphatase activity in serum is seen in patient with bone cancer and marked increased also occur in obstructive jaundice and biliary cirrhosis. Moderate elevations have been noted in case of Hodgkin's disease, congestive heart failure, infective hepatitis and abdominal problems.

### 2) Bile pigments

**Bilirubin or** hematoidin is the yellow breakdown product of normal heme catabolism. Heme is found in hemoglobin, a principal component of red blood cells. Bilirubin is excreted in bile and urine, and elevated levels may indicate certain diseases. It is responsible for the yellow color of bruis, urine and the yellow discoloration in jaundice.

Bilirubin in serum would only react with diazo reagent in the presence of alcohol, after the proteins had been removed by precipitation. Normally 0.25mg/dl of conjugated bilirubin is present in the blood of an adult. Bilirubin rises in disease of hepatocytes, obstruction to biliary excretion into duodenum, in haemolysis and defects of hepatic uptake and conjugation of bilirubin pigment such as Gilbert's disease. Estimation of bilirubin is one of the better liver function tests because the liver must take bilirubin away from the albumin to which it is

bound in the circulation, conjugate it and excrete it into the bile-a truly complex series of reaction.<sup>[33, 34, 35]</sup>

### Estimation of serum Total Bilirubin (TB)<sup>[36, 37]</sup>

The serum bilirubin level is one of the best tests of liver function. Bilirubin is the metabolic product of the breakdown of heme derived from senescent red blood cells. Each day about 7.5g of hemoglobin is catabolized with the corresponding production of 250 mg bilirubin.

Normally, 0.25 mg/dl of conjugated bilirubin is present in the blood of an adult. Bilirubin level rises in diseases of hepatocytes, obstruction to biliary excretion into duodenum, in hemolysis and defects of hepatic uptake and conjugation of bilirubin treatment such as Gilbert's disease.

#### Principle

Bilirubin reacts with diazotized sulphanilic acid to form an azo compound, the color of which is measured at 546 nm (536-560 nm) and is proportional to the concentration of bilirubin. The stability of final color of reaction of mixture is 10 minutes for total bilirubin and 5 minutes for direct bilirubin.

#### Hepatoprotective medicinal plants

Herbal drugs have gained importance and popularity in recent years because of their safety, efficacy and cost effectiveness. The Indian Traditional Medicine like Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani are predominantly based on the use of plant materials. The association of medical plants with other plants in their habitat also influences their medicinal values in some cases. One of the important and well documented uses of plant products is their use as hepatoprotective agents. Hence, there is an ever increasing need for safe hepatoprotective agent.<sup>[38]</sup> In spite of tremendous strides in modern medicine, there are hardly any drugs that stimulate liver function, offer protection to the liver from damage or help regeneration of hepatic cell. Many formulations containing herbal extracts are sold in the Indian market for liver disorders.<sup>[39]</sup> But management of liver disorders by a simple and precise herbal drug is still an intriguing problem. Several Indian medicinal plants have been extensively used in the Indian traditional system of medicine for the management of liver disorder. Some of these plants have already been reported to possess strong antioxidant activity.<sup>[40,41]</sup>

In India, more than 87 plants are used in 33 patented & proprietary multi-ingredient plant formulations & about 40 polyherbal commercial formulations reputed to have hepatoprotective action are being used. It has been reported that about 160 phytoconstituents from 101 medicinal plants have hepatoprotective activity.<sup>[42]</sup>

Many herbs have been used to alleviate various liver diseases, of which the most popular ones include Silymarin from *Silybum marianum*, andrographolide and neoandrographolide from *Andrographis paniculata*,

curcumin from *Curcuma longa*, picroside and kutkoside from *Picrorrhiza kurroa*, phyllanthin and hypophyllanthin from *Phyllanthus niruri*, glycyrrhizin from *Glycyrrhiza glabra*, etc.<sup>[43]</sup>

The literature review reveals that a large number of drugs of plant origin are endowed with hepatoprotective claims either directly or indirectly. In recent years, the usage of herbal drugs for the treatment of liver diseases has increased all over the world. The herbal drugs are believed to be harmless and free from serious adverse reactions, as they are obtained from nature and are easily available. Also, the limited therapeutic options and disappointing therapeutic success of modern medicine including herbal preparations.

Liver protective herbal drugs contain a variety of chemical constituents like phenols, coumarins, lignans, essential oil, monoterpenes, carotenoids, glycosides, flavonoids, organic acids, lipids, alkaloids and xanthenes derivatives.<sup>[44]</sup> Studies carried out in China and Japan resulted in the isolation of a hepatoprotective lignan, gomishin from the fruits of Chinese medicinal plant *Schizandra chinensis*. Gomishin is used for the treatment of chronic hepatitis. Studies carried out at Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (TBGRI) have shown that *Trichopus zeylanicus*, *Phyllanthus maderaspatensis* and *P. kozhikodanus* are extremely active against paracetamol-induced liver damage in rats.<sup>[45,46,47]</sup> A recent report indicates that fumaric acid obtained from *Sida cordifolia* has significant anti-hepatotoxic activity in rat.<sup>[48]</sup> Ursolic acid which occurs

in many plants also showed promising hepatoprotection against paracetamol and CCl<sub>4</sub> induced liver damage in rats.<sup>[49,50]</sup> Some of the reported constituents with pharmacologically/therapeutically proved claims may be enlisted as silymarin, (+)- catechin, saikosaponins, curcumin, glycyrrhizin, picroside I and II gomisins etc.<sup>[51]</sup>, acetyl bergenin<sup>[52]</sup> and kolaviron.<sup>[53]</sup> Most commonly used plants in herbal formulations in India and scientifically validated in experimental animals are *Andrographis paniculata*<sup>[54]</sup>, *Boerhaavia diffusa*, *Eclipta alba*, *Picrorrhiza kurroa*<sup>[55]</sup>, *Cichorium intybus*, *Tinospora cordifolia*.<sup>[56]</sup> Some of the polyherbal formulations are verified for their hepatoprotective action against chemical induced liver damage in experimental animals: Liv. 52, Liver cure, Tefroli, Livol, Hepatomed, Jigrine, Stimuliv, Koflet and Icterine.

Antioxidants can protect experimental animals and humans from oxidant mediated liver damages. This effect can be seen even in certain common vitamins, spices and vegetables (e.g. Vitamin-E and turmeric). Efficacy of the traditional and new herbal products should be tested by standard experimental methods. Also, there should be adequate data from *in vivo* and *in vitro* studies to validate the therapeutic potential claimed.<sup>[57]</sup>

Several plants have been reported to have hepatoprotective activity among those; a few plants tested against different experimental models are listed in below table.

Name of Plant	Family	Plant Parts Used	Screening Models
<i>Arachniodes exilis</i> <sup>[58]</sup>	Dryopteridaceae	Rhizomes	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Asparagus racemosus</i> <sup>[59]</sup>	Liliaceae	Whole plant	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Amaranthus spinosus</i> <sup>[60]</sup>	Amaranthaceae	Whole plant	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Aloe barbadensis</i> Mill <sup>[61]</sup>	Liliaceae	Dried aerial parts	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Artemisia absinthium</i> <sup>[62]</sup>	Asteraceae	Powdered aerial parts	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Azadirachta indica</i> <sup>[63]</sup>	Meliaceae	Leaf	Paracetamol
<i>Aerva lanata</i> Linn <sup>[64]</sup>	Amaranthaceae	Coarse powder plant material	Paracetamol
<i>Acacia confuse</i> <sup>[65]</sup>	Leguminosae	Bark	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Alocasia indica</i> Linn. <sup>[66]</sup>	Araceae	Leaves	Paracetamol
<i>Acacia Catechu</i> <sup>[67]</sup>	Leguminosae	Powdered pale catechu	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Argemone Mexicana</i> <sup>[68]</sup>	Papavaraeae	Leaf & flower	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Ardisia solanacea</i> <sup>[69]</sup>	Myrsinaceae	Leaves	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Aphanamixis polystachya</i> <sup>[70]</sup>	Meliaceae	Leaves	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Alchornea cordifolia</i> <sup>[71]</sup>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaves	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Apium graveolens</i> <sup>[72]</sup>	Apiaceae	Seeds	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Asteracantha longifolia</i> <sup>[73]</sup>	Acanthaceae	Whole plant	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Azima tetracantha</i> <sup>[74]</sup>	Salvadoraceae	Leaves	Paracetamol
<i>Aloe vera</i> <sup>[75]</sup>	Xanthorrhoeaceae	Leaves	Paracetamol
<i>Aerva lanata</i> <sup>[76]</sup>	Amaranthaceae	Whole plant	Paracetamol
<i>Aerva sanguinolenta</i> <sup>[77]</sup>	Amaranthaceae	Leaves	Paracetamol
<i>Asparagus racemosa</i> <sup>[78]</sup>	Liliaceae	Roots	Paracetamol
<i>Albizia lebeck</i> <sup>[79]</sup>	Fabaceae	Leaves	Thioacetamide
<i>Anisochilus carnosus</i> <sup>[80]</sup>	Nyctaginaceae	Leaves	Thioacetamide
<i>Aegle marmelos</i> Correa <sup>[81]</sup>	Rutaceae	Leaves	Paracetamol
<i>Andrographis paniculata</i> <sup>[8]</sup>	Acanthaceae	Aerial parts	Ethanol
<i>Boerhaavia diffusa</i> <sup>[83]</sup>	Nyctaginaceae	Roots	Carbon tetrachloride

<i>Byrsocarpus coccineus</i> <sup>[84]</sup>	Connaraceae	Leaf	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Bixa orellana</i> <sup>[85]</sup>	Bixaceae	Seed	Methanol
<i>Berberis tinctoria</i> <sup>[86]</sup>	Berberidaceae	Leaves	Methanol
<i>Betula utilis</i> <sup>[87]</sup>	Betulaceae	Bark	Ethanol
<i>Baliospermum montanum</i> <sup>[88]</sup>	Euphorbiaceae	Roots	Paracetamol
<i>Bupleurum kaoi</i> <sup>[89]</sup>	Umbelliferar	Dried roots	Carbontetra chloride
<i>Cordia macleodii</i> <sup>[90]</sup>	Boraginaceae	Leaves	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Cassia fistula</i> <sup>[91]</sup>	Leguminosae	Leaf	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Clerodendrum inerme</i> <sup>[92]</sup>	Verbenaceae	Leaves	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Cassia occidentalis</i> <sup>[93]</sup>	Caesalpiniaceae	Leaves	Paracetamol and ethyl alcohol
<i>Croton oblongifolius</i> <sup>[94]</sup>	Euphorbiaceae	Aerial parts	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Cochlospermum vitifolium</i> <sup>[95]</sup>	Cochlospermaceae	Bark	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Cassia tora</i> <sup>[96]</sup>	Caesalpiniaceae	Leaves	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Carum copticum</i> <sup>[97]</sup>	Apiaceae	Seed	Paracetamol And ccl4
<i>Chamomile capitula</i> <sup>[98]</sup>	Asteraceae	Fresh natural mature capitula	Paracetamol
<i>Calotropis procera</i> <sup>[99]</sup>	Apocynaceae	Flowers	Paracetamol
<i>Capparis spinosa</i> <sup>[100]</sup>	Capparidaceae	Root bark	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Cleome viscosa</i> Linn. <sup>[101]</sup>	Capparidaceae	Leaf powder	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Casuarina equisetifolia</i> <sup>[102]</sup>	Casuarinaceae	Leaf & bark	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Cajanus cajan</i> <sup>[102]</sup>	Papilionaceae	Whole plant	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Coriandrum sativum</i> <sup>[103]</sup>	Apiaceae	Whole plant	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Carissa carandas</i> <sup>[104]</sup>	Apocynaceae	Roots	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Cinnamomum zeylanicum</i> <sup>[105]</sup>	Lauraceae	Bark	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Carica papaya</i> <sup>[106]</sup>	Caricaceae	Seed	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Capparis spinosa</i> <sup>[107]</sup>	Capparidaceae	Root bark	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Carissa opaca</i> <sup>[108]</sup>	Apocyanaceae	Leaves	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Coccinia indica</i> <sup>[109]</sup>	Cucurbitaceae	Fruits	Paracetamol
<i>Carissa carandas</i> <sup>[110]</sup>	Apocyanaceae	Roots	Paracetamol
<i>Cyperus articulatus</i> <sup>[111]</sup>	Cyperaceae	Rhizome	Paracetamol
<i>Ceiba pentandra</i> <sup>[112]</sup>	Bombacaceae	Stem bark	Paracetamol
<i>Calotropis gigantean</i> <sup>[113]</sup>	Asclepiadaceae	Root bark	D-galactosamine
<i>Coldenia procumbens</i> <sup>[114]</sup>	Boraginaceae	Whole plant	D-galactosamine
<i>Crassocephalum crepidioides</i> <sup>[115]</sup>	Asteraceae	Whole plant	D-galactosamine
<i>Clitoria ternatea</i> Linn <sup>[116]</sup>	Fabaceae	Leaves	Paracetamol
<i>Decalepis hamiltonii</i> <sup>[117]</sup>	Asclepiadaceae	Roots	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Delonix regia</i> <sup>[118]</sup>	Caesalpiniaceae	Aerial parts	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Diteracanthus patulus</i> <sup>[119]</sup>	Acanthaceae	Leaves	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Dragea volubilis</i> <sup>[120]</sup>	Asclepiadaceae	Fruits	Paracetamol
<i>Desmodium oojeinense</i> <sup>[121]</sup>	Fabaceae	Bark	Paracetamol
<i>Elephantopus scaber</i> Linn <sup>[122]</sup>	Asteraceae	Whole plant	D-galactosamine
<i>Equisetum arvense</i> <sup>[123]</sup>	Equisetaceae	Aerial parts	Carbontetra chloride Induced
<i>Embelia ribes</i> <sup>[124]</sup>	Myrsinaceae	Fruits	Paracetamol
<i>Enicostemma axillare</i> <sup>[125]</sup>	Gentianaceae	Whole plant	D-galactosamine
<i>Euphorbia fusiformis</i> <sup>[126]</sup>	Euphorbiaceae	Tubers	Rifampicin
<i>Fumaria indica</i> <sup>[127]</sup>	Papaveraceae	Whole plant	D-galactosamine
<i>Ficus religiosa</i> Linn <sup>[128]</sup>	Moraceae	Stem bark	Paracetamol
<i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i> Linn. <sup>[129]</sup>	Fabaceae	Root powder	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Gentiana olivieri</i> <sup>[130]</sup>	Gentianaceae	Aerial parts	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Ginkgo Biloba</i> <sup>[131]</sup>	Ginkgoaceae	Dried extracts	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Gundelia tourenfortii</i> <sup>[132]</sup>	Asteraceae	Footstalks	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Hygrophila auriculata</i> <sup>[133]</sup>	Acanthaceae	Root	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Halenia elliptica</i> <sup>[134]</sup>	Gentianaceae	Whole plant	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Hypericum japonicum</i> <sup>[135]</sup>	Hypericaceae	Whole plant	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i> <sup>[136]</sup>	Elaegnaceae	Leaves	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Juncus subulatus</i> <sup>[137]</sup>	Juncaceae	Powdered tubers	Paracetamol
<i>Kalanchoe pinnata</i> Pers. <sup>[138]</sup>	Crassulaceae	Leaves	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Kigelia Africana</i> <sup>[139]</sup>	Bignoniaceae	Leaves	Paracetamol
<i>Luffa echinata</i> <sup>[140]</sup>	Cucurbitaceae	Fruits	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Laggera pterodonta</i> <sup>[141]</sup>	Asteraceae	Whole herb	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Lactuca indica</i> <sup>[142]</sup>	Compositaeae	Aerial parts	Carbon tetrachloride

<i>Launea intybacea</i> <sup>[143]</sup>	Asteraceae	Aerial parts	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Leucas lavandulaefolia</i> <sup>[144]</sup>	Labiatae	Leaves	Paracetamol
<i>Momordica dioica</i> <sup>[145]</sup>	Cucurbitaceae	Leaves	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Mallotus japonicas</i> <sup>[146]</sup>	Euphorbiaceae	Cortex	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Morus alba</i> <sup>[147]</sup>	Moraceae	Leaves	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Mimosa pudica</i> <sup>[148]</sup>	Mimosaceae	Leaves	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Momordica tuberosa</i> <sup>[149]</sup>	Cucurbitaceae	Tubers	Paracetamol
<i>Nelumbo nucifera Gaertn</i> <sup>[150]</sup>	Nelumbonaceae	Leaves	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Nilgiranthus ciliates</i> <sup>[151]</sup>	Acanthaceae	Bark	Paracetamol
<i>Nigella sativa</i> <sup>[152]</sup>	Ranunculaceae	Seed oil	D-galactosamine
<i>Orthosiphon stamineus</i> <sup>[153]</sup>	Lamiaceae	Leaves	Acetaminophen
<i>Ocimum sanctum</i> <sup>[154]</sup>	Lamiaceae	Leaf	Paracetamol
<i>Operculina turpethum</i> <sup>[155]</sup>	Convolvulaceae	Roots	Paracetamol
<i>Olenlandia herbacea</i> <sup>[156]</sup>	Rubiaceae	Whole plant	D- galactosamine
<i>Phyllanthus niruri</i> <sup>[157]</sup>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaves and fruits	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Piper chaba</i> <sup>[158]</sup>	Piperaceae	Fruit	D-galactosamine
<i>Picrorrhiza rhizome</i> <sup>[159]</sup>	Scrophulariaceae	Dried underground stems	Poloxamer (px)-407
<i>Piper longum</i> <sup>[160]</sup>	Piperaceae	Fruits and roots powder	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Picrorrhiza Kurroo</i> <sup>[161]</sup>	Scrophulariaceae	Root and rhizome	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Rubia cordifolia</i> Linn. <sup>[162]</sup>	Rubiaceae	Roots	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Ricinus Communis</i> <sup>[163]</sup>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaves	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Schouwia thebica</i> <sup>[164]</sup>	Arecaceae	Aerial parts	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Silybum marianum</i> <sup>[165]</sup>	Asteraceae	Leaves	Thioacetamide
<i>Scoparia dulcis</i> <sup>[166]</sup>	Scrophulariaceae	Whole plant	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Sesamum indicum</i> <sup>[167]</sup>	Pedaliaceae	Seeds	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Tridax procumbens</i> <sup>[168]</sup>	Asteraceae	Leaves	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Tylophora indica</i> <sup>[169]</sup>	Asclepiadaceae	Leaf powder	Ethanol
<i>Thymus capitatus</i> <sup>[170]</sup>	Lamiaceae	Essential oils	Paracetamol
<i>Tamarindus indica</i> <sup>[171]</sup>	Caesalpinaceae	Fruits, seeds, leaves	Paracetamol
<i>Vitis vinifera</i> <sup>[172]</sup>	Vitaceae	Leaves	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Vitex trifolia</i> <sup>[173]</sup>	Verbenaceae	Leaves	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Vanilla planifolia</i> <sup>[174]</sup>	Orchidaceae	Beans	Paracetamol
<i>Woodfordia fruticosa</i> Kurz <sup>[175]</sup>	Lythraceae	Flowers	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Wedelia calendulaceae</i> <sup>[176]</sup>	Compositae	Leaves	Thioacetamide
<i>Zanthoxylum armatum</i> <sup>[177]</sup>	Rutaceae	Bark	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Zizyphus rotundifolia</i> <sup>[178]</sup>	Rhamnaceae	Leaves	Carbon tetrachloride
<i>Zizyphus jujube</i> <sup>[179]</sup>	Rhamnaceae	Fruits	Thioacetamide

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