



TRADITIONAL DESCRIPTIONS ON *HARITAKI* AND ITS THERAPEUTIC IMPORTANCE: A SCIENTIFIC REVIEW

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Article Received on 03/01/2022

Article Revised on 24/01/2022

Article Accepted on 14/02/2022

ABSTRACT

Haritaki (*Terminalia chebula*) is traditional drug and possesses many therapeutic uses; the classical Ayurveda literatures described sources, features and therapeutic uses, etc. of *Haritaki*. *Haritaki* prevent and cure many diseases including digestive, respiratory and metabolic problems, etc. It is considered „King of Medicines“ and descriptions of this plant is also available in *Nighantus* as well as in Ayurveda materia medica. The fruit of plant used as chief ingredient in an important Ayurveda formulation *Triphala*. This plant helps in fungal infections, wound healing and helps to cure inflammations, etc. Plant possesses astringent, rejuvenative, stomachic and purgative, etc. properties. Ayurveda described different varieties of *Haritaki* based on their habitat and shape. This review emphasizes some key aspects of *Haritaki* in a view to explore medicinal importance of plant.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, *Haritaki*, *Triphala*, *Terminalia chebula*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda classics presented therapeutic importance and traditional uses of many plants and some of them possess great medicinal value; *Haritaki* is one of them. *Haritaki* is described as *Harad* in Hindi, *Kadukkai* in Tamil and Indian hog plum in English. Its fruit uses as ingredient of miraculous *Triphala* formulation. The dried fruit of the *Haritaki* possess enormous medicinal values and referred as “chebulic myrobalan”. The plant is native to the Indian origin but also found in Nepal, Srilanka and China. The brownish-black coloured and oblong shaped fruits of *Haritaki* used in ayurveda formulations mainly in powdered form.^[1-5]

The term “king of herbs” coined for this plant due to its miraculous property to cure various health ailments. This plant gives purgative, astringent, anti-bilious, anti-oxidant and laxative properties, etc. Traditional texts of Ayurveda described different varieties of *Haritaki* (**Figure 1**) depending upon their habitat and shape.^[4-7]

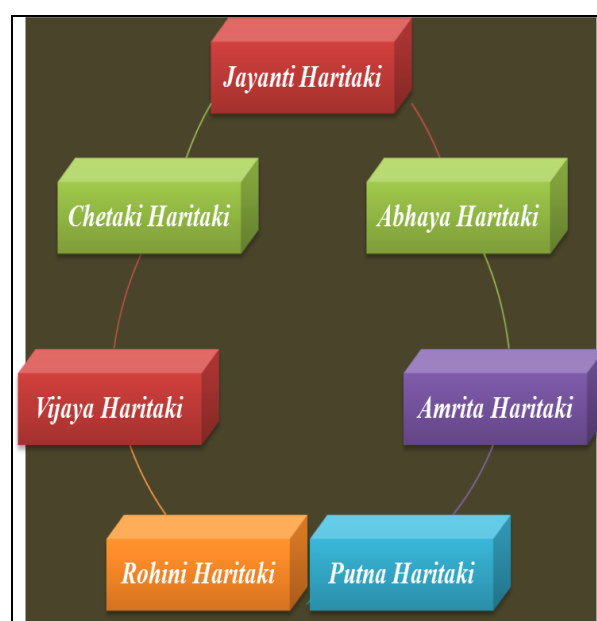


Figure 1: Different varieties of *Haritaki*.

Habitant of different varieties of *Haritaki*

- ✓ *Vijaya* grows in the Vindhya mountain and Gandhamardana mountain range.
- ✓ *Chetaki* grows in the Himalayan region.
- ✓ *Putana* also found in the Himalayan region.
- ✓ *Rohini* grows in *Sindh* (Jhansi) region.

- ✓ *Amrita* grows in *Champa* region.
- ✓ *Abhaya* found in Madhya Pradesh.
- ✓ *Jivanti* is habitant to the Saurashtra.

Description of *Haritaki*

Haritaki is oval shape fruit with, size ranging from 2 – 4 cm in length and 1.5 – 2.5 cm in breadth, fruits having longitudinal ridges and turns green or blackish color when ripens. The fruit of *Haritaki* possess sweet, sour and bitter tastes based on their varieties.

Chief constituents of *Haritaki*

Haritaki contains vitamins, proteins and minerals, etc. It is a rich source of manganese, vitamin C, potassium, iron, copper and selenian, etc. It contains tannic acid, gallic acid, stearic acid, behenic acid and palmitic acid, etc. The plant also contains many alkaloids and other constituents that offer remarkable therapeutic values.^[7-9]

Haritaki (*Terminalia Chebula*) plant belong to *Combretaceae* family, it has a dried ripe fruit, also called as *Terminalia* fruit.^[10] *Terminalia chebula* is commonly known as black myroblans in English and *Harad* in *Hindi*. By virtue of its properties *Haritaki* is consider as best *Sarva-Dosha Prashamana*, *Rukshana Dravya*, *Agni-Dipan Dravya*, *Annulomana Dravya*, and *Rasayana*

Properties^[11], which can be utilize in the *Samprapti-Bhanga* (pathological correction) of *Agni* and *Amma* in the treatment of *Kaphaja Pratishaya* with special reference to Allergic Rhinitis in children.

The chemical constitutional components of *Haritaki* reduces the production of IgE^[12] and having anti-inflammatory^[13], Immuno-Modulatory^[14], Mast cell stabilizer^[15], Anti-anaphylactic^[16], Free Radical scavenger and potent Antioxidant properties. These properties will work for pathological correction of Allergic Rhinitis in children.

Therapeutic uses – *Aruchi*, *Hridroga*, *Kasa*, *Pandu*, *Prameha*, *Udavarta*, *Vibandha*, *Jirnajwara*, *Vishamajwara*, *Siroroga*, *Tamaka Swasa*, *Gulma*, *Udarroga*.

In *Ayurvedic classic* *Haritaki* is mentioned as *Rasayana*^[17] drug when it is used with different *Anupana* (drug vehicles). Other advantages of *Haritaki Rasayana* therapies are promote long life, improve memory, complexion, strength, immunity and fight disease.^[18]

The various researchers performed *in-vitro* and *in-vivo* studies on *Haritaki* as shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Pharmacological studies on *Haritaki*.

Sr. No	Pharmacological Properties	Mode of Extraction	Research Finding	Ref. No.
1	Reduces the production of IgE	Dried fruit extract	<i>Terminalia chebula</i> extract is suggested to be potentially effective in the treatment of IgE-dependent pathologies.	[12]
2	Anti-inflammatory	Powder	The present study concluded that <i>Haritaki</i> had a better effect on treating carrageenan induced rat paw edema. Therefore <i>Haritaki</i> has got definite effect in reducing the inflammatory components.	[18]
3	Mast cell stabilizer properties	Ethyl Acetate and Methanol Extract	In <i>in vivo</i> study ethyl acetate and Methanolic extracts at the dose of 500 mg/kg bodyweight inhibited degranulation of mast cell.	[15]
4	Antioxidant and Free Radical Scavenging	Warm water Extract	The results showed that the all tested extracts of <i>terminalia chebula</i> exhibited antioxidant activity at different magnitude of potency	[10]
5	Immuno-modulatory activity	Ethanollic extracts	Study confirms the immunomodulatory activity of ripe <i>T. Chebula</i> fruits as evidenced By increase in the concentration of antioxidant enzymes, GSH, T and B cells, the proliferation of which play important roles in immunity.	[14]

Haritaki posses following Ayurveda properties

- *Katu*, *Tikta*, *Kashaya*, *Madhura* and *Amla Rasa*.
- *Laghu* and *Rukshsha Guna*
- *Tikshna Virya*
- *Madhura Vipaka*

Effects on *Doshas*

- The plant helps to balances all three *Doshas*; *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*.
- *Haritaki* with salt can helps to cure diseases of *Kapha dosha*.
- *Haritaki* with sugar helps to cure *Pitha dosha*.

- *Haritaki* with *ghee* can cure *Vatha dosha*.

Therapeutic values of different varieties of *Haritaki*

- ✚ *Vijaya* is useful for all kinds of diseases, it detoxify body and improves gastric strength.
- ✚ *Rohini* is useful for the healing of wounds.
- ✚ *Putana* is good for external application and topical diseases.
- ✚ *Amrita* used as a purgatives for detoxify body and relives constipation.
- ✚ *Abhaya* is good for eye disease.

- ✚ *Jeevanti* is used for oleation therapy and improves strength.
- ✚ *Kalika* removes foul smell of ulcer
- ✚ *Chetaki* is also used for detoxification purpose as purgatives.

Therapeutic attributes of different parts of *Haritaki* tree

- ❖ The roots of *Haritaki* tree helps in diseases associated with bone and joints.
- ❖ The stem of *Haritaki* tree helps to cure diseases related to the muscle.
- ❖ Bark of plant is useful for skin diseases.
- ❖ Branches are good for vascular disorders.
- ❖ Leaves are helpful to cure visceral diseases.
- ❖ Fruit improves digestion, relieves obesity, cure skin ailments and helps to treat heart diseases, etc.

Biological Effects and Therapeutic Importance of *Haritaki*

1. Improves Digestion

Haritaki improves digestive functioning of body and promotes absorption of essential nutrients, fruit has laxative effect thus treats constipation, decreases flatulence and removing waste from the body. This drug is useful for reducing stomach acidity and stomach ulcers.

2. *Haritaki* for baldness

Haritaki can prevent hair loss and *Haritaki* herbal oil is considered good for the growth and strength of hairs. *Haritaki* also relieves problems of dandruff and lice infections.

3. Anti-obesity action

This herb improves digestion as well as metabolic activities and helps to burn excess fat thus reduces obesity. It reduces feeling of hunger and helps to consume energy.

4. *Haritaki* for skin allergies and Acne

Haritaki possess antibacterial action thus helps to treat acne, *Haritaki* provides relief in skin spots associated with burning sensation and itching. *Haritaki* is useful for skincare since it combat against skin allergy.

5. *Haritaki* for Cough and Cold

Haritaki provides relieves against cough and cold, *Haritaki* along with honey helps to cure gingivitis and sore throat.

6. *Haritaki* for Diabetes

Haritaki reduces insulin sensitivity in body thus controls blood sugar levels and helps to cure diabetes.

Haritaki for Immunity

Haritaki along with *Ghee* helps to boost immunity and provides resistance against common infections in growing children.

Haritaki for heart

Haritaki increases purity of blood, improves strength of heart muscles, helps to clean blood and removes excess fat from artery. *Haritaki* control blood pressure and facilitate excretion process which ultimately reduces blood pressure.^[8-9,19]

Formulations of *Haritaki*

- ❖ *Kadukkai mathirai* for iron deficiency
- ❖ *Moola kudori thylam* for bleeding piles
- ❖ *Bhavana kadukkai* for anemia
- ❖ *Kadukkai legiyam* for constipation and gas trouble
- ❖ *Triphala choornam* for digestion and for balancing all three humors of body

CONCLUSION

Haritaki is a popular ancient drug used traditionally for many therapeutic purposes. The botanical source of different varieties of *Haritaki* is *Terminalia chebula* var. *chebula*, *Terminalia chebula* var. *tomentella* (Kurz) C.B. Clarke, *T. pallid* and *Terminalia citrina* Roxb. The plant used for fungal infections, wound healing and inflammations, etc. Plant offers astringent, stomachic, purgative, rejuvenative, anti-bilious, anti-oxidant and laxative properties, etc. properties. Ayurveda described different varieties of *Haritaki* based on their habitat and shape i.e.; *Vijaya*, *Chetaki*, *Rohini*, *Amrita*, *Putana*, *Abhaya* and *Jivanti*. These varieties utilizes for different therapeutic purposes.

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