

Current Trends in Potential Traditional Indian Herbs: *Emblica officinalis* and its Medicinal Importance

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Abstract: *Emblica officinalis*, commonly known as Amla, is a potent natural antioxidant and is renowned as one of the richest natural sources of Vitamin C. The berries of this plant contain the highest levels of naturally occurring Vitamin C among ripe fruits, traditionally used in various dietary practices. Research has highlighted the anti-viral, anti-bacterial, and anti-fungal properties of *Emblica officinalis*. The fruit, which resembles a small plum, offers heat-stable Vitamin C that has been clinically shown to be more readily absorbed than synthetic alternatives, particularly in patients with pulmonary tuberculosis. Both historical and modern studies suggest that *Emblica officinalis*, whether used alone or in combination with other herbs, can be beneficial in treating various conditions such as colds, skin ailments, influenza, anemia, diabetes, lung issues, high cholesterol, and even as an immune booster in cancer therapies. Recognized as one of the most effective natural anti-aging remedies, *Emblica officinalis* is also used to treat acne and other skin disorders. Additionally, it is effective against acidity and peptic ulcers. Rich in Vitamin C, calcium, iron, essential amino acids, and a variety of other vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, regular consumption of *Emblica officinalis* is said to enhance immunity, support cancer prevention, and rejuvenate the body. It also helps manage chronic conditions like hypertension, high cholesterol, diabetes, AIDS, influenza, persistent coughs, chronic infections, chronic fatigue, and inflammation. In Ayurveda, *Emblica officinalis* is highly regarded for managing diabetes, bleeding disorders, and promoting strength and stamina.

Keywords: *Emblica officinalis*, cancers, Diabetes, Natural anti-ageing

I. INTRODUCTION

Amla, also known scientifically as *Emblica officinalis*, is a significant herb in Indian Ayurvedic medicine. Renowned for its mention in the ancient text Charak Samhita as a 'rasayan', Amla is believed to slow aging and enhance longevity. This herb is widely used in Ayurvedic formulations due to its remarkable health benefits. Ayurvedic practitioners suggest that consistent consumption of Amla can contribute to a lifespan exceeding 100 years, with vitality akin to that of youth. Amla is thought to rejuvenate various bodily systems, strengthening them and promoting overall wellness by boosting the immune system. It is believed that regular intake of Amla can allow a person to live a century without suffering from any significant health issues. The fresh fruit of Amla has cooling, diuretic, and laxative properties, while the dried fruit is known for its sour and astringent taste. The bark of the Amla tree is also astringent. Additionally, Amla is known to be an aphrodisiac, haemostatic, and a nutritive tonic with rejuvenating properties, and it also helps increase red blood cell count. Amalaki, another name for Amla, is one of the richest natural sources of Vitamin C, containing about 3,000 mg per fruit. Amla is a key ingredient in Chyawanprash, a popular Ayurvedic tonic.

In Sanskrit, Amla is referred to as 'amritphale', meaning 'nectar fruit', a name that reflects its many beneficial properties. It was mentioned in a 7th-century Ayurvedic text, and according to tradition, the sage Chyawan is said to have restored

his vitality using this fruit. Modern research supports the idea that regular consumption of Amla enhances red blood cell production, strengthens teeth, hair, and nails, and helps regulate blood sugar and lipids. It also exhibits anti-inflammatory properties and is beneficial for conditions such as hemorrhoids, gastritis, and colitis. Additionally, Amla has shown effectiveness in treating eye conditions, particularly inflammations and cataracts, while also preventing premature graying of hair and promoting strong, dandruff-free hair. Overall, Amla enhances immunity and protects vital organs like the heart and brain.

Amla, also known as *Emblica officinalis*, is a widely revered herb in the Ayurvedic system of medicine in India. Ayurvedic practitioners often suggest that regular consumption of amla can contribute to longevity, potentially enabling one to reach 100 years of age while maintaining good health. This article explores the benefits of this remarkable herb and how it can be incorporated into daily life. Amla is renowned for being one of the richest natural sources of Vitamin C and has multiple medicinal properties. It acts as a diuretic, aperient, and laxative, and is also used as a natural hair dye. Additionally, amla is known to help with insomnia and promotes healthy hair. It has cardio-protective qualities and is beneficial for conditions such as hemorrhage, menorrhagia, leucorrhoea, and uterine bleeding. Both amla powder and oil are traditionally used in Ayurvedic treatments for scalp-related issues. Amla is widely recognized for its medicinal properties, including its ability to alleviate constipation and serve as a cooling agent to mitigate the effects of sunstroke and sunburn. It plays a crucial role as the primary ingredient in many shampoos and is also utilized globally in the production of amla oil. Beyond its medicinal uses, amla is incorporated into various foods like sauces, candies, dried chips, pickles, jellies, and powders. Additionally, it has applications in the dyeing industry and is a popular ingredient in ink production. The wood from the amla tree is also commonly used in making fireworks.

Biological Sources:

TABLE NO 1: Biological Sources

Common Name:	Indian Gooseberry
Hindi Name:	Amla
Sanskrit Name:	Amalaki, Dhatri
Latin Name:	<i>Emblica officinalis</i> Gaertn.
Habit and Habitat:	Amla plants are widespread across India, thriving up to altitudes of 5000 feet. The fruiting season spans from October to April. The hybrid varieties of Amla bear larger fruits compared to the wild types. When fresh, the fruits are light green, transitioning to a light brown hue as they ripen.
Parts Used:	The parts of the Amla plant utilized include fresh and dried fruits, seeds, leaves, roots, bark, and flowers. While fresh fruits are most commonly used, dried fruits are also valued.



Fig. 1: Fresh fruit



Fig. 2: Flowers

Fig. 3: Bark

Common Names:

TABLE NO 2: Common Names

Hindi:	Amla
English:	Indian Gooseberry, Emblic Myrobalan
Latin:	<i>Emblica officinalis</i> Gaertn

Sanskrit:	Aamalki, Dhatri (believed to pacify Tridoshas)
Tamil:	Nelli
Kannada:	Nellaka
Telugu:	Usirikaya
Malayalam:	Nellimaram
Marathi:	Amla
Bengali (Bangla):	Aamalki

Chemical Constituents:

Amla (*Emblica officinalis*) has been the subject of extensive research due to its rich chemical composition. Studies have identified the presence of various tannins, alkaloids, and phenolic compounds within the plant. Notably, the fruit comprises 28% of the tannins found throughout the entire plant. Two significant hydrolyzable tannins in the fruit, Emblicanin A and B, are known for their antioxidant properties. Upon hydrolysis, these tannins yield gallic acid, ellagic acid, and glucose. In addition, the fruit contains Phyllembin. Further fractionation studies have uncovered the presence of phytochemicals such as gallic acid, corilagin, furosin, and geraniin. The plant also contains flavonoids like quercetin and alkaloids such as phyllantine and phyllantidine. Amla primarily consists of amino acids, carbohydrates, and other compounds detailed in Table 1. Its juice is particularly rich in vitamin C, with concentrations as high as 478.56 mg/100 mL, surpassing the levels found in oranges, tangerines, and lemons. The detailed composition of *Emblica officinalis* fruit pulp is illustrated in Figure 4.

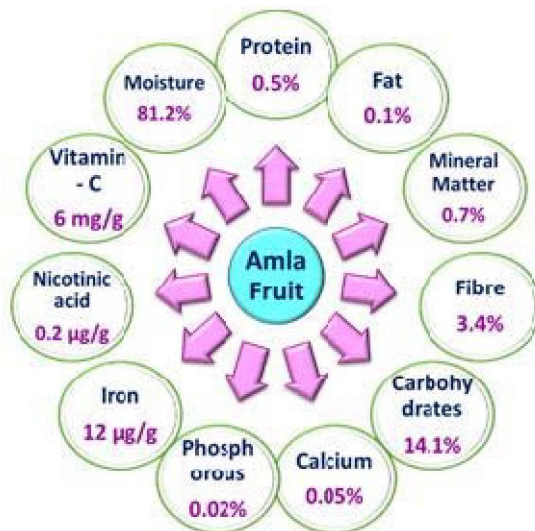


Fig. 4: Amla fruit pulp: Composition

TABLE NO 3: Chemical Constituents of Amla Fruit

Type	Chemical Constituents
Hydrolyzable Tannins	Emblicanin A and B, Puniguconin, Pedunculagin, Chebulinic acid, Corilagin, Geraniin, Ellagotannin
Alkaloids	Phyllantine, Phyllembin, Phyllantidine
Phenolic Compounds	Gallic acid, Methyl gallate, Ellagic acid, Trigallayl glucose
Amino Acids	Glutamic acid, Proline, Aspartic acid, Alanine, Cystine, Lysine
Carbohydrates	Pectin
Vitamins	Ascorbic acid
Flavonoids	Quercetin, Kaempferol
Organic Acids	Citric acid

Description:

Amla is a medium-sized deciduous tree that typically grows to a height ranging from 8 to 18 meters. The tree has a twisted trunk and branches that spread out. The flowers are yellowish-green, while the fruit is spherical, pale yellow, and marked by six vertical ridges. Mature fruits are firm and resistant to falling off easily. Each fruit generally weighs between 60 to 70 grams. The tree has gray bark and reddish wood, with leaves that are feather-like, narrow, and oblong, emitting a lemon-like scent. The wood is tough but tends to warp and crack when exposed to intense sunlight or heat.

Location:

Amla is commonly planted in the deciduous regions of tropical India, particularly on hill slopes up to 2000 meters in elevation. The tree is widely cultivated in Uttar Pradesh and is also grown in other states such as Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh.

Cultivation Methods:

Amla thrives in a variety of soils, ranging from light to heavy. It is well-suited to tropical climates, although young plants need protection from harsh conditions like hot winds, as they are vulnerable and can perish easily. Amla is typically propagated by seeds and requires ample sunlight. Irrigation is particularly important during the monsoon season. The trees begin to bear fruit about seven years after planting.

Soil and Climate:

Amla is adaptable to both light and heavy soils, with the exception of sandy soil. It can also grow in calcareous soils with rocky substrates, though well-drained, fertile loamy soil provides the best yield. The plant is capable of adapting to dry regions and can grow in moderately alkaline soils. Amla is commonly cultivated in tropical climates, and an annual rainfall of 630-800 mm is ideal for a good yield. Young plants, up to three years old, should be shielded from hot winds during May and June, as well as from frost in the winter. Mature trees, however, can endure freezing temperatures and heat up to 46°C.

Planting:

While Amla is generally propagated from seeds, seed-grown trees tend to produce lower-quality fruit and have a longer maturity period. To ensure better fruit quality, shield budding is performed on one-year-old seedlings using buds from high-yielding strains. Older, less productive trees can be rejuvenated and converted into superior varieties through top working. Planting pits of 1m³ are prepared during May and June, spaced 4.5 meters apart, and should be left exposed to sunlight for 15-20 days. Before planting grafted seedlings, each pit should be filled with surface soil mixed with 15 kg of farmyard manure and 1 kg of superphosphate.

Manures, Fertilizers, and Pesticides:

Medicinal plants like Amla should be cultivated without the use of chemical fertilizers or pesticides. Instead, organic manures such as farmyard manure (FYM), vermicompost, and green manure should be used according to the needs of the species. To prevent diseases, bio-pesticides can be made from natural ingredients like neem (kernel, seeds, and leaves), chitrakmool, datura, and cow urine. Biofertilizers, including Azotobacter, phosphobacteria, and Vesicular Arbuscular Mycorrhiza (VAM), can enhance plant growth.

Harvesting/Post-Harvesting:

Amla trees grown from seedlings begin to bear fruit approximately 7-8 years after planting, whereas those propagated through budding may start fruiting by the 5th year. The fruits initially appear light green, turning to a dull greenish-yellow as they mature. The optimal time for harvesting Amla is in February, when the fruits contain the highest levels of ascorbic acid. In southern regions of India, Amla fruits are available year-round. Mature fruits are firm and do not easily fall off the tree, requiring vigorous shaking for harvest. To achieve better market prices, harvested fruits should be sorted into different grades based on size. They can also be picked using long bamboo poles equipped with hooks.

Yield:

A fully matured Amla tree, around 10 years old, can produce 50-70 kg of fruit, with individual fruits weighing between 60-70 grams. Approximately 15-20 fruits make up a kilogram. With proper care, an Amla tree can continue yielding fruit for up to 70 years, with its productivity increasing annually for the first 50 years.

II. MEDICINAL IMPORTANCE OF EMBLICA OFFICINALIS:

Healing Properties:

- Amla provides antioxidant protection, shielding cells from damage caused by free radicals.
- It is used in treating skin conditions, respiratory infections, and premature aging.
- Amla is beneficial for conditions like hemorrhage, diarrhea, dysentery, and offers therapeutic benefits in managing diabetes.
- Its anti-bacterial and astringent properties aid in preventing infections and promoting the healing of ulcers.
- Amla may also act as a laxative, helping to relieve constipation, particularly in cases of piles.

Immunity Booster:

- Amla is renowned as an energy-enhancing, disease-preventing tonic, partly due to its positive effects on the immune system. Research has demonstrated that Amla can significantly increase white blood cell counts and enhance other immune responses, as observed in studies conducted on rodents.

Respiratory Conditions:

- Indian gooseberry is known for its benefits in treating respiratory issues. It is particularly useful in managing lung tuberculosis, asthma, and bronchitis.

Diabetes Management:

- Due to its high vitamin C content, Indian gooseberry plays a role in managing diabetes. A daily intake of a tablespoon of its juice mixed with a cup of bitter gourd juice for two months can help stimulate the pancreas to secrete insulin, aiding in blood sugar reduction. It is important to follow dietary restrictions during this period. This remedy also helps prevent diabetic eye complications.

Heart Health:

- Indian gooseberry is regarded as an effective remedy for heart disorders. It helps improve the function of all body organs, strengthens overall health, and eliminates harmful elements that cause diseases. It also rejuvenates energy levels.

Eye Care:

- The juice of Indian gooseberry mixed with honey is beneficial for maintaining eyesight. It is effective in treating conjunctivitis and glaucoma, significantly reducing intraocular pressure. Consuming the juice with honey twice daily can help in these conditions.

Scurvy Prevention:

- Being extremely rich in vitamin C, Indian gooseberry is one of the best remedies for scurvy. A mixture of the herb's dry powder and an equal amount of sugar can be consumed daily with milk for optimal results.

Anti-Aging Benefits:

- Indian gooseberry has revitalizing properties that are valuable in preventing aging and maintaining strength in old age. It enhances the body's resistance to infections, strengthens the heart, hair, and various glands in the body.

III. HEALTH BENEFITS AND THERAPEUTIC PROPERTIES OF EMBLICA OFFICINALIS (INDIAN GOOSEBERRY)

Indian gooseberry, known scientifically as *Emblca officinalis*, is recognized for its numerous medicinal properties. The fresh fruit is known to be a mild laxative and diuretic. A mixture of one tablespoon of fresh gooseberry juice and honey, consumed every morning, can be an effective remedy for various health issues. Consistent use is believed to enhance vitality within a few days. When fresh fruit isn't available, dried gooseberry powder combined with honey serves as an alternative.

Respiratory Disorders:

This herbal tonic is particularly beneficial in managing respiratory conditions such as tuberculosis, asthma, and bronchitis.

Diabetes:

Due to its high vitamin C content, Indian gooseberry is valuable in managing diabetes. A daily intake of one tablespoon of its juice mixed with a cup of fresh bitter gourd juice, for two months, can stimulate the islets of Langerhans, the cells responsible for insulin production. This combination helps lower blood sugar levels. Adhering to dietary restrictions is crucial when using this remedy. Additionally, it may help prevent eye complications associated with diabetes. A mixture of equal parts amla powder, jamun powder, and bitter gourd powder is also a beneficial food remedy for diabetes. A teaspoonful of this mixture, taken once or twice daily, can help control the disease's progression. Heart

Disease:

Indian gooseberry is regarded as an effective treatment for heart disease. It strengthens the body's organs and enhances overall health by eliminating harmful elements and revitalizing energy.

Eye Disorders:

A combination of Indian gooseberry juice and honey can help maintain eye health and is particularly useful in treating conjunctivitis and glaucoma by significantly reducing intraocular pressure. A cup of this juice, taken with honey twice daily, is recommended for such conditions.

Rheumatism:

Indian gooseberry is also beneficial in treating rheumatism. A mixture of one teaspoon of dried fruit powder and two teaspoons of jaggery, taken twice daily for a month, is recommended for relief from rheumatism.

Scurvy:

As a rich source of vitamin C, Indian gooseberry is an excellent remedy for scurvy. A mixture of dried gooseberry powder and an equal amount of sugar, taken in doses of one teaspoon three times daily with milk, is advised for scurvy treatment.

Diarrhea and Dysentery:

Dried amla fruit is beneficial in treating diarrhea and dysentery. A drink made from amla, lemon juice, and sugar candy (misri) is believed to be particularly effective for managing severe dysentery. Additionally, a paste made from amla leaves mixed with honey or buttermilk can serve as a useful remedy for these conditions.

Prevents Aging:

Indian gooseberry, known for its rejuvenating properties, plays a crucial role in delaying the aging process and sustaining vitality in older age. It boosts the immune system, protects against infections, and strengthens the heart, hair, and various glands within the body. Ancient lore even suggests that the sage Muni Chyawan regained his youth and vitality by using amla in his late 70s.

Hair Tonic:

Indian gooseberry is widely recognized in traditional remedies as a powerful hair tonic that promotes hair growth and pigmentation. The fruit, when cut into pieces and dried in the shade, can be boiled in coconut oil until the solid particles are charred. This dark oil is excellent for preventing premature graying. Additionally, water in which dried amla pieces have been soaked overnight can be used as a nourishing hair rinse.

IV. HOME REMEDIES USING AMLA

Amla is employed in treating various health conditions, including:

Blood Sugar Stabilization: Naturopaths often recommend a teaspoon of amla juice mixed with bitter gourd juice to stimulate the pancreas and enhance insulin production, thereby helping to lower blood sugar levels. Amla seeds or dried amla powder capsules are also effective in managing diabetes.

Cholesterol Reduction:

Research has demonstrated that amla can significantly lower cholesterol levels and prevent atherosclerosis. It strengthens the heart muscles and leads to notable reductions in total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, VLDL cholesterol, and triglycerides. Consulting a doctor before incorporating a 500 mg capsule of dried amla powder into your routine is advisable.

Hypertension Treatment:

Rich in vitamin C, amla helps regulate blood pressure. It can be consumed as amla powder (churna) or in the form of triphala tablets or decoctions. Triphala, which includes amla and two other herbs, is an effective natural remedy for high blood pressure.

Anemia Treatment:

Amla's high vitamin C content enhances iron absorption, making it beneficial for individuals with iron deficiency anemia.

Anti-Aging Properties:

Amla offers revitalizing effects, preserving stamina in older adults by supporting the heart, hair, and various glands. It also strengthens the immune system, helping the body resist infections and diseases.

Cough Remedy:

Mixing a teaspoon of amla juice or powder with warm milk and drinking it three times daily can soothe a sore throat. Adding ghee to this mixture further aids in relieving a cough. Sucking on a blend of amla powder and honey twice a day can help treat chronic dry cough. Amla is also valuable in the treatment of tuberculosis, asthma, and bronchitis.

Diarrhea and Dysentery Treatment:

Amla has cooling properties and is an excellent remedy for diarrhea. To stop loose motions accompanied by mucus or blood, squeeze the juice from a handful of amla leaves into a glass of milk, then add honey and ghee to the mixture before drinking.

Amla (Nellikai) for Hair Health and More:

Amla, also known as Nellikai, is widely recognized for its benefits in promoting hair growth and maintaining healthy hair. Amla oil, made by boiling dried amla fruits in coconut oil, acts as a natural conditioner and can help prevent hair loss and premature graying. For those with oily hair, a mixture of equal parts amla juice and lime juice with some water can be used as an effective anti-grease hair wash.

Cooling and Pitta Balancing:

Properties Amla is known for its cooling properties, especially when boiled in coconut water. Applying this mixture to the scalp can help reduce body heat, particularly during the hot summer months. It is also beneficial for soothing pitta-related conditions.

Nail Health Amla is a rich source of Vitamin C, which is essential for maintaining overall health, including the health of your nails. Incorporating amla juice or powder into your diet can help address deficiencies and treat white spots on the nails.

Menstrual Health Support:

For those experiencing menstrual disorders such as white discharge, dried and powdered amla seeds can be combined with honey and fennel (saunf) or mashed banana for relief. This traditional remedy is valued in Ayurveda for its effectiveness.

V. TRADITIONAL AYURVEDIC USES OF AMLA (EMBLICA OFFICINALIS)

Amla is one of the most extensively used herbs in Ayurvedic medicine, praised for its ability to support digestive health, strengthen the heart, and enhance the immune system. It also improves vision, imparts a natural glow to skin and hair, and is a potent source of Vitamin C, which helps prevent premature aging. Amla has a range of beneficial properties including being cooling, diuretic, laxative, and rejuvenating. It is used in various forms such as fresh juice, powder, and oil for different health benefits.

Amla supports overall body strength, detoxification, and immune defense. Regular consumption of fresh amla juice between meals can help alleviate general body weakness, strengthen the heart and mind, and improve sleep quality when used as a hair oil. Washing the eyes with amla water and drinking it daily can also enhance eyesight and relieve constipation.

The fruit is known for its diverse medicinal properties, such as cooling, diuretic, and carminative effects. Amla is utilized both internally and externally in various forms, including decoctions, pastes, and infusions, to address different health conditions. It is particularly effective in treating digestive issues, hyperacidity, ulcers, and blood impurities, among other ailments.

Amla is also beneficial in treating anemia, jaundice, and dyspepsia, and its use extends to managing vaginal discomfort, nausea, and skin conditions like scabies. Additionally, amla acts as a restorative tonic, especially during the colder months, and can be combined with other herbs for enhanced effects.

VI. ADDITIONAL USES:

Amla plays a significant role in blood sugar regulation and is a potent anti-inflammatory herb with strong antioxidant properties. It's also a natural source of Vitamin C, which helps neutralize free radicals. Known as a powerful brain food, Amla has been shown to reduce cholesterol levels. It supports liver function, boosts hemoglobin and red blood cell production, and is beneficial for respiratory conditions like cough, bronchitis, and asthma. Amla promotes oral health by cleansing the mouth and strengthening teeth. Its decoction is effective against hyperacidity and can be used with honey as an anthelmintic. Amla enhances cell survival, reduces free radical production, and increases antioxidant levels. It's a key ingredient in various traditional Ayurvedic formulations, such as Chyawanprash, known to improve intelligence and memory. Other classic preparations like Triphala and BrahmRasayana have also utilized Amla for centuries.

VII. CONCLUSION

Amla is renowned for being one of the richest natural sources of vitamin C, with its fresh juice containing nearly twenty times the amount found in orange juice. Just one small Amla has a vitamin C content comparable to that of two oranges. Clinical studies involving patients with pulmonary tuberculosis have demonstrated that this concentrated natural form of vitamin C is absorbed more rapidly by the body compared to synthetic alternatives. Amla is a key component in numerous Ayurvedic treatments and tonics, known for alleviating issues like excessive salivation, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, spermatorrhea, internal body heat, and menstrual disorders. Additionally, due to its cooling properties, Amla enhances sattwa and serves as an excellent liver tonic. Research has explored its potential as an antioxidant, its role in preventing ulcers, managing diabetes, enhancing mental clarity and memory, and its anti-inflammatory benefits. Amla extract supplements might be beneficial for individuals undergoing radiation therapy, although there is concern that it could also shield cancer cells that the radiation aims to target. Amla Tonic is valued for its haematinic and lipolytic properties, which are beneficial in treating scurvy and jaundice, preventing indigestion, controlling acidity, and serving as a natural anti-aging agent.

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