

## Constituents, pharmacological and toxicological effects of *Melia azadirachta*- A review



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**Abstract**— The phytochemical analysis of different parts of *Melia azedarach* showed that the plant contained alkaloids, carbohydrates, fixed oil and fats, protein and amino acids, saponins, sterols, triterpenoids, esters, thiols, cynogenic glycosides, tannins, flavonoids and phenolic compounds. The pharmacological studies revealed that *Melia azedarach* possessed antimicrobial, antiparasitic, anticancer, antioxidant, antiinflammatory, analgesic, antipyretic, reproductive, hepatoprotective, dermatological, antidiabetic, immunological, antilithiatic, hypolipidemic, butyrylcholinesterase inhibitory activity and melanogenesis stimulation effects. The current review highlighted the constituents, pharmacological and toxicological effects of *Melia azedarach*.

**Keywords:** *Melia azedarach*, constituents, pharmacology, toxicology

### Introduction:

Recently years, the field medicinal plant studies has received much attention as this brings to light the numerous little known and unknown medicinal virtues especially of plant origin which needs evaluation on modern scientific lines such as chemical analysis, pharmacological investigations and clinical trials. *Melia azedarach* (Family: Meliaceae) was widely used in the traditional medicine for the treatment of intestinal worms, skin diseases, stomach ache, nausea, vomiting, paroxysmal fever, sciatica, lumbago, piles, asthma, wounds, diabetes, post labor pain, ammenorrhoea and leucoderma. The phytochemical analysis of different parts of *Melia azedarach* showed that the plant contained alkaloids, carbohydrates, fixed oil and fats, protein and amino acids, saponins, sterols, triterpenoids, esters, thiols, cynogenic glycosides, tannins, flavonoids and phenolic compounds. The pharmacological studies revealed that *Melia azedarach* possessed antimicrobial, antiparasitic, anticancer, antioxidant, antiinflammatory, analgesic, antipyretic, reproductive, hepatoprotective, dermatological, antidiabetic, immunological, antilithiatic, hypolipidemic, butyrylcholinesterase inhibitory activity and melanogenesis stimulation effects. The current review highlighted the constituents, pharmacological and toxicological effects of *Melia azedarach*. In the current review, databases including Web Science, PubMed, Scopus and Science Direct, were used for searching for the chemical constituents and pharmacological effects of *Melia azedarach*.

### Plant profile:

#### Synonyms:

*Azedara speciosa*, *Azedarach commelinii*, *Azedarach deleteria*, *Azedarach fraxinifolia*, *Azedarach odoratum*, *Azedarach sempervirens*, *Azedarach sempervirens* var. *glabrior*, *Azedarach sempervirens* f. *incisodentata*, *Azedarach sempervirens* f. *longifoliola*, *Azedarach sempervirens* f. *subdentata*, *Melia angustifolia*, *Melia australis*, *Melia azedarach* var. *glabrior*, *Melia azedarach* var. *intermedia*, *Melia azedarach* var. *subtripinnata*, *Melia azedarach* var. *toosendan*, *Melia birmanica*, *Melia bukayun*, *Melia chinensis*, *Melia cochinchinensis*, *Melia*

dubia, *Melia japonica*, *Melia japonica* var. *sempperflorens*, *Melia orientalis*, *Melia sambucina* and *Melia toosendan*<sup>(1)</sup>.

**Taxonomic classification**<sup>(2)</sup>:

**Kingdom:**Plantae

**Subkingdom:**Viridiplantae

**Infrakingdom:**Streptophyta

**Superdivision:** Embryophyta

**Division:**Tracheophyta

**Subdivision:** **Spermatophytina**

**Class:**Magnoliopsida

**Superorder:**Rosanae

**Order:**Sapindales

**Family:**Meliaceae

**Genus:**Melia

**Species:**Melia azedarach

**Common names:**

**Arabic:**Zanzelkhat,Sebahbah, Neem, Jarood, Sebahi;**Afrikaans:** bessieboom syringe, arbre à chapelets; **Chinese:** chuan liang zi, lian; **English:** Cape-lilac, chinaberry, chinaberry-tree, Persian-lilac, Sichuan pagoda-tree, syringa berrytree, Texas umbrella-tree, tulip-cedar, umbrella-cedar, umbrella-tree, white-cedar; **French:** arbre à chapelets, lilas des Indes; **German:** indischer Zedrachbaum,persischer Flieder;**Hindi:** betain,deikna, dek, drek, bakain, mallan, nim, bakarja; **Indonesian:** marambung, mindi, gringging; **Italian:** Albero dei paternostri; **Japanese:** sendan; **Korean:** meolguseulnamu,**Portuguese:** amargoseira-do-Himalaio; **Spanish:**melia, paraíso; **Swedish:** zedrak<sup>(3)</sup>.

**Distribution:**

It is native to Indochina, Pakistan, India, Australia, and Southeast Asia<sup>(4)</sup>.However, the plant was distributed in **Asia** (China, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines, Japan, Cyprus), **Australasia** (Australia), **Europe** (Croatia, Italy, France), **Northern America**(Mexico,United States) and**Southern America**(West Indies, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Guyana, Suriname, Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay)<sup>(3)</sup>.

**Description:**

- The plant is a deciduous tree, may reach up to 45 m tall, and up to 30-60 (max. 120 cm) in diameter, with a spreading crown and sparsely branched limbs.
- Bark is smooth, greenish-brown when young, turning grey and fissured with age. —
- Leaves are alternate, 20-40 cm long, bipinnate or occasionally tripinnate.
- Leaflets are 3-11, serrate and with a pungent odour when crushed.
- Inflorescence is axillary panicle up to 20 cm long.

-Flowers are fragrant, numerous on slender stalks, white to lilac; sepals 5-lobed, 1 cm long, petals 5-lobed, 0.9 cm long, pubescent; staminal tube deep purpleblue, 0.5 cm long, 1 cm across.

-Fruits are small, yellow drupe, nearly round, about 15 mm in diameter, smooth and becoming a little shrivelled, slightly fleshy.

-Seeds are oblongoid, 3.5 mm x 1.6 mm, smooth, brown and surrounded by pulp<sup>(5)</sup>.

### Traditional uses:

It was used traditionally in the treatment of intestinal worms, skin diseases, stomach ache, nausea, vomiting, paroxysmal fever, sciatica, lumbago, piles, asthma, wounds, diabetes, post labor pain, ammenorrhoea and leucoderma<sup>(6-7)</sup>. It was said that the plant was beneficial in the treatment of leprosy, inflammation, scrofula, anthelmintic, antilithic, diuretic, deobstruent and cardiac disorders<sup>(8)</sup>. Leaf extract was given orally twice a day for pyrexia<sup>(9)</sup>, to relieve headache, locally applied in the treatment of burn and other skin diseases, as laxative, and prepared as mouth wash for gingivitis. Leaves and seed were used as insecticide. Stem bark infusion was used in gonorrhoea<sup>(10-11)</sup>. The seed oil of *Azadirachta indica* was used in traditional medicine as antidiabetic, antifertility, antibacterial, and for wound healing<sup>(12)</sup>.

### Parts used medicinally:

Leaf, flower, seed, oil, root, young branches, fruit and bark were used medicinally<sup>(10,13)</sup>.

### Physicochemical parameters:

Physicochemical parameters of *Melia azedarach* leaves were: total ash value: 5.19%, water soluble ash value 3.47%, acid insoluble ash value 1.72%, alcohol soluble extractive value 3.26%, water soluble extractive value 7.83% and moisture content 4.64%<sup>(14)</sup>. Physicochemical properties of *Melia azedarach* seed oil were: moisture 6.86%, protein 20.13%, fiber 15.40%, carbohydrate 19.45%, acid value 2.25 mgKOH/g, iodine value 9.14, saponification value 84.15 mgKOH/g, unsaponifiable matter 0.71%w/w, total saturated 9.02% and total unsaturated fatty acids 90.97%<sup>(15)</sup>.

### Chemical constituents:

Preliminary phytochemical analysis showed that the plant contained alkaloids, carbohydrates, fixed oil and fats, protein and amino acids, saponins, sterols, triterpenoids, esters, thiols, cynogenic glycosides, tannins, flavonoids and phenolic compounds<sup>(9,14,16-20)</sup>.

The fresh leaves hexane extract contained 2-undecanol; methyl 4, 6-decadienyl ether; 13-docosenoic acid; 7, 8-dihydrocarpesterol; glutaric acid, dimethyl ester; nonanoic acid, 1, 2, 3-propanetriyl ester; glycerol 2-acetate 1, 3-dipalmitate; docosenoic acid and 1 methyl-butyl ester<sup>(4)</sup>.

While, five compounds: 3,7,11,15-tetramethyl-2-hexadecen-1-ol; ethanol, 2-(9-octadecenyloxy)-(Z)-; phytol; carotene; 1,1',2,2'-tetrahydro-1,1'-dimethoxy- and rhodoxanthin were isolated from the ethanolic extracts of *Melia azedarach* leaves<sup>(20)</sup>.

However, forty eight compounds were identified in the methanolic leaf extract of *Melia azedarach* by GC-MS included: 2, 3-dihydro-3,5-dihydroxy-6-methyl-4H-pyran-4-one (aromatic flavoring agent); 2,3-dihydrobenzofuran (essential oil); 5-hydroxypiperonic acid (imino acid); ethoxytriethylsilane (dibasic esters); 4-methyl-2-hexanone (aromatic flavoring agent); pentadecane (n-alkanes); limonene (monoterpenes); pyrazol-5(2H)-one (flavonoids), 1-hexadecene (alpha-olefins); nonadecane (saturated aliphatic hydrocarbon); caryophyllene oxide (flavor and fragrance agents); 1-Acetyl-4-hydroxy-pyrrolidin-2-one (pyrrolidones); n-tetradecanoic acid (saturated fatty acid); 1,2-dihexylcyclopropene-3-carboxylic acid (n-alkanoic acids); 9-eicosyne (saturated aliphatic hydrocarbon); 14,10,6-trimethyl-2-pentadecanone (essential oil); E-6-octadecen-1-ol acetate (fatty acids); citronellyl propionate

(flavor and fragrance agents); hexadecanoic acid, methyl ester (methyl ester); carvacrol (monoterpenoid phenol); palmitic acid (saturated fatty acid); 1,5-anhydro-2-deoxyhex-1-enitol (nsaturated sugars); linolenic acid, methyl ester (poly unsaturated fatty acid); phytol (diterpene); methyl linoleate (polyunsaturated fatty acid); 15,12,9-octadecatrienoic acid (n-alkanoic acids); stearic acid (n-alkanoic acids); 10, 6, 2- trimethyl,14-ethylene-14-pentadecene (olefins); 2-propenoic acid, 2-methyl-, 2-dimethylamino ethyl ester (ethyl ester); 16, 12, 8, 4-tetramethylheptadecan-4-olide (isoprenoid); 5, 3, 1- trisilacyclohexane (saturated hydrocarbon); palmitic acid (monoglyceride); tetracosanoic acid, 3-oxo-methyl ester (methyl ester); hexacosane (unsaponifiable matter); stearic acid chloride (unsaturated fatty acid); quercetin (flavanoids); 13-docosenamide (alkyl amides); squalene (triterpene) 8, 2- dimethyl-2-4,8,12-trimethyltridecyl)-6-chromanol; gamma- tocopherol; 1-eicosanol (triterpene); beta-carotene, alpha-tocopherol-beta-D-mannoside, Kamphferol (Flavanoids); beta-sitosterol(phytosterol); stigmaterol (phytosterol); campesterol (phytosterol) and tetramethyl-2-hexadecen-1-ol (terpene alcohol)<sup>(18)</sup>.

Melianone, meliandiol, melianoninol, melianol, vanillin and vanillic acid were isolated from the fruits of *Melia azedarach*<sup>(21)</sup>.

Tirucallanes (3-alpha-tigloylmelianol, melianone, 21-beta-acetoxy-melianone, and methyl kulonate); tirucallane triterpenoids: [(21S,23R,24R)-21,23-epoxy-21,24-dihydroxy-25-methoxy tirucall- 7-en-3-one, (3S,21S,23R,24S)-21,23-epoxy-21,25-dimethoxytirucall-7-ene-3,24-diol, (21S,23R,24R)-21,23-epoxy-24-hydroxy-21-methoxytirucalla-7,25- dien-3-one, and (21S,23R,24R)-21,23-epoxy-21,24-dihydroxytirucalla-7,25-dien-3-one, along with 16 analogues] were also isolated from the fruits of *Melia azedarach*<sup>(22-23)</sup>.

Fatty acid identified in the seeds oil of *Melia azedarach* were: palmitic acid 5.68%, linoleic acid 74.57%, oleic acid 16.39% and stearic acid 3.33%<sup>(15)</sup>.

Mineral content (mg/100g) of *Melia azedarach* seed oil were calcium 1230, magnesium 990, phosphorous 213, potassium 121, zinc 3.12, manganese 3.4 and iron 19.52<sup>(15)</sup>.

The total proanthocyanidins in the methanolic leaves extracts of *Melia azedarach* was 330 ± 15 mg/ml, total phenolics 92 ± 5 mg/g gallic acid equivalent and total flavonoids 286 ± 10 mg/g rutin equivalent<sup>(24)</sup>. Flavonoids isolated from *Melia azedarach* were included: 4', 5-Dihydroxy flavone-7-O-u-L-rhamnopyranosyl-(1→4)-β -D-glucopyranoside; apigenin-5''O-β-D-galactopyranoside; kaempferol-3-O-β-rutinoside kaempferol-3-L-rhamno-D-glucoside and rutin<sup>(25)</sup>

### **Pharmacological effects:**

#### **Antimicrobial effect:**

The leaves and stem barks crude extracts and their chloroform, petroleum ether, acetate ethyl, butanol, and aqueous fractions were evaluated against *Streptococcus mutans* using seven different concentrations. The crude extracts and the petroleum ether fraction from showed significant antibacterial activity<sup>(26)</sup>.

Antimicrobial effects of *Melia azedarach* leaf extracts were investigated against six human pathogens (*Staphylococcus aureus*, *Escherichia coli*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae* and *Proteus vulgaris*). *Melia azedarach* leaf extract possessed maximum zone of inhibition against *Staphylococcus aureus* and minimum zone of inhibition against *Escherichia coli*. The zone of inhibition was concentration dependent<sup>(24)</sup>.

The in vitro antibacterial activities of the ethanolic extract of *Melia azedarach* fruit were studied against *Bacillus cereus* (ATCC11778), *Staphylococcus aureus* (ATCC25923), *Salmonella typhimurium* (ATCC 14028) and *Escherichia coli* (ATCC 25922). The extract inhibited the growth of all the tested bacteria. The lowest MIC (40 mg/ml) and MBC (80 mg/ml) were recorded against *Salmonella typhimurium*, which showed sensitivity more than other bacteria<sup>(27)</sup>.

The antibacterial activity of petrol, ethyl acetate, methanol, benzene, and aqueous extracts of the seeds of *Melia azedarach*, at five different concentrations (1, 2, 5, 10 and 15 mg/ml) was

investigated against eighteen hospital isolated human pathogenic bacterial strains (Staphylococcus aureus, Staphylococcus aureus ATCC 25923, Staphylococcus epidermidis, Group-A Streptococcus, Group-B Streptococcus, Enterococcus faecalis, Bacillus subtilis, Escherichia coli, Edwardsiella tarda, Klebsiella pneumonia, Proteus mirabilis, Proteus vulgaris, Pseudomonas aeruginosa, Salmonella typhi, Shigella boydii, Shigella dysenteriae, Shigella flexneri and Plesiomonas shigelloides). All seeds extracts demonstrated significant antibacterial activity against the tested pathogens. Ethyl acetate extract revealed the highest inhibition of bacterial growth<sup>(28)</sup>.

Antimicrobial activity of methanol, ethanol, petroleum ether and water extracts of the leaves of *Melia azedarach* was examined against eight human pathogens (*Bacillus cereus*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Escherichia coli*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Aspergillus niger*, *Aspergillus flavus*, *Fusarium oxysporum* and *Rhizopus stolonifer*) All the extracts showed significant activity against all pathogens, but the alcoholic extract of *Melia azedarach* leaves extract showed the maximum zone of growth inhibition and the minimum inhibitory concentration against the tested microorganisms. However, the minimum zone of inhibition and greater inhibitory concentration were recorded for the petroleum ether and aqueous extract of *Melia azedarach* against all the experimental strains<sup>(29)</sup>.

Five crude leaf extracts of *Melia azedarach* (methanol, ethanol, dichloromethane, ethyl acetate and aqueous) at five different concentrations were tested for antibacterial effect against eight strains of Gram-positive: *Micrococcus glutamicus*, *Lactobacillus bulgaris*, *Streptococcus faecalis*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Bacillus stearothermophilus*, *Staphylococcus pyogenes*, *Micrococcus luteus*, *Bacillus cereus* and Gram negative bacteria: *Escherichia coli* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. Dichloromethane leaf extract of *Melia azedarach* was effective against Gram positive than Gram negative bacteria. Ethanol extract inhibited the growth of all the tested bacterial strains, with maximum inhibition zone against the Gram negative bacteria. Methanolic extract was effective against all the tested bacteria. All the tested bacterial were sensitive to the ethyl acetate extract, while, aqueous leaf extract showed moderate activity against all tested bacterial strains<sup>(30)</sup>.

The ethanolic extract of the leaves of *Melia azedarach* was tested for antibacterial activity against *Escherichia coli*, *Salmonella typhi*, *Shigella dysenteriae*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Staphylococcus epidermidis*. The ethanolic extract showed antibacterial activity against all the tested bacterial strains with zone of inhibition ranging from 8.40 mm to 10.39 mm and 11.56 mm to 15.87 mm for 250 and 500 µg/disc of extract respectively<sup>(31)</sup>.

The antibacterial activity of the ethanolic leaf extract of *Melia azedarach* was studied against *E. coli* (ATCC 8739), *Enterococcus faecalis* (Ec P07) and *Bacillus subtilis* (Bs), and the antifungal activity was examined against *Alternaria alternate*, *Fusarium solani*, *Fusarium oxysporum* sp. *melonis*, *F. oxysporum* f. sp. *lycopersici*, *F. sambucinum* and *Botrytis cinerea*. The results showed that IC<sub>50</sub> of ethanolic leaf extract against *E. coli* was 6.6 µg/ml, *Enterococcus faecalis* 1 µg/ml, *Bacillus subtilis* 1.3 µg/ml, *Alternaria alternate* 1.0 µg/ml and *Fusarium solani* 53 µg/ml. The ethanolic leaves extracts exhibited a significant (P≤5%) inhibitory effects on growth of tested fungal pathogens by disc-methods<sup>(32)</sup>.

The antifungal effects of *Melia azedarach* flowers extracts was investigated against *Aspergillus niger*, *Aspergillus fumigatus*, *Aspergillus flavus*. The methanolic extract of the flowers showed the highest antifungal activity against *Aspergillus flavus* fungus with zone of inhibition of 19.6±0.66 mm. Dichloromethane, ethyl acetate and n-butanol extracts also possessed significant antifungal activity with 18±0.57 mm, 18.6±0.88 mm and 18±0.66 mm zone of inhibition, respectively. N-butanol extract showed the least antifungal activity against *Aspergillus niger* with 13.6±0.88 mm zone of inhibition. Dichloromethane and methanolic extracts exhibited excellent MIC against *Aspergillus flavus* (13.909±1.5 µg/ml)<sup>(16)</sup>.

Meliacine peptide isolated from the leaves inhibited the multiplication of foot and mouth disease virus (FMDV) in BHK-21 cells. The meliacine-inhibitable process was occurred within the first hour of the viral reproductive cycle. Meliacine didn't affect adsorption and penetration of the virus in cells. It prevented the process of uncoating of FMDV in BHK-21 cells by inhibiting vacuolar acidification<sup>(33)</sup>.

Meliacine, also exhibited antiviral activity against herpes simplex virus type 1 (HSV-1) by inhibiting specific infected-cell polypeptides produced late in infection which involved in DNA synthesis and in the assembly of nucleocapsids. It also affected the late event in the multiplication cycle of HSV-1. It diminished the synthesis of viral DNA and inhibited the spread of infectious viral particles<sup>(34)</sup>.

Limonoid 1-cinnamoyl-3,11-dihydroxymeliacarpin isolated from the ethyl acetate extract of leaves of *Melia azedarach* showed  $IC_{50}$  values of 6 microM and 20 microM against vesicular stomatitis (VSV) and herpes simplex (HSV-1) viruses, respectively<sup>(35)</sup>.

#### **Antiparasitic effect:**

Ethanol extracts from the kernels of ripe fruits of *Melia azedarach* (0.0033 to 0.05 g%) were assayed against larvae of *Aedes aegypti*. The extracts of the seed were lethal for third to fourth instar larvae. Non-fed *Aedes aegypti* larvae were more susceptible to the extracts. Under a more realistic environmental situation (25 and 30C), the death rate caused by the extract was higher<sup>(36)</sup>.

The larvicidal activity of aqueous extracts of different parts (50, 100, 500, 1000, 1500 and 2000 ppm) of *Melia azedarach* was investigated against *Culex quinquefasciatus*. The extracts increased the mortality of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> instar larvae, the effect was concentration dependent. 1.6±2.2% mortality was caused by the fruit extract (50 ppm), while, leaves extract caused 17.60±6.0% and bark extract caused 17.60±7.3% mortality. The  $LC_{50}$  of the fruits extract was 2035.13ppm, while that of leaves extract 612.250ppm and bark extract 368.3ppm<sup>(37)</sup>.

The antiparasitic effect of ethanol extracts of *Melia azedarach* was examined against the larval stages of *Anopheles stephensi*, *Culex quinquefasciatus* and *Aedes aegypti*. The results showed that the extracts of seed and leaf caused significant larval mortality in all larval stages of the three mosquito species. The fruit extract (50 ppm) produces 81% larval mortality on the 4<sup>th</sup> instar larvae of *An. stephensi* and 79% larval mortality in *Cx. quinquefasciatus* and *Ae. aegypti*. It appeared that the first and second instar larvae of *An. stephensi* and *Cx. quinquefasciatus* were more susceptible to all concentrations of leaf and fruit extracts<sup>(38)</sup>.

The activities of ripe fruit extract and fruit oil of *Melia azedarach* were studied against the head louse *Pediculus humanus capitis*. The oil and extract, individually or combined, caused high mortality of adult lice (62.9% and 96.5%). The highest mortality rate was recorded when 20% ripe fruit extract was combined with 10% ripe fruit oil<sup>(39)</sup>.

The anthelmintic effect of *Melia azedarach* was investigated against *Haemonchus contortus*. The ovicidal and larvicidal activity of *Melia azedarach* extracts on *Haemonchus contortus* was investigated by larval development and egg hatching tests. The seed ethanol extract was the most active on eggs ( $LC_{50}$ =0.36mg/ml) and the leaf ethanol extract showed the best inhibition of larval development ( $LC_{50}$ =9.18mg/ml)<sup>(40)</sup>.

The antiparasitic effect of *Melieae cortex* (*Melia azedarach* Linne. var. *japonica*) was investigated on the growth and fine structure of *Trichomonas vaginalis*. *Melieae cortex* decreased the viability of *T. vaginalis* dose-dependently. One to two hours after adding of *Melieae cortex* extract, the movement of flagella and axostyle was decreased, but the cell death didn't occur. After 30 min to 2 hour of the treatment with the extract of *Melieae cortex*, the fine structure of the cytoplasm was changed. The number of polyribosome was decreased, whereas the number of single ribosomes in the cytoplasm was increased<sup>(41)</sup>.

The antimalarial activities of the extracts of *Albizia gummifera*, *Aspilia mossambicensis*, *Melia azedarach* and *Azadirachta indica* were evaluated against laboratory adapted isolates

of *Plasmodium falciparum* using an in vitro radioisotopic uptake technique. The antimalarial activity (IC<sub>50</sub>) of *Melia azedarach* was 299.7±202.0 µg/ml<sup>(42)</sup>.

**Anticancer effect:**

Four tirucallane triterpenoids, isolated from the fruits, along with 16 analogues, were evaluated for their cytotoxicities against HepG2 (liver), SGC 7901 (stomach), K562 (leukemia), and HL60 (leukemia) cancer cell lines. One of the tirucallane triterpenoids analogues possessed strong cytotoxicity against HepG2 and SGC7901 cancer cells with the IC<sub>50</sub> values of 6.9 and 6.9 µm, respectively<sup>(23)</sup>.

Thirty one limonoids and tirucallane-type triterpenoid isolated from the fruits of *Melia azedarach* were tested for their cytotoxic activities against HL60, SK-BR-3, A549 and AZ521 human cancer cell lines. Meliarachin C (IC<sub>50</sub> 0.65 µM) and 3-O-deacetyl-4'-demethyl-28-oxosalannin (IC<sub>50</sub> 2.8 µM) exhibited potent cytotoxic activity against HL60 cells, attributed to their apoptotic effects<sup>(43)</sup>.

Triterpene, 3- $\alpha$ -tigloylmelianol isolated from the fruits of *Melia azedarach* showed cytotoxicity against the human lung adenocarcinoma epithelial cell line A549<sup>(22)</sup>.

The anticancer activity of *Melia azedarach* was studied against cancer [HT-29 (human colon adenocarcinoma), A-549 (non-small cell line carcinoma), HepG2 (hepatocellular carcinoma) and MCF-7 (human breast adenocarcinoma)] and normal cell line. The results showed that the extract of *Melia azedarach* seed kernel possessed high cytotoxic activity and selectivity to cancer cell lines (IC<sub>50</sub> range of 8.18- 60.10 µg/ml)<sup>(44)</sup>.

**Antioxidant effect:**

The water, ethanol and methanol extracts of dried leaves of *Melia azedarach* were investigated for antioxidant activity using DPPH radical scavenging assay. The result revealed that the extract, contains high amount of phenolic compounds and exhibited potent antioxidant activity<sup>(45)</sup>.

The antioxidant effect of the *Melia azedarach* was studied ethanol-induced erythrocyte damage in rats. Chronic administration of ethanol increased the level of lipid peroxidation, decreased the activity of superoxide dismutase and catalase and reduced the content of glutathione. The ethanol- induced changes was inhibited with co- administration of *Melia azedarach* (500mg/kg, orally)<sup>(46)</sup>.

The antioxidant activity of *Melia azedarach* leaf extracts was studied using DPPH radical scavenging activity. The result revealed that 5mg plant extract showed highest (65.4%), and 1 mg showed the lowest inhibition activity (45.04%). The inhibition activity of the plant extract was comparatively lower than that possessed by ascorbic acid<sup>(24)</sup>.

The ethanolic extract of the leaves of *Melia azedarach* was tested for antioxidant, using DPPH scavenging assay. Ethanolic extract of the leaves demonstrated antioxidant activity in vitro with IC<sub>50</sub> value of 19 µg/ml<sup>(31)</sup>.

The antioxidant activities of the ethanol leaf extract of *Melia azedarach* and its protective effect was also studied against H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>-induced cellular damage in cultured lymphocytes. The ethanol extract of *Melia azedarach* (20, 40, 60, 80, 100 mg/ml) exhibited significant dose dependent radical scavenging effects, and their IC<sub>50</sub> values were: DPPH radical (30.55±0.32 mg/ml), hydroxyl radical (26.50±0.26 mg/ml), nitric oxide radical (48.00±0.48 mg/ml), superoxide anion (30.00±0.32 mg/ml), and reducing power (22.00±0.22 mg/ml). The extract 60 mg/ml protected from the increased DNA damage at 500 µM H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>-treated cultured lymphocytes<sup>(47)</sup>.

The antioxidant activity of *Melia azedarach* flowers extracts was measured using DPPH free radical scavenging assay. Only ethanolic extract of the flowers revealed antioxidant

activity with  $IC_{50}$  of  $50 \pm 2$ . Dichloromethane, ethyl acetate, n-butanol and methanol extracts showed no antioxidant activity<sup>(16)</sup>.

The antioxidant activity of *Melia azedarach* was evaluated in depression induced in rat by stress procedures. The leaves aqueous extract (50 and 150 mg/kg bw, orally for 30 days) showed significant increase in the levels of protein, cholesterol and significant decrease in LPO level in depression induced rats<sup>(17)</sup>.

#### **Antiinflammatory, analgesic and antipyretic effects:**

The anti-inflammatory activity of hexane extract of the seeds of *Melia azedarach* was investigated in rats, using carrageenan induced paw oedema and formalin induced inflammation test. The extract at doses of 100 and 200 mg/kg bw, reduced the paw edema induced by carrageenan by 52.77 and 91.66%, respectively. While, it reduced the formalin induced inflammation by 15.21 and 20.86% at the same doses, respectively<sup>(48)</sup>.

The anti-inflammatory effect of the ethanolic leaf extract of *Melia azedarach* was studied using carrageenan-induced hind paw edema in female rats. The extract of *Melia azedarach* (150 mg/kg) possessed the high antiinflammatory activity (25%) compared with indomethacin (32%) at 10 mg/kg after 2 hours of treatment<sup>(32)</sup>.

The ethanolic extract of the leaves of *Melia azedarach* was tested for analgesic activity using acetic acid induced writhing test in mice. The extract demonstrated 45.45% ( $P < 0.001$ ) and 67.05% ( $P < 0.001$ ) writhing inhibition at the doses of 250 and 500 mg/kg bw respectively<sup>(31)</sup>.

The antipyretic activity of *Melia azedarach* leaves hydromethanol extract was investigated using the yeast induced pyrexia method in rabbits. The extract at 500 mg/kg dose, significantly ( $P < 0.0001$ ) reduced yeast-induced elevated temperature as compared with that of paracetamol<sup>(9)</sup>.

#### **Reproductive effect:**

The follicular development in cyclic female albino rats were investigated after oral administration of polar (PF) and non-polar (NPF) fractions of *Melia azedarach* seed extract at 24 mg/kg bw/day for 18 days. There was a significant reduction ( $P = 0.05$ ) in the number of normal single layered follicles in females treated by *M. azedarach*. In addition, the extracts significantly reduced the total number of normal follicles ( $13.00 \pm 3.58$  and  $14.60 \pm 2.25$  after 24 mg/kg NPF and PF) treatments compared to control ( $216.00 \pm 15.72$  and  $222.20 \pm 19.52$ , respectively)<sup>(12)</sup>.

The antifertility activity of ethanolic bark extract of *Melia azedarach* (200 and 400 mg/kg, once daily for 15 days) was investigated in male rats. The male rats were allowed to mate with sexually active female of same strain and the percent of pregnancy, number of implantation and number of viable fetuses were observed. Both doses of *Melia azedarach* significantly decrease the percent of pregnancy, number of implantation and number of viable fetuses in the treated female rats compared to control rats<sup>(49)</sup>.

#### **Hepatoprotective effect:**

The hepatoprotective effect of leaf methanolic extract was investigated in paracetamol induced hepatic damage in rats. Rats received paracetamol showed decreased activity of antioxidative enzymes (GPx, GST, SOD and CAT) in liver and increase the serum enzymes (SGOT, SGPT and alkaline phosphate), bilirubin and decrease the total proteins content. The leaf extract restored the activity of antioxidant enzymes and serum enzymes to the normal level<sup>(50)</sup>.

The hepatoprotective effect of the leaves ethanolic extract of *Melia azedarach* (300 and 500 mg/kg) was also studied against simvastatin induced hepatotoxicity in rats. The leaf showed significant hepatoprotective activity which could be due to its antioxidant property. It significantly reduced the increased serum glutamate pyruvate transaminase, glutamate oxaloacetate transaminase, alanine phosphatase and bilirubin<sup>(51)</sup>.



The ethanol extract of the leaves of *Melia azedarach* was significantly decreased the elevated levels of serum glutamic pyruvate transaminase, serum glutamic oxaloacetic transaminase, alkaline phosphatase in rats intoxicated by carbon tetrachloride<sup>(52-53)</sup>.

**Dermatological effect:**

A herbal cream containing a methanolic HPLC-standardized extract of *Melia azedarach* flowers was tested in skin diseases. The preparation possessed potent effect against bacterial skin diseases like cellulitis, pustules and pyogenic infections, in children. The obtained results were comparable to those of neomycin<sup>(54)</sup>.

**Antidiabetic effect:**

The antidiabetic effect *Melia azedarach* was studied in streptozotocin induced diabetic rats. The ethanol extract of *Melia azedarach* significantly decreased blood glucose 14.8% ( $P < 0.01$ )<sup>(55)</sup>.

**Immunological effect:**

*Melia azedarach* leaf extract inhibited the phagocytosis of opsonized sheep erythrocytes. This inhibition was time and dose- dependent, it was reverted after 48 hrs of removing the extract from the culture medium. Chemiluminescence in treated cells was also impaired<sup>(56)</sup>.

**Melanogenesis stimulation effect:**

The effect of a 70% ethanol extract of *Melia azedarach* on melanogenesis was studied with investigation of the underlying mechanisms using A B16F10 mouse melanoma cell line. *Melia azedarach* extract (10, 20 and 40  $\mu\text{g/ml}$ ) increased melanogenesis through the upregulation of tyrosinase and tyrosinase-related protein-1 protein expression by post-transcriptional control in B16F10 cells<sup>(57)</sup>.

**Antilithiatic effect:**

The antilithiatic effect of the aqueous extract was investigated against ethylene glycol-induced nephrolithiasis in male albino rats. Administration of aqueous extract (250 mg/kg bw, orally, for 28 days) with ethylene glycol (0.75%) reduced urinary calcium, oxalate, phosphate, and elevated urinary magnesium level. It also increased the urine volume, and reduced the tendency for crystallization. Histopathologically, the microcrystal deposition was reduced after treatment with the extract<sup>(58)</sup>.

**Hypolipidemic effect:**

The antihyperlipidemic effect of ethanol extract of leaves of *Melia azedarach* was investigated in hyperlipidemia induced by high-fat diet supplemented with propylthiouracil for 15 days. The ethanol leaves extract (300, 600 and 1200mg/200 g bw), decreased total cholesterol and LDL levels 37.78% and 35.57% (300mg/200g bw), 45.99% and 40.39% (600mg/200g bw), and 56.29% and 52.42% (1200mg/200g bw). ED<sub>50</sub> value of ethanol extract was 869 mg/200 g bw for total cholesterol and 1086.84 mg/200 g bw for LDL reduction<sup>(59)</sup>.

**Hypotensive effect:**

The antihypertensive effect of ethanolic extract of the leaves of *Melia azedarach* (180, 360 and 720mg/ 200g bw) was studied in doca-salt (deoxycorticosterone acetate) induced hypertension in rats. Blood pressure was measured at day 0, 8, and 14. There was a significant difference in blood pressure before and after induction ( $P < 0.05$ ) in rats received the extract at a dose of 180mg/ 200g bw<sup>(60)</sup>.

**Butyrylcholinesterase inhibitory activity:**

Aqueous, potassium phosphate buffer (pH 7.2), hydroethanolic solution 70:30 and hydroethanolic solution 50:50. extracts of *Melia azedarach* leaves were investigated for the inhibitory effect on butyrylcholinesterase activity in homogenates rat livers. The introduction of *Melia azedarach* extracts in the reaction mixture produced a variety of inhibitions (> 45 to 100%), independent on its concentration (0.5 to 2.0 mg/ml) and extract type<sup>(61)</sup>.

**Toxicity and side effects:**

The acute oral toxicity study of *Melia azedarach* showed no mortality upto 610 mg/kg<sup>(50)</sup>. The effects of n-hexane, ethyl acetate, n-butanol, chloroform, and aqueous fractions of the methanolic extract of *Melia azedarach* fruits (50 mg/kg bw, orally for 40 days) on serum glucose, lipid profile, GPT, ALP and creatinine were investigated in normal rabbits. All the extracts decreased the serum glucose, cholesterol, triglycerides and LDL concentrations significantly, and significantly increased serum HDL levels. All extracts ( except the aqueous extract) significantly elevated the serum levels of GPT, ALP and creatinine. Of the tested extracts, only the aqueous fraction was found safe, as it caused no significant alterations in the serum levels of GPT, ALP and creatinine<sup>(62)</sup>.

The toxicological studies performed on poultry, sheep, goat, swine and cows showed that the swine was the most susceptible and showed two main groups of symptoms. The first was gastrointestinal adverse effects (nausea, vomiting, violent colic, tympanites, diarrhoea and thirst). The second was neurological and respiratory adverse effects (coma, depressed respiration, marked dyspnoea, labored and irregular breathing, gasping, cyanosis and tachycardia). Different parts of the plant caused different reactions on the same species. Oral administration of aqueous extract of the fruit in rabbits caused gastrointestinal symptoms, while, subcutaneous injection caused dyspnoea, tremor, convulsions and death. The toxic principle would appear to be an alkaloid azaridine, tannin, bakacactone, and certain oils and proteins<sup>(63-64)</sup>.

*Melia azedarach* poisoning was recorded in dog. Clinical signs of poisoning were developed within hours and were manifested by gastrointestinal and CNS disturbances. However, the clinical signs appeared initially, were variable, but usually included tremors and a moderate limp in the dog's back leg, which evolved to a more severe condition in the following hours<sup>(65-66)</sup>.

Administration of *Melia azedarach* at single doses (5 to 30 g/kg bw) in calves revealed that animals dosed with 15, 25 and 30 g/kg bw were died. Clinical signs included ruminal stasis, anorexia, diarrhea, depression, incoordination, muscle tremors, difficulty to stand, sternal recumbence, hypothermia and dyspnea. Serum AST and CPK were increased. Signs were appeared after 4 to 24 h of dosing and the clinical signs continued for 20 to 72 h. Macroscopic signs were included congestion of the intestine, with liquid content in rumen and intestines, focal or diffuse yellow discoloration of the liver, and brain congestion. The liver sections showed swollen and vacuolated hepatocytes, scattered throughout the parenchyma or concentrated in the periacinar zone. Degenerative and necrotic changes were recorded in the epithelium of the forestomachs. There was also necrosis of lymphoid tissue. Skeletal muscles had hyaline degeneration and fiber necrosis<sup>(67)</sup>.

An African woman was died after using a decoction of the bark as an enema. A poisoning was also occurred after drinking a decoction of the leaves, the symptoms being severe included stomatitis, marked oliguria and sanguinous vomiting. Eating fruits was also caused poisoning in children. Death was also recorded in adult female after intake of a concoction prepared from the bark of a tree. On examination, the patient was found to be comatose. All reflexes were absent. The pupils were dilated and fixed. Pulse was 100/min and blood pressure 110/80. Later, the patient collapsed and her blood pressure was not recordable. She was also gasping and three days later the patient died<sup>(64,68-69)</sup>.

## Conclusion:

The current review discusses the chemical constituent, pharmacological, therapeutic and toxicological effects of *Melia azedarach* as promising herbal drug because of its wide pharmacological effects.

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