

Review Article

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Exploring The Efficacy And The Synergistic Role of Polyherbal Combination in Irritable Bowel Syndrome: A Comprehensive Review

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Abstract

Keywords

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Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a common functional gastrointestinal disorder characterized by chronic abdominal pain, bloating, and altered bowel habits. In Ayurveda, IBS is closely correlated with Grahani Dosh, a condition arising from the dysfunction of Agni (digestive fire). This review examines the efficacy and the synergistic effects of five key herbs—**Kutaj** (*Holarrhena antidysenterica*), **Bilva** (*Aegle marmelos*), **Musta** (*Cyperus rotundus*), **Shunthi** (*Zingiber officinale*), and **Brahmi** (*Bacopa monnieri*)—in addressing the multi-factorial nature of IBS, including its physical symptoms and its psychological triggers via the gut-brain axis.

Introduction

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a common highly prevalent functional gastrointestinal (FGID) disorder that places an enormous burden on resource challenged healthcare systems [1,2]. It has a heterogeneous clinical phenotype with various symptom combinations including abdominal pain, bloating and altered stool frequency, in the absence of any detectable

organic disease with the available clinical tests and examinations [3]. The prevalence of IBS varies between geographic regions and populations, and is also dependent upon the diagnostic criteria used [4]. A worldwide prevalence of approximately 10–20% of the adult population has been reported [5]. The prevalence of IBS in general population of India is 15% [6]. Most of the patients approach the general practitioner and only 30%–50% of the workload

at gastroenterology outpatient clinics[7]. The pathogenesis of IBS is multi-factorial, including factors such as genetics, dietary intolerance, alterations in the GI microbiota, small intestinal overgrowth (SIBO), intestinal immune activation, increased intestinal permeability, visceral hypersensitivity, abnormal pain processing, disruption of the gut-brain axis, behavioural pathways and altered GI motility [8-10]. It has been observed in some studies that serotonin regulation is abnormal in IBS patients. Serotonin is largely present in the entero-chromaffin cells in the gut and is a major regulator of the peristaltic reflex and sensory relays in the gut [11]. The release of serotonin in plasma appears to be reduced in those with constipation-predominant IBS (IBS-C) and increased in diarrhoea-predominant IBS (IBS-D) [12]. Diagnosis of IBS remains a challenge with no acceptable biochemical, histo-pathological or radiological tests available. Currently, it is diagnosed using symptom-based criteria initially proposed by Manning which were subsequently modified and incorporated into various iterations of the Rome criteria [13-16]. Many drugs have been advocated in the treatment of IBS, including anti-spasmodics, bulk-forming agents, psychotropic agents, and 5-HT receptor antagonists etc. However, in the majority of cases these drugs have proven to be disappointing for the relief of symptoms, possibly as a result of the heterogeneous nature and pathogenesis of the disease.

Aim:

1. To explore the Pharmacodynamics of Polyherbal Compound as per classics and its active Phytoconstituents.
2. To explore the probable mode of action of Polyherbal Compound and its vitality for the management of IBS through herbal drugs

Materials and Methods

Materials related to IBS in Ayurveda, herbal medicine related with it, Phytochemicals and other Related topics have been collected. We have

used various classical texts and also referred to the modern books and searched various websites to collect information on the relevant topics.

Pharmacological Analysis and Mechanism of action of Individual Components

1.Kutaja (*Holarrhena antidysenterica*)¹⁷⁻²¹: The Prime Motility Modulator

In Ayurveda it is described as the foremost remedy for dysentery (Pravahika) and severe diarrhea (Atisara). Its pharmacodynamic properties as per classics-

- Rasa (taste) - Tikta (bitter), Kashaya (astringent)
- Guna (qualities) - Laghu (light), Ruksha (dry)
- Virya (potency) - Sheeta (cold)
- Vipaka (post-digestive effect) - Katu (pungent)

Despite its Sheeta Virya, which is characteristic of Stambhana agents, it is classified as a potent Grahi(absorbent/digestive) due to its profound efficacy in conditions of Ama and infection, an action attributed to its Prabhava (specific, inexplicable action). It is primarily indicated for Atisara, Pravahika, Raktapitta (bleeding disorders), and Arsha (hemorrhoids).

Phyto-constituents and Action

Rich in steroidal alkaloids, particularly conessine, isoconessine, and conessimine, which are found in the bark and seeds. The plant also contains tannins, flavonoids, and triterpenoids that contribute to its overall action.

Research studies have shown its potent anti-diarrheal, anti-dysenteric, and anti-microbial activities and confirmed its efficacy against *E. histolytica*, as well as a range of bacterial enteropathogens, including *E. coli*, Shigella sp., and *S. typhi*. The mechanism of action of Kutaja is multi-faceted. The alkaloids, especially conessine, exert a direct anti-microbial and amoebicidal effect. Furthermore, the extract reduces intestinal motility, an effect that has been

linked to calcium channel blockade, similar to conventional anti-spasmodic drugs. It also possesses an anti-secretory effect and has been shown to prevent the adhesion of pathogenic bacteria to the intestinal wall, thereby reducing their virulence and preventing toxin production.

2. Bilva (*Aegle marmelos*)²²⁻²⁷: The Gut Regulator

The unripe fruit pulp of Bilva is particularly used for chronic and difficult-to-treat GI disorders. Its properties are-

- Rasa (taste) - Kashaya (astringent), Tikta (bitter)
- Guna (qualities) - Laghu (light), Ruksha (dry)
- Virya (potency) - Ushna (hot)
- Vipaka (post-digestive effect) - Katu (pungent)

It is a powerful Deepana, Pachana, and Grahi agent (digesting Ama, kindling the digestive fire, absorbent) making it a specific remedy for chronic Atisara, Grahani, and Pravahika.

Phyto-constituents and Action

Rich in range of bioactive compounds, including coumarins (marmelosin, imperatorin, marmelide), alkaloids (aegeline), tannins, and essential oils.

The anti-diarrheal and anti-microbial properties of Bilva have been well-established. Studies have confirmed its efficacy against various enteropathogens, including *V. cholerae*, *E. coli*, and *Shigella* sp. It works by reducing intestinal motility and, importantly, inhibiting bacterial colonization of the gut epithelium and neutralizing the action of enterotoxins. Besides its anti-diarrheal action, Bilva also exhibits a distinctive protective and healing effect on the gastric and intestinal mucosa. Research has shown that it enhances the production of gastric wall mucus and glycoproteins and has been found to increase the count of serotonin-releasing enterochromaffin (EC) cells, which play a vital role in mucosal integrity, secretion, and repair.

This makes Bilva not just an agent to stop diarrhea, but a true restorative tonic for a damaged gut lining.

3. Musta (*Cyperus rotundus*)²⁸⁻³²: The Carminative & Toxin Digester

Musta is categorized as the best herb for Ama Pachana (digesting toxins) and Sangrahi actions (absorptive capacity). Its properties are-

- Rasa (taste) -Katu (pungent) , Tikta (bitter), Kashaya (astringent)
- Guna (qualities) - Laghu (light), Ruksha (dry)
- Virya (potency) - Sheeta (cold)
- Vipaka (post-digestive effect) - Katu (pungent)

It worked as Deepana, Pachana, and Grahi agent, so mainly indicated for Jwara (fever), Atisara (diarrhoea), Agnimandya (indigestion), and Trishna (excessive thirst).

Phyto-constituents and Action

Rich in a volatile oil containing numerous sesquiterpenes, such as α -cyperone, β -selinene, cyperene, and rotundone, also contains flavonoids, tannins, and other phenolic compounds that mainly responsible for its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects.

Previous studies have shown its significant anti-diarrheal activity, which is attributed to both an anti-secretory mechanism that reduces fluid accumulation in the intestines and an anti-spasmodic effect that reduces intestinal motility. Beside this it also possess immuno-modulatory and anti-inflammatory action. In experimental models of IBD, its extract has been shown to protect the intestinal mucosa by downregulating the gene expression of key pro-inflammatory cytokines, including Interleukin-4 (IL-4), IL-6, IL-12, and Interferon-gamma (IFN- γ) indicating a sophisticated mechanism that hits the underlying inflammatory cascade in chronic GI disorders. It also have significant gastro-protective effects against mucosal injury induced by ischemia and reperfusion.

4. Shunthi (*Zingiber officinale*)³³⁻⁴¹: The Bio-availability Enhancer

Shunthi (Dry Ginger) is the universal medicine as described in ayurveda (Vishwabhashaja) and act as a potent Pachana (toxin-digesting) agent. Its properties are-

- Rasa (taste) -Katu (pungent)
- Guna (qualities) - Guru (heavy), Tikshna (intense)
- Virya (potency) - Usna (hot)
- Vipaka (post-digestive effect) - Madhur (sweet)

Shunthi stimulates digestion and act as Dipana and Pachana. It has Vedanasthapana action (Maintenance of pain). It is an aphrodisiac, improves voice and cures vomiting, dyspnea, spasmodic pain. It is mainly indicated in Shula (Pain), Amavata (Arthritis), Adhmana (Distention), Atisara (Diarrhoea), Jwara (Fever), Agnimandya (Digestive insufficiency) etc.

Phyto-constituents and Action

Z. officinale is reported to possess essential oils, phenolic compounds, flavonoids, carbohydrates, proteins, alkaloids, glycosides, saponins, steroids, terpenoids, and tannin as the major phytochemicals. A methanol extract of *Z. officinale* rhizomes has been shown in studies to have substantial antibacterial activity against *E. coli*, *Salmonella enteritis*, and *Staphylococcus aureus*. Recent research has shown that zingerone protects against *E. coli*-induced diarrhea, which is the primary cause of death in underdeveloped nations. Research has demonstrated that it has anti-ulcerative properties in experimental model of stomach ulcers. The gastric contraction was suppressed in situ by key components of ginger, including [6]-gingerol and [6]-shogaol, with the [6]-shogaol exerting more intense suppression. It has been observed as by enhancing the muscle activity in the digestive tract, some of its active ingredients accelerate digestion and absorption and treat constipation and gas also.

5. Brahmi (*Bacopa monnieri*)⁴²⁻⁵⁹: The Gut-Brain Axis Modulator

Brahmi is a traditional Ayurvedic herb renowned for its nootropic, neuroprotective, and cognitive-enhancing effects. In ayurveda it is described as Medhya Rasayana (re-establish intellectual deficiencies and enhance mental capacity). Its pharmacodynamic properties as per classics-

- Rasa (taste) - Tikta (bitter)
- Guna (qualities) - Laghu (light)
- Virya (potency) - Sheeta (cold)
- Vipaka (post-digestive effect) - Madhur (sweet)

As per classics it act as Dipani (appetizers), Medhya (brain tonic), Ayusya (longevity), Rasayani (rejuvenators), Svarya (speech improver), Buddhi (intellect) and mainly indicated for Kustha (anti-leprotic), Pandu (anemia), Jwara (fever), Kasa (cough), Visha (poison), Kandu (pruritic), Vibandha (constipation) etc.

Phyto-constituents and Action

The major phytochemicals reported are saponins, terpenoids, monnierin, hersaponin, tannins, flavonoids, glycosides. The saponin consists of bacoside A, bacoside B, betulin acid, D-mannitol, stigmastanol, β sitosterol, and stigmasterol.

In different studies it has been shown that it possess Antidepressant, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant activity etc. Beside this it also have Anti-Spasmodic.

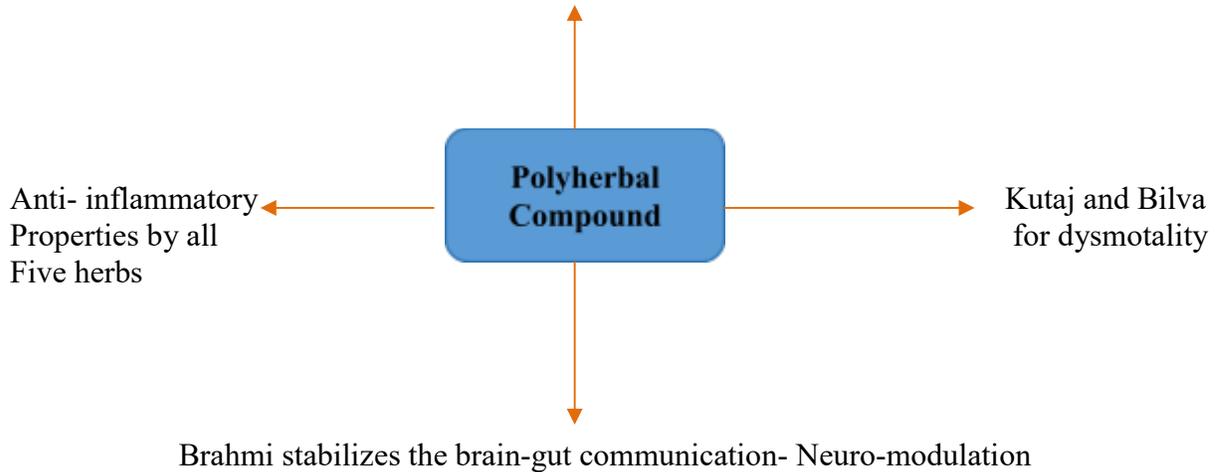
Activity in smooth muscles because of the hindrance of calcium influx via both voltage and receptor-worked calcium channels of the membrane. The juice and the extracts of the plant have been reported to have anti-ulcer properties. It is very useful in intestinal spasm (IBS). The plant is mainly explored in the research area for its neuro-pharmacological potential and various studies have proved their nootropic action also.

Probable Integrated Action & Synergistic Effect Of Polyherbal Compound

As per present review, the polyherbal combination of Kutaja, Bilva, Musta, Shunthi, and Brahmi shows potential in managing Irritable

Bowel Syndrome (IBS) by addressing the Gut-Brain Axis, treating both physiological dysmotility and psychological stress triggers. These herbs target motility modulation, enzymatic restoration, inflammation reduction, and neuro-correction, offering a multi-modal approach.

Fig.1 Digestive enzyme restoration by Shunthi & Musta



Recent researches highlight the involvement of Gut-Brain Axis (GBA) along with other factors as a critical pathway where emotional stress triggers physical GI symptoms and Ayurveda has historically addressed this connection by combining Deepana-Pachana herbs (digestive stimulants) with Medhya Rasayanas (nootropics) to treat these kind of conditions.

Conclusion

The multifactorial nature of IBS has created a challenge before the conventional system of medicine in management of this disease completely. So there is need to seek for alternative system of medicine like Ayurveda for its proper management. This review is a humble attempt to evaluate the clinical and pharmacological relevance of a specific polyherbal combination—Kutaja, Bilva, Musta, Shunthi, and Brahmi—in correcting intestinal motility and modulating the gut-brain axis to provide long-term relief from IBS symptoms. By treating the gut environment (Grahani) and the

mind (Manas) simultaneously, this combination offers a sustainable solution for IBS.

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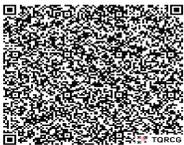
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