Synthesis of Silver Nanoparticles from Plant Chewing Sticks and their Antibacterial Activity on Dental Pathogen

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Synthesis of silver nanoparticles from plant chewing sticks of Azadiractha indica, Ficus bengalensis and Salvadora persica and their antibacterial activity on dental pathogens were conducted.

Methods: Oral pathogens were isolated from the oral cavities of student community and antibacterial assay was conducted by disc diffusion method.

Results: Lactobacillus acidophilus NCBT-060, L. lactis NCBT-063, Micrococcus luteus NCBT-036, Proteus vulgaris NCBT-020, Staphylococcus aureus NCBT-052 and Streptococcus mutans (NCBT-058) which cause gingivitis, periodontitis and plaque were tested for antibacterial activity. The antibacterial effect of chewing stick extract as well as silver nanoparticles from chewing sticks revealed that S. persica is highly effective against oral pathogens followed by A. indica and F. bengalensis when compared with control (AgNO3) at 1 mM concentration, ethyl alcohol and standard antimicrobial disc used as positive controls.

Conclusions: The different response of each microbe to the various chewing stick extracts indicated that the natural chewing stick posses different phytochemical compounds which inhibited the growth of oral pathogens. The silver nanoparticles prepared from S. persica proved scientifically about the epidemiological and clinical beneficial effects on oral hygiene.

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Introduction

The use of plant materials for the synthesis of silver nanoparticles offers numerous benefits of eco-friendliness, and compatibility for pharmaceutical and biomedical applications as they do not use toxic chemicals in the synthesis protocols. Chemical synthesis methods lead to the presence of some toxic chemicals absorbed and bring about adverse effects in medical applications. Bioinspired synthesis of nanoparticles provides advancement over chemical and physical methods as it is a cost effective and environment friendly and in this method there is no need to use high pressure, energy, temperature and toxic chemicals. Silver nanoparticles are the metal of choice as they hold the promise to kill microbe’s effectively. The silver nanoparticles act on a broad range of target sites both extracellularly as well intracellularly. In fact, microbes generally have a harder time developing resistance to silver than they do to antibiotics. The oligodynamic effect that silver has on microbes, whereby silver ions bind to reactive groups in bacterial cells, resulting in their precipitation and inactivation.

Many bacteria and fungi produce diseases which are manifested in or about the oral cavity. Some of these diseases or lesions are of a specific nature and are produced by a specific contribution to the problem of caries etiology. The highest caries susceptibility is in the age group of 20-40 years, also the females are more susceptible to dental caries as compared to males.

Dental decay is a chemical parasitic process consisting of two stages, the decalcification of enamel or its total destruction and the decalcification of dentine (dissolution of the softened residue). The carcinogenic Streptococci is critical to the development of pathogenic plaque. A large number of Streptococcus, Actinomyces and Lactobacillus species are involved in root caries and periodontal diseases. Antibiotic resistance has increased substantially in the recent years and is posing an ever increasing therapeutic problem. One of the methods to reduce the resistance to antibiotics is by using antibiotic resistance inhibitors from plants.

Plants are known to produce a variety of compounds to protect themselves against a variety of pathogens. It is expected that plant extracts showing target sites other than those used by antibiotics will be active against drug resistant pathogens. Medicinal plants have been used as traditional treatment for numerous human diseases for thousands of years and in many parts of the world. The search of biologically active component of plants has always been much interest to scientists looking for new sources of practical alternative against diseases. In rural areas of the developing countries, they continue to be used as the primary source of medicine. About 80% of the people in developing countries use traditional medicines for their health care.

The World Health Organisation has recommended and encouraged the use of chewing sticks. Recently, chewing sticks have been comprehensively reviewed and examined for their effectiveness in oral hygiene.

There is a long history of the use of plants to improve dental health and promote oral hygiene. In various parts of the world where tooth brushing by modern method is uncommon, the practice of tooth cleaning by chewing sticks is very commonly observed. This practice was recorded by the Babylonians in 5000 BC. This natural tooth brushing is very common today among many African and Southern Asian communities as well as in isolated areas of tropical America and the southern United States. In many African homes teeth are cleaned in the morning by chewing the root
or slim stem of certain plants until they acquire brush like ends. The fibrous end is then used to brush the teeth thoroughly\textsuperscript{23}.

Green synthesis and application of silver nanoparticles against antimicrobial activities were made by many workers and well documented, for example, synthesis of silver nanoparticle from \textit{Argemone mexicana} leaf silver nanoparticles\textsuperscript{24}, geranium leaf\textsuperscript{25}, \textit{Capsicum annum}\textsuperscript{26}, Papaya fruit\textsuperscript{27}, \textit{Phoma glomerata}\textsuperscript{28}, black tea leaf\textsuperscript{29}, \textit{Clerodendron}\textsuperscript{30}, \textit{Nicotiana tobaccum}\textsuperscript{31}, \textit{Catharanthus roseus}\textsuperscript{32,33}, \textit{Baliospermum}\textsuperscript{34}, \textit{Cissus quadrangularis}\textsuperscript{35}, \textit{Elettaria cardamomom}\textsuperscript{36}, \textit{Wrightia tinctoria}\textsuperscript{37}, \textit{Terminalia chebula}\textsuperscript{38}, \textit{Nitraria schoberi}\textsuperscript{39}. But the green synthesis and application of silver nanoparticles using chewing sticks against dental pathogen information’s and literatures are not documented so far. Hence the present work was focused on this area of research selecting three major chewing sticks commonly used by most of the village population in India and their antibacterial activities against dental pathogens was concentrated.

The aim of this study was to compare the antimicrobial effects of three major chewing sticks commonly used by Indian population using crude water extract as well as its silver nanoparticles effect against the dental pathogens.

Materials and Methods

The plant chewing stick used for the present work were \textit{Azadirachta indica} A. Juss (Meliaceae), \textit{Ficus bengalensis} L. (Moraceae) and \textit{Salvadora persica} L. (Salvadoraceae) (Fig. 1).

\textit{A. indica} A. Juss (Meliaceae)

The neem tree, in Sanskrit, Nimba and Arishta, is a native of India, and is cultivated in all parts of the subcontinent on account of its medicinal properties. The leaf bark and other products of Neem have been articles of the Indian materia medica since antiquity and are mentioned in the Ayurveda of Sushruta. The active principles of the plant were brought to the attention of natural products scientists in 1942, named as nimbin, nimbinin, and nimbidin. Azadirachtin is a chemical compound belonging to the limonoids was later identified. Neem mouth rinse is very effective in the treatment of infections, tooth decay, bleeding and sore gums. A mouthwash, using Neem oil, has been manufactured and used for the treatment of mouth ulcers.

\textit{F. bengalensis} L. (Moraceae)

The Banyan, a large tree throwing out numerous large aerial roots from the main trunk and large branches, which descend to the soil and form supports, and capable of separate existence when severed from the parent tree. Bark is grayish-white, wood grayish-white and moderately hard is used for various purposes. The stem stick is used as chewing stick for oral hygiene.

\textit{S. persica} L. (Salvadoraceae)

The Miswak (miswak, siwak) is a natural toothbrush made from the twigs of the \textit{Salvadora persica} tree (Arak). Miswak was used by the Babylonians some 7000 years ago; they were later used throughout the Greek and Roman empires and have been used by Jews, Egyptians and in the Islamic empires. It is believed that this precursor to the modern day toothbrush was used in Europe until about 300 years ago. Today, Miswak is being used in Africa, South America, Asia, the Middle East including Saudi Arabia, and throughout the Islamic countries. In the Middle East, the most common source of chewing sticks is the Arak (\textit{S. persica}) tree. Chemically, the air dried stem bark of \textit{S. persica} through chemical studies showed that it is composed of trimethyl amine, salvadoline, chlorides,
high amounts of fluoride and silica, sulphur, vitamin-C, small amounts of tannins, saponins, flavonoids and sterols. Its fibrous branches and roots have been used as toothbrushes.

Collection of chewing sticks

Samples of the most commonly used chewing sticks in India, namely Neem (A. indica), Banyan (F. bengalensis), and Miswak (S. persica) (Fig. 1). Out of these three chewing sticks S. persica was obtained from the commercial source and other chewing sticks were collected from the respective trees grown in the campus of National College, Tiruchirappalli.

Preparation of chewing stick extracts

Hundred gram of each of the chewing sticks were used in the experiment. The chewing sticks were cut into small pieces and ground to powder in a ball mill. The powder was kept separately in sterile, dry and screw-capped bottles, which were stored in a dry cool place before aqueous extraction. Each successive 10 gm quantity was put into a sterile screw-capped bottle to which 100 ml of sterile deionized distilled water was added. The extracts were allowed to soak for 48 hours at room temperature before the mixtures were centrifuged at 2,000 rpm for 10 minutes. The supernatants were used for antimicrobial activity.

Isolation of Pathogens from Oral Cavity

The pathogens isolated from oral cavities from 25 students from the Department of Biotechnology, National College, Tiruchirappalli revealed the presence of oral pathogens such as Lactobacillus acidophilus NCBT-060, L. lactis NCBT-063, Micrococcus luteus NCBT-036, Proteus vulgaris NCBT-020, Staphylococcus aureus NCBT-052 and Streptococcus mutans NCBT-058. From the heterogenous microbial colonies, pure colonies were isolated and grown in Nutrient Glucose Agar Medium for all the bacteria.

Synthesis and characterization of silver nanoparticles

Silver nitrate (AgNO₃) (Merck India Ltd.) was used for the study. One gram of dried powder material of chewing stick was added into the aqueous solution of 1 mM silver nitrate and kept in a water bath with temperature 50-70°C for 10-20 minutes. Change of colour (dark brown) was noticed. It was then observed in UV-vis spectroscopy at 280-580 nm w/l. The bioreduction of silver ions in solution was noticed at the absorption peak at 420 nm w/l. The spectra were recorded at 2, 10 and 20 minutes intervals for the conformation of silver nanoparticles. The solution was then centrifuged at 12,000 rpm for 15 minutes, the supernatant was discarded, the pellet was collected, it was then dried in hot air oven and the dried samples were used for Scanning Electron Microscopy - Energy Dispersive X-ray (SEM-EDX) pictures (Fig. 2 and 4).

Antimicrobial Assay by Disc Diffusion Method

The prepared chewing stick extracts and silver nanoparticles of chewing stick were tested for antimicrobial activity for dental pathogen by the disc diffusion method. The pure cultures of the dental pathogens were individually streaked uniformly all over the Nutrient Glucose Agar media in 9 cm Petri dishes. The aqueous chewing stick extracts and silver nanoparticles of chewing stick were loaded on plain sterile disc (Himedia SD 067) and placed on the medium in the Petri dish under sterile condition. Positive control discs with AgNO₃ 1 mM, ethyl alcohol 70% and standard antibiotic (Streptomycin 10 µg) were placed as positive controls. The Petri plates were incubated at 37 ± 1°C for 48
hours. The experiment was carried out, in triplicate for each extract.

**Results and Discussion**

Antimicrobial effect of natural chewing stick extracts and silver nanoparticles of chewing sticks

The natural chewing stick extracts of three traditional Indian plants viz. *A. indica*, *F. bengalensis*, and *S. persica* were selected and their antimicrobial susceptibility test was conducted against six oral pathogens, viz., *L. acidophilus*, *L. lactis*, *M. luteus*, *P. vulgaris*, *S. aureus* and *S. mutans* which cause dental caries, gingivitis and plaque. The results are given in Table-1.

Antimicrobial effect of chewing sticks against dental pathogens

The chewing stick extract of *S. persica* has shown the maximum inhibition zone of 10.0 mm for *L. acidophilus*, whereas *S. persica* silver nanoparticle has shown 20.0 mm inhibition zone, *A. indica* has shown the maximum inhibition zone of 9.0 mm for *S. aureus*, whereas *A. indica* silver nanoparticle has shown 13.0 mm inhibition zone. *F. bengalensis* has shown the maximum inhibition zone of 9.0 mm for *L. lactis* and *S. aureus*, whereas *F. bengalensis* silver nanoparticle has shown the maximum inhibition zone of 12.0 mm for *L. acidophilus* and *S. mutans*. The positive control antibiotic disc Streptomycin 10 μg have shown 12.0 to 16.0 mm of inhibition zone for the six dental pathogen tested for this work (Table 1, Fig. 3).

The selection of chewing sticks in Asian countries was based on a number of factors. The use of chewing sticks is most common in Asian countries especially in the Indian subcontinent and the Middle East region; further more chewing sticks are cheap, readily available in urban and rural areas of the countries. Their taste is agreeable and not unpleasant and reported to have anti-plaque and many other pharmacological properties\(^{41}\).

A recent survey in Asia showed that more than half of the rural population used chewing sticks as an oral hygiene tool\(^{42}\). So it was important to find out the antimicrobial properties of those chewing sticks as they are so commonly used in Asian countries. It is claimed that the mechanical plaque-removing properties of chewing sticks may be similar to that of a conventional toothbrush\(^{43,44}\).

Most studies on chewing sticks have been carried out, where more than 90% of the population uses different types of sticks from trees that grow there such as *Fagara zanthoxyloides*, *Serindei wernerkezi*, *Azadirachta indica*, *Accacia arabica*\(^{45,46}\). Certain chewing sticks including those derived from *Salvadora persica*, *A. indica* and *Accacia arabica* are active against several types of carcinogenic bacteria frequently found in the human oral cavity\(^{45}\). Results from the present study showed that *S. persica*, the maximum followed by *A. indica* and *F. bengalensis* showed antibacterial activity against all the six tested microbes viz., *L. acidophilus NCBT-060*, *L. lactis NCBT-063*, *M. luteus NCBT-036*, *P. vulgaris NCBT-020*, *S. aureus NCBT-052* and *S. mutans NCBT-058* for both chewing stick extracts as well as chewing stick nanoparticles. Antimicrobial activities of silver nanoparticles by several previous experiments by Landsdown (2002)\(^{47}\), Castellano et al. (2007)\(^{48}\), Singh et al. (2008)\(^{49}\), Marambio-Jones and Hock (2010)\(^{50}\), Kim et al. (2011)\(^{51}\), Guzman et al. (2012)\(^{52}\) and Justin Packia Jacob (2013)\(^{53}\) are the supporting evidence of antimicrobial activities of nanoparticle. It is to be stated that the present work is first of its kind with reference to the antibacterial activities of silver nanoparticle prepared from plant chewing sticks on dental pathogens. The use
of the chewing stick conforms to the notion of Primary Health Care Approach (PHCA) and the well established associations with certain cultural and religious beliefs. The chewing sticks have been proven effective as an oral hygiene tool and its use should be promoted with scientific rational and proper method of its preparation and usage. The use of chewing sticks will be a great help in developing countries with financial constraints and limited oral health care facilities for their population.

**Conclusion**

It has been scientifically proved to be very useful in the prevention of tooth decay even when used without any other tooth cleaning means. The users of Miswak have shown a remarkable lack of tooth decay as compared to other chewing sticks. From this study, it could be concluded that *S. persica* chewing stick as well as the nanoparticle are effective antimicrobial agent for oral pathogens when utilized clinically as an irritant in the endodontic treatment of teeth with necrotic pulps.

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**References**


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**Table 1.** Antimicrobial effect of chewing stick against dental pathogen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dental Pathogen</th>
<th>C (mm)</th>
<th>C₁ (mm)</th>
<th>S (mm)</th>
<th>A. i (mm)</th>
<th>F. b (mm)</th>
<th>S. p (mm)</th>
<th>A. i Ag (n) (mm)</th>
<th>F. b Ag (n) (mm)</th>
<th>S. p Ag (n) (mm)</th>
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<tr>
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<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>L. lactis</em></td>
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<td>16.0</td>
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<td>9.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>M. luteus</em></td>
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<td>0.0</td>
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<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>P. vulgaris</em></td>
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<td>6.0</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
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<td>11.0</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>S. aureus</em></td>
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<td>15.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>S. mutans</em></td>
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<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C (Control): Silver nitrate 1 mM solution, C₁ (Control): Ethyl alcohol 70%, S (Control): Streptomycin 10 µg, A. i: Azadirachta indica (crude water extract), F. b: Ficus bengalensis (crude water extract), S. p: Salvadora persica (crude water extract), A. i Ag(n): A. indica silver nanoparticle, F. b Ag(n): F. bengalensis silver nanoparticle, and S. p Ag(n): S. pertica silver nanoparticle.
Figure - 1
Plant and its chewing sticks

a) *Azadirachta indica*

b) *Ficus bengalensis*

c) *Salvadora persica*

a1) *A. indica* chewing stick

b1) *F. bengalensis* chewing stick

c1) *S. persica* chewing stick
Figure - 2
Synthesis of silver nano partial using chewing sticks

a) chewing stick powder
b,c & d) preparation of nano partial

A.i) A. indica
F.b) F. bengalensis
S.p) S. persica
Figure - 3

Antibacterial activity of silver nano particle on Dental pathogens

(a) *Lactobacillus acidophilus*  
(b) *L. lactis*  
(c) *Micrococcus luteus*  
(d) *Proteus vulgaris*  
(e) *Staphylococcus aureus*  
(f) *Streptococcus mutans*

(c) Control AgNo3 1mM solution  
s) Streptomycin 10μg  
A.i) A. indica  
F.b) F. bengalensis  
S.p) S. persica

c1) Control Ethyl alcohol 70%  
A.i(g) A. indica silver nano particl  
F.b(g) F. bengalensis silver nano particl  
S.p(g) S. persica silver nano particl
Figure - 4

SEM-EDX picture of silver nano partials of plant chewing sticks

a) Silver nano partial of *Azadirachta indica*
   a1) Elements in chewing stick of *A. indica* Na, Cl, O, and C
b) Silver nano partial of *Ficus bengalensis*
b1) Elements in chewing stick of *F. bengalensis* C, N, O, and S
c) Silver nano partial of *Salvadora persica*
c1) Elements in chewing stick of *S. persica* Cl, Ca, O, and S