

Original Article

SCREENING OF TOTAL PHENOL AND FLAVONOID CONTENT IN DIFFERENT CYTOTYPES OF TWO SPECIES OF *ACHYRANTHES* LINN. FROM WESTERN HIMALAYA, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Genus *Achyranthes* Linn. belonging to family Amaranthaceae consists of six species. The present study was undertaken to screen the phenolic components in the different cytotypes of two species of Genus *Achyranthes* Linn. growing in western Himalaya, India.

Methods: Methanol extract of leaves was used to determine the total phenol and flavonoid contents in different cytotypes of *A. aspera* Linn. and *A. bidentata* Blume by spectrophotometric method. Total phenol content was expressed as mg gallic acid g⁻¹ phenol and total flavonoid content as mg quercetin g⁻¹ flavonoid using the standard curves. Further, gallic acid content in methanol extracts of leaves was determined by RP-HPLC method using C-18 column, employing 0.01% (v/v) orthophosphoric acid: acetonitrile (98:2 v/v) as mobile phase at a flow rate of 1 ml/min with ultraviolet (UV) detection at 272 nm.

Results: Hexaploid plants of *A. aspera* Linn. possess the higher amount of phenol (9.16±0.84 mg/g) and flavonoid (78.36±1.63 mg/g) constituents in the methanol extract of leaves as compared to its dodecaploid counterparts (7.86±0.08 mg/g and 70.20±1.81 mg/g respectively). Similarly, phenol and flavonoid content is found to be more in the methanol extract of leaves of hexaploid plants of *A. bidentata* Blume (11.93±0.59 mg/g and 115.92±1.32 mg/g respectively) as compared to its dodecaploid counterparts (9.46±0.75 mg/g and 107.76±0.94 mg/g respectively). Further, RP-HPLC analysis of gallic acid revealed that higher amount of gallic acid is present in dodecaploid plants of *A. aspera* Linn. (1.04±0.02 mg/g) and *A. bidentata* Blume (1.34±0.03 mg/g) as compared to hexaploid counterparts (1.01±0.01 mg/g and 1.22±0.05 mg/g respectively).

Conclusion: The present investigation revealed that *A. aspera* Linn. and *A. bidentata* Blume plants show immense intraspecific variability in their phenolic components. Hence there is need to evaluate germplasm to select superior genotype for medicinal and conservation purpose.

Keywords: *Achyranthes* Linn, Cytotypes, Total phenols, Total flavonoids, Western Himalaya

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INTRODUCTION

Achyranthes is a genus of about six species in tropical and subtropical regions, mostly in Africa and Asia [1]. Out of three species of the genus available in India, *A. aspera* Linn. is distributed throughout India and commonly found on hillsides, waste places, roadsides and riverbanks up to the ranges of 2300 m while *A. bidentata* Blume grows in temperate and subtropical Himalaya from Kishtwar to Sikkim, Khasia Hills, Bihar, Konkan, Nilgiris and Travancore at an elevations of 1200 m-2400 m.

Traditionally, *A. aspera* Linn. is used in asthma, cough, oedema, dropsy, piles, boils, eruptions of skin, pneumonia, snake bites and night blindness. It is pungent, antiphlegmatic, antiperiodic, diuretic, purgative and laxative [2]. Ash of the plant is applied externally to ulcers and warts. The crushed leaves rubbed on aching back cure strained back [3]. A fresh piece of root is used as tooth brush. A paste of the roots in water is used in ophthalmia and opacities of the cornea. A paste of fresh leaves is used for allaying pain from the bite of wasps [4]. Inhaling the fumes of *A. aspera* mixed with *Smilax ovalifolia* roots is suggested to improve appetite and to cure various types of gastric disorders [5]. The plant is useful in liver complaints, rheumatism, scabies and other skin diseases.

As an important medicinal herb, the plant of *A. bidentata* Blume is used against whooping cough, abdominal pain, backache, trauma, pain and difficulty in movement of knees, blisters in the mouth and cholera, scorpion sting and malarial fever. The plant is diuretic and astringent [6-8].

Further, a perusal of the literature revealed the occurrence of different cytotypes among these species. Therefore, the present investigation has been taken up to evaluate these species with immense medicinal importance for their bioactive contents depending upon their different ploidy levels. The present study is the first attempt to carry out the investigation of total phenol, total flavonoid and gallic acid content in different cytotypes of *A. aspera* Linn. and *A. bidentata* Blume.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Collection of plant material

The healthy plants of *A. aspera* Linn. and *A. bidentata* Blume were collected from different localities in western Himalaya of India (table 1). Identification of the specimens was done at Botanical Survey of India, Dehra Dun, India. Voucher specimens have been deposited in the Herbarium, Department of Botany, Punjabi University, Patiala (PUN).

Table 1: Chromosome number, ploidy, locality with altitude and accession number (PUN) of different cytotypes of *Achyranthes aspera* Linn and *Achyranthes bidentata* Blume from western Himalaya, India

Taxa	Chromosome number (2n)	Ploidy	Locality with altitude (m)	Accession number (PUN)
<i>A. aspera</i> Linn.	42	Hexaploid	Tathal (Himachal Pradesh), 1100 m	59410
<i>A. aspera</i> Linn.	84	Dodecaploid	Dheera (Himachal Pradesh), 500 m	59411
<i>A. bidentata</i> Blume	42	Hexaploid	Dharamkot (Himachal Pradesh), 2100 m	58572
<i>A. bidentata</i> Blume	84	Dodecaploid	Rehlu (Himachal Pradesh), 950 m	58575

Chemicals and reagents

Acetic acid (Fisher Scientific), chloroform (Merck), ethanol (Changshu Yangyuan Chem), acetocarmine (BDH), Folin-Ciocalteu reagent (Loba Chemie), anhydrous Na_2CO_3 (S D Fine Chem), NaNO_2 (Sarabhai M Chemicals), AlCl_3 (S D Fine Chem) and NaOH (Loba Chemie) used were of analytic grade. Methanol (Merck), gallic acid (HiMedia), quercetin (Sigma-Aldrich), orthophosphoric acid (Loba Chemie) and acetonitrile (Merck) used were of HPLC grade.

Meiotic analysis

For meiotic analysis, the young floral buds of suitable size were fixed in Carnoy's fixative (6 alcohol: 3 chloroform: 1 acetic acid v/v/v) for 24 h and then preserved in 70% alcohol at 4 °C until use. For the cytological studies, anthers were squashed in 2% acetocarmine. A number of slides were carefully examined for chromosome counts. Photomicrographs of chromosome counts were made from freshly prepared slides using 80i Eclipse Microscope.

Extract preparation

The leaves of the selected plants were washed thoroughly and air dried in shade at room temperature. The dried leaves were ground into a coarse powder with a mechanical grinder and stored in air tight containers at room temperature for further use. 1 g powder of each cytotype was suspended in 50 ml methanol for 48 h at room temperature with occasional stirring. After 48 h, methanol extract was filtered with Whatman no. 1 filter paper. The filtrate was saved and allowed to dry at 37 °C in an incubator for complete evaporation of methanol. The whole process was repeated three times and finally blackish-green coloured, concentrated leaf extract was obtained. Dried extract was weighed and dissolved in methanol to make a final concentration of 100 mg/ml of extract and stored in the refrigerator until further use.

Determination of total phenols

Total phenol content determination was performed by using a modified Folin-Ciocalteu reagent method [9]. Folin-Ciocalteu reagent was diluted to 10 fold with double distilled water. 0.1 ml of methanol extract of leaves was mixed with 7.9 ml of double distilled water. Then, 0.5 ml of diluted Folin Ciocalteu reagent was added and incubated for 3 min at room temperature. After that, 1.5 ml of 20% of anhydrous Na_2CO_3 (w/v) was added and mixed thoroughly. The mixture was incubated at room temperature for 2 h. The absorbance

of the sample was recorded at 765 nm using spectrophotometer (Shimadzu, UVmini-1240 UV-VIS Spectrophotometer) against a blank containing double distilled water instead of leaf extract. The experiment was conducted in triplicate. The total phenol content was determined as mg gallic acid g^{-1} phenol using the standard curve.

Determination of total flavonoids

Total flavonoid content was determined by the method proposed by Kim *et al.* [10] with minor modifications. 1 ml of methanol extract of leaves was mixed with 4 ml of double distilled water. Then, 0.3 ml of 5% NaNO_2 (w/v) was added and incubated for 5 min at room temperature. Later, 0.3 ml of 10% AlCl_3 (w/v), 2 ml of 1 M NaOH and 2.4 ml of double distilled water was added. The mixture was incubated up to 30 min at room temperature and absorbance was measured at 510 nm using spectrophotometer (Shimadzu, UVmini-1240 UV-VIS Spectrophotometer). The experiment was performed in triplicate. The total flavonoid content was determined as mg quercetin g^{-1} flavonoid using the standard curve.

RP-HPLC conditions

Reverse phase-high performance liquid chromatography (RP-HPLC) was used for the detection of gallic acid. RP-HPLC was performed by modifying the method proposed by Rakesh *et al.* [11]. HPLC (Shimadzu) C-18 column with dimensions 250 mm x 4.6 mm and particle size 5 μm was used. The column temperature was maintained at 30 °C. Mobile phase used was 0.01% (v/v) orthophosphoric acid: acetonitrile (98:2 v/v) with a flow rate of 1 ml/min. The injection volume was 20 μl and detecting wavelength was 272 nm. The mobile phase was filtered through a 0.45 μm membrane filter.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Chromosome number

The meiotic analysis was carried out on different populations of *A. aspera* and *A. bidentata* from western Himalaya, India. The existence of two different chromosome counts of $2n=42$, 84 (fig. 1) was observed in both the studied species of *Achyranthes*. The species are hexaploid ($2n=42$) and dodecaploid ($2n=84$) based on base number $x=7$ [12]. The present chromosome counts are in conformity with the earlier reports from India and elsewhere [13-38]. However, varied chromosome reports have also been reported earlier for *A. aspera* i.e. $2n=14$, 36, 48 and 96 [39-41] and *A. bidentata* i.e. $2n=34$, 35, 36, 38 [36, 42].

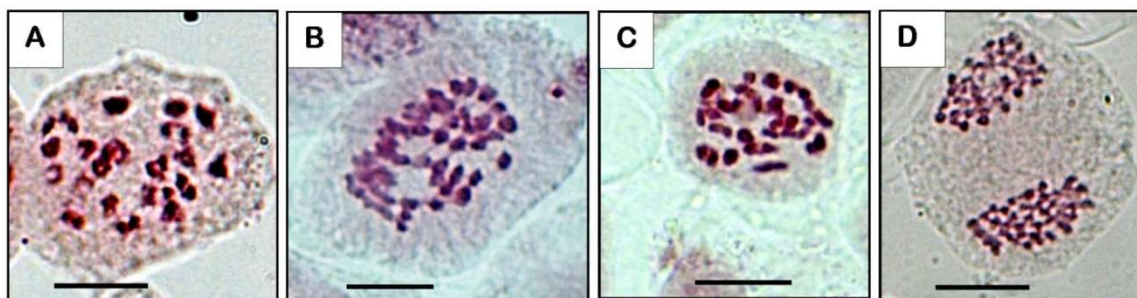


Fig. 1: A-B: *Achyranthes aspera* Linn.: A. A PMC at metaphase-I showing 21 bivalents, B. A PMC at metaphase-I showing 42 bivalents; C-D: *Achyranthes bidentata* Blume: A PMC at diakinesis stage showing 21 bivalents, b. A PMC at metaphase-II showing 42:42 distribution of chromosomes. Scale bar=10 μm

Phenol and flavonoid estimation

The amount of phenol and flavonoid contents in leaf extracts of *A. aspera* and *A. bidentata* were estimated by spectrophotometric method. Gallic acid was used as a standard compound and total phenolic content was expressed as mg gallic acid g^{-1} using the equation based on the calibration curve (fig. 2): $y=0.0007x$, $R^2=0.9946$, where y is an absorbance and x is mg gallic acid g^{-1} .

The total flavonoid content was expressed as mg quercetin g^{-1} using the straight line equation based on the calibration curve of quercetin standard (fig. 3): $y=0.0006x$, $R^2=0.9865$, where y is an absorbance and x is the mg quercetin g^{-1} .

Total phenol and flavonoid contents of hexaploid cytotypes of both the species of *Achyranthes* are higher as compared to dodecaploid cytotypes of respective species (table 2).

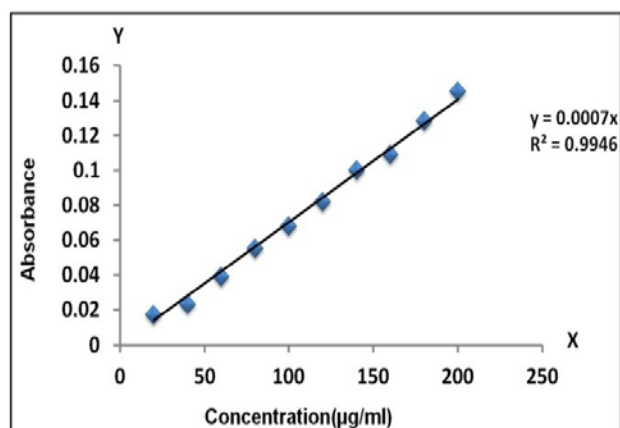


Fig. 2: Calibration curve for gallic acid

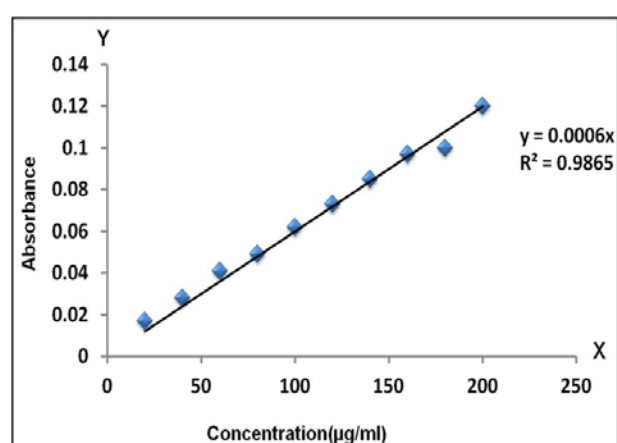


Fig. 3: Calibration curve for quercetin

Table 2: Total phenol and flavonoid content in leaf extract of hexaploid and dodecaploid cytotypes of *A. aspera* Linn. and *A. bidentata* Blume

Species	Cytotypes	Total phenol content (mg/g)	Total flavonoid content (mg/g)
<i>A. aspera</i> Linn.	Hexaploid	9.16±0.84	78.36±1.63
	Dodecaploid	7.86±0.08	70.20±1.81
<i>A. bidentata</i> Blume	Hexaploid	11.93±0.59	115.92±1.32
	Dodecaploid	9.46±0.75	107.76±0.94

Data expressed as mean±SD [n=3]

Phenolic compounds, broadly distributed in the plant kingdom, are a major class of bioactive components. Phenols and flavonoids have drawn increasing attention due to their marked effects in the prevention of various diseases as these possess diverse biological activities, for instance, antioxidant [43], antitumor [44], antiulcer [45], anti-inflammatory [43, 46] and antidepressant activities [47, 48].

Earlier, different leaf extracts of *Achyranthes* have been evaluated for different biological activities including antimicrobial activity [49, 50], anti-inflammatory activity [51], wound healing activity [52], anti-depressant effect [53], cancer chemo preventive activity [54], antinociceptive activity [55], analgesic activity [56], antifertility activities [57], anti-oxidant activity [58] and diuretic activity [59].

Screening of different phytochemical components from leaf extract has also been done earlier [50, 60-62]. However, no report till date is available on the characterization of phenolic constituents in the leaves of *A. aspera* and *A. bidentata* having different ploidy level. The present attempt has been carried out to find out the variation in a

number of phenolic constituents with variation in ploidy of the plant. In the present investigation, it has been observed that the plants of *Achyranthes aspera* and *Achyranthes bidentata* with the lower ploidy level i.e. hexaploids possess higher amount phenol and flavonoid constituents in the methanol extract of leaves as compared to its dodecaploid counterparts.

Further, RP-HPLC analysis was performed with the purpose of identifying and quantifying one of the phenolic compound i.e. gallic acid. Identification was performed by comparison of their retention's time and UV absorption spectrum with those of the standards. Five-point calibration curve of a standard sample of gallic acid is given in fig. 4. Fig. 5 shows the chromatograms obtained from the RP-HPLC separation of gallic acid with methanol extracts of different studied cytotypes of *A. aspera* and *A. bidentata*. Results revealed a considerable phytochemical (gallic acid) variation in the studied cytotypes of *A. aspera* and *A. bidentata* (table 3). Higher concentration of gallic acid is present in dodecaploid plants of *A. aspera* and *A. bidentata* as compared to hexaploid counterparts.

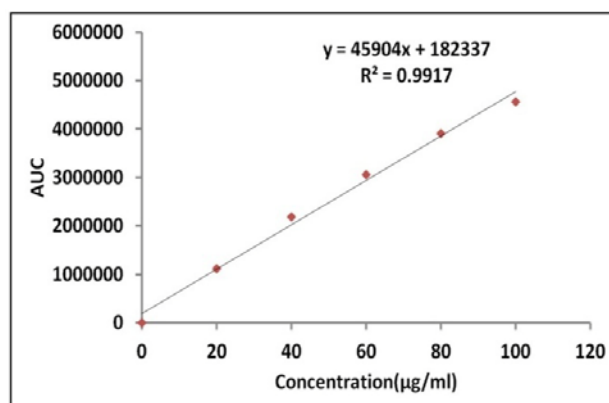
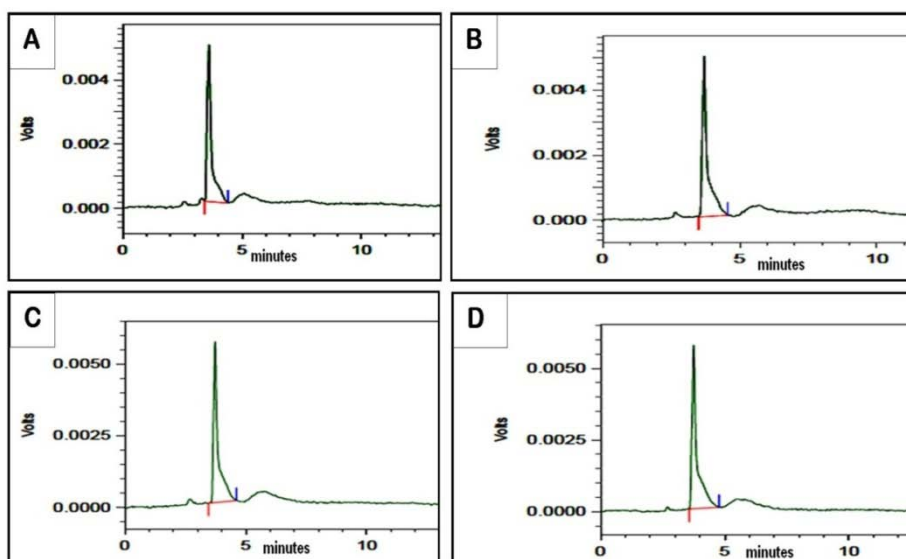


Fig. 4: Calibration curve for gallic acid

Fig. 5: RP-HPLC chromatograms of methanol extracts of leaves of A. Hexaploid cytotype of *Achyranthes aspera* Linn., B. Dodecaploid cytotype of *Achyranthes aspera* Linn., C. Hexaploid cytotype of *Achyranthes bidentata* Blume, D. Dodecaploid cytotype of *Achyranthes bidentata* Blume. Chromatograms show gallic acidTable 3: Gallic acid content in the leaf extract of hexaploid and dodecaploid cytotypes of *A. aspera* Linn. and *A. bidentata* Blume

Species	Cytotypes	Gallic acid (mg/g)
<i>A. aspera</i> Linn.	Hexaploid	1.01±0.01
	Dodecaploid	1.04±0.02
<i>A. bidentata</i> Blume	Hexaploid	1.22±0.05
	Dodecaploid	1.34±0.03

Data expressed as mean±SD [n=3]

Gallic acid is a poly phenolic compound and chemically known as 3, 4, 5-Trihydroxybenzoic acid. It is extensively used as a dietary herbal supplement as occurs in many plant materials in the form of esters, free acids, catechin derivatives and hydrolysable tannins. Gallic acid is evaluated for various biological activities including antioxidant, antimicrobial, anticancer, cardioprotective and neuroprotective [63-67]. In addition, no report till date is reported for the determination of gallic acid in different cytotypes of *A. aspera* and *A. bidentata*.

CONCLUSION

Present investigation revealed that *A. aspera* Linn. and *A. bidentata* Blume plants show significant intraspecific variability in their total phenol, total flavonoid and gallic acid contents which may be accredited to the genotype of these species. The variation observed in presently studied bioactive constituents could be considered as an

imperative factor for herbal formulation as the efficiency of the herbal remedy may be subjective to the type of genotype used for its preparation. Additionally, it recommends that there is a requirement for the selection of superior genotypes of these species of *Achyranthes* before recommending the same for therapeutic purpose and conservation.

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AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

Saggoo MIS provided guidance and critical review. Lovleen researched and wrote this manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final version of this study.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

There is no conflict of interest among the authors

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