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Review Article

**PSORALEA CORYLIFOLIA L. (BAKUCHI): A
COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW ON PHARMACOGNOSY,
PHYTOCHEMISTRY, PHARMACOLOGY, AND
THERAPEUTIC POTENTIAL IN SKIN DISORDERS**V.Alekhyia*¹, S.Udaya Lakshmi², V.Sai kishore³

1. Research Student, Department of Pharmaceutics, Bapatla college of Pharmacy, Bapatla-522101 .
2. Research Student, Department of Pharmaceutics, Bapatla college of Pharmacy, Bapatla-522101
3. Research Scholar, Department of Pharmaceutics, Bapatla college of Pharmacy, Bapatla-522101.

Abstract:

Psoralea corylifolia L. (commonly known as Bakuchi or Babchi) is a well-documented medicinal plant in Ayurveda, Unani, and Chinese medicine, primarily recognized for its therapeutic role in dermatological conditions, including psoriasis, vitiligo, and leprosy. The seeds and other plant parts are rich in furanocoumarins, flavonoids, meroterpenes, and essential oils, which contribute to its diverse pharmacological actions such as antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antitumor, and hepatoprotective properties. This review aims to provide an updated and comprehensive understanding of P. corylifolia by discussing its botany, traditional uses, phytochemical composition, extraction methods, pharmacological studies, and clinical applications. It is an annual herb of the genus Psoralea in the family Fabaceae, and its mature fruit can be used medicinally as a precious medicinal herb to tonify muscles and bones. With the deepening of research, its applications to various industries, including food, agriculture, and cosmetics, with products being developed in countries such as Vietnam, India, and Japan. PCL and related products have demonstrated therapeutic effects, such as antiosteoporosis effects, estrogen-like effects, anti-inflammatory properties, neuroprotection, antitumor activity, and vitiligo treatment. The expression mechanisms of these pharmacological effects are closely related to the regulation of the immune system, the inhibition of oxidative stress, and the induction of apoptosis. This paper summarizes the latest research on the ethnobotany, phytochemistry, processing technology, pharmacology, and hepatotoxicity of PCL. Furthermore, bibliometric analysis was used to systematically analyze the research hotspots and trends in PCL, which have never been addressed in previous reviews of PCL. In the future, it will be necessary to focus on the active metabolites of PCL, analyze its targets and signaling pathway network to address potential toxicity and side effects in clinical applications, and further expand the potential application of PCL in medicine.

Corresponding author:

V.Alekhyia,
Department of Pharmaceutics,
Bapatla college of pharmacy,
Bapatla, Guntur (dt),
Andhra Pradesh-522101



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INTRODUCTION:

Medicinal plants form the backbone of traditional and modern medicine, and *Psoralea corylifolia* L. (Fabaceae family) is a prominent ethnomedicinal plant. Known as Bakuchi in Ayurveda and Bu Gu Zhi in Chinese medicine, it has been traditionally used for skin disorders such as vitiligo (Shvitra), psoriasis, eczema, and leprosy. The seeds contain bioactive constituents like psoralen, isopsoralen, bavachinin, bakuchiol, and corylifolin, which exhibit phototoxic and immunomodulatory effects. In recent decades, scientific interest has intensified due to its application in dermatology and oncology. However, despite extensive ethnopharmacological knowledge, modern research faces challenges in standardization, clinical validation, and safety evaluation¹.

Indigenous herbs are used as remedies against various diseases in the traditional system of medicine or in ethnomedical practices. For the past few decades, compounds from natural sources have been gaining importance because of the vast chemical diversity they offer. This has led to a phenomenal increase in the demand for herbal medicine in the last 2 decades. They are relatively safe, easily available, and affordable to the masses. These drugs have given important lead in drug research, resulting in the discovery of novel molecules²⁻³.

Dry fruit of leguminous plant *Psoralea corylifolia* Linn. (syn: *Cullen corylifolium* Linn.) is one of the most popular Traditional Chinese Medicine and officially listed in Chinese Pharmacopoeia. *P. corylifolia* is an annual herb growing throughout the plains of India. The plant is of immense biological importance, and it has been widely exploited since ages for its magical effect against several skin diseases, such as psoriasis, leukoderma, and leprosy⁴.

CLASSIFICATION: The plant classification details are given below

Kingdom: Plantae

Division: Angiospermae

Class: Dicotyledoneae

Order: Rosales

Family: Leguminosae

Subfamily: Papilionaceae

Genus: *Psoralea*

Species: *corylifolia* Linn.

Distribution/Habitat: It grows throughout the plains of India, especially in the semi-arid regions of Rajasthan and Eastern districts of Punjab, adjoining Uttar Pradesh. It is also found throughout India in Himalayas, Dehra Dun, Oudh, Bundelkhand, Bengal, Bombay, some valley in

Bihar, Deccan, and Karnataka. This plant is also widely distributed in the tropical and subtropical regions of the world, especially China and Southern Africa⁵.

Propagation And Cultivation: The Plant Thrives Well In Areas With Low To Medium Rainfall During The Summer Months and on a variety of soils ranging from sandy, medium loam to black cotton in dry tropical regions of India. The germination percentage can be considerably increased by sowing the seeds during summer, that is, March–April and leaving them in the heat of the soil. Mechanical puncturing of the seed coverings or presowing treatment with concentrated sulfuric acid for 60 min has also been found effective in breaking the dormancy of the seeds and increasing the germination percentage considerably⁶. The crop takes 7–8 months to reach maturity. As seeds continue to mature continuously, 4–5 pickings are usually taken between December and March. Clonal propagation of *P. corylifolia* through shoot tip and axillary bud culture is done. Survival rate on transfer to field was 95%.

Parts Used: Seeds, seed oil, roots, and leaves.

Description of the plant: It is a small, erect, annual herb growing up to 60–120 cm in height throughout sandy, loamy plains of Central and East India.



***Psoralea corylifolia* plant**

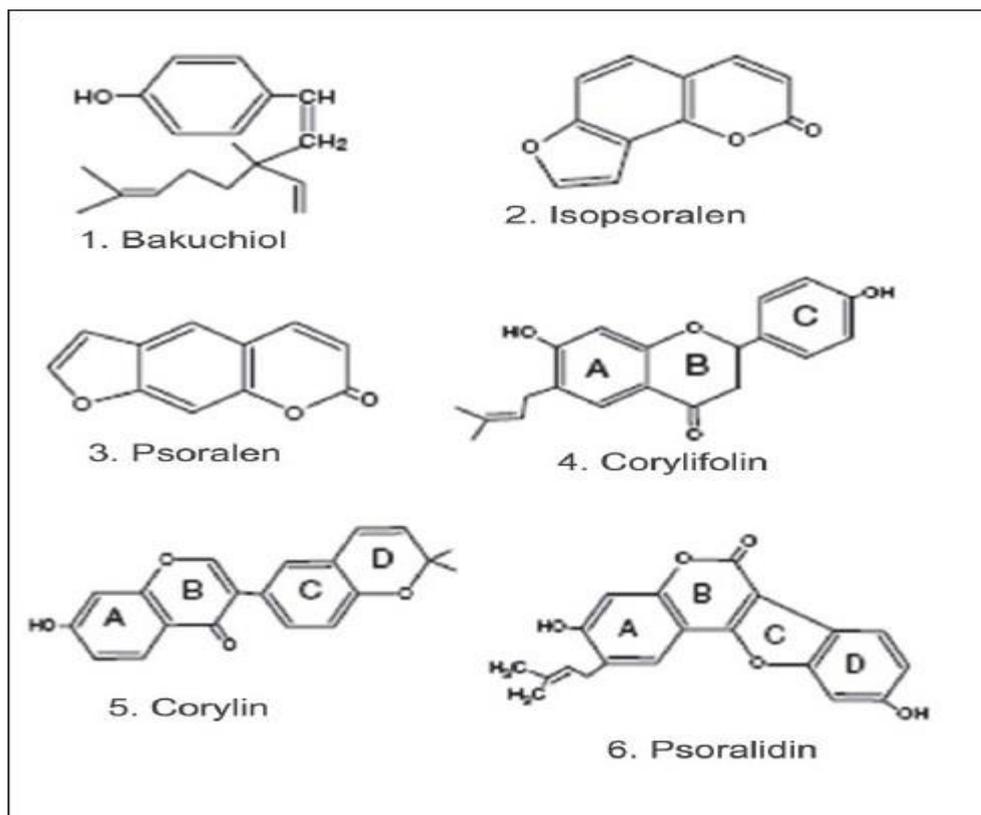
Psoralea corylifolia seeds : Seeds are brownish black in color, oblong, and flattened. Das, described the seeds as kidney shaped, 2–4 mm long,

2–3 mm broad, and 1–1.5 mm thick, hard, smooth, exalbuminous with straw-colored testa, with an agreeable aromatic odor and a pungent-bitter taste. They have grooved and gland-dotted stems. Leaves are simple, broadly elliptic, rounded, and mucronate at apex, clothed with white hairs on both surfaces, covered with numerous black dots, 5 main nerves springing from the base. Flowers are dense, corolla yellow or bluish purple, axillary, 10–30 flowered racemes. Flowering time is from August to December. Fruit is small, 5 mm long, subglobular, slightly compressed, pitted black, beaked without hairs, indehiscent, one-seeded pod, which is adhering to the pericarp⁷⁻⁸.

Microscopy: Transverse section of the fruit shows pericarp with prominent ridges and depressions, consisting of collapsed parenchyma and large secretory glands containing oleo-resinous matter; testa, an outer layer of palisade epidermis, layer of bearer cells, and 2–3 layers of parenchyma; cotyledons of polyhedral parenchyma and 3 layers of palisade cells on the adaxial side⁹.

Phytochemistry: The fruits of *P. corylifolia* consist of a sticky oily pericarp (12% of the seed), a hard seed coat and kernel. Chopra *et al* found that the seeds contain an essential oil (0.05%), a nonvolatile terpenoid oil, a dark brown resin (8.6%), and traces of alkaloidal substance. Dymock stated that the seeds contain 13.2% of extractive matter, albumin, sugar, ash 7.4%, and traces of manganese. Sen *et al* found that the seeds contained an unsaponifiable oil having the formula $C_{17}H_{24}O$, boiling between 180 and 190°C, a yellow acid substance $C_{40}H_{45}O_{10}$ from the alcoholic extract and a methyl glycoside having a m.p. 105–107°C, containing 4 (OH) groups. A pigment (probably a hydroxy flavone), a monoterpenoid phenol named bakuchiol ($C_{18}H_{24}O$, b.p. 145–147°C), a brown fixed oil (10%), and raffinose and coumarin compounds were also found in the seeds. The essential oil contains limonene, α -elemene, γ -elemene, β -caryophyllenoxide, 4-terpineol, linalool, geranylacetate, active component psoralen (identical with ficusin; $C_{11}H_6O_3$, m.p. 161–162°C), angelicin, and bakuchiol. Siddhiqui isolated

psoralidin ($C_{16}H_{14}O_4$; m.p. 315°C) and isopsoralen, along with the above constituents. Two new benzofuran derivatives—corylifonol and isocorylifonol—were isolated from the seeds. The seeds also contained flavonoids, such as corylifolean, corylifolin, corylifolinin, bakuchicin, psoralidin, isopsoralidin, bavachin, isobavachin, bavachinin, bavachalcone, isobavachalcone, 7-O-methyl bavachin, bavachromanol, corylin, corylidin, corylinal, 4-O-methyl bavachalcone, neobavaisoflavone, bavachromene, neobavachalcone, bakuchalcone, isoneobavachalcone, psoralone, isopsoralone, psoralenol, and psoralidin-2,3-oxide diacetate. Also astragalol, *p*-hydroxybenzoic acid, stigmasterol, triaconate, and β -sitosterol-D-glucoside were present in the seeds. Fixed oil of the seeds is viscous, bitter in taste, and on keeping deposits psoralen. Jois obtained considerable resin acids (21.5%) along with glycerides of oleic, stearic, palmitic, myristic, myristolic, linoleic, and linolenic acids from the petroleum ether extract of the seeds¹⁰. Two new coumestans—bavacoumestans A and B along with sophoracoumestan A were isolated from the seeds of *P. corylifolia*. Qiao and co-workers isolated 2 new benzofuran glycosides, namely, psoralenoside and isopsoralenoside, from the seeds, which could be easily converted into psoralen and isopsoralen on hydrolysis. 6-(3-Methylbut-2-enyl)-6'-7'-dihydroxycoumestan was obtained from the crude chloroform extract of the seeds of *P. corylifolia*. New isoflavone, corylinin, was also isolated from the plant. Other compounds present are β -D-glucosyl-*cis*-O-hydroxycinnamic acid; 2H-furo[3',2'-g][1]benzopyran-2-one, 2H-furo[2',3'-h][1]benzopyran-2-one; 8-oxo-8H-furo[2,3-f][1]benzopyran, mono-, di-, and triacylglycerols; $\Delta^1,3$ -hydroxybakuchiol; $\Delta^3,2$ -hydroxybakuchiol; and 6-prenylnaringenin. Leaves contain raffinose, psoralen, and isopsoralen. From the petroleum ether extract of *P. corylifolia* roots, diadzein, trilaurin, and coumesterol were isolated along with angelicin, psoralen, and sitosterol. Fruit contains corylinal and neobavaisoflavone, including the methyl esters of the 2 compounds, psoralenol, 5'-formyl-2',4'-dihydroxy-4'-methoxychalcone, and vachromanol



Structure of major constituents in *Psoralea corylifolia*

Uses: The most amazing aspect of this plant is that every part of it is useful. Roots, stems, leaves, seeds, and whatever blooms it has, all are used to treat a variety of skin problems, such as leukoderma, skin rashes, infections, and others. It is given the name "Kushtanashini" (leprosy destroyer). *P. corylifolia* is a very ancient remedy for leukoderma; it has been tried extensively not only by the practitioners of the Indian medicine but also by the followers of the Western system. The furanocoumarins, which contain psoralens, promote pigmentation¹¹. The powder is used by Vaidyas internally for leprosy and leukoderma and externally in the form of paste and ointment. Oil has a powerful effect on the skin *Streptococci*. It helps fight vitiligo, a disorder in which patches of skin lose their pigmentation. It is used in the inflammatory diseases, mucomembranous disorders, dermatitis, and edematous conditions of the skin. It also alleviates boils and skin eruptions. The plant has blood purifying properties. It is used to treat itching red papules, itching eruptions, extensive eczema with thickened dermis, ringworm, rough and discolored dermatosis, dermatosis with fissures, and scabies. It has shown to improve the color of skin, hair, and nails. Seeds are given in scorpion-sting and snake bite. Seeds are useful in bilious disorders. *P. corylifolia* extracts have found to possess antitumor, antihyperglycemic, antidepressant, and antioxidant activities. Its water

extract possesses antibacterial property. Seed and extract powder are used as diuretic, anthelmintic, laxative, and for healing wounds. Seeds are used as stomachic, stimulant, aphrodisiac, and diaphoretic. It is used in the treatment of various kinds of disorders, such as asthma, cough, nephritis, and others. The major components psoralen and isopsoralen have antitumor, antibacterial, and antiviral properties. It is a good hair tonic and hence used in alopecia areata and hair loss. It is an effective invigorant against impotence, menstruation disorder, and uterine hemorrhage. It is a cure for gynecologic bleeding. It is also useful to treat spermatorrhea and premature ejaculation. It shows coronary vasodilatory activity. The seeds act as deobstruent and heal ulcer, heart troubles, and cure blood disorders and elephantitis¹². The crude drug has been used for the treatment of enuresis, pollakiuria, painful feeling of cold in the waist and knees, and weak kidney. It is used in the treatment of debility and other problems related to kidney inefficiency, such as febrile disorders, low back pains, frequent urination, incontinence, and bed wetting. The root is useful in treating the caries of the teeth. *P. corylifolia* is used to promote bone calcification, making it useful for treating osteoporosis and bone fractures. Leaves are used to alleviate diarrhea. Fruit is bitter, helps to prevent vomiting, cures difficulty in micturition, used in treating piles, bronchitis, and anemias and improves complexion. *P. corylifolia* contains bavachinin, corylifolinin, and psoralen all of which

inhibit the multiplication of osteosarcoma and lung cancer cells. They are also useful in fibrosarcoma, malignant ascites, and leukemia. It has hepatoprotective properties. Essential oil is used as tonic and aphrodisiac. Seeds are sweet, bitter, acrid, and astringent. They impart vigor and vitality; improve digestive power and receptive power of mind. Seeds are antipyretic and alexiteric. *P. corylifolia* is a well-known nervine tonic in vata diseases. It is used in the treatment of intestinal amebiasis. The herb is cytotoxic, antimutagenic, and antirepellant.

Pharmacologic/Biological Activities: Essential oil has a distinct stimulatory action on voluntary muscles in high dilutions (1 in 100,000). It produced contraction of isolated rectus abdominis muscle of frog. Also, the isolated uterus of guinea pig showed tonic contractions. Well-marked contraction of the arterioles of the frog was seen on perfusion of oil. Petroleum ether extract of seeds produced a rise in the blood pressure on anesthetized dogs and caused stimulation of the intestinal smooth muscle. Corylifolinin isolated from the benzene extract produced coronary vasodilation and inhibitory action on HeLa cells and an estrogenic effect. The essential oil in dilution of 1 in 50,000 and 1 in 10,000 has been found to kill paramecia and streptococci within 15 and 10 min, respectively. The oil also showed selective antifungal activity. The fruit extract inhibits the growth of *Staphylococcus citrates*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Staphylococcus albus*, including strains resistant to penicillin and other antibiotics¹³. Psoralen shows strong inhibition of bacteria, such as *Microsporium canis*, *Microsporium gypseum*, *Trichophyton rubrum*, *Trichophyton mentagrophytes*, *S. aureus*, *Candida albicans*, *Escherichia coli*, *P. aeruginosa*, and others. Bakuchiol possesses DNA polymerase inhibitory activity. The glucoside of the isoflavonoid, diadzein, called diadzin, inhibits the enzymes alcohol dehydrogenase and NAD-dependent alcohol aldehyde dehydrogenase. These enzymes catalyze the oxidation of acetaldehyde, the primary product of alcohol metabolism. So, when diadzin is present, alcohol levels in the bloodstream increase and cannot be metabolized by the enzymes. An important consequence of this is that alcoholics soon lose their appetite for alcohol.

Clinical Studies: A clinical trial was carried out on 30 patients having vitiligo by the local application of an Ayurvedic preparation containing *P. corylifolia* as the main ingredient, along with oral administration of Gandhaka rasayana. Early cases of vitiligo showed maximum improvement within 1–10 months, whereas chronic cases having vitiligo of lip showed a poor response. Oral administration of 8-methoxypsoralen along with exposure of the

patient to sunlight for 5–30 min daily for 1–7 weeks gave very encouraging results. Results of another trial showed that the use of psoralen along with its chemical derivatives, namely, trioxalen, supplemented with exposure to sunlight is a more effective treatment for psoriasis. In one study, 49 patients underwent 6 months of *Psoralea corylifolia* treatment¹⁴. Of these patients, 14% were cured and another 19% regained pigmentation on at least two-thirds of the affected skin. A clinical trial was conducted in 76 patients in the age group 16–24 years with grade II and III acne vulgaris. They were advised to apply a topical preparation, Clarina cream, along with herbal Purim tablets containing *P. corylifolia* as one of the ingredients. Results revealed that patients with grade II acne had an excellent response in 56.25% and good response in 43.75%. Patients with grade III acne had an excellent response in 38.30% and good response in 56.66%. Thus, the combination of the 2 preparations is effective.

Mechanism of action for leukoderma: The drug appears to have a purely local action with a specific effect on the arterioles of the subcapillary plexuses, which are dilated so that the plasma is increased in this area. The skin becomes red and the melanoblasts (pigment-forming cells) are stimulated. In leukoderma, melanoblasts do not function properly and their stimulation by the drug leads them to form and exudate pigments, which gradually diffuse into the white leukodermic patches. Also, the phytochemically induced covalent binding of the drug to pyrimidine bases is responsible for its therapeutic effect. The photoconjunction involves thymine dimer adducts on the opposite strands of DNA. Psoralen has been found to intercalate into DNA, where they form mono- and di-adducts in the presence of long wavelength UV light and thus are used for the treatment of hypo-pigmented lesions of the skin, such as leukoderma¹⁴.

Marketed formulations: Algushadi yoga, Sarvangasundari gutika, Bhallatakawaleha, Dhatrayawaleha, Shashanglekhadileha, Maheshwara ghrita, Ayorajodi lepa, Sashishekara vati, Brihatsomaraji taila, Mahatrinaka taila, Kandarpasara taila, Somaraji ghrita, Bawchi tel, Bawchi churna, Shwitra vati, Khadirarista, Mahamanjistha kvatha, and so on.

Suggested combinations: Manjistha, neem, kutki for skin conditions; nutmeg, haritaki for chronic diarrhea with cold symptoms and loose, watery stool; haritaki, gokshura for urinary frequency; ashwagandha and bala for reproductive imbalances; and pippali and ashwagandha for coughs. For vitiligo, powder of bakuchi seeds was administered with the decoction of Bibhitaka (*Terminalia bellirica* bark) and Kaakodumbara (*Ficus hispida*).

For ringworm, one part of tila (sesame seeds), mixed with bakuchi was prescribed. In leukoderma, bakuchi is mixed with haratala bhasma and applied externally.

Toxicity: When psoralen and its derivatives are used for sun-tanning, residual edema of the legs, and cutaneous damage may occur. In some cases, acute dermatitis with blistering, edema, and possibly renal complications have been noticed. Other side effects observed were nausea and vomiting, insomnia, malaise, loose motions, headache, mental depression, and hepatotoxicity. Extensive chromosome damage was produced in mammalian cells by psoralen treatment and high-intensity long wavelength irradiations; therefore, caution should be exercised in the use of psoralen and light therapy because this could lead to later malignancy. Long-term therapy has been found to affect eyes, liver, and immune system. A mixture of psoralen, isopsoralen, and imperatorin caused hypertrophy of liver, kidney, and spleen in rats at a daily dose of 2.5 mg/75 g for 60 days.

Precautions: Use with caution in pregnancy. Excessive UV therapy causes high pitta. It is not given to patients suffering from liver diseases, lupus erythematosus, hydroa porphyria, or other diseases associated with light sensitivity. It is advised to avoid spicy diet, salt, and late nights during bakuchi regimen. Milk, ghee, and butter should be consumed in the diet. Seed oil should be avoided on eyes, and it should be mixed with coconut oil before application, because it is thermogenic¹⁵.

Safety: No herb–drug interactions are known, but caution should be observed with external applications. The drugs in their prescribed doses may be considered safe.

CONCLUSION:

P. corylifolia is commonly found as herb on the way side and at waste places throughout India. The plant has been used since centuries in leukoderma, psoriasis, vitiligo, asthma, ulcers, kidney disorders, and as an aphrodisiac and an anti-inflammatory. It is reported to contain essential oil, coumarins, alkaloids, flavonoids, and terpenoids. Concentrated fruit and seed extract can be found in various herbal preparations that are in market today. The pharmacologic and clinical studies reported in the present review confirm the therapeutic value of *P. corylifolia*. It is an important source of various types of compounds with diverse chemical structures as well as pharmacologic properties. Presence of such a wide range of chemical compounds indicates that the plant could serve as a “lead” for the development of novel agents having

good efficacy in various disorders in the coming years.

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