



Review Article

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THERAPEUTIC EFFICACY OF ASHTABHAIRAVA MATHIRAI IN FEVER MANAGEMENT: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ashtabhairava mathirai is an herbomineral formulation used in the Siddha system. Its application in treating fever has been described in the Siddha Vaidhya Thirattu textbook. Hence, a review of the ingredients is essential. This review aims to critically assess the available literature on the indication of Ashtabhairava mathirai in treating fever, its therapeutic potential, and its mechanism of action. A comprehensive literature search was conducted across multiple databases, including Siddha literature. The ingredients of Ashtabhairava mathirai exhibit various pharmacological activities, such as antipyretic, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and antioxidant activity. The study concluded that the multiple actions of ingredients of Ashtabhairava mathirai which is used to treat the condition, fever. These findings support the traditional therapeutic value of Ashtabhairava mathirai in treating 64 types of fever.

Keywords: Ashtabhairava mathirai, Siddha, Antipyretic activity, Fever, *Suram*, Herbomineral

INTRODUCTION

The Siddha system of medicine is one of the oldest traditional medical systems, originating in south India and attributed to the ancient sages known as Siddhars. This holistic system emphasizes the balance of the three fundamental humors Vaatham (principle of movement), Pitham (principle of transformation), and Kabam (principle of structure), which are believed to govern the physiological and psychological functions of the body.^{1,2} In modern science, fever is a complex physiological response to infection or inflammation, characterized by an elevation in body temperature above the normal range of 36-37°C.³

As per Siddha text Maruthuvam Podhu, *Suram*, or fever, is treated as a distinct disease and is classified into 64 types according to humors. The main cause of fever, Theraiyar, states "Aamam" or "Seetham," which indicates a disruption in the normal function of the gastrointestinal tract. Other causes include wrong behavior, habitats, unhealthy food, constipation, and controlling 14 natural urges.⁴ The treatment of *Suram* (fever) in Siddha employs a unique and systematic approach. Initially, one of three cleansing methods is chosen based on the patient's vitiated humors: fasting, vomiting, or purgation. These methods help detoxify the body and restore balance. Following this initial detoxification, various herbal and Herbomineral formulations are prescribed, tailored to the specific type of fever as described in the Siddha texts. These formulations are designed to target the particular characteristics and underlying causes of each type of fever, ensuring a holistic

and individualized treatment plan.⁵ The Siddha literature has many formulations for treating fever. Ashtabhairava mathirai (ABM) is one of the recommended formulations in the Siddha Vaidhya Thirattu textbook indicated for 64 various types of fever.⁶

According to the Siddha system of medicine, Herbomineral formulations allow elemental metals to be transformed into metallic salt complexes that are both assimilable and excretable. Herbomineral preparation offers stability, lower dosage requirements, easy storage, sustained availability, and reprocessing advantages over plant and animal-based drugs. It converts less bioavailable metals and minerals into more biocompatible forms through purification and preparatory procedures.⁷

This review discusses the ingredients of the formulation and their pharmacological actions. The primary goal is to evaluate the pharmacological activity and therapeutic efficacy of ABM in treating fever.

Preparation: Nervalam, 20.5 g, along with the remaining 2 to 13 ingredients, each 4.2 g, should be purified and powdered separately, powdered ingredients should be ground with breast milk, and lemon juice for 6 hours respectively, then again triturate with Poduthalai juice, Karisalai juice, Navalpattai juice each for 3 hours, respectively, and made into a pepper-sized pill and dried.

Table 1: Drug profile

Drug Name	Botanical Name	Taste	Potency	Division
Nervalam	<i>Croton tiglium</i> Linn	Bitter	Hot	Pungent ⁸
Rasam	Mercury	Sweet Sour Salty Bitter Pungent Astringent	Cold/ Hot	Depends upon adjuvant ⁹
Gandhagam	Sulphur	Bitter Astringent ⁸	-	-
Lingam	Red sulphide	No taste	Hot ⁹	-
Pooram	Calomel	Salty, Pungent	Hot	Pungent ⁹
Veeram	Mercuric chloride	Pungent, Salty	Hot	Pungent ⁹
Naabhi	<i>Aconitum ferox</i> Linn	Bitter	Hot	Pungent ⁸
Chukku	<i>Zingiber officinale</i> Roscoe	Pungent	Hot	Pungent ⁸
Milagu	<i>Piper nigrum</i> Linn	Bitter Pungent	Hot	Pungent ⁸
Thippili	<i>Piper longum</i> Linn	Sweet	Hot	Sweet ⁸
Sathikkai	<i>Myristica fragrans</i> Houtt	Astringent Pungent	Hot	Pungent ⁸
Sathipathiri	<i>Myristica fragrans</i> Houtt	Pungent Astringent	Hot	Pungent ⁸
Lavangam	<i>Syzygium aromaticum</i> Linn	Pungent	Hot	Pungent ⁸
Poduthalai	<i>Phyla nodiflora</i> Linn	Bitter Astringent	Hot	Pungent ⁸
Manjalkarisalai	<i>Eclipta prostrata</i> Linn	Bitter	Hot	Pungent ⁸
Naaval	<i>Syzygium cumini</i> Linn	Astringent	Hot	Pungent ⁸
Elumichai	<i>Citrus limon</i> Linn	Sour	Hot	Pungent ⁸

Table 2: Scientific review of Herbal ingredients of ABM

Botanical Name	Phyto Constituents	Pharmacological Activity
<i>Croton tiglium</i> Linn	Croton oil, Tiglic acid, Crotonic acid, Palmitic, Myristic acid, Crotonol, Lauric acids, Glycerides of stearic ¹⁰	Antinociceptive effect Gastrointestinal activity Haemagglutinating activity ¹⁰
<i>Aconitum ferox</i> Linn	Pseudo-aconitine, Aconitine, Picroaconine, Aconine, Benzoylaconine, Homo-napelline ¹⁰	Antipyretic activity ¹⁰
<i>Zingiber officinale</i> Roscoe	Gingerol, Shogaol, Zingerone, Gingerine, Gingiberol ¹¹	Antioxidant activity Anti-inflammatory activity Antimicrobial activity Anticancer activity Antiemetic activity ¹¹
<i>Piper nigrum</i> Linn	Piperine, Piperamide, Piperidine, Sarmenosine, Sarmentine, Trichostachine ¹²	Anti pyretic activity Anti-inflammatory activity Antidiarrheal effect Carminative activity Immunomodulatory Anticancer activity Antioxidant activity Antimicrobial activity ¹²
<i>Piper longum</i> Linn	Piperine, Piperlonguminine, Piperidine, Pellitorine, Pipernonaline, Asarinine, Bisabolene, Pentadecane ¹³	Antibacterial activity Antimicrobial activity Antiamoebic activity Antiplatelet activity Immunomodulatory activity Antiasthmatic activity Antitumor activity Neuroprotective activity Anthelmintic activity ¹³
<i>Myristica fragrans</i> Houtt	Myristicin, Eugenol, Elemicin, and Safrole ¹⁴	Antibacterial activity Antifungal activity Antioxidant activity ¹⁴
<i>Syzygium aromaticum</i> Linn	Oleanolic acid, Kaempferol, Eugenol, Quercetin, Gallic acid, Crategolic acid, Beta-Caryophyllene, Stigmasterol, Bicornin, Eugenitin, Gallic acid ¹⁵	Antiproliferative effect in liver cirrhosis, Antioxidant activity Anticancer activity Anti-inflammatory activity Antimicrobial activity Antiprotozoal activity Antithrombotic activity Antiulcer activity ¹⁵

<i>Citrus limon</i> Linn	Flavanones: Eriodictyol, Hesperidin, Hesperetin, Naringin, Eriocitrin, Neohesperidin, Neohesperidin Flavones—apigenin, Diosmin, Diosmetin, Homoorientin, Luteolin, Orientin, Vitexin Flavonols—Quercetin, Isoramnethin, Limocitrin, Rutoside, Spinacetin ¹⁶	Anti-inflammatory activity Antibacterial activity Antioxidant activity Anticancer activity ¹⁶
<i>Phyla nodiflora</i> Linn	Piperolein B (2E,4E)-N-isobutyl-2,4-decadienamamide, Piperine, Piperamine, Piperamide, Pipericide, Piperonal, Sarmentosine ¹⁷	Anti-inflammatory activity Antidiarrheal activity Antimicrobial activity ¹⁷
<i>Eclipta prostrata</i> Linn	Wedelolactone, Demethylwedelolactone, Demethylwedelolactone glucoside ¹⁸	Hepatoprotective activity Analgesic activity Anti-inflammatory activity Antioxidant activity Immunomodulatory Antimicrobial activity Antimalarial activity Anticancer activity Anti-ulcer activity ^{18,19}
<i>Syzygium cumini</i> Linn	Oleanolic acid, Myricyl alcohol, β -sitosterol, Ellagic acid Eugenia-triterpenoid-A, Myricetin, Eugenia-triterpenoid-B, Pentacyclic triterpenoid-Betulinic acid, Pentacyclic triterpenoid-Friedelin ²⁰	Diuretic activity Anti-inflammatory activity

Table 3: Scientific review of mineral ingredients in ABM

Ingredients	Previous Scientific studies
Sulphur (Gandhagam)	Anti-Microbial activity ²¹
Cinnabar (Lingam)	Antipyretic activity Anti-inflammatory Analgesic activity ²² Neuroprotective activity ²³
Calomel (Pooram)	Antipyretic activity Anti-inflammatory activity ⁷
Mercuric chloride (Veeram)	Antibacterial effect ²⁴

DISCUSSION

Based on existing research publications, the ingredients of ABM support its traditional use in treating fever. Previous studies have demonstrated that ABM exhibits potent antimicrobial activity.²⁵ Alkaloids present in *Aconitum ferox* Linn such as pseudo aconitine and aconitine possess antipyretic, analgesic, and anti-inflammatory activity. These compounds may act on the central nervous system to regulate body temperature and relieve pain.^{26,27} Piperine is an alkaloid present in *Piper nigrum* Linn, *Piper longum* Linn, and *Phyla nodiflora* Linn, demonstrating antipyretic and anti-inflammatory properties. It enhances the bioavailability of other compounds.²⁸ *Citrus limon* Linn and *Syzygium aromaticum* Linn are rich in flavonoids like hesperidin, quercetin, and kaempferol. Flavonoids are well known for their anti-inflammatory and antioxidant activities, which help reduce fever and alleviate associated symptoms.²⁹ Tannins and phenols are abundant in the *Piper nigrum* Linn and the *Eclipta prostrata* Linn. Tannins have astringent properties that reduce inflammation, while phenolic compounds contribute to the overall antioxidant, antiviral, antimicrobial, and hepatoprotective properties aiding in the reduction of oxidative stress associated with fever.³⁰ Moreover, essential oils such as gingerol and shogaol have notable anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial effects, supporting the immune response and helping to lower the fever.^{31,32} The pharmacological activities of metal and mineral drugs, such as Calomel and Cinnabar exhibit antipyretic and anti-inflammatory activity. Sulphur provides a broad spectrum of antimicrobial effects.³³ These ingredients help in managing infection, a common cause of fever, by inhibiting the growth of bacteria, fungi, and viruses. The Cinnabar possesses analgesic properties that alleviate pain. The review of ABM underscores the intricate blend of phytochemicals and their synergistic effects. Alkaloids, flavonoids, tannins, phenols, and essential oils in the formulation offer a holistic approach to fever treatment by

combining antipyretic, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, analgesic, and antioxidant properties.

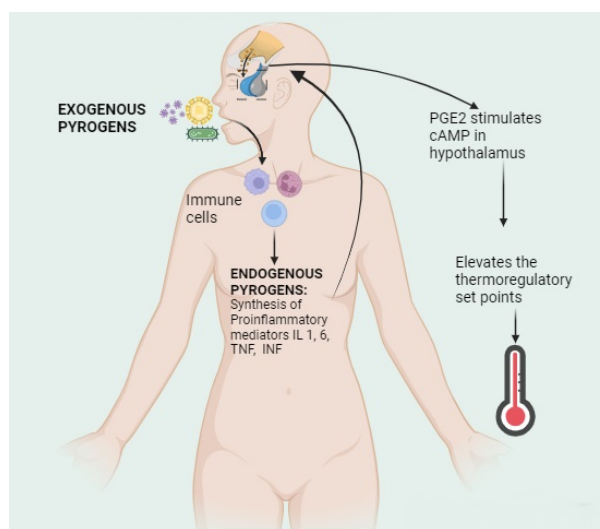


Figure 1: Pathophysiology of fever

The ingredients found in ABM possess pharmacological properties that directly target the mechanism of fever therefore, it may reduce the fever. *Aconitum ferox* Linn and *Piper nigrum* Linn, Calomel, and Cinnabar have antipyretic properties, possibly by inhibiting cyclooxygenase (COX) enzymes and reducing levels of prostaglandin E2 (PGE2), which can effectively lower body temperature and alleviate fever. Furthermore, anti-inflammatory ingredients such as *Zingiber officinale* Roscoe, *Piper nigrum* Linn, *Syzygium aromaticum* Linn, *Citrus limon* Linn, *Eclipta prostrata* Linn, *Syzygium cumini* Linn, Cinnabar,

and Calomel may help to reduce the production and activity of pro-inflammatory cytokines like TNF, IL-1, and IL-6, alleviating symptoms associated with fever and inflammation. In addition, the antimicrobial, antiviral, and antibacterial properties of *Piper nigrum* Linn and *Eclipta prostrata* Linn can hinder the growth and reproduction of pathogens, addressing the underlying cause of the fever and aiding in resolving infections. Lastly, the immunomodulatory effects of *Piper nigrum*, Linn, and *Eclipta prostrata* Linn in ABM may help regulate the immune response, boosting the body's ability to fight infections while preventing excessive inflammatory reactions, thus ensuring effective defense against pathogens without unnecessarily prolonging or intensifying fever.³⁴

In Siddha philosophy, the concepts of taste, potency, and division are crucial for maintaining balance among the three humors: vaatham, Pittham, and Kabam. According to the principles outlined in Table 1, major ingredients exhibit pungent, astringent, and bitter tastes, along with hot potency and pungent division. The dominant taste of the formulation significantly influences its overall nature and therapeutic effects. Siddha's taste philosophy emphasises that the pungent taste and hot potency are particularly effective in balancing the vitiated humors, specifically Vaatham and Kabam. Pungent taste, characterised by its sharp and spicy nature, stimulates digestion and circulation, while hot potency enhances metabolic activities. This combined effect helps to restore equilibrium in the humoral system of the body, promoting overall health and well-being. Thus, ABM might lower the body temperature, address the underlying cause of fever, and restore the natural equilibrium of humors.³⁵

CONCLUSION

As per the Siddha literature and a comprehensive review of its ingredients from various diverse sources, it is clear that ABM is effectively used to manage fever and its underlying causes. However, further preclinical evaluation is required to elucidate the specific mechanism through which ABM exerts its therapeutic effects, and clinical trials are necessary to confirm the therapeutic potential and ensure its safety.

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