

## Herbal and Botanical Review

## Therapeutic Application, Phytoactives and Pharmacology of *Tinospora cordifolia*: An Evocative Review

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**ABSTRACT** *Tinospora cordifolia* (Guduchi or Gurjo), a herbaceous vine or climbing deciduous shrub, is considered as an important medicine in the Ayurvedic system of medication, which is available in India, China, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. *Menispermaceae* is the family of this compound. *T. cordifolia* has a variety of properties to treat various ailments such as fevers, jaundice, diabetes, dysentery, urinary infections, and skin diseases. This compound has been subjected to many chemical, pharmacological, pre-clinical, or clinical investigations and some new therapeutic potential effects have been indicated. This review aims to summarize the critical information concerning in areas of chemical constituents, chemical structure, and pharmacokinetic activities such as anti-diabetic, anticancer, immune-modulatory, antiviral (especially *in silico* study about COVID-19), antioxidant, antimicrobial, hepatoprotective and its effect on cardiovascular and neurological disorders as well as rheumatoid arthritis. This traditional herb needs more experimental study on the clinical, pre-clinical study, and clinical efficacy of these compounds for the prevention and treatment of COVID-19 and needs large-scale clinical studies to prove the clinical efficacy of this compound, especially in stress-related diseases and other neuronal disorders.

**KEYWORDS** *Tinospora cordifolia*, Guduchi, *menispermaceae*, pharmacology

*Tinospora cordifolia* (Guduchi) is an important medicine in the Ayurvedic system of medication and is found in numerous classical texts for the treatment of various disorders such as jaundice, fever, skin diseases and diabetes.<sup>(1)</sup> *T. cordifolia* is a large, green glabrous, deciduous herbaceous plant. It belongs to the *Menispermaceae* family.<sup>(2)</sup> *T. cordifolia* is spread throughout India and China. Guduchi is the Hindi name of *T. cordifolia*, and it is a Hindu mythological term that refers to the heavenly elixir which is maintained the body in old age and helps to make it young. *T. cordifolia* is commonly known as Amrita, Guduchi Madhuparni, Amritavalli, Chinnobhava, Guduchika, Vatsadani, Kundalini, Chakralakshani, Gurja, Giloe, Tantrika, Gulancha, Thippateega, Amrutavalli, Garo, Galac, Amrita, Gilo, Gulvel, Guluchi, Chittamrutu, Gilo, Seendal Siddhilata, Amarlata, Heartleaf moonseed, Seendil kodi, and *Tinospora*.<sup>(3)</sup> *T. cordifolia* is a common climbing shrub found in the tropical deciduous forest of south Indian peninsular plains. The plant has been reported to contain tinosporin, columbin, tinosporin acid, and berberine. It is well-reputed in the traditional system of medicine to treat various ailments.<sup>(4)</sup> *T. cordifolia* is a deciduous herbaceous vine shrub with greenish-yellow typical flowers. This type of plant is found at

higher altitudes. Male or female flowers are formed on separate branches. Female flower are solitary while male flowers are clustered. Cultivation of *T. cordifolia* flowers expands over summers and winters, mostly in the tropical parts of plants climbing to an altitude of 300 m in India and China. Various active constituents are derived from the *T. cordifolia* plant like diterpenoid lactones, alkaloids, glycosides, steroids, and aliphatics. These constituents are found in different parts of *T. cordifolia* plant, including whole plant, root, and stem (Table 1). Recently, this plant was reported on various activities like anti-periodic, immunomodulatory, anti-diabetic, anti-leprotic, anti-inflammatory, anti-spasmodic, antioxidant, anti-arthritis, anti-allergic, anti-malarial, anti-stress, anti-neoplastic activities and have

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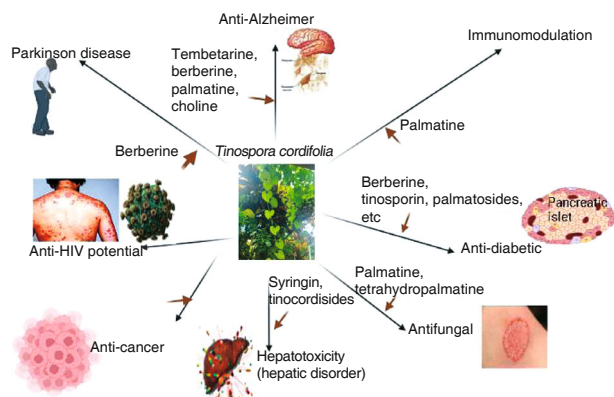
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**Table 1. *T. cordifolia* Chemical Constituents**

Plant common name & biological source	Parts	Chemicals constituents
Gurjo Heart-leaved moonseed	Root	<b>Alkaloids:</b> tembetarine, magnoflorine, choline, tinosporin, isocolumbin, palmatine, tetrahydropalmatine
Guduchi Giloy <i>T. cordifolia</i>	Stem	<b>Alkaloids:</b> berberine, palmatine <b>Glycosides:</b> cordifolioside A, B, C, D, E, tinocordiside, furanoid diterpene glucoside, 18-norclerodane glucoside, tinocordifolioside, cordioside, palmatosides F, syringin, palmatosides C <b>Steroids:</b> hydroxy ecdysone, ecdysterone, makisterone A, giloinsterol <b>Sesquiterpenoid:</b> tinocordifolin
	Aerial part	<b>Steroids:</b> $\beta$ -sitosterol, $\delta$ -sitosterol
	Whole plant	<b>Diterpenoid lactones:</b> furanolactone, clerodane derivatives, tinosporon, tinosporides, jateorine, columbin <b>Aliphatic compound:</b> heptacosanol and octacosanol <b>Miscellaneous:</b> nonacosan-15-one, jatrorrhizine, tetrahydrofuran, cordifellone, tinosporidine, cordifol, N-trans-feruloyl tyramine as tinosporic acid, diacetate, giloinin, and giloin

protective properties against neurological disorders and hepatoprotective activities (Figure 1).<sup>(5)</sup>



**Figure 1. Schematics Representation of Active Constituents of *T. cordifolia* with Their Medicinal Value**

**Active Constituents of *T. cordifolia***

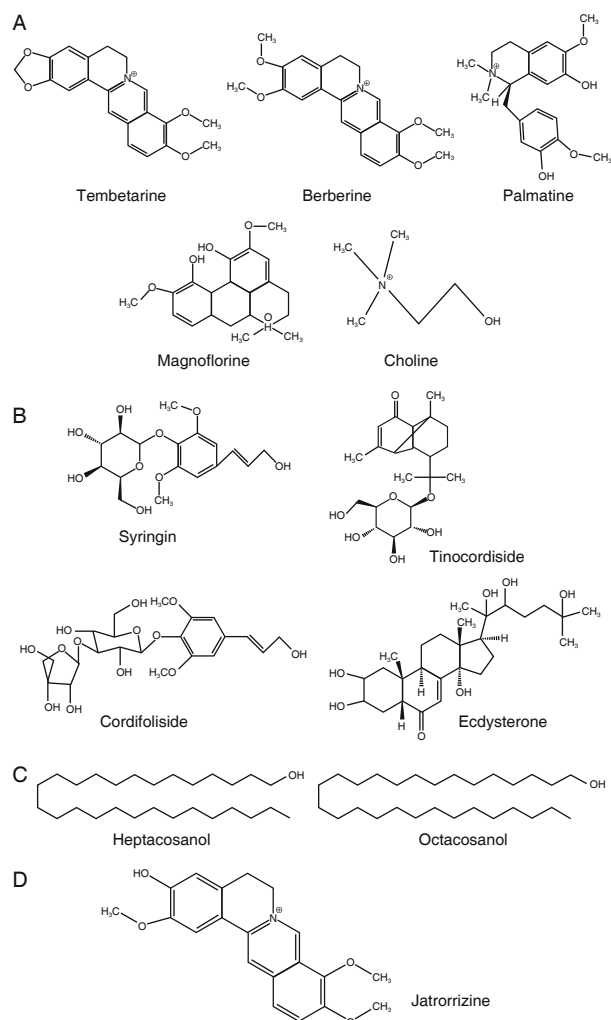
A variety of active constituents were isolated from *T. cordifolia* plant (Figure 2). All components belong to different drug categories such as glycosides, alkaloids, aliphatic compounds, steroids, sesquiterpenoid, polysaccharides, diterpenoid lactones, and phenolics. *T. cordifolia* plants leaves are fully rich with protein, and good for phosphorus and calcium. Different constituents reported include glycoside, alkaloids, bitter principles, crystalline components, etc. The bitter principles have been identified as columbin, chasmanthin, and palmarin. The alkaloid tinosporin, borapetoside F, borapetoside B, syringin, polypodine B 20,22-acetonide, angelicoidenol2-O-  $\beta$ -D-apiofuranosyl-(1 $\rightarrow$ 6)-  $\beta$ -D-glucopyranoside, secoisolariciresinol-9'-O-  $\beta$ -D-glucopyranoside, and pinoresinol-di-O-glycoside also have been isolated from *T. cordifolia*. The active constituents are diterpene compounds including

tinosporone, tinosporic acid, cordifoliosides A to E, the yellow alkaloid, berberine, giloin, crude giloininand, a glucosidal bitter principle as well as polysaccharides, including arabinogalactan polysaccharide. Picrotene and bergenin were also found in the plant.<sup>(6,7)</sup>

Extraction of *T. cordifolia* different parts has been carried out for extraction of lorophylls, carotenoids, phenols flavonoids and aminoacids.<sup>(8-10)</sup> Identified phytoconstituents are cordifolioside A, cordifolioside B, berberin and palmatine. These are the main phytoconstituents of *T. cordifolia*.<sup>(11,12)</sup>

**Pharmacological Activity of *T. cordifolia* Immunomodulators**

Dhama K, et al<sup>(13)</sup> investigated about immunomodulatory activity of *T. cordifolia*, as it has been used as an adjuvant in the treatment of tumours as immunotherapy. Palmatine is an active constituent of *T. cordifolia*, and it can reduce B-cell lymphoma-2 expression and stimulate characteristic apoptotic features related to constitutive expression of caspase-activated deoxyribonucleic acid in the nucleus and cytoplasm. Palmatine has a pharmacophore group of octacosanol (aliphatic alcohol) which exhibited angi-inhibitory and antimetastatic effects.<sup>(13)</sup> *T. cordifolia* downregulated vascular endothelial growth factor gene expression by inhibiting nuclear factor- $\kappa$ B (NF-  $\kappa$  B) then suppressed sprouting of new blood vessels and protected against neuroblastoma. Stem aqueous ethanolic extract (AEC) of *T. cordifolia* has the potential to restrain neuroblastoma cell proliferation via modulating expression of proliferating cell nuclear antigen and cyclin D1. *T. cordifolia* stimulated expression of mortalin and RelA subunit of NF-  $\kappa$  B with



**Figure 2. *T. cordifolia* Active Constituents**

Notes: A: alkaloids, uses: anti-Alzheimer, anticancer, anti-cholesterol and diabetes; B: glycosides, uses: antineoplastic, antioxidant, hepatoprotective & hypolipidemic, C: lipathic compounds, uses: food-flavoring and inhibiting tremor in essential tremor; D: miscellaneous, uses: promoting blood flow, mitotic activity, antimicrobial and antifungal activity

downregulation of B-cell lymphoma-extra large (Bcl-xl).<sup>(14)</sup>

### Hepatoprotective Activity

*T. cordifolia* water extract (TCE) intervention effectively reversed the excretion of vitamins, altered the excretion of metabolic intermediates of vitamins, and restored normal vitamin metabolism. TCE intervention normalized vitamin metabolism by reducing oxidative stress through antioxidant compounds present in it. Additionally, magnoflorine and columbin triggered liver regeneration through dopamine receptors and PPAR  $\alpha$  activation.<sup>(15)</sup> Furthermore, TCE enhanced glutathione synthesis and lipoamide levels, which decrease inflammation and were used fully in liver regeneration that retained vitamins. TCE also enhanced the uptake

of biotin and calcium. TCE ameliorated the effect of alcohol on vitamin metabolism in an alcoholic person due to its capability to fight oxidative stress, regenerate liver, expand intestinal absorption, and modulate lipid metabolism.<sup>(16)</sup>

### Antioxidant Activity

Water extract of *T. cordifolia* leaf and stem exhibited good antioxidant property. 2,2-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl (DPPH) is a stable free radical.<sup>(17)</sup> The *in vitro* study carried out on this radical was based on the measurement of scavenging ability of antioxidants towards stable radical DPPH. This radical reacts with suitable reducing agents, the electrons become paired off and the solution loses color stoichiometrically depending on the number of electrons taken up. *T. cordifolia* reduced the radical to the corresponding hydrazine when they react with hydrogen donors in antioxidant principles.<sup>(18)</sup> *T. cordifolia* inhibited or scavenged 2,2-azino-bis (3-ethylbenzotiazolin)-6-sulfonic acid radical and also reduced nitric oxide. *T. cordifolia* increased superoxide dismutase, reduced glutathione, glutathione-S-transferase, glutathione peroxidase and glutathione reductase.<sup>(19)</sup> *T. cordifolia* extract has phenolic compound that exert pro-oxidant effects by interacting with iron. O-phenanthroline quantitatively forms complexes with ferric ions which help to disrupt the presence of chelating agents. *T. cordifolia* extracts interfered with the formation of ferrous-O-phenanthroline complex, which shown that *T. cordifolia* extract has metal chelating activity. *T. cordifolia* extract has phenolics, flavonoids, and tannins constituents, which are responsible for antioxidant activity.<sup>(20)</sup>

### Anti-rheumatoid Arthritis Activity

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic inflammatory disease leading to joint destruction mediated by migration of CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells and macrophages infiltrating synovial tissue. TCE reduced spleen adherent cells, e.g., interleukin (IL)-1  $\beta$ , IL-6, IL-23, and tumor necrosis factor (TNF)  $\alpha$  and reduced draining lymph node cells (e.g., IL-17).<sup>(21)</sup> Study on stem extract of *T. cordifolia* showed that the pro-inflammatory cytokines were also reduced in synovial-infiltrating cells culture supernatants (e.g., IL-1  $\beta$ , IL-17, IL-6, and TNF  $\alpha$ ) and sera (e.g., IL-1  $\beta$  and IL-17) but not much change in levels of anti-inflammatory IL-10 and other cytokines. Thus, TCE altered the balance of pro- versus anti-inflammatory cytokines primarily by downregulating pro-inflammatory cytokines, particularly IL-17 and IL-1  $\beta$ . TCE-induced

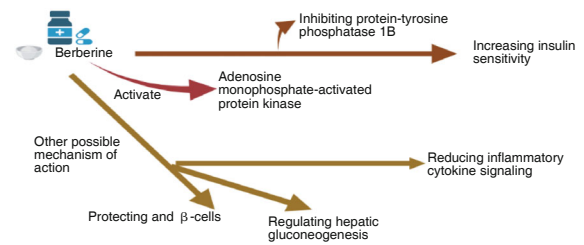
suppression of arthritis might be mediated in part by altering the chemotactic cellular migration of immune cells into the joints. TCE inhibits pro-inflammatory cytokines and chemokines along with the mediators of bone remodeling.<sup>(22)</sup> A statistically significant decrease in IL-17-producing T cells was observed, but that difference was primarily in IL-17<sup>+</sup>IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup> (double producer) cells of the spleen but not in IL-17<sup>+</sup> (single producer) cells in periphery (spleen) or target organ (joints). Nevertheless, the reduced frequency of IL-17<sup>+</sup>IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup> (double producer) cells correlates with reduced production of IL-17. TCE reduced the expression of receptor activator of nuclear factor- $\kappa$ B ligand (RANKL). TCE treatment reduced the osteoclastic mediators such as macrophage colony-stimulating factor and osteopontin.<sup>(23)</sup> TCE enhanced the mineralization of bone matrix on human osteoblast cells and proliferation of osteoblast cells. TCE might inhibit MMP-9 either by a direct effect on enzyme or by an indirect effect via inhibiting the key inducers of MMP-9. TCE reduced 3 of positive inducers of MMP-9, such as IL-6, IL-17, and RANKL.<sup>(24)</sup>

### Antidiabetic Activity

*T. cordifolia* is well explored in most available diabetes models in animals which were also substantiated in clinical subjects.<sup>(3)</sup> *T. cordifolia* constituents (berberine, palmatosides and palmetine) have highly anti-diabetic activity. *T. cordifolia* suppressed the glucose consumption efficiency which concludes the anti-diabetic activity is mediated through an insulin-dependent pathway through the activation of insulin reuptake tyrosine kinase and phosphatidyl inositol-OH-kinase. However, these inhibitors did not completely arrest the glucose consumption efficiency. *T. cordifolia* mediated its action majorly through insulin pathway and to some extent by other pathways like activated protein kinase, Ras-Raf-MEK-ERK, c-Jun N-terminal kinase, or peroxisome proliferator-activated receptors (Figure 3).<sup>(25)</sup> *T. cordifolia* constituents (alkaloids) are considered to share similar activity in mediating anti-diabetic properties. Palmatine and *T. cordifolia* improved Glut-4 expression, suppressed PPAR $\gamma$  (lipogenic gene) and simultaneously up-regulated PPAR $\alpha$  expression. The expression of PPAR $\alpha$  is downregulated by *T. cordifolin* treatment (Figure 3).<sup>(26)</sup>

### Anti-microbial Activity

*T. cordifolia* is effective at a lower concentration and higher volume with a maximum antibacterial activity (40  $\mu$ L at 2% concentration). The aqueous extracts



**Figure 3. Mechanism of Berberine as Hypoglycemic Agent**

of *T. cordifolia* exhibit effective antimicrobial activity against microorganisms.<sup>(27)</sup> Stem extract of *T. cordifolia* has secondary metabolites and the phytochemicals present in it such as quinones, polyphenols, alkaloids (berberine, palmatine), flavonoids, tannins, coumarins, terpenoids, lectins, and polypeptides.<sup>(28)</sup> *T. cordifolia* constituents such as quinones and flavonoids bind to adhesins form complexes with cell wall, terpenoids, polyphenols, and tannins cause membrane disruption and form metal ion complexes, thus inactivating the bacterial enzymes.<sup>(29)</sup>

### Anti-viral Activity

Berberine is the main constituent of *T. cordifolia*, and it was used as a natural dye. This constituent is helpful for staining heparin in mast cells. Berberine is relatively toxic parenterally but used orally for the treatment of numerous parasitic and fungal infections. Berberine,  $\beta$ -sitosterol, tetrahydropalmatine, octacosanol and choline have anti-viral property against severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).<sup>(30,31)</sup> Berberine reduced the cholesterol levels and  $\beta$ -sitosterol can be used in the inflammation. Octacosanol belongs alcohol category of "straight-chain aliphatic 28-carbon primary fatty alcohol" which is used in the health industry for nutritional supplements. Choline supports numerous vital bodily functions, including cellular growth and metabolism. A molecular docking study has proven that *T. cordifolia* (giloy) is an inhibitor for SARS CoV-2.<sup>(32)</sup> Berberine,  $\beta$ -sitosterol, octacosanol, tetrahydropalmatine, and choline are selected for 3CLpro targets I and II of main protease enzymes. The main chemical constituents of *T. cordifolia* (e.g. berberine and  $\beta$ -sitosterol) can be used as an anti-viral drug against SARS-CoV-2, and act like a good inhibitor towards SARS CoV-2 protein as compared to other inhibitors. The stem extract of *T. cordifolia* constituents are good inhibitors in regulating 3CL protease activity and provide good effects in controlling against virus replication and multiplication.<sup>(33)</sup>

### Antiarrhythmic Activity

Tembetarine and berberine are important constituents of *T. cordifolia*. These constituents are known as adaptogens, as they enhanced the resistance of body to physio-chemical, and biological stress and build energy. Arrhythmias produced by  $\text{CaCl}_2$  is severe and recalcitrant to manipulation, and high doses of antiarrhythmic agents have to be given to produce a significant effect.<sup>(34)</sup> Calcium concentration instigates a hyperpolarization of resting potential in cells of sinoatrial node and reduces the excitability of Purkinje cells due to a less negative value of the threshold potential.<sup>(35)</sup> *T. cordifolia* extract increased the effect as reflected by a progressive decrease in plasma calcium and sodium levels, and improved potassium levels at higher doses.<sup>(36)</sup> *T. cordifolia* normalized the arrhythmogenic calcium overload, reduced calcium-induced sodium levels, and enhanced anti-arrhythmic potassium levels.<sup>(37)</sup> The stem extract of *T. cordifolia* showed potent antiarrhythmic activity by normalization in PQRST waves as indicated by percentage of protection.<sup>(38)</sup>

### Neuroprotective Activity

Kosaraju, et al<sup>(39)</sup> investigated the neuroprotective activity of *T. cordifolia* ethanolic extract (TCEE) on 6-hydroxy dopamine-induced Parkinsonism.<sup>(39)</sup> The increased levels of dopamine by the treatment of TCEE are due to the reduced metabolism of dopamine or enhanced biosynthesis of dopamine by dopaminergic neurons of substantia nigra.<sup>(40)</sup> The increased dopamine levels by TCEE is furthered supported by anti-stress and anti-depression activity of *T. cordifolia* root extract in which dopamine levels were normalized after treatment. TCEE prevents dopaminergic neurodegeneration by decreasing iron-induced damage. Reduction in glutathione might impair  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$  clearance and improve OH radical's formation and produce oxidative stress. TCEE possess significant neuroprotection in 6-hydroxydopamine-induced Parkinson's disease by protecting dopaminergic neurons and reducing the iron accumulation.<sup>(41)</sup>

### Conclusion

This review discusses the pharmacokinetic properties, chemical constituent, and pharmacological and therapeutic effects of *T. cordifolia* as a promising herbal drug because of its safety and effectiveness. *T. cordifolia* is an important medicinal plant having various traditional importance as it is used in the

indigenous system of medicines like Ayurveda, Sidha, and Unani. Traditional practices have been proven by various experimental and research studies. This review illustrates the plant with tremendous potential in both healthcare and trade. Considerable work has been done to explore the pharmacological activity and medicinal uses of the plant. The plant has a various number of therapeutic applications viz. cardio-protective, diuretic, antidepressant, antiepileptic, neurodegenerative, antibacterial, antioxidant, antitussive, anti-HIV, immunostimulant, hepatoprotective, and anti-ulcerative. The major research studies were reported using extracts of the plant; still, the active principle process involved in these activities needs to be explored.

The safety profile analysis showed that *T. cordifolia* is a safe dose to use during pregnancy with caution. Thus, the above findings indicate that the traditional use of *T. cordifolia* has a logical and scientific basis in studies. *In silico* molecular docking approach provides insight into the screened molecules that might prove to be an effective inhibitor for SARS-CoV-2. Large-scale clinical studies are required to check the preclinical and clinical efficacy of these compounds for the prevention and treatment of SARS-CoV-2 and also need to prove the clinical efficacy of these agents, especially in stress-related diseases and other neurological diseases.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest concerning the review, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### Author Contributions

Ahsan R and Mishra A conceived and Badar B modified this manuscript, Ahsan R, Owais M and Mishra V have collected the literature. Ahsan R wrote the manuscript. Reviewers helped to revise the manuscript. All authors read and approved the manuscript.

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