



## A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE CONTROVERSY OF *ELAVALUKA* AN AYURVEDIC DRUG

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## ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is a traditional Indian system of medicine. In the present era, the world is looking towards herbal medicine because of its acceptability and safety. Medicinal plants constitute an effective source of Ayurvedic and another traditional system of medicine as well as modern medicine. About 80% of India's rural population depends on herbal medicines at the primary health care level. A large percentage of plants used in herbal industries are subject to controversy. The non-availability of plants, poor understanding, and parallel evolved knowledge systems are some of the reasons for this. The existing practices of the polynomial nomenclature system of Sanskrit, different perceptions in various communities, and vernacular equivalents are cumulative factors for controversy. *Elavaluka* is one of the controversial drugs used in many formulations like *Kalyanaka ghrita*, *Mahakalyanaka ghrita*, *Abhayaarista*, etc. *Elavaluka* is promoted in Ayurvedic medicine for its purported benefits in treating various ailments, including inflammatory conditions, anxiety, schizophrenia and respiratory disorders. However, its composition and mode of action need to be well-documented in scientific literature, raising concerns about its

safety and reliability. In conclusion, while *Elavaluka* remains popular in traditional Ayurvedic medicine, its controversial status necessitates further scientific scrutiny to address safety concerns and validate therapeutic claims effectively.

**Keywords:** Controversy, *Elavaluka*, Cumulative factors, Acceptability, Necessitates.

## INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a traditional Indian system of medicine. In the present era, the world is looking towards herbal medicine because of its acceptability and safety. Medicinal plants constitute an effective source of Ayurvedic and another traditional system of medicine as well as modern medicine. About 80% of India's rural population depends on herbal medicines at the primary health care level. A large percentage of plants used in herbal industries are subject to controversy. Non-availability of plants, poor understanding and parallel evolved knowledge systems are some of the reasons. The existing practices of the polynomial nomenclature system of Sanskrit, different perceptions in various communities, and vernacular equivalents are all cumulative factors for controversy. Plant-based medicines form an essential component of total medications available for treating multiple human and veterinary diseases. The increased demand and reduced availability have reportedly led to even adulterations of many plant-based formulations. Hence, a need has been felt to study the market and other associated processes such as market demand, supply, harvesting, processing end use, etc. This requires coordinated and focused research on these aspects of the medicinal value of all the plants and their actual uses so that the medicinal value of all the plants can be scientifically verified along with the documentation of traditional knowledge<sup>1</sup>.

*Elavaluka* is an aromatic drug mentioned in almost all *Samhita* and *Nighantu* for various diseases and formulations. Among these formulations is *Elavaluka*, a preparation that has sparked controversy among the medical community and regulatory bodies. Despite its popularity in traditional Ayurvedic practices, *Elavaluka's* journey through modern scrutiny has raised significant concerns regarding its safety, efficacy, and regulatory oversight.

### Material and methods

#### *Elavaluka*

**Botanical name** – *Prunus avium L.*

**Family**– Rosaceae

Eng. : Sweet Cherry

Hin. : Alubukhara, Aluvaalu, Gilaas, Aalubaalu

Kan : Chary hannu

#### **Nirukti** –

*एलवालुकम् - एलयति इति; 'इल् प्रेरणे' - 'il in inspiration' that it rolls like *Ela*.*

*एला इव वलति इति; 'बत् प्राणने' - It ignites the stomach fire. It gives life like cardamom.*

*ऐलेयः- इलायाः अपत्यम् इति - This is the son of cardamom.*

*सुगन्धिः- शोभनो गन्धोऽस्य इति - It has a beautiful smell. It has a fragrance.*

*हरिवालुकम् - हरिवर्ण वालुकम् इति - Green sand - green sand. or green ping sand.*

## SYNONYMS

Table no. 1: Synonyms as per different *Nighantu*.

Synonyms	<i>B P. Ni</i>	<i>Raja. N</i>	<i>Madanapala.N</i>	<i>Dhanwantari.N</i>	<i>Shodala.N</i>	<i>Kaiyadeva.N</i>
<i>Aileya</i>	+	-	-	-	-	+
<i>Sugandhi</i>	+	+	-	-	-	-
<i>Harivaluka</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Elalu</i>	+	-	-	-	-	-

Kapittha twak	+	+	-	+	+	+
Valuka	-	+	+	+	+	-
Elavaluka	-	+	+	+	+	+
Durvarnam	-	+	-	+	+	-
Drudham	-	+	-	-	+	-
Elahvam	-	+	-	-	-	-
Alukam	-	+	-	+	+	+
Prasaram	-	+	-	+	+	-
Elagandhikam	-	+	-	-	-	-
Guptagandhi	-	+	-	-	-	-
Elaphalam	-	+	-	-	-	-
Gandhakam	-	-	-	-	-	+
Kushtagandhi	-	-	-	-	-	+
Suvarna prasara	-	-	-	-	-	+

Distribution: The wild form of this species is often used as a stock for grafting cultivated varieties of cherry. The plant is found in Kashmir, Kumaon, and Himachal Pradesh. Indigenous in Europe—cultivated in northwestern India<sup>2</sup>.

**Morphology** - A deciduous shrub or small tree not produces root suckers.

Leaves—flaccid, more coarsely serrate.  
petiole – with 2 glands near the top.

Flower—white or pink in colour, flower buds not bearing leaves but with rather larger reflexed bud scales.

Fruit—nearly black, sweet, on peduncle up to 5 cm long.

**Part used**—roots stem bark.

### Properties and Action

Rasa – Kashaya

Guna – Laghu

Virya – sheeta

Vipaka – Katu

Karma—

Kaphaha-  
ra, Pittahara, Shukrashodhana, Vedanasthapana, Vama  
na, Kandughna, Kushtaghna etc.

Therapeutic uses – Kandu, Vrana, Chardi, Kasa,  
Murcha, Hrudroga, Krumi, Visha, Thrishna Etc.

### Chemical Constituents

Root Contains - volatile oil, Hydrocyanic acid, D-  
mandelonitril- $\beta$ -glucoside (prunasin).

Stem bark contains - D-mandelonitril- $\beta$ -glucoside (prunasin), D-mandelonitril- $\beta$ -gentiobioside dehydrogogonin 7-glucoside and chrysin 7-glucoside are main components. Tectochrysin, apigenin 5-glucoside, genkwanin 5-glucoside and neosakuranine are the minor components.

**Dose** - Churna (Powder): 1 to 3 g.

**Formulations** – *Abhayarishta*  
*Vidanagarishta*  
*Kalyanaka ghrita*  
*Mahakalyanaka ghrita*  
*Brihat chayagadi ghrita*  
*Muktadi Anjana*  
*Varavisaladi kashayam* etc.

### Classical Categorization

*Charaka Samhita* – *Sukrashodhana mahakashaya*<sup>3</sup>,  
*Vedanasthapana mahakashaya*<sup>4</sup>, *Kashaya skanda*.

*Shushrut Samhita* – *Lodhradi gana*<sup>5</sup>

*Bhavaprakasha* – *Karpuradi varga*<sup>6</sup>

*Nighantu Adarsh* – *Padmakadi varga*<sup>7</sup>

*Kaiyadeva Nighantu* – *Oushadha varga*<sup>8</sup>

*Madanpal Nighantu* – *Karpuradi varga*

*Raj Nighantu* – *Shathavahadi gana*<sup>9</sup>

*Shodhala Nighantu* – *Chandanadi varga*<sup>10</sup>

*Dhanwantari Nighantu* – *Chandanadi varga*



Image No-1 (*Prunus avium* Linn.)

In *Bhavaprakasha Nighantu*- एलवालुकमैलेयं सुगन्धि  
हरिवालुकम् ।

ऐलवालुकमेलालु  
कपित्थत्वच मीरितम् ॥  
शीतलं लघु ।

हन्तिकण्डूव्रणच्छर्दितृट्कासारुचिहृद्गुजः ॥

बलासविषपित्तास्तकुष्ठमूत्रगदक्रिमीन् ॥

In *Raja Nighantu* -  
हरिवालुकम् ।

प्रसरं दृढम् ॥

गुप्तगन्धि सुगन्धिकम् ।

द्विःसप्ताह्यमुच्यते ॥

कफवातनुत् ।

नाशयेद्रोबनं परम् ॥

In *Dhanwantari Nighantu* – एलवालुकमालुकं वालुकं  
हरिवालुकम् ।

स्याद्दुर्वर्णं प्रसरं दृढम् ॥

स्याच्छीतोऽत्यन्तं प्रकीर्तितः ।

ऽत्युप्रकण्डूकुष्ठत्रणान्तकृत् ॥

एलवालुकमालुकं बालुकं

एलवालुकं कपित्थं च दुर्वर्णं

एलागन्धिकमेलाद्धं

एलाफलं च विज्ञेयं

एलवालुकमत्युग्रं कषायं

मूर्च्छार्तिज्वरदाहांच

एलवालुकं कपित्थं

एलवालुः सुगन्धिः

विषविध्वंसनो

The following Drug sources are considered as *Elavaluka*.

1) *Prunus cerasus* Linn.

2) *Prunus avium* Linn.

3) *Gisekia pharnaceoides* Linn.

1) *Prunus cerasus*<sup>11</sup>

Botanical name – *Prunus cerasus* Linn.

Family - Rosaceae.



Image No-2 (*Prunus cerasus* Linn.)

Distribution – believed to be indigenous to W. Aisa. Cultivated in N.W. Himalaya. Morphology–A deciduous shrub or small tree producing numerous root suckers.

Leaves – conduplicate in bud, rather firm, shining, obovate, acuminate, serrate, glands usually on the margin of the blade close to the insertion of the petiole .

Flowers are in fascicles of 2-5 on slender pedicels 2-4 cm long. Flower buds usually produce a few leaves below the flowers.

The calyx lobes are usually toothed. The corolla is white or pink. The fruit is globose, light red to nearly black, acidic or sweet.

The fruit is sour and sweetish; stomachic, purgative, tonic to the brain; used in diseases of the throat and the lungs; useful in braimiting, retching, biliousness.

The seed is diuretic, vulnerann thirst, nagogue, laxative, antipyretic; used in gonorrhoea, strangury, emmen bronchitis; cures scabies, sore throat, liver complaints.

The bark which is bitter; is said to possess febrifugal properties.

The Kernel is supposed to be a nervine tonic and is used for the same purposes as hydrocyanic acid, of which it contains a considerable proportion.

## 2) *Prunus avium*<sup>12</sup>

Botanical name - *Prunus avium* Linn.

Family -Rosaceae.



Image No-3 (*Prunus cerasus* Linn.)

Distribution- Indigenous in Europe, cultivated in N.W. India.

Morphology -very similar to *P. cerasus* Linn. But larger and produces no root suckers.

Leaves -flaccid, more coarsely serrate, petiole with 2 glands near the top.

Flowers -white or pink in colour, flower buds not bearing leaves but with rather larger reflexed bud scales. Calyx lobes are usually entire.

Fruit-nearly black, sweet, on peduncle up to 5 cm long.

In Europe the fruits stalks are considered tonic and astringent.

## 3) *Gisekia pharnaceoides*<sup>13</sup>

Botanical name - *Gisekia pharnaceoides* Linn.

Family name – Ficoideaceae.



Image No-4 (*Gisekia pharnaceoides* Linn.)

Distribution – Punjab, Baluchistan, Rajputana desert, sind, Gujarat, Konkan, Deccan, Carnatic of madras pres.

Morphology -a diffuse somewhat succulent glabrous herb

Stem – 15-45cm long, branches prostrate or ascending.

Leaves -sub fleshy, sub opposite, 2-3.8 cm, linear oblong, elliptical, lanceolate or spathulate-oblong, obtuse or subacute, entire, tapering at the base, glabrous, glaucous., petioles 0-6 mm. long. Flowers- numerous, in almost sessile umbellate cymes; pedicels slender, 2.5-4 mm. long, Sepals 2-2.5 mm. long, elliptic-oblong, obtuse, with membranous margins. Stamens 5 filaments dilated at the base. Ripe carpels membranous, as long as the sepals and surrounded by them. Seed solitary, rounded on the back, black, with scattered white glandular prominences. The plant is acrid, pungent; digestible, alexiteric, anthelmintic, vulnerary; cures scabies, thirst, rhinitis, bronchitis, loss of appetite, heart troubles, leprosy, leukoderma, urinary diseases (Ayurveda). The plant has been found to act as a powerful anthelmintic in cases of tænia. The discoverer, Capt. W. H. Lowther (Journ. Agri- Hort. Soc. of India, 1857), directs that the fresh plant, including the leaves, stalks and capsules, be administered in doses of about an ounce ground into a powder and given in the form of a draught with water. The dose is recommended to be repeated three times, at intervals of four days.

## DISCUSSION

Charaka has enumerated *Elavaluka* in the list of *Tvagasavas*. This is included in *Kashaya-Skandha*. *Elavaluka* has been planned in the *Abhayarishta* for *Arsharoga*, in *Kalyanaka-Ghrita* given for *Unmada-roga*, and in the *Beejakerishta* given for *Panduroga*. The name *Elavaluka* mentioned in *Sushruta's Rodhradi gana* is *Elavaluka* only. *Bhavamishra* has called *Elavaluka* as '*Kushthagandhasadrisham*'. That is, it has a sweet smell like mustard. *Dalhana* is also called '*Kushthagandhikam*' in some places. Calculation of *Elavaluka* in *Charaka's Shukrashodhana* and *Vedanasthapana Dashemani*. *Elavaluka* is considered a



suspicious substance - in Indian medicinal plants - Sanskrit name of *Gisekia pharnacooides* ( Ficoideae), in *Shodala Nighantu* of prof.R.R.Dewvedi has mentioned *Prunus cerasus* to *Elavaluka* and *Padmaka* it leads to some controversy , Due to morphological similarities of *P.cerasus* and *P. avium* there is small difference in both the species but the *Gisekia pharnacooides* Linn is different from the *Prunus* species because of its morphology and the distribution. where as in Ayurvedic pharmacopoeia of India mentioned *Prunus avium* as *Elavaluka*.

## CONCLUSION

In Standardization techniques plant materials and their derived products have been examined, and it has always been an important part of Phyto-pharmaceuticals. A big quantum of research work in area of authentication of correct plant source has been undertaken to provide means of differentiation among many controversial medicinal plants, it possesses examinations like- Macroscopic examination, Microscopic, Morphological, Histological, Physico-chemical, Pharmacognostical, Phytochemical, Taxonomical, Heavy metal estimation, Radiological contaminations etc. At present, sources for *Elavaluka* are *Prunus cerasus*, *Prunus avium*, and *Gisekia pharnacooides* considered. Though, the sources are many for this drug, for most authentic texts in Ayurveda, the source of *Elavaluka* is taken as *Prunus cerasus* is considered as *Elavaluka*.

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