



Phytochemical Studies, Anti-Oxidant and Anti-Inflammatory Properties of Four Medicinal Plants

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Abstract

Rheumatoid arthritis, a chronic autoimmune disorder, is characterized by polyarthralgia and joint dysfunction resulting from autoimmune responses that target self-neoepitopes. These attacks lead to the activation of macrophages and other defense cells. By identifying these self-epitopes as biomarkers in RA, researchers have gained valuable insights into the disease's pathogenesis. Over the years, research has focused on investigating the potential of medicinal plants as anti-inflammatory agents. In this study, a hydroethanolic extract of *Saraca asoca*, *Ficus benghalensis*, *Chenopodium album*, and *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* leaves was prepared by Soxhlet apparatus. Various concentrations of extracts were utilized to assess phytochemical analysis, GC-MS, *in-vitro* anti-oxidant, and anti-inflammatory activities. The highest scavenging potential was exhibited by *Chenopodium album*, as assessed by the DPPH assay ($90.32 \pm 3.2\%$) and H_2O_2 ($86.00 \pm 1.94\%$). Similarly, the *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* showed ($92.23 \pm 0.83\%$) inhibition in membrane stabilization assay, and ($91.49 \pm 1.03\%$) in protein denaturation inhibition capacity. GCMS analysis showed various phytoconstituents in extracts. In order to confirm its therapeutic potential for treating RA, *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* may be a better drug candidate that needs to be further researched for mechanistic studies.

Keywords: Anti-Inflammatory Agents, Anti-Oxidant Activities, *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis*, Phytochemical Analysis, Rheumatoid Arthritis

1. Introduction

The progressive destruction of bones and joints, as well as other organs, characterizes the course of rheumatoid arthritis, a prevalent chronic inflammatory autoimmune disease of the joints. About 1% of people worldwide are affected by rheumatoid arthritis. Joints are attacked by the body's immune system in rheumatoid arthritis, an autoimmune disorder¹. Joint destruction, deformity, and significant disability are hallmarks of the disease's advanced stages. Bone loss, skeletal abnormalities, and synovitis are hallmarks of this condition².

Drugs such as Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs), corticosteroids, Disease-Modifying Antirheumatic Drugs (DMARDs), and biologicals have all been used to alleviate the discomfort associated with

rheumatoid arthritis. Ulcers, cancers, and infections are just some of the serious adverse effects of these medications³. Therefore, it is important to discover new treatments for rheumatoid arthritis that are efficient, cost-effective, helpful, and safe. There is still a significant amount of healing power in the traditional plants used all over the world. The majority of the world's population uses traditional medicine, which often involves the use of plant extracts or their components, to meet their primary healthcare needs. There is still the option of turning to traditional medicine instead of Western medicine⁴. Herbal supplements taken in conjunction with disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs are becoming increasingly accepted as a treatment option for rheumatoid arthritis. Pain and inflammation, such as that caused by arthritis, can be treated with a number of different plants. Antioxidants,

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compounds that treat arthritis, and anti-inflammatory compounds can all be found in abundance among plants⁵.

When different enzymes are activated, proteins lose their structure or become denatured, tissues migrate, and tissues break down⁶. One common technique for measuring anti-inflammatory efficacy involves the hypotonicity and heat-induced hemolysis of erythrocytes. Because of their similarities, the effects of drugs on erythrocyte stabilization could be extrapolated to the stabilization of the lysosomal membrane⁷. Activated neutrophils, proteases, and histamines are just some of the pro-inflammatory markers that have been shown to be released at the site of tissue damage due to the lysis of lysosomal membranes during chronic inflammation⁸.

About 80% of people around the world rely on medicines made from plants. Herbal medicines play a significant role in India's conventional medical practice⁹. The primary objective of the present study was to assess the antioxidant and anti-inflammatory capabilities of a hydroethanolic extract derived from medicinal plants. This investigation is rooted in the historical utilization of plant extracts for the treatment of various ailments. The outcomes of this research hold the promise of further enhancing the already substantial medicinal value of these plants.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Sampling and Leaf Extraction

Plant leaves were collected from GLA University, Mathura (U.P.) for this study. Collected leaves were shadow-dried and extracted for the process. We used a reflux apparatus to remove the phytoconstituents in a hydroethanolic solvent and then concentrated the extract in a rotary vacuum evaporator (Yamato Scientific Co., Japan) at 45°C. For in-vitro testing, the final concentrated extract was stored at -20°C.

2.2 Phytochemical Analysis

Using Kokate's method, qualitative chemical analyses were performed on each of the extracts in order to determine the phytoconstituents present in each of the samples¹⁰.

2.3 In-vitro Antioxidant Activities

The antioxidant power of various plant extracts was measured in terms of their ability to scavenge free

radicals using 2,2-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl (DPPH) and hydrogen peroxide, with the results being compared to those of standard anti-oxidant drugs (ascorbic acid).

2.4 DPPH (2, 2-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl) Free Radical Scavenging Assay

The antioxidant capacity of the extracts was evaluated using a tweaked version of the method developed by Moradi *et al*¹¹. A hydroethanolic solution of DPPH (3.4mg/100 mL) was added to a 50 L aliquot of the sample solutions to determine their concentrations (25-400 g/mL). For a period of one hour at 37 degrees Celsius, the reaction mixture was kept in the dark. How quickly the extracts bleached out the purple showed how well they neutralized free radicals. The reaction mixture's absorbance was measured using a UV-visible spectrophotometer (Agilent 8453, Germany). Ascorbic acid, derived from vitamin C, served as the standard. The following methodology was employed to determine the extent to which DPPH could be reduced.

$$\text{Scavenging activity percentage} = \frac{(\text{Abs control} - \text{Abs sample})}{\text{Abs control}} \times 100$$

2.5 Hydrogen Peroxide Scavenging Assay

The extract's ability to scavenge hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂) was measured using Ruch *et al*'s method¹². Extracts (25-400 g/mL) were diluted to a concentration of 0.1 mL in Eppendorf tubes with 50 mM phosphate buffer (pH 7.4), and then 2 mM H₂O₂ solution was added. After letting the mixture react for 10 minutes, the absorbance at 230 nm was measured while the mixture was vortexed. Ascorbic acid was used as a positive control. Extracts' H₂O₂ scavenging efficacy was calculated using the following formula: where A0 and A1 are the absorbances of the control and sample, respectively.

$$\text{H}_2\text{O}_2 \text{ scavenging activity percentage} = \frac{(\text{Abs control} - \text{Abs sample})}{\text{Abs control}} \times 100$$

2.6 In-Vitro Anti-Inflammatory Activities

By using the BSA denaturation assay, and HRBC membrane stabilization to test the effects of various plant extracts on arthritis, the effects were compared to those of common anti-inflammatory medications (diclofenac).

2.7 Inhibition of Protein Denaturation

The methodology was slightly modified from a previously reported procedure by Pavithra *et al.*¹³. The reaction mixture included 100 ml of 5% Bovine Serum Albumin (BSA) aqueous solution and 100µl of aqueous extracts of *Ficus benghalensis* (final concentrations of 100, 200, 400, 800, and 1000 g/ml). The sample was incubated for 20 minutes at 37°C before being heated, was raised in a hot water bath for 10 minutes to 70°C. After 10 minutes of cooling under running water, the mixture's turbidity and absorbance were measured at 660nm. Distilled water served as the blank. The outcomes were contrasted against methotrexate. The following formula was used to calculate the protein denaturation inhibition:

$$\text{Protein denaturation inhibition (\%)} = \frac{(\text{Abs control} - \text{Abs sample})}{\text{Abs control}} \times 100$$

2.8 Membrane-stabilizing Effects

Vallabh Deshpande *et al.*¹⁴ provided the basis for the technique, which was adapted here. Human volunteers were blood-collected after they had gone NSAID-free for two weeks. The reaction mixture contains 2ml of hypotonic saline (0.25% NaCl), 1ml of 0.15 M phosphate buffer (pH 7.4), 1 ml of test solution (100-500 g/ml), and 0.5 ml of 10% HRBC in normal saline, and has a total volume of 4.5ml. The combination was kept in an incubator at 56°C for 30 minutes. The test tubes were placed under a running faucet for 20 minutes to cool them down. The absorbance of the supernatant at 560nm was then measured after centrifuging the reaction mixture for 10 minutes at 3000rpm. The drug methotrexate was widely used. The percentage membrane stabilization activity was calculated as per the following formula

$$\text{Membrane-stabilizing (\%)} = \frac{(\text{Abs control} - \text{Abs sample})}{\text{Abs control}} \times 100$$

2.9 Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectroscopic Analysis

Thermo GC-Trace Ultra Version: 5.0 and Thermo MS DSQ II were used to do a GC-MS analysis of the leaf extract of a medicinal plant. The equipment has a 30mm 0.25mm ID 0.25m film DB 35 – MS Capillary Standard non-polar column. Helium is used as the carrier gas at a rate of at least 1.0 ml/min. The injector was set to 250°C, and this is how the oven temperature was set: 60°C for

15 minutes, and then slowly went up to 280°C over the next 3 minutes. The Willey and NIST libraries, as well as a comparison of their retention indices, were used to figure out what the parts were. The parts were figured out by comparing them to the ones in the computer library (NIST and Willey) that were connected to the GC-MS instrument. The results were then put into a table.

3. Result

3.1 Phytochemical Analysis

The qualitative phytochemical analysis of plant extracts has shown the presence of alkaloids, flavonoids, phenols, steroid proteins, Saponins, tannins, carbohydrates, terpenoids, glycosides and as shown in Table 1.

3.2 In vitro Antioxidant Activities

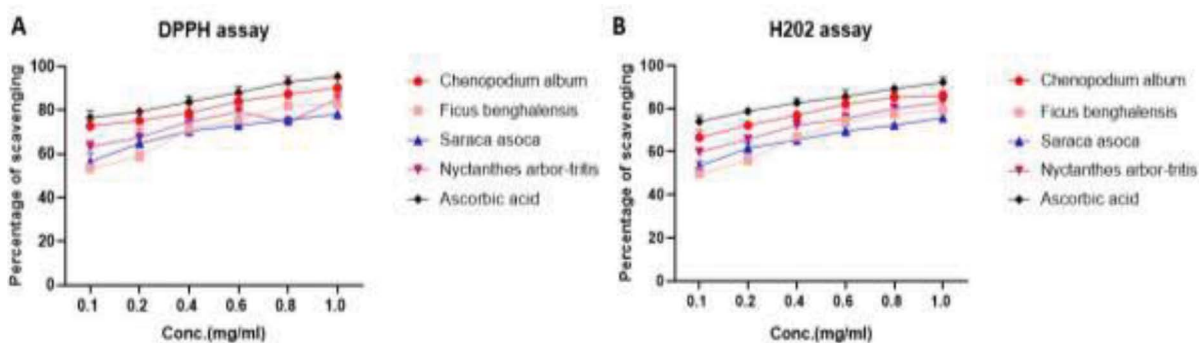
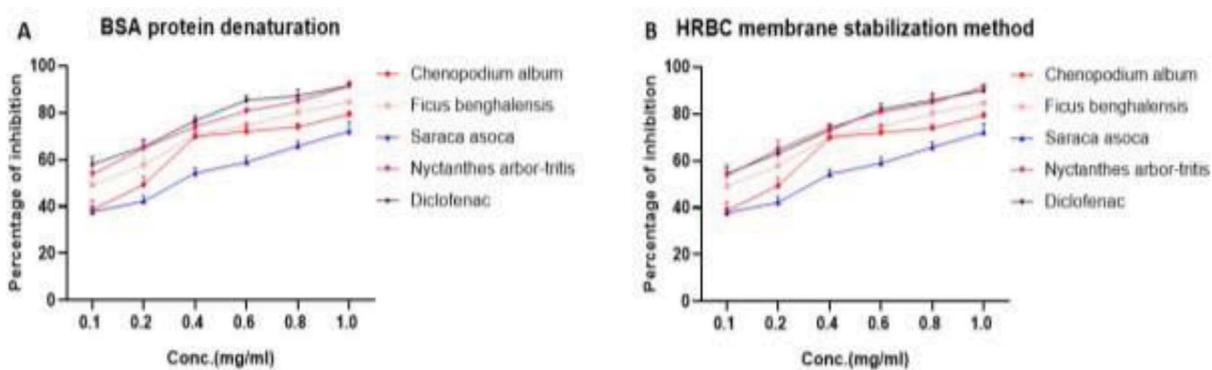
The production of ROS leads to more oxidative stress, which can cause autoimmune diseases like RA. As lipid peroxidation gets worse, the activities of antioxidant enzymes and the Na⁺/K⁺-ATPase get worse. Increasing the levels of ROS can also harm immunoglobulins and alter the DNA repair mechanisms. Di Dalmazi *et al.*¹⁵ have shown that ROS oxidative stress plays an important role in the progression of RA. DPPH and H₂O₂ assays were used to test the potential antioxidant activity of crude extracts from *Saraca asoca*, *Ficus benghalensis*, *Chenopodium album*, and *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis*. The inhibitory effect was compared to that of the standard ascorbic acid. *Chenopodium album* showed the most activity, and this activity increased with the amount of extract used. At the highest concentration tested (100 mg/mL), *Chenopodium album* showed the most ability to fight free radicals. In the DPPH assay, *Chenopodium album* had a percentage of inhibition of 90.32 ± 3.2 %, which was a little bit higher than the standard ascorbic acid (95.53 ± 1.4 %) and showed more activity than the other plant extracts (Figure 1(a)). *Chenopodium album* also had the highest ability to get rid of H₂O₂ (86.00 ± 1.94 %), which was the same as ascorbic acid (92.24 ± 2.02 %) (Figure 1(b)).

3.3 In Vitro Anti-Arthritic Activities

The protein denaturation method and the HRBC membrane stabilization method were used to study the anti-arthritic effects of different concentrations

Table 1. Results of phytochemical screening of plant extracts

| Chemical Constituents | <i>Saraca asoca</i> | <i>Ficus benghalensis</i> | <i>Chenopodium album</i> | <i>Nyctanthes arbor-tristis</i> |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Alkaloids | - | - | + | + |
| Flavonoids | + | + | + | + |
| Phenols | + | + | + | + |
| Saponins | + | + | + | + |
| Steroids | + | + | + | - |
| Tannin | + | + | + | - |
| Terpenoids | - | + | + | + |
| Carbohydrate | + | + | + | + |
| Glycoside | - | + | + | + |
| Protein | + | + | + | + |


Figure 1. In-vitro antioxidant activity of *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* (DPPH free radical scavenging assay (a) and Hydrogen peroxide scavenging assay (b)).

Figure 2. In-vitro anti-arthritis activity of *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* (BSA protein denaturation (a) and HRBC membrane stabilization (b)).

of Hydroethanolic Extract (HE) of leaves of *Ficus benghalensis* L. in a test tube. The anti-arthritis activity was measured by how well it stopped proteins from breaking down and stopped membranes from becoming more stable when the solution was less salty. The hydroethanolic

extracts of *Saraca asoca*, *Ficus benghalensis*, *Chenopodium album*, *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis*, and diclofenac were tested at concentrations of 100, 200, 400, 600, 800, and 1000 g/ml to see how well they stopped proteins from getting messed up and how well they kept membranes

from getting messed up. At different concentrations, HE of *Saraca asoca*, *Ficus benghalensis*, *Chenopodium album*, and *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* can stop proteins from breaking down. It showed that 1000 mg/ml of HE of *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* and 1000 mg/ml of diclofenac had the most effect at (91.49 ± 1.03 %) and (91.59 ± 1.97 %), respectively. Stopping hypotonicity caused the HRBC membrane to break, so the anti-arthritic activity was measured by how well the HRBC membrane held

together. At different concentrations, HEs of plant can stop the breakdown of HRBC caused by heat. It showed that the maximum inhibition was (92.23 ± 0.83) at 1000 mg/ml of HE of *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* and (89.92 ± 2.09 %) at 1000 mg/ml of diclofenac. As the concentration goes up, the ability to stop proteins from breaking down and protect and stabilize membranes also goes up. So, the anti-arthritic effect of extracts depended on how much was used.

Table 2. Name, retention time, peak area, mol. formula, mol. weight of phytochemicals in the hydroethanolic extract of *Saraca asoca*

| S.No | Chemical Compound | R.T | Area | Medicinal properties | Reference |
|------|---------------------------|--------|-------|---|-----------|
| 1 | 1,2-Ethanediol | 0.590 | 12.69 | Anti-tumor activity | 16 |
| 2 | Hydroxylamine | 0.735 | 6.90 | Carcinostatic activity, Antibacterial | 17 |
| 3 | dl-Glyceraldehyde | 0.779 | 2.94 | Neuroprotective effects | 18 |
| 4 | Acetic acid | 1.816 | 1.14 | Anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial | 19 |
| 5 | Acetamide | 4.166 | 0.09 | Anti-cancer, Anti-diabetic, and anti-inflammatory | 20 |
| 6 | 2-ethoxyethyl ethyl ester | 11.426 | 0.18 | Anti-microbial and anti-inflammatory properties | 21 |
| 7 | 2-Dodecanol | 14.592 | 0.03 | Anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory activity | 22 |

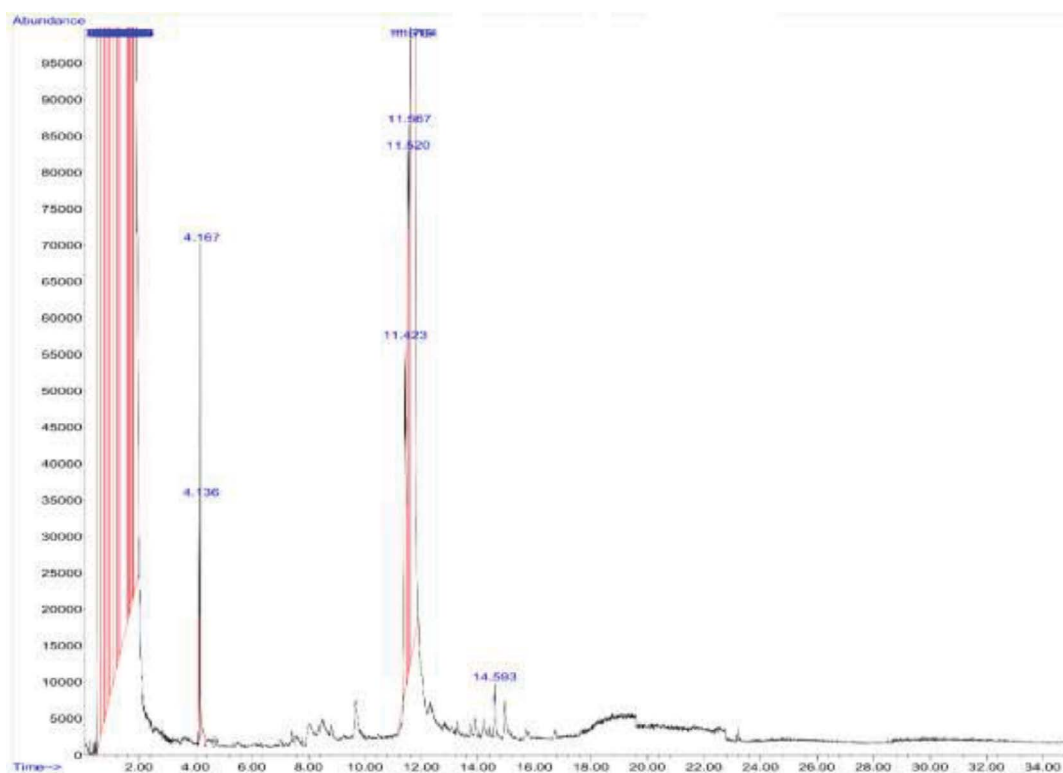
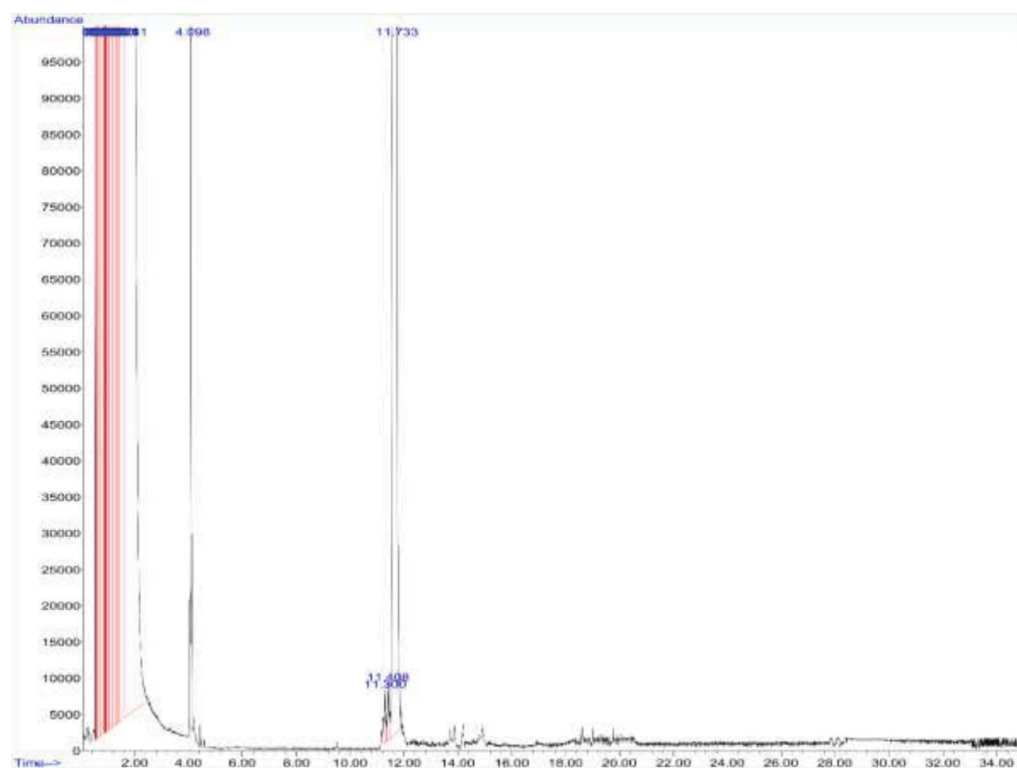


Figure 3. GCMS chromatogram of *Saraca asoca*.

Table 3. Name, retention time, peak area, mol. formula, mol. weight of phytochemicals in hydroethanolic extract of *Chenopodium album*

| S.No | Chemical compound | R.T | Area | Medicinal properties | Reference |
|------|----------------------|--------|-------|--|-----------|
| 1 | Hydroxylamine | 0.568 | 1.73 | Anti-inflammatory properties, anti-cancer properties, and antibacterial | 23 |
| 2 | Methylamine | 0.595 | 3.77 | Neurogenic, antioxidant, cholinergic, and neuroprotective properties | 24 |
| 3 | 1-Butanol | 0.806 | 12.33 | Anti-microbial activity | 25 |
| 4 | 1,2-Ethandiol | 1.762 | 19.07 | Anti-cancer activity | 26 |
| 5 | Acetic acid | 4.101 | 0.17 | Antimicrobial properties, antibacterial, antifungal, antioxidant and anticancer activities | 27 |
| 6 | 2-Acetylbenzoic acid | 11.302 | 0.02 | Anti-inflammatory property | 28 |
| 7 | Benzoic acid | 11.410 | 0.02 | Antialgal, antimicrobial, antimutagenic, hypoglycaemic, antiestrogenic, anti-inflammatory, anti-platelet aggregating, nematocidal, antioxidant, antiviral properties | 29 |

**Figure 4.** GCMS chromatogram of *Chenopodium album*.

3.4 GCMS Analysis

Mass spectrum interpretation GC-MS was performed using the National Institute of Standards and Technology's (NIST) database, which contains more than 62,000 patterns. The spectrum of the unknown component was compared to the library of known component spectra at

NIST. This study was conducted to identify the bioactive compounds present in the HE of plant material by means of Gas chromatography and Mass spectrometry. The formula, concentration (peak area %), Molecular Weight (MW), and Retention Time (RT) of the active ingredients are shown in Table 2 and Figure 3. Table 2 and Figure 4

Table 4. Name, retention time, peak area, mol. formula, mol. weight of phytochemicals in the hydroethanolic extract of *Ficus benghalensis*

| S.No | Chemical compound | R.T | Area | Medicinal properties | Reference |
|------|-------------------------------------|--------|-------|--|-----------|
| 1 | Methylamine | 0.352 | 3.05 | Neurogenic, antioxidant, cholinergic, and neuroprotective | 30 |
| 2 | Hydroxylamine | 0.741 | 11.04 | Antioxidant property | 31 |
| 3 | 1,2-Ethandiol | 2.156 | 7.01 | Anti-tumor | 32 |
| 4 | Dimethylamine | 4.177 | 0.02 | Anti-inflammatory and antiviral | 32 |
| 5 | Methylglyoxal | 4.231 | 0.10 | Anti-bacterial and Anti-inflammatory properties | 33 |
| 6 | N, N-Dimethyl-2-aminoethanol | 4.285 | 0.39 | Anti-oxidant and Anti-microbial | 34 |
| 7 | Cyclopropyl carbinol | 4.355 | 0.03 | Anti-bacterial and Anti-fungal | 35 |
| 8 | N-Hydroxycarbamic acid | 6.235 | 0.12 | Antimicrobial activity | 36 |
| 9 | 4-Amino- dl-3-Aminobutyric acid | 6.386 | 0.06 | It plays a crucial role in regulating neuronal excitability throughout the brain and is involved in various physiological processes and activity | 37 |
| 10 | 2-Formylhistamine | 10.443 | 0.05 | Anti-inflammatory activity | 38 |
| 11 | 3-Chloro-N-methyl propylamine | 11.037 | 0.03 | Insecticidal activities | 39 |
| 12 | Azetid-2-one 3 | 13.711 | 0.23 | Antitubercular, antifungal activity, and antibacterial, as well as anticonvulsant, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and antidepressant activity | 40 |
| 13 | Cathinone | 13.862 | 0.06 | Anti-depressant activity | 41 |
| 14 | 2-Formylhistamine | 14.116 | 0.03 | Anti-cancer activity | 42 |
| 15 | 2-Amino-1-(o-methoxyphenyl) propane | 14.187 | 0.06 | Anti-inflammatory activity | 43 |

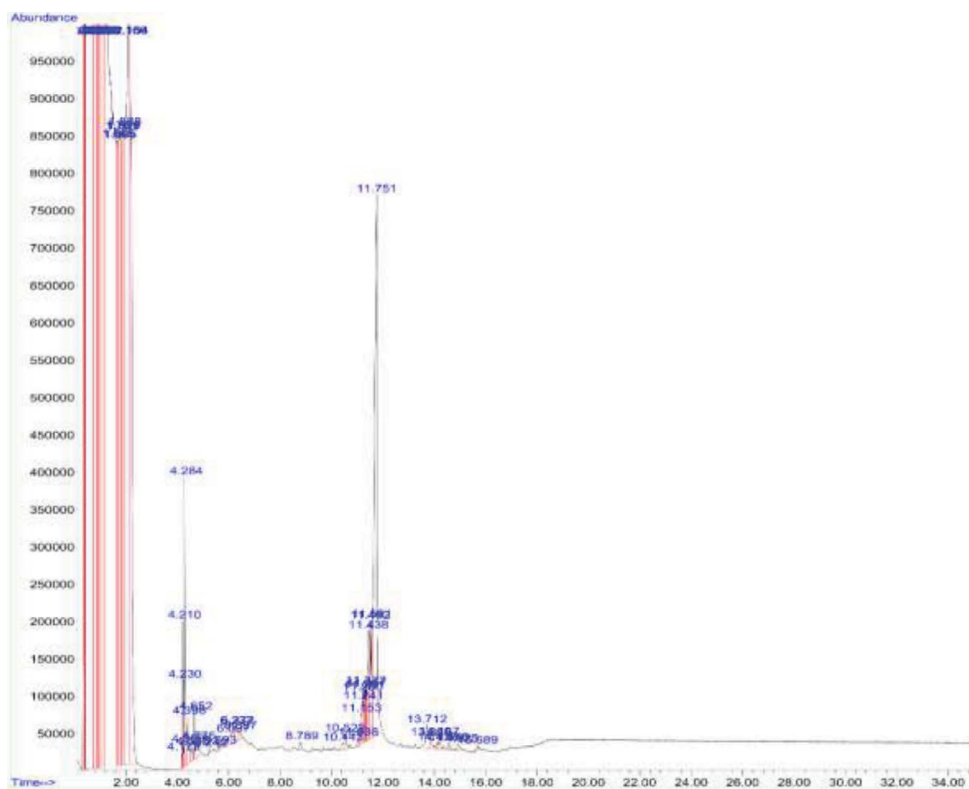
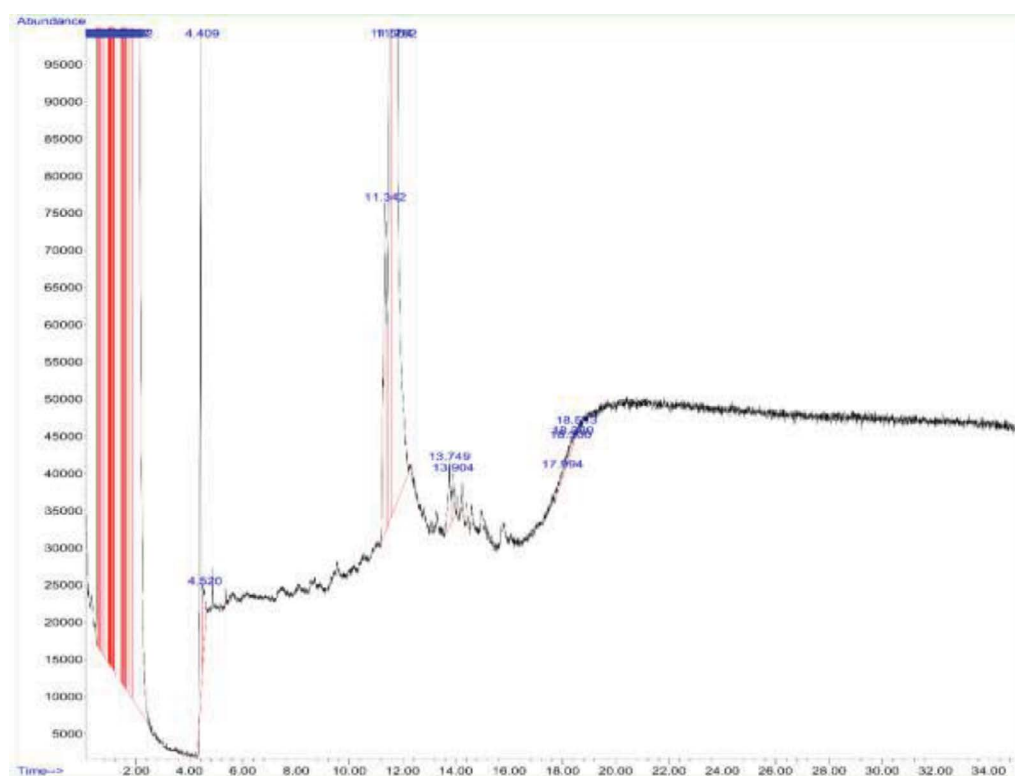
**Figure 5.** GCMS chromatogram of *Ficus benghalensis*.

Table 5. Name, retention time, peak area, mol. formula, mol. weight of phytochemicals in the hydroethanolic extract of *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis*

| S.No | Chemical compound | R.T | Area | Medicinal properties | Ref |
|------|------------------------------|--------|------|---------------------------------------|-----|
| 1 | Methylamine | 0.568 | 3.78 | Insecticide, Fungicide, antioxidant | 44 |
| 2 | Hydroxylamine | 0.633 | 5.50 | Carcinostatic activity, Antibacterial | 45 |
| 3 | Methylglyoxal | 4.409 | 0.26 | Antibacterial activity | 46 |
| 4 | Cyclopropyl carbinol | 13.749 | 0.07 | Anti-diabetic, anti-oxidant activity | 47 |
| 5 | 1-Methyl-2-phenoxyethylamine | 13.906 | 0.03 | Antinociceptive properties | 48 |
| 6 | 3-Azabicyclo3.2.2nonane | 18.298 | 0.03 | Anti-cancer and anti-viral property | 49 |
| 7 | 1,3-Propanediamine | 18.379 | 0.01 | Anti-oxidant property | 50 |
| 8 | Phenylpropanolamine | 18.514 | 0.01 | Anti-bacterial, anti-oxidant | 51 |

**Figure 6.** GCMS chromatogram of *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis*.

show that the HE of *Saraca asoca* contains 7 bioactive phytochemical compounds, while Table 3 and Figure 2 show that the HE of *Chenopodium album* contains 8 bioactive phytochemical compounds, Table 4 and Figure 5 show that the HE of *Ficus benghalensis* contains 15 bioactive phytochemical compounds, and Table 5 and Figure 6 show that the HE of *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* contains 9 bioactive phytochemical compounds.

4. Discussion

Flavonoids have been shown to have beneficial effects against bacteria, inflammation, allergies, and viruses. Pharmacologically active alkaloids find widespread application in the pharmaceutical and recreational drug industries⁵². Saponins have been found to inhibit tumor growth and hypercholesterolemia in experimental

animals⁵³. The polyphenolic family, of which tannins and phenols are part, has long been appreciated for its beneficial effects on health. According to Mehta *et al.*⁵⁴, terpenoids in hydroalcoholic extract and ethyl acetate fraction possess anti-arthritic properties. One of the first steps in identifying the active substances in medicinal plants is GC-MS analysis. As shown in 2, 3, 4, and 5 Tables, 7 bioactive phytochemical compounds from *Saraca asoca*, 8 bioactive phytochemical compounds from *Chenopodium album*, 15 bioactive phytochemical compounds from *Ficus benghalensis* and 9 bioactive phytochemical compounds from *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* which shows various pharmacological activities.

ROS-induced oxidative stress contributes to the development of autoimmune disorders such as rheumatoid arthritis. As lipid peroxidation increases, the functions of both anti-oxidant enzymes and the Na⁺/K⁺-ATPase decrease. In addition to damaging immunoglobulins, increases in Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS) modify DNA mismatch repair pathways. According to these investigations¹⁵, ROS oxidative stress plays an essential role in the pathogenesis of RA.

Denaturation of proteins in the synovial membrane and surrounding tissues is a well-known trigger of arthritic conditions. Some forms of arthritis might generate autoantigens because of protein denaturation^{28,55}. By altering electrostatic, hydrophobic, hydrogen, and disulfide bonds in proteins, lysosomal lysis during inflammation may contribute to denaturation⁵⁵. Anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) work to prevent the release of lysosomal enzymes by mitigating the injury to the lysosomal membrane. Environmental factors such as high temperatures, chemical medications, and hypotonic medium such as methotrexate, hydroxychloroquine, and diclofenac sodium can all compromise the RBC membrane integrity and lead to haemolysis⁵⁶. Since RBC membranes are similar to lysosomal membranes, studying their protective function may shed light on their anti-inflammatory qualities. Substances that inhibit protein denaturation and aid in membrane stabilization are needed for the development of anti-arthritic drugs, as shown in Figure 5; NAT extract possesses these properties.

5. Conclusion

Medicinal plants with anti-rheumatic properties hold great promise as natural alternatives for managing rheumatic conditions. Through centuries of traditional

use and modern scientific research, these plants have demonstrated their potential to alleviate inflammation, reduce pain, and improve the overall quality of life for individuals suffering from rheumatism. Furthermore, the integration of medicinal plants into conventional rheumatic treatments offers a holistic approach that can complement pharmaceutical interventions, potentially reducing the reliance on synthetic drugs and minimizing adverse effects. However, it's important to note that while medicinal plants show promise, their efficacy and safety should be thoroughly studied through rigorous clinical trials and research. Proper dosing, standardization, and potential interactions with other medications should also be considered.

6. Acknowledgments

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7. References

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