



Biopotentials of *Ulva Fasciata* and *Hypnea Musciformis* Collected from the Peninsular Coast of India

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BIOPOTENTIALS OF *ULVA FASCIATA* AND *HYPNEA MUSCIFORMIS* COLLECTED FROM THE PENINSULAR COAST OF INDIA

Joseph Selvin* and Aaron Premnath Lipton**

Key words: seaweeds, secondary metabolite, *Ulva fasciata*, *Hypnea musciformis*, antibacterial, brine shrimp cytotoxicity, larvicidal, antifouling, ichthyotoxic.

ABSTRACT

The secondary metabolites of seaweeds *Ulva fasciata* and *Hypnea musciformis*, collected from southeast and southwest coast of India, were tested for biotoxicity potential. Both species showed potent activity in antibacterial, brine shrimp cytotoxicity, larvicidal, antifouling and ichthyotoxicity assays. The green alga *U. fasciata* exhibited broad-spectrum antibacterial activity whereas the red alga *H. musciformis* showed narrow spectrum antibacterial activity. The brine shrimp cytotoxicity profile indicated that the seaweeds were moderately toxic. The overall activity profile indicated that *U. fasciata* contained more biological potency than *H. musciformis*.

INTRODUCTION

Marine algae are not only the primary and major producers of organic matter in the sea, but they also exert profound effects on the density and distribution of other inhabitants of the marine environment. An understanding of the wide range of behavioural relationships that exist among organisms would provide us with clues to substances of biomedical interest. Marine secondary metabolites are organic compounds produced by microbes, sponges, seaweeds, and other marine organisms. The host organism biosynthesizes these compounds as non-primary or secondary metabolites to protect themselves and to maintain homeostasis in their environment. Some of these secondary metabolites offer avenues for developing cost-effective, safe and potent drugs. Nearly 50 lakhs (50,000,00) species available in the sea are virtually untapped sources of secondary metabolites. Those compounds already iso-

lated from seaweeds are providing valuable ideas for the development of new drugs against cancer, microbial infections and inflammation (Elena *et al.*, 2001; Kim *et al.*, 1997; Okai *et al.*, 1997; Premila *et al.*, 1996) apart from their potential ecological/industrial significances such as controlling reproduction, settlement/biofouling and feeding deterrents (Selvin, 2002). In this background, the present study intended to evaluate the toxic influence, activity range and potency of seaweeds collected from the peninsular coast of India.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The algae, which inhabited exclusively on the intertidal rocky substratum, were selected for the collection in order to avoid other algal contamination (Selvin, 2002). Predominant algae such as *Ulva fasciata* and *Hypnea musciformis* were collected along the southeast and southwest of India. Immediately after collection, they were washed in fresh seawater to remove the epiphytes, sand and other extraneous matter and air-dried under shade. Completely dried material was weighed and ground finely in a mechanical grinder. The secondary metabolites of seaweeds were extracted in bulk extraction process. In this process, 500 g of finely powdered algal material was refluxed in a 5 L capacity round bottom flask using methanol-dichloromethane (1:1). The extract was filtered and concentrated to recover the excess solvents in another distillation system. Finally it was reduced to thick oily natured crude extract in a rotary vacuum evaporator (Buchi) at 40°C.

Modified cylinder plate double layer method was used for the evaluation of antibacterial potential of seaweeds. The following bacterial strains were used as test organism (i) Seven type cultures (obtained from Microbial Type Culture Collections, Chandigarh, India): *Micrococcus luteus* (ML), *Bacillus cereus* (BC), *Bacillus subtilis* (BS), *Escherichia coli* (EC), *Aeromonas hydrophila* (AH), *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (PA), and *Vibrio fischeri* (VF), (ii) two shrimp isolates: *Vibrio alginolyticus* (QS7) and *Vibrio harveyi* (RJM5) (iii) two fish isolates: *Aeromonas* sp. (CF-1) and *Aeromonas* sp.

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(CF-2). The inoculum was prepared by adding 5 ml of sterile nutrient broth onto the 18 h fresh slant culture of appropriate bacterium. The tube was gently vortexed and the suspension was collected in a sterile test tube. The first base layer was prepared with 10 mL of 1.5% agar. Six numbers of sterile porcelain beads of 7 mm diameter was placed on the base layer. The overlaid seed layer was prepared by pouring 15 mL of hot nutrient agar containing 0.2 ml of prepared inoculum (USP 1995; IP 1996; HiMedia Manual, 1998). After the seed layer solidified, the porcelain beads were removed carefully with a sterile forceps. The resultant wells were filled with 100 μ L of the appropriate algal extract and vehicle control (VC). After 24 h of incubation at $37 \pm 2^\circ\text{C}$ the area of inhibition zone was determined as average of triplicates.

Brine shrimp cytotoxicity assay was performed using the freshly hatched free-swimming nauplii of *Artemia salina*. The assay system was prepared with 2 mL of filtered seawater containing chosen concentration of extract in cavity blocks (embryo cup) and 20 nauplii each was transferred in experimental, vehicle control and negative control wells. Invariably the concentration of the experimental systems was determined on the basis of exploratory experiments. Based on the percent mortality, the LD₅₀ of the test compound was determined using probit scale (Miller and Tainter, 1944). The susceptibility or resistance of the mosquito larvae (*Culex* sp.) to the selected concentration of the extracts was carried out by adopting standard bioassay protocol (WHO, 1981). Observations were made after 24 h of treatment for larvicidal activity. The anticoagulant activity was studied using whole blood clotting time method (Selvin, 2002). Fingerlings (1.5-2.0 cm) of marine acclimated *Oreochromis mossambicus* were used for evaluating the ichthyotoxic potential. Five fingerlings each were introduced in experimental and control glass bowls containing 1,000 mL seawater and chosen concentrations of extract. Immediate reflex changes and mortality were observed continuously for six hours at 1 h interval for the next 12 h. After 24 h of exposure, the number dead and live fish were counted. The acute toxicological reflexes were observed and recorded (Indap and Pathare, 1998). Antifouling activity of secondary metabolites was evaluated using newly developed 'mol-

lusc foot adherence bioassay' (Selvin and Lipton, 2002). One of the common rock fouler *Patella vulgata* was used as test organism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The green alga *Ulva fasciata* exhibited broad spectrum of antibacterial activity and its extract inhibited all the tested bacteria in different activity ranges. The red alga *Hypnea musciformis* showed narrow spectrum of activity as it successfully prevented the growth of gram positive bacteria more significantly than the gram negative strains (Table 1). *H. musciformis* extract inhibited the growth of gram positive strains to the extent of 66.0% at 30°C , whereas all the gram positive bacteria were susceptible at 20°C . However, the inhibitory potential was feeble towards the gram-negative strains and only 50% and 75% at 30 and 20°C , respectively, were inhibited. Based on the inhibition area, the activity range was classified as less active, moderately active, active, highly active and resistant (Selvin and Lipton, 2004).

The secondary metabolites of *U. fasciata* successfully inhibited the growth of *B. cereus* and *E. coli* to the extent of 132.66 mm² and 112.56 mm² respectively at 20°C . It was active (94.98 mm²) against *M. luteus*, *A. hydrophila* and *P. aeruginosa* at 20°C (Fig. 1). The range was extended against *B. cereus* (78.5 mm²), *E. coli* (98.06 mm²) at 30°C and a clown fish isolate, CF1 (63.58 and 94.98 mm²) at 30 and 20°C respectively. A gram-positive bacterium, *B. subtilis* and a secondary pathogenic shrimp isolate, *V. alginolyticus* (QS7) were found to be moderately sensitive to *U. fasciata* (50.24 and 38.46 mm² and 38.46 and 50.24 mm² inhibition area respectively at 30 and 20°C). The same range of inhibition (50.24 mm²) was observed in the case of *A. hydrophila* and *V. fischeri* at 30°C whereas opportunistic shrimp pathogen, *V. harveyi* (RJM5) exhibited 38.46 mm² inhibition at 20°C . The activity range was reduced to less than 30 mm² inhibition area against *M. luteus* (28.26 mm²) and RJM5 (28.26 mm²) at 30°C , *V. fischeri* (28.3 mm²) at 20°C and a clown fish isolate, CF2 (12.86 and 19.26 mm²) at both the incubation temperatures.

The secondary metabolites of *H. musciformis*

Table 1. Antibacterial activity of algal extracts

Source organism of algal extracts	% antibacterial activity					
	Total (%)		Gram positive (%)		Gram negative (%)	
	30°C	20°C	30°C	20°C	30°C	20°C
<i>Ulva fasciata</i>	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Hypnea musciformis</i>	54.0	50	66.0	100	50	75

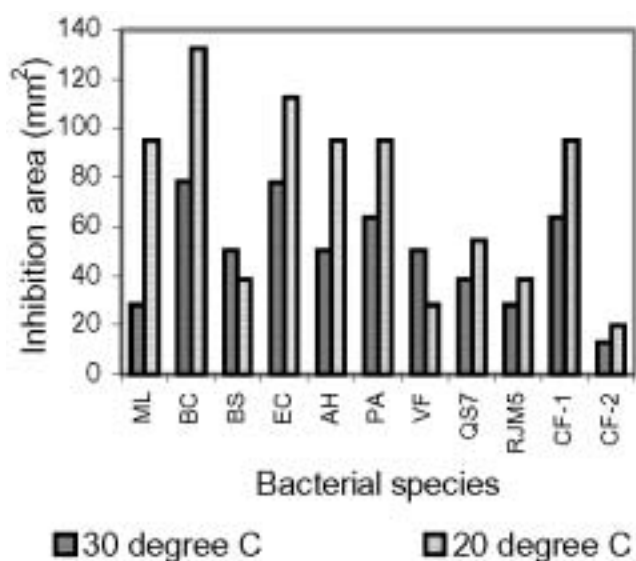


Fig. 1. Antibacterial activity of *Ulva fasciata*.

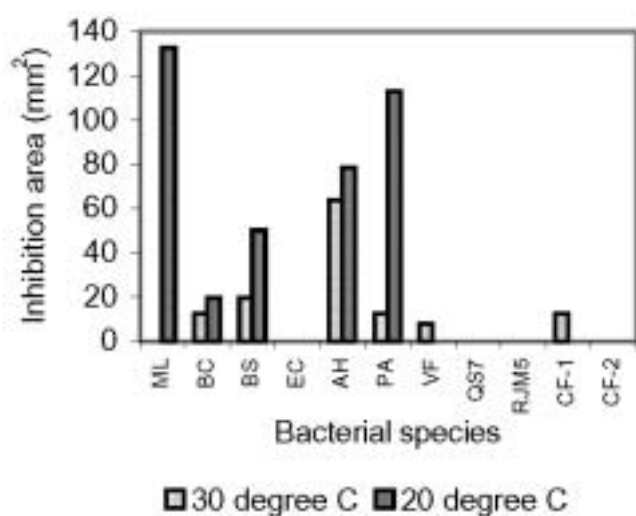


Fig. 2. Antibacterial activity of *Hypnea musciformis*.

showed antibacterial activity to the extent of 132.60 and 113.04 mm² respectively at 20°C against *M. luteus* and *P. aeruginosa* (Fig. 2). However, *M. luteus* was totally resistant at 30°C. It successfully prevented the growth of *A. hydrophila* at a rate of 63.6 and 78.50 mm² in both the temperatures. In terms of activity range, it was active against *B. subtilis* (50.24 mm²) at 20°C. However, at 30°C, it exhibited less activity (19.62 mm²). Such less activity was also extended against *B. cereus* at both temperatures and *V. fischeri* and CF1 at 30°C. The strains such as *E. coli*, QS7, RJM5 and CF2 showed total resistance to *H. musciformis* extract at both temperatures followed by *V. fischeri* and CF1 at 20°C. The

Table 2. *Artemia* cytotoxicity profile of algal extracts at 30 and 20°C

Algal extracts	Concentration (mg/mL)	Mortality (%)	
		30 ± 2°C	20 ± 2°C
<i>U. fasciata</i>	1	10.2 ± 2.6	0
	2	50.0 ± 7.0	20.0 ± 3.4
	4	91.66 ± 1.26	40.0 ± 5.6
	6	97.5 ± 4.8	60.0 ± 7.37
<i>H. musciformis</i>	1	20.2 ± 3.6	0
	2	60.0 ± 7.0	0
	4	90.6 ± 3.2	20.0 ± 1.26
	6	100 ± 0.0	40.0 ± 2.19

Mean ± SD n=10

results clearly indicated the incubation temperature considerably influenced the antibiosis of algal extracts. In certain cases the activity was significantly increased at 20°C. The slow growth rate of bacteria at 20°C may be the reason for the increased activity of algal extracts at low temperature. Antibiosis of algal extracts revealed that gram positive bacterial strains were more susceptible. It was reported that the gram positive strains were more susceptible to seaweed extracts than gram negative bacterial strains (Rao and Parekh, 1981; Pesando and Caram, 1984; Rosett and Srivastava, 1987).

Invariably, seaweeds have been proven to be potent source of antimicrobial compounds. This potential have also been proved in 'in captivity' control of shrimp bacterial pathogens (Selvin, 2002). Ethanolic extract of 8 species of seaweeds belonging to the groups of Chlorophyta, Pheophyta and Rhodophyta exhibited broad-spectrum antibacterial and antifungal activities (de-Campos *et al.*, 1998). The algal extracts such as *Enteromorpha compressa*, *Cladophorus zoolingeri*, *Padina gymnospora*, *Sargassum wightii* and *Gracilaria corticata* were active against gram positive and gram negative bacteria (Rao *et al.*, 1991). Based on the present findings, it could be inferred that the bioassay guided fractionation and purification may come up with potent antibacterial compounds.

Based on the brineshrimp lethality potential, the medium lethal dose (1.8 mg/mL) extrapolated from the graph indicated that *U. fasciata* extract was moderately toxic. The LC₅₀ value of *H. musciformis* extract was 4.2 mg/mL. Temperature had significant influence on the toxicity of algal extracts. The toxicity profile of algal extracts considerably decreased at 20 ± 2°C (Table 2). At this temperature, the toxicity of *U. fasciata* extract was reduced to 60% mortality at 6 mg/mL while the same concentration produced 97.5% mortality at 30 ± 2°C. Schmitz *et al.* (1993) reported the compounds

Table 3. Larvicidal profile of algal extracts on second and fourth instar larvae of *Culex* sp.

Algal extracts	Concentration (mg/mL)	Mortality (%)	
		Second instar larvae	Fourth instar larvae
<i>U. fasciata</i>	10	100 ± 0.0	20.2 ± 1.72
	6	60.2 ± 2.6	0
<i>H. musciformis</i>	10	100 ± 0.0	10.2 ± 2.71
	6	61.2 ± 3.0	0

Mean ± SD n = 10

Table 5. General behavioural changes observed in *Oreochromis mossambicus* exposed to ichthyotoxic algal extracts

Stages	Behavioural changes
State I:	a) Increased in ventilatory frequency
Initial signs	b) Erratic/rapid movements
Stage II:	a) Inclined towards one side
Secondary signs	b) Loss of swimming activity
State III:	a) Rapid surface respiration
Advanced signs	b) Inclined to bottom
	c) Start of sporadic uncontrollable swimming with non directional bursts

Table 4. Ichthyotoxicity profile of algal extracts to *Oreochromis mossambicus* fingerlings

Species	Concentration (mg/mL)	Mortality (%)	Time of death (h)
<i>U. fasciata</i>	8	100	2
	4	60.4 ± 3.0	6
	2	0	-
<i>H. musciformis</i>	4	100	6
	2	20.0 ± 2.89	6
	1	0	-

Mean ± SD n = 10

that showed activity in the brineshrimp could be correlated some extent to their potent cytotoxicity. Therefore the secondary metabolites of *U. fasciata* could be used for the isolation of cytotoxic fractions. Literature also evidenced the anticancer potentials of secondary metabolites isolated from seaweeds (Harada *et al.*, 1997; Prabhadevi *et al.*, 1998; Elena *et al.*, 2001).

The results of larvicidal activity indicated that the second instar larvae were more susceptible than the fourth instar larvae (Table 3). Similar observations were reported in the earlier works by Purohit *et al.*, (1983) and Krishnamoorthy (1996). The seaweeds (*U. fasciata* and *H. musciformis*) produced 100% mortality at 10 mg/mL. The activity profile considerably deviated among the different larval stages. Notably the fourth instar larvae were resistant at the concentration that produced 100% mortality for the second instar larvae exposed to *U. fasciata* and *H. musciformis*. The extracts might possess larvicidal and growth regulatory activities when the treatment was effected to different larval stages (Rao *et al.*, 1991). The acetone extract of seaweeds *C. scalpelliformis* and *Dictyota dichotoma* exhibited mosquito larvicidal activity against *Aedes aegypti* (Thangam and Kathiresan, 1991). Albeit the larvicidal potential of seaweeds was well established, no evidence was available on the field trials of seaweed-based mosquito repellents.

The secondary metabolites of *U. fasciata* effec-

tively prevented the blood clotting to the extent of 120 seconds while the control blood clotted within 40 seconds. The secondary metabolites of *H. musciformis* and Methanol (VC) did not significantly influence the clotting time. It was reported that seaweeds are excellent source of anticoagulants (Lara-Isassi and Alvarez, 1995). Sulfated xylogalactam isolated from a semi-perennial red alga *Delesseria sanguinea* and fucoidan from the brown algae *Fucus vesiculosus* and *Pelvetia canaliculata* showed significant anticoagulant activity (Nabil and Cosson, 1996; Nishino *et al.*, 1995; Collinec *et al.*, 1994). The secondary metabolites of *U. fasciata* were proven to be a potent immunomodulatory agent (Selvin *et al.*, 2004).

Antifeedant activity (ichthyotoxicity profile) of algal extracts is presented in Table 4. *U. fasciata* was toxic at 4 mg/mL while 2 mg/mL was less toxic and did not influence mortality within 6 h. *H. musciformis* extract was less toxic as 20.0% mortality was recorded only at 2 mg/mL. Both the algal extracts exhibited more or less same sort of behavioural changes (Table 5). Initially the fishes exhibited erratic movements and then inclined towards one side. Later, they rapidly went for surface respiration followed by settling at bottom or rapid swimming activity with non-directional bursts, which culminated in dwelling at bottom and mortality (Indap and Pathare, 1998). The present findings suggested that the seaweeds might possess secondary me-

tabolites to ward off predators. However in the 'mollusc foot adherence assay', it was found that the seaweeds were not molluscicidal. Both species prevented the foot adherence of limpets to extent of 70% at 10 mg/mL. Literature indicated that the antifouling property of seaweeds were associated with epiphytic microorganisms (Boyd *et al.*, 1998). Based on the present findings it could be inferred that bioassay guided fractionation and purification of *U. fasciata* and *H. musciformis* may give forth potent bioactive compounds.

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