

Chench (*Corchorus Sp.*) Most Preferable Leafy Vegetable for Bundeli Peoples

Pradip Kumar¹, Upasna Choudhary², Suraj Soni³ and Harshit Gupta⁴

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar- Department of Horticulture, PGCA, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University Pusa, Samastipur, Bihar-848125

²Ph.D. Research Scholar- Department of Vegetable Science, Banda University of Agriculture and Technology Banda, Uttar-Pradesh 210001

^{3&4}Ph.D. Research Scholar- Department of Entomology, Acharya Narendra Dev University of Agriculture and Technology Ayodhya, Uttar-Pradesh

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The Bundelkhand region is primarily known for its dry and arid terrain, with maximal biodiversity. Nevertheless, it is crucial to underscore the importance of giving this region more recognition to unlock its untapped potential, which may encompass vegetables, fodder, fruits, or other crops. Within the Bundelkhand region, there is a remarkably significant underutilized vegetable known as *Corchorus* spp., locally referred to as "Chench." This vegetable is consumed in various ways, and nearly every part of the plant finds its way into the local cuisine.

Introduction

Corchorus spp, belong jute family, represent a category of leafy green vegetables that hold substantial cultural, culinary, and nutritional significance. Although jute is primarily cultivated for its fiber, specific species within the *Corchorus* genus are grown and utilized as nourishing leafy greens in diverse regions worldwide. *Corchorus* spp vegetables are not only a vital source of nutrition but also a testament to the culinary diversity and cultural richness of the regions where they are enjoyed. Their adaptability in various dishes, from soups to stir-fries and salads, highlights their versatility.

The plants are typically annual herbs that reach heights of about 2-4 meters and are mostly unbranched, occasionally having a few lateral branches. Their leaves are arranged alternately, are simple, lanceolate in shape, measuring 5-15 cm in length, and possess a pointed tip with a roughly serrated or lobed edge. The flowers are yellow and modest in size, measuring about 2-3 cm in diameter, featuring five petals, and the fruit is a multi-seeded capsule. In India, this plant is also referred to as "nalta sag" and is a favored dish, especially during the warmer months. Its flavor is reminiscent of spinach and samphire.

Culinary Uses

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The leaves of *Corchorus* spp. can be consumed either raw or cooked. Young leaves are used in salads, while larger leaves are employed in Bundelkhand region cooking, often combined with Bengal gram as a pot herb. They are a rich source of high-quality protein. When cooked, young leaves and stem tops can become slimy unless they are fried. Additionally, the leaves tend to develop a mucilaginous texture, like okra. Dried leaves

can serve as a thickening agent for soups. Harvesting is typically done when the leaves and new shoots reach a length of 20 - 30cm. Sun-dried leaves can be crushed into flour and stored for extended periods. These dried leaves are also used to make herbal tea, while the seeds are utilized as a food flavoring.

Corchorus spp vegetables are highly versatile in the kitchen and feature in a wide array of traditional dishes worldwide. They possess a mild, slightly nutty flavor and a tender texture when cooked. Common culinary applications encompass salads, soups, stews, stir-fries, and more. The leaves and young shoots are highly regarded for their ability to enhance the taste and texture of these dishes. From Asian stir-fries to African soups, *Corchorus* spp vegetables hold a special place in a diverse range of culinary traditions.

Nutritional Value

Corchorus spp. is rich in nutrients, making it effective in preventing nutrient deficiencies. It boasts exceptionally high levels of beta-carotene, moderately high levels of vitamin E, significantly elevated levels of riboflavin, and extraordinarily high levels of folic acid and ascorbic acid. The calcium content ranges from moderate to high, iron levels are notably high to extremely high, and the protein content stands at 4.5%. The leaves of



this plant contain mucilage and phenolic compounds, with most of its components promoting overall eye health.

The leaves possess demulcent, diuretic, febrifuge, and tonic properties. They are employed in the treatment of chronic cystitis, gonorrhea, and painful urination (dysuria). A cold infusion is believed to have the potential to restore appetite and physical strength. The seeds have a purgative effect. Injections of olitoriside, a plant extract, offer significant relief from cardiac insufficiencies and do not exhibit cumulative effects, making them a suitable alternative to strophanthin.

Medicinal Uses

It has several medicinal uses in traditional and herbal medicine. Treatment with *Corchorus* spp. may considerably lower blood glucose, body weight, total cholesterol, triglycerides, and low-density lipoprotein (LDL) while raising high-density lipoprotein-cholesterol. Here are some of its medicinal applications:

- ✚ **Anti-Inflammatory Properties:** *Corchorus* is believed to have anti-inflammatory properties, and its leaves have been used to treat conditions associated with inflammation, such as arthritis.
- ✚ **Digestive Health:** In some traditional systems of medicine, *Corchorus* leaves are used to alleviate digestive issues, including diarrhea and constipation. The mucilage present in the leaves may help soothe the digestive tract.
- ✚ **Respiratory Conditions:** *Corchorus* has been used to address respiratory problems, such as coughs and bronchitis. It is thought to have soothing properties for the respiratory system.
- ✚ **Weight Management:** Some traditional practices involve the use of *Corchorus* to support weight management and help in weight loss efforts. The high fiber content in *Corchorus* may contribute to a feeling of fullness.
- ✚ **Wound Healing:** In certain regions, *Corchorus* leaves are applied topically to wounds and burns to facilitate healing and reduce inflammation.
- ✚ **Cardiovascular Health:** Some studies suggest that *Corchorus* may have potential benefits for cardiovascular health by helping to lower cholesterol levels and support heart health.



✚ **Rich in Nutrients:** Corchorus is a nutrient-rich plant and provides essential vitamins and minerals, making it a valuable addition to the diet for overall health and wellness.

Cultivation and Harvesting

Cultivating Corchorus spp. vegetables is relatively simple and well-suited for tropical and subtropical climates. They flourish in warm, humid conditions with regular rainfall. The most suitable soil type for their growth is well-drained sandy loam. These vegetables are typically propagated from seeds and exhibit rapid growth. Harvesting is recommended when the leaves and young shoots are still tender, well before reaching full maturity. This practice ensures the best flavor and texture in the harvested produce.

