



Original article

Integrated approach: Al₂O₃-CaO nanocatalytic biodiesel production and antibacterial potential silver nanoparticle synthesis from *Pedalium murex* extract

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ABSTRACT

Pedalium murex, a less-utilized traditional plant, has high lipid content, which ranges from 21 mg/gfw (milligram per gram fresh weight) in leaf, 32 mg/gfw in stem and 19 mg/gfw in callus. Lipids from different parts of the plant were extracted and employed for biodiesel production. Al₂O₃-CaO nanocatalyst was synthesized by the classical Sol-gel method, characterized by XRD, HR-SEM, and was applied for biodiesel production. In transesterification, the influence of methanol-lipid was evaluated by varying the ratio from 1:6 to 1:16, and the FAME converted yield was calculated to be 60% using Gas chromatography. The biomass was subjected to lipid extraction and was then used for the synthesis of AgNPs, analyzed through the UV-Visible absorption spectrum, XRD, HR-SEM, and SAED. AgNPs of *Pedalium murex* plant extract were examined for their antimicrobial activity against various bacterial pathogens such as *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Klebsiella pneumonia*, *Bacillus subtilis* and *Escherichia coli*. AgNPs showed the best antibacterial activity against *E. coli* at 5.0 mM concentration. This study is promising in the identification of a cheap source for biodiesel production with the added advantage of antimicrobial drug formulation from the medicinal plant *Pedalium murex*.

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1. Introduction

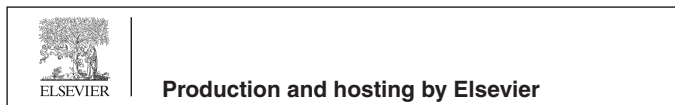
Biodiesel has the great alternation instead of fossil fuel and great attention because of environmental compatibility and biodegradability (Aarthy et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2012; Reyer et al., 2014). *P. murex* is a member of Pedaliaceae commonly known as 'Gokshru' and is distributed throughout the world including, India, Srilanka, Paksistan and Africa (Patel et al., 2011). The plant materials were utilized by local people as an analgesic and

antipyretic (Patel et al., 2011). Because of its important biological activities, medicinal applications and high lipid content in various parts of *P. murex*, we had chosen it as a suitable candidate for biomass utilization (SHARMA, n.d.). Evaluation of dietary effects of *P. murex* ethanolic extract was reported to be 9.5 kcal/g (Jobling, 1983; Ojha et al., 2014). Bligh and dyer method was applied with simple modifications such as the reduced quantity of solvent and obtained the maximum amount of lipids from different parts (leaf, stem, and callus) of *P. murex* (Ewald et al., 1998). The heterogeneous catalyst alumina supported calcium oxide was used in this study and was classically synthesized by a sol-gel method as described by Umdu et al. (2009). Among the solid base catalysts, CaO is economical with several advantages such as long catalytic lifetime, mild reaction conditions, high basicity, high activity and uses as a potent catalyst for effective synthesis of biodiesel (Wu et al., 2012). Adding Al₂O₃ as a supportive material will increase catalytic activity by many folds, especially suitable stability and dispersion properties with surface-enhanced

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reactant interactions (Galadima and Muraza, 2014). Whereas the Al_2O_3 -CaO system yields the most promising activity because of higher basicity and site concentration (Umdu et al., 2009). The solid biomass (after lipid extraction) was utilized to synthesize silver nanoparticles (AgNPs). AgNPs possess antibacterial activity against types of pathogens because of Ag ions (Arokiyaraj et al., 2015; Moosavi et al., 2015; Valsalam et al., 2019a, 2019b; Gurusamy et al., 2019). In this study, the antimicrobial potential of synthesized AgNPs were screened against highly pathogenic bacteria such as, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Escherichia coli*, *Bacillus subtilis* and *Klebsilla pneumonia*. This study detailed an optimized extraction of lipid content from different parts (leaf, stem and callus) of the commonly denoted traditional plant (*P. murex*) for the production of biodiesel catalyzed by Al_2O_3 -CaO. The remaining biomass (after lipid extraction) was utilized for the synthesis of AgNPs with antibacterial potentiality.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Preparation of catalyst and analytical technique

In this study catalyst was prepared as suggested by Yoldas (1975) and was used to synthesize CaO doped Al_2O_3 using Aluminum isopropoxide and Calcium nitrate as a precursor with 1:1 ratio. 10.2 g of Aluminum isopropoxide was added into 50 ml of 0.5 M HNO_3 , where placed in a reflux condenser with a silicon oil magnetic stirrer heating reactor at 85 °C for 1 h. To this, 8.2 g of Calcium nitrate was carefully added and continuously stirred till the formation of the gelly mixture. After 2 h of stirring, excess water was removed, and the gel was dried for 18 h at 120 °C and calcined for 6 h at 500 °C. The crystalline nature of synthesized catalysts were analyzed through X-ray diffraction and average crystalline size were calculated by debye scherrer equation. The foremost identifications and surface morphology characters of synthesized nanocatalyst was investigated by using High-resolution Scanning electron microscope (HR-SEM) incorporated with Energy-dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (EDAX).

2.2. Lipid extraction

P. murex plant was collected near the science campus of Alagappa University, Karaikudi Tamil Nadu, India (latitude: 10.094004, longitude: 78.785493). *P. murex* contains high lipid content ranging from 21 mg/gfw (milligram per gram fresh weight of tissues) in leaf, 32 mg/gfw in stem and 19 mg/gfw in callus (SHARMA, n.d.) were individually extracted as described by Kumari et al. (2011) with simple modification. All the analysis was made with 4 g of ground plant tissues. Using this method, lipids were successfully extracted from all parts of the *P. murex* plant and were transesterified by using Al_2O_3 -CaO nanocatalyst. The biomass was washed with double distilled water after lipid extraction distilled water, further air dried and used for AgNPs synthesis for potential antibacterial application.

2.3. Transesterification of *P. murex* and FAME analysis

Transesterification process was mainly affected by reaction temperature, reaction time, methanol to oil molar ratio and catalyst concentration (Banković-Ilić et al., 2017; Baskar et al., 2017; Baskar and Soumiya, 2016; Sivaprakash et al., 2019; Zabeti et al., 2010). Optimization of different parameters were carried for FAME production like methanol-oil ratio from 1:6, 1:8, 1:10, 1:12, 1:14 & 1:16, different catalyst concentration from 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 & 30 wt % with reaction time frame of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7 h and different temperatures ranged between 40 °C and 90 °C with 10 °C interval.

Methanol and lipid content were mixed vigorously in the reflux container under magnetic stirrer; Al_2O_3 -CaO composite was gradually added to the above mixer. 2 ml of formaldehyde was added to 2 ml of supernatant and was characterized by gas chromatography (Shimadzu 2010, Japan). This instrument was equipped with a capillary column (105 m, 0.32 mm ID, 0.20 μm film thickness) and detected using a Flame ionization detector (FID). Injector temperature was maintained as 225 °C, whereas detector temperature was adjusted as 250 °C, respectively. 1 μl of the sample was carefully injected onto a FAMES-RTX-2330 column (105.0 m length) using split mode (35:1) and the flow rate was 184.9 ml/min. GC solution software was used for a combination of peak areas and FAME was identified with internal standards.

2.4. Synthesis of AgNPs from remaining *P. murex* biomass

1 g of dried biomass (leaf, stems & callus) was kept in 30 ml of distilled water at 80 °C for 20 min. AgNO_3 was prepared at 1 mM concentration and was kept on magnetic stirrer for about 2 h at 80 °C for continuous stirring. Then, 10 ml of different extracted leaf biomass was added slowly with continuous stirring. The same procedure was followed to extract from stem and callus. AgNPs formation was confirmed by the appearance of brown color. *P. murex* contains various phytochemicals, including flavonoids, phenolics, terpenoids, glycosides and saponins and these phytochemicals involved in AgNPs synthesis (Sharma et al., 2012). Such functional groups provide a good reduction of silver ions to AgNPs (Vijayan et al., 2014). The maximum absorption spectra of the synthesized AgNPs were characterized using UV-Visible spectroscopy (Shimadzu, Japan) and X-ray diffraction analysis (X'Pert PRO analytical X-ray diffractometer). The size of the synthesized NPs and morphology was analyzed by HR-SEM images. AgNPs sample was dropped over carbon-coated copper grid with 200 mesh size and allowed to dry before observation. The functional components of AgNPs were detected by Fourier Transform infrared spectroscopy (FT-IR) between 400 and 4000 nm (Nicolet 380 FTIR spectrometer).

2.5. AgNPs and its antibacterial property

The synthesized AgNPs were tested for its antibacterial activity at three different concentrations (5 $\mu\text{g/ml}$, 10 $\mu\text{g/ml}$, and 15 $\mu\text{g/ml}$) against bacterial cultures (*K. pneumonia*, *B. subtilis*, *E. coli* and *S. aureus*) procured from MTCC. In this study, Mueller Hinton Agar was used for the determination of antibacterial activity as described by Ruparelia et al. (2008). All plates were incubated at 37 °C for 24 h and inhibitory activities were observed. The results were compared with standard antibiotics.

3. Results and discussion

To the best of our knowledge, there is no report on the biodiesel production from *P. murex* by using heterogeneous catalysts. In this study, Al_2O_3 and CaO_4 were synthesized individually, compared with Al_2O_3 -CaO and XRD pattern is described Fig. 1. Fig. 1(a) shows Al_2O_3 -CaO mixed metal oxide. Al_2O_3 and CaO_4 were perfectly matched with ICDD card no: 000020921, 000210155, respectively (Fig. 1b and c).

The peak broadening, average particle size of Al_2O_3 , CaO_4 and Al_2O_3 -CaO were calculated by Debye-Scherrer formula, Al_2O_3 having particle size of 30 nm is formed in hexagonal crystal system, CaO_4 pure and Al_2O_3 -CaO were amorphous in nature, thus particle size were 20–30 nm. Small peaks integration (>5 nm) (Umdu et al., 2009) in XRD is improbable and thickness of crystalline substance must be large to calculate the average size of CaO and Al_2O_3 -CaO.

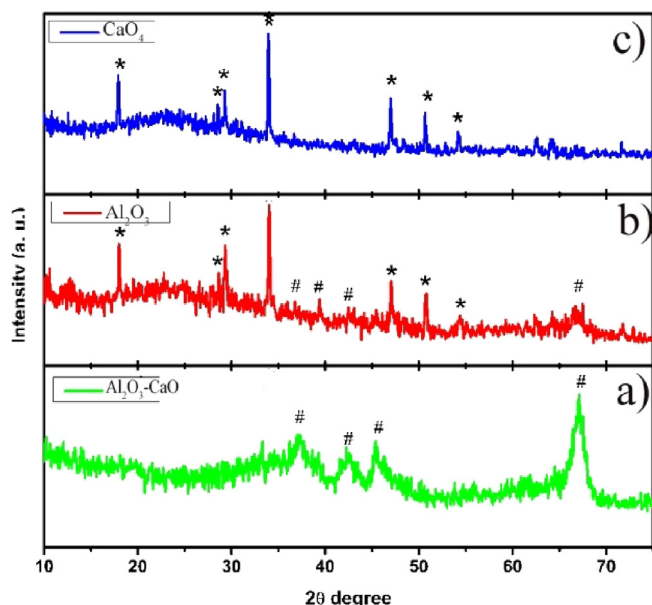


Fig. 1. a) XRD Pattern of Al_2O_3 -CaO nanocomposite b) CaO c) Al_2O_3 nanocomposite.

In our study we observed spherical rod-shaped mixed oxide catalyst in HR-SEM (Fig. 2), but it could not be observed in XRD.

Heterogeneous basic catalysts will selectively yield higher products than other catalysts in free fatty acids and the yield of biodiesel will decrease when froth formation occurs (Lam et al., 2010). Some recent research were achieved as high as 94% FAME yield from the composites of Al_2O_3 revealed the presence of metal oxides like $\text{LiNO}_3/\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$, $\text{NaNO}_3/\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$, $\text{CrOx}/\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$, $\text{MoOx}/\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$, $\text{WOx}/\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ and $\text{MoOx}/\text{P-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ (Satyarthi, 2011) furthermore those materials demands calcinations at $<450^\circ\text{C}$ (Kumar et al., 2012). Water component reacts with alkyl esters forming carboxylic acids that react with alkaline metals, resulting in sodium or potassium salts (soap formation) which in turn reduces alkyl ester yield and makes recovery of glycerol complicated (Freedman et al., 1986). In a study, Noiroj et al. (2009) used palm oil under transesterification process by using 25 wt% of KOH loaded Al_2O_3 catalyst yields 91% conversion at 70°C from methanol to oil molar ratio of 1:15. Mixed catalyst of CaO and ZnO were studied with very large surface area and small particle size to increase the FAME yield up to 94% from 10% wt of catalysts at 60°C with an hour of incubation (Ngamcharussrivichai et al., 2008). Zabeti et al. (2009) used Al_2O_3 - CaO composite catalyst in transesterification process in palm

oil and showed significant positive effects on the presence of calcium oxide. In another study, similarly synthesized CaO catalysts were utilized for transesterification from Jatropha oil and yield 95% (Hawash and Diwani, 2011). CaO nanocatalysts consist of high surface area associated with nanocrystalline nature, which enhances the reaction kinetics (Banković-Ilić et al., 2017).

Mixed catalyst of CaO and ZnO were studied with small particle size and higher surface area to increase the FAME yield up to 94% from 10% wt of catalysts at 60°C with an hour of incubation (Ngamcharussrivichai et al., 2008).

The size and shape of metal oxide CaO , Al_2O_3 and composite Al_2O_3 - CaO was determined. The particle size of the Al_2O_3 - CaO was 25–30 nm (99%), specific surface area (SSA) was 70–82.74 m^2/g and active site concentration was 190 $\mu\text{mol}/\text{g}$ conducted by TPD- CO_2 test method.

In the optimization of transesterification reaction, methanol to oil molar ratio leads a major role in FAME conversion. Transesterification requires 3 mol concentration of methanol to get yield the same amount of fatty acids and one mol of glycerol in stoichiometry ratio (Baskar and Soumiya, 2016). Catalyst concentration induces the reaction rate; oil molar ratio deals the impacts in reaction reversible, reaction temperature control the evaporation of methanol and nanocatalysts methyl ester conversion is directly proportional to reaction time (Maceiras et al., 2011; Baskar et al., 2017). Reaction was carried using various molar ratios (1:6, 1:8, 1:10, 1:12, 1:14 & 1:16) under the conditions of varying catalyst concentration (5, 10, 15, 20, 25 & 30 wt%), incubation temperatures (40°C – 90°C) and reaction time (2, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7 h). The Optimization of various parameters (Effect of conversion in oil molar ratio, Catalysts wt %, Temperature $^\circ\text{C}$, Time h) on FAME conversion from *P. murex* lipid was mentioned in Table 1.

CaO has been used recognized as catalyst for transesterification process (Banković-Ilić et al., 2017). Catalyst concentration enhances the conversion yield in the transesterification process. While increasing the wt % of catalysts results in a significantly increased quantity of biodiesel yield. Highest biodiesel conversion was recorded at 25 wt% of catalyst, a higher amount of catalyst made a slurry-like substance that required increased stirring with more power consumption (Ayeter et al., 2015). Moreover, the reusability of catalysts was also checked for 25 wt% of catalysts after transesterification and delivered good performance for further two tests.

After completion of the reaction, supernatant (methyl esters) was collected and a similar amount of *ortho*-phosphoric acid was added and thereafter characterized by Gas chromatography. The stability of the catalyst must be good in the reusability concept (Baskar et al., 2017).

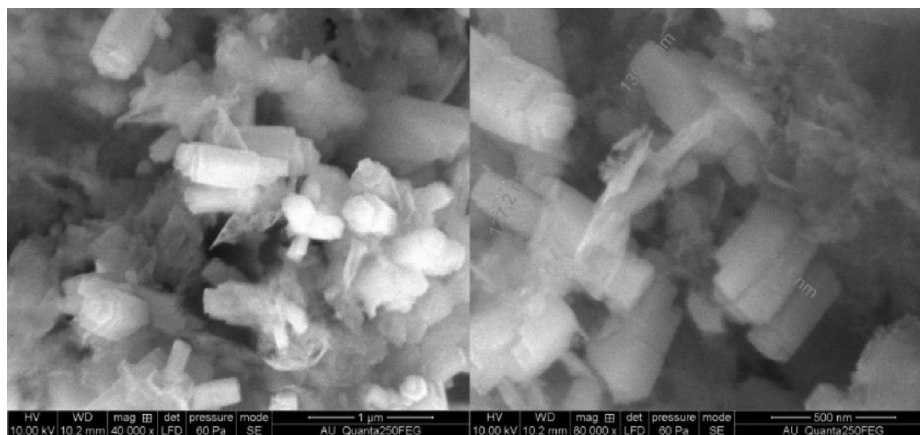


Fig. 2. HR-SEM results of Al_2O_3 - CaO nanocomposite.

Table 1
Optimization of various parameters (oil molar ratio between 1:6–1:16, catalysts between 5 and 25 wt%, temperature between 40 and 90 °C, time between 2 and 7 h) on FAME yield and triglyceride conversion from *P. murex* lipid.

Oil molar ratio	1:6																1:8																1:10																1:12																1:14																1:16																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																										
	Catalysts Wt %	Temp °C/6h	Time (h)/80 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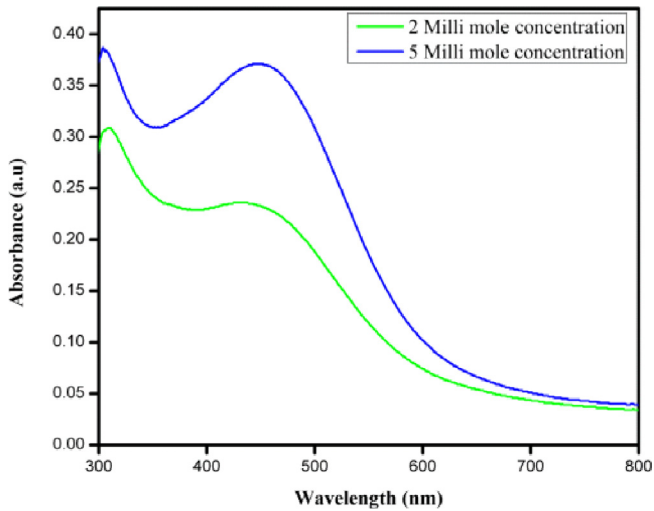


Fig. 4. UV-Vis spectra of silver nanoparticles synthesized from left over biomass of *P. murex*.

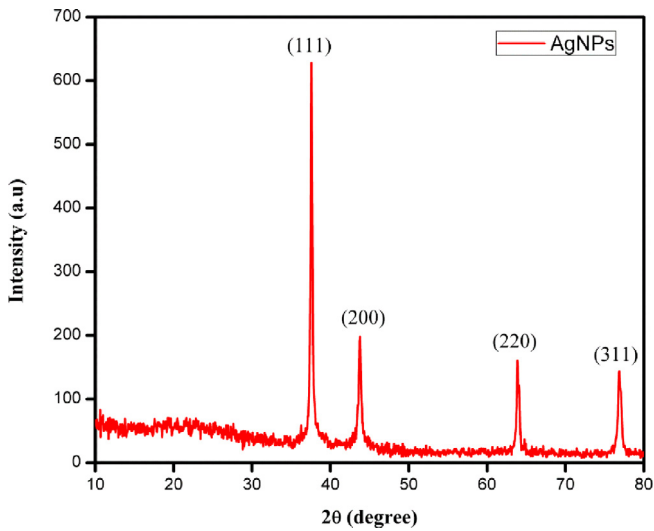


Fig. 5. XRD Pattern of silver nanoparticles synthesized from left over biomass of *P. murex* extract.

The observed lattice parameters were 111, 200, 220, 311, and 222 confirms the cubic silver (Fig. 5).

The calculated lattice constant was perfectly matched with ICDD card number: 01-087-0718. It suggests the formation of AgNPs from the *P. murex* extract and emphatically proved the crystalline phase presence in HR-SEM (Fig. 6). EDAX (energy dispersive X-ray analysis) (Fig. 7) of the AgNPs sample showed the existence of silver (Ag) element in the sample, moreover, other peaks shown are from the substrate, because of the diffusion of high-energy X-rays inside the sample.

From the results of Fourier Transform infrared spectroscopy, the broad spectrum clearly shows the peak shift at 3428 cm^{-1} shows O-H stretching frequency mainly due to free hydroxyl groups in the sample. Also, a broad spectrum was observed at 1635 cm^{-1} due to carboxylic acid group. At 1049 cm^{-1} , a band was observed which confirmed the presence of alcohol groups and C-OH vibrations (Fig. 8). AgNPs showed potent activity against *K. pneumonia*, *B. subtilis*, *E. coli* and *S. aureus* (Fig. 9). The inhibitory effect of AgNPs on Gram-positive and Gram-negative bacteria was described in Table 3.

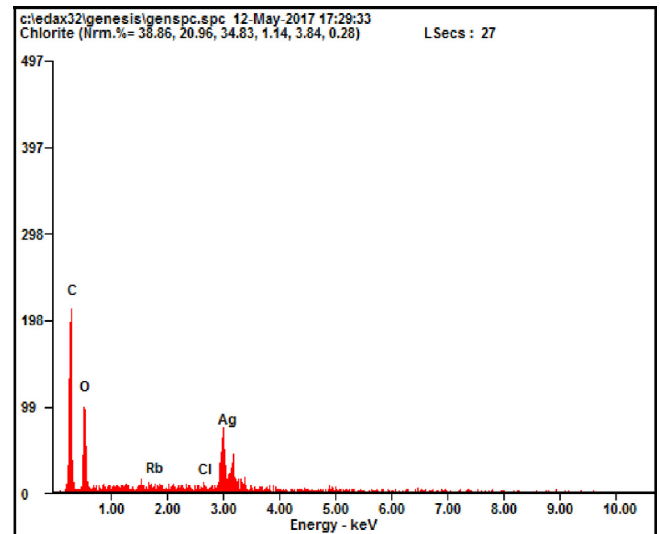


Fig. 7. EDAX results of synthesized silver nanoparticles.

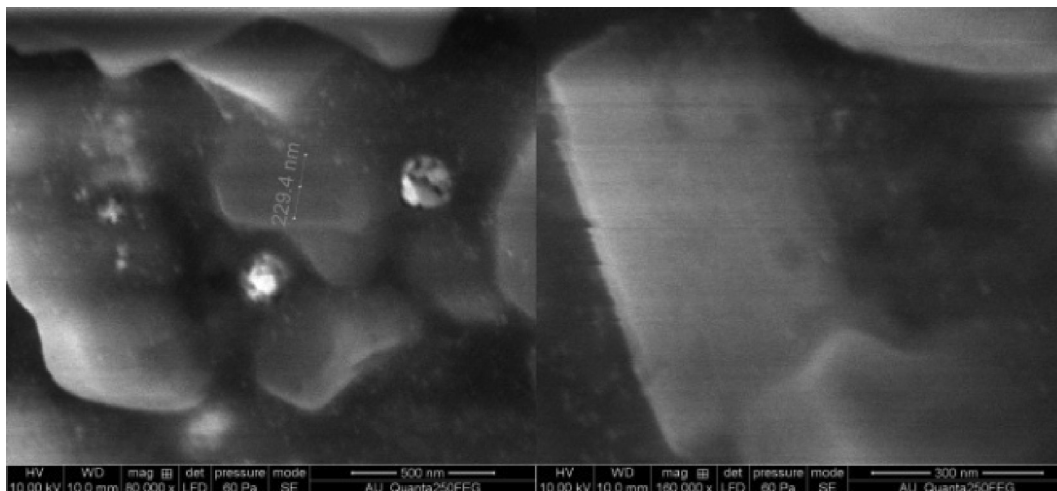


Fig. 6. HR-SEM images of silver nanoparticles synthesized from left over biomass of *P. murex*.

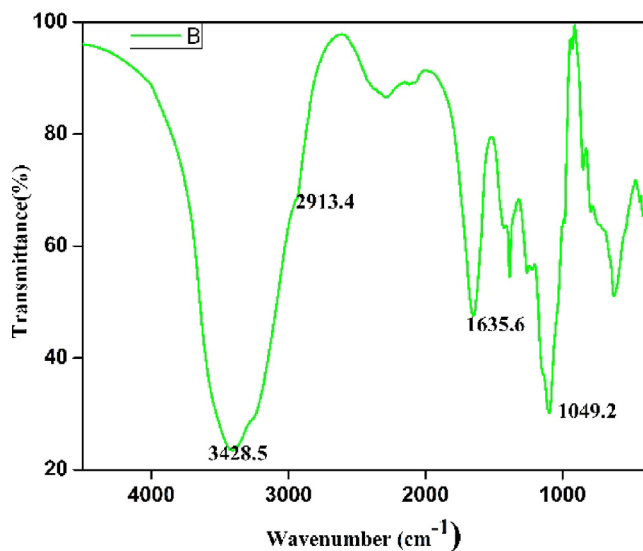


Fig. 8. FT-IR results of AgNPs synthesized from the leftover *P. murex* extract.

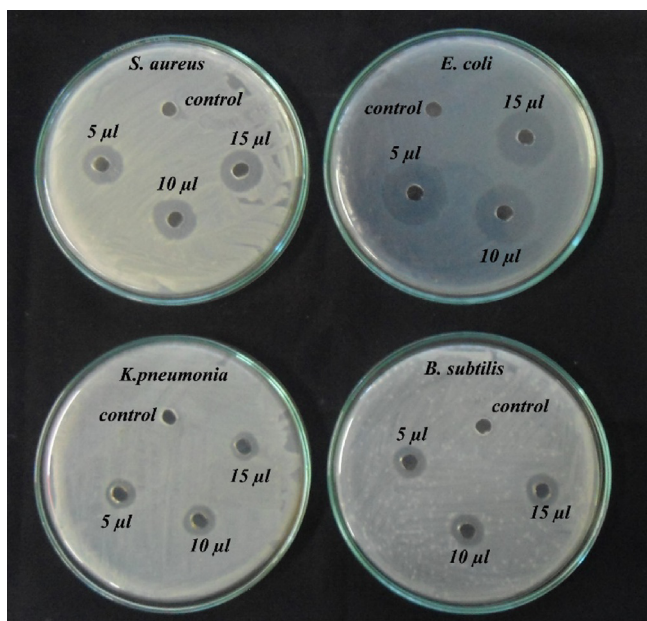


Fig. 9. Antibacterial efficiency of synthesized silver nanoparticles.

Antibacterial activity was found to be high against Gram-negative *E. coli* (11 mm); this maximum inhibition is due to the penetration of NPs through cell membrane in Gram negative

bacterial cell walls and makes penetration much easier when compared with gram positive bacteria (Shrivastava et al., 2010; Al-Dhabi and Ghilan, 2019; Al-Dhabi et al., 2018) But the mechanism of inhibition behind the antibacterial ability of AgNPs is not yet fully elucidated (Shao et al., 2015; Rajkumari et al., 2019; Arasu et al., 2019) AgNPs release Ag⁺ ions and these ions bind enzymes and proteins of the cell surface of bacteria and suppress cell division and replication cause bacterial cell death (Franchini et al., 2014). AgNPs exhibits less impact on Gram-positive bacteria than Gram-negative bacteria resulting in the destruction of *E. coli* cell membrane or wall integrity (Tang et al., 2013).

4. Conclusions

Summary illustrates the environmental prosperity of biodiesel production using lipid extracted from *P. murex*. The reaction was performed by applying Al₂O₃-CaO nanocatalysts synthesized by sol-gel method. It was obtained maximum lipid extraction of 21 mg/gfw from leaf, 32 mg/gfw from stem and 19 mg/gfw from callus and was utilized for biodiesel production. We also found that Al₂O₃-CaO nanocomposite is a promising candidate for highly efficient catalytic activity rather than pure Al₂O₃, CaO₄. A 60% conversion was attained at 1:14 oil molar ratio with 25 wt% catalysts loading at incubation of 80 °C and 6 h of reaction time. The remaining biomass (after lipid extraction) was utilized for the synthesis of cubic AgNPs as a potential biogenic antibacterial drug. The synthesized AgNPs showed maximum zone of inhibition against *E. coli*. Thus we conclude *P. murex*, a common medicinal plant in India, has potential for large scale production of biodiesel in the presence of Al₂O₃-CaO catalysts and the leftover biomass proved to be a suitable substrate for synthesis of AgNPs which acts as an efficient antibacterial agent.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Table 3
Antibacterial activities of AgNPs synthesized from leftover *P. murex* extract.

S.No	Pathogens	Zone of inhibition (mm) of 5 mol concentration of synthesized AgNPs			Ag ⁺ & culture Positive control	Zone of inhibition of commercial antibiotics							
		5 µl	10 µl	15 µl		Tetracycline	Ampicillin	Clindamycin	Gentamicin	Teicoplanin	Vancomycin	Erythromycin	Penicillin
1.	<i>S. aureus</i>	5	6	8	7	17	20	–	25	10	–	25	–
2.	<i>E. coli</i>	9	10	11	9	–	15	–	20	20	–	10	–
3.	<i>B. subtilis</i>	6	7	7	7	10	17	–	25	10	–	25	–
4.	<i>K.pneumoniae</i>	5	6	7	6	15	10	–	15	–	–	20	–

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