



PHYCOBILLIPROTEINS AND ITS ECONOMIC VALUES – AN OVERVIEW

R Devika*

Department of Biotechnology, AarupadaiVeedu Institute of Technology, Vinayaka Missions Research Foundation, Paiyanoor 603104
*Corresponding Author

AK Ramya

Department of Microbiology, Aarupadai Veedu Medical College and Hospital, Vinayaka Missions Research Foundation, Pondicherry

ABSTRACT

Marine ecosystem plays an important role in the country's economy for its valuable resources and top listed in the productivity environment. The plants and algae are known for its medicinal values and they are used in the primary health care and the bioactive compounds are proven to have therapeutic values. The special properties of phycobiliproteins are photosensitizer, chemical and thermal stability at varied pH. Phycobiliproteins extracted from macro and micro algae has wide applications in various industrial sectors like food, colourant, medicine, analytical sensing, pharmaceutical industries etc.

KEYWORDS : Seaweeds, bioactive compound, feedstock, phycoerythrin, phycobiliprotein, therapeutic value

INTRODUCTION

Our Indian subcontinent comprises of 7500 km coastline with 2.5 million km² Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and they account for the intergral part of the economy of our country. The primary and secondary metabolites from marine organisms has become a fascinating subject and active research are recorded across the globe^[1]. Exploration in Gulf of Mannar (Indian coast) recorded various marine resources which have highly potent applications in various industrial sectors^[2].

Marine ecosystem are distinctive ecosystem functions such as much in three aspects like social, biological & economic significance and are reported as the most productive environment in the world^[3-5]. Marine plants are an important part of the natural richness of developing countries and provide a significant contribution to the health care systems in those countries. They play a vital role in providing primary health care facilities and services to persons living in rural areas for traditional and modern medicines, they function as important therapeutic agents. The bioactive compounds from marine seaweeds and microalgae have recorded to have significant potential (active compounds) which is to be unexploited thoroughly^[6-8].

Seaweeds And Its Bioactive Compounds

Few marine microalgae and seaweeds are exploited for many products in various sectors. *Gelidiumsequipedale* (red algae) is used for agar production^[9], bioactive products obtained from plants and algae are used in food processing^[10,11].

Microalgae possess unusual lipid compounds which are proposed to be biorefinery feedstock and added value for fine chemicals and fuels^[12-15], lipids are used as aquaculture feeds^[16], biodiesel production^[17,18], supplement for human^[19,20]. Though, agar extraction process from microalgae generate huge amount of by-products which are potential fertilizer^[21]. *Gelidiumsequipedale* are rich in low molecules weight carbohydrates, proteins, mycosporine like amino acids (MAA), fatty acid, phenols, flavonoids etc. and proved to be potent nutritional value and posses biological activities like antioxidant, antimicrobial, anti inflammatory, cytotoxic etc^[22-24].

Red algae (Rhodophyta) are rich with phycobiliproteins (PBPs) which are non toxic, water soluble, strong absorbance, fluorescence property, free radical scavenging, antioxidant etc^[25-27]. PBPs are present in thylakoids membrane of seaweed's chloroplast which are very valuable in industries and has wide biotechnological applications^[28]. The extraction process requires appropriate solvents and cell disruption methods^[29].

Phycobiliprotein comprises of Phycoerythrin (R-PE), Allophycocyanin (APC), Phycocyanin (R-PC) in which the Rhodophyceae is rich with R-PE and whereas cyanophyceae registered C-PC^[30,31]. R-PE was purified from ten different seaweeds from the coast of Kilakarai, Gulf of Mannar^[32] and it is listed in the Table I.

Phycobiliproteins are photosynthetic light harvesting andwater soluble proteins present in red, cryptomonads, cyanelles and cyanobacteria (covalently bound via cysteine amnio acid chromophores known as phycobillin – an open chain chromophore^[33-35]. These proteins allows the transfer of light which cannot be used in photosynthetic mechanism (Chlorophyll a) and maintains the survival of the organisms even at low light^[36] and the phycobilisome reacts as energetic funnel to reaction centers^[37]. The phycobiliprotein is composed of α and β subunits with 2 or 3 chromophores (Phycoerythrobilin - PEB)^[38,39], phycocyanobilin (PCB) and phycobiliviolin (PVB)^[38]. Phycobiliproteins differ in amino acid sequences and divided into four types as phycoerythrin (PE), Phycoethyrocyanin, allophycocyanin listed in the Table II^[39,40].

Because of the high solubility and stability^[41] nature of phycobiliprotein are used in various industrial sectors such as additives in pharmaceutical formulation^[42], fluorescent label probe^[43], colouringagent^[44], as anti oxidant and anti cancer^[45-47].

Methods Of Extraction And Quantification

Red algae collected should be subjected to repeated washing with salt water (35% w/v) to remove the contaminants. Various extraction processes were reported such as maceration, ultrasound assisted, extraction and high pressure assisted extraction^[48,49].

Maceration

The algal biomass (100 mg) has to be suspended in phosphate buffer concentration (0.01 M < C < 1 M, pH 6.8) at different biomass : buffer ratio (R) (V_{buffer} = 0.5-5ml, 1.5 < R < 1:50) and homogenized using magnetic stirrer or motor and pestle at room temperature at different duration (5 min < 30 min). Even efficient phycoerythrin extraction was obtained using sodium phosphate buffer at pH 6.8^[50,51].

Ultrasound Assisted Extration

Biomass along with buffer suspension can be placed in ultrasonic bath or sonicator with an ultrasonic probe (ultrasonic pulse on & off 30/20S) at different time intervals. The sample is cooled in an ice bath to avoid overheating^[51].

High Pressure Assisted Extraction

Biomass in 0.1M buffer suspension is placed in vacuum sealing bags and extraction has to be carried out at different time intervals (5min < 12 < 30 min) at different pressures (0.1 MPa < P < 600 MPa).

Phycobiliprotein Quantification

R-Phycocyanin (PC) and R-Phycocyanin (PC) quantification studies can be performed using Bear and Eshel, 1985 equations and the absorption spectra can be measured between 200-900 nm using UV-VIS spectrometer

$$PE (PE/g) = (A564 - A592) - (A455 - A592) \times 0.2 \times 0.12$$

$$PC (PC/g) = (A618 - A645) - (A592 - A645) \times 0.5 \times 0.15$$

Purity index of the extract can be determined by Mensi and Romdhane, 2014.

$$PI = A564 / A230 \text{ (564 for PE and A280 for total protein)}$$

Response Surface Methodology (RSM)

A statistical model for optimization studies and evaluation of variable effects of PE can be determined by RSM yield from maceration and ultrasonic waves.

Extraction Of Phycobiliproteins From Microalgae

The economic value and its broad range of applications of phycobiliproteins involve efficient extraction and purification techniques such as cell disruption, pigment release, extraction and purification^[52]. The cell disruption and release of pigments are maceration, ultrasound, microwave and freeze thaw under mechanical treatments. Other extraction processes are solid-liquid extraction (Specific solvents) enzymatic hydrolysis or combination of mechanical and chemical treatments^[53]. Through maceration process *Gracilaria gracilis* yielded 3.53 mg g⁻¹^[54], *Gelidium pusillum* yielded 1.19 mg g⁻¹, respectively^[55]. Through ultrasound assisted method the yield of phycobiliproteins from *Gracilaria gracilis*, *Gelidium pusillum*, *Grateler paturuturu*, *Porphyridium cruentum* were 1.57 mg g⁻¹, 0.16 mg g⁻¹, 3.6 mg g⁻¹ and 69 µg g⁻¹, respectively^[54-56,12]. Through enzymatic hydrolysis *Palmaria palmate* and *Gracilaria verrucosa* yielded 3.28 g Kg⁻¹ dw, 6.25 mg g⁻¹ of phycobiliproteins, respectively^[57,58]. *Spirulina maxima* yielded 0.8 mg ml⁻¹ of Phycocyanin {PE} and 11.3 mg ml⁻¹ of Phycocyanin {PC}, respectively through ultrasonication^[59,60] and *Spirulina platensis* yielded 0.75 gL⁻¹ of PC through combination of mechanical agitation and thermal heating^[61]. Through microwave assisted process *Porphyridium cruentum* reported to yield 73.7 µg mg⁻¹ and 34.8 µg mg⁻¹ of PE and PC, respectively^[62].

Purification Of Phycobiliproteins From Microalgae

Purification process involves combination of techniques and the purity index is expressed as A565 nm/ A280nm ratio^[63] wherein for protein is 0.7 on food grade, 3.9 as reactive grade and > 4.0 as analytical grade^[64]. Precipitation method of ammonium sulfate (two steps with 20% and 40%) before chromatographic separation removes amino acids^[65] and achieved high PE purity of 5 in *Porphyridium marinum* algae and PE purity with 55% ammonium sulfate precipitation from red algae^[66]. *Portierahoren emannti* and *Porphyridium cruentum* with 5.1^[67]. Gel filtration with Sephacryl S 300 followed by anion exchange chromatography in *Lyngbyaax boricola* and *Synechococcus Sps.* had purity index of 5.2 and 3.4, respectively^[68,69].

Expanded bed and anion exchange chromatography in *Pyropiahai tanensis* yielded 247.13 mg L⁻¹ of PE with purity index^[70]. Hydroxyapatite (as adsorbent) in chromatography and precipitation with ammonium sulfate yielded 5.5 PE and 5.1 PC from *Porphyra ezoensis*^[71,72]. Purification and extraction recovery of PE and PC from microalgae is tabulated in the Table III.

Applications Of Phycobiliproteins

The phycobiliproteins because of its specific characteristics

and properties like stability, bioactivity and biocompatibility they are employed/ utilized in various industrial sectors like food, textile, cosmetics and pharmaceutical sectors^[72,73].

Phycobiliproteins In Analytic Sensing

Luminescent nanospore conjugated with phycocyanin is employed to detect mycelperoxides (a protein) that causes inflammation related diseases^[74] and also Ochratoxin A and Zearalenone can be detected through quantitative fluorescence image analysis^[75]. Phycocyanin is used to detect transcription factor^[76], toxic elements in effluent samples^[77,78], mercury in the environment^[79] etc., respectively. Phycocyanin has recorded the maximum stability effect among the phycobiliprotein due to its γ subunits^[80-82] when combining with sunlight harvesting solar optical temperature sensors^[83].

Phycobiliproteins In Pharmaceutical Applications

Report on antioxidant activity with phycocyanin isolated from *Anabaena Sps.* proved to be efficient against DPPH (2,2-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl) and ABTs (2,2'-azinobis-3-ethylbenzothiazoline-6-sulfonic acid) in rats where it attenuated the liver structural deformation caused by CCL₄^[84,85] and PE also effective against age related diseases in addition to antioxidant activator. R-PE has proved to be effective in anti-inflammatory, immunomodulation, repair damaged mucosa, regulation of immune functions etc^[86,87]. Phycobiliproteins behave photosensitizers^[88] agents to destroy cancer cells and C-PE is an effective therapeutic agent against Alzheimers disease^[89,90].

Phycobiliproteins In Food Applications

Phycobiliproteins act as natural food colorants because of its high stability and wide range of pH (4-10)^[91,92]. Phycocyanin is a natural red colourant, allophycocyanin and phycocyanin are used in commercial devices such as Lehar soda, 7up and TATA mineral water and it is proved to retain the colour for 30 days. Phycobiliproteins along with addition of acid/ salt / sucrose prevents denaturation denaturation and therefore add as preservatives in production of citric acid, calcium chloride, sodium chloride and sucrose^[93]. Thermokinetic stability of PC and PE extracted from *Nostoc Sps.* has proved to be citric acid, ascorbic acid and calcium chloride^[94]. PE and PC isolated from *Atacama cyanobacteria* recorded chemical stability at pH 5-8 at 50°C^[95,96].

CONCLUSION

The use of PBP has numerous applications in the current state of science. These skills aid in the development of numerous economic sectors, including as the food, colourant, pharmaceutical, and analytical sensing industries. The special properties of phycobiliproteins are photosensitizer, chemical and thermal stability at varied pH. Future developments in coastal seas and oceans, along with the development of red micro- and macroalgae marine cultures, should give rise to fresh stimuli for this.

Table I: Phycobiliprotein, Total Protein content from red algae

Red Algae	Phycobiliproteins (mg/g)			Total protein (%m/m)
	R-PE	R-PC	R-APC	
Portierio hornemanni	1.232	0.20	0.061	1.013
Hypneaespereri	0.416	0.18	0.046	0.461
Gelidiellaacerosa	0.545	0.19	0.062	0.928
Acanthoporaspicifera	0.421	0.34	0.121	1.061
Sarconemofiliforme	0.397	0.19	0.156	0.37
Laurensiapapillosa	0.182	0.36	0.043	0.981
Gelidiumpusillum	0.403	0.18	0.085	0.444
Gelidiumsalicornia	0.573	0.23	0.074	0.601
Acanthoporaspicifera	0.421	0.34	0.121	1.061

Table II: Characteristics features of types of phyco biliproteins

Types of Phycobiliproteins	Chemical Structure	Molecular weight	Absorption spectrum (nm)
Phycoerythrin	($\infty\beta$) ₆ Ycomplex	240	490-570
Phycoerthrocyanin	($\infty\beta$)	-	560-600
Phycocyanin	($\infty\beta$)	30	610-625
Allophycocyanin	($\infty\beta$)	104	650-660

Table III Purification and extraction recovery of PE and PC

Microorganism	Extraction Method	Purification methods	Extraction Recovery	
			PE A563/A280	PC A615/A280
Nostoc Sps.strain HKAR-2 71	50mM potassium PO ₄ buffer + Sonication + repeated freezing at pH 7.0	Sephaeryl Gel filtration chromatography + Dialysis + Precipitation (20 – 70% ammonium sulfate)	7.2	3.18
Nostoc Sps.strain HKAR-2 72	50mM potassium PO ₄ buffer + repeated freezing at pH7.0	Ammonium sulfate precipitation + Sepharyl Gel filtration chromatography + Hydrophobic interaction chromatography	97% recovery, y, 1.10 89% recovery, y, 6.37 83% recovery, y, 11.53	96% recovery, y, 0.92 80% recovery, y, 1.36 73% recovery, y, 5.75
Bangia atrorubra α69	50mM potassium PO ₄ buffer + Sonication at 7.2	35% saturated ammonium sulfate + ialysis + Sephadex G-200 + Reverse HPLC (RP-HPLC)	64.8% recovery, y, 2.47 91.3% recovery, y, 4.76 100% R 5.42	54.7% recovery, y, 0.77 68.3% recovery, y, 2.80 100% R 3.95
Porphyra ezoensis 41	10mM potassium PO ₄ buffer + freezing thawing at pH6.8	Expanded bed chromatography (Phenyl sepharose) Anion exchange C (DEAE-Sepharose)	0.96 mg g ⁻¹ 0.82 mg g ⁻¹	2.0 -2.5 4.5

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