

SHATAVARI (Asparagus Racemosus Willd.) - A BOON TO FEMALE HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda has the oldest and the most developed herbal system in the world. The herbs are viewed as the spiritual essence. *Shatavari* (*Asparagus racemosus* Willd.) is one amongst the millions of plants having multitude of benefits. However, in relation with female health, *Shatavari* holds a significant role. It serves as the *Ayurvedic* rejuvenative for women. It nourishes and cleanses the blood and the reproductive organs. Estrogen is one of the major hormones in females. Its deficiency leads to number of disorders in females. Chemical constituents of *shatavari* contribute to its estrogenic property. *Shatavari* has been mentioned by various *Acharyas* used in various preparations which are beneficial in various gynecological disorders, infertility as well as in restoring female health. An effort has been put forth to focus on the benefits of *Shatavari* in relation to female health.

Keywords: *Ayurveda*, *Shatavari*, female health

INTRODUCTION

Shatavari, or *Asparagus racemosus*, has been used for centuries in *Ayurveda* to support the reproductive system, particularly for females, and as a support for the digestive system, especially in cases of excess *pitta*. In Sanskrit it means “having one hundred roots” and also referred to as meaning “having one hundred husbands”. *Shatavari*'s name gives reference to its traditional use as a rejuvenative tonic for the female reproductive system. *Shatavari* is relied

on heavily for all stages of a woman's reproductive cycle, beginning with the menarche, supporting the female system through menses, ovulation and fertility, uterine strength during pregnancy, childbirth and ample lactation (flow and quantity of milk), and hot flashes, irritability, irregular memory and dryness during menopause. In *Ayurveda*, *Shatavari* is the primary uterine tonic.

AIM & OBJECTIVE

1. To study the *Ayurvedic* properties of *Shatavari*.
2. To collect and study all benefits of *Shatavari* concerned with female health as mentioned in the *Ayurvedic* treatises.

MATERIALS & METHODS

Table 1: *Ayurvedic* Properties:

Text	Rasa	Guna	Virya	Vipaka	Doshaghna
<i>Bhavaprakash</i> ¹	Madhura, tikta	Guru	Sheeta	-	Tridosha with rakta
<i>Raj Nighantu</i> ²	madhura	Hima	-	Tikta	Vata-kapha
<i>Kaideva Nighantu</i> ³	Tikta, madhura	Guru, snigdha	Sheeta	-	Vata-pitta
<i>Dhanwantari Nighantu</i> ⁴	Tikta, madhura	Hima	-	-	Vata-pitta

Gana:

Charaka – *Balya, Vayasthapana, madhuraskandha*

Sushruta- Vidarigandhadi, Katakapanchamula, pittaprashamana.

Kashyapa has given immense importance to *Shatavari* by keeping a chapter in *Kalpasthan* on its name i.e *Shatapushpa-shatavari kalpadhyaya*. He has described the qualities of *Shatavari* which is beneficial in various sorts of menstrual disorders and other gynecological problems.

Morphology:

It is a branched, scandent, spinous shrub with tuberous roots, found throughout India. Stem-woody, terete; branches- triquetrous, smooth and striate; spines-suberect or sub-curved, 6-12mm long; leaves-minute, scaling, bearing in their axils, tufts of axillary cladodes; flowers-racemes, white and minute; fruit- berry, globose, 4-6mm in diameter.

It is a conceptual study about *Shatavari* (*Asparagus Racemosus*) concerned with female health.

DESCRIPTION

Botanical name- *Asparagus racemosus Willd.*

Family- Liliaceae

Synonyms- *Bahusuta, Vari, Shatavirya, Narayani, Bhiru.*

Chemical Constituents:

- **Phyto-chemicals-** It includes saponin, flavonoids, iosgenins, glycosides, sistosterol, stigmasterol, sarsapogenin, sistosterol β-D-glucoside. Saponins (also known as shatavarins) and flavonoids are the main contributors towards the estrogen regulating properties of *Shatavari*.
- **Carbohydrates-** polysaccharides and mucilage.
- **Minerals-** Calcium, manganese and zinc in trace amounts.
- **Others-** Small amounts of vitamin A, B-complex and essential fatty acids.

Benefits of *Shatavari* in various phases of female health:

a) Menstrual disorders-

Kashyap mentioned the use of *Shatavari* in curing amenorrhoea, delayed menarche, excessive and heavy menstruation (menorrhagia, metrorrhagia, meno-metrorrhagia),

hypomenorrhoea, having improper menstrual flow.⁵

Vata dosha is responsible for all types of *yoni vyapad* (gynecological disorders). The “*guru*” and “*snigdha*” *guna* of *Shatavari* works well against *Vata*.

Charak, while describing about *Shaka varga*, have mentioned that the leaves of *Shatavari* is beneficial for *vata-pitta* disorders.⁶

Hence, these imply the utility of *Shatavari* in all sorts of gynecological disorders.

b) Infertility and recurrent abortion-

Shatavari is known to play a good role in treating infertility (*bandhyatwa*) and recurrent abortion (*garbhasrava and garbhapata*).

.....पथ्या पुष्पप्रजाकरी । (K.S/Ka/5/8)

Kashyap mentioned that *Shatavari* is congenial and brings menstruation and progeny.

Sushruta and *Kashyap*, both have mentioned that *Shatavari* has the quality of *vrishya* (aphrodisiac) which brings about vitality and hence helps in attaining conception.^{7,8}

c) Menopause-

Decrease in estrogen levels is certainly the most prominent reason for menopause related symptoms like hot flushes, insomnia, depression, irritability, dry vagina, urinary problems etc.

Kashyap have described the benefits of *Shatavari* in menopause, dry vagina, polyuria.⁹ It also possess *rasayana* property which is effective in restoring health and act as a rejuvenative.¹⁰

Shatavari is a hormone balancing herb along with potent anti-stress activity. Due to its *guru* and *snigdha* nature, it nourishes the female reproductive system from inside to relieve menopause symptoms. *Shatavari* is a phyto-estrogen rich herb.¹¹ Saponins (in the form of

shatavarins) and flavonoids (in the form of isoflavonoids) are phytoestrogens.

d) Lactation an Postpartum care:

During postpartum (after childbirth) stage, it improves the breast milk supply by increasing the level of prolactin hormone in lactating mothers.¹² Also, it relieves various postpartum symptoms like depression, hot flashes, constipation, excessive bleeding and insomnia due to *vatashamak* properties.

e) Other female health issues:

Shatavari improves *varna* (complexion), *oja* and *bala* (strength).¹³ This aids to improve body immunity, vigor and vitality.

Charaka have mentioned it under the *vayasthapana mahakashaya* thereby focusing on its rejuvenating and anti-ageing property.¹³

Shatavari forms the principle ingredient in many of the *Ayurvedic* formulations mentioned in the treatises which are basically indicated in various types of gynecological disorders and infertility issues which are as follows:

- *Shatavari Kalpa- Yoni Rogas (K.S/Ka/5/10-13)*
- *Shatavari Ghrita- Artava Vyapad (K.S/Ka/5/23-26)*
- *Jivantyadi Anuvasan Yamaka- Artava Vyapad (Ch/Si/4/9-11); (AS/Ka/5/30); (AH/Ka/4/59)*
- *Shatavaryadi Ghrita (oral, basti)- Asrigdara (Ha/Tri/10/51)*
- *Shatavari Narayan Taila- Bandhyatwa (YR/Vatavyadhi Chi.)*
- *Kamdev Ghrita- Bandhyatwa (Sha/Ma./9/27-32,35,37)*
- *Shatavaryadi Anuvasan basti- Bandhyatwa (Ch/Si/12/18)*
- *Narayan Taila- Bandhyatwa, vata rogas (Sha/Ma./9/101-112)*

- *Khandakadya louha*-helps to gain progeny, increases virility (*Bhav/Chi/75-89*)

Hence, it is evident that the use of *Shatavari* in relation to female reproductive health has been described exclusively by almost all the *acharyas* in their respective treatises. *Shatavari* is considered as one of the best drug in the aspect of female health, because it is mainly *vata-pittahara*. *Vata dosha* is mainly responsible for disturbance of the hypothalamus-pituitary-ovarian axis which leads to all sorts of gynecological disorders. Its *snigdha* and *guru guna* works against *vata* thereby proves to be efficacious in almost all sorts of *yoni rogas* and *artava dusti*.

Moreover, the chemical constituents present in *Shatavari* i.e Calcium, zinc are beneficial in pregnancy and menopause which are in a state of deficiency. The phytoestrogen present in it helps to build up the estrogen deficiency occurring in menopause. The isoflavonoids and calcium present in it are effective in menorrhagia as they prevent coagulopathy.

CONCLUSION

The nourishing properties of *Shatavari* used in the relation of the female reproductive system -a healthy female reproductive system, promotion of lactation, supporting already balanced female hormones, supportive of male reproductive system as well, promotion of healthy energy levels and strength, supporting the immune system, natural antioxidant properties.

Therefore, it is seen that *Shatavari* works as a wonder drug in restoring health as well as in various gynecological disorders suffered by most of the females in the present scenario. *Shatavari* also proves to be very efficacious in relieving the distress in menopausal women. It also may be included as a supplement in the antenatal period as well as for better lactation in

the postnatal period. Hence, it may be used an effective remedy in all sorts of female health issues as it has preventive as well as curative aspect and may be implemented exclusively in the health care system with minimal adverse effects.

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