



Review Article

AN OVERVIEW OF SHATAVARI (*ASPARAGUS RACEMOSUS*) AN AYURVEDIC DRUG

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ABSTRACT

Shatavari, *Asparagus racemosus* is one of the most important herbal drug used by Ayurvedic *Vaidyas* since ancient days. The drug is having wide range of therapeutic activity and mentioned as a *Rasayan* by ancient Ayurvedic texts. The main part used by Ayurvedic doctors is a root. It is mentioned as a tonic and having lactogenic function. *Shatavari* has also been successfully used by several Ayurvedic practitioners for Nervine disorders, Acid peptic diseases, certain infectious diseases and as a immunomodulant. Main use of this drug is in female disorders specially as a galactagogue and several menstrual disorders. Scientific fraternity is working on this drug at multidimensional level to prove this drug as a potent medicinal drug in multiple disorders. Various scientific studies are proved that this drug worked as a potent antitussive, antineoplastic, galactologue, antidiarrhoeal, and as immunomodulant. The main focus of this article is to review the scientific studies done on *A.racemosus* mainly on its phytochemistry, pharmacology, therapeutic uses mentioned in both modern sciences as well as in ancient Ayurvedic texts. Additional attempt is made to find the clinical studies done on *A.racemosus*. The present review article includes the detailed scientific exploration of root extract of *A.racemosus* in systematic way so that it can highlight future research prospects of this famous and commercially useful drug.

KEYWORDS: *Shatavari*, *Asparagus racemosus*, *Rasayan*, Galactagogue.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is gaining popularity worldwide. It has a very rich tradition of herbal medicines. The Ayurveda is totally natural remedy and its major base is herbal medicines. Now days Ayurveda started to become a mainstream healthcare system. Modern medicine is giving relief to the patients but at the cost of heavy side effects. So people are attracted towards Ayurvedic drugs specially herbs and herbal preparations from Ayurveda system. In last decade over the counter sale of herbal medicines has drastically increased. There are several popular herbal drugs are mentioned in Ayurvedic texts and their demand is increased both among Ayurvedic doctors as well as in common man. *Shatavari A. racemosus* is one of the most popular drug from Ayurveda stream. It is first described botanically in 1799.^[1] The genus *Asparagus* consisted of about 300 species around the world, out of which 22 species are recorded in India. *A. racemosus* is widely distributed across the globe and its distribution ranges from tropical Africa, Java, Australia, Sri Lanka, Southern parts of China and India, but it is mainly cultivated in India.^[2]

Shatavari is main *Rasayan* drug mentioned by Ayurvedic texts. It is also called as Queen of herb in folklore medicine. The drug is having wide range of therapeutic activity. The plant is easily available all over the India. It is considered as a rejuvenative for female like *Withania somnifera* for male. The drug is useful in several female reproductive system disorders. *A.racemosus* prevents aging, antitumor, useful in nervine disorders, and act as anti inflammatory agent. Ancient Ayurvedic texts claimed special use of this drug as a galactagogue and in abortion cases. *Charaka* mentioned use of root of *A.racemosus* as an aphrodisiac, in *Somaroga* as a uterine tonic as well as used in hepatopathy.^[3] Several Ayurvedic preparations of *A.racemosus* is readily available in the market. *A.racemosus* is one of the cost effective herbal drug. The major advantage of this drug is that it can be used both as a single drug as well as in polyherbal combination.

Background

A.racemosus was mentioned by various Ayurvedic texts like *Bhavparakash*, *Charak Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* and several *Nighnatu*.

Plant description

A.racemosus is readily available throughout India specially Himalaya region and Sri Lanka. The plant grows high up to 3 to 4 meters tall. The leaves are like pine needles, small and uniform and flowers are white and have small spikes. The plant belongs to genus *Asparagus*.



Figure 1: Plant of *Shatavari*



Figure 2: Root of *Shatavari*

Scientific classification

Kingdom: Plantae
 Clade: Angiosperms
 Clade: Monocots
 Order: Asparagales
 Family: Asparagaceae
 Subfamily: Asparagoideae
 Genus: *Asparagus*
 Species: *A. racemosus*

Habitat

Its habitat is common at low altitudes in shade and in tropical climate throughout Asia, Australia and Africa. Out of several species of

Asparagus grown in India *A.racemosus* is most useful in folk medicine.^[4]

Phytochemicals of *A.racemosus*

Shatavari known to have a wider range of phytochemical constituents which are mentioned as below.

Kaepfrol- Kaepfrol with Sarsopgenin can be isolated from tuberculous root of *A.Racemosus*^[5]

Saponins known as Shatavrins, Shatavarin I to VI present.^[6,7,8,9]

Furan compound- Racemofuran^[10]

Flavenoids- Glycosides of quercetin, rutin, and hyperoside and present in flower and fruits.^[11]

Sterols- Root contains sitosterols, 4-6-dihydroxy-2-O benzaldehyde and undecanoylcetanoate.^[12]

Polycyclic alkaloid- Asparagimne A.^[13]

Cyclic hydrocarbon- racemosol, dihydrophenanthrene.^[14]

Trace minerals such as Zinc, Copper, Cobalt, with calcium, potassium and selenium.^[15]

Essential fatty acids- Gamma linoleinic acids, Vitamin A and quercetin.^[16]

A.racemosus in Ayurvedic texts

Synonyms

Shatavari, Vara, Narayani, Shatvha, Keshika, Laghuparnika, Shatvirya, Madhura, Shatpatrika, Vrukshya, Dipya.^[17]

Vernacular names^[18]

Sanskrit: *Shatavari*

Hindi: *Satavari, Shatawar or Satmuli*

Bengali: *Shatamuli*

Marathi: *Shatavari or Shatmuli*

Gujarati: *Satawari*

Rajasthan: *Norkanto or Satawar*

Telugu: *Toala-gaddalu*

Tamil: *Shimaishadavari or Inli-chedi*

Malayalam: *Chatavali*

Kannada: *Majjigegadde or Aheruballi*

Madhya Pradesh: *Narbodh or atmooli*

Gana- *Vayasthapan, Balya, Madhurskandha*^[19]

Kantakpanchmula, Pittashaman, Vidharigandhadi^[20]

Guna Karma

Guru, Shita, Rasayani, Medhangnivardhak, Snigdha, Netra, Atisarjit, Shukrastanykar, Balya, vrushya, Grahanijit^[21]

Guna as per Ayurvedic text

Rasa- Madhur Tikta,

Virya- Shit,

Vipak- Madhur^[22]

Ayurvedic Formulations of Shatavari

Shatavarighrut^[23]

Narayan tail^[24]

Bala Tail^[25]

Chyawanprash^[26]

Asparagus racemosus Scientific studies

Antitussive effect

Roots of *A.racemosus* methanolic extract at the dose of 200 and 400mg/kg showed very effective as an antitussive agent in mice. The study was a comparative study with standard antitussive drug called codeine phosphate.^[27]

Antiprotozoal activity

A.racemosus crude alcoholic extract in vivo is working as an inhibitory agent in growth of *Eintamoeba histolytica*.^[28]

Antihepatotoxic activity

A.racemosus alcoholic extract of root has been shown to significantly reduce the enhanced levels of alanine transaminase, aspartate transaminase and alkaline phosphate in carbon tetra chloride CCl₄ induced hepatic damage in rats indicating antihepatotoxic potential of *A. Racemosus*.^[29-30]

Antineoplastic activity

Fresh root of *A.racemosus* in Chloroform/methanol (1:1) extract of has been reported to reduce the tumor incidence in female rats. The report suggested it as a mammotropic or lactogenic.^[31] Influence of *A.racemosus* on normal as well as estrogen primed animals, which reflects it as the mammary epithelium refractory to the carcinogen.^[32,33]

Immunomodulatory activity

Immunomodulating property of *A.racemosus* has proved to protect the rat and mice against experimental induced abdominal sepsis.^[34-35] Percentage mortality of *A.racemosus* treated animals was founded significantly reduced while survival rate was comparable to that of the group treated with a combination of metronidazole and gentamicin. Since *A.racemosus* also act as a antibacterial action, so function offered by *A.racemosus* against sepsis by altering function of macrophages, indicating it's immunomodulatory property.^[34-35]

Immunoadjuvant potential activity

The immunoadjuvant potential of *A.racemosus* aqueous root extract was evaluated in experimental animals immunized with diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis vaccine. Immunostimulation was evaluated using serological and hematological parameters. Oral administration of test material at

100mg/kg per day dose for 15 days resulted significant increase in antibody titre to *Bordetella pertussis* as compared to untreated (control) animals. Results concluded that the treated animals did show significant increase in antibody titre as compared to untreated animals. It proved as a potential immunoadjuvant agent in animals.^[36-37]

Antioxidant effects

The study of extracts of *A.racemosus* worked as a potential anti oxidant agent in free radicals induced damage in rats. *A.Racemosus* extract was studied against oxidative damage term of protection against lipid peroxidation, and protein oxidation. The antioxidant effect of polysaccharide fraction was more useful against lipid peroxidation, as assessed by thiobarbituric acid reactive substance formation, while that of crude extract was more effective in inhibiting proteins oxidation.^[38-41]

Antidepressant activity

A.racemosus worked as adaptogenic agent means as a antidepressant agent. Adaptogenic drugs are those which are useful as anti-stress agents by promoting non-specific resistance of the body. *A.racemosus* evaluated as an antidepressant effect in rats where methanolic extract of roots of *A.racemosus* in various doses of 100, 200 and 400mg/kg daily for 7 days and then subjected to tests like forced swim test (FST) and learned helplessness test (LH). The results indicated that immobility in FST and increased avoidance response in LH indicating antidepressant agent in behavioral experiments. So *Shatavari* can work as significant antidepressant agent and its effect is mediated through serotonergic, noradrenergic systems.^[42]

Anti-inflammatory effects

A.racemosus root extract at the dose of 200mg/kg can reduce the tissue weight, inflammatory cytokine production, neutrophil-mediated myeloperoxidase activity, so it can be worked as potential anti inflammatory agent.^[43]

Aphrodisiac activity

A.racemosus aqueous root extract *Chlorophytum borivilianum*, and rhizomes of *Curculigoorchioides* were studied for sexual behaviour effects in male albino rats and compared with untreated control group animals. Seven measures of sexual behaviours were tried to evaluated. Administration of dose of 200mg/kg body weight of the aqueous extract of *A.racemosus* had pronounced anabolic effect in treated animals as evidenced by weight gains in body and reproductive parts. There was a significant improvement in the sexual behavior of animals as reflected by reduction of mount latency, ejaculation latency, post

ejaculatory latency, intromission latency, and an increase of mount frequency. The penile erection is improved. This function can compare with the testosterone.^[44]

Anti-stress activity

Chlorophytum arundinaceum, *Asparagus adscendens* and *A.Racemosus* are used in the Ayurveda for general health as well as for stress relieved agents. The effects of the methanol and aqueous extract of roots of these plants were examined in an experimental mouse stress model, induced by swimming. The extracts were shown to exert an inhibitory effect on pro-inflammatory cytokines, namely interleukin1 β and tumour necrosis factor α , and on the production of nitric oxide in mouse macrophage cells. Inhibition was also observed in the production of interleukin 2 in EL4 lymphoma cells. Corticosterone levels in serum and adrenal glands were measured. The findings in the study suggest that *A.racemosus* can be useful as a anti stress agent.^[45,46]

Cytotoxicity, analgesic and anti-diarrhoeal activities

The study was done on ethanolic root extracts of *A.racemosus* to evaluate the cytotoxicity, analgesic and antidiarrhoeal agent. The test for analgesic activity of the crude ethanolic extract was performed using acetic acid induced writhing model in mice. On the other hand, antidiarrhoeal test of the ethanol extracts of *A.Racemosus* was done according to the model of castor oil induced diarrhoea in mice and brine shrimp lethality bioassay was used to determine cytotoxic activity of ethanol extract of the plant. The results obtained support the traditional uses of the *Shatavari* and require further investigation to identify the chemical constituents responsible for cytotoxicity, analgesic and anti-diarrhoeal activities.^[47]

Function on Uterus

Ethyl acetate and acetone extract of the root of *A.racemosus* on guinea pig's ileum, useful in spontaneous motility of the virgin rat's uterus.^[48] Alcoholic extract of *A.racemosus* which specifically block pitocin sensitive receptor through not other in the uterus.^[48] *Shatavari* can be used as uterin sedative.

Shatavari isolated from the roots of *A.racemosus* has been found to be useful for the competitive block of oxytocin induced contraction of rat, guinea pig and rabbit, in vitro as well as in vivo.^[49-50]

Galactogogue Effect

Ayurveda explains that *A.racemosus* can be used in increased milk secretion.^[51]

The aqueous fraction of alcoholic extract of root of *A.racemosus* which was administered intra muscularly shown to increase in the weight of mammary glands as well as yield of the milk.^[52]

Clinical studies

Shatavari is worked as a excellent gastric emptying agent as studied in one of the clinical study.^[53]

Double blind trial suggested it can worked as a good galactogogue agent.^[54] *A.racemosus* is having anti ulcerogenic activity so working in peptic ulcer conditions in volunteers^[55]. In females *Shatvari churna* and *Shatavari taila* is very useful for use in *panchkarma* for *Uttarbasti* in *Atyartva* (Menorrohea) conditions ^[56]. In modern era *Shatavari* very useful in aschyotan of eye conditions of computer related vision syndrome.^[57]

DISCUSSION

A.racemosus is very useful drug from Ayurveda stream. Several studies are conducted on this plant shows its utility as promising therapeutic agent in alternative therapies. Phytochemicals and pharmacology of this drug provide useful scientific data to promote this as an important Ayurvedic drug in several ailments. The review can add information of this drug as an evidence based drug.

CONCLUSION

Review of *Shatavari* from the Ayurvedic texts focus the importance as well as wide range of the therapeutic uses in ancient texts. Scientific studies of *A.racemosus* raise the chances of involvement of Ayurvedic doctors, Pharmacologists, Biotechnicians, and other related research field related personnel for vast research on this commercially valued plant. Detailed documentation and cataloguing of this plant is need of hour. This will helpful for promoting this plant more scientific way as a useful medicinal drug.

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