INTRODUCTION

Herbal medicine has become an integral part of standard healthcare, based on a combination of time-honored traditional usage and ongoing scientific research. Herbal medicine contains natural substances that can promote health and reduce illness. Ayurveda utilizes plenty of herbs to cure different ailments. The Saptaparna is one among the most important medicinal plant described widely in almost all Ayurveda literature and as well as Nighantu. A great poet of Sanskrit literature from 5th Century AD has written Raghuvansha Mahakavya, which contains a poetic description of Saptaparna with regards to the Madagandha of its Pushpa and Ksheera. The botanical name of Saptaparna is Alstonia scholaris R. Br.; Family: Apocynaceae. It is also known as “Devil’s tree”, “Dita bark”. The Apocynaceae family consists of about 250 genera and 2000 species of tropical trees, shrubs and vives. Alstonia scholaris R.Br. is a common tree, growing up to 17 to 20 meter in height, distributed throughout the sub Himalayana belt, west Bengal, Southeast Asia. The wood has been used for school blackboards, hence the name ‘Scholaris’. Synonyms of Saptaparna: Vishaltwak, Chatraparna, Shalmalipatrak, Gucchapushpak, Sharada, Saptacchada, Madaganda etc.
Properties and action mentioned in Ayurveda:

- **Guna**: Laghu (light), Snigdha (Oily)
- **Rasa**: Tikta (bitter), Kashaya (Astringent)
- **Vipaka**: Katu (pungent)
- **Veerya**: Ushna (hot)
- **Dosha**: Kaphapittashamak

According to Ayurveda, Saptaparna used to cure many ailments such as Kushtha, Shwas, Gulma, Jwara, Visarpa.

**Morphology**: The plant is a large evergreen tree.

**Phytochemistry**: The plant enriched with wide range of chemical compounds. It is known to be rich source of alkaloids which are useful for medicinal purposes. Alkaloids stand as a class of major importance in developing new drugs because alkaloids own a great variety of chemical structure and have been identified as being responsible for the pharmacological properties of medicinal plants.

- **Stem bark**: It having echitamine, new glycoside-retenerpines, glucoside triterpenes, amyring acetate, echitamidine, echitenine, Ditamine.
- **Root**: It contains akuammigine, tubaitowine, akuammigine, Hydroxyl-19.
- **Leaves**: It contains an indole alkaloid- picrinine, botalin, ursolic acid, β-sitosterol, new alkaloid Scholarin.
- **Fruits**: Picrinine, strictamine are present in flowers.
- **Seed**: Fruit contains Akuammidine (rhazine).

**Pharmacological activity**: Alstonia scholaris also been reported to inhibited liver injuries induced by carbon tetrachloride, β- galactosamine, acetaminophen, ethanol as remarked by the reduced elevation of levels of serum transamiases and histopathologic changes such as necrosis and inflammatory cell infiltration. Ayurveda recommends Alstonia scholaris for bowel complaints. The herb is given to lactating mothers to increased lactation, helps post-delivery weakness and digestion. Almost all parts of plant are used in medicine.

**Bark**

- **Grayish brown, rough, white milky latex that flows rapidly when cut.**

**Leaves**

- 4-7 in a whorl, bluntly acuminate, pale beneath.

**Flowers**

- Small, Greenish white, numerous in umbellate panicles, Scented.

**Fruits**

- Dehiscent follicles, brown or green, spindle shaped, a pendulous, two lobed

**Seed**

- Flat oblong, brownish hair at each end.

**Physical contents**: Foreign matter - Not more than 2%
- Total Ash - Not more than 11%
- Acid insoluble ash - Not more than 3%
- Water soluble extractives - Not less than 12%
- Alcohol soluble extractives - Not less than 4%

Alstonia scholaris is used in various Ayurvedic formulations like Saptaparnasatvadi vati, Saptacchadadi tail, Saptacchadadi kwath, Sattaparna ghanasara. Alsonia scholaris is one of the ingredient of an antimalearial drug Ayush-64, prepared by CCRAS, India which proved to be quite effective incombacting
malaria and it was also found effective in clearance of parasitaemia.[17]

**Propagation and cultivation:**[10,17] The tree is sometimes planted in gardens for ornamental purpose. It is easily raised through seeds and prefers fairly moist conditions.

**Necessary Altitude:** 0-900 M

**Mean Annual rainfall:** 1200-1400 mm

**Soil type:** Soil including alluvia, basaltic red earth, yellow earth with grey brown top soil, sandy grey earth.

**Diseases affecting:** Diseases caused by collectortrichum gloeosporioides (Penz) sacc. Sordaria humana (Fuckel) wint and other fungi have been reported on this tree.

**Substitute and Adulterants:** Trachelospermum fragrant Hook. F. (Apocynaceae)H. Trachelospermum lucidom (Don) schum. syn.

**CONCLUSION**

The plant Saptaparna (Alstonia scholaris R.Br.) is a beautiful foliage tree with a large canopy. Alstonia scholaris R. Br. has been used in traditional systems of medicines for treating various ailments such as antibacterial, antimicrobial. The plant contains various chemical constituents mostly alkaloids that can promote health and reduce illness. It is one of the ingredient of antimalerional drug Ayush-64, prepared by CCRAS. The plant Saptaparna (Alstonia scholaris R. Br.), invites attention of the researchers worldwide for its pharmacological activities.

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