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

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<tr>
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<th>Rasa</th>
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<th>Virya</th>
<th>Vipaka</th>
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<td>Bhavaprakash¹</td>
<td>Madhura, tikta</td>
<td>Guru</td>
<td>Sheeta</td>
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<td>Tridosha with rakta</td>
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**Gana:**
Charaka – Balya, Vayasthapanam, madhuraskandha
Sushruta – Vidarigandhadi, Katakpanchamula, pitaprasamana.
Kashyapa has given immense importance to Shatavari by keeping a chapter in Kalpasthana 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.

**Chemical Constituents:**
- **Phyto-chemicals**- It includes saponin, flavonoids, iosgenins, glycosides, sistosterol, stigmasterol, sarsapogenin, sistosterol B-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 amenorrhea, delayed menarche, excessive and heavy menstruation (menorrhagia, metrorrhagia, meno-metrorrhagia),...
hypomenorrhoea, having improper menstrual flow.\textsuperscript{5}

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

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

\textsuperscript{.................पृथ्वी पुण्यप्रजात्रारी। (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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{9}

It also possess *rasayana* property which is effective in restoring health and act as a rejuvenative.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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).\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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/Vatavyadh Chi.)
- *Kamdev Ghrita- Bandhyatwa*(Sha/Ma./9/27-32,35,37)
- *Shatvaryadi 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.

**REFERENCES**


11. Journal of Ethnopharmacology, March 2007, review article on “estrogen regulating properties of Shatavari due to its phyto-estrogen content”.


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