

MEDICINAL USES OF AMRITA [HYDNOCARPUS LAURIFOLIA (WILLD.) MIERS]

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ABSTRACT

Guduchi (*Tinospora cordifolia*) is a popular medicinal plant spread across the tropics. Its effectiveness in therapy is well known globally. Lesser known are its dietary benefits. Guduchi is being used in Diet by various tribal people of India and it also forms a part of traditional Indian cuisine. Ayurveda also states its dietary utility. The various benefits acquired by the use of Guduchi as a dietary component have been reviewed and discussed in this article.

KEYWORDS: Guduchi (*Tinospora cordifolia*).

INTRODUCTION

Tinospora cordifolia belonging to the family Menispermaceae is well known in Ayurveda as Guduchi. It is an important drug used by Ayurveda practitioners in various diseased conditions and also for maintenance of health. A majority of the Ayurvedic lexicons admire the potential health benefits of this drug and compare it to the celestial nectar which brings about immortality, hence the name Amruta is attributed to this. It is a famed rejuvenator and nootropic, used very commonly in treatment of ailments such as fever, diabetes and skin disorders. Though very renowned, lesser known are its utility in food and nutrition. The classification of food articles in Ayurveda is found to be into different vargas or groups based on the type of food. One such group is Shaka varga dealing with vegetables. This Shakavarga is sub divided into different groups based on the part used viz. leaves (Patra shaka), fruits (Phala shaka), tubers (Kanda shaka) etc. Guduchi, under the name Vatsadani (a synonym to Guduchi), is mentioned as one among the Patra Shakas. This indicates that the leaves of Guduchi were used as a vegetable by ancient Indians. The current paper is a review of its nutritive utility and importance as a dietetic in certain diseases.

Taxonomic Classification

- **Kingdom:** Plantae – Plants;
- **Subkingdom:** Tracheophyta – Vascular Plants;
- **Super-division:** Spermatophyta – Seed bearing plants;
- **Division:** Magnoliophyta – Flowering;
- **Class:** Magnoliopsida – Dicotyledons;
- **Subclass:** Polypetalae – Petals are free;

- **Series:** Thalamiflorae – Many stamens and flower hypogynous;
- **Order:** Ranales
- **Family:** Menispermaceae – The Moonseed family;
- **Tribe:** Tinosporeae
- **Genus:** *Tinospora*
- **Species:** *cordifolia*

Vernacular Names

- **Sanskrit:** Guduchi, Amrita
- **Bengali:** Golancha
- **English:** *Tinospora* **Gujarati:** Gulvel **Hindi:** Gulancha
- **Kannada:** Amrutaballi, Madhuparni
- **Malayalam:** Amrytu, Chittamritam
- **Oriya:** Gulochi
- **Tamil:** Amudam, Chindil
- **Telugu:** Tippateege, Guricha
- **Urdu:** Gilo, Satgilo
- **Synonyms of Guduchi**
- **Guduchi** - That which protects.
- **Amruta** - That which can act similar to the celestial nectar which can make the person immortal.
- **Chakrangi, Chakralakshanika** - Referring to the radiating medullary rays visible on transverse section.
- **Chinnaruha, Chinnodbhava**- Referring to its propagation by stem cuttings.

Botanical Description of Guduchi

Tinospora cordifolia is a popular traditional medicine distributed throughout the tropical region of India up to

1200 m above sea level from Kumaon to Assam, in north extending through West Bengal, Bihar, Deccan, Konkan, Karnataka and Kerala, India. It is a fairly common plant of deciduous and dry forests, growing over hedges and small tree. It is a glabrous, succulent, climbing shrub, often attaining a great height and sending down long thread like aerial roots. The plant seems to be particularly found climbing up the trunks of large Neem trees. The aerial roots that arise from the mature branches or cut bits of stems grow downward and by continuously lengthening sometimes reach the ground. They thicken gradually and resemble the stems, except for the absence of nodal swellings. The fresh or tender stems are greenish, longitudinally striated ribbed. The bark is grey of creamy-white in color, deeply cleft with spiral and longitudinal clefts, the space between the clefts being usually dotted with large rosette like lenticels. The branches bear smooth heart shaped leaves. Leaves are simple, alternate, exstipulate, long petiolate, chordate in shape showing multicoated reticulate venation. Flowers are small and unisexual where male flowers are in clusters and female flowers are solitary. Aggregate fruit is red, fleshy, with many drupelets on thick stalk with sub terminal style scars, scarlet coloured. Flowers grow during the summer and fruits during the winter

Preventive and Curative Potential Of Guduchi As Food

The potential benefits of guduchi as a therapeutic agent are well known whereas its dietary utility is not very renowned. Nutritional aspects of Guduchi are of a great importance in health and disease. The practice of using the leaves as a food article promotes health, serving both preventive and curative purposes. High carbohydrate and protein contents present in Guduchi helps in providing the essential energy component yielding 292.54 Cal/100g. Trace element presence in guduchi makes it a potential chromium and potassium supplement. The inadequate dietary intake of Chromium causes several metabolic abnormalities including impaired glucose and lipid metabolism, elevated circulating insulin levels and decreased insulin receptor numbers. Chromium repletion improves glucose tolerance and reverses abnormal elevations in circulating insulin and glucagon. Intake of Chromium has also shown to improve glycemic control and cholesterol levels in patients with Type II diabetes. The common intake of guduchi leaves as an anti-diabetic by people in diet is benefiting them by the action of the chromium component. Chromium supplementation also helps in relieving ataxia and peripheral nerve conduction defects. Potassium supplementation can reduce cardiac arrhythmias and also prevent the occurrence of the same, thus supporting the cardiac functioning. Ayurveda mentions the utility of guduchi in Hruddourbalya- as it enhances cardiac wellness. Guduchi also provides sufficient iron and calcium in accordance with the daily requirement thus preventing conditions such as Iron deficiency anaemia, dizziness, weakness, fatigue, dyspnoea and neuropsychiatric manifestations of chronic hypocalcaemia. The neurological manifestations are

clubbed under the name of Vatavyadhis (Diseases caused due to vitiated Vata) in Ayurveda and the authors have clearly stated about the properties of Guduchi shaka which can pacify vata and hence prevent occurrence of the Vatavyadhis. Along with the particular components acting towards prevention of diseases, it can be noted that the drug is also a potent medicament for a number of diseased conditions, as understood by the pharmacological experimentation done on Guduchi. Hence it can be noted that the drug *in-toto* is considered a rejuvenator, replenishing the health of the person who consumes it.

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