

MEDICINAL USES OF GUNJA (*ABRUS PRECATORIUS* LINN): A REVIEW ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

It is also called Rosery Pea. Rosary plant is known for containing a toxic substance 'abrin'. The common symptoms of its toxicity include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and trouble breathing. In some cases, it can also cause anuria (anuresis) and heart disease. The unwise use of any part of Rosary plant can lead to several side effects. Therefore, Rosary peas are not used in the raw form in ayurveda and traditional medicine. It is processed to detoxify and to eliminate its toxic effects. The purified (detoxified) Rosary peas exert stimulatory and strengthening actions on nerves. Due to this action, it is used to treat paralysis; However, it acts as a sedative when used in the high dosage. The rosary peas also have aphrodisiac action. Detoxified rosary seeds are dried and then ground to make a course powder. The course powder is then used to boil in milk. This milk is filtered and advised to drink for improving erection, stamina and performance. Leaves and roots of the rosary plant act as antitussive and soothe the throat similarly like Mulethi. Therefore, rosary roots and leaves are beneficial in the treatment of a cough.

KEYWORDS: Rosery pea, abrin, gunja.

INTRODUCTION

Abrus precatorius is a woody twinning plant with characteristic toxic red seeds with black mark at the base. Leaves resemble tamarind leaves having 20-40 leaflets. It is native to India, at altitudes up to 1200 m on the outer Himalayas but now found in all tropical countries. It is a beautiful, much-branched, slender, perennial, deciduous, woody, prickly twining or climbing herb. Stem cylindrical, wrinkled, bark smooth-textured, brown. Leaves stipulate, pinnately compound; leaflets 7-24 pairs, 0.6-2.5 cm × 0.4-1.2 cm, turgid, oblong, obtuse, truncate at both ends, appressed hairy. Flowers in auxiliary racemes, shorter than leaves, pink or pinkish-white. Pods 1.5-5.0 cm × 0.8-1.5 cm, turgid, oblong, appressed hairy, with a sharp deflexed beak, silky-textured, 3 to 5 seeded.

Common Name – Gunja
English Name – Indian liquorice root
Family – Leguminosae
Subfamily – Papilionatae

Name in another languages

Sanskrit – Gunja, Raktika, Kakananti
Hindi – Ratti
Gujarati – Chanothi
Telugu – Guriginja

Marathi – Gunjha
Kannada – Gullugunji

Ayurvedic Properties

Rasa – Tikta, Kashaya
Guna – Laghu, Ruksha, Tikshana
Virya – Ushna
Vipaka – Katu
Dosha karma – Pacifies Kapha dosha and Vat dosha

Medicinal Uses

Internal Use of Rosary Seeds

1. Hemiplegia
2. Paralysis
3. Sciatica
4. Muscle spasm
5. Low backache
6. Rheumatoid arthritis
7. Arthritis
8. Bursitis
9. Fibromyalgia
10. Erectile dysfunction
11. Premature ejaculation

External Use of Rosary Seeds

External application of detoxified Rosary seed paste is used in all diseases listed in above under the heading of "internal use of Rosary seeds." In addition to these

diseases, the paste prepared using rosary seed powder and sesame oil is also applied to treat the following conditions:

1. Alopecia or hair loss
2. Acne Vulgaris
3. Eczema
4. Psoriasis

Benefits and Uses

Detoxified Rosary pea acts on nerves, muscles, skin and organs of the reproductive system. Genrally, it is used paralytic disorders and erectile dysfunction and impotence.

Medicinal Parts

The dosage of detoxified rosary pea (*Abrus precatorius*) varies according to medicinal parts.

- Detoxified Rosary pea powder – 30-125 mg
- Rosary leaf Powder – 500 to 2000 mg
- Rosary root powder – 500 to 2000 mg

The maximum dosage of Rosary pea (Gunja seeds) Powder should not exceed 250 mg per day. Rosary leaves and root powder dosage should not exceed 4 g per day.

Main Components

- Haemagglutinin
- Abrin
- Glycyrrhizin

Detoxification of Gunja

Raw seeds are not suitable for medicinal uses, as discussed above. The coarse powder of Rosary peas is taken in cotton pouch and boiled in the cow's milk for 3 to 6 hours.

The second method includes boiling the seeds in Kanji water (Brown rice water) for 3 to 6 hours. Milk or Kanji used for detoxification should be discarded.

Boiling rosary peas in cow's milk or Kanji water reduces the toxic effects and make it usable for the medicinal purposes. Toalbumins present in the rosary peas break down after heat treatment and dissolve into the milk or Kanji water. Therefore, the process reduces toxic substances in rosary pea significantly.

The study also confirms the usability and effectiveness of ayurvedic detoxification process and found the absence of abrin in detoxified rosary seed extract whereas no-detoxified extract contains abrin.

Ayurvedic Formulations

1. Gunjabhadra rasa

Side Effects

- Vertigo
- Restlessness
- Diarrhea

- Vomiting

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