

Shatavari – Beyond Just A Medicinal Herb

*Mr. Ashwin G. Suragond and Dr. P. U. Ghatge

College of Food Technology, VNMKV, Parbhani, Maharashtra

*Corresponding Author's email: bondashwin003@gmail.com

Shatavari – the Queen of herbs scientifically known as *Asparagus racemosus*, is one of the most significant medicinal herbs used in traditional Indian medicine systems like Ayurveda, for which it has been highly valued as an extremely potent rejuvenative herb. The term “Shatavari” refers to “she who possesses a hundred husbands,” indicating its extensive application in the maintenance of vitality and reproductive functions, especially in women. Shatavari is a climbing shrub with tuberous roots, which are the major source of its medicinal and nutritional properties. Shatavari roots contain bioactive compounds like **steroidal saponins called Shatavarins, alkaloids, flavonoids, polyphenols, vitamins, and essential minerals, which are responsible for its adaptogenic, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and immunomodulatory effects**, thus qualifying it as a medicinal food.



Medicinal uses & health benefits

According to Ayurvedic medicine, Shatavari qualifies as a "Rasayana" because it increases long life, **boosts the immune system**, and rejuvenates the tissues in the body. Shatavari has been used to treat many conditions, but the most common use has been in the treatment and maintenance of the reproductive system in women. Shatavari has been proven to **balance hormones** in the body, boost fertility in women, and **treat symptoms associated with premenstrual syndrome (PMS) and menopause**. Shatavari has also been used to **boost milk production in lactating mothers** and therefore qualifies as a **galactagogue**.



The adaptogenic activity in Shatavari ensures the body’s **resistance to both physical and emotional stress** by regulating the hormonal balance. This makes it a necessity in the modern lifestyle, where stress has become a common factor in many diseases. Shatavari also has a significant impact on the digestive system. The herb **soothes the gastrointestinal tract** and has **anti-acidity properties**. Additionally, Shatavari has the ability to **heal ulcers by promoting the secretion of mucus** in the stomach. The **antioxidant properties** in Shatavari also ensure the body’s resistance to diseases by neutralizing the free radicals. This ensures the body’s protection against diseases. Additionally, the immune system benefits from the herb by promoting the body’s defenses.

Nutritional composition (per 100g of dried root)

Nutrient	Quantity (per 100g dried root)
Carbohydrates	45–55 g
Proteins	2–5 g
Fat	<1 g
Dietary fiber	5–10 g
Vitamin – C	~5–10 mg
Calcium	20–30 mg
Iron	1–2 mg
Magnesium	~10–15 mg
Phosphorous	~20–40 mg
Potassium	~200–300 mg
Steroidal saponin (shatavarins)	2–8%
Flavonoids	~0.5–1%
Polyphenols	~0.5–1.5%
Mucilage	~10–15%
Trace quantities of Vitamin A, Vitamin E, Vitamin B complex, Zinc, Copper and alkaloids	

Value addition - Role as a medicinal & functional Food

As a medicinal food, Shatavari has been traditionally taken in a number of simple yet effective ways. The most common form in which Shatavari has been traditionally used is in the form of a powder derived from the roots, also known as "**churna**." This powder is mixed with milk and taken daily to increase its bioavailability. Shatavari has also been **traditionally used to prepare herbal decoctions, medicated ghee, and syrups**. However, while the traditional forms of Shatavari have been effective, they might not be to the liking of the modern user. This is where the concept of value addition becomes highly significant.

Further advancements in value addition include the creation of standardized extracts in the form of **capsules, tablets, and liquids**. These products have more market potential among the urban population, who prefer consuming easy-to-take supplements in the right dosage. The process of standardization ensures that the product contains the right amount of the active ingredient, thus making it more reliable. Besides supplements, Shatavari is being used in functional foods and beverages. Functional foods can be defined as those that offer additional health benefits over and above the basic nutritional value. Shatavari is one such ingredient that can be used in functional foods. It is used in **herbal teas, health drinks, energy drinks, and functional foods such as nutrition bars and cereals**.

Another significant segment in the domain of value addition is the creation of **ready-to-use and instant products**. These products include Shatavari-based **drink mixes, granules, and flavored powder**. These products can be easily made by adding water or milk. These products may even contain natural flavoring agents like cardamom, saffron, and cocoa. The use of natural flavoring agents enhances the product's taste and makes it more appealing. One of the major challenges faced by herbal products is the bitter taste they possess. The use of natural flavoring agents in the production of herbal products like Shatavari helps in overcoming this challenge.



Benefits of Commercializing Shatavari

Apart from food and nutraceuticals, Shatavari can find applications in the **cosmetic industry** as well. Shatavari is found to have antioxidant properties and can be used for **anti-aging products**. This can open another market for Shatavari and add more value to the herb. From an economic point of view, Shatavari can prove to be a good source for income generation as its value addition can promote small-scale industries in the region as well. However, there are a few challenges linked to the commercialization and value addition of Shatavari. These challenges include the **standardization of the cultivation process**, the quality control process, and the scientific



validation process. Standardization in the quality and quantity of the value addition process is a significant factor in the commercialization and value addition of Shatavari. Furthermore, the **awareness** of the benefits of Shatavari as a medicinal food is a significant factor in the value addition and commercialization process.

Conclusion

Shatavari stands out as a remarkable example of a medicinal food that doesn't fail to deliver the consumer with a wide range of health benefits. Its adaptability to different forms of consumption makes it a remarkable medicinal food. Shatavari has the potential to become a treasure trove in the field of nutrition and healthcare. Value addition in the form of different products will enable the medicinal properties and benefits of Shatavari to reach the masses. Shatavari will thus contribute to the growth and development of the world economy in the coming years.