מאמר מרתק!

ארג'ונה

בכותב: פראשנטי דה ג'אגק, מטפל איורוודי בעל ידע עצום!

המאמר מובא ברשותו של הכותב!

להנאתכם ולמידתכם!

יגאל

Four Questions on Arjuna

The Braveheart Herbal Ally

Prashanti de Jager

Q. What is your favorite ethnopharmacological clue of arjuna's power?

A: Actually, Arjuna is my favorite ethnopharmacological hint of the power of *arjuna*. You see, the *Bhāva Prakāśa*, Ayurveda's main herbal text compiled over 400 years ago, states that nothing can be said about Arjuna, the great warrior of the Mahābhārata, that cannot be said about *arjuna*, the great tree of northern India. By looking at some of the names that the two share, it quickly becomes apparent why "Braveheart" is my main nickname for this herb.

- *Arjuna*: "The color of lightning/silver" — arjuna strengthens *tejas* (spirited aspect of an individual's spirit), the power of sāttvic (quality of purity) will, and that will bolsters *shen*, or spirit, with deep unswerving confidence. Note that arjuna is cognate with the Latin "argent" meaning "silver".
- *Citrayodhin*: "a warrior of manifold methods" — a whole confluence of dozens of factors mediate arjuna's ability to promote true wellness.
- *Dhanvin*: "armed with a bow, Sagittarius" — Sagittarius, ruled by Jupiter, is sāttvic.
- *Jaya*: "winning, conquering, victory" — lends itself to long-term protection over disease and a life well lived.
- *Kakubha*: "lofty, excelling, distinguished" — one of the most distinguished of herbal allies indicate that the pink/red bark of arjuna, which makes a pink tea, would be good for the heart/blood.

- *Śakra*: "strong, masculine, powerful, name of Indra" — arjuna makes one powerful and strong, and strong-willed with brilliant tejas.
- *Devadatta*: "god-given, Arjuna's conch shell, of one of the vital prāṇas in the body" — arjuna is so important that the saints equated it with a gift from Indra, the Lord of the Gods.
- *Guḍākeśa*: "thick haired" — the hair is the "blossom" of the adrenals, and I have noticed that many adrenal/jing* tonics, like *tulsī*, have reference to long/thick/beautiful *keśa*, or hair!
- *Hṛdroga* (*vairin*): "hostile to heartache" — I really like this one as it shows it is a great heart herb for the physical and emotional heart.
- *Pāśupāta*: "related or sacred to or coming from Śiva, name of weapon given to Arjuna" — Paśupati is the Lord of the animals, a name of Śiva, and Arjuna's weapon is a gift from this Lord, which means there is Śiva energy in Arjuna as well, typically referring to strong alkaloids but in the case of arjuna, likely refers to its toning tannins.
- *Savyasācin*: "Drawing bow with left-hand, ambidextrous" — this would indicate that like

and hence very important in common use.

- *Nāḍija*: "born from flowing channeled *prāṇa*" — shows its use to tone the circulatory system.
- *Phālguna*: "reddish and related to *Phālgunī nakṣatra*" — the doctrine of signatures would

brāhmī and tulsī, arjuna also gives balance in the left/right aspects of brain, heart, body, bringing deeper balance.

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* *jing* — one of the basic substances that according to traditional Chinese medicine pervade the body, usually translated as "essence".

- *Indrādru* — "Indra's tree from his garden in paradise" — this herb is Indra's favorite tree of his paradise garden? Indra = Lord of senses, the deep will, heart of the matter, and this is his tree.
- *Vīravṛkṣa*: "valiant tree" — braveheart.
- *Dhavala*: "white".
- *Śītala*: "cold" — astringents are usually cold.
- *Bhagṅa-kṣata-kṣaya-viṣa-astrajit*: "which conquers broken and injured parts, poison or wound from a weapon" — a nice succinct list of "kṣatriya diseases" if I ever have seen one, and arjuna cures kṣatriya disease.
- *Medomehavraṇajit*: "which cures wounds and reduces fat" — again, a reference to both astringent tannin principles and how wounds and obesity are banes to warriors.

Another reference to arjuna comes in another common Arjuna epithet: "Arjunakāṇḍa is used in removing kṣatriya disease."

A kṣatriya is a warrior or noble, and one of the greatest kṣatriyas is Arjuna. This gives another hint as to why this herb is associated with Arjuna: It is because *arjunakāṇḍa* (*kāṇḍa* is the bark on/near the limbs of trees) heals an Arjuna and supports an Arjuna. By this I mean anybody who is a warrior, who needs a stronger, bolder and more determined heart, and/or who suffers from excessive rajas (active/agitated) pitta, like poisoned blood, a typical "kṣatriya disease". I would sum up kṣatriya disease with two words: fear and fierceness. Arjuna is a balm that soothes and bolsters a heart broken by fear and pain and cools a heart burned by the intensity of focused fierceness.

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Section of Arjuna bark cut out by Tribals in Central India: The outer layer is silver and the inner layer is red.

I would aver to say that though only about 15 per cent of the world population is kṣatriya these days, everyone can use a stronger, clearer, bolder, more courageous heart and everybody can use help with the rajas pitta that our culture so readily holds space for. When an oil spill in the Gulf kills life beyond our comprehension, it is heartbreaking. When corporations intentionally instill deep fear into anyone not vigilant or astute enough to notice, it is heartbreaking. When divorce is almost as common as marriage, it is heartbreaking. When we are so isolated from Nature, our nature, it is heartbreaking. We live in very challenging times where the warrior in us needs support, where we sometimes need to have brave hearts to even get out of bed in the morning. Clinically, what turmeric is to trauma, what tulsī is to balance, arjuna is to heart. I have seen it often: arjuna simply is hṛdrogavairin, "hostile to heartache". And how is arjuna such a relentless adversary to heart dis-ease? About 20 per cent of its activities are directly anti-dys-ease and 80 per cent of its ability is pro-heart-stability, empowering the structure and functionality of the heart to optimally perform in a state of true wellness.

Q. What are some of the actions that arjuna has on the inner heart?

At the level of the *manomaya kośa* (sheath of the mind), arjuna clearly bolsters a confidence that can then open up endless possibilities in a person's life.

Have you ever noticed a big, strong, buff man who though clothed in a physical body of a warrior actually has an inner spirit that quakes or is even shattered? You can see it in his unsteady concerned eyes and feel it in the riddled aura of his *ojas* emanation (density of core vitality). Conversely, you can come across a physically frail old woman on a Himalayan path whose spirit is as huge and enduring as the mountains on which she meditates. What I am calling spirit here, and what TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine) calls Shen, is a deep layer or nexus of our being clothed in the will of tejas and in a way is confidence itself. Arjuna and

the tulsī, together are two of the stronger allies to

keep your and your ally's Shen strong is key, and is keep your Shen strong like an indomitable warrior.

I have seen some cases of insomnia and chronic poor judgement that are simply a loss of trust in existence at the level of *vijñānamaya kośa* (structured aspect of mind containing concepts and belief systems). In other words, people cannot sleep because they have the belief system that the world is a far too dangerous place to close their eyes. Though you might want to give them *aśvagandhā* to fortify their nervous system, arjuna is often the primary herb of choice here for this very issue of increasing the *sukha* (ease) and *sthira* (sturdiness) of Shen.

Knowing anthropomorphization is extremely common in the teachings of the Vedas, one is compelled to internalize any myth or legend regarding an apparent "outer" phenomenon. Indra, who is the lord of the gods (senses), whose weapon is the thunderbolt (*vajra*/focus), whose son is Arjuna (warrior), and whose tree is arjuna, is also that portion of the *Ātman*/Spirit that resides in the human body, like a human/divine nexus. Indra is Shen, and with that realization the ethnopharmacological investigation of arjuna comes full circle and the connection between arjuna and the cessation of the quaking spirit is firmly established. I have seen this clinically on numerous occasions!

Know that when we lose trust, when we falter emotionally, then we create that same terrain physically in our heart. And if our physical terrain is altered or shaken by our diet, by the psychic terrain of those people and situations that we associate with, or by our choices (or lack of) in our *dinacaryā* (daily routine), then the heart in our other *kośa*s (sheaths) are affected as well. If our actions are not aligned with the happiness of our whole, but, as Dr Partap Chauhan puts it, perhaps just "serving the happiness of our tongue" or other sense organs, then our heart will suffer. Enter arjuna.

Do not give up! Do not allow your nor your ally's Spirit/Shen/Indra to be cracked or diminished, but stay strong with a kind indomitable braveheart that is never victim but always a victor. This is the essence of *ahiṁsā*: non-diminishment of Self. Using herbs to your responsibility. Instill your herbs with spirit, infuse them with your power, and then let them infuse you back!

Q. How about arjuna's effects on the physical heart?

A: The Western science here is mature as the question is not about whether arjuna affects the heart, but rather what the exact phytochemistry is that interacts with our cell physiology to generate a given effect. Let's look at arjuna in the light of ayurvedic and Western pharmacology.

ARJUNA'S AYURVEDIC ENERGETICS

Classically arjuna's *rasa* (taste) is astringent and bitter, its *vīrya* (energy) is cooling and its *vipāka* (post-digestive effect) is pungent, though if you drink the tea there is definitely a sweetness in there as well which could be from the glycocides. FYI, keep your eyes on cooling herbs with warming metabolites.

ARJUNA'S AYURVEDIC KARMAS

The ayurvedic *karma* of arjuna is extensive, is truly *citrayodhin.*** Over many millenia, Caraka, Suśruta, Vāgbhaṭṭa,[1] Cakradutta,[2] Bhava Miśra,[3] all pour similar accolades toward arjuna.

- Treatment of three types of tumors vāta, pitta and kapha[4] (tridoshic)
- *Haridrā*: cardiotonic and cardio-stimulant[5] (powdered bark is taken in milk)
- Diuretic,[6] strangury, controlling urinary discharge (balanced)
- Vulnerary (decoction of the bark is used as an astringent wash in ulcers)
- Antidote (the ashes of the bark used as a poultice for snakebite and scorpion sting)
- Leucoderma (tones the level of pigment)
- Anemia (blood-building and anti-worm as most anemia is caused by worms)
- Hyperhidrosis (balances water metabolism)
- Asthma (like tulsī and *vibhītakī*, an affinity for

given action, and to some extent it is true, but I feel it is a synergy of energetics, a great confluence of factors, that are responsible, and seldom just a single player.

Note that arjuna shares a lot of fantastic chemistry with its myrobalan siblings, *āmlā*, *harītakī* and *vibhītakī*, and thus combines well with the superfruits of *triphalā* to help increase their mutual

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** A citrayodhin is a warrior who has manifold methods of fighting, thus making him much more potent. In the same way, arjuna, the herb, has many methods/mechanisms to invoke wellness. Citrayodhin portrays the Vedic technique of treatment and diagnosis that you can call "A Confluence of Factors". This is a key to *jyotiṣa* as it is to herbalism/Ayurveda and all *kāya cikitsā*.

the chest)

- *Hṛṣṭaśūla*: angina (relieving constriction that causes pain)

Typical *anupānas*[7] (carriers) are hot milk (*kṣīrapāka*), alcohol wine (*āsava*), ghee (*ghṛta*), and tulsī tea.

ARJUNA'S ACTIONS

The fact that arjuna is hypocholesteremic, hypolipidemic, anticoagulant, antihypertensive, antithrombotic, antiviral, antifungal, antibacterial, aphrodisiac, expectorant, tonic, styptic, antidysenteric, purgative and laxative tells us that this arjuna article is just a cursory introduction to an incredible ally!

ARJUNA'S PHYTOCHEMISTRY

As with most herbs it has hundreds of molecules within it that have synergistic power to hold space for true wellness. These include:

- Oleanane triterpenoids (arjunin, arjunic acid, arjunolic acid)
- Glycosides (arjunetin, arjunosides)
- Sterols (sitosterol)
- Flavonoids (arjunolone, arjunone, baicalein, luteolin, gallic acid, quercetin, and the phytoestrogen kaempferol)
- Astringent tannins (pyrocatechols, punicallin, punicalagin, terchebulin, terflavin C, castalagin, casuarina, casuarinin)
- Minerals/elements (calcium, magnesium, silica, zinc, copper)

Triterpenoids are mainly responsible for cardiovascular properties. Tannins and flavonoids are responsible for its anti-cancer properties. One can say that this molecule or that is responsible for a systemic salubrious effects.

ARJUNA IN WESTERN PHARMACOLOGY

Clearly, as is the case with arjuna's ayurvedic and ethnopharmacological indications, Western science has focused on proving all the heart-empowering activities of arjuna which include:

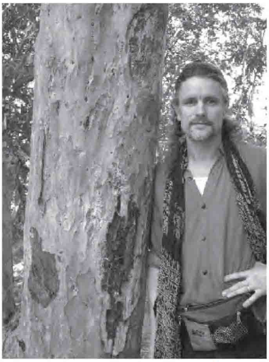
- Cardioprotective
- Lipid lowering (hypolipidemic, including plasma and tissue fats)
- Angina decreasing
- Myocardial infraction preventative
- Hypertension[8] (arjuna is hypotensive)
- Hypercholesterolemia (reduces cholesterol, as do all phytosterols)
- Cardiac arrest[9]
- Coronary arterial flow increasing
- Myocardium protection against ischemic damage[10]
- Inotropic (increases strength of heart contractions)
- Diuretic (assists in controlling blood pressure — BP)
- Antithrombotic (minimizes platelet dysfunction to preclude blood clots)
- Prostaglandin E2 enhancing
- Anticancer[11]
- Antiviral (I feel some deep heart diseases come from unknown viruses. The Purāṇas sometimes hint at this)

There is ample clinical evidence of arjuna's beneficial effect in coronary artery disease alone and along with statins,[12] and where statins tend to decrease tissue integrity, arjuna increases this.

Casuarinin in arjuna was also shown to prevent the attachment of HSV-2 to cells. It also exhibited an actively inhibited viral penetration, reducing viral titers up to 100,000-fold.[13]

ARJUNA IN VĀSTUŚĀSTRA

From a Vāstuśāstra (science of harmonious creation) point of view, arjuna is huge stalwart *agni rekhā* (a vertical fire line) that represents potent focused activation, like a steeple, like a braveheart. Arjuna, being a 30 m high tree, also creates a *sandhyā*, a place betwixt the twain, that connects earth and heaven, also what the heart is. Its rose



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Prashanti and an Arjuna trunk in Central India showing the # scars of years of harvestin by Tribals pink bark also signifies heart. It is one of the most pest and disease-free plants known. So just from the Doctrine of Signatures, cognized through the lens of *vāstu*, we can infer a lot.

Q. You speak of allies. When it comes to supporting the heart, what are some of arjuna's other allies?

A: A confluence of factors is standard in diagnostics and treatment in all the Vedic sciences, so I offer here some notes on arjuna allies. Many plants are mentioned in the *Atharvaveda* to be great for the heart including turmeric, garlic, guggulu, āmlā, tulsī, arjuna and fenugreek. All of these I use. Resveratrol, a polyphenol anti-aging molecule found in many herbs including grapes and many polygonums like *mahāmedā*, is one of the only single phytomolecules that I take and recommend. A cardiologist's best friend, CoQ10, which strongly potentiates human energy currency, ATP, is fantastic for the heart and immune system. Hawthorne berries are a very good two-directional herb regarding the heart, as it can raise low BP and lower high BP. In general I like using arjuna, tulsī, aśvagandhā, hawthorne, cardamom and resveratrol in my heart formulas, with a typical dose being about 5-7 grams of a mix suitable for the season and the person's doṣa, taken in hot milk or a delicious satisfying decaf chai.

Speaking of allies, be an ally to arjuna, and as always, make sure your herbs are responsibly grown in a win-win situation. The best medicine is medicine at every step. As arjuna is a very large tree from the jungle and its bark is used for medicine, you can imagine that harvesting can be devastating to the forests and the species that live there. Demand that your arjuna is sustainable; don't just ask if it is sustainable as everyone will just answer "yes". Rather let them describe how the trees are harvested and by whom. Where do the trees come from? Were they chopped down? Was it a clear-cut? Who benefited? Your medicine has to be free of exploitation and a product of win-wins in order to truly be medicine.

When you walk into an arjuna forest while exploring the phenomenal biodiversity of the jungles of central India, one of the first things you will notice is dozens of one inch deep, 3 × 3 inch squares gouged out of the trunks. This is where the Santal tribals have carved a piece of bark out to take home and brew as a medicinal and recreational tea. You can see the healing process that the tree takes and in a few years the wounds are nearly invisible. In the same way, arjuna will help us "panchkoshically" heal and empower our hearts, the Braveheart that we are!

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Endnotes

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