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Review Article

APHRODISIACS USED IN UNANI SYSTEM OF MEDICINE

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Abstract

For the propagation of human race there are four basic things which are essential- air, water, food and reproduction. Sexual activity is an intimate expression of love and a mode of procreation is an integral part of all cultures. The malfunction of this important activity leads to various psychological problems. Erectile dysfunction is defined as the persistent failure to develop and maintain erection of sufficient rigidity for penetrative sexual intercourse. Drugs supporting the sagging libido or sexual performance which is not up to a desired level or enhance the sexual performance are called aphrodisiacs. To overcome the problem of male sexual (or) erectile dysfunction various aphrodisiacs are preferred. In Unani system of medicine a number of herbs, minerals and animal origin drugs having aphrodisiac property are being in use since millennia. In this article an attempt is made to discuss about commonly used aphrodisiacs of Unani system of medicine.

Keywords: Aphrodisiac, Erectile dysfunction, Muqawwie bah, Unani.

INTRODUCTION

The word aphrodisiac is derived from the name of the Greek goddess of sexual love and beauty, Aphrodite.[1] An aphrodisiac is defined as any food or drug that arouses the sexual instinct, induces venereal desire and increases pleasure and performance. Many natural substances have historically been known as aphrodisiacs in Africa and Europe, such as Yohimbine and the Mandrake plant, as well as ground Rhinoceros horn in the Chinese culture and Spanish fly.[2-4] There are two main types of aphrodisiacs, psychophysiological stimuli (visual, tactile, olfactory and aural) preparations and internal preparations (food, alcoholic drinks and drugs).[3] Sexual relationships are one of the most important social and biological relationships in human life. The purpose of intercourse is to reproduce and to continue the process of generation, passion and pleasure form an integral part of this function. [5] Loss of firm erections is often extremely bothersome to men.[6] Male sexual weakness is termed as impotence which is defined as the persistent failure to develop and maintain erections of sufficient rigidity for penetrative sexual intercourse.[1] Nowadays for impotence the more specific term 'Erectile dysfunction' is preferred.[6] The condition of erectile dysfunction is more common in middle aged population. As per Massachusetts Male Aging Study, the prevalence of erectile dysfunction among the individuals of 40-70 years is 52 %.[6] The incidence of erectile dysfunction is also higher among men with certain medical disorders such as diabetes mellitus, heart disease, hypertension and decreased HDL levels. Smoking is a significant risk factor in the development of erectile dysfunction. Medications used to treat diabetes or cardiovascular diseases are additional risk factors. There is a higher incidence of erectile dysfunction among men who have undergone radiation or surgery for prostate cancer and in those with a lower spinal cord injury. Psychological causes of erectile dysfunction include depression, anger, stress or other causes.[7] Treatment of erectile dysfunction involves local use of vasoactive drugs like papaverine and alprostadin[8] and first line oral therapy includes phosphodiesterase type-5 inhibitors such as sildenafil and verdenafil which inhibit hydrolysis of second messenger cyclic guanosine mono phosphate release within penile smooth cells.[9,10] These drugs have limited efficacy, various side effects and contraindications in certain disease conditions. Sildenafil citrate (Viagra) is a successful drug that modifies the heamodynamics in the penis[11] but these drugs have side effects like headache, flushing, priapism, dyspepsia and nasal congestion.[12] Unani system of medicine is one of the very well organised systems of medicine; it treats sexual problems as a separate and integral part of medical science. Every aspect of sexuality from sexual debility to venereal diseases is discussed in details. Classical Unani medical literature has given much importance to sexual debility or impotency.[5] Avicenna has a totally different approach in the diagnosis, selection and administration of drugs in treating sexual debility and improving sexual performance. As per his view the three vital organs viz liver, heart and brain control the genital organs. Liver supplies the pure blood to the genitals, heart provides required heat and the Brain provides the power of senses.[13] A number of Muqawwie bah drugs (Aphrodisiac) are mentioned below which have been in use by ancient Unani physicians since centuries for the management of various sexual disorders. These drugs are time tested safe and effective.

Table 1: Commonly used Aphrodisiacs in Unani Medicine

S. No.	Botanical Name	Unani Name	Common Name	Parts Used	Reference
1	*Abelmoschus esculantus* (L.)	Bamiya	Lady finger	Fruits	14
2	*Abrus precatorius* L.	Ghongchi	Jequirity	Seed	15
3	*Acacia arabica* Willd.	Samaghe arabi	Acacia gum	Gum	15
4	*Aconitum heterophyllum* Wall.	Atees	Attesh	Root	14
5	*Aconitum napellus*	Beesh	Aconite	Root	15
6	*Acorus calamus* Linn.	Waj turkey	Sweet flag	Root	15,16
7	*Allium sativum* L.	Soom/Lehsun	Garlic	Bulb	15
8	*Allium cepa* L.	Piyaz	Onion	Bulb	17
9	*Alpinia galanga* Willd.	Khulanjan	Java galangal	Root	15
10	*Anacyclus pyrethrum* DC	Aqarqarha	Akarakarabha	Root	18
11	*Asarum europaeum* Linn.	Asaroon	Asarum	Root	5
12	*Asparagus racemosus* Willd.	Satawar	Asparagus	Root	19,20,21,22
13	*Aristolochia rotunda*	Zaravand	Smear wort	Root	15
14	*Asteracantha longifolia*	Talmakhana	Hygrophila	Seed	23,24
15	*Bacopa monnieri* L.	Brahmi	Indian penny wort	Whole plant	15
16	*Blepharis edulis* Linn.	Tukhme Anjra	Utangan	Seed	15
17	*Boswellia serrata*	Kundoor	Olibanum	Gum	5
18	*Brassica rapa*	Tukhme Shaljam	Turnip	Seed	17
19	*Buchanania latifolia* Roxb.	Chironji	Chirauli nut	Fruit	5
20	*Butea frondosa* Roxb.	Dhak	Flame of the forest	Gum	15
21	*Cannabis indica* L.	Qinnab	Indian hemp	Leaf	17
22	*Capsicum annuum* L.	Filfil	Capsicum	Seed	5
23	*Carica papaya* L.	Papita	Papaya	Fruit	15
24	*Celastrus paniculatus*	Malkangani	Staff tree	Seed	17
25	*Centaurea behen*	Behman Safaid	White behen	Root	17
26	*Ceratonia siliqua* Linn	Kharnoob	Carob tree	Seed	5
27	*Cicer arietinum*	Nakhud	Bengal gram	Seed	17, 25
28	*Cinnamomum aromaticum*	Taj	Chinese cinnamon	Bark	5
29	*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*	Darchini	Cinnamon	Bark	17,20,26,27
30	*Cheiranthus cheiri*	Tudri zard	Wall flower	Seed	15,17
31	*Chlorophytum arundinaceum*	Musli safaid	Indian spider plant	Root	17
32	*Cochlospermum religiosum*	Kateera	Tragacanth	Gum	5
33	*Commiphora mukul* Hook. ex Stocks	Muqil	Gogul	Gum	15
34	*Commiphora myrrha*	Mur	Myrrh	Resin	15
35	*Cocos nucifera* Linn.	Narjeel	Coconut	Endosperm	28
36	*Corulus avellana*	Funduq	Hazel nut	Fruit	15
37	*Crocus sativus* Linn.	Zaafran	Saffron	Stigma	15,29
38	*Cucumis melo* Linn.	Kharpaza	Sweet melon	Seed	5
39	*Curculigo orchioides*	Musli siyah	Black musale	Root	17
40	*Curcuma amada* Roxb.	Amba haldi	Mango ginger	Rhizome	17
41	*Curcuma zedoaria* Rosc.	Zaranbad	Zedoary	Rhizome	5
42	*Daucus carota* L.	Gazar	Carrot	Root	15
43	*Dolichos lablab* Linn	Lobia	Chinese beans	Seed	5
44	*Elettaria cardamomum*	Qaqla	Greater cardamom	Fruits	5
45	*Euphorbia hirta* L.	Dudhi	Dudhi	Leaves	15
46	*Euphorbia royleana*	Sheere thuhar	Common milk hedge	Resin	17
47	*Eruca sativa* Mill.	Jarjeer	Rocket	Seed	5
48	*Ferula foetida*	Hilteet	Asafoetida	Resin	17
49	*Ficus carica*	Injeer	Fig	Fruits	15
50	*Ficus religiosa* Linn.	Bargad	Banyan tree	Leaves	15
51	*Gossypium herbaceum* Linn	Pambadana	Cotton seed	Seed	30, 31
52	*Glycyrrhiza glabra* Linn.	Aslasoos	Liquorice	Root	15
53	*Hibiscus rosa-sinesis*	Gurhal	China rose	Flower	15
54	*Lactuca scariola*	Tukhme kahu	Lettuce seeds	Seed	17
55	*Lepidium sativum*	Halyoon	Common asparagus	Seed	5
56	*Lapinus albus*	Turmus	White lupine	Seed	5
57	*Linum usitatissimum*	Katan	Linseed	Seed	5
58	*Mathiola incana*	Tudri surkh	Wall flower red	Seed	17
59	*Melia azedarach*	Bakain	Bead tree	Seed	5
60	*Mentha arvensis* Linn	Nana	Mentha	Whole plant	5
61	*Moschusmoschiferus*	Mushk	Musk	Gland secretion	17
62	*Myristica fragrans*	Jaiphal	Nutmeg	Fruit	17
63	*Mangifera indica* L.	Aam	Mango	Fruit	17
64	*Mucuna pruriens* Linn. DC.	Konch	Cow hadge	Seed	15
65	*Nerium odorum* Aiton	Khar zohra	Oleander	Leaf, Root	15
66	*Orchis latifolia* Linn.	Salab misri	Salep	Root	17, 32
67	*Pastinaca secacul*	Shaqaqul misri	Wild Parship Secacu	Root	17
68	*Peganum harmala*	Aspand	Hermal	Seed	15
69	*Phoenix dactylifera*	Khurma	Date	Fruits	17
70	*Pinus longifolia* Roxb.	Sanober	Fruit	Pine nut	5
71	*Piper longum*	Filfil daraz	Long Pepper	Fruits	17
72	*Pistacia vera* Linn.	Pista	Pistachio nut	Fruit	5

73	*Prunus amygdalus*	Badam	Almond	Fruits	15
74	*Pyrethrum indicum* DC	Bozidan	Sweet pelitory	Root	5
75	*Raphanus sativus* Linn.	Turb	Raddish	Seed	5
76	*Rauwolfia serpentine*	Asrol	Rauwolfia	Root	17
77	*Ricinus communis* L.	Bedanjir	Castor	Seed	33
78	*Rosa damascena* Mill	Gule surkh	Rose	Petal	20, 34
79	*Salmalia malabarica*	Sembhal	Silk cotton tree	Root, Gum	17
80	*Salvia haematodes*	Behman surkh	Red Behen	Root	17
81	*Saussurea lappa*	Kusht shirin	Saussurea	Root	5
82	*Semecarpus anacardium*	Biladur	Marking nut	Fruit	17
83	*Sesamum indicum* Linn.	Kunjad	Sesamum	Seed	35
84	*Sida cordifolia*	Beejband	Country mallow	Seed	17, 28
85	*Sphaeranthus indicus* Linn.	Mundi	Mundi	Whole plant	15
86	*Symplocos racemosus*	Lodh pathani	Lodh tree	Bark	17
87	*Strychnos nux-vomica* Linn.	Azaraqi	Nux vomica	Seeds	17
88	*Syzygium aromaticum* L.	Qaranfal	Clove	Dried flower buds	17
89	*Tamarindus indica* L.	Tamar hindi	Tamarind	Seed	17
90	*Trapa bispinosa*	Sighara	Water chestnut	Fruit	17, 20
91	*Tribulus terrestris* L.	Kharkhasak	Punctureviné	Whole plant	36
92	*Withania somnifera* Linn.	Asgandh	Ashwagandha	Root	17
93	*Trigonella foenum-graecum*	Methi	Methi	Seed	5
94	*Vitis vinifera*	Kishmish	Grapes	Fruit	5
95	*Wrightia tinctoria* (Roxb.)	Indarjao	Ivory tree	Seed	15
96	*Zingiber officinale* Roscoe	Zanjabeel	Ginger	Rhizome	22,37,38

CONCLUSION

It is apparent from present article that there are many herbal drugs which are being used by Unani physicians in the form of single as well as compound formulations since centuries. These drugs are safe, effective and relatively free from adverse effects. Some studies have been conducted on these drugs but they lack extensive pharmacological and clinical studies by using modern parameters. Hence it is suggested that relevant studies may be carried out on these natural resources for the establishment of new, safe and effective aphrodisiacs.

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