

# *Aralia racemosa*

An extract from *Materia Medica Viva*, Volume two

The American spikenard is an herbaceous plant belonging to the Araliaceae. It grows in rich woodlands throughout USA. A tincture is prepared from the fresh root.

## The Essential Features

The principal action of *Aralia Racemosa* seems to centre on the bronchial part of the respiratory system. It appears to fit a class of people who have a constitutional weakness in this area and who, year after year, have colds – which can recur frequently – that settle very rapidly in the bronchi, causing spasmodic coughs with tough, viscid mucus. Year after year these repeated colds appear to worsen until eventually they develop into an asthmatic crisis. It seems that the constitution becomes weaker every year, allowing the common colds to purchase a deeper hold upon the bronchi. It is characteristic of this remedy to be sympathetic only during such respiratory events, which entail severe suffering and which may last for a few weeks each time, and to remain free of dyspnoea during the often lengthy intervals in between. Unfortunately, we do not often immediately think of this remedy in such situations.

If you have treated such a case for a long time, having noted the recurring pattern of the lung weakness year after year, you will almost certainly have prescribed *Tuberculinum* without effect. You may also have treated such cases with other remedies, such as *Allium cepa* because of the initially acrid discharge from the nose, or *Kali bichromicum* because of the viscid mucus, or *Kali carbonicum* because of sensitivity to cold and drafts and a night-time aggravation, or perhaps *Sambucus nigra* when the asthma persists for hours during the night and is accompanied by profuse perspiration, or *Ipecacuanha* when, as these patients sometimes do, your patient complains of nausea with the coughing. However these patients will have continued to return year after year for the same ailments, characterised by the tendency to catch colds which travel into the bronchi, causing a spasmodic cough and difficulty breathing. They have required *Aralia racemosa* all along.

One characteristic that you might have missed is that the patient, despite having suffered with such severe colds which ended nearly every time in cough and dyspnoea, recovered almost completely, until the next bout which brought him down to bed with the same symptomatology.

Typically, the only symptom which remains after such a crisis is a raw, burning feeling in the centre of the chest, as if the area were being continually irritated by smoke; the patient is constantly reminded of this sensitive spot. Deep breathing makes this burning much more pronounced, and the patient will tell you that this irritation always reminds him of his main sensitivity.

Another sensitivity these patients have relates to smoking. They are forced to give up smoking cigarettes as the smoke causes immediate coughing, even when they are not experiencing an acute exacerbation. They also have a great sensitivity to the smoke from others' cigarettes. While this is a common symptom in people suffering with asthma, in *Aralia*

*racemosa*, it is very pronounced even when the patient is not experiencing asthmatic symptoms.

There are several characteristics of the acute exacerbations which, together, constitute a case of *Aralia racemosa*, among them: irregular periodicity (they may have a cold any time of the year, but always at least once every winter), an aggravation at night on lying down and especially after a short sleep, the speed with which the colds travel from the nose to the bronchi, a need to sit up, an aggravation from cold and drafts, viscid, tenacious mucus, and loud wheezing. This is the full symptomatology of *Aralia racemosa*; as you will observe, it entails far more than its principal keynote, which according to Burnett is a 'fit of coughing occurring before midnight, either immediately on lying down or more commonly after a short sleep'.

I have given this remedy in a severe case of bronchopneumonia with high fever, coughing with loud wheezing and dyspnoea, with an aggravation around midnight that woke him after a short sleep. However, the remedy modified only by the time of aggravation and let the patient sleep a little longer; it did not cure. Subsequently he awoke at 2 or 2.30am. *Kali carbonicum* and other remedies were tried, but only with partial local amelioration; symptoms changed, but the patient did not really benefit. The remedy that finally really cured was *Phosphorus* because it fitted the entire mental-emotional picture.

In another case, *Aralia racemosa* modified the wheezing and coughing in a child who woke up around this time of morning, but again without curing. So, prescribing on this indication alone, as Burnett suggests, will very seldom give satisfactory results, I think. On the other hand, these two cases confirm that this keynote is quite correct (and should not be disputed); were it not, the remedy would have had no effect at all in either of the cases.

Allen writes in his Handbook: 'It has been found useful for asthma with spasmodic cough at night, in general worse lying. Spasmodic cough at night, after the first sleep, cough caused by tickling in throat associated with constriction of chest, has to sit up and cough violently'.

You will see satisfactory results with this remedy in cases in which during the initial years the common colds start with an acrid coryza; red, dry, parched lips; and an aggravation from cold air. These acute cases look like *Arsenicum album*. You prescribe *Arsenicum album*, and the cold travels rapidly into the bronchi while the coryza lessens impressively. This is a bad sign, and your immediate assumption should be that either the patient's constitution is weak or that the remedy was wrong.

At night the patient wakes up after a short sleep with violent spasmodic coughing that eventually forces him to get up from bed; he then sits and coughs for some time before he can go back to sleep. He needs his head high to prevent coughing. You think that this is an aggravation from the *Arsenicum album*, and you wait, but the next night is worse.

This is the time that this small remedy must be given, if one is fortunate enough to remember it and to include it in one's armamentarium.

The respiratory condition is almost always worse on lying down at night, and even more characteristic is an aggravation after a short sleep. The patient, even in the beginning of the night, will ask to sleep with a thick pillow. He wakes up with spasmodic coughing which is followed by difficult respiration. Tough, stringy mucus seems to obstruct the air passages, and he soon finds that he has to get up and walk around or sit up in bed to relieve the situation. Sitting bent forward ameliorates the coughing or the dyspnoea.

There is violent spasmodic coughing, aggravated around midnight, but in some cases the condition will last until the early morning, 3 or 3am. The same time modalities apply to the dyspnoea.

A combination frequently seen is: tickling in the throat; loud, wheezing respiration, spasmodic cough, difficult breathing, all are aggravated before or around midnight. The expectoration is warm and has a salty taste.

*Aralia racemosa* seems to affect the intestines as well, producing diarrhoea and prolapse of the rectum.

The mental symptoms are few as of yet. Fear that he will develop a serious disease, primarily out of the lungs. Irritable and peevish.

#### Generalities

Weak, prostrated, with nausea felt in the throat and stomach.

Worse: from cold, falling temperature, drafts, after a short sleep during the night, lying with head low. Worse: around 11pm or midnight, but the aggravation can continue until 4 or 5am.

Better: with warmth, warm covering, sitting up with the head bent forwards when coughing or dyspnoic.

Mouth: Taste salty. He wants to keep the tongue moving to keep it moist, although there is profuse salivation. Aphthae,

mostly of the palate.

**Nose:** Watery, acrid discharge from the nose excoriating the nostrils. Smarting and soreness of the posterior nares due to acrid mucus. Coryza with frequent sneezing, worse in cold air and better with warmth or while walking in the sun. The least draft of air brings on violent sneezing. Hay fever.

**Throat:** Sensation as if a foreign body were in the throat.

**Stomach:** Vague nausea felt in the throat and stomach. Discomfort in the stomach with flatulency.

**Abdomen:** Pain from the liver to the right scapula.

**Rectum:** Sensation as if about to have a loose stool, but expels with great difficulty only a teaspoonful of yellow faeces. After stool, while still sitting, an aching pain in the rectum develops, extending upwards. Irritation in the anus at night.

**Chest:** Loud wheezing respiration coming on immediately after lying down at midnight. Inspiration more difficult than expiration. Asthma on lying down at night; dry, wheezing respiration upon lying on the back with the head low, with a sense of impending suffocation and rapidly increasing dyspnoea. Loud, musical whistlings, mostly during inspiration. Spasmodic cough waking the patient after a short sleep, during the night around 11pm or midnight; he has to sit up and cough, and he is ameliorated by even a little expectoration.

**Sleep:** Profuse perspiration during sleep.

#### Clinical

Cases that are susceptible to common colds which settle in the bronchi very rapidly. Hay fever. Bronchitis. Periodic asthma.

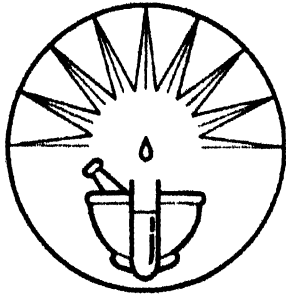
#### Relationship

Compare: *Arsenicum album*, *Ipecacuanha*, *Sambucus nigra*, *Sabadilla*.

#### Dosage

From 6c to the highest.

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# HELIOS

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