

## **The current status of *Hemidesmus indicus* (SARIVA) sold in Sri Lanka**

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*Hemidesmus indicus* (L.) R. Br. is a well known medicinal plant referred as Sariva in Sanskrit and Iramusu in Sinhala, which plays an important role in the preparation of Ayurvedic drugs in Sri Lanka. These plants grow wild in dry regions of the island. However, country's needs are mainly satisfied by material imported from India. The average annual requirement of the raw material of Sariva is around 40000kg. Due to the high demand for roots of this species, there is a known tendency for deliberate adulteration and substitution, by two other plants namely *Cryptolepis buchananii* Roem. & Schult. and *Ichnocarpus frutescens* (L.) R. Br. in Sri Lanka.

Therefore, the present study was conducted to evaluate the purity of crude raw material sold as Sariva in the market. Raw material collected from ten dealers in six districts counting five samples from each (altogether sixty samples), were used for this study. Morphological and anatomical characters were compared with those of authentic *Hemidesmus indicus*, *Cryptolepis buchananii* and *Ichnocarpus frutescens*. According to morphological, organoleptic and anatomical characters such as ridges and wrinkles of surface, smell, taste, starchy texture, colour and bark to wood ratio, presence of mechanical elements like stone cells with concentric rings, high abundance of pigment filled cells and the availability of secretary cells and prismatic crystals, market samples could be divided into two categories. One group was identical to *H. indicus* and the other was different from authentic *H. indicus*. The purity of samples studied ranged from 66% - 46%. The highest purity was observed in samples collected from Rathapura district. This clearly indicates the timely importance of setting proper guidelines providing a fast tool of raw material identification and authentication at the point of purchasing.

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