



Review Article

ASTAVARGA (EIGHT) MEDICINAL PLANTS IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Astavarga refers to a group of eight potent medicinal plants used in Ayurveda, an ancient Indian system of medicine. These plants are renowned for their therapeutic properties and are commonly utilized in various Ayurvedic formulations to promote health and treat specific ailments. The *Astavarga* group indeed holds immense significance in traditional Ayurvedic medicine due to its therapeutic properties. These plants have been valued for their medicinal benefits, such as enhancing vitality, bolstering the immune system, and promoting cellular regeneration. Given their importance and the threat of endangerment faced by many of these species, conservation efforts are crucial. Protecting and cultivating these plants can ensure their sustainability for future generations and maintain the availability of essential ingredients for Ayurvedic formulations. Creating awareness among the public about the significance of these medicinal plants could lead to increased demand and subsequently encourage cultivation initiatives. Moreover, integrating modern agricultural practices with traditional knowledge can aid in cultivating these plants effectively while preserving their medicinal properties. Efforts to protect and propagate these species could involve collaboration between conservationists, herbalists, farmers, and governmental organizations. This collective effort can not only help in preserving biodiversity but also maintain the heritage and efficacy of Ayurvedic medicine.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, which means "life" in Sanskrit and "science" or "knowledge" in *Veda*, is a "science of long life" that has been practiced in India since the prehistoric era. By re-establishing equilibrium between the body, mind, and spirit, Ayurveda seeks to preserve and extend a person's life by utilizing the natural laws of nature. ^[1] Numerous *Rishis* and *Saints*,

including *Aswani Kumars*, *Atreya*, *Bhardwaja*, *Dhanwantri*, *Charak*, *Sushrut*, and many more, have enhanced Ayurveda, which is the study of life. When *Ashwani Kumars*, who were widely known as Ayurvedic miracle healers, observed *Rishi Chyavan's* old, frail, and malnourished body during the early stages of Ayurveda's creation, they decided to use Ayurvedic medicine to bring him back to life.

Maharishi Bhriku, a renowned astrologer whose predictions remain accurate to this day, is the ancestor of *Rishi Chyavan*. Consequently, *Ashwani Kumars* developed a mixture of eight distinct plants that magically restored *Rishi Chyavan's* physique; this concoction became known as *Chyavanprash*. *Astavarga* is the collective name for these eight plants.^[1,2]

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Table 1: Members of *Astavarga* Plants

S.No	Sanskrit Name	Botanical Name	Family	References
1.	<i>Kakoli</i>	<i>Roscoeapurplea</i> Smith	Zingiberaceae	3
2.	<i>Kshirakakoli</i>	<i>Lilium polyphyllum</i> D. Don	Liliaceae	4
3.	<i>Jeevak</i>	<i>Crepidium acuminatum</i> (D. Wear) Szlach	Orchidaceae	4
4.	<i>Rishbhak</i>	<i>Malaxis muscifera</i> (Lind) Kuntze	Orchidaceae	4
5.	<i>Meda</i>	<i>Polygonatum verticillatum</i> (Linn.)	Liliaceae	5-6

6.	Mahameda	<i>Polygonatum cirrhifolium</i> (Wall.) Royle	Liliaceae	4
7.	Riddhi	<i>Habenaria intermedia</i> D. Wear	Orchidaceae	4
8.	Vridhhi	<i>Habenaria edgeworthii</i> Hook.f. ex Collett	Orchidaceae	4

Table 2: Morphological description of *Astavarga* plants

S.No	Botanical Name	Family	Habit	Flowering-Fruiting Period	References
1.	<i>Roscoeapurplea</i> Smith	Zingiberaceae	Herb, erect. Stem leafy, elongated. Leaves at the time of flower 5-6, lanceolate. Flowers few in a sessile spike. Corolla tube not longer than calyx; limb purple, rarely pale lilac or white. Lip broad, deeply bifid.	June-July	7
2.	<i>Lilium polyphyllum</i> D. Don	Liliaceae	A perennial herb upto 60-120cm in height. Erect, slender, hollow, leafy. Leaves-sessile, alternate or nearly opposite or whorled, 7-12.5cm long and 5-12mm broad. Flowers- pendulous, 10-12cm in diameter. Fruits- 2-3cm long, oblong, three angled, erect, coriaceous, loculicidal, 3-lobed capsule. Seed- numerous, circular, brown in colour.	June-July	7,8
3.	<i>Crepidium acuminatum</i> (D. Wear) Szlach	Orchidaceae	Terrestrial, up to 30cm tall. Leaves 3 or more, ovate, acute or acuminate, margins undulate, lower one with sheathing base. Inflorescence laxly many-flowered. Flowers yellowish-green to purple, with purple tinge near the centre. Bracts lanceolate. Sepals oblong; the laterals broad and oblong, 3-5-nerved; dorsal shorter than the laterals, 1-3-nerved, subacute. Petals longer than sepals, linear, 3-nerved. Lip shield shaped, narrowly ovate, slightly convex, tip notched or bilobulate; auricles straight and slightly overlapping. Column with rounded arms.	July-August	7
4.	<i>Malaxis muscifera</i> (Lindl) Kuntze	Orchidaceae	Terrestrial. subopposite, orbicular-ovate Leaves 2, unequal, to ovate-lanceolate, obtuse or subacute, sheathing or shortly petioled. Inflorescence laxly flowered, ebracteate, far exceeding the leaves. Flowers yellowish-green, c. 3mm across. Bracts shorter than the ovary, lanceolate. Sepals subequal, oblong-lanceolate, subacute. Petals shorter than the sepals, linear. Lip fleshy broadly ovate, acute, with a beak, without auricles; side-lobes obscure, convex thickened. Column fleshy, sessile.	July-September	7
5.	<i>Polygonatum verticillatum</i> (Linn.)	Liliaceae	Herbs; rhizomes tuber-like. Stem erect, angled, glabrous. Leaves in whorls of 3-6, sub-sessile, narrowly elliptic-lanceolate, acute to acuminate. Inflorescence 1-2 flowered; perianth pale-yellow, contracted in middle; filaments papillose; berries red.	July-August	7
6.	<i>Polygonatum cirrhifolium</i>	Liliaceae	Herb, up to 2m tall. Leaves in whorls of 3-6, rarely a few alternate in proximal part	June-August	7

	(Wall.) Royle		of stem, sessile, narrowly linear, apex usually cirrhose (coiled) at initial stage. Perianth white, greenish, or pale purple.		
7.	<i>Habenaria intermedia</i> D. Wear	Orchidaceae	Terrestrial. Stem up to 50cm tall. Leaves scattered, ovate-oblong. Inflorescence 2-6-flowered. Flowers white or greenish-white. Bracts leaf-like, broadly lanceolate, acuminate, equalling or exceeding the ovary. Sepals persistent, acuminate, 5-7-nerved, tip reflexed. Petals white, equalling the dorsal sepal, 5-nerved. Lip 3-lobed, longer than sepals, side-lobes deeply pectinate with filiform segments; mid-lobe linear; spur 5-6 cm, stout, exceeding the ovary, tapering towards the apex, more or less curved.	July-August	7
8.	<i>Habenaria edgeworthii</i> Hook.f. ex Collett	Orchidaceae	Terrestrial, up to 40cm tall, stout, leafy. Leaves ovate or oblong-lanceolate, acute or acuminate. Inflorescence spike 10-25cm long, many-flowered. Flowers crowded, deflexed in bud. Bracts shorter than the ovary. Sepals green, pubescent; the dorsal erect, broadly ovate or suborbicular, concave; laterals longer, deflexed. Petals yellow, erect, obliquely triangular, from the broad base, apex curved inwards and forming a hood with the dorsal sepal. Lip yellow, longer than the lateral sepals. Spur about twice the length of the ovary, yellowish-green, curving upwards with tip curved down.	July-August	7

Indication of the Astavarga Plant Drug as per Ayurvedic Lexicons***Kakoli (Roscoe purpurea Smith)***

S.No	Indications	DN ¹¹	KN ¹³	BN ¹⁴
1.	<i>Daha</i>	+	+	+
2.	<i>Jwara</i>	+	+	+
3.	<i>Raktapitta</i>	-	+	+
4.	<i>Rajayakshma</i>	+	+	+
5.	<i>Shukrajanana</i>	+	-	+
6.	<i>Vrishya</i>	-	+	-

Kshirakakoli (Lilium polyphyllum D. Don)

S.No	Indications	DN ¹¹	KN ¹³	BN ¹⁴
1.	<i>Basti Shodhaka</i>	+	-	-
2.	<i>Daha</i>	-	+	+
3.	<i>Hridya Roga</i>	+	-	-
4.	<i>Jwara</i>	+	+	+
5.	<i>Kasa</i>	+	-	-
6.	<i>Rakta Vikara</i>	+	-	-
7.	<i>Raktapitta</i>	-	+	+
8.	<i>Rajayakshma</i>	+	+	+

9.	<i>Ruchya</i>	+	-	-
10.	<i>Swasa Roga</i>	+	-	-
11.	<i>Shukrajanana</i>	-	-	+
12.	<i>Vrishya</i>	+	+	-

Jeevak (Crepidium acuminatum (D. Wear) Szlach)

S.No	Indications	DN ¹¹	MN ¹²	KN ¹³	BN ¹⁴	RN ¹⁵	NA	PN ¹⁶
1	<i>Balya</i>	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
2	<i>Bala Roga</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
3	<i>Daha</i>	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
4	<i>Jwara</i>	+	-	-	-	+	-	-
5	<i>Karshya</i>	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
6	<i>Kasa</i>	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
7	<i>Shukrajanana</i>	-	+	+	+	-	-	-
8	<i>Raktapitta</i>	+	-	+	-	+	-	-
9	<i>Rajyakshma</i>	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
10	<i>Rakta Vikara</i>	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
11	<i>Rasayana</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	+
12	<i>Vrishya</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	+

Rishbhak (Malaxis muscifera(Lind) Kuntze)

S.No	Indication	DN ¹¹	KN ¹³	BN ¹⁴	PN ¹⁶
1.	<i>Daha</i>	+	+	+	-
2.	<i>Jwara</i>	+	-	-	-
3.	<i>Karshya</i>	-	-	+	-
4.	<i>Rakta Dosha</i>	+	-	+	-
5.	<i>Raktapitta</i>	-	+	-	-
6.	<i>Rajyakshma</i>	+	+	+	-
7.	<i>Shukrajanana</i>	+	+	+	-

Meda (Polygonatum verticillatum (Linn.)

S.No	Indications	DN ¹¹	MN ¹²	KN ¹³	BN ¹⁴	RN ¹⁵	NA	PN ¹⁶
1.	<i>Daha</i>	+	-	-	-	+	-	-
2.	<i>Jwara</i>	+	-	-	+	+	-	-
3.	<i>Kasa</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
4.	<i>Stanya Roga</i>	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
5.	<i>Stanyajanana</i>	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
6.	<i>Shukrajanana</i>	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
7.	<i>Rakta Vikara</i>	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
8.	<i>Rasayana</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	+
9.	<i>Raktapitta</i>	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
10.	<i>Rajyakshma</i>	+	-	+	-	+	-	-
11.	<i>Vrishya</i>	-	+	-	+	-	-	+

Mahameda (*Polygonatum cirrhifolium* (Wall.) Royle)

S.No	Indications	DN ¹¹	MN ¹²	KN ¹³	BN ¹⁴	RN ¹⁵	NA	PN ¹⁶
1.	Daha	+	-	-	-	+	-	-
2.	Jwara	+	-	-	+	+	-	-
3.	Rakta Vikara	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
4.	Rasayana	-	-	-	-	-	-	+
5.	Raktapitta	+	+	+	-	+	-	-
6.	Rajayakshma	+	+	+	-	+	-	-
7.	Stanyajanana	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
8.	Shukrajanana	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
9.	Vata Shamaka	+	-	-	+	-	-	-
10.	Vatapitta Shamaka	-	-	+	-	-	-	+
11.	Vrishya	-	-	-	-	-	-	+

Riddhi (*Habenaria intermedia* D. Wear)

S.No	Indications	DN ¹¹	MN ¹²	KN ¹³	BN ¹⁴	RN ¹⁵	NA	PN ¹⁶
1	Balya	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
2	Jwara	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	Murchaa	-	-	+	+	-	-	-
4	Kushta	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
5	Krimi Roga	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
6	Shukrajanana	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
7	Raktapitta	-	-	+	+	-	-	-
8	Rakta Vikara	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	Rajayakshma	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	Rasayana	-	-	-	-	-	-	+
11	Tridosha Shamaka	-	+	+	+	-	-	-
12	Vrishya	-	-	-	-	-	-	+

Vriddhi (*Habenaria edgeworthii* Hook.f. ex Collett)

S.No	Indications	DN ¹¹	MN ¹²	KN ¹³	BN ¹⁴	RN ¹⁵	NA	PN ¹⁶
1	Kasa	-	+	+	+	-	-	-
2	Jwara	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	Kapha Shamaka	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
4	Kushta	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
5	Krimi Roga	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
6	Shukrajanana	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	Rakta Vikara	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
8	Raktapitta	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
9	Rajayakshma	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
10	Rasayana	-	-	-	-	-	-	+
11	Vrishya	-	+	+	+	-	-	+

Indication: D.N (Dhanvantri Nighantu), M.N (Madanpal Nighantu), K.N (Kaidev Nighantu), B.N (Bhavaprakash Nighantu), R.N (Raj Nighantu), N.A (Nighantu Adarsh), P.N (Priya Nighantu)

Table 3: Part used and Formulations of Astavarga Plants

S.No	Botanical Name	Part Used	Formulation	References
1.	<i>Roscoe purpurea</i> Smith	Rhizome	<i>Astavarga churna</i> , <i>Chyavanprashrasayan</i> , <i>Vachaditaila</i> , <i>Chitrakaditaila</i> , <i>Mahakalyan ghrita</i> , <i>Mahamayura ghrita</i> , <i>Jivaniya ghrita</i> , <i>Nagabala sarpi</i> , <i>Vajikaran ghrita</i> , <i>Brahini gutika</i> , and <i>Jivaniyagana churna</i>	4, 29
2.	<i>Lilium polyphyllum</i> D. Don	Bulb	<i>Astavarga churna</i> , <i>Chyavanprashrasayan</i> , <i>Vachaditaila</i> , <i>Mahakalyan ghrita</i> , <i>Mahamayura ghrita</i> , <i>Jivaniya ghrita</i> , <i>Vajikaran ghrita</i> , <i>Brahini gutika</i> , and <i>Jivaniyagana churna</i>	4, 30
3.	<i>Crepidium acuminatum</i> (D. Wear) Szlach	Pseudobulb	<i>Astavarga churna</i> , <i>Chyavanprashrasayan</i> , <i>Vachaditaila</i> , <i>Chitrakaditaila</i> , <i>Mahakalyan ghrita</i> , <i>Mahamayura ghrita</i> , <i>Mahapadma taila</i> , <i>Jivaniya ghrita</i> , <i>Vajikaran ghrita</i> , <i>Brahini gutika</i> , and <i>Himvana agada</i>	34, 24
4.	<i>Malaxis muscifera</i> (Lindl) Kuntze	Pseudobulb	<i>Astavarga churna</i> , <i>Chyavanprashrasayan</i> , <i>Chitrakaditaila</i> , <i>Mahakalyan ghrita</i> , <i>Mahamayura ghrita</i> , <i>Mahapadma taila</i> , <i>Jivaniya ghrita</i> , <i>Vajikaran ghrita</i> , and <i>Himvana agada</i>	27, 24
5.	<i>Polygonatum verticillatum</i> (Linn.)	Rhizome	<i>Astavarga churna</i> , <i>Chyavanprashrasayan</i> , <i>Vachaditaila</i> , <i>Chitrakaditaila</i> , <i>Mahakalyan ghrita</i> , <i>Mahamayura ghrita</i> , <i>Jivaniya ghrita</i> , <i>Vajikaran ghrita</i> , <i>Brahini gutika</i> , and <i>Indrokta rasayan</i>	35, 36
6.	<i>Polygonatum cirrhifolium</i> (Wall.) Royle	Rhizome	<i>Astavarga churna</i> , <i>Chyavanprashrasayan</i> , <i>Vachaditaila</i> , <i>Chitrakaditaila</i> , <i>Mahakalyan ghrita</i> , <i>Mahamayura ghrita</i> , and <i>Indrokta rasayan</i>	37, 38
7.	<i>Habenaria intermedia</i> D. Wear	Tubers	<i>Vachadi oil</i> , <i>Vajikaran ghrita</i> , <i>Astavarga churna</i> , <i>Chyavanprashrasayan</i>	24
8.	<i>Habenaria edgeworthii</i> Hook.f. ex Collett	Tubers	<i>Astavarga churna</i> , <i>Chyavanprashrasayan</i> , <i>Mahamayura ghrita</i>	33, 39

Table 4: Substitutes of Astavarga Plants

S.No	Botanical Name	Substitutes	References
1.	<i>Roscoe purpurea</i> Smith	<i>Aswagandha</i> (<i>Withania somnifera</i> (Linn.) Dunal) and <i>Kali musali</i> (<i>Curculigo orchoides</i> Gaertn)	42, 25
2.	<i>Lilium polyphyllum</i> D. Don	<i>Aswagandha</i> (<i>Withania somnifera</i> (Linn.) Dunal), <i>Safed musali</i> (<i>Chlorophytum arundinaceum</i> Baker), <i>Fritillaria roylei</i> Hook. <i>Fritillaria oxypetala</i> D.Don.	43, 25
3.	<i>Crepidium acuminatum</i> (D. Wear) Szlach	<i>Vidarikand</i> (<i>Pueraria tuberosa</i> (Wild.) DC), <i>Safedbehen</i> (<i>Centaurea behen</i> Linn.) and <i>Guduchi</i> (<i>Tinospora cordifolia</i> (Willd.) Miers, <i>Malaxis cylindrostachya</i> (Lindl.) Kuntze and <i>Malaxis mackinnoni</i> (Duthie) Ames)	43, 25
4.	<i>Malaxis muscifera</i> (Lindl) Kuntze	<i>Vidarikand</i> (<i>Pueraria tuberosa</i> (Wild.) DC) and <i>Lal behmen</i> (<i>Centaureum roxburghii</i> (D.Don) Druce	43
5.	<i>Polygonatum verticillatum</i> (Linn.)	<i>Satavari</i> (<i>Asparagus racemosus</i> Willd), <i>Salam mishri</i> (<i>Eulophia campestris</i> Wall.)	43
6.	<i>Polygonatum cirrhifolium</i> (Wall.) Royle	<i>Satavari</i> (<i>Asparagus racemosus</i> Willd), <i>Nagbala</i> (<i>Sida veronicifolia</i> Lam.), <i>Shakakul mishri</i> (<i>Polygonatum multiflorum</i> (L.) All.) and <i>Prasarani</i> (<i>Paederia foetida</i> L.)	43
7.	<i>Habenaria intermedia</i> D. Wear	<i>Varahikand</i> (<i>Tacca integrifolia</i> Ker Gawl.), <i>Bala</i> (<i>Sida cordifolia</i> Linn.), <i>Chiriya musali</i> (<i>Asparagus filicinus</i> Buch.-Ham. ex D.Don)	43

8.	<i>Habenaria edgeworthii</i> Hook.f. ex Collett	<i>Varahikand</i> (<i>Tacca integrifolia</i> Ker Gawl.), <i>Salam panja</i> (<i>Dactylorhiza hatagirea</i> (D.Don) Soo) and <i>Maha bala</i> (<i>Sida acuta</i> Burm.f.). <i>Habenaria griffithii</i> Hook.f.	43
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Table 5: Status of Astavarga Plants

S.No	Botanical Name	Status	Reference
1.	<i>Roscoeia purpurea</i> Smith	Commonly available	32, 41
2.	<i>Lilium polyphyllum</i> D. Don	Endangered	40
3.	<i>Crepidium acuminatum</i> (D. Wear) Szlach	Rare	40
4.	<i>Malaxis muscifera</i> (Lindl) Kuntze	Rare, threatened	40
5.	<i>Polygonatum verticillatum</i> (Linn.)	Threatened	40
6.	<i>Polygonatum cirrhifolium</i> (Wall.) Royle	Rare	40
7.	<i>Habenaria intermedia</i> D. Wear	Commonly available	40
8.	<i>Habenaria edgeworthii</i> Hook.f. ex Collett	Rare	40

CONCLUSION

The industry and Ayurvedic practitioners have a strong need for *Astavarga* plants. These plants are currently gathered from the wild during certain seasons. Such careless gathering has put these plants' survival in jeopardy. In-situ conservation of the genetic resource is of utmost importance. Ex-situ conservation is required in as many locations as feasible. For farmers to engage in large-scale cultivation, the methods for propagation and cultivation must be standardized. This lessens the strain on the natural wild population by allowing the industry to buy raw materials from farmers. To control the trade, the government and non-governmental organizations should devise a plan.

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