

## “Rishbhak (*Microstylis musifera*) – An Endangered plant of Asthavarga Mentioned in Samhitas”

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### Abstract-

Ancient Indian medicine developed ayurveda. It addresses issues with daily living, health, and the promotion of longevity that is, living a long, healthy life. The World Health Organization (WHO) has verified that around 80% of the global population is receiving the medical care they require from herbal medicines. The aṣṭavarga plant group is associated with a number of medicinal properties in Ayurveda. For example, Jivaniya refers to drugs that strengthen immunity and vitality, Bramhniya to increasing body flesh by stimulating cell regeneration, and Vayasthapana to the activation of metabolic processes, particularly anabolism. Astagarga is a set of eight medicinal herbs, four of which are orchids: *Malaxis acuminata*, *Malaxis muscifera*, *Habenaria intermedia*, and *Habenaria edgeworthii*. It is an important ingredient in many ayurvedic preparations. A valuable herb in Ayurveda, *Malaxis muscifera* is a member of the Astavarga plant group. In the shaded sections of semi-evergreen to shrubby forests, *Malaxis muscifera* thrives. It is a member of the Orchedaceae family, also known as Rishbhak. In order to better understand *Malaxis muscifera*'s botanical description, phytoconstituents, pharmacological activity, and medical applications, a systematic review analysis was carried out.

**Keywords-** Ayurveda, Asthvarga, Rishbhak, *Microstylis musifera*.

### Introduction-

Ayurveda is a kind of ancient medicine that has its roots in India and uses minerals and herbal ingredients. An ancient medical science is called Ayurveda. The terms "ayur" (meaning life) and "veda" (meaning knowledge or science) are the two Sanskrit words that make up the phrase "ayurveda."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, Ayurveda is an ancient Indian medicinal science. It addresses issues with daily living, health, and the promotion of longevity—that is, living a long, healthy life. Based on observation and experience, Ayurveda is a traditional medical system. Ayurveda is being practiced now in India. Another nation that is said to have the ability to export medicinal plants is India. The Indian government views Ayurveda on par with other medical practices.<sup>2</sup>

This timeless legacy is carried forward by the Ayurvedic Samhitas. According to Lord Dhanvantri, Ayurveda is the science of life. It is the Veda of life the good, bad, joyful, and unhappy aspects of existence<sup>3</sup>. Ayurveda's primary goals are to protect a healthy person's fitness and lessen a patient's illnesses.<sup>4</sup> For their primary medical requirements, almost 80% of people in underdeveloped nations rely on traditional medicines, the majority of which are made from plants. About 25% of medications in the modern pharmacopeia are synthetic counterparts of plant-based compounds based on the pharmacophore found in those plants<sup>5,6</sup>. As a result of their long history of employing plants to treat illnesses, Indians have the largest percentage of medicinal plants recognized for their therapeutic benefits of any nation in the world<sup>7</sup>. In local or regional healing practices, traditional herbal medicines are naturally occurring, plant-derived drugs that have undergone little to no industrial processing and have been utilized to cure illness. Debates about global health are paying a lot of attention to traditional herbal treatments.<sup>8</sup>

Rishbhak (*Malaxis muscifera* (Lindl.) Kuntze), popularly called Rishbhak and Snake mouth orchid, is a terrestrial herb, distributed in temperate to subalpine regions at an altitude between 2400-3600 m in the

Himalayan region.<sup>9</sup> It is a key component in Chyavanprash, a rejuvenating tonic that is well-liked by people of all ages. The plant is also used as an aphrodisiac, and to treat a variety of medical conditions, including sterility, burning sensations, diarrhea, fever, internal and external hemorrhage, and seminal weakness.<sup>10</sup> *M. muscifera* population that was observed in the wild in Dhanaulti, Chamoli, Gongoli, Uttarakhand, was examined. Threats to survival as well as botanical, chemical, and medicinally significant orchids have been discussed in this research.

**Scientific Classification:**<sup>11</sup>

Kingdom- Plantae

Division-Tracheophytes

Clade- Angiosperms

Clade- Monocots

Order- Asparagales

Family-Orchidaceae

Genus- *Microstylis*

Species- *M. muscifera*.

**English Name:** Adder mouth orchid, The fly bearing Malaxis, Snake mouth orchid, Rishbhaka.

**Sanskrit/ Hindi Name:** *Rishbhak*

**Habit :** A perennial, terrestrial herb, variable in size, 15-45 cm in height.

**Habitat-** Typically found up to an elevation of 2100–4100 meters above sea level in Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal, China, and Pakistan. found in the temperate Himalayas of India, extending eastward to Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, and Uttarakhand, up to an elevation of 2400-3600 meters.<sup>12</sup>

**Botanical characteristic features:** Its stem is tall and erect, tuberous at the base with ovoid pseudobulbs that are sheathed; it has one or two unequal leaves that are sessile or petioled, measuring 5 to 10 cm in length and 2-4 cm in width. The leaves are oblong to oblong-lanceolate, rounded or obtuse, blunt at the base, and narrowed to sheathe the petiole. Flower size: tiny, 3–4 mm long, pale yellow–green in terminal raceme, 10–25 cm long; pedicel: 3–4 mm long, erect; bracts: lanceolate, equal to or shorter than pedicels; sepals: broadly lanceolate; petals that are straight and shorter than the sepals; lips that are entirely full or only slightly bearded at the tip; ovate, sharply pointed, and thickened borders; sides of the lips that do not extend upward into auricles; column sessile, extremely brief, with arms that span very briefly; subterminal anthers, pollinia 4; pseudobulb-round, bright white, conical, straight or slightly curved, bullock horn-shaped, measuring 2–7 cm in length and 0.5–1 cm in diameter, and possessing a mucilaginous content.<sup>13</sup>

**Flowering:** July-August.

**Fruiting:** September-October.

**Active ingredients:** The bitter principle, alkaloid, flavonoid, and glycoside are all present in pseudo bulbs.

**Properties & Action:** Pseudobulb-Sweet, refrigerant, aphrodisiac, haemostatic, antidiarrhoeal, styptic, antidysentritic, febrifuge, cooling and tonic.<sup>14</sup>

**Ayurvedic Properties-**<sup>15</sup>

The literature includes screening of classical *Ayurvedic* literature, contemporary literature, modern literatures, journals and internet sources etc. to collect adequate data for the study purpose. The properties of Rishbhak (*Malaxis muscifera*) is mentioned in Dhanwantari Nighantu, Raja Nighantu and Kaiyadeva Nighantu, Madanpal nighantu & Bhavaprakash nighantu.

Properties	Rishbhak
<i>Microstylis muscifera</i>	
Family	Orchidaceae
Rasa	Madhur
Guna	Guru
Veerya	Sheeta
Vipaka	Madhur
Dosa Karma	Vaat-pitta Shamaka
Karma	Jivaniya, Brighaniya, shukrajanana, Balya, Snehopaga

**Medicinal uses of Rishbhak (*Microstylis muscifera*) in Ayurvedic Text:** <sup>16,17,18,19,20</sup>

- Sterility, pitta and vata vitiated situations, seminal weakness, internal and external hemorrhages, dysentery, fever, emaciation, burning feeling, and general debility might all benefit from it.
- It is also used to treat rheumatism, insect bites, and as an aphrodisiac.
  - Rishabhak is utilized to strengthen the body and nourishes body tissue when combined with vidarikand and aswagandha.
- It balances out inflamed vata and pitta doshas and increases kapha dosha.

**Part used:** Pseudo bulbs.

**Formulations:** The following are known as Astavarga Churna: Vajikaran Ghrita, Himvana Agada, Chitrakadi Taila, Mahakalyan Ghrita, Mahamayura Ghrita, Mahapadma Taila, Jivaniya Ghrita, and Vajikaran Ghrita.

**Substitutes:** Vidari kand (*Pueraria tuberosa* (Willd.) DC.) and Lal behmen (*Centaurium roxburghii* (D. Don) Druce.

**Discussion-** The Astavarga is a significant group of medicinal plants that have been documented in historical literature; nevertheless, there is little information available about their precise medical applications because the indigenous community has kept them and has passed them down orally to future generations. *Malaxis muscifera* (Lindl. Kuntze), often known as Rishbhak or Snake mouth orchid, is a terrestrial herb found in temperate to subalpine regions in the Himalayan region. Its elevation ranges from 2400 to 3600 m. It is a key component in Chyavanprash, a rejuvenating tonic that is well-liked by people of all ages. In addition, the herb is used as an aphrodisiac, to treat infertility, burning sensations, diarrhea, fever, internal and external hemorrhage, and seminal weakness.

**Conclusion-** Researchers and scientists may find the data gathered in this study useful in their investigation of novel phytochemical and pharmacological qualities, particularly in light of recent reports on the usage of the Astavarga plant Rishbhak in traditional medicinal knowledge. *Malaxis muscifera* (Lindl.) Kuntze, also known as Rishbhak, is one of eight plants whose underground parts are used in Ayurveda as general tonics that help strengthen the body's vital power, enhance the body's ability for cell regeneration, and strengthen the immune system. These plants are collectively referred to in India as "Astavarga." In addition to being used separately, they can all be combined to create a variety of revitalizing tonics in conventional Ayurvedic treatment. 'Chyavanprash', a polyherbal concoction including over fifty distinct plant constituents, is a highly valued remedy used as an aphrodisiac, immune system strengthener, energy booster, and general tonic in India.

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