

RARE MEDICINAL PLANTS IN AYURVEDA AND THEIR PROPERTIES OF THERAPEUTIC IMPORTANCE

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda and ancient science of medicinal plant described several species and plants which are very rare but possesses enormous therapeutic benefits. Rare drugs in Ayurveda refer to medicinal drugs that are not frequently used because of their unique properties and exclusive habitat. Rare herbs are superior pharmacological aids and are very precious because they cure complicated health ailments. Climate change, overharvesting and habitat degradation have put many of these uncommon medicinal plants in danger of extinction. Their sustainability depends on conservation methods. These herbs are essential for creating successful therapies according to Ayurvedic Pharmacopeia; hence it is imperative that they should be preserved for future generations. The some of the examples of these herbs/plants are Kshirkakoli, Kakoli, Jeevak, Mahameda, Meda, Rishbhak, Vridhii and Ridhhi, etc. Most of them are distributed mainly in the Himalayas. This review article discusses the medicinal value and characteristics of such rare drugs of traditional system of medicine.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Apurva Dravya, Astavarga, Endangered, Rare Medicine.

INTRODUCTION

The Vedic era in Indian history is commonly known as the golden age because of its tremendous input in every sphere of philosophy. The idea of rare medicines in Ayurveda is novel, as these drugs demonstrate certain and powerful pharmacological actions, so they are in a class by themselves among Ayurvedic drugs. Rare medicines are divided into a number of categories, such as *Apurva Dravya*, *Jangala Dravya* and *Anupa Dravya*. These are the substances with novel medicinal action,

growing in dry or desert or marshy or aquatic conditions, hence less available for medicinal purpose. Also, Ayurvedic literature divides these drugs into *Prachina* and *Navina* classes as old medicines described in ancient texts and new medicines being used in current practice respectively. Natural habitat is one of the important reasons of lack of availability of some medicinal plants. **Figure 1**, depicted examples of some rare herbs/plants belongs from Himalayan region and not found abundantly to use for common mass.^[1-4]

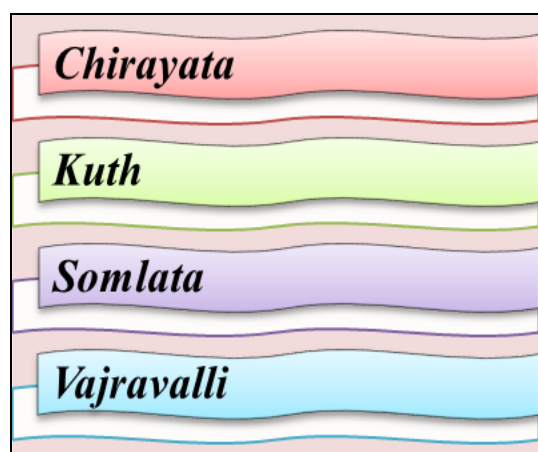


Figure 1: Rare Himalayan Herbs

Therapeutic Importance of Rare Plant Species

Rare medicines have special features like limited availability, specialized therapeutic activity, and unusual habitats, commonly occurring in far-flung forests, deserts, and high-altitude Mountain. *Sonapatha*, *Jivanti*, *Kali Haldi*, *Hathikana* and *Sarpagandha* are common examples of these types of drugs which found very rarely. *Sonapatha*, as mentioned in ancient Ayurvedic literature is used because of its antiseptic and astringent nature.^[4-6] *Jivanti*, is another important Ayurvedic herb, used to increase longevity and vitality. *Kali Haldi* is a perennial rhizomatous herb with a characteristic bluish-black rhizome and is indigenous to North-East India. *Hathikana* is a wild food plant, specifically known for its anti-inflammatory activity. *Sarpagandha* is a good

remedy for hypertension and is also a natural sedative and tranquilizer. One of the most prominent plants of this group is *Kakoli*, whose rhizome is employed in herbal preparations because of its high flavonoid, alkaloid, tannin, saponin, and glycoside content. *Chirayata* used as bitter tonic for liver disorders and detoxification purpose. *Kuth* is a rare root used for digestive and respiratory health. *Somlata* is used for respiratory issues and *Vajravalli* is used in bone healing and joint disorders. These are scarce herbs of tremendous therapeutic value whose preservation and cultivation are very important for traditional and contemporary medicine. Some other examples with their therapeutic application are depicted in **Table 1**.^[5-7]

Table 1: Category wise rare herbs and their specific therapeutic role.

Category	Herb	Ayurvedic Properties	Therapeutic Uses
Rare Rasayana Herbs	<i>Shalaparni</i>	<i>Vatahara & Balya</i>	Anti-inflammatory
	<i>Maharasnadi</i>	<i>Deepana & Balya</i>	Improves digestion & enhances strength
Rare Vatahara Herbs	<i>Ativisha</i>	<i>Deepana, Pachana and Jvaraghna</i>	Digestive issues, fever & diarrhea
	<i>Kapikacchu</i>	<i>Vajikarana & Medhya</i>	Aphrodisiac, nervine tonic, improves fertility
Rare Pittahara Herbs	<i>Daruharidra</i>	<i>Pittashamak, Raktashodhaka & Yakritottejaka</i>	Liver disorders, skin diseases, detoxification
	<i>Musta</i>	<i>Deepana, Pachana & Stanyashodhana</i>	Fever, digestive disorders & gynecological issues
Rare Kaphahara Herbs	<i>Chandraprabha</i>	<i>Mutrala & Rasayana</i>	Kidney and urinary disorders
	<i>Shankhapushpi</i>	<i>Medhya & Rasayana</i>	Enhances brain function, memory, and intelligence

Shalaparni contains *Guru* and *Snigdha Guna*, it is a *Vatahara*, *Balya* and *Shothahara* drug, which is considered useful in neuromuscular conditions. It contains *Ushna Virya*, *Madhura-Tikta Rasa* and *Madhura Vipaka* which provides nutrition to the *Dhatus*.

Maharasnadi possess *Laghu*, *Tikshna* and *Snigdha Guna*; it acts as *Balya* and *Medhya* drug. Its *Ushna Virya* and *Katu Vipaka* facilitate digestion and mental function.

Ativisha having *Laghu*, *Tikshna* and *Ruksha Guna*, thus it offers *Jvaraghna*, *Pachana* and *Grahi* activities, is useful in digestive ailments, diarrhea and fever. Its *Katu Vipaka* and *Ushna Virya* facilitate removal of *Ama* and balances *Kapha* and *Vata Dosha*.

Kapikacchu being *Guru* and *Snigdha Guna* gives *Vajikarana* and *Medhya* effects. Being *Madhura Vipaka* and *Ushna Virya* it pacifies nervous system and ensures vitality.

Daruharidra possessing *Laghu* and *Tikshna Guna*, it is a *Pittashamak* and *Raktashodhaka* herb. Its *Katu Vipaka* and *Ushna Virya* make it a good liver tonic and blood purifier, effective in jaundice and skin diseases.

Musta with *Ruksha* and *Tikshna Guna* imparts *Deepana & Pachana* properties, it possesses *Katu Vipaka* and *Tikta-Kashaya Rasa*, therefore considered beneficial in digestive diseases and fever, etc.

Chandraprabha with *Guru* and *Snigdha Guna*, are used as a *Mutrala* and *Balya* herb, considered beneficial in

kidney and urinary disorders because of its *Tikta Rasa* and *Ushna Virya*.^[7-9]

With the growing threat to these medicinally important plants, concerted conservation, cultivation, and propagation initiatives are essential in order to have them available in the future.

Different portions of these plants are used depending on the availability and intensity of bioactive compounds present therein. Although suitable substitutes are also available for most of the rare and endangered medicinal plants as mentioned below^[8-11].

Possible Substitute of Rare Plants/Herbs

- ✓ *Kshirkakoli* is endangered species, is replaceable by *Vidarikand*.
- ✓ *Rishbhak* has alkaloid and glycoside content, can be replaced with *Vidarikand*.
- ✓ *Meda* is extremely valued but endangered; substitutes include *Salam Mishri* and *Shatavari*.
- ✓ Similarly, *Nagbala* is a substitute for the rare species *Mahameda*.
- ✓ *Bala* is frequently used in place of *Ridhhi*.
- ✓ *Salam Panja* and *Mahabala* can be used in place of *Habenaria elgwerthii*.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda's rare medicine plants have peculiar therapeutic characteristics but are under the threat of destruction from habitat depletion, over-collection and environmental change. The herbs *Sonapatha*, *Jivanti*, *Kali Haldi* and *Sarpagandha* are precious for addressing

a range of diseases, including inflammation, neurologic and metabolic disorders. Their conservation will help preserve Ayurvedic practice and promote current medicine. Sustainable cultivation, conservation, and research on appropriate alternatives can prevent these rare plant resources from being lost in the future.

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