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THE RATHNAPURUSHA PARADIGM: A TAXONOMIC-TO-THERAPEUTIC CRITICAL SYNTHESIS OF *HYBANTHUS ENNEASPERMUS* (L.) F. Muell

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is an ancient, holistic system of Indian medicine that balances doshas to achieve optimal health. It utilizes crude herbs, a healthy diet, and lifestyle changes to treat diseases. *Dravyaguna* is the specialized Ayurvedic branch that studies the pharmacology, pharmacokinetics and therapeutic actions of medicinal plants; it systematically categorizes herbs based on their clinical *rasa, guna, veerya* and *vipaka*. *Ionidium suffruticosum*(L.) Ging. is an older scientific name, currently accepted as *Hybanthus enneaspermus* (*L.*) F. Muell., belonging to the family Violaceae, also called as spade flower and popularly recognized as *Rathna Purusha*, a highly prized perennial herb within classical Ayurvedic practice; its therapeutic utility in various disease conditions such as *shopha, shotha, visha, mutrakruchra, shoola, atisara,* etc

Keywords: *Ayurveda*, *Dravyaguna, Nighantu, Ratnapurusha*, *Padmacharini, Hybanthus ennaespermus*

BACKGROUND: *Dravya guna* is a unique branch of *Ayurveda* that explains the identity, properties, and therapeutic actions of a substance by combining its *Nama* (nomenclature), Rupa (morphology), and *Guna* (pharmacological) attributes. The genus Hybanthus represents one of the 150 distinct lineages within the Violaceae family, which altogether contains about 22 genera and 900 species. Highly prized in traditional Ayurvedic therapeutics, members of this genus are chemically characterised by significant concentrations of volatile oils, anthocyanins, carotenoid pigments, and the bioactive flavonoid rutin [1]. *Hybanthus enneaspermus (L.)* F. Muell. has a rich past. In parts of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, folk healers used to brew its leaves in water to treat painful urination (dysuria) centuries ago; it is also highly valued as a potent antidiabetic for diabetes management, antimicrobial, and wound-healing. These therapeutic properties are attributed to its rich profile of bioactive phytochemicals, including alkaloids, flavonoids, and saponins, which exhibit potent antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and antimicrobial activities. Some regional Sanskrit manuscripts dating back to the 15th century briefly mention a healer named Raghunatha describing a "small-violet creeper" that alleviates urinary stones [2]. The drug *Ratnaprusha* belongs to

- Kingdom: Plantae (Plants)
- Subkingdom: Tracheobionta (Vascular plants)
- Superdivision: Spermatophyta (Seed plants)
- Division: Magnoliophyta (Flowering plants / Angiosperms)
- Class: Magnoliopsida (Dicotyledons)
- Subclass: Rosidae
- Order: Malpighiales
- Family: Violaceae (Violet family)
- Genus: Hybanthus Jacq.
- Species: *Hybanthus enneaspermus* (L.) F. Muell [3]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials are as follows:

1. Chunekar KC, Pandey GS, editors. Bhāvaprakāśa Nighaṇṭu Bhavamishra. Bhavaprakasha Nighantu (Indian Materia Medica). Chunekar KC, commentator; Pandey GS, editor. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Bharati Academy; 2002.
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METHODOLOGY

The literature review was conducted through a systematic review and critical analysis of classical Ayurvedic texts (Nighantus)—including Bhavaprakasha Nighantu, Kaiyadeva Nighantu, Raja Nighantu, and Dhanvantari Nighantu—as well as standard reference books and electronic databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, and Plants of the World Online (POWO). Information regarding the botanical nomenclature (*Hybanthus enneaspermus / Ionidium suffruticosum*), family, classical Sanskrit synonyms (Paryaya), vernacular names, and medicinal properties was compiled and cross-referenced.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

BOTANICAL NAME[3]: *Hybanthus enneaspermus* (Linn.) F. Muell.

FAMILY NAME: Violaceae [1]

SYNONYMS(PARYAYA)[1]*: Amburaha, Atichara, Avyatha, Sthalapadmi, Padmacharini, Padmavati, Padmahava, Pushkaranadi, Pushkarini, Ramya, Sarada, Sthalapadmini, Sthalaruha, Sugandhamula*

VERNACULAR NAMES[1]:

1. English Name - Spade Flower, Pink lady's slipper
2. Hindi Name - Ratan purush, Ratan Purus, Stal Kamal
3. Bengali Name - Munbora
4. Kannada Name - Purusharathna
5. Malayalam Name - Orilathamatai, kalthamara
6. Telugu Name - Ratnapurusha
7. Marathi Name - Rathanparas
8. Tamil Name - Purusharathnam, Orilai Thamarai

VARIETIES [2]**:**

1. Ionidium suffruticosum /Hybanthus ennaespermus
2. Hibiscus mutabilis

HABITAT [1]: Agra, Bengal, and almost through Madras Presidency, Carnatic, tropical Asia, Africa and Australia

MORPHOLOGY [1]**:**This specimen is a compact, suffrutescent perennial herb standing 15 to 30 cm tall, featuring a highly branched structure with numerous diffuse or ascending stems that range from glabrous to moderately pubescent. Its subsessile leaves are linear to lanceolate, measuring 4–5 cm long and 3–8 mm wide, with entire or serrated margins and subulate, gland-tipped stipules.

The solitary red flowers emerge from the leaf axils on slender, erect pedicels that are 6–12 mm long (shorter than the leaves) and bear small bracts above their midpoint. The calyx consists of lanceolate, highly acute, and keeled sepals measuring 2.5 mm in length, while the strongly asymmetrical corolla features two oblong upper petals slightly exceeding the sepals, two longer falcate lateral petals, and a conspicuously enlarged, spurred lowest petal with an orbicular or obovate limb on a long claw. Finally, the plant produces sub globose capsules roughly 6 mm in diameter that contain ovoid, acute, yellowish-white seeds measuring 1.5 mm long with distinct longitudinal striations.



Figure. 01



Figure .02

Figures 1 & 2: *Hybanthus enneaspermus*. Photo by J.M. Garg, used under CC BY-SA 3.0. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

PART USED[1]: Root and Whole Plant

VIEWS OF DIFFERENT ACHARYAS

Raja Nighantu [4]

Sthalapadmi is designated by fifteen authoritative synonyms: *Sthalapadmi, Padmahva, Charati, Padmacharini, Sugandhamula, Amburuha, Lakshmisreshta, Supushkara, Ramya, Padmavati, Atichara, Sthularuha, Pushkarini, Pushkaradya,* and *Parnika*. These fifteen distinct nomenclatures, alongside their diagnostic stalk structures known as Pushkaradiyuta Nadi, constitute its complete botanical identity. Pharmacologically, this plant possesses a sweet (*Madhura*) and bitter (*Tikta*) taste profile coupled with a cooling (shita) potency, rendering it clinically effective in treating emesis (vomiting), *Raktapitta* (hemorrhagic/bleeding disorders), *Prameha* (urinary disorders or diabetes), and severe diarrhoea (*atisara*) triggered by pathogenic or external (*bhuta*) factors.

Bhavaprakasha Nighantu[5]

The medicinal herb known by various names such as *Padmacarini, Aticara, Avyatha, Padma,* and *Sarada* possesses qualities that are inherently non-hot (cooling), pungent, bitter, and astringent. It successfully pacifies imbalances in the *Kapha* and *Vata* doshas. Furthermore, this potent plant is highly effective in relieving painful urination (*Mutrakrcchra*), dissolving urinary calculi or kidney stones (*Asmari*), alleviating severe body aches (*Sula*), and curing respiratory distress,

chronic coughs, and toxic conditions or poisoning.

Kaiyadeva Nighantu [6]

The medicinal plant known by synonyms such as *Padmapatra, Patravati, Padma, Pushkarapatrika, Lakshmisreshta, Gandhamula, Kashmira, Padmacharini, Rathavarta, Avyatha, Shita, Charati, and Padmanadika*is characterised by its non-hot (*Anushna*) potency and a taste profile consisting of pungent (*Katu*), bitter (*Tikta*), and astringent (*Kashaya*) properties. Therapeutically, it pacifies aggravated *Kapha* and *Vata* doshas and is highly effective in mitigating dysuria (painful urination), urinary calculi (kidney stones), acute colic pain, asthma, chronic cough, and toxicological conditions.

Dhanvantari Nighantu[7]

The herb is traditionally recognised by several authoritative synonyms, including *Aticara, Padmavati, Caraṭi, Gandhamula, Lakṣmi, Sreṣṭha,* and *Supuṣkara*. Organoleptically, this plant profile is characterised by an inherently bitter taste (*Tikta*) and an explicitly rich, pleasant fragrance (*Sugandha*). Clinically, it exhibits potent neuropsychiatric and neuroprotective properties that directly target imbalances within the nervous system

CONTROVERSY [4,5,6,7]**:** Historical literature reveals a prominent nomenclatural divergence regarding the true botanical identity of *Sthalapadma.* Early compendia, such as the *Dhanvantari Nighantu*, offer limited morphological clarity, identifying the plant solely under the moniker *Padmacharini*. This lack of structural detail led subsequent scholars to cross-reference the name with entirely different plant families. For instance, the *Kaiyadeva Nighantu* in *Pathya Apathya Vibodhakaedited by* P.V. Sharma and GP Sharma aligns *Sthalapadmi* with the large, colour-changing shrub *Hibiscus mutabilis*. In stark contrast, as noted by Dr. Indradeva Tripathi in his *Dravyagunaprakashika* commentary on Raja-nighantu, the classical reference implies..., attributes the name to a low-growing herb traditionally identified as *Ionidium suffruticosum* (often documented as *Hibiscus inuspermas*). Effectively arbitrating this long-standing debate within the *Bhavaprakasha Nighantu,*Chunekar K.C in Vimarsha, commented that rather than standardising one plant at the expense of the other, he recognised that past authors were describing two structurally distinct species sharing a common nominal identity. By dedicating separate entries to both *Hibiscus mutabilis* and *Ionidium suffruticosum*, the *Bhavaprakasha Nighantu* accommodated both historical perspectives. This dual-classification system successfully resolved the controversy, establishing a clear botanical boundary between the two varieties.

The conclusion that one of the traditional varieties of Sthalapadma corresponds botanically to *Hybanthus enneaspermus* resolved through a two-step process: taxonomic differentiation of classical sources, followed by modern botanical synonymy.

1. Resolution of the Classical Controversy (Ayurvedic Dravyaguna)

Historically, the name Sthalapadma ("land-dwelling lotus") confused because classical texts described contrasting plants under the same or related vernacular titles (Sthalapadmi, Padmacharini):

The Shrub: A large, woody plant with showy, colour-changing flowers

resembling a lotus—identified as Hibiscus mutabilis (family Malvaceae).

The Herb: A small, delicate, low-growing herb traditionally referred to in classical commentaries (such as Indradeva Tripathi's commentary on Raja-nighantu)—identified as Ionidium suffruticosum.

Rather than forcing these two conflicting morphologies into a single species, commentator K. C. Chunekar (Bhavaprakasha Nighantu, Vimarsha) recognized that ancient authors were documenting two distinct botanical entities that happened to share vernacular and morphological associations. By adopting a dual-classification approach, the literature established:

True Sthalapadma / Sthalakamala: H*ibiscus mutabilis*

Herbaceous Sthalapadmi / Padmacharini / Ratanpurush: *Ionidium suffruticosum*

2. The Botanical Transition from *Ionidium suffruticosum* to *Hybanthus enneaspermus*

The passage links this herbaceous form to the genus *Ionidium* (with the misprinted/historical mention *Hibiscus inusperm* as, a typographical corruption of enneaspermus).

In modern plant taxonomy under the International Code of Nomenclature:

The herb was originally described by Carl Linnaeus as *Viola enneasperma* (1753).

It was later classified by Frédéric de Gingins as *Ionidium suffruticosum*.

In 1876, the Australian botanist Ferdinand von Mueller transferred the species to the genus *Hybanthus*, establishing its accepted botanical name:

Ionidium suffruticosum is a botanical homotypic/heterotypic synonym of *Hybanthus enneaspermus* (family Violaceae).

RASA PANCHAKA [4]

Rasa: *Katu, Tikta, Kashaya*

Veerya: *Anushna*(*Kinchit Sheetha*)

Karma: *Mutrakrichra, Ashmari, Shoola, Shwasa, Kaasa, Vishaghna*

Action[3]**:** Diuretic, Antigonococcal activity, Demulcent

DOSHAGNATA: *Kapha Vatha Hara*

MATRA[8]**:**Leaf Churna -5-10 gms

PHYTOCONSTITUENTS [1,3]:alkaloids, dipeptide, isoarborinol, sitosterol, flavonoids, sugars, tannins, aurantiamide acetate

PHARMACOLOGICAL ACTION OF VARIOUS PARTS OF THE PLANT [1,3]

1. Leaves – the leaves and tender stalks are demulcent
2. Fruit – antidote to snake and scorpion venom
3. Root -constipation mainly in children and urinary infection

AMAYIKA PRAYOGA [1]:

1. Leaves and tender stalk are used in decoction and with some mild oil in preparing a cooling linament for headache
2. Root is used in stomach pain for children [2]
3. Fresh leaves are powdered and mixed with one teaspoonful of turmeric powder. 5g of the mixture is taken twice a day orally to get relief from cough. It is continued for 3-4 days to get good relief from cough. (Bechic)[8]
4. Leaf powder is mixed with honey and taken orally as a tonic. Plant tonic diuretic[8]
5. For sexual energy is administered for four to five months using the whole plant's juice combined with cow's milk[12]

FORMULATIONS:

1. *Ratna purusha lehya*[3,9]

RESEARCH UPDATES [10]**:**

Table: 01 Pharmacological Actions of Plant Parts

Pharmacological actions	Part of the plant
Antioxidant activity	Leaves
Antimicrobial activity	Leaves
Nephro-protective activity	Whole plant
Hepatoprotective activity	Leaves
Anti-diabetic activity	Leaves
Anti arthritic activity	Whole plant
Anti-allergic activity	Whole plant
Anti-ulcer activity	whole plant

DISCUSSION:

Hybanthus enneaspermus, a prominent member of the Violaceae (violet) family commonly known as *Ratnapurusha or Purusharatna,*is highly regarded for its diverse therapeutic properties, particularly within traditional ethnomedicinal systems where it is widely celebrated for its applications in reproductive health and adaptations. Beyond its medicinal attributes, the plant holds regional dietary significance; in the Hassan region, where it is vernacularly termed *Hulle Kara Mevu*, the leaves are routinely ground up for local dosa preparation and are also used in various urinary disorders [11]. Cumulative research highlights the broad-spectrum medicinal utility of *Hybanthus enneaspermus*. The herb exhibits robust antioxidant capabilities alongside validated nephroprotective, hepatoprotective, and anti-ulcer properties. Additionally, its various organic extracts demonstrate powerful bioactivity, establishing its role as a viable candidate for managing diabetes, inflammation, microbial infections, arthritis, and allergic responses[12]

CONCLUSION:

Hybanthus enneaspermus (Violaceae) is a therapeutically versatile herb, validated by a broad spectrum of antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and reproductive activities. While its traditional dietary use in regional recipes confirms its cultural safety, wild populations face severe depletion and the threat of localised extinction due to unsustainable collection practices. Unlocking the true medical value of *Ratnapurusha* requires overcoming a critical knowledge gap: the total lack of human clinical trials. Future research must move away from repetitive animal testing and focus on human clinical validation, supported by lab-grown tissue culture methods to protect the plant's natural habitat.

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