



# Mustard Crop vs. *Orobanche aegyptiaca*

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**News Context:** Indian mustard farmers are facing a severe crisis due to a widespread infestation of the parasitic weed *Orobanche aegyptiaca* (commonly called **Broomrape** or *Margoja*).

- **The "Hidden" Threat:** Unlike common weeds, *Orobanche* is a **root parasite**. It has no chlorophyll; it attaches to the mustard roots underground and siphons off water, carbon, and nutrients.
- **The Damage:** By the time the purple flowers appear above ground, the damage (stunted growth, yellowing) is already done. It can reduce yields by **30% to 50%**.
- **Persistence:** A single plant produces thousands of tiny seeds that remain viable in the soil for up to **20 years**.
- **Wholistic Insight:** The crisis is pushing farmers in Haryana and Rajasthan to switch to crops like wheat, which could hurt India's goal of **Atmanirbhar (Self-reliance) in Edible Oils**.