

AN AYURVEDIC REVIEW ON PLANTS USED IN THE TREATMENT OF SKIN DISEASES

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Article Received on
11 March 2021,

Revised on 01 April 2021,
Accepted on 22 April 2021

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr20215-20412

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ABSTRACT

Skin is the most extensive and diverse organ of the body. Maintaining healthy skin is important for a healthy body. Ayurveda has discussed all skin diseases under the name of Kushtha and Kshudra rog in other words it can be known as "Ayurvedic dermatology". According to our Acharyas there are eighteen type of Kushtha out of which seven are known as 'Mahakushtha' and eleven are known as 'Kshudra kushtha'. According to acharya Sushruta there are forty four Kshudra rog. Skin disease are numerous and a frequently occurring health problem affecting all ages from the neonates to elderly and cause harm in number of way. The use of plants in the treatment of diseases is as old as the mankind. Plants and their parts are frequently used in the treatment of skin and other diseases. Natural treatment is cheap and

is claimed to be safe. A review of some of plants for the treatment of skin diseases described in the Ayurvedic literature described here.

KEYWORDS: Skin diseases, kushtha, kshudra rog, plant drugs, herbal drugs, medicinal plants.

INTRODUCTION

Human skin is the outer covering and largest organ of the body and plays a chief role in maintaining barrier between internal and external environment. Any weakness in the skin becomes a great handicap for a person on the society. In Ayurveda skin diseases are described under the name of Kushtha and Kushdra rog. There is not a clear correlation with skin diseases mentioned in allopathy and Ayurveda. According to Ayurveda, a disease that tears or pulls out and destroy the beauty of the body and any type of skin diseases are called “Kushtha”. The condition in which skin produce discolouration and if not treated properly then ultimately results the disfigurement known as Kushtha. The present article includes information about some medicinal plants belonging to different families, which are used very commonly as remedies for skin diseases. In Charaka Samhita Sutrasthan chapter 3, 50 Mahakshyas are mentioned. Out of these 50 Mahakashaya Kushthagana, Kandughana, Krimighana and Vishagana Mahakshayas etc. can be used in the treatment of skin diseases. Each Mahakshya contained 10 dravyas. Any Dravyas unavailability can be replaced by another Dravya's of the same Mahakashya.

Comman Skin Problems

Skin disorders vary greatly in symptoms and severity. They can be temporary or permanent and may be painless or painful. Some skin disorders are minor and other can be life threatening but most of the skin disorders are minor. According to the Ayurvedic texts, all Acharya have described eighteen types of Kushtha, and among them seven considered as Mahakushtha and eleven as Kshudra Kushtha but the nomenclature is different. Normally, diseases are originated with vitiation of one, two or all three Doshas. Vatadi three Doshas are vitiated (increase or decrease) proportionally one two or all three according to etiological factors. When etio-pathogenesis start three Doshas (Vata, Pita, Kapha) and four Dushya (skin, blood, muscle and fluids) which are in normal condition in the body are begin to vitiate by the etiological factors. Then the three Doshas and four Dushya known as “Saptkodravya” spread through the all tissues. As a result, eighteen type of Kushtha are produced.

Medicinal Plants Used in the Treatment of Skin Diseases

Natural drugs from plants are gaining popularity because of several advantages such as often

having few side effects, better patient tolerance, being relatively less expensive and acceptable due to long history of use. The World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated that as many as 80% of the world population is depend on traditional medicine for their primary health needs. At present about 65% of the Indian population is depends on the traditional system of medicine. Many hundreds of plant species worldwide are used in the traditional medicine skin and other diseases caused by bacteria, fungi and virus etc. In this article some plants used in skin diseases in Ayurveda are compiled and how they can be used in skin disease according to different Acharayas.

List of Common Medicinal Plants Used In The Treatment of Skin Diseases In Ayurveda

Sr.n.	Sanskrit name	Bot.name	Family
1.	Karanja	<i>Pongamia pinnata</i>	Fabaceae
2.	Nimba	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Maliaceae
3.	Sarshap	<i>Brassica campestris</i>	Brassicaceae
4.	Khadira	<i>Acacia catechu</i>	Fabaceae
5.	Haridra	<i>Curcuma longa</i>	Zingiberaceae
6.	Bhallatak	<i>Semicarpus anacardium</i>	Anacardiaceae
7.	Aragwadha	<i>Cassia fistula</i>	Caesalpiniaceae
8.	Tuvaraka	<i>Hydnocarpus laurifolia</i>	Flacourtiaceae
9.	Bakuchi	<i>Psoralea corylifolia</i>	Fabaceae
10.	Gritkumari	<i>Aloe vera</i>	Liliaceae
11.	Tulasi	<i>Oscimum sanctum</i>	Lamiaceae
12.	Aparajita	<i>Clitoria ternatea</i>	Fabaceae
13.	Vidang	<i>Embelia ribes</i>	Myrsinaceae

- **Karanj (*Pongamia pinnata*)**



Main Features:-Tree having glossy leaves with foetid smell. The flowers are bluish shaped like nails or parched paddy and blooming at night.

Habitat: From Himalayas, outer valleys to all over India. Flowers in April and May and pod ripen in the April.

Uses: In minor skin diseases (Kshudraroga) Karanj oil mixed with Vacha, Daruharidra, and Sarsapa or the oil of the heartwood of the trees of Salasaradigana should be applied. Karanjayadi Ghrita is applied on wounds for wound healing properties. Pippali Churna, Karanja Bija Churn mixed with Vidanga Churna is useful as snuff in Krimi, Kustha and vitiation of Kapha (CS.Ci.7/48). A paste is made of Kuth, Karanj seeds and Chakramard is useful in Kushta (CS.Ci.7/93). In Kustha, Vasa, Kutaja, Saptaparna, Karavira, Nimba and Khadira, these along with Gomutra used for bath, internally given and also a paste is prepared and applied. In Kusthaj Vrana the Karanja Tail or Sarsapa Taila should be applied (SS.Ci.9/53).

- **Nimba** (*Azadirachta indica*)



Main Features:-Nimba is the one of the best bitter drug. The plant exudes a gum which is like Hingu. It is used in a number of diseases particularly in skin diseases septic and worms.

Habitat:-Planted or self-grown throughout India, up to 5000 feet. The tree is never quite leafless; flowers March-May and fruit ripen in July-August.

Uses:-The combination of Nimba and Patola is efficacious in Kushtha in various forms (CS.Ci.7/97-99). In Kustha, if the part is wounded and eaten by maggots, Nimba and Vidanga with cow's urine should be used as bath, intake and an ointment (CS.Ci.7/157). In Kustha the Panchanga Churna or Kwath of Nimba is used for taking bath and external applications (VM.51/60-68). Intake of Haritaki and Nimba and Amalaki for a month overcomes all type of Kustha (GN.2.36/87). One who uses water pounded with one hundred leaves for a year and keeping on diet of flour becomes free from severe type of Kustha (GN.2.36/99). Regular use of the leaves of Nimba and Amalaki (fruit) mixed with Ghee alleviates urticarial and other skin diseases. An ointment of the paste of Nimba and Aragvatha is useful in Padminikantak.

- **Sarshap** (*Brassica campestris*)



Main Features:-A tall annual 4-5ft herb. Stem may be simple or branched. Flowers are yellow in colour. Seeds are 30-80 in the pods of length 2-3inch long.

Habitat:-Commonly cultivated all over India during cold season.

Uses:-Oil of Sarsapa medicated with Karanja, Koshataki, Ingudi and Khadira are used in Kustha (CS.Ci.7/119). Local application of the paste of Sarsapa seeds is used in Shotha (oedema). Sarsapa and Nimba leaves are burnt with Ballataka then pounded with goat's urine and used in Granthi Roga (VM.41/47). Paste of Sarsapa pounded with Brihati leaves should be applied locally in Shleepada (GN.4.2/39). A lump of mustard paste is put into a piece of Snuhi stem and cooked by closed heat. By local application it destroys eczema (AS.Ci. 21/50)

- **Khadir** (*Acacia catechu*)



Main Features:-A thorny tree with curved spines. The heartwood is firm and red. Leaves are small. It is a Specific drug for Kushtha and useful in skin and throat disorders.

Habitat:-In drier region of sub-Himalayan tract up-to 1200m, Punjab to north-easternstates.

Uses:-Khadira is the best remedy for Kustha (CS.Su.25). For Kushtha having predominance

of Rakta and Pitta Khadiragrit, Nimbagrit, Darvigrita and Patolagrita are tried remedies (CS.Ci.7/135). Mahakhadira grit (CS.Ci.7/152-156) and Khadira Kalpa (BH.Ci.6/52-54) are used in the Kustha. As Khadira and Bijaka destroy all type of kustha so do Kutaj and Bhalataka all types of Arsha (SS.Ci.6/19). Khadira Mula and Khadirasara are useful in Kustha. Khadira should be used in food and drinks for bath, external application and fumigation etc. in patient suffering from Kustha (SS.Ci.9/70-71). The roots of Khadira are burnt and the juice exuded is collected in a jar. This juice is taken with Ghrit, Amalaka juice and honey acts as Rasayana and destroy the Kustha (VM.51/59). Heartwood of Khadira is used in all type of Kushtha (AH.U.40/50).

- **Haridra (*curcuma longa*)**



Main Features:-A small herb, the flowers are yellow in colour. The kanda or rhizome is the useful part, is golden yellow in colour within. It is an efficacious drug for Kamala, Prameha and skin disease.

Habitat:-Cultivated throughout India.

Uses:-By taking 40gm of Haridra with cow's urine for a month relieves Kushtha (SS.Ci.9/45 and BHS.Ci. 6/56). Haridra and Bhringaraja roots in equal parts pounded with cold water and the paste applied locally alleviates erysipelas (VM.57/97). In Kandu, Pama, Daha, Sitapitta, Udarda, Vicharchika and Raktavikara etc. the Haridra Churna is given with Gomutra externally it can be applied with Navanitaka. Intake of Haridra with cow's urine for a period of one month relieves Kustha. The paste of Haridra and Raktachandana pounded with buffalo's milk should be applied on the face, relieves the dark shade (Vyanga) (RRS.24/45). Cow's urine 80 ml mixed with paste of Haridra destroyed scabies and eczema (VM. 57/18)

- **Bhallatak (*Semecarpus anacardium*)**



Main Features:-A medium sized tree with irritant bark sap. The fruits are obliquely ovoid, seated in fleshy orange red pulp with oily nuts. The juice of its fruits causes blisters on contact with skin. It is a potent drug for worms and evil organisms and useful in Vata disorders.

Habitat:-Throughout the hotter part of India. Leafless between Feb to April, new leaves and flowers appear in May. The pericarp of the fruit largely used in dyeing.

Uses:-Food and preparation of Grita containing Ballataka, Triphala and Nimba is useful in Kushtha (CS.Ci.7/82). Regular use of Bhallataka, Shilajatu, Makshika Basma, Guggulu, Agar, Tuvaraka, Khadira, Asana and Ayaskriti are useful in Medaj Kushtha (SS.Ci.9/6). In Kaphaj Kushtha, Grita cooked with Bhallataka, Haritaki and Vidanga is efficacious. In all type of Kushtha oil of Tuvaraka or Bhallataka is used (SS.Ci.9/7). In Switra, Bhallataka seed paste is made in cow's urine and applied on the spots. In all type of Kushtha, oil of Bhallataka and Tuvaraka or Sursapa should be taken or cooked in Ghrit with Vidanga, Haritaki and Bhallataka is taken (AH.Ci.19/12). Bhallataka nuts should be crushed, kept overnight in cow's urine and then dried. This is repeated thrice. Then it is pounded finely and made into a paste mixed with Snuhi latex and applied on vitiligo spot (AH.Ci.20/11).

- **Aragwadha (*Cassia fistula*)**



Main Features:-Tree bearing beautiful golden yellow flowers. Fruits are long stick like with Phallamajja inside. Acts on many diseases and provides wellbeing by relieving many disorders particularly Ama, Jwara and Kushtha. It is also a mild and safe purgative.

Habitat:-Outer Himalayas up to 4000ft and hilly tracts throughout India. Flower appears in April –July and the fruit ripens in cold season.

Uses:-Leaves of Aragvadha, Kakamachi and Karanj are pounded with buttermilk and applied as ointment after smearing with oil on the part affected with skin diseases (CS.Su.3/17). Decoction of Daruharidra, Rasanjana, Nimba, Patola, Khadira, Aragvadha, Kutaja, Triphala, Saptaparna and Tinisa alleviate Kushtha if used as bath and intake (CS.Ci.7/97-98). Ghee cooked with roots of Aragavadha and taken with decoction of Khadira destroys Kushtha (AH.Ci.19/13). The leaves of Aragvadha and bark of Slesmantaka etc. should be used separately or jointly as local paste added with little Ghee in erysipelas (CS.Ci.21/89-92).

- **Tuvraka (*Hydnocarpus laurifolia*)**



Main Features:-A large evergreen tree. Fruits are sub ovoid and seeds are obtusely angular up to 2.5cm long and 1.5cm broad. The oil from the seed is useful in skin diseases.

Habitat:-Forest of West coast and Western ghats often nearer water. Flower appears in March and April.

Uses:-Tuvaraka Taila, Khadira Kwath, Madhu and Grita are given internally in the treatment of Kushtha. The Taila when applied on the effected skin it act as Raktashodhana and the skin become red in colour. Seeds of Tuvaraka, Bhallataka, Bakuchi, Chitraka Mula and shilajitu should be used as per Rasayana method to cure kushtha (AH.Ci.19/53). Washing with decoction of Tuvaraka and application of its paste relieves foul smell of vagina. Chalmogra oil obtained from the seeds of Tuvaraka is an Indian Pharmacopoeial drug used in the treatment of leprosy in dose of 2ml intra muscularly.

- **Bakuchi (*Psoralia corylifolia*)**



Main Features:-Small plant having simple leaves. The seeds are black in colour having unpleasant smell. The seeds have white streaks within. It is a specific drug for svitra.

Habitat:-Throughout the India.

Uses:-Seeds of Tuvaraka, Bhallataka, Bakuchi, Chitraka Mula and Shilajitu should be used as per Rasayana method to cure kushtha (AH.Ci.19/53). To relieve kushtha Bakuchi should be taken with Ushnodka and the patient is exposed to sun light and kept on milk diet (VM.51/46). In all type of Kushtha Bakuchi Beeja 10 gms with hot water should be administered and patient is kept on Kshira and Grita Pathya (BS.kushtha.101). In skin diseases and Shivitra, Bakuchi Beeja Churna is given with Bibhitaki bark and Kakoudumbra Kwatha. Bakuchi is put in the decoction of Bibhitaki in overnight then pounded and taken with Taila. It alleviates Shwitra and Kushtha (VD.11/63). Bakuchi Beeja Tail is applied externally on Switra to bring back to the normal colour. Bakuchi is used as Rasayana namely Svetavalgujaphala Rasayana (SS.Ci.28/3), Bakuchi rasayana (AS.U.49/147-155) and Somraji rasayana (AH.U.39/107-110).

- **Ghritkumari (*Aloe vera*)**



Mean Features:-A perennial fleshy herb. The base of the plant spread over the ground and

the leaves are arranged in whorls at the base. Thorns are arranged in order on the borders of leaves. The leaves are succulent, exude a viscid jelly like, slimy and Grita like substance on incising or breaking the leave.

Habitat:-Cultivated throughout the India. Planted in gardens and found in semi-wild state in many parts.

Uses:-It is a home medicine for the diseases of women and especially for virgins. The Svarasa mixed with Haridra is applied externally in Tvakaroga, Arshas and Vrana. It is also used in Krimi. Kumari Svarasa and Jeeraka are made into paste and applied externally in daha(Burns) and abscess. It pacifies burning sensation and inflammation (VD.7/10). Wrapping with the leaf of Kumari destroys the wart (BP.Ci.52/5). Unripe, ripe or ripening abscess should be covered with the steamed leaf devoid of pulp (VD.16/102). It should not be given in Garbhini and Stanpana (breast feeding mother).

- **Tulsi (Ocimum sanctum)**



Mean features:-A common herb grown in villages and entire plant is aromatic. Leaves are considered sacred and good medicine. Flowers set densely in a circle in trumpet like spikes. It is useful to repel evil organism, maintains good health and alleviates disorders.

Habitat:-Found throughout the India up to 6000 ft. now being cultivated extensively.

Uses:-Bhavaprakasha Nighantu mentioned two varieties according to the colour of stem and leaves as Sukla and Krishna Tulsi. According to Yograttanaker local application of Tulsi is an excellent remedy Sheetpitta i.e. urticarial (YR.P.348). Sprinkling with the juice of Sursadi drugs alleviates the maggots in the wounds (V.D.6/30). Tulsi is one of the ingredients in Nimbadi Pralepa (GN.2.36/141). It is also used as Anupana for the other drugs. The Patra Swarasa is useful in Karnashula, Vranaprakshalana, Krimiroga and Charmaroga.

- **Aparajita (*Clitoria ternatea*)**



Mean Features:-A creeper spread in all direction extensively. The flowers are white or blue in colour and used in the worship Lord Vishnu. The plant is also anti toxic.

Habitat:-Throughout India and in most tropical region.

Uses:-The roots of white Girikarnika is pounded with cold water and applied thickly on the spot affected by vitiligo which disappears in a fortnight or a month if chronic (R.M.8/8). The roots of white Girikarnika is collected in Pushya constellation and worn in neck or used with cow's Ghr̥it. It destroys even severe scrofula (R.M.5/31). Root is pounded and applied externally. It is useful in filarial and Valmiki (H.S.36/6). One suffering from goitre should use the pounded root of the white-flowered Aparajita with Grita in morning (BP.Ci.44/30).

- **Vidang (*Embelia ribes*)**



Main Features:- A shrub growing in hilly regions mostly of North–East of India. The branches are delicate and flexible. The seeds have white spot on it. It is a potent anthelmintic drugs and also used in veterinary medicine.

Habitat:-Found in central Himalayan region and hilly region all over India.

Uses:-It is used externally as well as internally in the skin diseases. Patient should be bathed with urine and fed on diet processed with vidanga. In wounds, oil of Karanja, Sarshap, Sigr̥u,

and Koshamra should be applied (SS.Ci.9/52-53). It is useful drug for Krimi – tapworm. For children 4gm and for adult 8gm of powder given with Madhu and Dhadi is given. After 4 hours Eranda Taila or some Virechaka drug should be given.

CONCLUSION

Due to skin disease people not only disturb mentally but also expend lots of money for their cure. The herbal drugs which are cheap and have less side effects will be helpful to cure skin problems. In this review article some of the common medicinal plants are described which are commonly used by folklore. There is need of extensive research work in the Mahakshays of the Charaka. Intention should be drawn to the cultivation and conservation of the endangered plant. Folklore people should be asked for new medicinal plant and research should be carried out.

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