

**CLASSIFICATION OF AYURVEDIC HERBS FOR SKIN - AN  
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Article Received on  
30 September 2024,

Revised on 20 October 2024,  
Accepted on 10 Nov. 2024

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr202422-34622



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**ABSTRACT**

Ayurveda offers a holistic approach to treating skin problems, emphasizing the balance of the three *Doshas*: *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. Treatments often include cleansing therapies like *Vamana* (Emesis therapy), *Virechana* (Purgation therapy), and *Rakhtamoksham* (Bloodletting), along with herbal remedies tailored to individual skin types. Common Ayurvedic remedies for skin problems include herbal supplements like neem, turmeric, and aloe vera, as well as topical applications such as herbal pastes, oils, and lotions. Additionally, practices like *Abhyanga* (Self-massage) and *Panchakarma* (Detoxification therapies) are often recommended to purify the body and alleviate skin conditions. By addressing the root cause of skin issues and promoting internal harmony, Ayurveda offers a natural and effective approach to maintaining healthy, radiant skin. In this chapter, an effort has been made to review all the methodologies used for herb

classification used for skin problems with help of different school of thoughts. Along with-it challenges are also listed which must be addressed in future research.

**KEYWORDS:** Ayurvedic Cosmetics, Herbal Therapy, Herbs, Skin, Varnya.

**INTRODUCTION**

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, offers a holistic approach to treating skin problems by addressing imbalances in the body's *Doshas*. According to Ayurvedic principles, skin issues arise due to an excess or imbalance of three types of doshas, namely *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. Ayurvedic remedies for skin problems often involve a combination of internal purification through diet and lifestyle adjustments, along with external applications of herbs,

oils, and pastes. For example, for Pitta-related skin conditions like acne and inflammation, cooling herbs such as neem, turmeric, and aloe vera are recommended to pacify the fiery Pitta dosha. Similarly, Vata-related skin problems such as dryness and roughness are treated with nourishing oils like sesame or almond oil to balance the dry and light qualities of Vata. Kapha-related issues such as oiliness and congestion benefit from detoxifying herbs like triphala and exfoliating pastes made from chickpea flour and turmeric to counteract the heavy and stagnant nature of Kapha. Additionally, Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of maintaining a healthy digestive system and managing stress levels, as these factors can significantly impact skin health. Overall, Ayurveda provides a comprehensive and personalized approach to skincare, focusing on restoring balance to the body and promoting overall well-being.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout history, herbs have been valued for their ability to nourish, protect, and beautify the skin. Today, the use of botanical ingredients in skincare products continues to be popular, with modern science validating many of the traditional claims regarding the benefits of herbs for skin beauty. The history of using herbs for skin beauty dates back thousands of years, with various ancient civilizations harnessing the power of botanicals to enhance their skin's appearance and health in many civilizations however more importantly in Ayurveda. Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, has a holistic approach to skincare, emphasizing the use of herbs to balance the body's *doshas* and promote radiant skin. Ayurvedic texts dating back thousands of years mention the use of herbs like turmeric, neem, sandalwood, and aloe vera for various skin conditions.<sup>[1]</sup> Herbal pastes, oils, and powders have been used in Ayurvedic skincare rituals to cleanse, nourish, and rejuvenate the skin. Ayurvedic text, "Ashtanga Hridaya," which speaks about promoting glowing skin.<sup>[2]</sup>

"ययालोहिततवकासुवर्णकोष्ठाविपद्यतेरक्तजिताम्बुदर्शनेन।

तयानित्यकुसुमाक्षियुवतियात्वंस्त्रीशोभसेब्रह्मचारिणितस्मै नमः॥"

It means by the touch of whose golden skin, the reddish hue disappears, by whose glance, blood becomes clear water, O young lady with the eyes like flowers, you always shine, To that woman who is beautiful, I bow down."

This shloka extols the beauty and radiance of a woman with glowing skin, symbolizing clarity and vitality. It highlights the importance of maintaining healthy skin, which is

considered a reflection of overall well-being in Ayurveda. highlights the importance of cleansing and anointing the skin, along with the use of specific herbal ointments to treat skin problems as prescribed in the Charaka Samhita.<sup>[3]</sup>

"विशुद्धोनामयः त्वक्ष्मोवर्णश्चसुभगोऽपिच।

सद्यः क्षीणो रसो यस्य स एव मधुरो भवेत्॥"

It means one whose skin is clear, whose complexion is beautiful, even if depleted of vigour, their taste shall be sweet. This shloka highlights the importance of clear and beautiful skin in Ayurveda, suggesting that even if one's vitality is diminished, their appearance remains pleasing and attractive. It underscores the significance of skincare and inner vitality for maintaining beauty and sweetness in life.<sup>[4]</sup>

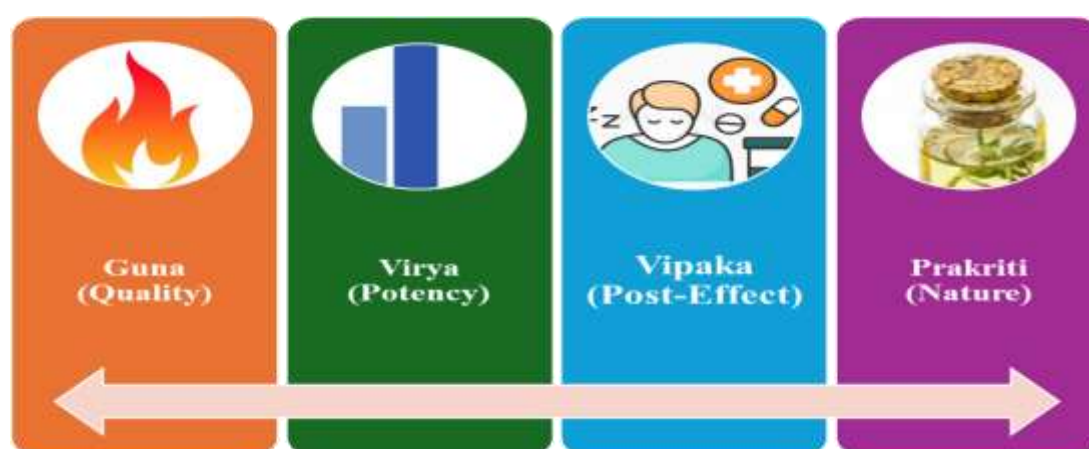
Herbs can be classified in various ways, depending on different criteria such as their botanical characteristics, therapeutic properties, traditional uses, and medicinal applications.<sup>[2]</sup>

**a. Classification based on characteristics:** In Ayurveda, herbs are classified based on their tastes (*rasa*), post-digestive effects (*vipaka*), qualities (*guna*), and actions (*virya*). Here's a brief overview of each classification according to one school of thought:

- 1. Prakriti (Nature):** Ayurveda categorizes herbs into six natures: sweet (*madhura*), sour (*amla*), salty (*lavana*), bitter (*tikta*), pungent (*katu*), and astringent (*kashaya*). Each taste has specific effects on the doshas and the body. For example, sweet and bitter tastes are often cooling and pacifying, while pungent and sour tastes tend to be heating and stimulating.<sup>[5]</sup>
- 2. Vipaka (Post-Effect):** *Vipaka* refers to the taste that herbs develop after digestion. Ayurveda classifies herbs into three categories based on their post-digestive effects: sweet (*madhura*), sour (*amla*), and pungent (*katu*). These post-digestive effects influence how herbs interact with the body after digestion and contribute to their overall therapeutic effects.<sup>[6]</sup>
- 3. Guna (Quality):** Herbs are also classified based on their qualities, which include hot (*ushna*), cold (*shita*), light (*laghu*), heavy (*guru*), oily (*snigdha*), dry (*ruksha*), sharp (*tikshna*), dull (*manda*), and so on. The qualities of herbs determine their effects on the doshas and help Ayurvedic practitioners select herbs that balance specific imbalances in the body.<sup>[7]</sup>

- 4. Virya (Potency or energy):** Virya refers to the inherent potency or energy of herbs. Ayurveda categorizes herbs as having either heating (*ushna*) or cooling (*shita*) virya. Understanding the virya of herbs is crucial for balancing the doshas and treating various health conditions. For example, heating herbs may aggravate *Pitta dosha* but balance *Kapha* and *Vata doshas*, while cooling herbs may aggravate *Vata dosha* but balance *Pitta* and *Kapha doshas*.

By considering these classifications, Ayurvedic practitioners can tailor herbal formulations and treatments to individual constitution (*prakriti*) and specific health concerns, aiming to restore balance and promote overall well-being.



**Figure 1: Classification of Herbs based on their different characters.**

These Ayurvedic herbs are often combined with other natural ingredients such as honey, almond oil, and coconut oil to create beauty creams that nourish the skin and enhance its natural radiance.<sup>[8]</sup>

- b. Based on properties:** By classifying herbs based on their properties and actions, one can choose the most appropriate herbs to address specific skin problems effectively. It's essential to consider individual skin type and sensitivity when selecting and using herbal remedies for skincare.<sup>[9]</sup>

S. No.	Category type	Herbs example	Uses as per ayurveda
1	Anti-inflammatory Herbs	Calendula ( <i>Calendula officinalis</i> ), Chamomile ( <i>Matricaria chamomilla</i> ), Turmeric ( <i>Curcuma longa</i> ), Licorice ( <i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i> )	Helps to Protect & Moisturize the Skin. Helps to Soften Dry Skin
2	Antibacterial and	Neem ( <i>Azadirachta indica</i> ), Tea	Helps to cure ring

	Antifungal Herbs	Tree (Melaleuca alternifolia), Thyme (Thymus vulgaris), Echinacea (Echinacea purpurea)	worm, Jock itch Scalp ringworm etc.
3	Astringent Herbs	Witch Hazel (Hamamelis virginiana), Rose (Rosa spp.), Geranium (Pelargonium graveolens), Yarrow (Achillea millefolium)	To relieve the pain of canker pores. To clean the skin and prevention of blemishes.
4	Emollient and Moisturizing Herbs	Aloe Vera (Aloe barbadensis), Marshmallow (Althaea officinalis), Shea Butter (Butyrospermumparkii), Coconut Oil (Cocos nucifera)	To increase the collagen level. Keep the skin hydrated and protected from sunburn.
5	Antioxidant Herbs	Green Tea (Camellia sinensis), Rosemary (Rosmarinus officinalis), Grape Seed (Vitis vinifera), Bilberry (Vaccinium myrtillus)	To boost the immunity To boost the metabolism of the body. To enhance the brain function.
6	Cicatrizing Herbs	Gotu Kola (Centella asiatica), Comfrey (Symphytum officinale), Plantain (Plantago spp.), St. John's Wort (Hypericum perforatum)	To stimulate the skin repair process. To diminish the skin scars. To cure acne.
7	Detoxifying Herbs	Burdock (Arctium lappa), Dandelion (Taraxacum officinale), Red Clover (Trifolium pratense), Cleavers (Galium aparine)	To support the cleaning channels of the body. To enhance the cellular detoxification process.
8	Soothing and Calming Herbs	Lavender (Lavandula angustifolia), Calendula (Calendula officinalis), Chamomile (Matricaria chamomilla), Oats (Avena sativa)	Heal and creates soothing positive psychological effect.
9	Anti-Aging Herbs	Ashwagandha (Withaniasomnifera), Gotu Kola (Centella asiatica), Ginseng (Panax ginseng), Schisandra (Schisandra chinensis).	To soften and make the skin radiant. To remove the wrinkles and expression lines.
10	Reverse Aging Herbs	Rhodiola (Rhodiola rosea), Gingko Biloba (Gingko biloba), Holy Basil (Ocimum sanctum).	Prevention of premature ageing. Delaying the process of aging.

c. **Based on specific purpose:** Some studies have reported the different types of herbs used for specific purpose –



**d. Curative classification of herbs:** There are various herbs used for the treatment of numerous skin issues. These are the following which deals with skin health in various way –

- a. Bacterial infection:** Herbs are part of a larger list that includes Aloe Vera, Neem, Barberry, Goldenseal, Cinnamon, Thyme, Cloves, Cayenne Pepper, Horseradish, Cumin, Oregano, Basil, Rosemary, Lavender, Tea Tree, Nutmeg, and Peppermint, all known for their disease-fighting capabilities by curing bacterial infection.<sup>[10]</sup>
- b. Fungal infection:** Herbs can be used individually or in combination, depending on the specific type and severity of the fungal infection. There are many herbs in this category i.e. Manjistha (*Rubia cordifolia*), Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), Tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*), Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*).<sup>[11]</sup>
- c. Detoxification of skin:** Several herbs can be used individually or in combination to create herbal skincare remedies that help detoxify and rejuvenate the skin i.e. Amalaki (*Emblica officinalis*), Bibhitaki (*Terminalia bellirica*), and Haritaki (*Terminalia chebula*).<sup>[12]</sup>
- d. Sunburn issues:** Several herbs have anti-inflammatory and wound-healing properties that can help soothe and repair sunburned skin i.e. Sandalwood (*Santalum album*), Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*) etc.<sup>[13]</sup>

- e. **Skin Irritation and Sensitivity:** There are several causes of skin sensitivity, including environmental factors, allergies, and underlying skin conditions and there are numerous herbs used for this purpose Chamomile, Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), neem coconut oil etc.<sup>[14]</sup>
- e. **Use of ayurvedic herbs as cosmetics:** Ayurvedic cosmetics often include ingredients such as turmeric, neem, sandalwood, and aloe vera, each chosen for its specific therapeutic properties. Turmeric, for instance, is renowned for its anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties, making it effective in combating acne and reducing inflammation. Neem is another prized ingredient, valued for its ability to purify the skin and soothe irritation. Sandalwood provides cooling and calming effects, ideal for soothing sensitive or sunburned skin, while aloe vera offers hydration and healing for various skin ailments.<sup>[15]</sup>

Moreover, Ayurvedic cosmetics are tailored to individual skin types and imbalances, aligning with the core principles of Ayurveda. By addressing the root cause of skin issues and promoting balance within the body's doshas, Ayurvedic cosmetics aim to not only treat existing concerns but also prevent future imbalances and maintain overall skin health. Ayurvedic beauty creams often incorporate a variety of herbs known for their skin-enhancing properties. Some of the most commonly used Ayurvedic herbs for promoting skin glow include:

- a. **Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*):** Renowned for its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, turmeric helps to brighten the complexion, reduce pigmentation, and improve overall skin tone.
- b. **Saffron (*Crocus sativus*):** Saffron is prized for its ability to impart a radiant glow to the skin. It helps to lighten dark spots, even out skin tone, and promote a healthy, luminous complexion.
- c. **Aloe vera (*Aloe barbadensis*):** Aloe vera is a hydrating and soothing herb that helps to moisturize the skin, reduce inflammation, and promote healing. It can enhance skin glow by keeping the skin nourished and hydrated.
- d. **Neem (*Azadirachta indica*):** Neem is a powerful herb with antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties. It helps to purify the skin, treat acne, and prevent blemishes, thereby promoting a clearer and more radiant complexion.

- e. **Manjistha (*Rubia cordifolia*):** Manjistha is known for its blood-purifying properties and is often used in Ayurvedic skincare formulations to detoxify the skin, reduce pigmentation, and promote a healthy glow.
- f. **Rose (*Rosa spp.*):** Rose petals or rose oil are commonly used in Ayurvedic beauty creams for their soothing and rejuvenating properties. Rose helps to hydrate the skin, reduce redness, and impart a natural radiance.
- g. **Sandalwood (*Santalum album*):** Sandalwood is prized for its cooling and calming effects on the skin. It helps to soothe inflammation, reduce blemishes, and promote a clear, glowing complexion.

## CONCLUSION

As far as we are aware, this analysis represents the inaugural effort to gather and associate the potential mechanisms of action of herbs used for skin issues from both the Ayurvedic and biomedical perspectives. The drugs reviewed in this chapter are recognized for their applications in Ayurvedic texts, yet they are predominantly utilized for treating various health conditions rather than for dermatological use. Our findings indicate that all the herbs assessed have the capacity to serve as medicine either directly or indirectly according to Ayurvedic principles, and they also demonstrate the ability to suppress the infections along with their use as a cosmetic item. These herbs hold promise as potent agents for skin lightening and addressing dermatological issues.

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