

THERAPEUTIC POTENTIAL OF AYURVEDIC PLANTS IN DERMATOLOGY

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With their sharp powers of perception and observation, the ancient authorities in Ayurveda have described and classified various Skin disorders, the classification being based on etiological, symptomatic and morphological criteria. Ayurvedic treatises broadly describe skin disorders as KUSTHA and under the KSHUDRA ROGA i.e. minor diseases. KUSHTHA are further classified into two main categories viz. MAHAKUSTHA - Major Skin Diseases and KSHUDRAKUSTHA - Minor Skin Diseases.

About 160 plants have been described as useful in the Dermatoses (KUSTHA) Therapy. Considering the frequency of citation and the nature of specific usage, the number of plants could be reduced to about 35. From ethno botanical and pharmacological viewpoint 15 of those plants deserve in depth multidisciplinary investigations.

As an example, a plant *Rubia Cordifolia* Linn. was taken up for pharmacognostic and clinical evaluation in acute Eczematous Dermatitis. The results of a phase II clinical trial are encouraging and further controlled trials are planned. Such an approach with other interesting plants may prove to be fruitful for the therapeutic leads in dermatology.

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