



## EKAMOOOLIKA PRAYOGA IN SKIN DISORDERS: AN INTEGRATIVE REVIEW OF AYURVEDIC AND ASIAN TRADITIONAL SINGLE-HERBS

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### ABSTRACT

For centuries, traditional medicine systems across Asia have looked to nature—particularly single herbs—to manage skin disorders ranging from rashes and itching to chronic conditions like eczema and psoriasis. Among these, Ayurveda stands out for its detailed and holistic understanding of skin health (Twacha) and disease (Kushta), where single herbs such as Neem (*Azadirachta indica*), Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*), and Bakuchi (*Psoralea corylifolia*) play a central role in cleansing the blood, reducing inflammation, and balancing the doshas. This concept of using one herb with targeted action, known as Ekamoolika Prayoga, reflects Ayurveda's deep respect for the potency of nature when used precisely. Other traditional systems—like Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), Kampo (Japan), Korean medicine, and Southeast Asian folk practices—also rely on single herbs, each chosen based on unique diagnostic frameworks. Herbs like Ku Shen, Shikon, and Portulaca have long been trusted to soothe the skin and support healing. This article brings together these ancient insights, with Ayurveda as the guiding focus, and explores how single herbs from across Asia can offer safe, natural, and effective support for skin conditions in today's world.

**KEYWORDS:** Twacha, Kushta, *Azadirachta indica*, *Psoralea corylifolia*, Shikon, and Portulaca.

### INTRODUCTION

Our skin does much more than just cover our body—it protects, breathes, and reflects what's going on inside. When it suffers, whether from itching, redness, infections, or long-term conditions like psoriasis, it affects not just appearance but also comfort and confidence. Long before modern dermatology, traditional healing systems across Asia had already developed rich herbal traditions to treat skin problems—often using just a single herb at a time.

At the heart of this approach is Ayurveda, India's classical system of medicine, which describes skin diseases under the umbrella of Kushta. Ayurveda sees skin issues not merely as surface problems but as signs of deeper imbalances in the body's doshas—Vata, Pitta,

and Kapha—and often linked to blood impurities (Rakta dushti), poor digestion, and emotional stress. To restore balance, Ayurveda frequently recommends single herbs known for their specific effects—like Nimba for its blood-purifying and anti-inflammatory nature, Haridra for its skin-brightening and healing properties, and Bakuchi for regenerating pigmentation in conditions like vitiligo. This method, called Ekamoolika Prayoga, is still widely practiced, especially when a targeted and gentle herbal action is preferred.

But Ayurveda isn't alone. In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), skin disorders are explained through concepts like “wind-heat” or “dampness,” and herbs such as Ku Shen (*Sophora flavescens*) and Zi Cao (*Arnebia euchroma*) are used to clear heat, detoxify, and soothe

inflammation. Japanese Kampo medicine uses Shikon (Lithospermum erythrorhizon) for healing wounds and burns, while Korean traditional medicine applies herbs like Portulaca oleracea for eczema and allergies. Many of these plants overlap in their actions and chemistry, even though they are explained differently in each system.

In today's age, where chronic skin conditions are rising and people are seeking gentler, plant-based options, revisiting these time-tested single herbs is more relevant than ever. This article highlights the unique depth of Ayurvedic practice while exploring the shared wisdom across Asia, presenting a bridge between ancient tradition and modern natural skincare.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

To explore the role of single herbs used in Ayurveda and other traditional Asian systems of medicine in the management of skin disorders.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To identify and list single herbs described in classical Ayurvedic texts for the treatment of Kushta.
2. To collect and compile traditional single herbs used in skin conditions across other Asian systems such as TCM (China), Kampo (Japan), Korean medicine, and Southeast Asian traditions.

### Ekamoolika prayoga for Skin diseases mentioned in Charaka samhita<sup>[1]</sup>

| S.NO | Name of drug    | Mode of administration              | Indication      | Reference    |
|------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1.   | Daruharidra     | Rasanjana Kashaya-Snana, Pana, lepa | Kushta          | C. Ci-7/97   |
| 2.   | Saptaparna      | Kashaya-Snana, Pana, lepa           | Kushta          | C. Ci-7/98   |
| 3.   | Tinisha         | Kashaya-Snana, Pana, lepa           | Kushta          | C. Ci-7/98   |
| 4.   | Ashvamara       | Kashaya-Snana, Pana, lepa           | Kushta          | C. Ci-7/98   |
| 5.   | Chakramarda     | With kanji-udvarthana               | Kushta, Sidhma  | C. Ci-7/127  |
| 6.   | Mulaka Beeja    | with kanji-udvarthana               | Sidhma kushta   | C. Ci-7/127  |
| 7.   | Kakodumbarika   | Along with guda-sramsana            | Svitra          | C. Ci-7/162  |
| 8.   | Durva           | Swarasa siddha ghruta-lepa          | Visarpa         | C. Ci-21/96  |
| 9.   | Asvagandha      | Sukhoshna lepa                      | Granthi visarpa | C. Ci-21/123 |
| 10.  | Mulaka (sushka) | Lepa                                | Granthi visarpa | C. Ci-21/124 |
| 11.  | Karanja         | Twak lepa                           | Granthi visarpa | C. Ci-21/124 |

### Ekamoolika prayoga for skin diseases mentioned in Susruta samhita<sup>[1]</sup>

| S.NO | Name of drug | Mode of administration         | Indication | Reference   |
|------|--------------|--------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| 1.   | Haridra      | Oral intake along with gomutra | Kushta     | S. Ci-9/45  |
| 2.   | Chitraka     | Oral intake along with gomutra | Kushta     | S. Ci-9/45  |
| 3.   | Pippali      | Oral intake along with gomutra | Kushta     | S. Ci-9/45  |
| 4.   | Guduchi      | Oral intake of swarasa         | Kushta     | S. Ci-10/14 |

### Ekamoolika prayoga for skin diseases mentioned in Ashtanga sangraha<sup>[1]</sup>

| S.NO | Name of drug | Mode of administration                         | Indication           | Reference      |
|------|--------------|--|----------------------|----------------|
| 1.   | Naktamala    | Twak lepa                                      | Vata kaphaja Visarpa | A. S. Ci-20/10 |
| 2.   | Vibheetaki   | Lepa   | Vata kaphaja Visarpa | A. S. Ci-20/10 |
| 3.   | Haritaki     | Lepa   | Vata kaphaja Visarpa | A. S. Ci-20/10 |
| 4.   | Khadira      | Oral intake of Sheeta kashaya along with honey | Twak roga            | A. S. Ci-21/36 |
| 5.   | Vidanga      | Oral intake                                    | Kushta               | A. S. Ci-21/37 |
| 6.   | Amrutavalli  | Oral intake of Swarasa                         | Kushta               | A. S. Ci-21/72 |

### Traditional Single Herbs Used in Japanese Medicine for Skin Disorders

| S.NO | Japanese Name             | Botanical Name               | Traditional Use in Skin Disorders  |
|------|---------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| 1.   | Shikon <sup>[2]</sup>     | Lithospermum erythrorhizon   | Used for burns, wounds, eczema, and skin inflammation; key ingredient in Shiunko ointment                  |
| 2.   | Dokudami <sup>[3]</sup>   | Houttuynia cordata           | reates allergic dermatitis, acne, boils, and urticaria; known for detoxifying and anti-inflammatory action |
| 3.   | Obako <sup>[4]</sup>      | Plantago asiatica / P. major | Used topically for wounds, insect bites, and inflammation; also taken as a decoction                       |
| 4.   | Kanzo <sup>[5]</sup>      | Glycyrrhiza uralensis        | Treats eczema and urticaria; anti-inflammatory; reduces histamine and allergic responses                   |
| 5.   | Bofu <sup>[6]</sup>       | Saposhnikovia divaricata     | Used for skin itching and hives (wind-heat conditions); clears damp and wind from the skin                 |
| 6.   | Byakujutsu <sup>[7]</sup> | Atractylodes japonica        | Used in skin conditions like oozing eczema; dries dampness, strengthens digestion                          |

**Traditional Single Herbs Used in Chinese Medicine for Skin Disorders**

| S.NO | Chinese Name               | Botanical Name           | Traditional Use in Skin Disorders   |
|------|----------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| 1.   | Bai Xian Pi <sup>[8]</sup> | Dictamnus dasycarpus     | Used for eczema, fungal infections, damp-heat skin conditions; clears heat and toxins |
| 2.   | Ku Shen <sup>[9]</sup>     | Sophora flavescens       | Treats dermatitis, eczema, itching; dries dampness and kills parasites                |
| 3.   | Zi Cao <sup>[10]</sup>     | Arnebia euchroma         | Used for burns, eczema, wounds; promotes tissue repair, cools blood                   |
| 4.   | Huang Bai <sup>[11]</sup>  | Phellodendron amurense   | Treats oozing eczema, ulcers, damp-heat lesions; antibacterial and anti-inflammatory  |
| 5.   | Di Fu Zi <sup>[12]</sup>   | Kochia scoparia          | Treats itching, eczema, scabies; clears dampness; often used as wash or decoction     |
| 6.   | Fang Feng <sup>[13]</sup>  | Saposhnikovia divaricata | Dispels wind, relieves itching in eczema and urticaria                                |

**Traditional Single Herbs Used in Korean Medicine for Skin Disorders**

| S.NO | Korean name                 |                       |   |
|------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| 1.   | Baekji <sup>[14]</sup>      | Angelica dahurica     | Treats acne, itching, inflammatory dermatoses                                 |
| 2.   | Hwangryeon <sup>[15]</sup>  | Coptis chinensis      | skin conditions like ulcers and boils; antibacterial and anti-inflammatory    |
| 3.   | Daejangcho <sup>[16]</sup>  | Portulaca oleracea    | Treats boils, eczema, inflammation; wound healing and antiallergic properties |
| 4.   | Cheongung <sup>[17]</sup>   | Ligusticum chuanxiong | Used in chronic skin disorders with blood stagnation; promotes circulation    |
| 5.   | Maekmundong <sup>[18]</sup> | Ophiopogon japonicus  | Moistens skin, treats dry skin and chronic inflammation                       |

**Traditional Single Herbs Used in Skin Disorders in Malaysia**

| S.NO | Herb name                   | Botanical Name          | Traditional Use in Skin Disorders   |
|------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| 1.   | Senduduk <sup>[19]</sup>    | Melastoma malabathricum | Traditionally applied for boils, ulcers, wounds, and skin inflammation; promotes wound healing        |
| 2.   | Tongkat Ali <sup>[20]</sup> | Eurycoma longifolia     | Occasionally used in skin revitalization and anti-inflammatory purposes; more known for tonic effects |
| 3.   | Pegaga <sup>[21]</sup>      | Centella asiatica       | Applied for skin regeneration, wound healing, and connective tissue repair                            |

**DISCUSSION**

The use of single herbs—Ekamoolika Prayoga—in treating skin disorders is not only a hallmark of Ayurvedic practice but a common thread that connects healing traditions across Asia. What makes this approach so unique is its simplicity paired with deep insight. Instead of using complex combinations, one carefully chosen herb is used based on its rasa, guna, veerya, vipaka, and prabhava—an approach rooted in centuries of clinical experience and classical knowledge. In Ayurveda, these herbs do more than just suppress symptoms. They address the root cause by balancing aggravated doshas, purifying the blood (rakta shuddhi), and improving tissue strength (dhatu poshana), which is especially vital in chronic conditions like Kushta.

Take Neem (Nimba) for example—its bitter taste and cooling potency make it ideal for pacifying Pitta and Kapha, both of which are often involved in inflammatory skin conditions. Haridra (Turmeric) is another classic, known for its antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and rejuvenating qualities. These herbs are often used externally as lepa (paste) and internally as kashaya (decoction), swarasa (juice), or ghritha preparations, offering a dual mode of healing.

What's fascinating is that this concept of using single herbs with clear therapeutic roles isn't exclusive to Ayurveda. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) relies on similar single-herb applications based on their ability to clear "damp-heat," "cool blood," or eliminate "wind," concepts that mirror Ayurvedic ideas of doshic imbalance. For instance, Ku Shen (*Sophora flavescens*) in TCM is used for itching and eczema, much like Bakuchi in Ayurveda. Japanese Shikon (*Lithospermum erythrorhizon*) and Korean *Portulaca oleracea* show comparable actions—wound healing, anti-inflammatory, and detoxification.

What stands out across these systems is not just the use of herbs, but the context in which they are chosen. Each tradition has developed a nuanced understanding of skin conditions, shaped by its own philosophy, yet converging on similar treatment principles. The herb is selected not only for its action on the skin but for how it interacts with the internal terrain—digestion, circulation, immunity, and emotional well-being.

In modern times, where people increasingly seek "green" solutions, this age-old wisdom is regaining importance. Many patients with chronic skin issues such as eczema,

psoriasis, or vitiligo are turning to natural therapies, not just for relief but for long-term management with fewer side effects. Ekamoolika Prayoga offers a gentle, precise, and holistic way forward, especially for those sensitive to polyherbal formulations or synthetic treatments.

However, while the traditional knowledge is rich and well-documented in classical texts, there remains a gap in modern scientific validation. Integrating these herbs into contemporary dermatological practice will require more pharmacological and clinical research to understand their mechanisms and ensure safety standards. Fortunately, herbs like *Centella asiatica*, *Glycyrrhiza glabra*, and *Curcuma longa* have already begun to bridge that gap, with increasing evidence supporting their traditional uses.

Thus, Ekamoolika Prayoga serves not only as a treatment strategy but also as a philosophical reminder—healing doesn't always have to be complicated. Sometimes, one well-understood herb, given with precision and purpose, can restore balance in profound ways.

## CONCLUSION

In today's fast-paced world, where skin issues are becoming increasingly common and treatments often feel overwhelming or harsh, Ekamoolika Prayoga offers a refreshing reminder of nature's simplicity and power. Using just one herb—carefully chosen based on its qualities and actions—can bring about meaningful healing without the complexity of multiple ingredients.

What makes this approach special is its rootedness in tradition and its gentle, personalized nature. Whether it's Neem for purifying the blood or Shikon for soothing inflammation, these single herbs have long supported the body in restoring balance from within. Their relevance hasn't faded with time—in fact, they're more needed now than ever. By embracing this ancient wisdom, we not only honor the healing systems of our past but also open the door to a more natural, mindful, and effective way of caring for the skin.

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