INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the traditional medicinal system of India and is believed to have originated over 6000 years ago.\(^{(1)}\) It is a holistic system of medicine that is indigenous to and widely practiced in India\(^{(2)}\) and one of the most noted systems of medicine in the world.\(^{(3)}\) Ayurveda is one of the great gifts of the sages of ancient India to mankind. More than 1200 species of plants, nearly 100 minerals and over 100 animal products comprise the Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia.\(^{(4)}\)

All Ayurvedic literature is based on the Samkhya philosophy of creation. (Samkhya are two Sanskrit words: \textit{sam}, meaning “truth,” and \textit{khya}, meaning “to know”)\(^{(2)}\) The term Ayurveda in Sanskrit consists of two words; \textit{ayur} meaning life, and \textit{veda} meaning knowledge or science. It is a science that describes ways to remain healthy as well as methods to treat disease. Ayurveda gives equal emphasis to diet and lifestyle; drugs (Herbal) form an important mainstay in the therapy.\(^{(5)}\)

Thus Ayurveda is the science of life. Ayurveda is considered as Upaveda part of the Atharveda, which deals with different types of herbs, plants, anatomy and physiology of different organs of the body and the principles of treatment of diseases.\(^{(5)}\)

Ayurveda is based on three fundamental principles are panchmabhuta siddhanta, tridosha theory and guna, rasa, virya, vipaka, prabhava and siddhanta as a pharmacological basis of ayurvedic therapeutics.\(^{(5)}\)

Human physiology is described in Ayurveda in terms of the five basic elements viz. Space, air, energy, liquid, and solid (Panchmahabhuta), which form all matter on earth.\(^{(3)}\) They exist in the human body in combined forms like vayu (space and air), pitta (energy and liquid) and kapha (liquid and solid). Vata, pitta and kapha together are called Tridosha (three pillers of life). The first is “Vayu” which controls force and influences moment. The second named “pitta” is responsible for enzymatic and metabolic activity. The last is “kapha” which controls secretion and anabolic activities. Tridoshas have to be in harmony for a person to be in state of positive health.\(^{(6)}\)

It is believed that they are in harmony with each other, but in every human being one of them is dominating which, in turn is called as the prakruti of that person. Tridosha exist in human body in seven forms called Saptadhatu viz. Rasa (lymph), Rakta (blood), meda (adipose tissue), mamsa (flesh), majja (nervine tissue), Shukra (reproductive tissue) and asthi (bones). These tissues are subject to wear and tear so that mala (excretory material) is formed from them.\(^{(7)}\)
When tridosha, saptadhatu and mala are in balance with each other, it is called as healthy condition while imbalance causes a pathological condition. It is hypothesised that the five characters of the medicinal herbs viz. Rasa, guna, virya, vipak and prabhava can be applied to treat various pathological conditions. (3)

The traditional medicine all over the world is nowadays reviewed by an extensive research on different plant species and their therapeutic principles. (8) About 80% of the world’s population relies on herbal medicine, and governments of Third-world countries, unable to sustain a complete coverage with Western type drugs, have encourages the rational development of traditional treatments. (9)

Although there is no record of pharmacological testing during the time period when Ayurvedic texts were written, 50 distinct pharmacological categories of medicinal plants were described. Similar to conventional medicine, Ayurvedic medicine has also benefited from advances in science and technology. These advances facilitated the understanding of diseases, the development of better pharmaceutical products, and the implementation of diagnostic techniques. Scientific studies in laboratory animals have now confirmed the pharmacological properties of many Ayurvedic herbs.

Ayurvedic medicine offers a wealth of relatively effective, safe, and economic health-care therapies. Ayurvedic medicine has been successfully integrated with allopathic medicine in India. Certainly, a great potential exists for its integration into the health-care system in the U.S. (10)

Those herbal plants which have been selected for medicinal use over thousands of years constitute the most obvious choice for examination in the current search for new therapeutically effective drugs. (9)

One of the main strategies in Ayurvedic medicine is to increase body's natural resistance to disease or stress causing agent rather than directly neutralizing the agent itself in practice. This has been achieved by using plant extracts of various plant materials. (11, 12)

The medicinal plants are widely used by the traditional medical practitioners for curing various diseases in their day to day practice. Plants are one of the most important sources of medicines. Herbs occupy the important place in the Ayurvedic Materia Medica and therapeutics. (13)

The important advantages claimed for therapeutic uses of medicinal plants in various ailments are their safety besides being economical, effective and their easy
availability. Because of these advantages the medicinal plants have been widely used by the traditional medical practitioners in their day to day practice.

In traditional systems of medicine the Indian medicinal plants have been used in successful management of various disease conditions. The medicinal use of plants is very old. The writings indicate that therapeutic use of plants is as old as 4000–5000 B.C. and Chinese used first the natural herbal preparations as medicines. In India, however, earliest references of use of plants as medicine appear in Rigveda which is said to be written between 3500–1600 B.C. Later the properties and therapeutic uses of medicinal plants were studied in detail and recorded empirically by the ancient physicians in Ayurveda which is a basic foundation of ancient medical science in India. (14) Considerable research on Pharmacognosy, Chemistry, Pharmacology and clinical therapeutics of Ayurveda has been carried out and there by numerous drugs have entered into the international pharmacopeia. (14)

Whereas conventional medicine is primarily oriented toward the treatment of disease, Ayurvedic medicine is oriented toward prevention, health maintenance, and treatment. In conventional medicine, drugs are developed based on the concept that the elimination of specific causes of a disease, such as microorganisms, will cure a disease. On the other hand, the belief in Ayurvedic medicine is that a disease is the product of an imbalance in the body and mental elements that reduce the body’s resistance to diseases. If the imbalance is corrected and the body’s defense mechanisms are strengthened by herbal formulas, lifestyle changes, and diet, then the body will resist a disease with a goal of eliminating it. Herbal and herbomineral products regularly used in Ayurveda are believed to strengthen the body’s defenses. Scientific evidence is gradually developing in support of the Ayurvedic concept. (10)

Ayurveda exploits the potential of various herbs as drugs and play important role in modern health care, particularly where satisfactory treatment is not available. In recent years, the clinical importance of herbal drugs has received considerable attention.

There is a need to evaluate the potential of Ayurvedic remedies as adjuvant to counteract side effectiveness of certain modern therapies.

Hence the present study was designed to evaluate the phytochemical and pharmacological screening of some successive extracts and isolated fractions of Herbal plants which has not been carried out yet.