

1 *Ervaru*: An Underexplored Medicinal Plant in Ayurveda

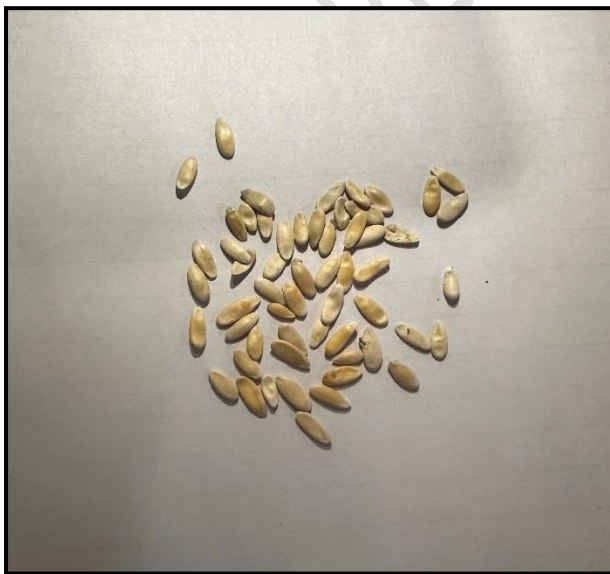
2 Abstract

3 *Ervaru* (*Cucumis utilissimus* Roxb.), a member of the Cucurbitaceae family, is an
4 underexplored medicinal plant with significant Ayurvedic therapeutic uses. To provide a
5 thorough understanding of *Ervaru*'s Ayurvedic identity and therapeutic importance, the
6 current review attempts to compile the existing classical and contemporary literature on the
7 plant. Major Ayurvedic texts, such as the *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga*
8 *Hridaya*, *Ashtanga Sangraha*, and other *Nighantus*, were used for a thorough analysis. Its
9 classification, synonyms, *Rasapanchaka*, *Doshakarma*, *Karma*, and therapeutic indications as
10 stated in classical writings are highlighted in the review. *Ervaru* is suggested in conditions
11 like *Daha*, *Trishna*, and *Mutrakricchra* and is primarily defined by *Madhura Rasa*, *Sheeta*
12 *Veerya*, and *Guru Guna*. Its taxonomy and therapeutic uses are further documented in
13 contemporary literature.

14 **Keywords:** *Ervaru*, *Cucumis utilissimus*, Ayurveda, *Rasapanchaka*, *Doshakarma*, *Nighantu*,
15 Medicinal plant.

16 Introduction

17 *Ervaru* consists of seeds of *Cucumis utilissimus* (Fam. Cucurbitaceae), an annual creeping
18 herb, cultivated in many parts of the country, especially in upper India and particularly in
19 Uttar Pradesh and Punjab¹. It has an elongated, fleshy fruit which is green when immature
20 and turns yellow on ripening. The seeds are numerous, flat, oval to oblong, creamish-white to
21 pale yellow in colour, rich in fixed oil, and constitute the official part used for medicinal
22 purposes. When unripe, it promotes taste and pacifies *pitta dosha*, but the same when ripe, it
23 produces excessive thirst, stimulates digestive capacity, and aggravates *pitta dosha*².



24
25 Figure 1: Seeds of *Ervaru*
26

AYURVEDIC REVIEW

The literary review of *Ervaru* is classified into three periods, i.e., *Vedic kala*, *Samhita kala*, and *Nighantu kala*.

A) Vedic Kala - On reviewing the *Vedas*, namely *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Samveda*, *Atharvaveda*, no references of *Ervaru* were found.

B) Samhita Kala –

Charaka Samhita – 2nd to 3rd Century A.D.

The *Charaka Samhita* includes a mention of *Ervaru* in the *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 27, “*Annapaana Vidhi Adhyaya*” (Recommendations on Food and Drink), where different foodstuffs are classified and the *rasa*, *guṇa*, *virya* and *karmas* are described. “*Ervarukais* cool in potency, heavy, and sweet in nature. Both alleviate burning sensation, thirst, exhaustion, and mental distress when ripe³.” This makes a clear and direct reference to *Ervaru* during the classical *Samhita* period. The characteristics mentioned are consistent with what is already known about fruits that resemble cucumber like fruits: they are cooling, hydrating, and helpful in hot weather. *Ervaru* is positioned as more than just a food item; it has therapeutic value, especially in *Pittaja* ailments like *daha* (burning) and *tr̥sna* (excessive thirst). This supports the Ayurvedic belief that “*Ahaara* is the best medicine,” which holds that eating the correct foods can both prevent and treat ailments. The *Charaka Samhita* states that *Ervaruka*’s cooling, hydrating, and relaxing qualities make it especially beneficial for *Pitta*-related conditions. The fruit is classified under *Shaka Varga* and is believed to be sweet, heavy, and cold in potency, supporting its use as both a culinary item and a therapeutic *Dravya*.

Sushruta Samhita – (5th Century A.D.)

In Chapter 42 of the *Sutra Sthana*, *Rasa Viseṣa Vijnaniya Adhyaya*, different substances are categorized based on their main taste, such as the *Madhura Varga* (sweet group)⁴. One of the substances in this group that is highlighted for its sweet taste and cooling qualities is *Ervaru*. Its presence suggests that it has therapeutic value in Ayurvedic medicine, especially for *pitta* balancing, lowering inflammation, and treating heat-related ailments. *Ervaru* is referenced along with other highly valued fruits like *Trapusha*, *Karkaruka*, and *Alabu*, emphasizing its role in traditional medicine and the meticulous botanical knowledge that has been maintained in the *Sushruta Samhita*. *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 46 - *Annapana Vidhi Adhyaya*, explains *Ervaru*’s attributes in further depth. It has an alkaline, slightly sweet taste, elevates *Vata* and *Kapha*, is mild on *Pitta*, and facilitates digestion. Additionally, when discussing wound assessment in *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 22 - *Vraṇa-Srava Vijnaniya Adhyaya* - the phrase “juice of *Ervaru*” is used to compare and contrast various exudates that are seen in *Sannipata* (*tridoshic*) conditions. *Ervaru*’s importance in traditional Ayurvedic literature as a food item as well as a diagnostic and therapeutic agent is highlighted by these numerous references.

66 **Ashtang Hridaya –(7th to 8th Century A.D.)**

67 There are 120 chapters in *Ashtanghridaya*, which is divided into six sthanas, each of which
68 has a different number of *adhyayas*. *Ervaru* (also called *Varu*) is referenced mostly in relation
69 to food classification and qualities in the *Aṣṭanga Hridaya*. Chapter 6-*Annasvarupa*
70 *Vijnaniya Adhyaya* in *Sutra Sthana* mentions it. Along with *Kusmanda*, *Tumba (Alabu)*,
71 *Kalinga*, and others, *Ervaru* raises *kapha* and *vata*, breaks down hard feces, remains
72 undigested in the stomach for a long time, promotes secretion in the tissues, tastes pleasant
73 after digestion⁵.

74 **AshtangSangraha –(9th to 10th Century A.D.)**

75 *Ervaru* is briefly mentioned in the *Ashtanga Sangraha* in *Annasvarupavigyaniya Adhyaya*
76 under *Shaka Varga*⁶.

77 **C) Nighantu Kala –**

78 *Ervaru* was detailed in detail in many Ayurvedic lexicons throughout the *Nighantu Kala*. The
79 drug is listed under various synonyms. Its characteristics, activities, and medicinal
80 applications have all been thoroughly explained by the *Nighantu* authors. *Sheeta Veerya* (cold
81 potency), *Madhura Rasa* (sweet taste), and *Kapha-Pitta* calming qualities are commonly
82 associated with *Ervaru*. It is thought to help in conditions like *Mutrakricchra* (dysuria),
83 *Trishna* (excessive thirst), *Daha* (burning sensation), and other urinary ailments.
84 *Ervaru*'s nutritional and therapeutic importance in Ayurveda is highlighted by the thorough
85 discussion of it in several *Nighantus*.

86 **BHAVPRAKASH NIGHANTU –**

87 *Ervaru* is mentioned in *Bhavprakash Nighantu* by the synonym *karkati* in the *shaakavarga*. It
88 is said to be dry (*rukṣa*) and cooling (*sitala*) in nature, and it functions as a *grahiṇi*, which
89 means it aids in the body's absorption and retention of fluids. It may be sluggish to digest, but
90 its weighty (*guru*) nature and sweet (*madhura rasa*) taste indicate that it is nourishing.
91 Particularly when unripe, *ervaru* is pitta-pacifying (*pittahara*) and delicious (*rucya*). It can,
92 however, enhance pitta, thirst, and digestive fire (*agni*) when fully ripe (*pakva*), suggesting
93 that its effects on the body vary according to age⁷.

94 **DHANVANTARI NIGHANTU**

95 In this *Nighantu*, *Ervaru* is mentioned in *Guduchyadi Varga*, one of the 07 *vargas*⁸.

96 **RAJ NIGHANTU**

97 In this *Nighantu*, *Ervaru* is mentioned in *Moolakadi Varga*, one of the 23 *vargas*⁹.

98

99 **KAIYADEVA NIGHANTU**

100 In this *Nighantu*, *Ervaru* is mentioned in *Oshadhi Varga*, one of the 08 *vargas*¹⁰.

101

102 **DRAVYAGUNA SANGRAHA**

103 In this *Nighantu*, *Ervaru* is mentioned in *Shaaka Varga*, various benefits has been described
104 in this¹¹.

105 **NIGHANTUSHESHA**

106 In this *Nighantu*, *Ervaru* is mentioned in *Shaaka Kanda*, various synonyms are mentioned
107 here¹².

108 **PARYAYRATNAMALA**

109 Several synonyms of *Ervaru* are mentioned in this. These names are used to identify the drug
110 in different regions and across various traditional sources¹³.

111 **MADHAVA DRAVYAGUNA**

112 *Ervaru* is mentioned in *Shaakavarga* in this *Nighantu*, it's *dosh shamana* properties are
113 mentioned in this text¹⁴.

114 **RAJVALLABH NIGHANTU**

115 Various *guna* of *Ervaru* is mentioned in this *Nighantu*¹⁵.

116 **Table 1: Synonyms of *Ervaru* in Various *Nighantus***

Synonym	D.N	K.N	B.P.N	R.N	N.S	P.R.M	D.G.S	M.D.G	R.V.N
<i>Ervaru</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
<i>Ervaruka</i>	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+
<i>Urvaru</i>	+	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
<i>Karkati</i>	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
<i>Karkatika</i>	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
<i>Trapusi</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
<i>Vyalapatra</i>	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Vyalapatrika</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
<i>Lomasha</i>	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Lomashi</i>	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Sthula</i>	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Brihatphala</i>	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Toyaphala</i>	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Hastidantaphala</i>	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-

<i>Gajadantaphala</i>	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Mutrapphala</i>	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
<i>Chirbhiti</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
<i>Valungi</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
<i>Rajadani</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
<i>Lata</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
<i>Chitra</i>	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
<i>Godumbika</i>	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
<i>Karkaru</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-

117

118 **Table no. 2: Classification of *Ervaru* in Ayurvedic classics is as under**

S.no.	Nighantu	Varga
1.	<i>Charak Samhita</i>	<i>Shaka Varga</i>
2.	<i>Sushruta Samhita</i>	<i>Madhura Varga</i>
3.	<i>Ashtanga Hridaya</i>	<i>Shaka Varga</i>
4.	<i>Ashtanga Sangraha</i>	<i>Shaka Varga</i>
5.	<i>Bhavaprakasha Nighantu</i>	<i>Shaaka Varga</i>
6.	<i>Dhanvantari Nighantu</i>	<i>Guduchyādi Varga</i>
7.	<i>Raja Nighantu</i>	<i>Moolakhadi Varga</i>
8.	<i>Kaiyadeva Nighantu</i>	<i>Aushadhi Varga</i>
9.	<i>DravyagunaSangraha</i>	<i>Shaaka Varga</i>
10.	<i>Nighantushesh</i>	<i>Shaaka Kanda</i>
11.	<i>Paryayratnamala</i>	-
12.	<i>Madhava Dravyaguna</i>	<i>Shaaka Varga</i>
13.	<i>Rajvallabh Nighantu</i>	-

119

120 **Table No.3: *Rasapanchaka* of *Ervaru* Detailed by Different Acharyas**

Properties		C.S.	D.N.	K.N.	B.P.N.	D.G.S.
<i>Rasa</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	+	+	+	+	+
	<i>Katu</i>	-	-	-	-	-

	<i>Tikta</i>	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Guna</i>	<i>Guru</i>	+	–	+	+	–
	<i>Ruksha</i>	–	–	+	+	–
	<i>Grahi</i>	–	–	+	+	–
<i>Veerya</i>	<i>Sheeta / Hima</i>	+	+	+	+	–
	<i>Ushna</i>	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Vipaka</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	–	–	–	–	–
	<i>Katu</i>	–	–	–	–	–

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123 **Table No. 4: Doshakarma of Ervaru as described in Classical Texts**

<i>Doshakarma</i>	C.S.	D.N.	K.N.	B.P.N.	D.G.S.
<i>Pittahara</i>	–	+	–	+	–
<i>Kaphahara</i>	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Vatakara</i>	–	–	–	–	+
<i>Kapha-Vatakara</i>	–	–	–	–	+

124

125 **Table no. 5: Karma of Ervaru in various nighantus**

<i>Karma</i>	C.S.	D.N.	K.N.	B.P.N.	D.G.S.	M.D.G.	R.V.N.
<i>Daha-hara</i>	+	–	–	–	–	+	+
<i>Trishna-hara</i>	+	–	–	–	–	+	+
<i>Klamahara</i>	+	–	–	–	–	+	+
<i>Mutralla</i>	+	+	+	–	–	–	–
<i>Ruchya / Rochana</i>	–	+	+	+	+	–	–
<i>Deepana</i>	–	–	–	–	+	–	–
<i>Grahi / Sangrahi</i>	–	–	+	+	–	–	–
<i>Pittahara</i>	–	+	–	+	–	–	–
<i>Santapahara</i>	–	+	–	–	–	–	–

<i>Murchahara</i>	–	+	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Kaphahara</i>	–	–	–	–	–	+	–

126

127

128 **MODERN LITERATURE**

129 **Classical uses of Medicinal Plants (Prof.P.V.Sharma – 20th Century A.D.)**

130 Description of *Ervaru* according to its therapeutic indications has been documented¹⁶.

131 **Medicinal Plants (S.G.Joshi–20th Century A.D.)**

132 In this text synonyms, chemical composition, part used, ayurvedic properties, actions and
133 therapeutics of *Ervaru* has been mentioned¹⁷.

134 **Indian Medicinal Plants (Kirtikar and Basu – 20th Century A.D.)**

135 Botanical description, distribution, vernacular names, medicinal uses, and phytochemistry of
136 *Cucumis utilissimus*¹⁸.

137 **API (Ayurvedic Pharmacopeia of India Part-I, Vol-II)**

138 Latin name, family, general description, distribution, vernacular names with classical names,
139 its macroscopic and microscopic description, chemical constituents, properties, action,
140 formulations, dosage and therapeutic uses, standards for identification, and quality control
141 parameters have been mentioned in this book¹⁹.

142 **The Useful Plants of India (Ambasta – 20th Century A.D.)**

143 *Ervaru* is an edible cucurbit whose fruits are consumed fresh or pickled, while the seeds are
144 nutritious, rich in fixed oil, and traditionally used as a cooling and diuretic agent in urinary
145 disorders.²⁰

146

147 **MODERN REVIEW**

148 **Table No. 6 Taxonomic Classification of *Ervaru*²¹**

Root	Root
Kingdom	Plantae
Phylum	Tracheophyta
Class	Magnoliopsida
Order	Cucurbitales
Family	Cucurbitaceae

Genus	Cucumis
Species	utilissimus

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150 **Indications**

151 **1. Calculus-Dysuria**

152 a) The seeds of *ervaru*, *trapusa* and *kusumbha*; *kumkuma* and *vasa* taken with grape juice are
153 efficacious in all types of dysuria²².

154 b) In *paittika* type, seeds of *ervaru* mixed with *madhuka* and *daruharidra* should be taken with
155 rice water²³.

156 c) Paste of *ervaru* seeds 10gm mixed with rock salt and taken with sour gruel removes
157 dysuria²⁴.

158 **2. *Udavartta* caused by suppression of urine**

159 One should take with water seeds of *ervaru* mixed with a little salt²⁵.

160 **3. Pain during pregnancy**

161 Milk cooked with *ervaru* root should be taken. It removes pain²⁶

162

163 **Pharmacological Actions**²⁷

164 Antioxidant activity:
165 *Ervaru* (*Cucumisutilissimus*) seeds exhibit strong antioxidant activity by scavenging free
166 radicals and reducing oxidative stress. This helps protect cellular components from damage
167 caused by reactive oxygen species. The antioxidant studies were carried out using in vitro
168 experimental methods.

169 Anti-inflammatory activity:
170 The seed extract shows significant anti-inflammatory effects in carrageenan-induced edema
171 models in albino rats. It reduces swelling and suppresses inflammatory responses, indicating
172 its potential usefulness in managing inflammatory conditions.

173 Analgesic activity:
174 *Ervaru* seeds demonstrate notable analgesic activity in experimental animal models,
175 particularly in mice, where the extract reduced pain perception. This supports its traditional
176 use in relieving mild to moderate pain.

177

178 **Abbreviations**

The following abbreviations have been used throughout this review article: **API** – *Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia of India*; **C.S.** – *Charaka Samhita*; **Su.S.** – *Sushruta Samhita*; **A.H.** – *Ashtanga Hridaya*; **A.S.** – *Ashtanga Sangraha*; **B.P.N.** – *Bhavaprakasha Nighantu*; **D.N.** – *Dhanvantari Nighantu*; **K.N.** – *Kaiyadeva Nighantu*; **R.N.** – *Raja Nighantu*; **N.S.** – *Nighantushesha*; **P.R.M.** – *Paryayaratnamala*; **D.G.S.** – *DravyagunaSangraha*; **M.D.G.** – *Madhava Dravyaguna*; **R.V.N.** – *Rajavallabha Nighantu*.

CONCLUSION

Ervaru (*Cucumis utilissimus* Roxb.), a medicinal plant belonging to the family Cucurbitaceae, has been described extensively in the Ayurvedic classics for its nutritional and therapeutic importance. Classical texts such as the *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Ashtanga Sangraha*, and various *Nighantus* describe its synonyms, classification, *Rasapanchaka*, *Doshakarma*, *Karma*, and therapeutic indications. *Ervaru* is predominantly described as having *Madhura Rasa*, *Sheeta Veerya*, and *Guru Guna*, and is indicated in conditions such as *Mutrakricchra* (dysuria), *Daha* (burning sensation), *Trishna* (excessive thirst), and other urinary disorders. The drug has also been mentioned as an important dietary as well as therapeutic agent in Ayurveda. This review compiles the available classical and modern literary information on *Ervaru*, providing a comprehensive understanding of its Ayurvedic identity and therapeutic significance.

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