

THE CONCEPT OF HAIR AND HAIR CARE IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

In an individual, condition of hair is reflection of the complete constitution of his physical and mental health. Irregular dietary habits, sedentary life style, inadequate sleep, deficiencies of vitamins and minerals, lack of scalp hygiene, fungal infections etc affects the quality of hair and invites the problems like dandruff, thinning hair, early baldness and premature greying. Ayurveda has a treasure of knowledge which includes many formulations and treatment methods for hair care. The branch trichology is still under development and many unauthorised products are available in the market which uses the name of Ayurveda. According to Ayurveda, different *Deha Prakriti* persons will have different hair texture. Hair care can be explained as both protective and curative measures. Scalp hygiene is important in maintaining the health of hair. Scalp should be clean before providing any nourishment therapy to the hair. Protective measures includes *Snana*(bath), *Ushnishadharana* (covering the head), *Abhyanga*, *Pratimarsa Nasya* and proper *Ahara*. Curative measures includes *Kaya Shodhana*, *Dhoomapana*, use of *Murdha Taila*, *Marsa Nasya*, *Rasayana Prayoga* etc. Proper purificatory measures of body should be done followed by nourishing treatment is the principle to be adopted for proper hair care. By practicing proper *Dinacharya* like *Shiroabyanga* and *Pratimarsa Nasya* daily and by avoiding *Theekshna*, *Ushna*, *Katu Lavana Rasa Ahara*, one can attain strong and beautiful hair.

KEYWORDS: Hair care, Ayurveda, *Murdha Taila*.

INTRODUCTION

The face of an individual is a personal identity in which hair plays a significant role. Hair has a tendency to lose its natural colour and texture with advancing age. In an individual, condition of hair is reflection of the complete constitution of his physical and mental health. Irregular dietary habits, sedentary life style, inadequate sleep, deficiencies of vitamins and minerals, lack of scalp hygiene, fungal infections etc affects the quality of hair and invites the problems like dandruff, thinning hair, early baldness and premature greying.

Healthy hair is described as, hair that has lustre and which is smooth, long, silky, bouncy with good volume & with no evidence of balding. Each hair composed of columns of dead keratinised epidermal cells bonded together by extracellular proteins. Ayurveda is the science which gives importance to maintenance of healthy body as well as curation of the disease. The earlier one can be achieved through *Swastha Vritha Paripalana*. Hair care has been given due importance in daily regimen (*Dinacharya*). Later one obtained through *Kapala Roga Chikitsa* and *Rasayana Prayoga*. Ayurvedic classics explains many formulations and methods for extensive hair care. There are a lot of areas to be explored in the field of Trichology in Ayurveda.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Various Ayurvedic text books, their commentaries, previous research works and published articles were thoroughly studied and analysed by the author along with self-assumptions and analysis.

1. Concept of Hair in Ayurveda

According to Ayurveda, the harmony amongst three components ie *Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *Mala* are essential to maintain the health.^[1] Among these, *Dharana* and *Poshana* are the main functions of *Dhatu*. From *Rasadhatu* each of the consecutive dhatus get transformed with proper *Dhatwagni*. While *Asthi Dhatu* emerging from *Meda Dhatu*, the *Prasada* portion and the *Kitta* portion are differentiated and the *Kitta* portion of it forms *Kesha* or hair on the scalp.^[2,3] The nourishment of *Kesha* is attained from *Ahara Rasa*. Acharya Sharangdhara has explained that *Kesha* is the *Upadhatu* of *Majja Dhatu*.^[4] As per *Brihathrayee*, hair has been considered as *Pitraja Bhava* (Paternal factor)^[5,6] Acharya Charaka has mentioned it as a *Parthiva Dravya* because of its inherent properties of roughness, steadiness and heaviness.^[7] He also opines that the number of *Kesha* is approximately 29956.^[8]

Relation of hair and body constitution

According to Ayurveda, different *Deha Prakriti* persons will have different hair texture. The nature of *Kesha* related with different types of body constitution or *Prakriti* of individuals are described.

Vata Prakriti: According to Charaka *Vata Prakriti* persons have rough hair on the head, face & body.^[9] Acharya Susruta states that individuals of *Vata Prakriti* has often rough and gritty beard, moustache, fingernails and hair.^[10] Vagbhata has mentioned that *Vata Prakriti* person will have *Sphutita* (splitted), *Syava* (dust) coloured hair and in little quantity.^[11]

Pitta Prakriti: According to Charaka and Susruta *Pitta Prakriti* persons attain early wrinkles, grey hair and baldness and they will have scanty, soft & tawny hair on the head, face & body^[12]. Vagbhata mentioned that colour of the *Kesha* is yellowish in *Pitta Prakriti*.^[13]

Kapha Prakriti: Susruta and Vagbhata has mentioned that, the person of *Kapha Prakriti* will have thick, curly, oily and dark black colour of hair.^[14]

Table 1: Features of hair in different *Deha Prakriti* individuals.

<i>Vatha</i>	<i>Pitha</i>	<i>Kapha</i>
Rough	Early grey hair, baldness	Firm
Syava	Pingala (brownish)	Dark black
Lusterless	Soft, silky	Curly
Less no:	Scanty	Bulky

2. Hair Growth

Structurally hair has a shaft and root. Shaft is the superficial portion of the hair, which projects above the surface of skin. Root is portion of hair deep to the shaft penetrating in to dermis. Shaft and root of hair consist of 3 concentric layers of cells i.e medulla, cortex and cuticle.

As per Trichology, the hair grows in three different phases

1. Anagen phase – This determines the length of the hair. Most of our scalp hair is in this anagen phase for almost about 7 years until some unknown factors push the hair to go into the catagen phase.
2. Catagen phase – In this phase the hair follicle stops growing and gets converted to a club hair.
3. Telogen phase – The last phase of growth of hair follicle where the follicle goes into a dormant resting phase and the hair shaft is shed off.

As anagen phase is the first stage of hair growth and the growth is steady for a long period, this may be correlated to *Kapha* predominant phase. Catagen phase may be considered as *Pitha* predominant and telogen phase related to *Vata Dosha Pradhana* as hair shaft shed off during this phase.

3. Hair Care Explained In Ayurveda

Hair care can be explained as protective and curative measures. Scalp hygiene is important in maintaining the health of hair. *Kesha* has been explained as ‘*Ke Shirasae Sheteiti*’.^[15] *Kesha* means which is embedded on the head or scalp. Thus, scalp should be clean before providing any nourishment therapy to the hair.

A) Protective measures

Snana (bath)

Acharya explained the importance of *Snana* in *Dinacharya*. It refreshes body and the mind along with that cleanses and nourishes the hair. According to Vagbhata, washing hair with hot water should be avoided as it causes *Balahaani* to *Kesha* and *Chakshu*.^[16]

Ushnishadharana (covering of head)

Ushnishadharana means covering of head with cloth. According to Acharya Charaka, it is said to be *Pavithra* and suitable for hair.^[17] It protects hair from UV rays, dirt, wind etc which may alter the natural colour and texture of hair and hinders the growth of hair. But covering the wet hair for long duration may exaggerate the dandruff and other fungal infections.

Abhyanga

It is explained as a *Dinacharya*, *Purva Karma* before *Shodana* and as one of the *Murdha Taila Prayoga*. Generally *Abhyanga* means oil application on the body. As skin is *Vata Sthaana*, oiling of skin mitigates *Vata Dosha*. In the context of *Dinacharya*, *Abhyanga* should be specially practised over *Shira*, *Sravana* And *Pada*.^[18] *Shiro Abhyanga* helps to nourish the hair growth and sense organs. It eliminates *Shiroroga* and good for the skin of face. According to Acharya Susruta, *Brajaka Pitta* present in the skin helps the absorption of medicines through these procedures. Oils like *Neelibringadi Kera*, *Bringa Amalakadi Taila*, *Kayyonnyadi Taila*, *Chemparathyadi Kera Taila* etc are widely using in South India for hair nourishment based on individual suitability. Oils like *Prapoundareekadi Taila* are said to be useful for *Kesha Ranjana*.

Nasya

Pratimarsa Nasya is advised as a daily regimen. *Anutaila* can be used for *Pratimarsa Nasya* by healthy individuals which nourishes all sense organs and hairs. *Ksheera Bala Taila*, *Bringarasa Siddha Ksheeragritha*, *Yashti Madhu Taila*, *Gogritha* etc are using for *Nasya* in clinical practise.

Ahara

According to Acharya Kashyapa *Ahara* (Diet) is said to be *Mahabeshaja*. The health and disease of an individual depends on the food he is consuming. As hair is the growing part from the scalp, it need proper nourishment. If the nutrition is not proper, the growth is disturbed, arrested and the hair starts to fall off. Acharya Charaka has advised to reduce the use of *Kshara* (alkaline substances) and *Lavana* (salty substances) as they are not

suitable for hair. Excessive use of these leads to premature greying of hair and falling of hair,^[19] Intake of *Amalaki, Mudga, Tila* etc can be encouraged with normal diet. Protein rich diet will promote the hair growth.

B) Curative measures

As per Ayurveda, *Chikitsa* can be mainly classified in to *Shamana* and *Shodhana*. When the disease is chronic and deep rooted it cannot be pacified with *Shamana chikitsa*. Since hair is part of the body and receives nourishment from *ahara rasa*, proper *sodhana* of body is necessary before any topical application of oil. In case of chronic hair diseases, *Kayashodhana* is the first line of treatment. *Virechana* or *Vamana* can be opted as per the *Dosha* involved. After *Kayashodhana*, *Urdwanga Shodhana* should be adopted followed by *Brimhana Chikitsa* like *Murdha Taila Prayoga*.

Dhoomapana

It is a therapeutic procedure of inhaling medicated fumes by a person. It is said to be more beneficial in *Kapha Vata* predominant conditions of head. It cures disorders of head and sense organs, *Kesa Shatana* (hair fall), greying of hairs etc.^[20] *Kesha Dhupana* is also helpful for removing sweat and dirt from the scalp. *Kesha Dhupana* with *Guggulu, Ushira* etc are in practise.

Murdha taila

Murdha Taila Prayoga have a very important role in *Shiroroga* and hair care. Oil should be regularly applied over scalp. *Abhyanga, Seka, Pichu* and *Vasthi* are the four *Murdha Taila*.^[21] Among these *Abhyanga* is indicated to eradicate dryness, itching and dirt of scalp.^[22] *Shiro Pichu* is indicated for *Kesha Shaata, Kapala Twak Sphutana* etc. It prevents falling of hair, baldness and also makes the hair black long and deep-rooted. It provides nourishment to the hair follicles and also gives strength to the cortex and fibre of hair. Mustard oil or Coconut oil can be used regularly for massage oil hair. *Neeli Bringadi Taila, Bringaamalakadi Taila, Ksheerabala Taila* etc can be used for *Shiropichu*. Tissue contact time of oil is more in *Shiropichu* and this will reduce excess dryness of scalp and nourishes root of hair and accelerate hair growth.

Shiro Lepana

Shirolepana means application of paste of medicines over the scalp for a particular duration of time. It is effective for *Darunaka, Kesha Brimhana* and *Kesha Ranjana*. Acharya Vagbata explained *Shirolepana* with *Tila, Amalaka, Padmakinjalka, Madhuka And Madhu* for *Kesa Brimhana* and *Ranjana*.^[23] Application of *Ayoraja, Bringarasa, Triphala, Krishnamritika* etc which are soaked in *Ikshurasa* for a month will cure *Palita*.^[24] It is one of the hair dye explained. *Mamsyadi Lepana* is advised for *Kesha Samvardhana*.

Rasayana Prayoga

Rasayana Prayoga rejuvenate the body and mind thus it can nourish the scalp and hair. Antioxidant activity of the

Rasayana Yogas help the hairs to grow thick and healthy. As premature hair fall is a sign of early aging process and *Rasayana* is best for reversing aging process. *Brahma Rasayana, Amalaki Rasayana, Narasimha Rasayana, Lauhadi Rasayana, Krishnatila Rasayana And Swadamshtra Rasayana* are some of the examples.

Use of Keshya drugs

Keshya Dravya means drugs which are beneficial to hairs. A total of 16 drugs, which possess *Keshya Property* (mentioned in a shloka from) are mentioned by *Acharya Bhavaprakasa*. These includes *Vibhitaki, Sindhuvara, Bijaka, Gunja, Bringaraja, Neeli, Bakuchi, Japa Tila* etc. These drugs can be used for therapeutic and preventive purposes in hair disorders. Most of these drugs, possess *Tikta, Kashaya* and *Madhura Rasa* which alleviate *Pitta Dosha*. *Ruksha Guna* pacifies *Vata*. *Ushna Virya* and *Katu Vipaka* pacify *Kapha Dosha*. These *Keshya* drugs can be utilised internally as well as externally according to the condition.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda has a treasure of knowledge which includes many formulations and treatment methods for hair care. The branch trichology is still under development and many unauthorised products are available in the market which uses the name of Ayurveda. Proper purificatory measures of body and head should be done followed by nourishing treatment is the principle to be applied for proper hair care. By practicing proper *Dinacharya* like *Shiroabyanga* and *Pratimarsa Nasya* daily and by avoiding *Theekshna, Ushna, Katu Lavana Rasa Ahara*, one can attain strong and beautiful hair.

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