

## A REVIEW ON THE APPLICATION OF AYURVEDIC PRINCIPLES IN COSMETOLOGY

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### ABSTRACT

We Live in a world where synthetic cosmetics often promise instant results but may carry unintended side effects. Many people are seeking skincare and haircare solutions rooted in ancient wisdom. Ayurveda is a traditional Indian system of health and lifestyle. It offers a holistic framework for beauty that goes beyond mere surface appearance. Instead, it emphasizes harmony between body, mind and spirit. In this review, we explore how classical Ayurvedic principles—such as **Tridosha** (Vata, Pitta, Kapha), **Sapta Dhatu** (body tissues), **Agni** (digestive fire) and **Ama** (toxins)—influence the health and radiance of skin and hair. Drawing on Ayurvedic texts like *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, and modern review, we examine daily routines (*dincharya*) and seasonal routines (*ritucharya*), cleansing and nourishment therapies (such as *abhyanga*, *udvartana*, *lepa*), rejuvenation strategies (*rasayana* and *panchakarma*) and the practical role of herbal formulations and lifestyle in cosmetology. Special

attention is given to the traditional groups of cosmetic herbs (e.g., *Varnya*—complexion enhancing; *Vayasthapana*—rejuvenative) and the modern resurgence of Ayurvedic cosmeceuticals in the global market. We also critically address challenges: standardization of herbal products, regulatory differences across countries (especially Indian vs. Western markets) and the risk of misrepresentation when brands misuse the label —Ayurvedic without honoring traditional methodology. Finally, we highlight open questions and suggest

paths forward—combining personalized Ayurvedic care with rigorous scientific validation for the future of sustainable, evidence-based beauty.

## INTRODUCTION & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

skin stems from balanced doshas, strong digestive fire (*Agni*), clear tissues (*Dhatus*), and unobstructed channels (*Srotas*) with routine purification to remove toxins (*Ama*). During the Garbha period (fifth and sixth months of pregnancy), Ayurvedic texts recommend maternal practices (*Garbhasanskara*) to nourish the unborn child's beauty and complexion—highlighting how beauty is present from conception. Historical records show that Ayurvedic cosmetic practices date back to Indus Valley civilization, where herbs, precious stones, minerals, and dietary rituals were leveraged for skin, hair and body care. Classic formulations like *Varnya Mahakashaya*, *Eladi Gana*, *Lodhradi*, and *Vayasthapaka Dravyas* were categorized specifically for enhancing complexion, delaying aging or treating pigmentation and hair fall.

Dincharya and Ritucharya are cornerstones of beauty care in Ayurveda. Practices like tongue scraping, oil massage (*Abhyanga*), herbal cleansing and seasonal diet adjustments are used to support skin radiance, scalp health and overall vitality. These routines aren't mere rituals but intentional habits that support tissue nourishment and toxin elimination.

Ayurvedic cosmetology is more than skin-deep. It embraces preventive and curative methods. External treatments (*Bahirparimarjana Chikitsa*) such as facial masks, *Lepa*, oil applications and surgical care (postoperative cosmetics) are complemented by internal rejuvenation therapies (*Antarparimarjana Chikitsa*) like *Rasayana* and *Panchakarma* to sustain long-term beauty and wellness.

Over the years, this ancient knowledge has attracted modern research. Contemporary reviews highlight the art and science of Ayurvedic cosmetics, showing that cosmetic herbs like turmeric, manjistha, amalaki, bhringraj, and gandhika possess antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and rejuvenative properties making them integral to both traditional and evidence-based formulations.

In sum, Ayurvedic cosmetology represents a time-tested, integrated path to beauty: one that prioritizes inner balance, personalized care, safe and botanically rich preparations.

## Fundamental Ayurvedic Concepts Impacting Beauty

In Ayurveda, beauty is far more than skin deep. It blossoms from harmony within the balance of **Doshas**, **Dhatus**, **Agni**, and the absence of **Ama**. Understanding these fundamentals isn't only academically rich; it directly shapes the health of skin and hair.

### Tridosha: The Root of Balance

At the heart of Ayurveda lies the **Tridosha** concept—Vata (air & ether), Pitta (fire & water), and Kapha (earth & water). These three vital energies govern physiology, metabolism, and mental-emotional life. When they're balanced, the body functions optimally; when disturbed, it disrupts tissue health and skin radiance.

- **Vata** controls dryness and fine lines, excess brings fragile, dehydrated skin.
- **Pitta** governs heat, too much can cause inflammation, sensitivity, and pigmentation.
- **Kapha** offers structure and moisture, excess leads to oily skin, congestion or dull complexion.

Ayurvedic texts state: "*Dosha, Dhātu, Mala moolam hi shariram*"—Doshas, Dhatus, and Malas are the root foundation of the body. Balancing them is essential for healthy tissue formation and healthy skin.

### Sapta Dhātu and Mala: Nourishing from Within

The **seven Dhatus**—from Rasa (plasma) to Shukra (reproductive tissue)—form and maintain the body's structure. Healthy **Rasa**, **Rakta**, and **Meda** are vital for glowing skin and strong hair. For instance

- **Rasa Dhātu** supplies skin and scalp nourishment.
- **Rakta Dhātu** brings vitality and even tone.
- **Meda Dhātu** adds smoothness and suppleness.

**Malas**, the waste products (e.g. urine, stool) must be efficiently eliminated. Any obstruction or toxin build-up disrupts dhātu balance and impairs beauty.

### Agni and Ama: The Digestive Harmony

**Agni**, the body's digestive fire, isn't just about digestion of food—it encompasses all transformation in the body: *Jatharagni*, *Bhutagni*, and *Dhatvagni* manage metabolic stages from food to tissues. When Agni is strong, nutrients fully nourish Dhatus; when weak (*Agnimandya*), toxins (*Ama*) form. **Ama** is undigested or incorrectly metabolized food

essence which is a sticky, foul, heavy residue. It circulates through channels (*Srotas*), blocks circulation and upsets tissue balance (**Sama Dosha, Sama Dhatu, Sama Mala**) which is the root cause of inflammation, premature aging, blemishes and hair thinning. Common signs include sluggish digestion, heaviness, dull complexion, fatigue, acne, or scalp itching—all indicating Ama-related imbalance.

### **Srotas and Marma: Channels and Vital Points**

The human body has a network of channels (*Srotas*) that transport nutrients, energy, and waste. Blocked or vitiated channels compromise skin and hair health. Ayurvedic therapies aim to open and purify these channels to ensure proper flow and cellular nourishment. Additionally, **Marma points** (vital energy zones) are stimulated during therapies like *Abhyanga* to boost circulation, tone skin, and support radiance.

### **IMPORTANCE IN COSMETOLOGY**

Taken together, these concepts offer a personality-based roadmap to beauty

- **Treatment** which is not masking, targeting root imbalance (e.g., calming Pitta v/s treating acne topically).
- **Personalization**: matching skin/hair care to one's dominant dosha and current state, seasonal routines matter.
- **Inner nourishment**: addressing Agni and Dhatu vitality so that skin and hair reflect overall well-being.
- **Detoxifying**: eliminating Ama so that the complexion glows, inflammation calms, and hair follicles thrive.

For example, a Pitta-aggravated person with heat and inflammation might experience acne or pigmentation, calming Pitta through diet, herbs, and marma-point therapies helps restore balance and beauty.

### **Ayurvedic Skin Care Practices**

Ayurvedic skin care is about harmonizing inner balance with external routines. It treats beauty as a reflection of overall well-being. Drawing from principles like **dinacharya** (daily rhythm) and **ritucharya** (seasonal adaptation), Ayurvedic skincare unfolds as a sustainable, personalized routine.

### **Dinacharya & Ritucharya: Daily and Seasonal Wisdom**

**Dinacharya**, or day-by-day habits, offers simple but profound rituals suited to individual skin types. The morning typically begins with tongue scraping to remove overnight *Ama*, followed by gentle facial cleansing using cold water to wake the skin and boost circulation. A short self-massage with dosha-specific oils (*Abhyanga*) nourishes the skin, softens dryness, and gently opens micro-channels (*Srotas*) to support deeper nourishment.

**Ritucharya** adapts skincare to the rhythms of the seasons. In summer, skin benefits from cooling masks using aloe vera or rose water; in winter, richer oils and ghee-based packs offer warmth and hydration. Following seasonal shifts with mindful routines reduces dryness, sensitivity, and rising doshas.

### **Abhyanga (Oil Massage)**

A daily or weekly *Abhyanga* involves gently massaging warm, herb-infused oil from head to toe. Sesame oil is a classic choice, but formulations vary by constitution. Dry skin (*Vata*) may use heavier oils, *Pitta* types may prefer cooling coconut. This ritual nourishes the tissues (*Dhatus*), calms aggravated doshas, and supports circulation for glowing, supple skin.

### **Udvardhana (Herbal Powder Massage)**

*Udvardhana* is a traditional Ayurvedic body scrub using dry or oil-infused herbal powders, massaged in an upward motion which is opposite to typical oil massage strokes. This routine exfoliates dead skin, improves texture, tones tissue and helps balance *Kapha* and *Medodhatu* (fat tissue). Clinically, *Udvardhana* has shown improvement in skin condition, firmness, and metabolic balance, as well as reductions in body fat and stress markers. It also activates nerve endings, boosts circulation, and brings out a natural radiance by deep exfoliation.

### **Herbal Masks, Lepa & Face Packs**

Ayurveda recommends weekly facial treatments using natural ingredients like turmeric, sandalwood, rosewater, aloe vera, neem, red sandalwood (*Rakta Chandan*), saffron and amla. These herbs have scientifically backed antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and skin-brightening properties. For instance, turmeric and neem help reduce inflammation and acne, while sandalwood and rose soothe and balance *Pitta*-dominant skin.

**Manjishta (*Rubia cordifolia*)**, known as a traditional blood-purifier, is especially valued in Ayurveda to improve complexion and soothe the skin inflammation. It offers antioxidant,

antibacterial, and skin-clearing effects—making it a trusted herb in Ayurvedic detox.

### Practical Skincare Recipe Suggestions

A balanced Ayurvedic skincare routine might look like this

- **Morning:** Tongue scraping → cold splash → oil massage (Abhyanga) → herbal mask (once or twice weekly) with turmeric, rosewater, or manjishtha.
- **Evening:** Oil cleansing with coconut or sesame oil, rinsed gently; followed by aloe vera or honey-lemon mask for hydration and gentle brightening.
- **Weekly:** Udvartana session with a Kapha-balancing herbal powder to exfoliate and improve skin tone.

These routines emphasize **simplicity, natural ingredients** and consistency building a lasting skin vitality rather than masking issues.

### Holistic Approach

Unlike many modern cosmetics that target surface effects, Ayurvedic skincare aims to

- Nourish skin cells via herbs and oils that support tissue strength
- Detoxify and eliminate *Ama* to prevent blemishes and dullness
- Customize caretaking based on constitution and season
- Build skin health that reflects internal harmony, not just external gloss.

This approach encourages mindful self-care—a daily conversation between body, mind, and the rhythms of nature.

### Ayurvedic Hair-Care Practices

When Ayurveda talks about hair care, it's about nurturing from the root, literally and metaphorically. The age-old practices connect your mind, body, and spirit; beautiful hair is simply the visible outcome of that deep, holistic care.

#### 1. Scalp Nourishment & Oil Massage (*Shiro Abhyanga*)

One of the most gentle yet powerful practices in Ayurveda is **Shiro Abhyanga** a soothing scalp massage using warm, herb-infused oils. Gently stimulating pressure points on your head calms the mind, increases blood flow, and nourishes hair follicles. Ayurveda recognizes 31 special *marma* (vital spots) on your head; massaging them with fingertip motions helps roots get nutrients while melting away stress and tension. Coconut oil, sesame oil, bhringraj oil,

almond or amla oil are typical choices. Coconut oil is especially cooling great for Pitta dosha or easily overheated scalps. Sesame oil works wonderfully for Vata-type dryness. Apply warm oil and massage for 5–10 minutes. You can leave it for an hour or even overnight if it suits your scalp type. This simple ritual relaxes you, balances your doshas, and builds hair strength.

## 2. Ayurvedic Herbs: Amla, Bhringraj, Brahmi & More Herbs like Bhringraj, Amla, Brahmi, Hibiscus, and Fenugreek form the backbone of Ayurvedic hair care. Here's how they help

- **Bhringraj:** Called the —King of Hair for a reason, it's believed to support hair regrowth, reduce fall, soothe infections, and delay premature greying.
- **Amla:** High in Vitamin C and antioxidants, it's known to strengthen follicles, bring shine, and prevent breakage or greying. Oral studies show amla syrup increased hair thickness in female pattern hair loss over 12 weeks.
- **Brahmi:** Soothes inflammation, eases scalp sensitivity, and strengthens roots.
- **Fenugreek, Hibiscus, Neem:** Nourish the scalp, condition the hair, and reduce dandruff or frizz when used as masks or oil infusions.

Applying these herbs as oils, pastes, or hair masks weekly encourages healthier growth and visible shine.

## 3. DIY Hair Masks & Weekly Treatment Rituals

Ayurvedic hair masks are affordable, natural, and easy to make. Here are a few trusted recipes

- **Bhringraj + Neem oil mask:** Soothes the scalp and strengthens hair roots.
- **Henna + Amla paste:** Prevents hair loss, nourishes follicles, and promotes shine.
- **Amla + Reetha + Shikakai:** Gentle cleanser and colour-protecting trio for volume and dandruff prevention.
- **Honey + Coconut oil:** Deeply moisturizing and softening, ideal for frizzy or dry hair.

Apply the mask for minimum 30–60 minutes once a week. Consistency over several weeks leads to noticeable improvements in strength, texture, and scalp health.

## 4. Diet, Lifestyle, and Inner Nourishment

According to Ayurvedic wisdom, what you eat matters just as much as what you apply. A balanced diet with fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and seeds delivers vital



nutrients that feed your hair from below the scalp. Managing stress through meditation, yoga, and proper sleep keeps doshas in harmony—essential for stopping hair fall and greying. Modern studies and anecdotal reports show how dietary shifts, along with relaxation practices, often result in less breakage, fewer visible split ends, and an overall healthier-looking mane.

## 5. Practical Weekly Routine

Here's what a mindful Ayurvedic hair care habit might look like

- **Evening Ritual:** Warm your chosen oil say, bhringraj or sesame—massage into your scalp with gentle circular strokes for 5–10 minutes.
- **Rest Time:** Leave the oil for at least an hour, or overnight if you prefer (based on your scalp type).
- **Wash Day:** Use gentle Ayurvedic cleansers like reetha, shikakai, or hibiscus, rinsing with lukewarm water.
- **Weekly Mask:** Use a herbal paste mask like henna-amlam or honey-coconut to condition deeply.
- **Monthly Tune-Up:** Trim split ends every 8–12 weeks to avoid breakage and promote hair health simple upkeep with big impact.

## Rejuvenation & Anti-Aging: Rasayana and Panchakarma

Ayurveda reminds us that true beauty is sustained vitality. The aging process can be softened or even reversed to a degree when internal imbalances are corrected and tissues are properly nourished. That's where **Rasayana** and **Panchakarma** come in: two pillars of Ayurvedic rejuvenation that support radiant skin, strong hair, and a clearer mind.

### Rasayana: The Rejuvenating Touch

**Rasayana** refers to therapies and herbs designed to support longevity, vitality, and tissue regeneration especially the skin, hair and mind. Classic Rasayana herbs like **Ashwagandha**, **Amla**, **Brahmi**, **Guduchi**, and **Shatavari** are widely celebrated for their adaptogenic, antioxidant and hormone-balancing effects.

- **Ashwagandha** helps the body manage stress, improves sleep and boosts skin resilience.
- **Amla** is rich in vitamin C, promoting collagen formation and skin elasticity.
- **Brahmi** calms the mind, sharpens focus, and supports healthy aging.
- **Guduchi** strengthens immunity and detoxifies the body.
- **Shatavari**, revered as the —Queen of Herbs, promotes hydration and hormonal balance



especially beneficial for aging women . Regular use of these herbs often in tinctures, powders, or herbal tonics is believed to support internal harmony that reflects outwardly in skin tone, texture and vitality.

### **Panchakarma: Resetting the System**

While Rasayana nourishes tissue, **Panchakarma** cleanses deeply. This five-part detoxification system is tailored to each individual and includes

1. **Vamana** (therapeutic emesis) – removes Kapha-type toxins that can cause congestion and dullness.
2. **Virechana** (purgation) – flushes Pitta-related buildup, supporting clearer skin and reduced inflammation.
3. **Basti** (medicated enemas) – targets Vata issues, nourishing the nervous and digestive systems.
4. **Nasya** (nasal therapy) – clears head and sinuses, promoting facial glow and mental clarity.
5. **Raktamokshana** (blood purification) – used to clear within for skin ailments linked to impure blood.

Combined with oils, herbal baths, and calming therapies like **Takradhara** (pouring medicated buttermilk over the head) and **Njavarakizhi** (warm rice and milk massage), Panchakarma promotes improved circulation, detoxification and deeper tissue rejuvenation.

### **Visible Benefits on Skin and Hair**

Studies and spa experiences report that Panchakarma

- **Enhances skin clarity** by reducing toxins and inflammation that dull the complexion.
- **Improves elasticity and reduces wrinkles**, thanks to deep nourishment and improved circulation.
- **Raises energy levels and mental clarity**, which reflects outwardly in vibrant skin and stronger hair follicles.
- **Reduces stress**, with calming rituals like Shirodhara soothing the nervous system a key factor in slowing skin aging.

Panchakarma works as a cornerstone of Ayurvedic cosmetology by "deeply cleansing the skin and removing toxins from the body" and, in doing so, supporting long-term beauty outcomes.

### Integrating Both Practices: A Holistic Routine

- **First**, Panchakarma creates a clean slate by clearing Ama and correcting doshic imbalance.
- **Next**, Rasayana herbs rebuild tissue, boost immunity, and support vitality from the inside out.
- **Together**, they prepare the body for more visible benefits: glowing skin, stronger hair, and a resilience that comes from balanced physiology.

While undergoing these therapies at a traditional Ayurvedic clinic often takes several days to weeks, many people also integrate lighter versions like periodic herbal resets and regular adaptogenic tonics into their home routines.

### Practical Tips & Precautions

- These therapies are potent and must be **customized to each person**, based on age, constitution, health status, and current imbalance.
- **Always consult a qualified Ayurvedic practitioner** before starting Panchakarma or Rasayana regimens. Some therapies like Raktamokshana or Vamana should never be done without expert supervision.
- People with major medical concerns, pregnancy or advanced age may follow **modified versions** under guidance.

### Real-World Reflections

At upscale Ayurvedic retreats like Surya Spa, clients have reported notable improvements in energy, skin glow, and overall vitality after combining **Abhyanga (four-handed oil massage)** with **Shirodhara**, detox diets, and Rasayana-infused meals. Many celebrity clients also testify to clearer complexions, calmer minds, and deeper sleep following these rituals. Together, **Rasayana and Panchakarma** present a profound, holistic approach to anti-aging, one that nurtures body, mind, and spirit.

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