

Review of Hair and Hair Disease from Ayurvedic Perspective

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Abstract:

Hair have had its share in the aesthetic value since ages. With the modernization and increasing importance to the face value, hair care and hair beauty is gaining its share of importance. Hair is a symbol of beauty and self-confidence. From the ages, human beings want to look beautiful. There are many references in classics and history books regarding the methods of beautification and maintenance of beauty. Ayurveda teaches that beauty, health and a happy long life are achievable only by understanding how all aspects of life contributes to bring balance to the body and mind. In Ayurveda inner and outer beauty are intimately related. Outer beauty is what we most commonly consider as the field of beauty. It includes qualities such as contour of the body, texture of the skin, and the quality of the hair. Nice and good-looking long hair makes a person mentally confident and healthy indeed. Trichology is the branch of dermatology in modern medicine which works on hair problems.

In Ayurveda hair is referred to as “*Kesha*”. Detailed descriptions regarding formation of hair, care of hair, hair diseases and their treatment with numerous herbal preparations and therapies are found in the legacy of Ayurveda. This article includes description of hair and hair diseases based on various references found in Ayurvedic texts.

Key Words: *Kesha, Khalitya, Palitya.*

Introduction:

Kesha as per Ayurved: The word “*Kesha*”. originally has been brought about from the root

“*Shee*” with “*Ach*” and “*Aluk*” *Pratyaya* which has been explained as “*Ke Shirsae Sheteiti*”⁽¹⁾. Hair means “*Kesha*”. in Ayurveda. *Kesha* means which lies embedded on the head or scalp.

Synonyms of *Kesha*: *Kesha, Bala, Kacha, Chikura, Kuntals, Shirorooha, Ashrahs, Moordhaja, Shirasija*⁽²⁾

Hair According to Ayurved: Physiologically hair are waste product (*Mala*) of *Asthi Dhatu*^(3,4) Sharangdhara Samhita opines that *Kesha* are the *Upadhatu* of *Majja Dhatu*⁽⁵⁾.

Hair has been considered as *Pitruj Bhava* means genetically it is derived from paternal genetic material^(6,7). It has got

predominance of *Prithvi Mahabhuta* due to which hair acquires roughness (*Ruksha*) and longer lasting (*Sthira*) Property, and nourishment⁽⁸⁾. *Gandha* is a *Guna* of *Prithvi Mahabhuta*.

According to Ashtang Sangrah, embryologically hair develops in the 6th month of gestation.⁽¹⁰⁾

Hair nutrition: Charak Samhita opines that *Ahar Rasa* is formed from digested food while *Kitta* is formed from non-digested part of food. This waste product (*Kitta*) nourishes all waste product including *Kesha* (scalp hair), *Loma* (body hair) and *Romakupa* (hair root).^(11,12)

Relation of hair and body constitution:

The nature of hair (*Kesha*) has been related with different types of body constitution (*prakriti*) of persons which are described as under:⁽¹⁵⁻¹⁹⁾

Table No. 1: Relation of hair and body constitution (Prakriti)

Sr. No.	Hair Specification	Vata Prakruti	Pitta Prakruti	Kapha Prakruti
1.	Type (<i>Swaroop</i>)	Splitting, Curly	Straight	Straight
	Colour (<i>Varna</i>)	Greyish	Whitish, Brownish	Black
	Touch (<i>Sparsha</i>)	Rough, Dry	Soft	Unctuous
	Quantity (<i>Praman</i>)	Less	Less	Dense
2.	Body hairs (<i>Loma</i>)	Black, Dry, Rough	Brownish, Soft, Scanty	Black, unctuous
3.	Mustache, Beard	Greyish, Dry, Rough, Scanty	Brownish, Soft, Scanty	Black, unctuous, Dense

General hair care in Ayurveda:

Ayurveda has given various methods for maintaining good health and hygiene of hair which are summarized below:

Diet (Ahara):

According to Ayurveda concept of balance diet is explained under the umbrella term *Panchbhautik Ahara* and *Shadrasatmak Ahara*. Balance diet for hair should be homologous to *Prithvi Mahabhuta* as hair mainly composed of *Prithvi Mahabhuta*. From perspective of *Shadrasatmak*

Ahara Madhura (sweet), *Tikta* (bitter) and *Kashaya* (astringent) taste promote hair growth and hair health. All metals are heavy and they have dominance of *Prithvi Mahabhuta* so food rich in calcium and iron are essential for long hair. *Amla* (sour), *Lavana* (salty), and *Kshara* (corrosive) food in excess quantity damage hair and blocks hair growth⁽²⁰⁾. Hence as per *Samanya Vishesh Siddhant* one should consume *Madhura, tikta, Kashaya Rasatmak Ahara* for hair growth. e.g.

Table No. 2: Diet (Ahara) for hair health and growth

Sr. No.	Consume		Avoid	
	<i>Rasatmak Dravya</i>	Example	<i>Rasatmak Dravya</i>	Example
1	<i>Madhura</i> (Sweet)	Green Moong, Green Leafy vegetables, wheat, Rice, coconut, almond etc.	<i>Amla</i> (Sour)	Tamarind, Tomatoes, Raw mangos etc.
2	<i>Tikta</i> (Bitter)	Spinach, Coriander, Bittergourd etc.	<i>Lavana</i> (Salty)	Extra Salt in diet, Salty wafers / Chips, Papad.
3	<i>Kashaya</i> (Astringent)	Pulses, Cashew nut etc.	<i>Kshara</i> (Corrosive)	Chinese food stuff, food with preservatives like vinegar and soda bicarbonate, Papad.

Hair massage (Shiro Abhyang)

According to Charaka Samhita hair massage is a part of daily regime i.e *Dinacharya*. Hair oiling strengthens skin of scalp and also provides nourishment to hair follicles and tensile strength to the hair.^(21, 22)

Nasal Administration of oil (Nasya)

According to Ayurveda Nasal instillation (*Nasya*) with medicated oil is beneficial for hair growth. *Nasya* blocks premature greying of hair and prevents hair loss.^(23, 24)

Hair Wash (Snana)

Daily bath has been given due importance in the daily regimen in Ayurveda. Bath with luke warm water improves peripheral blood circulation which helps to nourish skin and hair by removing dirt, sweat and itching⁽²⁵⁾. One should not wash hairs with hot water⁽²⁶⁾. Hair wash with medicated herbal powders once or twice a week is recommended for healthy hair. Herbal powder of *Amla* (*Embolic officinalis*), *Aritha* (*Sapindus Mukorossi*), *Heena* (*Lawsonia inermis*), *Shikakai* (*Acacia Concinna*), *Bhringraj* (*Eclipta Prostrata* etc are recommended by Ayurved for hair wash.

Covering of head:

Ayurveda advise to cover the head with cloth. It protects hair from air pollution, heat of sun rays and dirt⁽²⁷⁾. Now a day various kinds of headscarf, hats, and umbrella are used to protect head and hair.

Dhoompana (inhalation of medicated fumes)

The procedures of inhaling of medicated fumes through nostrils with a smoke stick is called *Dhoompana*. It has been described in the *Dinacharya* (daily regimen). Charak Samhita opines *Dhoompana* is beneficial for *Khalitya* and *Palitya*⁽²⁸⁾. Research should be conducted on benefits of *Dhoompana* in *Khalitya* and *Palitya*.

Combing & Cutting of hairs (Kesha Prasadhana & Kshourkarma)

Hair combing and cutting have been explained under the terms *Kesha Prasadana* and *Kshour karma*. Hair combing should be done with clean brushes. Regular hair combing stimulates the scalp, improves blood circulation and promotes hair growth⁽²⁹⁾. So it might be beneficial for healthy hair. Regular haircutting is important for a neat and presentable look in society.

Hair Diseases in Ayurveda⁽³⁰⁻³⁶⁾

Table No. 3: Hair Diseases in Ayurveda

Diseases	<i>Khalitya</i>	<i>Indralupta</i>	<i>Palitya</i>	<i>Darunak</i>	Ecto parasite (Bahya Krimi)
Clinical features	Gradual Hair loss leading to baldness	Sudden loss of hair creating circular patch	Changes in normal black coloration of hair to grey, brown or whitish color	Dry, Itchy and hard scalp condition	Tiny insect infest the scalp
Dosha Involvement	<i>Pitta & Vata</i> or <i>Pitta & Kapha</i>	<i>Vata</i> and <i>Pitta</i>	<i>Pitta</i>	<i>Kapha</i> and <i>Vata</i> Sometimes <i>Pitta</i> and <i>Rakta</i> .	--
Sign & Symptoms	<i>Pitta</i> Dominance – Sweating <i>Kapha</i> Dominance - Thickening of Skin	<i>Vata</i> Dominance - Pain <i>Pitta</i> Dominance - Burning	In <i>Vata</i> association- Dry, rough skin and blackish grey colour. <i>Pitta</i> Dominance- Brownish colour with burning sensation in scalp. <i>Kapha</i> Dominance- White and shiny appearance.	Scalp become dry and rough leads to tiny cracks result into hairfall	Itching, rash, blisters etc on Scalp, Visible lice on scalp. These can also be seen on beard (<i>Smashru</i>), body hair (<i>Loma</i>), and in eyebrows (<i>Pakshma</i>).

Table No. 4: Formulations for Hair Disease

Sr. No.	Textual Formulations	Proprietary Formulations in market
1.	Mahanila Taila	Vatajatadi Tail
2.	Prapaundarikadya Taila	Vedix Hair oil
3.	Nili Taila	Maha Bhringraj Tail
4.	Saireyakadi Taila	Kuntalkanti Tail
5.	Nimba Taila	Amla Tail
6.	Madhuka Taila	Badam Tail
7.	Bhringraja Taila	Coconut Hail Oil
8.	Anu Taila	Kesh kanti Taila

Conclusion:

Ayurveda has very well explained regarding trichology. Ayurvedic trichology is important as it emphasis on natural care of hair health through proper diet and regimen. Along with balance diet hair massage with medicated oil suitable for prakruti is important for hair health. Hair wash with minimal use of chemicals is also important for hair health and hair growth. So everybody must follow ayurvedic ways to maintain healthy, shiny hair and prevent premature greying and baldness.

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