

Personal Care in Ayurveda

We are all aware that the world of natural ingredients is huge and there exists a vast knowledge in India. Wouldn't this knowledge when put to beneficial use enable us to lead a better quality of life? However, where does this ocean of knowledge exist? Do we have any access to it?

Ayurveda — The Knowledge of Life

India's surgical anatomist Sushruta (1500 BC - 500 AD), has the answer. He says in his well-known treatise, *Sushruta Samhita*,

गोपालस्थपसा व्यधा ये कान्ये वनकारिनाः ।
मुलहारस्क ये तेभ्यो भेसजा व्यकतिरिसयते ।

– सुस्रुता समहिता; सुत्रस्थान ३६/१० ।

One can know about plant drugs from the (hundreds of thousands) cowherds, hermits, hunters (homemakers) and those who live in the forests by eating roots and tubers. Ayurvedic medical literature lists more than 20,000 plant names and synonyms along with their properties, products and therapeutic actions. There are lakhs of licensed practitioners of our classical traditions in India and all this contributes to our vast ocean of knowledge on plants. Ancient physician Charka says, that every substance in this world possess some medicinal value provided we use it correctly. In general, Ayurveda take a holistic approach to balance the three primal forces namely *Prana*, 'The breath of life', *Tejas* or *Agni*, 'The fire of life' and *Ojas* or *Soma*, a manifestation of harmony integration and love.

Definition of Life

Ayurveda defines life as the union of body senses, mind and soul. Indian philosophy states that there can be no life if this combination does not exist. Everything in the universe is composed



of five elements (*Panchamahabhutas*). They are *Prithivi* (Earth), *Jala* (Water), *Vayu* (Air), *Agni* (Fire), and *Akasha* (Ether / Space). *Agni* converts the five elements into the three *Doshas* (*Tri-dosha*): *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* or bio-energetic forces that are in fact waste products of these elements, governing our health, and determining our physical constitution (*Prakarti*). The three *doshas* control all individuals by different degrees, with one or two *doshas* dominating. *Doshas* not only determine our constitution and illness, but also our features, body types, our liking and dislikes. In short, *doshas* control every aspect of our life.

Vata consists of a combination of *vayu* & *akasha* (air & ether/space), *pitta* consists of *tejas* & *jala* (fire & water), and *jala* & *prithivi* (water & earth) form *kapha*. The *doshas* are invisible forces, demonstrated only by inference. To possess good health, growth, strength, complexion, mental stability and happiness, the three *doshas* should be in balance or in equilibrium. The balance of the *doshas* depends on correct diet, exercise, good digestion of the food eaten, healthy elimination of body

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wastes, and a balanced emotional spiritual health.

Ayurvedic beliefs

When the three *doshas* are unbalanced, they cause a disturbance in our mind and chaos among our organs causing ill health or disease. The three main cause of this imbalance and cause of diseases are:

- Neglect, abuse or too much use of our sense organs;
- Wrong decisions made by our body, mind and speech; and
- Effect of the seasons and environment.

Correct perceptions only happen by the co-ordination of the senses with our mind and soul. When external stimuli are in normal limits, the body responds within physiological limits suitable for our well-being. When an external stimulus crosses the normal range, they become stressful and the body responds abnormally. Ayurveda does not deny the existence of germs, but at the same time, it also does not accept it to be the main cause of diseases.

Food in Ayurveda

According to Ayurveda, all foods can be categorised into the following six classes: *Madhura* (Sweet), *Amla* (Sour), *Lavana* (Salty), *Katu* (Pungent), *Tikta* (Bitter) & *Ksaya* (Astringent). A healthy diet that consists of a mixture of all these six taste categories of food normally supplements a successful Ayurvedic herbal treatment.

Human Skin – Defined

Thvacha means skin in Ayurveda and this is a grammatical derivation of *samvarana* or covering.

"त्वचते संब्रियते देह अनाया" or "त्वचति संब्रनोति वा देहम्". *Thvacha* means it is that which covers the body (exterior exposed part of the body). The etymological interpretation of skin according to *shastras* is as given in the *shloka* below:

"स्पर्श ग्राहाके बाह्य इन्द्रियाभादे सा च देहव्यापिनी त्वचिस्थिता सूक्ष्मा वायः सत्वाग्नेना उपपन्ना वाताधिस्तात् देवता"

Skin is an exterior demarcation of what we perceive by the sense of touch, and which spreads over the entire body deriving its power from *Vayu*. The neurosensory element is present here, the presiding divinity in skin is *Vayu* and the role of the skin is to communicate to the mind within about the world outside. Further affirming this viewpoint, it says, "द्व्याध्यक्षे त्वचायोगा मानसा ज्ञान कारनाम्". The cause of knowledge by the mind as regards to touch is due to the proper contact between the skin and the world outside presided over by the external material with which the skin comes into contact and that which is communicated to the mind within. The implication here is that any improper contact is unhealthy and to remove the defects, one needs to rectify by use of a suitable therapy.

Thvacha also has various Sanskrit synonyms namely *carma* cognate to *derma* in Greek, implying to move, describing the dynamic nature of skin. *Sparshadhi sthana* means the substratum for the sense of touch, *tanu* meaning thin and stretched out, and familiar to 'tension' derived from the Latin root *tenses*, meaning tender to touch. *Asrkdhar* means the bearer of blood vessels that flow through the skin and *tvang* generally used along with the term *mamsa* as in *tvang-mamsa*, meaning skin and flesh, indicating the skin movement in the form of pulsatility and responsiveness.

Charka (1500 BC - 400 AD) defines

skin as a layer that stays permanently covering the body. Vagbhata (600 AD) defines skin as a six-layered organ that is progressively metabolised by the nutrient it receives from blood stream.

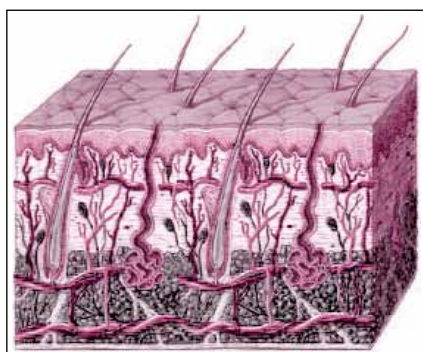
Sushruta's Scientific Classification of Human Skin

Sushruta defines skin as a sense organ of touch that is present all over the body. Sushruta's details on skin structure are closely accurate as per modern scientific thought. Skin according to Sushruta comprises of seven distinct layers that vary in their relative dimensions in accordance to its presence in different regions of the human body. The variations of skin layers are responsible for the difference with regard to disease penetration from external stimuli. Sushruta believes that the rule of relative proportion of the layers corresponds only to the fleshy regions of the body and other areas like forehead are exceptions to the rule. Sushruta defines skin structure analytically, describes the relevance of skin abnormalities, deformities and therapeutics involved in it.

The seven skin layers according to Sushruta are as follows: (From outer skin surface layer to inside below)

Avabhasini (That Causes Shine)

This is the most superficial layer and is the seat of pigmentation and measures 1/8 of a paddy grain in thickness. It constitutes pathological site of



skin freckles / *sidhma* (blotches, minor skin spots), *padmakantaka* i.e., reddish pimples that disfigure skin. *Avabhasini* is responsible for skin glow and beauty, therefore very important for the point of view of cosmetics. It is also the seat of *Udaka* or moisture and is *Kapha* dominant.

Lohita (Reddish)

It consists of blood vessels that give nourishment to the skin structure. To ensure proper blood supply, keeping *Lohita* healthy is paramount. It is 1/16 of the paddy grain in thickness and is the site of disfigurement caused by *tila* / moles, *kalaka* / larger blackish spots, and *vyanga* / other superficial deformities. This layer as the name suggest is red in colour and *pitta* dominant.

Sweta (White)

This is the thick white layer consisting of adipose tissue, which imparts colour to human skin. It measures 1/12 of the paddy grain in thickness and is the site of *charma dara* / skin splitting / cleavage, *charma dala* / dry and thick skin, and *mashaka* / dry skin eruptions. It is *kapha* dominant and is responsible for maintaining normal body temperature.

Tamra (Copper Red)

Tamra is the site of copper red pigmentation of skin, *kilasa* / white leprous spots, *kushta* / leprosy, *visarpa* / erysipelas or painful spreading of inflammation of skin and measures 1/8 of the paddy grain in thickness. *Kapha* and *pitta* both are dominant here.

Vedini (That which senses)

This measures about 1/5 of a paddy grain in thickness and is the site of *kustha* / leprosy and *visarpa* / erysipelas. It has good blood supply and is the site of the sense of touch. It is dominant in *vata*.

Rohini (Growing/ Healing)

Rohini measures one paddy grain

in thickness and is the site of *granthi* / painful glandular enlargements, *apachya* / abnormal non-malignant skin growth, *arbuda* / tumours, *shlipada* / elephantiasis, and goitre. This is dominant in *dhatu*, *rasa*, *raktha*, and *sukra* and is the site of healing of wounds.

Mamsadhara (Supporter of flesh)

This layer is the thickest of all skin layers with two-paddy grain in thickness. *Mamsadhara* means a supporter or bearer of flesh. The flesh that lies below firmly attaches to this layer above it. Loosening of skin and the accompanying wrinkles is due to defects in this layer. Anal fistula / *bhangandhara*, piles / *arsha* and abscess / *vidradhi* that structurally pervade the skin involve this layer. This is dominant in *manasa dhatu* and *kapha*.

Physiological Concepts — Dosha Siddhanta

To understand Ayurvedic skin therapy, one has to understand all the crucial concepts of 'Dosha Siddhanta'. *Doshas* are the operating principle in every living being as there is no life without *doshas*. *Dosha* maintains the dynamic balance of the body and the factors present in nature namely *Vayu* (Wind), *Agni* (Fire) and *Jala* (Water) differentiate them. These three factors are equally connote all the factors that chemically help various digestive processes in the human body system. *Vayu – vata* stands

for neurological and endocrinological activities, which cause sensation and are responsible for remote actions. *Agni – pitta* stands for chemical activities, in general, while *sleshma – kapha* is that which brings about a physical activity such as cohesion or absorption at a surface of the localised plane. *Pitta* and *kapha* are essentially regional and the localised effect of them on other regions of the body is due to the intervention of *Vata*. *Pitta* and *kapha* becomes irrelevant without *vata*.

In addition to the various *doshas*, *mala* is another factor that characterise life. While *doshas* are physiological principles integral to human body function, *mala* is the impurity or waste resulting from the various processes involved in metabolism. Ayurveda recognises three types of *mala* namely *purisha* (stools), *mutra* (urine) and *seveda* (sweat). *Seveda* is wholly concerned with the activity of skin and so important for skin care. Sweating moistens and cools the body and renders skin its tenderness and delicateness besides keeping it free from cracks. Decline in any sweating is pathological according to Ayurveda.

The third important factor for consideration in addition to *doshas* and *mala* is *dhatu*. Ayurveda recognises seven *dhatu*s, viz., *rasa* (assimilated taste of food), *raktha* (blood), *mamsa* (flesh), *medas* (adipose tissue and fatty matter), *asti* (bones), *majja* (bone marrow), and *sukra* (Semen) or *artava* (the oestrum in females). The *dhatu*s form in the same metabolic order given above in the body. *Rasa* is the most basic *dhatu* required for normal health. Healthy skin and good complexion is a direct indication of general good health of an individual.

Doshas and their effects on human health

Doshas work for maintaining of

body only at an optimal body temperature. Any decrease or increase in temperature beyond a certain level upsets the *dosha* balance and leads to the vitiation of the body systems. *Dhatu* is a body constituent, while *dosha* is an operating principle and *mala* is an impurity. *Dosha* leads to vitiation only if there is a disturbance in its equilibrium indicative of the general state of health. The therapy consists of the action to restore equilibrium and eliminate the aggravated state of the body systems. However, *mala* has to be effectively eliminated from the body as it is wholly a waste product that intermittently accumulates repeatedly in tune with body metabolism. Improper removal and accumulation of *mala* in the body, leads to disease although mere presence of *mala* in the body system is not harmful for health. A person with firm well-formed flesh, with a corresponding firm glowing skin is a sure sign of good health.

Skin functions

Skin has three major functions, *adana* (the process of receiving, presided by *pitta*), secondly *visarga* (the process of giving / ejecting presided by *kapha*), and thirdly *viksepa* (the process of moving about or pulsating, presided by *vata*). All skin functions come under the preview of the *tridoshas*.

1. Skin covers the body and separates it from the outer environ-



ment, creating a separate identity of the body with the outer world. Skin is thus a protective cover from harmful disease causing organisms.

2. It is a seat of touch, facilitating protection of itself and the body, creating knowledge of the environment outside for effecting suitable response.
3. It protects the inner sensitive organs by controlling the body temperature, regulating moisture, aids digestion and excretion and destroys toxins that reach it being the most superficial layer of human body.
4. It establishes close relations with the mind making it respond to our feelings of love, anger, sexual urge, emotive expressions etc. also serving as a shock absorber against external injury and trauma.
5. Skin is a ready indicator of the health status of the body.

Skin health features

Aging is a natural process and is unavoidable. Aging is a known anti-thesis of beauty. Although one cannot stop aging, to an extent we can control it by *hetu* (appreciating the etiological factors involved), *lakshana* (studying the signs and symptoms), and *chikitsa* (adopting appropriate treatments). The effects of aging in the context of cosmetic care and the therapy we have to adopt are below. Although many factors other than imbalance in *dosha* may be responsible for aging, we focus in this paper only on the *doshas* and the way to restore the balance.

1. **Wrinkles:** Wrinkles are due to increased vitiated *pitta* and *vata*, with severe loss of quality *rasa* due to severe skin malnutrition. There is a quantitative decline of *mamsa* and *medha dhatu*. Unctuous or *snigdha* quality that is required for a healthy skin is on the decline

with reduced sweating. Palliation or *shamana* of *vata* and *pitta* with increased consumption of nutritive food on to improve *rasa*, *mamsa* and *medha dhatu* is the treatment.

2. **Loose Skin:** A tight or firm skin is a sign of good health and beauty. Looseness of skin is due to the increase of *kapha dosha* and increase in *meda* and *rasa*. *Sthirikarana* is the treatment recommended to reduce *kapha* and regulate *rasa*, producing stability, increasing firmness of skin. Ayurveda also recommends suitable drugs to destroy adipose tissue.
3. **Skin discolouration:** Variation in skin colour occurs when one of the three *doshas* dominates. The body features also indicate the state of the *doshas* and the *doshic* pathology present. A vitiated *vata* causes a reddish brown or a dark blackish hue on skin; a vitiated *pitta* results in greenish yellow to coppery red tinge; and vitiated *kapha* results in whitish skin colour. To cure skin colour abnormalities appropriate correction of *doshas* involved is necessary. Skin discolouration can occur due to certain systemic disorders like anaemia, worm infection or due to separate disease entity or *kushta visarpa*.
4. **Dryness:** Dry skin loses its unctuousness, suppleness and elegance. Skin becomes rough, developing irregular cracks at many places and looks unhealthy. When *vata* and *pitta* dominates along with *ushna* (hotness) and *teekshnata* (acuteness) this condition prevails. In dry skin *rasa dhatu* is reduced, leading to loss of unctuousness reducing sweating. Ayurvedic treatment aims in alleviating *vata dosha* and counteracting *pitta* by promoting *sheetala* (cooling of skin) and *mardavata* (softness) and increase *rasa* and *meda dhatu*. Some methods *shehana*, the oleation treatment

(messaging the skin with medicated oil), *brahmana*, the augmentation of the deficit tissues concerned and *avagaha sveda*, a technique to increase sweating by adopting special treatments like tub bath with medicated hot water.

5. **Loss of elasticity and suppleness of skin:** An elegant skin is supple, neither rough nor brittle. Loss of suppleness happens when *kapha* and *rasa* decreases with vitiated *vata* and low sweating. Augmentation of *rasa*, *meda* and *sveda* by using appropriate drugs with proper nutrition of skin, oleation or anointing with suitable materials is the line of treatment advised by Ayurveda.
6. **Brown spots:** Numerous brown spots appearing suddenly on skin disfiguring skin appearance is quite likely to be a natural expression of the *prakariti* or constitution of the individual. These spots may not cause pain or trouble the individual and so does not require treatment. However, according to Ayurveda, appearance of unwarranted spots is a forewarning or symptom, indicative of some serious or even fatal ailment.
7. **Malnutrition of skin:** Malnutrition is not a disease, although it is the cause of many diseases. A healthy beautiful skin is an indication of a well-nourished body and so every one who wants a good skin should take care to see it is well nourished and prevent unnatural things that interfere with normal and natural body processes. Malnutrition results due to vitiation of *vata* increase in *kapha* element, and overall reduction of all *dhatu*s viz., *rasa*, *raktha*, *mamsa* and *meda*. Ayurveda recommends proper nutrition and drugs that treats the aggravated *doshas* and augments the *dathus*.
8. **Loss of skin lustre:** A lustrous skin

is attractive and healthy. A pale skin is indicative of ill health. Vitiating of *pitta* along with a qualitative decline in *kapha dosha*, *rasa*, *raktha*, and *meda dhatu* results in this undesirable condition. Blood purification, along with steps to improve *pitta*, *kapha*, *rasa*, and *meda* quality, is necessary to rectify the skin condition. Ayurveda recommends measures like skin oleation, fomentation with drugs that bestow a healthy yellowish whitish hue of turmeric.

9. **Greying of hair:** Increase in *pitta* and *vata*, reduction in *rasa*, defective or reduced *raktha* or blood supply are the primary reasons for premature greying of hair. The blood is impure, sweat is salty, and urine has increased concentration of salts. The treatment, in this case, consists of blood purification, along with steps to increase *pitta* and *rasa* and pacification of *vata*. Careful diagnosis is necessary and

if skin malnutrition is the cause then proper nutrition can resolve the case. If, however, *pitta prakirti* of the body is the reason, then use of drugs wholesome to the hair can improve the condition. If all this fails, then artificial means of dyeing the hair with *madayantika* or *henna* and masking grey hair should be the preferred choice.

10. **Baldness:** Dark and copious hair is a sign of beauty. Hereditary hair loss has no cure, although we can curtail it to a certain extent by use of cosmetic preparations and medical treatment. The treatment to cure baldness is to use bone promoting materials, augment *rasa* (nutrition for hair), *preenana* (pleasing to hair) and *tarpana* (satiating hair growth), using products that are wholesome to hair growth.

Human skin and health

Skin has to be unctuous, lustrous,

soft, supple, elegant, spot- and blemish-free, undiseased, with a clear complexion, beautiful, lovely and soothing to touch. Ayurveda offers a host of plant materials that can be used, namely, Chandana or sandalwood, durva grass (*cynodon dactylon*), kamal or lotus, (*nelumbo nucifera*), khus or usira (*vetiver zizanoides*), sariva (*hemidesmus indicus*), ghee or clarified butter, butter and cow milk.

Ayurveda also clarifies that some people have constitutionally a dry skin and there is no cure for this condition, by use of external cosmetic applications. Pure skin is healthy. However, ensuring a pure skin at all time is near impossible, as it is a living tissue subject to several physiological processes, inside the body and to the hostile external environment. Maintaining skin should be a constant engagement and should be a part of our daily regimen using products prepared exclusively for personal care.

Important skin care measures and plants used in Ayurveda

Skin care measures	Plants used
<i>Dahaghna</i> (Destroying burning of skin)	Chandana (<i>Sandalwood, Santalum album</i>), Ushira, Sariva (<i>Hemidesmus indicus</i>), Nimba (Neem, <i>Azadirachta indica</i>) and Ghee.
<i>Dirgha Keshakara</i> (Causing long hair)	Sahachara, Saireyaka, Brahmi (<i>Centella asiatica or Bocopa monnri</i>), Amalaka (<i>Amla, Emblica officinalis</i>), Bhringaraja (<i>Eclipta alba</i>) and Til oil
<i>Doshapanayana</i> (Cleaning vitiated dosha)	Vacha (<i>Acorus Calamus</i>), Aragvadha (<i>Cassia fistula</i>), Tulsi (Basil, <i>Ocimum sanctum</i>), Nimba, Karanja (<i>Pongamia galbra</i>), and Maricha (Pepper, <i>Piper nigrum</i>).
<i>Dridhatakara</i> (For rendering skin firm strong and durable)	Khadira (<i>Acacia catechu</i>), Haridra (Turmeric, <i>Curcuma longa</i>), Triphala {The three myrobalans in combination viz., Amalaki (<i>Emblica officialnis</i>), Bibhitaki (<i>Terminalia belerica</i>), Haritaki (<i>Terminalia Chebula</i>)}, Dadima (Pomegranate, <i>Punica grantum</i>), Vata (<i>Ficus bengalensis</i>), Udumbara (<i>Ficus racemosa</i>), and Jambu (Jamun fruit, <i>Syzygium cumini</i>).
<i>Kandughna</i> (Destroyer of itching)	Khadira, Haridra, Vacha, Rasona (Garlic, <i>Allium sativum</i>), Ajavayan, Maricha, and Ela (Cardamom, <i>Elettaria cardomomum</i> , <i>Amomum sabulatum</i> , <i>A. Aromaticum</i>).
<i>Kesharanjana</i> (Hair dye)	Madayantika (Mehendi, Henna, <i>Lawsonia inermi</i>), Triphala, Vibhitaki (<i>Terminalia belerica</i>), Nilini (Indigo, <i>Indigofera tinctoria</i>), Japa (Hibiscus, <i>Hibiscus rosa sinensis</i>), Sahachara, Bhringaraja (<i>Eclipta alba</i>), Narikela oil (Coconut oil), and Til oil (Sesame oil, <i>Sesamum indicum</i>).
<i>Kothanashana</i> (Destroyer of Urticaria and other skin allergies)	Tulsi, Maricha, Haridra, Lavanga (Clove, <i>syzygium aromaticum</i>), Til oil, Sarshapa and Rajika (Both Mustard varieties).

Skin care measures	Plants used
<i>Mardava kara</i> (Improving skin softness and suppleness, skin emollient)	Oil of Physalis, Badam (Almonds), and Ghee.
<i>Prasadana</i> (Soothing) This method improves skin quality by use of stimulants or <i>Charmaprasadana</i> .	
☞ <i>Rakta prasadana</i> ☞ (Blood stimulants)	Kesar (Saffron, <i>Corcus sativus</i>), Nimba, Aguru (<i>Aquilaria agallocha</i>), Kustha (<i>Costus speciosus</i>), Tagara (<i>Voleriana wallichii</i>) and Ghee.
☞ <i>Varna prasadana</i> ☞ (Pigment stimulants)	Ela, Parushaka (<i>Grewia asiatica</i>), Tamalapatra (<i>Cinnamon tamala</i>), Devadaru (<i>Cedrus deodhar</i>), Haridra, Chandana, Kumari (Aloe Vera), Yava (<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>), Chanaka (<i>Cicer arietinum</i>), Vegetable oil and Ghee.
<i>Rakshoghna</i> (Protective, disinfectants, also used as amulets against evil and injury)	Nimba, Vacha, Shigru, Rasona, Hing (Asafoetida, <i>Ferula Asafoetida</i>), Karanja, Very old Ghee, Silk and Beeswax.
<i>Rakta pravartana</i> (Facilitates blood circulation in skin)	Kustha, Tagara paatha (<i>Cissampelos pariera</i>), Devadaru, Vidanga, Citraka (<i>Plumbago zeylanica</i>), Trikatu, Aragvadha and vegetable oil.
<i>Romanashana</i> (Reduces hair on body)	Mulaka (<i>Radish, Raphanus sativus</i>), Naga kesara (<i>Mesua ferra</i>), Sarsapa (Mustard oil), Honey, Ksara (Alkaloids), Lavana (Salt), and Buttermilk.
<i>Romasanjanana</i> (Facilitative of hair growth)	Sahachara, Saireyaka, Brahmi (<i>Centella asiatica or Bocopa monnri</i>), Amalaki, Bhringaraja.
<i>Shaulya Prashamana</i> (Reducing thickness of skin fat)	Haridra, Vacha, Yava (<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>), Sarshapa, Rasona, Nirgundi, Kshara, Til oil, Mustard oil, Maricha, Vidanga, Kulatha and Honey.
<i>Shitaprashamana</i> (Protect from cold and reducing coldness of skin)	Tagara, Aguru, Dhaniya (Corianfrum sativum, Coriander grain oil), Sunthi (Ginger dried, Zingiber officinale), Shyonaka, Rohisha grass oil, Vacha, Kantakari (<i>Solanum xanthocarpus</i>), Tulsi, and Rasona.
<i>Shitopachara</i> (Used for cooling treatment)	Durva, Plaksa (<i>Ficus lacor</i>), Udumbara water, Yasti or Mulhathi (<i>Glycirrhiza glabra</i>), Ushira, Chandana, Sariva, Champaka Oil (<i>Michelia champaka</i>).
<i>Shodhana</i> (Purification of skin)	Maricha, Haridra, Sarshapa (Mustard, <i>Bassica nigra</i>), Nimbu (Lemon, <i>Citrus medica</i>), Shigru (Drumstick, <i>Moringa pterygosperma</i>), Aragvadha and Vacha.
<i>Shonita sthapana</i> (To stop bleeding, cause stypsis or haemostatics)	Exudation of gummy excretion from silk cotton tree (<i>viz., Salmalia malabarica</i>), Sugar and Honey.
<i>Shonitasamghata bhedans</i> (Rupturing the collection of blood)	Lavana, Shigru, Vacha, Nirgundi, Rakta Chandana (<i>Pterocarpus santalinus</i>), Haridra, Kustha, Brahmi.
<i>Shothaghna</i> (Reduces and destroys oedema)	Dashamula (Combination of ten root drugs), Punarnava (<i>Boerhavia diffusa</i>), Shigru, Nirgundi, Chandana, and Sariva.
<i>Sthirakarana</i> (Stabiliser) Increase skin firmness and reduce skin looseness. Increase the strength of skin.	Dadima, Chanaka, Chandana, Aguru, Dodhra (<i>Symplocos racemosa</i>), Laasksha (<i>Lac</i>), Khadira, Vata, Peepal (<i>Ficus religiosa</i>), Udumbara and Triphala.
<i>Swedanashana</i> (Reduces sweating)	Sariva, Durva, Nimba, Vasa (<i>Adhatoda vasica</i>), Dadima, Kulatha (Horse gram, <i>Dolichos biflorous</i>), Lodhra, Badara (<i>Zizyphua jujuba</i>), Masur (Lentil, <i>Lens culinaris</i>), Kapur (<i>Camphor</i>) and Ghee.
<i>Swedanjanana</i> (Increasing sweating)	Tulsi, Shigru, Rajika, Sarshapa, Nirgundi (<i>Vitex nigundo</i>), Sapta parna (<i>Alstonia scholaris</i>), and Vacha.
<i>Tvachya</i> (For good skin health)	Kesar, Nimba, Aguru, Kustha, Tagara, Cardamom, Parushaka, Tamalapatra, Devadaru, Haridra, Chandana, Kumari, Yava, Chanaka, Vegetable oil and Ghee.

Skin care measures	Plants used
<i>Ushnagana</i> (Heat promoting materials)	Musta (<i>Cyperus rotundus</i> , <i>C. scoriosus</i>), Shatapushpi (<i>Peucedanum graveolens</i>), Devdaru (<i>Cedrus deodhar</i>), Kushta (<i>Saussurea lappa</i>), Shigru (<i>Moringa oleifera</i>), Pippali (<i>Piper longum</i>), Maricha, Til oil, Mustard oil, Honey, Vidanga (<i>Embelia ribes</i>), Kulatha, and Trikatu (combination of three bitter substances viz., ginger, pepper and long pepper).
<i>Ushnopachara</i> (Treatment of heat)	Tulsi, Shigru, Rajika, Sarshapa, Nirgundi, Sapta parna, and Vacha.
<i>Varnya</i> (Gives wholesome skin colour)	Haridra, Ela, and Manjistha (<i>Rubia cordifolia</i>).
<i>Vayasthapana</i> (Stopping the process of aging)	Amalaka, Badam, Kumari, Guduchi, Yashti madhu or Mulhathi, Vegetable oils and Ghee.

How to use ayurvedic plants?

Sharangadhar Samhita lists many ways of using Ayurvedic plants either directly by crushing the plant part or indirectly through special formulations are as given below:

1. Extracts (*Kashya or Kwath*)
2. Fermented extracts or medicated wines (*Asava or Arishta*)
3. Infusions (*Fant or Him*)
4. Jams (*Avleha*)
5. Linctus (*Modaka, Paka or Chatan*)
6. Medicated fats (*Grit*) and
7. Paste (*Kalka*)
8. Pills (*Gutika, made by cooking the powdered herbs with jaggery or mukul*)
9. Powder (*Churna*)
10. Taila (*Oils*)
11. Tonics (*Leha*)

Herbs used should be as fresh as possible. Ayurveda advises to use the herbs in various forms or applications, either singly or using permutations and combinations. Dosages generally depends on the condition of the ailment, the expected action on the user, the effect of drugs on the user, availability, processing, cost-effectiveness, shelf-life, safety, etc., in tune with the ancient saying “An under-dose of medication cannot cure a disease just as a pot full of water cannot douse a forest fire.”

Application of skin formulations

Administration of skin drug preparations can be either *Sthanika* (Localised) or *sarva dehika* (all over the

body). Methods for skin care applications are as follows:

1. Abhyanga (Massaging with oils and other unctuous materials)
2. Anjana (Eye drops)
3. Avachurnana (Dusting with normal powder or dry dressing)
4. Avagahana (Tub bath)
5. Basthi (Giving enema – oily or dry)
6. Bramhana (Augmentation / Nourishing therapy)
7. Dhaavana (Washing)
8. Dhara (Continuously pouring medicated liquid on whole or part of the body as needed)
9. Dhuli Snana (Dusting with powder over the entire body)
10. Dhupana (Fumigation)
11. Gharshana (Rubbing with medicines)
12. Karna Purana (Filling up the ears)
13. Lekhana (Slimming therapy)
14. Lepa (Application of a thin layer of hot paste ointment)
15. Mardana (Pressure massaging)
16. Nasya (Nasal drops)
17. Pariseka (Giving a shower bath)
18. Pradeha (Application of a thick layer of hot ointment)
19. Pralepa (Application of thin layer of cold paste ointment)
20. Rukshana (Drying therapy)
21. Seka (Sprinkling of liquid medication)
22. Shirah Purana (Applying paste in the forehead and massaging)
23. Snana (Simple bathing)
24. Snehana (Oleation therapy)
25. Svedana (Sudative therapy)

26. Uddhutana (Dusting with very fine powder)
27. Udvartana (Dry massage with powders)
28. Upanaha (Application of poultice with drugs)
29. Varnam krtva (Making a wound and putting medicine)

Finally, a sure shot treatment method of topical skin care application described in Charaka Samhita. “In case a king or the prince is suffering from a hot or cold skin ailment, he should keep embracing a luscious woman whose entire body is thoroughly smeared with a paste of sandalwood or *aguru* and he will be completely cured of it.”

Readers, please note that above sure shot treatment is not easily or readily available now. What a pity!

ADDITIONAL READING:

1. Beauty Tips from Ancient India, by Sitaram Dixit, *Soaps Detergents & Toiletries Review*, February, 2005.
2. Are naturals superior to synthetics?, by Sitaram Dixit, *Chemical Weekly*, May 11, 2004.
3. Synthetics v/s Naturals – Facts and Fallacies, by Sitaram Dixit, *Chemical Weekly*, June 14, 2005.
4. Imitating Synthetics Naturally, by Sitaram Dixit, *Chemical Weekly*, November 8, 2005.
5. Improving Innate Ingredients by Sitaram Dixit, *Chemical Weekly*, March 10, 2009.