



CARE FOR HAIR- A HOLISTIC CARE -a review study

Dr. Anupam Sharma M.D (Ayu)¹, Dr. Supriya Gupta M.S (Ayu)², Dr.B.Kothainayagi,M.D(Ayu)³

¹Professor, Department of Kriya Sharir, FIMS, SGT University, Haryana, India

²Associate Professor, Dept. of Shalya Tantra, FIMS, SGT University, Haryana, India

³Reader, Dept. of *Samhita* Siddhant, Sri Sairam Ayurveda Medical College & Research Centre, The TN Dr. M.G.R Medical University, Chennai, Tamilnadu, India

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Abstract

The way, face is the mirror of a healthy physical being, so is the hair, which reflects an improved overall personality of an individual. Certain hair problems which people commonly face, are pre-mature greying, hair - fall, dandruff etc. They are mainly related to stress and other physical factors, adding up to the inferiority complex among individuals. As per the science of Ayurveda, the dis-balance of the *TriDoshas* leads to ailments and the concept of treating such disorders include either the remedy to remove the causative factor or to rebalance the dis-balanced. According to Ayurveda, hair is the *dhatu-gata - mala of asthidhatu*. Any product which improves or increases the *dhatu* will have an effect on its *dhatu- gata - mala* as well. Certain modalities to prevent hair- related issues include the use of *Keshya* drugs as mentioned in Ayurveda classics, or the use of *Rasayan* therapy along with proper *Aahar*. Different therapies including local application of medicated paste or oil massage for scalp have also been considered. Modern lifestyle, unhealthy food, polluted environment, mental and physical stress etc., has led people to lose hair at an early age. Hence awareness of the same is important for a groomed personality. This article reviews the causes of hair fall and the possible ways of getting relieved from the same. Moreover it covers ways to improve health of hair as mentioned in the classical texts of Ayurveda.

Keywords: Hairfall, *Keshya* drugs, *Asthidhatu*, Stress

INTRODUCTION

As the famous saying by Martin Luther “The hair is the richest ornament of a woman”, this brings into focus an individual’s persona. As per the ancient science of Ayurveda, hair that is *kesha* is considered to be an *upa-dhatu* of *majja-dhatu*. A detailed description of the same is not seen in *samhita-granthas*. One looks younger and beautiful with healthy hair, which adds up as a jewellery in one’s personality, besides boosting up confidence.

In the current era, we are blessed with a lot of facilities and luxuries which has led us to a sedentary lifestyle, harmful dietary habit along with a stress-induced work process. Due to this, the homeostasis of the body is greatly affected leading to various health issues. The awareness of people towards the ill effects of chemical products has made them inclined towards this holistic science of life, to seek a healthy life and hazard -free treatment procedures as a remedy for cosmetic issues. Ayurveda which is more than a healing system is an art for a healthy lifestyle, helping to achieve a healthy- long life¹. Faulty *Aahara* (diet) irregularity in the daily regimen- *Dinacharya* and in seasonal regimen- *Ritucharya*, exposure to a polluted ecology and a hectic work schedule leads to increased production of free radicals and finally fastens the aging process, one of

them being early greying or early hair fall. In context to *Ritucharya* that is Seasonal regimens if not followed –also leads to many diseases although with respect to Ritu there is no direct reference to pathology of hair, but in general, as per Ayurveda there is increase or decrease of general body vigour in different *ritus* and chances of health to deteriorate in few seasons, during which the basic regime is advisable. By following the concept of *YuktiPramana* (logical- reasoning) seasonal regimen should be followed to maintain good health of the body as well as hair¹²

CONCEPT OF HAIR

As per Ayurveda, one out of the three important constituents of our body that is *Dosha, Dhātu* and *malas* the seven *Dhatus* (body elements) namely the *RasaDhātu* (Tissue fluid including Intracellular fluid and extra cellular fluid), *RaktaDhātu* (Blood- the connective tissue), *MamsaDhātu* (Muscular tissue), *MedaDhātu*(Adipose tissue), *AsthiDhātu*(Bony tissues including the cartilages), *MajjaDhātu*(the Marrow) and *Shukra Dhātu*(Reproductive Tissue). Most Acharyas have stated that the production of latter *Dhatus* occurs from the former ones by the action of the *Agni* (enzymes related in their formation) of the respective *dhatus*. Besides the formation of the *Dhatus* in series, there is also the production of *Upadhatus* (Secondary tissue) & *dhatugat-mala* of the previous *Dhātu*. Hence while the formation of *Asthi Dhātu* or in other words during the metabolism of *Asthi Dhātu* in the presence of its *Agni* and its *panchabhoutika* part needed for the formation of next *dhatu* from its *Saar bhaag* that is its potent part forms the *Majja Dhātu* and at the same time the *dhatug atmala* is also produced in the form of scalp- body hair and nails. There is also the contribution of the Garbhaj Bhavas (factors influencing the development of foetus), hair is considered as the *Pitraj* That is its structure, colour and quantity of the upcoming progeny is transferred from the paternal side. As far as its *bhoutik* element is considered *Kesha* hair has the *Parthivaamsha* of *Prithvi Mahabhoota* (earth element). As per acharya Susrutha hair formation starts during the sixth month of intrauterine life⁸

We can assess a very close relation between the *Kesha* and the *TriDosha*, that is wellness of *Keshais* dependent on the *Dosha*. *VataDosha* is the primary *Dosha* on which both *Pitta* and *Kapha Doshas* are dependent on, mainly the *Kapha Dosha* contributes to the *Brimhanakarma* (provides nutrition) and *PittaDoshais* responsible for the softness of the hair. The *Romakupa* root of the hair is the site of sensation which is carried by the *Praana Vaayu* and is supplied by numerous blood capillaries. The nourishment of the *Twak* /skin is from *Rasa Dhātu* and *Kesha* is adhered to *Twak* and as such *Kesha* also gets its nutrients from the *Rasa Dhātu*. Premature greying of hair is caused by the vitiation of *Rasa Dhātu*. As per *acharyas* *Twak Saarata* is characterized by unctuous, smooth, soft, clear, fine, less numerous, deep rooted and tender hair and lustrous skin, while *Meda Sarata* is characterized by *Snigdhatata* of *Nakha, Kesha, Loma* etc . However with the *Vridhhi* and *Kshaya* of *Asthi Dhātu* we find that the growth of the hair and nails are both affected that is it is clearly seen in *AsthiK shaya* the individual witnesses falling of hair, nails, beards and moustaches also affecting and weakening of teeth and joints¹²

As far as the modern Medical Science is concerned regarding the concept of hair growth it has three phases¹¹ – 1. Anagen phase which determines the hair length. The scalp hair for almost around seven years remains in this phase before it is forced into the next phase of hair growth that is Catagen phase by some unexplained factors. Due to its stable and steady characteristic for a long duration, responsible for determining the hair growth length it can be considered under *Kaphaj Kaal* of the hair follicle. 2. Catagen phase where–in the hair stops growing and gets converted to a

club hair, and can be considered as the *Pitta* phase of hair growth. 3. Telogen phase characterised by the dormant–resting phase of the hair follicle and the shedding off the hair shaft occurs. This last phase hair–follicle growth can be co–related to the *Vatajakaal*.

CONCEPT OF HAIRLOSS

In today's lifestyle, the irregular and faulty dietary habits, environmental pollution, stressful living conditions leading to disturbed sleep etc. directly affects not only the psychological aspect of an individual but also the physical aspect including the health of hair. This leads to hair problems like hair loss (Alopecia), premature greying of hair, hair damage, greasy– oily hair etc.,⁴ The gradual falling of hair is known as *Khalitya* which can be co–related with alopecia as per Modern Health Science. *Acharya Sushruta*, *Acharya Chakradatta*, *Sharangdhara*, *Bhavmishra* and *Vangasena* have mentioned *Khalitya* in *Kshudraroga* (Minor disease). In *CharakSamhita*, *Khalitya* has been included in *Urdhva–jatrugat roga* (Disease of ENT and Eyes)⁹. *Acharya Charaka* has described that *Tejas* combines with *Vatadi Doshas* and reaches the *Shira Kapala*/ scalp thus leading to hair fall / *Indralupta*.^{1,10} According to *Sushruta*, *VidagdhaPitta* with the influence of vitiated *VataDosha* reaches *Romakoopa*/hair follicles and results in hair loss, also *KaphaDosha* with *Shonita* obstructs the *Romakoopa* leading to cessation of hair regeneration , a condition named as *Indralupta*, *Khalitya* or *Ruhya*³. The whole aim to reduce the hair fall now points towards increasing the duration of the anagen phase or the *Kaphaj kaal*¹

Khalitya or *Indralupta* can be basically considered as a *Pitta* predominant *TriDoshajanya* vyadhi that is the vitiation of all the three *Doshas* are considered. On the basis of the predominating *Dosha*, it can be studied under the following types.

1. *VatajaKhalitya* : wherein the , *Keshabhoomi* or scalp appears to be *Agnidagdha*/ burnt and has *Shyava* and *Aruna* discoloration. When *Vata Doshavitiates*, it dehydrates the tissues of the scalp⁶.The hair follicles becomes deficient from being protected from UV radiation. This causes hair breakage and split ends in the dry hair. The hair roots become frail and hair sheds off from the follicles that are damaged. Finally the damaged follicles become dormant, leading to hair loss⁶
2. *PittajaKhalitya* : wherein the colour of scalp appears as *Peeta*, *Neela* and *Harita* and is intensely full of the *Siras* (veins). Excessive sweat may also be found all over scalp. When *Pitta* vitiates, the tissues of the scalp are affected by the excess heat from within⁶. This causes inflammation of the follicles, which in turn weakens the roots of the hair. The inflamed follicles become deficient to nourish hairs, resulting in hairfall and premature greying.
3. *KaphajaKhalitya* : wherein the colour of the scalp is almost the same as the skin color and is Ghana and Snigdha in appearance along with whitish tinge. When the *Kapha Doshavitiates*, there is excess secretion of sebum. This sebum builds–up clogs at the site of hair follicle receptors, the spot from where nutrients is received from the blood eventually preventing hair growth⁶. Thus greasy scalp with oily dandruff caused due to *Kapha* aggravates.
4. *Sannipataja* or *Tri Doshaja Khalitya* : here the characteristic of all the three *Doshas* are observed. The scalp appears to be burnt and it bears nail like appearance⁵

Indralupta/ Khaalitya is similar to Alopecia great a or spot baldness which is an autoimmune disease distinguished by the loss of hair on the body especially on the scalp, face and sometimes on other areas of the body without any clinical inflammatory signs. In the general population its occurrence was estimated at 0.1– 0.2% with a lifetime risk of 1.7%¹³. The men were seen to be more affected than the children and the women, but yes at the same time it cannot be ignored that it resulted to cause more emotional issues in woman and children than men due to cosmetic reasons². Alopecia vice-versa causes psychological stress, and those affected may experience social phobia, anxiety, and depression¹¹

HAIRFALL MANAGEMENT

As mentioned earlier, as per modern medicine *Khalitya* can be correlated with alopecia. Alopecia which is a disorder of the derma, has been recognized for more than 2000 years and is a common issue throughout the world. However, in the current era the whole world is gradually showing acceptance towards the holistic science –Ayurveda and there has been an increase in the use of herbal products globally. People are now inclined to adopt more natural way of life⁴

As *Vata Dosh* and *Asthi Dhatu* are inversely related as described in “Ashrayashrayee Sambandh” of *Dosha Dhatu* and *Mala* and also the *Kesha* is the *dhatugat-mal* of *Asthi Dhatu Mala*, hence to maintain the healthy *Kesha*, it is mandatory to keep the homeostatic balance between *Vata Dosh* and *Asthi Dhatu*. *Lavana Rasa* consumption in excess quantity is one of the causes of *Khalitya* (Alopecia) as explained in *Charaka Samhita*, due to the vitiation of *VataDosha*¹²

Keshyavardhandravya, are those that stimulates healthy growth of hair and provides strength to the roots of the hair.⁴ The premature shedding of hair is also because of deficient nutrition to the hair roots. This non-availability of nutrients to roots is also due to obstructions of passage caused by *Kapha* and vitiations of *Rakta*. *Pittadhikya* which also enhances early greying of hair can be checked by consuming *jeevaniya*, *balya*, *Brimhana* and *Pitta* alleviating herbs. *Bringaraja*, *bhibhitaki* and *nirgundi* which act as hair dyes also reduces *Pitta*. These can be also used internally as medicated oils or ghee. *Khalitya* and *palitya* which is caused by anxiety, insomnia, excessive consumption of salty food can be subsided by following healthy lifestyle involving yoga and meditation as well. *Indralupta* caused by a local fungal infection can be checked by local use of honey/ madhu, which acts as antifungal and bacteriostatic agents. Honey has the antioxidants and nutrients to strengthen the follicles resulting minimized damage. Stronger hair follicles dramatically reduce the chance of hair breakage and therefore in the long run, less breakage improves the ability for the hair to grow for a longer duration. Besides the honey also reboots and stimulates the dormant follicles, and contributes to thicker and voluminous hair⁷

Ayurvedic therapies for hairfall management –

1. *Shirodhara* in which warm oils or medicated decoctions are poured on forehead in an oscillating manner. This therapy helps in balancing the *Vata* and *Pitta Dosh* as thus reducing the hair fall and also gives a calm effect on the mind by inducing sleep, regulating the blood pressure, and relieving stress.
2. *Shiro abhyanga* is massaging the upper body parts involving head and neck regions extending to shoulders with medicated oils. This procedure enhances the flow of blood and oxygen in the scalp region, thus provides proper nutritional supply to the hair follicles.

3. *Shiro Lepa* involves the drugs in dry powdered mixed form formulated as of a fine paste and applied locally to the scalp which is then covered with banana leaf, leaving a space at the top of the scalp, for pouring medicated oil on to the lepa. This promotes the medicinal paste to interact deeply with the tissues of scalp. It aids to subside *Pitta Dosh* and is proven to be beneficial in treating *Khalitya- paalitya*.
4. *Nasya* is considered as one of the best the rapiesin hair loss caused due to imbalanced *Doshas*. The procedure of lubricating thenasal passages with medicated oils is '*Nasya*'. Brahmi Ghee can be used for subsiding the *Pitta Dosh*, *Tikta Ghee* for alleviating *Vata* or *Pitta Dosh*s, and Vacha oil for treating imbalanced *Vata* or *Kapha Dosh*s.
5. Regular hair massage using herbal oils like Sesame oil, Coconut oil, Amla oil, Almond oil, Olive oil, Neem oil, Brahmi oil, and Bhringraj oil which the commonly used to promote hair re growth.
6. Regular Hair Cleansing to avoid the oils secreted and external pollutants clog the hair follicles with shikakai, triphala etc is advised.
7. Use of topical Ayurvedic treatments for hair regrowth like. *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*), *Bhringraja* (*Eclipta Prostrata* or *Eclipta Alba*), *Kumari* (*Aloe Vera*), *Ashwagandha* (*Indian Ginseng*), *Japa* (*Hibiscus*) etc
8. Dietary regimens like: Cucumbers that contains vitamin A, C and silica, needed for hair regrowth. It pacifies the *Vata* and *PittaDosh*s as well. Pumpkin which has Potassium and Zinc required for hair re-growth and maintenance of collagen levels respectively and also checks the vitiation of *Vata* and *Pitta Dosh*a.
 - a. Yogurt also has been known as one of the best hair care products since ancient times as it contains lactic acid which in repairs the hair with aggravated *Vata* related problems.
 - b. Coriander contains most of the minerals like iron, magnesium, and manganese along with Vitamin C, Vitamin K, and protein that helps combat hair fall and supports follicles to regrow healthy hair.
9. Following Stress-Free Lifestyle by exercising regularly, having sound sleep etc.

CONCLUSION

Healthy hair, a boon to the physical beauty also serves as an early signal for some systemic and chronic disease if affected.¹¹ Proper nutrition of *Dhatu*s enhances the production of the *Upadhatus* and *Mala*. Hence nourishment and treatment of *Asthi Dhatu* Vikar is essentially needed for the treatment of the hair diseases. Besides as the famous saying goes "We are what we eat" but rather if said- "We are what we digest", will suit the current issue better¹². Henceforth beautification starts with proper nutrition, efficient digestion and nutrients assimilation with regular elimination. Therefore as per this holistic science the concept of beauty is not only the external appearance, but also involves a healthy life style with therapeutic procedures needed for the enhancement of one's wholesome health, thereby granting beauty to the body. Careful diagnosis of the type of hair loss shall help in selecting effective treatment, not ignoring the fact that reassurance also is an important component of any treatment regimen and Ayurveda has it all.

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