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PERCEPTION OF SKIN HYGIENE THROUGH AYURVEDA: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT:

Ayurveda is a well-known system of medicinal practice which originated in India, and that is based on a treatment that aims on creating a balance between the basic elements of human life i.e. the wind, water, air and fire. The word "Twacha" means skin, derived from the word "Twachasamvarane" i.e. the skin is defined as the organ which covers the body from outside. Skin is one of the Indriyaadhithana(Sparshanendriya) which covers the Meda, Shonita and all other dhatus of the body and gets spread all over the body. One major area under Ayurvedic way of life is the hygiene practices. Hygienic living, according to Ayurveda, comprises of several lifestyle practice like regular Mukhaprakshalana, Nasya, Abhyanga, Mardana, Udvarthana, Utsadana, Vyayama, Snana, Padaprakshalana, Vastradharana, Padatradharana, Chatradharana, Lepa which help in rejuvenation and maintaining skin hygiene. Various psychosomatic factors are interrelated such as nutrition, hygiene, age and drugs along with which in term responsible for the healthy skin with its texture. So important is the skin to one's image that people spend much time and money to restore skin to a more normal or youthful appearance.

KEY WORDS: Ayurveda, Dinacharya, Hygiene, Ritucharya Skin

INTRODUCTION

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Skin morphology defines its uniform nature with its two layers, superficial layer having regenerative nature along with constant nature of its deeper layer is presented with blood vessels, nerves, and hair follicles, which contain glands. Parallel to this in *Ayurveda*, skin is one of the *Indriyadhithana* which completely covered *Meda*, *Shonita* and all other *dhatu*s of the body and gets spread all over the body. It is considered as the seat of *Sparshanendriya* as well as one among the main seat of *Vata*.¹⁻² Proper skin hygiene is the best way to keep your skin healthy. Removing dead cells, dirt and microbes on the skin surface is a key to good hygiene. At the same time, it's important to maintain the natural fats and oils

(extracellular lipids) in the outer skin layer (stratum corneum). Beauty lies beneath the skin. Everyone wants to look beautiful; beauty is reflected in beautiful skin. Skin is our first line of defense against outside world; skin is the exposed part of the body susceptible to infections. Most common diseases of skin occur due to lack of hygiene. For over a century, skin hygiene, particularly of the hands, has been accepted as a primary mechanism to control the spread of infectious agents. Although the causal link between contaminated hands and infectious disease transmission is one of the best-documented phenomena in clinical science, several factors have recently prompted a reassessment of skin hygiene and its effective practice.³

HYGIENE:⁴

Hygiene is a set of practices performed for the preservation of health. The science of health and embraces all factors which contributed to healthful living. This term also refers to conditions and practices that exist to promote or preserve health. It is important to note that what is considered

hygienic or not, can vary between different cultures, genders and groups.

SKIN HYGIENE:

Skin Hygiene is the practice of keeping oneself and surroundings clean, especially in order to prevent the spread of Skin diseases. It is the most important factor because skin is the defensive shield to protect whole body from external agents.

According to *Ayurveda*, the principles of healthy lifestyle which include a proper routine regarding *ahara*, *vihara* and *aacharas* based on *Hetu* (material cause), *Kala* (season) and *Desha* (habitat) are the only ways for healthy living. *Ayurveda* defines “*Swastha*” as: A state of an individual in which his *doshas*, *dhatu*, *agni* & *malas* are in equilibrium, at the same time his *manas*, *atma* and *indriya* are in a state of well being.

Effect of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala* on Skin:⁵

- ***Prakruta Pitta Karma:*** Production of *Prabha*(colour), *Medha*(complexion) and *Mruduta*(softness) in the body
- ***Prakruta Rakta Karma:*** *Varnaprasadana*
- ***Prakruta Mala Karma:*** *Sweda* maintains *Snigdghata* (moistness) of the skin

SKIN FORMATION:

Sushruta described that *Tvacha* develops in seven layers by the action of *Doshas*.⁶ *Charaka* described *Tvacha* as the *Matruja Bhava* (Maternal factor) which is one of the six *Bhavas* essential in the development of foetus⁷. *Vagbhata* described the formation of *Tvacha* due to *Paka* of *Rakta Dhatu* by its *Dhatvagni* in the foetus. After *Paka*, it dries up to form *Tvacha*, just like the deposition of cream over the surface of boiled milk.⁸

Table 1 - Different layers according to different *Acharyas*

Sl.No	<i>Sushruta</i>	<i>Charaka</i>	<i>Arunadatta</i>	<i>Sharangadhara</i>	<i>Bhela</i>
1	<i>Avabhasini</i>	<i>Udakadhara</i>	<i>Bhasini</i>	<i>Avabhasini</i>	<i>Udakdhara</i>
2	<i>Lohita</i>	<i>Asrukdhara</i>	<i>Lohita</i>	<i>Lohita</i>	<i>Asrikdhara</i>
3	<i>Sweta</i>	3 rd	<i>Sweta</i>	<i>Sweta</i>	3 rd

4	<i>Tamra</i>	4 th	<i>Tamra</i>	<i>Tamra</i>	4 th
5	<i>Vedini</i>	5 th	<i>Vedini</i>	<i>Vedini</i>	5 th
6	<i>Rohini</i>	6 th	<i>Rohini</i>	<i>Rohini</i>	6 th
7	<i>Mamsadhara</i>		<i>Mamsadhara</i>	<i>Sthula</i>	

TWAK SAARA PURUSHA LAKSHANA:

The skin is usually *Snigdha*(Unctuous), *Mridu*(Soft), *Shlakshna*(Smooth), Very pleasant and with a luster over it.⁹

METHODS TO ENSURE SKIN HYGIENE:

1. ABHYANGA¹⁰

Application of oil to the skin followed by massage in specific directions is called *Abhyanga*. Massage in specific direction improves blood circulation, by which toxins are eliminated.

Relieves physical and mental fatigue.

Clears stiffness and heaviness in the body

Benefits:

- Cleans the skin from any dirt
- Improves the body complexion
- Helps to maintain the original softness and luster of the skin

- Restores the natural immunity of the skin

2. MARDANA¹¹

Performing the massage with the

application of more pressure after anointing the body with oil. It is

indicated both in healthy and diseased persons. In normal persons, regular practice of *mardana* improves the body musculature and enhances the physical health. It is proved to be efficacious in

Twakagata vata: Diseases of skin due to imbalance of *vata dosha*

3. UDWARTHANA

Udwarthana is massage with different powders of herbs having *kashaya rasa*. In a direction opposite to the orientation of hair in the body is called as *Udwarthana*. *Udwarthana* opens the circulatory channels, facilitates the metabolic activity and



improves the complexion of the skin.

Sharira parimarjana is another name

for this procedure. Here the direction

of massaging is quite opposite to that

of *Abhyanga*. The skin is the

deposition of dead epithelial cells they

need to be scraped of regularly, it is

natural but sometimes it will not

happen. In olden days different

powders are used for *udwarthana*,

when these powders are rubbed on

skin, this powder will scrape of dead

epithelial cells Example Green gram

powder and bengal gram powder are

still used in household practices. As it

possess *Kaphahara*, Liquifies the

medas, *Twakprasadakaram*,

Eliminates the *sharira durgandha* and

relieves *kandu*.¹²

UTSADANA¹³

Massage with the powder of herbs

mixed with oil is called as *Utsadana*

Benefits:

- Blood vessels get dilated
- *Bhrajaka pitta* gets enhanced
- Relieves from *kandu* and *kota*

4. Nasya¹⁴

Administration of the medicines

through nasal route is known as *Nasya*.

Benefits:

- Skin becomes firm and good looking
- Prevents from the premature wrinkling of the skin
- Prevents from the premature graying of hair
- Devoid of Black patches

Vidanga choorna is beneficial in skin disorders

5. Vyayama¹⁵

The activities which produces tiredness

to the body are known as

Vyayama(Exercise)

Benefits:

- Good complexion
- Lightness of the body
- Ability to work
- Stability
- Allevation of *kapha*
- Increased *agni*

6. Snana¹⁶

Benefits:

- Removes *sharira durgandha*
- Encourages perspiration

- Relieves *kandu*
- Pores open up and thus dirt are easily cleaned off from skin

7. PADAPRAKSHALANA¹⁷

- Cleans the foot
- Cures diseases of feet and tiredness
- Good for eyes
- Enhances virility
- Acts as a *rakshogna*
- Enhances

8. VASTRADHARANA (Wearing cloth)^{18,19}

Wearing clean cloth enhances beauty and also protects against external environment. Wearing clean clothes:

Twachyam, Aayushyam, Yashasyam, Anandvardhanam. Wearing unclean: *Kandu, Krimi, Glani*

9. PADATRADHARANA (Wearing of foot wear)²⁰

Walking barefoot could lead to wounds or infections, so wearing footwear brings you courage to walk anywhere. Wearing foot wear is good for foot, Good for eyes, Acts as *rakshogna*, it

enhances strength and Courage

10. CHATRADHARANA²¹

Umbrella protects from rain, wind, dust, fumes, mist and intense heat of sun. It improves complexion. Shield skin from UV rays can block more than $\frac{3}{4}$ UV light on a sunny day.

Suphychen et al conducted study on a comparative study between umbrella and sun cream blocking exposure to

UV rays and concluded that Black umbrella can block at least 90% of rays and umbrella blocking more UV rays than sun cream²²

11. Lepa:²³

The external application of a paste prepared from the medicated drugs

TYPES OF LEPA

1. **Pralepa:** The paste which is *sheeta*, very thin as that of *chandana* applied to the skin.
2. **Pradeha:** The paste which is *ushna* or *sheeta*, thicker as that of buffalo's skin
3. **Alepa:** It is neither applied too thin nor it is applied too thick

Table 2 – Lepa according to Ritu(season)

<i>Ritu</i>	<i>Dravya for lepa</i>
<i>Hemanta & Sishira</i>	<i>Kumkuma and Kasturi</i>
<i>Vasanta</i>	<i>Kumkuma, Agaru, Karpura, Chandana</i>
<i>Greeshma</i>	<i>Chandana</i>
<i>Varsha</i>	<i>Agaru</i>
<i>Sharad</i>	<i>Chandana, Ushira, Karpura</i>

Mukhalepa helps to overcome the diseases like

- *Vyanga* (Discolored patches over face)
- *Vali* (Wrinkles)
- *Mukhadooshika*
- Relieves burning sensation, Itching and pain
- Makes *twak*, *mamsa* and *raktaprasadana*
- Good complexion with smoothness (soft)

12. MUKHAPRAKSHALANA

The procedure of washing the face with water is called as *Mukhaprakshalana*

• **Sheeta Jala (Cold):** Helps to overcome the diseases like

- Raktapitta, Mukhapidaka, Mukhashosha, Neelika, Vyanga*
- **Koshna Jala (Lukewarm):** Helps to remove dirt from face thus maintains healthy skin(*Mukhashuddhi*), *Kaphavatahara, Snigdhatta*.²⁴

ANULEPANA (ANOINTMENTS)

Application of anointments gives

- Complexion and beautiful look
- It enhances energy and strength
- Prevents excessive sweat
- Foul smell
- Discoloration²⁵



Relation between *Rasa* and Skin²⁶

- **Madhura:** Increases the luster of the skin and hair
- **Amla:** Taken in excess can increase the process of pus formation in the pre-existing injury or eruption on the skin
- **Lavana:** Create cuts on the skin particularly in pre existing skin diseases. It accelerates wrinkle formation on skin and graying of hair and alopecia
- **Katu:** Reduces the oiliness, itching of the skin
- **Tikta:** Reduces almost all secretions in the body
- **Kashaya:** Produces the tanning over the skin

SURYA NAMASKARA

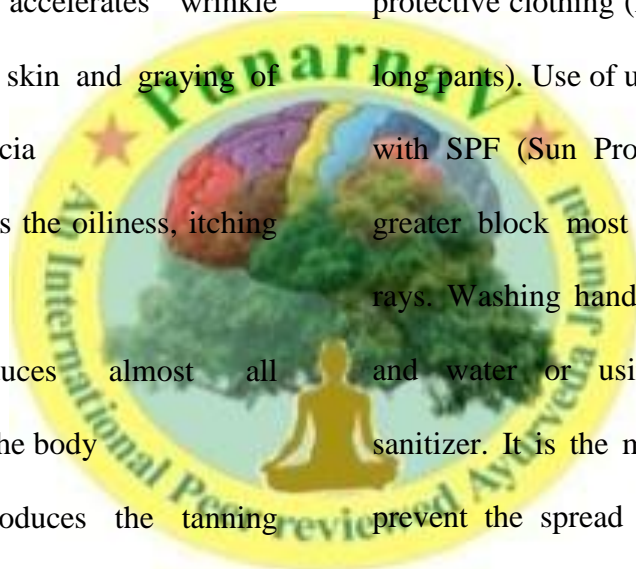
Exposure of early morning sun rays helps in the Synthesis of vitamin D; with this it activates the melanocyte which helps to remove the toxins through the skin pores

- A regular regimen results in a clear complexion and glowing skin

- Sun salutation exercise helps to add glow on your face making facial skin radiant and ageless. It is the natural solution to prevent onset of wrinkles.

METHODS OF PREVENTING SKIN DAMAGE

Protection from the sun. Avoid exposure to direct sunlight. Wear protective clothing (hats, long sleeves, and long pants). Use of umbrella and sunscreen with SPF (Sun Protection Factor) 15 or greater block most of the sun's harmful rays. Washing hands and nails with soap and water or using a waterless hand sanitizer. It is the most important way to prevent the spread of skin infections. A daily bath or shower is a must. A regular bath (every morning and after all athletic activities) helps in keeping you clean, fresh and odour free. Keeping your finger and toe nails trimmed and in good shape will prevent problems. Washing your hair at least every other day is important to keeping your hair and scalp healthy, poor hair hygiene could cause dandruff. Wear clean Clothes. Do not share towels,



clothes, soap, razors, toothbrushes, or topical preparations (including deodorants,

lotions, ointments, gels, or creams)

CONCLUSION²⁷

Medicated oil is used in the form of *Abhyanga* activates *Bhrajaka pitta* to promote the luster of the skin. *Snana* relieves the dirt and distress it is advocated in skin diseases. *Nasya* being purificatory measure helps in caring the skin by improving circulation and eliminating waste and toxic materials. The drugs used in the form of diet in skin diseases contain *tikta rasa* mainly; probable cause of its usage would be purification of blood. In dermatological problems, *tridoshas* get vitiated in turn de-arranges *dhatu*s like *rasa*, *rakta*, *mamsa*, and *twak* with *doshadushyasamurchana*. Principles of *Dinacharya* and *Rutucharya* should be

followed in skin hygiene. In skin hygiene, *Nasya*, *Abhyanga*, *Vyayama*, *Snana* is to advocated along with *sadvritta(sadachara)*. Preventive care is an important factor in *Ayurvedic* skin hygiene. A healthy diet, life-style and proper mind coordination will help a person avoid skin problems and many diseased states. The skin is a sensitive organ and is continuously exposed to various environmental stresses such as varying temperature, dust, smoke, heat, cold, rain and wind etc. So it is important to take good care of the skin and maintain its healthy condition.

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