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Review Article

CONCEPT OF HAIR AND ITS CARE IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Hair (Keshha) is a crown of head and barometer of one's beauty. Now-a-days because of faulty and speedy life style people have not time and also don't know about proper way of hair care and will be met different types of hair diseases. Because of that market of hair care products which contain highly chemical property and not so much safely and effective earn billion dollars. But Ayurveda described ancient way of hair care which are not so much costly and effective for hairs and other part of body also and people can protect their healthy hair easily.

Keywords: Hair, Hair care, Ayurveda

INTRODUCTION

We know the famous quotation

“A thing of beauty is joy forever.”¹

So, the concept of beauty (Saundarya) is gaining more and more attention globally and hair plays an important role in it, as it has been said that hair is a barometer of one's beauty. Healthy, beautiful, long and attractive hairs add charm to the personality.

“Ovid” said in brief words

“Ugly is a field without grass, plants without leaves and head without hairs”.²

So, it has a great aesthetic value and it is the crowning glory of any person. Therefore, to keep the healthy hairs in healthy state is entirely the duty of human beings, because just like face, hair is also a mirror of health.

Even thousand years ago, in Ayurvedic literature, so many types of daily regimens for hair care have been described as a part of Dinacharya which includes procedures like Moordha Taila, Nasya, Snana, Rasayana sevan etc.

DESCRIPTION OF HAIR

Etymology

The word Keshha has been derived from the root ‘shi’ with ‘ech’ prefix and ‘kulak’ conjugation that which grow on head.

Halayudha Kosha has depicted it by “Keshha Mastake Shete”.³

Definition

Keshha are the elements that grow on the scalp, Mastak, Shirah.

Keshha Samkhya (Numbers of hairs)

In ancient classics, many controversies have been noticed on this topic. The number of hair as per various texts may be summarized as under

As per Acharya Yajnavalkya in Manusmriti the total number of human hair is 3½ crores.

Acharya Charaka has enumerated the total human hair to be 29956 and stated that the number of Keshha, Shmashru and Loma is equal⁴.

Chakrapani, while commenting on this says that, this number of the mouths of Dhamani has been counted in macro-sense, whereas if minutely counted they are liable to increase.

Acharya Sushruta believes that like the Dhamani Agras hairs are innumerable.⁵

Ashtanga Samgrahakara holds same view as that of Charaka.

Keshhotpatti (origin of hair)

Ayurveda believes that the human body is built of main seven body elements as Dhatus viz. Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa, Meda, Asthi, Majja and Shukra. A specific manner has been thought of for the commencement of each and every Dhātu and their various manifestations by the learned Acharya. In spite of some controversies the major part of them believe that the production of the latter Dhatus occur from the former by the functions of their respective *Agni* i.e. the Rasagni turns the Ahara Rasa into Rasa Dhātu, then the Raktagni converts the suitable Rasa Dhātu in Rakta and so on.

It has been further explained that, from the Poshakansha of former Dhātu there is not only production of latter Dhātu but consequently there is side by side production of its Upadhātu and its *Mala*. There is no detailed description found in Ayurvedic classics regarding the production of hair in particular, but it has been stated in the process of Dhātu Nirmana that when Paka of Asthidhātu occurs by its own Agni, the Majja Dhātu emerges from the Sara Bhaga and at the same time hair of scalp and body and nail emerges as Mala (waste product).⁶

According to ancient classics the hair is one of the “Pitruja Bhava” means the structure, color and quantity of hair of a progeny are dependent on paternal side.⁷

Acharya have considered the hair as “Parthiva Dravya” because of its qualities like roughness, steadiness, heaviness etc.⁸ The hair is directly related with skin. So in the discussion of a person with healthy skin it was also added that his hair should be deep rooted, soft, fine and shiny.

Keshotpatti Kala

According to Charaka the Keshotpatti kal in foetus is at seventh month during gestational age. While according to Vagbhata Keshotpatti Kala in foetus is at six months.⁹

Keha Poshana & Vriddhi (nutrition and development if hair)

According to Acharya Charaka, from the ingested food there form an assimilable nutrition fluid (Ahara Rasa), which further divided into two parts, namely essential fluid (Sarabhaga) and the excretory matter/waste matter (Kitta). The waste matter is responsible for the production and nutrition of so many things like sweat, urine, hair etc. and among them are the hair follicles the hairs of the head and beard, hairs of the body etc.¹⁰

According to Maharshi Sushruta, Kesha get nutrition from the end part of the Dhamanis which are attached to the Romakoopa¹¹.

Kesha Varnotpatti (colour of hair)

Regarding the production of the color of hair, Ayurveda says that Teja Mahabhuta is responsible for the colouration of hair, Bhrajaka Pitta, one of the manifestation of Teja Mahabhuta, combines with Prithvi and Vayu Mahabhutas and produces black colour. The above physiology can be equated as under

Krishna Varna = Teja + Prithvi + Vayu¹²

The colour of hair varies from person to person and it is based on his Prakriti. On the condition of the Kesha Prakriti has relatedness, different types of Prakriti of persons may be different Kesha (hair). In brief -

Vata Prakriti person → Dry with low-density hair

Pitta Prakriti person → Yellowish hair

Kapha Prakriti person → Thick, black and curly hairs.

HAIR PROBLEM OR DISEASE

While, modernized life of 21st century is very fast and competitive, so each and every person has to face cut through competition in their life. For achieving their goal and position and even to complete for the very basic needs, people have to work more & more stressfully. Due to such a busy schedule Ritucharya and Dinacharya have taken a back seat in the 21st century. No one has time to follow the Swasthvruta hence prone to have a disease. Moreover, faulty dietetic habits & faulty hair care methods with unending race for synthetic cosmetics for conquering new horizons in fashion, stress of day to day life, exposure to sunlight, high T.D.S. level in water & pollution etc. leading to graying of hair prematurely or to fall down at younger age. Heredity is also one of the important causative factors of the disease

Hair problem is silent but devastating problem which may occur to any person. Millions of the people worldwide suffer from it and this is from why hair care remedies are billion dollar industry.

Spending vast amount on treatment in hormonal therapy, some drugs, hair transplant, hair weaving etc. those are largely ineffective at the same time having many side effects, too.

But Ayurveda has described how to care of hair and also recommended safely, effective and less costly measures for hair problems.

Ayurveda also described many problems or diseases like khalitya (hair falling), Arunsika, Darunaka, Palitya, Indralupta etc. and their managements also.

HAIRCARE IN AYURVEDA

In the chapter of Dinacharya, Ritucharya hair care is discussed indirectly. Here, they suggest some procedures which keep hair healthy and attractive. Some of them are as follows

Moordha Taila : Oil should be regularly applied on head (scalp), it is called Moordha Taila also. Adoption of this procedure in routine makes the scalp revitalized, keeps hair healthy, black and firm rooted, induces sleep and keeps away Khalitya and Palitya¹³.

Nasya : It has been described in Charaka Samhita that administration of Nasya in proper time with proper method keeps eyes, ears and nose of the person healthy. The hair of that person does not turn gray and he does not suffer from hair falling. His hair growth is also accelerated¹⁴.

Above sentences shows the importance of Nasya to prevent and to cure the diseases of hair like Khalitya and Palitya.

Snana : The process of taking bath is called Snana in Ayurvedic texts. According to Acharya Charaka, Snana is pious, vitalizer, aphrodisiac, expeller of fatigue, sweat harmful things etc. from the body and an enhancer of life.¹⁵

Acharya Sushruta has given some additional information of Snana in context of hair fall that the head and hair should not be washed with hot water or with very cold water. He adds that bathing should be done according to season and geographical distribution, but the overhead bath with hot water should be avoided always¹⁶.

Acharya Vagbhata adds that pouring warm water over the body bestows strength but the same over the head makes for loss of strength but the same over the head makes for loss strength of the hair and eyes¹⁷.

Dhoomapana : In Charaka Samhita, in the topic of Dinacharya, the benefits of Dhoomapana are described. Its beneficial for hair. Along with other benefits it is said to cure the Khalitya and Palitya, further it also improves the health of head and senses¹⁸. According to Acharya Sushruta inhalation of medicated fumes improves the firmness of hair on the head, beard and teeth¹⁹.

Kshaurkarma : According to Acharya Charaka, hair cutting (Kalpan) and proper tying (Samprasadhana) of hair of scalp and beard should be done regularly²⁰.

Acharya Sushruta says that the management of hair (Kesha Prasadhana) should be done with Keshaprasadhani (combs and brushes). It is also said that it is Keshya and aborter of Raja, Mala, Jantu etc. and increases the beauty of hair. Acharya adds that by regular cutting of hair a person may achieve vigor, happiness, lightness, good look etc.²¹

According to Acharya Vagbhata, one should not allow the hair, nails and moustaches grow long. It must be trimmed regularly²²

Ushnishka : The wearing of Ushnishka (turban) on head protects the hair from wind, heat, dust etc. and is said to be pious and beneficial for hair.²³

Thus, there are many types of daily regimens described for the care of hair. Acharya Sushruta says that the hair should not be stretched with finger, nails nor should be rubbed with force or shaken wildly in wind²⁴. In this way there is a proper guideline in Ayurvedic texts to keep the hair in healthy status. All these small advises have long lasting effects on hair and if we don't pay attention to them we are bound to pay the penalty.

Other management: Acharya Bhavmishra described many keshya drugs like Bhringraja, Amalaki, Krishna til, Gunja etc. which are mainly act on hairs.²⁵ Many samhitas Acharya describes many tail preparation, lepas(paste type local application) and oral medications in Ayurveda.²⁶ By use of these preparations every people can get prevention from hair problems.

CONCLUSION

Healthy and beautiful hair is crowning glory of once personality. Considering its importance Acharya described its Sharira including its definition, formation, nutrition, growth, term according to the place of growing, numbers, colours etc. elaborately thousands of years ago. Not only the daily regiments like Moordha Taila, Nasya, Snana, Lepana, Kshaudrakarma, Ushnishka etc. are also suggested for hair care and prevention of hair problem, which equally effective in today's modernized era, too.

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