



Review Article

ROLE OF *LEPAKALPANA* FOR IMPROVING BEAUTY OF SKIN W. S. R. TO *MUKHALEPA*

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ABSTRACT

Skin (*Twacha*) is the largest organ of the body and has a great cosmetic value. It is one of the five *Jnanendriyas* (sense organs) i.e., *Sparsha jnyaan* (touch sensation) gets from it. So it has ample of importance in physical and mental well being of an individual. It is most vulnerable to disease as it exposes to external environment. There are lots of reasons behind the skin problems and most striking is the today's busy and stressful life. Skin disorders affects all ages from the neonates to the elderly persons.

Ayurveda an ancient science has vast description of the topical applications in the name of *Lepa kalpana* described both as the *Chikitsa* (treatment) of various skin diseases and for beauty. The medicines that are in the form of a paste and used for external application are called as *Lepas*.

A great demand from *Ayurveda* in the field of cosmetology has been established due to its unique concept about beauty and effective, cheaper and long lasting therapy without any side effects. The herbal paste which is applied on face to treat acne, pimples, scars, marks and pigments are known as '*Mukha Lepa*' (face pack) in *Ayurveda*. *Mukhalepa* is a simple and effective skin care treatment in *Ayurveda*, which is done using variety of herbal pastes. The herbal face pack mainly consists of different rejuvenating herbs that help in nourishment of the skin and also aid in skin cleansing and make it soft and clear. *Mukhalepas* also helps to increase the elasticity of the skin and thereby prevents the ageing of the skin, avoids wrinkles on the face, and gives a good skin tone.

The present article is aimed to provide the details about the *Lepa kalpana* from the classics of *Ayurveda*, the concept of *Mukha lepa* and the drugs mentioned in classics which are useful for improving complexion and for the common skin ailments.

KEYWORDS: *Lepakalpna, Ayurveda, Mukha lepa, Face pack.*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda an ancient science has vast description of topical applications in the name of *Lepa* described both as the *Chikitsa* of various disease conditions and for beauty. *Lepa* preparations are the topical medicaments meant for external application to the skin or mucosal membrane.

One or more drugs are pounded to fine powder form and mixed with any of the specified liquid media to prepare *Lepa*. These preparations are best known for '*Vrta Shodhana*' (keep the wounds clean) and '*Vrta ropana*' (heal the wounds).^[1]

Beauty, the quality that gives pleasure to the senses, is perhaps the desire of every human being on earth. Some are born beautiful and some are made beautiful. It is the natural desire of mankind to have a healthy and glamorous skin with attractive personality. But very few are blessed with naturally perfect skin. People always have great concern about their health and beauty. Beauty is not just a visual experience; it is characteristic that provides a perceptual experience to the eye, the ear, the intellect, the aesthetic faculty, or the moral sense. It is the quality that gives pleasure meaning or satisfaction to the senses.^[2]

The concept of using herbs for the beautification is well described in *Ayurvedic* literature. Since centuries the herbal extracts, as a whole or part, have been used for various ailments of the skin, hair and for overall appearance. A great demand from *Ayurveda* in the field of cosmetology has been established due to its unique concept about beauty and effective, cheaper and long lasting beauty therapy without any side effect. The herbal paste which is applied on face to treat acne, pimple, scars, marks and pigments are known as '*Mukha Lepa* (face pack)' in *Ayurveda*.^[3]

Mukha lepa (face pack) is one of the well known effective and oldest method which is spread over the face and left for some time to cleanse and improve the condition of the skin. It is allowed to dry or to set with the object of improving the appearance of the skin by producing a transient tightening effect as well as by cleansing the skin.^[4] Different types of skin need different types of face packs. *Mukha lepas* help us looking after skin and also prove its worthiness by increasing circulation of the blood within the veins of the face. *Mukha lepas* are helpful for preventive and curative aspects of any skin problems.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

- To provide details about the *Lepakalpana* in *Ayurveda*
- To explain the concept of *Mukhalepa* (face pack)
- To mention the drugs from *Ayurveda* classics which are useful for improving complexion and for the skin ailments.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- References of *Lepakalpana* have been collected from the classical books on *Ayurveda*.
- All data is compiled and analyzed and discussed through and in depth understanding about *Lepakalpana* and *Mukhalepa* mentioned in Ayurvedic texts.
- Drugs from classics which are used for external application are also compiled in this review.

Concept of Lepa Kalpana**Lepa Definition**

The selected freshly collected wet drugs are pounded to fine paste form and used for external application as 'Lepa'.^[5]

The selected freshly dried drugs are taken in a clean *Khalva yantra*, pounded to fine powder form and filtered. This filtrate is again taken in *Khalva yantra* and added with required little quantity of water or any of the specified liquid preparations. The mixture is thoroughly triturated to obtain it in paste form, which is used as *Lepa* for external application.

Synonyms of Lepa

Alepa, *Lipta*, *Lepa*, and *Lepana* – all these are the synonymous words used in different contexts of classical texts.^[6]

Table 1: Types of Lepa

Sushruta, 3 types	Sharangadhara, 3 types	Vagbhat, 10 types^[7]
1) <i>Pralepa</i>	1) <i>Doshaghna</i>	1) <i>Snaihika</i>
2) <i>Pradeha</i>	2) <i>Vishaghna</i>	2) <i>Nirvapana</i>
3) <i>Alepa</i>	3) <i>Varnya</i>	3) <i>Prasadana</i>
		4) <i>Stambhana</i>
		5) <i>Vilayana</i>
		6) <i>Pachana</i>
		7) <i>Pidana</i>
		8) <i>Shodhana</i>
		9) <i>Shoshana</i>
		10) <i>Savarnikarana</i>

Note: Ten types of *Lepa* according to *Vagbhata* are not quoted in one chapter or at one place. When all the relevant information from the *Ashtanga Sangraha* is put together, these ten types of *Lepa* can be summed up.

1) Pralepa^[8]

It possesses 'Shita guna' (prepared with *Shita virya dravya*). It is *Tanu* which means very thin *Lepa* as that of *Chandana* applied to the skin. *Pralepa* is of two varieties: 1) *Avishoshi* 2) *Vishoshi*

Avishoshi

Avishoshi varieties of *Lepa* are those external applications that are removed from the place of application before they dry up. These types of *Lepa* are required in conditions where *Vrnashopha pidana* (squeezing action over the wounds) is not required. After removal of the earlier *Lepa*, the fresh wet *Lepa* put in the place to avail the desired therapeutic action.

Vishoshi

Vishoshi varieties of *Lepa* are those external applications that are left in the place of application after they dry up. These types of *Lepa* are required in conditions where *Vrnashopha pidana* (squeezing action over the wounds) is required. The squeezing action exerted by the dry *Lepa* over *Vrnashopha* is helpful in ripening of the same.

2) Pradeha

Pradeha possesses either *Ushna guna* or *Shita guna*. *Ushna pradeha* is meant for *Vatakaphaja* disease conditions and *Shita pradeha* for *Pittarakta* diseases.^[9]

3) Alepa

Alepa variety of *Lepa* is that, which exhibits the mixed characteristics of both *Pralepa* and *Pradeha*. It is neither applied too thin as *Pralepa* nor applied too thick as *Pradeha*. The application will be of medium thickness.^[10]

Thickness of Lepa

Sushruta has compared the 'thickness of *Lepa*' to the thickness of buffalo's skin.^[11] He says that *Pralepa* is thinner and *Pradeha* is thicker to buffalo's skin.

It means that the actual thickness of the buffalo's skin may be taken as the thickness in between both, which will be thickness of *Alepa*. Same is the opinion of *Sharangadhara* regarding the thickness of *Lepa*. The thickness of buffalo's skin may be obtained as 2.8 to 3.2 mm. Commentators have quoted the thickness of different *Lepa* as below:^[12]

Lepa	Thickness
<i>Doshaghna lepa</i>	- 1/4 <i>angula</i> (0.48 cm)
<i>Vishaghna lepa</i>	- 1/3 <i>angula</i> (0.65 cm)
<i>Varnya lepa</i>	- 1/2 <i>angula</i> (0.97 cm)

Note : 1 *Angula* = 1.95 cm.

Lepa and the Ratio of Sneha

Sushruta explains about the ratio of *Sneha dravya* such as *Ghrta* and *Taila* to be added while preparing *Lepa*.

This is done according to *Dosha* predominance or the disease condition as shown in the table below:^[13]

Disease	Ratio of Sneha
<i>Vataja vyadhi</i>	- 1/4 th part
<i>Pittaja vyadhi</i>	- 1/6 th part
<i>Kaphaja vyadhi</i>	- 1/8 th part

Lepa Absorption Mechanism

- *Lepa* are usually applied against the hair follicular direction (*Pratiloma gati*) this facilitates the quicker absorption of the drug potency through *Romakupya* (hair roots), *Sweda vahini* (sweat glands) and *Siramukha* (blood capillaries). Even the books of contemporary medical science put forward the same

theory of drug absorption in case of external applications.^[14]

- The function of *Bhrajaka Pitta* is said to metabolize the substance of drugs applied to the skin whereas one of its main functions is to manifest the colour and complexion of the *Twak*. (skin) In function of metabolism the activities of *Saman Vayu* supported by *Vyan Vayu* is of great importance. *Ayurveda* also propagates the theory of '*Strotomaya Purush*' indicating that the whole human body is porous. When the medication is applied in the form of *Lepa* or *Pradeha*, the minute particles of the substance penetrate into the *Twak* owing to the gravitational pull and the weight of the drug. The *Upashoshana* property of *Vayu* (*Vyana* and *Samana* especially) would play a major role in the penetration, and absorption of the medicaments applied over the *Twak*. After being absorbed in the *Twak*, the drugs would act upon the body, pertaining to its *Virya* (active principle) and in some cases according to its *Prabhava*.^[15]

• Transdermal drug administration

Transdermal drug absorption can significantly alter drug kinetics. Transdermal drug absorption depends on variety of factors as follows: ^[16]

- Site of application
- Thickness and integrity of the stratum corneum epidermidis
- Size of the molecule,
- Permeability of the membrane of the transdermal drug delivery system,
- State of skin hydration
- pH of the drug,
- Drug metabolism by skin flora,
- Lipid solubility,
- Depot of drug in skin,
- Alteration of blood flow in the skin by additives and body temperature,
- Skin thickness and amount of blood flow in the skin vary considerably with age.

Lepa Preparation and Application - General Norms ^[17]

- All *Lepa* preparations are for instant use and for single use only.
- Wet drugs are triturated to very fine paste form with no fibrous part left out, to use it as *Lepa*.
- Dry drugs are thoroughly pounded and the powder obtained is sieved. The fine powder obtained as filtrate is further triturated with specified liquid to prepare *Lepa*.
- *Lepa* are applied against the hair follicular direction to facilitate quicker and better absorption.
- *Lepa* are removed soon after they dry over the place of application.
- Therapeutically *Lepa* are effective in wet state and they turn non potent and skin irritating when dry. *Sushruta* and *Sharangadhara* both have same opinion over this point.^[18,19]

- Previous *Lepa* should never be covered with fresh one. If done so, it hampers the local temperature and leads to pain and numbness in the area.
- Application of *Lepa* during night hours is prohibited. Because as night time is naturally cool it helps in transfer of body temperature from hair follicles. When *Lepa* is applied on the skin, transfer of this temperature will be hampered leading to vitiation of *Dosha* resulting in worsening of the existing skin ailments.

Concept of Mukha Lepa

The herbal paste which is applied on face to treat acne, pimple, scars, marks and pigments are known as '*Mukha Lepa* (face pack)' in Ayurveda. ^[20]

Types of Mukhalepa

Mukha lepa (face pack) are also of three types based on their therapeutic use: ^[21]

- *Doshahara*
- *Vishaghna*
- *Varnakrita*

Properties of a good quality Mukha lepa^[22]

- It should be a smooth paste without gritty particles.
- The drugs should be uniformly mixed.
- Sufficient liquid media should be added in preparation of face pack.
- It should have pleasant odor.
- It should produce a significant cleansing of skin.
- When applied to the face, it should dry out rapidly to form an adherent coating on face.
- The coating should be such which can be removed either by piling or by gentle washing and should not cause any discomfort to face.

Time for Mukhalepa

As stated earlier *Mukhalepa* should not be applied at nights nor should it be allowed to stay on after it dries up. ^[23]

Direction of Mukhalepa application

As stated earlier *Mukhalepa* should be applied against the direction of hair follicles (*Pratilom*) on the skin to make the action of application more quick and effective. ^[24]

Procedure after application of Mukhalepa ^[25]

- *Lepa* should be allowed to remain till it becomes dry; if left dry, it vitiates the complexion of skin.
- It should be removed after moistening and when removed, the face should be anointed with oil.
- The person should avoid day sleep, excessive talk, exposure to fire and sunlight, sorrow and anger.

Contraindications of Mukha lepa

It should not be applied to persons suffering from *Pinasa* (rhinorrhoea), *Ajirna* (indigestion), immediately after *Nasya karma* (nasal drops), *Arochaka* (anorexia), *Hanugraha* (lock jaw), and after keeping awake the previous night (*Jagaran*). ^[26]

Benefits of Mukhalepa [27]

- If properly applied, it cures premature graying of hair, *Vyanga* (blackish hyper pigmentation of face), and *Nilika* (bluish hyper pigmentation).
- It detoxifies the skin and enhances the beauty of the skin.
- Prevents ageing of the skin.
- Reduces skin wrinkles and tones the skin.
- Pacifies pigmentation.
- Decreases discoloration of facial skin.

Classical Drugs for Improving Face Complexion and to Cure Common Skin Ailments

Ayurvedic classics have mentioned the groups of drugs and single drugs having *Varnya* action, which can be used for improving the complexion of the skin. The drugs can be used both as externally and internally. Externally it can be used for face wash or face pack (*mukhalepa*) to improve the glow of skin and to treat the ailments.

Acharya Sharangadhara has mentioned the following drugs for Mukhalepa [28]

- *Raktachandan* (*Pterocarpus santalinus*)
- *Manjishtha* (*Rubia cordifolia*)
- *Lodhra* (*Symplocos racemosus*)
- *Kushtha* (*Saussurea lappa*)
- *Priyangu* (*Callicarpa macrophylla*)
- *Vatankura* (*Ficus bengalensis*)
- *Masura* (Lentils)
- *Matulunga jata* (*Citrus medica*)

Varnya Mahakashaya (ten complexion promoter drugs) [29]

- *Chandana* (*Santalum album* L.)
- *Tunga* (*Calophyllum inophyllum* L.)
- *Padmaka* (*Prunus cerasoides*)
- *Ushira* (*Chrysopogon zizanioides* L.)
- *Madhuka* (*Glycyrrhiza glabra* L.)
- *Manjistha* (*Rubia cordifolia* L.)
- *Sariva* (*Hemidesmus indicus* L.)
- *Paysya* (*Jacquemontia paniculata*)
- *Sita* (white variety of *Cynodon dactylon* L.)
- *Lata* (black variety of *Cynodon dactylon* L.)

Kushthaghna Mahakashaya (ten drugs for curing skin ailments) [30]

- *Khadira* (*Acacia catechu*)
- *Abhaya* (*Terminalia chebula*)
- *Amalaka* (*Phyllanthus emblica*)
- *Haridra* (*Curcuma longa*)
- *Arushkara* (*Semicarpus anacardium*)
- *Saptaparna* (*Alstonia scholaris*)
- *Aragwadha* (*Cassia fistula*)
- *Karvira* (*Nerium oleander*)
- *Vidanga* (*Embelia ribes*)
- *Jatipravala* (Tenders shoots of *Jasminum officinale*)

Kandughna Mahakashaya (drugs used in skin ailments) [31]

- *Raktachandan* (*Pterocarpus santalinus*)
- *Nalad* (*Arundo donax*)
- *Amalatas* (*Cassia fistula*)
- *Latakaranja* (*Caesalpinia crista*)
- *Neem* (*Azadirachta indica*)
- *Kutaj* (*Holerrhena antidysentrica*)
- *Sarshap* (*Bassica alba*)
- *Yashtimadhu* (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*)
- *Daruharidra* (*Berberis aristata*)
- *Mustak* (*Cyprus rotundus*)

Groups of drugs having Varnya action [32]

- *Eladi gana*
- *Panchavalka*
- *Rodhradi gana*
- *Trijataka* and *Chaturjataka*

DISCUSSION

The skin is not only important for studying the structure and function, but also application of the same in understanding the disorders arise out of it. So it has ample of importance in physical and mental wellbeing of an individual. *Lepa* preparation are applied to skin prevents metabolism of drugs in the liver and increases the bioavailability of the drug and also provides its effects directly on the site of action. It is the natural desire of mankind to have a healthy and glamorous skin. The concept of using herbs for beautification is well described in *Ayurvedic* literature. Various drugs used in preparation of *Mukhalepa*, make skin healthy in natural way and enhances the complexion without causing any adverse reaction. It can be also effectively used to get rid of common skin ailments like acne vulgaris, hyper pigmented patches, scar marks etc.^[37] So it is our social responsibility to find out effective herbs from treasure of *Ayurveda* for skin problems.

The herbs to be used for making the paste for applying on the face should be chosen carefully after studying the skin type of the person and as per the specific requirement of the person. This is very important because if the ingredients are not accurate, there will not be any desired effect from the *Mukhalepa* therapy.

Ayurveda had reached the zenith of knowledge in the *Samhita kala* regarding the application of *Lepakalpa* for therapeutic and cosmetic purposes. Moreover, in contemporary era here are tremendous opportunities for further advancement of *Lepakalpa* for much better therapeutic, cosmetic purposes by adopting current science and technology.^[38]

CONCLUSION

The face is the feature which distinguishes a person. It is one of the parameter to identify a person. All people try to keep their face neat and clean because the face is directly exposed to the external environment and get easily affected by the environmental changes. Use of *Mukhalepa* increases beauty and imparts freshness. It is better to avoid synthetic chemical based cosmetic products and use the natural substances and products. It will make

skin healthy, prevent from skin diseases and improve complexion. Herbal face packs (*Mukhalepa*) increase the fairness and smoothness of skin, also able to cure wrinkles, dark circles, pimples etc. one can derive the maximum benefits of *Mukhalepas* by using them according to their skin type. *Mukhalepas* are helpful preventive and curative purpose of any skin problem.

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