



Ancient Remedies IN A MODERN WORLD

Ancient remedies are as relevant today as they were

More so with the increasing knowledge that artificial and chemical ingredients can be detrimental, not only to the skin but for general wellbeing as well. What is put on the skin is absorbed, as the skin is the largest organ of the body. Skin is an outer protective covering which protects the face, body and scalp.

One of the main reasons that Ayurvedic skin care products and protocols are taking the spa and beauty worlds by storm is the availability of numerous potent skin rasayanas in the Ayurvedic herbal treasury.

Skin rasayanas (rasa - essence, ayana - enter) are so called because of their ability to deliver penetrating holistic benefits to the skin without side effects or damage caused by a fragmented approach to skin health. Whatever the skin type or its needs for balance, there are Ayurvedic skin rasayanas that can help. Further, when used in combination, as is the Ayurvedic tradition, there is the added benefit of synergy, with the combined formulation being exponentially more beneficial than any single herb in the formulation. These rasayanas should be seen as nutritional supplements to provide support to the skin- face, body and hair in topical formulations where the benefits are delivered trans-dermally. It should be noted that true Ayurvedic formulations for internal or external use are only effective when used in combination with other herbs to help alleviate or balance a problem.

The therapeutic value of the rasayanas is maximized when they are used in natural topical formulations in combination with emollients such as milk, cream, yogurt or honey, exfoliating substances such as natural clay, salts, grain or lentil flours, vegetable base oils, and floral waters or pure vegetable oils to act as the yogavahi - the carrier of the healing values of the herbs to the cells and tissues. Both the herbs themselves, as well as the other ingredients in the formulations, can be chosen specifically for a skin type, or balanced to suit all skin types.

Formulations that are tridoshic - suitable for all skin types - generally have many more

herbs and ingredients to avoid aggravating an individual dosha (body type). The herbs should not be exposed to high temperatures, and should be of high quality and fresh. Formulations that add herbs to chemical bases or that contain artificial preservatives or fragrances are not as effective in maintaining skin health and appearance because the herbs in such formulations are not as active or have been processed. Just as processed food is said to have less nutrients than fresh food.

Vata skin, space or air predominant, is delicate and tends to be naturally dry. Skin rasayanas that benefit Vata types are mainly nourishing, with subsidiary benefits such as enhancing natural glow or purifying the skin. Such herbs also balance Vata dosha in the physiology, calming and settling the mind and supporting stress management and mind/body co-ordination so that the ravages of worry and excessive mental pressure do not show up on the skin as fine lines, sagging and bags under the eyes. Nourishment and deep, ongoing rehydration are essential if Vata skin is to look healthy, plump and youthful.

Brahmi (Bacopa), Shatavari (Indian Asparagus), Amla (Indian Gooseberry), Gotu kola (Indian Pennywort) and Ashwagandha (Winter Cherry) are potent Vata-pacifying skin rasayanas that help support skin elasticity, moisture balance, texture and radiance. They are ultra-nourishing, helping to regenerate skin cells and keep skin looking youthful. Triphala, made from equal parts of Indian Gooseberry, Beleric Myrobalan and Chebulic Myrobalan, are also excellent for Vata skin because it combines nourishment with a gentle detoxifying effect to enhance skin clarity. Topical formulations for Vata skin infuses these herbs with nourishing oils using traditional methodology that make the formulation effective.

Pitta skin, fire predominant, is sensitive and is generally neither dry nor oily. Skin rasayanas that support the health of Pitta skin are mainly cooling and soothing, with some element of nourishing and purifying as well. These

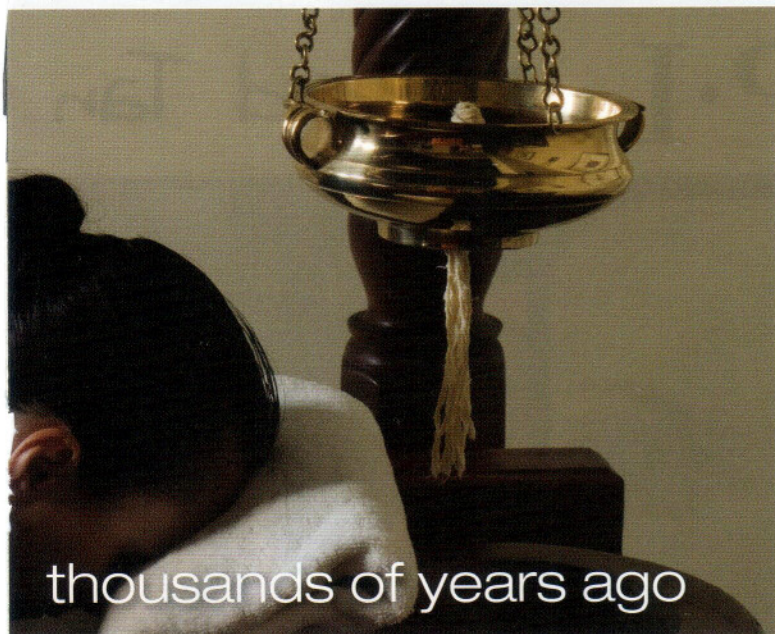
rasayanas also balance Pitta in the physiology, balancing the emotions and strengthening the heart/mind co-ordination so that inner serenity and emotional balance are reflected on the skin as a healthy glow and brightness, and angry eruptions and redness are avoided by the inclusion of herbs that help constrict capillaries, cool and calm the skin. Pitta skin also requires protection, because it tends to be more photo-sensitive than other types of skin.

Amla, Bhingaraj (Eclipta alba), Kumari (aloe vera), White Sandalwood, Red Sandalwood and Lajawanti (Mimosa Pudica) are considered the pre-eminent Pitta-pacifying skin rasayanas. They draw out excess heat, support the skin's natural ability to withstand the ravages of the environment, and keep skin clear and healthy. They nourish sensitive skin tissue without irritating it. Triphala, Manjistha (Indian Madder) and Neem are also helpful for Pitta skin because they purify and clarify the skin without depleting it of moisture or youthfulness. Topical formulations for Pitta skin combine these herbs with soothing oils.

Kapha skin, water or earth predominant, is oily, and tends to be congested and susceptible to attracting dust and grime. Skin rasayanas for Kapha skin are therefore first purifiers that detoxify and clarify, with subsidiary properties of being nourishing and rejuvenating. These herbs also balance Kapha dosha in the physiology, invigorating the mind and body so that the skin appears alive and vital, reducing the congestion that dulls Kapha skin.

Neem, Manjistha (Indian Madder), Triphala, Tulsi (Holy Basil), Cloves and Turmeric are potent Kapha-balancing skin rasayanas. They help detoxify the skin while nourishing it at the same time. They balance oil content in the skin and enhance clarity and brightness. Because of their effective detoxification properties, these rasayanas keep Kapha skin squeaky clean, so that it stays healthy and naturally radiant. Topical formulations for Kapha skin combine these herbs with light oils.

Tridoshic formulations (which means for all skin types) draw on skin rasayanas from each



thousands of years ago

group to offer the combined benefits of nourishment, detoxification, protection and balanced temperature.

Ayurvedic formulations in the form Lotions and Creams do not have water in them, therefore they appear to be thick in consistency. The base is generally oil in which herbs are infused for maximum potency and beeswax. The importance of this is that they should be viewed as concentrates and can be made lighter on application by using wet fingertips to massage them in. Massaging the cream or lotion helps the skin to absorb the goodness and impart the benefits

Some herbs have strong colours like turmeric, red sandalwood, manjishta (madder), saffron. Products made to traditional formulations will reflect the herbs used in them. The same will apply to scent.

Some of the most popular herbs used in Ayurvedic beauty care and their uses.

Turmeric (Haldi) – Curucuma Longa: Turmeric is mainly used to ensure a glowing, bright skin. Turmeric face masks are extensively available for their skin-friendly treatment that prevents bacterial infection. Turmeric pastes cure pigmentation, maintain the pH factor and are applied on the neck, face and over-all body to enhance the complexion and brightness of skin.

White Sandalwood (Chandan) – Santalum Album: The external application of chandan is through oil, powder and paste derived from the herb. The aromatic essence of chandan has made it a favourite of the beauty industry. It possesses various soothing qualities that effectively work to improve skin ailments and alleviate allergies. Herbal face masks and scrubs made from sandalwood powder cleanse the skin thoroughly and bring a healthy glow to it. Chandan has cooling properties.

Red Sandalwood (Rakta Chandana) – Pterocarpus santalinus: Red sandalwood powder which has antiseptic properties and hence, it is used for healing wounds. It is also calming and cooling. Red Sandalwood is used in face tonics, creams and lotions.

Neem – Azadirachta indica: This herb is used as a skin cleanser, acne, psoriasis and eczema and to treat common hair problems like dandruff.

Basil (tulsi) – Ocimum sanctum: Effective against scars and blemishes. Basil leaves contains many health benefits such as eugenol, citronellol, linalool, citral, limonene and terpineol. These compounds are known to have anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial properties. The Basil herb contains exceptionally high levels of beta-carotene, vitamin A, cryptoxanthin, lutein and zeaxanthin. These compounds help act as protective scavengers against oxygen-derived free radicals and reactive oxygen species (ROS) that play a role in aging.

Aloe Vera: Aloe Vera is used in many skin care formulations. It heals skin irritations and scars. The primal effect of this herb comes from its soothing properties.

By Yasmin Sadikot, Founder, OmVeda International. For more information please visit www.omveda.com.au or call 1 300 662 383.

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