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Role of Aahar, Vihar, Pathya, and Apathya in Complexion: A Review Article

	
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ABSTRACT

"Complexion" in humans is referred to the natural color, texture, and appearance of skin. In Ayurveda complexion is described as varna which is of different types like Gaur(fair), Krishna(black), Gaurshyam, and krishnashyam. According to Acharya Charaka, it is mentioned that Ahara (Diet), Nidra (Sleep), and Brahmacharya (Celibacy) are the main pillars of healthy and long life. Acharya Charaka explains particular Ahar and Vihar for particular varna(complexion) which starts before the pregnancy for mainly desire complexion of the baby. Mahabhutas play an important role in Varnotpatti(formation of skin color). According to Acharya Sushruta, Agni mahabhuta(fire) is responsible for the formation of color. During the development of the fetus combination of Mahabharata generate different varna(color) in the fetus. Nowadays, looking beautiful has been an urge of the human race. Along with Ahara, many Dinacharya (daily regimens) like Brahma muhurta (early wake up), Dantadhavan (cleaning tooth), Nasya (nasal instillation), Abhyanga (massage), Shirobhyanga (head massage), etc. also given by our acharyas with a specific time. A certain taste has a direct correlation with disease manifestation, hence it should be avoided by following proper Pathya and Apathya.



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INTRODUCTION:

The word “*Complexion*” is derived from the Latin word “*complexi*” which meant a combination of things and later in physiological terms, the balance of humor i.e. body fluids. Complexion in humans is referred to the natural colour, texture, and appearance of skin.¹ In Ayurveda complexion is described as *varna* which is of different types like Gaur(fair), Krishna(black), Gaurshyam, and krishnashyam.² According to Acharya Charaka, it is mentioned that Ahara (*Diet*), Nidra (*Sleep*), and Brahmacharya (*Celibacy*) is the main pillars of healthy and long life. Acharya Charaka explains particular Ahar and Vihar for particular *varna*(*complexion*) which starts before the pregnancy for mainly desire complexion of the baby.³ “*Aahar*” means “*Diet*” which is very much important for everyone to sustain life and maintaining normal physiological functioning of the human body. If a portion of healthy food is taken in proper quantity then it provides strength, good complexion, good life, health, and wellness. It also nourishes the mind, body, and soul.⁴ Food essentially contains five types of elements of nature which are Akash (*space*), Vayu (*air*), Agni (*fire*), Jala (*water*), and Prithvi(*earth*). Mahabhutas play an important role in Varnotpatti(*formation of skin colour*). According to Acharya Sushruta, Agni mahabhuta(*fire*) is responsible for the formation of colour. During the development of the fetus combination of mahabhuta generate different *varna*(*colour*) in the fetus.⁵ Ahara provides health benefits through its nutritional value, when food is not prepared or not consumed correctly then nutrition does not provide significant health benefits.⁶ Nowadays, looking beautiful has been an urge of the human race.⁷ People are doing several procedures to maintain their skin health. Ahar and vihar are two main modalities of prevention and management of the disease.⁸ Along with Ahara, many Dinacharya (*daily regimens*) like Brahma muhurta (*early wake up*), Dantadhavan (*cleaning tooth*), Nasya (*nasal instillation*), Abhyanga (*massage*), Shirobhyanga (*head massage*), etc. also given by our acharyas with a specific time.⁹ The certain taste has a direct correlation with disease manifestation, hence it should be avoided by following proper Pathya and Apathya.¹⁰

Dietary factors for complexion:

Some of the diets explained for complexion:

1) **Green tea:** The antioxidant catechins found in green tea that protect skin against sun damage and reduce redness, improves hydration and elasticity.¹¹

2) **Walnuts:** It is a good source of essential fats, vitamin E, zinc, protein, and selenium. All these nutrients make healthy skin.¹²

3) **Sweet potatoes** Are an excellent source of beta carotene, which acts as a natural sunblock and may protect your skin from sun damage.¹³

4) **Tomatoes** Are a good source of vitamin C, carotenoids, and especially lycopene. These carotenoids protect skin from sun damage and may help prevent wrinkling.¹⁴

5) **Papaya:** It is rich in antioxidants such as lycopene helps to improve the elasticity of the skin and minimize wrinkles. In papaya presence of enzymes like papain and chymopapain can decrease inflammation and acne. The presence of beta-carotene, vitamins, and phytochemicals in papaya have skin-lightening properties.¹⁵

Aahar guna:

Satvik Aahar (Ideal food):

Satvik means pure essence. The diet nourishes the body and maintains it in a peaceful state¹⁶. Satvik diet is seasonal fresh fruits, whole grains, milk, honey, and various vegetables. Satvik food has high nutritional value and is easy for digestion. It promotes complexion by balancing doshas.¹⁷

In vegetables and fruits, the presence of yellow-red organic pigments i.e. carotenoid pigments which are powerful antioxidants that prevent various diseases and makes skin healthy.¹⁸

In Aahar Pravicharan (Food should avoid):

Viruddha Ahara (Antagonistic Food material):

It means to take food which in much respect is the antagonist to the wellbeing of humanity. According to Acharaya Charaka 18 types of Viruddha ahara i.e. *Desh (place)* Aniruddha, *Kala viruddha (time incompatibility)*, *Agni viruddha (contradictory to digestion)*, *Matra viruddha (dose incompatibility)*, *Satmyaviruddha (wholesome incompatibility)*, *Dosha viruddha (contradictory to dosa)*, *Sanskar viruddha (food processing)*, *Virya viruddha (potency)*, etc. By this vitiation, aggravation of doshas and makes body ill e.g. don't eat eggs along with fruit, fish, yogurt and meat. Don't eat grains with fruits.¹⁹

If we take viruddhaahara regularly will cause inflammation at a molecular level, disturbing the eicosanoid pathway creating more arachidonic acid leading to increased prostaglandin-2 and thromboxane. This inflammatory effect will create ama, agnimandya, and several metabolic disorders.²⁰

Save of the person:

Satvaguna is the reason for pure mind and thoughts, intelligence, good concentration, and keen memory.²¹

Role of Dinacharya (daily regimen) in complexion:

In Ayurvedic text, Dinacharya (*daily regimens*) are given for humans to be healthy and also will helpful for skin health and complexion.

1) Brahma muhurat (early wakeup): In this time predominance of sattva or purity in the mind, as well as in the atmosphere. In this period, Nascent oxygen which is liberated early in the morning will easily and readily mix up with hemoglobin to form oxy-hemoglobin which reaches and nourishes the remote tissues rapidly.²²

2) Mukha prakshalana (Facewash): By cleaning the face with Lodhradi kwath (*decoction*) helps to relieve mukhasosa (*Dryness of face*), pidika (*pimples*), vyanga (*hyperpigmentation*), etc.²³

3) Dantadhavan/Cleaning of teeth: Helps to maintain oral hygiene. It produces alleviation of Kapha, cleanness in the mouth, and desire for food. It prevents dental carries by the maintenance of salivary pH and promotion of salivary secretion. Regular mechanical removal of food debris and control over acid formation helps to prevent dental plaque which in turn prevents periodontal diseases.²⁴

4) Daily practice of Nasya (nasal instillation): Is useful in hair falls, greying of hairs, or white hairs. The hair grows abundantly and the face becomes cheerful.²⁵

5) Galusha (gargles): Mouth is filled with dravya and kept without movement in gandusha. The practice of Gandusha enhances the voice, nourishment of the face, the strength of the mandible, taste sensation, and good taste. It prevents the dryness of the throat, decay of teeth and makes the teeth strong.²⁶

6) Abhyanga (massage): Body massage Should be done daily. It relieves exertion and excess of Vata from the body. It stimulates the new cells and helps in the removal of dead skin hence, it delays aging, improves complexion, etc.²⁷

Pathya (wholesome) and Apathya (unwholesome):

The person should follow particular pathya (wholesome) and apathya (unwholesome) for better skin health.²⁸

Some Pathya (wholesome) diets are as follows:²⁹

- Drink plenty of water to keep the body hydrated and soft. Water flushes the toxins out of the body and nourishes them. Staying hydrated improves the elasticity of the skin.
- The person should take Go-ghrita (*cow ghee*) because it has antioxidants properties and Vitamin E. It also has an antibacterial property that helps with acne.
- Takra (*buttermilk*): Helps to cleans the srotas(*channels*), navaneeta (*butter*), go-dugdha (*cow milk*), and mahishdugdha (*buffalo milk*).
- Mudga (*green gram*), masura (*lentil*) is the best protein and is easily digestible.
- Raktashali (*red rice*), shastikashali (*Navara rice*), godhuma (*wheat flour*), yava (*barley*), and rice in carbohydrates.
- Dadima (*pomegranate*), amalaki (*Embllica Officinalis*), haritaki (*Terminalia chebula*) is tridosha shamaka.
- Saindhav (*rock salt*) is the best for daily use but not to use in excess.

Apathya(unwholesome):

- Dadhi (*curd*), alkaline foods, dry vegetables, and uncooked food, moolaka, fast food, more spices, etc.

SUMMARY

The Complexion is not only a psychological and social issue but also relates to the general health of the persons. Skin reflects health. In Ayurveda, rakta and pitta vitiation are responsible for impairment of skin health, complexion, color, etc. Nutrition plays an

important role in health. In today's era due to busy life and developed technology, it is very difficult to maintain skin health. So, it is concluded that various fruits, vegetables are having powerful antioxidant, carotenoid pigments that prevents various diseases and makes skin healthy and by doing all vihar, Sathya and apathy helps for balances of tridoshas and having a good impact on skin health.

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