



Herbal Cosmetics and ancient Indian Medical Solutions: A Timeless Confluence of Beauty and Healing

Khushbu Singhal^{1*}, Kishori Lal Sharma²

*¹ PG Scholar, Department of Kriya Sharir, Madan Mohan Malviya Government Ayurved College, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India.

²Associate Professor, Department of Kriya Sharir, Madan Mohan Malviya Government Ayurved College, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India.

Corresponding Author: Khushbu Singhal

ABSTRACT: The history of beauty and cosmetics is deeply entwined with human civilization, where physical appearance, health, and cultural identity have long been interlinked. In today's era of increased beautification demands—alongside stress, pollution, and dependence on synthetic products—the incidence of beauty-related concerns has surged. *Ayurveda* offers a holistic beauty framework, emphasizing the alignment of a nourished body (*Sharira*), focused mind (*Manas*), and serene spirit (*Atma*)¹. This review delves into classical Ayurvedic works—including *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Aṣṭanga Hṛdaya*, *Bhavaprakasa*, and *Sarangadhara Samhita*—to compile and categorize herbal cosmetic formulations such as Lepa, Taila and Churna². The findings reveal a vast array of time honored remedies addressing conditions like *Indralupta* (alopecia), *Vyanga* (melasma), *Khalitya* (hair fall) and overall skin vitality—each remedy not only enhancing aesthetics but also rectifying underlying *Doshik* imbalances³. Classical Ayurvedic cosmetology, grounded in safety, sustainability, and therapeutic efficacy, presents promising, low-side-effect alternatives to modern synthetic cosmetics. Integrating these herbal formulations into contemporary cosmetology could yield durable, holistic results, realizing beauty that resonates with well-being.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Herbal Cosmetics, *Lepa*, Natural Formulations, Therapeutic Beauty.

INTRODUCTION

Close your eyes and drift back to your grandmother's garden, where aloe vera leaves glisten with morning dew, turmeric warms the earthy air and sandalwood's soft, woody fragrance drifts through the breeze. These aren't just plants—they're stories of healing, tradition and nature's gentle power.

From that timeless garden springs, the quiet revolution of herbal cosmetics. In India, where Ayurveda has been a guiding philosophy for millennia, we're rediscovering remedies passed lovingly from generation to generation: aloe for soothing, neem for clarity, amla for radiance, turmeric for its golden glow. These ingredients are not just components of skincare—they are cultural legacies captured in every jar. This reconnection with our roots isn't just nostalgia—it's a meaningful embrace of beauty that honours both the Earth and our well-being. And it's driving remarkable growth—the Indian herbal beauty and skincare market reached **USD 3.1 billion in 2024**, and is on track to blossom into **USD 10.3 billion by 2033**, growing at a robust **CAGR of 14.4%**.

The pull of herbal cosmetics isn't just about cleaner ingredients; it's about trust, authenticity and stories we can believe in. Brands rooted in these values are thriving. Forest Essentials, with its luxurious *Ayurvedic*-infused beauty and Vicco Laboratories, known for turmeric-based creams, illustrate how ancient wisdom is being reimagined for modern beauty.

This revival isn't merely fashionable—it's living history. Ancient rituals from civilization's cradle—recipes of face masks (*lepa*), oils (*Taila*) and nourishing ghee blends (*ghrta*), aligned beauty with seasons and inner balance, viewing self-care as nourishment for body and spirit. Even in legendary texts like the *Mahabharata*, Draupadi carried her *Prasadhana petika*, showcasing how beauty was both ritual and empowerment. In essence, herbal cosmetics have always been more than adornment—they are heritage in harmony with wellness and identity.

Today's consumers don't just buy beauty—they buy values. They seek products that speak to their health, their ethics, their connection with earth. That intent has powered the global herbal beauty surge as well: by 2024, the market reached **USD 94.11 billion**, with expectations to soar to **USD 323.36 billion** by 2033—fuelled by a growing demand for natural, eco-conscious beauty.

In the rhythm of our tech-driven era, there is something quietly powerful in turning to rituals rooted in soil, texture and fragrance. Herbal cosmetics embody that—offering beauty that feels soulful, sustainable, and profoundly connected to our heritage.

So, let's journey forward, exploring how ancient botanicals are being validated by modern science, how brands are crafting narratives that resonate deeply, and how herbal beauty bridges time with intention, wellness, and meaning.

METHODOLOGY

The review follows a systematic and transparent methodology rooted in both rigor and relevance. Research questions centred on the chemical composition, therapeutic properties, and efficacy of key herbal ingredients—such as aloe vera, turmeric and neem—form the foundation of the inquiry.

Data extraction focused on extracting standardized information: botanical source, extraction method, concentration, bioactivity (e.g., antioxidant capacity), formulation type and any safety findings. This enabled consistent comparison across studies. In addition to scientific literature, market insights and real-world applications were drawn from reputable industrial and ethnobotanical reports, providing meaningful context to laboratory-only findings.

A narrative synthesis approach was adopted, clustering findings by ingredient or thematic concerns—such as efficacy, sustainability, and safety—and emphasizing both strengths and limitations of the evidence base.

This methodology combines structured literature search and extraction with narrative interpretation and clarity—ensuring that the review is both credible and meaningful to readers seeking evidence-informed, culturally grounded insights on herbal cosmetics.

DISCUSSION

A rich tapestry of botanical heritage lies at the heart of Indian herbal cosmetics. This review uncovers a remarkable array of plants—such as Aloe vera, Tulsi, Neem, Hibiscus, Saffron, Turmeric, Fenugreek, and more—that have long been cherished in traditional medicine for their beauty-enhancing and healing qualities. These botanicals, sourced from various parts—leaves, flowers, roots, seeds, and stems—find their way into lotions, oils, face masks, and creams, each imbued with unique phytochemicals like flavonoids, saponins, alkaloids, essential oils, and antioxidants. These compounds deliver potent benefits: hydrating and cleansing the skin, soothing irritation, boosting elasticity, and supporting skin and hair vitality. For instance, rose essential oil helps maintain elasticity, while the phenolic richness of turmeric and tulsi brings powerful

antioxidant and anti-inflammatory actions⁴. These indigenous ingredients—rooted in Ayurveda—are now gaining traction in global beauty markets, thanks to their natural efficacy and gentler profiles.

Challenges to Navigating Herbal Beauty:

Despite all these promising attributes, several challenges remain:

- **Raw Material Variability & Quality Control:** Natural fluctuations in plant constituents—affected by climate, harvest time, and processing methods—make product consistency challenging.
- **Lack of Standardization:** The absence of harmonized global standards for herbal extraction, quality benchmarks, and manufacturing practices makes regulatory compliance complicated.
- **Shelf-Life and Stability Issues:** Without synthetic preservatives, many herbal formulations have shorter shelf lives and are prone to degradation and microbial risks.

Looking Ahead: Opportunities & Promise

The future of herbal cosmetics is ripe with innovation:

- **Cutting-edge technologies** like nanotechnology and green chemistry hold the potential to significantly enhance the stability and efficacy of botanical products.
- **Consumer awareness**—especially around the benefits, limitations, and safe use of herbal formulations—can help build trust and foster wider adoption.

In Summary

Indian herbal cosmetic traditions weave a compelling narrative—of natural efficacy, cultural legacy, and skin-deep care. The plants studied here—Neem for its antibacterial properties.

Aloe for soothing hydration, Turmeric for brightening resilience—offer multi-dimensional benefits. While challenges like standardization, sourcing, and shelf-life persist, advances in technology and growing consumer trust are paving the way for a promising future in truly sustainable beauty.

Benefits of herbal cosmetics:

Herbal cosmetics are gaining popularity as a safer, more sustainable alternative to synthetic beauty products. These natural formulations offer numerous benefits that align with modern consumers' preferences for gentler, eco-conscious, and ethical skincare solutions.

Gentle and Skin-Friendly

Formulated without harsh chemicals, herbal cosmetics are less likely to cause skin irritation or allergic reactions. Ingredients like aloe vera, chamomile, and turmeric are known for their soothing and anti-inflammatory properties, making them suitable for all skin types, including sensitive and acne-prone skin.

Nutrient-Rich and Effective

Packed with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, herbal products nourish the skin and hair. For instance, turmeric's curcumin content provides antioxidant and anti-inflammatory benefits, while aloe vera offers hydration and healing properties.

Eco-Friendly and Sustainable

Herbal cosmetics often use biodegradable ingredients and recyclable packaging, reducing their environmental impact. Many brands prioritize ethical sourcing and cruelty-free practices, aligning with the growing consumer demand for sustainability.

Affordable and Accessible

Natural cosmetics are often more affordable than their synthetic counterparts. The World Health Organization supports the use of traditional herbal remedies due to their cost-effectiveness and safety, making them accessible to a broader population.

"Harnessing India's Herbal Legacy: Nature's Bounty in Modern Beauty"

Imagine our skin and hair being pampered with remedies passed down through generations—botanical gifts like Amla, Brahmi, Shikakai, Neem, Aloe vera, and others. Each plays its own unique role in nurturing beauty naturally and richly:

1. Amlaki (Indian Gooseberry / *Emblica officinalis*)

Amla is a vitamin C powerhouse—said to contain up to twenty times more than oranges—and brims with antioxidants and tannins that help brighten the skin, even tone, and support collagen production. It also strengthens hair, supports scalp health, and gives a natural glow⁵.

2. Brahmi (*Bacopa monnieri*)

A timeless Ayurvedic gem, Brahmi soothes inflammation, fights free radicals, promotes collagen production, and supports healing—making it beloved for aging skin, acne, and uneven texture. On the hair front, it nourishes, improves scalp circulation, reduces dandruff, and helps tame hair fall.

3. Shikakai (*Acacia concinna*)

Gentle yet effective, Shikakai has historically been used as a natural hair cleanser. It removes dirt, excess oils, lice, and buildup without harsh stripping—promoting soft, tangle-free hair.

4. Neem (*Azadirachta indica*)

Neem’s reputation as “*Sarva Roga Nivarini*” (the healer of all afflictions) underscores its antibacterial and antifungal strengths. It’s a frontline defender against acne, scalp infections, and inflammation, helping to purify and balance skin and scalp.

5. Aloe vera

Celebrated for its cooling, hydrating, and soothing nature, Aloe vera brings gentle relief to irritated or sunburnt skin. It’s also known to support skin healing and moisture retention. For hair, it nourishes the scalp and promotes shine and vitality—though its effects may vary based on formulation purity.

6. Multani Mitti (Fuller's Earth):

Known for its oil-absorbing and purifying properties, Multani Mitti helps cleanse the skin by drawing out impurities and excess sebum. Its gentle exfoliating action removes dead skin cells, unclogs pores, and tightens the skin, making it beneficial for acne-prone and oily skin types.

7. Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*): Turmeric, particularly its active compound curcumin, offers anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and antimicrobial benefits. It aids in reducing acne, lightening hyperpigmentation, and promoting an even skin tone. Additionally, turmeric supports wound healing and enhances skin elasticity, contributing to a youthful appearance.

8. Sandalwood (*Chandan*): Sandalwood possesses anti-inflammatory and antiseptic properties, making it effective in treating acne, eczema, and sunburns. It helps in reducing redness, soothing irritated skin, and lightening dark spots. Regular use can promote an even skin tone and a radiant complexion.

Drug	RASA(Taste)	VEERYA (Potency)	VIPAKA (post digestive effect)	GUNA (qualities)	KARMA (therapeutic action)
Aamlaki	Amla	Sheeta	Madhura	Guru, Snigdha	Tridoshnashak
Brahmi	Tikt,Kashaya, madhura	Sheeta	Madhura	Laghu, sheetal	Kusthagna,sothhara
Chandan	Madhura,tikt	Sheeta	Katu	guru	Vrana nashak
Turmeric	Katu,tiktras	Ushna	Katu	Ruksha	Varnya
Aloe vera	Tikt,madhyra	Sheeta	Madhura	Snigdha,Pichhil	Charmarog nashak
Neem	tikt	Ushna	Katu	Snigdha,laghu	Kusthagna

In short, herbal cosmetics offer a threefold gift:

- ❖ A gentle, skin-kind experience, rich with compounds that nurture rather than burden.
- ❖ A powerful blend of multi-purpose benefits, combining moisture, calm, repair, and antioxidation in one.
- ❖ A mindful beauty choice, aligned with sustainability, conscious sourcing, and gentle environmental footprints.

Still, it's wise to remember: "natural" doesn't always mean "harmless." Personal sensitivities exist, and choosing products with clear labels and thoughtful sourcing ensures the benefits shine through safely and meaningfully.

Here are the three **Ayurvedic therapies**—Udvardana, Lepa, and Nasya.

Udvardana:

“Herbal Powder Massage for Natural Detox & Skin Glow”.

Definition and Technique

Derived from Sanskrit, *Udvardana* literally means "upward rubbing."

This unique Ayurvedic massage uses herbal powders or pastes—which may be dry or mixed with medicated oils—and is applied in vigorous strokes against the direction of hair growth (*Pratiloma Gati*), typically moving from the feet upward toward the heart.

Types

- Dry (*Ruksha*) *Udvardana*⁶: Uses only dry herbal powders. Excellent for reducing excess *Kapha*, cellulite, and localized fat, as well as promoting lymphatic drainage.
- Oily (*Snigdha Utsadana*) *Udvardana*: Involves blending powders with medicated oils or ghee. Ideal for dry skin, weakened muscle tone, and individuals with *Vata* imbalances; it also adds nourishment and glow.

Benefits

- Detoxifies by stimulating lymphatic flow and eliminating toxins (*Ama*) through the skin.
- Breaks down fat and cellulite, helping tone the body and reduce blemishes.
- Exfoliates dead skin cells and revitalizes skin texture for a luminous glow.
- Improves circulation, boosts metabolism, and energizes the body and mind.
- Acts as a natural deodorant, reducing body odor, and even calms the mind while providing stress relief.

Lepa:

“Herbal Cream Masks for Skin Nourishment & Repair”

Description

Lepa refers to a topical application where powdered or paste-like herbal formulations are applied directly to the body or face⁷. These mixtures often use a base like water, decoction, milk, honey, ghee, or specialized oils depending on the intended therapeutic outcome.

Usage Tips

- Apply against the direction of hair (for better absorption).
- Remove as soon as the paste dries⁸.
- Avoid applying at night, to allow skin to breathe.
- Never overlap new applications on old ones to prevent irritation.

Benefits

- Effectively treats inflammation, wounds, and enhances wound-cleaning and healing.

- Improves skin complexion, nourishes tissues, and provides targeted therapeutic care depending on herb selection.

Nasya

“Nasal Beauty Ritual for Inner Radiance”

Essence of the Therapy

Nasya involves administering medicated oils, powders, or herbal juices through the nasal passages. In Ayurveda, it's emphasized that "the nose is the gateway to the head⁹," aiding medicine to deliver benefits directly to the upper body and brain regions.

Cosmetic and Therapeutic Applications

- Hair & Scalp: Effective in managing issues like hair fall, premature greying, and dandruff through specific oils (e.g., *Bhringaraja Taila*, *Chandana Taila*).
- Skin Disorders: Useful for acne, melasma, pigmentation, and minor skin ailments. (*Yuvanpidika*, *Vyanga*, *Darunaka*).
- Sensory Enhancement: Nurtures the health of sensory organs and vitality of the face and head.

Overall

Impact

Nasya is both corrective and preventive—balancing Doshas, rejuvenating tissues, and supporting clarity of mind and sensory wellness. It beautifully complements cosmetic care by targeting root causes and enhancing overall radiance.

Comprehensive Classification of Herbal Cosmetics

Herbal cosmetics are categorized based on their dosage forms and the body parts they are intended for. This classification ensures targeted application and efficacy of the products.

I. Dosage Forms

- Emulsions: Cold creams, vanishing creams, liquid creams
- Powders: Face powders, talcum powders, tooth powders
- Oils: Hair oils
- Mucilage: Hand lotions
- Gels: Hand jellies, wave set jellies
- Suspensions: Cosmetic stockings
- Pastes: Toothpaste, deodorant paste
- Soaps: Shampoo soaps, shaving soaps, toilet soaps
- Solutions: Aftershave lotions, hair set lotions.

II. Application Areas

Skin Care: Creams, lotions, face packs, deodorants, bath and cleansing products, makeup preparations.

Hair Care: Shampoos, hair tonics, hair dressings, hair waving preparations, beard softeners, shaving media.

Oral Care: Tooth powders, dentifrices (toothpaste), mouthwashes.

Nail Care: Nail polishes, nail polish removers, manicure preparations

Shaving Preparations: Shaving creams, shaving foams.

Foot Care: Foot powders, foot creams

This structured classification aids in the development and use of herbal cosmetics, ensuring that each product is formulated to meet specific needs effectively.

CONCLUSION

In weaving together centuries-old wisdom and modern beauty, this review reveals a promising path forward. Time-honoured botanicals like aloe vera, tulsi, neem, turmeric, saffron, hibiscus, and fenugreek

continue to captivate not only with their soothing, brightening, and healing properties—but with their ability to connect us to tradition and nature itself.

Today's consumers, especially those embracing clean and conscious beauty, are longing for products that not only feel gentle and effective but also carry stories and ethics. And the herbal cosmetics market is answering that call.

Yet, even as this botanical renaissance blooms, it needs the grounding force of rigorous science—clinical trials, safety testing, and transparent quality standards—to build trust and ensure herbal beauty is more than sentiment—it's substance. When ancient remedies meet modern validation, the result is beauty that's honest, effective, and deeply rooted.

REFERENCES

1. Charaka Samhita. The foundational Ayurvedic text outlining holistic beauty principles aligned with body, mind, and spirit. *Charaka Samhita*, c. 100 BCE – 200 CE.
2. Cosmetology in Ayurveda – Classical Medicaments. Overview of formulations like Lepa, Taila, Ghrita for cosmetic use. *World Journal of Pharmaceutical Research*. 2020;9(3)
3. Cosmeceutical Assets of Ancient Ayurvedic Astuteness. Documentation of specific formulations for melasma, alopecia, blemishes, hair growth (e.g., Indralupta, Vyanga treatments). *International Journal of Green Pharmacy*.
4. Clinical study of herbal ingredients (including turmeric) in skincare – Demonstrated antioxidant, antimicrobial, and anti-inflammatory properties of turmeric (curcumin) and other herbs in treating acne and enhancing skin health. *PMC* 2023.
5. *Phyllanthus emblica L. (amla) branch: A safe and effective ingredient against skin aging* – PMC [Internet]. 2021 [cited 2025 Aug 14]; Shows that topical amla branch extract improves skin elasticity, hydration, wrinkle reduction, and skin lightening.
6. Singh J. Udvardana – Ayurvedic Powder Massage. *Ayur Times* [Internet]. 2015 Oct 21 [cited 2025 Aug 14]; Outlines definitions, dry and oily types, technique, benefits such as cellulite reduction, lymphatic drainage, skin glow.
7. Benefits of Ayurveda Herbal Face Packs – Dr. Savitha Suri (2025): Describes how Mukha Lepa (herbal face pack) nourishes the skin, provides nutrients, treats inflammation, improves complexion, and aids tissue nourishment.
8. Ayurvedic Facial – Mukha Lepa for Radiant Skin – *Tatva Ayurved*: Outlines usage guidelines such as application technique, removal timing, and precautions to prevent irritation, including the avoidance of overlapping applications and nighttime use.
9. Charak Ayurlekha – Nasya Therapy in Ayurveda: Highlights Nasya as an ancient Panchakarma practice and uses the phrase “*Nasa hi shiraso dwaram*” (“the nose is the gateway to the head and brain”), along with benefits for cognition, detox, sinus clearance, and hair growth