

Chapter 3. Ayurvedic Hair Care Principles

Part 1 — “Keśa” Explained, Plus Hair-Type & Scalp-Condition Mapping

1. What Is Keśa in Ayurveda?

Classical Point	Modern Parallel	“Why It Matters” for a Cosmetologist
Upadhātu of Asthi Dhātu - hair arises as a secondary tissue from bone-nutrient metabolism.	Strong hair needs the same minerals (Ca, P, trace Zn) that bones do.	Low-bone clients (osteopenia, post-partum) often show hair fall – treat both.
Governed by Bhrajaka Pitta + Vyāna Vāta + Ślesaka Kapha	Pigment & shine (Pitta), circulation (Vāta), sebum-lubrication (Kapha).	Target the dominant sub-doṣa when formulating oils/serums.
Nourished via Rasavaha & Medovaha Srotas	Blood/lymph micro-flow & sebaceous pathways.	Steam or scalp dhāra opens these channels before applying active taila.

2. Anatomy Snapshot (for non-biologists)

- Hair Shaft:** Dead keratin layers → cuticle (shine), cortex (strength), medulla (sometimes absent in fine hairs).
- Follicle Bulb:** Living root with melanocytes (pigment) & dermal papilla (blood supply).
- Sebaceous Gland:** Opens into follicle; Kapha seat producing sebum.
- Arrector Pili Muscle:** Tiny Vāta-governed muscle – goose-bump reflex.

Ayur-Key: When we say “nourish hair,” we mean feeding the *follicle* via blood & oil, not the already-dead shaft.

3. Doṣhic Classification of Hair Types

Parameter	Vāta Dominant	Pitta Dominant	Kapha Dominant
Thickness	Fine, brittle	Medium, silky	Thick, coarse
Porosity / Moisture	Very dry, frizzy	Normal-leaning dry	Oily, heavy
Growth Speed	Irregular spurts	Fast	Slow but prolonged
Natural Colour	Dull brown / grey early	Coppery / auburn tinge	Jet black, lustrous
Typical Imbalance	Split ends, telogen effluvium, alopecia areata	Premature greying, inflammatory scalp, thinning	Oily dandruff, folliculitis, pilar keratosis
Ideal Oils	Sesame-bala, almond-ashwagandha	Coconut-brahmi, neem-sandal	Mustard-karanja, lightweight bhringraj
Best Rasāyana	Ashwagandha ghṛita, dates-almond	Amla, manjishta-saariva	Triphala, trikatu-honey

Mixed Types

- Vāta-Pitta:** Dry but inflamed → needs cooling *and* lipid.
- Kapha-Pitta:** Oily scalp plus itchy redness → anti-fungal + anti-inflammatory.

4. Ayurvedic Scalp-Condition Taxonomy

Classical Term	Modern Equivalent	Dominant Doṣa	Hallmark	First-Line Management
Indralupta	Alopecia areata / totalis	Vāta-Pitta	Sudden smooth patches	Sneha basti, leeching borders + bhringraj taila
Khalitya	Androgenic / diffuse baldness	Pitta-Kapha	Vertex & temple miniaturisation	Lekhana abhyanga, mild virechana, rosemary-neeli serum
Darunaka	Seborrhoeic dermatitis	Kapha-Vāta	Greasy flakes, itch	Nimba-karanjā taila dhāra + probiotic mist
Arunshika / Pittika	Folliculitis decalvans	Pitta-Rakta	Painful pustules & scabs	Cooling virechana, neem-lajwanti lepa
Palitya	Premature greying	Pitta + Agni imbalance	< 30 yrs grey strands	Amla-nabhasa rasāyana, triphala hair rinse

5. Practical Diagnosis Flow (Chair-Side)

- Look** – sheen, thickness, colour, scalp flakes.
- Touch** – shaft roughness (Vāta), greasy film (Kapha), warmth (Pitta).
- Ask** – premature greying? sudden shed after stress? seborrhoea since puberty?
- Link** to Doṣa & Srotas:
 - Greasy roots + large pores → Kapha / Medovaha block.
 - Burning scalp + redness → Pitta / Raktavaha heat.
 - Flaky, flying strands → Vāta / Rasavaha depletion.
- Plan** internal + external synergy (detailed in later parts of this module).

Key Take-Aways

- Hair = upadhātu of Asthi** → bone-nourishing rasāyana helps follicles.
- Classify **both hair shaft & scalp state**; many cases are mixed.
- Map doṣa to **specific oils, herbs & Panchakarma picks** for targeted success.

Remember: "Gloss outside begins with dhātu juice inside."

Part 2 — Herbal Oils & Treatments for Hair Strengthening

(The "Big-Four" Botanicals: Bhringarāja, Brāhmī, Āmalakī & Coconut)

1. Why These Four Are Classics

Herb / Base	Sanskrit Name	Core Guṇa-Vīrya‡	Follicle Benefit	Dosha Target
Bhringraj	<i>Bhringarāja</i> (<i>Eclipta alba</i>)	Tikta-kaṭu, Śīta	Up-regulates β-catenin → anagen kick-start; darkens hair	Vāta-Pitta
Brahmi	<i>Brāhmī</i> (<i>Bacopa monnieri</i> / <i>Centella asiatica</i>)	Tikta-kaṣāya, Śīta	Antioxidant; increases micro-circulation; anti-stress	Pitta-Vāta
Amla	<i>Āmalakī</i> (<i>Emblica officinalis</i>)	Amla-rasa, Śīta	Vitamin-C rich; collagen co-factor; prevents premature greying	Pitta
Coconut (Base)	<i>Nārikela</i>	Madhura, Śīta	Penetrates cortex; reduces protein loss; natural SPF ~8	Pitta-Kapha

‡Guṇa = qualities, Vīrya = heating/cooling potency.

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2. Preparing Therapeutic Oils — Three Proven Techniques

Method	When to Use	3-Line How-To	Pros	Cons
Classical Sneha-Pāka	Full-service clinic, deep potency	Decoction + paste + oil cooked till water evaporates.	Very stable; multi-herb synergy.	3–4 h simmer; needs constant stirring.
Solar (Sūrya-Tāpa) Infusion	Small spa batches, low heat herbs	Fill glass jar ½ herbs ½ oil; sun-warm 21 days, shake daily.	Minimal equipment, preserves volatile actives.	Not ideal in humid / rainy season.
CO₂/Cold-Press Blending	Retail lab, GMP	Buy CO ₂ extracts; dilute 0.3-1 % into fractionated coconut or sesame.	Repeatable, quick; strong actives.	Costly extracts; needs nitrogen flushing.

3. Signature Formulations (100 ml each — scale as needed)

3.1 Neelibhringādi Taila (Clinic-Grade Strength)

Best for: premature greying, androgenic thinning.

Ingredients	Qty
Sesame oil (base)	60 ml
Coconut oil	25 ml
Fresh Bhringraj paste	6 g
Fresh Indigo (<i>Neeli</i>) leaves	5 g
Amla coarse powder	4 g
Goat's milk	100 ml
Licorice powder	2 g

Sneha-Pāka: Boil herbs in milk + 400 ml water → reduce to 100 ml; add oils; cook on low heat until frothing clears and a drop of taila floats clean on water. Cool ≤ 45 °C; strain; add 0.6 ml vitamin E.

3.2 Brahmi-Amla Nervine Scalp Serum (Lightweight, Leave-On)

Best for: stress-shedding, migraine scalp.

Ingredients	Qty
Fractionated coconut oil	40 ml
Jojoba oil	30 ml
Brahmi CO ₂ extract (Centella)	0.3 ml (0.5 %)
Amla oil-soluble extract	0.6 ml (1 %)
Rosemary antioxidant	0.2 ml
Lavender EO (0.25 %)	0.25 ml

Shake under nitrogen; store amber dropper.

3.3 Triple-Action Hair-Spa Mask

Oil phase + herbal paste + steam — single-use salon ritual.

Component	Portion	Key Herbs
Pre-Oil (warm)	10 ml Neelibhringādi	Opens follicle, liquifies Kapha sebum
Herbal Mud Pack	25 g (Amla + Brahmi + Aloe pulp)	Infuses antioxidants, tightens cuticle
Steam-Cap	8 min moist heat	Enhances absorption
Cool Rinse	Triphala-Amla pH 4 splash	Seals cuticle

4. Dosha-Tailored Application Guides

Doṣhic State	Quantity & Frequency	Massage Style	Companion Internal
Vāta Dry-Shed	2 tsp warm Sesame-Bhringraj oil, 4x/week	Slow circular pads, 10 min	Dashamoola ghṛita 5 ml HS
Pitta Heat-Thinning	1 tsp cool Brahmi-Amla serum, daily night	Gentle fingertip tapping, 5 min	Coriander-fennel tea 3x/day
Kapha Oily-Dandruff	1 tsp Mustard-Neem blend, alt-night	Brisk knuckle rub, 7 min	Trikatu ½ tsp pre-breakfast

5. Combining Oils with Other Modalities

Condition	Add-On Panchakarma	Function
Alopecia areata	Micro Raktamokṣaṇa (leech) around patch	Enhances blood supply
Seborrhoeic scalp	Taila-Dhāra 30 min Nimba-Karanjā oil	Antifungal with penetration
Post-chemo hair regrowth	Śirodhara with Brahmi taila + gentle nasya	Calms Vāta, improves sleep

6. Contra-Indications & Safety

- Bakuchi or Karanja** oils — avoid in pregnancy, photosensitivity.
- Mustard oil** — patch-test; can irritate Pitta scalps.
- High-grade essential oils > 0.5 %** — may sting seborrhoeic skin.
- Keep all sneha in dark glass $\leq 25^{\circ}\text{C}$; discard if rancid odour.

7. Quick Reference “Which Oil When?” Table

Goal	Week-1 Quick Win	Month-1 Deeper	Month-3 Maintenance
Strengthen shaft	Coconut-amla overnight Neelibhringādi 2x/wk	Bhringraj serum 1x/wk	
Stop stress-shed	Brahmi scalp mist daily	Brahmi-Amla serum + Nasya	Ashwagandha latte HS
Darken early greys	Indigo-heena gloss	Neelibhringādi dhāra series	Amla rinse after every wash
Clear oily flakes	Nimba-tulsi foam wash	Mustard-karanja oil-steam	Hibiscus probiotic mist alt-day

Key Take-Aways

- Choose your **base oil** for dosha & climate (sesame \rightarrow warming; coconut \rightarrow cooling).
- Infuse with **target herbs**: Bhringraj (growth), Brahmi (stress), Amla (pigment).
- Use technique hierarchy: **Sneha-pāka** (deep clinic potency) \rightarrow **Solar infusion** (home DIY) \rightarrow **CO₂ blend** (retail GMP).
- Marry oil therapy with **internal rasāyana & lifestyle tweaks** for sustained results.

“Feed the follicle from above with oil and from within with rasa”— only then does true Ayurvedic hair strength unfold.

Part 3 — Managing Three Everyday Complaints

(Dandruff · Hair-Fall · Premature Greying)

0. Snapshot Table — Compare at a Glance

Complaint	Classical Term	Doṣa & Srotas at Fault	Fast Visual Clues	1-Line Ayur Strategy
Dandruff / Itchy Flakes	Darunaka	Kapha + Vāta · Medovaha & Svedavaha	Greasy or dry white flakes, itchy beard or scalp	Melt Kapha, pacify Vāta, balance scalp microbiome
Hair-Fall / Thinning	Khalitya (AGA / diffuse) or Indralupta (patchy)	Vāta-Pitta (diffuse) or Pitta-Kapha (pattern) · Rasavaha / Raktavaha	Visible shed in shower, widening part, smooth patches	Re-lubricate Vāta or cool Pitta, stimulate follicle anagen
Premature Greying	Pāliṭya	Pitta in Bhrajaka + Vāta dryness · Rasavaha / Raktavaha	< 30 yrs grey strands starting at temples or crown	Cool Pitta, nourish pigment cells, antioxidant rasāyana

1. Darunaka — Ayurvedic Dandruff Protocol (21 Days)

Layer	Remedy	Why It Works	How Often
Cleanse	Neem-Tulsi Low-Foam (Cat 5 F-1, 1 pump)	Antifungal, lifts Kapha sebum	Alternate days
De-Scale	Lodhra-Salicylic Gel Mask (Ch 9 F-4)	Keratolytic; lodhra astringes pores	2x week, 10 min
Oil Treatment	Nimba-Karanjā Taila-Dhāra (Ch 9 F-A)	Penetrates follicle, reduces yeast	Clinic: days 3-6-9-12 (30 min)
Microbiome Rinse	Hibiscus-Probiotic Mist (Cat 5 F-8) – Triphala guggulu 500 mg HS	Re-seeds friendly flora	4 sprays, 3x day
Internal – Coriander-fennel infusion 500 ml/d	Scrapes Medas; cools Pitta	21 days	
Lifestyle	No cheese, beer, or night-shades; brisk walk AM	Removes Kapha + Āma	Daily

Expected: 50 % itch drop Day 7, visible flake ↓ > 70 % by Day 21.

2. Hair-Fall (Khalitya/Indralupta) — 60-Day Dual Path

2.1 Diagnose FIRST

Pull-test > 6 hairs out of 60 = active telogen.

Dermoscope miniaturised hairs > 20 % = androgenic.

2.2 Vāta-Dominant Diffuse Shed (Telogen)

Pillar	Tool	Notes
Internal Lubrication	Bala-Ashwagandha Ghṛita 20 ml HS (Ch 6)	Nourish Vāta-depleted follicle
Matra Basti	60 ml Kṣīra-Bala taila, 5 nights	Deep tissue oiling
Topical	Brahmi-Amla Serum nightly massage	Anti-oxidant + micro-circulation
Stress Brake	12 min Yoga-Nidra; Ashwagandha 300 mg AM	Normalize cortisol

Goal: Pull-test normal (< 3) by Day 45; density +10 % at Day 60.

2.3 Pitta-Kapha Pattern Loss (Androgenic)

Pillar	Tool	Notes
Lekhana Abhyanga	Sesame-mustard + Kolakulathādi powder, 25 min alt-days (Ch 6)	Scrapes Kapha plugs
Mṛdu Virechana	Avipatti choōrṇa 8 g once	Purge Pitta heat
Follicle Stim	Rosemary-Neeli Serum (Cat 6 F-6) + Kesharāja Tonic Spray	DHT modulation
Nasya	Anu taila 4 drops/d	Enhances scalp prāna flow

Goal: Hair calibre ↑, vellus : terminal ratio ↓ 15 % in 8 weeks.

3. Premature Greying (Pāliṭya) — 90-Day Colour-Save Plan

Step	Tool	Action
Gentle Virechana	6 g Triphala choōrṇa in warm water	Off-load Pitta & metals
Pigment Oil	Neelibhringādi Taila (Ch 3 P-2) warm, 3x week, 2 h	Supplies tyrosinase activators & BH ₄ co-factor
Herbal Tea	Amla-Triphala Glow Tea (Cat 7 F-5) AM cup	High Vitamin-C & antioxidant
Nutri-Supplement	Copper 2 mg + B-complex (integration)	Melanin enzyme co-factors
Scalp Packs	Amla-henna-coffee gloss, 20 min each 2 weeks	Natural tint + collagen boost
Stress Coolant	Sheetali breath 50 rounds dusk	Pitta down-shift

Milestone: Halting new greys by Month 3; 10-25 % re-pigmented strands along hairline in dedicated clients at Month 6.

4. Quick “Cheat Card” for Practitioners

See / Feel	Think	Do
Greasy yellow flakes smell	Kapha-Darunaka Neem foam → Karanja dhāra	
Tight scalp, fine shed after illness	Vāta Telogen	Bala ghṛita → Brahmi serum
Burning scalp, red pimples, shed	Pitta-Indralupta	Virechana → Cooling gotu kola mist
Sudden silver strands with acidity	Pitta Greying	Amla tea + Neelibhringādi

Key Take-Aways

- Map Doṣa → choose oil weight & herbs.** Heavy sesame for Vāta, cooling coconut for Pitta, mustard-karanja for Kapha.
- Clear Srotas before you feed follicle.** Steam or dhāra first, serum second.
- Synchronise internal & external.** Triphala guggulu without an antifungal dhāra = half result; likewise, oil alone with junk diet = rebound.
- Track metrics every 3-4 weeks** (shed counts, scalp photos) to refine protocol.

Mantra: “Open → Cleanse → Cool/Heat-balance → Nourish → Stimulate.”

Follow that sequence and most common hair woes resolve within one to three months—even for clients new to Ayurveda.

Part 4 — Diet & Lifestyle: The Hidden 70 % of Hair Therapy

“Oil on the scalp is only as good as the oil in the pan that cooked last night’s dinner.”

—Modern adaptation of *Suśruta* wisdom

1. Why Food Comes Before Follicle-Serum

1. Hair = Upadhātu of Asthi (bone).

Calcium, protein and trace minerals must first cross the gut wall; no topical can replace a missing dhātu-building block.

2. Agni dictates absorption.

Weak digestive fire = expensive supplements in, expensive urine out.

3. Prāṇa follows routine.

Erratic sleep, blue-light nights and sedentary days disturb *Vyāna Vāta*—the micro-circulation that feeds dermal papillae.

Hence: **Dietary inputs + Lifestyle rhythms ≈ 70 % of sustainable hair results**, with oils, lepas and Panchakarma delivering the finishing 30 %.

2. Doṣha-Wise Food Guidelines

Doṣha Predominance*	“Hair-Happy” Foods	Foods that Sabotage
Vāta (dry, brittle)	Warm porridge with ghee, sesame laddus, soaked almonds, avocado, root soups	Dry crackers, ice-cold smoothies, excessive caffeine, intermittent fasting without guidance
Pitta (greying, inflamed scalp)	Amla, coriander chutney, coconut water, cucumber, mung-bean khichadi, aloe vera juice	Chillies, fermented pickles, alcohol, deep-fried snacks, canned tomato sauces
Kapha (oily dandruff, sluggish growth)	Millets, barley, horse-gram soup, steamed greens with trikatu sprinkle, ginger-lime water	Cheese, sugar pastries, red meat in excess, iced drinks, heavy desserts

*For mixed constitutions blend the columns (e.g., Pitta-Kapha chooses cool yet light grains).

3. Nutrient Check-List (Modern + Ayur Lens)

Nutrient	Classical Parallel	Food & Dose	Hair Function
Complete Protein	Māṃsa-dhātu builder	1 g/kg body-weight from dal, quinoa, paneer, lean fish	Keratin shaft strength
Iron & B-12	Rakta nourishment	Amla-jaggery chutney (iron) + dairy/eggs/B-12 tab (veg)	Prevents telogen effluvium, pale scalp
Omega-3 (EPA/DHA or ALA)	Lubricates Vāta	1 tbsp flax-seed or 2 fish oil caps	Anti-inflammatory sebum balance
Vitamin C	Amla rasa	1 fresh amla or ½ cup guava	Collagen cross-link, iron uptake
Zinc & Copper	Pigment cofactors	Handful pumpkin seeds (zinc) + sesame/gun-powder spice (copper)	Enzyme for melanin, anagen support

Rule-of-thumb: Build every plate around “PCF”—Protein, Colourful produce, Fat source.

4. Timing & Agni Hacks (Dinacharya for Hair)

Clock	Action	Why Follicles Love It
7-9 a.m.	Protein-rich warm breakfast	Matches Kapha window; fuels keratin synthesis all day
10 a.m.	250 ml lukewarm water sip	Hydrates Rasavaha srotas; thins sebum
12-1 p.m.	Heaviest meal; include bitter greens	Peak Pitta digests minerals, clears āma
4 p.m.	Amla-Triphala “glow tea”	Antioxidant boost before evening stress
6 p.m.	Sunset walk, 15 min	Micro-circulation to scalp, reduces cortisol
9:30 p.m.	Warm golden milk (turmeric-ghee)	Lubes Vāta; triggers growth-hormone sleep cycle
10 p.m.	Lights out, devices off	Melatonin and IGF-1 optimal for hair matrix cells

5. Lifestyle Levers Beyond the Plate

Lever	Dosha Effect	Simple Habit
Sleep 10 p.m.-6 a.m.	Calms Vāta, rebuilds ojas	Blue-light filter + wind-down playlist
Exercise (45 min/day, sweat without exhaustion)	Mobilises Kapha, oxygenates follicles	Brisk walking, Surya-Namaskar sets
Stress Alchemy	Controls cortisol-driven shedding	12 min Bhrāmarī + 5 deep belly laughs
Scalp “Hygiene Minimalism”	Preserves healthy microbiome	Shampoo max 3x/wk; avoid SLS; prefer herbal foams
Seasonal Tweaks (Ritucharya)	Prevents cyclical flares	Add sesame laddus in winter; switch to coconut-water spritz in summer

6. Seven-Day Sample Menu (Vāta-Pitta Balanced)*

Meal	Monday Example	Key Hair Inputs
Breakfast	Moong-dal dosa + sesame-ginger chutney	Complete protein + calcium
Mid-morning	1 amla + handful soaked raisins	Vit C, iron
Lunch	Quinoa-vegetable khichadi, beet-raita, coriander salad	Folate, betaine, probiotics
Snack	Roasted pumpkin seeds + coconut water	Zinc, electrolytes
Dinner	Barley-veg soup, ghee drizzle, grilled asparagus	Silica, healthy fat
Bedtime Drink	Turmeric-ghee almond milk	Tryptophan, omega-9

*Kapha-dominant clients remove raisins & coconut water, increase ginger-lime.

7. Red-Flag Eating Patterns That Sabotage Hair Plans

- **Crash diets / juice cleanses** → instant telogen effluvium.
- **Excess whey shakes** in Pitta types → cystic scalp acne.
- **Night-owl snacking** (chips, cola) → Kapha seborrhoea spikes.
- **Over-fermented kombucha** in Vāta → bloating → poor nutrient uptake.

8. Practitioner's Checklist at Follow-Up

1. **Meal Frequency:** 3 solid + 2 light?
2. **Water Intake:** at least 30 ml/kg/day?
3. **Bowel Regularity:** daily soft?
4. **Sleep Hours & Quality:** 6.5–8?
5. **Stress Score (1-10):** < 5?
6. **Supplement Compliance:** iron/omega-3 taken?
7. **Visible Outcomes:** pull-test, scalp micro-photo compared.

If ≥ 3 "No," adjust diet/lifestyle **before** intensifying topical or Panchakarma tools.

Key Take-Aways

1. **Nutrition → Rasa & Rakta → Hair:** quality inside shows outside.
2. **Agni timing** is as important as ingredient list—eat main meal at noon.
3. **Lifestyle rhythm** (sleep, exercise, stress) stabilises *Vyāna Vāta*—the courier delivering nutrients to follicles.
4. **Season-smart tweaks** prevent recurrent dandruff, sweat-grease, dry shedding.
5. Educate clients that **consistency, not an exotic superfood**, is the secret; the fanciest bhringraj oil cannot compensate for a soda-and-skip-breakfast lifestyle.

Mantra: "Feed the fire, calm the wind, drain the phlegm—hair will thrive."