

Chapter 8. Herbal Shampoos & Cleansing Powders (Reetha, Shikakai)

1 Why Swap Sulfates for Sapōnins?

Synthetic Surfactant	Issue	Herbal Swap	Gain
Sodium-lauryl/ethyl sulfates	Strip sebum, lift cuticle → frizz, colour-fade	Reetha (<i>Sapindus mukorossi</i>)	Mild plant sapōnin, pH-acidic, biodegradable
Cocamidopropyl betaine	Contact dermatitis in Pitta/Vāta scalp	Shikakai (<i>Acacia concinna</i>)	Natural foam, rich in chelating phycocides
Silicone conditioners	Build-up, blocks Medovaha srotas	Fenugreek + Amla mucilage	Slippage + phyto-protein without occlusion

Key Ayurveda link: Reetha & Shikakai combine **Tikta-Kaṣāya rasa + Śīta vīrya** → unclog Kapha sebum yet calm Pitta scalp heat.

2 Ingredient Toolbox

Function	Herb / Source	Ayur Guṇa-Vīrya	Notes
Primary Sudsing	Reetha nut pericarp	Tikta, Kaṣāya · Śīta	10 % sapōnin; natural pH 5.0
	Shikakai pod	Tikta · Rūkṣa · Śīta	Adds detangle gloss; chelates Ca ²⁺
Condition-Slip	Fenugreek seed	Madhura · Uṣṇa	Mucilage coats cuticle
	Hibiscus petal	Madhura · Śīta	Shine, pH buffer
Scalp Therapy	Neem leaf	Tikta · Śīta	Anti-Malassezia (dandruff)
	Amla	Amla rasa · Śīta	Antioxidant, anti-grey
Fragrance & Cool	Vetiver, Rose petal	Śīta	Optional 2-3 % powder

3 Powder Shampoo Blueprints (100 g retail pouch)

3.1 Normal-Oily “Reetha-Shikakai Classic”

Ingredient	g	%
Reetha powder (90-mesh)	40	40
Shikakai powder	30	30
Neem leaf	10	10
Amla	10	10
Vetiver powder	5	5
Rice starch (anti-caking)	5	5

Use: 1.5 Tbsp + warm water → thin paste; massage 2 min; rinse.

pH in use: 5.0-5.5 (cuticle-friendly).

3.2 Dry-Sensitive “Hibiscus-Fenugreek Silk”

Ingredient	g
Hibiscus petal fine	35
Fenugreek seed mucilage powder	25
Oat protein hydrolysate	10



Ingredient	g
Shikakai micro-grit	10
Brahmi leaf	10
Rose petal	10

Activate with warm aloe juice or coconut milk; leave 1 min then rinse.

3.3 Anti-Dandruff “Neem-Charcoal Detox”

Ingredient	g
Reetha	35
Shikakai	25
Neem	15
Activated bamboo charcoal	10
Holy basil (Tulsi)	10
Peppermint leaf	5

Optional: 0.5 g menthol crystal for cooling Kapha scalp.

4 Liquid Herbal Shampoo Concentrate (200 ml batch)

Cold-Process Maceration — retains heat-labile antioxidants, 4-week shelf (refrigerated).

Step	Ingredient	Qty
Macerate	Reetha coarse chips	15 g
	Shikakai coarse	10 g
	Amla slices	5 g
Liquid	Distilled water 95 °C	150 ml
Steep 6 h & strain	—	—
Add	Glycerin	15 g
	Sodium benzoate + potassium sorbate	0.6 g
	Xanthan gum	0.4 g
	Lavender hydrosol	to 200 ml

Shake; pH adjust with citric acid to 5.2. **Use 2 Tbsp**; low-foam but effective.

5 Doṣa-Wise Usage Guide

Scalp Doṣa	Frequency	Water Temp	Follow-Up
Kapha-oily	Alt-day	Warm	Neem-tulsi hydrosol
Pitta-inflamed	2×/week	Cool-lukewarm	Aloe-vetiver mist
Vāta-dry	1-2×/week	Lukewarm	5 drops Brahmi-Amla light serum



6 Quality Control & Stability

- **Moisture** in powders < 5 % (Karl-Fischer).
- **Microbial plate count** < 100 cfu/g; saponins are self-preservative but test yearly.
- **Bulk density** 0.5–0.7 g/ml for easy jar fill.
- Liquid concentrate passes ISO 11930; 4 week fridge, 12 month if 0.8 % preservative + 0.5 % glyceryl caprylate.

7 Safety & Contra-Signals

Issue	Cause	Fix
Eye sting	Low pH + sapōnins	Rinse profusely; advise eyes-closed massage
Excess dryness	Overuse on Vāta scalp	Cut to 1× week; pre-oil 30 min
Colour fade (henna-dyed)	High Reetha content	Switch to Hibiscus-Fenugreek blend

8 Retail / DIY Tips

- Supply **wooden scoop** (≈ 8 g) and cotton muslin “tea-bag” for hassle-free mixing.
- Encourage “shot-gun” add-ins at home: yogurt (Kapha), coconut milk (Pitta), honey (Vāta).
- QR code on pack links to 1-min how-to video.

Key Take-Aways

1. **Reetha & Shikakai = natural surfactant duo**—adjust ratio to scalp oiliness.
2. **Powder format = zero-preservative, travel-friendly, sustainable.**
3. Always align cleanser with **doṣa & season**; cleansing **without stripping** retains scalp microbiome and luster.
4. Combine with **weekly oil therapy** (see Chap 7) for complete Ayur hair-care loop:
Oil → Herb wash → Hydrosol → Light serum.

Formulator mantra: “Let Mother Soap-Nut wash, let Shikakai shine—chemistry done by Nature, only guided by our hands.”