Study on the Evolution of Various Ancient Skin Care Practices into Present Day Beauty Care Preparations

The concept of beauty and cosmetics is as ancient as mankind and civilization. Archaeologists estimate that cosmetics existed as long ago as 6000 bc (Gebelein, 1997). These early cosmetic purposes were more as a protection against nature’s elements, as opposed to a beautification process. Oils, clays and paints were used for protection from burns, cold, and irritation. As the years progressed and society became more civilized, the reasons for using cosmetics changed. Women are obsessed with looking beautiful. So, they use various beauty products that have herbs to look charming and young. Indian herbs and its significance are popular worldwide. Herbal formulations always have attracted considerable attention because of their good activity and comparatively lesser or nil side effects with synthetic drugs. Herbs and spices have been used in maintaining and enhancing human beauty since time immemorial. Indian women have long used herbs such as Sandalwood and Turmeric for skin care; Henna to color the hair, palms and soles; and natural oils to perfume their bodies (Shweta et al., 2011).

THE WORLD HEALTH Organization (WHO) estimates that about 80% of the population living in developing countries relies almost exclusively on traditional medicine for their primary health care needs (Goleniowski et al., 2006). In almost all traditional medicine systems, medicinal plants play a major role and constitute the backbone of traditional medicine. The Indian materia medica includes about 2000 drugs of natural origin, almost all of which are derived from India’s different traditional systems and folklore practices. Folklore is the result of experience of not a person, but of the community or the society at large. We may call it the wisdom of the people or the learning of the community. The individual earns knowledge through experience and when experience and knowledge are combined together, they voice the same feeling which becomes the feeling of the society. This feeling gets its expressions in the elements of folklore.

Skin is one of the largest organs in the body that play a very significant role in protecting the entire system from wide range of assaults and hazards from the external environment (Nina Jablonski etal 2004). It is the organ that regulates body temperature through control of surface blood flow and sweating also detects critical information about the ambient environment and objects touched of the body. It has surface area of 1.8 square meter and making up about 16% of
body weight. It serves many important functions, including protection, percutaneous absorption, temperature regulation, fluid maintenance, sensory and disease control. Skin complaints affects all ages and cause harm in number of ways. Traditional medicinal resources, especially plants, have been found to play an important role in the management of dermatological conditions. In ancient India plant psoralens were used to treat vitiligo, and lactic acid was one of the earliest skin softeners, frequently added to bath water. Some of the herbs and practices that were used to enhance the natural beauty are given below:

**Turmeric**

Turmeric has been used in India as a medicinal plant, and held sacred from time immemorial. Turmeric is used in India as a spice, dye, cosmetic, medicines and home remedies.

According to Ayurveda, turmeric is Vranahara (ulcer healing), Varnya (improve complexion), Tvakdoshahara (cure skin diseases), and Kandoohara (cure itching). Till recently, before the onslaught of synthetic and herbal skin care products in the market, womenfolk were dependent more on turmeric, and they used to smear their bodies with a mixture of turmeric–sandal paste for gaining a golden glow to their skin. Indian women apply it to the skin to reduce hair growth. Several Sanskrit synonyms of turmeric indicate its color-improving property (such as: varna-datri — one who gives color, indicates its use as enhancer of body complexion; hemaragi and hemaragini — both indicate golden color, meaning that it is used by women folk to get a golden complexion; yoshti priya, meaning favorite of young women, indicating its use for enhancing beauty; hridayavilasini, meaning giving delight to heart, charming; etc.). It is considered as an effective wound-healing medicine and is strongly related to the social customs of India. If a wound occurs as a part of a ritual, only turmeric powder is used for healing. The wounds are usually caused by old, rusty, unclean iron sword or hooks while performing certain rituals; even in such cases the wounds get healed without any pus formation or infection.

The fresh juice of turmeric is believed to have antiparasitic property in many skin afflictions. Turmeric mixed with gingelly oil is applied over the body to prevent skin eruptions. A coating of turmeric powder or a thin paste is applied on small pox and chicken pox patients to facilitate the process of scabbing. Turmeric has a very wide variety of phytochemicals including curcumin. (Chattopadhyay.I etal 2004) The long list of uses include antiseptic, analgesic, anti-
inflammatory, antioxidant, Collagen formation, antimalarial, insectrepellant, and other activities associated to turmeric. (Arora, Basu et al 1971)

**Amla**

Emblica officinalis fruit (EO), commonly known as Amla is a reputed traditional medicine and functional food used in Indian subcontinent. It has been used for skin disorders and beauty care. It is one of the three constituents of ‘myrobalan’ an important group of three fruits named in Ayurveda as ‘Triphala’: the other two being Terminalia chebula and Terminalia belerica. Emblica officinalis reduced DNA damage induced by UVB radiation. Recently, it has been shown to promote pro-collagen content and inhibit matrix metalloproteinase in skin fibroblast (Mushtaq et al 2010). It antioxidant property had been evaluated (Poltanov et al 2009)

**Tamarind**

Tamarind or Tamarindus indica, family Fabaceae, is widely growth in tropical regions and has long been supplied as an important nutrition source and traditional medications. Tamarind seed has activity of radical scavenging, lipid peroxidation reducing and anti-microbial activity. Its antioxidant activity is appropriate for anti-wrinkle cosmetics.

**Holy basil**

In India, Ocimum sanctum or basil is one of the sacred herbs, which is grown in houses and temples in all areas of the sub-continent. It is a powerful medicinal plant and much has been done to validate its medicinal activity. When basil oil was tested in trials in India as an antibacterial treatment for acne, it produced good results siddhuraji, this activity could well be due to the antibacterial activity which is present in this family.

**Sandalwood**

Known by sanskrit name of Chandan, Santalum album is used for its volatile oil. Major uses of sandalwood are as antimicrobial (Parek et al 2006), a skin softener, antioxidant (Paolo Scartezzini et al 2000) and to invigorate peripheral blood circulation in the skin and removes skin blemishes. Effective against Streptococcus aureus. It relieves itching and inflammation of the skin and acts as an antiseptic in acne (Tisserand 1987)
SOME TRADITIONAL PRACTICES FOLLOWED BY LOCAL INHABITANTS.

NORTH

Aloe barbadensis Mill. Chaal kuwari Aloaceae leaves the leaves are crushed and the paste is layered on the burnt places for skin burns.

Citrus medica L. Sumthiratenga Rutaceae Fruit. The fruit juice is mixed with curd and paste formed is layered on the face. Makes face fair and beautiful.

Lycopersicon esculentum Mill. Bilahi Solanaceae Fruit- The juice from the fruit is mixed with honey and the mixture is orally taken, face becomes fair and beautiful.

Commelina benghalensis Linn./Kanchura/Herb-Plant paste is applied to soften the skin and is also taken internally to soothe an inflamed or irritated surface (A.K Singh et al 2002)

SOUTH

Red Sandalwood, or Pterocarpus santalinus is ground to a paste with water or honey, and applied topically as a popular home remedy used in southern India, especially Kerala, for post-acne and other facial scars.

Saffron (Crocus Sativus) of Iridaceae is taken along with milk internally for fair skin.

Terminalia bellarica Roxb. Combretaceae Fruits are ground with cow’s urine and applied externally on infected part, daily twice for 2 weeks for treatment of psoriasis. (Rajakumar et al 2009)

A revisit of the ancient scholarly knowledge is inevitable to bring them to the realm of present day needs. With the advent of modern medicine and beauty care products, the ancient wisdom started disappearing from the mainstream. However, the use of various chemicals to meet the everlasting beauty needs of man has contributed enormous health hazards to man and equally it had damaged the ecosystem. Therefore, a reinvestigation of various skin care practices followed in the traditional dictum in the past only would help to revive their utility in the present day. Hence the present study was planned.