

# Ayurvedic Perspective and Practical Applications of Lepa Therapy

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**Abstract:** Lepa (Alep) is considered a fundamental and primary treatment for inflammation. The human body receives drugs through two primary routes: the enteral (direct) route and the parenteral route, which includes absorption through the skin. Lepa Kalpana has been in existence since the Vedic period in Ayurveda and offers multiple therapeutic benefits in various conditions. It is indicated in conditions such as Aagantuja and Neej Shotha, Vrana Ropana, Tvak Prasadana, and Tvak Savarnikaran, among others. This article highlights the types of Lepa, their practical applications, usability according to Doshas, their mechanism of action and absorption, Guna (properties), rules of application, and Lepa Vidhi (procedure). Despite its extensive historical use, there are several lacunae in its clinical application due to a lack of research. This article aims to provide a literature review on Lepa Kalpana, its applications, and the absorption of essential oils through the skin. With the growing market for Ayurvedic cosmetics, people are increasingly accepting Ayurveda on a larger scale. Lepa Kalpana can be used both therapeutically and cosmetically. The objective is to raise awareness about the use of Lepa in general clinical practice.

**Keywords:** Lepa Kalpana, Pralepa, Pradeha, Aalep, Shotha Shaman, Vrana Ropana, Tvak Prasadana, Bhrajak Pitta, Absorption Mechanism, Essential Oils.

## INTRODUCTION

"Bahi Parimarjana" is one of the independent treatment modalities in Ayurveda, encompassing all externally applicable medicines. Various types of external applications such as Aalep, Abhyanga, Parisheka, Swedana, Upanaha, and Vimlapana are explained in the Sushruta Samhita. Among these, Aalep is a significant procedure.

Aalep is highly beneficial as it provides instant relief from pain. In clinical practice, it is effective in reducing local temperature, acting as a Tvak-Mansa Prasadak (skin and muscle purifier), Rakta Prasadak (blood purifier), enhancing stability, and assisting in healing.

**Definition:**

Any drug in its raw form, crushed with liquid using a stone, dried, or mixed with liquid to form a smooth consistency and applied to the body, is called Lepa.

**Importance:**

Shalya Tantra is renowned for its rapid action, and Lepa is one of the treatments under this discipline. Just as water can extinguish fire, Lepa can provide immediate relief from localized pain.

**Types of Lepa:**

According to different Ayurvedic texts:

- Sushruta:
  1. Pralepa
  2. Pradeha
  3. Aalep
- Sharangadhara:
  1. Doshaghna (Pacifying Doshas)
  2. Vishaghna (Detoxifying)
  3. Varnya (Enhancing complexion)
- Vagbhata:
  1. Snaihika
  2. Nirvapana
  3. Prasadana
  4. Stambana
  5. Vilayana
  6. Pachana
  7. Peedana
  8. Shodhana
  9. Shoshana
  10. Savarnikarana

**Types and Actions of Lepa:**

1. Pralepa:
  - Thin in consistency
  - Can be Sheet (cold), Tanu (thin), Avishoshi (wet), or Vishoshi (dry)
2. Pradeha:
  - Thicker than Pralepa

- Can be Ushna (hot) or Sheet (cold)
  - Helps in pacifying Vata and Kapha Doshas by trapping heat
  - Used according to Shotha (inflammatory) stages
3. Aalep:
- Medium thickness, applied at body temperature
  - Purifies blood and enhances skin complexion
  - Used in Avidagdha Shotha (non-suppurative inflammation), Marma Sthanagat Vyadhi (disorders affecting vital points), and Guhyarogas (genital disorders)
- Dried or previously prepared Lepa should not be reused as it loses potency.
  - Overlapping multiple layers of Lepa should be avoided as it prevents proper absorption.

#### Sneha Proportion in Lepa Kalpana:

To prevent excessive dryness and discomfort, Sneha (oil or ghee) should be added based on Dosha dominance:

- Pittaja Vyadhi: 1/6th part Sneha
- Vataja Vyadhi: 1/4th part Sneha
- Kaphaja Vyadhi: 1/8th part Sneha

#### Thickness of Lepa:

- Alep: 2-3 mm
- Pradeha: 3-4 mm
- Pralep: 1-2 mm

#### Application and Removal Guidelines:

- Application Time:
  - Alep should be avoided at night as it may trap heat, leading to worsening of the condition.
  - Pradeha should be applied during the daytime, especially in Pitta-Rakta predominant Shotha, to prevent excessive heat accumulation.
- Application Direction:
  - Lepa should be applied in the Pratiloma (opposite to hair growth) direction to ensure better penetration through skin pores.
- Bandhan (Dressing):
  - A thin gauze dressing should be applied after Lepa application.
- Removal:
  - Lepa should be washed off immediately after drying using warm gauze.

#### Mechanism of Absorption:

The skin consists of three layers: Epidermis, Dermis, and Hypodermis. The stratum corneum, the outermost layer, acts as a protective barrier. Active principles of Lepa are absorbed through skin pores and micro-vessels into circulation, where they exert their therapeutic effects.

Bhrajak Pitta plays a crucial role in metabolizing active substances applied to the skin. The involvement of Samana Vayu and Vyana Vayu facilitates penetration and absorption through gravitational pull and weight of the drug.

#### Essential Oils and Their Role in Lepa Therapy:

Essential oils have a smaller molecular weight than carrier oils, allowing them to penetrate the skin barrier easily. Their lipophilic and hydrophilic nature enables better absorption. Many Ayurvedic herbs contain essential oils, which can be utilized in Lepa formulations to enhance efficacy.

## DISCUSSION

Lepa therapy has significant potential in Ayurvedic medicine, particularly in treating inflammatory conditions, skin diseases, and pain management. The combination of specific herbal powders, liquids, and essential oils makes it an effective treatment modality. However, while Ayurveda emphasizes Lepa's importance, there is a lack of scientific validation regarding its pharmacokinetics and long-term efficacy.

Recent studies highlight the transdermal absorption capabilities of herbal extracts, reinforcing the Ayurvedic concept of Bhrajak Pitta aiding in skin metabolism. Further research into bioavailability, formulation optimization, and comparative studies with modern topical treatments can help establish Lepa as a mainstream therapeutic approach. Additionally, standardizing preparation methods, storage conditions, and clinical applications will enhance its credibility in integrative medicine.

Future prospects include nano-formulations of Lepa for enhanced penetration, stability, and efficacy, as well as combining it with biomedical techniques for

targeted drug delivery in inflammatory and degenerative diseases. Addressing these gaps will facilitate the global acceptance of Lepa Kalpana beyond traditional Ayurvedic practice.

#### CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE

Many Ayurvedic herbs contain essential oils that can be effectively utilized through external application in the form of Lepa. Proper selection of Dravya (medicinal substances), vehicle (Sneha or water), and adherence to Ayurvedic application and removal guidelines ensure effective results.

Sushruta emphasized Aalep as a primary treatment for inflammation, highlighting its role in Shotha Shaman (anti-inflammatory effects). However, further preclinical studies are required to analyze the precise mode of action and absorption mechanisms of Lepa through the skin.

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