

# FEEL GOOD THREADS

Ayurveda, a branch of India's sister science ayurveda, could herald a new range of clothing that makes you feel good – literally – using herb-infused fabrics to ease common skin complaints and other conditions. *By Ratna Bhavani Cordukes*

**T**here is a saying in ayurveda that roughly translates to "you should not apply anything to your skin that you would not put in your mouth". This is true for the ayurvedic herbal pastes and oils that are applied during ayurvedic treatments. Is it possible to accept the same principle

for herb-infused organic clothing used for healing purposes?

Ayurveda is a branch of the 5,000-year-old Indian system of Vedic healthcare. *Ayur* means 'life' and *Vastra* means 'clothing' or 'fabric'. Ayurveda starts from the principle that the skin is a living organ so everything that comes in direct contact with it has an impact on our health. The skin is not just a protective layer but also a conduit for outside substances to enter the body. As such, chemicals that are present in textile dyes can easily enter our bloodstream and cause damage to our tissues. Likewise, the skin can also absorb herbs found in natural dyes to fortify our immunity and protect us from harmful substances.

### The process

The fibres used for Ayurveda textiles are treated with herb extracts. The colours of



**Turmeric**

these fabrics come exclusively from 200 different plants, each having its specific medicinal qualities that are found in their flowers, leaves, seeds, barks and roots. Ayurveda uses a systematic treatment approach which is also visible in its preparation of the ayurveda cloth which is carefully monitored and controlled.

The cloth is first bleached then dried in direct sunlight. A gum is then applied made

from plants like aloe vera and camphor and then dipped into a concoction or 'Kashaya' that contains up to 40 herbs, one of which will be used as the primary for its specific beneficial qualities. It is then left to dry or 'season' for over a period that can range between 15 to 30 days. This process of herbal dyeing developed through extensive research during the age old dyeing methods used since the Indus Valley Civilization (c.2,500BC).

### Healing agents

Ayurveda fabrics act as healing agents because of the herbs that can get absorbed through the skin. Each herb has a therapeutic effect and is especially good in alleviating skin conditions such as eczema and psoriasis, though studies also show relief in cases of rheumatism, arthritis, diabetes, blood pressure and respiratory conditions like asthma. Certain fabrics contain anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory properties. Here are a few examples of herbs that are used for their medicinal values:



**Aloe Vera**

■ **Tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*)** controls viral and bacterial infections, while its essential oil acts as an antiseptic with insect repellent property. Also alleviates stress, improves immunity and strengthens the respiratory system

■ **Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*)** contains curcumin that has bactericidal, antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties. It cleans and disinfects the skin

■ **Neem (*Azadirachta indica*)** has strong antibacterial properties

■ **Kumari (*Aloe Vera*)** good for curing infections, wounds and burns

■ **Khus-khus (*Vetiveria Zizanioides*)** anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, nervine, sedative



**Tulsi**

Ayurveda fabrics are 100% organic, completely free of synthetic chemicals, toxic irritants and are biodegradable - consequently, they are ecological as they protect the environment from pollution and damage. The fabrics are not just beautiful for their colours but also for the positive effect they have on the human body and mind. The best time to wear or use these fabrics is when the body is at total rest such as bedtime, relaxation or meditation. This is because the body naturally heals and balances itself during this time. This is the reason why these fabrics are mainly used for making sleep wear, bed sheets, towels, meditation clothes and cotton mats.

### Positive future

Ayurveda can be safely used as an addition to holistic treatments for several conditions to help boost immunity and reduce stress levels. Government officials in Kerala, India, a hub for ayurvedic herbal medicine, are now interested in taking this further after recent clinical trials produced good results with skin problems and increased immunity levels. More research is required, however, to help bring ayurveda to the forefront in terms of the mainstream textile industry and as an important contributor for sustaining the planet and minimising global warming. There is rising interest in ayurveda, though, as seen in recent articles in the media, by the BBC and other outlets. The future of Ayurveda is exciting and its scope is endless. ॐ

*Ratna Bhavani Cordukes is an ayurvedic practitioner and yoga teacher and the founder of For Balance. For research and references relating to this article visit: [forbalance.com](http://forbalance.com)*



**Khus-khus**



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