



HEALTH AND BEAUTY TIPS FROM
ANCIENT INDIA



Ancient Indian Beauty Tips You Should Consider

Aesthetics is a part of any civilization, regardless of age. All forms of societies around the world have adopted visual care in one form or another, with techniques differing based on location. Yet, all ancient societies share one beauty source in common. This would be the use of natural products.

This meant that the beautifying process did not look synthetic and overly flashy. Beauty in ancient societies had a certain taste of nature to it, which was observable in the material used for the care.

This non-synthetic appearance is something that many beauty stylists around the world still strive for. Because of this, it is necessary to study and find the beauty tips from ancient societies, which never utilized unnatural beautification means.

The Ancient society we're going to analyze today is Ancient India. Historical records present Indian settlements and urbanization as one of the earliest in the world. They originated in the Indus Valley, dating as far back as 2600 BCE.

The Indus Valley specifically presents architecture that exceeds that of Ancient Egypt, which is phenomenal considering the lack of technology back then. The care for aesthetics in architecture makes us assume that care of for personal looks was quite normal.

In any ancient civilization, there is a greater focus on practicality of looks over extravagance. As a result, you're going to find a huge portion of everyday clothing being focused on comfort. Beauty was only used to add final touches to dressing.

India has two main problems specifically affecting its climate. The first would be heat. The second would be humidity. The combination of both factors led to a need for lighter dressing, with a focus on body cooling.

Beauty Techniques Differ Based on Location

While all ancient societies use nature as their source of aesthetics, the material used differs greatly. Ancient Egypt, for example, was a desert for the most part. This meant that growing fruits, vegetables, and spices for use was difficult. Their reliance was mostly on oils and tactics of reducing distressful bodily expressions (hair shaving, smells, etc.). Thus, the beauty techniques there differ from those in parts of the world that has a thriving green environment.

Ancient India was an arid, hot region, but it was specifically settled near the ocean, where rich agricultural lands were surrounded by highlands and desert. This led to perfect growing conditions.

The Indus Valley area was a perfect fit for growing fruits, vegetables, and spices, which allowed the Ancient Indians to add such things to their daily diets. In fact, when speaking of spices, the first country to come to mind is usually India.

It is the land of spices, after all. Thus, you should expect to see mention of spices a lot through this booklet.

Practicality, Aesthetics, and a Background of India's Habitat

Spices were added into the mix when heat became too much. To combat the arid temperatures, spices were commonly used as a coping mechanism. Because they naturally stimulate the body's metabolism, sweating is increased profoundly. This cools off the body in hot environments.

In fact, this remedy of "spice cooling" is still used in many parts of the world today. An example of this includes Mexico, another hot country where spice use is a cultural staple.

Spice has its drawbacks though, and those drawbacks are where a lot of Ancient Indian beauty techniques happened to be centered. The first was bad smells. The second was odor.

Sweating by nature is used by the body to detoxify from bodily wastes, akin to urinating. However, in addition to stored up toxins in the body, spices generated toxins of their own. This is a result of their high nutritional content, which means that a lot of spice is processed to waste when consumed.



Thus, you get the stereotype of "Indians suffering from bad breath and stink." This is not of course an attempt to make fun. It's a biological consequence of the adaptations that Indians, ancient and modern, have to undertake for normal body cooling.

This leads us, of course, to the first part of our Ancient Indian beauty health tips: a focus on reducing smells and eliminating body odor.

Tip #1: Odor Elimination

It should be understood that Ancient India was highly influenced by religious teachings. These religious teachings contribute a lot to the structure of beauty and hygiene norms in the area.

Bathing

With odor elimination, it starts with the extensive use of bathing in Ancient India. Not only were odors bad in smell, but they also accompanied sweat. This required washing of the body on a constant basis.

It was not uncommon to see Indians bathing in rivers and special bathrooms multiple times a day. With flowing rivers such as the Ganges, this was an afforded option.

In Hinduism, teachings instruct that bathing occurs 1-3 times per day. This is a number that is considered fair for hot climates, even by modern day standards. Oils were used extensively in bathing, especially for rubbing the body with a variety of oils and fat (coconut oil and ghee were used).

Rubbing oil has the advantage of rubbing off the scent of the oil onto the skin. When sweating, the odor of the body's bacteria and toxins mix with the oils, allowing for the generation of better scents... or at the very minimum, toned-down versions of horrible body scents.

Shaving

Another method of odor removal was hair shaving. Ancient Indians were known to shave pubic hair off. Also, Ancient Indian males had the habit of shaving their chest hairs off. Not much is known about the arm pits though, which is actually a main contributor to bad odor.

Perfuming

As mentioned previously, India is the land of spices, and these spices have afforded Indians a lot of advantages thanks to their taste and aroma. Their existence led to the production of incense and fragrances, which were used for beauty and environmental improvement.

A main perfume ingredient was sandalwood, which is actually extracted from a tree that grows native to the Indian continent. The fragrance of sandalwood was so popular among many civilizations that exports were recorded with both Arab and Roman traders.

Other sources of odor that were used in India included deer musk. While deer musk was able to be grown worldwide, it was specifically reared in India. The environment in India would allow deer to flourish with enough food and proper breeding by farmers in the location.

Consumption Items

Some foods and drinks in India also had a dual purpose of reducing body heat through sweating, while being usable for fragrances and odor too! One of those would be tamarind, a fruit that was used by Indians for its acidity.

Use of this fruit has become common both locally and internationally, leading to its use as a cooling drink. Also, the acidic odor has a strong smell, which contributes to diverting the stench of bad bodily odor.



Tip #2: Skin Care

Use of Oils

This is an obvious component of beauty in any society. Skin is something that has to be constantly rejuvenated. Bad skin is seen as a sign of bad health or aging, which wasn't favorable.

Skin care was implied in the previous part by oil usage. Oils have the natural effects of smoothening out the skin. This is in addition to the body rubs that come with the oil. You see, oils are actually applied by massaging them onto the body. This has the additional effects of stretching the skin, making it more elastic.

Elastic skin is excellent, especially since it can accommodate losses or gains in weights quite efficiently. It also avoids the development of stretch marks on the body, which served to ruin it in the eyes of the ancient society.

Elasticity of the skin also meant that wrinkles are less likely. A healthy skin that stretches properly can contract too, avoiding the looks of wrinkled old age.

Another advantage of oiling is the avoidance of dry skin. While Indian societies are humid to begin with, dry skin was more of a symptom of hotter Indian areas that lacked humidity. It was necessary to reduce dryness of the skin as a result.

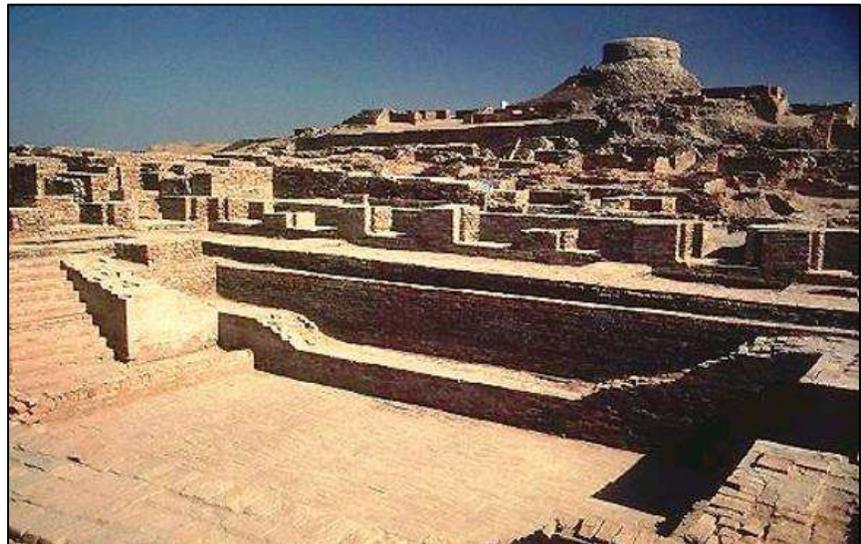
Use of Mud Baths

The silt and mud left by rivers in India allowed for the creation of mud baths. This is in addition to the natural heat of the environment, which allowed body sweat to be open for the reception of mud nutrients.

And of course the mud baths had high nourishing content. It is rich in minerals and vitamins required for such a process.

They also served the function of body detoxification and stress removal.

This ties into the part of odor removal too. After all, a mud bath where the body is detoxified means a reduction of stored toxins.



The extreme heat also meant that bacteria in the skin were killed in the process. This makes mud baths a cleansing process, where you are less likely to omit a stench when you least want to!

Fruits and Spices

The two main products used in Indian skincare are *turmeric* and *lemons*.

Turmeric



Turmeric is an icon of spices in Indian culture. It has even been gaining popular support around the world lately as a natural supplement for everyday use.

Turmeric is actually a ginger vegetable that is grinded into a spice and refined, giving it its pure bright orange color. It has been traditionally consumed as a medication for a multitude of treatments around India, but it also acts as a skin care product.

For skin use, turmeric is usually mixed with a concoction of milk, sandalwood, and flour. Sandalwood adds the incense perfume smell as we mentioned before, with flour turning the concoction into a paste. This allows for the easy spreading of the product over the body, while giving it a good smell too!

Turmeric is added in with the milk to create a boost of skin softening effects. This is one of the benefits of the spice after all!

Additionally, turmeric has the ability to brighten up the looks of the skin, especially when milk is applied for the paste's creation. This is commonly used as facial cream to prepare brides and women heading to events.

Lemons

Lemons on the other hand, are used for skin brightening and exfoliation. The acidic nature of a lemon allows for the removal of dead skin faster. The nature of lemons also makes them perfect for opening up blocked facial pores for pimple removal.

Contrary to the delicate skin of your face, you can also rub the lemon directly on your elbows, knee, hands or feet, even though the skin here is much thicker and sturdier. This will hydrate the skin and ease any friction or pain.



Just make sure that you do not expose your skin to the bright sun immediately after applying lemon, otherwise it might cause a phototoxic reaction.

Tip #3: Fashion and Jewelry

The fashion of Ancient India is easily observable in the clothing of Indians today. As a general rule, Indians prefer to wear bright-colored clothing. That would be clothing colored either orange or yellow. The brightness of color has the obvious function of blocking out sun rays, which are the source of all heat discomfort in India.

The dressing was augmented by the Indian use of parasols. Parasols are mini-umbrellas that are lightweight and easy to carry. Considering their lightness and weakness, their function was not of rainfall protection. It was to protect the user from sunlight.

Clothing Materials and Dyes

Cotton was the primary material used for clothing production in Ancient India, but the bland whites and greys were not pleasant to society. For this reason, the Ancient Indians would manufacture dyes that were usable for clothing, giving them color and vibrance.

While cotton was the primary target for dye, there was also silk. Unfortunately, silk is naturally delicate to handle, and difficult to produce. The difficult production of silk meant that the dyeing process had to be careful. This was bound to cost more in terms of colored silk, making it an item of luxury for Ancient Indian elites.

For example, the two common colors used for cloth dyes were red and yellow. Those were extracted from madder plants, which provided the reddish color, and ochre, providing yellow and orange colors.

As a general rule, it was known that ochre blended better with cotton, making it more convenient for dyeing. Madder on the other hand was more difficult to use, but was permanent when absorbed into cotton.

Fashion Styles

Men in ancient India wore dhotis, which involve a baggy long-sleeved shirt with baggy pants. They are commonly seen in the dress of Indian men today. This is an odd form of clothing, especially when you consider the hot climate.

Regardless, the bagginess of the clothing serves the function of cooling the body by providing ventilation to it. It serves as a similar function to robes worn by Arabs in hot desert climates.

Women in Ancient India wore saris. These were less focused on convenience and more on looks. Saris involve the wearing of a long skirt, which covered the woman's bottom half entirely. A top is then worn, with the style of the top varying based on the woman.

Generally though, tops would involve long cloths, where the excess would be dropped over the back (kind of like a superhero cape).

Jewelry

Due to the fact that religion governed Ancient Indians, jewelry wasn't just an aesthetic thing. It was also ceremonial garb, used for religious reasons.

The styles are difficult to describe, as they varied rapidly from one place to another. Jewelry in Ancient India did not follow a unified code of equipment. It was worn based on the perceptions of the location of design.

For example, the ancient inhabitants of what is today called Rajasthan, focused on the use of gold and glass combinations as jewelry.

Gold was molten with glass to create highly colorful adornments.

On the other hand, beaded jewelry utilizing clay was a common feature in the Southern regions of Ancient India.



Unlike Ancient Egyptians, there was no need to be excessive in the use of jewelry for decorations. The decorative clothing of Indians made up for that aspect, a direct result of the colored dyes they used.

Home is Where the Beauty Is

Beauty styles exist in all cultures, but the purposes and expressions vary. One culture may emphasize extravagance, while another may focus on simplicity. One culture may have an abundance of materials for beautifying, while another relies excessively on exports.

Regardless of the location, it is interesting to see the methods of adaption taken up by every culture. Being forced to rely on the toils of your soil and your homeland's plants allows you to create a unique beauty style that matches your home.



This is seen in India more than any other location in the world, even still today!

And not only is Ancient Indian fashion elegant and beautiful, but its simplicity and bright colors speak of an ancient culture and its wonderful natural blends!

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