

Management of Shwitra (Vitiligo) through the Holistic Approach of Ayurveda

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Vitiligo is a chronic skin disorder characterized by the progressive loss of melanocytes, leading to the formation of depigmented patches on the skin. Ayurveda describes in detail the etiology, symptoms and management of Vitiligo under the disease named Shwitra. While conventional treatments often focus on symptom management, Ayurveda, offers a holistic approach to restoring skin pigmentation and addressing the root causes of the disorder. The disease results from increased oxidative stress brought on by chronic inflammation, which in turn causes greater melanocyte destruction. By examining both classical Ayurvedic texts and contemporary clinical studies, this research highlights the potential benefits of personalized Ayurvedic treatments in promoting skin pigmentation, improving immune function, and managing oxidative stress. This is a case study of 17yr old male patient who came to the OPD with the complaints of white patches on face (below both eyes), lips, neck, extensor aspect of right forearm and left-hand palm region since 2 years. The patient was given Shaman Chikitsa, Nidan Parivarjan, dietary modifications and lifestyle adjustments. Patient started regaining normal pigmentation of skin and is still under follow up for further treatment and for Apunarbhav Chikitsa.

Keywords: Vitiligo, Shwitra, Oxidative stress, Nidan Parivarjan, Apunarbhav Chikitsa

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Introduction

Vitiligo is a chronic skin condition characterized by the loss of pigment in certain areas of the skin, leading to the development of depigmented patches. This occurs when melanocytes, are destroyed or stop functioning due to a combination of genetic, autoimmune, and environmental factors. Vitiligo can affect people of all ages and skin types, and its appearance can vary widely. It can be correlated with *Shwitra* disease in *Ayurveda* due to the identical signs and symptoms which are; non-exudative white, red or coppery-red colored patches, roughness, dryness, itching, burning sensation of the patches, loss and discoloration of the hair. While vitiligo itself is not harmful and doesn't typically affect overall health, it can have significant psychological and emotional impacts due to changes in appearance. *Ayurveda* states that *Shwitra* originates from by being untruthful, ungrateful, disrespecting God and *Guru*, sinful acts, misdeeds of past life and intake of *Viruddha Ahar*. Other causes may be *Chhardi Vega Dharana*, *Atisewan* of *Amla-Katu-Ushna-Lavan Madhur Aharsewan*, *Atimatra Bhojan* along with *Navanna Sevan* and *Dadhi Sevan*. In *Charak Samhita* while explaining the *Nidana* of *Shwitra*, *Acharya Charak* has explained *Viruddha Aharvihar* (unbeneficial food) and *Paap Karma* (bad deeds) as the main cause of *Shwitra*.^[1]

Above etiological factors produce the imbalance of *Doshas* (body humours) like *Vata*, *Pitta Kapha* specially *Bhrajak Pitta* which helps in the formation of and maintain the color of skin. These *Doshas* are vitiated along with *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa* and *Meda Dhatus*.^[2] By considering the above-mentioned factors it can be noted that Vitiligo results due to faulty eating habits, faulty lifestyle and unawareness of same according to *Ayurveda*. Hence not only medicinal treatment but holistic approach is the need of hour to treat Vitiligo.

Case Report

A 17 year old male patient came to OPD of Rognidan & Vikruti Vigyan on 5th July 2024, with the complaints of white patches on face (below both eyes), lips, neck, extensor aspect of right forearm and on left hand palm region since 2years but is increasing now for 4 months. No itching, burning, roughness or discolouration of hair was present.

History of present illness

Patient has history of small white patch on chest region, which appeared once during childhood and even disappeared after a few months. Two years ago, a small white patch appeared on neck and face region which started spreading slowly but has now been spreading rapidly since last four months. Hence patient's parents got concerned and then he was brought to hospital to seek Ayurvedic treatment. His appetite, bowel evacuation and urine are normal. He joined gym 6months ago and since then the intake of incompatible foods has increased and was also taking pre workout meals (having boiled black chick peas in morning and working out in gym after half an hour).

Past Medical History

- No/H/O - Bronchial Asthma/Pulmonary Tuberculosis/COPD/Emphysema/Covid-19.
- No/H/O - HIV1/HIV2/Hepatitis B.
- No/H/O - other major illness.
- No surgical history found.

Personal History

■ Ahara

01. *Virudhha Ahar* (incompatible foods like milkshakes, eating tomato chutney and having milk immediately after that, powder of black chick peas with milk (as a source of protein))
02. *Adhyashan* (habit of overeating while trying to gain weight, over feeding of food and milk by parents since childhood)
03. *Katu, Amla and Lavan Rasa* dominant *Ahar*
 - **Vihar** - *Diwaswap* - 1-2 hrs, *Ratrijagaran* - Yes, *Vyayam* after having food
 - **Manasik Hetu** - No
 - **Addiction history** - No
 - **Occupation** -

Ashtavidha Parikshan

- *Nadi* (pulse) - 82/min.
- *Mala* (stool) - *Malavastambha* (1time/alternate day)
- *Mutra* (urine) - *Ishat Peet* (Pale yellow)
- *Jeehva* (tounge) - *Saam* (Coated)
- *Shabda* (speech) - *Prakrut* (Normal).

- *Sparsh* - *Anushna Shit*
- *Druka* (eyes) - *Prakrut*
- *Akruti* - *Madhyam* (Medium) BMI – 21.2kg/m²

Local Examination

Site	No. of Patches	Dimensions	Colour
Face	Below Right Eye	3cmx5cmx4cm	Milky White
	Below Left Eye	2cmx3cmx3cm	Milky White
	Lower Lip	2cmx2cm	Milky White
Neck	Anterior aspect	5cmx3cm, two other small patches	Milky White
Right hand	Elbow (extensor aspect)	Multiple small irregular patches	Milky White
Left hand	Palm	3cmx1cm	Milky White

Systemic Examination

- Blood Pressure - 120/70 mm/Hg.
- Pulse - 82/min
- SPO₂ - 98% O₂
- S1S2 - Normal

- Respiratory rate - 19/ min
- Temperature - 98.2°F

Samprapti Ghatak

- *Dosha* - *Pachak Pitta, Saman Vayu, Apan Vayu, Kledak Kapha.*
- *Dushya* - *Rasa Dhatu, Rakta Dhatu*
- *Strotas* - *Annavaha Strotas, Raktavaha Strotas*
- *Strotodushti* - *Sang*
- *Agni* - *Agnimandya*
- *Adhishtana* - *Twak*
- *Sadhyata* - *Krichhasadhyata*

Materials and Methods

Table No. 1 shows the Therapeutic intervention given to the patient.

Treatment was continued upto 3 months.

Table 1: Therapeutic Intervention

Date	Aushadhi	Matra	Anupaana	Kaal
05/07/2024	Bakuchi Churna	3gm Twice a day	Koshnodak (Lukewarm water)	Vyanodane (After meal)
	Aarogyawardhini Vati	2tab (250mg each) Twice a day	Koshnodak (Lukewarm water)	Vyanodane (After meal)
	Kumariasav	3 tsp (15ml) Twice a day	3 tsp Koshnodak (Lukewarm water)	Vyanodane (After meal)
	Avipattikar Churna	3 gm twice a day	Koshnodak (Lukewarm water)	Apane (Before meal)
	Bakuchi Churna & Chitrak Churna	Both in equal quantity	Mixed with Gomutra	Local Application

Observations and Results

No. of Patches	Dimensions		Colour	
	BT	AT	BT	AT
Below Right Eye	3cmx5cmx4cm	1cmx2cmx3cm	Milky White	Reddish colour
Below Left Eye	2cmx3cmx3cm	1cmx1cmx3cm	Milky White	Skin colour
Lower Lip	2cmx2cm	1cmx1cm	Milky White	Pale White with reddish spots in between
Anterior aspect of neck	10cmx5cm, two other small patches	10cmx5cm, two other small patches	Milky White	Pale White with red spots in between
Elbow	Multiple small irregular patches	Multiple small irregular patches	Milky White	Pale White
Palm (left hand)	3cmx1cm	2cmx1cm	Milky White	Pale White with red spots in between

Discussion

Ayurveda says that the first step for the treatment of *Nidan Parivarjan* (Avoiding the causative factors). As mentioned earlier patient was taking *Katu Rasa* (spicy) and *Lavan Rasa* (salty) dominant *Ahar*, *Viruddha Ahar* (incompatible food combination) and *Adhyashan* (overeating). All these causes lead to *Rakta Dushti* (vitiation of blood) and vitiation of *Tridosha*. *Bhrajak Pitta* which resides in the skin and is responsible for *Chaya* and *Prabha* of *Twacha* (skin) is main *Dosha* to be vitiated.

The treatment was designed in accordance with *Koshtha Shuddhi* (clearing out gut toxins), which would improve *Dhatu's* nutrition and clear blockages in the *Strotas* (channels) to allow *Vyan Vayu* and *Bhrajak Pitta* to flow properly. Thus, improving the skin colour and pigmentation.

Mode of action of the drugs used are given as follows

Bakuchi Churna - It contains psoralen, isopsoralen, bakuchiol, bavchinin, bavachin and corylin which have antioxidant properties,

Help in stimulating melanocytes for Melanin synthesis, Immuno-modulatory effect and inhibitory against antigen induced granulation[3,4] They also increase the rate of synthesis and amount of melanin and hence encouraging skin to recover from a vitiliginous state.[5]

Arogyavardhini Vati - It *Raktadhushtihara* (blood purifier), *Kushtahara* (alleviates skin disease), *Sroto Vishodhana* (cleansing channels of body) and *Pitta Doshahara* (alleviates Pitta) properties. And it improves digestion and metabolic activities[6] It performs *Bhedan* activity, is hepatoprotective and hence used for *Kostha Shodan* (clearing out gut toxins).

Kumariasava - It facilitates the flow of *Achha Pitta* from Liver to intestine thereby maintaining healthy digestion and keeps *Pachak Pitta* in check. Also, liver plays an important role in regulation of melanin production so using hepatoprotective drugs like *Kumariasava* maintains the normal functioning of Liver.

Avipattikar Churna - As the patient had *Malavibandh*, *Avipattikar* was choice of drug because it contains *Trivrutta* and *Triphala* both of which help in relieving *Vibandha*[7,8] with subsidiary effect on *Pitta*.[9]

Lepa of Bakuchi Churna and Chitrak Churna- The treatment protocol as per the classics for any *Kushtha* is *Shodhan*, *Shaman* followed by *Lepa* on the lesions[10] *Bakuchi* promotes local blood circulation, which nourishes the cells there and aids in the proper development of *Bhrajak Pitta* in the skin. *Chitrak* being *Ushna* (hot in potency) with *Katu Rasa* and *Katu Vipaka* helps in *Pachan* (digestion) of the *Rasagat Samta* at the level of skin through local application. Patient was advised to apply this *Lepa* and sit under morning sunlight. The UV rays from sunlight reacts with the *Lepa* contents and helps in promoting the growth of melanocyte, its migration and stimulates proliferation.[11]

Conclusion

This case study has shown encouraging results for the treatment of vitiligo just by using *Shaman Chikitsa* and within a short span of time. This was accomplished because *Nidan Parivarjan* (Ceasing the intake of the causative factors) was the primary emphasis.

The study's findings and observations support the notion that, when correctly implemented, Ayurvedic principles produce positive, rapid benefits.



Figure 1: Before Treatment



Figure 2: After Treatment



Figure 3: Before Treatment



Figure 4: After Treatment

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