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Review Article

COMPREHENSIVE AYURVEDIC APPROACHES TO ADDRESSING *SHWITRA* (VITILIGO)

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ABSTRACT

Melanocyte degeneration, which results from the autoimmune loss of melanocytes, is associated with vitiligo, an acquired macular de-pigmentation disorder. Because of the disease's similar appearance, this vitiligo can be compared to *Shwitra* in Ayurveda classics. *Shwitra* is referred to as *Kushta Roga Chikitsa* in ancient Ayurvedic texts, particularly the *Charaka Samhita*. **Methodology:** *Shodhana* and *Shamana Chikitsa* were used to treat a 32-year-old male patient who complained of white, discoloured areas on his nape of neck, trunk, and around his knee and elbow joints. **Results:** After treatment, individual criteria were assessed using the subjective criteria and VASI scoring system, and the patient showed encouraging results in this study. **Discussion:** After the patient received treatment with *Shamana Aushadis* and *Shodhana*, the white, discolored spots changed to a pinkish hue before returning to their natural skin tone. The subjective criteria for patients showed a 9% improvement, and the VASI score reduced from 3.5 to 0.4. **Conclusion:** The current case study confirmed the effectiveness of Ayurvedic medication in treating *Shwitra*.

INTRODUCTION

Shwitra or *Shweta-Kushtha* are associated with the skin condition known as vitiligo[1]. *Bhrajaka Pitta* and *Vata* are situated in skin. Skin disorders may indicate an imbalance between the two[2]. *Shwitra* is unique among skin disorders because all skin tissues (*Twak*) operate correctly, although the tissue exhibits discoloration (*Twak Vaivarnyata*) and does not exude any discharge (*Aparisarav Stravi*)[3,4]. According to Acharya Vagbhata, the three *Doshas Pitta*, *Kapha*, and *Vata,* are the reasons for this. According to *Dhatus*, there are three distinct types of *Shwitra*, based on the location and the skin's color and texture. It is referred to as *Vataja Shwitra* when it is dry and red in *Rakta Dhatu*, *Pittaja Shwitra* when it is coppery in *Mamsa Dhatu* and causes burning and hair loss, and *Kaphaja Shwitra* when it is white and itchy in *Medo Dhatu*[5].

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Numerous theories exist regarding the etiology of vitiligo, including the main reasons include autoimmune, chemical contact, endocrine, genetic, psychological, and adverse drug interactions[6,7]. Dishonesty, ungraciousness, contempt for the gods, insulting the preceptors, evil deeds, sins from past incarnations, and eating contradictory foods are the actual reasons that are considered *Nidana* in Ayurveda[8]. In India, vitiligo, a skin disorder that results in loss of pigmentation, often manifests between the ages of 10 and 30 years, with the second and third decades of life showing the highest occurrence. Although vitiligo can appear at any age, its frequency decreases with age. According to studies conducted in India, approximately 46% of instances occur before the age of 20[9]. Focal melanocyte loss causes hypopigmented patches. It is thought to be caused by the autoimmune destruction of melanocytes by cells. Vitiligo is often symmetrical and generalized, affecting the hands, wrists, feet, knees, neck, and skin surrounding body orifices[10].

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To evaluate the efficacy of the Ayurvedic treatment protocol in *Shvitra*.

Brief History of Patient

The present case report involved a 32-year-old man who presented with complaints of white discoloration over his bilateral lower extremities, initially characterized by mild itching and a tiny lesion. Later, he saw more white patches around both elbow joints, trunk, and nape of neck, with severe itching, dryness, and white color patches. Subsequently, the patient underwent treatment in the conventional system of medicine and continued medication for 4 months. He showed no improvement; therefore, he decided to visit the OPD of Kayachikitsa at Raghunath Ayurved Mahavidyalaya and Hospital for suitable and effective management. He was diagnosed with *Shwitra* (vitiligo) and was administered an Ayurveda treatment protocol. No associated symptoms were observed.

Past History: There was a history of skin complaints for 6 months. However, there was no history of HTN, DM, or other systemic disorders.

Family History- Nothing significant; No one at home has this problem.

Personal History: He is a police officer from a vegetarian Hindu family. He had a poor appetite with constipated bowel and normal micturition. He had a history of good sleep. There was no history of allergy to any medication or food.

History of Previous Treatment: There was no history of any medication before attending the conventional system.

Dietary Habits

- His *Agni* was *Vishama* and takes 1-2 times food a day.
- Commonly consumed food– Canteen food
- Curren appetite– Poor

***Dashvidha Pariksha*:** His *Prakriti* was *Pitta-Kaphaja, Twaksara*, *Madhayama Samhanana*, *Sama Pramana, Pravara Satva* with *Vishmagni*, *Pravara Vyayama Shakti* and of *Youvana Vaya*. He presented *Vikrati* in *Rasa, Rakta, Mamasa,* and *Meda* with *Daurblaya.*

Anthropometric measurements: The patient's height was 177cm and weight was 78kg.

***Rupa* (clinical findings)**

Table 1: Depicting the Findings on his skin

Site of Lesions	Nape of neck, trunk and bilateral knee joints and elbow joints.		
Lesion	Epidermal		
Distribution	Generalised, symmetrical, non–segmental and bilateral.		
Character of lesion	Macule	**Severity**	Severe
Number of lesions	Multiple lesions	**Sensation on lesion**	Normal sensation
Colour	Milky white	**Inflammation**	Absent
Arrangement	Segmental, diffused	**Swelling**	Absent
Itching	Present	**Discharge**	Absent

Samprapti Ghatak

- *Dosha– Tridoshaja*
- *Dushya– Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa & Meda*
- *Agni– Agnimandhya*
- *Srotas– Rasavaha, Raktavaha, Mamsavaha & Medovaha*
- *Srotodusti– Sanga*
- *Rogamarga– Bahya*
- *Udbhava Sthana– Amashaya*
- *Vyakta Sthana– Twacha*
- *Swabhava– Chirakari*
- *Sadhyasadhyata– Yapya*

Line of treatment in Ayurveda- *Deepana Pachana*, *Snehapana*, *Abhyanga* and *Swedana*, *Vamana*, *Shamsarjan Karma* and *Shamana Aushadhi.*

Table 2: *Sodhana Karma* advised to the patient

Deepan-Pachana-	*Panchakola Churna* [01st March, 2025 to 04th March, 2025] 3 gm twice daily before food with lukewarm water.
Internal Snehana-	*Somraji Ghrita* [05th March, 2025 to 09th March, 2025] 1st day- 30ml 2nd day- 50 ml 3rd day- 80 ml 4th day- 100 ml 5th day- 12 ml
External Shehana-	*Marichyadi Tailam- Sarbanga Abhyanga.*

Swedana-	*Nadi Sweda* with *Dashamoola Kwatha*	
Vamana-	*Madan Phala Yoga* given on 11th March at 6:00 am. *Madanphala = Antarnakha Musti Pramana*. *Vacha* = 5gm Honey = Q.S. (50ml) *Saindhav Lavana* = Q.S. (15 gm) *Yashtimadhu Kwatha* = 5ml	
	Vaigaki- 10	***Antaki***- *Pittanta*
	Manaki- approx.1.5 *Prastha*	***Shuddhi***- *Pravara Shuddhi*
	Laingiki- *Kramaat kaphapitta anilaagamana, Shareera laghuta, Dourbalya, Kanta Indriya shudhi, Anati mahati vyatha etc.*	
Sansarjan Karma-	3 days [11th March, 2025 to 15th March, 2025]	

Table 3: Details of *Shamana Chikitsa*

	Medication	**Dose**
1	*Mahamanjisthadi Kashaya*	15ml *Kashaya* 45ml lukewarm water, twice daily before food at 7:30 am and 7:30 pm.
2	*Arogyavardhani vati*	250mg, on morning empty stomach with lukewarm water.
3	*Bakuchi churna*	3gm *Churna,* twice daily after food with lukewarm water.
4	*Gandhaka rasayana*	250mg, twice daily after food with lukewarm water.
5	*Khadirarishta*	30ml, twice daily after food with 30 ml of water.
6	*Panchsakar Churna*	3gm *Churna,* once daily after food with lukewarm water at bedtime.
7	*Ointment Pigmento*	Apply over the white patches, followed by exposing the area to the mild sunlight for 10-20 minutes.

RESULTS

VASI Score before treatment

VASI = Σ {Hand units} x {Residual Depigmentation}

Table 4: Result of VASI Score in Various body parts

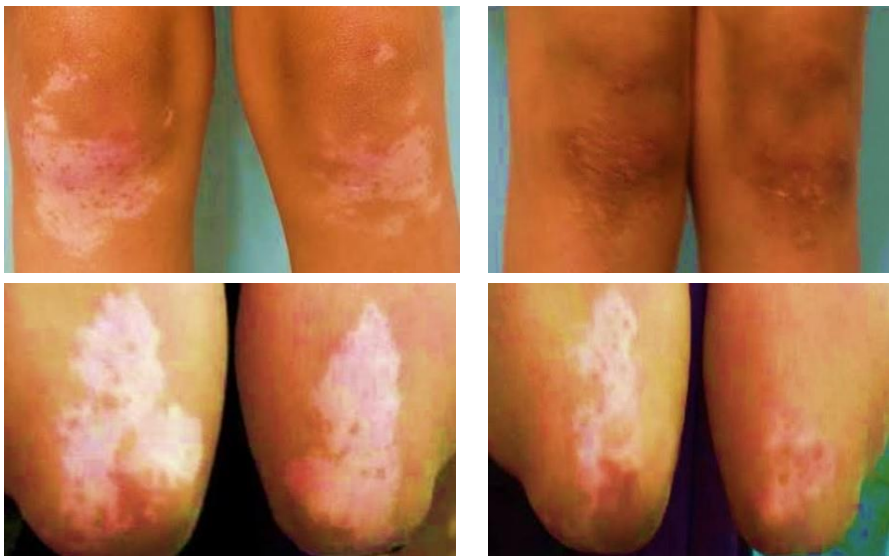
Body parts	**Before treatment**	**After treatment**
Face & neck	0	0
Upper extremity	3x0.5	2x0.1
Trunk (front) Trunk (Back)	0 0	0 0
lower extremity	4 x0.5	2x0.1
Feet	0	0
hand	0	0
Total VASI Score	**3.5**	**0.4**

Table 5: Results showing changes before and after the treatment

Criteria's	**Score**	
	Before treatment	**After treatment**
Colour of Patch	White (*Shweta*)	Normal skin colour in some affected areas, & white patches in some areas.
Size of Patches	Right elbow- 8x5 cm Left elbow- 7x3 cm	Right elbow- 8x3 cm Left elbow- 5x3 cm

	Right knee- 5x5 cm Left knee- 5x4 cm	Right knee- 2x3 cm Left knee- 2x2 cm
Number of black dots observed	Non-appearance of black spot.	Appearance of more than 5 black spots.

Fig.1: Pictures showing changes before and after the treatment



Before treatment **After treatment**

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda effectively treats *Shwitra* (vitiligo) by balancing *Doshas*, purifying blood, and rejuvenating the skin for pigmentation. This treatment often yields satisfactory results in such cases. The patient had whitish patches on the nape of neck, trunk and bilateral knee and elbow joints. After one month, the patches became pinkish and inflamed, and after another month, they turned pinkish without inflammation. After 30 days, the depigmented areas gradually filled with normal skin color. Improvement was measured using the VASI score, showing some areas completely free of white patches, while others still had them.

Panchakarma therapies, such as *Vamana*, cleanse the body and restore *Dosha* balance. *Vamana* expels diseased humors using *Urdhobhaga*, targeting harmful *Doshas*, especially *Kapha*, towards the *Amashaya*. *Vamana* possesses the properties of *Ushna, Tikshna, Sukshma, Vyavayi*, and *Vikasi*. Once absorbed, *Vamana Yoga* in travelling through the *Hridaya* and *Dhamani* to the body's channels. *Dhatu Shaithilya Karma*, with *Vikasi Guna*, relaxes bonds, while *Vyavayi Guna* ensures a quick absorption. *Ushna Guna* liquefies *Dosha Sanghata*, *Tikshna Guna* breaks down *Dosha* and *Mala*, and *Sukshma Guna* penetrates microchannels to eliminate toxins[11].

Mahamanjisthadi Kashaya[12] is formulated based on the *Sharangadhar Samhita Madhyam Khanda* 2/139-144, containing over 40 medicinal herbs, including *Sariva, Bibhitaki, Haritaki, Amalaki, Manjishtha, Nimba, Haridra, Vacha,* and *Khadira* etc[13]. These medications have properties such as *Varnya*, *Kapha Pittashamaka*, *Shothahara*, *Kushtaghna*, and *Vranropaka*. Mostly exhibit *Tridoshaghna* or *Kapha Pittahara* traits, categorised as *Tikta*, *Katu*, *Kashaya Rasa, Laghu, Ruksha Guna*, and *Ushna Veerya; Katu Vipaka*. *Manjistha* is noted for *Varnya* and *Rakta prasadana*, while *Nimba* is recognised for *Kandughna* effects. *Haridra* is *Kusthaghna*, and *Vacha* aids in *Sroto Shodhana*. Their therapeutic effects stem from their qualities of *Rasa, Guna, Veerya, Vipaka, and Prabhava,* following the principles of *Samprapti Vighatana Chikitsa Siddhanta*[14]. It supports skin health by cleansing the blood and regulating the formation of *Bhrajak Pitta*[15].

Arogyavardhini Vati[16] contains *Shuddha Parada, Shuddha Gandhak, Loha Bhasma, Abhraka Bhasma, Tamra, Triphala, Shilajatu, Guggulu, Chitrak Moola, Katuki*, and *Nimba patra* extract. This formulation promotes liver health, supports digestion, helps eliminate excess *Snigdha Dravyas*, aids in digestionting of *Drava* and *Kleda*, and improves blood quality.

The primary ingredient of *Khadirarishta*[17] is *Khadira* extract. This extract is used for its immunomodulatory properties, blood purification, astringent effects, bactericidal action, cooling properties, and anti-inflammatory benefits[18]. This substance is widely recognized for its detoxifying properties. It plays a crucial role in cleansing the body

and assists in eliminating built-up toxins by its *Laghu, Ruksha Guna*, *Tikta, Kashaya Rasa*, *Katu Vipaka* and *Sheeta Veerya* properties. As a result, it enhances liver function, purifies the blood, and supports the production of melanin pigments by melanocytes, which are essential for skin coloration.

Bakuchi has *katu-Tikta Rasa*, *Ruksha Guna*, and *katu Vipaka*, which help eliminate *Sroto-Dushti* and improve local blood circulation. This supplies essential nutrients to skin cells and aids in the formation of *Bhrajaka Pitta*, promoting a radiant skin appearance and normal skin tone. Its properties include *Agnideepan*, *Pachana*, *Kushthaghna*, and *Kaphvatahara*[19]. *Bakuchi* is composed of several active compounds, including psoralen, isopsorale, bakuchiol, bavachinin, bavachin, and corylin. These components are known for their antioxidant properties, which help protect the cells from oxidative stress. Additionally, they play a crucial role in stimulating melanocytes, which are responsible for melanin production, thereby promoting skin pigmentation. *Bakuchi* also exhibits immunomodulatory effects that can help regulate the immune response. It can also inhibit antigen-precipitated granulation, contributing to its therapeutic potential[20]. Contents of *Gandhaka Rasayana*[21] are *Shudha-Ghandhak* (sulphur), prepared by giving *Bhavana* of *Chaturjata*, *Triphala,* and *Shunthi* with *Swarasa* of *Guduchi, Bhringaraja*, and *Ardraka,* which has several potential uses for skin health. *Gandhaka-Rasayana* is *Kandughna, Ugravishadoshaghna, Dahanashaka, Kushthaghna, Raktaprasadana, Rakta Shodhaka, Twachya* means useful in skin condition[22,23].

Panchasakar churna is a potent herbal remedy for constipation; however, it does not serve as a direct treatment for vitiligo. It operates through two mechanisms that affect the motility of the large intestine and influence the secretion processes. Consequently, it alleviates constipation without inducing discomfort in patients owing to its distinctive formulation[24]. Although it is often used alongside other Ayurvedic treatments to enhance digestion and overall well-being, it may also indirectly aid the body's healing processes.

Pigmento ointment contains *Bakuchi, Nimba, Chakramarda,* and *Khaira*. *Bakuchi* stimulates melanocytes for melanin synthesis, *Nimba* serves as a stimulant, *Chakramarda* helps preserve the skin's normal complexion, and *Khadira* effectively heals while maintaining the skin's natural color. Pigmento ointment is beneficial for sustaining healthy skin pigmentation. It is enriched with *Bakuchi*, neem, *Chakramarda*, and other herbs that are beneficial for *Shvitra*, as outlined in Ayurveda. *Bakuchi* stimulates melanocytes to produce melanin. Additionally, other herbs, such as *Chakramarda* and *Nimba*, possess antioxidant properties that protect melanocytes from damage caused by free radicals.

Sun Exposure Therapy: Controlled exposure to sunlight or UV light therapy is occasionally recommended in Ayurveda to stimulate melanin production in the affected areas. Ointment Pigmento, derived from *Bakuchi, Nimba, Chakramarda,* and *Khaira*, is used for the treatment of vitiligo in Ayurveda. Photosensitizing agents include *Bakuchi*, which contains psoralen that activates melanocytes upon exposure to ultraviolet light. The treatment involves applying oil and exposing the affected skin areas to sunlight. The primary secondary metabolite of *Bakuchi* is a furanocoumarin known as psoralen. Psoralen promotes re-pigmentation by increasing the skin's sensitivity to ultraviolet light. Controlled exposure to sunlight or UV light is prescribed in Ayurveda to encourage melanin synthesis in afflicted regions.

Pathya: Cow milk and ghee, *Mudga*, *Parval*, rice, spinach, *Methi,* and easily digestible diets.

Apathya: *Guda*, *Tila*, curd, prickles, chilis, fish, brinjal, jackfruit, heavy diets, etc.

CONCLUSION

The incidence of *Shwitra* (vitiligo) is increasing due to poor lifestyle choices, making it essential to identify and eliminate the various causes of the condition. Adhering to the Ayurvedic treatment guidelines specified in *Shvitra Chikitsa* can help many people restore their pigmentation. *Shwitra* is a condition characterized by aesthetic disruption that significantly impacts both mental and physical health. The Ayurvedic treatment protocol aids in eliminating the root cause of the disease and preventing recurrence by enhancing the overall condition concerning the quantity and size of lesions, along with the restoration of normal skin pigmentation.

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