



Case Study

AYURVEDIC MANAGEMENT OF *SHWITRA* (VITILIGO)

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Article info

Article History:

Received: 19-10-2024

Accepted: 29-11-2024

Published: 20-12-2024

KEYWORDS:

*Shwitra, Kushta Roga, Vitiligo, Shamana Chikitsa, Virechana, Khadirarishtham, Mahatiktaghrita, Bakuchi Tail.*

ABSTRACT

In Ayurveda, skin diseases are classified under *Kushta Roga* with *Shwitra* being one of its notable conditions. *Shwitra* is characterized by whitish patches on the skin, primarily resulting from the involvement of *Sapta Dravyas* i.e., *Vata, Pitta, Kapha, Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa, and Meda*. *Shwitra* is often correlated with vitiligo, a hypopigmentation disorder impacting about 1% of the global population. While *Shwitra* is not harmful in a physical sense, it can significantly affect a child's social and mental well-being. **Methodology-** This case report presents a 13-year-old female patient came to SBLD Panchakarma OPD with complaint of white patches on her face and both upper and lower limbs, accompanied by mild itching but no burning sensation since one year. The initial treatment involved *Shamana chikitsa* followed by *Shodhana Chikitsa* for a period of three months, with regular follow-ups to assess changes in the size, no. and colour of the patches. This article discusses the Ayurvedic management of *Shwitra*, highlighting treatment efficacy. **Result and Discussion-** The patient exhibited notable improvement following *Virechana* and subsequent *Shamana Aushadis*. The treatment protocol effectively facilitated the re-pigmentation of the depigmented patches. No. of patches are reduced after treatment. This case underscores the potential of Ayurvedic treatments for *Shwitra*, reaffirming their efficacy as described in classical texts. Such outcomes could be fundamental in managing future cases of similar skin conditions. **Conclusion-** The rising incidence of vitiligo is linked to lifestyle factors, making it essential to address its causes through Ayurveda. *Shwitra Chikitsa* offers treatments that improve pigmentation and mental well-being. Using *Shodhana* and *Shamana* therapies, practitioners can target the root causes, reduce patches, and restore normal skin pigmentation while preventing recurrence.

INTRODUCTION

*Shwitra* is referenced in several Ayurvedic texts, with its name derived from the Sanskrit word "Sweta," meaning "white patch." It is characterized by the appearance of white patches on the skin across the body.<sup>[1]</sup> As stated in the Kashyapa Samhita, "*Shweta Bhava Michanti Shwitram*," this condition reflects the imbalance of *Bhrajak Pitta*, which is responsible for the skin's pigmentation.<sup>[2]</sup>

*Shwitra* is discussed within the context of *Kushta Roga Chikitsa* in classical Ayurveda. Similar to *Kushta*, it results from the vitiation of the *Tridosha* and

the *Dhatus*, including *Rasa, Rakta, Mansa, and Meda*.<sup>[3]</sup> The clinical presentation of *Shwitra* correlates with vitiligo, a condition marked by depigmentation of localized skin areas due to the destruction of melanocytes. This destruction is often attributed to autoimmune mechanisms. Vitiligo can carry significant social stigma, leading to physical disfigurement and an inferiority complex in children, which can hinder their social development.<sup>[4]</sup> Globally, the prevalence of vitiligo is around 1%, with incidence rates ranging from 0.1% to over 8.8%.<sup>[5]</sup>

Historical references to *Shwitra* can be found in the Vedic period and in texts such as the *Brihatrayi* and *Laghutrayees*, where it is classified into three types: *Dharuna, Charuna, and Shwitra* (or *Kilasa*). Acharya Charaka identifies factors such as *Viruddha Ahara* and *Vihara*, as well as disrespect towards deities, *Gurus*, and *Brahmanas*, along with sins from past lives, as key

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contributors to the disturbance of the *Tridosha* balance.<sup>[6]</sup>

In modern medicine, treatments for vitiligo typically include topical corticosteroids, calcineurin inhibitors, calcipotriol combined with corticosteroids, UV radiation, phototherapy (PUVA therapy), surgical interventions, skin grafting, and medical tattooing. However, these treatments can have adverse effects and limitations based on treatment duration and the extent of lesions.<sup>[7]</sup>

Ayurveda offers a range of potent formulations for managing such chronic autoimmune conditions, providing safer, more straight-forward, and cost-effective natural remedies. In this context, we present a case study of a young female patient with vitiligo who was successfully treated using Ayurvedic therapies alongside dietary modifications.

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the impact of Ayurvedic treatments on *Shwitra*.
2. To examine the effects of *Virechana* therapy on *Shwitra*.

### MATERIALS & METHODS

This study was carried out in OPD of Panchakarma department of SBLD Ayurvedic College, Sardarshahar, Churu (Rajasthan).

#### Case Report

**Patient Background:** 13-year-old female with white patches on her face, upper, and lower limbs for one year, accompanied by mild itching.

**Symptom Progression:** Gradual increase in the number of patches; lesions are in an active phase.

#### Medical History

- No family history of autoimmune disorders among first-degree relatives.
- Patient has no personal history of conditions like atopic dermatitis, psoriasis, or asthma.

#### Previous Treatments

- 10-month history of homeopathic and allopathic treatments, including corticosteroids, multivitamins, and topical applications.
- Initial improvement noted, but no significant progress in recent months.

**Current Visit:** Patient visited the hospital for Ayurvedic treatment upon the recommendation of a neighbor.

**Highlights:** Persistent white patches with mild itching, unsuccessful response to previous treatments, and current exploration of Ayurvedic therapy.

#### Personal History

- **Ahara:** Dietary analysis indicated the consumption of incompatible foods, specifically milk consumed with salted meals in the morning and evening. The patient also reported a high intake of sweet, sour, and heavy-to-digest foods.

- **Vihara:** patient exhibited lifestyle habits including a 1.5-hour postprandial nap and nocturnal awakening.

#### Psychological history

A patient with vitiligo may feel socially isolated and experience psychological distress, leading to symptoms of depression.

#### General examination

- BP- 110/70 mm of hg
- Pulse rate- 72 / min
- Respiratory Rate- 18 / min
- Pallor- Absent
- Icterus- Absent
- Lymph node- Not palpable
- Oedema - Absent

#### Local examination

- Site of lesion - Face and both upper and lower limbs
- Colour of lesion- White
- Distribution- Asymmetrical
- Itching- Present (mild)
- Discharge- Absent

#### Investigations

The haematological report shows a haemoglobin level of 12.5 g/dL.

#### Treatment

##### Phase A (Initial 30 days)

##### 1. Ayurvedic Oral Powder Combination

- a) *Amlaki Churna (Embllica Officinalis)*- 2 g
  - b) *Manjistha Churna (Rubia Cordifolia)*- 1 g
  - c) *Vidanga Churna (Embelia Ribes)*- 1 g
  - d) *Bakuchi Churna (Psoralea Corylifolia)*- 2 g
  - e) *Sudha Gandhaka* (purified sulphur)- 125mg
  - f) *Rasamanikya* (arsenic compound)- 65mg
- Administered twice daily (bd) after meals with lukewarm water.

2. ***Arogyavardhini Vati*** (traditional Ayurvedic tablet) - 2 tablets bd after meals.

3. ***Khadiraristham*** (herbal decoction)- 10ml bd with an equal quantity of water post-meals.

4. ***Bakuchi Oil***- Topical application on affected areas.

5. ***Mahatikta Ghrita*** (medicated ghee)- 3g bd.

**Phase B: *Virechana Karma*** (Therapeutic Purging) with *Trivrut Avaleha* and *Mahatikta Ghrita Sneha Pana*.

##### ***Sneha Pana*** (Internal Oleation)

- **Day 1:** *Mahatikta Ghrita* - 25ml
- **Day 2:** *Mahatikta Ghrita* - 50ml
- **Day 3:** *Mahatikta Ghrita* - 70ml
- **Day 4:** *Mahatikta Ghrita* - 100ml
- **Day 5:** *Mahatikta Ghrita* - 120 ml

**External Oleation and Sudation Therapy**

- **Days 6-8:** Full-body massage (*Sarvanga Abhyanga*) with *Tila Taila* (sesame oil) followed by *Sarvanga Vaspa Swedana* (steam therapy) using *Dasamoola Kwatha*.

**Virechana Day (Therapeutic Purging)**

- **Day 9:** *Virechana karma* administered with *Trivrut Avaleha* – 50gm (followed by *Samsarjana Karma* for 5 days considering *Madhayam Shuddhi* as *Virechana Vegas* are 11)

**Phase C: Topical Therapy**

1. **Lukoskin Ointment**- Local application on affected areas.
2. **Lukoskin Syrup**- 2ml bd.
3. **Tab. Pigmento**- 1 tablet three times daily post-meal.
4. **Mahatika Ghrita** (medicated ghee) – 3gm bd.

This comprehensive Ayurvedic treatment protocol integrates both internal and external therapies to address hypopigmentation through detoxification, immune modulation, and localized application, adhering to traditional therapeutic principles for enhanced skin regeneration and overall balance.



Before Treatment

During Treatment

After Treatment



Before Treatment

During Treatment

After Treatment



Before Treatment

After Treatment

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The patient showed significant improvement after undergoing *Virechana* therapy, followed by *Shamana Aushadi* treatment. The Ayurvedic protocol

led to visible re-pigmentation of previously depigmented areas, with a noticeable reduction in the number of white patches. This case demonstrates the

potential effectiveness of Ayurvedic treatments for managing *Shwitra* (vitiligo), aligning with classical Ayurvedic texts on the condition's management.

### Observed Outcomes

- Facial white patches have turned black, resembling normal skin tone.
- White patches on the feet have become pinkish.
- Reduction in itching and improvement in sleep quality.
- Diminished symptoms overall.

The patient exhibited notable improvement following *Virechana* and subsequent *Shamana Aushadis*. The treatment protocol effectively facilitated the re-pigmentation of the de-pigmented patches. No. of patches are reduced after treatment. This case underscores the potential of Ayurvedic treatments for *Shwitra*, reaffirming their efficacy as described in classical texts. Such outcomes could be fundamental in managing future cases of similar skin conditions.

As per the prescribed treatment plan, the patient has been consistently taking their medication and following dietary recommendations, which include avoiding foods such as *Lavana*, *Amla*, *Tikshna Dravya*, curd, and spicy foods, as well as habits like daytime napping (*Divasvapna*) and staying awake at night (*Ratrijagaran*). After following this regimen, remarkable improvements have been observed in the patient's condition. The white patch on the face become black and now appears normal, white patches on feet become pinkish, there has been a reduction in itching, insomnia has been controlled, and other symptoms have significantly diminished. In the treatment of vitiligo (*Shwitra*), the approach involves both external (*Bhahya*) and internal (*Abhyantar*) use of *Kusthaghna Dravya*, as per patient's specific signs and symptoms.

*Bakuchi* oil has long been used in traditional Ayurvedic medicine for the treatment of vitiligo (*Shwitra*), as outlined in ancient texts. *Bakuchi* oil primarily targets skin pigmentation, exerting a mild irritant effect on the skin and mucous membranes, while also demonstrating potent antibacterial properties.<sup>[8]</sup>

*Arogyavardhini Vati* is referenced in the *Rasaratna samucchaya* for the treatment of *Kushta* (skin disorders). It functions as a *Dhatu Poshaka*, nourishing and supporting the body's tissues. In cases of *Dhatu* imbalance, *Arogyavardhini Vati* can be used to restore harmony. Since vitiligo (*Shwitra*) involves four key *Dhatu*s, this formulation is particularly beneficial. It possesses anti-pruritic and antioxidant properties, enhances digestion, and supports overall metabolic functions.<sup>[9]</sup>

Lukoskin ointment and syrup, a traditional remedy for vitiligo, feature *Bakuchi* as a key ingredient, known for its effectiveness in restoring normal skin

pigmentation in affected areas. In addition to *Bakuchi*, Lukoskin ointment and syrup also contain *Ammi majus* (*Yavani*), which promotes melanin production when exposed to sunlight, further aiding in the treatment of vitiligo.

*Vidanga* promotes *Apatarpan*, helping clear blockages in the body's channels (*Strotasa*) and supporting detoxification. Combined with *Amalaki*, a powerful *Rasayana* (rejuvenative) herb, it aids in fat reduction, cholesterol control, and toxin elimination. This formulation enhances *Agni* (digestive fire) for better nutrient absorption and restores balance among the three *Doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*). Since psychological factors contribute to the development and progression of vitiligo (*Shwitra*), dietary changes and psychological counseling are beneficial in managing the condition.<sup>[10]</sup>

Immune-modulatory effects of *Amalaki*, address the autoimmune response in vitiligo by potentially reducing antibody activity against melanin, a phenomenon observed in the serum of vitiligo patients. This immune modulation supports skin pigmentation restoration and reduces the autoimmune-mediated destruction of melanocytes. Thus, *Amalaki's* multifaceted therapeutic profile provides a comprehensive approach to managing Vitiligo, supporting tissue health, and enhancing immune resilience.<sup>[11]</sup>

*Manjishtha* herb exhibiting a range of properties, including *Varnya* (improving complexion), *Kapha Pittashamak* (balancing *Kapha* and *Pitta Doshas*), *Shothahar* (reducing oedema), *Kushtaghna* (treating skin diseases).<sup>[12]</sup>

*Khadirarishta* is a traditional Ayurvedic polyherbal formulation primarily composed of *Khadira* (*Acacia Catechu*) extract, which has been extensively utilized for its immunomodulatory, blood-purifying, astringent, anti-allergic, and bactericidal properties. Rich in potent antioxidants, *Khadirarishta* is effective in neutralizing free radicals and eliminating toxins from the body, making it particularly beneficial for the management of dermatological conditions. Its therapeutic profile includes *Shothahara* (anti-inflammatory), *Krimighana* (anti-microbial), and *Shodhana* (detoxifying) qualities, which work synergistically to cleanse the blood and alleviate various skin disorders.<sup>[13]</sup>

*Mahatikta Ghrita* is an Ayurvedic medicated ghee known for its *Tikta* dominance, making it particularly effective in balancing *Kapha dosha* and addressing *Kushthavikara* (skin disorders). The *Ghrita* serves multiple therapeutic purposes due to its unique formulation. It lubricates and softens the *Doshas*, thereby facilitating their removal and restoring balance within the body. Additionally, *Mahatikta Ghrita* enhances digestion, regulates bowel

movements, and promotes overall strength and vitality. Regular use is also associated with improved skin complexion, which makes it particularly beneficial in dermatological treatments within Ayurvedic practice.<sup>[14]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the rising incidence of vitiligo, often linked to lifestyle factors, calls for a holistic approach through Ayurveda. *Shwitra Chikitsa* focuses on restoring skin pigmentation and improving mental well-being. By utilizing *Shodhana* (detoxifying) and *Shamana* (palliative) therapies, Ayurveda addresses the root causes of vitiligo, such as immune imbalances and tissue dysfunction. Treatments like *Amalaki*, *Bakuchi*, and *Khadirarishta* help reduce depigmented patches, support immune modulation, and promote skin regeneration. This comprehensive approach not only restores pigmentation but also prevents recurrence by balancing the body's internal systems.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the SBLD Ayurvedic College and Hospital, for providing valuable support in conducting this case study within the Department of Panchakarma. Their guidance, resources, and facilities have been instrumental in the successful completion of this research. Special thanks to the faculty and staff for their unwavering support and for fostering an environment conducive to learning and exploration in the field of Ayurvedic medicine. This case study would not have been possible without their cooperation and encouragement.

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### Cite this article as:

Raj Kumar Jangir, Jyoti Kumari Jangir. Ayurvedic Management of Shwitra (Vitiligo). International Journal of Ayurveda and Pharma Research. 2024;12(11):54-58.

<https://doi.org/10.47070/ijapr.v11.3432>

Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared

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