



SHVITRA AND ITS MANAGEMENT THROUGH AYURVEDA: CORRELATION WITH MODERN SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Medically known as Vitiligo, *Shvitra* is a chronic skin condition caused by the loss of pigmentation that leads to white patches appearing in different parts of your body. This condition does not affect health but can have a deep impact on the psychology of the patient due to its external appearance. Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, offers a holistic approach toward managing *Shvitra* therapy, emphasising balance and natural healing. The current article explains *Shvitra* from both the Ayurvedic and current scientific perspectives, elaborating on its aetiology, pathophysiology, and treatment modalities. From the traditional Ayurvedic texts and current biomedical research, this paper tries to project the advantages of integrative approaches in the management of *Shvitra*.

Keywords: *Shvitra*, Vitiligo, Leucoderma, *Bakuchi*, *Khadira*

INTRODUCTION

Shvitra, more commonly called Vitiligo, is a depigmentary disorder affecting about 1% of the world's population ^[1]. The primary characteristic of this disease is the destruction of melanocytes, skin

cells responsible for skin colouration; this is manifested in white patches on the skin. Though not fatal, this is an essential cause of psychological impact due to reasons of cosmetic appearance ^[2]. Ayurveda is

one of the oldest concepts of medicine and, therefore, has an excellent and invaluable package for managing *Shvitra*, emphasising restoring balance in the body through diet, lifestyle, and herbal treatment [3]. The present article elucidates *Shvitra*, and its management strategies based on Ayurvedic principles and correlates them with contemporary scientific persistence.

Ayurvedic Perspective on Shvitra

Etiology and Pathogenesis

Shvitra, according to Ayurveda, is a *Tridoshaja Vyadhi*, which indicates that it involves imbalance in all three doshas: *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* [4]. The disorder from an Ayurvedic concept results from flawed functioning of the Metabolic Processes within the body, particularly those overseen by the *Pitta Dosha* within the body, since it primarily governs skin color and metabolism [5]. Genetic predisposition, stress, dietary indiscretions, and accumulation of *Ama* (toxins) in the body are the basic causative factors; therefore, their cumulative action produces white patches on the skin [6].

Symptoms and Diagnosis

The Ayurvedic texts describe *Shvitra* in terms of characteristic symptoms such as asymptomatic white or hypopigmented patches, different in size and shape, and thus occur anywhere in the body [7]. Diagnosis under Ayurveda involves inspecting the patient in minute detail for his *Prakriti*, *Vikriti*, and other factors like diet, way of life, and mental status [8].

Management Strategies in Ayurveda

1. *Shodhana* (Purification Therapy)

Shodhana therapy targets removing the accumulated toxins from within. Procedures like *Vamana*, or therapeutic emesis; *Virechana*, or therapeutic purgation; and *Raktamokshana*, or bloodletting, are considered to detoxify the body and balance doshas [9]. They are believed to purify blood and other body tissues and remove the root cause of *Shvitra* [10].

2. *Shamana* (Palliative Therapy)

In *Shamana* therapy, herbal formulations and dietary modifications are used to pacify the aggravated doshas. Herbs like *Bakuchi* (*Psoralea corylifolia*), *Neem* (*Azadirachta indica*), and *Khadira* (*Acacia*

catechu) find application in their property in enhancing skin pigmentation and detoxification processes [11]. Herbal pastes and oils, like *Bakuchi* oil, are applied to stimulate melanocyte function and repigmentation of the skin [12].

3. *Rasayana* (Rejuvenation Therapy)

Rasayana therapy is toning and rejuvenation of the immune system of the body. It involves herbs and formulations which enhance the body's resilience and make it more tolerant to health challenges. *Chyawanprash Rasayana* is an iconic Ayurvedic formulation usually prescribed due to its expressed immunomodulatory and antioxidant properties [12].

4. Dietary and Lifestyle Modifications

Ayurveda emphasises the importance of a balanced diet and lifestyle in managing *Shvitra*. Patients are advised to avoid foods that aggravate the doshas, such as spicy, sour, and fermented foods [14]. Instead, a diet rich in fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes is recommended. Regular Yoga and meditation practice is also encouraged to manage stress and promote mental well-being [15].

Correlation with Modern Science

Pathophysiology of Vitiligo

Modern medicine characterises vitiligo as an autoimmune disorder in which the immune system attacks melanocytes and eventually destroys them [16]. Genetic background, oxidative stress, and environmental factors are key contributors to Vitiligo's development or pathogenesis [17]. Due to a loss of melanocytes, typical white patches are visible in people who suffer from the disease.

Modern Treatment Modalities

1. Pharmacotherapy: Corticosteroids and immunomodulators have been extensively used to treat Vitiligo to reduce inflammation and modulate the immune response [18]. Besides topical corticosteroids, calcineurin inhibitors like tacrolimus and pimecrolimus are mainly used as steroid-sparing agents [19].

2. Phototherapy: Phototherapy in NB-UVB photochemotherapy is widely applied to stimulate melanocyte proliferation and migration. This therapy's repigmentation of Vitiligo patches has been achieved to par excellence, as reported [20]. Another option is excimer laser therapy, which irradiates the targeted

UVB light to the areas involved and promotes repigmentation^[21].

3. Surgical Interventions: Surgical techniques include melanocyte transplantation and skin grafting in patients with stable Vitiligo who fail to respond to medical therapy^[22]. The method involves transplanting melanocytes from the average skin area to the depigmented patches, restoring pigmentation^[23].

Integrative Approaches: Thus, incorporating the principles of Ayurveda with any of the modern medical treatments can provide a holistic management of *Shvitra*. The detoxification and immune-enhancing therapies of Ayurveda will go hand in hand with the immunomodulatory and anti-inflammatory activities of modern-day pharmacotherapy. Phototherapy in modern medicine shall complement Ayurvedic herbal applications, evoking a proper response about melanocyte function and leading to enhanced repigmentation.

Case Studies and Clinical Evidence

Various clinical studies have been conducted to test the efficacy of Ayurvedic treatments in treating Vitiligo. One such vital study by Pandya et al. in 2014 showed that *Bakuchi* oil, alone or in combination with NB-UVB, resulted in considerable repigmentation in patients with Vitiligo^[24]. Another study conducted by Parab et al. in 2017 showed that the quality of life is better with Ayurvedic formulations and improved pigmentation, besides conventional treatments^[25]. It conspicuously indicated the potential benefits that integrative approaches in managing Vitiligo could achieve.

CONCLUSION

Shvitra, or Vitiligo, is a heterogeneous condition, very challenging to deal with by chronicity and psychological symptoms. In Ayurveda, the disease is more comprehensively dealt with by associating detoxification, dietary modifications, herbal therapies, and modifications in diet and lifestyle. Modern science adds other complementary dimensions to this autoimmune process in the case of Vitiligo and allows for more advanced treatment modalities, like pharmacotherapy and phototherapy. Such integration

can thus thematize a comprehensive and effective strategy for managing *Shvitra* about the disease's bodily and psychological dimensions. Further research and clinical studies are needed to explore integrative treatments' full potential and establish standardised protocols for their implementation.

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