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“Ayurvedic Management of *Khalitya* (Hair Fall)”

ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, a vast repository of ancient knowledge, provides in-depth insights into both systemic and localized diseases, including minor conditions. Hair loss, affecting approximately 1.7% of the global population, is one such challenge that poses a significant concern for healthcare professionals. In Ayurveda, hair loss is referred to as *Khalitya Roga*, categorized under *Kshudra Roga* (minor diseases) or *Shiroroga* (diseases of the head and scalp). This progressive condition is increasingly common among individuals with sedentary lifestyles, stressful routines, and poor dietary habits, leading to imbalances and deficiencies in the body, which ultimately manifest in hair loss. Ayurveda offers a holistic approach to managing and reducing hair fall through lifestyle modifications, purification therapies, and targeted medications.

Keywords: *Khalitya*, *Indralopa*, hair oil, *Nasya*.

INTRODUCTION

Healthy, long, and vibrant hair significantly contributes to an individual's overall personality and well-being. Just as the face reflects the health of the body, hair serves as an external manifestation of internal health. In the present age of modernization, while individuals are surrounded by luxuries and advancements, they are simultaneously burdened with a sedentary lifestyle, stress-induced hectic schedules, and poor dietary habits. These factors disturb the homeostasis of the body, leading to a variety of health issues, among which

Khalitya (hair fall) is a significant concern. The prevalence of hair fall is progressively increasing in society, which in turn adversely affects the quality of life. Chronic hair loss has a profound impact on mental health, and studies have shown that patients with hair loss have *Dermatology Life Quality Index* (DLQI) scores comparable to those with severe *Psoriasis*. The emotional consequences include diminished self-confidence, lower self-esteem, and heightened self-consciousness.

In Ayurveda, hair loss is referred to as **Khalitya**, and it is classified under **Shiroroga** (diseases of the head and scalp). Both Acharya Charaka and Ashtanga Hridaya have described **Khalitya** as part of **Shiroroga** based on its location and similar etiopathogenesis to other head-related diseases. The Ashtanga Hridaya specifically mentions that the diseases affecting the outer part of the head, particularly the scalp, are categorized as **Shiroroga**. Furthermore, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Samgraha, Yogaratnakara, and Madhava Nidana categorize **Khalitya** under **Kshudra Roga** (minor diseases) due to the relatively mild nature of the condition. These disorders are not life-threatening and are less severe compared to other major ailments. According to Gayadasa, they are termed "minor" due to the smallness of their cause, symptoms, and treatment. Despite being of lesser severity, these conditions can cause significant psychological distress, frequently resulting in embarrassment and discomfort for the patient.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This review work is based on a thorough study of various Ayurvedic texts, including both the **Brihat-Trayi** and **Laghu-Trayi**, alongside modern medical literature and recent research publications.

Khalitya and Indralupta: Gradual hair loss is termed **Khalitya** in Ayurveda. When **Pitta** combines with **Vata** or **Kapha** doshas to cause degeneration of hair, it is referred to as **Khalitya**. According to Acharya Charaka, the **Tejas Dhatu**

1 follicles, leading to alopecia or *Khalitya* in humans. Another term used in Ayurvedic texts for hair fall is *Indralupta*. *Ruchya* and *Chach* are listed as synonyms of *Indralupta*. According to Acharya Kartika, hair loss from the entire body is referred to as *Ruhya*.

1 **Differences Between *Khalitya* and *Indralupta*:** In *Khalitya*, hair loss occurs gradually and is generalized over the scalp. In contrast, *Indralupta* presents as sudden, patchy hair loss. When *Kapha* dosha combines with *Rakta Dhatu*, it results in the complete degeneration and shutdown of hair follicles, ultimately causing baldness. If *Khalitya* is caused by *Vata*, it leads to burning sensations on the scalp; if due to *Pitta*, it causes sweating; and when caused by *Kapha*, it results in thickening of the skin.

1 **Origin of Hair in Ayurveda:** According to Ayurvedic principles, the human body is composed of seven primary *Dhatus* (body tissues) — *Rasa*, *Rakta*, 2 *Mansa*, *Meda*, *Asthi*, *Majja*, and *Sukra*. The production of subsequent *Dhatus* occurs from the preceding one through the influence of their respective *Agni* (digestive fire). For instance, *Rasa Agni* transforms *Ahara Rasa* into *Rasa Dhatu*, *Rakta Agni* converts part of *Rasa Dhatu* into *Rakta*, and so on. Along 1 with the production of *Dhatus*, there is also the generation of their by-products, known as *Upadhatus* and *Malas*.

2 During the metabolism of *Asthi Dhatu*, *Majja Dhatu* is produced from its *Sara* portion, and simultaneously, hair on the scalp and body, along with nails, form 1 as *Malas*. According to Acharya Sharngadhara, hair on the scalp and body are considered *Upadhatus* of *Majja Dhatu*. Furthermore, among the *Garbhaj Bhavas* (factors responsible for fetal development), hair is classified under *Pitraj Bhava*, meaning its structure, color, and quantity are primarily influenced 3 by the paternal lineage. Hair formation begins during the sixth month of intrauterine development.

from keratinization of the germinal cells. Hair is an appendage of the epidermis and is present in all regions of the skin, except for the palms, soles, and lips. Hair grows from hair follicles, which are small pockets located within the epidermis. The hair growth cycle consists of three phases: *Anagen*, *Catagen*, and *Telogen*. The *Anagen* phase is the active growth phase, lasting 3-5 years. On a healthy scalp, approximately 100,000 hair follicles exist, with 90% being in the *Anagen* phase. This is followed by the *Catagen* phase (2-3 weeks), during which the follicles become dormant, and the *Telogen* phase, a resting phase lasting 3-4 months, after which hair sheds and new hair begins to grow.

Causes of *Khalitya Roga*:

1. The *Usna Guna* (hot qualities) of *Pitta* dosha can cause early hair loss and premature graying in individuals with *Pitta Prakriti*.
2. Aging naturally leads to the loss of hair color. However, lifestyle factors such as diet, stress, mental health, and environmental conditions can accelerate premature aging, which in turn causes early hair fall. In a survey, 81.66% of individuals aged 30-40 years experiencing premature aging reported hair fall as a significant concern.
3. Causative factors of *Shiroroga* include excessive exposure to smoke, sunlight, mist, water sports, irregular sleep patterns, and excessive stress. These factors exacerbate *Doshas* and contribute to *Khalitya*.
4. *Darunaka* which is caused by the deranged *Kapha* and *Vayu* doshas, results in minute fissures on the scalp, leading to dryness, itching, and subsequent hair fall. This condition may also involve *Pitta* and *Rakta*.
5. Excessive consumption of salty foods and alkaline substances (*Kshara*) leads to *Khalitya*. In pregnant women, excessive salt intake can cause hair fall in the child due to *Pitta* vitiation.

6. Stressful factors such as anger, excessive laughter, sneezing, and overexertion post-*Nasya* therapy may lead to both *Khalitya* and *Palitya* (premature graying of hair).
7. A decrease in *Asthi Dhatu* or its vitiation can lead to hair loss, as hair is considered the *mala* of *Asthi Dhatu*.
8. Excessive combing during the *Ritukal* (seasonal change) may lead to hair fall in children.

Modern Causes: In modern science, hair fall can be attributed to nutritional disorders, local skin conditions, hormonal imbalances, stress, drug use, cosmetic treatments, and genetic predisposition.

Approach to *Khalitya* Patients: Hair fall can manifest as a primary disorder or as a secondary symptom of other diseases. Due to its diverse etiopathogenesis, a thorough patient history, including medical, family, and personal history, should be obtained. A careful scalp and body examination is essential for detecting any abnormalities.

Management of *Khalitya* (Hair Fall)

1. *Nidanparivarjana* (Avoidance of Causative Factors):

- **First line of treatment:** Identifying and eliminating the causative factors (*Nidana*) is essential in managing *Khalitya*. All contributing factors, including lifestyle, dietary habits, and environmental exposures, should be thoroughly examined and avoided to prevent the progression of the disease.
- **Prevention is better than cure:** Individuals with a *Pitta Prakriti* are more prone to premature hair loss. They should follow a diet and lifestyle as outlined in Ayurvedic texts to balance their doshas. During the rainy season and autumn season (*Sharad*), *Pitta dosha* tends to aggravate, making these periods more unfavourable for people with a genetic predisposition to baldness.

Rasayana Therapy: In cases of premature aging, *Rasayana* (rejuvenation) therapy is necessary, primarily using *Vayasthapana* (anti-aging) herbs and formulations to restore vitality and delay aging processes.

- **Shiroroga (Head-related disorders):** To manage hair fall, patients should protect themselves from environmental factors like dust, smoke, cold water, and excessive sunlight. They should also avoid unhealthy habits such as sleeping during the daytime or staying awake at night, which can aggravate doshas.
- **Dietary Restrictions:** Avoiding excessive salt and *Kshara* (alkaline substances) is crucial. Overuse of these substances can aggravate *Pitta dosha*, leading to hair loss.
- **Limit Harsh Chemical Treatments:** Modern chemical-based treatments and excessive heating treatments used for cosmetic purposes should be avoided to protect the integrity of hair.

2. Hair Care Practices (Samhita Guidelines):

- **Moordha Taila (Oil Massage):** Regular oil application (*Moordha Taila*) to the scalp is recommended. This practice nourishes the hair follicles, strengthens the hair roots, and prevents hair fall. Common oils include **Mustard oil** or **Coconut oil**, which provide nourishment and maintain the natural colour and texture of hair.
- **Nasya (Nasal Drops):** Annual Nasya therapy with *Anu Taila* is beneficial for hair health. It is recommended during the rainy, autumn, and spring seasons, when the weather is clear. *Nasya* helps nourish the *Srotas* (channels) above the clavicle, including the hair follicles, and accelerates hair growth.
- **Snana (Bathing):** According to **Acharya Sushruta**, the head and hair should not be washed with excessively warm or cold water.

least three times a week) using mild, chemical-free shampoos or herbal decoctions like *Henna*, *Bhringraj*, *Shikakai*, and *Triphala* is recommended for cleansing the scalp without causing damage.

- 3 ○ ***Dhoomapana* (Medicated Smoke):** Medicated smoke therapy (*Dhoomapana*) helps clear doshas from the head region and enhances the firmness of hair. It is also beneficial for the head, eyes, and other sensory organs.
- ***Kshaurakarma* (Hair Cutting):** Regular haircuts, beard grooming, and nail trimming are recommended to maintain hair health. **Acharya Charaka** suggests that haircuts should be done thrice every fortnight to maintain hair strength and hygiene.
- 3 ○ ***Ushnishka* (Head Covering):** Wearing a *Ushnishka* (turban or cap) protects the hair from harmful environmental factors like wind, dust, and heat, contributing to better hair health.

3. Purification Procedures (Panchakarma):

- Panchakarma therapies like *Vaman* (emesis), *Virechana* (purgation), *Vasti* (enema), and *Rakta Mokshana* (bloodletting) are indicated based on the involvement of *Pitta dosha* in hair fall. These therapies help detoxify the body and balance the *doshas*, leading to improved hair health. *Virechana* and *Rakta Mokshana* are commonly prescribed for hair fall and baldness due to *Pitta* aggravation.

4. Medicated Oils for *Shiroabhyanga* (Head Massage):

- *Neeli Taila* (Sushruta)
- *Sairiyaka Taila* (Sushruta)
- *Mahaneel Taila* (Ashtanga Hridayam)

- ***Chandanadhya Taila*** (Chakradutta)
- ***Mulethi, Amla, Milk, and Taila Paka*** (Chakradutta)

5. **Pastes for Local Application on the Scalp:**

- ***Madhuka, Amla, and Honey*** (Acharya Sushruta)
- ***Til (Sesame), Amla, Honey, and Oil*** (Acharya Sushruta)
- ***Kapikakshu Moola and Aksha Taila*** (Acharya Sushruta)
- ***Dugdika Karveera (Milk) and Karveera Paste*** (Acharya Sushruta)
- ***Kapalaranjaka Lepa*** (Chakradutta)
- ***Bhringpushadi Lepa*** (Chakradutta)
- ***Mandoora Bhasma, Amla Churna, Japapushpa - wash with Triphala Kwath***
- ***Ayas Churna, Triphala, Sour Liquid*** (Chakradutta)

6. **Medicated Oils for Nasal Medication (*Nasya*):**

- ***Anu Taila Nasya*** (Acharya Sushruta)
- ***Brihatyadi Navana*** (Acharya Sushruta)
- ***Sahacharadi Navana*** (Acharya Sushruta)
- ***Nimba Taila*** (Chakradutta)
- ***Bhringaraja Rasa, Mulethi, Milk, and Taila Paka*** (Chakradutta)

7. **Other Ayurvedic Herbs & Rasayana for Hair Health (as per Charaka Samhita):**

- **Kankarishta**
- **Dwipanchmool Ghrita**
- **Amalaki Rasayana**
- **Navayas Lauha**
- **Mandoora Bhasma**

By combining proper *Nidanparivarjana* (identification and avoidance of causes) with *Shiroabhyanga*, *Nasya*, **Panchakarma** therapies, and **Rasayana** (rejuvenation) treatments, *Khalitya* can be effectively managed. This approach helps balance the *doshas*, promote healthy hair growth, and prevent further hair loss. Regular lifestyle modifications, coupled with Ayurvedic therapies, can significantly improve hair health and prevent premature aging or thinning of hair.

Discussion:

Khalitya (hair loss) is a prevalent and complex condition affecting a significant portion of the global population. It has profound implications on both physical and emotional well-being. The condition is primarily triggered by various factors, including *viruddha ahara* (incompatible foods), *pitta-vardhak ahara vihara* (diet and activities that increase *Pitta*), *abhishyandi ahara* (diet that causes the accumulation of fluids), and a sedentary lifestyle, all of which increase the *Pitta* and *Vata doshas*. The imbalance of these doshas can lead to the development of *Khalitya*.

From an Ayurvedic perspective, the management of *Khalitya* involves a holistic approach, focusing on *Abhyanga* (oil massage), *Shodhana* (detoxification), *Lepana* (local application of medicinal pastes), *Nasya* (nasal therapy), and *Rasayana* (rejuvenation) therapies.

Vata dosha. Oiling with medicinal oils prepared from herbs that balance **Vata**, **Pitta**, and **Kapha** doshas helps normalize the imbalances of all three *doshas*, particularly *Vata* and *Pitta*, contributing to the restoration of hair health and preventing hair loss.

2. **Shirolepana (Head Application of Pastes)**: This therapeutic practice involves the application of medicinal pastes prepared from **Vata**, **Pitta**, and **Kapha**-reducing herbs. The paste normalizes the aggravated doshas (**Vata**, **Pitta**, and **Kapha**) and improves circulation in the scalp, which may contribute to the rejuvenation of hair follicles and prevent further hair loss.
3. **Shodhana (Detoxification)**: *Shodhana* is a specialized detoxification therapy that removes accumulated *doshas* from the body, thereby purging the root cause of the imbalance. *Shodhana* therapies, such as **Virechana** (purgation) and **Vamana** (emesis), help eliminate the excess *doshas* from the body, thereby facilitating the restoration of balance and improving the health of hair.
4. **Nasya: Nasya therapy**, involving the administration of medicinal oils through the nasal passages, is effective in addressing hair loss. Nasya purifies the head region, nourishes the scalp, and strengthens the hair follicles, promoting healthier hair growth.
5. **Rasayana (Rejuvenation)**: *Rasayana* therapy includes the use of **immune-modulating**, **antioxidant**, and **rejuvenating** substances to combat hair loss. It is especially beneficial in cases of chronic illness, premature aging, or nutritional deficiencies, as it helps restore vitality to the body and improve overall hair health.

Conclusion:

1 Minor adjustments in lifestyle and dietary habits can help prevent hair loss. Regular hair care practices such as oil massage, proper washing, and protection from environmental factors (e.g., chemicals, pollutants, excessive heat) are essential for maintaining healthy hair and preventing further damage.

1 Before initiating any treatment for hair loss, it is crucial for the physician to first identify the underlying cause. The initial line of treatment should be *Nidanparivarjana* (elimination of causative factors). Once the cause is addressed, other therapies like *Abhyanga*, *Lepana*, *Shodhana*, *Nasya*, and *Rasayana* should be prescribed based on the specific needs of the patient. By following this integrated Ayurvedic approach, *Khalitya* (hair loss) can be effectively managed and treated.

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