

Review of Premature Graying of Hair (*Akala Palitya*) and its Treatment in Ayurveda

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Abstract

Premature graying of hair (*Akala Palitya*) is a burning issue as large number of population especially young men and women in present times are suffering from this disease. Hair forms an important anatomical structure of the body which not only has protective function but also adds beauty to the face. Increased industrialization and urbanization has posed greater danger of *Akala Palitya* due to pollution, contamination of water, air and due to other intrinsic factors. Hair has a tendency to lose its natural color with advancing age. It is therefore natural for the hair to turn grey with age. But premature graying is a morbid condition and it makes even the young looks older. This causes a great deal of concern to the effected persons. Concept of *Akala Palitya* has been mentioned in *Ayurvedic* Lexicons along with its prevention and treatment.

Keywords

Premature graying of hair, *Akala Palitya*, *Ayurveda*



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INTRODUCTION

The face of an individual is a personal identity in which hair plays a significant role. Therefore, a perfect head with hair is an attribute of personality and beauty. Genetically Indians are black haired and a dark head is any time better and goes well on any dress. This feeling makes one especially *Palitya* persons to have dark black hair, that's why they undergo various therapies with hope of getting black hair.

A large percent of population especially young men and women in present times are suffering from *Akala Palitya*. Because of this effected persons feel social embarrassment and stigma. Incidence as per W.H.O is largely between the age group of 25-30 years. Accordingly *Akala Palitya* is such condition, which is prevailing more and encountered more in day to day clinical practice.

Unfortunately contemporary medical science does not offer any satisfactory treatment other than artificial coloring of hair (dyeing). This regular dyeing will lead to many adverse effects like hair fall and other scalp diseases. Understanding hair and related problem reflects the psychological and pathological conditions of whole body

system.

In different lexicons of *Ayurveda* concept of *Akala Palitya* has been explained and different types of satisfactory treatment without any side effects have also been discussed by different authors.

NIRUKTI AND PARIBHASHA

Nirukti:

Palitya means change of color of hair or graying of hair

Paribhasha:

1) *Palitya* means grayish colored hair.

2) *Palitya* is the *lakshana* of *vridhdhavastha*.

Definition of *Akala-Palitya*:

- *Palitya* occurs at the stage of *vardhakya*, but due to increased *ushna guna* of *pitta* early graying (untimely) of hair is observed.
- *Akala-Palitya* means graying of hair at the young age.
- *Palitya* means *Shukla bhava* of the hair¹.

Hence *Akala Palitya* may be defined as untimely or early graying of hair due to excess *pitta ushnata*. (Here untimely refers to young age.)

NIDANA

The first and foremost line of treatment is avoidance of etiological factor; hence *nidana* plays an utmost importance in the perspective of the treatment. This is followed by the specific treatment as per the aetiopathogenesis of the disease. The etiological factors for hair disorders and *Akala Palitya* are variable. Wide varieties of possible etiological factors are to be elucidated. Acharya Charaka has mentioned *Akala-Palitya* as *Janmabalapravritta Vyadhi*².

According to different authors of *Ayurveda*, *Akala Palitya* is both *swatantra* and *paratantra vyadhi* and it is included under *kshudra roga* and *kapalagata roga*. Here, *paratantra Akala-Palitya* refers to the disease caused by some other diseases like *shwitra* etc. The *nidanas* mentioned for those *rogadhikaras* can be applied for that of *Akala-Palitya*. Also, *Akala Palitya nidanas* can be studied by eliciting, *rasavaha* and *asthivaha srotodusti karanas*. *Akala Palitya* is *twachagata roga* where *romakupas* are lodged, so that some of the *kushtha nidanas* can also be considered.

All the etiological factors can be elaborated in the following subtitles.

i) *Aharaja* (dietetic factors)

ii) *Viharaja* (External and behavior factors)

iii) *Manasika* (psychic factors)

iv) *Anya Hetuja* (miscellaneous factors)

Aharaja:

The *nidana* in the this group includes intake of different types of food materials and this can be taken as *Viprakrishta nidana*. These *nidanas* affect *rasa dhatu poshana krama*, where *rasa* is the nourishing factor for both *kesha* and *kesha Varna*. *Apathya* / Improper diet is a contributory factor for *Akala-Palitya*, in the form of *Anashana*, *Adhyashana*, *Viruddha ahara* etc.

Viharaja:

Nidana in the form of *vihara* which includes exposure to certain environment, change in lifestyle and regimen. It may be included under *Viprakrishta nidanas*. Some of them are as follows-

Ratrijagarana:

Due to regular indulgence in *ratrijagarana*, *vata vridhhi* takes place which in turn causes *rasavaha srotodusti*. This may be the cause for *Akala-Palitya*.

Atapa sevana:

Due to excessive *Atapa sevana*, like continuous working in field farmers or other hard workers, over hot sun may develop *Akala-Palitya*. Sunrays increase the *ushnta*

of *Keshabhumi* and *roma kupa* to produce *Akala Palitya*.

Rajo sevana, Dhuma sevana and Dushita vayu sevana:

They make the scalp dry due to the increase of *sthanika rukshata*, which results in reduction of *snigdhamsha* may lead to graying of hair.

Shiro Abhyanga Ayoga:

This causes the improper nourishment of both scalp and hair follicles³

Dushita Jala snana:

This is also the *bahya nidana*. In certain parts of India like Saurashtra, Balhika and Saindhava especially coastal areas suffer from lack of fresh and soft water. This is because of *Desha swabhava*⁴. It contains high salt content and continuous usage of such water is harmful to scalp.

Ati Vyayama and Upavasa:

Due to excess physical work and continuous indulgence in *upavasa vata* vriddhi occurs. Due to *vikshepana karma* of *vata* it aggravates to *shiras*, causes *sthanika tridosha dusti*, which in turn causing *Akala Palitya*.

Manasika Hetu:

Krodha, shoka, adhika chinta and *manasika shrama* are considered to be both *pitta*

and *vata prakopaka* nidanas which are responsible for early graying of hair. These are the specific nidanas for *Akala Palitya* mentioned in classics, through which *swatantra* type of *vyadhi* manifests.

Krodha

Due to *krodha* swasthana *sanchita pitta* gets *kupita* along with *vayu*, and causing *sharir ushma* vriddhi along with other symptoms like *trishna, daha*⁵

Shoka

Due to *shoka vata* vriddhi takes place. This leads to *vishamagni* causing *rasa-rakta dusti* and direct influence of *shoka* on *dehoshma* vriddhi leads to *Akala Palitya*⁶

Shrama

Due to excess *shrama*, *vata* gets vitiated, in turn vitiates *jatharagni* & *rasa dusti*, and direct influence of *shrama* on *sharirika ushna* vriddhi causing *Akala Palitya*⁷

Anya Hetuja:

Prakriti prasakta

Pitta prakriti persons naturally develop premature graying of hair⁸

Jaati and kula prasakta

As far as *kulaja* / hereditary factors are concerned, there are no direct references available to consider the *hetu* of the disease. But one can find that the heredity is

considered to be one of the colors deciding factors⁹. However this factor can be considered indirectly for the formation of disease *Akala Palitya*

Deshanupaatini

According to different *desha* / areas, color and texture of hair will change. While telling the excessive usage of *khsara*, *pippali*, and *lavana*, Acharya Charaka told about the incidence of *Akala Palitya* which is more prevailing in the areas like Balhika, Saurashtra, Saindhava, where *ushara* / *lavanamsha* is more in soil. In such conditions even though persons are having *lavana satmya*, they develop *Akala Palitya*¹⁰

Kaalanupatini

According to age two types

Kaalaja: Swabhavika -Vridhavashta
(Physiological)

Akaalaja: Vikritijanya -Poorva
/Madhyaavastha (Pathological)

SAMPRAPTI

Samprapti is a physio-pathogenesis which can be told sequentially, that takes place in different stages of disease. The knowledge of *Samprapti* /understanding of each sequence of *Samprapti* is essential in diagnostic and prognostic aspects of disease. According to the different levels of pathology occurred, the line of treatment is

going to change. *Samprapti* of *Akala Palitya* changes according to *swatantra paratantra Vyadhi*.

Acharya Sushruta and Madhavakara have emphasized pathogenesis with the increase of *vayu* especially due to excess of *shoka* and *shrama*. At the same time the *pitta* is being increased in its *ushna guna*. This provoked *pitta* circulates throughout the body through *rasayana* is by the virtue of *vikshepana guna* of provoked *vata* to increase the *sharira ushna*. This *sharirika ushna* reaches to *shiras* and vitiates *sthanika vata karya* and *shleshma karya*.

The *sthanika pitta* and *kapha dushana* happens, causing *bhrajakagni dusti bhrajaka pitta* works are hindered and causing *vikrita kesha Varna utpatti*. This *samprapti* emphasizes the involvement of *dehoshma* in the disease pathology.

Another *samprapti* of *Akala Palitya* initiates with *jatharagni dusti* due to *pitta pradhana tridosha dusti* resulting *asthidhatwagni dusti*. During *asthi dhatwagni yapara*, the *poshakamshas* which nourish *asthidhatu* are converted into three parts i.e. the *sthula bhaga*, *suksma bhaga* and *kitta bhaga*. This *kitta bhaga* is processed by the action of *malagni* to produce *kesha*. As there is *dusti* of *kesha poshaka bhavas* and *dusti of sthanika*

bhrajaka pitta, shleshma and vata, vikrita varna of *kesha* takes place. If the *dusti* occurs at any levels of *samprapti*, *kesha utpatti prakriya* hinders and *Kesha varna utpatti vikriti* occurs.

The *Vyadhi kriya kala* of *Akala-Palitya* initiates with, *sanchayavastha* occurring at *aamashaya*, *prakopa* takes place in *koshta* and *prasaravastha* occurs in *sarva sharira*. *roma kupa* is the place where in the *doshadushya sammurchana* takes place and the disease manifests.

SAMPRAPTI - GHATAKA

Dosha: *Sharirika dosha-- Tridosha (pitta dosha pradhana)*

Sthanika dosha -- Bhrajaka pitta

Dushya: *Dhatu-- rasa and asthi.*

Agni: *At dhatwagni level* pathogenesis can be thought of at the level of *jatharagni, rasagni, asthyagni*. If *rasadhatwagni* is affected then due to lack of nourishment of *rasa dhatu Akala Palitya* would occur.

At *bhutagni* level also pathology can be thought of- *kesha* and *varna* are produced by *prithvi* and *tejaamshas*. During *rasa-mala vivechana*, if *kittabhaga* i.e., specifically *Kesha poshaka bhava* is not nourished properly with *prithvi* and *tejaamshas*, then *bhutagni paka* impairment can be thought.

At *mala* level pathogenesis may be at the level of production of *asthimala* from *asthidhatwagni vyapara* and also in terms of *mala vivechana* to form respective *malas* like, *kesha*.

Srotas: *Srotas* should be understood by studying *srotomula*. *Romakupa* is affected by *rasavaha srotas* and *asthivaha srotas*. *Srotodusthi prakara* is usually *sanga* at different levels of *Samprapti*

Udbhava sthana: *Amashaya*

Sanchara sthana: *Rasayanis.*

Vyadhi adhishtana: *Shirogata Romakupa.*

Vyakta sthana: *Shirogata kesha.*

Roga marga: *Bahya rogamarga.*

PURVA-ROOPA

It refers to the features, which indicates the forth-coming disease. No specific *purva roopa* has been mentioned for *Akala-Palitya* in classics.

ROOPA

Roopa indicates the manifestation of disease. *Prakrita Palitya* symptoms are developed in *Vridhdhapy*. And *Vaikrita Palitya* symptoms are usually developed in *Akala Vaya*^{11,12}

Initially *Vagbhata* has given the classification and symptoms of *Akala Palitya* according *doshic* aspect as below¹³

<i>Vata samsargaja Palitya</i>	<i>Sphutita ,Shyava, Khara</i>
<i>Pitta samsargaja Palitya</i>	<i>Pitabha , Dahayukta</i>
<i>Kapha samsargaja Palitya</i>	<i>Snigdha , Sweta , Sthula</i>
<i>Dwidoshaja Palitya</i>	<i>Mixed laxanas of two doshas</i>
<i>Tridoshaja Palitya</i>	<i>Sarva Laxanas</i>

According to Yogaratnakara¹⁴

<i>Vataja</i>	<i>Vishama , Ruksha</i>
<i>Pittaja</i>	<i>Pitabha</i>
<i>Kaphaja</i>	<i>Sarvarupanvita</i>

SADHYA – SADHYATA

The prognosis of the disease depends upon the factors like *nidana, kala, desha, bala, ashraya* and *lakshana* etc.

Acharya Vagbhata has mentioned *sadhya-sadhyata* of and *Palitya*¹⁵-

Vataja, pittaja, kaphaja are *Sadhya* while *sannipataja* and *vaya parinama krita Palitya* are *Asadhya*

Also *vyadhi* if associated with *shiro ruja, sparshanasahyata* and different colors (*anya varnas*) then it are turned to be *Asadhya*.

CLASSIFICATION

The classification of *Akala Palitya* can be done on the basis of *nidanas, samprapti and roopa*.

Acharya Sushruta differentiates condition into two--

- 1) *Prakrita Palitya* 2) *Vaikrita Palitya*

He specifies the *Prakrita Palitya* occurs in *Pitta Prakriti* persons naturally. Increase in *sharira ushna* becomes the cause for *Vaikrita Palitya*¹⁶

Sharangadhara mentions 2 types of *Palitya*-

- 1) *Kalajanita Palitya* 2) *Akalajanita Palitya*

He considers *Akalaja Palitya* in *Vaikrita* variety and *Kalaja Palitya* is and is *Prakrita*

variety. *Akala Palitya* is the type comes under *Vaikrita* variety¹⁷

On the basis of *dosha* it can be classified under following types;

Vagbhata has classified 5 types of *Akala-Palitya*¹⁸

- 1) *Vataja* 2) *Pittaja* 3) *Kaphaja* 4) *Dwandwaja* 5) *Tridoshaja*

Yogaratnakara has classified 3 types of *Akala-Palitya*¹⁹

- 1) *Vataja* 2) *Pittaja* 3) *Kaphaja*

Acharya Bhela has classified 5 types of *Akala-Palitya*²⁰. Among them 4 are *Nija* and 1 *Agantuja*

CHIKITSA

Chikitsa is classified in three categories i.e. *prakritivighata*, *nidana parivarjana* and *apakarshana*. *Prakritivighata* includes both *shodhana* and *shamana* therapies. *Shodhana Chikitsa* is expulsion of vitiated *doshas* and *Shamana Chikitsa* causes the destruction of factors responsible for the manifestation of disease. As *nidana* is inevitable for the formation of disease, *nidana parivarjana* is also an impartable constituent of the treatment. According to *dosha* involvement the *Chikitsa sutra* for *Akala Palitya* is carried out.

The following are the *Chikitsa Sutra* to treat/prevent premature gray hair²¹;

- 1) *Sthanika Snehana / Abhyanga*
- 2) *Samshodhana (Sarvadaihika and Shirovirechana)*
- 3) *Nasya*
- 4) Palliative measures (*Shiro-lepa*)
- 5) Preventive measures

Sehahana and Swedana:

Snehana refers to the *shiro* and *vaktra abhyanga*. *Abhyanga* is told with *tila Taila*, *amalaki Taila / Taila* processed with *asana pushpa* and *patra* administered for 6 months is helpful in *Akala-Palitya*. *Swedana* can be done by applying *pradeha* drugs²²; *tapa swedana (Hasta Taila swedana)*²³

Samshodhana:

Acharya Vagbhata has mentioned *samshodhana* word in terms of both *sarvadaihika* and *sthanika* like *shirovirechana*. *Shirovirechana* refers to *shodhana* type of *navana nasya*.

Nasya Karma:

In *Akala-Palitya* the *navana* and *pratimarsha Nasya* is mentioned for early graying of hair²⁴. The *Yogas* for *Nasya karma* mentioned in different classics have been given below.

Yogas for Nasya karma

- 1) 1 *kudava* oil + 2 *prastha Bhringaraja swarasa*+1 *pala Yastimadhu*--Oil is used in *Akala Palitya* in the form of *Nasya*²⁵
- 2) *Bhringaraja ghrita: Bhringaraja swarasa* cooked in bile²⁶ *Nasya* for a week destroys *Palitya*.
- 3) *Prapoudarikadi Taila*²⁷: *Prapaundarika + Maduka+Pippali + Utpala + Amalaki + Oil*
- 4) *Chandanadya taila: Chandana + Madhuka + Moorva + Triphala + Neelotpala + Priyangu + Guduchi + Shunthi + Loha bhasma + Jatamansi + Saariva + Krishna saariva Bhringaraja -Taila Nasya* in *Akala Palitya*²⁸
- 5) *Kashmaryadi Taila:Kashmarya + Arjuna + Jambu + Sahachara* flowers

and fruits + Fruits of *Arka* + *Triphala* + Fruits of *Madhuka* + 32 Palas of *Bhringaraja* swarasa - *Taila Nasya* in *Akala-Palitya*²⁹

- 6) *Bhringaraja taila*: *Goksheer* + *Bhringaraja swarasa* + *Yastimadhu kalka* - *taila Nasya* cures *Palitya*³⁰.
- 7) *Nimba beejadi taila*: *Nimba beeja*; *Bhavana* with *Bhringaraja Swarasa* + *Asana kwatha* mechanical extraction of *taila* is used for *Nasya* - Indicated in *Akala Palitya* with restriction milk as diet for 1month³¹
- 8) *Nimba taila Nasya*: *Abhavita nimba beeja taila* in the form of *Nasya* for 1month with diet as cow's milk is also helpful in *Akala Palitya*³²
- 9) *Neelyadi taila*: *Neeli patra* + *Shirishapatra* + *Saireyakapatra* + *Bhringaraja swarasa bhavita* + *Tila Beeja* + *Gunja beeja* - Oil is used in the form of *Nasya*³³
- 10) *Ksheeradi taila*: *Godugdha* / *Aja dugdha* + *Sahachara swarasa* + *Bhringaraja Swarasa* + *Tulasi Swarasa* + *Yastimadhukalka*+ *Tila taila*. This yoga is kept in *Meshashringa*³⁴

Nasya Yogas can be administered in the form of *Pratimarsha* and *Marsha*.

SHIRO LEPA

- 1) *Lohachurna* + *Bhringaraj* + *Haritaki* + *Vibhitaki* + *Amalaki* + black soil are taken in equal quantity powdered and mixed with sugar cane juice. This mixture is kept for 1month and that juice is applied over hair³⁵
- 2) Two *Amalaki* fruits, two *Haritaki* and two *Vibhitaki*, 5 *karsha Amra majja*; 1 *karsha lohachurna* are mixed well and kept in Iron jar. To this water is added and this is kept for whole night and applied³⁶
- 3) *Triphala* + *Loha churna* + *Bhringaraj swaras* - Kept in matured coconut for month. This is applied over scalp³⁷
- 4) *Utpala* triturated in milk-- kept underground for 1 month³⁸
- 5) *Haritaki* + *Tila Taila* + *Loha bhasma* – paste with *Kanji*³⁹.

KRISNIKARANA YOGA

- 1) In a slightly matured fruit of coconut the powder of *triphala*, *loha bhasma*, and the juice of *bhringaraj* should be kept. This coconut should be placed in a pit properly dug out in the earth. After a month, this should be taken out. Then hair on head should be cut and the paste of the above mentioned recipe should be applied over the scalp. After the application head should be wrapped with banana leaf for 7 days. Then

the head should be washed with the decoction of Triphala. While using this recipe, patient should take milk and meat soup. It's an excellent recipe for making the hair black in scalp.

2) Powder of *Triphala*, *Loha bhasma* taken in equal quantities, should be triturated by adding water. To this equal quantity of oil is added and cooked for brief period. After the *Bhringaraja swarasa* equal quantity of oil should be mixed with the above mentioned recipe, again cooked. This oil is stored for month and applied.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Pathya-pathya: It plays an important role as much as of medicine and it is rightly mentioned that, if one follows *pathya*, then there is no need of medicine. *Pathya* plays an important role in prevention and recurrence of the disease as well as in its treatment.

Pathya:

Ahara: *Shashtika shali*, *Mudga*, *Goghritha*, *Dugdha*, *Kushnanda*, *Dadima*, *Kharjura*, *Narikela*

Vihar: Regular hair wash, regular *shiro abhyanga*, *murdha taila*, *prayogika dumapana*, *Anu taila* *Pratimarsha Nasya*, timely sleeping.

Keshya Drugs: *Narikela*, *Tila*, *Vibhitaki*, *Gunja*, *Triphala*

Kesha Ranjana Drugs: *Bhringaraja*, *Vibhita Majja*, *Amrasthi*, *Madayantika*, *Japa*, *Loha bhasma*, *Neelini*, *Saireyaka*.

Apathya:

Ahara: *Lavana rasa atisevana*, *katu rasa atisevana*, *amla rasa atisevana*, *shushka*, *suksha*, *Viruddha ahara*, *Lashuna*, *Masha*, *Kulatha*.

Vihara: Exposure to *raja*, *dhuma*, *ati atapa sevana*, *ati vyayama*, *krodha*, *shoka*, excess intake of alcohol & smoking, *vegavarodha* and improper sleeping habit

CONCLUSION

As we are in modern era life style disorders are at peak, there are many diseases which are now caused in young age due to pollution, disturbed life style among them premature graying of hair is one. Teen agers, young adults all are suffering from this disease so it is necessary to have knowledge about the disease with its prevention and treatment. As *Ayurveda* is the oldest health science its lexicons explains in detail about premature graying of hair (*Akala Palitya*). It explains about *nidana samprapti* and *chikitsa sutra*. One must have deep knowledge about this disease to

avoid and prevent it. As Modern Medicines
Are having so many side effects *Ayurveda*
has to play key role in coming future.

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