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# Ayurvedic approach for managing *Indralupta* (Alopecia Areata): A Case Study

Pal Subodh<sup>1</sup>, Paradkar Hemant<sup>2</sup>, Attar Sajida<sup>3</sup>, Pathrikar Anaya<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Post Graduate Scholar, Dept. of Kayachikitsa, APM's Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Sion, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Dept. of Kayachikitsa, APM's Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Sion, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor, Dept. of Kayachikitsa, APM's Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Sion, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.

<sup>4</sup>Professor & HOD, Dept. of Kayachikitsa, APM's Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Sion, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.

## ABSTRACT

*Indralupta* (Alopecia areata) is a disease characterised by patches of hair loss spread throughout the body and scalp described as *Shirogata Roga* (diseases of head) & *Kapalagata Roga* (Scalp disease) by *Acharyas*. It can be considered alopecia areata according to conventional medicine. Alopecia areata is considered autoimmune, making it difficult to treat with increased chances of recurrence. But *Ayurveda* is very effective with no side effects and minimal chances of recurrence as it not only treats the disease but also works on the causative factors (*Nidan Parivarjana*). The present case report is on the effectiveness of *Shaman* (treatment that pacifies the aggravated *Doshas*), *Keshya* (Hair nourishing treatment), and *Raktamokshna* (blood-letting) in the patient of *Indralupta*. A 16-year-old boy who had hairless patches on his scalp was diagnosed with Alopecia areata 4 years before by a dermatologist. He already took conventional modern medicines but didn't get a satisfactory result. It showed recurrence after the stoppage of medicines. So, he came to *Kayachikitsa* OPD for *Ayurvedic* treatment. After 4 months of *Shamana Chikitsa*, *Jalaukavcharan* (Leech therapy), *Nasya* (medicine administered through nasal route), and *Shirolepa* (local application of *Ayurveda* herbs), complete recovery was seen with no adverse effects during and after treatment. In this case, hair regrowth from hair follicles was evident within 30 days of treatment. The collected data of this study suggest that *Shamana* treatment, *Raktmokshan*, and *Keshya* medicine can provide complete relief in *Indralupta*.

**Key words:** *Indralupta*, alopecia, Alopecia areata, Hair loss, Case study.

## INTRODUCTION

The very first impression of a person depends on his looks, in which hair plays an important role. Nowadays we can see tremendous ailments related to hair like hair fall, greying of hair, Alopecia, etc. It affects self-esteem, and confidence further leading to depression. Alopecia areata which mainly affects the scalp is an autoimmune disorder in which patchy loss of hair is seen with no signs of inflammation.<sup>[1]</sup> Due to its

location, it affects the beauty of a person which makes him look unpleasant and lowers his confidence. Also, contemporary treatment includes treatment with the use of steroids has many adverse effects with chances of recurrence.<sup>[2]</sup> Many therapies are available for the treatment of alopecia areata, including topical, systemic, and injectable modalities. However, these treatment methods produce variable clinical outcomes and there are no currently available treatments that induce and sustain remission.<sup>[3]</sup> Conventional modern therapy consists of intralesional corticosteroids, topical corticosteroids, minoxidil, anthralin, topical immunotherapy, prostaglandin analogs, topical retinoids, bexarotene, capsaicin, sulfasalazine, photochemotherapy, excimer laser, and fractional photothermolysis laser, systemic corticosteroids, methotrexate, cyclosporine, azathioprine, and biologics. None of the agents available currently for treating this condition is curative or preventive completely.<sup>[4]</sup> In such cases, *Ayurveda* is found to be promising. Alopecia areata can be correlated with

### Address for correspondence:

Dr. Paradkar Hemant

Associate Professor, Dept. of Kayachikitsa, APM's Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Sion, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.

E-mail: hemant.paradkar@gmail.com

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*Indralupta* explained in *Ayurveda*. *Indralupta* is explained under the heading of *Kshudrarogas* by Acharya *Sushruta*.<sup>[5]</sup> *Ayurveda* emphasizes the involvement of all three *Doshas* along with *Rakta Dhatu* in hair fall and *Indralupta*.<sup>[6]</sup> According to *Ayurveda*, vitiated *Pitta* in association with vitiated *Vata* causes the falling of hairs from the scalp. After that, vitiated *Rakta* and *Kapha* block the orifices of the hair follicles which restricts the growth of new hair. Thus, *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha Dosha* (three factors responsible for all physiological processes inside the body) and *Rakta Dushya* (one of the sites in the body where the disease occurs) are the main internal causative factors of *Indralupta*.<sup>[7]</sup> So while treating such cases removal of obstruction at hair follicles is important and then start with anti-hairfall treatment. Acharya *Sushruta* has explained the line of treatment of *Indralupta* in *Chikitsa-sthan*.<sup>[8]</sup> Here a case of 16 years old boy describes the usefulness of *Ayurvedic* management with *Shamana* medicines, *Jalaukavcharan*, *Nasya*, and *Shirolepa Chikitsa* in the treatment of alopecia areata.

## PATIENT INFORMATION

On 10<sup>th</sup> November 2022, a 16-year-old boy came to OPD of the Kayachikitsa department with complaints of patchy loss of hairs on the scalp gradually increasing for 4 years. He had no history of any major illness. Also no family history of such diseases. There were multiple patches of hair loss all over the scalp of variable sizes as seen in [Fig. 1]. The patient identified a small patch of hair loss on the scalp before 4 years. The patient visited a dermatologist where he was diagnosed with alopecia areata and treated for the same. Eventually, he recovered from it. After 1 year, again similar patches of hair loss started appearing on the scalp not relieving with the same line of treatment he was taking. He had stopped the treatment after 6 months due to unsatisfactory results. Then he took various other treatments with local physicians and General practitioners, whose details were not available [Table 1]. The patient was referred to our hospital by one of his friends. After examining the patient diagnosis was made as *Indralupta*. The patient was explained about

the disease and was advised of internal *Ayurvedic* medicines along with procedures like *Jalaukavcharan*, *Nasya*, and *Lepan Chikitsa*. Internal medicines are listed in [Table 2]. Treatment principles included *Krumighna Chikitsa* considering his age, *Srotovishodhan Chikitsa* to improve nourishment to *Rasa*, *Rakta*, and *Asthi Dhatu*, *Keshya Chikitsa* to initiate regrowth of hair. Details of procedures are mentioned in [Table 3]. The line of treatment showed successful results in this case of *Indralupta* within 4 months. The patient was followed up on every 15th day for 1st two months and then monthly. Follow-up details are mentioned in [Table 4].

## Clinical findings

The patient had hairless patches on the scalp for the past 4 years, no itching on the scalp, the general condition was good, all the vitals were normal, and no systemic illness.

## Ashtavidha Pariksha

1. *Nadi*: 72/min, *Vata kapha*
2. *Mutra*: *Samyak* (Normal output)
3. *Mala*: *Asamadhankarak* (Non satisfactory)
4. *Jivha*: *Saam* (coated)
5. *Shabda*: *Spashta* (Clear)
6. *Sparsha*: *Anushna* (Warm)
7. *Druk*: *Samyak* (Normal)
8. *Akruti*: *Madhyam*, but many patches of hair loss are seen on the scalp

## Other examinations

*Prakriti*: *Vata Kaphaj*; *Vikruti*: *Tridosha*; *Saar*: *Mansa*; *Samhanana*: *Madhyam*; *Satva*: *Madhyam*; *Satmya*: *Madhyam*; *Aahar Shakti*: *Samyak*; *Vyayam Shakti*: *Madhyam*; *Vaya*: 16years; *Desha*: *Aanup*; *Kaal*: *Aadan*

## Timeline

Table no. 1 represents the timeline of the occurrence of events in the present case study. It represents all the symptoms along with the previous treatment taken by the patient and the results obtained.

Table 1: Timeline

Dec 2018	A small patch of hair loss on the scalp was diagnosed as Alopecia areata and treated by Dermatologist. Complete recovery with treatment.
Feb 2020	Recurrence of patches of hair loss on the scalp. Started the same line of allopathic treatment taken before. Treatment continued for 6 months but no complete remission.
Sept 2020	Stopped the treatment due to unsatisfactory results.
Jan 2021 - Apr 2022	Patients have taken intermittent treatment from local physicians and general practitioners but no sustainable result achieved.
10 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2022	The patient was advised to visit the OPD of Kayachikitsa by one of his friends. The patient came with complaints of many patchy hair loss patches on the scalp.

### Diagnostic findings

Several patches of hair loss are seen on the scalp. The patient was already pre-diagnosed with alopecia areata by a dermatologist.

### Treatment schedule

The patient was treated as shown in Table no. 2,3.

The patient was treated with *Arogyavardhini* 125mg twice daily along with *Krumikuthar Rasa* 125 mg at night with *Guda* till 21 and 15 days respectively. It was followed by *Rasapachak* Tab 125 mg, *Asthimajjapachak* Tab 125 mg, and *Mahamanjishthadi Kwath* 20 ml with an equal amount of water twice daily for 3 weeks, *Bhringaraja Ghana* 250 mg and *Bibhitak Ghana* 250 mg for 13 weeks. After completion of 4 months and complete recovery, *Amalaki Ghan* 250 mg with lukewarm water was started for 2 months for hair nourishment. *Jalaukavcharan* was done on the scalp 4 times every 15 days. *Anu Tail Nasya* 3 drops in each nostril were given, daily from the 21<sup>st</sup> day onwards till the 120<sup>th</sup> day. *Tagar + Daruharidra Lepa* were done on an alternate day from the 61<sup>st</sup> to the 120<sup>th</sup> day.

Table 2: Shamana treatment.

SN	Medicines	Dose	Anupaan	Duration
1.	<i>Arogyavardhini Rasa</i>	125mg (1-0-1)	lukewarm water	First 21 days
2.	<i>Krumikithar Rasa</i>	125mg (0-0-1)	<i>Guda</i> (Jaggery)	First 15 days
3.	<i>Rasapachak</i>	125mg (1-0-1)	lukewarm water	From 22 <sup>nd</sup> day to 42 <sup>nd</sup> day
4.	<i>Asthimajjapachaka</i>	125mg (1-0-1)	lukewarm water	From 22 <sup>nd</sup> day to 42 <sup>nd</sup> day
5.	<i>Mahamanjishthadi Kwath</i>	20ml. (1-0-1)	an equal amount of lukewarm water	From 22 <sup>nd</sup> day to 42 <sup>nd</sup> day
6.	<i>Bhringaraja Ghana</i>	250mg. (1-0-1)	lukewarm water	From 22 <sup>nd</sup> day to 120 <sup>th</sup> day
7.	<i>Bibhitaki Ghana</i>	250 mg (1-0-1)	lukewarm water	From 22 <sup>nd</sup> day to 120 <sup>th</sup> day
8.	<i>Amalaki Ghana</i>	250mg. (1-0-1)	lukewarm water	From 121 <sup>st</sup> day to 180 <sup>th</sup> day as <i>Keshya</i>

Table 3: Procedures

SN	Procedures	Duration
1.	<i>Jalaukavcharan</i>	4 Times 15 <sup>th</sup> , 30 <sup>th</sup> , 45 <sup>th</sup> and 60 <sup>th</sup> day
2.	<i>Nasya – Anu Tail</i>	3 drops in each nostril daily from the 21 <sup>st</sup> day onwards till the 120 <sup>th</sup> day.
3.	<i>Shirolepa</i>	<i>Tagar + Daruharidra Lepa</i> was done on an alternate day from the 61 <sup>st</sup> to the 120 <sup>th</sup> day.

**Outcome and follow-up:**

Follow-up changes are given in Table no. 4. As per the [Figs. 1-4], there was no visible hair or hair roots at various places on the scalp before treatment. After 30 days of treatment, there was visible hair eruption at many places on the scalp. The images were taken after treatment of 4 months [Figs, 5-8] and the regrowth of hair was clearly visible. The patient was instructed to continue the *Amalaki Ghan* 250 mg with lukewarm water with *Pathya* (wholesome diet regimen). Thereafter, the patient regularly came to the hospital for follow-up and continued the treatment.

**Table 4: Follow-up**

SN	Follow-up	Changes seen
1.	1 <sup>st</sup> day	<i>Arogyavardhini</i> and <i>Krimikuthar</i> started.
2.	15 <sup>th</sup> day	The patient's bowel habits were improved, <i>Samyak Malapravrutti</i> with <i>Niram Jivha</i> . No hair growth was seen. <i>Krimikuthar</i> stopped. Leech therapy was done.
3.	21 <sup>st</sup> day	<i>Arogyavardhini</i> Stopped. <i>Bhringaraja Ghana</i> 250 mg, <i>Rasapachak</i> Tab 125 mg, <i>Asthimajjapachak</i> Tab 125 mg, <i>Mahamanjishthadi Kwath</i> 20 ml, and <i>Bibhitak Ghana</i> 250 mg started. <i>Anu Tail Nasya</i> Started. Not much hair growth was seen.
4.	28 <sup>th</sup> day	A few tiny brownish hair growths were seen on some patches. Treatment continued. Leech therapy was done.
5.	35 <sup>th</sup> day	Tiny hair growth was seen on all patches. Treatment continued.
6.	42 <sup>nd</sup> day	<i>Rasapachak</i> Tab, <i>Asthimajjapachak</i> Tab, <i>Mahamanjishthadi Kwath</i> stopped. <i>Bhringaraja Ghana</i> and <i>Bibhitak Ghana</i> continued. <i>Nasya</i> continued. Leech therapy was done. Hair growth was seen.
7.	60 <sup>th</sup> day	Leech therapy was done. Asked to start <i>Tagar + Daruharidra lepa</i> alternate day.
8.	90 <sup>th</sup> day	<i>Bhringaraja Ghana</i> and <i>Bibhitak Ghana</i> continued. <i>Nasya</i> continued. <i>Tagar +</i>

		<i>Daruharidra Lepa</i> continued. More black hairs are seen.
9.	120 <sup>th</sup> day	Complete recovery was seen. <i>Bhringaraja Ghana</i> , <i>Bibhitak Ghana</i> and <i>Nasya</i> stopped. <i>Lepa</i> therapy stopped. <i>Amalaki Ghan</i> 250 mg twice daily started for the next 2 months.
10.	180 <sup>th</sup> day	Normal hair growth was seen. No recurrence of alopecia. <i>Amalaki Ghan</i> stopped.
11.	250 <sup>th</sup> day	No recurrence of alopecia. Patient was happy with the results.

**DISCUSSION**

*Acharya Charaka* explains the pathophysiology of *Khalitya* and *Palitya* in *Trimarmiya Chikitsa* where he says that when *Teja* along with *Vatadi Doshas* reaches the scalp leads to *Indralupta*.<sup>[9]</sup> *Acharya Sushruta* explains about *Indralupta* in *Kshudraroga* where he says that *Kapha* and *Rakta* block the *Romkupa*, while *Vata* & *Pitta Dosh* leads to hair fall.<sup>[5]</sup> So the involvement of *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*, and *Rakta* can be seen in this disease.

*Arogyavardhini* is said to be *Kusthaghna* (can alleviate all types of skin disorders). Also, the drug has properties like-*Pachani* (digestive), *Dipani* (appetizer), *Pathya* (wholesome for channel), *Hridya* (cardioprotective), *Medonashaka* (help in fat reduction), *Malashuddhikari* (cleaning of waste materials from the body), increase *Kshudha* (appetizer), *Sarvaroga prashamani* (can alleviate all types of disorders from the body). So, it was used for *Srotoshuddhi* (clearing of channel).<sup>[10]</sup> *Arogyavardhini Vati* is used in all types of *Kushtha*, especially in *Vata* and *Vata-Kaphajkushtha*. It helps to remove *Ama* (toxins) from the body. It has an antipruritic nature that relieves the itching sensation. Contains *Kutaki* as the main content, which works as *Shodhan* and *Bhendan* of *Dosha*.<sup>[11]</sup>

*Acharya Sushruta* explains the involvement of *Krimi* in all types of skin diseases. So considering his age and consumption of *Viruddhahar*, *Krumikuthar rasa* was used. It is a herbo-mineral combination containing *Karpura*, *Hingul*, *Vatsanabh*, *Pasash Beej*, etc. mainly



works on *Krumi*. It is considered that many *Twak Vikar* involve *Krumi* in their pathophysiology and *Krumikuthar Rasa* is a time-tested formulation in Skin diseases.<sup>[11]</sup> *Bhringaraja* is a well-known herb used in hair ailments. It is *Ushna Veerya*, which breaks the *Srotoavrodh* and leads to hair growth.<sup>[12]</sup> According to the Principles of *Ayurveda*, it is said that when *Rasa Dhatu* is of good quality the succeeding *Dhatu*s will also be good.<sup>[13]</sup> So *Rasapachak* was used to improve the quality of *Rasa Dhatu*. *Kesha* [Hairs] is *Mala* of *Asthi Dhatu*, so the quality of hair depends on the quality of *Asthi Dhatu*. Hence *Asthimajjapachaka Yog* was used.<sup>[14]</sup>

*Bibhitaki* is also *Keshya* with *Kashaya Rasa*, *Madhur Viapaka*, *Ushna Virya*, and *Ruksha Guna* which acts as *Srotorovishodhak* and shows *Keshya* properties.<sup>[15]</sup> *Amalaki* is a *Rasayana* i.e., good for all the *Dhatu*s. *Amalaki* (*Embllica*) has been ubiquitously used in Ayurvedic medicine for nourishing hair since ancient times. Experiments showed that *Amalaki* extract solution promoted hair strength (tensile strength and extensibility).<sup>[16]</sup> *Mahamanjishthadi Kwath* is a blood purifier. It pacifies the vitiation of *Kapha* and *Pitta* and acts as a *Rakta Shodhaka*. It detoxifies blood and helps to eliminate accumulated toxins from the body.<sup>[17]</sup> *Jalaukavcharan- Acharya Sushruta* tells to do *Raktamokshana* in *Indralupta*. It helps to eliminate the *Srotasavrodh* and vitiated *Rakta Dhatu*.<sup>[8]</sup> *Shirolepa- Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned the *Lepa* of *Tagar + Daruharidra* in *Indralupta*.<sup>[8]</sup> *Nasya* is indicated in all *Urdhvajatrugata Vyadhis* of which *Indralupta* is one. *Anu Tel* is very effective for hair growth as well as it prevents hair fall.<sup>[18]</sup> There are many clinical studies published on *Indralupta*. These studies highlighted the results of *Shamana* or *Shamana* along with some external applications or the use of only local procedures like *Pracchhanna Karma* and *Jalaukavacharana*. In this case, we have used the *Shaman Chikitsa* along with *Keshya Chikitsa*, *Nasya*, *Jalaukavacharana*, and *Lepa*. Recurrence is a major issue in alopecia areata. In this case, no recurrence was observed till the 8<sup>th</sup> month. The patient regularly visits the OPD for follow-up and following the diet and medications.

## CONCLUSION

In this case of Alopecia areata Ayurvedic principles of diagnosing the disease, finding out the *Samprapti* (Pathophysiology), and then starting the treatment which do *Sampraptibhanga* (Treating the root cause of Pathophysiology) gave complete recovery with no side effects during or after the treatment. We conclude that the *Ayurveda* protocol of *Shamana*, along with *Jaloukavacharan*, *Nasya*, and *Keshya* treatment used for this patient for four months was beneficial and the regrowth of hair started considerably in 30 days. The results obtained from this treatment show that further research can be undertaken based on this treatment plan for the Ayurvedic management of alopecia areata (*Indralupta*).

## Patient perspectives

The patient was pleased after getting complete hair growth.

## Declaration of patient consent

The authors certify that they have obtained the patient's consent, for reporting his case along with the images and other clinical information in the journal. The patient understands that his name and initials will not be published and due efforts will be made to conceal his identity, but anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

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