



## Saying Goodbye To Vitiligo (Leucoderma) Through Ayurveda

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*Leucoderma, also known as vitiligo is a skin disorder that affects nearly 2% of the world population. Allopathic system of medicine in widespread practice today offers palliative measures. There are many explanations as to why this happens but none of these explanations has been proven to be the right one. This also explains why there is no confirmed cure for leucoderma. Even after extensive scientific research, the treatments of leucoderma are still very scarce and have not been proven to work for a majority of people. The best patients can do is hide these marks with colour creams but it is to be noted, this only hides these marks and doesn't stop more patches of white skin from appearing. There is no explanation as to the location of these patches of skin. Also, a question that may rise is why only patches appear and not the whole body is affected. For this too there is no proven explanation.*

*By contrast, the Charaka Samhita, a two thousand-year-old Indian Ayurvedic text, provides a description of leucoderma (shvitra/Kilasa) with recommendations for treatment. In this paper, a detailed Ayurvedic analysis and approach to management will be presented.*

**Key words:-** vitiligo, leucoderma, shvitra, Kilasa.

### Introduction

Leucoderma is a chronic disorder of the skin where the skin stops producing pigments that color the skin. As a result white patches appear randomly at different locations on the skin. These patches are white in color and as time passes may increase in number and size. Leucoderma is not a medical term. It is only a substitute name for vitiligo. Vitiligo is a more common name for this disease in the west where as in Asia leucoderma is used more.

According to modern science vitiligo involves focal areas of melanocyte loss. There may be a positive family history of the disorder in those with generalised vitiligo and this type is associated with autoimmune diseases such as diabetes, thyroid and adrenal disorders, and pernicious anaemia. Trauma sunburn may precipitate the appearance of vitiligo. A number of hypotheses have been advanced to explain the pathogenesis, none of which is entirely satisfactory. One popular theory is that the monocytes are the target of a cell-mediated autoimmune attack<sup>1</sup>.

*Ayurveda*, a Sanskrit term meaning 'science of life', is said to be the most ancient system of medicine in widespread practice today. In *Ayurvedic* classical literature, such as the *Charaka Samhita*, leucoderma also known as 'white leprosy' is called *svitra* or *kilasa*. In *Ayurvedic* medicine, the process by which a disease is understood and diagnosed is called *nidanapancaaka* and is composed of five parts: *nidana* (causative factors or etiology), *purvarupa* (earliest signs/symptoms), *rupa* (clinical signs/symptoms), *samprapti* (pathogenesis of the condition), and *upasaya* (diagnostic tests). Traditionally, when a disease is being discussed, the five parts of the *nidanapancaaka* will be presented. Indeed, the ancient *Ayurvedic* text, *Charaka Samhita*, presents skin disease (*kustha*) following this format.

### ***Nidana*<sup>2</sup> (causative factors):-**

The development of leucoderma in an individual is said to be caused by the incorporation of the following unwholesome regimes into their life:

- Habitually take unctous and heavy substances;
- Suppression of natural urges particularly of vomiting;
- Take exercises during indigestion;
- Apply cold water immediately after intensive exposure to sun, exercise and fear;
- Intake of uncooked food or intake of food during indigestion;
- Excessive intake of food prepared of new cereals, curd, fish, sesamum, milk and jaggery;
- Sleep regularly in day;
- Use contraindicated items while undergoing *Pancakarma* therapy;
- Untruthfulness, ungratefulness...insult of *Brahmanas*, teachers and other respectable persons.

### ***Purvarupa*<sup>3</sup>(earliest signs/symptoms)**

- *Vaivarnya* (abnormal colour)
- *Kandu* (itching)
- *Toda* (pin pricking pain)
- *Suptata* (numbness)
- *Paridaha* (burning sensation)
- *Romaharsha* (Horripilation)
- *Aswedanamatiswedana* (excessive or absence of perspiration);
- *Atishlakshannata* (excessive smoothness)
- *Parushhya* (roughness)

### ***Rupa*<sup>4</sup>(clinical signs/symptoms):-**

- *Daruna*- when *dosha* (chiefly) vitiates the *rakta* (blood), the patches will be red in color.
- *Caruna*- when *dosha*(chiefly) vitiates the *mamsa* or the muscle tissue, the patches will be coppery in color.
- *Kilasa*- when *dosha* (chiefly) vitiates the *medas* or the fat, the patches will be white in color.” [This is the most common *rupa*(clinical presentation) of *svitra* hence leucoderma is often called *kilas*]

### ***Samprapti*<sup>5</sup> (*pathogenesis of the condition*)**

In the Charaka it says the three vitiated *doshamix* with the *dhatus*, namely the *rasa* (lymph), *rakta* (blood), *mamsa* (muscles), *medas* (fat), and result in the white patches.

### **The vitiligo is curable when<sup>6</sup>:**

- The hairs of the affected area has not turned white (as in albinism)
- The patches are not too many and not wide spread.
- The patches are distinctly distributed.
- The onset is new.
- It is not because of *Dagdh-varna* (burnt wound) *Switra*, other than these, are not advisable to be taken up for treatment.
- *Charaka* has also emphasized that the whitish discolouration appearing over the genital area, palmer and planter surfaces and lips are incurable, even with their onset is new.

### ***Chikitsa* (treatment):-**

#### **AS per Modern point of view**

There are many leucoderma treatments but none of them are proven 100% successful in modern science. Using colour creams and tanning creams to hide the patches of skin is a more common method. This hides the patches but requires a lot of time to apply the creams and the drawback is it doesn't prevent more spots from appearing. Steroid creams are also very commonly used. Steroid affects the immune system of the body by weakening it. So when a steroid cream is applied to the skin, the antibodies in the skin are weakened and they

stop attacking the melanocytes and melanin production is resumed. It is to be noted that this treatment does not guarantee that the patches will not appear again.

### AS per Ayurvedic point of view

**Purification therapies ( Shodana ) :-** According to *Ayurveda* eliminative measures must initially be employed, taking into consideration a patient's *agni*(digestive fire) and level of *ojas* (immunity power), then might herbal remedies prove effective. Purification methods such as *snehana* (application of oil), *svedana* (fomentation or heat therapy) and *virechana*(purgation) are employed to (1) "loosen and liquefy *Ama* (undigestive material)" and excess *dosha* from the various sites of accumulation in the tissue, (2) mobilize *Ama* and excess *dosha*, (3) facilitate removal of *Ama* and excess *dosha* from the body. An additional manner of purification often mentioned with leucoderma is called *rakatamokshana* (therapeutic bloodletting).

First of all, purgative is administered in leucoderma. Thereafter patient should take the juice of Malapu (Kakodumbarika/*Ficushispida* Linn.) mixed with jaggery and be exposed to sun. This is continued for three days. During this period in the event of thirst he should take liquid gruel. By this treatment the eruptions arisen in diseased spot should be torn open with a thorn. When all the eruptive boils are torn open the patient should take the decoction of Malapu, Asana (*Pterocarpusmarsupium*), Priyangu (*Callicarpamacrophylla*), mixed with phanita (cooked sugarcain juice) every morning for a fortnight<sup>7</sup>.

Khadira (*Acacia catechu*), as a decoction, is recommended for treatment of leucoderma<sup>8</sup>. The rasa of Khadira is bitter and astringent. Its *virya* (potency) is cold, and its *vipaka* is pungent. It is said to balance both *Pitta* and *kaphadosha*. Laboratory studies have identified constituents shown to regenerate liver cells, as well as providing anti-fungal and anti-inflammatory effects.

Realgar, Vidanga (*Embeliaribes*), Kasisa (Green vitriol), Rocana, Kanaka-pushpi (Swarnaksiri/*Argemone Mexicana*)) along with rock salt is applied as paste for alleviation of leucoderma<sup>9</sup>.

The alkali of the flower-bud of Jati (*Jasminumofficinale*) mixed with elephant's ichor pasted for leucoderma<sup>10</sup>.

Nilotpala (a species of *Nelumbonucifera*), Kustha (*Saussurealappa*) and rock salt powdered with elephant's urine make paste and apply for leucoderma<sup>11</sup>.

Seeds of radish and Bakuchi (*Psoraliacorylifolia*) powdered with cow's urine apply paste for leucoderma<sup>12</sup>.

Kakodumbara, Bakuchi and Chitraka (*Plumbagozeylanica*) powdered with cow's urine apply paste for leucoderma<sup>13</sup>.

Good quality of Avalgubeeja (*Psoraliacorylifolia*) should be taken, cleaned and soaked in fresh *Gomutram* (cow's urine) and kept overnight. Subsequently it should be removed and dried in sun. On the second day it should be once again be soaked in fresh cow's urine and kept overnight. The process should be repeated for seven days and on the eighth day purified, processed seeds should be powdered and should be stored in clean corked containers. This can be used internally in a dose of 200-400 mgs, along with AmalakiSwarasa (*Embliaofficinalis*) or KhadiraKashaya (decoction of *Acacia catechu* bark). Its external application along

with *Gomutram* stimulates the *Bhrajaka pitta* (melanocytes) and effects the proper formation of the pigments; this whole process is called as *Krishneekarana*.

The preparations like *Panchatiktaghritaguggulu*, *Tiktaka-ghrita*, *Khadiraristam*, *Amritabhallatakalehya*, all these internally and the medicines like *Doorvadithailam*, *Mareechadithailam* and *Avalgujabeejadilepachooranam* used externally in a judicious combination judging the constitution of the patient, have proved to be very useful in treating leucoderma/vitiligo.

We can use some herbal drugs in treating leucoderma like Nimba (*Azadiractaindica*), Manjista (*Rubiocardifolia*), Khadira (*Acacia catechu*), Guduchi (*Tinosporacordifolia*), Katuki (*Picrorhizakurroa*), Haridra (*Curcuma longa*) and Bhallataka (*Semicarpusanacardium*) etc.

*Ayurveda* encourages a regular practice of self-introspection such as meditation, by which an awareness and clarity of judgement develops which in turn promote right actions, hence healthy results.

Take seeds of Prapunada (*Cassia tora*), Kutha (*Saussurealappa*), Mulethi (*Glycyrrhizaglabra*) and mixed with *ghrita* (Ghee). Give it to a white cock that is hungry since 48 hours. Apply paste for leucoderma of that cock's excrement. Keep continue for at least 1 month is very much effective in leucoderma<sup>14</sup>.

Make *Kshara* (alkali) of Jalpippali (*Piper chaba Hunter*) and mix with elephant's urine. Sieve this mixture and then mix 1/10<sup>th</sup> part of seeds of Bakuchi and cook. When mixture gets smoothness, make tablets of it. Apply it as paste for leucoderma<sup>15</sup>.

Patient of leucoderma should be given *Vamana* (medical vomiting technique) in every 15 days till symptoms disappear. Patient should be given *Virechana* (medical purgation) in every 1 month. Keep *Raktamokshana* (blood letting out) two times in every year. Keep *Nasya* (nasal drops of medicine) in every three days<sup>16</sup>.

The patient should avoid tea, coffee, alcoholic beverages, all condiments and highly- flavoured dishes, sugar, white flour products, denatured cereals like polished rice and pearled barley, and tinned or bottled foods.

## Conclusion

Many cases of leucoderma have been resolved with *Ayurvedic treatment*. *Ayurveda* believes that only elimination of symptoms of any disease is not exact treatment of that particular disease. *Ayurveda* treat the root of disease.

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