

Review Article on *Indralupta* w.s.r. to Alopecia areata

Dr. Shubham Banolta, Dr. Shweta Gyanendra Shukla, Dr. Dipti Bisht, Dr. Anil Raj

P.G. Department of Kayachikitsa, Rishikul Campus, UAU, Haridwar.

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Abstract: Hair fall has been described in Ayurveda by the name of *Indralupta roga* under the heading of *kshudra roga* (~minor disease) due to *Alpa- Hetu*, *Lakshana* & *Chikitsa* or *shiroroga* (~diseases of head & scalp). However, it has been mentioned as *Tridoshaja Vikara* in *Charaka Samhita*, *Sutra sthana* while *Vagbhata* has cited it in *Shiroroga* (~diseases of head and scalp). The *Samprapti* (~pathogenesis) of *Indralupta* is the *vitiated Tridosha* (~Three vitiated factors) and *Rakta* (~blood) affecting the scalp. Ayurveda offers an effective treatment approach for the management of *Indralupta*. *Indralupta* (~Hairfall) is the most common condition in young and old age. In pathophysiology of *Indralupta* there is involvement of *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa* and *Asthivaha Srotas*. Hair fall is a cosmetic disorder affecting patient psychologically. There are some differences between *khalitya* & *Indralupta*. In *khalitya*, hair loss is gradual and generalised over the scalp but hairs are lost suddenly and patch by patch in *Indralupta*. When the *kapha dosha* combines with *rakta dhatu* it results in degeneration and shutting down completely of hair follicles thus leading to baldness.

Keywords: *Indralupta*, Patchy hair loss, *Srotas*, Baldness.

I. Introduction

Alopecia areata is a chronic autoimmune disease that may result in hair loss, ranging from well-defined patches on the scalp to total hair loss on the scalp up to the whole body. Alopecia areata affects all ages, any gender, and all skin typesⁱ. The burden of Alopecia areata is multifactorial and stems from the physical and psychological impact of the disease. All aspects of life can be affected including work, leisure, family, relationships, and daily activities. In fact, the British Association of Dermatologists outlines the substantial psychological and social disability that may be caused by Alopecia areata, particularly in those patients with chronic and persistent diseaseⁱⁱ.

Prevalence:

- The prevalence of patients with a diagnosis of Alopecia areata reported in population-based studies ranges between 0.1% and 0.58%.ⁱⁱⁱ
- A study from Northern India found that Alopecia areata accounted for 0.7% of new dermatology outpatient cases, with a higher prevalence in males (male-to-female ratio of 2:1) and 88% of patients being under 40 years of age.^{iv}
- In South India, a tertiary hospital reported an incidence of 2% among dermatology outpatients, with the majority of patients aged between 21–40 years and an equal distribution between males and females.^v

इन्द्राणां इन्द्रनीलवत केशानां लुप्तं नाशो यस्मात् || (शब्द कल्प द्रुम 1/211)

Indra it means *Utamanga/Shrestha* and **Lupta** means Morbid baldness of the head; loss of beard.

According to Ayurveda, *Vata* and *Pitta* gets accumulated in the location of *Kha-Vaigunya* in the scalp region in a *vikrit awastha*^{vi}. This hampers the supply of nutrients to the hair follicle ultimately resulting in the falling of clumps of hair in that particular area thereby leaving a bald patch. Ayurvedic literature explicitly outline a number of circumstances that disrupt the *Dosha's* equilibrium. However, there is no precise explanation for the causes of hair loss in the instance of *Indralupta*.

The hair and nails are the *malas* (waste products) of this metabolic process. According to Ayurveda, *Dhatu* and *Dosha* both contain *Ashraya Ashrayi Bhava* or *Dosha* is considered to reside there. So any deformity in the *asthi dhatu* may also be reflected in *Nakha* and *Kesha*. *Kesha*, *Danta*, and *Nakha Vikruti* are part of *Asthi's Upadhatu* and *Mala Dushti*. So, deformities in these body organs may also result from pathology in *Asthi Dhatu*.

Charaka in *Vimanasthana*, while describing the disorders occurring due to over indulgence in *Kshara*, *Lavana* and *Viruddha Ahara* has mentioned the occurrence of Hair Loss as a consequence. It has been mentioned that the *Viruddha Ahara* like, simultaneous intake of *Lavana* (~salt) with milk in the diet induces *Indralupta*. Thus, it can be said that a person habituated to excessive *Lavana* or *Kshara* intake and taking *Viruddha Ahara* in routine is prone to have *Indralupta*.

II. Literature Review

Vedic period:

- There is no complete description about the disease *Indralupta*, however; there are instances which depict that *Khalitya* (*Indralupta*) was prevalent in that period also. For instance, Lord Indra cured the *Khalitya* and *Palitya* of Apala's father.

- The case of *Rishi Jamadagni* (Father of *Parashu Rama*) who was able to enhance the hair growth of his daughter is also well known.
- *Samhita Period:*
- ***Charaka samhita:*** In *Chikitsa Sthana* 26 has mentioned that by ignoring *Pratishyaya*, *Indralupta* occurs as a complication^{vii}.
- ***Sushruta samhita:***

रोमकूपानुगं पित्तं वातेन सह मूच्छितम् । प्रच्यावयति रोमाणि ततः श्लेष्मा सशोणितः । ।

रुणद्धि रोमकूपांस्तु ततोऽन्येषामसंभवः । तदिन्द्रलुप्तं खालित्यं रुह्येति च विभाव्यते । ।

(Su.Ni.13)

Sangraha kala:

- ***Ashtanga sangraha:*** *Vagabhatta* has mentioned *Indralupta* under the heading of *Shiroroga* and has also described its pathogenesis. Difference between *Indralupta* and *Khalitya* has been described here. Especially, the types of *Khalitya* along with symptoms and prognosis have been stated.^{viii}
- ***Madhava nidana*^{ix}:** He described the disease *Indralupta* according to *Sushruta* but in *Madhukosha* commentary, *Kartika acharya* has clearly differentiated
 - *Indralupta:* इन्द्रलुप्तं श्मश्रुणि भवति
 - *Khalitya:* खालित्यं शिरस्येव
 - *Ruhy:* रुह्या च सर्वदेहे
- ***Dosha:*** **Vata:** Samana, Vyana;
Pitta: Pachaka Pitta & Bhrajaka Pitta;
Kapha: Tarpaka Kapha
- ***Dushya:*** **Dhatu:** Rasa, Rakta, Asthi.
- ***Mala:*** Sweda, Keshha.
- ***Agni:*** Jatharagni, Rasagni, Asthyagni.
- ***Srotasa:*** Rasavaha, Raktavaha, Asthivaha, Swedavaha, Manovaha
- ***Adhithana:*** Keshabhoomi
- ***Rogamarga:*** Bahya Rogamarga (twak and romakopa)

Samprapti^x:

Nidana Sevan → Dosha Prakop

(According to *Vasavarajiyam* and *Acharya Charaka* involvement of **Krimi** is the main etiological factor of *Indralupta*)^{xixii}

Pitta present in hair follicles (*Romakupa*) associating with *Vata* causes Hair fall.

Kapha along with *Rakta* blocks the hair follicles and blocking the re-growth of hair.

Shatkriyakala

- *Sanchaya-* *Amashaya*
- *Prakopa-* *Kosta*
- *Prasara-* *Rasayanis*
- *Stana Sanshraya-* *Romakoopa*
- *Vyakta-* *Shirogata Keshha*

Types of *Indralupta*

Acharya Harita described five types of *Indralupta* based on the predominance of the doshas:

Sr. No.	Type	Lakshana.
1.	<i>Vataja Indralupta</i>	<i>Rukshta, Pandura varna shirakapala.</i>
2.	<i>Pittaja Indralupta</i>	<i>Daha yukta, Rakta varna shirakapala.</i>
3.	<i>Kaphaja Indralupta</i>	<i>Snigdha shirakapala.</i>
4.	<i>Raktaja Indralupta</i>	<i>Paka yukta.</i>
5.	<i>Sannipataja Indralupta</i>	<i>Sarva yukta.</i>

➤ Local Examination:

Inspection

Distribution: Is hair loss focal, multifocal, or diffuse?

- Patchy: Alopecia areata, tinea capitis
- Diffuse: Telogen effluvium, androgenetic alopecia
- Frontal recession: Androgenetic alopecia

Hair Density: Thinning vs complete loss.

Hair Shaft Abnormalities:

- Miniaturized hairs (vellus-like): Androgenetic alopecia
- Broken hairs or black dots: Tinea capitis, trichotillomania

Scalp Skin Changes:

- Erythema, scaling, pustules: Seborrheic dermatitis, psoriasis, fungal infection
- Scarring/atrophy: Lichen planopilaris, discoid lupus erythematosus

Presence of “Exclamation mark” hairs: Suggestive of alopecia areata.

Palpation

Scalp Consistency:

- Soft, normal
- Thickened, boggy (e.g., in myxedema)
- Atrophic or scarred

Tenderness: May indicate underlying inflammation or infection.

Hair Pull Test

- Gently tug on a small bundle (about 50-60 hairs).
- Positive: More than 6 hairs pulled out → active hair shedding (e.g., telogen effluvium, alopecia areata).

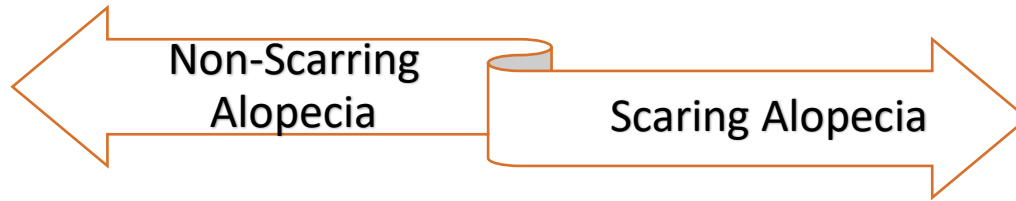
Hair Tug Test

- Assesses hair fragility. Hold hair shaft at two points and pull—breakage suggests structural hair shaft disorder.

Dermoscopy (Trichoscopy)

- A non-invasive tool to visualize:
- Black dots
- Yellow dots (alopecia areata)
- Perifollicular scaling
- Miniaturized hairs
- Follicular openings (present in non-scarring, absent in scarring alopecia)

➤ **Differential Diagnosis:**



Non-Scarring Alopecia
(Intact hair follicles, Potential for Regrowth exist)

Condition	Key Features	Common Symptoms
Androgenetic alopecia	Patterned hair loss M-Shaped in males Diffuse thinning in Females	Gradual thinning, No Inflammation.
Telogen effluvium	Diffuse shedding 2-3 months after stress	Sudden hair fall, thinning without bald patches.
Alopecia areata	Patchy, smooth bald patches	Exclamation mark hairs, nail pitting.
Trichotillomania	Hair pulling Disorder	Broken hair of varying length, bizarre shaped.
Tinea capitis	Patchy hair loss, scaling, black dots	Itching, lymphadenopathy, possible kerion.
Anagen effluvium	Rapid hair loss due to chemo/Radiation	Sudden Diffuse loss, especially during Treatment.
Loose anagen syndrome (children)	Hair easily pulled out	Thin hair, no scarring or inflammation.

Scarring Alopecia
(Destroyed hair follicles replaced by scar tissue; Irreversible)

Condition	Key Features	Common Symptoms
Discoid Lupus Erythematosus (DLE)	Scaly, erythematous plaques with follicular plugging	Hypopigmentation, Atrophy, Systemic Lupus.
Lichen Planopilaris	Patchy hair loss with Perifollicular scales, Redness	Violaceous lesion, itchy scalp
Folliculitis Decalvans	Tufts of hair, pustules, crusts	Bacterial infections (<i>Staph. aureus</i>)
Tinea Capitis	Painful boggy swelling with pustules; scarring in late stage	Fungal

➤ **Diagnosis (Salt Score):**

Severity of Alopecia Loss Tool

SALT score is useful to find out the quantitative assessment of scalp hair loss³. The entire scalp was divided into 4 parts based on the surface area, **Vertex** (40% - 0.4), **Occiput** (24% - 0.24), **Right side** (18% - 0.18), and **Left side** of scalp (18% - 0.18).

Percentage of hair loss in each area is determined independently and is multiplied by the percentage of scalp covered in that area of the scalp, and summing the products of each area will give the SALT score.



Hair loss over the vertex of the patient is around 90%

Therefore; for vertex = $90\% \times 0.4 = 36\%$

Hair loss from the right side of the patient is around 90%

Therefore; for right side = $70\% \times 0.18 = 12.6\%$



Hair loss from the left side of the patient is around 90%

Therefore; for left side = $70\% \times 0.18 = 12.6\%$

Hair loss over the occiput of the patient is around 90%

Therefore; For Occiput- $80\% \times 0.24 = 19.2\%$



Calculating the SALT score for the patient:

- For Vertex- $90\% \times 0.4 = 36\%$
- For Right side- $70\% \times 0.18 = 12.6\%$
- For Left Side- $70\% \times 0.18 = 12.6\%$
- For Occiput- $80\% \times 0.24 = 19.2\%$

= 80.4%

Chikitsa Sutra:

इन्द्रलुप्ते सिरां मूर्ध्नि सिग्धस्विन्नस्य मोक्षयेत् | कल्कैः समरिचैर्दिह्याच्छिलाकासीसतुत्यकैः ||

कुटन्नटदारुकल्कैर्लेपनं वा प्रशस्यते | प्रच्छयित्वाऽवगाढं वा गुञ्जाकल्कैर्मुहुर्मुहुः ||

लेपयेदुपशान्त्यर्थं कुर्याद्वाऽपि रसायनम् | मालतीकरवीराग्निनक्तमालविपाचितम् ||

तैलमभ्यञ्जने शस्तमिन्द्रलुप्तापहं परम् ||^{xiii}

In case of *Indralupta* the bald part or seat should be anointed and fomented, and then bleeding should be resorted to, after this plaster composed of *manashila*, *Kasisa*, *Tutta* and *Marich* or of *Kuttannata* and *Devadaru* pasted together, should be applied to it. As an alternative, it should be deeply scraped and constantly kept covered with a paste of *gunja* seeds. As an alternative, *Rasayana* medicines should be administrated for its cure. Oil cooked with *Malati*, *Karaveera*, *Chitraka* and *Naktamala* is highly efficacious in curing Alopecia.

Line of Treatment:

Three crucial strategies are needed to manage hair loss in *Indralupta*;

- Harmonizing *Doshas*.
- Restoring *Dhatu*
- Reducing mental stress

Doshas can be balanced by *Pathya-Apathya Ahar* and *Vihar*. External application of medicated oil and internal use of certain medicines like *Arogyavardhini vati*, *Gandhak Rasayan*, *Saptamrit lauh* etc. can be beneficial.

Dhatus can be replenished by समानगुणाभ्यासो हि धातुनां वृद्धिकारणमिति । (च. सू. 12/6);

Ojas is the essence of all the seven *Dhatus* and Quality of *Ojas* depends upon quality of all *Dhatus* thus Quality of all *Dhatus* depends upon quality of *Rasa Dhatu*. Thus consuming *ahar* that are *Rasaposhak* can be beneficial in managing *Indralupta*. Also as mentioned earlier; the hair and nails are the *malas* (waste products) of *asthi dhatu* thus *Asthi dhatu poshak ahara-vihara* may be useful in managing *Indralupta*.

Many stressful situations can trigger hair loss, so to counteract stress and protect your hair, one should learn and practice relaxation techniques. *Rasayana* treatment is thought to be helpful for hair loss because of its immune-modulators, antioxidant qualities, and renewing activity. *Amalaki Rasayana*, *Bhringraja Rasayana*, *Agastya Haritaki*, *Narsingh Rasayana* etc.

Acharya Sushruta while describing *Kshudraroga* explains about *Indralupta* where he says mentioned *Kapha* and *Rakta* block the *Romkupa*, while vitiated *Vata* & *Pitta Dosha* leads to hair fall^{xiv}. So the involvement of *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*, and *Rakta* can be seen in this disease. So treatment can be opted by well knowing the *Dosha predominance*.

- *Siravedha*, *Nasya*, *Rasayana prayoga*, *Sira vyadhana/Gadha prachhanna*, *Shiroabhyanga*.
- *Acharya Vagbhata* has strictly contraindicated *jala seka* until the *roma pradurbhava*^{lx}.

Samanya chikitsa: (For Local Application)

Lepanartha:

- *Hastidantamasi lepa*^{xv}.
- Application of *Bhallataka rasa*.
- *Prachchanna* and application of *Gunja*, *Karaveera*, *Chitraka*, *Karanja lepa*.
- *Pippali*, *anjana* and *rasanjana* with *gomutra*.
- Rubbing with *karkasha patra* followed by *avachurnana* by *maricha beeja churna*
- *Indralupta massi*.
- *Manashiladi lepa*.

Tail used:

- *Bhringaraja Tail*.
- *Malatyadi Tail*.
- *Karanja Tail*.
- *Jatyadi Taila*.

IV. Discussion:

Alopecia areata is described as one of the *Kshudra roga* in *samhita*. *Acharya Charaka* mentions that *Tejas* by involving *Vatadi Dosha* when reaches the scalp, it results in *Indralupta*^{xvi}. Three crucial strategies are needed to manage *Indralupta*: restoring *dhātu*, reducing mental stress, and harmonizing *doshas*. *Indralupta* is a medical condition that primarily affects the *Kapala* or *Scalp*. It is characterized by hair loss with restricted hair regrowth. *Shiroabhyanga*, *Rasayana*, *Shamana chikitsa* was the main line of treatment.

V. Conclusion:

When it comes to treating *Indralupta*, Ayurveda can be quite helpful. Relief on the SALT scale can be achieved by using appropriate external medications in addition to internal ones. Since, causative factors are mostly environmental, dietary, habitual and mental, the approach of Ayurveda is basically preventive and the medicines can provide permanent and better cure for *Indralupta*. A

Physician must determine the etiology of *Indralupta* before beginning treatment, and *Nidana parivarjana* should be the first course of action. As a result, additional treatments such as *Abhyanga*, *Lepa*, *Shodhana*, *Nasya*, and *Rasayana* should be recommended.

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