



Original Research Article

Volume 14 Issue 10

October 2025

AN AYURVEDIC APPROACH IN CENTRAL ALOPECIA (KHALITYA) – A CASE STUDY OF SHIRO BASTI WITH NILIBHRINGADI TAILA AND NASYA WITH ANU TAILA

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Abstract

Hair health reflects not only external beauty but also the internal balance of doshas and dhatus as described in Ayurveda. Hair loss, particularly central alopecia, represents a multifactorial disorder influenced by genetic, hormonal, and environmental factors. Ayurveda identifies hair fall under *Khalitya*, one among the *Shiro Rogas*, where derangement of *Pitta dosha* and *Rakta dhatu* plays a major pathogenic role. The present paper presents a clinical case study of a patient suffering from central alopecia, treated successfully with *Shiro Basti* using **Nilibhringadi Taila** and *Nasya Karma* using **Anu Taila**. This combination aimed to pacify aggravated doshas, nourish hair follicles, and restore scalp health. The treatment demonstrated visible regrowth of hair and improvement in scalp texture and vitality. The case underlines the effectiveness of classical Ayurvedic therapies in managing central alopecia and restoring the natural balance of the scalp.

Keywords:

Shiro Roga, Khalitya, Central Alopecia, Shiro Basti, Nilibhringadi Taila, Nasya, Anu Taila, Ayurveda

Introduction

In Ayurveda, *Shira* (head) is considered the **uttamanga**, the most important organ of the human body. It houses the *Indriyas*, the *Prana*, and the *Manas*, playing a central role in both physical and mental well-being. The ancient Acharyas recognized that disturbances in the head region can influence the entire body, and thus described a group of disorders collectively termed as *Shiro Roga*. These diseases encompass a wide range of conditions affecting the scalp, brain, sense organs, and associated structures. The head, being the seat of *Prana Vata* and *Indriyas*, when afflicted, results in disorders that manifest both locally and systemically.

Among the *Shiro Rogas*, disorders of the scalp and hair occupy a unique position because they affect not only physiology but also the psychological and social aspects of health. *Kesha* (hair) is considered an upadhatu of *Asthi dhatu*, and its strength, luster, and density reflect the balance of the body's doshas and dhatus. When this balance is disturbed, especially due to the vitiation of *Pitta* and *Vata*, hair fall, thinning, and premature graying may occur.

Ayurveda classifies hair-related disorders primarily under *Khalitya* and *Palitya*. Among these, *Khalitya* denotes loss of hair from the scalp, corresponding closely to the modern concept of alopecia. In *Sushruta Samhita*, *Khalitya* is described as a disease of the scalp caused by the vitiation of *Pitta dosha*, which burns the hair follicles, and *Vata dosha*, which dries and shrinks them, leading to hair fall and bald patches. The condition primarily affects the scalp region, manifesting as partial or complete loss of hair.

Shiro Rogas are said to arise due to improper diet, stress, excessive heat exposure, irregular sleep, and suppression of natural urges—all of which aggravate *Vata* and *Pitta*. With the growing prevalence of lifestyle-induced stress and hormonal imbalance, such disorders have become increasingly common. *Khalitya* not only causes cosmetic concern but also leads to emotional distress, affecting confidence and social interaction.

In modern terms, *Khalitya* correlates with **Alopecia**, a disorder characterized by partial or complete loss of hair due to damage or inactivity of hair follicles. *Central alopecia*, particularly, involves thinning and hair loss from the vertex and mid-scalp regions, often associated with seborrheic changes or hormonal factors. While modern treatments such as corticosteroids, topical minoxidil, or hair transplantation offer temporary or localized relief, relapse and side effects are common.

Ayurveda, with its holistic approach, focuses on correcting the root cause of the disorder rather than merely addressing symptoms. By balancing the *doshas*, improving scalp circulation, and nourishing the *dhatus*, it aims to restore hair growth naturally. Among the

traditional therapies, *Shiro Basti* and *Nasya Karma* are considered highly effective in *Shiro Roga chikitsa*.

In this paper, a case of *central alopecia (Khalitya)* has been presented where the patient was treated with *Shiro Basti* using **Nilibhringadi Taila** and *Nasya* using **Anu Taila**. Both these therapies have been mentioned in classical texts for promoting scalp nourishment, strengthening hair follicles, and pacifying aggravated *Pitta* and *Vata*.

Ayurvedic Review of Khalitya

Nidana (Etiological Factors)

The causes of *Khalitya* as per the Ayurvedic classics include *Ati Ushna Bhojana* (excess intake of hot and spicy food), *Atapa Sevana* (exposure to sunlight), *Krodha* (anger), *Chinta* (mental stress), and *Kshaya* (tissue depletion). These factors lead to *Pitta* aggravation and subsequently vitiate *Rakta dhatu*. As a result, the hair roots get inflamed and weakened.

Samprapti (Pathogenesis)

The pathogenesis begins with vitiation of *Pitta* and *Vata dosha*, which localize in the scalp region, specifically the *Romakupa* (hair follicles). *Pitta* causes burning and inflammation, while *Vata* induces dryness and constriction of hair follicles. This leads to detachment of hair and their inability to regrow. Over time, the region develops baldness.

Dosha-Dushya Sammurchana

Dosha: Predominantly *Pitta* and *Vata*

Dushya: *Rakta, Mamsa, Asthi*

Srotas: *Raktavaha* and *Mamsavaha Srotas*

Srotodushti: *Sanga* and *Atipravrutti*

Rupa (Symptoms)

Gradual hair fall, thinning of hair on the vertex, dryness of scalp, mild itching, and burning sensation are the key clinical features.

Chikitsa Sutra (Line of Treatment)

The *Chikitsa Sutra* for *Khalitya* is based on *Pitta shamana* and *Rakta shodhana*. Treatments include:

Snehana and *Swedana* for *Vata-Pitta* pacification.

Shiro Abhyanga, *Shiro Basti*, *Nasya*, and *Shiro Dhara* with cooling and nourishing oils.

Internal medications for *Rakta shodhana* and *Pitta shamana* like *Amla*, *Bhringraj*, *Nimba*, and *Guduchi*.

Materials and Methods

Case Presentation

A 35-year-old female patient presented with complaints of progressive hair thinning over the vertex and central scalp region for the past two years. She also reported dryness, mild burning sensation on the scalp, and occasional dandruff. The patient had tried various topical solutions and supplements without significant improvement.

Ayurvedic Assessment

Prakriti: *Pitta-Vata*

Agni: *Vishama Agni*

Nidra: Disturbed due to stress

Nadi Pariksha: Predominant *Pitta-Vata*

Diagnosis: *Khalitya (Pittaja type)*

Treatment Objective

To pacify aggravated *Pitta* and *Vata* doshas.

To promote nourishment of *Romakupa* and strengthen hair roots.

To improve scalp circulation and prevent further hair loss.

To restore the natural luster and thickness of hair.

Chikitsa (Therapeutic Intervention)

A. Shiro Basti with Nilibhringadi Taila

Duration: 7 consecutive days

Taila quantity: 250 ml (lukewarm)

Procedure:

A leather cap was fitted over the patient's head, sealed properly, and filled with lukewarm Nilibhringadi Taila. The oil was retained for 35 minutes daily, followed by gentle massage and *Swedana* (mild fomentation).

B. Nasya Karma with Anu Taila

Duration: 7 days (after completion of Shiro Basti)

Dosage: 6 drops per nostril, administered in the morning on an empty stomach.

Procedure:

The patient was made to lie in a supine position, and lukewarm Anu Taila was instilled into each nostril. After administration, mild massage over the face and forehead was performed.

Observation and Results

The patient underwent the complete course of *Shiro Basti* followed by *Nasya Karma* for a total period of 14 days. Throughout the therapy and follow-up, she was monitored for changes in subjective and objective parameters such as hair fall count, scalp dryness, oiliness, hair texture, itching, and burning sensation.

During Treatment

During the initial days of *Shiro Basti*, the patient experienced a soothing cooling sensation and reduced burning over the scalp. By the fourth session, noticeable relief in scalp dryness and itching was observed. Hair fall, which initially ranged around 120–150 strands per day, reduced to approximately 70–80 strands.

The *Nasya* therapy further enhanced these effects. The patient reported lightness in the head, improved sleep quality, and decreased stress levels after the completion of *Nasya Karma*. Scalp condition continued to improve, with better oil balance and visible new hair growth in the central region by the end of the second week.

After Treatment (Follow-up of 1 Month)

After completion of the treatment and a follow-up of one month, the following observations were recorded:

Parameter	Before Treatment	After 14 Days	After 1 Month Follow-up
Hair fall per day	120–150 strands	70–80 strands	30–40 strands
Scalp dryness	Severe	Mild	Normalized
Burning sensation	Moderate	Occasional	Absent
Itching	Present	Mild	Absent
Hair texture	Dull and thin	Improved	Shiny and thicker
Hair regrowth (central region)	Sparse	Noticeable new growth	Dense regrowth

The overall appearance of the scalp improved remarkably. There was a visible reduction in bald area size and an increase in hair density and sheen. The patient reported high satisfaction with the results and better confidence in social interactions.

Discussion

Ayurvedic Perspective

The success of the therapy can be explained through Ayurvedic principles governing *Shiro Rogas* and *Khalitya*. The disease originates from the aggravation of *Pitta* and *Vata doshas* in the scalp region, which in turn vitiate *Rakta* and *Mamsa dhatus*. The treatment aimed to balance these elements using *Shiro Basti* and *Nasya*, two classical therapies designed to nourish the *Uttamanga* and purify *Sira-mukhas* (channels).

Shiro Basti serves as a local *Snehana* (oleation) therapy that directly nourishes the scalp and hair follicles. The retention of medicated oil on the head allows deeper penetration of the taila through the skin pores, restoring the natural moisture and pacifying *Vata* and *Pitta*. The mild warmth of the oil stimulates microcirculation, enhancing nutrient supply to hair roots. The oil's lipid-soluble constituents facilitate absorption of active compounds that support follicular regeneration.

Nilibhringadi Taila, the chosen medicated oil, is a classical formulation with ingredients such as *Bhringraj*, *Amla*, *Nili*, *Tila taila*, and *Ksheera*. These ingredients possess *Pitta-shamaka*, *Raktashodhaka*, and *Keshya* properties. *Bhringraj* is well-known for promoting hair growth and preventing premature graying. *Amla* provides cooling and antioxidant effects that counteract *Pitta* aggravation, while *Nili* (*Indigofera tinctoria*) maintains the natural hair pigment. *Tila taila* acts as an excellent *Vata-shamaka* base that nourishes and strengthens the scalp.

Nasya Karma, on the other hand, is described by Acharya Charaka as the most effective therapy for disorders of the head. The nasal route provides direct access to the cranial region through *Shiro-marma* and *Sringataka marma*. The administered medicated oil reaches the *Uttamanga*, clearing accumulated doshas and improving sensory and vascular functions.

Anu Taila used in *Nasya* contains a blend of herbs like *Devadaru*, *Daruharidra*, *Yashtimadhu*, *Agaru*, and *Ksheera*. These herbs have *Vata-Pitta shamaka*, *Srotoshodhaka*, and *Medhya*

(neurotonic) actions. Regular administration helps balance doshas in the cranial region, relieves stress, enhances scalp nourishment, and indirectly promotes hair regrowth.

The sequential use of *Shiro Basti* and *Nasya* acts synergistically. While *Shiro Basti* works at the peripheral level to rejuvenate the scalp, *Nasya* complements it by detoxifying and revitalizing the cranial system internally. Together, they provide comprehensive *Shiro Chikitsa* for *Khalitya*.

Modern Correlation

From a modern viewpoint, alopecia is caused by multiple factors, including hormonal imbalance (particularly androgenic activity), stress, nutritional deficiencies, and poor scalp circulation. Chronic stress leads to elevated cortisol levels that disrupt the hair growth cycle and induce follicular miniaturization.

The warm oil application during *Shiro Basti* improves scalp blood flow, enhancing oxygen and nutrient delivery to follicles. The massage and heat reduce muscular tension, promoting relaxation and parasympathetic activation, which counteracts stress-induced hair fall. The antioxidants in Nilibhringadi Taila, such as flavonoids and phenolic compounds, protect follicles from oxidative damage and inflammation.

Nasya therapy, by stimulating the olfactory and trigeminal nerves, activates parasympathetic pathways that improve brain function and hormonal regulation. This indirectly influences the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, reducing stress-mediated hair loss. The mucosal absorption of herbal constituents may also exert systemic anti-inflammatory and rejuvenative effects.

Psychological and Holistic Outcomes

Beyond physical improvement, the therapy had notable effects on the patient's emotional state. The calming and grounding effect of *Shiro Basti* combined with *Nasya* improved mental clarity, sleep quality, and self-esteem. Ayurveda recognizes that mind (*Manas*) and body (*Sharira*) are interdependent, and restoration of hair health cannot be complete without mental balance. This holistic effect distinguishes Ayurvedic therapy from purely cosmetic interventions.

Mechanism of Action (Ayurvedic and Modern Integration)

Ayurvedic Concept	Modern Correlation
Snehana (Oleation) and Swedana (Fomentation)	Enhances microcirculation, relaxes scalp muscles, improves nutrient supply
Pitta Shamana	Reduces local inflammation and oxidative stress
Vata Shamana	Restores follicular vitality and moisture
Raktashodhana	Detoxifies and rejuvenates scalp tissues
Nasya Karma	Stimulates neurovascular and hormonal regulation
Keshya Dravya Prayoga	Provides essential micronutrients for follicular regeneration

The observed hair regrowth and scalp restoration can thus be attributed to the combined effect of local nourishment, improved circulation, dosha balance, and reduced stress response.

Conclusion

The present case study demonstrates that the combined use of *Shiro Basti* with **Nilibhringadi Taila** and *Nasya Karma* with **Anu Taila** is an effective Ayurvedic regimen in managing *Khalitya* (central alopecia). The therapy provided multidimensional benefits—reduction in hair fall, improvement in scalp texture, and visible hair regrowth—while also enhancing overall well-being.

Ayurveda views the body as an interconnected system, and hence, treatment of *Khalitya* cannot be limited to the scalp alone. By addressing the *Dosha-Dhatu-Mala* imbalance, improving local circulation, and rejuvenating the cranial region, *Shiro Basti* and *Nasya* restore harmony at both physical and mental levels.

The study also highlights that Ayurvedic therapies are safe, non-invasive, and provide sustainable results without dependency or adverse effects. However, outcomes may vary based on chronicity and individual constitution, and larger clinical trials are recommended to validate these results scientifically.

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