



# PALITYA ROGA: AN AYURVEDIC REVIEW OF PREMATURE GREYING OF HAIR

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## Abstract

*Palitya* is a condition described in Ayurvedic classics characterized by premature whitening of hair. Hair is considered an important marker of health, youthfulness, and beauty. Although greying of hair is a physiological phenomenon associated with ageing, the occurrence of grey hair at a young age is considered pathological. Ayurveda attributes *Palitya* mainly to aggravated *Pitta Dosha*, often associated with *Vata*, affecting the hair follicles and disturbing normal pigmentation. Classical texts describe various dietary, lifestyle, psychological, and hereditary factors responsible for the development of *Palitya*. Modern biomedical science links premature greying with oxidative stress, melanocyte dysfunction, nutritional deficiencies, environmental factors, and genetic predisposition. The increasing prevalence of premature greying among younger populations highlights the need for preventive and therapeutic approaches. Ayurvedic management emphasizes *Nidana Parivarjana*, *Shodhana*, *Shamana*, *Rasayana* therapy, and lifestyle modifications. This review aims to critically analyze the Ayurvedic concept of *Palitya*, correlate it with contemporary scientific understanding, and explore the scope of integrative management.

**Keywords:** *Palitya*, Premature Greying, Ayurveda, Hair Disorders, *Pitta Dosha*, *Rasayana*.

## Introduction

Hair plays a vital role in physical appearance and social identity. Healthy hair with natural pigmentation and shine has long been viewed as a marker of vitality and physical balance. In recent years, premature greying has become increasingly common due to changing dietary habits, stress, pollution, and lifestyle disturbances.

In Ayurveda, hair (*Kesha*) is closely associated with tissue nourishment and metabolic balance. The classical texts describe *Palitya* as a disorder in which hair loses its natural colour before the expected age. The condition has been discussed by *Acharyas* such as *Charaka*, *Sushruta*, and *Vagbhata*.

From a biomedical perspective, hair colour is determined by melanin produced by melanocytes present in the hair follicle. Loss or dysfunction of these melanocytes results in greying. Modern research indicates that oxidative stress, nutritional deficiencies, smoking, endocrine disorders, and genetic influences play significant roles. Because *Palitya* is not merely a cosmetic concern but also affects psychological well-being, a comprehensive understanding is necessary. Ayurveda offers a holistic approach that addresses causative factors, systemic imbalance, and preventive care.

## Ayurvedic Concept of *Kesha*

According to Ayurveda, *Kesha* is considered a *Mala* of *Asthi Dhatu*. Proper nourishment of *Dhatu*s supports healthy hair growth and pigmentation. Balanced *Doshas*, especially *Pitta*, are essential for maintaining hair colour<sup>1</sup>.

*Bhrajaka Pitta* is believed to influence pigmentation. Disturbance of *Pitta* results in altered colouration of hair. *Vata* contributes by accelerating degenerative changes, while *Kapha* supports nourishment and stability.

The health of hair reflects the status of:

- *Rasa Dhatu*
- *Rakta Dhatu*
- *Asthi Dhatu*
- *Agni*
- *Dosha* equilibrium

Thus, *Palitya* should be understood as a manifestation of systemic imbalance rather than an isolated hair disorder.

## *Nidana*<sup>2</sup> (Etiological Factors)

### *Aharaja Nidana*

- Excessive consumption of spicy foods
- Sour foods
- Salty foods
- Fermented foods
- Alcoholic beverages
- Irregular meal timings

### *Viharaja Nidana*

- Night awakening
- Excessive physical exertion
- Exposure to sunlight
- Lack of proper rest

## Manasika Nidana

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Grief
- Emotional instability

## Genetic Predisposition

The concept of *Beeja Dushti* may explain hereditary tendencies observed in premature greying.

## Environmental Factors

Modern environmental pollutants may aggravate oxidative stress and contribute to *Palitya*.

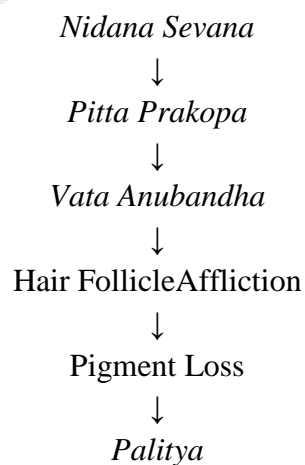
## Samprapti<sup>3</sup> (Pathogenesis)

The pathogenesis begins with continuous exposure to causative factors. These factors aggravate *Pitta Dosh*. *Vata* facilitates the movement of aggravated *Pitta* toward the scalp and hair follicles.

## Samprapti Ghataka

- *Dosha: Pitta-Vata*
- *Dushya: Rasa, Rakta, Asthi*
- *Srotas: Rasavaha, Raktavaha*
- *Agni: Vishama/Tikshna*
- *Udbhava Sthana: Amashaya*
- *Vyakta Sthana: Kेशha*

### Flowchart



## Classification of Palitya<sup>10</sup>

### *Vataja Palitya*

- Dry and rough hair
- Rapid greying

### *Pittaja Palitya*

- Yellowish-white hair
- Associated heat symptoms

### *Kaphaja Palitya*

- Thick and oily hair
- Slow progression

### *Tridoshaja Palitya*

- Mixed clinical features
- More difficult to manage

## Modern Perspective of Premature Greying<sup>5</sup>

Hair pigmentation depends on melanocytes located in hair follicles. These cells synthesize melanin, which determines hair colour.

### **Mechanisms**

#### **Oxidative Stress<sup>6</sup>**

Reactive oxygen species damage melanocytes and reduce pigment production.

#### **Genetic Factors<sup>9</sup>**

Family history strongly influences age of onset.

#### **Nutritional Deficiencies**

- Vitamin B12 deficiency
- Iron deficiency
- Copper deficiency
- Zinc deficiency

#### **Endocrine Disorders**

- Thyroid disease
- Autoimmune disorders

## Smoking<sup>7</sup>

Smoking significantly increases the risk of premature greying.

## Environmental Exposure<sup>8</sup>

Pollution and UV radiation contribute to oxidative damage.

## Correlation Between Ayurveda and Modern Science

### Ayurvedic Concept Modern Correlation

<i>Pitta Prakopa</i>	Oxidative stress
<i>Rakta Dushti</i>	Cellular damage
<i>Beeja Dushti</i>	Genetic factors
<i>Rasakshaya</i>	Nutritional deficiency
<i>Manasika Nidana</i>	Psychological stress

Both systems recognize the importance of diet, stress, heredity, and systemic health.

### Management of *Palitya*<sup>11</sup>

#### *Nidana Parivarjana*

Avoid:

- Spicy food
- Smoking
- Alcohol
- Sleep deprivation

#### *Shodhana*

#### *Virechana*

Primary therapy for Pitta elimination.

#### *Nasya*

Beneficial for diseases above the clavicle.

#### *Shamana*

Commonly used drugs:

- *Bhringaraja*
- *Amalaki*
- *Guduchi*
- *Brahmi*
- *Yashtimadhu*

## Rasayana

- *Amalaki Rasayana*
- *Chyawanprasha*
- *Brahma Rasayana*

## External Therapies

- *Shiro Abhyanga*
- *Shirodhara*
- *Keshya Taila* application

## Prevention<sup>12</sup>

- Balanced diet
- Regular sleep
- Stress reduction
- *Yoga* and meditation
- Avoid smoking
- Routine scalp care
- Seasonal purification therapies

## Conclusion

*Palitya* is a multifactorial disorder involving dietary, lifestyle, psychological, hereditary, and environmental influences. Ayurveda attributes the condition primarily to aggravated *Pitta Dosha* affecting hair follicles. Modern research supports the role of oxidative stress, melanocyte dysfunction, and nutritional deficiencies. The holistic Ayurvedic approach encompassing prevention, purification, rejuvenation, and lifestyle modification may offer effective strategies for managing premature greying. Further scientific studies are required to validate classical therapies and establish evidence-based integrative protocols.

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