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Conceptual Study on *Shuklagata Roga* involving *Sira* with special reference to Episcleritis and Scleritis

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is a science of life which deals with healthy as well as diseased stage of body. As per disease description, ophthalmic portion is widely discussed by Aacharya Sushrut under the special branch known as *Shalakya Tantra*. Aacharya Shusrut has described 76 types *Netra Rogas*, among them there are 11 *Shuklagata Rogas*. Aacharya Vagbhatt has described total 13 diseases in *Shukla Mandala* in which there are four diseases affecting *Sira* viz. *Sirajala*, *Sirapidika*, *Sirotpata* and *Siraharsha*. *Shukla Mandala* is the white part of eye which resembles with sclera along with episclera, tenon's capsule and bulbar conjunctiva. Episcleritis and scleritis are the inflammatory diseases affecting this white portion (*Shukla Mandala*). In the present study, a review is presented on etiopathogenesis of *Sira* related *Shuklagata roga* to enlighten their correlation on the basis of location, pathogenesis and clinical features with episcleritis and scleritis and to find an effective management option for episcleritis and scleritis through Ayurveda.

KEYWORDS

Sirajala, Sirotpata, Siraharsha, Episcleritis, Scleritis



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INTRODUCTION

Aacharya Sushrut has described 11 types of Shuklagata Roga among the 76 Netra Rogas. Among the 11 Shuklagata Roga, two diseases involve Sira i.e. Sirajala and Sirapidika¹. Aacharya Vagbhatt described total 13 diseases in Shukla Mandala in which there are 4 diseases related to Sira viz. Sirajala, Sirapitika, Sirotpata and Siraharsha². Aacharya Sushrut has enumerated Sirotpata and Siroharsha among Sarvagata Netra $Rogas^3$. According modern to ophthalmology, the sign and symptoms of these four diseases can be correlated with the inflammatory conditions of sclera i.e. episcleritis (superficial) and scleritis (deep). Both the diseases might equally well be considered as mild and severe forms of the same disease, but the distinction is convenient since they differ in their evolution⁴.

• Sirapidika

It is a white colored nodular swelling covered by *Sira* (blood vessels) in *Shukla Mandala* lying close to the *Asita mandala* (i.e. cornea)⁵. According to *Aacharya Vagbhatt*, *sirapitika* is *Sarshapopama* (white mustard seed shaped) *pitika* covered by blood vessels located near the *Krishna mandala* along with symptoms of *Daha* (burning sensation) and *Gharsha* (Foreign

body sensation) in the eyes⁶. It is *Sannipataja* and *Chedana Sadhya Vyadhi*.

• Sirajala

It is defined as a network of *Kathina* (hard), *Mahan* (large), *Srakta* (filled with excess blood or congested) *Sira* (blood vessels) in *Shukla mandala*⁷. Similarly *Aacharya Vagbhatt* has described *Sirajala* as *brihat* (large), *rakta* (red colored/ congested), *Ghana* (thick), *unnatam* (elevated) network of blood vessels⁸. It is *Raktaja* and *Chedana Sadhya* disease.

• Sirotpata

It is a condition which may be painful or painless and in it the Akshiraji (eye blood vessels) becomes coppery red in color and after sometime turns to normalcy. This repeatedly and diffusely occurs (samantada)⁹. According to Aacharya Vagbhatt, due to vitiation of Rakta, Shukla Mandala is full of Raktaraji (congested blood vessels) along with the symptoms of Ushayate (burning sensation), svedanam (pain), Ashopha (mild or no swelling), ashrupdeham (tearing or watering of eyes)¹⁰. It is *Raktaja* and *Vedhana Sadhya* Vyadhi.

• Siraharsha

if *Sirotpata* is neglected it leads to *Siraharsha* in which there will be *tamra* (copper), *accham* (clear). *Asram* (red), *pragadham* (thick) discharge from the eyes



and lastly loss of vision¹¹. Similarly *Aacharya Vagbhatt* has explained that if *Sirotpata* is left untreated, the blood vessels become more prominent and congested and leads to *Siraharsha* and the eyes becomes unable to see¹². It is *Raktaja* and *Vedhana Sadhya Vyadhi*.

• Episcleritis

It refers to benign recurrent inflammation of the episclera, involving the overlying Tenon's capsule but not the underlying sclera¹³. It can be simple in which all or part of the episclera is diffusely inflamed, or nodular, in which inflammation is confined to a localized area with the presence of a well-defined red nodule. **Symptoms** includes redness, discomfort in eyes, grittiness and photophobia may occur. Visual acuity is almost always normal. It is usually transient and self-limiting condition lasting several days or some weeks but nodular episcleritis tends to be more symptomatic and takes longer time to resolve. In mild cases diseases can be treated with cold compresses and artificial tears. If moderate to severe, a mild topical steroid relieves the discomfort and inflammation. In cases where topical treatment is unsuccessful oral NSAIDS may help¹⁴.

• Scleritis

It is a much less common condition than episcleritis and covers a spectrum ranging in severity from trivial self-limiting episodes to a necrotizing disease that may involve adjacent tissues and threaten vision¹⁵. It is characterized by oedema and cellular infiltration of the entire thickness of the sclera. It is bilateral condition and occurs most frequently in women. Clinically it is classified in two typesanterior and posterior scleritis. Anterior scleritis is further divided into nondiffuse. necrotizing non-necrotizing nodular, necrotizing with inflammation and necrotizing without inflammation. In nonnecrotizing nodular scleritis, one or more dark red or bluish nodule appears with less circumscribed and later becomes purple and semitransparent. In the diffuse type, hard whitish nodules with size of pin's head may develop in the inflamed zone and they disappear without disintegrating. There is no ulceration but the sclera is thinned. Necrotizing scleritis is associated with scleral necrosis, severe thinning and melting in severe cases. Necrotizing scleritis with inflammation presents with a red, painful eye and may be associated with anterior uveitis and is usually a part of systemic autoimmune disease. Necrotizing scleritis without inflammation is called scleromalacia perforans and occurs in seropositive patients suffering from



rheumatoid arthritis. There is painless scleral thinning with melting in severe In posterior scleritis there is cases. thickening of posterior sclera which may start primarily posteriorly or an extension of anterior scleritis. The clinical is varied presentation and usually misdiagnosed. Patient presents decreased vision with or without pain, proptosis or restricted ocular movements. There may be present disc edema, macular edema; choroidal folds, choroidal detachment, uveal effusion syndrome and detachment¹⁶. retinal exudative scleritis include Complications of sclerosing keratitis. keratolysis, complicated secondary cataract, glaucoma¹⁷, uveitis, hypotony, perforation¹⁸etc. Treatment modalities for scleritis mainly include oral NSAIDS, corticosteroids and immunosuppressive agents.

DISCUSSION

On the basis of site of disease

From modern anatomical aspect, white portion of eye includes sclera along with episclera, tenon's capsule and overlying bulbar conjunctiva. Aacharya Sushrut has stated that the two diseases *Sirajala* and *Sirapidika* are located in *Shukla Mandala* (white portion of eye) and rest of two

diseases Sirotpata and Siraharsha involve not only Shukla Mandala (sclera) but also other mandalas (coats) of eye i.e. choroid and retina. That's why Sirotpata and Siraharsha are explained in Sarvagata Rogas. This shows that the way of anatomical description of eye followed by Aacharya Sushrut is anterior to posterior. Modern description of scleritis also supports the above statement by involving ocular structures during complications such as glaucoma, uveitis, cataract etc. Moreover signs of posterior scleritis like macular edema, choroidal folds, choroidal and retinal detachment also indicate toward involvement of deeper coats.

On the basis of Doshika Dominance

During description of *Indriya Utpati* (development of senses), Aacharya Vagbhatta has explained that *Indriyas* are the essence of Kapha- Raktavaha srotas and *Mahabhoota*. In Netra, Shukla Mandala is formed by the essence of Sleshma (Kapha) and it comes under Pitrija bhava¹⁹. It is having predominance of Jala *Mahabhoota*²⁰. So Kapha predominant Dosha in Shukla Mandala having *Dharana*, *Bandhana* (holding body entities together) and *Sthirtva* (stability by maintaining molecular union) properties²¹. From modern anatomical aspect, sclera is composed of the collagen fibres, elastin,



proteoglycans and glycoproteins²² that provide a structural support to the whole eye. Hence the composition of sclera indicates its similarity toward Kapha dominancy. The vascular nature of episclera and conjunctiva indicates towards involvement of Agni Mahabhoota. Therefore, Pitta is considered Anubandha Dosha.

On the basis of Pathogenesis/Samprapti

Most of the etiological factors in episcleritis are localized with very less systemic association. In episcleritis, there occurs localized lymphocytic infiltration of episcleral tissue associated with oedema and congestion of overlying Tenon's capsule and conjunctiva²³. Similarly in *Sirajala* and *Sirapidika*, *Nidanas* like *Usanabhitaptasya*, *Raja-Dhoom nishevan* are the local irritating factors which cause vitiation of *Sthanika Rakta Dhatu* and manifest the diseases.

Scleritis is found in association with multiple conditions such as- autoimmune collagen disorders, metabolic disorders, infections, granulomatous diseases, after ocular surgery, Bechet's disease, rosacea, chemical burns etc²⁴. Histopathology may show granulomatous or non-granulomatous inflammation, vasculitis and scleral necrosis²⁵. This etio-pathogenesis scleritis reflects the affection of whole body (Sarvadaihika Prabhava). In Sirotapata

and Siraharsha, Samanya Nidana of Netra roga like Shukta-Arnala-Amla-Kulatha-*Masha nishevan, Aatapa sevana* etc. causes provocation of Pitta Dosha which leads to Rakta Dushti. Achaksushya and Agnidushtikara Nidana Sevana causes Mandagni. It leads to Aama formation which further causes vitiation of Doshas and Dushita Chala Dhatu (i.e. Rasa and Rakta) formation. These vitiated Doshas and Chala Dhatus migrate into the whole body and also ascends towards the Urdhavajatrubhaga through Siras. Here Khaivagunyya in Shukla Mandala and Abhyantra mandala of Netra already present and thus Sthanasanshraya occurs and Dosha Dushya Sammurchana takes place which results in manifestation of Lakshana of Sirotapata and Siraharsha. Thus the Samprapti shows that Sirotapata Siraharsha and have Sarvadaihika affection and it justifies the Sarvadaihika Siddhanta mentioned Chikitsa Samprapti Vighatana of Sirotapata and Siraharsha.

On the basis of clinical features/ Lakshana

Sirapidika is characterized by Sarshapopama nodular swelling covered by blood vessels in Shukla Mandala located near to the cornea which simulates with nodular episcleritis as described above. Sirajala is defined as a network of hard,



large and congested blood vessels in white portion of eye (Shukla Mandala) which resembles with diffuse episcleritis in modern parlance. In Sirotpata congested blood vessels appear in the eyes with or without pain for a moment and then clear spontaneously. The word Utpata means destroying²⁶ that can be considered as necrosis of the tissue that leads to thinning of scleral tissue. Therefore Sirotpata can be correlated with non-necrotizing as well as necrotizing scleritis. If this condition is neglected, it leads to worsening of clinical features and lasts as loss of vision because of involvement of posterior segment of eye such as choroid, retina etc. Hence Siraharsha can be considered as posterior scleritis. In this way, these four diseases -Sirapidika, Sirajala, Siraharsha Sirotpata can be considered as the advanced stage of one another respectively. Similarly in modern science it is described scleritis resembles that episcleritis pathologically, but extends more deeply, the essential difference being a dense lymphocytic infiltration deep within the scleral tissue²⁷.

On the basis of treatment/ Chikitsa

In the treatment of *Sirajala* and *Sirapidika*, all Aacharyas have mentioned that the veins which are hard and do not respond to drugs of scraping action, the treatment is same as of *Arma* i.e. *Chedana chikitsa*²⁸. Treatment

of *Sirotpata* and *Siraharsha* is similar to that of *Raktaja Abhisyanda*. It involves *Virechana*, *Raktamokshana*, *Shirovirechana* as internal purification measures and *Parisheka*, *Pradheha*, *Anjana*, *Aschyotana*, *Tarpana*, *Putpaka* etc. as local therapeutic measures²⁹.

As described by Aacharyas, all the above four diseases have Rakta Dushti and affects Sira which is the passage for flow of Rakta. In Sirapidika and Sirajala, Kapha is the Sthanika Dosha i.e. Ashraya and Rakta is in Prakopa awastha i. e. Ashrayi. According to Ashraya-ashrayi Chikitsa principle, the treatment of *Sirapidika* and *Sirajala* should be Kapha-Rakta shamaka. During treatment of Sirapidika and Sirajala, Aacharya Sushrut has concentrated mainly on the site of the disease manifestation. Moreover both the diseases have also features of Netra Aamavastha like- Raga, Shopha, Gharsha, Shoola, Ashru³⁰ etc., therefore along with Sthanika chikitsa Aama pachana treatment should also be added. By following the principle of *Khale* Kapota Nyaya, Aacharya has chosen the drugs having Lekhana properties for local procedures which keeps the Sthanika Kapha Dosha in Samyawastha and pacifies the *Prakoopita Rakta Dosha*. If these diseases still persist then Chedhana Karma is indicated.



and Siraharsha Sirotpata are more advanced diseases in comparison to Sirapidika and Sirajala because involvement of other deeper ocular structures (Mandala) along with scleral tissue and having systemic association. Therefore, during their treatment Sarvadaihika Chikitsa has important role along with Sthanika chikitsa by following Kedari Kulya Nyaya. In Sirotpata and Siraharsha, there is active involvement of vitiated Rakta which is having similarity with Pitta. During description of Netra Panchbhautika composition Aacharya Sushrut has stated that Rakta is having predominance of Agni Mahabhoota (Agnito Raktam)³¹ and Agni is directly related with the Pitta. Therefore, it can be stated that in Sirotpata and Siraharsha, Ashraya is Pitta and Ashrayi is Rakta. Thus line of treatment for Sirotpata and Siraharsha should be Pitta-Rakta Shamaka. Aacharya Charak has mentioned in Vidhishonitiya chapter that treatment of *Raktaja* disorders, Raktapittahara treatment should be given which includes Virechana, Langhana, and Raktmokshana³².

Initially Langhana and Aampachana treatment should be given for the pacification of Sthanika vitiated Kapha Dosha and Aama Dosha. Snehpana should be given with Tikta Aushadhi siddha Ghrita in Poorvakarma of Virechana. Virechana

Yoga can be prepared from Kwatha of Abhaya, (decoction) Pippali Draksha. According to Ayurveda principle, Dushita Pitta is excreted out of body by Virechana. Rakta has the same qualities as of *Pitta* therefore the vitiated *Gunas* of *Pitta* reduced by Virechana also reduces the vitiating Gunas of Rakta which were causing the disease. Orally the drugs like Manjistha, Kutki, Aarogyavardhini Vati, Shadanga Guggulu and Kwatha prepared from Mridwika, Madhuka, Devdaru, Chandan, Triphala, Ikshu, Lodhra and Daruharidra with honey can be used. In cases of severe inflammation, Nimba bhavita Godanti Bhasma should be used. For local application, Tikta Ghrita Anjana or *Anjana* with unequal quantity of *Madhu* and Ghrita can be used. All the drugs described above have Rakta shodhaka and Rakta-Pitta Shamaka properties thereby helps in reducing the sign and symptoms of episcleritis and scleritis.

Here *Krimichikitsa* should also be adopted to treat the recurrence of the disease because of involvement of *Raktaja Krimi*. For *Raktaja Krimi Chikitsa*, *Panchakarma* can be performed with in a single day followed by *Rakta Shodhaka* medicines³³.



CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the above review that white portion of eye (sclera along with episclera, tenon's capsule and bulbar conjunctiva) can be compared with Shukla Mandala and its inflammatory diseases i.e. episcleritis and scleritis can be correlated with Sirapidika, Sirajala, Siraharsha and Sirotpata on the basis of similarity in their clinical features. These four diseases can be considered as advanced stage of one another. Chikitsa Siddhanta described for Sirapidika, Sirajala and Siraharsha, Sirotpata described above can prove very beneficial and effective therapeutic measures for episcleritis and scleritis to prevent their recurrence, drug side effects and complications.



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