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A Review on *Shwitra* (Vitiligo) and its Treatment

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ABSTRACT

The disease *Shwitra* is one which is characterized by colour variation within the skin and possesses a significant cosmetic problem within the affected area and will induce the complex in the sufferers. The affected people feel isolated from the society and acquire depression.

Based on the symptoms it's considered as variability of *Kushta*. Even the causative factors of the *Kushta* are found to be as same as for that of *Shwitra*. In Ayurvedic classics we discover various modalities of the treatment both externally and internally to treat this disorder and various works/ researches are also conducted in this regard.

Based on the symptoms *Shwitra* is correlated with Vitiligo as told in modern science. It's an idiopathic hypopigmentary condition. The precise reason behind hypo pigmentation of the skin is unknown, but it's a condition which occurs because of the malformation and distribution of melanocytes and synthesis of melanin. The management of this condition isn't completely satisfactory in spite of advances in modern medicine.

KEYWORDS

Shwitra, Vitiligo, Kushta



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INTRODUCTION

The skin could be a largest organ of the body which absorbs Ultraviolet radiations, prevents dehydration, and maintains normal temperature of the body and it communicates with the external environment.

Skin being the indicator good health of body, any discoloration or changes within the skin puts on the person for social stigma and causes mental agony.

In the present days because of the increased and injudicious use of plastic, rubber, paints, perfumes, cosmetic and artificial materials of low quality and also the improper lifestyle have increased the incidence of skin diseases to a greater extent.

The skin is one among the simplest indicators of general health. Even an untrained eye can detect any change within the skin. The color and texture of the skin plays an awfully important role to uphold ones personality.

The disease *Shwitra* is one which is characterized by colour variation within the skin and possesses a serious cosmetic problem within the affected area and will induce the complexity to the sufferers. This disorder may be obviously noted in dark skinned people. The affected people

feel isolated from the society and obtain depression. Even our societies also are having a contemptuous opinion regarding this condition and take a look at to isolate the affected people and hence this condition includes a social stigma.

Though there are not any direct references available regarding the disease *Shwitra*, considering the signs and symptoms it is included in concert of the variability of *Kushta*. The same causative factors are considered to be the main causative factors for *Shwitra* also.

In Ayurvedic classics we discover various modalities of the treatment both externally and internally to treat this disorder and various works/ researches are also distributed in this regard.

Based on the symptoms *Shwitra* may be correlated with Vitiligo as told in modern science. It's an idiopathic hypopigmentory condition which affects about 1% of world's population. The precise reason for hypo pigmentation of the skin is unknown, but it's a condition which occurs because of the malformation and distribution of melanocytes and synthesis of melanin.

HISTORICAL REVIEW

The study of the past history gives us the image of origin of diseases. Many historical



facts are available regarding the disease *Shwitra* since Vedic period. For the sake of convenience it may be noted as below.

Vedic Period (2500BC-1000BC)

The literature of the many epochs is valuable sources of knowledge in understanding the disease *Shwitra*. Rigveda, Samveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda are four popular Vedas. Many references are available in Rigveda and atharvaveda about *Shwitra*.

In Rigveda, Kilasa is that the name which has been used to describe the spotted deer, which has striking resemblance with the disease *Shwitra* where the hypopigmentary patches are diffused over the body without ulcers¹.

In Atharvaveda the term *Shwitra* isn't directly described. But the terms like Kilasa, Palita are employed in place of *Shwitra*².

In Koushika Sutra of Atharvaveda Rama, Krishna, Asikri are the medicinal herbs which are described because of the remedial property of those herbs for the Kilasa, Darila.

A commentator says Bhringaraja, Indravaruni and Neeli are the drugs described remedial property of the drugs Rama, Krishna and Asikri respectively. The fourth drug appreciated in maintenance of the colour is Rajani or Turmeric³.

In Yajurveda there's a reference mentioning that Chandra (moon) is affected with the disease *Shwitra*.

“*Switrichaivagalatkustinetrarogi cha vamanekunakhashya vadantavascha*”

Persons laid low with *Shwitra* and their progeny are disqualified for wedlock as per the direction of Manu.

Samhita Period (1000BC-100AD)

Samhita period is taken into account as golden era of Ayurveda as because the maximum contribution is given during this period. *Acharya* Charaka explains about *Shwitra* roga in context of Kustachikitsa and mentions about the nidana (causative factor)⁴.

Acharya Sushruta also mentioned about *Shwitrarog* in *Kushtarogadhyaya* and dealt its types as Vataja, Pittaja and Kaphaja *Shwitra*⁵.

Acharya Bhela has also described *Shwitra* in brief.

Kashyapa Samhitahas also dealt about *Shwitra* in *Kushtha* chapter itself and defined its cardinal symptom as twacha Shwetata.

Sangraha Period (800AD-1700AD)

Important works of this era are Ashtanga Sangraha, Astanga Hridaya, Madhava Nidana, BhavaPrakash, Sharangadhara Samhita and Yoga Ratnakar. These books compiled and reproduced the scattered information of Samhitas in an order.



In Astanga Sangraha there's special mentioning of causative factor savisha jaloukavacharana⁶.

Acharya Sharangadhara has given numerical data and prescriptions for *Shwitra*⁷.

Adhunika Kala (1700AD)

This started after the doorway of the foreigners. Here especially during recent decades there has been tremendous and marvelous development within the field of medication.

Becker and Obermayor have recorded Vitiligo cases (1937). Even Bubkley and Lobitz (1953). Afterwards A. B. Lener (1959), Fitz Patric (1974), Parish J.A (1976), N. Behl (1980) and Roburghi (1980) have drained depth studies on vitiligo.

NIRUKTI/PARIBHASHA

Nirukti:

'*Shwitra*' is that root verb, to form the word *Shwitra*. It is having a suffix of 'RIK'.

SWITH + RIK + KA → *SHWITRA*

Shwitra which grossly mean Sweta Varna i.e. white colour.

Paribhasa:

Shabda Kalpadruma defines as "Swetateiti *Shwitram*"

Which reads as *Shwitra* is disease where whitish discoloration of the skin may be a salient symptom.

Kasyapasamhita also gives an identical definition.

"Shwetabhavamicchanti *Shwitram*"

Shwitra may be a disease where whitish colouration of the skin.

Paryaya:

1. Shwethakusta
2. Kusta
3. Kilasa
4. Charuna
5. Daruna
6. Varuna

Shwetha kusta:

"Shwetataaanenaitishwethakustam"

According to Amarakosha, it's considered united of the synonyms of *Shwitra*. Shwetha means white and kusta means skin condition.

It imparts the meaning the disease characterized by the whitish colouration of the skin is thought as Shweth kusta.

(1) Kusta¹⁷:

(2) Kilasa¹⁸:

Bheda:

1. According to Ashraya: (cha. Chi. 7th)⁸

(A) Raktasrita *Shwitra*

(B) Mamsasrita *Shwitra*

(C) Medoasrita *Shwitra*

2. According to Dosha; (As.

San.Ni.14th)⁹

(A) Vataja *Shwitra*

(B) Pittaja *Shwitra*



(C) Kaphaja *Shwitra*

3. According to Nidana: (M.N. 49/39 commentary)¹⁰ A-(a) Doshaja *Shwitra*

(1) Atmaja

(2) Paraja

(b) Vranaja *Shwitra*

B- According to Sushruta: (Su.Ni.5/27)¹¹

(a) Sahaja

(b) Jatothara

4. According to Prognosis:

(a) Sadhya *Shwitra*

(b) Asadhya *Shwitra*

5. According to Colour:

(a) Raktavarna *Shwitra*

(b) Tamravarna *Shwitra*

(c) Swetavarna *Shwitra*

6. According to Vagbhata: (As. San. Chi. 22/11indu)¹²

(a) Garbhaja *Shwitra*

Chikitsa Vivechana

The term chikitsa springs from the foundation word 'kit rogapanayane' i.e., measures calculated for the removal of things of the disease.

As per Vaidyaka Shabda Sindhu, it's been defined as -that which eradicates the disease¹³.

Acharya Charaka says that the mere removal of the causative factors of the disease might not always end in the entire removal of the disease; per se the effect of the disease should still be

operative. Hence in his view, chikitsa aims not only at the unconventional removal of the causative factors of the disease but also at the restoration of the dosha equilibrium¹⁴. Prime importance of chikitsa lies in breaking apart of the samprapti.

The prognosis of *Shwitra* depends upon the first diagnosis and prompt treatment. We will cite a quotation as told by *Acharya* Vagbhata, the meaning of which runs as “*Shwitra* is taken into account as more bibhatsa than that of *Kushtha*”.

Chakrapani¹⁵ commenting on *Shwitra* chikitsa mentions that the treatment of *Kushtha* can be taken even for the *Shwitra*, however it should be adopted intensively.

Within the treatment of *Khustha*, shodhana procedures are advised before all other forms of treatment. Counting on the predominance of dosha, snehapana is indicated in vata pradana *Kushtha*, vamana in shleshma pradhana and virechana and raktamokshana in pitta pradhana *Kushtha*.

In the kalpasthana of Charaka Samhita, there are description of dravyas meant for vamana and virechana. If there's bahudosha, shodhana therapy is indicated to eliminate them. Repeated vamana and virechana should be adopted, meanwhile taking precaution that the bala of the patient isn't diminished.

Within the lesions that are sthira and Kathina mandala, nadi and prastara form



of sweda must tend and scraped by kurcha and raktamokshana should be done.

Acharaya Susruta says that treatment will be started soon after the looks of premonitory symptoms. He further explains the particular line of treatment apart from the overall treatment when doshas are located in each dhatu.

If the Doshas are present in twacha then Shodhana karma are to be performed.

If the Doshas are present in Rakta Dhatu then Shodhana, aLepa, raktamokshana and manthapana are to be administered.

If the Doshas are present in medo Dhatu, then it becomes yapya by its own¹⁶.

While explaining general line of treatment of *Kushtha*, Acharya Susruta and Vagbhata both have mentioned identical procedures. Vamana for each 15 days, virechana for once in every 30 days, shirovirechana for each 3 days and raktamokshana for each six months are to be administered¹⁷.

The patient must drink Kashaya of Khadira. He must use the identical for Snana. Also the yavagu prepared from Khadirambu must be consumed¹⁸.

Apart from the overall line of treatment of *Kushtha*, specific line of treatment for switra has been given in Charaka Samhita. Both Acharya Charaka and Vagbhata have given at most importance to Shodhana

procedure which will be followed by Shamana Tehrapy.

Sramsana is the therapy of choice for *Shwitra* roga. It's given after the Shodhana procedures like vamana and virechana¹⁹.

For the aim of *Sramsana* Malapurasa with guda is given for a minimum period of three days. The patient is anointed with sneha and exposed to the sun reckoning on the strength of the individual. If *sphota* or blisters appear on the hypo-pigmented areas, they must be opened and drained with a *kantaka*. At this stage if the patient feels thirst, peya should lean.

Then the patient is given decoction made of Malapu, Asana, Priyangu and *Palasha Kshara* or *Khadhira kasaya* together with phanitha²⁰.

Aragwadha is mentioned as best *Sramsana* dravya. Raktamokshana is additionally indicated within the treatment of *Kushta* Roga especially in *Shwitra*. The Raktamokshana procedure is taken into account one of the Panchashodanas.

Raktamokshana could be a process of letting the vitiated blood out of the body as a treatment procedure in disease caused by Rakta or pitta and disbursed either by using appropriate instruments in selected patients with proper matra only.

Savarneekarana is in an exceedingly one amongst of the sixty Vranopakramas mentioned by Acharya Susruta done to



bring back the conventional colour of the skin in a healing wound.

Krishna karma is more relevant within the treatment of Vranaja *Shwitra*. Apart from all the therapies, *Shwitra* may be cured only within the persons who are innocent of papa karma.

Daivavyapashraya chikitsa is additionally mentioned within the treatment of *Shwitra*. Acharaya Hareeta says rupyadhana or giving for free silver as alms helps in alleviating *Shwitra*. The main nidana of *Shwitra* is viruddhahara. Hence nidana parivarjana also plays a vital role within the treatment of *Shwitra*.

Browsing the *chikitsa* sutra described within the classics it may be said that the treatment principle is shodhana and shamana. The latter includes internally *Shwitra* nashaka yoga together with *Daivavyapashraya chikitsa* and externally within the sort of *Lepa* *chikitsa*.

Shwitra is one of the raktapradoshaja vikara. *Sramsana* could be a variety of adhobhagahara shodhana karma helpful within the diseases occurring within the skin especially in *Shwitra*. *Lepa* is additionally beneficial. By the knowledge of these factors *Shwitra* *chikitsa* follows as below-

Amapachana:- it's very essential before every shodhana procedure. Tikta, katu and *agnideepanadravyas* are administered to

correct *jatharagni* till niramalakshanas are obtained.

Snehapana:-After niramalakshanas are observed patient is subjected to snehapana procedure. Sneha is run considering bala, *agni* and koshta. The chosen snehadravya is run within the early morning hours, which should be in hrusiyasimatra on the primary day. As Charaka mentions in *Kushtha* Chikitsa, 'Na at isnigdhan virichyate', sadhyo sneha is given to the patient, considering the time taken for the digestion of the hrusiyasimatra of sneha. On the second day calculated amount of sneha is given together with saindhavalavana.

Abhayanga and Sweda:-After administering sneha internally, abhayanga and sweda are administered for 3 days. Snehana and *Swedana* help within the further liquefaction of klinna doshas which are situated within the sukshmamarga and also help in easy entry of the doshas from shakha to koshta and from there elimination through the closest route.

Though *Swedana* is contraindicated in *Kushtha*, mrudu *swedana* within the sort of ushna jala parisheka is suggested.

Sramsana:-After *abhyanga* and *swedana*, by assessing the koshta of the patient oushadhi is given for the aim of *sramsana* in *shleshmantakala*-



‘Shleshma kale gate jnatwa kostham samyak virichyate’.

Then the patient is suggested to have luke warm water in little quantity frequently. Patient is observed for *vega pravrutti*. Considering the *suddhi prakara*, *samsarjana* is suggested. Afterwards, *shamana oushadhi* are started.

LEPA:

1. *Manashiladi Lepa–Ch.S.*
2. *Kadaliksheeradi Lepa –Ch.S.*
3. *Mulaka-Avalguja Lepa –Ch.S.*
4. *Kakodumbaradi Lepa –Ch.S.*
5. *Krishnasarpadi Lepa – A.Hr, Su.S.*
6. *Prapunnadabeejadi Lepa – A.Hr, Su.S.*
7. *Gajalendajadi Lepa – A.Hr, Su.S.*
8. *Tuttadi Lepa – A.Hr, Su.S.*
9. *Tiwakadi Lepa – A.Hr,Su.S.*
10. *Gandhakadi Lepa – B.R,B.Y.T.*
11. *Shwetajayantimooladi Lepa – B.R,B.Y.T.*
12. *Neelotpaladi Lepa - Ch.S.*
13. *Savaranikarana Lepa –Y.R.*
14. *Triphaladi Lepa –R.R.S.*
15. *Pootikadi Lepa –Su.S.*
16. *Jalapippalyadi Lepa – Su.S.*
17. *Haritakyadi Lepa –A.Hr.*
18. *Avalgunjadi Lepa – A.Hr.*
19. *Vyoshadi Lepa – A.Hr.*
20. *Marichadi Lepa –A.Hr.*
21. *Pratisaraniya Kshara Lepa - A.Hr.*
22. *Avalgunjaabeejadi Lepa –C.D.*

Exposure to Sun-Light:

Atapasevana is taken into account of the methods of langhana further as *anagni* sort of *swedana*. Here atapasevana increases *Bhrajaka agni* directly.

In the treatment, the patient is suggested to show the hypopigmented skin portion to sunrays. The time for exposure to sunlight is within the early morning hours. Early morning sunrays contain Ultra Violet rays stimulate skin pigmentation mechanism. Facultative or inducible colouring which ends up from the exposure even in normal individuals commonly referred to as Tan is stimulated. (Harrison’s principle of Internal Medicine).

LIST OF YOGAS INDICATED IN SHWITRA.

CHURNA:

1. *Nimbhapatradi churna –R.R.S.*
2. *ShwetaKushtahara churna –R.R.S.*
3. *Bakuchyadi churna –G.N.*
4. *Kustahara churna –Chakra.*
5. *Pashupati churna –B.R.*
6. *Switranashana churna -R.R.S.*
7. *Mustadi churna – A.Hr,Ch.S.*
8. *Shashankalekhadhi Churna – A.Hr*
9. *Avalguja churna – C.D.*
10. *Khadiradi churna –A.Hr.*

GUTIKA:

1. *Triphala Gutika – Y.R.*
2. *Shashilekha Vati –Y.R.*
3. *Chandraprabha Vati – R.R.S,B.R.*



4. *Kshara Gutika* –Y.R.
5. *Pancha Tikta Ghrita Guggulu* – B.R.

KASHAYA:

1. *Khadiradi Kashaya* – Y.R,Ch.S.
2. *Patolamoolyadi Kashaya* –A.Hr.
3. *Bakuchyadi Kashaya* –Su.S.
4. *Vibhetakyadi Kwatha* – B.Y.T.
5. *Kakodumbradi Kwatha* –S.Y.

AVAHLEHA:

1. *Mahabhallatakaavaleha* –Su.S.
2. *Mahanimbakavaleha* –B.P.

GUDA:

1. *Manibhadra Guda* –A.Hr.
2. *Chandrashakaladi Guda* –A.Hr.
3. *Vidangadi Guda* –A.Hr.
4. *Pathyadi Guda* – A.Hr.

RASAYANA:

1. *Chitraka Rasayana* – A.Hr.
2. *Bakuchi Rasayana* – A.Hr.
3. *Indreerasayana* –Ch.S.

GHRITA:

1. *Triphala Ghrita* –Y.R.
2. *Bakuchyadi Ghrita / Somaraji Ghrita* – B.R,B.P.
3. *Neelinyadi Ghrita* –Ch.S.
4. *Neela Ghrita* –Su.S.
5. *Mahaneela Gritha* – Su.S,B.Y.T.
6. *Tiktaka Gritha* – A.Hr.
7. *Mahavajraka Ghrita* –A.Hr.
8. *Avartaki Gritha* – A.Hr.

TAILA:

1. *Laghumareechayadi Taila* – B.P,B.Y.T.

2. *Jyothishmati Taila* – B.Y.T,A.Hr.

3. *Aragwadhathi Taila* – B.R.

4. *Switrari Taila* –Ch.S.

5. *Kushtadi Taila* – Su.S.

6. *Vibheetaki Taila* –Su.S.

7. *Mahavajraka Taila* – Ch.S.

8. *Marichyadya Taila* – Su.S.

9. *Karaviradya Taila* –Su.S.

ASAVA:

1. *Madhwasava* – Ch.S.,A.Hr.

2. *Madhukassava* – A.Hr,Ch.S

ARISHTA:

1. *Khadirarishta*– Su.S.

2. *Punaranavadyarishta* –CH.S.

3. *Kanakabindwarishta* –CH.S.

4. *Abhayarishta* –CH.S.

RASOUSHADHI:

1. *Kilasanashana Rasa* –Y.R.

2. *Switrantaka Rasa* –Y.R.

3. *Chandraprabha Rasa* – Y.R.

4. *Shwetari Yoga* –Y.R,R.R.S.

5. *SwitraKushtari Rasa* –Y.R.

6. *Krishneekarana Yoga* –Y.R.

7. *Kushtakutra Rasa* –Su.S.

8. *Udayaditya Rasa* –Su.S.

9. *Vijayeshwara Rasa* –R.R.S.

10. *Talakeshwara Rasa* – R.R.S.

11. *Khageshwara Rasa* – R.R.S

12. *Kasisabhra Rasa* –R.R.S.

DHOOMA:



1. *Shwetadishirsha virechana Dhooma* –
Su.S.

EKA MOOLIKADRAVYA:

1. *Guggulu-Su.*
2. *Rasona-A.Hr.*
3. *Bhallataka –B.P.*
4. *Ashwagandha –B.P.*
5. *Kakanasa–B.P.*
6. *Bakula –B.P.*
7. *Kakodumbarika–B.P.*
8. *Shimshupa –B.P.*
9. *Beejaka–B.P.*
10. *Khadira –B.P.*
11. *Chitrakamoola–B.P.*
12. *Bakuchi –A.Hr.*

RASADRAVYA:

1. *Hingula –B.P.*
2. *Spatika–R.R.S.*
3. *Kaseesa –R.R.S.*

CONCLUSION

❖ The disease *Shwitra* is having no direct references available in classical texts, but categorized under the heading of *Kushta*

❖ *Shwitra* can be compared with Vitiligo of the modern medical science. Aetiopathogenesis, Symptomatology, Classification and management of this disease in both Ayurvedic and Modern Medical Science are nearly the same.



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