

Etiopathogenesis and Symptomatology of Shwitra (Vitiligo): An Ayurvedic Literary Review

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Abstract

The skin is the largest and first organ of the body which interacts with environmental stimuli to the natural ability of the body. In this modern era different types of skin diseases are increasing day by day, Shwitra (Vitiligo) is very common among them. Shwitra (Vitiligo) is an autoimmune idiopathic and worldwide common depigmentation disorder with an estimated prevalence from 0.1 to 8%. In Ayurveda, from Vedic period to Adhunik kala we found description regarding Shwitra. The present study reviewed different Ayurvedic classics of Vedic Kala, Purana Kala, Samhita Kala, Samgraha Kala, Nighantu Kala and Adhunik Kala to collect the information regarding the Aetiology, Pathogenesis, Sign & Symptoms, differential diagnosis, etc. of the skin disorder Shwitra (Vitiligo) in a methodical manner. The main Aims and Objectives of the study are to furnish the ancient Ayurvedic concept of Shwitra (Vitiligo) in a methodical manner towards encouraging the Ayurvedic physicians as well as Ayurvedic scholars of this field for finding out the real solution of the great skin problem.

Keywords: Shwitra, ayurveda and shwitra, autoimmune skin disorder, vitiligo

1. Introduction

The term Shwitra is derived from 'Shwitra' dhatu with suffix 'Rik'. Shwitra means whiteness [1]. 'Shwitra' of Ayurvedic view is similar to the Modern view of 'Vitiligo'. Vitiligo is a specific type of acquired leukoderma which is characterized by the appearance of white-patches, without any other pathological changes in the normal structure of the skin [2]. Shwitra is found in the fourth layer of the twak named as 'Tamra' (i.e. Malpighian layer) and involving 'Bhrajaka pitta' of the skin. Acharya Charaka (1000 B.C.), Maharshi Sushruta (1000 B.C.-1500 B.C.), Maharshi Vagbhata (200 A.D.-600 A.D.), Madhava Nidan (700 A.D.), Bhava Prakasha (1600A.D.) have mentioned different etiological factors related to diet, habit, drugs etc. All most all ancestors of Ayurveda are arranged in a view that the etiological factors related to Kustha (Obstinate skin diseases including Leprosy) are similar to the etiology of Shwitra (Vitiligo). The common etiology of kustha are intake of mutually contradictory food and drinks, Suppression of vomiting like natural urges, Excessive physical exhaustion, Hard work after heavy meal, Too exposure to cold and heat in an unusual manner, Intake of uncooked food, Intake of food before the digestion of previous food, excessive intake of food preparation of freshly harvested, grains, curd, fish, salt and sour substances. Excessive intake of tila pista (Sesame), mulaka (Radish), pastry, milk and jaggery, performance of injudicious sexual act or sexual act during indigestion, sleep during day, insult to Brahmins and superior or social misconducts. Regarding

symptomatology Madhavakar (700 A.D.) has clearly mentioned in his context "Madhava Nidan" [3] that Shwitra (Vitiligo) is produced by the same causes as of kustha (Obstinate skin disease including leprosy); they are non-exudative and tridoshaja in origin (caused by increase of all the three dosas together). Roughness and pink colour are due to vata, coppery-red like a lotus petal, feeling of burning sensation and loss of hairs are due to pitta; white colour, thickness, feeling of heaviness and itching are due to kapha; involvement of rakta (blood), mamsa (muscles) and medas (fats) causes their respective types of colours and pain. The Shwitra (Vitiligo) is a troublesome problem making the persons very frustrated and neither effective nor very safe treatment is present. Through such literary work it is an effort to provide the information of Ayurvedic ancestors in a methodical manners to the scholars of this field.

2. Materials & Methods

• Materials

The ancient Ayurvedic texts of Vedic Period, Samhita Period, Sangraha Period and Modern Period have been taken into consideration to review regarding Shwitra (Vitiligo).

• Methods

This present study represented the Ayurvedic views on Shwitra (Vitiligo) some methodical manner has been taken to furnished before the reader.

3.4. Rupa (Clinical Features)

3.4.1 According to doshika involvement showing Table No : 5

Table 5: According to Doshika involvement As per, Maharshi Sushruta (1000 B.C.-1500 B.C.), Maharshi Vagbhata (200 A.D.-600 A.D.), Madhava Nidan (700 A.D.) and Bhava Prakasha (1600A.D.) showing in Table No : 5

Texts	Vataja	Pittaja	Kaphaja
S.U	Mandal. Aruna, parusha, paridhwanshi	Padyapatraprati paridaha	Kasha, Shweta, snigdha, kandu
A.H	Ruksha, Aruna	Tamra, daha, Romavidhawanshi	Shweta, Ghana, Guru, Kandu
M.N	Ruksha, Aruna	Tamra, daha, Romavidhawanshi	Shweta, Guru, Kandu
B.P	Ruksha, Aruna	Tamra, daha, Romavidhawanshi	Shweta, Guru, Kandu

3.4.2 According to Dhatu involvement showing Table No: 6

Table 6: According to Dhatu involvement showing Table No: 6

Dhatu-Ashraya	Type of Shwitra	Rupa
Rakta	Daruna	Rakta varni
Mamsa	Charuna	Tamra varni
Meda	Shwitra	Shweta varni

3.5 Classification of Shwitra

As, per different scholars, types of shwitra has been given in the following Table No: 7

Table 7: Showing types of Shwitra according to Acharya Charaka(1000 B.C.), Maharshi Sushruta (1000 B.C. – 1500 B.C.), Maharshi Vagbhata(200 A.D.- 600 A.D.), Madhava Nidan (700 A.D.) and Bhava Prakasha (1600A.D.) and Bhoja (2500 to 3000 B.C.)

Classical Texts	Types	Name
Ch.S	3	Daruna, Charuna, Shwitra
Su.S	3	Vataja, pittaja, kaphaja
A.S	2	Sahaja, janmottarakalaja
A.H	3	Shwitra, kilasa, daruna
M.N	3	Shwitra, kilasa, varuna
M.N	3	X
B.P	3	Shwitra, kilasa, Aruna
Bhoja	2	Doshaja, Vranaja

4. Discussion

From review of the Ayurvedic literatures of different era it has been found that ancient Ayurvedists have a sound concept with troublesome problem of the skin i.e. Shwitra (Vitiligo). In symptomatology view are similar to the old concept Shwitra (Vitiligo). As per Modern view Vitiligo causes loss of skin colour in patches. The discolored areas usually get bigger with time. The condition can affect the skin on any part of the body. It can also affect hair and the inside of the mouth. Normally, the color of hair and skin is determined by melanin. Vitiligo occurs when cells that produce melanin die or stop functioning. The dosha Vayu, Pitta, Kapha are involved towards genesis of the disease Shwitra which means it is a tridoshaja vyadhi and its hardly curable or incurable one. Shwitra is a deep-seated ailment affects twaka (skin), rakta (blood), mamsa (muscles) and meda (fats) and lasika (lymph

through vitiation of Rasavaha Srota (lymphatic and capillaries system) and Raktavaha Srotas (Vascular System). The usual finding are discoloration of skin with whitish patches. As Ayurveda gives importance to Dosha Vaigunya (Unequilibrium state of doshas among Vata, Pitta and Kapha), Dhatu Vaishmya (Qualitative and Quantitative maldistribution of tissues) and Srota Dusti (Obstruction and Disorders in Srotas). So, the manifest features are justifying the claim of our ancestors. In present study, efforts given to encourage the scholars to this field towards finding out the curable solution of the ailments by keeping views on making equilibrium of Doshas, proper nourishment of Dhatu as well as cleaning the microchannels by which Melanocytes formation and distribution of Melanin to the target area could be possible.

5. Conclusion

From the above discussion it could be concluded that Shwitra (Vitiligo) is a troublesome problem hardly curable ailment of the skin caused by aetiology, pathogenesis and symptomatology same as Kustha (Obstinate skin disease including leprosy).

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