



Review Article

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A REVIEW ON MANAGEMENT OPTIONS AVAILABLE FOR THE TREATMENT OF SHVITRA IN AYURVEDIC TEXT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO VITILIGO

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ABSTRACT

Shvitra (vitiligo) is an acquired de-pigmentation disorder manifested as white macules on the skin which causes significant psychological stress and social stigmatization. This disease is triggered by the improper functioning of the melanocytes which are responsible for skin pigmentation. The correlation of vitiligo in Ayurveda is considered with shvitra. The three type of shvitra are mainly treated with different types of samshamna, lepa and samshodana karma like vamaana, virechana etc. The reasons to develop this disease are also considered as the un-truthful, ungratefulness and disrespect the gods, sinful acts etc. These causative factors including oral as well as mental sinful disposition of this present life and previous life. So clinically this study requires some validation of various therapies like samshodhana, samshana, phototherapy etc. in shvitra as acharyas considered this disease in a karmaja category over the vitiligo, as modern science does not add any specific treatment like this as mentioned in Ayurvedic texts with special reference to vitiligo.

Keywords: *shvitra*, vitiligo, skin, *dhatu*s, *shodana*, internal therapy

INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda all the skin diseases are described under the heading of kushta. kushta is further divided into Mahakushta and Kshudra kushta¹. But Shvitra is not described under any of these contexts. Acharya Sushruta has mentioned Shvitra as another form of kushta which is differentiated from kushta because of absence of secretions and its confinement to the skin only².

In modern dermatology, Shvitra is correlated with Vitiligo which is characterized by depigmentation of the patches of skin where melanocytes are lost³. It affects about 1 % of world population. The etiology of disease is still unknown. Various trigger factors like sunlight, mechanical trauma, chemical exposures ultimately cause an autoimmune response that targets melanocytes which ultimately destruct them and leads to depigmentation. Non segmental generalized vitiligo is the most common type which is symmetrical and progressive in nature.⁴

Due to the chronic nature of disease, long term treatment, lack of uniform effective therapy and unpredictable course of disease is usually very demoralizing for patients. Some therapies like PUVA (Psoralen + Ultra Violet A rays exposure) and corticosteroids, and TLO1, skin grafting like split skin graft and glister roof grafts⁵ are being available and have so many harmful side effects, so it is really needed to find a safe, easier, less complicating, cost effective and fruitful approach for the management of disease.

The shvitra is multi factorial complex disorder characterized by patchy, depigmentation of epidermal skin. Because of the chronic nature of the disease it requires long term treatment internally and externally which requires the pravarsatva (high mental tolerance) in the sufferers and physicians.

In Ayurvedic text, various treatment modalities of Shvitra (vitiligo) are available in the form of Samshodhan, Shamshaman, Pralepa Chikitsa which are quite effective and less harmful to effected humans.

Causes of Shvitra

- Intake of mutually contraindicated foods and drinks which are liquid, heavy and unctuous.
- Suppression of urges of vomiting and others.
- Performing physical exercises in excessive heat and intake of heavy meals.
- Transgression of the prescribed order with reference to heat and cold also fasting and intake of food.
- Use of cold water immediately after exposure to the sunlight and heavy exertion.
- Transgression of panchkarma procedures
- Excessive intake of food preparations of freshly harvested grains, curd, fish and salt etc.
- Sleep during the day time and intake of masa, mulaka, tila, milk and jaggery.
- Insult to Brahmins and preceptors and other sinful acts.⁶⁻⁸

Types of Shvitra

As per Acharya Charaka there are three types as Daruna, Charuna and Kilasa. These all are caused by simultaneous vitiation of all the three doshas.⁹ Acharya Charaka has given its stages according to its penetration in Dhatus like if it is located in Rakta Dhatu it appears red in color. If in masa dhatu it appears coppery color and if in meda dhatu it appears white in colour, as deep as the penetration more it is difficult to treat.¹⁰ According to Acharya Sushruta, shvitra has three types vataj, pittaj and kaphaj.¹¹

Prognosis of shvitra

The patches of shvitra if are matted together and numerous in number and hair over the patches are red in color disease is supposed to be incurable.¹² As per Acharya Sushrut the type of shvitra in which eruptions or patches extend and become confluent and invade the sole of the feet, palms of the hand and anal region and the local hair becomes red in color seems to be incurable.¹²

Treatment of shvitra

Internal therapy

According to Acharya Charaka, shodhana (purification) therapy should be employed in shvitra patient, Firstly the oleation therapy is to be done after which malapya (*Ficus hispida*) juice along with jaggery should be given for sramsana karma (light purgation) after administration of this exposure to the sunlight is given to patient which results in to purgation. After this while feeling thirsty the patient is provided with peya for three days.¹³ In the case of pustular eruptions, bhedana should be done after which decoction of malapaya (*Ficus hispida*), asana (*Terminalia elliptica*) and shatpushpa (*Anethum sowa*) should be given to the patient for 15 days at morning. According to the strength of patient plasha (*Butea monosperma*) kshar with phanita should be given as an alternative.¹⁴ Decoction of khadira (*Acacia catechu*) is considered as an excellent option for treating the leucoderma.¹⁵ According to Acharya Sushruta decoction of bhadra (*Acorus calamus*) and malapi (*Ficus hispida*) is given to the patient of shvitra.¹⁶ It produces blisters over the skin which further treated with application of lepa.

Acharya Sushruta prescribed vama (induced vomiting) and virechana (purgation) to remove aggravated doshas from the body.¹⁷

External therapy

Manashila (Realgar), vidanga (*Embelia ribes*), kasisa (ferrous sulphate) and gorochana (bezoar) along with saindhava are used externally.¹⁸ paste of kakodumbra (*Ficus hispida*), avalguja (*Psoralea corylifolia*) and citraka (*Plumbago zeylanica*) along with gomutra. Seed of avalguja (*Psoralea corylifolia*), laksha (*Lacciferlaccia*), gopitta, both types of anjana, pippali (*Piper longum*) along with the powder of kalloha.¹⁹

Bloodletting, virukshan and sattusevana are indicated in shvitra patients.²⁰

According to Acharya Sushruta,

- Application of Krishna sarpamasi along with Vibhitakataila (oil of *Terminalia bellirica*) readily yields response in the treatment of shvitra.

- Application of kshara made by krishansarpi cooked in mustard oil is proves best in the case of shvitra.²¹
- Leaves and bark of Amra and Haritaki (*Terminalia chebula*), are soaked in the decoction of the same and converted in to vartis (suppositories) which further soaked in the vataksheera and later on lighted in the Indian lamp. The lamp black thus produced is collected and soaked in the decoction of Haritaki (*Terminalia chebula*). Application of this formulation after lubrication with mustard oil for several times on shvitra produces significant results.²²
- Application of lepa of tutha (blue vitriol), haritala (*Terminalia chebula*), trikatu, arka (*Calotropis procera*), karavira (*Nerium indicum*), kushta (*Saussurea lappa*), avalguja (*Psoralea corylifolia*), bhallataka (*Semecarpus anacardium*) and snuhi (*Euphorbia neriifolia*) along with seeds of vidanga (*Embelia ribes*), karavira (*Nerium indicum*) yield better results in shvitra.²³
- Application of Neel Ghrita and Mahaneel Ghrita on shvitra sures the disease.²⁴
- Local application of swaranapushpi, kasisa (Green vitriol), bidanga (*Embelia ribes*) manashila (Realgar), gorochan and saindhava is useful in shvitra.²⁵
- Gutika of vasa (*Adhatoda vasica*), kuth (*Saussurea costus*) and pippal (*Piper longum*) along with bast mutra is applied on shvitra.²⁶
- Hartala (Orpiment) one shan (dose) and bakuchi (*Psoralea corylifolia*) four shan (dose) mixed with gomutra is applied on shvitra.²⁷

DISCUSSION

Shvitra is the obstinate complex skin disease characterized by patchy, de-pigmentation of epidermal skin which occurs also due to untruthful, ungratefulness and disrespects the Gods, sinful acts etc. it also includes oral as well as mental sinful disposition of present life and past life. The chronic nature of disease requires the patience of patient and physician to get treated. The various modalities and management of shvitra are discussed with various aspects, the severity of disease related with the penetration of dhatus by doshas. The most effective treatment of shvitra is sramsana karma (light purgative method) by malapya juice (*Ficus hispida*) and jiggery after oleation therapy.

The bhedana of pustular eruption is also indicated. Decoctions like khadira (*Acacia catechu*), plashakshara (*Butea monosperma*) etc. are mostly used to treat the severe condition of disease. The method of exposure to sunlight is also mentioned prior to purgative procedure as to regain the melanin pigmentation to cure the diseases. PUVA therapy mentioned in conventional medicine is to cure diseases like vitiligo and psoriasis is a similar to treat the shvitra mentioned in traditional texts.

External treatment reflects the utility of effective and efficient drug like kakodumbra (*Ficus hispida*), avalguja (*Psoralea corylifolia*) and citraka (*Plumbago zeylanica*) along with gomutra. The modalities like raktamokshana (bloodletting), virukshana (dry therapy) and administration of sattu (rice water) are the fully effective in shvitra (vitiligo). The local application of Lepas (cold ointment) and pradaha (hot and thick ointment) is most effective method to treat this obstinate skin disease like shvitra.

CONCLUSION

The skin diseases are obstinate in nature and among these diseases; shvitra is a complex in form due to the chronic nature of doshas involved to penetrate the dhatus (essential tissues) of body, therefore both methods like internal and external used to treat the complex disease.

The treatment gets started with samshudhi (internal purification) to balance the dominant doshas which are causative factor of disease.

After that external therapy like PUVA/Sunlight, lepa (ointment) therapies followed to treat the obstinate skin disease. Virukshana (dry therapy) and administration of sattu and peya for three or four days also lowers the symptoms of this chronic disease.

PUVA therapies replaced and modified the sunlight method mentioned in Ayurveda texts before purgation.

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