SYSTEMIC REVIEW ON SWITRA (VITILIGO) AND ITS MANAGEMENT

Saroj Kumar Debnath¹, Laxmidhar Barik², Bikash Kumar Tripathy³, Jayram Hazra⁴

¹Research Officer (Ayurveda), ²Research Officer (Ayurveda), ³Senior Research Fellow (Ayurveda), ⁴Director, Central Ayurveda Research Institute for Drug Development, Kolkata, West Bengal, India, Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences, Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India.

Email: sarojkumardebnath@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
Since ancient time Switra is consider as a social stigma. Commonly Switra patients have no social acceptance. Switra patient may easily prone to mental depression and especially it occurs in young patients. It is a burning problem in the society. According to clinical features Switra is more similar to Vitiligo. It has no modern treatment to cure till date. Such kinds of patient may get satisfactory result by Ayurvedic treatment.

Key words: Switra, Vitiligo.

INTRODUCTION
The word Switra has its root in the Sanskrit word Sweta which means white and Switra means white patches on the skin or white skin lesion. According to clinical manifestations Switra is more similar to Vitiligo. Vitiligo is a long term dermatological disorder characterized by patches of the skin losing their pigment. The patches of affected skin become white and usually have sharp margins. The hairs from the affected skin may also become white. Switra or Vitiligo is hypopigmentation of the skin. It is also called hypomelanosis condition of the skin. This results in the destruction or hypofunction of melanocyte. Melanocyte cell of the skin contains the Melanin which is very important factor in respect of pigmentation. Proper Melanin synthesis into the melanocyte cell is essential for normal colour of the skin. Melanin is produced into the Melanosomes of Melanocytes of the skin from Tyrosine amino acid with the help of Tyrosinage enzyme. According to modern medicine the cause of the Vitiligo is unknown till date. It may onset at any age but usually occurs in childhood at 10 years of age or in second decade of life. It is Multifactorial disease. Genetic susceptibility is important factor in this case. Risk factors are positive family history, sufferings from inflammatory diseases and or
autoimmune diseases. Vitiligo is a noninfectious chronic skin disorder. Both sexes are equally affected with this disease and Population Incidence of this disease is one present. Confirm diagnosis is possible by skin biopsy or tissue biopsy\(^1\). Switra or Vitiligo is a burning problem in the society because till date there is no modern treatment to cure. It is related with skin colour and appearance of the skin and the patients who are suffering from Switra (Vitiligo) for prolong period they may easily suffer from mental depression and mental counseling is essential in this condition.

**History of Switra:**
In the Atharvaveda the Switra word is mentioned for the first time. In Rigveda (6000 B.C) Swirtra is described as Kilasa. In 200 B.C, the Indian Manuscript described it as Sweta Kustha. Kilasam word is also mentioned in Atharvaveda for Switra. In Amarakosha it is mentioned that Padasphota, Tvakapuspi, Kilasa, and Sidhmali are synonyms of Switra\(^2\).

**Nidana (Etiological factors):**
Nidan or causative factors of Switra are mentioned in different classics of Ayurveda. It is described in Charak Samhita that Untruthfulness, ungratefulness, disrespect for the gods, insult of the preceptors, sinful acts, and misdeeds of past lives and intake of mutually contradictory food are the causative factors of Switra.\(^3\) In Madhav Nidan it is mentioned that Nidana or causative factors of Switra are same in case kustha and switra\(^4\).

**Prakar / Bheda (Verities):**
According to Charak Switra is of three varieties, namely daruna, charuna and kilasa. All of them are generally caused by the simultaneous vitiation of three dosas (i.e. Vata, Pitta & Kapha). If dosha is located in raktadhatu (blood tissue) then Switra will be reddish in colour. When dosha is located in mamsadhatu (muscle tissue), Switra will be in coppery colour, and if dosha is located in medasdhatu (fat tissue), then Switra will be white in colour. In respect of prognosis the subsequent ones are more serious than the previous ones\(^5\). As per Susrut Samhita, Hastang Hridaya & Madhav Nidan Swita is of three types on the basis of dosa and these are Vatapradhan, Pitta pradhan & Kapha pradhan Switra.\(^6\)

**Sadhyasadhyatta (Prognosis):**
The sadhyasadhyatta or prognosis of the Switra is described in different classics of Ayurveda. In Charak Samhita it is mentioned that the Switra will be Asadhya or incurable in the following conditions those are if the patches of switra are matted together, if there are several patches, if the small hair over the patches are reddish in colour and if the patient is suffering for several years. The Switra will be Sadhya or curable in the following conditions those are if the hairs over the patches are not reddish, if the skin is thin and pale in colour, if the disease is of recent origin and if the space between two patches is elevated, then the disease is Sadhya or curable\(^7\). In Madhav Nidan it is mentioned that Agnidhagdaja Switra (white colour due to burn) is Asathya or incurable. If Switra is manifested in anal, penis, vulva, lip, palm and sole then it is Asathya or incurable\(^8\).

**Rupa/ Lakshan (Clinical Features):**
White patches on the skin are the main sign of Switra. The patches are more common in areas
where the skin is exposed to the sun. In *Madhav Nidan* it is described that *Switra* is three types and these are *Vatapradhan Switra, Pitta pradhan Switra & Kaphapradhan Switra*. Clinical features of *Vatapradhan Switra* are rough and reddish white in colour. *Pitta pradhan Switra* is tamra or coppery white in colour, affected skin is smooth like a lotus leaf, burning sensation is there and loss of hairs over the affected skin. *Kaphapradhan Switra* is white in colour, dense, thick, and there is itching sensation over the affected skin.

**Sapeksha Nidan (Differential diagnosis):**

White and coppery coloured patches with mild scaling and resembles with *alabu puspa* (bottle guard flower) are clinical features of *Sidhma kustha* (*Pityriasis alba*) and in case of *Pundarika kustha* it is white in colour with red edges, it resembles lotus leaf and it is elevated and accompanied with burning sensation but in case of *Switra* there is white patches but usually there is no scaling and no elevation, red coloured edges.

**The management of Switra:**

The management of *Switra* is clearly mentioned in different classics of Ayurveda. In *Charak Samhita* it is described that the *switra* patient should be cleansed by the administration of *Panchakarma* therapy (elimination therapy) and for that purpose the juice of *malapu (kakoudumbarika) (Ficus racemosa)* along with jaggery is excellent for causing *sramsanam* (a type of purgation). The patient should first of all take *snehana* (oleation) and *swedana* therapy, thereafter; this recipe should be taken by the patient according to the *rogibala* (strength of the patient) of the patient and *rogabala* (virulence of the disease) of the disease. After taking the juice of *malapu (kakoudumbarika) (Ficus racemosa)*, the patient should expose to the sun light and this will cause purgation. After this purgation therapy, the patient will feel thirsty for which the patient should *takepeya* (thin gruel) for three successive days.

In Ayurveda Skin disorders is mentioned as a *Kustha*. In *Charak Samhita* the etiology, clinical features and treatment of Skin disorders are vividly described in 7th chapter of *Chikitsathan*. It is mentioned in *Charak Samhita* that all the managements prescribed for the treatment of *Kustha* are also useful for the treatment of *Switra*.

If the patient is suffering from *Kustha* and it is dominated by *vatadosha* then it should first be advised for *greeta pan* (intake of cow ghee). If the patient is suffering from *kustha* and it is dominated by *kaphadosha* then it should first be administered *vamana karma* (emetic therapy). If the patient is suffering from *kustha* and it is dominated by *pitta dosha* then should first be administered *raktamokshan* (blood-letting) and *virechana karma* (purgation therapy). The dose of the medicine for these therapies should be administered as per *rogibala* (strength of the patient) of the patient and *rogabala* (virulence of the disease) of the disease. So in case of *Switra* Ayurvedic physician also apply such kinds of management for treatment of *Switra* according to the predominance of *dosha*.

**Treatment of Pustular Eruptions in Switra:**

It is described in *Charak Samhita* if pustular eruptions occur over the patches of *switra* then it should be punctured with the help of a thorn for the removal of serous fluid from these pustules. After the exudation of the fluid from the eruptions, the patient should take every morn-
ing, the decoction of malapua (kakodumbarika), asana, priyangus, and satapuspa for continuous fifteen days. Alternatively, the patient may take the kshara (alkali preparation) of palasas along with phanita (a type of sugar) in an appropriate dose according to the rogibala (strength of the patient) of the patient and rogabala (virulence of the disease) of the disease.

Recipes for External Application:

In Charak Samhita it is mentioned that Manashila, vidanga, kasisa, gorochana, kankpuspi (swarnakshiri) and rock-salt should be used for external application over the affected part of the skin for the treatment of switra.

Treatment of Switra with Ekakdravya (Single herbs):

In Atharvaveda four important medicinal plants have been mentioned for the treatment of Switra and those are Rama (Vakuchi) (Psoralea corylifolia), Krishna (Bhringaraj) (Eclipta prostrata), Asikini (Indravaruni) (Citrullus colocynthis), Rajani (Haridra) (Curcuma longa). As per Charaka Samhita Khadir (Acacia catechu) is an important single herbs as a drink preparation for treatment of Switra. As per Bhaisajyadhanvantwari (Bengali Ayurvedic book) Swet Aparajitamool (root of Clitoria ternatea) is effective medicinal plant for the treatment of Switra.

Pathyapathya for Switra:

Pathya for Switra patient means which diet Switra patient will take and such kinds of diet are Laghuanna (Light food), Tikasaka (bitter leafy vegetables), Puratandhanya (old fresh cereals), Mudga (green gram), Patala, Jangalamamsa (meat of arid animal), Food preparation and ghee preparation with Bhallatak (Semecarpus anacardium), Triphala (Amalaki, Haritaki & Bibhitaki) and Nimba. Apathya for Switra patient means which diet Switra patient will not take and such kinds of diet are guru dravya (heavy food), amla (sour), paya (milk), dadhi (curd), anupmamsa (meat of marshy land animals), matsa (fish), guda (jaggery), tila (sesame).

DISCUSSION

Switra means white patches on the skin or white skin lesion. In the Atharvaveda the Switra word is mentioned for the first time. According to clinical manifestations Switra is more similar to Vitiligo. Vitiligo is a long term dermatological disorder characterized by patches of the skin losing their pigment. Switra or Vitiligo is hypopigmentation of the skin. It is also called hypomelanosis condition of the skin. It results in the destruction or hypofunction of melanocyte. It may onset at any age but usually occurs in childhood at 10 years of age or in second decade of life. It is Multifactorial disease. Genetic susceptibility is important factor in this case. Risk factors are positive family history, sufferings from inflammatory diseases and or autoimmune diseases. Vitiligo is a noninfectious chronic skin disorder. Both sexes are equally affected with this disease and Population Incidence of this disease is one present. Confirm diagnosis is possible by skin biopsy or tissue biopsy. According to Ayurveda etiology of Switra are Untruthfulness, ungratefulness, disrespect for the gods, insult of the preceptors, sinful acts, misdeeds of past lives and intake of mutually contradictory food are the causative factors of Switra. It is of three types on the basis of dosa and these are
Vatapradhan, Pitta pradhan & Kapha pradhan Switra. Clinical features of Vatapradhan Switra are rough and reddish white in colour. Pitta pradhan Switra is tamra or coppery white in colour, affected skin is smooth like a lotus leaf, burning sensation is there and loss of hairs over the affected skin. Kaphapradhan Switra is white in colour, dense, thick, and there is itching sensation over the affected skin. The Switra will be Sadhya or curable in the following conditions those are if the hairs over the patches are not reddish, if the skin is thin and pale in colour, if the disease is of recent origin and if the space between two patches is elevated, then the disease is Sadhya or curable. Agnidhagdaja Switra (white colour due to burn) is Asathya or incurable. If Switra is manifested in anal, penis, vulva, lip, palm and sole then it is Asathya or incurable. As per Charak Samhita all the managements prescribed for the treatment of Kustha are also useful for the treatment of Switra and treatment should be given according to predominance of Dosha.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of clinical features Switra is more similar to Vitiligo. It is mentioned first in Atharvaveda. Its etiology, types, clinical features and prognosis are clearly described in Madhav Nidana. Its managements are vividly described in Charak Samhita.

REFERENCES

11. Agnivesha, Charaka, Drishibala, Sharma R K, Dash B. Charaka Samhita (Chakrapani Datta’s Ayurveda Dipika), Chikitsasthan, 7th Chapter, Sloka no. 162-


Source of Support: Nil
Conflict Of Interest: None Declared