

An Ayurvedic Overview of Skin, Skin Diseases and the Role of Raktamokshana

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ABSTRACT :

Skin is the largest integumentary organ of the body, in both surface area and weight. It fulfils a huge number of important functions, all of which are designed to help our body working properly. But the adverse factors like changing life style, excessive use of cosmetics and skin care products, junk food habits, air pollution, UV rays, stress etc. damages the human skin. Any disease affecting the skin can affect the beauty as well as the personality of a person. Anushastra karma was routinely practiced in the past and so much importance is given to it in the Ayurveda samhitas. Among the Anushastras, Raktamokshana enjoys a place of pride and is being widely used for the treatment of various diseases. This article explores the description of skin, skin diseases and the role of raktamokshana.

KEYWORDS : Skin, Twak, Skin disease, Twakroga, Raktamokshana

I. INTRODUCTION :

In contemporary society, beauty is an important aspect of oneself for good personality and elegant look. The growing demand for cosmetology itself reveals the increasing significance importance of beauty care. Dermatological problems can cause psychosocial consequences that seriously affects patients' lives. Skin is the largest organ of the body in both surface area and weight. Its average thickness is about 1 to 2 mm and there are two layers of skin^[1]. Thin or hairy layer, which is very thin and contains hair and

found all over the body, except palm and sole. Thick or glabrous skin, which is very thick having no hairs and present at palm and sole^[2]. Ayurveda describes the anatomical and physiological aspects of Skin under the broad concept of Twak. Twak is one of the five sensory organs which helps to determine the touch sensation and it covers the whole body. Acharya Charaka has enumerated six layers of Twak whereas Acharya Sushruta describes seven layers.^[3] The formation of seven layers of skin takes place in the similar manner as that of the formation of skim on the surface of boiled milk. Other modified structures of the Twak are Kasha and Sweda granthi.^[4]

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS :

Literature searches regarding Twak, Twakroga and Raktamokshana were carried out through various Ancient Samhitas and its available Commentaries, Authorised text books, Journals and Published Articles and Databases.

III. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS :

In Ayurveda, Twacha word denotes Skin. Twacha is derived from "twak" dhatu, which means the 'cover'. About the Utpatti of Twak, it is described that when life is induced by the union of sperm (Shukra) and ovum (Shonita) in uterus (Garbhashaya), it undergoes rapid transformation and seven layers of skin form during embryonic period in third and fifth month of fetal age.

LAYERS OF SKIN^[5,6]

Table No.1 Layers of Skin

Layers according to Acharya Sushruta & Charaka	Width	Rogadhishtana	Modern Concept
Avabhasini/Udakadhara	1/18 Vrihi	Sidhma, Padmakantaka	Epithelial layer
Lohita	1/16 Vrihi	Tilakalaka, Nyachcha, Vyanga	Stratum lucidum
Shweta/ Trutiya	1/12 Vrihi	Ajagallika, Charmadala	Stratum granulosum

Tamra/ Chaturtha	1/8 Vrihi	Kilasa, Kushta	Malphigian layer
Vedini/ Panchami	1/5 Vrihi	Kushta, Visarpa	Papillary layer
Rohini/ Shashti	1 Vrihi	Apachi, Arbuda, Slipada, Galaganda	Reticular layer
Mamsadhara	2 Vrihi	Bhagandara, Vidradhi, Arsha	Sub cutaneous tissue, Muscle

TWAK ROGA

Majority of skin diseases have been described under ‘Kushta’ in Ayurveda. Literary meaning of Kushta is “kushnativapuhetikushtam” which means any disease which deforms skin is known as Kushta. There are two types of Kushta – Mahakushta, which is further classified into 7 subtypes and Kshudrakushta, which is further classified into 11 types. The name Mahakushta is based on the chronicity of the disease and severity of the symptoms. Less severe skin diseases are described in Kshudrakushta. Remaining skin diseases are enumerated in the context of Kshudraroga.^[7]

Ayurveda give emphasis on the concept of Shamana, Shodhana and Nidanaparivarjana while explaining the treatment of various skin ailments. Acharya Sushruta, explains in KushtaChikitsa that a person afflicted with any kind of skin disease should refrain from taking meat, milk, curd, oil, Kulatha, Masha, Nispava, preparations and modifications of sugarcane juice, Amla, Viruddhahara, Adhyashana, Ajirna, Vidahi, Abhishyandaahara, Divaswapna and Vyavaya.^[8] Kushta is Tridoshajvyadhi and hence all doshas have to be taken into consideration and treated accordingly based on its predominance.

IMPORTANCE OF RAKTAMOKSHANA IN TWAKROGA

Raktamokshana is one of the parasurgical procedure (Anushastra Karma), which is the procedure of allowing bleeding for therapeutic purposes. Raktamokshana is made of two words Rakta and Mokshana, Rakta means blood and Mokshana means to leave. Combining both these words makes the term Rakta-mokshana which means ‘to let out blood’. The blood is expelled out from the body to reduce the quantity of toxic substances in blood borne diseases (Raktajavikara). It is one among the Shodhana Karma (Panchakarma) according to Acharya Sushruta and Acharya Vagbhata. Acharya Charaka has also mentioned the procedure of Raktamokshana but did not consider it under Panchakarma. The process of Raktamokshana can be traced back to the Vedic period only and not beyond.

According to Ayurveda classics, RaktaDushti is recognized as a major factor in the development of skin disorders. Alternatively, patients may experience relief from the symptoms by letting out the vitiated Rakta. Acharya Sushruta explains the procedure of Raktamokshana in detail, different techniques like Jalaukavacharana, Prachanna, Shrngna, Alabu, Siravyadha and describes Siravyadha as Ardhachikitsa^[9].

त्वन्दोषान्त्रयःशोफरोगाःशोणितजाश्वये
रक्तमोक्षणशीलानांभवन्तिकदाचन ||

In ShonitavarnaniyaAdhyaya, Acharya Sushruta highlights the importance of Raktamokshana and its preventive aspect in the above verse. It mentions that those undergoing Raktamokshana as a routine will never suffer from skin disorders, Granthi, Shopha and Raktajaroga.^[10] In KushtaChikitsa, it is advised that Raktamokshana has to be done every six months.^[11] Raktamokshana helps by reducing inflammation, improving blood circulation and eliminate toxins that contribute to skin ailments.

IV. DISCUSSION :

The skin is essential for overall health and well being, serving multiple important functions. The incidence of skin diseases is increasing and it varies by region, age group and lifestyle factors. Raktamokshana is a treatment modality included in the line of management of many skin diseases. Raktamokshana purifies Rakta and in turn the other Dosha associated in the disease process and thus alleviates the disease faster than only Shamana medications. Also, it is told in the Samhitas that one who undergoes Raktamokshana periodically, doesn’t suffer with Twakroga, Granthi, Shopha etc. which is explaining the preventive aspect of Raktamokshana and the therapeutic effect is explained in the context of KushtaChikitsa also.

V. CONCLUSION :

Preventing and treating skin diseases are essential for numerous reasons, impacting both physical and mental health. Raktamokshana is a

treatment modality which is widely accepted in Ayurveda and it is having both preventive as well as therapeutic effect.

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