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Review Article

Role of *Chitrak* in the Management of Skin Problem W.S.R. to *Shwitra*

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ABSTRACT

Shwitra is common skin disorders mainly characterized by the presence of lesion or white patches over the skin. *Shwitra* on the basis of symptomatic similarities can be correlated with vitiligo. Excessive consumption of liquid and heavy foods, intake of salty & sour foods, excessive intake of fish and sweets, exposure to sunlight, genetic factors and autoimmune responses, etc. are some causes which can initiate pathogenesis of *Shwitra*, in this condition destruction of melanocytes take place. However exact cause of *Shwitra* is still to know. Ayurveda described various treatment modalities for the management of *Shwitra*; *Chitrak* (*Plumbago zeylanica*) is one such herb which offers beneficial effect in the management of vitiligo. Considering this aspect present article emphasizes role of *Chitrak* in the management of vitiligo.

Keywords: *Ayurveda*, *Shwitra*, *Vitiligo*, *Chitrak*, *Plumbago zeylanica*.

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Introduction

The word *Switra* means *Shweta* and disease *Switra* technically resembles whiteness of the skin or white patches over skin. *Switra* (Vitiligo) characterized as whitish colored patches over skin without any pain or secretions. The milky white macules smaller than 0.5cm or patches larger than 0.5cm may be observed in disease condition. Pathologically disease involves gradual destruction of melanocytes of epidermis leading to hypopigmentation or depigmented patches over skin. The *Switra* physically not produces any harmful effects but it greatly affects quality of life due to the psychological depression associated with disease condition [1-5].

The word *Switra* can be elaborated by using quote "*Shweta Bhava Micchanti Switra*" which means reflection of white colour. *Charaka Samhita* mentioned *Tridoshaja* involvement in *Switra* along with *Rakta*, *Maamsa* and *Medadhatugat* vitiation. The fourth layer of *Twacha* (*Tamra*) mainly considered as prime location of *Switra*.

Ayurveda mentioned therapeutic approaches such as; *Shodhana* and *Shaman Chikitsa* for the management of various skin problems. In this regards natural drug *Chitrak*

(*Plumbago zeylanica*) also recommended alone or in combination for the treatment of *Switra*.

Plumbago zeylanica (*Chitrak*) is a plant belonging from family *Plumbaginaceae*, offers several medicinal importance including health benefits in skin problems. *Chitrak* traditionally recommended for various therapeutic purposes in case of *Grahani Roga*, *Agnimandya*, *Udara Sula*, *Arsa* and *Gudasotha*. This plant mainly found in tropical and subtropical countries, is also found in West Bengal, Maharashtra and some parts of South India. The root of plant employed mainly for various therapeutic purposes. The major phytoconstituents of plant are Plumbagin, Chitranone, Plumbagic Acid, Hydroxyproline, Maritone, Dihydrosterone, B- Sitosterol and Zeylanone etc [2-7].

Chitrak is used for the management of various health problems like; nausea, indigestion, abdominal cramps, osteoarthritis, hemorrhoids, ulcer, skin disease and leprosy, etc. It can be used as liver tonic and helps to control level of cholesterol. *Chitrak* offers various therapeutic benefits in skin and other problems as depicted in **Figure 1**.



Figure 1: Therapeutic benefits of *Chitrak*.

***Chitrak* in *Shwitra*:**

Chitrak offers beneficial effects in *Shwitra* since it offers *Tridoshghana* effect, mainly pacifies *Kapha* & *Vata Dosh*, control vitiated *Vayu* and helps to maintain normal circulatory functioning of body. As per Ayurveda *Chitrak* offers health benefits in skin problem due to its inherent properties which are as follows:

- ❖ **Rasa:** *Katu*
- ❖ **Guna:** *Laghu, Tikсна, Ruksa*
- ❖ **Vipaka:** *Katu*
- ❖ **Virya:** *Usna*
- ❖ **Karma:** *Sothahara, Grahi, Kaphavatahara, Arsohara and Sulahara.*

Chitrak helps to treat *Shwitra* since it offers following health benefits in skin problem:

- The heating effect of *Chitrak* boosts circulatory process thus removes skin ailments.
- It enhances metabolism and remove toxins from the body thus improves skin health by detoxification process.
- It improves digestion thereby regulate nutritional supply, maintain colour and texture of skin
- The anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties of *Chitrak* provide calming and soothing effects in skin problems.

The vitiation of *Kapha* and *Vata* is main *Doshic* involvement in *Shwitra*, *Chitrak* pacifies *Kapha* and *Vata* thus control disease from its root cause. *Plumbago zeylanica* provides strength to immune system due to the presence of plumbagin therefore protect skin from microbial susceptibility. It protects body from environmental toxins and prevent free radicals induce damage of tissue. It reduces inflammatory process inside the body thus protects from skin ailments such as; vitiligo.

There are various commercial formulations used for skin ailments containing *Chitrak* as ingredient such as; *Punarnavadi Guggulu*, *Yogaraj Guggulu*, *Kapha* massage oil, *Punarnavadi Guggulu* powder and *Yogaraj Guggulu* powder. The bitter taste, pungent metabolites and heating effect of *Chitrak* help to balance *Kapha* and *Vata* thus relieve skin manifestation of vitiligo [6-10].

The other formulations containing *Chitrak* can be used in vitiligo are as follows:

1. Formulations containing *Chitrak* used in *Shamana Chikitsa* of *Shwitra*:

a. *Manjishthadi Kwath / Churna*

It contains *Chitraka* root along with *Bakuchi seeds*, *Neem bark*, *Go-mutra*, *Hasthi-mutra* and *Sasyaka*.

b. *Mahakashaya Yoga*

It contains *Chitraka* along with *Manjishtha*, *Adusa*, *Nimba*, *Triphala*, *Haldi*, *Khadir*, *Kutaki*, *Giloya*, *Baakuchi*, *Murva*, *Danti*, *Amaltasa*, *Patolpatra*, *Peepal* and *Anantamula*.

c. *Go-mutrasava*

It contains *Chitraka* along with *Go-mutra*, *Shunthi*, *Marich* and honey.

2. Formulations for local application can be used in *Shwitra*:

a. *Yoga for Shwitra containing Chitrak*

It contains *Chitrak mool* along with *Baakuchi beej*, *Chakramard beej*, *Tulsi beej*, *Jeeraka*, *Neem beej*, *Khadir twak*, *Gairik bhasma*, *Erand beej* and *Gandhak*.

b. *Gutika for Shwitra containing Chitrak*

It contains *Chitrak* mixed with *Gomutra* and other ingredients such as; *Avalgujadi gutika* *Baakuchi*, *Mainshila*, *Hartal* and *Gunja* root.

c. *Ghrita for Shwitra containing Chitrak*

It contains *Chitrak* along with *Triphala*, *Tulsi*, *Amaltasa*, *Makoya*, *Trikatu*, *Kutaj*, *Mehndi*, *Danti*, *Madaar* and *Daruhaldi*.

d. *Bhallatakadi lepa for Shwitra containing Chitrak*

It contains *Chitrak* along with *Bhallataka*, *Snuhi root*, *Arka root*, *Maricha*, *Shankh*, *Tuttha*, *Pippali*, *Salts*, *Sarjikshara*, *Kalihari* and *Yavakshara*.

Conclusion

Shwitra is one of the common skin problem symptomatically correlates with vitiligo. Excessive consumption of heavy, oily, salty & sour foods, exposure to sunlight, genetic factors and environmental effects, etc. are some factors which can trigger pathogenesis of *Shwitra*. Ayurveda described various approaches for the management of *Shwitra* including use of natural drugs such as; *Chitrak (Plumbago zeylanica)*. *Chitrak* helps to treat *Shwitra* since it offers health benefits in various skin ailments. It removes toxins from the body, improves digestion, regulates nutritional supply, imparts anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties, provide calming and soothing effects. *Chitrak* provides strength to

immune system thus protect skin from microbial susceptibility, it protects body from the damage induced by free radicals, pacifies *Kapha* and *Vata* and detoxifies body thus maintain colour and texture of skin. Article concluded that *Chitrak* can be used as alternative therapeutic measure for the management of skin disease like; *Shwitra*.

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