

CONCEPT OF TWAK IN AYURVEDA- AN OVERVIEW**Ashwathykutti V.*¹ and Rakesh Narayanan V.²**

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Article Received on
20 May 2016,Revised on 10 June 2016,
Accepted on 01 July 2016

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr20168-6703

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ABSTRACT

Twak sarira is indeed an unexplored area in ayurvedic sarira vijñana. Twak is not just an external covering, but an important seat for vata, pitta and the most important sensory faculty, sparsanendriya. Twak is essentially sapta dhatvatmaka and Many skin manifestations are reflections of internal dhatu dushti or even Agni dushti. In this light an attempt is made to critically analyse the references related to twak sarira in Ayurveda to explore the applied aspects of twak sarira.

KEYWORDS: Twak sarira, Ayurveda, Guna configuration.**INTRODUCTION**

Skin is the most important sense organ and covering the entire body it forms the largest organ of the body. Being the external cover, it reflects many of the internal pathologies and gives valuable signs of various disease. Ayurveda understands the skin very comprehensively and from various classical references the clinical importance can be very well appreciated.

The word twak is derived from the Sanskrit root त्वच संवरणे which means “that which covers”.

The understanding of the concept of twak is essential for the management of not only skin diseases, but also for a wide range of systemic pathologies, owing to the fact that the skin is not just a mere external covering, but is in fact a mirror of the inside body. Many skin manifestations are reflections of internal dhatu dushti or even agni dushti. This concept was well elaborated in our classics and it is with this aim that an exploration into the concepts relating to twak from samhita, were undertaken.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The references related to twak were first collected and sequentially arranged into various headings such as references relating to physiology, pathology, symptomatology, embryology and the fundamental guna configuration of twak to get a bird's eye view of the concept of twak in Ayurveda. Later each of the references were analysed to understand its applied aspects.

TWAK UTPATTI- EMBRYOLOGY OF TWAK

Twak is the result of the dhatu parinama in the foetus. It is primarily the result of transformation from rakta to mamsa. Vagbhata says it develops from rakta as cream is formed from milk.^[1] The embryonic development of twak is completed by the sixth month of foetal life.^[2] It is formed in seven layers. Each layer is said to be the seat for different diseases.

Table No: 1^[3]

Sl.No	Layer	Diseases
	Avabhasini	Sidhma, Padmakantaka
	Lohita	Tilakalaka, Nyaccha, Vyanga
	Sweta	Carmadala, Ajagalli, mashaka
	Tamra	Kilasa, kushta
	Vedini	Kushta, Visarpa
	Rohini	Granthi, Apaci, Arbuda, Slipada, Galaganda
	Mamsadhara	Bhagandara, Vidradhi, Arsa

GUNA CONFIGURATION OF TWAK

Twak is *sneha sara* hence *abhyanga* is *twakprasadakaram param*.^[4] It is *snigdha sheeta* and so oil which is *ushna snigdha* is bad for skin when used internally but is good when used externally as it is against *vata*, which is the main factor which is antagonist to the *guna* configuration of skin. So *twachya dravya* are mostly *sheeta* and *snigdha* in *guna*. But if there is *kapha dushti* in skin resulting in *mala roopa kapha* (which is termed as *kleda*), *ruksha guna* can counter it which is predominant in *kashaya rasa* and hence *triphala* which is *ruksha* is *twakgatakledasoshana*.^[5]

PHYSIOLOGY OF TWAK

The twak has a structural component which is constituted from the *rasa dhatu* and a functional component which is the *twak indriya* which is the physiological function of *vata dosha*. *Sparshanedriya* is the most important cognitive organ as it is spread over all other

indriyas. Sparsa is the basis for perception of all knowledge and sparsa is identified in two planes, Aindriya and Manasa (Cakra.Ca.Su.30/6).^[6] Hence sparsanendiya is closely related with manas. Twak is the sthana of both vata and pitta showing the complimentary actions of both the dosha.

Sweda is a mala of medas, whereas the snehamsha of twak (sebum) is the mala of majja dhatu.^[7] So skin is essentially sapta dhatwatmaka. Its jalamsha is derived from rasa, colour from rakta, cellular components, muscles of epidermis and dermis being mamsa, sneha being medas and majja, connective tissue and hair constituting asthi and cellular division leading to cell proliferation and maintenance being the function of sukra dhatu of skin. The function of sweda is to maintain the moisture of skin and hair. So loss of sweat results in dryness of skin and hair. The colour of skin is maintained by bhrajaka pitta, which also does the paka locally.^[8] Twak kleda is the result of rakta kleda.^[9]

TWAK IN PATHOLOGY

The poshanamsha of twak is derived from rasa dhatu and hence rasa dushti directly influences the twak. This is why rasa kshaya results in dryness of twak^[10] and rasa dushti due to stress (chintyaanam cha ati chintanaat)^[11] is a main exacerbating factor in many skin disorders like psoriasis. This is how mind indirectly affects the skin. Direct influence of the mind on twak can be observed in abhyanga applied on the skin pacifying the vata and samvahana which is one of the upakrama of vata dosha in soothing and thus calming the mind. In modern terms also, skin and nervous system are derived from similar embryological derivatives both being ectodermal derivatives, one derived from the surface ectoderm and other from the neuroectoderm.

Twak is the first component of bahya roga marga. Thus it is an entry portal to deeper dhatus.

Skin manifestations form a basic tool of diagnosis in Ayurveda, especially by means of darshana pareeksha. Thus if we look at the basic dosha vriddhi lakshanas itself, the stiffness of twak is the lakshana of vata kopa. Yellow discolouration of skin indicates pitta vriddhi. Bloody discolouration shows raktavriddhi.^[12] Acharya also adds that most of the skin diseases are communicable and are of spreading nature.^[13]

TWAK IN SAMPRAPTI OF VARIOUS DISEASES

In “dahadi” sannipata jwara, pitta vitiation causes daha first in twak later in koshta.^[14] In samprāpti of arsa twak is a main dushya and in charma kila, a variant of arsa kapha dosha is taken by vyana vata and manifest as a cheloid like structure on skin.^[15] In Vidradhi, tridoshas vitiate twak, mamas etc to produce shophā internally or externally.^[16] Udara is a mahagada in which tridoshas especially localise in the junction between twak and mamsa.^[17] Pandu, the disease gets its nomenclature itself due to the pale discoloration of the skin which is due to the pitta, localised in between twak and mamsa.^[18] Kushta and Visarpa have similar dushyas (Sapta dravya sangraha) involved in the pathology, twak being an important one. In visarpa, along with vata and kapha dosha, rakta can independently cause granthi visarpa getting localised in twak, sira, snayu and mamsa^[19] a. In kushta tridosha vitiate twak, lasika, rakta and mamsa getting localised in siras resulting in twak vaivarnya. Slowly deeper dhātus get affected attracting various microorganisms that slowly eat away body hairs, skin, snayu, dhamani, cartilaginous bones etc. In uttana vata rakta, symptoms usually manifest in skin and mamsa.^[20]

TWAK IN SYMPTOMATOLOGY

SYMPTOM	TRANSLATION	DISEASE/AVASTHA
Twak roukshyam	Dryness	Jwara
Twak peeta haritatwa	Yellowish or greenish discolouration	Jwara
Twak shaityam	Coldness of skin	Jwara
Twak karshnyam	Blackish discolouration	Arshas
Twak peeta haritatwa	Yellowish or greenish discolouration	Arshas
Twak pandu snigdhatwa	Paleness of skin	Arsha
Twak daha	Burning sensation on skin	Prameha pitaka
Ruksha krishna twak	Dry blackish skin	Vata gulma
Twak haaridratwa	Greenish discolouration	Pitta gulma
Shukla twak	Whitish discolouration	Kaphaja gulma
Shyavaruna twak	Blackish or reddish discolouration	Vatika sophā
Twak peetatwam	Yellowish discolouration	Pitta sophā
Twak shuklata	Whitish discolouration	Kaphaja sophā
Twachi pritakvidhan varnaan	Multiple colourations on skin	Pandu Saamanya lakshana
Twak rukshata	Dryness	Pandu poorvarupa
Twak haaridrata	Greenish discolouration	Kamala
Twak sarshapa lipta iva	Skin feels hot as if paste of sesame has been applied	Pitta sophā
Kathina sheetala twak	Hard, cold skin	Kaphaja sophā
Twak vaivarnyam	Discolouration of skin	Kushta saamanya samprapti
Krimi bhakshita iva romam	Skin looks as if eaten by worms	Shwitra samprapti
Twak daha, kandu, swapa, unnati	Burning sensation, itching and raised.	kushtha poorvarupam
Pakwodumbara taamra twak	Skin looks like ripened udumbara (variety	Udumbara kushtha

	of Ficus) fruit	
Tanu sitaaruna sphotaichita twak	Thin blackish or reddish with oedema	Pundareeka kushtha
Twak sphutana rukshata	Cracked dry skin	Twakgata vata
Twak taamra shyava lohita kanduyukta	Coppery, blackish or reddish with itching	Vatarakta
Twak mamsaantara daha	Burning sensation between skin and muscle	Raktaavrita vata

CONCLUSIONS

Twak is the external covering of the whole body but it reflects the state of the various inner functions. Twak is snigdha guna pradhana and is nourished by rasa dhatu. Being the seat of sparsanendriya and vata, it is closely related with manas. Twak being the bahya roga marga, it acts as an entry portal for so many diseases. Hence samprāpti of wide range of diseases including jwara, pandu, sophia, vidradhi etc include twak as the main dushya. Any deviation in the normal state of the tridosha is explicitly reflected through the skin. Change in the colour, texture of the skin and associated symptoms like itching, burning sensation etc can reveal the underlying dosha dushti in various systemic pathologies.

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