

Comparative literature study of *Twak* (Skin) according to Ayurveda and Western medicine

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Abstract

Since, the incidence and impact of diseases of skin are ever increasing; the necessity of proper multifaceted understanding about skin is immense. Furthermore, the knowledge elaborated in Ayurveda and western medicine, if compared in a nutshell, will benefit clinicians vastly. Thus, my objective was to abridge the key facts about *Twak* (Human Skin) as per both disciplines and for this all relevant literary materials were referred with emphasis to authentic Ayurveda Samhita (Compendiums). Following are some of the notable particulars brought in-to light by this research. Disease conditions of *Twak* cause physical, mental, social and spiritual disharmonies in a person. Hence, *Twak* is like a reflector of the total health and wellbeing of an individual and his personality. Thus, treatments of *Twak* are of paramount importance. The seven layers of *Twak* proclaimed by Sushruta Samhita, corresponds perfectly with the seven skin layers, accepted by western medicine at present. Sushruta Samhita states that, there is no other worrying disease like *Kushtha* (Skin Disease) highlighting the suffering of such patient. It is declared by *Maharishi* (Great Sage) Dhanvantari that, disease *Shvitra* (Vitiligo) occurs precisely in the fourth layer of *Twak*; *Tamra*, which can be accepted even according to modern medicine, since the Melanin pigment is made by copper containing enzyme (Tyrosinase). In conclusion, despite daily advancements and changes in knowledge of western medicine and modern science, the excellence of wisdom proclaimed thousands of years ago by the holy and divine Maharishi of Ayurveda, will stand resolute and unparalleled even in future.

Keywords: *Twak*, Ayurveda, Western Medicine

Introduction

Twak, the human skin is the outermost covering of the body and also the largest sensory organ of man. Skin is the physical barrier which controls the exchange of materials between the body and the environment. Skin is also mainly responsible for the external appearance of a person and thus, health or disease of skin affects one's personality immensely. This fact is evident by the poor social involvement seen in majority of the patients suffering from *Kushtha* such as; *Shvitra*, *Kitibha* (Psoriasis), etc. Today the incidence of skin diseases is ever increasing due to various reasons. Therefore, at present there is a massive necessity for the knowledge about skin to be collected, analyzed and summarized as per the view of both Ayurveda and western medicine in order to enhance the health and to minimize the diseases of skin.

In Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, the concept of *Twak* is mainly elaborated under *Sharera rachana* (Anatomy) and an unparalleled as well as fascinating knowledge is found specially in *Vruddatraya* regarding human skin. The words *Twak*, *Twacha* and *Charma* are synonymous to each other and appear frequently in Ayurveda Samhita to symbolize human skin. *Twacha* is derived from "*Twach samvarne*" *Dhatu* meaning the covering of the body¹. In Ayurveda extensive description of *Twak* is available, including mainly the *Rachana shareera* (Anatomy), *Kriya sharera* (Physiology), *Vikritivingnana* (Pathology) and *Chikitsa* (Clinical Medicine) of *Twak*.

In Ayurveda the three main pillars are the *Trisutra*, namely; *Hetu* (Aetiology), *Linga* (Symptomatology) and *Aushadha* (Treatments), whilst the two main objectives are preserving health of the healthy person and pacifying ailments of the diseased person².

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