



REVIEW ARTICLE

ROLE OF RAKTAMOKSHAN IN VARIOUS DISEASES- A CRITICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Raktamokshan (bloodletting) is a unique treatment /procedure of ancient Indian medicines. It is commonly used for the detoxification through which a state of health is maintained as well as diseases could be cured with the help of it. It is also known as bloodletting technique in which the impure blood is taken out from the patient's body who is suffering from disease. Hence this procedure detoxifies *rakta dhatu* (blood) with different methods according to the *prakriti* (constitution) of the patient. The present study is to compile various methods of *raktamokshan* (bloodletting) in different diseases and its benefits. References has been collected and compiled from different *Ayurvedic* classical texts, manuscripts and journals have been used to review concept of *rakatmokshan* (bloodletting).

Key words: *Panchamahabhuta, Atma, Shaddhatwatmaka bhava, Garbha, foetus.*

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INTRODUCTION

According to classical *ayurvedic* texts, it has been mentioned that *rakta dhatu* (blood) is made up from *rasa dhatu*(plasma) as mentioned in *Charak* and *Shushruta*. *Rakta dhatu* (blood) plays vital role in our body as it helps in circulation, provides nutrition to each part of our body as well as provides nutrition to our *sapta dhatus*(seven tissues). It also helps to improve *varan* (colour complexion). It increases *bal* (immunity, power) of our body. *Acharyas* has mentioned that our survival is based on *rakta dhatu* (blood) as without it survival is impossible ^[1]. So everyone should take care of it. *Acharyas* have termed it as *prana dharak* (life saver) that means *rakta dhatu* (blood) carries our *prana* (life). If *rakta dhatu* (blood) gets vitiated it causes various disorders. *Rakta* (blood) gets vitiated due to many causes such as consumption of highly fermented alcoholic drinks, excessive salt intake, *til taila sevana* (sesame oil), consumption of *anoop jal animals* (aquatic animals) curd, vinegar, alcohol, food (*aahar*) which are *sanyoga* (combination), *desh* (place), *kala* (time), and *matra* (quantity) *virudha* (opposite)^[2].

When *rakta dhatu* (blood) gets vitiated with *vatta* it look like reddish black and its consistency is more diluted, when it get vitiated with *pitta* its colour changes into yellowish black and it does not get coagulate

as normal blood do. *Kapha* vitiated *rakta* (blood) appears more whitish in colour as well as its consistency becomes more sticky and becomes more thick in nature as compared to the normal blood.

Vitiated *rakta* (blood) leads to various disorders which are known as *rakta doshaj rog* (blood disorders) such as *Kushtha* (skin disorders), *Visarpa* (erysipelas), *Rakttapitta* (hemorrhagic disease), *Raktapradar* (Dysmenorrhea), *Guddapakka* (anal abscess), *Gulam* (tumour), *Vidhradi* (abscess formation), *Kamla* (jaundice), *Viyanga* (capillary angiomas), *Till* (non elevated moles), *Dadru*(ringworm), *Pama* (eczema).

The vitiated blood can be detoxified by *Raktamokshan* (bloodletting). The practice of *Raktamokshana* (bloodletting) can be traced back from *Vedic* period. It is a non-pharmacological and result oriented therapy recommended in *ayurveda* to manage painful conditions ^[3]. In this procedure 100-150 ml of impure blood is taken out due to which a person is suffering from the disease. *Shard ritu* (period between Sep-Nov) is classical period for detoxification of blood through *raktamokshan*^[4]. Removal of these toxins balances the *doshas* (energies that control all of the body's biological functions). It can be done in various ways depending upon the vitiation of *rakta* by different reasons and on specific area for local pathologies like

inflammation, abscesses and pigmentation or can be done for more serious skin disorders like Psoriasis, Eczema, Herpes etc. Though the procedures are considered as the most effective treatment modalities in *ayurveda*, they should be done with many precautions. A thorough examination by a qualified and experienced *ayurvedic* physician is necessary before deciding the mode of treatment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: Literature related to *Raktamokshan* is collected from classical texts of *Ayurveda*, various publications, books and research papers. After a thorough study of research carried out in the field of *Raktamokshan*, the subject matter related to it was compiled and critically analyzed in this study.

Indications for *raktamokshana*:

Raktamokshan as a method of treatment is indicated in *Sotha* (inflammation), *daha* (burning sensation), *paka* (abscess), *raktavrana* (wound), *Vatarakta* (gout), *kushta* (skin disease), *vata* diseases having severe pain, *slipada* (filariasis), blood vitiated with poisons, *granthi* (cyst), *arbuda* (tumor), *apache* (scrofula), *ksudraroga* (minor skin disease), *raktadhimantha* (secondary glaucoma), *vidari* (gangrenous stomatitis), *stanaroga* (breast disease), debility and heaviness of the body, *raktabhishyanda* (purulent conjunctivitis), *tandra* (sleepiness), *putigraha*, *putinasya*, *putideha*, *yakrutpliha*

roga, *visarpa*, *vidradhi*, *pidaka*, *paka of karna*, *oshta*, *ghrana*, *siroruja*, *upadamsa* and *raktapitta*.^[5,6]

Different methods of *Raktamokshana*:

There are two main types of *raktamokshana* – *shastra visravana* and *vnushastra visravana*. In *shastra visravana* the blood is let out using surgical instruments through multiple incisions (*Pracchana*) or venepuncture (*siravedha*). In *anushastra visravana*, the blood is let out through organic instruments such as application of leeches (*Jalaukavacharana*), sucking the blood through cow's horn (*shring avacharana*) and extracting of blood using a vegetable called *Alabu*/ bottle gourd^[7].

***Pracchana* (scarification):**

Prachanna (scarification) is one among the *shastrakrita raktamokshana* in which multiple small incisions/pricks are made to irrigate the impure blood. This type of *raktamokshana* can be done as a *poorvakarma* (pre-operative procedure) in *shringa*, *Alabu*, *ghati* type of *rakta mokshana*. In this type of *raktamokshana*, bloodletting is done by scraping the area with a sharp instrument in *uttana rakta* (superficial), *ekadesa pindita rakta*. The site where *pracchana* is to be done should be cleaned well and a *bandhana* (ligation) is done above the site of *pracchana*. The *pracchana* should be done in such a manner that it should be straight, neither too

superficial nor too deep, it should not be oblique and should not be very near to other *pracchana* line^[8].

In a single case study of 23 year old male with complaints of white patches over left shoulder, itching and burning sensation, nine sittings of *prachhana karma* were done at an interval of 7 days followed by *bakuchi churnaavachurna*. Complete remission in signs and symptoms of *shivtra* (vitiligo) were found (M Krunal et.al, 2017)^[9].

A male patient aged 23 years with complaint of excessive hair fall more than 150 hairs in a day resulting in baldness in forehead, dandruff and itching all over head was advised local *abhyanga* (massage) of scalp with *dhurdhurpatradi taila* for 1 week followed by *pracchana* (scarification) by modified technique in scalp once in a week for 5 week. There was marked improvement in the case of alopecia (Bhusal N et. al, 2017)^[10].

Danthavestaka (pyorrhoea) is commonly seen in society as prominent gum problem. To evaluate the efficacy of *prachanna* (scarification) in *danthavestaka* a young girl of 18 year age, suffering from bleeding gums along with pus discharge was given *prachanna karma*. After 15 days of *prachanna and aharana*, no inflammation, no bleeding, pus discharge was found. It was concluded that *prachanna* is a very specific method of *rakthamokshana* used to remove

lodged superficial blood from small area (Pundareekaksha RP 2016)^[11].

Ghati yantra :

Ghati yantra (cupping pot) is the simple and effective treatment for reducing *ruka* (pain), *stambha* and *spandana* (sensation) in *gridhrasi* (sciatica). In this procedure, *pracchana* (scarification) is done at the region where bloodletting is to be done. The *ghati yantra* (cupping pot) with a burning candle is kept over the pricked region. This *ghati yantra* is kept for 10 – 15 minutes on the pricked region; the burning candle utilizes the air inside and thus creates a vacuum with negative pressure which leads to bloodletting.

The twenty patients suffering from *gridhrasi* (sciatica) had restricted movements due to painful limb, affecting their daily routine activities. *Raktamokshana* was done on *sphik* (gluteal region) or *kati* (low back) region with the help of *ghati yantra* (*kanchapatra*) in four sittings (0, 5th, 10th and 15th day). Marked reduction in severity of *ruja* (pain), *toda*, *stambha*, and *spandana* (sensation) was seen in the patients (Patil MK et.al,2016)^[12].

Shringavacharana:

In this procedure, bloodletting is done by using *shringa* (cow horn). This method of *raktamokshana* (bloodletting) is done in blood vitiated with vata as *shringa* is having properties like *snigdada* , *ushna* (hot),

madhura (sweet). Sushruta explained method of *shringavacharana* (cupping by horn) by manual method i.e. blood should be sucked by mouth. After scratching the site, bloodletting should be done by means of the cow horn to which a piece of thin urinary bladder of an animal has been tied as a cover by a thread till blood is sucked out by manual mouth suction. This causes bloodletting. After proper *raktamokshana*, the *shringa* should be removed and the wound should be bandaged using *jatyadi ghrith*^[13].

But nowadays due to awareness of various infections like HIV, Hepatitis B, etc., sucking of blood by mouth is not suitable. This is the main cause by which physicians agonizing from *shringavacharana* method in surgical practice. To overcome this problem, instrument is modified in such a way that instead of sucking of blood by mouth, mechanical suction pumps are used. These pumps facilitate easy and smooth suction of blood (Sonaje M et. al, 2011)^[14].

Total 16 cases of lumbar *spondylosis* were treated with *raktamokshana* by using modified *shringa yantra*. Total four sittings of *raktamokshana* were carried out in 15 days interval. After completion of treatment, significant relief was observed in low back pain. *shringa avacharana* showed fruitful outcomes in the management of *sandhigata vata* (osteoarthritis) (Joshi F et. al, 2017)^[15].

Skin disorders in *ayurveda* are efficiently treated by remedial and parasurgical methods. *Vicharchika* (Eczema) is a type of *kshudra kushta*, a chronic disease characterized by itching erythema, scaling, edema, vesiculation, and oozing. The involvement of *vata* results in dry or blackish lesion of eczema. However, itching in those affected areas is due to *kapha*^[16]. Innovative *shringavacharana yantra* with vacuum pump was used for treatment of eczema in 32 patients and significant results were found (Sonaje ML et. al, 2012)^[17].

Jalaukavacharana:

Jalaukavacharana^[18] (Leech therapy) involving the attachment of leeches to affected areas, is an ancient and famous modality of *raktamokshana* which can be used in delicate persons and it can be a choice of treatment in *pitaghna doshas* and deep seated disease pathologies. The leeches are allowed to extract blood for about 20 to 45 minutes at a time, from the person undergoing treatment. It is the mildest and safest method used for *raktamokshan*. There are more than 600 species of leeches that have been identified but only 12 of the species are used medically, so they are given a class of their own. Leech saliva contains anticoagulant substance like hirudin, calin, and destabilase, which increase bleeding time and clotting time during course of therapy. They are classified as *Hirudo*

Medicinalis or medicinal leeches. Based on the purpose of treatment medicated leeches are selected.

The patient having thrombosed piles such as bluish coloured solid round swelling at the anal orifice, tenderness and pain was selected. In strangulated and thrombosed external piles, leeches were applied. Significant relief in symptoms like *gudadaha* (burning pain in anus), *vedana* (pain), *vibandha*, *kandu* (itching) etc. were noticed (Kulkarni NH et. al, 2015) ^[19].

Vicharchika is one of the *kshudra kushta*. Vichar means to move in different directions, spread or extend. Vicharchika means coating, cover, a form of cutaneous eruption, itching with scab. Highly significant result was found after *virechana* (medicated purgation) and *raktamokshana* (bloodletting by leech therapy) to a 47 year old female having classical signs and symptoms of *vicharchika* (Katariya P et. al, 2017) ^[20].

Hair fall in *ayurveda* is termed as *khalitya*. It is classified under *shiroroga*. Vitiated *pitta* ie. *bhrajaka pitta* along with vitiated *vata* leads to weakening or withering of the hair from the hair roots. Vitiated *rakta* and *kapha dosha* block the opening of hair follicle due to which production of new hair stop ^[21].

A 28 yrs old female with chief complaint of hair fall, thinning of hairs with

recession of hairline in temporal and frontal region, dandruff, itching scalp and roughness was selected for the therapy. Total five sittings of *jalaaukavcharana* were done on day1, day 15, day 30, day 45, and day 60 with oral medication for regular 2 months. Two leeches were applied over to fronto-temporal region of both side. When leeches left the site by their own (after sucking blood for approximately 30 min), dressing with *haridra* (turmeric powder) and *jathyadi taila* was done. Significant improvement in symptoms were reported (Yadav CR et. al, 2017) ^[22].

Alabu:

In this type of *rakthamokshana* (bloodletting) is done by using a *alabu* (*Laganaria Vulgaris*) containing a burning candle. This particular technique is used in *kapha dushta rakta*, *avagaghatara dushta rakta in twak*, *sukumara purusha*, *kandu* (itching), *suptata* (numbness), *sparsanasa* ^[23]. The *alabu* used should be soft, white, which is neither too big nor too small. The length of attached *nalika* should be of 4 *angula* and diameter 8 *angula*. *pracchana* (pricking) should be done at the region where bloodletting is to be done. The *alabu* with a burning candle is kept over the pricked region and is kept for 10 – 15 min. The burning candle utilizes the air inside and thus creates a vacuum with negative pressure which leads to bloodletting.

Jatyadi taila or *ghrita* is used for dressing & bandaging the wound^[24].

Siravedha-

Siravedha (venepuncture) is considered to be the half or just sometimes the complete treatment (depending upon the condition) in *shalya tantra gata vyadhies* as *bastikarma* is considered for the *kayachikitsa gata vyadhies*^[25]. By the *siravedha* alone, all the diseases can be cured from their roots, just like rice and other crops in the field dry out completely by removing the bunds of field. The diseases which are not cured by *sneha*, *lepa* etc. are cured by *siraveda*^[26]. It is an emergency management to achieve better results^[27]. A tourniquet is tied 4 fingers above the site and vein is made visible. Vein is punctured and blood is allowed to flow for some time. Later it stops on its own. The symptoms of *samyak siravedha* are *laghavam* (lightness of body) and *vedana shanti* (pain reduction). Pain arising from a diseased condition get subsided followed by decrease in the symptoms of the disease. So *siravedha* can be used in pain predominant diseases^[28].

Gridhrasi (sciatica) is one of the painful condition which disturbs the daily routine of the patient. This diseases having predominance of *vata dosha* as it comes under 80 *vataj nanatmaj vyadhi* and may have *kaphaanubandha* with it. The radiating pain from lumbar region to the lower extremities

may show stiffness in the lower limb and hence patient may get difficulty in walking.

A total of 20 patients on the basis of sign and symptoms and clinical examination were selected and treated with 3 sitting of *siravedha* at four *anguls* above and below *janusandhi*, (knee joint) and *antarakandara gulfa* (ankle joint) with an interval of 15 days in between. *Siravedha* therapy showed highly significant results in all signs and symptoms of *gridhrasi* (Bharti T et. al, 2015)^[29].

To study the effect of *siravedha* in the management of pain in *gridharasi*, 10 patients with signs and symptoms of *gridharasi* were selected. *Siravedha* was done at *antara kandara gulpha* till *samyak sravita lakshanas* were observed and treatment was found effective in the management of pain in *gridharsi* (Nandkishor PU et. al, 2013)^[30].

DISCUSSION:

In *ayurveda* use of particular therapy in a particular disease depends on its property like *ras*, *guna* etc. and the *chikitsa* (treatment) is correction of vitiated *doshas* to reinstate the *tri-dosha* equilibrium. Different modalities of *raktamokshan* act on predominantly in *vata*, *pitta*, *rakta* and *kaphaja vyadhi* or when *pitta* or *kapha* is in *anubandha* to *vata dosha*. In such condition of *vata prakopa* due to *kapha* and *pitta avarana*. *Raktamokshan* can remove the *avarana* of *kapha* or *pitta dosha* giving way for *anulomana* indirectly cures the *vatic*

symptoms along with *pitta* and *kapha dosha* and patient gets immediate relief in pain.

CONCLUSION:

Raktamokshana is an effective blood purification therapy, in which carefully controlled removal of small quantities of blood is conducted to neutralise accumulated toxins of many blood-borne diseases. It provides a rapid and sometimes dramatic reduction of symptoms in certain acute disorders. When *pitta* symptoms are to be reduced quickly, removing a small amount of toxic blood from affected area can relive acute sign and symptoms effectively. As awareness about *ayurveda* is increasing day by day, more and more people are coming to its fold and are being treated by various methods described in *ayurveda*.

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