



RAKTAMOKSHNA – REVIEW STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CHARAKA SAMHITA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda understands the disease in terms of imbalanced doshas (bodily humors) and treatment aims at removing this unbalanced doshas out of the body and achieving a state of equilibrium in the body. To achieve this various purificatory procedures are told like Vaman (emesis), Virechana (Purgation), Basti (medicated enema), Nasya (Nasal medication) and Raktamokshana (Bloodletting), these five procedures are collectively called as Panchakarma procedures. Raktamokshana includes various methods and commonly practiced are Siravedhan (Vein puncturing) and Jalaukavacharan (Leech application). Raktamokshan is indicated in disorders of Pitta (fire/bile) and Rakta (blood) involvement.

The practice of Raktamokshana can be traced back from Vedic period and the references related to bloodletting by means of leech application are available in the Kousika sutra of Adharvana Veda. The extraction of blood for the cure of many disorders was in practice since antiquity until the late 19th century. Hippocrates was also reported that bloodletting was in practice in Greece during the fifth century B.C. It was used to "treat" a wide range of diseases, becoming a standard treatment for almost every ailment, and was practiced prophylactically as well as therapeutically.

Though Charaka has not incorporated Raktamokshana (bloodletting) in the group of Panchakarma, mentioning of more than 30 references of Raktamokshana for the management of Jwara (fever), Gulma (abdominal tumor), Kushta (skin disorders), Arshas[piles], Visarpa (herpes) and Vatarakta (gout) etc. suggests the comprehensive knowledge about bloodletting therapy. The details of the historical perspective as well as the references related to Raktamokshana in Charaka Samhita will be discussed in this topic.

Key Words: Raktamokshana, Bloodletting, Charaka Samhita, Panchakarma, Raktajrog

INTRODUCTION:

Ayurveda has discussed principles as well as philosophy of life. It is one of the healing sciences with its main objective to maintain healthy person in healthy and sound condition of the body and soul respectively and to achieve the respective benefits in case of diseased person.

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The term, Panchakarma" means five therapeutic procedures that brings about homeostasis. According to Charaka school of thought Vamana [emesis], Virechana [purgation], Asthapanavasti [enema therapy with decoctions], Anuvasanavasti [enema therapy with oils] and Nasya [nasal administration] come under the category of Panchakarma treatment modalities.[1]

Though Charaka has not incorporated Raktamokshana [bloodletting] in the group of Panchakarma, mentioning of more than 30 references of Raktamokshana for the management of various disease conditions related to different branches of Ayurveda suggests that he is having a comprehensive knowledge about bloodletting therapy also.

Historical Aspects of Raktamokshana:

In the Koushika sutra of Atharvaveda, references of bloodletting [Raktamokshana] by leech are available. Bloodletting indeed represents one of the oldest human efforts on medicinal therapy. It is hard but a fact to believe that in 18th century when the doctors could do nothing to the patients coming to them but were just drawing blood as much as possible from them, so that they would feel something was being done for them.[ii] Bloodletting is one of the oldest medical practices, have been practiced among ancient peoples including the Mesopotamians, the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Mayans, and the Aztecs. The British Encyclopaedia is the witness of this therapy.[iii] In Greece, bloodletting was in use during the time of Hippocrates, who mentions bloodletting but Ingeneral relied on dietary techniques. Erasistratus, however, theorized that many diseases were caused by plethoras, or over abundances, in the blood and advise that these plethoras be treated, initially by exercise, swearing, reduce food intake and vomiting. Herophilus advocated bloodletting. Archagathus, one of the first Greek physicians to practice in Rome, also believed in the value of bloodletting.[iv] To expel out the vitiated blood, seven procedures were advocated: Venesection [SiraVedhan], Horn application [Sringa Avacharana], Gourd application [Alabu

Avacahrana], Leech application [Jalauka Avacharana], Scrapping [Pracchanna Karma], Cupping glass application [Ghati Yantra Avacharana] and Needle application [Suchi Avacharana].[v]

AIMS & OBJECTIVES:

To study and document the details of Raktamokshana mentioned in Charaka Samhita.

MATERIALS ANDMETHODS:

After a thorough consultation of Charaka Samhita, Ancient Historical works along with e-journals; the subject matter related to Raktamokshana was compiled

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Jwara [Fever]: 1. Karnamoola Sodha [inflammation near the root of the ear] as a consequence of Sannipatajwara Raktavasechana by incising the vein nearer to the ear [Ch. S. Chi. 3/28]
2. SakhanusariJwara.....Raktavasechana by incising the vein in the arm [Ch. S. Chi. 3/289]
3. Abhighataja Jwara...Raktavasechana [Ch. S. Chi. 3/31] Gulma [Abdominal tumor]:
4. If Gulma doesn't cure by medicines, it is inferred that the vitiation of the blood is the cause and should be managed by means of Raktavasechana with the help of Sringa [horn] etc. Bloodletting can also be done by

Bahu Siravedhana i.e. incising the vein in the arm [Ch. S. Chi. 5/32].

5. If Gulma is associated with the complications like Trishna [thirst], Jwara [fever], Paridaha [excessive burning sensation], Soola [colic], Sweda [sweating], Agnimardava [decreased digestive power] and Aruchi [anorexia]; it should be managed by means of Raktavasechana [Ch. S. Chi. 5/36].

6. In case of Kaphaja Gulma, Raktamokshana is suggested by means of Ghatiyantara. In this context, the author had also explained the method of application of Ghatiyantara in a lucid manner [Ch. S. Chi. 5/137 – 141].

7. Kushta: For the management of PittajaKushta... Raktamokshana is advised. It is further quoted that in case of Alpa Dosha [less acute stage], bloodletting should be done by means of Pracchana [rubbing with a coarse device] and in case of BahuDosha [more acute stage] by means of Siravedhana [Venesection] – [Ch. S. Chi. 7/40].

8. The equipment and instruments useful for bloodletting therapy in the context of Kushta Chikitsa is suggested by Charaka as.... KurchaSastra, Sringa, Alabu, Jalouka [Ch. S. Chi. 7/50-52].

9. Raktamokshana is also indicated for the management of Switra [leucoderma] – [Ch. S. Chi. 7/172].

Rajayakshma [Wasting condition]:

10. For the management of the symptoms of Rajayakshma such as Sirahsoola [headache] and Parswasoola [pain in the flanks] bloodletting therapy by means of Sringa, Alabu, Jalouka or Siravedhanais suggested by Acharya Charaka[Ch. S. Chi. 8/8].

Unmada [Insanity]:

11. For the management of Unmada, Vishamajwara and Apasmara [epilepsy] bloodletting is to be conducted at Sankhakesanta Sandhi [joint of hairline and temporal region] – [Ch. S. Chi. 9/77].

Swayadhu [Oedema]:

For the management of Galaganda [goiter] and Gandamala [cervical adenitis] Siravedhana is advised [Ch. S. Chi. 12/80].

13. Bloodletting therapy by means of Venesection is suggested for the management of Alaji, Charmanakhantra Sodha [whitlow] and Vidarika [inguinal and axillary lymphadenitis] [Ch. S. Chi. 12/89].

14. Jalagardabha is to be treated by means of Raktamokshana [Ch. S. Chi. 12/100]. Udara [Abdominal disorder]:

15. Vama-BahuSiravedhana [Venesection in the left arm] is indicated in Yakritodara and Pleehodara[enlargement of liver & spleen] - [Ch. S. Chi. 13/77].

Arshas[Hemorrhoids]:

16. In case of Raktarshas [bleeding piles], Raktamokshana is to be conducted by means of JaloukaPrayoga[leech application], Sastra

[sharp instruments], Suchi [needles] etc. [Ch. S. Chi. 14/61].

Grahani [Dysentery]:

17. Siravedhana is indicated in Atyagni [increased digestive power] - [Ch. S. Chi. 15/226]. Visarpa [Erysipelas]:

18. In case of Visarpa, if the vitiated Doshas in the state of Ama are lodged in Pittasthana, it is advised to conduct bloodletting. [Ch. S. Chi. 21/45].

19. If the blood is vitiated in the periphery and cause Visarpa – Raktamokshana is indicated. In case of vitiated blood is associated either with Vata, Pitta or Kapha; it should be extracted by means of Vishana [horn], Jalouka [leech] or Alabu [gourd] respectively. [Ch. S. Chi. 21/68-69].

20. If Grandhi Visarpa is dominated by Rakta and Pitta, it should be treated by bloodletting therapy. [Ch. S. Chi. 21/119].

Visha [Poisoning]:

21. When poison is spreading from the place of bite, after sucking the poison – bloodletting should be conducted by means of Pracchana, Sringa, Jalouka and Siravedhana. [Ch. S. Chi. 23/39].

Dwivraniya [2 Types of Ulcers]:

22. Raktavasechana [Ch. S. Chi. 25/38].

23. In the premonitory state of Vrana, to arrest the further progress of the disease, Raktavasechana is indicated [Ch. S. Chi. 25/44].

Trimarmiya [3 Vital Organs]:

24. In case of the remaining types of headaches, bloodletting is indicated [Ch. S. Chi. 26/81].

25. Siravedhana is also indicated in Mukhapaka [stomatitis] [Ch. S. Chi. 26/204].

26. For the management of Pittaja Swarabheda [hoarseness of voice], Siravedhana is indicated [Ch. S. Chi. 26/289]. Vatavyadhi [neurological disorders]:

27. When Raktagata Vata vitiates, Raktamokshana is advised [Ch. S. Chi. 28/92].

Vatarakta [Gout]: 28. If the aggravated Vata is located in the periphery bloodletting should be done by means of Sringa, Jalouka, Alabu and Suchi. [Ch. S. Chi. 29/36-38]

29. Siravedhana is indicated in Vatarakta when it is associated with Raga [redness], Ruja[pain] and Daha[burning sensation] - [Ch. S. Chi. 29/131] Yonivyapath Chikitsa [Treatment of Gyneac disorders]:

30. If the impotency is caused by Dhvajabhanga [morbidty of the phallus], Raktamokshana is advised [Ch. S. Chi. 30/200]. Trimarmiya Siddhi: 31. For the management of Anantavata – Siravedhana is indicated [Ch. S. Si. 9/85]

DISCUSSION&CONCLUSION:

- It is evident that Acharya Charaka has a definite idea about the stages and the management of different disease conditions

and thus mentioned Raktamokshana at more than 30 places in his work and also quoted that the diseases which may not be cured by drugs should be treated by surgical or para-surgical measures.

- On study of Charaka Samhita, it is recognized that the author has incorporated various aspects of bloodletting therapy as under.

- ♣ Types of Raktamokshana - Sringa, Jalouka, Alabu, Suchi, Siravedhana, Pracchana

- ♣ Method of application of Ghatiyantra [Ch. S. Chi. 5/137-141]

- ♣ Instruments useful for Raktamokshana- Kurcha Sastra,[Ch. S. Chi. 7/50-52].

- ♣ Places of Venesection to be done –
 - o KarnamoolaSiravedhana[nearer the ear]- [Ch. S. Chi. 3/288], o Bahu Siravedhana [arm]- [Ch. S. Chi. 3/289; 5/32] o Sankha-kesantaSandhi[joint of hairline & temporal region] - [Ch. S. Chi. 9/77] o Vama-Bahu [in the left arm] - [Ch. S. Chi. 13/77]

- The author has clearly stated that one must be cautious about his limitations while treating a patient other than his specialization and such cases should be referred to the concerned specialist[8] .

- Further in the context of Gulma Chikitsa, it is mentioned that the administration of alkalis“ and cauterization is the specialty of Dhanvantari School i.e. school of surgeons. Hence for the administration of alkali

therapy, services of physicians who are Ksharatantra Vid [proficient in the administration of alkalis“] should be better utilized[¹] .

- Though Charaka Samhita is considered to be primarily a work on Kayachikitsa, matter related to other branches has also been dealt in a comprehensive manner. However the author is very much clear about the views and ideas while dealing a patient other than his specialization. Hence, Acharya Charaka has never crossed his jurisdiction at any point of time, while documenting the medical knowledge in his compendium.

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