



RESEARCH ARTICLE

A CRITICAL REVIEW ON THE SITES OF RAKTHAMOKSHANA

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ABSTRACT

According to the ancient science of Ayurveda, blood is the fluid that contains life of a living being. Acharya Susruta has considered *Raktha* as the fourth *Dosha*^[1]. It also plays a great role in transportation of nutrients throughout the whole body as well as in the spread of diseases. A myriad of diseases are caused by pathogenic microorganisms, which exist in blood and body fluids. It is collectively termed as blood borne diseases. In accordance with the basic concepts of Ayurveda, the vitiated blood needs to be banished from the body and the technique of *Rakthamokshana* plays a crucial role in this. Through this parasurgical method, *Rakthapradoshajavyadhis* can be easily managed. Selection of the site for the procedure has been explained in detail by the sages viz. Susruta, Charaka and Vagbhata.

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INTRODUCTION

Rakthamokshana or bloodletting is one among the five purificatory therapies (*Pancha shodhana* i. e *Vamana*, *Virechana*, *Basti*, *Sirovirechana* and *Rakthamokshana*) described in Ayurvedic classics. It consists of two terms, *Raktha*— meaning blood and *Moksha* – meaning to liberate. Letting out the vitiated blood from the body is achieved through the procedure of *Rakthamokshana* or *Asravisruthi*. *Raktha* is one among the 7 *dhatu*s that together nourish and make up the body. According to Acharya Vagbhata, features of pure blood are: sweet, slightly salty, neither hot nor cold, not coagulated and vivid red in colour resembling lotus, *indragopa* worm, gold, blood of sheep and rabbit. He further states that blood gets vitiated by factors that cause vitiation to *Pitta* and *Kaphadosha*^[2]. *Rakthamokshana* is a main line of management used for *Raktapradoshaja vikaras*. When a disease does not get subsided with the usual treatment methods *Rakthamokshana* is attempted. *Rakthamokshana* is mainly of two types – 1. *Sastrakritha* 2. *Anusastrakritha*. *Sastrakritha* includes *Pracchana* and *Siravedha*. *Anusastrakritha* includes *Sringa*, *Jalouka*, *Alabu* and *Ghati*. *Jalouka* (leeches) should be used in case of vitiated *Rakta* being situated deep in body, *Pracchana* (scarification using surgical instrument) in case of

Pinditha raktha (clotted blood), vein puncture in case of systemic vitiation of *Raktha* and with horn or bitter gourd in the case where *Raktha* is located in the skin^[3]. According to Acharya Susruta, *Siravedha* (a type of *Rakthamokshana*) is equivalent to half of all therapeutic measures in *Shalyatantra* as *Basti karma* is in *Kaya chikitsa*. He further states that those who undergo *Rakthamokshana* regularly at proper time will not be afflicted by *Tvakdosha*, *Granthi*, *Sopha* and other *Rakthaja roga*^[4].

Therefore, the significance of *Rakthamokshana* stands unmatched among all other treatment modalities. *Siravedha* helps in the elimination of vitiated blood from the *Siras* or blood channels. Venesection or *Siravedha* is indicated in the vitiation of circulating blood and not stagnant. It gives promising results in varicose veins, allergies, psoriasis and eczematous conditions. Acharya Susruta mentioned *Siravedha* to be done in *Vatavyadhi*. When *Vata* is found to be affecting the skin, muscles, blood, veins, and arteries, therapies such as *Snehana* (oleation), *Abhyanga* (oil bath), *Upanaha* (warm poultice), *Mardana* (massage), *Alepa* (applying paste on skin), and *Asramokshana* (bloodletting) should be adopted^[5].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main source of attaining knowledge about *Rakthamokshana* had been from the eloquent works of Susrutha, Charaka and Vagbhata. Observation of practical demonstrations of the procedures had also meticulously aided in producing vivid results. The sites of *Rakthamokshana* have been classified on the basis of *Sadangatvam*, for convenience and easy understanding.

Indications of Rakthamokshana according to different Acharyas (Refer Table 1)

Contraindications of Rakthamokshana according to Susrutha :

General anasarca, oedema in an emaciated person which has occurred as a repercussion of excess sour tasting food intake, those presented with oedema as a complication of anemia, *Arshas*, abdominal distension, *Garbhini* are general contraindications for executing *Rakthamokshana*^[7].

Sites of Siravedha according to different Acharyas (Refer Table 2)

RESULTS

The importance of carrying out *Rakthamokshana* has been well versed by all the three Acharyas. Explanations with clarity and precision of the sites to be punctured are elaborated by Susrutha.

Vagbhata has mentioned the *Trikurchaka* and *Kurcha sastra* in the 26 sharp instruments. *Trikurchaka* is indicated for *Raktha visravana*, and *Kurcha sastra* is used for *Pracchana karma*. According to Charaka, in the treatment of *Kushta*, the rounded nodules which are fixed and hard are to be softened by *Nadi* and *Prastara* type of *Swedana karma*, after this these nodules are punctured by the *Kurcha sastra* and then bleeding occurs, which is wiped out. In *Kaphaja kushta*, blood should be expelled by scratching the patch and applying *Sringa*, *Alabu* and *Jalauka*^[9]. In *Gulma Chikitsa*, Charaka has described that if any of the normal treatment modalities does not produce any results, bloodletting will eradicate the disease. It can be done using *Srnga* or *Bahusiravedha*^[10].

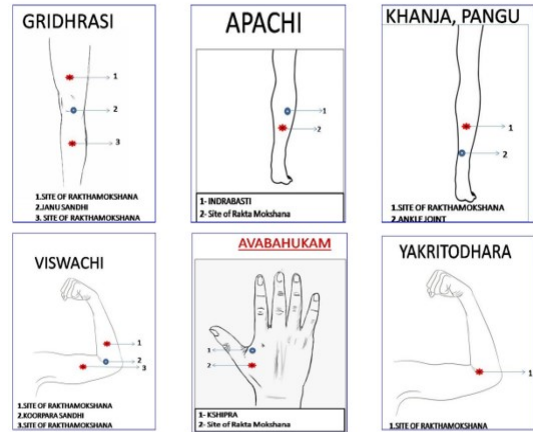


Diagram no 1. Diagram showing sites of Siravedha in some Diseases

Table 1. Table showing Indications of Rakthamokshana according to different Acharyas^[6]

According to VAGBHATA	According to CHARAKA	According to SUSRUTHA
<i>Visarpa, Vidradhi, Pliha, Gulma, Agnisada, Jwara</i> , diseases of mouth, eyes and head, <i>Mada, Trt</i> , salty taste in mouth, <i>Kushta, Vatasra, Pittasra</i> , belching with acid and sour taste, and <i>Bhrama</i> .	<i>Mukhapaka, Akshiraga, Puti ghrana asya, Gulma, Upakusha, Visarpa, Rakthapitha, Prameelaka, Vidradi, Rakthameha, Pradara, Vatasonitha, Vaivarnya, Agnisada, Pipasa, Guru gathratha, Santapa, Ati Daurbalya, Aruchi, Shiro ruk, Annapana vidaha, Tiktha amal udgiranna, Klama, Krodha, Buddeh sammoha, Lavanasyata, Sveda, Sharira daurgandhya, Mada, Kampa, Svava kshaya, Tandra, Atinidra, Tamo darshana, Kandu, Kotha, Aru, Pidika, Kushta, Charmadala</i>	<i>Pancha vidradhi</i> except that caused by combination of <i>tridosha, Kushta</i> , painful accumulation of <i>Vata, Sopha</i> , diseases of ear lobe, <i>Slipadha</i> , blood vitiated by toxins, <i>Arbuda, Visarpa, Grandhi</i> , three types of <i>Upadamsa</i> , diseases of mammary gland, <i>Vidarika</i> , porous gum, gingival abscess, <i>Galasaluka, Kantaka</i> , dental caries, hypertrophy of gum, suppurative gingivitis, spongy gums, disease of lips caused by <i>Pitta, Raktha</i> and <i>Kapha</i> and other minor diseases.

Table 2. Table showing sites of Siravedha classified according to *Shadangatvam* in specific diseases^[8]

BODY PART	DISEASE AND SITE
<i>Shiras</i> (head)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Apasmara, Trithiyaka jwara</i> – vein at the middle of <i>Hanu sandhi</i> (temporo - mandibular joint) 2. <i>Unmada</i> – the vein present between temple and edge of scalp or at the <i>Apanga</i> (outer canthus), the forehead or chest should be punctured. 3. Diseases of tongue and teeth – veins on <i>Adhojihwa</i> of tongue or veins situated at <i>Jihwa, Osthha, Hanu</i> and <i>Talu</i> 4. Disease of palate – the local vein must be punctured. 5. Disease of ears, especially <i>Karnashula</i> – veins running parallel to ears or veins of pinna 6. Anosmia and disease of nose – vein at tip of nose. In <i>Pinasa</i>, veins located in nose and forehead. 7. Eye diseases – veins at the nose, the forehead and the <i>Apanga</i>
<i>Antharaadhi</i> (trunk)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Pravahika</i> with <i>soola</i> – vein within 2 finger width around pelvis. 2. Internal abscess and pain in flanks - The vein in region between breast and left axilla or veins situated in flanks, axilla and between breast. 3. <i>Dakodara</i> - vein on either side of the <i>Nabhi</i> (navel) and on left side of the <i>Sevani</i> 4. <i>Parikarthika, Upadamsa</i>, Seminal disorders – the veins of penis 5. <i>Mutravidhi</i> – vein on either side of scrotum.
<i>Bahu</i> (upper limb)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shoulder joint – a) vein joining with either side or below it in <i>Cathurthaka jwara</i> b) The vein between shoulders in <i>Avabahuka</i> (refer diagram no: 1) 2. Elbow joint – a) 4 fingers above or below the joint in <i>Viswachi</i> (refer diagram no: 1) b) Vein of left <i>Koorpara sandhi</i> in <i>Plihodhara</i>, vein of right <i>Koorpara sandhi</i> in <i>Yakritodhara</i> (refer diagram no:1) cough and asthma. 3. The vein punctured with <i>Vrihimukha sastra</i> at 2 fingers above <i>Kshipra marma</i> – in <i>Padadaha, Padaharsha, Visarpa, Vicharchika, Vatakanadaka, Vataraktha, Padadari, Cippa</i>
<i>Sakthi</i> (lower limb)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ankle joint – a) The veins 4 fingers above it in <i>Krostukasirsa, Pangu</i> (refer diagram no: 1) <i>Khanja</i> (refer diagram no: 1) <i>Vataja</i> and <i>Kaphaja slipada</i>. b) The vein located between tendo achilles and ankle joint. 2. Knee joint – a) Vein punctured 4 fingers above or below knee joint in <i>Gridhrasi</i> (refer diagram no: 1) b) Vein punctured 2 fingers below the <i>Indrabasi marma</i> in <i>Apaci</i>. (refer diagram no: 1) 3. The vein attached to roots of <i>Uru</i> is punctured in <i>Galaganda</i>. 4. Vein over great toe is punctured in <i>Kaphaja slipatha</i>.

Whereas Vagbhata indicates multiple sittings of bloodletting especially in *Paithika* type^[11].

DISCUSSION

Various Acharyas have detailed about the method and sites of *Rakthamokshana*, nevertheless, for the ease and practicality, several changes are adapted in this technique as a whole. The instruments used for drawing blood for bloodletting are usually, no:18 needle or no:20 needle or scalp vein set butterfly needle of 20 NG, *Pracchana* is done using surgical blade (number 11), vacuum syringe is used as *Ghati yantra*. It is done as an emergency measure in acute IVDP conditions using suction apparatus (modified method of Sringa). Profound results have been obtained in treating varicose veins of all grades, psoriatic conditions, sciatica etc. *Siravedha* method of *Rakthamokshana* is done for the treatment of Sciatica and the vein selected is above *Gulpha sandhi* (ankle joint). A *Ghati yantra* is used for bloodletting in the area of medial malleolus as well as in both sides of lumbo – sacral region^[12]. The selection of veins is completely different as described by Vagbhata and Susrutha acharyas which is 4 fingers above or below the knee joint, and bears close reference to that described by Charaka. All *marmas* are excluded for *Rakthamokshana* as injury to these points will result in fatality. In current practice, the scope of *Rakthamokshana* is immense and is indeed to be explored extensively.

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