

## UTILITY AND IMPORTANCE OF BLOOD AND SHONITAMOKSHANA IN THE VIEW OF CHRONIC DISEASES DESCRIBED IN ANCIENT TEXTS OF MEDICINE

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### ABSTRACT

Ayurveda speaks about many modes of healing art, even surgery and para-surgical techniques. In the Koushika sutra of Atharvaveda, references of bloodletting (Raktamokshana) by leech are available. Among the para-surgical measures, shonitamokshana or bloodletting enjoys a pride of place from the dawn of medical history. Earliest references of bloodletting are found in the basic works of all systems of medicine. The oldest civilization of the world too used this method to bestow health on its subjects from time immemorial. Blood is the life for the human being; this concept is used since ancient era of medicine so it has such importance that some scientists are taken this

as a one of the essential element of genesis and to cause the disease.

**KEYWORDS:** Shonita, raktamokshana, blood letting, siravedh, shalyatantra, anushalya.

### History

Shonitmokshana is a technical term employed to denote a para-surgical procedure to expel out the vitiated blood from selected areas of the body, by specific methods. Bloodletting is an effective & safe remedy for *shonitashraya vyadhi* (blood born diseases). Among various modalities of Raktamokshana, Jalaukavacharana (Leech therapy) & Siravyadha (Venepuncture) are more in practice due to its simplicity & ease of access 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. In the Koushika sutra of Atharvaveda, references of bloodletting (Raktamokshana) by leech are available.<sup>[1,2]</sup>

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.<sup>[3]</sup> In Greece, bloodletting was in use during the time of Hippocrates, who mentions bloodletting but in general relied on dietary techniques. Erasistratus, however, theorized that many diseases were caused by plethoras, or over abundances, in the blood and advised 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.<sup>[4]</sup>

#### **Ancient ayurveda concept view**

The first liquid principle known as Rasa, formed from the ahara (diet) while circulating in the body, when reaches yakrut (liver), pleeha (spleen), attains red colour due to ranjak pitta and will be known as Rakta. Though rakta is circulating continuously in our body its main seats are yakrut (liver) and pleeha (spleen), and from here it governs the other seats of rakta (rakta sthna). A person who possesses non vitiated and excellence quality Rakta is called *Rakta Sara Purusha* and he exhibits the following characters:- unctuous, red colour, beautiful dazzling appearance of the ears, eyes, face, tongue, nose, lips, sole of the hands and feet, nails, forehead and genital organs. Such individuals are endowed with happiness, great genius, enthusiasm, tenderness, moderate strength and inability to face difficulties and cannot tolerate hot food and environment such as travelling at noon.<sup>[5,6,7,8]</sup>

#### **Healthy blood**

The blood in its healthy and natural state is possessed of a vivid red colour like that of an Indragopa (Cochineal) insect, and is neither too thin nor too transparent.<sup>[9]</sup> Blood should be regarded as pure when it has colour like that of gold and firefly (Indragopa), red lotus, lac juice and gunja (*Abrus precatorious*) fruit.<sup>[10]</sup> Therapies like cold-hot, unctuous-rough etc should be taken as the causative factors for impure blood.<sup>[11]</sup>

Therapies like purgation, fasting and blood-letting indicated for the treatment of raktpitta (a disease characterized by bleeding from differ parts of body) are also useful for curing diseases due to vitiation of blood. The above mentioned therapy in its entirety are not to be

administered in all diseases. They are to be selected with due regard to the nature of the disease caused by vitiation of blood.<sup>[12]</sup>

### **Indications for bloodletting**

Recommend desired diet to the patients when inflammation is progressing. Prefer raktamokshana for reducing the pain and prevent from further progressive inflammatory responses. Raktamokshana is favorable – When wound is oedematous, complicated (hard, rough, tight), painful and deep rooted irregular When dark reddish coloured blood is present in the body Specifically, in toxic edema, raktamokshana is done through jalauka or prachchhan vidhi.<sup>[13]</sup>

### **Factors responsible for vitiation of blood**

Alcohol consumption, excessive intake of salt, sour, pungent, unctuous and heavy food items, stale food, and over eating, sleeping immediately after food, exposure to sun of hot environment, stress and not performing Raktamokshana. Rakta is naturally vitiated in sharad (autumn). Therapies like cold-hot, unctuous-rough etc should be taken as the causative factors for impure blood.<sup>[14]</sup>

### **Blood Disorders**

The following diseases occur due to the vitiation of blood, mukhapaka (oral ulcers), akshiraga (redness of eyes), asyagandhika (foul odour from mouth), gulma, upakusa (bleeding from gums) visarpa (herpes Zoster), raktapitta (epistaxis), pramilika, vidhradhi, pradara (excessive menstrual flow), vatashonita, vaivarnya (discoloration of skin), agnisada, pipasa (frequent thirst), gurugatrata (heaviness of body), daha (burning sensation), tiktamla udgara (burps with sour and bitter taste), specially of the diet and drink that are not properly digested, krodha (anger), lavanasyata (salt taste in mouth), sweda (excessive sweating), shareeradaurgandhya (body odour), kampa (tremours), atinidra (excessive desire to sleep), tamodarshana (blackouts), kandu (itching), kandu (itching), kota, pidaka, kushta (skin diseases).<sup>[15]</sup>

### **CONCLUSION**

Blood is the life for the human being this concept is used since ancient era of medicine so it has such importance that some scientists are take this as a one of the essential element of and to cause the disease.

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