



“REVIVING AN ANCIENT PRACTICE: EXPLORING THE RELEVANCE AND BENEFITS OF RAKTA MOKSHANA (BLOODLETTING) IN MODERN SURGERY”

Dr. Amol Devrao Padole*

Assistant Professor Department of Shalyatantra, Government Ayurveda College, Vajirabad, Nanded,
Maharashtra, India.

Abstract:

Bloodletting, known as *Raktamokshana* in traditional Ayurvedic medicine and practiced in various forms across diverse cultures, has a rich history spanning millennia. This review article provides a comprehensive examination of the principles, techniques, and therapeutic applications of *Raktamokshana* in both traditional and modern medical contexts. Drawing from a wide range of historical texts, ancient manuscripts, and contemporary scientific literature, this review explores the evolution of bloodletting practices, their cultural significance, and the underlying physiological mechanisms.

The article delves into the various methods of bloodletting, including leech therapy, venesection, and cupping, shedding light on their unique benefits and potential risks. It also explores the current resurgence of interest in bloodletting within the field of complementary and alternative medicine, highlighting recent scientific studies that investigate its efficacy in conditions such as hypertension, chronic pain, and inflammatory disorders. Furthermore, the review critically evaluates the safety and ethical considerations surrounding *Raktamokshana* in modern healthcare, emphasizing the importance of evidence-based practices and informed patient choices. It discusses the integration of traditional knowledge with contemporary medical approaches and the potential for synergistic treatments.

In conclusion, this comprehensive review seeks to bridge the gap between traditional and modern medicine by providing an in-depth analysis of *Raktamokshana*'s historical significance and contemporary relevance. By synthesizing historical wisdom and scientific evidence, it offers valuable insights into the potential therapeutic applications of bloodletting in healthcare today.

Keywords: *Raktamokshana*, bloodletting, Jalauka, Shring, alabu, siravedha, therapeutic applications of *Raktamokshana*.

Introduction:

Raktamokshana, an ancient therapeutic procedure rooted in the traditional systems of medicine, has garnered significant attention and exploration in contemporary medical research and practice. Derived from the Sanskrit words “Rakta” meaning blood and “Mokshana” meaning letting go, Raktamokshana refers to the process of controlled bloodletting. This therapeutic modality has been employed across various traditional medicine systems such as Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), and Unani, among others, for centuries. [1]

The aim of Raktamokshana is to purify the blood, balance bodily humors, and alleviate a wide array of health conditions. While Raktamokshana has ancient roots, its relevance in modern healthcare has been a subject of increasing interest and scrutiny. This review article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the historical development, various techniques and methods, therapeutic applications, safety considerations, and recent scientific investigations pertaining to Raktamokshana. Additionally, we will explore the cross-cultural perspectives on this procedure, highlighting its place in different traditional medical systems and its potential integration into contemporary medical practice. [2]

Raktadhatu (Blood) in untainted or healthy status looks like fiery gold which turns red after putting in fire; Indragopa (red colored insect), red lotus or like. *Abrus Precatorius* (Gunja). [3]

This review draws upon a wealth of scholarly resources, including ancient texts, scientific studies, clinical trials, and expert opinions, to present a well-rounded understanding of Raktamokshana. By delving into the past while embracing contemporary insights, this article intends to shed light on the enduring significance and evolving role of Raktamokshana in the realm of healthcare.

1. Raktamokshana (Blood Letting Therapy)

Expulsion or removal of vitiated blood from the body is Known as Raktamokshana. [3]

2. Types: [4]

A. Asashastra (Without instruments)	B. Sashastra (With instruments)
a) Jalaukavacharana	a) Pracnhan karm
	b) Alabu
	c) Shring
	d) Sira vedh

A. Asashastra**i) Jalaukakavacharana:** ^[4]

जलमासामायुरिति जलायुकाः जलमासामोक इति जलौकसः । सु. सू. १३-९

Definition of 'Jaloka'

As the very basis of life for 'Leeches' is water, since their site of dwelling is 'Jal' i.e. water, the 'Leeches' are known as 'Jalauka'.

ii) Types of Jalauka:

SR. NO	POISNOUS (Savish Jalauka)	NON-POISNOUS (Nirvish Jalauka)
1	Krishna	Kapila
2	Karbura	Pingala
3	Alagarda	Shankumukhi
4	Saamudrika	Mushika
5	Indra-yudha	Pundarikmukhi
6	Gochandana	Saavarika

iii) PROCEDURE: ^[4]**PURVA KARMA-**

- One should not apply Spirit gauze or turmeric to clean the area in any condition.
- No Snehan i.e., oleation

PADHAN KARMA

- If Leech do not catch the site by its own, in such condition a small prick induced bleeding may be required so as to facilitate the sucking procedure.
- The Leech when once starts sucking the blood, elevates its neck (Ashvakhuravadananam) and fixes its head to the supporting point of skin.
- One can observe wave like movements indicating sucking of blood.

PASHCHAT KARMA

- Turmeric powder is placed to the bleeding site.
- Bandaging is done to arrest the bleeding.

Post procedure Jaloka care-

- Turmeric powder is placed on its mouth so as to induce vomiting.
- Immediately after this one may find jets of black coloured blood being emitted by the Leeches.

Specialty of Leech-

- A Leech has got an anti-coagulant chemical called Hirudin. While sucking the blood this Hirudin prevent clotting of blood.
- Ayurveda believes that Leeches suck only the impure part of blood.
- We can assume the sucking of blood from superficial veins which is deoxygenated or impure one.

Indication & Utility of Leech Therapy-

- Vascular diseases.
- Nonhealing ulcerative lesions like Diabetic ulcer, Laprotic wound.
- It is used *Shotha, Vatarakta, Vata* diseases having severe pain.
- Post-operative skin grafting lesions.
- Skin disorders.
- Yakrutpliha roga.
- Used in Abscess, Cellulites, Thrombophlebitis.
- Useful in third degree thrombosed prolapsed Piles.
- Alopecia.

B. Sashastra:

1. 'Sira- vyadhan'- [5]

- This can be termed as 'Vene-puncture'.
- Supremacy of 'Sira Vyadhan'

सिरव्यधचिकित्सार्धं शल्यतन्त्रे प्रकीर्तिताः ।

यथा प्राणिहितः सम्यग्बस्तिः कायचिकित्सिते ॥ सु. सू. ८/२२

Matra

Amount of blood letting allowed is 13.5 pal. (as 1 pal= 50 gm, therefore total amount will be up to 0.75 lit.)

Rule for selection of site:

Blood letting should be done from the peripheral or the nearest vessel from the affected site. Generally, for sarvadehik Shodhan- median cubital vein is preferred.

Proper kala for siravedha

Preferably in Sharad reetu as Pitta is vitiated more in this season. Better to avoid Grishma reetu.

Indications for Shira- Vyadhan:

It is indicated in all types of diseases with *Rakta* Vitiation

Vatarakta, Visarpa, Kushta, Vranashotha, Vidhradi aamavastha, Yakrutodara, Non healing ulcers, tumors.

Contra-indications for Shira- Vyadhan:

Young children & very old people, Ruksha, Kshat, Ksheen, Krish, Bheeru, Stree karshit, After Vaman, Virechan & Basti karma, In persons suffering from insomnia, Klaibya i.e Impotency, Anaemic & Haemophilic Patient, Exhausted person, Sleeplessness conditions, Pregnancy.

Sign of Proper or Adequate Bloodletting:

लाघवं वेदनाशान्तिर्व्याधेर्वेगपरिक्षयः । सम्यग्विस्राविते लिंग प्रसादो मनस्तथा ॥ सु.सू.१४/३३

- Laghav.
- Vedana shanti.
- Vyadhi weg parikshay.
- Manh Prasad.
- Raktum Swayamev Avatishthate.

2. 'Alabu Yantra' [6]

This is indicated when there is predominance of 'Kapha dosha'.

अलाबु कटुकं रुक्षं तीक्ष्णं च परिकीर्तिकम् । तस्मात् श्लेष्मोपसृष्टे तु हितं तदवसेचने ॥

सु. सू. १३/३-६

Principle:

'Alabu Yantra' works on the Bale- Jar's principle.

Which states that –

- 1/5 th of the atmospheric air contains oxygen
- It is consumed by the flame of a Candle within the container
- 1/5 th vacuum will be created.
- Thus, vacuum is likely to be occupied by whatever fluid or solid that is available at its bottom.

3. 'Prachhan karm' (shastrapada or pada) [7]

गात्रं बद्धोपरि दृढं रज्ज्वा पट्टेन वा समम् । स्नायुसंध्यास्थिमर्माणि त्यजन् प्रच्छानमाचरेत् ॥

अधोदेश प्रविसृतैः पदैरुपरिगामिभिः । न गाढघनतिर्याऽभिर्न पदे पदमाचरन् ॥

वा. सु. २६/५१-५२

Procedure:

- Multiple incisions are made with Utpal patra sashtra' i.e., Scalp blade,
- Vertically & parallel to the course of local blood vessels at the desired site.

Principle:**The main purpose of Prachhan karma is to:**

- relieve tension or the local pressure.
- To remove the toxins & other waste products from that site.

Indications:

Paraphimosis, Cellulites, Localized collection/ accumulation of fluid under the skin & sub cutaneous tissues. Hematoma, Early stage of Filariasis (Lymph edema), Snake, Scorpion or Insect bite etc.

4. Shring Yantra [8]

This is indicated when there is predominance of 'Vata dosha'.

उष्णं समधुरं स्निग्धं गवां शृगं प्रकीर्तितम् ।
तस्माद्वातोपसृष्टे तु हिता सा त्ववसेचने ॥

सु. सू. १३-४

Conclusion:

- Raktamokshana gives instant results compare to other palliative treatment
- Reduces inflammation.
- Reduces infection.
- Restores sensation of the part.
- Helps in healing of ulcers
- It helps in relieving pain, burning sensation.
- If not used cautiously then may even prove fatal.

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