

Exploring Ashastrakrita Raktamokshana: A Comprehensive Review of Shringa, Alabu & Ghati Avacharana

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Abstract: *Raktamokshana is one of the oldest and salient parasurgical procedures described in Ayurveda which is being widely used for the treatment of various diseases. Raktamokshana, the word consists of two terms - 'Rakta' meaning blood and 'Mokshana' which means to set free, hence Raktamokshana is the free flow of blood out of the body. Raktamokshana therapy can be performed in two ways - using sharp instruments and without using sharp instruments. Among the different blood letting techniques like Siravyadha, Pracchana, Jalaukavacharana, Shringa and Alabu - Shringa, Alabu and Ghati avacharana are the techniques of Raktamokshana which uses Yantra mainly, for blood letting. This article attempts to explore the importance of Ashastrakrita Raktamokshana w. s. r to Shringa, Alabu and Ghati as per various Samhitas.*

Keywords: Rakta, Raktamokshana, Ashastrakrita, Shringa, Alabu, Ghati

1. Introduction

Raktamokshana comprises of two words - Rakta and Mokshana. Rakta means blood and Mokshana means to expel. Thus, Raktamokshana means the procedure in which vitiated blood is expelled out of the body. Acharya Sushruta suggests Raktamokshana as an ultimate measure where the conventional methods fail and states that if a disease does not respond to the administration of Snehana, Svedana, Lepana etc, then it is cured by the proper method of Raktamokshana.¹

The various techniques for bloodletting can be conventionally classified into Shastrakrita Raktamokshana and Ashastrakrita Raktamokshana i. e, Blood letting using and without using Shastra respectively. Shringa, Alabu & Ghati avacharana comes under the method of Ashastrakrita Raktamokshana, as it uses Shringa, Alabu and Ghati which comes under the category of Nadiyantra as per the Samhitas.

Shringa Vacharana

Shringa is the hollow horn of large animals like cow, ox etc. The Shringa used for Chushana (aspiration/sucking) should be of 18 Angula in length, should be well fixed and should have orifice of 3 Angula at the base and another orifice at its tip permitting the entry of a Siddhartaka (white mustard), resembling Chuchuka (Nipple).²

Properties

Shringa (Cow's horn) is Ushna virya, Madhura rasa and Snigdha, hence it is ideal to remove blood vitiated by Vata.³

Procedure⁴:

- A slender and straight cow's horn is taken.
- It is cleaned well both inside and outside and cut ends are rubbed to smoothen the rough edges.
- The rough edges, if present may injure the skin of the patients.
- Over the selected site multiple incisions are made.

- The broad end of the horn is placed covering the site and held tightly.
- A piece of thin cloth is placed over the tip of the horn and then has to forcibly suck to create negative pressure within the horn.
- This make the vitiated blood, pus etc. flow out and get collected in horn.
- The procedure can be repeated till the required amount of blood has let out.
- The horn is often removed, collected blood is carefully disposed.
- The site is cleaned; Haridra powder is sprinkled and bandaged.
- Application of cow's horn can bring out blood from an area of 10 Angula.⁵

Indications

- Vitiated blood which has produced loss of sensation (Supta) should be removed by Shringavacharana.⁶
- Shringa is used when the vitiated blood is localised in the skin (Twakstha).⁷
- According to the depth of morbidity, Shringa is indicated in Avagadhatama avastha, when it is deep.⁸
- Blood vitiated by Vata and Pitta should be removed by Shringa.⁹

Contraindications

- The blood vitiated by Kapha should not be extracted by Shringa because of its Skannatva (viscosity).⁹

Alabu & Ghati Avacharana

Alabu is the dried and hollowed gourd of climber fruits like that of *Langenaria siceraria*. It should be 12 Angulas in length, 18 Angulas in circumference and with a round orifice of 4 or 3 Angulas. With burning wick placed in its interior, it is useful for extracting blood vitiated by Sleshma. Ghati (pot) is similar and used for softening and raising the gulma.¹⁰

Properties

Alabu is considered Katuka, Ruksha and Tikshna, hence it is ideal to remove blood vitiated by Kapha.¹¹

Procedure¹²:

- A medium sized ripened Alabu is taken, an opening is made on the top and the inner pulp is removed.
- The hollow fruit is dried under sun, such that it becomes hard.
- The site of letting is selected, multiple incisions are made.
- The hollow gourd is placed such a way that the burning wick is within.
- The gourd is held right against the skin.
- The burning wick consumes Oxygen and creates negative pressure, which makes the vitiated blood, pus etc. to flow out into the gourd.
- After sometime, gourd is pulled.
- The site is cleaned, Haridra is sprinkled and bandaged.
- Application of cow's horn can bring out blood from an area of 12 Angula.¹³
- Procedure of Ghati avacharana is similar to that of Alabu avacharana.

Indications

- Vitiated blood which has produced loss of sensation (Supta) should be removed by Alabu/ Ghati avacharana.⁶
- Alabu/ Ghati is used when the vitiated blood is localised in the skin (Twakstha).⁷
- According to the depth of morbidity, Alabu/Ghati is indicated in Avagadhatara avastha, when it is deep.⁸
- Blood vitiated by Kapha and Vata should be removed by Alabu/ Ghati.⁹

Contraindications:

When blood is vitiated by Pitta, Alabu/ Ghati should not be used as they are associated with fire (Analasamyoga).¹⁴

2. Discussion

Raktamokshana is one of the parasurgical procedure (Anushastra Karma) - a treatment modality included in the line of management of many diseases. Raktamokshana purifies Rakta and in turn the other Dosha associated in the disease process and thus alleviates the disease quicker than administration of Shamana medications alone. Additionally, references are there in the Samhitas that one who undergoes Raktamokshana periodically, doesn't suffer with Twakroga, Granthi, Shophya etc. which is explaining the preventive aspect of Raktamokshana. There are different techniques of Raktamokshana mentioned in the Samhita, of which Pracchana and Siravyadha are Shastrakrita - blood letting using sharp instruments, and Shringa, Alabu/ Ghati and Jalauka are Ashastrakrita - blood letting without using Shastra. Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya and Ashtanga Sangraha included Raktamokshana as a Shodhana karma and explains about the application and utility of these procedures in detail. Shringavacharana is done using Cow's horn and it is Ushna virya, Madhura rasa and Snigdha in guna. It is ideal to remove blood vitiated by Vata and Pitta, and also when the morbidity is in Avagadhatama avastha. Alabu and Ghati avacharana is done using dried hollow gourd and pot respectively. Alabu is considered Katuka, Ruksha and Tikshna, hence it is ideal to remove blood vitiated by Kapha

and Vata, and also when the morbidity is in Avagadhatara avastha.

Procedure is done after making incisions over the site selected for blood letting. After incising the site and covering the Shringa with a thin layer of cloth, the blood should be removed by sucking; while using Alabu/Ghati for removing blood, a burning lamp should be kept inside. Shringa, Alabu and Ghati avacharana is done when the vitiated blood has produced loss of sensation (Supta) and when the vitiated blood is localised in the skin (Twakstha).¹⁵

3. Conclusion

Raktamokshana is one of the procedures included under the category of Shodhana karma. The term Raktamokshana consists of two words 'Rakta' meaning blood and 'Mokshana' which means to let out, hence Raktamokshana is the letting blood out of the body. Raktamokshana therapy can be performed in two ways. 1. Shastra Visravana (with the use of sharp instruments) and 2. Ashastra Visravana (without the use of sharp instruments). Shringa - Alabu - Ghati - Jalauka avacharana are included described as Ashastra Visravana techniques which are highly utilised in different Raktaja vikaras based on the condition of the patient as well as the disease.

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