



Review Article

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OUTLINE OF RESEARCHES ON RAKTAMOKSHANA

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ABSTRACT

Raktamokshana in other words, Bloodletting is a kind of Para surgery directed for the treatment of specifically Raktaja roga (blood born diseases) along with other many surgical diseases. Many research works are being carried out across the world on various disorders. The aim of this study was to know the trend and pattern of the academic research works carried out at different Ayurvedic institutions across India on the Bloodletting and to provide the guidelines for further research works in the area of Bloodletting. Title of the paper are procured from 'Researches in Ayurveda'- A classified directory of PG and PhD research works carried out at various institutions throughout India, compiled by Prof. M. S. Baghel. In India, 143 research works have been carried out. Around 38 various disorders are studied adopting bloodletting as treatment modality. This paper is just an outline of various research works being carried out across India. The information gathered by the title of research work is presented here. Majority of research works were on Vicharchika (Eczema) (30 works) followed by Vrana (8 works). In 20 research works the title doesn't figure out on which disease the work was performed. Among the modality tested, 75 research works were reported on Leech application, followed by 28 works on (Sira Vedhana) venesection, similar number works were with no mention of the mode of bloodletting studied.

Keywords: Raktamokshana, Sira Vedhana, Jalaukavacharana, Rakta

INTRODUCTION

Indian Ayurveda Surgery has probably the first detailed, rational, systematic description of Raktamokshana for several illnesses.¹ Raktamokshana is also considered one among Shodhana (Purificatory) procedures. Raktamokshana means letting of blood which is mainly indicated in certain disease state especially when there is Raktadushti and also during physiological function.² Sushruta, Father of Indian Surgery, has given all the information regarding bloodletting in detail in his treatise, "Sushruta Samhita".³ The process of Raktamokshana can be traced back to the Vedic period only and not beyond that. In the Koushika sutra of Atharvaveda, references of bloodletting (Raktamokshana) by leech are available.⁴ 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.⁵ 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.⁶ 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.⁷ To expel out the vitiated blood, seven procedures were advocated: Venesection (Sira Vedhan), Horn application (Sringa Avacharana), Gourd application (Alabu Avacharana), Leech application (Jalauka Avacharana), Scrapping (Pracchanna Karma), Cupping glass application (Ghati Yantra Avacharana) and Needle application (Suchi Avacharana).⁸

Aims and Objectives

- To know the trend and pattern of the academic research works carried out at different Ayurvedic institutions across India on the Bloodletting.
- To provide the guidelines for further research works in the area of Bloodletting.

Observations

Across the world many research works are being carried out on bloodletting, which is gaining popularity. It is one of the age old treatment modality which was cornered few decades back, but at recent times its popularity is appreciable. In India, 143 research works are reported from various Ayurvedic Institutions. Table 1 shows number of research works across India, in which bulk of research works, 21, are done at Government Ayurvedic Medical College, Bangalore.

In this paper, the titles of research works are being studied and analysed. First research work was done on 1967 at IPGT and RA, Jamnagar, India and National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur, India. Bloodletting was studied on 39 disorders and there were works, the titles of which don't specify on which the study was done. 28 works are reported on Vicharchika (Eczema), a disease in which raktadushti is the prominent cause; letting out blood will cure the condition. The list of disorders on which the study was carried out is depicted in Table 2.

Out of seven modalities of Bloodletting bulk of research works, 75, are done by using leech application, followed by 28 works on Venesection (Sira vedhana), 7 works on Scrapping (Pracchanna), 2 works on both Pracchanna and Jalauka Avacharana, and one by Jalauka Avacharana and Sira vedhana as modality. Only one work reports have opted for 3 modalities for bloodletting in the study, viz Jalauka Avacharana, Sira Vedhana and Shringa Avacharana (Horn application) – Table 3. 29 research works didn't notify on the modality being used. This information reveals, leech application, as one of the prominent modality, which can be used on patients irrespective of age, sex and in whom pain withstanding capacity is said to be low.¹

Table 5 classifies the research works according to the department under which the work was done. As Bloodletting falls under Shalya Tantra, a branch of Ayurveda which deals with surgical management of disorders, reported a bulk of research works, 82, followed by 17 works from Kayachikitsa Dept, 14 works from Shareera Rachana (Anatomy) department, from Shalaky Tantra department 12 works, 11 works from Department of Panchakarma and Manasa roga and one work from

Department of Samhita (Basic Principles). 2 works were carried out at Diploma level at Institute for Post graduate Teaching and Research in Ayurveda (IPGT and RA), Jamnagar, India. Only 3 works were from post doctoral thesis (Ph. D works), out of which 2 are from Pune University and one from Gujarat Ayurveda University.

DISCUSSION

Raktamokshana, a parasurgical procedure gaining popularity around the globe, is being widely practiced. Bloodletting removes vitiated doshas which cause the ailment. This modality falls under purificatory therapies, which cleanse the body. This modality is also indicated for maintenance of health. As cited by Sushruta, the person who regularly undergoes bloodletting therapy will not get afflicted by Shophya, Twak dosha, Visarpa, Granthi etc disorders.¹¹ In India, ample amount of postgraduate institutes are there, where several research works are carried out to appreciate the facts laid down in ancient Ayurvedic texts and to elaborate scientific explanations to the Ayurvedic treatment. Raktamokshana is the second topic on which more research works are being carried out across India after Vrana ropana (wound healing), this suggest the importance of this topic. A massive 143 research works are reported on Bloodletting, 38 disorders are studied by scholars by raktamokshana as therapeutical option. Raktamokshana is indicated for ailments caused by Rakta dushti/vitiation of rakta, the list includes gouty arthritis, filariasis, herpes, tumors, various skin disorders, genital ulcers, chronic ulcers resulting from snake bite etc. Raktamokshana is tested in almost all disorders cited by Sushruta.

Table 1: Depicts Numbers of Research Works at Various Institutions

College	No. of works
Bangalore, Government Ayurvedic Medical College	21
Jaipur, National Institute of Ayurveda	18
Institute For Postgraduate Teaching and Research In Ayurveda, Gujarat Ayurveda University, Jamnagar	16
Nagpur, Shri Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya	9
Nanded, Government Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya	9
Hassan, S D M College of Ayurveda	9
Hyderabad, Dr B K R R Government Ayurvedic College	7
Trivendrum, Government Ayurvedic College	6
Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya, Hubli	5
Varanasi, Faculty of Ayurveda Institute of Medical Sciences	5
S D M College of Ayurveda, Kuthpady	5
Nagpur, Government Ayurvedic College	4
Alva'S Ayurvedic Medical College, Moodbidri	4
University of Pune	3
Nasik, Ayurved Mahavidyalaya	3
Bijapur, Dr B N M Rural Ayurved Medical College	3
Sullia, K V G Ayurveda Medical College and Hospital, Sullia	3
Pune, Tilak Ayurved Mahavidyalaya	2
Akola, R K Toshaniwal Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya	2
Ahmedabad, Government Akhandanand Ayurvedic College	1
Lucknow, State Ayurvedic College, University of Lucknow	1
Udaipur, M. M. M. Government Ayurvedic College	1
Bombay, Smt. K G M Punarvasu Ayurvedic College	1
Ahmednagar, Gangadhar Shastri Gune Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya	1
Raipur, Government Ayurvedic College	1
Gadag, S D G M Ayurveda Medical College	1
Shri Jagadguru Gurusiddeshwar Co - Operative Hospital And Research Institute (Shri J G C H Society), Ghataprabha	1
Ayurvedic Medical College and Pg Centre, Davangere	1
Total	143

Table 2: Depicts Number of Research Works according to Diseases

1.	Adhimantha	3
2.	Amavata	1
3.	Amavata, Sandhivata and Vatarakta	1
4.	Anjana-Namika.	2
5.	Apabahuka	1
6.	Ardhavabedhaka	2
7.	Arsha	9
8.	Dadru	1
9.	Dantaveshta	1
10.	Gridhrasi	8
11.	Indralupta	3
12.	Inflammatory Conditions	1
13.	Kitibha	3
14.	Kshudrakushtha	2
15.	Mandal Kushta W.S.R. To Psoriasis	2
16.	Marma	1
17.	Mukha-Dooshika	5
18.	Not Mentioned	20
19.	Padadari	2
20.	Pakshaghata	1
21.	Rakta Roga	3
22.	Sandhigatavata	6
23.	Saushira	1
24.	Shirah Shula	4
25.	Shirotogas	1
26.	Shleepada	2
27.	Shvitra	1
28.	Siragranthi (Varicose Vein)	4
29.	T A O (Thromboangiitis Obliterans)	1
30.	Tamaka Shvasa	1
31.	Twakgata Dosha	2
32.	Vatakantaka	1
33.	Vatarakta	3
34.	Vicharchika	30
35.	Vidradhi	2
36.	Vipadika	1
37.	Visarpa	1
38.	Vrana	3
39.	Vranashopha	5
40.	Yakradalyudara	2
TOTAL		142

Table 3: Depicts Various Modalities of Bloodletting on Various Illness

S.N	Disease	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	NM	Total
1	Adhimantha	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	03
2	Amavata	-	1	--	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
3	Amavata, Sandhivata and Vatarakta	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
4	Anjana-Namika.	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
5	Apabahuka	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
6	Ardhavabedhaka	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
7	Arsha	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	9
8	Dadru	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
9	Dantaveshta	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
10	Gridhrasi	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	8
11	Indralupta	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	3
12	Inflammatory conditions.	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
13	Sandhigatavata	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
14	Kitibha	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
15	Kshudra, kushtha, Dermatitis	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
16	Mandal Kushta w.s.r. to Psoriasis	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
17	Mukha-Dooshika	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
18	Padadari	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
19	Pakshaghata	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
20	Vrana	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
21	Vranashopha	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6
22	Rakta roga	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
23	Sandhi shoala and Shotha	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
24	Saushira	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
25	Shira Shoala	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	4
26	Shleepada	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

27	Shvitra	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
28	Siragata Vyadhi	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
29	Sira-Granthi	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4
30	T A O	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
31	Tamaka Shvasa	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
32	Twakgata Dosha	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
33	Vatakantaka	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
34	Vatarakta	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
35	Vicharchika	2	19	4	-	-	-	1	1	1	2	30
36	Vidradhi	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
37	Vipadika	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
38	Visarpa	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
39	Yakradalyudara	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
40	Marma	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

1: Sira Vedhana, 2: Jalauka, 3: Pracchanna, 4: Alabu, 5: Shringa, 6: Ghati Yantra, 7: Jalauka and Pracchanna, 8: Sira – vyadha, alabu, Shringa and Jalauka, 9: Jalauka and Shiravedhana

Table 4: Depicts Number of Research Works according to Modality of Bloodletting

Modality of Bloodletting	No. of works
Pracchanna and Jalauka	2
Jalauka and Sira Vedhana, Shringa Avacharana	1
Jalauka and Sira Vedhana	1
Pracchanna	7
Sira Vedhana	28
Not Mentioned	29
Jalauka	75
TOTAL	143

Table 5: Depicts Number of Research Works according to Departments

Department of Panchakarma and Manasa Roga	11
Diploma in Panchakarma	2
Department of Shalya	82
Department of Kayachikitsa	17
Department of Shareera Rachana	14
Department of Samhita	1
Department of Shalakya Tantra	12
List of M.Sc. Theses	1
Ph. D. (Ayurveda)	3
TOTAL	143

Among various modalities of Raktamokshana, Jalaukavacharana (Leech Therapy) and Siravyadha (Venepuncture) are more in practice due to its simplicity and ease of access. Shringavacharana, a method of Raktamokshana which is becoming extinct nowadays as it is unpopular as per era, its criticalness and lack of standardize accessible procedure. In rural area, this method of bloodletting is still practiced for several disorders, one prime condition being the snake bite, wherein letting of blood in sting bitten area is first aid treatment, which aid to save the life of a person. On Jalauka Avacharana, bulk of research works are reported and leeches are studied by scientists across the globe. Several departments have undertaken the work to study the efficacy of bloodletting, among those; Shalya Tantra Department tops the other. Concerning point is that, apart from Venesection and leech application, other modes are being less tried. There is a need to test the efficacy of other modes of bloodletting such as Gourd application, Horn application and scrapping and needle application.

CONCLUSION

Raktamokshana (Bloodletting), a popular para surgical procedure in Ayurvedic system of medicine is time tested. It answers several chronic problems of ill health. It has been practiced in some form by almost all societies and cultures. At various times bloodletting was considered part of the medical treatment for nearly every ailment known to man.

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