

Raktamokshana (Bloodletting) – Ayurvedic and Modern perspectives

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Raktamokshana (bloodletting), a Para surgical procedure is gaining popularity around the world. In Ayurveda Raktamokshana is considered as a half of the Shalya Chikitsa (Surgery). The present study was undertaken to collect the data on bloodletting in the view of Ayurveda and modern. Data were gathered through rigorous reviewing of Ayurvedic authentic texts, scientific journals and the web sources and analysed. Raktamokshana was found directed for the treatment of specifically Raktaja Roga (blood-borne diseases), along with other many surgical diseases. It was described by using Shastra (sharp instruments) or Ashastra (blunt instruments). In Ayurveda, six procedures were advocated to expel out the vitiated blood from the body viz Sringa Avacharana (horn application), Alabu Aavacharana (gourd application), Jalauka Avacharana (leech application), Pracchana Karma (scraping), Ghati Yantra Avacharana (cupping glass application) and Sira Vedhana (Venesection). Raktamokshana was indicated in gouty arthritis, filariasis, herpes, tumors, various skin disorders, genital infections, abscess, inflammatory condition, cellulitis, painful ulcers, chronic ulcers resulting from snake bite, etc. It was contraindicated in generalised swelling, swelling in debilitated persons, swelling caused by sour diet and swelling in those suffering from anaemia, piles, phthisis and in pregnancy. In modern medicine, phlebotomy referred for the removal of small quantities of blood for diagnostic purposes. However, venesection was used for conditions such as Haemochromatosis, Polycythemia Vera, and Porphyria Cutanea Tarda. Application of leeches (*Hirudo medicinalis*) in the area of microsurgery and re-implantation surgery was also recorded. The secretion of *H. medicinalis* comprising several biologically active substances was found reduced venous congestion and prevented tissue necrosis. It can be concluded that bloodletting is beneficial in diagnostic purposes and in the management of many diseases and its utility can be explained both in Ayurveda and modern views.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Raktamokshana, Bloodletting, Venesection