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Review Article

Historical review on Jalaukāvacharaṇa in Agadatantra

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Abstract

Ayurveda is science of life where basic principle of chikitsa is to maintain the svastha (healthy) state of an individual by means of various day to day life measures and to treat the sufferer one with all efforts to cure him. In Ayurveda science there are various references in which one can see treatment in very acute conditions .and it is quite clear that most life threatening condition will be nothing but poisoning cases where incidence and mortality is always on higher side, in past poisoning was done by means of various routes. Ayurveda philosophy is strongly based on the doṣa, dhātu and mala siddhānta. which directly relevant to chikitsa approach, while getting reference in acute condition of poisoning cases among twenty-four treatment modalities, one of the treatment modality is raktamōkṣaṇa which directly deals with rakta dhātu. Here effort was made in this paper to understand the role of raktamōkṣaṇa in viṣa chikitsa. In raktamōkṣaṇa process, rakta dhātu (blood) of a person is let out with help of various methods. The expelling blood is believed to be in impure form or in other words we can say harmful to body and hence it was also clearly mentioned in various conditions of viṣa chikitsa.

Keywords: raktamōkṣaṇa, rakta, dhātu, viṣa, chikitsa etc.

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INTRODUCTION

Leeches extract the blood of their victim (Phlebotomy) under the mistaken belief that removal of bad blood may cure the disease. From the time of early Greek medicine there are records of leeches for bloodletting. They were also used to reduce swellings and of patients suffering from every variety of ailment from common cold to cancer. Hirudo medicine, was commonly used for phlebotomy in Europe in olden times and the practice, at one time spoken as lechery, was so common that doctors themselves were often called Leeches. Besides Hirudo medicine, other species were used in various parts of the world. The medicinal leech of America is *Macrobdella decoraso*, great was the demand for leeches for medicinal use that suitable species were even cultured. Nachtrieb (1912) states that about 1850, one American leech farm disposed of as many as 1000 or more leeches daily. About 7 million leeches were used in London hospitals and 5 to 6 million in Paris hospitals in 1863. The famous English poet, Wordsworth, wrote a poem - The Leech gatherer, based on the medicinal use of leech. The use of leeches in Ayurvedic medicinal practice in India is very ancient. Even now, some native medical men employ them. They are used as a drug to prevent loss or graying of hair and other symptoms of old age. Leeches are also said to be used as materia medica in the treatment of piles, tonsillitis and baldness. Hirudin, extracted from the leeches was employed a few years ago as a haemolytic agent or anti-coagulant in the modern hospitals and was sometimes administered to patients whose blood had a tendency to clot inside the blood vessels. New and better anticoagulants have now taken the place of this.

Agadatantra is branch of Ayurveda which deals with various kinds of poisons which are divided in two parts sthāvāra viṣa and jaṅgama viṣa and also they again formed subgroups of those poisons in accordance with their adīṣṭhāna (situation) they summarized sthāvāra viṣa in various adīṣṭhāna like mūla, patra, puṣpa, twak etc under each adīṣṭhāna some names of poisons plants were mentioned which denotes the most poisons part in that plant, likely they also mentioned sixteen types of adīṣṭhāna, it was also believe that poison act on human body with help of guṇas and prabhāva.

Relation in between Raktadhātu and Viṣa. It is said that when poison gets enter in to body it starts acting on body according to its guṇa and many of poison guṇas are similar to that of rakta dhātu and pitta doṣa viṣa vitiates pitta doṣa and rakta dhātu, and then starts- getting spread in to our body and to overcome this situation bloodletting that is raktamōkṣaṇa plays a vital role in viṣa chikitsa.^[1]

Process of raktamōkṣaṇa in viṣa chikitsa

The Rakta Dhātu which is vitiated by poison is removed from the body by using various methods.

Elimination of Rakta Dhātu by making multiple incisions and evacuating blood by using following methods.

Various incisions are made on site of bite blood is extracted by using of animal horns i.e. Śrīṅga and Alābu.

Raktamōkṣaṇa by leech application.

First of all, heart should be protected and for this medicaments covering it should be taken immediately such as honey, cow-dung juice, pressed juice of cooked sugar-cane or crow, blood of goat, ash or earth.

In Agadatantra it has been said that any poison firstly affects the Rakta dhātu and then starts to spread in the body so to eliminate the poison from body the raktamōkṣaṇa will be the first measure, Charkacharya also mentioned the twenty-four measure that is Viṣaupkramas to eliminate the poison in those measures he also mentioned the raktamōkṣaṇa process in short it is as follows

Raktamōkṣaṇa process: Rakta dhātu firstly gets vitiates by Viṣa. This vitiated Rakta dhātu circulates all over body and produces symptoms. While treating this poisonous condition, we must concentrate on Rakta dhātu, because it is main channel of Viṣa circulation. To control the action of Viṣa we have to eliminate this vitiated Rakta dhātu by Raktamoskana i.e. Bloodletting, which is mainly done by Venesection.

Ayurvedic texts also mentions that the blood should be eliminated through the poison scraping, application of horn or leech or venesection and also mentions the importance of raktamōkṣaṇa in Dūṣīviṣa. In case of poison situated in kapha sthan that is Dūṣīviṣa, fomentation and venesection are applied in Dūṣīviṣa or the poison suited in blood ejection five evacuative measures should be applied.^[1]

So eliminate the poison the Jalaukāvacharaṇa process picked the detail about Javalaka is as follow That's the ideal medicine, which relieves from all kinds of miseries, says Charaka.

Drug, is not necessarily be given orally. Ayurveda speaks about many modes of healing art, even surgery and para-surgical techniques. Among the surgical measures, Raktamōkṣaṇa 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.

All the major classics of Ayurveda have dealt the topic with minute details of a scientist.

Etymology: Jalauka

The word Jalauka is a compound word with two components Jala + Āyu; i.e. the animals having water as the life. The term Jalauka can be split into Jala + Oka; i.e. water dwelling animals.

Definition

Shabdakalpadruma has considered Jalauka in feminine gender and defined it as an aquatic creature employed to expel out the vitiated blood.

Bhagavadgomandal defines Jalauka as an animal living either in water or in mud with distended abdomen.

Synonyms

Jalauka is called by different names, which are as below Jalāyuka, Jalaua, Jaluka, Jalāluka, Jālalauka, Jalita, Jaloka, Jalauga, Jalatani, Jalaukas, Jalauchi, Jalaukasu, Jalararpini, Raktapāta, Ruktāpa, Raktapāyini, Vāṇini, Vedhini, Venika.

Types of Jalauka

In Ayurvedic literature, Jalauka have been classified into two main groups:

- Saviṣa (Venomous)
- Nirviṣa (Non-venomous)

Each group containing six in number.

Saviṣa Jalauka:

The Saviṣa Jalauka originates in the decomposed urine and fecal matter of toads and poisonous fishes in ponds of stagnant and turbid water.

General characters of Saviṣa Jalauka:

- Resemble the fish of vermin type.
- Ventral surface is convex (Āyata).
- **Kṛiṣṇa:** Kṛiṣṇa leeches are black like collyrium powder and have broad heads.
- **Karburā:** Karburā leeches are elongated like varmi fish having cleft end elevated ventral surface.
- **Alagarda:** Alagarda leeches are hairy, have prominent sides and black mouth.
- **Indrāyudha:** Indrāyudha leeches raised linear marks and thus appear of variegated colours like those of a rain bow.
- **Sāmudrikā:** Sāmudrikā leeches are slightly black and yellow in colour, are spotted and possess the features of an attractive flower.
- **Gōchaṇdana:** Gōchaṇdana leeches appear to be divided in their hind part like scrotum of a bull and have a pinpointed mouth.

If Saviṣa Jalauka is applied, then a person suffers from following

clinical symptoms: ^[iii]

- Burning
- Itching
- Swelling
- Drowsiness
- Fever
- Delirium
- Unconsciousness
- Irresistible inclination to scratch the seat of bite.

Nirviṣa Jalauka:

Nirviṣa Jalauka originates in decomposed vegetable matter, as the purified stems of the several aquatic plants known as Padma, Utpala, Nalina, Kumuda, Pundarika and common zoophytes, which live in clear water.

Geographical Distribution:

According to Sushruta, the leeches are found in Yavana (Turkestana, Pandya, Sahya, Pautana etc.) Habitat:

Such leeches swim about in sweet scented water, live on non-poisonous weeds, and lie on the leaves of flowering water plants in spite of on the dark and oozy beds of pools and suck blood from the affected part of a human being without causing any discomfort.

General characters of Nirviṣa Jalauka:

Such types of Jalaukas are characterized by following points:

- Strong and large bodied.
- Ready suckers
- Greedy

Individual features of Nirviṣa Jalauka:

Kapila	Colour like Manahshila at the sides Dorsal surfaces are slimy and coloured like Mudga pulse.
Piṅgaḷa	Colour Reddish, Shape Round Locomotion Speedy.
Śaṅkhamukhi	Colour blackish red like that of liver. Provided with the greatest swiftness.
Mūṣika	Colour like the common blind moles Emit foul smell from the body.
Puṅḍarikamu- khi	Colour like Mudga pulse. Presence of resemblance of the mouth of the full blown lotus lilies.
Sāvarika	Marked with impressions like lotus leaves. Measured eighteen fingers in length. Directed to apply only in the lower animals.

The leeches are further classified according to sex by Acharya Vagbhatta. Those which are delicate, having thin skin, small sized head, the lower body being large are female leeches and the ones with opposite characters along with being semi lunar in look with large front portion are male.

Collection and Preservation of leech:

Collection of leeches is very simple. Acharya Sushruta has told that the leeches can be caught with a piece of wet leather, in tanks streams and where there are lotuses. There is another method to collect the leeches i.e. the fresh meat of dead animals, fish or milk must be applied on the thigh of an animal or the human being himself, may apply on his thigh (Jaṅghā) and keep the Jaṅghā in the water for some time. Due to attraction of these diets, Jalauka will come and start biting. Then they are made to leave the skin of the person with the application of Saindhava lavaṇa (rock salt) and collected.

Time of collection:

Acharya Dalhana has told that the best time for collecting leeches is Sharad Ritu (Autumn).

Preservation of leeches:

After collecting the leeches like above, they should be kept in a wide and new pot. The pure water of tank with lotus is put into the pot. Feed it with Shaivala, the meat of pig and other animals, which are living in watery and marshy areas, and powder of stem of small plants; in order to make the leech to move and the grass and leaves of plants must be kept inside water in the pot. On every third day the water should be changed and feeding should be dropped inside the pot. After seven days the pot should be changed. Poisonous leeches must be thrown out.

Application, number of leeches:

An average number of leeches to be applied are one for every two years of the patients age for the complete course, up to adult life, which can be varied. A leech should never be used again for fear of infection leeches abstract blood, about four times their own weight. An average sized leech will remove directly and by subsequent hemorrhage about ounce to two ounce of blood.

DISCUSSION

Process of Raktamōkṣaṇa-

Raktamōkṣaṇa 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.

Sushruta Samhita, the oldest available manual on surgery has devoted an entire chapter for the description of Jalaukas, and a chapter on Jalaukāvacharaṇiya for the purpose of bloodletting. Jalaukāvacharaṇa is claimed to be the supreme therapy because of its safety and high efficacy in the disorders involving the vitiation of blood. It is safely indicated even for the king, rich, old, fearful, weak, women and the people of tender nature. A brief description of jalaukas is provided here with ancient considerations followed by modern views.

CONCLUSION

As rakta dhātu karma is jīvan and in poisoning rakta dhātu gets vitiated and because of that many of ill effects start in our body, which is very fatal to human body and to counteract the acute condition, and reverse the harmful effects of poison immediately the provision of raktamōkṣaṇa was advised in treating various condition of viṣa chikitsa.

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