

SIRAVEDHA - A LITERARY REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Father of ancient surgery, *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned various methods of *Raktamokshana* (blood –letting) in his treatise *Sushrut Samhita*. *Siravedha* is one of the method of *Raktamokshana*. Importance of *Siravedha* is glorified by stating it as *Ardhachikitsa* in *Shalyatantra*. *Siravedha* is nothing but venepuncture. Difference is that *Siravedha* is employed as single therapeutic procedure in order to treat a diseased condition whereas venepuncture may be diagnostic or a part of therapeutic procedure rather than being an independent treatment procedure. In eighth chapter of *Sharira Sthana* of *Sushrut Samhita*, the detailed description of *Siravedha* is given which includes appropriate time, method as well as indication and contra-indications of *Siravedha*. *Siravedha* is helpful in providing relief in symptoms like pain, stiffness in *Gridhrasi* (sciatica) and *Vatrakta* (gout). The procedure is believed to be helpful in curing disorders like varicose veins, skin disorders etc. The present study focuses on literary review of *Siravedha* with a brief explanation on probable mode of action of procedure under consideration.

Keywords: *siravedha*, venepuncture, blood-letting , varicose vein, skin diseases.

INTRODUCTION: The art of healing is one of the oldest intellectual properties of human beings originated out of constraint, need of self protection and the urge to help. Ayurveda advocates, “Let the noxious blood be let out” it will cure the disease or otherwise it will make a clear pathway towards further treatment modalities. *Raktmokshana* is one of five *Panchakarma* procedures or the 5 basic techniques of detoxification. It is made of two words – *Rakta* i.e blood and *Mokshana* i.e to leave and combining both these words makes the word *Raktamokshana* which means ‘to let out blood’. It is the only *Shodhana* procedure where the vitiated doshas are taken out from the *Shakhas* by creating an artificial route, in which carefully controlled removal of considerable amount of blood. *Raktamokshana*((blood –letting) can be broadly classified into two types:

- *Ashastra* (performed with the measures other than sharp instruments)
- *Jalauka*
- *Alabu*
- *Srungi*
- *Sashastra* (performed with sharp instrument)
- *Prachana*
- *Siravedha*

Siravedha is one type of *Shastrakrut Raktamokshana*.

INDICATIONS¹:

- Five types of *Vidradhi* (abscess) except *Sannipataj Vidradhi*
- *Kushtha* (skin diseases)
- *Ekdeshaj Shotha* (edema at a single site)
- *Shleepada* (filariasis)
- Poisoning
- *Arbuda* (tumour)
- *Granthi* (swelling)
- *Updansha* (gonorrhoea)

- *Stanaroga* (diseases of breast)
- *Gridhrasi* (sciatica)
- *Vatrakta* (gout).

CONTRA –INDICATIONS²:

- *Sarvangsopha* (anasarca)
- *Ksheena* (lean and thin, malnourished)
- *Pandu* (Anaemia)
- *Arsha* (hemorrhoids)
- *Udara* (ascites)
- *Garbhini* (pregnant woman)

APPROPRIATE TIME³:

- *Varsha rutu* (rainy season)

When sky is clear that is without clouds and rain.

- *Grishma rutu* (summer season)

When the environment is cool that is in the morning hours.

- *Hemanta rutu* (winter season)

Madhyahana (afternoon time)

Amount⁴: 1 *Prastha* = 13.5 *Pala*

PROCEDURE:

• **Pre- procedure preparation:**

- The patient on which siravedha is to be performed, should be fed with liquid food or *Yavagu*.
- *Snehana* (oleation therapy) and *Swedana* (fomentation therapy) should be performed.
- *Vaidhya* should gather all the instruments and emergency medicine which may be needed during or after the procedure.
- The patient is made to seat in comfortable position facing the east direction.
- The site of puncturerd should be cleaned properly means there should not be any dust or dirt at the site.
- The cloth should be tied 1 finger breadth above the site to be punctured
- Nowadays tourniquet is used instead of cloth.

- The vein which is to be punctured should be made prominent.

• **Procedure:**

- Vein is punctured with needle not so slow not so fast in one stroke and blood is allowed to flow.
- When vein is punctured , first vitiated blood flows which is slightly dark in colour.

• **Post-procedure:**

- An eye is kept on the amount of blood.
- If *Siravedha* is done in an appropriate manner the flow of blood stops spontaneously after sometime.*
- When it is 1 *Prastha* then the blood flow is stopped by applying pressure bandage.
- Patient is made to rest for few minutes.

SAMYAK LAKSHANA⁵ (symptoms of adequate blood flow):

- *Laghava* (feeling of lightness in body)
- *Vedanashanti* (relief in pain)
- *Vyadhivegaparikshaya* (relief in concerned disease)
- *Manaprasada* (feeling of wellness in mind)

ATIPRAVRUTA LAKSHANA⁶ (symptoms of excessive blood flow):

- *Aandhya* (blindness)
- *Timira* (blackouts in front of eyes)
- *Akshepaka* (seizures)
- *Pakshaghata* (paralysis)
- *Trushna* (thirst)
- *Daha*(burning sensation)
- *Marana* (death)

This is observed practically also that many a times post – trauma the main cause of death is excessive blood loss.

BENEFITS:

- Procedure is cost-effective and safe.

- It can be performed on OPD basis and there is no need of hospitalisation.

- It is helpful to eliminate *Doshas* from *Shakhas* and in this therapy there is no need to bring the *Doshas* in *Kostha*.

PRECAUTIONS: The procedure should be carried out under strict aseptic precautions otherwise it may lead to complications like infection, sepsis etc.

DISCUSSION: *Siravedha* can be compared with venepuncture but it differs in few aspects, the main being that *Siravedha* is therapeutic procedure whereas venepuncture may be diagnostic or a part of therapeutic procedure rather than being independent therapeutic procedure. With few modifications the procedure remains same as it was in ancient times. *Siravedha* is considered to be *Ardhachikitsa* in *Shalyatantra* that is most of the surgical disorders can be cured by *Siravedha*. This quote from *Sushruta Samhita* signifies the importance of *Siravedha*.

Probable mechanism of action

In sciatica and gout:

Pain known as *Ruja* is supposed to be due to vitiation of *Vata Dosh*. This is further classified as

- *Dhatukshayajanya samprapti*
- *Avrodhjanya samprapti* (obstructive pathology)

Siravedha acts in *Avrodhjanya samprapti* (obstructive pathology). *Siravedha* relieves this obstruction, causes *Vatanuloman* and hence providing relief in symptoms like pain and stiffness. From modern point of view, stimulation to large sensory fibers from peripheral tactile receptors depresses the transmission of pain signals either from the same area of the body or even from many segments.

This results in local lateral inhibition leading to pain relief in sciatica and gout⁷.

In varicose vein: In disease like varicose vein, chronic non healing wounds wherein the hampered blood circulation is causative factor, *Siravedha* leads to regularisation of blood flow and hence providing relief.

In skin disorders: Blood-letting leads to detoxification of blood that is why it is classified under *Shodhana* procedure. Therefore procedure is employed in treating skin diseases where purification of blood is one of the part of treatment.

In hypertension and polycythemia vera: The action of *Siravedha* is not only on or near the site of puncture but on whole body that is why it is also employed in systemic diseases like hypertension and polycythemia vera. In these conditions blood-letting leads to reduction in blood volume and thus relieving the condition.

CONCLUSION: *Siravedha* is capable of providing relief in many chronic life style disorders and hence should be practice on more and more number of patients with the aim of standardising it as one of the treatment modalities.

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