

Role of *Siravedhana* in Pain Management

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Abstract: Pain is a common clinical symptom that significantly affects the quality of life and is often associated with musculoskeletal, neurological, and inflammatory disorders. In Ayurveda, pain (*Shoola*) is primarily attributed to the vitiation of *Vata Dosha*, frequently complicated by the involvement of *Rakta Dhatu*. *Siravedhana*, a parasurgical procedure described by Acharya Sushruta under *Raktamokshana*, is considered an important therapeutic measure in *Shalya Tantra* and is regarded as *Ardhachikitsa*. The procedure involves venesection for the removal of vitiated blood, thereby relieving obstruction to *Vata Dosha* and restoring normal physiological balance. *Siravedhana* plays a significant role in pain management by reducing inflammation, improving local circulation, and pacifying aggravated *Doshas*. It provides prompt relief in various painful conditions such as *Gridhrasi*, *Sandhivata*, *Vatarakta*, and *Katishoola*. When performed with proper indications and precautions, *Siravedhana* serves as an effective, economical, and minimally invasive approach for managing pain. This article highlights the therapeutic importance and mechanism of *Siravedhana* in the management of pain from an Ayurvedic perspective

Keywords: *Raktamoksha*, *Siravedhana*, *Asrakmokshana*, Pain management, Blood-letting, Therapeutic phlebotomy, venesection

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Ayurveda, seven types of *Dhatus* exist in the human body, and from the *Sara Bhaga* of each *Dhatu*, *Upadhatus* are formed. Among all the *Dhatus*, *Rakta* is considered the most important, as it plays a major role in maintaining the vitality of life. *Rakta* is described as *Apya* in nature and attains a red colour due to the presence of *Tejas* in the body, remaining unvitiated and clear. *Rasa*, which is normally watery, acquires a red colour when it reaches the *Yakrit* and *Pleeha* through the action of *Ranjaka Pitta*¹. *Rakta* is regarded as the root (originating factor) of the body, and the body is sustained by blood, therefore, it should be protected with great care. In fact, blood itself is considered life². *Shuddha Rakta* is responsible for *Bala* (strength), *Varna* (complexion), *Sukha* (happiness), and *Ayusha* (longevity), and it plays a vital role in the sustenance of *Prana*³.

Ayurvedic therapy is based on two main The *Sodhan* and *Saman Chikitsa*. The one in which direct elimination of these vitiated or increased *Dosha* is done is known as a *Shodhan Chikitsa* whereas when the increased *Dosha* are not directly eliminated but brought into an equilibrium with the help of various medicines, then it is called as *Shaman Chikitsa*. Among different types of *Shodhan* therapies, *Raktamokshana* is considered as best for *Pitta* and *Rakta Pradoshaj Vyadhi*.

Pain is a common clinical symptom that significantly affects the quality of life and is often associated with musculoskeletal, neurological, and inflammatory disorders. In Ayurveda, pain (*Shoola*) is primarily attributed to the vitiation of *Vata Dosha*, frequently complicated by the involvement of *Rakta Dhatu*. Acharya Sushruta's contributions to the field of ancient surgery are enduring, and many of the concepts and techniques he described continue to remain relevant in the modern era with minor modifications. Among these, *Siravyadha*, a form of *Raktamokshana* (bloodletting), is described by Acharya Sushruta as *Ardha Chikitsa* (half of the therapeutic measures) in *Shalya Tantra*⁴. In such conditions where pain and redness are the main symptom, *Siravedhana* is the treatment of choice for that because it relieves from them immediately⁵.



Siravedha

Definition of *sira*: According to *Acharya Charak* they are called *Sira* (vessels) because they conduct (the blood etc) from one place to another. *Hridaya* spreads *Rasa (Rakta)* in the whole body and from there it returns back to heart by *Sira*. So *Sira* are called “*Hritprabhava*” because they spread throughout the body originating from *Hridaya*⁶

Siravedha is a surgical procedure of puncturing the vein for therapeutic purpose and there by accomplishing the *Raktamokshana*. It is indicated in all conditions where *Raktamokshana* is indicated. Even then, in certain disease *Siravedhana* has edge over other method of *Raktamokshana*. It is indicated in physically strong and courageous people. Morbidity of *Rakta dhatu* when generalized is best treated by *Siravedhana*⁷. *Siravedha* (therapeutic venesection) is broadly classified in Ayurveda based on site, indication, and procedural variations. The classical texts, especially *Sushruta Samhita*, detail different approaches for selecting veins (*Sira*) for puncture, keeping in mind the disease pathology, dosha predominance, and anatomical region.

1. Based on Anatomical Region

- *Siravedha* in the Upper Limb - Commonly indicated in diseases of the head, neck, and upper torso. Puncturing the veins of the arm, cubital fossa (*Kurpara*), and forearm is mentioned.
- *Siravedha* in the Lower Limb - Used for disorders affecting the lower extremities, pelvis, and lumbar region. Veins of the thighs (*Uru*), calves, and ankles (*Gulpha*) are chosen.
- *Siravedha* in the Head and Neck Region o Applied in specific disorders such as *Ardhavabhedaka* (migraine), *Netra Roga* (eye diseases), *Danta Roga* (dental diseases), and *Karna Roga* (ear disorders). Temporal veins, frontal veins, and veins behind the ear are selected with great caution.

2. Based on Indications / Disease-Specific Venesection *Acharya Sushruta* has described disease-wise selection of veins (*Sira*), such as:

- For *Vatarakta (Gout)*: Veins around the *Kurpara* (elbow) and *Gulpha* (ankle).
- For *Netra Roga* (Eye Disorders): Veins at the temples (*Shankha*) or forehead (*Lalata*).
- For *Arsha* (Hemorrhoids): Veins around the anal region (*Guda*).
- For *Vidradhi* (Abscess): Localized venesection near the site of swelling.
- For *Shiroroga* (Head Disorders): Veins in the scalp and temples. This disease-based approach reflects the precision of Ayurveda in correlating pathology with vascular distribution.

3. Based on Number of Punctures

- *Eka Sira Vedha* (Single Vein Puncture): Most commonly performed, where only one vein is punctured to relieve localized *Dushti*.
- *Bahusira Vedha* (Multiple Vein Punctures): Applied in chronic or systemic conditions involving widespread *Rakta Dushti*. It is rarely practiced due to the risk of excessive blood loss.

4. Based on Mode of Venesection

- *Alpa Siravedha* (Superficial Venesection): Shallow puncture allowing limited bloodletting, generally for mild disorders or in weak patients.
- *Pravṛtta Siravedha* (Deep Venesection): Deeper puncture performed for expelling larger quantities of vitiated blood in robust patients or chronic disorders.

5. Special Considerations

- *Prayojya Siravedha* (Therapeutic Venesection): Performed as per indication for disease management.
- *Apprayojya Siravedha* (Contraindicated Venesection): Certain veins such as those supplying vital organs (e.g., in the groin, near the heart, or forehead midline) are strictly avoided due to risk of complications



Contraindications *Siravedhya*⁸

Sira vedhya should not be undertaken in the *balyavastha* (very young), and the *sthavir* (very old), *ruksha* (perched man), *kshata* (wounded), *kshina* (debilitated person), *bhiru* (timid), *parisharnt* (tired), *Madhya padhwa* (excessive drinking), *stri karshii* (emaciated due to excessive indulgence in sex), in person who have undergone *vaman* (emesis) or *virechan* (purgasis) *anuwasan* and *asthapan vasthi* (who have been administered enemas), in person who has spent sleepless nights, in impotent, in very weak persons pregnant women's, in persons suffering from kapha, asthma, fasting, thirst and unconsciousness. *Sira vedhya* is contra indicated on in invisible *siras* and even if visible but cannot be stabilized (slippery) or even if stabilized but cannot be made prominent *Siravedhya*

Indication For *Siravedhya*⁹

Pada-daha (burn), *pada harsha* (tingling sensation in foot), *avbahuk*, *chippa*, *visarpa*, *vata shonata*, *vatkantaka*, *vicharchika* and *padadari* disease- *sira vedhan* should be performed at the distance of two fingers above the site of *shipra marma* with *brihi mukha* instrument

Siravedhan Vidhi

A patient who has been adequately prepared through *Snehan* (oleation) and *Swedana* (fomentation), and who has consumed a light liquid diet such as *Yavagu*, should be brought to the surgeon at an appropriate time of the year, avoiding the rainy and winter seasons. The patient should be positioned comfortably in a sitting or lying posture in a manner that does not interfere with normal bodily functions. The selected site for venepuncture should be neither tightly nor loosely constricted. Following this, the *Sira* should be punctured carefully using appropriate surgical instruments.

II. DISCUSSION

Siravedha, as described in the *Sushruta Samhita* and subsequent Ayurvedic texts, occupies a central role in *Raktamokshana* and is regarded as a half therapy (*Ardha Chikitsa*) due to its broad therapeutic potential. In Ayurveda, the selection of a specific therapeutic modality for a particular disease is based on its inherent properties such as *Rasa*, *Guna*, *Virya*, and *Vipaka*, with treatment aimed at correcting the vitiated *Doshas* to restore *Tridosha* balance. *Siravedhana* primarily exerts its action on disorders involving *Pitta*, *Rakta*, and *Kapha*, as well as conditions in which *Pitta* and *Kapha* are associated with aggravated *Vata Dosha*. In cases where *Vata Prakopa* occurs due to obstruction (*Avarana*) by *Pitta* and *Kapha*, *Siravedhana* helps in eliminating this obstruction, thereby facilitating the normal downward movement (*Anulomana*) of *Vata*. Through this mechanism, *Siravedhana* effectively alleviates *Vatika* symptoms along with associated *Pitta* or *Kapha* involvement, resulting in rapid relief from pain.¹⁰

Pain in Ayurveda is mainly attributed to aggravated *Vata Dosha*. However, when *Vata* is obstructed by vitiated *Rakta* (*Raktavrita Vata*), pain becomes severe and persistent. *Siravedhana* directly addresses this pathological mechanism.

By removing impure and obstructing *Rakta*:

- *Vata Dosha* regains its normal movement (*Gati*)
- Local inflammation and congestion are reduced
- Pressure on nerves and surrounding tissues decreases
- Microcirculation improves, aiding tissue healing

III. CONCLUSION

Siravedha is an Ayurvedic parasurgical intervention with clinically relevant therapeutic potential, particularly in chronic, refractory, and blood-related disorders. When applied following appropriate patient selection and in accordance with classical Ayurvedic guidelines, it may serve as a complementary therapeutic approach alongside contemporary medical management. A critical review of classical texts and modern scientific literature indicates that *Siravedha* facilitates the elimination of vitiated blood, thereby alleviating symptoms associated with *Rakta Dushti* and compromised microcirculation. Evidence from recent clinical studies suggests its beneficial effects in inflammatory disorders, hypertension, localized vascular congestion, and certain metabolic conditions. The probable mechanisms underlying these effects include enhancement of blood circulation, detoxification processes, and modulation of immune



responses. However, further well-designed clinical studies are required to establish its efficacy and to support its integration into evidence-based healthcare systems.

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