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**“RAKTAMOKSHANA AS A PARASURGICAL METHOD:  
A CRITICAL REVIEW WITH CONTEMPORARY CLINICAL RELEVANCE”**

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**Abstract –**

Raktamokshana (bloodletting) is a significant parasurgical procedure described in classical Ayurvedic texts, especially in Sushruta Samhita, and is regarded as Ardhachikitsa (half of surgical treatment) in Shalya Tantra. It is primarily indicated in diseases arising from Rakta and Pitta Dushti where Shamana Chikitsa fails to provide adequate relief. The present review aims to critically analyze the conceptual basis, classification, methods, indications, contraindications, and contemporary clinical relevance of Raktamokshana. Classical procedures such as Siravedha, Jalaukavacharana, Prachchana, Shringa, Alabu, and Ghatiyana are discussed along with their modern equivalents like therapeutic phlebotomy, leech therapy, and cupping.

Available scientific evidence supports its efficacy in dermatological, musculoskeletal, vascular, and inflammatory disorders. This review establishes Raktamokshana as a scientifically relevant, safe, and effective parasurgical modality when practiced judiciously with proper patient selection and aseptic precautions.

**Key Words** Raktamokshana, Bloodletting, Parasurgical Procedure, Jalaukavacharana, Siravedha, Ayurveda.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Ayurveda emphasizes Shodhana Chikitsa for the management of diseases caused by deep-seated Dosha vitiation. Raktamokshana is a unique Shodhana therapy specifically aimed at eliminating vitiated Rakta from the body. Acharya Sushruta described Rakta as Jeeva (life itself) due to its indispensable role in nourishment, sustenance of life, and maintenance of physiological functions. In several contexts, Rakta is equated with Dosha because of its vital significance.

According to Ayurvedic principles, diseases that do not respond to Snehana, Swedana, Lepana, or Shamana therapies are often attributed to Rakta Dushti. In such conditions, direct elimination of vitiated Rakta becomes essential. Hence, Raktamokshana occupies a central place among parasurgical procedures in Shalya Tantra and is considered both a curative and preventive therapeutic modality.

### **CONCEPTUAL BASIS OF RAKTAMOKSHANA**

Rakta Dhatus play a pivotal role in Ayurvedic physiology by performing functions such as Poshana (nourishment), Pranadharana (sustenance of life),

and maintenance of Varna (complexion). According to the principle of Ashraya–Ashrayi Bhava, Pitta Dosha resides in Rakta; therefore, vitiation of Rakta invariably leads to Pitta Dushti.

Rakta Dushti occurs due to faulty diet (Aharaja), improper lifestyle (Viharaja), seasonal factors (Kalaja), and psychological stress. Clinically, it manifests as Kushta (skin diseases), Visarpa, Shopha (inflammation), Vidradhi (abscess), Vatarakta (gout), and various vascular disorders. Raktamokshana expels the vitiated Rakta directly, thereby arresting disease progression at its root level and preventing recurrence.

**Table 1: Ayurvedic Conceptual Basis of Raktamokshana**

<b>Component</b>	<b>Description</b>
Rakta Dhatus	Vital tissue responsible for nourishment, life sustenance,
Associated Dosha	Pitta (Ashraya–Ashrayi Bhava)
Primary Pathology	Rakta Dushti
Major Causes	Aharaja (dietary), Viharaja (lifestyle), Kalaja (seasonal), Manasika
Principle of Treatment	Shodhana (purificatory), Curative and Preventive
Elimination of vitiated Rakta	

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### **CLASSIFICATION OF RAKTAMOKSHANA**

#### **RAKTAMOKSHANA**



**Table 2: Classification of Raktamokshana**

Type Method	Instrument Used	Area of Action
Shastrakruta, Prachchana	Sharp instrument / blade	Localized, superficial Rakta Dushti
Shastrakruta, Siravedha	Needle / venesection	Generalized deep-seated Rakta Dushti
Ashastrakruta	Jalaukavach arana. Medicinal leech	Deep-seated, inflamed, delicate areas
Ashastrakruta	Shringa. Animal horn/suction	Vata-dominant localized. disorders
Ashastrakruta	Alabu/Bottl e guard.	Kapha-dominant conditions
Ashastrakruta	Ghatiyantara	Musculosk

	Earthen pot/cupping device.	electal & localized inflammation
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### **Description of Procedures**

#### **1. Jalaukavacharana (Leech Therapy)**

It is the mildest and safest method of Raktamokshana, especially indicated for children, elderly, females, and delicate patients. Medicinal leech saliva contains bioactive substances such as Hirudin, Calin, Bdellins, and Hyaluronidase, which exhibit anticoagulant, anti-inflammatory, analgesic, and antimicrobial properties.

#### **Clinical indications:**

- Vatarakta (Gout)
- Osteoarthritis
- Varicose veins
- Non-healing ulcers
- Eczema and psoriasis
- Venous congestion in reconstructive surgery



### **2. Siravedha (Venesection)**

Siravedha is indicated in the generalized Rakta Dushti. Acharya Sushruta described 700 Siras, out of which 98 are Avedhya. The procedure closely resembles modern therapeutic phlebotomy used in polycythemia vera and hemochromatosis.



### **3. Prachchana**

Prachchana involves multiple superficial incisions over the affected area to drain vitiated Rakta. It is useful in localized skin and inflammatory disorders.



### **4. Shringa, Alabu, and Ghatyantra**

These methods operate on the principle of negative pressure. Ghatyantra is comparable to modern cupping therapy and is effective in musculoskeletal pain, Gridhrasi (sciatica), and localized inflammatory conditions.



**Mode of Action of Raktamokshana**



Improved tissue perfusion and oxygenation  
|  
Restoration of Dosha balance  
|  
Samprapti Vighatana and disease regression

**Mechanism of Bloodletting (Modern / Allopathic Perspective)**

Pathological Condition  
(Excess blood volume / toxic metabolites / inflammatory mediators / iron overload / venous congestion)  
↓  
Increase in Blood Viscosity & Hemodynamic Load (Polycythemia, hyper viscosity, venous stasis, microcirculatory impairment)  
↓  
Tissue Hypoxia & Inflammatory Activation (Elevated cytokines, oxidative stress, endothelial dysfunction)  
↓  
Bloodletting / Therapeutic Phlebotomy / Local Blood Removal (Controlled removal of blood volume)  
↓  
Reduction in Circulating Blood Volume & Viscosity (Decreased)

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hematocrit, reduced  
venous pressure)

↑ Oxygen delivery

↓ Removal of Pathological Substances  
(Excess red blood cells, iron, inflammatory mediators, toxins)

↓ Cardiac strain

↓ Improvement in  
Microcirculation &  
Tissue Perfusion  
(Enhanced oxygen delivery, reduced  
venous congestion)

↓ Modulation of Inflammatory &  
Immune Response  
(Decrease in cytokines, oxidative  
stress, and endothelial activation)

↓ Hemodynamic Stabilization  
(Reduced cardiac workload, improved  
vascular compliance)

↓ Clinical Improvement & Symptom  
Relief  
(Pain reduction, decreased  
inflammation, improved organ  
function)

## **• Key Scientific Effects of Bloodletting (Modern View)**

↓ Blood viscosity

↓ Hematocrit and iron overload

↓ venous congestion

↓ Inflammatory mediators

↑ Microcirculation

## **Clinical Conditions Where This Mechanism Is Applied**

- Polycythemia vera
- Hemochromatosis
- Porphyria cutanea tarda
- Venous congestion (post-surgical)
- Chronic inflammatory conditions
- Hypertension (historical & selective use)

## **Indications and Contraindications of Raktamokshana**

### **Indications-**

Kushta (skin diseases)

Visarpa (erysipelas)

Vatarakta (gout)

Abscess and inflammatory conditions

Poisoning.

Non-healing ulcers

Joint and vascular disorders

### **Contraindications**

Severe anemia

Bleeding disorders such as hemophilia

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Pregnancy

Immune compromised states

Active tuberculosis

**Table 3: Selection of Raktamokshana Method Based on Disease Condition**

Disease Condition	Preferred Method	Rationale
Kushta (Skin diseases)	Jalaukavacharaṇa / Prachchana	Local Rakta Dushti
Vatarakta (Gout)	Jalaukavacharaṇa / Siravedhaṇa	Rakta-Pitta involvement
Gridhrasi (Sciatica)	Ghatiyantra	Local congestion & pain
Abscess (Vidradhi)	Prachchana	Superficial toxin drainage
Varicose veins	Jalaukavacharaṇa	Venous congestion relief
Generalized Rakta Dushti	Siravedha	Systemic purification

**Table 4: Classical Procedures and Their Modern Correlation**

Ayurvedic Procedure	Modern Equivalent
Siravedha	Therapeutic phlebotomy
Jalaukavacharaṇa	Medicinal leech therapy
Ghatiyantra	Cupping therapy
Prachchana	Micro-incision drainage
Shringa / Alabu	Suction-based bloodletting

## **DISCUSSION**

Raktamokshana is a direct and targeted Shodhana therapy providing both local and systemic benefits. Classical texts emphasize its superiority in Rakta and Pitta dominant disorders where internal medications alone are insufficient. From a modern perspective, Raktamokshana aids in removal of inflammatory mediators, reduction of venous congestion, improvement of microcirculation, and immune modulation.

Jalaukavacharaṇa introduces pharmacologically active substances through leech saliva, while Siravedha parallels modern therapeutic phlebotomy. The availability of disposable instruments, standardized leech therapy, and cupping devices has significantly improved safety and patient acceptability. Thus, Raktamokshana acts as a bridge between classical Ayurvedic surgery and evidence-based contemporary medicine.

## **CONCLUSION**

Raktamokshana is a time-tested parasurgical procedure with significant therapeutic and preventive value. When performed with proper patient selection, aseptic precautions, and scientific

understanding, it serves as an effective modality in chronic inflammatory, dermatological, and vascular disorders. Integration of classical Ayurvedic wisdom with modern clinical practices can further enhance its global acceptance and clinical utility.

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