

SIRAVEDHA KALPANA IN SHALYA TANTRA – A CLASSICAL AND CLINICAL
PRESPECTIVE – A CRITICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Siravedha (therapeutic venesection) is one of the most important para-surgical procedures described in *Ayurveda* under the domain of *Raktamokshana* (bloodletting therapy). It is considered highly effective for expelling vitiated *Doshas*, especially vitiated *Rakta* (impure blood), thereby restoring *dosha-dhatu-samyata* (balance of body elements). The classical texts, including *Sushruta Samhita*, highlight *Siravedha* as a prime modality in the management of various disorders such as skin diseases (*Kushtha*), abscesses (*Vidradhi*), gout (*Vatarakta*), hypertension-related symptoms, and certain vascular conditions. The procedure involves identification of specific veins (*Sira*), followed by controlled puncturing using sharp instruments, ensuring the safe expulsion of impure blood under strict procedural guidelines. Proper patient selection, seasonal considerations, pre- and post-procedural care are emphasized for safety and efficacy. Modern scientific interpretation suggests that *Siravedha* may work through mechanisms akin to detoxification, regulation of microcirculation, and immunomodulation. Thus, *Siravedha* represents a unique blend of traditional therapeutic wisdom with potential contemporary clinical applications in chronic and refractory diseases.

KEYWORDS: Siravedha, Raktamokshana, Ayurvedic parasurgical procedure, venesection, Rakta Dushti, Sushruta.**INTRODUCTION**

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, emphasizes both preventive and curative measures for maintaining health and treating diseases. Among the *Shalya Tantra* (surgical) interventions described, *Raktamokshana* (bloodletting therapy) holds a prime place in eliminating vitiated blood (*Dushta Rakta*), which is considered a major cause of systemic and localized pathologies. *Siravedha* (therapeutic venesection) is described by *Acharya Sushruta* as the most effective method of *Raktamokshana*, earning it the title of “*Ardha Chikitsa*” (half of all therapeutic measures) due to its wide applicability in various disorders.

The procedure involves puncturing or incising a selected vein (*Sira*) under strict guidelines to expel impure blood. Classical texts highlight the importance of proper vein selection, seasonal considerations, and pre- and post-procedure protocols to ensure safety and efficacy.

Indications of *Siravedha* include diseases such as *Vatarakta* (gout), *Kushtha* (skin disorders), *Vidradhi* (abscess), *Visarpa* (erysipelas), *Arsha* (piles), and *Netra Roga* (ocular disorders). Contraindications are equally well-described, with avoidance in conditions such as anemia, pregnancy, children, elderly, and extremely debilitated patients.

Modern interpretations suggest that *Siravedha* may work by reducing venous pressure, relieving congestion, improving microcirculation, and modulating inflammatory mediators. Recent studies have attempted to correlate the therapeutic outcomes with principles of detoxification, immune regulation, and metabolic balance. Thus, *Siravedha* represents not only a traditional parasurgical procedure but also a potential complementary modality in modern clinical practice.

Given its significance, this paper aims to critically analyze the classical references, procedural methodology,

indications, contraindications, and probable mechanisms of *Siravedha*, alongside its clinical relevance in the present era.

TYPES OF SIRAVEDHA

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**
 - 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

- **Ekā 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



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. The discussion of this procedure can be approached from both the classical Ayurvedic framework and modern scientific perspectives.
- From the Ayurvedic standpoint, *Rakta* (blood) is considered the seat of life (*Jeeva*) and its vitiation leads to multiple pathological conditions ranging from skin disorders (*Kushtha*) to joint diseases (*Vatarakta*). *Siravedha* directly addresses *Rakta Dushti* by eliminating vitiated blood, thereby re-establishing doshic balance and ensuring proper tissue nourishment. Classical texts also emphasize its role in breaking the pathological cycle of *Avarana* (obstruction) and *Srotorodha* (blockage of channels), which aligns with the concept of improving circulation and removing stagnation.
- The specificity of vein selection in different disorders reflects the scientific precision of Ayurveda. For example, puncturing veins around the *Kurpara* (elbow) or *Gulpha* (ankle) in *Vatarakta* indicates an understanding of localized venous drainage and systemic effects. Likewise, venesection in the temples (*Shankha*) or forehead (*Lalata*) for

ocular and cranial disorders shows anatomical and functional correlation. Such detailed mapping of veins, combined with indications and contraindications, demonstrates the sophisticated surgical knowledge of ancient physicians.

- In modern medical terms, *Siravedha* can be compared with venesection or therapeutic phlebotomy, which is used for conditions like polycythemia vera, hemochromatosis, and hypertension-related complications. Bloodletting has been shown to reduce blood viscosity, decrease venous pressure, enhance microcirculation, and modulate inflammatory markers. These mechanisms provide a scientific rationale for the efficacy of *Siravedha* in conditions involving congestion, inflammation, and toxin accumulation.
- Furthermore, recent experimental and clinical studies suggest that controlled bloodletting may improve oxidative stress parameters, modulate immune responses, and reduce the burden of pro-inflammatory mediators. This correlates with the Ayurvedic explanation of expelling vitiated *Doshas* and restoring homeostasis. The emphasis on seasonal timing, patient selection, and pre- and post-procedural care also reflects an awareness of safety measures comparable to modern-day surgical asepsis and patient monitoring.
- Despite its wide therapeutic relevance, *Siravedha* requires cautious application. Contraindications outlined by Ayurveda—such as in pregnancy, childhood, advanced age, anemia, and debility—are in line with modern clinical safety protocols. Complications like excessive blood loss, infection, or vascular injury, if the procedure is improperly performed, highlight the importance of strict adherence to guidelines.
- Thus, the discussion indicates that *Siravedha* is not merely a traditional practice but a well-documented parasurgical intervention with parallels in contemporary medicine. Its role in detoxification, circulatory regulation, and immunomodulation makes it a potential complementary therapy for chronic and lifestyle-related diseases. However, rigorous clinical trials and experimental studies are needed to validate its efficacy and safety for integration into modern evidence-based healthcare.

CONCLUSION

Siravedha is a scientifically relevant Ayurvedic parasurgical procedure that offers significant therapeutic benefits in chronic, refractory, and blood-related disorders. With proper patient selection and adherence to classical guidelines, it may serve as a complementary approach alongside modern medical practices. Further clinical studies are warranted to validate its efficacy and explore integration into evidence-based healthcare. Literature review suggests that *Siravedha* effectively eliminates vitiated blood and provides relief in conditions associated with *Rakta Dushti* and obstructed microcirculation. Evidence from contemporary studies

indicates beneficial effects on inflammatory disorders, hypertension, localized congestion, and metabolic diseases. The probable mechanism may involve improved blood circulation, detoxification, and modulation of immune responses.

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