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# Role of Diet, Fasting and Drugs in Blood Purification and Prevention of Diseases based on Charak Samhita

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## ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the science which deals with individual as a whole rather than mere focussing on sign and symptoms and hence is individual specific and all about the knowledge and existence of "Ayu" which is nothing but the conjunction and continuation of four components i.e., *Sharira*, *Indriya*, *Satwa* and *Atma*, where *Sharira* and *Indriya* are tangible while *Satwa (Manas)* and *Atma* are intangible. Individual is the epitome of the universe and hence affected and influenced at both gross and subtle level and three sub-pillars i.e., *Aahar*, *Nindra* and *Brahmacharya* have huge impact in all the dimensions of *Ayu* directly affecting the state of health and hence happiness when used wisely, again vitiation of *Doshas* and manifestation of diseases when used unwisely (*Pragyaphradha*). *Aacharya Sushruta* has considered *Rakta* as 4<sup>th</sup> *Doshas*, so the importance of proper formation and its role in formation and maintenance of other *Dhatus* and *Ojas* depends entirely on the diet and life style of each and every individual. The properties of pure blood and also of impure blood along with every factor either physical or emotional affecting the *Rakta* has been told with enumeration of various pathological conditions arising out of this.

**Key words:** *Rakta*, *Kulatha*, *Pramilaka*, *Virechan*, *Langhan*, *Rakta Mokshan*.

## INTRODUCTION

*Aacharya Charak* in *Charak Samhita*, *Sutra Sthan* 24<sup>th</sup> chapter "*Vidhi Shonit*" chapter has very well expounded the topic of blood formation (Haemopoiesis) and the regimen therefore.

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Living creatures are endowed with strength, complexion, happiness and longevity due to pure blood. Blood plays a vital role in the sustenance of *elan vital*.<sup>[1]</sup> It is only the pure blood that helps promotion of strength, etc. where there is pure blood; the *elan vital* is well sustained and not otherwise. As it is said also that there are ten factors which help in sustaining the *elan vital*, viz., temples, three vital organs (heart, head, urinary bladder), throat, purified blood, semen, *ojas*, and rectum.<sup>[2]</sup>

Pure blood can be likened to the colours of:<sup>[3]</sup>

- Gold (Purified with fire)
- Fire fly (*Indragopa*)
- Red lotus
- Lac
- Fruits of *Gunja (Abrus precatorius)*

Depending upon individual constitution and the signs and symptoms of persons endowed with pure blood are claxity in complexion, normal functioning of sense organ, unobstructed digestion and motion, happiness, contentment (nourishment) and strength; so, even without examining the blood as such, one can determine its purity by external signs and symptoms of individuals as indicated in this verse. Later *Aacharya Charak* has also described the feature of the *Rakta*, vitiated with different *Doshas*; vitiation by *Vata Dosha* makes it reddish, non-slimy, foamy and the one vitiated by *Pitta* is yellow and black, and it takes a longer time to coagulate because of the inherent heat of (*Pitta Dosha*) [lowering the platelates counts]; the one vitiated by *Kapha* is slightly pale in colour thready and thick; the one due to vitiation by more than one *Doshas* shares the characteristics of the respective symptoms of all the vitiated *Doshas*.<sup>[4]</sup>

- 1) Blood gets vitiated by the intake of unwholesome, hot and sharp wine and in food in large quantities.
- 2) Exceedingly saline alkaline acidic and pungent food.
- 3) *Kulatha* (*Dolichos biflorus*linn), Horsegram, mungbean, *Nispava* (a type of *Simbi* Indian bitter bean) and *Pindalu* (*Dioscorea alata*) and all green eatables like radish etc.
- 4) Meat of aquatic, marshy and *Prasaha* (animals and birds who take their food by snatching) types of animals and animals' livings in holes.
- 5) Curd, sour whey, vinegar, wine, *Sauviraka* (fermented barley water) type of liquor.
- 6) Rotten, putrefied food articles and those having mutually contradictory qualities, and
- 7) Any other type of food in excessive quantities.

Blood also gets vitiated by the following:

1. Sleeping during day time after taking liquid, unctuous any heavy food.
2. Excessive anger.
3. Excessive exposure to sun and fire.

4. Suppression of the urge for vomiting.
5. Absence of the bloodletting therapy (in the autumn).
6. Exertion, heat, and external injury.
7. Taking food before the previous meal is digested.
8. By the very nature of the autumn season.

There are number of diseases mentioned in *Charak Samhita, Sutra Sthan*, chapter 26, occurring due to vitiation of blood as:

Stomatitis, conjunctivitis, rhinitis, halitosis, cellulitis and some other diseases which could be easily ignored and misdiagnosed like *Pramilaka* (drowsiness), suppression of the digestion, thirst, heaviness of the body, burning sensation, saline taste in the mouth, excessive weakness and excessive sweating and foul smelling of body, anorexia, headache, excessive anger, excessive sleep, frequent attacks of fainting and one very important concept has been discussed as if the curable diseases do not get cured by cold, hot, unctuous, drying and such other therapies they are to be taken as diseases due to vitiation of blood.<sup>[5]</sup>

The idea underlying such a diagnosis is that the above mentioned therapy, if properly administrated, but such of the diseases as are caused by the aggravation of *Rakta* cannot be cured simply by the therapy meant for alleviating the disease due to vitiation of *Dosas*.

#### Principles of treatment for the diseases of blood

1. Purgation (*Virechan*)
2. Bloodletting as indicated for the treatment of *Raktapitta* (a disease characterised by bleeding from different parts of the body)

The therapies are to be administered with due regard to the nature of disease caused by the vitiation of blood.<sup>[6]</sup> There are three important points to be taken in to account in connection with the blood letting.

- a) Firstly - therapy is to be administered with due regard to the strength of the patient and extent of the manifestation of the concerned disease.

- b) Secondly - it is to be seen that the blood letting corresponds to the extent the remaining blood is purified.
- c) Thirdly - even for the patients suffering from the same types of disease the bloodletting is to be regulated according to the seriousness of the disease. For example, in the case of patients suffering from minor skin diseases, bloodletting is to be done in small quantity with the help of scraper whereas in the case of major skin diseases a large quantity of blood is to be taken out by venesection.<sup>[7]</sup>

As bloodletting by leech therapy and venesection needs supervision and expertise, *Acharya Charak* has described in a very elaborated way the process of fasting (*Langhan*) and diet and description of 10 drugs as Hematics or haemostatics which includes;

1. Honey
2. *Madhuka* (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*)
3. *Rubhira* (*Croesus sativa*)
4. mocarasa (resin of *Salimalia malabarica*)
5. Earthenpot pieces
6. *Lodhra* (*Symplocos racemosa*)
7. *Gairika* (*Ferrum haematite*)
8. *Priyangu* (*Callicarpa macrophylla*)
9. Sugar
10. Fried paddy<sup>[8]</sup>

In *Carak Samhita Sutrasthana* chapter 22 reducing and nourishing therapy, *Langhana*, *Ruksana* (drying therapy) and *Svedana* (fomentation therapy) comes under reducing while *Brihana*, *Snehana* (oleating therapy) and *Stambhana* (astringent therapy) comes under nourishing. Where *Langhan* (lightening therapy) directly is capable to reduce the body whereas it is the additional effect of *Svedan* and *Ruksana*,<sup>[9]</sup> as they are dominated by the quality of lightness but the dryness is not the after effect of normal *Langhana*.

There are 10 types of *Langhana* therapies told by *Acharya Charak* which includes;

1. Four types of elimination therapies viz. emesis, purgation, *Niruha* types of enema and inhalation
2. Control of thirst
3. Exposures to wind
4. Exposures to sun
5. Intake of substances which stimulates digestion (dominant in *Agni* and *Vayu Mahabhuta*)
6. Fasting
7. Physical exercise

And again, especially for purification of blood along with bloodletting *Acharya Charak* has described *Virechan* and *Upawas* has been defined by *Chakrapani* in his commentary on *Ca.Su.1* as abstinence from anger and observance of thoughtful act and doesn't mean emaciation of the body.<sup>[10],[11]</sup>

And again among ten *Langhana* therapies *Upawas* is especially indicated for the disease like vomiting, diarrhoea, heart diseases, cholera, intestinal torpor, fever, constipation, heaviness of the body, eructation, nausea and anorexia which are caused by the vitiation of *Kapha* and *Pitta* if are of mild nature, they are to be treated with control of thirst and hunger.

So, at the initial stage of diseases digestive drugs are to be administrated for the *Aampachan* and at the later stage (*Niramavastha*) alleviation therapy (*Shaman*) is to be administrated for their cure.<sup>[12]</sup> Again in chapter 23, *Sutra Sthan* the six therapies are again classified into two groups viz. Refreshing and emaciating where it has been mentioned that one who over refreshes himself with unctuous, sweet, heavy and slimy substances, newly harvested rice, fresh wine, meat, cow's milk and its preparation made of sugar of candy and pastry but is averse to physical exertion, indulges in sleep during day time, and keep lying on the bed and sitting as ease at all the time fall a victim to various metabolic diseases (Diabetes, fever, obstinate urinary disorder) and various diseases related to blood (*Rakta Dhatu*) and

skin (*Twacha*) like *Pandu*, urticaria, itching, fever and several others.<sup>[13]</sup>

So, it can be clearly seen that how purification and contamination of blood depends upon the diet and lifestyle along with mental condition and emotion of the individual also plays a huge role in the prevention of various diseases related to the blood as also in reference of *Aachara Rasayan*. *Acharya Charak* in *Chikitsa Sthan* told that being truthful takes away lots of anxiety affecting the proper nourishment of all *Dhatus* (including *Rakta*), free from anger, avoid violence, exhaustion excessive thinking stress and worries, maintain hygiene, calm, indulge in creative activities, talking with pleasing words, having a clean body begets clear mind, practice penance, meditation, avoiding barbaric behaviour, compassionate, timely sleep, regular intake of milk and ghee, free from ego, love for spiritual knowledge, have self control.<sup>[14]</sup>

So, all these similar other basic and very important activities go a long way and help the individual in attaining the *Purusharth* as disease are destroyer of health, well being and life.<sup>[15]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

How each and every factor influences the state of *Doshas* and *Dhatus* can be understood very easily. Excessive intake of saline, alkaline, acidic and pungent food along with hot and in excessive quantities, intake of some specific *Dravyas*, like curd, vinegar, wine etc. rotten and impure eatables leads to the vitiation of *Rakta* and also some unwholesome lifestyle and habits, and even itself in *Sharad Ritu* (autumn) vitiates the *Rakta*. The first line of treatment is *Virechan* (which of course depends on the proportion of vitiation), *Rakta Mokshan*, along with fasting (*Upwas*) and observance of *Aachara Rasayan* affects the state of blood and hence maintenance of health and well being as all rest all *Dhatus* and *Ojas* and *Updhatus* depends on this only.

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