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# A conceptual and applied aspect of *Ashtavidha Shastra Karma* in *Shalaky Tantra* focusing on *Sushruta Samhita*

Shipra<sup>1</sup>, Abhishek Kangoo<sup>2</sup>, Vijayant Bhardwaj<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Post Graduate Scholar, Dept. of Shalaky Tantra, Rajiv Gandhi Government Post Graduation Ayurvedic College and Hospital, Paprola, Distt. Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, India.

<sup>3</sup>HOD, Dept. of Shalaky Tantra, Rajiv Gandhi Government Post Graduation Ayurvedic College and Hospital, Paprola, Distt. Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, India.

## ABSTRACT

A vast description of *Shastra* and *Ashtavidha Shastra Karma* is given in our *Samhitas*, which are used for medical and surgical procedures. Most of the modern procedures can be correlated to them. As described by *Acharya Sushruta* there are three stages of a surgical surgery, known as *Trividh Karma*, that are: *Poorva Karma* (pre-operative measure), *Pradhan Karma* (operative), and *Paschat Karma* (postoperative measures).<sup>[1]</sup> *Ashtavidha Shastra Karma* falls under *Pradhan Karma*, which includes the main *Karma* or procedure. The procedures or steps that make up *Ashtavidha Shastra Karmas* are always the heart of surgery. From a broad perspective, *Ashtavidha Shastra Karmas* can be seen as the foundation of modern surgery, which may explain why both *Ayurvedic* and modern surgeons continue to commemorate *Acharya Sushruta*. Although modern surgery is always being updated and enhanced, these *Shalya Karmas* have not lost their luster because they are the origins of all surgeries and roots are always more essential than the branches.

**Key words:** *Ashtavidha Shastra Karma, Sushruta, Chedana, Bhedana, Vedhana, Lekhana, Eshan, Aharan, Vistravan, Seevan.*

## INTRODUCTION

Any device or instrument that causes injury (intentional injury caused by the surgeon during operation) to the tissue is considered *Shastra*. The nature of injury depends upon the type of instrument and Nature of Operation. Surgical instruments mentioned by *Sushruta* for each *Shastra Karma* are almost similar to modern surgical instruments. *Ashtavidha Shastra Karma* has been explained in

detail, and these principles are well accepted in the modern surgical era. These techniques are used either alone or in combination in surgical practice

### *Shastra Karma*

*Ashtavidha Shastra Karmas*<sup>[2]</sup> (Operative Procedures): On the day and time having auspicious stellar constellation, *Agni, Brahmana* and physician should be worshipped first, then offer oblation, perform sacrificial rites and chant hymns of benediction; the patient is then given light food and made to sit east facing; after restraining him, the surgeon sitting opposite to him, insert the knife in the direction of hairs avoiding vital spots.

**Table 1: Different *Acharyas* have considered different numbers and types of *Shastra Karmas*, which are as follows:**

	<i>Shastra Karma</i>	Name of <i>Shastra Karma</i>
<i>Acharya Charaka</i>	6	<i>Patana, Vedhana, Chedana, Lepana, Prachana, Sevana</i> <sup>[3]</sup>

### Address for correspondence:

Dr. Shipra

Post Graduate Scholar, Dept. of Shalaky Tantra, Rajiv Gandhi Government Post Graduation Ayurvedic College and Hospital, Paprola, Distt. Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, India.

E-mail: shiprasharma330.ss@gmail.com

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(Ch.Chi 25/55)		
Acharya Susrutha (Su.Su 5/5)	8	Chedana, Bhedana, Lekhana, Vedhana, Visravana, Eshana, Aharana, Seevena <sup>[4]</sup>
Ashtanga Hridhyem (As.Su.26/28)	13	Chedana, Bhedana, Lekhana, Vedhana, Eshana, Seevena, Prachana, Udharana, Patana, Kuttan, Manthan, Grahana <sup>[5]</sup>
Ashtanga sangreha (As.Su. 24/21)	12	Chedana, Bhedana, Lekhana, Vedhana, Eshana, Seevena, Prachana, Utpatana, Patana, Kuttan, Manthan, Grahana, Dahana <sup>[6]</sup>

Here, we are going to focus on *Ashtavidha Shastra Karma* i.e., 8 surgical procedures by *Acharya Sushruta* in detail.

### 1. Chedana (Excision)

*Chedana* involves excision of part of the body/ tissue using various instruments.

*Chedana* should be done in *Vrana* that is along with veins (*Siras*), which have *Sthula* edges, which are hard and in *Adhimansaja vikara*.

**Table 2: Shastra and Anushastra used in Chedana**

1.	Shastra used in Chedana	Mandalagra, Karpatra, Vridhipatra, Nakhasastra, Mudrika, Utpalpatra, Ardhadhara <sup>[7]</sup>
2.	Anushastra used in Chedana	Twaksar, Sphatik, Kaca(glass pieces), Nakha <sup>[8]</sup>

In modern these instruments can be correlated to the scalpel and blades.

**Type of Chedana:** There are three types of *Chedana*

1. *Tiryak Chedana (Horizontal incision)*: Done in *Shalaky Tantra* in parts like Eyebrows, Cheeks, Temporal region of the head, eyelids, lips and gums.

2. *Chandramandalavat* (Circular excision)
3. *Ardhamandalavat* (Semi lunar)<sup>[9]</sup>

**Table 3: Chedana Sadhya Rogas in eye, ent and mouth<sup>[10]</sup>**

SN		Chedana Sadhya Rogas	Modern correlation
1.	In Eyes (11 in number)	Parvani, 5 Aram, Sirajal, Sirapidika, Arshovartam, Shushk Arsha, Vartam Arbuda	Pterygium excision, Enucleation and evisceration surgery.
2.	In ENT and Mouth	Kaphaj Granthi, Ulcer Margin, Mild tumors, Adhimansa, Necrosed Tissue, Galshundika, Karna Nasa Arshas, Karna Nasa Arbuda, Dantapupput, Talupupput, Tundikeri, Kanthashaluka	Tonsillectomy, Tonsillectomy with Adenoidectomy, Thyroidectomy - partial and total, Excision of the benign and cancerous lesions, Excision of periauricular sinuses.

*Kaphaj Granthi - Granthi* which is not present on *Marma* and which is not going to become *Pakwa* should be excised in *Apakwa Stage* and *Agnikarma* is done.

*Galshundika - Galshundika* has to be firmly handled with a *Samdamsa Yantra* and with *Mandalagra Shastra* the lower 1/3rd part should be cut by leaving the upper 2/3<sup>rd</sup>, excessive cutting causes bleeding complications and improper cutting causes complications like salivation, insomnia and aggravation of the disease.<sup>[11]</sup>

### 2. Bhedana (Incision)

Making an incision for opening a cavity to drain out pus, blood and removing calculus.

Done in wounds that have pus inside but do not have an opening, have sinuses inside, or pus pocket.

**Table 4: Shastra and Anushastra used for Bhedana karma**

1.	Shastra used for Bhedana	Vridhipatra, Nakhasastra, Mudrika, Utpalpatra, Ardhadhara. <sup>[12]</sup>
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2.	Anushastra used for Bhedana	Twaksar, Sphatika, Kacha, Kuruvind, Nakha, Agni, Kshara. <sup>[13]</sup>
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Method of holding Shastra for Bhedana: Vriddhipatra and all other instruments used for Bhedan karma should be held between the Vrinta (handle) and Phala (blade).<sup>[14]</sup>

**Table 5: Bhedana Sadhya Roga in eyes, ent and mouth<sup>[15]</sup>**

SN		Bhedana Sadhya Roga	Modern correlation
1.	Five in Eyes	Upnah, Krimigranthi, Anjanamika, Lagan and Bisvartam	Lacrimal sac abscess incision and drainage, Orbital subperiosteal abscess drainage, incision and drainage of chalazion, etc.
2.	In ENT and Mouth	Karna Nasa Dant Vidradhi (abscess), Sopha, Medoj Osth Rog, Vrinda and Ekvrinda (tumors of throat), Tundikeri (Tonsillitis), Mukhpaka (Stomatitis), Galvidhradi, Talupupputa (tumor of the palate), Dantpupputa (Gingivitis), Gilayu (tonsillar abscess) etc.	Tonsillectomy, Incision, and drainage of abscess, hematoma, etc.

**Quality of incision:** 1. Adequate in length, 2. Extensible, 3. Regular and uniformly cut edges, 4. Independent, 5. All layers are cleanly incised.<sup>[16]</sup>

**Direction of incision:** The incision line should be preferred in the directions of hair and along the Langer line because it heals quickly. The incision should be oblique in the eyebrow, cheeks, temple, forehead, eyelid, lip, and gum.<sup>[17]</sup>

**Types of incision:**

1. *Gothirtha*: Incision like *Khur* of cow (semi-circular).
2. *Sarvathobadra*: Circular incision to open a fistula or sinus.
3. *Langlak*: *Langlak* means “plough” used by farmers. It is a T-shaped incision.
4. *Ardhalangalaka*: It means half of *Langlak*. It is a L-shaped incision.

**Complication of faulty Incision:** *Bhedan* should be given in the exact pattern as suggested in the text; otherwise, it may lead to damage of blood vessels and nerves, severe pain, delayed wound healing and keloid formation (*Maskandi*).<sup>[18]</sup>

**3. Lekhana Karma (Scraping)**

*Lekhana* means to remove or to scrap out debris or unwanted tissues from the affected part.

*Lekhana Karma* should be done in *Anuloma Gati* (direction of hair follicle). If it is done in *Pratiloma Gati* (opposite direction of hair follicle) it will cause severe pain and bleeding.<sup>[19]</sup>

**Table 6: Shastra and Anushastra used for Lekhana Karma**

1.	Shastra used for Lekhana Karma	Mandalagra and Karpatra. <sup>[20]</sup>
2.	Anushastra used for Lekhana	Kshara, Gojihva, Sephalikka, Nakha <sup>[21]</sup>

**Table 7: Lekhana Sadhya Rogas<sup>[22]</sup>**

SN		Lekhana Sadhya Rogas	Modern Correlation
1.	Lekhya Netra Roga	Utsangini, Kumbhik Pidika, Vartam Sharkara, Vartam Avbandh, Pothaki, Bahalvartam, Shayav Vartam, Vartam Kardam, Klishta Vartam. All these diseases are vartamgata roga.	Corneal Scraping for diagnosis (corneal biopsy)
2.	Lekhya Roga in ENT	Karna Nasa Arsha, Soshir, Upkush, Jihwa Rog,	

		<i>Upjihwika</i> (Swelling on the tongue), <i>Adhijhwika</i> (Adenoids), Four kinds of <i>Rohini</i> , <i>Danta Vaidarbha</i> (Gingivitis)	
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*Lekhana* is an independent procedure indicated in conditions like *Shyava Vartma* (oedema of eyelids) and *Kardama Vartma* (lid abscess) where the lid should be scraped uniformly. *Shyava Vartma* and *Kardama Vartma* present with lid oedema, discolouration, itching and secretion in the lid, suggestive of long-standing inflammatory changes in the lid due to the vitiation of *Rakta*. Here *Lekhana* is aimed to remove the vitiated blood from the affected site which is done in the form of a uniform scratch or uniform line.

In the absence of main instruments, the *Lekhan* should be performed with a piece of *Kshauma* (cloth made of the fibres of an *Atasi* plant), linen or a cotton pad (*Pichu*) or with alkaline substances such as nitrates of potash, *Samudraphen*, rock salt, rough leaves of trees (e.g.; *Udumbara*).

For *Lekhana karma*, *Shastra* should be held at the junction of *Vrunta* (edge) and *Vruntaphala* (handle) with the hand slightly raised and *Lekhana* should be done multiple times.<sup>[23]</sup>

Assessment of performance of *Lekhana* Procedure: Sushruta has explained certain parameters to assess the proper and improper *Lekhana karma*.

- Absence of bleeding from the site, itching, oedema and appearance of the lid like a fingernail are the characteristic features of *Samyak* (proper) *Lekhana karma*.<sup>[28]</sup>
- Improperly done *Lekhana* methods are the result of either *Ayoga* (under-scraping) or *Atiyoga* (over-scraping).
- Excessive bleeding from the site, congestion, oedema of lids, discharge, blurring of vision and inflammatory features are due to under-scraping. Features like inward rolling of lids (entropion), misdirected eyelashes (trichiasis) and discharge with pain are suggestive of over-scraping.

#### 4. *Vedhana* (Puncturing or Paracentesis)

*Vedhana* means puncturing or removal of fluids

**Table 8: *Shastra* and *Anushastra* used in *Vedhana***

1.	<i>Shastra</i>	<i>Kutharika</i> , <i>Vrihimukha</i> , <i>Aara</i> , <i>Vetasptra</i> and <i>Suchi</i> . <sup>[24]</sup>
2.	<i>Anushastra</i>	<i>Kareera</i> <sup>[25]</sup>

Method of *Vedhana*: *Kutharika* should be held in the left hand, the stroke is given on it by the middle finger of the other hand (right hand) released after holding it with the thumb.<sup>[26]</sup>

*Acharya Sushruta* has explained 15 *Vedhya Sadhya Vyadhis*.<sup>[27]</sup>

**Table 9: *Vedhya Sadhya Vyadhis* in eyes, ent and mouth**

SN		<i>Vedhya Sadhya Vyadhis</i>	Modern co-relation
1.	In eyes and ent	<i>Puyalasa</i> , <i>VPKR</i> <i>Abhishayand</i> , <i>VPKR</i> <i>Adhimantha</i> , <i>Sashoph</i> <i>Akshipak</i> , <i>Ashoph</i> <i>Aakshipaka</i> , <i>Anytovaat</i> , <i>Vatprvaya</i> , <i>Siroutpat</i> , <i>Siraharsha</i>	Anterior chamber paracentesis

Paracentesis (Anterior chamber paracentesis (ACP) is a surgical procedure done to reduce intraocular pressure (IOP) of the eye. The procedure is used in the management of glaucoma and uveitis. It is also used for clinical diagnosis of infectious uveitis.

#### 5. *Eshana Karma* (Probing)

**Table 10: *Shastras* and *Anushastras* used for *Eshana***

1.	<i>Shastra</i>	<i>Eshani</i> <sup>[28]</sup>
2.	<i>Anushastra</i>	<i>Anguli</i> , <i>Baala</i> , <i>Kareera</i> <sup>[29]</sup>

Method of holding probe: *Eshani* should be held at its base.<sup>[30]</sup>

#### Indications:

- Nadi Vrana* (Sinuses)
- Sasalya Vrana* (wound with foreign body inside)
- Unmargi Vrana* - ulcers those which follow abnormal (lateral or oblique) directions<sup>[37]</sup>

- In modern co-related to: Bowman's probe: in congenital dacryocystitis to open up the nasolacrimal duct and lacrimal sac probing.<sup>[31]</sup>

## 6. Aharana Karma (Extraction)

**Table 11: Shastras and Anushastras used for Aharana**

1.	Shastra	Badisa and Dantasanku <sup>[32]</sup>
2	Anushastra	Nakha, Anguli <sup>[33]</sup>

### Indications:

- Karnamala (impacted wax)
- Dant Sharkara (tartar of teeth),
- Dantamala (tartar)
- Krimi Danta (Dental Caries)
- Kapalika

## 7. Visravana Karma (Bloodletting or Draining of Pus)

### Indications:

- Five types of Vidradhi (abscess),
- Ekadeshaja Sopha (localized inflammatory swelling),
- Visajusta Sonitha,
- All kinds of Arbuda,
- Vataja Pittaja Kaphaja Granthi,
- Vataja Pittaja Kaphaja Upadansa
- Saushira,
- Galashaluka,
- Kantaka, Krimidant (Tooth Caries),
- Dantavestak,
- Sitada,
- Upakusha,
- Dantapupputa,
- Disorders of lips caused by Pitta, Rakta and Kapha etc.<sup>[34]</sup>

**Table 12: Shastras and Anushastras used for Visravana**

1.	Shastras	Suci, Kushapatra, Atimukha, Sararimukha, Antarmukhaand, Trikurchka. <sup>[35]</sup>
2.	Anushastras	Jalouka, Nakha <sup>[36]</sup>

Method of holding Shastra - Should be held at its tip.<sup>[37]</sup>

- Visravana in Vidarika: In Apakwa Vidarika either Jalouka or Prachanna is done.
- Visravana in Upadamsha: Jalouka or Sira Vyadha to be done, Sira Vyadha is done at Medhra Madhya. In Alpa Doshas Jalouka can be done, in deep-seated Doshas Sira Vyadha is advisable.

## 8. Seevana Karma (Suturing)

It means suturing with the help of different types of needles and threads.

Seevana Karma i.e., suturing is one of the prime surgical procedures and has great importance as the success of surgery depends on careful apposition and wound healing.

### Indication:

- Pralamba Mamsa (a hanging cut muscle)
- Sudha Vranas (Clean uninfected wounds)
- Diseases arising from fat such as tumors
- Cut/Incised wounds (Such as tumors)
- Well-scraped wounds
- Sadhyovrana (Traumatic wounds)
- Diseases localized on moveable joints
- Cut wounds on Karnapali (Earlobe), Netragola (Eyeball), Nasa, Ostha, Kantha, Kapala, Bahu, Greeva, etc.
- Deep-seated wounds.<sup>[38]</sup>

**Suture material:** Acharya Sushruta has worked with many natural different types of suture materials both vegetative and animal origin which are either

absorbable or non-absorbable like thin cotton thread, fibres of *Ashmantak* tree, hemp plants, *Atasi*, *Murva* or *Guduchi*, silk threads, horse hairs and *Snayu*.<sup>[39]</sup>

#### Types of *Suchi* (Needle)<sup>[40]</sup>

1. Round: Length - 2 Angula - Used where there is less *Mamsa* and *Sandhis*
2. Triangular: Length - 3 Angula - Used in broad places
3. Curved

#### *Seevana* indication:

1. *Abhighataj Osth Prakop*
2. *Kanthshaluk*
3. *Galganda* etc

In the case of an uncomplicated *Sadyo Vrana* it is mentioned that the wound should be sutured on the same day.

**Contraindications for *Seevana*:** *Acharya Sushruta* mentioned that the wounds affected by *Agni*, *Kshara*, *Visha*, wounds that emit *Marutha* (gas gangrene), and wounds that have blood or foreign body inside should not be sutured. In these cases, the wound should be cleaned and the dust, hairs, nails and bone pieces be removed. If they are not removed from the wound, they cause severe suppuration of the wound along with different types of pain.<sup>[41]</sup>

**Type of *Seevana*:** Su.Su.25/21-22: Four methods of suturing techniques are described in *Sushruta Samhita* and other ancient Ayurvedic texts.

1. *Vellitaka* - Continuous type. This is achieved by suturing continuously along the length of the wound rapping the wound edges inside it.
2. *Gophanika* - Interlocking or blanket-type suturing. The wounds, shaped like footprints of crow, are sutured with *Gophanika* type of suturing.
3. *Tunnasevani* - Zig zag type or subcuticular. It is done as like as the torn-up garments are sutured.
4. *Rijugranthi* - Straight and interrupted type. This type of suturing thread is inserted from two edges of the wound and the knot is tied. This is an interrupted type of suturing.<sup>[42]</sup>

#### *Seevana Vidhi*

Wound edges should be slightly raised, approximated, and then sutured. *Acharya Sushruta* explain that during suturing, if the bite is taken at very near of edge the margin may tear and result in wound dehiscence and if the suture is taken very far from the margin there may be tension suture which causes very much pain at the operative site. So, the needle should be passed neither very far nor very near the margins of the wound.

In modern correlation to Lobuloplasty, Eyelid suturing.<sup>[43]</sup>

#### DISCUSSION

The *Ashta Vidha Shastra karma* is being implemented in various forms in Modern Surgery even today. *Sushruta* has given clear instructions on surgical procedures but the references are scattered. The term *Chedana* in Ayurvedic classical texts and the term 'excision' used in modern surgical textbooks have the same meaning i.e. *Chedana* means an abnormal or diseased part should be excised from the normal body part. In all available references, the term *Bhedana* has been used in comparison to incisions but there are other references where the typical incisions also have been indicated under the heading *Chedana Karma* like, *Tiryak*, *Chandramandal* and *Ardhamandalavat Chedan*. According to *Sushruta*, the incision line should be preferred in the line of hair that heals quickly.

*Lekhana Karma* should be done in *Anuloma Gati* (direction of hair follicles). If it is done in *Pratiloma Gati* (opposite direction of hair follicles) it will cause severe pain and bleeding. *Sushruta* indicates *Vyadhan Karma* which can be considered as tapping. *Acharya Sushruta* gave the appropriate definition for a probe that it is a slender surgical instrument for exploring the depth or direction of a wound, sinus etc. He not only told us about the incisions but also about how a particular instrument should be held in hand during the surgical procedure, which we are practising even today. Talking about the incisions he said that incisions should be taken from above to downwards, avoiding damage to *Marmas*, *Sira*, *Snayu*, *Asthi*, *Sandhi* and *Dhamni*, it shows that these are important structures and should

be avoided during surgery to avoid the permanent loss of the function of any part of the body.

The 8 types of surgical procedures like *Chedana*, *Bhedana*, *Lekhana*, *Aharana*, *Vyadhana*, *Sravana*, *Esana* and *Seevana* are the basis of any surgical technique and this has remained unchanged. All surgical procedures are bound by these 8 varieties. There may be conflict on the numbers of surgical procedures by some authors but the procedures are unchanged. These surgical procedures are still in use these days.

## CONCLUSION

*Ashtavidha Shastra Karmas* mustn't be the eight surgical procedures; rather these are the eight basic principles of all the surgical procedures which can be used for any surgery. These *Karmas* contain a short but full description of all the surgeries. Every surgical procedure comprises either one or more of them.

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