



Exploring Emerging need of Ritu Shodhana W.S.R. to Virechana in Sharad Ritu

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Abstract

Ayurveda being one of the most ancient traditional medical sciences in the world, offers vast knowledge of personalized therapeutic wisdom. Being attributed as the science of life, it particularly aims towards rendering a quality and healthy living to fulfill the goals of life. Thereby with its holistic approach particularly emphasizing on the preventive aspect, it explains certain principles which are primarily applicable for the prevention of diseases initially rather than further on in the pathogenesis stage.

Thus Ayurveda firmly believes in 'prevention is better than cure'. So is the prime objective of Ayurveda quoted in the text as:

'Maintaining the health of the healthy, and treating the ailments of the diseased.'

Wherein maintenance of the healthy state of the mind and body along with the normalcy of the Dosha (bio energies), Dhatu (tissues) and Malas (toxins) are reciprocated. And focus is greatly emphasized on the preventive aspect.

One such concept with remarkable outcomes, as explained in Ayurveda is that of 'Ritushodhan'; which basically denotes the purificatory measures partaken by an individual in order to conserve health or to treat disorders, during the onset of seasonal transitions. This often marks as the phase for onset of various ill-effects on health.

This work is to understand importance of Sharadiya Virechan i.e. Purification therapy in the autumn season to control the Pitta Dosha is detailed.

KEYWORDS

Ritu Shodhana, Pancha Karma, Sharad Ritu, Virechan, Pitta Dosha.

INTRODUCTION

Shodhan or Panchakarma is the term for the purification therapies which are a part of the general treatment module in Ayurveda. Shodhana therapy is considered most effective and a potent measure for the pacification of extremely altered or vitiated Doshas (leading to ill health), certain chronic or recurring conditions which are not responding to the general drugs. In such cases Shodhana serves as the most successful resort and thus is denoted as '*Apunarbhava Chikitsa*' i.e. *which won't recur*¹.

Currently the seasonal trend has largely revealed a sharp rise in the number of ailments occurring with respect to a particular season and consistently following a similar pattern in the society with identical complaints from the patients. This synonymously resonates with the need for the seasonal purification therapies as mentioned in Ayurveda to serve as a control measure.

Ritu Shodhana

Though Swasthavritta (health regimen) is not among Ashtanga (branches) of Ayurveda, it has its own importance in day to day life. Ayurveda guides society with the concept of daily-seasonal-social regimens as an integral part of maintenance of life. Critical equilibrium and homeostasis in Tridosha is responsible for health and ill-health. Chaya (increase in its own site), Prakopa (increase causing the spread from own site), Prashama (pacification) are the three natural stages those occur according to daily periodical and seasonal variations. And to counter negative manifestations caused by them, certain practices like Ritu Shodhana holds immense benefits.

Ritushodhana is followed irrespective of Swastha (health) or Atura (disease) in order to prevent the disease and for the simultaneous promotion of health. Ritucharya is basically the seasonal regimen directed to avoid complications triggered by Chaya and Prakopa (variation) of Dosha arising according to the different

seasons(Ritu). This seasonal regimen has Shodhana mentioned as the mainstream therapy to overcome any pathology.

The accumulation of Doshas arising from cold season should be expelled out during Vasanta(spring); that arising from summers should be expelled during Varsha(rainy season); that arising from Varsha be expelled during Sharad Ritu (autumn) expeditiously and effectively. Such aggravated Doshas in different seasons should be counteracted appropriately.

By this, people will not become victims of diseases born by the effect of seasons and the normalcy within the body will be restored and revitalized². One who righteously follows Ritucharya, never suffers from any systemic manifestations induced by seasonal factors. Shodhana in appropriate seasons helps to expel vitiated Doshas, otherwise further accumulation occurs leading to its aggravation and even causes threat to life.

Sharadritu(autumn)-The significance of Shodhana

Pathogenesis of Pitta in Sharad Ritu (Sep 16 – Nov 15 autumns):

Sharadritu is a time for Pitta Prakopa. The body that is habituated to cold of Varsha Ritu(rains), all of a sudden gets exposed to heat of the sun rays. The Pitta which was accumulated in rainy season gets provoked by Ushna Guna of this season. This results in the rise of Pitta and reduction of Vata Dosha and person lands up in PittajaVikara(disorders). And since Rakta(blood)is having *Ashraya Ashrayee Sambhandha*(intermediate relation) with Pitta, the diseases related to blood are also bound to occur. Thus skin manifestations are a very common phenomenon occurring in this time period due to involvement of blood. Hence Virechana is the purificatory measure administered in Sharad Ritu for preventing and controlling Pitta Prakopa.

PITTA

Pitta Dosha is one among the 3 bio energies(Vata, Pitta ,Kapha) mentioned in Ayurveda which in their equilibrium and disturbance lead to health and disease respectively.Thus they form the chief elements constituting health.

Pitta represents Agni(fire element) present at cellular level, single system level, and organization level. Pitta Dosha does not move in the body independently. It is circulated all over the body with the help of Vata Dosha. In modern physiology it has been mentioned that the basic theory of body's control system allow the functional system to operate in support of one another. The homeostatic mechanism involves Nervous system, Hormone system and Immune system. Similarly all these three Doshas have equal importance and they together maintain homeostasis in our body. Here the function of Pitta Dosha may represent the enzymes, endocrine or neuroendocrine system in organization level. Pitta Dosha are of five subtypes on the basis of location namely Paachaka, Ranjaka, Saadhaka, Alochaka, Bhrajaka Pitta. All these together form the guiding force in metabolism, transformation, digestion, assimilation etc happening at the cellular level.

Role of Virechana in Sharad Ritu for prevention of Pitta Dushti

Sharad Ritu is observed to exist usually from mid September to mid November in India. In this Ritu, since Pitta attains stage of Prakopa. Acharyas suggested purificatory procedures along with changes in diet and behavioral regimens in order to conquer the natural variation of Dosha in this season.

Virechana as a pacifying therapy stands as the best line of management for Pitta-Rakta induced conditions. It is a major therapy along with usage of Tiktha Dravyas indicated as a part of seasonal purification therapy in Sharad Ritu³.

Virechana :

The word Virechana' is derived from Richa' Dhatu (i.e. detachment of relation). The word "Recana" is commonly used as evacuation. Thus, Virechana means Mala Deha Nirharanam i.e. removal of Mala from the body. It means that which eliminates the impurity from the lower part of the gut⁴.

Pitta Dosha And Virechana

Virechana is regarded as the most important amongst all therapies for Pitta by Ayurveda. And is the first line protocol for management of vitiated Pitta.

This evacuative therapy eliminates aggravated Dosha, excreta, alleviates diseases, improves strength and complexion and if administered properly, endows the person with a long life. Virechana sharpens memory, increases equity of organs, energy, and stability of all Dhatu, Agni and delays ageing⁵.

Classification of Virechana Dravya(drugs)

Sukhma Virechana, Mridu Virechana, Teekshna Virechana

According To Sharangadhara :

Anulomana — Haritaki,

Sramshana — Kritamala,

Bhedana — Katuka,

Rechana – Trivrit

Specificity of Virechana:

Virechana is regarded as the best one among all the therapeutic measures for Pitta elimination.

Effects of Virechan on Pitta Dosha

Virechana helps in maintaining the equilibrium of functions which perform the systemic actions in normalcy thereby nullify co-morbid conditions of Doshas.

Nourishes various *Pitta* sites:

Pachaka pitta which is termed as Jatharagni by the virtue of its inherent power, it augments the actions of the other sites of Pitta present elsewhere in the performance of metabolic functions of the body. Pachaka Pitta may be compared with digestive enzymes that help in digestion of food material.

Ranjaka pitta which resides in liver and spleen help in coloration of rasa Dhatu means the formation of Raktadhatu. Factors regulating erythropoiesis and maturation of RBCs are vitamin B12, folic acid, pyridoxine, Vitamin C (helps iron absorption), minerals like iron, copper which mainly comes from diet'. If the digestion of food is not occurred properly vitamin B12, iron, folic acid and others cannot absorb properly.

Sadhaka Pitta which resides in Hridaya helps in fulfilling the desires of mind. If there is improper digestion, Ajirna will occur. During indigestion, fainting like symptoms appears indicating that function of Sadhaka Pitta is hampered.

Alochaka pitta which resides in Dristhi (eye) helps in perception of vision. Vitamin A is present in both cytoplasm of the rods and in the pigment layer of retina. Vitamin A is responsible for formation of Rhodospin. In the rods of retina a pigment rhodospin is present which are required for seeing in dark/dim light. If 13 carotene containing food products are not properly digested retinol cannot formed so that there is difficulty in formation of rhodospin and perception of vision in dim light disappears⁶.

Bhrajaka Pitta which resides in skin helps in digestion and absorption of substance that is being used in Mardana, Sechana, Avagahana and expression of shades in the skin.

Therefore mainly Pitta is responsible for all chemical reaction. It helps carry out various functions listed above. Pitta helps in the formation of nutrient products which is used for the nourishment of every cell⁵.

Indications:

Kustha (psoriasis), fever, cough, asthma, Galagraha(stiffness), Galaganda(goitre), Shlipada(elephantiasis), diabetes, Mandagni (improper or delayed digestion), due to incompatible diet indigestion(Visuchika, Alasaka), bleeding disorders, snakebites, mental disorders, diarrhea, intoxication, premature greying and falling of hair ,swelling, anemia, jaundice, ulcers etc; especially in Pitta predominant diseases⁷.

Also in features of general *Pitta Prakopa*:

Burning sensation, excess body heat, perspiration, fainting, suppuration, anger, frustration, excess thirst and hunger, digestive problems, painful and heavy menstruation, inflammation, skin disease, boils etc.

Benefits:

The benefits of Virechana are : It improves intelligence, gives strength to sense organs, stableness in body, increases Utsaha (feels powerful and energetic), increase hunger, also delayed ageing when the person takes Virechana(accordingly to seasonal variations),it also destroys Pittaj disorders.

For example, when the water is drained from the pond, all aquatic plants and animals will not survive and die, similarly Virechana will removes all Pittaja diseases by eliminating pitta from the body.

Hence to relieve vitiated Pitta and Rakta, Sneha Pana with Tikta Ghrita and Virechana are advised. Tikta Ghritapana helps to relieve Vata Prakopa due to Virechana. It also helps to relieve Pittakopa due to Kaala Swabhava(nature), nourishes the body and improves appetite also.

Formulations administered:

During Sharad Ritu herbal ingredients like Trivrit, Duralabha, Musta, Sarkara, Udeechya, Chandana, Draksha and Yastyahwa could be advised for Virechana. The powder of Dwigunothara Pippali, Pippali Moola and Abhaya helps for easy purgation in Swasha. Due to the hot climate, Pitta and Rakta vitiates simultaneously during Sharad which can lead to development of skin diseases. Pitta Shamana procedures like Virechana and Tikta Ghrita Pana(ghee) is mentioned . Madhura rasa and Madhura Vipaka of Ghrita helps to reduce the Pitta Prakopa. The Ghrita is good for all person in all season according to Kasyapa⁸.

Discussion:

Shodhana improves Kayagni, cures the disorders, maintains the equilibrium of the Dosha, improve function of sense organ, mind, Buddhi, color and complexion. It also improves the vigor and vitality and enables the person to live a long and healthy life. Hence following seasonal regimen is beneficial in prevention of diseases.[h] Ritu Shodhana helps to eliminate the Doshas accumulating in the body. If Panchakarma is done without the consideration of Kāla(, season)then it will definitely end in complications. Hence consideration of Kāla in Panchakarma is very much essential.[If treatment is not given accordingly then it may lead to Peeda(discomfort) just like the plants which get destroyed by untimely rain. Properly conducted Virechana, removes aggravated Pitta and clears all channels of body, Jatharagni gets kindled and lightness sets in. Before administering Shodhana, it is essential to examine the status of Dosha, Prakriti, Desha, Kala, Vaya and Koshtha.

Conclusion:

Sharad Ritu as a season for Pitta Prakopa and Virechana has a significant role in controlling the features of Pitta Prakopa. To prevent disease, it is essential to Follow Ritucharya through Shodhana, with proper dietary regime which helps to serve the motto of Ayurveda, “Maintain health of healthy individual and relieves

disease of diseased person”. Hence it is the duty of a wise person to be vigilant about his duty towards his own body; as an officer in charge of a city preserve the city and a charioteer in maintenance of his chariot.

Thus it can be concluded that for attainment of Swasthya and to nurture the health it is crucial to follow the Ritu Shodhana.

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