

# VIRECHANA KARMA IN INDIAN LITERATURE\*

by

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## Introduction:

Vedic literature, Buddhist *pitakas* and Jain Agamas contain references to *panchakarma Cikitsa*. The division of treatment into *daivavyasraya* and *Yuktyvyasraya* in Ayurveda is traceable to Vedic literature. *Kausika Sutra* refers to *panchakarma Cikitsa* which explains its practices during Sutra period. Virechana karma is one of the *panchakarma cikitsas*.

The word '*virechana*' is a verbal noun and is formed from root *rica* with *vi* as the prefix and *lyut* as suffix. This means that the suffix is applied both in the sense of *karana* and *adhikarana* i.e. the instrumental and locative cases. Sometimes it means the process of *virechana* also; then the suffix *lyut* is taken in the sense of *bhava* i.e. abstraction. All the three shades of the meaning of the term *virechana* help to understand the function of *virechana* together with its agent and location.

## Vedic sources of virechana and its importance

Though the other *karmas* are mentioned at length in Atharvaveda Kaushika Sutra, the process of *virechana* is not left out. The Kandika 29 titled '*sarvavisho bhaishajyam*' makes repeated reference to the process of *virechana* to combat the after effects of poisons. This *virechana* is always administered in the form of an oil or decoction or powder or any suitable form. The worm treatment (*krimi bhaishajyam*) also points to the similar approach. It should be noted that the charm system also was mentioned in *Kaushika Sutra* in the *Pitta-Jwarabhaishajyam* (K. Sut. Kandika 30). *Virechana karma* is the treatment of choice in the vitiation of pitta.

## Buddhist source

Buddhist literature also contains description for the *Virechana cikitsa*. Jiwaka was mentioned as proficient in the application of purgative methods. He administered this treatment using lotus flower soaked with medicine (Maha Vagga VIII 7:11).

## Incidence of Virechana :

At one time, the humours of the Tathagata's body were disturbed and he wanted to take a purgative. Venerable Ananda went to Jiwaka for this. Jiwaka advised to rub his body with fat for some days. Having done this, Ananda went again to Jiwaka for advice on further course of treatment. Thinking that he should not

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give a strong purgative to the Blessed Tathagata, he imbued three handful of blue lotus with various drugs and went to the place where the Blessed one was. Having approached him, he gave the first handful of lotus flowers saying Lord, 'May the Blessed-one smell this first handful of lotuses that will purge the Blessed one ten times'. Then he offered 2nd handful of lotuses saying same and similarly offered also the third handful of lotuses and said thus the Blessed-one will purge fully thirty times. After this Jiwaka bowed before the blessed, passed round him with his right side towards him and went away. Jiwaka Kaumabhacha, when he went out of the presence of the Lord thought that he had given indeed a purgative for full thirty times as humours of Tathagata's body are disturbed, but it will not purge the Blessed-one full thirty times: it will purge him only twenty nine times. But the Blessed-one having purged, will take a bath; the bath will purge him once and thus he will have full thirty times. Likewise it happend; he purged 29 times and then he took bath and the bath purged him once and thus the Blessed-one purged full thirty times.

After this Jiwaka told the Blessed-one to abstain from liquid food till the body was completely restored and so it happened.

The words *ayushya* and *sramasdevamalapaha* explain the role of bath as disclosed in the account of Lord Budha given above. It is further surprising to note that Jiwaka was well versed in ascertaining the number of *vegās* of a particular purgative drug used by him in the *virechana* process, having taken into account the type of constitution with preponderance of *doshas* were given. Purgative drugs with corresponding potency were given. The purgative used was if strong, even standard small dose given in the form of snuff was quite effective. Lord Budha was further advised by Jiwaka to abstain from liquid food until his body was completely restored. Thus the Jiwaka episode throws light on the use of *virechana* with minute observations and skill in actual administration of the purgative drugs.

### **Kautilya's Artha Shastra :**

The Artha Shastra of Kautilya gives a brief account of some recipes in connection with *Panchakarma*. Kautilya lays down a small number of purgative drugs in the 13th and 14th chapter of Artha Shastra.

### **Puranas on Virechana :**

An account on *Virechana karma* is available in the Agni and Garuda puranas. This indicates of wide and general use of *Virechana karma* in different diseases. To combat *visarpa* and *jwara* use of ghee prepared with a decoction of *triphala* and mixed with *trivrit* (*Operculina turpethum*) was recommended. Use of *Haritaki* (*Terminalia chebula*) mixed with equal weight of *guda* mixed with honey was an effective recipe for purgation. Garuda purana emphatically supports the Ayurvedic view of using *Virechana* always preceded by *snehana* and *swedana karmas*. Generally it is held that "pitto virecanam srestham" but Agni purana makes a reference to a *Virechana* to remove superfluity of *kapha dosha* (Agni Purana page 295/33). Persons

suffering from heart disease benefit by the use of *virechana* (Agni Purana page 263/26)

The following tables show the herbal ingredients of *virecana kalpas* in different diseases from Agnipurana and Garudapurana.

#### VIRECHANA KALPA - GARUDA PURANA

Indication	Drugs	Accompaniment	Reference
<i>Kushtha</i>	—	—	171/13
<i>Vata Vikara</i>	<i>Trivrita, Danti</i>	<i>Triphala-Madhu</i>	171/14
<i>Pitta Dosa</i>	<i>Trivrita</i>	—	172-38
—	<i>Trivrita, Haritaki</i>	<i>Sunthi-Vidanga</i>	172-39
<i>Visarpa</i>	<i>Trivrita, Triphala</i>	—	171-37
<i>Jwara</i>	„		171-37
<i>Urostambha</i>	<i>Triphala</i>	<i>Citraka, Katurohini</i>	183/5
<i>General</i>	<i>Haritaki</i>	<i>Guda, Madhu</i>	183/4
„	<i>Triphala</i>	<i>Draksa</i>	193/13
„	<i>Haritaki</i>	<i>Lavana, Ushnodaka</i>	193/13

#### VIRECHANAKALPA - AGNI PURANA

Indications	Drugs	Accompaniment	Reference
Various diseases	<i>Triphala</i>	<i>Gud</i>	223/41
<i>Kapha-Vata</i>	<i>Triphala</i>	<i>Trikatu, Ksara</i>	295/33
<i>Hridroga</i>	—	—	263/26

#### Narayaniya Tantra on *Virechana*

Narayaniya tantra gives a detailed account of treatment for cases of poisoning. The *yogas* might be studied with classical treatises like Caraka and Susruta. From the nature of the work, one can conclude the *yogas* as of traditional one and the practice of *Virechana karma* is in vogue in cases of poisoning.

#### Samhitas

Caraka in the Chapter on *Viscikitsa* mentions only a few recipes for *Virechana-karma* to counteract cases of poisoning. However, the number of recipes given by

Susruta in the same context are comparatively more. The Kalpa-sthana of Caraka brings out the importance of *Virechana karma* by presenting them through different media and various mixtures. The *Virechana karma cikitsa* can be put to as many uses as the physician desires. Caraka described six hundred preparations and yet stated that these are only fraction of the possible number of such preparations. According to one's own intelligence, numerous of them can be made. Indian medicine recommends its use in cases of Rheumatism. *Vatarakta* is also treated by *Virechana*. Specially in case of poisons the use of purgative drugs is preceded by the use of emetic drugs and this practice could be studied with advantage in comparison with the similar accounts in the Kausika Sutra under the heading *Sarvavisha bhaishajyam*. Epilepsy could be cured by the use of ghee or oil from the stand point of purgation (Jolly). The use of ghee is described as the best in the treatment aimed at the removal of pitta-vitiations. Wounds caused by bite of mad animal are treated by ghee after blood letting. Purgative preparations made of ghee help to remove the discordance of doshas. The treatment is of the nature of a detoxication. The *doshas* vitiated in excess are radically eliminated and balance restored. Number of medicines used for purgative action can be unlimited. Of late, many synthetic purgative agents also are in the market.

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#### SUMMARY

The article aims at enumeration of the earliest references on this subject of *Virechanakarma*, one of the methods of treatment under the category of *panchakarma cikitsa*. The *virechana kalpas* described in Puranas as well as list of conditions amenable for this kind of therapy are also recorded.

सारांश

## विरेचनकर्म की भिन्न युगीन प्रयोगधारा

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वेदकाल में विषचिकित्सा के लिये विरेचनकर्म का वर्णन मिलता है। सूत्रकाल में विरेचन कर्म का वर्णन मिलता है। सूत्रकाल में विरेचनकर्म के साथ मन्त्र चिकित्सा का महत्त्व अधिक था। बुद्धकालीन प्रसिद्ध एवं सफल राजचिकित्सक जीवक ने कुशलतापूर्वक तथागत (बुद्ध) को नस्य के द्वारा विरेचन दिया और उसके विकृत दोषों का शोधन किया। कौटिल्य अर्थशास्त्र के १३वें तथा १४वें अध्याय में विरेचन-द्रव्यों का वर्णन मिलता है।

पुराणों में से अग्निपुराण एवं गरुड-पुराण में विरेचनयोगों का वर्णन है फिर भी पुराणों में विरेचन से पूर्व स्नेहपान को विशेष महत्त्व दिया गया है। विषचिकित्सा के प्रधान-ग्रन्थ नारायणीय-तन्त्र में अनेक स्थानों पर विरेचन का उल्लेख प्राप्त होता है। चरकसंहिता में ६०० विरेचनकल्पों का वर्णन करते हुए कहा है कि यह केवल संकेतमात्र है, अत्यधिक कल्पों की कल्पना की जा सकती है। भावप्रकाश तथा माधव-निदान ने आम बात एवं वातरक्तचिकित्सा में विरेचन की गणना की है। इसी प्रकार आधुनिककाल में भी मैगसल्प, फिनालफिथलीन आदि औषधियों का प्रयोग किया जाता है। इस प्रकार विरेचन का चिकित्सार्थ अविरतरूप से प्रयोग चल रहा है। सभी विरेचक द्रव्यों की जानकारी की अपेक्षा विशिष्ट विरेचक द्रव्यों का पूर्ण ज्ञान अत्यधिक प्रशंसनीय है। तथा आयुर्वेद का सम्यक् वेत्ता किसी भी द्रव्य का सम्यक् रूपेण प्रयोग कर सकता है।