

## REVIEW ARTICLE

## Conceptual Study of Rakta as a Dosh

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## ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is a holistic science based on the concepts of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, *Panchmahabhoot* etc. There are total 3 *dosha* which are the fundamental bio-regulatory energies that governs all physiological and pathological activities of the body and seven *Dhatu* which are the structural and functional tissues which are responsible for *Sharira Dharana* (maintenance of body). *Rakta* is one of the seven *dhatu* accepted by all *Acharya* but in context of Surgery *Rakta* is considered as a fourth *Dosha* by *Acharya Sushruta* as there is no existence of Body without *Vata*, *pitta*, *kapha* and *Rakta* and they are responsible for origin, sustenance and destruction of body. Hence, an attempt has been made to understand the physiological activities of rakta as a dosha and to appraise the importance of rakta as a dosha in maintenance of health and in manifestation of disease.

## KEYWORDS

• *Dosha* • *Dhatu* • *Rakta* • *Shalya* • *Raktamokshana*

## INTRODUCTION

Doshas in their normal states cause proper functioning of the body and in their abnormal states they surely afflict the body by causing various kinds of disorders, these features are shown by Rakta dhatu also. *Rakta* (Blood) is a

vital fluid, which acts as the body's transport, regulation and defence system. In Ayurveda *Rakta* is one of the seven *Dhatu* which has been unanimously accepted by all *Acharya*. *Rakta* is second *dhatu*, formed from the action of *Rasa Dhatu* through the action of *Ranjaka*

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*pitta*, *Mool Sthan* (Root location) of *Rakta* is *Yakrita* (Liver) and *Pleeha* (Spleen) But *Rakta* is given equally importance as other three *dosha* and considered it as a fourth *dosha* by *Acharya Sushruta* in context of surgery.

#### Understanding of *Rakta Dhatu* as a *Chaturtha Dosha*:

1. In relation to three *Dosha*, *Acharya Sushrut* said that they are responsible for the origin of body. In addition to this he said, these three *dosha* and fourth *Rakta*-they are always present in the body and are responsible for its Origin, sustenance and Destruction<sup>1</sup>. Although all *Acharya* described 3 *Dosha* yet in *Shalya-prakaran* section of *Sushruta Samhita*, he accepted *Rakta* as a *dosha* as well, because *Dosha* move to all part of the body in association with *Rakta* and produce diseases.

Without *Rakta*, the vitiation of the *Vrana Sthana* (wound site), swelling, suppuration and healing cannot occur through the action of these *dosha*.

There is no body without *Kapha*, no body without *Pitta*, no body without *Vata* and no body without *Rakta*<sup>2</sup>. Therefore the body is always sustained by these four factors. This highlights the importance of four factors in maintaining the body's integrity and function

2. *Acharyas* have described *Nanatmaja* diseases originated from that particular *dosha*. 80 disease from *vata*, 40 diseases from *pitta* and 20 diseases from *kapha*<sup>3</sup>. But along with these *Nanatmaja* diseases originated from three *dosha*, *Acharya Sharangdhar* also mentioned 10 *Rakta nanatmaja* diseases<sup>4</sup>, which shows the importance of *Rakta* in causing disease independently like other *dosha*. No other *dhatu* or *dushya* give rises to disease independently except *vata*, *pitta*, *kapha* and *Rakta*.
3. In *Samhitas* the characteristics of vitiated blood by *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* are described, but similar descriptions are not typically provided for other *Dhatu*. *Vata* vitiated blood is frothy, non-coagulable, light red or blackish in colour, dry, thin. *Pitta* vitiated blood is bluish, yellowish, greenish in colour, foul odour, unattractive to ants and flies, non-coagulable. *Kapha* vitiated blood is cold, thick, viscous, flows slowly, resembles muscle tissue. *Rakta*

*dosha* vitiated blood have same symptoms as *pitta* vitiated blood.<sup>5</sup> Here clearly *Acharya Sushruta* considered *Rakta* as a *dosha* which vitiated blood and manifest disease.

4. Just as some *Acharyas* consider *Basti Shodhana Kriya* as half of the treatment of aggravated *Vata dosha*<sup>6</sup>, in the same way scholars of the *Dhanwantri* tradition, recognize the predominance of *Rakta* in *Shalya Tantra*, regard *Raktamokshana* (Blood letting) as the principle therapy of *Shalya Tantra*.

Therefore in *Panchkarma* mainly 4 *dosha* are expelled through the body. For *Kapha Dosha-Vamana*, for *pitta dosha-Virechana*, For *Vata dosha-Vasti* and *Raktamokshana* for *dushita Rakta*. Thus *Rakta* holds a great importance in Body along with three *dosha*.

5. During the process of disease manifestation, the third stage of *Kriyakala* which is *prasarawastha* (when *dosha* spreads from their perspective seats to all over body through *srotasas*), *dosha* spread throughout the body. The spread of *dosha* may occur in following forms Individually: *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha* or *Rakta* alone.

In dual combinations: such as *vata-pitta*, *pitta-kapha*, *kapha-rakta*, *rakta-vata*.

In triple combinations: such as *vata-pitta-rakta*, *Pitta-kapha-rakta*

Thus *dosha* may spread in 15 types of combinations<sup>7</sup>. Thus the essence is that like *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* circulates throughout the body and participates in disease progression, *Rakta* also have the same features and therefore it can be considered as *fourth dosha*.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

*Rakta* as a *Dhatu* is crucial for nourishing the body's tissue by transporting nutrients and carrying oxygenated blood to all organs. The importance of *Rakta* is underscored by the fact that *Acharyas* or ancient scholars dedicated a separate chapter to *Rakta*, unlike other *Dhatu*. There are several grounds on which *Rakta* is considered as a *Dosha*. The three *dosha* *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha* and fourth *Rakta* are responsible for origin, presence and destruction of body. *Rakta* has independent capability to cause

disease as there are 10 *Nanantamaja* diseases of *Rakta* like other three *dosha*, and many more factors by which we can assume *Rakta* as a *Chaturtha Dosh*.

*Dosha* should have the ability to vitiate (*Dushita*) other components like *Dhatu*, *Mala* or other body elements. But instead of vitiation to other *Dhatu*, *Rakta* itself got vitiated and causes disease. Therefore *Rakta* is concomitantly regarded as both *Dosha* and *Dhatu*, embodying a dual classification that emphasizes its pivotal role in Ayurveda. Just as optimal levels of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* are essential for health, an adequate quantity of *Rakta* is also crucial for body's well-being. So as like doshas if *Rakta* is kept healthy and balanced through healthy life style and diet practices one would escape the risk of degeneration and disasters caused by *Rakta*.

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