FOUR TYPES OF VIRECHANA (PURGATIVE THERAPY) BY SHARANGDHARA: A CRITICAL REVIEW

Katole Harshaprabha, Chandaliya Sachin

PG Scholar, Department of Panchakarma, Shri Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur, India.
HOD & Professor, Department of Panchakarma, Shri Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur, India.

ABSTRACT
Sharangdhara had stated four types of virechana i.e. Anulomana, Sramsana, Bhedana, Rechana explaining them with the help of example of one drug each. To understand their practical aspect and clinical use one need to think on certain bullets like – potency of the drug, their site of action, duration of action, effect on the consistency of the excretory product, contribution in the process of formation of feces etc. This article enlightens the practical aspect of these 4 types as above along with their mode of action, speed of action, their effect on excretory product, and their action on formation of feces and also about the nature of the drugs that should come under these four types. It also enlightens us to understand whether these four are the types of virechana or the grades that define virechana.

Keywords: Anulomana, Sramsana, Bhedana, Rechana, Sharangdhara, Virechana.

INTRODUCTION: Virechana is the body bio purification method done for excessive pitta dosha, kapha associated pitta, even if pitta is available in large amount in Kaphasthana. Sharangdhara had classified virechana in 4 types i.e. Anulomana, Sramsana, Bhedana, Rechana. This classification according to sharangdhara is based primarily on mode of action, potency of drug, consistency of excretory product. To study virechana more effectively it is important to understand the practical aspect to these 4 types. Understanding the practical aspect of these 4 types can help us clarify whether these are the types or grades which define virechana karma.

Primary Action of virechana:
All the types of virechana primarily expel feces, provoked pitta and Kapha and other vitiated biochemical metabolites. These drugs possess ushna, tikshna, sukshma, vyavayi and vikasi properties. Because of these properties they reach the heart and get circulated through the vessels. They liquefy the vitiated complexes of doshas due to their agneya nature leading to the separation of adhered doshas located in the gross and subtle channels by their tikshna property.

Because of the dominance of Prithvi, Jala Mahabhuutas and their specific action i.e. prabhava, these drugs take the vitiated material in downward direction and expel them through anal region. The concept of ‘mala paka’ in virechana 1. Paka of mala –
a. Mala is primarily purisha4. Also, dosha4, vata – mutra and purisha etc4. So, mala means either feces alone or the vitirated complexes of doshas-dhatus and all the other malas like mutra inside the body.
b. Paka is Pachanam5,6, digestion 7.
c. So, Paka of mala means the completion of the process of formation of feces after the end of digestive action or digesting the accumulated doshas in the intestines.

2. It is said that virechana medicines act after their digestion, while vamana drugs act before they get digested8. So, Agni plays a major role in the virechana process. Agni has its action at multiple levels from jatharagni to dhatvagni, one must understand its specific action in this regard. Apart from sramsana, all the other three types are said to be having mala paka in their action. That means they are processed by Agni during their action.
3. From the definition, it is seen that *Anulomana* drugs help in completing the digestion process. It finalizes the formation of feces after complete digestion. Then it propels down the feces throughout the lumen to expel it out.

4. *Anulomana karma* and *bhedana karma* are said to be having one common action, i.e. *bhedana* of *bandha*, i.e. breakage of the bonds amongst the complexes of *mala*.

5. *Bhedana* directly does not claim about *paka* procedure of *mala*. But it is said to be breaking down the bonds of accumulated complex of wastes in lumen. For breaking the bonds of hard stools, the liquefaction is necessary. So various secretions might be getting secreted into the lumen. It is not clear from the text that whether *bhedana* drugs are involved in *paka* of *mala* or not. Sometimes it might be without digestive secretions (just plain liquefying agents) and sometimes, some digestive secretions might be associated with it. But the maximum *bhedana* drugs are said to be of having *katu*, *amla* and *lavana rasa*. So, there are more chances that these drugs also carry out the process of formation of feces.

6. *Sramsana* drugs expel the unprocessed *mala* and *doshas* without waiting for the completion of their digestion from the anal route. *Koshtha* is the place where the process of digestion takes place. Some commentators consider the other hollow organs like the place of storages of *ama*, *agni*, *pakwa*, *mutra*, *rudhira* along with *hrudaya*, *unduka*, *phuphusa* under the term *koshtha*. So, *malas* attached to these organs are also removed through the *sramsana* process. 7

7. *Rechana* drugs with their *teekshna veerya* act strongly on the intestinal muscles. They just propel the finished and unfinished feces from the lumen. They don’t participate in any type of process which involves the feces formation. They primarily work towards the propulsion of the feces from the lumen. *Virechana* medicines carry the *mala* into a downward direction due to their ‘*guru*’ property. This *guru* property should be considered with the other factors like ‘prabhava of virechana drugs.’ Here the word ‘*aadi*’ with ‘*mala*’ indicates other vitiated *dushya* etc factors also. 11

8. The *paka* or the digestion of *mala* during *anulomana*, *sramsana* and *bhedana* procedures might be taking place at *jatharagni* level and the *paka* of *malas* expressed in *rechana* process might be taking place at all levels of Agni. But one must understand that these definitions grossly speak about the action of digestion of *mala* at *jatharagni* level.

9. These four types can be further classified into two categories.

A. *Mrudu virechana* – *anulomana* and *sramsana*

B. *Teekshna virechana* – *bhedana* and *rechana*

**Method:** The analysis of all the four definitions from *Sharangdhara* and searching for all the medicines having these karmas from *Bhavprakasha* give some definite conclusions as follows.

| Table no. 1: - Definitions of all the four types of Virechana according to Sharangdhara |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| According to Sharangdhara | Anulomana<sup>12</sup> | Sramsana<sup>13</sup> | Bhedana<sup>14</sup> | Rechana<sup>15</sup> |
| Anulomana is the procedure, in which the drug used act on *apakwa mala* (undigested or partially processed), makes it *pakwa* and expels it by bringing it in the downward direction. It breaks | It is the procedure in which the *pakwa* or *apakwamala* adhered to the *koshtha* is expelled through downward direction. These drugs do not | Forceful expulsion of *baddhal* *abadhhal* *pinditamala*. Meaning of *bhedana* is breaking, splitting, piercing. | It is the procedure by which the drug liquefies the *pakwa* or *apakwamala* and evacuates it in watery form. |
down the *samhanan* of the *mala* and expels it from downward direction without any obstruction.

**According to Adhamalla** Anumolana does not act only on *malapaka* (completing action of digestion & conversion of undigested/ partially digested material into feces i.e. final waste product) but on *doshapaka* (digestion of the vitiated complex factors or morbid elements in the body) also. The partially or completely digested malas adhered to *koshtha* can be expelled out by *sramsana*. Bhedana breaks down *doshas* as well as malas accumulated inside body and expels them through downward direction. Malas as well as *doshas* are being expelled out through *rechana*.

**Example** Haritaki Aragvadha Kutaki Trivrit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of karma</th>
<th>Work done on purgative action of drugs</th>
<th>Modern Aspect</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anulomana</td>
<td>It has been proven that the oil extracted from <em>haritaki</em></td>
<td>Anulomana dravyas can be compared with the</td>
<td>These drugs might be acting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katole Harshaprabha et al: Four Types of Virechana (Purgative Therapy) By Sharangdhara: A Critical Review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sramsana</strong></td>
<td>The aqueous extract of the fruit pulp has purgative action due to the presence of anthraquinones in <em>Aragvadha</em>. The drugs can be compared with the Anthraquinone derivatives whose mode of action occurs on the mesenteric plexus to increase peristalsis resulting in the purgation. These drugs might be acting on mesenteric plexus leading to increase in peristaltic movements of intestinal muscles.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bhedana</strong></td>
<td><em>Kutaki</em> possesses surface tension lowering action. The drugs like Dioctyl sodium sulfosuccinate act by surface tension lowering action. It acts on the intestinal mucosa leading to more retention of water in the lumen which softens the stool because of net water accumulation. It emulsifies the colonic contents &amp; has purgative action due to physical property of lowering surface tension which is thought to facilitate penetration of the fecal mass by water and fats. These drugs might be acting on intestinal mucosa for increasing the water content in intestine to facilitate penetration of the fecal mass by water and fats.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rechana</strong></td>
<td>The extracts of <em>Operculina turpethum</em> leaves demonstrated a potent cathartic activity through causing: discharge of watery faeces, enhanced intestinal motility and increase in intestinal fluid content. These may be compared with the stimulant purgatives which irritate intestinal mucosa, increases motility by acting on myenteric plexuses. Their more important mechanism of action is accumulation of water and electrolytes in the lumen thus enhancing the watery fecal discharge. They also cause these drugs might be acting on intestinal smooth muscles increasing intestinal motility and increase in intestinal fluid content.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
forceful evacuation.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speed of virechana action</th>
<th>Anulomana</th>
<th>Sramsana</th>
<th>Bhedana</th>
<th>Rechana</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparatively slower than other virechaka drugs.</td>
<td>Quicker than anulomana but slower than bhedana and rechana.</td>
<td>Quicker than anulomana and sramsana, but may be slower than rechana.</td>
<td>Fastest among all 4 types.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Anulomana</th>
<th>Sramsana</th>
<th>Bhedana</th>
<th>Rechana</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They may be taking time to convert apakwa mala into pakwa one &amp; then carry on their further action.</td>
<td>They are not involved in mala paka.</td>
<td>Bhedana of already digested mala takes place.</td>
<td>They are neither involved in malapaka nor mala bhedan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table no. 5- Use of following Types of Virechana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use accordin g to the conditions</th>
<th>Anulomana</th>
<th>Sramsana</th>
<th>Bhedana</th>
<th>Rechana</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The condition where paka of mala is expected along with the expulsion of the same. Like srotorodha by undigested mala and doshas where agnideepana is expected and also paka of mala&amp;doshas and the blockages of the srotas are to be removed.</td>
<td>The condition where only expulsion of doshas, adhered to the koshtha is expected without the paka of malas.</td>
<td>The condition where only piercing/splitting/breakage of the mala or doshas is expected.</td>
<td>The condition where only expulsion of doshas is expected with or without the paka of malas. It can also be used in the condition where excessive body fluid is expected to be expelled out.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use in Diseased conditions</th>
<th>Anulomana</th>
<th>Sramsana</th>
<th>Bhedana</th>
<th>Rechana</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The use of anulomana dravyas is well explained in Arshachikitsa. Udavarta and Adhmaan. Pandu.</td>
<td>Charak has already stated sramsana as a line of treatment in Jwara, Gulma, Shwitra &amp; Vaata vyaadhi.</td>
<td>Prameha, Shwaas, Kaas, Asradaaha, Kushtha, Krimi etc.</td>
<td>Shopha, Udara, Kushtha, Kamla etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table no. 6: - Virechaka drugs with their rasa according to Bhavprakashha:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of varga</th>
<th>Anulomana</th>
<th>Sramsana</th>
<th>Bhedana</th>
<th>Rechana</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Virechana Type</td>
<td>Constituents</td>
<td>Indications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Haritakyadi</td>
<td>Haritaki – Pancharasa Except lavana Bidalavana</td>
<td>Bibhitaki - Kashaya Shunti – Katu Aardraka - Katu Pippalimoola - Katu Katuka – Katu Katuparni - Tikta Bhallataka - Katu, Tikta Romakalavana Saamudralavana Sauvarchalalavana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Vatadivarga</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Karir – Katu, Tikta</td>
<td>Shami – Tikta, Katu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Amraadiphalavarga</td>
<td>Piilu – Madhur, Tikta</td>
<td>Amamrphalaa - Madhur, kashaya Badar – Madhur, Amla, Tikta Piilu - Madhur, Tikta Amlavetasa – Amla</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dhaatvaadivarga</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Tutha – Katu</td>
<td>Kankushtha – Tikta, Katu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dhanyavarga</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Maasha – Madhur</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Shaakavarga</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Paalakya Dronapushpidala m – Madhur Kalayashaaka - Tikta Kaaravellaka - Tikta Dindisha</td>
<td>Sehunda – Katu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The drugs explained in Bhavprakash in various vargas help us to understand the nature of drugs that might be used for these 4 types of virechana karma. Most of the Anulomaka drugs have Madhur and Lavana property with ushna veerya (See table no.6). Sramsana drugs dominantly consist of Madhura and Tikta rasa with sheeta virya. (See table no.6). Bhedana drugs mostly possess Tikta, Katu, amla and lavana rasa with ushna virya and katu amla vipaka (See table no.6). All the three rasas are associated generally with teekshna in veerya. Also, the dravyas like Samuddra lavana, romaka lavana and sauvarchala lavana are said to be possessing the bhedanakarma. Lavana are said to be possessing abhishyandi, aruksa, sukshma, ushna and vyavayi properties. Abhishyandi property is said to be acting like ‘dosha samghata vichhedak’ i.e. to be having the property of breaking the bonds of dosha complex. So, bhedana karma actually breaks the bonds amongst various biochemical waste metabolites and passes them out of lumen. Maximum drugs which have the rechanakarma are said to be having the strong purgative action. (See table no.6) Most of them are having Katu and Tikta rasa dominance with ushna virya. They act primarily with their prabhava.

DISCUSSION: The types classified by sharangdhara are not actually the separate types of virechana. They indicate the grades of the same action from milder to severe. Virechana karma varies according the potency of the medicine and the site of action of the individual drug once it gets absorbed and starts its action. All these four types might be acting on separate sites for their actions. The process of purgation is the cumulative action of the series of various events taking place once any purgative drug gets inside the digestive system. Anulomana drugs might be just pushing the accumulated material in the intestinal lumen. It might be acting probably on short term malabaddha.

Sramsana drugs are to be used for the slightly chronic constipation where the motions are passed on daily basis, but might not be getting evacuated completely. These drugs produce mild purgation. Bhedana drugs are to be used in the cases of chronic constipation with the hard stools. When the feces become harder and have lesser content of fluids. Bhedana drugs break the feces, make them softer and then push them towards anal sphincter. The word ‘bhitwa’ indicates the vigorous intestinal movements and propel the drugs in downward direction. The word ‘baddha’ has the meaning like shushka and grathitam. The word shushka is related to purisha and grathita is related to dosha etc. factors. ‘Abaddhata’ means liquefied nature. It is present at two places, one at purisha and the other at mala etc. Here the mala word denotes ‘dosha’. The word ‘purisham bhitwa’ indicates the fragmentation of feces. The fragmented feces then are propelled towards downward direction. Trivrutta is the example of ‘rechana’dravya. It is the first drug mentioned in Charaka Kalpashthana as virechana drug. So, amongst four types of Virechana, the type entitled ‘Rechana’ might be having the properties of the
proper virechaka drugs i.e ushna, teekshna, sukshma, vyavayee and vikasee. That is why they are quickest in action. The mechanism for such virechana drugs is well documented by Charaka and said to be having the action due to prabhava. From the drugs mentioned by Bhavaprakasha as having rechana property practically show the quick and strong purgative action in comparison to the others (see table no 6).

The drugs from anulomana-sramsana and bhedana categories primarily might be acting on the accumulated feces inside the lumen. They act mainly on intestinal muscles and by the secretions from the lumen inside the colon only. So, the drugs of these three types might have lesser fluids excreted out through the process. But rechana drugs might be dragging the fluids from interstitial spaces throughout the body. So rechanakarma shows more fluids than the others.

CONCLUSIONS: Paka of mala is influenced by the action of agni and may involve the regulation of feces formation. Anulomana, Bhedana and Rechana drugs play a significant role in paka of mala. Anulomana drugs might be helping in formation of feces along with their mild purgative action. These four types may also be considered as the grades of virechana based on the severity of their action; anulomana as the mildest one up to rechana as strong purgative. They can be categorized into two types according to their mode of action i.e.

A. Mrudu virechana – anulomana and sramsana
B. Teekshna virechana – bhedana and rechana

The purgative action of anulomana, sramsana and bhedana drugs may be more local whereas the purgative action of rechana drugs might be present throughout the body.

The drugs of all these types of medicines shall be used as per their specific indications depending upon their action on mala.

REFERENCES:
2. Sharangadhara (with Adhamalla Commentary), edited by Vidyasagar Pandit Parshuram Shastri, Choukhambha Subharti Prakashana, Varanasi, Purvakhandha, Chapter 4.
10. Sharangadhara (with Adhamalla Commentary), edited by Vidyasagar
Pandit Parshuram Shastri, Choukhambha Subharti Prakashana, Varanasi, Purvakhandha, Chapter 4/4,5.


12. Sharangadhara (with Adhamalla Commentary), edited by Vidyasagar Pandit Parshuram Shastri, Choukhambha Subharti Prakashana, Varanasi, Purvakhandha, Chapter 4-3.

13. Sharangadhara (with Adhamalla Commentary), edited by Vidyasagar Pandit Parshuram Shastri, Choukhambha Subharti Prakashana, Varanasi, Purvakhandha, Chapter 4-4.

14. Sharangadhara (with Adhamalla Commentary), edited by Vidyasagar Pandit Parshuram Shastri, Choukhambha Subharti Prakashana, Varanasi, Purvakhandha, Chapter 4-5.

15. Sharangadhara (with Adhamalla Commentary), edited by Vidyasagar Pandit Parshuram Shastri, Choukhambha Subharti Prakashana, Varanasi, Purvakhandha, Chapter 4-6.

16. Sharangadhara (with Adhamalla Commentary), edited by Vidyasagar Pandit Parshuram Shastri, Choukhambha Subharti Prakashana, Varanasi, Adhamalla on Purvakhandha, Chapter 4-3.

17. Sharangadhara (with Adhamalla Commentary), edited by Vidyasagar Pandit Parshuram Shastri, Choukhambha Subharti Prakashana, Varanasi, Adhamalla on Purvakhandha, Chapter 4-4.

18. Sharangadhara (with Adhamalla Commentary), edited by Vidyasagar Pandit Parshuram Shastri, Choukhambha Subharti Prakashana, Varanasi, Adhamalla on Purvakhandha, Chapter 4-5.

19. Sharangadhara (with Adhamalla Commentary), edited by Vidyasagar Pandit Parshuram Shastri, Choukhambha Subharti Prakashana, Varanasi, Adhamalla on Purvakhandha, Chapter 4-6.


49. Sharangadhara (with Adhamalla Commentary), edited by Vidyasagar Pandit Parshuram Shastri, Chaukhambha Subharti Prakashana, Varanasi, Adhamalla on Purvakhanda,Chapter 4-5.
50. Sharangadhara (with Adhamalla Commentary), edited by Vidyasagar Pandit Parshuram Shastri, Chaukhambha Subharti Prakashana, Varanasi, Adhamalla on Purvakhanda,Chapter 4-5.

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Katole Harshaprabha, PG Scholar, Department of Panchakarma, Shri Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur, India. Email: katoleharsha@gmail.com

Source of support: Nil Conflict of interest: None Declared

Cite this Article as :