

Suśruta's Perineal Lithotomy:

An Experimental Study

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Principles of Ayurveda

In

Suśrutasaṃhitā

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ĀYURVEDIC PRINCIPLES IN *SUŚRUTASAMHITĀ*

Principles of Aetiology and Diagnosis

Elements (*bhūtas*)

There are **five** “Primal Elements” that make up the Universe, and thus the human body: Ether (*Ākāśa*), Air (*Vāyu*), Fire (*Agni*), Water (*Jala*) and Earth (*Prthivī*).

Humors (*doṣas*)

There are **three** “Bodily Humors”, normally in balance in the tissues of the body: **Wind** (*vāta*), **Phlegm** (*kapha* or *śleṣma*), and **Bile** (*pitta*). There is natural preponderance of certain humors in certain tissues. In some situations **Blood** (*rakta* or *śoṇita* , actually a tissue, or *dhātu*) behaves like a humor!

There are **two** “Mental Humors, *mānasika doṣas*: **Sublime** (*rajas*), and **Base** (*tamas*), normally in complete balance in the Healthy Mind.

Tissues (*dhātus*)

The **seven** “Body Tissues” form the structure of the body, and are **normally** pervaded by the three bodily humors, **in complete balance**. These seven tissues are produced serially (the first transmuting into the second, the second to the third, and so on) from ingested and absorbed nutrients. Thus, in progressive order, the *dhātus* are: **Digested and absorbed Food** (*rasa*), which makes **Blood** (*rakta*), which makes **Flesh** (*māṃsa*), which turns to **Fat** (*medas*), in its turn to **Bone** (*asthi*), which forms **Bone Marrow** (*majjā*), from which is formed “**Semen**” (*śukra*): a source of energy present in both men and women, *Śukra* is thus much more than just the ejaculate of the male, and the secretions of the female genitals.

As mentioned above, sometimes blood can behave like a *doṣa* or humor.

Disease (*Vyādhi*)

Disease is caused by imbalance of humors affecting the Body Tissue. Similarly, imbalance of mental humours affects the Mind. Thus even local disorders, like stones, are essentially due to a general imbalance of *doṣas*.

Treatment

Remedy (*auśadha*)

Remedy is:

1. **Systemic-** To restore the humoral balance (*saṃśodhana*) .
2. **Local (including surgical procedures)-** pacification (*saṃśamana*) of the local manifestation of the aetiological agent Both are often combined, as in surgical treatment.

Environmental alteration, and **Psychotherapy** are an integral part of the therapeutic armamentarium. **Religious observances and incantations to the Divine**, and the application of **astronomy** and **astrology**, in the hope of potentiating favourable outcome, all are part of the system of treatment in a “holistic” way.

Systemic Treatment

The mainstay of systemic treatment in *Suśrutasaṃhitā* is aimed at **Restoration of the Balance of Humors**. Humoral amelioration is carried out by: **Diet** (specific to the vitiated *doṣas*), **Regimen** to restore the balance, and by **Medicines** derived from herbs, animal parts, and minerals (often in combination : polypharmacy!) to ameliorate the vitiated *doṣas*.

Routes of Administration:

Medication is given by **mouth** (liquids, pills, powders, and electuaries to suck), **per rectum** (evacuant and retentive enemas used quite often!), by **inhalation** as snuff or medicated smoke, and as **nasal drops or irrigation** (errhines).

Certain special procedures for “evacuation of *doṣa*” are employed for specific disorders:

Śirobasti or “head evacuation” is advocated for “phlegm generated” disease ; medicated oils are dripped on appropriate part of the forehead and generate nasal and pharyngeal discharge; presumably restoring humoral balance .

Tarpaṇa : Medicated oil is pooled on each closed eye in a well (made of medicated flour paste) holding the oil in situ, for a specified period .

Pañcakarma, a **five-fold process of treatment** for “Internal Cleansing”: sweating, blood-letting (venesection or by leeches), emesis, body massage with medicated oils, and retention enemas of both oily and non-oily medication.

Local Treatment (including Surgery)

Pre-, Intra-, and Post – operative regimen (including medication) are essential. Surgical operation is only part of the treatment of the whole patient.

Surgical Procedures: Eight principal procedures are described: Incision, Excision, Scraping, Probing, Extraction (including foreign bodies), Drainage (open or by tube), Suturing of wounds, Cautery (Heat or Chemicals).

Surgical Instruments: 120 + Surgical Instruments are described: **Sharp** (including a variety of Knives, Cross-action Scissors, and Sharp pointed Rods), **Blunt** (including Cross-action Forceps, Blunt Probes, and Hollow Tubes), **Accessory Instruments**, including Bandages, and the Hand: Fingers and Finger- nail. **“The Hand is the Best Instrument”**. Design and construction of instruments, including Metallurgy, and other materials (organic and inorganic), are described in some detail.