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Hetutwa of Rakta Dhatu in Health and Disease: An Ayurvedic comprehensive Perspective

Lad S.¹, Bhide M.², Patil S.³

1. PG Scholar, Ayurveda Samhita & Siddhanta, BVDU College Of Ayurveda Pune, Maharashtra
2. HOD Department of Samhita Siddhant & Sanskrit, BVDU College Of Ayurveda Pune, Maharashtra.
3. Assistant Professor, Department of Kriya Sharir, DAMC&H, Udgir, Maharashtra

ABSTRACT:

Background: In Ayurveda, dosha, dhatu, and mala are regarded as the fundamental constituents of the human body, and their equilibrium ensures health and wellbeing. Among the seven dhatus, rakta dhatu holds a central and indispensable role due to its life-sustaining functions. **Objective:** To critically review classical Ayurvedic literature regarding Rakta dhatu, its functions, importance, pathological states, association with doshas, and its role in disease manifestation. **Methods:** Literary review of Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, Kashyapa Samhita, and contemporary Ayurvedic commentaries was undertaken, along with modern comparative insights. **Results:** Rakta dhatu is essential for jivana (life sustenance), varna (complexion), prasadana (clarity of sense organs), and sharira bala (strength). Pathological states include kshina rakta, vrudha rakta, kupita rakta, and dushta rakta. Dosha association with rakta dushti produces a wide spectrum of diseases ranging from skin disorders to systemic conditions. Chikitsa involves rakta shodhana through shodhana (raktamokshana, virechana) and shamana measures. **Conclusion:** Rakta dhatu plays a vital role in both physiological and pathological states. Its equilibrium ensures health, while its vitiation leads to multi-systemic disorders. Understanding rakta dhatu is essential for preventive and curative Ayurveda.

KEYWORDS: Rakta Dhatu, Ayurveda, Raktamokshana, Dushta Rakta, Dosha association, Pathological states.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Dr. Shrutee D. Lad

PG Scholar, Ayurveda Samhita & Siddhanta,
BVDU College Of Ayurveda Pune, Maharashtra

Email- shruteeswapnil1608@gmail.com , Mobile no:- 9822833942

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INTRODUCTION:

Ayurveda emphasizes the balance of dosha, dhatu, and mala as the foundation of health. Among the seven dhatus, Rakta dhatu is regarded as 'Jeeva' (life essence). It provides nourishment, complexion, vitality, and supports the entire body system. The ancient Acharyas like Charaka, Sushruta, and Vagbhata have extensively elaborated the physiological and pathological aspects of Rakta dhatu, its dushti (vitiation), and its role in the origin of diseases. This paper aims to review the concept of Rakta dhatu in health and disease.

Methodology

This study is based on a literary review of Ayurvedic classical texts including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, Kashyapa Samhita, and authoritative commentaries. Relevant modern literature was also compared to provide a holistic understanding.

Results**Functions of Rakta Dhatu**

According to Ayurveda, Rakta dhatu is responsible for Jivana (life sustenance), Varna (complexion), Sharira Bala (strength), and Prasada (clarity of sense organs).

Pathological States of Rakta

a. Kshina Rakta (Depletion): Leads to craving for Amla and Sheeta substances, with dryness, cracking, and flaccidity of veins.

b. Vriddha Rakta (Increase): Causes disorders like Kamala, Kushta, Gulma, Pliharoga, Raktapitta, and hepatosplenic enlargement.

c. Kupita Rakta (Aggravated): Triggered by Agni, Visha, resulting in pain, fever, thirst, and vesicular eruptions.

d. Dushta Rakta (Vitiated): Root cause of numerous diseases including Kushta, Arsha, Indralupta, Tilakalaka, Gulma, Raktameha, and others.

Dosha Association with Rakta Dushti

- Kapha-Dushta Rakta: Shotha, Kandu, Indralupta, Guhyaroga.
- Pitta-Dushta Rakta: Raktapitta, Ardra Arsha, Visphota, Upakusha.
- Vata-Dushta Rakta: Shiroroga, Shotha, Vranas, Vatarakta.
- Kapha-Pitta Dushta Rakta: Yakritodara, Plihodara, Vrana.
- Kapha-Vata Dushta Rakta: Mutraghata, Raktagranthi, Mukhadushika.
- Vata-Pitta Dushta Rakta: Shyavadanta, Padadaha, chronic ulcers.
- Tridosha Dushta Rakta: Granthi, Shotha, Upadansha, Udara Roga.

Severe and Special Types of Dushti

- Prakarshena Dushta Rakta: Leads to Kamala, Kushta, Jwara, Arsha, Vyanga, and Murchha.
- Visha Dushta Rakta: Symptoms include Chimchimayana, Jrimbha, Vepathu, Bhrama, Murchha, Tamaka Shwasa, sometimes Mrityu.

Table 1: Functions of Rakta Dhatu

Function (Karma)	Description
Jeevana	Sustains life by nourishing all Dhatus.
Tarpana	Provides nutrition and maintains vitality.
Varnya	Imparts colour and complexion.
Arogya	Ensures disease-free state by maintaining balance.
Ushma	Maintains body heat and metabolism.
Sneha	Lubricates tissues and organs.

Table 2: Pathological States of Rakta

Condition	Key Features	Associated Disorders
Kshina Rakta	Dryness, cracking, roughness, flaccidity	Vata aggravation, desire for sour & cold substances
Vruddha Rakta	Hyperemia, increased volume	Kamala, Kushtha, Gulma, Splenic/Liver disorders
Kupita Rakta	Aggravated by Agni & Visha	Jwara, Trishna, Sphota, pain
Dushta Rakta	Vitiated, impure	Skin diseases, Raktapitta, Kushta, Arsha, tumors

Table 3: Dosha Association with Rakta Dushti

Dosha Involvement	Manifestations
Kapha-Dushta Rakta	Shotha, Kandu, Indralupta, Guhyaroga
Pitta-Dushta Rakta	Raktapitta, Arsha, Putibhuta Artava, Visphota
Vata-Dushta Rakta	Shiroroga, Vrana, Vatarakta
Kapha-Pitta	Yakritodara, Plihodara, Ulcers
Kapha-Vata	Mutraghata, Raktagranthi, Acne
Vata-Pitta	Blackened teeth, burning feet, chronic ulcers
Tridosha	Granthi, Shotha, Udara Roga, complex disorders

Flowchart 1: Rakta Dushti → Disease Pathogenesis

Hetu (Causative factors: Viruddha Ahara, Visha, Ati-Madhya, etc.)



Rakta Dushti (Vitiation of blood)



Dosha Association (Vata, Pitta, Kapha involvement)



Manifestations (Shotha, Jwara, Kushta, Raktapitta, etc.)



Vyadhi (Disease expression – Skin, Liver, Spleen, Systemic disorders)

DISCUSSION:

The clinical significance of Rakta Dhatu extends beyond its classification as a mere "tissue"; it is described by Acharya Sushruta as the fourth pillar of the body, synonymous with Jeeva (life itself). This review highlights that Rakta is not only a carrier of nutrients but the fundamental substrate for vitality, complexion, and sensory clarity. The results of this study underscore a sophisticated

understanding of hematological and systemic pathology within Ayurvedic classics.

The Physiological Matrix

The primary function of Rakta, defined as Jivana (life sustenance), aligns with the modern physiological role of hemoglobin in oxygen transport and cellular respiration. However, Ayurveda expands this scope by linking Rakta to Prasadana (mental and sensory clarity) and Varna (complexion). This

suggests that the quality of Rakta Dhatu directly influences the metabolic health of the skin and the functional efficiency of the central nervous system.

Pathological Dynamics and Dosha Interaction
The study reveals a nuanced classification of Rakta pathology. While Kshina Rakta (depletion) mirrors clinical anemia—characterized by dryness and loss of vascular tone—Vruddha Rakta (increase) and Dushta Rakta (vitiation) encompass a broader spectrum of inflammatory, metabolic, and dermatological conditions.

The association of specific Doshas with Rakta provides a diagnostic roadmap:

- Pitta-Rakta synergy is most prominent due to their shared Ashraya-Ashrayi (resident-residence) relationship. This explains why Raktapitta (bleeding disorders) and Visphota (vesicular eruptions) are predominantly inflammatory.
- Vata-Rakta interactions lead to degenerative and neuralgic manifestations, such as Vatarakta (gouty arthritis/peripheral vascular disease).
- Kapha-Rakta vitiation manifests as congestive and hypertrophic conditions, including Shotha (edema) and Granthi (cysts).

Clinical Implications for Treatment

The findings emphasize that because Rakta is the vehicle for systemic vitiation, Raktamokshana (bloodletting) and Virechana (purgation) are not merely localized treatments but systemic detoxifiers. The presence of Visha (toxins) in Rakta, leading to symptoms like Bhrama (vertigo) and Murchha (fainting), suggests that Rakta serves as a primary medium for endogenous and exogenous toxemia.

CONCLUSION:

Rakta dhatu is the essence of life and a central factor in health and disease. Its equilibrium maintains vitality, while its vitiation causes multiple disorders. Ayurvedic understanding

of Rakta dhatu provides a holistic foundation for both diagnosis and management. The health of an individual is inextricably linked to the purity of Rakta Dhatu. By categorizing diseases based on the specific Dosha-Rakta involvement, practitioners can move beyond symptomatic relief toward root-cause resolution. This review reaffirms that maintaining Rakta equilibrium is essential for preventing the progression of systemic diseases from the skin to internal organs.

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