

A conceptual study of Virechan Karma

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Abstract

Ayurveda, a science of longevity, is getting its glory back and panchkarma is playing a very important role in it. Panchkarma as described in classical texts consists of five shodhana karmas which removes the vitiated doshas and malas from the body through different routes. Virechan is one of those shodhana karma which pacifies the vitiated doshas from adhomarg i.e. guda. Easy intake of oral medicines and removal from physiological pathway makes it easily acceptable. This article tries to summarize the different classifications of virechan drugs, the process and utility of Virechan in different diseases.

Keywords: Panchkarma; Shodhan; Virechan; Classification of Virechan; Procedure to conduct the process

1. Introduction

Ayurveda, a science of harmony and longevity of the coordination of body, mind and soul. And to maintain this absolute health, a disease-free body is the prime requirement. Nowadays panchkarma is getting popular and becoming a prominent tool in breaking the pathogenesis of disease and bringing the health to the patients at a faster pace. Some ignorant people still look it as merely detoxifying process but others could understand the wide dosha and mala pacifying property of the procedures. Panchkarma comprises five procedures of shodhana which are known to remove disease from its roots and prevents its reoccurrence.

Virechan is a type of shodhana procedure which comes under panchkarma and is a method of inducing therapeutical purgation. Four different types of virechan karma are being mentioned by Sharangdhar and the procedure of virechan karma is significantly described in brihtarriya emphasizing its importance and ability in pacifying vitiated doshas and malas.

2. Virechana

पिते तु विरेकं श्लेष्मसंसृष्टे वा तस्थानगते वा श्लेष्मणीति ॥[1]

Virechana is most important measure of Shodhana therapy. It is a specific modality for the elimination of pitta dosha but it is also effective upon Kapha and Vata. It is less stressful procedure than Vamana and has less possibility of complications. Among the Panchakarma therapy by Virechana the Pitta dosha clear not only from the Amashaya but from all over the body i.e. from cellular level. Apart from Pitta it is also useful in the elimination of Kapha Dosha. It is easy to perform and having least complication, hence it is widely used by the Ayurvedic Physicians

2.1. Etymology

The word Virechana has three components:

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- Vi- Upsarga
- Rich- Dhatu
- Lyuta- Pratyaya

According to Vachaspatyama (Vachaspatyama 4847)

Virechan=Vi+rich+lyut malade nisananam

i.e. by applying 'Lyuta' pratyaya to 'Rechana-rich' dhatu word "Rechana" is formed that means 'Mala bhedana'(expelling out the malas).

2.2. Synonyms [2]

Rechanam, Praskandanam

2.3. Definition [3]

"Tatra dosh harnam adhobhagam,Virechan sangyakam"

The elimination of Dosha from the 'Adhobhagena' is symbolized as Virechana. The word 'Adhobhagena' is used for Guda as commented by Chakrapani. It is one of the Shodhana Karma as mentioned in the Ayurvedic classics. According to 'Gangadhara' Virechana means "Maladeh Nirharanam" i.e. expelling out of Malas. Sometimes action of expelling the Doshas through both routes – Urdhva and Adho are known by the common term Virechana.

2.4. Classification of virechana

2.4.1. On the bases of the mechanism of action of drug [4]

Anulomana

The drug which digests the ama Dosha of malas & breaks their consolidation and after removing vibandha, expels them out through adhobhaga is known as Anulomana, like Haritaki. According to Dalhana, Anulomana causes expulsion of Vata and Kapha [5].

Sramsana

The drug which does not digest the Aam Dosha of malas but drag the malas which are fixed in koshta to adhobhaga and excrete them out is known as Sramsana like Aragvadha. In Jvara Chikitsa, it has been mentioned that Sramsana eliminates the Pitta and Kapha situated in Pakvasaya [6].

Bhedana

The drug which breaks abaddha, baddha & pindita malas and expels them out through Adhobhaga is known as Bhedana like Katuki. Katuki is considered as cholagogue i, e. Pitta Virechana.

Rechana

The drug which expels pakva or apakva malas after diluting them through adhobhaga is known as Rechana like Trivrita. The "Rechana" and "Virechana" words seem to be similar but the Virechana represents the complete therapy while the Rechana is the action of some types of drugs used in Virechana

2.4.2. On the bases of quality of the drug used for Virechana [7]

The Virechana drugs are divided into two types depending upon its physical Characteristics

Snigdha Virechana

The Virechana given by using snigdha dravyas is known as snigdha Virechana. It is contraindicated in those patients who have been given much of aabhyantar snehana. Drugs used are – Eranda, Tilvaka, Aragvadha, saptala. In Pakwaashyagata vata [8], this type of Virechana is indicated.

Rooksha Virechana

The Virechana given by using rooksha dravyas, is known as rooksha Virechana. It is indicated in those patients who have snigdha sharira & having doshotklesha avastha after snehapana. eg.- Haritaki, Danti, Katuki.

2.4.3. On the bases of requirement in the body [9]

Mridu

The drugs which are Manda in Veerya or when combined with opposite Virya, or given in low Dosage, given to the Ruksha patient and causes less purgation is known as Mridu Virechana If patient is of alpa bala, diseases having dominance of Vata, mridu or unknown koshta disease is of alpa Dosha then Mridu Virechanais advised.

Madhyama

In madhyama koshta, Madhyama bala and madhyam vyadhi this type of Virechana is indicated.

Tikshna

In krura koshta, balvana rogi and disease with bahu Doshas, tikshna Virechana is indicated. The drugs which causes numerous (Mahavega) motions and eliminates the Doshas in large quantity by quick (Kshipra) and gentle (Sukha) purgation without causing either much Glani (depression) and pain in heart area or anus or harmful to internal organs, is known as Tiksna Virechana

2.4.4. On the basis of Yoni

Animal Origin

Urine (A. S. Su. 14/4; Ch. Su. 1/94-97), Milk (Ch. Su. 1/107-114) Takra (A. S. Su. 14/4)

Plant Origin

Table 1 Represents the plant origin

Parts used	Charaka (Ch.Su.1/77-85)	Sushruta (Su. Su. 39/4)	Vagbhata (A. S. Su. 14)
Mula (Mulini)	Hastidanti Shyamatrivritta Shweta Saptala Danti Gavakshi Visanika Avartaki Dravanti	Snuka Shyamatrivritta Raktamula Saptala Danti Gavakshi Swarnakshiri Dravanti Chitraka Kusa, Kasa Kinihi	Shalaparni Prasnaparni Kantakari Vartaki Gokshura Punarnava Vastuka Salavriksha

Phala (Phalini)	Shankhini Vidanga Anupklitaka (Madhuyasti) Prakirya (Latakaranja) Abhaya Antahakotarpushpi Kampillaka and Aragawadha Udkirya	Puga Eranda Haritaki AMalaki Bibhitaka Nilini Chaturangula Kampillaka	Triphala, Pilu, Eranda, Priyala Badara Kuvala Karkandhu Kashmari Puga Parusaka Vidanga Draksha Neel, Yashtimadhu Putikaranja
Kshira	Snuhikshira Arkakshira	Saptacchada Jyotishmati	Saptaparna Jyotishmati
Tvacha	Putika Tilvaka	Kampillaka Ramyaka Patala, Tilvaka	Kampillaka Lodhra Mahanimba Patola

2.5. Indications and contraindications:

Following are the diseases / conditions in which the Virechana is indicated and contra-indicated (Ch. Si. 2/11, 13; Su. Chi. 33/25-32; A.H. Su. 27/8, 9; Su. U. 4/7-11; B. P. Pu.)

2.5.1. Indications (Rechya)

Table 2 Represents the indications

Virechana Yogya (Indication)	Ch.	Su.	A.S.	A.H.	B.S. Ka. S.	Sa.	B.P. Y.R.
Pitta Pradhana Vyadhi							
Jwara	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Pandu	+	+	-	-	-	+	+
Kamala	+	-	-	+	-	-	-
Halimaka	+	-	+	+	-	-	-
Netradaha	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Aasyadaha	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Paittika vyadhi	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
Vata Pradhana Vyadhi							
Pakvashaya Ruja	-	+	+	+	-	-	-
Shirahshula	+	-	+	-	-	-	-
Parshvaruja	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gulma	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
Vatarakta	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
Kapha Pradhana Vyadhi							

Prameha	+	+	-	-	-	+	+
Netrasrava	+	-	-	-	-	+	+
Aasyasrava	+	-	-	-	-	+	+
Nasasrava	+	-	-	-	-	+	+
Shwasa	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kasa	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shotha	+	+	-	-	-	+	+
Tridoshaja Vyadhi							
Kushtha	+	+	-	-	+	+	+
Visarpa	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Hridroga	+	+	-	-	-	+	+
Rakta Pradhana Vyadhi							
Pliha	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
Vyanga	+	-	+	+	-	-	-

'+' shows indicated by the acharya, '-' shows not indicated by the acharya

2.5.2. Contra Indication of Virechana regarding general condition as per classics.

Table 3 Represents Contra Indication of Virechana regarding general condition as per classics

General condition	Ch.	Su.	A.S.	A.H.	B.S. Ka. S.	Sa.	B.P. Y.R.
Langhita	+	-	+	-	-	-	-
Durbala	+	-	-	-	+	-	-
Durbalendriya	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Upavasita	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Subhaga	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alpagni	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
Abhighata	+	-	-	-	+	-	-
Kshatkshina	+	+	+	-	-	+	+
Shranta	+	+	-	-	-	+	+
Pipasita	+	+	-	-	+	+	+
Karma Bharadvahata	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Vridha	+	-	-	-	-	+	+
Bala	+	+	+	-	+	-	-
Atikrisha	+	-	+	-	+	+	-
Atisthula	+	+	+	-	+	+	-
Daruna koshta	+	-	+	+	-	-	-
Kshama	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Garbhini	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Bhakta	+	+	-	-	-	+	-

Rikta Koshtha	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
Sukumar	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
Navaprasuta	-	+	-	-	-	+	+
Ratri Jagarana	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
Anupasnigdha	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
Atisnigdha	+	+	-	+	-	+	+
Atiruksha	+	-	-	-	-	+	+
Bhayoptapta	-	+	-	-	-	+	+
Chintaprasakta	+	-	-	-	-	+	+
Maithunaprasakta	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Adhyayanaprasakta	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vyayamaprasakta	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
Shalyardita	+	-	+	+	-	-	-
Kamadi Vyagra	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Nirudha	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nava Pratishtaya	-	+	-	-	-	-	-

2.6. Procedure of virechana karma

On the basis of the opinion of Dalhana about ‘Trividha Karma’, the procedure of Virechana Karma may be classified into three stages:

- Purvakarma
- Pradhanakarma
- Paschatakarma

2.6.1. Purvakarma (Pre-operative procedure)

In Virechana karma, following procedures may be taken as Purvakarma which are illustrated below.

Sambhara Sangraha

The drugs and other apparatus which are considered to be useful in the different stages of Virechana karma as well as to tackle the complications (if develop at any stage) should be arranged prior to the administration of Pradhanakarma.

Atura Pariksha

For the Virechana Karma, patient should be selected considering the ‘Ayogya’ of Virechana according to classical texts.

Atura Siddhartha:

Pachana, Deepana, Snehana and Swedana are such measures which are to be conducted for ‘Atura Siddhata’. Pachana-Deepana karma should be carried out first. After Pachana-Deepana Karma Aabhyantara Snehana should be administered.

Matra Vinischaya

Matra is an important factor for carrying Samyaka Virechana. The dose of the Virechana drug should be manipulated according to Koshtha, Agni, Bala etc. While deciding the Matra of Virechana Aushadhi prime importance is to be given to the Koshtha of the patient as well as the form of Virechana Aushadhi i.e. whether it is in form of Churna, Kwatha, Swarasa or Modaka. Various doses depending on the Koshtha and Kalpana are described below in tabulated form:-

Dose of Aushadhi (Virechana): It can be tabulated in summarized in Table 4 as follows:

Table 4 Dose of Virechan Aushadhi

Kalpana	Hina for Mridu Koshtha	Madhyama for Madhyama Koshtha	Uttama for Krura Koshtha Kwatha
Kwatha	02 Tolas	04 Tolas	08 Tolas
Kalka, Churna, Modaka	01 Tola	02 Tolas	04 Tolas
Swarasa (Half of Kwatha)	01 Tola	02 Tolas	04 Tolas
Ushnodaka (As Anupana)	04 Tolas	08 Tolas	12 Tolas

The patient which is weak, having Alpa Dosha, devoid of strength, whose Shodhana has been done and whose Koshtha is unknown then in such patients Mridu Aushadhi in Alpa Matra is advisable. If the Koshtha of patient is unknown then also Mridu Ausadhi should be administered.

Table 5 Dosage according to strength of patient and disease

Conditions	Dose
Young age, good strength affected by poison, having skin disorder	Uttama
Diseases in Moderate stage with moderate strength	Madhyama
Diseases having involvement of lesser humors and lesser strength	Laghu

(Bh. Si. 1/5-12)

2.6.2. Pradhana Karma:

In Virechana Karma, following procedure may be taken as Pradhanakarma

Administration of Virechana Drug

Before administration of Virechana Drug, Abhyanga and Swedana should be carried out. Pulse, blood pressure, respiration and temperature should be recorded. It should be recorded at regular interval during the Pradhana Karma. It is essential that patient should remain in calm mood, because intestinal motility, secretion of various enzymes and that of mucous are very sensitive towards emotional disturbance.

Time of Administration

Virechana drug should be administered after passing of 'Shleshma-Kala' as mentioned in Ashtang Hridaya (A. H. Su. 18/33). Unlike it should not be administered in morning time.

Accordingly, the appropriate time for administering Virechana drug may be regarded as between 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. It should preferably be administered empty stomach.

Atura Paricharya:

As soon as the drug administered, patient is advised to sprinkle the hot water over the face, gargle by hot water and have a fragrance of flowers. Patient must take complete rest. Patient should be given hot water repeatedly in little quantities. Cold water should be given to the patient with preparation containing Jaypala.

Hritadosha Lakshana

In the Samyaka Virechana, the evacuation of Mala, Pitta and Kapha occurs from the bowels. Hence Kaphanta should be considered. Karshya and Laghuta are the other symptoms to be observed in the patients (Ch. Si. 1).

Assessment of Virechana

Acharya Charak has categorized the assessment by naming as Antiki, Vaigiki, Maniki and Laingiki criteria for sodhana process. (Ch. Si. 1/14-16).

- Vaigiki standard

After the administration of the medicine while counting the Vegas, the first 2 – 3 Vegas mixed with Mala should not be counted (Ch. Ka. 14). In Vaigiki standard the number of Vega according to different type of suddhi are as follows.

Table 6 Vaigiki Shuddhi

Pravara Suddhi→	30 vega
Madhyama Suddhi→	20 vega
Avara Suddhi→	10Vega

- Maniki standard

In Maniki Shuddhi the proportion of Mala in Avara, Madhyama and Pravara Shuddhi are as follows

Table 7 Maniki Shuddhi

Pravara Suddhi→	4 Prastha
Madhyama Suddhi→	3 Prastha
Avara Suddhi→	2 Prastha

- Laingiki standard

The sign and symptoms of Samyaka Lakshana can be considered under Laingiki standard.

- Antiki standard

When Shodhana i.e.; Virechana is given there should be limit where one has to the process and for this Antiki standard mentioned by Acharyas is best limit (end point). In case of Virechana, Kaphanta condition should be reached.

Acharya Charaka says that after elimination of Kapha up to 'Anilagamana' means there is total expulsion of Vata, Pitta and Kapha Dosha and nothing is remained there in Koshtha to be expelled out.

Ayoga, Samyaka Yoga and Atiyoga Lakshana

Ayoga (Asamyaka Yoga) Lakshana

Vitiating of Tridosha, Agnimandya, Gaurava, Pratishyaya, Tandra, Chhardi, Aruchi, Pratiloma of Vata, Daha, Kukshi-ashuddhi, Hridya-ashuddhi, Kandu, Vitsanga, Mutrasanga, Pidika, Adhmana, Adaurbalya, Alaghava etc. (Ch. Si. 1/18; Su. Chi. 33/24; A. H. Su. 18/38-39).

Samyaka Yoga Lakshana

Daurbalya, Laghava, Trishna, Glani, Aruchi, symptoms of ailment relieved. Expulsion of Vata – Pitta – Kapha and Vata in sequence. Downward movement of Vata, sensorial pleasure, Srotoshuddhi, Agni dipti, Indriya shuddhi etc. (Ch. Si. 17-20; Su. Chi. 33/25, A. H. Su. 18/39).

Atiyoga Lakshana

Disorders manifested by Vata, Pitta and Kaphakshaya, Supti, Angamarda, Klama, Murchha, Gudabhramsa, Shula, expulsion of blood through anus, discharge similar to Mamsa and Meda from anal route, disorders created by Rakta Kshaya etc. Ch. Si. 1/19, Su. Chi. 33/24, A. H. Su. 18/40-42).

2.6.3. Paschat Karma

The time period from the completion of Vegas, till the patient reached his normal diet is crucial and the specific management that has to be taken at this juncture is known as Paschat Karma.

Samsarjana Krama

After the completion of Shodhana procedure like Virechana, normal diet should not be given immediately as the Agni is hampered due to the Shodhana procedures and vulnerable to diet which is beyond its capacity to digest. Hence the intention of Samsarjana Krama is to bring resurgence to impaired Koshagni. The detailed Samsarjana Krama according to Pravara Shuddhi, Madhyama Shuddhi and Avara Shuddhi is illustrated below (Ch. Chi. 1/11; A. H. Su. 18/29).

Table 8 Samsarjana Krama

Day	Anna Kala	Pravara Shuddhi	Madhyama Shuddhi	Avara Shuddhi
1	Morning			
	Evening	Peya	Peya	Peya
2	Morning	Peya	Peya	Vilepi
	Evening	Peya	Vilepi	Krita-akrita Yusha
3	Morning	Vilepi	Vilepi	Krita-akrita Yusha
	Evening	Vilepi	Akrita Yusha	Normal diet
4	Morning	Vilepi	Krita Yusha	
	Evening	Akrita Yusha	Akrita Yusha	
5	Morning	Krita Yusha	Krita Mamsa Rasa	
	Evening	Krita Yusha	Normal diet	
6	Morning	Akrita Mamsa Rasa		
	Evening	Krita Mamsa Rasa		
7	Morning	Krita Mamsa Rasa		
	Evening	Normal diet		

2.7. Probable mode of action of virechana

The properties of Virechana dravyas are Ushna, Tikshna, Sukshma, Vyavayi, Vikasi etc. are mentioned in Ayurvedic classics which play a vital role in the mode of action of Virechana Karma.

2.7.1. Ushna

Ushna guna has Agneya property & hence “Vishyandana” occurs i.e. ‘Vilininam Kurvanti’ (Chakrapani). Hence it facilitates movement of morbid Doshas towards Kosta. It also assists to Tikshana property to perform its action.

2.7.2. Tikshana

Tikshna property performs the function of “Sanghatabhedana”, ‘Chakrapani’ quoted the word ‘Vicchindayanti’ (Ch. Ka. 1/5 - Chakrapani). It means to break the complex morbid matter into smaller molecules. Thus, Tikshna property breaks the Mala and morbid Dosha in micro form.

2.7.3. Sukshma

Sukshma guna due to its Anupravanabhava, i.e. “Anutvat Pravanabhavach..... (Ch. Ka. 1/5 - Chakrapani) its helps to dilate the channel and to pass the drug into micro-channel. This property helps to remove the morbid matter from micro-channels and brings them to Kosta for expulsion.

2.7.4. Vyavayi

Due to this, drugs spreads quickly throughout the body & starts their action before its digestion. Due to Vyavayi Guna, Virechaka drugs spreads all over the body without changing their form.

2.7.5. Vikasi

Due to this property drugs loosens the dhatu bandhana (Sh.Sam.Pu.Kh.4). It creates the dhatu shaithilyata (Dalhana). Hence drugs initiate their action without being digested. From all these properties doshas are driven to koshtha.

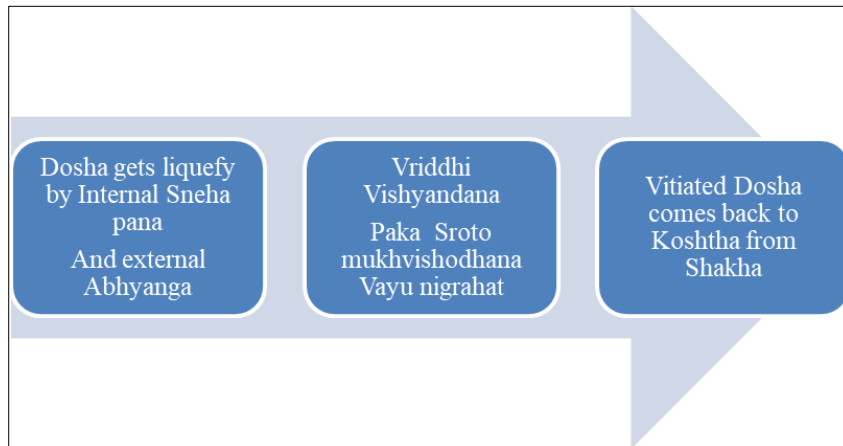


Figure 1 Mode of action of Virechana Karma

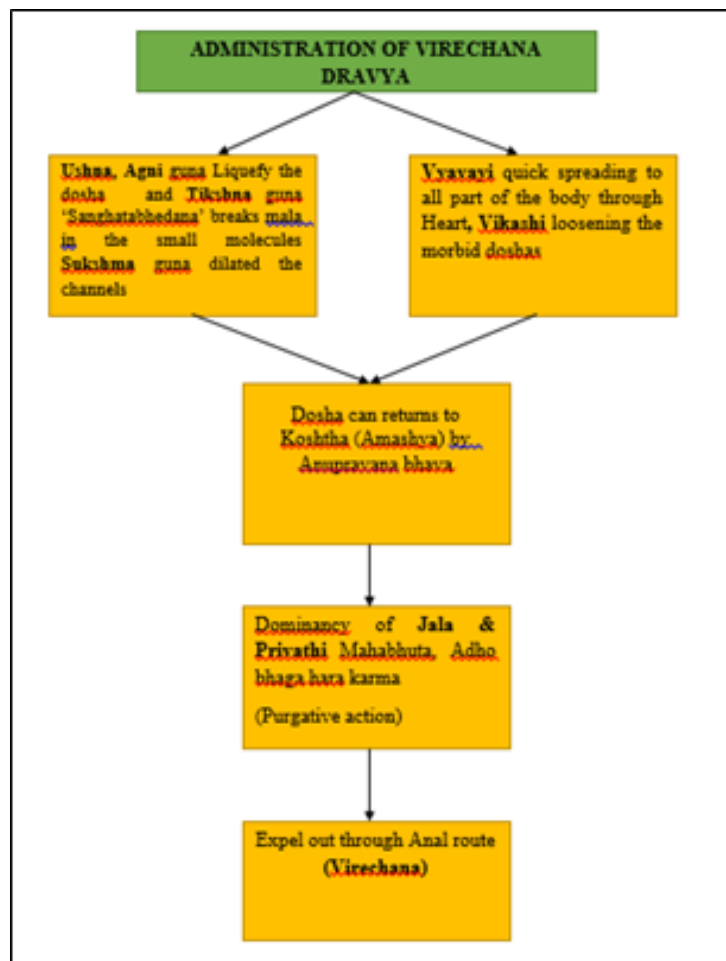


Figure 2 Administration Of Virechana Dravya

Now from above description of Virechana dravya's properties it can be conclude that due to their Vyavayi, Vikasi, Sukshma, guna Virechana Drugs reaches to the micro channels and by virtue of its Ushna, Tikshna Guna it scrapes out and liquefies morbid Mala and compact Doshas. In this way, Virechana Drugs brings Shakhagat Mala to Koshta and consequently expels out form the body.

The drugs which are having Jala and Prithvi Mahabhutas dominancy have a natural tendency to go downwards and thus they can assist in induction of Virechana. If drugs are having all above said properties but if it is not having Virechaka Prabhava then it will not induce the Virechana. Hence we can say, drugs act by its active principle can be said as Virya or Prabhava not by property, but properties assist in carrying the function of drug.

3. Conclusion

Virechan karma is considered best for increased and morbid Pitta and Kapha dosha and is also responsible for Vata anulomata thus acts on tridosha. Judicious use of drugs for Virechan process, a shodhana karma, can bring markable results, when given after proper assessment of disease and patient. Virechan is the easily accepted procedure as it is safe, have less complications and an almost painless procedure. Virechan removes the doshas from adhomarga that is the physiological route of eradication of mala by an individual thus comfortable. All these factors marks its easy acceptability and its tridosha pacifying quality, the best suitable process in several diseases.

Compliance with ethical standards

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The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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