



Review Article

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ROLE OF VIRECHANA KARMA IN PITTAJA VYADHI: A REVIEW

*Dr. Vishavender Attri¹, Dr. Darshana²

¹Ph.D. Scholar & Reader, Department of Panchakarma, Government Ayurvedic college, Patiala, Punjab

²Guide and Associate Professor, PG Department of Kayachikitsa, DBAC, Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab

*Corresponding Author - Dr. Vishavender Attri¹ Ph.D. Scholar & Reader, Department of Panchakarma, Government Ayurvedic college, Patiala, Punjab

Email id - vishavenderattri@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Background: In *Ayurveda*, *Pitta Dosha* is responsible for metabolic activities, digestion, transformation, and heat regulation in the body. When *Pitta* becomes vitiated, it leads to various *Pittaja Vyadhi* such as *Amlapitta*, *Raktapitta*, *Kushtha*, and *Pittaja Jwara*. Among the *Panchakarma* procedures, *Virechana Karma* is considered the prime therapy for eliminating aggravated *Pitta Dosha* from the body through the lower pathway. **Aim:** To evaluate the role of *Virechana Karma* in the management of *Pittaja Vyadhi*. **Objectives:** To understand the classical concept of *Virechana Karma*. To analyze the pathogenesis of *Pittaja Vyadhi*. To assess the therapeutic role of *Virechana Karma* in *Pitta* disorders **Materials and Methods:** This is a conceptual and literary review based on classical Ayurvedic texts such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, along with relevant modern scientific literature. Classical descriptions of *Virechana Karma*, its indications, procedures, and effects were critically analyzed in relation to *Pittaja Vyadhi*. **Results:** *Virechana Karma* effectively eliminates vitiated *Pitta Dosha* from its main site (*Amashaya* and *Pakwashaya*), thereby correcting *Agni*, clearing *Srotas*, and restoring *Dosha-Dhatu-Mala Samyata*. It provides significant relief in symptoms such as burning sensation, hyperacidity, inflammation, and bleeding disorders. The therapy also prevents recurrence by addressing the root cause of *Pitta Dushti*. **Conclusion:** *Virechana Karma* is a highly effective and specific *Shodhana*

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Chikitsa for *Pittaja Vyadhi*. It not only provides symptomatic relief but also acts on the fundamental pathology by expelling vitiated *Pitta*, thus promoting overall health and preventing disease recurrence.

Keywords: *Virechana Karma, Pittaja Vyadhi, Pitta Dosha, Shodhana Chikitsa, Panchakarma, Agni*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, emphasizes the maintenance of health through the balance of *Tridosha*¹—*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. Among these, *Pitta Dosha*² is mainly responsible for digestion, metabolism, body temperature, and transformation processes. It is closely associated with *Agni* and governs various biochemical activities in the body. When *Pitta* remains in a balanced state, it supports proper digestion, vision, complexion, and intellect. However, due to factors like intake of spicy, sour, and hot foods, excessive exposure to heat, stress, and improper lifestyle, *Pitta* becomes aggravated, leading to various pathological conditions.

The vitiation of *Pitta Dosha* results in a group of disorders collectively known as *Pittaja Vyadhi*³. These include conditions such as *Amlapitta*,⁴ *Raktapitta*,⁵ *Pittaja Jwara*,⁶ *Kushtha*,⁷ and inflammatory diseases. The common features observed in these disorders are *Daha* (burning sensation), *Amlata*⁸ (acidity), *Raga*⁹ (redness), *Paka*¹⁰ (suppuration), and *Sravana*¹¹ (discharge). The pathogenesis of these diseases involves disturbance of *Agni*, vitiation of *Rakta Dhatu*, and obstruction of *Srotas*, which ultimately leads to disease manifestation. Therefore, treatment should not only focus on symptomatic relief but also aim at eliminating the root cause, i.e., vitiated *Pitta*.

In *Ayurveda*, *Shodhana Chikitsa*¹² is considered superior to *Shamana Chikitsa*¹³ because it eliminates the morbid *Dosha* from the body rather than just pacifying them. Among the various *Shodhana* therapies, *Virechana Karma*¹⁴ is specifically indicated for *Pitta Dosha*. It is a therapeutic purgation procedure that expels vitiated *Pitta* predominantly through the anal route. Classical texts describe that *Virechana* not only removes excess *Pitta* from its primary sites like *Amashaya*¹⁵ and *Pakwashaya*¹⁶, but also helps in purifying *Rakta* and improving the function of *Agni*.

Thus, *Virechana Karma* plays a crucial role in the management of *Pittaja Vyadhi* by addressing the basic pathology. It helps in relieving symptoms such as burning sensation, inflammation, and acidity, while also restoring physiological balance in the body. Due to its ability to provide both curative and preventive benefits, *Virechana* is widely considered as the treatment of choice in *Pitta* predominant disorders.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim:

To evaluate the role of *Virechana Karma* in the management of *Pittaja Vyadhi*.

Objectives:

- To understand the classical concept of *Virechana Karma*
- To analyze the pathogenesis of *Pittaja Vyadhi*
- To assess the therapeutic role of *Virechana Karma* in *Pitta* disorders

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study is a conceptual and literary review carried out using classical Ayurvedic texts such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, along with their commentaries, to understand the principles of *Virechana Karma* and its application in *Pittaja Vyadhi*. Relevant references were collected from authenticated Ayurvedic textbooks, peer-reviewed journals, and standard databases. The classical descriptions regarding *Pitta Dosha*, its *Dushti*, *Samprapti* of *Pittaja Vyadhi*, and the therapeutic indications, procedure, and effects of *Virechana Karma* were critically analyzed. The collected data were systematically compiled, compared, and interpreted to establish the role of *Virechana Karma* in the management of *Pitta* predominant disorders.

CONCEPTUAL STUDY

PITTAJA VYADHI

*Pitta Dosha*¹⁷

Pitta Dosha is one of the fundamental functional entities in *Ayurveda*, primarily responsible for digestion, metabolism, thermoregulation, and transformation processes within the body. It possesses qualities like *Ushna* (hot), *Tikshna* (sharp), *Drava* (liquid), *Amla* (slightly acidic), and *Sara* (flowing nature). The main seat of *Pitta* is considered as *Amashaya* and *Pakwashaya*,

along with its presence in *Rakta Dhatu*. Balanced *Pitta* maintains proper *Agni*, vision, complexion, and intellect, whereas its imbalance leads to pathological changes in the body.

Definition

Pittaja Vyadhi refers to a group of diseases caused predominantly due to vitiation of *Pitta Dosh*. When *Pitta* undergoes *Vridhhi* (increase) or *Dushti* (vitiation), it disturbs normal physiological functions and leads to disease manifestation. These disorders are characterized by dominance of heat, inflammation, and metabolic disturbances. Classical texts describe that *Pitta Prakopa*¹⁸ results in various systemic and localized diseases depending on the site of involvement.

Nidana¹⁹ (Etiological Factors)

The causative factors responsible for aggravation of *Pitta* mainly include excessive intake of *Amla*, *Lavana*, *Katu Rasa*, *Ushna Ahara*, *Vidahi Ahara*, alcohol consumption, and irregular dietary habits. Lifestyle factors such as excessive exposure to sunlight, anger, stress, night awakening, and suppression of natural urges also contribute to *Pitta Dushti*. These factors lead to aggravation of *Pitta* and initiate the disease process.

Samprapti²⁰ (Pathogenesis)

The pathogenesis of *Pittaja Vyadhi* begins with aggravation of *Pitta Dosh* due to *Nidana Sevana*. The vitiated *Pitta* disturbs *Jatharagni*, leading to improper digestion and formation of *Ama*. This *Ama* along with aggravated *Pitta* circulates through *Srotas*, causing *Srotorodha* (obstruction) and *Dhatu Dushti*. Depending on the site of localization (*Sthanasamshraya*), it produces specific disease conditions such as *Amlapitta*, *Raktapitta*, or *Pittaja Jwara*.

Nidana Sevana (intake of *Amla*, *Lavana*, *Katu*, *Ushna Ahara*, stress, heat exposure)



Aggravation of *Pitta Dosh* (*Pitta Prakopa*)



Vitiated *Pitta* affects *Jatharagni*



Impaired digestion (*Agnimandya*)



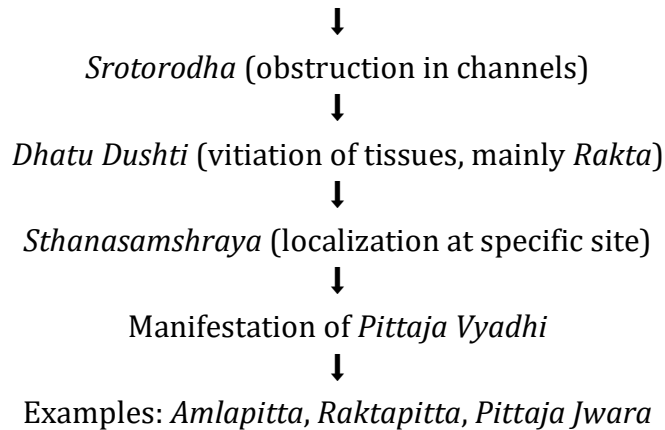
Formation of *Ama*



Combination of *Ama* + vitiated *Pitta*



Circulation through *Srotas*



Lakshana²¹ (Clinical Features)

The clinical features of *Pittaja Vyadhi* are mainly due to the inherent qualities of *Pitta*. Common symptoms include *Daha* (burning sensation), *Amlata* (acidity), *Raga* (redness), *Sweda* (excess sweating), *Paka* (inflammation or suppuration), *Trishna* (excess thirst), and *Kshudha Vriddhi* (increased appetite). In some conditions, bleeding tendencies (*Raktasrava*) and yellowish discoloration of body parts are also observed.

Types²²

Various diseases are classified under *Pittaja Vyadhi* based on predominance of *Pitta Dosha*. These include *Amlapitta* (acid peptic disorder), *Raktapitta* (bleeding disorders), *Pittaja Jwara* (fever), *Kushtha* (skin disorders), *Kamala* (jaundice), and inflammatory conditions. Each disease has specific clinical manifestations but shares common *Pitta*-dominant features.

Chikitsa Siddhanta²³

The line of treatment for *Pittaja Vyadhi* focuses on *Pitta Shamana* and *Pitta Shodhana*. Therapies include use of *Sheeta*, *Madhura*, and *Tikta Dravya*, along with lifestyle modifications. Among all treatment modalities, *Virechana Karma* is considered the best *Shodhana Chikitsa* for eliminating vitiating *Pitta* from the body. It helps in correcting *Agni*, purifying *Rakta*, and restoring physiological balance, thus playing a key role in the management of *Pittaja Vyadhi*.

VIRECHANA KARMA

Virechana Karma²⁴ is one of the principal *Shodhana Chikitsa* procedures described in *Ayurveda*, specifically indicated for the elimination of vitiating *Pitta Dosha*. It is a controlled therapeutic purgation process in which morbid *Pitta* and associated toxins (*Ama*) are expelled from the body through the *Adhobhaga* (lower route). Classical texts explain that

Virechana not only removes aggravated *Pitta* from its main seat (*Amashaya* and *Pakwashaya*) but also helps in the purification of *Rakta Dhatu*, thereby correcting systemic imbalances.

Indications²⁵

Virechana Karma is mainly indicated in disorders where *Pitta Dosha* is predominant. These include *Amlapitta*, *Raktapitta*, *Kushtha*, *Kamala*, *Pittaja Jwara*, *Arsha*, and various inflammatory and skin conditions. It is also beneficial in diseases involving *Rakta Dushti*, metabolic disturbances, and conditions characterized by symptoms like burning sensation, hyperacidity, and bleeding tendencies. The therapy is especially useful when *Pitta* is accumulated in the gastrointestinal tract and needs to be expelled.

PROCEDURE²⁶

1. Purva Karma (Pre-operative Preparation)

Before performing *Virechana Karma*, proper preparation of the patient is very important to ensure effective elimination of *Pitta Dosha*.

- **Deepana–Pachana:** Initially, medicines having *Deepana* (appetizer) and *Pachana* (digestive) properties are given to improve *Agni* and digest *Ama*. This stage prepares the body for proper response to *Shodhana*.
- **Snehapana (Internal Oleation):** Administration of medicated *Ghrita* or *Taila* is done in increasing doses for 3–7 days depending on the patient's strength and condition. The aim is to loosen and liquefy the vitiated *Dosha* and bring them into *Koshtha*.
- **Abhyanga (External Oleation):** Whole body oil massage is performed using medicated oils. It helps in further mobilization of *Dosha* towards the gastrointestinal tract.
- **Swedana (Sudation Therapy):** After *Abhyanga*, *Swedana* is performed to induce sweating. It dilates the channels (*Srotas*) and facilitates the movement of vitiated *Dosha* into the *Koshtha*.
- **Assessment of Proper Oleation (*Samyak Snigdha Lakshana*):** Signs like softness of body, improved digestion, oily skin, and easy bowel movement indicate adequate oleation and readiness for *Virechana*.

2. Pradhana Karma (Main Procedure of Virechana)

- **Selection of Drug (*Virechana Dravya*):** Based on *Prakriti*, disease condition, and strength of the patient, appropriate purgative drugs like *Trivrit*, *Eranda Taila*, *Avipattikara Churna*, or other formulations are selected.
- **Time of Administration:** The procedure is generally performed in the morning on an empty stomach, preferably during *Pitta Kala*.
- **Method of Administration:** The selected *Virechana Dravya* is administered with suitable *Anupana* (vehicle), such as warm water or milk.
- **Observation of Vegas (Purgative Bouts):** After administration, multiple bowel evacuations occur. The physician monitors:
 - Number of *Vegas*
 - Nature of stool (presence of *Pitta*, mucus, etc.)
 - Patient's strength and comfort
- **Assessment of Proper Virechana (*Samyak Virechana Lakshana*):** Signs include:
 - Lightness of body (*Laghuta*)
 - Clarity of senses
 - Relief from symptoms
 - Proper expulsion of *Pitta*
- **Types of Response:**
 - *Samyak Yoga* – proper purification
 - *Ayoga* – inadequate purification
 - *Atiyoga* – excessive purgation (needs management)

3. Paschat Karma (Post-operative Care)

- **Samsarjana Karma (Dietary Regimen):** After *Virechana*, digestive power becomes weak, so a specific graduated diet is followed:
 - *Manda* (thin rice gruel)

- *Peya* (slightly thick gruel)
- *Vilepi* (semi-solid food)
- Light normal diet

This progression usually continues for 3–7 days depending on the intensity of purification.

- **Rest and Lifestyle:** The patient is advised:
 - Complete rest
 - Avoid exposure to heat, cold, and stress
 - Avoid heavy, spicy, and oily food
 - Maintain mental calmness
- **Monitoring Recovery:** Restoration of *Agni*, normal appetite, and overall strength indicate proper recovery after *Virechana*.

4. Management of Complications

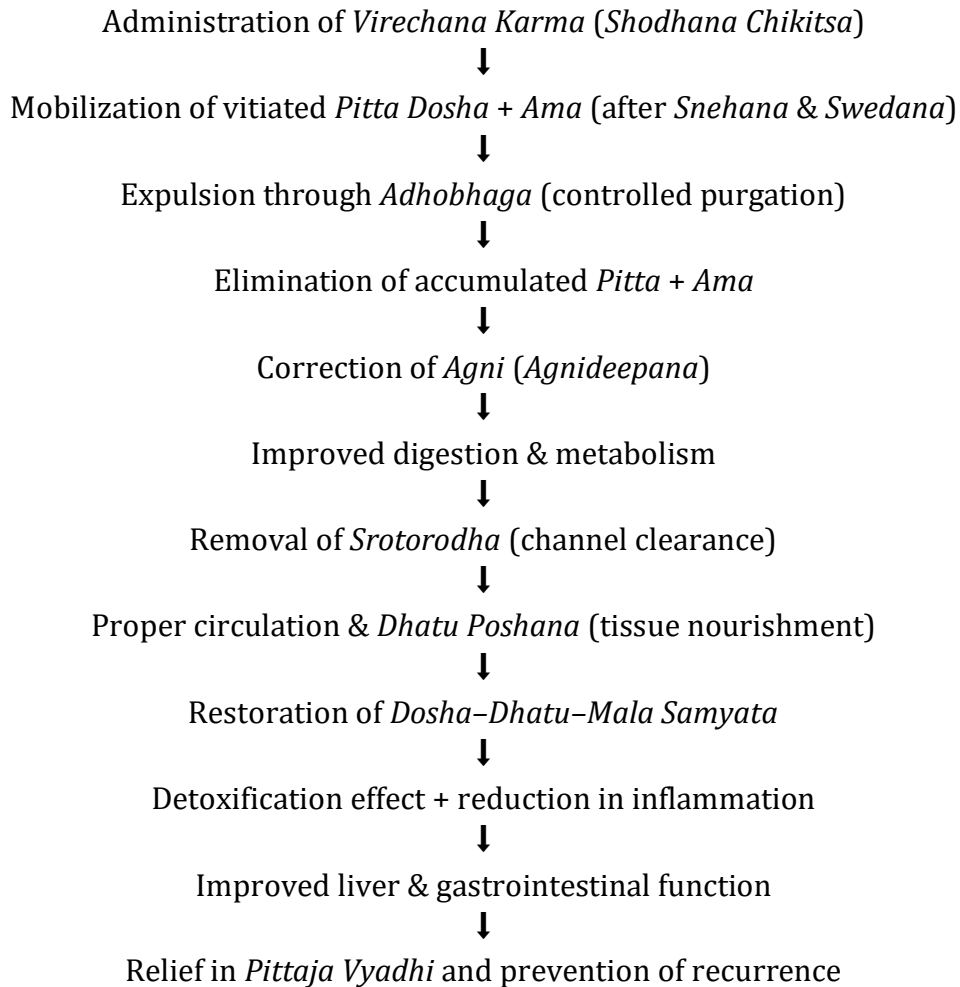
- **In Ayoga (Inadequate Purgation):** Mild purgatives or repeat procedure may be advised.
- **In Atiyoga (Excessive Purgation):** Management includes administration of *Stambhana Dravya*, fluids, and supportive care to prevent dehydration.

Contraindications²⁷

Despite its therapeutic benefits, *Virechana Karma* should be avoided in certain conditions. It is contraindicated in individuals who are very weak, dehydrated, emaciated, or suffering from severe *Vata* disorders. It should not be administered in pregnancy, extreme old age, or in patients with acute fever, diarrhea, or severe debility. Proper patient selection (*Rogi Pariksha*) is essential before planning the procedure.

Mode of Action²⁸

Virechana Karma acts by eliminating accumulated *Pitta Dosha* and *Ama* from the body, thereby correcting *Agni* and improving metabolism. It clears *Srotorodha* (channel obstruction), enhances tissue nutrition (*Dhatu Poshana*), and restores the balance of *Dosha-Dhatu-Mala*. The therapy also has a detoxifying effect, reduces inflammation, and improves liver and gastrointestinal functions, making it highly effective in *Pittaja Vyadhi*.



Therapeutic²⁹ Importance of Virechana Karma

The importance of *Virechana Karma* lies in its ability to address the root cause of disease rather than just providing symptomatic relief. It not only alleviates symptoms like burning sensation, acidity, and inflammation but also prevents recurrence by eliminating the underlying *Pitta Dushti*. Due to its systemic action, it is widely used in the management of chronic and recurrent *Pitta* disorders and is considered a cornerstone therapy in *Panchakarma*.

RESULT AND FINDINGS

- *Virechana Karma* showed effective elimination of vitiated *Pitta Dosha* from the body through controlled purgation (*Adhobhaga Shodhana*).
- Significant reduction in classical *Pittaja Lakshana* such as *Daha* (burning sensation), *Amlata* (acidity), *Raga* (redness), and *Trishna* (excess thirst) was observed.

- Improvement in digestive function (*Agni*) was noted, leading to better appetite and proper metabolism.
- Clearance of *Srotorodha* (obstruction in body channels) resulted in improved circulation and tissue nourishment (*Dhatu Poshana*).
- Reduction in inflammatory manifestations and bleeding tendencies (*Raktasrava*) indicated purification of *Rakta Dhatu*.
- Enhancement in overall well-being with symptoms like lightness of body (*Laghuta*), clarity of mind, and improved energy levels.
- Decrease in recurrence of *Pittaja Vyadhi* due to removal of root cause (*Pitta Dushti*), indicating preventive as well as curative action.
- Better clinical outcomes when *Virechana* was performed after proper *Purva Karma* like *Snehana* and *Swedana*.
- Individualized selection of *Virechana Dravya* and dose provided safe and effective results with minimal complications.
- Overall, *Virechana Karma* demonstrated a strong therapeutic role as a specific *Shodhana Chikitsa* for management of *Pittaja Vyadhi*.

DISCUSSION

Virechana Karma is considered the most specific *Shodhana Chikitsa* for the management of *Pittaja Vyadhi*, as it directly targets the elimination of vitiated *Pitta Dosha*. In *Ayurveda*, the root cause of disease is *Dosha Dushti*, and in *Pitta* predominant disorders, the accumulation and aggravation of *Pitta* in its primary sites like *Amashaya* and *Pakwashaya* play a key role. *Virechana* acts by expelling this aggravated *Pitta* through the lower route, thereby removing the fundamental pathology rather than just suppressing symptoms. This explains its superiority over *Shamana Chikitsa* in chronic and recurrent conditions.³⁰

The procedure of *Virechana Karma* involves systematic steps including *Purva Karma*, *Pradhana Karma*, and *Paschat Karma*, which together ensure safe and effective detoxification. *Snehana* and *Swedana* help in mobilizing the vitiated *Dosha* from peripheral tissues to the gastrointestinal tract, making elimination easier. The administration of appropriate *Virechana Dravya* induces controlled purgation, leading to expulsion of *Pitta* along with *Ama*. This process results in correction of *Agni*, removal of *Srotorodha*, and

restoration of normal physiological functions. The post-procedure regimen (*Samsarjana Karma*) plays a crucial role in gradually restoring digestive strength and maintaining the benefits achieved.³¹

Clinically, *Virechana Karma* demonstrates significant improvement in symptoms associated with *Pittaja Vyadhi*, such as burning sensation, acidity, inflammation, and bleeding disorders. Its action on *Rakta Dhatu* and metabolic pathways indicates a broader systemic effect beyond the gastrointestinal tract. Moreover, by addressing the root cause, it reduces the chances of recurrence and promotes long-term health. When performed with proper patient selection, dose adjustment, and adherence to classical guidelines, *Virechana* proves to be a safe, effective, and comprehensive therapeutic modality in the management of *Pitta* disorders.³²

CONCLUSION

Virechana Karma is a highly effective and specific *Shodhana Chikitsa* for the management of *Pittaja Vyadhi*, as it directly eliminates vitiated *Pitta Dosh*a from the body and addresses the root cause of disease. By correcting *Agni*, clearing *Srotas*, and purifying *Rakta Dhatu*, it not only provides symptomatic relief but also restores physiological balance and prevents recurrence. When performed with proper protocol and patient selection, *Virechana* serves as a safe, holistic, and fundamental therapeutic approach in *Pitta* predominant disorders.

CONFLCIT OF INTEREST -NIL

SOURCE OF SUPPORT -NONE

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