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The Science of Piercing: A Critical Analysis of *Viddhakarma* and Its Contemporary Implications

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, holds significant importance for several reasons like their holistic approach, preventive care, personalized treatment, natural remedies, mind body connection etc. One of its lesser known yet highly effective therapies is *viddhakarma*, is an ancient *Ayurvedic* parasurgical procedure mentioned in eight *Shastrakarma* defined in *Sustruta Samhita*. *Viddhakarma*, also referred to as *Vedhan Chikitsa* or *Suchivedhan*, is a therapeutic intervention that involves precise puncturing or piercing of specific points to alleviate pain and potentially reverse underlying pathological processes. *Viddhakarma* has become a major treatment method and is increasingly popular for pain management, particular as a primary therapy for musculoskeletal disorders. The practice of *viddhakarma* for pain management is increasingly gaining popularity.

Key Words *Viddhakarma*, *vedhan chikitsa*, Accupunture, *Siravedhan*

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INTRODUCTION

Viddhakarma, a fundamental concept in *Ayurvedic* surgery, has its roots deeply embedded in ancient Indian medical tradition. The *Susruta Samhita*, a seminal text on *Ayurvedic* surgery, serves as a primary source of knowledge, providing meticulous descriptions of diverse surgical interventions, including incisional procedures. This foundational text, alongside other classical *Ayurvedic* treatises such as the *Charaka Samhita* and the *Astanga Hridayam*, forms the corner stone of *Ayurvedic* surgical practices.

Developed upon the principles of *Ayurveda*, *Viddhakarma* procedures were meticulously crafted to address a range of health anomalies and promote holistic well-being. The foundational principles of these procedures were based on a deep understanding of the intricate relationships between the three fundamental bio-energetic forces (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*), the seven essential tissue elements (*dhatu*s), and the three primary waste products (*malas*), which govern the dynamic equilibrium of human physiology.

The *Susruta Samhita*'s comprehensive accounts of *Viddhakarma* procedures, including

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instrumentation, preoperative preparations, and postoperative care, demonstrate a profound understanding of human anatomy, physiology, and surgical principles. The text's emphasis on asepsis, wound management, and patient care underscores the ancient Indians' sophisticated grasp of surgical science.

This rich heritage of *Ayurvedic* surgery has been perpetuated through centuries, with *Vidhakarman* remaining an essential component of traditional *Ayurvedic* practice. As the field of medicine continues to evolve, revisiting the fundamental principles and historical development of *Vidhakarman* can provide valuable insights into the synthesis of traditional knowledge and modern medical advancements.

Why differ from Accupuncture :-

In Ancient times, *vidhakarman* was frequently used by *vaidyas*. Its quick response and efficiency made it an impressive and time effective method of treatment. This method of treatment become prevalent all over India and developed in India. It is not a modified form of accupuncture while they share similarities but their origin, underlying philosophies, and specific practices differ significantly. These both treatment modalities are totally different depending on their basic principles and mode of action. Many people confuse *Vidhakarman* as an accupuncture. The principle used in *Vidhakarman* are totally different from Accupuncture. *Vidhakarman* is based on the principle of balancing the three doshas and the flow of *prana*. The practice involves stimulating

marma points, which are vital energy points but in accupuncture involves the selection of specific points in the body called meridian which connects the whole body to dynamic energy, harmonizing with the energy of universe, providing evidence of ubiquitous *lok purush samanya siddhant*. This again proves that Accupuncture originated from *Vidhakarman*.

Definition and Origin:-

Vidhakarman, a therapeutic intervention in *Ayurveda*, encompasses the deliberate and controlled creation of incisions or punctures in the body to achieve specific therapeutic objectives. This procedure involves precise surgical techniques aimed at promoting physiological equilibrium, facilitating the elimination of accumulated pathological fluids, and addressing underlying *doshic* imbalances.

Indications for *Vidhakarman* include various medical conditions where controlled tissue disruption is deemed beneficial, such as:

- Relieving tension or pressure buildup in affected tissues.
- Draining accumulated fluids, pus, or other pathological materials.
- Stimulating healing responses in chronic or non-healing wounds.
- Restoring balance to disrupted physiological processes.
- Ameliorating symptoms associated with excess *doshas* or *dhatu*s.

Vidhakarman procedures are grounded in *Ayurvedic* principles, considering factors such as:

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- Individual constitution (*Prakriti*).
- *Dosha* predominance and balance.
- *Dhatu* involvement and tissue integrity.
- *Agni* (metabolic fire) and *Ama* (toxins) dynamics.

By leveraging the body's natural healing mechanisms, *Viddhakarma* aims to reestablish homeostasis, alleviate disease symptoms, and promote overall well-being.

Mechanism of Action: *Viddhakarma*:-

Viddhakarma is a sterile procedure involving the puncturing or piercing of specific points on the body using specialized hollow needles called *Viddhakarma shalaka*. This procedure triggers a cascade of physiological responses, leading to therapeutic benefits.

1. **Analgesia:** The painful mechanical stimulus induced by piercing releases endorphins, which block nociceptors, thereby inhibiting pain transmission and providing immediate relief.
2. ***Vatanulomana* Effect:** The needle prick causes a minor release of blood (*Rakta*), which helps remove obstructions in blood vessels, restoring circulation and promoting vascular health.

3. **Removal of Accumulated Toxins (*Ama*):** The release of blood and fluids facilitates the elimination of accumulated toxins, contributing to disease alleviation.

Therapeutic Applications:

- Viddhakarma* is employed in the treatment of:
- Acute and chronic pain management
 - Inflammatory conditions
 - Circulatory disorders
 - Certain diseases requiring bloodletting (e.g., hypertension, arthritis)

Physiological Basis:

- Viddhakarma* operates on the principles of *Ayurvedic* physiology, specifically:
- Dosha* balance (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*)
 - Dhatu* balance (tissue health)
 - Agni* and *Ama* dynamics (metabolic balance and toxin elimination)

By harnessing the body's natural healing mechanisms, *Viddhakarma* offers a minimally invasive, effective approach to managing various health conditions.

Comparison of *Viddha Karma* to *Siravedhana*:-

There are factors that differentiates *Viddha Karma* with *Siravedha* as listed in

Table 1 Difference between *viddha karma* and *siravedha*

S.N.	<i>Siravedhana</i>	<i>Viddha Karma</i>
1.	Need <i>Purva Karma</i> (such as <i>Snehana</i> and <i>Swedana</i>).	No need for <i>Purva Karma</i> .
2.	The volume of blood that evacuates is high.	Less blood drops will be evacuated.
3.	Almost using <i>Shringa</i> , <i>Alabu</i> , <i>Gatiyantra</i> , <i>leeches</i> , <i>Shastra</i> .	Need only one <i>Shastra</i> (<i>Vrihimukha Shastra</i>) that resembles with insulin no.26 needle
4.	Usually patients get apprehensive about the procedure, so there are chances to refuse.	Fearless procedure for patients, lesser chances to refuse.
5.	The pain subsided soon after the procedure.	Pain, heaviness, stiffness subsided soon and benefited the patient.
6.	Comparatively, high costs are afforded by the patients.	Cost-effective for the patients.

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Depth of *Vedhana* :-

Acharaya Sushruta has advised to perform *Viddhakarma* mainly in *vata* dominant condition. *Sushruta Samhita* has mentioned properly the level of depth of *Viddhakarma* according to the area where this procedure has to be performed.

- In Skin- *Vrihimatra*.
- In *Mansal Pradesh* - it is *1 Yav.* (4–6 mm)- resembles insulin syringe.
- In case of bone- it is *Ardha Yav.*

Therapeutic Applications of *Viddhakarma* :-

Viddhakarma, a parasurgical procedure in *Ayurveda*, is utilized to address a range of health conditions characterized by *doshic* imbalances and physiological dysfunction. The therapeutic scope of *Viddhakarma* encompasses:

Rheumatological Conditions

Osteoarthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis

Joint stiffness and inflammation

Viddhakarma's anti-inflammatory and analgesic effects may contribute to improved joint mobility and reduced pain.

Musculoskeletal Disorders

Myalgia

Muscle strains

Fractures

Viddhakarma's localized stimulation may enhance muscle relaxation, reduce spasms, and promote bone healing.

Neurological Afflictions

Neuropathic pain

Neuralgia

Neurological dysfunction

Specific *Viddhakarma* techniques may modulate pain perception, improve nerve conduction, and restore neurological function.

Dermatological Conditions

Chronic skin disorders (e.g., eczema, psoriasis)

Skin inflammation

Localized *Viddhakarma* treatments may reduce inflammation, promote skin healing, and restore dermal integrity.

Metabolic Dysregulation

Digestive disorders (e.g., constipation, diarrhea)

Metabolic syndrome

Viddhakarma may help rebalance metabolic processes, enhance digestive function, and improve overall physiological homeostasis.

Vascular Conditions

Hypertension

Atherosclerosis

Peripheral vascular disease

Specific *Viddhakarma* procedures may improve blood circulation, reduce vascular inflammation, and promote cardiovascular health.

By leveraging its unique mechanisms of action, *Viddhakarma* offers a complementary therapeutic approach for managing various health conditions. In *Sushruta sharir sthana*, *Acharaya* outlines the specific points in the body for *viddhakarma* in specific disease. Here are some :-

Table 2 Disease wise location for *Viddhakarma*

Disease/adaha	Location for <i>Viddhakarma</i>
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1	<i>Chippa, Padadaha</i>	Two finger above <i>Kshipra marma</i>
2	<i>Grudhrasi, Vishvachi</i>	Four finger above and below the knee and elbow joint.
3	<i>Bahushosha, Avabahuka</i>	At trapezius, supra and infra spinatus muscle.
4	<i>Karnashoola, Karnaroga</i>	Superior aspect of the ear.
5	Nasaroga like Anosmia, Rhinitis	Tip of the nose.
6	<i>Apachi (Scrofula)</i>	Two finger below the <i>Indrabasti marma</i> .
7	<i>Apasmar, Unmaad</i> (convulsion, Epilepsy)	Near the tempo- mandibular joint (junction of skin and hairline of Pradesh)
8	Muscular wasting of Shoulder	Center of anterior and posterior border of shoulder joint.
9	<i>Jivharog and dantarog</i>	Base of the tongue.
10	<i>Mutravidhi</i> (Hydrocele)	Lateral side of scrotum.

DISCUSSION

1. Relevance of *Viddhakarma* in Contemporary Medicine

Viddhakarma, an ancient *Ayurvedic* parasurgical procedure, demonstrates potential therapeutic benefits in managing various health conditions, warranting further investigation into its integration with modern medical practices.

2. Mechanistic Insights

The analgesic and anti-inflammatory effects of *Viddhakarma* are attributed to the release of endorphins and the *Vatanulomana* effect, highlighting the procedure's potential in pain management.

3. Comparative Analysis with Acupuncture

While sharing similarities, *Viddhakarma* and acupuncture exhibit distinct differences in underlying philosophies, principles, and practices, underscoring the need for nuanced understanding.

4. Therapeutic Applications

Viddhakarma's efficacy in addressing joint disorders, musculoskeletal problems, neurological disorders, skin conditions, metabolic disorders, and circulatory issues necessitates further research.

5. Precision and Safety

Sushruta's emphasis on meticulous care and avoidance of critical points (*Marma*) underscores the importance of surgical precision and injury prevention.

6. Holistic Perspective

Viddhakarma's focus on balancing *doshas*, *dhatu*s, and *agni* highlights *Ayurveda's* holistic approach to health, contrasting with reductionist views.

7. Ethical Considerations

The discussion of *Viddhakarma* reinforces the ethical imperative to minimize harm and preserve life, aligning with modern medical ethics.

8. Integration with Modern Medicine

Investigating *Viddhakarma's* compatibility with allopathic treatments could yield innovative therapeutic strategies.

9. Standardization and Regulation

Establishing standardized protocols and regulatory frameworks for *Viddhakarma* practice is crucial for ensuring safety and efficacy.

10. Future Research Directions

Further studies should investigate *Viddhakarma's*:

Mechanisms of action :

Efficacy in specific disease conditions

Safety profiles

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Integration with modern medical practices.

critical areas of the body during medical interventions.

CONCLUSION

The study of *Viddha Karma* underlines the importance of precise knowledge of the human body's critical points, or *Marma*. *Sushruta's* teachings serve as an ancient guide for surgeons, emphasizing the need for meticulous care to avoid causing irreversible damage. These teachings are not only vital for surgical procedures but also contribute to the broader medical understanding of trauma management and injury prevention.

Viddha Karma offers a holistic perspective on the human body's vulnerability, reflecting an advanced understanding of anatomy for its time. The identification of *Marma* points and other critical structures like veins, arteries, and joints demonstrates an early awareness of how interconnected bodily systems are. Injury to these points can result in immediate or delayed consequences, ranging from pain and loss of function to death.

This understanding reinforces the need for surgical precision and the value of preventive measures in medical practice. It also highlights the ethical responsibility of practitioners to preserve life and minimize harm, principles that continue to be foundational in modern medicine. The discussion of *Viddha Karma* in *Sushruta Samhita* remains relevant, offering timeless insights into the importance of safeguarding

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