



## DUSHTA VRANA IN AYURVEDA: A CLASSICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE ON NON-HEALING ULCERS

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### ABSTRACT

Dushta Vrana, described in Ayurvedic classics, can be correlated with chronic or non-healing ulcers characterized by delayed healing, foul smell, pain, discoloration, discharge, and tissue destruction. Wound healing is a complex biological process influenced by multiple local and systemic factors such as infection, vascular insufficiency, diabetes mellitus, malnutrition, and immune compromise. Ayurveda provides a comprehensive approach for the management of Dushta Vrana through principles of Shodhana (purification) and Ropana (healing), as elaborated by Acharya Sushruta under the concept of Shashthi Upakrama. Various therapeutic measures including internal purification procedures, local wound cleansing, Ksharakarma, Raktamokshana, and application of Vrana Ropaka formulations have been described for effective wound management. The present review highlights the Ayurvedic understanding of Dushta Vrana, its clinical features, and classical management principles while correlating them with contemporary concepts of chronic wound healing. The study emphasizes that proper wound purification, infection control, and Dosha balance are essential for successful healing and prevention of complications in non-healing ulcers.

### INTRODUCTION

In clinical practice, Dushta Vrana is one of the most frequently encountered conditions faced by healthcare professionals. Management of wound healing remains a major concern in surgical practice. Although healing of Vrana is a natural physiological process, the wound must be protected from Dosha Dushti and microbial contamination, as these factors may interfere with the normal course of healing.

Despite significant advancements in medical science and the development of newer therapeutic modalities to accelerate recovery, traditional Ayurvedic principles continue to maintain their clinical relevance.

Acharya Sushruta, known as the “Father of Indian Surgery,” has elaborately described the concept and

management of Vrana in the Sushruta Samhita. He explained sixty therapeutic measures (Shashthi Upakrama) for comprehensive wound management, which include both local and systemic treatment approaches using various medicinal formulations and procedures. Among these therapies, Virechana has been advocated for the elimination of aggravated Doshas, particularly in Vata-Pitta predominant Dushta Vrana. Along with this, Jatyadi Ghrita has been recommended as an external application to support and enhance the wound healing process.

### Definition

A wound (Vrana) may be defined as a disruption or destruction of body tissue caused by trauma, injury, surgery, or other pathological conditions, usually involving damage to the skin and underlying structures.<sup>[1]</sup>

According to Ayurveda, the term Vrana is derived from the concept that even after complete healing, the scar or mark persists throughout life.<sup>[2]</sup>

“Vrunoti yasmaat roodhheapi vranavastu na nashyati | Aadeha dhaaranaat tasmaat vrana ityuchyate ||”

This indicates that a healed wound leaves a permanent impression on the body; hence it is termed as Vrana. Since it produces tissue destruction and loss of structural integrity, it is considered a pathological lesion requiring proper management.

When a wound fails to heal within the expected duration or shows delayed healing despite appropriate management by the Chikitsa Chatushpada—namely Bhishak (physician), Dravya (medicines), Upasthata (attendant), and Rogi (patient)—it is termed as Dushta Vrana. Such wounds are commonly associated with pain, discharge, foul smell, discoloration, slough, swelling, and impaired healing due to Dosha vitiation and contamination.

### DUSHTA VRANA

Dushta Vrana can be correlated with chronic or non-healing wounds that are difficult to heal and are associated with vitiation of the three Doshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. According to Ayurveda, a wound presenting with foul smell, abnormal discoloration, profuse discharge, severe pain, slough, swelling, and delayed healing is termed as Dushta Vrana.

These wounds are usually long-standing in nature and often contain unhealthy tissue, debris, putrefied pus, and blood discharge, which interfere with the normal healing process. In such conditions, proper wound cleansing and removal of necrotic or unhealthy tissue become essential to facilitate the action of therapeutic agents on healthy tissue and promote healing.

Dushta Vrana exhibits clinical features opposite to those of Shuddha Vrana, with symptoms appearing in greater intensity. Due to contamination, Dosha Dushti, and persistent inflammation, the healing process becomes significantly delayed. Hence, Dushta Vrana may be understood in modern terms as a contaminated, infected, or chronic non-healing ulcer.

### Lakshanas of dushta vrana<sup>[3]</sup>

According to Ayurvedic classics, Dushta Vrana presents with several characteristic clinical features indicating Dosha vitiation and impaired wound healing. The ulcer may appear either Samvruta (narrow-mouthed) or Vivruta (wide-mouthed), with irregular unhealthy margins. The wound may be Kathina (hard) or occasionally Mrudu (soft) in consistency and may appear Avasanna (depressed).

Patients commonly experience Vedana (severe pain), Daha (burning sensation), and Ushnata (increased local

temperature) at the site of the ulcer. Features such as Raga (redness), Shopha (swelling), Paka (suppuration), and Puyasrava (purulent discharge) indicate active inflammation and infection. The wound may also present with Kandu (itching), Pidaka (boil-like eruptions), and unhealthy granulation tissue.

Dushta Vrana often appears unpleasant or frightening in appearance (Bhairava, Manojna Darshana) and may contain foul-smelling pus, slough, damaged muscles, vessels, ligaments, and necrotic tissue (Puti Mamsa Sira Snayu). These features collectively indicate chronicity, contamination, and delayed healing of the wound.

### Management of Dushta Vrana Non-Healing Ulcer

Despite advancements in medical science, the management of chronic or non-healing wounds remains a major clinical challenge. Acharya Sushruta clearly understood the importance of wound care and described Shashthi Upakrama—sixty therapeutic measures—for the complete management of Vrana and promotion of Vrana Ropana.<sup>[4]</sup>

Ayurveda gives importance not only to healing the wound but also to preventing recurrence and minimizing complications. The main objectives in the management of Dushta Vrana are proper wound cleansing, reduction of pain, control of infection, removal of unhealthy tissue, promotion of healthy granulation, and healing with minimal scar formation.

For effective wound management, Ayurveda describes different measures from the initial stage of the wound up to complete healing and restoration. These include Urdhwa Shodhana through Vamana and Shirovirechana, Adho Shodhana through Virechana and Basti, along with Langhana, use of Katu-Tikta-Kashaya Ahara, and Raktamokshana wherever indicated.

### The treatment modalities of Dushta Vrana can be broadly classified into two categories

1. Medical Management: Apatarpana, Alepa, Parisheka, Abhyanga, Sweda, Vimlapana, Upanaha, Pachana, Sneha, Vamana, Virechana, etc.
2. Surgical Management: Chedana, Bhedana, Darana, Lekhana, Eshana, Aharana, Vyadhana, Visravana, Seevana, Sandhana, Ksharakarma, Agnikarma, Pratisarana, Loma Apaharana, and use of Yantra.

Thus, the management of Dushta Vrana in Ayurveda is comprehensive and includes both systemic purification and local wound care measures aimed at converting Dushta Vrana into Shuddha Vrana and promoting proper healing.

### Shodhana in Dushta Vrana

In Ayurveda, Shodhana refers to purification therapy aimed at eliminating vitiated Doshas and promoting proper wound healing. It is broadly classified into two types:

Abhyantara Shodhana – Internal purification procedures  
 Bahirgata Shodhana – External purification through local application of medicines and procedures.

### Abhyantara Shodhana

#### 1. Vamana<sup>[5]</sup>

Vamana Karma (therapeutic emesis) is one of the primary procedures of Panchakarma used for expelling aggravated Doshas through the upper route of the body. It is especially beneficial in Kapha predominant Vrana situated above the level of the Nabhi Pradesh. By eliminating vitiated Kapha, Vamana helps in reducing discharge, heaviness, and delayed healing associated with Dushta Vrana.

#### 2. Virechana<sup>[6]</sup>

Virechana Karma is mainly indicated for the elimination of aggravated Pitta Dosha from the body. It is considered beneficial in chronic non-healing wounds associated with Pitta predominance, particularly ulcers situated in the middle part of the body. Virechana helps in reducing inflammation, burning sensation, discoloration, and promotes healthy wound healing.

#### 3. Basti<sup>[7]</sup>

Basti Chikitsa is regarded as an important therapy for balancing all three Doshas, especially Vata Dosha, through the colon. It is useful in Vata predominant Vrana, Margavarana Janya Vrana, and wounds affecting the lower extremities. Basti helps in improving circulation, reducing pain, and supporting tissue healing.

#### 4. Shirovirechana<sup>[8]</sup>

Shirovirechana is particularly beneficial in wounds located in the Urdhwajatru Pradesh (regions above the clavicle) and in conditions associated with Kapha predominance. It helps in the elimination of vitiated Doshas from the upper part of the body and supports proper healing of the affected area.

### Bahya Shodhana

#### 1. Raktamokshana<sup>[9]</sup>

Raktamokshana is an important therapeutic procedure indicated in Dushta Vrana, as Rakta plays a major role as a Dushta in the pathogenesis of the disease. Commonly practiced methods of Raktamokshana include Siravedhana (venepuncture) and Jalaukavacharana (leech therapy). It is especially beneficial in wounds associated with Pitta and Rakta Dushti.

Raktamokshana helps in improving venous drainage, reducing venous and capillary stasis, and promoting proper circulation around the ulcer area, thereby facilitating wound healing. It also aids in reducing swelling, pain, burning sensation, and local inflammation by eliminating vitiated blood and inflammatory factors. Acharya Sushruta has mentioned specific veins for puncturing in different disease conditions in the Sushruta Samhita.

#### 2. Ropana<sup>[10]</sup>

Ropana refers to therapies that promote and accelerate the healing process of wounds. Ayurveda emphasizes creating favourable conditions for wound healing through cleansing, reduction of infection, removal of slough, and promotion of healthy tissue formation. Modern wound management mainly focuses on infection control and debridement, whereas Ayurveda additionally highlights the importance of tissue healing through Ropana therapies.

Acharya Sushruta elaborated the concept of Vrana Ropana using various formulations such as Kalka, Kashaya, Varti, Ghrita, Taila, and Choorna preparations. Commonly used Ropana formulations include Jatyadi Ghrita, Ropana Ghrita, and Ambasthadi Ghrita.

#### 3. Vrana Prakshalana<sup>[11]</sup>

Vrana Prakshalana refers to therapeutic cleansing of the wound using medicated decoctions. Kashayas such as Sursadi Gana Kashaya, Aragwadhadi Kashaya, Lakshadi Gana Kashaya, and Panchavalkala.

Kashaya are commonly used for wound cleansing to reduce contamination, discharge, and inflammation.

#### 4. Vrana Pichu<sup>[12]</sup>

In Vrana Pichu, medicated oils and ghee preparations are applied locally over the wound to promote healing and maintain moisture. Commonly used preparations include Doorvadi Ghrita, Jatyadi Taila/Ghrita, Nimbadi Taila, Kshara Taila Pichu, Sursadi Taila, and Hingulamrutadi Malahara.

#### 5. Vrana Lepa<sup>[13]</sup>

Application of medicinal pastes over the wound is known as Vrana Lepa. Preparations such as Tilakalkadi Lepa are used to reduce inflammation, discharge, pain, and support the healing process.

#### 6. Vrana Basti<sup>[14]</sup>

Vrana Basti involves retention of medicated oil over the wound for a specific duration to promote healing and nourishment of local tissues. Jatyadi Taila is commonly used for this procedure due to its wound healing properties.

Thus, Bahya Shodhana procedures play an important role in converting Dushta Vrana into Shuddha Vrana by cleansing the wound, reducing Dosha Dushti, controlling infection, and promoting healthy wound healing.

### DISCUSSION

Wound healing is a complex and dynamic process that occurs through three major phases: inflammatory, proliferative, and remodeling. Along with these phases, granulation tissue formation, collagen maturation, and scar formation occur simultaneously and contribute to restoration of tissue integrity. Although wound healing is a natural physiological process, it may be delayed or

impaired by several local and systemic factors such as infection, poor circulation, contamination, metabolic disorders, and Dosha Dushti.

In Ayurveda, proper healing of a wound cannot be achieved without adequate Shodhana. Therefore, Ropana is always preceded by Shodhana, as a wound affected with unhealthy tissue, slough, discharge, or Dosha vitiation cannot progress towards satisfactory healing. The concept of Shodhana in Ayurveda is comparable to wound bed preparation and cleansing in modern wound management. By removing unhealthy tissue, excessive discharge, microbial contamination, and vitiated Doshas, the wound gradually attains the state of Shuddha Vrana, after which Ropana therapies become more effective.

Dushta Vrana requires a comprehensive therapeutic approach because involvement of multiple Doshas and pathological factors cannot always be managed with a single drug or procedure. Hence, Ayurveda describes various Vrana Shodhaka and Vrana Ropaka drugs possessing different pharmacological properties for effective wound management. Drugs having Katu, Tikta, Kashaya, and Madhura Rasa are considered beneficial in the management of Dushta Vrana due to their cleansing, drying, healing, and tissue restorative properties.

The primary objective in the management of Dushta Vrana is removal of maximum Dushti through Shodhana, along with reduction of discharge (Sravahara), burning sensation (Dahahara), infection, and inflammation, followed by promotion of healthy wound healing through Ropana Chikitsa. The drugs used for this purpose should possess properties such as Amapachaka, Tridosahara, Krimihara, Vishahara, and Puyanirharana. These actions help in reducing factors that interfere with healing and support restoration of healthy tissue.

Once proper Shodhana is achieved, the wound gradually converts into Shuddha Vrana, where further healing can be enhanced with Ropana therapies. In addition, careful evaluation of the underlying cause of non-healing ulcers such as arterial ulcers, venous ulcers, neurogenic ulcers, trophic ulcers, and diabetic ulcers is essential for appropriate management and successful wound healing.

### CONCLUSION

Dushta Vrana represents a chronic and difficult-to-heal wound condition in which the normal healing process is impaired due to Dosha Dushti, microbial contamination, unhealthy tissue changes, and various local or systemic factors. Proper protection and timely management of Vrana are therefore essential to prevent its progression into Dushta Vrana and to promote uncomplicated healing.

Ayurveda provides a comprehensive approach for the management of Dushta Vrana through the principles of Shodhana and Ropana. Shodhana therapies help in removing slough, discharge, foul smell, infection, and

vitiated Doshas, thereby converting the wound into Shuddha Vrana, while Ropana therapies promote healthy granulation tissue formation and tissue repair. Effective wound healing can be achieved when the ulcer becomes free from excessive discharge, necrotic tissue, foul smell, burning sensation, itching, and inflammation.

Clinical observation suggests that Dushta Vrana is more commonly seen in the lower extremities, emphasizing the importance of proper care and early intervention in wounds affecting the lower limbs. Before initiating treatment, careful assessment of the type of Vrana, level of Dushti, predominance of Dosha, involvement of Dhātu, site, size, and prognosis (Sadhya-Asadhyata) of the wound is necessary for planning appropriate management.

Thus, the Ayurvedic principles of wound care described by Acharya Sushruta continue to hold significant relevance in the contemporary management of chronic non-healing ulcers. An integrated approach involving proper wound cleansing, Dosha balancing, and tissue healing measures can play an important role in achieving successful wound healing and preventing complications.

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