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*By: Dr. Soumya Upadhyay*



# Effectiveness of Ayurvedic Management of Chronic Epistaxis (Nasagata Raktapitta): A Case Study

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## **Abstract:**

Nose bleeds, also known as epistaxis, occurrence is common and may present at least once in sixty percent of the population. When nose bleeds occur more frequently and for a longer duration, it may indicate other underlying pathologies. This case study presents a 37 years old male with intermittent nose bleeding for more than 10 years. After Āyurvedic assessment, the client was advised the use of herbal blends along with diet and lifestyle recommendations for a duration of six months. Approximately eight months after the initial consultation, the client reported no episodes of nose bleeds and relief of all other associated symptoms. This case provides positive insight into the effectiveness of Āyurvedic management of epistaxis.

## **Introduction:**

Nose Bleeds are a common symptom associated with a wide range of pathologies. Most often a nose bleed may occur only as a symptom that tends to heal on its own. However, if there is a frequent presentation of nose bleeds, it may indicate a more serious underlying pathology.

Nose bleeds, also known as epistaxis, may ap-

pear at least once in about sixty percent of the population with approximately six percent of cases who seek out medical attention.<sup>1</sup> Epistaxis may arise in children as well as adults and requires further examination to determine possible causes.

There are two types of epistaxis based on the site of origin. Anterior nose bleeds may occur due to mild damage or irritation of the capillaries and small blood vessels at the front of the nose. This may be due to dry air, cold, allergies, or by inserting objects into the nose and most commonly observed in children. Posterior nose bleeds, however, arise deep inside the nose affecting the larger blood vessels resulting in heavier bleeding. This type is more common in adults.<sup>2</sup>

Chronic nose bleeds may be associated with systemic disorders such as cardiovascular disease, hemophilia, infections, trauma, or idiopathic in nature. A multitude of treatment measures are available which include topical vasoconstriction, nasal packing, use of a balloon system, or cautery.<sup>1</sup>



Recent reevaluation of water irrigation also known as neti has been shown to be an effective management technique.<sup>3</sup>

### Ayurvedic interpretation of Nose-bleeding:

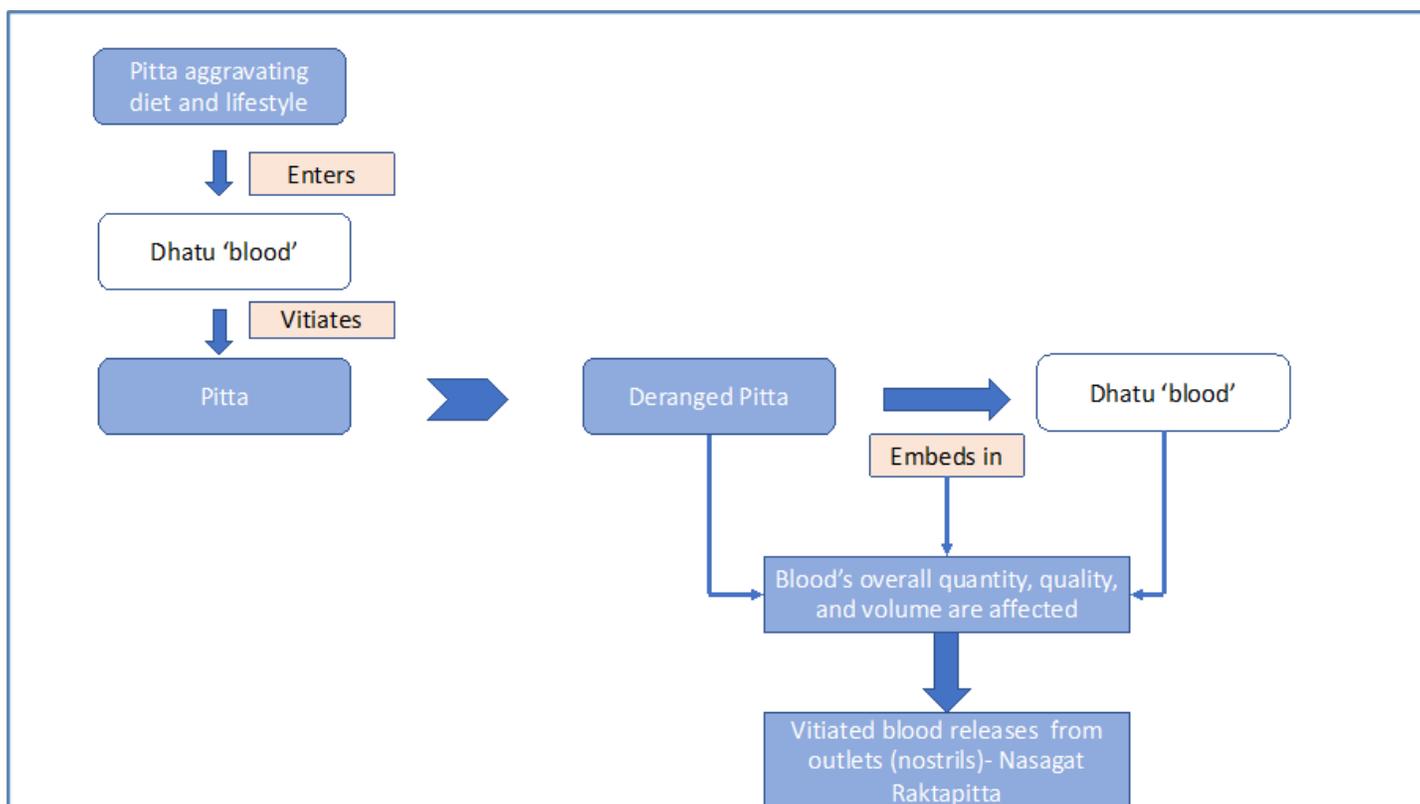
Āyurvedic classical literature describes a similar condition to epistaxis as Raktapitta. Though it may not be a direct correlation of both these disorders, the synonymous nature of bleeding through one's nose is described as Nāsagata Raktapitta.<sup>4</sup> This disorder is associated with the habitual and overuse of hot, pungent, saline, and that which causes a burning sensation. Also, excessive exposure to the sun and factors that aggravate pitta doṣa may trigger this condition.<sup>5</sup> The deranged pitta leaves its position and enters the rakta dhātu (blood). The heat of pitta situated in the liquid medium of rakta dhātu can spread quickly causing further patho-

logical changes in otherwise healthy tissue. The excessive heat manifests as exudation (bleeding) of aggravated pitta and rakta out of the orifices as shown in Figure 1. This may present either in the upward direction, downward direction or both.<sup>6</sup>

Caraka Samhita mentions virecana (purgation) as one of the best procedures for reducing aggravated pitta and rakta (blood) flowing through the upward passage or nose.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, a combination of madhura (sweet) and śīta (cooling) property herbs work well on balancing a vitiated pitta in such disorders.<sup>8</sup>

In this case study, the medical history and associated symptoms indicated a strong association with long term aggravation of pitta that was manifesting as Nāsagata Raktapitta.

Figure 1: Āyurvedic Pathogenesis of Chronic Nose bleeds (Nāsagata Raktapitta)



## Case Study:

A 37 years old, male client presented with a primary complaint of chronic nose bleeds since 1997. The episodes were sometimes triggered by stress or when he felt that his body was overheating. He mentioned frequent discomfort of a burning sensation in his throat after meals associated with sour or acidic burping. He would also experience nausea, halitosis, body aches, lack of strength, and indigestion quite often. The client also exhibited severe acne on his face and back. Due to the frequency of the nose bleeds, it often hindered his work as a physical therapist. He mentioned occasionally that his nose would bleed during his client sessions.

Upon further assessment, he revealed that his diet was primarily comprised of spicy food, including regular consumption of red chilies and junk food. He frequently consumed leftovers, sour foods such as sauces and vinegar as well as lots of snacks. His bowel movements were irregular with occasional constipation and loose stools. There is a strong family association with this case as his father and two brothers also suffered from chronic nose bleeds.

After prakṛti analysis, it was determined that he was predominantly pitta prakṛti with a high risk of developing Pittaja disorders.

## Parikṣa (Assessment):

1. Nādi parikṣa (pulse examination): Pitta Vāta
2. Jihva parikṣa (tongue examination): Nirāma (no indication of the presence of toxins)
3. Koṣṭha parikṣa (examination of the abdo-

men): No tenderness

4. Personality: Very aggressive, hotheaded, angry, and competitive.

5. Agni parikṣa (appetite): Tīkṣna (very sharp)

6. Body strength: Very good.

7. Thirst: excessive

8. Stress: related to business and work.

9. Sleep: only 4 hours

**Cikitsa (Treatment):** The full treatment lasted for 7-8 months. The following recommendations were given in this order:

A. Prepare a kṣīra pāka (herbs cooked in milk) with the following herbs. Drink this two times a day. To make the drink, add ¼ of a spoon of each of the following herbs in 4 ounces of milk. Boil the milk for 2 minutes and then cool it. Drink 2 ounces in the morning and 2 ounces in evening.<sup>9</sup>

Table 1: Formulation for Kṣīra Pāka (Medicated Milk)

Herb	Properties and action
Yaṣṭimadhu ( <i>Glycyrrhiza Glabra</i> ) <sup>10</sup>	Sweet, slightly heavy, slightly bitter, effective in blood disorders (rakta vikāra), toxicity
Śatavari ( <i>Asparagus Racemosus</i> ) <sup>11</sup>	Cooling, slightly heavy, astringent sweet taste, strengthening, effective in blood disorders (rakta vikāra)
Sankha-pushpi ( <i>Convolvulus paniculatus</i> ) <sup>12</sup>	Sweet, soft, strengthening, slightly heavy, effective in blood disorders (rakta vikāra), and pitta imbalances

B. Prepare a decoction of the following herbs. To prepare a decoction, take 1 spoon of each herb in 16 ounces of water. Boil the water until 8 ounces of water remain. Let the water become lukewarm. Filter and then drink once a day in the morning on an empty stomach.

Table 2: Formulation for Decoction

Herb	Properties and action
Ghrita kumari ( <i>Aloe Vera</i> ) <sup>13</sup>	Cooling, bitter, good for disorders of the spleen, liver, and blood
Drākṣa (Black raisins) <sup>14</sup>	Cooling, slightly heavy, sweet, highly effective in rakta pitta
Haritaki ( <i>Terminalia Chebula</i> ) <sup>15</sup>	Includes five tastes (sweet, bitter, astringent, sour, sweet) except salty, slightly warm, sweet, light

C. Prepare a hima (herbs soaked overnight in cool water) with the following ingredients: Raisins, Amalaki (Indian gooseberry), honey, crystal sugar, and pomegranate seeds. To prepare the hima, add half a spoon of each of the above-mentioned ingredients in cool water overnight. In the morning, filter it and then drink it at least twice anytime during the day.

D. Pranayama (Yogic breathing exercises): Practice every day to calm down and reduce stress levels. The most important pranayama suggested was anuloma viloma (alternate breathing). Alternate breathing when done in a cyclical pattern reenergizes the nervous system and calms stress levels.

E. Chandana Bala taila (oil) for the scalp. Apply and massage over the scalp at least two times a week. The oil contains sandalwood and Bala, both herbs together move the vitiated pitta down from the upward passage and are cooling in property.

**Other Recommendations:** In addition, from the nidāna parivarjana (negating the causative factors) perspective, avoiding hot, spicy, sour, and salty food including tomatoes was strongly recommended. He was also advised to consume fresh food and eliminate the consumption of leftovers. Stale food contributes to the production of āma (toxins).

### Results:

First follow-up session: The client consumed the decoction for a month and found that his body heat had reduced significantly. He was progressing well and did not have an episode of nose bleeds for a continuous period of one month. He wanted to give it more time to reach a solid conclusion. To make the decoction more palatable and enable to take the herbs for a longer time, adding honey was suggested. Since results from Āyurvedic treatments are relatively slow, it is important for regular compliance of herbal consumption.

Second follow-up session: After six months, the client came in for a follow up. He was extremely happy and did not have an episode of nose bleeds in the last 6 months of treatment. He was pleasantly surprised with the results because he thought that this being a family problem, it could never subside.

However, a dramatic improvement in his condition where he became completely free of nose-bleeding episodes proved otherwise. Additionally, his body heat had reduced a lot and he was feeling much cooler. He had been practicing pranayama at 5:30 am daily. The client had stopped eating spicy food, junk food, and leftovers. His wife confirmed that he was putting the best efforts to not get upset easily. All his hard work had paid off. It was a behavior change and a lifestyle modification that provided additional help in his recovery.

### **Discussion:**

Raktapitta as described in classical literature states that this condition may develop due to habitual and excessive consumption of food which is difficult to digest such as fried or processed food, pastries, sour, salty, and fermented ingredients, etc. An increase in heat induces aggravation of pitta which further induces an abnormal distortion of the rakta dhātu along with its associated organs, spleen, and liver. The predominance of heat in all the above components affects the channels of circulation which may result in aggravated blood flowing out in the urdhvaga (upward direction) or the adhoga (downward direction).<sup>16</sup> When associated with Kapha, the blood flows through the ears, nose, eyes, or mouth. As seen in this case, the bleeding occurred through the nose, hence termed as Nāsagata Raktapitta. Prognosis of this type of Raktapitta is identified as curable especially when occurring in a client who is still strong, has a strong agni, young and not depleted.<sup>17</sup>

The approach to the management of this client was focused on the pacification of primarily pitta and also kapha.

The pūrvarūpas (premonitory signs and symptoms) of raktapitta are burning sensation while digesting food, sour and foul belching, nausea, hoarseness of voice, burning sensation all over the body, acne and body aches, and feeling of excessive heat in the eyes, nose, mouth and ears.<sup>18</sup> All such symptoms were observed in this client. He mentioned that he would often feel hot even in cold temperatures. His acne flared up intermittently and he mentioned stress or excessive heat as a trigger for his nose bleeds.

This case has the classical presentation of Nāsagata Raktapitta, hence the management was based on the use of herbs which are predominantly madhura (sweet), śīta vīrya (cold potency), and nourishing if devoid of āma. All herbs indicated for this client possessed these qualities.

Kṣīra pāka is a special preparation for making medicated milk by cooking with herbs. Such preparations are especially useful in Pittaja disorders. In addition to the herbs, the therapy was supported by negations of the triggers or causative factors and replace with daily practices that pacified pitta and stress.

### **Conclusion:**

In summary this case of chronic epistaxis resulted in positive outcomes providing clinical evidence of efficacy of Ayurvedic interventions.

The combination of herbs along with pranayama techniques provided supportive health measures, negation of triggers, and stress management techniques. Assessment of the client's prakṛti also indicated his risk of developing this type of disorder that is predominantly pitta aggravation.

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