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## ‘A Critical Review on Visha with special reference to its Pharmacodynamic Action.’

**Adhao Mamata**

Associate Professor, Dept of Agadtantra

Bhausahab Mulak Ayrved College, Hospital and Research Centre Nandanvan, Nagpur.

**Abstract:** Agadtanta is one of the significant branches of Astang Ayurveda. Aim and utility of Agadtantra is same as Ayurveda i.e. Protection of healthy individuals from poisons and management of individuals afflicted from poisons. The very sight of one that causes vishada (depression) among the living beings and after entering the body causes the vitiation of Dhatus ultimately kills the healthy person is defined as visha. Visha dravyas (poisonous drugs) are used in various Ayurvedic formulations due to their quick effectiveness in relatively smaller dose in spite of their reported side effects. While using any drug it is important that the physician should be aware of its properties and it should be administered with the treating intensions. The real difference between a medicine and a poison is the intent with which it is given. An acute poison can become an excellent drug if it is properly administered, and similarly even a drug, if not properly administered, becomes an acute poison Pharmacodynamics of vish dravyas refers to the study of its therapeutic benefits and toxicity. According to Ayurveda Guna (properties), Rasa, Virya, Vipaka and Prabhav is responsible factors for the specific action of a vish dravya. Visha dravya produces its effect by its action on oja which is final excellent essence of all Dhatus. In the present article, an attempt has been made to understand visha, its Pharmacodynamic Action in Ayurvedic parlance by presenting them in a single place.

**KEY WORDS:** Agadtantra, Visha, Properties of Visha, Pharmacodynamic action of Visha

### Corresponding Author:

Dr. Mamata P. Adhao M.D. (Agadtantra), Ph.D. Scholar (M.U.H.S.)

Associate Professor, Dept of Agadtantra

Bhausahab Mulak Ayrved College, Hospital and Research Centre Nandanvan,  
NagpurEmail: [mamata.adhao@gmail.com](mailto:mamata.adhao@gmail.com) Mob.no. 9890633370

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## INTRODUCTION:

Ayurveda : The Science of Life is a sub branch of Atharvaveda is divided in eight divisions called as Astang Ayurveda. One of the significant components is Agadtantra. <sup>1</sup> Objective of Agadtantra is protection of healthy individuals from poisons and to give general attention to dangerous/toxic substances to manage and deal with the harming/poisoning conditions. In Sushruta Samhita called as 'Agadtantra', in Charaka Samhita it is called as 'Vishagarvairodhik prashaman' by Acharya Vangbhat 'Danshrachikitsa', in Haritasamhita 'Vishtantra' and in Kautilya Arthashastra 'Jangali'.<sup>2</sup> The very sight of one that causes vishada (depression) among the living beings is a visa (poison), alternatively the one that entraps human beings in mrtyupasa (death rope) and destroys him is a Vish.<sup>3</sup> The Visha word derived from the root 'vis' which means to encompass or to get occupied. Thus, the one which occupies whole body at once after ingestion is called Visha. The substance that after entering the body causes the vitiation of Dhatus ultimately kills the healthy person is defined as visha.<sup>4</sup> Any drug or material possessing Vyavayi, Vikasi, Sukshma, Chedi,

Madavaha, Agneya, Jivithara and Yogvahi gua(properties) is called as Visha.<sup>5</sup>

## AIM AND OBJECTIVE

1. To study the concept of *Visha* according to Ayurveda.
2. Recollect and arrange all the scattered references in different ancient texts related to Visha and its Pharmacodynamic action.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD:

The whole study is based on literary review collected from classical *Ayurveda* texts and modern books. This study is carried out under following heads- Definition of Visha, Vishotptti (Mythological Origin of Poison), Classification of Visha, Factors responsible for Pharmacodynamic action for visha.

**Origin (Utpatti) of Visha:** In ancient literature mythological etymology of visha has been mentioned. As per Acharya Charaka Lord Brahma deposited the Visha in jangama (mobile) and sthavara (immobile) things of his creation. Vish originates from Ambu (water).<sup>6</sup>

**Classification of Poison:** According to Ayurveda, classification of visha is based on its origin and its site (adhishtana). According to Acharya Sushruta, the poisons is classified into two types. One of them is Junghama

visha(poison of mobile origin) and its sites are sixteen and another is Sthavar visha (poison of imobile origin) and its sites are ten.<sup>7</sup>

According to Charaka the poisons are classified into two categories one of them is Janghamavisha (animal poisoning) and another is Sthavar Visha (plant and mineral poisoning).<sup>8</sup> According to Vagbhata the poison is classified into two types. One of them is the Akrutrim visha (natural poisoning) and this is again sub divided into two that is Sthavaram and Janghamam. The other one is the krutrimvisha which is called as Gara visha (Unnatural of chemically prepared poison).<sup>9</sup> Classics of Rasashastra categorize shtavara visa in two types: mahavisha(strong poison) upvish(mild Poison)<sup>10</sup>

### Pharmacodynamics of Visha:

Pharmacodynamics refers to the study of a

drug's effect on the body. The process includes studying a compound's therapeutic benefits and toxicity.<sup>11</sup>

It is very imperative to know the responsible factors for pharmacodynamics of vishdravya. According to Ayurveda Guna (properties), Rasa, Virya, Vipaka and Prabhav is responsible factors for the specific action of a dravya. Some Dravya act according to it's to Guna, Rasa, some according to Virya, some according Vipak and some of them act according to its Prabhava.<sup>12</sup>

**Visha guna (properties of poison):** Acharya Charaka, Sushruta, Bhavprakasha and Yogratanakar described Ten Guna of poison. Ashtang Hrudaya had described eleven and Sharangdhara had described eight guna of visha. These ten gunas vitiates the doshas and destroys the ojas.<sup>13,14</sup>

**Table 1. Showing Visha Guna according Various Acharya**

Sr. No	Guna	Ch. S.	Su.Y. R. & B. P.	A. S.	A. H.	Sh. S.
		<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>
1	Laghu	+	+	+	+	-
2	Ruksh	+	+	+	+	-
3	Aashu	+	+	+	+	-
4	Vishada	+	+	+	+	-
5	Vyavayi	+	+	+	+	+
6	Tiksna	+	+	+	+	-
7	Vikasi	+	+	+	+	+
8	Sukshma	+	+	+	+	+
9	Ushna/ Agneya	+	+	+	+	+



10	Anirdeshya Rasa	+	-	+	-	-
11	Apaki	-	+	-	+	-
12	chedi	-	-	-	-	+
13	Madavah	-	-	-	-	+
14	Prannashak	-	-	-	-	+
15	Yogvahi	-	-	-	-	+

### The effects of ten attributes of Visha:

**Table 2. Visha Guna (Properties) and their pharmacodynamics actions**

Visha Guna (Properties)	Pharmacodynamic Action
Ruksa (non-unctuous)	Aggravation of vayu
Usna (hot)	Aggravation of pitta along with sonita
Tiksna (sharp)	Moha (stupor)
Sukṣma (minute)	Enters into and damages the sarira- avayavas (organs of the body)
Asu (quick acting)	Kills instantaneously
Vyavayi (all-pervading prior to digestion)	Absorbed and circulated all over the sarira (body)
Vikasi (slackening)	Harms dosas, dhātus and malas
Visada (non-sliminess)	does not stick anyplace
Laghu (lightness)	Duscikitsya (difficult to treat)
Apaki (indigestible)	Durhara

The nature of *visha* is considered exactly opposite to that of the *Ojas* so when *visha* is administered or enters the body by opposing to oja which is the final and paramtej of dhatus, Visha causes destruction of *ojas* kills prana which leads to death<sup>15</sup>

As all these guna are opposite to oja gunas,

**Vish rasa:** While describing about the origin of the Visha, Sushruta described another property of the visha; just as the atmospheric water which has imperceptible and undeveloped taste, of ground or soil on which

it fall upon, so it is the nature of the tasteless visha that it partakes up the specific taste (rasa) of thing or animal in which it exists.<sup>16</sup>

**Vish Prabhav :**The property which is responsible for a special or peculiar action of a Dravaya is known as Prabhava. Prabhav may also be defined as the special property which produces actions which are different from and contrary to those attributed to Rasa, Guna, Virya, Vipaka, Some time Visha Dravya act by its Prabhav.<sup>17</sup>

**Function of Poison (Visha Karya)**

After getting entered the body the poison at once vitiates the blood then simultaneously it vitiates the tridoshas. Poison having entered the body vitiates the blood first, next the Kapha, Pitta and Vata which are in their normal state along with their seats, next in Hridaya cause death. Though all poisons are having Tikshna and other properties, it takes away the life immediately in persons who have aggravation of Vata and Pitta. The poison first gets into that specific Dosha by which it is predominant, gets localized in those organs which are specific to that Dosha and produces diseases born from that Dosha all of which described above. Thus, spreading all over the body and causing obstruction to the channels, the poison expels the life of the person very quickly<sup>18</sup>.

#### **DISCUSSION :**

Visha is a substance which disturbs all the functions of the body, which results into fetal conditions still in ayurvedic text, there are various references which shows that we can use the vishadravya as a medicine, as mentioned in the Charaksamhita that even an acute poison become an excellent drug if it is administered properly and similarly even a drug if not administered properly become an acute poison<sup>19</sup> Visha Dravya (Poisonous

Substances) In spite of their fatal effect many Visha dravyas are used as medicines e.g. many of the of the poisonous plants as well as Rasaushadhis which are reported for their toxic nature but they are used, after proper processing, widely in the treatment without any adverse effects as they are effective in small doses to cure the diseases. According to Ayurveda every dravya (substance) can create a specific action on the body and this action depends upon the Guna (properties) Rasa, Virya, Vipaka and Prabhav of that dravya. Particular guna decides the particular action of that dravya on the body.<sup>20</sup> Visha dravyas, along with their undesirable properties, are also incorporated with certain desirable properties, by which they act faster than other medicines or plants. Further, to make these properties therapeutically effective certain Shodhana (purificatory) procedures are explained in the classical texts, which may be helpful for diminution of toxic properties of the poisonous substances.<sup>21,22</sup>

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Ayurveda advocates uses of certain visha dravyas (poisonous substances) as medicament. Guna and action of these visha dravyas are well documented in classical texts of Ayurveda. The concept of visha can be

understood in the context of its gunas and by understanding them in a scientific way, it is also possible to use them as a fast acting drug. As Pharmacodynamic action of vishadravyas shows both therapeutic and toxicity properties, the judicious use of vishadravyas is recommended.

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