

Review Study on Vishapranahara Kriya

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ABSTRACT

Agadtantra is an important branch of Ashtanga Ayurveda that deals with signs and symptoms and also with the management of poisoning, resulting from the bites of snakes, insects and worms, spiders, rodents, etc. and various other poisons produced by improper combinations of substances or drugs. Vata plays the major role in the *visha pranahara kriya* which is explained in our classics. When poison enters the body, first it acts on the blood, then on doshas, along with their aashayas, it reaches the heart and affects it and destroys the life. Because of dryness property, vayu gets aggravated; due to hot property, pitta gets vitiated; subtleness leads to vitiation of rakta; Due to *avyakta rasa* (indistinct taste), kapha is vitiated; due to rapidly acting, it quickly permeates through the nutrient fluid; vyavayi guna spreads it throughout the body instantaneously. Tikshna guna (sharply acting) property causes injury to marmas, vikashi guna results in death of the patient. Due to laghu guna it becomes difficult to manage therapeutically; because of vaishadya guna, it pervades all over the body with dosha without any obstruction in circulation. Depending upon the location of dosha and prakriti of patient, *visha* produces several other complications.

Keywords - Ayurveda, Agadtantra, Visha, Vishakriya, Role of Vata.

INTRODUCTION

Agadtantra is the branch of Ayurveda which deals with Visha and Upavisha (a variety of toxic and poisonous substances obtained from plants, animals, minerals, metals etc.) with reference to their sources i.e., utpatti of visha, visha yoni, vishadhistananani, characteristics and properties i.e. visha gunani, the symptoms which they produce i.e., visha lingani, the lethal dose i.e., ghatak matra, the nature of fatal result i.e. visha vegani, Visha Kriya etc..

The remedial measures which should be employed to combat their actions or effects i.e. visha-upakramani and the method of their detection and estimation i.e. vishapariksha.

Classical View Visha Gunas

According to *Susruta Samhita*, *visha gunas* are 10 in number. They are *ruksha*(rough), *ushna*(hot in potency), *tikshna*(penetrating), *sukshma*(entering into minute pores), *aashu*(quick acting), *vyavayi*(spreading), *vikasi*(debilitate the tissues), *visada*(non-unctous), *laghu*(light), and *apaki*(undigestable).

According to acharya charaka¹-

लघु रूक्षमाशु विशदं व्यवायि तीक्ष्णं विकासि सूक्ष्मं च ।

उष्णमनिर्देश्यरसं दशगुणमुक्तं विषं तज्ज्ञैः ॥२४॥ [cha.chi 23/24]

Vata Gunas

The *gunas* of *vata dosha* are *ruksha* (dry), *laghu* (light), *sheeta* (cold), *khara* (rough), *sukshma* (subtle), and *chala* (mobile).

Table No 1: Comparison Between Visha Gunas and Vata Gunas.

VATA GUNAS	VISHA GUNAS
Ruksha	Ruksha
Laghu	Laghu
Sukshma	Sukshma
Vishada*	Vishada
Aashukari**	Aashu
	Vyavayi
	Vikashi
Sheeta	-
Khara	-
Yogavaahi*	
Chala	
-	Teekshna
-	Ushna
-	Apaki
-	Vishamapaki

*According to Acharya Charaka

** According to Acharya Susruta

In brief when we compare the *visha gunas* with the *vata gunas* (table no: 1) we can see that the majority of the *gunas* of *visha* are very similar to that of *vata* which plays an important role in the action of *visha*.

Action of Visha as Per its Qualities:

- Ushna (Heat) which vitiates pitta & blood.
- Tikshna (Sharp) which destroys vital organs (marmas), affects the brain.
- Sukshma (Subtle) Power of penetrating into the smallest capillaries of the body.
- Ruksha (dryness) which Vitiates vata.
- Ashu (quick acting) takes away life fast.
- Vyavayi enters into the body without digestion and quick in deranging function.
- Vikasi which is capable of drying the bodily humours disintegrating
- Visada which excites the location of doshas spreads in the body, arresting the functions of the organs.
- Laghu (Light) speeds all over the body and difficult to cure and control.
- Apaki which is difficult to remove from the body and anirdesyarasa means undifferentiated taste which vitiates the kapha
- **Clinical Features As Per Site Of VATA Dosha**

स्याद्वातिकस्य वातस्थाने कफपित्तलिङ्गमीषत्तु।
तृणमोहारतिमूर्च्छांगलग्रहच्छर्दिफेनादि ॥२८॥ [cha.chi 23/28]

If *visha* is situated at vata sthana in a person having vatika prakriti, then he suffers from *trit* (excessive thirst), *moha* (loss of consciousness), *arati* (dislikness for everything), *moorchha* (fainting), *galagraha* (obstruction in the throat), *phena chhardi* (vomitus containing froth). There will be less manifestation of signs and symptoms of *kapha* and *pitta*.

If the poison gets lodged in pitta sthana in a person having paittika prakriti he will suffer from *trit* (excessive thirst), *kasa* (cough), *jwara* (fever), *vamadhu* (vomiting sensation), *klama* (mental fatigue), *daha* (burning sensation), *tama* (appearance of darkness), *atisara* (diarrhea). There will be less manifestation of signs and symptoms of *kapha* and *vayu*.

If the poison gets lodged in kapha sthana in a person having kapha prakriti then he will be suffering from *shwasa* (dyspnea), *galagraha* (obstruction of throat), *kandu* (itching), *laala vamaana* (excessive salivation). There will be less manifestation of signs and symptoms of *vayu* and *pitta*.

दूषीविषं तु शोणितदुष्ट्यारुःकिटिमकोठलिङ्गं च ।
विषमेकैकं दोषं सन्दूष्य हरत्यसूनेवम् ॥३१॥

Dushi-visha (a type of artificial poison) vitiates blood and produces symptoms like *aru* (eczema in the head), *kitibha* (psoriasis) and *kotha* (urticaria). This type of poison afflicts each one of the dosha and causes death of the patient.

क्षरति विषतेजसाऽसूक् तत् खानि निरुध्य मारयति जन्तुम् ।
पीतं मृतस्य हृदि तिष्ठति दष्टविद्धयोर्दशदेशे स्यात् ॥३२॥

Due to *visha tejus* (power of poison) vitiates blood transudes to obstruct *srotas* (channels) leading to death of the patient.

If the poison is taken orally it stays in heart and if the poison is transmitted by bite or from poisoned arrow, it gets lodged in the place of bite

Vishasya Pranaharatvam & Visha Pranaharonakrama

Vishasya pranaharatvam refers to the *tikshnadi gunas of visha* along with its predominance in *vata, pitta doshas* that helps in the *pranaharana kriya*. *Visha pranaharanokrama* refers to the mode of action of *visha* starting from the entry of *visha* into the body leading to *pranaharana*. The *visha* after entering into the body firstly causes *rakta* vitiation followed by *tridosha prakopa* along with its *ashayas* and on reaching the *hrdaya* it leads to *deha cheda* or *prana nasha*.^[2]

Role of Vata

Visha after entering the body, vitiates the *rakta* and along with *tridoshas* and its *ashayas* and this vitiates *rakta* on reaching the *hrdaya* leads to *sarvasrotamsi baddhatva* (obstruction of channels), which is the cause for *deha nasha* (destruction of the body).^[3]

Acharya Charaka has explained that *hrdaya* can be considered as the *moola sthana* of *pranavaha srotas* which is also known as *vatasthana srotas* as it helps in the propagation of *prana vayu*.^[4]

So when this *prana vayu* is getting obstructed, it hampers the *swasadi karma* (cessation of respiration), which causes the *pranaharana* or *marana* (death).

The *vyana vata* which has the *avasthita stana* in *hrdaya* and *vicharana sthana* in *sarva sarira* is also getting *baddha* (obstructed) which causes *sarva chesta hani* (loss of function) thereby leaving the person in an unconscious or coma state.^[5]

Acharya Susruta also explains the same, i.e. the *visha* causes *sarvadoshaprakopana* (vitiates of *tridoshas*) which lead to derangement of their functions and thus the *visha* which has entered into the body remains in the *apaki* (undigested state) which obstructs the *prana* and the *margaavrita* (obstruction) by the deranged *kapha* hampers the *swasadi karma* (cessation of respiration) thereby leaving the person in unconscious state.^[6]

Visha Vega & Veganathara Kala

The acharyas while explaining about *visha* has explained about the *visha vegas* and the *vegantara kala*. *Sapta kalas* have been mentioned in our body between the dhatus. So the *visha* entering into each *kala* gives rise to each stages of poisoning.

The time duration taken by the *visha* to spread from one *kala* to the next with the help of *vata* is known as *vegantara kala*. From the commentary we can see that "*sameeraneno hyamanam vayuna preyamanam*" which clearly signifies the role of *vata* which helps the *visha* in spreading throughout the body, completing each stages quickly thereby resulting in *pranaharana*.^[7,8]

Treatment as Per Site of Dosha-

Dhamani bandha (application of tourniquet), *avamarjana* (eliminating the poison), and *atmaraksha* (protecting ourselves from the attack of evil spirits) should be done with the help of *mantras*. The predominant site of dosha in whose place where *visha* lodged should be treated first.

If the *visha* is located in *vata sthana* (site of *vata*), then the patient should be administered with *swedana* (fomentation therapy) and should be given to drink the paste of *nata* (*Valeriana wallichii*) and *kushta* (*Saussurea lappa*) mixed with curd.

If the *visha* is located in *pitta sthana* (site of *pitta*), then the patient should be administered with ghee, honey, milk and water to drink. He should also be given *avagaha* and *parisheka* (types of fomentation therapies). If the *visha* is located in *kapha sthana* (site of *kapha*), then the patient should be administered with *ksharagada*, *swedana* (fomentation therapy) and *siravyadhana* (bloodletting).

If the *visha* is located in *rakta sthana* (site of *rakta dhatu*), or if the patient is afflicted with *dooshivisha* then the patient should be administered with *siravyadhana* (bloodletting) and *Panchakarma* (five types of elimination therapies).

Treatment Modalities

Visha is managed by the above said 24 fold treatment principles. Any of the above said methods can be implemented in the treatment. They can be classified in to two as per the usage. One is emergency management and the other is conservative and *rasayana* treatment. The procedures like *mantra*, *arishtha*, *utkartana*, *nishpeedana*, *aachooshana*, *agni*, *parisheka*, *avagaha*, *raktamokshana* are all emergencies as they will arrest the spread of *visha*. The *vamana*, *virechana*, *samjna sthapana* (restoration of consciousness) etc are helpful in the removal of the absorbed poison. The set of treatments like *prashamana* (pacification), *aushadha* etc. are self-explanatory. *Mrita sanjeevana* (restoring life in about to die or apparently dead person) acts as a life saving and *rasayana*.

To say, *rasayana* has an inverse relation with *visha*. This is told very clearly by *Vagbhata* while explaining the *Ashtangas* of *Ayurveda*. *Rasayana* comes next to *visha* in the chronology. *Visha Chikitsa* completes only after *rasayana prayoga* as it rejuvenates the damaged cells and tissues. The one which stands separate is *kakapada chikitsa*. It is a trump card management in *Visha Chikitsa* when all other treatments fail. In olden days of practice it was very much used by various *vaidyas*. Now it is restricted only to a limited area like Kerala. There are still some incidents of life saved by this procedure. Similar references about the line of management in cases of poisoning can be cross referred in *Sushruta Samhita* & *Ashtanga Samgraha*.^[9,10]

Stage Wise Treatment of Poisoning

It can be interpreted that the treatments mentioned are in chronological order and can be used as per the stage in which the patient has been brought to the *vaidya*. As the complication is increased the treatment methodology has to be changed from simple local techniques to highly evolved methods like the *kakapada chikitsa*. It is mentioned in some of the Malayalam texts of toxicology that when *visha* enters the body it starts hunting the *prana*/life of the person and the chase begins where the *visha* is after the *prana*. It is the amount of poison and the strength of the person together with the rapidity of the action of the drugs given which decides the prognosis. There is also a concept called *visha kala* and *amritha kala* which says that there are 15 vital points in the body and the poison affected to any one of these points on the days as per the *tithi* mentioned in the Indian calendar decides the prognosis and the intensity of the treatment required. Similar is the concept of *kalavanchana* where the poison in its total virulence in the body is nullified by the treatment methods aptly adopted.

Various Formulations

The *agada yogas* help in managing the complications due to the *sthavara visha*. The *Ashtanga Samgraha* specifically mentions sixteen *lakshanas* as the *upadravas* of *visha*. If we see the above reference we can come across a few of the features like *jwara*, *kasa*, *shwasa*, *hikka*, and *swayathu*. The drugs dealt above like *nalada* (*Vetiveria zinzanioides*), *jeevaka* (*M. musifera*), *rishabhaka* (*Microstylis wallichii*), *bharangi* (*Clerodendrum serratum*) are also effective in *Visha Chikitsa* which makes us understand that the selection of drug is an important factor in treating the complication in *visha* and the conventional drugs have to be replaced.

DISCUSSION

When we look at the action of *visha* based on its *gunas*, we can see that the *gunas* of *visha* which are similar to that of *vata* plays a major role in the action of *visha*. For eg: *laghutva*, which is an attribute of *vata* makes *visha* *anavastitha* (unstable) thereby there occurs no interaction between the *bheshaja* administered and the *visha* which is essential for treatment thus making it *dushchikitsya*.

Due to *visha tejus* (power of poison)^[15,16] vitiated blood transudes to obstruct *srotas* (channels) leading to death of the patient. On analyzing the *samhitas* we can understand that when the *vata* is getting obstructed due to the *visha* it ends in

destruction of the body (deha nasha) On top of that the transition of *visha* through each kalas with the help of *vata* further helps in accomplishing each satges of poisoning quickly thereby ending in marana (death) Thus it clearly signifies the important role of *vata* in pranaharana kriya.

CONCLUSION

It is the *prabhava karma* of *visha* that it afflicts the *Hridaya*, since *Hridaya* is considered as the *sthana* of *Pranavahasrotas*, *Vyana vata* etc, its *baddhatva* leads to loss of function along with the affliction of *prana vayu*(cessation of respiration) resulting in *Pranaharatvam*.

Thus the *visha* which spreads in the whole body causing *baddhatva* of the *srotases* leads to *prana nasha* and the acharya explains that there is no need of any similie to explain about *visha*, the *visha* just like *visha* itself brings about *prananasha*.^[8]

Thus, *vata* plays a major role in propogating the *visha* throughout the body and helps in the completion of different stages of poison quickly leading to *Pranaharatva*. The person though cured of poison should avoid antagonistic diet, over feeding, anger, fear, exertion and sexual intercourse and day sleep particularly.

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