

# GangaAyurCon-2022

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

on

MEDICINAL PLANTS OF GANGA RIVER BASIN  
AND THEIR THERAPEUTIC IMPORTANCE IN  
INDIAN SYSTEM OF MEDICINE

5th - 6th September, 2022



**GURUKUL CAMPUS**

Uttarakhand Ayurved University, Haridwar (U.K.) 249407

**Organised by:**

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# A REVIEW OF MEDICINAL USES OF POISONOUS PLANTS

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**Introduction:-** In Ayurvedic classical text the use of poisonous plants are since Ancient time. Plants are the major source of medicine in Ayurveda. Though most of the plant drugs are safe, but few are toxic in nature. These poisonous/toxic plants are categorized as visha and upavisha in Ayurvedic texts. Ayurvedic classics have various methods of shodhana to overcome toxicity of poisonous plants. After shodhana process visha and upavishadravyas are considered of highly therapeutic value and very effective in small doses after proper purification, even sharpest poison can be a good life saving medicine. To purify any vishadravyas helps not only to eradicate the toxicity of the drug but also imbibe additional therapeutic properties and makes the drug more users attentive. Dukha that is called Visha or which cause mrutyu by internal administration termed as Visha. Vishadravyas plays an important role in paradbandhan and it will give more benefits to human being by using proper quantity with proper process. The drugs of visha group should be collected when they are Nava (fresh), Guru (heavy), Snigdha (smooth), Ghana (solid) and when they abide fruits.

## **Vishadravyas**

**Brief History:-** The history of visha and its treatment ways back to centuries. The mythological concept regarding origin of visha states that it was created at time of creation of universe by lord Bramha and other opinion that it was obtained during samudramanathana. References regarding visha or poison and poisoning can also be traced in vedas. It was believed that moksha (salvation) is the ultimate aim of life and it was also believed that this can be attained through Rasa karma with the proper use of visha-upavishadravyas which will fulfill this desire. It is said in the texts that visha & upavishadravyas when used properly, would prove highly beneficial to the body or even as lifesaving drug like amrita (nectar) otherwise they are considered to be fatal to mankind.

**Visha-Etymology:-** The word visha is derived from the root 'Visha' which means to suffuse completely. The sthavara or jangamadravyas, which induce toxic symptoms in the body when inhaled, consumed in un-purified form are called as 'Visa dravyas'.

**Synonyms of Visha:-** Ksweda, Garala, Kalakuta.

**Classification of Visha:-** The classification of poison is based on certain basic criteria like origin, base properties, potency etc. The classification of the poison differs from Ayurvedic text to text. Ayurvedic classics and texts in medieval period have classified into mahavisha and upavisha. Visha basing upon its origin has been classified into two categories jangamvisha (animal poison) and (plant and mineral poison) sthavarvisha. The sites of sthavarvisha and jangmavisha are narrated as ten and sixteen respectively. Further it also is also classified as Akritimvisha (natural poison) and kritimvisha (Chemically prepared Visha) where akritimvisha is again sub divided into Sthavara and Jangama.

**Visha Guna;-** Acharya Charaka and Sushruta have enumerated ten similar gunas of visha with an exception of apaaki (sushruta) being replaced by anirdeshyarasa (charaka). Acharyavagbhata has attributed eleven gunas to a vishadravya by including apaki and Avyaktarasa. Sharangdhara has stated certain extra gunas of vishadravya like chhedi, madavaha, jivitahara and yogavahi. Laghu (light), ruksha (dry), ashu, visada, vikasi and vyavayi (enhanced bioavailability), tikshna (intense), sukshma (subtle), ushna (hot), anirdeshya rasa/apaki/avyakta rasa. All these 10 qualities are opposite to that of Ojas (essential energy for the body and mind) that keeps body healthy. The first available reference of upavishas is from the text Rasarnava. Among the recent authors Rasa tarangini emphasized on upavishas. Apart from Rasa tarangini, abundant references are found in Rasendrapurana (Rpu), Rasendrasambhava (R.Sam) and Rasendrabhaskara (R.bh)

According to Rasa Tarangini Vishadravyas can be classified in to two types depending on their source.

1. Sthavaravisha	Sthavaravisha includes the poisonous drugs from mineral and plant origin.
2. Jangamavisha	The jangamavisha includes the toxic effects of animal and insect bites.(rats,snake,etc)

**Sthavaravisha again of two types:-** 1)Visha 2)Upavisha

Number of Vishas and Upavishas according to Ayurvedic classics

Types of vishas	Rasaratnasamucchaya	Sharangadharasamhita	Rasa tarangini
Visha	5	9	9
Upavisha	7	7	11

**Vishagati (Movement of toxins in body):-**Jangamavisha acts in the lower part (adhahbhaga) of the body whereas Sthavaravisha acts in the upper part (urdhwabhaga). Hence they counteract each other.

**Aim:-** The aim of this review to provide detailed knowledge on poisonous medicinal plants used for various therapeutic purposes after different pharmaceutical process of shodhana. After sodhanavisha are having the karmas like Rasayana, Yogavahi, Tridoshaghana, Brumhana and Veeryavardhaka. Poisonous plants (Visha, Upavishadravyaas) are commonly used to improve health and their role in making medicines to treat illness as herbs in single or in compound formulations. In Rasa shastra, almost all drugs used are visha in nature including parada(without Samskara). For example eight doshas or toxic effects of Tamra (copper) if consumed unprocessed were described in detail. Hence all metals and minerals may be included under sthavara/khanijavisha group. The property of vishatva may be the reason for the quick action in minimum dose. Hence forth Rasa shastra stands superior and most appreciated for its attributes, Rasa chikitsa stands exceptional. There are contraindications mentioned for the usage of visha, but still, rasa dravyas which are also poisonous are indicated only after processing. The qualities of Ojas and visha antagonize each other, but still vishadravyas can act as Rasayanadravyas after proper processing and appropriate dose.

The utility of vishas and upavishas can be classified as - Utility in Lohaveda, Dehaveda, Chikitsa and in other areas.

Utility in Lohaveda of vishas and upavishas includes various Samskaras (special procedures) of parade.Ex: Chitraka in swedana (vapouring procedure); in moorchana (swooning procedure) they are used for the removal of vishadosha; langali and chitraka in adhahpatanasamskara (condensation). They also help to increase kramanatva of parada. Use in preparation of Ranjanataila, Saranataila.

References of visha and upavishas in vedasamskara of parada are enumerated.Ex: Vishatrana, vishodaka, raktasnuhi, chitraka, etc. They have role in doshanivarana of parada (elimination of blemishes of mercury). Ex: Chitraka to remove vahnidosha,Krishna dattura to remove chapalayadosha.

Utility of vishopavishas in other areas-Gunja is one among the „mitrapanchaka , „dravakagana and used in apunarbhavabhasmapareeksha. Arka and snuhikshira are the common bhavanarthadravyas in the process of marana (incineration) of most of the rasa dravyas. All the vishopavishas are used in the sattvapatana (extraction method) of chapala (bismuth) drug. To quote safety profile of Vishaaushadhies, “A drug is safe if it destroys the disease but not the diseased”.

A safety profile starts with the identification of a genuine drug, processing, etc and till the drug proven clinically safe. The selection of the drug for processing should be done carefully based on grahya-agrahyadravyalakshanas described in classics. The drug has to be collected accordingly as said in classics and according to the grahyalakshanas. Such collected drug has to be preserved properly and processed.

**Materials and Methods:-**Visha (Poison) are classified into two categories on basis of their toxicity and potency - (1) Visha (2) Upavisha. In this section by various process of shodhana poisons have capacity for therapeutic and single as well

as compound formulation prepared. Acharyas have mentioned various methods of sodhana to nullify all the evil effects and to enhance the therapeutic properties of a drug. Vatsanabha is one of the common drugs used in drug compounding/ formulation

along with Tankana which acts as an antidote; Haritaki is also used. The drug administered in appropriate dose and according to the conditions, acts as amruta; else can cause ill effects. Vishopavishas should not be administered to children below 8 years and adults above 80 years of age. These drugs as adjuvant help in antagonizing the toxic effects and enhance the therapeutic benefits. Pathyaapathya plays a major role in drug administration. Regimen like Swasthavrutta, Brahmacharya and Pathyaapathyaahara, are to be strictly followed.

On reviw of Ayurvedic literature it is observed that various shodhanprocess are mentioned for visha and upavisha.

Following procedures are common for different 'Vishopavisha' drugs:

GomutraNimajan :- Soaking in cow urine for prescribed period.

Swedana :- Boiling indifferent liquids such as cow milk, goat milk cow urine vegetable extracts and kanjika etc.

Bharjana :- Frying with or without ghee.

Bhavana :- Maceration and / or trituration with vegetable juices.

Nihsnehana :- Reduction of oily content.

Kshalana :- Washing with hot water.

Nistvachikarana :- It is the process of decortications (Removal of covering).

Synonyms, Shodhana, Dose, Uses, Formulations and Fatal Dose for Various Types of Visha and Upavisha:-

S. N	Name	Synonyms	Shodhana	Dose	Uses	Formulations	Fatal Dose
1	Vatsanabha (Visha) (Aconitum Ferox)	Amruta	Soaked in Gomutra for three days	$\frac{1}{16}$ to $\frac{1}{8}$ Ratis	Tridosahara, Jwara, swasa, kasa	Hinguleswararasa	4 mg of the alkaloid
2	Strychnos Nuxvomica (Upvisha)	Kupeelu	Swedana in Godugdha for one yama	$\frac{1}{4}$ to 1 Ratis	Rakthavikara, Kandu	Navajeevana rasa	2 gm powdered
3	Jayapala (Croton Tigliam)	Jaipala	Swedana in Godugdha for two yama	$\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ Ratis	Kustha, Vrana	Dantiharitaki	1-2 ml of oil or 4-5 crushed seeds
4	Dhattura (Datura Stramonium)	Kanaka	Swedana in Godugdha for one yama	$\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ Ratis	Bronchial Asthama	Kanakasava	50 to 100 seeds
5	Bhang (Cannabis Indica)	Vijaya	Wash with water and dry	2 to 4 Ratis	Grahani, Antrasula, Pralapa	Sukravallabha rasa	10 mg per kg body weight
6	Ballataka (Semicarpus Anacardium)	Vatari	Swedan for one yam with coconut water	1 to 3 Ratis	Arsyas, Kustha, Switra	Sanjeevanvati	About 10 gm
7	Gunja (Abrus Precatorious)	Sikhandi	Swedana in Godugdha	- to 1 Ratis	Conjunctivitis	Gunjabadra rasa	90-120 mg (1 to 2 seeds)
8	Arkha Ksheera	Ravidugdha	Not needed		Gulma, Krumi, Udararoga	Lokeshwar rasa	Uncertain
9	Snuhi Ksheera	Snuhidugdha	Imaliswarasa	Mulachurna - $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 gm	Kustha	Arshkuthar rasa	Uncertain
10	Langali (Gloriosa Superba)	Dipta	Soaked in gomutra for one day	Churna 250 to 500 mg	Sotha, Vrana	Sulantak rasa	Not definite
11	Karaveera (Nerium Indicum)	Hayamara	Swedana in godugdha for one yama	Churna - 30 to 125 mg	Pama, Ashmari, kustha	Karaveeraditaila	Leaves 5 to 15
12	Ahiphena (Opium)	Niphena	Bhavana in Srungaveraswara for 21 times	$\frac{1}{4}$ to 1 Ratis	Karnasula, Atisara	Ahiphenasava, Vedanantakarasa	2 gm
13	Chitrakmool (Plumbago Zeylenica)	Pathi, Vyala	Cut in small pieces, dipped in lime water, wash and dried.	Root powder - 1 to 2 gm	Grahni, Arsyas, Increase appetite.	Chitrakadivati, Agnitundivati, Agnitundivati	Not mentioned

**RESULT:-**It is effective in small amount so Visha describe in Rasa Shastra as rasaushadhi. Vishas should be essentially subjected for Shodhana before being used in therapeutics. Larger doses of purified visha may induce toxicity and may be fatal. Herbal poisons (vishas and upavishas) have a wide range of pharmaceutical and therapeutic utility in Rasa Shastra, hence also named as “VishaShastra”. In many of the processes and formulations herbal poisons are equally used. They are used as Rasayana (rejuvenation and longevity drugs) to give strength and vitality to the body and the wisdom of detachment to the mind. Though they are highly poisonous, various purification processes help in nullifying the evil effects of the drug as well as attributing various other therapeutic benefits, allowing the drug to be used internally.

**Conclusion:-** Proper Shodhana methods as mentioned in our Rasa Shastra and other different Ayurvedic Classics Visha and Upavisha have potential role and these drug used in therapeutic matra can be safely used in various diseases. In Rasa shastra, like any other Rasa dravyas, visha and upavishas also play a significant role. It is reviewed in various classics that, visha may act as amruta, if administered in proper dose and vice versa. Also in modern, it is said that, toxins are molecules that are harmful to living organisms. It is a fact that virtually any substance can be harmful at high enough concentrations - as Paracelsus (1493-1541) said in the sixteenth century, “the dose makes the poison”. Vishas plays an important role both in lohavedha and dehavedha. It is found that if toxicity of these substances is reduced they may become more beneficial and quick-acting due to their vyavayi and vikasigunas. Vishas processed and administered appropriately are considered rasayana, vajeekarana, sarvarogahara and even vishaghna. If a manufacturer is not taking care in procuring a genuine raw material from authentic resources and deviate from the manufacturing process as prescribed in the classics, definitely the product will be spurious and this may happen with any system of medicine.

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