A Review on Visha and Upavisha Dravyas of Rasa Shastra

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Abstract: Ayurveda is science of long and healthy life which focus on treatment of diseases. Ayurveda works on management of physical and mental health using various medicines involving herbs, poisonous drugs, metals and minerals. Ayurveda embraces different streams including Rasa Shastra which utilizes Rasa aushadhis (Herb - mineral preparations) for therapeutic purposes. This article discusses about Visha - upvishadravyas commonly used to improve health and their role in the preparation of making Rasa aushadhis to treat illness as herbs in single or in a compound formulations.

Keywords: Rasa aushadhis, Visha - upvishadravyas, shodhan, therapeutic use.

1. 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 upvishadravyas 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 help not only to eradicate the toxicity of the drug but also imbibes additional therapeutic properties and makes the drug more users attentive. Dukha that is called Visha or which cause mrityu by internal administration termed as Visha. Vishadravyas plays an important role in Paradabandhana 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), Gaur (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 Samudramanthatha. References regarding Vista 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 to Rasa karma with the proper use of Visha – upvishadravyas which will fulfil this desire. It is said in the texts that visha and upvishadravyas which would prove highly beneficial to the body or even as life saving drug like amrita (nectar) otherwise they are considered to be fatal to mankind.

Visha - Etymology: - The word vista is derived from the root ‘Visha’ means to suffuse completely. The shodhana or jangamadravyas, which induce toxic symptoms in the body when inhaled, consumed in un - purified form are called as ‘Vista dravyas’.

Synonyms of Visha: - Garala, Kalakuta, Kswedva.

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 jangamavisha (animal poison) and (plant and mineral poison) shavaravisha. The sites of shavaravisha and jangamavisha are narrated as ten and sixteen respectively. Further it also is also classified as Akritrima visha (natural poison) and kritrimavisha (Chemically prepared Visha) where akritrimavisha is again sub divided into Shhavara and Jangama.

According to Rasa TaranginiVishadravyas can be classified in to two types depending on their sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Visha</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sthavaravisha</td>
<td>Shavaravisha includes the poisonous drugs from mineral and plant origin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Jangamavisha</td>
<td>The jangamavisha includes the toxic effects of animal and insect bites. (rats, snake, etc)</td>
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</table>

Shavaravisha again of two types: - 1) Visha 2) Upavisha

Number of Vishes and Upvishes according to Ayurvedic classics
VishaGuna; - Acharya Charaka and Sushruta have enumerated ten similar gunas of visha with an exception of apaaki (Sushruta) being replaced by anirdeshyarasas (Charaka). Acharya Vagbhata has attributed eleven gunasto a vishadravyaby including apaaki and Ayakartaras. Sharangdhara has stated certain extra gunas of vishadravya like chhedhi, madavatha, jivithahara and yogavahi. Laghu (light), ruksha (dry), aashu, vishadha, vikasi and vyavayi (enhanced bioavailability), tikshha (intense), suksma (subtle), usha (hot), anirdeshyara / apaaki / avayakta rasa. All these 10 qualities are opposite to that of Ojasa (essential energy for the body and mind) that keep body healthy. The first available reference of upavishas is from the text Rasarnava. Among the recent authors Rasa tanangini emphasized on upavishas. Apart from Rasa Tanangini, abundant references are found in Rasendrapuranam (Rpu), Rasendraasambhaya (R. Sam) and Rasendravahaskara (R. bh).

Vishadravya - collection: - The poisonous herbal drugs (upavisha) are to be collected when these plants are at their peak potency level. The plants should be newly grown, it should possess snigdha (smooth) ghana, and gura guna. These plants should be collected from the place where anti-poisonous drugs are not grown. They should be free from climatic effects and should be ripped completely.

Vishadravyas - Samskara: - The purified ‘vishadravyas’ should be carefully covered with a cloth soaked in ‘raktaasarpasapatala’ and placed in suitable container. By doing so the ‘Vishadravyas’ retains its potency for a longer period.

VishadravyaPrayoga: - when the disease remains incurable even after administration of different rasa aushadhis the use shudhavishadravya as medicine will be beneficial. These “Vishadravya” are more beneficial in VataKaphajaroa.

VishadravyaSevana - Unfit Person: - The persons who are short tempered (pitta prakriti), who are impotent, who are suffering from rajayakshmaroga, who are hungry, thirsty, tired after prolonged work and pregnant women, children, aged persons and sukumara all these people are considered unfit for administration of vishadravya.

Vishadravyas seven - pathaya: -

Aharajapathaya: - Ghee, milk, sugar, honey wheat and its preparation, cooked milk Maricha, saindhava

Vihararajapathaya: Brahmacharya staying in cool areas, cold seasons and use of cold water. All these are considered good for the persons during consumption of Vishadravyas.

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

2. Aim

The aim of this review is to provide detailed knowledge on poisonous medicinal plants used for various therapeutic purposes after different pharmaceutical process of shodhana. After shodhana vishas are having the karmas like Rasayan, Yogavahi, Tridoshaghana, Brumhana and Veevyavardhaka. Poisonous plants (Visha, Upavishadravyas) are commonly used to improve health and their role in making medicines to treat illness as herbs in single or in compound formulations.

In Rasasahastra, 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 / khanjavisha 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 Ojasa 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 Samskara (special procedures) of parade. Ex: Chitraka in swedana (vapouring procedure); in moorchana (soothing procedure) they are used for the removal of vishadosha; langali and chitrakai 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: Vishastrana, vishodaka, raktaasuni, chitraka, etc. They have role in doshanivarana of parada (elimination of blemishes of mercury). Ex: Chitraka to remove vahnidosha, Krishna dattura to remove chapalayadosa.

Utility of vishopavishas in other areas - Gunja is one among the “mitra panchaka” dravakagana and used in apunarbhabhavhasamapareeksha. Arka and smukhisheera are the common bhavanarhadrasyasins the process of marana (incineration) of most of the rasa dravyas. All the vishopavishas are used in the sattapatana (extraction method) of chapala (bismuth) drug. To quote safety profile of Visha aushadhis, “A drug is safe if it destroys the disease but not the diseased”.

Some Rasa aushadhis containing Visha/Upvisha as ingredients and ther Therapeutic uses as mentioned in Rasa RatanSamuchchhaya.
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 - agrahyaadrayalakshanas 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.

3. 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 shodhana 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 anurut; 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. Pathyaapalya play a major role in drug administration. Regimen like Swasthavrutta, Brahmacharya and Pathyaapalyyaaahara, are to be strictly followed.

On review of Ayurvedic literature it is observed that various shodhan process are mentioned for visha and upavisha.

Following procedures are common for different ‘Vishopavisha’ drugs:

- Gomutra Nimajjan: - Soaking in cow urine for prescribed period.
- Swedana: - Boiling in different 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.
- Nisnehana: - 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. N</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Synonyms</th>
<th>Shodhana</th>
<th>Dose</th>
<th>Uses</th>
<th>Formulations</th>
<th>Fatal Dose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vatsanabha (Visha) (Aconitum Ferox)</td>
<td>Anrutha</td>
<td>Soaked in Gomutra for three days</td>
<td>1 to 6</td>
<td>Tridoshahara, Jwara, svasa, kasa</td>
<td>Hinguleswararaasa, Sanjeevanivati</td>
<td>4 mg of the alkaloid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>StrychnosNuxvomica (Upvisha)</td>
<td>Kupeelu</td>
<td>Swedana in Godugdha for one yama</td>
<td>1 to 6</td>
<td>Rakshavikara, Kandu</td>
<td>Navajeeyaana rasa, Agritundivati</td>
<td>2 gm powdered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jayapala (Croton Tigliam)</td>
<td>Jaipala</td>
<td>Swedana in Godugdha for two yama</td>
<td>1 to 6</td>
<td>Kushta, Vrana</td>
<td>Dantihartaki, Jalodrari rasa</td>
<td>1 - 2 ml of oil or 4 - 5 crushed seeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dhattura (Datura Stramonium)</td>
<td>Kanaka</td>
<td>Swedana in Godugdha for one yama</td>
<td>1 to 6</td>
<td>Bronchial Asthma</td>
<td>Kanakasava, Unmadagajankush rasa</td>
<td>50 to 100 seeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bhang (Cannabis Indica)</td>
<td>Vijaya</td>
<td>Wash with water and dry</td>
<td>2 to 4 Ratis</td>
<td>Grahan, Antrasula, Praalapa</td>
<td>Sukravallaba rasa Vijayavati</td>
<td>10 mg per kg body weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bhallataka (Semen Anacardium)</td>
<td>Vatari</td>
<td>Swedana for one yam with coconut water</td>
<td>1 to 3 Ratis</td>
<td>Arsyas, Kushta, Switra</td>
<td>Sanjeevanavati, Bhallatatkarasayana</td>
<td>About 10 gm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Gunja (Abrus Precatorious)</td>
<td>Sikhandi</td>
<td>Swedana in Godugdha</td>
<td>1 to 6</td>
<td>Conjunctivitis</td>
<td>Gunjabadra rasa, Gunaditaila</td>
<td>90 - 120 mg (1 to 2 seeds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>ArkaKsheera</td>
<td>Ravidugdha</td>
<td>Not needed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Snuhiksheera</td>
<td>Snuhidugdha</td>
<td>Imaliswarasa</td>
<td>Mulachurna – ½ to 1 gm</td>
<td>Kushta</td>
<td>Arshkuthar rasa, Kameshwarasa</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Langali (Gloriosa Superba)</td>
<td>Dipta</td>
<td>Soaked in gomutra for one day</td>
<td>Churna 250 to 500 mg</td>
<td>Kushta</td>
<td>Sulatank rasa, Vaishvanara rasa</td>
<td>Not definite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Karaveera (NeriumIndicum)</td>
<td>Hayamara</td>
<td>Swedana in godugdha for</td>
<td>Churna – 30 to 125 mg</td>
<td>Pama, Ashmari, kushta</td>
<td>Sparshvataditaila, Karviradhita</td>
<td>Leaves 5 to 15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Result

It is effective in small dose so Vishes is described in Rasa Shastra as rasaaushadhi. Vishes should be essentially subjected for Shodhana before being used in therapeutics. Larger doses of purified vishamay induce toxicity and may be fatal. Herbal poisons (vishes and upavishes) have a wide range of pharmaceutical and therapeutic utility in Rasa Shastra, hence also named as “Visha Shastra”. 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.

5. Discussion

Present review divulge that the vishes and upvishes are very useful as a part of use in the herbo - mineral preparations though needs to detoxified and purified. In ayurvedic classic purification and detoxification classical method methods make it suitable to use for human beings for the treatment of various health conditions. By ancient time various ayurvedic classics toxic substances into visha and upavisha categories on the basis of their intensity of the vishadravays. By different shodhan procedure these vishadravaya detoxify. Pathaya, apathaya and VishaSevan unfit persons described by different Acharyas in Ayurvedic classics are described here. AftershodhanVisha and Upavisha have very beneficial in little amount and medicinal properties utilised in various diseases.

6. Conclusion

Proper Shodhana methods as mentioned in our RasaShastra and other different Ayurvedic Classics Visha and Upavisha have potential role and these drug used in therapeutic matrix can be safely used in various diseases. In Rasashastra, like any other Rasa dravyas, visha and upavisha also play a significant role. It is reviewed in various classics that, vishemay 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 - a Paracelsus (1493 - 1541) said in the sixteenth century, “the dose makes the poison”. Vishes play an important role both in lohavedha and delhavedha. It is found that if toxicity of these substances is reduced they may become more beneficial and quick - acting due to their vyavayi and vikasigunam. Vishes 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.

References