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A review on Vatasnabh

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Ayurved 'The Science of Life' originated in India more than 5,000 years ago and is often called the "Mother of All Healing." This science is practiced in India since ages. This science is also called Astang ayurved. Ashtanga Ayurveda means eight limbs or eight branches of Ayurveda which includes

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अष्टाव् अङ्गानि तस्याहुश्चिकित्सा येषु संश्रिता । A.H. 1/ 5-6

Damsha Chikitsa or Visha chikitsa is one of the important limb of Ayurveda which deals with toxicology. 'Visha' is that which causes 'Vishannatva' (distress) and / or vishada (sadness) in the body. Thus 'Visha' has been defined as a substance which is destructive to life and possess properties like Vyavayi, Vikasi, Ushna, Tikshna, Ruksha, Sukshma, Ashukar, Anirdeshya rasa / Apaki etc. And the drugs which possess these properties are called 'Vishas' and those which are less in virulence than 'Vishas' are called 'Upavishas' (sub-poisons). In this it deals with toxic metals, animals and plants. The use of toxic plants in Ayurvedic preparation is very common. According to Acharya Charak that If the substance is given with purpose to save life it is medicine but if it is given with the intention to cause bodily detriment it is poison. (1) There is no substance in the universe which cannot be used as drug on the condition that they are used rationally and with define object. (2).

Visha(poison) is generally defined as a material which when administered, inhaled or swallowed is capable of acting deleteriously on the body. Therefore almost anything is poison. There is actually no borderline between a medicine and a poison, for a medicine in a toxic dose is poison and a poison in a small amount may be medicine. In law the real difference between a medicine and a poison is the intent with which it is given.

Vatsanabha, the Ayurvedic synonym to Aconite has derived its name from sanskrit for the resemblance of its tuber to the umbilicus (Nabhi) of a calf (Vatsa). Vatsanabha or Mahavisha, Aconitum ferox is a species of monk's hood from the family. Ranunculaceae is a deciduous perennial with tall and erect stems crowned by racemes of large eye catching blue, purple, white zygomorphic flowers with numerous stamens. (20)

History of Aconite

Aconite is a commonly used drug in traditional medical practices world over. Its toxic properties were possibly first noticed and utilized by tribes to make their arrow and spear heads poisonous [7]. Word Aconite is derived from a Greek word Akoniton, which stands for spear or lancet. A paste of Aconite tuber, was utilized for this purpose. Aconite (Vatsanabha) found its place in Ayurvedic pharmacopeia for centuries back with its first possible mention in Atharva veda

English: Indian aconite, Monk's hood, Aconitum

Hindi: Bachnag, Meetavish, Bachanag, Bis, Bish, Mhoor

Telugu: Ativisa, Nabhi

Bengali: Bish, Butsnabish, Katbish

Marathi: Bachag, Vachnag

Gujarathi: Shingadivachanag

Tamil: Vashanavi

Malayalam: Vatsanabhi, Vatsanabham

Kannada: Vatsanabhi

Susruthacharya quoted about four varieties of vatsanabhi. Rasavagbhata have also elaborated the four varieties as brahma, kshthriya, vaisya, shudra, But Rasatarangini had described only three variety of vatsanabh on the basis of colour they are Krishna, kapisa, and panduvarna. They are considered as superior to each other in the similar order.

Rasa Panchank of Vatsanabh.

Rasa- Madhur

Vipak- Madhur

Virya - Ushna Guna

Dosha Karma- Kapha-vata shaman

Dhatu Karma- Alpa matra Balya Bruhan

Synonyms based Traditional discription of Aconite(Vatsanabha) in Indian medicine.

- 1.Sindhuvvara - (Vitex nigundo) like leaves.
2. Gostanakar -Tuber shape is like cow's nipple
- 3.Yat Parthiva na taro vruddhi- Does not permit other plants to grow nearby
4. Pandur - Pale color tuber.
5. Neel Pushpa- Blue flowers
6. kanda Visha - Toxic properties in tuber.
7. Kshupa - Shrub
8. vatsanabhykrit - like umbilicus of a calf

References Of Vatsanabh from Ancient Texts

1.Charak samhita

In Charak Samhita, Vatsanabh has been mentioned as Visha, Shringi Visha and as Vatsanabh.

Charak samhita (Chikitsasthana) - Aindri Rasayana – Rasayana, ojasakar, vataroga (10)

(Chikitsasthana) - Vishamjwar – Vishamjwar (11)

(Chikitsasthana) - Vishachiktsa - Sthavar visha (12)

(Chikitsasthana) -Vishachiktsa - Moola Visha- Sthavar visha (12)

2. Sushrata samhita

Vatsanbh has been mentioned in Sushruta Samhita in Chikitsasthan and Kalpa Sthan.

Sushrata samhita – Chikitsasthan – Vajrak Tail – Nadi vran, Dushit Vran (26)

Chikitsasthan – Mahavajrak Tail - Kushta,Gandamala,Nadivran (26)

Kalpa Sthan - Stavar Visha

Kalpa Sthan - Kandavisha Bheda

Kalpa Sthan - Kandavisha Lakshana

3. Ashtang Hridayam

References of Vatsanabh in Ashtang Hridayam are mainly in Uttartantra.

Ashtang Hridayam -- Chikitsasthan - Kushtadi tail - Visha

Uttartantra - Tutthanjana - Tikshna Dushti

Uttartantra - Karanja Tail - Gandamala

Uttartantra - Bhadryadi Tail - Kushta, NadiVrana, Apachi

Uttartantra - Sindhuvarmuladaya Agad - Vishadosha

Uttartantra - Bramhyadi Rasayan - Kushta, Gulma Visha

Vatsanabh as mentioned in Laghutrayee and other texts

1. Bhaisajya Ratnavali-

Agnikumara rasa - Indigestion

Agnisandipana rasa - Indigestion

Agnitundi Bati - Indigestion

Hinguleshvara Rasa - Joint pain, Viral fever

Jvarankusha rasa - Pain and fever

Mrita sanjivani rasa - Rheumatic pain, Malarial fever

Ramabana rasa - Diarrhea, pain in abdomen

Shvasa kuthara rasa - Asthmatic bronchitis

Shula kuthara rasa - Septicemia

2. Bhava Prakash

Ajirna kantaka rasa - Indigestion

Tripur bhairava rasa - fever

3. Yoga Chintamani

Amara sundari Bati - Vata disease

Kanaka sunder Rasa - Septicemia, Viral fever

Kalari Rasa

4. Sharangdhara Samhita

Sanjeevani Bati -Common cold with fever, indigestion

5. Yoga Ratnakara

Amrit Kala nidhi Rasa- Indigestion, Fever

Durjala jeta rasa -Disease caused by contaminated water as infective diarrhea, fever

Gada murari Rasa- Inflammatory fever

Narayana jwarankusha rasa - Fever

Pratap lankeshwara Rasa- Puerperal fever

Tribhuvan Kirti Rasa - influenza, viral fever

6. Anupana Tarangini –

Ashvini Kumara rasa- Chronic diarrhea

7. Sidha Yoga Samgriha-

Aswakanchuki Rasa- Respiratory tract infections, fever

Kasturibhairava Rasa - Enteric fever

8. Rasa Raj Sunder

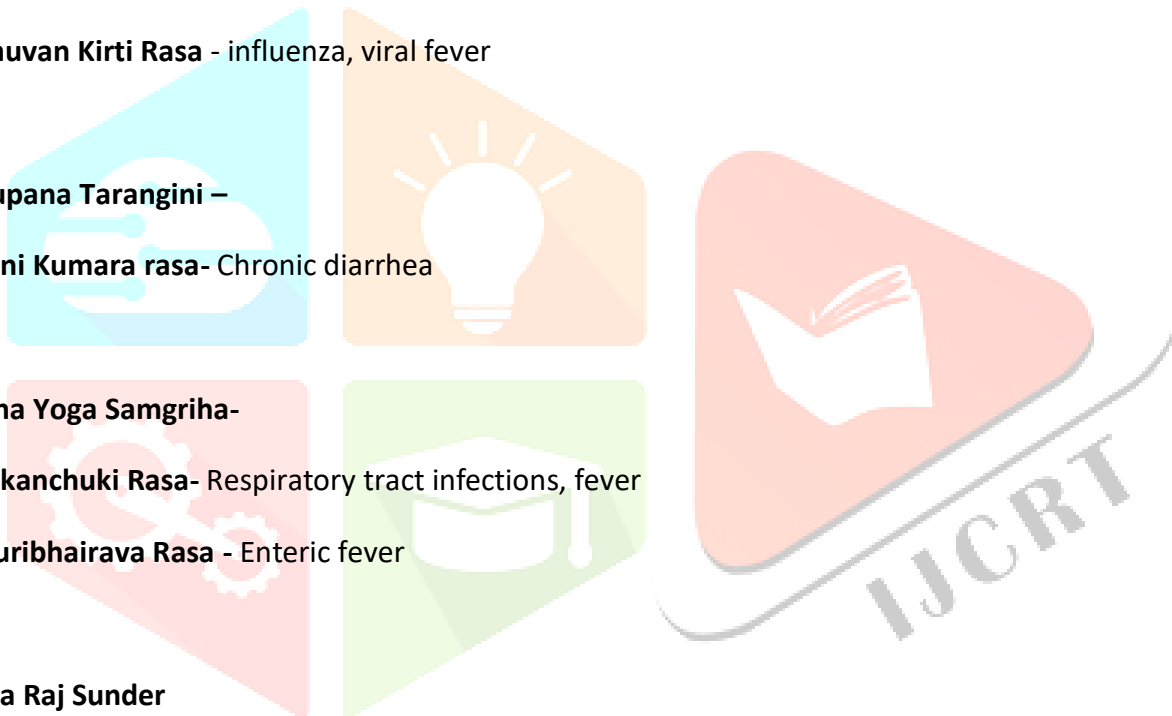
Ananda Bhairava rasa - Fever, cough, diarrhea

9. Rasa Sara Samgriha

Betal rasa- Malarial fever, Septicemia

Jaya Bati- Pain in abdomen

Vata gajankusha - sciatica, obesity, Vata disease



10.Rasa Tarangini

Kapha ketu Rasa - Common cold, Cough,fever

Mritunjaya Rasa - Chronic fever

Shiva Tandava Rasa - Septicaemia

11.Rasa Yoga Samgriha

Laxmi narayana rasa - Chronic fever

12- Rasa Yoga Ratnakara

Grihani Gaja kesari - Infective diarrhea

13.Rasa Yoga Sagar

Pancha Vaktra rasa- Septicaemia, Fever

14.Rasa Ratna Sammuchaya

Panchamrita Rasa- Initial and chronic stage of tuberculosis

15.Brihad Nighantu Ratnakara

Shula kuthara rasa-Indigestion

Shodhana Of Vatsanabh

- 1 .Swedana in Aja dugdha or Go dugdha for 3 days [18,19,24]
2. Sthapana and Aatapa shoshana in Gomootra for 3 days [22,21,22,23]
3. Sthapana or Aatapa shoshana or Bhavana in Gomootra for 3 days

Toxic effects of Vatsanabh

Toxic effects of Vatsanabh are well noted in Ayurvedic texts. It is warned for over dosing or crude use without shodhan. It may cause Daha (burning sensation), Syncope, bradycardia, or Cardiac arrest (Hridgati Aodhana). It may also prove fatal. [9]

Necessity of Shodhana:

Impure or impurely purified Vatsanabha if administered in any form will cause Daha (acute burning sensation) all over the body. It may also cause Murcha (Syncope), Hrutrodana (cardiac arrest) which may usually lead to Mrutyu (death) of patient [8]. Use of Vatsanabha in higher dose may also lead to toxicity and death. All parts of the plants are poisonous. Tuber is chiefly used as a poison. Leaves handled or rubbed on the skin, produces tingling and numbness. The odor of the plant has a narcotic effect; its pollen causes pain and swelling in the eyes. It imparts a sensation of tingling & numbness to the tongue, lips & mouth when chewed. [3]

Changes occurring during Shodhana

Though treatment with cow urine, cow milk, or cow dung is the traditional method of Shodhana, it may not be feasible or acceptable to all. After Shodhana process, the total alkaloid content decreases, [4] but the contents of less toxic substances such as aconine, hypoaconine, and benzylhypoaconine increases [5,6] possibly due to conversion of the toxic aconitine into aconine or hydrolysis of the alkaloids to their respective amino alcohols after Shodhana process [7-8]

Methods of Shodhana of Vatsanabh

Method (1): A properly collected Vatsanabha should be broken into small pieces and dipped in a stone or earthen vessel containing cow urine. The vessel is to be kept under sun for three days with a change of urine every morning. After three days take the Aconite out from the vessel, peel off its skin and make it dry under the sun.

Method (2): Small pieces of Aconite are to be kept in a cloth bag and is kept for boiling through a dola yantr containing cow milk. After 3-6 hour of boiling through this we get shodhit Vatsanabh.

Method (3): In second method, Goat milk is used instead of cow milk. Through this way also Vatsanabh can be purified.

Fatal period, Fatal dose and Cause of Death

Fatal dose[14]

- Indian aconite root: 1.3-2gm
- Tincture: 5ml
- Liniment: 1ml
- Pure aconitine: 2mg
- Aconitine nitrate: 4mg.

Fatal Period [15]

Fatal period is usually 1-5 hrs it may vary from person to person and amount of dose administered. Doses below Lethal Dose produce alarming symptoms immediately. In Non-fatal cases: numbness & tingling sensation persist for some time.

Recovery Period [16]

Recovery time is dependent on amount of intoxication. Mildly intoxicated patients may take 1–2 days while patients with cardiovascular complications may take 7–9 days to recover.

Cause of death [17]

Death may be due to Respiratory failure or Ventricular Fibrillation

Diet during Consumption of Vatsanabh

As per advised by ancient Acharyas, while patient is consuming Vatsanabh Kalpa, use of Katu, Amla and Lavana all the taste which rise Pitta, oil, afternoon nap, exposure to sun and exposure to heat should be avoided. Consumption of cow milk, wheat, naturally cool water, & food that are naturally sweet are advised.

Contraindication of Vatsanabh

Vatsanabh is contraindicated in Grishma (summer) and Varsha Ritu (rainy). Due to its Tikshna guna it is contraindicated in Pitta Predominant people, pregnancy and dehydrated patients.

Adverse drug reaction (ADR)

An adverse drug reaction (ADR) is an unwanted or harmful reaction experienced following the administration of a drug or combination of drugs under normal conditions of use and is suspected to be related to the drug. An ADR will usually require the drug to be discontinued or the dose reduced.

ADR reporting of Vatsanabh

Reports of ADR from Ayurvedic drug intake were only minimal and suggesting for their under reporting. Many cases have occurred in China and Hong Kong. Vatsanabh poisoning in acute cases leads to cardiac toxicity.

There was suspected case of Vatsanabh poisoning due to over dose of *Tribhuvankirti Rasa* Showing symptoms of Bradicardia, fatigue, etc the symptoms reduced after the dose of *Tribhuvankirti Rasa* was stopped.

Conclusion

Vatsanabh (*Aconite ferox*) is described as Sthavra Visha i.e poisonous plant by our ancient Acharyas. Though its toxic nature it can be used in Ayurvedic Preparation after proper shodhan & if consumed in proper dosage. The Chemical constituents are toxic in nature but after shodhan it reduces the toxicity & transforms into non toxic or relatively less toxic substance & enhance its biological efficacy. The improper consumption of Vatsanabh can lead to ADR, so care should be taken accordingly.

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