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## JYOTSNIKA – A VISHA CHIKITSA MANUAL

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**Abstract:** Jyotsnika is a renowned monograph on *visha Chikitsa* (Management of Poisoning) authored by Sri. Narayanan. It is composed of 21 chapters with 1139 *shlokas* (Verses) which deals elaborate insight to different aspects of *Visha* (Toxin) as well as its management. Even though written in Malayalam, the regional language of the state of Kerala, the monograph also uses Sanskrit vocabulary in many instances and only Sanskrit verses in certain occasions. With roots in Ayurvedic *samhitas*, this treatise also derives its knowledge from traditional Dravidian system of toxicology and couples both in such a beautiful manner there by becoming a unique creation on its own. The practical approach of the treatment coupled with the *mantra Chikitsa* (Treatment through invocations), makes this book a treasure trove for physicians as well as scholars in understanding the lineage of the traditional *visha Chikitsa sampradaya* in Kerala as well as improving the arsenal of medicaments for such cases. The Chapters or *Adhikaras*, cover almost all the practically encountered cases from identifying as well as treating the same. Hence, this is an attempt to inquire, scrutinize and acquaintance the pride of *Keraleeya Visha Chikitsa* to the Ayurvedic community and to the whole world.

**Index Terms - Jyotsnika, Visha Chikitsa, Agadatantra.**

### I. INTRODUCTION

*Visha Chikitsa*, one among the *ashtangas* (Eight branches) of Ayurveda has been explained under different names like *Agadatantra*, *Gara Chikitsa*, *Visha Vaidya*, *Visha gara vairodhika prashamana*<sup>[1]</sup> etc. The *samhitas* deals with the same in detailed manner with *Susruta samhita* dedicating an entire *kalpa sthana* for *visha Chikitsa* alone. During the period of *Susrutacharya*, it was the duty of the *Vaidya* (Physician) to learn the art of saving the people's life from death due to poisoning and reach the efficiency of *rajavaidya*<sup>[2]</sup> – the one who is responsible for saving the life of the king and to safeguard him against the poisoning.

But due to the unique geographical situation of the state of Kerala, surrounded by lush evergreen forest, a paradise for human beings as well as the poisonous fauna ranging from simple insects to deadly snakes thereby creating a situation for *Visha chikitsa* to grow and mould itself in a distinctive avatar of its own. These circumstances merged the knowledge from *samhitas* with the traditional Dravidian *Visha Chikitsa* and created a blend of practical principle-oriented treatment system which could be practiced with medicines which are indigenous and locally available.

In today's world, to revive the traditional knowledge base for the entire world where the perspective of Ayurveda is changing with evidence-oriented practice, it is a strict and essential need to explore the age old literatures critically and validate it scientifically. But unfortunately the book written in regional languages are either forgotten or not given its due respect for revival. *Jyotsnika* by Sri. Narayanan is one such gem of a creation in a regional language that needs to be brought in to the forefront. Hence this review is carried out for the purpose of literary research

### Title of Monograph

Even though the real name of the monograph is *Jyotsnika*, it is also called by other names regionally such as *Vishajyotsnika*, *Vishavaidyajyotsnika*, *Jyotsnikavishavaidya*, *Jyotsnikachikitsa* etc.

The literal meaning of the word *Jyotsnika* is "the moon". The following could be the reasons for selecting such a name for the monograph

1. *Chandra*/The Moon is considered as the god/*Adhipa* for *Aushadhi* (Medicine). Hence the name might be given as a reverence to moon.
2. Another reason might be that the book shines like the moon in the darkness created by the poison.
3. Another reason might be the author's acceptance of getting inspired from a previously written book – *Udheesam* – meaning "the moon".

### The Author: Sri. Narayanan

In the final *adhikara* of the book – “*Vaidya parambarya adhikara*” the name of the author is mentioned to be Narayanan. Other than this one reference, there is no mentioning of the author anywhere in the monograph. The name of his guru is mentioned in the same context as *Vasudeva* belonging to the *Kashyapa gotra* and a devotee of lord Shiva.<sup>[3]</sup>

Another common belief transferred as oral tradition among the practitioners of *Visha Chikitsa* in Kerala is that the “*Karat Nambootiri*” is the author of *Jyotsnika*. Here, ‘Karat’ could be the name of an ancestral house and ‘*Nambootiri*’ a caste name. Since the only reference of *Karat nambootiri* is available in folklore stories like “*Aiteehyamala*”, the authorship as per the reference from monograph is attributed to Narayanan.

Another inference that could be taken is that Narayanan could be the real name of *Karat Nambootiri*, thus connecting both the opinions in one conclusion.

### Status of Manuscript

Like the *samhitas* of its period, *Jyotsnika* was also written and transferred in palm leaves. The authentic printed versions of the same are as follows

1. Published by Travancore government, under Sree Vanchi sethu Lakshmi granthavali book no.9 in 1920’s edited by Mahadevasastrikal
2. Published by Kochi Malayalabhasha Parishkarana committee under Sree Ramavarma Granthavali in 1920’s
3. Edited and published by Vaidya visharadan, K. Velukkuru vaidyan in 1940’s.
4. Published by Poorna Publications, Kerala, Compiled by Jayaprakash Cherupuzha and Commentary by P. Raghavan Nair in 2008
5. Published by Department of Agada Tantra, Vaidyaratnam, P. S Varier Ayurveda College, Kottakkal, Vishavaidya *Jyotsnika* – An English translation in the year 2009.
6. Published by The state Institute of Languages, Kerala, *Vishajyotsnika* by Dr Rajani Nair in 2017.

### Language of the Monograph

The Monograph is completely written in Malayalam – the regional language of Kerala. There are multiple areas where Sanskrit words can be found as it is. Certain Sanskrit verses like the ones from *Ashtanga Hridaya (Bilwadi gulika)*<sup>[4]</sup> can be found as same. The *Manipravala* system an old poetic style which was prevalent in the region of Kerala during 11<sup>th</sup> century AD, mixing Sanskrit and Malayalam is not strictly adhered to in this monograph. Nor has been the *shudha* Malayalam (Pure Malayalam) followed, like in later period of 18<sup>th</sup> century. Hence this monograph could have been written between 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

### Form of the Text

This Monograph has 21 chapters named as *Adhikaras* with a total of 1139 verses. Here the traditional approach of starting with salutation to deities and guru is followed in first chapter which starts with *Mangalacharanam* (Salutation to God), qualities of *visha chikitsaka*, and even the summary of the monograph is given in the first *adhikara*. This is followed by every aspect of toxicology from poisonous snakes, its toxic manifestations; management, medicaments, emergency procedures, other poisonous animals and creatures like, rat, scorpion, dog etc. are elaborated. A separate chapter is dedicated to the astrological aspects of *visha Chikitsa*. Another distinctive feature is the dedication of whole two chapters for *mantra Chikitsa*, followed by concluding chapter introducing the origin of *visha Chikitsa*, his guru and himself.

### Objectives of the text

The objective of the monograph as explained by the author himself is “for the benefit of the humans affected with *visha* and for the management of the same” He further states that no good deed done in life like *dana* (Alms), *yagna* (Rituals) etc. can come near the merit earned by saving the life of a person afflicted with *visha*.

### Content of the compendium

The monograph has 21 chapters. Each chapter is called an *adhikara*.

The first chapter begins with invocation to the deities, qualities of ideal *visha Vaidya*, and the summary of the contents of the monograph.

The second *adhikara* deals with the unique concept of *vyotisha/Jyoti shastra* in the context of *visha Chikitsa*. Also, the *doota vijnana* (Messenger), *shubha ashubha* (Auspicious & Inauspicious), *nimitha* (Reasons) are also explained here.

The next two chapters, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> *adhikaras*, deal with general sign and symptoms of poisoning from snake and general principles of management respectively.

The next three chapters 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> *adhikaras* deals with specific sign, symptoms and management of the three poisonous group of snakes, *darveekara* (Hooded snakes), *mandali* (Snakes with circular marks) and *rajila* (Snakes with lines) in detail respectively.

The next two chapters 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> *adhikaras*, explain general management of snake bite, formulations, and *pathya apathya* (Wholesome & Unwholesome) during *visha Chikitsa*.

The 10<sup>th</sup> *adhikara* is a unique chapter which incorporates *visha Chikitsa* with *yoga sashtra* and explains the concepts of *Amrita kala* and *visha kala*. It also explains different *daivavyapashraya Chikitsa* (divine management) for poisoning.

The 11<sup>th</sup> chapter deals with *mooshika* (Rat) *Chikitsa*. The 12<sup>th</sup> *adhikara* deals with scorpion, spider, dog, its envenomation and management.

The next two *adhikaras*, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> chapter explains the nature of toxins from plant and mineral origin. It also explains about management of poisoned animals.

15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> chapter elaborates multiple formulations, its ingredients and method of application.

The next two *adhikaras* (17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>) explains the mythological origin of snakes as well as its evolution.

The mystical and majestic mode of *mantra Chikitsa* is explained in the next two *adhikaras*. (19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>)

The concluding final chapter (21<sup>st</sup> *adhikara*) gives the appropriate finish for the monograph mentioning the lineage of *visha chikitsa*, the name and details of author’s guru as well as the name of the author himself.

**Unique features**

1. Medical use of *Ahiphena* (*Papaver Somoniferum*) - *Ekanayakamooladi lepa*, *Parantyadi taila* – in *mandali Chikitsa*. Management of *Ahiphena* poisoning also mentioned.
2. Management of tobacco poisoning (*Dhoomrapatra*)
3. *Oothu Chikitsa* (Blowing therapy)
4. Use of Crow's eggs
5. Use of Parasitic plant *Vanda roxburghii* growing on *Citrus medica*
6. Use of Sand boa snake for *Bhujanga churna*
7. Use of Human urine
8. Elephant Dung
9. *Loranthus*
10. *Dashapushpa* (Ten flowers)
11. Rhino horn
12. *Amrita kala/ Visha kala*

**Yogas mentioned for Darveekara Chikitsa****Lepa (Application)**

1. *Hingu* (*Ferula asafoetida*) + *Marica* (*Piper nigrum*) + *Vaca* (*Acorus calamus*) in *Kimshuka twak* (*Butea monosperma*) *swarasa* (Juice)
2. *Tankanam* (Borax) + *Grihadhoomam* (Soot) in *Naramootra* (Human urine)
3. *Shivamalli jeerna patra* (*Indigofera aspalathoides*) + *Hingu*
4. *Matrughati moola* (*Physalis angulata*) + *Hingu* in *Nara mootra*
5. *Lasuna* (*Allium sativum*) + *Marica* + *Hingu* + *Shunti* (*Zingiber officinale*) + *Pippali* (*Piper longum*) – *Arka patra swarasa* (*Calotropis gigantea*)
6. *Ishwari moola* (*Aristolochia indica*) + *Shunti*
7. *Neeli moola* (*Indigofera tinctoria*)

**Paana (Internally)**

1. *Vyosha* (Three pungent spices) + *Kanji* (Sour gruel) / *Water*
2. *Ashwagandha* (*Withania somnifera*) + *water* / *Naramootra*
3. *Vishnupriya root* (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*) + *Maricha*
4. *Karanjamoola* (*Pongamia pinnata*) + *Maricha*
5. *Sharangeshta moola* (*Physalis minima*) + *Maricha*
6. *Gudichimoola* (*Tinospora cordifolia*) + *Maricha*
7. *Chandana* (*Santalum album*) + *Usheera* (*Vetiveria zizanioides*)
8. *Tanduleeyaka* (*Amaranthus spinosus*) + *Ashwagandha* (*Withania somnifera*)
9. *Saindhava* (Rock salt) + *Arka patra* in *Naramootra*
10. *Shireesha* (*Albizia lebbek*) *flower and seeds* + *Arka flower and seeds* + *Trikatu* in *Arkaksheera*

**Nasya/Anjana (Nasal administration/ Collyrium)**

1. *Nagavalli* (*Piper betle*) + *Dhatura* (*Datura metal*) *leaf juice* + *Saindhava* – *Nasya*
2. *Gunjabeeja* (*Abrus precatorius*) + *Maricha* + *Bakula* (*Mimusops elengi*) *beeja* in *Naramootra* or *Dronapushpi* (*Leucas aspera*) *swarasa* – *Nasya* or *Anjana*
3. *Tulsi* (*Ocimum sanctum*) + *Dronapushpi swarasa* + *Maricha* – *Nasya*
4. *Lasuna* + *Vaca* + *Hingu* in *Naramootra* – *Nasya*
5. *Hingu* + *Maricha* + *Saindhava* in *Naramootra/ Dronapushpi swarasa* – *Nasya*
6. *Bhringaraja* (*Eclipta alba*) *swarasa* + *Maricha* – *Nasya*
7. *Lasuna* + *Hingu* in *Chandana swarasa* – *Nasya*
8. *Lasuna* + *Tankanam* + *Trikatu* + *Vaca* + *Hingu* in *Dronapushpi swarasa* – *rolled to pill* – *Nasya*
9. *Hingu* – *Bhavana* in *Dronapushpi swarasa* – *filled in crow's egg and dried in shade.* – *Use with Tulsi swarasa/ Nara mootra/ Dronapushpi swarasa/ Shigru* (*Moringa oleifera*) *swarasa* – *Nasya*

**Yogas mentioned for Mandali Chikitsa****Lepa/Paana**

1. *Neeli moola paste* in *luke warm water* – *lepa and paana*
2. *Karanjamoola twak* – *lepa and paana*
3. *Chandana* with *cold water* – *paana*
4. *Neerpathamoola twak* – *lepa and paana*
5. *Paatalamoola* (*Stereospermum suaveolens*) – *lepa and paana*.
6. *Venkaramoola twak* – *lepa and paana*
7. *Sarpagandha* (*Rauwolfia serpentina*) + *Vaca* + *Usheera* – *Lepa and paana*
8. *Kupilu* (*Strychnos nux-vomica*) *moola* – *lepa*
9. *Sariva* (*Hemidesmus indicus*) + *Vaca* – *lepa*
10. *Yashtimadhu* (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) + *Chandana* + *Usheera* – *Lepa and Paana*
11. *Karambha* (*Callicarpa macrophylla*) + *Ishwaramooli* – *Paana*
12. *Punarnava* (*Boerhavia diffusa*) *moola* + *Arka moola* – *Lepa and paana*
13. *Lodhra* (*Symplocos racemosa*) + *Chandana* + *Haridra* (*Curcuma longa*) + *Daruharidra* (*Berberis aristata*) + *sarala* (*Pinus roxburghii*) + *arka* + *bilwa* (*Aegle marmelos*) + *Manjishta* (*Rubia cordifolia*) + *paatala* – *Lepa and paana*
14. *Tagara* (*Valeriana wallichii*) + *Chandana* + *Kushta* (*Saussurea lappa*) + *Madhuka* (*Madhuca indica*) + *Usheera* + *Sariva* – *Lepa and Paana*
15. *Nimba* (*Azadirachta indica*) + *Neeli* + *Karanja* – *Lepa and paana*
16. *Murva* (*Marsdenia tenacissima*) + *Patha* (*Cyclea peltata*) + *Saindhava* + *Vaca* – *Lepa and paana*

*Nasya*

1. *Sinduri swarasa (Bixa orellana) + Shunti + Maricha + Lasuna*
2. *Bakula beeja + Hingu in stanya*
3. *Vyosha + Saindhava in stanya*
4. *Vacha + Maricha in Dronapushpi swarasa*
5. *Krishnatulasi (Ocimum tenuiflorum) patra swarasa + Shigru patra swarasa + Saindhava + Maricha*
6. *Indravalli (Cardiospermum halicacabum) swarasa + Shunti + Ishwaramooli + Saindhava + Lasuna*
7. *Dronapushpi + Tulsi + Maricha*
8. *Nirgundi (Vitex negundo) + Dronapushpi + Maricha*
9. *Bakula beeja + Shunti + Maricha + Lasuna in Naramootra*

*Anjana*

1. *Shirishamoola + Maricha in Nagavalli swarasa*
2. *Purana Maricha (Old pepper)*
3. *Bakula beeja in Tulsi swarasa*
4. *Saindhava + Aadhaki (Cajanus cajan)*
5. *Trikatu*

*Mandali Visha upadrava Chikitsa*

1. *For Chithabrahma (Mental instability) – Usheera + Chandana*
2. *Yellow Urine – Karanja twak in ushna jala*
3. *For Jwara – Vrikshamla (Garcinia indica) moola in ksheera*
4. *For Chardi (Vomiting) – Triphala (Three fruits)*
5. *For sarvanga daha (Whole body burning sensation) – Usheera + Hreebera (Pavonia odorata) + Chandana*
6. *Rakta Chardi (Vomiting blood) – Nimba patra in ksheera*
7. *Rakta atisara (Bloody diarrhoea) – Kadambatwak (Anthocephalus cadamba) paana*
8. *Angasada (Languidness) – Punarnava (Boerhavia diffusa) in luke warm water*
9. *Aanaha (Fullness of abdomen) – Saindhava + Trikatu*
10. *Pipasa (Thirst) – Kadalikanda toya (Musa paradisiaca) + Ksheera (Milk)*
11. *Raktashteevana & Urdhwaga raktasrava (Bleeding from mouth or orifices)– Malati patra (Aganosma heynei) swarasa + taila (Oil)*
12. *Rakta srava through loma (Bleeding through sweat pores)– Shigru moola fried in bronze vessel, powdered and applied with ghrita*
13. *Mala mootra rodha (Constipation, Urinary retention)– Pippali + Ela in narikela jala (Cocos nucifera)/luke warm water for paana or udara dhara*
14. *Mootra rodha (Urinary retention) – Mooshika mala (Rat faeces) + Trapusha (Cucumis sativus) beeja – Lepana at adho nabhi(Lower abdomen)*
15. *Mootra rodha - Kathi – lepana at adho nabhi*
16. *Mootra rodha – Nirgundi (Vitex negundo) moola – lepana at adho nabhi*
17. *Raktasrava (Bleeding) – Lakshmana (Ipomoea sepiaria ) patra – shiro lepana*
18. *Shirashoola (Headache), Netraroga (Eye diseases), Jataradaha (Burning sensation in abdomen) – Amalaki + Musta (Cyperus rotundus) + Chandana – boil in milk – applied on head.*

*Rakta dushti (Vitiation of blood)*

1. *Sariva + Chandana + Yashtimadhu – Kwatha with Sita (Sugar) and Madhu (Honey)*
2. *Kutaja moola Kwatha (Holarrhena antidyenterica)*
3. *Ksheeri vriksha ksheera (Milky trees) kwatha with Sita*
4. *Manjishta + Sariva – Kwatha*
5. *Navaneetha (Butter) + Dadhi (Curd) + Madhu + Kushta + Trikatu + Saindhava + Grihadhoomam + Manjishta + Daruharidra – Sarvanga lepa (Whole body application)*

*Lepa for Visha – shophya (Swelling)*

1. *Punarnava + Shigru moola + Shireesha moola + Ashwagandha*
2. *Amratata twak (Spondias pinnata) + Karanja twak*
3. *Tintrini twak (Tamarindus indica) + Amra twak (Mangifera indica) + Ishwaramooli + Vacha + Patha + Haridra in Aranala (Sour gruel)*
4. *Half of Dhatura fruit + Saindhava + Aranala – steam, make paste*
5. *Kushta + Tagara + Usheera + Chandana + Yashtimadhu + Sariva*
6. *Punarnava + Arka moola + Ishwaramooli + Gokshura (Tribulus terrestris) + Patha + Vacha + Chandana + Haridra + Aghori (Flacourtia indica) + Karanja twak + Aranala*
7. *Saindhava + Ghrita (Clarified butter)*
8. *Mrinala (Nymphaea stellata) + Dashapushpa + Raktavalli (Ventilago madraspatana) + Amrita + Haridra + Deerghavrinda + Karanja twak + Shigru + Shireesha + Punarnava + Vacha + Chandana + Sariva + Maricha + Haritaki (Terminalia chebula) + Daruharidra + Arka moola + Patha + Tanduleeyaka + Usheera + Neeli moola + Maricha + Sharapunkha (Tephrosia purpurea) in Aranala*
9. *Shigru + Punarnava + Haridra + Vacha + Chandana + Patha + Ishwaramooli + Yashtimadhu + Shireesha + Gokshura*
10. *Matrughati + Vacha + Arka moola + Chandana + Haridra + Karanja + Usheera*

*Other Yogas*

1. *Nalpamaradi lepa*
2. *Ekanayakamooladi lepa*
3. *Karaskaravrikshadanadi lepa*
4. *Doorvarasadi taila*

5. *Brahmidoorvyadi taila*
6. *Matrughadyadi taila*
7. *Ekanayakamooladi ghrita*
8. *Panktiprasoonadi ghrita*
9. *Parantyadi taila*

*Yogas mentioned for Rajila Chikitsa*

*Samanya yoga (General Medicaments)*

1. *Shunti paste in Hot water - paana*
2. *Pippali + Saindhava in luke warm water - paana*
3. *Shweta shankhapushapi (Clitoria ternatea) moola – paana*
4. *Vacha + Maricha – paana*
5. *Neeli moola + 1/4<sup>th</sup> Shunti with warm water - paana*
6. *Trikatu with warm water – paana*
7. *Beejapooru vrikshadani (Vanda roxburghii growing on Citrus medica) + Shunti – Paana*
8. *Saindhava + Pippali + Madhu in gomayarasa (Liquid squeezed from cow dung)– paana*
9. *Harenu (Pisum sativum) + Kushta + Shunti + Pippali + Maricha + Grihadhoomam + Katukarohini (Picrorrhiza kurroa) + Ativisha (Aconitum heterophyllum) + Abhaya + Madhu in kavoshnambu – Paana*
10. *Daruharidra + Gorochana (Bezoar)+ Saindhava*
11. *Nandivriksha (Tabernaemontana divaricata) moola – paana*

*Lepa*

1. *Sariva kanda in Naramootra*
2. *Tagara + Lasuna + Trikatu in Tulsi swarasa*
3. *Hingu + Pippali + Saindhava + Sariva + Ishwaramooli +in Naramootra*
4. *Moorva + Nimba twak + Ishwaramooli + Trikatu +Saindhava*

*Rajila Visha upadrava Chikitsa*

1. *Kapha vridhi – Amrita + Maricha in luke warm water*
2. *Kapha vaishamya - Ardraka swarasa + Maricha + Madhu*

*Anjana*

1. *Trikatu + Masha (Vigna mungo) in Tulsi swarasa*
2. *Bakula beeja*
3. *Bakula beeja + Maricha*

## CONCLUSION

Jyotsnika is an exquisite work on *visha chikitsa* done by Sri. Narayanan who effortlessly merged the two *sampradayas* of *visha chikitsa* and created a separate dimension for *Keraleeya visha chikitsa*. This monograph in its 21 *Adhikaras* and 1139 verses covers almost all the practically encountered toxicological conditions and its effective management using local and easily available medicaments. The contribution of this monograph for the growth of *visha chikitsa* in the region of Kerala is immense and it was the aim of this literary review after the thorough analysis to bring the same to lime light and forefront.

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