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Original Article

Gara Visha: A Critical Review of the Concept, Clinical Features and Management in Classical Ayurvedic Texts

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ABSTRACT

Gara Visha, a *Kritrima* (artificially prepared) poison, is described in Agada Tantra as a *Samyogaja* combination that acts slowly because of its *Kalantaravipaki* nature. This review examines its definition, modes of administration, clinical features, pathogenesis and management in the Brihatrayi, Laghutrayi, Bhela Samhita, Yogaratnakara, Agni Purana and Manusmriti, with their commentaries. Classical texts describe administration through food, drinks, tooth-cleaning sticks and oil application, producing *Mandagni*, *Pandu*, *Shotha*, *Jwara*, *Kasa*, *Shwasa* and *Balakshaya*. Impaired *Agni* is central to its pathogenesis. Management includes *Vamana*, *Suvarna*-based formulations, *Agada* and *Ojas* protection, making it both eliminative and restorative.

Keywords: Gara Visha, Agada Tantra, Kritrima Visha, Kalantaravipaki, Mandagni, Ayurvedic toxicology

INTRODUCTION

Agada Tantra mentioned Gara Visha as one of the 'Kritrima visha'[1], means Artificial poison. The word 'Gara' comes from गृ (Root Word) and अच् (Suffix) which means to diglute or in liquid form[2]. Gara Visha is an artificially prepared toxic formulation composed of a combination of various substances intended to induce pathological conditions within the body. Due to its slow absorption and delayed metabolic processing, it generally does not produce immediate fatality. Classical Ayurvedic literature describes its administration primarily through admixture with food, thereby facilitating the slow and concealed dissemination of its toxic effects throughout the body. It is usually administered by women for purposes such as Vashikarana, to gain attention, due to personal grudge, or under the influence of enemies[3,4]. Furthermore, Dalhana Tikakara mentions additional routes of administration, including anna (food), paana (drinks), dantakashta (tooth-cleaning sticks), abhyanga (oil application), avalekhana[5] etc. Consumption of Gara Visha can result in manifestations such as Garopahata Paavaka (impairment of digestive power) and Garopahata Twacha (skin disorders). Agadatantra gives a vast view on this topic by clearly explaining definition, symptoms, mode of administration and treatment.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

A critical review of Gara Visha was carried out based on classical Ayurvedic literature, relevant commentaries, contemporary research publications, and reliable websites. The collected literature was reviewed to understand its concept, etiology, classification, clinical manifestations, pathogenesis, and management. The findings were critically analysed and interpreted to establish the classical concepts

DEFINATION

Gara Visha is a combination of poisonous or non poisonous substance which exerts toxic effect after sometime and it doesn't kill the person instantly[6].

AGNI PURANA

In the Agni Purana, references are found regarding Sthavara, Jangama, Kritrima Visha, and Upavisha. Various mantras along with herbal formulations have been described for the management of poisoning. Additionally, Vaseekarana yoga's containing both animate and inanimate substances are explained. These formulations were primarily intended for purposes such as Marana (destruction), Dwesha (creating hostility), and the induction of diseases like kustha[7].

UPANISHADS

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In *Upanishada Vakya Mahakosha*, authored by Gajanana Shambhu Sadhale, descriptions of Vaseekarana yoga's employed for purposes such as raga (attraction), pasha (attachment or control), Dwesha (hostility), and bhavana are available. In this context, the following quotation is mentioned[8]:

"vashi sarvasya lokasya sthavarasya charasya cha"

MANUSMRITI

The Manusmriti, along with the commentary of Kulluka Bhatta, provides references regarding poisons and measures for protecting the king from poisoning. The text describes methods for the detection of poisonous food substances, including the use of animal experiments. It is also mentioned that food materials should be processed with antitoxic drugs before consumption. Furthermore, the king was advised to wear protective ratnas (gems) as a safeguard against poisoning[9].

Discripation according to Brihatray

CHARAKA SAMHITHA

According to Acharya Charaka, Gara Viṣha is described as the third variety of poison following Sthavara and Jangama Viṣha and is characterized by its *Saṃyogaja* origin (formed by the combination of various substances) and *Kalantaravipaki* nature (metabolized gradually over a period of time), thereby persisting in the body for a prolonged duration and causing various diseases[6].

Mode of administration of Garavisha,

In ancient India, Gara Visha was reportedly administered with the intention of influencing or controlling individuals, particularly husbands or enemies. It was administered through food mixed with substances such as sweat, menstrual blood, and other bodily waste products[3].

Chakrapaani, the commentator of Charaka Samitha, describes Gara Viṣha as *TachhaChirakaariroga-janakampranharam*[6] indicating that it acts slowly, produces diseases gradually, and may ultimately result in fatal outcomes. It is classified into two types.

Types are :- 1) Nirvisha Dravya samyogakruta

2) Savisha Dravya samyogakruta

SUSHRUTA SAMHITA

Acharya Sushruta has devoted an entire section comprising eight chapters to toxicology, designated as the Kalpa Sthana. The Sushruta Samhita mentions Gara Visha while explaining the definition of Agada Tantra itself, referring to it as "vividha visha samyogaja," denoting poison produced by the combination of various substances. In the Annapanaraksha Kalpa, methods of administration of Gara Visha, such as through Anna, Pana, and Dantakashta have been described. Furthermore, the Samhita explains in the Keeta Kalpa Adhyaya that powders prepared from the bodies of insects (keetadeha churna), when administered in combination with various formulations, can also act as Gara Visha.

Mode of administration of garavisha[5]

1 Anna	7 Kashaya	13 Kavachabharana
2 Paana	8 Parisheka	14 Padukapadapiteshu
3 Dantakashta	9 Anulepan	15 Prushteshu gaja vajina
4 Abhyanga	10 Srakshu	15 Naya
5Avalekhana	11 Vastra	16 Dhuma
6 Utsadana	12 Shayyasu	17 Anjanadhishu

Dalhaṇa, the commentator of the Sushruta Samhita, in the Keeta Kalpa Adhyaya, states that keetadeha churna, when administered in combination with various medicinal formulations (nanaushadha yoga) or used as an external application (Anulepana), can also acts as Gara Visha.

VAGBHATA ACHARYA

In the Uttarasthana of both Ashtanga Sangraha and Ashtanga Hridaya, Acharya Vagbhata has described Gara Visha under the principal classification of Kritrima Visha and Akritrima Visha[1]. The Ashtanga Sangraha provides a detailed explanation of Gara Visha, including its definition, modes of administration, clinical features, prognosis, treatment, and complications. The description of Gara Visha in the Ashtanga Hridaya is largely similar to that presented in the Ashtanga Sangraha.

Kritrima visha also regarded as Garavisha, Which is prepared from the combination of various substance.

Mode of administration of Garavisha

The combination of different body parts or excreta of various animals (*nana pranyanga shamala*), ashes of drugs possessing incompatible potency (*virud-dhaushadhi bhasma*), and poisonous substances with mild potency are considered components of Gara Visha[10].

Indu, in his commentary, states that Gara Viṣha is a special type of poison (*visheha visha*) usually administered along with food, and the term "food" broadly encompasses all kinds of consumable substances (*sakalamapi vastujaatam*). He further explains that its manifestation depends upon the nature and combination of the substances involved (Nana*vidha dravya yoga vasta*)[11]. Gara Viṣha may produce either immediate or delayed effects, act gradually over a prolonged duration, and may ultimately result in death (*chiraklena ca hanti*)[1].

DISCRIPATION ACCORDING TO LAGHUTRAY

MADHAVA NIDHANA[12]

Madhavakara has dedicated the final chapter of his work to Visha Roga. In this chapter, he describes the mode of administration and clinical features of Gara Visha, which are largely similar to the descriptions provided by Charakacharya.

The Madhukosha commentary further states that Gara Visha possesses a special quality of *apaki* nature, indicating that it remains undigested and persists in the jathara (gastrointestinal tract) for a prolonged duration. (*garashchasyeti apaki jaṭharavasthitaḥ*).

BHAVAPRAKASHA[13]

In the Vishadhikara of Madhyama Khanda, Bhavaprakasha, while referring to Kashyapa, mentions two types of Kritrima Visha, namely Dooshivisha and Gara Visha.

SHARANGADHARA[14]

Gara visha has been mentioned under the type of visha, which are sthavara, jangama, kritrima.

BHELA SAMHITA[15]

The 18th chapter of Sutrasthana, namely Annaraksha Adhyaya, deals with the protection of food and describes several conditions of visha dushita substances such as anna (food), paana (drinks), vastra (clothing), and abhyanga (oil application). These are similarly explained in the Sushruta Samhita as modes of administration of Gara Visha.

YOGARATNAKARA[16]

Poisoning caused by artificial poison may manifest its effects after a fortnight (paksha) or even after a month (Maasa). The clinical features described include *alasya*, *jadyata*, *kasa*, *swasa*, *balakshaya*, *jwara*, *shopha* and *pitachakshu*

Laksha of Garavisha

S.N.	Symptoms	Charaka[17]	Vagbhata[18]	Bhava prakasha[19]	Madhavanidhana[20]
	Pandu	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Krisha	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Alpa Agni	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Aadhman	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Shvayathu hastpaadyo	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Marmapradhaman	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Yksma	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Grahani Dosh	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Gulma	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Jwar	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Kasa		✓		
	Shwasaroga		✓		
	Udara roga		✓		
	Yakritvikar		✓		
	PleehaVikar		✓		

S.N.	Symptoms	Charaka[17]	Vagbhata[18]	Bhava prakasha[19]	Madhavanidhana[20]
	Shophvaana		✓		
	Shushkpadkar		✓		
	Durbala		✓		

Treatment of Garavisha

Acharya Charak[21]	Acharya Vagbhata[22]	Yogaratnakar[23]
1.**Hridya Shodhan**:- Vamana Karma is performed by administering fine copper powder (Sukshma tamra Churna) mixed with honey to induce therapeutic emesis. 2.**Suvarnapras**:-The patient should be administered one shana of the powder of Suvarna(gold). Suvarna is controls all poisons and poisonous combinations. Poison does not stay in the body on taking Suvarna like water on lotus leaf. 3. **Agadpana**- Mahisha Ghritha processed with Nagdanti, trivitit, dantidravanti, milk latex of snuhi and madanpala along with one adaka of cows urine is useful incurring patients suffering from the poisons of snake's bite, insects and from Gara	1. **Vaman** 2. **Sharkarasuwarnadileha** 3.Suwarnamakshika and Suwarnabhasma when given with sugar and honey cure Gara visha 4.**Treatment of Mandagni**- In Garopahatpavaka condition Murvadi agada is described for patients experiencing Mandagni associated with artificial poisoning. The formulation is administered either with Takra, Sukhushana jala, Mastu or Amal Rasa 5.**Management of Associated Symptoms**:- such as thirst (Tṛṣṇa), cough (Kasa), dyspnoea (Shwasa), hiccups (Hikka), and fever (Jwara). A decoction prepared from pigeon meat, Saṭhi, and Puṣkaramula is administered . 6.**Treatment of ojkshaya**- Ubtan of manjistha, apamarg, neem, haldi, pipal and Chandan. 7. Milk and ghee is supposed to be the best diet in Gara visha.	1.Sharkarasuvarnadi leha 2. Putrajivmajja yog 3. Ghrihdhumadigrita 4. Paravatadihima 5. Garnashanras

DISCUSSION

Gara Visha occupies a unique and significant position in Agada Tantra, representing the Ayurvedic understanding of artificially prepared and gradually acting poison. Unlike Sthavara and Jangama Visha, which produce immediate manifestations, Gara Visha acts in a concealed and chronic manner due to its *Kalantaravipaki* nature. This resembles repeated low-dose toxic exposure and long-term biochemical injury caused by adulterated food, incompatible dietary combinations, and artificially processed substances. The term "Gara," implying dilution or liquefaction, denotes a poison that may not initially be toxic but becomes harmful after combination, processing, or prolonged metabolism. This reflects the Ayurvedic understanding that toxicity may arise not only from a single poison but also from the interaction of various substances. The classification of Gara Visha under *Kritrima Visha* clearly differentiates artificially prepared poisons from naturally occurring toxins. Acharya Charaka, Sushruta, and Vagbhata unanimously describe Gara Visha as *Samyogaja*, originating from combinations of substances. This demonstrates that Ayurvedic toxicology deeply analysed the pathological consequences arising from improper combinations, incompatible processing, and concealed administration.

An important observation across Brihatrayi and Laghutrayi is the repeated emphasis on *Mandagni* and *Apaki* state. Madhukosha explains that Gara Visha remains undigested in the *Jathara* for prolonged periods, indicating that impairment of Agni is the central pathological event in Gara Visha. Once Agni becomes weakened, the body gradually loses its ability to digest and neutralize harmful substances, leading to progressive systemic derangement. Thus, Gara Visha primarily attacks the metabolic integrity of the body before manifesting as overt disease. The symptomatology described by different Acharyas strongly supports this concept. Symptoms such as *Pandu, Krishata, Grahani, Gulma, Shwasa, Kasa, Shotha,*

and *Balakshaya* indicate chronic depletion of bodily strength and progressive involvement of multiple systems. These manifestations show that Gara Visha is not confined to a single organ but gradually vitiates *Dosha, Dhatu,* and *Srotas*. Dalhana's explanation regarding *Keetadeha Churna* and Vagbhata's reference to *Viruddhaushadhi Bhasma* further establish the Ayurvedic concept of toxic transformation through improper combinations and processing. The management principles of Gara Visha reveal a rational and holistic toxicological approach. Therapies such as Vamana aim at toxin elimination. Thus, Ayurvedic treatment focuses not only on detoxification but also on rejuvenation, metabolic correction, and restoration of systemic balance.

CONCLUSION

The concept emphasizes that improper combinations, concealed exposure, weakened Agni, and prolonged retention of toxic substances can gradually disturb the balance of Dosha, Dhatu, and Srotas, ultimately leading to chronic systemic disease. The extensive descriptions of administration routes and clinical manifestations reflect the remarkable observational and analytical abilities of ancient Ayurvedic scholars. The therapeutic principles of Gara Visha focus not only on elimination of poison through Shodhana but also on restoration of Agni, protection of Ojas, rejuvenation of tissues, and strengthening of the body's resistance. Thus, the management of Gara Visha in Ayurveda is both curative and restorative in nature. Gara Visha is not merely a description of poisoning but a broader representation of concealed pathological processes occurring within the body. Gara Visha stands as evidence of the advanced toxicological wisdom of Ayurveda, where pathology, prevention, diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment were systematically understood and elaborately documented

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