

international journal of panchakarma And avurned medicine

ANCIENT METHODS OF DETECTION OF POISONING IN DIFFERENT CONDITIONS – A REVIEW

Dr. Arvind Charandas Tumram¹, Dr. Hemraj Konduji Bhiogade², Dr. Shama S. Suryawanshi³, Dr. Sushil Vilas Chawre⁴, Dr. Pravin Kumar Rathod⁵,

- 1. Assistant Professor, Dept of Agadtantra, Govt. Ayurved College, Nagpur
- 2. Associate Professor, Dept of Agadtantra, Govt. Ayurved College, Nagpur
- 3. Professor, Dept of Agadtantra, Govt. Ayurved College, Nagpur
- 4. Assistant Professor, Dept. of Kayachikitsa, Govt. Ayurved College, Nagpur
- 5. PG (Scholar) Dept of Agadtantra, Govt. Ayurved College, Nagpur

| Article Received on | - | 18/01/2016 |
|---------------------|---|------------|
| Article Revised on | - | 23/03/2016 |
| Article Accepted on | - | 24/04/2016 |

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Abstract

In ancient time poisoning was one of the important methods of killing enemies. This was very common among the kings and wealthy persons. In ancient time the poison used to be administered through food, drinks, cosmetics etc. apart from this there were some other conditions like contaminated air, water, earth and *vishakanya* which were poisonous and used to be detected by their signs & symptoms just like *Vishjasta Bhumi* (poisoned earth), *Vishjasta Vayu* (poisoned air), *Vishjasta Jal* (poisoned water), *Vishakannya* (poisonous women) etc. Hence, it was very necessary to examine all the food materials and tools of our surrounding. So that time some methods had been developed to detect the poisoning. In ancient time, it was duty of the physician to protect health of king and so the kings always used to appoint an efficient physician to protect him from the danger of poisoning. In *Ayurved* various methods of detection of poisoning have been described and it can be divided in major six groups and most of the poisoning can be detected with help of their signs and symptoms. In this modern era various costly methods have been given to detect the poisoning. So this study will prove to be helpful for those physicians who are deprived from recent modern equipments which are used to detect the poisoning.

Key Words: Poison, Detection, Method, Pariksha, Padhhati, Examination

INTRODUCTION

Major two types of methods of detection of poison have been mentioned in this modern era. These are Qualitative and Quantitative methods. But in ancient time there were no such types of methods to detect the poisoning. In ancient time there were some different methods they used to apply to detect the poisoning. With the help of typical signs and symptoms they were getting idea whether is it *Sthawar Visha* (vegetable/ metal poison) or *Jangam Visha* (poison due to animal bite). In ancient time *Visha Kanya* (Poisoned women) was used as a weapon to kill the King and wealthy person.

Address for Correspondence: Dr. A.T.Tumram Assistant Professor, Department of Agadtantra, Government Ayurvedic College, Nagpur, Maharashtra, India 440024 Mobile no- 9923203002 Email: atumram@gmail.com The method of making of *Visha Kanya* (Poisoned women) by administering small quantities of poison daily even from the day of birth, theywould make the body of a woman poisonous. And *Visha Kanya* can be known by typical signs & symptoms. Modern science has given some methods or technique to detect poison after death and such type of method has been stated also in *Kautilya Arthashatra*.

Today lots of doctors are providing their services in remote areas and government still not able to provide all equipments and instruments which is necessary to detect poison. So this study may be helpful for those physicians who are deprived from recent modern equipments which are used to detect the poisoning.

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AIM AND OBJECTIVES:-

- To search and re-evaluate the knowledge of methods of detection of poisoning in the various scriptures of *Ayurved*.
- To get the knowledge of methods of detection of poisoning of ancient era in single literature through the collection of various text materials of *Ayurved* scriptures and text books.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

This article is based on a review of Ayurved scriptures and text books related to the subject. Related materials on methods of detection of poison and other relevant topics have been collected. The main basic Ayurved Texts Charak Samhita, Sushruta Sangraha, Samhita. Astang Kautilva Arthashathra and available commentaries on these are used for review. In this study, methods of detection of poisoning have been classified in major six groups by collection of scattered material of ancient Ayurved scriptures. Some types of methods of detection of poison have been presented in tabulation form to understand easily.

Visha Parikshan Padhhati (methods of detection of poison):

In ancient time king used to be killed by food mixed with poison, so when food suspected as poison, so it should be tested. In ancient scriptures of *Ayurved* various methods of detection of poison have been described and it can be divided in major six groups-

I)Bhoutic Parikshan (Physical Characteristics)

(II) Agni Pariksha (Examination on fire)

(III) *Lakshananusar Parikshan* (According to Signs and Symptoms)

(a) *Lakshana of Sthavar & Jangam Visha* (Signs & Symptoms of vegetable & animal poison)

(b) Signs & symptoms according to mode of administration

(c) Signs & symptoms according to site of poison

(d) Signs & symptoms according to poisoned material or substance

(e) Visajusta Bhumi (poisoned land)

(f) Visajusta Jala (poisoned water)

(g) Visajusta Vayu (poisoned air)

(h) Poisoned Fooder & Food

(i)PoisonedTree

(h) Visha Kanya (Poisoned women)

(i) Gara Visha & Dushi Visha

(IV) Panchabhautic Pariksha of Visha

(V) Examination on Animal / Birds

(VI) Ashumrut parikshan (Examination on dead body)

Bhoutic Parikshan (Physical Characteristics):

Visajusta Anna (Characteristics of poisonous food): Foods (Vegetables, pulses, rice, meat etc.) which would flow naturally cease to flow when mixed with

poison, require long time to cook; cooked ones become stale, losing their (good) fumes and becomes hard; undergo change in respect of their normal colour, smell, taste, and *aroma*, become very moist and appear to particles.^[1,2] full of glistening be (a) Condiments mixed with poison become dry very quickly. ^[3] (b) The *fumes* coming out of poisoned food or during boiling will be dark coloured, black or blue like neck of peacock).^[4] (c) The *image* of the observer in water will be distorted with less or more of the (natural) features or images might not appear at all. ^[3] (d) Accumulation of *foam* appearance of dividing lines of stripe, threads and bubbles show up. $^{[3]}$ (e) In those which have predominance of salt, lines of foam appear especially. And such signs indicate towards the poison in food materials have been given below as per table 1^[3]

Table I Bhoutic Parikshan of Visajusta Anna

| S. | Food Material | Lines | Smell |
|-----|----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| No. | | | |
| 1 | Meat soup | Blue Lines | Muscle – fat |
| 2 | Milk | Coppery read | Muscle – fat |
| 3 | Wines & Water | Black | Muscle – fat |
| 4 | Curds | Blue | Muscle – fat |
| 5 | Buttermilk | Bluish – | Muscle – fat |
| | | Yellow | |
| 6 | Sour gruel prepared | Black | Muscle – fat |
| | from grains | | |
| 7 | Medicinal decoctions | Brown | Muscle – fat |
| 8 | Ghee | Light Brown | Muscle – fat |
| 9 | Honey | Green | Muscle – fat |
| 10 | Oils | Light – Red | Muscle – fat |

Fruits ^[1,3]: Unripe fruits ripen (very quickly), ripe fruits undergo putrefaction, green ones their shining and attain the features of the cooked ones, the dry ones become black or discoloured, hard ones become soft and soft ones become hard.

Flowers ^[3, 5]: The Flowers of the garland fade lose their fade, lose their smell, their edges get cracked.

Cloths ^[3,]: The bed sheets and covering will have black patches, their threads, wool and stitches fall off.

Oils ^[6]: If materials for massage (oil etc.) is poisoned becomes slimy, thick or discoloured.

Articles ^[3, 7]: Articles made out of metals and precious stones appear as coated with dirt, lose their smoothness, luster, heaviness, brilliance, colour and feel.

(II) Agni Pariksha (examination on fire): ^[8, 9] When poisoned food is thrown over the fire, it burns with single point flame (not with normal spreading flame) becomes like Peacock's neck, interrupted and slow, emits flame of different colours like a Rainbow and gives out cracking loud sound. The smoke that emerges will be smelling like that of dead body, causes fainting, watering of the eyes, nose and mouth, horripilations, headache, running in the nose and disturbance of vision.

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(III) Lakshananusar Parikshan
(According to Signs and Symptoms):
In our ancient Ayurved science poison has
been divided in major two parts, Sthavar
Visha (vegitable/ metal poison) and Jangam
Visha (animal bite poison).

(a) Lakshana of Sthavar & Jangam Visha:
 ^[10,11] Sthavar Visha Lakshan (signs and symptoms vegetable/ metal poison): Fiver, hiccup, sensitivity in teeth, and spasm in throat, frothy saliva, vomiting, anorexia, dysponea, and fainting.

Jangam Visha Lakshan (signs and symptoms of animal bite poison): Sleep, drowsiness, exhaustion, burning sensation, inflammation, horripilation, edema, and diarrehea.

Mode of administration: As per table (2).

| No. | Mode of | Signs & Symptoms |
|-----|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| | administration | |
| 1 | Vishadhum | Fainting, watering of eyes, |
| | (Poisonous Fumes) | nose and mouth; |
| | when inhalation or | horripilations, headache, |
| | smoke | running in the nose and |
| | | disturbances of vision. [12] |
| 2 | Vapor of poisoned | Cardiac pain, abnormal |
| | food | movement of the eyes and |
| | | headache. ^[13] |
| 3 | Vishajusta | The bristles of the tooth - |
| | Dantakasta | brush fall out; it emits the |
| | (Poisoned | smell of poison and causes |
| | tooth brush etc.) | dryness and swelling of the |
| | | palate, teeth, tongue and lips. |
| | | [14, 15] |
| 4 | Vishajusta Anjana | Accumulation of dirt in the |
| | (Poisoned | eyes, redness, pain, distortion |
| | collyrium) | of visions and even |

| | | blindness. ^[16] sliminess due |
|---|-------------------|--|
| | | to lacrymation, burning |
| | | sensation and pain ^[17] |
| 5 | Vishajusta | Headache, discharge of |
| | Nasyadhum | kapha (watery fluid), |
| | (poisoned snuff & | bleeding through the orifices |
| | smoke) | (nose, eyes, mouth) and |
| | | disorder of sensory |
| | | perception. ^[18, 19] |
| 6 | Ear drop | Swelling, pain, ulcers and |
| | | defects of hearing. ^[20] |
| | | Discharge from ear. ^[21] |
| 7 | Smelling flowers | Headache, tears in the eyes |
| | | and loss of sensation of smell |
| | | will develop. ^[20, 22] |

(c) Signs & symptoms according to site of poison [Table 3]

| No. | Site | Signs & Symptoms |
|-----|-----------------|--|
| 1 | <i>Visha</i> in | Tingling sensation in the lips, |
| | mouth (Poison | burning sensation inside the |
| | in mouth) – | mouth, hardness at root of the |
| | Ingestion | tongue, lockjaw, tingling |
| | | sensation in the teeth, more |
| | | salivation, and lose of sensation of |
| | | taste, ^[23] tongue has pricking pain. |
| | | [24] |
| 2 | Visha in | Perspiration, toxicity, fainting, |
| | amashaya | vomiting, discoloration, distention |
| | (Poisoned | of abdomen, horriphilation, |
| | food in the | burning sensation, loss of appetite |
| | stomach) | (Taste), obstruction to vision and |
| | | working of the heart, and |
| | | appearance of rashes (spots) all |
| | | over the body. ^[25] Flatulence, |
| | | trembling and abnormality of |
| | | sense organ. ^[26] |
| 3 | Visha in | Thirst, burning sensation, |
| | pakvashaya | Fainting, diarrhea, gurgling noise, |
| | (Poisoned | in the abdomen, stupor, disorders |
| | food in the | of sense perception, loss of |
| | intestine) | strength, emaciation, pallor and |
| | | enlargement of the abdomen. ^[27, 28] |
| | | |

e-ISSN 0000.00

Signs & symptoms according to poisoned material or substance

Table4: Signs & symptoms according topoisoned material or substance

| S. | Mode of | Signs & Symptoms |
|-----|------------------------|--|
| No. | administration | |
| 1 | Vishajusta tailadi | Produce burning sensation |
| | (poisoned oil etc.) if | on the skin, perspiration, |
| | used for oil bath | ulcers, bleeds and |
| | | lacerations. ^[29] Eruption of |
| | | boils, pain, discharge, |
| | | sweating, fever and |
| | | tearing of muscles. ^[30] |
| 2 | Through Umbrella | Boils on the body which is |
| | | painful, suppurating |
| | | quickly and resembling |
| | | the ripe fruit of jambava. |
| | | [31] |
| 3 | Oil for bath | Head poisoned – produces |
| | | headache, appearance of |
| | | nodules and falling of |
| | | hairs. ^[32] |
| 4 | Poisoned comb | Falling of hair, headache, |
| | | bleeding from passages |
| | | and appearance of cysts |
| | | on head. ^[33] |
| 5 | Poisoned wooden | Inflammation, discharge, |
| | foot wear | numbness and eruption of |
| | | boils in feet. ^[34] |
| 6 | Poisoned ornaments | Respective sites – Burning |
| | | sensation, suppuration and |
| | | tearing ^[35] |
| | 17 | tearing $^{[35]}$ |

(e) *Visajusta Bhumi* (poisoned land): ^[36] The region of land which has been poisoned appears as through burnt from fire, the grass and bush will be found faded and drooping down, insect and crawling animals lying dead, the hoofs and nails (of horse etc.) become cracked and fall off, may develop burning sensation, itching and pain, men and animals may develop vomiting, fainting, fever, delusion and headache.

(f) Visajusta Jala (poisoned water): [37]

The water of reservoirs (ponds, lakes, rivers)which has been poisoned, will have bad taste, slight warmth, full of long streaks (lines) and foam, heavy (heard to digest) and broken up (curdled); rejected by the birds and shoals of dead dish floating. It produces pain, swelling and irritation on touch. Rice cooked in that water causes burning sensation immediately after, undergoes digestion after a long time, causing burning sensation, producing fainting and fever after digestion and appearance of colours like blue, yellow, brown or red all over the body.

(g) *Visajusta Vayu* (poisoned air): ^[38] The air that has been poisoned will be cold during summer and hot during winter, causes, fainting and other symptoms.

(h) Poisoned Fodder & Food: ^[39] They suffer from malaise, fainting, vomiting or diarrhea or death.

(i) **Poisoned Tree:** ^[40] The shade of tree which have been poisoned is found to be abnormal, the flower of such trees, might either lose their fragrance or become more fragrant than usual, may cause itching, ulcerations and diarrhoea.

(j) Visha Kanya (Poisoned women): ^[41] In ancient time some people especially king and wealthy person used to be killed by Visha Kanya (Poisoned women).The

method of making of *Visha Kanya* (Poisoned women) by administering small quantities of poison daily even from the day of birth, they make the body of a woman to become poisonous.

Person dies by touching her, by her breath and such other contacts. Hence she is to be tested before hand. The flowers and flowers buds held in her hand or worn in her hair fade away, the bugs in the bed, the lice in the cloth and insect in the bathing water used by her will be found dead.

(k)Gara Visha & Dushi Visha
Gara Visha : (Artificially mixed poison)
[42] Gara visha is prepared by mixing many
drugs. It may produce swelling (Dropsy)
anaemia, enlargement of the abdomen,
insanity, piles etc. [41]

(L) Dushi Visha : (Weak Poison): ^[43, 44] One suffering from Dushi Visha passes liquid stool of abnormal colour, has foul smell and tastelessness in mouth, thirst, fainting, vomiting, muffled voice and of toxicity and symptoms dusyodara (~abdominal disease). If it is located in stomach, the person suffers from disorders of kapha and vata and if located in intestines, he becomes a victim of the disorders caused by vata & pitta. In this cases, hair fall off and limbs dropdown and the person becomes like a bird with severed wings. Situated in rasa etc. it produces respective disorders of dhatus.

(IV) Pachabhautic Pariksha of Visha (Examination of elements of poison):^[45]The elements are namedaccordingly on the basis of the theory of 'Vyapadesastu Bhuyastha'. For e.g. the element having 'Pruthvi' Mahabhuta will be termed as also are composed of Panchamahabhutas and are present with specific characters i.e. Shabda (sound), Sparsha (touch), Rupa (Appearance), Rasa (Test), Gandha (smell) which has been explained by Dalhana in his Sushruta commentary in the context of the Vishnna Pariksha (poisoned food examination). Shabda Pariksha (Examination of Sound) -When poisoned food burns making loud cracks.

Pariksha (Examination of Rupa Appearance) – When cast into the fire it acquires the colour of a peacocks neck. Gandha Pariksha (Examination of smell) -When it burns it emits irritating fumes and it be speedily extinguished. can't Rasa Pariksha (Examination of Test) -Jivajivakas (flies) die after flying over the food. Gandha poisonous Pariksha (Examination of smell) - If the poisoned food comes in contact with hand it causes burning sensation in hand and falling nails

(V) Examination on Animals and Birds: ^[46, 47, 48]After consuming poisoned foods, animal shows following symptoms

Table5: Typical signs and symptoms afterpoisoning in Animals

| No. | Animal / Birds | Effects / Symptoms |
|-----|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Crows | Lose voice |
| 2 | Flies | Do not sit on such food, |
| | | if by chance sit, they die. |
| 3 | Cakora bird | Eyes become red by |
| | | sight of poisoned foods. |
| 4 | Kokila (Cuckoo) | Voice undergoes change |
| | | (coos abnormally) |
| 5 | Swan (dog) | Gait altered, roams |
| | | excessively |
| 6 | Brngraja bird | Begins to cry, coos |
| | (Srike) | |
| 7 | Kraunka bird | Become excited (toxic) |
| | (Domoiselle crane) | |
| 8 | Krikavaku (cock) | Hoots loudly |
| 9 | Suka (Green | Make long, loud sounds, |
| | parakeet) and | cry |
| | Sarika (mynath) | |
| | (parrot) | |
| 10 | Camikara | Vomits |
| 11 | Karandava birds | Fly Way |
| | (White breasted | |
| | goose) | |
| 12 | Jivanjiva (Peacock | Either dies or faints |
| | Pheasant) bird | |
| 13 | Nakula (Mangoos) | Gets horripilations |
| 14 | Vanara (Monkey) | Eliminates faces |
| 15 | Prsata (Spotted | Weeps, passes tears |
| | dear) | |
| 16 | Mayura (Peacock) | Gets agitated, elated and |
| | | by it mere look, the |
| | | poison becomes weak. |
| 17 | Back of elephant | Animal becomes |
| | etc. is poisoned ⁽²⁰⁾ | unhealthy, excessive |
| | | salivation and readiness |
| | | of eyes. ⁽²⁰⁾ |

(VI) Ashumrut Parikshan (Examination on dead body) The methods of detection of poison on dead body is performed by external and internal examination with the help of signs. If the purpose of killing person by the poison is ingested with the mixing of food material, so some sign appears Black colour can be seen on hands, legs, teeth & nails, muscles looses & detaches from skin & fat.^[49]

If we are getting discharge of blood from bit sign and signs mentioned above, so it should be considered as person is killed by snake bite or any poisonous fly.^[50]

If persons posture is not proper, their cloth is scattered here & there and number of episode of diarrohea occurred it should be considered as person is killed, by its administration of *Dhatura* & *Dhatura* like *Deliriant* poisons ^[51]

A person, who died, its small amount of digested or undigested food martial, has to be taken for '*Rasadi Pariksa*' or (chemical examination) has to be done by giving that food material to the birds.^[52]

After complete digestion of food material, a small or little part of heart has to cut & put into the Agni (fire). We get '*Chit* – *Chit*' sound and green and blue colour like rainbow. Which appears in rainy season, so it should be consider as food material is mixed with poison. ^[53]

In the cadaver, of the animal, dead by consuming poison the poison will be found accumulated in the heart (of that animal), if dead by being bitten by poisonous insect etc. or dead by wounds of weapons smeared with poison then the poison will be found at the site of the bite or wound.^[54]

DISCUSSION

Daily the number of patients is dying due to poisoning. In this modern era the equipments of detection of poisoning are so costly. Therefore, initially it should be diagnosed with the help of Bhoutic Parikshan (Physical Characteristics), Agni Pariksha (Examination on fire), Lakshananusar Parikshan (Test according to signs & symptoms), Panchabhautic Pariksha of Visha, Examination on Animal / Birds and Ashumrut parikshan (Examination on dead body). Visha, Examination on Animal / Birds and Ashumrut parikshan (Examination on dead body). With the help of typical signs & symptoms we can diagnose whether is it poisoning of Sthavar Visha (vegetable /metal poison) or Jangam Visha (poison due to animal bite). Fiver, hiccup, vomiting, anorexia etc. like signs and symptoms indicates person suffering Sthavar Visha and sleep, drowsiness, edema, and diarrhea etc. like signs and symptoms indicates person suffering Jangam Visha. In ancient time Lakshananusar Parikshan (Test according to signs & symptoms) was the one of the important methods of detection of poisoning. Lakshananusar Parikshan (Test according to signs & symptoms) was also used to detect the

poisoning in various conditions like mode of administration, site of poison, material or substance, Visajusta Bhumi (poisoned land), Visajusta Jala (poisoned water), Visajusta Vavu (poisoned air), Poisoned Fooder & Food. Poisoned Tree. Visha Kanya (Poisoned women), Gara Visha & Dushi Visha. Panchabhautic Parikhan of Visha is also one of the important methods to detect the poisoning. Panchabhautic Parikhan of Visha can be done with specific characters of poisonous food i.e. shabda, spersha, rupa, rasa, and gandha. To detect the poisoning, animal experiment also explained ancient science. After consuming in poisoned foods, animal shows typical symptoms and symptoms i.e. crows loses its voice, Krikavaku (cock) hoots loudly. Various typical signs & symptoms of poisoning have been described here in tabulation form, so it is understood easily by the common people. In ancient time they use to detect the poisoning after death also and Ashumrut Parikshan explained to detect poisoning with the help of internal and external examination of dead body. In ancient time there was method of making Visha Kanya (Poisoned women), she used to kill the king and wealthy person. So the King to protect himself and his family members always used to appoint an efficient physician to protect from the danger of poisoning with the help of methods of detection of poisoning. So, all these methods were efficiently used to detect the poisoning in ancient era.

CONCLUSION

This study will be helpful to common men, physician and student of Ayurved, because this topic is included in the syllabus of Ayurved also. This study helps those persons who are willing to acquire knowledge on this topic. In future this study may save the time and decrease the pains due to collection of all scattered literature at one place. In this modern era various costly methods have been given to detect the poison and simultaneously for reporting of any poisonous sample it takes a little time, and this time is always very critical for patient. That's way in cases like poisoning time is one of the important factors. In this study poisoning has been divided in major six groups, and detection of poisoning is done with help of signs and symptoms of poison. So this study will prove to be helpful for those physicians who deprived from recent modern are equipments which are used to detect the poisoning.

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CITE THIS ARTICLE AS -

Arvind A. Tumram, Ancient Method of Detection of Poisoning in Different Condition- A Review, Int. J. Panchakarma And Ayu. Med., 2016; Vol 1, Issue 1.

Source of Support - Nil

Conflict of Interest - None Declared