

A CONCEPTUAL NOTE ON THE UNDERSTANDING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF AGADATANTRA IN AYURVEDA

Raneesh S

Lecturer, Dept. of Agadatantra, Govt. Ayurveda Medical College & Hospital, Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu, India.

Received: 22-10-2012; Revised: 25-11-2012; Accepted: 27-11-2012

Abstract

The term “Personalized Medicine” is an integral part of cikitsa or management in Ayurveda. It signifies the need of a very comprehensive approach, very much specific to the individual. This is because each individual is unique. Thus, one man’s food may become another man’s poison. There is plethora of factors which determines the positive or negative impact of a particular substance. These factors are finally related to guna (quality) and karma (function). Karma reflects the latent guna, which forms the absolute constituent of dravya (Matter). Thus, health and disease depends upon the saatmya (congenial) and asaatmya (non-congenial) nature among the trio respectively. Agada, which literally means absence of disease or non congenial factors, thus meaning a healthy state, forms a vital part of Ayurveda. The depth of Agadatantra is unfathomed by mere translations, not understanding its core principles. This has led to stunted growth in terms of its practice. The true potential of Agadatantra is realized by the term “Agadaveda” as quoted by Acharya Caraka. In short Agadatantra is synonymous with Ayurveda itself as it is denoted as “Agadaveda”

Key words: Ayurveda; Agadatantra; Visha; Agadaveda; Doosivisha.

***Address for correspondence:**

Dr. S. Raneesh., M.D (Ay),
Lecturer, Dept. of Agadatantra,
Govt. Ayurveda Medical College & Hospital,
Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu, India – 629 001.
E-mail: healerraneesh@gmail.com

Cite This Article

Raneesh S. A conceptual note on the understanding and significance of Agadatantra in Ayurveda. *Ayurpharm Int J Ayur Alli Sci.* 2012;1(7):144-150.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda – the eternal knowledge base of life in all its aspects, mentions eight branches for the wholesome management of an individual and never to segregate the body based on various factors. Even the correlation of each of the branches in allopathic terms is a blunder. For example, the term “kaaya” in kaaya cikitsa (Management of the internal heat principle) refers to the internal agni^[1] and when the concept of agni does not exist at all in internal or general medicine why do we equate it. Unlike the western bio medicine Ayurveda doesn't segregate the body parts but views as a whole and hence it is wholesome in its principles and approach.

To quote a few more examples, Baala cikitsa is much more than what pediatrics is. It starts even prior to the fertilization addressing the abnormalities of shukra (sperm) and aartava (ovum) due to the reason that any abnormality in them in terms of dosha makes them incapable of being fertile.^[2] Such a broad comprehensive approach is shattered by the term Pediatrics, which neither is aware of the shukra / aartava doshas nor the doshas of the mother's milk and many more.

Similar tragedy is also seen in understanding Agadatantra, which is equated to Toxicology. This piece of writing is a humble effort to emphasize and unveil the broad understanding of Agadatantra with the classical references.

Significance of Agadatantra

Anger is the worst poison, in fact the Raagadai rogaah are termed as Maha visha (poison). Visha has originated from krodha (anger). The term krodhavisha is also used by Acharya Susruta.^[3] The importance of mind in the context of visha is emphasized here.

Visha and Amruta (nectar) are the two sides of the same coin meaning they are one and the same thing. Hence, it is emphasized in the

very beginning of Caraka samhita as – Though visha is tikshna, by proper usage it can become the best medicine and the improperly used medicine can be poisonous.^[4]

The similar situation is seen in understanding the doshas. “*Dushayanti iti doshah*” - That which causes dushana (vitiation). The next line is often missed which says vikrta – in its abnormal state it destroys the body & avikrta – in its normal state it sustains the body.^[3] In the similar fashion the term “Visha” is to be understood. Visha is termed as “*vishadam janayati iti visha*”^[5] – That which causes sorrow, synonym of disease (*vikaaro dukham eva ca*).

The example given is that of the burn caused by hot Ghee.^[6] Here, the Ghee represents the dusya (that which gets corrupt, representing Dhatu – tissue elements / Mala – body waste) and the hot nature represents the dosha. Ghee never causes burn but the hotness in the ghee has caused the burn which clearly indicates that doshas (vaata, pitta & kapha) are the functional matter / elements.

To elaborate it further, what is the difference between Sthanasamsraya (pathological process) and asraya asrayi bhava (physiological pathway) of doshas?

Say for example, Vaata dosha does sthanasamsraya in asthi dhatu (bone tissue). The dosha or abnormality is measured in terms of asatmya nature of guna and karma. Here, the ruksha guna (dry quality of vaata) gets increased more than the optimal level and the kriya (function) of ruksha guna is soshana (to take away the moisture) and thus the snigdhamsha (oily / moist content) is lost, making the bone brittle, thus we say the bone is osteoporotic.^[7] This asatmya guna leading to abnormality is understood as visha.

When we say vaayu resides in asthi in terms of asraya asrayi bhava, it means that to make the asthi dhatu (which is basically kapha nature

and in fact a drava dhatu) into a strong consolidated form, there is the need of ruksha guna for soshana to the optimal level, thus when there is a satmya nature in terms of guna and karma and it is said as vata dhatu (avikrita or it is the amruta).

The visha nature is present in all substances as it is said in the mythological origin of Visha – sthaavara & jangama.^[8] Thus, all substances are poisonous in one or the other way. Its usage, proper or improper makes it compatible or incompatible with life respectively. Say for example, Cow's ghee, the best substance in the management of poison can act as a poison if not administered in the proper avastha – It is suitable in predominance of vaata pitta state besides manda kapha. If completely assimilated it acts as amruta on the other hand if not digested properly as it is given in an improper avastha it acts as visha.^[9] Here toxicity is due to improper stage of administration. Thus, the term "toxicity" though understood easily becomes difficult to define as it is based on multiple factors.

Understanding the term Gada in Agadatantra

The term Gada is synonymous with disease and interestingly to note, it is not just another name of a disease but the disease caused by multi - factorial etiology,^[10] (*Aneka kaarana janyatvaat ...*). Thus, the tantra which brings forth the absence of diseases (A – absence; + gada) caused by varied etiology is to be understood as Agadatantra. This can be further justified by Visha mukta lakshana,^[11] which is identical to swastha lakshana (healthy signs). There is no other substance as potent as poison in neutralizing the poison,^[12] (*Na Visha pratimam kincit nirvishikaranam Vishe*). Further, in all chronic diseases which do not respond to all those mundane treatments, the usage of Visha is the only effective therapy.^[13] Thus, Agadatantra deals with the techniques of treating the ill effects of poisoning besides it

makes use of these poisons judiciously in treating diseases.

Xenobiotic is the general term that is used for a foreign or strange substance taken into the body. It is derived from the Greek term "xeno", which means "foreigner." Hence, Xenobiotics are those, which cannot be broken down to generate energy or be assimilated into a biosynthetic pathway. It includes structurally diverse agents both natural and man-made chemicals, pesticides, alkaloids, secondary plant metabolites and toxins of moulds, plants and animals, besides environmental pollutants.^[14]

The concept of apaaki guna,^[15] (not being assimilated into the body at every level) in visha explains the entire mechanism of Xenobiotics and likewise the Endotoxins. Endotoxins as a result of impaired tissue metabolism or infections (e.g. Granulomatous inflammation). In granulomatous inflammation there is an inflammatory mass or collection of modified macrophages called epitheloid cells.^[16] These epitheloid cells are weakly phagocytic and so remain as doosivisha.

Doosivisha is a unique concept and is so named due to the fact that no medicine can neutralize it (*Oushadhadibhi aveeryam visham doosivisham*). Any type of poison, natural or artificial, when not eliminated completely from the body, the remnant poison attains a state called doosivisha as they manifest by causing plethora of diseases on exposure to incompatible land, time factor, food, lifestyle etc.^[17]

In the sutrasthana of Astaanga samgraha, it is said that doshas after undergoing sakha gati, wait for ideal conditions to manifest,^[18] (*Te kaaladi balam labdhva kupyanti anyasrayeshu api*). This is nothing but the similar concept of doosivisha.

Galen, the Greek physician quotes that “All who drink of this remedy will be cured, except those who die. It is, therefore, evident that, it is an effective remedy, except in those incurable cases.”^[19] The incurability of the diseases at times may be due to Doosivisha, which goes unrecognized with the present day ignorance. Thus, Aacharya ends the verse by saying “doosivisham iti smrtam” (remember that it is due to doosivisham, when the condition manifests due to exposure of secondary aggravating factors).^[20] To tackle this aspect of visha, specific lines of treatment of Doosivisha is the only choice and so the need of Doosivishari agada is significant.

The ten gunas of visha depict the quick nature of spread and severity of affliction. As guna reflects the karma, the potentiality of its action depends on the presence (Qualitative & Quantitative) of maximum guna. Hence, based on karma the manifestation might be acute, chronic or very chronic (praanahara and Doosivisha).^[21]

One of the regional books of Visha cikitsa in Malayalam, namely Kriya Kaumadi mentions that the faulty food habits such as over eating, incompatible foods and intake of food in an indigested state (Ajeerna ašana) can lead to the formation of Doosivisha.

The retention of metabolic waste products (faeces, urine & menstrual blood) in the body will cause re-absorption of toxins into blood stream leading to Doosivisha. Thus, the concept of Visha is not to be ignored in the context of Adharaneeya vega (non suppressible natural urges) and also Dharaniya vegas (Raagaadi etc.) as mentioned earlier.

The concept of Viruddha is to be understood under the similar lines as Gara visha,^[22] (*Virrudham api ca aharam vidyaat visha garopamam*). The formation of Aama (improperly / partially metabolized food) itself is equated to Visha,^[23] (*Kodravebyo vishasya eva vadati aamasya sambhavam*). Thus,

diseases are primarily caused by Aama and hence called as Aamaya. Later, when aama attains the state of Aama visha it denotes the incurable state of visha.^[24] (*Ama dosham maha ghoram varjayeth visa samgyakam*).

The above mechanism is also to be understood in terms of disease chronicity. As the disease gets chronic, it attains a visha swabhava. The healthy body is basically Sheeta (cold – though the body temperature is 36.6 – 37.2 °C, we do not feel it. It is due to this sheeta or cold nature, snigdha (oily nature, both sheeta and snigdha nature represents strength) & agneya in nature (inherent heat), which represents purity – similar to Ojas. Health is at first disturbed by the ushna guna which is evident in the form of Jwara / Sopha (heat & dry principle / Inflammation, Jwara is universal as it not only affects man, but plant, animals, birds, earth, water etc and hence mere translation of jwara into pyrexia or fever doesn't make sense). Further, it is also said that kapha gets into kopa (vitiation) by the presence of ushna guna acting upon the snigdha guna (it is lucidly mentioned right from the beginning as *Piitena hi sleshma dusyata iti drusyate*, Sarvangasundara commentary to kapha kopa in vasanta rtu.^[25]

Though, the healthy body is agneya besides sheeta snigdha, the abnormal ushna triggers the disease process and as the disease gets chronic it turns to sheetha ruksha (Vata roga) and later on, diseases like vata rakta (Rakta the asrayi of Visha). Rakta is Jeeva sonitham which is equated to Asta bindu ojas.^[26]

Thus, after vata rakta, the next possibility is the mental disorders as rakta dusti (vitiation of blood) has happened immensely. It is evident that the mental disorders can be caused by visha and in many of the visha lakshanas, mental abnormalities are explained. Hence, it is clear that Ghruta (Ghee) has to be the drug of choice as it is the best medicine in mental disorders,^[27] as well as in Visha.^[28] Further, in the context of Bhoota graha cikitsa

(Psychiatry), it is mentioned to use Agada prayoga.^[29] This is also true when we look at the indication of Ghruta. This state is generally vata pitta or pitta vata and manda kapha.^[30] Similarly, the usage of Milk is also emphasized.

It is said that visha is opposite to Ojus. Ojus represents the purest form of snigdhatā and this is the ultimate structural constitution that can withhold or keep up agni. “*Dehasthiti nibandhanam, snigdham somatmakam, yannaase niyatam naasah*”. When the purest snigdhatā fails, agni cannot be sustained. In other words, when doshas work as per prakṛti, the srotas remains sīta snigdha and agneya (Strong and pure) and vice versa, which is equated to Visha. Disturbance in this causes jwara, sophā and results in bheda or chronicity, which is characterised by agni naasha and subsequent disintegration.^[31]

The concept of allergen – immunology:

Broadly, visha is classified into akṛitrima and kṛitrima. While akṛitrima are natural poisons, Kṛitrima are artificial visha or man-made, by combining toxic or non-toxic substances to yield a harmful substance (visha). The synonym of kṛitrima visha is gara. The adverse effects that gara visha can produce and the duration for its manifestation depends on the combination used in making it. It may result in death and the duration of manifestation can be acute, chronic or very chronic. On the contrary it may not kill at all but may manifest as sophā, paandu etc.^[32]

Gara visha, as widely believed or projected is intentional, but at times it can also be accidental (unintentional / unforeseen effects) as Acharya Dalhana puts up this idea in his commentary.^[33]

It is Acharya Dalhana, who clearly mentions that gara visha has its domain not only in annapaana (Foods & Drinks) but also can be used in a variety of medium such as in oil,

cloth, ornaments, footwear etc. In the present era, the usage of many chemicals in textiles, cosmetics, footwear, etc gives rise to contact dermatitis in the hypersensitive patient. This explains the entire gamut of allergic as well as irritant contact dermatitis.

In terms of hypersensitivity, it is a well-known fact that visha acts very fast in vaata pitta predominant person. The same can be understood with regard to hypersensitivity, as the flare up being the nature of vaata and pitta dosha. Thus, the individual in contact with visha was also assessed in terms of susceptibility many centuries ago.

What is Sopha / Shotha?

It is not a mere swelling and as such it indicates the ushna nature or the inflammatory principle at various grades. Thus, we have the chapter trishotheeya in Caraka sutrasthana, where Acharya says that all the diseases are basically shotha and mentions that it is not the naming of the disease but understanding the doshas, which is quite important.^[34]

Sopha also has a wide meaning and as Acharya Susruta quotes that the lakshana of vṛana is applicable to all the disorders, which has started due to Sopha.^[35] Vṛana means to depart (Vrunoti). The importance of vṛana is explained by Acharya Susruta in the chapter Vṛanaprasna Adhyaya. It is in this chapter the fundamentals of Ayurveda in the form of Dosha, Dhatu, Mala and Shad kriya kala have been mentioned. The bottom line is that Ayurveda is basically vṛana prasna (The question of Ulceration) – the ways and means of how body deteriorates from birth to death. The answer is in the form of healthy principles which Ayurveda specifies to each and every individual in the form of personalized medicine. Thus, one man’s food may become another man’s poison.

In Ayurveda, the concept of Sopha forms the fundamental basis as it covers all pathological

progressions. It starts with vidaha (improper combination of ushna (heat) & snigdha (oily nature) and progresses into jvara. The inflammation continues to be interpreted into vata / vata rakta stage and upto where the degeneration results in vrana of bhedavastha. The bhedavastha also refers to the chronicity of diseases.

If Sotha is all the disease / single progression of vidaha to Vrana (disintegration of the body) then, one can find something very interesting in the management of Sotha. If we look at the Sopha cikitsa of Caraka samhita chapter 12, verse 4, it is mentioned that the synonym of Ayurveda is none other than Agadaveda.^[36] Thus, the term Agadaveda justifies all the above explanations without any second thought.

CONCLUSION

Raagadi roga (the mental states of desire, fear, anger, greed etc) are said to be the Maha visha (worst poisons). Poison and nectar are one and the same thing. The judicious use of anything makes it nectar and vice versa. The doshas in their vitiated form is similar to visha and in their prakrta (normal) state makes it dhatu or amruta (nectar). Agadatantra is not mere toxicology. It is in fact the absence of disease, which depicts health in its true sense which is evident from visha mukta lakshana which is none other than Swastha lakshana. Thus, Ayurveda is also known as Agadaveda.

REFERENCES

1. Agnivesha. Caraka Samhita (Ayurveda Deepika commentary by Cakrapaanidatta). Yadavji Trikamji Acharya, editor. 5th ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan; 2001.p.189.
2. Susruta. Susruta samhita (Nibandhasamgraha commentary by Dalhana). Yadavji Yadavji Trikamji Acharya, editor. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Krishnadas Academy; 2004.p.344.
3. Ibid. p.559.
4. Agnivesha. Caraka Samhita (Ayurveda Deepika commentary by Cakrapaanidatta). Yadavji Trikamji

- Acharya, editor. 5th ed. Varanasi: Chowkhambasanskrit sansthan: 2001.p 23.
5. Ibid. p.570.
6. Vagbhata. Astaanga hrdaya (Sarvangasundara & Ayurveda rasayana commentaries by Arunadatta & Hemadri). Harishastri Paradhar, editor. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Krishnadas academy; 2006.p.7.
7. Vagbhata. Astanga samgraha (Sasilekha commentary by Indu). Shiv Prasad Sharma, editor. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office; 2008.p.150.
8. Ibid. p 842.
9. Ibid.p. 6.
10. Vagbhata. Astaanga hrdaya (Sarvangasundara & Ayurveda rasayana commentaries by Arunadatta & Hemadri). Harishastri Paradhar, editor. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Krishnadas academy; 2006.p. 560.
11. Ibid.p. 440.
12. Vridha Vagbhata. Astanga samgraha (Sasilekha commentary by Indu). Shiv Prasad Sharma, editor. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office; 2008.p. 903.
13. Ibid. p.904.
14. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/medical/xenobiotic> [Accessed on: 05/10/2012]
15. Vridha Vagbhata. Astanga samgraha (Sasilekha commentary by Indu). Shiv Prasad Sharma, editor. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office; 2008.p.905.
16. Harsh Mohan. Textbook of Pathology. 5th ed. New Delhi: Jaypee brothers medical Publishers; 2005.p.153.
17. Vagbhata. Astaanga hrdaya (Sarvangasundara & Ayurveda rasayana commentaries by Arunadatta & Hemadri). Harishastri Paradhar, editor. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Krishnadas Academy; 2006.p.902.
18. Susruta. Susruta samhita (Nibandhasamgraha commentary by Dalhana). Yadavji Yadavji Trikamji Acharya, editor. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba krishnadas Academy; 2004.p.565.
19. www.healthskepticism.org/global/quotes/list/prescribing [Accessed on: 05/10/2012]
20. Vridha Vagbhata. Astanga samgraha (Sasilekha commentary by Indu). Shiv Prasad Sharma, editor. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office; 2008.p.847.
21. Ibid.p.844.
22. Vridha Vagbhata. Astaanga Samgraha (Sasilekha Commentary by Indu). Sharma S, editor. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Series Office; 2008, Sutrasthana, 19/25.p.154.
23. Vagbhata. Astaanga Hrdaya (Commentaries sarvangasundara & Ayurveda rasayana of

- Arunadatta & Hemadri respectively). Paradhar H, editor. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Krishnadas Academy; 2006, Sutrasthana, 7/29. p.133.
24. Ibid. Sutrasthana, 13/26.p.216.
 25. Ibid. Sutrasthana, 8/14.p.150.
 26. Ibid. Sutrasthana, 1/6.p.6.
 27. Vridha Vagbhata. Astaanga Samgraha (Sasilekha Commentary by Indu). Sharma S, editor. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Series Office; 2008, Sutrasthana, 1/21.p.6.
 28. Vagbhata. Astaanga Hrdaya (Commentaries sarvangasundara & Ayurveda rasayana of Arunadatta & Hemadri respectively). Paradhar H, editor. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Krishnadas Academy; 2006, Uttrasthana, 40/51.p.944.
 29. Ibid. Uttrasthana, 35/69.p.907.
 30. Ibid. Uttrasthana, 5/13.p.794.
 31. Vridha Vagbhata. Astanga samgraha (Sasilekha commentary by Indu). Shiv Prasad Sharma, editor. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office; 2008.p.154.
 32. Vagbhata. Astaanga Hrdaya (Commentaries sarvangasundara & Ayurveda rasayana of Arunadatta & Hemadri respectively). Paradhar H, editor. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Krishnadas Academy; 2006, Cikitsasthana, 1/82.p.560.
 33. Ibid. Uttarasthana, 35/6.p.902.
 34. Agnivesha. Caraka Samhita (Ayurveda Deepika commentary by Cakrapaanidatta). Yadavji Trikamji Acharya, editor. 5th ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan; 2001.p.106.
 35. Susruta. Susruta Samhita (Nibandhasamgraha Commentary by Dalhana). , editor. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Krishnadas Academy; 2004, Sutrasthana, 22/13.p.110.
 36. Agnivesha. Caraka Samhita (Ayurveda Deepika commentary by Cakrapaanidatta). Yadavji Trikamji Acharya, editor. 5th ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan; 2001.p.482.

Source of Support: Nil

Conflict of Interest: None Declared