



## Review Article

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**A REVIEW ON VISHAHARA DRAVYAS (ALEXETERICS) OF DHANVANTARI NIGHANTU**Reshmi Pushpan <sup>1\*</sup>, Smitha Jain <sup>2</sup>, Anitha MG <sup>3</sup>, Nishteswar K <sup>4</sup><sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Agada Tantra Department, SDM Institute of Ayurveda & Hospital, Bengaluru, India<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Agada Tantra Department, SDM Institute of Ayurveda & Hospital, Bengaluru, India<sup>3</sup>Professor, Agada Tantra Department, SDM Institute of Ayurveda & Hospital, Bengaluru, India<sup>4</sup>Professor, Dravyaguna Department, Shri Bhanwarlal Dugar Ayurvedic College, Rajasthan, India

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**ABSTRACT**

As per WHO report 80% of the world population is dependent on traditional medicines for primary health care. Envenoming is an important public health hazard in countries like India as access to anti venoms are yet to be streamlined in rural parts where the occurrence of such hazards are common. Medicinal plants, animal products, metals and minerals have always been the sources of medicine in India through various systems of medicine including Ayurveda. Dhanvantari nighantu is the oldest nighantu on drugs dealing with synonyms, properties and activity of drugs available at present. This paper is an attempt to focus on the information recorded in Dhanvantari nighantu on vishahara dravya.

**Keywords:** Ayurveda, vishahara, Dhanvantari Nighantu, medicinal plants, anti venom.

**INTRODUCTION**

Medicinal herbs are the local heritage with global importance.<sup>1</sup> There is a growing demand for plant based medicines, health products, pharmaceuticals, food supplements, cosmetics etc. Various plants have been used against snake bite, in folk and traditional medicine.<sup>2</sup> The materia medica of Ayurveda comprises of vegetable, animal, metals & minerals drugs. Ayurveda identified that mind and body as the sites of manifestation of diseases basing on the etiological factors of the diseases and classified as exogenous and endogenous in origin. Visha is considered as one of the external factors for the causation of exogenous disease (Agantuja vyadhi). The subject related to herbal medicine described in Ayurvedic classics is

drawing the attention of modern scientists for carrying out research studies with a proper scientific validation. Nighantu have been written to emphasize on the identification and therapeutic properties of medicinal plants. Dhanvantari nighantu is the oldest nighantu dealing with synonyms and properties of drugs available at present.<sup>3</sup> This text is believed to be composed prior to 13<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>4</sup> This review is an attempt to focus on the information recorded in Dhanvantari nighantu on Vishahara dravyas. Drugs from Dhanvantari Nighantu<sup>5,6</sup> were screened for the action *Vishahara*. Obtained data is presented as per vishahara action with respect to herbal, mineral and animal origin drugs which belong to different vargas (chapter wise classification). The botanical names of the plants were updated according to the plantlist (www.plantlist.org).

**Table 1: Vishahara plants (Alexeterics) of Guduchyadi varga- Plant**

Drug name	Botanical source	Action
Kanda guduchi	<i>Tinospora cordifolia</i> (Thunb.) Miers	Vishahara
Ativisha	<i>Aconitum heterophyllum</i> Wall. ex Royle	Vishavinashini
Manjishtha	<i>Rubia cordifolia</i> L.	Visham jayet
Jala mustam (Saivala)	<i>Cyperus esculentus</i> L.	Vishaapaha
Haridra	<i>Curcuma longa</i> L.	Vishanut
Patha	<i>Cyclea peltata</i> (Lam.) Hook.f. & Thomson	Vishaghni
Ajasringi	<i>Gymnema sylvestre</i> R. Br.	Vishanut
Prishniparni visesha	<i>Uraria picta</i> (Jacq.) DC.	Vishaghni
Kashmarya	<i>Gmelina arborea</i> L.	Vishaam jayet
Madhuyashti	<i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i> L.	Vishanashini
Katukaalaambu	<i>Lagenaria siceraria</i> (Molina) Standl.	Visharte for vamaana
Jeemutaka	<i>Luffa echinata</i> Roxb.	Vishavidhwamsi, Gareshu vamaane hita
Vandhyakarkotaki	<i>Momordica dioica</i> Roxb. ex Willd.	Visham hanti
Dhamargava	<i>Luffa cylindrica</i> M. Roemer.	Gare
Koshataki	<i>Luffa acutangula</i> (L.) Roxb.	Garaadishu
Dravanti	<i>Croton tiglium</i> L.	Gare
Nilini	<i>Indigofera tinctoria</i> L.	Visham hanti
Snuhi ksheera	<i>Euphorbia nerifolia</i> L.	Visha
Swarnaksheeri	<i>Euphorbia thomsoniana</i> Boiss.	Vishapaha
Ankola	<i>Alangium salviifolium</i> (L.f.) Wangerin	Kukkuraakhu visham hanti, Jantu vishaapaha, Vishahrit
Raktapamarga	<i>Cyathula prostrata</i> (L.) Blume	Vishaghna
Rasna	<i>Pluchea lanceolata</i> (DC.) C.B. Clarke	Vishajit
Ashwagandha	<i>Withania somnifera</i> (L.) Dunal	Visham hanti

**Table 2: Vishahara plants (Alexeterics) of Satapushpadi varga**

Drug name	Botanical source	Action
Vidanga	<i>Embelia ribes</i> Burm.f.	Vishan hanti
Yavakshara	<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	Vishadoshahara
Bhadrela/Brihadela	<i>Amomum subulatum</i> Roxb.	Vishaan
Nagakesara	<i>Mesua ferrea</i> L.	Vishaghna
Twak	<i>Cinnamomum zeylanicum</i> Nees	Vishaapaham
Shuklajaji	<i>Cuminum cyminum</i> L.	Vishamhantri
Yavani	<i>Anethum graveolens</i> L.	Vishamayaan

**Table 3: Vishahara plants (Alexeterics) of Chandanadi varga**

Drug name	Botanical source	Action
Chandana	<i>Santalum album</i> L.	Vishaghna
Kumkuma	<i>Crocus sativus</i> L.	Vishahrit
Karpura	<i>Cinnamomum camphora</i> (L.) J.Presl.	Vishadoshaghna
Jatipatri	<i>Myristica fragrans</i> Houtt.	Vishahrit
Lavanga	<i>Syzygium aromaticum</i> (L.) Merrill & Perry	Vishahrit
Nalika	Stalk of <i>Nelumbo nucifera</i> Gaertn.	Vishanashini
Mamsi	<i>Nardostachys jatamansi</i> (D.Don) DC	Vishahrit
Kushta	<i>Saussurea lappa</i> (Decne.) Sch.Bip.	Visham nashayet
Tagaram	<i>Valeriana wallichii</i> DC.	Visha doshaghna
Nakha	<i>Martynia annua</i> L.	Visham hanti
Sprkka	<i>Melilotus officinalis</i> (L.) Pall.	Visham hanti
Damana	<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i> L.	Vishaghna
Choraka	<i>Angelica glauca</i> Edgew.	Vishaantakaraka
Saileya	<i>Parmelia perlata</i>	Vishanashana
Elavaluka	<i>Gisekia Pharnaceoides</i> L.	Vishavidhwansana
Lamajjaka	<i>Andropogon jwarancusa</i> Jones	Vishanashana
Padmaka	<i>Prunus cerasoides</i> D.Don	Vishaapaha
Dhataki	<i>Woodfordia fruticosa</i> (L.) Kurz	Vishanashini
Chakshushya	<i>Cassia absus</i> L.	Visham sthavara jangamam
Rasanjana	<i>Berberis aristata</i> DC.	Vishaapaha
Kataka	<i>Strychnos potatorum</i> L.f.	Vishanashana
Lodhra	<i>Symplocos racemosa</i> Roxb.	Visha vidhwansana
Kramuka(Lodhra visesha)	<i>Areca catechu</i> L.	Vishahrit

**Table 4: Vishahara plants (Alexeterics) of Karaveeradi varga**

Drug name	Botanical source	Action
Bhringaraja	<i>Eclipta alba</i> L.	Vishanashana
Rajarka	<i>Calotropis gigantea</i> (L.) W.T.Aiton	Vishapaha
Kakajangha	<i>Peristrophe paniculata</i> (Forssk.) Brummitt	Vishadoshahara
Chudamani(Kakamachi bheda)	<i>Abrus precatorius</i> L.	Vishaghni
Mulaka	<i>Raphanus sativus</i> (L.) Domin.	Vishadoshahara
Shigru	<i>Moringa oleifera</i> Lam.	Vishaghna
Jambeera	<i>Citrus medica</i> L.	Sughoram krtrimam visham
Kuteraka	<i>Ocimum tenuifolium</i> L.	Dwividham cha visham hanyat
Shaluka	<i>Nelumbo nucifera</i> Gaertn.	Krtrimama cha visham hanyu
Sumukha	<i>Ocimum gratissimum</i> L.	Vishanashana
Kandeera	<i>Ranunculus scleratus</i> L.	Luta visha
Jalapippali	<i>Phylla nodiflora</i> (L.) Greene	Vishahara
Shephalika	<i>Nyctanthes arbor-tristis</i> L.	Vishaghna
Ashwakhura	<i>Clitoria ternatea</i> L.	Vishadoshahara
Jantukaari	<i>Gardenia resinifera</i> Roth	Hanti visha yogam prayogataha
Gushti	<i>Dioscorea</i> sps.	Garaartijit
Nakuli	<i>Aristolochia bracteolata</i> Lam.	Mushikasya visham hanti
Gandhanakuli	<i>Ophiorrhiza mungos</i> L.	Vrischikodbhava sarpadi vishaghni
Sankhapushpi	<i>Convolvulus prostratus</i> Forssk	Visham hanti
Tanduleeyaka	<i>Amaranthus spinosus</i> L.	Vishaghna

**Table 5: Vishahara plants (Alexeterics) of Amradi varga**

Drug name	Botanical name	Action
Kadamba	<i>Anthocephalus cadamba</i> (Roxb.)	Vishapaha
Udakirya	<i>Holoptelea integrifolia</i> Planch.	Vishanashana
Sireesha	<i>Albizia lebbek</i> (L.) Benth.	Vishaha
Roheetaka	<i>Tecomella undulata</i> (Sm.) Seem.	Visha vega vishanashana
Champaka	<i>Michelia champaca</i> L.	Vishaha

Table 6: Vishahara plants (Alexeterics) of Suvarnadi varga

Drug name	Botanical name	Action
Kodrava	<i>Paspalum scrobiculatum</i> L.	Visham jayet
Shyamaka	<i>Echinochloa frumentaceae</i> Link.	Vishadoshanut
Koshamra taila	<i>Schleichera oleosa</i> (Lour.) Merr.	Vishapaha
Navaneeta	butter from cow's milk	Vishahara

Table 7: Animal products with Vishahara property in Dhanvantari Nighantu

Drug name	Botanical name	Action
Gorochana	Bezoar	Visham jayet
Kasturi	<i>M. moschiferus</i>	Vishaghni
Pravala	Coral	Vishanashaya
Goghrita	Clarified butter from cow's milk	Vishaghna
Ushtra ghrita	Clarified butter from camel milk	Vishapaha
Stree ghrita	Clarified butter from human milk	Vishapaha
Hastini ghrita	Clarified butter from elephant milk	Vishahara
Purana ghrita	Clarified butter from cow's milk	Vishahara
Takra	Butter milk from cow's milk	Garahara
Navaneeta	butter from cow's milk	Vishahara

Table 8: Mineral and metal products with Vishahara property in Dhanvantari Nighantu

Drug name	Scientific name	Action
Roupya	Argentum	Vishaghna
Ritika	Brass	Vishaghna
Hingula	Cinnabar/Mercuric sulphide	Vishaghna
Marakata	Emerald/Beryl	Vishaghna
Tankanakshara	Borax/Sodium tetraborate	Sthavaradi vishaghna
Manashila	Arsenic disulphide	Vishanashini
Sindura	Red oxide of mercury/lead tetra oxide	Vishaapaha
Saurashtri	Alum/Potassium aluminium sulfate	Vishaapaha
Gandhaka	Sulphur	Vishaghna
Kaseesa	Ferrous sulphate	Visham hanti
Pushpakaseesa	Ferrous sulphate	Vishaghna
Tuttha	Copper sulphate	Visha vega prashamana
Hema makshika	Chalcopyrite/copper iron sulphide	Vishaapaha
Anjana	Lead sulphide	Visha vikaraghna, Vishaapaha
Pushpanjana	Zinc oxide	Visham nirvishataam jayet
Gairika	Red ochre/hematite	Vishaapaha
Swarnagairika	Red ochre/hematite	Vishaghna

Table 9: Drugs with specific Vishahara karmas

Drug	Indication	Interpretation
Jeemutaka	Akhu vishaha	Rat poison
Ankola	Kukkuraakhu visham hanti	Rabies and rat poison
Tankana kshara	Sthavaradi vishaghna	All vegetable poison
Chakshushya	Visham jangama sthavaram	Both animal and vegetable poison
Jambeera	Sughoram kritrimam visham	Artificial poison / synthetic poison
Shaluka	Kritrimam cha visham hanyu	Artificial poison / synthetic poison
Kandeera	Luta visha	Spider poison
Nakuli	Mushikasya visham hanti	Rat poison
Roheetaka	Visha vega vinashana	Stops progression of visha
Gandha nakuli	Vrischikodbhava sarpadi vishghni	Scorpion sting & snake bite

## DISCUSSION

Out of the 373 drugs enlisted in the nighantu, atleast 30% (109) are observed to possess vishahara activity with the highest number i.e. 37 in Chandanadi gana, 23 in Guduchyadi gana, 20 in Karaveeradi gana, 15 in Suvarnadi gana, 8 in Satapushpadi, 5 in amradi, and one drug in the mishraka gana.

It is notable that no drug has been specifically mentioned as effective against snake venom. Ten drugs have been highlighted with specific indications in combating particular type of envenomation or poisoning. Jeemutaka (*Luffa echinata* Roxb.) has been attributed the synonyms Garaagari and Akhuvishaha in Dhanvantari nighantu emphasizing its role as an important drug in the management of poison. Tender fruits (Apragaadha) of Koshataki (*Luffa acutangula*) is suggested to be best for

administration. Ankola (*Alangium salviifolium*) is the only single drug mentioned for rabies in Dhanvantari Nighantu which is also useful in rat poison. Tankana kshara (Borax) is to be considered as one of the most important antidote in all vegetable poison. The drug Chakshushya (*Cassia absus*) is the only drug mentioned as an antidote for both animal and vegetable poison. The drug Sumukha (*Ocimum gratissimum* L.) is attributed the synonym Garaghna. The drug Gandhanakuli is attributed the synonym Vishamardhini. All these clearly indicate the importance given to the identification and understanding of Vishahara dravyas in Dhanvantari nighantu. *Achyranthes aspera*, *Eclipta alba*, *Curcuma longa*, *Alangium salviifolium*, *Peristrophe paniculata*, *Amarathus spinosus*, *Clitorea ternatea*, *Aristolochia indica/bracteata*, *Mesua ferrea* etc mentioned in the nighantu are also used by local healers or tribals to treat snake bite.<sup>7,8,9,10</sup> Research studies have been conducted on drugs

such as *Eclipta alba*, *Acacia catechu*, *Pluchea indica*, *Curcuma longa*, *Aristolochia*, *Withania somnifera*, *Abrus precatorius*, *Alangium salvifolium*, *Aristolochia bracteata* or *A.indica*, *Calotropis gigantea* and *Clitoria ternatea* to show its inhibitory effect on snake venom.<sup>11</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Ayurvedic texts quote that Ojas, prime substance which imparts immunity to the body is vitiated by Visha (toxic substance or poison). Visha with its ten gunas (attributes) neutralizes gunas of Ojas leading to impaired immunity and death. Visha may be produced endogenously in the form of Amavisha (undigested toxic substance) and also may enter through external sources. Visha may produce allergic reactions as well as immunodeficiency. It may be interpreted that vishahara drugs may possess antihistaminic and immunomodulatory activities. The drugs from natural source such as Jeemutaka, Ankola, Tankana kshara, Jambeera, Nakuli, Gandhanakuli are to be investigated with emphasis to their specific anti-venom activity and also with respect to anti-inflammatory, antihistaminic and immunomodulatory activities. The herbal alternatives for Anti-snake venom and other anti venoms could take leads from ancient lexicons such as Dhanvantari nighantu for anti-venom new drug development.

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