Review Article

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VISHAGHNA YOGAS IN ASHTANGA HRIDAYA: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, emphasizes the maintenance of physical, mental, and spiritual health through a holistic approach to life and disease management. Ashtanga Hridaya is regarded as one of the most authoritative classical compendia of Ayurveda, comprehensively describing the eight branches of Ayurvedic medicine. Among these, Damshtra specifically deals with toxicology and the management of poisoning conditions. Vishaghna yogas (antitoxic formulations) and Agadas have been described in Ashtanga Hridaya for the prevention and treatment of various toxic manifestations. The text is systematically organized into six major sections, namely Sutrasthana, Sharirasthana, Nidanasthana, Chikitsitsthana, Kalpasiddhisthana, and Uttarasthana. Detailed references related to poisons, their clinical manifestations, and therapeutic management are predominantly found in the relevant chapters of Sutrasthana, Chikitsitsthana, Kalpasiddhisthana, and Uttarasthana. The present review article aims to systematically compile, categorize, and present all the Vishaghna yogas described in Ashtanga Hridaya in a comprehensive and organized manner, thereby highlighting their significance in Ayurvedic toxicology and clinical practice.

Keywords: Ashtanga Hridaya, Vishaghna Yoga, Damshtra, Toxicity, Agada

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, is a holistic science that aims to preserve and promote the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of individuals. Its primary objectives are the maintenance of health in healthy individuals and the management of diseases in the diseased. These principles are comprehensively elaborated in the classical Ayurvedic compendium Ashtanga Hridaya, which is regarded as one of the most practical and systematically organized texts of Ayurveda. The text is systematically divided into six sthanas (sections)- Sutrasthana, Sharirasthana, Nidanasthana, Chikitsitsthana, Kalpasiddhisthana, and Uttarasthana- each addressing distinct aspects of Ayurvedic principles and clinical practice, thereby providing a comprehensive framework for the understanding of health and disease.

Classically, Ayurveda is categorized into eight major branches, namely Kayachikitsa, Balroga, Grahachikitsa, Urdhwanga Chikitsa, Shalya Tantra, Damshtra, Rasayana, and Vajikarana[1]. Among these, Damshtra, also known as Agada Tantra, is the specialized branch concerned with the study, diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of poisons and toxicological conditions. Toxicology occupies a significant place in the Ashtanga Hridaya, where extensive descriptions of Visha (poison), its properties, symptomatology, complications, and therapeutic approaches are provided. The text also describes numerous Vishaghna Yogas and Agadas (anti-toxic formulations) intended for the management of different types of poisoning and toxic manifestations. These formulations reflect the depth of Ayurvedic understanding of toxicology and its therapeutic strategies.

The present review article emphasizes a comprehensive analysis of the references to Vishaghna Yogas and Agadas described throughout the Ashtanga Hridaya. By compiling and critically evaluating these formulations across various sections of the text, the study seeks to elucidate their therapeutic significance and clinical relevance in the management of toxic as well as other disease conditions.

Vishaghna Yogas in Classical Text Ashtanga Hridaya

Ashtanga Hridaya is one of the principal classical texts of Ayurveda, authored by Vagbhata. The text systematically consolidates and refines the teachings of earlier Ayurvedic treatises, particularly Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita, into a concise, well-organized, and poetically composed compendium of Ayurvedic principles and clinical practice. Owing to its clarity, brevity, and practical orientation, it continues to serve as a fundamental text in contemporary Ayurvedic education and practice.

Damshtra, also known as Agada Tantra, represents the branch of Ayurveda that deals with toxicology. In the classical text Ashtanga Hridaya, this discipline is elaborated with a systematic approach to the understanding and management of toxic substances. The term Agada Tantra is composed of two words: Agada and Tantra. The word Agada is derived from Gada, which denotes both Roga (disease) and Visha (poison). Thus, Agada refers to a therapeutic substance or formulation capable of counteracting disease or neutralizing poison. In this context, Dravya (substance) that induces Vishada (distress or sorrow) is termed as Visha (poison).

Formulations designed to counteract such toxic effects are known as Vishaghna Yogas (antitoxic formulations). Poisons are described as possessing eleven characteristic properties: Teekshna (sharp), Ushna (hot), Ruksha (dry), Vishada (clear/non-slimy), Vyavayi (quickly spreading), Aashukari (rapid-acting), Laghu (light), Vikasi (diffusive), Sookshma (subtle), Avyakta Rasa (indefinable taste) and Vishampaki (Indigestible)[2]. Therapeutic formulations that antagonize these properties of Visha are termed Vishaghna Yogas. The Ashtanga Hridaya describes various such formulations across its sections, emphasizing their role in the effective management of poisoning and toxic conditions.

The Vishaghna Yogas described in Ashtanga Hridaya are presented in Tables 1-4.

Table 1: Vishaghna Yogas in Ashtanga Hridaya Sutrasthana

Vishaghna Yoga	Indications	Route of Administration	Classical References
Takra[3]	Gara Visha	Pana	A.H.Su. 5/34-35
Ghrita[3]	Visha	Pana	A.H.Su. 5/37-39
Madhu[3]	Visha	Pana	A.H.Su. 5/52-53
Mutra Varga[3]	Visha	Pana	A.H.Su. 5/80-81
Kordusha[4]	Visha	Pana	A.H.Su. 6/13
Nishpav[4]	Visha	Pana	A.H.Su. 6/20
Varshambho, Kalshakam[4]	Gara Visha	Pana	A.H.Su. 6/97
Sumukho[4]	Gara Visha	Pana	A.H.Su. 6/108
Kapitha[4]	Visha	Pana	A.H.Su. 6/126
Haritaki[4]	Gara Visha	Pana	A.H.Su. 6/ 153-157
Sevyachandanadi lepa[5]	Vishayukta anna Sparsha	Pralepa	A.H.Su. 7/19-20
Sevyachandanadi Gandush[5]	Mukhagata Visha	Gandusha	A.H.Su.7/21
Haridrakatabhyadi Yoga[5]	Amashaya gata Visha	Navana Nasya, Anjana, Pana	A.H.Su. 7/22-26
Sukshma Tamra Raja and Hemachurna[5]	Visha Bhakshana- Gara Visha	Pana	A.H.Su. 7/27-28
Madhura Rasa and Madhura Gana[6]	Visha	Pana	A.H.Su. 10/6-8 A.H.Su. 10/22-24
Tikta Rasa and Tikta Gana[6]	Visha vikara	Pana	A.H.Su. 10/14 A.H.su. 10/28-29
Anjanadi Gana[7]	Visha	Anjana	A.H.Su. 15/14
Patoladi Gana[7]	Visha	Pana	A.H.Su. 15/15
Aragwadhadi Gana[7]	Visha	Pana	A.H.S. 15/17-18
Rodhradi Gana[8]	Visha	Pana	A.H.Su.15/ 27
Arkadi Gana[8]	Visha	Pana	A.H.Su. 15/28
Eladi Gana[9]	Visha	Pana	A.H.Su.15/ 43-44
Shyamadi Gana[9]	Visha	Pana	A.H.Su.15/ 45
Sarpi/ Paya[10]	Visha	Gandusha	A.H.Su. 22/6
Kshara[11]	Visha	Pana	A.H.Su. 30/3

Table 2: Vishaghna Yogas in Ashtanga Hridaya Chikitsitsthana

Vishaghna Yoga	Indications	Route of Administration	Classical References
Ghanchandanadi Yoga[12]	Vishajanya Jwara	Pana	A.H.Chi 1/15
Triphalashyamadi modaka[12]	Vishaj Jwara	Pana	A.H.Chi. 1/99
Vyoshadi Virechana[12]	Vishaj Jwara	Pana	A.H.Chi. 1/100
Aaragwadh virechan[12]	Vishaj Jwara	Pana	A.H.Chi. 1/101
Abhayarishta[13]	Gara Visha	Pana	A.H.Chi 8/64-67
Putikaranjadi Chukra[13]	Visha, Gara Visha	Pana	A.H.Chi 8/145-148
Hingwadi Choorna[14]	Visha, Gara Visha	Pana	A.H.Chi 10/53-55
Dashmoolshathiyadi Choorna[15]	Gara Visha	Pana	A.H.Chi 12/19-24
Dantileha[16]	Gara Visha	Pana	A.H.Chi 14/92-95
Kshara Agada[16]	Aakhu Visha, Gara Visha	Pana	A.H.Chi 14/102-106
Narayana Choorna[17]	Danshtra Visha, Mool Visha, Dushi Visha, Gara Visha	Pana	A.H.Chi 15/14-21
Haritaki Ghruta[17]	Gara Visha	Pana	A.H.Chi 15/28-30
Snuhisiddha Ghrita[17]	Gara Visha	Pana	A.H.Chi 15/31-37
Tapyadi Yoga[18]	Visha	Pana	A.H.Chi 16/20-22
Kutajadi Gud[18]	Gara Visha	Pana	A.H.Chi 16/23-28
Dashmooladi Leha[19]	Gara Visha	Leha	A.H.Chi 17/14-16
Patolmuladi Kwatha[19]	Visha	Pana	A.H.Chi 17/31-32
Tiktak Ghrut[20]	Gara Visha	Pana	A.H.Chi 19/2-6

Table 3: Vishaghna Yogas in Ashtanga Hridaya Kalpasiddhisthana

Vishaghna Yoga	Indications	Route Of Administration	Classical References
Ishwaku Vamana[21]	Visha, Kritrim Visha	Pana	A.H.K. 1/27-31
Vyoshadi Gulika[22]	Visha Vikara	Pana	A.H.K 2/21-23
Sudha /Snuhi[22]	Dushi Visha	Pana	A.H.K 2/42-46
Saptala -Shankhini[22]	Visharoga	Pana	A.H.K 2/49-5
Danti-Dravanti[22]	Kritrim Visha	Pana	A.H.K 2/51-56

Table 4: Vishaghna Yogas in Ashtanga Hridaya Uttarsthana

Vishaghna Yoga	Indications	Route of Administration	Classical References
Siddharthakvachadi Yoga[23]	Visha	Pana, Anjana, Lepa, Snana, Udvartana	A.H.U 5/10-12
Siddharthakvyoshadi choorna[23]	Sarpa Visha, Vishayukta shastra aaghata	Anjana, Nasya, Lepa	A.H.U 5/15-17
Naktamaal-shirishadi Agada[23]	Rakshograha	Nasya, Anjana	A.H.U 5/41-42
Varavishaladi yoga[24]	Visha, Krutrim Visha	Pana	A.H.U 6/26-31
Koshyatakadi Yavagu[25]	Visha vega	Pana	A.H.U 35/21-22
Chandroday Agada[25]	Visha	Pana, Nasya, Anjan, Lepa, Bandahan	A.H.U 35/24-32
Dushi Vishari Agada[25]	Dushi Visha	Pana	A.H.U 35/38-39
Tapyasuvarna leha[25]	Gara Visha	Lehana	A.H.U 35/56
Moorvadi Yoga[25]	Gara Visha	Pana	A.H.U 35/57-58
Paravatmishadi yoga[25]	Gara Visha	Pana	A.H.U 35/59
Ghrita[25]	Sarva Visha	Pana	A.H.U 35/69
Ghrita Kshoudram Agada[26]	Hridaysamrakshan	Pana	A.H.U 36/54
Sinduvarimuladi[26]	Darveekar Damsha	Pana	A.H.U 36/57
Sakapala (Kushtha) with madhu[26]	Darveekar Damsha	Nasya	A.H.U 36/57
Charati (Gunja) Nakuli[26]	Krushna sarpa	Lepa	A.H.U 36/58
Kshoudramanjishthagrahadhuma with Ghrit[26]	Krushna sarpa	Pana	A.H.U 36/59
Tanduliyakadi Agada[26]	Rajimant visha	Pana, Nasya, Anjana	A.H.U 36/60
Sugandhadi Agada[26]	Visha, Mandali Visha	Pana	A.H.U 36/61-62
Himvan Agada[26]	Mandali sarp Visha	Lepa	A.H.U 36/63-64
Kashmaryavatadi kalka[26]	Mandali visha	Pana	A.H.U 36/65
Vanshatvakadi Agada[26]	Gonas visha	Pana	A.H.U 36/66
Katukaativishadi Yoga[27]	Raajimant Visha	Pana	A.H.U36/67
Puran Ghrit with Vara churna[27]	Kandachitra Sarpa Damsha	Pana	A.H.U 36/69
Karaviradi Yoga[27]	Vyantar Sarpa Visha	Pana	A.H.U36/70-71
Shirishpushpa Yoga[27]	Sarpa Visha	Pana, Nasya, Anjana,	A.H.U36/72
Natakushthadi Yoga[27]	Takshak Sarpa Visha	Pana	A.H.U36/73
Tvagadi Agada[27]	Visha	Pana	A.H.U36/82-83
Bilvadi Agada[27]	GaraVisha, Sarpa, Luta, Aakhu, Vrishchik Visha	Pana, Nasya, Anjana,	A.H.U 36/84-85
Seetavaigandhik Yoga[27]	Sarpangabhihat, ShankaVisha	Pana	A.H.U 36/89
Nrukeshasarshapadi Yoga[28]	Visaha Damsha	Dhoopana	A.H.U 37/23
Tanduliyakadi Yoga[28]	Keeta Visha	Pana	A.H.U 37/25
Ksheerivrukshatvak Lepa[28]	Keeta Visha	Lepa	A.H.U 37/26
Dashang Agada[28]	Keeta Visha	Pana	A.H.U 37/28
Chakratail[28]	Keeta Visha	Sechana	A.H.U 37/29
Vidarigandha Siddha Tail[28]	Keeta Visha	Sechana	A.H.U 37/29
Sarpa lavanyukta, Aarnal Sakheer Lavana[28]	Keeta Visha	Sechana	A.H.U 37/30
Saindhavadi Upnaha[28]	Keeta Visha	Upnaaha	A.H.U 37/31
Rajanisandhavadi yoga[28]	Damsha	Pratisarana	A.H.U 37/31
Matulungadi Lepa[28]	Keeta Visha	Lepa	A.H.U 37/32
Paaravatshakrutadi Yoga[28]	Vrushchik Visha	Pana	A.H.U 37/34
Hingwadi Gutika[28]	Vrushchik Visha	Lepa, Anjana	A.H.U 37/35
Karanjadi Yoga[28]	Vrushchik Visha	Lepa	A.H.U 37/36
Nagaradi Yoga[28]	Vrushchik Visha	Lepa	A.H.U 37/40
Vishalepa[28]	Vrushchik Visha	Lepa	A.H.U 37/41
Naagpurishadi Lepa[28]	Vrushchik Visha	Lepa	A.H.U 37/42
Shireeshbijadi Yoga[28]	Keeta, Sarpa, Aakhu, Vrushchik Visha	Pana, Lepa	A.H.U 37/43
Shireeshpushpadi Yoga[28]	Vrushchik Visha	Pana	A.H.U 37/44
Padmaka Agada[29]	Luta, keet visha	Pana	A.H.U 37/70
Champaka Agada[29]	Vrushchik Visha	Pana	A.H.U 37/71
Gomaya Agada[29]	Vrushchik Visha	Pana	A.H.U 37/72
Gandhamadan Agada[29]	Sarvakeet, Luta Visha	Pana	A.H.U 37/73-74
Yashtyadi Yoga[29]	Keeta Visha	Pana	A.H.U 37/75
Shireeshpatradi Yoga[29]	Keeta Visha	Pana	A.H.U 37/76
Triphala-Nalinee-Trivrutta[29]	Keeta Visha	Pana	A.H.U 37/77

Kusumbhadi Yoga[29]	Karnika	Lepa	A.H.U 37/78
Kushtha- danti Yoga and Mathit kinva[29]	Karnika	Lepa	A.H.U 37/79-80
Hriberadi Yoga[29]	Luta Visha	Pana, Nasya, Anjana, Lepa, Seka	A.H.U 37/82-85
Rodhrasevyadi Yoga[29]	Luta Visha	Pana	A.H.U 37/86
Aagardhoomadi Yoga[30]	Aakhu Visha	Lepa	A.H.U 38/18
Neeleeni kwatha or Shukakhyaankol kwatha[30]	Aakhu Visha	Pana	A.H.U 38/20
Koshatakadi churna[30]	Aakhu Visha	Pana	A.H.U 38/21
Vachamadanadi Yoga[30]	Aakhu Visha	Pana	A.H.U 38/22
Trivruta-neeli-Triphala kalka[30]	Aakhu visha	Pana	A.H.U 38/23
Gomayanjan[30]	Aakhu Visha	Anjana	A.H.U 38/24
Kapitthagomayrasa[30]	Aakhu Visha	Leha	A.H.U 38/25
Tanduliya Ghrita[30]	Aakhu Visha	Pana	A.H.U 38/25
Nisha-katabhidi / Asphotmula/ Kapitha panchanga – Ghrita[30]	Aakhu visha	Pana	A.H.U 38/26
Sinduwarnatadi Kwatha[31]	Aakhu visha	Pana	A.H.U. 38/27
Sharpunkha Beeja[31]	Aakhu Visha	Pana	A.H.U 38/28
Ankolmooladi Lepa[31]	Aakhu Visha	Lepa	A.H.U 38/29
Kapitthatilakadi Yoga/ Saryakmulam yoga[31]	Aakhu Visha	Pana	A.H.U 38/30
Katukalabu Ambu Paana[31]	Aakhu Visha	Pana	A.H.U 38/31
Sindhuvaradi Yoga[31]	Aakhu Visha	Nasya	A.H.U 38/32
Arkaksheeryukta Rechakam[31]	Alarka visha	Pana	A.H.U 38/35
Ankolmuladi Yoga/ Dhatur phala Shweta Punarnava kalka[31]	Alarka Visha	Pana	A.H.U 38/36
Tilchurna-taila-rui-Gud Yoga[31]	Alarka visha	Pana	A.H.U 38/37
Aushadhi-Ratnayukta Jala[31]	Visha	Snana	A.H.U 38/38
Somvalkadi Yoga[31]	Nakh, Danta Visha	Lepa	A.H.U 38/40
Brahmivachadi Yoga[32]	Visha, Garvisha	Pana	A.H.U. 39/50-53
Shukataru (Shirish)[33]	Visha	Pana	A.H.U 40/48
Hema (Suwarna)[33]	Gara Visha	Pana	A.H.U 40/49

DISCUSSION

In the field of toxicology, the Ashtanga Hridaya provides detailed descriptions under Damshtra or Agada Tantra, one of the eight classical branches of Ayurveda. It discusses different types of Visha (poisons), including animal, plant, artificial, and cumulative toxins, along with their etiopathogenesis, clinical manifestations, complications, and prognosis. The text also describes numerous Vishaghna Yogas and Agadas (anti-toxic formulations) for the management of poisoning and toxic manifestations. These formulations are administered through various routes, including Pana (oral administration), Nasya (nasal instillation), Anjana (collyrium), and Lepa (topical application), among others, depending on the nature and effects of the poison. Their primary aim is to neutralize toxins and restore physiological balance.

In the current scenario, the principles of Agada Tantra have gained renewed importance due to increasing exposure to environmental pollutants, pesticides, food adulterants, industrial chemicals, heavy metals, and endocrine-disrupting substances. Ayurvedic concepts such as Gara Visha and Dushi Visha closely resemble chronic low-grade toxicity and cumulative toxic burden observed in modern medicine. The detoxification approaches described in the Ashtanga Hridaya, including Shodhana therapies and Vishaghna formulations, may offer supportive strategies for managing chronic toxic exposure and lifestyle-related disorders.

After reviewing Ashtanga Hridaya, it is observed that numerous drugs and formulations useful in the treatment of poisoning are described in different sections of the text. The majority of references related to Vishaghna Yogas are found in Uttarsthana in 35 to 38 chapters dealing with Vishachikitsa, while additional references beneficial in the management of poisoning are also scattered throughout other chapters and sections.

CONCLUSION

Ashtanga Hridaya provides a comprehensive understanding of the principles and therapeutic approaches for managing poisoning and toxicological conditions. The text, systematically organized into six Sthanas- Sutrasthana, Sharirasthana, Nidanasthana, Chikitsitsthana, Kalpasthana, and Uttarasthana- contains extensive references to Vishaghna Yogas and Agadas, particularly within Sutrasthana, Chikitsitsthana, Kalpasiddhisthana, and Uttarasthana. These formulations reflect the depth of Ayurvedic knowledge in toxicology and emphasize both preventive and curative aspects of treatment.

In the contemporary era, increasing exposure to environmental pollutants, chemicals, food adulterants, pesticides, and other toxic substances has emerged as a major public health concern. In this context, the Vishaghna Yogas and Agadas described in the Ashtanga Hridaya assume considerable clinical relevance. Their potential role in neutralizing toxic effects, managing poisoning conditions, and supporting the treatment of various systemic disorders highlights their therapeutic significance in present-day healthcare. Therefore, these classical formulations may serve as valuable resources for further pharmacological exploration and integrative approaches to the prevention and management of toxicological and other disease conditions.

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