

**ARKA – AS VISHAGHNA DRAVYA W.S.R TO VISHAVAIDYA JYOTSNIKA:
A REVIEW**

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**ABSTRACT**

Agada Tantra is one of the eight branches of *Ayurveda* that deals with the management of *Visha*. Apart from the references from *Ayurvedic* classical texts, there are many books written in regional languages. *VishaVaidya Jyotsnika* is one among them with immense knowledge about various practices of *Vishachikitsa*. *Arka* or *Calotropis procera* is an *Ayurvedic* herb in the management of *Visha* (poison) and its related conditions. Many practices including *Pana*, *Lepa* etc. for managing *Visha* have been described in this text. This article aims at collecting details about the references regarding *Arka* in various contexts of management of *Visha* in *Vishavaidya Jyotsnika*.

Keywords: *Agadatantra*, *Arka*, *Calotropis procera*, *Visha*, *Keraleeya Visha Chikitsa*, *Agada yoga*

INTRODUCTION

Arka or *Calotropis procera* is an *Ayurvedic* herb considered under the category of *Upavisha*¹. References from *Charaka Samhitha* states that even an acute poison can become an excellent medicine if it is admin-

istered properly². *Arka* is having two varieties i.e., *Alarka/Sweta Arka* and *Arka* (based on floral colours) which are the variety of *Calotropis procera* and purple variety of *Calotropis gigantea* respectively³.

Many references regarding the *vishahara* (anti-toxic) property of the drug are available in the classics. It forms the ingredient of various *Agada yogas* (formulations for the treatment of poison and toxic conditions) and other commonly practised formulations. In addition to the *Brihat trayis* (three main treatises in *Ayurveda* classics), the drug is frequently mentioned in *Keraleeya Visha Chikitsa Granthas* (Classic books followed in Kerala for the treatment of poisonous conditions) like *Vishavaidya Jyotsnika*, *Prayogasammucchayam*, *Kriyakaoumudi*, *Kodasherymargam* etc. which highlights its potency and the important role played by *Arka* even in the management of *mandali visha* (*viper bite*)⁴. Among these *Visha Vaidya Jyotsnika* is the most popular and widely practised one⁴. The term *Vishavaidya Jyotsnika* is a combination of “*Vishavaidya* (physician)” and *Jyotsnika*- meaning this text is the one that shines like a moon amidst the *Vishachikitsa* literature⁵. It is a treasure house of knowledge concerning the management of various conditions related to *visha* and this text contributes largely to the practice as well as research in *Agada Tantra*⁴. This article aims to collect references about various formulations containing *Arka* mentioned in *Vishavaidya Jyotsnika*. Proper evaluation of the drug and its properties with genuine research studies may help practitioners to tackle the innumerable ailments arising due to exposure to various toxins, with better and cost-effective management. In this article, an attempt is made to throw light on the significance of the antitoxic property of the drug *Arka* and its potency in treating various poisonous conditions including snake bites.

DISTRIBUTION⁶: Found throughout India, commonly seen as a weed.

PARTS USED⁶ Whole plant

PROPERTIES AND USES⁶

The dried whole plant is a good tonic, expectorant, anthelmintic, and depurative. The root bark is anthelmintic, depurative, expectorant and laxative, and is useful in cutaneous diseases, intestinal worms, cough and ascites. The powdered root promotes gastric secretions and is useful in asthma, bronchitis and dyspepsia. The leaves are useful in the treatment of

paralysis, arthralgia, swellings and intermittent fevers. The flowers are bitter, digestive, astringent, stomachic, anthelmintic and tonic. They are useful in asthma, catarrh, anorexia, inflammations and tumours. In large doses, it is purgative and emetic.

RASA PANCHAKA⁷

- *Rasa: Katu, Tikta*
- *Guna: Laghu, Ruksha, Tikshna*
- *Virya: Ushna*
- *Vipaka: Katu*
- *Karma: Vatahara, Rechana, Vishaghna, Deepana, Shodhana*

THERAPEUTIC USE⁸

- *Krimidanta Sula*: The cotton piece is dipped in an equal quantity of *Arka Ksheera* and *Madhu* and placed over the affected area.
- *Arsas*: Mixture of *Arka Ksheera*, *Haridra Choorana* (*Curcuma longa* Linn.) and *Shireesha Beeja Choorana* (*Albizia lebbeck* linn) is applied over the affected part in chronic pile mass.
- *Lootha visha*⁹: *Sireesha Beeja* (*Albizia lebbeck* linn) is done *Bhavana* with *Arka Ksheera* for three times, then mixed with *Pippali Choorana* (*Piper longum*) and given for *Lepa*, *Pana*, *Nasya* and *Anjana*.
- *Vrishchika Visha*¹⁰; *Lepa* with *Palasha Beeja* (*Butea monosperma* linn.) mixed with *Arka Ksheera* relieves pain due to scorpion bite.
- *Alarka Visha*: Intake of a combination of *Arka Ksheera*, *Palasa* (*Butea monosperma* linn), *Taila* and *Guda*.

REFERENCES FROM VISHA VAIDYA JYOTSNIKA ABOUT ARKA¹¹.

DARVIKARA

- *Lepa: Lasuna* (*Allium sativum*), *Maricha* (*Piper nigrum*), *Hingu* (*Ferula asafoetida*), *Pippali* (*Piper longum*) and *Sunti* (*Zingiber officinale*) ground in the *Swarasa of Arka Patra* (*Calotropis procera*).
- *Pana*: Mixture of *Saindhava* and *Arka patra* ground in human urine.
- *Pana: Shirisha pushpa* (*Albizia lebbeck*) and *Arka beeja* (*Calotropis procera*) with equal quantity

of Vyosha (*trikatu- Zingiber officinale, Piper nigrum, Piper longum*) is ground in Arka kshira.

MANDALI

- Lepa Yoga for Sopha: Punarnava (*Boerhavia diffusa*), Arka (*Calotropis procera*) Eswarimoola (*Aristolochia indica*), Gokshura (*Tribulus terrestris*), Paata (*Cissampelos parietal linn.*), Vacha (*Acorus calamus*), Sariba (*Hemidesmus indicus*), Haridra (*curcuma longa*), Aghori bark (*Flacourtia indica*), Karanja (*Pongamia pinna-ta*).
- Paana and Lepa: Roots of Punarnava (*Boerhavia diffusa*) and Arka (*Calotropis procera*)
- Pinda Sweda Prayoga: Kalka of Arishtamanjari (*Acalypha indica*), Kaalasaka (*Murraya koengii*), Indeevara (*Pergularia extensa*), Arka (*Calotropis procera*), Amlika, Dattura (*Dhattura metel*), Gandhara and Sigru is ground with Kanchika.

MOOSHIKA VISHA

- Lepa: Hingu with Dattura Swarasa, Arka Patra and Visanika Patra (*Pergularia daemia*).

SARVA VISHA

- Pana and Lepa: Hingu, Saindhava, and leaf of Arka with Arka Patra Swarasa.

- Pana and Nasya: Shireesha Beeja and Pushpa with Arka in equal quantities mixed with Vyosha.

FOR REGAINING CONSCIOUSNESS IN VISHAR-THA

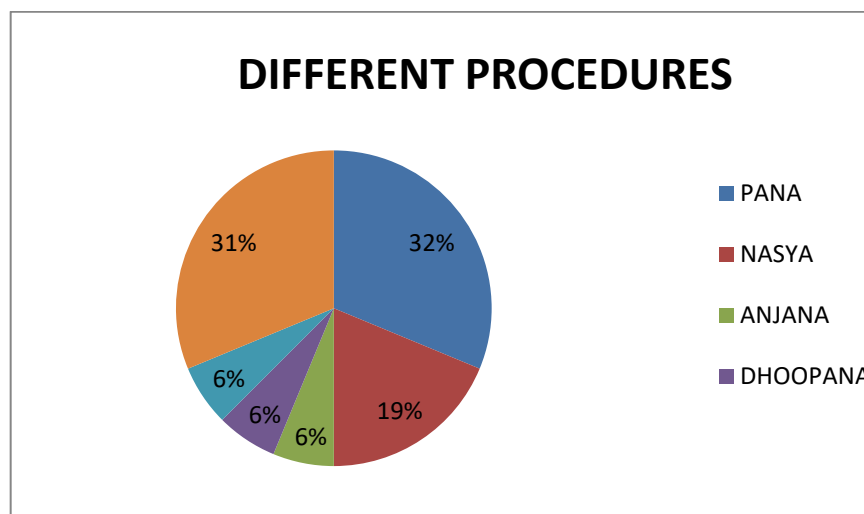
- Nasya and Anjana: Paste of Koshataki (*Luffa cy-lindrical*), Vacha (*Acorus calmus*) Hingu (*Ferula asafoetida*), Sireesha (*Albizia lebbeck*) and Vyosha in Arka ksheera or Ajamootra.

OTHER FORMULATIONS

- Devadarvyadi yoga
- Hinguadi gutika
- Arkapatradi choorna
- Nabhinirvishadi gulika
- Mrityunjaya gutika
- Mayoorasikhadi dhoopana
- Choornarajan (Nasya)

VELAA PRAYOGA (Method of Plantation)

- Dhoopana: Manasia (*Realgar*), Vyosha, and Vella (*Gynandropsia gynandra*) are taken in equal quantity are to be ground in snuhi ksheera (*Eu-phorbia nerifolia linn*) Arka (*Calotropis procera*) and Tamboola (*Piper betle*) Swarasa.



DISCUSSION

Agada Tantra, the branch of toxicology deals with the management of various conditions related to Visha. Other than classical Ayurvedic textbooks, many books are available in regional languages related to

the practices followed by the traditional vaidyas. Visha Vaidya Jyotsnika is one among them with an abundance of knowledge regarding practical aspects in the management of Visha related conditions. Arka, one among the Upavishas under the classification of

Sthavara Visha has many therapeutics qualities in the management of *Visha*. *Calotropis procera* and *Calotropis gigantea* are two varieties of *Arka* described in *Ayurveda* by the name of *Rakta Arka* and *Swetha Arka*. Both have almost similar qualities but *Calotropis procera* is having superior medicinal qualities¹². *Vishavaidya Jyotsnika* is a *Keraleeya Grantha* about *Vishachikitsa* containing various references from the management of *Sarpa Visha* to *Mooshikavisha*. Twenty-two formulations containing *Arka* including *Lepa*, *Pana*, *Anjana*, *Dhoopana*, *Nasya* have been described above in detail, among them majority are *Lepa yogas*.

CONCLUSION

Since ancient times *Arka* has been widely used for the management of various conditions including *Visha*. References regarding the therapeutic effects of the drug are available from various classical texts and research works. In *Vishavaidya Jyotsnika* various formulations such as *Pana*, *Lepa* etc. have been mentioned for different conditions. In this review article twenty-two, the preparations and formulations containing *Arka* have been quoted. As not much clinical documentation has been carried out on these practices, there remains scope for research.

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