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A critical review of *Vrischik Visha* (Scorpion) with special reference to *Brihataryee*

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ABSTRACT

In *Ayurveda* the branch *Agad Tantra* deals with the knowledge of different types of poison of animal or plant origin. It also deals with the origin, types, signs and symptoms and management of poisoning resulting from the bites of *Sarpa* (snake), *Mushika* (rodents), *Kita* (insects) and *Luta* (spider). *Vrischik* is said to be oldest poisonous creature on the earth. Among 800-1000 species, 30 species are lethal to humans. Due to scorpion bite (*Vrischik Damsha*) causality of life is very less, but it causes local pain, inflammation, oedema and redness of skin. Almost all *Ayurvedic Samhita* explain various variety of *Vrischik* based on its origin, structure, its sting effects, complications and their treatment, so here an effort is made to see the review of *Vrischik* w.s.r. to *Brihataryee* (i.e., *Charak Samhita*, *Shusruta Samhita*, *Astanga Hridayam*, *Astangam Samghram*).

Key words: *Ayurveda*, *Agad Tantra*, *Brihataryee*, *Jangama Visha*, *Vrischik Visha*, *Chikitsa*.

INTRODUCTION

In *Ayurveda* *Vrischik* is categorized under the *Kita Visha*. *Kita* (insects) are born from the decomposed mass of excreta, urine, semen, egg or carcass of snakes only. They are of four kinds, each one possessing the qualities of individual *Doshas* separately and one with qualities of all the *Doshas* together.

Nirukti

वृश्चिकेति इति: वृश्चिक

The word वृश्चिक is formed by the union of dhatu वृश्च +

किकन् Pratyaya. (अमरकोश)

वृश्चिक शूककीटाः स्यात् ।

Vrischik is a *Kita* which possess Shook or stinger.

Morphology of *Vrischik*

According to *Ayurveda* the *Manda Visha Vrischik* (scorpions which are mildly poisonous) are yellow, white, blue, dry, rough, and brown in colour, with hairs on their body, many joints and their belly being either reddish or white. *Madhya Visha Vrischik* (scorpions which are moderately poisonous) have smoke coloured belly, three joints and either brown or reddish in colour. Scorpions with *Teekshna Visha Vrischik* (scorpions which are highly poisonous) are reddish brown, spotted, of variegated colours, resemble blood or fire, have only one joint, their belly is either reddish black or white in colour.^[1]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study of critical review on *Vrischik Visha* paper is based on *Brihataryee of Ayurveda* i.e. *Charaka Samhita*, *Shusruta Samhita*, *Astanga Hridaya/Astang Sanghrah*.

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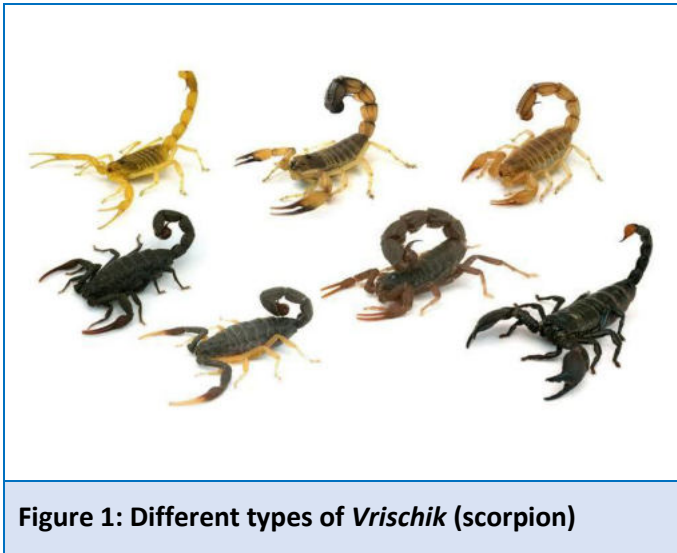


Figure 1: Different types of Vrischik (scorpion)

Classification of Vrischik

In *Ayurveda* Vrischik is classified on two ways;
On the basis of severity of the poison.

1. *Manda Visha Vrischik*
2. *Madhya Visha Vrischik*
3. *Maha Visha Vrischik*

Charak Samhita

According to *Acharya Charaka* Poison of Vrischik (scorpion) is penetrating and the beginning itself produces burning sensation just like fire, rises upwards quickly and alter settles at the site of bite (sting), the site is highly painful, bluish has pricking and bursting sensation.^[2]

Acharya Charaka further described about the *Asadhya Lakshan* are as follows: *Druk, Gharan, Rasana Upahat /Indriya Abhighaat, Mamsa Kotha* (the patient loses the senses of vision, smell and taste, has flesh falling down excessively, suffers from intense pain and finally dies). The person having the above said symptoms wills about to die so these patients can be skipped from the treatment schedule.^[3]

Sushruta Samhita

In the *Sushruta Samhita*, *Acharya Sushruta* has explained in detail information regarding the Vrischik and its *Damsha*. *Acharya Sushruta* has classified the Vrischik in three categories depending on the basis of severity of the venom as.^[4]

Table 1: Classification of Vrischik

SN	Vrischik Bheda	Utpatti	Sankhya (Number)
1.	<i>Manda Visha Vrischik</i>	born from the decomposed <i>Goshakrit</i> (Cow dung)	12
2.	<i>Madhya Visha Vrischik</i>	born from decomposed of the <i>Kashtha</i> (wood), brick	3
3.	<i>Maha Visha Vrischik</i>	born from the decomposed dead body of the <i>Sarpa</i> (snakes) and such other poisonous animals etc.	15

Further *Acharya Shusruta* classified *Manda Visha Vrischik* on the basis of their morphology as,^[5]

Table 2: Names and Characteristics of Manda Visha Vrischik.

SN	Name of Vrischik
1.	<i>Krishna</i>
2.	<i>Shyava</i>
3.	<i>Karbur</i>
4.	<i>Panduvarni</i>
5.	<i>Gomutrabh</i>
6.	<i>Karkasha</i>
7.	<i>Mechaka</i>
8.	<i>Peeta</i>
9.	<i>Dhumra</i>
10.	<i>Romasha</i>
11.	<i>Shadbalabh</i>
12.	<i>Rakta</i>

The Vrischik which have the *Shweta Udara* are termed as the *Manda Visha Vrischik*. The *Manda Visha Vrischik* has many segments on their body at the tail

region. On stinging they exhibit the symptoms as: *Vedana* (pain), *Gatrastambha* (stiffness of body), *Krishna Rakta Srava* (flow of black coloured blood) from the site of sting. When bitten in the *Shakha* (extremities) pain travels upward, gives rise to burning sensation, sweating, oedema at the area and fever. Radiating pain in the upper direction is the cardinal symptom of the *Vrischik Damsha*. These are the symptoms of the *Manda Visha Vrischik Damsha*.

Madhya Visha Vrischik is 3 in number;

Table 3: Madhya Visha Vrischik

SN	Name of Vrischik
1.	<i>Rakta</i>
2.	<i>Peeta</i>
3.	<i>Kapil</i>

Madhya Visha Vrischik having the Smoky coloured abdomen (*Dhumra Varni*), with three joints in their tail; These are formed from the *Mala*, *Mutra* and rotten eggs of the *Sarpa*. They exhibit the characteristics likewise the *Sarpa* from which they are born. On stinging they provokes the respective dosha. When *Madhya Visha Vrischik* stings they produces the symptoms like *Jihva Shopha* (stiffness of tongue), *Bhojan Avarodha* (Dysphagia), *Ugra Moorchha* (Severe unconsciousness).^[6]

Maha Visha Vrischik is 15 in number.^[7] They are as follows,

Table 4: Maha Visha Vrischik

SN	Name of Vrischik
1.	<i>Shweta Chitra</i>
2.	<i>Shyamal</i>
3.	<i>Dwiparva</i>
4.	<i>Lohita</i>
5.	<i>Rakta</i>
6.	<i>Shweta</i>

7.	<i>Rakta Neelodar</i>
8.	<i>Peeta</i>
9.	<i>Neela</i>
10.	<i>Raktaneela</i>
11.	<i>Neelashukla</i>
12.	<i>Raktobabhru</i>
13.	<i>Eka parva</i>
14.	<i>Parvani Dwayi</i>
15.	<i>Aparva</i>

Those which are white, of variegated colours, brown or reddish in their body, their belly being red, white, reddish blue, yellowish-red, bluish-yellow, white, grey; which have two joints in their tail, have different shapes and colours which are terrifying these kinds of scorpions are to be known as *Pranachora* (thieves of life or killers) are *Teeksna Visha*. These are born from the decomposed snakes or from the animals died due to the *Visha Prabhav*. When *Maha visha Vrischik* stings they produces the *Vega-vat* symptoms as that of the *Sarpa*. There will be manifestation of symptoms of all stages at once. Development of vesicles, dizziness, burning sensation, fever, black blood flows out from orifices and with these dreadful symptoms the person dies quickly.^[8]

Ashtang Hridaya / Astang Samghrah

Acharya Vagbhatta described about *Vrischik* like: poison of *Vrischik* is penetrating and in the beginning, itself produces burning sensation just like fire, rises upwards quickly and later settles at the site of bite(sting), the site is highly painful, bluish, has pricking and bursting sensation. Having symptoms like, *Toda* (Pricking type pain), *Vedana* (Pain), *Daha* (burning sensation) *Raga*(redness), *Visarpavat*.^[9]

Further *Acharya* says about the *Utpatti* of the *Vrischik* as,

- **Manda** : Born from decomposing cow dung.

- **Madhya** : Animals that are died from *Visha*, *Digdha*, *Shastra*, *Sarpa*, born from decomposing Caracas of animals killed by poison
- **Maha** : Decomposing Caracas of snakes^[10]

Acharya has given the characteristics of the *Manda*, *Madhya* and *Maha Vrischik* as,^[11]

Characteristics of *Manda Visha Vrischik*

- *Peeta*
- *Sita*
- *Shyava*
- *Ruksha*
- *Karbura*
- *Mechaka*
- *Romasha*
- *Bahu Prava*
- *Lohita*
- *Pandu udara*

Characteristics of *Madhya Visha Vrischik*

- *Dhumra udara*
- *Tri parva*
- *Kapil varna*
- *Aruna varna*
- *Pishanga*
- *Shabal*
- *Chitra*
- *Rakta varna*

Characteristics of *Maha Visha Vrischik*

- *Shonitabha*
- *Agni sama*
- *Eka/dwi parva*
- *Raktodar*
- *Sitodar*

When a person gets stung by these types of *Vrischik* the symptoms are as follows: *Shuna Rasana* (Numbness of taste bud), *Gatra Sthambha* (stiffness of whole body), *Jwara* (fever), *Ardita* (facial palsy), *Krishna Shonita Shruva* (flow of black coloured blood), *Indriya Avasad*.^[12]

Acharya Vagbhatta has stated one another type of *Vrischik* and named it as '*Ucchiting*'. *Acharya* described that, *Ucchiting* bites from its mouth and the bite produced very severe pain.

Bite (sting) by *Sadhya* scorpion produces symptoms like *Vedana* (pain) and *Romancha* (Horripilation) a feeling as through the body is sprinkled with cold water, because of having the colour like the camel this (scorpion) itself is spoken as *Ustradhuma* and as *Ratrika* since it moves out at nights.^[13]

On the *Dosha* predominance *Acharya* opines that *Vrischik* and the *Ushtradhoom* are predominant of the *Vata Dosha* vitiation.

Management

According to *Ayurveda* management/ *Chikitsa* can be done by two method,

- Yukti Vyapashrya Chikitsa*
- Daivya Vypashrya Chikitsa*

Yukti Vyapashrya Chikitsa furthers classified as follows:

Shodhana Chikitsa

In all cases of scorpion poisoning of severe degree the patient should be made to drink a mixture of honey, ghee, venesection, emesis, application of collyrium, and nasal medication therapies, should be adopted, foods which is warm, unctuous, sour, sweet and mitigating *Anila (Vata)* should be adhered to: In *Bahula Dosha* condition: which may include *Vamana*, *Virechana*, *Nasya* and *Rakta Mokshana* according to predominance of *Doshas*.^[14]

Shamana Chikitsa

The site of scorpion sting should be immediately bathed with *Chakra Taila* or oil prepared with *Vidarigandhadi Gana* or any oil made lukewarm or

with ghee mixed with *Lavanottama* repeatedly or sprinkled with lukewarm fermented rice - wash or with milk and salt. A paste of *Ajajai* fried in ghee and added with *Saindhava* should be applied as warm poultice.^[15]

Acharya Charak has given the line of treatment or the principle of treatment in the *Vrischik Damsha* as;

Swedana and *Abhyang* with the *Ghruta + Lavan* (*Saindhav Lavan*) For the *Parishek* purpose always *Ushna Dravya* should be used.^[16]

There is systematic presentation of the treatment protocol of *Vrischik Damsha* has been stated by *Acharya Susruhta* in *Susruhta Samhita*. *Acharya* advised that bites (sting) of scorpions strong and moderate poison should be treated just like snake bite.^[17] The site of bite should be given fomentation, incised and then smeared (filled) with.^[18]

Table 5: Treatment of *Vrischik Damsha* (Pratisaran method)

Pratisaran at the site of bite with the Churna of	Rajani (<i>Haridra</i>)
	Saindhav,
	Vyosh (<i>Trikatu</i>)
	Fruit and flowers of <i>Shirish</i>

Sour *Matulunga* and young leaves of *Tulsi* macerated in cow urine is ideal paste to be applied externally; fresh cow dung warmed is best as warm poultices; milk added with honey and more of sugar is ideal for drinking. In case of bite of scorpion of mild poison, the site of bite should be bathed with either *Chakra Taila* or water boiled with drugs of *Vidaryadi Gana*; fermentation may be given by pan cakes and poultices prepared from anti-poisonous drugs applied on the site.^[19] *Gudodaka* (jaggery water) added with powder of *Chaturjataka* should be given cold for him to drink or milk added with *Guda* (jaggery) may be given. Fumigation (by smoke) of feathers of peacock, cock, *Saindhava Lavana*, oil and ghee, given to the area of bite destroys the poison of *Vrischik* quickly; or flower of *Kushumbha*, *Rajani*, *Nisha*, *Kodrava* or grass, all

mixed with ghee and its smoke given on the region of the anus quickly destroys the poison of both scorpions and insects.^[20]

DISCUSSION

Vrischik is a type of *Keeta* due to its severity of poisoning and disease manifestations *Ayurvedachryas* have given special attention that needs medical care. Though all scorpions are not so fatal to human being but some of them are very much fatal as well as hazardous for children. In all most all literature of *Ayurveda* there is description of *Vrischik Visha* there severity and their complication and management. In *Brihatrayee* there is detail elaboration of classification and management of the *Vrischik* on the basis of the severity of the venom, place of origin, as *Manda*, *Madhya*, *Maha Visha Vrischik*. While describing the treatment chapter in regard of *Vrischik*, they have said that the treatment of the *Manda* and *Maha Visha Vrischik* is possible but it is *Kashtasadhya* and in context of *Maha Visha Vrischik* treatment it is said as *Asadhya* (incurable). It means the patient cannot be escaped from the poisoning; his death is sure. According to classical references of *Ayurveda* the poisoning caused by scorpion bite can be treated successfully if it in *Sadhya* (curable) conditions.

CONCLUSION

By studying above, it seems that *Brihatryee* includes *Vrischik* under *Keeta Visha*. It can produce more fatal symptoms as compared to other *Keeta*. *Acharya Shusruta* clearly classified *Vrischik* on the basis of severity of venom. In other words, *Acharya* has given the probable idea regarding the habitat of the scorpions and the probable suitable environment for rearing scorpions. *Acharya Charaka* clearly described the *Sadhya* and *Asadhya* conditions of *Vrischik Damsha*. *Acharya Vagbhatta* described a poisonous *Vrischik* "*Uchhiting*" and their method of treatment. According to *Brihatryee* the poisoning caused by scorpion bite can be managed by use of many *Vishaghna Yogas* and *Ekal Dravyas*. The conventional treatment prescribed for the management of pain of scorpion sting was to administrate local application as well as internal medication. By using the treatment

methodology of *Ayurveda*, scorpion stung can be managed in better way.

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