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# A review of *Vatsanabh* (*Aconitum ferox*) in Ayurveda

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## ABSTRACT

*Vatsanabh* (*Aconitum ferox*) from the family Ranunculaceae is a species of monk's hood. *Vatsanabh* is also named as *Ksweda*, *Amrita*, *Visha* and *Vatsanaga*. It rises in eastern temperate and sub-alpine areas of Himalayas, Nepal, Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Sikkim. All the parts of this plants are poisonous, the root part is more potent than other parts. Root part is mostly used for medicinal use. As the root part is poisonous but useful in the treatment of various diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, fever, hypertension and also act as *Rasayana*. *Vatsanabh* or its preparation in therapeutic dose, acts as medicine. Formulations having aconitum roots as ingredients are effective in various diseases.

**Key words:** *Aconitum ferox*, *Vatsanabh*, *Ayurveda*.

## INTRODUCTION

*Vatsanabh* is included in *Mahavisha* having Latin name *Aconitum ferox* and family Ranunculaceae with tall and erect stem with blue, purple, white zygomorphic flowers with numerous stamens.<sup>[1]</sup> It's synonyms are *Ksweda*, *Vatsanga*, *Visha*, *Amrita*.<sup>[2]</sup> Its root are poisonous but useful in the treatment of various diseases such as sciatica, fever, hypertension, rheumatoid arthritis and after *Shodhana* it also act as a *Rasayana*.<sup>[3-5]</sup> Acharya Charaka has categorized *Vatsanabh* under *Sthavara Visha*, Acharya Sushruta under *Kanda Visha* and Acharya Kaideva Nighantu under *Visha Varga*.<sup>[6]</sup>

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## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Pharmacology

<b>Rasa</b>	Madhur
<b>Virya</b>	Ushna
<b>Vipaka</b>	Madhur
<b>Prabhava</b>	Diaphoretic
<b>Guna</b>	Ruksha
<b>Dhatu effect</b>	Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa, Meda
<b>Organ effect</b>	Liver, skin, stomach
<b>Excretion</b>	Saliva, sweat

**Toxic Parts** - Root, Seeds

**Toxic principles** - Aconitine, Pseudoaconitine, Aconine

### Fatal Dose

- *Vatsanabh* root - 1gm
- Extract of *vatsanabh* - 250 mg
- Alkaloid - 4mg<sup>[7]</sup>

**Fatal Period**<sup>[8]</sup> - Usually 1-5 hrs

### Vatsanabh Shodhan

#### Immersion in cows urine

Vatsanabh being cut into pieces by instrument having sharp edge. Urine is changed everyday on two consecutive days. After 3 days the Vatsanabh dried in sun.

#### Boiling in cow urine

Vatsanabh taken in quantity of 10 Tola (115gm), then it is tied in cloth bundle is then suspended in Dolayantra full of cows urine & boiled. Vatsanabh is purified by boiling in cows' urine for a Prahar (3 hour).

#### Cause of Death

Death may occur due to respiratory failure or ventricular fibrillation.<sup>[9]</sup>

#### Symptoms of Vatsanabh poisoning

1. Salivation
2. Nausea and vomiting
3. Weakness
4. Diarrhea
5. Vertigo
6. Tingling and numbness in mouth and lips
7. Hypotension
8. Tingling and numbness in mouth and lips
9. Blurring of vision
10. Convulsions

#### Toxic symptoms according to Acharya Sushruta<sup>[10]</sup>

- Greeva Stambha (neck stiffness)
- Peeta Vinmootra Netrata (yellowish discoloration of feces, eyes & urine.)

#### Toxic symptoms according to Acharya Vagbhat

Stage	Symptoms
1	Twak Vikara (skin changes)
2	Vepathu (tremors)

3	Daaha (burning all over the body)
4	Vikrtavastha (deformities)
5	Phenodgama (froth from mouth)
6	Skandabhanga (drooping of shoulder)
7	Jadata (comatose)
8	Marana (death)

#### Management

- Tankan used as an antidote of aconite due to its Hrudya effect.<sup>[11]</sup>
- Tankan laahi along with Gogharta should be given.<sup>[12]</sup>
- Use of Arjun Twak, Churna along with Honey & cow's clarified butter.
- Use of Ajaadugdha (Goat milk) - According to Ayurved Prakash, emetics should be used in the beginning then goat milk should be used until the vomiting stops. The goat milk is retained in the stomach it indicates that the toxic effect of aconite is abolished.
- Use of juice of Tanduleeyak.

#### Treatment according to modern

- Gastric lavage
- Strong tea
- KMNO<sub>4</sub>
- Tannic acid
- Symptomatic treatment
- Cardiac monitoring
- For collapse give IV fluids<sup>[13]</sup>
- For syncope give injection Digitalin in 0.25mg doses
- For cardiac arrhythmia give 50 ml of 0.1% Novacaine slow IV
- Due to vagal inhibition, can cause heart failure, in that situation give injection Atropine 1mg.

### Therapeutic Indications

*Vatsanabh* should be used for therapeutic purpose after *Shodhana*

It is indicated in following health conditions:

- Indigestion
- Fever
- Respiratory infections
- Asthama
- Common cold
- Cough
- Diabetes
- Loss of Appetite

### Contraindications

- Contraindicated in pregnancy, lactation
- Food substances which aggravate *Pitta* like *Usna*, pungent, salty and sour eatables should be avoided.
- In the patient of cardiac, liver, kidney and brain disease.
- It should be avoided in hunger, thirst, anger, sun exposure.

### Autopsy finding

- Organs are congested
- Fragments of root may be found in stomach contents.
- Bronchial tree shows frothy mucus
- Mucus membrane of stomach and small intestines may be congested and inflamed.<sup>[14]</sup>

### Medicolegal importance

- It is ideal homicidal poison can be easily given with foodstuff
- Accidental poisoning may occur
- Suicidal

- Cattle poison
- Arrow poison
- Root can cause abortion<sup>[15]</sup>

### CONCLUSION

*Vatsanabh* (*Aconitum ferox*) is a *Sthavara Visha*. *Vatsanabh* is highly toxic in nature. It can be used as medicine after purification process. Pharmacologically it relieves coldness, improves digestion. Useful in treatment of sciatica, backache, night blindness, inflammation, headache, vision problem, inflammation, eyes related problems. Due to some properties like *Teekshna*, *Ushna Vish Dravya* get spread rapidly in body. By utilizing these properties of *Visha Dravyas* medicines can be made more effective. *Acharya Charaka* told that if *Visha Dravyas* is taken in proper dose it acts as a medicine but if these drugs taken in more dose, it acts as poison. Some of the formulations having aconitum as an ingredient are effective in many diseases.

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