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A review on *Vrischika Visha* and its *Chikitsa* in classics

Moumita Tewary¹, Shrinidhi R², Chaithra Hebbar³, Shubha PU⁴

¹Post Graduate Scholar, Department of Agada tantra, Sri Dharmasthala Manjunatheshwar College of Ayurveda, Udupi, Karnataka, India.

²Associate Professor, Department of Agada tantra, Sri Dharmasthala Manjunatheshwar College of Ayurveda, Udupi, Karnataka, India.

³HOD & Professor, Department of Agada tantra, Sri Dharmasthala Manjunatheshwar College of Ayurveda, Udupi, Karnataka, India.

⁴Assistant Professor, Department of Agada tantra, Sri Dharmasthala Manjunatheshwar College of Ayurveda, Udupi, Karnataka, India.

ABSTRACT

Scorpion stings are an intimidating problem in India, especially in rural parts of India. Envenomation from scorpions if estimating on yearly basis it is about 12 lakh people per year and is responsible for nearly about 3250 deaths. There are about 1400 species of scorpions identified worldwide out of this only 53 are reported to be dangerous to humans. The common clinical feature of the scorpion sting is sharp localized burning pain which gradually spreads to the whole limb followed by the variable nature of paresthesia and swelling. Even death is immediately seen in untreated cases of scorpion sting. *Vrischika Visha* is categorized under *Keeta Visha* in *Ayurveda*. Its warning signs are *Urdhwa Gati of Daha, Toda, Sphutana, Sotha, Shyavata* etc. *Vrischika Damsha* is such a specific envenomation that requires medical attention. Several treatment approaches are explained in our classics which are described for managing *Vrischika Visha*.

Key words: *Vrischika Visha, Scorpion, Brihatrayee, Prayoga Samucchaya, Kriya Kaumudi.*

INTRODUCTION

Agada Tantra, one among eight branches of *Ayurveda* encompasses topics of both toxicology and toxinology. Excruciating pain, burning sensation, swelling and erythema seen in scorpions bite resemble the symptoms

of *Vrischika Damsha*^[1] (Scorpion sting) in *Ayurveda*. Excruciating pain at the site of sting is an important factor for the immediate search for medical care. Even though many external medicinal preparations have been mentioned in *Ayurvedic Classics* and *Granthas* to address the acute symptoms. The term *Vrischika* is derived from a root word means *Chedane* to cut. Based on *Vishadamsa Lakshanas*^[2] classified into three i.e., *Manda, Madhya* and *Tikshna*.

MATERIALS & METHODS

The detail study on *Vrischika Visha* and its *Prabhava* on human body is carried out with the help of references which are available in *Samhitas - Sushruta Samhita*^[3] *Astanga Samgraha*^[4], *Astanga Hridaya*^[5], *Prayoga Samucchaya*^[6], *Kriya Kaumudi*^[7] and other *Ayurvedic Classics*.

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Moumita Tewary

Post Graduate Scholar, Department of Agada tantra, Sri Dharmasthala Manjunatheshwar College of Ayurveda, Udupi, Karnataka, India.

E-mail: moumitatewary2110@gmail.com

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HISTORICAL REVIEW^[8]

Charaka Samhita^[9]: Acharya Charaka has explained the Chikitsa (Treatment) of Vrischika under 23rd chapter of Chikitsa Sthana.

Sushruta Samhita: Acharya Sushruta has explained in detail about Vrischika under 8th chapter, Keeta Kalpa Adhyaya of Kalpa Sthana.

Harita Samhita: In Harita Samhita, 55th chapter of 3rd Sthana, Mantra Chikitsa has been mentioned for the management of Vrischika Damsha.

Astanga Samgraha: Acharya Vriddha Vagbhata has elaborate the details of Vrischika in Keeta Visha Partisedha Adhyaya (43rd chapter) and Visha Opayogiya Adhyaya (48th chapter) of Uttartantra.

Astanga Hridaya: Acharya Vagbhata has also mentioned the context of Vrischika in 36th and 37th chapter of Uttartantra.

Prayoga Samucchaya: Prayoga Samucchaya has explained in detail about Vrischika, under Saptama Pariccheda, Vrischika Visha Chikitsa Adhyaya.

Kriya Kaumudi: - Kriya Kaumudi has mentioned the context of Vrischika in Keeta visha Prakarana.

Origin of Vrischika^[10]

According to Acharya Sushruta based on origin of Vrischikas are said to be 3 types i.e., Manda, Madhya and Mahavisha. The one which are originated from Go Shakrit Kotha (putrefied cowdung) called Manda Visha, those from Kastha Isthika (decayed wood or bricks) are called Madhya Visha and those are originated from the Sarpakotha (cadaver of snakes) are Mahavisha. Other Acharya opine the same.

Classification of Vrischika^[11]

Table 1: Based on Visha Prabhava

Samhitas	Types	Vrischika
Charaka Samhita (Chikitsasthana) ^[12]	2 types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dooshivishaja Vrischika Prana Haram / Asadhyam

Sushruta Samhita (Kalpasthana) ^[13]	3 types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mahavisha - 15 types Madhya Visha - 3 types Manda Visha - 12 types
Astanga Samgraha (Uttartantra)	3 types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mahavisha - Powerful Poison Madhya Visha - Moderate Poison Manda Visha - Mild poison
Astanga Hridaya (Uttartantra)	3 types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mahavisha - Powerful Poison Madhya Visha - Moderate Poison Manda Visha - Mild poison
Prayoga Samucchaya	3 types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mahavisha - Powerful Poison Madhya Visha - Moderate Poison Manda Visha - Mild poison
Kriya Kaumudi	2 types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ugra Visha Alpa Veerya Visha

Table 2: Based on Dosha predominance

Samhitas	Types	Vrischika
Prayoga Samucchaya ^[14]	4 types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vata Pradhana Pitta Pradhana Kapha Pradhana Sannipatika
Kriya Kaumudi	3 types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vayavya - 18 Agneya - 24 Soumya - 13 Sankrina - 12
Gaya Das ^[15]	3 types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manda - 10 Madhyama - 3

	▪ Pranahara - 13
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Table 3: Morphological Features of Vrischika^[16]

Acharyas	Maha Visha Vrischika	Madhya Visha Vrischika	Manda Visha Vrischika
Sushruta	White or variegated colours, brown or reddish in body, belly being red white, reddish blue, yellowish red, bluish yellow, pink, bluish white, red or grey, having 2 joints in tail, having different shapes and colours are terrifying.	Red yellow or brown colour in body, smoky in belly, three joints in tail	Colours such as black, blue, brown, white and colour like cow's urine, coarse, blue -black, yellow or smoky, having hair on their belly resembling algae, red or white having more number of joints in the tail than others.
Astanga Samgraha	Reddish brown, spotted variegated colour, resembles blood or fire, have only one joint, belly is reddish black or white in colour.	Smoke coloured abdomen, 3 joints, brown or reddish brown in colour.	Yellow white, blue, dry, rough, brown or dark brown in colour, hairs on the body, many joints belly being reddish or white.
Astanga Hridaya	Appear like fire, have one joint; belly is red black or white.	Smoke coloured abdomen, 3 joints, brown, slight red, reddish brown body spotted, variegated and resembling blood.	Yellow white-blue many colours of black, dry, hairy has many joints, abdomen red and pale.

Prayoga Samucchaya	Pingala Varna (resembles fire), Na Na Varna (various colour) 'Reddish, having 1 or 2 joints in tail, combinaton of red, white &black colour abdomen.	Brass colour, reddish, copper colour abdomen, tail have 3 joints.	Yellowish (Haridra Varna), white, blackish and dark colour, Na Na Varna (various colour), Predominance of Ruksha, having more hairs, many joints in tail (Asangyam), white colour abdomen.
Kriya Kaumudi	Copper colour, black, white or reddish colour stomach, possess various colour (Aneka Varna), resembles fire (Agnitulya Prakasha), having 2 joints in tail.	Reddish or bluish body, stomach greyish, having 3 joints in tail.	Dark, yellow, light white colour, stomach whitish colour, rough body (Ruksha Deha), having 7 joints in tail.

General symptoms of Vrischika Visha^[17]

Most of the scorpions are neurotoxic in nature and causes locally severe pain (Vedana), burning sensation (Daha), Swelling (Sotha) and redness at the site of bite. The patient suffers from above symptoms and pain moves in upward direction from the bite site.

According to Acharya Vriddha Vagbhata, the bite site of poisonous scorpion is similar to fire, suddenly pain moves in upward direction and later on it fixed at the site of bite. The bitten site becomes blackish in colour and unbearable pain and burning sensation is present at the site.

Acharya Charaka has been explained the symptoms of Dooshi Visha and Pranahara. The bite of Dooshi Visha Vrischika is similar to fire and there will be burning sensation and Bhedavat Pida (piercing pain) at the site of bite and pain moves in upward direction. When bitten by Pranahara Vrischika, there will be loss of

sensation of eyes, nose, tongue and flesh cut and fall from the site of bite and excessive pain also present at the site of bite. *Pranahara Visha* is also known as *Asadhya*.^[18]

Types of Vrischika Visha & Lakshana

Table 4: Based on Varna (Colour) & Lakshanas^[19]

SN	Vrischika Bheda	Varna	Samanya Lakshanas
1.	Manda Visha Vrischika	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Krishna ▪ Shyava ▪ Karbura ▪ Pandu ▪ Gomutra ▪ Karkasha ▪ Mechaka ▪ Peeta ▪ Dhooma Varna ▪ Romayukta ▪ Shadvala ▪ Rakta Varna 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vedana ▪ Kampa ▪ Gatra Stambha ▪ Krishna Rakta ▪ Daha ▪ Sotha ▪ Jwara ▪ Sweda
2.	Madhya Visha Vrischika	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rakta ▪ Peeta 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jihva Sotha ▪ Bhojanasya Abarodha ▪ Murcha
3.	Maha Visha Vrischika	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shweta ▪ Chitra ▪ Shyamala ▪ Lohita ▪ Rakta Shweta ▪ Rakta Neela ▪ Peeta Rakta ▪ Neela Peeta ▪ Neela Shukla ▪ Rakta Vabru 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sarpa Visha Vega ▪ Sphota ▪ Daha ▪ Jwara ▪ Manovibhram

According to *Kriya Kaumudi*^[20]

Table 5: Damsha Lakshanas of Vrischika Visha according to Dosha predominance

SN	Type	Damsha Lakshana
1.	Vayavya	Severe pain, Pricking pain
2.	Agneya	Burning sensation, redness, slight oedema, Kharjura Varna.
3.	Soumya	Continuous thick blood discharge, Alpa Vedana, Udumbara Varna
4.	Sankirna	All type of symptoms are seen

According to *Prayoga Samucchaya & Kriya Kaumudi*^[21]

Table 6: Dhatugata Damsha Lakshana of Vrischika Visha

SN	Dhatu	Prayoga Samucchaya	Kriya Kaumudi
1.	Twak	Severe pain	Pricking pain, vomiting, delirium, convulsion
2.	Rakta	Severe burning sensation	All above + fatigue, burning sensation, Atisara, Jwara
3.	Mamsa	Hidhma, Oedema	Granthi all over body
4.	Meda	Greeva bhanga	Hidhma, Galasosha
5.	Asthi	Jwara	Jwara
6.	Majja	Manasantapa, Dukha	Vyasana Manasantapa
7.	Shukra	Rakta netra, Death	Rakta Netra, Death

Table 7: Dosha predominance of Vrischika Visha according to different Acharyas

SN	Samhita	Dosha predominance
1.	Charaka Samhita	Vataolbana
2.	Sushruta Samhita	Did not mention specific Dosha predominance for Vrischika, mentions Vatakapha predominance of Keeta Visha

3.	<i>Astanga Hridaya</i>	<i>Vataolbana</i>
4.	<i>Astanga Samgraha</i>	<i>Vataolbana</i>
5.	<i>Prayoga Samucchaya</i>	Mostly <i>Vata Pitta</i> predominance, very few are <i>Kapha</i> predominance
6.	<i>Kriya Kaumudi</i>	Mostly <i>Vata Pitta</i> predominance

Sadhya and Asadhya Lakshana of Vrischika Visha^[22,23]

Table 8: Sadhya and Asadhya Lakshana according to different Acharyas

Acharyas	Sadhya Lakshana	Asadhya Lakshana
Astanga Samgraha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Stambha Sopha Sa</i> (Loss of movement of penis) ▪ <i>Drishya Romatam</i> (Horripilation) ▪ <i>Sitambu Seka Anganam Eba</i> (Feeling as though cold water is sprinkled all over the body) 	-
Charaka Samhita	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Drig, Ghrana, Nasa Na Upahata Nara</i> (Patient loses his power of vision, smell & taste) ▪ Muscle tissue gets sloughed and falls out (<i>Mamsai Patati</i>). ▪ Excessive pain (<i>Atyartha Vedana</i>) ▪ Succumbs to death

Samanya Chikitsa of Vrischika Visha^[24,25]

According to Acharya Charaka the general management of Vrischika Visha is Swedana, Abhyanga with Ghrita and Saindhava, Parisheka (Irrigation), food along with Ghrita.

According to Yoga Ratnakar, Mantra Chikitsa has been explained for Vrischika Visha. This procedure might have been used for assurance of the patient. Anyhow it is no more relevant in the present era.

According to Acharya Sushruta the treatment of Maha and Madhyama type of Vrischika should be done similar to the Sarpa Vega (Snake bite). Site should be cleaned properly and the Swedana should be done. Pratisarana should be done by Haridra, Saindhava Lavana, Trikatu and Churna of Sirisa Phala and Pushpa.

Acharya Vagbhata has explained the general management of Vrischika Visha with Seka, Upanaha, Lepa and various Yogas.

Mantra Chikitsa (Chanting)^[26]

1. 'Om Kshah Fat Swaha' by spraying water along with this Mantra scorpion poison is destroyed.
2. 'Adityarathvegen Vishnu Banabalen Cha, Garunapakshanipaaten Bhumyam Gachha Mahavisha' scorpion poison destroyed by chanting this Mantra along with spraying water to the patient.

Seka^[27]: The site of scorpion sting should be immediately bathed with Chakra Taila or Taila prepared by Vidargandha or Ghee mixed with Saindhava Lavana or Milk added with Saindhava Lavana or fermented luke warm rice water.

Upanaha^[28]: The paste of Ajaji fried in ghee and added with Saindhava Lavana should be applied as warm poultice (Upanaha).

Lepa^[29]

1. **Jirakadi Lepa^[30]:** Application of warm paste of Jiraka mixed with Ghee, honey and Saindhava removes Vrischika Visha and pain.
2. **Ajakshiradi Lepa^[31]:** Lepa prepared with the equal parts of Sirisha Phala and Pippali by processing in Ajakshir should be applied over the affected spot.
3. **Karpaspatradi Yoga^[32]:** Karpasa should be rubbed into a paste with addition of Ghee and applied over scorpion bite.

4. **Ullipashan Lepa**^[33]: *Ullipashan* (Arsenic) and *Nimbu Swaras* are pounded to fine paste and applied over bite site.
5. **Kshirivrikshadi Lepa**: Application of paste of bark of *Kshirivriksha* after the patient has undergone *Shodhana* therapy destroys the poison of *Vrischika*.
6. **Mukta Lepa**: Application of paste of *Mukta* is best to cure swelling, pricking pain, burning sensation and fever.
7. **Hingu-Haritala Lepa**: Pill prepared with *Hingu*, *Haritala*, along with *Matulunga Swaras* can be used for application on the bite and *Anjana* is best to remove the poison of *Vrischika*.
8. **Palasha-Arka Kshira Lepa**: Seeds of *Palasha* are ground into a paste with milky sap of *Arka* (*Arka Kshira*) and applied over the bite site.
9. **Jayapala Lepa**: Seeds of *Jayapala* are grounded to fine paste by adding water and are coated over the wound
10. **Karanjadi Lepa**: *Karanja*, *Arjuna*, *Shelu*, *Katabhya*, *Kutaja*, *Sirisha Pushpa* macerated with *Mastu* is paste to be applied on the site of bite.

Specific Yogas^[34] (Formulation)

1. **Dashanga Agada**: *Vacha*, *Hingu*, *Vidanga*, *Saindhava*, *Gajapippali*, *Patha*, *Prativisha*, *Vyosa* all are taken in equal quantity should be made into *Kalka* by adding water and given internally.
2. **Manasiladi Gutika**: *Suddha Manasila*, *Karanja Bija*, *Gambhari Bija*, *Kustha* are taken in equal quantity and mixed and made into pills. This pill is administered internally and applied as *Lepa* over the bite spot.
3. **Paravatadi Agada**: *Paravata Sakrit*, *Pathya*, *Tagara* and *Vishwabhesaja* mixed with juice of *Bijapura* is a best choice antidote for *Vrischika Visha*.
4. **Nagaradi Agada**: *Nagara*, *Griha Kapota Purisha*, *Haritala*, *Saindhava* mixed with *Bijapuraka rasa*, this *Agada* immediately destroys the poison of the *Vrischika*.

5. **Sirishadi Agada**: Seeds of *Sirisha* soaked and macerated for 3 times in the *Arka Kshira* and then mixed with powder of *Pippali*, this *Agada* destroys the poison of *Keeta*, *Sarpa*, *Loota* & *Vrischika*.
6. **Bilwadi Gutika**: Roots of *Bilwa*, flowers of *Surasa*, fruits of *Karanja*, *Nata*, *Surahavam*, *Phalatrika*, *Vyosa*, *Nisa Dwaya* (*Haridra* & *Daruharidra*) all macerated in goat's urine and made into a nice paste. Used as *Anjana*, *Pana*, *Nasya*, this medicine cures the poison of *Vrischika*, *Loota*, *Sarpa*, *Mooshika* etc.

According to *Kriya Kaumudi*^[35]

Kriya Kaumudi has explained various formulations in the context of *Vrischika Visha* management.

1. *Lashuna*, *Maricha*, *Hingu*, *Sunthi*, *Tulsi* leaves are taken and *Bhavana* with *Arka Kshira* and *Gutika* is prepared for external application.
2. *Manasila*, *Sirisa Bija*, *Kumkum*, *Kustha* are taken and *Gutika* is prepared for internal administration.
3. *Dhara Yoga*^[36]: *Cavarkaram* and *Saindhava* made into powder form and added with *Tandulodaka*, *Dhara* should done with luke warm state.
4. *Vaca*, *Hingu*, *Saindhava*, *Gajapippali*, *Patha*, *Vyosa*, *Vidanga*, *Ativisha* is indicated for *Pana*.

According to *Prayogasamucchaya*^[37]

1. *Dhara Yoga*: *Dhara* should do with *Ghrita* and *Saindhava* in luke warm condition.
2. *Ajamoda* should be fried with *Ghrita* and made into paste and added with *Saindhava*. Paste should be applied on the site of bite and tied. After that *Swedana Karma* should done, immediately after *Swedana Karma* is followed by *Raktamokshana*. After this *Haridra*, *Saindhava*, *Sunthi*, *Maricha*, *Pippali*, *Sirisha Bija* and *Pushpa*- all should be taken in equal quantity and made into powder form. Sprinkled over the site of bite.
3. *Trivrit* and *Tandulodaka* both should be mixed with *Ghrita* in the form of *Pana*.
4. After *Vamanadi Karma*, bark of *Nalpamara* is made into paste to be applied on the bite site.

Diet in *Vrischika Visha* (scorpion sting)

- 1) *Ghrita* added with more of honey or milk with more of sugar or solution of jaggery each one added with powder of *Chaturjata* (*Cinnamomum verum*, *Elettaria cardamomum*, *Cinnamomum tamala*, *Mesua ferrea*) and very cold should be consumed.^[38]
- 2) Food which is warm, unctuous, sour, sweet and mitigating *Anila* (*Vata*) should be consumed.

***Upadravas* (complication) of *Vrischika Visha*^[39]**

Prayoga Samucchaya and *Kriya Kaumudi* have explained about the *Upadrava* of *Vrischika Visha*, which may appear due to the bite of *Mahavisha Vrischika*. These complications are:

- a) *Asahyavedana* (Severe pain)
- b) *Sotha* (Swelling)
- c) *Swasa* (Breathlessness)
- d) *Trishna* (Thirst)
- e) *Moha & Pralapa* (Delirium)

Upadrava Chikitsa

1. ***Lepa*** - *Churna* of *Vibhitaki*, *Haridra*, *Pippali*, *Manjistha*, *Maricha* and *Visha* should be grinded in the *Swarasa* of *Brihati* and it should be applied in the *Lepa* form.
2. ***Anjana*** - *Karanja*, *Tintidika*, *Saindhava* and *Karaskarapatra* *Swarasa* should be taken in the form of *Anjana*.
3. ***Pana*** - *Ghrita* and *Dadhi* should be taken in the form of *Pana*.

DISCUSSION

Scorpions are venomous in nature especially which are belongs to class Buthidae. Of the nearly 100 Indian species, the commonest are *Mesobuthus* (red scorpion) and *Palamneus swammerdami* (black scorpion), the former is more venomous.^[40] *Acharyas* have explained in detail about its classification, appearance, signs and symptoms, numbers, mode of action of venom, complications and treatment. Various types of *Vrischika Visha* are described by our *Acharyas*.

They are dangerous to human beings. So, the management is very important. There are ample references of treatment modalities and medicines in *Samhitas* and *Ayurvedic* classics. *Acharya* has described *Mantra Chikitsa* (Chanting), *Lepa* (external application), *Vatika/Gutika* (oral medications), *Dhoopana* (fumigations), *Ushna Swedana* (fomentation), *Parisheka* (Spraying water) *Vamana Karma* (Emesis), *Siravyadha* (Venesection) and many *Agada* (Anti-poisonous drug). *Hingu*^[41], *Takra*, *Haridra*, *Karanja*, *Saindhava Lavana*, *Triphala*, *Manjistha*, *Sukshma Ela*, *Chandan*, *Sirisha*, *Tandulodaka* these drugs have been described as *Vishaghna* having *Tikta*, *Katu Rasa*, *Ushna Veerya*, *Katu Vipaka*, *Krimighna Karma*, *Kapha Vatahara* and also anti-inflammatory, anti-fungal, anti-bacterial properties. Therefore, these medicines can be used in scorpion sting. *Ghrita* and *Gomutra* (cow's urine) are used in treatment of scorpion bites. *Analgesic* and antioxidant properties of cow's urine are scientifically proven. These Herbs are easily available, common and cheaper. The method of preparations and mode of action is also simple and convenient. There are also some food preparations which are suitable for scorpion poisoning.

Analgesics, anti-inflammatory and antihistaminic properties of some ingredients used to treat scorpion sting. Therefore, (*Hingu*, *Vatsanabh*^[42], *Ativisha Arka*) these ingredients help to reduce pain, redness and oedema caused by scorpion stinging.

Jwara (Pyrexia) may occur in scorpion sting, there are many ingredients like *Sariva*, *Manjistha*, *Draksha*, *Patha*, *Yashtimadhu*, *Kutaja* and *Tulsi* shows *Jwaraghna Prabhava* (*antipyretics*). Therefore, these medicines are effective in controlling pyrexia.

Sotha (Inflammation) at the site of scorpion sting may appear. *Haridra*, *Karanja*, *Vatsanabh*, *Yashtimadhu* shows *Sothaghna Prabhava* (anti-inflammatory properties) so it is used in scorpion sting.

External application of *Apamarga*, *Haridra*, *Mustak*, *Hingu*, *Vacha* may become helpful to overcome muscular spasms occurring at the site of scorpion sting. Respiratory failure or pulmonary oedema are the cause of death in patients with upper respiratory infections

or related problems. *Apamarga*, *Haridra*, *Maricha*, *Tulsi* and *Arka* possess *Kasaghna Prabhava* (anti-asthmatic effect). These herbs help to prevent respiratory failure in scorpion sting.

There are many herbs which shows various kinds of pharmacological effects like antipyretics, analgesics, anti-inflammatory, anti-asthmatics, anti-oxidants, antispasmodics, anti-convulsant, cardioprotective which are being used in scorpion sting management. Further there is still need to study these herbs for their chemical contents and toxicity, which may help to increase efficacy and authenticity of the claims.

CONCLUSION

From all these references it can be concluded that *Vrischikas* are different kind so the *Visha Lakshanas* associated with each of them are unique in nature and the management that should be adopted to each *Vrischika Damsha* must be specific according to the nature of *Vrischika*. Several herbal medicines are being used traditionally in management of scorpion stinging. There are many herbs given in this paper that are commonly available that can be used as emergency management of scorpion sting. Still a need for precaution pertains due to devastating conditions and fatality in children depending upon factors various of scorpion stinging.

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