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Contemporary significance of gara visha

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Abstract

Gara visha is a wonderful concept explained by Ayurvedic Acharyas which throw light on the changing life style and possibility of exposure of toxins. Through our daily life activities we are unknowingly exposed to one or other type of toxin. This increases the risk of disorders like stroke, heart attack, cancer, skin ailments etc. Education and public awareness programme is necessary to make people aware of the risks.

Keywords: *Gara visha*, Ayurveda, Toxins.

1. Introduction

Agadatantra is a special clinical branch of Ayurveda which was in practice since time immemorial. Agadatantra not only explains about Natural toxins (*Sthavara* and *Jangama visha*) but also gives equal importance to artificial toxins (*Gara visha*) also. *Gara visha* is well explained in all classics and traditional books of Ayurveda. *Gara visha* is prepared artificially by the mixture of various substances to produce various diseases [1]. Since it takes some time for this type of poison to get metabolized it doesn't cause instantaneous death of a person. Now a days due to the influence of fast life, fast foods, adulteration, pesticides, environmental pollutants people are exposed to toxins from many angles, which one day become intolerable as far as health is concerned. Unsystematic use of all these resources which leads to exogenous or endogenous toxicity. Agadatantra gives a vast view on this topic by clearly explaining definition, symptoms, mode of administration and treatment. On close observation of this subject we can notice the incredible influence today's changing life style. Today man is commonly exposed to these artificial poisons which are prepared by the combination of poisonous and non poisonous substances. Hence it is the need of the hour to understand properly about all the possible toxins which we are exposing unknowingly [2].

2. Classical view on gara

The word gara comes from गृ (Root Word) and अच् (Suffix) which means to dilute or in liquid form [3]. It is classified under *kritrima* or *samyogaja visha* by Acharyas.

Gara samyogajam visham gara samjam gada pradama kaalantara vipakitvat na tadaasu haratyasoon [4]. *Gara visha* is prepared artificially by the mixture of various substances to produce various diseases. Since it takes some time for this type of poison to get metabolized it doesn't cause instantaneous death of a person. Incompatible drugs in a formulation and those *visha yogas* having less potency can also be incorporated into this. Two types of *gara vishas* are explained in our classics as

- *Nirvishadravya samyogakrtam* Combination of 2 nonpoisonous substances. eg: *virudhahara* which can be considered as *gara*.
- *Savisha dravya samyogakrtam* Combination of poisonous materials which can be termed as *kritrima visha* [5].

3. Mode of administration [6].

<i>Anna</i> (food)	<i>Anulepana</i> (unguents)
<i>Pana</i> (drinks)	<i>Utsadana</i> (massaging powder)
<i>Dantakashtha</i> (tooth brush)	<i>Parisheka</i> (medicated bathing water)
<i>Kashaya</i> (decoction)	<i>Anjana</i> (collyrium)
<i>Nasya</i> (nasal drops)	<i>Vastra</i> (dresses)
<i>Dhuma</i> (fumigation)	<i>Sayya</i> (beds)
<i>Abharana</i> (ornaments)	<i>Paaduka</i> (foot wears)

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4. Current significance of *gara visha*

Most of the *gara visha adhishtanas* mentioned in Ayurvedic classics can be correlated to resources that we are using daily. So any form of incompatible drug combination or less potent toxins that may get into our daily utensils accidentally or intentionally, will definitely harm the consumers. The food, drinks, medicines, cosmetics, washing powders, tooth paste etc are now accumulated with one or other form of poison. But people are least aware about this and they even shows little interest even to read the labels of their daily utensils. The alarming increase of severe diseases like cancer, stroke, heart attack etc can also be attributed to the effect of these poisons through our daily goods. Statistics of those disease are distressingly increasing from past years shows the relevance of this problem [7].

5. Foods

Some foods contain natural toxicants which may adversely affect our body. Kesar dal, faba beans, potato shoots, certain varieties of mushroom etc may contain toxic components, which require Careful selection, adequate processing cooking etc that can transform natural toxins as nontoxic. Another burning issue is the addition of adulterants into the food for improving the profit. Main disadvantage of food adulteration is that consumer is paying more money and getting low quality products. Some form of adulterations are injurious to health even resulting in death. Tea, coffee, honey, chili powder etc are adulterated with some component which may cause severe ailments. Food add any non-nutritious substances which are added intentionally to food generally in small quantities to improve appearance, flavor, texture and storage properties. Food additives can be Direct /Intentional additives and Indirect Incidental additives. Sodi, m Nitrate, BHA & BHT, Trans fats, Propyl gallate, Monosodium glutamate, etc are some of the dangerous additives in our common foods which may cause various cancers, behavioral problems, heart failure, kidney failure etc. Some pesticide residues are also reported from our fruits and vegetables. Defective processing, packaging, unhygienic practices enhance the presence of microorganisms in our foods [8].

6. Drinks

Now a day's drinks or beverages are changing its form to soft drinks, milk, milk shakes, carbonated water etc. As a part of this change some or other forms of toxins also get into our daily drinks. Industrialization, globalization, agricultural revolution etc also contributed to it. Our complete food milk, is now termed as white poison owing to the presence of pesticide residues, infectious microbes, adulterants, excessive hormones, are reported from its. Some heavy metals are also reported to present in tea and coffee. Some coloring agents are also added into this. Most of the carbonated and soft drinks require additives and preservatives which consists of chemical substances that are harmful to our body. Artificial sugars like Aspartame is added to these soft drinks which shows carcinogenic effect. Drinking water also contain many types of micro organisms pesticides heavy metals and even rocket fuel [9].

7. Cosmetics

Cosmetics in the form of face creams, lotions, sun screen, lipsticks, sprays, etc has become part of this modern life style. Talc which is seen in cosmetics, lotion, powder etc is a proven carcinogen linked to ovarian cancer. Imadazolidinyl is

a chemical found in hair dyes is also carcinogenic. Synthetic colors and fragrance contain PHTHALATES which interferes immune system. Sodium lauryl sulfate is a compound commonly seen in face creams for the removal of dirt and oil from skin is proved carcinogenic. Dibutyl phthalate, seen in nail care products is an endocrine disrupter & reproductive toxicant. BHA (butylated hydroxyanisole) and BHT (butylated hydroxytoluene) in lipsticks, moisturisers etc causes liver, thyroid and kidney problems and affects blood coagulation in experimental animals [10].

8. Drugs

Various modern drugs and chemicals are also proved as toxic like erythromycin, aspirin, oral contraceptives, paracetamol etc. Aspirin can cause acute and chronic overdose effect. Acute effect may be intentional or accidental, and chronic may occur in a day normal daily dose built up in the body. Use of aspirin during viral illness inhibits fat metabolism. This may increase risk of Reys syndrome. Paracetamol is an active metabolite of phenacetin and acetanilide and overdose cause liver damage. Toxic and nontoxic products are produced by the metabolises of paracetamol in the liver. Toxic metabolite is NAPQI, N-acetyl-p-benzoquinone [11].

Some Banned Drugs in India [12]

Drug Name	Indication	Side Effect
Fenfluramine	Obesity	Disease of heart valve, Fibrosis
Phenoformin	Anti Diabetic	High risk of Lactic Acidosis
Rofecoxib	Arthritic Pain	Heart Attack, Stroke
Nimesulid	Pain Killer	Liver Failure
Phenophthaline	Pain Killer	Cancer

Herbal medicines are also not free from side effects. Many plant products from *Semecarpus anacardium*, *Abrus precatorius*, *Aconitum ferox* known to have side effects. Many ayurvedic preparation are also now prepared with dangerous preservatives for improving shelf life. Drugs and Cosmetic Act 1940 suggest that Ayurvedic drugs containing Ahiphena, Arka, Bhallataka, Bhang, Danti, Gunja etc & metals & minerals like As, Hg and Pb cannot be sold as OTC products.

9. Discussion

Due to the changing life style people are exposed to one or other kind of poisons in their day to day life. This exposure is in the form of food, drinks, drugs, cosmetics etc. This concept can be well correlated with *gara visha* explained in the classical books of ayurveda. *Gara visha* concept is very vast and can be applicable in the elimination aspect also. The treatment principle mentioned in *gara visha* can be made applicable in similar contemporary conditions. Education & public awareness activities should be conducted to make the people aware of the possible toxins they are exposing through their daily utensils. Eating organic and whole food and make use of organic personal care products may also help to reduce the risk. Always buy products from authenticated shops and frequent testing of those in labs. Following *Dina Charya* and *Ritu Charya* and Seasonal evacuation of *Doshas* as per Ayurvedic classics may be beneficial.

10. Conclusion

Gara visha is a vast aspect mentioned in the ayurvedic classics, which can be comparable with various sources of exposure of toxins through our daily life activities. People are

least aware of toxins they are exposing in day to day life. The aspect is more wide when we think of the possible toxins which can get into our food and drinks during the various stages of processing, packaging etc. With about 4% of water resource in the world, India would have been a water adequate nation. However in 2011 India turned into a water stressed nation according to experts. Reason for this will end up in thinking about the pollutants in our water which make it inconsumable.

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