

Vishachikitsa traditional toxicology of Kerala: A Book review

Anuja A. Wadadekar^{1*}, Jitendra J. Tapaswi², Chinmay P. Phadke³

Assistant Professor^{1,2,3}, Dept. of Agadtantra¹, Dept. of Dravyaguna², Dept. of Sanskrit-Samhita-Siddhanta³, P.D.E.A's College of Ayurved and Research Centre Nigdi Pune, Maharashtra India -411044

Corresponding Author:

Anuja A. Wadadekar

E-mail: anujak1486@gmail.com



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Toxicology, *Agadtantra* or *Danshtra* is one of the eight divisions of *Ayurveda*. It deals with the management of animate and inanimate poisoning. Kerala has a long tradition of the systems of *Visha Chikitsa* from an early period of indigenous, classical and tribal. But it is on the verge of extinction due to many reasons.

The author Dr Ittoop Ancheril, has opened us a vast treasure of knowledge of *Visha Chikitsa* in Kerala through this book. The book which is an outcome of long and vigorous research showcases all aspects of toxicology in *Ayurveda*. Dr Ittoop has analyzed unique practices, various local books which are followed and methods which are adopted by practitioners across Kerala. This information is gathered through extensive personal interviews covering 2400 kms across Kerala.

The book is divided in two parts and twelve chapters. First part is based on the literary study on ayurvedic aspects of toxicology. Author have elaborated evolution process of *Agadtantra* in Kerala. He has discussed the impact of various traditions and religions on the same. Introduction to *Visha Vaidya* system and literary works done by them has been introduced. It should be noted that vast treasure of *Ayurveda* literature is awaiting to be explored in this region. Author has also narrated in detail use of astrology in the management of poisoning. Use of communication media have now restricted the use of *Doota lakshana*, but the depth of knowledge and minute details in the field is noteworthy and it can open up a new horizon to researchers in *Agadtantra*. *Visha Chikitsa* practices like *Karuthu Prayoga*, *Oothu Chikitsa*, use of *Vishahari Lehya*, *Vishakallu* are explained which are not included in the undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum of *Agadtantra*.

Second part summarizes an interactive survey which was conducted among the registered *Visha Chikitsa* practitioners of Kerala, who had minimum clinical experience of 20 years. In depth interviews of 90 to 150 minutes each were conducted through a semi structured questionnaire. 52 domains were identified. Analysis of these interviews enlightens us with the traditions of *Visha Chikitsa*, educational modules followed,

reasons for decline of traditional *Visha Chikitsa*. It also enumerates various formulations in the management of *Sarpa*, *Mooshika*, *Loota*, *Alarka* and *Vrischika Visha*. Management of *Dooshivisha*, *Kaivisha* and *Garavisha* by these *Vaidyas* are also summarized. Opinions of *Vaidya* regarding treatment modalities like *Mantra Chikitsa*, *Oothu Chikitsa* and *Prativisha Prayoga* are also elaborated.

In the discussion part Author have shown effectively various factors responsible for decline of *Vishachikitsa* in Kerala through "ISHIKAWA Diagram". The book also summarizes scope of research in the subject of *Agadtantra* and need of revival of this branch of *Ashtang Ayurved*.

The aim of the book is to bridge the gap between modern toxicology and traditional knowledge of *Agadtantra*. A systematic approach is pursued to explore scientific approach in Kerala's clinical and literary contributions to the field of *Agadtantra*. This book will be helpful to all students of *Ayurveda* pursuing Under Graduate degree or Post graduation in the subject of *Agadtantra*. The book can be used as a reference book in the syllabus of *Agadtantra* since it can help to expand the knowledge of *Agadtantra* beyond the boundaries of Kerala. Which will especially benefit post graduate and Ph.D. scholars of *Agadtantra* subject.

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Figure No. 1: Front page of Vishachikitsa Book

