

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS IN AGAD TANTRA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ASPHYXIAL CONDITIONS

Pooja Rana¹, Dr. Ramesh Chandra Tiwari^{2*}, Dr. Ved Bhushan Sharma³,
Dr. Bhawana Mittal⁴

PG Scholar¹, Professor & HOD², Assistant Professor^{3,4},

PG Department of Agad Tantra Evum Vidhi Vaidyaka, Uttarakhand Ayurved University
Rishikul Campus, Haridwar, 249401, Uttarakhand.

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*Corresponding Author

Dr. Ramesh Chandra Tiwari

Prof. and H.O.D., P.G Department of
Agad Tantra Evum Vidhi Vaidyak,
Uttarakhand Ayurved University,
Rishikul Campus, Haridwar.



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ABSTRACT

Unconsciousness is a life-threatening emergency characterized by loss of awareness and inability to respond to external stimuli. In Ayurveda, such altered states are described under *Murcha* and *Sanyasa*, resulting from derangement of Doshas, vitiation of *Prana Vayu*, obstruction of channels (*Srotorodha*), and impairment of vital functions. *Agad Tantra*, the Ayurvedic branch dealing with toxicology and emergency management, describes several revival-oriented therapies for preservation of life and restoration of consciousness in critically ill individuals. Classical Ayurvedic texts explain emergency management in conditions resembling drowning and hanging, where respiratory obstruction and impairment of *Prana* lead to collapse of consciousness.^[1] In the present era, increasing cases of near-drowning and near-hanging have become major medical and medico-legal emergencies. Survivors often

develop complications such as hypoxic brain injury, paralysis, seizures, memory impairment, respiratory weakness, and prolonged neurological deficits due to cerebral oxygen deprivation. Ancient Ayurvedic scholars emphasized immediate revival measures including *Nasya*, *Anjana*, *Dhoopana*, sensory stimulation procedures, and administration of pungent and aromatic Agada formulations for restoration of consciousness and *Prana*. Though originally described for poisoning and asphyxial states, these therapies may have supportive

applicability in present-day near-drowning and near-hanging survivors, particularly in managing post-hypoxic neurological and respiratory complications. The present article highlights the Ayurvedic understanding of unconsciousness and revival measures described in *Agad Tantra* with special reference to drowning and hanging, while correlating classical concepts with modern emergency and rehabilitative care.

KEYWORDS: *Agad Tantra*, *Murcha*, *Sanyasa*, Near-drowning, Near-hanging, Hypoxic brain injury, Asphyxia, Ayurveda.

INTRODUCTION

Unconsciousness is one of the most critical emergency conditions encountered in medical and forensic practice. It is characterized by partial or complete loss of awareness, inability to respond to external stimuli, and impairment of cerebral activity. Various causes such as poisoning, trauma, metabolic disorders, neurological diseases, and asphyxial conditions may result in unconsciousness. Among these, drowning and hanging are particularly important because they produce rapid cerebral hypoxia and may lead to death within a short duration if immediate intervention is not provided.

In Ayurveda, disorders of altered consciousness are described under *Murcha* and *Sanyasa*. *Murcha* is generally understood as transient loss of consciousness caused by vitiation of Doshas affecting the mind and sensory pathways, whereas *Sanyasa* represents a more severe and life-threatening condition resembling deep unconsciousness or coma.^[2] Ayurvedic classics explain that disturbance of *Prana Vayu*, obstruction of channels (*Srotorodha*), and impairment of *Hridaya* and *Mana* result in collapse of consciousness and loss of bodily control. Since *Prana* is considered the sustaining force of life, any condition interfering with respiration and cerebral function is regarded as highly dangerous.

Agad Tantra, one of the eight branches of Ayurveda, primarily deals with toxicology, poisoning, envenomation, and emergency therapeutics. Along with management of poisons, Ancient Acharyas have also described revival-oriented therapies in conditions associated with respiratory obstruction and unconsciousness, including drowning and hanging-like states. Ancient physicians emphasized preservation of *Prana* through immediate interventions such as *Nasya* (nasal administration), *Anjana* (application of medicated collyrium), *Dhoopana* (medicated fumigation), sensory stimulation, sprinkling of cold water, and administration of

Agada formulations. These therapies were intended to stimulate sensory organs, restore consciousness, improve respiration, and revive vital functions.^[3]

Drowning occurs due to submersion in liquid causing respiratory impairment and oxygen deprivation, whereas hanging results from constriction of neck structures leading to obstruction of airway and cerebral blood flow. In both conditions, deficiency of oxygen ultimately produces cerebral hypoxia, resulting in unconsciousness and severe neurological damage. Contemporary medicine recognizes that survivors of near-drowning and near-hanging may develop long-term complications including hypoxic brain injury, paralysis, memory loss, seizures, speech disturbances, respiratory complications, cognitive dysfunction, and persistent neurological deficits. In severe cases, survivors may remain in vegetative states or suffer permanent disability due to prolonged oxygen deprivation to the brain.^[4]

In the present era, near-drowning and near-hanging cases are increasingly encountered in emergency departments and medico-legal practice. Prompt cardiopulmonary resuscitation and intensive care management have improved survival rates, but management of post-hypoxic complications remains a major challenge. This creates a need for supportive and rehabilitative approaches that may improve neurological recovery and restoration of normal function.

The classical formulations and revival therapies described by Acharyas in *Agad Tantra* for drowning and hanging conditions may have significant relevance even today. Although these formulations were originally mentioned in the context of emergency revival, their properties such as *Prana*-stimulation, *Vata-Kapha shamana*, *Hridya*, *Medhya*, and consciousness-restoring effects suggest possible utility in supportive management of complications observed in near-drowning and near-hanging survivors. Ayurvedic interventions aimed at restoring sensory activity, improving respiration, stimulating higher centers, and preserving vitality may conceptually support recovery from hypoxic neurological impairment.^[5]

Interestingly, many Ayurvedic emergency principles resemble modern resuscitative concepts such as airway maintenance, stimulation of respiration, oxygenation, and preservation of cerebral function. Thus, correlating classical Ayurvedic knowledge with present-day understanding of hypoxic injury may broaden the scope of integrative emergency and rehabilitative care.

Therefore, the present article aims to explore the Ayurvedic concept of unconsciousness and emergency management described in *Agad Tantra* with special reference to drowning and hanging, while also highlighting the potential applicability of these classical formulations and revival therapies in managing complications associated with near-drowning and near-hanging conditions in the modern era.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

1. *Kakandadi Yoga*

Kakandadi Yoga^[6] described in *Charaka Samhita (Chikitsasthan)* is a classical revival formulation indicated in severe unconscious states resembling death. The formulation consists of *Kakanda, Tulasi, Indrayana, Punarnava and Shirisha Phala*, which are administered after processing in forms such as *lepa* (external application), *nasya* (nasal administration) and *pana* (internal use). This multidimensional mode of administration reflects its intended rapid action in restoring consciousness and vital functions. The ingredients of the formulation are traditionally considered to possess *Vishaghna, Pranavaha-srotas* stimulating and consciousness-restoring properties, thereby helping in overcoming profound loss of awareness. In conditions such as drowning and hanging, *Kakandadi Yoga* may be interpreted as a classical resuscitative measure aimed at revival of the apparently lifeless individual. Its description in *Charaka Samhita* highlights an important traditional therapeutic approach for emergency restoration of consciousness.

2. *Mritasanjeevana Agada*

Mritasanjeevana Agada^[7] is extolled in *Charaka Samhita, Sushrut Samhita* and *Ashtang Samgrah* as a potent revival formulation employed in severe toxic and unconscious states. Unlike routine anti-poison measures, it is specifically valued for its role in restoring *chetna* when *Murcha* or *Sanyasa* develops, acting as an emergency intervention in collapse-like conditions. Classical references describe its use as tablet to awaken the patient, protect *prana*, and overcome obstruction to vital functions. Its therapeutic significance extends beyond poisoning, making it conceptually relevant to asphyxial emergencies such as drowning and hanging, where sudden deprivation of respiration leads to loss of consciousness. In this context, *Mritasanjeevana Agada* represents an Ayurvedic approach to emergency revival and resuscitative support in life-threatening unconscious conditions.

3. *Sanjivana Agada*

Sanjivana Agada^[8] described in *Sushrut Samhita* and *Ashtang Samgraha (Uttarasthana)*, is a potent polyherbal anti-toxic formulation composed of numerous drugs such as *chandana*, *kushtha*, *laksha*, *priyangu*, *musta*, *ela*, *haridra*, *vidanga*, *devadaru*, *shirish* and many others, which are collected in an auspicious constellation (*Pushya*), processed into a paste, and administered through multiple routes including internal intake, *nasya*, *anjana*, *dhoopana* and external application. This formulation is considered highly effective in reviving consciousness in individuals affected by severe poisoning, acting as a powerful *vishaghna* agent that not only neutralizes toxins but also restores vitality and *prana*, and is further described to protect against artificial poisons, fever, *graha dosha*, *krimi*, *vishaj* conditions, and even external harmful influences, thereby emphasizing its broad-spectrum therapeutic and rejuvenative role in *Agad Tantra*, especially in life-threatening toxic and unconscious states.^[9]

4. *Kautilyodita Agada*

Kautilyodita Agada^[10] is a classical Ayurvedic antidotal formulation described in *Ashtang Samgraha (Uttarasthana)* for the management of unconsciousness and toxic conditions. It is prepared using drugs like *Priyangu*, *Tagara*, *Laksha*, *Manjistha*, *Madhuka*, *Madhu* (honey), and *Haridra*. According to the text, this *Agada* is especially useful in patients who have lost consciousness due to severe poisoning, trauma from powerful blows, hanging, or drowning. The formulation is believed to act as a *Chetana-varadhaka* (restorer of consciousness) and *Vishahara* (anti-toxic) medicine.^[11] Owing to its aromatic, stimulant, and detoxifying properties, *Kautilyodita Agada* holds importance in emergency management described in Ayurveda, particularly in conditions resembling asphyxial unconsciousness and toxic collapse.

5. *Shirish-based Agada*

In *Ashtang Samgraha (Uttarasthana)*, *Shirish-based Agada*^[12] is indicated in conditions of unconsciousness caused by severe toxic and traumatic factors, including hanging where rapid restoration of consciousness is required; owing to the predominance of *Shirish* (*Albizia lebbek*), along with supportive drugs possessing *vishaghna*, *pranavaha-srotas* stimulating and *shothahara* properties, this formulation acts by counteracting residual toxic effects, improving respiration, and reviving *Chetna* (consciousness), thereby making it clinically relevant in *Agad Tantra* for emergency management of asphyxial conditions like hanging,

drowning, or poisoning-induced syncope, where it serves as a life-restoring therapeutic measure.

6. *Amrit Ghrita*

In *Charak Samhita*, *Amrit Ghrita*^[13] is described as an important therapeutic formulation indicated in conditions of *visha* (poisoning) and associated unconsciousness, particularly where restoration of vitality and protection of vital organs is required. This medicated ghee is prepared using potent drugs like *Shirish*, along with other *vishaghna*, *deepana* and *rasayana dravyas*, processed in *ghrita* to enhance bioavailability and rapid systemic action. It is administered internally and acts as a *vishahara* (anti-toxic), *hridya* (cardio-supportive), *medhya* (neuroprotective) and *rasayana* (rejuvenative) formulation, helping in pacifying aggravated doshas—especially *Pitta*—while nourishing dhatus and restoring *prana*. In emergency conditions such as asphyxial unconsciousness seen in drowning and hanging, *Amrit Ghrita* supports recovery by improving consciousness, stabilizing physiological functions, and counteracting the systemic effects of toxins, thereby playing a crucial role in the holistic management of life-threatening states in *Agad Tantra*.

DISCUSSION

The management of unconsciousness (*Murcha/Sanyasa*) described in *Agad Tantra* is mainly based on the pharmacological properties of the drugs used in various *Agada* formulations. Most of the formulations indicated in poisoning, drowning and hanging possess predominance of *Katu*, *Tikta* and *Kashaya rasa*, which help in *vishahara karma* by clearing obstructed channels, reducing *kapha* accumulation and stimulating *pranavaha srotas*. *Katu rasa* acts as *srotoshodhaka* and *chetana-uttejaka*, thereby helping in restoration of consciousness, while *Tikta* and *Kashaya rasa* assist in detoxification, absorption of toxic materials and stabilization of deranged *doshas*. These properties become especially important in asphyxial conditions like drowning and hanging where *kapha* obstruction, hypoxia and impaired circulation lead to loss of consciousness.

Most of the drugs present in formulations such as *Sanjivana Agada*, *Mrita-Sanjivana Agada*, and *Kautilyodita Agada* possess *Laghu*, *Tikshna* and *Sukshma guna*. *Laghu guna* facilitates rapid absorption and quick action of the medicine, while *Tikshna guna* helps in penetrating obstructed channels and stimulating sensory and nervous functions. *Sukshma guna* enables deeper systemic action, particularly in the head region where consciousness is affected. These properties explain why therapies like *nasya*, *anjana* and *pradhmana nasya* are repeatedly

advised in unconscious states, as drugs having *tikshna* and *sukshma* qualities can rapidly reach the *siras* and stimulate consciousness.

The predominance of *Ushna virya* in many Agada formulations plays a major role in counteracting *kapha-vata* dominance occurring during unconsciousness. In drowning and hanging, respiratory obstruction and circulatory impairment may produce *kapha* accumulation and *vata avarodha* leading to *sangya-nasha*. *Ushna virya* drugs such as *pippali*, *maricha*, *vacha* and *tagara* help in stimulating respiration, improving circulation and restoring *prana*. At the same time, some formulations also contain *Sheeta virya* drugs like *chandana*, *usheera* and *priyangu* which help in pacifying pitta, reducing burning sensation and protecting tissues from toxic damage. Thus, the combination of *ushna* and *Sheeta virya* drugs provides both stimulatory and protective actions.^[14]

Most ingredients in these Agadas possess *Katu vipaka*, which supports *deepana*, *pachana* and *kapha-hara* effects. *Katu vipaka* also aids in clearing metabolic obstruction and enhancing elimination of toxins from the body. Some *ghrita*-based preparations like *Amrit Ghrita* possess *Madhura vipaka* and *Snigdha guna*, which nourish dhatus, support *ojas* and protect the nervous system after severe systemic insult. This indicates that Ayurveda not only focused on immediate revival but also on restoration of strength and prevention of further deterioration.

The use of *ghrita* and *madhu* as anupana or processing media also has significant importance. *Ghrita*, due to its *yogavahi*, *medhya* and *samskara anuvartana* properties, enhances penetration of drugs into deeper tissues and supports brain function. *Madhu* possesses *yogavahi*, *lekhana* and *srotoshodhana* properties which aid in rapid delivery and detoxification. Together, they improve efficacy of the formulations in emergency conditions. Thus, the therapeutic effectiveness of Agada formulations in unconsciousness can be understood through their *rasa*, *guna*, *virya* and *vipaka*. The predominance of *Katu-Tikta-Kashaya rasa*, *Laghu-Tikshna-Sukshma guna*, mainly *Ushna virya* and *Katu vipaka* collectively contribute to *vishaghna*, *kapha-vata hara*, *prana-uddipaka* and *sangya-prabodhaka* actions. These pharmacological principles form the basis of emergency management in *Agad Tantra* and explain the classical use of these formulations in severe poisoning and asphyxial conditions such as drowning and hanging.

CONCLUSION

Agad Tantra provides a detailed and holistic approach for the emergency management of unconsciousness occurring in severe poisoning and asphyxial conditions such as drowning and hanging. Classical Ayurvedic texts describe that even a patient appearing *mrita-sannibha* should be treated actively with revival measures aimed at preservation of *prana* and restoration of consciousness. Procedures such as *nasya*, *pradhmana nasya*, *anjana*, *siravedha* and administration of potent Agadas are specifically indicated for rapid *sangya-prabodhana* and *vishahara* action.

Formulations like *Sanjivana Agada*, *Mrita- Sanjivana Agada*, *Amrit Ghrita* and *Kautilyodita Agada* possess multiple pharmacological properties due to the predominance of *Katu*, *Tikta* and *Kashaya rasa*; *Laghu*, *Tikshna* and *Sukshma guna*; *Ushna virya*; and *Katu vipaka*. These properties help in clearing obstructed srotas, stimulating respiration and circulation, counteracting *visha* and restoring consciousness. Their multidimensional action indicates their potential usefulness in life-threatening unconscious states where rapid revival is necessary.

In the present scenario, where mortality due to poisoning and asphyxial emergencies remains significant, these classical formulations may serve as valuable supportive measures for improving survival and maintaining consciousness until definitive management is provided. However, scientific standardization and experimental as well as clinical evaluation of these Agadas are necessary to establish their safety, efficacy and exact mode of action. Further research may help in integrating the principles of *Agad Tantra* with modern emergency medicine for better management of unconsciousness associated with poisoning, drowning and hanging.

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