

**“SHANKA VISHA”: AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE ON
PSYCHOSOMATIC DISORDERS AND THE ROLE OF MANAS
UPACHARA**

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ABSTRACT

In the present era, increasing psychological stress, fear, anxiety, and misinformation have led to a rise in conditions where individuals experience physical symptoms without any actual pathological or toxic cause. Ayurveda describes a similar condition as “Shanka Visha”, wherein a person develops signs resembling poisoning purely due to mental factors such as suspicion, fear and anxiety. This highlights the strong connection between mind and body, which is now widely recognized in modern science as psychosomatic disorders. Despite its clinical relevance, “Shanka Visha” remains an under-explored concept in contemporary research, creating a need to re-evaluate its significance in today’s context. The present study aims to revisit and interpret this classical Ayurveda concept in the light of current psychosomatic

conditions and to emphasize the role of *Manas Upachara* as a primary therapeutic approach. Through a critical review of classical texts and supportive modern insights, it is observed that the manifestations of Shanka Visha are primarily driven by disturbed mental states, especially *Rajas* and *Tamas*, leading to the projection of false toxic symptoms. The study highlights that proper reassurance, counseling, and psychological support play a crucial role in management, often more effective than pharmacological intervention. Thus, *Manas Upachara* emerges as a holistic and essential approach in addressing such conditions, offering a bridge between Ayurvedic wisdom and modern psychosomatic understanding, and providing a cost-effective and patient-centered strategy for present-day healthcare challenges.

KEYWORDS: psychological stress, toxic symptoms, psychosomatic disorders, Manas Upachara.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is mainly divided into eight clinical branches called *Ashtanga* Ayurveda. Out of these eight clinical branches, *Agadtantra* deals with the study of poison with particular reference to their sources, properties, action, manifestations and management. Among these, Shanka Visha represents a distinct condition where symptoms of poisoning appear without actual exposure to toxic substances, primarily due to psychological factors such as fear, anxiety, and suspicion.^[1,3]

The concept of Shanka Visha highlights the significant role of the mind in the manifestation of disease. Classical texts emphasize that disturbances in mental faculties, particularly the aggravation of *Rajas* and *Tamas*, can lead to physical symptoms mimicking toxic conditions.^[1] This illustrates the fundamental principle of the mind-body relationship. In contemporary medical science, such conditions are recognized under psychosomatic disorders, where psychological stress and emotional disturbances result in somatic symptoms.^[4] Shanka Visha can also be correlated with the “nocebo effect,” in which negative expectations or beliefs lead to the development of adverse physical symptoms in the absence of a physiological cause.^[5,7]

Therefore, understanding Shanka Visha through both classical and modern perspectives provides a comprehensive approach for its diagnosis and management.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To study the concept of Shanka Visha
2. To analyze its etiopathogenesis
3. To evaluate the role of Manas Upachara
4. To correlate with modern psychosomatic disorders

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This article is work of the systematic collection, compilation, and correlation of information obtained from classical Ayurveda texts (Samhitas), along with modern textbooks, research articles, and other relevant sources.

According to Acharya Charaka, when an individual comes into contact with an object such as a rope, or experiences a unknown bite possibly non-poisonous or prick from an unidentified organism in dark; a fear or suspicion of poisoning may arise. Due to this psychological perception, the person may develop various symptoms including *Jwara* (fever), *Chhardi* (vomiting), *Moorcha* (giddiness or fainting), *Daaha* (burning sensation), *Glani* (fatigue or prostration), *Moha* (loss of consciousness), and *Atisaara* (diarrhea). these all symptoms are closely resembles the acute panic status with anxiety related cognitive fog. This condition is described as Shañka Visha, where symptoms manifest primarily due to fear and suspicion rather than actual poison.

Similarly, Vagbhata explain that when a person accidentally comes into contact with a snake or its body part, intense fear may trigger physiological responses. The aggravated *Vata Dosh*a can lead to *Shofa* (localized swelling) at the site of contact. This condition is termed Sarpangābhīhata, where the manifestation is due to fear-induced bodily reactions rather than actual envenomation.

❖ ETIOLOGY

Category	Factors
Psychological	Fear, anxiety
Personality	Weak mental strength (Alpa Satva)

❖ SAMPRAPTI (PATHOGENESIS)

Psychological Trigger (Fear/Anxiety)



Disturbance in Manas



Aggravation of Rajas and Tamas



Manovaha Srotas Dushti



Psychosomatic manifestation

Table No. 1: Correlation of Shanka Visha with Psychosomatic Disorder.

Aspect	Shanka Visha	Psychosomatic Disorder
Nature	Imaginary	No Organic Pthology
Dosha	<i>Rajas, Tamas</i>	Psychological Imbalance
Lakshan	<i>Jwar, Chhardi, Murchchha, Daah, Shofa</i>	Fever Induced by fear, Vomiting, Giddiness, Burning, Swelling

❖ DIAGNOSIS

- No history of poison intake
- Normal laboratory findings
- Symptoms triggered by psychological factors
- Improvement with reassurance

❖ MANAGEMENT

1) *Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa* [Divine Therapy]

This is described in the Charaka Samhita, is a spiritual mode of treatment that includes mantra chanting, rituals, amulets, and other faith-based practices. It mainly acts on the mind by reducing fear, anxiety, and false beliefs, thereby promoting mental stability.

2) *Satvavajaya Chikitsa* [Psycho therapy]

This is as explained in the Charaka Samhita, is a form of psychotherapy aimed at controlling and stabilizing the mind. In Shanka visha, where symptoms arise due to fear and false belief of poisoning, this therapy focuses on reassurance, counseling, and withdrawal of the mind from Negative thoughts. By enhancing sattva (mental strength) and correcting perception. *Sattvavajaya* helps reduce anxiety-driven symptoms and restores normal psychological balance.

3) *Yuktivyapashraya Chikitsa* (Rational therapy)

This refers to the line of treatment planned and administered by the physician after careful evaluation of the patient's condition. It includes therapeutic approaches such as *shodhana* (panchakarma procedure), *shamana* (pacification of *dosha*), and regulation of diet and lifestyle (*Pathya aahara*). In the management of *visha*, Charaka Samhita describes two important measures— *Hrudayavarana* and *Sandnyasthapana*.

- *Hrudayavarana* aims to safeguard the heart, as *Hridaya* is the seat of *Mana* and *Oja*. When poison enters the body, it initially affects the blood, followed by vitiation of *tridosha*, and ultimately reaches the heart, spreading systemically and leading to depletion

of *Oja*. This results in severe effects on both body and mind, which may even become fatal. Therefore, protection of the heart is considered crucial in cases of poisoning.

- *Sandnyasthapana* aims to lower the confusion and panic state of mind, as anxiety related cognitive fogging and brain-gut connection will be established by restoration of mind.

Table No. 2: The Pathya-Apathya in condition of visha.

	CHARAK	VAGBHATA
Pathya	Kodrava, Saindhava lavan, Bramhi, Dadima, mudag, Karvellak, Aavala, Jivanti etc	Food mixed with Ghee, Medicine mixed with Ghee
Apathya	Krodha, Bhaya, Maithun, Virudha aahar, Divaswapan	Bhaya, Ajeeran, Adhyashan, Krodha, kulatha

DISCUSSION

The Ayurvedic concept of Shanka Visha represents a profound understanding of the interaction between mind and body, wherein psychological disturbances can manifest as physical symptoms mimicking true toxic conditions. This study reinterprets this classical entity in the light of modern psychosomatic disorders, which are increasingly observed in present-day clinical practice due to rising stress, anxiety, and health-related fears. The pathogenesis of Shanka Visha is primarily rooted in the vitiation of *Manas Dosha*, especially *Rajas and Tamas*. Aggravating factors such as fear, anxiety, and delirium, poor attention leads to a typical mental state called as brain fog or cognitive fog, also some gut-brain axis leads to subsequently projects somatic symptoms resembling poisoning. This clearly correlates with the psychosomatic model described in modern medicine, where psychological stress contributes to physical symptoms in the absence of organic pathology. In the current scenario, easy access to unverified medical information, heightened disease awareness, and increasing mental instability have amplified such conditions. Patients often misinterpret minor physiological changes as serious illness or toxic exposure, thereby reinforcing the cycle of fear and symptom manifestation. This makes Shanka Visha clinically relevant even today, particularly in differential diagnosis to avoid unnecessary toxicological interventions.

Management of Shanka Visha in Ayurveda is distinctly centered on *manas upachar*, which includes *Ashwasana* (reassurance), *Satvavajaya Chikitsa* (psychotherapy), and supportive counseling. These interventions aim to correct the disturbed mental state, rather than merely suppressing symptoms. The importance of reassurance and physician-patient communication

is strongly emphasized, which aligns with modern psychological approaches such as cognitive and behavioral therapy. By restoring confidence and reducing fear, the root cause of symptom generation is effectively addressed.

The present analysis highlights that *Manas Upachara* is a safe, economical, and holistic approach with significant therapeutic potential in managing psychosomatic conditions. It also underscores the need for integrative application of classical principles in modern healthcare to improve patient outcomes. Thus, Shanka Visha can be viewed as an early Ayurveda description of psychosomatic illness, and its proper understanding can help bridge the gap between traditional knowledge and modern medical science.

CONCLUSION

Shanka Visha is a psychosomatic condition described in Ayurveda classical text where mental disturbances mimic symptoms of poisoning. Early identification and appropriate management through *Manas Upachara* ensure effective recovery and prevent unnecessary medical interventions. This concept underscores the importance of integrating psychological care into clinical practice.

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