Vamana (Emesis): Scope for its utility in poisoning

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Abstract
Ayurvedic principle of treatment named “Vamana Karma” which is very similar to the procedure of “Emesis” has been popular in the Ayurvedic management of various diseases. Vamana (Emesis) has also been mentioned as an important treatment procedure among the 24 modalities of treatment in poisoning as per Acharya Charaka. Therefore, this special contribution of Ayurveda needs to be reviewed in this context.

Keywords: Vamana, scope, utility, poisoning

Introduction
Emesis has been described as a treatment procedure in the management of poisoning. Theoretically, it is the first and foremost treatment for removal of unabsorbed poisons administered orally. It has been mentioned in the modern medical literature that emesis should be utilized in oral toxicity until 4-6 hours of poisoning, because it will directly remove the poison from the stomach and prevent its absorption in the body. However, modern medical science claims that, there is no utility of emesis after the time period of 4-6 hours, as the poison present in the stomach would have already been absorbed in the body within this period. Therefore, utility of emesis in the cases of poisoning through oral route is limited by the time span and it is utilized as a first-aid measure only.

Kemp (1935) in his writing named “Healing Ritual” has mentioned some vital emetic recipes, intended to induce vomiting. In the management of snakebite poisoning, emetics were indicated and it was advised not to sleep after the emesis. Dog bites poisoning and other animal bite poisoning were also treated by vomiting along with other measures. Hippocrates, in the chapter of regimen in health, advises the use of emetics during the six winter months; for this period engenders more phlegm than does the summer and causes the occurrence of diseases that attack the head and the region above the diaphragm. Indications, detailed process of emesis etc. have also been mentioned (Jonnes 1934).

But in today’s era, Gastric Lavage (Stomach Wash) has taken over the utilization of emesis in the oral poisoning, as it is a more sophisticated treatment procedure and can be well utilized even in certain conditions like coma etc. where emesis is generally contraindicated. Due to this, the utilization of emesis as a treatment procedure in the oral toxicity has reduced to a great extent and it has almost reached to a level of extinction in the modern principles of treatment of poisoning.

However, an Ayurvedic principle of treatment named “Vamana Karma” which is very similar to the procedure of “Emesis” has been popular in the Ayurvedic management of various diseases. Vamana (Emesis) has also been mentioned as an important treatment procedure among the 24 modalities of treatment in poisoning as per Acharya Charaka. Therefore, this special contribution of Ayurveda needs to be reviewed in this context.

Ayurveda is based on the fulcrum of Acharvaveda and is considered as its Upaveda. Hence, various standard principles of Ayurveda can be observed in the Vedic literature, though in a rudimentary manner. Even Vamana Karma was observed to be popular in the Vedic period. Acharvaveda has advised to perform Vamana Karma with Madanaphala (Randia dumetorum) in treatment of poisoning (Acharvaveda 1/6/108). Further, in the snake bite poisoning, the use of Katutumbi (Lagenaria siceraria) and Dhaamaagava (Luffa cylindrica) for Vamana has been recommended (Acharvaveda 5/131). The use of some Rasa mixed with the drugs like Palaasha (Butea monosperma) has been indicated for the treatment modality of Vamana. One of the prominent Sutra belonging to Acharvaveda i.e. Kaushika Sutra has also described Vamana. It has been stated that an emetic drug should be prescribed in the case of injury by a poisoned arrow.
While referring to the treatment of poisoning in Visha chikitsaa, it has been mentioned that Madanaphala should be used for Vamana.

According to Vaachaspatyam (Sanskrit Dictionary), the word “Vamana” is described as “Udgaare” (Eruetation), “Chhardane” (Vomiting) or “Nihsarane” (Elimination).

According to Monnier William Dictionary (1951), “Vama” means ejection, spitting out, vomiting, giving out, emitting, saliva, eructation, belching, sound, roaring, echo, flowing out, issuing out, etc.

Definition

Acharya Charaka has defined “Vamana” as a process in which waste products or toxins (Dosha) are eliminated through Urdhvaabhaaga (Upper channels) i.e. mouth [1]. Chakrapaani, the commentator of Charaka Samhitaa, has elaborated the term “Urdhvaabhaagaa” as Urdhva Mukha (Mount). Even Acharya Bhavamishna bears the same opinion for “Urdhva” as Mukha maarga (Mouth).

Properties of vamana drugs

Vamana drug (Drug inducing emesis) is the main tool for induction of Vamana. Apart from the Vamana drug, Vamanopaga Gana has also been described [2]. Drugs included in Vamanopaga Gana help in enhancing the process of Vamana. These Vamana drugs should have the following characteristics for producing Vamana.

Bhautika constitution

All the Vamana drugs have dominance of Agni and Vaayu Mahaabhuta [3-5].

1. Guna

According to Acharya Charaka, Vamana drug must possess the appropriate properties to reach at the site of lesion and cause Sampraapti Vighatana. These Guna are Ushna, Tikshna, Sukshma, Vyavaayi and Vikaasi [6]. Apart from these Guna, Acharya Sushruta has mentioned Saratva Guna instead of Vyavaayi Guna [7]. The role of each Guna in producing the vomiting and thus relieving the Dosha is being discussed as here under.

2. Ushna

Ushna is Aagneya, which produces Dahana, Paachana and Svedana [8]. Ushna drugs play important role in the process of Vishyandana of the Dosha Sanghaata responsible for the disease [9]. Acharya Sushruta has commented that Vishyandayati means “Vilinam Kurvanti”. According to Apte (1965), “Vilinam” means to dissolve or to liquefy. Sushruta Samhitaa commentator Dalhana opines that Ushna drugs are capable to dominate the Saumya drugs due to their Ushnaatva [10]. In this way, due to Ushna property, the drugs used in Vamana Karma, liquefy the Dosha Sanghaata. In modern parlance, it may be like the action of catalytic agents which may be converting the saturated compounds into the unsaturated ones or in the form, in which they are more reactive.

3. Tikshna

Daaha, Paaka and Sraava are produced by Tikshna Guna. Tikshna Guna acts for Vichchhindana. Acharya Chakrapaani mentions that Vichchhindana is nothing but the breaking down of morbid matter into smallest possible particles [11]. Even Acharya Dalhana has explained that occurring because of Tikshna property, Tikshna Guna is also Aagneya. It produces Shodhana, Paachana, Chhedana and Sraavana of Dosha in their places and the waste products (Dosha) ooze out immediately. On the basis of the above references, it can be said that due to Tikshna property, Vamana drugs break down the bigger molecules into smaller molecules, which may either be water soluble or in such a form so that they may be taken out from the diseased place, and can be brought to the blood circulation where they may be brought into Koshthha i.e. Aamaashaya in the case of Vamana, due to the Anu Pravanabhaava of the drugs [12].

4. Sukshma

The Vamana drugs can pass through minute Srotasa due to Sukshma Guna only. Vaayu, Aakaasha and Agni Mahaabhuta are dominant in its Bhautika constitution. Due to the Sukshma Guna, Vamana drugs enter Sthula and Anu Srotasa. Acharya Shaarangadhara has mentioned the same things [13]. Acharya Dalhana is also of the same opinion. Vamana drugs, after breaking the Dosha Sanghaata by its Ushna and Tikshna properties, bring the Dosha into Koshthha due to their Anu Pravanabhaava.

5. Vyavaayi

Vyavaayi drugs are supposed to act directly on the body. It is generally considered that as soon as this type of drugs are ingested, their action starts even before digestion [14, 15]. Due to this property, the Vamana drugs get absorbed and then act quickly. Acharya Dalhana mentions that due to this property, Vamana drug spreads into the body without changing its form. Acharya Charaka attributes the Vyavaayi Guna to Visha and Madya [16, 17]. Acharya Chakrapaani also comments in the Visha Chikitsaa Adhyaaya that, Vyavaayi means spreading out in the whole body. In Madaatayya Chikitsaa, the property of Sarva Vyapaapatva has been attributed for Vyavaayi Guna. So, on the basis of above references, it can be said that, due to the Vyavaayi Guna, Vamana drug spreads out in the whole body and starts its action before its Paachana (Digestion) just like the action observed in case of Visha and Madya.

6. Vikaasi

The drugs having Vikaasi Guna, produce Shaithilya in Sandhi and specially in Oja [18]. It has been mentioned in Sushruta Samhitaa that Vikaasi are those which loosen (Vimokshayet) the Dhaatu Bandhana. Acharya Dalhana explains that, due to this property, the Vamana drugs pervade through whole body without digestion due to Vikaasi property also, just like that of Vyavaayi Guna. Further, he mentions that loosening (Vimokshayet) of Dhaatu Bandhana means Shaithilya occurs due to this Guna [19].

7. Saratva

Saratva Guna of Vamana drugs has been mentioned by Sushruta Samhitaa. Acharya Dalhana opines that due to Saratva Guna, Anulomana is possible [20, 21]. At other juncture, Acharya Dalhana himself describes that, Anulomana is nothing but Vaata and Mala Pravartanam [22]. Acharya Gayi, another expounder, is of the opinion that Saratva is Visarana i.e. sliding, spreading. It is possible that due to Saratva Guna, Mala brought towards the Koshthha from Shaakhaa may be evacuated. Thus, removal of Dosha may be enhanced.

Veerya

Mostly, all the Vamana drugs should have Ushna Veerya.
Due to Ushna Veerya, Dahana, Svedana, Vivaara and particularly Paachana drugs are first brought to Hridaya; from where they are circulated through Dhiman to Shihula and Anu Srotasa of the body [23]. Thus, Ushna Veerya helps the Vamana drugs in their circulation all over the body and also in breaking up the Dosha Sanghatana.

Vipaaka
Due to Vyavyaayi Guna, Vamana drugs get absorbed without their digestion. Therefore, it seems that Vipaaka does not play any role in the Vamana Karma.

Prabhava
Acharya Charaka clearly mentions that, the main action of Vamana is due to its Prabhava. It is very evident from his quote as Urdhva Bhaaga Prabhavaat Aushadhasya Urdhvam Utkshipyate [24]. Elaborating Prabhava of Vamana drugs, Acharya Chakrapaani mentions that, due to dominance of Agni and Vaayu Mahaabhuuta in their Panchabhattikta constitution, there is a tendency of Urdhva Gati of Vamana drugs. It may be initiated by Udaana Vaayu. However, Acharya Chakrapaani emphatically mentions that it is the Prabhaava of Vamana drugs, which plays an important role in their Urdhva Gati.

Role of Udaana Vaayu in Urdhva Gati
Acharya Charaka has mentioned the Udaana Vaayu as “Udano Pranunno” [25]. In this perspective, Acharya Chakrapaani comments that Vamana drugs are set in motion in upward direction (Urdhva Gati) by Udaana Vaayu only. Even Ashtaanga Samgraha has the same view.

Procedure of vamana karma
First of all, it should be decided that the patient is fit for Vamana Karma or not; indicated as a Vaamya or Avaamya by the Acharya [26-29]. Even modern medical science has described the indications and contraindications of emesis. Emesis is strictly contraindicated in the cases of corrosive poisons, convulsant drugs like Strychnine, Petroleum distillates, conditions like coma, severe cardiac and respiratory distress, advanced pregnancy etc. The administration of Vamana Karma is a vast procedure and needs to be undertaken with very minute details. However, it can be concised in the tabular form as below and an overview of this procedure can be obtained. The readers interested to explore the detailed procedure can follow the exhaustive list of references from the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purva Karma</th>
<th>Pradhaana Karma</th>
<th>Pashchaata Karma</th>
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<td>C) <em>Snehana &amp; Svedana</em> [35-38]</td>
<td>C) Ascertainment of Vamana Vega [64]</td>
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<td>D) Dietic regimen before Vamana Karma [48-52]</td>
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<td>E) <em>Maanasopachaara</em> [53]</td>
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However, in the cases of acute poisoning, Sadyo Vamana (Instant emesis) is proposed with salt and lukewarm water only, even without any pre-measures (Purva Karma) and post-measures (Paschaatta Karma). But in the cases of chronic poisoning like heavy metals, Dushivisha, Garavisha; special medicines are indicated for Vamana by utilizing the complete procedure with all the pre-therapeutic and post-therapeutic measures (Purva Karma and Paschaatta Karma).

Indications in Visha chikitsa
1. It is indicated within 4-6 hours of oral poisoning when poison is present in stomach.
2. It is used in 1st & 2nd Vega of Sthaavara Visha (Inanimate poison) [70-72]
3. Darveekara Sarpa Damsha (2nd, 4th, 5th & 6th Vega Veya) [73]
4. Mandali Sarpa Damsha (3rd Vega) [74], Mandali Sarpa Damsha (2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th & 6th Vega Veya) [75]
5. Raajimaana Sarpa Damsha (2nd, 4th & 5th Vega) [76-78]
6. In Dushivisha [79, 80]
7. In Garavisha – Vaman with Taamra Raja [81]
8. When Visha present at seat of Kapha Dosha [82]
9. Luttaa poisoning (in exaggerated stage or Kaphaja Luttaa bite) - Vamana by Yashitmudhu, Madunapahala, Ankola, Jaelini, Nirgundi Kalka with Triphalaa Kwaatha or Shirisha (Leaves, stem, root & fruits), Ankola root Kalka with Triphalaa Kwaatha [83]
10. In Insect bite [84]

11. In Mushaka Visha (Rat bite) – Vamana by Jaalini Kwaatha or Shirisha Kwaatha or Ankotha Kwaatha or Shirisha, Katutumbi mula, Madanapahala & Devdaali phala or Koshataati, Shirisha, Jeemutaka, Madana powder with Dadhi (Curd) or Vachaa, Madanapahala, Jeemutaka & Kushthha [85-87], Or *Nishpaava*, *Kadala mula*, *Bandhujiva phala* or *Suvarchalaa*, *Raamatha*, *Swarjikaa*, *Ativishaa dvaya* or *Shyamachaa*, *Karnikaa mula* [88].
12. *Aamaashayagata Savisha Anna* (when poisoned food is present in stomach) – Vamana by Madanapahala, Katutumbi [89]
13. When symptoms like *Gaurava, Utklesha, Hrullasa* occur [90].

Conclusion
Looking at all the references and various indications of Vamana (Emesis) in Sthaavara and Jangama Visha (Inanimate and animate poisons), the wide range of utility of this treatment modality is quite evident. It is very clear that *Vamana Karma* (Emesis) is not to be used for oral toxicity only, but it can be utilized in diverse conditions like animate bites as well as chronic poisoning. Therefore, the utility of emesis should not be limited to the cases of poisoning through oral route only and shouldn’t be restricted as a first-aid measure. Also, the time limit of 4-6 hours given by modern science literature for preforming this treatment procedure doesn’t stand anymore, if we think about emesis in the Ayurvedic

~ 143 ~
perspective i.e. *Vamana Karma*. Therefore, we should take one step ahead to explore the scope for utilization of *Vamana* in various cases of poisoning. Even the instances of utilization of emesis in snake bites or dog bites in 1930s give the contemporary evidences in this direction. As we find abundant information about *Vamana* (Emesis) in Ayurvedic literature, there’s a need to utilize this great legacy to explore the scope of *Vamana Karma* in diverse conditions of poisoning.

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“147”