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EFFECT OF VASA (ADHATODA VASICA NEES) ON ŚOṬHA (INFLAMMATION / EDEMA)

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ABSTRACT

Vasa (Adhatoda vasica Nees), commonly known as Malabar nut, is a well-documented medicinal plant in Ayurveda with potent anti-inflammatory, expectorant, and blood-purifying properties. Śoṭha, described in Ayurvedic literature as swelling or inflammation, arises from the vitiation of Vata, Pitta, and Kapha doshas, often involving the Rakta dhatu. The present review explores the Ayurvedic and modern scientific perspectives on the role of Vasa in the management of Śoṭha. Vasa, characterized by Tikta-Kashaya rasa (bitter-astringent taste) and Sheeta virya (cold potency), exerts Shothahara (anti-inflammatory), Raktaprasadana (blood-purifying), and Dahaprashamana (anti-burning) actions. Modern studies have validated its anti-inflammatory potential through inhibition of prostaglandin synthesis and antioxidant mechanisms. The review concludes that Vasa serves as an effective natural therapeutic agent for inflammatory and edematous conditions, bridging classical Ayurvedic wisdom and modern pharmacological understanding.

KEYWORDS: Vasa, Adhatoda Vasica, Śoṭha, Inflammation, Shothahara, Ayurveda

INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda, Śoṭha denotes an abnormal swelling or inflammation of tissues, which may be localized or systemic. It is caused by the derangement of Vata, Pitta, Kapha, and Rakta doshas, leading to fluid accumulation, pain, and redness. According to Acharya Charaka, “Śoṭhaḥ sarveṣu vyādhiṣu dṛśyate” (Śoṭha is a feature seen in almost all diseases) (Charaka Samhita, Sutrasthana 18/6). The management of Śoṭha involves the use of Shothahara dravyas possessing properties that alleviate inflammation, pacify vitiated doshas, and purify Rakta. Among them, Vasa (Adhatoda vasica Nees) holds a significant place for its Kapha-Pittashamaka and Raktaprasadana karma.

Ayurvedic Pharmacodynamics (Dravyaguna) of Vasa

According to classical Ayurvedic texts, Vasa possesses the following pharmacodynamic attributes:

Characters	Properties
Rasa	Tikta (bitter), Kashaya (astringent)
Guna	Laghu (light), Ruksha (dry)
Virya	Sheeta (cold)
Vipaka	Katu
Karma	Shothahara, Raktaprasadana, Kaphapittahara, Vishahara, Shwasahara, Jvarahara

Bhavaprakasha Nighantu describes Vasa as:

“वासा श्वासकासघ्नी शीतला तीक्ष्णगन्धुकि।
रक्तपतितप्रशमनी श्वेतपुष्पा वर्षापहा॥”

(Bhavaprakasha, Haritakyadi Varga, 182-183)

This verse emphasizes its efficacy in bleeding disorders, inflammatory conditions, and Kapha-Pitta dominant diseases.

Mechanism of Action on Śoṭha (Ayurvedic View)

Śoṭha occurs due to the vitiation of Kapha and Pitta doshas leading to obstruction of Vata and subsequent accumulation of fluids in tissues. Vasa, with its Sheeta virya and Tikta-Kashaya rasa, pacifies Pitta and Kapha, thus reducing inflammation and edema. Its Ruksha guna absorbs excess moisture, and its Raktaprasadana property purifies blood, alleviating Raktaja Śoṭha. Additionally, its Vishahara and Dahaprashamana actions relieve burning and pain associated with inflammatory conditions.

Modern Pharmacological Correlation

Modern pharmacological studies validate the classical Shothahara action of Vasa. The major alkaloids, vasicine and vasicinone, exhibit anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and analgesic properties. Experimental studies on animal models, such as carrageenan-induced paw edema, have demonstrated significant reduction in inflammation upon administration of Vasa extracts. The mechanism involves inhibition of prostaglandin and histamine release, stabilization of cell membranes, and suppression of oxidative stress. Additionally, Vasa enhances microcirculation and reduces vascular permeability, further controlling edema formation.

Mode of uses & Therapeutic forms

Form of Vasa	Method of Use	Therapeutic Benefit in Śoṭha
Vasa Swarasa (Fresh Juice)	10–20 ml twice daily with honey	Excellent for Pittaja Śoṭha, purifies blood, and reduces heat.
Vasa Kashaya (Decoction)	40–50 ml twice daily	Cleanses Rakta and drains inflammatory exudate.
Vasa Taila / Ghrita (Oil/Ghee)	External massage	Relieves Vata-Pittaja Śoṭha; reduces pain and swelling.
Vasa Churna with Madhu	2–3 g with honey	Helpful in respiratory or allergic edema.
Vasa Patra Lepana (Leaf paste)	Local application	Soothes Daha and swelling in Vrana Śoṭha or insect bites.

Mechanism of Action (Ayurvedic Pathophysiology)

Vasa acts therapeutically on Śoṭha through:

- Dosha pacification:** Sheeta virya ↓ Pitta, Tikta-Kashaya rasa ↓ Kapha, Ruksha guna ↓ Kleda (moisture).
- Raktaprasadana:** Purifies vitiated Rakta dhatu → prevents Raktaja Śoṭha.
- Srotoshodhana:** Clears micro-channels → reduces Srotorodha (obstruction).
- Daha-Shamana:** Reduces burning sensation and inflammation.
- Vedana Shamana:** Relieves pain and tenderness by pacifying Vata and Pitta.

Therapeutic applications of vasa in sotha

Vasa Swarasa (Fresh juice)	Useful in Raktaja and Pittaja Śoṭha; acts internally to cool and purify blood.
Vasa Kashaya (Decoction)	Administered orally or used for local washing in inflamed areas or ulcers.
Vasa Taila/Ghrita	External application for Vata-Pitta Śoṭha to reduce swelling and pain.
Vasa Churna with honey	Used in systemic inflammation and allergic edema.

Therapeutic Actions of Vasa on Śoṭha

Therapeutic Aspect	Mechanism / Ayurvedic Explanation
Shothahara (Anti-inflammatory)	Tikta-Kashaya rasa and Sheeta virya pacify Pitta and Kapha, reducing heat and fluid accumulation.
Raktaprasadana (Blood purifier)	Removes Rakta dushti and improves microcirculation; beneficial in Raktaja Śoṭha.
Kaphahara	Reduces fluid congestion and heaviness in Kaphaja Śoṭha.
Dahaprashamana	Its Sheeta virya relieves daha (burning) and rakta-pitta vriddhi.
Vedanasthapana (Analgesic)	Alleviates shoola (pain) by pacifying Vata and reducing tissue tension.
Vishahara	Detoxifies inflammatory toxins (Aama, Vishasadrsha dravya).

Modern Pharmacological Correlation

Pharmacological Effect	Scientific Explanation
Anti-inflammatory	Vasicine and Vasicinone inhibit prostaglandin and histamine release. Studies (Phytother Res. 2018) show marked reduction in carrageenan-induced edema in rats.
Antioxidant	Neutralizes reactive oxygen species responsible for tissue inflammation.
Analgesic	Blocks peripheral pain mediators; supports Vedanasthapana karma.
Vascular-protective	Reduces vascular permeability and stabilizes cell membranes.
Antihistaminic	Suppresses histamine-induced inflammatory responses.

Indications in Clinical Practice

Type of Śoṭha	Dosha Predominance	Indicated Use of Vasa
<i>Pittaja Śoṭha</i>	<i>Pitta-Rakta</i>	Vasa Swarasa internally; Vasa Taila externally.
<i>Kaphaja Śoṭha</i>	Kapha-Meda	Vasa Kashaya; acts as decongestant and diuretic.
<i>Raktaja Śoṭha</i>	Rakta dushti	Vasa Churna or Swarasa; blood purifier and detoxifier.
<i>Vata-Pittaja Śoṭha</i>	Vata-Pitta	Vasa Taila Abhyanga; relieves pain, redness, and warmth.

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DISCUSSION

Vasa's multidimensional action on Śoṭha is due to its dosha-pacifying, blood-purifying, and anti-inflammatory properties. In conditions like Pittaja and Raktaja Śoṭha, its Sheeta virya reduces burning and redness. In Kaphaja Śoṭha, its Tikta and Kashaya rasa help in fluid reabsorption and reducing heaviness. Furthermore, the synergistic presence of alkaloids like vasicine enhances its efficacy by inhibiting inflammatory mediators and promoting tissue healing. Its combined Ayurvedic and pharmacological attributes make it a suitable drug for both acute and chronic inflammatory conditions. Clinical evaluation and experimental validation strengthen its role as a natural anti-inflammatory agent.

CONCLUSION

Vasa (*Adhatoda vasica*) is an effective Shothahara dravya, supported by both classical Ayurvedic principles and modern scientific research. Its Sheeta virya, Tikta-Kashaya rasa, and Raktaprasadana properties act on the pathogenesis of Śoṭha by pacifying Pitta and Kapha doshas, purifying Rakta dhatu, and reducing inflammation. The herb serves as a valuable therapeutic agent in managing inflammatory and edematous conditions with minimal side effects. Further pharmacological and clinical studies can validate its traditional applications and encourage integration into modern anti-inflammatory therapeutic regimens.

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