

Manjishtha in Toxicological Disorders: Classical References and Modern Evidence

Dr Kiran balbhim khandekar¹, Dr Shruthi bhokare², Dr Hauserao Patil³

¹PG Scholar Department of Agad Tantra Lrp ayurved college and hospital islampur sangli

²Guide Department of Agad Tantra Lrp ayurved college and hospital islampur sangli

³HOD And Professor of Agad Tantra Lrp ayurved college and hospital islampur sangli

Abstract—Manjishtha (*Rubia cordifolia*) is one of the important medicinal herbs described in classical Ayurvedic literature for its Raktashodhaka (blood purifying), Vishaghna (anti-toxic), and Varnya properties. Toxicological disorders in Ayurveda are broadly described under the concept of *Visha*, which includes poisoning due to animal toxins, plant toxins, artificial poisons, and environmental contaminants. Classical Ayurvedic texts such as Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya highlight the therapeutic role of Manjishtha in disorders associated with vitiation of *Rakta* and toxic accumulation in the body. Owing to its *Tikta-Kashaya Rasa*, *Ushna Virya*, and *Katu Vipaka*, the drug is believed to pacify *Pitta* and *Kapha*, purify blood, and facilitate detoxification through improved metabolic and circulatory functions. In the context of toxicological disorders, Manjishtha is traditionally indicated in conditions such as *Visha*, Raktadushti, skin disorders, and inflammatory conditions where toxin accumulation plays a key role in pathogenesis. Modern pharmacological studies have provided scientific support to these classical claims. Research indicates that the phytoconstituents of *Rubia cordifolia*, including anthraquinones, glycosides, and flavonoids, exhibit significant antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, hepatoprotective, and detoxifying activities. Experimental studies also suggest its potential role in reducing oxidative stress, enhancing hepatic detoxification mechanisms, and protecting tissues against toxin-induced damage. Thus, an integrative understanding of classical Ayurvedic references and modern scientific evidence highlights the therapeutic relevance of Manjishtha in managing toxicological conditions. The herb demonstrates promising potential as a natural detoxifying agent and supportive therapy in toxin-related disorders, warranting further clinical research and evidence-based validation in the field of integrative toxicology.

Index Terms—Manjishtha (*Rubia cordifolia*); Ayurvedic Toxicology (*Agada Tantra*); *Visha* (Poisoning); Raktashodhana; Detoxification; Antioxidant Activity; Hepatoprotective Effect; Phytochemicals; Integrative Medicine.

I. INTRODUCTION

Toxicological disorders have been recognized since ancient times in medical traditions across the world. In Ayurveda, the concept of poisoning and toxic exposure is elaborately explained under the discipline of Agada Tantra, one of the eight classical branches of Ayurveda. The Ayurvedic texts describe different types of poisons including Sthavara Visha (plant and mineral origin), Jangama Visha (animal origin), and Kritrima Visha (artificial or synthetic toxins). These toxins may enter the body through food, environment, bites, stings, or contaminated substances and can disturb the physiological balance of Dosh, Dhātu, and Agni, ultimately leading to systemic disorders. ¹ Among the various medicinal plants used in Ayurvedic toxicology, Manjishtha (*Rubia cordifolia*) holds a prominent place due to its powerful Raktashodhaka (blood purifying), Vishaghna (anti-toxic), and Shothahara (anti-inflammatory) properties. The plant is widely described in classical Ayurvedic compendia such as Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya, where it is indicated in disorders involving vitiation of Rakta Dhātu, inflammatory diseases, skin disorders, and toxic conditions. ² Manjishtha is botanically identified as *Rubia cordifolia* Linn., belonging to the family Rubiaceae. It is a perennial climbing herb widely distributed in India, China, and other parts of Asia. Traditionally, the root of the plant is used for medicinal purposes.

Ayurveda attributes several pharmacological properties to this herb, including Tikta-Kashaya Rasa, Guru Ruksha Guna, Ushna Virya, and Katu Vipaka, which collectively help in detoxification and purification of blood.³

Modern scientific research has increasingly focused on validating the traditional uses of medicinal plants. Studies on *Rubia cordifolia* have demonstrated significant antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, hepatoprotective, and detoxifying properties due to the presence of bioactive compounds such as anthraquinones, flavonoids, glycosides, and triterpenoids.⁴ These pharmacological activities suggest that Manjishtha may have therapeutic relevance in managing toxicological disorders caused by environmental toxins, chemicals, heavy metals, and oxidative stress.

Therefore, understanding the role of Manjishtha in toxicological conditions through both classical Ayurvedic literature and modern scientific research can provide valuable insights for integrative healthcare approaches. This article aims to review the classical references and contemporary scientific evidence supporting the use of Manjishtha in toxicological disorders.

II. CONCEPT OF TOXICOLOGICAL DISORDERS IN AYURVEDA

Ayurveda recognizes poisoning as a serious medical condition and provides detailed descriptions of its etiology, pathogenesis, symptoms, and management. Toxicological disorders are broadly described under the concept of Visha. According to classical texts, Visha possesses specific properties such as Laghu, Tikshna, Ashu, Vyavayi, and Vikasi, which enable it to spread rapidly throughout the body and disturb normal physiological processes.⁵

The sources of toxins are categorized into three main types:

1. Sthavara Visha

This category includes toxins derived from plants and minerals. Examples include poisonous herbs, toxic metals, and contaminated food substances.

2. Jangama Visha

These toxins originate from animals such as snakes, scorpions, insects, and other venomous creatures.

3. Kritrima Visha

Artificial poisons created through chemical combinations or contaminated food and environmental toxins fall under this category.

The entry of toxins into the body disturbs Dosha equilibrium, particularly Pitta and Rakta. The accumulation of toxins in Rakta Dhatu leads to conditions such as inflammation, skin diseases, ulcers, and systemic toxicity. Hence, detoxification and purification of blood play a crucial role in the management of toxicological disorders.⁶

Herbal drugs with Vishaghna and Raktashodhaka properties are frequently used in Ayurvedic therapy to neutralize toxins and restore physiological balance. Manjishtha is considered one of the most effective herbs in this category.

Ayurvedic Pharmacological Properties of Manjishtha
Manjishtha has been extensively described in Ayurvedic literature due to its therapeutic importance. Its pharmacological attributes according to Ayurvedic principles are as follows:

Rasa (Taste): Tikta, Kashaya

Guna (Qualities): Guru, Ruksha

Virya (Potency): Ushna

Vipaka (post-digestive effect): Katu

Because of these properties, Manjishtha helps in pacifying Kapha and Pitta Dosha and purifying the blood. It is also known for its ability to improve circulation and eliminate accumulated toxins from tissues.⁷

In classical Ayurvedic texts, Manjishtha is indicated in various conditions such as:

- Skin disorders (Kushtha)
- Blood disorders (Raktadushti)
- Inflammatory diseases
- Poisoning and toxic conditions
- Wound healing
- Gynecological disorders

These therapeutic indications suggest its strong detoxifying and anti-inflammatory potential.

Classical References of Manjishtha in Toxicological Conditions

Classical Ayurvedic literature contains numerous references highlighting the therapeutic importance of Manjishtha in toxicological disorders. In Charaka

Samhita, Manjishtha is mentioned among the drugs that purify blood and help in the management of inflammatory and toxic conditions affecting Rakta Dhatu. It is also included in several herbal formulations used for skin disorders and poisoning.⁸ Similarly, Sushruta Samhita describes Manjishtha as an effective drug for treating Raktadushti and inflammatory diseases. It is recommended in formulations used for detoxification and wound healing.⁹ In Ashtanga Hridaya, Manjishtha is categorized among herbs that purify blood and reduce inflammatory reactions caused by toxic substances.¹⁰ These classical references clearly indicate that Manjishtha was historically used as a detoxifying herb to neutralize toxins and restore physiological balance.

Phytochemistry of Manjishtha

Modern phytochemical investigations have identified several bioactive compounds in *Rubia cordifolia*. These include:

- Anthraquinones (alizarin, purpurin)
- Flavonoids
- Glycosides
- Triterpenoids
- Phenolic compounds

Anthraquinones are considered the primary active constituents responsible for many of the therapeutic effects of Manjishtha. These compounds possess strong antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that help neutralize free radicals and protect tissues from toxin-induced damage.¹¹ The presence of flavonoids and phenolic compounds further contributes to its detoxifying activity by enhancing cellular antioxidant defense mechanisms.

Modern Pharmacological Evidence

Recent scientific studies have investigated the pharmacological activities of *Rubia cordifolia*, confirming many of its traditional uses.

Antioxidant Activity

Oxidative stress plays a major role in toxin-induced cellular damage. Studies have shown that extracts of Manjishtha exhibit strong antioxidant activity by scavenging free radicals and reducing oxidative stress.

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Hepatoprotective Effect

The liver is the primary organ responsible for detoxification. Experimental studies have demonstrated that Manjishtha possesses hepatoprotective properties, protecting liver cells from toxin-induced damage.¹³

Anti-inflammatory Activity

Toxins often trigger inflammatory reactions in tissues. Research indicates that Manjishtha has significant anti-inflammatory effects by inhibiting inflammatory mediators.¹⁴

Antimicrobial Activity

Certain toxicological conditions may involve microbial contamination. Studies have shown that *Rubia cordifolia* exhibits antimicrobial properties against several pathogenic microorganisms.¹⁵

These pharmacological activities support the use of Manjishtha in the management of toxicological disorders.

Role of Manjishtha in Detoxification

The detoxifying action of Manjishtha can be understood through both Ayurvedic and modern perspectives.

From an Ayurvedic viewpoint, the herb purifies Rakta Dhatu and removes accumulated toxins from tissues. Its Ushna Virya helps stimulate metabolic processes and promote elimination of toxic substances.

From a modern biomedical perspective, the antioxidant and hepatoprotective properties of Manjishtha help protect cells from toxin-induced damage and enhance detoxification mechanisms in the liver.¹⁶

These dual mechanisms make Manjishtha a promising herbal drug in integrative toxicology.

Clinical Applications

Manjishtha is widely used in Ayurvedic practice for conditions involving toxin accumulation and blood impurities. Some important clinical applications include:

- Skin diseases such as eczema, psoriasis, and dermatitis
- Chronic inflammatory conditions
- Liver disorders
- Blood purification therapy

- Supportive treatment in toxic exposures

Its role in improving microcirculation and reducing inflammation further contributes to tissue healing and detoxification.

III. DISCUSSION

The integration of classical Ayurvedic knowledge and modern scientific research highlights the therapeutic potential of Manjishtha in toxicological disorders. Ancient Ayurvedic scholars recognized the importance of detoxification and blood purification in maintaining health and preventing disease. Manjishtha was considered a key herb for achieving these therapeutic goals. Modern pharmacological studies have provided scientific validation for many of these traditional claims. The presence of bioactive compounds such as anthraquinones and flavonoids explains its antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and hepatoprotective effects.

These pharmacological actions play an important role in combating toxin-induced cellular damage and improving detoxification processes. However, further clinical research is required to establish standardized dosage, safety profile, and therapeutic efficacy in human subjects.

IV. CONCLUSION

Manjishtha (*Rubia cordifolia*) is an important medicinal herb in Ayurveda with significant detoxifying and blood-purifying properties. Classical Ayurvedic texts describe its use in various toxicological and inflammatory disorders, emphasizing its role in purifying Rakta Dhatu and neutralizing toxins.

Modern scientific research supports these traditional claims by demonstrating its antioxidant, hepatoprotective, anti-inflammatory, and antimicrobial activities. The presence of bioactive phytochemicals contributes to its therapeutic potential in managing toxin-induced disorders.

Therefore, Manjishtha represents a valuable herbal drug in integrative medicine, particularly in the management of toxicological conditions. Future research focusing on clinical trials and pharmacological mechanisms may further validate its therapeutic applications.

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