

## Diagnose Poisonous Snakebite: From the Ayurvedic Classics

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Snakebite is not a new entity for the human society. Since long past the human society has been living with the snakes. In most of the times snakes behave with the human society as friends. They do not cause harm to the humans. The nature has given the character to the poisonous snakes that, they generally don't like to live in the residential areas and always like to escape the human contact.

By the gift of the nature most of the snakes we see are non-poisonous. Though very rare there is incidence of poisonous snakebites that even can cause instant death of the victim. The ancient health science, Ayurveda says that, snakebite may be proved to be so dangerous that, the victim may not even be able to speak one line.

Considering the need of diagnosis of poisonous snakebite, the father of Surgery, Susruta, mentions the signs and symptoms of poisonous snakebite as "Sarpita Dangsa". The diagnostic criteria of this type of snakebite are as follows:

1. Presence of one, two or many teeth (fang) mark (Eka, dwe, bahu dantapadayukta)
2. The marks are deep (Nimagna)
3. With less bleeding (Alparakta)
4. The injury is caused by changing the position by the snake (Udvrittra karoti) (can be diagnosed by injury to the surrounding tissues)
5. Associated with systemic signs and symptoms (baikrityakarani)
6. Has small swelling (Sangkshiptani sashofani).

Susruta has also mentioned an other type of snakebite which is poisonous but not dangerous. In this condition only marks of blue, yellow or white colour (rajyah salohita, nila, pita, sitastatha) are seen at the site of bite but no systemic signs and symptoms of poisoning appears.

An other author of ancient India, Bagbhata, who compiled the concepts of Charaka and Susruta has elaborated poisonous snakebite and discussed the signs and symptoms into 3 categories as follows:

1. Presence of 4 fang marks (dangstrapadani chatwari), injury to the surrounding tissues and continuous bleeding (mamsacchedadbicchinnaraktabahini) (Dangstranipiditam - incurable - most poisonous).

2. Presence of 3 fang marks (dangstrapadani trini), injury to the surrounding tissues and continuous bleeding (mamsacchedadbic-chinnaraktabahini) (Dashtakam- moderately poisonous - chance of cure).
3. Presence of fang marks with bleeding (dangstrapade sarakte) (Vyaluptam - mildly poisonous - prognosis - good).

Diagnosis of poisonous snakebite is the most important task of the physician as it determines the prognosis and need of treatment to be given. Not being able to diagnose a poisonous or non-poisonous snakebite the physician may push the patient to the fatal outcome.

The techniques of diagnosis of poisonous snakebite should be learnt by each and every medical practitioner thoroughly for the benefit of the patient and success in practice.

A detail scientific evaluation of the signs and symptoms of poisonous snakebite mentioned in the ayurvedic classics may explore a new field in the field of toxicology.

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