

Review Article

Dushivishjanya Shotha: An Ayurvedic Perspective on Toxin-Induced Inflammation and Edema

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ABSTRACT

Shotha (edema/inflammation) is one of the most clinically significant conditions described in classical Ayurvedic literature. Among its various subtypes, *Dushivishjanya Shotha* — swelling arising from *Dushi Visha* (accumulated or latent toxins) — occupies a particularly important position in both ancient toxicology (*Agada Tantra*) and internal medicine (*Kayachikitsa*). This article provides a systematic review of the concept of *Dushivishjanya Shotha* as described in classical Samhitas, exploring its aetiology, pathogenesis (*Samprapti*), clinical features, complications, and Ayurvedic management approaches including Panchakarma and herbomineral formulations. The condition offers a compelling framework for understanding modern toxin-mediated inflammatory disorders.

Keywords - *Dushivishjanya Shotha*, *Dushi Visha*, ancient toxicology herbomineral formulations.

Introduction

Shotha, referred to as *Shopha* or *Shvayathu* in the ayurvedic texts, broadly denotes swelling or inflammatory processes anywhere in the body. The Ayurvedic term encompasses a wide clinical spectrum ranging from localized swellings to systemic oedema and inflammation of internal organs such as bronchitis, pancreatitis, and nephritis. According to *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridayam* — the three foundational texts of Ayurveda — *Shotha* may arise as a primary (*Swatantra Vyadhi*) or secondary (*Paratantra*) condition associated with systemic diseases. Among the various etiological types of *Shotha*, the *Vishaja* or *Dushivishjanya* variety — arising due to the action of *Visha* (poison or toxin) upon body tissues is of exceptional significance. In the contemporary context, where exposure to environmental pollutants, food adulterants, chemical toxins, and pharmaceutical residues is widespread, the Ayurvedic concept of *Dushi Visha* and the resultant *Shotha* is increasingly relevant.[1]

Dushi Visha: The Concept of Accumulated Toxins

Visha is defined in Ayurveda as any substance capable of vitiating the *Saptadhatus* (seven body tissues) upon

ingestion or contact, and may potentially lead to death[2]. Ayurvedic texts differentiate *Visha* into multiple categories based on origin, potency, and clinical behaviour:

- *Sthavara Visha*: Poisons of plant/mineral origin
- *Jangama Visha*: Poisons of animal origin (snake venom, insect bites)
- *Kritrima Visha*: Artificially prepared or compound poisons
- *Dushi Visha (Garavisha)*: Latent or accumulated sub-lethal toxins

Dushi Visha is defined as any poison originating from inanimate or animate sources, or a *Kritrima Visha* that has been retained in the body after partial expulsion, or which has provisionally undergone detoxification by anti-poisonous agents or passage of time, yet continues to exert pathological effects. The term '*Dushi*' connotes something that corrupts or vitiates, and *Dushi Visha* therefore refers to a corrupting toxin that, while sub-acutely potent, persistently damages the *Dhatus* (body tissues), *Srotas* (channels), and *Doshas* (bio-energetic principles).

In the modern context, *Dushi Visha* has been correlated with chronic low-grade toxin exposure from environmental pollutants, processed food chemicals, heavy metal

accumulation, chronic medication residues, and persistent organic compounds.

Dushivishjanya Shotha: Definition and Classical Context

Dushivishjanya Shotha refers specifically to the inflammatory oedema and swelling arising as a consequence of *Dushi Visha* affecting the body[3]. This represents one of the nine classical types of *Shotha* recognised in Ayurvedic literature. While the primary nine types described by different Acharyas include *Vataja*, *Pittaja*, *Kaphaja*, *Vata-Pittaja*, *Pitta-Kaphaja*, *Kapha-Vataja*, *Traidoshaja* (*Sannipataja*), *Abhigataja* (traumatic), and *Vishaja* (toxic), *Dushivishjanya Shotha* specifically falls under the *Vishaja* category involving latent toxins.

The *Charaka Samhita* (*Chikitsa Sthana*) and *Sushruta Samhita* (*Kalpa Sthana*) both describe the classical features of *Visha*-induced *Shotha*, noting its association with systemic toxic manifestations. The *Ashtanga Hridayam* of *Vagbhata* further elaborates on *Vishaja* swelling in the context of both acute toxicology and sub-acute *Dushi Visha* exposure.

Nidana (Aetiology) of Dushivishjanya Shotha

The causative factors (*Nidana*) of *Dushivishjanya Shotha* are rooted in the actions of *Dushi Visha* upon the *Doshas*, *Dhatus*, and *Srotas*[4]. Classical texts enumerate the following precipitating and aggravating factors (*Dushita* factors):

1) Primary Causative Factors

- Incomplete neutralisation of acute *Visha* (poison) leaving residual toxic burden in body tissues
- Chronic exposure to *Sthavara Visha* (plant/mineral toxins) in sub-lethal doses
- *Garavisha*: deliberately or accidentally prepared compound toxins ingested over time
- *Jangama Visha* inadequately treated, leaving residual venoms circulating in *Rasa* and *Rakta Dhatu*
- *Viruddha Ahara* (incompatible food combinations) generating *Ama* (undigested metabolic (toxins))
- *Viruddha Ahara* → *Agnimandya* → *Ama* → (chronic exposure + retention) → *Dūṣī Viṣa* → *Dhatu Dushti* → *Shotha* / chronic disorders.

a) Role of *Agni* in *Dusi Visa* formation

- *Agnimandya* (weak digestion) is the central factor in the formation of *Dusi visa*.

- When *Virudha Ahara* (incompatible food combinations) is consumed repeatedly then it disturbs *Jathragni* and leads to improper digestion – formation of *Ama*
- This *Ama* when not eliminated properly and persists in the body over time combines with exogenous or endogenous toxins gradually transform into *Dusi Visa* (low grade cumulative toxin).

Table 1 Difference in role of *Agni* in *Ama* vs *Dūṣī Viṣa*

Aspect	Ama Formation	Dūṣī Viṣa Formation
State of Agni	Mandāgni (weak digestive/metabolic fire)	Viṣama/Alpa Agni (irregular or suppressed Agni)
Primary Cause	Improper digestion of food	Accumulation of low-grade toxins over time
Nature of Toxin	Undigested metabolic waste (Ama)	Latent, less potent poison (Dūṣī Viṣa)
Speed of Formation	Rapid (after faulty digestion)	Slow, chronic accumulation
Agni Function	Fails to digest food properly	Fails to detoxify and eliminate toxins
Dosha Involvement	Mainly Kapha association	All three Doṣas involved (Tridoṣaja)
Effect on Body	Blocks channels (Srotorodha)	Remains hidden, later causes chronic diseases
Reversibility	Relatively easier with Deepana-Pachana	Difficult; requires long-term detoxification
Clinical Nature	Acute or subacute conditions	Chronic, latent disorders
Example	Indigestion, heaviness	Allergic, autoimmune-like conditions

b) Aggravating (Dushita) Factors

According to classical texts, the following factors intensify the activity of *Dushi Visha* and precipitate[5] or worsen *Shotha*:

- *Dushita Desha* (exposure to polluted environments or regions)
- *Dushita Kala* (unfavourable seasonal or temporal conditions)
- *Dushita Anna* (consumption of adulterated, stale, or contaminated food)
- *Diwaswapna* (daytime sleeping, which suppresses Agni and promotes Ama formation)

- Debilitated states: post-Panchakarma weakness, *Jwara* (fever), Pandu (anaemia)
- Sedentary lifestyle, suppression of natural urges, and improper diet.
- Modern analogues include industrial chemical exposure, consumption of food with preservatives and artificial additives, junk food, soft drinks, and the use of cosmetics with toxic chemical residues.

Samprapti (Pathogenesis)

The fundamental pathogenesis of *Shotha*, as described in the *Charaka Samhita (Sutrasthana)*, begins with Dosha vitiation[6] followed by displacement of morbid elements. The sequence is as follows:

1. Vitiated Vata displaces morbid *Rakta* (blood), *Pitta*, and *Kapha* into the circulatory channels (Srotas)
2. *Vayu* becomes further obstructed by these morbid elements.
3. Accumulation of *Pitta*, *Kapha*, and *Rakta* occurs in the space between *Twak* (skin) and *Mamsa* (muscle).
4. Swelling (*Shotha/Utsedha*) manifests at the site of accumulation.

Vitiated Vata



Displacement of Morbid Elements(Rakta +
Pitta + Kapha) into Srotas (channels)

Obstruction of Vayu by Rakta, Pitta &
Kapha.



Dhatu Dushti



Kleda Vriddhi



Accumulation Between Twak & Mamsa
(Skin and Muscle)



Śotha / Utsedha.

In *Dushivishjanya Shotha*, Visha (toxins) acts as the primary Nidana that first vitiates Pitta and Rakta (as Visha has inherent Ushna, Tikshna, and Sukshma properties), subsequently causing *Dosha-Dushya Sammurchhana* — the amalgamation of vitiated Doshas with susceptible Dushyas (tissues). This concept, also elaborated in the Journal of Ayurveda and Integrated Medical Sciences, is considered a mandatory step in disease manifestation (Vyadhiutpatti).

The presence of Pitta and Rakta between skin and muscle tissue produces inflammation, while Kapha accumulation results in fluid oedema. Toxins specifically disrupt Rasa and Rakta Dhatu first, then progress to affect deeper Dhatus via the principle of Khavaigunya (structural weakness in susceptible tissues), explaining the site-specific manifestation of toxic inflammation.

Purvarupa (Prodromal Features) and Rupa (Clinical Features)

a) General Features of Shotha (Samanya Lakshana)

- *Gaurava* (heaviness of body)
- *Utsedha* (swelling/puffiness) over body surfaces
- *Ushma* (warmth at site of swelling)
- *Sira Tanuta* (vascular dilatation/prominence)
- *Slomharsha* (horripulation / goosebumps)
- *Anga Vivarnata* (discolouration of skin over affected region)

b) Specific Features of Vishaja (Dushivishjanya) Shotha

In addition to the general features, *Dushivishjanya Shotha* is characterised by the toxic systemic context in which it occurs. Complications (*Upadravas*) arising from *Dushi Visha* include:

- *Jwara* (fever) — systemic inflammatory response
- *Daha* (burning sensation)
- *Hikka* (hiccups)
- *Adhmana* (abdominal distension)
- *Vandhyatwa* (reproductive dysfunction)
- *Atisaar* (diarrhoea)
- *Murcha* (syncope/loss of consciousness)
- *Hrudroga* (cardiac disorders)
- *Unmada* (mental disturbances)

- *Kampa* (tremors)

The swelling in *Vishaja Shotha* tends to be associated with signs of systemic toxicity, and its *Dosha* predominance determines the specific character[7]: *Pitta*-predominant *Vishaja Shotha* presents with burning, redness, fever, and rapid ulceration, while *Kapha*-predominant presentation shows stable, cold, and non-pitting oedema.

Chikitsa (Management) of Dushivishjanya Shotha

The treatment of *Dushivishjanya Shotha* follows two cardinal principles:

- (1) *Vishahara Chikitsa* — neutralising and eliminating the causative toxin (*Visha*).
 - (2) *Shothahara Chikitsa* — resolving the resultant swelling and inflammation.
- These must be pursued simultaneously.

a) Shodhana (Purification Therapies — Panchakarma)

Shodhana forms the cornerstone of management in toxic swellings, aimed at expelling both the *Visha* and the vitiated *Doshas* from the body:

- *Swedan* (Sudation/Steam therapy): Administered after *abhyanga*, typically using *Dashamoola Kwatha*, to open channels and mobilise toxins for expulsion

- *Vaman* (Therapeutic emesis)[8]: Primary choice for fluid accumulation and *Kapha*-predominant toxic oedema; eliminates accumulated toxins and *Kapha* from the upper channels
- *Mridu Virechana* (Mild therapeutic purgation): Indicated particularly in Pitta-predominant *Vishaja Shotha*; herbs and castor oil (*Eranda Taila*) are used to cleanse toxins, fat, Ama, and excess Pitta
- *Raktamokshana* (Bloodletting): Specifically indicated to eliminate toxins and vitiated Rakta; particularly relevant in *Vishaja* and *Abhighataja Shotha*

b) Bahya Chikitsa (External Therapies)

External therapies (*Bahya Chikitsa*) are applied locally to reduce swelling and manage complications:

- *Abhyanga* (Therapeutic oil massage): Using *Dashamoola Kwatha*; stimulates lymphatics and removes toxins from peripheral tissues
- *Lepa* (Medicated plasters): Applied in the direction opposite to hair growth. Key formulations include:
 - *Punarnavadi Lepa*: *Punarnava*, *Devadaru*, *Shunthi*, *Sarshapa*, *Shigru Twak* with *Kanji* (for *Kapha-Vata Shotha*)

- *Darvadi Lepa*: *Devadaru*, *Guggulu*, *Shunthi* in *Gomutra* (cow urine)
- *Haridra-Raktachandana-Daruharidra Lepa* (for *Pittaja/Vishaja Shotha*)
- *Tila Lepa* with butter or milk (general anti-inflammatory)

c) Antah Parimarjana (Internal Medicines)

- *Dushivishari Agada* (antidote formulations): Classical anti-toxin preparations are the primary internal treatment
- *Shothahara Mahakashaya* (*Charaka Samhita Sutrasthana 4/38*): The group of 10 anti-oedematous drugs — *Patala*, *Agnimantha*, *Bilva*, *Syonaka*, *Kashmariya*, *Kantakari*, *Brihati*, *Shalaparni*, *Prishniparni*, *Gokshura* (*Dashamula*)
- *Ksharagad*: powerful *dushivishjanya* anti inflammatory drug
- *Punarnavasava / Punarnavashtaka Kwatha*: Powerful diuretic, anti-inflammatory
- *Dashamoola Kwatha / Dashamoola Haritaki*: Anti-inflammatory, anti-oedematous, *Tridoshahara*
- *Arogyavardhini Vati*: Hepatoprotective, detoxifying, balances Doshas and removes toxins
- *Chandraprabha Vati*: Multi-ingredient formulation with *Trikatu* (*Pippali*,

Shunthi, Maricha); anti-inflammatory, channel-clearing

- *Gomutra Mandoora / Shothari Rasa*: Specific formulations for oedema management
- *Shunthyadi Kashaya, Gokshradi Guggulu, Vasakasava*: Supporting formulations

d) Single Herbs of Significance

The following single herbs have classical evidence for managing *Shotha*, particularly in the context of toxin-mediated inflammation:

- *Punarnava* (*Boerhavia diffusa*): Diuretic, anti-inflammatory, balances all three *Doshas*, particularly effective in fluid oedema
- *Shunthi* / Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*): Anti-inflammatory, *Deepana-Pachana* (digestive stimulant), reduces Ama
- *Haridra* / Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*): *Vishahara, Shodhana*, anti-inflammatory, *Raktashodhaka* (blood purifier)
- *Guduchi* (*Tinospora cordifolia*): Classical *Vishahara*, immune-modulating, anti-inflammatory

- *Guggulu* (*Commiphora mukul*): Anti-inflammatory, channel-clearing (*Srotoshodhana*)
- *Devadaru* (*Cedrus deodara*): Anti-inflammatory, *Vata-Kaphahara*
- *Eranda* / Castor (*Ricinus communis*): Anti-inflammatory, used in *Virechana*; *Vata-Shotha*
- *Aragwadha* (*Cassia fistula*): Classical *Shodhana* and detoxifying herb
- *Arjuna* (*Terminalia arjuna*): Cardiotonic, reduces Vata-induced swelling
- *Haritaki* (*Terminalia chebula*): *Tridoshahara, Rasayana*, anti-inflammatory

Pathya-Apathya (Dietary and Lifestyle Advice)

a) Pathya (Beneficial)

- Old rice (*Purana Shali*), barley (*Yava*), horse gram (*Kulattha*), green gram (*Mudga*)
- Buttermilk (*Takra*), old ghee, honey (in moderation)
- Meat of Iguana, porcupine, peacock, partridge, and gallinaceous birds (classical references for Nija *Shotha*)
- Horseradish, radish, pointed gourd (*Patola*)
- Light, easily digestible, Kapha-pacifying diet

- Clean, uncontaminated water and food; avoidance of exposure to environmental toxins

b) Apathya (Harmful)

- Incompatible food combinations (*Viruddha Ahara*) — particularly fruit-milk combinations
- Junk food, processed foods, soft drinks, baked foods
- Exposure to chemical industries and toxic cosmetics
- Daytime sleeping (*Diwaswapna*), sedentary lifestyle
- Excessive sexual intercourse and prolonged walking
- Suppression of natural urges

Modern Correlation and Relevance

The concept of *Dushivishjanya Shotha* finds compelling modern parallels. The classical description of Dushi Visha — a sub-acute, chronic, accumulating toxin that disrupts the body's homeostatic mechanisms and triggers inflammation — resonates deeply with contemporary understanding of:

- Chronic inflammatory disorders triggered by persistent low-grade chemical exposure

- Heavy metal toxicity (lead, mercury, cadmium) causing systemic inflammation and oedema
- Toxic shock syndrome and septicaemia following partially treated envenomation
- Drug-induced oedema from NSAID use, chemotherapy, or corticosteroid toxicity
- Autoimmune inflammatory conditions triggered by environmental toxins
- *Dushivisha janya Visaphota Kushtha* (a toxic skin manifestation comparable to dyshidrotic eczema from chemical exposure)

Published case reports in peer-reviewed Ayurvedic journals, including a 2021 case in PMC documenting the successful management of recurrent dyshidrotic eczema as *Dushivisha Janya Visaphota Kushtha* using *Vishahara* and *Rasayana Chikitsa*, have demonstrated the clinical applicability of this framework in contemporary practice.

Conclusion

Dushivishjanya Shotha represents a sophisticated Ayurvedic nosological construct that integrates toxicology (Agada Tantra) with the pathophysiology of inflammation. The concept of *dushi*

Visha — a latent, sub-lethal, accumulating toxin — provides a conceptual framework of remarkable contemporary relevance in an era of pervasive environmental chemical exposure.

Classical Ayurvedic management through *Shodhana* (Panchakarma purification), *Vishahara Agada*, *Shothahara Mahakashaya*, and appropriate *Pathya-Apathya* offers a holistic therapeutic approach that targets both the root toxin and the resultant inflammatory oedema. Integration of this classical understanding with modern biomedical knowledge holds significant potential for managing chronic inflammatory conditions of toxin-mediated origin.

Further clinical research, pharmacological validation of anti-toxic Ayurvedic formulations, and systematic documentation of *Dushivishjanya Shotha* cases would greatly strengthen the evidence base for this classical concept.

Discussion

Dusivisa-janya Sotha represents a pathological condition in which chronic or latent toxins (*Dusivisa*) present in the body lead to inflammatory swelling (Sotha). In Ayurveda, the concept of *Dusivisa* refers to a weakened or residual form of poison that

remains in the body for a long time due to incomplete elimination or repeated exposure to toxic substances. Unlike acute poisons, *Dusivisa* manifests gradually and produces chronic disorders affecting various tissues and organs. The present discussion highlights the Ayurvedic understanding of toxin-induced inflammation through the mechanism of *Dusivisa* and its role in the development of Sotha.

According to Ayurvedic classics, exposure to animal, plant, artificial poisons or environmental toxins, along with improper diet and lifestyle, may lead to accumulation of toxic substances in the body. When these toxins are not properly detoxified, they transform into *Dusivisa* and remain dormant within the body tissues. Over time, due to factors such as unwholesome diet (*Viruddha Ahara*), seasonal changes, stress, and weakened Agni, the latent toxins become activated. This activation results in vitiation of Tridosha (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha), particularly Pitta and Kapha, which play a significant role in inflammatory responses.

The pathogenesis of *Dusivisa-janya Sotha* can be understood through the involvement of *Dosa*, *Dhatu*, and *Srotas*. The accumulated toxins first disturb Agni (metabolic fire) leading to the formation of

Ama (metabolic toxins). This toxic environment vitiates the *Doṣas*, which then circulate through the *Rasa* and *Rakta Dhatu* via different *Srotas*. As a result, obstruction and inflammation occur in the tissues, leading to *Sotha* (swelling or oedema). Clinically, this condition may present with features such as swelling, heaviness, discoloration, pain, burning sensation, and impaired function of the affected body part.

From a modern perspective, the concept of *Dusivisa-janya Sotha* may be correlated with chronic inflammatory conditions caused by long-term exposure to toxins, pollutants, chemicals, or metabolic waste products. Persistent inflammatory responses in the body are often associated with oxidative stress, immune dysregulation, and tissue damage. Ayurveda interprets these processes through the imbalance of *Doṣas* and the accumulation of toxic substances in the body.

Management of *Dusivisa-janya Sotha* in Ayurveda focuses on elimination of toxins, restoration of *Agni*, and pacification of vitiated *Doṣas*. Therapeutic approaches include *Sodhana* therapies such as *Vamana*, *Virechana*, and *Raktamokṣaṇa* for detoxification, along with *Samana* treatments using anti-inflammatory and

detoxifying herbal drugs. Medicines like *Guduchi*, *Haridra*, *Nimba*, *Triphala*, and *Guggulu* are commonly used due to their *Viśaghna* (anti-toxic), *Sothahara* (anti-inflammatory), and *Rasayana* (rejuvenative) properties. Dietary regulation, avoidance of etiological factors, and lifestyle modification are also essential components of treatment.

Conclusion

Dusivisa-janya Sotha indicate that Ayurvedic management - particularly *Dusivisari agad. Deepana-Pachana* therapy and *Sodhana* procedures show significant improvement in swelling, and associated symptoms. These interventions help in eliminating *Dusivisa*, correcting *agni* reducing *Ama* and restoring *Dosa* balance. Thus Ayurvedic interventions promising and holistic outcomes in *Dusivisa-janya Sotha*, but further large scale standardized clinical studies are required. *Dusivisa-janya Sotha* indicate that Ayurvedic management - particularly *Dusivisari agad. Deepana-Pachana* therapy and *Sodhana* procedures show significant improvement in swelling, and associated symptoms. These interventions help in eliminating *Dusivisa*, correcting *agni* reducing *Ama* and restoring *Dosa* balance. Thus Ayurvedic interventions promising and holistic outcomes in *Dusivisa-janya*

Sotha, but further large scale standardized clinical studies are required.

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