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A Comprehensive Literary Review of Vishama Jwara and its Therapeutic Principles

Vd. Milind Babarao Aware[1], Vd. Bhavana Sumit Dande[2], Vd. Shraddha Karnkumar Shitole[3]
[1]Professor, Department of Samhita Siddhant
[2]Professor & HOD, Guide, Department of Samhita Siddhant
[3]PG Scholar (3rd Year), Department of Samhita Siddhant
Shree Saptashrungi Ayurved Mahavidyalaya and Hospital, Nashik, Maharashtra, India

Abstract: *In Ayurveda, Jwara extends far beyond a simple elevation in body temperature. As articulated in Charaka Samhita (Nidanasthana 1/15), the cardinal manifestation of Jwara is Deha-Indriya-Manah-Santapa, representing a systemic state of distress impacting the physical body, sensory organs, and the mind. Vishama Jwara represents a distinct and complex form of irregular fever documented extensively across foundational Ayurvedic texts. Commentators such as Chakrapani associate Vishama Jwara with Bhutanubandha, while Acharya Sushruta notes its frequent Agantuchanubhandhi nature (Sushruta Samhita, Uttaratantra 39/51). Madhavakara further categorizes it as Bhutabhishangajanya (microbial or infectious afflictions; Madhava Nidana 2/8-10). Characterized by irregularities in Arambha (onset), Kriya (manifestation of symptoms), and Kala (timing), Vishama Jwara possesses strong Anushanga (prolonged persistence). Therapeutic management requires careful evaluation of Vegavastha (paroxysmal stage) and Avegavastha (remission stage) utilizing diverse Shodhana (purificatory) and Shamana (pacifying) modalities (Charaka Samhita, Chikitsasthana 3/217-218).*

Keywords: Jwara, Vishama Jwara, Shodhana, Shamana, Ayurvedic Therapeutics, Intermittent Fever

I. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda—the sacred science of life—occupies a paramount position in ancient and traditional medical systems by securing longevity and holistic health. Among all somatic disorders, Jwara is regarded as the primordial and foremost disease, thus receiving the earliest and most extensive description in classical literature. Acharya Charaka defines the fundamental cardinal symptom of Jwara as a state of tri-fold distress affecting body, mind, and intellect: Deha-Indriya-Manah-Santapa (Charaka Samhita, Nidanasthana 1/15). Chakrapani defines it through the etymological term "Jwarayati Santapayati," signifying a condition inherently bound with burning sensations and intense bodily distress.

Mythologically, Jwara originates from the wrath of Rudra, the deity of destruction (Charaka Samhita, Nidanasthana 1/16-20). Recognized metaphorically as the "king of diseases," comparable terminologies exist across veterinary domains, such as Pakala in elephants and Abhitapan in horses.

Vishama Jwara is distinguished specifically by its erratic nature (Visamata), marked by irregular onset (Visamarambha), alternating sensations of hot and cold (Visama Kriya), and inconsistent duration of suffering (Visamakala) (Sushruta Samhita, Uttaratantra 39/51-57). Sushruta attributes its origin to Agantuka Karana (external factors), with commentator Dalhana clarifying this as Bhutabhisanga—a concept that correlates well with modern understandings of parasitic or microbial infections (Sushruta Samhita, Uttaratantra 39/51-57; Dalhana Commentary). Consequently, Vishama Jwara encompasses both remittent and intermittent clinical patterns comparable to vector-borne illnesses like malaria, which is transmitted by infected female Anopheles mosquitoes.

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Historically, textual references to febrile disorders date back to the Upanishads (400 B.C.), where Vishama Jwara was termed "Takman," described as possessing burning (Dahana) and wasting (Shosana) properties that assault the body like wild fire.

II. SYNONYMS AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Vedic texts associate multiple synonyms for Jwara arising from Rudrakopa (the anger of Rudra), including Tapah, Shushmi, Shoka, Abhishoka, Rudraha, Papma, Vyangah, and Sheersha Parbheta.

Comprehensive insights are detailed across the Samhita and Sangraha texts, including Charaka, Sushruta, Bhela, Harita, Kashyapa, Madhava, Sharangadhara, Bhavaprakasha, and Yogaratnakara:

- **Kashyapa Samhita (Khilasthana, Chapter 1, Sloka 36-37):** Classifies Vishama Jwara based on the day of onset into Santataka, Satataka, Anyeduska, Triteeyaka, and Chaturthaka. He highlights etiological factors such as physical overexertion, heavy meals, incompatible food combinations (Virudhahara), daytime sleep, and untimely dietary habits. Kashyapa also warns against administering Kashaya (astringent decoctions) during the Amavastha or Tarunavastha stage, as it leads directly to Vishama Jwara.
- **Charaka Samhita (Chikitsasthana 3/55 & Commentary):** Establishes that all forms of Vishama Jwara are fundamentally Tridoshaja in origin, with clinical variations manifesting according to the dominant Dosha.
- **Sushruta Samhita (Uttaratantra 39/57-58, 92):** Emphasizes the dominance of Vata Dosha alongside external etiologies (Agantuka Karana) such as Bhutabhishanga.
- **Astanga Hrudaya (Nidanasthana 2/56-57):** Vagbhata notes that Mandagni (impaired digestive fire) during Adanakala (northern solstice) and dietary indiscretions during convalescence precipitate the recurrence of fever.
- **Harita Samhita (Sutrasthana 2/178-199):** Describes five distinct types of Vishama Jwara (Vataja, Ekaikajwara, Dwahieka, Triahika, and Chaturthaka Jwara) and specifies the exact subsidence timeline (14th, 18th, and 22nd days for Vatolbana, Pittolbana, and Kapholbana respectively).
- **Madhava Nidana (Chapter 2, Verses 8-10 & 28):** Madhavakara affirms Bhuta (microorganisms/pathogens) play a direct causative role and includes Pralepaka Jwara within the spectrum of Vishama Jwara.

III. ETIOLOGICAL FACTORS (NIDANA)

3.1 Dietary Causes (Ahara)

- Excessive intake of astringent (Kasaya), dry (Ruksha), or hot (Ushna) substances (Charaka Samhita, Sutrasthana 3/34-35).
- Ingestion of very cold water (Shitambu) or heavy/nourishing (Santarpan) foods.
- Consumption of incompatible food (Virudha Ahara), unwholesome diet (Asatmya), or marshy meat (Anupamansa) (Kashyapa Samhita, Khilasthana 1/36).

3.2 Lifestyle Causes (Vihara)

- Exposure to toxic pollens or strange fragrances (Visausadhi Gandha).
- Habitual daytime sleeping (Divaswapna) and erratic daily routines (Mithya Vihara).
- Psychological stressors such as grief, anger (Krodha), and fear (Bhaya).

3.3 Microbial & Environmental Factors (Bhutabhisanga / Keetanu)

External pathogenic entities (Keetanu/Bhuta) enter the body through specific portals of entry, leading to an incubation period (Sanchaya Kala) before aggravating the Doshas (Sushruta Samhita, Uttaratantra 39/51-57). Acharya Charaka explicitly notes that geographic regions heavily populated by mosquitoes (Mashaka), rats (Mooshaka), and flies (Makshika), alongside unwholesome winds and seasonal shifts, serve as crucial epidemiological roots for widespread febrile outbreaks (Charaka Samhita, Vimanasthana 3/6-8).

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IV. PATHOPHYSIOLOGY (SAMPRAPTI)

The pathogenesis begins when causative factors provoke Tridosha, impairing Agni (digestive fire) and generating Ama (toxins). This Ama localizes within the Amashaya (stomach), obstructs bodily channels (Srotorodha), and interacts with Pachaka Pitta and Samana Vayu. Circulating systemically via Vyana Vata through Rasa and Rakta dhatus, the vitiated factors target specific tissue layers (Dhatus), producing distinct clinical presentations (Sushruta Samhita, Chikitsasthana 3/68-70; Charaka Samhita, Chikitsasthana 3/55-60):

Type of Vishama Jwara	Primary Dhatu Involved	Anatomical Site	Classical Reference
Santata Jwara	Rasa Dhatu	Wall of Amashaya	Charaka Samhita, Chikitsa 3/55
Satata Jwara	Rakta Dhatu	Amashaya	Sushruta Samhita, Uttara 39/53
Anyeduska Jwara	Mamsa & Meda Dhatus	Hrudaya	Astanga Hrudaya, Nidana 2/56
Triteeyaka Jwara	Asthi Dhatu	Kantha	Madhava Nidana 2/28
Chaturthaka Jwara	Majja Dhatu	Shira	Kashyapa Samhita, Khila 1/37

V. CLINICAL CLASSIFICATION AND PERIODICITY

According to classical consensus across Charaka, Sushruta, Vagbhata, and Madhavakara, Vishama Jwara manifests primarily in five clinical types based on the periodicity of paroxysms (Vega) and intervals of remission:

Name of Jwara	Paroxysms (Vega)	Time Period / Pattern	Classical Reference
Santata	Nirantara (Continuous)	7, 10, or 12 days continuous period	Charaka Samhita, Chikitsa 3/55
Satata	Twice in 24 hrs	Within Ahoratra (24-hour period)	Sushruta Samhita, Uttara 39/53
Anyeduska	Once in 24 hrs	Within Ahoratra (24-hour period)	Astanga Hrudaya, Nidana 2/56
Triteeyaka	Once	On alternate days (every 3rd day)	Charaka Samhita, Chikitsa 3/60
Chaturthaka	Once	On every 4th day	Madhava Nidana 2/28
Chaturthaka Viparyaya	Twice	In between two days (leaving 1st & 4th day)	Sushruta Samhita, Uttara 39/57

VI. PROGNOSIS (SADHYA-SADHYATA)

- **Sukhasadhya (Easily Curable):** Fevers in strong patients with mild Dosha involvement, superficial tissue localization (Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa), and outward-manifesting paroxysms (Bahirvega) (Sushruta Samhita, Chikitsasthana 3/71).
- **Krichhrasadhya (Difficult to Cure):** Internalized paroxysms (Antarvega) with moderate complication (Charaka Samhita, Chikitsasthana 3/50).
- **Asadhya (Incurable):** Chronic Chaturthaka fevers affecting deep tissues (Asthi and Majja) accompanied by severe complications like dyspnea (Swasa), syncope (Murcha), delirium, and extreme debility (Sushruta Samhita, Uttaratantra 39/60).

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VII. PRINCIPLES OF MANAGEMENT (CHIKITSA)

Ayurvedic treatment for Vishama Jwara relies on Yuktivyapasraya (rational therapeutics), Daivavyapasraya (spiritual therapies), and Satwavajaya (psychotherapy).

7.1 Special Considerations on Langhana

Unlike acute Jwara where fasting (Langhana) and diaphoresis (Swedana) are primary interventions, strict Langhana is generally contraindicated in Vishama Jwara due to the deep-seated nature of the pathology and chronicity (Charaka Samhita, Chikitsasthana 3/217-218).

7.2 Pharmacological Interventions (Shamana & Shodhana)

Because Pitta and Vata dominate alongside toxic involvement, bitter herbs (Tikta Rasa) and medicated Ghrita are foundational (Charaka Samhita, Chikitsasthana 3/217). Commonly utilized classical formulations include:

Formulation Class	Classical Remedies / Medicines	Textual References
Choorna (Powders)	Sudarshana Choorna, Mahasudarshana Choorna, Nimbadi Choorna, Anantadi Choorna	Yogaratnakara, Jwara Chikitsa; Sharangadhara Samhita 2/6
Kwatha (Decoctions)	Guduchyadi Kwatha, Amritashtaka Kwatha, Patoladi Kwatha, Kiratiktakadi Kwatha, Mustadi Kashaya	Charaka Samhita, Chikitsa 3/200-210; Sushruta Samhita 3/68
Rasa Yoga & Lauha	Kasturibhairava Rasa, Sannipatabhairava Rasa, Vishamajwarantaka Lauha, Sarvajwarahara Lauha	Bhaishajya Ratnavali, Jwarachikitsa 3/150-165
Ghrita (Medicated Ghee)	Indukanta Ghrita, Panchatikta Ghrita, Shatpala Ghrita, Amritashatpala Ghrita, Kalyanaka Ghrita	Charaka Samhita, Chikitsa 3/217-225; Astanga Hrudaya, Chikitsa 1/45

VIII. PREVENTIVE MEASURES (DETERRENCE)

- Avoid endemic regions during high vector transmission seasons.
- Take proper prophylactic formulations at prescribed intervals when traveling.
- Use topical insect repellents (30-35% DEET), especially from dusk to dawn.
- Wear protective, long-sleeved permethrin-treated clothing.
- Sleep under fine-nylon bed netting impregnated with permethrin.
- Seek immediate medical evaluation upon contracting any tropical febrile illness.

IX. CONCLUSION

Vishama Jwara remains a sophisticated disease entity in Ayurvedic medicine, bridging ancient clinical observations of periodicity, vector-borne transmission (Bhutabhisanga), and deep tissue pathology. Effective management requires precise diagnostic evaluation of Vega, Dushya, and Agni, integrating targeted bitter formulation therapies (Tikta Dravya) alongside modern prophylactic measures to secure complete recovery and prevent relapse.

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