

## REVIEW ARTICLE: VISHAHAARI LEHA IN SARPA VISHA CHIKITSA

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## ABSTRACT

*Vishahaarileha* is one of the magical remedy which is given in *Sarpadamsa* (Snake bite) by traditional *Vishavaidyas* of Kerala. It has been used as a confirmatory test for *Sarpadamsa* (snake bite). A betel leaf smeared with 2.5 g. of *Vishahaarileha* is given to the patient. Based upon the taste perceived by the patient, *Vaidya* determines the nature of *Sarpavisha* (Snake venom) and treat accordingly. Here, instead of normal *lehakalpana*, hand is used for mixing all the ingredients, so that due to the heat generated in between the hands evaporates the watery content in the mixture. Many of the *Vishaharayogas* (antitoxic preparations) are least explored since those are written in regional languages (mainly in Malayalam). Here this article aims to explore the method of preparation, administration, and probable mode action of this *leha* in *Sarpavisha*. This reference has been taken from a *Vishagrantha* (In Malayalam language) named “*Prayogasamuchayam*” written by Kochunnitampuran of Cochin dynasty. Further research works on this preparation may prove the exact mode of action on the *Sarpavisha* (snake venom) and its use in the field of *Ayurveda*.

**Keywords:** *Prayogasamuchayam, Sarpavishachikitsa, Vishahaarileha*

## INTRODUCTION

*Agadatantra* is a branch that always demands the practical training (*Drushtakarmatwa*) more than any other branches of *Ayurveda* as it has to deal with fatal cases and emergency management. In Kerala, *VishaChikitsa* is widely practiced since ancient time and *Ayurvedic* toxicologists (*VishaVaidya's*) of Kerala considered seven famous treatises as their authentic reference books.

1. *Ashtangasangraha*
2. *Vishanarayaneeyam*
3. *Lakshanamrutham*
4. *Uddesha*
5. *Utpala*
6. *Haramekhala*
7. *Kalavanchana*<sup>1</sup>

The traditional method of treatment for poisoning in Kerala is classified broadly into two

categories, namely, *Vi havaidya* (treatment for poisoning by using (*Aushadha/Agada*) and *Vishavidya* (treatment for poisoning by using *mantras*)<sup>1</sup>. *Vishavaidya* is the method of treating poisoning by using antidotes (*Agada*) whereas the latter is the methodology adopted to eliminate the effects of toxins from the body by using *mantras*.<sup>1</sup> It is likely that there was no obvious distinction between *Vi havaidya* and *Vi havidya* in older days. But gradually the distinction seems to have become more prominent.

*Sarpavisha Chikitsa* has got more importance in the rural areas of Kerala due to increased rate of mortality by *Sarpadamsa* (snake bite). Some of the *Vishaharayogas* which can be used in emergency conditions of *Sarpadamsa* were mentioned in textbooks of *Kera-*

leeyavisha-chikitsa. Vishavaidyajyotsnika, Prayogasamuchayam, Kriyakoumudi are the famous books written by eminent scholars during past centuries. Vishahaarileha is one of the yoga which is mentioned in Prayogasamuchayam, a text book of Vishachikitsa by “Sri Kocchun-nithampuran” from Cochin dynasty, who himself was a reputed toxicologist. This book was written in Malayalam language. In other Malayalam Vishagranthas such as Kriyakoumudi<sup>2</sup> by V.M Kuttikrishnamenon, Vishavaidyasarasamuchaya by Valloorsankaranamoothiri also, references of Vishahaarileha are available.

#### About Vishahaarileha

Vishahaarileha is one among the yoga which is widely used by Keraleeyavishavaidyas in Sarpavishachikitsa. Apart from being a me-

dicinal formulation; the Vishahaarileha has another surprising usage. It is used to detect “which snake has bitten the victim”. In other words, we can say that it is a confirmatory test for snake bite.<sup>3</sup>

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

##### Ingredients of Vishahaarileha

- Tambula-Betel leaf
- Mrudangphalabeeja “Attanga in Malayalam”- Luffaamara
- Bronze vessel commonly called “Uruli” as in Malayalam
- Mercury (Hg)
- Sulphur (S)
- Nimbataila /neem oil (*Azardiracta indica*)

##### Properties of ingredients<sup>4</sup>

Drug name	Mrudangaphala (Luffaamara)	Tambula (Betel leaf)	Nimbataila (oil of Azardiracta indica)	Parada (Purified Mercury)	Gandhaka (Purified Sulphur)
Rasa	Tikta	Tikta, Katu	Tikta	Shadrasa	Katu, Tikta, Kashaya
Guna	Ushna, Laghu	Laghu, Vishada, Tikshna	Laghu, Snigdha		Sara
Veerya	Ushna,	Ushna	Ushna		Ushna
Karma	Vishahara, Virechana	Deepana	Raktasudhikara	Yogavahi	Vishagna, Deepan Rasayana
Doshagnata	Kaphavatahara	Vatakaphahara	Kaphapittahara		Pittakara, Kaphavatahara
Vyadhignata	Visha Kamala, Kushta, Vrana	Vranahara, Vishahara, Shwasa, Kasa	Twakarogahara, Krimi, Vrana	Rasayana	Visha, Kandu, Visarpa, Pama

#### Method of preparation<sup>3</sup>

Here the normal method of lehakalpana is not followed, instead hand is used for mixing all the ingredients, so that due to the heat generated in between the hands evaporates the watery content in the mixture. Prepared Vishahaarileha has shown in fig 1.

One kudava (300 ml) of fine paste of Mrudangaphala beeja (Seeds of Luffaamara) is taken and mixed with two prastha (2.4 litre) of Tambul (betel leaf) swarasa (leaf juice). This mixture is suspended in a cloth and filtrate dripping from the bundle is collected, measured and placed in a shallow wide mouthed bronze vessel. An equal amount of

*Nimbataila* (oil of *Azadiractaindica*) is taken and added to it. Each of *Suddhaparada* (Purified mercury) and finely powdered *Shuddha-Gandhaka* (purified sulphur) is taken in proportion of 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the above mentioned mixture and mixed well. Then it is thoroughly tri-

turated by hand to remove all the watery part from it. The resultant *leha* is of a very thick colloid consistency. It should be preserved in an airtight container.



Fig 1. Vishahaari leha

#### Administration of Vishahaarileha

As soon as a *Dashta* (patient who is bitten by a snake) comes in, 1 *Panathookkam* (apprx. 2.5 g.) of this *leha* is smeared on a betel leaf and the victim is asked to chew it. Later on he is asked to describe the taste which he experiences. The actual taste of this

*leha* is *tikta rasa*, but if the taste experienced by the victim is

- *Kashaya* (astringent)-only a very slight envenomation should be inferred
- *Katu* (pungent), -*Darveekara* snake (Cobra) has bitten the person.
- *Amla* (sour)- then it is a *Mandali* (Viper).
- *Madhura* (sweet)-then it is a *Rajila* (Krait).<sup>3</sup>

#### Probable mode of action

When the *Visha* enters the body



*Doshaprakopa* in the body



*Samyogajanyaprabhava* of *Vishahaarileha*



*Vyktata* of *Rasa* in *Rasanendriaya* (tongue) may be due to respective vitiated *Dosha*

- *Madhurarasa* will be perceived in *Rajila-Visha* (*Kapha* vitiation)
- *Amla rasa* will be perceived in *Mandali-Visha* (*Pitta* vitiation)
- *Katu rasa* will be perceived in *Darveekara-Visha* (*Vata* vitiation)
- *Thikta rasa* will be perceived in *Alpa-Visha* (Slight vitiation of *Doshas*)

#### DISCUSSION

It is believed that in India about 2 million people are bitten by snakes annually of which 15,000 to 30,000 cases prove fatal. The problem became worsened after urbanization and deforestation. There are nearly 2,500 species of snakes in the world of which approximately 375 are poisonous. Most important families

are Elapidae, Viperidae, and Hydrophillidae.<sup>5</sup>The cobra and krait from Elapidae family which possess neurotoxic venom and Russell's viper, saw scaled viper comes from Viperidae family shows hemotoxic effect in the body. Hydrophillidae snakes (sea snakes) mainly affect muscle tissues and lead to muscle damage, stiffness, immobilization etc.<sup>5</sup>

Ayurveda classification of snakes is mainly based on their quality of *Visha* i.e.; *doshaprapakatwa* of *Visha* in the body. *Darveekara* (*Vatapradhana*), *Mandali* (*Pithapradhana*) *Rajila* (*Kaphapradhana*) are the *Savishabhomasarpas* and its *Visha* considered to be fatal, but fatality depends upon the nature of bite. When *SarpaVisha* enters the body due to *damsa*, first it does the destruction of *Rakthadhatu* then vitiates *Vatadidoshas* and reaches *Hrudaya*, later it does the destruction of *Ojas*, which is the essence of our body. *Visha* travels in the body by means of its *Gunas* into each *Dhatu*s from *rasa* to *Sukra*. In *Prayogasamuchayapradhamaparicchedam*, it is explained that how the *Visha* travels in our body<sup>6</sup>. *Charma*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Medas*, *Asthi*, *Majja*, *Shukra* are the seven *Dhatu*s (instead of *rasa* here *charma* is used) which are situated in sequence in all living beings. So *Vaidya* can detect the *Visha* when it reaches to each *Dhatu*s by seeing different types of *Lakshanas*. In some cases, *Visha* may not show its presence in the body but some *Vishe-shayogas* will help the *Vaidya* in this situation and *Vishahaarileha* is one of them.

It is one of the magical remedy which is used to detect the nature of *Visha* affected to the *Sarpadashta* (snake bite victim). Moreover it is used to confirm whether envenomation has taken place or not. Another reference of this *Vishahaarileha* is available in one of the compiled text book of *Vishachikitsa* named "*Kriya kourmudi*"<sup>2</sup> written by V.M Kuttikrishnamenon who was a famous *Vishavaidya* of Kerala, son of Sri Ramavarmaappan Tampuran, Maha Raja of Cochin.

In *SarpaVishachikitsa*, first *Vaidya* has to diagnose the nature of *Visha* and it is better understood after giving this *Vishahaarilehato* the envenomated person. While giving this medicine the patient should be conscious, if he is unconscious it is the physician's duty to make him conscious by performing *Nasya* (*nasal medication*), *Anjana* (*collyrium*), *Jaladhara* (*irrigation of head with water*). It should always be kept in mind that it is the *Doshakopa* that the physician is inferring and Nomenclature of snakes is only the characterization on the *Doshas* onto the physical realm. The *Vi haharileha* is given to the patient mainly to see the state of *Trido a* in the patient's body, that is to say, this is a test that is used to diagnose which *Do ha* (*V ta*, *pitta* or *Kapha*) is most affected in the patient's body at that moment. If the creature that bit the patient is a venomous one, its poison will affect the patient's *Prakruti* or original state of *Trido ha*. Any one, any two (*Sa sarga*) or all three (*Sa nip ta*) *Do has* in the patient's body will be affected depending on the nature of the poison<sup>7</sup>.

### CONCLUSION:

*Ayurvedic* diagnosis of snake bite is totally different from the other systems of medicine. It is mainly focused on the state of *Doshawhich* is caused by the *Visha* and a difficult task for a *Vishavaidya* to fix the amount of envenomation that has taken place in the patient's body. *Vishahaarileha* is one of the magical remedy which helps *Vaidya* in this situation. In present era, practice of this yoga in *sarpavishachikitsais* limited to some of the *Vishavaidhyas* of Kerala like *Smt. Vimalaantharjanam* (Ullanoor Mana, Venkitangu, Trissur, Kerala). Further researches on this *Vishahaarileha* might be helpful to explore the exact mode of action and its use in the field of *Ayurveda*.

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