A REVIEW ON UPAVISHA - SNUHI (EUPHORBIA NERIFOLIA LINN)

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ABSTRACT

In Ayurveda, Upavis is the group of drugs which were less toxic in nature and not so lethal but produces certain toxic symptoms on consumption or administration. Snuhi is one among the upavis and a well-known plant in Indian system of medicine. According to Acharya Charaka even an acute poison become an excellent drug if it is administered properly and similarly even a drug if not administered properly becomes an acute poison. The drug snuhi is employed as an important ingredient of various classical preparations. This review article includes overall information about the plant Snuhi, its toxicological aspect, management, medico-legal aspect and therapeutic uses.

Key words: Snuhi, Upavisha, Therapeutic uses, Toxicological aspect

INTRODUCTION

Snuhi (Euphorbia nerifolia linn), is a well-known medicinal plant in the Indian system of medicine. It has been stated categorically that strong poisons could be the best medicine, if it is used after proper Shodhana (Detoxification), in a proper therapeutic dose and formulation. On the contrary a good medicine may affect adversely unless it is used for proper person with proper dose¹. Rasratnasamucchaya described eleven number of Upavisha ². In Ayurvedic literature Upavisha are the group of drugs which were less toxic in nature and not so lethal but produce certain toxic symptoms on consumption or administration. They are having less toxic potency³. Snuhi is also identified as Snuhi ksira, Sudha ksira, Sehunda ksira, Snuhi dugda, Sudha dugdha and Sehunda dugdha; all these are the synonymous words used in the classics for the milky exudate of ‘Euphorbia nerifolia’⁴.

Scientific classification⁵:

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<tr>
<th>Kingdom</th>
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Botanical name: *Euphorbia nerifolia* linn

Family: Euphorbiaceae

Vernacular name: 6,7:

Sanskrit Name: Snuhi

Hindi Name: Thuhara

English Name: Common milk hage

Telugu: Akujemudu

Tamil: Ilaikalli

Bengali: Manasa sija

Arabic: Jakum

Classification:

Ayurveda: Sthavara visha varga, Upavisha 8

Modern: Irritant organic vegetative poison

Special categorisation 9:

Caraka: Viśecana, sat sodhana vrksa, kṣirtraya

Susruta: Adhobhagahara, Shyamadi

Vagbhata: Nikumbhadi (Virechana)

Species 10:

- *E. nerifolia* linn – Patra Snuhi
- *E. nivulia* Buch - Ham
- *E. antiquorum* Linn – Tridhara Sehunda
- *E. trigona* Haw - Tridhara Sehunda bheda
- *E. royleana* Boiss - Thuhara
- *E. Tirucalli* – Kanda snuhi

Distribution 11: Plant occurs commonly in rocky ground throughout the Deccan, Peninsula and is often cultivated for hedges in villages throughout India.

Plant description: Large succulent shrub or a small tree or which grows upto 6-20 ft high, with jointed, cylindrical or obscurely 5-angled branches bearing short stippular thorns, more or less confluent in vertical or slightly spiral lines. Flowers – yellowish green or greenish yellow in color. Leaves – fleshy, deciduous, 6-12 in. long. Fruits – tricolcus, consisting appearing three radiating follicles. Seeds – minute like rape seeds.

Flowering and fruiting time – plant becomes leafless during winter. Flowers begin to appear in springs and subsequently plant bears fruits.

Major chemical constituent 12:

Latex – Euphol, neri foliol, neriifolene.

Part used 13: Latex, stem, leaf, and root

Ayurvedic properties 14:


*Karma* – Kapha-vatahara, Dipana, Recana

Indications: *Vatavyadhi*, *Gulma*, *Udara*, *Sula*, *Sotha*, *Arasas*, *Kushta*, *Medoroga*.

Snuhi- uses:

- *Arsha* – turmeric powder mixed with latex of snuhi is applied externally
- Krmidanta – root of snuhi is chewed
- Vrana – wounds are cured by applying the steamed leaves of snuhi for 5-6 days.
- *E. antiquorum* Linn – Visha, *Dooshivisha* and *Sarpa visha* 15
- Snuhimula churna mixed with black pepper – Scorpion sting, Snake bite and used internally and externally 16.

Toxic part - Latex

Dosage 17: Latex – a possible fatal dose is 25-30ml and fatal period is about 3 days.(modi)

Snuhi ksir Shodhana (Purification method) 18:

2 pala (96ml) of Snuhi ksira is taken along with 2 tola (24ml) of filtered cinca patra swarasa in a clean wide mouthed container. The vessel is placed under sun and dried. When the liquid part dries up, the dry powder obtained is stored in a suitable airtight container as Suddha suska snuhi ksira for further therapeutic use.
Snuhi ksira properties: Suddha snuhi ksira mitigates vata dosa and is useful in Gulma roga, Udara roga, Adhmana and in curing the chronic pile mass. It is also useful in combating influences of Visa over body.

Ayurvedic formulations of Snuhi: Jatyadi varti, Snuhiddugdhadi varti, Snuhi Ghruta, Jalodarari rasa.

Toxic symptoms: Ingestion of latex – Irritant, Vomiting, Diarrhoea, Burning sensation in the abdomen, Convulsions and Coma.

On contact - Skin - Burning of skin and vesication
Eye - Inflammation of eye and temporally blindness

Treatment: Wash contact part with running water
Symptomatic treatment - On ingestion: Gastric lavage with normal saline, Activated charcoal
On contact: Skin - Topical corticosteroids
Eye- Antibiotic eye drops, Tears substitute, IOP (Intra ocular pressure) lowering medications

Post Mortem Appearance- Signs of inflammation of contact part, gangrenous patches in the stomach and rotten spleen.

Medico legal importance- Commonly accidental poisoning, Homicidal and suicidal purposes are very rare and used for procuring criminal abortions.

CONCLUSION
Poisonous plants which are included in visha and upavisha category can give quick relief in various diseases with their internal use. If they are used without purification they may cause harmful effects. Hence poisonous plants should always use after purification with specific purification process. According to Acharya Charaka even an acute poison become an excellent drug if it is administered properly and similarly even a drug if not administered properly becomes an acute poison.

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