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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 Sarpa (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.

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

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). Vishavidya 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. 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 Vishaharayagos which can be used in emergency conditions of Sarpadamsa were mentioned in textbooks of Kera-
leeyavisha-chikitsa. Vishavaidyajyotsnika, Prayogasamuc hayam, Kriyakoumudi are the famous books written by eminent scholars during past centuries. Vishahaarileahas 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 Kriya koumudi² by V.M Kuttikrishnamenon, Vishavaidyasarasamuccayam by Valloorsankaran-namboothiri 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 medicinal 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.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Ingredients of Vishahaarileha
- Tambula-Betel leaf
- Mrudangphalabeeja “Attanga in Malayalam” - Luffaamara
- Bronze vessel commonly called “Uruli” as in Malayalam
- Mercury (Hg)
- Sulpher (S)
- Nimbataila/neem oil (Azadiracta indica)

Properties of ingredients⁴

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drug name</th>
<th>Mrudangaphala (Luffaamara)</th>
<th>Tambula (Betel leaf)</th>
<th>Nimbataila (oil of Azadiractaindica)</th>
<th>Parada (Purified mercury)</th>
<th>Gandhaka (Purified Sulphur)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rasa</td>
<td>Tikta</td>
<td>Tikta, Katu</td>
<td>Tikta</td>
<td>Shadrasa</td>
<td>Katu, Tikta, Kashaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guna</td>
<td>Ushna, Laghu</td>
<td>Laghu, Visha-da, Tikshna</td>
<td>Laghu, Snigdha</td>
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<td>Sara</td>
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<td>Veerya</td>
<td>Ushna, Ushna</td>
<td>Ushna</td>
<td>Ushna</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karma</td>
<td>Vishahara, Virechana</td>
<td>Deepana</td>
<td>Raktasudhikara</td>
<td>Yogavahi</td>
<td>Vishagna, DeepanRasayana</td>
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<td>Doshagnata</td>
<td>Kaphavatahara</td>
<td>Vatakaphahara</td>
<td>Kaphapittahara</td>
<td>Pittakara, Kaphavatahara</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vyadhigna-ta</td>
<td>Visha Kamala, Kushtha, Vrana</td>
<td>Vranahara, Vishahara, Shwasa, Kasa</td>
<td>Twakarogahara, Krimi, Vrana</td>
<td>Rasayana</td>
<td>Visha, Kandu, Visarpa, Pama</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Method of preparation³
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 Azadiracta indica) is taken and added to it. Each of Suddhaparada (Purified mercury) and finely powdered Shuddha-Gandhaka (purified sulphur) is taken in proportion of 1/5th of the above mentioned mixture and mixed well. Then it is thoroughly triturated 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.

**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).

**Probable mode of action**

When the Visha enters the body

1. Doshaparakopa in the body
2. 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 AlpaVisha (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 Hydrophilli-
dae. The cobra and krait from Elapidae family
which possess neurotoxic venom and Rus-
sell’s viper, saw scaled viper comes from Vi-
peridae family shows hemotoxic effect in the
body. Hydrophilliidae snakes (sea snakes)
mainly affect muscle tissues and lead to mus-
cle damage, stiffness, immobilization etc.

Ayurveda classification of snakes is mainly
based on their quality of Visha i.e.; doshapa-
kopatwa of Visha in the body. Darveekara
(Vatapradhana), Mandali (Pithapradhana)
Rajila (Kaphapradhana) are the Savishabh-
oumasarpas 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 Rak-
thadhatu 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 from rasa to Sukra. In Prayogasamuchayapradhamaparicchedam,
it is explained that how the Visha travels in
ourbody. Charma, Rakta, Mamsa, Medas,
Asthi, Majja, Shukra are the seven Dhatus
(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 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 koumudi” written by V.M Kuttikrish-
namenon who was a famous Vishavaidya of
Kerala, son of Sri Ramavarmaappan Tampu-
ran, Maha Raja of Cochin.

In SarpaVishachikitsa, first Vaidya has to di-
agnose the nature of Visha and it is better un-
derstood 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), Ja-
ladhara (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 charac-
terization on the Doshas onto the physica-
realm. The Vi haharileha is given to the pa-
tient 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 (Vāta, 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 nipāta) Do has in the patient’s
body will be affected depending on the nature
of the poison.

CONCLUSION:
Ayurvedic diagnosis of snake bite is totally
different from the other systems of medicine.
It is mainly focused on the state of Do-
hwhich 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. Vimalaa-
tharjanam (Ullanoor Mana, Venkitangu, Tris-
sur, Kerala). Further researches on this Visha-
haarileha might be helpful to explore the ex-
act mode of action and its use in the field of
Ayurveda.

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