



VISHA CHIKITSA: A FOLKLORE VISION

SHREEVANITHA^{1*}

ABSTRACT:

Man started his life journey from the forest which was devoid of toxic environment, but he was not able to get rid of the organisms or the wild, which made it inevitable for the origin of the science of toxicology. The classical school of medicine incorporating this science developed all these centuries reaching the general public, this further developed on traditional knowledge restricting to individuals possessing the lineage of medical knowledge, such as incidence of snake bite, a major socio-medical problem of south east Asian countries. In Indian rural areas, Health centers are inadequate and snake bite victims mostly depend on folklore healers and herbal antidote, as an alternative treatment. To obtain authentic data, survey was conducted in and around Udupi district. Single herbal preparation and compound preparations used by folklore *Vaidyas* are discussed in detail. Only few plants used by folklore healers for snake bite management were reported and discussed. In this review details of plants, local name, identification, useful part, method of administration are discussed, which might be useful for evolving - the future therapeutic management for snake bite.

KEYWORDS: Folklore, Traditional, Medicinal Plant, Snake bite

^{1*}Associate Professor, Dept. of Agada Tantra, Muniyal Ayurveda Medical Sciences Manipal, Karnataka, India.

Corresponding Email id: vanitavenkat@gmail.com Access this article online: www.jahm.co.in

Published by Atreya Ayurveda Publications under the license CC-by-NC-SA

INTRODUCTION:

Plants have been used in folklore medicine for thousands of years. The knowledge of medicinal plants has been gathered from different medicinal system such as Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha etc. It is estimated that around 200,000 plant species are known all over the world [1]. The WHO has listed 21,000 plant species possessing medicinal properties in the world. In India, about 2,500 plant species are used for medicinal purposes by traditional healers [2]. Multifarious uses of plants among multi ethnic societies are all practices based on observations. Study of traditional or folk medicines of tribes is called ethno-medicine. Majority of the world population still rely on the folklore herbal medicine for their health care [3]. As anti -Snake venoms are not readily available in rural areas and remote places, folklore practitioner serves the society with locally available herbs to reduces the poison content in body and prevent the inflammations[4]. Snake is a word that evokes feeling of horror and disgust in most of us. Large tracts of forests serve as home to innumerable snakes. Snake bite till date remains a public health hazard in India. There are about 300 species of snakes identifiable in India, of which 60 are known to be poisonous [5]. Considering the geographical pattern of the whole world [6], it is estimated that the true incidence of snake bite/envenomation could

exceed 5million/year. 50% of the snake bite cases of Udupi have been reported from Kundapura and Karkala. India accounts for almost 80% of global snake bite death, with over 64,000 people dying every year [7]. Karnataka is one of the 13 states with highest prevalence of snake bite deaths.

Common poisonous snake in India mainly includes Indian Cobra {*Naja naja*}, Common Krait {*Bungarus caeruleus*}, Russell's viper {*Daboia russelii*}, Saw scaled viper {*Echis carinatus*} have been reported from south India.

METHODS:

We have visited 5 folklore practitioners in and around Karkala, Mudradi, Muniyalu and Shivapura of Udupi district, Karnataka State of India. Information was collected from them regarding the *VISHA CHIKITSA* and *GARAVISHA* by Interview method.

SEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Information obtained regarding different concepts of *Visha Chikitsa* and Medicines used in *Visha Chikitsa*. Concept of *Sparshamani* or *Visha Kallu* deals with the concept that it is being stored in the heap of rice and is taken out only when it is required. *Sparshamani* is kept on bite mark, so that it is allowed to absorb *Visha*. *Kasturi Mrigashringa* was used in earlier ages, but currently not in use as *Kasturi Mriga* is now at the verge of extinction.

Other practitioners also shared their knowledge and experience with us, which included assuring the victim about his life and health, which influences his mind positively. Tie a band 4-8 cm above the bite mark, so as to prevent the blood {vitiated} entering into heart. Folklore practitioners also explained us the importance of excising of bite mark and *Nishpeedana* of vitiated blood from the spot of bite, which is to be later followed by *Antah Parimarjana* and *Bahih Parimarjana Chikitsa*. *Antah Parimarjana* includes chewing and intaking of juice of *Ishwari*, which acts as best blood purifier. *Bahih Parimarjana Chikitsa* includes *Lepa* of *Sarpagandha* and *Eka nayaka* root, trituration with lemon juice and applied externally.

Practitioners also explained us the importance of identifying and knowing prognosis and choosing the treatment wisely. If the patient, presents himself with hoarseness of voice, it indicates the rising of *Visha* till throat. Emesis with strong tea is indicated. Patient presenting himself with rolling of eyes and insensitivity in the scalp region, which is specifically symptomized by painlessness towards plucking of hair from scalp indicates the most

severe condition, where poison has raised towards head. Practitioner should wisely choose to treat or give up the patient, based on his own confidence, strength of the patient and other clinical features. If at all practitioner chooses to treat the patient, he must excise the scalp of the patient and keep the *Lepa* of anti-poisonous or meat of *Jangala Praani*, so as to absorb the poison.

Intake of milk and other *Kaphakara* food are totally contraindicated after the treatment as it causes *Visha Vardhana*. Practitioners also explained us the treatment for *Gara* poison. Patient is given *Bhasma* of *Balpa Kodi* root processed with milk. It acts as emetic and causes emesis within half an hour. Later of which, *Gara Visha Shodhana Dravya* is administered. Another important information gathered was experiences, knowledge and practices of folklore medicine are at the verge of extinction, due to insecurity in sharing the knowledge of herbs used, with the fear of reduction in the potency of medications and lack of interest in pursuing the knowledge and many more. There is a need of promoting and supporting the folklore practitioners, in order to promote folklore system of medicine.

Table- 1. Local Snakes Found in Surveyed Area

English Name	Type Of Poison	Sanskrit Name	Scientific Name	Local Name	Family
Indian Cobra	Neurotoxic	<i>Darvikara</i>	<i>Naja naja</i>	<i>Nagara Havu</i>	Elapidae
Common Krait	Neurotoxic	<i>Darvikara</i>	<i>Bungarus</i>		Elapidae

			<i>caeruleus</i>		
Russel's Viper	Hemotoxic	<i>Mandali</i>	<i>Daboia russelii</i>	<i>Katta</i> <i>Kadambale</i>	Viperidae
Scaw Scaled Viper	Hemotoxic	<i>Mandali</i>	<i>Echis carinatus</i>	<i>Kolaku</i> <i>Mandala,</i> <i>Kannadi Havu,</i> <i>Kole Gandaka,</i> <i>Pili Kandodi</i>	Viperidae
King Cobra	Neurotoxic	<i>Darvikara</i>	<i>Ophiophagus</i> <i>hannah</i>	<i>Raja Nagara</i> <i>Havu, Kalinga</i> <i>Sarpa</i>	Elapidae
Python	Non-Venomous		<i>Python</i> <i>molurus</i>	<i>Permari</i>	Pythonidae

Table No. 2. Names of important Medicinal Plants used by the folklore practitioner in Udupi district

Sanskrit	Latin Name	Local / Kannada Name	Family
<i>Eshwari</i>	<i>Aristolochia indica</i> Linn	<i>Eshwari</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Sarpagandha</i>	<i>Rauwolfia serpentina</i> (L.) Benth. ex Kurz	<i>Sarpagandha / Indian Snake Root</i>	Apocynaceae
<i>Garudapatala/ Sarpagandha</i>	<i>Coculer nirsutur</i> (<i>Chassalia curviflora</i> var. <i>Ophioxylodes</i> -)	<i>Kadu Garudapatala</i>	Menispermaceae
<i>Shigru</i>	<i>Moringa oleifera</i> Lam	<i>Nugge Soppu</i>	Moringaceae
<i>Amalaki</i>	<i>Emblica officinalis</i> Gaertn or <i>Phyllanthus emblica</i> Linn	<i>Nellikette</i>	Euphorbiaceae
<i>Snuhi</i>	<i>Euphorbia nerifolia</i> Linn	<i>Kasaradakette</i>	Euphorbiaceae
<i>Kupilu</i>	<i>Strychnus nuxvomica</i> Linn	<i>Kasarka</i>	Loganeaceae

<i>Saptachakra</i>	<i>Salacia reticulate</i> Wight	<i>Ekanayaka (Beru)</i>	Hippocrateaceae
<i>Olle Kudi</i>	<i>Memecylon malabarica</i> (C. B. Clarke.) Cogn	<i>Balpa Kudi</i>	Melastomataceae
<i>Bhoomi Champa</i>	<i>Kaempferia rotunda</i> Linn	<i>Neeli Sampige</i>	Zingiberaceae

DISCUSSION

Folklore practices are boon to the society, as they contain precious and ancient knowledge. Knowledge of *Sparshamani* and blood purifying drugs are very precious. Identification, preservation, and growing of drugs needs experience and idea of each drug. Dosage of herbal drugs are to be decided based on types of snake bite, severity of condition is obviously a difficult task. Superstitions have imposed a major impact on spreading the knowledge, as practitioners believe that efficacy of the drug reduces with disclosing its name. Folklore practitioner increases the life span of the victims bitten by the snake in the village area by preventing the *Vyavyatha Guna* of poison in the body till the availability of further treatment. Aged practitioners have failed in spreading the knowledge to the younger generations, due to the lack of interest and hesitation toward folklore practices.

Due to the advent of modern technologies and methodologies, the lineage of practitioners has been discontinued for the present and

upcoming generations as result of which the ancient knowledge is at the verge of extinction. Thereby, resulting in loss of sacred ancient knowledge of *Visha Chikitsa*, which was formulated and passed on to several generation by our ancient researchers. As the folklore practitioners failed in documenting the theories due to illiteracy, modern era has failed in gaining the precious sacred knowledge. Need for documentation and setting a medical standard to these practices is high, so as to give a dignified touch to the practices. Herbal drugs are to be made available in the modernized capsules, tablets or powder form with more palatability, easy availability and long shelf life. So that victims at any corner of the world can make the best use of it and attain the profit to the maximum extent. Resources for the preparations of medicaments are at the verge of extinction due to deforestation, natural calamities. It is necessary to propagate the ideas and medications in order to make the best use of naturally available healing techniques. *Younger generations should develop the

patience to obtain the sacred folklore knowledge on *Visha Chikitsa* and develop interest on the same to nurture the ancient Indian practices, besides mastering the modernized techniques. *Providing an opportunity to the world to witness the wonderful results of application of sacred Indian medical knowledge with modernized technical touch needs lots of patience, heap of interest and inspiring ideas of younger generations.

CONCLUSION

The treatment protocol and the medicaments used by traditional practitioners, if analysed proves to be scientific. We gathered idea and knowledge of 6 snakes, its bite marks and treatment of it using 10 locally available drugs. Knowledge obtained by 5 folklore practitioners were precious and each step had its own importance. Treatment modalities of each practitioners differed with steps followed, though the principle followed is identical. Need for awareness and interest to preserve and propagate this traditional method, before they get extinct is essential. The institutes, which are with department of post graduate studies in *Agada Tantra* has to take steps for documentation of this holistic knowledge and application of this method in clinical practice [8]. Method for diagnosis, approach to treatment differs with region and experience. Signs and symptoms, taste perception,

Tridoshalakshana and severity differs with each patient [9]. Approach, treatment and dosage is to be wisely chosen by the practitioners based on *Bala Dosha*, *Kala* and *Rutu*.

Acknowledgements:

Author expresses thanks to Mayuri Shetty, Surabhi G, Pavan P Jogi., and B Varun Shenoy for their assistance in survey of folklore practice of Agada.

REFERENCES:

1. Chandel kis, Shukla G, Sharma N. Biodiversity in medicinal and aromatic plants in India. New Delhi, Indian council of agricultural research, National bureau of plant genetic resources, pursa campus: 1996; 21-24 {Google scholar}
2. Antony Gomes, Rinku das, Sumana saekhel et al. Herbs and herbal constituents active against snake bite: Indian journal of experimental biology: Vol 48:865-71.
3. Prabhu M, Kumuthakalavalli R Folk remedies of medicinal plants for snake bites, scorpion's stings and dog's bites in Eastern ghats of Kolli hills, Tamil Nadu, India: 5 IJRAP 2012; Vol 3[5]:696 -700.
4. Mangadi, Gurudeva. Botanical and Vernacular Names of south Indian Plants 2001; Bangalore: Komala for divyachandra prakashana: vol (1):38-42.
5. Shastry JLN. *Dravyaguna Vidjnana*: chaukhambha Oriental, 2 ed, {2005}; vol 2: 747-8.
6. The Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia part 1 2009; Vol 6:

7. The sidhha Pharmacopeia of India, Part 1; Vol 2008:1-2
8. Kanojia Anitha, Chaudhari kishora Shivaji, Gothecha Vinod Kumar. Medicinal plants active against Snake Envenomation; IJRAP (3), May 2012;363- 6.
9. Gupta YK, Peshins SS. Do Herbal Medicines have potential for managing Snake bite Enevenomations; Toxicology International, May – Aug 2012; vol 19 (2): 87-9

CITE THIS ARTICLE AS

Shreevanitha. Visha Chikitsa: A folklore vision. *J of Ayurveda and Hol Med (JAHM)*. 2022;10(6): 119- 125

Conflict of interest: None