Review Article

Unveiling Traditional Practice of Oothu Chikitsa- A Review

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Abstract

Kerala has an exceptional status in practice of Ashtavaidya Parampara from time out of mind. The land offered fertile ground for plants and snakes to thrive. The incidence of snake bites marked the beginning of Visha Chikitsa in Kerala. Improvised Vishavaidya Parampara is popularly known as Keraleeya Visha Chikitsa. Different practices were followed by Vishavaidyas in the successful management of emergency conditions of Visha and many distinctive treatments remain unrevealed to us. Malayalam books were written based on their practical experiences in the field of Vishachikitsa such as Kriya Koumadi, Prayoga Sammucchaya, Vishavaidya Jyotsnika, Kodassery margom etc. Unique traditional treatment modalities practised during those periods includes Oothu chikitsa, Karu prayoga, Thookku dhara, Jaladhara, Vellottu prayogam etc. The aim of this paper is to review a formulation used for Oothu Chikitsa by a traditional Vishavaidya in Sarpa Visha Chikitsa which were followed in his fourty years of practice in Visha Chikitsa.

Keywords

Agada, Vishachikitsa, Oothu chikitsa

Introduction

Agadatantra, a branch of Ayurveda, deals with the study of different kinds of poisons and the management of poisoning from various sources. It is not a deniable fact that incidence of snake bite has not declined in rural areas and at the same time statistics proves that suburban areas are also vulnerable to snake bite. It means treatment of snake bite cases still remains a challenge to the medical fraternity even after invention of sophisticated and advanced medicines and techniques[1]. The contribution of professional Vishavaidyas from Kerala for the management of snake bite is highly appreciated. The Ayurvedic treatment module for this medical emergency is unique and requires medical skills and experience to practice. Apart, from using treatment mentioned in the Samhitas, they follow many unique treatments which are known to provincial Visha vaidyas, since ages[1]. Many of those treatment principles were hand written and preserved but were taught and shared only to their own successive generations. There are many medicines and treatments which are effectively used as life-saving tools in the remote areas. Oothu is one among them which is used in snake bite cases when the patient is falling unconscious. It is an emergency treatment which is very handy and can be practiced with minimal requirement[1].

Oothu chikitsa

The treatment modality called Oothu is one of the most important therapeutic procedures performed in the initial stage of snake bite treatment, particularly in the stages of Vata, Kapha or Vatakapha predominance and when the effect of Visha is limited to the first three Dhatus. It is considered as an immediate stabilization of the patient from severe envenomation. The textual reference for this method of treatment is in Visha Jyotsnika[2] and Kriyakaumudi[3]. Viswa, Maricha, Dusparsa, Vishavega are the drugs mentioned in the textual reference in Prayogasamuchhayam wheras in Kriya koumudi, a combination of Viswa, Vishavega, Trikatu, Thrittapatra, Dusparsa and Vacha have been mentioned.

Indications: A Vishavaidya mainly employs this treatment modality when any or all of the following symptoms appears in a snakebite victim:

1. Delay in responses to verbal and physical stimuli
2. Drowsiness
3. Drooping of the eyes
4. Numbness over the tongue, mouth and scalp
5. Pain all over the body
6. Paralysis of jaw, tongue, larynx and neck

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7. Headache
8. Dizziness, vertigo
9. Excess salivation, formation of mucous and fluids in the chest, eyes, etc.

Method

Three persons who have not consumed alcohol or any such Tikshna Dravyas (because being similar in nature to that of Visha can aggravate it further) for the last 24 hours are needed for the treatment. The patient should be seated in a comfortable position, either in a chair or a high pedestal, which is convenient for the treatment. One attendant should stand behind and the other two attendants on either sides of the patient. They should then chew a small quantity of the drugs explained above, slightly pounded together. The person standing behind the patient should blow air through his mouth onto the Murddha of the patient and the two attendants standing on either side should blow air through their mouth to the ear on the respective side. This should be done synchronously for at least 150 times. It can be increased as per the patient's condition. The attendants can briefly stop the treatment in between to spit out excess saliva. Care should be taken not to spit out the medicines kept in the mouth. Improvements can be noticed in the responses of the patient after 75-100 blowing. After 150 blowing there is usually a marked improvement in the verbal and physical responses, drowsiness and drooping of the eyes. The patients report a vivid feeling of the effects of Visha descending down their body before disappearing[1].



Oothu Chikitsa

Ingredients

Table no: 1 Ingredients of formulation

Drug	Botanical Name	Family
Ela	Elettaria cardomomum	Zingiberaceae
Maricha	Piper nigrum	Piperaceae
Vacha	Acorus calamus	Araceae
Pippali	Piper longum	Piperaceae
Sunthi	Zingeber officinale	Zingiberaceae
Kushta	Saussurea lappa	Asteraceae
Neeli	Indigofera tinctoria	Papilionaceae
Sarpagandha	Rauwolfia serpentina	Apocynaceae
Lasuna	Allium sativum	Amaryllidaceae
Lavanga	Syzgium aromaticum	Mtrtaceae
Kumari Sara	Aloe vera	Liliaceae
Eswari Moola	Aristolochia indica	Aristolochiaceae
Hingu	Ferula asafoetida	Umbellifrae

Table no: 2 Pharmacological properties of herbal ingredients

S.No	Drug	Rasa	Guna	Virya	Vipaka	Karma
1	Ela[4]	Katu Madhura	Laghu Ruksha	Sita	Madhura	Pithavatahara Swasahara Hridya Vishaghna
2	Maricha[5]	Katu	Tikshna Laghu	Ushna	Katu	Kaphavatasamaka Vishaghna Swasahara
3	Vacha[6]	Katu Tikta	Laghu Tikshna	Ushna	Katu	Kaphavatasamaka Lekhana Deepana Sulaghna
4	Pippali[7]	Katu	Tikshna Laghu Snighda	Anushna	Madhura	Kaphavatasamaka Dipana Swasahara Sulanasaka
5	Sunthi[8]	Katu	Laghu Snighda	Ushna	Madhura	Dipana Swasahara Sulahara Hridya
6	Kushta[9]	Tikta Katu Madhura	Laghu Ruksha Tikshna	Ushna	Katu	Kaphavatasamaka Vishaghna Kasahara Sirasulahara
7	Neeli[10]	Tikta	Laghu Ruksha	Ushna	Katu	Vatakapha samaka Vishaghna Kasa swasahara
8	Sarpagandha[11]	Tikta	Ruksha	Ushna	Katu	Vatakapha samaka Vishaghna Vedanasthapana
9	Lasuna[12]	Katu	Snigha Tikshna	Ushna	Katu	Vataghna Pachana
10	Lavanga[13]	Katu Tikta	Laghu snighda Tikshna	Sita	Katu	Kaphapittasamaka Vishaghna Kasaswasahara
11	Kumari Sara[14]	Tikta Madhura	Snighda Pichila	Sita	Katu	Tidoshasamaka Vishahara
12	Eswari Moola[15]	Katu Tikta Kasaya	Laghu Ruksha	Ushna	Katu	Kaphavatasamaka
13.	Hingu[16]	Katu	Laghu Snighda	Ushna	Katu	Tridoshahara

Discussion

A handwritten document which has scientific, historical or literary value can be considered as manuscript. India is rich in its collection of medical as well as other manuscripts and most of these remain unpublished. As such, several unique disease conditions and medical formulations contained in these texts are being lost by decaying. The practice of Vishachikitsa flourished in Kerala from time immemorial. There was a practice of writing the treatment procedures in palm leaves in olden period. This was followed by the traditional Vishavaidyas and which remained in the family as such without revealing to anyone. Due to this, many of the available treatment procedures and formulations remained unexplored due to difficulty in decoding those manuscripts and non availability of the same to the proper hands.

Oothu Chikitsa or blowing therapy can be considered as an emergency line of management to regain the consciousness, to stabilize the patient and to protect the vital organs in cases of envenomation. The reference explained in this paper reviews the formulation or herbal drugs used by a traditional Vishavaidya in Kerala who successfully practiced Vishachikitsa in 40 years. The formulation contains thirteen drugs and the procedure should be done for 101 times. On analyzing Rasa panchaka of drugs used in this formulation, most of them possess Katu-Tikta Rasa, Ruksha-Tikshna Guna, Ushna Virya and Katu Vipaka. Tikta katu rasa possess Vishahara property, Tikshna guna facilitates deeper penetration of drug which will be gainful in this condition. Vishaghna as well as Sanjasthapana Karma of the drugs acts in the process of regaining altered consciousness.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to bring into vogue the local health tradition which is immediate, handy and also cost-effective treatment. The medicines used in this context found to be different from the available references about Oothu Chikitsa from the available literatures. But, the effort should be put to prove the efficacy and mode of action of these procedures and anti-dotes on the scientific basis to be accepted largely by the Ayurvedic medical community. Such efforts will help the survival of the very precious and rarest procedures and anti-dotes by bringing them to the mainstream, which would be beneficial for the mankind. There is a need to explore the available manuscripts to uplift the field of Visha Chikitsa in the present days.



Literature

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