

**AYURVEDIC ASPECT OF RABIES –A REVIEW****Savita B. Chougule**

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**ABSTRACT**

Rabies is an acute, highly fatal viral disease of central nervous system caused by Lyssavirus type 1. It is a zoonotic disease of warm blooded animals such as dogs, cats, jackals and wolves. It is transmitted to man usually by bites or licks of rabid animals. In Ayurvedic texts it is described as *alarka visha*. Incurable features includes affected person imitates the voice and activities of an animal by which he got bitten, affected person sees the image of an animal by which he got bitten in water and in mirror, *Jalasantrasa* (Hydrophobia) means affected person gets frightened by sight, touch and sound of water.

Treatment of dog bite is described by Sushrutaacharya. It includes pouring hot ghee on bite site, drinking of old ghee, Purgation, Propitiatory bath, *Sanshodhana* (putrifying therapies), *Dhatu- Sharpunkha yoga*, various *agadas* (anti poisonous medicine) for ingestion as well as for external application.

**KEY WORDS:** Rabies, *Alarkavisha*, Hydrophobia, Ayurvedic treatment.

**INTRODUCTION**

Rabies is an acute, highly fatal viral disease of central nervous system caused by Lyssavirus type 1. It is a zoonotic disease of warm blooded animals such as dogs, cats, jackals and wolves. It is transmitted to man usually by bites or licks of rabid animals.<sup>1</sup> Rabies is present in all continents with the exception of Antarctica, but more than 95% of human death occur in Asia and Africa. Once symptoms of the disease develop, rabies is nearly always fatal. Every year, more than 15 million people worldwide receive a post-exposure vaccination to prevent the disease.<sup>2</sup>

In Ayurvedic texts it is described as *alarka visha*.<sup>3</sup> *Brihatrayee* describes its signs and symptoms, incurable features and treatment in detail.

**Table No.1:** Local Signs and Symptoms

**Signs and Symptoms in Rabid animal-**

According to Charaka, due to vitiation of *tridosha* and contrariety of *dhatu* dog suffers from headache, salivation and drooped face.<sup>4</sup> According to Sushruta and vaagbhata, When *vata* gets aggravated in the body of dog, fox, jackal, bear, tiger etc. It combines with aggravated *kapha* and accumulates in the channels of their sense organs resulting in loss of sensation. Such sensory deprived animal runs at random with drooped tail, lowered jaw and shoulder, exuding more saliva and bites any one that come close.<sup>5, 6</sup>

Due to bite of such *alarka peedita pashu* (Rabid animal) following signs and symptoms are produced in human.

**Local and General Signs and Symptoms**

Signs and Symptoms	<i>Charakasamhita</i> <sup>7</sup>	<i>Sushruta Samhita</i> <sup>8</sup>	<i>Ashtaang samgraha</i> <sup>9</sup>	<i>Ashtaang Hrydayam</i> <sup>10</sup>
<i>Suptata</i> (Loss of sensation)	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Krishna asruka strava</i> (Blackish coloured bleeding)	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Kandu</i> (Itching)	✓	-	✓	✓
<i>Nistoda</i> (pain)	✓	-	✓	✓
<i>Vaivarnya</i> (Discolouration)	✓	-	✓	✓
<i>Kleda</i> (Exudation)	✓	-	✓	✓
<i>Vidaha</i> (Buring sensation)	✓	-	✓	✓
<i>Raga</i> (Redness)	✓	-	✓	✓
<i>Shopha Granthi</i> (Suppurative and cystic swelling)	✓	-	✓	✓
<i>Danshavdaran</i> (Tearing of tissue)	✓	-	✓	✓
<i>Spota</i> (Appearance of vesicles)	✓	-	✓	✓
<i>Nikunchana</i> (Contractures)	✓	-	✓	✓
<i>Mandal</i> (Ring like patches)	✓	-	✓	✓

**Table No.2:** General Signs and Symptoms

Signs and Symptoms	<i>Charaka Samhita</i> <sup>11</sup>	<i>Sushruta Samhita</i>	<i>Ashtaang Samgraha</i> <sup>12</sup>	<i>Ashtaang Hrydayam</i> <sup>13</sup>
<i>Hritshula</i> (Chest pain)	✓	-	✓	✓
<i>Shiroruka</i> (Headache)	✓	-	✓	✓
<i>Jwara</i> (Fever)	✓	-	✓	✓
<i>Stambha</i> (Stiffness)	✓	-	✓	✓
<i>Trishna</i> (Thirst)	✓	-	✓	✓
<i>Murccha</i> (Fainting)	✓	-	✓	✓

**Asadhya Lakshana(Incurable features)-<sup>14</sup>**

- 1) When affected person imitates the voice and activities of an animal by which he got bitten, it becomes incurable.
- 2) When affected person sees the image of an animal by which he got bitten in water and in mirror it becomes incurable.
- 3) *Jalasantrasa* (Hydrophobia)- When affected person gets frightened by sight, touch and sound of water such condition is called as *Jalasantrasa* (Hydrophobia), it is incurable.

**Treatment-**

- 1) Prophylaxis methods-

The person in whom the poison is spontaneously aggravated has no chance of recovery, hence the poison should be artificially aggravated (and then remedied) before reaching that stage of aggravation.<sup>15</sup>

2) *Agnikarma-*

Blood containing poison should be removed from the site of bite and then site should be burnt by pouring hot ghee on it then *agada* (antipoisonous medicine) should be applied as warm poultice on that area.<sup>16</sup>Juice of *pratyakpushpa* (*Achyranthes aspera*) flowers should be squeezed on the wound.

3) *Ghritpaan* (Drinking of ghee)and Purgation-

Affected person should be made to drink old ghee and purgative drugs along with milky sap of arka (*Calotropis procera*) should be administered.<sup>17</sup>

4 )Propitiatory bath-

The person should be taken to the banks of river or a meeting place of four roads and be given bath with cold water from pots containing precious gems and medicinal plants.<sup>18</sup>

6) *Sanshodhana* (putrifiactory therapies)-

After bath the person should be administered strong putrifiactory therapies (Vomiting and purgation) because in a person who is not purified well, the poison gets aggravated again, though the wound has healed.<sup>19</sup>

5) Preparation of medicines and treatment in *Alarka Visha-*

a) *Palala* (Paste of tila) mixed with tila taila (*Sesamum indicum*),milky sap of arka (*Calotropis procera*) and *guda* (Jaggery)should be administered. *Dhatu* (*Dhatu metel*) along with *shweta punarnava* (*Boerhavia diffusa*) should be administered. These drugs are said to destroy the poison of rabid dog as easily as wind drives away the cluster of clouds.<sup>20</sup>

b) *Dhatu Sharpunkha Yoga*-<sup>21</sup>

Root of Sharpunkha (*Tephrosia purpurea*) one *karsha* (10 gs) and root of *Dhatu* (*Dhatu metel*) half *karsha* (5gms) should be macerated along with *tandula* (rice) using *tandulodaka* (rice water) this paste should be enveloped with leaves of *dhatu* and *apupa*(pan cake) should be made with it. This cake should be consumed at the time of meals (mid day) by the person suffering from poison of rabid animal.

If after the digestion of this pan cake the person still behaves like rabid animal as

before, then he should be kept confined in a cold room devoid of water.

Once the abnormal symptoms subside the person should be given bath the next day. He should be given warm meals of boiled rice along with milk. This kind of treatment should be given for 3-5 days and be continued by half its degree for further days until abnormal symptoms subside.

c) Repeated application of paste of tila (*Sesamum indicum*), guggula(*Commiphera mukul*), durva(*Cynodon dactylon*), dadima(*Punica granatum*) and *guda* as a warm poultice is best to treat the local symptoms of dog bite.<sup>22</sup>

d) Roots of nala (*Arundo donax*) macerated with water is beneficial for drinking and external application.<sup>22</sup>

e) *Rasona* (*Allium sativum*),*Marich* (*Piper nigrum*), *Pippali*(*Piper longum*) and *Triphala* (*Emblica officinalis*, *Terminalia chebula*, *Terminalia belerica*) macerated with cow bile if used as nasal drops, collyrium and external application is the best medicine for dog bite.<sup>23</sup>

f) Decoction of leaves, bark, root of *jalave-tasa* consumed cold is best medicine for dog bite. Medicated ghee prepared from this decoction used for drinking, nasaldrops, anointing and external application is best in all types of *Jalasantrasa* (Hydrophobia).<sup>24</sup>

g)The wound caused by the nails or teeth of such rabid wild animals should be squeezed and warm oil should be poured over the area,as these aggravates *vata*.<sup>25</sup> Application of paste of somvalka (*Myrica esculanta*), ashvakarna(*Dipterocarpus turbinatus*), gojihva(*Onosma bracteatum*), hamsapadika(*Adiantum lunulatum*), haridra(*Curcuma longa*), daruharidra(*Berberis aristata*) and gairika removes the poison from the wounds caused by nails and teeth.<sup>26</sup>

**DISCUSSION-**

According to modern science, there is no specific treatment for rabies. Rabies is usually fatal and major efforts are only for prevention.<sup>27</sup> Ayurveda emphasizes the same. In *Sushruta samhita*, many yogas are mentioned to prevent the pathogenesis of rabies. *Dhatu Sarpunkha yoga* is one of them. According to *Bhavaprakash*, *Dhatu* (*Dhatu metel*) and *Sharapunkha* (*Tephrosia purpurea*) are *vishapaha* (antipoisonous)<sup>28</sup>, when both the drugs are used in combination the anti poisonous effect is enhanced. *Dhatu* itself is a *Sthavar visha* (Vegetable poison) and use of *Sthavar visha* is recommended in treatment of *Jangam visha* (Animate poison)<sup>29</sup>, after *shuddhikaran* (purification) of *Sthavar visha*. *Dhatu* can also be used in combination with *shweta punarnava* (*Boerhavia diffusa*) which is also *vishghna* (anti poisonous).<sup>30</sup>

**CONCLUSION-**

In *Sushruta Samhita* it is mentioned that, the person in whom the poison increases on its own accord, he does not survive, hence it should be made to increase quickly, if not increasing on its own. This indicates that the prophylactic treatment plays a major role, because as the disease is progressing it is very difficult to treat and becomes incurable. Various remedies useful in dog bite are described in *Brihatrayee*. There is need to study the efficacy of these drugs as the efficacy of these drug is proved, it will be a precious gift to the world of medical science and ultimately a blessing for humanity.

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