



INCISION ON VERTEX (KAKAPADA) : THE EMERGENCY TREATMENT OF SNAKEBITE

Ayurveda

Prof. Dr. Dilip Kr. Goswami

MD Ayurveda, Ph. D. Dept. of Agadatantra Toxicology, Forensic Medicine and Medical Jurisprudence Sri Sri College of Ayurvedic Science and Research Hospital Sri Sri University, Cuttack, Odisha, India

ABSTRACT

Snakebite can be considered as the most critical and serious condition that needs emergency and expert treatment with promptness. Delay or Lack of expertise in treatment in snakebite can be considered to end with fatal outcome. Therefore the techniques of dealing with poisoning, specially snakebite is occupying topmost priority in not only Toxicology but also in Medical system. Researchers have established a number of techniques to deal with snakebite. But, probably the success rate is not reaching the expected level. Search in the Ayurvedic classics, said to be of the period before Christ, also reveal the sincerity showed towards snakebite by the experts. In the Ayurvedic classics the authors have described 24 management procedures for poisoning. The physicians are advised to utilise the ones among them according to the condition of the patient, type of the poison, severity of signs and symptoms etc. Incision on the vertex is one of the interesting treatment procedure advised in relation to snakebite by the Ayurvedic acharyas. It is said to utilise at the state when the other methods show failure with utmost caution. A discussion on the treatment procedure is considered to have importance in modern era also. Hope the present discussion will open a new field of research in the field of snakebite treatment.

KEYWORDS

snakebite, promptness, 24 management procedures, incision on the vertex

INTRODUCTION –

Snakes are the creatures existing since creation. Their existence is proved by the Indian scholars in different literatures. In different Indian literatures snakes are described as the creatures with immense strength and capacity. They are even described as the source of strength to hold and destroy the creation. A number of rituals are also being prescribed by our ancestors to protect the self from the anger of the snakes.

As the snakes reside and move around us and they come to the contact/visibility frequently they bite the stranger due to fear, anger or other causes. Snakebite is a common experience of the human beings that is commonly trusted to end with fatal result. A number of snakebite cases are experienced by the physicians even now. Statistics say that, most of the snakebite cases are non poisonous. Only a few number of snakes available around us are proved to be poisonous which proves that, each and every bite of snake is not poisonous. When an individual gets snakebite, due to fear, he/she with the family members and neighbours run to the hospital to get remedy. In such situations it becomes a challenge to the physician to face the situation, to convince the gathering than to manage the condition of the patient.

Considering the situation, the Ayurvedic scholars, before thousands of years of Christ, did serious observation and study and prescribed 24 methods to utilise at the time of poisoning management. The physicians are advised to choose the appropriate and applicable ones from these 24 methods.

Out of the 24 methods of treatment one is mentioned as “KAKAPADA” which is applicable at the terminal state of a snakebite patient. This treatment is done by giving incision on the vertex leading to bleeding which is followed by application of fresh meat. A discussion and effort for evaluation of this emergency treatment is considered to be important even in the present context.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES –

The present literary study is conducted with the following aims and objectives –

- (1) To collect the informations available in the Ayurvedic classics about Kakapada related to its indications, contra-indications, probable mode of action etc.
- (2) To compile the concepts of different Ayurvedic classics on Kakapada
- (3) To develop a common idea about the procedure
- (4) To give effort to discuss the observations to justify its applicability and utility

- (5) Ultimately to arrange the whole work in the form of a scientific article and send to a peer reviewed popular journal for publication

MATERIALS AND METHODS –

The study was conducted at the Central Library, Sri Sri College of Ayurvedic Science and Research Hospital, Sri Sri University, Cuttack, Odisha, India by following the below mentioned method –

- (1) Charaka Samhita, Susruta Samhita, Ashtanga Samgraha and Ashtanga Hridaya were studied and their concepts on Kakapada were collected
- (2) The collected informations were organized accordingly, discussed with the aim to justify its applicability in different views
- (3) Ultimately a summary and conclusion were prepared and references were added
- (4) The article such prepared was sent to a peer reviewed popular journal for publication expecting to convey a message to the scientific society about the emergency management procedure of poisoning mentioned in the Ayurvedic classics

OBSERVATION AND RESULT –

The study revealed the below mentioned observations and results –

- (1) In case of Adhodasta (bite on the lower part of the body) an incision should be made on the mastaka (head) and in Urdhadasta (bite on the upper part of the body) the incision should be given on the Pada (foot – sole) of the patient and raktayukta mamsa of Daksha, Kaka, Mayura (fresh meat of cock, crow, peacock) etc. should be applied on it [1]
- (2) On the Kakapada Chaga, Gavaya, Mahisha or Kukkuta mamsa (meat of goat, cow, buffalo, cock) should be applied that can absorb the bisha (Poison) even after its spread [2]
- (3) In saptama vega of Darvikara Sarpadanga sirobirechana should be applied with Tikshna abapidana nasya, Tikshna Anjana should be applied and raktayukta charma or mamsa should be applied on a kakapada shaped injury caused by tikshnasashtra [3] (At the 7th state of bite by Elapid snakes strong medicines are advised to apply through the nostrils and eyes and fresh meat is advised to apply on the incision given on the vertex)
- (4) In the saptama bishavega application of abapida nasya followed by application of raktayukta mamsa should be applied by giving incision on the murdha of the shape of Kakapada [4] (At the 7th stage of snakebite poisoning strong medicines are advised to apply through the nostrils and also to apply fresh meat on the incision given on the vertex)

(5) In the saptama vega of Darvikara Sarpadanga Tikshna Anjana and nasya should be applied. At this stage application of raktayukta mamsa or charma is also advised to apply by giving an incision on the murdha [5]

(6) In case of mandali and rajiman sarpadanga (bite by the Viperidae and other snakes) the same treatment as Darvikara sarpadanga is advised to apply [6]

(7) Advising the treatment of saptama vega of sthavara visa (inanimate – plant and mineral origin poisons) Avapida nasya and Kakapada is advised. Kakapada is advised to make on the murdha of the patient on which asrigyukta pishita (meat with blood) is advised to apply [7]

(8) The sangramita visa (spreaded poison) when reaches shira (head) should be treated immediately. In such state Kakapada should be applied on the murdha (vertex) if the bite is on the adha-pradesha (pada – foot) and raktayukta mamsa of kaka, dakshya, shikhi, chhaga, gavya, mahisha, kukkuta etc. (meat of crow, cock, peacock, goat, cow, buffalo etc., with blood) should be applied in bilwaprana (of the quantity of a Aegle marmelos fruit). If the bite is on the urdhva-pradesha (shira) then the kakapada should be made on the pada (foot – sole) and the same procedure should be followed. If this is not done the bisha (poison) will cause death of the individual within a short time [8]

(9) In reference to Darvikara bisachikitsa, in the saptama vega, Tikshna Anjana and nasya are advised to apply. At this stage application of rudhirayukta mamsa or charma on the incision given on the murdha is also advised [9]

DISCUSSION –

As the discussion of the study the following points can be mentioned –

(1) Kakapada – The word is formed with two portions (i) kaka – crow and (ii) pada – foot. The literary meaning of kakapada is “the foot of a crow”. Hence the kakapada can be understood as an incision of the shape of the foot of a crow i.e. 4 incisions starting from one point towards different directions.

(2) Murdha – The word murdha means and indicate cerebrum, uppermost part of hard palate, head, the uppermost point, crown. Hence “murdha” can be considered as the vertex (the top of the head)

(3) Saptama vega of bisha – The Ayurvedic acharyas mention 7 vegas of bisha that indicate the severity of the effect of a poison on an individual. The signs and symptoms of the vegas are described by the scholars nicely. The signs and symptoms mentioned in the classics indicate that, this is the stage with severe signs and symptoms suggesting the terminal state of the patient.

(4) Raktayukta mamsa / charma – Indicates meat or skin with blood. Here fresh meat or skin is indicated. Hence in this case the meat or skin should be used just after killing the bird / animal before molecular death

(5) From the meanings of the terminologies discussed it can be said in relation to kakapada – (i) Kakapada is an incision advised to apply on the vertex of a patient of poisoning (snakebite). (ii) It contains 4 incisions starting from 1 point, the depth of which should be sufficient to bleed. (iii) Fresh meat or skin of commonly available bird / animal should be applied on the incision.

(6) From the available descriptions of the process a hypothesis can be made that, when a patient, specially of snakebite, reaches the stage of 7th vega he / she is at the terminal stage and the chance of recovery is of very less percentage. Hence the treatment should be done with risk. Application of incision on the vertex is not risk free. On the other hand the benefit of the treatment is also not sure. But considering the fact “in stead of allowing a patient to die without treatment a risk should be taken” the procedure should be applied. With regard to the mode of action of the treatment it can be assumed that, the fresh meat / skin applied on the bleeding incision can suck the poisoned blood from the patient and make him free from poison.

(7) The descriptions of the treatment procedure available in the classics clearly reflect that, it is a risky procedure which should only be applied by an expert in the field. A little lack in knowledge can be proved to be harmful to the patient.

(8) Since modern science has invented Anti Snake Venom for

successful treatment of snakebite hence there is no chance of accepting such type of treatment procedure for the condition.

(9) A scientific analysis and study of the treatment method may explore some interesting facts on the concept of the Ayurvedic scholars on management of snakebite at the terminal state.

SUMMARY –

As summary of the study the following points can be mentioned –

(1) Snakebite is a condition that needs urgent, expertise effective treatment

(2) The Ayurvedic scholars also agree with the serious sequence of poisoning, specially snakebite

(3) Ayurvedic scholars categorise the stages of snakebite poisoning in 7 stages (vega) out of which the 7th stage is the terminal stage

(4) The 7th stage of snakebite poisoning is advised to deal with a specific type of treatment procedure which is named as KAKAPADA, a process of giving incision on the vertex to bleed and to apply fresh meat of cock, peacock, cow, goat, buffalo etc. which is expected to suck the poisoned blood from the system resulting in recovery

(5) Kakapada is a process of management of snakebite which is to be applied only by expert physician

(6) The concept of Kakapada mentioned in Ayurvedic classics needs scientific study, research and evaluation in present context

CONCLUSION –

To conclude the study it can be said that, Ayurvedic Scholars, before thousands of years of Christ, studied, researched and evaluated the signs symptoms and treatment of poisoning due to snakebite, identified the emergency state and also advised treatment with its indication, precautions etc. Further study and research on the treatment method discussed may be proved beneficial for the human society.

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