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Contemporary review of *Alarka Visha* in Ayurveda

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Abstract:

Alarka visha in Ayurveda - Agadatantra is a concept that closely correlates with the modern disease rabies, originating from the bite or lick of a rabid animal, particularly a dog. Ayurvedic principles describe it as a disease affecting the Sandnyavaha Strotas (nervous system), with symptoms that include hydrophobia (Jalasantrasa), fever, spasms, and paralysis. Although Ayurved had mentioned the incurable nature as it develops symptoms like Jalasantrasa. But post exposure prophylaxis as per Ayurveda can be adopted to minimize the possibilities to convert it in incurable state. Here the present study brief the modern as well as classical aspect of Alarka Visha along with its treatment.

Keywords: *Alarka visha, Jalasantrasa, Agadatantra*

Introduction:

Rabies is an acute, highly fatal viral disease of central nervous system caused by Lyssa virus type 1. It is a zoonotic disease of warm blooded animals such as dogs, cats, monkeys and wolves. It is transmitted to man usually by bites or licks of rabid animals.

Ayurvedic Perspective on Rabies (*Alarka*)

In Ayurveda, *Alarka*, commonly known as rabies, is identified as a disorder affecting the *sandnyavahastrotas* (the channels responsible for sensory functions). Ayurvedic classics refer to this condition as *Alarka Visha*. The *Brihatrayee* texts provide a comprehensive description of its symptoms, incurable nature, and therapeutic approaches. *Charaka* explains that the disease arises

from the imbalance of the three *dosha* (*vata*, *pitta*, *kapha*) and the disruption of bodily tissues (*dhatus*). Affected dogs exhibit symptoms such as headaches, excessive salivation, and a drooping facial expression. According to *Acharya Sushruta* and *Vagbhata*, *Vatadosha* gets aggravated in animals like dogs, foxes, jackals, and other animals, it combines with *Vruddha Kaphadosha* and accumulates in the sensory channels. This leads to loss of sensation, causing the animal to behave erratically—causing symptoms mentioned in texts such as Jaw and shoulder drooping, excessive salivation, biting other humans etc. Humans bitten by such rabid animals develop characteristic signs and symptoms of the disease. The local as well as general signs and symptoms as mentioned in Ayurveda classics are as follows,

Local signs and symptoms - *Suptata*, *Krishna asruka strava*, *Kandu*, *Toda*, *Vaivarnya*, *Vidaha*, *Raga*, *Shopha*, *Dansha Sthana-avdaran*, *Spota*, *Mandal utpatti* etc.

General signs and symptoms - *Hritshula*, *Shiroruka*, *Jwara*, *Stambha*, *Trishna* and *Murcha*.

येनचापिभवेद्दृष्टस्तस्यचेष्टांरुतंनर।

बहुशःप्रतिकुर्वाणःक्रियाहीनोविनश्यति || (Su.S. K. 7/46)

Here *Acharya Shushrut* indicates the the changes in person who is bitten by the affected animals. The person starts behaving as that of the affected animal and is unable to perform his natural activities.

त्रस्यत्यक्स्माद्योऽभीक्ष्णं दृष्ट्वास्पृष्ट्वाऽपिवाजलम्।

जलत्रासंतुविद्यात्तंरिष्टं तदपिकीर्तितम्। (Su.S. K. 7/48)

The incurable nature of the disease with signs and symptoms of hydrophobia is stated by *Acharya Shushruta* as - *Jalatrasm*. Here the affected person develops fear for water by watching, touching or sound of it causing *Arishta Lakshana*.

Treatment:

Modern science has stated no specific treatment for rabies. It only states preventive and prophylactic measures in form of vaccination. While *Acharya Sushruta* had mentioned number of methods along with some medications in form of *Agada* for preventing the pathogenesis - *Samprapti* of *Alarka Visha*. The treatment as mentioned in *SushrutaKalpasthana* can be briefed as follows,

1. *Vistravana* - *Dahana* - After the bite of affected animal, at the site of bite bloodletting - *Raktamokshana* should be performed and *Dahana Karma* should be done by *Tapta Ghruta*.
2. *Lepana* - After the *Dahan Karma* the *Lepa* of *Agada* should be done at the site.
3. *Ghrutpana*- *Purana Ghruta* is indicated in *Alaka Visha* for internal consumption as medication.
4. *Sanshodhana* - purgation - *Virechana* is indicated with help of *Arka Ksheer*.
5. Medications -

- A) *Palala* (Paste of *tila*) mixed with *tilataila*, milky sap of *arka* and *guda* (Jag-gery) should be administered.
- B) *Datura* along with *Shwet Punarnava* is advocated for *Alarka Visha*.
- C) Root of *Sharpunkha* one *karsha* (10 gm) and root of *Dhatura* half *karsha* (5gm) should be triturated along with *tandula* using *tandulodaka* (rice water) this paste should be enveloped with leaves of *dhatura* and *apupa* (pan cake) should be made with it. This is to be taken along with meals.
- D) Use of *Mantra Chikitsa* is also stated by *Acharya Shushruta*.
- E) Washing off the site of bite is also mentioned by *Acharya*.

Inference:

Modern science have no specific treatment for the signs and symptoms of rabies. It has pre and post exposure prophylaxis treatment protocol. It includes administration of Active as well as passive immunization. Here Ayurveda describes the various methods which can be implemented post bite by the rabid animal which can prove useful in preventing the pathogenesis - *Samprapti* of *Alarka Visha*. Use of both the methods and through further case studies can be conducted to study the efficacy of treatment.

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