

AN ETHNO MEDICAL SURVEY ON THE TRADITIONAL MEDICINES AND METHODS USING FOR THE TREATMENT OF *ARSHAS* (HAEMORRHOIDS) IN SRI LANKA

Research Article

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Abstract

Back ground: *Arshas* (Haemorrhoids) is one of the most common ailments in Sri Lankan society. Most of the people suffering from *Arshas* have great faith in Ayurvedic and Traditional treatments. According to literature survey there are many preparations for the *Arshas* done by using herbs and materials which could be found from our natural surroundings. The traditional medical practitioners' select the drugs based on a rational theory and empirical knowledge obtained by trial and error. Some traditional physicians of Sri Lanka claim to have special treatments known only to them or to the trusted members of the family, or the most eminent and trusted of the physician. **Objectives:** This survey conducted to find out the most using formulations, treatment methods and commonest drugs used for the disease of *Arshas* of the traditional physicians in Sri Lanka. **Methods:** In this survey ethno medical data was collected from thirty four traditional physicians residing in Uva province in Sri Lanka by using a questioner. **Results:** The main methods of treating the disease *Arshas* was *Kashaya* (Decoctions), *Churna* (Powders), *Alepa* (Pastes), *Avagaha* (Sitz baths), *Arishtha*, *Asava* and *Dhuma* (fumes). The most common herbs of treating the *Arshas* were Gotukola (*Centella asiatica* L.), Kohila (*Lassia spinosa* L.), Mun (*Vigna radiate*), Umbalakada (Maldive fish) and Ratu Araliya (*Plumeria autifolia* P.).

Key words: *Arshas*, Traditional Treatment, Ethno medical, Sri Lanka

Introduction

Arshas is a major affliction that affects the human society. *Arshas* are extremely common in adults (1). In Ayurveda, ancient physicians and surgeons described *Arshas* as an abnormal fleshy growth in ano rectal region (*guda*) (2). *Arshas* are correlated with haemorrhoids in western

modern medicine. The main symptoms of the haemorrhoids are bleeding, prolapsed, discharge and pain (3). In western modern medicine haemorrhoids are treated by several methods. These include chemotherapy, reduction of sphincteric pressure, fixation treatment and surgical treatment (3). In Sri Lanka in traditional medicine, *Arshas* is called Mulaggaya (4) and the traditional physicians are using several methods to treat *Arshas* including application of herbal oils, pastes and internal medicines. The aim of this study was to find out various traditional medicines, methods and most consuming herbs for the medicines using in traditional physicians in Sri Lanka for the disease of *Arshas*.

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Material and methods

The study was done in Uva province in Sri Lanka and ethno medical data was collected by using a questioner from thirty four well known traditional physicians residing in Uva province.

Results and observations

(1). Below mentioned recipes are the most regularly prescribe recipes by all 34 traditional physicians. These recipes are selected after the evaluation of traditional physicians' treatment prescriptions. A selected criteria of these prescriptions was, this one recipe is using more than 10 traditional physicians. The prescriptions quoted by physicians who participated in the survey are given below with Sinhalese name and botanical name.

- i. Entire plant of Gotukola (*Centella asiatica* L.), Bulbs of Ratulunu (*Allium cepa* L.), Spadix of Kohila (*Lassia spinosa* L.), Seeds of Mun (*Vigna radiate* L.) and Umbalakada (Maldive fish) – decoction.
- ii. Roots of Savandara (*Vetiveria zizanioides* L.), barks of Kohomba (*Azadirachta indica* A.) and Kurundu (*Cinnamomum seyalanicum* B.), Stems of Venival (*Coscinium fenestratum* G.) - decoction.
- iii. Roots of Diyamitta (*Cissmpelos pareira* L.) and seeds of Asamodagam (*Trigonella foenum* L.) -decoction.
- iv. Roots of Diyamitta (*Cissmpelos pareira* L.) and Kahabiliya (*Tragia plukenetti* R.) - decoction.
- v. Decoction prepared with Roots of Nidikumba (*Desmodium triflorum* L.) with adding Ghee.
- vi. Rhizome of Inguru (*Zingiber officinale* L.), Roots of Beli (*Aegle marmelos* L.) and Ratnitil (*Plumbago indica* L.) - decoction.
- vii. Roots of Mukunuwenna (*Alternanthera sessilis* L.) and seeds of Mun (*Vigna radiate* L.) - decoction.
- viii. Latex of Imbul (*Ceiba pentandra* L.), Rhizome of Manel (*Nymphaea nouchali* F.), Roots of Nidikumba (*Desmodium triflorum* L.), Seeds of Tala (*Sesamum indicum* L.), Stem of Suduhadun (*Santalum album* L.) - decoction.
- ix. Entire plant of Gotukola (*Centella asiatica* L.), Bulbs of Ratulunu (*Allium cepa* L.), Spadix of Kohila (*Lassia spinosa* L.) – decoction.
- x. Leaves of Ratu Araliya (*Plumeria autifolia* P.) - decoction.
- xi. Entire plant of Gotukola (*Centella asiatica* L.), Bulbs of Ratulunu (*Allium cepa* L.), Spadix of Kohila (*Lassia spinosa* L.) and seeds of Sududuru (*Cumunum cyminum* L.) - decoction.
- xii. A decoction prepared with Spadix of Kohila (*Lassia spinosa* L.), Rhizome of Alukesel (*Musa paradisiacal* L.), Inner pith of Vatakeiya (*Pandanus kaidan* L.), Umbalakada (Maldive fish) with Jaggary.
- xiii. Equal portion of Heerassapalu (*Cissus quadrangularis* L.), Leaves of Olinda (*Arbus melanospermus* L.), Entire plant of Gotukola (*Centella asiatica* L.), Roots of Karalhaba (*Achyranthes aspera* L.) and Karanda (*Pongamia glubra* and Vent) are taken and the juice is extracted. This extracted juice is given in treatment of piles.
- xiv. 10 kalan (5g) of Seeds of Badulla (*Semecatpus coriacea* T.), 20 kalan of plant of Sarana (*Boerhavia diffusa* L.) and roots of Ratnitil (*Plumbago indica* L.), 5 kalan of seeds of Tippili (*Piper longum* L.) are taken and grounded together with equal weight of Jaggary to make a paste. This paste is taken orally twice a day, 5g at a time.

- xv. Stamens of flowers of Nelum (*Nelumbo nucifera* L.) are mixed with Bee honey and Ghee and given in treatment of piles.
- xvi. The kanji prepared from stem bark of Ratnitol (*Plumbago indica* L.) and scraped kernel of King coconut is given in treatment of piles.
- xvii. Seeds of Kalutala (*Sesamum indicum* L.) are ground with water and apply on piles.
- xviii. Leaves of Karavila (*Momordica charantia* L.), Bulbs of Sudulunu (*Allium sativum* L.), Chimney soots are taken in equal quantity and grounded together. This applied on pile masses.
- xix. Forment the pile masses with heated shell of tortes.
- xx. Powdered sugar candy is sprinkled on embers obtain by burning coconut shells. The piles fumigated from the arising smoke.
- xxi. Leaves of Val Inguru (*Zingiber cassumunar* R.) and Human hair are put in to fire and fumigate the piles.
- xxii. Bulbs of Ratulunu (*Allium cepa* L.) are grounded and made in to a bolus using a piece of cloth. This bolus is heated using steam and pile masses are fomented with this.
- xxiii. 10g each of Savinda lunu (Sodium chloride impure), Kalu tumba (*Momordica dioica* R.), Datta (*Baliospermum montanum* M.), Kaneru (*Nerium indicum* M.), Bin kohkmba (*Pongamia pinnata* L.), Valangasahal (*Embelia ribes* L.) are taken and 4 nali of water is added and is made into a decoction by boiling down to 1 nali. The same ingredients are taken again in similar quantity and ground in to a fine powder. This powder is added to the afore said decoction along with one patha of latex obtain from Vara (*Calotropis gigantean* L.) and 1 nali of Talatel (oil of *Sesamum indicum* L.) was added. The whole mixture is then boiled according to thaila paka and the oil obtain is applied on the piles.
- xxiv. Kohila ala juice (spadix of *Lassia spinosa* L.) 8 nali, Thumba karavilla juice (Juice of tuberous root of *Momordica dioica* R.) 4 nali, Kidaran ala juice (juice of corms of *Amorphallus companulatus* D.) 2 nali, Gingerly oil 1 nali and 5 kalan each of Seenakkaran (Potash Alum), Vedi lunu (Potassium Nitrate), Inguru (*Zingiber officinale* R.), Gammiris (*Piper nigrum* L.), Tippili (*Piper longum* L), Mee mini mavil (skin hair of mouse deer), Badulla eta (seeds of *Semecarpus anacardium* L.f.), Daluk eta (seeds of *Euphorbia antiquarum* L.), Perumkayam (*Ferula asafetida* L.), Galis (*Gardenia gummifera* L.) and make an oil and applied as a pitcu into the anal canal.(2). The methods of treatment for *Arshas* as described by the physicians are given in below table 1.

Table 1: Methods of treating *Arshas*

Method	No. of physicians	Percentage (%)
<i>Kasaya</i> (Decoction)	34	100
<i>Churna</i> (Powder)	34	100
<i>Guli</i> (Pills)	18	53
<i>Kalka</i> (Paste)	22	65
<i>Arista/ Asava</i>	32	94
<i>Thaila – Pitchu</i>	8	23

<i>Thaila - Vasti</i>	4	12
<i>Thaila - Application</i>	34	100
Vidum (Accupuncture)	0	0
Pillissum (Cortarization)	0	0
<i>Kshara</i> (Cortarization)	4	12
<i>Shalya</i> (surgical methods)	0	0
<i>Avagaha</i> (Sitz bath)	34	100
Thavili (fomentation)	20	58
<i>Dhuma</i> (Fume)	14	41
Mantra (Hymn)	4	12
Kem karma (Secret methods of traditional treatments)	8	23

(3). All the prescriptions and treating methods of 34 traditional physicians are carefully studied and below mentioned plants were the only plants including all prescriptions prescribe for the treatment of *Arshas*. Those using plants and the method used are given in table 2.

Table 2: Plants used in treatment of *Arshas* and the method used

Sinhala name	Botanical name	Externally use	Internally use				
			Decoction	Arishta & Asava	Pills	Paste	Other preparations
Aralu	<i>Terminalia chebula</i> R.	+	+	+	+	+	+
Bulu	<i>Terminalia belarica</i> R.-	-	+	+	+	+	+
Nelli	<i>Emblica officinalis</i> G.	-	+	+	+	+	+
Kohila	<i>Lassia spinosa</i> L.	+	+	-	-	-	-
Ratkarala haba	<i>Achyranthes aspera</i> L.	-	+	-	-	-	-
Vara	<i>Calotropis gigantic</i> L.	+	-	-	-	-	+
Daluk	<i>Euphorbia antiquorum</i> L.	+	-	-	-	-	-
Gotukola	<i>Centella asiatica</i> L.	+	+	-	-	-	+
Namal renu	<i>Mesua fera</i> L.	+	+	-	-	+	+
Ratu araliya	<i>Plumeria acutifolia</i> P.	-	+	-	-	-	-
Undupiyaliya	<i>Desmodium triflorum</i> D.	+	+	-	-	-	-
Vel penela	<i>Cardiospermum halicacabum</i> L.	+	+	-	-	-	-
Uk mul	<i>Saccharum officinarum</i> L.	-	+	-	-	-	-
Kidaran	<i>Amorphophilus companilatus</i> D.	+	+	-	-	-	+
Beli	<i>Aegle marmelos</i> C.	-	+	-	-	-	+
Kalu tala	<i>Sesamum indicum</i> L.	+	+	-	-	-	-
Sudu handun	<i>Santalum album</i> L.	-	+	-	-	-	+
Badulla	<i>Semecarpus anacardium</i> L.	+	+	-	-	-	-
Ratu lunu	<i>Allium cepa</i> L.	+	+	-	-	-	+

Kaladuru	<i>Cyperus rotandus</i> L.	-	+	+	+	+	+
Kalu thumba	<i>Momordica dioica</i> R.	+	+	-	-	-	-
Hin nidikumba	<i>Biophytum sansitivum</i> Dc.	+	+	-	-	-	+
Val inguru	<i>Zingiber cassumunar</i> R.	-	+	-	-	-	-
Muruva	<i>Marsdenia tenacissima</i> R.	-	+	-	-	-	-
Asamodagam	<i>Trigonella foenum</i> L.	-	+	-	-	-	-
Savandara	<i>Vetiveria zizanioides</i> L.	+	+	+	-	-	-
Eth thora	<i>Cassia lata</i> L.	+	+	-	-	-	-
Olinda	<i>Abrus precatorius</i> L.	+	+	-	-	-	-
Heerassapalu	<i>Cissus quadrangularis</i> L.	+	+	-	-	-	-
Imbul	<i>Salmalia malabartica</i> S.	-	+	-	-	-	-
Abin	<i>Papaver somniferum</i> L.	-	+	+	+	+	-
Rath nitol	<i>Plumbago indica</i> L.	+	+	-	-	-	-
Mukunuwanna	<i>Alternanthera Sessilis</i> L.	+	+	-	-	-	-
Karawila	<i>Momordica charantia</i> L.	-	+	-	-	-	+
Vatakeiya	<i>Pandanus tectorius</i> S.	-	+	-	-	-	-
Bin kohomba	<i>Munronia pinnata</i>	-	+	-	-	-	-
Kottamalli	<i>Hyoscyamus reticulates</i> L.	-	+	+	+	+	-
Palol	<i>Stereosperum suaveolens</i> DC.	-	+	-	-	-	-
Vel kappetiya	<i>Croton lacciferusa</i>	+	+	-	-	-	-
Nika	<i>Vitex nigando</i> L.	-	+	-	-	-	-
Diyamitta	<i>Cissampelos Pereira</i> L.	+	+	-	-	-	-
Venivel	<i>Coscinium fenestratum</i> G.	-	+	-	-	-	-
Inguru	<i>Zingiber officinale</i> R.	-	+	+	+	+	-
Alu kesel	<i>Musa paradisiacal</i> L.	-	+	-	-	-	-
Manel	<i>Mymphaea lotus</i> L.	+	+	-	-	-	-
Divul	<i>Feronia limonia</i> L.	-	+	-	-	-	-

Discussion

The traditional medical field has many methods of treatment for treat the disease of *Arshas*.

All 34 physicians were use *Kashaya* (Decoctions), *Churna* (Powders), application of oil and *Avagaha* (Sitz baths). *Arishta* and *Asava* are using 32 physicians. *Kalka* (Paste), *Guli* (Pills) and *Thavili* (Formantation) are used 22, 20 and 18 physicians respectively. Dhuma (Fumes) are practice 14 physicians and Thaila pichu and *Kem karma* (Secret methods of traditional treatments) are 8 physicians were prescribes. *Mantra* (Hymn), *Thaila vasti* and *Kshara* (Coutarization) are only 4 physicians are

practice. *Vidum* (Accupuncture), *Pillissum* (Cortarization) and *Shalya* (surgical methods) are currently not practice. 46 plants are identified to use the treatment for *Arshas* and some plants are using externally and some are internally. Some plants are use externally and internally both. Chimney soots, shell of tortes, coconut shells, Human hair and skin hair of mouse deer also included the treatments. For the decoctions Gotukola (*Centella asiatica* L.), Kohila (*Lassia spinosa* L.), Mun (*Vigna radiate* L.), Umbalakada (Maldive fish) and Ratu Araliya (*Plumeria autifolooa* P.) are also popular among the traditional physicians.

Conclusion

The traditional physicians of Sri Lanka use many methods to treat the disease *Arshas* but currently the treatment methods are limited such as *Kashaya* (Decoctions), *Churna* (Powdres), *Alepa* (Pastes), *Avagaha* (Sitz baths), *Thavili* (fomentation), *Arishta*, *Asava* and *Dhuma* (fumes) and they do not practice *Agni* (couterization) and *Shastra* (Surgery) as a treatment method. Some physicians are using *Mantra* (Hymn) and *Kem karma* (Secret methods of traditional treatments) as a treatment and they practice these methods along with medicaments. In traditional medicine, exceptional plant and animal materials are also use for treat *Arshas*. Most physicians seem to be quoting the commonest and well known prescriptions.

A common difficulty encountered during this study was the unwillingness of

the physicians to divulge the best prescriptions and treatment methods used most successfully by them, specially the prescriptions which come down in the family.

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