



Review Article

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ETHNO PRACTICE IN BHUTONMADA: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Bhutonmada/Grahonmada is a Psychiatric condition characterized by abnormal behaviour in terms of an exhibition of strength, energy, valour and enthusiasm, defects in perception, retention and memory, abnormality of speech, and abnormality in perceiving self and environment. Bhutavidya deals with the possession of demons or evil spirits and their management. It is widely practised in many parts of India; however, Ethno-practitioners in some regions of Kerala and Karnataka who have proficient knowledge about Bhutavidya are treating patients successfully. A combined approach of Jyotishyashastra, and Daivavyapashraya, like Mantra-Homa-Bali and Bsheshaja, are followed by such practitioners. In this approach, Jyotishyashastra is used as a tool for diagnosis, while a combined approach of Daivavyapashraya and Yuktivyapashraya is used in its treatment. This article presents the concept of Bhutavidya explained in Ayurveda along with descriptions of Ethno-practices narrated by a Bhutavidya residing in Kasargod district of Kerala; information collected through an in-depth, focused Interview.

Keywords: Ethnopractice, Bhutavidya, Jyotishyashastra, Bhutonmada

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is one of the oldest and most traditional healing systems; it originated in India from the Vedic sciences. The literal meaning of Ayurveda is "The Science of Life"; it's the combination of two Sanskrit words, Ayur (life) and Veda (science/knowledge). Life here does not refer to an individual's life but applies to the life of the entire universe in which the individual is a part¹. It is divided into eight different branches known as Ashtanga Ayurveda. Graha Chikitsa or Bhutavidya is among Ashtanga Ayurveda, which is considered unique because it deals with the affliction of the human mind with Bhuta/Graha and its unique treatment methods like shantikarma, Bali haranadhi².

Bhutonmada/Grahonmada is a psychiatric condition characterized by abnormal behaviour in an exhibition of strength, energy, valour and enthusiasm, defects in perception, retention and memory, abnormality of speech, and abnormality in perceiving self and environment³. Bhootavidya deals with the possession of demons or evil spirits and their management⁴.

It is widely practised in many parts of India. Ethno-practitioners in a few regions of Kerala and Karnataka who have proficient knowledge of bhutavidya are seen treating patients successfully. These practitioners follow the combined approach of Jyotishya shastra and Daivavyapashraya, like Mantra-Homa-Bali and Bsheshaja. Jyotishyashastra is used as a tool for diagnosis, while a combined approach of Daivavyapashraya and Yuktivyapashraya is used in chikitsa. This article explores different traditional treatment methods in Bhutonmada followed by Ethno-practitioners of Kerala and Coastal Karnataka.

SOURCE OF DATA/ INFORMATION

Reference materials related to Bhutonmada, Bhutavidya, and Daivavyapashraya chikitsa are collected from various Ayurveda Samhita and their available commentaries. A few articles published in scientific journals are also referred to contain the required material. Some content related to Ethno-practices has been collected from a Traditional Vaidya residing at Kasaragod, Kerala, by interrogation and observation of the rituals performed.

Grahonmada/ Bhutonmada

The aetiology of Grahonmada is said to be untraceable. Prajnaparadha (offence against one's wisdom) or Karma (misdeeds done in previous birth) is believed to play an essential role in the pathogenesis of Grahonmada. The signs and symptoms have sudden onset without any warning signs, and the prognosis is unpredictable⁵.

Grahavesha

Purpose of Grahavesha: Himsa (intention of violence/affliction), Rati (intention of desire/Lust/pleasure), and Abhyarchanam (seeking worship/Adoration/reverence) are said to be the key purposes of Grahavesha. Himsa, i.e., demonic possession with violent or aggressive intentions, is asadhya (untreatable). Rati, i.e., demonic possession with intentions of desire and Abhyarchanam, i.e., demonic possession with intentions of seeking worship, is Sadhya (treatable).⁵

Grahavesha occurs at deserted temples, burial grounds, deserted highways or roads, and other such types of isolated or abandoned places. People who are frightened in such places are prone to suffer from Grahavesha.

Types of Graha: Acharya Sushruta has described eight kinds of Bhutonmada- Deva, Asura, Gandharva, Yaksha, Pitru, Naga, Rakshasa and Pishacha. According to Acharya Charaka, there are 11 types of Bhutonmada. Deva, Rushi, Guru, Vriddha, Siddha, Pitru, Gandharva, Yaksha, Rakshasa, Brahmarakshasa and

Pishacha. According to Ashtanga Hridaya, descriptions of 18 types of graha roga are available. Deva, Asura, Rushi, Guru, Vriddha, Siddha, Pitru, Gandharva, Yaksha, Rakshasa, Sarpa, Brahmarakshasa, Pishacha, Kushmanda, Nishada, Preta, Maukirana and Vetala.

Table 1: Types of Bhuta/ Graha in Brihatrayee

Bhuta/ Graha	Sushruta ⁶	Charaka ⁷	Ashtanga Hridaya ⁸
Deva	+	+	+
Asura	+	-	+
Rushi	-	+	+
Guru	-	+	+
Vriddha	-	+	+
Siddha	-	+	+
Pitru	+	+	+
Gandharva	+	+	+
Yaksha	+	+	+
Rakshasa	+	+	+
Sarpa/ Naga	+	-	+
Brahmarakshasa	-	+	+
Pishacha	+	+	+
Kushmanda	-	-	+
Nishada	-	-	+
Preta	-	-	+
Maukirana	-	-	+
Vetala	-	-	+

Chikitsa: Daiva Vyapashraya (spiritual practices), Sattvavajaya (Psychotherapy/ Practices to keep the mind in control), and Yukti Vyapashraya chikitsa (treatment with medications and therapies) have been mentioned. Daivavyapashraya chikitsa like Pooja, Bali, Upahara, Mantra, Homa, Japa, and Prayaschitta are useful⁹. In Unmada caused by Deva, Rushi, Pitru, and Gandharva, one should avoid teekshna Anjana (potent Collyrium), kroora karma like taadanadi karma (acts of cruelty)¹⁰. A person having a preponderance of sattva, abstaining from meat and wine, taking a wholesome diet, and observing purity of mind and body are not affected by either Nija or Agantuja unmada¹¹.

ETHNO PRACTICE

The term 'Ethno-medicine' refers to a wide range of healthcare practices, belief systems and therapeutic techniques that arise from indigenous cultural development. They are widely practised in many parts of India. However, Ethno-practitioners in some regions of Kerala and Karnataka who have proficient knowledge of bhutavidya are seen treating patients with successful results.

Their practices can be divided into three methods.

1. Jyotishyashastra /Astrology – as a diagnostic tool
2. Ucchatana, Homa and Bali – as Daivavyapashraya chikitsa
3. Aushada – as Yuktivyapashraya chikitsa

Jyotishyashastra/ Astrology

Ethno-practitioners with proficient knowledge in Astrology use it as a diagnostic tool. If a patient comes with symptoms of Bhutonmada, the practitioners instruct the client to sit in front of them. Then they chant the prayer by rubbing the Kaparda (Cowries), take a handful of cowries and place them separately. From this, a multiple of 12 is deducted, and the remainder is noted. The rest (a number less than 12) gives the astrologer the Lagna based on the prediction.

Bhutonmada is diagnosed when Maandi (upagraha of Shani) is in the 6th, 8th, and 12th Bhava from Prashnath Lagna or when Maandi is in Lagna itself¹². Likewise, many other interpretations help them diagnose Bhutonmada and its presenting signs and symptoms.

Ucchatana Homa and Bali

It is a method of purification of harmful and toxic energies. In short, it can be said as an upturn or withdrawal of mind. A person's mind, which is afflicted by the results of action from an object, place or person, is called Ucchatana.

Ethno-practitioners perform and practice Homa to remove toxic energies, which are in the form of Graha or Bhuta, from the client's body. The main deity of worship is Goddess Kali. Homa is performed by reciting specific hymns, followed by Bali (offering), where a cock is sacrificed, reciting the Bali mantra.

Aushadha

After Ucchatana Homa, the Ethno practitioner gives medicines to be taken by the client for one month or more. Kalyanaka gritha/Lehya¹³ and Manasamitra vataka¹⁴ are the most common prescriptions. Ucchatana Homa is performed to purify a person from negative energies, and once Bali is completed, certain Graha is said to be satisfied. Oral medications are effective only after this.

Bhutavesha during Homa/ Bali

During Ucchatana Homa or Bali, some individuals are found to attain Bhutavesha (Agitation due to the possession of the negative energies). To control this possession, a Bhasma is used by the practitioner.

Preparation of bhasma- It is prepared on the day of Shivaratri every year. In the evening of Shivaratri, dried cow-dung cakes are made into a heap and burnt. Panchagavya is prepared and added to this heap while burning. 'Om Namah Shivaya' is chanted throughout the process. When the ignited heap turns into ashes, the ash is collected, washed, filtered, and dried in the shade. Later it is stored in an airtight container.

During Bhutavesha, the practitioner takes a pinch of this bhasma and runs it all over the client's body, chanting a specific mantra. Later, a pinch is put inside the client's mouth, and the same is advised to apply as a tilak (apply on the forehead) daily.

DISCUSSION

Astrology

Jyothishyashastra studies the cosmic energies of planets and their influence on an individual. Each world corresponds to certain personality traits or body parts in Jyothishyashastra. Diseases or injuries can be predicted based on the earth's position in one's birth chart. Ethno-practitioners analyse and interpret the sthana of Maandi to diagnose Bhutonmada.

Daivavyapashraya chikitsa

This chikitsa is said to be behind the purview of reasoning. It appears to play a significant role in boosting confidence, removing fear and inculcating a disciplined lifestyle.

Two critical factors for the success of this treatment are

- Faith
- Restraint.

Without faith, nothing much can be expected from the treatment. Extreme restraint is important because one has to follow a disciplined path. Ultimately, these treatment methods are believed to eradicate the disease only due to divine influences and faith. Homa, Yajna, Mantra, and Japa provide a frame for the physical form of worship. By being exposed to these rituals, the senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell attain a total external experience which opens an internal experience attained by faculties of thought, memory, intuition, imagination and emotion. Mantra, through their sound energy, triggers an emotional/mental force. It is believed that the drugs used in Homa are eco-friendly and used for cleansing the environment. The depth and detail of all these rituals point to a consciously devised structure that rests on the phenomenal power of faith¹⁵.

Acharya Sushruta, in the context of sarvagraha samanya chikitsa, explains,

“Raktaani gandhamaalyani beejani madhusarpishi |
bhakshyashcha sarve sarvesham saamaanyo vidhirucyate||¹⁶”

Dalhana explains “Raktaani gandhamaalyani” as “kumkuma, rakta karaveeradi”, which means garland to be made of kumkum kesar, Rakta karaveera along with different varieties of sweet preparations to be taken in palasha patra and kept in nirjana pradesha¹⁷ (place devoid of people).

In Ashtanga Hridaya Uttarantra, there is an explanation regarding samanya chikitsa where acharya says, “Raktaani bhakshashcha¹⁸”. This can be correlated with the Ethno practice of Bali (sacrificing animals) during Ucchatana Homa as a treatment modality for Graha/ bhuta.

Aushadha

Kalyanaka gritha alleviates inauspiciousness, sins and micro-organisms, including all the graha. It cures mental affections caused by supernatural beings.

Manasmitra vataka, indicated in Manodosha, improves medha. It is also effective in managing GAD with co-morbid generalized social phobia¹⁹, which can be correlated with symptoms of Agneya grahonmada of Haritha Samhita.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda is a holistic science that explores the symbiotic relationship between the mind, body, soul, senses and their functioning. Even though various treatment modalities for Bhutonmada are explained in Ayurveda, only a few Ayurveda Vaidya are seen practising it. This may be the reason for the probable downfall of such occult practice. The impact of western culture made Indians believe facts only if they were explained in western terminologies. But there are a few factors in the universe which can be known through experiencing rather than logically analysing them. Ayurvedic physicians of the present modernized world adhere mainly to Yuktivyapashraya chikitsa and Satwavajaya chikitsa. But have completely ignored Daivavyapashraya chikitsa as most practitioners feel it as outdated practices. Very few traditional practitioners are seen practising Ayurveda without neglecting the role of Daivavyapashraya chikitsa. Exploring such Ethno-practices and bringing their awareness into the present scientific world for the further research study is the primary intention of this article.

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