

# **Animal Origin Drugs used in Unani Medicine**

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INSTITUTE OF HISTORY OF MEDICINE AND MEDICAL RESEARCH, NEW DELHI

# Animal Origin Drugs Used in Unani Medicine

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## FOREWORD

Medicine as it is cultivated to-day is the product of Western Science and technology and Western Science itself till now has promoted a mechanistic outlook in life. The discovery of antibiotics in cases of infection and some remarkable achievements in the field of surgery have greatly added to the prestige of orthodox medicine. But failures are no less remarkable and a critical awareness is growing even in medical circles. It is alleged by the present day critics of medicine that advantages are far outbalanced by the disorders to which medical therapy has given rise and the physician's meddling is itself responsible for many of the present-day ailments. Dr. Lewis Thomas frankly admits that "medicine has hardly begun as a science, is still at its earliest beginnings, just now about to emerge as a coherent scientific discipline. Compared with the rest of biology or with the harder physical sciences, medicine is still largely a pre-Darwin, pre-Newton enterprise." (*The American Review*, Winter 1978, pp. 100-101).

But the question remains whether the lines of research which medicine has followed till now are the only possible approaches to the problem of health and disease. The interest in alternative systems of medicine is gaining ground. It is more and more realised that age old systems like Ūnānī and Ayurveda have much to offer to medical science and it is high time that we should tap our own heritage for guidance and instruction.

The indigenous systems of medicine suffer from some drawbacks. It is therefore imperative to know what is living and what is dead in these systems of medicine and this calls for intensive research. The Institute of History of Medicine and Medical Research, Tughlaqabad is engaged in extensive research in neglected fields of Ūnānī Medicine. The writers of this monograph "Drugs of Animal Origin used in Ūnānī Medicine", have made a painstaking study of the drugs of zoological origin used in Ūnānī Medicine. The uses of these drugs require to be scientifically probed and their empirical value is yet to be determined in a sustained manner. As a preliminary step our researchers have made a useful collection and classification of the available data for which they are to be congratulated.

It is hoped that this work will help in framing guidelines for future research workers on the drugs of animal origin.

March, 1978

HAKIM ABDUL HAMEED  
President

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## INTRODUCTION

This monograph was inspired by the following observations of Thorp and Cobbin (24) in their book on 'Cardiac Stimulant Substances':

"Great success has followed the search for drugs in plants and even today large sums of money are spent in isolating and examining new alkaloids from the flora of every country, but worthwhile discoveries are few and far between. The study of pharmacologically active substances in the animal kingdom is comparatively unexplored and could well be very rewarding. The recent discovery of a cardiac stimulant—'eptatretin' in the hag fish and the occurrence of a powerful smooth muscle stimulant in the cockroach gut are pointers that Invertebrata and Agnathans, as well as the Vertebrata, may have much to interest the pharmacologist. It is the time we paid more attention to the animal kingdom and made a few more preliminary sorties into this almost unexplored territory."

Indian systems of medicine have felt the importance of the drugs of Zoological origin right from the very ancient times. The *Indian Materia Medica*, which includes drugs of Ayurveda—the Indian system of medicine and Unani—the Greco-Arabian system of medicine, at present has about 2,000 drugs; out of these about 200 are obtained from animal (15). Since a majority of physicians practising Ayurveda and patients having faith in it, are vegetarians, the crude drugs from animals are put to limited usage in Ayurvedic medicine; only those animal products are used which do not have any physical sign of life. The *materia medica* of Greeks consisted of many substances of animal origin. Arabs in translating works on medicine from the languages of their foreign neighbours, not only copied their ideas but also their beliefs in the virtues of drugs and substances mentioned in those works (10). The Unani system, therefore, makes extensive uses of animal drugs. It has a large number of animal origin drugs which are beneficial or are claimed to be so, in a variety of human ailments. The authors had the opportunity of studying some rare unani books and seeing the samples of animal origin drugs or their models, at the library and museum of the Institute of History of Medicine & Medical Research, New Delhi. These studies yielded enormous data. It has some very valuable remedies for difficult diseases, successfully treated by Unani Physicians in our country. It also contains claims which

are very wild and fantastic. The overall impression is that the Unani system appears to make use of almost everything of animal origin for medicinal purposes. The treasury of information is a virgin field. It should be very fruitful if these claims are put to critical evaluation and scientific testing. The first step, in this direction, would be to collect and classify the available data and present it in an understandable form. The present review is intended to achieve this end.

Unani system of medicine assumes that ingestion of animal organs invigorates the corresponding human organ. Accordingly hearts of animals are used as cardiotonics, brains as brain tonics, livers for biliousness and liver diseases, kidneys for renal disorders, penis and testicles for sexual potency and so on. Modern organ therapy is based on similar assumptions. The difference lies in the form of usage; while the Unani medicine uses the whole organs, modern medicine extracts their active principles. 'Organ for organ and gland for gland'—theory, however, does not hold good in all the cases since animal origin drugs include lower vertebrates also, which have no organs comparable to those present in the human system.

## CLASSIFICATION

Animals utilized for medicinal purpose in Unani medicine are so varied that almost all major macroscopic phyla are covered. Entire organisms or their flesh, fat, organs, glands, blood, milk, secretions, excretions, bones, teeth, hooves, horns, feathers, hairs, nails, shells, castings and even the pathological products formed in the body are made use of in the preparation of medicines.

Rao and Ali (16) classified these drugs in 11 groups based upon the use of organs, parts, secretions or excretions of the animals involved in their formation. Two classifications are being presented in the following pages. First is essentially a modification of the classification of Rao and Ali (*loc. cit.*) made more elaborate to accommodate a wide variety of more than 200 Zoological drugs used by Hakims. The second classification is a therapeutic index of the drugs of animal origin, wherein the drugs are listed according to their uses in Unani medicine.

According to the first classification, these drugs have been divided into two main groups :

(A) Whole organisms.

(B) Parts/Organs/Secretions and Excretions of Animals.

The format is an alphabetical arrangement of the Unani names of drugs. English synonyms, wherever known, are given in parenthesis.



## WHOLE ORGANISMS

Organisms of which the entire body is incorporated in Unani medicines are described below. These are used either fresh or after being dried, ashed or otherwise processed in various Unani formulations.

1. **AZDAH (Python)**: Live animal is burnt and the ash is mixed with honey for use on piles, leucoderma and other skin diseases (7,11).

2. **BAYA (Weaver Bird)**: Its medicinal properties and uses are similar to those of sparrow (11).

3. **BHAINS (Buffalo)**: If a leper sits inside the abdominal cavity of a freshly slaughtered, eviscerated buffalo, he will be cured of leprosy (11).

4. **BHID or TATIYA (Wasp)**: Live wasps are made to sting the subjects suffering from vitiligo, paralysis and other nervous disorders for beneficial effect. Wasps ground with honey and salt form a useful paste for application in rheumatism and leucoderma. Black variety is fried in olive oil and applied externally for the treatment of leucoderma. Fried wasps, when applied on the male organ of generation, stimulate its erectile power. Young ones of wasps, in combination with other drugs, are said to be nutrient and fattening (7, 11).

5. **BICHHOO (Scorpion)**: Dried scorpions are pulverized and mixed with vinegar for application on vitiligo, leucoderma and alopecia. In cases of snake bite or scorpion sting, a scorpion with tail cut, is tied on the bite wound. This treatment is claimed to absorb the poison from the wound. Application with wine or oil has similar effect. Oil extracted from scorpions is applied on the male organ for stimulating effect and also in paralysis and rheumatism. Ash is useful in chronic cough, renal and cystic calculi, healing necrotic wounds and piles. It is used as **SURMA** for the treatment of eye diseases and for improving eye sight (7, 9, 11, 23).

6. **BIR BAHUTI (Cochineal insect)**: There are two varieties of these insects, black variety and silver variety. The later is greyish red in colour and is more valued medicinally. Dried bodies of fecundated females, eggs and larvae are immersed in boiling water, spread out, dried and pulverized. This powder is used as medicine. It possesses sedative, antispasmodic and antitussive properties (14). The insects are taken in betel for improving complexion and for the treatment of paralysis and facial paralysis. Inhalation with lemon juice is good

for ammenorrhoea (11). Application on the male organ stimulates erectile power (1, 2, 3, 9, 11, 23, 25).

7. **CHAMGADAR (Bat)**: Whole animal is boiled in water. The decoction so obtained, when mixed with sesame oil, forms a useful emulsion for application in rheumatism, sciatica and paralysis (11).

8. **CHEECHRI (Tick)**: Ticks collected from dogs are killed, dried and pulverized. This powder is said to improve eye lashes (11).

9. **CHEENTI (Black Ant)**: Black ants are extracted in olive oil and used for the treatment of ear ache and for stimulation of erectile power (9, 11, 23).

10. **CHHIPKALI (Lizard)**: Lizards are burnt in rape oil and used as healing agent for wounds and scrofulous tumours (2, 3, 7, 11).

11. **CHIDIYA (Sparrow)**: Feathers and hairs are removed from the body of a live sparrow. It is then hung in a honey comb. When it dies of the bee stings, it is fried in sesame oil and used as an inunction to the male organ of generation for the treatment of sexual debility (7).

12. **DAKORI (A kind of fly)**: The flies are ground into a paste and applied externally as a depilatory agent and for the treatment of skin pigmentation. The application is, however, very irritant and may cause severe inflammation and ulceration. If a fly is ingested accidentally, it may produce ill effects e.g. diphtheria, enteritis, dysentery etc. (11).

13. **DEEMAK (White Ant)**: White ants, mixed with ox hump fat, form a useful ointment for piles. 'SHAH DEEMAK' (Queen Termite) given with clarified butter, is believed to be a powerful sexual tonic (3, 7, 11).

14. **GHONGA (Apple Snail)**: Ash is styptic, urinary antiseptic and good for colic and spleen troubles (12). Calx is prescribed for the treatment of piles (16).

15. **GIJAI (Millipede)**: Expressed juice of the insects with fowl's feathers or honey is used as a throat paint in diphtheria. The juice is instilled in ear for alleviating ear-ache and in urinary meatus for the treatment of urethritis and gonorrhoea (7). Ash is of value in Jaundice, dyspnoea, renal calculi and dysuria (7, 12). Fumes are harmful for sexual function. This property is made use of in taming vicious horses (12).

16. **GIRGIT (Chameleon)**: Whole animal is boiled with some herbal medicines for use as an application for rheumatism (7, 12).

17. **GOBRILLA (Beetle)**: It is a black insect found in cow dung, hence the name 'GOBRILLA'. Its 'KHISANDAH' in very small doses, removes bilious humours of stomach and liver. It is useful in dropsy and scorpion sting. Insects fried in olive oil alleviate ear ache and

give relief in piles. If tail of an insect is cut, a fluid exudes from the body. This is instilled in eyes for the treatment of eye diseases. The beetle, if tied on the thighs of parturient women, facilitates delivery (7, 12).

18. **GOH (Monitor)**: The Freshly killed animal is applied on thorn pricks and bites of poisonous animals (7, 12).

19. **HAWASIL (Pelicans)**: The bird is eviscerated, minced into fine material and boiled gently with sesame oil. The extract, so obtained, is good for paralysis, facial paralysis and gout (7, 11).

20. **JARRA (A bird resembling Falcon but smaller than it)**: The bird is boiled in water and made into an emulsion with olive oil for use in sciatica pain and rheumatism (7).

21. **JHANPUL (Black Dronge)**: Whole bird is boiled in sesame oil along with a large black bee for use in alopecia (11).

22. **JHENGA (Prawns)**: Fresh prawn is difficult to digest and constipating but possesses nutrient, blood purifying, anthelmintic, aphrodisiac, cardi tonic and uter tonic properties (11,14). Dried prawn is used as surma for the treatment of night blindness. It is mixed with oil to form a useful application in inflammations, rheumatism and gout (11).

23. **JHEENGUR (Cricket)**: Roasted insect is useful in colic, particularly of cystic origin. The insect is fried in olive oil and instilled in ear for alleviating ear ache (7,11).

24. **JONK (Leech)**: Live leeches are used for sucking diseased blood. Leeches, in combination with earthworms, are boiled in sesame oil to form a stimulant application for the male organ. Dried pulverized leeches are given with honey in pharyngitis, with olive oil and vinegar for application on piles, and with oil of *Viola odorata* in renal calculi, urethral inflammations and hydrocele (3,7,9,11).

25. **JOON (Louse)**: Six live lice, if taken in 'BAKLA' (*Vicia faba*) seeds, are said to cure quartan fever. If a lice is put in the milk of an expectant mother, it will die in the case of a male child in the womb but will survive in the case of a female child (7, 11).

26. **JUGNU (Fire Fly)**: If one fly is dried and taken with asafoetida for three days, it is useful in renal and cystic calculi. It is believed to cure night blindness. Externally it is used with egg albumen for the treatment of piles. Instillation with rose oil is depurative and beneficial in ear ache and deafness. Ingestion of three flies may be fatal (7, 9, 11, 23).

27. **KACHHUA (Turtle)**: Whole animal is eviscerated and ashed. The ash is good for healing cancerous wounds, tuberculosis particularly of the bones, calcium and phosphorus deficiency, dyspepsia, pox and respiratory diseases (23).

28. **KANKHAJURA (Centepede)**: The insect is burnt, ensuing fumes are curative for epilepsy (12).

29. **KAUA (Crow)**: Live bird, with some iron dust and vinegar, is put in a vessel and buried in horse dung for 40 days. This procedure causes disintegration of the birds flesh and exudation of an oily substance. The latter is used for blackening grey hairs and stimulating hair growth (7).

30. **KEKRA (Crab)**: 'ARQ-E-SARTAN' and 'SAFUF-E-SARTAN' are used in Unani Medicine for the treatment of chronic cough and tuberculosis of lungs. Ash is useful in biliousness, debility, haemoptysis, tuberculosis, ammenorrhoea, renal calculi, dysuria and breast cancer. It is mixed with ass milk and applied on scorpion and wasp stings. With honey it forms a useful application for dog bite wounds, vitiligo, piles and inflammations. Gargles with the aqueous solution of ash give relief in sore throat and diphtheria. Sea crabs are useful in eye diseases and as tooth powder (3, 7, 9, 12, 16, 23).

31. **KHARATEEN (Earthworm)**: These are used, both internally and externally, as powerful aphrodisiacs. External application for the stimulation of erectile power may be in the form of a paste or decoction. Dried worms are beneficial in healing wounds, chronic boils, piles and sore throat. These are used for alleviating ear ache. For this purpose the worms fried in pochard's fat or extracted with olive oil or salt is sprinkled over live worms and the fluid exuded is instilled in the ear. Dried worms are mixed with almond oil and applied in cases of hernia. Internally these are useful in chronic cough, diphtheria and jaundice and for facilitating delivery (3, 7, 9, 12, 23, 25). Earthworms increase body heat and are of value in rheumatism, nervine disorders, bronchitis and tuberculosis. Oil extracted from the worms is indicated in hemiplegia, paralysis, facial paralysis and muscular wastage (16).

32. **KHATMAL (Bed Bug)**: Application of dried bed bugs in and around nostrils or their gargles with wine facilitates expulsion of leech from throat. Instillation of the extract of bugs through urethral opening relieves urinary obstruction. Fumigation is good for epilepsy. Application, in the form of a paste, promotes hair growth. In snake bite cases, ingestion of one bug acts as a detoxicant (7, 12).

33. **LOMRI (Fox)**: Live fox is boiled in water. The decoction, so prepared, is used for gout (12).

34. **MACHHAR (Mosquito)**: Ingestion of seven mosquitoes with 'BAKLA' (*Vicia faba*) seeds is curative for quartan fever. They are prescribed with 'MUNDI' (*Sphaeranthus indicus*) in cases of difficult