INTRODUCTION

Epilepsy is a serious neurological condition involving immediate medical attention. It is not a disease but a sign of underlying neurological disturbance. “Epilepsy” is a Greek word meaning a condition of being overcame or attacked. In simple term, it is the tendency to have seizure (a hypersynchronous discharge from the group of neurons). Nerve cell damage or seizure can be due to many factors, but 65% of cases have no known cause. Cerebrovascular disease is the most common cause affecting 30-70% of the cases. While head injuries, trauma, infection or tumors are also provoking the seizure.

In India, all aspects including etiology, diagnosis and treatment of epilepsy is documented in ayurvedic literature. In ayurvedic context, Epilepsy is known by the Sanskrit name ‘apasmara’ or ‘apasmriti’. An ancient vedic physician Charak described it as a condition characterized by derrangement of mind and memory. While sushruta described its clinical manifestation as sudden blockage of the channels that control consciousness. The person is overpowered with the alteration of mind and memory. As a result he falls down; throws his hands and feet (convulsion) & saliva dribbles from mouth. The teeth are closed; eye and eyebrows are distorted. The clinical description (purvarupa) includes contraction of eyebrows, constant irregular movement of eyes, hearing of sound which are non-existing, excessive discharge of saliva and nasal excreta; disinclination for food (anorexia and indigestion), distention of abdomen, increased thirst, profuse sweating, transient blackout, fainting, hallucination, body ache etc.

The clinical manifestation (rupa) according to ayurveda is divided into four types based on predominant dosha involved in it: Vataja, pittaja, kaphaja and sannipataja. Vataja type characterized as frequent fit, excessive crying, irregularly contracted fingers, bulging eyes, rough and blackish nails, skin, face, hallucination and trembling. Kaphaja has features of prolonged fits with delayed recovery, white nail, eye, face and skin, vision of white, heavy, smooth objects. Pittaja is characterized by gaining consciousness in shortest period, greenish yellow and coppery nail, skin, face and eye, vision of bloody, irritating, agitated and burning objects. While Sannipataja is a vitiation of all three dosha and gives combination of incurable signs (intractable epilepsy).
Several herbal treatment mentioned in Ayurveda for elimination and alleviation of the condition have no such toxic effects as it cleansance the channels blocked by dosha. There are several formulations described in chikitsasthanam like use of shatavari with milk, oil and garlic, brahmi juice, vaca with honey etc. Many of them are scientifically proved herbs which improve the epileptic features include bhrahmi, vaca, shatavari, mulethi, pumpkin etc. But there is not any scientific study or document which indicates the use of garlic as antiepileptic agent. The latin name of plant is Allium sativum Linn. (Fam. Liliaceae); commonly known as ‘LASUNA’. Lasuna consists of bulb of Allium sativum Linn. (Fam. Liliaceae); a perennial bulbous plant, cultivated as an important condiment crop in the country. It is best remedy for indigestion and flatulence. The use of garlic in india as an antiseptic is very common. Also its medicinal use as anti hyperlipidemic and anti-tuberculosis were already proved. The bulbular part is having useful in diseases of eye and heart, improve appetite, voice, and complexion. The bulb has a sharp taste; diuretic; carminative; troubles of spleen, liver, and lungs; chronic fever; thirst; caries of the teeth; thins the blood (Yunani). From ancient times, the use of garlic as aphrodisiac is well known. It is also used in asthma, earache, piles, inflammation, paralysis, lumbago, leucoderma (ayurveda).

The other common plant of the family Liliaceae includes Allium cepa known as “KANDA” or “PYAJ”. It is an evergreen bulb growing to 0.6 m (2ft), belonging to family Alliaceae. The bulb is anthelmintic, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, antispasmodic, carminative, diuretic, expectorant, febrifuge, hypoglycaemic, hypotensive, lithontripic, stomachic and tonic. When used regularly in the diet it offsets tendencies towards angina, arteriosclerosis and heart attack. It is also useful in preventing oral infection and tooth decay. Fresh onion juice is a very useful first aid treatment for bee and wasp stings, bites, grazes or fungal skin complaints. It also aids the formation of scar tissue on wounds, thus speeding up the healing process, and has been used as a cosmetic to remove freckles. The juice of white bulbs of it is the popular remedy for cataract. In homeopathy, it is used particularly in the treatment of people whose symptoms include running eyes and nose.

A large number of agents called antiepileptic drugs are available to treat various types of seizures with the objective to reduce seizure frequency and severity within a
framework of an acceptable level of side effects. The ideal anti-seizure drug would suppress all seizures without causing any unwanted effect. Unfortunately the drugs used currently not only fail to control seizure activity in some patients, but they frequently cause side effects. In addition safety, tolerability, efficiency, expenses especially in long term therapy, serum drug monitoring etc. are other limitations with synthetic antiepileptic drugs.

Comparatively lesser side effects and interactions associated with these herbal remedies can make the anticonvulsant treatment more rationale and patient friendly.