

**ETHNOMEDICAL SURVEY ON SRI LANKAN HASTI VEDAKAMA: A STUDY
BASED ON ELEPHANT CLUSTER AT THE TEMPLE OF THE TOOTH RELIC**

A.M.G.H.K. Athapaththu^{1*} and S.M.S. Samarakoon²

¹*Faculty of Indigenous Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.*

²*Department of Ayurveda Medicine and Indigenous Medicine, Faculty of Indigenous Medicine
University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.*

* *gayumiathapaththu@gmail.com*

Today, in a situation where many aspects of the Sri Lankan traditional medical system are facing the risk of losing their knowledge, traditional Hasti Vedakama is still prevalent in the country due to the strong bond of the elephants with the Sri Lankan culture, especially associated with the Esala Perahera, one of the main cultural events of Sri Lanka. *Elephas maximus maximus* being an endangered animal species, the traditional Hasti Vedakama is a branch of traditional medicine that should be preserved. This study aimed to recognize the role of the Sri Lankan Hasti Vedakama in the modern society. The study assessed elephant caretakers' preference for traditional medical practices, examined disease prevalence and treatment approaches of Sri Lankan Hasti Vedakama, catalogued different plant species and minerals commonly used for treatments, and identified challenges to the traditional Hasti Vedakama. The study consisted of in-depth discussions with three traditional practitioners registered in the Ayurveda Medical Council of Sri Lanka and a survey was conducted with 26 mahouts. The results showed that 100% of mahouts preferred traditional Hasti Vedakama to treat diseases of elephants. The frequently encountered ailments were different types of wounds, abdominal disorders, and constipation. The frequently used treatment methods were powders, pills, and pastes out of many other treatment methods, including decoctions, tablets, ointments, surgery, fumigation, oil application, fomentation, enema, and administering of medicine through the trunk. Eighty-two plant species belonging to 45 plant families, six minerals, and six basic oils that are most commonly used to treat elephants were identified.

Keywords: Asian Elephants, Ethnomedicine, Hasti Ayurveda, Sri Lanka