



Review Article

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CONTRIBUTION OF KERALA TO AYURVEDIC LITERATURE IN PANCHAKARMA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PANCHAKARMAM ATHAVA SODHANA CHIKITSA: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The physicians of Kerala recorded their clinical experiences as texts which strengthened the literary database of Ayurveda. Panchakarma and its preparatory procedures, which form an important mainstay of Ayurvedic treatment have been described in detail in many of these texts. These texts also aimed at the revival of Panchakarma mode of treatment. They also contain elaborate descriptions of innovative practices which were developed in Kerala like Takradhara (pouring medicated buttermilk on the head in a prescribed manner), Pizhichil (medicated oil massage by squeezing oil from cloth) and Kizhi (treatment using medicated cloth bags) which have now become famous as Keraleeya Panchakarma. Some of the important books in this genre are Vasthipradeepam, Ayurvedic treatments of Kerala, Dharaakalpam, Sirassekaadividhi and Chikitsasangraham. **Panchakarmam athava Sodhanachikitsa** is a book by Manakkodam Kesavan Vaidyar which is presented in the form of case discussions and contains detailed descriptions of all the procedures related to Panchakarma.

Keywords: Ayurvedic literary database, Keraleeya Panchakarma, Panchakarmam athava Sodhanachikitsa

INTRODUCTION

Kerala, a small state in the southern part of India, has played a unique role in the process of enrichment of Ayurveda.¹ There were many families of physicians in this region who belonged to both brahmanical and non brahmanical castes. The most important and famous among them were the Ashtavaidya.² The clinical and academic acumen of these physicians not only resulted in the development of innovative treatment protocols and procedures, but also created a textual heritage that strengthened the literary database of Ayurveda.

The knowledge, gained from innumerable number of clinical experiences, which had been passed on from generation to generation was later documented by these physicians. Their valuable contributions include commentaries and translations of classical texts and medical dictionaries.³ Compilations of prescriptions of medicines and their practical applications as in Sahasrayogam, Yogamritam, Alathoor Manipravalam, Chikitsamanjari, Chikitsanool and Vaidyamanorama were also very popular. Some of these texts tried to bridge Ayurvedic concepts with modern scientific knowledge like Brihatsareeram and Ashtangasareeram by Vaidyaratnam P.S Varier.

Books were also written based on the eight specialized subjects of Ayurveda. Significant contributions were in toxicology and Balachikitsa (paediatrics). Prayogasamuchaya by Kochunni Thampuran, Vishavaidyaajyotsnika by Karattu Namboothori and Sarvagaram Pramochna by Kuttamath Cheriya Rama Kurup are books related to toxicology. Vaidyatarakam by C.N. Narayanan, Arogyakalpadruma by Kaikkulangara Rama Varier and Arogyachintamani by Vallathol Narayana Menon are famous works in Balachikitsa. Books related to allied sciences like Vrikshaayurveda, Hastayurveda were additions to the Ayurvedic literature.⁴

DEVELOPMENT OF PANCHAKARMA PRACTICE AND LITERATURE IN KERALA

Sodhana (purification) and Samana (pacification) are the two types of treatment described in the classical textbooks.⁵ Panchakarma, a group of five purificatory procedures – vamana (emesis), virechana (purgation), nasya (nasal medication), vasti (medicated enema), raktamokshana (blood letting) - is an integral part of Ayurvedic treatment.⁶ These procedures are preceded by two preparatory regimen – snehana (oleation) and swedana (sudation).

But in course of time, sodhana (purification) treatment took a backseat, may be due to the elaborate and difficult nature of its application and Ayurvedic treatment was limited to samana (pacification). The physicians of Kerala realized that the use of samanachikitsa (pacifying treatment) alone can cause stagnation in the science. So they undertook the herculean task of revolutionizing the neglected aspects of sodhanachikitsa (purificatory treatment).

As a part of this, they not only revived the five main purificatory procedures, but they also modified the preparatory snehana (oleation) and swedana (sudation) into procedures with independent standing. These procedures have also been grouped into five main types – Pindasweda (sudation using medicated cloth bags), Annalepanam (application of medicated rice paste), Kayasekam (Pizhichil - medicated oil massage by squeezing oil from cloth), Sirovasthi (retention of medicated oil on the head), Sirosekam (medicated oil irrigation on the head) and Sirolepanam (application of medicated paste on the head). These have enriched Ayurveda as a whole and Panchakarma in particular.

Kerala has been able to achieve a place of pride in the global arena due to the development and nurturing of such innovative techniques which have now become famous as Keraleeya Panchakarma. Pandit Shiv Sharma, Honorary Physician to the President of India has opined in 1972 that it is during the last quarter of a century that the practice of Panchakarma has spread from Kerala to other parts of India.⁷ These were found to provide relief in many chronic disease conditions where the western system of allopathic medicine failed and also as a rejuvenative procedure in healthy individuals. This latter aspect has now developed into a separate branch called Ayurvedic health tourism.

The observations and experiences of these physicians were recorded in a number of books for the benefit of future generations. The subject matter of these books was not only related to Panchakarma practices as described in the classical Ayurvedic texts like the Brihatrayee, but they also contain elaborate and practical descriptions of treatment procedures which were developed and popularized in Kerala. It can be seen that many of these books were written as a part of an effort to revive Ayurveda in its complete form. They have also tried to give scientific explanations to many obscure principles of Panchakarma based on personal clinical experiences. These books became very popular owing to the simplicity of presentation and gravity of contents.

Some of the important books in this genre are listed below:

Chikitsasamgraham

It is a book published in 1905 which contains a detailed description of Panchakarma procedures.⁸ The author, Vaidyaratnam P. S. Varier has stressed on the practical do's and don'ts while performing these procedures. Later authors have followed these instructions in their books. In addition, this book contains a catalogue of formulations that are manufactured in the institution established by the author – Arya Vaidya Sala, Kottakkal. It also has many practical instructions regarding the storage and dispensing of these medicines.

Dhaaraakalpam

It is a book that describes the drugs, benefits, procedure and duration of dhaara (controlled flow of medicated liquids on body and head) in detail and was published in 1913. The name of the author is seen to be Kaviraj Sukhadeva in one edition of the book, but the exact author is unknown.⁹ Sri. N. V. K. Varier has mentioned in his book Ayurvedacharitram that Yadav Sarma has published Dhaarakalpam along with Vaidyamanorama from Mumbai. This is also seen as an appendix in other books like Sahasrayogam. Aattupurath Imbichi Gurukkal has also published this along with commentary.¹⁰

Sirassekaadividhi

The five procedures of Takradhara (pouring medicated buttermilk on the head in a prescribed manner), Pizhichil (medicated oil massage by squeezing oil from cloth), Njavarakizhi (treatment using cloth bags prepared with medicated rice), Njavarateppu (application of medicated rice paste) and Talapothichil (application of medicated paste on the head) have been described in the book. It was written and published by Putiyedath Raman Menon in 1929 along with Bhaavaprabodhini commentary.¹¹ But this book has not been quoted by any other author.

Vasthipradeepam

It is a book written in Malayalam language by Paanavalli Krishnan Vaidyar and was published in 1932.¹² As the name suggests, this book has described vasti (medicated enema) with importance. But it also describes other treatment procedures like snehapanam (internal oleation therapy), swedanam (sudation), pizhichil (medicated oil massage by squeezing oil from cloth), kizhi (treatment using medicated cloth bags) and takradhara (pouring medicated buttermilk on the head in a prescribed manner).

Ayurvedic Treatments of Kerala

Vayaskara NS Mooss published this book in English in 1944.¹³ It describes the Keraleeya Panchakarma procedures like Pindasweda (sudation using medicated cloth bags), Annalepanam (application of medicated rice paste), Kayasekam (Pizhichil - medicated oil massage by squeezing it from cloth), Sirovasthi (retention of medicated oil on the head), Sirosekam (medicated oil irrigation on head) and Sirolepanam (application of medicated paste on head). The third edition of this book has included chapters on Potalasweda (sudation using medicated leaves tied in cloth bags), and Dhara (irrigation therapy). It has also devoted separate chapters for the equipments needed for the procedures, pathya (diet and lifestyle regimen) to be followed and medicines to be advised during the procedure.

Keraleeya Panchakarma Chikitsa Vijnanam

This book was published by T. L. Devaraj, compiling the information collected by Vaidya Raghunatha Sarma, a disciple of Vaidyaratnam P. S. Varier. The author has indicated in the preface that he aims to make the knowledge of these traditional practices available to scholars, especially to physicians and researchers outside Kerala.

Other Publications

Vasudeveeyavilasam Publications has published a pamphlet on 'Keraleeya Chikitsakrama'. Kaikulangara Rama Varier has compiled the Panchakarma procedures mentioned in Ashtangahridaya into 'Panchakarmachikitsa' in Malayalam. Vaidyabhushanam Raghavan Thirumulpad has compiled the chapters related to Panchakarma in Ashtangasangraham. He has also written a commentary for this titled 'Karmaparichayam'.

PANCHAKARMAM ATHAVA SODHANACHIKITSA

This book, written in Malayalam, by Manakkodam Kesavan Vaidyar is one of the most authoritative and comprehensive books dealing with Panchakarma. This is a book which describes the Poorvakarma (preparatory procedures) in addition to the Panchakarma procedures. It also explains the procedures that were developed and practiced in Kerala and have since become famous as Keraleeya Panchakarma. Since it describes both classical and Keraleeya procedures, this book, which was first published in 1949, can be considered as a complete book on Kriyakrama (treatment procedures).

The author, Manakkodan Kesavan Vaidyar was an ardent follower of Sree Narayana Guru. Apart from being an expert physician, he was also a social reformer, orator and nationalist who established Travancore Ayurveda Mandalam and later, the Keraleeya Vaidya Mahamandalam in 1952 in an effort to revive Ayurveda in the society. He believed that the revival of Ayurveda was possible only by emphasising on sodhanachikitsa (purificatory therapy).

The cardinal features of this book which have made it a popular text among physicians are many. These features are described below -

Presentation in the form of case discussion

This book contains a judicious combination of theoretical principles and practical knowledge. The author has stressed on the need for acquiring the skill to perform Panchakarma procedures and also the need for documenting such practices for the benefit of future physicians. In each section he has described the classical references in the topic followed by his own experiences. It has elaborate and lucid descriptions of all Kriyakrama (treatment procedures) which was the result of years of keen observation of different cases and in fact, it can be considered as the first book which has been presented in the form of case discussions in Ayurveda. More than fifty cases have been described. He has also included illustrations for better understanding of the treatment procedures.

Description of concepts with clarity

The author has given a derivation for Panchakarma different from that is usually understood as a group of five procedures. The term Panchakarma is derived from 'pancha' dhatu which means elaborate and therefore it indicates elaborately performed procedures preceded by a lot of preparation and followed by post treatment care.¹⁴

He has tried to bridge the differences of opinion between the Charaka and Vagbhata schools of thought regarding the inclusion of Raktamokshana (blood - letting procedure) among the Panchakarma. Though he has defended, in theory, Charaka's opinion that rakta(blood) does not have a natural route of exit from the body and hence Raktamokshana cannot be considered as one among the Panchakarma, but in practice, he has used Siravedha (venesection) and has given numerous indications for its effectiveness.¹⁵

Description of Standard Operative Procedures (SOP)

Step by step description of procedures, considering every minute detail, is a notable feature of this book.

For instance, the method of preparing bladder for doing medicated enema has been described as follows - 'The urinary bladder of cattle should be collected, cleaned and inflated. The opening should be tightly tied with a string and dried. After use, it should be washed and hanged to dry. It should be smeared with tuvarakataila and kept away from wind. In this way, the same bladder can be used for almost hundred times.'¹⁶

Many practical tips have been included, for instance, during Naleesweda(tubal fomentation), the steam should be initially fanned using a thick cardboard sheet to prevent it from directly falling on the patient.

During snehapana (internal oleation therapy), the smell of the ghee should be masked by inserting a fragrant cotton piece into the nose of the patient. When higher doses are reached, the eyes should also be covered. The ghee that sticks to the lips should be wiped off with a cloth. Otherwise, the patient will develop dislike for the ghee and nausea which may be mistaken for samyak snighdha lakshana (features of proper oleation).¹⁷After fomentation procedures, patient should be advised to take bath using Acacia caesia [incha/ soap bark] and black gram powder and apply Rasnadi Churna on head.

Such detailed descriptions leave no room for doubt in the mind of the physician regarding the conduct of Panchakarma.

Innovations in application

Snehapana(internal oleation therapy)

He has been bold enough to suggest his own opinions and modifications in certain aspects like dosage of medicines. For instance, he has stressed that Achasnehapana(internal oleation therapy using only medicated ghee in greater doses) should be used only in severe cases while in all other cases, Sadyasneha (internal oleation therapy using medicated ghee and diet in lower doses) should be preferred. Sadyasneha should be given for three days by using saindhava (rock salt) and ghee. During these three days, the patient should be given body massage with medicated oil followed by steam bath. On the fourth day, virechana (purgation) has to be done. While doing Achasnehapana, the classical texts prescribe madhyama (moderate) and uttama (high) doses for snehapana to produce sodhana. But the author states that the physician has to arrive at a dose in between these two according to the condition of the patient and stage of the disease.¹⁸

Pizhichil (Medicated oil massage by squeezing oil from cloth)

The duration of treatment procedures has been modified according to the clinical condition. He has recorded a case of Apatantraka (neurological disorder associated with seizures) in a full-term pregnant woman wherein Pizhichil was performed for 24 hours and another where it was performed for 36 hours continuously based on the treatment principle of tailadronisayana (lying in table specifically designed for the purpose) in Apatantraka. The second case was saved, and the lady delivered a child, but the first case was a stillbirth though the woman survived.¹⁹Such a long duration of a swedana (sudation) procedure is not seen in the classical texts and such bold applications of Panchakarma is seldom heard of even now.

Vasti (medicated enema)

In the context of vasti (medicated enema), he has suggested by the weight of his own experience that medicines which are indicated for oral use in specific conditions as samana (pacifying) are more effective when they are used as yapanavasti. For instance, Vidaryadi Ksheera Kashayam given as medicated enema will produce the same effect within one day while it has to be used orally for twelve days.²⁰ He has also noted that tailasangrahana (retention of the medicated oil) is rarely seen as a complication of Snehavasti (enema with medicated oil). Matravasti (a type of medicated enema to be administered in lower dose than Snehavasti), if given less than the prescribed quantity, is ineffective. He has advised against doing it with glass syringe.

Application of Sirovasti and Uttaravasti

Sirovasti (retention of medicated oil on the head) has been considered as a samana chikitsa (pacifying therapy) which produces the effect of sodhana (purification) by "aavakranasikotklesam" (secretions from mouth and nose).²¹ Taila in chikkanapaka (preparation of medicated oil up to a waxy consistency of the ingredients) has been advised for this procedure.²²

He has recorded successful management of Puyameha in males by uttaravasti (urethral enema) with Tankanajalam. Uttaravasti (vaginal enema) has also been advised with Tankanajalam, Surasadigana, Nyagrodhadigana in Asthisrava (vaginal discharge) in females.²³

Classification of medicated oils used for nasya (nasal medication)

Many popular medicated oils that are used for nasal medication are categorised according to their effects. For e.g., Dhanvantaram (101), Ksheerabala thailam, Arimedadi thailam and Anu thailam are samana (pacifying), Ksheerabala (101), Brihat Jambooka thailam, Mahakukutamamsa thailam are brimhana (nourishing) while Mridveekadi taila is sodhana (purificatory) in nature. Karpasasthyadi thailam, Maharajaprasarini thailam, Ksheerabala (101) were found to be very effective as nasal medication in neurological diseases with more than 85% successful cases.²⁴

Practice of Vamana [emesis]

He has described the practice of emesis in conditions like visarpa (an acutely spreading disease affecting the skin and deeper tissues). The use of diet prepared using fish in non vegetarians and black gram in vegetarians has been advised. He has cautioned against certain practices like Thiruvizhachardi [A practice in Thiruvizha Siva temple of Kerala wherein a medicinal drink is given in cases of planned food poisoning]. This is only a type of gastric lavage and made emesis seem to be a very simple procedure. He has stressed that emesis should be done only after proper snehana (oleation) and swedana (fomentation) and should be followed by peyadikrama (post procedural diet).

The complications for emesis, apart from those mentioned in the classics, have been described. For instance, if the person gets body pain during the procedure, body massage with Dhanvantharamkuzhambu and swedana (fomentation) with jackfruit leaves.²⁵ The author has referred to the measures to be adopted in case of complications from various other books of the time also. One instance is the advice to use Kasthuryadigulika and Dhoomapana (fumigatory therapy) using verukinpuzhu (secretion from the anal gland of the Civet cat) when a person loses consciousness during emesis which is described in Yogamruta (a traditional Keraleeya text).

CONCLUSION

A sound theoretical foundation, vast clinical experiences and an aptitude for innovation were the hallmarks of the traditional physician families of Kerala. This led to the development of a unique style of treatment called Keraleeya Panchakarma which were the modified forms of the preparatory procedures of the classical Panchakarma.

Many books were written and published in Kerala related to these procedures. The book Panchakarmam Athava Sodhanachikitsa has described the preparatory and main procedures of Panchakarma with detailed explanation. Hence this book has served as the base for creating SOPs for the Panchakarma procedures in different institutions. Different medicated oils that are used for nasya as brimhana, samana or sodhana in general practice by Ayurveda physicians are based on the clinical observations of the author in this text.

It was these keen observations of the clinical effects of such combinations that have guided many generations of physicians across Kerala. This book is a valuable and authoritative treatise on Panchakarma for the current generations of Ayurvedic physicians.

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