



Book Review

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A BOOK REVIEW ON SIRASEKKADI VIDHI: A GUIDE TO TRADITIONAL PRACTICES OF KERALA, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Sirasekkadi Vidhi is a handbook on principles and practice of Panchakarma procedure with Malayalam commentary Bhavaprobodhini by the author and English Annotations by the editor. This book does the basic treatment principles of Ayurveda, its explanation, and scientific analysis. To overcome the lack of proper guidelines (except some basic information) in classical texts about procedures, including Sirasessa, Kayasessa, Pinda Sveda, Annalepana, Shirolepana, Kalavidhi, Snehapana Vidhi are elaborated in this text.

Keywords: Sirasekkadi Vidhi, Panchakarma, Ayurveda

INTRODUCTION

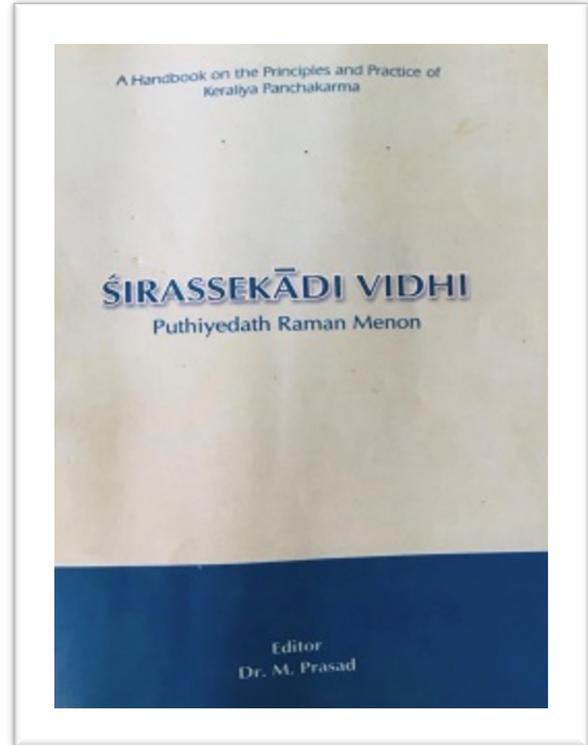
Murdha Taila is a variety of Bahya Snehana in which oil is applied to the head in various modes. They comprise Shiro Abhyanga, Seka, Pichu and Basti. They are considered as best treatments in treating multiple disorders of Vata.

Sirasekkadi vidhi is an attempt of Puthiyedath Raman Menon to record the popular and practically relevant treatments in Kerala, but not much explained in classics. The procedure of Murdhini Taila, along with the popular treatment of Ayurveda, is depicted in the book.

About the Author

"Sirasekkadi Vidhi"- An original textbook of Keraleeya Panchakarma is written by Rajavaidya Puthiyedath Raman Menon (1877-1965), Native of Pooppathy, near Mala in Thrissur District, Kerala, India.

He was a scholar in Ayurveda (including Hasthyayurveda), Ayurvedic Medicine Manufacturing - including Rasa medicines, Tarka Sastra (Nyaya & Vaiseshika), Astronomy & Astrology and several Indian sciences. Apart from this book, the great scholar Vaidyan Puthiyedath Raman Menon wrote a critical commentary on Ashtangahridaya in the Sanskrit language. Unfortunately, he could only complete Sutra Sthana before his death. Shri. Padmabhooshan Thirumulpad himself took the initiative to publish the Ashtangahridaya commentary of Vaidyan Raman Menon. Rajavaidyan Puthiyedath Raman Menon wrote "Subodhini" commentary to Sreeramodantham, several Sanskrit Slokas & Sthothras (devotional Slokas). "Nakshathrappana", - which describes the positions of various stars in the sky for a straightforward understanding of laymen, is especially worth mentioning. He has written several Ayurveda articles in Ayurvedic periodicals of that time.



About the Book

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Sirasekkadi Vidhi is a handbook on principles and practice of Panchakarma procedure with Malayalam commentary Bhavaprobodhini by the author and English Annotations by the editor. The author attempts to record the popular and practically relevant treatments in Kerala, but not much explained in classics. This book does the basic treatment principles of Ayurveda, its explanation, and scientific analysis. Siraseka, Kayaseka, Pindasveda, Annalepana, Shirolepana, Kalavidhi, Snehapana Vidhi are the 7 chapters of the book which are elaborated. He published 500 copies in the 1105 Malayalam Era (A.D/ C.E. 1929). Book had Sanskrit Slokas written in Malayalam font /alphabet in that edition. Besides, he traditionally included Anwaya, Anwayartha, Paribhasha to Malayalam and the meaning (Sara) of the Slokas in the Malayalam language. Since Sirasekkadi Vidhi was out of print, the great Ayurveda scholar Padmabhooshan Thirumulpad took the initiative and republished it in A.D/C.E. 2009. Dr. M. Prasad- Famous Ayurveda Physician in Kerala and Former Principal of Ashtanga Ayurveda College- is the Editor of the 2009 edition. In this edition (2009), Slokas and Anwayas are in Devanagiri script with Anwayartha, Paribhasha and Saram in the Malayalam language. Apart from that, meaning in the English language is also included for the easy understanding of Ayurveda scholars outside Kerala.

Peculiarities of the Book

To overcome the lack of proper guidelines (except some basic information) in classical texts about procedures like Siraseka (Takra Dhara), Kayaseka (Pizhichil), Pindasveda (Shashtika Pindasveda), Annalepa (Njavaratheppu) and Shirolepa (Thalapothishichil) -well-known Ayurvedic treatments which are called as Panchakarma or unique Ayurvedic treatments of Kerala because they are developed and practised in Kerala in olden days- Vaidyan. Raman Menon prepared the book Sirasekkadi Vidhi.

Sirasekkadi vidhi

The author starts the chapter by invoking the blessings of Lord Rudra, who Brahmins worship with Dhara and Mantra "Rudrasukta".

He elaborates the method of Siraseka- Shiro Dhara, Kayaseka-Pizhichil, Pindasveda – Navara kizhi, Annalepana – Choru theppu, Shirolepana – Thala pothishichil. The detailed description of Takradhara Vidhi, its indications, preparation of medicine for Takradhara, about the dimensions of Dhara pot and different Dravadravya for Dhara with its respective indications. The pattern of fall of Dhara resembling the Malayalam letter RA and KA is only specific to this book and not seen elsewhere.

In the present era, where the Ayurvedic treatments are done blindly without any consideration of Doshas, the author explains explicitly that Takra Dhara is effective in Kapha and Pitta dominant condition, not in Vataja condition as it aggravates Shoola. The Dhara should fall on the forehead in a rhythmic fashion of writing the Malayalam alphabet 'RA' or 'KA'.

Kayaseka vidhi

The author starts the chapter with salutations to Lord Vishnu. In this chapter, Dhara implies Pizhichil, briefly explaining types of Snehana, positions to be performed during Kayaseka, procedure, duration, the quantity of Taila to be used, indication, and uses.

In this chapter, the author mentions only six positions and omits the prone position, which may cause compression to the chest wall during the procedure.

Pinda Sweda vidhi

The author starts the chapter by saluting Lord Dhanwantari. He explains the entire treatment procedure of Shashtika Pinda Sveda, its preparation, duration of the procedure, benefits and a few indications.

Annalepana vidhi

The author briefly explains the indications, preparation, procedure, duration of Annalepa. The preparation of Navara rice is the same as that of Pinda Sveda, and the quantity required is only 1/3rd as that of Pinda Sveda. Annalepana is done below the level of the neck only.

Shirolepana vidhi

The author explains the preparation of Lepana, its thickness, procedure, indications and contraindication, durations (1 ½ hour) are mentioned.

Kalavidhi

In this chapter, the author mentions specific months of Ashata, Aswina, Phalguna for the treatment procedure like Dhara. But during emergencies, this rule is not to be followed. Time of treatment, course of treatment for 14 days is mentioned. These treatments may be practised annually to enhance physical strength built and prevent the impact of ageing.

Snehapana vidhi

A narration of do's and dont's during Snehapana (which is taken up as the standard routines for all the therapies) is given here as it has its application in all the therapeutic procedures. Do's and Dont's should be strictly followed for the entire course of treatments and an equal number of days succeeding it.

With this, the text is concluded, the author Puthiyedath Raman Menon invokes the Lord for the happiness of all those Vaidyas who follow this text and practice accordingly.

Unique Feature of the Book

The author's work attempted to simplify the enigmas of the clinical side of specialized therapies mentioned in the treatise like Dharakalpa. The author notes the lack of standardization and ignorance about the conditions in which these treatments are indicated and the lack of procedural details led to the creation of this book. The text is laid out in tune with the traditional system followed by the Astavaidyas. On better analysis of this text, the author I only extended the concept laid in Dharakalpa.

Contributions

The pattern of fall of Dhara resembling the Malayalam letter RA and KA is only specific to this book and not seen elsewhere.

By stating 'Anamla Takra' should be used for Dhara, the author contradicts the opinion in Dharakalpa where Amla Takra is used, which may cause Vidaha & Abhishyanda.

As per the author for Kayaseka, six positions are practically enough to cover the entire body instead of 7 positions. The course of treatment of each therapy is mentioned explicitly in this text. After each procedure, the author advises following Do's and Don'ts as mentioned in Snehapana Vidhi.

Relevance in the Present Era

The First edition of Sirasekkadi Vidhi was written in the Malayalam language. The revised edition contains Sanskrit Slokas with English and Malayalam explanations for an easy and better understanding of Ayurvedic scholars outside Kerala.

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