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Review On “Panchakarmam Athava Sodhanachikitsa”

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INTRODUCTION

Kerala is rightly considered as the abode of Ayurveda. That title largely owes to the contributions of old vaidyas of Kerala. They not only developed special treatment methodologies based on Ayurvedic principles, viz *Shashtikapindasweda*, *Murdha taila kalpana* etc, but also brought out numerous Ayurvedic textbooks which explains and expands on the fundamental principles of Ayurveda.

One such notable work is “*Panchakarmam athava sodhanachikitsa*” authored by Manakodam Kesavan Vaidyan, first published in 1949 by Vidyarambham Publishers, Alappuzha. The 320 pages book in Malayalam language, priced at Rs. 300/- is one of the most authoritative and comprehensive book about *Panchakarma*. The Sixth edition of the book was released in 2013.

The author Manakodam Kesavan Vaidyan, apart from being an eminent and famous *Panchakarma* specialist and physician, was also a patriot and orator. A follower of social reformer Sree Narayana guru, Kesavan Vaidyan died in 1955, on the day of 4th Onam, the birth date of Sree Narayana Guru. His contributions to the revival of Ayurveda in Kerala are immense. He founded an organisation for the unity of Ayurvedic physicians named “Thiruvithamkoor Ayurveda Mahamandalam”, which later developed into “Keraleeya Vaidya Mahamandalam”. He had worked as one of the 3 members of exam board of studies of Ayurvedacharya and had been appointed by the Kerala government as an honorary lecturer at Thiruvananthapuram Ayurveda college.

“*Panchakarmam athava sodhanachikitsa*”, as the name indicates, is a treatise on *sodhanachikitsa-*

vamana, virechana, nasya, vasthi, and siravedha. Since *Snehapana* and *Swedana* are preparatory procedures of *sodhana*, those are also included in the first part of the book. *Sirovasthi* is also described, probably considering its eliminative property.

CONTENT OF THE BOOK

The content of the book is not divided as chapters, but each topic is described under a heading viz -- *Snehapana, Swedavidhi, vamanavidhi, Virechanavidhi, Nasyavidhi, vasthividhi, Sirovasthi, and Siravedha*. Under these headings the indication, contra indication, classification, complication and treatment of complications are described as in classical literature along with his own views and clinical experiences about each therapy.

Kesavan Vaidyan advocates only medicated ghee and not pure ghee for *snehapana* (internal oleation). According to him, *chikkanapaka* is only meant for *sodhananga snehapana*. Even though *uthama*, and *madhyama matra* are advised for *sodhana* in the classics, he recommends *madhyamamatra*. For children, aged and weak (*sukumara*), a special dose digested in 6-9 hours is suggested, for *samana* (pacification) and *brumhana* purpose. Kesavan Vaidyan suggests that it has to be used in a systematically increasing and decreasing order.

Description of different types of *sweda* (sudation) which are popularly used in Kerala like *Nadisweda, Ksheeradhuma, Snehadhara (pizhichil), Pindasweda, Avagaha, Dhanyamladhara, and Upanaha* is provided. The author insists that *Kayaseka* should be performed in the morning after digestion of previous day's meal. At the beginning of the procedure, ‘*Thala*’ should be applied over head, like *Sirolepana*.

Maximum time advised for *Pizhichil* is 1 ½ hrs for a duration of 14 or 21 days. In *vathapitha* or *ruksha* persons, maximum time will be 2 hours. Light massage should be done with other hand throughout the procedure. Curiously, he also describes the time taken for spread of *sneha* in body tissues, as in 300 matra in roma koupa, 7 days to reach skin, etc. He used to do *Kayaseka* and *Sirodhara* simultaneously. *Dhanyamladhara* has been given prime importance in *Pakshaghatha*.

During *Vamana*, massage is advised in *anuloma* direction (downwards). From his clinical experience author suggests *pithaantha* as the end point of *Vamana*, rather than number of *vega* or the quantity of vomitus. In post-operative procedure, *Dhumapana* is advised before doing *kabala*. Kesavan vaidyan gives importance to proper *purva* and *paschat* karma while doing *sodhana*. He mentions about 'Thiruvizha chardi', a traditional practice of vomiting, related to a temple which is believed to cure different ailments, only as a type of gastric lavage because of the absence of proper pre and post-operative procedures.

He suggests the time of *Virechana* as 2 ½ -3 hours after sunrise and recommends *churna*, *kwatha*(decoction) or *leha* for *virechana*(purgation), than *erandathaila*. End points of each type of *suddhi* are separately mentioned. Importance of *peyadikrama* is portrayed through an example from this case diary.

The better method of instillation of *Nasya* (nasal medication) medicine according to *Kesavan Vaidyan* is to blow it into the nose. It is said that 2 days are sufficient to give result for *sodhana Nasya* except in *sannipatha jwara* which needs 6 -7 days. A notable recommendation among

Nasya is with *ardhanareeswara churna* when the patient is unconscious.

Excretion of stool with oil within 12-18 minutes (½ - ¾ nazhika) is considered as the *samyaklakshana* of *Snehavasti*. In *krurakoshta* 4 days of *Snehapana* is advised prior to *Snehavasti*, to prevent retention of oil. For *matravasthi* 1 ½ - 4 ounce oil is used without doing any *purvakarma*. *Kashaya vasthis* (medicated enemas) are arranged in an order of *sodhana*, *lekhana*, *samana*, *brumhana*, and *vajeekarana*, among *karma-kala-yoga vasthis*. Importance of bath and food after *niruha* is explained giving examples. Also several formulations of *Snehavasti* and *Kashayavasthi* are detailed in the book.

Sirovasthi is explained after *vasthi*, considering its slight purificatory action. The author describes it as a *samana chikitsa* (pacification) which produces the effect of *sodhana* (purification) by producing secretions from mouth and nose. In *Sirovasthi*, *taila* in *chikkana paka* is recommended because it is aimed in *ulklesana*, where as in other *murdhathaila*, *kharachikkana paka* of oil should be used.

'*Panchasiravedham*' (on both upper limbs, both lowerlimbs, and forehead) is indicated in *kushta*, and *vathasonitha*. Notably, *Siravedha* (vein's puncture) in head is also well explained.

An endnote is given which comprises of some important points to keep in mind while doing these *sodhanakarma* (purification). For example, mild medicines should be used for *Snehapana* to withstand its effect; sterilization of all instruments in *Siravedha* etc.

ANALYSIS

In the preface, the author gives a definition of *Panchakarma* as ‘elaborately performed procedures’. As the name indicates, the book is a compilation about such procedures. Even though *sodhana* procedures give better result, *samana* treatment is more popular among practitioners. It may be due to the lack of efficiency, experience or confidence in performing *sodhana* treatment. So to promote *Panchakarma* among physicians, the author was in a need of documenting such practices. For each procedure, he has explained classical literatures followed by his own experiences. There is a contradiction in the book, that he recommends the inclusion of *Siravedha* (veins puncture) in *Panchakarma* but at the same justifies its non-inclusion.

Step by step procedural descriptions are given which leaves no room for doubt for current practitioners. For example, post-operative procedures of *Kayaseka*. Procedures are laid out in such a manner that even the smallest detail is explained. Details of use of buffalo bladder as *vasthiputaka* is an example for that. The author gives clarification for some verses in classics. He also makes modifications in procedures based on the treatment principles in classics. 36 hours (90 nazhika) of *kayaseka* is explained in *apathanaka* case, quoting the reference, “*thailadronyam chasayana*”. At the same time, he doesn’t recommend sticking strictly to classical texts for every procedure. Modified dose of *Snehapana* (internal oleation) is an example for that. But attaining *samyak lakshana* is mandatory for each procedure. For attains *samyak lakshana*, he suggests that practitioners can even make some changes in the usual procedure. Some additional signs of *samyaksnigdhattha* are explained from his practical experience, like presence of sneha in

urine, smell of ghee on body etc. He also supports making modification in treatment plans according to the convenience of both physician and the patient, as in one case where *Madhuthailika vasthi* instead of *Vireka* (purgation) after *Kayaseka* was recommended.

He advocates to take safety precautions while performing a procedure, especially in a contraindicated condition to avoid complications. For example, in *Kushta*, before doing *Swedana*, body is smeared with lime water and *thuvataka thaila*. The author has given much importance to *Sadyasneha*. Only in chronic diseases, he uses *sodhananga snehapana*. Some practical tips are also suggested in the book like inserting fragrant cotton piece in nose while taking ghee to avoid smell. Some innovations like use of fillers in *Nasya* (nasal medication), make the procedure easier. Author emphasizes on *samyaksnigdhattha* of *Snehavasti* rather than the number, while doing *karma-kala-yoga Vastis*. According to author, *Nasya* (nasal medication) must be done after bodily purification in order to eliminate vitiated *doshas* (by *snehapana*). Some modification in dosages of medications and *Vasti* (enema) are suggested based on the current health status of people. He advocates 10 *prasrutha* of *Niruha* after 55 years of age and a new dose for *snehapana*.

Some negative findings in Kesavan vaidyan’s clinical experiences are also reported while discussing the cases, which make the book more credible. Memory loss of an *apathanaka* patient after treatment is an example. In addition to the complications experienced during the procedure, how he managed these are also explained.

Several books on or before that period has influenced the author in his practice and he acknowledges that. *Dhumapana* (medicated

smoke) with secretion from civet cat, explained in complication of *Nasya* and *Vamana*, is described in *Yogamrutha*. Duration of *Kayaseka* is similar to that of *Vastipradeepa*. Vast references of formulations are seen in this book. The addition of honey in the beginning of preparation of *vasti* (enema) is regarded auspicious. Explaining an incident of complication in *madhutailika vasti* - considered as the safest - he reminds us about the extreme care which should be taken during *sodhanachikitsa* (purification) especially *vasthi*. He notes that the medicines indicated for oral use are more effective when they are used as *yapanavasti*. A single *Vasti* of *vidaryadi ksheera kashaya* give same result as that obtained from 12 days of its oral administration.

Regional procedures like *Upanaha* has given much significance. In *sleepada*, *kottamchukkadi churna*, *yava*, *kulatha* are applied in juice of *nongana* and *gomutra*(cow-urine) for 14 days of *Upanaha*, along with internal medicines. Formulations used for *Nasya* (*nasal medication*) are categorized based on their effects. For example, *ksheerabalathaila*, *arimedadi thaila* are *samana*, *bruhat jambooka thaila*, *maha kukkutamamsa thaila* are *brumhana* etc.

Pictures are depicted for easy understanding of the procedure. Author provides a lot of scope for researches in many areas like *snehapaka* etc. In the book '*Nasya*' is placed between '*Virechana*' and '*Vasti*'. The reviewer feels that it would be better if the procedures are arranged in an order of *Kayasodhana*, followed by *Sirasodhana*. Also, for easy understanding measurements would have been better if expressed in international system of units.

CONCLUSION

The book *Panchakarma athava sodhana chikitsa*, presented in the form of case discussions, is a combination of classical *Panchakarma* along with Kerala treatments. It contains detailed descriptions of all the *Panchakarma* and related procedures which enhances its use as a reference for Standard Operative Procedure (SOP). Observations and experiences of the author are beneficial for current practitioners. Descriptions about management of complications helps to enhance confidence in readers. This book is relied heavily by majority of practitioners of Kerala, along with the classical texts and '*Dharakalpa*'. It helps to popularize *Sodhanachikitsa* (purification) among Ayurvedic physicians.