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BOOK REVIEW

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BOOK REVIEW – UZHICHILINTE TATWAM

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Abstract

Uzhichilinte Tatwam is a book written by S.V. Govindan explaining about the basic techniques of massage, its various forms and its utility in health and disease. The detailed explanation about each technique and the application in various disease conditions gives the readers a clear idea on the use of massage in treatment aspects. The inoculation of principles of Ayurveda, Yoga and Chinese medicine is definitely an attractive feature of the book. New techniques like Self massage and Spiritual massage designed by the author are yet another highlight of this book. For those seeking a detailed know-how regarding massage and its possible effect in health and disease, this book is a must read.

Key words: Massage, self -massage, Ayurveda, spiritual massage.

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INTRODUCTION

“Uzhichilinte Tatwam” is a Malayalam paperback book written by S. V. Govindan that details about the relevance, method and different practices of massage. The book was published in February 1985 by Current Books, Kottayam. It consists of 143 pages. The first edition of the book was originally written in Hindi and then the author himself wrote a Malayalam version as per the request of Late Padmabhushan P.K. Warriar who considered the book to be unique and informative. The second and third edition was published in 1992 and 1996 by Current books, Kottayam. The price is Rs 45. The book has been translated to English and published in 2000.

The author was born at Ottappalam, Palakkad on December 24, 1924. He was a devoted disciple of Vinobha Bhave and ardent follower of Gandhiji. He gained vast knowledge about spiritual healing and massage through long years of experience. He was deeply influenced by Kelappaji and is also known as a renowned social worker. The author has five other books to his name - ‘Ayurvedic massage for health and healing’, Fundamental maxims of Ayurveda, Massage for health and healing. He has also written another Malayalam book – ‘Brahmavidyayude Harishree.’ He currently resides at Brahmaidhya mandhir, Wardha.

FEATURES OF THE BOOK

Author – S.V. Govindan

Period – 19th century,

Edition – First edition, February 1985

Language – Malayalam

Number of sections -20

Number of chapters – no division into chapters

Number of verse – nil

Translation – English – Ayurvedic Massage For Health and Healing (1996)

Total pages – 143

Price – Rs 45/-

The book is currently available at Mahatma Gandhi University Library, Kerala (Ed. 2006, 139 pages)

OBJECTIVE OF THE BOOK

“Uzhichilinte Tatwam” (Principles of Massage) is a book that provides deep information on the techniques and use of massage in healthy persons as well as in individuals affected with various diseases. A comprehensive explanation regarding various types of massage, its uses along with use of Ayurveda medicated oil and yoga aims at a holistic approach to massage. New techniques like self-massage prompts readers to understand and practice massage in daily life.

CONTENTS OF THE BOOK

The book consists of 20 sections. A brief history and evolution of massage and its modifications are lined in the beginning

followed by a chapter dedicated to understanding the anatomy and physiology of human body with special reference to the science of *Marma* (study of vital points in the body). The concept of massage is explained using the malayalam word *uzhichil*. The need of *uzhichil*, the rules or methodology to be followed while practising *uzhichil*, necessary precautions to be taken, preparation of the patient/individual receiving the massage and preparation of person performing the massage is also elaborated. There is also a section dedicated to the know-how of self-massage. The special massages in Kerala and its utility is described. The influence of other contemporary sciences like yoga and chinese medicine is evident in the book. Modernization of massage techniques have also been mentioned by the author. The most important contribution by the author is the concept of 'Spiritual Massage' which is a concept devised and propagated by the author that has caught international attention. The book is provided with sufficient diagrams and images to explain *marma* points, massage techniques and yoga postures.

The first chapter gives a brief outlook of the history of massage in various parts of the world. The practice of massage in Kerala and its utility among soldiers and among commoners for maintenance of health is mentioned. The western classification of

massage is also briefed at the end of this chapter. A comparison of the *marma* science elaborated in *Kalaripayattu* (a martial art that originated in Kerala) and its specialities are mentioned in the second chapter. In the latter part of the third section, the methods of massage with necessary precautions is elaborated. A reader gets a good idea on how it has to be performed and what are the key areas to concentrate. The method to massage one's own body is also provided. The author was keen on massaging himself as can be seen in the text. The highlight of the massage technique devised by the author is the direction in which pressure has to be applied. The sequential order of massage beginning from toes up to the head is elaborated. This technique is modified depending upon the disease with which the individual is suffering. This section ends with precautions to be followed while massaging women and children. The next section deals with massage oils and its preparation. The use of different coloured bottles to store oils which serves different purposes is also included. The author recommends use of linseed oil for skin diseases. The use of Ayurveda taila according to the condition is also suggested.

Mardana, ardana, marshana, sparshana, champana, kampana, ladana and *peedana* are the eight types of massage quoted by the

author. The reference is given as Vinobha. A section is dedicated to ubtan which are powders or pastes used for massage on the body which serves the purpose of improving skin tone and for enhancing beauty. The last section of this chapter deals with 12 techniques of massage. Each technique is explained in detail along with the body part on which it has to be done.

The technique of cold massage is elaborated next. A clear description of the procedure along with necessary precautions are enlisted along with the time duration of the massage. Cold massage is advised in insomnia, hypertension and certain psychiatric condition. The next part of this section deals with special Kerala procedures like *chavitti uzhichil*, *pizhichil*, *navara kizhi*, *dhara*, *netra tarpanam* etc. The Kerala method of continuous 14/21 days *uzhichil* is elaborated here. The instructions to be followed during the rest period is also included. The author mentions time period of massage for each age group. The 7 postures of Ayurveda massage is briefed. Self-massage was widely practiced by the author. It is used as a tool to energize and rejuvenate oneself. The step by step method is elaborated. Self-massage is to be done in sitting posture. Cold massage, oil massage, powder massage can be done similarly. Special method to massage anus is mentioned. Application of oil on the tip of the finger and

insert the finger and rotate 4-5 times. Author claims it will prevent haemorrhoids and diseases of the prostate gland. The author gives an elaborate description of massage in each part of the body. This includes the core points where pressure has to be applied, the directions in which massage has to be performed. Illustrations are provided for better understanding. Massage of umbilicus with special reference of a pulse examination in the umbilicus is detailed. Massage of chest involves massage of breast and nipples. Gentle tugging at the nipples is advised. The massage of back involves the massage in plexus like solar plexus, cardiac plexus etc. The next section of the book gives an account of use of different massages in certain clinical conditions. The author emphasises that massage alone cannot preserve health, a balanced diet, sleep hygiene etc are crucial to this. Treatment also doesn't rely solely upon massage. It acts remarkably well in certain diseases like insomnia, paralysis, obesity etc. Massage with amalaka taila or oils in blue bottles can be used for massage on head. A few examples of the use of Ayurveda oil for massage in various diseases mentioned in the book are given below. In case of fractures, gentle massage with Dhanwantaram taila is done after initial management with reduction and immobilization. In case of paralysis,

massage with oil in red bottles/ ksheera bala taila/ pinda taila is beneficial.

There is also description regarding Shiyatsu massage, theory of Yin and Yang and Acupressure. The author's personal experience with Acupressure is also stated. A special rolling massage is explained for painless labour. A rolling pin is used to massage the feet of the pregnant woman. The author enlists yoga postures suitable for each condition. The last topic dealt is Spiritual massage. This is the premier contribution of the author. Various experiences of this massage is also narrated. A detailed description about the chakra and massage on each chakra is explained.

ANALYSIS

The book is entirely based on the author's journey of self-learning and experience. The author has been influenced by various sciences that contributed to shaping his deep knowledge of massage. Massage techniques have been elaborated in detail leaving no room for doubt. The illustrations and diagrams are used effectively to communicate the same. The inclusion and explanation of *marma* in the second chapter of the book is a clear reflection of the necessity of understanding the human anatomy before delving into massage. An attempt to compare massage to *Kayakalpa* which is an extreme form of rejuvenation is seen in the book. The reader will find it

interesting to know that massage can be done on one's own body as well for others, both for rejuvenation as well as for disease. The technique of cold massage is widely used which means it had good results for certain conditions. The author was keen on massaging himself as can be seen in the text. The highlight of the massage technique devised by the author is the direction in which pressure has to be applied. The sequential order of massage beginning from toes up to the head is elaborated. This technique is modified depending upon the disease with which the individual is suffering. In case, there is increased body heat or obesity, massage is to be done in the reverse direction starting from the head and ending at the feet. This technique is called cold massage, here water at room temperature is utilised for massage. In most instances, there is explanation regarding mode of action of massage in various parts of the body. The flushing out of toxins and the improvement of circulation by massaging towards the heart are the explanations cited. Massage is a natural process according to the author. He uses the metaphor of animals cleansing themselves by licking and the warm loving touch of a mother. Though there is no mention of tridosa sidhanta, the influence of Ayurveda is highly noticeable. This is evident in the section wherein the initial management of various diseases like fractures, skin disease

and paralysis are briefed along with the suitable Ayurvedic oil for massage. Adoption of integrated management of Ayurveda, massage, yoga and meditation for the treatment of diseases as well as maintenance of health is a key feature of the book. A brief outlook on the massage practices that existed during the author's time and its variations is also available in the book. The special mention of women masseurs is such an example. The practice of Kerala panchakarma and certain quotes can also be seen. The book is a reflection of the sincerity and the strictness with which the author practiced and propagated massage. Step by step narration is very useful for the reader. The utility of massage during that time was not restricted to improving physique alone but also to improve the tone and texture of skin. The inclusion of ubtan and various recipes is a matter of interest. Recipes to improve skin tone without the use of chemicals is in great demand today. These recipes should be tried and tested. There is updated information regarding the use of electric massagers and vibrators. But according to the author, the massage by a human is always better. The author's knowledge of the plexus in the body and its relation to chakras is evident. The relationship of chakra with various glands in the body and how the spiritual massage of these chakras will combat diseases affecting these glands is also

elaborated. A table is given at the end of the book regarding the same. The author's expertise in massage is evident through the narration of different cases managed by massage. At an event in Wardha, a person's blood pressure was lowered by massage which was very high prior to it. This is an illustration of the utility of massage in emergency situations.

Massage was not confined to the limits of simple application of pressure to the body, but a knowledge regarding movement of joints is also included. This is even more appreciable when there is advice to perform massage towards the direction of heart in diseases of joints like *Sandhivata* (painful conditions of joints like osteoarthritis). The massage of promoting sexual health is also clearly described. The author has presented the massage techniques in such a way that even a common man with no experience can understand and try learning it. The comparison of massage to techniques in Kalaripayattu and Kayakalpa is the reflection of use of massage for protection, revitalization and strengthening of the body. The extensive literature regarding Japanese massage-shiyatsu and chinese massage is a direct indication of influence of other cultures and techniques. It is also a reflection of the fact that massage was popular in the Eastern part of the world.

The concept of spiritual massage, a contribution by the author is an inoculation of the science of yoga along with massage techniques. While in yoga there is a need to focus on those 6 points in the body along with pranayama (breathing techniques/ controlled breathing) etc, the author utilises the technique of massage along with meditation. The science of reflexology is also utilised. The use of mantra and music to do spiritual massage along with the time duration is also explained.

The book ends with the description of *yoga nidra*(sleep). The perfect time for *yoga nidra* and its experience is also narrated. Its experience is also narrated. The concept of spiritual *ojas* is another contribution by the author. This *ojas* is connected to the well - being of the body and any disruption in the same will cause disease. The practise of spiritual massage is intended to maintain the optimum state of spiritual *ojas*. It is described as a way to obtain relief from pain and misery. It may be noted that the fundamental concepts of Ayurveda have been adopted to

understand disease onset and treatment throughout the book.

CONCLUSION

The book is a treasure of information for the ones seeking practical aspects and technical know- how of massage. It is like a handbook to explore the world of massage. The authors experience in different parts of the world validates it even more. The simple presentation and systematic arrangement of topics helps in better understanding of the technique and its usefulness in multiple contexts. Readers seeking scientific explanation to the effect of massage will find this book convincing and encourage them to practise self-massage. The cosmetic benefit of massage and natural ingredients to boost skin health are definitely some of the attractive take away of the book. The emphasis on spirituality and its role in well- being will catch the attention of readers. Hence, massage could be considered as a mode of effective treatment along with the administration of Ayurveda medicines to address both physical and mental diseases.

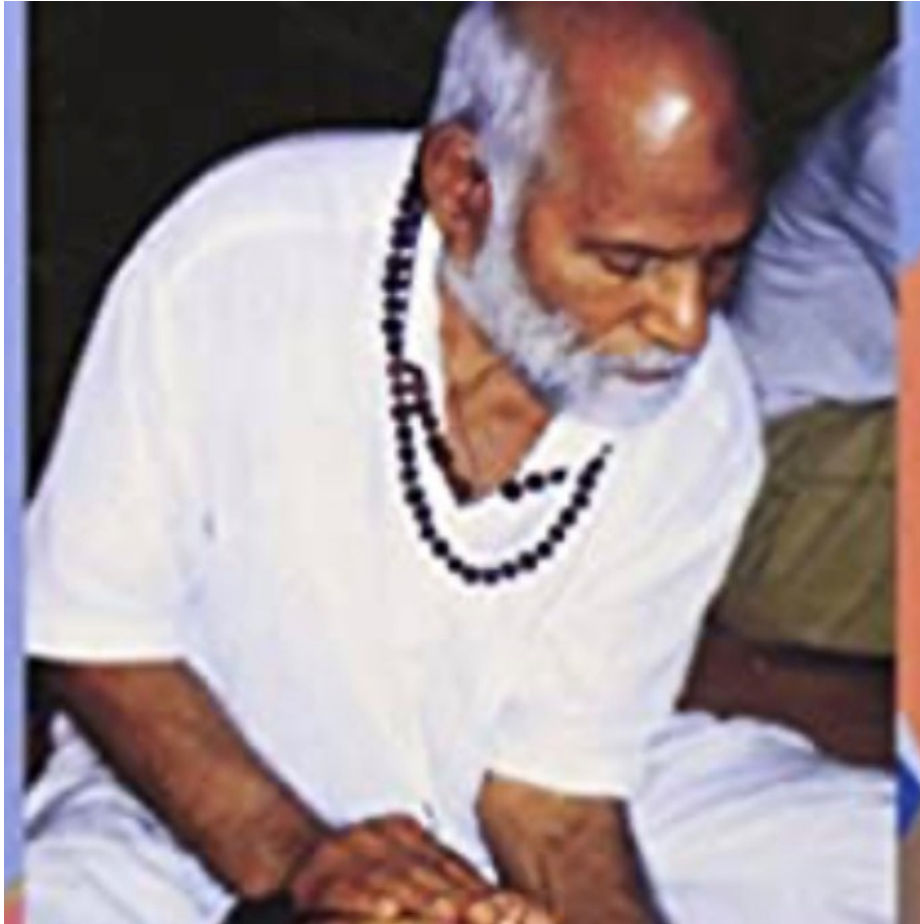


Image 1: S.V. Govindan performing massage (Image courtesy – Google images)

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