BOOK REVIEW

Keraliya Cikitsa Paddhati - A Complete Guide to Specialized Keralan Ayurveda Treatment Procedures Based on Dharakalpah-A Book Review

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ABSTRACT

Background: Various Socio-political and geographical reasons helped Kerala to provide a favorable atmosphere to flourish Ayurveda in this land. Inestimable contributions made by Ayurvedic practitioners in Kerala led to developments in terms of procedures as well as medicine. Knowledge about the subtler nuances of performing various therapeutic procedures, along with their clinical implications was recorded by eminent practitioners in Kerala. However, it was dispersed amongst various regional texts, and it needed to be lined under one heading. Authors Pavana Jayaram and Manoj Sankaranarayana managed to gather all these pieces of information together and presented them in the form of this book named - Keraliya Cikitsa Paddhati.

Methodology: The presented book was studied, analyzed, and compared with other contemporary works on a similar subject.

Body and Analysis: The present book is written in Sanskrit and English. It contains 304 pages, and its price is 500 INR. This book was published by Sarada Mahadeva Iyer, Ayurvedic Educational and Charitable Trust, Tamil Nadu. The book was published in 2010. It comprises three sections. The first section encompasses the Sanskrit text Dharakalpa which sheds light on the Procedure named Dhara – one of the specialized Keraliya treatment modalities. Following it, the book presents the first and only english commentary on Dharakalpa written by the authors – Pavana and Manoj. The second section of the book comprises an extensive review of the available literature about external treatment modalities (Bahih-parimarjana cikitsa). The third section of the book encompasses various necessary preparations required before commencing the procedure. It caters both, epistemological knowledge and pragmatic usage of external treatment modalities for the Ayurvedic fraternity. ‘Keraliya Cikitsa Paddhati’ is the first and only attempt made in such a direction where the traditional knowledge is not merely translated but very well explored through available literature.

1. INTRODUCTION

Kerala is a land blessed with biodiversity and well protected by its natural boundaries. As a result, it was less affected by perpetual strife for power compared to the mainland. This unique situation provided a favorable atmosphere for various indigenous streams of knowledge especially Ayurveda to flourish in this land. Inestimable contributions made by Ayurvedic practitioners in Kerala led to developments in terms of procedures as well as medicine. Knowledge about the subtler nuances of performing various therapeutic procedures, along with their clinical implications was recorded by eminent practitioners in Kerala. However, it was dispersed amongst various regional texts, and it needed to be lined under one heading. Authors Pavana Jayaram and Manoj Sankaranarayana managed to gather all these pieces of information together and presented them in the form of this book for the first time in this era. They are post-graduates in Ayurveda and have been trained under renowned practitioners of Ayurveda. They have also co-authored another book named “Rogavijnana and Vikritivijnana.”

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At present, they are working as medical officers in the Department of Indian Systems of Medicine.

This work is presented in three parts; the first part contains Dharakalpa, a Sanskrit text with the first ever English commentary on Dharakalpa written by the authors. The second part is a comprehensive analysis of special Keraliya Ayurveda treatment procedures. An interesting addition of the third part – the appendix, makes it a complete guide for Keraliya treatment modalities.

The present book is written in Sanskrit and English. It contains 304 pages, and its price is 500 INR. This book was published by Sarada Mahadeva Iyer, Ayurvedic Educational and Charitable Trust, Tamil Nadu. The book was published in 2010. The book is edited by Dr. Usha Rani Sanka and Dr. Marcis Gasuns. It is forwarded by P. R. Krishna Kumar, Dr. M. R. Vasudevan Namboodiri, Dr. Anitha Jacob, and P.T.N. Vasudevan Mooss. Acknowledgement by these eminent personalities in Ayurveda highlights this book’s significance in the current era.

2. BODY

“Keraliya Cikitsa Paddhati” broadly comprises three sections [Table 1]. The first section encompasses the Sanskrit text Dharakalpa which sheds light on the Procedure named Dhara – one of the specialized Keraliya treatment modalities. Following it, the book presents the first and only English commentary on Dharakalpa written by the authors – Pavana and Manoj. The second section of the book comprises an extensive review of the available literature about external treatment modalities (Bahih-parimarjana cikitsa). Murdha-seka, Kaya-seka, Pinda sweda, Anna-lepana, and Shiro-lepana are Pancha-kriya (five procedures) that are developed and profoundly practiced in the traditions of Kerala.[3] It aims to bring authenticity and operative uniformity to perform later-developed external treatment modalities. In this section, authors have discussed the evolutionary progress in the procedures, and operative guidelines as well as their indications mentioned in various regional texts and Samhita in the later era of Ayurveda.

The third section of the book encompasses various necessary preparations required before commencing the procedure. It includes comprehensive knowledge of Shasthika and preparations such as Gandhharvastadi kashayam, Panchagandha choornam, and Snana kashaya, which are commonly used during all the above-mentioned procedures.

In a nutshell, this single book provides the evolutionary background, procedural update, and clinical applications of specialized Keraliya Ayurveda treatment procedures. This is the first and only attempt made in such a direction where the traditional knowledge is not merely translated but very well explored through available literature.

3. ANALYSIS

“Keraliya Cikitsa Paddhati” is a book of reflection on traditional Ayurvedic treatment procedures that evolved and developed in Kerala. It serves the novel purpose of opening the door of knowledge about Keraliya procedures to the external world.

The preface of the book defines the intention and approach of the writers. It critically analyses the progression of Ayurveda through various socio-political backgrounds. It showcases how the practices of Shodhana cikitsa took a back seat due to a lack of scholarly physicians and Shamana procedures took over. The state achieved the balance of usage of external modalities along with internally used herbo-mineral drugs for the purpose of Shamana. This book intends to enquire about the theoretical basis on which specialized treatment procedures are preserved in Kerala. The book is also inspired by inquisitiveness that raged from the usage of the misnomer Keraliya pancha-karma which is commonly been used without any textual reference from any regional text.

In the first part of the book, the authors have attempted to weave knowledge about the treatment modality Dhara by keeping the textbook Dharakalpa in the center. Dhara: the flow of a liquid stream; and Kalpa: Shastram or science about the procedural aspect. As the name suggests, it is a comprehensive work on the procedure of Dhara and the analogous treatment procedure. The authors invariably direct the fact of greater clinical significance to the procedure of Dhara amongst all other procedures. In the modern period, Acharya Yadavaji Trikamaji first published this basic text along with Vaidyamoraroman under his Ayurveda granthamala (Vol. 9) in the year 1913. As the book-Dharakalpa was essential in understanding the procedure of Dhara, Some Hindi and Kannada translations were published. However, the inclusion of the English commentary makes this book unique as it provides thorough information about the procedure of Dhara from all the contemporary Samhita and regional texts. This commentary makes this book stand out among all the contemporary books on Dhara, as it provides a systematic review of available literature along with some included manuscripts in Sanskrit and Malayalam and focuses on the precise interpretation of it. The Sanskrit text of Aryavaidyan S. Raghunathna sarma explaining various approaches of specialized treatment procedures that are prevalent in Kerala is been revived through this commentary. The list of accessory material (Anypakaranani) necessary for Murdha-seka is yet another remarkable contribution by the commentator to the text.

In the second section of the book, the authors attempt to collect the available literature and current practices about these external treatment modalities. It analyses these procedures for their clinical significance, which is rooted in the fundamental tenets of Ayurveda. Even though the traces of references about the indications of these procedures are found in the Samhita, their procedural details and clinical utility have been further explored by various scholars from Kerala. This book attempts to connect the links between all the references found in the various Samhita to provide elaborate and standard operative procedures. Some of the indications of procedures open up a novel arena about their systemic effectiveness. For example, Sirodhara with Swaras of Bhringaraja is recommended in Kamala. The extensive review of Siro-abhyanga revealed its usefulness not only in Shiro-rogas but also in systemic disorders such as Vishama Jwara, Asr宫殿, and Svasa.

Indications like Dhara with tender coconut water and milk in Kamala associated with Bhrama (dizziness), highlight the effectiveness of procedural interventions in emergency conditions too. The book includes various procedural adaptations by other authors too. For example, Dhara with the aqueous medium is to be performed after covering the body part with plantain leaf to reduce Kapha Prakopa, as quoted by Nischalakara, which is been mentioned in the book while discussing the process of Dhara. The inclusion of a chapter to discuss the differences in the Rutu-kala according to geographical position showcases the awareness of the authors about the consideration of Kala before commencing any procedure.

Newer findings regarding the use of specialized procedures reflect the outcome of constant contemplation on clinical pragmatism oriented around fundamental principles. Various researchers have disclosed the multifaceted systemic effects of tropical applications. External applications
of unctuous substances in the form of Abhyanga and Seka have shown positive effects on growth factors, altered states of consciousness stages, noci receptors, the parasympathetic nervous system, and neurotransmitters. Siro-Dhara is also been studied for its effect on physiological (tidal volume, CO₂ excretion, and ECG) and psycho-somatic (EEG, the profile of mood states, POMS) strata of the body.⁵

In the last part of the book, the authors provide some adjuvant medicinal preparations required for the successful commencement of the procedure. It sensitizes the readers with comprehensive knowledge about Shashtika-the integral part of Njavara kizhi and Anna-Lepana, different varieties of Shashtika, and their properties. It provides preparation of Gandharvakastha kashayam, which is also known as Pathi kashayam (as it is administered immediately after therapeutic procedures in Droni itself). It can be well explained by the Agni-vardhana, kleda-hara, and Vatanulomana properties of this Kashaya required to pacify the Abhishaynda brought by the sudation. Preparation of all these formulations needs a precise understanding of the metric system. This book provides detailed conversions of measurements mentioned in Samhita into the current metric system. The position of the patient while performing the procedure is important so as to cover the entire body, so this book elucidates seven positions in which the Kaya-seka is performed in Kerala.

Authors have not only thoroughly reviewed and compiled but also have restructured all the available literature around Specialized Keraliya ayurveda treatment procedures in the simplest yet elaborative manner. This book empowers both the theoretical and procedural aspects of external treatment modalities which is lacking in books of recent times. This book is one of the first books written about Keraliya Cikitsa in the English language. As a result, it is able to serve the purpose to even larger community. And hence, “Keraliya Cikitsa Paddhati” strikes the perfect balance in catering to both, epistemological knowledge and pragmatic usage of external treatment modalities for the Ayurvedic fraternity across the world.

4. CONCLUSION

Kerala, the state evolved a well-balanced system of Ayurveda by giving equal importance to its philosophy and therapeutic procedures. The book reflects the same and sensitizes the readers about both. The extent of use of “Keraliya Pancha kriya” across the centuries proves their significance in the management of various disease conditions. This book is the first-ever attempt to serve the pearls of knowledge in traditional Kerala textbooks to the larger community of Ayurveda. It surely is the must-have book in every Ayurvedic physician’s collection.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Nil.

7. AUTHORS’ CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors give equal contribution while preparing this book review.

8. FUNDING

Nil.

9. ETHICAL APPROVALS

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10. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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11. DATA AVAILABILITY

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12. PUBLISHERS NOTE

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REFERENCES


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[Image of a traditional Indian medicine treatment scene]
The care and concern in the purity of Ayurveda tradition are presented here in the book, Keraliya Cikitsa Paddhati, which we hope to evoke sincerity of purpose in Ayurveda practice. The range of materials and procedures compiled here shows the serious professional nature of this system. I am sure that Keraliya Cikitsa Paddhati, will be an invaluable reference work for the study of specialised Ayurveda treatment procedures of Kerala. I wish both my students all the very best in their life.

Padmavati Dr. K. Rajagopal

Keraliya Cikitsa Paddhati stands out to be the best effort to compile and critically evaluate the vibrant clinical Ayurveda tradition of Kerala. This is an outstanding work for any aspiring clinician, who wish to rigorously study the specialised treatment procedures of Kerala, along with its theoretical basis.

Dr. C. D. Sahadevan

Keraliya Cikitsa Paddhati, is a textbook where siddhanta meets citrad and vice versa. Excellent effort by Dr. Pavana to study the specialised therapeutic procedures practiced in Kerala in a diachronic manner. The beauty of this work is that it caters the needs of a beginner as well as an established physician. Keraliya Cikitsa Paddhati transcends all the limitations of English translation of Sanskrit Ayurveda texts.

Dr. L. Mahadevan

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