JYOTSNIKA – A VISHA CHIKITSA MANUAL

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Abstract: Jyotsnika is a renowned monograph on visha Chikitsa (Management of Poisoning) authored by Sri. Narayananan. It is composed of 21 chapters with 1139 stolakas (Verses) which deals elaborate insight to different aspects of Visha (Toxin) as well as its management. Even though written in Malayalam, the regional language of the state of Kerala, the monograph also uses Sanskrit vocabulary in many instances and only Sanskrit verses in certain occasions. With roots in Ayurvedic samhitas, this treatise also derives its knowledge from traditional Dravidian system of toxicology and couples both in such a beautiful manner there by becoming a unique creation on its own. The practical approach of the treatment coupled with the mantra Chikitsa (Treatment through invocations), makes this book a treasure trove for physicians as well as scholars in understanding the lineage of the traditional visha Chikitsa sampradaya in Kerala as well as improving the arsenal of medicaments for such cases. The Chapters or Adhikaras, cover almost all the practically encountered cases from identifying as well as treating the same. Hence, this is an attempt to inquire, scrutinize and acquaintance the pride of Keraleeya Visha Chikitsa to the Ayurvedic community and to the whole world.

Index Terms - Jyotsnika, Visha Chikitsa, Agadatantra.

I. INTRODUCTION

Visha Chikitsa, one among the ashtangas (Eight branches) of Ayurveda has been explained under different names like Agadatantra, Gara Chikitsa, Visha Vaidya, Visha gara vairodhika prashamana[1] etc. The samhitas deals with the same in detailed manner with Susruta samhita dedicating an entire kalpa sthana for visha Chikitsa alone. During the period of Susrutacharya, it was the duty of the Vaidya (Physician) to learn the art of saving the people’s life from death due to poisoning and reach the efficiency of rajavaidya[2] – the one who is responsible for saving the life of the king and to safeguard him against the poisoning.

But due to the unique geographical situation of the state of Kerala, surrounded by lush evergreen forest, a paradise for human beings as well as the poisonous fauna ranging from simple insects to deadly snakes thereby creating a situation for Visha chikitsa to grow and mould itself in a distinctive avatar of its own. These circumstances merged the knowledge from samhitas with the traditional Dravidian Visha Chikitsa and created a blend of practical principle-oriented treatment system which could be practiced with medicines which are indigenous and locally available.

In today’s world, to revive the traditional knowledge base for the entire world where the perspective of Ayurveda is changing with evidence-oriented practice, it is a strict and essential need to explore the age old literatures critically and validate it scientifically. But unfortunately the book written in regional languages are either forgotten or not given its due respect for revival. Jyotsnika by Sri. Narayanan is one such gem of a creation in a regional language that needs to be brought in to the forefront. Hence this review is carried out for the purpose of literary research

Title of Monograph

Even though the real name of the monograph is Jyotsnika, it is also called by other names regionally such as Vishajyotsnika, Vishavайдyajyotsnika, Jyotsnikavishavaidya, Jyotsnikachikitsa etc.

The literal meaning of the word Jyotsnika is “the moon”. The following could be the reasons for selecting such a name for the monograph
1. Chandra/The Moon is considered as the god/Adhipa for Aushadhi (Medicine). Hence the name might be given as a reverence to moon.
2. Another reason might be that the book shines like the moon in the darkness created by the poison.
3. Another reason might be the author’s acceptance of getting inspired from a previously written book – Udheesam – meaning “the moon”.


The Author: Sri. Narayanan
In the final adhikara of the book – “Vaidya parambarya adhikara” the name of the author is mentioned to be Narayanan. Other than this one reference, there is no mentioning of the author anywhere in the monograph. The name of his guru is mentioned in the same context as Vasudeva belonging to the Kashyapa gotra and a devotee of lord Shiva.[3]

Another common belief transferred as oral tradition among the practitioners of Visha Chikitsa in Kerala is that the “Karat Nambootiri” is the author of Jyotsnika. Here, ‘Karat’ could be the name of an ancestral house and ‘Nambootiri’ a caste name. Since the only reference of Karat nambootiri is available in folklore stories like “Aiteehyamala”, the authorship as per the reference from monograph is attributed to Narayanan.

Another inference that could be taken is that Narayanan could be the real name of Karat Nambootiri, thus connecting both the opinions in one conclusion.

Status of Manuscript
Like the samhitas of its period, Jyotsnika was also written and transferred in palm leaves. The authentic printed versions of the same are as follows
1. Published by Travancore government, under Sree Vanchi sethu Lakshmi granthavali book no.9 in 1920’s edited by Mahadevasastrikal
2. Published by Kochi Malayalahashha Parishkarana committee under Sree Ramavarma Granthavali in 1920’s
4. Published by Poorna Publications, Kerala, Compiled by Jayaparakash Cherupuzha and Commentary by P. Raghavan Nair in 2008
5. Published by Department of Agada Tantra, Vaidyaratnam, P. S Varier Ayurveda College, Kottakkal, Vishavaidya Jyotsnika – An English translation in the year 2009.
6. Published by The state Institute of Languages, Kerala, Vishajyotsnika by Dr Rajani Nair in 2017.

Language of the Monograph
The Monograph is completely written in Malayalam – the regional language of Kerala. There are multiple areas where Sanskrit words can be found as it is. Certain Sanskrit verses like the ones from Ashtanga Hridaya (Bilwadi gulika)[4] can be found as same. The Manipravala system an old poetic style which was prevalent in the region of Kerala during 11th century AD, mixing Sanskrit and Malayalam is not strictly adhered to in this monograph. Nor has been the system an old poetic style which was prevalent in the region of Kerala during 11th century AD, mixing Sanskrit and Malayalam is not strictly adhered to in this monograph. Nor has been the concept of visha Chikitsa, and even the summery of the monograph is given in the first adhikara. This is followed by every aspect of toxicology from poisonous snakes, its toxic manifestations; management, medicaments, emergency procedures, other poisonous animals and creatures like, rat, scorpion, dog etc. are elaborated. A separate chapter is dedicated to the astrological aspects of visha Chikitsa. Another distinctive feature is the dedication of whole two chapters for Jyotisha/Jyoti shastra in the context of visha Chikitsa. Another common belief transferred as oral tradition among the practitioners of Visha Chikitsa in Kerala is that the “Karat Nambootiri” is the author of Jyotsnika. Here, ‘Karat’ could be the name of an ancestral house and ‘Nambootiri’ a caste name. Since the only reference of Karat nambootiri is available in folklore stories like “Aiteehyamala”, the authorship as per the reference from monograph is attributed to Narayanan.

Another inference that could be taken is that Narayanan could be the real name of Karat Nambootiri, thus connecting both the opinions in one conclusion.

Objectives of the text
The objective of the monograph as explained by the author himself is “for the benefit of the humans affected with visha and for the management of the same” He further states that no good deed done in life like dana (Alms), yagna (Rituals) etc. can come near the merit earned by saving the life of a person afflicted with visha.

Content of the compendium
The monograph has 21 chapters named as Adhikaras with a total of 1139 verses. Here the traditional approach of starting with salutation to deities and guru is followed in first chapter which starts with Mangalacharanam (Salutation to God), qualities of visha chikitsaka, and even the summery of the monograph is given in the first adhikara. This is followed by every aspect of toxicology from poisonous snakes, its toxic manifestations; management, medicaments, emergency procedures, other poisonous animals and creatures like, rat, scorpion, dog etc. are elaborated. A separate chapter is dedicated to the astrological aspects of visha Chikitsa. Another distinctive feature is the dedication of whole two chapters for mantra Chikitsa, followed by concluding chapter introducing the origin of visha Chikitsa, its guru and himself.

The first chapter begins with invocation to the deities, qualities of ideal visha Vaidya; and the summary of the contents of the monograph.

The second adhikara deals with the unique concept of jyotisha/Jyoti shastra in the context of visha Chikitsa. Also, the doota vijnana (Messenger), shubba ashiubha ( Auspicious & Inauspicious), nimitha (Reasons) are also explained here.

The next two chapters, 3rd and 4th adhikaras, deal with general sign and symptoms of poisoning from snake and general principles of management respectively.

The next three chapters 5th, 6th, and 7th adhikaras deals with specific sign, symptoms and management of the three poisonous group of snakes, darveekara (Hooded snakes), mandali (Snakes with circular marks) and rajila (Snakes with lines) in detail respectively.

The next two chapters 8th and 9th adhikaras, explain general management of snake bite, formulations, and pathya apathyya (Wholesome & Unwholesome) during visha Chikitsa.

The 10th adhikara is a unique chapter which incorporates visha Chikitsa with yoga sashtra and explains the concepts of Amrita kala and visha kala. It also explains different daivayapashraya Chikitsa (divine management) for poisoning.

The 11th chapter deals with mooshika (Rat) Chikitsa. The 12th adhikara deals with scorpion, spider, dog, its envenomation and management.

The next two adhikaras, 13th and 14th chapter explains the nature of toxins from plant and mineral origin. It also explains about management of poisoned animals.

15th and 16th chapter elaborates multiple formulations, its ingredients and method of application.

The next two adhikaras (17th & 18th) explains the mythological origin of snakes as well as its evolution.

The mystical and majestic mode of mantra Chikitsa is explained in the next two adhikaras. (19th & 20th)

The concluding final chapter (21st adhikara) gives the appropriate finish for the monograph mentioning the lineage of visha chikitsa, the name and details of author’s guru as well as the name of the author himself.
Unique features
1. Medical use of Ahipena (Papaver Somniferum) - Ekamayakamooladi lepa, Parantyadi taila – in mandali Chikitsa. Management of Ahipena poisoning also mentioned.
2. Management of tobacco poisoning (Dhoomrapatra)
3. Oothu Chikitsa (Blowing therapy)
4. Use of Crow’s eggs
5. Use of Parasitic plant Vanda roxburghii growing on Citrus medica
6. Use of Sand boa snake for Bhujanga churna
7. Use of Human urine
8. Elephant Dung
9. Loranthus
10. Dashapushpa (Ten flowers)
11. Rhino horn
12. Amrita kala/ Visha kala

Yogas mentioned for Darveekara Chikitsa

Lepa (Application)
1. Hingu (Ferula asafoetida) + Marica(Piper nigrum) + Vaca(Acorus calamus) in Kimshuka twak (Butea monosperma) swarasa(Juice)
2. Tankanam(Borax) + Grihadhoomam(Soot) in Naramootra(Human urine)
3. Shivismalli jeerna patra(Indigofera aspalathoides) + Hingu
4. Matrughati moola (Physalis angulata) + Hingu in Nara mootra
5. Lasuna (Allium sativum) + Marica + Hingu + Shunti(Zingiber officinale) + Pippali (Piper longum) – Arka patra swarasa (Calotrops gigantea)
6. Ishwari moola (Aristolochia indica) + Shunti
7. Neeli moola (Indigofera inctoria)

Paana (Internally)
1. Vyoshtha(Three pungent spices) + Kanji(Sour gruel) / Water
2. Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera) + water / Naramootra
3. Vishnupriya root(Ocimum tenuiflorum) + Maricha
4. Karanjamoola(Pongamia pinnata) + Maricha
5. Sharangeshtha moola (Physalis minima) + Maricha
6. Gudichimoola (Tinospora cordifolia) + Maricha
7. Chandana (Santalum album) + Usheera (Vetiveria zizanioides)
8. Tanduleeyaka (Amaranthus spinosus) + Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera)
9. Saindhava (Rock salt) + Arka patra in Naramootra
10. Shireesha (Albizia lebbeck) flower and seeds + Arka flower and seeds + Trikatu in Arkakesheera

Nasya/Anjana (Nasal administration/ Collyrium)
1. Nagavalli (Piper betle) + Dhatura (Datura metal) leaf juice + Saindhava – Nasya
2. Gunjabeeya (Abrus precatorius) + Maricha + Bakula (Mimusops elengi) beeea in Naramootra or Dronapushpi(Leucas aspera) swarasa – Nasya or Anjana
3. Talsi (Ocimum sanctum) + Dronapushpi swarasa + Maricha – Nasya
4. Lasuna + Vaca + Hingu in Naramootra – Nasya
5. Hingu + Maricha + Saindhava in Naramootra/ Dronapushpi swarasa – Nasya
6. Bhringaraja (Eclipta alba) swarasa + Maricha – Nasya
7. Lasuna + Hingu in Chandana swarasa – Nasya
8. Lasuna + Tankanam + Trikatu + Vaca + Hingu in Dronapushpi swarasa – rolled to pill – Nasya
9. Hingu – Bhavana in Dronapushpi swarasa – filled in crow’s egg and dried in shade. – Use with Tulsi swarasa/ Nara mootra/ Dronapushpi swarasa/Shigru (Moringa oleifera) swarasa – Nasya

Yogas mentioned for Mandali Chikitsa

Lepa/Paana
1. Neeli moola paste in lake warm water – lepa and paana
2. Karanjamoola twak – lepa and paana
3. Chandana with cold water – paana
4. Neerpathamoola twak – lepa and paana
5. Paatalamoola (Stereospermum suaveolens) – lepa and paana.
6. Venkaramoola twak – lepa and paana
7. Sarpagandha (Rauwolfia serpentina) + Vaca + Usheera – Lepa and paana
8. Kupulu (Strychnus nux-vomica) moola – lepa
9. Sariva (Hemidesmus indicus) + Vaca – lepa
10. Yashthinadh (Glycyrrhiza glabra) + Chandana + Usheera – Lepa and Paana
11. Karambha (Callicarpa macrophylla) + Ishwaramooli – Paana
12. Punnarnava (Boerhavia diffusa) moola + Arka moola – Lepana and paana
13. Lodhra (Symplocos racemosa) + Chandana + Haridra (Curcuma longa) + Daruharidra (Berberis aristata) + sarala (Pinus roxburghii) + arka + bilva (Aegle marmelos) + Manjishtha (Rubia cordifolia) + paatala – Lepa and paana
14. Tagara (Valeriana wallichii) + Chandana + Kashta (Saussurea lappa) + Madhuka (Madhuca indica) + Usheera + Sariva – Lepa and Paana
15. Nimba (Azadirachta indica) + Neeli + Karanja – Lepa and paana
16. Murva (Marsdenia tenacissima) + Patha (Cyclea peltata) + Saindhava + Vaca – Lepa and paana
Nasya
1. Sinduri swarasas (Shlox orellana) + Shunti + Maricha + Lasuna
2. Bakula beej + Hinga in swara
3. Vyosha + Saindhava in swara
4. Vacha + Maricha in Dranapushipi swarasas
5. Krishnatailasi (Ocimum tenuiflora) patra swarasas + Shigru patra swarasas + Saindhava + Maricha
6. Indravalli (Cardiospermum halicacabum) swarasas + Shunti + Ishwaramooli + Saindhava + Lasuna
7. Dronapushpi + Tulsi + Maricha
8. Nirgundi (Vitex negundo) + Dronapushpi + Maricha
9. Bakula beej + Shunti + Maricha + Lasuna in Naramootra

Anjana
1. Shirishamoola + Maricha in Nagavalli swarasas
2. Purana Maricha (Old pepper)
3. Bakula beej in Tulsi swarasas
4. Saindhava + Aadhaki (Cajanus cajan)
5. Trikatu

Mandali Visha upadrava Chikitsa
1. For Chithabrahma (Mental instability) – Usheera + Chandana
2. Yellow Urine – Karanja twak in usha jala
3. For Jwara – Vrikshamala (Garcinia indica) moola in ksheera
4. For Chardi (Vomiting) – Tripulha (Three fruits)
5. For sarvanga daha (Whole body burning sensation) – Usheera + Hreebera (Pavonia odorata) + Chandana
6. Rakta Chardi (Vomiting blood) – Nimba patra in ksheera
7. Rakta aterasa (Bloody diarrhoea) – Kadambatwak (Anchocephalus cadamba) paana
8. Angasada (Languidness) – Punarnava (Boerhavia diffusa) in lake warm water
9. Aanaha (Fullness of abdomen) – Saindhava + Trikatu

10. Pipasa (Thirst) – Kadalkandana toya (Musa paradisiaca) + Ksheera (Milk)

11. Rakutasheevana & Urdhwa rakta rasrava (Bleeding from mouth or orifices) – Malati patra (Aganosma heyni) swarasas + taila (Oil)

12. Rakta srava through loma (Bleeding through sweat pores) – Shigru moola fried in bronze vessel, powdered and applied with ghrita

13. Mootra rodha (Constipation, Urinary retention) – Pippali + Ela in narikela jala (Cocos nucifera) lake warm water for paana or adara dhara

14. Mootra rodha (Urinary retention) – Mooshika mala (Rat faeces) + Trupusha (Cucumis sativus) beej – Lepana at adho nabhi (Lower abdomen)

15. Mootra rodha - Kuthi – lepana at adho nabhi

16. Mootra rodha – Nirgundi (Vitex negundo) moola – lepana at adho nabhi

17. Rakutasrasrava (Bleeding) – Lakshmana (Ipomoea sepriaria) patra – shiro lepana

18. Shirashoolaa (Headache), Netraroga (Eye diseases), Jataradaha (Burning sensation in abdomen) – Amalaki + Musta (Cyperus rotundus) + Chandana – boil in milk – applied on head.

Rakta dushti (Vitiation of blood)

1. Sariva + Chandana + Yashithadhu – Kwatha with Sita (Sugar) and Madhu (Honey)
2. Kutaja moola Kwatha (Holarrhena antidysenterica)
3. Ksheeri vriksha ksheera (Milky trees) kwatha with Sita
4. Manjishtha + Sariva – Kwatha
5. Navaneetha (Butter) + Daddi (Curd) + Madhu + Kushta + Trikatu + Saindhava + Grijadhoomam + Manjishta + Daruheridra – Sarvanga lepa (Whole body application)

Lepa for Visha – shopha (Swelling)

1. Punarnava + Shigru moola + Shireesha moola + Ashwagandha
2. Amrakta twak (Spondias pinnata) + Karanja twak
3. Tintri twak (Tamarindus indica) + Amra twak (Mangifera indica) + Ishwaramooli + Vacha + Patha + Haridra in Aranala (Sour gruel)
4. Half of Dhatura fruit + Saindhava + Aranala – steam, make paste
5. Kushta + Tagara + Usheera + Chandana + Yashithadhu + Sariva
6. Punarnava + Arka moola + Ishwaramooli + Gokshura (Trirbus terrestris) + Patha + Vacha + Chandana + Haridra + Aghori (Flacourtia indica) + Karanja twak + Aranala
7. Saindhava + Ghrita (Clarified butter)
9. Shigru + Punarnava + Haridra + Vacha + Chandana + Patha + Ishwaramooli + Yashithadhu + Shireesha + Gokshura
10. Matrughati + Vacha + Arka moola + Chandana + Haridra + Kushta + Karanja + Usheera

Other Yogas
1. Nalpamaradi lepa
2. Ekanayakamooladi lepa
3. Karaskaravishadananadi lepa
4. Doorvarasadi taila
5. Brahmidoorvyadi taila
6. Matrughadyadi taila
7. Ekanayakamooladi ghrita
8. Panktiprasoonadi ghrita
9. Parantyadi taila

Yogas mentioned for Rajila Chikitsa

Samanya yoga (General Medicaments)
1. Shunti paste in Hot water - paana
2. Pippali + Saindhava in lake warm water - paana
3. Shweta shankhapushapi (Clitoria ternatea) moola – paana
4. Vacha + Maricha – paana
5. Neeli moola + 1/4th Shunti with warm water - paana
6. Trikatu with warm water – paana
7. Beejapoora vrikshadani (Vanda roxburghii growing on Citrus medica) + Shunti – Paana
8. Saindhava + Pippali + Madhu in gomayaras (Liquid squeezed from cow dung)– paana
10. Darsharidra + Gorochana (Bezoar)+ Saindhava
11. Nandivriksha (Tabernaeomontana divaricata) moola – paana

Lepa
1. Sariva kanda in Naramootra
2. Tagara + Lasuna + Trikatu in Tulsi swarasa
3. Hingu + Pippali + Saindhava + Sariva + Ishwaramooli +in Naramootra
4. Moorva + Nimba twak + Ishwaramooli + Trikatu +Saindhava

Rajila Visha upadrava Chikitsa
1. Kapha vridhi – Amrita + Maricha in luke warm water
2. Kapha vaishamya - Ardraka swarasa + Maricha + Madhu

Anjana
1. Trikatu + Masha (Vigna mungo) in Tulsi swarasa
2. Bakula beeja
3. Bakula beeja + Maricha

CONCLUSION

Jyotsnika is an exquisite work on visha chikitsa done by Sri. Narayanan who effortlessly merged the two sampradayas of visha chikitsa and created a separate dimension for Keraleeya visha chikitsa. This monograph in its 21 Adhikaras and 1139 verses covers almost all the practically encountered toxicological conditions and its effective management using local and easily available medicaments. The contribution of this monograph for the growth of visha chikitsa in the region of Kerala is immense and it was the aim of this literary review after the thorough analysis to bring the same to lime light and forefront.

REFERENCES


