

Review Article

Basavarajeeyam: A historical perspective

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Access this article online

Website: www.ayujournal.org

DOI: 10.4103/0974-8520.96115

Quick Response Code:



Abstract

Basavarajeeyam is an important handbook for an Ayurvedic physician of Andhra region. It is a bilingual work and the content was presented in Sanskrit and Telugu languages. With regard to the place and date of Basavarajeeyam there is no common opinion among the present day scholars. Pt Govardhana Sharma Changani in his introduction to the Sanskrit version of Basavarajeeyam exposed a historical profile of Basavarajeeyam picturing him as Basava who was a staunch follower of Veerashaivism and a contemporary of king Bijjala (end of 12th cent. AD). The same statement is carried out in the works of Ayurvedic Itihasa written by Atredeva Vidyawalkan and Acharya Priyavrata Sharma. It appears that the historical evidence shown by these scholars is one sided and cannot stand any reason. Basavaraju stated that he had started writing this work after a thorough study of many works such as Charaka, Nithyanatheeyam (1360 AD), Revenakalpam, Pujyapadiyam, Bahatam, Kashikhandam (1435 AD) etc. Basavaraju has faithfully reproduced certain chapter of Vaidyachintamani, which is considered to be a work of 15th century. Basavaraju not only mentioned *Phirangiuroga* in the index of diseases described by him at the end of the book, but also indicated *Phirangichekka (Madhusnuhi)* in the management of *Meharoga* and *Granthi*. By this evidence Basavarajiyam should be considered as the work of post Bhavaprakasha period. Basavaraju indicates in the *Gulmaroga Chikitsa* that *Sankhadravaka* should be administered in the dose of 'Ekanni'. The name Ekanni was given for a copper coin which came in to circulation of money during British India produced from Madras mint (1794 AD). Based on these internal evidences, it can be safely concluded that Basavaraju belong to 18th century.

Key words: Basavarajeeyam, Ekaani, Phirangiuroga

Introduction

Basavarajeeyam is a famous compendium as well as a treatise in *Ayurveda* followed in various parts of the country apart from its popularity in Andhra Pradesh. Basavarajeeyam consists of 25 chapters (*Prakaranas*) and the content was presented in Sanskrit slokas and Telugu cantons (*Padya*).^[1]

Though Basaraju rendered Telugu translation for the Sanskrit sloka, he did not explain the meaning of Telugu poems written by him. For the first time in India a non Telugu speaking person Pandit Sri Govardhana Sharma Changani translated these Telugu verses into Sanskrit languages in 1930.^[2] While commending the efforts of Pandit Changani for having taken up the herculean task of translating Basavarajeeyam into Sanskrit which would go a long way in enriching the

therapeutic armamentarium of the Ayurvedic physician, we can consider it a perfect rendering. As he did not belong to Telugu speaking area, gross mistakes were committed by the scholar in interpreting the Telugu verses into Sanskrit. For example, in the first Telugu reference Basavaraju suggests *Tambula sevana* with bed bugs concealed in it for *Triratrajwara*. In the addendum of Changani's work it is said that *Pasupatastra rasa* should be given in *Tambula*. Apart from numerous spelling mistakes, some references have been completely avoided either due to oversight or difficulty in translation. Anyhow, the credit for popularising this work in other states definitely goes to Pandit Shri Govardhana Sharma Changani, who translated this work into Sanskrit.

As regards the place and time of Basavaraju, there are different opinions among Ayurvedists and other historians. Some place him in the present Karnataka state and having connections with the neighbouring states of Andhra Pradesh. This conclusion is probably based upon the fact that he was a Shaivaita and probably of Lingayat cult. However, except for the reference '*Linga murthimahambhaje*' no other evidence is there to give strength to the statement that Basavaraju was a follower of

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Lingayat culture. Pandit Changani's assertion in his introduction that Basavaraju belonged to Kannada Desha may not hold good as there is not a single mentioning of a Kannada word in the text. One has to invariably take into account the colophon it can be concluded that Basavaraju originally belongs to the culture of Shaivism and to Nidimamidi school of Bhagi sect which flourished in the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh.

About 800 years ago during the 11th and 13th centuries a vigorous form of Shaivism, generally known as Virashaivism swept over the South preaching common people to attain single minded devotion towards Shiva. Mallikarjuna Pandita Aradhya of Andhra Pradesh and Basaveshvara of Karnataka (A.D. 1167) were the chief exponents of the Virashaivism. However, in the course of time, the term Virashaivism came to be limited to the teaching of Basava, while those of the Pandit branched off and evolved into the distinct cult of Aradhyas. The term Aradhya means adorable and the Aradhyaes were men of high learning and pious leaving essentially committed to 'Lingadharana'. The cause of the breach in the Virashaivism was the Non-Brahmanical twist Basava gave to it and the resultant anxiety of Aradhyas to retain the Brahmanical rights like invocation of the Gayatri Mantra and wearing the Yagnopavita. As a result, probably the Aradhya Shaivism was popular only among certain sections of the Upper class, especially Brahmins. In Andhra Pradesh, Virashaivism became interestingly limited to a few communities like the Jangamas and some sections of the Pattusalis (Silk weavers) and Balijaas. Basavaraju's Guru Shri Ramadeiska Acharya belongs to Aradhya cult.^[3] "Rama" word strongly suggests that he belongs to 'Niyogo Aradhya' subsect which comprises Niyogi Brahmins adept to 'Lingadharana'. The term 'Desika' is commonly used for a 'Guru' who is adept in imparting knowledge. The origination of Aradhya cult can be traced back to Kakatiya, one of the important dynasties that ruled over Andhra Desha in the Dakshinapath between 1199 and 1261 A.D. and made 'Orugallu' (now Warangal) as their capital city which is situated in the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh. Shri Ramadeiska taught Ayurveda Shashtra to Basavaraju at this place. After completion of the training he might have extended his practice from Mehaboobnagar Nalgonda district to the border districts of Karnataka like Bellari, Anantapur, Cuddapah and Kurnool.

Materials and Methods

For fixing up the period of Basavarajeeyam, two important translations done by Govardhana Sharma Changani (Sanskrit, 1930) and Puvvada Suryanarayana Pantulu (Telugu, 1919) have been examined. The historical aspects of works quoted by Basavaraju and a thorough analysis of the content of Telugu verses (101) have been taken up for the analysis of the study.

Discussion

It is noted during the field study that almost all the Vaidyas practising in the rural areas of the Telangana districts are somewhat religiously following the therapeutic procedures and medicines mentioned in Basavarajiyam and they yearn to keep a copy of the book with them. The practise of preparing

'Rasaubba', a typical mercurial preparation, is also being followed in Warangal, Mehaboobanagar, Nalgonda, Karimnagar and Nizamabad districts of Telangana region.

Basavaraju used the word Gollu a colloquial expression for *Raksha Karma* in *Telangana*. *Agnia Karma* is performed with red hot needles or coins on the abdomen as a preventive measure or *Shula* and other abdominal disorders and this process is called 'Golluvevuta'.

The vernacular names of certain herbs like Dommadollu Gadda (Ashwagandha), Jinnangi, Rakta-mandalpaku, Gollajiddaku, Buddakachaku, Regotti, Guvvaguttak etc. Nagasarapu Gadda described in Basavarajiyam are still in vogue only in Telangana districts mainly Warangal, Mehaboobanagar, Nalgonda, Karimnagar etc. Basing on these facts it can be concluded that Basavaraju was born, lived and practised in the Telangana region.

For fixing the period of Basavaraju, one invariably goes to Basavapuram, Virashaivism of Karnataka and find that some other Basava lived during varying periods of Karnataka kings. Due to the prevalence of Basava culture there is but natural that 'Basava' became a common name in that region. In this particular case such claims are invalid because Basavaraju did not hail from those regions as thoroughly established above. In this help can be taken from the references indicated in the first chapter of the Basavarajeeyam.

The author has extensively quoted the works namely Madhavanidanam (6-7 A.D.), Pujyapadiyam (8th century), Bahatam (13-14 A.D.), Basaratnakaram (1360 A.D.), Kashikhandam (1435 A.D) and Vaidyachintamani (15th century) and Bhavamishra (1150 A.D.).

Bhavamishra described a new disease namely *Phirangaroga* and prescribed a new drug namely *Dwipantar vacha*. Basavaraju clearly mentioned the drug *Dwipantar vacha* as *Phirangichekka* (9th chapter) and enumerated *Phirangaroga* in the list of diseases dealt with in the text (25th chapter). After a careful review regarding the periods of various works mentioned by Basavarajiyam, it becomes explicit that Basavarajiyam might have been written after the 16th century but not during 12th as mentioned by Pandit Changani.

Basavaraju indicates in *Gulmaroga Chikitsa Shankhadravaka* should be administered in the dose of 'Ekanni'. The name Ekanni was given for a copper coin which came into circulation of money during British India. In 1608 A.D. the English company made its first attempt to establish factories in India. Just like the other European companies, the English company also required coins to meet the exigencies of their trade. In 1764, when the company took up the administration of Bengal into its hand, it also thought of right of coinage. A series of coins of the denomination of 40, 20, 10, 5, 2 1/2 cash (one cash=Ekanni) were issued from Madras mint bearing the denominations in English and in Tamil and Telugu scripts on the reverse side. In the same century, sometime between 1794 and 1797, coins of the denomination of one forty eight of the rupee i.e. fulus and one ninety six of the rupee i.e. half fulus were issued bearing the arms of the company on one side and Balemark on the other. These coins were meant for currency in Circular District, Madras.^[4] Based on this analysis, it can be safely concluded that, Basavaraju belonged to 18th century (1764-1797 A.D.).

Besides including classical herbs mentioned by his predecessors, Basavaraju incorporated an array of local available herbs which is definitely a very significant contribution to the science of *Ayurveda*.^[5]

Conclusion

Basavarajeeyam, a complete text book of *Ayurveda* is widely referred and adopted by many practitioners of south India. Pt Govardhana Sharma Changani in his introduction to the Sanskrit version of Basavarajeeyam exposed a historical profile of Basavarajeeyam picturing him as Basava who was a staunch follower of Veerashaivism and a contemporary of king Bijjala (end of 12th cent. AD). The same statement is carried out in the works of Ayurvedic *Itihasa* written by Atredeva Vidyawalkar^[6] and Acharya Priyavrata Sharma.^[7] The analysis of Telugu verses rendered in the texts and a thorough scanning of Basavarajeeyam content, one can conclude that it is the work belongs in to post Bahvaparakasha period. Evidence with regard to the posology of *Sankhadravaka* i.e. 'Ekanni' a unit of the money introduced by Britishers during 1794 lends support to

conclude that the Basavarajiyama is a work of 18th century. On the whole Basavarajeeyam is an exhaustive work on many kinds of diseases and their treatment. He explained the Agnikarma well in the light of his own experience. Undoubtedly he proved himself an eminent scholar-Physician of his times in the history of *Ayurveda*.

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हिन्दी सारांश

बसवराजीयम – एक ऐतिहासिक दृष्टिकोण

के. निश्थेश्वर

आन्ध्रप्रदेश में 'बसवराजीयम' आयुर्वेदिक चिकित्सक के लिए महत्वपूर्ण ग्रन्थ है। यह एकद्वैभाषिक संग्रह है, जो संस्कृत और तेलुगु भाषा में रचित है। बसवराजीयम के स्थान एवं काल के विषय में मतैक्य नहीं है। पं. गोवर्धन छांगाणी के मतानुसार बसवराजीयम 'बसव' की प्रतिकृति है, जो वीरशैव पन्थ के अनुयायी थे (१२ वीं शती)। यही मत अत्रिदेव विद्यालंकार तथा प्रियव्रतशर्मा रचित आयुर्वेद के इतिहास में ग्राह्य है। यह दृष्टिकोण ऐतिहासिक उपलब्धियों के अनुसार अग्राह्य लगता है। बसवराजु के अनुसार अनेक ग्रन्थ जैसे चरक, नित्यनाथीयम (१३६० ई.), रेवणकल्पम, पूज्यपादीयम, वाहटम, काशीखण्डम (१४३५ ई.) की समीक्षा के बाद बसवराजीयम लिखा गया। बसवराजु ने १५ वीं शती के वैद्यचिन्तामणि के कुछ अध्यायों को पुनः प्रकाशित किया है। बसवराजु ने अनुक्रमणिका में फिरंगरोग का निर्देश किया है, साथ ही मेहरोग एवं ग्रन्थि चिकित्सा में फिरंगीचक्का (मधुस्नुही) का वर्णन भी किया है। इस सन्दर्भ के अनुसार बसवराजीयम, भावप्रकाश के पश्चात काल में ग्राह्य लगता है। बसवराजु ने गुल्मरोगचिकित्सा में शंखद्रावक की मात्रा 'एकत्री' वर्णित की है। एकत्री वह ताम्र मुद्रा है जो मद्रास ब्रिटिश इण्डिया (१७९४ ई.) अर्थव्यवहार में प्रचलित थी। इन सन्दर्भों के अनुसार यह कहा जा सकता है कि बसवराजु का काल १८ वीं शती है।