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BOOK REVIEW

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BOOK REVIEW ON SAMBRADAYIKA BALACHIKITSA

RASNA KARAYIL^{1*} JIGEESH P.P.²

ABSTRACT:

One of the Ayurvedic branches that focus on treating pediatric age group is called "*Balachikitsa*." Kerala tradition has a noteworthy contributory role in pediatrics and its evidences are available through regional Kerala texts. "Sambradayika Balachikitsa" is a true example for this tradition. Traditional medicine is usually kept secret. But quite different from that, Dr. P.K.V. Anand, the author, tried to share his knowledge and experience through the book "Sambradayika Balachikitsa". This review highlights the traditional pediatrics practice in Kerala, providing information about the author, text, characteristics & innovations. The author has tried to gather maximum informations about traditional methods that prevailed in his tradition and give vivid explanations for treatment methods unfamiliar to the current scientific community.

^{1*}PG scholar ²Professor and HOD, Department of Panchakarma, VPSV Ayurveda college, Kottakkal, Kerala, INDIA

Corresponding Email id: krasna47@gmail.com Access this article online: www.jahm.co.in

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INTRODUCTION

'*Balachikitsa*' is one of the branches of *Ayurveda* that deals with the treatment of the pediatric age group. It includes guidelines and instructions for the child's caretakers. Keeping aside the pediatric books like *Kasyapa Samhita*, and *Ravanas koumara bhrithyam*, Kerala tradition has a noteworthy role in *Balachikitsa*. This was due to the existence of well-versed *Vaidya* in pediatric care in every village of Kerala. It can be considered the foundation stone of the proclaimed Kerala's high health standards. Trissur Kunnath mana has its own *Balavaidya* tradition. Such traditions are introduced through the book "Sambradayika Balachikitsa".

The tradition of *Balachikitsa* of Trissur Kunnath mana is well known in the region of central Kerala. They date back to the pediatric physicians of the Kochi royal family. For seven successive generations, they had been the recipient of 'Veerasrumkhala' (golden

bracelet) awarded by Maharaja of Kochi to royal physicians. Padinjare kunnath manakkal Narayanan Namboothiri, P.K. Vasudevan Namboothiri, and P.K. Narayanan Namboothiri are a few of the *Vaidya* from this tradition. The author of this book, Dr. P.K.V. Anand also belongs to this family and is fortunate enough to be a descendant of that tradition.

Dr. P.K.V. Anand has vast teaching experience of 19 years and is currently working as Professor and Head of the Department of Panchakarma, at Vaidyaratnam Ayurveda College Ollur. He has many signature works in his name including commentary on *Kalyanakarakam*, English translation of *Vakyapradeepika* commentary on *Astangahridaya*, Ottappar, Panchakarma Bodhak Kathakal, etc. which are very beneficial to the Ayurvedic community. The basis of this book is '*Balachikitsa*' of N.A.Kaimal, which is republished with his practical experiences.

This is the first edition of the book and is published by Kunnath Mana Ayurveda books, Trissur in the year 2021. The price of this book is Rs- 450/ and it contains a total of 304 pages.

BODY

The book is presented in verse followed by its meaning in Malayalam language, making it easily conveyable to Ayurvedic scholars. It consists of 42 chapters, *Balachikitsa* being the first chapter. The next two chapters deal with etiological factors for childhood diseases while the major portion of the book explains different diseases and their treatments. In the final portions, the author explained *Praakara yoga* (disease-preventing formulations), care and treatment of women in pregnancy, the puerperal period, and general women's health care. The last part of the book deals with *Paribhasha* or glossary of terms. The entire book gives a compendium of pediatrics.

The first chapter is named *Balachikitsa* and the contents are almost similar to that of *Balopacharaneeyam* explained in *Ashtanga hridaya*. The second chapter named '*Samanya nidana*' compiles the general etiology and treatment of common diseases of children from birth onwards. One of the distinctive features is that the book touch upon many conditions which are not very familiar in

clinical practice as well as specific treatments of common conditions. In addition to common symptoms, invisible factors also act as a cause of illness. Thus, '*Niguda Nidana*', the third chapter, describes the pre-birth etiological factors which lead to the diseases. After the introductory remarks, the author emphasizes diseases and their treatment modalities. *Jwara* (fever) is summated in the 4th chapter where its complete description of the etiological factors, pathology, types, and treatment are explained. This is followed by *Raktapitta* (bleeding disorders) emphasizing the practical treatment procedures for several bleeding conditions occurring in children. The different *Dhara* preparations and *thazhi prayoga* (application of medicinal paste over the cloth in the affected area) are a few examples. *Svasa Hidhma* (dyspnoea and hiccough), *Rajayakshma* (tuberculosis), *Svarasadam* (diseases affecting the vocal cord), and *Arochakam* (anorexia) account for the subsequent chapters. Many practical applications like rubbing medicinal paste in the head in the case of *Kasa* (cough) and boiled banana in cows' urine for whooping cough are described. It is important to emphasize the special *Nayopayam kashaya*, *mukkudi prayoga* (Special preparation), and *kariku kashaya* (medicines prepared using tender coconut shell) designed specifically for children in

Swasa hidhma prakarana. Kshaya kesari yoga and *Jambeera navaneetha prayoga* in *Rajayakshma Prakarana*. The eleventh chapter '*Bhaktarodha*' (dysphagia) is another uniqueness of this book. The succeeding chapters are *Chardi* (vomiting), *Hridroga* (heart diseases), *Trishna* (thirst), *Madathyam* (alcoholic intoxication), *Arshas* (haemorrhoids), *Atisara* (diarrhoea), *Grahani* (duodenal disorders), *Visuchika* (cholera), and *Krimiroga* (parasites). Every disease is described in detail along with its treatment. Even things that seem trivial are described with utmost interest. Apart from the classical description, practicality is being considered in chapter *Madatyaya* where a few other conditions like drinking toddy accidentally or using ganja are explained along with their home remedies. The chapter also deals with first aid for electric shock. The usages like *Musta takram*, *kudamoru* were described in the *Grahani* chapter. Different *Gomutra prayoga* (usages of cow's urine) in *Krimi roga* are also worth mentioning. The next chapters are entitled *Mootraghata* (retention of urine), *Pidaka* (rashes), *Vrudhi* (enlargement of scrotum), *Gulma* (abdominal tumor), *Soola* (pain), *Mahodara* (enlargement of the abdomen), and *Pandu* (anemia) respectively. In *Pitakadhyaya*, *Pitakas* like *Saravika* (carbuncle) and *Kachapika* (rashes like tortoise

shell) along with their treatments are explained with unique external applications like tortoise shells and ivory. Generally, *Gulma* is rare in children however *Gulmadhyayam* has also been briefly explained.

As *Karappan* is a common disease in children, the author has given a very detailed description in 28th chapter. All types of *Karappan* seen in children are distinguished in a simple way. Fifty-six types of *Karappan* and their treatments are described in detail. The nomenclature according to the symptoms of each type is also worth mentioning. *Akakkarappan*, *purakkarappan*, *pannikkarappan*, *kudalkkarappan*, *kalkkarappan* are few of them. Remedies using the most easily available medicines described in each are also significant. One can grasp the significance of this condition in children from such a comprehensive overview.

The description of five types of *chilanni roga* and 18 types *vaarppu roga* is quite unusual and explained in detail along with their management. The 31st chapter is dedicated to '*Graha badha*' (psychiatric disorders of children) and the next chapter is for *Vataroga* (disease of *vata*). The final portion of the book is allocated for diseases under *Salakya* (diseases of head) and other specific diseases like *Ulbarus* (sexually transmitted disease), *Sakharoga* (diseases of

upper and lower limbs) and *Nabhi roga* (diseases affecting umbilicals). Apart from the aforementioned, final three chapters, *Prakarayogas* (disease preventing formulations), *Salsanthana prapti* (related with obstetrics and gynecology), and *Paribhasha* (glossary of terms) are explained in a different manner.

ANALYSIS

Traditional medicine is usually kept secret. But quite different from that, the author is trying to impart traditional knowledge and experience to the youngest generation. Some of the principles and practices of *Balachikitsa* which were popular in Kerala are presented in this book either exactly as they are or with minor variations. The tradition followed by them has been explored by the author. Another feature of this book is the incorporation of physicians who contributed the treatment modalities and exclusive applications were mentioned along with references. Being a Pediatric book, the therapeutic procedures are carefully dealt in depth. Pediatric dosage always poses a challenge that necessitates extreme care, so the author had given detailed instructions regarding medicinal dose.

While comparing with *Ashtanga hridaya*, pediatric age group is divided into eleven stages in this book^[1].

Several conditions and their treatments are described, which one may seem unimportant but make confusion if patients approach with the same, for example, application of *tala* (applying of medicinal paste over the head) for overheating of the head. Even subtle factors that we ignore in our daily life can lead to diseases. Mere boiling of milk is one among them. Recurrent infections in children are caused using antibiotics and therefore it is suggested that treatment should be done for improving the strength of the body. The use of Siddha remedies in pediatric care is also discussed by the author.

He introduces many special medicines exclusively from his tradition. For example, it is said that the eggs of ants with breast milk are used as *talam (Sirolepam)* to prevent Sanni (convulsions) in children. *Dhara* for whole body burning, *thazhiprayoga* in *Kasa*, *mukkudi prayoga*, *Karanja patra swarasa udvartana* in *Sthoulya* are a few of them. These medical practices have been gathered from his ancestors. In this text, the author frequently uses the term "divine medicine", from that description itself we can understand that they were successful therapies which are commonly practiced at that time.

Few Malayalam words used in this book are incomprehensible to the current ayurvedic community as they are not familiar

with them. For example, echilpunnu, onkan, puramundi etc. The nomenclature of the disease according to its symptoms needs special attention like types of karappan, chilanni, and varppu. *Viswabhi* is mentioned instead of *Viswachi*, *Rakta sthambha* instead of *Vatasonitha* and *Magana* for *Lagana*.

One of the valuable contributions of Kerala physicians is the description of karappan which include multi-systemic conditions with predominant dermatological manifestations. 56 or 18 conditions have been enumerated by traditional physicians and a purely *dosha*-based classification is also available for all types^[2]. The author in this book has considered both classifications together which gives a complete picture of all types of karappan. Apart from these another classification is also seen in other texts^[3].

Prakarayogas is said to prevent and save the most common diseases in children according to their age. The description follows as explained in *Arogyarakshakalpadruma* but only those which are currently pursuable have been explained. A vivid elaboration of preparations is mentioned throughout the book in the last chapter named '*Paribhasha*'. Elaneer kashayam, mukkudi, varu kuzhampu (medicines fried in oil and made into paste and apply), kudamoru (preparation by using

buttermilk) are other unique preparations included in the book.

The method of presentation of Sambradayika balachikitsa is almost similar to that of *Arogya Kalpadruma* and *Vaidyatarakam*, however minor differences in the placement of chapters in the latter part exists. Treatment of poison, insanity, epilepsy and material description are found in *Arogya Kalpadruma*. The description of common diseases can be seen in the last part of *Vaidyatarakam*. Quite different from Sambradayika balachikitsa, details like *Vardhakya* (geriatrics), *Dravya varnana* (material description), *Arogya* (health), *Dinacharya* (daily routine) etc are also seen in *Vaidyatarakam*.

Many traditional secrets from that era are included in this book. It is important to comprehensively analyze the several applications it covers. The research potential of most applications mentioned there should also be considered. Thus, an English translation of this book is found to be indispensable.

CONCLUSION

The book 'Sambradayika balachikitsa' can be considered as a Practitioner's handbook in Pediatrics. Traditional medicine is usually kept under wraps. In contrast to it, the author readily shares his expertise and experience with the current generation. It is

unquestionably a valuable gift to the ayurvedic community which is written with the intention to provide a concise and simplified version of pediatrics to the physicians of Kerala. This book will definitely instill confidence in any physician who is hesitant to explore the field of pediatrics.

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