

A REVIEW OF THE BOOK OUSHADHASARAVICHARAM

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Introduction

As part of P.K. Warriar Commemoration Series-2, the Department of Publications Arya Vaidya Sala Kottakkal released the Malayalam book “Oushadhasaaravicharam”, which discusses in-depth elements of herbs that are particularly accessible in Kerala. The word “Oushadhasaaravicharam” means compendium of medicinal formulations. This book was printed at Sterling Print House, Cochin, and was released in March 2022 during Kochi International Book Festival. A group of Ayurveda Medical Officers with expertise in *Dravyagunavijnanam*, who are part of the Kerala State Government's Ayurveda Medical Officers laid the foundation. The conversations in WhatsApp on each medicinal plant were later collated and published in the magazine "Physician". The late Padmabhooshan Dr. P K Warriar, a renowned Ayurveda physician and Managing Trustee of Aryavaidyasala, took pleasure in reading and discussing these articles. After considering the intended audience for the articles, he wished to publish them as a book in order to serve as a model for upcoming scholars. Comprehensive descriptions of 17 distinct medicinal plants were published in various volumes before being collated into one book.

Content

Details about 17 Kerala-native medicinal plants in *ayurveda* can be found in the book *Oushadhasaaravicharam*. Thus, it has 17 chapters, beginning with the most well-known plant, *Ocimum sanctum* (*Tulasee*), and ending with *Emilia sonchifolia* (*Aakhukarnee*). The botanical name, family, morphological distribution, *rasapancaka*, chemical components, many varieties and clinical experiences are used as a common template to explain each medicine.

Following a general overview of the plant, the first chapter discusses the way to farm *Tulasi*, the drawbacks of using *Tulasi* improperly, etc. The second chapter provides in-depth information about the herb *Curcuma longa* (*Haridra*). The chapter's features include

information on identifying adulteration if there is any and the rationale behind using boiled and powdered curcumin for cooking.

The *Maranda arundinaceae* (*Tugaaksheeree*) plant, which is widely utilized as food and medication, was the subject of the third chapter. The fourth chapter is aimed at providing "descriptions of Ficus plants" in more detail. It emphasizes the four primary plants that are together referred to in Kerala as "*Naaalpaamarangal*." *Mangifera indica* is discussed in chapter five. *Vrkshaayurveda* is cited for advice on how to prepare the seeds to get the best yield possible. Mangoes' ability to affect all seven *dhaatus* helps to explain the unknown history of *Aamrakalpam*. *Leucas aspera* (*Dronapushpi*) is discussed in chapter six. For ease of comprehension, the uniqueness of *Leucas aspera's* activity in diseases related to the head, toxicology, and gynecology is described separately. The explanations about the *Dasapushpam* namely *Samanga* (*Biophytum sensitivum*), *Bhadraa* (*Aerva lanata*), *Sasasruti* (*Emilia sonchifolia*), *Sakralataa* (*Cardiospermum halicacabum*), *Musalee* (*Curculigo orchiods*), *Bhrngaraaja* (*Eclipta alba*), *Sahadevi* (*Vernonia cinerea*), *Lakshmana* (*Ipomoea sepiaria*), *Vishnukraantaa* (*Evolvulus alsinoides*), and *Doorvaa* (*Cynodon dactylon*) is covered in the last 11 chapters. Considering its availability and abundance in Kerala eleven exclusive chapters were dedicated to them.

Discussion

Ayurveda scriptures from the past do caution against the use of medications without a sufficient understanding of their properties. Texts also caution the improper use of well-known drugs. It also emphasizes the idea that even poisons can function as beneficial when used appropriately. The majority of traditional preparations are polyherbal. Hence, studying herbs is a core part of being an *ayurveda* doctor. The term "*dravyagunavijnana*" refers to the discipline of *ayurveda* pharmacology that studies the characteristics and effects of drugs. Before engaging in clinical practice, a full understanding of medicinal plants is essentially required. To utilize the maximum therapeutic benefit, several combinations are formulated. A lack of understanding of each drug may be the reason for the inappropriate usage of various formulations.

The clinical experiences of many physicians using the above mentioned medicinal herbs are well incorporated in this book, inviting the readers' attention. Because of the language used, even readers outside the *ayurveda* community can understand the content. Rare information from old Malayalam books is another uniqueness of the book. For example, *Maranta*

arundinacea can be used as an *abhaava dravya* for milk, wheat, and *shashtika*. It is considered that *ayurveda* herbs are safe and without adverse effects, however, this is not always the case. The difference in the quality of herbs that have been processed organically and the ones that are being sold in the market are highlighted in this book. For instance, the market sample of *Maranta arundinacea* contains a higher amount of fiber.

Over many centuries, information on the therapeutic potential of various plants has been gathered and then systematically recorded in several *nighandus*. The relevant references from these dictionaries were successfully collected in this book. Through this book, students have access to a wealth of information from a wide range of dictionaries, allowing them to analyze the variations in opinion among various *aacaarya* and their likely causes. Thus the publication forms a good compilation of the data on every single drug. Usually, the process of cultivating medicinal plants is given little attention in similar books, whereas it is thoroughly detailed in this one. Another fascinating aspect is general knowledge rather than just pharmaceutical applications of plants.

Justifications for the frequent usage of curcumin in festivals and wedding ceremonies are explained in this book. The author expresses his concern about restricting *Maranda arundinaceae* (*Tugaksheeree*)'s usage as an "*abhaava dravya*" despite its numerous medicinal attributes. The specific differences between the male and female *srnga* (leaf buds) of *Ficus bengalensis* (*nyagrodha*) are explained to use for *pumsavana* (a therapeutic procedure to stabilize the embryo in the womb) to have the desired child. *Atyagnicikitsa* and the use of *Ficus recemosa* in abortion are also addressed.

The herbs described in ancient scriptures like Charaka Samhita, Susruta Samhita, etc. are easily available in North India. This book discusses Kerala's numerous traditional drug practices and home medicines. Ancient doctors used to heal patients with locally accessible drugs. Plants that are widely available and grow nearby may have a better impact on living things because people who are familiar with a place might develop a strong sense of attachment to everything in it (a phenomenon called *deṣa saatmyata*). The drug's habit (*deṣa*) is another crucial factor to take into account because it significantly affects the drug's overall action. The use of *daṣapushpa* can be viewed as a brilliant approach based on *deṣa-saatmya*, and when the safety and quality of treatment are in dispute, it is always preferable to treat with the majority of readily available medications. All of them are not flowering plants and even those

blossoms do not have distinguishing scents or appearance. Due to religious significance, they are given the status of flowers and are often used in rituals or worship. Each of these has therapeutic uses and they are also used together as in “*daṣapushpadi tailam*”.

Along with the scientific explanations, a collection of proverbs about trees is also included, creating a distinctive presentation that makes the text more entertaining to read. The strange narratives, such as the idea of a marriage between the trees *Mangifera indica* (mango) and *Aegle marmelose* (*vilwam*) and the myths surrounding it, the higher water-holding capacity of *Cassine kedarnathi* (Celastraceae), which provides water for elephants during the summer, etc., are of interest. *Aswathopanayanam*, the *samskara* associated with *Ficus relegiosa*, which are comparable to the 16 *samskaras* to be followed by humans, and the rationale for the name "dye fig" for *Ficus tinctoria* is also described. It describes the various pollination techniques used with *Ficus* plants, which are pollinated by a specific kind of wasp. The reader will be more interested in unfamiliar occurrences, such as the sacrifice of a wasp, are described in depth.

An advantage of this book is that it lists all important formulations with every single drug at the end of each chapter. *Ayurveda* developed as a result of thorough research and testing of every medication. Components are precisely blended in poly-herbal medications to achieve a balanced formula. In this combination, one or two plants will be active while the rest will support them. Understanding the *rasa* (taste), *guna* (properties), *veerya*(potency), and *vipaaka* (attributes of drug assimilation) of a certain medicine is vital in understanding its mode of action. Only a drug specialist can create an efficient combination out of these herbs.

A doctor who is well known in *dravyagunavijnana* can only understand the specific action of each poly-herbal combination. After finishing each chapter, readers will have a wealth of information at their disposal that will enable them to use the medicine for conditions other than those mentioned in authentic sources. It is simpler for readers to understand each plant's pharmacological effects on different conditions because the essential findings from research studies on each plant are concisely given. The information in this book is entirely unambiguous and clear, which perfectly corresponds to its title.

The successful utilization of social media during the covid pandemic for generating vibrant conversations on drugs has resulted in the development of this work. This increases the

relevance of this book by showcasing the work of 44 Ayurveda medical professionals who compiled each plant. Contrary to other pharmacological publications, which discuss medications in a specific order, this book doesn't really follow any specific pattern. This 240-page book has an MRP of Rs.300.

Conclusion

Drugs are the primary tool for an *ayurveda* physician for treatment. The therapeutic experiences with each drug by more than 40 doctors, the *rasapanca* of each drug, its chemical components, and its morphological distributions are some of the book's remarkable aspects. Thus, it will benefit young practitioners using native drugs - in learning as much as possible about them. The use of locally available herbs makes it more affordable and helps to avoid any adverse effects. The book is distinctive, since it presents a scientific topic with a literary flair. The reader becomes an expert on the customs and potential uses of each plant owing to a thorough understanding of every tiny feature of that herb.

Fig1: Front and back cover of the book



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