

RELEVANCE OF PURIFICATORY TREATMENT IN DEGENERATIVE DISEASES- BOOK REVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

Degeneration is a pathological process of deterioration (*apacaya*) of a tissue or organ caused by cellular injury. Even though other therapies like *samana* (pacification), *brmhana* (nourishing), and *aahaara-vihaara* (food and regimen) also have roles in degenerative diseases, *sodhana-cikitsa* (purificatory therapy) is paramount and cannot be replaced by other therapies. This is to be followed by *rasaayana-cikitsa* (rejuvenative therapy) for its utmost benefit. This book, “Relevance of Purificatory Treatment in Degenerative Diseases”, gives a detailed description of degenerative diseases, does the bridging between ayurvedic science and allopathic science very effectively, and accounts in detail the relevance of *sodhana* (purificatory) procedures in each scenario. The book is a compilation of the essay awarded first prize in the 1992, All India Ayurvedic Essay Competition.

This is the first edition of the book and was published by the Department of Publications, Kottakkal Arya Vaidya Sala, Malappuram, in 1992. The price of this book is Rs. 160 and it contains a total of 152 pages. The authors, Dr. G. Purushothamacharyalu and Dr. G. Arundhathi Purushotham, are eminent physicians who have been awarded first prize in the All-India Ayurvedic Essay Competition conducted by Arya Vaidya Sala. This competition was conducted during the years 1987 to 1992, except the year 1990, and have books like Gridhrasi (sciatica) and associated conditions, Pravahika (amoebiasis), Karna nasa mugha roganal (diseases of ear, nose, and mouth), and Pakshagata (hemiplegia) to their account. As given in the title itself, this book deals with various degenerative conditions being explained at the cellular level and in accordance with the *trimarmas* of the body, then explains degenerative diseases from an ayurvedic perspective, and lastly stresses the relevance of *pancakarma* in each scenario.

BODY

The book is divided into eight sections, and the preface is written by renowned physician, Dr. P.K. Warriar. The first section discusses the relevance of purificatory treatment in degenerative diseases. Here he starts with the definition of degeneration and says it is a physiological phenomenon of old age. He later moves on to the concept of degeneration and equates it to the similar concept explained in Charaka Samhitha. The concept of *trimarmas* and their vulnerability in the degenerative process are discussed, and each *pancakarma* procedure is explained briefly. The second section accounts for degenerative diseases and includes their aetiology and nature, where nuclear and cytoplasmic details are explained in detail. Later in the chapter, he deals with the classification of cellular degenerations and degenerative diseases. There is a detailed account of the degeneration of vital organs and atherosclerosis. The author explained ayurvedic purificatory treatment briefly at the end of this chapter.

The process of senile degeneration is explained in the third section. It starts with natural changes in old age and their effect on various tissues and organs and ends with a short note on the treatment modalities, with special reference to *sodhana karma*. Amyloidosis accounts for the fourth section, where detailed explanations are given about amyloid protein, aetiology, clinical features, classification, specific organ involvement, diagnosis, prognosis and treatment of amyloidosis. Lastly, the author tries to correlate the same in an ayurvedic scenario and talks about its treatment options.

The fifth section includes degenerative diseases of the nervous system. Here the author classifies diseases based on the area involved, and there are brief descriptions of different diseases affecting the cerebral cortex, basal ganglia, cerebellum, peripheral nerves and also degenerative diseases affecting motor neurons. The next section, "Degenerative Disorders of the Nervous System and Ayurveda," is a comprehensive continuation of the previous chapter. The site of involvement and *dosha* analysis is being done in detail by quoting the opinions of many Acaaryas like Charaka, Vaghbata, Bhela, Kashyapa, etc. Later explanations are given for the *sodhana* therapies. The chapter continues with degenerative diseases of the joints, liver, heart, lungs and kidneys, and there are brief notes on *sodhana* therapies for each of them.

The seventh section is on degenerative diseases and *ayurveda*, where concepts like *dhaatu-saithilya*, *dhaatupaaka*, and *dhaatukshaya* are explained. The ayurvedic approach to the treatment of degenerative diseases is explained based on *dosha* and *dooshya* in a tabulated manner. The purificatory treatment and its relevance in degenerative diseases make up the eighth section, where the author gives a detailed account of each *pancakarma* and its *poorvakarma*, like *snehana* and *swedana*. The chapter explains the mode of action of each *pancakarma* and finally substantiates its role in degenerative diseases. Lastly, the author has given a brief summary and a written list of standard text books and publications to which he has referred.

ANALYSIS

The book "Relevance of Purificatory Treatment in Degenerative Diseases" is the published work of an award-winning essay, which itself is a clear indicator of its well-organised content delivery. The author binds the core concepts of degeneration to the concepts of *dhaatusaithilya* (derangement of body humour) explained in the classical text, the Charaka Samhita. Here, the scattered concepts of degeneration that are present in the ancient ayurvedic texts are compiled and arranged very precisely in a nutshell, which gives the readers, a bird's-eye view. The degenerative changes at the nuclear and cytoplasmic levels are explained in detail initially, and later they are equated to the *srotodushti* lakshanas (vitiation of the channels of the body), which are just glimpses of their in-depth depictions. While explaining cellular degeneration, they are further divided into cloudy swelling, hydropic swelling and fatty degeneration, which shows the detailing being followed.

The book not only has detailed explanations of atherosclerosis but also has some brief notes on Monckberg's degeneration, Zenker's degeneration, etc. There are notes on various *vastis* (enemas) that can be used in senile degeneration, which include *maadhutailika vasti* and many *yaapana vastis*. The concise explanations of different diseases of the nervous system are followed by brief accounts of their treatment options, which will kindle the fire for further reading. The book also gives utmost importance to the concept of *trimarmas* (three vital parts of the body), and in the context of *sodhana* therapies for *hrdaya* (heart), the author explains the use of *sauvirakadi thaila* and *punarnavadi thaila* for *vaata* and *kapha* disorders.

Raktadaarukathaila anuvasana vasti is explained for degenerative diseases of the kidney. Thus, we can see compilations made from not only Charakasamhita, Susruta Samhita, Ashtangasamgraha, and Ashtangahrudaya, but also Bhelasamhita, Hareetha Samhita, and Kashyapa Samhita. The compilations are also made from texts such as Bhavaprakasa and Sarngadhara samhita, and they are very well arranged under a single umbrella.

Along with classical references, the author has quoted many scientific research papers, and while explaining regeneration of the central nervous system, the author explains two discoveries, one of which is the peripheral nerve implantation theory by Albert Aguaya and coworkers. They discovered that all the CNS axonal systems vigorously regret into a peripheral nerve stump embedded in the CNS. It is being stated that this was "The Paper that Restarted Modern Central Nervous System Axon Regeneration Research". This is yet another example of effective content delivery. The book does have scope for revision as it accounts for most of the modern concepts so precisely, and since it was written 30 years ago, the concepts do need updating based on recent research developments.

The ayurvedic concepts are explained in this book in simple language with proper referencing, which makes it very useful for not only students but also practitioners. For example, while explaining *snehana* (oleation), *guna* (properties)- based analysis is being done on its mode of action. As the name of the book points out, not only the purificatory treatment and its mode of action are explained in detail, but also proper justifications are made for their efficacy in degenerative diseases. There are also annotations on various *rasaayana karmas* (rejuvenation therapies) and their placement in degenerative diseases, which further adds to the value of the work. Lastly, the author concludes by saying that *agnideepti* (normalcy of digestive fire) is the key element for health, strength and longevity, which itself depicts the uniqueness of the ayurvedic science.

CONCLUSION

The book not only serves as a concise work of the various degenerative diseases and their treatments but also effectively delivers the relevance of the most acclaimed *sodhana* therapy. The book gives the readers the thrust to envisage research in the field of various degenerative diseases and the effectiveness of *pancakarma* in each scenario.

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