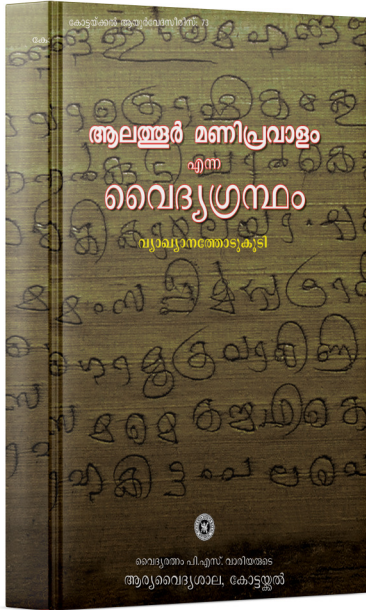


Alathoor Manipravalam - A review

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The rare palm leaf manuscripts of several texts cutting across subjects, such as science, literature, arts, architecture, astrology etc. have been in a state of deep slumber in ancient aristocratic households. The current generation knows little on the importance of these treasures. These gems had been serving as the basis of knowledge systems. They inspired many generations with lyrical brilliance and creative flight that too, in the native dialect. These creations (in verse, poems and prose) were a serious work of science and literary imagination.

When it comes to the ancient science of *ayurveda* there are documentations spanning across diagnosis of diseases, treatment modalities, drug formulations and single herb remedies. These works surely are with the aforementioned

qualities. We can find a combination of both knowledge and clinical experience.

The term “*vaidyan*” denotes a knowledgeable person. He should be aware of the blessings of Mother Nature. Apart from the plant sources, the flesh, blood and bones, of the fauna are to be keenly observed by the physicians as a source of remedies. These resources are applied after a thorough research and experimentations for healing the sick.

The combination of Sanskrit and Malayalam namely *Manipravalam* marks milestone in the development of the language of Kerala. Most of earlier literary works were written in this style. This was very suitable to codify and translate scientific knowledge. The then authors of *Manipravalam* had a good command over the native dialect as well as Sanskrit. Both vernacular and classical metres used abundantly in versification. It was indeed a commendable feat. In many texts, the introductory parts contain, antecedents, the family history etc. explained in chronological order. In fact, it serves as a blurb.

Numerous are the ayurvedic literature works published by Arya Vaidya Sala, Kottakkal for the benefit of the scientific fraternity. The “Alathiyur Manipravalam” edition conceptualized by Dr. M R Raghava Varrier, then Chief Editor, Publications Department Arya Vaidya Sala. He was technically supported by Dr. M. V. Sreekrishnan and Prof. Njayath Balan. The source book was collected from the manuscriptology library of Calicut University.

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Deciphering and publishing the text with appropriate commentary is one of the innovative contributions by this prestigious institution.

The original text has many scribal errors. It is also incomplete. Only a judicious effort by experts makes the total retrieval possible. A keen study of the present work reveals the painstaking endeavor behind.

Apart from the verses with meaning and interpretation, glossary, *maanaparibhaasha*, comparative studies and other references are added in the publication.

The single drug remedies (*ottamooli*; viz. *otta* means single and *mooli* means drug) which was the initial stage of traditional system consisted of both *angaati marunnu* (dry drug; *angaati* is market and *marunnu* is drug-dry drugs are collected and sold in the market) and *pacca marunnu* (fresh herb; *pacca* means green or fresh). Later drug combinations were emerged substituting the single drug remedies. These were formulated considering the specificities of diseased conditions. *Angaati marunnu* also signifies the drug becoming a commodity. Herbs cultivated even in the Himalayan ranges and coastal regions of the country were harvested and dried and sold. It was a boost for the community of physicians as these can be stored and used later. This facilitated the preparations of different drug forms like *swarasam*, *kashaayam* and *coornam* prepared from herbs plucked from forests, households etc. These herbs were prescribed in its proper combination with appropriate proportions. The verse found in another *manipravalaam* text, given below is inclusive of both native and foreign varieties.

*Elam kolam kaṭuku takaram
kuntitkuntirikkam,
Conappullum cukilumakilum naakilam
tuttinaakam.
Teempoo, kancaavuluva viṭayam maanci
mancatti kottam*

Caatikkaayum palavaumavite kaanalaam te marunnum

(p-38, Foreward of Alathoor Manipravalam)

The *gurukulas* served as the solitary medium of ayurvedic education for the continuation of the tradition. This knowledge system was treasured through various schools such as *ashtavaidya*, other traditional families and even that of tribal communities. These *gurukulam* maintained the authenticity and quality which instilled the faith of the people in the science.

The knowledge of single drug remedies sustained as home remedies. This trend gave chance for the herbs around the house premises being under the scrutiny. The results were perhaps keen involving multiple observers and various interpretations.

When social changes disrupted the easy access prepared medicines, *ayurveda* faced a tough time for survival; especially due to the spread of allopathic system during the colonial periods. Courtesy of the visionary physician Vaidyaratnam P S Varrier, who founded Arya Vaidya Sala, Kottakkal (est.1902) mass production and sales outlets enabled reach of *ayurveda* everywhere. Ayurveda College was also established by him 1914. But this institutionalization made the physicians averse towards traditional informal knowledge. It is imperative that these salient points are addressed in the introduction of this book.

Among the *ashtavaidya* tradition, Alathur School of *ayurveda* remains significant because of its adherence to the basic theories of *ayurveda*. It also has several unique drug formulations of its own. There are legends of *Aṣwanis* blessing one ancestor with a rare treatise of treatment.

Some of drug combinations evidence this theory. In the description on *goola roga*, in the beginning of the text, serves as the prime example of the situation where the students find it difficult to comprehend, rather define it in the language of

current science. A deeper understanding is inevitable to diagnose and manage the various manifestations of *śoolaroga* such as inflammation, infection, degeneration based on *vaata*, *pitta* and *kapha* respectively, along with flatulence, colic, belching etc.

Paittika gulma is another example for the exemplary treatment.

Kāṭalāṭi yotakamaraccu raṅtume
Tayiril kaṭanju pariṭācyā yah pibed.
Apayaati gulmāpi tasya paittikam
Lavanena vaa saha karimpu khaaditam.
 (p- 46, Verse 3)

Kāṭalāṭi and *ambazham* are ground and mixed with curd. If administered with rock salt and sugar cane as additives, *paittika gulma* is healed.

Gulma and *śoola* increase the acidity. Simple remedies as the one mentioned above, is found to be effective. It especially relevant in the current scenario as the younger generation is devoid of physical exercises and regular in the intake of spicy fast food.

One of the other lifestyle diseases happens to be diabetes. Numerous combinations are provided for this disease alone in Alathur Manipravalam. The primary objective is to relieve the obstruction in the *srotas* enabling the flow of *medas* the main culprit of *prameha*. The choice of the protocol is very rational. Innumerable short yet effective combinations are galore in various forms of verses in this text for ailments varying from *kushṭha*, *rajyakshmaa*, *kaasa*, *swaasa*, *mootraaghaata*, *mootrakṛchra*, *aśmari*, infections of the ear, teeth, *indralupta*, ocular diseases and so on.

Four combinations are advised for *rakṭāṭisaara*(page no. 114, verse 174). The Malayalam term '*vitar*' denotes *visarpam*. Many combinations of *lepāna* (external application) are also suggested apart from that of *kashaaya*. The application of *tamarayalli* (petals of lotus flower), *aambal kizhangu* (tuber of water lilly) etc. rare therapeutic applications that enhances the quality of the text.

Page.117(234), the combination comprising *ittil*, *citteenntal*, *kaayam*, *naayakkurāna-parippu*, *nellikka* and *amukkuram* is to be researched ardently because it can be effective for the post covid ailments.

The treatment protocols for *paandu* and *arśas* are also very remarkable.

Fried *vaazhaykka* and *kaayam* is an effective remedy for *vr̥shya* purpose

There can be doubts on the relevance of Alathur Manipravalam in this digital era. Yet it is obvious that the amalgamation of rare combinations into current ayurvedic practice will surely empower the physician. Amidst the overuse of the computers and the AI *ayurveda* also rise to the occasion with innovations in both theory and practice. Generating data for incessant research is also important. Healing blooms in full only through the insightful observation of the theories. The traditional knowledge systems ought to return to its roots ie., the classical texts. The onus is on the younger generation who are running from pillar to post appearing for the entrance exams to dive deep into the vast ocean of the classical texts and come up with the gems of knowledge.

The publication of Alathur Manipravalam truly is a contribution to the ayurvedic literature.