

KERALEEYA KARKIDAKA MASA CHARYA- TRADITIONAL PRACTICES AND ITS CONTEMPORARY SIGNIFICANCE

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ABSTRACT - Kerala is a state which has a wide pattern of religious and spiritual values inbuilt in the most sacred way. The practice of various traditional values longs back to early times. All the traditional practices has an in-depth value of health and prosperity hidden within itself. *Karkidaka masam* is an auspicious month famously known as the *ramayana masa* and celebrated with great fervor in Kerala. The name *karkidaka* is because in this month there's transition of sun from *midhuna rasi* to *karkidaka rasi* (Gemini zodiac sign to Cancer zodiac sign) beginning with the onset of heavy rains. Hence this month is understood as a period of low immunity and reduced strength. Hence the value of treatments especially the *Ayurvedic* rejuvenative and immunity boosting treatments are widely followed. When it comes to the aspect of immunity both food and treatments play an important role. Hence, here discussing the *karkidaka masa* traditional *ayurvedic* treatment practices with the dietary regimens.

KEYWORDS - karkidaka masa, Oushadha peya, Ayurvedic treatments.

INTRODUCTION-

The revolution of earth around the sun is the reason for the creation of day & night as well as seasons. The 6 seasons described by *Ayurveda acharyas* are : *Shishiram* (Jan mid - March mid), *Vasantham* (March mid - May mid), *Gressham* (May mid - July mid), *Varsha* (July mid - Sept mid), *Sharath* (Sept mid - Nov mid) & *Hemantha ritu* (Nov mid - Jan mid). But this division is not exactly like this in Kerala. In Kerala, mainly three *ritus*⁷ are present ie *Varsha*, *Vasantha* and *Greeshma*. Here *varsha ritu* starts by middle of May and extends till August middle. In *varsha ritu*, the *agni* gets debilitated, by reaching *greeshma ritu* the *agni* undergoes further decrease and gets vitiated by the *doshas*. They get aggregated by the effect of the thick cloud, sudden blowing of the cold wind (after scorching heat of the sun in *greeshma*) resulting in *amlapaka* (sourness) in turn causes *pitta vardhana*. Because of the cold rain, cold wind, *vata kopa*, solidification of *kapha* occurs resulting in vitiation of the *tridoshas*.

Karkidaka is the last month of the year that falls from July mid to August mid as per the *Malayalam* calendar. *Midhuna* and *karkidaka* months (June middle to August middle) marks the beginning of rainy season in Kerala. According to the *rithu charya* in *Ayurveda*, *varsha rithu* (monsoon) is the time when the earth, air and water gets contaminated due to climatic changes. During this season, our digestive system may get weaker due to the reduced digestive power. This is the time when contagious infections starts spreading. Due to the cold weather conditions *vata rogas* are on its height. Hence, to protect our body and boost our immunity certain diet regimens, life style modifications and *Ayurvedic* medications are using at this time which has come to a trend now.

FOOD REGIMEN IN KARKIDAKA MONTH-

In *Ayurveda*, it is explained that "*ama*" (un-metabolised syndrome) which is due to *agnimandya* (indigestion) make imbalance in *Tridoshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta* & *Kapha*). So as to maintain a strategic distance from certain unsafe impacts of environmental change, it is important to pursue a particular dietary pattern. These strict dietary routine and lifestyle changes will revitalize the immunity and eliminate the imbalances.

On *Ayurvedic* basis the diet prepared from rice is structured in stages, going from more liquid preparations to increasingly solid ones. These stages of digestibility are called *Manda*, *Peaya* etc. *Manda* means rice water which is the clear supernatant watery portion -without rice- in which rice is boiled. *Peaya* means solid rice and liquid portions are taken in equal proportion. During this season more complaints of indigestion, loss of appetite etc are commonly seen. Nowadays administration of *oushadha peya* has become a trend and instead of using it for the whole month, these are now used for only 7 days or 14days or 21 days and the contents has differed allot.

KARKITAKA OUSHADHA PEYA PREPARATION-

Dashapushpa (10 sacred flowers- *vishmukrantha*, *musali*, *sahadeva*, *shasha shruthi*, *lakshmana*, *bhringaraja*, *bhadra*, *lajjalu*, *durva*, *shakralatha*) start to blossom as the rain hits the ground. The ancient method of making of the medicinal soup is by taking the juice of these 10 leaves and to this *shashtika shali* is added, once the *shali* rice is half cooked the powder of medicines like *jeeraka*, *shunti*, *ela* etc are added which serves the property of *agni deepana*. Then finally coconut milk and *ghrita* are added.

BOTANICAL SOURCE	MALAYALAM NAME	SANSKRIT NAME
Aerva lanata (L.) Juss.ex.Schult.	Cheroola	Bhadra
Biophytum sensitivum (L.) DC	Mukkutty	Viparitha lajjalu
Cardiospermum halicacabum L.	Valliyuzhinja	Indravalli
Curculiogo orchiooides Gaertn.	Nilappana	Musali

Cynodon dactylon (L.) Pers.	Karuka	Durva
Eclipta alba (L.)Mant	Kayyuniyam	Bringharajan
Emilia sonchifolia (L.) DC	Muyalcheviyan	Akhukarni
Evolvulus alsinoides (L.) L.var.alsinoides	Vishnukranthi	Hari Krantha
Ipomea sepiaria Koen. ex Roxb.	Thiruthali	Lakshmana
Vernonia cinerea (L.)Less.	Puvamkurunnel	Sahadevi

USHADHA PEYA PREPARATION IN VAIDYARATNAM -

Dasamoolam is made into *potali* and immersed in boiling water, to it fenugreek (soaked for 12 hrs), green gram (soaked over night) and *shashtika shali* rice is added and cooked. When it becomes half boiled the masala *chandrashura* (garden cress), *jeeraka*(cumin), *shunti* (ginger), *ela* (cardamom) , *dhanyaka* (coriander), *ajamoda* (ajwain), *maricha* (black pepper), *shathapushpa* (dill seeds), *saileya* (aniseed), *pippali* (long pepper), coconut milk, salt and ghee are added to it. In cases of obesity, diabetes or people who does not like *shashtika shali* can consume *yava rice*(barley)/*godhuma rice* (wheat) instead of *shashtika sali*.

PATHILA CURRY (TEN LEAVES CURRY)-

The *oushadha peya* is usually served along with this *pathila* (10 leaves) curry. They are highly affordable and are very good for health and longevity. These leafy vegetables, abounding in anti-oxidants, mineral salts, iron, vitamins, and proteins which will revive immune system. This *pathila* (10 leaves) may be differently known in different places. The 10 leaves are-

1. *Neyyunni ila- Diplocyclos palmatus leaves.*
2. *Thalu ila- Wild colocasia leaves.*
3. *Thakara ila- Oval shaped cassia leaves.*
4. *Kumbalam ila- Ash gourd leaves*
5. *Mathan ila - Pumpkin leaves.*
6. *Vellari ila- Cucumber leaves.*
7. *Kodithoova ila- Indian stinging nettle leaves.*
8. *Mullan cheera ila- Spiny amaranth.*
9. *Chena ila- Elephant yam leaves.*
10. *Chembu ila- Small colocasia leaves.*

Here, *sigru* (*Moringa Oleifera*) is not using in this season. There is a folk belief that roots of *sigru* helps to absorb toxicity from soil and is removed through its leaves during this time of *karkidaka*. Due to this belief the leaves of *shigru* is not using in the month of *karkidaka*.

A SPECIAL ADJUVANT FOR PEYA -

Sunti and *guda* (jaggery) is grinded together and taken along with *peya* as an adjuvant. It helps in increasing digestive power and reduces all illness concerned with stomach.

BENEFITS OF USHADHA PEYA AND ADJUVANTS-

By using these *oushadha peya* and it's adjuvants the intestinal mobility for flawless digestion will improve and it will ensure the expulsion of toxins accumulated in the body. In this current situation of spread of viral infection the use of such *oushadha peya* will revive immunity of the body. The powder that consists of *ajamoda*, *jeeraka*, *sunti* etc has bronchodilator action, hence medical conditions like chest infection, throat infection, hiccups etc gets reduced by using this.

OTHER PRACTICES

1. *Oushadha seva* – Usually it is practicing in kerala on *karkidaka* month's 16th day. On this day mild toxic type of medicines are given to the person for making his body *sathmya* (immune) to it. Usually used medicines are *chitraka* (grinded paste) + cow's ghee mixture. It is given in very little quantity in early morning after bath with prayers. The quantity is justified as the ring finger is inserted into the mixture and how much ever is adhered to the finger that much quantity (*bindu pramana*).

2. *Mukkudi seva*- Usually during this period gastric problems like indigestion, gastritis are widely seen. Hence, *mukkudi* is given. *Mukkudi* is prepared by adding *pippali*, *sunti*, *krishna*, *dhanyaka*, *ajamoda*, *jeera*, *sugandhamoola*, *dadima* fruit peel, *chitraka* and *musta* all taken one gram each and added into buttermilk or curd and boiled. This *mukkudi* is prepared and taken during *karkidaka* month for 1 day, 7 days or whole month.

3. *Panchagavya sevana*- This is also a custom followed in the temples of Kerala or is made at homes. *Panchagavya* is a mixture that is prepared by mixing five ingredients. The three direct constituents are cow dung, urine, and milk; the two derived products are curd and ghee. These five things are mixed together and taken in early morning. This helps boost immunity and helps in brain function.

KARKIDAKA CHIKITSA OR KARKIDAKA TREATMENT

Karkidaka chikitsa or *Karkidaka* treatment is a seasonal *Ayurvedic* treatment performed during the month *Karkidaka*. Nowadays, *karkidaka* month is considered as a time exclusive for *Ayurvedic* treatments.

INTERNAL MEDICATIONS -

During this time a custom of using '*chuvannaratha kashya*' (*Chuvannaratha-Rasna*) is quiet famous. This is nothing but the *Rasnerandadi kashaya*¹ which is used for different type of *vata* disorders. This was taken along with buffalo ghee fortified with *jeera*, taken for 7 or 14 or 21 days. Another form of using this *kashaya* is by adding goat's legs or head into this *kashaya*, according to the logical thinking of physician.

EXTERNAL THERAPIES

Application of oil on body and head was a long run custom in *Kerala* which is extinct now. Oil massage is done for ladies on Tuesday and Friday, and for men on Wednesday and Saturday. Since all these habits have reduced drastically, the body started to get old and weak very early. After having a view on this, the trend of *karkidaka chikitsa* came into practice. Here *abhyanga* is done to body and head and in some cases according to the condition of patient – *kizhi* (*potali sweda*), *pizhichil*(*kayaseka*), *vasti* (enema) treatments are done. *Sirodhara* is usually contraindicated during this time due to the intense cold climate of *varsha rithu*. It is also practiced for patients who had a history of stroke or paralysis or back pain. Conducting a course of *pizhichil* (*kayaseka*) and *njavara kizhi* (*shastika shali pinda sweda*) treatment every year during this time will be helpful for patients.

COMMAN TAILAS USING-

Commonly *dhanwantaram taila*, *kethakimooladi taila*³ are used for body and for head *asanavilwadi taila*², *balaguloochyadi taila*⁶ or *kera taila* which is suitable according to the *prakriti* of that individual can be used. *Kuzhambu* (*yamaka* preparation) is used in patients who are weak or emaciated. In osteoarthritis cases - *Dhanwantaram taila*⁵ + *kethakeemooladi taila*+ *panchatiktakam gritha*⁴ in taken in 3:2:1 ratio can be used for *pizhichil/kizhi/ abhyanga* (for body). *Thalakkenna* (Head oil) usually prescribed in the evening, and it is a must in this period.

APPLICATION OF VASTHI-

In *varsha ritu*, *vasthi* is the most preferred *sodhana* therapy. So *vasthi* can be administered during this season to eradicate the vitiated *doshas*. Out of the 2 types of *vasti madhutailika vasti* is generally done in *swastha* condition. But according to *roga avastha* - *dwipanchamoola vasti*, *vaiharana vasti*, *rajayapana vasti* and *lekhana vasties* are also practiced. Usually *vasti* is practised as *yoga vasti krama* – ie 8 *vasti* format- five *anuvasana vasthis/ mathra vasthis* and three *kashaya vastis*.

CONCLUSION -

This *karkidaka* rituals and regimens were formed based on the culture and *Ayurvedic ritu charya*. These have found a great result in people's life promoting immunity and good health. Many people who follow these regimens have found to be immune to the spreading viral attacks. Since, this era is facing a lot of viral infections and other communicable diseases, following these rituals and regimens will surely make one self keep away from these disease.

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