



An International Journal (AMIJ)

Singaporean Journal of Scientific Research(SJSR)

Vol.13.No.1 2021 Pp. 23-30

available at: www.sjsronline.com

ISSN: 1205-2421

Paper Received :28-08-2021

Paper Accepted:02-11-2021

Paper Reviewed by: 1. Dr. P. Surya Prakash 2. Dr.Basu Reddy

Editor : Dr. R. Rajkumar

Rejuvenation Procedure in *Siddha* Literature as Preventive Health Measures and Promotion of Longevity

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ABSTRACT

Ever since man started curing illness, he began to discover the reasons for illness. In his efforts to cure and prevent illness, by continuous search and research for generations, man found several methods of rejuvenating his physical body with healthy foods, perfect medicines, herbs, proper exercises and austerities. Each method showed a certain effect and some very effective methods are still in use all over the world in various places. The *Siddha* system of medicine is a well-known holistic traditional medicine system that emphasizes both curative and preventative measures. These medicines, especially those derived from herbs, metals, and minerals, are high in anti-oxidants and other beneficial compounds. *Kaya-Karpam* is a prime treatment in *Siddha* and *Ayurveda* is aimed at arresting degeneration of body cells, slowing down the ageing process, and for improving body immunity as a whole. It includes intake of special medicines and diet and comprehensive body care programmes. The treatment aims to return youthfulness by rejuvenating and has the capacity to revitalise and balance the *vatham*, *pitham*, and *kapam*, allowing the body and mind to achieve harmony.

KEYWORDS: Degeneration, *Rasayana*, *Panchakarma*, Rejuvenation, *Kaya Karpam*.

1.Introduction

According to a report of the WHO about 80 % of the population in some Asian and African countries relies on traditional medicine for their primary health care needs. It has been observed that traditional health care systems offer a safe alternative in chronic and degenerative diseases and have been increasingly resorted to by patients suffering such conditions. There are unique fundamental principles behind the usage of its pharmacopeia which is of primary interest to scientists in the contemporary world. The 'Tridhotam' concept consisting of *Vatham*, *Pitham* and *Kabam* has been explained on the basis of input-output, throughput and storage respectively, applied to a single cell [Alex Hankey,2001]¹. Non-pharmacological and pharmacological approaches from *Siddha* system could help cellular regeneration and provide resistance against low Lineary Energy Transfer [Rakhee Mehra, *et. al*, 2008]². Perhaps no other system of medicine has devoted an entire branch to the specialty of geriatrics and longevity. The neuro-nutrient impact of *Ayurvedic Rasayana* therapy in brain aging validates Rasayanas as micronutrients and being tissue and organ specific [Ram Harsh Singh *et al.*, 2008]³. Till date, wound healing applications have been a major area of research with numerous applications from classic book on surgery, *Susruta Samhita* finding validation. Wound healing activity of Topical Application Forms based on *Ayurveda* is a case in point [Hema sharma Datta, *et al*, 2011]⁴.Regeneration and repair process in *Siddha* and *Ayurveda* is linked with its fundamental concepts. Modern science is yet to explore the conceptual aspect of regenerative medicine. The basic difference presented between *Ayurveda* and modern science in addition to certain conceptual differences lie in the manner tissue regeneration is attempted in case of injury, disease and aging. Vincent Di Stefano [1990] in his paper 'Towards Regeneration' observes "According to the current paradigm of western scientific medicine, the patient is sufficiently well served by the prescription of a chemical drug with some possible lifestyle or dietary advice. The notion of trophorestoration- the active promotion of repair in damaged organ systems and body tissues-simply does not enter the picture. Within the herbal medicine tradition notions of tonification and trophorestoration are well established". While he was speaking of all herbal systems in general, *Siddha* concepts and therapies viewed critically, seem only to revolve around trophorestoration. The aim of *Ayurveda*, the restoration of the equilibrium of the body would not be meaningful if trophorestoration of tissues in injury disease and aging was not attempted. Trophorestoration is the path to repair and regeneration. [Rakhee Mehra, *et. al*, 2008]²

Siddha concept of Tri-humours and origin of diseases

The three basic elements Air, Fire and Water – are emphasized to from the three fundamental components that constitute the subtle energy forces behind the normal human physiology. These three components – *Vatham*, *Pitham* and *Kapam* (representing air, fire and water respectively) known as trihumors and their in harmony facilitates pathological conditions. In contrary, the harmonious proportion of these humors is vital to correct diagnosis. [T. Thirunarayanan, 2012]⁵

Kaya karpam

Kaya - Karpam is an ancient system of bodily rejuvenation practiced in *Siddha* said to reverse the natural aging process. It is a set of specific therapies mentioned in Vedic texts that can actually reverse the physical degeneration caused by age. The belief is that *Kaya-Karpam* practices turn old cells into new ones, and remove all impurities and toxins that cause physical degeneration. The treatments literally transform old cells to new again. In simple, *Kaya Karpam* is a true science of “rejuvenation” – to make young again. From Sanskrit, *Kaya* means “body” and *Karpam* means “stone like transformation / transmutation”. The concept may seem really simple, but it is actually quite an extraordinary process. The main idea behind the therapies is to balance the decay of old cells with the growth of newer, younger, healthier cells. It is a reversal of metabolic activities in the body. The rate of healthy, new cells must form faster than the degeneration and death of old cells, in order to arrest the symptoms of aging. Through *Kaya-Karpam*, one can actually suspend the ravages of time, and preserve healthy, youthful, supple tissues. [Ram Harsh Singh, *et al*]³

Historical background of Kaya karpam

Between the tenth and fifteenth centuries some alchemists, called 'Siddhars' in South India were successful in their research and lived as long as they wished, and after death their bodies were impervious to decay and disintegration. Eighteen well-known saints demonstrated their longevity to the people and the people saw that their bodies did not decay after death. It has addressed the methods and drugs for longevity and enhancement of innate health. They have been divided into *Karpam* medicines, *Karpam* practices of life style and *Karpam* diet. In this science 108 herbs and herbo-mineral combinations are recommended for normal individuals to boost immunity, to promote general health, for prevention of diseases (*Pothu Karpam*) and also for restoration of health from specific type diseases (*Sirappu Karpam*).[R.Thiyagarajan, 2019]⁶

Now-a-days, there is no descendant to personally teach their system, but the processes of rejuvenation, withstanding aging and postponement of death are scattered bit by bit in the writings of the *Siddhars*. The processes to be followed are all written in obtuse language, and although written in Tamil, even a scholar cannot understand the meaning clearly today.

Health benefits of Kaya karpam

The aim of Rejuvenation Therapy is to return youthfulness by rejuvenating each and every Dhatu or Tissue in the body. Due to untimely food, lack of exercise, improper sleep, unhealthy lifestyle,

pollution and use of synthetic drugs we fall a victim to many health problems and during recent years there is a rise of diseases like diabetes, arthritis, cancer, heart problems etc. *Kaya-karpam* treatment reverses the effect of time, nourish the tissues and rejuvenate the body, mind and spirit. This treatment is very useful for people with physical hardship and mental strain.

Changing lifestyles (lack of exercise, untimely food intake, unsuitable environment conditions and pollution) are seen in many young urbanites fall victim to perennial health problems like diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, osteoporosis, spondylosis, psychosomatic problems, stress and strain, etc. There has also been an alarming increase in the number of diseases and disorders caused by synthetic drugs, prompting a switchover to traditional medicine. The west has turned to “Mother nature knows best” philosophy and the east to the “Traditional Systems of *Ayurveda* and *Siddha*”.

The following are the key benefits of Kaya-Karpam/Rejuvenation Therapy

- Retards the aging process
- Improves immunity, vigour and vitality
- Corrects metabolism
- Revitalizes body, mind and soul
- Repairs worn out tissues
- Improves memory power & intelligence
- Relieves stress and strain

This rejuvenation procedure of *Kaya Karpam* includes

1. *Mooligai Karpam* : Drugs of herbal origin.
2. *Thathu Karpam* :Drugs of mineral origin
3. *Seeva karpam* :Drugs of animal origin
4. *Pranayamam* :Art of controlling the breath
5. *Yogam* :The perfect scientific art that united mind with the God
6. *Yogasanas* :Rejuvenating yogic postures
7. *Muppu* :Higher order *Siddha* alkali

1. Mooligai Karpam

i) Pothu karpam

Siddha literature like *Thanvanthiri Nigandu*, *Vaithiya Guru Nool*, *Simittu Rathiram* reviews strongly suggest that category of rejuvenation while using karpam type of medicine. These include Blood cell rejuvenation (*Karuvembu karpam*, *Karisalai karpam*, *Vembin choornam*), Reproductive cell proliferation in male (*Vilaangu karpam*, *Vilva poo karpamum vethaium*) and

female, Hormonal balancing (*Brahmi karpam*, *Moondru Mooligai karpam*), Prolong life span (*Vensaarai karpam*, *Poorna karpam*, *Paasaana karpam*, *Mayil muttai karpam*, *Kaya karpam aya chenthooram*, *Amurtha rasa karpam*, etc) and also for general health (*Karug karippan karpam*, *Karippan karpam*, *peichurai virai karpam*, *Thozhukanni karpam*).

According to our current literature review, the ailment for *Karpam* medicine could be to prevent ageing, stress, maintain wellness, immune enhancing, neurotonic as prophylactic. On the other hand, *Karpam* can also be used to treat infections such as Tuberculosis (*Konji marak karpam*, *Thetra marak karpam*, *Naagathalisedi karpam*, *karbogarisi karpam*, etc), Memory and respiratory disorders (*Vishnu karanthi karpam*), Urinary tract infections (*Oorilai thamarai karpam*), Jaundice (*Oorilai thamarai karpam*, *Panja mooligai karpam*), Gastric ulcer (*Seenthil karpam*), Muscular dysfunction (*Jeeva karpam*, *Amirtha kadukai karpam*, *Vilaangu karpam* etc), Psychiatric diseases (*Sencharai karpam*), Venereal disease (*Karpoora vilva karpam*, *Karanthai seenthil karpam*), Inflammation. Some medicine also acts as Anti-dote as snake anti-venom (*Aaduthindapaalai kodi karpam*, *Keeriviruchak karpam*, *Siriyangai karpam*) and Insect bites (*Vidatherkarpam*, *Vembukarpam*) etc.

ii) Sirappu karpam

Some preparation prescribed for *Kapha* disease which includes *Arokani kadukai karpam*, *Sivanar vembu karpam*, *Karanthai seenthil karpam*, *Poorna karpam*, *Milagu karpam choornam*, *Sivanar vembu karpam*, *Thiriviruthai kadukai karpam*, *Milaku karpam* etc.

Vatham seems to be one of the prominent humor on the human body imbalance of Vatham may leads to several dreadful disorders including some inflammatory diseases. Formulations like *Sirappu karpam*, *Vijayankadukkai karpam*, *Thiriviruthai kadukai karpam*, *Ganthaga karpam*, *Koongin poo karpam*, *Vembukarpam* are known form ancient time in management of disease pertains to the *Vatham* humor. Other class of *karpam* exclusively utilized for treating disease on misbalancing of *Pitham* that includes *sivanar vembukarpam*, *moodrumooligai karpam*, *panjamooligai karpam*, *porikaara karpam*, *karpooravilva karpam*, *oorilaitthamarai karpam*, *thiriviruthai kadukai karpam*. [G.Vinitha, 2019]⁷

2. Thathu Karpam

This deal with metals & mineral products used as *kaya karpam* preparations. Medicines of mineral and metal origins are known from the literature *Agasthiyarchendhooram* 300. Eg. 1) *Aya birungaraja karpam*. 2) *Aya sambeera karpam*. 3) *Poorana chandhirothayam*

i) *Aya sambeera karpam* - To treat Anaemia, *Sobai*, greying of hair and strengthen the body.

ii) *Aya birungaraja karpam*- Treats anaemia, greying of hair and treats tiredness.

iii) *Poorana chandhirothayam*- Treats diseases of tuberculosis, types of *Krani*, *Kunmam* and *Soolai*, Sexual diseases, Jaundice and acts as Anti-venom. [Y. S. R. Fathima et al. 2022]⁸

3. *Jeeva Karpam*

It is defined as the medicines of animal origin. Some of them are listed below-

- i) Raw milk- treats prolonged *Kangai* diseases.
- ii) Condensed milk- Causes increased heat when not consumed. [R.Thiyagarajan, 2019]⁶

4. *Yogam*

Yogam is the process of controlling the soul from the deviation of the sense organs and their functions. It is of eight types and called as “*Attanga yogam*”.

Attanga Yogam- “*Eyamam Niyamam* and *Asanam* numberless, *Pranayamam* and *Prathiyakaram* alike *Tharanai*, *Thyanam* and *Samathi* to triumph, these eight are the steel limbs of Yoga”

Eyamam: Nonviolence, truth, honesty, sexual continence, forbearance, attitude, kindness, straight forwardness, bodily cleansing are the ten *eyamams*. Making it a habit to practice *eyamam* on a regular basis cleanses one's words, thoughts, and actions.

Niyamam: Austerity, contentment, belief in God, charity, adoration of God, listening to teachings and scriptures explained, modesty, having a discerning mind, repeating of prayers, and sacrifice are the ten *niyamams*.

Asanam: *Thirumoolar* outlined a large number of *asanas*, but he focused on a five to achieve *Yoga Siddhi: Pathirasanam, Veerasanam, Padhumasanam, Kukkudasanam, and Komugasanam.*

Prathiyakaram: Withdrawal of the mind from external objects and the constraint of the senses is known as *Prathiyakaram*. It keeps an internal concentration while avoiding dispersion and distraction.

Tharanai: *Tharanai* means to retain the mind and keep it stable on the inside, as *prathiyakaram* has achieved.

Thyanam: *Thyanam* is a form of meditation that is exercised on a regular basis and without interruption.

Samathi: *Attanga Yogam's* ultimate objective is *Samathi*. It is the acquisition of serenity. It is a *yoga* with eight limbs.

Bandham and Muthirai: *Bandham* and *Muthirai*, in addition to *Asanam*, play an important part in spiritual activities. *Bandham* is a type of body manipulation that confines and stimulates the life energy inside the trunk. *Moola bandham, Ottiyana bandham, and Jalanthara bandham* are all dealt with by *Thirumoolar*. The perineum and vaginal muscles are contracted during *Moola*

Bandham. *Ottiyana bandham* is done by pulling the abdominal muscles back. *Jalantharabandham* is performed by forcefully squeezing the chin and chest together. These *bandhams* are used to remove *pranan* from the *idakalai* and *pingalai chakras*. The extracted *pranan* passes via the *Sulumunai naadi* and ascends to *Sahasaram*.

Muthirai are psycho-energetic motions used with the hands, fingers, eyes, or tongue while meditating or breathing. *Thirumoolar* teaches how to rouse the *kundalini* with the *Yoni muthirai*, *Sambhavi muthirai*, and *Kesari muthirai*.

4. Pranayamam :

It is a practice of ordered breathing. The process of *pranayamam* consists of three acts, namely *Pooragam* (inspiration) *Kumbakam* (retention) and *Resagam* (expiration). The above terms are used by Tantrics and Siddhars. The inspiration should be of twelve *mathirai* and expiration should be of eight *mathirai* and retention should be of four *mathirai*. In second section of *Thanthiram-3*, *Thirumoolar* deals with measurement of life span and breath rhythm in days of week. If one knows the rhythm of breath, one is aware of “*Nadai*”. The *Nadai* and God are one in consciousness. The breathing occurs through the nostrils alternatively. The air passing through the left nostril is called *Idakalai*, while the air passing through the right nostril is called *Pingalai*. The left one is also known as *Chandhira Naadi* while the right one is known as *Suriya Naadi*. Persons who have obtained mastery over *Pranayamam*, his/her breathing through middle one is called *Sulumunai Naadi*. A person who attained mastery over *Pranayamam* is physically, mentally healthy and ready for higher spiritual practices. [Kanakavalli K *et al.*, 2019]⁹

6. Yogasanas

Siddha system gives emphasis to drug, diet and disciplined life style with observation of *Yoga* techniques (*Asanam*, *pranayamam*, *Dhyanam*, etc.) *karpam-yogam* deals with *Yoga* techniques which help, prevent and promote health and maintain youth long. [G.Vinitha, 2019]⁷

This panacea is intended for prolonging life by combatting against grey hair, old age, diseases, etc for the purposes of promoting longevity. These medicines and material remedies may greatly help one in the process of rejuvenation if used according to the instructions given by Siddhars.

8. Muppu

Muppu is the combination of three rare salts which enhances the efficacy of any *Siddha* medicine has a distinct place in *Siddha* medicine. It is regarded as a closely guarded secret and also constitutes for *Rasavatham* (metallurgy), Yogic concentration, a part of *Siddha* tradition and for *Vaithyam* (medicinal formulation). [Thangapandiammal *et al.*, 2019]¹⁰

Conclusion

Kaya Karpam therapy, used for rejuvenation and increased longevity, has however, transformed over the years from a highly secretive, selective, and intensive treatment first developed by saintly adepts who used it to immortalize their physical bodies. *Kaya-karpam* may include a range of therapies, such as herbal or mineral preparations, postures of various schools of *Karpam Yoga*, breathing practices, aroma therapy, body oils, herbs allied products, life-style guidelines and constitutional assessments. Though most of us may not be able to undergo the classic “*Kaya-Karpam Rejuvenation*” as described by ancient texts, there are many aspects of this anti-aging regimen that we can practice to stay young and combat the disease process. A deeper exploration in the areas of *Kaya-Karpam* and its molecular targets can fetch us to a break-through in combating various diseases and promote healthy living.

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