



BOOK REVIEW

A Book Review on *Vrkshayurveda*

M. P. Sanal Kumar^{1*}, P. P. Jigeesh²

¹Scholar, Department of Panchakarma, VPSV Ayurveda College, Kottakkal, Kerala, India.

²Professor and Head, Department of Panchakarma, VPSV Ayurveda College, Kottakkal, Kerala, India.

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ABSTRACT

One-Health, although a relatively recent term, gained global acceptance years ago. In India, as part of ecosystem preservation, they integrated various domains – animals, plants, and more – under the umbrella of One-Health. These living beings were revered and protected with utmost intensity. While safeguarding inanimate things is relatively straightforward, protecting living beings poses challenges due to diseases, often encountered on a daily basis. Consequently, developing a robust health-care system for these domains becomes essential. This led to the evolution of *Mrugayurveda* and *Vrkshayurveda*. The *Vedas* were the earliest texts to mention treatments for animals and trees. On *vrkshayurveda*, later works by authors such as *Salihotra* and *Surapala* delve into comprehensive scripts on *Vrkshayurveda*. Among these, the renowned *Upavana Vinoda*, a chapter from *Sarngadhara Padhadi* by *Sarngadharacharya* (16 CE), focuses entirely on plant life. It covers everything from land examination for tree planting (*bhoomi niroopana*) to botanical marvels (*vrkshayurveda parishistam*), including techniques to enhance plant product yields. Building on this foundation, *Vidvan K. Vasu Panikker* published a Malayalam commentary on *Vrkshayurveda* in 1945–1946. In 2022, Kottakkal Arya Vaidya Sala's publication division released the first edition of the same book as part of the P.K. Warriar Commemoration series, complete with English and Malayalam commentary, aiming to enhance global acceptance. The current edition spans 136 pages and is priced at Rs. 250.

1. INTRODUCTION

The phrase “one-health” is relatively new, but the concept has long been understood on a worldwide scale. It states that there are interdependencies between the health of ecosystems, plants, animals, and people. Thus, preserving these domains' sustainable health is crucial to achieving the planet's overall health. The Indians came up with this idea many thousands of years ago. They revered inanimate items, flora and fauna, and even the ecosystem. As a result, unique maintenance systems have emerged for these various domains. *Aswa Chikithsa*, *Gaja Chikithsa*, revering water bodies-mountains-forests and preserving them, are some examples. *Vrkshayurveda* also falls under this category.

Vrkshayurveda covers a range of topics related to gardening, horticulture, soil conservation, plant nutrition, insect management, and environmental preservation. The Sanskrit terms *vrksa*, which means “tree,” and *ayurveda*, which means “life science,” are the roots of *vrkshayurveda*. The *Rg Veda* has the earliest mention of *vrkshayurveda*. The works of

Salihotra (400 BC)^[1] and *Surapala* (100 BC)^[2] are the most complete and reputable sources on *vrkshayurveda*. Few other well-known texts in this topic are *bruhat samhitha*^[3] (by *varahamihira*), *arthasasthra* (by *kodilya*), *Krishi parasara* (by maharshi parashara), *kashyapeeya krishisookti* (by *naharshi kashyapa*), and *viswvallabha* (by *chakrapani misra*).

This book “*Vrkshayurveda*,” book in the P.K. Warriar Commemoration series, is published by *arya vaidya sala kottakkal* in 2022. There are 12 chapters and 136 pages in this book. The source of this edition is the one published in 1945–1946 by *Vidvan K. Vasu Panikker* and commentary in Malayalam, by *K. Padmanabha Pilla Sastri* and with a thorough introduction by *Suranattu Kunjan Pilla*. The original text for this work is *Sarngadhara Padhathi* in Sanskrit language, written by *Sarngandhara acharya*, who is believed to have lived in the sixteenth century AD. The material of the old book has been fully reflected in the new edition. The book is expected to cost around 250 rupees in India.

2. BODY

The book is a perfect replica of the *Upavanavinoda*^[4] and all the chapters are covered in great detail. The botanical names of all 171 plants discussed in this book are also included here at the end. The chapters in this book are as follows.

Corresponding Author:

M. P. Sanal Kumar,
Scholar, Department of Panchakarma, VPSV Ayurveda College,
Kottakkal, Kerala, India.
Email: drsanalkumarmp@gmail.com

The book begins with the chapter on *Bhoomi Niroopana*, which is crucial to plant seeding. Here, the three primary classifications of land—*jangala*, or dry land; *anoopa*, or marshy land; and *sadharana*, or land possessing both *jangala* and *anoopa* characteristics – are explained. This chapter also covers soil according to *shad rasas*, or the six basic tastes, as well as where to plant and where not to plant. Chapter 2, *bheejothpathi vidhi*, describes land preparation, seed preservation, and seed sowing. The third chapter goes into detail on plant taxonomy. Here, their morphology and the part from which they grow are taken into consideration for the classification to categorize them. The general guidelines for plating saplings are covered in the next chapter, *Ropana Vidhana*. This chapter also covers appropriate planting season, pit depth, materials to be added before planting a plant, plating layouts and their benefits, good-evil plants, and which direction to plant certain trees.

Instruction on watering plants is the content of *Nishechanavidhi*. In addition to water, plants also require nourishment. *Poshana Vidhi* describes several methods and strategies to improve the health of the plants. This chapter describes general and particular preparations that can be made to boost a plant's yield of fruits and blooms. The seventh chapter covers the topics of pest management and shielding plants from natural disasters such as fire and storm. The tome equals human and trees in its roga origin in the chapter *Tharumikithsa*. According to this theory, all tree ailments are result from a *thi-dosha* imbalance, just as it does in human illness. Therefore, the specific characteristics of *vatha pitha kapha* plant varieties are given here and their treatments accordingly. In addition, this chapter covers *krimi chikithsa* (a remedy for bug annoyance) and injuries caused by wind, lightning, etc.

The ninth chapter offers suggestions on which trees, in terms of their benefits and drawbacks, should be planted close to the house. The chapter expressly suggests certain plants for certain outcomes, such as happiness and money. The chapter *Taru Mahima* uses several examples to illustrate that the benefits of tree planting, such as planting *thulasi* (*osmium sanctum*), will extend a person's life in *Vaikunda* by around a thousand years and planting *vilwa* (*Aegle marmelose*) will provide wealth and healthy progeny, among other benefits.

Chapter 11 of *Upavana Kriya* describes how to make a park. This article describes every aspect of an *Upavana*, or park, including a garden, a pond, a makeover hill, an open zoo with pets and birds, a summer resting area, and so on. In the final chapter, *Parishistam*, it is explained how the *vrkshayurveda* could help people by changing the properties of plants. This article describes several methods like altering the scent and color of flowers, such as dyeing cotton a different hue, planting plants that bloom regardless of the season, keeping ripe fruits from falling to the ground, and cultivating plants from other plant species, such as brinjal from mango seeds.

3. ANALYSIS

The entire life cycle of a plant is covered in the book. As per Indian philosophy, there is no distinction between *Prakruthi* (nature) and *Purusha* (life), as both are composed of *Thri doshas*, which, in turn, are made up of *pancha mahabhoothas*. Therefore, choosing land based on the plant's characteristics, it is crucial to increase the yield.^[3] The book includes a chapter called *tharu chikithsa* where the *dosha*-based characteristics of plants are detailed, which will give us a good idea of how to evaluate a plant's *dosha prakruthi* (character) like if a tree is tall, slender, dry, and lackluster, and its fruits ripen prematurely, it is considered to have *Vathika Prakruthi*. By assessing the dosha of the plant, we can select the land accordingly, which is very crucial for

increasing the productivity of a plant. It is quite difficult to determine a land's *Dosha prakruthi*; therefore, the text included some trees that grow on these lands so that we can readily recognize the lands by looking at these plants.

It is intriguing that this text specifically recommends sowing black gram and sesame seeds before planting the necessary plants. Since it is very difficult to obtain natural nitrogen, these pulses' roots will supply enough of it because some nitrogen-fixing bacteria are colonizing in their roots. It is said to smoke the seeds with *Vidanga* rice (*Embelia ribes*) to prevent them from being bitten by moths like pests and thus to preserve them for a long time. Natural techniques like this are better than using unnecessary chemicals. It will be fascinating to learn that, back then, morphology was used to try and categorize plants. This book provides such an explanation of the term "*vanaspathi*," which refers to a plant that has fruits but no flowers. In addition to improving the architecture and preventing growth retardation, this will save land. At present, the same process is being used to create large plantations.

Most bananas are propagated by suckers and rhizomes. However, *Ropana Vidhana Adhyaya* describes a method by which we can cultivate banana saplings from the seeds. Certain plants benefit from different types of fertilizers. For example, *yava* (barley) is a better fertilizer for coconut trees, pomegranates benefit from water after washing the fish, jack fruit trees benefit from *vacha* (*Acorus calamus*) decoction, and so on. It is especially advised to use *Kushtaadi choorna* (powder of *saussurea Lappa* group) for flowers that lack scent. The particular preparation known as *Kunapa jala* is mentioned in the *Poshana Vidhi* chapter. Numerous studies have been conducted on this preparation, and the results indicate that it is an excellent fertilizer for raising yields.^[4] To protect the plant from poisons and toxic rain, a nice and simple preparation is provided in the *Druma Raksha* chapter. It is quite simple to produce using white rice. These days, it will be advantageous for people to grow safe veggies in their courtyards. The chapter also highlights how beneficial ash is in shielding trees from the cold and snowfall.

The same principles used in Ayurveda are also acceptable here for treating plants. Thus, flavors that are sweet, sour, and salty will soothe *Vatha*, and so forth. If we planted some trees near our house, it would be quite pleasant and cool. However, according to *Vrkshayurveda*, not every tree should be planted close to a house. While some will experience unfavorable outcomes, others will experience favorable ones. Which ones are causing this effect is explained very clearly in this book. We may then plan our premises accordingly. It would be quite helpful when constructing a new house. The world's biggest problem right now is deforestation. The text claims that turning the world green will have some advantages. Planting certain trees, such as *vilwa* (*Aegle Marmelos*), is said to attract *Shiva's* grace. Encouragement of such actions, particularly when they are connected to a belief, will thereby promote the forestation.

The book's best section is *Upavanakriya*, which describes all the methods and concepts for creating a natural forest or park. It is evident that all the arms required for a park to provide entertainment for visitors have been discussed. It is regarded as a flaw in life if *upavana* is absent, the author says. *Chithreekaranam*, the last and final chapter, is an odd one. This chapter describes a number of tactics that are unimaginable in the modern world. It is also mentioned to alter fruit flavors and floral colors, create multi-colored blooms, and even create distinct fruit variety on the same tree. This may have something to do with the current popularity

of genetic engineering. Technique to create bonsai tree is also mentioned in this chapter.

4. CONCLUSION

The majority of Indian sciences' potencies have not yet been thoroughly studied. Similar to how study on *Vrkshayurveda* is abundant. Many natural methods are offered here to boost output, safeguard the plant, cure illnesses, and even make some fascinating changes to the plants and their byproducts and all of this should be thoroughly examined. This book offers a wealth of practical exercises. However, some concepts might seem fantastical to the average reader. These seemingly magical ideas require scientific validation to gain wider acceptance. The book by Kottakkal Arya Vaidya Sala has both an English and Malayalam translation, academics can compare each verse's word-for-word meaning and get its whole significance. Since this book also includes additional information from sources such as *Charaka Samhitha* and *Kasyapa Samhitha*, among others, its credibility has also improved. The book is a useful addition to any home library because it discusses plants, which are an inevitable component of human existence.

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9. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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10. DATA AVAILABILITY

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11. PUBLISHERS NOTE

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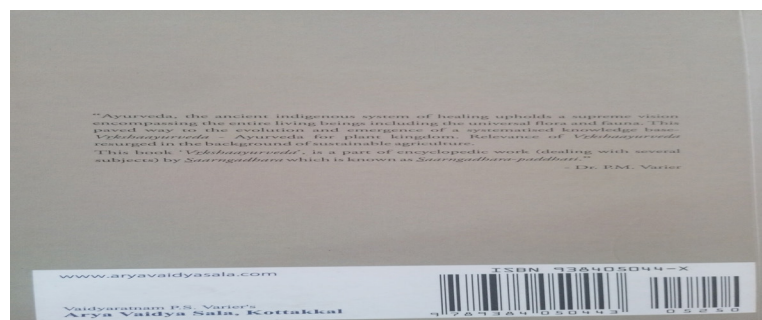
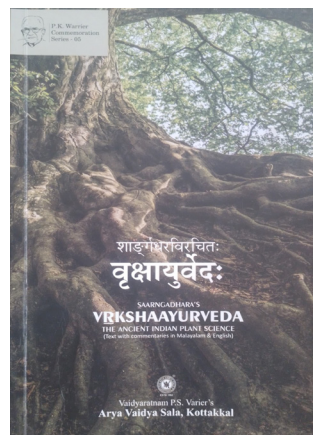
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Chapter number	Chapter name
1	<i>Bhumi Niroopana</i> (Selection of Soil)
2	<i>Bhijothpathi vidhi</i> (rules of sowing of seeds)
3	<i>Paadapa vivaksha</i> (methods of propagation)
4	<i>Ropana vidhanam</i> (process of plantation)
5	<i>Nishechana vidhi</i> (rules of watering of plants)
6	<i>Poshana vidhi</i> (rules for the nourishment of plants)
7	<i>Druma Raksha</i> (rules for the protection of trees)
8	<i>Tharu chikithsa</i> (treatments of plants)
9	<i>Nivaasaasanna tharu</i> (good and evil omens relating to residence near trees)
10	<i>Tharu mahima</i> (glory of trees)
11	<i>Upavana prakriya</i> (construction of gardens)
12	<i>Vrkshayurveda parishishtam</i> (botanical marvels)
