

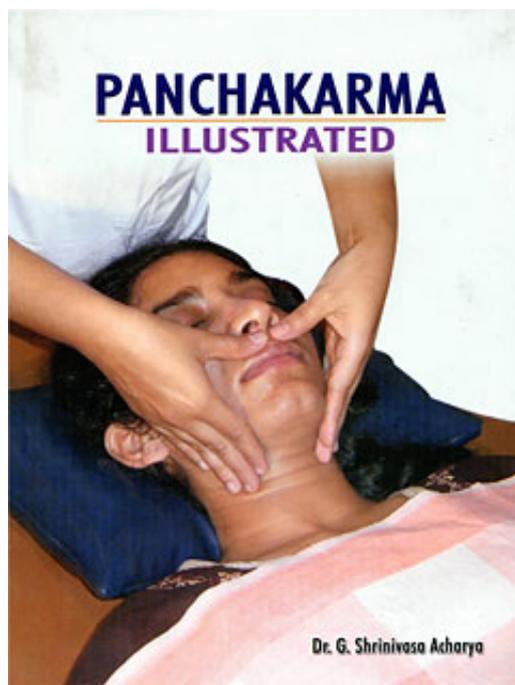
G. Shrinivasa Acharya Panchakarma illustrated

Reading excerpt

[Panchakarma illustrated](#)

of [G. Shrinivasa Acharya](#)

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Foreword

"*Panchakarma Illustrated*" authored by Dr G. Shrinivasa Acharya is a new addition to the contemporary Ayurvedic literature. This new book has attempted to present this important subject with necessary inputs of practical wisdom and skill. Most of the treatment procedures have been illustrated with sketches, photographs and diagrams making the subject easy to follow. The book describes in good details the *Purva Karma* measures such as *Snehana*, *Swedana* and *Abhyanga* besides special treatment procedures developed utilizing the essential components of oleation, massage and sudation. The major part of the book is devoted to such therapeutic aspects which is followed by the Classical *Panchakarma* measures such as *Vamana*, *Virechana*, *Vasti*, *Shirovirechana* and *Rakta-mokshana*. The write-up is lucid and the emphasis is on practical utility. Incorporation of plenty of diagrammatic and photographic illustrations is the highlight of this book. The book under review "*Panchakarma Illustrated*" is a good handbook on *Panchakarma* therapy and its contemporary usage.

Ayurved is one of the most ancient systems of health care and medicine, its antiquity going back to the *Vedas*. In spite of many unfavourable circumstances Ayurved continued to flourish all through the ages and has remained in unbroken professional practice of thousands of years. The compilation of *Laghutrayi* texts after the classic *Brihatrayi* with a range of additional new information is the testimony of progressive outlook of Ayurved. It is interesting to observe that during last few decades there has been a tremendous resurgence of interest in Ayurved as a positive health science all over the world. It is believed that the ancient science of Ayurved is based on such fundamental principles and approaches which transcend time and space and hence Ayurved inspire of being very old, is equally contemporary and futuristic. Ayurved is now passing through a phase of Revival and Renaissance.

Ayurved is based on the theory of *Samanya* and *Vishesha* i.e. Homology Vs Heterology operating on the comprehensively holistic four-dimensional life entity, *the Ayu*, comprising of Body, the Mind and the Soul as a continuum. The physical body is *Panchabhautika* i.e. made-up of the five fundamental qualities of Matter. These qualities of matter maintain an equilibrium with the Ecosystem and the Universe through the inbuilt *Samanya* and *Vishesha* mechanism. This

universal state of equilibrium i.e. *Samya* is the principal feature of *Swasthya* i.e. Health and the reverse i.e. *Vaishamya* is the basis of *Vyadhi* or Disease. Ayurved advocates a range of promotive, preventive and curative measures in terms of judicial life-styles, diet and medications to restore the eco-bio-balance. It is in this context that Ayurved describes the schedule of *Sadvritta*, *Swasthavritta*, *Ahara-Vihara* and the unique therapeutics i.e. *Aushadhi* based on the doctrine of *Samshodhana* and *Samshamana*. *Panchakarma* therapy, which is subject matter of the present book, is the technology of *Samshodhana* therapy of Ayurved. *Samshodhana* essentially refers to bio-purification of the body aiming to cleanse the macro and micro channels of the biological system which is essential to permit free flow of nutrients, energies and medicaments used during therapy besides permitting the free passage of excretables from the body.

The human body is made-up of several organs, tissues and systems which perform different functions essential for maintaining the life process. The basic structural unit of life is a single Cell which consists of its boundaries i.e. the cell-membrane covering a range of dynamic sub-cellular structures. The cell-membrane performs the most dynamic function of the molecular transport system. Similarly all the visceral organs are lined by a dynamic membrane system which is responsible for the transport system in the concerning organ and tissue. The entire membrane system is so designed that it functions in a rhythmic continuum. Very similar to this contemporary concept of micro transport system of the biological assembly Ayurved propounds a comprehensive concept of *Srotas* system. According to Ayurved the human body is made-up of innumerable channels i.e. *Srotamsi* - '*Srotamayam hi shariram*'. A *Srotas* is a macro or micro structure which may have a space inside, may have openings, has contents in the inner space and which has inherent tendency to vibrate and move. This definition of *Srotas* encompasses the major channels of the body like gastrointestinal tract, urinary tract, respiratory tract etc. besides the medium size channels of the body like the micro tubular structures such as Nephrons, Seminiferous tubulus etc. The minutest unit of *Srotas* system is a single Cell which too has space inside, has openings in the form of pores of the cell-membrane, has contents inside and it vibrates. Thus starting from the single Cell up to large system channels of the body are all a continuum of membrane system and in all probability the membrane system as described in contemporary system of biology is comparable to the concept of *Srotas* in Ayurved.

By continued use, wear and tear, environmental pollution and many other such insults there is a natural tendency of damage, disruption and blockade of the *Srotamsi*. The membrane system gets thickened and obliterated in due course of

time because of factors mentioned above. This situation interrupts the *Srotas* function and biological transport system leading in turn not only to loss of function but also to further structural distortion. This is the state of *Srotodushti*. If such a situation is allowed to continue it gives way to different kinds of diseases depending upon the nature and the extent of *Srotas* - distortion and its site.

The *Panchakarma* therapy is essentially designed to restore the integrity of *Srotas* system in the body in health and disease. Although the *Srotas* morbidities are all mixed impurities, there are always possibilities that the morbidities could be categorized with dominance of one of the three *Doshas* namely *Kapha*, *Pitta* and *Vata*. Accordingly the *Panchakarma* measures are 3 designed in such a way that they have some degree of specific action. The *Vamana karma* is specific to elimination of *Kapha*, the *Virechana karma* is specific to elimination of *Pitta* and *Vasti karma* is specific for purification of *Vata*. Hence there is a need of developing markers and parameters to monitor the rate of *Tridosha* specific bio-purification during *Panchakarma* therapy in patients, so that the specific efficacy of these bio-purificatory procedures may be ascertained on scientific lines.

The purificatory effect of *Panchakarma* therapy measures and allied therapies generally take place at two levels - (1) Transmembrane visceral purification of the body through *Pradhana karmas* like *Vamana*, *Virechana* and *Vasti*; (2) Transdermal purification of the body through *Bahya parimarjana* procedures of *Snehana*, *Swedana*, *Abhyanga* and such other therapies. It is understood that most of the procedures of *Keraliya Panchakarma* produce their effect through transdermal purification of the body besides their additional physiotherapeutic benefits. The purificatory effect of classical *Pradhana karmas* is through transmembrane elimination.

Thus the *Panchakarma* therapy and the allied therapeutic practices are essentially biopurificatory procedures aiming to cleanse the channels of the body optimizing the natural body functions. However many of these procedures have interim physiotherapeutic benefits and these practices are prescribed by Ayurvedic practitioners as routine prescriptions of treatment for patients of different chronic diseases especially the conditions of neuro-muscular deficits and osteoarticular ailments. The later part of the efficacy of *Panchakarma* therapy is more popular in present times and it is this dimension which has made this important branch of Ayurved to survive down the ages. The traditional practices of *Panchakarma* as prevalent in Kerala ordinarily fall in this category.

(x)

I consider it a useful handbook on the subject and congratulate the author and the publishers for this good contribution to the Ayurvedic literature. It is hoped that the book will be useful for student, teachers and practitioners of Ayurved in their day-to-day practice.

Jan. 10,2006

Prof. Ram Harsh Singh

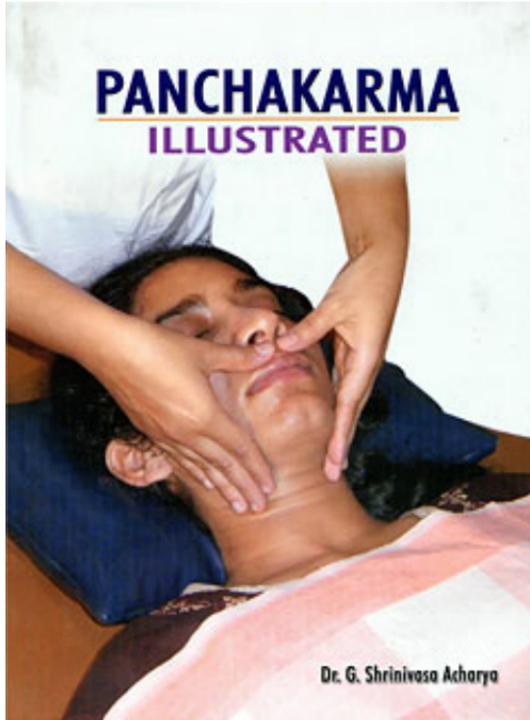
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