

INTEGRATING HASTYĀYURVĒDA (AN ANCIENT TREATISE ON GAJA-CHIKITSĀ)
INTO VETERINARY MEDICINE: NEW DIRECTION FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICESapana Choudhary^{1*}, Dr. Geetha Kanchan² and Dr. Ch. Ramadevi³¹PG Scholar, Department of Ayurveda Samhita & Siddhanta, Dr B.R.K.R Govt. Ayurvedic College and Hospital, Hyderabad, Telangana - 500038.²Assistant Professor, Department of Ayurveda Samhita & Siddhanta, Dr B.R.K.R Govt. Ayurvedic College and Hospital, Hyderabad, Telangana - 500038.³I/C Principal and I/C HOD, Department of Ayurveda Samhita & Siddhanta, Dr B.R.K.R Govt. Ayurvedic College and Hospital, Hyderabad, Telangana - 500038.

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda's holistic approach extends beyond human health to nourish and treat the well-being of animals and plants. In the past, Ayurveda expanded into various horizons such as Vṛkṣa and Pasu-Ayurveda. *Hastyayurveda*, a subsect of Pasu-Ayurveda by Palakapya, focuses on elephant health and treatment. However, there is limited literature on this subject, which hinders research and innovation. It serves as a comprehensive and rare resource on *gaja-chikitsa*. Therefore, there is significant potential for further study to illuminate these subjects and *samhitas*, advancing Ayurveda and inspiring future scholars, practitioners, educators, and students to uncover concealed information and investigate such *samhitas*.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Veterinary Medicine, Palkapya, *Hastyayurveda*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, referred to as the "science of life," extends beyond human health to include the well-being of animals and plants. *Hastyayurveda*, specifically, is a comprehensive text by Sage Palkapya that focuses on the care and treatment of elephants. It serves as a valuable resource for understanding the unique needs and management of these animals. India is home to a significant population of wild Asian elephants, estimated to be over 30,000. These elephants face various health challenges, including both infectious and non-infectious diseases.

Treatises like *Hastyayurveda* provide detailed insights into the health, care, and management of elephants, offering valuable knowledge for those involved in elephant conservation. By understanding their health needs and diseases, conservationists and caretakers can implement better management practices, ultimately contributing to the protection and preservation of these majestic animals. Historically, elephants were indeed used in warfare, but today their roles have shifted primarily to zoos, temples, national forests, and wildlife sanctuaries. Unfortunately, many elephants suffer from poor health and reproductive failures, which, along with

various infectious and non-infectious diseases, have led to increased mortality rates.

This situation underscores the need for comprehensive studies on elephant diseases and their treatments.

AIM: To explore the integration of Hastyāyurvēda, an ancient treatise on Gajachikitsā, into modern veterinary medicine, proposing new directions for research and practice.

OBJECTIVES: To critically analyze the subject matter and evaluate the contribution of *Hastyayurveda*.

METHODS: Published and unpublished resources of *Hastyayurveda*, available both offline and on the internet^[1], were thoroughly screened, and the content is presented in a systematic manner.

Contents of the Text

Hastyayurveda is divided into four main sthanas and consists of approximately 160 chapters and around 12,000 shlokas. This comprehensive text covers various aspects of elephant care, health management, and treatment, making it a vital resource for those studying and working with elephants.

Author: Palkapya Palkapya.

The present book is edited by Pandit Shivadutta Sharma and was printed at Anandashrama Press in 1894.^[2] A copy of *Hastyayurveda* is available at the Raja Serfoji Saraswati Mahal Library in Tanjavur, South India.

Time

The derivation of *Hastyayurveda* is based on the conversation between Rompada, the king of Anga, and Muni Palkapya. Rompada was a contemporary of Dashratha, the king of Ayodhya, and Palkapya appears in the *Agnipurana* of Vyasa (with the period of the Purana possibly ranging from 200 BC to 500 AD).

Therefore, the time period of Muni Palkapya is believed to be before the Purana era.^[3]

Maharogasthana^[4]: The first *sthana* of *Hastyayurveda*, consists of 18 chapters.

The initial chapter, *Vananucharitadhyaya*, begins with a *mangalaacharna* (auspicious invocation) to Lord Ganesha and includes mythological narratives about the origin of elephants from Lord Brahma, as well as the story of how Sage Palkapya was delivered by a female elephant.

The treatise can be studied by the *Brahmins* (priests and scholars), *Kshatriyas* (warriors and rulers), and *Vaishyas* (merchants and landowners). This indicates that only three varnas are permitted to access and learn from the text, while it is restricted for those who do not follow Vedic traditions (*nastika*).

In this section, Palkapya describes approximately 11 diseases, detailing their *nidana* (causes), types, *lakshana* (symptoms), *sadhya* (curable) and *asadhya* (incurable) characteristics, and treatments for conditions like *jwara* (fever), *pandu*, *shiroroga* (head diseases), and *netraroga* (eye diseases).

He also discusses therapies such as *kshara* (alkaline treatment)^[5] and *agnikarma* (cauterization)^[6] for *padaroga* (leg ailments), and incorporates *daivyaprashya chikitsa* (divine or spiritual therapies) like *havan* (sacred fire offerings), *mantra* (chants), and *balikarma* (ritualistic offerings) for specific ailments. This comprehensive approach reflects the depth of knowledge within *Hastyayurveda* regarding elephant care and health management.

Kshudraroga sthana^[7]: *Kshudrarogasthana*, the second *sthana* of *Hastyayurveda*, consists of 72 chapters and discusses approximately 62 diseases, detailing their *nidana* (causes), *lakshana* (symptoms), and *chikitsa* (treatment).

In this section, significant emphasis is placed on *visha chikitsa* (poison management), covering topics like *visha*

bhakshna lakshana (symptoms of poison ingestion), *vishadata lakshana*^[8], *dushivish lakshana*^[9], and various types of snakes (*sarpa*) and their bites (*sarpadamstra*).^[10]

After addressing these toxicological concerns, Palkapya goes on to describe diseases such as *ama* (ama or toxic residue), *grahani* (intestinal disorders), *ardita* (hemiplegia), *manyagraha*, *balakshya*, *mutrasanga* (urinary issues), *gulma* (abdominal masses), *hrudyaroga* (heart-related issues), *shularoga* (pain disorders), *bhutaagraha pravesha* (spiritual disturbances), and *hastonmita roga*.

Additionally, this *sthana* includes information about the *poshanaprakara* (nourishment) of elephants and *shataritu* (the six seasons), providing a holistic understanding of elephant health and management.

Shalyasthana^[11]: *Shalya Sthana*, the third *sthana* of *Hastyayurveda*, consists of 34 chapters and provides a comprehensive examination of various surgical aspects related to elephants. In this section, detailed descriptions of *vrana* (wounds)^[12] are provided, including their *adhisthana* (location), *aakruti* (shape), *srava* (exudation), types, and the three dosha-related classifications: *vataja*, *pittaja*, and *kaphaja vrana*. The concept of *sadhya kshata vrana* and *arista lakshana* is also addressed.

Following this, Palkapya discusses *sharira rachana* (anatomical structures), detailing the number of *danta* (teeth), *nakha* (nails), *marma* (vital points), *shira* (veins), *asthi* (bones), and *sandhi* (joints). The body is divided into 15 parts, and the *sthana* (site) of *vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha* is also elaborated upon.

The section further explores *sharira kriya* (physiological functions) related to *panchamahabhuta* and *saptadhatu* (seven bodily tissues). Palkapya notes that Ishwara is the cause of *jagat utpatti* (creation of the universe).

He explains concepts like *ritumati*^[13], *garbhadharan prakar* (concept of conception), *garbhini lakshan*, *prasav prakara* (methods of delivery), and *mudhagarbha chikitsa* (treatment for obstructed fetus). Additionally, *asthibhanga chikitsa* (treatment for bone fractures), etc., is discussed.

The text covers *shastrapranidhana*, *agnipranidhana*, and 10 types of shastras, *yantra prakara*, *yantra nirmana vidhi*, *pratikarmakriya*, and *kshara prayoga prakara*. Lastly, references to conditions like *vishakita*, and *vyaladamstra* (diseases from injuries) are included, along with *danta udharanaprakar* (tooth extraction methods) and *havanaadi* (sacred chants or rituals). This *sthana* thus encompasses a wide range of surgical knowledge pertinent to elephant health.

Uttarsthana^[14]: *Uttarsthana*, the fourth *sthana* of *Hastyayurveda*, comprises 36 chapters and covers a variety of important topics related to elephant health and

management. In this section, Palkapya discusses the construction of elephant shelters (*hastishala*) according to the six seasons (*shat ritu*). He also elaborates on the appropriate dietary practices (*bhakshnayogya aahar*) and the procedures for *snehapana* for elephants.

The text includes information on *nasya* (nasal therapy) and *basti* (enema) procedures, along with their proper (*samyaka*) and improper (*asamyaka*) *lakshanas*. Additionally, it describes 12 types of *jalaauka* (leeches)^[15], differentiating between *savisha* (poisonous) and *nirvisha* (non-poisonous) varieties, and their specific characteristics.

Palkapya categorizes elephants into three types: *uttama* (excellent), *madhyama* (medium), and *adhama* (inferior), and provides a description of *kala vibhaga* (seasonal divisions) and the *prakruti* (constitution) of *vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha*.

DISCUSSION

The field of elephant care, as detailed in *Hastyayurveda* by Acharya Palakapya, is a testament to the depth of ancient Ayurvedic knowledge, extending beyond human well-being to include the care and treatment of animals, particularly elephants. This ancient text provides a holistic and comprehensive approach to elephant health, offering insights into not only the treatment of diseases but also their prevention, diet, and overall care. Through its detailed divisions into four *sthanas*, *Hastyayurveda* presents a multifaceted approach to understanding and managing the health of elephants, which are both culturally significant and ecologically important.

One of the key strengths of *Hastyayurveda* is its comprehensive nature, offering detailed explanations of both major and minor diseases affecting elephants. The first *sthana*, *Maharogasthana*, addresses serious diseases in great detail, providing Ayurvedic practitioners with a wealth of knowledge to diagnose and treat complex health issues in elephants. These insights would have been invaluable to ancient caretakers of elephants, enabling them to manage conditions such as gastrointestinal, respiratory, and infectious diseases that could otherwise be fatal. Additionally, the second *sthana*, *Kshudraroga Sthana*, offers practical guidance on less severe but still significant ailments. This comprehensive approach ensures that elephants are cared for holistically, addressing both immediate and long-term health concerns.

The third *sthana*, *Shalyasthana*, is particularly remarkable for its detailed exploration of surgical techniques, a testament to the sophisticated medical knowledge possessed by Ayurvedic practitioners in ancient times. The fact that elephants, due to their large size, present unique challenges in terms of surgery and treatment makes this section especially significant. It suggests that ancient Indian veterinary care included not only herbal remedies and therapies but also practical

interventions that required skill and precision. This acknowledgment of the importance of surgical care for large animals reflects a broader understanding of how animals' physiological needs differ from those of humans, a principle that is central to modern veterinary science.

Another important aspect of *Hastyayurveda* is its treatment of Shodhana therapies, particularly *Vasti* (enemas) and *Nasya* (nasal therapy). These therapeutic techniques are integral to Ayurveda and are used for detoxifying and balancing the body. In the context of elephants, these therapies may help address chronic conditions or underlying imbalances in the body that can lead to disease. The use of such therapies further emphasizes the holistic nature of Ayurvedic medicine, which seeks to balance both the physical and mental health of animals. This approach to elephant care would have been groundbreaking at the time and continues to offer valuable insights into alternative treatment options.

The text's focus on toxicology and poisoning provides another key area of interest. Elephants, being large and herbivorous, are at risk of ingesting toxic plants or being poisoned through environmental contamination. The detailed descriptions of the symptoms of poisoning and the remedies offered by Ayurvedic practitioners show an advanced understanding of the dangers posed by toxins. This knowledge, along with modern research into elephant poisoning, could lead to more effective prevention and treatment strategies, which are vital to protecting these animals from harm.

Hastyayurveda also provides an extensive framework for treating external injuries, a common occurrence for elephants, especially those in captivity or working in the logging or tourism industries. The book's treatments for various types of wounds, including herbal remedies and external therapies, offer a practical and accessible guide for caretakers. Modern veterinary practices can incorporate these traditional treatments into their toolkit, exploring their efficacy in wound healing and recovery for elephants in contemporary settings.

In conclusion, *Hastyayurveda* offers invaluable insights into the health and well-being of elephants, combining preventive, therapeutic, and surgical care with an understanding of the animal's broader environmental and social needs. The ancient knowledge contained in this text aligns with modern principles of animal welfare, which emphasize a holistic, preventative, and compassionate approach to care. By integrating Ayurvedic practices with contemporary veterinary medicine, we can create a more comprehensive and sustainable approach to elephant care that benefits both the animals and the communities that rely on them. Further research into the synergy between these two approaches could open up new avenues for improving elephant health and wellbeing, offering more effective treatments and preventive measures that reflect the rich

wisdom of ancient traditions alongside the advancements of modern science.

CONCLUSION

Hastyāyurveda is a comprehensive and significant text focused on elephants. It covers various aspects, including the genealogical, physical, mental, and intellectual characteristics of elephants, as well as their nutritional needs for optimal growth. Additionally, it provides detailed guidance on the diagnosis and treatment of diseases affecting these majestic animals. Ayurveda, with its rich repository of ancient manuscripts like *Hastyayurveda*, offers valuable insights into elephant care (*gaja chikitsa*). However, much of this knowledge remains underexplored by modern scientists and researchers.

Occasionally, enthusiasts bring these texts to light, but there is still a significant gap in their translation, transcription, and critical analysis in formal research efforts. There is great potential for further study to shed light on these topics and *samhitas*, which could help advance the field of Ayurveda.

Encouraging future scholars, practitioners, educators, and students to uncover and investigate this concealed knowledge can lead to better care and management practices for elephants, benefiting both the animals and the field of Ayurveda.

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