



Research Paper

A Review Article on Gaja Chikitsa (Treatment of Elephants) w.s.r to “Mathangaleela” an available Malayalam text book.

Dr. Shihabudheen Gurukkal C H

(Associate Professor, Department of Ayurveda Samhita and Siddhanta, Sri Sri College of Ayurvedic Science and Research Hospital, Sri Sri University, Cuttack.)

ABSTRACT: Ayurveda, the oldest existing medical science of India, which is not only limited for the health of human. Although, much literature exists on Ashwayurveda, Gajayurveda and Vrikshayurveda, it has not been well explored. Gajashastram is written by sage Palakapya. The book is an encyclopaedia on elephant care and is a good read for anyone interested in animal welfare, elephant-lore, history of elephant lore in India, Ayurveda and veterinary sciences. The book deals with elephant care in total except for the diseases and treatment which are dealt in Hastayurveda by the same author.

Matanga Lila is a treatise in Sanskrit dealing with the life and behaviour of elephants, which is a technical science dealing with the taming and training of elephants, and also the anatomy and zoological features of elephants¹. It is a treatise in 263 stanzas divided into twelve chapters of varying length. In the treatise, the author's name has been mentioned as Nilakantha, but nothing more is known about the author.

Franklin Edgerton, who published a translation of the text to English, has argued that the content of the text represents the codification of orally-transmitted traditions of practical knowledge. In support of this contention, he noted that the "signature texts such as the Matanga-Lila" contain over 130 technical words, for which there are no clear Sanskrit etymologies.²

KEYWORDS: Gaja Chikitsa, Lakshana, Musth, Manhouts, Ashwayurvedha, Mrgaayurveda,

Received 01 Nov., 2023; Revised 08 Nov., 2023; Accepted 10 Nov., 2023 © The author(s) 2023.

Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. INTRODUCTION

Mathangaleela is another classical Sanskrit text on elephantology written by Neelakanta and edited by Ganapathy Sastri. Neelakanta is believed to be hailing from Kerala in southern India. Mathangaleela is very popular among people in Kerala. For about 400 years, before no other commentaries are arise on *Matangalila*. After that, Mahakavi Vallathol wrote a commentary on *Matangalila*.³ Then after available an ‘Arthavedi’ translation on *Matangalila* by Brahmashri Ceruvalli Narayanan Namboodiri.⁴

II. AIM AND OBJECTIVE

Aim of this article is to explore the ancient Gaja Chikitsa book “Mathangaleela” at deeper level and to add new scientific data to the existing science.

III. ABOUT THE AUTHOR (TIRUMANGALATH NILAKANTHA)

Matangaleela (the play or game of elephants), written by Neelakanta, is another classic written in Sanskrit on elephant mythology. Neelakanta is believed to be hailing from Kerala in southern India. Mathangaleela is very popular among people in Kerala. According to Ullur S. Parameshvara Iyer, Matangalila is the work of Tirumangalath Nilakantha, the author of Manushyalayacandrika (Manushyalaya Candrika) and Kavyollasa.

IV. CONTENT ANALYSIS OF MATANGALILA

Matangalila is a very short but beautiful work., in 12 cantos, which contains only 263 verses. It gives an exclusive picture of elephant science. For writing this text, the author chooses some models⁵.

There are twelve chapters in this text.

Table no. 1- Chapters of the book

Chapter	Chapter Name	Content
1	Gajotpatti	The origin of elephants
2.	Shubaha Lakshanam	Favourable marks of elephants
3.	Ashubha Lakshana	Unfavourable marks of Elephants
4.	Ayur Lakshana	Good Symptoms of longevity of elephants
5	Vaya Lakshana	The marks of age of elephants
6	Maana Niraya	Different mesurements of elephants
7	Mulya Vishesha	Prices of elephants
8	Sathwa Bhedha	Marks of character (Maanasika Prakruthi) of elephants
9.	Mada Bheda	Symptoms of must time of elephants
10.	Gajha Graha Vicharam	Techniques for catching of elephants
11.	Gajha Rakshaadhi Vicharam	Keeping of elephants and their daily and seasonal regiment
12.	Nagaadhyaksha Lakshanam	The qualities of elephant mahout.

Chapter I:

This chapter deals with the origin of elephants as well as sage Palakappya. According to this book elephants once had the capacity to fly in the air. Once they perched on a branch of a tree and because of the weight it broke and fell upon the hermitage of Sage Dirghatapas (Fig. 1). The enraged sage cursed them and elephants lost the capacity to fly. Some of them went to Brahma and requested for recourse and for the cure of diseases, which they are likely to be afflicted with by the curse. The Lord gave them a promise that a child will be born out of a cow elephant that will be named as Palakappya. Palakappya born out of a cow elephant grew with elephants and learned everything about elephants. Palakappya tells the King Anga that elephants descended from Airavatha and the seven sacred elephants born out of the Cosmic Shell are to be zealously tended.

This chapter also narrates different synonyms of elephants and their etymologies in verses starting from 31. It is explained why the elephants lack sweat glands on their skin unlike other animals and also the presence of intra-abdominal testes. The condition of musth is discussed in detail⁶.

Chapter II:

The chapter explains the lakshnanas of the elephants. This classification is based on the elephant's colour, length, height, sensitivity and other qualities. This chapter contains 17 verses. The best elephants are those, which share the king's pathos and fight in favour of the king. It is said that the elephants are driving the chariot and fighting.⁷

Chapter III:

Different unfavourable marks of an elephant are described in this chapter. They include the number of nails, presence of external testes, very short trunk fingers etc. Undesirable marks on the trunk, penis, and on the tail are given in verses two and three. A list of undesirable marks that are seen on the other parts of the body is also listed. Another warning is not to have a pregnant cow or a cow with a calf at foot⁸.

Chapter IV:

The chapter deals with marks of longevity state and best elephants. It includes only 4 verses. This chapter explains the full length of life of the elephants. In twelve Lakshana's how many have for the elephant, for one lakshana it will increase 10 years of life span of elephant. The elephant which named as

- a.Mrgajaathi _ - 40 Years
- b.Mandhajaathi- 80 Years
- c.Badhra Jadhi -120Yeras⁹

Chapter V:

The chapter explains the different life stages of elephant. The animal is named differently according to their age and deeds. It is depicted in 23 verses¹⁰.

Table no.2- Showing different life stages of elephant

Age	Name
Up to 12 years	Adhama (Alpaayushkaala)
12to 24 years	Madhyama (Madhyayushkaala)
24to 60 years	Uthama (Deergaayushkaala)

Chapter VI:

The chapter is given the title 'decisions of measurements. Standard measurement protocols for each class of elephants are given. Length of the elephant is given as the measurement from the eye to the root of the tail, height from the shoulder to the bottom of the toenail and circumference at the girth¹¹.

Chapter VII:

The chapter is the smallest one in *Matangalila*. It consists of only 3 verses. It narrates the method to calculate the price of elephants. The prices are calculated in accordance with their quantities. The statement given is as follows 'the price agreed to by both the buyer and the seller shall be the best price when the seller feels that he got the right price and the buyer feels that he gave only the right price and not more'¹².

Chapter VIII:

The chapter with the heading 'Signs of Character' describes the marks that may indicate differences in physical and mental characters. By these characters elephants divided under eight categories, they are

- a. Deva Satwam
- b. Asura sathwam
- c. Gandharwa Stahwam
- d. Yaksha Sathwam
- e. Rakshasa Sathwam
- f. Manushya Sathwam
- g. Pishaja Sathwam
- h. Sarpa Sathwam¹³.

Chapter IX:

The chapter provides a full description of musth, different stages of musth and important behavioural changes during musth. The elephant is periodically subject to a strange condition called *must*. The *must* is the discharge of fluid from the temporal glands, which are situated on midway of the forehead. It flows from eyes, palate, nob, temples, ears, naval, trunk and nipples and from the hairs of the body. The Lakshanas mentioned in the time of must are

- a. Praharsha (Great mirth)
- b. Sheegratha (Movements will be very quick)
- c. Gandhe (Smell of discharge of fluid)
- d. Gathir Dehasya (Continues movement of Body)
- e. Kanthatha (Splendor)
- f. Krodha (Anger)
- g. Veerya (Very powerful)
- h. Abheeruthwam (Courage)¹⁴.

Chapter X:

The chapter deals with capture techniques. The commonly described five methods, stockade (khedda), pit, noosing, use of a receptive cow as a decoy and mela shikkar are given along with the merits and demerits of each method. It describes the five methods of catching wild elephants and it contains 14 stanzas (verses). The last two methods some time leads to injury or death of the elephant, so those methods should not use for capturing elephants¹⁵.

The five methods are: —

1. Varikarma
2. Vashavilobanam
3. Anugati
4. Apaata
5. Avapata.

Chapter XI:

Management of elephants is the topic of discussion in this chapter. Both daily protocols as well as the seasonal changes required are given. It mentions the food items according to, each stage, medicines, on particular occasions, special attention at the time of rut etc¹⁶.

Chapter XII:

Qualities of elephant managers, mahouts, and trainers are described. Various commands including visual signs, oral, percussion, and prodding are given. The mahouts are mainly in three types, the last one should be avoided. They are

- a. Rekhavaan (Uthama- believes the qualities of elephant)
- b. Yukthiman (Madhyama- believes the qualities of elephant and him)
- c. Balavaan (Adhama- believes only his quality and won't take care of elephant)¹⁷

V. CONCLUSION

Ayurveda not only deals with the treatment of human beings but also animals. As Hastyayurveda & Matangalila also deal with the diseases of elephants. Matangalila is the best and known Sanskrit work on elephant science, by Nilakantha. There are many other works available on elephant science, but Matangalila considerably deviates from them. According to Gajashastras, there is no other work in Kerala, got famous like Matangalila.

REFERENCES:

- [1]. Wink, A. (1997). *Al-Hind the Making of the Indo-Islamic World: The Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquest: 11Th-13th Centuries* Volume 2. BRILL. p. 100. ISBN 9789004102361.
- [2]. Locke, P. (2008). "Captive elephant management, the Tharu, and the Nepali state" (PDF). International Institute for Asian Studies Newsletter. 49: 14. Retrieved 7 November 2016.
- [3]. Vallathol. Matangalila. Priyadarsini Printers. Cheruthuruthy. 1981
- [4]. Nilakanthas, Mathangaleela, Bramhasree Cheruvalli Narayanan Namboodhiri, 1st edition, Devi book stall, kodungallore, 2005.
- [5]. Nilakanthas, Mathangaleela, Bramhasree Cheruvalli Narayanan Namboodhiri, 8th edition, Devi book stall, kodungallore, 2019, Page No: 24
- [6]. Nilakanthas, Mathangaleela, Bramhasree Cheruvalli Narayanan Namboodhiri, 8th edition, Devi book stall, kodungallore, 2019, Page No: 25
- [7]. Nilakanthas, Mathangaleela, Bramhasree Cheruvalli Narayanan Namboodhiri, 8th edition, Devi book stall, kodungallore, 2019, Page No: 49
- [8]. Nilakanthas, Mathangaleela, Bramhasree Cheruvalli Narayanan Namboodhiri, 8th edition, Devi book stall, kodungallore, 2019, Page No: 57
- [9]. Nilakanthas, Mathangaleela, Bramhasree Cheruvalli Narayanan Namboodhiri, 8th edition, Devi book stall, kodungallore, 2019, Page No: 59
- [10]. Nilakanthas, Mathangaleela, Bramhasree Cheruvalli Narayanan Namboodhiri, 8th edition, Devi book stall, kodungallore, 2019, Page No: 61
- [11]. Nilakanthas, Mathangaleela, Bramhasree Cheruvalli Narayanan Namboodhiri, 8th edition, Devi book stall, kodungallore, 2019, Page No: 71
- [12]. Nilakanthas, Mathangaleela, Bramhasree Cheruvalli Narayanan Namboodhiri, 8th edition, Devi book stall, kodungallore, 2019, Page No: 77
- [13]. Nilakanthas, Mathangaleela, Bramhasree Cheruvalli Narayanan Namboodhiri, 8th edition, Devi book stall, kodungallore, 2019, Page No: 79
- [14]. Nilakanthas, Mathangaleela, Bramhasree Cheruvalli Narayanan Namboodhiri, 8th edition, Devi book stall, kodungallore, 2019, Page No: 88
- [15]. Nilakanthas, Mathangaleela, Bramhasree Cheruvalli Narayanan Namboodhiri, 8th edition, Devi book stall, kodungallore, 2019, Page No: 99
- [16]. Nilakanthas, Mathangaleela, Bramhasree Cheruvalli Narayanan Namboodhiri, 8th edition, Devi book stall, kodungallore, 2019, Page No: 107
- [17]. Nilakanthas, Mathangaleela, Bramhasree Cheruvalli Narayanan Namboodhiri, 8th edition, Devi book stall, kodungallore, 2019, Page No: 147