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The Transition of Shalakyia Tantra from Ancient Texts to Ayurvedic Classics

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Abstract

One of the eight branches of Ayurveda, along with Netragat roga, Karnagat roga, and Mukhghat roga, that focuses on ailments and disorders of the head and neck area is Shalakyia Tantra. Ancient texts documenting its path through Ayurvedic classics may be found; some of the most significant ones are as follows:

Rigved: This work contains numerous mentions of surgeries and therapies related to the Shalakyia Tantra, presented as anecdotes. **Atharvaved:** The foundational work of Ayurveda is this scripture. Numerous illnesses associated with the Shalakyia tantra, such as Shirsakti, Shirsamaya, Karna shula, Vilohita, etc., are also described in stories and mantras. The text Chakshupanishad is devoted to the preservation and treatment of vision. The locations of seven gods in seven distinct regions of the eyes are mentioned in the Brihadaranyak Upnishad in order to preserve it. This demonstrates their extensive understanding of the anatomy of the eye. **Contribution of Charak Samhita (200-300 B.C.):** this seminal work of ayurveda, credited to Acharya Charak, covers a variety of shalakyia tantra subjects. **Second-century Sushrut Samhita:** The first 26 chapters of this text are devoted to the Uttar tantra, the final chapter to the Nidana tantra, the 16th chapter to the Sutra tantra, and the 22nd chapter to the Chikitsa tantra to the Shalakyia tantra. **Ashtang Hridaya & Ashtang Sangrah:** Acharya Vagbhat has included information about shalakyia tantra in 17 chapters of the Uttara Tantra. **Bhel Samhita:** It is organized into eight sthana and has 120 chapters. As per the shalakyia tantra point of view chapter no. 21 *Shiroroga chikitsa* is of great important.

Keywords: Shalakyia tantra, samhita, charak, sushrut, ashtang, bhel, chakshu panishad, rigved, atharvaved, brihadaranyak upnishad

Introduction

Shalakyia Tantra is one of the eight branches of Ayurveda which deals with the upper body part or head portion so it is also called '*Urdhvanga Chikitsa*'. The evolution of Shalakyia Tantra, a fundamental component of Ayurveda, has been a captivating journey that spans centuries. This transformation can be traced from its origins in the ancient classical texts to its prominent place within the Ayurvedic canon. In this exploration, we will delve into the historical context, key milestones, and the enduring significance of Shalakyia Tantra in the world of traditional Indian medicine. Shalakyia Tantra not only involves in medicine/*aushadh* but also use of variety of surgical procedures. From the ancient time till now many sages and acharyas gave their contribution in Shalakyia Tantra, who made it bloom like a flower and we find the fragrance of their contribution in different ancient and ayurvedic classical texts.

Materials and Methods

Literature Review: Conduct an extensive review of ancient texts such as Rigveda, Atharva veda, Shatpath Brahmin, Brihadaranyak Upanishad, and ayurvedic classic texts like Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, and other relevant manuscripts that discuss Shalakyia Tantra.

Systematically analyze the evolution of Shalakyia Tantra principles, methodologies, and treatment modalities through different historical periods.

Manuscript Analysis: Collect and translate ancient manuscripts related to Shalakyia Tantra, paying special attention to variations in terminology, diagnostic criteria, and therapeutic approaches. Employ a comparative analysis to identify changes and adaptations made to Shalakyia Tantra concepts over time.

Cross-Referencing: Cross-reference Shalakyia Tantra principles with other branches of Ayurveda to identify interdisciplinary influences and collaborations.

Investigate the integration of Shalaky Tantra concepts into broader Ayurvedic frameworks.

Origin

Shalaky Tantra is created by two words 'Shalaky' and 'Tantra' with distinct derivations (nirukti);

Shalaky

The word Shalaky is indicative of a surgical procedure using *shalaka* like instrument. The word '*Shalaka*' is derived from 'Sal' dhatu with suffix 'ka'. Collectively it has the meaning like ^[1]

- a.) Quick movements: "शल" " श्वल"-आशुगमने धातु (सु. सू.26/3)
b.) '*Himsayam Dhatu*' Painful, '*Rujayam*'cruel: "शल" हिंसायाम धातुः... "शल" रुजायाम.... (डलहण, सु. सू.26/3)

From the above introduction, it can be concluded that Shalaka makes painful, fast and hidden movements.

"शलाका यन्त्रण्यापि नाना प्रकारणि, नाना प्रयोजनानि, यथा योग परिणाह दीर्घाणि च ॥" (सु. सू. ७/१४)

These shalaks are of different types, uses and sizes for their use ^[2].

Tantra

Tantra is a well classified system of medical knowledge. It supports importance and meaning of Ayurveda.

"तत्र आयुर्वेद शाखा विद्या सूत्रं ज्ञानं लक्षणं तन्त्रमित्यनर्थान्तरम्॥" (च.सु. 30/31)

According to Charak there are different meanings of Ayurveda likes, Shakha, Vidya, Sutra, Gyan, Lakshan and Tantra. From the etymological introduction (nirukti), we can conclude that: Shalaky Tantra is a branch of Ayurveda that deals with the management of diseases with probe-like instruments ^[3].

Definition of Shalaky Tantra

According to Acharya Sushrut, Shalaky Tantra takes care of ear, eye, oral cavity, nose etc. which manifest above the neck.

"शालाक्य नाम उर्ध्वजत्रुगतानाम श्रवणनयनवदन घ्राणादि संश्रितानाम व्याधीनाम पउशमनार्थं॥"(सु. सू.1/8.2)

According to Sushrut Shalaky Tantra is the name of medical science of Urdhvajatrugata for alleviating diseases of hearing, eyes, mouth, smell and other senses ^[4].

"अदि शब्द शिरः पकाल आदि संश्रितानाम" ॥ (डलहण)

The commentator Dalhana says that the word "Aadi" refers to other diseases such as head disease and forehead disease. Acharya Vaghhatt also calls it Urdhwang. All the acharyas considered Shalaky Tantra a full-fledged branch of Ashtang Ayurveda ^[5].

"तस्यायुर्वेदास्याङ्गान्यष्टौ तद्यथा कायचिकित्सा, शालाक्यम, शाल्यापहर्तृकं विषगरवैरोधिकप्रशमन, भूतविद्या, कौमारभृत्यकम्, रसायनं, वाजीकरणम् इति॥" (च.सु.30/28)

"तद्यथा-शल्यं, शालाक्यम, कायचिकित्सा, भूतविद्या, कुमारभृत्यं, अगद तन्त्र, रसायन तन्त्रं, वाजीकरण तन्त्रं इति॥" (सु.सू.1/7)

"कायबालग्रहोर्ध्वाङ्गशल्यदंष्ट्राजरावृषान् अष्टावङ्गानि तस्याहुश्चिकित्सा॥" (अ.ह.सू.1/5)

Charak said that Ayurveda has eight parts namely Kayachikitsa, Shalaky Tantra, Shalya Tantra, Vishagaravairodhikaprashamanam (Agad Tantra), Bhuta Vidya, Kaumara Bhratya, Rasayan and Vajikarana.^[6] Acharya Sushrut also gave eight branches of ayurveda, for example Shalya Tantra, Shalaky Tantra, Kayachikitsa, Bhut Vidhya, Kaumara Bhratya, Agad Tantra, Rasayan Tantra and Vajikarana Tantra.Acharya ^[7]. Vagbhatta explain the eight branches of Ayurveda firstly Kaya Chikitsa, Baal Tantra, Grah Chikitsa, Urdhwang (Shalaky Tantra), Shalya Tantra, Dansh Chikitsa, Jara/Rasayana, Vrushan/Vajikarana.^[8]

History of Shalaky Tantra

Shalaky Tantra has an illustrious past. Its history is as old as the Vedas. Glimpses of its achievements are scattered in ancient literature.

Vedic References

- The oldest is from the Rigveda (6000-4000 BC), which says that the Ashwin Kumar's cured Paravruj and Shrona's eye sight.^[9], cured blindness of Rujashva^[10], gave eyes to Kanva rishi.^[11]

याभिः शचीभिवृषणा परावृजं प्रान्धं श्रोणं चक्षस एतवे कृथः। (Rigved Mandal 1, Chapter 112, Verse 8)

शतं मेषान्वक्ये चक्षदानमुत्राश्वं तं पितान्यं चकार । तस्मा अक्षी नासत्या विचक्ष आथतं दसा भिषजावनर्वन्॥१६॥ (Rigved, Mandala 1, Chapter 116, Verse 16)

"युवं कण्वायापिरिप्ताय चक्षुः प्रत्यधतं सुष्टुति जुजुषाणा" (Rigved, Mandala 1, Chapter 118, Verse 7)

- Shiva Purana, Rudra Samhita kand:4, Chapter 17 Siva spoke thus: "Go north, and whichever person you meet first, cut off his head and attach it on boy Ganesha's body. "Then they started north. It was a one-horned elephant that they met. They took the head and attached it to the body. Putting this together, the gods bowed before Siva, Visnu and Brahma... They said: "Since we are all born of your radiant Energy, let this energy enter into it by chanting the Vedic mantras. Saying this, they sprinkled together the holy water that the mantras called upon the body remembering Siva. Immediately after touching the holy water, the boy Ganesha revived and regained consciousness. As Siva wished, the boy awoke as if from sleep."^[12]
- In addition to these surgical procedures, the Atharvaveda mentioned a number of head ailments:^[13]
 - Shirsakti:** Painful headaches
 - Shirsamaya:** Frequent headaches
 - Karna Shula:** Painful ear diseases
 - Vilohita:** Hemorrhagic diseases of the head

शीर्षकितं शीर्षामयं कर्णशूलं विलोहितम् । सर्वं शीर्षण्यं ते रोगं बहिर्निर्मन्त्रयामहे॥१॥ कर्णाभ्यां ते कङ्कुषेभ्यः कर्णशूलं विसल्पकम् । सर्वं शीर्षण्यं ते रोगं बहिर्निर्मन्त्रयामहे॥२॥ यः कृणोति प्रमोतमन्धं कृणोति पूरुषम् । सर्वं शीर्षण्यं ते रोगं बहिर्निर्मन्त्रयामहे॥४॥ (Atharvaveda Kand 9, Chapter 13, Verse 1-4)

- Sunbathing is said to reduce various types of headaches and earaches in Atharvaveda, Kand 9, Chapter 13 Verse 22.^[14]

सं ते शीर्षाः कपालानि हृदयस्य च यो विदुयुः । उद्यन्नादित्य रश्मिभिः शीर्षां रोगमनीनशोऽभेदमशीशमः॥२२॥

- Suryadev is called the guardian of eyes and sight in Atharvaveda, kand 5, chapter 24, verse 9)^[15]

सूर्यचक्षुषामधिपतिः स मावतु ।

In khand 5, chapter 10, verse 8 says that we got our eyes from Surya Dev and ears from Antariksha.^[16]

- The Chakshupanishad are devoted to the protection of the sight and the treatment of its diseases. This is a brief summary of the Sun Prayers, the chanting of which is said to promote eyesight and its health.

ॐ चक्षुश्चक्षुश्चक्षुषतेजस्थिरोभव । मां पाहि पाहि । त्वरितम् चक्षुरोगान् शमय
शमय त्वरितं ममाजातरूपं तेजो दर्शय दर्शय । यथाहमंधोनस्यां तथा कल्पय
कल्पय किल्याण कुरु कुरु । यानि यानि मम पूर्वजन्मोपार्जितानि चक्षुः
प्रतिरोधक दुष्कृतानि सर्वाणि निर्मूलय निर्मूलय ॥

- Nodular swellings in head and neck are described as apachi and their treatment is said to be vedhan through shalaka.
- Rigveda and Atharvaveda prescribed the herbs Tila, Shigru, Jiraka etc. for toothache.
- Rigveda advised both Sarshap tail and Shigru for earache.
- Durva is recommended for nosebleeds.
- Rigveda says that Haridrav relieves diseases of the oral cavity. Various herbs like kusht, madhuk, shatavar, munj, sarshap, shilanjil have been recommended for eye diseases.
- The therapeutic properties of "kushta" in problems of head & eyes explained in Atharvaveda.^[17]

शीर्षामयमुपहत्यामक्षयोस्तन्वोऽं ३ः । कुष्ठस्तत् सर्वं निष्करद् दैवं समह
वृष्यम् ॥१०॥

- Shatpath brahman has lineage (Shat. Bra. 7/1/2/7)
 - Head - Galaxy
 - Eyes - Sun & Moon
 - Tongue - Mata Saraswati
 - Nose - Ashwini Kumars

द्यौरवास्यशिरः सूर्यचन्द्रमसौ चक्षुषी जिह्वा सरस्वती नासिके अश्विनौ ॥

Divine Influence of Eyes Has Been Described In Brihadaranyak Upanishad

"तमेताः सप्ताक्षितय उपतिष्ठन्ते तद्या इमा अक्षि लोहिन्यो राजयस्ताभिरेन
रुद्रोऽन्वायत्तोऽथ या अक्षन्नापस्ताभिः पर्जन्यो या कनीनका तथाऽऽदित्यो
यत्कृष्णं तेनाग्निर्विच्युक्लं तेनेन्द्रोऽधरयेन वर्तन्या पृथिव्यन्वायत्ता द्यौरुत्तरया ।
नास्यान्नं क्षीयते य एवं वेद ॥ २ ॥ (बृहदारण्यक उपनिषद् 2/2/2)

These seven gods that prevent decay worship it: Through these pink lines in the eye Rudra attends on it; through the water that is in the eye, Parjanya; through the pupil, the sun; through the dark portion, fire; through the white portion, Indra; through the lower eye-lid the earth attends on it; and through the upper eyelid, heaven.^[18]

इमावेव गौतमभरद्वाजावयमेव गौतमोऽयं भरद्वाज हमावेव विश्वामित्रजमदग्नी
अयमेव विश्वामित्रोऽयं जमदग्निरिमावेव वसिष्ठकश्यपावयमेव वसिष्ठोऽयं
कश्यपो वागेवात्रिवाचा द्यतेऽत्तिर्ह वै नामैतद्यदत्रिरिति । सर्वस्यात्ता भवति
सर्वमस्यान्नं भवति य एवं वेद ॥ ४ ॥ (बृहदारण्यक उपनिषद् 2/2/4)

These two ears are the Rishis Gautama and Bharadvaja; the right Gautama, left Bharadvaja. These two eyes are the Rishis

Visvamisra and Jamadagni; right Visvamisra, left Jamadagni. These two noses are the Rishis Vashishtha and Kashyapa; right Vashishtha, left Kashyapa. The tongue is Atri because one eats with the tongue and Atri is meant for Atti (eating). He who knows this, eats everything and everything becomes his food^[19].

Father of Shalaky Tantra-Rajarshi Nimi

- Shalaky Tantra owes its origin to Rajarshi Nimi, according to both Sushruti and Vagbhata. Acharya Dalhana considered King Videh "adi bhishak" (first physician of Shalaky).
- Videh, Nimi and Janak are generally considered to be the same person.
- There are various popular stories about the name, some of which include:
 - i). The Puranas and Ramayana (uttarkand) described that Nimi was the emperor of a great city. He once decided to perform a yagya and went to kulguru Vashishtha. But Vashishth ordered that it be delayed for 500 years. Nimi was not ready to wait so long and so started the yagya with the help of other sages. Enraged at this, Vashisth cursed him to death. However, the Yagya continued to place the dead body in the uncovered coffin. The Gods appeared at the end of the yagya and the Nimi was given a divine body which remained in the eyelids of all living beings. As the sages repeated the mantra, his body began to rotate, and suddenly a perfect person like Nimi emerged from the sacred fire. Created by Manthan and born of the body, they were called "Mithi" and "Videha" and "Janak".
 - ii). Acharya Dalhan also narrated the same story with some variations. In his version, the sun god cursed Videha with blindness. Later the curse was lifted when videh meditated on the sun and as a sign of his blessing Sun God taught him the science of seeing (chakshur veda). The period of Nimi has been suspected to be around 500-1000 BC.

Table 1: Vaidya Harishastri Pardakar quoted the following text books of Shalaky Tantra from Upnishad kala.

Videha Tantra	Kankayan Tantra
Gargya Tantra	Galav Tantra
Chakshushya Tantra	Bhadra Shaunakya Tantra
Nimi Tantra	Satyaki Tantra
Shaunak Tantra	Karala Tantra
Krishnatreya Samhita	Katyayna Samhita

Samhita Kaal References

Charak Samhita (200-300 B.C.): Taught by Atreya, codified by Agnivesha, revised by Charak-It holds comparatively less material about shalaky tantra.

- Charak samhita, Sutra Sthana 17th chapter "Kriyantah Shirasoadhyay" contains definition of Shira and explanation of five types of shiro roga-vataj, pittaj, kaphaj, sannipataj, krimij.
- Chapter 18th "Trishothiya adhyay" contains about rogas like Upjihwika, Adhojihwika, Galashundika, Galagand, Galgraha, Rohini, Karnmoolika shoth.
- Netra Swasthavritt has been told in Sutra sthana chapter 5. Procedures like Anjana, Dhoompan, Nasya, Gandush are advised to use everyday for health benefits. Apling oil

on head, Karna Pooran is considered healthy and massaging foot with oils as “Drishti prasadak”.

- Charak Samhita Chikitsa Sthana chapter 26th “Trimarmiyachikitsaadhyay” described about Shiroroga, Nasaroga, Karnaroga, Mukhroga, Netraroga and also its chikitsa. Treatment like nasya (for nasa and shiroroga), kaval (mukhroga), tail pooran (karnaroga), vidalak (netra shool) has been included.
- Charak Samhita Siddhi Sthana chapter 9th has diseases like Ardhabhedak, Sooryavarta, Shankhak, Anantvaat.

Sushrut Samhita (2nd Century): Shalakyia Tantra's classification of diseases and their knowledge are described for the first time in the best possible way and in detail in the Sushrut Samhita.

- The Sushrut Samhita dedicated the first twenty-six chapters in Uttara Tantra, the last chapter of the Nidana Sthana, the 16th chapter of the Sutra Sthana and the 22nd chapter of the Chikitsa Sthana to the Shalakyia Tantra.

Contributions

- The anatomy of the eye is described in detail.
- Classification and description of shiroroga, netraroga, karnaroga, nasaroga, mukharoga.
- Details of the infections of eye lid, conjunctiva, cornea and vision.
- Surgical procedures for eye diseases such as small incision, removal of excess capsular cataract, pterygium surgery, styne incision, follicular scrapping, entropion surgery, trichiasis surgery and glaucoma surgery.
- Parasurgical procedures like kshara, Agni, raktamoksha for eye diseases.
- Several oral medicinal compounds for treatment
- Kriya Kalp-Tarpana, Putapaka, Seka, Aschyotan, Anjana.
- Nasya Karma for eye, ear, nose, throat related diseases.
- Described the details of Nadi sweda, kavala, gandusha, dhuma, raktamokshana, kshara, Agni karma for the management of oral diseases.
- Surgery of Gala sundika, tundikeri, talu pupput, adhrushi, mamsa tana, Gala vidradhi and so on.
- Details of Nasa Sandhan, Karna Sandhan, Oshtha Sandhan. Similar methods are used today in nasal and cleft palate surgery.

Ashtanga Hridaya & Ashtanga Sangraha: Acharya Vagbhat spread the knowledge of Shalakyia Tantra in seventeen chapters of Uttara Tantra. (11th to 28th Ashtanga Sangraha) and about Tarpana, putapaka, Aschyotana, Gandush, Kavala etc. in the chapter of Sutra Sthana.

- Organized description of surgical procedures, their complications and management.
- He described 94 netra roga and classified 18 chronic inflammatory diseases as fistulas and offered special treatment for them.
- Pindi and Vidalak are introduced inside is described in kriyakalp along with tarpan, putpak, sek, ashchyotan, anjana which has many new medicinal compounds.
- He did not limit the Tarpana sessions to a maximum of 5 days, Putapaka was described as a follow-up procedure to Tarpana.
- Kapalgata 11 vyadis are prescribed for scalp diseases like vagbhati, hair fall, gray hair etc.
- He explains 75 oral cavity diseases along with cleft lip surgery.

Result & Discussion

The transition of Shalakyia Tantra from ancient texts to Ayurvedic Classics is a testament to the enduring relevance and evolution of this branch of Ayurveda. Over the centuries, Shalakyia Tantra has traversed a remarkable path, transitioning from its origins in the ancient texts like Atharvaveda, Rigveda, Yajurveda, different puranas, upanishads, tantras to becoming an integral part of Ayurvedic classics. This journey has been marked by a continuous process of refinement, expansion, and adaptation to the changing times and healthcare needs.

The ancient classics, with their foundational principles and profound wisdom, laid the groundwork for Shalakyia Tantra, providing a solid foundation for the diagnosis and treatment of ailments related to the head, neck, and sensory organs. These texts were not only repositories of knowledge but also served as guides for generations of Ayurvedic practitioners.

As Ayurveda evolved and encountered new challenges, Shalakyia Tantra too evolved. It absorbed insights from other medical traditions and integrated them into its practices. The development of specialized surgical techniques, advances in ophthalmology, and innovations in ENT procedures are just a few examples of how this field adapted to the needs of the time.

Today, Shalakyia Tantra continues to thrive as an essential component of Ayurvedic healthcare. Its holistic approach, emphasizing the balance of bodily humors, individual constitution (Prakriti), and lifestyle management, resonates with the contemporary quest for holistic well-being. Ayurvedic classics, such as the Ashtanga Hridaya and the Bhaisajya Ratnavali, have further enriched this field with their insights and practical applications.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the transformative journey of Shalakyia Tantra from its roots in ancient classics to its current status as an integral part of Ayurvedic classics is a compelling narrative of adaptability, resilience, and enduring wisdom. The evolution of Shalakyia Tantra reflects not only the historical progression of Ayurveda but also its ability to assimilate diverse influences and address evolving healthcare challenges.

The foundational principles laid out in the ancient texts served as the bedrock for Shalakyia Tantra, offering profound insights into the diagnosis and treatment of conditions related to the head, neck, and sensory organs. These texts not only encapsulated a repository of knowledge but also acted as guiding beacons for successive generations of Ayurvedic practitioners.

As Ayurveda encountered new challenges and expanded its horizons, Shalakyia Tantra underwent a dynamic evolution. It absorbed insights from diverse medical traditions, incorporating advancements in surgical techniques, ophthalmology, and ENT procedures. This adaptability has been crucial in maintaining the relevance and effectiveness of Shalakyia Tantra over the centuries.

Today, Shalakyia Tantra stands as a vibrant and essential component of Ayurvedic healthcare. Its holistic approach, emphasizing the balance of bodily humors, individual constitution (Prakriti), and lifestyle management, aligns seamlessly with the contemporary pursuit of holistic well-being. Ayurvedic classics such as the Ashtanga Hridaya and the Bhaisajya Ratnavali have further enriched this field, providing practical applications that continue to guide practitioners in their efforts to promote health and alleviate suffering.

In moving forward, it is imperative to recognize and preserve the invaluable wisdom embedded in Shalakyia Tantra. By doing so, we ensure that this ancient branch of Ayurveda remains a beacon of hope and healing, contributing to the holistic well-being of individuals and communities. The resilience and adaptability demonstrated by Shalakyia Tantra serve as an inspiration for the ongoing evolution of Ayurveda, fostering a legacy of health and harmony for generations to come.

19. Brhadaranyaka Upnishad, Kand 2, Chapte 2, Verse 4, Swami Madhavananda, the Modern Art Press, Calcutta, Third Edition 1950, 326.

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