MANAGEMENT OF DISEASES AND DISASTERS-KAMBA
RAMAYANAM SHOWS THE WAY
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Abstract

Introduction: Kambarayana, a famous Tamil Epic translated by Kambar from the Sanskrit version of Valmiki Ramayana., is about the story of King Rama. Many verses in the Ramayana of Kambar encompass a variety of management of diseases and disasters. The aim is to study and examine the management of diseases and disasters adopted by Kambar in Kambarayana and its relevance to the present day functioning. Analysis of the evolution of medical history is vital in knowing and comparing the advances that are now in existence in the area of theory and practice of medicine.

Materials and Methods: This is a descriptive research concerned with the management of diseases and disasters found in Kambarayana. Secondary data collected from Standard text books, Standard English translation of Kambarayana from the books published by the Government of Tamil Nadu in association with Tamil university and compared with present day functioning. Primary data are also collected from the focused groups (Doctors and Pharmacists) who are having more exposure in the modern medical field by administering constructed questionnaire comprising of some events, statements and narrations found in Kambarayana in connection with diseases aspects and collected data are analyzed statistically using relevant statistical tools.

Results and Discussions: The most of the Kamban’s vivid version brought out the marvelous medical treatment, Surgical procedures, application of embalming techniques, Disaster management which was practiced during the Ramayana period is very much adapted, practiced and performed by present day medical experts.

Keywords Bio-diversity, Diseases, Embalming, Heart attack, Lump, Medicine
1. Introduction

Tamil is the oldest and classical Indian language steeped with a several treasure of wisdom, rich traditions and eloquence in literatures. It is quite interesting to note that many management concepts related to disease and disasters currently practiced universally have been quoted in Tamil literatures at such and early age. Kambaramayana is one among such immortal literatures, translated by Kambar (who is supposed to have lived in 9th century)[1] from the Sanskrit version of Valmiki Ramayana. Kambar has handled the subject deftly by making slight changes to Valmiki Ramayan and to suit the cultural sensitivities of the Tamil. His works have drawn a large number of research scholars for an application of many universal truths, described therein, which are ageless and timeless. Many versus in the Ramayana of Kambar encompasses variety of medical Science concepts. Analysis of evolution of medical history is not only to express our gratitude to our ancestors, but is vital in knowing and comparing the advances that are now in existence in the area of theory and practice of medicine. This paper focuses how the immortal bard adapts Management of diseases and disasters in his magnum opus.

1.2 The Story of KambaRamanyana

Ayodhya, a city of Kosala country was ruled by a Surya dynasty king Dasaratha. He had three wives, namely Kosalai, Kaikeyi and Sumithirai. Both Kosalai and Kaikeyi had one son each who is Rama and Bharatha followed by two twins (Lakshmana and Satthurukkana) for Sumitthirai. As per the advice of Vashista, Dhasaratha sent Rama and Lakshmana to Thandaga forest with Sage Viswamitra for the off-the job training. There Rama learnt several new things and developed various skills through the sage. There Rama killed Thadaka a women rakshasa who and her associates often disturbed Yaga by Sage Viswamithra. Rama married Sita, a beauty queen of Mithila ruled by the King Janaka. The king Dasaratha decided to crown Rama as a king of Ayodhya. But under the influence of Mantharai @ Kooni, Kaikeyi forced Dhasaratha to send Rama to the forest for fourteen years and her son Bharatha would become the King. Rama along with his wife Sita and Lakshmana proceeded to forest. Due to injustices made by him towards Rama, the King Dhasaratha died. In the forest, Rama was disturbed by Surpanaka resulted in the abduction of Sita by her brother Ravana cunningly and prisoned at his Island and forced her to marry him. During the course of chasing and tracing, Rama had a strategic alliance with Vanara King, Sukriva by killing his brother Vaali. Hanuman, Ankatha and other Vanaras helped Rama to trace Sita about her where about. Though Sita faced several untold misery, maintained her chastity. With the help of
Vibishna, a pious brother of Ravana, Rama killed Ravana and his associates, Kumbakarna and Indirajith. Rama rescued Sita from the clutches of Rakshasa Ravana and returned to Ayothya and crowned as the King.[1-2]

1.3 Structure of Kambararamayana

Kambaramayana had six main chapters said as Kandam in Tamil. They are Balakandam, Ayothya Kandam, Aranya kandam, Kishkindha Kandam Sundara kandam and Yudha kandam. These six kandams further divided into one hundred and twenty three segments called as padalams which comprise twelve thousand verses approximately.

1.4 Objective of the Study

To study and examine the management of diseases and disasters adopted by Kambar in Kamabaramayana and its relevance to the present day functioning.

2. Review of literature

Merriam Webster defines disease as a condition of the living animal or plant body or of one of its parts that impairs normal functioning and is typically manifested by distinguishing signs and symptoms: sickness, malady (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disease)

Merriam Webster defines Disaster Management as the organization and management of resources and responsibilities for dealing with all humanitarian aspects of emergencies, in particular preparedness, response and recovery in order to lessen the impact of disasters. (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disaster)

Biodiversity means the variability among living organisms from all sources, including interalia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are a part, this includes diversity within species, between species and of eco systems [3]

3. Methods of Research

This is a descriptive research concerned with the management of diseases and disasters found in Kambaramayanam. Standard Textbooks were referred, studied and analyzed. There are a number of books written on Kambararamayanam. Though some books are in Tamil and some are literal translations by P.S Sundaram by H.V Handae, A bibliography of sources is appended at the end of the paper. Apart from secondary data as mentioned above, Primary data are also collected in person from focusing groups by administering constructed questionnaire comprising of some events, statements and narrations found in Kamba Ramayanam in connection with diseases aspects. The target groups are
selected on the basis following criteria. (a) Respondents should have Tamil as a mother tongue (b) Should involve in Medical field. As such primary data collected from 100 samples comprising of Physicians, Surgeons, Sidha Medical officers and Pharmacists. The data are compiled and statistically analyzed by using the simple average method.

3.1 Surgical Procedure (Cleaning and Dressing)

“Should a lump appear in the body,
It is cutout and bad blood discharged,
And after cauterizing and medication
One gets rid of one’s pain “-(146)

(Yudhakandam – 15 Kumbakarnan killed padalam ) [4]

Meaning: “You are aware that any troublesome Abscess in the body is removed by surgery and the Malady is cured by flushing out the impure blood and thereafter by prompt medication” [5]

Elucidation: What is stated above in the treatment of any abscess that is formed through any surgical course, as in modern time has been very much adopted to perfection even those days of the Ramayana period as illustrated by Kambar in his Ramayana.

3.2 Embalming Technique

Vasishta further thought that ,” since
There is no present ,
Who can perform death rituals , and also
Thinking .................................
Only after bharata , who is son of cruel lady
Comes to Ayodhya , took the body away , from
The ocean of women

And arranged is to be preserved , in an Ocean of oil

(Ayothiyakandam – Thailam Attupadalam )[6]

Meaning: Vashista who heard the death of Dhasaratha and came to the place where the body was kept and decided along with ministers to start the only after the return of Bharata, the son of wicked Kaikeyi. They took the body of Dhasaratha from the midst of a Sea of women and placed it in a “sea of oil ”[7]

Elucidation: What this poem focuses is preserving a corps for a length of time as followed during the Ramayana period is identical to the updated embalming technique that is very much in existence now. It is a scene in which Dasaratha
last rites of the great Emperor Dasaratha was to performed only by his brother Bharatha who was not available on the spot and was resting at Kekaya country. To get him at Ayothya was a time consuming process. In order to preserve the body intact, sage Vasishtha counsels that that the body of Dasaratha should be kept in a coffin filled with medicated oil as it was available in the relevant period. This clearly shows that the present day embalming technique was very much in vogue during the Ramayana period.

3.2 Indrajith’s Death

Thereupon Ravana flung away that sword
And said, ” I will not come back here without
My son’s head which they took away
As a sign of their success
As well as their own two heads .
Mean while, he ordered ,” put the body in the jar of oil “

(Yudhakandam -28- Ravana’s Grief)[8]

Meaning: Ravana took a solemn pledge not to return to the city of Lanka till he had severed the heads of his foes and also revered the head of his son Indrajit who was killed by their might. Ravana directed that the body of his son be preserved in a trough of oil in accordance with the ancient custom.[9]

Elucidation: The same method was adapted in another scene also. When Indrajith was killed, his father, Ravana ordered to put his body in the jar of oil. Ravana was in a fix only where the headless body was presented before him was with severed head of Indrajith was taken by the victor. Ravana was at this juncture that until severed head of Indirajit was brought he would not perform the last rites of his son. Till such time he directs the trunk of Indrajith should be put in a jar filled with medicated oil for preservation.

3.3 Magnetic Treatment

Dasaratha told Rama

“The boons granted to Kaikeyi that day
A vertible spear which pierced my heart

Stuck to it even after killing me

And has left me at last only now

Drawn by the magnet of your chest –

A great gem which attracts all - (117)

(37- Release and Return Padalam – Yudhakandam )[10]

Meaning: Dasaratha told Rama, “When I wanted to crown you, a spear (in the guise of a boon Secured by Kaikeyi) pierced my heart and remained there all long, even after I died. But after embracing you I am relieved of this spear.[11]

Elucidation: The poem emphasis the fact of Dasaratha meeting his son, returning from heaven after Sita meets the ordeal of fire (Agnipravesh) in proof of her chastity during his loving embrace with his dear son Rama, Dasaratha says that the deadly spear that got stuck in my heart with the unsympathetic vow that Kaikeyi demanded for your exile in the forest for fourteen years has been removed with a magnetic spell of your embrace. This speaks about the inherent magnetic power rooted in the body as it was during the Ramayana period which is very much on par with present day magnetic treatment performed by medical experts.

3.4 Bio-Diversity

Rama told Lakshmana

“Even the experts,” said Rama, “do not know

The true nature of this fleeting world

As it beings number many thousand crores.

Young prince, what is impossible?” -(3289)

(8 Marichas death padalam – Ayodhya kandam ) [12]

Meaning: Rama replied, “Brother! Even experts cannot know everything in this changing world animal like this is not unusual in this world where billions of species are in existence. There is no rule that an animal should have a particular appearance, or should die in a particular manner.”[13]

Elucidation: The above poem brings to the fore a knowledge of biodiversity that was very much known to the Ramayana characters in those times. A point at issues is above Rama advises his brother Lakshmana when he brands
Maricha as a fake deal and that such a creature not in existence in the world. When Rama tells that the whole world is replete with countless creatures about which none can make out a conclusive theory. This clearly shows the signs of biodiversity as it is researched upon the modern world was very much known during the Ramayana period.

3.5 Heart attack

Dasaratha then looking at charioteer asked him,
Whether Rama is inside the palace, or far away
And that expert charioteer told him that
“Rama along with his brother and the gold of Mithila
Had gone inside, the forest where tall bamboo plants and they
And immediately, Dasaratha lost his soul and died.

(5- Thailam Attupadalam – Ayodhyakandam ) (59) [14]

**Meaning:** Dasaratha asked his charioteer Sumanthira whether Rama was far away or near by Sumanthira replied that Rama, accompanied by Lakshmana and the golden daughter of Mithita, had entered the forest of Bamboos! As he was saying this, Dasaratha lost his life. [15]

**Elucidation:** Emperor Dasaratha’s death on account of a sudden heart attack due to the shock of his eldest son Rama and his beloved wife Sita and brother Lakshmana had already carried out the vow of staying in the forest for fourteen years. The rude shock that resulted in a deadly heart attack is very much similar as we come across daily reports of deaths occurring by heart failure in many cases upon their getting a rude shock.

3.6 Disaster Management:

Samaban told Hanuman

“A medicine that will revive the dead
One that will join split bodies
One that will push out weapons stuck
And a true one to restore old forms –
O hero, go there and bring these” (27)

“These four medicines arose when the milky ocean was churned:

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Meaning: The herbs can bring back the lives of the dead (General medicine), restore their severed limbs (orthopaedics), remove the weapons stuck in their bodies (surgery) and return the mutilated bodies to their original form (plastic surgery).

Elucidation:
The above poem brings out the marvelous medical treatment as it was practiced during the Ramayana period, which has been brought out through the Kamban’s vivid version. It is above the life-saving herbs (drugs) that were relied upon (Example) of bringing back Lakshmana to life when he and many others fell down in the battle field with a powerful shaft known as Bramasthra, it was sanjeevi that did this work. So also cases of severed limbs attached to bodies in full form and the removal of the deadly weapons got stuck in bodies being removed by cutting through the body was followed in those times as of now through modern surgeries with its extensive breakthrough.

4. Analysis and Interpretation:

4.1 Respondents Profile:
The percentage distribution of the respondents' profile is shown in Fig 1. Out of 100 respondents, 25 are Physicians, 25 are Surgeons, 25 are SIDHA Medical officers, and remaining 25 are Pharmacists.

![Respondents Profile](image_url)

Fig. 1: Profile of Respondents.

4.2 Surgical Procedure
In the area of Surgical Procedure (Fig 2), around 17% of the total respondents strongly agree, 47% of the respondents are agreeing, 15% remains neutral followed by 14% and 7% of respondents are disagreeing and strongly disagreeing respectively. Inference: In the area of Surgical Procedure in Kambaramayana, around 64% of respondents are toeing my line of investigation in this great work.
4.3 Embalming Technique

In the area of Embalming Technique (Fig 3), around 14% of the total respondents strongly agree, 47% of the respondents are agreeing, 13% remains neural followed by 23% and 3% of respondents are disagreeing and strongly disagreeing respectively. Inference: In the area of Embalming Technique in Kambaramayana, around 61% of respondents are toeing my line of investigation in this great work.

4.4 Indrajith’s Death

In the area of Indrajith’s Death (Fig 4), around 17% of the total respondents strongly agree, 42% of the respondents are agreeing, 15% remains neural followed by 21% and 5% of respondents are disagreeing and strongly disagreeing respectively. Inference: In the area of Indrajith’s Death in Kambaramayana, around 59% of respondents are toeing my line of investigation in this great work.
4.5 Magnetic Treatment

In the area of Magnetic Treatment (Fig 5), around 18% of the total respondents strongly agree, 42% of the respondents are agreeing, 12% remains neutral followed by 26% and 2% of respondents are disagreeing and strongly disagreeing respectively. Inference: In the area of Magnetic Treatment in Kambarayana, around 60% of respondents are toeing my line of investigation in this great work.

![Magnetic Treatment Chart]

Fig. 5 Magnetic Treatment.

4.6 Bio-Diversity

In the area of biodiversity (Fig 6), around 11% of the total respondents strongly agree, 35% of the respondents are agreeing, 11% remains neutral followed by 39% and 4% of respondents are disagreeing and strongly disagreeing respectively. Inference: In the area of biodiversity in Kambarayana, around 46% of respondents are toeing my line of investigation in this great work.

![Bio-Diversity Chart]

Fig. 6 Magnetic Treatment.

4.7 Heart attack

In the area of Heart attack (Fig 3), around 15% of the total respondents strongly agree, 42% of the respondents are agreeing, 10% remains neutral, followed by 27% and 6% of respondents are disagreeing and strongly disagreeing respectively.
Inference: In the area of Heart attack in Kambarayana, around 57% of respondents are toeing my line of investigation in this great work.

**Fig. 7 Heart attack.**

### 4.8 Disaster Management

In the area of effect and powerful communication (Fig 8), around 18% of the total respondents strongly agree, 49% of the respondents are agreeing, 11% remains neutral followed by 15% and 7% of respondents are disagreeing and strongly disagreeing respectively.

Inference: In the area of effect and powerful communication in Kambarayana, around 67% of respondents are toeing my line of investigation in this great work.

**Fig. 8 Disaster Management.**

### 5. Conclusion

The foregoing is a short narrative of the researcher’s conviction as to how the immortal bard through his unique vision focused on the managerial implication in is monumental work Ramayana as it is existed during those times which are
more relevant to our modern times as well. Hordes of scholars have already researched on various issues of Kamabaramayana and presented their verses more exhaustively. But this study is just a specific study on the subject of management of diseases and disasters with a researcher’s own yardstick from Kamabaramayam. The researcher had endeavored to cite examples of how concurrence and typical are the impression of his great visionary the trends parallel to our modern milieu.

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