The aim of the Project was to translate *Jyotsnika* into English. It was not a critical edition of *Jyotsnika* that was aimed at. Kerala is well known for its Ayurveda tradition. The treatment of poison was so specialised in Kerala that a number of families devoted solely to the treatment for poisoning — poisoning by reptiles and animals. This could have been so because of the high incidences of such poisoning in Kerala. Some of the Viṣṇa vidyās (practitioners against poison) have compiled treatises, which are being followed even today. We have Prayoga samuccayam, Uddisanarayanām, Jyotsnika, Agadatantram, etc.

*Jyotsnika* is a text preferred by many traditional Viṣṇa vidyās. It is believed to have been compiled by Karatṭu Nambuthiri. It was published by at least two publishers - the first one remains anonymous, as the first printed copy did not contain any date or the name of the publisher; the second publisher was Cochin Sirkar. Cochin Sirkar published two editions, the first one in 1926-27 and the second one in 1949-50 (1124ME).

The Project was carried under the following chapters with an Introduction, Glossary and an Annexure.

1. Abhivandanādhikāraṁ, सर्वमहाचिकित्साधिकारम्
2. Duta-lakṣaṇādhikāraṁ, दुतालक्षणाधिकारम्
3. Lakṣaṇaṁ, लक्षणम्
4. Cikitsārambhāṁ, चिकित्सारम्भम्
5. Darvivaraviṣacikitsā, दरविकरविषाचिकित्सा
6. Mandhalivacikitsā, मन्दहलिवाचिकित्सा
7. Rājilivacikitsā, राजिलिवाचिकित्सा
8. Cikitsākramam, चिकित्साक्रमम्
9. Lehyatalādikramam, लेहतालादिक्रमम्
10. Sudhakalādinirūpanaṁ, शुधकालादिनिरूपणम्
11. Ākhuviṣattinaṁ, अक्षुविषस्तिना
12. Vṛścikādicikitsādhirāmaṁ, वृष्किकादिचिकित्साधिरामम्
13. Poisoning of cows, कष्टकृत्त व्यथदिकारम्
14. Treatment for all poisons, अस्तरक्षितसर्वस्वपूर्वक चिकित्सा
15. Sarvamaḥāchikitsādhirāmaṁ, सर्वमहाचिकित्साधिरामम्
16. Sarppolppattī, सर्पपोल्पत्ति
17. Sarppalakṣaṇādyadhikāraṁ, सर्पपालक्षणाधिकारम्
18. Paramparyadhikaraṇaṁ, परापराधिकारणम्
19. Avaśeṣaṁ, अवाशेषम्

**Discussion**

*Jyotsnika* is one of the most important texts within the Kerala viṣṇa vidyā tradition. Karatṭu...
Nambutiri compiled the text. Karaṭṭu was one of the Nambutiri families that specialized in viṣacikitsā (in fact, everything related to snakes) – the other families being panpumekkaṭtu, kokkara, manṇarasala, and veṭṭikkoṭu.¹

*Jyotsnika* is a text used by many a traditional viṣavaidyāns. The text is in verses and its language is a mixture of Sanskrit and Malayalam.

Viṣavaidyāṁ in Kerala showed exceptional brilliance in viṣacikitsā (treatment for poison). The taxonomy and the effective medicines revealed this brilliance. One compelling reason for this could have been the frequency of snake bites and subsequent casualties in a region blessed with thick forests and poisonous fauna and flora.

Viṣavaidya granthās in general followed the Sanskrit tradition. The viṣavaidyapraṇaraṇāṁ in Aṣṭāṅghrādyāṁ has been accepted as the basic authority. Seven famous texts are talked of, by the practitioners in Kerala, as being the basic texts to viṣavaidyāṁ – Aṣṭāṅghrādyāṁ, Ārayaṇīyāṁ, Uḍdiśāṁ, Ulpalaṁ, Mekhala, Kalavaṇcanaṁ, and Lakṣaṇaṁrtaṁ. All the viṣavaidyā texts had been compiled, based on these seven texts.

There are not many books on the history of ayurveda in Kerala. The one available now and widely taught in the ayurveda educational institutions is that of NVK Varier, published by the Koṭṭakkal Árya Vaidyaśālam. The general surveys of the history of literature in Kerala like the *Kerala Sāhitya Caritraṁ* (Ulloor, 1990) do not give much information on the development of ayurvedic literature in general and of the early period in particular.²

The ayurveda in Kerala was a continuation of the Caraka, the Suśruta, and the Vagbhaṭa traditions. *Viṣa pratīṣṭedhaṁ* has been classified into viṣavidyā and viṣavaidyām. Viṣavidyā consists of magic spells and viṣavaidyām consists of medicinal intervention. *Jyotsnikā* belongs to the tradition of medicinal intervention, a prominent position being granted for medicinal intervention along with spells. It seems from the foreword provided by the previous editor that much of the spells that were originally there in the text of *Jyotsnika* was not included in the available text.

NVK Varier says that Bauddhāyurveda granthās were prevalent during the time when Kerala had strong trade relations with north India.³ (NVKV, pp.550-1) He further says that apart from the religious places of the Buddhhas or the Jainas, the chief exponents of medicine in Kerala [during Buddha-Jaina period] were the communities of Velan and Maṇṇan.

MGS Narayanan says (Narayanan, Foreword to NVKV, p.540) that the influences of the the idea of pañcabhūta appears in the Sangha literature in the early centuries of the Christian era and before this there is no evidence for the presence of a civilization here. In such a situation the different streams of the Kerala ayurveda tradition might have come up due to the inner dynamics of the society or the relations the society had with the trade associates from other shores. So Narayanan is of the opinion that it may not be proper to talk about the period before the advent of Sanskrit as one enriching the medical practices of Kerala.

With the advent of Sanskrit (or of the people whose language was Sanskrit) ayurveda assimilated the earlier medicinal practices as well, which possibly changed the form and content (and provided for the unique growth) of ayurveda in Kerala.

The Buddhist texts of Vāgbhaṭa on medicines/treatment were recognized and accepted by the vaidyāns in Kerala, even those belonging to the Brahmin community,⁴ in spite of the existence of ayurveda samhitās that were brāhmīnic.⁵

There are evidences for the early texts of Bhelan having been prevalent in Kerala.⁶ (NVKV, p.552) It is not known with any certainty which
region or caste Bheylan belonged to. From his name it is made out that he belonged to a lower caste. Bheylan was rejected by the northern parts of the subcontinent, may be because of his possible low caste origin.

There are a lot of medicinal preparations or mixtures (yogams) in Kerala that are not seen in Caraka, Suśruta, or Vāgbhaṭa. (NVKV, p.482) Sahasrayogam is a text that has been familiar to families in Kerala for generations. At present there are different editions of Sahasrayogam, with some differences noticeable for each from the other. Apart from the traditional vaidyans using it, the families that were well-to-do in the past centuries treated it as a family medicine text.

The medicinal preparations or mixtures narrated in it - gulikās like the kasturyādi (vāyu), gorocanādi, konpaṇcādi, dhanvantaram, etc., aṇjanaṃ like ilanirkuzhanpu, etc. – were not seen in the Sanskrit text. The matras kept by the traditional vaidyans to be used at sannipātavastha, certain practices of viṣavāidyam, etc. were unique to Kerala. The commonly used medicines in Kerala were not known to the northern part of the country. Kerala specialized in using ilanirvelam and nālikerappal. In fact, every part of coconut tree (which was called the kalpavṛkṣa) like irkkil, veru, cakiri, ciraṭṭa is of medicinal property(ies) to the Keralites. Paccappuzhu was a factor seen only in the preparations of Kerala. Many preparations in bālacikitsā and kaṟutta gulikā, marmma gulikā, etc. used in marmma cikitsā too were typically Kerala ones. It is widely recognized that dhara, īḷavarakkizhi, pizhacal, talam, and tala poticcil were ‘ciṭṭappetutiya keraṭṭiya cikitsā murakal’ (the treatment practices developed in Kerala). The construction and uses of dharappatti too was a contribution of Kerala to the Indian ayurveda. (NVKV, pp. 482-3)

Indu, a disciple of Vāgbhaṭa and commentator (the commentary is Śāśīrekhavyakhyanam) of Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayam, belonged to Kerala. It is believed that both Indu and Jajjaṭan lived in Kerala and created a tradition of disciples here. (NVKV, p.486)

The language of the text places it during the Manipravalam period, ie the early medieval period. It should also be noted that the text that we studied contained a rich trace of the malayalam of the twentieth century.

A Note on Transliteration

While doing the transliteration of the Malayalam text, there was a challenge, which the present writer attempted to meet by adding some new symbols to express a few sounds of the Malayalam vowels. The rules and symbols for the transliteration of Sanskrit text could be applied here only with certain modifications.

Malayalam language traces its origin to both Sanskrit and old Tamil. (The old Tamil or Centami is the common ancestor to both the present-day Malayalam and the present-day Tamil. And it is as distinct from the present-day Malayalam as it is from the present-day Tamil.) But the Malayalam script has got distinct differences from Sanskrit and from Tamil.

There are more consonants in Malayalam and Sanskrit than in Tamil. For eg, please see how the five consonants in Sanskrit and Malayalam are being represented by the corresponding two consonants in Tamil.

Rom: ka, kha, ga, gha, na
San: Eō, Jē, Mē, Pē, Rō
Mal: l, j, k, l, m
Tam: Æ
Rom: ca, cha, ja, jha, ña
Malayalam has got more vowels than Sanskrit has. Sanskrit has got only long vowels for e and o, while Malayalam has both long and short variants of these two vowels. See the following example of the Sanskrit vowels and the corresponding Malayalam vowels:

San: sē, uđ, vē, zē, vē
Mal: N, O, P, Q, R
Tam: ē
Rom: ta, tha, da, dha, na
San: jō, ṭō, bō, jō, hō
Mal: S, T, U, V, W
Tam: ē
Rom: ta, tha, da, dha, na
San: ē, ē, mū, vē, xē
Mal: X, Y, Z, [, \]
Rom: pa, pha, ba, bha, ma
San: {ē, jō, mē, ē, ę
Mal: ], ^, _ , a
Rom: ž, ž, ž, ž

The letters like ra and la in Sanskrit have more than one pronounced forms in Malayalam. See the following examples:

ra \rightarrow ra (c), ra (d)
là \rightarrow la (e), la (f)

Then Malayalam has an extra letter zha (g).

These are the three letters that occur at the end of the Malayalam alphabet after ‘ha’, which is the last letter in the Sanskrit alphabet.

So the following changes to the standard diacritical marks that are used to transliterate Sanskrit text, have been accepted to adapt it to transliterate the Malayalam script.

e, o \rightarrow used for short vowels ṅ, ḍ,
č, ē \rightarrow used for long vowels ġ, ḍṁ
ra \rightarrow used for e as in parāmpa (ja-če)
,ra \rightarrow used for d as in pārāppaṁ (jmd-pañ)
là \rightarrow used for e as in ḍala (Be)
là \rightarrow used for f as in kāḷaṁ (jñw)

Notes and References
1. There were Nambutiri families who focused on the other areas of life: for eg, magical spells and handling of spirits were taken care of by kallur, kunnampampu, kaṭṭumaṭam, and kaladi.
2. Ulloor (Kerala Sahitya Caritram (Malayalam). Trivandrum, University of Kerala, 1990) discusses the Jyotija texts of Kerala from an early period, whereas the descriptions of the ayurveda texts are scanty.
3. He says that the trade routes that were existing in the 5th or 6th C AD came to an end later because of historical reasons.
4. In fact, the mistake committed in the northern parts of the subcontinent of accepting the ideas and opinions
of Vagbhata and not acknowledging him at all (in texts like Madhavanidana) was not made by the people of Kerala. (NVKV, p.551)

5. Aṣṭavaidyanmar, who were Brahmins, are descendants/followers (paranparyavakaśika) of the Vagbhata tradition. (NVKV, p.488)

6. More can be read about the influences or impact of Bheṣa on Kerala ayurveda in NVKV (p.552ff).

7. This has been true in other fields like Jyotisham, Mimaśa, Vedanta, etc. You can see the acaryas and their original texts – whether it is Bhaṭṭamimamsa or Advaita, for example. (NVKV, p.486)

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