

PROJECT REPORTS

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF *JYOTSNIKA*: AN AYURVEDIC TEXT ON VIŠAVIDYĀ*

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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 Viśavaidyas (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 Viśavaidyas. It is believed to have been compiled by Karattu 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. *Abhivandanādhikāraṃ*, അഭിവന്ദനാധികാരം
2. *Dutalakṣaṇādhikāraṃ*, ദൂതലക്ഷണാധികാരം
3. *Lakṣaṇaṃ*, ലക്ഷണം

4. *Cikitsāraṃbhaṃ*, ചികിത്സാരംഭം
5. *Darvvikaraviṣacikitsā*, ദർവ്വീകരവിഷചികിത്സ
6. *Maṇḍhaliviṣacikitsā*, മണ്ഡലവിഷചികിത്സ
7. *Rājilaviṣacikitsā*, രാജിലവിഷചികിത്സ
8. *Cikitsākramaṃ*, ചികിത്സാക്രമം
9. *Lehyatailādikramaṃ*, ലേഹ്യതൈലാദിക്രമം
10. *Sudhakalādinirūpaṇaṃ*, സുധാകലാദിനിരൂപണം
11. *Ākhuviṣattinu*, ആഖുവിഷത്തിന്
12. *Vṛścikādicikitsādhikāraṃ*, വൃശ്ചികാദിചികിത്സാധികാരം
13. Poisoning of cows, പശുക്കൾക്ക് വിഷപ്പെട്ടാൽ
14. Treatment for all poisons, എല്ലാവിഷത്തിനും ചികിത്സ
15. *Sarvamahācikitsādhikāraṃ*, സർവ്വമഹാചികിത്സാധികാരം
16. *Sarppolppatti*, സർപ്പോൽപ്പത്തി
17. *Sarppalakṣaṇādyadhikāraṃ*, സർപ്പലക്ഷണാദ്യധികാരം
18. *Paramaryadhikāraṃ*, പാരമ്പര്യധികാരം
19. *Avaśeṣaṃ*, അവശേഷം

Discussion

Jyotsnika is one of the most important texts within the Kerala *viśavaidya* tradition. Karattu

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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 panpumeccaṭṭu, kokkara, maṅṅaraśāla, and veṭṭikkoṭu.¹

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

Viṣavaidyam 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 *viṣavaidyaprakaraṇam* in *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayam* has been accepted as the basic authority. Seven famous texts are talked of, by the practitioners in Kerala, as being the basic texts to *viṣavaidyam* – *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayam*, *Āraṇiṇiyam*, *Uḍḍiśam*, *Ulpalam*, *Mekhala*, *Kalavañcanam*, and *Lakṣaṇamṛtam*. All the *viṣavaidya* 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 Ārya Vaidyaśālā. The general surveys of the history of literature in Kerala like the *Kerala Sāhitya Caritraṃ* (Ullor, 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 pratiṣedham* has been classified into *viṣavidyā* and *viṣavaidyam*. *Viṣavidyā* consists of magic spells and *viṣavaidyam* 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 granthas* 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 Buddhas or the Jainas, the chief exponents of medicine in Kerala [during Buddha-Jaina period] were the communities of *Velan* and *Maṅṅan*.

MGS Narayanan says (Narayanan, Foreword to NVKV, p.540) that the influences of the the idea of *pañcabhuta* 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 *vaidyans* in Kerala, even those belonging to the Brahmin community,⁴ in spite of the existence of ayurveda *saṃhitās* that were brāhminic.⁵

There are evidences for the early texts of Bheḷan having been prevalent in Kerala.⁶ (NVKV, p.552) It is not known with any certainty which

region or caste Bheḷan belonged to. From his name it is made out that he belonged to a lower caste. Bheḷan 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 (*yogaṃs*) in Kerala that are not seen in Caraka, Suśruta, or Vāgbhaṭa. (NVKV, p.482) *Sahasrayogaṃ* is a text that has been familiar to families in Kerala for generations. At present there are different editions of *Sahasrayogaṃ*, 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 - *guḷikās* like the *kasturyādi* (*vāyu*), *gorocanādi*, *konpañcādi*, *dhanvantaraṃ*, etc., *añjanaṃ* 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 *viśavaidyaṃ*, etc. were unique to Kerala. The commonly used medicines in Kerala were not known to the northern part of the country. *Karaḷayaṃ*, *tunpa*, *mukkurri*, etc. were more familiar to the people of Kerala than those in other parts of the country.

Kerala specialized in using *ilanirveḷḷaṃ* and *nalikerappal*. 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 *kaṛutta guḷikā*, *marmma guḷikā*, etc. used in *marmma cikitsā* too were typically Kerala ones. It is widely recognized that *dhara*, *ñavarakkizhi*, *pizhaccal*, *taḷaṃ*, and *tala poticcil* were ‘*cittappetuttiya keraḷīya cikitsā muraḷaḷ*’ (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)⁷

Indu, a disciple of Vāgbhaṭa and commentator (the commentary is *Śāsirekhavyakhyanaṃ*) of *Aṣṭāṅgahrdayaṃ*, 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 Centamiḷ 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: Eò, JÉ, MÉ, PÉ, Ró

Mal: I, J, K, L, M

Tam: è, é

Rom: ca, cha, ja, jha, ña

San: SÉ, Uô, VÉ, ZÉ, \É

ra → ra (c), ra (d)

Mal: N, O, P, Q, R

la → la (e), la (f)

Tam: ê, ë

Then Malayalam has an extra letter zha (g).

Rom: ta, tha, da, dha, na

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.

San:]ô, `ö, b±, fô, hÉ

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.

Mal: S, T, U, V, W

Tam: î, ï

Rom: ta, tha, da, dha, na

San: iÉ, lÉ, nù, vÉ, xÉ

e, o → used for short vowels F, H

Mal: X, Y, Z, [, \

ē, ō → used for long vowels G, Hm

Tam: î, ï

ra → used for c as in paranpara (]c-¼c)

Rom: pa, pha, ba, bha, ma

San: {É, jò, ±É, lÉ, ´É

ra → used for d as in pārapuṣaṃ (]md-,pdw)

Mal:], ^, _ ` , a

la → used for e as in āla (Be)

Tam: ð, ñ

la → used for f as in kaḷaṃ (]fw)

zha → used for g as in kazhakaṃ (]glw)

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: a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, r, e, ai, o, au, aṃ, aḥ

+É, <, <Ç, =, >ð, @ñ, B, Bā, +Éā, +Éè, +/E, +&

Mal: a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, r, e, ē, ai, o, ō, au, aṃ, aḥ

A, B, C, Cu, D, Du, E, F, G, sF, H, Hm, Hu, Aw, Ax

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

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*, *kunnamparampu*, *kaṭṭumaṭaṃ*, and *kaladi*.
2. Ulloor (*Kerala Sahitya Caritram* (Malayalam). Trivandrum, University of Kerala, 1990) discusses the *Jyotiṣa* 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 Vagbhāta and not acknowledging him at all (in texts like Madhavanidanaṃ) was not made by the people of Kerala. (NVKV, p.551)

5. Aṣṭavaidyānmar, who were Brahmins, are descendants/followers (*paranparyavakaśika!*) of the Vagbhāta tradition. (NVKV, p.488)
6. More can be read about the influences or impact of Bheḷa on Kerala ayurveda in NVKV (p.552ff).
7. This has been true in other fields like *Jyotiṣaṃ*, *Mimāṃsa*, *Vedantaṃ*, etc. You can see the acaryas and

their original texts – whether it is Bhaṭṭamimāṃsa or Advāida, for example. (NVKV, p.486)

Bibliography

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