

VARĀHAMIHIRA AND AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Varahamihira was not only one of the greatest Indian astronomers-astrologers but a man of varied talents with vast knowledge of different branches of study and wide observation of public life in its various facets which he deftly and skilfully wove together in the fabric of popular astrology technically called mundane astrology or Samhita. He flourished in the sixth century A.D. and composed numerous works. He composed his most well-known work, the Brihat-Samhita towards the middle of the sixth century A.D., which contains a good deal of information of common interest to a health conscious layman. It is proposed to take stock of the allusions of a medical nature, whether detailed or casual here.

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astronomy, horoscopy and natural astrology. He composed his most well-known work, the brhat-samhitā², towards the middle of the sixth century AD (roughly about 545-550 AD) under the patronage of the Aulikara king of Avanti, Dravyavardhana who ruled after the well-known Yaśodharman-Viṣṇuvardhana in c. 540-60 AD³. Natural astrology came to include practically all the topics of interest to a common man, and Varāhamihira largely contributed to this enlargement of its scope as can be inferred

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1. For the topics included in the samhita, see Ajay Mitra Shastri, India as seen in the Brihat-Samhita of Varahamihira, *ISBV*, Delhi, 1969 pp. 430-33.
2. Sudhakara Dvivedi's edition with Bhattotpala's gloss (2. Vols. Benares, 1885-87) is referred to. It is hereinafter abbreviated as *BS*.
3. For Varahamihira's date, see Ajay Mitra Shastri, *ISBV*, pp. 4-18; Varahamihira and his Times, Jodhpur, 1991, pp. 3-5, 43-58.

by the fact that many of the subjects are first found included in an astrological work composed by him. This fact has a historical significance in as much as it evidences the growth of material life and with that man's growing curiosity about prospects in newer and newer undertakings and a corresponding growing demand for astrologers catering to new needs. And health is of prime concern to everyone, and the *bṛhat-saṃhitā* of Varāhamihira contains a good deal of information of common interest to a health conscious layman. Great value attached to male progeny and polygamy, which was rampant in the new rich sections of the society, taken together were responsible for the incorporation of erotic remedies in medical texts and an astrologer hankering after popularity could not avoid questions about them. So also about some other matters of common interest. These references not only indicate commoners' interest in these matters but also reveal the developed state of Ayurveda or medical science. It is proposed to take stock of the allusions of a medical nature, whether detailed or casual, here. At the outset we shall devote attention to the topics on which Varāhamihira gives detailed information.

I. EROTIC REMEDIES

Chapter 75 of the *bṛhat-saṃhitā*

captioned *Kāndarpikam* dwells upon erotic remedies which were also called *vṛṣya* (BS. CIII. 63) and *vājikarana*. It is pertinent to note in this context that chapters dealing with this subject are incorporated in most of the medical texts,⁴ and some of the prescriptions described by our author tally with those met with in the texts on Ayurveda.

These prescriptions were necessitated chiefly by the Indians' hankering for the male children, which must have been originally due to economic necessities of the society which was primarily agricultural, and to some extent by the fairly common incidence of polygamy. Varāhamihira himself specifies the purpose of these remedies as follows: "If at the time of coitus woman's blood is in excess of man's sperm, a female child is born, if *vice versa*, the outcome is a male, when both the blood and sperm are equal, an hermaphrodite is born. Therefore a man should take recipes increasing his sperm". (*ibid.*, LXXV.1). Polygamus practice is mentioned as a reason for these remedies in verse 5 of the same chapter. We are given the following ten prescriptions :

- I. Tablets of a mixture in equal proportions of the mineral compound called *mākṣika-dhātu*, mercury, iron-dust, yellow myro-

4. E. G. Sushruta, IV. 26, Charaka, Chikitsasthana, II. Cf. Vatsyayana's *Kamasutra*, VII, 1 : it is quite natural for an erotic text to describe erotic remedies conducive to sexual life.

- balan and bitumen, doughed with clarified butter and honey and done into globules (guṭīkā), to be taken for twenty-one days.⁵
- II. Milk boiled with kapikacchu roots.⁶
- III. Taking six morsels of beans cooked in clarified butter churned from milk (payaḥsarpis), followed by a drink of milk.⁷
- IV. The powder of vidārikā boiled in its own sap and then dried up in the sun seven times, to be taken with boiled milk sweetened with sugar. This prescription is especially meant for a man with many wives.⁸
- V. Taking the powder of yellow myrobalan, boiled in its own juice and mixed with honey, sugar and clarified butter, followed by milk in keeping with one's digestion.⁹
- VI. Eating sesamum grains boiled seven times in milk with goat's testicles and then dried up, followed by a drink of milk.¹⁰
- VII. An evening meal comprising boiled śaṣṭīka variety of rice taken with clarified butter and black gram soup, and drinking of milk thereafter.¹¹
- VIII. Cakes made of a compound of sesamum seeds, roots of aśvagandhā and kapikachchhu, vidārikā, and the flour of śaṣṭīka rice, ground in goat's milk, and fried in clarified butter.¹²
- IX. Drink of milk boiled with gokṣuraka.¹³
- X. Eating the root of vidārikā boiled in milk.¹⁴
- It is also observed that sexual activity is adversely affected in the case of a man who consumes very sour, pungent, bitter, salty food as well as a diet full of leafy vegetables grouped as kṣāraśāka. This kind of food harms digestion also (BS, LXXV 12).

5. BS LXXV. 3.

6. *Ibid* LXXV. 4, cf. Kamasutra, VII. 1-38 for a similar prescription.

7. BS LXXV. 4.

8. *Ibid*. LXXV. 5. Sushruta (IV. 26. 23) also prescribes the use of the powder of Vidarika boiled in its own sap with clarified butter and honey for a polygamist.

9. BS LXXV. 6 cf. Sushruta, IV. 26. 24, for a similar prescription.

10. BS LXXV. 7. cf. Sushruta, IV. 26. 18, 20, Vatsyayana's Kamasutra (VII. 1. 37).

11. BS LXXV. 8.

12. *Ibid*. LXXV. 9.

13. *Ibid*. LXXV. 10. cf. Sushruta, IV. 26. 33, 35 for a similar statement.

14. *Ibid*. LXXV. 10. cf. Sushruta, IV. 26. 28; Kamasutra, VII. 1. 38.

II. POWDER FOR INDIGESTION

Curiously enough, we find a prescription for an appetiser also in the chapter on erotic remedies. This is in all probability as a man with weak digestion cannot easily consume and digest the above mentioned erotic recipes, and keeping appetite kindled is absolutely essential¹⁵ A powder prepared from ajamoda salt, yellow myrobalans, ginger and long pepper (all in equal quantities), taken with wine, butter-milk, tarala? (kāñji, according to some) or hot water, is stated to promote digestion.¹⁶

III. MENSTRUATION AND CONCEPTION

As stated above, birth of children, more especially male children, was greatly desired in the then Indian society, and an astrologer was naturally concerned about menstruation and conception. We have a chapter devoted to the consummation of males and females (puṁ-strisamprayog-ādhyāya, *BS*, LXXVII), and in addition to general matters last eight stanzas of this chapter (19-26) give us some useful information which is important from our point of view, as they give us an idea of the then prevailing notions and practices regarding menstruation and pregnancy.

A woman is advised to eschew bath, wearing new garments and anointing the body on the first three days of the menses after which on the fourth day she should bathe with water purified and perfumed with various herbs (*ibid.*, LXXVII. 21-22)¹⁷. The menstrual blood resembling hare's blood or lac-dye and fading away at washing is pure; the same, when free from noise and pain and ceasing to flow after three days undoubtedly develops into a foetus on uniting with a man.¹⁸

Varāhamihira refers to a sixteen-day period suitable for conception (ṛitu) out of which the first three nights were to be avoided for sexual union (*ibid.* LXXVII. 26). According to some medical writers on the other hand, this period consists of twelve nights from the commencement of menses, of which the first three nights are unfit for coitus.¹⁹ As the sixteen-day-period is known to the early smṛitis like Manu (III.46) and Yājñavalkya (I.79) also J. Jolly seems to be right in taking it to be original.²⁰

It was believed that a male or female child would be born as the impregnation takes on an even

15. This is actually hinted at in *BS*, LXXV. 10.

16. *ibid.* LXXV. 11.

17. For a list of these herbs, see *ibid.*, XLVII. 39-42; Charaka IV. 8. 5. Sushruta, III. 2. 25.

18. *BS* LXXVII, 19-20. cf. Sushruta, III. 2.3-17.

19. *ibid.* III. 2.28-30; Ashtanga-hridaya, II. 1.27f.

20. *Indian Medicine*, Eng. tr. by C. J. Kashikar, Pune, 1951, p. 74.

or odd night.²¹ Moreover, a conception taking place on distant even nights was believed to result in the birth of a long living, handsome and happy son.²²

The situation of the foetus in a particular spot in the womb was taken to be indicative of the sex of the child to be born. Thus the child would be a male, female or a eunuch as the foetus stands in the right, left or middle of the womb. Twins would be born if it is situated on both sides.²³ The birth of two, three, four or more children at a time, and a delivery long before or after the usual period were regarded as abnormal and taken to forebode evil (*ibid.* XLV. 51,53). Varāhamihira further states that one should refrain from marking his wife's body with nails or teeth during the period fit for conception (*ibid.* LXXVII. 26).

IV. TOOTH STICKS

For keeping the mouth clean and free from odour ancient Indians had been using tooth-sticks (danta kāṣṭha) since long, and it was regarded as a sign of the townsman (nāgaraka) as would appear from a perusal of the relevant section of Vātsyāyana's Kāma-sūtra (I.4.16). Varāhamihira devotes an independent

chapter in his bṛhat-saṃhitā entitled appropriately danta-kāṣṭha-lakṣaṇādhyāya (LXXXIV). Twigs of thousands of creepers, spreading plants, shrubs and trees were used as tooth-sticks, those of vikaṅkata, bilva, kāśmarī, kśema-taru, vaṭa, arka madhūka, sirīṣa, karañja, plakṣa, jāti, aśvattha, badara, bṛhati, śāka, sriphala, kadamba, nīpa, arjuna, karavīra bhāṅḍīra, samī, śyāmā, śāla, aśvakarṇa, devadāru, cāṭurūṣaka, priyaṅgu, apāmārga, jambu, and dāḍīma being especially recommended and believed to bestow good luck (*ibid* LXXXIX. 1, 3-7). Some of these twigs are also recommended by Caraka (I.5.48-49) and Suśruta (I.24.5-7). The tooth-sticks that are not tried before, have leaves and an even number of joints, are split, withered at the top, and without skin, we are told, should not be used (*BS* LXXXV. 2;) Yogayātrā (Y.Y. 11.20). Normally a tooth-stick should be a vitasti (9") in length (*ibid.* II.21).²⁴ We also get reference to a recipe for perfuming tooth-sticks in *BS* LXXXVI. 31-34. Kept in bovine urine mixed with the powder of yellow myrobalan (haritaki) for a week, they are immersed for sometime (half a night according to Bhattot-pala) in the scented water prepared from small cardamoms, cassia bark,

21. Cf. Manu-smṛiti. III.48.

22. *BS* LXXVII. 23. For astrological factors favouring the birth of a son, see *ibid* LXXVII. 25; Brhājataka, IX. 11.

23. *BS* LXVII. 24. cf. Charaka, IV. 2.28 f.

24. Some popular beliefs relating to tooth-sticks are related in *BS* LXXXIV, 8-9. and Yoga-yatra, II. 21-22.

añjana, honey, pepper, nāga-kōśara and costus mixed in equal proportions. Next they (probably their upper parts) were powdered with 4, 2, 1 and 3 parts of nutmeg, cassia bark, small cardamoms and camphor respectively and dried under the sun. Such tooth-sticks, we are told, impart freshness of complexion, facial lusture, clearliness and fragrance of the mouth and sweet speech. A similar device of perfuming tooth-sticks is found in the Agni-purāṇa (CCXXIV. 40). However, there we are told to immerse them in bovine urine for only three days instead of a week.

In addition to these deliberate delineations on topics of medical interest we have casual allusions of medical importance relating to the domain of layman's interest scattered throughout Varāhamihira's numerous writings showing the highly develo-

ped state of Ayurveda during his time.

V. GENERAL MATTERS

Varāhamihira evinces awareness of diseases, doctors, treatment and certain principles of medical science through these casual references. He refers to physicians as vaidya⁵ ayu-yajña⁶ and bhiṣaj²⁷, to horse-physicians as turaga-bhiṣaj²⁸, to surgeons as śalya-hṛd⁹ to chemists as rasāyana-kuśala³⁰ and to depoisners as viṣa-ghātaka³¹. The word śālākya³² denoting a kind of surgery, is met with in BS, XV. 12. We have references to the three humours of the body, viz (i) wind (vāta, vāyu, mārut, anila, pavana); (ii) bile (pitta) and (iii) phlegm (śleṣma, kapha), their derangement, diseases proceeding therefrom and persons suffering from them.³³ The fact that bile is greatly vitiated and becomes powerful by basking under the sun is also recorded.³⁴ Mention is also made of

25. BS V. 41; X.3; XV.26; XXXIII. 11, CIII 61; Y.Y III.23.

26. BS XVI. 17. Utpalā takes it to mean experts in Chemicals and erotic remedies : Ayusho hitam-ayushyam rasayana-vajikarana-adi.

27. BS V.80; VII.6; IX.32; 43; X.9, 16; XV.7. 17; CIII.61,62.

28. BS XLIII. 13.

29. *Ibid.* V.80.

30. *Ibid.* XVI 19.

31. *Ibid.* LXXXV. 32.

32. Utpalā takes it to mean an eye-specialist (akshi-roga chikitsaka).

33. (i) wind BS IX.40 (marud gada); LXXXVI.11 (Vāta-rogin) LXXXVI.37 (vayu grasta); BY, V.1 (anilaja-roga); BS X1.25 (anila-jvara), Brihaj-jataka (BJ), XXIII 13 (sams-ishtah pavana), For allusions to food-grains causing wind, Cf. BS XV, 13, XVI.33.

(ii) bile : BS IX 43 (Pittaja-kamala) XIX.9 (Pittottha-ruj). BY. V.2 (citta-ruj), BS VIII.13 (Pitta.....Pida) also Cf. *ibid.* CIII 11, 18.

(iii) Phlegm : *ibid.*, VIII.28 (Shleshma-krita-roga), C III.61 (Shleshmika dravya), BY V.1 (Kaphaja-roga).

34. BS CIII. 55.

the dhātus (primary fluids of the body), their deterioration and derangement and the diseases caused by them³⁵. The part played by climatic and seasonal disorders in causing diseases was recognised. Thus there are allusions to outbreaks of epidemics due to untimely rains, the irregularity of cold and heat, abnormality of seasons (*BS* XLV. 38-39), and unnatural features of the sun and the moon (*ibid.*, III.26; IV. 29). People also believed in the evil influence of planets, stars and other astrological phenomena as a cause of diseases.³⁶ According to Suśruta divine calamities and irregularities of cold, heat, wind and rain divest medicines and water of their respective properties and their use generates epidemic diseases.³⁷ In treatment, stress was laid on regulating diet (*BS* CIII. 55).

VI. GENERAL AILMENTS

Ailments in general are called by various terms like roga³⁸ āmaya³⁹

ruj⁴⁰ vyādhi⁴¹ gada⁴² and akalyatā⁴³ and health is referred to as kalya⁴⁴ and ārogya.⁴⁵ Ayuṣadha⁴⁶ and Bheṣajya⁴⁷ are the words employed for medicine. Varāhamihira mentions insanity (*unmāda*, *ibid.*, XXXII. 11; *BJ* XXIII. 13), rigor mortis (*moha*, *ibid.* XXV. 12), death due to worms in a wound (*ibid.*, XXV.7), indigestion (*mandāgnitā*, *BS*, LXXV. 10. Cf. LXXVIII. 28), bleeding (*rakta srāva*, *ibid.*, LXXXVI. 35; *kṣataja-visruti*, *ibid.* LXXXVIII. 30; *asrg-udbhava*, *ibid.*, CIII. 13; *kṣarita-kṣataja*, *ibid.* CIII.16), abortion (*garbha-pāta*, *ibid.* LXXXVIII. 5 Cf. V. 79,85; L. 35,38) and the diseases of the womb (*kuṣy-āmaya* *ibid.*, V. 51), abdomen (*udara-roga*, *ibid.*, LXXXVIII. 29; CIII. 10, 16; *jaṭhara-gada*, *ibid.*, CIII. 6,13), heart (*hrd-roga*, *ibid.*, CIII. 44; *koṣṭha-roga*⁴⁸ *ibid.*, CIII. 5), mouth (*mukharuj*, *ibid.*, V. 82; *mukha-roga*, *ibid.*, V. 83; VI. 4; *vadana-roga*, *ibid.*, XXXII. 18; *vaktra-roga*, *BJ* XX. 1), teeth (*danta vaikṛtya*, *ibid.*, XXIII.

35. *Ibid.*, VII.5 (dhatu-sankshaya), CIII.16 (dhatu-klāma), *BJ* XXV,1 (dhatu-kopa), Cf. *ibid.*, XXV.3. 8, *BY* V.2 for death and disease due to vitiated blood.

36. All the references to diseases here are drawn from astrological contexts.

37. Sushruta, *Sutrasthana*, VI. 16-18.

38. *BS* V.72, VI.2, VII.2, IX.18,23, 43; VIII.32,34; XI.31,36,48, etc.

39. *Ibid.*, IV.29; VII.7; VIII.42; V.51.

40. *Ibid.*, V.82; XIX.9, XXXVII.13 (variant reading; LII.60, LXXXVIII.6; CIII.7,

41. *Ibid.*, V.36, VIII.4, 17; IX.33, 44; XXIX.12; XXXIV.15; XXXV.5; XXXVII.2; XLV.25; L.14; LXXXVIII.5, 24; CII.7.

42. *Ibid.*, VIII.51; IX.40,42; XII.17; XVI.40; XLV.60; XCIV.40.

43. *Ibid.* LVII.50.

44. *Ibid.* CIII.5.

45. *Ibid.* VIII.15; XXIX.11; XLIX.22, LXXVIII.21; LXXXIV.5; LXXXVIII.10; CII.13.

46. *Ibid.* LXXV.5; XCIX.5.

47. *Ibid.* XV.17; XVI.5; XIX.1.

48. It may also denote abdominal affection.

11. Cf. *ibid* XXIII. 15), eyes (akṣi-gada, *BS* IX. 40; akṣi-ruj, *ibid.* L. 11; C. III. 16; dr̥g-ruja *ibid.*, CIII. 6; dr̥g-roga, *BJ*, XIX. 1. Cf. *BS* CIII. 18; *BJ* XXIII. 10, 12, 13), head (śiro-ruj, *BS*, LII. 109), throat (gal gadaḥ, *ibid.*, IX. 42), private parts (guhya-ruj, *ibid.*, V. 86; *BJ*, XXIII. 7; guhy-odbhava-roga, *ibid.* XXV. 9), i.e. piles or fistula, and of ears (śravaṇa-vyādhi, *BS*. IX 33. Cf. *BJ*. XXIII. 11: Śravaṇopaghāta).

VII. SPECIFIC DISEASES

The following specific diseases are named by our author :

1. Gala-graha (*BS*, XXXII. 10), throat-spasm. According to the Caraka (Sūtrasthāna, XVIII. 22), gala-graha arises from the hardening of the phlegm in the throat,
2. Śvayathu (*BS*, XXXII. 10), swelling of the skin, oedema. It may be of three or two varieties as it is caused by the three humours of the body or by endogenous and exogenous factors (Caraka, Sūtrasthāna, XVIII. 3).
3. Prameha (*BS*, LXVII. 7), diabetes, morbid secretion of urine. The possibility of a man with very tender sex organ falling a victim to diabetes leading to his death is indicated.
4. Chardi (*ibid.*, XXXII. 18), vomiting. It is of five kinds, as it
- results from contact with repulsive objects, excess of wind, bile or phlegm, and tridiscordance (Caraka, Sūtrasthāna, XIX).
5. Kāsa (*ibid.*, IX. 44; XXXII. 10), cough accompanied by the shaking of jaws is alluded to (hanū-kampa-yutaś-cha kāsaḥ, *ibid.*, VIII 48).
6. Śvāsa (*ibid.* VIII. 48; IX. 44; XXXII. 10; *BJ* XXIII. 8), dyspnoea.
7. K-aya (*BS*, VIII. 49; *BJ* XXIII. 8. 17), consumption.
8. Śoṣa (*ibid.*, XXIII. 8), pthisis. Death caused by Śoṣa is referred to (*ibid.* XXV. 3).
9. Pāṇḍu-roga (*BS*, XXXII. 14), anaemia or jaundice.
10. Kāmālā (*ibid.*, IX. 43). It is a kind of jaundice marked by 'intensive yellow colour of the skin, eyes, nails, urine and faeces and particularly of face, with exhaustion, weakness, thirst, heat, indigestion, dispise of food and dullness of senses.'⁴⁹
11. Kuṣṭha (*BJ* XXIII. 9), leprosy.
12. Śvitra (*ibid.* XXIII. 7), white leprosy.
13. Vicarcikā (*BS*, XXXII. 14), itching, dark, severely wet spots or boils.⁵⁰

49. J. Jolly *op.cit* , p. 128.

50. *ibid.* p. 143.

- Utpala takes it to be a skin-disease of the foot (vicarcikā-roga-viśeṣaḥ pādayoḥ-tvag-vikāraḥ).
14. Dadrū (*ibid.*, XXXII. 14), itching, red, elevated spots.⁵¹
 15. Visarpikā (XXXIV. 14), St. Anthony's fire, erysipelas, carbuncles and other abscesses.⁵² Utpala explains it as a deformation of limbs (aṅgā-vikār).
 16. Vidradhi (*BJ*, XXIII. 8), abscesses and inflammations. It is of two kinds according to the Caraka (Sūtrasthāna, XVII. 90) : internal and external, the latter appearing in the skin, muscle and flesh. It is so called because of its briskly appearing characteristics (*ibid.* verse 95). The internal vidradhi occurs in the heart, the pharynx, liver, spleen, stomach, kidneys, umbilical region, groins and bladder (*ibid.* para 101).
 17. Gulma (*BJ*, XXIII. 8), 'a round growth like swelling hardness in the intestines between the heart and navel.'⁵³
 18. Khalati (*ibid.*, XXIII. 15), baldness.
 19. Apasmāra (*ibid.*, XXIII. 17; *BS* LII. 76), epilepsy.
 20. Viśūcikā (*ibid.*, LXXXVI. 44), 'cholera in its sporadic form'. Utpala understands it as pricking pain in the stomach (udara-śūla).
 21. Atisāra (*ibid.*, XXXII. 18), dysentery.
 22. Jalodara (*BJ*, XXV. 3), dropsy originating from untimely drinking of water.
 23. Jvara (*BS*, XXXII. 10, 14; XCIV. 35; CIII. 13), fever. There is reference to a serious kind of fever causing death (*BJ*, XXV. 1). The fever caused by provoked bile is mentioned in *BY*, XI. 25 (cf. Caraka, Nidānasthāna, I. 17-21).
 24. Pliḥaka (*BJ*, XXIII. 8), splenic disorders.
 25. Niśāndhatā (*ibid.*, XX. 1), night-blindness, one suffering from this, is referred to as niśāndha.

We also have numerous allusions to outbreaks of pestilential diseases called maraka⁵⁴ māra⁵⁵ māri⁵⁶.

To sum up, Varāhamihira's writings contains rich information on various topics relating to Ayurveda and showing its developed state.⁵⁷

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.* pp. 147-48.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

54. *BS*, V.27; XI.12; 29-31; XII.21; XXXV.4; XLV.79; LXXXVIII.24.

55. *Ibid.*, III.31.

56. *Ibid.*, LXXXVI.33.

57. The *BS* contains a chapter (LIV) dealing with Vrikshayurveda which properly comes within the domain of horticulture.

सारांश

वराहमिहिर तथा आयुर्वेद

—अजयमित्र शास्त्री

वराहमिहिर न केवल भारत के महान ज्योतिषियों-खगोलज्ञों में से एक थे, अपितु सार्वजनिक-जीवन के विभिन्न पक्षों के अवलोकन के साथ विविध प्रकार की प्रतिभाओं तथा विद्या की विभिन्न शाखाओं के विस्तृत ज्ञान से युक्त थे, जिसको उन्होंने लोकप्रिय ज्योतिष विद्या के ढांचे में बड़ी कुशलता व निपुणता के साथ बना, जिसे तकनीकी भाषा में मुण्डेन ज्योतिष अथवा संहिता कहा जाता है। वराहमिहिर का काल छठी शती ईसवी है। कई ग्रन्थों के रचनाकार थे। जिनमें से उनके सुप्रसिद्ध ग्रन्थ 'बृहत्संहिता' का रचना काल छठी शती ईसवी के मध्य का समय माना जाता है, जिसमें स्वास्थ्य के प्रति सचेत साधारण व्यक्ति के लिये सार्वजनिक रुचि की सामग्री पर्याप्त मात्रा में मिलती है। प्रस्तुत लेख में चिकित्सकीय संदर्भों की स्थिति का विस्तृत अथवा प्रासंगिक रूप से विवेचन करने का प्रयास किया गया है।