

Āyurvēda GLEANED THROUGH BUDDHISM

Ala Narayana* & G. S. Lavekar**

ABSTRACT

The Pāli canon consists of three Pitakas (baskets), which replete the Buddhism and is known as *Tripitaka*, viz, Vinaya, Sutta and *Abhidhamma Pitakas*. The original phase of *Tripitaka* (Buddhisim started in 544 B.C. and lastly systematized up to 29 B.C. The Buddhist literature also possesses the esoteric material of Medical Science, which is practiced and conserved in India since centuries. It refers to the fundamentals of medicine, rules of good living, which lay considerable emphasis on the hygiene of body, mind. Internal Medicine, curative medicine including symptoms, methods of diagnosis, theories of causation, materia-medica, therapeutics and treatment and skills of *Jivaka*. Some famous and popular prescriptions are also dealt with.

Introduction

The source of *Āyurvēda* is not confined to the medical compendia only like *Caraka*, *Suśruta*, *Bhēla*, *Kaśyapa*, *Vāgbhaṭṭa* etc, but to other literatures also. The Buddhist literature also possesses the esoteric material of Medical Science. The outset of the Buddhist literature is considered to be after the demise of Lord Buddha. The canon of the sacred literature of the Buddhists was composed in languages like *Pāli*, *Māgadha* and other dialects. The Buddhist literature does not possess the word *Āyurvēda*. But it described the five branches of *Āyurvēda* in *Dighanikaya* (1.2.27) of *Suttapitaka* and the copious material of remaining branches of *Āyurvēda* persists there. The five branches are

1. *Vassakamma or Vrisa or Vājīkarana.*
2. *Salakiya or śālakya Tantra.*

* Director (Institute), Indian Institute of History of Medicine, Osmania Medical College Building, Putlibowli, Hyderabad - 500 095 ** Director, Central Council for Research in Ayurveda & Siddha, No.61-65, Opp. D-Block, Janakpuri, New Delhi - 110 058

3. *Sallakattiya or Śalya Tantra*
4. *Daraka –Tikiccha or Balacikitsā or Kaumārabhṛtya*
5. *Mulabhesajjanam anuppadanam and Osadhinampatimokkho or Kāyacikitsā* including Pharmaceutics.

Date of Buddha

Gautama, alias *Siddhartha*, was the son of *Suddhodana* and *Māya* of *Kapilavastu*, born at *Lumbinivana* in 624 B.C and died at the age of 80 i.e. c. 544 B.C. He attained renunciation at the age of twenty-nine after seeing an old man, a cripple, an ascetic and a corpse. He thus became Buddha.

The language, which the Buddha used to speak, was *Māgadhi* or *Pāli*, the folk language of Northern India. The *Tripitaka* belonging to the *Sthaviravada* School is authentically available in *Pāli* language. The original phase of *Tripitaka* started in 544 B.C. and lastly systematized up to 29 B.C. The *Pāli* canon consists of three *Pitakas* (baskets) and is known as *Tripitaka*: these are *Vinaya*, *Sutta* and *Abhidhamma Pitakas*. *Vinaya Pitaka* deals with rules of the monastic order. *Sutta* deals with the ethical principles of Buddha's teaching. *Abhidhamma Pitaka* expounds with the metaphysical principles underlying the doctrine. The *Visuddhimagga* of *Buddhaghosa* (380 - 440 A.D.) is an encyclopedic treatise of Buddhism dealing with Yogic practices.

Vinaya pitaka deals essentially with the rules and regulations applicable to the monks. It has in it two sections called *Mahavagga* and *Chullavagga*. *Mahavagga* in a chapter entitled "on medicaments" lists the instructions and guidance given by Buddha to the monks. It describes four different procedures of making a patient sweat. A house called *Jantagar* is also described in *Chullavagga* where people could go for the sweat-treatment. *Mahavagga* also describes the operation of blood-letting with the help of a horn. It gives clear instructions about the care of the patient

The *Mahavagga* relates two case histories, which relates to the instructions of the Buddha about treating boils and wounds. In one case a monk had boils. The Buddha allowed the use of lancet, decoctions of astringent herbs, sesamum salve, and compresses and bandages for covering wounds. When the sore began to itch, sprinkling of mustard

powder on the affected part was allowed; when the sore became moist, it was allowed to be fumigated; when a tumorous growth appeared on the wound, the Buddha allowed monks to cut it off with a lancet. When the wound did not heal, the Buddha allowed the use of oils. In fact, he allowed all sorts of treatments to be tried on the wound.

MEDICINE AND BUDDHA

Medicine and its definition

Buddhaghosa, a great exponent of Buddhist canons defines medicine as “cure for the sick”. The word ‘*Tikiccha*’ is used in the Buddhist works. *Tikiccha* is derived from the root *kit Rogapanayane* or to remove off the diseases and its causes by applying some measures. (*Visuddhimagga* I. 96)

The *Itivuttaka* records states that Lord Buddha was a physician (*bhisakko*) and surgeon (*sallakatto*). The Lord Buddha’s approach was philanthropic towards mankind and he tried utmost to remove the worldly pain. His four noble truths are *cattari ariya sattani*, *dukkham ariyasaccam*, *dukkhasamudayam ariyasaccam* and *dukkhanirodhagamini pati padda*. The Lord Buddha propounded this doctrine and *Aṣṭāṅghṛdaya* has regarded him an extraordinary physician and *Aṣṭāṅgasangraha* has honored him as genius physician.



Amongst the authorities of *āyurvēda*, the names of *Dhanvantari (Divodāsa)* with his two disciples *Vaitarana* and *Bhoja, alambayana* the toxicologist, *Nimi, Nagnajit, Nārada, angīrasa, Kapila, Kandaraggisamo, Atula* and *Kankāyana* are mentioned with their respective skills. (*Jātakas* XXII.543.38)

The Buddhistic literatures mentioned the *Maha Bhutas* four in number i.e. *Parthavi, apo, tejo* and *vayo*. The *Majjhima Nikaya* and *Milindapanho* added *ākāśa* as *panchama bhuta*. (M. III, 115, 140, XXVIII.2.2). These four *bhutas* forms four *dhatu*s in forty-two aspects.

No proper classification of diseases is found in Buddhist works except the 8 causes. But the synonymous words such as *Abādha*, (V. P. IV.261) *āmaya*, (V. P. IV.261) *Vyādhi*, (A. I. 139) *Ruja*, (MP. 172) and *Roga* (D. III. 75) are mentioned in Buddhistic literature and the very terms are also used in *āyurvēda*. *Madhumeha* (diabetes mellitus) disease is said to be major (*Vikata rogas*) (VP. V. 2.15), while others are considered to be as general. *Kuttha* (Leprosy), *Ganda* (Goitre), *Kilāsa* (Leucoderma), *śośa* (Tuberculosis) and *Apamara* (Epilepsy) are stated five *Abādhas*. (*Vinaya Pitika* I. 71). Buddhistic works said that in ancient times there was only three diseases viz., *Iccha* (desire or longing), *Anaśana* (fasting or hunger) and *Jara* (old age), which gradually through slaughtering of animals, increased to 98 varieties. (D. III. 75; Sn. 311). The Buddhistic literature also refers to *Bhūtavijja (bhūta vidya)*. (*Dighanikaya*, I. 2. 1)

The medicinal plants, mentioned in the Buddhist literature, are 435 among them 60 herbs are repeatedly referred due to variant spellings of *Pāli* language. 64 plants could not be identified. Pestle and mortar were allowed to grind the medicines and for sifting the powder, the *chunam* sifter (*cunnacalini*) and cloth sifter (*vussacalini*) were used. As the *Caraka* and *Suśruta Saṁhitā* all the animal products are not simultaneously dealt with in the Buddhist literature. Metals, Minerals, salt and Jewels were also used.

There is no specific term for internal medicine, identical to *Kāyacikitsā* in the Buddhist literature. In the treatment of various diseases, the different parts of the plants, the roots, leaves flowers fruits and the bark, were all used. No mention of either Mercury or Sulphur is found in it. *Rasacikitsa* is not indicated. All types of major and minor surgical operations were done.

The Buddhist scriptures that mention the practice of medicine are the *avadanas*. They form part of the religious literature of the *Mahāyāna* sect of Buddhism. One such *avadana* called *Kunalavadana* describes a disease that emperor Ashoka suffered from and how its remedy was discovered. Another *avadana* called *Dharmaruchyavadana* describes the case of a housewife who developed excessive appetite.

Anatomy & Physiology

The literatures described the body in philosophical and anatomical aspects of various varieties of dead bodies by names that are very peculiar; layers of skin *chavim* (outer), *cammam* (inner); *mamsam* (muscle); *asthi* (bone) and bone marrow. (*Anguttara Nikaya*, VII.7.9). The *Viśuddhimagga*, described various muscles, all internal organs and enumerated total bones of the body as 300. Preservation of the dead body was also in vogue. The dead body of wife of king Bhadra of Munda, in oil tub, made of iron and was kept covered by the lid. (*Anguttara Nikaya*, III.7).

The literature says very meager about the Physiology. The *Viśuddhimagga* (VM. VIII. 121), describes that when food, liquids fall into the *mahāsotas* (gastro-intestinal tract), it get divided in to 5 parts. The worms eat 1 part, the stomach fire (Digestive secretions) burns up one part, one part becomes urine, one part becomes excreta and another part is turned into nourishment.

Preventive Medicine

The literatures has laid emphasis on the hygiene of the body and mind and prescribed rules of good living, cleanliness of body and utensils, cooking, serving, eating food, the serving a meal at feast, cleaning before and after food, good and bad effects of various foods, the procedure of evacuation, cleaning of tooth. (V.P. *Parivara*, VII.3.13) Buddha himself taught how to build a *Vaccakuti* (Latrine) bathroom, how to construct a brick pond in an open place and how to make a medical bath to cure a disease and body anointment with oil.

The *Vinayapitaka*, mentions four royal snake families, their identification, characteristics and various poisons and cardinal symptoms of snakebite, antidotes. (*Mahavagga*. IV.2.14)

Pancakarma

Snēhana (oleation) and *Svēdana* (sudation) are pre-*pancakarma* measures. It is interesting to note that the terms *vamana*, *virecana*, *uddhavirecana* (*urdhvavirecana* or upward expulsion of the *dosas*), *Adhovirecana* (purgative), *Śīsavirēcana* (*Śīravirēcana*) and *Natthukamma* (*Nastahkarma*) were very elaborately described in the Buddhistic works. (*Dighanikaya*, I. 2. 27).

Darakatikiccha (Paediatrics)

The term *Darakatikiccha* of the Buddhists is identical with the Paediatrics or children disease. (D. I. 12). *Āyurvēda* designates it as *Kaumārabhṛtya* or *Bālaroga* (A. H. I. 1.5). The *Pāli* term '*Dhāti* (*Dhātri*)' is used to denote the wet-nurse whose most essential duty was to (feed her) breast feed in case the mother is unable to suckle the child. (D. II. 19; M.I. 395; II. 324; J. I. 57; III. 391)

The Buddhistic works have categorized the wet-nurse in to four types. The episode says that the king *Bandhuman* engaged nurses for the babe *Vipassi*. Some suckled him (*khiram payenti*), some washed or bathe him (*nhapeti*), some nursed him (*dharenti*) and some carried him about on their lap (*ankenā pariharanti*). The *Divyavadana*, a

Sanskrit work of *Mahāyāna* school of Buddhism, has clearly classified the nurse in the aforesaid types. The *āyurvēdic* works have no such type of category of the wet-nurse.

Obstetrics

No proper term is also assigned to obstetrics in *āyurvēda* and Buddhistic literature, though the material is copious. The *Cullavagga* (X. 10.22) and *Parajika* (II. 3.53) of *Vinayapitaka* furnish a list of various gynaec disorders attributed to women desirous to obtain ordainment (*upasampada*) and coincidentally they were examined and in case they were found with the following disorders, might not join to *sangha* (sexual intercourse).

Animitta is that who do not possess either primary or secondary developed characteristics of sex. In *animittamatta*, there may be partial development of sex characteristics. *Alohita* may be defined as women having amenorrhoea. Amenorrhoea means without menstruation and it may be primary or secondary. The commencement of menstruation occurs generally at the age of 12 and stops at the age of 50. If it does not come before the age of twelve and after the fifty, must be understood of primary type and pregnancy, lactation and menopause are the causes of secondary amenorrhoea.

The *Vinayapitaka* (II. I. 4) describes 10 kinds of semen and its characteristics normal and abnormal semen were described. The factors, which are responsible for conception also explained. (VP. II. I. 4)

The Buddhistic literature mentions vaginal pad (*Udakasati*) for nuns to be used during menstrual period. (VP. VIII. 17. 25)

The Buddhistic works like *Samyuttanikaya* (X. I. 1), *Jātaka* (IV. 494) and *Viśuddhimagga* (VIII. 30) described the foetal development with out mentioning the period in a set order.

The *Mahā-ummagga Jātaka*, also described about sex-determination through skull, the distinguishing point between the two is that sutures in man's skull are straight; while women's are crooked and if the mass of embryo is like a *pinda* (compact ball) is a male or elliptical like *pesi* is a female. (*Jātaka*. XXII. 546).

The most striking reference of contraceptive medicine (the name was not mentioned) referred in Buddhistic literature. The episode describes that a woman asked a Buddhistic monk to provide some medicine by which she may become fertile. A fertile woman also wanted to use medicine by which she may not become fertile. (VP. I. 3. 163)

Curative Medicine

Symptoms of bodily illness

1. Loss of appetite: Appetite depends on the condition of four elements, of which the condition, of which the body consists. When health is recovered he will feel hungry.
2. Eating causes discomfort to the person and this brings about symptoms of disease.
3. When one has a headache and lies in bed it is called disease.
4. Sometimes we find that phlegm fills the gullet, water comes instantly out of the mouth and nose, and the accumulated water being enclosed in an air pipe causes acute pain in the throat. In such a case, speaking is difficult on account of voice and all food is tasteless.

Method of Diagnosis

The Buddhistic literature, states that a physician, having inspected the countenance of the diseased and the voice, prescribes for the patient according to the eight sections of the medical science. If he does not understand the secret of the science he will, though desirous of acting properly, fall into mistake.

Simply noticing that one is ill but not investigating the cause of the illness is a dangerous thing. This is prohibited in the science of Medicine. To find out the cause of the sickness, one should examine one self in the morning. If one feels any disturbance in the four elements on inspection, abstinence from eating is to be first observed. There is indeed no trouble in feeling the pulse. Of what use is it then to enquire one's fat from a

diviner! If one were indisposed, he should investigate the cause. When the cause of ill health has been discovered, one should take rest. When a disease has befallen one, rest and cure must be taken at once.

Theories of causation of disease

1. Disequilibria of four *Mahābūtas*. Every living creature is subject to either a peaceful working or the failure of the great elements.
2. A disease might arise due to the changing seasons.
3. Generally speaking a disease, which has befallen a body, arises from too much eating, or eating again before the former food is digested.
4. Disease is also brought on sometimes by excessive labor.
5. Eating of red stones, drug habits.
6. Snake bites, etc.
7. Climatic cause – heat, lightning.
8. Accident: Wounds due to sword, arrow or falling down.

It is pointed out that Buddha attributed failure of health to the disequilibria of four great elements earth, water, fire and air.

Therapeutics

1. **General** : When a disease has befallen one, he must rest.
2. **Dietetics** : Food is forbidden at an improper time. If anyone feels illness, then one should abstain from food. Even in great thirst, one must not take any syrup or water, for this is the strictest probation in this science. During the day at least in which treatment is adopted the patient must abstain from eating. This abstinence is to be continued sometimes a day or two or even four or five days until the disease has been quite cured. It is not good to force a person when attacked by a violent fever to drink hot water or to take

food. Food should be avoided also in a case of sickness brought on by swallowing a red stone (Cinnabar) or in chronic illness or in swelling of stomach. Food should be abstained from in all other diseases such as fever, a violent pain in hands and feet, any injury caused by lightning, sword, or arrow, an acute febrile disease, cholera, measles, diarrhea, heart disease and toothache. When sickness has not been cured by medicine, one may eat food at any prescribed hour, if this be the physician's order.

3. **Fasting in the treatment of disease :** Fasting is an effective cure without any trouble of cauterizing the head or rubbing the throat. This is in accordance with the general rule of the science of medicine, i.e., curing disease without using a decoction or any medicine. The explanation is that when the stomach is empty, violent fever abates. When the juice of the food is absorbed the phlegmatic disease is caused. When the internal organs are at rest and bad breath dispersed, severe cold will naturally be over. There will be no failure if the method is adhered to. "If it be necessary to consult some famous physician, the poor and the needy are cut off, from the food of life. When it is a case of gathering the best herbs from the western field the parentless and the helpless will lose their way. But the fasting of which we are now speaking is simple and admirable, for it is practiced equally by the poor and the rich."



FASTING BUDDHA

Drug Treatment

1. In fever (Malaria) give decoction of liquorices root, wild tea and bitter ginseng (Aratiac quinquefolia).
2. In the cure of violent fever the application of cooling by means of water is prohibited. But in hot and damp places lying south of a river and range, the above rule is not to be applied. When a fever arises in this region, cooling by water is effective.
3. In the cure of sinking heaviness and shivering cold, the best remedy is to remain near the fire.
4. When suffering from “wind pressure” (this probably represents rheumatism), the best remedy is to anoint the wounded and painful spot with oil and to warm it with a heated bed sheet.

5. If one feels that there is food in the stomach, one should press or stroke the belly at the navel, drink as much hot water as one can and put the finger inside the throat to cause vomiting. Drinking and ejecting, one should continue the same till the remnant of the food is exhausted. Or there is no harm if one drinks cold water and hot water mixed with dry ginger.

Famous and Popular Prescriptions

The book mentions certain prescriptions since the benefit conferred by them is remarkable.

1. A pill called *sanling* (equal mixture of three) is also good for several sicknesses and not difficult to obtain. Take the bark of *Haritaki* (yellow myrobalam), dry ginger, and sugar. Prepare the three in equal quantities, grind former two and mix them with sugar by means of some drops of water and then prepare pills. About ten pills for one dose every morning is the limit. No dieting is required.

In case of diarrhea, about two to three doses are sufficient to effect recovery. The benefit derived from this cure is very great, as it can relieve a patient from giddiness, cold, indigestion, etc.

2. Treatment for common cold. If one feels chilly, the last named water (lentil soup) is to be drunk with some pepper or ginger or piper longum (*Pillali*). If one feels cold, kashgarian onions or wild mustard must be applied. The *śāstra* on medical treatment says, "Anything of acrid or hot, removes a cold with the exception of dry ginger." Avoid drinking cold water, carry out other dieting according to medical advice. In case of cold, eating will not hurt one.

Jīvaka and his Skills

The *Mahavagga* also gives an account of the physician *Jīvaka*. It describes his birth, childhood, medical training and his skills of medicine. According to Tibetan tales, Jīvaka's preceptor at Taxila University was *Ātrēya* and he learnt the surgical and medical

skills from him and ultimately superseded his teacher in the very science. *Jīvaka* was a contemporary of the Buddha (5th century B. C.) and was greatly attached to him. *Jīvaka* treated Buddha on two occasions when he was ill due to disturbance of *dosas*. *Jīvaka* is said to have performed several surgical operations as well.



Jīvaka

Jīvaka's first patient was a merchant's wife who was suffering from a chronic disease of the head for several years. Many physicians had examined her but could not restore her to health. They had received huge fees and left. *Jīvaka* young in age and in experienced was given permission to examine her with reluctance. *Jīvaka* took one handful of clarified butter (ghee) mixed some drug in it, boiled it and administered it to the patient through her nose while she was lying on her back in bed. Ghee given through the nose came out of the mouth and the patient spat it out. She was cured at once. For this cure *Jīvaka* received huge gifts.

Jīvaka treated King *Bimbisāra* while he was suffering from fistula-in-ano (*Bhagandalabadho*). His queen noticed his outer garments were stained with blood and said that the king was under menstruation and would soon conceive. The King was desperate. The physician *Jīvaka* treated him by giving medicine and with one application the King was cured (*bhagandalabadha ekeneva alepena aparaddhi*). *Jīvaka* was rewarded and appointed royal physician and also physician to Buddha.

At *Rājagṛha* a merchant was suffering from chronic head disease (*sisabadho*) for seven years and was not cured by world-famed doctors. The case was incurable and some physicians predicted that the patient would live hardly for five or seven days. King *Bimbisāra* called *Jīvaka* and asked him to examine the patient. *Jīvaka* performed operation on the head and pulled out two worms, which would enter his brain in a few days and may kill him. The merchant was cured and rewarded *Jīvaka* and became a slave



Jīvaka performing Cranial operation on merchant

Once a splinter from the rock hurled by Devadatta injured Buddha's foot and a piece of stone was pierced the Blessed foot. There was great pain in it and he was unable to walk. Buddha had to be carried from *Maddakūci* to *Jīvaka's* amravana (mango grove) (J. IV. 503). *Jīvaka* cut opened the foot with a knife let out the bad blood and removed the proud flesh, and applied an astringent medicine and bandaged the wound and healed it (J. IV. 533). After the death of King *Bimbisāra*, *Jīvaka* continued in the court of *Ajātaśatru* and served him for several years.



Jīvaka accompanying *Ajātaśatru* on a visit to "Buddha" Barhut

सारांश

बौद्ध साहित्य में आयुर्वेद का संग्रह

अला नारायण एवं जी.एस. लवेकर

‘पाली’ सिद्धान्त (प्रामाणिक धर्मग्रन्थ संग्रह) तीन पिटकों से बना है, जो बौद्ध साहित्य से परिपूर्ण है। इसे त्रिपिटक जैसे- विनय, सुत्त और अभिधाम पिटकों के नाम से जाना जाता है। त्रिपिटक (बौद्ध साहित्य) ईसा पूर्व ५४४ वर्ष से आरम्भ हुआ और ईसा पूर्व २९वें वर्ष में अन्ततः व्यवस्थित हुआ। बौद्ध साहित्य भी चिकित्सा विज्ञान की गोपनीय सामग्री से सम्पन्न है, जो कि भारतवर्ष में सदियों से क्रियान्वित और सुरक्षित है। यह चिकित्सा के मूलभूत सिद्धान्तों और आदर्श जीवन के नियमों से सम्बन्ध रखती है। जो शारीरिक और मानसिक स्वास्थ्य, आभ्यन्तर औषधि, लक्षणों सहित रोगनाशक औषध, नैदानिक विधि, कार्योत्पादन के सिद्धान्त, औषध-शास्त्र, चिकित्सा विज्ञान, चिकित्सा और जीवन कला आदि के लिए महत्वपूर्ण विचारणीय बल प्रस्तुत करती है। कुछ प्रसिद्ध और लोकप्रिय नुसखें भी इसके साथ मात्रापूर्वक वर्णित हैं।