

GLEANINGS OF ĀYURVĒDA IN RĀMĀYAṆA

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ABSTRACT

Rāmāyaṇa is one of the most important literary works of ancient India and considered as *Ādikāvya* (the first epic). It has been accepted as homogenous work attributed to a single author *Vālmiki* and considered as an authentic record of historical events painted with poetic mind of Sanskrit literature. *Rāmāyaṇa* is not only the story of *Rāma* but is a realistic view of the social, economic, religious, political and aesthetic aspiration and achievements of Aryans living several thousand years ago. There has been some controversy regarding the epic, whether it is drawn from historical facts or from a talented poet's imagination. *Rāmāyaṇa* contains about 24000 verses and is arranged into seven *kāṇḍa* or Parts/ Sections. In *Rāmāyaṇa* many subjects like literature, Arts, Crafts, Rites& rituals, Philosophy of life, and different Science subjects like Astronomy, Medicine etc are discussed. *Vālmiki*, has given fairly profuse references in *Bālakāṇḍa* of practice of medicine of his period and clearly mentioned the word '*Āyurvēda*' the healing art of ancient India and emphasized about medicaments, surgery, magic medicine and crystal therapy. The *Rāmāyaṇa*, describes many number of wars and war medicine, most probably the wounded soldiers were treated and first aid being administered on battle field. Wounded soldiers were most probably treated and even first aid being attempted on the battlefield. Magic medicine is another major component of healing in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It includes spells and incantations, or the chanting of *mantra* and is used even more frequently than herbal remedies.

Introduction

Rāmāyaṇa, considered as *Ādikāvya* (the first epic), one of the most popular literary works of ancient India. The *Rāmāyaṇa* has a profound impact on art and culture in the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia. The *Rāmāyaṇa* is not just a Hindu religious tale. Starting from the 8th century, the colonisation of Southeast Asia by Indians began. Several large empires were established. Because of this, the *Rāmāyaṇa* became popular in Southeast Asia and manifested itself in text, temple architecture and performance, particularly in Indonesia (Java, Sumatra, Bali and Borneo), Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines and Vietnam. It has been accepted as

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homogenous work attributed to a single author *Vālmiki*. The word *Rāmāyaṇa* is derived from *Rāma* and *Ayana*, it means that the poem which describes the goings (*Ayana*) of *Rāma* and *Sītā*. *Rāmāyaṇa* is not only the story of *Rāma* but it is a realistic view of the social, economic, religious, political and aesthetic aspiration and achievements of Aryan living several thousand years ago. It also covers Arts, Craft, Science, Literature, Philosophy, Trade, and Commerce etc. The epic has been held down the ages to this day and is intimately linked with the present religious faith of millions in India. It has gone through a long process of interpolations and redactions; it is impossible to date it accurately. The current text of *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* has come down to us in two regional versions from the north and the south of India. It is an important source of the History of post Vedic Indian society, furnishing the facts and circumstances. The epic has exerted a profound influence in molding Indian cultures through ages. Thus *Rāmāyaṇa* is the backbone of Aryan civilization. It is considered as an authentic record of historical events painted with poetic mind of Sanskrit literature. There has been some controversy regarding the epic, whether it is drawn from historical facts or from a talented poet's imagination.

Rāmāyaṇa is an ancient Sanskrit epic attributed to the poet *Vālmiki* and does not contain any information regarding his early life. There is a story about *Vālmiki*, which tells that *Vālmiki* was a bandit. *Ṛṣi Nārada* come across him in a forest and advised *Vālmiki* to change his life and to do good things. *Vālmiki* changed his life style and became a great poet, and wrote the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the life story of *Rāma*. *Vālmiki* also plays a role in the story. He was from a *Kirāta Bhīla* community, a tribal caste community and his name was *Vailya* before he became the *Ādikavi* (prime poet) *Vālmiki* who recorded the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Some have believed that *Vālmiki* was to have been born into the *Nāga* clan. A folk legend records narrates that the sage was born out of an "anthill" (Sanskrit, *Valmika*) and therefore was called *Vālmiki*. This legend also records that he was originally a bandit but some sages showed pity towards him and taught him to chant the mantra "*Rām, Rām, Rām*" as he repeated the syllables, "*Marā, marā, marā*" they produced the name *Rāma*, and while he was deeply immersed in meditating on the name of *Rāma*, ants built anthills around him. This story appears with minor variations in the *Skandapurāṇa* and also in the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* and *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa*. Many popular works of

Rāmāyaṇa like *Bhakti Rāmāyaṇa*, including the *Kṛttivāsa Rāmāyaṇa* of Bengal, adopt this story. He received the outline of the great epic from Sage *Nārada*. In the seventh book of the epic, *Vālmiki* mentioned that he was a friend of King *Daśaratha*. *Rāma*'s brother *Lakṣmaṇa* leaves the pregnant *Sītā* (*Rāma*'s wife) in *Vālmiki*'s hermitage. Finally, it was *Vālmiki* who sheltered *Sītā*, raises her twin sons, and plays the role of reconciler between *Rāma* and *Sītā* by testifying publicly to *Sītā*'s purity. In this context, *Vālmiki* describes himself as a son of *Pracētas*, which makes him a member of the family of *Bhṛgu*, an influential lineage of *Brāhmaṇa* in ancient India. Thus, these two kinds of biographies of *Vālmiki*, which describes *Vālmiki* as a sage-poet born in a high-caste *Brāhmaṇa* family and endowed with supreme wisdom and the divine sensibilities that made him the creator of *Rāmāyaṇa* poetry. While the other, describes him as a sinner transformed into a saint. The first type of biography is in conformity with the status of the *Rāmāyaṇa* as the great epic that it is in the Brahmanic tradition. The second type of biography relates to the status of the *Rāmāyaṇa* as a *Bhakti* poem that transforms its readers from sinners into devotees of the Lord *Rāma*. The two types of biographies thus reflect the two major orientations and interpretations of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Hindu culture. The scholars do not accept *Vālmiki* as a contemporary of *Rāma* and believed that he composed the *Rāmāyaṇa* before the advent of *Rāma*. Even Scholars have suggested a historical *Vālmiki*, who probably was a resident of *Kauśala* (a region of the modern state of Uttar Pradesh) and traveled extensively in North India, though he did not know much of the South. This opinion is based on the textual evidence from the *Rāmāyaṇa* that gives details and geographically corrects descriptions of North India, where as its descriptions of South India are purely fanciful.³

This epic poem *Rāmāyaṇa* is *Smṛti*, which is "from memory". *Vālmiki*'s *Rāmāyaṇa*, the oldest version of *Rāmāyaṇa* is the basis for all various version of *Rāmāyaṇa* that are prevalent in various cultures. The text survives in numerous complete and partial manuscripts, the oldest surviving of which is dated from the eleventh century AD. The *Rāmāyaṇa* had an important influence on later Sanskrit poetry, primarily through its establishment of the *Ślōka* meter. But, like its epic cousin *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa* is not just an ordinary story. It contains the teachings of ancient Hindu sages and presents them through allegory in narrative and the interspersion of the philosophical and the

devotional way. *Śrīmad Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* is composed of verses called *Ślōka*, in Sanskrit language, which is an ancient language of India and a complex meter called *Anuṣṭupa*. These verses are grouped into individual chapters called *sarga*, wherein a specific event or intent is told. These chapters or *sarga* are grouped into books called *kāṇḍa*. Thus the structure of *Śrīmad Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* contains about 24000 verses and is arranged into seven *kāṇḍa* or Books, and they are:

1. *Bālakāṇḍa* (77 chapters) - Describes the young *Rāma* and deals with the miraculous birth of *Rāma*, his early life in *Ayōdhyā*, his slaying of the demons of the forest at the request of sage *Viśvāmitra* and his wedding with *Sītā*.
2. *Ayōdhyākāṇḍa* (119 chapters) - The section of *Ayōdhyā* which deals with *Daśaratha*'s grief over his promise to *Kaikēyī* and the beginning of *Rāma*'s exile.
3. *Aranyakāṇḍa* (75 chapters) - Describes *Rāma*'s life in the forest and the abduction of *Sītā* by *Rāvaṇa*.
4. *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* (67 chapters) - Deals with the *Vānara* kingdom, *Rāma*'s meeting with *Sugrīva* and the search for *Sītā* by the *Vānara* army.
5. *Sundarakāṇḍa* (68 chapters) - This section describes *Hanumāna*'s travels to *Lankā* and finds imprisoned *Sītā* there and brings back the good news to *Rāma*.
6. *Yuddhakāṇḍa* (128 chapters) - Which narrates the *Rāma-Rāvaṇa* war and the successful return of *Rāma* to *Ayōdhyā* and his coronation.
7. *Uttarakāṇḍa* (111) - Epilogue, which details the life of *Rāma* and *Sītā* after their return to *Ayōdhyā*, *Sītā*'s punishment and how *Sītā* and *Rāma* pass on to the next world.²

Textual History

Traditionally the epic belongs to the *Trētāyuga*, one of the four eons of Hindu chronology and is attributed to *Vālmiki*, an active participant in the story. It is composed as an Epic in Sanskrit, an early variant of Classical Sanskrit, so that in principle the core of the work may date to as early as the 5th century BC. Since in its current form, after hundreds of years of transmission through recitations and in manuscript form, the epic

has gone thorough numerous variations. It cannot be dated by linguistic analysis as a whole, and should be considered to have emerged over a long process, spanning from the 5th to 1st centuries BC. The core events told in the epic may be of even greater age, the names of the characters, *Rāma*, *Sītā*, *Daśaratha*, *Janaka*, *Vaśiṣṭha* and *Viśvāmitra* are all known in the Vedic literature such as the *Brāhmaṇa* which are older than the *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*. However, nowhere in the surviving Vedic poetry is a story similar to the *Rāmāyaṇa* of *Vālmiki*. *Brahma*, one of the main characters of *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Viṣṇu*, who according to *Bālakāṇḍa* was incarnated as *Rāma* are not Vedic deities and come first into prominence with the epics themselves and further during the ‘Puranic’ period of the later 1st millennium AD. There is also a version of *Rāmāyaṇa*, known as *Rāmōpākhyāna*, found in the epic *Mahābhārata*. This version, depicted as a narration to *Yudhiṣṭhira*, is devoid of any divine characteristics to *Rāma*.

There is general consensus that book two to six form the oldest portion of the epic while the first book *Bālakāṇḍa* and the last the *Uttarakāṇḍa* are later additions. The author or authors of *Bālakāṇḍa* and *Ayōdhyākāṇḍa* appear to be familiar with the eastern Gangetic basin region of northern India. And the *Kauśala* and *Magadha* region during the period of the sixteen *janapada* as the geographical and geopolitical data is in keeping with what is known about the region. However, when the story moves to the *Aranyakāṇḍa* and beyond, it seems to turn abruptly into fantasy with its demon-slaying hero and fantastic creatures. The geography of central and south India is increasingly vaguely described. The knowledge of the location of the island of Sri Lanka also lacks detail. Basing his assumption on these features, the historian H.D. Sankalia has proposed a date of the 4th century BC for the composition of the text. A. L. Basham, however, is of the opinion that *Rāma* may have been a minor chief who lived in the 8th or the 7th century B.C.

There are diverse regional versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* written by various authors in India, some of them differ significantly from each other. During the twelfth century AD, *Kambana* wrote *Rāmāvatāram* in Tamil, popularly known as *Kambarāmāyaṇam*, it is a unique classic, even though it is based on *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*. *Kambana* has modified *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* and reinterpreted many anecdotes of *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* to suit the

Tamil culture and his own ideas. *Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa* inspired the *Śrīrāmacaritamānasa* by *Tulasīdāsa* in 1576, an epic *Avadhī* (a dialect of Hindi) version with a slant more grounded in a different realm of Hindu literature, that of *bhakti*, which is an acknowledged masterpiece of India, popularly known as *Tulasīkṛta Rāmāyaṇa*. *Rāmāyaṇa* has been translated/written into various languages by various authors such as *Prēmānanda's* Gujarati in 17th century AD, Bengali by *Kṛttivāsa* in 14th AD, Oriya by *Balarāmadāsa* in 16th AD, Marathi by *Śrīdhara* in 18th AD, Telugu by *Raṅganātha* in 15th AD, Kannada by *Narahari* in 16th AD, Assamese by *Mādhava Kaṇḍalī* in 14th century and *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa Kilippaṭṭu* a Malayalam version by Thunchaththu Ezhuthachan in the 16th century.

Rāmāyaṇa refers many subjects like literature, Arts, Crafts, Rites & rituals, Philosophy of life and different Science subjects like Astronomy, Medicine etc. The main system of medicine in India, *Āyurvēda*, as well as most of the knowledge content in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, was based on the sacred scriptures, the *Veda*. The art of healing, along with other areas of learning, was taught in hermitages. *Āyurvēda* has remained a widely accepted and practiced system of medicine in India through the centuries, validating the information about medicine in the *Atharvavēda* at least to some extent. The system of medicine includes herbal medicine, surgery, magic medicine, and crystal therapy, though the last method of healing is not mentioned as prominently as the others are. It is very likely that many components of the medicine in the *Rāmāyaṇa* are of relevance even today to the practice of traditional medicine. The *Rāmāyaṇa* refers to names of specific plants and herbs only occasionally. Typically, at the points in the story when someone is being healed, the narration becomes vague, and the names of the healing substances are rarely mentioned. Even the medicinal properties of the plants are absent. This makes it difficult to accurately identify the medicines and the modes used to prepare and administer them. However, while the healing in the *Rāmāyaṇa* itself is not explicit, and one may speculate that the treatment described in the *Rāmāyaṇa* stays within the Ayurvedic framework.

Āyurvēda in *Rāmāyaṇa*

In *Bālakāṇḍa Vālmiki* gives fairly profuse references to the practice of medicine in his age and he clearly mentioned the word '*Āyurvēda*', the Indian Science of Medicine

(I.45.31). And narrated the birth of *Dhanvantari* the God of *Āyurvēda* during churning of *Kṣīrasāgara* (Milky Ocean) and consider him as *Āyurvēdamayapurūṣa*. In *Ayōdhyākāṇḍa* it is coated that the city of *Ayōdhyā* was inhabited by a number of *Vaidya* or physicians (II.100.42) and the Kings (II.100.13) treated them with great respect. The Kings are used to maintain their own team of skilled physicians for their service. And Lord *Rāma* him self advised to his younger brother *Bharata* that honor the *Vaidya* with gifts, affectionate regard, agreeable speech and gain their confidence (II.100.13, 60). The skilled Physicians were accompanied *Bharata's* Army. The skilled surgeons are known as *Śalyakṛta* (V.28.6), and were existed at the time of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, who were in special demand. Physicians accompanied royal armies on the march. They were included among the camp – followers of *Bharata's* army (II.83.12-4).^{1,3}

They knew anatomy, Physiology, and medical diagnosis. Full knowledge of the structure of human body was possessed by surgeons, which can be inferred from the many anatomical terms used in the epic. For example in *Yuddhakāṇḍa* the following anatomical and physiological terms are quoted.

1. *Kāya* - Body (44/30)
2. *Mastaka* - Head (52/34)
3. *Lalāṭa* - Forehead (59/104)
4. *Śaṅkha dēśa* - Temporal region (97/21)
5. *Grīvā* - Neck (41/87)
6. *Udara* - Stomach (5/7)
7. *Yakṛt* - Liver (58/30)
8. *Plihā* - Spleen (59/30)
9. *Sañjñā* - Consciousness (90/77)
10. *Śvāsa* - Respiration (64/27)¹

A correct reading of the contours and facial expressions of the body precisely determined whether life was existed or not in the patient. The knowledge of medical diagnosis can be traced in *Suśēṇa's* statement about *Lakṣmaṇa*, he said: "*Lakṣmaṇa* is

not dead. His face is not distorted or darkened. Just look at his countenance, which is beautifully bright and cheerful. His palms resemble lotus-petals and his eyes are pleasant. Such are not the characteristics of lifeless bodies. This one is instinct with life. As he is lying, stretched on the ground, his heart trembling and every moment testify to his respiration” (VI.101.24-8). The anatomical conditions, obtaining in the human body on the eve of death, were well understood. The queens of *Daśaratha* knew with practical distinction between deep sleep and death. When they felt the king, as he lay in bed apparently asleep, did not perceive any action in the ever-moving pulse, they became apprehensive of his end (II.65.13-4). *Trijaṭā* assured *Sītā* that *Rāma* and *Lakṣmaṇa* were not dead, for although lying insensible with arrows, their grace had not left them, whereas the faces of persons dead and become unsightly to a degree (VI.48.31-2). Physiognomy also was a fully developed science in the epic age.

Suśēṇa, father in law of *Sugrīva* (VI.50.23) was a highly skilled surgeon whose expert services stood the *Vānara* in excellent stead in the battle of *Laṅkā*. He kept up the fighting capacity of the army at its highest (VI.91.21-8). On more than one occasion, restoration to life of *Rāma* and *Lakṣmaṇa*, and to others chiefs on the *Vānara* side, was solely attributable to the prompt and efficacious medical attention of *Suśēṇa*. He knew all about drugs and their habitats, and able to cure even ‘surgical cases’ with medicinal herbs. While supplicating before *Kaikēyī*, *Daśaratha* beseeched her to speak out her malady, so that his expert physicians might attend to her ailment (II. 10. 30-1). With this we can assume that the practice of Ayurvedic medicine is flourished during *Rāmāyaṇa* time.³

The Disease (*Vyādhi*) was looked upon as vitiation from providence (II.100.69). In the *Uttarakāṇḍa* it is narrated that the vitiation of *Tridōṣa* (three humors) i.e. *Vāta* (Wind), *Pitta* (Bile) and *Kapha* (Phlegm) was the main cause for diseases (5.7). It also describes the acute suffering caused to the people from a widespread incidence of dropsy (VII. 35.50-65), which indicate the importance of *Vāta*. It is said that, owing to the anger of the wind-God, the excretal functioning of all creatures was obstructed, their breath impeded, their bellies swollen and their joints, as if being pierced, became hard as wood. Entire population was put to excruciating affliction and untold distress

and, it is mentioned, only devout congregational prayers to the wind-god alleviated the misery of the people. The idea of a disease was conveyed by the terms *Āmaya* (VII.5.7), *Rōga* (VI.22.38) or *Vyādhi* (II. 10. 31) and *Ātura*, the sick person (VI.5.13). Great stress was laid on the necessity of *Pathya* or discreet diet, both as a precaution against ill health and as a prescription in diseases. Even wholesome food, if needlessly taken, produces diseases (II.64.59, 12.71). A man desirous of meeting his end is averse to taking medicine and those who were not observes *Pathya* (III. 40.2,53.17,17.15).³

In *Rāmāyaṇa* various diseases of physical as well as mental origin are mentioned. The mental derangement as *Cittamōha* (V.34.23), insanity as *Unmāda* (V.34.24), the abortion and miscarriage as *Garbha-parisrāva-skanna* (I.37.26-7), the fracture of the jaw was conveyed by the expression *Hanuḥ-abhajyāta* (VII.35.47). The deformity with a hump on back is considered as *Kubja* (I.32.25). The dropsy as *Mahōdara* (VII.35.54), delusion as *Mrgatṛṣṇikā* (V.34.23), gout as *Vātagati* (V.34.23), wound or ulcer or sore as *Vraṇa* (II.73.3). Obstruction in the free flow of urine as *Viṇmūtrāsāya āvaraṇa* (VII.35.50) and one who is suffering from eye-disease or eye-disorder as *Nētrātura* (VI.115.17) in which there is intolerance to light.³

Medical Treatments are with herbs, surgery, magic, and crystal therapy. Magic and sorcery were also “traditionally” employed with a view to enhancing the efficacy of herbal treatment. In *Rāmāyaṇa* mainly two types of herbs are mentioned i.e. 1. Normal herbs and 2. *Divyauśadhi*. *Auśadhi* or herbs had to be searched for in huge forests (III.67.15) and on hills. The Himalaya is still reputed to be an abode of medicinal herbs of all descriptions (VI.74.29-32). Some herbs were said to illumine the regions all around (VI. 74.32). On the *Citrakūṭa* Hill, thousand of herbs grew would glow at night and visible by their own luster like flames of fire (II.94.21). Herbs with antidote properties of snake poison grew on the *Mahēndra* Mountain (V.1. 21). The habitat of these herbs was a matter of common knowledge to forest-dwellers like *Vānara* (VI.50.30). In *Rāmāyaṇa* hundreds of plants are quoted. For example-

1. *Agaru*- *Aquilaria agallocha* (*Ayō* 91/83), for *lēpana* (external application)
2. *Arjuna*-*Terminelia arjuna* (*Yud* 22/56), for the constriction of *sētu* (bridge)

3. *Aśōka*-*Saraca ashoka/ indica* (*Sun* 14/3), mentioned as one of the tree of *Aśōkavana* (garden) in *Laṅkā* (Sri Lanka)
4. *Utpala* - *Nymphoea stellata* (*Yud* 83/12), one of the ingredients of the water used for regaining the consciousness.
5. *Kadalī* - *Musa paradisiaca* (*Aranya* 42/13), habitat near by *Pañcavaṭī*
6. *Kadamba* - Autocephalous kadamba (*Aranya* 60/12), habitat near by Pampa
7. *Karpūra* - *Cinnamum camophora* (*Kiś* 28/8) for refreshing the air during rainy season
8. *Kimśuka / Palāśa* - *Butea frondosa* (*Ayō* 56/6) habitat near by *Citrakūṭa* mountain
9. *Kamala / Paṅkaja / Padma* - *Nelumbo nucifera* (*Aranya* 18/9) for color
10. *Kuśa* - *Desmostachya bipinnata* (*Ayō* 94/24) as bedding
11. *Kētaka* - *Pondanus tinctorious* (*Kiś* 27/27) habitat near *Tuṅgabhadrā* river
12. *Candana* - *Santalum album* (*Ayō* 91/83, 114/20&22) for external application on body and fumigation.
13. *Tāla* - *Barassus flabellifer* (*Kiś* 31/14) habitat near at *Kiṣkindhā*
14. *Darbha* - *Cynodon dactylon* (*Ayō* 103/29) for *Piṇḍadāna*
15. *Nārikēla* - *Cocos nucifera* (*Aranya* 35/13) habitat near sea shore of Sri Lanka
16. *Nyagrōdha* - *Ficus bengalensis* (*Ayō* 55/6, 7) under its shade *Tapasvī* (Sages) do Penance
17. *Punnāga* - *Calophyllum inophyllum* (*Sun* 10/23) for oral freshness
18. *Bakula* - *Mimusops elangi* (*Sun* 10/23) for oral freshness)
19. *Bilva* - *Aegle marmelos* (*Bāla* 14/22, 39) for fumigation in *Aśvamēgha yajña*
20. *Raktacandana* - *Pterocarpus Santalum* (*Sun* 10/23) applied on *Rāvaṇa*'s body
21. *Lājā* - *Oryza sativa* (*Yud* 114/20) kept on *Rāvaṇa*'s dead body
22. *Sōma* - *Ephedra vulgaris* (*Ayō* 32/29) concerned to *yajña*
23. *Saptacchada* - *Alstanea scholaris* (*Sun* 2/10) Hunuman observed in *Laṅkā* (Sri Lanka)^{1,3}

Among the plants mentioned *Aśōka*, *Candana*, *Tāla*, *Kadali*, *Padma* and *Badarī* are important. A drug known as *Mōhinī* was mentioned in *Yuddhakāṇḍa* (72. 6-7), which may be employed for anesthesia. Other than this some plants having special or magical powers are quoted and denoted them as *Divya auṣadhi*. When *Indrajit* had wounded most *Vānara* chiefs along with *Rāma* and *Lakṣmaṇa*, *Hanumāna* was sent to fetch four medicinal herbs which are *Divya auṣadhi* from the *Auṣadhi* hill in the *Himālaya* (VI.74. 39-34).

They are

1. *Mṛtasañjivānī* - a drug for resuscitating the dead
2. *Viśalyakaraṇī* - capable of remove pain and arrows
3. *Suvarṇakaraṇī* - capable of restoring to the wounded limbs
4. *Sandhānī* - was meant for curing fractures and cut surfaces

Suṣēṇa employed these drugs in “inhalation treatment” for providing instantaneous relief by using very powerful drugs for insufflation into the nose. When *Lakṣmaṇa* was sorely wounded by a *Śakti* of *Indrajit*, *Hanumāna* brought the above mentioned four medicinal plants from the *Mahōdaya* mountain and *Suṣēṇa*, after pounding administered them to *Lakṣmaṇa* through his nostrils which had immediate effect (VI.101. 43-4). In *Rāmāyaṇa* the names of specific plants and herbs are quoted occasionally. Even some animal products, metals, minerals and gemstones are also mentioned. And the medicinal properties of these are not mentioned clearly.

Proficient and skilled surgeons (V.28.6) existed at the time of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Performance of obstetric operations was certainly known. In cases of difficult labor, surgeons resorted to the cutting of the foetus in the womb with sharp instruments (V.28.6). There is an interesting reference even to transplantation of an eyeball (II.14.5). When *Indra* had his scrotum severed through the curse of *Gautama* and was thus deprived of the power of regeneration (I.48.27-8), the assembled *Pitṛdēva* transplanted the scrotum to the person of the sufferer (I.49.8). This incident postulates knowledge of intricate surgical operations.

Since the *Rāmāyana* age was characterized by a lot of fighting, the art of treating men wounded on the battlefield was particularly well developed, and military surgeons were in especial demand. They were, for instance, included among the camp – followers of *Bharata's* army (II. 83. 12-4), whose expert services stood the *Vānara* in excellent stead in the battle of *Lañkā*. And keep up the fighting capacity of the army at its highest (VI.91.21-8). They cure even 'surgical cases' with medicinal herbs.

Great care was taken of the wounded in *Rāma's* army. Wounded soldiers were most probably treated even in the battlefield, as there is no indication of their being sent to the rear in the camping ground. Evidence can be adduced to prove some sort of first aid being attempted on the battlefield. When the *Vānara* army was sorely hit by the *Brahmāstra* of *Indrajit* in the night-battle, *Hanumāna* and *Vibhīṣaṇa* went round the field with torches in their hands to cheer up the wounded soldiers and administer them first aid (VI.74.6-7) *Sugrīva* directed *Suśēṇa* to take wounded *Rāma* and *Lakṣmaṇa* to *Kiṣkindhā* (VI.50. 24). When *Indrajit* was slain by *Lakṣmaṇa* and *Vānara* army gained a respite. *Rāma* orders *Suśēṇa* to heal the wounds of *Vānara* heroes to enable them to recoup their vitality for the next round of the battle (VI.91.22-6). There were certain antiseptic herbs whose application served as a protection from the corroding effects of dreadful weapons. The *Rākṣasa* warriors, *Triśira* and others are described as proceeding to the front after smearing their bodies with medicinal herbs and aromatics as prevention against festering wounds (VI.69.18).

The science of midwifery seems to have been considerably developed as it is stated that, during *Rāma's* reign, women gave birth to babies without any risk (*Ārōgyaprasavā nāryaḥ*, VII. 41.19.). A nurse was called as *Dhātṛī* (I.38.18). Nurses reared prematurely born babies by keeping them in jars of ghee. The nurses in *Sagara's* place knew the art of incubating a prematurely born foetus. Of the two queens of *Sagara*, the younger, *Sumati*, is said to have given birth to a gourd-like foetus and when it opened, innumerable tiny half-breathing lives are said to have born out of it. The nurse fostered them in jars filled with ghee till they attained maturity (I.38. 18.). Ghee being a good non-conductor of heat and cold, the infant was reared at a uniform temperature.

Corpses were preserved by some form of embalming. *Daśaratha's* body was kept in a capacious pan with oil to prevent decay and disintegration till the arrival of *Bharata* (II.66. 14). In the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, *Rāma* asks *Lakṣmaṇa* to preserve the dead child of the *Brāhmaṇa* petitioner in a jar of oil with spices and aromatic drugs, so that it might not be spoiled or disfigured by any means, its joints may not be loosened and its hair may not fall off (VII. 75. 2-4). Similarly, king *Nimi's* body was preserved by the *Brāhmaṇa*, pending the completion of his sacrifice, by means of fragrant substances, garlands and cloth (VII. 57.11). Hence, as among ancient Egyptians, among ancient Indians too, knowledge of corpse preservation must have been largely prevalent.

The main objective of medical science from time immemorial has been to free man from the pain of disease and death, and in every age ingenious experiments have been performed with some amount of success. The *Rāmāyaṇa*, as well, records attempts of man hankering after elusive immortality. "How can we become exempt from decrepitude and disease and attain immortality" (I.45.16.7), had been the motive force behind the churning of the Ocean, by the gods and demons, in search of ambrosia. Various supposedly death-dispelling drugs like the *Mṛtasañjīvanī* (VI. 74.33) and elixirs of life (*Rasāyanam*, VI.5.13) were discovered or invented. The *Rākṣasa* as fired with imperialistic ambitions, dreaded mortality as a most sinister foe and undertook prolonged austerities for obtaining perpetual life as a gift from "Gods" (VII.10.116). But, all thoughtful souls acknowledge that death is the common to all (II.72.15) and that the inexorable law of time (*Kāladharma*, II.72.37) is relentless.³

Discussion and Conclusion

There have been speculations on whether the first and the last *kāṇḍa* of *Vālmiki's* *Rāmāyaṇa* were indeed written by the original author. Many experts are of the opinion that they are integral part of the book in spite of the many differences in style and some contradictions in content between these two chapters and the rest of the book. There is general consensus that books two to six form the oldest portion of the epic while the first book *Bālakāṇḍa* and the last the *Uttarakāṇḍa* are later additions. The author or authors of *Bālakāṇḍa* and *Ayōdhyākāṇḍa* appear to be familiar with the eastern Gangetic basin region of northern India and the *Kauśala* and *Magadha* region during the period of

the sixteen *janapada* as the geographical and geopolitical data is in keeping with what is known about the region. However, when the story moves to the *Aranyakāṇḍa* and beyond, it seems to turn abruptly into fantasy with its demon-slaying hero and fantastic creatures. The geography of central and south India is increasingly vaguely described. The knowledge of the location of the island of Sri Lanka also lacks detail. Based on these features, the historian in its current form dated the *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* varying from 500 BC to 100 BC. As with most traditional epics, since it has gone through a long process of interpolations and redactions, it is impossible to date it accurately.

The *Aṣṭāṅga* (the 8 divisions) of *Āyurvēda* specialties the *Kāyacikitsā* (Internal Medicine), *Kaumārabhṛtya* or *Bālacikitsā* (Pediatrics), *Bhūtavidyā* or *Grahacikitsā* (Psychiatry), *Śalyatantra* (Surgery), *Śālākyatantra* (Otto-Rhino-Laryngology & Ophthalmology), *Viṣatantra* (Toxicology), *Rasāyanatantra* (Geriatrics), *Vājīkaraṇatantra* (The therapy for male sterility, impotency and the promotion of virility) are all discussed. Since the *Rāmāyaṇa* age was characterized by a lot of fighting, hence War medicine i.e. the art of treating men wounded on the battlefield was particularly well developed. Great care was taken for the wounded in *Rāma's* army. Wounded soldiers were most probably treated even in the battlefield, as there is no indication of their being sent to the rear in the camping ground. Evidence can be adduced to prove some sort of first aid being attempted on the battlefield. Magic medicine is another major component of healing in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It includes spells and incantations, or the chanting of *Mantra*, and is used even more frequently than herbal remedies. The herbs are huge in forests (III.67.15) and on hills. The *Himālaya* were and still are reputed to be an abode of medicinal herbs. Some herbs were said to illumine the regions all around. Indeed, ancient Indians possessed a wide knowledge of practical botany, and their vegetable drugs were numerous and highly efficacious. The topics like *Sadvṛtta* (the behavior of good men or good conduct), *Ṛtucaryā*, *Dinacaryā* (the seasonal and daily conduct), Diet & Dietetics etc, which related to medicine are also narrated.

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सारांश

रामायण में आयुर्वेद

सुभोस वाराणसी एवं अला नारायण

रामायण भारतवर्ष का राष्ट्रीय महाकाव्य है। इसको आदिकाव्य भी माना जाता है। यह प्राचीन भारत का एक अति महत्त्वपूर्ण साहित्यिक कार्य है। यह एकल लेखक वाल्मीकि के समरूप कार्य के रूप में स्वीकार किया जाता है। यह एक वास्तविक ऐतिहासिक घटनाओं का प्रलेख है तथा संस्कृत साहित्य का काव्यमय रूप है। रामायण न केवल राम की कहानी है अपितु यह सामाजिक, आर्थिक, धार्मिक, राजनैतिक और सौन्दर्यपरक अभिलाषा एवं हजारों वर्ष पुरानी आर्यों की जीविका सम्बन्धी उपलब्धि का वास्तविक पर्यवलोकन है। इस महाकाव्य के सम्बन्ध में कुछ भ्रान्ति भी है, कि यह ऐतिहासिक तथ्यों का चित्रण है या बुद्धिमान कवि की कल्पना है। रामायण में लगभग २४००० पद्य अन्तर्विष्ट है तथा यह सात काण्ड या पुस्तकों में विभक्त है। रामायण में विविध विषय जैसे साहित्य, कला, चिकित्सा आदि पर विचार-विमर्श किया गया है। बालकाण्ड में वाल्मीकि ने जीवन में औषधियों के व्यवहार के स्पष्टतः सन्दर्भों का प्रचुर वर्णन किया है। उन्होंने स्पष्ट रूप से “आयुर्वेद” शब्द का उल्लेख किया है। चिकित्सिकीय उपचार जैसे जड़ी-बूटियों, शल्यक्रिया, जादु-टोना और मणि चिकित्सा का वर्णन मिलता है। रामायण काल में युद्ध बहुत अधिक होते थे। अधिकांश घायल सिपाहियों की चिकित्सा की जाती थी तथा युद्धस्थल पर ही प्राथमिक चिकित्सा की जाती थी। रामायण में जादुई चिकित्सा स्वास्थ्य प्राप्ति हेतु चिकित्सा का एक अन्य प्रधान अंग था। इसके अन्तर्गत मन्त्र और अभिचार या मन्त्र जप समाहित थे। इनका प्रयोग औषधीय उपचारों से अधिक किया जाता था।