

Application of Sanskrit In Medical Science

Introduction:

The foundation of Indian culture is based on the Sanskrit language. The word 'Sanskrit' means "prepared, pure, refined or perfect." It has an outstanding place in our culture and indeed was recognized as a language of rare sublimity by the whole world. In fact, Sanskrit was the language of free thinkers, who questioned everything and expressed the widest spectrum of thoughts on various subjects. In particular, it was the language of our scientists in ancient India.

Before dealing with the specific achievements of our ancestors in the fields of Mathematics, Astronomy, Medicine, Engineering, etc. it is necessary to mention that the Sanskrit language made two great contributions to the development and progress of science in ancient India-

1. A language was created by the great grammarian Panini, namely classical Sanskrit, which enabled scientific ideas to be expressed with great precision, logic and elegance. Science requires a written language in which ideas can be written with great precision and logic.
2. A philosophy is required for the progress of science to give support and encouragement to science and scientific development.

Sanskrit was the language of our Philosophers, our Scientists, our Mathematicians, our Poets and Playwrights, our Grammarians, our Jurists etc. In grammar, Panini and Patanjali (authors of Ashtadhyayi and the Mahabhasya) have no equals in the world; in Astronomy and Mathematics the works of Aryabhata, Brahmagupta and Bhaskar opened up new frontiers for mankind, as did the works of Charaka and Sushruta in Medicine. In Philosophy, Gautama (founder of the Nyaya system), Ashvaghosh (author of Buddha charita), Kapila (founder of the Sankhya system), Sankaracharya, Brihaspati, etc., present the widest range of philosophical systems the world has ever seen, from deeply religious to strongly atheistic. Jaimini's Mimamsa sutras laid the foundation of a whole system of rational interpretation of texts which was used not only in religion but also in law, philosophy, Grammar etc.

The earliest literature on Indian medical practice appeared during the vedic period in India, i.e., in the mid-second millennium BCE. The Sushruta samhita, the Charaka samhita, the Ashtangahridaya & the Ashtangsamgraha are encyclopaedias of medicine compiled from various sources from the mid-first millennium BCE to about 500 CE.

Ayurveda, translated as "the science of life", is currently recognized by the World Health Organization as a highly sophisticated system of natural health, with extensive systems of empiric scientific literature and advanced clinical procedures stemming from the vedic discipline, the oldest continuing system of knowledge in the world. In Hindu mythology, the origin of ayurvedic medicine is attributed to Dhanvantari, the physician of the gods.

Ayurvedic literature deals elaborately with measures of healthful living during the entire span of life and its various phases. Ayurveda stresses a balance of three elemental energies or humors; vata, pitta and kapha. According to Ayurvedic Medical theory these three substances - dosas are important for health, because when they exist in equal quantities, the body will be healthy, and when they are not in equal amounts, the body will be unhealthy in various ways. Sanskrit-based therapies have proven medical benefits that have not been adequately employed in conventional western medicine. The unique nature of Sanskrit lends itself well to the assessment and treatment of speech pathologies with anatomical causes. Sanskrit is organised in a scientific manner, with clear grouping of the phonemes that are easy for health care professionals to memorize and apply to speech pathology therapies. Atharva Veda (xix.71.1) also deals with the sound therapy aspects of the mantras for the treatment of the human system at physical, physiological and spiritual level. Gajiwala summarizes the organizational structure of the Sanskrit phonemes as grouped "according to the voicing state, manner of articulation, place of articulation and the internal pressure required to produce them". He provides several illustrations clearly showing how the Sanskrit phoneme structure can be mapped to the anatomy of the throat and mouth, providing a reliable method of locating and surgically correcting the anatomical structures inflicted with

speech difficulties. Asking a patient to pronounce Sanskrit syllables and mapping the speech difficulty to the corresponding anatomy creates a far more reliable and useful diagnostic and therapeutic tool for speech pathologists and surgeons than the methods currently used in diagnostic assessments and speech therapies.

Ayurveda focuses on surgery, exercise, yoga and meditation. Meditation and yogic exercises have been prescribed as measures to various sorts of psychosomatic disorders. Yajna are also the central points of Vedas. It appears as a soul of psycho-therapy, with the use of herbal ingredients. It has a subtle soothing impact on the mind of performer (Atharva veda, iii.11.1). The fragrant substances burnt in Havan Agni (sacred fire) produce smoke which has chemosomatic effect on the body of the performer and all others present there. Thus, the basis of yanga therapy in Atharva Veda is both physiological and psychological. In Atharva Veda (xi. 4.16) a broad classification of therapeutic methods for mental ailments is given, as following:-

Atharvani - -----Manas Chikitsa

Angirasi-----Endocrinological

Daiviya-----Divine - Nature Therapy

Manushyaj-----Medicines prepared by human beings

The Vedas have given the greatest emphasis on Manas chikitsa, than the other therapies, and it is the best because it provides greatest freedom to the therapist. Sanklap is a technique in Atharva Veda, which can be applied to both mental and physical ailments (xii, 1.9). Charaka Samhita stresses a balance of three mental qualities i.e. satva, rajas & tamas to mental ailments. It is also referred in the Mahabharata.

In studies related to the prevention and treatment of cardiovascular disease, Transcendental Meditation has been proven to significantly decrease the risk factors of cardiovascular illnesses, such as high blood

pressure, hypertension, high cholesterol and smoking. There is no risk of overdose or adverse side effects. The health benefits of Transcendental Meditation shows increased longevity, decreased stress reactivity, increased resistance to disease, and improved perceptual ability, improved health during pregnancy and child birth.

Underwood and Rhodes (2008) hold that this early phase of traditional Indian medicine identified "Fever, cough, consumption, diarrhoea, dropsy, abscesses, seizures, tumours and skin diseases including leprosy". Treatment of complex ailments, including angina pectoris, diabetes, hypertension and stones also ensued during this period. Plastic surgery, cataract surgery, puncturing to release fluids in the abdomen, extraction of foreign elements, treatment of anal fistulas, treating fractures, amputations, caesarean sections and stitching of wounds were known. The use of herbs and surgical instruments became widespread. In ancient India the intention to discover truth was so consuming that in the process, they discovered perhaps the most perfect tool for fulfilling such a search that the world has ever known -- the Sanskrit language.

The Hindu religion and associated traditions developed alongside the advance of ancient Vedic medical knowledge and technology, and the language of Sanskrit became significant and necessary to the healing methods and preventive medicine practiced by the Indian people.

Conclusion:

Today, no doubt, we are behind the western countries in science, but there was a time when India was leading the whole world in science. Knowledge of the great scientific achievements of our ancestors and our scientific heritage will give us the encouragement and moral strength to once again take India to the forefront of science in modern world.

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