

## HISTORICAL OUTLOOK AMONG MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

Indian tradition does not lay much stress on the individual. All the arts and sciences are developed with the final aim of attaining salvation. Due to this, historical details are lacking in India. There are books even without the name of the author. Even recorded evidences are lost during foreign invasions and rule.

Ayurveda was handed down hereditarily but many hereditary practitioners have little knowledge about the history of this science. Many evidences are lost due to negligence and lack of proper care, due to ignorance of historical value. The physicians and scholars are requested to devote some time for collection and preservation of information of historical value like genealogy, significant events, manuscripts, awards, gifts, appliances & instruments etc. This will enrich the source material useful for the reconstruction of history of medicine in India.

Indian tradition, culture and the philosophical background do not lay much stress on the individual. The purpose of the arts and sciences is also unique in India. Before starting the subject, all the arts and sciences discuss the purpose of that particular art or science. And almost all of them—whether it is mathematics, astronomy, medicine or philosophy or poetics—proclaim that the purpose is the attainment of salvation of the soul. Based on this strong cultural tradition, we find, that we lack historical, political, socio-economic and biographical details and several other aspects which are important with a historical point of view.

There are several books which do not give the name of the author. India had a very high state of civilization and culture from ancient time and was well developed in all branches of arts and science. But unfortunately many of the particular facts of history are not recorded. Several recorded evidences are also lost during the foreign invasions and rule spread over centuries. The lack of interest combined with the invasion and rule of alien people made the historical evidences disappear. The sad state of affair is that even today Indian society has not awakened fully in this aspect and

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the interest in the historical evidences is still lacking, though in recent years some change is seen.

It is only during the last few decades that the Indian Science of Medicine—Ayurveda – is imparted through educational institutions. Before that, this science has been handed down from generation to generation hereditarily. Barring a few selected veteran scholars, many of the hereditary practitioners do not know anything about the history of this science or the great personalities and their works, their commentaries or commentators and their significance. Their knowledge is limited only to some books or sections which are essential for the practice. Many of such hereditary physicians may be having valuable manuscripts or other material which may be of little use or no use to them but very valuable to the scholars interested in the history of medicine. Many evidences are lost due to negligence and lack of proper care due to ignorance of the historical value. There are families of great physicians in which the predecessors earned a great name and were awarded gifts or titles or lands etc. The records which certify these gifts, honours or awards are not kept safely by their descendants who were not of the same repute and efficiency. They were kept for some time without touching or looking at them and many of them were eaten away by white ants and worms during the passage of time ; sometimes they were thrown into tanks or wells. Even now there may be several physicians who hail from the families of great physicians having manuscripts and records, appliances and instruments used by their forefathers. Some of them are reluctant either to part with them or to publish or donate to some interested institutions.

History regarding the famous families of physicians which may be known only to their descendants is also necessary to be collected, preserved and published.

I take this opportunity, through this publication to request all the physicians/practitioners of all systems of medicine to devote a small part of their precious time for this aspect of medical history and any other information on items below having historical value of their families or well-known physicians.

Genealogy of hereditary physicians ; important or significant events of treatment ; manuscripts ; records certifying any awards, titles, gifts or remuneration etc ; bags, boxes, tubes etc used to carry medicines; instruments or appliances used for treatment, preparation of medicines etc ; specific cures and prescriptions treated as family secrets.

Similarly historical details of medical institutions are to be preserved for future. The details regarding the origin and development of medical institutions are to be collected, preserved and published.

Collection of information on these aspects will enrich the source material useful for the reconstruction of history of medicine in India during the early part of this century and before. The history full fledged in all respects creates inspiration and respect for the science among the present generation of physicians and scholars.

## सारांश

### भारत में चिकित्सकों का ऐतिहासिक दृष्टिकोण

बी. रामाराव

भारतीय परम्परा में व्यक्ति विशेष पर कोई प्राधान्य नहीं। सभी कलाओं एवं विज्ञान का विकास मोक्षप्राप्ति के अन्तिम उद्देश्य के साथ हुआ। इसके वजह से भारत में ऐतिहासिक विवरणों की कमी है। लेखकों के नाम के बिना भी यहाँ पर पुस्तकें हैं। विदेशी आक्रमण एवं शासन के दौरान अभिलिखित प्रमाण खो जाने के प्रमाण हैं।

आयुर्वेद परम्परागत देन है, लेकिन परम्परागत चिकित्सकों को इस विज्ञान के इतिहास के बारे में अल्प ज्ञान है। कई प्रमाण लापरवाही तथा उचित सावधानी के अभाव, तथा इतिहास के अज्ञान के कारण खो गये हैं। चिकित्सकों एवं विद्वानों से अनुरोध है कि वे कुछ समय दें जिससे ऐतिहासिक महत्व की जानकारी जैसे वंशावलियों, महत्वपूर्ण घटनाओं, पाण्डुलिपियों, पुरस्कारों, भेंट, यन्त्रों उपकरणों आदि को जमाकर सुरक्षित रखा जा सके। भारत में चिकित्सा इतिहास की पुनःरचना में यह साधन सामग्री के उपयोग को समृद्ध बनायेगी।