

CHAPTER II

CHARAKA SUSHRUTA AND THEIR TIMES

- 2.1. Introductory
 - 2.2. Analysis
 - 2.3. Historical Background necessary
 - 2.4. Importance of History of Medicine
 - 2.5. Antiquity of Indian Medicine
 - 2.6. Scientific Approach
 - 2.7. Ayurveda and its Sources
 - 2.8. Milestone in Indian Medicine
 - 2.9. Creative and Scientific period
 - 2.10. Charaka
 - 2.11. Sushruta
 - 2.12. Main signs of the times
 - 2.13. Summary
-

2.1. INTRODUCTORY :

'This Science of life is declared to be eternal, It is, indeed, in view of such dissemination by the channel of instruction that some authorities have spoken of the rise of the science of life at this or that time.'

- Charaka¹

This very statement of Charaka applies aptly to Charaka-Samhita itself. Charaka-Samhita and Sushruta-Samhita are the two oldest scientific compendiums on Indian Medicine extant today. Science of medicine ever exists and it is only the presentation that may be new

¹ Charaka-Samhita, Vol.II, S.A.30 Sl.27(1) & (iv), p.598-9.

from time to time. Laws of life exist at all times. It is their discovery and systematization that can have a beginning and have a gradual evolution.

Hippocrates, the ancient Greek exponent of European medical thought and science emphasizes the importance of ancient art and science thus :

' I declare, however, that we ought not to reject the ancient art as non-existent, or on the ground that its method of enquiry is faulty, just because it has not attained exactness in every detail, but much rather, because it has been able by reasoning to rise from deep ignorance to approximately perfect accuracy, I think we ought to admire the discoveries as the work, not of chance but of inquiry rightly and correctly conducted.'²

These remarks of Hippocrates apply equally to ancient Indian medical science. But by chance, ancient India's great achievements in many branches of knowledge have not been rightly evaluated and it was much more so in the case of ancient Indian medical science. This sort of negligence is well borne out by H.W.Rawlins' broad observations:

' India suffers today in the estimation of the world, more through the world's ignorance of her achievements than in the absence of insignificance of these achievements.'³ But again by good chance the worth of Sanskrit literature was recognized by European Scholars and treasures hidden

² Jones: 'Hippocrates on Ancient Medicine.' Vol.1, I, 1923, p.33. Quoted by G.N.Mukhopadhyaya in History of Medicine, Vol.1, p.4.

³ India in European Literature and Thought: In the Legacy of India, (The Clarendon Press, 1951), p.36.

therein were gradually discovered and well appreciated by Mcdonell:

' Mcdonell considers that discovery of Sanskrit literature by the West the most significant event in the history of culture since Renaissance.'⁴

2.2. ANALYSIS

To understand properly the real significance of ancient Indian medical works of Charaka and Sushruta, the following analysis of subject is useful:

- (1) Historical background necessary.
- (2) The importance of history of medicine,
- (3) The antiquity of Indian medicine
- (4) The scientific approach of the ancient authors on medicine
- (5) Ayurveda and its sources
- (6) Milestones in Indian medicine
- (7) The creative and scientific period
- (8) Charaka
- (9) Sushruta
- (10) The main signs of the times.

2.3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND NECESSARY

In spite of the belated recognition of the Sanskrit literature, ancient Indian medical science has not been recognized for a very long time. European scholars had unfounded notions about ancient Sanskrit medical books and they thought that they contained nothing very valuable.

⁴P.Kutumbiah, Ancient Indian Medicine. (Orient Longmans, 1962), Preface p.IX.

'The european scholars had a preconceived notion that the ancient Saṅskrit books contained little or nothing that was original.'⁵ Eminent scholars like Sir William Jones, Bernier and others had such preconceived notions about ancient Indian medicine.

But there are a few exceptions. Zimmer, Prof. Max Neuberger and some others have recognized the high merit of ancient Indian medicine. Prof. Max Neuberger has claimed the achievements of ancient Indian medicine and considers them almost equal to ancient Indian wisdom in other branches of knowledge. 'The medicine of the Indians, if it does not equal the best achievements of their race, at least nearly approaches them and ^{by} its wealth of knowledge, depth of speculation, and systematic construction takes an outstanding position in the history of oriental medicine.'⁶ But Zimmer goes one step further and says: 'Thus I delved into medicine, the best representative of Hindu early life and wisdom.'⁷

This claim necessitates the finding out the utility and importance of ancient medicine from the view point of our research. It is useful to glance at its historical background as historical facts have definite influence on

⁵ G.N. Mukhopadhyaya. History of Indian Medicine, (Calcutta University, Vol. I, p. 4).

⁶ Neuberger. History of Indian Medicine translated by Playfair, Vol. I P. Quoted in the preface by G.N. Mukhopadhyaya in History of Indian Medicine, Vol. I, p. 5.

⁷ Henry R. Zimmer, Hindu Medicine. (The Johns Hopkins Press, 1948, p. XXXVIII).

the psychological and related theories propounded therein.

2.4. IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY OF MEDICINE

History of medicine has its own importance. Any object or subject has a history and to understand it correctly, one must study its history. Everything existing has a past and to understand its present, one must delve deep into its past. Moore says: 'The study of history is worth pursuing when the consideration of the past can be made useful to us in the present.'⁸ Knowledge of history is useful in many ways. It guides us in the right directions by showing the positive and negative aspects of the subject in hand. Historical study of a subject gives in nutshell the wisdom of the past without undergoing the hardships the ancients had to suffer to find out the truth.⁹

It is useful to a researcher to understand the importance of historical approach in the study and research of any subject and especially of a subject like medical science. In India, historical approach had been given a new turn and historical data was usually presented in mythological story forms. It might have been due to the deep influence of philosophical attitude cultivated by a sort of detachment toward the world and worldly affairs. This type of attitude is considered by some as 'ahistorical' attitude of the

⁸ G.N.M. History of Indian Medicine. (Calcutta University), Vol. I, p. 44.

⁹ Ibid., p. 44.

Indians. Be what it may, one may consider it a fault or appreciate in words of one's choice, the fact remains that a chronological upto date recorded history is not available in India. But this does not mean that there is no data to construct historical background. There is plenty of literary and other material available and its right utilization can be useful in such historical construction: .

' The study of the ancient books is very important in the construction of the history of Hindu medicine.'¹⁰

But history of medicine cannot be and should not be studied apart from the history in general. History of a race or people has deep and marked influence on the medical science of the people. Both are intimately connected and are so much related to each other that an artificial division of the two would certainly mutilate the historical picture. The student of medical history should study them at a time in one perspective. The student of medical history must make himself intimately acquainted with general history and trace the influence which the science of medicine has exerted in the historical development of the civilized nations and should also find out how much the signs of the times have influenced the development of

¹⁰G.N.Mukhopadhyaya. History of Indian Medicine, Vol. I, (Calcutta University), p.6.

medical science. Such study must be done with scientific methods says Osler: 'As a study, the history of that branch of science which has to do with healing, has peculiar attractions. With foundations in anthropology medicine has close affiliations with most of the theories, many of the philosophies and with the pseudo-sciences of alchemy and astrology.'¹¹ This is quite true in the matter of Indian medical history. Ancient Indian medicine has been intimately related with theologies, philosophies and other sciences and this relation shall be described in the next chapter. Suffice it to state here that history of medicine in India had a glorious past and its study is very interesting. It is the glory of the initial efforts of the ancient Indians to overcome all obstacles. 'In the history of medicine are recorded the heroic efforts of man over the unknown, the conflicts against ignorance, superstition and prejudice, relentless self-sacrifice in the search of truth, indomitable courage in the face of failure and disappointment.'¹² This is equally true in the case of medical history in India.

Such was the noble purpose behind the evolution of medical science in general. It was particularly marked in the origin of ancient Indian medicine as it was influenced

¹¹ Ibid., p.55.

¹² Dr. Jal Rustom. Medical Legacy. (Illustrated Weekly, Nov.1st, 1964), p.13.

by philosophical and theological ideas from the very beginning and that is why it is called the best Indian wisdom by Zimmer as quoted above. Indian medicine has a fine scientific record too.

The influence of Indian medicine was allround not only in Indian continent but in the far off lands in Asia and neighbouring Arab countries and even in Greece.¹³

Of all sciences and branches of knowledge, science of medicine occupied the foremost place and the proficiency and its advancement was unique. No less an authority than Zimmer asserts without hesitation that Medicine can now be regarded as the oldest of Indian sciences and it has been proved to be the science in which the Indians specialized first.¹⁴

The importance of this Indian science had a belated recognition in the West, as we have seen before, but it was duly honoured even by the American Scholars. A Charaka-Club was started in 1898 in this far off land.¹⁵ It is upto the Indian scholars to keep the interest of the foreigners afresh by continued investigation in this fertile soil for research work.

¹³ Dr. Julius Jolly. Indian Medicine. Translated by C.K. Kashikar, Poona. p.1.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.1.

¹⁵ G.N.M. History of Indian Medicine, (Calcutta University), p.30.

2.5. ANTIQUITY OF INDIAN MEDICINE

To find out the antiquity of Indian medicine, one has naturally to compare it with Greek medicine, which is considered to be the oldest in the West. After the arousal of interest of the leading Sanskrit scholars of the West, the question of comparative antiquity of Indian and Greek medicine has well been discussed on factual grounds. This question is important to us only to find out the antiquity and originality of Indian medicine.

The westerners believe that all they have at the present day, they originally owe to the Greeks or in short to Hellenism.¹⁶

The best way to find out the antiquity of the two is the comparison and contrast of theories of the two: 'A study of Samhitas of Charaka and Sushruta reveal many analogies between Indian and Greek systems of medicine. Jolly gives a list of some of these analogies.¹⁷ These similarities are pertaining to humoral theory, influence of seasons on dietetics, surgical instruments, and such other matters. From these analogies an easy conclusion is drawn by Western scholars generally that Indian medicine was influenced by the Greek medicine: 'Western scholars have expressed a doubt as to the originality of Indian medicine and allege that

¹⁶ Dr. Kutumbiah. Ancient Indian Medicine. (Orient Longmans, 1962), p. XXXVIII

¹⁷ Ibid., p. XXXVIII

Indian medicine has borrowed these elements from the Greek.¹⁸ But looking to the possible influence of the Greek on Indian medicine in history, it was only during the Greek invasion by Alexander that such an impact would have taken place. Indian medicine proved to be much older than this impact. Moreover, this Greek impact was slight and superficial. Moreover, there are such other historical facts. The North eastern part of India untouched by the Greeks was a big centre of cultivation of Indian medicine and this fact is a proof against any possible influence of the Greeks. Similarly, it was only during the time of Hippocrates that Greek influence would have taken place but no proficient school of medicine would borrow from its inferior. 'If any borrowing occurred it must have taken place during the time of Hippocrates (5th century B.C.) but the anatomy of the Indians is much in advance of the school of Hippocrates.¹⁹

But too much has been made of the similarities between the two systems of Indian and Greek medicine. The essential difference between the two are fundamental. Humours are three in Indian medicine, while four in Greek medicine, elements are five in Indian and four in Greek medicine. Such fundamental differences as these are many. Humoral theory was well established during Buddhistic times and which

¹⁸Ibid.,p.XXXIX

¹⁹Ibid.,p.IX.

originated quite earlier than Hippocrates. 'Besides, we have in early Buddhistic literature independent evidence of the 'accomplished' humoral theory at the time of Buddha (557-477 B.C.).²⁰ Thus from chronological point of view, the Indian theory seems to have the priority. So it was safely deduced by Dr.P.Kutumbiah: 'The origin of Indian medicine is not to be sought in Greece, Egypt or any other country. The Indians are solely responsible for it.'²¹ The question of pulse-lore and similar factors prove that Indian medicine did not borrow its medical views from the Greeks but on the contrary, an alternative question can be raised whether the Greeks borrowed their medical ideas from the Indians. This assumption does not seem to be so very improbable. Hopkins too has similar feeling when he states: 'After a review of the points of contact and weighing as dispassionately as possible, the historical evidence for and against the originality of Pythagoras, we are unable to come to any other conclusion than that this philosopher took his whole system indirectly from India.'²² It is wellknown that Pythagoras had a profound influence on humoral theory propounded by Hippocrates. Moreover, Hippocrates and other Greek writers mention indigenous

²⁰ Ibid. p. XLII

²¹ Ibid., p. XII

²² Ibid., p. XLIII

Indian drugs and 'some of them bear corrupted Sanskrit names.'²³ Suffice to say in summing up this topic that the antiquity of Indian medicine goes far beyond Greek medicine.

2.6. SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

The approach of the ancient Indian medical authorities is the next important question, once the antiquity of Indian medicine is established. The approach of the ancient Indians was scientific. Scientific approach or scientific methods are not a new innovation of the modern times. Scientific methods developed with the passage of time as the means and methods increased. Scientific approach seems the order of the day as it is the sole approach recognized at present. Empirical approach changed from time to time and at present, it has reached almost its climax. Though the ancients lacked in the varied means and methods adopted by modern sciences, they had the advantage of utilizing intuitive knowledge. Zimmer describes the approach of the ancient Indian scientists in this wise: 'Through this wisdom Bharadwaja gained unlimited life and so did the holy seers to whom he proclaimed it with the eye of intuitive knowledge. They duly beheld similarities and dissimilarities qualities,

²³Ibid., p.XLIII

qualities, individual substances and their specific active properties as well as the possible combinations of their virtues and the inseparable inherence of one item in another.'²⁴ This same scientific approach of the ancients is well described by Brijendranath Seal in his book, 'The Positive Sciences of Ancient Hindus' in this manner succinctly: 'What is characteristic of the Hindu scientific mind is that, without being content with the general concepts of science and a general methodology, it elaborated the fundamental categories and concepts of such of the special sciences as it cultivated with assiduity and systematically adapted the general principles of scientific method to the requirements of the subject matter in each case.'²⁵ Modern science is cautious and starts from facts to fundamentals. Srinivas Murty describes modern scientific approach like this: 'It treats all facts as data to be tested, all 'Principles' as working hypothesis to be conformed, all 'Truths' as claims to be verified.'²⁶ These descriptions of the ancient and modern scientific methods point out the characteristics

²⁴Dr.Zimmer.Hindu Medicine.(The Johns Hopkins Press,1948), p.48.

²⁵G.Srinivas Murti. The Science and Art of Indian Medicine. (The Theosophical Publishing House,1940),p.25.

²⁶Ibid.,p.8.

of each of them. Modern approach in science puts limitations and creates specializations and rules out intuitive knowledge without verification and so has a supreme advantage of being fool-proof. Though ancient Indian sciences like Ayurveda were well advanced, they should be checked by modern scientific methods. So one would like to agree with G.N.Mukhopadhyaya when he says: 'All teachings in the Ayurveda cannot be accidental, they must have been founded on facts, experiments and experience.. if there is anything in the Ayurveda that does not corroborate scientific facts, it must be discarded.'²⁷ This seems to be the correct approach in understanding the ancient sciences like Ayurveda and psychological and related theories contained therein. But at the same time, the present scientific spirit should duly respect the scientific approach of the ancients based on reason and intuitive knowledge.

2.7. AYURVEDA AND ITS SOURCES

This scientific spirit of the ancient Indians could create Ayurveda, so-called because it was considered to be the source of all knowledge pertaining to life. Ayurveda is no Veda as are the four Vedas of the Hindus but it is called the fifth Veda in Indian folklore. 'Its existence is

²⁷ G.N.M. History of Indian Medicine. (Calcutta University), Part II, A.49.

a myth. Sushruta calls it an upanga (Living limb) of the Atharva Veda. It was raised to the status of a Veda and appended to Atharvaveda to give the science of medicine the necessary sanctity and authority.²⁸ Moreover, Ayurveda had close relations with Atharvaveda and it developed out of the Vedic historical background. So naturally, to give importance and high status to this science, it was considered as Ayurveda i.e. Vedic science of life because highest knowledge is to be obtained in Vedas only. The general concept about Ayurveda is not misplaced, as it is a science of life and covers important subjects like philosophy, psychology and logic etc. along with the medicinal science.

Ayurveda was such an advanced and cultivated science that there were innumerable treatises written on the subject. Weber, in his story of Indian literature, remarks: 'The number of medical works and authors (in Sanskrit literature) is extraordinarily large. The former are either systems embracing the whole domain of science or highly special investigations of single topic.'²⁹ Such a vast literature on medicine was not lop-sided but it enveloped almost all branches of medicine. In

²⁸ Ibid., p.1.

²⁹ G.N.M. History of Indian Medicine. (Calcutta University), Vol. II, p.1.

surgery, also there had been wonderful advancement. ' In surgery, too, the Indians seem to have attained a special proficiency and in this department, European surgeons might perhaps even at present-day still learn something from them, as indeed, they have already borrowed from them the operation of rhinoplasty.'³⁰ Their knowledge about the medical properties of minerals, plants and animal substances can also draw attention of the researchers. Their Materia Medica was very carefully evolved. They excelled in animal medicine and special monographs on horses and elephants were prepared and widely practised. In short, the number of Sanskrit medical works is so big and varied that it cannot be enumerated in a few pages. 'The number of Sanskrit medical works and especially of small compilations on the treatment of diseases is too numerous and indefinite to admit of detailed enumeration here.'³¹

There are a number of important treatises on ancient Indian medicine written by Indian and European scholars. Outstanding among them are, Jullius Jolly's 'Indian medicine,' in the encyclopedea of Indo-Aryan Research, Zimmer's 'Hindu Medicine', 'Hoernele's 'The Commentators on Sushruta and Samhita, ' Wilson's : 'On the medical and

³⁰ Ibid.,

³¹ Ibid.,p.1.

surgical sciences of the Hindus, 'Dutt's 'History of civilization in Ancient India,' Roth's 'Monograph on Charaka' Ray's 'History of Hindu Chemistry,' Roy's 'On the past and present state of medicine in India, 'Neubergers 'History of medicine' and such others. Volume first of Jamnagar edition of Charakasamhita, Dr.Kutumbiah's 'Ancient Indian Medicine' and G.N.Mukhopadhyaya's 'History of Indian Medicine' are scholarly works on this subject. These treatises shed good light on the hoary past of the Indian medicine and any honest researcher would feel that he has to deal with a material which is interesting from its qualitative and quantitative aspects.

Over and above these treatises on the subject and the original available Samhitas, there are other sources from which the researchers can gather ample material for investigation. Dr.Jal Rustom Vakil in his series of articles on 'Medical Legacy' in 'Illustrated Weekly of India' in 1964-65 points out that various traditional or folk-remedies, relics of surgical and medical appliances and instruments, medical anecdotes and references, medical and surgical topics depicted in ancient paintings, shrines and sculptures, and ancient medical beliefs continuing till today, are some of the other main sources of Ayurvedic knowledge.³²

³²Dr.Jal Vakil.Medical Legacy. (Illustrated Weekly), Article from Nov.1964 to Feb.1965.

These sources of material are recognized by the compilers of Jamnagar edition of Charaka Samhita too. The revival of interest in Ayurveda shows that these sources could be well utilized for reconstruction of Ayurvedic knowledge of medicine and to show its historical evolution.

2.8. MILESTONES IN INDIAN MEDICINE

History, in the sense of a chronological order of events and dates in the lives of great leaders, is not feasible in the case of medical history of Indian medicine. The reasons for this state of affairs are many and varied. Medical history is a part and partial of the nation to which it belongs and in the case of Indian medicine, the ancient Indian history itself is not so accurate as one could desire. Thus unless the facts of chronology of the political and cultural history of India are fully established, it is not possible to portray an exact chronological history of Indian medicine. The reasons for such an absence of exact historical description are well propounded by Max Muller.

'From the actual works themselves written by the poets, philosophers and scientists of India, very little material is to be had pertaining to the life and work of the author. Most often even the name has to be learnt from the collophone or such other appendages to the original, contributed by the editors, commentators and such others. The difficulties

in computing the dates also augmented by the prevalence of different eras in vogue in the various parts of India.³³

Moreover, whatever material in the form of literature edicts, inscriptions, paintings and other art-forms existed were destroyed by the waves of foreign invasions and depredations from time to time and much historically valuable material got lost or destroyed.

Not for cheap consolation but to understand a universal historical fact, we can agree with George Elliot's words that greatest benefactors of the world are hidden from the ken of history. Even in the present historical era of exact and varied recordings of events, not the great man of science get as much prominence as the politicians. Thus merits do not require cheaper publicity. At least in ancient India, great personages deliberately shunned publicity and they sometimes, used pseudonyms to remain incognito.

All these factors worked together in the making of history of medicine in India and that is why there is an absence of upto-date records of chronological history of Indian medicine. Thus with the history of medicine being a terra incognita to the general public and all but the untravelled region to the majority of even medical men,

³³Maxmuller Quoted in Charakasamhita Part I.P.10 (Jamnagar edition).

a comprehensive view of the evolution of medicine has yet to be written.³⁴

Inspite of all these handicaps for having an exact medical history in India, a fair picture can be portrayed which would at least provide for the milestones in its evolutionary course by utilization of whatever material and sources available as are enumerated before. The stories of the lives of the great personages in medical history provide useful data for such a construction of historical portrayal: 'It has been rightly said that history is the biography of outstanding individuals in each age and this is even more true with the history of medicine.'³⁵ So it is quite a safe and sure way to outline the chronological tree of the important personages who had rendered distinguished service in the making of Ayurveda. Here is the chronological tree which gives outlines of evolution of Ayurveda.

³⁴Ibid.,p.24.

³⁵Ibid.,p.29.

BRAHMA

,
 Daksha
 ,
 Ashwins
 ,
 Indra

According to the version in Charaka Samhita	According to the version in Kasyapa Samhita	According to the version in Sushruta Samhita
Bharadwaja	Kasyapa, Vasistha Atri and Bhrugu	Dhanvantari or Divodasa
Atreya Punervasu		
Agnivesa, Bhela Jatukarna, Parasara and others.	their sons and disciples	Sushruta Aupadhenava Vaitarana Aurabhra Pauskalavata, Kartavirya Gopurarakshita Bhoja and others

This is in short the chronological tree of medical personalities in Ayurveda and it shows the divine origin of the ancient Indian science. In the west too, the origin of medicine is attributed to God. 'All medicine is derived from God and without his will it cannot exist or be practised' remarked Dr. Ryan.³⁶ In India, it is a tradition to attribute the origin of sciences to God. Charaka and Sushruta follow the same tradition and show that origin

³⁶ G.N.M. History of Indian Medicine. (Calcutta University), Part I, p.3.

of medical science is Brahma.' In Charaka and Sushruta Samhita, Brahma is said to be the originator of medical science.³⁷

2.9. CREATIVE AND SCIENTIFIC PERIOD

The entire ancient evolutionary time of Indian medicine is generally divided into three or more periods like (1) the prevedic period (2) Vedic period (3) creative, or rational period and (4) lastly the period of decadence. Dr. Rustom Jal Vakil accepts these broad divisions and periods logically described by Dr. P. Kutumbiah in his book 'Ancient Indian Medicine' and succinctly accounts for the same like this: 'From the chronological stand-point, several main periods or epochs of ancient Indian medicine are recognizable namely (1) The earliest or the prehistoric phase (upto 2500 B.C.) including the paleolithic and neolithic ages (2) The pre-vedic phase or the period of Indus-Valley civilization or 'Harappa Culture.' (From about 2500 B.C. to 1500 B.C.) (3) The Vedic period (1500 B.C. to 800 B.C.). (4) The intermediate Brahmanic or Brahman-Upanishad period (800 B.C. to 600 B.C.). (5) The 'Creative period' of 'Rational Medicine' or Buddhistic period (600 B.C. to A.D. 200) and (6) The 'Period of decadence or the post-Buddhistic period' after 200 A.D.³⁸

³⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

³⁸ Dr. Jal Rustom. Medical Legacy. (Illustrated Weekly). Dec. 6, 1964, Article 2, p. 21, Col. I.

Out of all these periods, we are concerned with the creative or the rational and scientific period from 600 B.C. to 200 A.D. This is the period of unique creativity not only in the field of medicine but in other fields of knowledge also. This can be called the golden age of scientific creation in ancient India. 'Between now and the Vedic age, there was a period of experimentation and research in the realm of medicine, second to none in the history of world-medicine. This was the scientific period of medicine in India.'³⁹

This period indicates the departure of the science of medicine from its moorings in ethico-religious relations at the time of the Vedic period. The main reason for this is the predominant and profound influence of philosophies like Nyaya and Vaisheshika Systems.' This change is to be attributed to the influence of the new schools of philosophy. Medicine has at last broken its leading strings to religion and allies itself with philosophy.'⁴⁰

During this time Charaka and Sushruta compiled their Samhitas and gave to Indian medicine a scientific status and form. Entire credit for such a scientific reorientation of Indian medicine goes to Atreya and the older Sushruta.

'This may be taken to mean that Atreya, the physician and

³⁹Charaka Samhita Part I.1.17(Jamnagar Edition)

⁴⁰Dr.Kutumbiah.Ancient Indian Medicine.(Orient Longmans), 1962,p.XVII.

Sushruta, the surgeon were understood to be the first founders in their respective departments of medicine as a science.⁴¹

During this creative time, Indian medicine developed eight branches like (1) Major surgery or Salya Tantra (2) Minor Surgery or Salakya Tantra (3) Medicine in general, Medicine proper or Kaya chikitsa (4) Demonology or Bhuta Vidya (5) Science of paediatrics or Kumar Bhrutya (6) Toxicology or Agada Tantra (7) Science of tonics or Rasayan and (8) The science of virification or vajikaran.⁴²

Charaka encompasses all these branches of medical science by eightfold divisions like Sutrasthan or section on general principles, (2) Nidanasthan or the section on Pathology (3) Vimanasthan or the section on specific determination of measure (4) Sharirsthan or section on the Human Embodiment (5) Indriyasthan or section on the Sensorial Prognosis (6) Chikitsasthan or the section on Therapeutics (7) Kalpasthan or Section on the Pharmaceutics and (8) Siddhithana or the section on success in treatment. But Sushruta does not follow these divisions. He provides five divisions: Sutra, Nidan, Sharira, Chikitsa and Kalpasthan later Sushruta, added uttar-Tantra consisting of the

⁴¹ Ibid., p. XVIII

⁴² G.N.M. History of Indian Medicine. (Calcutta University), p. XIX.

divisions: Shalakya, Bhuta Vidya and Kumar-Bhrutya.

By such divisions or branches of medical science and divisions into sub-sections for scientific treatments, these two monumental works on medicine occupy a unique status in the medical history of India. 'Charaka-Samhita stands as the finest document of the creative period of ancient Indian medicine (600 B.C. - 200 A.D.) in regard to the extent of its contents and to the state of its preservation.⁴³

Similarly Sushruta-Samhita renders unique service in the field of surgery during this same period. It needed a particular effort, a stroke of genius, to break down the barriers of traditional specialization and to merge surgery into the science of medicine. This step is accomplished through the work of Sushruta. 'In Sushruta samhita, surgery has achieved a leading position as an indispensable element of general medical training.'⁴⁴

2.10. CHARAKA

Of the medical authorities during the time of creative period, Charaka stands foremost. He excels all others not only in propounding medical theories but in presenting the whole science of medicine very

⁴³Dr. Kutumbiah. Ancient Indian Medicine. (Orient Longmans), 1962, p. XIX.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. XXI.

comprehensively. 'Charaka is the most rewarding author among the writers of Classic Medicine. He excels Sushruta and Vagbhatta by far, in regard to the philosophic background of medicine and its interrelation with religious thought and the various aspects of Hindu spiritual life and ideals.'⁴⁵

It can be safely stated here, that Charaka has propounded psychological theories also, as an integral portion of philosophical ideas current in those times. Therein lies interest for this research work. But before we set out to delve into this research field, we should know something about Charaka himself.

In India, personalities are hidden under the guise of pseudonyms or under the halo of the hazy past. It is very difficult to point out who Charaka was, even though there seems to be more than one version about his life. It is generally estimated that Charaka was one real personage and not a mere myth. He was either (1) a Rishi of the Pre-Panini age or (2) that Charaka is Patanjali, or (3) a sage as the incarnation of Shesa, the serpent-king or (4) the court-physician of the King Kaniska.⁴⁶

This is the case about the life of Charaka. There is no external or internal evidence from which his identity can be made out. When one's identity is obscure, his life

⁴⁵Ibid., p. XIX.

⁴⁶Charaka-Samhita, Jamnagar Edition, Part I. p. 84.

and parentage would be much more in dark and it is no use hunting about the theories that try to identify him with one or the other of the four personages cited above. We must rest content with what we know about Charaka's great monumental work. Jamnagar edition on Charakasamhita well sums up the question of Charaka's identity. 'It is not possible to know with any degree of precision who Charaka was or his parentage, when and where he lived and redacted the work, whether this was the personal name of the author or of a school to which he belonged or a title he assumed for himself or which was conferred on him by his contemporaries. With the field thus open for the exercise of fertile fancy, several theories have become current regarding the identity and the time of this famous redactor. Before we examine any of these, it is necessary to remember that the book itself affords no clue to the nature and time or other circumstances of the redactor. There is just a bare mention of his name in the colophon of each chapter as the redactor of the treatise compiled by Agnivesha.⁴⁷

This complicated and uncertain position about the life of Charaka, in no way affects our research work as it is purely an objective attempt to find out the psychological data in Charaka's redaction. It is purely

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 82.

an objective study of the psychological science embedded in Charaka-Samhita.

2.11. SUSHRUTA

With regard to life of Sushruta, the position is no better. He was the great medical authority of the contemporary Kashi School of medicine. He must have been influenced by Atreya School of medicine. Dr.P.Kutumbiah sums the discourse on life and time of Sushruta in this wise: 'Regarding the data of Sushruta we have the following indications; he must have been acquainted with doctrines of Atreya. With reference to human body, he introduces his own exposition with a remark pointing to the difference between Atreya's system and his own in respect of the total number of the bones. This proves that Sushruta cannot be anterior to Atreya.'⁴⁸

Moreover, Sushruta is not one but two or more. 'The Sushrutasamhita is also a collective effort of two or more individuals, although customarily accredited to Sushruta alone.'⁴⁹

Thus there is scanty material about the life of Sushruta also. But to our purpose the cultural aspects of the times is much more useful than the subjective

⁴⁸Dr.Kutumbiah.Ancient Indian Medicine. (Orient Longmans, 1962), p.XXXI.

⁴⁹Dr.Jal Rustom.Medical Legacy. (Illustrated Weekly, Dec.1964), p.23, Col.III.

material in the lives of Charaka and Sushruta.

2.12. MAIN SIGNS OF THE TIMES

To understand the great works of Charaka and Sushruta, one must understand their age with its main features. The creative age was a golden age in ancient Indian history. It was really scientific in spirit and artistic in expression. Not only was there comparative political peace and prosperity but there was universal accord in this sub-continent in all spheres of life. Science and art reached their Zenith. Philosophy too was at its climax. Lives of the people in general were happy and healthy in every way. Education was almost universal. Culture percolated from top to bottom in society. Healthy impressions from childhood to old age through purposeful ceremonies were well defined and well observed. Life was regulated through healthy habits and well-defined routine. Artistry in dress and clothing was duly indulged in. Use of wine with temperance was allowed in special and medical cases. Marriage was considered sacred and healthy procreation was considered a religious duty.

Similar were the happy conditions in the field of medicine. Status of the therapist was high in society. Nursing, hospitals, pharmacy and veterinary were properly

evolved and utilized. Quacks were condemned. State took interest in medical field. Village had the benefit of the services of good therapists and the best of therapists was given the status of the royal physician.

The study of medicine was not considered easy and entrance too was difficult. That was not on account of the lack of vacancies found today in medical colleges but the test and preparation for entrance was quite difficult and those who equipped themselves for the hard test could only qualify themselves for this pious profession.

All these environmental factors were the direct and indirect causes for making deep impressions on Charaka Samhita and the theories enunciated therein. Philosophical and Psychological theories depicted in these great works owe no less to the unique features of the times.

All this description of Charaka, Sushruta and their times leads us to the approach of the ancients in the matter of their scientific dealing with psychological theories.

2.13. SUMMARY

Ayurveda or the science of life is said to be beginningless. But this does not mean that it has no history. The history of medicine is very interesting and

useful in many ways as it reflects many salient features of the growth of the nation and its culture. The worth of Indian medicine was recognized before but with the increase of research work of the ancient literature, it was evaluated as one of the best Indian sciences. Indian medicine has its roots in the Vedic times. Some scholars think on factual grounds that Indian medicine is older than Greek medicine. There can be seen four to five historical periods in Indian medicine. The best period is the scientific period from 600 B.C. to 200 A.D. The origin of Indian medicine is attributed to God as is done elsewhere. Charakasamhita and Sushrutasamhita state that the originator of the medical science is Brahma, the God of creation. The development of this science owes much to the great personages like Atreya, Dhanvantari etc. The two great compendiums are compiled by Charaka and Sushruta. Authentic details of their lives are not available. This, being an objective study, needs only their textual material for its use.

