

P.C. Venkata Subbaiah: Iron Age Culture in Kuppam Region of Andhra Pradesh: A Perspective

D. Anand Naidu: Nuclear Policy of India: A critical study

G.S. Negi: Contemporary History of Meeting Glaciers of Uttarakhand

B.D. Malange: Science Education in Rural Area and the contribution of Karnataka Health Institute in Health Awareness

A. Kumar Jha: Science Technology and Social Change: Karim Nagar to Hari Nagar

— 0 —

14TH WORLD SANSKRIT CONFERENCE: SECTION ON SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE – A REPORT*

The Fourteenth World Sanskrit Conference was organized in Kyoto, Japan on 1-5 September 2009, jointly by the International Association of Sanskrit Studies and the Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University. The Scholars from nine countries participated in the section on the Scientific Literature, convened by Dominik Wujastyk and Michio Yano. Nineteen Scholars contributed papers in this section in three areas. I. A thematic panel on “Physicians and Patients: Textual Representations in Pre-modern South Asia”, with the aim of exploring aspects to the complex and multi-faceted relationship between physicians and patients, their functions, specific roles, ideal image and position in society was also organised in the section Scientific Literature. II. Ayurvedic literature and III. Mathematics Astronomical works.

I. Werner Franz Knobl opened the panel and delivered lecture on “Divine agents of healing and their patients in Vedic times”. He explored the figures of the two Aśvins, namely the divine physicians par excellence, and their patients, who are human beings (often corresponding to mythological figures), animals and gods, as the story of Indra’s sickness that is said in connection with the Sautrāmani ritual. The discussion at the end of the panel was animated by Knobl’s explanation regarding the etymology and meaning of some contextually relevant words.

The contributions by Karin Preisendanz, Dagmar Wujastyk and Abhijit Ghosh focused on the physician. In “Debates, colloquies and (un)professional

* by **Cristina Pecchia**, University of Vienna, Institute for South Asian, Tibetan & Buddhist Studies Spitalgasse 2/2, 1090 Vienna-Austria (Europe). e-mail: cristina.pecchia @ univie.ac.at, *Indian Journal of History of Science*, 44.4 (2009)

competition: Images of physicians and their rivals in early classical Ayurveda according to the *Carakasamhitā*”, Preisendanz described features of the physicians as they emerge from the analysis of passages devoted to medical debates as well as to other situation-specific contexts in the *Carakasamhitā* (CS). The physician in the garb of teacher gives practical advice to the prospective physicians, indirectly depicts rival physicians in professional competitions and characterizes quack doctors. The topic of the incompetent physicians was more widely explored by Ghosh, in his article “Two opposite images of physicians in India then and now”. Through passages from Kṣemendra’s *Narmamālā*, he described a gallery of characters representing different types of quacks, among whom the barbers receive the most mocking portrait. However, barbers had an elevated rank among the occupation-based castes in Bengal and the Deccan, precisely because they acted as country surgeons. Furthermore, the term *ambasṭha*, which is an alternative designation of the Bengali Vaidyas, may derive from the Tamil word for barber, that is *ambattam*. Wujastyk, in “To care or not to care: A physician’s compassion and detachment in the Sanskrit medical classics”(her paper was read by Dominik Wujastyk), mainly examined the physician’s attitude towards the patients who suffer from incurable terminal illness and, as such, belong to one of the two main categories of patients who should not be treated. Some of the questions that were asked after the presentation showed the modern embarrassed reaction to the clear position stated in the classical medical works.

The two papers entitled “The physician’s examination of the patient’s constitution according to the *Carakasamhitā Vimānasthānā*”, by Philip Maas and “The construction of the patient in Sanskrit medical narratives” by Cerulli were focused on the patient. Maas spoke of the ten characteristic aspects of the patient’s constitution, as they are presented in the CSV 8.95-122. He demonstrated some problematic discrepancies between this text and other related passages in the same work, posing the question of how the modern interpreter should deal with these differences. Cerulli delineated the image of the patient as it emerges from Sanskrit medical narratives such as those related to fever, miscarriage and the king’s disease. These narratives record the process from health to sickness as the result of personal agony. They also show the extent to which medical speculations consider sickness in connection with the socioethical dimension.

Lastly, in “Treating diseases by knowing health: Patient and physician in dialogue”, Cristina Pecchia focused on the relationship between patient and physician. Its importance in the treatment of diseases lies in the fact that it allows

a transfer of knowledge from physician to patient. Precisely this transfer will make the patient the agent in the process of cure. As a case in point, the exposition regarding alcoholism in the CS was mentioned.

During the proceedings of the panel, M. Yano informed the audience of a link created by Tsutomu Yamashita and his colleagues, in which the classical ayurvedic *Samhitās* in Sanskrit are available in digitized version. The academic community will greatly be benefitted from their work and generous act of sharing. With Yamashita's kind permission, the link is also given here: [http:// www. cc.kyoto-su.ac.jp/~ yanom/sanskrit/ayurveda/](http://www.cc.kyoto-su.ac.jp/~yanom/sanskrit/ayurveda/).

II. Ayurvedic literature was a prominent part of the section on the Scientific Literature also in the following days of the Conference, with papers presented, in order of appearance, by Vijaya Jayant Deshpande, Jan E.M. Houben, Kenneth G. Zysk, Tsutomu Yamashita, Dominik Wujastyk and Sandra Smets.

Wujastyk, in “*Aṣṭāṅgayoga* before Patanjali: The Yoga treatise in the *Carakasamhitā*”, called again attention on the CS, dealing with a portion of the work that in actual fact corresponds to a Yoga treatise in the CS. The paper by Zysk and Yamashita, “Jajjaṭa’s *Nirantarapadavyākhyā* as an early commentary on the *Carakasamhitā*”, which was read by Yamashita (Zysk was not present in person at the Conference), informed the scholarly community upon their study and editorial work on Jajjaṭa’s commentary. In the article “*Rasa* and *Rasāyana* in the *Abinava-cintāmaṇi* of Cakrapanikasa: two chapters in a late pre-colonial Ayurvedic encyclopedia”, Houben focused on a 18th century medical treatise, also detecting some sources of two central ayurvedic topics such as *rasa* and *rasāyana*. The presentation by Deshpande, “Sanskrit roots of medieval Chinese ophthalmic concepts”, showed that sources for a specific medical knowledge such as medieval Chinese ophthalmology can also be traced back to the ancient Indian medieval medicine. Finally, in “Miscarriage in ayurvedic literature”, Smets explored the topic of miscarriage and examined its definition, diagnosis and treatment, as they are expounded in different ayurvedic works. She also referred to rational as well as magic-religious explanations for the pregnancy disorders.

III. Treatises in Sanskrit concerning the history of astronomy and mathematics as well as *śulba* and divination were the subject of six papers which completed the section on the Scientific Literature.

In “Sine quadrant in India-Sanskrit texts and extant specimens”, Sreeramula Rajeswara Sarma presented different descriptions of the *sine* quadrant that are

contained in Indian astronomical works of the medieval period, starting with the early 15th century manual by Padmanābha. He focused on the reasons of the popularity of the sine quadrant, which is also reflected by the large number of manuscript copies of the works dealing with the instrument. Francois Patte, in “Mathematical algorithms in Sanskrit prosody and music treatises”, demonstrated that treatises on prosody and music contain combinatorial models that correspond to algorithms. This shows that the Indian pandits who elaborated them were familiar with specific mathematical procedures. Takanori Kusuba, in “Two mathematical texts in the fourteenth century”, explored some of the developments in Indian mathematics after the great achievements of Bhāskara II (12th century). He especially examined Nārāyaṇa’s *Gaṇitakaumudī* and Thakkura Pheru’s *Gaṇitasārakaumudī*. The paper presented by K. Ramasubramanian and K. Mahesh, “*Śyenaciti*”, treated of a specific sacrificial altar used by Vedic priests, the *Śyenaciti*. The scholars offered details concerning its construction according to the *Śulbasūtras* and comments on the religious significance of this kind of altar. Kauji Kumagai discussed a work on divination, the *Gargasamhitā*, which is not yet appeared in a printed edition. As the title of his paper indicates, “Chapter 39 of the *Gargasamhitā*”, Kumagai investigated a specific section of the work, in which it is clear that divination was one topic among many others. The analysis of the chapter included a comparison with other works, focusing on the causes of omens. Michio Yano and Miki Maejima presented some result of their editorial work on the *Atharvaveda-Pariśiṣṭa* with “The astronomical and astrological chapters in the *Atharvaveda-Pariśiṣṭa*”. One of their conclusions is that the examined chapters (50 to 57) show different chronological stages and that the latest part of the work may be dated to the sixth century. Finally, Bidare V. Subbarayappa offered his reflections on some features of astronomical works in “The nature and structure of Sanskrit texts on mathematical astronomy: A perspective”. The scholar concentrated on both standardized formats and innovations as they emerge in a number of works on mathematical astronomy over the span of many centuries.