

## NEWS

### SEMINAR ON EVOLUTION OF MEDICAL TRADITIONS—A REPORT\*

A two-day history of science seminar on Evolution of Medical Traditions was organised by the Indian National Science Academy at Biotech Park, Lucknow during 14-15 October 2012 along with meeting of the Research Council and National Commission for History of science. Professor D Balasubramanian was the principal co-ordinator of the seminar and it was planned in such a manner that it could generate interest among the medical practitioners, researchers and students of the nearby places. At the inaugural session, Professor Raghavendra Gadagkar, the chairman of the Research Council described history of science as a fascinating inter-disciplinary subject which could not become popular in India despite its wide popularity in western countries. He emphasised that evolution refers to 'change' and added that Lucknow is an ideal place to discuss changes as it has been a great center of medicine from medieval times. Professor D Balasubramanian described India as a country which provides diverse medical choices to the people and Lucknow an ideal place to discuss these diverse medical traditions, and has a great culture too. Professor SS Agarwal, a well known modern medical practitioner and Vice-President of the Academy who is from Lucknow was happy to see that the seminar is being held in Lucknow. Commenting on the theme of the seminar he noted that evolution is an important concept but at the same time the medicine should be taught in historical perspective. Professor Agarwal also read a message received from the President, INSA which highlighted the role of the Academy to the pursuit of excellence in science and promotion of science and technology and its involvement in establishing international linkages in Science with other sister Academies globally through participation and collaboration. The History of Science, one of the important activities of the Academy is being pursued from 1960

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under the guidance of Indian National Commission for History of Science to promote researches, collection and publication of sources based on studies in all the areas Science including ayurveda/siddha medicines. He further reported that a Young Historian of Science programme has been planned to generate interest among the young scholars and wished seminar a grand success.

**Key-Note Address:** Evolution of India's Medical Traditions was delivered by Professor MS Valiathan, FNA, National Research Professor, Manipal University & Past-President, INSA.

The two-day seminar was planned in four sessions as under:

**Session I: Ayurveda** (Chair: Dr SS Agarwal, FNA, Vice-President, INSA)

Glimpses of the Golden Age of Caraka-Suśruta-Vāgbhaṭṭa, the Creators of the Bṛhatrayi Texts of Ayurveda — R H Singh, Distinguished Professor, Faculty of Ayurveda, BHU, Varanasi

Shastra and Science for Future Medicine — Bhushan Patwardhan Vice Chancellor, Symbiosis International University, Pune

History of 'Human Physiology': Unrecognized Contributions of Ayurveda — Kishor Patwardhan, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Ayurveda, Institute of Medical Sciences, BHU, Varanasi

Clinical Research in the Tradition of Ayurveda — P Ram Manohar, Director and CSO, AVP Research Foundation, Coimbatore

**Session II: Siddha, Unani and Homeopathy** (Chair: Dr A K Bag, FASc., Advisor, History of Science Programme, INSA)

Siddhā Medicine: Historical Perspective and the case study on Thamiraparpum- an anti- Ulcer siddhā medicine — SP Thyagarajan, Pro Chancellor (Research) at Sri Ramachandra University, Porur, Chennai

Tibb-i Yunāni in Medieval India — A Non-Professional's Exploration — Shireen Moosvi, Centre for Advance Studies, Dept. of History, AMU, Aligarh

History of Development of Homoeopathy in India — Ajoy Ghosh, University of Calcutta, Kolkata

**Session III: Regional Medical Practices**(Chair: Dr S Natesh, formerly Advisor, Department of Biotechnology, Government of India)

Traditional Healing Practices in North East India — Rama Shankar, Ayurveda Regional Research Institute, CCRAS, Itanagar

Medical Pluralism at the Tanjore Court in the Early Nineteenth Century India — Savithripreetha Nair, Visiting Fellow, Centre for Contemporary Studies, IISc, Bangalore

Indian Medicinal plants and European Interaction — H Y Mohan Ram, FNA, INSA Srinivasa Ramanujan Professor, Sriram Institute for Industrial Research, Delhi

Surgical Instruments found through archaeology — Vibha Tripathi, Ex – Head, AIHC & Archaeology, BHU, Varanasi

**Session IV: Natural Products and Molecular Medicine**(Chair: Dr. P K. Seth, FNA, CEO, Biotech Park, Lucknow)

Molecule or Mixture? Role of minor components in Plant Extracts — D Balasubramanian, FNA, L. V. Prasad Eye Institute, Hyderabad

Drug Leads from Natural Products: Efforts by CSIR-Lucknow Laboratories — Rakesh Maurya, Central Drug Research Institute, Lucknow

Madhulika Banerjee, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Delhi was entrusted to summarize, give feedback suggestions in each session as a social scientist.

At the end of two days of deliberations, it was observed that the seminar could cover the broad and representative areas of medical traditions and how the various systems of medicines evolved. Professor MS Valiathan in his key note address rightly pointed out that how the Vedic practices underwent a major change during Buddhist period, when hymns and rituals practically disappeared. There was constant interchange of ideas during this period. Professor RH Singh presented an overall account of Ayurvedic system of medicine described in *Bṛhatṭrayī* texts of Caraka, Suśruta and Vāgbhaṭa. He also spoke on *Pañcamahābhūtās* and *Tṛdoṣa* theory and explained how Ayurveda used holistic but individualized approach in the entire consideration of health care and disease management. Professor Bhusan Patwardhan talked about Systems Ayurveda approach which advocates that ‘whole to part’ relation is important to understand the holistic multi-target approach of Ayurveda in contrast to reductionist single-target approach of modern medicine. Dr. Kishor Patwardhan dispelled the notion that organ-specific

functions have not been described in Ayurvedic literature through examples. Dr P Ram Manohar attempted to cull out evidence from classical Ayurvedic texts to sketch an outline of the approach adopted in the ancient tradition of Ayurveda to build evidence in clinical medicine. Professor Thyagarajan outlined the origin and development of Siddha Medicine as described in *Saiva Siddhānta*. Professor Shireen Moosvi presented a detailed account of practice of *Tibb-i Yunāni* in Medieval India from historical and literary perspective. Dr. Ajoy Ghosh outlined the development of Homoeopathy in India during the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century and how homoeopathy became the third most popular method of medical treatment after allopathic and ayurveda. Dr. Rama Shankar discussed the age old traditional healing practice of North-eastern region of the Country and the need for their scientific validation and recognition. Professor Mohan Ram talked about the contribution of Portuguese scholars who translated the vernacular manuscripts on plants and medicine. Dr. Savithri Preetha Nair presented a case study of medical pluralism patronised at the Tanjore Court under the reign of Raja Serfoji II (1798–1832) where ‘Western medicine’ was negotiated and accommodated under the anatomically trained Rājā through indigenous practitioners attached to it. Rājā Serfoji II offered to the Tanjorean public through the medium of the *Ārogyaśālā*, a range of practitioners and therapeutic options to choose from, including modern surgical skills. Professor Vibha Tripathi made an attempt to identify and correlate the ancient metal implements, especially of copper-bronze and iron, possibly used in surgical processes between circa 600 to 200 BC. Professor D. Balasubramanian discussed the role of minor component in plant extracts often considered as garbage to identify ‘active principles’ or molecules responsible for specific biological actions and synthesize them using modern organic and structural chemistry principles. Dr. Rakesh Maurya discussed the efforts of CSIR’S Central Drug Research Institute, Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants, National Botanical Research Institute, and Indian Institute of Toxicology Research laboratories in developing drug leading from Natural Products.

It was noted at the end of the seminar that a tradition evolves in a social milieu and it is also true in case of the growth of the medical science. It came out that the medicine in ancient medieval time is mostly a social science and a few more seminars and symposia are needed to understand this interrelationship.