

BOOK REVIEW

Bhagwan Dash— *Vāgbhaṭa and Candranandana in Indo Tibetan Medicine*, Hind Pocket Books Private Limited, New Delhi 110003, pages 160, Price Rs 250, ISBN 9788121618687 First Indian Edition, 2013

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India had been a great centre of learning in the past with its world famous universities at *Takṣaśilā*, *Nālandā* and *Vikrama-śilā*. Many Buddhist monks/scholars from neighbouring countries like Tibet, Japan and China came here to study at these universities and were acquainted with the Indian traditions in mathematics, astronomy, medicine and literature. They were interested in the original manuscripts and their translations, carried back many of them on their return and established schools for study, translation and interpretation in the process. With passage of time and adverse local politics and environmental conditions, the knowledge on Indian tradition and works were destroyed, and controversies cropped up as regards the identity of some important authors of Sanskrit works. The book under review is one such work on Indian medicine (Ayurveda) by a 17th century Tibetan scholar giving account on two Indian Ayurvedic authors, Vāgbhaṭa and Candranandana. The work is *Khog 'bubs* written by an eminent Tibetan scholar, Sde-srid Saṅs-rgyas Ragya-mtsho (1620-1705 AD).

The book is planned in three main sections, first an introduction describing the early life of Vāgbhaṭa, second his studies and authorship of *Aṣṭāṅga-hṛdaya saṃhitā* and his debate with various scholars at *Nālandā*, and third on the

genealogy and works of Candranandana. It also contains nine appendices containing the original text (*Khog 'bubs*) in Tibetan, glossaries of names of disease and technical terms described in the text in Tibetan, Sanskrit and English, all arranged in alphabetical order.

Authorship of Vāgbhaṭa

Saṅs-rgyas Ragya-mtsho's *Khog 'bubs (antarāvekṣaṇa)* describes the origin of medicine, its development in Phagyul or *Bhārata-varṣa* through the efforts of Kumāra Jīvaka (Tsho-byed Gzon-nu), Nāgārjuna (Klu-sgrub), Vāgbhaṭa (Phakhol), Candranandan etc. and their popularity in Bod-yul (Tibet) in different traditions. As per description of this work, two important works of Vāgbhaṭa in Sanskrit namely *Aṣṭāṅga-saṃgraha* and *Aṣṭāṅga-hṛdaya* are available and well-known. The former is larger in size, in verse and prose, and later in metrical verse forms. Some of the later commentators and modern medical historians have designated the former as of Vṛddha Vāgbhaṭa and later of Laghu Vāgbhaṭa and attributed them as Vāgbhaṭa-I and Vāgbhaṭa-II. However Saṅs-rgyas Ragya-mtsho has referred (ref. line. Nos. 223-226) to four different works of Vāgbhaṭa on Ayurveda (two mentioned above), third his auto-commentary called *Vaidūryaka-bhāṣya* which is available only in Tibetan translation and the forth being *Rasa-ratna-samuccaya* an important text on *Rasa-śāstra* making no differentiation between Vāgbhaṭa I & II.

Time, Place and Dharma of Vāgbhaṭa

Saṅs-rgyas Ragya-mtsho's *Khog 'bubs* mentions Vāgbhaṭa as a contemporary of Kaniṣka and Nāgārjuna who lived in 2nd -1st century BC, and was born in *Kha-che* region meaning Kashmir

in Tibetan language. This is in conformity with *Aṣṭāṅga-saṅgraha* which mentions the birth place of Vāgbhaṭa as Sindhu (*Sindhuṣu labdha-janmā*). The author have provided roman and Devanāgarī versions of verses mentioned in *Khog 'bubs* supporting Vāgbhaṭa's genealogy, biography, different opinions about place of birth, his devotion to Śiva and boons bestowed by him for the work of this celebrated Ayurvedic physician.

As regards religious belief of Vāgbhaṭa, as to whether he was Hindu or Buddhist, the author presents a narration from Sañs-rgyas Ragya-mtsho's *Khog 'bubs*. Vāgbhaṭa was a scholar of *Vedas, Upaniṣads, Vedāṅgas and āyurvedas*. By propagating Liṅgeśvara Śiva he got the boon to be victorious everywhere. However, he was defeated in debate by a tantric at Nālandā by Nāgārjuna's disciple named Ārya-deva. Though defeated he was provided all facilities in Nālandā monastery to pursue his academic activities. He composed many poetic works eulogizing Lord Buddha in the names of Aśva-ghoṣa, Mātr-ceṭa and Ārya-sūra. However, he was not pressurised to abandon his linkages with Vedic traditions.

Vāgbhaṭa's Debate in Nālandā

Vāgbhaṭa's visit to Nālandā and his challenge for debate to 1500 scholars is mentioned in *Khog 'bubs* (verses 85-91) where he describes himself as *tīrthika* (heretic) and known as Kṛṣṇa Muni who wears dress made of deer skin and *kamaṇḍala* in his hand. If defeated he had vowed to get himself drowned in Ganga along with his followers. Monks were worried about his open challenge. Invitation to Ārya-deva (born from earth and not from mother's womb) (verses 91-101), urgent summon by Ācārya Nāgārjuna to Ārya-deva (verses 101-105), his persuasion for debate (verses 106-122), and Ārya-deva's debate with Vāgbhaṭa (Aśva-ghoṣa) (verses 122-156) are all given by the author giving a detailed English translation. Debates with Sarasvatī (verses 157-165), Śuka-Pañḍita (verses 166-177) and Kaṭhanī-

Pañḍita (178) are also mentioned. The debates mainly concentrated on grammar and logic, however he was finally defeated by using black magic. Aśva-ghoṣa's loss of faith in Śiva (verses 189-194), attempt to escape to *Brahma-loka*, arrest and punishment (verses 218-222) are well described by the author.

Composition of *Aṣṭāṅga-hṛdaya - saṃhitā* and its importance

After his defeat, Vāgbhaṭa engulfed Buddhism and followed the instructions of Lord Buddha and tried to purify the sins committed by him. He later on composed four texts, *Brhat-Aṣṭāṅga, Aṣṭāṅga-hṛdaya-praveśa, Aṣṭāṅga-hṛdaya saṃhitā* and auto commentary over *Aṣṭāṅga-hṛdaya-saṃhitā* (verses 223-230). Six sections of *Aṣṭāṅga-hṛdaya-saṃhitā* viz *Sūtra-sthāna, Śārīra-sthāna, Nidāna-sthāna, Cikitsā-sthāna, Kalpa-siddhi-sthāna* and *Uttara-sthāna* are mentioned with English translation. *Sūtra-sthāna* or the section of general principles of medicine has thirty chapters (250-283) while *Śārīra-sthāna* relating to the features of the body is described in six chapters (284-289). *Nidāna-sthāna* concerning the diagnosis of various diseases has sixteen chapters (290-306), while *Cikitsā-sthāna* concerning the treatment of diseases twenty-two chapters (307-328). *Kalpa-siddhi-sthāna* dealing with recipes for various therapies and their successful administration has six chapters (329-334) while *Uttara-sthāna* is a subsequent section having forty chapters (335-375).

According to the author, Vāgbhaṭa's work *Aṣṭāṅga-hṛdaya saṃhitā* is like *elanvitae (prāṇa)* of physicians. It is grammatically and poetically correct and it is a product of poetic prosody. It is a joint venture of preceptor Nāgārjuna who was a Buddhist scholar and disciple Vāgbhaṭa who in earlier part of life was a *tīrthika* (non-Buddhist). Thus it represents the doctrine of both the Buddhist and non-Buddhist.

Candra-nandana

Candra-nandana in his [*Padārtha-*] *Candrikā* (commentary on *Aṣṭāṅga-hṛdaya*) mentions himself as an inhabitant of Kashmir. His knowledge of scriptures made him known as a great interpreter and excellent physician. The *Padārtha-candrikā* commentary was translated into Tibetan between 1013 and 1055 AD. From the quotes it appears that he might have studied many other works like *Candra-lakṣa-varga* and *Upadeśa-siddhānta*. He also composed a work on *Nighaṇṭu* explaining names of medical terminologies with reference to word-meaning and determination of their derivation from compounds. The *Nighaṇṭu* was quite popular in *Ārya-deśa* (*Bhārata-varṣa*).

The first six appendices of the book contain the glossaries of the names and diseases described in the text in Tibetan, English and Sanskrit arranged alphabetically in Tibetan Devanāgarī, Roman and Sanskrit. The glossaries

are all the more important as they cover the names of all the diseases and their therapies as well as the technical terms. The appendix VII provides the original text in Tibetan. This will help the readers in verifying the facts mentioned in the book.

Vāgbhaṭa was an eminent scholar and Ayurvedic physician, and his works are followed even today by Ayurvedic physicians. So is Candra-nandana well-known for his *Padārtha-candrikā* and *Nighaṇṭu*. The author must be congratulated to bring forth the Tibetan version and the Indian original materials before us in order to clear the controversies regarding the genealogy, time, habitation, religious faith and some details of the works of Vāgbhaṭa and Candra-nandana using the Tibetan text *Khog 'bubs* written by Tibetan scholar Sde-srid Saṅs-rgyas Ragya-mtsho. He has painstakingly Sanskritised and translated the verses from Tibetan text into English. The book will be of help to Ayurvedic scholars having interest in multi-linguistic studies.