

The Epigraphic Evidences on Ayurveda and Indian Medical Heritage

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Abstract

History of Indian medical heritage is due to receive serious attention from historians. There is need to fill in this gap by writing narratives based on primary evidences such as inscriptions, manuscripts and other intangible sources like oral traditions, etc. Among them, inscriptions play a crucial role in chronicling the development of Indian medical traditions, the status of medical men in the society, the royal patronage in the form of grants of land, donations, providing medical aid to common people, paying remunerations to the medical men for their services, and establishment of medical facilities. The article explores information available from Ashokan inscriptions about plantation of medicinal plants and setting up of treatment facilities for men and cattle. It also includes other inscriptions from Telangana, Andhrapradesh and Tamilnadu covering narratives about veterinary physicians, Jaina surgeon named Aggalayya, maternity hospital, preventive measures for people during epidemics and about Parahita family of physicians and other information about Indian medical heritage.

Key words: Aggalayya, Ashoka, Ayurveda, History of medicine, Indian medical heritage inscriptions, Malkapur, Parahita, Phanigiri.

1 Introduction

The primary focus of the majority of historians dealing with Indian history in general is on the political and economic aspects. In contrast, research and publication of works on history of science in general and about Ayurveda and other topics related with Indian medical heritage in particular is a relatively recent phenomenon. Further it is observed that such works heavily rely on textual resources and very little on primary resources like epigraphs

and other archeological evidences diluting the seriousness of content and veracity. Writing on history of Indian medical heritage with an emphasis on Ayurveda from epigraphical resources is challenging, as on many occasions the information related with medical practice, healthcare etc. is not directly mentioned in the text. However, we do find information about Vaidyas (Ayurvedic physicians), facilities for deliveries, treating fever and other generalized conditions, etc. confirming existence of medical practice similar to one narrated in Ayurvedic texts belonging to the period of the epigraph. Hence, the medical historian has to sift through the vast amounts of literature

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available from inscriptions, identify technically and contextually meaningful words/sentences and decipher the meaning embedded in them to come up with meaningful description.

2 Epigraphs containing the information on medical heritage

The paper presents eighteen such instances wherein the epigraphs have been deciphered to fetch medically relevant information and provided descriptions. This work will facilitate the possibility of further such work by historians and other domain experts concerned with this field.

2.1 Ashoka's second rock edict

Asoka was the most influential ruler of early India. He was honored with the titles like *devanāmapriya* (one dear to the gods) and *priyadarśī* (with pleasing countenance/looks with kindness upon everything). The set of Asoka's fourteen edicts is found about a mile to the east of Junagarh, the capital of the Junagarh State in the Kathiawar Peninsula, and at the entry of the dell or gorge which leads into the valley that girdles the mighty and sacred Girnar mountain.

Historians believe that date of issue of this rock edict lie in between 258–257 BCE and the measures were passed before the date of the edicts probably between 260–258 BCE (Mookerji 1955, pp. 37–38). Second Rock–Edict of Ashoka provides valuable evidence about medical care in India. The translations of the second edict among the fourteen deciphered from Brahmi script are as follows (Hultzsch 1991, pp. 2–4):

Everywhere in the dominions of King *Devanāmapriyapriyadarśin* (Ashoka), and likewise among (his) borderers, such as the Chodas, the Pandyas, the Satiyaputa the Keralaputa, even Tamraparni, the Yona king Antiyaka, also the kings who are neighbors of this Antiyaka, everywhere two (kinds of) medical treatments were established by king *Devanāmapriyapriyadarśin*, (viz) medical treatment for men and medical treatment for cattle. And wherever there were no herbs that are beneficial to men and beneficial to cattle, every-

where they were caused to be imported and to be planted.

Wherever there were no roots and fruits, everywhere they were caused to be imported and to be planted.

On the roads, wells were caused to be dug, and trees were caused to be planted for the use of cattle and men.

These lines clearly show that the king Ashoka has taken care to offer treatments for the people and animals under his dominion and among other neighbouring areas. Conservation and protection of medicinal plants were given the highest concern. Digging and construction of wells for the cultivation of medicinal plants on roadsides served dual purpose of providing shelters to the travelers from sunlight, using them for medicinal use for men and beast (Figure 1) (Mookerji 1955, pp 129–131).

2.2 Ikshvaku inscription, Phanigiri

This is a pillar inscription engraved on limestone in Sanskrit and Prākṛit languages and Brāhmī script of 3rd to 4th century BCE. The height of inscription is 122 inches (excluding square and circular base), the circumference is 43 inches, and pillar is in 8 facets (octagonal) each facet is 5–6 inches in width and carved on three facets. Ikshvaku King Sri Rudra Purushadatta issued this in his 18th regnal year. It is now preserved in a store-house at Phanigiri village, Nalgonda district in Telangana state. It was found on a lofty hill (*Jaina* center for spirituality) and later shifted and preserved in the Phanigiri village wherein term *phanigiri* denotes a snake-shaped hill (Subrahmanyam 2001–2007, p. 32; Peter 2008, p. 99; Khvaja 1950, pp. 1–3) (Figures 2, 3, 4, 5, 6).

The inscription has four verses dedicated to the worship of Lord Buddha and records the erection of a pillar containing the *dharmacakra* by the chief physician (*agrahīṣaja*) Dhemasena. Hence, it is an important tangible evidence about the existence of chief physician to the kings. In Buddhist philosophy *dharmacakra* denotes the Buddhist eight-fold path illustrated in a wheel and erecting this is to be considered as a great honor. The king, allowing a physician to erect the pillar with *dharmacakra* denotes king's concern and respect to the physicians.



Figure 1 Edicts of Ashoka at Junagadh, Gujarat (Courtesy: Internet Archive Book).



Figure 2 Phanigiri hill, Nalgonda.



Figure 3 Phanigiri original hilltop site.



Figure 4 Phanigiri Sthupa.



Figure 6 Phanigiri stupa with beautiful Brāhmī script on estampage.



Figure 5 A part of Phanigiri stupa inscription.

2.3 K. B. Museum Inscription

It is a Jaina medical inscription preserved at Khazana Building Museum, near the Golconda Fort, Hyderabad under the custody of Department of Archaeology and Museums, Telangana state. Recently the inscription (No. 54) was shifted to the newly established Jaina Gallery at YSR State Archaeological Museum, Hyderabad. Details of the inscription were published in the Corpus of Telangana inscriptions, Part IV (1973). The script is Telugu and the language is Sanskrit. Due to partial damage the full text is not available. The height of the granite stone inscription is around 37 inches, width 14 1/4 inches and breadth 11 inches. The Jain Theerthankara figure is carved on the top of third side of the inscription (Mallampalli 19734, pp. 103–106; Rama Rao 1975, pp. 201–202) (Figure 7).

The inscription describes the gift of three *khandrikas* (old land measurement) of wetland, some *marturs* (old land measurements) of dry land and one flower garden to Bhima, the *vaidyavidyādhara* (excellence in medical science) by someone whose name is unfortunately lost. It also describes that the ancestors of Bhima were physicians. The earliest members mentioned are Gundadeva and Trivikrama. Trivikrama is praised as Bharata in *rasa* (*alankāraśāstra*–rhetoric); Dhanvantari in *vaidya*



Figure 7 K. B. Museum inscription with Jain Tirthankar on the top.

(medicine); king Vatsa in *hastyāśva* (veterinary science of horses and elephants) and Madreya in sword-fighting. Trivikrama was a warrior, physician, well versed veterinary doctor having special knowledge of horses and elephants. Trivikrama had four sons – Meda, Gunda, Mardanarya, and Pampa. Meda is described as well versed in medicine, a follower of Parahitha (traditional physicians engaged and dedicated to the benefit and well being of other people and animals). The editor of the inscription opines that probably he was an expert in treating the maternity cases. All these were the followers of *Jina* (Rama Rao 1975, pp. 201–202).

The name of Vikrama Kota Bhima appears in the 35th line. This may be the name of a descendant of the Parahita family. The editor of the inscription mentions that the gift was to Bhima by a donor whose name is lost. Line 51 has a name Sabbayamalla who might have been an officer or a feudatory king and he donated 3 *khandrikas* and some *marturs* of land from those villages and flower garden, probably to the God *Jina*, who was established by him in the second village. Based on the Telugu characters of the record, this inscription can be placed in 12–13th century CE (Rama Rao 1975, pp. 201–202).

2.4 Saidapur Inscription

This is a Jaina inscription located at Saidapur village, Bhongir taluk, Nalgonda district, Telangana (Figures 8, 9). It is engraved on three sides of a pillar erected amid the village. The characters of the inscription are of the Telugu–Kannada variety prevailing in the 11th Century CE except for some portion on the third side which is in Sanskrit describing eulogy of the royal physician Aggalayya. The inscription is dated in the śaka year 956, *Bhava, Jyestha Pun-nami Brhaspativāra, Somagrahaṇa* which corresponds to June 4, 1034 CE. The information of Saidapur inscription was published in the *Epigraphia Andhrica*, Vol. VI of Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Andhrapradesh.

The inscription reveals that “Aggalayya” was a Jaina and always helpful to good people. His activities were always intended for the healthy being of people, welfare of friends, satisfaction of the *Gurus* (Teachers), teachings of the *Jina*, and clearing the doubts of the physicians in their medical pursuits. He was verily the God Brahma himself.

Among the scholars of Ayurveda and ingenious scholars that flourished in the court of Jagadekamalla (alias



Figure 8 Saidapur inscription, Nalgonda.

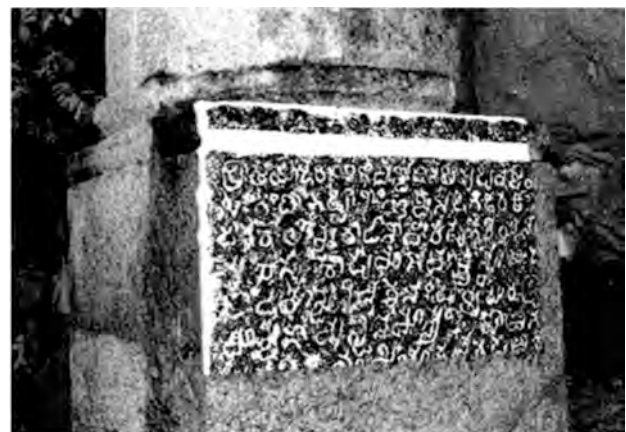


Figure 9 Saidapur inscription script on estampe.

Jayasimha –famous king of that period), he was proficient in ‘*śastraśāstra* (the science of surgery)’. It is further emphasized in this inscription ‘when one comes to know that any treatment by surgery was made and the patient got the relief that is due to Aggalayya and king Jagadekamalla. Even when a disease was found incurable by other physicians in its *parākarśa* (serious stage) and in its *upakrama* (treatment) they say in all quarters (regions) that Aggalayya was most efficient in curing that disease’ (Sastry 1977, pp. 127–130).

The inscription contains the praise of the king Jagadekamalla I and records the gift of lands in the villages of Mucchanapalli, Tenkanamaddi and Juvipakavadi and cash (*drammas*) for the daily rites and repairs (11.19,20) of the two Basadis (Jain temples) namely, the Buddhasena *jinālaya* in Baliya Mucchanapalli and *vaidyaratnākara-jinālaya* in Ikkuriki to Aggalayya, the (*Naravaidyaratnākara*) and Prāṇācārya, who is also the *gavunda* (village head man) of Mucchanapalli. The *vaidyaratnākara-jinālaya* under reference is named after the physician Aggalayya himself, as he bore the title *vaidyaratnākara*. The third side of the inscription extols the greatness of the royal physician Aggalayya who is said to have been the wizard of Ayurveda. The pointed reference made to the *sastracikitsa* (surgery) in the Ayurvedic methods reveals that the surgery was in a well-developed stage and practiced by the experts in Ayurveda (Sastry 1977, pp. 127–130).

It is the first Jinasasana of the king Jagadekamalla I (the sole wrestler of the world) found in these parts of the Chalukyan Empire. It is interesting to note that the king Jayasimha II after knowing the proficiency of the royal physician Aggalayya in the Ayurveda conferred on him the *pratipatti* (recognition) of *mahāsāmanta* (independent ruler of an adjoining territory) and made him the *gaunḍa* (village head man) of the Mucchanapalli village. It reveals that persons of eminence are entrusted by the king with positions of importance in the administration of the kingdom.

2.5 Thirumukkudal inscription

Thirumukkudal is a village in the Madhurantaka Taluk, Chengalpattu district of Tamil Nadu, situated at the confluence of the three rivers Palar, Vegavathi, and Cheyyar. This village is famous for Venkatesa Perumal temple. It is an ancient temple with an inscription in the stone-built

compound wall (Figures 10, 11, 12). It was discovered and copied down by K. V. Subramanya Ayyar in 1915–16 and according to him, it is the biggest and the most informative record about the 11th century CE, giving fairly detailed particulars about an Ayurvedic *athurasalai* (hospital). The epigraph is dated in the sixth regnal year of Rajekesari Varman alias Vira Rajendradeva (CE 1067). He is the king of Chola Desha (Devi 2006, p. 170).

Caraka Saṃhitā, mentions that well trained qualified physicians, attendants and sufficient medicaments are necessary for the treatment of patients (Sharma 2008, p. 183). The *athurālaya* at Thirumukkudal had all these requisites. This hospital was primarily built for the treatment of the students of the Vedic college run by the temple. It is named as “*Vīracolāthurālaya*”. From the particulars furnished by the Epigraphical Report, it is found that the *athurālaya* had been functioning as a full-fledged hospital. It was provided with 15 beds for the treatment of in-patients. The teachers of the college and the employees of the temple were given free medical aid. Detailed information is given regarding the endowment provided for the upkeep of the hospital. The hospital consisted of one general physician (*kāyā cikitsa* specialist), one surgeon (*śalya* specialist), two male medical attendants, two female attendants (nurses), one barber and one waterman. Male attendants were recruited mainly to collect the medicinal herbs and bring firewood and to do all services to prepare medicines. Female attendants’ main role was to provide medicines, to make the patients follow the proper food regimen and activities (*pathyāpathya*). The inscription also reveals about some formulations stored in the hospital like *Brahma rasāyana*, *vasaharītaki*, *daśamulaharītaki*, etc. along with their quantities as to suffice the need for one-year usage.

One washerman for washing the clothes of the patients, one potter for providing requisite pots for medicinal use and a gatekeeper (watchman) were also recruited. The traditional general physician Kodandarama Asvatthama Bhattar belonging to nearby village ‘Alapaka’ with *suvarṇa gotra* (progeny of a sage) was recruited as chief physician. The total cost of free diet supplied for a year was calculated on the assumption that there were always fifteen in-patients getting treatment in the fifteen beds. The report also informs about the provisions made for burning up a lamp in the hospital during nights for which 45 *nadi* (old volumetric measurement) oil is provided, 7



Figure 10 Thirumukkudal Temple with large inscriptions on the outside compound wall.



Figure 11 Thirumukkudal temple wall with an inscription.

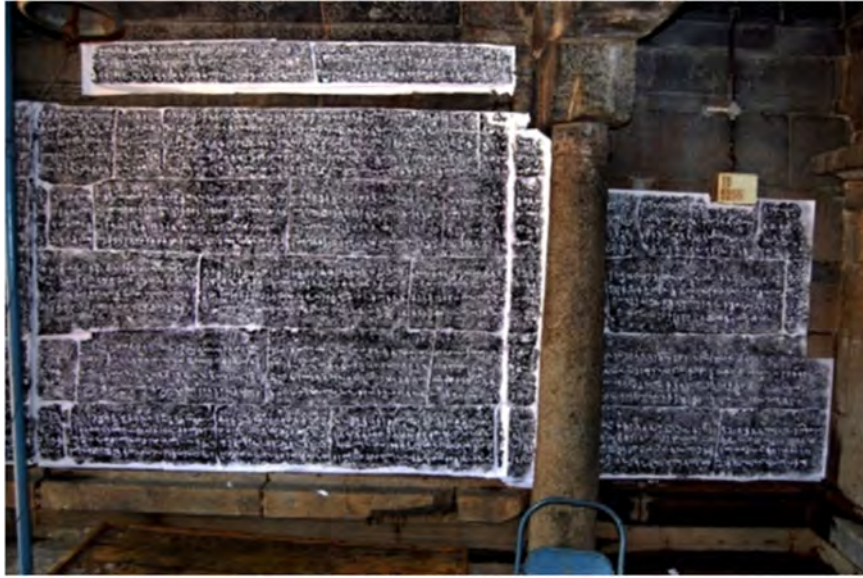


Figure 12 Thirumukkudal inscription script on estampage.

mats were provided for hospital and for supplying water for the hospital—needs for which a waterman was paid 15 *kalam* (old volumetric measurement) of paddy annually. Besides, there was also a provision to supply diet to the patients at the rate of 1 *nali* of rice per head per day (Devi 2006, p. 170).

2.6 Nandalur inscription

This inscription was inscribed on the stone wall of Saumyanathasvami temple in Nandalur village in Cuddapah district, Andhra Pradesh (Figures 13, 14, 15). It is on the 5th tier of the north base, the north and west walls of the same hall and the north wall of the central shrine. It belongs to king Rajendra–Chola III (1257–58 CE). The inscription is dated in *śaka era* at 1179, *Piṅgala, Meśa Saṅkrānti*. It is written in three languages: the first part in Sanskrit; the next comprising mostly of the names of the donors with the number of their shares of land in Telugu but in Grantha alphabet like the first Part; and the last portion of about 20 lines, giving the main gist of the record is in Tamil. Along with donations and other issues, it has a record of the epidemic disease. As per the inscription, the brāhmaṇas of Perungandura village had some lands from earlier days but they left the place due to famine. When they returned, they found that their villages and lands were already supplanted by the *vellalas* (agriculturists). It

is said that the *vellalas* had deserted their own village Inbrolu due to the epidemic *mārijvara* (?plague) and came to occupy the lands of brāhmaṇas and the brāhmaṇas lost their lands and income. The feudatory chief Manumasiddhi, to whom the brāhmaṇas appealed, restored the lands (Rama Rao 1975, p. 200; Gopalacharyulu, pp. 49–50).

This inscription reveals the record of the epidemic disease called *mārijvara* (a killing fever *māri* means killing, *jvara* means fever) which is compared/akin to the plague (spokensanskrit.org). It may be noted that by the time of the inscription plague or plague like disease was prevalent in India, and during such type of epidemics people used to vacate that area to stop further spreading of the disease. This type of preventive measure is mentioned in classical *Ayurvedic* texts like *Caraka Saṃhitā* which was followed by physicians and was popular in those days.

In *Caraka Saṃhitā* it is mentioned that to avoid and protect oneself from epidemics one has to adopt preventive measures, have a residence in hygienic locations, observance of *brāhmacarya* (sexual restraint to promote physical, mental and spiritual health), etc. This inscription provides evidence of adopting preventive measure by the people of the entire village by changing their residence to hygienic locations (Sharma 2008, pp. 145–146).



Figure 13 Nandaluru temple.



Figure 14 Nandaluru temple wall with inscription.



Figure 15 Nandaluru inscription script on estampage.

2.7 Malkapuram inscription (Images 18–20)

This is a huge single granite pillar inscription with image of *Nandi* (divine bull) carved on the top of the pillar. It is famous as *Nandi* pillar inscription/Malkapur inscription. At present this inscription is found in a field opposite to an old ruined temple in Malkapuram village of Guntur taluka and district, Andhra Pradesh (Figures 16, 17, 18). The ruins of surrounding walls, base, small pond, etc., are visible. The height of the pillar is 14' 7" and the sides are 2' 10" and 2' 8". The text is inscribed on the three sides of the pillar; the first side contains 90–lines second 79 and the third 31 lines, bringing the total lines to 200. The majority of the text is in Sanskrit language and Telugu script. It gives a detailed account of the Kakatiya family and the foundation and pontifical succession of the Golagi-*maṭha* (Saiva monastery). The inscription refers to the grant of two villages called Mandaram and Velagapudi on Friday, the eighth day of a black fortnight of *Caitra* month of *Durmati* year of *śaka* 1183. This corresponds to the year 1261CE. The first village was donated by the Kakatiya king Ganaptideva and the second by his daughter Rudramadevi to Viśveśvaraśivācārya of Golagi-*maṭha*. Viśveśvaraśivā established the temple of Viśveśvara, a Sanskrit College, a *maṭha* for *śaivas*, a choultry for feeding people without distinction of caste and creed, a general and a maternity hospital, besides some other things. It states that he made grants of land for the maintenance of all these institutions (Rama Rao 1975, pp. 200–201).



Figure 16 Malkapur inscription with a snake on the top.



Figure 17 Malkapur inscription with Nandi and Śivaliṅga on the top.

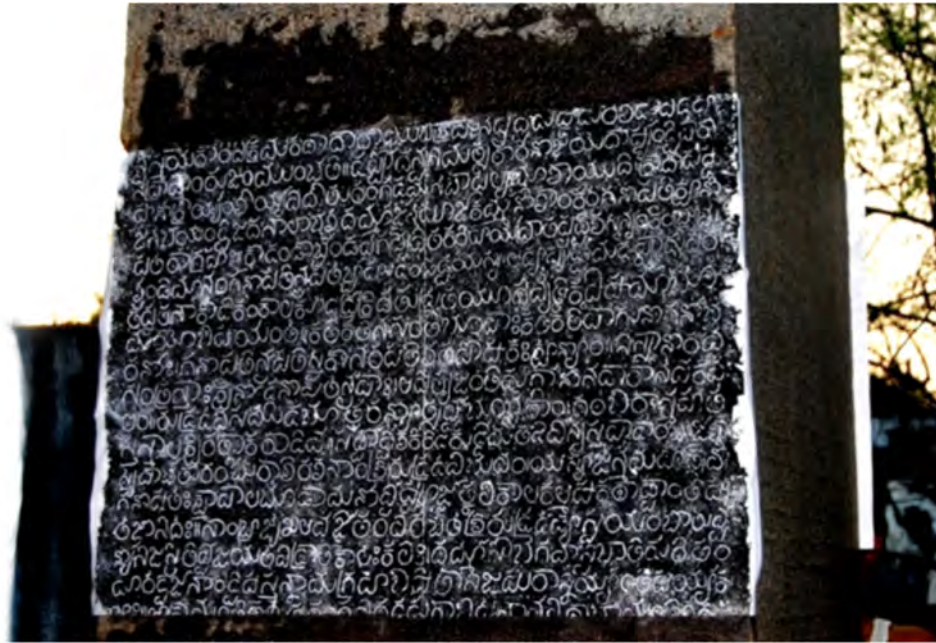


Figure 18 Malkapur inscription with script on estampage.

2.8 Nagarjunakonda inscription

Nagarjunakonda is a historical Buddhist town, now an island located near Nagarjuna Sagar in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh. It now lies almost entirely under the Nagarjuna Sagar Dam. It is named after Nagarjuna, a southern Indian master of Māhāyāna Buddhism who lived in 2nd century CE, and believed to have been responsible for the Buddhist activity in that area. It was only in 1926 that a teacher, S Venkataramayya, discovered the ruins of the ancient city. Archaeological excavations carried out between 1926–60 resulted in 130 sites spread across 24 sq km (Figures 19, 20).

The excavations conducted at Vijayapuri Nagarjunakonda showed the structure of a hospital attached to a monastic complex in the early centuries of the Christian era. The term “*vihare mukhya jwaralaye*” (main room for sufferers from fever) found in the inscription excavated at the site reveals the existence of a dedicated facility for treating fever in the monastery. This ‘*jvarālaya*’ consisted of a closed pillared hall in the center with rooms all around. The main building has a passage through one of these rooms leading to an enclosure with an open court. A verandah running all around the enclosure and whole complex having proper drainage, urinals, lavatories and septic tanks made in line with hygienic principles (Devi

2006, p. 71; Dutt 196, pp. 134–135).

2.9 Kaluvacheru inscription

A copper plate inscription dated 1423 CE (some consider 1428) reveals the grant of the village Kaluvacheru, which was named later as Annavaramu, of East Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh (Figure 21). The donor was the queen of Virabhadra Reddy of Kondavidu dynasty and recipient was a physician named Parahitacārya son of Kalanathabhata, a member of the sixth generation of the Parahita family of physicians and surgeons. The family details and the medical services rendered by the family members are given in detail in the inscription. Parahita, a member of the third generation of the family, once relieved a cobra from its suffering from pain due to the stuck-up of a long bone of a frog in its throat. In lieu of this act of kindness to the poisonous cobra, his family was honored with the name *parahita* (*para*– others, *hita*– well being). The treatment for snake-bites or scorpion bites was called ‘*parahitavidhi* or *viṣavidya*. These physicians are considered as renowned scholars in various other sciences and best one to treat snakebites and offer free of cost treatments with a belief that the treatment would become ineffective if any remuneration is accepted. Such practice was known as *parahitacāranavidya* and physicians were called *parahi-*



Figure 19 View of ruins of excavations of Vihara of Nagarjunakonda.



Figure 20 Inscription bearing 'Vihare Mukhye Jwaralaye' at Nagarjunakonda.

tas or lokopakaras (Gopalacharyulu, pp. 50–51; Devi 2006, pp. 81–82; Anonymous 1958, pp. 467–468).

2.10 Ponnupalli copper plate inscriptions 1 and 2

Ponnupalli copper inscription–1 reveals donation of Ponnupalli village by the king Pedakomati Vemareddy to Bhāskaracārya on the solar eclipse in the *Pauṣa* month of *Tarana* year *śaka* 1326, corresponding to 1404 CE. Ponnupalli village lies on the southern bank of river Krishna in Andhra Pradesh. The donee Bhāskaracārya belongs to *parahita* tradition. A brief note in the inscription mentions that Bhāskaracārya was praised by the king as Dhanvantari of the Earth (*bhūloka dhanvantari*) and a prince among scholarly physicians (Anonymous 1958, pp. 463–464; Rama Rao, 1976, pp. 29–30).

The Ponnupalli grant 2 is dated as the solar eclipse in the *Aśwayuja* month of *Sarvadhari* year, *śaka* 1330 corresponding to 1408 CE. It records the gift of a village, Ponnupalli, situated on the bank of Krishna in the Velanandu and Divi region of Trilinga, Andhra Pradesh. The village was donated by the king Pedakomati Vema to Singanarya son of Villayarya, a great physician and learned scholar of eight branches of Ayurveda and other sciences like *Patañjalimahābhāṣya*, *Purva* and *Uttara Mimāmsa*, etc. Singanarya belonging to Kasyapagotra, was a quiet man and a devotee of Śiva (Anonymous 1958, pp. 462–464; Rama Rao, 1976, pp. 29–30).

2.11 Bhavanarayanawamy temple inscriptions

Inscriptions on north and south side stone walls of Bhavanarayanawamy temple in Bapatla, Guntur district Andhra Pradesh reveal the gift of perpetual lamps to diety Bhavanarayanawamy by Anantabhata, son of Vaidya (physician) Suryadevapandita, grandson of Nagadeva, great-grandson of Surya who belonged to family of Perumanambi during 1151–1154 CE. The inscription mentions about the greatness of Suryadevapandita, a learned physician (Rama Rao 1975, pp. 198–199; Devi 2006, p. 80).

2.12 Bhimeswara Swamy temple inscriptions

The Bhimeswara Swamy temple of Lord Śiva lies in the town Daksharamam of East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh with three inscriptions relating to medicine.

1. First inscription on the stone wall of the temple belongs to 1155 CE during the regnal years of Chola



Figure 21 Kaluvacheru inscription.

king Rajaraja II. This inscription reveals that Suraya named minister who is also a learned physician had donated a garden to God Bhimeswara. He is also known as *parahitaparatantra* (Rama Rao 1975, pp. 199–203).

2. Second inscription in the same temple wall, belonging to 1430 CE refers to donation of the land to God Bhimeswara by a famous physician Annayapandita who is also called as *vaidyendra* (king among other physicians) (Rama Rao 1975, pp. 199–203).
3. Third inscription refers to the donation of a physician named Muddanarya for the maintenance of perpetual lamps of Lord Bhimeswara. It is mentioned that he is famous for *abhyāṅgaprakriya* (external massage with medicated oils). The record belonging to 1154 CE shows the importance attached to *abhyāṅga* prescribed in Ayurveda in daily regimen (Rama Rao, 1976, pp. 29).

2.13 Brahmanakraku village grant inscription

The Kraku grant of Harihara II was discovered in Brahmanakraku village near Kavali of Nellore district in Andhra Pradesh. The grant was recorded on five copper plates in the year 1376 CE. Among several brāhmins who received the grant of 64 parts of the village, the 31st person among the list, Srigiri Pandita was the son of Srivallabha and brother of Lakshmanapandita, a renowned scholar in Ayurveda and Yajurveda. All these family members are mentioned as learned physicians (Rama Rao, 1975, p. 203).

2.14 Kshirarameswara inscription

Kshirarameswara inscription is found in Kshirarameswara Anjaneyaswamy temple in Palakollu village of Narsapur Taluk, Krishna district, Andhra Pradesh. It reveals the gift of perpetual lamps to God Kshirarameswara by learned physician Vasudeva, specialized in *aśvavidya* (treatment of horses). Vasudeva belonged to *atreya gotra* and was the son of Ananta Pandita. The inscription belongs to the year 1300 CE (Rama Rao, 1975, p. 203).

2.15 Akkalapudi inscription

Akkalapudi inscription reveals the donation of Akkalapudi village to a famous physician Parahitacarya by Singayanayaka the king of Korukonda Kingdom. Presently it is located near Rajamahendravara (Rajamundry) of East Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh. The physician belonged to Kalanathabhatta family and was given a status equal to the minister. This belongs to the period 1368 CE (Gopalacharyulu, pp. 50; Ayurvedic expert committee report, pp. 460).

2.16 Tummalagudem Vishnukundi charter

Vishnukundi charter from Tummalagudem (Indrapala Nagaram) in Ramannapeta taluk of Nalgonda district, Telangana mentions the donation of two villages Erlapadu and Penkaparru by the king Govindavarman to a monastery for spiritual rites as well as procurement of medicines (Rama Rao 1976, p. 28) (Figure 22).

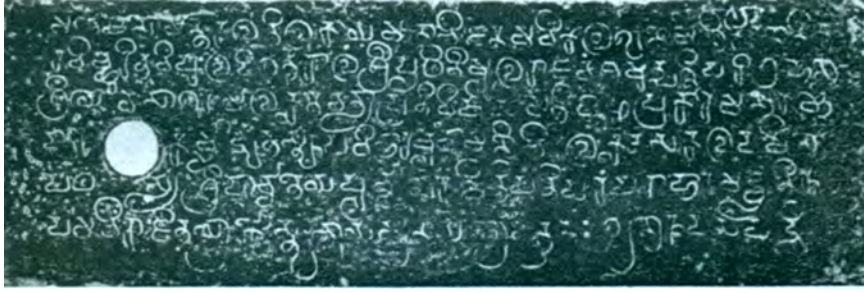


Figure 22 Vishnukundi charter.

2.17 Kollipara inscription

Kollipara inscription is in Sanskrit, engraved on copper plate. It mentions grant to Mugdhasivacarya, by the king Arikesari son of Vinayaditya Yuddhamalla of Chalukya family. Arikesari (775–800 CE) was an expert in *ga-jatantra* (science on elephants) along with proficiency in grammar, law etc. (Rama Rao 1976, p. 29).

2.18 Kondavidu inscription

Kondavidu inscription was found in a deserted temple of Kondavidu, Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh. Among the donees who received a grant from a person (donor name is not legible) were one *parahitavaidya* and one *aswavaidya* by the name Lakshmanapandita. The period of the inscription is approximately 1546 CE (Rama Rao 1976, p. 32).

3 Conclusion

The information in above-mentioned epigraphs show the importance of even a single sentence and a word of appreciation e.g. *agrabhisaja* (elder among physicians), *vaidyaratnākara* (excellence among other physicians), *bhūloka dhanvantari* (*dhanvantari* of the Earth), *parahitavaidya* (physicians meant for the welfare of others), etc. These are akin to current day awards like B.C Roy and Padma awards bestowed in recognition of physicians. Such evidences uphold the importance and the patronage enjoyed by people in healthcare domain in ancient times. They are testimony to the presence of a flourishing tradition of *vaidyas* (physicians) in the ancient times receiving due recognition and royal patronage. The other details about land grants, donations and mention of functioning hospitals (general, maternity, etc.) reiterate

the same. It is pertinent to note that this work represents a minuscule of huge corpus of Indian inscriptions and lot more vigorous interdisciplinary teamwork is needed to explore the same. This is a great opportunity for the future scholars and Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH), Government of India may come up with a central sector scheme in line with “Scheme for acquisition, cataloging, digitization and publication of text book and manuscripts” for conducting research works based on inscriptions.

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