

Systematic Evolution of Indigenous Medicine

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Abstract

Sri Lanka had an indigenous system of traditional medicine called Hela medicine and Sinhala medicine Hela medicine, which goes back three thousand years was build on a series of prescription . Physically and Mentally this medicine is into divided two parts and physical medicine was done by doctors . Psychiatry was done by Shanthikarma. Hela medicine was always clinical. Also Sarvangha Vedakama was divided into several parts like eye medicine, tree medicine, snake medicine, and animal medicine. It was also divided into various disorders related to cysts, penis vata, hemorrhoids and maddogs. In the Pre-Brahminical inscriptions from the third century BC to the first century AD, Hela medicine was known as “වෙජ්ජ” Since the Anuradhapura era many kings were engaged in the practice of medicine and even had constitutionally maintained various rules and regulation for it. It is revealed by archeological doctors and there were many medical remedies from the Anuradhapura period to the kandy period, local medicine evolved and about sixty one ancient medical books were written in this regard. This study was done revealing that foreign influence also happened on Hela medicine.

Introduction

A major cultural elements associated with local culture is traditional medicine Hela medicine. which dates back three thousand years is gradually disappearing from Sri Lanka. Its importance the evolution of local medicine from the

Anuradhapura period to the kandy period. Including various medical methods dispensaries and places set apart for it are included in this study.

Keywords : Medicine, Physically, Divided, Influence, Anuradhapura, Kandy Constitutionally

Research Problem

Is there trust in Hela medicine among the what kind of faith is there among the common people in Hela medicine?

Aimes of the Research

Who the global covid epidemic was prevalent doctors in many countries of the world were anxious to find a suitable vaccine or other medicine for it. Local doctors in Sri Lanka were also interested in this and some of them conducted various researchs in search of old prescription. The aim of this study is to investigate the systamitic evolution of Hela medicine from the Anuradhapura period to the Kandy period, emphasizing that the various remedies, clinical methods prescriptions and first aid methods included in Hela medicine, which has a long history of three thousand years. Can be used even today.

Significance of the study

Local and foreign people living in many countries of the world sometimes accept the ancient medicine of Sri Lanka with the popularization of western medicine, Hela medicine was suppressed. Medicines that are not harmful in any way can be found in the environment it self. This study shows that remedies such as veda were developed from Hela medicine and it is important to focus on local medicine again.

Literature Review

In the third part of professor M B Ariyapala's book *Medieval Sri Lanka Society* (1962) under the title of fine art education and medicine, the facts are outlined focusing on the ancient medical science in the book "Hela Hadiyawa" written by Baddegama Wimalawansa Thero. There are many information related to Hela medicine. In the second category of our culture heritage written in 1998 many points are shown in this regard under the Ayurveda system at medicine. Another study is Karanasena Hettiarachchi's "Historical background and law at Indigenous Medicine in Sri Lanka" published by the Society of History and Archeology in 2007.

There is an indigenous system of traditional medicine called "Sinhala Wedakama" or "Hela Wedakama" in Sri Lanka. Hela Wedakama is based on a series of prescriptions which have around 3000 years passed down from generations to generations. It is said that the beginning of this has descendant from the period of King Ravana. Scholars have accepted that Ayurveda medicine system is not intrinsic in Sri Lanka and it was a skill which got from India (Uragoda, 1998.02.21). Archeologists have revealed there was an advanced medicine system in Sri Lanka. Even hospitals with surgical facilities had been established here in ancient times.

Hela Wedakama/ Indigenous Medicine can be divided as two sectors which are physical and psychiatric medicine. Physical medicine was done by doctors and psychiatric medicine was done by "Bali Thowil" ritual. Hela Wedakama/ Indigenous Medicine was always clinical. But Western medicine acknowledges that it was clinical at least 500 years ago. The medicine which ancients have conducted can be divided five parts as all-round medicine (physician) Orthopedics, Ophthalmology, Veterinary medicine

and Sarpa Wedakama. Except these five parts of medical system, there was a specific medical treatment for “Gedi Wedakama”, medicine related Cough disease, Catarrh medicine, Rheumatic medicine, Hemorrhoids, Medicine related mental diseases, Medicinerelated Rabis diseases. As well as, there was a medical method for “gawa wedakama” “Ali wedakama” – medicine related cows and elephants. These methods came from ancient times to the present.

The purpose of the paper is to inquire the evolution of Indigenous medical system by literature reviews and archeological sources. The status for indigenous medical system for each kingdom is studied in this paper.

Anuradhapura Kingdom

The doctor was the one who mastered the skill of medicine. The medical profession which was considered as an intellectual profession, was highly recognized in society. It can be identified that in pre-brahmi letters, “waigna” was known as doctors. Especially, in this era, medicine was conducted among the “brahma” community.

It has been recognized tree letters which has included three names of doctors in pre-brahmi letters. There are “Sithulpawwa magul maha viharaya”, Pichchendiyawa and Rajanganaya” in Hambantota district. There was mentioned on the cave sacrifice which was done by doctor brahma Gobuthiya of Devanampiya Gamini Thissa king in the Pichchendiyawa. There was also mentioned he was the teacher of the king. That means it was famous that the doctor of Anuradhapura society was a educated person. As well it can be seen that he communicated with the royal family. Among them some doctors are literature scholars. It has mentioned about a cave sacrifice by a doctors who called Thissa in the shila letter of Sithulpawwa magul maha vigharaya

and a cave sacrifice by a doctor who called Mithra in the shila letter of Rajanganaya.

In the beginning monks have not engaged in the medical profession. That was conducted not as a profession but as a service which expanded from rules related to discipline. It has been revealed from Pali Atta Kathawa and other literature books that there were monks who had skill of medicine. According to the first lines, it was prohibited for monks to conduct in the profession of medicine. However, As mentioned in the Atta Katha, they could give medical treatments for only relative.

In Anuradhapura Kingdom, Kings have contributed for advancing the medical system.

■ Mahawansha has revealed that two hospitals called “Soththi Shala” and sSivika Shala” were built by King Pandukabhaya. Soththishala was known as a common hospital while Sivika Shala was built for Pregnat women.

■ King Dutugemunu built 18 hospitals and gave meals for patients according to the medical regulations. Hospitals were governed by the government and king’s private treasury has been facilitated to give meals and drugs for pregnant women and give rewards for midwives.

■ King Buddhadasa was a surgical doctor. The king built a hospital and ballroom, a separate hospital for people with disabilities and blind people, an army hospital for soldiers and veterinary place for animals. There was a veterinary medicine in this era. The king wrote a medical book called “Sarartha sangrahaya”.

■ Hospitals were built for common people in the kingdom of 1st Upathissa. Hospitals were built for blind people,

people with disabilities and pregnant mothers.

- A wife of king Mahanama built a hospital.
- In Mahawansha, it has mentioned that king Shilakala increased salary for hospitals.
- The king of 7th Aggabodhi gave drugs for patients.
- King Dappula built and maintained hospitals in the areas of Polonnaruwa and Padawiya.
- The king of 2nd Sena built a hospital in Mihinthalye.
- The king of 4th Kashyapa built hospitals for people who affected pandemic diseases in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa and built several hospitals in several places.

In his era, it has mentioned that there were hospitals according to the shila letters of Kiribathvehera and Kukumahandama. People who scarified, concerned to protect the land property of hospitals. According to shila letter of Kiribathvehere Public service officers should not enter to the land if they want to enter for any specific matters, they had to get permissions from authorities of land of hospitals. According of the shila letter of Kukurumahandama, there was and ayurvedic center in Anuradhapura city.

- The king of 5th Kashyapa has built hospitals in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa areas with the purpose to prevent diseases. Except that, he built pharmacies for each place. According to the Kirinda shila letter, there was a pharmacy called “Wedna” in the right side of Thissamaharama Rajamaha Viharaya.

According to shila letter of Polonnaruwa Raja Sabhawa, a person called Dethiwalakna gave a land to built a hospital for a doctor called Rakkha with the promise of getting Ginger over a year.

Archeological Factors

To the north of the Rankoth Sthupa, between bikku residences one can find remains of a ancient hospital. This is believed to be built by King Maha Prakkramabahu to treat the sick bikkus. One compartment of this building with a garden within the building there is a herbal boat. Also, as a result of the archeological excavations done by the Central Cultural Fund there have been discoveries of Chinese ceramic containers, grinding machines that were used to grind herbal medicine and surgical tools. These surgical tools are very Much similar to modern medical science (Dissanayake, 2009:60-61)

Pollonnaruwa Era (A.D 1017 – 1215)

The Mahavansa narrates that king Wijayabahu I (A.D. 1055-1110) has given medicine for bikkus. (M.V 2009:60)

During the time of Maha Prakkaramabahu in Pollonnaruwa era (A.FD. 1153-1186) the medical technology was in an advanced stage. According to ancient chronicals (wansha katha) his court of ministers had a minister for medicine (maha vefana) and a deputy (sulu vedana)

During that time for every resident patient at the hospital there was a male and a female attendant. According to the Mahavansa for those who get injured during emergency accidents such as war, there were female and male teams with very good administration. Also king Prakkramabahu has had doctors with various specializations and had paid a remuneration also.

The chief physician of the king Prakkramabahu the second was known as the ‘Maha Wedana’. He was alert about the food served for the king and thoroughly examined whether they are being poisoned. Every morning he examined the king and check whether he is in good health or if there is any ailment he would administer necessary mediations. (Ananda thero, 1997,68)

The Parakkramabahu the second has given medications to the sick and it is mentioned in the Kadawuru Sirithe.

“sick people were given medication, pregnant mothers were given necessary food, midwives’ were given necessary equipment and other necessities for people involved in the medical field” (Ananda Thero, 1997,69”)

The venerable Dharmasena Thero in infamous Saddharmarathnavali discloses that medical profession was popular during that time (A.D. 1220-1293). The idioms used in that emphasizes on that. For example, oils are bad for cholesterol and molasses are bad for phlegm. Furthermore, it mentions about a treatment for infertility as well (Jayathilake, 1936:663)

The chief incumbent of Mayurapada has authored Yogawarnaya (A.D. 1272-1283) and Prayogarathnawaliya (A.D. 1283-1293)

Gampola Era (A.D. 1341-1415)

The Saddharmalankara authored by the venerable Dharmakeerthi thero the second (A.D. 1398-1410) elucidates about ancient indigenous medical treatments. Surgical methods were also existing. The manuscript describes a surgery on a miscarriage, where the surgeons had cut the stillborn in to pieces in order to take it out (Venerable Gnaneshwara thero, 1914:269).

According to M.B. Ariyapala, during this time ancient herbal medicines such as, valmi, perumkaya, siddiguru, thippili, ghee, honey and molasses have been used.

Kotte Era (A.D. 1415-1597)

The poetry in Gira Sansesha describes that Sri Jayawaedenapura monastery has taught medicine (Senanayake, 2007:225). This proves that the bikkus that time learnt and were versatile on medical profession. The Prakkramabahu the sixth has united the country and has stabilized the politics and economy in the country. Under that context it is just to assume he must have developed the medical profession as well.

The foreign influence on domestic medical practice

The domestic medical system that existed hitherto encountered a challenge with the advent of foreigners in 1506. It needs to be mentioned however that the domestic medical practice was not significantly influenced during the Portuguese and Dutch periods. The reason being that at the time Western medicine was not at a developed stage.

Historians such as Ribeiro have stated that Portuguese did pay attention to the domestic medical practice. During their period of time medical institutions were established in Colombo, Mannar and Jaffna.

During the Dutch period medical institutions were established with local medical practitioners. Their job role however was to support and assist the Dutch medical officers. Owing to this, locals began to become attracted to the Dutch medical practice. As he was unsatisfied with local medical practitioners even Shri Weera Parakrama Narenrasinghe requested for Dutch medical practitioners' assistance three times.

With the advent of the British the local medical system began to collapse. However several books on local medical practice were published during this time. Yogha Malaawa, Yogha Muhkthawaliya, Yogha Deepaniya, Yogha Sekaraya, Dharva guna deepaniya, Vaidhyabhinidhanaya, Kumaraoushadaa maalawa, warayogha sanghrahaya, Baishajayaartha manjusa akaaradhiya, Dhruva namaavaliya akaaradhiya, Oushadha mukthaharaya, kumaraoushada dharshanaya, ayurvedha viyaakaranaya, vaidya maalawa, vatikka prakaranya or beheth guli kalkaya were some of them.

The British were very interested in providing healthcare for the locals. They established the public health department and instituted the western medical system as the government's medical system. Because the western medical system received the support of the Government the local public began to move away from the local domestic medical system.

Primary Source (Interview)

Pemaris L, 67 year, Sirisevena, Boralukatiya, Karatota

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