

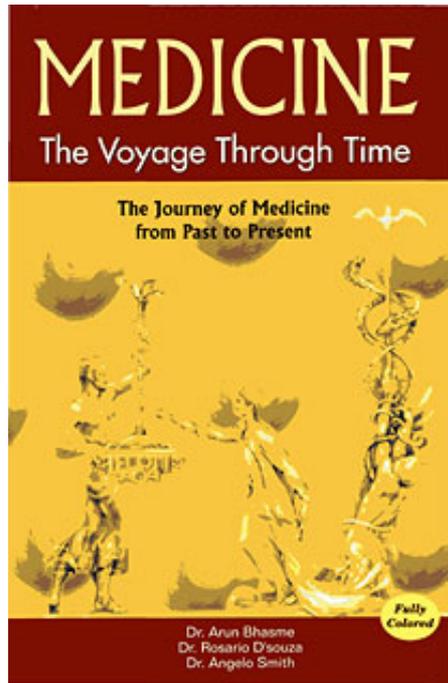
Bhasme /D'souza/Smith Medicine -The Voyage Through Time

Reading excerpt

[Medicine -The Voyage Through Time](#)

of [Bhasme /D'souza/Smith](#)

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physicians described ligaments, sutures, lymphatics, nerve plexus, fascia, adipose and vascular tissues, mucous and synovial membranes, and many more muscles than any modern cadaver is able to show. They understood remarkably well the process of digestion – the different functions of the gastric juices, the conversion of chyme, into chyle, and of this into blood.

The state of medicine in ancient India can be summarized in the following words –

"Many of the advances in the sciences that we consider today to have been made in Europe were in fact made in India centuries ago." – **Grant Duff British Historian of India.**

AYURVEDA

Introduction

Origin and History

Ayurveda originated in India long back in pre-Vedic period.

Rig-Veda and *Atharva-veda* (5000 years B.C.). the earliest documented ancient Indian knowledge have references on health and diseases. Ayurvedic texts like *Charak Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita* were documented about 1000 years B.C.

Historically, the origin of Indian medicine can be traced to the Vedic periods or Vedas – especially to '*Atharva Veda*' which mentions 2 systems of medicine; first, the system predominantly of charms and magico-religious medicine; second, the system of drugs used on an empirical basis.

The term Ayurveda means '**Science of Life**'. It deals elaborately with measures for healthful living during the entire span of life and its various phases. Besides, dealing with principles for maintenance of health, it has also developed a wide range of therapeutic measures to combat illness. These principles of positive health and therapeutic measures relate to physical, mental, social and spiritual welfare of human beings. Thus Ayurveda becomes one of the oldest systems of

health care dealing with both the preventive and curative aspects of life in a most comprehensive way and presents a close similarity to the WHO's concept of health propounded in the modern era.

This medical knowledge has been the work of ages. It is the outcome of the great power of observation, generalization and analysis combined with patient labor of hundred of investigators spread over thousand of years. This knowledge has played so important a part in the development of Indian culture that it has been documented in an integrated form in the Vedas.

Most of the mythological and medico-religious genesis of Ayurveda is even today shrouded in the mist of antiquity. Indian medicine is described as having a divine origin in the different ancient medical texts. Different authors have given different versions of the story. These stories may have been circulated to make the system more acceptable to the people in ancient times.

In all these Samhitas or medical texts, '*Brahma*' the omniscient Hindu god is said to have originated Ayurveda before the creation of man, for their protection. Brahma first taught ayurveda to the twin physicians of the gods; the Aswins, and they passed it on to Indra (lord of the sky) and from Indra it was passed on to the different sages who in turn passed it on to their sons and disciples. Dhanvantri, God of Indian Medicine, an incarnation of Vishnu emerged from the milky-ocean at the end of the churning by the devas and the asuras.



DHANVANTRI—GOD OF INDIAN MEDICINE

Around 5000 years BC, Rig-Veda & Atharva-veda (the ancient books on Indian knowledge, wisdom, culture & science) contain many hymns on diseases and their treatment by various plants and other materials. It was around 1000 years B.C. when Ayurvedic fundamentals and its eight clinical specialties were fully documented in Charak Samhita and Sushruta Samhita - the first compendia ON Ayurvedic medicine & surgery respectively.

In this sense, Ayurveda is considered to have divine origin representing one of the oldest organized system of medicine for

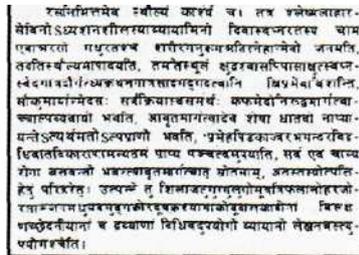
positive health & cure of human sickness. It has a school of physicians and a school of surgeons referred in literature as 'Atreya Sampradaya'¹ and 'Dhanvantri Sampradaya'¹ respectively.

The most important and massive ancient compilation of the School of Medicine is known as Charka Samhita. It contains several chapters dealing at length with therapeutic or internal medicine. About 600 drugs of plant, animal and mineral origin are described in it. Besides, this compendium also deals with other branches of ayurveda like anatomy, physiology, etiology, prognosis, pathology, treatment and medicine etc.



THE CHARKA SAMHITA—AN ANCIENT COMPILATION OF APPROXIMATELY 600

An equally exhaustive ancient compilation, Sushruta Samhita exists relating to school of surgery. It deals primarily with various fundamental principles and theory of surgery. In it is identified 1120 diseases, lists 760 medicinal drugs, and says that the surgeon's equipment amounts to 20 sharp instruments (including knives, scissors, saws and needles) and 101 blunt ones (such as forceps, tubes, levers, hooks and probes).



SUSHRUTA SAMHITA—ANCIENT COMPILATION OF THE PRINCIPLES AND THEORY OF SURGERY

Dissection and operative procedures are explained making use of vegetables and dead animals. Descriptions of how to go about doing incision, excision, extraction and bandaging etc. are detailed in this compendium. It also describes the association of malaria and mosquitoes, plague with dead rats, phthisis with fever, hemoptysis and cough, and smallpox. In addition, this document also mentions of such other topics as anatomy, embryology, toxicology and therapeutics.

These were used for teaching of Ayurveda in the ancient universities of Takshashila and Nalanda.

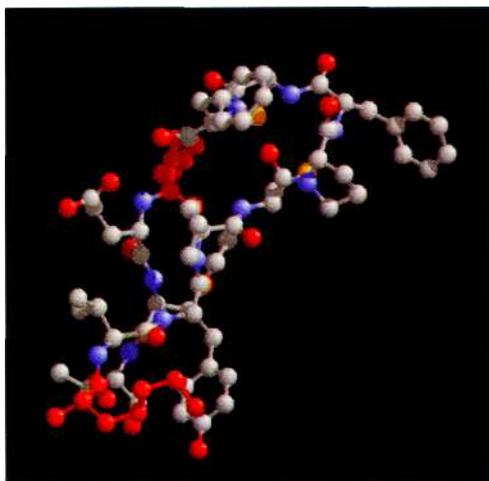
still below those found in the more well off Western nations. Diseases like HIV/AIDS, cholera, tuberculosis, pneumonia-and malaria remain major killers in these regions. The challenge of medicine in the 21st Century is to make high quality healthcare available to all.

Doctors obviously accepted the germ theory as the explanation of disease at the turn of the century. They also realized that some diseases are caused by lifestyles e.g. lung cancer by smoking, heart disease by unhealthy eating. Other complaints such as asthma have been linked to car pollution.

Today at the turn of the century outbreaks of E-coli, BSE, AIDS as well as the continuing deaths from cancer have shown problems in finding cures in medicine still exist. Some diseases such as TB are resurfacing as new strains of the disease, resistant to vaccines and antibiotics.

Yet, despite all the advances in medicine, cures for diseases such as Cancer and AIDS are still being sought.

MEDICINE IN THE 21ST CENTURY



It is always somewhat presumptuous to attempt to predict the future, but in this case we are on solid ground because most of the prerequisite historical processes are already in motion and all of them appear to be clearly pointing in the same direction.

Medical historian **Roy Porter** notes that the 19th century saw, the establishment of what we think of as scientific medicine. From about the middle of that century the textbooks and the attitudes they reveal are recognizable as not being very different from modern ones. Before that, medical books were clearly written to address a different mind-set.

But human health is fundamentally biological, and biology is fundamentally molecular. As a result, throughout the 20th century scientific medicine began its transformation from a merely rational basis to a fully molecular basis. First, antibiotics that interfered with pathogens at the molecular level were introduced. Next, the ongoing revolutions in genomics, proteomics and bioinformatics provided detailed and precise knowledge of the workings of the human body at the molecular level.

Our understanding of life advanced from organs, to tissues, to cells, and finally to molecules, in the 20th century. By the early 21st century, the entire human genome will be mapped.

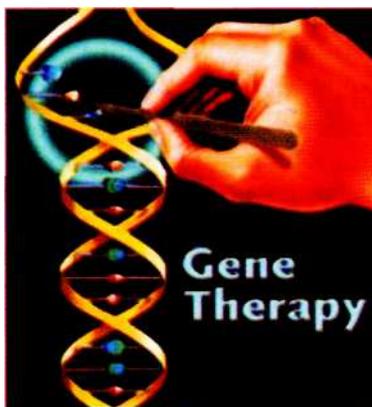
This deep molecular familiarity with the human body, along with simultaneous nanotechnological engineering advances will set the stage for a shift from today's molecular scientific medicine in which fundamental new discoveries are constantly being made, to a molecular technologic medicine in which the molecular basis of life, by then well-known is manipulated to produce specific desired results. The comprehensive knowledge of human molecular structure so painstakingly acquired during the 20th and early 21st centuries will be used in the 21st century to design medically-active microscopic machines.

These machines, rather than being tasked primarily with voyages of pure discovery, will instead most often be sent on missions of cellular inspection, repair, and reconstruction. In the coming century, the principal focus will shift from medical science to medical engineering. **Nanomedicine** will involve designing and building a vast proliferation of incredibly efficacious molecular devices, and then deploying these devices in patients to establish and maintain a continuous state of human healthiness.

In brief, Nanomedicine will employ molecular machine systems to address medical problems, and will use molecular knowledge to maintain human health at the molecular scale.

"Nanotechnology is the builder's final frontier."

RICHARD SMALLEY, NOBEL LAUREATE, CHEMISTRY



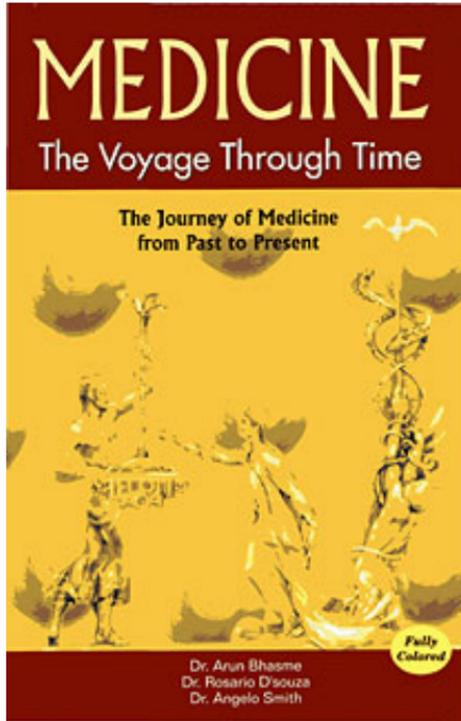
GENETICS AND MEDICINE

The risk of developing many disorders, such as Alzheimer's, diabetes and heart disease, may well be influenced by our genetic make-up. Greater understanding of the human genome will direct the development of medicines to help treat and prevent diseases over the next hundred years. Advances in genetics will allow treatments to target the genes or specific proteins that cause disease. Gene therapies are being developed that aim to replace faulty genes and so reverse the effects of inherited disorders such as cystic fibrosis.

ETHICS AND MEDICINE

Advances in medical science will not come without controversy.

- Technology has made genetic fingerprinting a routine task but how should this information be used?
- Individuals can be warned of diseases that they are likely to develop in older age but this profile could also be used to assess a person's suitability for insurance or employment. How can we protect the rights of the individual?



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