Preface

Since the last two decades scholars across the world have increasingly been accepting a greater role of social sciences like history in the domain of health and medical care management. The systems of medicine are now being examined not as isolated scientific and technical development but they are being evaluated also through sociological perspectives to see how and how far they have facilitated health access to largest number of people possible. There can hardly be any distrust in the conclusion that study of the medical practices of an old and diverse civilization as India's may offer valuable insights in thinking about the health problems we encounter, to try out solutions, and to learn from mistakes and successes of past generations.

The present thesis has been prepared in this backdrop of historiography. It aims at exploring medicine from the perspective of social history. It is mainly based on a host of Sanskrit, Prakrit, Pali and Tamil texts pertaining to the society prior to the fourth century AD. Besides, it has also drawn assistance from the ethnological literature as well as through observation of certain tribal practices.

References to each source have been included along with statements made in the work. Some passages have been used through such editions which do not refer to the internal divisions of the original texts. Therefore, page numbers of these works have been noted. Reference numbers of the Jatakas pertain to number of the story, number of the volume, and number of the related page in Fausboll's edition of the text in same order. The 'O' and 'R' occurring in context of the Bower Mss. mean 'obverse' and 'reverse'.

I express advance apology for disappointing those seeking a conclusion in a thesis like this. I also fear that the present thesis may appear fatuous and entirely a mis-match to the prestige and repute of my supervisor Prof. B.D. Chattopadhyaya. Nevertheless, while I accept responsibility of the content that follows I express my gratitude to him for his generous support to me as a student as well as writer of this draft.

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