2.0 Early History

Medical tradition of India can be trace back to the third millennium B.C. Study of medical history is not only to express our debt to our predecessors but is important in understanding the advances that are now taking place in theory and practice of medicine.

The works of Caraka, Susruta, and Vagbhatta are well known medical classics. There is evidence in the rock edicts, inscriptions, and historical records to show that ancient India was not lacking in an organized medical service and that the profession itself, based as it was on sound ethical principles, was held in high esteem. Some of the Indian kings and rulers were made an extensive system of medical relief for man and for animals. With the advent of Europeans into India in the 15th century and more particularly the British at a later stage, the western system of medicine came to be implanted on the Indian soil. Since then, for obvious reasons, the practice of, and training in, this new system has been progressively adopted, although the indigenous methods still have their sway over India’s millions of villagers.

The “art of healing” began thousands of years ago with innovations of the primitive man trying to provide relief to those close to him, in sickness and suffering, motivated by feelings of sympathy and kindness. People believed in God’s supremacy and magic, superstitions, magic – religious phenomenon were very much practiced. There is also evidence that prehistoric man improvised stone and flint instruments with which he performed circumcisions, amputations and trephining of skulls.
Ayurveda is a part of Atharvaveda which solely deals with medicine. Ayurveda was fully developed between 700 and 1000 BC (Dwivedi, 1979, PP 88-94). Ayurveda is composed of two words – Ayur and veda which put together literally means ‘Science of Life’, Atharva Veda incudes eight division of – Ayurveda:

1) Kayachikitsa (Internal Medicine)

2) Salakya Tantra (Surgery of head and neck, ophthalmology and Otolaryngology)

3) Shalya Tantra (Surgery)

4) Agada Tantra (Toxicology)

5) Bhuta Vidya (Psychiatry)

6) Kaumarabhrity (Pediatric)

7) Rasayana (Science of rejuvenation)

8) Vajkarana (The science of Fertility)

The Vedic sages created books dealing exclusively with Ayurveda. Atreya Samhita is the oldest medical book in the world, Atreya was the grandson of God Brahma and are of the seven immortal Rishis in Vedic Literature. Rishi Atri was Acharya (Teacher) of Ayurveda. The priests were considered as Vaidyas (Physician of Ayurveda). Sage physicians were the surgeons in the ancient days.

Beginning of Medicine and Surgery in India is thought as the gifts from God Indra to Sages Bharadwaja, the patron saint of medicine and Dhanvantari, the patron saint of Surgery. Ayurveda was fully developed into eight recognized branches or specialties and two prominent schools: A) Atreya Sampradaya (schools of physicians) b) Dhanvantra Sampradaya (schools of surgeons). Atreya
and susruta practiced around 600 BC, nearly 150 years before Hippocrates. These two main schools made Ayurveda a more scientifically verifiable medical system (around 1500 BC)

2) Maharshi Atreya learnt Ayurveda from Rishi Bharadwaja. He revolutionized the medical system of Ayurveda into the system we have today. He established the code of medical ethics in India. Agnivesa Samhita (800 BC 400AD) one of the six disciples of Atreya, which was later an re-edited by Charaka and Dridhabala. This Samhita is known at present as Charaka Samhita and is considered to be an authentic book of Ayurvedic medicine.

The school surgeons was initiated by Lord Dhanvantari, who, legend has it, was a disciple of Indra himself, and was the king of Kashi Dhanvantari means ‘expert in Surgery’. There were many disciples of Dhanvantari, Susruta was the foremost of them. He described human anatomy in details in his treatise “Susruta Samhita”. Susruta was the first surgeon to perform rhinoplasty and ear lobe construction. In Susruta Samhita transmission of malaria was incriminated to a biting insect, probably mosquito.

Original Susruta Samhita was further revised by Nagarjuna (4th century BC), the great Buddhist Teacher. Susruta Samhita was re-edited by Chakrapani in the 11th century.

Kashyapa was the head of a school of pediatrics. He was also a disciple of Indra and has written a book known as Kashyapa Samhita. The other disciples of Punarvasu Atreya, Dhanvantari and Kashyapa, also wrote many treatises which are known after their names. Ayurveda was divided into eight prominent branches which arrangements for regular teaching in its different disciplines at Takshila, Nalanda, Kashi, Ujjain and other university of that time.
During the 8th century A.D., the Khalifa of Baghdad Haran-al-Rashid (786 – 806 AD) invited many learned scholars of Ayurveda and got ayurvedic books translated into Persian and Arabic. Thus, Ayurveda, one might say, has contributed indirectly to the development of Unani medicine too. During 9th and 12th centuries A.D., Nagarajuna and his disciples made research in minerals and metals and developed the science of Rasashastra. In Arthasastra of Kautilya, there is a mention of postmortem. Ashumrita Parikshagara (examination of men who recently died). These reports of inquest were also necessary in higher courts of law during the reign of the Great emperor Chandragupta. The dead bodies in cases of homicide, suicide or those who died in accidents, were kept in a examination room, which was set apart for the purpose and the cause of death had to be reported after post mortem examination to higher authority. To prevent decomposition dead bodies were preserved by immersion in oil.

Ayurveda grew tremendously during Buddhist Kings like King Ashoka (226 BC), who patronized Ayurveda as state Medicine and established schools of Medicine and Hospitals.

Charaka (200AD), the most popular name in Ayurveda medicine was the court physician to the Buddhist king Kaniska during Buddhist time.

With the advent of Muslims in India, Hindu medicine eroded due to the lack of state help and support by the rulers.

2.1 Medicine in Medieval India:

Medicine in medieval India deals with the history of Unani medicine – its beginning and basis, its coming into India, its manuscripts and physicians covering the period of the Delhi Sultans and the Mughals. In this period many medical book
and Unani system of medicine were translated. Kilab-ul-Saidana (Materia Medica and pharmacology) of Al-beruni was the first Persian translated book in India, Hakim Husam-ud-din-Marekeli was one of the famous physician of Delhi of this period. During the reign of Khiljis, the medical science touched its glorious peak. There were 45 renowned unani physicians in the period of Ala-ud-din-Khilji. Hakim Fazlullah Mendevi was a famous physician of his time.

During the period of Muhammad-bin-Tughlug there were more or less seventy hospitals and 1200 physicians in Delhi. From Mejuma-i-Ziae, a Persian manuscript, the picture of medical system was found. This text deals with various topics in medical science. Ziya-ud-din Bakshi, a physician of high order, wrote two medical books—

- a) Kitab-al-Kulliyat-wa Juziyat and
- b) Kilab-fil-Sana-atul- Tibbiya.

Emperor Firuz Shah Tughlug was an eminent medical man. He had a good knowledge in orthopaedics and fractures under his dictation a book was composed entitled 'Tibb-i-Firuz Shahi. He was interested in building hospitals for the relief of the sick and afflicted. The Sultan personally visited the patients. Mobile hospitals were started for serving the distant corners of the empire.

During the reign of Sultan Sikandar, mian Bhowa composed in Persian medical treatise called Madan-ul-Shifa-Sikandar Shahi. It deals with the science of medicine and the fundamentals of medicine, Treatment of diseases, human anatomy and symptoms of diseases.
The Bahmani rulers paid attention to the care of public health & hygiene. Ala-ud-din Bahman shah opened some dispensaries and medical schools for spreading the medical education. Hakim Nasir-ud-din Shiraji was a great physician of that time. Sultan Ala-ud-din Mujahid paid due attention to hospital construction. He opened a large charitable hospital where irrespective of cast and religion people were treated free of cost and necessary food, medicine and other things were given to the patients.

During the reign of Muhammad Quli Qutab Shah a large hospital Dar-u-Shifa was built where 4000 patients may be treated. There were two types of physicians of Dar-u-Shifa. Those who were expert and vast experience in diagnosis of diseases; they took care of the patients and other were scholars; they gave suggestions and theoretical training to the students.

During the Mughal period there were so many eminent physicians at Delhi and other large towns. Hakim Yusuf bin-Muhammad was one of the greatest Hakims of Babur’s reign. He had a thorough knowledge of Ayurvedic medicine. He wrote some medical books with the help of Ayurvedic and Unani system of knowledge.

Emperor Akbar, was a great patron of spreading medical science. He collected many Hakims and Vaidyas from different corners. Even from Persia and Khorasan the physicians came to his court. Special physicians were appointed for the members of the royal family. For public, free medicine and medicinal aid were provided. The physicians were employed for the army section by the emperor. Hakim Ali Gilani was a distinguished physician who wrote many books on medicine. Sharh-e-Qanun-Ibn-i-Sina is one of them. Hakim Abul Fatah was expert in anatomy. Under his orders the first work in India on history of medicine named khassat-al-
Hayat was compiled by Ahmad-bin-nasrullah of Sind in 1587. Ain-ul-Mulk, Hakim Shams-ud-din Ali Sherazi wrote book on medicine such as Alfzual Adwiyya, Jam-ul-Atibba, Sabad-i-Sitta Rishidi and Fawaid-ul-Insan.

During the Akbar's reign there was government hospitals as well as private clinics of the doctors. Jahangir also paid attention to the public helath care. He established same hospitals and many eminent medical personnels attended to his court. Shah Jahan also established some big hospital for the benefit of the people. During the period of Aurangzeb many books were translated and hospitals were established.

2.2 Medicine in Modern India:

Indians are indebted deeply to Europeans for enjoying the facilities of modern medical science. Ayurvedic and Unani medicine did not cover all aspects of medicine especially in case of complex diseases and surgery. So due to the influence and contact of the foreigners that modern system of medicine has been in vogue in our country.

2.3 Influence of the Portuguese:

So far as the foreigner's influence on Indian medicine is concerned, it is to be said that India came first under the contact of the Portuguese. Alfonso de Albuquerque laid the foundation of Portuguese rule in India in 1509. The Portuguese rulers felt the need of keeping public hygiene and sanitation. Peoples were affected at that time with dysentery, typhoid, enteric diseases, malaria etc, and in the Royal Hospital medicine was taught, and in 1703 medical instruction began with Cyprians Valadares as the master. This type of training continued when in 1801, Miranda and Almeida started a three-year cause of Medicine and surgery
at the Military Hospital of Goa, situated at Panvelim. In 1821, this course was extended by a year to four years.

On November 5, 1842, the Goa Medical School was founded at Panjim, on the lines of the Continental Medical Schools of Portugal and France. The teaching programme was spread over four years. In 1846, the first batch of eight students passed out. In 1847, the course was extended to five years and the school was named Escola Medico-Cirgica De Nova Goa – the school of medicine and surgery of New Goa. In 1871, the staff was increased by the addition of seven more lecturers. In 1881, midwifery, gynaecology and paediatrics were included in the course. On January 25, 1888, an ordinance was passed, which converted the existing schools into a Naval and Colonial School of Medicine.

In 1962 it was decided, after the liberation of Goa, that the medical school should be turned into a medical college for giving M.B.B.S. degree. The Govt. of India decided in 1968 that this medical college should impart post-graduate teaching. The MCI has given recognition to start post-graduate courses in different subject.
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