PREFACE

Āyurveda, represented by Caraka and Suśruta, stands first among the sciences of Indian intellectual tradition. No other branch of learning is subject to such an acute competition as Āyurveda is with modern medicine. Yet, it has survived the challenges of time and has attained a new impetus today. Intensive researches and studies are being carried out throughout the world with the intention to answer some of the fundamental questions which are yet to be answered in the domain of medical science. This is probably due to the novelty of the fundamental principles of Āyurveda which is based on a holistic approach. The fundamental principles are, in fact, built upon philosophical concepts. Hence it is essential to remove the ambiguities in philosophical abstractions for developing the consistency and authenticity of the fundamental principles. One of the possible ways is to make explicit the philosophical speculations in which the fundamental principles of Āyurveda are rooted. Carakasaṃhitā deserves special mention in this respect.

Carakasaṃhitā is recognized as a unique treatise on kāyacikitsā and fundamental principles. It is an encyclopaedia that discusses the inner and outer world without leaving anything as irrelevant and taking into consideration the prevailing knowledge systems.
Carakasaṃhitā, ascribed to the great celebrity Caraka, has got three strata. The first stratum is the original work composed by Agniveśa, the foremost of the six disciples of Punarvasu Ātreyā. He accomplished the work by collecting and codifying the teachings of his preceptor Punarvasu Ātreyā. The second and the most prominent stratum is the redacted (pratisaṃskṛta) form of Agniveśatantra and this redaction is ascribed to Caraka. The third and final layer is a reconstruction by Drḍhabala, son of Kapilabala of the Punjab. He has incorporated the seventeen chapters of the sixth section Cikitsāsthāṇa as well as the last two sections Kalpasthāṇa and Siddhisthāṇa into the Carakasaṃhitā and completed it. Thus, Carakasaṃhitā, as it is available today, comprises 120 chapters (adhyāyas) prearranged in eight sections (sthānas): Ślokasthāṇa or Sūrasthāṇa (30 chapters), Nidānasthāṇa (8 chapters), Vīmānasthāṇa (8 chapters), Sārīrasthāṇa (8 chapters), Indriyasthāṇa (12 chapters), Cikitsāsthāṇa (30 chapters), Kalpasthāṇa (12 chapters), and Siddhisthāṇa (12 chapters). The most significant thing to be noted in this connection is that the book is now known in the name of the redactor Caraka even though the final reconstruction was done by Drḍhabala.

The present thesis is the result of my endeavor as a research student of the Mahatma Gandhi University. The purpose of the attempt is to present a comprehensive view of the philosophy of Caraka. The work primarily tries to codify the philosophical abstractions strewn in different sthānās of the compendium and, through a comparison with the concepts in other philosophical systems, seeks to bring out the foundational ideas constituting the creative matrix of Āyurveda.
The thesis comprises nine chapters. The introductory chapter deals with the relevance of the study by focusing on the relationship between philosophy and the practical science of Ayurveda. The second chapter gives an explanation of the six categories enumerated by Caraka in comparison with the six categories of Vaiśeṣika philosophy. The third chapter is devoted to a discussion of the important fundamental theories regarding the origin of the universe, five physical elements (pañcabhūtas), and the three faults (tridoṣas), and reveals the allegiance of Caraka to the pre-classical Sāṁkya. The next chapter describes the Self as the foundational cause of the Universe. A detailed exposition of a human-being and his relation with the universe based on philosophical abstractions is given in the fifth chapter. In the sixth chapter the sources of knowledge are analyzed by making a comparison with their concepts in Nyāya philosophy. Similarly, the seventh chapter is a comparative analysis of logic and dialectical terms. Analytical devices are also discussed in this chapter. The eighth chapter discusses ethical conceptions and moral prescriptions. The concluding chapter evaluates the innovative contributions of Caraka and determines his philosophical vision.