

CARAKA SAṂHITĀ

Caraka Saṁhitā is basically an enlarged form of the original Agniveśa tantra (अग्निवेश तंत्र).

While discussing the History of Āyurveda, we have learned that the Agniveśa Tantra stems from the first cognitions of the ancient ṛṣis like Bhāradvaja (भारद्वाज) and Punarvasu Ātreya (पुनर्वसु आत्रेय) regarding Āyurveda.

Agniveśa Tantra was in Sūtra (सूत्र) or Verse form, which was elaborated on by Caraka with his lucid annotations (भाष्य) or Bhāṣya in such a spectacular way that the treatise became popularly known as Caraka Saṁhitā.

The exact period of Caraka Saṁhitā cannot be established.

With time, even Caraka Saṁhitā did not survive in its complete form and almost one third of its content was lost.

The missing part was later rewritten by Dṛḍhabala (दृढबल) who sourced similar material from contemporary works and completed the Caraka Saṁhitā in its present form.

Unfortunately, Dṛḍhabala's period cannot be established either, apart from the proposition that his work could not have been earlier than 4th century AD due to the references found in works like Navanītaka (नवनीतक).

TRANSLATIONS OF CARAKA SAṂHITĀ

Caraka Saṁhitā was translated from Sanskrit into Arabic in the beginning of the 8th century and its name Sharaka Indianus occurs in the latin translation of Avicenna, Razes, and Serapion.

A translation of Caraka Saṃhitā from Sanskrit into Persian and from Persian into Arabic is mentioned in the Fihrist* (finished in A.D. 987).

It is likewise mentioned by Alberuni.

Caraka Saṃhitā was first translated into English by A.C. Kaviratnain in 1897.

*Fihrist is a book completed in 987 A.D, and gives ample testimony to the knowledge of pre-Islamic Persia and its literature in classical Islamic civilization. It was written by Arab scientist and scholar "Ibn al- Nadim". In the author's own words Fihrist means "an index of the books of all nations."

CARAKA SAṂHITĀ OF PRESENT

The Caraka Saṃhitā that is now available has 8 sthānas [Aśtāṅga sthāna], totalling one hundred and twenty chapters:

- Sūtra sthāna (सूत्र स्थान) (30 chapters)
- Nidāna sthāna (निदान स्थान) (8 chapters)
- Vimāna sthāna (विमान स्थान) (8 chapters)
- Śarīra sthāna (शरीर स्थान) (8 chapters)
- Indriya sthāna (इन्द्रिय स्थान) (12 chapters)
- Cikitsā sthāna (चिकित्सा स्थान) (30 chapters)
- Kalpa sthāna (कल्प स्थान) (12 chapters)
- Siddhi sthāna (सिद्धि स्थान) (12 chapters)

The 17 chapters of Cikitsa sthāna and complete Kalpa sthāna and Siddhi sthāna were later added by Dṛḍhabala.

COMMENTARIES ON CARAKA SAṂHITĀ

ĀYURVEDADĪPIKĀ is a very popular commentary (टिका) or tikā on Caraka Saṃhitā written by Cakrapāṇidatta (चक्रपाणिदत्त).

The work also known as Caraka-tātparya-tikā (चरक तात्पर्य टिका) was composed around 11th century AD and is heavily relied upon by various Āyurvedic scholars and healers in India to decipher Caraka Saṃhitā and apply its concepts in treatment.

ABOUT CARAKA

The life and times of Caraka are not known with certainty. Some Indian scholars have stated that Caraka of Caraka Saṃhitā existed before Pāṇini (पाणिनि), the grammarian, who is said to have lived before the sixth century B. C.

Another school argues that Patañjali (पतंजलि) wrote a commentary on the medical work of Caraka, which is corroborated by his commentator, Cakrapāṇidatta. They say that if Patañjali lived around 175 B.C., Caraka must have lived some time before him.

Another source about the identity of Caraka and his times is provided by the French orientalist Sylvan Levi. He discovered in the Chinese translation of the Buddhist Tripitaka, a person named Caraka who was a court physician to the Indo-Scythian King Kaniśka, who in all probability reigned in the second century A.D.

From the above discussion, it would seem that Caraka may have lived between the second century B.C. to the second century A.D.

Till such time as further and more conclusive evidence is available, to narrow down this period would not be justifiable.