

# Memoirs of Vaidyas

## The Lives and Practices of Traditional Medical Doctors in Kerala, India (8)\*

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### Abstract

This article presents an English translation of an interview with a doctor of traditional Indian medicine (*Āyurveda*), R\*\*\* T\*\*\* (1920 ~ 2010) in Kerala, India. The contents of the interview: 1. History of the Family, 2. Primary Education, 3. Getting a Job, 4. Career Change to *Āyurveda*, 5. Texts of *Āyurveda*, 6. Commentary on the texts of *Āyurveda*, 7. Education of *Āyurveda*, 8. Modern *Āyurveda*, and Bibliography.

### Key words

Ayurveda, Traditional Indian Medicine, Kerala

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\*We would like to express our deepest gratitude to Vaidya R\*\*\* T\*\*\* for accepting our interview and to his family for allowing the translation to be published. We are very sorry we could not publish this article during Vaidya R\*\*\* T\*\*\*'s lifetime.

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## Introduction

We would like to introduce here an English translation of one of our interviews. The interviewee, R\*\*\* T\*\*\* (1920 ~ 2010) is a physician and scholar of traditional Indian medicine (*Āyurveda*). We have made every attempt to prepare a literal translation of the interview. However, in order to promote understanding, we have organized the stories by topic and gave detailed explanations in the footnotes. Some of the personal names and related place names are shown by initial characters with asterisks to protect their privacy. This interview was conducted as one of the activities of the Indo-Japanese research project, PADAM (Program for Archiving and Documenting Āyurvedic Medicine), which is directed by the authors (Yamashita, Manohar and Madhu) and supported by JSPS (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science) and Mishima Kaiun Memorial Foundation, Japan.

The scientific names of medicinal plants, noted in parentheses or footnotes by the editor are mainly based on those given in P. K. Warrier, V. P. K. Nambiar and C. Ramankutty (eds.), *Indian Medicinal Plants, A Compendium of 500 Species*. Vaidyaratnam P S Varier's Arya Vaidya Sala Kottakal. 5 vols. Madras: Orient Longman, 1993-1996.

### Data of the interview

Date: 21st January 2007

Place: The interviewee's residence in Kerala, India

Interviewee: R\*\*\* T\*\*\* (1920 ~ 2010), Doctor and scholar of traditional Indian Medicine

Interviewer: Madhu K. Parameswaran

Video-record: PADAM VT, New Series R\*\*\* T\*\*\* 1-3, for about 75 minutes

Original Language: Malayalam

Translator and Assistant Editor: Madhu K. Parameswaran

Editor: Tsutomu Yamashita

### Editor's note

[ ] : Supplementary explanation by editor

( ) : Paraphrase of the previous word by editor

### Abbreviations

AHS: *Aṣṭāṅgaḥṛdayasaṃhitā*

AS: *Aṣṭāṅgasamgraha*

BhS: *Bhelasamhitā*

Ci: *Cikitsāsthāna* or *Cikitsasthāna*

CS: *Carakasamhitā*

eJIM: eJournal of Indian Medicine

Mal.: Malayalam (Malayāḷam)

Skt.: Sanskrit

SS: *Suśrutasamhitā*

Sū: Sūtrasthāna

Utt: Uttarasthāna

## Interview with R\*\*\* T\*\*\*

### 1. History of the Family

I am forgetting things these days, but I have not forgotten any of the teachings (*śāstra* Skt.) [of *Āyurveda*].<sup>1</sup> I forget my personal matters, but for treatments and all [of medical procedures], I have no problem.

— May I have your birth date?

It is 20th May 1920. According to the Malayalam Calendar, it is 6th *Iḍavam* 1095.

— What was your father's name?

Narāyaṇayyar (D. Narayana Iyer).<sup>2</sup> In our T\*\*\* *jāti* (Mal., Skt.),<sup>3</sup> we had the custom of familial relationship (*saṃbandham* Mal.).<sup>4</sup> [Other *jātis*, like] Nampūtiri, Embrāntiri, Paradēśi, all of them used to enter into this familial relationship with the women of our *jāti*.

<sup>1</sup> *Śāstra* (Skt.) literally means “teaching”, “manual of rules”, “treatise”, or “book” and denotes whole knowledge of a discipline. Some Indian scholars translate *śāstra* as “science”.

<sup>2</sup> Iyer (Iyar, Aiyar, Aiyar, Aiyer, or Aiyyer) is one of the surnames of *Brahmin* community originally in Tamil Nadu. This name is spelled in several different ways. See Thurston [1909] Vol. I, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> T\*\*\* is one of the surnames of *Kṣatriya* community in Kerala. See Thurston [1909] Vol. VII, pp. 33-35.

<sup>4</sup> *Sambandham* (Mal.) literally means “union” or “relation” and denotes a kind of marriage system between two different families, particularly between *Brahmin* and the other community. See Menon [1979] pp. 85-89; Panikkar [2001] pp. 176-199.

—— What was your mother's name?

Lakṣmikkūṭṭi Nambiṣṭāṭiri (K. Lakshmikkutty Nambisathiri). The women of T\*\*\* *jāti* were known by the name, Nambiṣṭāṭiri.

M\*\*\* (the interviewee's son) —— What is "D." in [my] grandfather's name (D. Narayana Iyer)?

D is for Dharmarājayyar (Tamil Brahmin's name). We had a matrilineal system prevailing in our *jāti* at that time. My mother's [original] family house (*maṭham* Mal.) was here in Cālakkuṭi (Thrissur District, Kerala). My father came from Harippāṭṭu (Alappuzha District, Kerala). This was my father's second marriage. His first wife belonged to his own *jāti*, but she had died earlier.

[After the death of his first wife,] when they had a talk (*praśnam* Mal.) with an astrologer,<sup>5</sup> the astrologer said that if he get married [to a woman] of his own *jāti*, his spouse will not live long. Then, he decided to get married [to a woman] of T\*\*\* *jāti*. That's why we (our family) are just like Brahmins in our daily life. The only difference is that we are not included in their (Brahmins') rites and ceremonies.

—— Did he (D. Narayana Iyer) use to live at the family house?

Yes, particularly in his old age. After he gave all of his properties to his brother's sons, he moved to this place, [the family house in Cālakkuṭi].

## 2. Primary Education

—— Who did teach you during your childhood?

I got my education in a normal way. I had, just today, written down all those past memories. We were, of course, the aristocratic T\*\*\* family members, but, in reality, we lived in deep poverty. Most of the male members were working as cooks in hotels (restaurants) or some Nampūtiri Brahmins' households. I and my younger brother fortunately had scholarships and we had a high school

<sup>5</sup>*Praśnam* (Mal.) literally means "question" or "enquiry" and here means an astrological enquiry about fortune. At the interview with an astrologer, one asks his/her fortune and private matters to the astrologer. The astrologer will answer to the enquirer mainly according to the enquirer's horoscope. See the *Praśnamārga*, an astrological Sanskrit text written in Kerala (the seventeenth century); Menon [1979] pp. 161-162; Yano [2003].

education at the time in Cālakkuṭi and our education proceeded.

I passed my SSLC (Secondary School Learning Certificate) examination. In those days, even passing the SSLC examination was a huge accomplishment, but there was no college nearby to continue my study. Then, I decided to try for a job and I got one in the [South Indian] Railways. Oh, I forgot! During my education, I had learned Sanskrit [too].

—— From whom [did you learn Sanskrit]?

My actual aim [of learning Sanskrit] was to learn the Astrology (*Jyōtiṣaṃ* Mal.). My guru's name was Maṇḍaṃparanpū Nampūtiri. He was a great astrologer (*jyōtsyan* Mal.).

—— Where was his place?

Here, in Cālakkuṭi. He was a very famous astrologer. Have you heard about famous Kaimukkū Vaidikan? Maṇḍaṃparanpū was his teacher. Kaimukkū Vaidikan learned from him after me. While I was learning under him, he became ill and went away from Cālakkuṭi. Then, I was unable to continue my study.

—— How long did you learn Astrology?

I learned till the calculation of the positions of the heavenly bodies (*grahaṃ* Mal.). The predictions based on these calculations come at a later stage [of learning Astrology], but when my teacher had to leave Cālakkuṭi, my learning stopped.

—— How old were you then?

I think I was 18- or 19-year-old then.

—— Did all things happen after your SSLC examinations?

Yes, [after] I passed it.

—— Did you want to go to college?

I wanted, but I had no money. For study in college, I had to stay in Triśśūr, but I had no means for that. I did continue my informal education.

Immediately after my SSLC examination, I remember that my father took

me over to his native place, Tirunelveli [in Tamil Nadu]. There, a river overflow even at the height of summer. Do you know why? At the height of summer, it would be raining hard in Kerala during monsoon (*kālavaraṣaṃ* Mal.). The rain water will flow there (Tirunelveli).<sup>6</sup> I went there in such a season, in summer, just before the rain.

I had stayed there for one month. At that time, a scholar (*paṇḍita* Skt.; *paṇḍita* Mal.) of Sanskrit, who was one of my father's relatives, was there. My father assigned me to learn [Sanskrit] from him even for a very short duration. I had learned some Sanskrit already at my school. Then, he (the scholar) told me that I was fit to learn a Sanskrit work called *Māgham*.<sup>7</sup> [According to his advice,] I learned thirty verses (*śloka* Skt.) of the first chapter (*sarga* Skt.) [of the *Māgham*] on this occasion.

After that, I returned to Cālakkuṭi. When I started to learn Astrology (*Jyōtiṣaṃ*) later, I learned the rest of the *Māgham* until the second chapter (*sarga*) from Maṇḍamparampu Nampūtiri. Since the study of the Sanskrit texts is necessary for learning Astrology, all of the astrologers taught Sanskrit to their students. Therefore, I learned Sanskrit along with Astrology.

When my teacher went away, because of his illness, all of my learning stopped. However, incidentally, P.S. Subbarāma Paṭṭar was in Cālakkuṭi who was a teacher at Sacred Heart Convent School. He was one of the disciples of the famous Ayyā Śāstri (Sanskrit Scholar) and younger brother of Anantanārāyaṇa Śāstri. He (P.S. Subbarāma Paṭṭar) was also suffering from some illness, but even so, he had joined as a teacher at the school, because getting a job was very difficult in those days.

One day, when I was bathing at a riverbank, he (P.S. Subbarāma Paṭṭar) was there too. He asked me whether I was interested in learning Sanskrit. He might have heard that I was a good student. He asked me to visit his place to meet him on the next day. When I went, he asked me what I had learned till then and asked me to write the story of the first chapter of the *Māgham* in simple Sanskrit. I wrote and showed it to him. He was happy to see it and told. "R\*\*\* (my name)! You can start learning *Kaumudī* (the *Laghusiddhāntakaumudī*)<sup>8</sup> now."

<sup>6</sup>The river's original name is Tāmraparṇi. It originates in Kerala and flows towards Tamil Nadu. As monsoon arrives early in Kerala, the river will be in full spate in Tamil Nadu even when summer temperatures are soaring. This fact is confirmed by the interviewee's son, Dr.M\*\*\* in July 2015.

<sup>7</sup>The *Māgham* is a popular name of a Sanskrit verse work (*kāvya*), the *Śiṣupālavadham* by Māgha (the seventh or eighth century). See Yamashita and Manohar [2007-2008b] (2), p. 160.

<sup>8</sup>The *Laghusiddhāntakaumudī* by Varadarāja (the seventeenth century) is an abridgement

Thus, it was decided that I would learn the *Vyākaraṇa* (traditional Sanskrit grammar). In those days, there was a publisher, named ‘Nirṇaya Sāgar’ in Bombay. They used to print the Sanskrit texts of traditional medicine (*Āyurveda*), Astrology (*Jyotiṣa*), and so on. Here [in Kerala] we used to get the [Sanskrit] texts printed in the *Grantha* script, but they (the Nirṇaya Sāgar Press) used to print the [Sanskrit] texts in the *Devanāgarī* script. However, [the office of] this publisher was burned down by fire. After that, [other] publishers like the Chaukhamba, and so on came. Anyway, my teacher got [a book] of the *Kaumudi* published by this Press (the Nirṇaya Sāgar) for me. I learned the whole of the first half (*Pūrvārdha* Skt.) of the *Kaumudi* from him. Then, he fell gravely ill and moved to Triśśūr. My study got interrupted again.

However, my study resumed again soon. There was one Kṛṣṇa Vārier who was a proficient traditional logician (*tārkika* Skt.) and one of the disciples of Parīkṣittū Tampurān (Pareekshithu Thampurān, Maharaja Rama Varma XVIII).<sup>9</sup> He was a teacher of Sanskrit at the Cālakkuṭi Boys High School. All of these people, somehow, had a special concern and love for me. He asked me whether I was interested in learning traditional logic (*Tarka* Skt.).<sup>10</sup> And I began learning it from him.

—— Which texts were you learning?

I started with the *Tarkasaṃgraha*,<sup>11</sup> and then took up the *Nyāyabodhinī*<sup>12</sup> and later on studied the *Muktāvalī*.<sup>13</sup> I have learned these three texts, but I could not

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of the *Siddhāntakaumudī* by Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita (the seventeenth century), a commentary on the Sanskrit Grammatical work, the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* by Pāṇini. See Abyankar and Shukla [1986] pp. 330, 428-429.

<sup>9</sup>Maharaja Rama Varma XVIII (1876 ~ 1964) popularly known as Parīkṣittū Tampurān (Pareekshithu Thampurān) was the last king of Cochin and Travancore. He was also known as a Sanskritist. See Kocha Varma, *History of Cochin Royal Family*. <www.cochinroyalhistory.org> (accessed on 5th July 2015).

<sup>10</sup>For the *Tarka* (traditional discipline of logic in India) in our interviews, see Yamashita and Manohar [2007-2008b] (2), pp. 160-161; [2012] (6), p. 12.

<sup>11</sup>The *Tarkasaṃgraha* by Annam Bhaṭṭa (the seventeenth century) is one of the treatises of the *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* school of Indian philosophy. See Matilal [1977] p. 107.

<sup>12</sup>There are some Sanskrit works of the same title. However, here the interviewee seems to mean the *Nyāyabodhinī* by Govardhana Miśra, one of the commentaries on the *Tarkasaṃgraha*. See Vidyabhusana [1921] pp. 390-391.

<sup>13</sup>The interviewee seems to indicate a Sanskrit work, the *Siddhāntamuktāvalī* by Viśvanātha Tarkapañcānana (ca. the seventeenth century) as *Muktāvalī*. This work is an auto-com-

complete the *Muktāvalī*.

It was then I got a job in the South Indian Railways. Getting a job was a big thing in those days. I was deployed in Madras. By God's grace, I did not forget any of which I had learned. I remember all of them even now. In Madras, I began buying Sanskrit books every month after I got my salary. I bought five - eight books every month. My salary was not much, but even so, I bought many books. There was a place called "Moor market" in Madras where you could get old (second-hand) or rare text books, some of them with annotations. Many Sanskrit verse works and dramas (*nāṭaka* Skt.) were also available. I was able to read so many books in this way. Recently, I heard that it ("Moor market" in Madras) was gutted in a fire.

It was during this time, when I was working at the Railway department in Madras, I contracted a disease. You might know about it.

— Yes. I have heard about it, but could you tell us once more?

### 3. Getting a Job

It was during my stay in Madras as an employee at the Railway department that I contracted a disease. I was a Gandhian. I still am, and till this day I have lived my life as a true Gandhian. Bribery was rampant in the Railway life, but I had taken a vow not to accept them. I had little means to support myself. A meager salary was my only income. I had learned the *Bhagavadgītā* from a master and my life was directed according to its principles. I learned *Bhaktiyoga* (the way of devotion)<sup>14</sup> which is stated in the verses [of the *Bhagavadgītā*] like ... *maitraḥ karuṇa* ...<sup>15</sup> I think God might have decided that the Railway department is not

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mentary on the *Bhāṣāpariccheda* of Viśvanātha Tarkapañcānana, one of the treatises of the *Navya-Nyāya* school. See Matilal [1977] p. 110; Vidyabhusana [1921] pp. 392-393.

<sup>14</sup> On *Bhaktiyoga* in the *Bhagavadgītā*, see, for example, Hiriyanā [1949] p. 56; *Bhagavadgītā* [2] p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> The interviewee quotes here the verses from the *Bhagavadgītā*, the 12th Chapter. The *Bhagavadgītā* 12.13-14 (the *Mahābhārata* 6.34.13-14) runs: "[The Blessed One said,] No hater of all beings, Friendly and compassionate, Free from selfishness and I-faculty, Indifferent to pain and pleasure, patient, The disciplined man who is always content, Whose self is controlled, of firm resolve, Whose thought and consciousness are fixed on Me, Who is devoted to Me, he is dear to Me." Translated by F. Edgerton, *Bhagavadgītā* [1] Part 1, pp. 122-123 ([*śrībhagavān uvāca* /] *adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānāṃ maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca / nirmamo nirahaṃkāraḥ samaduḥkhasukhaḥ kṣamī || saṃtuṣṭaḥ satataṃ yogī yatātmā dṛḍhaniścayaḥ / mayy arpitamanobuddhir yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ ||*).



the place where I should be. Anyway, I contracted a dreadful disease at that time. I was treated at the big hospitals of the time in Madras like the Stanley Medical College and the Railway Hospital, but I was not cured.

—— What was your disease?

It started as simple cough. I used to get it often, but this time it stayed on. They diagnosed it as tuberculosis. It was the time when X-ray [examination] was introduced in India. The doctors used my X-ray film to show the students how to diagnose tuberculosis by X-ray [examination]. There were also many tuberculosis sanatoriums for treatments, but I was not getting well. Then, the Railway department sent me back to my native [place] accompanied by an attendant. There was nothing more to be done by modern medicine (Allopathy) at the time.

When I came home, my Sanskrit teacher, Śrī P.S. Subbarāma Paṭṭar promised to take me to Dr. Krishnaiyyar (Kṛṣṇa Iyyar) who was an expert physician in those days. When we went to see him, he was not there. Then, my teacher took me to a Nambīśan.<sup>16</sup> This Nambīśan, who was one of his friends, was a doctor (*Vaidya* Skt.) of *Āyurveda*. (The interviewee points at a photo kept on his desk to his left.) When we consulted with him, he knew that I had been very poor, and he prescribed very simple medicines for me. I took his medicines for a month following strict regimen (*pathya* Skt.) and I was cured.

—— What was his prescription?

His prescription was the juice of *kañṇuṇṇi* (Mal.) (*bhṛṅgarāja* or *tekarāja* Skt.; *Eclipta prostrata* (Linn.) Linn.). This juice was to be placed in an iron vessel and I had to add one big spoon of goat's milk that was still warm after milking. If you want to know where it has been prescribed in the medical works (*śāstra* Skt.), you can find it in the *Rasāyanacikitsā* of the *Aṣṭāṅgaḥṛdaya*.<sup>17</sup> The

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The interviewee has authored and published a Malayalam translation of the *Bhagavadgītā* which includes a detailed introduction called *Gītāpradakṣiṇam* about the close relationship between the dictums given in *Āyurveda* with and the message of the *Bhagavadgītā*. (This fact is confirmed by the interviewee's son, Dr.M\*\*\* in July 2015.)

<sup>16</sup>Nambīśan is one of the surnames of a community called Puṣpakan of Ambalavāsi which is a community originally engaged in temple services in Kerala. See Thurston [1909] Vol. I, pp. 28-31; Vol. VI, p. 236.

<sup>17</sup>The *Aṣṭāṅgaḥṛdayasaṃhitā*, the 6th Volume, Uttarasthāna, the 39th Chapter about "The Rules of Rejuvenation-therapy" (*rasāyanavidhi*). In this chapter, the effect of drinking

*Agastyarasāyana*<sup>18</sup> was also prescribed to be taken at bed time in the night. I tried to analyze the logic of this treatment after I learned *Āyurveda*.

There was also an oil to be applied over the head for a short duration and mopped off later. It was *Tekarājādi Velicceṇṇa* (Mal.; *Tekarājāditailam* Skt.), (*tekarājarasavimśatibhāge siddhatailam abhayāprativāpaḥ*). This means that the one-part of oil needs to be processed in twenty-parts of the juice of *kañṇuṇṇi* and the paste of *kaṭukka* (Mal.; *harītakī* or *abhayā* Skt.; *Terminalia chebula* Retz.).<sup>19</sup> For my convenience, he told me to take only ten-parts of *kañṇuṇṇi* juice.<sup>20</sup> Anyway, my disease was cured within a month.

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juice of *kañṇuṇṇi* (*bhṛṅgarajas*) is described as follows, AHS Utt 39.162: “Those who drink extracted juice of *bhṛṅgarajas* and have milk everyday for one-month will become the same as the ones who have strength and energy, and gain the life duration of one-hundred years.” (*ye māsam ekaṃ svarasaṃ pibanti dine dine bhṛṅgarajaḥsamuttham / kṣīrāśinas te balavīryayuktāḥ samāḥ śataṃ jīvitam āpnvanti* //).

<sup>18</sup>The *Agastyarasāyana* is one of the prescriptions of the rejuvenation-therapy (*rasāyana*). See CS Ci 18.57-62 (*Agastyaharītakī*); AHS Ci 3.127-132; AS Ci 5.79-84; the *Sahasrayoga*, [1] Malayalam edition, pp. 206-207, *lehya* 1; [2] English edition, pp. 264-265, *lehya* 15; [3] CCRAS edition, p. 215, *lehayoga* 1.

<sup>19</sup>The *Tekarājāditaila* is one of the traditional formulae for hard-breathing and cough. As the interviewee quotes here this formula from the *Sahasrayoga* as follows, the *Sahasrayoga*, [3] CCRAS edition, p. 258, *tailayoga* 41: “The *taila* oil heated in the *viṃśatibhāga* of *tekarāja* (*kañṇuṇṇi*) [juice] added by *abhayā* (*kaṭukka*) [paste] beats down even hard-breathing and cough (*śvāsa-kāsa*), just like the force of wind blows out clumpy clouds.” (*tekarājarase viṃśatibhāge siddhatailam abhayāprativāpam / śvāsakāsam api hanti narāṇāṃ meghavṛndam iva mārutavegaḥ* // cf. the *Sahasrayoga*, [1] Malayalam edition, p. 283, *tailayoga* 34; [2] English edition, pp. 120-121, *taila* 19.)

*Viṃśatibhāga* (Skt.) is commonly interpreted as “twentieth-part” or “one-twentieth” (1/20). However, the interviewee interprets *viṃśatibhāga* in this verse as “twenty-parts” presumably according to the traditional interpretation of this formula in Kerala. In this formula, the quantities of other ingredients than *tekarāja* (*kañṇuṇṇi*) juice are unspecified, but the *Tekarājāditaila* is traditionally prepared in Kerala in the ratio of ingredients as twenty-parts of *tekarāja* (*kañṇuṇṇi*) juice, one-part of *taila* oil, and one-quarter (1/4) part of *abhayā* (*kaṭukka*) paste. (The traditional ratio of ingredients of the *Tekarājāditaila* adopted in Kerala were confirmed by Madhu K. Parameswaran through the personal communication with Dr. Ramankutty Varier in Kerala, February, 2015.)

<sup>20</sup>The interviewee mentions here another ratio of ingredients of the *Tekarājāditaila* using only ten-parts of *kañṇuṇṇi* juice, i.e., ten-parts of *tekarāja* (*kañṇuṇṇi*) juice, one-part of *taila* oil, and one-quarter (1/4) part of *abhayā* (*kaṭukka*) paste. This method has also been adopting among old *Āyurvedic* physicians especially in Valluvanad and Thrissur Dis-

#### 4. Career Change to Āyurveda

I began to think what to do next. I did not want to go back to my old job [at the South Indian Railways], because corrupt practices were rampant there. Other [people said the same thing] too. My Sanskrit teacher opined that it would be better to become a doctor (*Vaidya*) of *Āyurveda* for my temperament. Well, how could I become a *Vaidya*? There were only two Āyurvedic colleges [in Kerala]. One was in Kottakkal and the other in Thiruvananthapuram. I did not have any means to study in a college staying in such a distant place. Then, I decided to learn from a *Vaidya* privately. My teacher took me to the *Vaidya* who had treated me. This Guru had taught many disciples and was the chief physician at the Rāma Varma Central Ayurveda Hospital.

— What was his name?

Paḷḷippurattū Vāsudevan Nambīśan. I visited his ancestral home. It is near the mountain widely known by the eccentric Naranath's tale that Naranath Bhranthan (Nārāṇattū Bhrāntan)<sup>21</sup> had rolled up huge rocks. Have you heard about Naranath Bhranthan?

— Yes. I have.

His place was quite near to the mountain.

— Was it Rāyiramaṅgalaṁ, Rayiranellor Mountain?

Yes, it is Rāyiramaṅgalaṁ. I am becoming so forgetful. Do you have any medicines for this forgetfulness?

— We will sit near you and help you out in remembering things.

I learned under him for five years. It was something around four and a half years or five years. He taught me ten - fifteen verses [of the medical works] a

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tricts, Kerala. (This information is confirmed by Madhu K. Parameswaran through the personal communication with Dr. Ramankutty Varier in Kerala, February, 2015.)

<sup>21</sup> The eccentric Naranath, Naranath Bhranthan (Nārāṇattū Bhrāntan) is a famous character of folklore in Kerala. See Sankunni [2010] Vol.I, pp. 50-53. Yamashita and Manohar [2011] (5), pp. 13-14.

day. This was at night after finishing all of his other works. Here the problem was that I was unable to see him treating patients.

—— Why?

The reason was that I had been working in the kitchen [of my teacher's home] at that time. I used to cook for my teacher's family. That was the condition on which he had accepted me as a disciple. His wife was a Nair,<sup>22</sup> and whatever a Nair cooks cannot be touched by a Nambīśan, but if a T\*\*\* (the interviewee's *jāti*) cooks, both Nair and the Nambīśan can eat. It was a triangular interplay of castes (*jāti*) at my teacher's household. This was a custom of the time and I should admit that it became quite useful for me since I did not have any other means to pay him the fee for teachings (*gurudakṣiṇā* Skt.).

Soon after my studies, the Government [of Cochin] started an Āyurvedic Department in the Cochin state and adopted a system of the examination to select Āyurvedic physicians to be posted in this department. This was the *Vaidyabhūṣaṇam* degree examination. I enrolled myself for this examination and passed it, but did not go for the job.<sup>23</sup> Many disciples of my Guru, who had passed this examination, went for these jobs. Some of them still come here when we organize a small reunion during the *Vidyārambham* ceremony.<sup>24</sup> Now, this function has evolved to a larger scale with a public festival.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Nair or Nāyar is originally a soldier community in Kerala. This large community had historically varied and included many occupational *jātis*. See Thurston [1909] Vol. V, pp. 283-413.

<sup>23</sup>Although the interviewee passed this examination, he did not choose the profession of a Government doctor. (This fact is confirmed by the interviewee's son, Dr.M\*\*\* in July 2015.)

<sup>24</sup>*Vidyārambham* (Skt.) ceremony is an autumnal ceremony to celebrate the beginning of learning and the initiation into the letters of the alphabet. This ceremony is performed in the third year or fifth year of the child. See Menon [1979] pp. 102-103.

<sup>25</sup>On the occasion of *Vidyārambham* ceremony, it is a usual custom for the disciples to go to their guru's place and pay their respects. While the interviewee's teacher was alive, the interviewee used to visit his teacher during *Vidyārambham*. After his teacher's death, and as the interviewee began teaching young students himself, the students began to celebrate *Vidyārambham* at the interviewee's home. As time has passed and the interviewee's disciples have swelled, this annual programme became a large affair. (This fact is confirmed by the interviewee's son, Dr.M\*\*\* in July 2015.)

— During your five years of education, were you assisting your Guru in the clinic and getting chances to see various patients and clinical conditions?

No, because of the special condition [as cooking for my teacher's family] I had during my education, I was not able to see many patients during my training years. After this period, to get a medical license, I had to complete one year of the internship at an Āyurvedic hospital and I had some clinical experiences. However, let me say one thing here that true experience only comes when you are practicing on your own.

Moreover, I had the good fortune of getting trained in Naturopathy during this period of my life. I went to learn Naturopathy at the Indian Institute of Natural Therapeutics in Bombay (Khar, Mumbai) for a period of three months. Naturopathy involves treatments that involve major changes to one's lifestyle removing unhealthy diet and regimen (*apathya* Skt.). Some people believe that Naturopathy does not involve any medication, but that is not entirely true. Medications which are not toxic in nature are included in Naturopathy treatments. For me, this seemed to be very close to the fundamental principles of Āyurveda. At the end of the training period, I was asked to address the participants and I gave a lecture on the similarities in fundamental principles of Āyurveda and Naturopathy.

M\*\*\* (the interviewee's son) — Is it not a European woman (*madāmma* Mal.) who gave you the scholarship for Naturopathy training? Do you remember her name?

Yes, I think her name was Miss C. Pain. She was a French lady who had come to Kerala to popularize Naturopathy. She needed somebody to translate her speeches to Malayalam during the meetings. I had completed my training of Āyurveda by then and did not find English was so much challenging for me. Then, I took this task of translating her speeches. At the end of her tour of Kerala, she gave me a scholarship of one hundred Rupees to learn Naturopathy in Bombay. In those days, things were not as expensive as today. You could get a train ticket to Bombay for ten Rupees. I went [to Bombay to get the training]. After this training, I thought that my outlook towards the ethics and practice of Āyurveda evolved. I am following this evolved approach even today.

— Do you mean that your training of Naturopathy helped you to understand your own discipline, Āyurveda in a deeper way?

Yes.

— Does that mean you evolved the thought structure of *Āyurveda* in a different way from your Guru's?

My Guru was a very learned man. If you ask both of us the meaning of a certain verse (*śloka*) [in a medical work of *Āyurveda*], we may say the same words. However, this does not mean that I mimic my Guru's thought in entirety. Everybody has his own originality. Without original thinking, you will not be able to grasp the true meaning of *Āyurveda*.

M\*\*\* (the interviewee's son) — My father's Guru had also taught Śrī Unni Mooss (Trīśśūr Taikkāṭṭū Unṇi Müssū) who had founded the SNA Oṣadhaśāla.<sup>26</sup>

Yes, it is right. Unni Mooss was my Guru's first student (*śiṣya* Skt.) and I was his last [student]. Unni Mooss belonged to one of the Aṣṭavaidya families (Thaikkāt Mooss or Taikkāṭṭū Müss).<sup>27</sup> In those days, the learned physicians (*Vaidya*) of *Āyurveda* from nearby places came to and stayed at their (the Aṣṭavaidya families') ancestral homes to train the younger generations of *Āyurvedic* physicians.<sup>28</sup>

Unni Mooss was very gifted and used to compose verses, but I have almost forgotten even a famous verse he wrote paying salutations to his Guru. He died very young. I did not have the good fortune of meeting him.

## 5. Texts of *Āyurveda*

— Were you learning a Sanskrit medical work, the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayam* (*Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayasaṃhitā*) when you were studying under your Guru?

<sup>26</sup>SNA Oṣadhaśāla (Oushadhasala) is one of the manufacturers of *Āyurvedic* pharmaceuticals based in Thrissur (Trīśśūr), Kerala.

<sup>27</sup>Aṣṭavaidyas are traditional physicians of *Āyurveda* and belong to Nampūtiri Brahmin community in Kerala. See our interviews with Aṣṭavaidyas, Yamashita and Manohar [2007-2008b] (2); [2010] (4); [2012] (6).

<sup>28</sup>In olden days, young members of Aṣṭavaidya families learned *Āyurveda* at the house of Kuṭṭāncēri Müssū, one of the Aṣṭavaidya families. They never went to non-Aṣṭavaidya physician to learn *Āyurveda*. However, Unni Müssū, who was belonging to an Aṣṭavaidya family (Trīśśūr Taikkāṭṭū Müssū), went to the interviewee's teacher (Vāsudevan Nambīśan, a non-Aṣṭavaidya physician) to learn *Āyurveda*, because Vāsudevan Nambīśan was an excellent and accomplished physician of *Āyurveda*. (This fact is confirmed by the interviewee's son, Dr.M\*\*\* in July 2015.)

Well, it was only the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayam* [that I learned]. We had not even heard the names [of other Sanskrit medical works] like the *Carakasamhitā* and the *Suśrutasamhitā*. This was the case all over Kerala. You cannot spot even one manuscript containing these texts [other than the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayam*] in any of the old manuscript repositories of Kerala. Well, you might find one or two in some corner.<sup>29</sup>

— Have you seen any other manuscripts [than the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayasamhitā*] yourself?

No, we do not have them in Kerala. Here, we have only the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayam*. Of course, some rare commentaries including some good commentaries written in Kerala could be found,<sup>30</sup> but not the [manuscripts of the texts of] the *Caraka[samhitā]* or the *Suśruta[samhitā]*.

The specialty of the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayam*'s commentaries written in Kerala<sup>31</sup> is that they are more focused on the treatment aspect rather than the theoretical aspect [of *Āyurveda*]. Even after learning the whole traditional medical works (*śāstra*), if you are still unable to treat [patients], then what is the good of doing it?

It was a social custom that once you have learned Sanskrit, traditional logic (*Tarka*), Sanskrit verse works (*Kāvya*) and traditional Sanskrit grammar (*Vyākaraṇa*), [then,] you would take up astrology (*Jyōtsyam*) or traditional medicine (*Vaidyam* Mal.) as a profession to sustain yourself. This was the custom

<sup>29</sup>Some manuscripts catalogues describe the existence of several manuscripts of the *Carakasamhitā* and the *Suśrutasamhitā* in Kerala. See Sarma [2002] pp. 173, 191; Rao, et al. [2005] pp. 109-111, 215-217; Sarma and Neelakandhan [2014] p. 92. However, some of these manuscripts are unconfirmed at present.

<sup>30</sup>A manuscript of one of the commentaries on the *Carakasamhitā*, called the *Nirantara-padavyākhyā* by Jajjaṭa is found in the Oriental Research Institute & Manuscripts Library, Trivandrum, Kerala. See Variar [1985] p. 64; Sarma [2002] p. 173; Rao, et al. [2005] p. 109; Sarma and Neelakandhan [2014] p. 78.

<sup>31</sup>The commentaries on AHS written in Kerala are, for example, the *Hṛdyā* (Sanskrit); the *Kairālī* (Sanskrit) on the Uttaraśthāna; the *Vākyapradīpikā* (Sanskrit) by Parameśvara; the *Pāṭhya* (Sanskrit); the *Lalitā* (Sanskrit) by Pulāmantōḷ Śaṅkaran Mūs; the *Hṛdayabodhikā* (Sanskrit) by Śrīdāsapaṇḍita; the *Vyākhyāsāra* by Ravi; the *Alpabuddhiprabodhana* (Malayalam) by Śrīkaṇṭha, and so on. The *Śaśīlekhā* (Sanskrit) by Indu is also believed to be written in Kerala by some scholars. See Variar [1985] p. 63; Meulenbeld [1999-2002] IA, pp. 661-685; Visalakshy [2012] p. 111; Sreelekha [2014] p. 63; Kumar [2014] pp. 141-142.

in Kerala. You can always find doctors (*vaidyan* Mal.) or astrologers in the families of all these Variers or Pisharody.<sup>32</sup> This was a practical custom in the society [in Kerala].

— Do you mean that they did not study the traditional medical works (*śāstra*) deeply enough?

No. What I meant that mere theoretical knowledge without any treatment acumen is useless. What would you gain from mere theoretical study? You can, at best, conduct some debates. What else? You need a sharp clinical acumen. Why are you learning medicine?

[On the other hand,] it is also meaningless that once you started clinical practices, you would stop the theoretical studies. To continue your clinical practices, you need to analyse the traditional medical works (*śāstra*) constantly [for theoretical studies].

— Why do you think that the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayam* gained the prominence in Kerala than the *Carakasamhitā* and the *Suśrutasamhitā*?

In the last chapter of the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya*, it says that this work has been composed taking all of the relevant materials from the *Carakasamhitā* and the *Suśrutasamhitā*.<sup>33</sup> For medical practitioners, the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayam* seems to be more beneficial. To attain full understanding of certain matters [of *Āyurveda*], the *Caraka* and *Suśruta* do not supply enough materials. The *Caraka* and *Suśruta* are incomplete in this point, but the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya* was made solely to overcome this difficulty.

— Can you cite examples to support this?

There are many, but I am not able to recall them all right now.

<sup>32</sup> Varier (Vāryar, Variyar, or Warriar) and Pisharody (or Piṣārōṭi) are the sub-caste names of a community called Ambalavāsi which is originally engaged in temple services in Kerala. See Thurston [1909] Vol. VI, pp. 199-203; Vol. VII, pp. 322-329. See also Footnote 16.

<sup>33</sup> AHS Utt 40.89 runs: “Just like an essence (*hṛdaya*), this [work, namely *Aṣṭāṅga-hṛdaya*[-*saṃhitā*] was composed from the ocean consisting of all of the words of *Āyurveda*. Let the auspiciousness which was achieved [by the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayasaṃhitā*] in turn accomplish the supreme auspiciousness of the world.” (*hṛdayam iva hṛdayam etat sarvāyurvedavānmayapayodheḥ / kṛtvā yac chubham āptaṃ śubham astu paraṃ tato jagataḥ* //).



## 6. Commentary on the texts of *Āyurveda*

— When you wrote your commentary on the *Aṣṭāṅgasamgraha*,<sup>34</sup> did you add some new viewpoints to help understanding [of the text]?

That is not intentional. When you study something, it is just like taking food. You digest and assimilate your food. Just the same thing, you digest and assimilate the knowledge you derive from a text. This occurs naturally. If you ask me why all of these happened in this way, I can only say that it was coincidence or fate (*niyoga* Skt.). If you again ask me why I chose to comment on the *Aṣṭāṅgasamgraha*, I can only say that it was only by chance. I did not pursue any predetermined goal.

— You learned the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayam* during your training period, but you chose to write a commentary on the *Aṣṭāṅgasamgraha*. Why?

That is why: *etat paṭhan samgrahabodhasakta* (the one who learnt this [treatise, namely the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayasamhitā*] is capable to understand the [*Aṣṭāṅga*] *samgraha*).<sup>35</sup> One who learns the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayam* will know the purport of the [*Aṣṭāṅga*] *samgraha*. The [*Aṣṭāṅga*] *samgraha* was composed first. [After that,] the *Aṣṭāṅga[hṛdayam]* was composed to aid those who [can] make [only] small amount of efforts (*alpasamudyatānām*) and are incapable to master the text [of the *Aṣṭāṅgasamgraha*] fully. This is explained in the Uttaratantra of the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayam*.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, I thought of commenting on the original work

<sup>34</sup>The interviewee published his Malayalam translation and commentary called the *Pra-kāśikā* of the *Aṣṭāṅgasamgrahaṃ* during 1981-1987, 1st edition, 12 vols. See Thirumulpad, Padmabhooshan Vaidyabhooshanam Sri. Raghavan. *His Life & Thoughts*. <www.thirumulpad.com> (accessed on 5th July 2015).

<sup>35</sup>The interviewee quotes from AHS Utt the 40th Chapter. AHS Utt 40.83 runs: “The one who had studied this [work, *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayasamhitā*] is capable to understand the [*Aṣṭāṅga*] *samgraha*; becomes a physician who has a rich experiences of practice; and will not shiver [with fear or tension]. It is no wonder that [this physician] inspires a sense of awe (shivering) to the one who [still] makes efforts [to learn] the other large works [of *Āyurveda*].” (*etat paṭhan samgrahabodhasaktaḥ svabhyastakarmā bhiṣag aprakampyaḥ / ākampayaty anyaviśālātatrakṛtābhiyogān yadi tan na citram* //). See also Yamashita and Manohar [2007-2008b] (2), p. 146.

<sup>36</sup>The interviewee quotes from AHS Utt the 40th Chapter. AHS Utt 40.80 runs: “By churning the great ocean of the eight branches of medicine, a great nectar, the *Aṣṭāṅgasamgraha* had been obtained; from this [work], for the benefit of those who [can] make [only]

(the *Aṣṭāṅgasamgraha*) itself.

— You have described in your commentary that the importance for enhancing the efficacy of medicinal recipes is the preparation processes of medicines (*bhāvana* Skt.).

Again, I cannot claim it as my original idea. All of my ideas come from the text itself or some commentary on it. My work only involved a deeper thought about these issues and to present them more clearly before the scholars. Where is my originality? And where is that which you can call “original” in this world? Everything exists in relation to other things. I thought deeply about the issue of enhancing the potency of a drug. The dosage can be minimized and I got the answer that it is the preparation processes (*bhāvana*).

— Why did you choose to write your commentary in Malayalam rather than English? To reach a wider audience, it may be better to write it in English in which, of course, you are very proficient.

I thought that my service should be first rendered to those who are immediately around me. If people who are around Cālakkuṭi or this district or even my state do not get benefitted from my work, then what is the use? And there is another reason. You cannot express any idea fully well in a language that is foreign to the culture in which the science has developed. There is something extra that cannot be explained through merely translated words. A language has its own individuality. I may try it, but I will not be able to capture all that essence if I write it in English.

There is another problem. Writing a commentary is not difficult, but getting it printed and published is a different problem. I do not know whether it is my misfortune or good fortune, my virtue or my vice, I have never received any sort of external help for any of my attempts. All of this work was done entirely by me. This was only because of the blessings of my teachers that I could do at least this much. Most of the people I have met had different intentions about these matters. It might also be, because my circle of acquaintances is not so wide. I am a common man and I do not have personal connections with people in high class, and therefore I did not get any help.

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small efforts [to learn *Āyurveda*], this great work, [the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayasamhitā*] was taught separately.” (*aṣṭāṅgavaidyakamahodadhimanthanena yo 'ṣṭāṅgasamgrahamahāmṛtarāśir āptaḥ / tasmād analpaphalam alpasamudyamānām prṭyartham etad uditam prthag eva tantram //*).

When I completed my commentary on the *Aṣṭāṅgasaṃgraha*, I did not know what to do and no one offered any help too. So I got it printed and published by myself. All of supports came from the students and people like you for these years. I also did not go begging to different people for getting my works done. That might also be one reason.

— How do you feel about that you are famous now all over the country even beyond the Āyurvedic community, as a commentator and a physician?

I do not know this fact. Am I famous? Who did say so? It feels good in this old age to hear that people are appreciating my work, but even if it was not so, I would not have been disappointed. A wild flower does not feel sad about its fragrance not being appreciated by the townsfolk. I do not have many desires. I wrote some essays and some of them got published. I am intending to publish some of these selected essays in the coming *Vidyārambhaṃ* day.<sup>37</sup>

So it goes. One poet was asked: “Why are you writing?” He answered: “The time and space is not limited” (*kālo hy ayam niravadhir vipulā ca prthvī*)<sup>38</sup> and there would be someone somewhere reading my work and appreciating its value.

All of my works were made possible by the blessings of my Gurus. P.S. Subbarāma Paṭṭar once blessed me with the following [Sanskrit] words: *Sarvāṇy api śāstrāṇi pratibhāsantām* (Let all the works (sciences) shine in your intellect).<sup>39</sup> All of these works have been possible owing to their blessings. And in respect to these great people, I have constituted five scholarships in their names to be given to the bright students who experience financial hardships. Another person whom I consider, my Guru is Swami Vidyānanda who was the

<sup>37</sup>For *Vidyārambhaṃ*, see Footnotes 24 and 25.

<sup>38</sup>The interviewee quotes a part of the Sanskrit verse from the beginning part of a Sanskrit drama, the *Mālatīmādhava* by Bhavabhūti. The *Mālatīmādhava* 1.6 runs: “Those, who indeed speak ill of us (depreciate our efforts) in this matter, know something that is inexpressible; that attempt is not for them. There will be born, (or) there is, some one of similar tastes with me; for, time is unlimited and the earth is wide.” Translated by M.R. Kale. (*ye nāma kecid iha naḥ prathayanty avajñāṃ jānanti te kim api tān prati naiṣa yatnaḥ / utpatsyate 'sti mama ko 'pi samānadharmā kālo hy ayam niravadhir vipulā ca prthvī* // ). See also Keith [1998] p. 196.

<sup>39</sup>The interviewee's son, Dr.M\*\*\* remembers the words differently as *nikhilāṇy api śāstrāṇi pratibhāsantām te*.

For the Sanskrit works of P.S. Subbarāma Paṭṭar, see Sundareswaran, Vasudevan and Murali [2012].

disciple of Sri Narayana Guru (social reformer ca. 1854 ~ 1928) who instructed me to treat people with the medicines that are affordable and locally available. I have constituted a scholarship in his name too. I could have been a Railway officer, but my destiny was elsewhere. This is just my fate (*niyoga*).

— Did you want to comment on any other work?

I wanted to write a commentary on the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayam*, at least for the first fourteen chapters, but I could not. I wrote the commentary for a couple of chapters which got published by the Government of Kerala along with the commentary by Kaikkulaṅṇara Rāma Vāryar (Kaikulangara Rama Warriar) (1832 ~ 1896).<sup>40</sup> Kaikkulaṅṇara's commentary is more scholarly, while my approach is a kind of practical guidance of the text for common physicians. Anyway, it is not going to be done now. I do not know so much, but whatever I know is pure and clear. That is the only virtue I find in myself.

## 7. Education of *Āyurveda*

— What do you think about the need of learning traditional logic (*Tarka*) for *Āyurvedic* education?

Traditional logic is [the study] of the nature of substances (*dravya* Skt.). If you do not have a thorough understanding of traditional logic you will not be able to understand the intricacies of *Āyurvedic* fundamental theory. If you do not have a thorough grasp of traditional logic, you will not be able to understand much of the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayam*, [the first volume,] *Sūtrasthāna*, the 9th Chapter.<sup>41</sup>

— You had learned traditional logic, but the present generation of students of *Āyurveda* do not acquire enough proficiency in this kind of traditional study (*śāstra*). Do you think they will be able to successfully master *Āyurveda* without this kind of traditional knowledge?

It is not absolutely true to say that they (students of *Āyurveda*) do not have any chance to learn traditional logic. Traditional logic is being taught at the initial

<sup>40</sup>For Kaikkulaṅṇara Rāma Vāryar, see Yamashita and Manohar [2009] (3), p. 30.

<sup>41</sup>The *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayasaṃhitā*, the first volume, *Sūtrasthāna*, the 9th Chapter called “Chapter of Knowledge beginning with Substances” (*dravyādivijñānīya adhyāya*) is devoted to the explanations of fundamental theories of *Āyurveda* regarding substance (*dravya*), potency (*vīrya*), taste-after-digestion (*vipāka*), and special effect (*prabhāva*).

year of their course, but I doubt whether it is being taught in an appropriate way. However, let me say one thing, today's generation of Āyurvedic students and physicians have much better intellectual abilities than the previous generations of Āyurvedic physicians.

—— You have an optimistic view about the future of Āyurveda. Is it right?

Absolutely, it is not just because of the capabilities of Āyurveda, but also because there is still much incapability of the allopathic medicine (modern Western medicine). I can quote many examples from my own clinical experiences. Many patients, who have not been successfully cured by all kinds of allopathic medical therapy for their heart diseases, came here for treatments. I can say that almost 90% of them got good results here.

## 8. Modern Āyurveda

—— What are your hopes about future of Āyurveda?

I am sure that Āyurveda will survive for eternity, because the fundamentals of Āyurveda elucidate the basic principle of the function of the universe. It will evolve for sure, but the fundamentals [of Āyurveda] will remain intact. Until recently, we had a motto “Health for all by year 2000 A.D” [by the World Health Organization (WHO)].<sup>42</sup> It is 2007 now. Have we achieved this goal? No. Why? For we fail to live enough according to the principles of Āyurveda.

—— Does this mean that “Total Health” will remain a mirage forever?

No, it is not an unattainable goal. The ideal state is that the one who has an equilibrium condition of *doṣas*; that of *agni*; balanced functions of *dhātus* and *malas*; and pure *ātman*, *indriyas* and *manas* [is being in a state, called health (*svastha*)] (*samadoṣaḥ samāgniś ca samadhātumalakriyaḥ / prasannātmendriyamanāḥ [svastha ity abhidhīyate //]*).<sup>43</sup> This is just an attainable goal. Of course, one must consider the genetically-inherited states of ill health and constitution, but

<sup>42</sup> See World Health Organization, *Global Strategy for Health for All by the Year 2000*. “Health for All” Series, No.3. Reprint edition. Geneva: World Health Organization, 1989, 1st edition, 1981. <<http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/9241800038.pdf>> (accessed on 8th July 2015); World Health Organization, *Global Health Declarations*. <<http://www.who.int/trade/glossary/story039/en/>> (accessed on 8th July 2015).

<sup>43</sup> The interviewee quotes from SS Sū 15.41.

even such a weak man, as I can survive to this age without difficulties. This is a proof of the principles of *Āyurveda*. If the principles are observed in daily life, they can certainly bring about the ideal state, health.

— *Āyurveda* will involve with a daily life in one's somatic and mental conditions. Is it right?

Yes. Of course, I cannot say that I am able to practise perfectly, but one should strive for perfection. I consider error of intellect (*prajñāparādha*)<sup>44</sup> is the sole cause for most of today's health problems. Medical practices seem to become means of accumulating wealth in those days, but Astrology says that if the wealth is not accumulated through right conducts (*dharma* Skt.), it brings about misfortunes. I never use *Āyurveda* in search of wealth.

During my youth, I was influenced by the life and preaching of [Mahatma] Gandhi (1869 ~ 1948) and I took the motto of “Unto this last”<sup>45</sup> as the guiding principle of my medical practice. The therapy should be affordable even for poor people. And to stick to this principle, you will be able to resist the temptations. This will only be possible if your needs are few. It is said that one should be content with whatever comes along the way (*yadṛcchālābhasaṃtuṣṭaḥ*).<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup>CS Sū 20.5 runs: “The worsening [factors] of both of the exogenous and endogenous disorders are unwholesome contacts (*saṃyoga*) between the sense organs (*indriya*) and the sense objects (*artha*); error of the intellect (*prajñāparādha*); and changes (*pariṇāma*) [by passage of time].” (*dvayos tu khalv āgantunijayoḥ preraṇam asātmendriyārthasaṃyogaḥ, prajñāparādhaḥ, pariṇāmaś ceti* // ). Cf. AHS Sū 4.32-34.

<sup>45</sup>*Unto this last* is the title of an essay by John Ruskin (1819 ~ 1900), first published in 1860 on a journal, *Cornhill Magazine* in four articles and published in a book in 1862. See Ruskin [1862] and [1900]. Pandiri [1995] pp. 298-299 says: “Gandhi's life was profoundly influenced by this book, which he read on October 1, 1904, on a train ride from Johannesburg to Durban in South Africa. He states in his Autobiography that this book changed his life. Gandhi later translated this book into Gujarati, entitled *Sarvodaya* (Welfare of All).”

Valji Govindji Desai translated Gandhi's Gujarati translation again into English as *Unto This Last: A Paraphrase* in 1951. See Ruskin, Gandhi, and Desai [1951].

<sup>46</sup>The interviewee quotes a part of a verse from the *Bhagavadgītā*. The *Bhagavadgītā* 4.22 (the *Mahābhārata* 6.26.22) runs: “Content with getting what comes by chance, Passed beyond the pairs (of opposites), free from jealousy, Indifferent to success and failure, Even acting, he is not bound.” Translated by F. Edgerton, *Bhagavadgītā* [1] Part I, p. 47 (*yadṛcchālābhasaṃtuṣṭo dvandvātīto vimatsaraḥ / samaḥ siddhāv asiddhau ca kṛtvāpi na nibadhyate* //).

If you cultivate this kind of attitude towards life and profession, it is easy to be content and satisfied. I have realized this not from the books, but from my own life. Patients come here and after getting a consultation give a fee [to me] according to their capacity. Some of them give 10 Rupees and some give 100 Rupees. I never demand anything, but throughout my life, I was never left wanting for more. These days, I earn around 500-1000 Rupees daily from my consultations. It is more than what I need. I think people are lavish these days.

—— Today, when you teach young students of *Āyurveda*, are you able to impart them fully what you have learned from your Gurus?

Yes, I can confidently say so, but let me say one thing here, imparting the knowledge of the discipline (*śāstra*) [of *Āyurveda*] is one thing, and to pass on the subtle personal adaptations of the discipline that I acquired throughout my life is another matter. I think each of these students will need to go through their own personal evolution to develop their own original understanding of the discipline. Along my life, the various people whom I have met and tried to emulate, such as Gandhi-ji, the various philosophical works that I read and tried to follow, the various disciplines and techniques that I learned, have all contributed to my understanding of *Āyurveda*.

—— What is your opinion about the modern drug-manufacturing industry and their techniques adopted in the modern *Āyurveda*?

I prefer the middle way in these matters. Why do you think there are such a wide variety of medicinal recipes for treating a disease such as a cardiac disease (*hṛdroga* Skt.) for instance? All of different substances and herbs that you can find around you have medicinal properties and give a wider choice of medicinal recipes. You can choose those which are suitable to the locality and use them to treat the [various conditions of] disease. In the past, when the patients were given prescriptions, they were, more or less, able to gather all of the ingredient herbs for the prescriptions [by themselves] from their surroundings, but it is not so today and the changes occurred.

—— Do you think the early physicians were able to discover and understand the medicinal properties of different herbs? What method do you think they might have used?

How can I answer such a question? I think all knowledge comes from observations and accumulated knowledge and experiences over long periods of time.



There is an instance described in the *Vedas* where they say that men observed the use of herbs as medicines from animals. This is also observation and discovery. I think modern streams of science and medicine does not give much importance to the past. This is a fundamental fault inherited from Western scientific thought. English [people] came to India to trade, and you can see the reflections of trade and business in every aspect of their culture and in thought and sciences. That is why I always say that mere knowledge is not enough. We need wisdom arisen from education. [It is important] to know how and what extent, we can use the nature.

— What is regimen (*pathya* Skt.)? You have always given a great importance to this concept in your writings.

The literal meaning of the word *pathya* is ‘that which is beneficial for the way’. Now the word ‘way’ (*patha* Skt.) means the channels of the body or the different instances in life.

— So that means the regimen (*pathya*) will differ according to situations and compositions of people?

Yes, and one needs to have the wisdom to understand these differences. I think that the reason why today’s generation of the physicians of *Āyurveda* do not lay stress on the regimen is that they do not have good model physicians around them to emulate.

I think all of the problems that *Āyurveda* faces today come not from the lack of therapeutic tools, but the scarcity of capable and wise physicians. You know that among the four limbs (*catuspāda* Skt.) of medical care (*cikitsā* Skt.) of *Āyurveda*,<sup>47</sup> the physician (*bhīṣaj* Skt.) is of the utmost importance. If the quality of physicians [of *Āyurveda*] deteriorates, it would reflect immediately on all of the other limbs (*pāda* Skt.) and ultimately on the treatments. This does not mean that I am against the college model of education of *Āyurveda*. I am a supporter of the college model of education.

<sup>47</sup> CS Sū 9.3 runs: “Physician, drugs, attendant, and patient constitute the four limbs [of *Āyurveda*]. It should be known that if they (the four limbs) have good qualities, they become causes for alleviation of diseases.” (*bhīṣag-dravyāṅy-upasthātā rogī pādacatuṣṭayam / guṇavat kāraṇaṃ jñeyaṃ vikārayupaśāntaye //*). Cf. BhS Sū 9; SS Sū 34.15-24; AHS Sū 1.27; AS Sū 2.21. See Yamashita and Manohar [2011] (5), p. 16.



I think that the *gurukula* (Skt.) system<sup>48</sup> [of education of *Āyurveda*] underwent a decline due to its own internal weaknesses. The best option available today is college education. One cannot deny it.

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<sup>48</sup>*Gurukula* (Skt.) literally means “teacher's house” and denote a traditional educational system by which students stay with the teacher (*guru*) at the teacher's house and learn from the teacher. See Yamashita and Manohar [2007-2008b] (2), p. 150.

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