

A History of Indian Medical Literature



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Egbert Forsten Publishing, 2002. Hardcover. Book Condition: New. First edition. Ayurveda, the science of (long) life, or Indian classical medicine is one of the major traditional medical systems of history, beside the Hippocratic (upon which both the early Western and the Islamic medicine were based) and the Chinese systems. From ayurveda is further derived the Tibetan medicine, now often considered as an independent system[1]. All these traditional systems contain a theoretical basis with (sometimes erroneous) ideas of anatomy and physiology. All have long empirical traditions of diagnostics and therapy and a well developed pharmacy, which enable them to cure successfully many ills, although their real reasons may not be correctly understood. In the case of ayurveda areas such as hygiene, dietetics and surgery (including plastical surgery) were particularly well developed. In the history of Indian studies ayurveda has been a side-issue, although never wholly ignored. The majority of indologists knew very little of ayurveda and ayurvedic texts. Fortunately, there have always been physicians interested enough in the history of medicine to learn Sanskrit and Sanskrit scholars capable of guiding them and even conducting studies of their own. In India, many ayurvedic doctors have done important work, although here there is sometimes a regrettable tendency to use anachronistic terminology and interpretations. The historical study of ayurveda started very soon after Indology had been established in Europe[2]. British physicians in India (and others before them like Garcia d`Orta in the 16th century) had achieved some practical knowledge, but the first serious Western student of a classical ayurvedic text was the Bavarian physician Franz Hessler (1799-1890). As early as 1830 he presented a medical dissertation on Indian medicine[3]. He learnt Sanskrit more or less alone and studied the Calcutta edition of the Susrutasamhita (1835-36), of which he prepared a complete Latin translation[4]. Unfortunately...

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