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දර්ශනපති ඉතිහාසය උපාධිය පූරණය කරනු පිණිස කැලණිය විශ්වවිද්‍යාලයේ පශ්චාද් උපාධි අධ්‍යයන පීඨය වෙත ඉදිරිපත් කෙරෙන පර්යේෂණ නිබන්ධයකි



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Abstract

Neither comprehensive nor direct attempt has been so far made to study medical history of ancient Sri Lanka. It is also not given special attention to the method of controlling and preventing diseases. The previous studies have been confined themselves to random surveys by some scholars. Our study carried out using primary and secondary sources has brought to light that there was a well-developed medical system with its necessary aspects in Sri Lanka during the period between (c.) 600 BC up to 1600 AC. It was further revealed that this medical system was an outcome of the mixture of indigenous medical system and Indian Ayurvedic system which was greatly influenced by Buddhist philosophy. There are also texts written on various branches of medical field in the Island in Sanskrit and Sinhala and Tamil languages.

In this study the influence of kings' patronage for the development and evolution of medical system, the hospitals and other medical centers prevailed in ancient and medieval Sri Lanka, general and popular methods of preventing, controlling and curing ailments are dealt with. Aspects of alternate medicine such as magic spells, incantations and charms, enchantments, methods of dispelling infant seizing evils were also taken for discussion. A particular attention has been made to discuss the pirit chanting, a Buddhist way of controlling, preventing and healing certain diseases and dispelling the influence of bad spirits and evils. By means of such rituals as chanting pirit, incantations of magic spells having developed sound mental state and at the same time taking drugs Sri Lanka has had developed a unique medical system. It is a fact there is no conclusive evidence to believe the story of Ravana but it is commonly accepted that Sri Lankan medical system is derived from this mythical figure. In Sri Lanka there was a well-developed pediatric medical system. To control and prevent the child from being infected and influenced by evil spirits there were effective methods. At the very early stage the infant is subject to attack by infections and bacteria. The main reason for that is that at the tender stage the immune system of living beings is normally weak. So foreign elements had to be introduced to the child system in order resist such attacks. Among these introductions keeping contacts the child with different herbs and trampling him on them, applying same on his body played a significant role. The primary reason responsible for the prevalence of such a developed medical system was the patronage by the rulers. Dutugemunu who ruled at about the 2nd century BC introduced a systematic medical service. His project included to appoint a physician for every ten village, planting medical herbs, paying emoluments to physicians, & etc. He was followed by a number of his successors such as Vasabha, Voharikatissa, Upatissa, Buddhadasa, Sena I, Mahinda II, Udaya I, Kassapa IV and Parakkamabahu I. It was but a salient feature of Sri Lankan medical system that using the Buddhist method of psychotherapy coupled with herbal medicine for the purpose of treating ailments, controlling and preventing diseases. This demonstrates the fact that Sri Lankan medical system acknowledged the interrelation between spiritual strength and the effect of drug was important for treating ailments, controlling and preventing diseases.

Key words: medical system, controlling and preventing, diseases, indigenous medicine, Ayurveda.