VAGBHATA: THE LEGENDARY AND VISIONARY OF AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is an eternal system of medicine serving humanity since long back. Brahma composed the Brahma-Samhita consisting of one thousand chapters and one lakh verses before creation of the living beings. It shows the utility of this science of life and that’s why Brahma transmitted this knowledge to Daksha-Prajapati. Daksha-Prajapati to Ashwins (Nasatya and Dasra) and Ashwins to Indra. According to Vriddha-Vagbhata, different seers and sages in the leadership of Punarvasu Atreya approached Indra to learn Ayurveda. These seers and sages brought this knowledge to the earth for the welfare of suffering humanity. Punarvasu Atreya, Divodasa Dhanvantaari and many other seers taught Ayurveda to their disciples and consequently Agnivesha-Tantra (later became popular as Charaka-Samhita), Sushruta Samhita, Bhela-Samhita, Harita-Samhita and many other Samhitas were composed. It was the initiation of writing the Samhita (classical texts) of the Ayurveda on the earth. These Samhitas became very much popular in due course of time. The transmission of the knowledge of Ayurveda did not stop here and remains continue. In this series, a learned scholar and visionary of Ayurveda, Vagbhata appears who wrote the text comprising of Ashtanga Ayurveda. Vagbhata dedicated himself to design such a text which includes Ashtanga-Ayurveda according to the need of the age and he succeeded. Due to excellence and gravity of the text, his classic (Ashtanga-Samgraha / Ashtanga-Hridaya) has been considered among the Brihat-traiy (greater-trio) of Ayurveda. Some of the scholars consider Ashtanga-Samgraha of Vriddha-Vagbhata as a third classic among the Brihat-traiy while many others accepted Ashtanga-Hridaya of Vagbhata as a third classic among Brihat-traiy. Two other classics of Brihat-traiy are Charaka-Samhita and Sushruta-Samhita. Although Vagbhata
faced struggle to get popularity of his text because in those days the texts written by seers and sages only were accepted and studied. Vagbhata compiled and rearranged the subject matter meticulously discussed in already available Samhitas namely Charaka-Samhita, Sushruta-Samhita and many others and in due course of time became popular. We see the chronological development of the concepts and practices in the texts of Vagbhata. Several Vagbhatas are mentioned in the histories who have written text on different streams of learning. There are three significant works on Ayurveda by Vagbhata viz. Ashtanga-Samgraha by Vriddha-Vagbhata, Ashtanga-Hridaya by Vagbhata and Rasaratnasamuchchaya by Rasa-Vagbhata. This research paper deals with various aspects related to Vagbhata, his personality and contributions.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Vagbhata, Ashtanga-Samgraha, Ashtanga-Hridaya, Samhita.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is an eternal system of medicine serving humanity since long back. Brahma composed the Brahma-Samhita consisting of one thousand chapters and one lakh verses before creation of the living beings. It shows the utility of this science of life and that’s why Brahma transmitted this knowledge to Daksha-Prajapati, Daksha-Prajapati to Ashwins (Nasatya and Dasra) and Ashwins to Indra. According to Vriddha-Vagbhata, different seers and sages in the leadership of Punarvasu Atreya approached Indra to learn Ayurveda. These seers and sages brought this knowledge to the earth for the welfare of suffering humanity. Punarvasu Atreya, Divodasa Dhanvanatari and many other seers taught Ayurveda to their disciples and consequently Agnivesha-Tantra (later became popular as Charaka-Samhita), Sushruta Samhita, Bhela-Samhita, Harita-Samhita and many other samhitas were composed. It was the initiation of writing the Samhita (classical texts) of the Ayurveda on the earth. These Samhitas became very much popular in due course of time. The transmission of the knowledge of Ayurveda did not stop here and remains continue. In this series, a learned scholar and visionary of Ayurveda, Vagbhata appears who wrote the text comprising of Ashtanga Ayurveda. Vagbhata dedicated himself to design such a text which includes Ashtanga-Ayurveda according to the need of the age and he succeeded. Due to excellence and gravity of the text, his classic (Ashtanga-Samgraha / Ashtanga-Hridaya) has been considered among the Brihat-trayi (greater-trio) of Ayurveda. Some of the scholars consider Ashtanga-Samgraha of Vriddha-Vagbhata as a third classic among the Brihat-trayi while many others accepted Ashtanga-Hridaya of Vagbhata as a third classic among Brihat-trayi. Two other classics of Brihat-trayi are Charaka-Samhita and Sushruta-Samhita. Although Vagbhata faced struggle to get popularity of his text because in those days the texts written by seers and sages only were accepted and studied. Vagbhata compiled and rearranged the subject matter meticulously discussed in already available Samhitas namely Charaka-Samhita, Sushruta-Samhita and many others and in due course of time became popular. We see the chronological development of the concepts and practices in the texts of Vagbhata. Several Vagbhatas are mentioned in the histories who have written text on different streams of learning. There are three significant works on Ayurveda by Vagbhata viz. Ashtanga-Samgraha by Vriddha-Vagbhata, Ashtanga-Hridaya by Vagbhata and Rasaratnasamuchchaya by Rasa-Vagbhata. This research paper deals with various aspects related to Vagbhata, his personality and contributions.

Aim and objective of the study

The main aim and objective of this review paper is to focus upon the personality of Vagbhata and his contributions in the field of Ayurveda.

Materials and Methods

The subject matter related to personality and contributions of Vagbhata is collected, compiled and analyzed on the basis of thorough study of relevant Ayurvedic literature.
About Vagbhata

Vagbhata was the son of Simhagupta and grandson of Vagbhata. His father was a Brahmin and his preceptor Avalokita was a Buddhist. He had his education from preceptor Avalokita and his father. Vagbhata, the author of Ashtanga-Samgraha (AS), is known by the name Vahata also. The author himself mentions in the colophon of the chapters of AS that he was the son of Simhagupta and was a namesake of his grandfather. Thus, Vagbhata appears to be the original name which was later modified into Vahata particularly in south India. Since Vagbhata was the disciple of Buddhist teacher Avalokita, Buddhist gods and goddesses are mentioned in his text with reverence. On the basis of this fact, some of the scholars believe that Vagbhata was a Buddhist but mention of Vedic practices and worship of Vedic gods and goddesses, cow, Brahmans prove him to be Vedic follower. P. V. Sharma concluded that Vagbhata was born in a Brahmin family and was the follower of Vedic religion but observed equal respect towards Buddhism since he was a disciple of a Buddhist Guru.

Aufrechts Catalogus Catalogorum mentions ten Vagbhatas viz. 1. Author of Vahata-Nighantu; 2. Author of Vagbhata-Smriti-Samgraha; 3. Son of Simhagupta, grandson of Vagbhata and author of Ashtanga-Hridaya (AH), Vamanakalpa and Vagbhatiya; 4. Father of Tisata, author of Chikitsa-kalika; 5. Minister of Malavendra and father of Deveshwara; 6. Son of Nemikumara, a Jain author of Alankaratilaka, Chhandomushasana, Vagbhatalankara and Shringeratilaka; 7. Author of Padartha-chandrika, Bhavaprakasha, Rasaratnasamuchchaya and Shastradarpana; 8. Author of Vagbhataka-kosha; 9. Vridhha-Vagbhata, quoted in Todaranakama and Bhavaprapaksha and 10. Author of Vagbhatalankara. Harishastri Paradakara and Nandakishor Sharma mentioned eight Vagbhatas apart from the author of Ashtanga-Samgraha and Ashtanga-Hridaya. Gurupada Haldar in his Vridhhatrayi mentioned four Vagbhatas. There are three works ascribed to the authorship of Vagbhata viz. Ashtanga Samgraha (AS), Ashtanga-Hridaya (AH) and Rasa-ratna-samuchchaya. The author of Rasa-ratna-samuchchaya is definitely different one. The other two works i.e. Ashtanga-Samgraha and Ashtanga Hridaya are ascribed to the authorship of Vagbhata. In Ashtanga-Samgraha, the author has given some information about his birthplace, father and teacher but the same is not found in Ashtanga-Hridaya. There is also difference with regard to style and language, subject matter and its detail.

There is controversy regarding the author of AS and AH. Some of the scholars are of the view that author of both the AS and AH is identical whereas many others accept different authors. By later commentators the author of AS is referred as Vridhha-Vagbhata and that of AH as Svalpa-Vagbhata or Laghu-Vagbhata or simply Vagbhata. The epithet ‘Vridhha’ generally indicates that the author of AS is older or earlier than that of Laghu Vagbhata of AH. Relying on this the Indian historians generally place Vridhha-Vagbhata earlier than Laghu-Vagbhata. Nevertheless, in European circle of scholars an idea has come up that reverses the Indian concept totally. According to this, Laghu Vagbhata precedes Vridhha-Vagbhata. The theme has been discussed at length by Hilgenberg and Kirfel in the Introduction to their German translation of the AH and also by C. Vogel in the introduction to the AH.

Chandranandana, the commentator of AH is confused about the identity of two Vagbhatas. He takes them as one. Arundatta and Indu follow him. On the other hand, Dalhana, Vijayarakshita, Shrikanthadatta, Hemadri and Shivadasa Sen recognize them as different distinguishing one of them with the epithet ‘vridhha’. Indu says the author of AS as Vahata. Shrikanthadatta uses the word ‘Samgrahakara’ instead of Vridhha-Vagbhata. The epithet ‘Vridhha’ is seen with many other authors or texts such as Sushruta, Kashyapa etc.

Gananath Sen, Yadavji Trikamji, Harishastri Paradakara, Atridev Gupta and many other scholars of modern period established the identity of the author of AS and AH on the basis of similarity of language and style, same name of the father and rearrangement of the Ayurvedic text according to Ashtanga-Ayurveda. Jyotishchandra Saraswati, P.V. Sharma, Dr. Hoernle and many others are of the opinion that both

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Vagbhata's are different. Prof. Banwari Lal Gaur in his book on Sutrasthana of AH says that there is no need to debate on this issue as the high quality literary language and use of specific words justify the author of AH to be different from that of AS. There is difference in style and subject matter available in both the works. AS is in prose and verse while AH is written in verse. The language is more sophisticated and literary in AH. There is difference in subject matter also such as age of man fit for producing offspring is 25 years in AS whereas 20 years in AH, marma are of 5 types in AS while 6 types of marmas in AH. AH enumerates one more type of marma i.e. Dhamani marma. There is difference in number of each type of marma also. Thus it appears, as concluded by P.V Sharma, there were three stages in relation to Vagbhata; first: only AH was known and popular, second: both the AS and AH were known as the work of same author; and third: the authors of both the works were known to be different. This historical development appears to be nearer to the fact and it is clear that two Vagbhatas are different and are known as Vridhha-Vagbhata and Vagbhata, Vagbhata-I and Vagbhata-II or Gadya-Vagbhata and Padya-Vagbhata. 

Date of Vagbhata

There is difference of opinion regarding the date of Vagbhata like that of identity. The different views range from 2 century BC to 13 century AD. The views are as follows- according to Kunte- 2 century BC, Jyotishachandra Saraswati-1 century BC AS; 5 century AD or little earlier AH, Gurupada Haldar -2-3 century AD, Jamnagar Charak-Samhita edition- before 4 century, Paradakar, N. K. Sharma, Yadavji Trikanji, Gananath Sen and Atridev- first half of 5 century, Hoernle, Winternitz, Keith and Mukhopadhyaya - 625 AD for Vagbhata-I, 8-9 century for Vagbhata-II, Maharashtra-Gyankosha and Jolly- before 8 century, Filiozat-7-10 century, Cordier-1196-1218 century AD.

Vagbhata has not mentioned the name of Bhattara Harichandra. Bhattara Harichandra, a commentator of Charak-Samhita, has also not mentioned the name of Vagbhata. Indu and Jejjata, the commentators of Vagbhata, have mentioned the name of Bhattara Harichandra which shows that he was earlier to both the commentators. Possibly Bhattara Harichandra and Vagbhata were contemporary that’s why could not mention the name of each other. Bhattara Harichandra was the Rajvaidya of the king Sahasanka who was popular by the name Chandragupta-II and his time period is between 375-413 A.D. Therefore, the time period can be accepted the same being his Rajvaidya. Vridhha-Vagbhata has mentioned about the Shakas and Shakanganas in his text AS which shows that the time period of Vridhha-Vagbhata should be the ruling period of Shakas. Varahamihira (505 A.D.) has quoted one formulation in his text Brihat-Samhita similar to Vridhha-Vagbhata. Itsing, a Chinese traveler came to India in 7th century, mentioned the name of AS. In Madhava-nidana (7-8th Century A.D.), many verses of AH are described. On the base of above facts, the time period of Vridhha-Vagbhata (Vagbhata-I) can be accepted near about the ruling period of Chandragupta-II (end of 4th century or early 5th century AD). So, the time period of Vridhha-Vagbhata can be assumed between 400-475 A.D. and Vagbhata (Vagbhata-II) in between the 5th-6th century A.D. Hence it becomes clear that Vagbhata was predecessor to Varahamihira, Itsing and Madhavakara.

Birthplace of Vagbhata

Author of AS clearly mentions “Sindhushulabdhajanma” means he was born in Sindhu region. He has mentioned the Sindhu river, shakas and shaka-women suggests that he certainly spent some years in Sindhu region. But it seems that later he migrated to other place as he has mentioned that one should not live in a place which is not ruled by a king and which is inhibited by people who do not follow dharma; but should live in a place where food is abundant and water, herbs, firewood and other things are also available, safety is assured, natural and beautiful landscapes are nearby and which is an abode of enlightened scholars. These attributes point to Ujjain and mention of Avantisoma and Avantibhumi support to conclude that Vagbhata migrated to Ujjain and settled there. If we accept the view that Vagbhata was the grandson of

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Vriddha-Vagbhata, then the same nativity can be accepted.

**Contributions of Vagbhata**

Vagbhata was a first legendary and visionary to start the compilatory works on Ayurveda-Samhitas. He was first among humans whose text could get place among most authentic set of Samhitas popularly known as Brihat-Trayi (greater trio) of Ayurveda. He realized the problem of his generation in the learning of Ayurveda. He saw that the available Samhitas are enriched with the knowledge of one or two specialties of Ayurveda and are very lengthy. So, it requires a lot of time to have the knowledge of entire Ayurveda and life span of individual is decreased in due course of time. Therefore, he planned to write such classical text by which one can get the required knowledge of Ash-tanga-Ayurveda at one place. In this regard AS and AH are two major works which goes into the credit of Vagbhata-I and Vagbhata-II respectively. Vagbhata composed the text, which is free from repetition, neither too brief nor too elaborative, free from any kind of contradictions, reveals the clear meanings of the mysterious subject matter and in conformity with the age.

Text of Vriddha-Vagbhata possesses unique approaches such as correlation of the features of dhatu-vriddhi with that of doshas e.g. shleshmavikara in Rasa-dhatu-vriddhi, pitta-vikara in rakta-dhatuvriddhi, five types of kaphadosha, several new drugs have been mentioned in the Agrya-prakarana e.g. Vasa is the best for Rakta-pitta disease, Kantakari for Kasa-roga, Laksha for Sadyahkshata, Haridra for Prameha, Guggulu for medoroga and vata-vikara, Chitrak and Bhallataka for Shushkarsha, Kutaja for Raktarsha, enumeration of Madhyama-Panchamula and Jivaniya Panchamula, feature of season on the base of month, ecliptic and characteristic features, description of Ritusandhi, Sarvarthiddha-Anjana, average time needed for the digestion of diet and medicines, twelve types of Shasra-karma (surgical practices), twenty six surgical instruments while Sushruta mentions only twenty surgical instruments, Shiva-gutika in Rasayana-prakarana, Padalepas for vajikarana purpose and clinical use of vishas.

Text of Vagbhata (AH) possesses unique approaches such as definition of Vipaka, dose of medicine in Bhesjaja-kalpa, single specific action of Dhaatus and malas, seven Sadyaha-snehana yogas in Snehadh-yaya, enumeration of dhamani-marma, certain new formulations in chikitsa such as Suranapaka in arsha, Dadimashataka-Churna in Atisara, Ayaskriti in Udara-roga, Mandura-Vataka in Pandu-roga and so on. Number of commentaries in Sanskrit and Hindi have been written on AH which shows the gravity and significance of the text. It has been translated in other languages also. There is also popular saying that Vagbhata is the best physician in Kaliyuga and his work is best on the subject of Sutrsthana.

**DISCUSSION**

There is mention of different Vagbhatas in the history which shows that this name was very much popular in those days. The author of AS and AH are Vriddha-Vagbhata and Vagbhata respectively. It was in practice during Gupta period that the name of grandfather was given to grandson and it may be with Vagbhattas who authored Ayurvedic text AS and AH. Second controversy is regarding the date of Vagbhata because the ancient authors did not mention the date of birth. It may be due to the reason that they did not believe in introducing themselves in detail. They were devoted to work not towards the name and fame. Therefore, the date of Vagbhata decided in this article is on the base of internal as well as external evidence. Vriddha-Vagbhata has mentioned his birthplace as Sindhu region but Vagbhata did not mention. Some of the scholars are of the opinion that as the author of both the AS and AH are identical, therefore author has stated about the birth place in his early writing i.e. AS and did not feel it essential to mention in his later writing i.e. AH.

In spite of all the controversies, the contributions of Vagbhata cannot be ignored because he changed the mind sets of the people and established that both the text written by seers and sages and ordinary man can be equally useful. He has followed the existing Samhitas but rearranged text in such a nice way that it became the choice of vaidyas for getting the knowledge.
of Ashtanga-Ayurveda. He has started the new dimension of thoughts. At one place, he stated that a good thought and information is welcomed by public otherwise why Bhela-Samhita and Harit-Samhita are not studied similar to Charaka-Samhita and Sushruta-Samhita. He has also stated that an effective medicine given by anyone either he is seer or ordinary man, definitely acts. These thoughts of Vagbhata reveal that he has struggled a lot to establish his classics.

CONCLUSION

After thorough study and discussion, it can be stated firmly that AS and AH are the authentic text or classics of Ayurveda written by Vriddda-Vagbhata and Vagbhata respectively. The gravity and significance of the text of Vagbhata is the cause behind its inclusion in Brihat-trayi of Ayurveda. It shows that Vagbhata was endowed with the great vision. He has contributed a lot in the area of fundamental doctrines, description of medicines, surgical practices and description of systematic required knowledge of Ashtanga-Ayurveda through his text. Thus, he was really a great legendary and visionary of Ayurveda.

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