

NEED FOR A SECTION OF HISTORY OF MEDICINE IN THE IMPORTANT MEDICAL LIBRARIES OF INDIA*

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A sound knowledge of History of Medicine in general and of India in particular is very essential to the administrators, teachers and research scholars of medicine in India to understand and appreciate the present state of health and medical care in the light of the background of our past and also to plan intelligently the future medical teaching and training and medical care in India. It is also necessary to some extent, to the students, particularly at post-graduate level, to appreciate the medical heritage of India. The study of history of medicine helps to absorb the high standards of ethics laid down in the past to respect the antiquity of the art of healing to inspire us with love towards the medical profession and to appreciate and admire our past tradition, struggle and achievements.

For this purpose the students and staff must have access to the variety of books and journals, particularly biographies and great classics which are becoming increasingly available on a variety of subjects like anthropology, public health, social security, medical care, preventive medicine, family planning, medical education and medical specialities. Hence, the setting up of a section for the history of medicine in the National, post-graduate medical Institutions in India and also in the Libraries of Research Institutes and bigger medical colleges is essential.

In the academies and societies of medicine in European and American Universities, there are large number of collections of old and rare books and journals pertaining to History of Medicine. Such collections are useful for the research scholars and authors in medicine. Though European Medicine was introduced in America only 3 centuries ago, the learned Institutions in the Universities have acquired large number of old and rare books and journals both of European writings and of all material of American origin.

In India, though it is known that there are large collections of manuscripts on Ayurveda and other systems of Medicine, scattered in different parts of India, they are in Oriental Libraries and not in medical Institutions. Though many books on Ayurvedic and other systems have been printed in India during the last 150 years, we have only list of books with private individuals or in private institutions and there is no library or libraries which acquired and preserved old and rare books useful for study of History of Medicine. It was only after medical schools or medical colleges were established in the first half of the 19th Century, attempts were made to provide libraries for the use of staff and students in these colleges of so called Western medicine. Such libraries, which are nearly 150 years old, existed in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and

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other cities, but many of the old books and journals have disappeared, and some were lost by vagaries of weather or some were thrown away or were auctioned, partly on account of lack of appreciation of the value of the old books and partly due to the need for space for expanding the library with more and more new books and editions. Even after all these losses including the destruction by insects and temits etc. there are a good number of books compiled or written by medical officers serving in India on the basis of their experiences of this country. Some of these books were printed abroad and many were printed in India. These were prepared with the idea to help the new medical officers to understand the health problems and diseases in the Indian climates and to know of the indigenous drugs available in India.

Every developed country has a National or Central Medical Library which acquires and preserves and promotes the use of such collections of old and rare books. The National Medical Library of India may give greater attention to the preservation of old and rare books of European Medicine and also of books of Medicine of European Origin as well as books written by medical officers in India and printed in Europe or in India. Such early literature is also essential today for a proper understanding of the course and development of modern medicine in India and also very useful for the research workers, teachers and administrators,

Soon after India attained independence, when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, formed the first National Government, Hon'ble Rajkumari Amrit Kaur became the first Health Minister and Dr. Devaraj N. Mehta, took charge as the first Indian Director-General of Health Services of India. At that time some of the senior medical administrators felt the necessity for collecting information pertaining to old and rare books available in Indian libraries for history of medicine. The D. G. H. S., appointed an officer on Special Duty for examining older libraries in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and in other Cities and to trace medical works to prepare a list of books still existing in Indian Libraries for the utilisation as the nucleus to the library of the History of Medicine in India. The project was closed while the work was half way through and interim report was submitted nearly 25 years ago, for the necessary action. But no further attention seems to have been given to this report or any further action taken on it.

The Bhole Committee had accepted the suggestion of Prof. Sigerist for an Institute of History of Medicine, as a part of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences at New Delhi. But there was a delay in opening of the main Institute, and when All India Institute was opened there was no provision for a department of History of Medicine. Meanwhile the Upgrading Committee of Government of India recommended, the opening of an Upgraded Department of History of Medicine at Vizag.

When the Department of History of Medicine was opened in 1956, at Vizag plans were made to collect and form a select library of old books for History of Medicine for teaching, research and administrative training. This department subsequently became Indian Institute of History of Medicine under Central Council for Research in Indian

Medicine and Homoeopathy. The Library of this Institute is unique and valuable for its collection of rare and old books pertaining to all countries of the world as old and rare books illustrating History of Medicine in India, in ancient, medieval and modern time, covering various systems of medicines in India like, Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha. Later, a sub-department of History of Medicine was opened in the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi. This Department is building up a good library and a good museum.

The postgraduate Institutions of Medicine at Calcutta, Chandigarh and Pondicherry and many other well developed medical colleges in Central Universities with post-graduate courses might have by now acquired medico-historical collections. It is difficult to obtain very old, rare and costly historical material like books, manuscripts, museum material etc. and individuals cannot afford to secure them for their personal library unless they are affluent and also very keen on history of Medicine. It therefore, becomes necessary for the Central and State Governments to consider the present needs of the situation and rectify the deficiencies and provide adequate infrastructure funds and facilities to equip these temples of learning.

It is necessary to organise training course for the libraries in this special discipline so that the historical sections in the major medical libraries may be developed and expanded and on right lines. Training courses in Documentation, abstracting and information retrieval services will go a long way in this programme. Simultaneously there must be arrangements atleast in the bigger libraries for the publications. Such training facilities are necessary if the medical history libraries are to be built up on the rational and scientific lines with maximum benefit for the science and country.

It may be helpful to depute a librarian with experience in a large medical library to visit some of the older libraries with historical collection in Europe and America to get acquainted with the procedures and techniques in a collection rare old books and microfilms for utilising the library to the best advantage and also to arrange for training centres of medical libraries in their special field of History of Medicine in India.

Every modern library intended to serve wide areas and learned professions must be equipped for reprography such as Microfilm Reader and other photo duplicating equipment like Xerox etc. There must also be trained personnel to operate this equipment.

The Ministries of Health, both in Centre and State may send circulars and publish advertisements calling for old and rare books, reports and journals with medical interest available with different individuals or families or Institutions under the government or private management and to secure them for the libraries either free or by purchase if necessary.

The National Medical Library, at Delhi, situated in the Medical Enclave, may also serve as a Centre for Historical collection of medical books and also provide

references and extracts through microfilms and Xerox copies to other libraries of India. The Historical collections of the Medical books and journals in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay and other Cities may be pooled together in one place in the city to serve as a Medico-Historical Library, with Documentation and Information Services. These Libraries may send Catalogue of their collection to the National Medical Library and also micro films. The National Medical Library will also prepare its own catalogue of collection on History of Medicine and also Union Catalogue of old and rare books available in different Centres of India to prepare bibliographies and microfilms. The Libraries and other post-graduate Institutions in India may be provided with microfilms or of the xerox copies of the references and extracts required, at moderate cost for research workers and other individuals interested in the field and freely to Government Institution and the Research Bodies. Arrangements may also be made to supply such references and extracts, to scholars in India and abroad.

It may also be necessary to consider to appoint an expert Committee both at Centre and local level to plan and implement necessary changes quickly and smoothly. Apart from the representatives of medical administrators and medical librarians some experts of library science and Documentation Service and a few eminent people who are interested in History of Medicine may also be included in this Committee.

A short paper like this may not cover all details, but if this paper succeeds in creating interest among the librarians of the need for a Section of History of Medicine in the medical libraries and secures their support for materialisation of the suggestions made in this paper the author of this paper will be gratified.

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SUMMARY

- I. Need for the knowledge of History of Medicine for medical men.
- II. The wealth of historical collection of medicine in Europe and America.
- III. The absence of paucity and neglected state of medico-historical collection in India.
- IV. Attempts to locate and collect books on History of Medicine.
- V. The opening of Upgraded Department of History of Medicine and collection of select library of books of History of Medicine relating to world and especially relating to India.
- VI. Need to utilise the existing historical collection to the maximum extent.

- VII. Training of necessary personnel in the Division of Medical History for the improving collections for the Documentation and Information Services and for the publication of the Researchers.
- VIII. Suggestions for the enrichment of the Historical collections and old medical historical works by various procedures followed in the West.
- IX. Equipment required for the Documentation and Bibliography Services on History of Medicine and supplying microfilms and xerox copies for Institutions and individuals.

सारांश

‘भारत के महत्वपूर्ण वैद्यकीय पुस्तकालयों में वैद्यक-इतिहास की आवश्यकता’

—सी. गोविन्दारेड्डी

- I. चिकित्सकों को वैद्यक-इतिहास के ज्ञान की आवश्यकता ।
- II. यूरोप तथा अमेरिका में, वैद्यक की इतिहास सम्बन्धी संगृहीत निधियाँ ।
- III. भारत में, वैद्यक-इतिहास की प्रचुर सामग्री होने पर भी एतत्सम्बन्धी संग्रह की उपेक्षणीय स्थिति ।
- IV. वैद्यक-इतिहास के पुस्तकों का स्थान प्रदर्शन और संग्रह करने का प्रयास ।
- V. वैद्यक-इतिहास के स्तरोन्नत विभागों का उद्घाटन तथा कुछ वांछनीय पुस्तकालयों का चयन जिनमें, विश्व के वैद्यक-इतिहास विषयक पुस्तकों का और विशेषकर भारतीय वैद्यक-इतिहास के पुस्तकों का भाण्डार हो ।
- VI. सम्प्रति वर्तमान जो इतिहास सम्बन्धी संग्रह हैं, उनका सर्वाधिक उपयोग करने की आवश्यकता है ।
- VII. वैद्यक-इतिहास प्रभागान्तर्गत कुछ आवश्यक समझे जाने वाले (नियुक्त) प्रभारियों का प्रशिक्षण जिससे, संग्रहों द्वारा डॉक्मेंटेशन और इन्फॉर्मेशन सेवाओं में अभिवृद्धि की जा सके और प्रकाशन तथा अनुसन्धान की भी अभिवृद्धि हो सके ।
- VIII. इतिहास सम्बन्धी संग्रहों की समृद्धि के हेतु सुझाव, और पाश्चात्य पद्धतियों के अनुसार कई प्रकारों की विधियाँ अपनाकर वैद्यक-इतिहास की पुरानी कृतियों को उपलब्धि का सुझाव ।
- IX. डॉक्मेंटेशन तथा ग्रन्थ-लेखकों के इतिहास (बिब्लियोग्राफी) सम्बन्धी सेवाओं में जरूरी उपकरणों का वितरण और संस्थानों अथवा व्यक्तियों को अणुचित्रों और एक्सेराॅक्स (Xerox) की प्रतियों का वितरण ।