

## GLIMPSSES INTO THE PRACTICE AND PRINCIPLES OF MEDICINE IN BUDDHISTIC INDIA IN THE 7TH CENTURY A. D.<sup>1</sup>

Gleaned from "The Records of Buddhist Religion" by the  
Chinese Monk I-tsing<sup>2</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

Medicine as practised and conserved in India in the second half of 8th c. A. D. is best reflected in the writings of I-tsing the Chinese traveller. I-tsing refers to the rules of good living which lay considerable emphasis on the hygiene of body and mind. The rules cover topics like daily walk, bath, dental hygiene. The account of I-tsing also sheds light on the curative medicine including symptoms, methods of diagnosis, theories of causation, materia-medica, therapeutics and drug treatment. Some famous and popular prescriptions and also harmful treatment are dealt with. The author presents the social status of the physician and some interesting sidelights on society and religion based on the Account. I-tsing remarks on the current traditions concerned with the History of Medicine in India.

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1. A paper read in the Medical section of the 25th Annual Meeting of the Indian Science Congress held at Calcutta from January 3rd to 9th, 1938. As the Congress was celebrating its Silver Jubilee, the occasion was made a notable one by a joint session with the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Reprinted from the Bulletin of the Institute of the History of Medicine, 6 (9), 1938 pp. 987-1000.

2. I-tsing was born in 635 A. D. in Fanyang near Peking. From his 12th year he devoted himself to the study of the sacred canon of Buddha. It was in his 18th year that he first formed the intention of travelling to India. This plan was not, however, carried out till his 37th year. While engaged in his studies in the western capital in 670 A. D., some of his teachers and other Bhadantas set their hearts on visiting the sacred places of Buddhists such as Vulture Peak and

"I made a successful study in medical sciences but as it is not my proper vocation I have finally given it up."  
—*I-tsing*

The art and science of medicine, as practised and conceived in India in the latter half of the 7th century A. D., is best reflected in the pages of "Record of Buddhist Religion" written by I-tsing, a Chinese monk, who toured India in search of books and knowledge, and lived nearly ten years in the University of Nalanda, then the most famous University in the East and rightly called "the Oxford of Buddhist India." He has preserved for us, in his book, minute details regarding the beliefs and practices of the period with regard

to health and diseases, and the value of his observations is considerably enhanced by the fact that he was not merely a learned monk with a thirst for knowledge, but had actually studied Sanskrit and the science of medicine at the feet of the masters in the Faculty of Medicine at Nalanda. He has also translated a book, "Bhaishagya Vasthu,"<sup>1</sup> included in the Vinaya texts. He tells us that, as it was not his proper vocation, he finally gave it up. But he did not note the details of rules of hygiene or medical principles and practices of contemporary India as an idle pastime or to supply his readers with gossip and travellers' tales. His object was definitely much more

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seeing the Tree of Knowledge in India. One by one all his friends withdrew from the dangerous journey for one reason or other and he alone had the good fortune of reaching India by the southern sea-route. He landed at Tamralipti (in Bengal) in 673 A. D. and resumed his journey westward on land in the company of many hundreds of merchants. About a ten days' journey from Mahabodhi Vihara, I-tsing was attacked by an illness of the season and also narrowly escaped from a band of highway robbers. He worshipped at Vulture Peak, Mahabodhi Vihara, Kusinagara and later settled down to study at Nalanda Vihara for 10 years (675-685 A. D.) After having studied at the feet of many great masters and collecting scriptures (400 texts—500,000 slokas) he retraced his footsteps to Tamralipti, where he again took ship in 685 to Sri Bhoga, at which place he continued to study sutras for some years. It is believed that he wrote "The Record" from 690 to 692 A. D. Having accidentally missed his passage in a homeward-bound ship, he sent in 692 "The Record" in 4 volumes or chapters to China through another monk, Tatsin. His object in composing this treatise was to correct the misrepresentations of Vinaya rules, particularly of the Mulasarvasthivada school. He therefore dwells chiefly on monastic life and discipline of the times. Mingled with these, however, are several passages or even chapters of great historical and cultural interest. The book is now available in English. "A Record of Buddhist Religion, as practised in India," by I-tsing, translated by J. Takakusu, Oxford, 1806. Finally I-tsing himself returned to China in 694-5 and was greatly honoured by the Royalty and the people. From 700 to 712 he went on translating Indian works (56 in number and about 250 volumes), covering a wide range of Vinaya texts. He died in 713 A. D. in his 79th year.

1. Bodleian Library collection contains a text (no. 5) called Mulasarvastivada—Bhaishagya-Vastu—18 Volumes—(C. F. Mahavagga. Khanda VI). Life & Travels of I-tsing XXXVII. J. Takakusu.

utilitarian or humanitarian. He wrote to satisfy the needs of the times. His book may be described as one of the early, if not the earliest, Health Primers and medical guides for the benefit of the missionary. After referring with pardonable pride to the superiority of Chinese drugs, he adds, "But though the herbs and stones are many, the tending and protection of the body and inspection of causes of diseases are neglected. I describe the general methods of medical treatment in order to meet the wants of the time." The book is therefore clearly intended and written as a prototype of the "Moore's Family Medicine" or a "Missionary's Guide to Health and Simple Treatment."

### **The Philosophical Background of the Age**

The importance of health for a vigorous intellectual and spiritual life was clearly recognised. "Is it not a sad thing that sickness prevents the pursuit of one's duty and vocation? Is it indeed a small matter for us to lose one's glory and favour?"

The theory of Karma still forms the background of Indian thought. "The swallowing of poison or death and birth is often due to one's former Karma." I-tsing, however, is not a fatalist. Perhaps he was only echoing the popular conversation when he

added "still, it does not follow that a man should hesitate to avoid or further a circumstance that lends to or averts disease in the present life." But there was still some belief in "repetitions" as the writer describes a long repetition for the prevention of disease. "I desire that an established disease may be cured without much medicine and that a fresh disease may be prevented, thus not necessitating a physician. Then a healthy condition of the body and the absence of any disease may be expected. If practised accordingly the method above mentioned will bring ease to the body and perfected merit to religious work." Matrceta's hymns were so popular in India, on account of their poetical excellence, spiritual solace and therapeutic virtues. "Sixthly, by their use, life is prolonged, free from disease."

### **Preventive Outlook of Medicine**

Considerable emphasis is laid on the hygiene of the body and mind. I-tsing notes the rules of good living. His insistence on the cleanliness of body and utensils, his sound advice regarding manner of cooking, serving and eating food, his elaborate descriptions of the manner of serving a meal at feasts and procedure laid down for cleansing before and after meals, his classification of the food-stuffs, the good or bad effects of various articles in diet, his lists of

diets common in the various parts of India, his description of the water vessels and methods to filter or purify the water and the instructions regarding the storing and use of water are too long to be included in a short paper like this. That his ideas resemble almost our modern conceptions is clear from statements like the following "Food is sufficient if you do not die of hunger." "Everything must be clean and pure if you prepare either food or drink for the spirits or for yourself." "Earthy body is maintained only by food and clothing."

This learned monk devotes considerable space to the advantages to health of proper exercises. "In India, both laymen and priests are in the habit of taking walks, along a path in secluded places. Firstly it cures diseases and secondly it helps to digest food." "If anyone neglects this exercise, he will suffer from ill-health and often be troubled by a swelling of the legs or of the stomach, a pain in the elbow or shoulders. Walking for the sake of air is an exercise and its object is to keep oneself in good health or to cure diseases." He also notes that every morning, a pupil enquires of the teacher if he is in perfect health, and that the senior Bhikkus blessed the juniors with the words "Arogya" ("Be healthy").

As important as the daily walk was the cleansing bath. Buddha

himself is said to have taught how to build a bath-room, how to construct a brick pond in an open place and how to make a medical bath to cure a disease. Sometimes the body was anointed with oil, sometimes the feet alone or the head was rubbed with oil, for maintaining clear eyesight and for keeping off cold. Among the therapeutic effects of bath, I-tsing mentions that a bath, in addition to cleansing the body, promoted the digestion of food, making the subject free from phlegm and preventing the disease of internal organs. He also tells us that baths should be taken when one is hungry and that bathing after a good meal is forbidden in the science of medicine (Chikitchavidya).

Dental hygiene occupies a prominent place. Detailed rules for cleansing before and after meals are noted. "Unclean spittle should not remain in the mouth. To remove taints or grease, lips should be washed with peafLOUR or mud made by mixing earth with water. It is a fault if there should be a taint of food in the teeth or grease in the tongue. This is done by using peafLOUR or ash-water. The wise should see this and be careful in the matter." One should not swallow mouth-water or spittle. The mouth should be rinsed two or three times with pure water. Then only should a person drink water and in a secluded place. Anyone breaking this rule

loses his dignity. The description of various kinds of tooth-woods, their size, the manner of using them and the varying therapeutic effects are set forth with a clearness and enthusiasm that is rare even in modern text-books of medicine. Dantakas-tha, taken from the stem, branch or root of a tree is prepared beforehand. "Its length is to be 8 to 12 fingers breadth and its thickness the size of little finger. Chew softly one of its ends and clean the teeth with it. Then washing it and bending it rub the tongue." "Chew fully and polish cleanly. Let all saliva come out. Rinse abundantly with water." The dirt at the root of the teeth, hardened by time, must all be cleansed away. If washed with warm water, teeth will be free from dirt. Young people can chew any wood. Even children of three years are taught to use it. The elders must have the stick hammered at one end and made soft. The best wood is bitter, astringent or pungent in taste or one that becomes like cotton when chewed. The root of the northern Burweed is most excellent. It hardens the teeth, scents the mouth, helps to digest the food or relieves the heartburn.

The society of the period must have set a high value on tooth-wood as it was a custom to offer tooth-woods to guests on festive occasions and at religious ceremonies. Therapeutics of tooth-wood are also mentioned. "If this kind of tooth

cleanser be used, the smell of his mouth will go off after 15 days; or disease in canine teeth or toothache will be cured after a month." Sometimes it is held that one can cure sickness by drinking juice of tooth-wood. We need not be surprised to hear from this foreign visitor that toothache was very rare in India owing to their chewing tooth-wood.

More astonishing to the present generation, who witnessed the opening of E. N. T. (Ear, Nose, Throat) clinics in India, will be the simple but efficient rules of hygiene of the nose. "Take in the water from the nose once a day. This is the means of securing a long life adopted by Boddhisat Nagarjuna. When a man gets used to these practices, he is less attacked by sickness."

## **CURATIVE MEDICINE**

### **Symptoms of bodily illness**

1. Loss of appetite: appetite depends on the condition of four elements, of which the body consists. When health is recovered he will feel hungry.

2. Eating causes discomfort to the person and this brings about symptoms of disease.

3. When one has a headache and lies in bed it is called disease.

4. Sometimes we find that

some days phlegm fills the gullet, water coming incessantly out of the mouth and nose, and the accumulated water being enclosed in an air pipe causes acute pain in the throat. In such a case, speaking is difficult on account of want of voice and all food is tasteless.

### Method of diagnosis

The medical science, one of the five vidyas in India, states that a physician, having inspected the countenance of the diseased and the voice, prescribes for the patient according to the eight sections of the medical science.<sup>1</sup> If he does not understand the secret of the science he will, though desirous of acting properly, fall into mistake.

1. The following are the eight sections of medical science, according to I-tsing. "The first treats of all kinds of sores; the second of acupuncture for any disease above the neck; the third of the diseases of the body; the fourth of demoniac diseases; the fifth, of the Agada Medicine (antidote); the sixth, of the diseases of children; the seventh, of the means of lengthening one's life; the eighth, of the methods of invigorating the legs and body. Sores (1) are of two kinds, inward and outward. The disease above the neck (2) is all that is on the head and face; any disease lower down from the throat is called a 'bodily' disease (3) The demoniac (4) is the attack of evil spirits and the 'Agada' (5) is the medicine for counteracting poisons. By 'children' (6) is meant from the embryo stage until after a boy's 16th year; lengthening life (7) is to maintain the body so as to live long, while 'Invigorating the legs and body' (8) means to keep the body and limbs strong and healthy."

Simply noticing that one is ill but not investigating the cause of the illness is a dangerous thing. This is prohibited in the science of Medicine. To find out the cause of the sickness, one should examine oneself in the morning. If one feels any disturbance in the four elements on inspection, abstinence from eating is to be first observed. There is indeed no trouble in feeling the pulse. Of what use is it then to enquire one's fate from a diviner! If one be indisposed, he should investigate the cause. When the cause of ill-health has been discovered, one should take rest. When a disease has befallen one, rest and cure must be taken at once.

### Theories of causation of disease

1. Disequilibrium of four mahabutas. Every living creature is subject to either a peaceful working or the failure of the great elements.

2. A disease might arise due to the changing seasons.

3. Generally speaking a disease which has befallen a body arises from too much eating, or eating again before the former food is digested.

4. Disease is also brought on sometimes by excessive labour.

5. Eating of red stones, drug habits.

6. Snake bites, etc.
7. Climatic causes—heat, lightning.
8. Accident:—wounds due to sword, arrow or falling down.

It is pointed out that Buddha attributed failure of health to the disequilibrium of four great elements earth, water, fire and air. I-tsing, however, adds a very illuminating comment. "If we discuss sickness, according to the common custom, there are only 3 kinds, instead of 4."

### **Materia medica**

I-tsing notices that the medical herbs in India are the same as those in China. Some of the best herbs of China are not found in India at all. But Harithika Kumkum (Saffron) and Swasthika are abundant within the limits of India. Three kinds of cardomoms are found in Dwaravathi; two kinds of cloves grow in Polucondore. Only the herbs above mentioned are used in India. All other herbs are not worth gathering. The Chinese missionary goes into a rhapsody about the 400 kinds of herbs and roots of China. "We can cure disease and control temper." He asserts the superiority of China. "In the healing art of acupuncture and cautery and the skill of feeling pulse, China has never been superseded by any country in Jambudvipa."

### **Therapeutics**

1. General: When a disease has befallen one, he must rest.

2. Dietetics: Food is forbidden at an improper time. If anyone feels illness, then one should abstain from food. Even in great thirst, one must not take any syrup or water, for this is the strictest prohibition in this science. During the day at least in which treatment is adopted the patient must abstain from eating. This abstinence is to be continued sometimes a day or two or even four or five days until the disease has been quite cured. It is not good to force a person when attacked by a violent fever to drink hot water or to take food. Food should be avoided also in a case of sickness brought on by swallowing a red stone (Cinnabar) or in chronic illness or in swelling of stomach. Food should be abstained from in all other diseases such as fever, a violent pain in hands and feet, any injury caused by lightning, sword, or arrow, an acute febrile disease, cholera, measles, diarrhoea, heart disease and toothache. When sickness has not been cured by medicine, one may eat food at any prescribed hour, if this be the physician's order.

3. Fasting in the treatment of disease: Fasting is an effective cure without any trouble of cauterising the head or rubbing the throat. This is

in accordance with the general rule of the science of medicine, i. e., curing disease without using a decoction or any medicine. The explanation is that when the stomach is empty, violent fever abates. When the juice of the food is absorbed the phlegmatic disease is caused. When the internal organs are at rest and bad breath dispersed, severe cold will naturally be over. There will be no failure if the method is adhered to. "If it be necessary to consult some famous physician, the poor and the needy are cut off, from the food of life. When it is a case of gathering the best herbs from the western fields the parentless and the helpless will lose their way. But the fasting of which we are now speaking is simple and admirable, for it is practised equally by the poor and the rich." I - sting also gives many rules to be observed in fasting, prescribes the limit to the period of fasting in different regions of India, and even tries to answer the question whether fasting is in any way bad. He warns, however, that poisons such as snake - bites are not cured by fasting. Fasting, therefore, is to be studied and practised as a science and not to be looked upon as a religious observance. In the science of Ayurveda, handed down by Sakra Davendra as one of the five sciences of India, the most important rule is fasting.

### Drug treatment

1. In fever (Malaria) give decoction of liquorice root, wild tea and bitter ginseng (Aratiac quinquefolia).
2. In the cure of violent fever the application of cooling by means of water is prohibited. But in hot and damp places lying south of a river and range, the above rule is not to be applied. When a fever arises in this region, cooling by water is effective.
3. In the cure of sinking heaviness and shivering cold, the best remedy is to remain near the fire.
4. When suffering from "wind pressure" (this probably represents rheumatism), the best remedy is to anoint the wounded and painful spot with oil and to warm it with a heated bedsheet. If one anoints the same with warm oil, good also results.
5. If one feels that there is food in the stomach, one should press or stroke the belly at the navel, drink as much hot water as one can and put the finger inside the throat to cause vomiting. Drinking and ejecting, one should continue the same till the remnant of the food is exhausted. Or there is no harm if one drinks cold water and hot water mixed with dry ginger.



### **Famous and popular prescriptions**

The book mentions certain prescriptions since the benefit conferred by them is remarkable.

1. A pill called Sanling (equal mixture of three) is also good for several sicknesses and not difficult to obtain. Take the bark of Harithaki (yellow myrobalam), dry ginger, and sugar. Prepare the three in equal quantities, grind former two and mix them with sugar by means of some drops of water and then prepare pills. About ten pills for one dose every morning is the limit. No dieting is required.

In case of diarrhoea, about two to three doses are sufficient to effect recovery. The benefit derived from this cure is very great, as it can relieve a patient from giddiness, cold, indigestion, etc.

2. Treatment for common cold. If one feels chilly, the last named water (lentil soup) is to be drunk with some pepper or ginger or piper longum (pippali). If one feels cold, kashgarian onions or wild mustard must be applied. The sastra on medical treatment says "anything of acrid or hot, removes a cold with the exception of dry ginger." Avoid drinking cold water, carry out other dieting according to medical advice. In case of cold, eating will not hurt one.

3. Another prescription highly recommended by I-tsing is based on his personal experience. Tea and ginseng decoction was the medication he took daily during the twenty years he was away from China. He hardly suffered from any serious disease, and this freedom from sickness he attributes to the tonic.

### **Harmful treatment**

He warns against the dangers of harmful medical treatments which are not to be practised. The dangerous habit of swallowing a stone, red or white (most probably mercury sulphide or arsenic), seems to have been very common in those days. A crystal or adulasia sometimes produces fire. If swallowed, one's body is burnt and cracked. "People of these days do not distinguish this and those who die of this fault are innumerable" Again, he condemns the filthy medicines. "When a sickness arises, people use the urine and faeces as medicament; sometimes the dung of pigs or cats which is kept in jars. People called it the 'dragon decoction,' which, though beautifully named, is the worst of filthy remedies." The devout Buddhist also refuses to believe that Buddha allowed treatment of illness with putrid substances like the urine and faeces of cows.

## The Training of the Physician and His Social Status

The pupil had to live on simple fare, taking a breakfast of rice water, etc., at sunrise. During the illness of the pupil, the teacher nursed him, supplied all medicines needed and paid attention to him as if he were his own son. The courses of study were comprehensive. The eight divisions of Ayurveda (Astangas) had to be studied. "These eight arts formerly existed in eight books, but lately a man epitomised them and made them into one bundle. All the physicians in five parts of India practised according to the book. Any physician who is well versed in it never fails to live by official pay."

Special mention may be drawn to the observation that a man well versed in this treatise never fails to

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5. There has been some difference of opinion with regard to the identity of the author here referred to by I-tsing. Takakusu assumed that the reference is to Susruta. Later, the question whether it was Susruta or Vagbhata whom I-tsing had in mind had been the subject of a learned discussion between Prof. Julius Jolly and Prof. Hoernle. It is almost impossible to be definite or dogmatic in matters of this kind, but the consensus of present-day opinion seems to be in favour of accepting the view that the medical writer referred to by I-tsing was probably Vagbhata the Second, the author of the celebrated compendium 'Astanga Hridaya' (the essence of eight sections), a book which has maintained a primacy of place as a handbook for all Indian physicians throughout the early and later middle ages and even to the present day.

live by official pay, thus proving the existence of a paid medical service in India more than a thousand years ago and also indicating that a high standard of knowledge was insisted upon for appointment of medical officers. 'The Indians greatly honour physicians, for they do not injure life and they give life to others as well as benefit themselves.' I-tsing is a great admirer of this particular profession and asks, "Is it not beneficial if people can benefit others as well as themselves by the study of medicine?"

## Interesting Sidelights on Society and Religion

The book affords many interesting sidelights on the life of the times. People laid up with any illness were permitted to eat with spoons and not with hands. Persons approaching honoured teachers were expected to have their feet bare except in cases of illness. Elaborate procedures were daily practised by people to purify themselves after urination and after defaecation. Among the thirteen necessities of Bhikkus are two items of medical interest. One of these was a piece of cloth made of silk and twenty feet long, kept with the Bhikkus for defraying the cost of medicines in cases of necessity. The other is a piece of cloth to cover "itches" whenever the Bhikkus suffered from them. On the death of a Bhikku enquiries were to be made

whether anyone nursed him during his last illness, and the six requisites of a priest were to be handed over to that person. The stores of medicines left by the dead man were to be kept in a consecrated store and to be supplied to sick persons when needed.

### **Medical economics**

I-tsing offers sound advice to people, urging them not to take unscientific and useless medicine with a view to avoid expenses. People spend money lavishly and neglect to provide immediate needs. "People would not take good medicine and, seeking the least expense, would use Dragon Decoction though their motive may be to get some benefit from such medicine yet they are not aware of their grave offence to the noble teaching." He seems to be fully sensitive to the wide gulf between the rich and the poor, and conveys the same to readers in a pathetic manner. "The princes and powerful nobility alone can command effective and fashionable treatment. In such cases those who are rich can buy the costly pill prepared from kidneys, or the valuable glue that comes from Syria. But those who are poor can do nothing and pass away with the morning dews."

### **Powerlessness of the physician**

"What can one do when an illness had got the upper hand. Every

effort will be in vain even if the physician of Lee come in the morning and present pills and powder or if Peim-chi-ai visit in the evening and offer a medication or plaster." Cauterised with fire or with a puncture applied, one's body is treated just as wood or stone. Except by the shaking of the legs and moving of head, the sick differs not from the corpse. "Such results are indeed due to one's ignorance of the cause of disease and the want of understanding how to remedy. It may be said that people hope for recovery without ground, just like someone, who wishing to stop a stream does not dam it at its source or like those who being desirous of cutting down a forest, do not fell the trees at their roots but allow the current or the sprout to increase more and more."

### **I-tsing's Contribution to the History of Medicine**

Atreya and Charaka or Dhanvantari and Susruta often begin their addresses and discussions with a few preliminary remarks reviewing the history of the topic in medicine under discussion and mentioning the names of famous sages of Vedic and Brahmanic India and stating briefly the view and arguments of various protagonists and antagonists. I-tsing adds very interesting remarks on the current traditions concerned with the history of medicine in India. The

science of medicine was handed down from Sakra - Devendra as one of the five sciences of India which is followed throughout the five parts of that country.

But his unique contribution is treasured in the following passage : "Therefore the world - honoured one Budda himself preached a Sutra on the art of medicine." Kasyapa, the commentator of I - tsing, points out that this Sutra on medicine was not translated into Chinese. If this Sutra could be identified or unearthed, it is likely to modify some of the present conceptions with regard to the evolution of Indian medicine and its contribution or indebtedness to the Greek medicine of the fifth and fourth centuries before Christ.

I - tsing preserves a fragment of the Sutra. Buddha is reported as having attributed the failure of health to the disequilibrium of the Four Great Elements (Mahabhutas) in the following manner :

1. Making of the body slothful

and heavy owing to an increase of the element Earth.

2. Having very much eye mucous or mouth water owing to an accumulation of the element Water.

3. Having head and chest very feverish owing to the overpowering heat caused by the element Fire.

4. The violent rush of breath owing to the moving influence of the element Air.

Takakusu, the editor of I - tsing, observes that while it is easy to restore the items 2, 3 and 4 representing the well - known Tridosha theory (Theory of three humours) the first item is difficult to interpret as the Chinese word used by I - tsing may mean "Disease swelling of the abdomen" or "Chronic enlargement of spleen." Indefatigable search for this Sutra or its scattered fragments in Pali or Sanskrit and a close study of the texts alone can elucidate some of these difficult problems facing the medical historians of the East and West.

सारांश

सातवीं शताब्दी में बौद्धधर्म के भारत में  
चिकित्सा के अभ्यास एवं सिद्धान्तों की झलक

चीनी भिक्षु इत्सिंग के “बौद्धधर्म के अभिलेख” से एकत्रित

डी. बी. एस. रेड्डी

चीनी यात्री इत्सिंग के लेखों में भारत में आठवीं शताब्दी के उत्तरार्ध में चिकित्सा के अभ्यास एवं विचारों को अच्छे ढंग से प्रतिबिम्बित किया गया। इत्सिंग अच्छे जीवन यापन के नियमों का उल्लेख करते हैं जो कि शरीर एवं मन के स्वास्थ्य पर काफी जोर डालते हैं। इत्सिंग के विवरण उपचारात्मक चिकित्सा के साथ रोग रक्षण निदान पद्धति, रोग कारण के सिद्धान्त, द्रव्यगुण, चिकित्सा तथा औषध उपचार पर भी प्रकाश डालते हैं। कुछ प्रतिष्ठित व लोकप्रचलित नुस्खे तथा हानिकारक उपचारों का भी विवरण किया गया। लेखक विहितियों के सामाजिक स्थिति तथा कुछ रोगरू घटनाओं को जो कि समाज व धर्म के आधार पर हैं प्रस्तुत करते हैं। इत्सिंग भारत में आयुर्विज्ञान इतिहास के तत्कालीन प्रचलित परम्पराओं से सम्बन्धित विषय पर अपने विचार प्रकट करते हैं।