

## BIOGRAPHY OF *Vaṅgasēna* - HIS CONTRIBUTION

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### ABSTRACT

*Vaṅgasēna*, the celebrated author of the *Vaṅgasēna saṁhita* or *Cikitsā Saṅgrha* is one of the medieval luminaries of the Indian system of medicine. *Vaṅgasēna* perhaps can be counted among few celebrities of *āyurvēda*, who attained the fame and commanded respect from the intellectual community especially in Bengal with just a single work. He is the son of *Gadādhāra* a commentator of *Caraka*, *śuśṛta* and *Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya* who hails from West Bengal.

The work describes diseases comprehensively and contains detailed accounts of treatment. It contains additional information, which makes it a complete treatise on *āyurvēda*. He compiled this work as well- tried medical formulae from the predecessors.

### Introduction

*Vaṅgasēna* perhaps can be counted among few ancient luminaries of the Indian system of medicine, who attained the fame and commanded respect from the intellectual community with just a single work. His contribution to the *āyurvēda* as the Author of *Cikitsā Saṅgrha* or *Vaṅgasēna Saṁhita* is priceless. The work has been consistently popular among physicians especially in Bengal. Other titles for this comprehensive treatise are *Cikitsamaharnava*, *Cikitsāsaṅgrha*, *Cikitsatattva Sangraha*, *Vaidyavallabha* and *Vangadatta Vaidyaka* (A.H. of I.M.L. Vol. II A. pp.223).

*Vaṅgasēna Saṁhita* contains additional information, which makes it a complete treatise on *āyurvēda*. It gives us information about the practice of *āyurvēdic* medicine in India around 1100-1200 AD. *Vaṅgasēna* compiled this work as a collection of well- tried medical formulae from elders in the art of medicine (*Vaidya-Vrddha-Siddha Prayoganivaha*, verse 1)

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**PARENTAGE:**

*Vaṅgasēna* himself gives an account at the following prelude verses about his birthplace and father's name:

*Kanti ka vasnirjataksri Gadādhara sonuna*

*Kriyate Vaṅgasēnena cikitsasara sangraha (4)*

Which reveals, *Vaṅgasēna*, was born in a reputed Vaidya family of *Kantinagara* of the Muzaffarpur district in Bengal and son of *Gadādhara*. According to *Niscalakara*, *Gadādhara*, is the commentator of *Caraka*, *śuśrta* and *Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya*.

*Gadādhara* hails from reputed *Dāsa* family, who has revised the *Susruta Samhita* also. *Gadādhara* was a great genius and his interpretations on treatises and texts have theoretical and practical applicability. *Gadādhara's* birthplace has been identified as *Kanjivilli* in *Rādha* (West Bengal).

In the introductory verse, *Vangasena* has offered salutation first to God *Mahadev* and *Parvati* then *Saraswati* followed by his father who taught medicine to him. (“*Tadame Tatpadam gurumcha*” prelude verse)

The *Vangasenotpatti* at the end of *Vangasena's* treatise is as under:

“*Sri Krishnah pridhvim nijanghrikamala rogi krutam ha yada .....*”

*Yada tyaktam dhamnijam gatata lyam mahyalpa kalantare (colophon 1-4)*

Means “when *śrīkṛṣṇa* who had freed the earth of diseases by coming up on to the earth, had left and returned to his abode, it became filled with disease and frightening again with in a short time. Seeing this, I was born in the house of *Gadādhara* and made the earth healthy again”. It ends with the words “After being born in the house of *Gadādhara*, I redacted the work that was called *Agastyasamhita* before my birth. Thereafter it became well known under the name of *Vaṅgasēna*. This book, being quintessence of all the doctrines will speedily conquer success.

**DATE:**

According to Prof. P. V. Sarma, *Vaṅgasēna* is posterior to *śodhala*. A comparison of *Vaṅgasēna*'s verses with those of the “*śōdhala Nighaṅṭu*” learns however that it is out of the question that the latter was *Vaṅgasēna*'s source. *Atrideva* and Prof. P. V. Sharma mention that *Vrnda* and *Cakradatta* as *Vaṅgasēna*'s main sources. According to J. Jolly, the oldest Manuscript of *Vaṅgasēna* is written in 1276 and another in 1320. Hence he might have been a contemporary of king *Lakśmanasena* of the *Sena dynasty*. P. K. Gode also considered him to have lived in the early twelfth century at the latest because *Hēmādri* quotes *Vaṅgasēna* extensively in his commentary on *Astanga Hrdayasamhita*. *Hēmādri* lived in the second half of the thirteenth century i.e. 1260 to 1309 A.D. (Catalogus catalogorum by Aufrecht Part I p.no.768). Certainly *Vaṅgasēna* lived earlier to him, hence the period may be conclude as first half of 12<sup>th</sup> century A. D. The single quotation in *Dalhana* commentary on the *Susruta* (Chi.3.57-58) lowers the limit to about 1200 A.D. and finally the date of *Vaṅgasēna* may be fixed conveniently in the last quarter of 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. to first quarter of 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

**HIS WORK *Cikitsā Saṅgraha***

Undoubtedly *Vaṅgasēna*'s *Cikitsasara Saṅgraha* is a very comprehensive work which consists a general introduction to pathology, duties of the physicians etc. and the main text contains an elaborate description of diseases and a still more comprehensive presentation of their treatment then there is the elixir and *Vajikarana*, *Bṛmhanasvedana*, *Vamana* etc. lastly the dietetics and pharmacology, diagnosis and prognosis. There are scholars in history that became immortal by their single extraordinary work and *Vaṅgasēna* seems to be one of them. Based on this work, he was a great scholar of *Ayurveda* and renowned Vaidya of his time.

*Vaṅgasēna* strongly believes that “Health is the necessary precondition for the four-fold human values (righteous living, wealth, pleasures and salvation) and diseases steal them away and perplex the very purpose of life. That is the reason he explained the pathology as well as treatment for these diseases (preface verse 6 & 7).

The work consists of 104 *Adhikaranas* (sections) arranged as identical as *Madhavanidana*. The description of diseases is almost all same. But curative aspects

and formulae are having some special features. Some of them are as follows.

1. *Tālisādiyōga*: three types  
*Tālisādiġutika*, *Mahātālisādisūrna* and *Tālisadyacurna* (*Rajayaksma prakarana*)
2. *Jātiphaladyacurna*  
In this *Bhanga* (*Cannabis Sativa* Linn) was mentioned for the first time in *Rajayaksma prakarana*.
3. In the chapter *ślipadarōgādhikāra* he mentions *śākhōṭaka* (*Streblus asper*. Lour-Moraceae) along with *Gōmūtra* is very useful in the treatment of *ślipada* (Filariasis). This formula was taken by *śarangadhara*.
4. Etiology and treatment of *Sōmarōga* (polyuria) were presented entirely in independent way for the first time in the chapter on (women's diseases, *Sōmarōga*).
5. *Vaitaraṇavasti* mentioned in *Vastikarmadhikāra* of the *Vangasena's* work, cannot be find in earlier works. The main ingredients are *Saindhavalavana*, tamarind, jagerry and cow's milk along with tailam. It is very much useful in *katisula* (back pain), *uru* and *Prṣṭhaśūla* (low pain in lower limbs) and all types of *Vatavyadhis*. This specific *vastikarma* is very much practiced in Kerala for the patients with joint disorders and very especially in *āmavāta*.

After the *Nidāna*, the author vividly described, *Pūrvarūpa*, *Rūpa*, *Upāśaya* and *Samprāpti* of the diseases and their treatment. It contains separate chapters on *snēha*, *śvēda*, *Vamana Virecana*, *Vasti*, *Dhūmapāna*, *Kavala*, *Nasya*, *Svasthanavritta*, Pharmacology, *Ritucarya*, *Arista* and definitions of a series of actions of drugs followed.

The chapter on *Dravyaguna* describes the tastes etc, the actions of a restricted number of medicinal substances, the best varieties of these and substitutes to be used in the absence of particular drugs. The *Ganapatha* chapter enumerates 37 groups of drugs, together with their actions. The next chapter called *Samśodana Samśamana Rasadravyadinam Vargadhikara*, in which 14 *Vargas* (groups) of drugs, appropriate for the purpose of *Samśodana* and *Samśamana* or dominated by particular taste were described.

Three chapters on *Dhānyavarga*, *Māmsavarga*, *śākhaphalavarga*, elucidate about

the proprieties of articles of food. Two chapters on *Vyanjana Mamsavyanjanam* and *Matsya vyanjana* are expound with prepared foods. The work has an exclusive chapter on *Dravadravaya*, which deals with fluids. The next chapter on *ariṣṭas* contains mainly material from the *śuśrta Samhita* (Su. 28-33). The last chapter called *Dīpana Pācana dravyalakṣaṇa* gives definitions of a series of technical terms denoting particular actions of drugs and is the earliest one of this type on the subject.

The stage of development of *rasaśāstra* in *Vaṅgasēna's Cikitsā Saṅgraha* deserves careful study, having been under estimated by J. Jolly, who claimed that the calcinations of metals is not mentioned while metals in general are infrequently spoken of though iron is elaborately described, as well as its killing (*Māraṇa*) etc.

Iron and its varieties are indeed described in a detailed way in the chapter on *Arśas* (hemorrhoids). The usual three type of iron are listed as *Munda*, *Tikṣṇa* and *Kānta*. Various other metals are mentioned in the treatise are *Tāmra* (copper) at many places in the chapter on *Rasāyana*, *Nāga* (lead) and *Vaṅga* (tin) are referred in the same chapter substances like *Gandaka* (sulphur), *Abraka* (mica) etc. are repeatedly prescribed the killing of diverse metal not only iron was well known to *Vaṅgasēna*. He was also acquainted with a number of processes to which *Parada* (mercury) should be subjected before using it medicinally.

Apart from the peculiarities some more features are worthy to be mention that the treatment of *Galaganda* and *Gandamala* is dealt twice, once in the *Salakya*, which deals with *Ksudrarogas*, includes a description of *Haritaki* and its seven varieties and of *Amlaki*, *Vibitaki* and *Triphala* and another in *śalya*.

Chapter on *Ariṣṭas* explicate the *Nētraparīkṣa* (eye examination), *Mukhaparīkṣa* (examination of oral cavity) and *Jīvaparīkṣa* (examination of Tongue) followed by an elaborate description of the *Mūtraparīkṣa* (urine examination). *Tailabindu* method of urine examination for the first time in Indian Medical Literature is described, in which the form (shape) assumed by a drop of oil on the surface of the urine, has diagnostic and prognostic significance.

The work contains a specific chapter on the *Jaladosadiyoga*, which is a

remarkable contribution of *Vaṅgasēna*. The chapter illuminates not only the *Yogas* for the treatment of disorders caused by polluted water but also some recipes suitable for making women submit to male advances (*Vaśikarna*) improving the qualities of the sexual organs in males and females, preventing flaccidity of the breasts in women, delaying ejaculation in men causing sterility or caring it etc.

*Vaṅgasēna Samhita* even though a comprehensive work, it is interesting to note that it does not have any information about the pulse examination.

Though *Vaṅgasēna* is profoundly dependent on *Mādhava*, the author of *Mādhava Nidana*, in the arrangement of the diseases he deviates from his work by inserting stanzas from other sources, splitting up chapters, combining them in new ways and adding new diseases. After going through the entire work one can easily find that *Vaṅgasena* was a great scholar of Ayurveda and had occasion to study all the then available *Samhitas* on different specialties of Ayurveda, having come from an illustrious dasa family.

P. K. Gode, wrote a note in IJHM (Indian Journal of History of Medicine Vol.1, 1956) the earliest dated paper manuscript of a work on "*Cikitsā Saṅgraha*" available in the Govt. Mss. Library, at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, this manuscript bears No.352 of 1879-1880 it is dated *samvat* 1376 (1320 A.D.) in spite of the lapse of 636 years since it was written, the thick paper of the manuscript, even though musty in appearance, shows no signs of decay and can be handled without causing any damage to it. This condition of the manuscript may be contrasted with sad condition of modern printed book, which within less than 50 years from the years of their publication become brittle and are not fit for handling. The medical work represented by this manuscript is also called "*Vaṅgadatta Vaidyaka*" but its correct name is *Cikitsāsāra Saṅgraha*.

Figure I.

॥०॥ उनामाविनायकाय॥ उनामाविनायकाय॥ विद्यासवसायुधितानीरुजाशुद्धसन्निवाकप  
नाडिनाडायाव्यानामजगत्किं तत्राङ्गकिं कामो जालोकादिर्दृष्टुं कुरुपकामत्तुकिं नि  
राडिकाकारकच्छिन्नालपयकुडुंगयाआलागलकीद्वीकच्छिवापिदिचक्रगोपकृष्णविभाननय  
ध्याकनप्रसाधयत्॥ विद्वत्सोमनामदीपकाईकरसन्निवापरिभेडलोपिज्ञानोविद्वानामो  
विदुशोपद्रुकासिं कवमाधुपिडिकासिं समासिनो॥ इहहोउनाविद्याहानपिज्ञकपादिना॥ मोडक  
वदुस्रं संरक्तपिडिकावितैस्त्राकरंगईविकोवाविद्याहावस्यं कवी॥ विसृष्टवृत्सद्योनिशःशाफ  
अतरपाकवान्॥ करदाककरपिज्ञमसि॥ याडालगईस॥ पिडिकाउनागच्छाईशाहयकडकु  
शोसर्वाविकोसर्वाकिं गानाजीयादिरेगळिका॥ बाहुपाशोशकडकुच्छिन्नास्योस्यसिद्वानो॥ पिज्ञ  
याकापस्युनोककृष्णामिद्यासिधीयात॥ रकामनामवोहृष्णपिडिकास्यस्यसिंको॥ श्यानापिज्ञको  
पेनंधनामोयचक्रात॥ विद्वतासिद्वहोदगईनेजालगईने॥ इरिावरीगेधनामोकाविस्तोद  
काड्या॥ पिज्ञगच्छिन्नासिं स्यामिद्यस्य॥ बापलस्यद्योशाघकोसिद्धनभुगोयसिं॥  
नालापद्यालायादुल्लेजुल्लेखुनाछुती॥ निरुत्तिलपनामनेजालगईकडोरु॥ घनोसवक्रापिडि ३१  
कामुनपरिभेडलो॥ अक्षलडा॥ मस्युद्योनाविद्याककपवानडी॥ यचाकाराशुकदिनायधिनमे

Vangasena Sena's Cikitsa Sara Samgraha - MS Dated A.D. 1320 1320 in the Government MSS Library at the B.O.R. Institute, Poona. (First Page)

Figure II.

शारपालोकात॥ इतिरिष्टाधुयगा॥ आयंमयाचिरपरिस्मृतकथं चिन्तयं बहोवनागनिक  
नेलतासुसादा॥ सायं चतस्रयदिगापिरलंरथलानोकिन्नासुाकननसाकोडकमोहितः॥ ३॥  
६॥ इतिरियंवेद्युप्रीगदाधरसुनवेद्युयिद्यावाथैअबगसमप्राति॥ ४॥ ६॥ ७॥ ८॥  
संवत् १३१६ वर्षादिदिक्पालुनमुदि१३ शानो॥ अष्टुदवाजापुरवाद्यनागइहहानाय  
ठंजालसुनउरणसिद्धतन्नाकाना॥ धुयनाथे॥ रथेडहायतवगेदशसुसकमलसिद्धि॥ का  
मैगलेमदाश्री॥ १॥ मुजंनवतु॥ लम्कपाठकाया॥ १॥ यादशोषुसुदृष्टुगादृशंसिखि  
नेमयायदिसुद्वमसुद्वं वाममादायानदीयना॥ १॥ १॥ १॥ १॥ १॥ १॥ १॥ १॥ १॥ १॥ १॥

Vangasena Sena's Cikitsa Sara Samgraha - MS Dated A.D. 1320 1320 in the Government MSS Library at the B.O.R. Institute, Poona. (Last Page)

Julius Jolly the great German Orientalist, in his monumental work 'History of Indian Medicine' (English translation by C. G. Kashikar, Poona, 1951 pp.7-8) has made some of the following remarks on *Vangasena* and on his treatise.

1. The *Vaṅgasēna Saṁhita*, is very comprehensive work on medicine, published at Calcutta as early as 1884.
2. *Vaṅgasēna*, was the son of *Gadādhara*, hailed from Kanjika and contemporary of the Sena dynasty of Bengal.
3. Many recipes given by *Vaṅgasēna* are identical with those in the Bower Ms. others can be traced to *Vṛnda* and *Cakradatta* (C.A.D. 1060)
4. The oldest Mss of *Vaṅgasēna*'s work are dated 1276 A.D. and 1320.
5. The Ms. dated 1320 A.D. mentioned by Jolly is identical with the Ms in the Government Manuscripts Library at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
6. It contains a general introduction to pathology and deals with duties of the physician etc, an exhaustive description of disease and their treatment, the elixir and *Vajikarana*, *Bṛmhana*, *Svedana*, *Vamana* etc., the dietetics and pharmacology, diagnosis and prognosis.
7. It says nothing about the calcinations of metals.
8. *Nāḍīparīkṣā* is not mentioned in this voluminous work.
9. No reference is found about the use of opium in it.
10. It mentions three kinds of iron and six kinds of steel.
11. It speaks about properly purified quick silver, the *Rasaparpati* (a preparation of quicksilver) and other mercurial mixtures but does not enter into the particulars of the methods of working upon mercury.

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## सारांश

### वङ्गसेन की जीवनी तथा उनका योगदान

पी.के.जे.पी. सुभक्ता एवं ए. नारायण

वङ्गसेन संहिता या चिकित्सासारसंग्रह के ग्रन्थकर्ता वङ्गसेन भारतीय चिकित्सा पद्धति के मध्यकालीन संग्रहकारों में सुप्रतिष्ठित हैं। वङ्गसेन अपनी एक ही कृति के द्वारा बंगाल के विद्वानों में अत्यन्त गौरव तथा कीर्ति को अर्जित किया था। आयुर्वेद के सुप्रसिद्ध व्यक्तियों में इनकी गिनती की जा सकती है। वङ्गसेन पश्चिम बंगाल के गदाधर के पुत्र थे, वे चरक, सुश्रुत तथा अष्टाङ्ग हृदय के भाष्यकार थे।

वङ्गसेन संहिता में व्याधि तथा उनकी चिकित्सा पद्धतियों का वर्णन है। जो विषय अन्य ग्रन्थों में उपलब्ध नहीं हैं वे भी उसमें पूर्ण रूप से वर्णित होने के कारण यह संपूर्ण रूप से आयुर्वेदिक संहिता बन गयी है। विशेषरूप से इसमें ग्रन्थकार ने पूर्वजों के अनुभव सिद्ध योगों का संकलन किया है।