

125

1

32.

P R E F A C E

By
SVETOSLAV ROERICH

for the book
INDIA'S HERBS AND HERBAL REMEDIES

By
REV. FR. CLAUDE D'SOUZA
(14th April 1980.)

426
2

P R E F A C E
- - - - -

For many years Rev. Father Claude D'Souza was interested in research and application of the Traditional systems of Medicine and Healing which have come down to us as a legacy from remote antiquity. In the Rig Veda which may be dated as far back as 4000 B.C. or even earlier we find references and descriptions of some medicinal plants, while the Ayurveda already gives us detailed information about various drugs and plants and their usages. The Susruta Samhita and Charaka Samhita which go back to the time of King Kanishka contain not only discourses on Medicine but also exhaustive descriptions of the Indian Materia Medica as it was recorded in those days.

The Navanitaka manuscript which may be dated in the second century A.D. gives us many precious recipes and methods of treatment prevalent in the early years of our era. Likewise, the early History of India records many names of great healers such as Atreya, Agnivesa, Parasara, Guru Charaka and references can be found in the Buddhist period of the organised cultivation of medicinal plants under expert supervision.

The contacts between Egypt, Greece, Rome, Persia, Bysantium and China constantly enriched, enlarged, and contributed to the great Indian tradition of Medicine and the Art of Healing.

More and more people all over the world turn to the traditional methods of treating ailments. More and more serious students and scientists turn to the study of the vast material which accumulated over thousands of years of trial and experiments.

India was particularly favoured through its geographical and geophysical location and characteristics and abounds in an unusual wealth of plants and other substances of medicinal importance.

The climates of India range from the Sub-Artic, Alpine, Temperate, Sub-Tropical and Tropical zones and offer an unrivalled variety of conditions for the generation of vegetable, animal and mineral substances which are of great medicinal importance.

Against this unique background of Natural Wealth was born the great Medicinal System and Tradition of Ayurveda with its numerous ramifications or off' shoots and adaptations to local conditions and usages. The vast Region of the Himalayas was a sort of meeting place, a coming together of several Medicinal Traditions such as the Indian, Tibetan, Chinese and Arabian systems

besides the local schools and local traditions each in turn enriching and contributing to one another. The great Chinese traveller Hsuan-Tsang, who visited India in the seventh century A.D. records in his diaries the medicinal plants which abound in the Kulu Valley.

Upto today this Himalayan Valley exports a number of medicinal plants, such as the various Valerian species, Aconitum Haeteroptillum, Picrorryza Karrera, Jurinea Macrocephala, Angelica Glauca, Acorus Calamus, Viola Cinerea and many others.

The Greeks and Romans made use of Indian Medicinal preparations and the Rhizome of the Valerianaceous Plant Nardostachys Jatamansi was the base of a famous ointment or Salve called Nardus by the Romans.

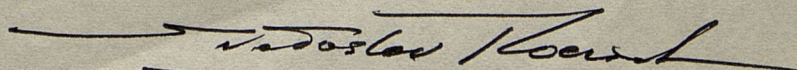
Numerous are the examples of Indian substances being exported and used abroad, many are the narratives about the Wise Men of India being visited by Greek and other Sages in the distant past.

The systems of health evolved by the ancient practitioners of India enjoy an ever widening popularity in our own days, and are practised by an ever increasing number of devoted followers in many countries.

More and more attention is being paid to indigenous systems, more and more is the wealth of ancient traditions explored, studied and applied with success for the treatment of various ailments. There can be little doubts that the astounding wealth of India's Materia Medica and systems of health and healing will yet provide us with solutions to many a baffling problem which we are striving to solve and overcome.

Modern research by outstanding Indian Scientists and scholars has brought to light priceless information on the vast Indian Materia Medica and the traditional Art of Healing and Medicine. Such names as Dr.R.M.Nadkarni, Col.Sir R.N.Chopra, I.C.Chopra, S.L.Nayar, A.K.Nadkarni, to mention just a few, will always be cherished by all who have studied or are interested in the traditional systems of Medicine and that vast collection of priceless information, India's Materia Medica.

It is for this reason and in this light that this new popular book by Rev. Fr.Claude D'Souza, who has made an extensive study of the traditional methods of healing diseases will be welcomed not only by students of this fascinating and most important subject but by all who are interested in the traditional systems of Medicine - in the great Art of Healing.


(SVETOSLAV ROERICH)