

# Ayurveda in Nepal

Edited by Alan Tillotson and Todd Caldecott, with  
Vaidya Madhu Bajra Bajracharya

*The following is an excerpt from a recently published book *Ayurveda in Nepal: The Teachings of Vaidya Mana Bajra Bajracharya*. The book presents a concise detailed outline including basic treatment details of an authentic tradition in Ayurveda, passed down from generation to generation over the last 800 years. More information about the book and the project to translate Dr. Mana's other teachings can be found at [www.ayurvedainnepal.com](http://www.ayurvedainnepal.com). This excerpt was printed with the permission of the editors.*

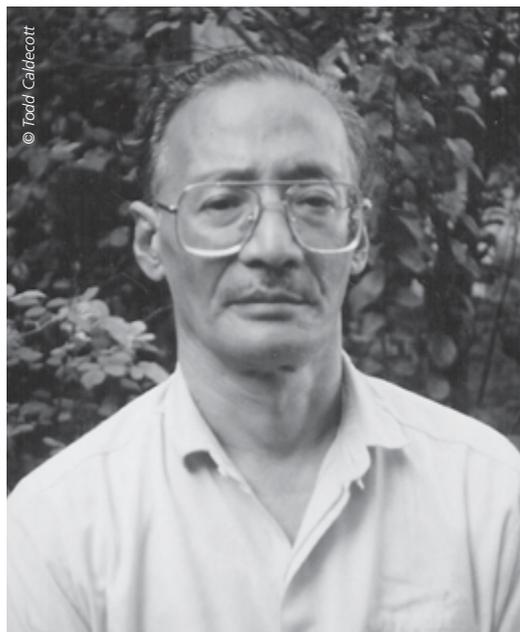
*In 1976, I was travelling in Afghanistan when I contracted dysentery and blood poisoning. I had lost close to 60 pounds and was facing death when the German drivers of my tour bus took me to meet a man they called a "miracle healer," the Ayurvedic sage Vaidya Mana Bajra Bajracharya of Kathmandu Nepal, known to his Western patients as Dr. Mana.*

*Dr. Mana saved my life and I became his student. Recently, Dr Mana's son Madhu, Todd Caldecott, and I completed a translation from Sanskrit and Nepalese of a summary of the 47 books on all aspects of Ayurvedic medicine. More about this book can be found on our website [www.AyurvedainNepal.com](http://www.AyurvedainNepal.com).*

## Autobiography of Vaidya Mana Bajra Bajracharya

I was born February 3rd, 1930 in a family of Bajracharya (Buddhist priests). My father, Durga Bajra Bajracharya, and mother Tirthakumari Bajracharya have five sons. I am the fourth one. We are members of a Bihar called "Kanaka Chaitya Mahabihar," one of the most famous Bihars in Kathmandu Valley. Our Bihar was established about seven hundred years ago in front of the ancient Chaitya of Kanakmuni Buddha.

By caste, we are Shakya related to the Shakya of



Vaidya Mana Bajra Bajracharya of Kathmandu Nepal

Kapilavastu, the birthplace of Lord Gautama Buddha. During the medieval period, following the principles of Bajrayana, the third advanced stage of Buddhism (following Hinayana and Mahayana), our ancestors received the consecration of Bajrayana. This consecration bestows the title of Bajracharya. To have this title, one must follow the principles of the "Heruka Chaka Samvara

Vaidya Madhu Bajra Bajracharya (Dr. Madhu), son of late Ayurvedic sage Vaidya Mana Bajra Bajracharya, is the chairman of Nepal Traditional Ayurvedic Medical Practitioner's Association. He runs the Piyushabarshi Aushadhalaya Ayurvedic Clinic, the oldest Ayurvedic Clinic in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Alan Tillotson has been practicing herbal medicine for over two decades. Alan is well known in America for his apprenticeship study of Ayurvedic herbology beginning in 1976 in Nepal under Vaidya Mana Bajra Bajracharya.

Todd Caldecott has practiced as a clinical herbalist and Ayurvedic practitioner for 15 years, and has a broad array of clinical experiences, from Canada and the United

States, to Trinidad and India. His studies have been diverse, including classical Indian (carnatic) music in Tamil Nadu and Buddhist meditation in Sri Lanka and Bodhygaya, India

- L Vaidya Madhu Bajracharya (left) and the late Vaidya Keshav Lal (right), Kathmandu, Nepal
- C Medicinal herbs drying in the sun, Kathmandu, Nepal
- R Worker separating herbs, Kathmandu, Nepal

Tantra.” Those with the title of Bajracharya are the priests of the Newari Buddhists, one of the ancient inhabitants of Kathmandu Valley.

In 1937, I received my formal initiation as a Bajracharya, which I needed to be a member of the Bihar. In 1944, I received my consecration as Bajrayana, which I needed to be an authorized Bajracharya. In 1945, I married with Gyani Devi Bajracharya. Marriage is essential for Bajrayana practice. We have a son and four daughters.

In addition to being priests, my family has also carried forward the tradition of Ayurvedic medicine, running unbroken from generation to generation during these seven hundred years. Our family maintains our original vows to help mankind, and especially to maintain the health of the Newari Buddhists who live around the Bihar. During all this time, we have never charged for a medical consultation. We have a very good traditional education system in our home to study Buddhism and Ayurvedic medicine side by side. We have an extensive Sanskrit family library of Ayurvedic medicines, containing many unpublished texts.

My grandfather, Nila Bajra Bajracharya, was a specialist in Spiritual Healing (Bhuta Vidya). In his time, he was the royal physician of Nepal. In his field, religious approaches

are used to cure diseases such as paralysis, meningitis, children’s diseases, and mental illness. My father was a specialist in Ayurvedic Internal Medicine (Kayachikitsa Tantra). However, he died at an early age in an accident. This tragedy actually made our family very strong. My eldest brother, Divya Bajra Bajracharya, who had already completed his studies in Internal Medicine, continued his work and study, and with the help of my grandfather, achieved a high level in Internal Medicine. He passed his knowledge to his brothers, and I am one of those who chose to specialize in the Internal Medicine field.

For six years, I studied Sanskrit from my brother and his friends. Almost all of the Buddhist and Ayurvedic texts are written in Sanskrit, so it is necessary to achieve complete fluency. During this period of study, I also had to help my grandfather and my brothers run our medical clinic. I learned the practical basics of Ayurvedic diagnosis, botany, chemistry, philosophy, anatomy, and pharmacology.

When I was seventeen years old, I finished my formal Sanskrit study. Then, I started to learn the Ayurvedic texts, including Charaka Samhita (the text of internal medicine), Susruta Samhita (surgery), Madhava Nidana (diagnosis), Madanapala Nighantu (botany and pharmacology), and Rasatarangini (chemistry). I also



paid much attention to my study of Buddhism. At the beginning, I studied Naryakarana, the nine original Mahayana Buddhist texts -- Pragyaparamita, Saddharma Pundarika, Lanka Valara, Dosha Bhumi, Gandavyuha, Samadhiraja, Suvarnaprabha Lahilaristara, and Guhya Samaja. I continued my study of Buddhism and Ayurveda for eight years.

During this time, with the help of my brothers, I was gaining more and more medical practice, dealing with different kinds of patients. In addition, I also had much interest to learn painting and sculpture. I practiced by drawing pictures of herbs, and making clay models of the human body. This helped me to learn anatomy in great detail, and to be able to recognize all the plants we used in our medical practice. Finally, I became free to start my individual medical practice, and to choose further advanced study.

In 1955 I realized that, first of all, I must see all the plants, and how they grow in different climates. So, I spent two years traveling on foot in Nepal and India. During this time, I collected almost all the plants that are mentioned in the Ayurvedic texts, and made color paintings of them on the spot.

After returning from my trekking, I began to treat patients without supervision. At first, I was not a success

in drawing patients because I had no power to convince patients of my skill. But, in a short time, with the help of my brothers and mother, my reputation began to build. For the next fifteen years, I treated many, many Nepali patients. During this time, I decided to study English, and I began to have contact with international people. I started to study Western medical texts in detail, bringing home books each week to read, and our family now has the tradition of studying Western sciences. My son and many of the children of my brothers have attended college for this purpose. My nephew is an ophthalmologist, my son-in-law is a post-doctoral research associate in the Ohio State University School of Natural Resources, and my son Madhu Bajra Bajracharya is one of six other Ayurvedic doctors working at our clinic in Nepal.

In 1969, I started to teach Buddhism and Ayurvedic medicine to Westerners. This teaching activity made me famous in Kathmandu. In 1972 I went to Europe and America, following an invitation from one of my students, to speak at Columbia University on Buddhism. After coming back, I realized that the people of the new young generation liked very much Ayurvedic medicine. So, I opened an examining room in my family clinic, and I concentrated on handling foreign patients. This clinic is named Piyusavarsi Ausadhalaya.



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In 1975 I was elected chairman of the Nepal Ayurveda Association, the nation-wide organization of Ayurvedic physicians. The main aim of the organization is to help each other for the development of Ayurvedic practice. I have written several books and pamphlets on Buddhism, Ayurvedic medicine and Nepali culture, which are published in the Nepali language. Some are translated into English, such as *Buddhist Mythology of the Kathmandu Valley*.

I continued my work at my clinic for foreigners, and I realized very early the need for writing down all the Ayurvedic knowledge in a form which will preserve it for future generations. I also learned that the way of talking and explaining Ayurvedic Medicine to patients and foreigners required much thought and practice, and now my Western patients can understand my way of practice when I explain to them. I found out that many diseases that Western medicine cannot treat successfully can be treated with Ayurvedic medicines. I wrote a series of books and pamphlets for my Western patients. Some of the titles are *Eastern Theory of Diet, Hepatitis, An Outline of Ayurveda, Breast Cancer, and Ayurvedic Medicinal Plants and General Treatment*.

For many decades I have maintained my practice of four hours study and writing each day, and working in the clinic for five hours in the afternoon. I have completed writing 47 books containing full descriptions of all aspects of Ayurvedic practice. The books are in the Nepali and Sanskrit languages. In 1995 I wrote *The Real Facts of Ayurveda Based on Related Ancient Science and Philosophy* in English. This book is a condensed extract briefly covering all the traditional Ayurvedic texts that I have studied. It contains short descriptions of each area.

My dream for many years has been to establish an International Ayurvedic Research Center in Kathmandu. This is becoming more important recently, because ecological destruction in Nepal is causing many of our valuable plants to disappear. Some of these plants are essential for formulas which can deal with serious diseases for which there is no medicine in other parts of the world.

To stop this destruction I am attempting to develop a model farm in Kathmandu, as part of the Institute, to teach farmers how to grow and preserve valuable plants. This will improve their incomes, and benefit the Nepali economy. As another part of the Institute, I have decided to translate my books into English so people will realize

what Ayurveda really is, and the value it has for mankind. When completed, this will serve as a University level course in Ayurvedic medicine. In 1997 I completed the translation of the first of my 47 books into English, entitled *Ayurvedic Ophthalmology*, with the help of my son, Vaidya Madhu Bajra Bajracharya, my senior American student Alan Tillotson Ph.D., and American medical doctor Robert Abel, Jr. I am working very hard these days to realize my dream, and I hope to gather international support to help protect our threatened eco-systems, save our plants, bring our medicines to the world community, and, most importantly, to preserve and strengthen our traditional medicine system in Nepal.

The great Ayurvedic sage Vaidya Mana Bajra Bajracharya died suddenly in January of 2001. His clinic in Kathmandu is now in the hands of his son, Vaidya Madhu Bajra Bajracharya. He leaves behind not only his family and the Newari people, but also the tens of thousands of patients he has cured throughout the entire world.

## Chapter 1: The Foundations of Ayurveda

### The Definition of Ayurveda

The Sanskrit medical word Ayurveda means “Science of Life.” Life, the physical state of being alive, includes both the mind and the body. It is the ultimate goal of the mind, its intrinsic nature, to pursue happiness and to reject suffering. The cause of the happiness and the suffering experienced by the mind is the result of what happens to the body. This creates the dynamic experienced by all living beings: The mind rejects suffering because its destination and goal is happiness, yet the existence of suffering is an inescapable truth for all corporeal sentient beings. Therefore, our minds, from our first breath, take on the task of leading our body away from suffering.

The body and mind are the inexorably linked physical and metaphysical units of life. The function of these two units and how they mutually coordinate is the main subject of Ayurveda. Ayurveda deals with how to achieve happiness via the proper understanding of how to avoid suffering and attain happiness. The body, the physical cause of pain and suffering, is capable of misleading the mind. The mind when misled cannot function in the

proper way. That is to say, when functioning properly, the mind is focused and will strive to lead the body towards happiness. But the mind can lose its control over the body, and such loss invariably leads towards suffering.

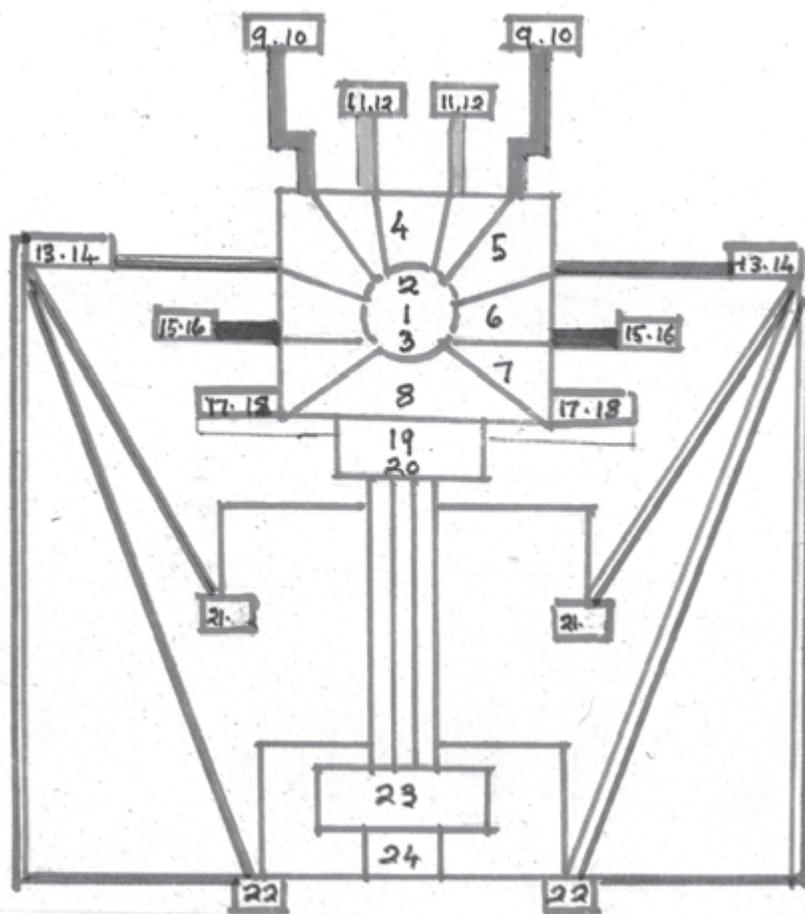
The word suffering, from the point of view of medicine, is simply another word for disease. Disease is that which destroys the physical construction of the body. Disease is thus a destructive force. Happiness, in the medical sense, is that which strengthens bodily construction. Happiness is therefore a constructive force. The constructive and destructive forces within the body are the two major factors of life. The constructive force of happiness that exists naturally when the body is in balance encourages the mind to guide the body towards proper activities. The destructive forces of disease that occur when the body is out of balance awaken the mind, signaling it to be alert and to change its activities, with the goal of restoring the natural balance. In this sense, a balanced life leads to health, while life's imbalances are the fundamental cause of sickness. This is true not only for individuals, but also for ones progeny and for society as a whole.

The knowledge gained by mankind about how to maintain the balance of these two major factors, generation after generation for thousands of years, is the main subject of Ayurveda. Therefore Ayurveda means the science of life, and it deals with the good of life and the bad of life. It deals with the happy life and the unhappy life. It strives to discern what things are good for life and what things are bad. It seeks always to restore life to proper balance.

### The Historical Background of Ayurveda

The true history of Ayurveda starts in the time of the Vedas, the ancient Holy Books of the Aryans ("noble ones"). Hindu mythology tells us that Lord Brahma, the creator of the world, transmitted the knowledge of Ayurveda to mankind. The four Vedas are called Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda. They were written about 3-5 thousand years ago. All the Vedas contain medical knowledge based upon the principles of Ayurveda, especially the Atharva Veda.

It was well known to the ancient peoples of the East that rishis and munis existed, learned sages and saints who devoted their life to understanding the realities of the world (the word rishi and muni are interchangeable, but a rishi would be the most spiritually advanced of



these two words for sage). Aryavarta, the land of the Aryans which covers the wide surrounding area of the Himalayas, is the native home of the rishis and munis. The surrounding area of the Himalayas in the present political landscape includes the countries of Nepal, India, Pakistan, Bhutan, and Bangladesh.

The ancient civilization of these countries was strongly influenced by the unique intellectual contributions of these holy sages. The hymns, liturgical formulas and medical knowledge found in the Vedas were the contributions of various rishis and munis. The sages realized that sickness was a major impediment to the search for liberation, and so many of them became vaidyas to help their people. Vaidya, the Sanskrit word for physician, is derived from the root word for wisdom.

About seven hundred years BC there was a renowned rishi called Bharadwaja, who was known as the leading vaidya of his time in the land of Aryavarta. There were many stories about him and his medical skills. Atreya Punarvasu – the medical sage who is the source of the most important classic of Ayurveda, the Charaka Samhita

### The Twenty Four Life Elements of the Sankhya Philosophy

– tells us that Bharadwaja was the first medical teacher of all subsequent rishis and munis. He learned Ayurveda directly from Lord Indra, the king of the gods. Indra had learned Ayurveda from the Aswinis, who were known as practitioner physicians to the gods. Prajapati was the teacher of the Aswinis and he studied Ayurveda from the Lord Brahma, the creator of the world.

Today's historians cannot understand who these god-like characters actually were. The Vedas talk in detail about Indra, the Aswinis, Prajapati etc. and give many details about their exploits and personalities. But from

a historical perspective their roles can never be totally clear, because there is no authentic proof that they were real persons or even characters based upon authentic historical personages. The implications of the story of Ayurveda's spiritual beginnings and the transmission of knowledge are extremely thought provoking, because the writers of that time depict it (and clearly believe it to be) the result of direct communications between real celestial beings and the great sages.

### The Great Medical Conference

The historical record of Ayurveda begins with a medical conference in the Himalayan Mountains described in the collection (samhita) of medical writings called the Charaka Samhita. The writer, Atreya Punarvasu, was one of the devoted students of Bharadwaja. He tells us that a large and well-attended medical conference of veteran rishis and munis was held under the chairmanship of Bharadwaja in the valley of the Himalayas. The main aim of this conference was to share medical knowledge and to encourage the attending scholars to compile the medical knowledge gained by different peoples of the region, knowledge that had been passed down, mostly orally, from generation to generation. This stream of Ayurvedic medical knowledge was considered eternal, because it was known by them to have been there since the beginning of time. However, the participants also knew that there were no authentic and complete texts of Ayurveda available for study. For this reason the writing of texts became the focus of the conference.

This historic conference was a milestone in the history of medicine. The task of compiling the medical knowledge was very difficult, because many scholars who knew various aspects of Ayurvedic medicine lived and worked throughout different parts of the Eastern world. Travel and communication in those days was very difficult. Nonetheless, the participants of the conference overcame these difficulties. They arrived from many distant points and stayed together for a long period of time. The conference is estimated to have lasted about three years. The participants engaged in long and complex discussions and debates, and formed committees to compile full texts about the different subjects of Ayurveda. The attending scholars produced all the Charaka Samhita, the text of internal medicine, the Susruta Samhita, the text of surgery, and the Kashyapa Samhita, the text of pediatrics, and many others.

**Harmonious ratios of physical proportions, drawing by Dr. Mana Bajracharya**

