

Karin Preisendanz

Debates, Colloquies and (Un)professional Competition:  
Images of Physicians and Their Rivals in Early Classical Āyurveda  
According to the Carakasamhitā

Among the sciences of classical India, the science of medicine, especially as presented in the Carakasamhitā (CS), exhibits a remarkably strong interest in debate, from the theoretical as well as practical point of view. Because of the connection of dialectics and eristics with reasoning and logic, this has even led to the claim that Indian logic originated in the medical schools (Surendranath Dasgupta). Although this often-repeated claim cannot be substantiated historically, the focused treatments of debate and colloquies in the CS, as well as other passages of the CS where these issues are touched upon, are of great interest for our knowledge of images of physicians within the medical science itself during the first centuries AD, especially as regards physicians in their various relationships to other physicians and multiple interaction with them.

The paper will first analyze the passages relevant to debate and colloquies with the aim to determine the images of physicians contained in them. They primarily concern physicians in their roles as teachers and mentors of prospective physicians and neophytes, and as colleagues. At the same time, the image of physicians as rivals in the context of professional competition emerges from these passages. This latter topic will be explored from various angles, also on the basis of additional materials found in the CS which are not directly related to the issue of debate and colloquies. They concern the issue of disclosing essential details of the scientific methodology employed in the basic therapies to others, physicians and non-physicians, as well as the ascertainment of the affiliation of other physicians to one's own tradition. Even though some of the relevant passages of the CS present considerable difficulties when one strives for their precise philological understanding and interpretation, extremely rich and colourful information is provided here for our knowledge of the image of the incompetent physician or quack in medical (as opposed to non-medical) literature, which will be treated in the second part of the paper. Throughout, the distinctive elements making up the various images will be related to more general characterizations of physicians as found in other contexts in the CS.