

Tibetan medicine, a shining pearl among the jewels of traditional Chinese medicine, comes from an accumulation of experience that the Tibetans gained during the prolonged course of fighting nature and disease. Many accomplished Tibetan medicine practitioners are responsible for forming the medical system that is unique to Tibet. For historical and social reasons, however, the system developed at a slow pace until the late 20th century.

Tibetan medicine has a history of over 2,000 years. Around 200 BC, when Tubo King Nyitri Tsampo raised six questions concerning Tibetan medicine, a man named Zila Garma Yade answered one of these by saying: "Poison could be used as an antidote to poison." In accordance with this theory, Gyaipo Chixi developed a kind of medicinal ball, which was called Tujoinwangrab.

During the 4th century, Lhato Torab summed up his experience in the theory of "treating illness caused by cold factors with medicine of a heat nature, and illness caused by heat factors with medicine of a cold nature." Tonge Tojogyain enriched the theory of Tibetan medicine with his knowledge of Indian medicine learned from his father Gachi Bichi. Tojogyain was so effective that he was able to perform surgery on the eyes of Molung Gunbazha. When Zhonnyi Dewo contracted leprosy, he lived in an underground cell to keep from infecting his relatives. All these examples illustrate a high level of medical knowledge and treatment.

Tibetan medicine gained new ground in the 7th century when Tibetan King Songtsan Gambo unified the Tibetan Plateau and became friendly with the Tang Dynasty through his marriage to Tang Princess Wen Cheng. The princess brought the Outline on Traditional Chinese Medicine to Tibet. It was turned into Tibetan by Mahatiwa, a Han monk, and Dharmokorka, a Tibetan sutra translator. Though the Tibetan version of this classic text is now lost, the fundamental principles have been incorporated into the Four-Volume Medical Code, a famous classic. Songtsan Gambo encouraged medical studies, which led to the further development of Tibetan medicine.

In the early 8th century, Tibetan King Tsampo Tride Zudain married another Tang Dynasty Princess, Jin Cheng. Princess Jin Cheng brought many medical classics to Tibet. Mahayana, a Han monk, and Vairocana, a Tibetan master translator, translated the Medicine Kong on Medical Treatment, the earliest Tibetan medical work available today.

Yutog Nyingma Yundain Goinbo was the most accomplished and famous Tibetan medical practitioner during the time of Trisong Detsan. He gathered folk medical prescriptions from among the common people. He studied medicine in Nepal and India, and invited medical practitioners from China's hinterland, Nepal and India to work and lecture in Tibet. Based on his research and experience, he wrote the Four-Volume Medical Code, which marks the formation of a unique Tibetan medicinal system. In the early 13th century, Yutog Sama Yundain Goinbo, an offspring of Yutog Nyingma Yundain Goinbo, studied the Medicine King on Medical Treatment and Indian medical works, and, on this basis, revised the *Four-Volume Medical Code*.

The 14th century saw the rise of the Qamba and Soika medical factions with treatment aimed at coping with the diverse climates of south and north Tibet. Tibetan medical masters created many medical works and wrote copies of annotations to the Four-Volume Medical Code.

During the 17th century, the 5th Dalai Lama, who set great store by Tibetan medicine, created such Tibetan medical schools as the Soirabzhobianling in the Zhaibung Monastery, the Soirab Changsun Duibaling in Xigaze, and Lhawangjor and Sangpo Nyimatang in the Potala Palace. Sanggyi Gyamco, a Degsi official under the 5th Dalai Lama, made an historical contribution to Tibetan medicine by completing the Blue Glaze, an annotation to the Four-Volume Medical Code in 1689. He also created the Outline of Medical Theory and the

Feast for the Immortals in 1703. These became the major works for Tibetan medicine practitioners of later generations. Sanggyi Gyamco also created 79 of Tibet's first colored medical charts, based on the Medicine King on Medical Treatment, his own works including Blue Graze and Outline of Medical Theory, and medical theory of the Qamba school. He also contributed to the training of Tibetan medical workers by establishing the Rachizhobianling Medical School at Yaowangshan Mountain in 1696.

During the period of the 13th Dalai Lama, Tibetan medicine made new progress. Noted Tibetan medicine masters at that time included Gema Jigmei Qoigyil Senge, Lama Jigmei Chilai, Government Medical Doctor Wogyi Dainzin Gyamco, Doje Gyaincain, Zhakang Spyi-khyabmk Kampo Qamba Tubwang, Qaboba Dangqu Bendain and Qenrab Norbu. They wrote medical works and taught students. Of these, Qenrab Norbu was the most accomplished. Based on his study of Tibetan sutra classics, astronomy, calendaring and medical works including the Four-Volume Medical Code, he wrote a dozen additional works. Some of these are An Ocean of Medical Theory, Collected Samples of Medicinal Herbs, The Way to Deliver Babies, The Key to Classics, Notes to Pulse Taking, Urine Tests, and Bleeding Therapy.

At the direction of the 13th Dalai Lama, the Lhasa Medical School was launched in 1916, with Qenrab Norbu as the headmaster. The 1,000 students came from monasteries and, later, army barracks in Tibet as well as Tibetan areas in Qinghai and Kam. Additional students came from Bhutan, Sikkim and Ladakh. In 1959, the Lhasa Tibetan Medicine and Calendaring Academy became the Tibetan Medicine Hospital, with Qenrab Norbu, then 77 years old, serving as its director.

During the period of the 14th Dalai Lama, the few government-run Tibetan medical institutions were simply equipped and small in size. Representative of these were the one at the Yaowangshan Mountain and the Medicine and Calendaring Academy in Lhasa.

Before the peaceful liberation of Tibet in 1951, the Medical and Calendaring Academy had 73 medical doctors and students working in a clinic with a total area of 367 square meters. It provided medical treatment mainly to people from the upper echelons of the ruling class of Tibet. About 10,000 people a year received treatment and approximately 2,500 kg of Tibetan medicine was produced. But the vast masses of serfs and slaves were too poor to go to the clinic. During this period, there were fewer than 500 medical workers in all of Tibet.

In old Tibet, under serfdom, students of the Zhaibung Monastery Medical School (which was disorganized soon after its establishment), one in Xigaze and two in the Potala Palace as well as the Yaowangshan Mountain Benefiting-All School and the Tibetan Medicine and Calendaring Academy in Lhasa were all monks from Lhasa, Xigaze and Shannan. Only in 1939 were military personnel recruited, in accordance with a decree issued by the local government of Tibet. The two medical schools derived their income from monasteries and manors. In the vast rural and pastoral areas, there was not even one good clinic. The broad masses of peasants and herders lived lives at the mercy of nature. Driven by dire poverty, the sick in the lower levels of society turned to folk prescriptions and sorcerers. Many died as a result. For example, in the 150 years prior to 1951, Tibet was hit by smallpox four times, taking a toll of 7,000 people in Lhasa in 1925 alone. In 1934 and 1937, typhoid killed a total of 500 Lhasans.

The situation took a turn for the better following the peaceful liberation of Tibet in 1951.

In May 1959, the Yaowangshan Mountain Benefiting-All School and the Tibetan medicine hospital in Lhasa were merged and renamed the Lhasa Tibetan Medicine Hospital in September 1961. Qenrab Norbu and his student Qamba Chilai were made its director and deputy director. The hospital includes the medical, surgical, women and children, and acupuncture departments, plus the pharmaceutical workshop. It is geared toward providing medical treatment and, at the same time, cultivating medical workers. This is different from the past practice of primarily training medical workers. In 1965, the hospital set up its out-patient building and an in-patient building with 32 beds. This was the first time in history that a Tibetan medical hospital had out-patient and in-patient departments.

In 1965, Tibetan medical workers compiled the book, *A Probe Into Tibetan Medicine*, in which they added 300 kinds of medicinal herbs. Some of the veteran Tibetan medicine workers contributed articles in their areas of expertise, including stomach diseases, kidney diseases, gout, influenza, cerebral hemorrhage, kidney diseases-related dropsy and women's diseases.

The State Medical Code, compiled in 1974, takes in certain traditional Tibetan medicine, including Gyamchidainba (Tiemu 7), Ngakajiua (Chenshang 15) and Chuitang Ribo. The Tibetan Medicine Group composed of eight veteran practitioners from the Tibet Medicine Hospital was also formed in 1974. This group gathered Tibetan medicine classics from among the common people, and conducted clinical trials with their findings and documented prescriptions that proved to have a curative effect on certain diseases when combined with Western medicine.

The Tibetan Medicine Hospital Study Group published the newly compiled *Tibetan Medicine Prescriptions* in 1975. In the next two years, the PRC Ministry of Public Health dispatched two groups of medical workers and video people to shoot two films under the joint name of Tibetan Medical Science and Tibetan Medicine. Two of the group members collaborated with Qamba Chilai to compile the 80 medicine charts and some 4,000 photos into four albums in both Chinese and Tibetan. In 1977, Tibetan medicine specialists from Tibet, Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, Yunnan and Xinjiang met in Lhasa and Xining to determine the medical contents of 174 Tibetan medicines and 290 Tibetan medicine prescriptions. This paved the way for the production and application of Tibetan medicine.

The year 1979 saw a new phase in the development of Tibetan medicine. Work on the book, *Chinese Medical Science: Tibetan Medicine*, began in April that year, with Tubdain Cering and Qamba Chilai serving as chief editor and deputy chief editor respectively. This was followed with the publication of the Four-Volume Medical Code and its annotated versions titled *Blue Glaze and Supplementary to the Crux*.

In light of the Central Government's decision to energetically develop Tibetan medicine, astronomy and calendaring, the Lhasa Tibetan Medicine Hospital was renamed Tibetan Medicine Hospital of Tibet on September 1, 1980. The hospital has grown into Tibetan medical treatment, education, research, Tibetan medicine-making and calendaring center in the Tibet Autonomous Region. It has made impressive progress in the treatment of high blood pressure, acupuncture and children's mental diseases.

Since 1981, Tibetan medicine hospitals have been set up in five of the seven prefectures and five of the 75 counties. Tibetan medicine departments can be found in hospitals from 70 of the 75 counties. Major ones include the Shannan Prefecture Tibetan Medicine Hospital, the Ngari Prefecture Tibetan Medicine Hospital, the Xigaze Prefecture Tibetan Medicine Hospital, the Nagqu Prefecture Tibetan Medicine Hospital, the Qamdo Prefecture Tibetan Medicine Hospital, as well as Tibetan medicine departments in Konjo, Xainza, Baxoi and Gyangze counties. The Tibetan Medicine Hospital of Tibet has held five training classes for some 200 medical workers hailing from various parts of Tibet.

In September 1981, the Tibetan Medicine Society of the All-China Administration for Medical Sciences held its inauguration ceremony and its council meeting in Lhasa. Dozens of papers on the history of Tibetan medicine, theory, clinical practice, prescriptions and research results were read at the meeting. This played an important role in the inheritance and development of Tibetan medicine.

During the First Session of the Sixth PRC National People's Congress (NPC) held in June 1983, Qamba Chilai was cited as a representative of Tibetan intellectuals and Tibetan medical workers. The Second Tibetan Medicine and Traditional Chinese Medicine Association Meeting, held in Lhasa in July 1983, received approximately 80 papers.

In August 1983, the Tibetan Medicine Secondary School of the Tibet Autonomous Region was launched in Lhasa. Over the years, it has trained many outstanding medical workers.

The People's Government decided in 1985 that those who passed examinations given by the Yaowangshan and calendaring schools prior to 1959 be given Tibetan medicine diplomas; those who graduated from Gyigyinarge Medical School in Xigaze and those who studied Tibetan medicine and calendaring in and graduated from Mozhuling and Painbo Nalanto sutra lecturing schools be given respective diplomas. This was followed by more pay for these veteran Tibetan medical workers.

The In-Patient Department Building was built in August 1985 with a total investment of 11 million yuan earmarked by the people's government of the Tibet Autonomous Region. It has 150 beds.

In August 1987, the Tibet People's Publishing House published Chinese-Tibetan charts painted in accordance with the Four-Volume Medical Code.

In summer of 1988, the young and middle-aged Tibetan medical workers were taught the Outlines of Tibetan Medicine.

Beginning in April 1989, Tibetan and Western surgical methods were used in surgical operation with great success.

In September 1991, efforts were made to identify more than 600 kinds of Tibetan medicinal materials, including some 100 medicinal minerals that were from northern Tibet. Directors of Tibetan medicine hospitals from Xigaze, Shannan and Nagqu were invited to attend.

In December 1991, an exhibition displayed the achievements made in the development of traditional medicines in China. Also on view were books on medical science, including painted charts on the Four-Volume Medical Code which was honored with a gold medal, the Four-Volume Medical Code: A Treasure House which won a silver medal, and the Biography of Medical Masters in Tibet which was awarded the Outstanding Medal.

With the assistance of the Swiss Red Cross Society, the Shannan Qoingyi Songtsan Tibetan Medicine School was created in June 1992. The Swiss society had previously invested in the building of the Benxiong Tibetan Medicine School in Xigaze. Both schools recruit students from remote areas. After six years of study in the two schools, the students return home to serve.

Since the advent of the 1990s, Tibetan medicine scholars have gone abroad for exchange and cooperation. For example, Coru Cenam and Qamba Chilai went to Japan for a visit in March 1990, and Qamba Chilai and two others visited the United States in December 1992. The visits enhanced mutual understanding and promoted development of Tibetan medicine.

Tibetan medicine is also used to serve people of non-Tibetan nationalities. On November 10, 1992, the Shannan Prefecture Tibetan Medicine Hospital and the China National Center for Tibetan Studies jointly created the Beijing Tibetan Medicine Hospital. Two years later, they opened the Tibetan Medicine Section in the Tianjin Hedong District Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital. Both the Beijing hospital and the Tianjin section have treated about 300,000 patients. Medical workers from 30 countries including Germany, Italy and Israel have visited them.

In September 1993, the State Medicine Dictionary Compiling Committee, the Medicine Standardizing Office of the PRC Ministry of Public Health and medicine offices in Tibet, Sichuan, Yunnan and Xinjiang gathered in Lhasa for the China Tibetan Medicine Standardizing Work Conference. The conference summed up experience gained in using scientific means to standardize Tibetan medicine.

The CPC Central Committee and the PRC State Council held their third national work conference on aid to Tibet in Beijing in August 1994. It was decided during the conference that Jiangsu Province would undertake to expand the Pharmaceutical Workshop of the Tibetan Medicine Hospital, with an investment of 53 million yuan (about US\$6.6 million).

To summarize, traditional Tibetan medicine, originally unique to Tibet and born out of centuries of battling nature, has become an important part of Chinese medicine. As it integrates with advanced modern science, Tibetan medicine better serves Tibetans and people from all over the world. And the best of it has been inherited for further development.

PICTURES

1. Statue of Yutog Nyingma Yundain Goinbo, the most accomplished and famous Tibetan medical practitioner during the time of Trisong Detsan.
2. Statue of Sanggyi Gyamco, a Degsi official under the 5th Dalai Lama and a famous Tibetan medicine practitioner.
3. Statue of Qenrab Norbu, a famous Tibetan medicine practitioner.
4. Jars of Tibetan medicine displayed during a medicine ceremony.
5. Chinese-Tibetan charts painted in accordance with the Four-Volume Medical Code. It is held as a combination of the Tibetan medicinal science and art.
6. Part of the Tibetan medicine charts.
7. A chart on embryo in Tibetan medicine.
8. A chart on dissected human body in Tibetan medicine.
9. Instruments used in Tibetan medicine.
10. A chart on Tibetan medical diagnosis through taking pulses.
11. A chart on Tibetan medicine.
12. The In-Patient Department of the Tibetan Medicine Hospital of the Tibet Autonomous Region.
13. A Tibetan medicine practitioner treating a cerebral patient using acupuncture and moxibustion.
14. Fire treatment is used to treat those suffering from vertebra diseases.
15. Pulse taking is also unique to Tibetan medicine practitioners.
16. Medicated bathes are resorted to cure patients.
17. Bleeding method is employed to cure a patient.
18. Musk, a precious medicinal material.
19. Tibetan safflower, a precious medicinal herb.
20. Changjor, a Tibetan medicine which is of curable effect for atrophic gastritis.
21. Rannasampe (Pearl 70), a Tibetan medicine which is of special effect for heart and cerebral diseases.
22. Coral 70, a precious Tibetan medicine.
23. An astronomical chart: Tibetan medicine practitioners also study astronomy and calendaring.
24. On November 10, 1992, the Shannan Prefecture Tibetan Medicine Hospital and the China National Center for Tibetan Studies jointly create the Beijing Tibetan Medicine Hospital.
25. Ngapoi Ngawang Jigmei, CPPCC vice-chairman, attend the opening ceremony of the Beijing Tibetan Medicine Hospital.