

‘On Eliminating Disease’:
Translations of the Medical Chapter
from the Chinese Versions of the *Sutra of Golden Light*

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A great deal of material that is highly relevant to the history of Indian medicine can be found embedded within Buddhist texts that were translated into Chinese over the course of the first millennium C.E.² Among the many Chinese Buddhist scriptures and parts thereof that discuss medicine, the *Sutra of Golden Light* (Skt. *Suvarṇa[pra]bhāsottama-sūtra*; Ch. *Jin guangming jing* 金光明經) surely ranks among the most well-known. The text contains a chapter that briefly summarizes the basic principles of Indian medicine. Since the seventh century at least, the Chinese Buddhist tradition has held this chapter to be a foundational statement of Buddhist healing wisdom.³ Today, it continues to be widely cited in virtually all sectarian and scholarly works discussing Buddhist medicine.

The textual core of the *Sutra of Golden Light* is thought to have been composed in Sanskrit in the first centuries C.E., though the earliest received text that is extant in that language dates no earlier than the mid-fifth century. Complete or fragmentary translations also exist in Sogdian, Xixia, Mongoli-

¹ This article has benefitted from advice received from Venerable Jianrong as well as from the participants in the Cornell Classical Chinese Colloquium, where a portion of it was presented in 2010.

² On Indian medicine in Chinese translation, see Demiéville 1985; Birnbaum 1989; Strickmann 2002; Chen 2005; Deshpande 2008; Salguero 2009, 2010, 2010–11.

³ The text is cited in the 668 encyclopedia, *Forest of Pearls in the Garden of the Dharma* (*Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林; *Taishō Tripitaka* vol. 53, no. 2122, p. 986b15–c20), that defined the parameters of Buddhist medicine for many future generations.

an, Old Uighur, Khotanese, and Tibetan.⁴ Three Chinese versions of the text are included in the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經 edition of the Sino-Japanese Buddhist canon. These are as follows:

1. *Jin guangming jing* 金光明經, T. 663: a version produced in 414–421 by Indian monk Dharmakṣema 曇無讖 (385–433) that predates the earliest extant Sanskrit version of the text;
2. *Hebu jin guangming jing* 合部金光明經, T. 664: a composite text created in 597 that collated together sections from several independent Chinese translations of the sutra that were available at that time, which contains Dharmakṣema’s chapter on medicine; and
3. *Jin guangming zuisheng wang jing* 金光明最勝王經, T. 665: A full re-translation of the sutra completed in 703 by the renowned Chinese pilgrim Yijing 義淨 (635–713).

Both Dharmakṣema’s and Yijing’s translations contain chapters called “On Eliminating Disease” (*chubing pin* 除病品) that differ significantly from the extant Sanskrit version. Dharmakṣema’s translation is closer to the Sanskrit, but diverges in the details of the medical doctrines it introduces. Yijing’s translation appears to have been heavily influenced by Dharmakṣema’s earlier efforts, as the two texts use similar language in many passages. However, it differs in many respects from the other versions. It is more concise in its telling of the narrative that frames the chapter, is longer and much more detailed in its summary of Indian medical thought, and contains a number of departures from the source text. It is also important to note that Yijing was more familiar with the doctrines of Indian medicine than other Chinese translators, as he had studied medicine at the monastic university at Nālandā during his 24-year-long pilgrimage to South and Southeast Asia. While still abroad, he sent reports of monastic life—including copious notes on Indian medical and hygienic practices—back to China.⁵ Thus, his version of the chapter “On Eliminating Disease” represents one of only a small number of Chinese translations of Indian medicine by an author intimately familiar with both its doctrines and its practice.

⁴ Emmerick 2004, pp. xi–xiii. On the authorship, ideological context, and historical development of the sutra, see also Gummer 2000; Zhou Minhui 2003; Ludvik 2006.

⁵ This material is discussed in my forthcoming book, *Chinese Buddhist Medicine: Disease, Healers, and the Body in Crosscultural Translation*. See *Taishō Tripitaka* vol. 54, no. 2125, Chapters 4–8, 20, 23, 27–29; translated in Li 2000.

Despite its significance for the history of both Buddhism and medicine, however, to my knowledge no Chinese version of the *Sutra of Golden Light*'s chapter on medicine has ever been translated into English.⁶ The purpose of the present article is to provide such a resource. Below, I offer translations of both Dharmakṣema's and Yijing's versions of the chapter side-by-side to facilitate comparison. In presenting this English translation of a Chinese translation of a Sanskrit text, I have chosen to render terminology (including names) in English whenever possible rather than speculatively back-translating. In the notes I have provided clarifications of the specialized medical terminology with reference to Sanskrit terms, which I hope will be a useful starting point for those who may be interested in the connections between the sutra and the larger Indian medical literature.

As the main purpose of this article is to make these translations available to scholars of South Asian medicine, I will avoid taking up here questions concerning the translation, reception, and circulation of the text in China. I have discussed some of these topics elsewhere, and further discussion is better left for publication in a journal related to the Chinese cultural and historical context.⁷ Nor will I discuss here the broader implications of the medical chapter for the history of medicine in India, or compare the chapter point by point with the Āyurvedic medical literature. These topics were long ago broached by Johannes Nobel and should be further analyzed by historians of Indian medicine.⁸ However, before proceeding with the translation, I do feel that a brief remark about the context in which this chapter of the *Sutra of Golden Light* should be read is warranted. Though it has become routine both within academic scholarship on Indo-Sinitic crosscultural exchange and within the East Asian Buddhist tradition itself to treat this chapter as an important summary of a tradition of Buddhist medical knowledge, this is a misconception.⁹ It is imperative to note that the text at no point claims a Buddhist origin for any of the knowledge it presents. Though the protagonist sets out to practice medicine based on a feeling of compassion for the suffering of the multitudes—a state of mind that the text surely wants us to interpret as a Buddhist virtue—the narrative never portrays him as

⁶ A full English translation from the Sanskrit is available in Emmerick 2004. A full German translation of Yijing's text is available in Nobel 1958.

⁷ On the treatment of the *Sutra of Golden Light*'s medical chapter by medieval Chinese commentators, see Salguero forthcoming.

⁸ Nobel 1951.

⁹ The role of this text in the canonization of Buddhist medicine is discussed in Salguero forthcoming.

anything other than a lay physician and never attributes his knowledge to a Buddhist source. An unbiased judgment on the basis of the contents of the text suggests that the chapter should be read as a *précis* of the main ideas and practices of mainstream Indian medicine, rather than a testament to an independent Buddhist medical tradition.

This reading of the text in no way diminishes its historical value. While it might not tell us anything about the practice of healing among Buddhist monastics or devotees, the various extant versions of the medical chapter—edited and translated in different geographical contexts and historical periods—offer glimpses of the development of Indian medicine that merit further exploration. In contrast to the creative approaches taken by many Chinese translators to render their source texts in ways they thought would fit with native medical and cultural expectations, Dharmakṣema’s and Yijing’s translations of the medical content in the *Sutra of Golden Light* are devoid of interpolated references to indigenous Chinese medical and cosmological ideas and afford us relatively unobstructed views “through the Chinese looking glass.”¹⁰ It is my hope that making the contents of the Chinese versions of the medical chapter available in English might encourage and facilitate further comparative research in the future.

Dharmakṣema’s Version of
“On Eliminating Disease”
金光明經除病品第十五
(*Taishō Tripitaka* vol. 16, no. 663,
pp. 351b23–352b09)¹¹

Yijing’s Version of
“On Eliminating Disease”
金光明最勝王經除病品
第二十四
(*Taishō Tripitaka* vol. 16, no. 665,
pp. 447b21–448c21)

佛告道場菩提樹神：「善女天！諦

佛告菩提樹神：「善女天！諦聽！

¹⁰ As I discuss in detail elsewhere, many Chinese translators felt the need to creatively reinterpret the medical content in Buddhist texts in order to force it into indigenous frameworks (see Salguero 2009, 2010, 2010–11, and forthcoming).

¹¹ The following translations are based on the corrected, punctuated, annotated edition of the *Taishō Tripitaka* made available by the Chinese Buddhist Electronic Texts Association at <http://www.cbeta.org> and on their jCBReader desktop application. I have adjusted the punctuation in many places without noting these instances. When I have used a variant character other than the one selected by the *Taishō Tripitaka*’s editors, I have provided the latter in braces { }.

聽！諦聽！善持憶念，我當為汝演說，往昔誓願因緣。過去無量不可思議阿僧祇劫，爾時有佛出現於世，名曰寶勝如來。應供。正遍知。明行足。善逝。世間解。無上士。調御丈夫。天人師。佛世尊。

The Buddha addressed the assembly and the Goddess of the Bodhi Tree thus:

Noble goddess, listen well! Listen well! Pay attention as I relate to you this tale about vows taken long ago. Incalculable, inconceivable, infinite eons ago, a Buddha appeared in the world that was named Bejeweled Excellence¹² Tathāgata, Worthy of Respect, Perfectly Enlightened, Consummate in Wisdom and Actions, Well-Accomplished, Knower of the World, Unsurpassed One, Tamer of Men, Teacher of Gods and Humankind, World-Honored Buddha.

諦聽！善思念之，是十千天子本願因緣，今為汝說。善女天！過去無量不可思議阿僧企耶劫，爾時有佛出現於世，名曰寶髻如來。應。正遍知。明行足。善逝。世間解。無上士。調御丈夫。天人師。佛世尊。

The Buddha addressed the Goddess of the Bodhi Tree thus:

Noble goddess, listen well! Listen well! Pay attention as I now tell you this tale about the former vows taken by the ten thousand divine sons.¹³ Noble goddess, incalculable, inconceivable, infinite eons ago, a Buddha appeared in the world that was named Bejeweled Topknot Tathāgata, Worthy, Perfectly Enlightened, Consummate in Wisdom and Actions, Well-Accomplished, Knower of the World, Unsurpassed One, Tamer of Men, Teacher of Gods and Humankind, World-Honored Buddha.

¹² Emmerick 2004, p. 76, gives Ratnaśikhin.

¹³ This story is being told as part of a longer narrative sequence that spans several chapters concerning the former lives of various characters including the Buddha, the goddess whom he is addressing, and the ten thousand divine sons.

善女天！爾時是佛般涅槃後，正法滅已，於像法中，有王名曰天自在光王，修行正法，如法治世，人民和順孝養父母。是王國中，有一長者名曰持水，善知醫方，救諸病苦，方便巧知四大增損。善女天！爾時持水長者家中，後生一子，名曰流水，體貌殊勝，端正第一，形色微妙，威德具足，受性聰敏，善解諸論，種種技藝書疏算計，無不通達。

Noble goddess, when this Buddha had passed into Nirvana and the true Dharma had disappeared, in the period of Semblance Dharma, there was a king named Heavenly Omnipotent Radiance¹⁴ who practiced the true Dharma and ruled according to the Dharma, and his people were filial in caring for their parents. In this kingdom, there was a layman named Water-Bearer¹⁵ who was very knowledgeable in the practice of medicine.

善女天！時彼世尊般涅槃後，正法滅已，於像法中，有王名曰天自在光，常以正法化於人民，猶如父母。是王國中，有一長者名曰持水，善解醫明，妙通八術，眾生病苦，四大不調，咸能救療。善女天！爾時持水長者，唯有一子，名曰流水，顏容端正，人所樂觀，受性聰敏，妙閑諸論，書畫算印，無不通達。

Noble goddess, when this World-Honored One had passed into Nirvana and the true Dharma had disappeared, in the period of Semblance Dharma, there was a king named Heavenly Omnipotent Radiance who educated his people in the true Dharma and was just like a parent [to them]. In this kingdom, there was a layman named Water Bearer who was very knowledgeable in the science of medicine.¹⁶

¹⁴ Emmerick 2004, p. 76, has Sureśvaraprabha.

¹⁵ Emmerick 2004, p. 76, has Jaṭiṃdhara.

¹⁶ Medicine was traditionally counted as one of the Five Sciences (Skt. *pañcavidyā*; Ch. *wuming* 五明) of ancient India. The others included grammar, technical arts, logic, and philosophy. See discussion in Zysk 1998, pp. 46–9. Dharmakṣema uses the more conventional “practice of medicine” (*yifang* 醫方) as do several variant versions of Yijing’s translation.

He could cure all ailments, and could skillfully determine the fluctuations of the Four Elements.¹⁷ Noble goddess, at that time, there was born into the layman Water Bearer’s family a son named Flowing Water.¹⁸ He was of extraordinary appearance, exceedingly handsome, with exquisite features, dignified, and of intelligent character. He understood well all the texts, and of all the various fine arts, literary pursuits, and mathematics there were none he did not thoroughly understand.

He thoroughly knew the Eight Arts,¹⁹ and could cure the people’s diseases and the imbalances of the Four Elements. Noble goddess, at that time, the layman Water Bearer only had one son named Flowing Water. He had handsome features, was considered attractive by all, and was of intelligent character. He was learned in all the texts, and among the arts and mathematics there were none he did not thoroughly understand.

¹⁷ Both Chinese translations refer explicitly to the Four Great Elements (Skt. *mahābhūta*; Ch. *sida* 四大)—i.e., Earth, Water, Fire, and Wind—the constituent parts of the human body and the rest of the material world, as understood by many Indo-European medical and philosophical traditions. (See discussion of the appearance of this doctrine in Chinese Buddhist texts in Demiéville 1985, pp. 65–76.) Emmerick 2004, p. 76 n 150, points out that his Sanskrit text reads *dhātu*, and suggests that the reference to Four Elements is a mistranslation on the part of the both Dharmakṣema and Yijing. However, *mahābhūta* and *dhātu* are often used interchangeably in Buddhist and medical texts. From the context, it is most likely that this part of the sutra in fact intended to refer to the Four Elements, which are widely considered to fluctuate with the seasons, resulting in disease.

¹⁸ Emmerick 2004, p. 76, has Jalavāhana.

¹⁹ The Eight Branches (*ba shu* 八術) of medicine, which are listed by name in the verses below. The list given in this sutra is close, but does not exactly match, the classical eightfold division of Āyurvedic medicine (Skt. *aṣṭāṅgāyurveda*). As they appear in the *Śusrutasamhitā*, the Eight Arts are surgery (*śalya*, lit. “the scalpel”), treatment of the head and neck (*śālākya*, lit. “use of the needle”) treatment of the body (*kāyacikitsā*), demonology (*bhūtavidyā*), pediatrics (*kaumārabhṛtya*), toxicology (*agadatantra*), longevity (*rasāyanatantra*, lit. “science of elixirs”), and aphrodisiacs (*vājīkaraṇatantra*). See Emmerick 2004, p. 76 n 151; Vogel 1963; Chen 2003.

是時國內天降疫病，有無量百千諸眾生等，皆無免者，為諸苦惱之所逼切。

At that time, the heavens sent down an epidemic to that country, and incalculable hundreds of thousands of people were unable to escape it. Everyone was plagued by all kinds of suffering.

善女天！爾時流水長者子，見是無量百千眾生受諸苦惱故，為是眾生大悲心，作是思惟：『如是無量百千眾生受諸苦惱。我父長者，雖善醫方，能救諸苦，方便巧知四大{太}增損，年已衰邁老耄枯悴，皮緩面皺，羸瘦顛掉，行來往反要因几杖，困頓疲乏，不能至彼城邑聚落，而是無量百千眾生，復遇重病無能救者，我今當至大醫父所，諮問治病醫方祕法，諮稟知己，當至城邑聚落村舍，治諸眾生種種重病，悉令得脫無量諸苦。』

Noble goddess, when Flowing Water the layman's son saw these incalculable hundreds of thousands of people experiencing much suffering, he gave rise to a feeling of great compassion for these people, and he had the following thought: "Now, incalculable hundreds of thousands of people are afflicted with much suffering. Although my father excels in the practice of medicine, can cure many ailments, and can skillfully

時王國內，有無量百千諸眾生類，皆遇疫疾，眾苦所逼，乃至無有歡樂之心。

At that time, there were incalculable hundreds of thousands of people in the kingdom that were afflicted by an epidemic. They were so plagued by their many ailments that there was no longer a happy thought [in the whole kingdom].

善女天！爾時長者子流水，見是無量百千眾生受諸病苦，起大悲心，作如是念：『無量眾生為諸極苦之所逼迫。我父長者，雖善醫方，妙通八術，能療眾病，四大增損，然已衰邁，老耄虛羸{羸}，要假扶策方能進步，不復能往城邑聚落救諸病苦。今有無量百千眾生，皆遇重病，無能救者，我今當至大醫父所，諮問治病醫方祕法，若得解已，當往城邑聚落之所，救諸眾生種種疾病，令於長夜得受安樂。』

Noble goddess, when the layman's son Flowing Water saw these incalculable hundreds of thousands of people experiencing all kinds of afflictions, he gave rise to a feeling of great compassion, and he had the following thought: "Incalculable numbers of people are being plagued by extreme suffering. Although my father excels in the practice of medicine, thoroughly knows the Eight Arts, can cure many dis-

determine the fluctuations of the Four Elements, he is already frail, elderly, and withered. His skin and face are wrinkled, and his body is weak and trembles. He relies on a cane to walk around and gets exhausted. He is unable to go to the cities, towns, and villages. Though there are incalculable hundreds of thousands of people that have come down with serious diseases, he will be unable to help them. I should now go to my father, the great physician, and ask him his disease-curing medical secrets. Once I have understood these, then I should go to the cities, towns, villages, and hamlets to cure any kind of serious diseases the people may have, and bring them relief from their inestimable suffering.

eases and the imbalances of the Four Elements, he is already frail, elderly, and weak. He relies on a cane in order to walk, and is unable to repeatedly go out to the cities, towns, and villages to seek out the sick. Now that there are incalculable hundreds of thousands of people that have come down with serious ailments, he will be unable to help them. I should now go to my father, the great physician, and ask him his disease-curing medical secrets. Once I have understood these, then I should go to the cities, towns, and villages and seek out all the people with whatever diseases in order that they might be comforted in their time of need.

時長者子思惟是已，即至父所，頭面著地為父作禮，叉手却住，以四大增損而問於父，即說偈言：

時長者子作是念已，即詣父所，稽首禮足，合掌恭敬，却住一面，即以伽他，請其父曰：

Once the layman's son had had this thought, he went to his father, paid homage by touching his head to the ground, placed his hands together and stood aside. He then asked his father about the fluctuations of the Four Elements, speaking this verse:

Once the layman's son had had this thought, he went to his father, paid homage by bowing his head to [the father's] feet, placed his palms together in respect, and stood to one side. Then, he spoke in verse, asking his father:

『云何當知， 四大諸根，
 衰損代謝， 而得諸病？
 云何當知， 飲食時節，
 若食已， 身火不滅？
 云何當知， 治風及熱，
 水過肺{肺}病， 及以等分？
 何時動風、 何時動熱、
 何時動水， 以害眾生？』

『慈父當哀愍， 我欲救眾生，
 今請諸醫方， 幸願為我說。
 云何身衰壞， 諸大有增損？
 復在何時中， 能生諸疾病？
 云何噉飲食， 得受於安樂，
 能使內身中， 火勢{熱}不衰損？
 眾生有四病， 風黃熱痰癰，
 及以總集病， 云何而療治？
 何時風病起？ 何時熱病發？
 何時動痰癰？ 何時總集生？』

“How should we understand the fluctuation of the Four Elements and the faculties, and how these lead to various illnesses? How should we understand the [proper] seasons for drink and food, so that while eating or after eating the bodily fires²⁰ will not be extinguished? How should we understand the treatment of vāta, pitta, śleṣman, and their combination?²¹ Which season arouses vāta,

“Kind father, please take pity. I wish to help the people. Please will you now explain to me the practice of medicine? Why does the body break down, and why do the Elements fluctuate? And, in what seasons can diseases arise? How can one take food and drink and maintain wellbeing, while ensuring that the power of the fire inside the body is not depletion?”

²⁰ Dharmakṣema’s term “bodily fire” and Yijing’s “power of the fire inside the body” refer to the process of digestion, which in Indian medicine is routinely spoken of using the metaphor of fire (cf. Skt. *jaṭharāgni*).

²¹ The Chinese literally reads “wind,” “heat,” “illnesses of water in the lungs,” and “equal parts,” all loose translations of four major causes of disease in Indian medicine: wind, bile, phlegm, and the combination of the three (Skt. *saṃnipāta*). Elsewhere, Dharmakṣema uses an abbreviated “illness of the lungs” for *śleṣman*. I have used the Sanskrit here for consistency. Note that, in translating the causes of disease in these two sutras, I have explicitly rendered the character 病 as “illness,” although this may in some cases be superfluous. For example, I translate *feibing* 風病 as “vāta illness(es),” although it is also possible that this is a binome that should be translated simply as *vāta*. The same binome may even be a translation of the Sanskrit *vāta-doṣa*, although the terminology of *tridoṣa* is not used in the extant Sanskrit version of this text and is therefore not used in my English translation. For the early development of the *tridoṣa* doctrine, see Scharfe 1999. For the appearance of these illness

which season arouses pitta, which season arouses śleṣman, thereby harming people?"

ed? People have four illnesses: vāta, pitta, śleṣman and the combination of illnesses.²² How can these be treated? In what season does vāta arise? In what season does pitta emerge? What season arouses śleṣman? In what season does the combination occur?"

時父長者，即以偈頌，解說醫方，而答其子：

時彼長者聞子請已，復以伽他而答之曰：

Then the father promptly replied in verse, explaining the practice of medicine in answer to his son:

Upon hearing his son's request, the layman replied with these verses:

『三月是夏， 三月是秋，
三月是冬， 三月是春。
是十二月， 三三而說，
從如是數， 一歲四時。
若二二說， 足滿六時。
三三本攝， 二二現時，
隨是時節， 消息飲食，
是能益身， 醫方所說。』

『我今依古仙， 所有療病法，
次第為汝說， 善聽救眾生。
三月是春時， 三月名為夏，
三月名秋分， 三月謂冬時。
此據一年中， 三三而別說，
二二為一節， 便成歲六時。
初二是花時， 三四名熱際，
五六名雨際， 七八謂秋時，
九十是寒時， 後二名冰雪。
既知如是別， 授藥勿令差。』

"Three months are summer, three months are autumn, three months

"I now will explain to you step by step all the methods of treating ill-

factors in Chinese Buddhist texts, see Demiéville 1985, pp. 65–76; Salguero 2010–11.

²² Yijing's translations of the four causes of disease literally read "wind," "yellow heat," "phlegm congestion," and "combination of illnesses." The differences between these terms and those chosen by Dharmakṣema are consistent with changes in translation norms over the interim between the fifth and eighth centuries (see chart and discussion in Salguero 2010–11, pp. 64–65).

are winter, and three months are spring. When counting these twelve months by threes, a year has four seasons. If counting by twos, that would make six seasons.²³ On the basis of either three-[month periods] or two-[month periods], ingesting food and drink in accordance with the seasons can benefit the body. This is what is explained by the practice of medicine.

ness according to the ancient sages. Listen well, and you will be able to help people. Three months are the season of spring. Three months are called summer. Three months are called autumn. Three months are said to be the winter season. Aside from dividing the year by threes, there is another teaching counting by twos in order to get six seasons. The first two are the Season of Flowers. The third and fourth are the Interval of Heat. The fifth and sixth are the Interval of Rain. The seventh and eighth are called the Season of Autumn. The ninth and tenth are the Season of Cold. The last two are called Icy Snow. When you know to differentiate like this, you will not give medicines that cause [your patient's condition] to worsen.

隨時歲中， 諸根四大，
代謝增損， 令身得病。
有善醫師， 隨順四時，
三月將養， 調和六大，
隨病飲食， 及以湯藥。

當隨此時中， 調息於飲食，
入腹令消散， 眾病則不生。
節氣若變改， 四大有推移，
此時無藥資， 必生於病苦。
醫人解四時， 復知其六節，

²³ Cf. translation of this passage in Emmerick 2004, p. 78. As Emmerick notes, the Sanskrit is “defective” and the Tibetan and Khotanese versions are of little assistance in interpreting this passage. Dharmakṣema’s Chinese is also rather opaque. My translation here is informed by a sidelong glance at Yijing’s version of the sutra, which seems to me significantly clearer. The six-fold periodization of the year commonly used in Indian medicine (Skt. *ṛtu*) includes *śiśira* (late winter), *vasanta* (spring), *grīṣma* (summer), *varṣā* (rainy season), *śarad* (autumn), and *hemanta* (early winter).

明閑身七界， 食藥使無差。
謂味界血肉， 膏骨及髓腦。
病入此中時， 知其可療不。

“In accordance with the seasons of the year, the faculties and the Four Elements fluctuate between excess and depletion, causing the body to become ill. A good doctor will nurture and balance the Six Elements²⁴ in accordance with the four seasons of three months each, and [give] drink, food, and medicines that are appropriate for the illness.

“You ought to, in accordance with these seasons, regulate the drink and food so that whatever enters the belly will be properly digested, and the various diseases will therefore not arise. When the seasonal influences²⁵ change and the Four Elements fluctuate, if at that time medicines are not given, ailments will definitely arise. If a doctor understands the four seasons and knows the six periods, and has trained in the body’s Seven Constituents,²⁶ then food and medicine will be employed without error. [The Seven Constituents] are namely: *rasa-dhātu*,²⁷ blood, flesh, fat, bones, marrow, and brain. When an illness enters into these, he will know whether or not he can cure this.

²⁴ The Chinese term *liuda* 六大 typically refers to the Four Elements, plus Space (Ch. *kong* 空; Skt. *ākāśa*) and Consciousness (Ch. *shi* 識; Skt. *vijñāna*).

²⁵ While Yijing uses the word *qi* 氣, a central concept of Chinese medicine and cosmology, we should not read this as an interpolation of indigenous Chinese doctrine. He is using a common word to refer to the predominant climactic influences arising in different seasons and to suggest that these can affect the body’s health detrimentally, as is consistent with Indian medical doctrine.

²⁶ In Indian medical texts, the Seven Constituents (*sapta-dhātu*) are most commonly understood to include *rasa-dhātu* (see next note), blood, flesh, fat, bone, marrow, and semen. Yijing’s text includes “brain” as the last item instead of semen.

²⁷ Sometimes rendered in English translations as “chyle” or “chyme,” *rasa-dhātu* is the essence of digested food and drink. It is the most subtle of the Seven Constituents, is the most refined product of digestion, and is of utmost importance to the health and vitality of the body.

多風病者，夏則發動，
 其熱病者，秋則發動，
 等分病者，冬則發動，
 其肺病者，春則增劇。
 有風病者，夏則應服，
 肥膩鹹酸{酢}，及以熱食；
 有熱病者，秋服冷甜；
 等分冬服，甜酢肥膩；
 肺病春服，肥膩辛熱。

病有四種別，謂風熱痰癢，
 及以總集病，應知發動時。
 春中痰癢動，夏內風病生，
 秋時黃熱增，冬節三俱起。
 春食澁熱辛，夏膩熱醎醋，
 秋時冷甜膩，冬酸澁膩甜。
 於此四時中，服藥及飲食，
 若依如是味，眾病無由生。

“Illnesses of excessive vāta emerge in the summer. Illnesses of pitta emerge in the fall. Illnesses of the combination emerge in the winter. Śleṣman illnesses are more severe in the spring. For illnesses of vāta it is recommended to give Oily, Salty, Sour, and Hot foods in the summer.²⁸ For illnesses of pitta, it is recommended to give Cold and Sweet in the autumn. For the combination, give Sweet, Sour, and Oily in the winter. For illnesses of śleṣman, give Oily, Pungent, and Hot in the spring.²⁹

“There are four categories of illness—namely vāta, pitta, śleṣman, and the combination of these illnesses—and one ought to know the season in which they emerge. In the spring śleṣman arises, in the summer vāta illnesses come, in the autumn pitta increases, and in winter season the three arise together. In the spring, eat Astringent, Hot, and Pungent. In the summer, Oily, Hot, Salty, and Sour. In the autumn season, Cold, Sweet, and Oily. In the winter, Sour, Astringent, Oily, and Sweet. If in these four seasons, one administers medicines, drink, and food in accordance with the Flavors like this, illnesses will not have cause to emerge.

²⁸ The effects of the medicinal Flavors on the *vāta*, *pitta*, and *śleṣman* constitute a major part of Indian therapeutic reasoning (see Wujastyk 2000). The Flavors mentioned in Chinese Buddhist texts usually do not match the basic six most commonly found in the Āyurvedic texts (Sweet, Sour, Salty, Astringent, Bitter, and Pungent), nor do they follow the expected seasonal correspondences. Note that Dharmakṣema’s and Yijing’s translations are unsurprising in this regard, and in the fact that they differ from one another.

²⁹ The *Taishō Tripitaka* editors note that one source has Bitter 苦 here instead of Hot.

飽食然後，則發肺病；
 於食消時，則發熱病；
 食消已後，則發風病。
 如是四大，隨三時發。

食後病由癢，食消時由熱，
 消後起由風，准時須識病。
 既識病源已，隨病而設藥。
 假令患狀殊，先須療其本。

“*Śleṣman illnesses emerge immediately after eating. During digestion, pitta illnesses emerge. After digestion is finished, vāta illnesses emerge. This is how the Four Elements emerge at three different times.*³⁰

“*[Immediately] after eating, illness comes from śleṣman. During digestion, it is from pitta. After digestion, it arises from vāta. If you ascertain the time [of onset], you will be certain to understand the disease. Once you understand the origin of the illnesses, then you can establish the medicine appropriate for it. Supposing [the patient] is afflicted with various different conditions, you must first treat the root.*

風病羸損，補以酥膩；
 熱病下藥，服訶梨勒；
 等病應服，三種妙藥，
 所謂甜辛，及以酥膩；
 肺病應服，隨能吐藥。
 若風熱病，肺病等分，
 違時而發，應當任師，
 籌量隨病，飲食湯藥。』

風病服油膩，患熱利為良，
 癢病應變吐，總集須三藥。
 風熱癢俱有，是名為總集。
 雖知病起時，應觀其本性，
 如是觀知已，順時而授藥。
 飲食藥無差，斯名善醫者。

“*For the depletion that accompanies illnesses of vāta, fortify [the patient]*

For vāta illnesses, give oils and fats. For afflictions of pitta, purgatives

³⁰ This final line implies a connection between the Four Elements on the one hand and the *vāta*, *pitta* and *śleṣman* on the other. The standard formulation in Āyurvedic texts is that *śleṣman* relates primarily to the Water Element, *pitta* relates primarily to Fire, and *vāta* relates primarily to Wind. What is meant in this particular passage is not entirely clear. (See discussion of how other Buddhist texts deal with these correlations in Demiéville 1985, pp. 65–76.)

with ghee. For a purgative of pitta, give yellow myrobalan.³¹ For the combination of illnesses you ought to give the three kinds of wondrous medicines—that is, Sweet Flavor, Pungent Flavor, and ghee. For śleṣman illnesses, you ought to give medicines that induce vomiting. If vāta, pitta, śleṣman, or combination illnesses emerge in contradiction to their [expected] time, one should trust the doctor to determine the drink, food, and medicine that are suitable for the illness.”³²

are beneficial. For śleṣman illnesses, you ought to induce vomiting. For the combination you must use all three medicines. If there are vāta, pitta, and śleṣman together, this is what is meant by ‘combination.’ Although you know the season in which this disease arose, you ought to contemplate its root nature. Once you have contemplated thus, give medicines according to that season.³³ One who [administers] drink, food, and medicine without error is called a good doctor.

復應知八術， 總攝諸醫方，
於此若明閑， 可療眾生病。
謂針刺傷破， 身疾并鬼神，
惡毒及孩童， 延年增氣力。

“Moreover, you ought to know the Eight Arts, and fully absorb all of the practices of medicine. If you are trained in these, you can heal the diseases of the people. [The Eight Arts are] namely the use of needles, traumatology, bodily illnesses, de-

³¹ Terminalia chebula (Skt. *harītakī*) is a panacea frequently encountered in Buddhist scriptures as well as secular medical texts. For a brief comparison of sources, see Dash 1974.

³² Curiously, this last sentence seems to be addressed to a hypothetical patient rather than to the physician-to-be listening to his father’s instructions.

³³ In other words, in cases involving a combination of illnesses, treat the root cause rather than the cause indicated by the time of onset.

*monology, toxicology, pediatrics,
longevity, and increasing vitality.*³⁴

先觀彼形色，	語言及性行。
然後問其夢，	知風熱癘殊。
乾瘦少頭髮，	其心無定住，
多語夢飛行，	斯人是風性。
少年生白髮，	多汗及多瞋，
聰明夢見火，	斯人是熱性。
心定身平整，	慮審頭津膩，
夢見水白物，	是癘性應知。
總集性俱有，	或二或具三。
隨有一偏增，	應知是其性。
既知本性已，	准病而授藥。

*“First observe [your patient’s] form,
speech, and habits. Then, ask him
about his dreams to know his peculi-
arities of vāta, pitta, and śleṣman.³⁵
If there is dryness, emaciation, loss
of hair, an unsettled mind, too much
talking, or dreams of flying, then he
has a vāta constitution.³⁶ If he has
hair that turned white while he was
young, sweats too much, gets angry
often, is intelligent, and in his
dreams sees fire, he has a pitta con-
stitution. If he has a stable mind and
an even-keeled body, he is cautious,
his head exudes oil, and in his
dreams he sees water and white*

³⁴ On the Eight Arts, see note 19.

³⁵ Of course, the Chinese is not gendered here.

³⁶ Unlike the earlier translation by Dharmakṣema, Yijing’s version of the chapter categorizes people according to their predominance of *vāta*, *pitta*, or *śleṣman*. On the development of the idea of constitutions in Āyurvedic literature, see Scharfe 1999, p. 618).

things, you should know he has a śleṣman constitution. Although a combination constitution can include either two or all three [of the above], there will still be one that predominates, and this ought to be considered his [root] constitution. Once you know his root constitution, you can evaluate the illness and give medicines.

驗其無死相，	方名可救人。
諸根倒取境，	尊醫人起慢，
親友生瞋恚。	是死相應知：
左眼白色變，	舌黑鼻梁欹，
耳輪與舊殊，	下脣垂向下。

“Check that he does not have the death-signs.³⁷ If all is right, that is a person that can be helped. If you do not properly perceive this situation or arrogantly pursue the admiration of others, the friends and family [of your patients] will become angry. These are the death-signs you should know: the white of the left eye changes color, the tongue turns black, the bridge of the nose becomes crooked, the ears rotate abnormally, and the lower lip droops down.

³⁷ While Yijing’s list is quite short here, the topic of death-signs (Skt. *riṣṭa*) was of great concern to early Indian doctors, and lengthy discussions of the visible omens of impending death are found in the major Āyurvedic treatises. In such texts, the reader is implored not to take up a case where the death-signs are present, as the patient’s inevitable death will only lead to the tarnishing of his own reputation.

訶梨勒一種， 具足有六味，
能除一切病， 無忌藥中王，
又三果三辛。 諸藥中易得，
沙糖蜜蘇乳， 此能療眾病。
自餘諸藥物， 隨病可增加。

“One yellow myrobalan seed contains all the Six Flavors and can eliminate all diseases.³⁸ Among the medicines that are not prohibited, it is the best. There also are the Three Fruits³⁹ and the Three Spices.⁴⁰ Among all medicines the easiest to obtain are granulated sugar, honey, and buttermilk. These can cure all diseases. Using medicines other than these may result in the illness increasing.

先起慈愍心， 莫規於財利。
我已為汝說， 療疾中要事，
以此救眾生， 當獲無邊果。』

³⁸ Though six medicinal Flavors are mentioned here, more than six were mentioned above. The mention of prohibited medicines in the following sentence is likely referring to monastic disciplinary regulations on allowable medications. On medicines mentioned in various Vinaya, see Jaworski 1927; Zysk 1998, pp. 73–83; Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu 2007, pp. 54–68.

³⁹ *Triphalā* is a common Indian medicinal compound mentioned repeatedly in Buddhist and medical texts alike. The ingredients are *Terminalia chebula* (Skt. *harītakī*), *Embllica officinalis* (*āmalakī*), and *Terminalia bellirica* (*bibhītaka*). In the Indian medical literature, this remedy is used in treatments for many disorders, though it is most well known for its role in promoting vitality.

⁴⁰ Another common Indian medicinal compound, *trikaṭu* is composed of ginger, black pepper, and *Piper longum* (*pippalī* or *pippala*). It is said to alleviate *sleṣman*, promote digestion, and treat a host of disorders.

“The primary thing is to generate a compassionate and sympathetic heart, and not to be guided by profit. I have now told you the essentials of curing illness. With this you can help people and obtain limitless success.”

善女天！爾時流水長者子，問其父醫四大增損，因是得了一切醫方。時長者子知醫方已，遍至國內城邑聚落，在在處處隨有眾生病苦者所，軟言慰喻，作如是言：『我是醫師！我是醫師！善知方藥，今當為汝療治救濟，悉令除愈。』

Noble goddess, because the layman's son Flowing Water asked his father the physician about the fluctuation of the Four Elements, he then came to understand the entirety of the practice of medicine. Once the layman's son understood the practice of medicine, he went among the cities, towns, and villages all over the kingdom. Wherever the sick people were, he consoled them with gentle words, saying: "I am a doctor! I am a doctor! I excel at prescribing medicine. I now will come to your rescue and treat your diseases, and I will completely cure you."

善女天！爾時長者子流水，親問其父八術之要，四大增損，時節不同，餌藥方法，既善了知，自忖堪能救療眾病，即便遍至城邑聚落所在之處，隨有百千萬億病苦眾生，皆至其所，善言慰喻，作如是語：『我是醫人！我是醫人！善知方藥，今為汝等療治眾病，悉令除愈。』

Noble goddess, when the layman's son Flowing Water asked his father about the essentials of the Eight Arts, the fluctuations of the Four Elements, the differences in the seasons, and the methods of administering medicines, he understood well and became himself capable of curing myriad diseases. Then, he went among the cities, towns, and villages all over. Wherever the hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands, millions of sick, suffering people were, there he went. With well-spoken words he consoled them, saying: "I am a doctor! I am a doctor! I excel at prescribing medicine. I now will treat your many diseases, and I will completely cure you."

善女天！爾時眾生聞長者子軟言慰喻，許為治病，心生歡喜踊躍無量，時有百千無量眾生，遇極重病，直聞是言，心歡喜故，種種所患即得除差，平復如本氣力充實。善女天！復有無量百千眾生，病苦深重難除差者，即共來至長者子所，時長者子，即以妙藥授之令服，服已除差亦得平復。善女天！是長者子，於其國內，治諸眾生所有病苦，悉得除差。

Noble goddess, when the people heard the layman's son's gentle words of consolation promising to cure their diseases, their minds gave rise to boundless happiness and elation. When the incalculable hundreds of thousands of people who had contracted grave diseases truly heard these words, because of the happiness in their hearts, all of their afflictions were immediately eliminated, and they regained their full strength.⁴¹ And likewise, noble goddess, when incalculable hundreds of thousands of people with ailments that were grave and difficult to cure all rushed together to the layman's son, the layman's son right away gave them a dose of his wondrous medicines. After taking this dose, they were cured and back to normal. Noble goddess, that layman's son in

善女天！爾時眾人聞長者子善言慰喻，許為治病，時有無量百千眾生遇極重病，聞是語已，身心踊躍，得未曾有。以此因緣，所有病苦悉得蠲除，氣力充實，平復如本。善女天！爾時復有無量百千眾生，病苦深重難療治者，即共往詣長者子所，重請醫療，時長者子，即以妙藥令服皆蒙除差。善女天！是長者子，於此國內，治百千萬億眾生病苦，悉得除差。

Noble goddess, at that time the people heard the layman's son's well-spoken words of consolation promising to cure their diseases. When the incalculable hundreds of thousands of people experiencing extreme and grave disease heard these words, their bodies and minds were elated as never before. Because of this effect, all of their ailments were destroyed, and they regained their full strength. And likewise, noble goddess, when incalculable hundreds of thousands of people with ailments that were grave and difficult to cure all rushed together to the layman's son seeking medical treatment, the layman's son right away gave them a dose of his wondrous medicines and cured them all. Noble goddess, that layman's son in that kingdom treated the ailments of

⁴¹ Note that many of the patients are cured not by Flowing Water's medical ministrations, but by hearing his proclamations. On the power of his words as an allegory for the miraculous potency of the sutra itself, see Gummer 2000, pp. 258–62.

that kingdom treated every ailment
the people had, completely curing
them.

hundreds, thousands, tens of thou-
sands, millions of people, complete-
ly curing them.

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