

A Translation of the Nepalese Text of the
Suśrutasamhitā

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Part 1. Sūtrasthāna

Part 2. Nidānasthāna

Part 3. Śārīrasthāna

Śārīrasthāna 2: On Semen and Menstrual Fluid

Literature

Meulenbeld offered an annotated overview of this chapter and a bibliography of earlier scholarship to 2002.¹⁵⁷ Das (2003: chs 6–8) also studied topics of this chapter and in chapter 13 provided an overview of the conceptual background of ayurveda on the topics discussed in this chapter.

Translation

- 1 We shall now explain the anatomy that is the purification of sperm (*śukra*) and blood (*śoṇita*).
- 3 Semen (*retas*)¹⁵⁸ is incompetent to produce offspring if it is [characterized by] wind, bile, phlegm, blood (*śoṇita*),¹⁵⁹ decomposition (*kūṇapa*), clumps (*granthi*),¹⁶⁰ stinking pus (*pūtipūya*), low volume (*kṣīṇa*), urine, or feces.

¹⁵⁷ [HIML](#): IA, 244–246.

¹⁵⁸ The Nepalese version has -रेतांसि “semen” (in the plural) as the subject of the sentence: “seeds are unable to produce offspring....” In the vulgate, -रेतसः is a masculine bahuvrīhi, making “men whose semen has...” the subject of the sentence.

¹⁵⁹ Note that the list begins with the four entities, wind, bile, phlegm and blood, hinting at a four-humour system (see Wujastyk 2000: 485–486).

¹⁶⁰ Modern Establishment Medicine (MEM) understands that normal ejaculate contains coagula which, however, dissolve after about half an hour. But coagula that do not dissolve may sometimes be a sign of an underlying disorder (see, e.g., Lamming and Marshall 1990: 2, 614–615; Cohen 1990).

Diagnosis by humours

- 4
- When the dysfunction is caused by wind, there is a colour and a type of pain that typically goes with wind problems.
 - If caused by bile the colour and the pain are typical of bile afflictions. If caused by phlegm the discolouration and suffering are characteristic for phlegm disease.
 - And if caused by blood (*śoṇita*) there will be a colouration due to blood and a sensation of a bile affliction. Moreover, when caused by blood (*rakta*) there is the smell of decomposition (*kuṇapa*).¹⁶¹
 - Phlegm with wind causes the appearance of clumps.
 - Bile with blood (*śoṇita*) causes the appearance of foul-smelling pus (*pūtipūya*).
 - Bile with wind (*māruta*) cause a weakening of semen.
 - Humoral colligation (*sannipāta*) causes the smell of urine and feces.¹⁶²

Cases of foul-smelling sperm, sperm with clumps, and when it reeks of pus are hard to treat. But when sperm contains urine or faeces there is no treatment.¹⁶³

- 5 Moreover, seasonal blood (*ārtava*) too can become afflicted (*upasṛṣṭa*), seedless (*abīja*) because of the three humours, and blood as the fourth, taken individually, in pairs or triples or all together.¹⁶⁴

This can also be known by means of the humour, colour and pain.

In these cases, that which displays decomposition (*kuṇapa*), clumps and the putrid smell of pus is incurable (*asādhya*). And otherwise it is curable (*sādhya*).

Among these, the kind which shows decomposition, or coagula, or pu-

161 Note that the text mentions both शोणित and रक्त. This raises the question of whether the author considered these to be different, or whether it is an artefact of textual transmission.

162 The expression “humoral colligation,” translating

- सन्निपात, refers to the simultaneous
- disorder of three humors at the same time, a condition that is difficult to treat (see Wujastyk 2016: 38 *et passim*).

163 Note that the above characterizations presuppose the direct inspection of an ejaculate. The process of collection is not described in the sources in this chapter.

164 This translates the text of the oldest surviving witness, N, and the vulgate. But MS H, that normally follows K very closely, has a negative particle, न, reversing the sense of the sentence.

trid pus is incurable. The other types, however, can be treated.

6 And there is a verse on this.

An expert should overcome the first three of these sperm pathologies with special treatments such as unction and sweating, as well as by means of a urethral instillation (uttarabasti).¹⁶⁵

find out
about ut-
tarabasti

Therapies by humour

- 6.1 In that context, when the sperm is of the nature of wind, there is an enema (*āsthāpana*) consisting of [Bengal quince](#), [Indian kudzu](#) and milk.¹⁶⁶ In the urethral instillations one should use sesame oil well cooked with [mahua](#), [grey orchid](#), [deodar](#), and [chir pine](#). One can also make the patient drink clarified butter with ripe [pomegranate](#), [citron fruit](#), [rock salt](#), a caustic (*kṣāra*), and [two kinds of salt](#).¹⁶⁷
- 6.2 When the sperm is of the nature of bile, there is an enema of milk cooked with curds, [Malay beechwood](#) and [liquorice](#). One should also apply a paste (*kalka*) of [white dammer tree](#) and [axlewood](#) in the vagina. There is an oily enema (*anuvāsana*) of sesame oil cooked with [liquorice](#); in the same way, it should only be applied as a urethral instillation.¹⁶⁸ One should make him swallow ghee cooked with [wild sugar cane](#), [common smilax](#), [heart-leaved moonseed](#), [white teak](#), [false daisy](#), and the [five roots](#).
- 6.3 When the sperm is of the nature of phlegm, there is an enema (*āsthāpana*) consisting of a decoction (*kaṣāya*) of [golden shower tree](#). And one should also apply an oily enema (*anuvāsana*) of sesame oil cooked with [long pepper](#), [embelia](#) and honey; and it should only be applied as a urethral instillation.

¹⁶⁵ Ḍalhaṇa on 3.2.6 ([Su 1938](#): 345) noted that “unction and sweating” indicates the “five treatments”: वमन, विरेचन, अनिरूह, अनुवासन and उत्तरबस्ति. He noted that the explicit mention of urethral enema in the verse was for the purpose of highlighting its priority. However, a natural reading of the verse does not suggest that these distinctions were in the author’s mind.

¹⁶⁶ These three recipes are not present in the vulgate text of the *Suśrutasaṃhitā*.

¹⁶⁷ -विपक्व “well cooked with...” might be interpreted as “with ripe...”.

¹⁶⁸ By specifying “upper (i.e., urethral) instillation” the author is clarifying that this is not a rectal enema.

One should make him drink a ghee cooked with hairy bergenia, white teak, emblic myrobalan, long pepper, bearded premna, and prickly chaff-flower.

3.2.7 And there are verses about this.

When there is blood in the sperm, the physician should give the person ghee cooked with flowers of the fire-flame bush, catechu, pomegranate, and arjun.

3.2.8 *When it smells like a corpse, he should drink ghee cooked with the sal group of trees. †When clumps appear, it is cooked with stones, or also in ash from a flame-of-the-forest.¹⁶⁹*

9 *And also, when it resembles pus, it is treated with items such as phalsa and banyan. When the sperm is deficient it should be treated as was stated before and also as will be described.¹⁷⁰*

10 *When it looks like feces, he should be made to drink ghee together with leadwort, cuscus grass and devil's dung.*

10.1 *In these six cases, a wise person should carry out the sequence that starts with oleation.¹⁷¹*

10.2–3 *It deteriorates as a result of not having sex with women for a long time as well as from the use of actions, and from overusing the drugs that are astringent, spicy and sharp, that are acidic (amla), salty, sere (rūkṣa), sour (śukta) or stale (paryuṣita), and because of suppressing the impulses in vaginas and from intercourse.*

10.4 *When there is a defect (doṣa) in the menstrual blood (ārtava) one should advise the therapy starting with oleation.*

And one should use a urethral instillation (uttaravasti) exactly as was described before.

10.5

¹⁶⁹ The Nepalese text and translation of this sentence are uncertain. The vulgate text reads, 3.2.8 (Su 1938: 345): ग्रन्थिभूते शटीसिद्धं पालाशे वा ऽपि भस्मनि “If clumps appear, it is cooked with śaṭī or in ash from a palāśa.” The vulgate edition notes in a footnote that some vulgate manuscripts add an extra line, स्नेहादिश्च क्रमः षट्प्रेतासु विजानता. The Nepalese manuscripts read this line two verses further down.

¹⁷⁰ Dalhaṇa on 3.2.9 (Su 1938: 345) noted that “what was stated before” refers to the स्व-योनिवर्धन section, i.e., Suśrutasaṃhitā 1.15.10 (Su 1938: 69), and that “what will be described” refers to Suśrutasaṃhitā 4.26 (Su 1938: 496), the chapter on weakness and strength (क्षीणबलीय).

¹⁷¹ The six cases probably refer to

to what?

puzzling

- 10.6
10.7
10.8
10.9
10.10
10.11
10.12 And there is a verse about this@

To purify the menstrual blood (ārtava), one should apply the procedure that finishes with a urethral installation.

From

Therapies for menstrual blood

- 12cd For purifying the menstrual blood one should follow the procedure, the last of which is a urethral instillation (*uttarabasti*).¹⁷²
13 One should use a paste (*kalka*) as well as cloths and a salutary lavages (*ācamana*).¹⁷³
14 In case of a bad smell and the appearance of pus, or the appearance of marrow in the blood.
15 He should drink a decoction (*kvātha*) of **white sandalwood** or a decoction of red **sandalwood**.¹⁷⁴
14ab When clumps (*granthi*) appear, he should drink **velvet-leaf**, **three heating spices**, and **Indrajao**.¹⁷⁵
14a He should drink a decoction (*niḥkvātha*) that is the extracted juice (*surasa*) of a caustic (*kṣāra*), **dried ginger**, and **devil's dung**.
...

¹⁷² The “procedure ending with a urethral instillation” probably refers to verse 6 above (see page 65).

¹⁷³ The word आचमन, normally “sipping water from the palm” is here translated “lavage” following the context and Ḍaḥaṇa on 3.2.13 (Su 1938: 345), who described it as “water for washing the vagina” (योनिप्रक्षालनोदक). This treatment may be intended for the condition mentioned in 12cd, but in the vulgate text there is a preceding half verse stating that the treatment is for the “four disorders of menstrual blood.”

¹⁷⁴ The name चन्दन may refer to several types of sandalwood; presumably one is meant here that is different from white sandalwood, i.e., perhaps *Pterocarpus santalinus* Linn. f. The vulgate has an extra half-śloka here.

¹⁷⁵ On ग्रन्थि, see note 160.

- 24 Thus a man has unblemished semen and a woman has pure menstrual blood.

During menstruation

- 25 During the season (*ṛtu*), starting from the first day onwards, the chaste woman (*brahmacārīṇī*) foregoes bathing, anointments, ornaments and grooming (*vilekhana*).¹⁷⁶ She should abstain from sleeping during the day, collyriums, weeping tears (*aśrupāta*), massages, cutting her nails, taking showers, laughing, telling stories, hearing too much noise and from exertion.¹⁷⁷

For what reason? By sleeping during the day, the fetus becomes deaf.¹⁷⁸ From collyrium he becomes blind. From weeping, his vision is impaired. From bathing and anointing, he becomes badly behaved. From massage with oil he gets a pallid skin disease (*kuṣṭha*).¹⁷⁹ From cutting the nails he gets ugly nails (*kunakha*). From smearing an unguent he becomes bald. From habitually exercising in the open air he goes mad. For this reason one should avoid these.

For three days of ritual food, the husband should protect (*√rakṣ*) the woman. She lies on a layer of *halfa grass*, and eats a different kind of food from the palm of her hand, or from a plate or from a leaf.¹⁸⁰

On the forth day, one should show to the husband the woman who has had a purifying bath, is wearing unstitched clothes, is ornamented and who has chanted a benediction and recited a blessing.¹⁸¹

What is the reason for that?

- 26 And there is a verse on this.

¹⁷⁶ The word ऋतु “season” in āyurvedic texts can, according to context, refer either to the period of menstruation or else to the period of fecundity following menstruation (Das 2003: 15 ff., note 27, *et passim*). Ḍalhaṇa on 3.2.25 (Su 1938: 347) noted that the woman’s abstention should last three days from the first appearance of her menses.

¹⁷⁷ On the similar prohibitions relating to a menstruating woman as described in Dharmaśāstra literature, as well as the similar defects accruing from disobedience (see Leslie 1989: 284–287).

¹⁷⁸ Here, the vulgate reads स्वप्नशीलः “he tends to sleep.”

¹⁷⁹ On translating कुष्ठ in Āyurvedic texts, see Emmerick 1984: 96 ff.

¹⁸⁰ This sentence is hard to construe because हविष्यं “ritual food” cannot agree with - भोजिनीं.

¹⁸¹ See Wujastyk, Birch, Klebanov, et al. 2023: 58 and fn. 167.

A woman has a bath after her period. The type of man she sees after that determines the type of son to whom she will give birth. She may then show her son to her husband.

- 27 *Next, the priest (upādhyāya) should perform the appropriate ritual for producing a son. At the end of the ritual, the expert (vicakṣaṇa) should anticipate the following procedure.*
- 28 *Next, after the man has eaten a rice porridge with ghee and milk in the afternoon, having been celibate for a month, at night he should sexually approach the woman who has had a diet rich in oil and mung beans. He then soothes her in a friendly way and he may go to her optionally on the fourth, sixth, eighth, tenth or twelfth day.*
- 31 *Henceforth, he should approach after a month*
[At this point there is a misplaced folio in MS N]
- 32 **And when conception has occurred in this way**
During one of these nights, the pregnant woman should press three or four drops of juice from one or other of the following: *convolvulus, banyan, Indian bat tree, country mallow, carray cheddie*. Then she should administer them in the right nostril if she desires a son and in the left if she wants a girl, and she should not sneeze them out.¹⁸²
- 33 *For certain, in the presence of these four, a fetus that follows the rules will come into being, just like a sprout is from a combination of field, seed, water and grass.*¹⁸³
- 34 *Children born in this manner are beautiful, of noble character and enjoy long lives.*¹⁸⁴ *They provide release from obligation (ṛṇa) and they*

29, 30 missing?

Problematic passage in the edition.

¹⁸² There is a textual problem at the start of this passage.

¹⁸³ The Nepalese version reads क्षेत्रबीजोदकतृणाम् “of field, seed, water and grass” in contrast to the vulgate’s ऋतुक्षेत्रामुबीजानाम् “of season, field, water and seed.” This gives the two versions quite different meanings. In the Nepalese version, the author is referring to the four plants mentioned in the previous verse, *convolvulus, banyan, Indian bat tree, country mallow*, and *carray cheddie*. Then the author presents a simple agricultural simile. In the vulgate version, the words of the compound each have a double meaning: they can refer to the agricultural simile, but they can also be construed to mean “menstrual season, womb, nourishing bodily fluids, and male and female semen,” a parallelism not present in the Nepalese transmission. This is how Ḍalhaṇa interpreted the verse.

¹⁸⁴ We translate महासत्त्वाः as “noble character;” Ḍalhaṇa, commenting on the vulgate reading सत्त्ववन्तः, refers to the गुणस्, interpreting the expression as “not strongly influenced by रजस् and तमस्.”

themselves have children, benefitting their parents.¹⁸⁵

- 35 In that context, the element of heat (*tejas*) is the most important factor as far as complexion (*varṇa*) is concerned. That being granted, at the moment the fetus is formed, when the food has water as its chief element, then the fetus is fair.¹⁸⁶ When earth is the predominant element, it is dark (*kṛṣṇa*). When earth and ether are the chief elements, it is dark brown (*śyāma*).¹⁸⁷ Some people say that the newborn (*prasava*) has the same colour as the colour of the food that the pregnant woman commonly eats. Similarly, creatures like snakes, scorpions and large geckos that inhabit black, yellow or white habitats are black, yellow or white.¹⁸⁸ In that context, congenital blindness (*jātyandha*) is caused by the element of brilliance (*tejas*) not reaching the location of eye (*dṛṣṭi*). Similarly, red eyes are a consequence of blood, white eyes are a consequence of phlegm, yellow eyes are a consequence of bile, and misaligned eyes (*vikṛtākṣa*) are a consequence of wind.

185 Children born in this manner fulfil their parent's obligation to have children and they themselves have children, thus continuing the family. The three debts are normally understood as being to the gods, the ancestors and to sages. But Ḍalhaṇa's phrasing is odd in that he says पितृणामृणत्रयमोक्षणशीला: "behaving so as to provide release from the three debts to the ancestors."

186 The food of the mother, that is.

187 The terms कृष्ण and श्याम often mean more or less the same, a dark blue or black colour. The latter can shade into brown or dark green.

188 Cf. also n. , p. 169.

Part 4. Cikitsāsthāna


Part 5. Kalpasthāna

Part 6. Uttarat Tantra

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