

# A Translation of the New Edition of the *Suśrutasaṃhitā*

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The Suśruta Project is producing a new Sanskrit text edition of the *Suśrutasaṃhitā* based on the early Nepalese manuscripts. As we gradually transcribe and edit the manuscripts, we are producing this new translation of the classic work.

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## Sūtrasthāna, adhyāya 1

- 1 Now I shall narrate the chapter on the origin of this knowledge.<sup>1 2</sup>
- 2 Now, as is well-known, Aupadhenava, Vaitaraṇa, Aurabhra, Puṣkalāvata, Karavīra, Gopurarakṣita, Bhoja, Suśruta and others addressed Lord Divodāsa, king of Kāśi, the best of the immortals, who was in his ashram surrounded by an entourage of sages.<sup>3</sup>
- 3 “O Lord, distress arose in our minds after witnessing people thrashing about with cries, assailed by different kinds of pain and injury (*vedanābhighāta*), feeling helpless in spite of having friends, because of diseases arising from the body, the mind and external sources.
- 4 “To quell the illnesses of those who seek happiness and for our own purpose of prolonging life, we desire the science of life (*āyurveda*) that is being taught. Welfare, both in this world and in the next, depends upon it. Therefore, we have come to the Lord in pupillage.”
- 5 The Lord said to them:  
“Welcome to you! My children, all of you are beyond reproach and worthy to be taught.
- 6 “As is well known, Ayurveda is the name of what is said to be the subsidiary part of the Atharvaveda. Before creating people, Svayambhū composed it in hundreds of thousands of verses and a thousand chapters and, after observing the short lifespan and low intelligence of people, he presented it again in eight parts.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ḍalhaṇa understood the word “knowledge (*veda*)” as specifically “medical knowledge.” He said that the word “longevity” (*āyur*) had been elided.

<sup>2</sup>At this point, later manuscripts and commentaries include the statement “as the venerable Dhanvantari stated.” The absence of this statement in the early Nepalese MSS is highly noteworthy because it removes the outer narrative frame of the *Suśrutasaṃhitā* (Wujastyk 2013: 148; Klebanov 2021a: § 3.1.2). On the figure of Dhanvatari in medical literature, see HIML: IA 358–361.

<sup>3</sup>On these persons, see HIML: IA 361–363, 369 ff. The authority Bhoja does not appear in the list as published in the vulgate edition (SS 1931: 1), and was not included in HIML amongst “authorities mentioned in the *Suśrutasaṃhitā*.” Meulenbeld gathered textual evidence about Bhoja at HIML: IA 690–691. Klebanov (2021b) has discussed these authors in the context of an anonymous commentary on the *Suśrutasaṃhitā* that cites them.

<sup>4</sup>Svayambhū is another name for Brahmā, the creator.

- 7 “Surgery, treatment of body parts above the clavicle, general medicine, knowledge of spirits, care of children, and the disciplines of antidotes, rejuvenation and aphrodisiacs.
- 8 “Now, a collection of the characteristics of each component of Āyurveda.
- 9 “Among them, [the component] called surgery has the goal of extracting various grasses, wood, stone, dust, iron (?), soil, bone, hair, nails, discharge of pus, malignant wounds and foreign bodies inside the womb, and of determining the application of surgical instruments, knives, caustics and fire by means of sixty definitions.
- 10 “[The component] named the doctrine of treating body parts above the clavicles has the aim of curing diseases situated above clavicles that is, diseases located in ears, eyes, mouth, nose and so on.
- 11 “[The component] called general medicine has the goal of curing illnesses established in the whole body and [diseases] such as fever, tumour, swelling, hemorrhagic disorders, insanity, epilepsy, urinary diseases, diarrhoea and the like.
- 12 “[The component] called knowledge of spirits is for appeasing demons by pacification rites and making food offerings for those whose minds have been possessed by gods, their enemies,<sup>5</sup> Gandharvas, Yakṣas, demons, deceased ancestors, Piśācas, Vināyakas,<sup>6</sup> Nāgas and evil spirits that possess children.
- 13 “[The component] called care of children is for bearing children and purifying defects in a wet-nurse’s milk, and curing diseases that have arisen from bad breast milk and demons.
- 14 “[The component] called the discipline of toxicology is for [knowing] the signs of poison from snake and insect bites and for neutralising various combinations of poisons.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Dānavas. The insertion marks (*kākapadas*) below the text at this point appears to be by the original scribe.

<sup>6</sup>The vulgate doesn’t have *vināyakas* but does add *asuras*, probably under the influence of Ḍalhaṇa. Cite Paul Courtright, Ganesha book.

<sup>7</sup>The scribal insertion marks (crosses) above the line at this point in MS K appear to be

- 15 “[The component] called the discipline of rejuvenation is maintaining youth, bringing about a long life and mental vigour and for curing diseases.
- 16 “[The component] called the discipline of aphrodisiacs brings about the increase, purity, accumulation and production of semen for those whose semen is minimal, bad, depleted, and dry [respectively] and for inducing an erection.
- 17 “Thus, this Āyurveda is taught with eight components.”  
“Among these [components], tell us which is for whom.”
- 18 They said, “After you have conveyed the knowledge of surgery, teach us everything.”
- 19 He said, “so be it.”
- 20 They then said, “Having considered the view of all of us, when we are unanimous, Suśruta will question you. We too will learn what is being taught to him.”
- 21 He said, “so be it.
- 22 “Now, as is well-known, the aim of Āyurveda is eliminating the disease of one who have been assailed by disease and protecting the healthy; āyurveda is [that knowledge] in which they find a long-life, or that by which long-life is known. Learn its best component (i.e., surgery), which is being taught in accordance with tradition, perception, inference and analogy.
- 23 “For this component is first, the most important, because it is referred to first; it cures wounds and joins together the most important thing, Yajña’s head. For, just as it has been said of old, ‘the head that had been cut off by Rudra was joined again by the two Aśvins.’
- 24 “And also, of the eight disciplines of Āyurveda, [surgery] alone is the best because of the quick action of its procedures, its application of

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in a later hand and their referent is lost in the damaged part of the folio. Although MSS N and H include spiders (*lūtā*) and creepy-crawlies (*sarīṣṛpa*) in the list, it does seem that MS K had a shorter list, and the vulgate edition adds rodents (*mūṣika*).

blunt instruments, knives, caustics and fire, and it is common to all disciplines.

- 25 "Therefore, [surgery] is eternal, meritorious, leads to heaven, brings renown, bestows a long life, and affords a livelihood.
- 26 "Brahmā said this, 'Prajāpati learned it. From him, the aśvins. From the aśvins, Indra. From Indra, I. In this world, I will transmit to those who desire it for the benefit of people.' And in this regard, there is [this verse].
- 27 "For, I (i.e., Brahmā) am Dhanvantari, the first god, the remover of old age, pain and death of mortals. Having understood surgery, the best of the great knowledge systems, I arrived on earth again to teach it here.

## Sūtrasthāna, adhyāya 28

- 1 Thus, living creatures and their strength, complexion (*varṇa*) and energy (*ojas*) are rooted in food. That (food) depends on the six flavours (*rasa*). Thus, the flavours depend on substance (*dravya*), and substances depend on medicinal herbs. There are two kinds of them (herbs): stationary and mobile.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Suśruta sū.1.28 Sharma 1999–2001: I, 21, SS 193<sup>82</sup>: 7.

## Abbreviations

- HIML Meulenbeld, G. J. (1999–2002), *A History of Indian Medical Literature*, 5 vols. (Groningen: E. Forsten), ISBN: 9069801248.
- SS 1915 Ācārya, Y. T. (1915) (ed.), suśrutasamhita, suśrutena viracita, vaidyavaraśrīḍalhaṇacāryaviracitaya nibandhasamgrahakhyavyākhyaya samullasita, acāryopahvena trivikramatmajena yādavaśarmaṇa samśodhita = *The Sushrutasamhita of Sushruta, the Nibandhasangraha Commentary of Shri Dalhaṇāchārya* (Mumbayyām: Nirṇayasāgaramudrāyantrālaye), ARK: ark:/13960/t3sv0mt50, accessed 29/07/2020; HIML: IB, 312 edition \*v.
- SS 1931 Ācārya, Y. T. (1931) (ed.), suśrutasamhita, vaidyavaraśrīḍalhaṇacāryaviracitaya nibandhasamgrahakhyavyākhyaya samullasita, maharṣiṇa suśrutena viracita, sūtra-nidānaśarīra-cikitsa-kalpasthanottaratantratmakah. acāryopahvena trivikramatmajena yādavaśarmaṇa samśodhita = *The Sushrutasamhitā of Sushruta with the Nibandhasangraha Commentary of Shree Dalhaṇāchārya* (2nd edn., Mumbayyām: Pāṇḍuraṅga Jāvajī at the Nirṇayasāgaramudrāyantrālaye), ARK: ark:/13960/t9j41sg94, accessed 09/06/2020; HIML: IB, 312 edition \*v.
- SS 1938 Ācārya, Y. T. and Ācārya, N. R. (1938) (eds.), śrīḍalhaṇacāryaviracitaya nibandhasamgrahakhyavyākhyaya nidānasthānasya śrīgayadaśacāryaviracitaya nyayacandrikakhyapañjikavyākhyaya ca samullasita maharṣiṇa suśrutena viracita suśrutasamhita (3rd edn., Bombay: Nirṇayasāgara Press); HIML: IB, 313 edition cc.
- SS 1938<sup>2</sup> Ācārya, Y. T. and Ācārya, N. R. (2004) (eds.), maharṣiṇa suśrutena viracita suśrutasamhita, śrīḍalhaṇacāryaviracitaya nibandhasamgrahakhyavyākhyaya nidānasthānasya śrīgayadaśacāryaviracitaya nyayacandrikakhyapañjikavyākhyaya ca samullasita (Vārāṇasī: Caukhambhā Kṛṣṇadāsa

Akādami); Reprint of the third, 1938 edition (SS 1938), with changed pagination.



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