

A Translation of the Nepalese Text of the  
*Suśrutasamhitā*

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# Sūtrasthāna







# Nidānasthāna



# Śārīrasthāna



**Cikitsāsthāna**







# Kalpasthāna



# Kalpasthāna 5: Therapy for those Bitten by Snakes

## Introduction

## Literature

A brief survey of this chapter's contents and a detailed assessment of the existing research on it to 2002 was provided by Meulenbeld.<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> [HIML](#): IA, 294–295. In addition to the translations mentioned by Meulenbeld ([HIML](#): IB, 314–315), a translation of this chapter was included in P. V. Sharma [1999–2001](#): 3, 35–45.

## Translation

Passage numbers refer to the canonical numbering of the vulgate edition (*Su* 1938).

- 1 Now we shall explain the procedure (*kalpa*) that is the therapy for someone bitten by a snake.<sup>473</sup>
- 3 For a person bitten on a limb by any snake, one should first of all make a strong binding, at four fingers measure above the bite.<sup>474</sup>
- 4 Poison does not move around into the body if it is prevented by bandages (*ariṣṭā*) or by any other soft items of cloth (*plota*), leather (*car-mānta*) or bark.<sup>475</sup>
- 5 Where a bandage (*bandha*) is not suitable, one should raise the bite up and then cauterize it.<sup>476</sup> Suction, cutting and cauterizing are recommended in all cases.
- 6 Suction will be good after filling the mouth with earth (*pāṃśu*).<sup>477</sup> Alternatively, the snake should be bitten by the person who knows that they have just been bitten.<sup>478</sup>

473 On कल्प, see note 429.

474 Application of a tourniquet is deprecated by modern establishment medicine, which relies on antivenom medications (e.g., Pillay 2013: 150–151 et passim in the literature). The vulgate introduces the word अरिष्टा at this point. This may be a borrowing from Ci.23.251cd (*Ca* 1941: 582).

475 It is hard to translate the word अरिष्टा otherwise than “bandage,” as referred to by बन्धियात् in the previous verse, and apparently similar to items of cloth etc., and called a बन्ध in the next verse. But in general Sanskrit literature, including medical literature, the word (in masc. gender) means either “an alcoholic tonic” or “an omen of death,” (1.30.3 (*Su* 1938: 137)), or is a plant name. This raises a question mark over its unique meaning in the present context. The *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayasaṃhitā* (Utt.36.42cd (*Ah* 1939: 910)) seems to be a gloss on अरिष्टा, saying “An expert in mantras may bind using a braid made of silk etc., empowered with mantras” (see also 5.5.8 (*Su* 1938: 575)). On problems that can arise from tying a bandage too tightly, see 5.5.56 (*Su* 1938: 577) below.

476 The vulgate reads उत्कृत्य “having excised” rather than translate उद्धृत्य “having raised up.”

477 The vulgate recommends cloth, not earth (5.5.6 (*Su* 1938: 574)).

478 The syntax is odd here, and the vulgate has removed the difficulties. Ḍalhaṇa on 5.5.6 (*Su* 1938: 574) noted that one should hold the snake firmly and give a good bite to its head and tail (हस्ताभ्यामुपसंगृह्य पुच्छे वक्रे च सर्पः सम्यग् दष्टव्यः). Our colleague Dr Madhu K. Paramesvaran reports that this procedure is known in Malayalam *viṣavaidya* treatises and is practiced in Kerala, though rarely: “this practice has been described as one of

- 7 Now, one should in no way cauterize someone bitten by a Maṇḍalin. Because of the over-abundance of poison in the bile (*pittaviṣa*), that bite will be lethal as a result of cauterization.<sup>479</sup>

### The application of mantras

- 8 An expert in mantras should tie on a bandage (*ariṣṭā*) too, with mantras. But they say that a bandage that is tied on with cords and so on causes the poison to be purified.<sup>480</sup>
- 9 Mantrās prescribed by gods and holy sages (*brahmarṣi*), that are imbued with truth and religious power (*tapas*) are inexorable and they rapidly destroy intractable poison.
- 10 Drugs cannot eliminate poison as quickly as the application of mantras imbued with religious power (*tapas*) and imbued with truth, holiness (*brahma*) and religious power.<sup>481</sup>
- 11 The mantras should be received by a person who is abstaining from women, meat and mead (*madhu*), who has a restricted diet, and who is pure and lying on a bed of *halfa grass*.
- 12 For the mantras to be successful, one should diligently worship the deity (*devatā*) with perfume, garlands, and oblations (*upahāra*), as well as sacrificial offerings (*bali*), and with mantra repetition (*japa*) and rituals.<sup>482</sup>

the first-response cares for snakebite in most of the Malayalam texts of Viṣhavaidyā. I have never seen this happening in real life and my teachers used to consider it to be a method (albeit a bit outrageously dangerous) for self-reassurance by the patient.” (Paramesvaran 2023). Cf. the Viṣhavaidyā text edited by Mahādeva Śāstrī (1958).

479 Verses 5.4.29, and 37 above note that the venom of Maṇḍalins particularly irritates the bile.

480 Ḍalhaṇa on 5.5.8 (Su 1938: 575) clarified that on the one hand the bandage must be accompanied with mantras, but on the other hand, it may also be used without mantras. The verse seems to put two points of view.

481 Ḍalhaṇa on 5.5.10 (Su 1938: 575) noted that mantras like “kurukullā” and “bheruṇḍā” are explained in other treatises and therefore not explained further in his commentary. These two mantras are the names of tantric Śaiva and Buddhist goddesses. For a study on this specific subject see Slouber (2016). HIML: IIB, 151, n. 344 provides a bibliography to 2002 of studies on Kurukullā, who is mentioned in Māhuka’s *Hara-mekhalā*, and Meulenbeld 2008: 30–34 includes discussion of Bheruṇḍa as a bird, with related terms.

482 Ḍalhaṇa on 5.5.12 (Su 1938: 575) noted that उपहार includes incense, while बलि refers to sacrifice with an animal (सपशुनैवेद्य).

- 13 But mantras pronounced illicitly or that are deficient in accents (*svara*) and letters do not give success. So antitoxic (*agada*) procedures need to be employed.

### Blood letting

- 14 A skilled physician should puncture a duct (*sirā*) which is located on the limb (*śākhāśrayā*), and comes from the bite and the general area. If the poison has spread, one on the forehead should be pierced.
- 15 The blood being drawn out draws away all the poison.<sup>483</sup> Therefore one should cause blood to flow, for that is his very best procedure.
- 16 After incising (*pracchāna*) the area around the bite, one should smear it with antidotes and sprinkle it with water infused with sandalwood and cuscus grass.<sup>484</sup>

### Internal medications

- 17 One should make him drink various antidotes together with milk, honey and ghee. If they are unavailable, the earth of black ants can be good.<sup>485</sup>
- 18 Alternatively, he should consume orchid tree, siris and purple calotropis or white siris too. He should not drink sesame oil or horse gram, nor wine or Indian jujube.
- 19 But after drinking any other liquid at all, he should throw up after drinking it. For on the whole, poison is easily removed by means of vomiting.

<sup>483</sup> The Nepalese version uses a present passive participle construction here, that is less common than the vulgate's locative absolute. The Nepalese version states that it is the blood coming out of the patient that carries away the venom; the vulgate text says merely that the venom emerges while the blood comes out.

<sup>484</sup> प्रच्छान is the second of the two methods of blood letting described in the vulgate text of the *Suśrutasamhitā* at 1.14.25 (Su 1938: 64); this verse does not appear in the Nepalese version of the *Suśrutasamhitā*.

<sup>485</sup> This refers to earth taken from an anthill. In South Asia, there is a long tradition of considering such earth to be beneficial and even holy (e.g., Irwin 1982).

## Therapies at each pulse of toxic reaction

- 20 In the case of hooded snakes, when there is a toxic reaction (*vega*) first one should let blood. At the second, one should make him drink an antidote (*agada*) together with honey and ghee.<sup>486</sup>
- 21 At the third one should use errhines and collyrium (*añjana*) that destroy poison.<sup>487</sup> At the fourth, when he has vomited, the physician should make him drink a gruel (*yavāgū*) that destroys poison.
- 22 At the fifth and sixth toxic reactions one should make the person drink something that aids cooling, that is cleansing and *tīkṣṇa* (*sharp*), and a well-regarded gruel too.
- 23 But at the seventh, one should purge (*śodh*) his head with a sharp sternutatory.<sup>488</sup>

## In the case of Maṇḍalins

- 24 Amongst Maṇḍalins, the earliest toxic reaction (*vega*) should be treated in the same way as with Darvīkaras.<sup>489</sup>
- 25 At the second, one should make him drink ghee and honey and then make him vomit.<sup>490</sup>
- 26 At the third, one should give the purged patient healthy gruel. At the fourth and the fifth too, one should do the same as for the Darvīkara.

<sup>486</sup> This section reproduces some of the therapies from *Suśrutasamhitā* 5.2.40–43 (*Su* 1938: 566) on the stages of slow poisoning (*dūṣṭviṣa*) by plant poisons; see translation on p. 131 above.

<sup>487</sup> The rare word नस्तः “from or into the nose” in नस्तःकर्म “errhine” is supported by both Nepalese manuscripts. The term is more common in the *Carakasamhitā*, occurring eleven times, e.g., at 1.20.13 (*Ca* 1941: 114), 2.1.36 (*Ca* 1941: 203), *et passim*.

The *Carakasamhitā* describes how collyriums, especially रसाञ्जन, cause phlegm to flow, thus clearing the eyes (1.5.14–19 (*Ca* 1941: 38–39)). This could be appropriate in expelling poisons.

<sup>488</sup> The vulgate adds a half-verse here recommending the application of a collyrium (*añjana*) to a cut made on the patient’s head.

<sup>489</sup> The vulgate again adds a half-verse here, recommending the “crow’s foot” incision on the patient’s head. On this procedure, described in *Carakasamhitā* 6.23.66–67 (*Ca* 1941: 574), see Wujastyk 2003: 145. This text is not supported here, as it was not in the Nepalese text at *Suśrutasamhitā* 5.2.43 (*Su* 1938: 566) either. See footnote 372, p. 132 above. As stated there, it appears that this procedure was known in the tradition of the *Carakasamhitā*, but not in the earliest text of the *Suśrutasamhitā*.

<sup>490</sup> Again, the vulgate text differs substantively, adding another half-verse. But the general idea of the treatment is the similar.



- 27 At the sixth, wholesome things from the group of plants starting with **cottony jujube** should be drunk and a sweet antidote.<sup>491</sup> And at the seventh, a wholesome antidote that destroys poison in a sternutatory (*avapīḍa*).<sup>492</sup>

### In the case of Rājimats

- 28 Now, Amongst Rājimats, one should let blood at the first toxic shock.<sup>493</sup>  
 29 At the second, a patient who has vomited should be made to drink an antidote that destroys poison. At the third, fourth and fifth, the rule that applies to the Darvīkara is suitable.  
 30 At the sixth, use a very sharp collyrium (*añjana*), and at the seventh a sternutatory (*avapīḍa*). There is a prohibition on using blood-letting for pregnant women, children and the elderly.  
 31ab In those who are in pain because of poison, it is advised that the prescribed procedures be applied gently.

### 31ab In animals

In goats and sheep, bleeding and collyriums are the same as for people.

- 32cd In cows and horses, that is twice as much; three times as much for buffaloes and camels, four times for elephants and simply (*kevala*) for all birds.<sup>494495</sup>

write note  
on par-  
isekān pra-  
dehāms

491 The “group of 17 plants beginning with **cottony jujube**” (काकोल्यादि गण) is described at *Suśrutasamhitā* 1.38.35–36 (*Su 1938*: 167). These plants pacify the bile, blood and wind and increase phlegm, body-weight, semen and breastmilk.

492 The अवपीड is described at *Suśrutasamhitā* 4.40.44–45 (*Su 1938*: 556), where it is also recommended for victims of snakebite. It is a type of head-evacuant. Commenting on that passage, Ḍalhaṇa cited “other treatises” as saying that अवपीड treatment was suitable for restoring the consciousness of those who have been poisoned. He also quoted a text by an authority called Videha, that says the same. Videha was an author known to Ḍṛḍhabala (according to Cakrapāṇidatta) and often cited in the *Madhukośa* on the topic of eye diseases (*HIML*: IA, 132 *et passim*). See also *Mahākośa*: 1, 62–63.

493 The vulgate text says that the blood-letting should be done with a **gourd**. It also has an extra half-verse here, prescribing an antitoxin to be drunk together with honey and ghee.

494 Ḍalhaṇa on 5.5.32 (*Su 1938*: 576) explained “simply for all birds” as meaning that birds should receive just drugs, and not blood-letting or collyriums. See p. 156 for the toxic reactions in birds and other animals.

- 34 One should consider carefully with one's intellect the location, constitution (*prakṛti*), suitability (*sātmya*), the season, the poison, and the strength or weakness of the toxic reaction and then proceed with therapy.<sup>496</sup>
- 47–48ab One should eliminate this poison completely. It is extremely hard to overcome. For even a small amount remaining can strongly bring about a toxic reaction.<sup>497</sup>
- 48cd–49 Or it may lead to dejection, pallor, fever, cough and headaches, dessication, swelling, catarrh, poor vision, disinterest in food (*aruci*) or rigidity (*jāḍyatā*).<sup>498</sup> And in such cases one should apply the cure as appropriate.<sup>499</sup>
- 50–51ab One should also treat the secondary ailments (*upadrava*) of a poisoned patient each as appropriate.  
Now, after the bandage (*ariṣṭā*) has been removed and after the place marked by it has been quickly incised (*pracchāna*) one may see poison that has leaked out there, and a toxic reaction may strongly result.
- 52.1 Once the poison has disappeared one can conquer irritated wind using items that restrain the wind.<sup>500</sup>

495 The vulgate includes several verses after this sentence that give a recipe and also a list of specific items like place and constitution that should be given careful consideration. Ḍalhaṇa on 5.5.33 (Su 1938: 576) cited the opinions of Gayadāsa and Jejjāta on this recipe but stated that he preferred to follow the contrasting opinions of Vṛddhavāgbhaṭa (1.25.24cd–25aba (As 1980: 184)) and Suśruta (4.31.29cd–30ab (Su 1938: 511)) on this topic, as well as several citations “another work” (तन्त्रान्तर) that is unidentified.

496 The vulgate here has twelve verses not found in the Nepalese version. These verses explicitly switch subject away from assessments according to toxic reactions and to the treatment of both mobile and immobile poisons, starting from physical symptoms such as swelling and discolouration as well as humoral theory. At the point where the vulgate summarizes the extra verses, saying that cases should be treated “according to their humors” (यथादोषं), the Nepalese witnesses have “as is appropriate” (यथायोगं, 5.5.49cd (Su 1938: 577)). This suggests that the text has been edited to fit the insertion of the verses referring to humoral therapy. These verses also include therapies such as the crow's foot treatment (see footnotes 372 and 489, pp. 132, 161 above) and the beating of drums that have been smeared with antidotes, as discussed in *Suśrutasaṃhitā* 5.6 (Su 1938: 580–582) (see p. 165 below).

497 We take अवतिष्ठे “remaining” as a present participle; although it should be neuter, perhaps the suffix has been attracted by the -अम् of स्वल्पम्.

498 Ḍalhaṇa on 5.5.49ab (Su 1938: 577) reported a reading from Jejjāta of स्तैमित्य “immobility” instead of प्रतिश्याय “catarrh.”

499 The vulgate introduces दोष theory here, which is absent in the Nepalese version.

500 This half-verse is not present in the vulgate, but has broadly the same sense as

- 53 One can conquer bile using substances that remove bile-fever (*pittajvara*), with decoctions, oleation and purges, combined with substances that remove poison, with the exception of sesame oil (*taila*), wine, horse gram, and mangosteen.<sup>501</sup>
- 54 One can conquer phlegm with the group that starts with golden shower tree, together with honey.<sup>502</sup>
- 56 If the the bandage (*ariṣṭā*) is bound tightly, or if it is incised (*pracchita*) with sharp ointment or with the remnants of the poison, then when the limb swells up, the the flesh that becomes moist, smells a great deal, is putrid (*śīrṇa*) is named “poison-stink (*viṣapūti*).”<sup>503</sup>
- 57 The black blood of a person who is suddenly wounded is ripened, flows and burns. And also the flesh from the wound of a person putrifies, turns black, weeps and is exceptionally foul-smelling.
- 58 One may be sure that a person who has thirst, stupefaction (*mūrcchā*), fever and a temperature has been struck by something poisoned (*dig-dha*).

K jvarāhau?  
Check MS.

78 504

5.5.52cd (Su 1938: 577), that is not present in the Nepalese version.

501 The vulgate reads “fish” in place of “wine.”

502 The आरम्बघण is listed at *Suśrutasaṃhitā* 1.38.6 (Su 1938: 164). These herbs are there explicitly said to pacify phlegm and to remove poison, etc. (1.38.7 (Su 1938: 164)).

503 *Suśrutasaṃhitā* 5.5.16 (Su 1938: 575) (p. 160 above) suggests smearing an incised area with antidotes.

504 After this verse, the vulgate text adds five verses, 79–83, that do not appear in the Nepalese version.



# Uttaratantra





## Todo list

Can't be "sedation" . . . . .	37
find out about <i>uttarabasti</i> . . . . .	65
This is a change we should make in the edition. . . . .	85
You need not give all the grammatical details about <i>śrotādi</i> . Assume you are talking to knowledgeable Sanskrit scholars. . . . .	86
Perhaps <i>kalka</i> here could also mean the <i>Terminalia Bellerica</i> (विभीतक). . . . .	88
<i>Euphorbia Antiquorum</i> (Antique spurge) . . . . .	90
The webpage <a href="https://hindi.shabd.in/vairagya-shatakam-bhag-acharya-arjun-tiwari/post/117629">https://hindi.shabd.in/vairagya-shatakam-bhag-acharya-arjun-tiwari/post/117629</a> says that this verse belongs to the <i>Nītiratna</i> . I could not find this text. . . . .	93
The provisional edition should be modified accordingly. . . . .	95
There, Ḍalhaṇa comments that deliberation on <i>avapīḍa</i> had been done earlier when it was mentioned. Find that description to know more details. . . . .	97
Search for the section where the treatment of <i>ākṣepaka</i> is described. . . . .	98
Make the first letter of sentence capital. . . . .	98
? . . . . .	104
? . . . . .	104
? . . . . .	104
(?) . . . . .	104
Cf. <i>Arthaśāstra</i> 1.21.8. . . . .	112
I'm still unhappy about this verse. . . . .	115
Mention this in the introduction as an example of the scribe knowing the vulgate. . . . .	115
fn about <i>sadyas+</i> . . . . .	115
Bear's bile instead of deer's bile. . . . .	116
<i>punarṇavā</i> in the N & K MSS . . . . .	117
<i>śrita</i> for <i>śṛta</i> . . . . .	117



■ explain more . . . . .	117
■ Medical difference from Sharma. . . . .	118
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