A Translation of the New Edition of the Suśrutasaṃhitā

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Kalpasthāna, adhyāya 3

Introduction

Translation

- 1 And now we shall explain the rule (*kalpa*) that is the required knowledge about mobile poisons.²⁰³
- The full explanation about the sixteen carriers (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of the mobile poisons, that have been mentioned by me in brief, will be stated.²⁰⁴
- 4 In that context, they are:205
 - gaze and breath,
 - teeth, nails, and bites
 - urine and faeces,
 - menstrual blood,
 - semen,
 - tail,
 - contact with saliva,
 - nipping with the mouth (*mu*-

- khasaṃdaṃśā),
- fart (avaśardhita),²⁰⁶
- anus,²⁰⁷
- bones,
- bile,
- bristles ($\sin ka$), and
- corpses.

5 In that context,

location of the poison	creatures ²⁰⁸
in their breath and	divine snakes
gaze in their fangs	the ones on earth ²⁰⁹

²⁰³ In contrast to stationary, plant poisons. No reference is made to Dhanvantari (see Birch, Wujastyk, Klebanov, Parameswaran, et al. 2021).

^{204 &}quot;Carrier" for base, foundation (*adhiṣṭhāna*) aims to capture the idea that the author will describe the creatures in which poisons inhere.

²⁰⁵ The content of this section is presented as a table, for clarity for the contemporary reader and mindful of the theoretical issues surrounding notational variation, including the "symbolic rewriting" and the modification of "expressive capacities" discussed by Sarukkai (2016: 321 ff). For further discussion, see Wujastyk 2021a: 81–83.

²⁰⁶ This interpretation comes from Dalhana on 5.3.4 (Su 1938: 567), but he reads विशर्धित.

²⁰⁷ Dalhana on 5.3.4 (Su 1938: 567) noted this reading.

²⁰⁸ Many of these names are mere dubious placeholders.

²⁰⁹ Dalhaṇa on 5.3.5 (Su 1938: 567) cited the otherwise unknown authority Sāvitra on the topic of poisonous snakes (HIML: v. ???, ???).

location of the poison	creatures
in their nails, mouths and fangs	cats, dogs, monkeys, men $(nara)$, crocodiles, frogs, 'cook-fish' $(p\bar{a}kamatsya)$, monitor lizards, cone snails $(\hat{s}amb\bar{u}ka)$, 'poisonous snakes' $(pracal\bar{a}ka)$, '212 geckos $(grhagodik\bar{a})$, four-footed insects and others
in their urine and faeces	lice (kiṭipa), 'flat insects' (picciṭā), 'orange-dwellers' (kaṣāyavāsika), 'pepper snakes' (sarṣapaka), 'angry beetles' (toṭaka), dung beetles (varcaḥkīṭa), and 'pot insects' (kauṇḍinya)
in their semen	mice
in their stings (śūla)	scorpions, 'earth scorpions' (viśvambhara), wasps (varaki), ²¹⁴ fish, crabs (ucciṭiṅga), and 'wing-scorpions' (patravṛścika)
in their saliva, nails, urine, feces, blood, semen and fangs	spiders
in the bites of their mouths	flies, wasps (kaṇabha) and leeches
in the bites of their mouths, in their fangs, faces, †, farts, anuses and feces	'speckle-heads' (citraśīrṣa), 'lids' (śārava), 'bellied' (kukṣita), 'wood-enemies' (dārukāri), 'liquors' (medaka), and 'darts' (śārikā).

²¹⁰ Probably dittography from the previous word, monkey ($v\bar{a}nara$). But it is supported in both Nepalese witnesses, so it must go back to an earlier exemplar.

²¹¹ MS KL 699 separates the words पाक and मत्स्य with a daṇḍa, indicating that the scribe thought they were separate terms. Dalhaṇa thinks this is a kind of fiery insect (5.3.5 (Su 1938: 567)).

²¹² *Arthaśāstra* 14.1.14, 23 (Olivelle 2013: 448), where it might also be a chameleon, but the latter are not venomous.

²¹³ The scribe of MS NAK 5-333 noted in the margin that some of his sources read गल-गोंडिका, which is the name of a snake known also in the *Carakasaṃhitā* and elsewhere in literature. Hemacandra's *Abhidhānacintāmaṇi* (4.364) mentions that गृहगोंधिका and गृहगोंिकका are synonyms (Rādhākāntā Deva 1876: 691a, sub māṇikyā).

²¹⁴ वरटी is a wasp; वरिक in the Nepalese MSS may be an alternant of this word. Dalhana on 5.3.5 (Su 1938: 568) remarked that some interpreted वरिकेमत्स्य as two items, "wasp and fish," others as a single one, "wasp-fish."

Table 2: Passage 5, expressed in tabular format.

- 6 The enemies of the king pollute the waters, roads and foodstuffs in enemy territory. The experienced physician, who has learned how to purify things, should clean up those polluted things.
- 7 Polluted water is slimy and smells of tears.²¹⁵ It is covered with froth and covered with streaks. The frogs and fish die, the birds are crazed and, along with the wetland creatures, they wander about aimlessly.
- Men, horses and elephants who swim in it experience vomiting, delusion, fever, swelling and sharp pains. He should try to purify that polluted water, after curing their ailments.
- 9 And so, he should burn axlewood and garjan oil tree, as well as corky coral tree, with crimson trumpet-flower tree and small-flowered crape myrtle and weaver's beam tree, and with golden shower tree and white cutch tree. Then he should sprinkle that ash, cold, on the waters.
- 10–11 And in the same way, putting a handful of the ash in a pot, one may also purify water that one wants.

 If any one of the limbs of cows, horses, elephants, men or women, touch a place on the ground that enemies have spoiled with poison, or a ford
 - a place on the ground that enemies have spoiled with poison, or a ford or rock or a flat surface, then it swells up and burns and its hair and nails fall out on that place.²¹⁷
 - 12 In that situation, he should grind up country sarsaparilla together with all the aromatic items, with alcoholic drinks. And then he should

²¹⁵ अस्र normally means "tears," but rarely means "blood."

²¹⁶ On the polysemy of elephant/snake ($n\bar{a}ga$), see Semeka-Pankratov 1979.

^{217 &}quot;Swells up" translates an unclear reading that was probably श्यति, which may be an irregular form of $\sqrt{3}$, श्वा, श्वि (see Whitney 1885: 175–176).

- sprinkle the paths that need to be used with waters mixed with mud.²¹⁸ And if there exists another path, he should go by that.²¹⁹
- When grasses and foods are polluted, people collapse, fall unconscious. And others vomit. They get loose stool (*viḍbheda*) or they die. One should apply to them the therapy as described.
- Alternatively, one should wipe various musical instruments with antidotes that remove poison and then play them. What is called the most excellent paste for a musical instrument is certain minerals²²⁰ together with gold and sarsaparilla, and a portion of of nutgrass equal to that, together with the bile called "brown cow".²²¹ By the sound of the musical instrument, even terrible poisons that may be present at that place are destroyed.
 - 16 If there is smoke or wind that is affected by poison then birds are dazed and fall to the ground. People get coughs, colds, and head illnesses, and acute eye diseases.²²²
 - 17 The smoke and air can be purified by putting into the air: lac, turmeric, Himalayan monkshood, and myrobalan, with Himalayan mayapple, costus, cardamom,²²³ and peas, and beautyberry.

218 Our "alcoholic drinks" translates सुरा. For a discussion of this term at our period see McHugh 2021: 37–39 et passim.

219 Dalhaṇa on 5.3.12 (Su 1938: 568) cited a similar reading for the fourth pāda, but with a negative particle, "and if there is no other way, one should go by that."

- 220 "Certain minerals" translates तारावितार, the unanimous reading of the Nepalese witnesses. But the meaning of this expression is not clear and may even refer to plants, like the other ingredients. The vulgate reads तारः सतारः, which is also not very clear. However, Dalhaṇa on 5.3.14 (Su 1938: 568) identified these as "silver" and "mercury." This is highly unlikely to be a correct understanding of the passage. Historically, mercury is not naturally present in the South Asian peninsula (Watt 1889–96: v. 5, 233) and the word पार्द that Dalhaṇa used is probably a loan-word from Persian (sub paranda, parranda Steingass 1930: 244b). Mercurial compounds are not reliably attested in South Asia until two or three centuries after the composition of the Suśruta-saṃhitā at the earliest. The currently available "śāstric" recension of the Arthaśāstra that is datable to 175–300 CE (Olivelle 2013: 29–31) does not mention mercury (ibid, 534). See further the study by Wujastyk (2013a: 17, et passim).
- 221 सुरेन्द्रगोप and कुरुविन्द are both uncertain, see index. Dalhaṇa's opinion has been followed here, but it seems fair to say that all commentators were guessing.
- 222 The syntax of this verse is somewhat loose; the vulgate has regularized it, smoothing out the difficulties.

write footnote: don't repeat ativiṣā; vulgate similar to H.

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The origin of poison

- As it is told, the arrogant demon called Kaiṭabha created an obstacle for lotus-born Brahmā, at the very time that he was creating these creatures.²²⁴
- 19 Pitiless Fury took a body and burst out of the mouth of furious Brahmā's store of fiery energy.²²⁵
- 20 He burned that great, thundering, apocalyptic demon. Then, after bringing about the annihilation of that demon, his amazing fiery energy increased.
- And so, there was a sinking down (*viṣāda*) of the Daityas. Observing that, it was named "poison (*viṣa*)" because of it's ability to produce a "sinking down."
- 22 After that, the Lord created beings and subsequently made that fury enter into creatures still and moving.
- Water that falls from the sky to the earth has no obvious flavour. The savour of the different places it lands on enters into it. In the same way, whatever substance a poison reaches, it establishes itself there and by its nature it takes on that substance's savour.²²⁶
 - 25 Generally speaking, in a poison, all the qualities are really sharp. For this reason, every poison is known to irritate all of the humours.
 - 26 Irritated and afflicted by the poison, they leave their natural functions. Poison does not get digested, so it blocks the breaths.²²⁷
 - 27 Breathing is obstructed because its pathway is blocked by phlegm. Even if life continues, a man remains without consciousness.
 - 28 Similar to semen, the poison of all angry snakes pervades the whole body, and goes to the limbs like semen because of being stirred up.
 - Their fangs are like hooks. When it gets there, it sticks inside them. That is why snakes do not release poison that has not been agitated.
 - 30 Sprinkling with very cold water is traditional for all cases of poisoning,

²²⁴ At this point, the text seems to make a new beginning to the topic of toxicology, as if starting a new chapter.

^{225 &}quot;Fury" is here anthropomorphised.

²²⁶ The scribal emendation in MS NAK 5-333 of नियच्छति to निगच्छति suggests that the scribe had more than one manuscript before him, one of them representing the reading of the vulgate recension.

²²⁷ Probably a reference to the five breaths. Dalhana refers to winds (বার), but this does not seem correct since it is a reference to humours rather than breaths.

because poison is declared to be extremely hot and sharp.²²⁸

Poison in insects is slow and not very hot, having a lot of wind and phlegm. So in cases of insect poisoning, sweating is not forbidden.

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²²⁸ The verb पठ् "is declared, read aloud" here could suggest that the author is working within a written, not oral, tradition.

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NGMCP

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Glossary and Index of Medical Substances

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axlewood (dhava) Anogeissus latifolia
                                                divaricata (L.) R.Br. ex Roem. &
   (Roxb. ex DC.) Wall. ex Guill & Perr.
                                                Schultes. See GJM 557, AVS: v. 5, 232.
  See AVS: v. 1, 163 f, Chopra, GIMP: 20, 4
                                                Synonym of ??. But some say Valeriana
beautyberry (priyangu) \leftarrow śyāmā.
                                                jatamansi, Jones See GVDB: 173–174 for
  Callicarpa macrophylla, Vahl. See
                                                discussion (and charming comments
  AVS: v. 1, 334, Nadkarni: #420. Some
                                                on brain liquid testing), 27
  say also Setaria italica Beauv.
                                              crimson trumpet-flower tree (pāṭalā)
   GVDB: 263-264. See also GVDB: 413, 5
                                                Stereospermum chelonides, (L. f.) A.
                                                DC. See GJM 573, AVS: v. 5, 192 ff,
cardamom (elā) Elettaria cardamomum,
                                                 ADPS: 362 f, AVS: v. 3, 1848 f, IGP 1120,
  Maton. See AVS: v. 2, 360,
  Nadkarni: #924, Potter 66, 5
                                                Dymock: v. 3, 20 ff, 4
certain minerals (tārāvitāra) Unknown. It
                                              garjan oil tree (aśvakarna) Dipterocarpus
  is not even certain that these are
                                                turbinatus Gaertn. f. See GVDB: 28,
  minerals. The variant reading in the
                                                Chopra, GIMP: 100, 4
  vulgate, tārah sutārah was glossed by
                                              gold and sarsaparilla (surendragopa)
  Dalhaṇa on 5.3.14 (Su 1938: 568) as
                                                Unknown. Dalhana on 5.3.15
   follows tāro rūpyam, sutārah pāradah,
                                                 (Su 1938: 568) glossed surendra as
   "tāra means silver; sutāra means
                                                 "gold" and gopā as "Indian
  mercury.", 4
                                                sarsaparilla." He also noted other
corky coral tree (pāribhadra) Erythrina
                                                opinions that surendra was "Tellicherry
  suberosa Roxb. See GVDB 245, 4
                                                bark", 4
costus (kuṣṭha) Saussurea costus, Clarke.
                                              golden shower tree (rājadruma) rājadruma
                                                 = āragvadha. Cassia fistula L. See
  See Nadkarni: #2239, 5
country sarsaparilla (anantā)
                                                GVDB 37, 4
  Hemidesmus indicus, (L.) R. Br. See
                                              Himalayan mayapple (vakra)
   ADPS: 434, AVS: v. 3, 141–5,
                                                Podophyllum emodi, Wall.
  Nadkarni: #1210. But see GVDB: 13 for
                                                 (Nadkarni: #1971). But perhaps a
                                                synonm of crape jasmine and ??
  complications that may suggest that it
  is to be equated with sārivā, which may
                                                 (GVDB: 354), 5
  sometimes be Cryptolepis or
                                              Himalayan monkshood (ativisā)
  Ichnocarpus fruitescens R. Rr.
                                                Aconitum heterophyllum Wall.
   (GVDB: 429-431), 4
                                                GVDB: 12, Nadkarni: #39, 5
crape jasmine (tagara) Tabernaemontana
                                              Indian sarsaparilla (s\bar{a}riv\bar{a}) \rightarrow anant\bar{a}
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- (Hemidesmus indicus, (L.) R. Br.ADPS: 434, AVS: v. 3, 141–5, Nadkarni: #1210) and black creeper (pālindī. Ichnocarpus frutescens, (L.) R.Br. or Cryptolepis buchanani, Roemer & Schultes AVS: v. 3, 141, 3.145, 3.203, Nadkarni: #1283, #1210, ADPS: 434), 27
- lac ($l\bar{a}k\bar{s}\bar{a}$) Kerria lacca (Kerr.). See Meulenbeld 1974b: 445, Nadkarni: v. 2, #32. Watt (1908: 1053–1066) is characteristically informative, and is definite about the antiquity of lac in India, 5
- myrobalan (*abhayā*) Terminalia chebula, Retz. See ADPS: 172, Nadkarni: #2451, Potter 214, 5
- nutgrass (*kuruvinda*) Unknown. Þalhaṇa on 5.3.15 (Su 1938: 568) glossed the term as nutgrass, but noted other opinions that it was a whetstone or a very special metallic gem. Singh and Chunekar (GVDB: 108) added that it could be a variety of rice, ṣaṣṭika dhānya, 5
- nutgrass (*mustā*) Cyperus rotundus, L.

- See ADPS: 316, AVS: v. 2, 296, Nadkarni: #782, 27
- peas (hareṇu) hareṇu = satīna. Pisum sativum, L. Singh and Chunekar (GVDB: 419–420, 467–468) notes that two plants are usually meant under this name, but there is no agreement on the identity of the second, 5
- small-flowered crape myrtle (*sidhraka*) Lagerstroemia parviflora Roxb. See GVDB: 432, 4
- Tellicherry bark (*kuṭaja*) Holarrhena pubescens Wall. ex G.Don, with Wrightia tinctoria and W. arborea considered GVDB: 101–102, ADPS: 267–270, 27
- turmeric (*haridrā*) Curcuma longa Linn. GVDB: 465, 5
- weaver's beam tree (*muṣkaka*) Schrebera swietenioides, Roxb. See AVS: v. 5, 88, Lord, Nadkarni: #2246, 4
- white cutch tree (*somavalka*) Acacia polyacantha, Willd. See AVS: v. 1, 30, IGP 7, GJM 602, AVS: v. 2, 935; *pace* Nadkarni: #1038, 4

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