

A Translation of the New Edition of the *Suśrutasamhitā*

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Kalpasthāna, adhyāya 1

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.⁹² Translations of this chapter since 2000 have appeared by Wujastyk (2003: 131–139) and P. V. Sharma (1999–2001: 3, 1–15).

More recently, a discussion of the fourth chapter of this section in the light of the Nepalese manuscripts was published by Harimoto.⁹³ After a close comparative reading of lists of poisonous snakes, Harimoto concluded that, “the Nepalese version is internally consistent while the [vulgate] editions are not.” Harimoto showed how the vulgate editions,⁹⁴ had been adjusted textually to smooth over inconsistencies, and gave insights into these editorial processes.

Manuscript notes

- MS Kathmandu NAK 5-333 has foliation letter numerals, for example on f. 323a, that are similar to MS Cambridge Add. 1693,⁹⁵ dated to 1165 CE noted in Bendall's chart of Nepalese letter-numerals Bendall 1883: Lithograph V, after p. 225

⁹² HIML: IA, 289–290.

⁹³ Harimoto 2011: 101–104.

⁹⁴ The two editions SS 1938 and SS 1889, that Harimoto noted present identical texts.

⁹⁵ Scan at cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01693/1.

Translation

- 1–2 And now I shall explain the procedures for safeguarding food and drink, as were declared by the Venerable Dhanvantari.⁹⁶
- 3 Divodāsa, the king of the earth, was the foremost supporter of religious discipline and virtue. With unblemished instruction he taught his students, of whom Suśruta was the leader.⁹⁷

[Threats to the king]

- 4–5 Evil-hearted enemies who have plucked up their courage, may seek to harm the king, who knows nothing of it. He may be assailed with poisons by or by his own people who have been subverted, wishing to pour the poison of their anger into any vulnerability they can find.⁹⁸
- 6 Therefore, a king should always be protected from poison by a physician.
- 7 The racehorse-like fickleness of men's minds is well known. And for this reason, a king should never trust anyone.⁹⁹
- 8–11 He should employ a doctor in his kitchen (*mahānasa*) who is respected

96 MS H adds in the margin अथ खलु वत्स सुश्रुतः “Now begins Vatsa Suśruta.” This phrase has been copied here by the scribe from the beginning of the *Suśrutasamhitā* chapter in the *sūtrasthāna* on the rules about food and drink (SS 1.46.3 (SS 1938²: 214)). The scribe presumably felt, not unreasonably, that this section had common subject matter with the present chapter. Further, SS 1.46.3 is the only place in the Nepalese transmission of the *Suśrutasamhitā* that names Dhanvantari and integrates him into the narrative of the *Suśrutasamhitā* as the teacher of Suśruta.

The mention of Dhanvantari here is the only other time in the Nepalese transmission that this authority is cited as the source of Ayurvedic teaching, and the unique occurrence of this actual phrase, “as was declared by the Venerable Dhanvantari.” See the discussion by Klebanov (2021a: 28–32), who concludes that the earliest recoverable recension of the *Suśrutasamhitā* may have had the phrase only at this point and not elsewhere in the work.

97 This is a quite different statement from the vulgate (SS 1938: 559) that has Dhanvantari as the teacher, and calls him the Lord of Kāśī (*kāśīpati*). Ḍalhaṇa followed the vulgate but explicitly noted the reading before us with small differences: दिवोदासः क्षितिपतिस्तपोधर्मश्रुताकरः “Divodāsa, the king of the earth, was a mine of traditions about discipline and virtue.”

98 Verses about the use of Venemous Virgins as a weapon do not appear in the Nepalese manuscripts. Cf. Wujastyk 2003: 81 f., 132. This material is present in the commentary of Gayadāsa.

99 The verb √śvas is conjugated as a first class root in the Nepalese manuscripts.

- by experts, who belongs to a good family, is orthodox, sympathetic, not emaciated, and always busy.
- 12–13 The kitchen should be constructed at a recommended location and orientation. It should have a lot of light,¹⁰⁰ have clean utensils and be staffed by men and women who have been vetted.¹⁰¹
- 17–18ab The chefs, bearers (*voḍhāra*), and makers of boiled rice soups and cakes and whoever else might be there, must all be under the strict control of the doctor.¹⁰²
- 18cd–19ab An expert knows people’s body language (*iṅgita*) through abnormalities in voice, movement and facial expression. He should be able to identify a poisoner by the following signs.
- 19cd–23 Wanting to speak, he gets confused, when asked a question, he never arrives at an answer, and he talks a lot of confused nonsense, like a fool. He laughs for no reason, cracks his knuckles and scratches at the ground. He gets the shakes and glances nervously from one person to another. His face is drained of colour, he is grimy (*dhyāma*) and he cuts at things with his nails.¹⁰³ A poisoner goes the wrong way and is absent-minded.
- 25–27 I shall explain the signs to look for in toothbrush twigs, in food and drink as well as in massage oil (*abhyāṅga*) and combs (*avalekhana*); in dry rubs (*utsādana*) and showers, in decoctions (*kaṣāya*) and massage ointment (*anulepana*); in garlands (*sraja*), clothes, beds, armour and ornaments; in slippers and footstools, and on the backs of elephants and horses; in nasya (*snuff*), inhaled smoke (*dhūma*), eye make-up (*añjana*), etc., and any other things which are commonly poisoned. Then, I shall also explain the remedy.
- 28 Flies or crows or other creatures that eat a poisonous morsel (*bali*) served from the king’s portion, die on the spot.

Cf. Arthaśāstra 1.21.8.

100 We read महच्छुचिः with the Nepalese manuscripts and against the vulgate’s महच्छुचि. We understand शुचिस् as a neuter noun meaning “light” following Apte (1992: 1050a).

101 Verses detailing the ideal staff are omitted in the Nepalese manuscripts. Cf. SS 1938: 560; Wujastyk 2003: 132.

102 The word सौपोदनैकपूपिक “chefs for the boiled rice soups and cakes” is grammatically interesting. The term सूपोदन (as opposed to sūpaudana) is attested in the *Bodhāyanīya-grhyasūtra* 2.10.54 (Shastri 1920: 68). More pertinently, perhaps, सूपोदन is attested in the Bower Manuscript, part II, leaf 11r, line 3 (Hoernle 1893–1912: vol. 1, p. 43).

103 The word ध्याम is glossed by Ḍalhaṇa (in a variant reading) as someone who is the colour of dirty clothes SS 5.1 (SS 1938²: 560).

- 29 Such food makes a fire crackle violently, and gives it an overpowering colour like a peacock's throat.
- 30–33 After a chukar partridge looks at food which has poison mingled with it, its eyes are promptly drained of colour; a peacock pheasant drops dead. A koel changes its song and the common crane rises up excitedly.¹⁰⁴ It will excite a peacock and the terrified parakeet and the hill myna screech. The swan trembles very much, and the racket-tailed drongo churrs.¹⁰⁵ The chital deer sheds tears and the monkey releases excrement.¹⁰⁶
- 34 Vapour rising from tainted food gives rise to a pain in the heart, it makes the eyes roll, and it gives one a headache.¹⁰⁷
- 35, 36cd In such a case, an errhine and a collyrium that are costus, *lāmajja* grass (*lāmajja*), spikenard (*nalada*) and honey (*madhus*);¹⁰⁸ a paste of sandalwood on the heart may also provide relief.¹⁰⁹

104 The verb अर्च्छति “rises up” is a rare form best known from epic Sanskrit (see Oberlies 2003: 212, §7.6.1). The transmitted form क्रौञ्च is obviously a colloquial version of Sanskrit क्रौञ्च. Commenting on SS 1.7.10 (SS 1938²: 31), Ḍalhaṇa interestingly gives the colloquial versions of several Sanskrit bird names, even singling out pronunciation in the specific location of Kānyakubja. For क्रौञ्च he says that people pronounce it कुरञ्च and कौचि. The form क्रौञ्च is found in Pāli (see Cone 2001: 731, who notes that Ardhamāgadhī has the same form). Elsewhere, Ḍalhaṇa calls the bird क्रौञ्चिर, क्रौञ्चि, and कैचर (SS 1.46.105 (SS 1938²: 223), SS 6.31.154 (SS 1938²: 684) and (SS 6.58.44 (SS 1938²: 790) respectively).

105 Ḍalhaṇa seemed confused about the racket-tailed drongo (भृङ्गराज). He called it a generic drongo (भ्रमरक), a word that can also mean “bee,” (Dave 1985: 62), and then said that it is like the black drongo (धूम्याट) (for a nice explanation of this name, see Dave 1985: 62–63) and that people call it “the king of birds.”

106 MS KL 699 reads bull (वृषभ) for Chital deer (पृषत). The latter may perhaps be mistaken for the former in the Newa script, although the reading of MS KL 699 is hard to read at this point.

107 “Tainted” translates उपक्षिप्त. The word’s semantic field includes “to hurl, throw against,” and especially “to insult verbally, insinuate, accuse.” The commentator Ḍalhaṇa glossed the term as, “spoiled food given to be eaten” (विदूषितस्यान्नस्य भोक्तुं दत्तस्य), but he noted that some people read “उखाक्षिप्त” or “thrown into a pan.” Other translators have commonly translated it as “served,” perhaps influenced by Ḍalhaṇa’s “given (दत्त).”

108 The vulgate supplies another phrase and verb at this point that is not present in the Nepalese transmission, but that makes the text flow more easily.

109 Singh and Chuneekar (1972: 350) discussed the difficulties in identifying लामज्ज, a plant cited more often in the *Suśrutasaṃhitā* than in the *Carakasaṃhitā*; Ḍalhaṇa adopted the common view that it is a type of *uśīra* or vetiver grass. The grammatical

- 37 Held in the hand, it makes the hand burn, and the nails fall out. In such a case, the ointment (*pralepa*) is beautyberry (*śyāmā*), velvet-mite (*indragopa*) ‘gentle’ (*soma*) and water-lily (*utpala*).¹¹⁰
- 38–39 If he eats that food, by mistake or through ignorance, then his tongue will feel like a ball of stone (*aṣṭhīlā*) and it will lose its sense of taste. It stings and burns, and his saliva (*śleṣman*) dribbles out.¹¹¹ In such a case, he should apply the treatment prescribed above for vapour, and what is stated below under “toothbrush twigs.”

neuter form मधुस् “sweetness” of the Nepalese manuscripts is less common than neuter मधु “honey, sweetness, liquorice.”

110 “Beautyberry” (*Callicarpa macrophylla* Vahl.) is one identification of *śyāmā*, but vaidyas and commentators have different ideas about the plant’s identity (see Singh and Chuneekar 1972: 410; Warrier et al. 1994–6: 1: 334; Nadkarni 1954: #420). On translating *indragopa* as “velvet-mite,” see Lienhard 1978. Ḍalhaṇa’s remarks show that he had a reading *indrāgopā* before him, and he tries to explain इन्द्रा and गोपा as separate plants. But he also says that some people read इन्द्रगोप. Ḍalhaṇa curiously parses the name सोमा (f.) out of the compound; this feminine noun is almost unknown to Ayurvedic literature. Some dictionaries and commentators consider it a synonym for गुडूची, others for ब्राह्मी or चन्द्रतरु. Ḍalhaṇa also mentions that some people think the word refers to the soma creeper (*somalatā*), which might explain his choice to take the word as feminine. But the compounded word is far more likely to be सोम (m.), the well-known mystery plant (**wuja-root**3). If this can be taken as rue (*Ruta graveolens*, L.), as some assert, one can point to a pleasing passage in Dioscorides where rue plays an antitoxic role: “...it is a counterpoison of serpents, the stinging of Scorpions, Bees, Hornets and Wasps; and it is reported that if a man be anointed with the juice of the Rue, these will not hurt him; and that the serpent is driven away at the smell thereof when it is burned; insomuch that when the weasel is to fight with the serpent she armeth herself by eating Rue, against the might of the serpent.” Cited from Wren 1956: 262; not found in Osbaldeston and Wood 2000.

111 The vulgate reading from his mouth (चास्यात्) seems much more likely, but is not attested in the Nepalese manuscripts.

Our thinking about indragopa is wrong (Lienhard 1978: 99; Dave 1985: 22).

Lienhard (1978) has redefined our thinking about indragopa.

Lienhard 1978; Dave 1985

Lienhard 1978

SS 1938²

Ḍalhaṇa on SS 1.6.99 (SS 1938²: 345)

This and that.¹¹²

This and that.¹¹³

¹¹² Lienhard 1978.

¹¹³ As argued by Lienhard 1978.