

# 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.

## Contents

<b>The Manuscripts used in the Vulgate editions by Yādavaśarma</b>	
<b>Trivikrama Ācārya</b>	<b>2</b>
The manuscripts of the 1915 edition . . . . .	2
The manuscripts of the 1931 edition . . . . .	2
The manuscripts of the 1938 edition . . . . .	3
<b>Sūtrasthāna, adhyāya 1</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Sūtrasthāna, adhyāya 28</b>	<b>9</b>

# The Manuscripts used in the Vulgate editions by Yādavaśarma Trivikrama Ācārya

Yādavaśarma Trivikrama Ācārya produced three successive editions of the *Suśrutasaṃhitā* with the commentary of Ḍalhaṇa, in 1915, 1931 and 1938. These editions, especially the last, are considered the most scholarly and reliable editions of the work, and have been constantly reprinted up to the present day.

The 1915 edition was based on three manuscripts. The 1931 edition used another nine. For his final 1938 edition, Ācārya used a further three.<sup>1</sup>

## The manuscripts of the 1915 edition

- 1 Calcutta, Royal Asiatic Society. Covers the sūtra, nidāna, śārīra and kalpa sthānas.
- 2 Jaipur, Pandit Gaṅgādharaḥṭṭaśarmaṇ, lecturer at the Royal Sanskrit University. Covers the cikitsāsthāna and the uttaratantra.
- 3 Bundi, my great friend the royal physician Paṃ. Śrīprasādaśarmaṇ. Covers the uttaratantra.

## The manuscripts of the 1931 edition

- 1 Vārāṇasī, professor of literature, the great Gaurīnāthapāṭhaka. With the *Nibandhasaṅgraha*. Covers the nidānasthāna and uttaratantra.
- 2 Ahmedabad. My friend Sva. Vā. Vaidya Raṇachōḍalāla Motīlāśarmaṇ. With the *Nibandhasaṅgraha*. Covers the śārīrasthāna.
- 3 From the library of my great friend Sva. Vā. Vaidya Murārājīśarmaṇ. Extremely old. No commentary. Covers the śārīrasthāna.
- 4 Puṇe, BORI library. With the *Nibandhasaṅgraha*. Covers the śārīrasthāna.<sup>2</sup>
- 5 With the *Nibandhasaṅgraha*. Complete.
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9

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<sup>1</sup>SS 1938: 22.

<sup>2</sup>Not one of the three MSS of the *śārīrasthāna* described in **shar-void**.

## The manuscripts of the 1938 edition

1  
2  
3

edition sthāna	Manuscripts														
	1915			1935									1938		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3
sū.	●							●	?		●	●1-43	●		●
nī.	●			●				●	?		●		●	●	●
śā.	●				●	●	●	●	?		●		●		●
ci.		●						●	?	●	●		●		●1-9
ka.	●							●	?		●		●		
utt.		●	●	●				●	?		●				

## Sūtrasthāna, adhyāya 1

- 1 Now I shall narrate the chapter on the origin of this knowledge.<sup>3</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>4</sup>
- 3 “O Lord, distress arose in our minds after witnessing people thrashing about with cries, assailed by different kinds of pain and injury (*vedanā-bhīghāta*), 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>5</sup>
- 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.

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<sup>3</sup>Ḍalhaṇa understood the word “knowledge (*veda*)” as specifically “medical knowledge.” He said that the word “longevity” (*āyur*) had been elided. After this opening statement, later manuscripts and commentaries include the attribution, “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>4</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>5</sup>Svayambhū is another name for Brahmā, the creator.

- 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>6</sup> Gandharvas, Yakṣas, demons, deceased ancestors, Piśācas, Vināyakas, <sup>7</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>8</sup>
- 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

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<sup>6</sup>Dānavas. The insertion marks (*kākapadas*) below the text at this point appears to be by the original scribe.

<sup>7</sup>The vulgate doesn’t have *vināyakas* but does add *asuras*, probably under the influence of Ḍalhaṇa. Cite Paul Courtright, Ganesha book.

<sup>8</sup>The scribal insertion marks (crosses) above the line at this point in MS K appear to be 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 (*sarīsrpa*) in the list, it does seem that MS K had a shorter list, and the vulgate edition adds rodents (*mūṣika*).

- 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 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.
- 28 In this context, as far as this discipline is concerned, a human being (*puruṣa*) is called an amalgam of the five elements and the embodied soul. This is where procedures apply. This is the locus.

Why?

Because of the duality of the world, the world is twofold: the stationary and the moving. Its nature (*ātmaka*) is twofold, depending on the preponderance of Agni and Soma.<sup>9</sup> Alternatively, it can be considered as being fivefold. The multitude of beings in it are fourfold: they are termed “sweat-born, stone-born, caul-born and egg-born”.<sup>10</sup> Where they are concerned, the human being is the main thing; others are his support. Therefore, the human being (*puruṣa*) is the locus.

- 29 Diseases are said to be the conjunction of the person and suffering (*duḥkha*). There are four of them: invasive, bodily, mental and inherent. The invasive ones are caused by an injury. The bodily ones are based on food, caused by irregularities (*vaiṣamya*) in wind, bile, phlegm and blood.<sup>11</sup>

The mental (*mānasa*) ones, caused by desire (*icchā*) and hatred (*dveṣa*), include: anger (*krodha*), grief (*āśoka*), misery (*dainya*), overexcitement (*harṣa*), lust (*kāma*), depression (*viṣāda*), envy (*īrṣyā*), jealousy (*asūyā*), malice (*mātsarya*), and greed (*lobha*).

The inherent (*svābhāvika*) ones are hunger, thirst, old age, death, sleep and those of the temperament (*prakṛti*).

These too are located (*adhiṣṭhāna*) in the mind and body.

Scarification (*lekhana*), nourishment (*bṛṃhana*), purification (*saṃśodhana*), pacification (*saṃśamana*), diet (*āhāra*) and regimen (*ācāra*), properly employed, bring about their cure.

- 30 Furthermore, food is the root (*mūla*) of living beings as well as of strength (*bala*), complexion (*varṇa*) and vital energy (*ojas*). It depends on (*āyatta*) the six flavours (*rasa*). Flavours, furthermore, have substances as their substrate (*āśrayin*). And substances are remedies (*oṣadhī*).<sup>12</sup> There are two types: stationary (*sthāvara*) and moving (*jaṅgama*).

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<sup>9</sup>See Wujastyk 2004.

<sup>10</sup>This fourfold classification of beings is paralleled with closely-related vocabulary in *Bhelasamhitā* 4.4.4 (Bhela 2000: 206; Bhela 1921: 81).

<sup>11</sup>Note that four humoral substances are assumed here.

<sup>12</sup>Pāṇini 6.3.132 provides that the final vowel of the noun *oṣadhi* may be lengthened (→*oṣadhī*) under certain conditions. These conditions require that the word be used in a Vedic mantra and not in the nominative. Neither condition is met in this passage, yet the author uses the form *oṣadhī*. This form is in fact not uncommon in medical literature as well as in epics, purāṇas, smṛtis, and other parts of Sanskrit literature (oberlies).

- 31 Of these, there are four types of stationary ones: fruit trees (*vanaspati*), flowering trees (*vrkṣa*), herbs (*oṣadhi*) and shrubs (*vīrudh*).<sup>13</sup> Amongst these, the “fruit trees” have fruit but no flowers.<sup>14</sup> The “flowering trees” have flowers and fruit. The “herbs” die when the fruit is ripe. “Shrubs” put out shoots.
- 32 As is well known, moving remedies are also of four types: those born in in a caul (*jarāyuja*), those born from eggs (*aṇḍaja*), those born of sweat (*sveda*), and shoots (*udbhid*). Amongst these, those born in a caul include animals (*paśu*), humans, and wild animals (*vyāla*). Birds, creepy-crawlies (*sarīṣṛpa*) and snakes are “born of eggs.” Worms (*kṛmi*), small insects (*kunta*) and ants (*pipīlika*) and others are born of sweat.<sup>15</sup> Shoots include red velvet mites (*indragopa*) and frogs (*maṇḍūka*).

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<sup>13</sup>Ca.sū.1.71–72 also describes these four types of medicinal plant in similar terms but with slightly differing names: *oṣadhi* is a plant that ends after fruiting, *vīrudh* is a plant that branches out, *vanaspati* is a tree with fruit, and *vānaspatya* is a tree with fruit and flowers.

<sup>14</sup>The MSS agree in reading *phalavantyaḥ* “having flowers” which is grammatically non-standard. It is also found in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* (1.92.27cd–28) edition 56r .

<sup>15</sup>The word *kunta* is found in literature, commonly as a compound with *pipīlika*; possibly the compound is a type of ant.



## 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>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Suśruta sū.1.28 Sharma 1999–2001: I, 21, SS 1938<sup>2</sup>: 7.

## Abbreviations

- Bhela 1921 Mookerjee, A. and Ananta Krishna Shastri, V. (1921) (eds.), *The Bhela Samhita. Sanskrit Text* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta), ARK: [ark :/ 13960 / t3sv3157j](https://n2t.org/ark:/13960/t3sv3157j); Based on two copies made of the Thanjavur codex unicus (MS Thanjavur TMSSML 10773, Burnell 1880: 63–4, Sastri 1933: #11085).
- Bhela 2000 Krishnamurthy, K. H. (2000), *Bhela-saṃhitā. Text with English Translation, Commentary and Critical Notes* (Haridas Ayurveda Series, 8; Varanasi: Chaukhambha Visvabharati).
- 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.), सुश्रुतसंहिता, सुश्रुतेन विरचिता, वैद्यवरश्री-डल्हणाचार्यविरचितया निबन्धसंग्रहाख्यव्याख्यया समुल्लसिता, आचार्योपाह्वेन त्रिविक्रमात्मजेन यादवशर्मणा संशोधिता = *The Sushrutasamhita of Sushruta, the Nibandhasangraha Commentary of Shri Dalhaṇāchārya* (Mumbayyām: Nirṇayasāgaramudrāyantrālaye), ARK: [ark:/13960/t3sv0mt50](https://n2t.org/ark:/13960/t3sv0mt50), accessed 29/07/2020; HIML: IB, 312 edition \*v.
- SS 1931 Ācārya, Y. T. (1931) (ed.), सुश्रुतसंहिता, वैद्यवरश्रीडल्हणाचार्यविरचितया निबन्धसंग्रहाख्यव्याख्यया समुल्लसिता, महर्षिणा सुश्रुतेन विरचिता, सूत्र-निदान-शारीर-चिकित्सा-कल्पस्थानोत्तरतन्त्रात्मकः. आचार्योपाह्वेन त्रिविक्रमात्मजेन यादवशर्मणा संशोधिता = *The Sushrutasamhitā of Sushruta with the Nibandhasangraha Commentary of Shree Dalhaṇāchārya* (2nd edn., Mumbayyām: Pāṇḍuraṅga Jāvajī at the Nirṇayasāgaramudrāyantrālaye), ARK: [ark :/ 13960 / t9j41sg94](https://n2t.org/ark:/13960/t9j41sg94), accessed 09/06/2020; HIML: IB, 312 edition \*v.
- SS 1938 Ācārya, Y. T. and Ācārya, N. R. (1938) (eds.), श्रीडल्हणाचार्यविरचितया निबन्धसंग्रहाख्यव्याख्यया निदानस्थानस्य श्रीगयदासाचार्यविरचितया न्यायचन्द्रिकाख्यपञ्जिकाव्याख्यया च समुल्लसिता महर्षिणा सुश्रुतेन विरचिता सुश्रुतसंहिता (3rd edn., Bombay: Nirṇayasāgara Press); HIML: IB, 313 edition cc.

SS 1938<sup>2</sup> Ācārya, Y. T. and Ācārya, N. R. (2004) (eds.), महर्षिणा सुश्रुतेन विरचिता सुश्रुतसंहिता, श्रीडल्हणाचार्यविरचितया निबन्धसंग्रहाख्यव्याख्यया निदानस्थानस्य श्रीगयदासाचार्यविरचितया न्यायचन्द्रिकाख्यपञ्जिकाव्याख्यया च समुल्लसिता (Vārāṇasī: Caukhambhā Kṛṣṇadāsa Akādamī); Reprint of the third, 1938 edition (SS 1938), with changed pagination.

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## Lexical Index

ācāra	nature: 7	sarīsrpa: 5, 8
regimen: 7	āyatta	
adhiṣṭhāna	depends on: 7	dainya
located: 7	āyur	misery: 7
āhāra	life, longevity: 4	depends on
diet: 7	āyurveda	āyatta: 7
aṇḍaja	the science of life: 4	depression
born from eggs: 8		viṣāda: 7
anger	bala	desire
krodha: 7	strength: 7	icchā: 7
animals	born from eggs	diet
paśu: 8	aṇḍaja: 8	āhāra: 7
ants	born in in a caul	dravya
pipīlika: 8	jarāyujā: 8	substance: 9
āśoka	born of sweat	duḥkha
grief: 7	sveda: 8	suffering: 7
āśrayin	bṛṃhaṇa	dveṣa
substrate: 7	nourishment: 7	hatred: 7
asūyā	complexion	energy
jealousy: 7	varṇa: 7, 9	ojas: 9
ātmaka	creepy-crawlies	envy

*īrṣyā*: 7  
 flavours  
*rasa*: 7, 9  
 flowering trees  
*vṛkṣa*: 8  
 frogs  
*maṇḍūkā*: 8  
 fruit trees  
*vanaspati*: 8  
 greed  
*lobha*: 7  
 grief  
*āśoka*: 7  
*harṣa*  
 overexcitement: 7  
 hatred  
*dveṣa*: 7  
 herbs  
*oṣadhi*: 8  
 human being  
*puruṣa*: 6f  
*icchā*  
 desire: 7  
*indragopa*  
 red velvet mites: 8  
 inherent  
*svābhāvika*: 7  
 irregularities  
*vaiṣamya*: 7  
*īrṣyā*  
 envy: 7  
*jaṅgama*  
 moving: 7  
*jarāyujā*  
 born in in a caul: 8  
 jealousy  
*asūyā*: 7  
*kāma*  
 lust: 7  
 knowledge  
*veda*: 4

*kṛmi*  
 Worms: 8  
*krodha*  
 anger: 7  
*kunta*  
 small insects: 8  
*lekhana*  
 Scarification: 7  
 life, longevity  
*āyur*: 4  
*lobha*  
 greed: 7  
 located  
*adhiṣṭhāna*: 7  
 lust  
*kāma*: 7  
*lūtā*  
 spiders: 5  
 malice  
*mātsarya*: 7  
*mānasa*  
 mental: 7  
*maṇḍūkā*  
 frogs: 8  
*mātsarya*  
 malice: 7  
 mental  
*mānasa*: 7  
 misery  
*dainya*: 7  
 moving  
*jaṅgama*: 7  
*mūla*  
 root: 7  
*mūṣika*  
 rodents: 5  
 nature  
*ātmaka*: 7  
 nourishment  
*bṛṃhana*: 7  
*ojas*  
 energy: 9

vital energy: 7  
*oṣadhi*  
 herbs: 8  
*oṣadhī-*  
 remedies: 7  
 overexcitement  
*harṣa*: 7  
 pacification  
*saṃśamana*: 7  
 pain and injury  
*vedanābhighāta*: 4  
*paśu*  
 animals: 8  
*pipilika*  
 ants: 8  
*prakṛti*  
 temperament: 7  
 purification  
*saṃśodhana*: 7  
*puruṣa*  
 human being: 6f  
*rasa*  
 flavours: 7, 9  
 red velvet mites  
*indragopa*: 8  
 regimen  
*ācāra*: 7  
 remedies  
*oṣadhī-*: 7  
 rodents  
*mūṣika*: 5  
 root  
*mūla*: 7  
*saṃśamana*  
 pacification: 7  
*saṃśodhana*  
 purification: 7  
*sarīṣpa*  
 creepy-crawlies: 5,  
 8  
 Scarification  
*lekhana*: 7  
 shoots

<i>udbhid</i> : 8	<i>duḥkha</i> : 7	knowledge: 4
shrubs	<i>svābhāvika</i>	<i>vedanābhighāta</i>
<i>vīrudh</i> : 8	inherent: 7	pain and injury: 4
small insects	<i>svedaja</i>	<i>vīrudh</i>
<i>kunta</i> : 8	born of sweat: 8	shrubs: 8
spiders	temperament	<i>viśāda</i>
<i>lūtā</i> : 5	<i>prakṛti</i> : 7	depression: 7
<i>śreyas</i>	the science of life	vital energy
welfare: 4	<i>āyurveda</i> : 4	<i>ojas</i> : 7
stationary	<i>udbhid</i>	<i>vṛkṣa</i>
<i>sthāvara</i> : 7	shoots: 8	flowering trees: 8
<i>sthāvara</i>		<i>vyāla</i>
stationary: 7		wild animals: 8
strength	<i>vaiṣamya</i>	welfare
<i>bala</i> : 7	irregularities: 7	<i>śreyas</i> : 4
substance	<i>vanaspati</i>	wild animals
<i>dravya</i> : 9	fruit trees: 8	<i>vyāla</i> : 8
substrate	<i>varṇa</i>	Worms
<i>āśrayin</i> : 7	complexion: 7, 9	<i>kṛmi</i> : 8
suffering	<i>veda</i>	

## Index of Manuscripts

*The numbers after the colon refer to pages in this document.*

Kathmandu, KL 699: 1

Kathmandu, NAK 5-333: 1

Kathmandu, NAK 1-1079: 1

Thanjavur TMSSML 10773: 10