

A Translation of the Nepalese Text of the *Suśrutasamhitā*

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Part 1. Sūtrasthāna

Part 2. Nidānasthāna

Part 3. Śārīrasthāna

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Part 5. 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.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁶ [HIML](#): IA, 294–295. In addition to the translations mentioned by Meulenbeld ([HIML](#): IB, 314–315), a translation of this chapter was included in 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.⁴⁸⁷
- 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.⁴⁸⁸
- 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.⁴⁸⁹
- 5 Where a bandage (*bandha*) is not suitable, one should raise the bite up and then cauterize it.⁴⁹⁰ Suction, cutting and cauterizing are recommended in all cases.
- 6 Suction will be good after filling the mouth with earth (*pāṃśu*).⁴⁹¹ Alternatively, the snake should be bitten by the person who knows that they have just been bitten.⁴⁹²

487 On कल्प, see note 443.

488 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).

489 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 *Aṣṭāṅgaḥṛdayasaṃhitā* (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.

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

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

492 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.⁴⁹³

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.⁴⁹⁴
- 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.⁴⁹⁵
- 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.⁴⁹⁶

the first-response cares for snakebite in most of the Malayalam texts of Viṣhavaidya. 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 Viṣhavaidya text edited by Mahādeva Śāstrī (1958).

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

494 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.

495 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). HIMAL: 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.

496 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.⁴⁹⁷ 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.⁴⁹⁸

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.⁴⁹⁹
- 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.

⁴⁹⁷ 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.

⁴⁹⁸ प्रच्छान is the second of the two methods of blood letting described in the vulgate text of the *Suśrutasaṃhitā* at 1.14.25 (Su 1938: 64); this verse does not appear in the Nepalese version of the *Suśrutasaṃhitā*.

⁴⁹⁹ 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.⁵⁰⁰
- 21 At the third one should use errhines and collyrium (*añjana*) that destroy poison.⁵⁰¹ 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 sharp (*tikṣṇa*), and a well-regarded gruel too.
- 23 But at the seventh, one should purge (*śodh*) his head with a sharp sternutatory.⁵⁰²

In the case of Maṇḍalins

- 24 Amongst Maṇḍalins, the earliest toxic reaction (*vega*) should be treated in the same way as with Darvīkaras.⁵⁰³
- 25 At the second, one should make him drink ghee and honey and then make him vomit.⁵⁰⁴
- 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.

⁵⁰⁰ 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. 129 above.

⁵⁰¹ 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.

⁵⁰² The vulgate adds a half-verse here recommending the application of a collyrium (*añjana*) to a cut made on the patient’s head.

⁵⁰³ 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 386, p. 130 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*.

⁵⁰⁴ 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.⁵⁰⁵ And at the seventh, a wholesome antidote that destroys poison in a sternutatory (*avapīḍa*).⁵⁰⁶

In the case of Rājimats

- 28 Now, Amongst Rājimats, one should let blood at the first toxic shock.⁵⁰⁷
 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.⁵⁰⁸⁵⁰⁹

write note
on par-
isekān pra-
dehāms

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

506 The अवपीड is described at *Suśrutasaṃhitā* 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.

507 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.

508 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. 154 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.⁵¹⁰
- 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.⁵¹¹
- 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*).⁵¹² And in such cases one should apply the cure as appropriate.⁵¹³
- 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.

509 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.

510 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 386 and 503, pp. 130, 159 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).

511 The word अवतिष्ठ “remaining” is hard to parse. It cannot be a णमुल् formation (Pāṇini 3.4.22 ff), because of the root's reduplication, and should not be a present participle because it is not neuter. However, lack of gender concord is not unknown in Epic Sanskrit; several of the examples cited by Oberlies (2003: § 10.2.1) even involve present participles without gender concord. Cf. Edgerton 1953: 1, § 6.12 for examples in BHS.

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

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

- 52.1 Once the poison has disappeared one can conquer irritated wind using items that restrain the wind.⁵¹⁴
- 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.⁵¹⁵
- 54 One can conquer phlegm with the group that starts with golden shower tree, together with honey.⁵¹⁶
- 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 weeps, smells a great deal, is putrid (śīrṇa) is designated “poison-stink (viṣapūti).”*⁵¹⁷
- 57–58ab *One may be certain that a person has been struck by something poisoned (digdha) if their wound immediately starts to suppurate has black blood that flows and is inflamed, as well as having black, weeping and exceptionally foul-smelling flesh coming out of the wound and also someone who has thirst, fainting (mūrcchā), fever and a temperature.*⁵¹⁸
- 58.1–60 *One who is known to have these exact symptoms may have poison in their wound that is † given by mistake.† And they may have a wound that has been hit by something poisoned (digdha) and is full of poison. And others are sick because of a wound that stinks because of poison. The wise person debrides the excess flesh of such people and then, after removing the blood by means of leeches and after removing the humours from above and below, he should irrigate with cold bark decoctions from milky trees. And he should ap-*

514 This half-verse is not present in the vulgate, but has broadly the same sense as 5.5.52cd (Su 1938: 577), that is not present in the Nepalese version.

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

516 The आरम्बधगण is listed at *Suśrutasamhitā* 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)).

517 *Suśrutasamhitā* 5.5.16 (Su 1938: 575) (p. 158 above) suggests smearing an incised area with antidotes.

518 The Nepalese witnesses describe someone who has been struck or hurt (क्षत, आहत), while the vulgate describes someone who is pierced (विद्ध). Ḍalhaṇa on 5.5.58ab (Su 1938: 576) interpreted the latter wording as being struck by a poison-smeared arrow.

ply items that destroy poison such as cloths containing ointments together with cold liquids mixed with ghee.

61ab When the bone is injured by poisons, the very same rule should be followed as for bile poison.

61cd–63ab The following are powdered: *turpeth*, *weaver's beam tree*, *liquorice*, the two kinds of *turmeric*, the *Indian madder* group,⁵¹⁹ and all kinds of salt.⁵²⁰ One may put this in a horn, together with honey. This antidote destroys poison, being employed together with drinks, collyrium (*añjana*), oil rubs (*abhyañjana*), *errhines* and drugs.

With its relentless potency (*vīrya*) and as a destroyer of the toxic reaction (*vega*) to poison, it is called “The Great Antidote” and has great power.

63cd–65ab Very fine *embelia*, *velvet-leaf*, the three *myrobalans*, *wild celery*, and *devil's dung*, as well as *Himalayan mayapple* and the three *pungent drugs*, the whole group of salts, together with *leadwort* and honey should be placed in a cow's horn and covered with something made of cow's horn. It should be set aside for two weeks. This antidote is called “Unbeaten” because it conquers both stationary and mobile poisons.

65cd–68ab One should make a fine powder of the following items and place them in a horn, together with honey: *sacred lotus*, *deodar*, *grey orchid*, *black creeper*, *kutki*, *Himalayan yew*, *rosha grass*, *crêpe ginger*, *Alexandrian laurel*, ??, *natron*, ??, *cardamom*, ??, ??, *costus*, *crape jasmine*, *beauty-berry*, *lodh tree*, *Indian bdellium-tree*, *red chalk*, *rock salt*, *long pepper*, and *dried ginger*.

78 ⁵²¹

519 There is no मञ्जिष्ठा group. There is a plant वक्र, so a reading मञ्जिष्ठवक्रे “*Indian madder* and *Himalayan mayapple*,” instead of मञ्जिष्ठवर्गे, is conceivable.

520 There is a लवणवर्ग (1.46.313–321 (Su 1938: 236–237)).

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

Part 6. Uttarat Tantra

Todo list

Can't be "sedation"	37
find out about <i>uttarabasti</i>	65
29, 30 missing?	68
Problematic passage in the edition.	68
Perhaps <i>kalka</i> here could also mean the <i>Terminalia Bellerica</i> (विभीतक).	84
<i>Euphorbia Antiquorum</i> (Antique spurge)	86
The webpage https://hindi.shabd.in/vairagya-shatakam-bhag-acharya-arjun-tiwari/post/117629 says that this verse belongs to the <i>Nītiratna</i> . I could not find this text.	91
The provisional edition should be modified accordingly.	93
There, Ḍalhaṇa comments that deliberation on <i>avapīḍa</i> had been done earlier when it was mentioned. Find that description to know more details.	95
Search for the section where the treatment of <i>ākṣepaka</i> is described.	96
Make the first letter of sentence capital.	96
?	102
?	102
?	102
(?)	102
Cf. <i>Arthaśāstra</i> 1.21.8.	110
I'm still unhappy about this verse.	113
Mention this in the introduction as an example of the scribe knowing the vulgate.	113
fn about <i>sadyas+</i>	113
Bear's bile instead of deer's bile.	114
<i>punarṇavā</i> in the N & K MSS	115
śrita for śṛta	115
explain more	115

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