

THE GEOGRAPHICAL DATA IN THE SUSRUTA SAMHITA

By

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The present paper deals with the data of geography available in the Susruta Samhitā. It may serve as one of the parameters for ascertaining the date of this compendium, despite its two strata belonging roughly 1000 B. C. and 1st Cent. A. D. and ascribed to Kāsirāja Divodāsa Dhanvantari and Nāgārjuna as expounder and redactor respectively, with textual modification (pāṭha-suddhi) by Candraṭa (c. 950 A. D.), the son of Tīsaṭācārya who wrote the commentary on his father's work Cikitsākalikā. The text generally presents upaniṣadic glimpse and reflects the conditions of these periods. The geographical information concerns country (desa), province or state (janapada), city (nagara), river, lake, mountain and sea.

Countries

The Susruta Samhitā mentions by name two countries only, one is Cīna and other is Yavana. The name of China does not appear as a country but in the context of bandages (patta), the cīna-patta (eye bandage) is also mentioned. Dalhaṇa and Cakrapāni the celebrated commentators of the Susruta Samhitā, do not give its meaning and are silent on this point. The name of China came into vogue after Chin dynasty (221-207 B. C.) though the Mahābhārata (Sabhā., LI. 23) describes it as one of the countries whose king had given a present to Yudhiṣṭhira. Actually the silken cloth of China was very popular and it might have been used for dressing the eyes in case of surgical operations due to its smoothness.

Yavana :

The word Yavana was used in Medieval Indian literature as a synonym of Mleccha and indicated any foreigner. But, up to the early centuries of the Christian era it meant, to an Indian, the Greeks only. The word derived from the term Yauna in old Persia, used for the first time in the records of Darius I (522-486 B. C.), one of the Achaemenian emperors of Persia, was borrowed by the Indians without any modification (cf. Mahābhārata, Sānti., 207.43). The earliest use of Sanskritised form Yavana can be traced in Aṣṭādhyāyī (II. I. 72; IV. I. 175) of Pāṇini whereas the Prākṛta form Yona appears in the inscriptions of Ashoka.

In the Second Cent. B. C., the Yavanas had settled in Afghanistan and northern Punjab and had established four independent states in Kapisā, Puṣkarāvati (Peshavar), Takṣasiḷā (Taxilla) and Sākala (Sialkot). King Menander was the ruler of Sakala and his philosophical discussions with Bhadanta Nagasena are recorded

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in the *Milindapanho* (c. 200 B. C.). Patanjali has also mentioned an invasion of the Yavanas upto Sāketa (Ayodhya) and Mādhyamika (Bundi of Rajasthan).

Susruta (I, 13. 13) refers to Yavana as one of the origins of leeches (jalaukas) and the commentator Dalhaṇa identifies Yavana with Turuṣka which generally signifies modern Turkey.

Janapadas and Nagaras

The term janapada (I, 6,20) occurs once only in the *Susruta Samhitā*. The term janapada, signifying the small independent states, does not appear in the *Vedic Samhitās*. In the *Aitareya* (VIII. 14), *Satapatha* (XIII. 4.2.17) and *Taittirīya* (II. 3.9.9.) *Brāhmaṇas*, janapada denotes both the people as opposed to the king and the land or realms. The subjects were also denoted by the adjectival janapadas (*Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, II.1.29; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, V. II. 5; VIII. I. 5). Nagara is found in early vedic literature only in the derivative adjective, used as a proper name (nagarin). But it appears in the sense of a town in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* (I. II, 18; 31.4) and frequently in the later texts. Susruta does not use the term nagara at all. But the name Visvāmitra Āsrama (identified with modern Buxer in Bihar) has been mentioned in *Uttaratantra* (86. 4) by Nāgārjuna. Susruta himself mentions Pautana as one of the sites where leeches are found (*Sūtra*, 13.13).

The janapadas mentioned in the *Samhitā* are discussed hereunder.

Kasi :

Divodasa Dhanvantari, the expounder of the *Susruta Samhitā* was a king of Kāśī. This is explicitly mentioned in the text itself (*Sūtra*, I.3.41) and is confirmed by external sources (*Harivamsa purāṇa*, I.32.18-22). Divodāsa bore the title of Dhanvantari on the basis of the name of his great grand father. Dhanva, the father of Dhanvantari, was grand son of Kāsa. Kāśī, the name of the kingdom is said to have derived from Kāsa. The geneology of Divodāsa is dealt with in the *Harivamsa Purāṇa*. This shows the striking association of the name of Kāśī with king Kāsa who is somewhat related to our medical heritage. This Kāśī would appear to have been one of the oldest seats of medical learning in the world.

The first reference to Kāśī is in the *Atharvaveda* (*Paippalāda recension*, XIII. I.12), where a magician directs the fever of his patient to Kasi, Gandhara and Magadha. It does not indicate the future greatness of city. In the vedic period; Kāśī was already known as an established janapada. At the time of the *Atharvaveda* (c. 1500 B. C.), it formed the south-east extremity of the ten Aryan settlements. The *Brāhmaṇic* texts such as *Satapatha* (XIII. 5.4.19-22) and *Sāmkhyāyana* (XVI, 29.5) reveal indirectly vedic culture as having pervaded Kāśī and the adjoining territories. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (II.I.I.) also refers to Kāśī. Kasi was the name of the kingdom of which Varanasi was the capital. Narrations in the *Purāṇas* show that the city was so named because it was situated between the two rivers

Varaṇā and Asī. But it is interesting to note that Susruta does not mention the form Varanasi at all.

Videha :

Nāgārjuna, the supplementer of Susruta Samhitā, refers to the king of Videha (Videhādhipa) as an expounder of Sālākyatantra (Utt., 1.5). Like Kāsī, Videha was also one of the janapadas mentioned in the Atharvaveda (XIII. 1.12). The Sāmkhyāyana (XVI. 29.5) and Satapatha Brāhmaṇas (XIII. 5.4.19-22) testify to its existence as an established janapada. Videha can be identified with Tirhut division of Bihar.

Pandya :

Pāṇḍya is mentioned as one of the states where leeches were available (1.13.13). Dalhaṇa, in his commentary mentions that it was situated in southern region. He does not forget to quote a verse from the Saktisangama Tantra (7th Paṭala) wherein it is said to be located south of Kāmbōja (eastern part of Afghanistan) and west of Indraprastha (old Delhi).

The modern districts of Tirunelvely and Madurai of Tamilnadu are generally identified with the Pāṇḍya janapada. Its capital, at different periods, was situated at Urugpura (Tiruchiappally), Mathura (Madura) and Kolkai at the mouth of the river Tāmraparṇī. It is said to have been founded in the sixth cent. B.C. but was overthrown in the middle of the eleventh cent. A. D. and was afterwards restored by the Nāyakas. The Mahābhārata frequently (Droṇa, 23.69;72-75; Ādi, 186.16; Udyoga, 19.9) refers to it.

Kasmira :

Susruta (Ci., XXX. 32) mentions a divine lake of Kasmira where some divine herbs like Kareṇu, Kanyā, Chatrā, and Atichatra are grown.

It is said to have been originally colonised by Kāsyapa, whose hermitage is still pointed out in the Hari mountain near Srinagar. He gave his name to Kasgar and Kashmir, and to the people originally called Kassias or Kāsas. Viṣṇu is said to have incarnated in Kasmira as the fish (matsya-avatara) and bound the ship (nau) (into which form Durga had converted herself to save the creatures from destruction in the great deluge) to the westernmost and highest of the three snowy peaks situated to the west of Banhal Pass in the eastern portion of the Pir Panjal range; hence this peak is called Naubandhanatirtha. It is the Navaprabhramsana of the Atharvaveda and the Manoravasarpaṇa of the Satapathā Brāhmaṇa. At foot of this peak is the Kramasara lake (now called Konsarnag) which marks a foot-step of Viṣṇu (Satapatha Brāhmaṇa and Mahābhārata). Viṣṇu is also said to have incarnated as the boar (varāha-avatāra) at Baramula, 50 Kms. from Srinagar on the right bank of Jhelum river. Kasmira once formed a part of the kingdom of Gāndhāra (as per Jātaka).

Avanti :

Susruta, while describing the properties of the water of the rivers flowing east and west wards, mentions Avanti as a janapada with two divisions (Sūtra, 45.21) viz., Prācyā (eastern) and Aparā (west). He says that a person who drinks the water of these rivers passing through it, gets piles.

Avanti may be taken to correspond roughly to modern Malwa, Nimar and the adjoining parts of the Madhya Pradesh. It appears to have been divided by the river Vetravatī (modern Betwa) into north and south divisions. According to Dr. R. D. Bhandarkar the state of Avanti was divided into two parts, one placed in Dakṣiṇapatha having Mahismati (Maheshwar) for its capital, and the other (northern part) having its capital Ujjain. This account of Prācyā and Aparā Avantis is quite correct. Pāṇini (II.2.31) also mentions Avanti with Asmaka. Mahābhārata (Bhīṣma, 9.43) is also acquainted with it. In Buddhist works, it is abundantly referred to.

Visvāmītra Asrama :

Susruta was son of Visvāmītra (Utt. 66.4) whose hermitage was located at modern Buxer in Bihar. It is 100 Kms. away from Varanasi and is situated on the banks of the Gangā. Thus it must have been quite convenient to Susruta to come down to Varanasi to learn Ayurveda from Divodāsa Dhanvantari.

Pautana :

It is a name of a city where leeches were abundantly found, Daḥṇa, the commentator, identifies Pautana with Mathura of Uttar Pradesh. But geographers identify it with Paithana of Mahārashtra situated on the banks of the Narmadā river (Sut., 13.13).

Mountains, Rivers and Lakes*Himavat Mountain :*

The Susruta Samhitā describes Himavat mountain (Himālaya) in two contexts, one in connection with rivers and the other with reference to the Soma plant. The term Himavat has been used always for Himālaya. since its peaks are always covered with snow, that is why it is called Himavat. Pointing out the properties of the water of the rivers originating from Himavat, Susruta says that the water of these rivers produces heart diseases, anasarca, headache, elephantiasis and goitre (Sut., 45. 21). Soma Plant is also mentioned by Susruta (Ci., 29.27) as growing on the Himalayas.

Except the rivers Indus (Sindhu), Jhelum (Vitastā) and Kosi (Kausikī) (Ci., 29.29;28 and 30.34), no river is mentioned by name in the Samhitā. These rivers are considered as the abodes of Soma plant. Geographically the five rivers of

Panjab (Chenab or Candrabhāgā, Ravi or Irāwatī, Bias or Vipāsā and Satluj or Satadru along with Vitastā and Sindhu), Ghagghar, Yamuna, Ganga, Ban Ganga, Gomati, Ghaghara, Gandak, Rapti of Uttar Pradesh, Kosi and Budhi Gandak of Bihar and Brahmaputra flowing through Bangla Desh and Assam, take their origin from the Himavat Mountain.

Himavat is the highest mountain in the world and with its ranges it spreads from river Indus in the west to Brahmaputra in the east. Its length, from east to west, is about 2414 Kms. and from north to south its breadth is 160 to 241 Kms. Its peaks are always covered with snow. Geographically, it has three main divisions viz., (i) Greater or inner part, (ii) Trans Himalaya and (iii) Minor or external. part. Under the first group, come the peaks of Nandadevi, Trisuli, Kedarnath, Badrinath, Gangotri etc., having an altitude of more than 20,000 ft. The peaks of Trans Himalaya are usually of the altitude of 15,000 to 12,000 ft and its ranges go parallel to Sivalik near Dehradun. Minor ranges have very low altitude peaks.

Hindukush (Mūjavanta), Karrakoram and Kailasa are the ranges of Trans Himalaya. Hindukush starts from west and separates India from Afghanistan.

Sulasman range of Hindukush in Afghanistan is identified with Mūjavanta (Ci., 29.5) mountain. It is one of the mountains where Soma used to grow copiously.

Arbuda :

Arbuda has been identified with the mountain Abu in the Arawali Range in the Sirohi District of Rajasthan. It is one of the mountains where Soma plant used to grow. (Ci., 29.27).

Vindhya :

It is a mountain having several ranges located in Central India and it is said to have been one of the mountains where Soma used to grow (Ci., 29.28). The rivers Narmada, Tapti, Sona etc. take their origin from it and their water is considered as producing skin diseases and anaemia (Sut., 45,21).

Parlyatra :

It is the western part of the Vindhya range extending from the south of the Chambal to the Gulf of Cambay. It comprises Arawali, other hills of Rajasthan including Satpura range of Vindhya. Chambal, Betwa, Vidisha, Mahi and Ksipra originate from it. It is also one of the mountains where Soma used to grow (Ci., 29.28).

Sahyadri :

The mountain forming the northern part of the western Ghats north of river Kaveri and extending upward from Coimbatore is known as Sahyādri. Its range

extends from Cape Camorin to the valley of Tapti. Godawari, Bhima, Krishna, Tungabhadra and Kaveri rise from it. Susruta (Sutra, 45.21) says that the water of the rivers originating from it, produces leprosy. It is also one of the mountains where Soma used to grow (Ci., 29.27).

Malaya :

The southern parts of the western Ghats, south of the river Kaveri, and the Ananmalai hill including Cardamom hill extending from Coimbatore gap to Cape Camorin, are generally called Malaya. According to Susruta (Sut., 45.21), the water of the rivers originating from it produces worm diseases. Chittar and Vaigai have their sources in Malaya. It is also one of the mountains where Soma used to grow.

Sri Parvata:

It is situated in the Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh on the South side of the Krishna river. Dr. Burgess found it to be an isolated hill about 1750 ft. high, surrounded on three sides by the river Krishna and on the fourth partly by the Bhimunikolanu torrent. Patal Ganga flows past Srisailam. Some scholars hold that a portion or peak of the Malaya, which is the southern portion of the western Ghat, is called Srisailam. It is also one of the mountains where Soma used to grow. (Ci., 29.27).

Mahendra:

The whole range of hills extending from Orissa to the district of Madura was known by the name of Mahendra Parvata. It included the Eastern Ghats and the range extending from the Northern Circars to Gondwana, part of which near Ganjam is still called Mahendra Malai or the hills of Mahendra. The name is principally applied to the range of hills separating Ganjam from the valley of the Mahanadi.

The water of the rivers, originating from it, produces elephantiasis and ascites (Sutra, 45.51). Sabari, Indravati, Brahmani, Vamsadhara etc. take their origin from it. It is also one of the mountains where Soma used to grow (Ci., 29.27)

Devagiri :

It is a part of the Aravali range which is situated near the Chambal between Ujjain and Mandisor, It has been identified by Prof. Wilson with Devagara situated in the Centre of the region of Malwa on the south of the Chambal.

It is enumerated as one of the mountains where Soma used to grow (Ci., 29.27).

Manasa :

It is the lake Manasarovar situated in the Kailash mountain in Tibet. According to Moorcraft's estimate (Asiatic Researches, Vol. XII, p. 375; JASB, 18S8, p. 165),

it is fifteen miles in length (east to west) and eleven miles in breadth (north to south). There are three approaches from the Uttar Pradesh to the holy lake and Kailash over the Lipu Lekh Pass, Untadhara Pass and the Niti Pass. According to Susruta, it is one of the sites where Soma (Ci., 29.30) and divine herbs (Ci., 30.32) like Karenu, Kanya, Chatra and Atichatra are available. The adjective kṣudra (minor) for Mānasa leads us to suggest that in Kashmir, the only lake which can have this description is the Wooler lake situated near Baramula.

Devasunda Hrada :

It is a pond where Soma plant used to grow, but it can not be identified and the commentator is also completely silent on this point (Ci., 29.30).

Nala Setu :

It is identified with the Adam's bridge situated near Rameshvaram. It is also one of the sites where the divine plant named Vegavati used to grow (Ci., 30.36).

Purvabhimukha nadyah :

Rivers which flow towards east are called Purvābhimukhā nadyaḥ and they are Ganga, Mahanadi, Godavari, Kṛṣṇa, Cauveri and Vaigai which go to the Bay of Bengal. Water of these rivers is not considered to be good for health due to heaviness (Ci., 45.21).

Pascimabhimukha nadyah :

Rivers which flow towards west are called Pascimabhimukha nadyah (Sutra., 45.21) and they are Narmada and Tapti rivers which go down to the Arabian Sea. The water of these rivers is supposed to be wholesome due to lightness.

Daksinabhimukha nadyah :

Rivers which flow towards south are called Daksinabhimukha nadyah. The five rivers of Punjab-Satluj, Ravi, Beas, Chenab, Jhelum and Sindh flow southward. Water of these rivers is not so provocative of the Doṣas (Ci., 45.21).

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S U M M A R Y

The present paper presents geographical information available in Suśruta Samhita. It may serve as one of the parameters for ascertaining the date of this compendium. The upper and lower limits of this work ascribed to Kasiraja Divodasa Dhantantari and Nagarjuna as expounder and redactor respectively, with textual modification (paṭha-suddhi) by Candrata (c. 950 A. D.), the son of Tisaṭācārya who wrote the commentary on his father's work Cikitsakalika are fixed as 1000 B.C. and I Century A. D. respectively. The text generally reflects the conditions of the upanisadic periods, the geographical information concerns country (desa), province or state (janapada), city (nagara), river, lake, mountain and sea.

The Suśruta Saṁhita mentions by name two countries only-one is Cinā and other is Yavana. Suśruta refers to janapadas like Kāśī, Pandya, Kāśmīra, Avanti (viz., Prācyā and Aparā with two divisions) and Maru. Cities (nagara) like Visvāmītra Āśrama (Buxer) and Pantan (Muthurā) are only identified. Mountains like Himavat, Vindhya, Pariyātra, Sahyādri, Malaya, Śrīśaila, Mahendra, Devagiri, and Arbuda are described. Few rivers which flow from some of these mountains are indicated including properties of their water. Of course, all rivers are indicated but only names of Kauśikī, Vitastā and Sindhu have been mentioned. Lake Mānasarovara and Devasunda of Kāśmīra are also identified. The attractive part in this work is reference to Nalasethu.

सारांश

सुश्रुत संहिता की भौगोलिक सामग्री

लेखक. डा० ज्योतिर्मित्र

प्रस्तुत पत्र सुश्रुत संहिता के आभ्यन्तर भौगोलिक सामग्री का चित्रण करता है। संहिता के काल-निर्णय में यह एक माध्यम हो सकता है। काशिराज दिवोदास द्वारा उपदिष्ट नागार्जुन द्वारा संस्कृत एवं उपबृंहित तथा चिकित्साकालिका के लेखक तीसट के पुत्र चन्द्रट (९५० ई०) द्वारा पाठ संशोधित होने के कारण इसकी उपरितन सीमा १००० ई० पू० एवं अधस्तन सीमा १०० ई० मानी जाती है। यह संहिता उपनिषत्कालीन प्रतिबिम्ब को प्रस्तुत करती है। भौगोलिक परिधिके अन्तर्गत देश, जनपद, नगर, नदी, हृद, पर्वत एवं समुद्र आते हैं।

सुश्रुत संहिता में चीन एवं यवन देश का निर्देश है। यह काशी, पाण्ड्य, काश्मीर, अवन्ति (प्राच्य एवं अपर खण्ड सहित) मरू जैसे जनपदों का प्रसंगवश संकेत करती है, नगरों में केवल विश्वामित्र आश्रम (बक्सर) एवं पोतन (मथुर) का उल्लेख है। हिमवत् विन्ध्य, परियात्र, सहयादि, मलय, श्रीशैल, महेन्द्र, देवगिरि एवं अर्बुद पर्वतों का ससन्दर्भ चित्रण हुआ है। इनमें से कतिपय पर्वतों से निकलने वाली नदियों का उनके जल के गुण सहित निर्देश है किन्तु नामतः केवल कौशिकी, वितस्ता एवं सिंधु ही अंकित हैं। मानसरोवर एवं काश्मीर के देवसुन्द हृद का भी निरूपण है। इस संहिता का अत्याकर्षक सन्दर्भ है नलसेतु।