

International Memory of the World Register

Susruta Samhita (Nepal)

2012-74

1.0 Summary (max 200 words)

Susruta Samhita is a 1134 years old palm leaf manuscript, preserved in Kaiser Library. It is written in Kutila script also recognized as Gupta script. It is considered as the oldest document in the field of Ayurveda (traditional medicine system using herbs and plants) medicine found and preserved in Nepal. Especially focus on surgery. It discusses various kinds of diseases related to heart, skin, gynaecology, ENT etc. It also describes various methods and use of herbs in curing diseases.

This document is of utmost importance for the research on history of science and medicine in India and the world (cf. Dominik Wujastyk [2009]. "New Evidence for the Textual and Cultural History of the Suśruta Saṃhitā." In: Indian Journal of History of Science, vol. 44, no. 2:187–19). It is roughly 600 years older than any other known textual sources on Suśruta- as well as Carakasamhita, two oldest āyurvedic compendia, (ibid. and P. Maas [2010] "On what became of the Carakasamhitā after Drḍhabala's revision", In: eJournal of Indian Medicine Vol 3, No 1, pp. 1–22) and bears a singular historical evidence of a very early stage of textual development. Furthermore, this manuscript contains an appended text of Suśrutanighaṇṭu, which has been not transmitted elsewhere in Indian cultural region. In fact, already classical commentators on Suśrutasamhitā from approx. 11th ctr. CE seemingly didn't know about the existence of this text.

This is the oldest manuscript of Suśrutasamhitā and the second oldest manuscript of a full-fledged āyurvedic text (the oldest one being the so called "Bower Manuscript").

According to Wujastyk (2003:406-7) Ayurveda is a systematic and formal tradition of healing that became South Asia's principle medical system until the advent in the late eighteenth century. He further describes that Ayurveda has profoundly influenced all cultures surrounding South Asia including Tibet, Central Asia, China, South-East Asia and the Middle East. He discusses that through Portuguese and Dutch physicians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many items of Ayurveda's pharmacopoeia entered European medical knowledge in the early modern period.

Meulenbeld (1999-2002), providing a comprehensive survey of research, states that since the mid-nineteenth century, the Susruta Samhita has been

the subject of hundreds of studies, epitomes, commentaries, editions and translations. He says that it has entered the fabric of the history of medicine as one of the best known Asian medical classics.

Wujastyk (2003a: 61-146) has stated that its chapters on surgery have revealed the extraordinarily advanced methods of plastic surgery, foreign body removal, suturing, contact removal and other techniques that were known and practiced in classical times. Dimitrov, Dragomir and Tamot Kashinath (2007) have described the Susruta Samhita as a very old palm leaf manuscript and a medical treatise of King Mandev's period.

Similarly, Wujastyk, in his article titled "New Manuscript Evidence for the Textual and Cultural History of Early Classical Indian Medicine (NA)" discusses that this manuscript is of far greater importance for the history of science and medicine than the chronological ruling of the then Nepalese monarch. So, Susruta Samhita is claimed as foundational text in South Asian medical history.

Ayurvedic practitioners in Nepal have considered this documentary heritage as the pioneer for the traditional herbal medicine.

2.1 Name of nominator (person or organization)

National Memory of the World Committee, Nepal National Commission for UNESCO.
Kaiser Library, Ministry of Education, Kaiser Mahal, Kathmandu Nepal

2.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage

Owned by Kaiser library, Ministry of Education, The Government of Nepal

2.3 Contact person(s) (to provide information on nomination)

Ms. Janaki Karmacharya

2.4 Contact details

Name	Address
Kaiser Library,	Kaiser Mahal, Kathmandu Nepal

Telephone	Facsimile	Email
977 01 4411318	977 01 4442010	info@klib.gov.np

2.5 Declaration of authority

I certify that I have the authority to nominate the documentary heritage described in this document to the International Memory of the World Register.

Signature

Full name (Please PR

**Janaki Karmacharya
Chief Librarian
Kaiser Library**

Institution(s), if appropriate

Date

3.0 Identity and description of the documentary heritage

3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

Title: Sursutasamhita

Institution: Kaiser Library, Kaiser Mahal, Kathmandu Nepal.

3.2 Catalogue or registration details

Title: Sursutasamhita
Subject: Ayurveda
Material: Palm-leaf with wooden cover
Reel No.: C80/7, KLD No. 210
Script: Kutila (called ***Licchavi* in Nepal**)
Size: 53.5 x 4.4 cm
Folios: 141
Manuscript No.: 699
Language: Sanskrit
Date: 878 AD: 1134 years old
Owner of the Manuscript: Kaiser Library
State: Slightly damaged on the sides

3.3 Visual documentation if appropriate (for example, photographs, or a DVD of the documentary heritage)

DVD/CD of the manuscript will be provided.

3.4 History/provenance

In 1908 Kaiser Shumsher visited Britain with his father, the then Rana Prime Minister. He was very impressed by the library and museum system of Britain. After he returned from Britain he developed his private library which remained personal for many years. After his death, his family donated the library to the government in 2021 BS (1964 AD). The library consisted of more than 25 000 books, documents, periodicals and seven hundred manuscripts as well as 32 ropani of land including exiting building. Since the year 2026 BS (1969 AD) the library has been called KAISER LIBRARY. Susrutsamhita is one of the valuable manuscripts collected by Kaiser Shamsheer.

The Manuscript was written at least one and half year before commencement of Nepal Sambat that is 879 AD. , (Mandev Sambat 301 (878 AD). This has been referred to e.g. by Dhanabajra Bajracharya. (1973) . He has mentioned that during the era of King Mandev sambat 301, this manuscript was copied, which makes us believe that the original manuscript was written during the 4th Lichhibi king of Nepal. This became evident as we notice that Mandev Sambat only started since 576 AD.

3.5 Bibliography

- Tamot, Kasinath (2012). The oldest manuscript of Susrutasamhita (MS) . Bajracharya, Dhanavajra, 1973, Lichchhabikalka Abhilekh, Nepal Asian Research Center, Kirtipur Kathmandu
- Dimitrov, Dragomir and Kashinath Tamot (2007),” Kaiser Shamsheer, his Library and his manuscript Collection.” Newsletter of the NGMCP (Nepal German Manuscript Cataloging Project), Susrutasamhita, Kaiser Library Accession Number 699, NGMPP c80/7, KLD no. 210.
- klebanov, Andrey, 2010, The Nepalese version of the Susrutasamhita and its interrelations with Buddhism and the Buddhists. MA thesis, Hamburg University, Hamburg.
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- Panta, Mahesh Raj, 1976, Vedanga Jyotish Ko Kalmanko Astadhyayee, Sushrutasamhita ra Kautalya Arthasastra ma Pareko Prabhav Poornima, 35
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- Petech, Luciano, 1984, Mediaeval History of Nepal (c750-1480). Rome:ISIMEO. Thoroughly revised edition.
- Regmi, D.R., 1983, Inscriptions of Ancient Nepal, Vol. I (Inscription), II (translation), III (Introduction to the Inscription) Delhi: Abhinav Publications
- Sharma Hem Raj (Ed.), 1938, Kasyap Samhita (Bridhajeewakeeya Tantra wa)
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Mumbai: Nirnayasagar Yantralaya,
Subedi, Kashiraj Sharma, Tiwari Narendra Nath, 2000, Saushrutnighantu,
Mahendra Sanskrit University, Dang
Wujastyk, Dominik (2009) "New Manuscript Evidence for the textual and cultural
History of Early Classical Indian Medicine". In: Medical Text and Manuscripts in
Indian Cultural history. Delhi: Manohar publishing. Revised version.

3.6 Names, qualifications and contact details of up to three independent people or organizations with expert knowledge about the values and provenance of the documentary heritage

Name	Qualifications	Contact details
1.Dr. Kasi Raj Sharma Subedi	Bachelor in Ayurvedic Medicine Science	T. U. Ayurvedic Campus, Kirtipur Tel.: +977-1-4357911 (Res) Fax.: +977-9841473257
2.Kashinath Tamot	Freelance Researcher and Senior Cataloguer, NGMCP President, Nepal Mandal Research Center PatanDhoka Former Reader T.U.	NGMCP, Icchumati Marg, 127, Valuwatar. Tel.: +977-1-4420855 Mobile: +977-1-9841904461
3.Prof. Dineshraj Pant	Higher studies in Sanskrit language and literature, astronomy and in classical Nepalese studies (history, palaeography, epigraphy, chronology law and newari)	Professor, Valmiki Campus, Nepal Sanskrit University Tel.: +977-1-4435749(Res) Mobile: +977-1-9849221642

4.0 Legal information

4.1 Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)

Name	Address	
Kaiser Library	Kaiser Mahal, Kathmandu Nepal	
Telephone	Facsimile	Email
+977-1-4411318	+977-1-4442010	info@klib.gov.com

4.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details if different from the owner)

Name	Address
Kaiser Library	Kaiser Mahal, Kathmandu Nepal

Telephone	Facsimile	Email
+977-1-4411318	+977-1-442010	info@klib.gov.com

4.3 Legal status

This manuscript is a part of collection of Kaiser Library and the property of the Government of Nepal. The collections of the library are preserved as per the provisions of various laws of Nepal such as the Archives Preservation Act 1989 and Archives Preservation Rule 2006.

4.4 Accessibility

This Manuscript is publicly accessible free of charge as reference source to all who are interested.

4.5 Copyright status

Kaiser Library has the copyright of its collections.

5.0 Assessment against the selection criteria

5.1 Authenticity.

This Manuscript was written at least one and half years before Mandev IV, the Lichhibi king of Nepal [King Mandev Sambat 301 (878 AD)]. Dimitrov, Dragomir and Tamot Kashinath (2007) have described the Susruta-Samhita as a very old palm leaf manuscript as a medical treatise of King Mandev's period. In addition, many in country scholars and scholars from abroad have coded this document owned by Kaiser Library. The manuscript is digitalized under Nepal-German Manuscript Cataloguing Project (NCMCP). Its material used, script, and the contents prove it belongs to the period of Nepalese monarch Mandev IV. Dominik Wujastyk in his article "New Manuscript Evidence for the Textual and Cultural History of Early Classical Indian Medicine", states that the manuscript Kaiser Samsher NAK 9/699 ranks amongst the earliest manuscript known from peninsular India. He further discusses that the manuscript is written in "Transitional Gupta" script. The authenticity of the document has been proven based on palaeography and other codicological factors. In addition, as per the information till to date gathered by National Archive Nepal this is only copy in Nepal in its originality. It is the oldest document of this type in Nepal.

5.2 World significance

This document is of utmost importance for the research on history of

science and medicine in India and the world (cf. Dominik Wujastyk [2009]. "New Evidence for the Textual and Cultural History of the Suśruta Saṃhitā." In: Indian Journal of History of Science, vol. 44, no. 2:187–19). It is roughly 600 years older than any other known textual sources on Suśruta- as well as Carakasamhitā, two oldest āyurvedic compendia, (ibid. and P. Maas [2010] "On what became of the Carakasamhitā after Dr̥ḥabala's revision", In: eJournal of Indian Medicine Vol 3, No 1, pp. 1–22) and bears a singular historical evidence of a very early stage of textual development.

Furthermore, this manuscript contains an appended text of Suśrutaniḥaṅṭu, which has been not transmitted elsewhere in Indian cultural region. In fact, already classical commentators on Suśrutasaṃhitā from approx. 11th ctr. CE seemingly didn't know about the existence of this text.

This is is the oldest manuscript of Suśrutasaṃhitā and the second oldest manuscript of a full-fledged Ayurvedic text (the oldest one being the so called "Bower Manuscript").

In this manuscript different ways of Aayurvedic treatment for different kinds of diseases related to heart, skin, gynaecology, ENT etc., together with surgical treatment have been described. The manuscript describes 20 main surgical instrument and 101 supporting surgical tools used in the traditional treatment method. As an example, the manuscript discusses that in case of poisoning, pumpkins and Ghiraula (a local vegetable) seeds are useful for facilitating vomiting to remove the toxic effect. Poisoning may affect the heart and to neutralize the effect of poisoning, Palindi, a local herb can be used. The manuscript describes 24 different methods useful in cases of poisoning. Further to these, it describes 48 types of eye related diseases that can be categorised into five main branches.

According to Wujastyk (2003: 406-7), this is one of the defining texts for Ayurveda, the systematic and formal tradition of healing that become South Asia's principle medical system until the advent in the late eighteenth century. He further describes that Ayurveda has profoundly influenced all cultures surrounding South Asia including Tibet, Central Asia, China, South-East Asia and the Middle East. He discusses that through Portuguese and Dutch physicians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many items of Ayurveda's pharmacopoeia entered European medical knowledge in the early modern period.

As Aayurved is considered one of the oldest treatment systems through herbal medicine, this document is of universal significance for the preservation and promotion of natural medicine and traditional treatment system.

5.3 Comparative criteria:

1 Time

This is the ancient manuscript of Ayurvedic medical science found and preserved in Nepal. The Chark Samhita (evolved in first century), Kasap Samhita (evolved in first century), and Susrutasamhita (evolved in 2-4th century) are considered to be "Three foundational Ayurvedic text". Susrutasmhita is related with surgical treatment system and belongs to the oldest era of Mandev Sambat.

2 People

This manuscript reflects significant aspects of human and social behaviours of the ancient society of Mandevian era. The society is found completely depending upon agricultural and natural resources for their food, cloth and medicine. As this manuscript discusses with surgical treatment for people lived in that era, it is focused for the wellbeing of human beings.

3 Subject

Susruta Samhita describes about Ayurvedic medical system which is especially focus for its chapters on surgery. It is considered one of the oldest treatment systems through herbal plant.

The most famous surgical procedures described in Susrutasamhita are among other, blood-letting, repair of the nose and ear (Plastic reconstructions), fistula-in-ano as well as removal of bladder stone, It also contains an extensive list and descriptions of surgical instruments, prescriptions for the general pre and post surgical care and diet, as well as an account of surgical training at the time.

The appended text of Susrutnighantu is a further unique feature of this manuscript which is the oldest known representative of the genre of medical nighantus- Materai Medica of ancient ayurveda: an extensive list of medically used plants along with their synonyms and designations in local language.

4 Form and style

This text has its own style and language. It does not follow the standard Sanskrit language. This is written in palm leaf covered by wood in Kutila script which is primary form of Newary script. Kutila script is also considered as traditional Gupta script. The manuscript is written in prose

and verse form

6.0 Contextual information

6.1 Rarity

This text is written in 878 AD. The National Memory Committee has consulted the oldest libraries in Nepal and has found that this is the only document at Kaiser library in Nepal in the subject.

6.2 Integrity

The text of Suśrutasaṃhitā presented in the current manuscript covers roughly 60% -- 70% of the text, it lacks a larger portion of its second (of six) section - Nidānasthāna - the section dealing with nosology of individual diseases (etiology, pathogenesis and symptomatics).

However, the existing 141 folios are a complete part of the manuscript with surgical illustrations.

One can hope that the nomination of this document for memory of the world register may bring together missing parts for compilation.
