

**COMMENTARIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF DALHANA AND HARANA CANDRA TO  
SUTRASTHANA OF SUSRUTA SAMHITA**

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**ABSTRACT**

Ayurvedic treatises plays a major role in imparting Ayurvedic medical knowledge. Among all the treatises available at present, Susruta Samhita, one among the Brihatrayī texts, is considered as the bible of Ayurvedic surgery. The text is attributed to Susruta, who is considered as the founding father of surgery. Susruta Samhita is a treatise which mainly focus on surgery which occupies an important place among astangas of Ayurveda. Sutrasthana is the primary section of Susruta Samhita which contains the essential principles, basic concepts etc. Many commentaries have been written on Sutrasthana of Susruta Samhita but the widely studied Sanskrit commentary is Nibandha Saṅgraha by Dalhana written during 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D and the last available commentary is Susrutartha Sandipani by Haranacandra written in 20<sup>th</sup> century. This work focuses on bringing light on the contributions of the commentators Dalhana and Haranacandra in moulding the knowledge of Sutrasthana of Susruta Samhita.

**KEYWORDS:** Susruta Samhita, Dalhana, Nibandha Saṅgraha, Haranacandra, Susrutartha Sandipani.**INTRODUCTION**

Ayurveda, the traditional system of Indian medicine, encompasses a comprehensive understanding of life, health, and disease. Its classical knowledge has been preserved and transmitted through foundational treatises collectively recognized as the Brihatrayi, namely Charaka Samhita, Susruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya. Among these, Susruta Samhita occupies a distinguished position for its systematic exposition of surgical science and clinical procedures, making it one of the earliest authoritative works on surgery.

Within Susruta Samhita, the Sutrasthana forms the conceptual and theoretical foundation of the entire text. It outlines essential doctrines, fundamental principles, and methodological frameworks that govern both preventive and curative aspects of medical practice. The section elaborates on basic philosophical concepts such as the theory of five elements and the doctrine of the three doshas, along with detailed discussions on disease progression, diagnostic considerations, surgical instruments, operative techniques, and procedural guidelines including cauterization, alkaline therapy,

bloodletting, bandaging, and suturing. Owing to its comprehensive scope, Sutrasthana serves as the intellectual framework upon which subsequent sections of the text are structured.

Over centuries, the complexity and depth of Susruta Samhita necessitated interpretative commentaries to clarify terminology, resolve textual ambiguities, and contextualize doctrinal principles. Among the prominent commentators, Dalhana (12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) authored the Nibandha Saṅgraha, which is regarded as one of the most authoritative and comprehensive expositions of the text. Several centuries later, Harana Chandra composed the Susrutartha Sandipani, offering explanations that reflect both fidelity to classical tradition and responsiveness to evolving pedagogical needs. While Dalhana's commentary is known for its scholastic rigor and reconciliation of earlier viewpoints, Harana Chandra's work demonstrates interpretative continuity combined with structural clarity suited to modern academic understanding.

Despite the acknowledged importance of these commentaries, a systematic comparative evaluation of their contributions specifically to Sutrasthana remains limited. A focused literary analysis of their interpretative approaches, doctrinal clarifications, and explanatory methods is essential to understand the continuity and evolution of the commentarial tradition in Ayurvedic literature.

#### AIM

To understand the commentarial contributions of Dalhana and Haranacandra to Sutrasthana of Susruta Samhita.

#### MATERIALS

Susruta Samhita, Nibandha Saṅgraha, Susrutārtha Sandīpani.

#### Outline of Susruta Samhita

Acharya Susruta is considered as the author of the treatise. It embodies the teaching of his preceptor, Divodasa Dhanvantari, who was the king of Kasi.<sup>[1]</sup> Susruta Samhita is systematically organized into major sections that collectively encompass the theoretical and practical dimensions of Ayurvedic science. The text is traditionally divided into Sutrasthana, Nidanasthana, Sarirasthana, Chikitsasthana, Kalpasthana, and Uttarasthana. Sutrasthana lays down the foundational principles and operative guidelines; Nidanasthana deals with the etiology and clinical features of diseases; Sarirasthana elaborates anatomical, embryological, and structural concepts; Chikitsasthana focuses on therapeutic interventions and disease management; Kalpasthana describes formulations and toxicological measures; and Uttarasthana expands upon specialized disciplines including ophthalmology, otorhinolaryngology, pediatrics, and allied branches. This structured arrangement reflects a coherent progression from theoretical constructs to diagnostic methods and therapeutic applications, thereby demonstrating the comprehensive scope and clinical orientation of the treatise.

#### Style of writing of Susruta Samhita

The treatise follows a dialogic format often presented as the conversations between Dhanvantari and his disciple Susruta, which adds a more dynamic pedagogical tone which reflects the oral tradition of the ancient Indian system of teaching and learning.

The work consists of more than hundred different views which may be placed under ekiya sutra unlike other samhitas.<sup>[2]</sup> The pattern of writing incorporates both prose and poetic descriptive methods but more emphasis is given for prose pattern of description. The lengthy description of concepts is a peculiar feature of the text. No significant methodological explanation like the chatushka methodology of Caraka Samhita can be found here but the conceptual use of beeja chatushtaya

including purusha, vyadhi, oushada, kriyakala is exclusive to this text.

Susruta incorporates concise aphorisms enriched with detailed scientific explanations, practical examples, and certain analogies taken from daily life as well as the nature, thereby making complex surgical and medical concepts easily accessible to the learners and practitioners alike.

The entire text is contributed to surgical aspects of medicine but it also aids the learner to easily understand other basic concepts of medicine along with its practical utility. The text paves a way to the deeper understanding of the surgical procedures by the way it details the basic approach of a surgical case with caution and also put forward the guidelines on carrying out successful completion of surgical procedures including rhinoplasty.

In toto, the treatise stands out for the descriptive accuracy, scientific rigor and literary expression signifying both scholarly depth and the aesthetic refinement as a whole.

#### Commentaries on Susruta Samhita

Different commentaries have been written during different times owing to the importance of the treatise. Even then, most of the works have been lost and not available for ready reference today. Around 19 commentators are mentioned under different areas and the names of them are Sukira, Svira, Sudhira, Nandi, Varaha, Jejjāṭa, Gayadasa, Bhaskara, Madhava, Brahmadeva, Kartikakuṇḍa, Cakrapanidatta, Vangadatta, Gadadhara, Vapyacandra, Bakulakara, Ramadeva, Purusottamasuri.<sup>[3]</sup> Along with these, the most celebrated commentary is that of Dalhana, as this is the only commentary being available in whole and printed form today. Also, Sutra, Nidana and Sarira sthanas of the Susruta Samhita with Ayurveda Rahasyadyotini commentary (in Hindi) by Dr. B.G. Ghanekar was published by M/S Meharchand Lakshmanadass, Delhi in 1952.<sup>[4]</sup>

Other two commentaries available now, but in incomplete form are Nyaya candrika or Bṛhat panjika by Gayadasa for Nidana sthana only written during 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D and the Bhanumati commentary of Cakrapanidatta for Sutrasthana only written during 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>[5]</sup>

These commentaries preserve the authenticity of the original text and also tries to bridge the gap between the ancient wisdom and the later scholarly interpretations to ensure the continuity and the relevance of Susruta's significant contributions to medical science.

#### Dalhana and Nibandha Sangraha

Dalhana the author of the work Nibandha Sangraha was the son of Bharatapala and he was the physician in the court of king sahanapala who was ruling in the later half

of 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>[6]</sup> His commentary, Nibandha Sangraha, is considered one of the most systematic and well-organized expositions of Susruta Samhita available to date. The work demonstrates both intra-textual depth and interdisciplinary relevance, functioning as a repository of diverse interpretative traditions and variant readings. Dalhana displays extensive multi-textual scholarship, citing nearly forty-five Samhitas and twenty-one commentaries, thereby presenting a comprehensive review of the medical literature prevalent during his time. He recognizes the existence of regional recensions of the text and applies critical reasoning rather than blindly accepting or rejecting earlier interpretations. His commentary reflects detailed knowledge of pharmacology, surgical science, anatomy, physiology, and therapeutic classifications. Distinct doctrinal interpretations, alternative classifications of purification procedures, expanded disease descriptions, and specific pharmaceutical viewpoints highlight his intellectual independence. The inclusion of cross-references, illustrative explanations, and traditional surgical practices enhances both conceptual clarity and academic value. Despite certain scholarly criticisms regarding deviations from earlier traditions, Nibandha Sangraha remains a unique and influential contribution that significantly shaped the development of Ayurvedic surgical literature, though it remains relatively underexplored in modern medical textual research. References from the work of Dalhana was being found in many later works of other authors which may be taken as a sign of the wider acceptance and readability of his works.

#### **Peculiarities of Nibandha Sangraha**

Nibandha Sangraha is distinguished by its integrative and critically reasoned approach to the interpretation of Susruta Samhita. Dalhana incorporates diverse viewpoints from earlier commentators while also presenting independent opinions that can be identified through comparison with the primary text. His method reflects neither blind acceptance nor outright rejection of prior authorities; rather, he evaluates traditional interpretations, considers the views of the majority, and applies critical reasoning to arrive at balanced conclusions. Although the commentary shows a noticeable inclination toward the views of Gayadasa, it cannot be regarded as a mere representation of that tradition, as Dalhana maintains intellectual independence throughout his exposition.

The work contains several distinctive doctrinal positions and conceptual clarifications. It identifies Bhadrapada as the first month of the year, classifies aphrodisiac substances into six categories, and presents an alternative classification of purification procedures. It extends the occurrence of raktagulma to both men and women, introduces the disease sitalika with notable clarity, and describes pranayama in terms of three components. Dalhana also endorses the method of boiling honey in pharmaceutical preparations. Beyond these specific

positions, the commentary offers detailed anatomical observations on organs such as the liver and spleen, physiological discussions on digestive and metabolic principles, explanations of circulation concepts, reproductive elements, mental strength, pharmacological attributes, physical exercise, and dietary adaptability.

A significant feature of Nibandha Sangraha is its extensive cross-referencing of other classical treatises addressing similar subjects, thereby broadening interpretative perspectives. The use of illustrative examples and explanatory anecdotes enhances clarity and accessibility, making complex medical concepts more comprehensible. Despite scholarly debates regarding his adherence to earlier traditions, the commentary remains unique in its interpretative depth and structural organization. Its influence on the development of Ayurvedic medicine and surgical literature has been substantial, although it continues to be relatively underexplored in modern textual research.

#### **Haranacandra and Susrutartha Sandipani**

Susrutartha Sandipani, composed by Kaviraja Haranacandra Chakravarti in the early twentieth century (completed around 1908 and later published from Calcutta), is regarded as the last available Sanskrit commentary on Susruta Samhita. The work reportedly took nearly three years to complete and reflects sustained scholarly dedication. Haranacandra was born in East Bengal around 1849 as the son of Kaviraja Ananda Chandra Chakravarti and was a disciple of Kaviraja Gangadhara Roy. Well-versed in Sanskrit and Ayurvedic literature, he combined traditional scholarship with active medical practice. He initially practiced in his native region before moving to Rajshahi, where he established an institution dedicated to Ayurvedic education, integrating theoretical instruction with practical training. His reputation later extended to Calcutta, where he eventually settled and continued his professional work.

Haranacandra showed a marked interest in Western medical sciences, particularly anatomy, and is said to have engaged in anatomical dissections to refine his understanding. He gained recognition as a skilled practitioner, especially in the management of ocular disorders. Although he is believed to have authored works on other medical subjects, clear documentary evidence of such contributions remains unavailable. Consequently, Susrutartha Sandipani stands as his principal and most substantial scholarly contribution, representing an important modern-era engagement with the classical text of Susruta Samhita.

#### **Peculiarities of Susrutartha Sandipani**

Susrutartha Sandipani is distinguished by its elaborate and highly detailed narrative style, offering expanded explanations when compared to earlier commentaries. The work reflects a scholarly effort to elucidate the fundamental principles and teachings of Susruta with

conceptual depth, while simultaneously representing the interpretative outlook of the early twentieth century. It incorporates similes, logical maxims, and illustrative reasoning extensively, thereby enhancing clarity and pedagogical value. A notable feature of the commentary is its substantial use of cross-references to related classical texts, even exceeding earlier works in this regard. Although it is considered the last available Sanskrit commentary on Susruta Samhita, its narrative

approach maintains continuity with traditional commentarial frameworks. At the same time, the author consciously integrates his own perspectives and analytical approaches in explaining the original verses. Owing to its detailed exposition and interpretative breadth, the text may serve as a foundational reference for further academic refinement and for deepening the understanding of fundamental medical concepts.

### Comparative analysis of Nibandha Sangraha and Susrutartha Sandipani

**Table 1: Comparative analysis of Nibandha Sangraha and Susrutartha Sandipani.**

Parameter	Nibandha Sangraha (Dalhana, 12th Century)	Susrutartha Sandipani (Haranacandra, 20 <sup>th</sup> century)
Historical Context	Composed during the medieval scholastic phase of Ayurveda under royal patronage; reflects consolidation of earlier traditions	Composed in the early modern period; reflects reinterpretation of classical knowledge in a changing medical landscape.
Scholarly Orientation Methodology	Primarily consolidative and critical; aimed at reconciling variant readings and earlier authorities.	Interpretative and explanatory; aimed at expanding clarity and academic accessibility.
Methodology	Analytical evaluation of textual variants, integrates multiple classical viewpoints with critical reasoning.	Elaborative exposition with detailed narrative style; integrates traditional exegesis with modern-era perspectives.
Engagement with Earlier Authorities	Selective acceptance after critical scrutiny; neither blind adherence nor rejection.	Incorporates earlier views but places greater emphasis on individual interpretative expansion.
Cross-Referencing	Extensive references to numerous Samhitas and commentaries; serves as a literary consolidation of tradition.	Higher frequency of cross-referencing with related texts; uses comparative illustrations more extensively.
Doctrinal Contributions	Offers alternative classifications, novel disease descriptions, anatomical and physiological clarifications, and pharmaceutical viewpoints.	Provides expanded conceptual interpretations, pedagogical elaborations, and structured clarification of principles.
Narrative Style	Concise yet analytically dense; scholastic and critically reasoned.	More elaborate and detailed; employs similes, logical maxims, and explanatory illustrations.
Clinical Orientation	Preserves and strengthens classical surgical doctrines and traditional practices.	Bridges classical knowledge with early twentieth-century medical thought and educational needs.
Intellectual Character	Represents foundational scholastic consolidation of Susruta Samhita.	Represents modern-era reinterpretation and pedagogical refinement of the classical text.
Scholarly Impact	Highly influential in shaping subsequent understanding of Susruta Samhita; considered authoritative.	Serves as the last major Sanskrit commentary and provides a baseline for further academic engagement.

### DISCUSSION

- Susruta Samhita is a treatise that covers all the major basic core concepts of Ayurvedic surgery. It aims to make the reader understand the wider possibilities

and opportunities in the field of surgery. It strives to gain insights into the core of understanding the basic considerations in surgical practice thereby equipping

the surgeon to excel in the practical side of medicine.

- Nibandha Sangraha being written by Dalhana during 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. is the most accepted and studied available Sanskrit commentary. The basic style of writing of the work is prose form and thereby enables the learner to analyse the concepts being explained in Susruta Samhita easily.
- The last available Sanskrit commentary is the Susrutartha Sandipani commentary written by Haranacandra during 20<sup>th</sup> century. Due to the significant difference in time period between the two commentaries, around 800years, makes this commentary stand out in the way it is written and presented.
- The vivid usage of nyayas(maxims), the wide usage of drstanta (similes) to explain different contexts, the profound usage of cross references from many centuries back, the clear cut definition and meanings of technical terms can be seen on a wider scale in both the commentaries.
- On comparative analysis of both these works, it is seen that many of the uncommonly used nyayas like sakritkrta Nyaya, satyarambha niyama Nyaya, sthunanikhanana Nyaya, sarva vakya savadharana Nyaya, sundhopasundha Nyaya etc can be found in Susrutartha Sandipani, which is to be considered as a greatest addition from the part of this work as it is the last available commentary work till date on Susruta Samhita.
- Nibandha Sangraha mainly focused on giving the contextual meaning of terms to help the reader understand the very detail of the context being explained and hence more than 350 padarthās (meaning of terms) can be found in the sutrasthana of this commentary alone.
- Both the commentaries give equal importance to explaining the usage of matra etc, along with the concept of oushadha. Also, the age old jyotishashastra njana, is also being incorporated in many places to come up with a mix of conceptual analysis along with age old theories.

## CONCLUSION

The surgical Ayurvedic principles paves a way to in-depth understanding of the surgical concepts. The integration of modern surgical knowledge with a broader perspective for application of Ayurvedic principle can help in wider global acceptance and growth of Ayurvedic medicine. There is a pressing need to incorporate the age old system of Ayurvedic core principles into present day science in order to come up with the most effective method of management of different health conditions.

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