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Review Article

Ashtanga Sangraha

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A Bird's Eye View on Ashtanga Sangraha

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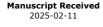
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Ayurveda has passed down through the centuries as a complete healing system, evolving to meet the needs of the time, and yet remaining committed to its core principles. These fundamental principles are laid down in Ayurveda Samhithas which are the store houses of information. Brihatrayees (the greater trio) are the three treatises occupying the best positions for the authority and authentication with respect to compilation and presentation of Ayurveda in its best form. Ashtanga Sangraha is an authoritative text on the science of medicine in ancient India. The name of the text itself conveys its meaning clearly. It is a collection of information of the Ashtangas - the eight branches of Ayurveda in one single text providing preference to Kayachikitsa. The glory of this book is that it confines only to the three pillars of medical science i.e., Hetu (etiology), Linga (symptomatology), and Oushada (therapeutics). The text is composed in such a way as to be suitable to the present age. Acharya Vagbhata created a great revelation in the medical field through his treatise. This review article focuses on unique contribution of Acharya Vagbhata in Ashtanga Sangraha for the development of Ayurveda.

Keywords: Ashtanga Sangraha, Sthaanas, Vagbhata, Brihatrayee, Ayurveda

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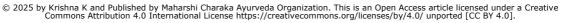
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Introduction

Ayurveda the science of life is eternal, permanent, and it has no beginning. The origin of Ayurveda was dated back when Lord Brahma recollected the science of Ayurveda and revealed the knowledge to Prajapati Daksha and from him it was transferred to Aswins then to Indra and finally to Sage Bharadwaja. The period up to Indra was called Vedic period.[1] From sage Bharadwaja the knowledge of Ayurveda was transferred to Agnivesa, Bhela and other disciples. This period was the golden era of Ayurveda, called the Samhitha period which extended from the time of Sage Bharadwaja to the time of Acharya Vagbhata. Samhitha period witnessed the development and spread of Ayurveda in both India and abroad. Many outstanding treatises were developed in Ayurveda during this golden period. Sages like Agnivesa, Bhela, Parasara, Charaka, Susrutha, Haritha, Vagbhata; all attained much popularity during this period. Through their eminent works Acharya Charaka, Susrutha and Vagbhata were entitled as the Brihatrayaas of Samhitha period.

Vagbhata shines as a bright luminary in the field of Ayurveda. Descendent of a family of reputed physicians he strived hard to preserve and propagate the knowledge of medicine. We would have lost much of the knowledge of many branches unless he had collected the essence of all the 8 branches of Ayurveda by churning a large number of ancient texts. Thus, a great compiler, the first one known so far, he set the trend for preparing such books and was followed by many authors later. He was an embodiment of medical knowledge of ancient India, standing at the threshold of medieval India and passing on the ancient knowledge to the next generation. Vagbhata has introduced a distinct method and clearly perceivable system in his work. Though Vagbhata has adopted the teachings and doctrines of both Charaka and Susrutha as his basis, he has given such a clear outline to his subject that the student comprehends it readily and is always able to rely upon the knowledge thus acquired without suspicion and fear. It may safely be said that Vagbhata has cleared the way where formerly there were mazes and pitfalls which only a close study could remove. Thus, Acharya Vagbhata is rightly counted as one among the Brihatrayaas the great three masters of Ayurveda along with Charaka and Susrutha.

Ashtanga Sangraha of Acharya Vagbhata is an ancient authoritative text on Ayurveda, studied since many centuries by students, scholars and practitioners of Indian medicine. Because of its archaic style of composition and terse language, certain amount of difficulty is being experienced. This work is intended to provide an insight on Ashtanga Sangraha written by Acharya Vagbhata.

Aim and Objective

The aim of this study is to provide an insight on Ashtanga Sangraha written by Acharya Vagbhata.

Materials and Methods

All sorts of references related to *Ashtanga Sangraha* was collected and compiled from various *Ayurvedic* texts.

Discussion

Authorship

The text Ashtanga Sangraha itself provides the foremost knowledge about the author. In one of the concluding verses of the text the author furnishes his own whereabouts as follows –"there was a great physician by name Vagbhata, who was my grandfather and I bear his name, from him was born Simhagupta and I am from him born in the land of Sindhu. Having acquired sound knowledge from Avalokita, the preceptor and even more from my father, and after studying a large number of texts of medical science, this treatise named Ashtanga Sangraha has been written".

Period of Ashtanga Sangraha

A wide range of opinions persists regarding time period of *Ashtanga Sangraha*. Some of views are: 1) first or second century BC 2) second or third century AD. 3) Posterior to *Charaka* and *Susrutha Samhitha* and anterior to *Yajnavalkya*. 4) Between 2nd and 6th centuries 5) 5th or 6th century about 550AD 6) between *Kamasootra* (400AD) and *Varahamihira* (505-587 AD) 7) late in 6th or early in 7th century about 625AD 8) between 7th or 8th century AD 9) between 1010 and 1055AD (during reign of King *Bhoja* of Dhara).[2] Based on various internal and external evidences modern *Ayurvedic* Scholars fixed period of *Ashtanga Sangraha* as 6th or 7th century AD. This has to be proved with further clarifications in future.[3]

A view on Sthaanas and Number of Adhyayas

Ashtanga Sangraha is a voluminous text having 150 Adhyayas divided into 6 Sthaanas each containing varying number of chapters. The text is composed in both prose and verse, about 9250 together.

The Sthaanas are

Table 1: Sthaanas and Adhyayas of Ashtanga Sangraha

SN	Sthaana	Chapter
1.	Sutrasthaana	40
2.	Sarirasthaana	12
3.	Nidanasthaana	16
4.	Chikitsasthaana	24
5.	Kalpasthaana	8
6.	Utharatantra	50
	Total	150

Main contents of each Sthaana

1. Sutrasthaana:

- The first and foremost *Sthaana* of the text which constitute the whole essence of the text.
- This *Sthaana* explains the origin and propagation of *Ayurveda* and the basic doctrines of Ayurveda.
- Principles of health with its personal social and community aspects.
- Prevention of diseases, various dietary regimens and food articles to be adopted in various seasons.
- Causes of diseases and methods of treatments.

2. Sarirasthaana:

- Deals with the evolution and composition of universe.
- Development of foetus inside the womb
- Human Anatomy and Physiology
- Physical and psychological temperaments
- Nature of various dreams, good and bad omens
- Fatal signs leading to various diseases and death.

3. Nidanasthaana:

 The Nidanastana in brief deals with etiology, signs and symptoms, pathogenesis and prognosis of major diseases.

4. Chikitsasthaana:

 Elaborates the methods of treatment, medicines, diet, perfect care of the patient etc. of all diseases pertaining to Kayachikitsa.

5. Kalpasthaana:

- Deals with the method of preparing purificatory recipes.
- Administration of purificatory recipes.
- Management of complications.
- Principles of pharmacy, weights, and measures.

6. Utharathantra:

The last section has 50 chapters allotted to remaining seven branches

- Balachikitsa 5 chapters
- *Grahachikitsa* 5 chapters
- Urdvangachikitsa
- Netraroga Chikitsa 10 chapters
- Karnaroga Chikitsa 2 chapters
- Nasaroga Chikitsa 2chapters
- Mukharoga Chikitsa 2 chapters
- Siroroga Chikitsa 2 chapters
- Salya Chikitsa 11 chapters
- Damstra/ Visha Chikitsa 9 chapters
- Rasayana Chikitsa 1 chapter
- Vrsa/ Vajikara Chikitsa 1 chapter

Translations and Commentaries on Ashtanga Sangraha

Translations

Ashtanga Sangraha is translated into many regional languages. Some of them are fully translated including whole Sthaanas, but some are partially translated with particular Sthaana. Many of the translations are not available now. Its first edition was published by Ganesh Tarte of Bombay in 1888. Later T Rudraparasava published the complete text together with Indu commentary from Trichur, Kerala during 1913 to 1924. Next Ramachandra Sastry Kinjawadekar of Pune published some portions of the text with Indu commentary. All these are not procurable now. In 1980 Ananta Damodar Athavale of Pune has published the full text together with Indu's commentary.

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Following are the available translations of *Ashtanga Sangraha*

- 1. English translations by
- Srikantha Murthy
- Rama Rao
- P Srinivas Rao
- Ashtanga Sangraha Sutrasthaana by Vaidya Sri Govardhan Sharma
- Ashtanga Sangraha sutrasthaana by Ramachandra Shaastri
- Ashtanga Sangraha Sarirasthaana by Kinjawadekar
- Ashtanga Sangraha Nidanasthaana by Kinjawadekar
- 2. Hindi translation
- Anantha Damodar Athavale
- Atridev Gupta
- Kendriya Ayurveda and siddha Anusandhan
 Parishath
- Samkshipta Ashtanga Sangraha by S V Sukla
- Ashtanga Sangraha Sarira sthaana by Pakshadhara Jha
- 3. Marathi translation
- Ashtanga Sangraha Sutrasthaana by Prof. Subhash Ranade.
- 4. Malayalam translation
 - Ashtanga Sangraha by M Narayanan Vaidyar.

Commentaries

Ashtanga Sangraha is the only text with the least number of commentaries. The reason for not writing commentary on Ashtanga Sangraha remains controversial. It may be due to the non-popularity of the text at that time, or due to missing of written manuscripts. Presently only one commentary on Ashtanga Sangraha written by Indu is available. But from the statement of Indu it is clear that there were some commentaries earlier to this. But it is not available. So that opinion is not reliable. Two other commentaries on this work written by Harishchandra and Brahma Suri are available in manuscript form and not yet printed. Another commentary named Ashtanga Sangraha Vyakhya is reported to be available in GOML Madras, but is incomplete.

Sasilekha Commentary by Indu

Indu has written a commentary on *Ashtanga Sangraha* in the name of *Sasilekha*. This commentary is quite elaborate and explains the text in great detail. Hence it helps to understand the subject matter very clearly. Indu has written commentaries on both *Ashtanga Sangraha* and *Ashtanga Hrdaya* in the common name *Sasilekha*. It can be presumed from his own statement that commentary on *Ashtanga Sangraha* was written first and that on *Ashtanga Hrdaya* next.

Indu

Indu the commentator of Ashtanga Sangraha has not furnished any information about himself in his commentary. In his commentary on Ashtanga Hrdaya he offers obeisance to Vaagiswari at the commencement and to Girijesa, Vinayaka, and Skanda at many places.[4] This makes us to presume that he belonged to a Hindu Brahmin family devoted to worship of Siva. In the commentary Indu furnished the names of plants and the names being known only in the region of Kashmir. Based on this it can be inferred that he belongs to Kashmir region.

Period of Indu

Many opinions persist about the time period of Indu. Kshira Swami in his commentary on Amarakosa quoted Indu. So, Indu's time is definitely before Kshira Swami. He may belong to 9th or 10th century. But some opines that it is some other Indu who is the author of a Nighantu. Dr. Gode has estimated Indu's period to be AD1050. But this does not tally with the external evidence in Hemadri's writings. Hemadri has clearly mentioned Indu to be of a later period than Arunadatta and the period Arunadatta has been derived to be AD 1240. Hence, according to this Indu dates somewhere around AD1250. Commentator Indu himself Medinikosa, a work of 12th century and he is quoted by Niscalakara and Hemadri. So, this person can be assigned to 13th century or even later. We cannot reach on a definite conclusion about the period and place of Indu, may be future studies provide a clear picture.[5]

Conclusion

Ashtanga Sangraha is one of the epic texts in Ayurveda.

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It is a collection of information of Ashtangas - the eight branches of Ayurveda in one single text providing preference to Kayachikitsa. Acharya Vagbhata created a great revelation in the medical field through his treatise. Many controversies and conflicts exist about the time period, place and authorship of the text Ashtanga Sangraha and the attributes related to it. This happened because all the Ayurvedic treatises are composed in earlier centuries, the details of which cannot be dogged out in the present century. The present day Ayurvedic scholars are working hard to derive answers for all confusions through these discussions researches. This will really add up to the scientific foundation of Ayurveda. Ashtanga Sangraha continues to remain as a popular treatise in the field of Ayurveda with its own honor.

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