

A NOTE ON HARITA SAMHITA

by

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According to traditions and literary authorities, the divine creator, Brahma, taught the science of medicine to Daksa, the progenitor and he imparted it to the twin gods, the Aswins. From them, Indra, the lord of immortals learnt it. The legend in Carakasamhita states that the first mortal that received instruction of the science was Bharadvaja. A congress of ṛṣis sent him as their delegate to appeal to the king of gods, to impart the science for the redemption of suffering mankind below. Graciously enough, Indra taught the whole science to Bharadvaja. It was from Bharadvaja that Atreya and other great sages learnt the science of medicine and passed it on to their disciples.

Atreya or Kṛsnatreya is said to have six disciples - Agnivesa, Bhela, Jatukarna, Parasara, Harita and Ksarapani. After hearing the instructions of Atreya, everyone of his six disciples is said to have composed treatises of medicine. These works were read out to the gathering of scholars and students and the treatise by Agnivesa was supposed to have been acclaimed as the best among the six treatises. This treatise was later redacted by Caraka and has now come down to us as Carakasamhita which is really Agnivesa Carakasamhita.

With regard to the compositions of the remaining five, though the authors of these books are mentioned and some verses cited in ancient medical literature, no comprehensive texts by them were available till recently. A single, old and defective manuscript of a work by Bhela in Tanjore Maharaja Serfoji's Saraswathi Mahal Library, in Telugu script was discovered and described by Burnell in his Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts under No. 10773. This unique manuscript was utilised by the Calcutta University to publish the text with the introduction of MM. Ananta Krishna Sastry. The next treatise of this group of six to be traced was a manuscript called Haritasamhita. In Haritasamhita also Harita is said to be a disciple of Atreya alongwith Agnivesa, Bhela and others. We have a confirmation of the story of Bharadvaja as the teacher of Atreya and other sages.

There are references in ancient Sanskrit Literature to number of Haritas.*

* According to the genealogy of Emperor Mandhata, given in the History of India by Bhagavaddattji, Harita is in the fourth generation.

Mandhata-Ambarisa-Harita (Harita)-Haritarsi. According to Matharavṛtti, a very old commentary on Sankhyakarika, Harit was one among persons who learnt Sankhya knowledge from Pancasikha.

There is a Harita, reputed to have learnt at the feet of the great sage Jabali and to be the author of Dharma and smṛiti books. Whether this Harita is the same as the co-student of Agnivesa is not certain. One Kumara Harita is mentioned in Satapathabrahmana who is quite different.

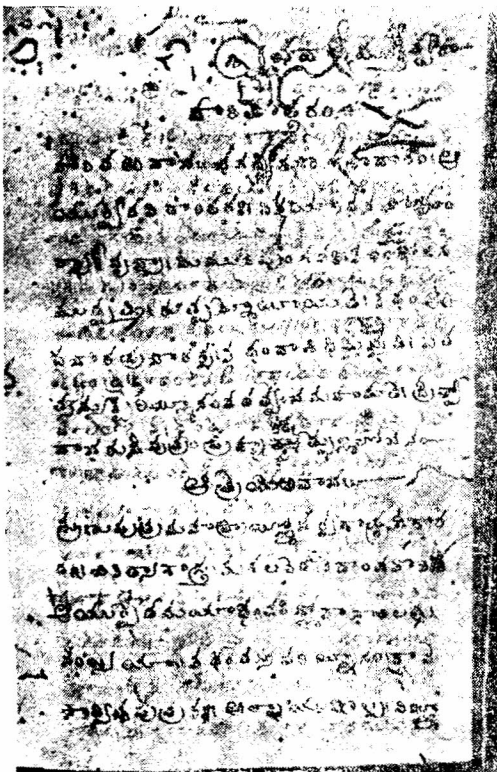
The treatise of Harita, the pupil of Atreya, is quoted in many later medical works or commentaries and is often referred to as old Harita.

Jolly points out that the hypothesis that oldest medical work is preserved in the samhita ascribed to Atreya or Harita appears to be resting on firm ground. The name alone is not a proof of antiquity and several modern falsifications in the domain of legal literature are concealed especially under the respected names of Atreya and Harita. Haas regards Atreya-Harita samhitas as a poor and later one because of the theory of karmavipaka and the use of various substances causing nausea. But as Jolly points out these are already peculiar to the Vedic medicine.

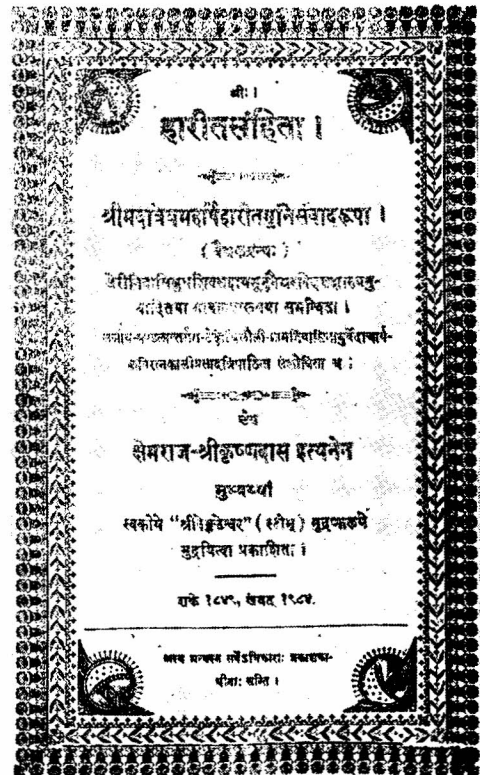
It is also noteworthy that in one work of Haritasamhita it is said at the end of the work that in the four eras - yugas - Atri, Caraka, Susruta and Vagbhata were the standard authors and consequently betrays hereby his acquaintance with and the anteriority of Vagbhata. The genuineness of this concluding part can however be challenged since the text of Harita is in general very badly preserved, manuscripts appear to be wanting. In the Bower manuscript, immediately after Atreya, Harita is mentioned. The complete work requires a closer examination; it nevertheless contains in its six sthanas, which are of unequal extent, a complete system of medicine with many peculiar statements on diseases and therapeutic substances which are often used in later texts.

Besides the manuscripts labelled as Haritasamhita in the Mysore Oriental Library and the Sanskrit College, Calcutta, there is one paper manuscript on Kondapally paper with leather binding, probably not less than 100 years old, in the possession of a family of physicians of Muktyala. This is entitled as Haritottara-samhita and no other information is available about the original from which this copy was made. The arrangement of contents of the first few chapters are similar to those of the printed work but in the later part they are different. One copy of manuscript entitled Haritottarasamhita is also available in Asiatic Society, Calcutta. Cikitsasarasangraha in the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona and Naditantra in the Oriental Library, Mysore are also attributed to Harita. To add to this, there is also another source of confusion as there are number of manuscripts labelled as Atreyasamhita, probably to indicate that it is a notes of lectures by Atreya and compiled by Harita. Such manuscripts under this name are available in the following libraries :

B. J. Institute of Learning and Research, Ahmedabad.
Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur.
Royal Asiatic Society, Bombay.
Oriental Institute, Baroda.
Asiatic Society, Calcutta.
Oriental Library, Mysore.



First page of the manuscript
Haritottara, at Muktyala



Title page of the book Haritasamhita

This institution has a copy of Haritasamhita, edited with Hindi translation by Sri Ravidatta Sastri and published by Kshemaraj Sri Krishna Das in 1927 from Bombay. Whether this treatise is a genuine one or spurious one, it is yet difficult to say. The language and style of the work do not suggest it to be an older treatise.

Recently during the visit of Dr. Filliozat to India, he was accompanied by Miss Raison, who was examining the various manuscripts of Haritasamhita and scrutinising them with a view to collect all printed and manuscript copies, collate them and bring out a new critical edition, under the guidance of Prof.

Filliozat. These scholars have examined the printed copy in this Institute and also requisitioned the manuscript copy from Muktyala. Since the Institution has already started a programme of translation of ancient Sanskrit medical classics, atleast selected passages from rare ones has already published. English translations of selected passages from Bhelasamhita, Kasyapasamhita etc., we thought it worthwhile to translate a few selected passages from Haritasamhita for the benefit of the medical profession unacquainted with Sanskrit language,

HĀRĪTA SAMHITĀ

Translation of selected passages

by

B. RAMA RAO

FIRST STHĀNA

CHAPTER - I

(I compose this work) after making obeisance to Śiva, who bestows the art of the realisation of supreme self, the handsome nectar of consciousness (of self), the God, destroyer of diseases like rāga (desires), controller of love-god, and who always has the moon on his head and is the form of the three guṇas (sattva, rajas and tamas).

Ātreya was sitting along with his many disciples, on the northern part of the Himālaya mountain, which is respectfully inhabited by siddhas and gandharvas (sects of gods), is very peaceful and which is crowded with herds of wild animals and various plants and trees. He was shining like the early Sun, with penance and was clean like the white pure sphaṭika. His body was smeared with ash (sacred). His matted hair was like a jungle and he was wearing white kuṇḍalas (ear ornaments). His disciple Hārīta enquired from him the complete knowledge of this great science. Hārīta said, O ! venerable, embodiment of good qualities! You are the best among the knowers of Ayurveda and the best of sages. I am enquiring this very humbly. How the diseases are produced and how they are known? What are the treatments and dietetics and how are the diseases cured? Kindly tell, O ! Great sage, all this knowledge. Asked thus by the great Hārīta, his disciple, the teacher and the sage (Ātreya) replied smiling and with his eyes widely open. Ātreya told: My dear son (pupil), hear me, you are very clever, perfect in all sciences, and specially efficient in the science of treatment and a knower of the science. The science of Ayurveda is endless having lakh verses. O ! son, can its knowledge be revealed in a very short period?