THE DATE OF DHANWANTARI NIGHANŢU

P. V. SHARMA

Department of Dravyaguna, Postgraduate Institute of Indian Medicine, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi 5

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Dhanvantari Nighanţu is the oldest Nighanţu dealing with synonyms and properties of drugs available at present. Although Paryârataṁata, a work assigned to Mâdhava Kara, the author of Nidâna or Rogaviniscaya, is an earlier work but it deals only with synonyms of drugs and not the properties. In spite of so much importance of the work, technically as well as historically, its date has not been decided as yet. Some scholars taking the name 'Dhanvantari' place it quite early. Sharma and Sardesai, in the introduction of Kshiraswâmi commentary of the Amarakosa,¹ say that the Vanasadhik Varga of the Amarakosa is based on the Dhanvantari Nighanţu and as such it must have preceded Amar Sinha by a long interval (Amar Sinha is generally placed in the fifth or sixth century A.D.). On the other hand, some scholars, on the basis of internal evidences, place it in the tenth or late as twelfth century A.D. An attempt is made in this paper to examine it afresh on the basis of external and internal evidences.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCES

1. Hemâdri, the commentator of Astângahṛdaya and authority on religious texts, refers to Dhanvantari Nighanţu.² Hemâdri’s date is the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth century A.D.³ Hence the Dhanvantari Nighanţu must be before this.

2. Niścalâ Kara (thirteenth century A.D.) has mentioned the name of Dravyâvali, but not the Dhanvantari Nighanţu.⁴

3. Arunadatta, the commentator of Astângahṛdaya, has quoted the Dhanvantari Nighanţu.⁵ Arunadatta flourished in the middle of the thirteenth century A.D.⁶ and as such the work must have preceded this.

4. Hemacandra, in his commentary on Abhidhānacintâmani, has referred to Dhanvantari. The date of Hemacandra is twelfth century A.D. and as such Dhanvantari Nighanţu must be prior to this.

5. It is surprising that Dallana (twelfth century A.D.)⁷ has not mentioned any Nighanţu in his commentary on Suârutsa although he has given a good and vivid description of plants and other drugs. This is a fact which deserves serious consideration and analysis. If there was Dhanvantari Nighanţu what made him not to use this. The other alternative is that he may be connected with the authorship of the work which he would have taken after completing the commentary. In other words, the commentary of Dallana

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may be before the work. As a corollary to this, Dallana might have preceded the Dhanwantari Nighantu.

6. Vardhamana, in his Ganaratnamahabodhi, has quoted a verse from the Dhanwantari Nighantu but not by name.

Vardhamana has given the date of composition of his work as A.D. 1140. Hence the Dhanwantari Nighantu must have preceded that.

7. Chakrapani (eleventh century A.D.), the commentator of Caraka Samhita, has mentioned Nighantu and Nighantuvara at two places although he does not mention the name of Dhanwantari Nighantu specifically. The quotations are also not found in the work.

8. Kshirswami, the commentator on Amarakoṣa, quotes Dhanwantari Nighantu and Indu Nighantu. Kshirswami’s date is eleventh century A.D. Hence the date of the Dhanwantari Nighantu must be before this. Indu, the author of the Nighantu quoted here, must be a person different from that of the same name who wrote the Šasilekha commentary on Aṣṭāṅga Samgraha because this commentary has not been referred to by any author before Ṣemādri (thirteenth to fourteenth century A.D.). Indu has utilized Dhanwantari Nighantu as well as Aṣṭāṅga Nighantu (an unpublished manuscript) in this commentary. On this basis, the authors of Indu Nighantu and the Dhanwantari Nighantu may be taken as contemporary and may be placed before Kshirswami (eleventh century A.D.).

INTERNAL EVIDENCES

In the beginning introduction after salutation to Dhanwantari, the author has mentioned that he is composing this book as a short treatise dealing with drugs taking the essential facts from the ocean-like literature of Nighantu. It shows that there was a vast literature on Nighantu at the time of its composition. The name of this work is Dravyāvali which has come out of the mouth of Dhanwantari and has been composed for the benefit of the Vaidyas’ sons (traditional Vaidyas), enumerating the drugs in seven groups (vargas) such as guḍucyādi, śatapuspādi, candanādi, karavirādi, āmrādi, suvarṇādi and miśrakādi along with their uses. In the end, he says that the synonyms of these drugs will follow in order, but instead of this Dhanwantari Nighantu starts with salutation to Dhanwantari and with contents of rasa, virya, vipāka, etc., of drugs. This shows that the two works are quite different from one another.

If they were the same there would not have a separate salutation, a different name of the work and contents different from those proposed in the earlier context.

There is also a difference in nature of the facts which places these works (Dravyāvali and Dhanwantari Nighantu) in different periods. The former work seems to be an earlier one while the latter one seems to be of the later
period. The following facts in relation to the Dhanvantari Nighantu deserve consideration:

1. There are several drugs mentioned and described in it which are definitely of the medieval period not before twelfth century A.D. such as ahiphena (opium),\textsuperscript{15} jayapāla (croton),\textsuperscript{16} kaṅkuṣtha,\textsuperscript{17} aṅvijāra (ambara),\textsuperscript{18} vijayā\textsuperscript{19} which were introduced in this country by Muslims. The words mleccha\textsuperscript{20} and yavana\textsuperscript{21} have been used probably for Muslims.

2. The detailed descriptions of pārada\textsuperscript{22} along with its saṃskāras and gandhaka show the advanced state of rasa-śāstra. Most of the facts and verses have been taken as such\textsuperscript{23} from Rasaratna Samuccaya which is a work of the thirteenth century A.D.\textsuperscript{24}

3. The mention of yaśada (zino)\textsuperscript{25} further leads this work to at least fourteenth century A.D. because before that yaśada has not been mentioned in any work not even in Rasaratna Samuccaya. Perhaps Madanpāla Nighantu is the first Nighantu to have mentioned it.\textsuperscript{26} Thus Dhanvantari Nighantu will be a contemporary of Madanvinoda.

4. Masurikā (small-pox) has been mentioned and masura has been named as masurikā and has been advocated as efficacious in this disease.\textsuperscript{27}

5. There is also reference of Siddhauṣadhi\textsuperscript{28} and Nāgārjuna\textsuperscript{29} which indicate the advanced state of tantricism and rasa-śāstra.

In the former portion (Dravyāvali) none of the above facts is found except the word rasa for pārada, kaṅkuṣtha and masurikā.

As mentioned above, the Dhanvantari Nighantu has not been mentioned explicitly by any author in the Āyurvedic field before Arunadatta. Taking this into account it may be placed before Arunadatta in the thirteenth century A.D. The same condition is with Indu who has been referred to by Hemādri as the first author. In the commentary on Aṣṭāṅga Samgraha Indu has quoted several verses from Nighantu out of which some are found in Dhanvantari Nighantu and others in Aṣṭāṅga Nighantu, an unpublished manuscript (No. D13256 of the Government Oriental Manuscripts library, Madras). Aṣṭāṅga Nighantu seems to be an earlier work which has been followed by both Indu and Dhanvantari Nighantu. If Indu, the commentator and lexicographer, is the same person the question of the date of Kṣiraswāmi will have to be reconsidered because he has referred to both Indu and Dhanvantari Nighantu. The only difficulty is that some of the quotations of Dhanvantari Nighantu cited by him are not found in the extant book.\textsuperscript{30} Hemacandra (twelfth century A.D.) has quoted both Kṣiraswāmi and Dhanvantari Nighantu. Hence they must be before that period. It may be possible that Kṣiraswāmi might be referring to Dravyāvali as Dhanvantari Nighantu and Indu also might be a person different from the commentator Indu.\textsuperscript{31}

As regards the reference of the work in Vaidhamāna’s Ganaratnamahābodhi, it is also not explicit but the verse is found in Dhanvantari Nighantu.
The date of Vaidhamāna is also doubtful. Eggeling has placed him in the twelfth century A.D. on the basis of a verse given at the end of the book that it was composed in Vikrama Samvat 1197 corresponding to A.D. 1140 but the difficulty is that the verse is found only in two out of six or seven manuscripts. Hence no decision can be taken on this basis. As regards the oldest manuscript dated A.D. 1229, it is also inconclusive because in the manuscript there is mention of Samvat 1151 which cannot be taken with certainty as Sāka Samvat on which basis Eggeling has fixed the above date. On the contrary, it may be some other Samvat.

At one place Vaidhamāna has quoted a verse regarding properties of Lasuna and synonyms\textsuperscript{32} from Arunadatta. It shows that there was some Nighantu also composed by Arunadatta. There is one Aruna lexicographer quoted by Hemacandra and Sarvanand but he is known as Aruna and not Arunadatta. The date of Arunadatta the commentator on Astāṅgahṛdaya is thirteenth century A.D. and as such Vardhamāna cannot be anterior to it and thus he may be placed in the fourteenth century. Quotations in the Ganaratnamahābodhi have been traced up to Hemacandra, an author of the twelfth century.\textsuperscript{33} Hemacandra was a Jain and also wrote a vyākaraṇa. Vardhamāna is also a Jain and some scholars are of the opinion that he composed his work not for Pāṇini’s sūtras but for some modern vyākaraṇa.\textsuperscript{34} If he has quoted and followed Hemacandra (twelfth century A.D.) it is not possible to place him in A.D. 1140. Moreover, several quotations in his work have not been traced and identified as yet.\textsuperscript{35} However, if the date fixed by Eggeling is accepted, the quoted verse should be assigned to Dravyāvali which might have been mixed with Dhanvantari Nighantu later on.

CONCLUSION

1. The Dravyāvali and the Dhanvantari Nighantu are two different works composed by different authors and at different periods. The only similarity is that both the works start with salutation to Dhanvantari. Dhanvantari is not concerned with the authorship of any work at all.

2. From external and internal evidences, the Dravyāvali may be placed in the tenth century A.D. or even earlier and the Dhanvantari Nighantu in the thirteenth century A.D., not before and after. After a lapse of some time both these works were confused to be one and of the same author.

3. The actual text of the Dravyāvali referred to by the authors is not available at present. It seems that the whole text of this work was mingled up with the Dhanvantari Nighantu. In the existing book of Dhanvantari Nighantu, the portion dealing with synonyms might be from Dravyāvali and that dealing with properties and actions might be from Dhanvantari Nighantu. It should be noted that Dravyāvali contained only synonyms of drugs\textsuperscript{36} like
other Nīghantuṣ of that period. Perhaps the Dhanwantari Nīghantuṣ is the first to deal with properties and actions of drugs.

REFERENCES


2. Hemārdi on *Āstāṅgahṛdaya Śūrā*, VI.129.


5. —*Āstāṅgahṛdaya, Śūrā*, VI.97.


11. —*Caraka, Śūrā*, 27.4.

12. "The date of this commentator is now known. He quotes Bhoja and is quoted by Vardhamāna in the *Ganarathomabhodhi* and, therefore, belongs to the second half of the eleventh century."

In some of the manuscripts the name of the book is Guḍḍeyādi Nighaṇṭu or Dravyavālī Dhanvantariya (see ibid., f.n., p. 1).

Opium is also mentioned by Shodhala (thirteenth century A.D.) and Sharāṅghdhara (fourteenth century A.D.).


Sārāṅghadhara Samhitā, 1.4, 20; 2.6.62–63.

Although Bhaṅgā has been mentioned in quite earlier works like Kātyāyana's Vārttikas (third or fourth century B.C.), its medicinal use is observed only from the medieval period.

Vardhamāna in his Ganarutnamahābodhi has also quoted a verse from Siddha Nāgārjuna, see Gana., VII.430.


The words _Sanaprī_ and _Ṣīlalavātaka_ referred to in _Amara_ (*vide* above introduction) are not found in _Dhan. Ni._

31 For discussion of the date of Indu, see Sharma, _P. V._, *op. cit.*, pp. 344–348.

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रसोन्नः स्वरप्रभोण्यवच लक्ष्यम: कठको गुणः ।...

अक्षरान्तिप्रतापयः दंशिला: ॥

— _Gana._, 277.


34 _Gana._, preface to Part I, p. ix; preface to Part II, pp. iii and iv.

35 _Ibid._, p. x.

पर्यायनामान्यव्याप्ते गुणवादेवष्टात्रकम्—