

THE DATE OF *DHANWANTARI NIGHANṬU*

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Dhanwantari Nighanṭu is the oldest *Nighanṭu* dealing with synonyms and properties of drugs available at present. Although Paryāyaratnamālā, a work assigned to Mādhava Kara, the author of *Nidāna* or *Rogavinīścaya*, 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 'Dhanwantari' place it quite early. Sharma and Sardesai, in the introduction of Kṣīraswāmi commentary of the *Amarakoṣa*,¹ say that the *Vanauśadhi Varga* of the *Amarakoṣa* is based on the *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu* 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. Hemādri, the commentator of *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya* and authority on religious texts, refers to *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu*.² Hemādri's date is the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth century A.D.³ Hence the *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu* must be before this.

2. Niścāla Kara (thirteenth century A.D.) has mentioned the name of *Dravyāvalī*, but not the *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu*.⁴

3. Arunadatta, the commentator of *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya*, has quoted the *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu*.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 *Abhidhānacintāmaṇi*, has referred to *Dhanwantari*. The date of Hemacandra is twelfth century A.D. and as such *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu* must be prior to this.

5. It is surprising that Dallana (twelfth century A.D.)⁷ has not mentioned any *Nighanṭu* in his commentary on *Suśruta* 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 *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu* 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

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

6. Vardhamāna, in his *Ganaratnamahābodhi*, has quoted a verse from the *Dhanwantari Nighantū*⁸ but not by name.

Vardhamāna has given the date of composition of his work as A.D. 1140.⁹ Hence the *Dhanwantari Nighantū* must have preceded that.

7. Chakrapāṇi (eleventh century A.D.),¹⁰ the commentator of *Caraka Saṃhitā*, has mentioned *Nighantū* and *Nighantūkāra* at two places although he does not mention the name of *Dhanwantari Nighantū* specifically.¹¹ The quotations are also not found in the work.

8. Kṣīraswāmi, the commentator on *Amarakoṣa*, quotes *Dhanwantari Nighantū* and *Indu Nighantū*. Kṣīraswāmi's date is eleventh century A.D.¹² Hence the date of the *Dhanwantari Nighantū* must be before this. Indu, the author of the *Nighantū* quoted here, must be a person different from that of the same name who wrote the *Śasīlekhā* commentary on *Aṣṭāṅga Saṃgraha* because this commentary has not been referred to by any author before Hemādri (thirteenth to fourteenth century A.D.). Indu has utilized *Dhanwantari Nighantū* as well as *Aṣṭāṅga Nighantū* (an unpublished manuscript) in this commentary. On this basis, the authors of *Indu Nighantū* and the *Dhanwantari Nighantū* may be taken as contemporary and may be placed before Kṣīraswāmi (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 *Nighantū*. It shows that there was a vast literature on *Nighantū* at the time of its composition. The name of this work is *Dravyāvalī* 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*, *karavīrādi*, *āmrādi*, *suvarnādi* and *mīśrakādi* along with their uses. In the end, he says that the synonyms of these drugs will follow in order,¹³ but instead of this *Dhanwantari Nighantū* starts with salutation to Dhanwantari and with contents of *rasa*, *vīrya*, *vīpāka*, etc., of drugs.¹⁴ 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 difference in nature of the facts which places these works (*Dravyāvalī* and *Dhanwantari Nighantū*) 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 *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu* 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),¹⁵ *jayapāla* (croton),¹⁶ *kaṅkustha*,¹⁷ *agnijāra* (ambara),¹⁸ *vijayā*¹⁹ which were introduced in this country by Muslims. The words *mleccha*²⁰ and *yavana*²¹ have been used probably for Muslims.

2. The detailed descriptions of *pārada*²² along with its *samskāras* and *gandhaka* show the advanced state of *rasa-śāstra*. Most of the facts and verses have been taken as such²³ from *Rasaratna Samuccaya* which is a work of the thirteenth century A.D.²⁴

3. The mention of *yaśada* (zinc)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 Nighanṭu* is the first *Nighanṭu* to have mentioned it.²⁶ Thus *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu* 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.²⁷

5. There is also reference of *Siddhaśadhī*²⁸ and *Nāgārjuna*²⁹ which indicate the advanced state of tantricism and *rasa-śāstra*.

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

As mentioned above, the *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu* 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 Saṃgraha* Indu has quoted several verses from *Nighanṭu* out of which some are found in *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu* and others in *Aṣṭāṅga Nighanṭu*, an unpublished manuscript (No. D13256 of the Government Oriental Manuscripts library, Madras). *Aṣṭāṅga Nighanṭu* seems to be an earlier work which has been followed by both *Indu* and *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu*. If Indu, the commentator and lexicographer, is the same person, the question of the date of Kṣīraswāmi will have to be reconsidered because he has referred to both *Indu* and *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu*. The only difficulty is that some of the quotations of *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu* cited by him are not found in the extant book.³⁰ Hemacandra (twelfth century A.D.) has quoted both Kṣīraswāmi and *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu*. Hence they must be before that period. It may be possible that Kṣīraswāmi might be referring to *Dravyāvalī* as *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu* and Indu also might be a person different from the commentator Indu.³¹

As regards the reference of the work in Vaidhamāna's *Ganaratnamahā-bodhi*, it is also not explicit but the verse is found in *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu*.

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 synonyms³² from Arunadatta. It shows that there was some *Nighanṭu* 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 *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya* 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.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 Pānini's *sūtras* but for some modern *vyākaraṇa*.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.³⁵ However, if the date fixed by Eggeling is accepted, the quoted verse should be assigned to *Dravyāvalī* which might have been mixed with *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu* later on.

CONCLUSION

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

2. From external and internal evidences, the *Dravyāvalī* may be placed in the tenth century A.D. or even earlier and the *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu* 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 *Dravyāvalī* referred to by the authors is not available at present. It seems that the whole text of this work was mingled up with the *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu*. In the existing book of *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu*, the portion dealing with synonyms might be from *Dravyāvalī* and that dealing with properties and actions might be from *Dhanwantari Nighanṭu*. It should be noted that *Dravyāvalī* contained only synonyms of drugs³⁶ like

other *Nighantus* of that period. Perhaps the *Dhanwantari Nighantu* is the first to deal with properties and actions of drugs.

REFERENCES

¹ Sharma and Sardesai, *Amarakosha*, Oriental Book Agency, Poona, 1941, Introduction, pp. vii-viii.

² त्वङ्मूलपल्लवं ग्राहि कषायं पित्तनाशनम् इति (धन्वन्तरिनिघण्टौ वर्गः ५।७)
—Hemādri on *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya Sū.*, VI.129.

³ Sharma, P. V., *Vāgbhaṭa-vivecanā*, Chowkhamba, Varanasi, p. 364.

⁴ Bhattacharya, D. C., *New Light on Vaidyak literature*, I.H.Q., Vol. XXIII, No. 1, pp. 123-155.

⁵ कठिल्लीऽपि वर्षाभिः, स च प्रागुक्तगुणः, तथा च निघण्टुः (धन्वन्तरीयः, वर्गः १।२७४)

पुनर्नवा विशाखश्च कठिल्लः शशिवाटिका ।
वृश्चीरः क्षुद्रवर्षाभिर्दीर्घपत्रः कठिल्लकः ॥
पुनर्नवोऽपरः क्रूरः सद्योमण्डलपत्रकः ।
श्वेतमूलो वर्षकेतुर्महावर्षाभूरुच्यते ॥

—*Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya, Sū.*, VI.97.

निघण्टावुक्तम्—

आरुक्ं वीरसेनं च वीरा वीरारुक्ं तथा ।
विद्याज्जातिविशेषेण तच्चतुर्विधमारुक्म् ॥

Ibid., VI.135.

⁶ Hoernle, *Studies in the Medicine of Ancient India*, Part I, Introduction, para II.

⁷ Bhattacharya, D. C., *op. cit.*

⁸ आटरुषः सिहास्यः, यथा—

वासकः सिंहपर्णी च वृषो वासाथ सिंहिका ।
आटरुषः सिंहमुखी भिषङ्माताऽटरुषकः ॥

—*Ganaratnamahābodhi*, Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi, 1963, III.176.

⁹ सप्तनवत्यधिकेष्वेकादशसु शतेष्वतीतेषु ।
वर्षाणां विक्रमतो गणरत्नमहोदधिर्विहितः ॥

—*Ibid.*, VIII.460.

¹⁰ Bhattacharya, D. C., *op. cit.*

¹¹ पिरायाकः तिलकल्कः, निघण्टुकारस्त्वाह—पिरायाको हरितशिशुः

—*Caraka, Sū.*, 27.4.

लेलीतकः पाषाणभेद औत्तरापथिकः, उच्यते हि निघण्टौ—

‘आसीद् दैत्यो महाबाहुर्लेलिहानो महासुरः ।
योजनानां त्रयस्त्रिंशत् कायेनाच्छाद्य तिष्ठति ॥
विष्णुचक्रेण संछिन्नः पपात धरणीतले ।
वसा तस्य समाख्याता लेलीतक इति क्षितौ ॥’

—*Ibid.*, Ch. 7.70.

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

—Sharma and Sardesai, *op. cit.*, pp. iv-v.

13

‘नमामि धन्वन्तरिमादिदेवं सुरासुरैर्वन्दितपादपद्मम् ।
लोके जरासृग्भयमृत्युनाशं धातारमीशं विविधौषधीनाम् ॥’

‘तथा निषण्टाम्बुनिधेरनन्ताद् गृह्णााम्यहं किञ्चिदिहैकदेशम् ॥’

‘तस्मान्निषण्टुरित्येष नातिसंक्षेपविस्तरः ।
हिताय वैद्यपुत्राणां यथावत् संप्रकाश्यते ॥’

‘द्रव्यावलिं विना वैद्यास्ते वैद्या हास्यभाजनम् ।
द्रव्यावलयभिधानानां तृतीयमपि लोचनम् ॥
द्रव्यावलिनिविष्टानां द्रव्याणां नामनिर्णयम् ।
लोकप्रसिद्धं वक्ष्यामि यथागमपरिस्फुटम् ॥’

—*Dhanwantari Nighanṭu*, Anandasharma, Poona, 1925, pp. 1-2.

‘द्रव्यावलिः समादिष्टा धन्वन्तरिमुखोद्गता ।’

‘शतत्रयं च द्रव्याणां त्रिसप्तत्यधिकोत्तरम् ।
हिताय वैद्यपुत्राणां द्रव्यावल्यां प्रकाशितम् ॥’

—*Ibid.*, p. 7.

In some of the manuscripts the name of the book is *Guḍucyādi Nighanṭu* or *Dravyāvalī Dhanwantariya* (see *ibid.*, f.n., p. 1).

14

धन्वन्तरिपदद्वन्द्वं नत्वा लोकहितार्थिनाम् ।
रसवीर्यविपाकादि द्रव्याणां कथ्यते मया ।

—*Ibid.*, p. 7.

15 *Ibid.*, VI.120-121.

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

See *Gadanigraha*, Part I, Chowkhamba, Varanasi, 1968, pp. 208, 394.
Sārāṅgadhara Saṃhitā, 1.4, 20; 2.6.62-63.

16 *Ibid.*, I.227-228; VII.131-132.

17 *Ibid.*, III.141-142.

18 *Ibid.*, VI.21-22.

19 *Ibid.*, I.30-31.

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

20 *Ibid.*, IV.66; VI.9, 40, 97.

21 *Ibid.*, III.2 (additional); IV.71.

22 *Ibid.*, VI.37-39; III.109-113.

23 *Ibid.*, VI.1 and 5 (*Mahārasas*); *Rasaratna.*, II.2; III.17, 109-113.

24 Sen, Gananath, *Pratyakṣa Sarīram*, Calcutta, 1924, Introduction, pp. 54-55.

Ray, P. C., *History of Chemistry in Ancient and Medieval India* (edited by P. Rây), Calcutta, 1956, pp. 122, 158.

25 *Dhan. Ni.*, VII.87.

26 *Madanpāla Nighanṭu*, Bombay, 1954, p. 109.

27 *Dhan. Ni.*, VI.95-96.

28 *Ibid.*, 7, 61.

29

‘नागार्जुनेन संदिष्टौ रसरश्च रसकावुभौ—’

—*Ibid.*, VI.27 (*Rasas*).

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

³⁰ Sharma and Sardesai, *op. cit.*, pp. vii–viii.

Dhan. Ni., I.66.

The words *Sanaparni* and *S'italavātaka* 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.

³²

रसोनः स्निग्धश्चोष्णश्च लशुनः कटुको गुरुः । . . .

अरुणदत्ताभिप्रायेणैते दर्शिताः ॥

—*Gana.*, 277.

³³ Shastri Nemichandra, *Abhidhānāchintāmaṇi* (Chowkhamba, 1964), introduction, p. 13.

³⁴ *Gana.*, preface to Part I, p. ix; preface to part II, pp. iii and iv.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. x.

³⁶

पर्यायानामान्युच्यन्ते गुडूच्यादेर्यथाक्रमम्-

—*Dhan. Ni.*, p. 7.