

The Ancient Surgical Instruments

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1. Short Communication

Susruta is unanimously accepted to be the “father of surgery”. He is considered to be the eminent disciple of the great divine surgeon “DHANWANTARI”. Susruta was the most beloved, obedient, studious and meritorious disciple of his teacher. He wrote the book “SUSRUTA SAMHITA” that can be considered as the “constitution of surgery”. A good number of principles of surgery mentioned by Susruta in the Samhita cannot be challenged.

Instruments are the main tool for a surgery to conduct successful surgery. For different purposes different types of instruments are needed. The surgeon is the person to choose and select the needed instruments for the proposed surgery. Any fault in this step will invite problem during the surgical procedure.

Susruta has nicely described the surgical instruments in different categories with the description of the character and use of each of them in his Samhita.

The study of Susruta Samhita reveals the following facts about the surgical instruments –

(1)The instruments used to keep the patient and the disease in control during the surgical procedure is known as “YANTRA” [1].

(2)The total number of yantra is 101. Hands are the main yantra as it controls all the other instruments [2].

(3)The 101 yantra are classified into 6 types as follows [3] (Table 1).

(4)The Yantra is advised to prepare from Iron preferably [4].

(5)The Yantra should be manufactured by following the shape and size of the mouth of the different animals, birds etc. and should be used for different purposes [5].

(6)At the time of manufacturing of the Yantra the length, breadth, roughness, sharpness etc. should be fixed as per need of the user (surgeon) . All the Yantra should be strong, beautiful and with easy and comfortable handling facility [6].

(7)The character of the different Yantra as mentioned by Susruta are mentioned in the following table [7] (Table 2).

The idea of Susruta about the surgical instruments has got scientific justification and background. The method of classification, made and use mentioned are praisable.

Hence, a systemic comparative study and analysis on this topic should be considered as the need of time. Such study may reveal many facts regarding the surgical instruments used in ancient India.

Table 1: Showing the types and number of surgical instruments as mentioned by Susruta

Serial No.	Type	Number
1	Swastika	24
2	Sangdangsa	2
3	Tala	2
4	Nadi	20
5	Shalaka	28
6	Upayantra	25

Table 2: Showing the types, length, shape and use of the surgical instruments as mentioned by Susruta

Sl. No.	Name	length	Shape	use
1	Swastika	18 anguli	Like the mouth of lion, tiger, fox, jackel etc.	For removal of foreign body from bone
2	Sangdangsa	16 anguli	May be with handle or without handle	For removal of foreign body from skin, muscles etc.
3	Tala	12 anguli	Like the palate of the fish	For removal of foreign body from ear and nose
4	Nadi	As per need and purpose	Some are prepared with one side opening and some are with both side opening	For removal of foreign body , examination of disease , drainage etc.
5	Shalaka	As per the need and purpose	Earthworm shaped, snake hood shaped etc.	For application of medicine at a specific site , cauterization etc.
6	Upayantra	Of different types, shape and size . thread, gauge, bangle etc. are examples		

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