

HISTORICAL NOTES

MANUSCRIPTS ON ALCHEMY IN INDIA — COMMENTARIES AND EDITIONS

Mira Roy*

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Abstract

The paper tries to provide a list of manuscripts on alchemical traditions of India. These treatises primarily relate to fulfillment of psycho-somatic and tantric goals and describe medicinal herbs and juices used for longevity. They also describe the alchemical processes of extraction and purification of metals and are composed in vernacular Indian languages including Sanskrit.

Key words: Agastya, Alchemy, *Dhātu*, Iatro-chemistry, *Rasaśāstra*, Nāgarjuna

The early alchemical notion is often related to drugs of longevity, use of medicinal herbs and juices associated with religious mysticism and magic. The tantric cult which centered round worship of Śiva and Pārvatī with alchemy as integral part to fulfill their psycho-somatic experimental goals came into vogue in India after the decline of Buddhism. The *Mātrkābheda tantra*, *Kubjikā tantra*, *Rudrayāmala tantra* and others are the principal texts of this tradition. Their emphasis was on transmutation processes for changing baser metals into gold and silver with the help of mercury, and using gold and mercury for rejuvenation and vitality. The preparation of mercury and mercury compounds are generally categorized under the *rasaśāstra* (alchemy and iatro-chemical) texts, and large number of such texts, listed below, came out between 9th and 18th centuries in Sanskrit. The important texts in this category are: *Rasahrdaya* by Govinda Bhāgvat, *Rasaratnākara* by Siddha Nāgārjuna, *Rasārṇava* (anonymous), *Rasendracūdāmaṇi* by Somadeva,

Rasaratnasamuccaya by Vāgbhaṭa and so on. A few other miscellaneous texts on *Pārada*, *Gandhaka*, *Dhātu*, *Dhātuśuddhi*, *Jāraṇa*, *Yantra* etc were composed. It has also not been possible to include a few other texts published in languages other than Sanskrit, like Bengali, Gujarati, Oriya, Malayalam, Marathi, Tamil and Telugu. Some of the Tantric alchemical treatises have now been traced in their Tibetan translations (as recorded in great Tibetan scriptures, *Kanjur* and *Tanjur*), and in the Tamil compositions of *Sittars* (Sanskrit *Siddhas*). Among the *Siddha* system of medicine, the name of Agastya, Bogar, Karuvurar, Nandiśvar, Ramadevar, Romaṛri, Kailāsa Muni and a few others are known.

List of Manuscripts on Alchemy with Commentaries and Editions etc

Agastya Saṃhitā (13th – 14th cent. A.D.): Gemology.

Ākāśabhairava Kalpa (15th – 16th century A.D.), Text on Pyrotechnic vide *Studies in Indian Literary History*, P.K. Gode, Vol II. 1954.

* Former Keeper Sanskrit Manuscript, Department of Sanskrit, University of Calcutta, Senior Research Fellow (History of Science), with the Indian National Science Academy and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, and a Research Associate of PHISPC ; Email: pr_forever@rediffmail.com

- Ānandakaṇḍa of Tadarānanda*: (ed.) Ramakrishna Sastri, Tanjore, 1952.
- Arka-Prakāśa*, attributed to Rāvaṇa: (ed.) Suresh Chandra Gupta (1300 B.S).
- Bhaiṣajyaratnāvalī*—
- Cakradatta* of Cakrapāṇi (11th century AD) Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 4th ed., Varanasi, U.P.
- Citrasūtra (Viṣṇudharmottara Purāna)*—
- Dhātukalpa* (Anon): PLG. Ms. No. 58.—
- Dhātulakṣaṇa* of Bharadvājā—
- Dhātumañjarī* (a part of *Rudrayāmālā Tantra*) AS. Ms. No.10666—
- Dhātumāraṇam* of Śārṅgadhara: PLG Ms. No. 59.—
- Dhāturatnamālā* of Aśvīnikumāra: (three copies) BLK, Ms. No. 1390; VSP. Ms. No. 1077; and As. Ms. No. 8310.—
- Dhāturatnamālā* of Devadatta: PLG Ms. No. 60.—
- Dhātuśuddhi-prakaraṇa*—
- Gandhaka-kalpa*, Government Oriental Manuscript Library, (GOML), Madras—
- Gandhasāra* of Gangādhara, Gode, P.K., *Studies in Indian Literary History*, Vishvesvarananda Vedic Research Institute, Hoshiarpur, vol. III, 1960, pp. 1-12.
- Gandhasāra* (Author unknown)—
- Gandhasāstra* of Lokeśvara, referred in a Buddhist work, 'Nagarasarvasva' of Padmasrī, 1000 A.D.—
- Kādambarī* of Bāṇabhaṭṭa: Ed by Pandit Sri Krishna MohanaSastri with comm of Chandrakala and Vodyotni, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Benares, 1953.
- Kailāsakārikam* (on the medicinal use of mercury) Government Oriental Manuscript Library, (GOML), Madras, XXIII, No. 13113.
- Kaṅkālī-rasa* with the commentary of Merutuṅga—
- Kautuka-cintāmani* (c. A.D. 1500) of Pratāparudradeva, vide Gode, P.K. *The History of Fireworks in India between A.D. 1400 and 1900*. The Indian Institute of World Culture, Bangalore, Transaction No. 17, 1953, pp. 13-14.
- Laghu-ratna-parīkṣā*, pp.13-14—
- Madirārṇava* (Work on distillation) Prior to 14th century A.D.—
- Maṇi-Māhātmya*—
- Mātrkābhedantra*: Ed by Sri Chintamani Bhattacharya, Calcutta Sanskrit Series, No.7, Calcutta, 1933.
- Pāradayoga-śāstra* of Sivarāma Yogindra, Bombay Sanskrit Press, Lahore, 1923-24..
- Rājavyavahāra-kośa* of Raghunath Pandit (1676 A.D.) —
- Rasabheṣajakalpa* or *Rasabhāṣyakalpadīpikā*: (Anon): Madras/D Ms. No. 13195—.
- Rasacaṇḍāṃśu* (also called *Rasaratnasamgraha*): (ed.) Datta, Ballala Barakara, Poona, Yasavanta Press 1919; 2nd ed. Poona, Hanuman Press, 1928.
- Rasacandrikā* of Mādhava Kavindra: As, Ms. No. 4429.
- Rasacintāmani* of Madanāntadeva: Extracts quoted in HCI pp. 363-365.
- Rasadarpaṇa *Rasadhātu-śodhanamāraṇa*: BORI, Ms. No. 15298.
- Rasādhyāya* (The Vārtika on *Kaṅkālīrasa*) attributed to a disciple of KaEkālī. (Ed) IndradevaTripathi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Saṁsthana. Kasi Sanskrit Granthamālā No. 79, Varanasi 1982
- Rasādhikāra* of Harihara: VSP, Ms. No. 125.
- Rasadīpikā-grantha* of Ānandānubhaṭṭa: PLG, Ms. No. 110; AS, Ms. No. 3622 (incomplete).
- Rasagovinda* of Govinda: PLG, Ms. No. 109.
- Rasagrantha* (Anon): Madras/D Ms. No. 13194.
- Rasahr̥daya-tantra* of Govinda Bhagavatpāda : (i) (ed.) Jadavji Trikuṃji Acarya, Bombay, Ayurvediya Granthamālā, No. 1, 1911; (ii) (Eds.) B.V. Subbarayappa, M.M. Sastry, B.S.R. Rao and S.R.N. Murthy (IJHS 1997 Vol. 32, Nos. 1-2).
- Rasakacchapuṭa* of Nāgarjuna: Madras/D Ms. No. 13192 (incomplete).
- Rasakaṅkālī* of Kankālī: PLG, Ms. No. 108.
- Rasakalpalatā* (Anon): AS Ms. No. 4573.
- Rasakalpam* (Part of *Rudrayāmālatantra*): As Ms No. 8876.
- Rasakaumudī* of Jñānacandraśarman: (ed.) S.S. Pranacarya, Bombay Sanskrit Press Lahore, 1923.
- Rasālaṅkāra* of Govinda: BU Ms. No. 310.
- Rasamaṇi* of Harihara: PLG Ms. No. 115
- Rasamañjarī* (Anon): Madras/D Ms. Nos. 4651, 3987, 2258 and 2290
- Rasamañjarī* of śalinātha: CP p. 216; PLG Ms. No. 112 & 113 (also tracts available in AS. and VVRI).
- Rasamārāṇādi-kalpa* (Anon): RORI Ms. No. 12288 (106).
- Rasāmṛtam*: (Ed) Jadavji Trikuṃji Acarya; New Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1951.

- Rasamuktāvalī* (Anon): PLG Ms. No. 116.
- Rasanibandha* (Anon) BIK Ms. No. 1426.
- Rasanighaṅṭu* (Anon): Madras/D Ms. Nos. 13800; 13301.
- Rasapaddhati* of Bindu Paṇita: With the Commentary of Madhava Pandita, (Ed.) Jadavji Trikuṃji Acharya, Ayurvediya Granthamālā No. 14 and 15, Bombay 1925.
- Rasapadmacandrikā* (Anon): (ed.) Jadavji Trikuṃji Acarya, Bombay, 1912.
- Rasapārijāta* (Anon): CP Ms. No. 44.
- Rasapārijāta* of Lakṣmīdhara: BU Ms. No. 303.
- Rasapradīpa* of Rāmacandra (with the commentary of Prāṇanāth): VSP Ms. No. 1080; Banaras Ms. No. 111.
- Rasaprakāśa* of Mūlarājā: VVRI Ms. No. 2259.
- Rasaprakāśasudhākara* of Yaśodhara: (ed.) Jadavji Trikuṃji Acarya, Āyurvediya Granthamālā, No. 2, Bombay, 1911; English Trans. by Damodar Joshi, INSA, 2010
- Rasarāja* (Anon): Banaras Ms. No. 44994.
- Rasarāja* of Mūlarājā: VVRI Ms. No. 2259.
- Rasarāja* of Śaṅkara: CPB Ms. No. 4562.
- Rasarājakalpasamgraha* of Rāma: As Ms. No. 0078.
- Rasarājalakṣmī* (Anon): BIK Ms. No. 1427.
- Rasarājalakṣmī* of Viṣṇudeva (14th Century. A.D.)
- Rasarājaśiromaṇi* of Paraśurāma: PLG Ms. No. 119.
- Rasārṇava*: (ed.) P.C. Ray and Harish Chandra Kaviratna, Asiatic Society, Kolkata, 1910.
- Rasārṇavakalpa*: (ed. and tr.) Mira Roy and B.V. Subbarayappa, Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi, 1976
- Rasārṇavakalpa*: (Anon): Bombay/Kiel Ms. No. 88.
- Rasa raṅjana*: (Anon): PLG Ms. No. 1058; Madras/D Ms. No. 13196-7.
- Rasaratna*(Anon): AS. Ms. No. II 60.
- Rasaratnākara* of Nāgārjuna (Text quoted in P. Ray, *History of Chemistry in Ancient and Medieval India*, Indian Chemical Society, Calcutta, 1956, pp. 311-320).
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- Rasaratnamālā* (Anon): VSP Ms. No. 1078.
- Rasaratnamālā* of Narasiṃha: AS Ms. No. 8479
- Rasaratnamālā* of Nityanātha: CP Ms. No. 49.
- Rasaratnapradīpa* of Kāmeśvara: AS. Ms. No. 1504
- Rasaratnapradīpa* of Rāmarājā: BU Ms. No. 306; CP, Ms. No. 48.
- Rasaratnasamuccaya* of Somadeva: OUSA. Ms. No. 862.
- Rasaratnasamuccaya* (Anon): Madras/D Ms. No. 13198; CP Ms. No. 13208.
- Rasaratnasamuccaya* of Vāgbhaṭa: (ed.) Vinayaka Apte, Anandasrama Sanskrit Series Poona, 1890
- Rasaratnasamuccaya* of Māṅkiyadeva: Preserved in L.D. Institute of Indology
- Rasasāgara* of Kṣemāditya: VVRI Ms. No. 2329
- Rasasaṃgraha* (Anon): CPB Ms. No. 4564; VVRI Ms. No. 2277
- Rasasaṃgrahasiddhānta* (Anon): PLG Ms. No. 122
- Rasasaṃketa*: PLG Ms. No. 121.
- Rasasaṃketa-Kalikā* of Camuṇḍa Kayastha
- Rasaśaṅkara*: PLG Ms. No. 120
- Rasasaṃskāra* (Anon): PLG Ms. No. 123.
- Rasasāra* of Govindācarya: (ed.) Jadavji Trikuṃji Acarya, Ayurvediya Granthamālā, No. 6. Bombay, 1912
- Rasasāra-Saṃgraha* of Gaṅgādhara Paṇḍita: Madras/D Ms. No. 13207.
- Rasasārāṃṛta* of Rāma Sena, Mitra, R.L., Notices of Sanskrit Ms. Vol. I, p. 205.
- Rasasiddhiprakāśa* (Anon): CP Ms. No. 56.
- Rasasudhākara* of Yaśodhara: CPB Ms. No. 4685.
- Rasasudhānidhi* of Vajrarājāsukla: NWP/Allh. Ms. No. 12.
- Rasasūtrasthāna* (Anon): Madras/Oppert Ms. No. 6597.
- Rasavaivāecika*: PLG Ms. No. 109.
- Rasāvātāra* (Anon): BIK Ms. No. 1431.
- Rasavinoda* (Anon): CPB Ms. No. 4563.
- Rasāyana-kāvya* of Natsurama: CPB Ms. No. 4568.
- Rasatarāṅgiṇī*: (ed.) Daśānandaśarma, New Delhi, 1953; AS. Ms. No. 816; CP Ms. No. 58.
- Rasāyanatarāṅgiṇī*: (ed.) Raghunātha Sāstrī (Oria script) Cintamani Press Belgunta, 1929.
- Rasayogamuktāvlī* of Naraharibhaṭṭa, CP. Ms. No. 47
- Rasayogasāra*: (ed.) Hariprapanna Śarma, 2 vols. Varanasi.
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- Rasendracintāmaṇi* of Dhunḍukanātha: VVRI Ms. No. 2247 & 2283.

Rasendracūmaṇi (Anon): Madras/D Ms. No. 13210.

Rasendracūmaṇi of Somadeva: (ed.) Yadav Sarman, Motilal Banarsidass, Lahore, 1932 (vide References)

Rasendrakalpadruma (Anon): VSP Ms. No. 1081.

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Rasendrasārasaṃgraha of Gopala Krishna: (ed.) Upendranath Sen Gupta, Dhanvantari Press, Kolkata, 1912.

Rasendraratnakośa of Deveśvaropadhyāya, VVRI Ms. No. 1136

Rasopaniṣat: (ed.) Sāmbaśivaśastri, Trivandrum Sanskrit Series Trivandrum, 1928.

Rasoparasaśodhana (Anon): BIK Ms. No. 1432.

Rasapradīpa of Nāthadeva: AS. Ms. No. 8477; VSP Ms. No. 9385.

Ratna-Śāstra of Agastya.

Ratnaparīkṣā (6th century.A.D.) of Buddhahamma.

Ratna-saṃgraha.

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Suta-pradīpikā (preparation of mercurial medicines) Govt. Oriental Manuscript Library, Madras

Suvarṇa-tantra: Asiatic Society, Calcutta.

Suvarṇa-raupya-siddhi-śāstra of Jinadattasuri (Vs. 1210) included in *Abhraka-kalpa*, L.D. Institute of Indology, Ahmadabad.

Vipāksūtra (on fermentation), (Ed.) P.L. Vaidya, Library of His Highness, The Maharaja of Bikaner, Poona 1933

Yantroddhāra (on apparatus and appliances)

Yantraprakāra

Abbreviations

AS : A Descriptive catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in The Asiatic Society, Bengal, Compiled by HaraprasadShastri, Kolkata, Vol. III, 1923.

Banaras : Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in The Banaras (Sampurnananda) Sanskrit University, Compiled by T.P. Upadhyaya and Subhadra Jha, Varanasi, 1953.

BIK : A Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in The Library of The Maharaja of Bikaner, Compiled by R.L. Mitra, Kolkata, 1880.

Bombay/Kiel : A Classified Alphabetical Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts, Compiled by F. Kielhorn, Mumbai.

BU : A Descriptive Catalogue of the Samskrta and Prakrta Manuscripts (BhagavatSinghji and H.M. Bhandarkar Collections) in The Library of The University of Bombay, compiled by G.U. Devasthali, Bombay University, Mumbai, 1944.

CP : A Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in Central Provinces, Edited by F. Kielhorn, Nagpur, 1926.

CPB : A Catalogue of Sanskrit and Prakrt Manuscripts in Central Provinces and Berar, Edited by Rai BahadurHiralal, Nagpur, 1926.

HCI : History of Chemistry in Ancient and Medieval India, by P. Ray, Indian Chemical Society, Kolkata, 1956.

IJHS : Indian Journal of History of Science, Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi.

Madras/D : A Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in Madras Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Compiled by KuppuswamySastri, Vol. XII, Chennai, 1918.

Madras/Oppert : List of Sanskrit Manuscripts (Preserved in Madras Government Oriental Library) in South India, Compiled by G. Oppert.

NWP/Allh : A Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in Private Libraries of N. W. Provinces, Compiled by the order of The Government of North-West Provinces, Vol. I, Allahabad, 1874.

OUSA : A Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in Osmania University Sanskrit Academy, Osmania University, Hyderabad.

PLG : A Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts Contained in The Private Libraries of Gujarat, Kathiawad, Kacch, Sindh and Khandesh, Compiled under the Superintendence of G. Buhler, Bombay, Fascicule-4, Government of Bombay, 1871-73.

RORI : A Catalogue of Sanskrit and Prakrt Manuscripts in Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, compiled by Jinavijaya (Jodhpur Collection), Jodhpur, Part III (B) 1960.

VSP : A Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in the VangiyaSahityaParishad, Compiled by ChintaharanChakravarti, Kolkata, 1935.

VVRI : A Catalogue of Manuscripts in the Vishvesvarananda Vedic Research Institute, Compiled by Visvabandhu, Hoshiarpur, 1959.