



Review Article

DECODING THE AYURVEDIC WISDOM OF RAVIGUPTA'S SIDDHASARA SAMHITA AND SIDDHASARA NIGHANTU: A REVIEW OF THEIR LITERARY AND THERAPEUTIC INSIGHTS

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Article info

Article History:

Received: 18-10-2025

Accepted: 16-11-2025

Published: 15-12-2025

KEYWORDS:

Ravigupta,
Siddhasara
Samhita,
Siddhasara
Nighantu, Ayurveda,
Dravyaguna, Post-
Brihatrayi
literature,
Ayurvedic
pharmacology,
Classical texts.

ABSTRACT

Acharya Ravigupta, a distinguished *Ayurvedic* scholar of the early medieval period, composed important work, the "*Siddhasara Samhita*". He has also included "*Siddhasara Nighantu*" at the last part of *Samhita*. These texts represent a mature phase in the evolution of classical Ayurveda following the *Brihatrayi* period. The *Siddhasara Samhita* provides a systematic exposition of Ayurvedic principles, diagnosis, and therapeutic approaches, whereas the *Siddhasara Nighantu* elaborates the pharmacological and qualitative aspects of medicinal substances. Together, they bridge the classical *Samhita* tradition and the later *Nighantu* literature, reflecting both theoretical depth and clinical applicability. Despite their significance, Ravigupta and his contributions remain comparatively unexplored in Ayurvedic scholarship. The *Siddhasara* texts, containing valuable references to *Dravya* and their properties, have not been adequately studied or compiled in modern times. In the present article, an attempt has been made to bring together the available *Shloka*, drug descriptions, and conceptual references from both *Siddhasara Samhita* and *Siddhasara Nighantu* into one comprehensive framework. Illustrative examples from the texts will be discussed further in the review to highlight Ravigupta's literary, therapeutic, and pharmacological insights. The study thus emphasizes the need for deeper exploration of these lesser-studied works and their pivotal role in the historical development of Ayurveda.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, has continuously evolved through refinement and reinterpretation by successive generations of scholars. After the classical triad of *Charaka*, *Sushruta*, and *Vagbhata*, several eminent physicians emerged who compiled, condensed, and elaborated earlier doctrines to suit the needs of their times. Among them, *Bauddhacharya* Ravigupta occupies a significant position as the author of the *Siddhasara Samhita* and its complementary *Siddhasara Nighantu*.

The *Siddhasara Samhita*, composed around the 7th century A.D., was critically edited and published in Roman script by E. R. Emmerick in 1980 (Germany).

In his introduction, Emmerick proposed the following provisional chronology: Vagbhata- 600 A.D., Ravigupta- 650 A.D., and Madhava- 700 A.D., suggesting that Ravigupta was either contemporary with or slightly later than *Vagbhata*. The *Siddhasara Samhita* is a concise yet comprehensive text integrating theoretical foundations with clinical applications. It emphasizes both preventive and curative approaches and demonstrates mastery in *Kayachikitsa*, *Rasayana*, and diagnostic methodology.

At the outset, Ravigupta pays homage to *Bhagavan* Buddha, revealing his Buddhist affiliation. In the concluding verses, he mentions that *Siddhasara Samhita* is composed of thirty-one chapters, comprising about 1,300 *Shloka* in continuous metre, at the request of his elder brother Devagupta, who suffered from a yellow disease (*Pitabhyamaya*). The second chapter, *Dravyagana Adhyaya*, lists thirty-three of the thirty-seven *Gana* described in the *Sushruta Samhita* (*Dravyasangrahaniya Adhyaya*). The final section, known as the *Siddhasara Nighantu*, elaborates on medicinal plants as well as *Lavana Kshara*, *Khanija*

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Quick Response Code	
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and *Jantava Dravya* in *Paryaya Shaili* (synonymic style) across ninety-six verses.

These twin works represent a vital link between the classical *Samhita* and later *Nighantu* such as the *Dhanvantari Nighantu*, *Bhavaprakasha Nighantu*, and *Raja Nighantu*, illustrating Ravigupta's lasting influence on *Ayurvedic* pharmacology and therapeutics. Therefore, the present article emphasizes the literary, historical, and scientific significance of *Acharya* Ravigupta's contributions through the *Siddhasara Samhita* and *Siddhasara Nighantu*, highlighting their role in the transitional development of early-medieval *Ayurveda*.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Source of Data

The present review is based on a comprehensive and critical study of both primary *Ayurvedic* manuscripts and secondary scholarly resources. The main sources of data include:

1. Primary Textual Sources

The *Siddhasara Samhita* and *Siddhasara Nighantu* authored by *Bauddhacharya* Ravigupta (circa 7th century A.D.) served as the principal references. The critical edition published by Emmerick (1980, Leiden) and subsequent editions by Chaukhambha and CCRAS were thoroughly analyzed.

2. Comparative Classical Literature

To contextualize and compare the doctrinal and pharmacological aspects, classical *Ayurvedic* treatises such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga*

Hridaya, *Kashyapa Samhita* and *Madhava Nidana* were reviewed. Further correlation was made with later *Nighantu* like *Dhanvantari Nighantu*, *Raja Nighantu*, and *Bhavaprakasha Nighantu* to trace the continuity of Ravigupta's influence on *Dravyaguna* evolution.

3. Commentaries and Supplementary Texts

Traditional expositions and commentaries by authorities such as *Arunadatta*, *Srikanthadatta*, *Chandrata*, and *Nischalakara* were referred for interpretive clarity. Relevant clinical and pharmacological sections from *Madhava Nidana*, *Chakradatta*, and *Sathvaiyakaras* were also examined for cross-references.

4. Modern and Research-Based Sources

Secondary data were gathered from modern *Ayurvedic* compendia, philological analyses, and peer-reviewed articles indexed in PubMed, Google Scholar, and Scopus. Works of noted scholars such as G. J. Meulenbeld, B. Dash, and P. V. Sharma were utilized for historical correlation, textual authentication, and interpretative framework.

A systematic textual and comparative analysis was undertaken to identify citations, terminological parallels, and pharmacognostic continuities of Ravigupta's formulations across subsequent *Ayurvedic* literature. This facilitated the determination of chronological positioning, drug identification trends, and the evolutionary trajectory of *Dravyaguna Vijnana* in post-*Brihatrayi* tradition.

RESULTS AND OBSERVATIONS

Manuscript Evidence

S.No.	Type of Manuscript	Description/Source
1.	Khotanese version	Found in India Office Library
2.	Sanskrit Palm-leaf MSS (A-E)	Microfilmed under Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project; written in Newari script
3.	Malayalam Fragment (MS M)	Worm-eaten palm-leaf manuscript
4.	Tibetan Version	Obtained from Tanjore
5.	Telugu Script Version (Peris <i>Siddhasara</i>)	Preserved in southern India

References by Later Scholars

S.No.	Scholar/Text	Century	Reference/Quotation
1.	Vrinda (<i>Siddhayoga</i>)	9 th A.D.	Borrowed several verses from <i>Siddhasara</i>
2.	Chandratta (<i>Chikitsakalika</i> , <i>Yogaratnasamuccaya</i>)	10 th A.D.	Cites <i>Siddhasara</i> in <i>Svedana</i> description and compound formulations: पित्तेनस्यान्मृदुः कोष्ठः कूरो वातकफात्मकात् । मध्यमः समदोषत्वान्मात्रा योज्यानुरूपतः॥ चिकित्साकलिका व्याख्या।
3.	Srikanthadatta (<i>Madhava Nidana</i>)	13 th A.D.	Cites Ravigupta in <i>Netraroga</i> (verse 67) In relation to <i>Arjuna</i> disease:

			रविगुप्ते-कृष्णभागे सितं बिन्दुशुक्लं विद्यात्कफात्मात्। रक्तं च शुक्लभागस्थमर्जुनं शोणितोद भवम् ॥ नेत्ररोग 59/67 व्याख्य
4.	<i>Arunadatta (Ashtanga Hridaya Commentary)</i>	13 th A.D.	Quotes Ravigupta on buffalo milk and dietary classifications. यत्तु रविगुप्तः सिद्धसारेऽध्यगीष्ट ग्व्यात् स्निग्धं गुरुतरं माहिषं स्वप्नकृत्पयः॥ He again quoted the verse of <i>Siddhasara Samhita</i> : सिद्धसारे चोक्तम् “अत्युष्णा मण्डकाः पथ्याः शीतलाः गुरुवो मताः॥
5.	<i>Nishcalakara (Ratnaprabha on Chakradatta)</i>	13 th A.D.	Lists direct borrowings from <i>Siddhasara Samhita</i> and mentions Ravigupta by name.

Textual parallels between *Siddhasara Samhita* and *Madhava Nidana*:

S.No.	Disease	Shloka (common in both text)	Source location
1.	<i>Jwara</i>	दक्षापमानसंकुद्धरुद्रंनिःश्वास संभवः । ज्वरोऽष्टधा पृथग्द्वन्द्वसंघातागन्तुजः स्मृतः॥	<i>Siddhasara Samhita</i> and <i>Madhava Nidana</i> : <i>Jwara Chikitsa</i>
2.	<i>Prameha</i>	दन्तादीनां मलाद्यत्वं प्राग्रूपं पाणिपादयोः। दाहश्चिक्कणता देहे तृट् स्वादस्यं च जायते॥	<i>Siddhasara Samhita</i> and <i>Madhava Nidana</i> : <i>Prameha Chikitsa</i>
3.	<i>Atisara</i>	अरुणं फेनिलं रुक्षमल्पमल्पं मुहुर्मुहः। शकृदामं सरूक्शब्दं मारुतेनातिसार्यते॥	<i>Siddhasara Samhita</i> and <i>Madhava Nidana</i> : <i>Atisara Chikitsa</i>
4.	<i>Arsha</i>	पृथग्दोषैः समस्तैश्च शोणितात् सहजानि च। अर्शासि षट् प्रकाराणि विद्याद्गुदवलित्रये॥	<i>Siddhasara Samhita</i> and <i>Madhava Nidana</i> : <i>Arsha Chikitsa</i>

Citations in *Ratnaprabha on Chakradatta* (by *Nishcalakara*)

S.No.	Disease	No. of Citations
1.	<i>Jwara</i>	16
2.	<i>Atisara</i>	1
3.	<i>Raktapitta</i>	2
4.	<i>Rajyakshma</i>	2
5.	<i>Kasa</i>	2
6.	<i>Hikka</i>	2
7.	<i>Daha</i>	1
8.	<i>Unmada</i>	3
9.	<i>Udararoga</i>	2
10.	<i>Pliha</i>	1
11.	<i>Upadamsa</i>	1
12.	<i>Visarpa</i>	2
13.	<i>Kantharoga</i>	1
14.	<i>Nasaroga</i>	1
15.	<i>Apasmara</i>	1
16.	<i>Chhardi</i>	3
17.	<i>Madatyaya</i>	1
18.	<i>Urustambha</i>	1
19.	<i>Anaha</i>	1
20.	<i>Gulma</i>	2
21.	<i>Mutrakricchra</i>	1

22.	<i>Prameha</i>	1
23.	<i>Shotha</i>	1
24.	<i>Bhagandara</i>	3
25.	<i>Kustha</i>	6
26.	<i>Jihvaroga</i>	1
27.	<i>Karnaroga</i>	1
28.	<i>Netraroga</i>	1

By the name of the book *Siddhasara* (by *Nishcalakara*)

S.No.	Disease	No. of Citations
1.	<i>Atisara</i>	2
2.	<i>Pandu</i>	3
3.	<i>Madatyaya</i>	1
4.	<i>Apasmara</i>	1
5.	<i>Krimi</i>	1
6.	<i>Rajyakshma</i>	1
7.	<i>Nadivrana</i>	1
8.	<i>Udavarta</i>	1
9.	<i>Mutrakricchra</i>	1
10.	<i>Vrana</i>	1
11.	<i>Visarpa</i>	2
12.	<i>Pliharoga</i>	1
13.	<i>Upadamsa</i>	1
14.	<i>Virechanadhyaya</i>	1

Nischalakara also quotes the verse in his commentary in the chapter of *Krimi* as:

“ज्वरो विवर्णता शूलं हृद्रोगं सदनं भ्रम।”

It clearly shows that his explanations in *Chakradatta* follow the same style seen earlier in *Siddhasara*.

Textual Structure and Internal Evidence

Siddhasara Samhita comprises 31 chapters and ~1300 *Shloka*, composed in *Anustubh* metre.

The author identifies himself:

सार्वं प्रणम्य सर्वज्ञं दुर्गगुप्तस्य सूनुना।

संहिता सिद्धसारेयं रविगुप्तेन वक्ष्येत॥ सिद्धसार संहिता।

“Having bowed down to the omniscient Lord, this *Siddhasara Samhita* is being composed by *Acharya Ravigupta*, the son of *Durgagupta*.”

This verse serves as the introductory *Mangala Shloka* of the text, confirming both the authorship and title of the work right at the beginning.

Ravigupta was the son of *Durgagupta* and a devotee of *Bhagavan Buddha*.

In the concluding portion of the text, *Ravigupta* provides additional internal information about the treatise, stating:

“एकत्रिंशदिमेऽध्याया निबद्धास्तन्त्रपद्धतौ।

अनुष्टुप्छन्दसा श्लोकत्रयोदशशतान्विता॥

नियोगाद्देवगुप्तस्य भ्रातुर्जेष्ठस्य संहिताम्।

पाण्डुनांवासमुद्दिश्य रविगुप्तोऽकरोदिमाम्”॥ (31/32-33)

This colophon confirms that the *Siddhasara Samhita* comprises 31 chapters in *Anustubh* metre (around 1300 verses) and was composed by *Ravigupta* for his elder brother *Devagupta*, who suffered from a yellow disease (*Pandu Roga*).

In *Tantradyaya* (1st chapter), he describes the eight branches of *Ayurveda*:

तस्य त्वाङ्गि शालाक्य कायभूतचिकित्सतः ।

शल्यगदवयोबालरक्षा बीजविवर्धनम् ।

Also describe fundamentals of *Dravyaguna* principles:

- Six *Rasa* and their effects on *Dosha*
- Two *Virya*: *Shita* and *Ushna*
- Two *Vipaka*: *Madhura* and *Katu*
- Proper administration of *Dravya*.

In *Dravyaganadhyaya* (2nd chapter), 33 *Gana* are mentioned following *Sushruta Samhita*, but with some renaming:

<i>Sushruta Samhita</i>	<i>Siddhasara Samhita</i>
<i>Vidarigandhadi</i>	<i>Sthiradi</i>
<i>Viratarvadi</i>	<i>Viravrakshadi</i>
<i>Shalasaradi</i>	<i>Shaladi</i>

Panchamoola Classification

- Mahat Panchamoola
- Laghu Panchamoola
- Valli Panchamoola
- Kantaka Panchamoola
- Trina Panchamoola

He has not mentioned the *Jivana* and *Madhyam Panchmoola* of *Charaka*. He has taken same *Dravya* as *Sushruta* in *Mahat Panchmoola* but in *Laghu Panchamoola* he includes *Eranda* in place of *Gokshura*.

पृश्नपर्णीस्थिरैण्डवृहती द्वयसंयुतम् ।

बृहणं वातपित्तघ्न पञ्चमूलं कनिष्ठकम् ॥

These drugs are also included in *Laghu Panchamoola* by *Chakrapanidutta* in his commentary '*Bhanumati*' on *Sushruta Samhita*. This tradition is also available in *Kashyapa Samhita* such as:

एरण्डवर्ज्यं खुड्डाकं पञ्चमूलं श्रुतं हितम् । खिल. स्थान-10/83

In *Trina Panchmoola* he has mentioned *Kasadevyia* by which *Kasa* (*Saccharum spontaneum* L.) and *Ikshu* (*Saccharum officinarum* L.) have been taken.

कुशः कासद्वयं दभौ नडधेति तृणोद्भवम् ।

पित्तकृच्छ्रहरं पञ्चमूलं वस्तिविशोधनम् ॥

He followed the pattern of *Sushruta*:

कुशकाशनलदर्भ काण्डेक्षुका इति तृणसंज्ञकः। सु.सूत्र 38/76

Parallel in Chakradutta

In the 14th chapter, *Pandukamaladhayaya*, Ravigupta records an important formulation- *Phalatrikadi Kvatha*, for the management of *Pandu* and *Kamala*. The verse reads:

फलत्रिकामतावासातिका भूनिम्बनिम्बजः।

क्वाथः क्षौद्रयुंतो हन्यात् पाण्डुरोग सकामलकम् ॥

This very recipe is also found verbatim in *Chakradatta*. The commentator *Nischalakara* explicitly remarks that *Chakrapanidatta* has borrowed this formulation from *Siddhasara Samhita*, demonstrating the textual precedence and authority of Ravigupta's work. Such parallels highlight that *Siddhasara Samhita* was one of the source texts for later medieval compendia.

This evidence further supports the view that Ravigupta's treatise preserves valuable, unique, and otherwise lost clinical traditions. From a historical perspective, this enhances the importance of the text. For contemporary researchers in *Dravyaguna* and formulation science, *Siddhasara Samhita* offers a rich repository of early therapeutic insights that merit deeper study and experimental validation.

Nighantu Portion

Contains 96 verses, following *Paryaya-Shaili* style.

Mentions four classes of substances:

1. *Vanaspati Dravya*
2. *Lavana-Kshara Dravya*
3. *Khanija Dravya*
4. *Jantava Dravya*

Introduces new synonyms not found in earlier *Samhita*:

Aralu/Dirghavrnta for *Katvanga*

Kapotavanka → *Suryabhakta*

Tamalaki → *Ajhata*

Murva (*Marsdenia tenacissima* (Roxb.) Moon) → *Murangi / Taskara-snayu*.

DISCUSSION

The manuscript evidence confirms that *Siddhasara Samhita* circulated widely from northwest India to southern and Tibetan regions, reflecting early medieval scholastic transmission.

Textual comparison reveals that *Madhava Nidana*, *Chakradatta*, and *Vrinda's Siddhayoga* borrowed directly from *Siddhasara Samhita*, placing Ravigupta chronologically between *Vagbhatta* and *Madhavakara* (7th century A.D.).

The occurrence of formulations like *Phalatrikadi Kvatha* in later works such as *Chakradatta*, with explicit acknowledgement by *Nischalakara*, further confirms the textual influence and chronological seniority of *Siddhasara Samhita*.

The systematic division into 31 chapters and inclusion of *Dravyaguna* principles demonstrate Ravigupta's bridging of *Samhita* and *Nighantu* traditions.

His emphasis on *Paryaya-shaili* drug nomenclature inaugurated a trend that shaped all later *Nighantu*, enabling accurate *Dravya* identification across regions.

The inclusion of new synonyms and classification of drugs into *Vanaspati*, *Khanija*, *Jantava*, etc., marks an early step toward pharmacognostic differentiation. Thus, Ravigupta's contribution extends beyond compilation he restructured *Ayurvedic* material for practical and didactic clarity.

CONCLUSION

Acharya Ravigupta's *Siddhasara Samhita* and its *Nighantu* portion together mark a seminal transition between the classical *Brihatrayi* corpus and the later medieval *Nighantu* literature. The presence of multiple manuscript versions- from Khotanese, Sanskrit, and regional scripts- authenticates its antiquity and affirms its early medieval origin (circa 7th century A.D.). Ravigupta's adoption of the *Paryaya-Shaili* (synonymic style), expansion of *Dravya-gana*

groupings, and rational therapeutic formulations reflect a sophisticated evolution in *Dravyaguna Vijnana* and clinical reasoning.

This review highlights that the *Siddhasara Samhita* serves as a vital bridge between theoretical exposition and applied therapeutics, integrating principles of internal medicine, rejuvenation (*Rasayana*), and ethical medical practice. Its *Nighantu* portion contributes significantly to the systematization of pharmacological knowledge and regional drug identification.

In sum, Ravigupta's contributions illuminate the continuity and innovation of Ayurveda's intellectual tradition. Future interdisciplinary research- philological, pharmacognostic, and textual- should further explore these works to standardize ancient formulations, validate regional herb correlations, and deepen understanding of Ayurveda's scientific and literary evolution.

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Cite this article as:

Udit Verma, Rashmi Srivastava, Sandhya Bhandari. Decoding the Ayurvedic Wisdom of Ravigupta's *Siddhasara Samhita* and *Siddhasara Nighantu*: A Review of Their Literary and Therapeutic Insights. *International Journal of Ayurveda and Pharma Research*. 2025;13(11):69-74.

<https://doi.org/10.47070/ijapr.v13i11.3874>

Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared

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