

An Ancient Indian Method of Penis Lengthening

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Further to the recent references to penile lengthening published in this *Journal* (Kompanje, 2006; Moeliker, 2007), I provide historical references to the topic from India.

The classic Sanskrit medical corpus, entitled the *Sushruta Samhita* (ca. the 3rd–4th century AD), derives its name from the famed Indian “father of surgery,” Sushruta (ca. the 6th century BC). In this text, there are a number of references that allude to diseases of the genitalia that result from attempts at penile lengthening (Bhishagratna, 1911). The section on pathology (Nidana–sthana) specifically states:

...through practice of getting the (penis abnormally elongated by pricking the) bristles of a water parasite (Suka) into its body... [and] a man who foolishly resorts to the practice of getting it abnormally elongated and swollen by plastering it with Suka (a kind of irritating water insect) and not in the usual officinal way. (pp. 81, 94)

The latter segment implies that there was an accepted method of performing this procedure. Furthermore, cross referencing this information with another well-known ancient Indian text, *Kama Sutra* (ca. the 4th–6th century AD), the part describing “The Means of Attracting Others to One’s Self” becomes evident that the practice of the “Suka”

technique was still present and accepted at the time of its composition (Burton, 1883):

When a man wishes to enlarge his lingam, he should rub it with the bristles of certain insects that live in trees, and then, after rubbing it for 10 nights with oils, he should again rub it with the bristles as before. By continuing to do this a swelling will be gradually produced in the lingam, and he should then lie on a cot, and cause his lingam to hang down through a hole in the cot. After this he should take away all the pain from the swelling by using cool concoctions. The swelling, which is called “Suka,” and is often brought about among the people of the Dravida country, lasts for life. (pp. 174–175)

From these accounts, it can be discerned that the application of the bristles of a “Suka” insect results in an immune mediated reaction that leads to swelling and permanent penile organomegally. The *Kama Sutra* alludes to the finding that these insects are found in trees, whereas in the *Sushruta Samhita*, the application of water-borne insect bristles leads to genital pathology.

One potential candidate insect that could cause such organomegally in India would be mosquitoes as vectors of filariasis and subsequent elephantiasis (Das, Ramaiah, Augustin, & Kumar, 2001). However, the ancient Indians were clearly aware of mosquitoes, and typically did not call them Suka, but knew them as Masaka (Bhishagratna, 1911).

Suka, therefore, could be a name for one or a variety of arthropods that could transmit and result in genital filariasis and subsequent elephantiasis, cause myiasis by infestation of tissue with fly larvae (Kahn, 1999) or bring about some other immune mediated condition that induces penile organomegally. This practice no longer seems to exist in the Indian subcontinent.

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