Importance of Sanskrit language in learning Ayurveda

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ABSTRACT

Textual knowledge and practical knowledge is inevitable to learn and practice any scientific subjects. To master the text, one must master the language in which the original text has been written. The science of Ayurveda has written in Sanskrit. Sanskrit is a language which has a scientifically structured grammar. By adding the prefixes and suffixes, it gives varied meaning to a single word. So, one has to learn it perfectly while handling that language. Even the same root can express different meanings as they are listed under different groups which undergo various grammatical processes. The knowledge in the learning tools used is very important in learning the scientific scripts written in Sanskrit.

Key words: Sanskrit, Ayurveda, Language, Prefixes, Suffixes.

INTRODUCTION

The Sanskrit is the language which upholds the legacy of the democratic India, worldwide. It is also known as ‘Devabhasha’ i.e. ‘language of God’. The term ‘Sanskrit’ is derived from the conjoining of the prefix ‘Sam’ meaning ‘Samyak’ which indicates ‘perfectly’, and ‘Krit’ that indicates ‘done’. It is the first language to make grammar of its own and the term Sanskrit means ‘refined’, ‘consecrated’ and ‘sanctified’. In the present scenario, Sanskrit language is helpful in understanding various Ayurvedic text which has a unique style of expression. Sanskrit is an ancient Language in which the Vedas were written. The science of Ayurveda is emerged as a separate scientific branch even though the glimpse of this science can be seen in all the four Vedas, Shaddarshanas, Puranas and in many other scientific and literary texts. The structure of Ayurvedic books, its technical terms, the grammar, the tools used to unlock and understand the texts etc. are adopted from the other texts written in Sanskrit. This language was constructed by the great grammarian Panini, to enable scientific ideas to be expressed with great precision, logic and elegance. The grammar was fully described by Panini, who composed 3959 rules for Sanskrit.\[1\]

Therefore, the knowledge in other texts written in Sanskrit becomes pivoted to understand the Ayurveda text. So, to learn Ayurveda in deep, one should have a perfect knowledge in Sanskrit in which the Samhitas are written. Another characteristic of Sanskrit is contextual specificity, i.e. capability to express multiple meaning by a single word according to the contexts and subject matter dealt with there. All these factors are taken to be important in learning Ayurveda textbook. So, this article is an attempt to review
Sanskrit language with its importance in learning and understanding of Ayurveda Samhitas.

Relation of Samhitas with language

Characteristics of language

Ayurveda, the science of life, deals with vast topics not only related to diseases and treatment, but also in all aspects related to maintaining the health of an individual. These concepts are embedded in the language Sanskrit. Sanskrit is a synthetic language. A single word of this language presents before us a synthesis of several ideas. Sanskrit words are divided into two categories - nouns and verbs. There are twenty one suffixes in the noun category and nine suffixes in the verbal category. The noun is divided into seven different cases called Pradhama, Dwitiya, Tretiya etc. Each Vibhakthi expresses the meaning of preposition along with noun. In addition to these suffixes they are divided into ‘singular’ (Eka-vachana), ‘dual’ (Dwi-vachana) and ‘plural’ (Bahu-vachana) and the dual is the particular character of Sanskrit language that differs it from other languages. Sanskrit is a highly inflected language with three grammatical genders - ‘Masculine’ (Pullingam), ‘feminine’ (Streelingam) and ‘neuter’ (Napumsakalingam). Even these genders can express certain specific sense in the meaning of the word.

For example:

बुधः (पुंसकलिङ्ग) - बुधयित श्यदयते हित ।

बुधा (प्रीतिलिङ्ग) - शोिणतम ।

बुधं (नपुंसकलिङ्ग) - बुधयित बुधं ्  इयश्०श ấyदं करोित ।

Example for Sandhi - योगूर्वबैयाय = य: + पूर्वबैयाय

In a Sanskrit sentence, sometimes two or more words having some syntactical and semantic connection give up their respective endings and embrace one another. This feature of the joining of words is called ‘Samasa’ (compound).

Example for Samasa - अय्य मध्यधोष्ट्रं च - अधोमयोऽधर्मिनः

In Ayurveda, the word ‘व्याख्यात्व’ means ‘व्याख्यात्यनि’, i.e. within the limit of the strength of the patient. Here the importance is not for the strength but it is given to the word ‘within’. There are some strict rules to derive a word to express a perfect meaning to the context where it is used and it is termed as Nirukti. The Nirukti of Vata Dosha is - ‘Va Gathi Gandhanayoho: Vaayu’[4] ‘Gati’ means movement and ‘Gandhana’ that which pierces or making perforations. Karmani and Karttari Pratyayas are added from Krit and Unadi Pratyayas. So that which has the Karma or that which is a tool to make movement or making perforations is Vata or Vayu. If Gati and Gandhana are there, then ‘Laghutva’ and ‘Rukshata’ are necessary. ‘Suksham Guna’ of Vata also can be assumed along with the ‘Chalathwa’ property. Here from the Nirukti of the Vata, the Gunas inherited in the particular Dosha can be perceived as per mentioned in Samhithas.[5]

Some of the Sanskrit words don’t have any accurate English meaning or term. - For example, the word ‘Mantra’, its Nirukti is ‘Mananat Trayate Ithi Mantra’[6] and its english meanings shall be instrument of thought, speech, sacred speech, incantation, spell, counsel etc.[7] Here in these...
Ayurveda and is helpful in the diagnosis of diseases. Nyaya Darshana and Ayurveda accepted the concepts of Punarjanma and Moksha. Ayurveda take all the Yoga principles and practices in the name of Satwovajaya and Daivyapapashraya Chikitsa. Pranayama takes part an important role in Ayurveda is also adopted from Darshana Sastra. Vaisheshika Darshana considered attainment of Moksha is through the knowledge of six Padarthas.

Ayurveda concepts are explained in the form of Slokas having lots and lots of hidden meanings and interpretation. An in-depth knowledge in Sanskrit is essential to understand Ayurveda Sastra. Thus, Sastra adopted many tools like Tantrayukt, Tantraguna, Ardhasraya, Sabdarchabodaka Vritti etc. from the Sanskrit literature.

Among them, Tantrayukt plays an important role in analyzing the Sastra. The purpose of Tantrayukt is to clarify whether the sentence, consist of hidden ideas which can be extracted by Vakyayojana and Athityojana. Manana and Chindana of the Sastra need prior knowledge of Tantrayukt. Tantraguna is also an apparatus which help the Sastra to maintain its qualities. The Stanas of Samhitas are arranged properly which show the Kramagatartha Tantrayukt.[10]

Nyayas are also used as a tool to define complicated principles and notions in a simple form. The Ayurveda Samhitha commentators explain more about Nyayas for transfer the felicitous meanings. While explaining the positioning of Chatuskas, Kalpana Chatuska is mentioned after Nirdhesha Chatuska. Because, before knowing about the treatment procedures, Acharya’s explains about the Roga, Sarera, Sadhyasyadhy of Rogas etc. for easy understanding. The relevance of arrangement can be explained with the help of Suchikhata Nyaya. Like that ‘Khadadishu Mridadivat Nyaya’ is essential for explaining the thought of Samavayi Sambanda of Doshas in the formation of diseases, which are very useful for the scholars to grasp the Sastra. Ayurveda gave importance to Khalekpatha Nyaya and Ketarakulya Nyaya for explaining the basic concept of Dhatuparina etc. a
concept of formation of Dhatus from the preceding Dhatus. Nyayas can provide a path into the hidden concepts of Samhithas.

The Upamas are also the outcome of the Sanskrit literature. With the help of similarities with a worldly object, the approach can be efficiently understandable. Samhitas mention several similes for explaining Chikitsa, Roga, Nidana etc. In Jwara Chikitsa, Acharya mention that the increase of Kapha during the intake of Peya is compared to the ‘slush by the rain fall on sand’[11]. The colour of Ojas is correlated with ghee and taste is like Madhu.[12] Here, these Upamas are used to get the idea about an unknown substance - Ojas. Like that, colour of Sudha Rakta can be figured out by the similes Tapaneeya Indragoba, Gunjaphala Savarna etc.[13] Acharyas used similes for explaining the anatomy of heart with a lotus facing downward.[14] Upamas are also used in case of diagnosis of diseases also, Kusta Rogi can be identified with the resemblance of skin with the Udumbara fruit.[15] Some of the symptoms of diseases can also identified with the Upama used in the names like Urustambha, Krostitu Sirsha, Padadaha etc.

The Sanskrit is also contributed in to the Dravyaguna Sastra for identifying a drug. The synonyms which are used for the drugs are based on their morphological character, its Karma, Guna or related with their therapeutic character. The morphology of a plant can also be understood with their synonyms. The drugs like ‘Jadila’ and ‘Lomasha’ are the synonyms of ‘Jadamamsi’ and it’s because of the roots having hairy parts. ‘Peetadharu’ is the synonym of ‘Devadaru’ because its wood is yellow. Like that the Madhura Rasa of ‘Draksha’ can be inferred by its synonym ‘Swadhi’ and poisonous character of the fruit of ‘Kupeelu’ from ‘Vishathintu’. The synonyms also help in understanding the action of drugs like Medhya to the drug Sankhupuspi, as it is used to promote intellect, Haridra as ‘Jwaranthika’ cures Jwara, ‘Vishagni’ acts as antidote for poison.

Ayurveda embraces the style of other Sanskrit books and epics. The famous Indian epics like Ramayana followed a path of dividing the book into ‘Kanda’ form and then having many subdivisions. Charaka Samhita also grouped the chapters into different ‘Chatuskas’ like Beshaja Chatuska, Kalpana Chatuska, Nirdesha Chatuska etc. Astanga Hridaya grouped whole Sutrastana into two groups like Karmakanda and Jnana Kanda. Beeja Chatuska is the methodology adopted by Susrutha to explain the Samhitha. Sanskrit grammar apprehends the concise ideas of Samhita in its Slokas. This Sutra concepts propounded by Panini influence the style of Samhitas also.

Language gives importance to ordering in enumerating the science. In Ayurveda, ‘Shad Rasas’ follows a particular order and the Samhita maintain that order in the succeeding Slokas also. The Doshas, Dhatus, Mala etc. are also mentioned like this. An Ayurveda scholar must be able to know this sequence for better understanding of Sastra and also in practical applications.

Some notions explained in Samhitas have references in the epics. In the Ramayana ‘Kishkinda-Khanda’ Masanumasa Garbha vridhi is explained similar to the Ayurveda classics.[16] The Mahabharata have the explanation regarding the Swastya Lakshana and Trigunas. Ayurveda may be termed as a separate science after getting the references from different Vedic textbooks and epics.

Methodology of learning and teaching Ayurveda

Adhyayana vidhi is a method to be followed for understanding Sastra. Samhithakara used some methodologies to facilitate easy learning and is beneficial for Trividha Shishya Buddh. According to Vedacharyas there are five steps to know Vedas - Pada, Paada, Krama, Ratha and Jada. Among them ‘Ratha’ and ‘Jada’ are used by scholars for expressing the subjects. The Ayurveda is also considered as Upaveda, therefore the Adhyayana Vidhi for Vedas are also applicable for it.

In Ayurveda Paata, Avabodha, Anustana, Tatvikhyacharya and Swadhya are the methodologies used for studying Sastra in a deeper sense. These are considered to be authentic and established.
The Paata (reading) is the first Adhyayana Vidhi mentioned by Ayurveda Sastra. For reading the Samhitas the basic knowledge of language is required i.e. Pada-jnana and it can be attained only through the knowledge of Aksharas (alphabet). Every letter has its own articulation and accent. To read that word, correct pronunciation is necessary. Even though one has the awareness of letters, but pronunciation is wrong, then acquiring the meaning is difficult.

Sanskrit textbook follows Pada-Jnana, Padartha-Jnana (knowledge about word meaning), Vaakya-Jnana (knowledge about sentence), Vaakyarthajnana (knowledge about word meaning) and Avanava (rearranging). A word is a combination of a root word and a suffix to give a meaning. Therefore Sandhi, Samasa, Pratyaya, Nirukti, Nishpatti etc. are needed for Padarthajnana.

After reading the Samhitha, Paadavabhoda i.e. interpretation of it is indispensable for conveying the content. Thus, to know the reading portion the knowledge of each word (Padartha) and the meaning of the sentence (Vakyarthajnana) in which the words belong is very much essential. Avaboda is crucial in Ayurveda Sastra because the interpretation of a concept depends on the author who reads. It is of the specific features of sanskrit. As Ayurveda is a practical science, then practical experience (Anustana), interaction with experts in the same fields and self-learning is unavoidable.

Ayurveda is a vast Sastra which extends the knowledge in eight branches. These Ashtangas are explained in the Samhitas of ancient Acharyas like Caraka, Susruta and Vagbhata in the different Sthanas. But the Samhithas mentioned deep and elaborate concepts in a concise manner as Slokas and is difficult for the Alpabudhis to understand. ‘Astamargas’ are the tool for understanding Sastra. It is used for both teaching and learning purposes.

**CONCLUSION**

For reading and understanding the textual meaning Sanskrit language plays an important role. Without Sanskrit knowledge, it is impossible to understand the essence of the Indian philosophies such as Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya etc. which are the pillars of Ayurveda and also the Sastrabhaga. Acharyas say that the results depend on the one who is able to handles the Sastra. If we learn Samhita without having the knowledge of its Prayojana, it is like ‘Kakadhanta-Pareeksha. In the present era Ayurveda Shastras upliftment is based on the analysis of its content and with the correct interpretation. Therefore, for a total appreciation of Ayurveda one must acquire basic knowledge of Sanskrit. Thus, inspire new Ayurveda scholars to follow Sanskrit books for gaining abundant knowledge.

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