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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

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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*, *Tritiya* 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 :

बुक्क (नपुंसकलिङ्ग) - बुक्कयति बुक्बुक् इत्यव्यक्तशब्दं करोति ।

बुक्का (स्त्रीलिङ्ग) - शोणितम् ।

बुक्कः (पुल्लिङ्ग) - बुक्कयति शब्दयते हति ।^[2]

Style of Language

The *Sanskrit* language is believed to have been generated by observing the natural progression of sounds created in the human mouth. This is one of the prime reasons why *Sanskrit* has been rich in poetry.^[3] There are two types of writing style in the language, one is *Sloka* type and the other is prose type. The *Sloka* type writing style strictly follows the style of 'meters' (*Vritta*) and they are on the basis of the number of words in the '*Paada*' (each sentence). So, there is a need of limiting the words to write

them. Here comes the importance of '*Sandhi*' (joining words) and '*Samasa*' (compounding words). They created particular rules for *Sandhi*, where the case ending will not be deleted. There are various type of *Sandhi* and in most of them, two vowels can be replaced with a single vowel or consonant. They reduce the '*Akshara*' (alphabets) and the '*Maatra*' (duration of pronunciation) to attain the style of 'meters' (*Vritta*).

Example for *Sandhi* - योऽपूर्ववैधाय = यः + पूर्ववैधाय

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* - अधश्च मध्यश्चोर्ध्वं च - अधोमध्योर्ध्वानि ।

In *Ayurveda*, the word 'यथाबलं' means 'बलं अनतिक्रम्य', 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

meanings none of them are capable to convey the spiritual aspect in the word. But with the *Nirukti*, one can understand the perfect meaning. No other language has an appropriate word to express the meaning of a *Sanskrit* word used in many contexts. A single word can be derived in different ways to get different meaning as per the context and the subject dealt with. - For example, the word '*Roga*'-'*Rujyathe Anena Ithi Roga*' and '*Rujathi Ithi Roga*'.^[8] Both having the meaning 'a disease', but in the first derivation disease is acting as a tool to give pain and in the second derivation, disease itself independently giving pain because of the suffixes added along with the root.

Except some words most of the *Sanskrit* words have the ability to provide a complete meaning without any support of adjacent word. These are the words which have context specificity. '*Anekarthapada*' (context specify words) is the unique feature of *Sanskrit* literature, which means the meaning of a word changes according to the context. *Ayurveda* is the science that hides the *Sastrabhaga* inside *Slokas*. Therefore, appropriate meaning of a particular word is necessary to understand the concept of *Sastra*. The accent of the words is also capable to change the meaning of a word.

Ayurveda adopts several topics and concept from different *Darshanas*. Many topics which are merely mentioned in *Ayurveda* are elaborated in *Darshana Sastra*. Each *Darshana* contributes its own part to the *Ayurveda Sastra*. The contributions start from the very first line of *Astanga Hridaya Sutrastana*.^[9] Here *Acharya* doesn't detail about the '*Ragadi*'. The word '*Adhi*' denotes *Dweshya*, *Mada*, *Moha*, *Matsarya* etc. along with *Raga* and this list is obtained through the knowledge in *Sanskrit* and other related texts in the language.

Darshanas also have their own contributions. Concept regarding *Tridosha*, *Triguna*, *Purusha*, *Satkaryavada* etc. are the contributions of *Sankhya Darshana* to *Ayurveda*. The *Pramana*'s like *Pratyaksha*, *Anumana* and *Aptopadesha* are the opinion of *Sankhya Darshana* for attaining knowledge is adopted by

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 *Satwavajaya* and *Daivavyapashraya 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 *Tantrayukti*, *Tantraguna*, *Ardhasraya*, *Sabdarthabodaka Vritti* etc. from the *Sanskrit* literature.

Among them, *Tantrayukti* plays an important role in analyzing the *Sastra*. The purpose of *Tantrayukti* is to clarify whether the sentence, consist of hidden ideas which can be extracted by *Vakyayojana* and *Arthayojana*. *Manana* and *Chindana* of the *Sastra* need prior knowledge of *Tantrayukti*. *Tantraguna* is also an apparatus which help the *Sastra* to maintain its qualities. The *Stanas* of *Samhithas* are arranged properly which show the *Kramagatartha Tantrayukti*.^[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*, *Sareera*, *Sadhysadhya* 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 *Khalekapotha Nyaya* and *Ketarakulya Nyaya* for explaining the basic concept of *Dhatuparinama* i.e. a

concept of formation of *Dhathus* from the preceding *Dhatu*. *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. *Samhithas* 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 Indragobha*, *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*, *Krostuka 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 *Samhithas* 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 *Samhithas* have references in the epics. In the *Ramayana* '*Kishkinda-Khanta*' *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 Buddhi*. 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*, *Tatvidhyacharya* and *Swadhyaya* 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), *Vaakyartha Jnana* (knowledge about word meaning) and *Anvaya* (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 meaning of the read portion the knowledge of each word (*Padartha*) and the meaning of the sentence (*Vakyartha*) 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*.^[17] 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 handle the *Sastra*,^[18] 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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