

**SANKHYA DARSANA IN AYURVEDIC: A REVIEW OF ITS
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ABSTRACT

Sāṅkhya Darśana, one of the six classical systems of Indian philosophy, provides a metaphysical scaffold for Ayurvedic theory and practice. This review critically examines the assimilation and reinterpretation of Sāṅkhya principles—such as Satkāryavāda, the duality of Puruṣa and Prakṛti, Guṇa theory, and the doctrine of evolution—within the Caraka Saṃhitā. Drawing from primary Sanskrit sources, the article highlights Ayurveda's philosophical pluralism and its pragmatic adaptation of metaphysical constructs for clinical reasoning. The study underscores the enduring relevance of Sāṅkhya in shaping Ayurvedic epistemology and therapeutic logic.

KEYWORDS: Sāṅkhya Darśana, Caraka Saṃhitā, *Satkāryavāda*, *Guṇa*, *Prakṛti-Puruṣa*, Ayurvedic Epistemology.

INTRODUCTION

The philosophical underpinnings of Ayurveda are deeply rooted in the darśana traditions of Bhārata. Among these, Sāṅkhya Darśana—codified in Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṅkhyakārikā*—offers a dualistic metaphysics that distinguishes between the conscious principle (Puruṣa) and the

unconscious, creative principle (Prakṛti). Caraka Saṃhitā, while not a philosophical treatise per se, integrates these doctrines to construct a coherent framework for understanding health, disease, and therapeutics.

Caraka acknowledges the foundational role of Sāṅkhya in the Trisutra¹—Hetu, Linga, and Auśadha—where causality, symptomatology, and treatment are philosophically grounded (Caraka Sūtrasthāna 1.24). This review explores how Caraka reconfigures Sāṅkhya's metaphysical constructs to serve Ayurveda's clinical and soteriological aims.

Satkāryavāda and Ayurvedic Causality

Sāṅkhya's Satkāryavāda posits that the effect (kārya) preexists in its cause (kāraṇa), and transformation is real (Parināmavāda). Īśvarakṛṣṇa states²: "*Asadakaraṇād upādānagrahaṇāt sarvasambhavābhāvāt śaktasya śakyakaraṇāt kāraṇabhāvāc ca satkāryam*" (Sāṅkhyakārikā 9). Caraka mirrors this in his description of dhātu transformation³: "*Rasād raktaṃ, raktād māmśaṃ...*" (Caraka Cikitsāsthāna 15.13), affirming that each tissue arises from its predecessor through inherent potential. Samkhya's Satkāryavāda posits that the effect preexists in its cause, and transformation is real (Parināmavāda). Charaka's descriptions of embryogenesis, dhātu metabolism, and disease progression reflect this causality, where the manifest (kārya) is a transformation of the unmanifest (kāraṇa). For instance, the evolution of rasa into rakta and subsequent dhātus mirrors Samkhya's causal continuum.

Prakṛti-Puruṣa Dualism and Ontological Adaptation

Sāṅkhya maintains a strict dualism⁴: "*Dṛṣṭaṃ śrutam anumānam ca trividhaṃ pramāṇam*" (Sāṅkhyakārikā 4). Caraka, however, often refers to Avyakta as a composite of both principles, allowing for a more integrative ontology. In embryological contexts⁵, he states: "*Garbhaḥ puruṣa-prakṛti-samyogāt*" (Caraka Śārīrasthāna 4.30), suggesting a functional unity that facilitates life. While Samkhya maintains a strict dualism, Charaka presents a more integrative view, often referring to Avyakta as a composite of both principles. This synthesis allows Ayurveda to reconcile metaphysical abstraction with physiological and psychological realities, especially in contexts like garbha-vṛtti and manasika doṣa.

Guṇa Theory and Psychosomatic Correlates

Sāṅkhya's triadic Guṇas—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas—are ontological constituents of Prakṛti⁶. Īśvarakṛṣṇa writes: "*Prakṛtir guṇasāmyam*" (Sāṅkhyakārikā 3). Caraka reinterprets these as psychological traits⁷: "*Sattvaṃ laghu śubhaṃ prītikaram... Rajo duḥkhaṃ krodhaṃ... Tamo*

mūḍhatvaṃ" (Caraka Śārīrasthāna 4.36), integrating them into manasika prakṛti and doṣa theory. Samkhya's triadic Guṇas—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas—are recontextualized in Charaka as mental constitutions and behavioral tendencies. The mapping of Sattva to clarity, Rajas to activity, and Tamas to inertia finds clinical relevance in Ayurvedic psychology and pathology, particularly in the classification of manasika prakṛti and doṣa.

Evolutionary Cosmology and Clinical Relevance

Sāṅkhya's 25 tattvas—from Avyakta to Mahābhūtas—outline a metaphysical evolution. Caraka adapts this to describe śarīra-sṛṣṭi⁸: "*Avyaktaṃ mahān ahaṅkāraḥ... pañca tanmātrāḥ pañca mahābhūtāḥ*" (Caraka Śārīrasthāna 1.27). Unlike Sāṅkhya's passive Puruṣa, Caraka attributes agency to Avyakta, aligning metaphysical evolution with the goal of health and mokṣa. Samkhya's 25 tattvas, culminating in the manifest universe, are echoed in Charaka's description of śarīra-sṛṣṭi. However, Charaka departs from Samkhya's passive Puruṣa by attributing agency to Avyakta, thereby aligning metaphysical evolution with the teleological aim of health and liberation.

Epistemology and Clinical Reasoning

Sāṅkhya recognizes three pramāṇas⁹: *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, and *śabda* (Sāṅkhyakārikā 4). Caraka expands this to include *yukti* and *aitihya*¹⁰: "*Yuktiḥ śāstraṃ pratyakṣam aitihiyam anumānam*" (Caraka Vimānasthāna 4.4). This pluralism allows Ayurveda to synthesize empirical observation with scriptural authority and rational inference. Samkhya's pramāṇas—*pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, and *śabda*—are foundational to Ayurvedic diagnosis and treatment. Charaka expands this triad by incorporating *yukti* and *aitihya*, reflecting Ayurveda's empirical and scriptural pluralism. The emphasis on aptopadeśa and *yukti* underscores the role of authoritative knowledge and rational synthesis in clinical decision-making.

Comparative Analysis: Samkhya and Charaka

Principle	Samkhya Darshana	Charaka Samhita
Satkāryavāda	Effect pre-exists in cause (Parināmavāda)	Applied to dhātu transformation and disease
Prakṛti-Puruṣa	Dualistic and separate entities	Often unified as Avyakta
Guṇa Theory	Ontological constituents of Prakṛti	Psychological traits and doṣic correlates
Evolution	25 tattvas from Avyakta to Mahābhūtas	Adapted to embryology and prakṛti-vikṛti
Epistemology	Pratyakṣa, Anumāna, Śabda	Expanded to include Yukti and Aitihiya

DISCUSSION

Charaka's engagement with Sāṅkhya is a dynamic hermeneutic process. Rather than passive adoption, it reflects a deliberate reinterpretation of metaphysical constructs to serve Ayurveda's pragmatic and soteriological goals. The transformation of abstract principles into diagnostic and therapeutic tools exemplifies Ayurveda's philosophical adaptability. Charaka's engagement with Samkhya is neither passive adoption nor wholesale rejection. Instead, it reflects a dynamic hermeneutic process wherein metaphysical constructs are reinterpreted to serve Ayurveda's soteriological and clinical aims. The pragmatic orientation of Charaka transforms Samkhya's abstract principles into actionable diagnostics and therapeutics, exemplifying Ayurveda's philosophical adaptability.

CONCLUSION

The philosophical interplay between Sāṅkhya Darśana and Charaka Saṃhitā reveals Ayurveda's capacity to integrate metaphysical depth with clinical utility. By reconfiguring Sāṅkhya's doctrines, Charaka constructs a medical epistemology that is both spiritually grounded and empirically robust. Future research may explore similar integrations with other darśanas to further illuminate Ayurveda's pluralistic foundations.

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