

Deciphering the Quartet Code of Charaka Samhita

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ABSTRACT

The *Ayurveda* system of medicine is based on the Basic Principles which are in the coded form mainly in the three great treatises namely the *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* and the *Vagbhata Samhita*. The seers of yore have used their own particular style of narration which needs to be comprehended properly to bring about the desired levels of the theoretical and practical know-how in the *Ayurveda* scholars. The *Charaka Samhita Sootra Sthana* is unique as it presents a methodology based on the quartet (a group of four). Each of the seven quartets paves the way for the understanding of all the *Ayurveda* principles of health care. Therefore it is mandatory for an aspiring *Ayurveda* physician and academician along with the research scholars to decipher the quartet code of the *Charaka Samhita*.

Keywords: Basic Principles, *Charaka Samhita*, Quartet, Health care, Research, Decipher, Code.

1. Introduction

The *Ayurveda* literature mainly the *Charaka Samhita* is a treasure of knowledge considered amongst the major triad or the *brihatrayee*. The *Charaka Samhita* is divided into eight sections or *Sthana* namely the *Sootra*, *Nidana*, *Vimana*, *Shareera*, *Indriya*, *Chikitsit*, *Kalpa & Siddhi sthana* respectively. ^[1] The sequence of these sections is of great significance as it is in tandem with the aims and objectives of the indigenous system of medicine, *Ayurveda*. ^[2] The first and foremost target is the maintenance of health by following the *Ayurveda* system of life. The methodology of *Ayurveda* living and the Basic doctrine of *Ayurveda* which is its foundation are vividly explained in the first section or the *Sootra Sthana* known as the 'brain' of the *Charaka Samhita*. ^[3] The essence of the knowledge of the whole text is extracted in its *Sootra Sthana*. The whole treatise is directed by the *Sootra Sthana*. The predominance of the *Sootra Sthana* can be gauged by its analogy to the nectar. ^[4] The *Sootra Sthana* is the nectar of knowledge and is the collection of all the basics of *Ayurveda* medicine. All the three major treatises namely the *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* and the *Ashtanga Hridayam* accord the highest importance to this first section called as the *Sootra Sthana*. The *Charaka Samhita sootra sthana* is unique as it has been divided into quartets which is a group of four chapters, thus the total of thirty chapters are categorized under the seven groups of four chapters known as *Sapta Chatushka* (28 chapters) and the remaining two are the collection of the information termed as the *Sangraha dwaya*. These quartets convey all the basic information of the *Ayurveda* system of medicine but the information is in coded form which needs to be deciphered in all its merit. This paper therefore presents an in depth analysis of the quartet methodology of the *Charaka Samhita* with special reference to the fundamentals of the science of life, *Ayurveda*.

2. Quartet in Charaka Samhita Sootra Sthana- A unique literary methodology

The *Chatushka* (Quartet) means a group of four. The *Sootra Sthana* of the *Charaka Samhita* presents the quartet methodology which is in tandem with the methodology of the ancient source of knowledge, the *Veda*. The significance of the number four is immense in the Indian Philosophy as apparent in the *Chatushpada Gayatri*, *Yoga Chatushpada* et al. In *Ayurveda* also the *chikitsa chatushpada* (four limbs of treatment), *chaturvidha sootra* (four types of verses) et al are explained that are indicative of the importance of the 'four'. *Charaka* calls the quartet methodology as the *mahartha* i.e. great meanings/subjects. The summary of the quartets in *Charaka Samhita Sootra Sthana* with their subject matter of discussion is as under:

S.No.	Name of the Quartet	Name of the Chapters	Crux of discussion
01	<i>Bheshaja</i> (Medicine)	1) <i>Dirghamjeevitiya</i> 2) <i>Apamargatanduleyam</i> 3) <i>Aragvadheeyam</i> 4) <i>Shadvirechana - shatashriteeyam</i>	Preface to the <i>Charaka Samhita</i> , The list of the drugs used in <i>Ayurveda</i> and their utility
02	<i>Swastha</i> (Health)	1) <i>Matrashitiyam</i> 2) <i>Tasyashitiyam</i> 3) <i>Navegandharaneeyam</i> 4) <i>Indriyopakramaneeyam</i>	The principles of maintenance of health, the dietetics, daily regimen, seasonal regimen, ideal lifestyle, social conduct.
03	<i>Nirdesha</i> (Promulgation)	1) <i>Khuddakchatushpada</i> 2) <i>Mahachatushpada</i> 3) <i>Tisreshaneeyam</i> 4) <i>Vatakalakaleeyam</i>	The ideal/desired medical establishment, the enunciation of the curable-incurable diseases, eight triads, <i>numero-uno</i> status of the <i>Vata</i> among the <i>tridosha</i> .
04	<i>Kalpana</i> (Preparation)	1) <i>Sneha</i> 2) <i>Sweda</i> 3) <i>Upakalpaneeyam</i> 4) <i>Chikitsaprabhrateeyam</i>	The basics of the well known therapy of <i>Panchkarma</i> . The <i>poorva karma</i> i.e. preparation along with the main process, do's and don'ts.
05	<i>Roga</i> (Disease)	1) <i>Kiyantahshiraseeyam</i> 2) <i>Trishotheeyam</i> 3) <i>Ashtodareeyam</i> 4) <i>Maharoga</i>	Basics of the disease, important sites, etiological factors and manifestations along with the basics of diagnosis and classification of the diseases.

06	<i>Yojana</i> (Planning)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>Ashtauninditeeyam</i> 2) <i>Lamghanabrimhaneeyam</i> 3) <i>Samtarpaneeyam</i> 4) <i>Vidhishoniteeyam</i> 	General Protocol of the treatment plan mainly the duo of <i>santarpana</i> (nourishment) & <i>apatarpana</i> (emaciation)
07	<i>Annapana</i> (Food)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>Yajjahpurushiyam</i> 2) <i>Atreyabhadrakapyeeyam</i> 3) <i>Annapanavidhim</i> 4) <i>Vividhashitpeeteeyam</i> 	The qualities of the food and attributes of the medicine. The Basic Principles of <i>Ayurveda</i> pharmacology and process of transformation of food into the <i>dhatu</i> s and explanation of the metabolism. The pathological manifestation of the diseases due to faulty transformation of the tissues.

3. Contribution of the Quartet methodology in the understanding of the Basic Principles of Ayurveda

The importance of the Quartet methodology is visible in every aspect of the Basic Principles of *Ayurveda*. The journey of the *Ayurveda* began in the very concise *trisootra* form to the contemporary progressive science.^[5] The treasure of knowledge explained in the seed form in the quartets of the *Sootra Sthana* find their application in all the other sections of the *Charaka Samhita*. The quartet methodology is per se a teaching methodology. The best teaching methodology is that which leads to the initiation of the student towards the subject and then generates a lot of interest which leads to the development of the vision towards a science. The quartets have been designed to make the *Ayurveda* scholar acquainted with the Basic Principles of *Ayurveda*.

The first quartet commences with the deliberation on the motive of the treatise which is the attainment of the state of equilibrium of the tissues or the *dhatu*samyam.^[6] After the initiation of the student, the seers start promulgating the applied utility of the *Ayurveda* basics. It is very significant to note that the seers of yore mainly the *Charaka Samhita*, in the first quartet itself mentions the term *Anavicchhan* meaning research.^[7] The research methodology in *Ayurveda* revolves around the concepts of the cause and effect described in the first quartet.^[8] The best example of the literary research is the sequence of the quartets. The arrangement of the quartet denotes a rational thinking and approach towards the *Ayurveda* literature.

The medicine is the first requirement of the clinical practice. Thus the first quartet deals with the enunciation of the medicine or the *bheshaja*. This quartet describes the medicines to be used in the various therapies of the system like the purification & pacification therapy, the external and internal applications, the medicines for specific purposes *et al*. These medicines are used in the treatment procedure described in the *Chikitsa sthana*. This quartet also describes the importance of the rational use of the drugs and the possible hazards of non- judicious use of the drugs.^[9] The seer *Vagbhata* also propagates the importance of following the *Ayurveda* deliberations as they are the key to health.^[10]

The second quartet in *Charaka Samhita sootra sthana* is the *Swastha Chatushka*. The *swastha* means healthy. Thus, this quartet defines the methods of healthy living. The significant factors of the *dinacharya* (daily regimen), *ritucharya* (seasonal regimen) with the ways to attain a sound mental health have been dealt with in detail in this quartet. A unique *Ayurveda* concept of suppressible and non-suppressible urges has been explained. Thus the methods for leading a perfect way of life i.e. the physical, mental, social and spiritual well being has been explained vividly in this quartet. This quartet therefore bears the preventive aspect of the *Ayurveda* medicine.

After the comprehensive deliberation on methods to remain healthy, the third quartet deals with the medical fraternity or profession. This promulgation of knowledge is for the diseased and the medical professionals both. ^[11] The attributes of the four limbs of medical profession namely the physician, medicine, para-medical staff and the patient are mentioned which are necessary for maintaining the patient- doctor-vendor relationship in a sacred manner. The relation of the patient and physician should be based on mutual trust and with the support of the para- medical staff the goal of the attainment of health can be achieved. The curability and non-curability of a disease has been explained along with the eight triads and the quartet culminates with the establishment of the *Vata dosha* as the supreme entity in the body compared with the air in the environment. Thus, this *nirdesha chatushka* (quartet of promulgation) is a word of wisdom for all the stakeholders of *Ayurveda*.

The next quartet is the *kalpana chatushka* i.e. dealing with the preparation of the patient, physician and the medicine for the *Ayurveda* treatment mainly the purification therapy mainly the *Panchkarma*. This quartet therefore covers the curative aspect as it proposes a systematic method of preparing a patient to undergo the *panchkarma* along with the need of the skill for an *Ayurveda* physician to carry out the treatment procedure to perfection and be ready to deal with any untoward side effect/ complication of the drug. This section therefore deliberates upon the ways to prevent any undesired result of the therapy.

Following the *Kalpana* is the quartet of the disease i.e. *roga chatushka*. As the name suggests, this quartet describes the basics of the pathology mainly the *trividha bodhya sangraha*. ^[12] The knowledge of the diseases hitherto unknown is gained by utilizing this concept. Therefore, this is an important tool in clinical research. The causative factors of the disease like the *dosha* are explained with their normal and abnormal behaviours. The manner of spread of the vitiated *dosha* in the body along with the method to correct the vitiation has been explained. The classification of the disease is also conspicuously present. This quartet therefore forms the basis of the diagnosis of the disease in the terms of *Ayurveda*.

The exegesis of the disease is followed by the treatment plan i.e. *yojana*. The six fold methodology of *Ayurveda* treatment has been pondered over. ^[13] The two lines of treatment on the basis of the principles of the generality and individuality, ^[14] the nourishing and emaciation therapies have been explained along with the brilliant exposition of the importance of the *rakta*, blood in pathology and its treatment plan. This quartet therefore becomes the base of *Ayurveda* treatment plan.

The last quartet is based on the food and its transformation. The food is considered to be the cause of existence of the health and the disease. The choice of the food depends upon its qualities and one's own body constitution. This quartet

therefore deals with the various aspects of food and the potent food known as medicine with its transformation in the body along with various pharmacological manifestations. The transformation of the food into the various tissues of the body and its malfunction leading to the disease has been explained along with its treatment principle. This quartet therefore establishes the predominant role of the food in health and also the disease followed by the treatment plan.

4. Discussion & Conclusion

The quartet is foremost part of the treatise unique to the *Charaka Samhita*. The complete text has been described in the code form namely the quartet. The criteria for the construction and consistency of quartet have been done very pragmatically and with the applicability in the clinical practice. Only the *Charaka Samhita Sootra Sthana* explains the quartet methodology as it is essential to classify the knowledge treasure of the *Sootra Sthana*. The sequential arrangement of the quartets and its chapters is of great significance as it goes in tandem with the aims and objectives of the *Ayurveda* system of medicine. The quartets are related to a section or *Sthana* e.g. the first quartet of medicine provides nutrition to the section dealing with the treatment or the *Chikitsa Sthana*, *Kalpa* and the *Siddhi Sthana*. The contribution of the quartet is manifold as visible in the specialities of dietetics, hygiene, pathology, pharmaceuticals and ultimately the treatment. The quartets have been framed aiming the attainment of two goals viz. the maintenance of health and the cure of the disease. It is one of several methodologies of literary study of the text like the *trividha bodhya samgraha*, *trisootra*, *tadvidhya sambhasha*, *tantrayukti et al*. The quartet methodology therefore assumes a great importance in literary study of the text along with the clinical application and the modern concept of research in *Ayurveda*.

5. References

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