

GENERAL ARTICLE

CHARAK SAMHITA - A CRITICAL REVIEW

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Abstract:

Charak Samhita", which is a collection of various basic principles, healthy advises & directions, Teaching & Research methodology, anatomy & physiology of body, pharmacological actions of various drugs, description of Preventive, Promotive & Curative aspects of various diseases along with Panchakarma chikitsa etc. For these great contributions, he has been known as "Father of Medicine" for ever. He was the only one great sage who has told about the two objectives of Ayurveda i.e. 1) To maintain & promote the positive health of healthy individuals 2) To cure the disease of diseased ones. Here the Acharya Punarvasu Atreya was the advisor & Acharya Agnivesha was the main author of this Charak Samhita, whereas Acharya Charak was the actual redactor & Acharya Dridabala was the completer of this Samhita.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Charaka Samhita, Charaka

Introduction:

Ayurveda has been one of the ancient sciences of life of the world going back to over 4,000 years BC, which is a branch of Atharva Veda. It is an eternal science of healthy living treasures deals with physical, psychological and spiritual well being of the human being and covers all the aspect of human life. It is not a materialistic science but a philosophical and factful truth, which enhanced by our great ancient sages like Acharya Charak, Sushrut, Vagbhata etc. through their experience, logic and power of wisdom.

Among these great sages, Acharya Charak has a great contribution towards Ayurveda by giving a great Literature i.e. "Charak Samhita", which is a collection of various basic principles, healthy advises & directions, Teaching & Research methodology, anatomy & physiology of body, pharmacological actions of various drugs, description of Preventive, Promotive & Curative aspects of various diseases along with Panchakarma chikitsa etc. For these great

contributions, he has been known as "Father of Medicine" for ever. He was the only one great sage who has told about the two objectives of Ayurveda i.e. 1) To maintain & promote the positive health of healthy individuals 2) To cure the disease of diseased ones. Here the Acharya Punarvasu Atreya was the advisor & Acharya Agnivesha was the main author of this Charak Samhita, whereas Acharya Charak was the actual redactor & Acharya Dridabala was the completer of this Samhita.

The "Charak Samhita" consists of 8 sections (Sthan) and contains total 120 chapters, 9035 Sutras (formula) & 12,000 Slokas. Each section contains some of chapters, sutras & slokas. These 8 sections are as follows, viz. 1) Sutrasthan (30 chapters) 2) Nidanasthan (8 chapters) 3) Vimanasthan (8 chapters) 4) Sharirasthan (8 chapters) 5) Indriyasthan (12 chapters) 6) Chikitsasthan (12 chapters) 7) Kalpasthan (12 chapters) and 8) Siddhisthan (12 chapters). Acharya Dridabala has completed the redaction process of "Charak Samhita" by redacting the last 17 chapters of Chikitsasthan,



total Kalpasthan & Siddhisthan, which were not redacted by Acharya Charak.

The original Charak Samhita (Sanskrit Version) is of one volume. But the currently available Charak Samhita (Commentary of various authors) is in two parts like Purvaardha & Uttaraardha. Purvaardha contains 5 sections (Sthan), viz. 1) Sutrasthan 2) Nidanasthan 3) Vimanasthan 4) Sharirasthan 5) Indriyasthan and Uttaraardha contains 3 sections, viz. 1) Chikitsasthan 2) Kalpasthan 3) Siddhisthan. Actually these available 2 parts are the Hindi commentary of Charak Samhita, as different commentaries in different languages like English, Gujarati, Arabic, Persian etc are also available which are written by different Acharyas & learned Vaidyas.

The Sutrasthana is that section where a collection of various important Sutras (Ayurvediya formula) or Slokas related to various context are described, for which it is, also known as Slokasthan. This Sthan contains 1952 Sutras and 30 chapters which are divided into 7 Chatuskas & 1 Sangrahadhyaya. Chatuska means a division comprising of 4 chapters relating to same topic. The first Chatuska is Ausadha Chatuska comprising chapter no.1 to 4, where description about various drugs & basic principles of Ayurveda is available. Likewise the 2nd Chatuska is Swasthavritta Chatuska comprising chapter no.5 to 8, where many healthy advises is mentioned which are required for maintaining the good health of healthy individuals. Similarly the 3rd Chatuska is Niradesh Chatuska comprising chapter no.9 to 12, where many important information & directions related to Ayurveda is described. The 4th Chatuska is Kalpana Chatuska comprising chapter no.13 to 16, where a no. of preparations or ways of preparations related to Ayurvediya drugs or various treatments are advised. The 5th Chatuska is Roga Chatuska comprising of chapter no.17 to 20, where various types & no. of diseases are mentioned. Likewise the 6th Chatuska is Yojana Chatuska comprising chapter no.21 to 24, where the various types of ways of treatment procedures of various

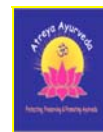
ailments are described. Similarly the 7th Chatuska is Annapana Chatuska comprising chapter no.25 to 28, where the various types of foods, food materials & various ways of preparing food are told by Acharya Charak. The Sangrahadhyaya comprising of the last two chapter no.29 & 30, where the collection of different characteristics of life, body & physician (Vaidya) are elaborately described.

The Nidanasthan is that section which contains 247 Sutras and 8 chapters where the various Nidana (Etiology), Samprapti (Pathogenesis), Purvarupa (Prodromal signs & symptoms) and Rupa (Clinical features (signs & symptoms)) of 8 Mahavyadhis (Diseases) like Jwara (Fever), Raktapitta (Haemoptysis or Haematemesis), Gulma (Abnormal growth), Prameha (Diabetes), Kustha (Leprosy), Shosa (Tuberculosis), Unmada (Insanity) and Apasmar (Epilepsy) are elaborately described.

The Vimanasthan is that section which contains 354 Sutras and 8 chapters where the specific knowledge (Quantitative & Qualitative) about Dosha (Ailments), Roga, Bhesaja (Drugs), Desha, Kala, Bala, Sharira, Ahara, Sattwa, Satmya etc. as well as their characteristics is elaborately described. The detail description about Srotas, Amashaya, Krimi Roga, various Pramanas, Dasavidha Rogi Pareeksha (Ten investigations regarding patients), 44 types of Vaada (Debate), methods of study & teaching, methods of Research, details of seminars & symposium and Janapadadhwansa (Epidemiology) are available in this section.

The Sharirasthan is that section which contains 382 Sutras and 8 chapters where the detail description about anatomy & physiology of Sharira (Body), Garbha (Pregnancy (Sign & Symptoms according to months), Monthly development & nutrition of fetus, causes of fetal death & treatment)), Prasava (Labour, Prenatal, Natal & Postnatal care, Sutika Roga & its line of treatment) etc. are available.

The Indriyasthan is that section which contains 378 Sutras and 12 chapters where the Arista Lakshanas (Prognosis of death) on the basis of



various descriptions regarding Swara (Voice), Gandha (Smell), Rasa (Taste), Sparsha (Touch), Swapna (Dreams), Chhaya (Shadow), Praticbhaya (Reflected Shadow), Prabha (Lustre) & Sadyomaran (Quick death) and Astamahagada (8 dreadful diseases) are narrated very nicely.

The Chikitsasthan is that section which contains 4904 Sutras and 30 chapters where the detail description of various diseases & their principles of treatment along with descriptions of Rasayan & Vajikaran are available. Here the 1st chapter is related to Rasayan & the 2nd is related to Vajikaran. Both chapters are described according to 4 Paada (Paada have been told, which denotes 1/4th of a chapter, so that 4 Paada comprises one chapter). The various diseases like Jwar, Raktapitta, Gulma, Prameha, Kustha, Shosa, Unmada, Apasmar, Kshatakshina, Shotha, Udara, Arsha, Grahani, Pandu, Shwasa, Kasa, Atisara, Chhardi, Visarpa, Trishna, Bisa, Madatyaya, Vrana, Marma, Urusthamba, Vatavyadhi, Vatarakta & Yonivyapad and their clinical features with different principles of treatment (Shodhan (Panchakarma), Shaman (Medicines) & Nidan Parivarjan (Avoiding the causative factors)) are narrated very nice manner, that's why Acharya Charak was famous for Chikitsasthan ("*Charakastu Chikitsite*")

The Kalpasthan is that section which contains 378 Sutras and 12 chapters where the different Kalpana (Churna, Kalka, Kwath, Swaras etc.) of Vamana drugs (Emetics) like Madanphala, Jimutak, Ikshwaku, Dhamargav, Vatska (Kutaja), Kritavedhan and Virechana drugs (Purgatives) like Shyama Trivrit, Chaturangul (Aragvadh), Tilwak (Lodhra), Sudha (Snuhi), Saptala-Sankhini & Danti-Dravanti according to the stage of Dosha/Roga & Rogi along with their pharmacological action, dose, indications & contraindications are described.

The Siddhisthan is that section which contains 700 Sutras and 12 chapters where the detail description of Panchakarma Chikitsa is available. The different Karmas like Snehana, Swedan, Vaman, Virechan, Asthapan Basti, Anuvasan Basti, Uttarabasti, Shirovirechan etc and their detail procedures, indications & contraindications, advantages & disadvantages, importance of various therapies along with 36 types of Tantrayukti, the disease Mutraghata & Shiroroga and the importance of Charak Samhita are nicely & elaborately explained in this section.

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