



A comparative analysis on Sanskrit commentaries on Ashtaangahrdaya Mangalashloka

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ABSTRACT: This article explores the depth and richness of ayurvedic texts through the lens of Sanskrit commentaries, with a particular focus on the *mangalashloka* (prayer verse) of the Ashtaangahrdaya. The aim is to provide a nuanced understanding of key terms and concepts within the verse by undertaking a comparative analysis of multiple commentaries. Ayurveda's foundational texts such as Caraka, Suśruta, and Ashtaangahrdaya offer profound insights into traditional Indian medicine. Commentaries play a pivotal role in elucidating the intricacies of these texts, offering diverse perspectives and interpretations that contribute to a comprehensive understanding of ayurvedic scholarship. The study undertakes an in-depth examination of Sanskrit commentaries related to the *mangalashloka* in the Ashtaangahrdaya. To ensure consistency and coherence throughout the analysis, the study employs a structured framework. The materials utilized include various Sanskrit commentaries on Ashtaangahrdaya, such as Sarvaangasundara, Ayurvedarasaayana, Vaakyapradeepika and Hridayabodhika. The comparative analysis of commentaries reveals varying interpretations of the terms and concepts. The research highlights the complexity and depth of ayurvedic thought as presented through different commentaries. These varied interpretations enrich the comprehension of ayurvedic principles and underscore the importance of embracing multiple perspectives for a holistic understanding of *ayurveda*. The study emphasizes the need for multidimensional approaches in the study of ancient texts, providing a more profound appreciation of this traditional system of medicine.

Keywords: Ashtaangahrdaya, Mangalashloka, Commentaries, Ashtangahrdaya commentary, Sanskrit commentaries

INTRODUCTION

The foundational texts of *ayurveda*, namely Caraka, Suśruta and Ashtaangahrdaya, have long served as pillars of traditional Indian medicine. Sanskrit commentaries play a pivotal role in describing the depth of ayurvedic texts, offering valuable perspectives on the cultural, linguistic and historical context, surrounding these ancient teachings. Within this vast landscape, the *mangalashloka* (prayer verse placed at the beginning of a text) of Ashtaangahrdaya takes centre stage, drawing deliberate attention to facilitate an in-depth exploration of manifold explanations within a concentrated framework.

Despite the wealth of knowledge embedded in *ayurveda*, a notable research gap exists in

systematically unravelling the diverse understandings found within Sanskrit commentaries. This research tries to bridge this gap, aiming to shed light on the richness and variability inherent in ayurvedic scholarship. By undertaking a comparative analysis of multiple Sanskrit commentaries, the study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of key terms and concepts of a single verse. This approach not only highlights variations in interpretations but also enriches the comprehension of *ayurveda*'s multidimensional nature, contributing to a more comprehensive and inclusive appreciation of this ancient healing tradition.

Indeed, the diversity of conceptualisations within Sanskrit texts, like *Bhagavatgeetaa*, is a

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testament to the richness and depth of the intellectual traditions surrounding these works. In the case of the *Bhagavatgeetaa*, various philosophical schools like *dvaita*, *advaita*, *visishtadvaita*, and expositions emphasizing the synthesis of knowledge and action offer different lenses through which the text is understood. Each understanding brings forth unique insights, contributing to a multifaceted understanding of the subject matter.

Commentaries in *ayurveda* mutually complement and enhance understanding, serving as essential tools to elucidate text complexities. They act as interwoven threads, collectively contributing to a comprehensive comprehension of ancient wisdom. The interdependence of commentaries emphasizes that the true essence of ayurvedic texts is complete only when engaging with multiple perspectives, providing a more profound understanding for scholars and practitioners.

The relevance of commentaries becomes evident in the detailed exploration of different aspects within a text. Reading several commentaries becomes essential for obtaining a comprehensive and clear grasp of the various dimensions a subject holds. This holds true for texts like the Caraka Samhita, Ashtaanghrdaya etc, foundational ayurvedic texts. The uniqueness of commentaries ensures that different perspectives and insights are preserved, contributing to the ongoing relevance and existence of these commentaries.

The survival of numerous commentaries on texts like the Caraka Samhita highlights the enduring significance of these explanations. Each commentary represents a distinct intellectual tradition and viewpoint, allowing scholars and practitioners to engage with the text in ways that resonate with their understanding. The coexistence of these commentaries enriches the study of ancient texts, demonstrating the continued relevance of various descriptions in preserving and expanding our comprehension of profound subjects.

METHODOLOGY

In this research initiative, the methodology is centred on a meticulous compilation of Sanskrit commentaries specifically relevant to the *mangalashloka* in ayurvedic text, Ashtaanghrdaya. The primary focus lies in prioritizing commentaries renowned for their historical significance and scholarly influence, thereby creating a foundation for thorough and detailed analysis. Following this, a carefully curated list of terms and concepts significant to ayurvedic principles is developed, encompassing fundamental elements like *raagaadi*, *satataanushaktaa*, *aseshakaaya*, *apoorva-vaidya*, and others. To ensure an uniform understanding across the selected commentaries, a structured framework is established, drawing insights from authoritative dictionaries, classical ayurvedic texts, and modern descriptions. The methodology places a premium on contextual analysis and synthesis, with the overarching goal of crafting a unified understanding that seamlessly bridges historical perspectives with contemporary insights. The incorporation of regular cross-referencing techniques serves to uphold coherence and consistency throughout the research process, ultimately contributing to a detailed exploration of the profound ayurvedic wisdom embedded within the *mangalashloka*.

RESULT

The Sarvaangasundara commentary offers a distinct perspective on the term “*raagaadi*,” defining *raaga* as the primary emotion, with subsequent emotions being *dvesha*, *lobha*, and others. The explanation specifies, “*raagaaadir yesham te raagaadaya*^[1]” emphasizing that *raaga* is the foremost among these emotions, setting the tone for the others. It further elucidates the concept of “*aadi*,” suggesting that these emotions encompass *dvesha*, *lobha*, and other attachments.

In contrast, the Vaakyapradeepikaa and Aayurvedarasaayana provide an alternate view “*raagaadi*” as the cause for *dvesha*, *lobha*, and other mental disturbances. According to Aayurvedarasaayana, the root of these emotions lies in desires like lust and anger, expressed as “*tadaadaya tanmoolaa kaama-krodhaadaya.*”^[2] Vaakyapradeepikaa reinforces this perspective by stating, “*raagaadir yesham dvesha-lobhaadeenaam te raagaadaya, manaso vikaaraa,*”^[3] emphasizing that *raaga* and other emotions are the source of mental disturbances. Additionally, it introduces the concept of “*raagaadi-roga,*” implying that these emotional states themselves are considered as diseases.

In essence, while Sarvaangasundara commentary categorizes *raaga* as the primary emotion, Vaakyapradeepikaa and Aayurvedarasaayana delve into the psychological impact of “*raagaadi,*” associating it with mental disturbances and considering it as the root cause of various mental disorders. These varied clarifications contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between emotions and mental well-being in ayurvedic thought.

The term “*satataanushaktaa*” is elaborated as being connected with, closely related, or attached to, as per V.S. Apte. In the Sarvaangasundara commentary, it is described as “*sahaja-roga,*” signifying diseases that affect an individual throughout their entire life.^[4] The commentary notes that these conditions are pervasive and inherent, persisting consistently over time. The Hrdayabodhikaa and Vaakyapradeepikaa offer a different perspective, describing “*satataanushaktaa*” as *rogas* that are carried over to other *janma* (rebirth). The explanation states, “*tathaa satataanushaktaan santatam anvanushaktaan janmanah prabhrti sareerinaa sangataan sahajaan ityartha,*”^[5] indicating that these diseases are naturally inherited and linked to the constitution of the body

from one birth to another. The use of the term “*anu-sabda-grahanaad dehaantara-praaptau ca sambandha soocyate*”^[6] suggests a connection or relationship extending beyond the current physical existence, possibly into subsequent lifetimes. This multifaceted explanation of “*satataanushaktaa*” emphasises the complexity and depth of its implications within ayurvedic principles.

The term “*asesha-kaaya-prasrtaa*” is elaborated in the Sarvaangasundara commentary as *rogas* that affect the entire body. The commentary defines it as “*aseshascaasau kaayasca areshakaaya,*”^[7] indicating that these diseases extend across the entire body. The Vaakyapradeepikaa and Aayurvedarasaayana, however, offer a subtle description, “*asesha-kaaya-prasrtaa*” as ailments affecting both the mind (*manas*) and the body (*sareera*). The explanation considers “*asesha*” synonymous with *manas*, stating “*asesho mana-paryaaya*”^[8] highlighting disturbances in the mind such as emotions and sensory disturbances. The inclusion of examples like “*netra-svara-vikrtyooru-kampaadeenaam darsanaat*”^[9] emphasizes the broad scope of impact on both mental and physical aspects. Additionally, the term “*pra*” is specifically explained in the Hrdayabodhikaa, Sarvaangasundara and Vaakyapradeepikaa, which collectively accept “*asesha-kaaya-prasrtaa*” as diseases affecting the bodies of all living beings, including elephants, tigers and cows. The explanation further notes that these diseases manifest prominently in the bodies of various creatures, reinforcing the universality of their impact.

In the context of *ayurveda*, the term “*apoorva-vaidya*” holds distinct interpretations across various commentaries. According to Vaakyapradeepikaa, it asserts that the *apoorva-vaidya* has the capability to eradicate *ragadi-rogas* without the risk of *punaraavartana* (reoccurrence). Aayurvedarasaayana adds a

spiritual dimension, explaining that the *apoorva-vaidya* guides individuals through *moksha saastra*, facilitating the destruction of *raagaadi-rogas*. Notably, there is a divergence in interpretations regarding the identity of the *apoorva-vaidya*. Some perspectives, such as the *bauddha* or *avaidika*, view it as a figure associated with non-Vedic traditions. On the other hand, *vaidika* scholars, including the *Vaakyapradeepikaakaara*, interpret it as *Maheshvara*, aligning with Vedic principles. This multiplicity of interpretations shows the richness and complexity of the concept of *apoorva-vaidya* within ayurvedic discourse, encompassing both medical and spiritual dimensions.

In the *Vaakyapradeepika* commentary, the concept of “*anubandha-catushtaya*” (literally means four connections, and therefore, it is four-fold in nature and content) is expounded as a vital framework encompassing four essential elements crucial for the elucidation of a *saastra*. Firstly, there is the notion of “*adhikaari* (authority),” denoting the authoritative source or individual vested with the right to expound the *saastra*. Secondly, the concept of “*vishaya* (subject)” identifies the subject matter of the *saastra*, emphasizing the science of *aayurveda* (*aayurveda saastram*). The element of “*sambandha* (relationship)” is described, emphasizing the connection between different components, particularly highlighting the distinctive relationship between *upaayopeya-lakshana-sambandha*, signifying the unique link between the means (*upaaya* - the science itself) and the end (*upeyam* - life, *dharma*, *artha*, *sukha*). Furthermore, the fourth element encompasses both “*upaaya* (means)” and “*upeyam* (end),” identifying the means as the *saastra* itself (*upaaya - saastram*) and the end as life (*upeyam - aayu*), along with the pursuit of *dharma*, *artha*, and *sukha*. Lastly, the overarching “*prayojanam* (purpose)” of the *saastra* is defined as the alleviation of diseases and the attainment of overall

well-being (*rogopasaanti*). This systematic elucidation of “*anubandha-catushtaya*” provides a comprehensive framework for comprehending the contextual, content, and objective dimensions of the ayurvedic *saastra*.

DISCUSSION

The *mangalashloka* holds paramount importance in Sanskrit commentaries, serving as a foundational element in the study of *saastras*. Comprising three integral components – *kaayika*, *maanasa*, *vaacika* - it entails physical gestures such as *namaskaara*, instilling respect and devotion. The mental facet involves prayers and meditation, directing the mind towards *saastra* study, while the verbal aspect emphasizes the recitation of the *mangalashloka*, facilitating a seamless learning experience for students. The overarching purpose of the *mangalashloka*, is to eliminate obstacles (*vighnanaasa*) and ensure the obstacle-free completion (*nirvighna-parisamaapti*) of *saastra* studies. This concept is reinforced in *nyaaya granthaas* like *Tatvacintaamani* and *Muktaavali*, which delve into the details of overcoming impediments in the pursuit of knowledge. Additionally, specific examples, such as the *mangalashloka* in *Ashtaanghrdaya* addressing *raagaadi-roga* (diseases like passion, anger, etc.), exemplify its universal application in tackling various challenges. In essence, the *mangalashloka* serves as a comprehensive tool for students, harmonizing physical, verbal and mental dimensions to pave the way for a smooth and successful study of *saastras*.

The analysis of the term “*raagaadi*” in ayurvedic texts, such as *Sarvaangasundara* commentary, *Vaakyapradeepika* and *Aayurvedarasaayana*, showcases the complexity and depth of ayurvedic thought regarding emotions and their impact on mental well-being. *Sarvaangasundara* commentary takes a unique stance, categorizing *raaga* as the primary emotion and specifying that

it sets the tone for subsequent emotions like *dvesha* and *lobha*. The emphasis on “*raagaadi yashaam te raagaadaya*”^[10] highlights *raaga*’s pivotal role, suggesting that these emotions are interconnected and involve attachments.

On the contrary, Vaakyapradeepikaa and Aayurvedarasaayana offer an alternative perspective, explaining “*raagaadi*” as the cause for mental disturbances like *dvesha* and *lobha*. The root cause is identified as desires, such as lust and anger, as expressed in “*tadaadayah tanmoolaa kaama-krodhaadaya*”.^[11] Vaakyapradeepikaa reinforces this view by stating that *raaga* and other emotions are the source of mental disturbances, introducing the concept of “*raagaadi-roga*,” implying that these emotional states themselves are considered as diseases.

Moving on to the term “*satataanushaktaah*” its interpretation as being connected or attached is consistent with V.S. Apte’s definition. Sarvaangasundara commentary defines it as “*sahajaroogaah*,” suggesting diseases that persist throughout one’s entire life. In contrast, Vaakyapradeepikaa and Hrdayabodhika offer an intriguing twist, describing it as diseases carried over to other births. The concept of a continuous connection between the individual and specific diseases across lifetimes adds a profound dimension to the understanding of health and well-being.

Similarly, the term “*asesha-kaaya-prasrtaah*” presents different explanations. Sarvaangasundara commentary characterizes it as diseases affecting the entire body, while Vaakyapradeepikaa and Aayurvedarasaayana broaden the scope, describing ailments that affect both the mind and the body. This inclusive interpretation considers “*asesha*” synonymous with *manas*, emphasizing disturbances in the mind and sensory faculties.

This becomes a unifying principle that transcends species boundaries, highlighting the interconnectedness of health and well-being in the

natural world. This universality implies that the fundamental principles of *ayurveda* can potentially be applied to various fields, including *Vrkshaayurveda* (treatment of plants), *Mrgaayurveda* (treatment of animals) etc. The treatment protocols derived from ayurvedic principles could thus offer a holistic approach to the well-being of all living beings.

The insight derived from the explanation of “*pra*” in the context of diseases affecting various creatures expands the scope of *ayurveda* beyond human-centric applications. It suggests a broader ecological perspective where the principles of balance and harmony, inherent in *ayurveda*, can be extended to promote the health and vitality of the entire ecosystem. This interdisciplinary approach aligns with the holistic ethos of *ayurveda*, emphasizing its potential impact on numerous fields beyond traditional human healthcare.

The term “*apoorva-vaidya*” introduces a fascinating dimension, with Vaakyapradeepikaa and Aayurvedarasaayana associating it with the capacity to eradicate *raagaadi-rogaah* without reoccurrence and guiding individuals through *moksha saastra*. The divergence in identity interpretations, whether *bauddha* or *maheshvara*, adds layers to the concept, blending medical and spiritual dimensions.

Lastly, the concept of “*anubandha-catustaya*” reveals a structured framework for *sastra* exposition in Vaakyapradeepikaa. The elements of authority, subject, relationship, means and end provide a systematic approach to understanding ayurvedic principles, emphasizing the alleviation of diseases and the attainment of overall well-being as the purpose.

The tradition of commencing *sastra* texts with a *mangalaṣloka*, typically featuring *ishṭa-devataa-namaskaara*, is a customary practice. In this context, the *devataa-namaskaara* within the *mangalaṣloka* is delineated into three

categories: *ishṭa-devataa*, *samucita-devataa* and *samucita-ishṭa-devataa*. Notably, the focus here is on *samucita-ishṭa devataa*, signifying the deity that is not only appropriate for the subject matter of the *śaastra* but is also revered by the author.

While it is not obligatory for the *anubandha-catushtaya* to be explicitly mentioned in the *mangalashloka*, this specific case presents an exception. The *mangalashloka* itself serves as an introductory explanation of the *anubandha-catushtaya*, which includes *adhikaari* (the one qualified to study the *śaastra*), *vishaya* (the subject matter of the *śaastra*), *sambandha* (the relationship between different components), and *prayojana* (the purpose or utility of the *śaastra*). The *mangalashloka*, in essence, lays the foundation for these key elements.

In this context, the *adhikaari* is identified as the one possessing a genuine inquiry (*jignaasa*) into the *śasstra*. The *mangalashloka* explicitly communicates that those with a genuine thirst for knowledge and a desire to understand the *śaastra* should undertake its study. The emphasis on *jignaasa* as the defining characteristic of the *adhikaari* aligns with the overarching theme of seeking wisdom and understanding.

Furthermore, the *mangalashloka* delves into the specific subject matter of the *śaastra*, referencing *raagaadi-rogas*. This inclusion spotlights the importance of understanding and addressing ailments, particularly those related to emotional disturbances like *raaga*, to achieve the overall objective of the *śaastra*.

The *mangalashloka* serves as a comprehensive introduction, not only paying homage to the chosen deity but also intricately weaving in the elements of the *anubandha-catushtaya*. It effectively outlines the qualifications of the *adhikaari*, delineates the subject matter of the *śasatra*, establishes the relationships within the text, and

articulates the ultimate purpose or utility of studying the *śaastra*.

In summary, these diverse interpretations within ayurvedic commentaries illuminates the richness and complexity of ayurvedic thought, offering a multifaceted perspective on emotions, diseases and the overarching principles of the ancient system. This complex interplay contributes to a comprehensive understanding of *ayurveda*'s holistic approach to health and well-being.

CONCLUSION

The realm of ayurvedic scholarship is marked by a profound diversity in descriptions as presented through various Sanskrit commentaries. These illustrations not only accentuate the richness of scholarly traditions but also highlight the subtle perspectives on ayurvedic principles. Sanskrit commentaries, recognized as indispensable tools, play a critical role in unravelling the intricate layers of ayurvedic texts. They serve as guiding frameworks that shed light on the depth and complexity embedded in the ancient teachings. The coexistence of multiple perspectives within these commentaries accentuates the need for varied viewpoints in comprehending the details of *ayurveda*.

The significance of commentaries in *ayurveda* is highlighted by their role as *paraspara-pooraka*, meaning that they mutually complement and enhance the understanding of the subject matter. These commentaries serve as vital tools in elucidating the knowledge embedded within ayurvedic texts. Rather than stand-alone interpretations, they act as interwoven threads that collectively contribute to a comprehensive comprehension of the ancient wisdom.

In *ayurveda*, the depth of knowledge within a text is often revealed through the different perspectives presented in various commentaries. Each commentary offers a unique lens through which the content is explored, providing additional

insights, clarifications and contextualization. The holistic understanding of ayurvedic principles, therefore, emerges through the synthesis of these varied commentaries.

This emphasizes the interdependence of commentaries in enriching the overall understanding of ayurvedic texts. It implies that the true essence of the subject matter becomes complete only when one engages with multiple commentaries. By delving into this multifaceted approach, scholars and practitioners can access a more profound comprehension of *ayurveda*, thereby ensuring a holistic grasp of its principles and applications.

This study, therefore, contributes significantly to a deeper appreciation of *ayurveda* by showcasing its richness, complexity and the inherent value in embracing manifold perspectives. The dynamic interpretations within Sanskrit commentaries not only reflect the evolving nature of ayurvedic thought but also underscore the importance of adopting a multidimensional approach to understand this ancient and holistic system of medicine.

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