



# Insights from Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika: Key Foundations for Understanding Ayurveda

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## Abstract

This paper explores the convergence of Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika darśanas, and Ayurveda sastra, elucidating their profound influence on ancient Indian knowledge systems and their enduring relevance. Through a comprehensive analysis of primary texts and secondary sources, key principles such as logic, ontology, and perception are examined, highlighting their foundational role in understanding reality and health. Nyāya shastra's emphasis on logic and knowledge acquisition is intricately woven into Ayurvedic discourse, shaping the theoretical underpinnings of health and disease. The fusion of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika principles gave rise to Tarka Sastra, exerting considerable influence on Ayurveda and other sastras. Despite differences, conceptual alignments between these disciplines are identified, emphasising a holistic understanding of health and well-being. This synthesis of philosophical inquiry and practical wisdom offers timeless insights into navigating contemporary challenges and enriches our understanding of the human experience.

**Keywords:** Ayurveda, Nyaya, Vaisesika, Darsana, Tarka sastra

## Introduction:

In the vast landscape of ancient Indian knowledge systems, the interplay between philosophical inquiry and practical wisdom is exemplified in the convergence of Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika darśana, and Ayurveda sastra. Rooted in foundational principles of logic, perception, and ontology, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika shastras provide a theoretical framework for understanding the nature of reality, while Ayurveda offers practical insights into holistic health and well-being. The fusion of these disciplines not only enriches our understanding of the universe but also sheds light on the intricate connections between philosophical concepts and their real-world applications.

Nyāya and Vyākaraṇa shastra, with their focus on the intricacies of language and meaning, serve as the bedrock for comprehending various sciences. Mastery over Pada (word) and Padārtha (meaning) is considered fundamental for a comprehensive understanding of disciplines like Mimamsa, Vyākaraṇa, Sankhya, Vedanta, and Alankara shastra. The impact of Nyāya shastra on Ayurveda is particularly noteworthy, as evidenced by its detailed exploration in texts like Caraka Samhita, where principles of logic and knowledge acquisition are intricately woven into the fabric of medical science.

The fusion of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika darśanas gave rise to Tarka Sastra, a distinct branch of knowledge that exerted considerable influence on a multitude of sastras, including Ayurveda. This amalgamation is palpable in ancient texts like Caraka Samhita, where philosophical principles seamlessly intertwine with practical wisdom to form a comprehensive framework for understanding health, disease, and well-being.

As we embark on an exploration of the philosophical underpinnings of Ayurveda and its intersection with Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika darśanas, we delve into a rich tapestry of thought that spans millennia, offering insights that continue to resonate in our understanding of health and the human condition.

## Methodology

The methodology for the article involved an extensive literature review of primary texts and secondary sources in Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, and Ayurveda, followed by a textual analysis to identify key concepts and methodologies. Comparative studies were conducted to explore overlaps and divergences between these disciplines, supplemented by case studies from ancient texts like Caraka Samhita. An interdisciplinary approach incorporated insights from philosophy, medicine, linguistics, and history. Findings were synthesized, interpreted, and peer-reviewed to ensure accuracy and integrity, with ethical considerations guiding the research process.

## Discussion

"Kanaadam paanineeeyam cha sarva shastropakaarakam," which translates to "Nyāya and Vyākaraṇa shastra are beneficial for all sciences. Vyākaraṇa deals with pada (word), while Tarka shastra focuses on padārtha (meaning). Understanding these concepts is crucial for comprehending other sciences. Mastery over pada and padārtha is considered fundamental for a comprehensive understanding. To grasp ancient disciplines like Mimamsa, Vyākaraṇa, Sāṅkhya, Vedānta and Alaṅkāra, Nyāya shastra plays a pivotal role. Similar to the modern emphasis on mathematics, ancient times accorded significant importance to Nyāya shastra. Pramāṇa, essential for gaining prameya jnana, can only be understood through Nyāya shastra. Exploring the impact of Nyāya shastra on Ayurveda, we focus on a small aspect, using the analogy of 'sthālī pulāka Nyāya."

Even though Nyāya shastra primarily focuses on mokṣa (liberation), its main objective is a detailed understanding of padārthas (objects) with the purpose of uddeśa lakṣaṇa (defining goals) and parīkṣa (examination). To conduct parīkṣa, knowledge of pramāṇas (valid means of knowledge) is essential. Nyāya shastra also covers aspects like vāda (discussion) and jalpa (disputation) to facilitate knowledge acquisition. Caraka Samhita, specifically in the Vimana sthana 8th chapter, elucidates nearly all subjects covered in Nyāya shastra. It provides detailed explanations of adhyayana vidhi (study methods), adhyāpana vidhi (teaching methods), and then introduces Tadvidya sambhāṣā, which involves discussions with experts in the same field<sup>1</sup>.

Tadvidya sambhāṣā includes saṃvāda (dialogue) divided into sandhāya sambhāṣā (friendly discussion for knowledge acquisition) and vigṛhya sambhāṣā (hostile discussion solely for winning debates). The presenter in a discussion should possess qualities like śrutam (knowledge), dhāraṇam (retention), pratibhānam (clarity), and vacana śakti (effective expression). Undesirable qualities include kopanatva (anger), avaiśārya (lack of readiness), bhīrutva (fearfulness), adhāraṇatva (inconsistency), and anavahitvatva (lack of relevance), as explained in detail in Caraka Samhita<sup>2</sup>.

Caraka further categorizes the assembly into two – jñānavatī (knowledgeable) and mūḍhapariṣad (ignorant assembly). Additionally, it describes mitra pariṣad, udāsīna pariṣad, and śatru pariṣad (pratiniṣṭa pariṣad) as types of parishads, along with guidelines on proper behavior in a parishad. In the vāda mārga (path of debate), upanaya (approach), nigamana (counter-approach), siddhānta (conclusion), dṛṣṭānta (illustration), and nigrasthāna (refutation) are thoroughly explained in this chapter of Caraka Samhita. Due to the vastness of the subject matter, a comprehensive exploration of the entire Caraka Samhita is not feasible. Furthermore, recognizing the significance of the shat dravyas (six substances) as elucidated by Kanada is imperative, as emphasized within the vāda mārga.

In Caraka Samhita, in the Sutra Sthana's "dīrghaṅjīvitīya adhyāya," there is an explanation of the Shat Padārthas, namely sāmānya (universal), viśeṣa (particular), guṇa (attribute), Dravya (substance), Karma (action), and Samavaya (inherence). The noteworthy explanation pertains to Samanya and Visesa: "sarvadā sarvabhāvānām sāmānyam vṛddhi kāraṇam, hrāsaheturviśeṣaśca pravṛttirubhayasya tu | sāmānyamekatvakaram viśeṣastu pṛthaktvakṛt<sup>3</sup> |"

In the discourse on Dravya, it is mentioned, "yatṛāśritāḥ karmaguṇāḥ kāraṇam samavāyi yat tat dravyam<sup>4</sup>," which bears similarity to the Tarka Siddhanta Lakshana: "Guṇavatvam kriyāvatvam vā dravya lakṣaṇam<sup>5</sup>" This alignment showcases the connection between the two philosophical perspectives.

The fusion of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika darśanas resulted in the emergence of a distinct branch of sastra called Tarka Sastra. This branch wielded considerable influence on a multitude of sastras, and its impact is distinctly noticeable in Caraka Samhita. The amalgamation of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika principles is evident in this ancient text, underscoring their significant contribution to its foundation and content.

The primary principles of Ayurveda revolve around Pañcamahābhūta Siddhanta and Tridosha Siddhanta. The Pañcamahābhūtas encompass Prthvi (earth), Jala (water), Tejas (fire), Vayu (air), and Akāśa (ether). Additionally, Dravya includes Kala (time), Dik (space), Atma (soul), and Manas (mind), although detailed explanations are not provided for all except the mind, possibly due to its lesser significance in Chikitsa sastra.

In Ayurveda, the Pañcamahābhūta Siddhanta is elucidated slightly differently than in Vaiśeṣika Darśana. Notably, it is stated that Akāśa possesses the śabda (sound) guṇa, Vayu has Śabda and Sparśa (touch), Agni has Śabda, Sparśa, and Rūpa (form), and Jala has Śabda, Sparśa, Rūpa, and Rasa (taste). Prthvi encompasses Śabda, Sparśa, Rūpa, Rasa, and Gandha (smell). The principle of Pañcīkaraṇa is accepted by Vedantis and Sankhya, but rejected by Tārikikās. In Sankhya Darśana, creation occurs sequentially, with Akāśa giving rise to Vayu, Vayu to Tejas, Tejas to Jala, and Jala to Bhoomi. However, this sequential creation is not accepted in Vaiśeṣika Darśana, leading to concerns regarding linking Satkārya Vāda and Asatkārya Vāda.

While Pañcīkaraṇa is not explicitly mentioned in Caraka Samhita, Sushruta elaborates on it as Anyonyānupraveśa, where each substance penetrates the others, revealing distinct characteristics in each substance. This concept aligns with Vaiśeṣika Darśana, which posits that the body is primarily composed of earth, with the other elements present within it.

In Ayurveda, dravyas (substances) are categorized into kāraṇa dravyas (causal substances) and kārya dravyas (effectual substances). The kāraṇa dravyas encompass the elements starting with pṛthvi (earth), which provide functionalities such as stability, aggregation, transformation, arrangement, and space provision. Ayurveda accords greater significance to its own sastra, distinguishing between sthāvara (immobile) and jaṅgama (mobile) substances, sourced from plants and animals respectively, both utilized as medicinal substances.

The kārya dravyas are further delineated in the Rasavaiśeṣika<sup>6</sup> framework, comprising Rasa (taste), Guṇa (qualities), vīrya (potency), vipāka (post-digestive effect), and karma (action). The primary division of Rasa lies in the madhurādi ṣaḍ rasas, with some interpretations including kṣāra as a rasa, resulting in a classification of seven rasas, while others incorporate avyakta, advocating for eight rasas. Some perspectives suggest that the rasa of water (jala) is avyakta. Though there are varying viewpoints, both Ayurveda and Vaiśeṣika concur on the fundamental notion that rasa encompasses six types.

Nagarjuna provides a detailed explanation of rasa division in several sutras, elucidating the distinct tastes of various substances like sugarcane (sweet), nimba (sour), lavaṇa (salty), chili (pungent), harītaki (astringent), and kāraskara (bitter), which are not extensively discussed in Vaiśeṣika or Tarka texts. He delves into the reasons behind the differences in sweetness observed among substances like sugarcane, banana, and milk.

Nagarjuna's RasaVaiśeṣika text highlights that the combination of different elements within substances contributes to their tastes. For instance, the presence of pṛthvi (earth) and jala (water) elements generates the madhura (sweet) taste, while jala and tejas (fire) produce the amla (sour) taste. Similarly, tejas and vayu (air) create the Katu (pungent) taste, and akāśa (ether) and vayu give rise to the Tikta (bitter) taste. This emphasis on the predominance of bhootas (elements) in determining taste differences is a core concept in Ayurveda sastra.

According to Ayurveda, individual tastes can exist independently, but their combination results in an array of taste variations. For example, one taste alone creates six types, two tastes combined yield fifteen types, three tastes combined produce twenty types, and so forth, resulting in a total of sixty-three distinct taste differentiations.

Moreover, Ayurveda emphasizes that merely identifying tastes is not sufficient; understanding their properties (rasana grāhya) is crucial. Ayurvedic texts illustrate this through examples like describing the taste of gold as kaṣāya Madhura and silver as Kashaya Tikta, showcasing the diverse perceptions of taste obtained through inference (anumāna), authoritative texts (āptopadeśa), and other means.

Similarly, the concept of guṇa (qualities) in Ayurveda offers a wealth of information beyond the 24 guṇas typically discussed in Tarka sastra. Ayurveda delineates 41 types of guṇas in Charaka Samhita<sup>7</sup>, emphasizing their relevance in treatment and therapeutic interventions. In contrast to Tarka sastra, which predominantly focuses on discussions related to lakshana (definition) and Pramāṇa (evidence), Ayurveda's approach is primarily centred around treatment-based principles. This distinction underscores the practical application of guṇas and their significance in the context of healthcare practices within Ayurveda sastra.

### Conclusion:

The convergence of Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika darśanas, and Ayurveda sastra represents a profound synthesis of philosophical inquiry and practical wisdom, illuminating the intricate connections between theory and application in ancient Indian knowledge systems. Through the exploration of fundamental concepts such as pada, padārtha, rasa, guṇa, and karma, we uncover a holistic understanding of health, disease, and well-being that transcends mere physicality.

The impact of Nyāya shastra on Ayurveda is evident in texts like Caraka Samhita, where principles of logic, knowledge acquisition, and debate are intricately woven into the fabric of medical science. Similarly, the fusion of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika darśanas gave rise to Tarka Sastra, which exerted considerable influence on the theoretical underpinnings of Ayurveda and other sastras.

As we reflect on this interplay between philosophy and practice, we gain a deeper appreciation for the timeless wisdom embedded in ancient Indian knowledge systems. Through a synthesis of theory and application, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika darśanas, and Ayurveda continue to offer profound insights into the nature of reality, health, and the human experience, shaping our understanding of the world and our place within it.

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