

Influence of Sāṃkhya and Yoga Philosophy on Āyurveda

Simi Borgohain & Sony Das

Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the impact of Sāṃkhya and Yoga philosophy on Āyurveda. The Upaniṣads, which is one of the Vedic texts, is where philosophy first emerged. The development of both Āyurveda and Indian philosophy was guided by the same maxim, which is to completely get rid of suffering. As such, we discover that Indian philosophy and Āyurveda are closely intertwined. Sāṃkhya Philosophy's primary focus is on how comprehensive knowledge will help the Purusha to achieve liberation. Sāṃkhya philosophy and Āyurveda both agree that the fundamental elements of evolution are the same. Again, Āyurveda is equal to yoga philosophy in terms of reducing pain, thus they explained Aṣṭāṅgayoga in terms of being free from suffering. Therefore, the study of the impact of Sāṃkhya and Yoga Philosophy on Āyurveda has been conducted for this paper. Historical, descriptive, and analytical methods have been used for conducting the study.

Keywords: Āyurveda, evolution, Sāṃkhya Philosophy, suffering, Yoga Philosophy

Introduction:

Indian philosophy and Āyurveda both are related to each other because both have developed with the same aphorism – Dukha-nivritti (free from suffering). Indian philosophy is deeply spiritual and consistently stresses the importance of realizing truth through practical experience (Hiriyana, 1993; Sharma, 1960). Annihilation of the three kinds of pains- Ādhyātmika dukkha which is physical and mental suffering produced by natural and intra-organic causes, Adhibhautika dukkha, which is physical and mental suffering produced by natural and extra-organic causes, and Ādhidaivika dukkha, which is physical and mental suffering which are produced by super-natural and extra-organic causes, and the realization of supreme happiness is the end (Sharma, 1960). On the other hand, as per Johns Hopkins, “Āyurveda is a natural system of medicine that originated in India more than 3000 years ago. The term Āyurveda is derived from the Sanskrit words Āyur which means life and Veda means science or knowledge. Thus, Āyurveda translates to knowledge of life. Āyurveda is based on the idea that disease is due to an imbalance or stress in a person's consciousness (Charaka, 2006; Sushruta, 2004). It encourages certain lifestyle interventions and natural therapies to regain a

balance between the body, mind, spirit, and the environment” (Lakeesha & Heidi, 2022). Āyurveda is profoundly associated with the mystery of life. The flow of life and the stream of intelligence are intimately linked by their origins: in this sense, Āyurveda or ‘knowledge of life’, harks back to the very first manifestation of cosmic existence.

The Vedas make it simple to find the roots of Indian philosophy. It evolved as an independent system, largely untouched by external influences. The schools of Indian Philosophy are broadly classified into two categories, namely, Āstika (Orthodox) and Nāstika (Heterodox). Āstika school is known as Ṣaḍ-darśana, which belongs to the six philosophical systems, namely, Mimamsa, Vedānta, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, and Vaiśeṣika (Chatterjee & Datta, 2008). These are regarded as Orthodox because they accept the authority of the Vedas. The other schools of Indian philosophy, are known as the Nāstika schools of Indian philosophy, namely, Carvaka, Bauddha, and Jaina. They are called Nāstika because they reject the authority of the Vedas. Most of the schools of Indian Philosophy try to explain suffering and how we can get relief from this suffering. Like Indian Philosophy, Āyurveda also tries to explain suffering and different kinds of disease which leads to suffering. Āyurveda not only explained suffering but also, gave different suggestions to free from suffering. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to know about the Sāṃkhya and Yoga Philosophy and its influences on Āyurveda.

Objectives of the Study:

The primary aim of this paper is to examine Āyurveda in the context of Samkhya and Yoga Philosophy, which attempts to focus following details:

1. To understand Āyurveda’s view about the world and sufferings.
2. To understand the Sāṃkhya and Yoga’s view about the world and sufferings.
3. To know about the Sāṃkhya and Yoga Philosophy and its influences on Āyurveda.

Method of the Study:

The method of the present study is historical, descriptive, and analytical in nature which is based on primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources include books, journals, and data gathered from research institutes’ internet materials. In this study, secondary data are mostly used.

Discussion:

All knowledge originates in philosophy. It is regarded as the origin of all sciences. The Vedas provide a clear path to the roots of Indian philosophy (Sharma, 1960). The earliest existing works of Indian literature are the Vedas. The Vedas contain numerous philosophical ideas and viewpoints. Indian philosophy has traditionally placed a strong emphasis on the necessity for the practical realisation of truth. Sāṃkhya and Yoga Philosophy are the two important Āstika schools of Indian Philosophy which contain various philosophical ideas and it has impacts on Āyurveda. The purpose of Āyurveda is to promote health and prolong life (Mishra, 2012). It is a way of life that has developed through experiential, intellectual, and spiritual illumination that is based on an

understanding of Creation. The various philosophical theories utilized in Āyurveda have a significant impact on an individual's overall health, including their physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being.

Sāṃkhya and Yoga Philosophy have a greater influence on Āyurveda. The Sāṃkhya system was founded by the great sage Kapila. The Sāṃkhya seeks an understanding of truth for the practical reason of putting an end to all sorrows and sufferings (Hiriyanna, 1993). On the other hand, Patanjali, a great Indian sage, gave the world a priceless gift in the form of his Yoga Philosophy, which is a guide for anybody seeking spiritual awakening. It is a huge help to individuals who want to understand that the spirit exists as a separate principle that is unconstrained by the boundaries of the physical world, the senses, and the mind. The value of Yoga as an important method of realizing the spiritual truths of Indian Philosophy has been recognized by almost all the schools of Indian Philosophy and Āyurveda. The Sāṃkhya system and Yoga are closely related. The Sāṃkhya epistemology is largely accepted by Yoga, and the three *Pramanas* namely; perception, inference, and testimony are also recognized by both Yoga Philosophy and Āyurveda (Chatterjee & Datta, 2008). The 25 principles of Sāṃkhya, which comprise its metaphysics, are largely accepted by Yoga. The practice of yoga is a sure way to achieve *Viveka-jnana*, or discerning knowledge, which is seen in the Sāṃkhya as the necessary prerequisite for liberation. Like Yoga Philosophy, Āyurveda also discussed the 25 principles of Sāṃkhya Philosophy (Archana et al., 2013).

Āyurveda has accepted the creation theory of Sāṃkhya Philosophy, which is also accepted by Yoga Philosophy. Sāṃkhya's theory of creation is known as the *Prakriti Parinamavada*; which is the form of *Satkaryavada* (Sharma, 1960). *Satkaryavada* admits that the effect exists in the material cause even before it is produced (Chatterjee & Datta, 2008). *Parinamavada* is one of the forms of *Satkaryavada*; which means when an effect is produced, there is a real transformation of the cause into the effect.

Sat is created from Sat, according to both Āyurveda and Sāṃkhya Philosophy. *Jwara* is said to only manifest from *Jwara Nidan* in Āyurveda as well (Charaka, 2006). In a similar manner, just the specific *Nidan* of each disease causes its manifestation. Sāṃkhya proposes 25 guiding principles for the construction of the cosmos. *Prakriti* (unmanifest) and *Purusha* (primordial cosmic soul) are the two main principles. *Prakriti* serves as the fundamental source from which all other elements arise. However, by itself, it cannot produce anything. Creation becomes possible only when *Prakriti* unites with *Purusha*, the 25th principle. *Purusha* is neither *Prakriti* (the producer) nor *Vikriti* (the product or evolute); he is *Nirguna* (devoid of qualities), *Nishkriya* (inactive), and the embodiment of *Shuddha Chaitanya* (pure consciousness). All *Gunas* (qualities) and *Kriyas* (actions) belong to *Prakriti*, not to *Purusha*. Out of these 25 principles, the 23 evolutions of *Prakriti* are categorized as follows – The first product of the evolution is called *Mahat*, and the great along with the intellect, ego, and mind is the cause of the entire creation. *Mahat* can refute the *Purusha* consciousness because it is composed of limited stuff. The second outcome of evolution is *Ahamkara*. *Ahamkara*, the individualization principle, is produced by *Mahat*. Its purpose is to produce self-essence. *Ahamkara* creates the concept of the mind. *Purusha* mistakenly

sees himself as this ego and the cause of the actions. According to which of the three gunas predominates, ahamkara is said to be of three different types. It is called Vaikarika or Sattvika when the element of sattva predominates in it; Taijasa or Rajasa when that of rajas predominates; Bhutadi or Tamasa when tamas predominates (Chatterjee & Datta, 2008). From the first arise the eleven organs, namely, Jnanendriyas, Karmendriyas and mind. The five organs of perception are known as Jnanendriyas, which are the functions of sight, smell, taste, touch, and sound (Sharma, 1960). The five organs of action are Karmendriyas, which are the functions of speech, prehension, movement, excretion, and reproduction. From the third, i.e., Tamasa Ahamkara is derived the five subtle elements i.e., Tanmatras or 'things-in-themselves'. These are the essences of sight, smell, taste, touch, and sound. From the essence of sound arises the element of ether or Akash together with the quality of sound. The element of air, along with the qualities of sound and touch, emerges from the essence of touch combined with the essence of sound. The element of fire, along with the qualities of sound, touch, and colour, emerges from the essence of colour combined with the essence of sound, touch, and colour. From the essence of taste combined with those of sound, touch, and colour arises the element of water. Lastly, the element of earth, along with the qualities of sound, touch, colour, taste, and smell, emerges from the essence of smell combined with the essence of sound, touch, colour, taste, and smell (Sharma, 1960). The second quality, Rajasa interact with both the first and the third, providing the energy necessary for transforming sattva and tamas into respective products. Manas, also known as the mind, is the only sense that is predominately Sattvika, or manifesting, and as such, it derives from Sattvika Ahamkara. Both activity and knowledge require the manas or mind's cooperation. This is the organ inside the body that stimulates the other senses so they can reach their intended goal. Therefore, according to Sāṃkhya Philosophy, evolution is the play of these 24 principles together with the Purusha. Like Sāṃkhya, Āyurveda says that the origin of the elements of the world is caused by Vyapadeshastu Bhuysa nyaya, which is 1/8 of each of the other 4 tanmatras and 1/2 of a specific tanmatra. By this combination that particular element is developed. Like Sāṃkhya, Āyurveda, and Yoga Philosophy also accepts the process of evolution. But the only difference between Sāṃkhya and Āyurveda is that Āyurveda accepts sense organs or Indriyas as Bhautikas or Products of Panchabhutas, not Ahamkaras as explained by Sāṃkhya. This distinction primarily relates to the treatment angle. Three types of dukkha, i.e., Adhibhautika, Adhidaivika, and Adhyatmika as explained by Sāṃkhya are also explained in Āyurveda along with their treatment (Waghmare & Mhaskar, 2014). All of Āyurveda is described in order to treat the illnesses that fall under these three categories of illness.

Again, Āyurveda has accepted the Astanga Yoga of Yoga Philosophy. Yoga promotes mastery over the body, the senses, and the mind. Both the body and the mind are distracted by physical attachment and passion. They must be vanquished. Yoga offers us the eightfold path of discipline which is known as Astanga Yoga to help us get over them (Das et al., 2018). Āyurveda uses the Yama and Niyama from Astanga Yoga since its goal is to sustain health. All time forms of Yama are elaborated upon by Āyurveda in Astanga Yoga. Yama

means abstention and it includes the five vows, namely, ahimsa, satya, asteya, brahmacharya, and aparigraha. Āyurveda explained the importance of ahimsa, i.e., speaking truth maintains physical as well as mental health. Āyurveda also discussed brahmacharya and aparigraha. Āyurveda explained that brahmacharya is regarded as one of the most superior pathways to all pathways to maintain both physical and mental health. Thus, Āyurveda accepts both the Yama and all Niyama. A sort of Niyama called Shaucha was accepted by Āyurveda, and it was employed in Dincharya as Snan vidhi and Dantdhavan vidhi. Snan vidhi serves as both an appetizer and a means of maintaining bodily cleanliness. In order for your chikitsa to be successful, you need both the Paricharak and the Shaucha guna, as explained in the Chatuspad. So, by adhering to Yama and Niyama, we can preserve Swasthya avastha and aid in the purification of the body and soul. Again, Āyurveda has accepted the Pranayama of Astanga Yoga. Patients with conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, lung illness, and asthma can preserve their health by engaging in Pranayama (Das et al, 2018). The control of Vat dosh can be achieved in this way, and Asana Yoga also aids in Vat dosh control. Several asanas are outlined in Āyurvedic treatment and then utilized to treat physical and mental illnesses. Pratyahara is also explained by Āyurveda. Pratyahara means taking benefits Indriya by not making use of them.

Thus, a lot of similarities are found in Āyurveda with Sāṃkhya and Yoga Philosophy. The aim of Āyurveda and both Sāṃkhya and Yoga Philosophy is to reduce pain and therefore they give different suggestions to free from suffering.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, we have seen that Āyurveda was influenced by Indian Philosophy. Āyurveda has accepted the theories of creation and the products which are evolved in the world, which was explained by Sāṃkhya Philosophy. Like Āyurveda, Yoga Philosophy also accepts the Sāṃkhya theory of creation. Sāṃkhya Philosophy says that the elements of the world originate from particular tanmatra like from Sabda tanmatra Akasha elements develop etc. The origin of the elements of the world, according to Āyurveda, is caused by Vyapadeshastu Bhuysa nyaya, which is 1/8 of each of the other 4 tanmatras and 1/2 of a specific tanmatra. By this combination that particular element is developed. In that sense, Āyurveda was influenced by Sāṃkhya Philosophy. Again, Āyurveda was also influenced by Yoga Philosophy. Āyurveda accepts and explained the Astanga Yoga of Yoga Philosophy to reduce disease and free from suffering. Therefore, Āyurveda explained Astanga Yoga and the different forms of Yama to remove pain.

At the last, it is clear that Āyurveda was mostly influenced by both Sāṃkhya and Yoga Philosophy and they accept the different principles and theories of Samkhya and Yoga Philosophy to reduce disease and free from suffering. When we compare Āyurveda with Sāṃkhya Philosophy, then we can clearly understand the evolution process of the world.

References:

- Acharya, B. U. (2011). *Bharatiya darshana*. Sharada Mandir.
- Archana, I., Kumar, P., & Vyas, M. (2013). Speculation of Sankhya darshana in Ayurveda to attain complete health. *Ayurpharm–International Journal of Ayurveda and Allied Sciences*, 2(6), 196–202.
- Charaka. (2006). *Charaka samhita* (V. Y. Trikamji, Ed.; Ayurveda Deepika commentary of Chakrapanidatta). Chaukhambha Krishnadas Academy.
- Chatterjee, S., & Datta, D. M. (2008). *An introduction to Indian philosophy*. Motilal Banarsidass.
- Das, P., Devi, M., & Goswami, K. (2018). Sankhya darshan and Ayurveda: A critical analysis. *International Journal of Ayurveda and Pharmaceutical Chemistry*, 8(2), 19–24.
- Hiriyanna, M. (1993). *Outlines of Indian philosophy*. Motilal Banarsidass.
- Mishra, J. (2012). *Bharatiya darshana*. Chaukhambha Surabharati Prakashan.
- Sharma, C. (1960). *A critical survey of Indian philosophy*. Motilal Banarsidass.
- Shastri, A. D. (1993). *Sushruta samhita* (8th ed.). Chaukhambha Sanskrit Series Office.
- Shastri, K. N., & Chaturvedi, G. N. (1981). *Charaka samhita* (8th ed.). Chaukhambha Bharati Academy.
- Sushruta. (2004). *Sushruta samhita* (Y. T. Acharya, Ed.; 4th ed.; Nibandhasangraha commentary of Dalhanacharya). Chaukhambha Krishnadas Academy.
- Waghmare, S. S., & Mhaikar, B. D. (2014). Darshanik background of Ayurveda. *International Ayurvedic Medical Journal*, 2(2), 255–258.