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Chatuska – An idiosyncratic approach of Charaka Samhita

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is a science of life. It reflects a wonderful amalgamation of the combination of science and philosophy. This holistic knowledge of living is divine which was passed on to the disciples and then to the common man by various oral narrations and writings. Different Samhitas are available as authenticated ayurvedic texts. Charaka Samhita is the most important ancient authoritative writing. Sutrasthana of Charaka samhita comprises the essence of all sthanas. To highlight the methodology and speciality of Chatuskas of sutrasthana of Charaka Samhita and thus explain the arrangement of Chatuskas is the objective of this research. Charaka Samhita and its available commentary were thoroughly studied with special reference to sutrasthana. Chatuska methodology is distinctiveness of the Charaka Samhita and was adopted so as to conglomerate the similar descriptions under one heading. It is not only unique presenting way but stands as evidences of the practical approach of Charaka Samhita.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Charaka Samhita, Sutrasthana, Chatuska

1. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda reflects a wonderful amalgamation of the combination of science and philosophy. It is the most ancient indigenous medical system, which is result of scientific thinking of our intellectual ancestors. It is collection of lots of fact elements required for well-managed and healthy life. The main purpose of Ayurveda is to maintain the health of the healthy individual and treatment of the diseased Individual. For the fulfillment of this aim it emphasis on prevention and encourages the maintenance of health through close attention to balance in one's life, right thinking, diet, lifestyle and the use of herbs.

Tracing back the origin of Ayurveda, it is considered to be divine. The Hindu God, *Brahma* who is called as the creator of the universe is believed to pass on Ayurveda-holistic knowledge of healing, onto the sages for the well-being of mankind. From the sages the knowledge of Ayurveda passed on to the disciples and then to the common man by various writings and oral narrations. This entire concept of Ayurveda at present is mainly found in different *Samhitas*. *Samhita* is a Sanskrit word from the prefix 'sam' meaning 'together' and 'hita', originated from 'dha' dhatu meaning to 'put'. Thus, *Samhita* literally means put together, joined union and methodically rule based combination of text or verses. The ideas presented in *samhita* were much ahead of their time and stands true till date. Among the various classical literatures of Ayurveda there are three fundamental authoritative texts called *Brihatrayee* - *Charak samhita*, *Susruta samhita*, *Astanga hridaya*.

1.1 Charaka Samhita

One of the oldest and the most important ancient authoritative writing on Ayurveda is *Charaka Samhita*. *Acharya Punarvasu Atreya* was the advisor & *Acharya Agnivesha*¹ was the main author. *Agnivesha* compiled the knowledge and presented it as *Agnivesha tantra*, which was later on known as *Charak Samhita*. *Acharya Charaka* was the *Pratisanskarta*² (actual redactor) & *Acharya Dridabala* was the completer of *Charaka Samhita*. *Charaka Samhita* is a collection of various basic principles, every aspect of body, pharmacological actions of many drugs, description of preventive and curative aspects of various diseases along with *shamana* and *sodhana chikitsa* i.e. *Panchakarma* and promotion of health. It also includes healthy advises & directions, teaching & research methodology. The "*Charaka Samhita*" consists of 8 sections (*Sthana*)³ and contains total 120⁴ chapters, 9035 *Sutras* & 12,000 *Sloka*⁵. *Acharya Dridabala* added last 17 chapters of *Chikitsasthana*, total *Kalpasthana* & *Siddhisthana*. Each section contains some of chapters, *sutras* & *slokas*. The *sthana* of *Charaka Samhita* are as follows:

- Sutrasthana* (30 chapters)
- Nidanasthana* (8 chapters)
- Vimanasthana* (8 chapters)
- Sharirasthana* (8 chapters)
- Indriyasthana* (12 chapters)

- f) *Chikitsasthana* (12 chapters)
 g) *Kalpasthan* (12 chapters)
 h) *Siddhisthana* (12 chapters)

1.2 Sutrasthana

Sutra literally means a short sentence, which has deep meaning. It is one, which comprises of minimum letters but maximum matter, which is in the form of confirmed pure knowledge, and also possessing the power of self. As the name suggest sutrasthana is a chain of important principles in concise form. The *Sutrasthana* is that section where a collection of various important *Sutras* or *Slokas* related to various contexts is described. Thus, it is also known as *Slokanth*⁶. *Sutrasthana* comprises the essence of all *sthanas* in seed form thus it is also called as *Madhusancaya* of *samhita* and considered as head or *Uttamanga* of the *Samhita*⁷. *Sutrasthana*, the *Adyasthan* is representative of rest *Sthanas*. It lays the foundation for the whole *samhita* by describing the basic principles. The nectar from all the flowers of the rest 7 *Sthanas* is collected to design the *Sutrasthana*⁸. The *Sutrasthana* of *Charak samhita* mentions about *Triskanda* which is the base of whole *Samhita*. This *Sthana* contains 1952 *Sutras* and 30 chapters. The chapters of *sutrasthana* of *Charaka Samhita* are decorously arranged in the form of *Chatuska* (tetrads, i.e. groups of four) which is the only characteristics of *Charaka samhita*. There are 7 *Chatuskas* & 1 *Sangrahadyaya* (group of 2 chapters).

1.3 Chatuska

The word *Chatuska* means; one, which is comprised of 4 parts or the collection of 4 different subjects, forming a group. It is referred to the group of 4 chapters having a compilation of knowledge related to a specific subject. Origin of *Chatuska* Methodology could be traced back in the Vedic literature. The *chatuskas* are denoted as *Mahartha* = *Maha* + *Artha*⁹. The *Maha* and *Artha* both terms elaborate the vitality of *Chatuskas* more than that the *Maha* and *Artha* are the synonym of Heart; this word appropriately narrates the exact position and importance of *Chatuska* in *Samhita*. *Chatuska* is a unique scribing methodology that also provides evidences of the practical approach of *Charaka Samhita*. *Chatuskas* are as the heart of the text providing the nourishment to rest of *Samhita*. The method of *Chatuska* was adopted so as to conglomerate the similar descriptions under one heading. It is the building block of *Sutrasthana* and collected in the form of four chapters of different aspects but related with a common theme.

The *Chatuskas* are designed in particularly aiming to fulfill the *Dwaya - Prayojana* of Ayurveda *Swasthasya Swasthya rakshnam* and *Aturasya Vikara Prashamanam*. This is the base for the division of 7 *Chatuskas*.

Table 1: Showing Chatuska and Aadhayas in chatuska

Chatuska	Name of Chapters			
<i>Bhesaja</i>	<i>Dirghanjivitiya</i>	<i>Apamarga Tanduliya</i>	<i>Aragvadhya Adhaya</i>	<i>Sadvirechana Satasritiya</i>
<i>Swasthya</i>	<i>Matrasitiyaadhya</i>	<i>Tashyasitiya Adhya</i>	<i>Navegandharania Adhya</i>	<i>Indryopakramaniya Adhya</i>
<i>Nirdesh</i>	<i>Khuddakachatuspada</i>	<i>Maha Chatuspada</i>	<i>Tisraisaniya Adhyay</i>	<i>Vatakalakaliya adhya</i>
<i>Kalpana</i>	<i>Sneha Adhya</i>	<i>Sweda Adhya</i>	<i>Upakalpaniya Adhya</i>	<i>Chikitsa Pravritiya Adhya</i>
<i>Roga</i>	<i>Kiyantahsirasiya</i>	<i>Trisoithiya Adhya</i>	<i>Astodariya Adhya</i>	<i>Maharogadhyaya</i>
<i>Yojana</i>	<i>Astauninditiya Adhya</i>	<i>Langhana brimhanya Adhya</i>	<i>Santarpaniya Adhya</i>	<i>Vidhisonitiya Adhya</i>
<i>Annapana</i>	<i>Yajjapurusiya Adhya</i>	<i>Atreya bhadrakapya Adhya</i>	<i>Annapanavidhi Adhya</i>	<i>Bibidhasitapitiya Adhya</i>

Considering the objectives of Ayurveda it is sub-grouped under three headings.

- To maintain health: *Swastha* and *Annapana Chatuskas*
- To cure disease: *Bhesaja* and *Roga Chatuskas*
- For fulfillment of both objectives: *Nirdesh, Kalpana* and *Yojana Chatuska*

Elaboration of the concept and applicability of every *Chatuska* is the prime necessity for the knowledge of *Charaka Samhita* in present era.

1.3.1 Bhesaja Chatuska: *Bhesaja* is the one, which eliminates the disease or conquers the fear of the disease. *Bhesaja* or *Aushadha* is used to cure the disease of an individual. It constitutes the instruments or tools for achieving the *Dhatusamyata*. Without that, *Vaidya* cannot be able to perform his duty i.e. treatment. Thus the first and foremost *Chatuska* i.e. *Bhesaja Chatuska* is in line with curative aspect of *Prayojana* of Ayurveda. Thus the *Bhesaja Chatuska* acquires the first position and lies as medium of all *Shamana* and *Sodhana* drugs, rather processes of treatment. It deals with various medicines to be used in various forms either externally or internally. Thus, the field of therapeutics actually is initiated from this quadrate and elaborated in further chapters and then in further *Sthana*. This mainly deals with the principles relating to *Hetu* (etiology), *Linga* (symptomatology), *Aushadha* (medicaments), etc. which is the essence of the whole treatise. Table below shows the contents included in the 4 chapter of this *chatuska*.

Table 2: Bhesaja Chatuska and its contents

<i>Dirghanjivitiya</i>	Origin of Ayurveda, <i>Trisutraayurveda</i> , Ayurveda <i>parivasha</i> , <i>Ayu lakshan</i> , <i>kshadpadharta</i> , <i>tridoshas</i> , <i>rogas</i> , various medicines like <i>phalini</i> , <i>moolini</i> , <i>mahasneha</i> , <i>lavana</i> etc ¹⁰ .
<i>Apamarga Tanduliya</i>	<i>Sodhan dravyas</i> i.e. herbs to be used during and after <i>panchakarma</i> , 28 <i>Yavagu varnan</i> ¹¹
<i>Aragvadhya Adhaya</i>	32 no of powder i.e. <i>lepa</i> etc. for external application ¹²
<i>Sadvirechana Satasritiya</i>	600 emetic and purgative preparations, <i>panchakashaya kalpana</i> , 50 <i>mahakashya</i> and 500 <i>kashaya</i> ¹³

1.3.2 Swastha Chatuska: *Swastha Chatuska* is second in the order of Seven *Chatuskas*. This *Chatuska* comes after *Bhesaja Chatuska* and defines the objective of Ayurveda i.e. *Swasthasya Swasthya Raksanam*; but it is also for *Aturasya Vikara Prasamanam*. Because *Chikitsha* in Ayurveda is to bring to the status of *Dhatu Samya* and *Swasthya* is the state of *Dhatusamya*. The major portion of the *Chatuska* deals with the important guidelines to be followed by healthy individuals to maintain their health. This *Chatuska* mainly illustrates *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharaya* and also principles about the *aahara* etc. *Swastha Chatuska* comprises of;

Table 3: Swastha Chatuska and its contents

<i>Matrasitiyaadhya</i>	Description of diet, personal hygiene, <i>Anjan nasya Dhumpna</i> etc. Basically deals with the daily regimen to be followed by healthy individuals ¹⁴ .
<i>Tashyasitiya Adhya</i>	Condition of nature and body in 6 season, description of <i>Adankal</i> and <i>Visargakal</i> , regimen of 6 season <i>Satmya varnan</i> ¹⁵ .
<i>Navegandharaniya adhya</i>	Description of non-suppressible and suppressible urges, description of exercise, etiology preventive and treatment method of endogenous and mental diseases ¹⁶
<i>Indryopakramaniya adhya</i>	<i>Panchapanchak varnan</i> , <i>Sadvritta palan</i> ¹⁷ (general code of conduct)

1.3.3 Nirdesh Chatuska: *Nirdesh Chatuska* placed after the *Swastha Chatuska* as it gives complete diagnostic methodology right from the qualities of the physician to the characteristics features of *Prakrita* and *Vikrita Doshas*. It provides instructions to the physician so that he can succeed in his field. Table below shows the contents included in the 4 chapter of this *chatuska*.

Table 4: Nirdesh Chatuska and its contents

<i>Khuddakachatuspada</i>	Deals with 4 aspects of therapeutics, <i>vaidya</i> (qualities of physician), <i>dravya</i> (qualities of drugs), <i>upasthata</i> (nursing staff), <i>rogi</i> (patients), superiority of physician, 6 quality of <i>Vaidya</i> ¹⁸
<i>Mahachatuspada</i>	Doubts about the utility of our limbs of treatment, views of <i>Maitreya</i> , views of <i>Atreya</i> , prognosis of disease ¹⁹
<i>Tisraisaniya Adhyay</i>	Pursuits of life, re-birth, 4 fold of investigation method, 7 other triads, causes of disease and its path etc ²⁰ .
<i>Vatakalakaliya adhya</i>	symposium on <i>Vata dosha</i> , qualities of <i>Vataprakopa</i> , <i>Vataprasaman</i> , symposium of <i>Pitta dosha</i> and <i>Kapha dosha</i> ²¹

1.3.4 Kalpana Chatuska: The *Kalpana Chatuska* is placed in the fourth position, the major portion of this *Chatuska* deals with the application of medicines in the form of various therapeutic purification procedures either in healthy or in diseased individuals. After knowing about the *prakrit* and *vikrit doshas* the drugs and procedures to be used can be selected. So it is placed after *nirdesh chatuska*. *Sodhana* (bio-purification procedures) is an important concept of Ayurveda for removal of toxic wastes from the body. Before *panchakarma* (purification therapy) *purvakarma* procedures such as *snehana*, *swedana* should be done to mobilize toxic wastes in the body and excrete them out. *Kalpana Chatuska* explains about these procedures.

Table 5: Kalpana Chatuska and its contents

<i>Sneha Adhya</i>	Source of <i>Sneha</i> , <i>Snehapan kaal</i> , qualities and indication of <i>Ghrita</i> , <i>Taila</i> , <i>Vasa</i> , <i>Majja</i> ²² .
<i>Sweda Adhya</i>	Definition of <i>Swedan</i> (fomentation), various types of <i>Swedan</i> , indication and contraindication of <i>Swedan</i> ²³
<i>Upakalpaniya Adhya</i>	Collection of equipment required for <i>Sodhana</i> procedure, <i>Vaman virechan karma</i> , <i>Pathyaapathya</i> and also gives outline of fully equipped hospital ²⁴ .
<i>Chikitsa Pravritiya Adhya</i>	Depicts the importance of <i>sodhana</i> over <i>shaman</i> therapy. Definition of <i>Chikitsapravrit</i> and <i>Vaidyamani</i> physician, <i>suddha chikitsa</i> , <i>swabhavoparamvada</i> (theory of natural destruction) etc ²⁵ .

1.3.5 Roga Chatuska: This tetrad provides a brief list of diseases that are extensively mentioned throughout *Charaka Samhita*. *Roga Chatuska* is designed to explain the complete collection of knowledge of the process of *Dhatu-Vaisamya* in a concise manner. It fully contributes to that necessity of understanding the entire pathogenesis disease. In addition, it also provides knowledge on the assessment of the vital organs, which is important aspect as the degree of severity, and chronicity of the diseases is dependent on the vital organs. The determination of formulations and procedures depends upon the principle of management, and the principle of management lies upon the understanding of pathogenesis. Thus it is explained after *kalpana chatuska*.

Table 6: Roga Chatuska and its contents

<i>Kiyantahsirasiya</i>	Provides the details of <i>shiroroga</i> (disease of head), <i>hridroga</i> (cardiac disease), 62 permutation and combination of <i>Doshas</i> , 18 types of <i>Kshaya</i> , <i>vidradi</i> (abscess), <i>madhumeha</i> , 3 pathways of <i>Doshas</i> etc ²⁶ .
<i>Trisothiya Adhya</i>	endogenous and exogenous edemas, local swellings ²⁷
<i>Astodariya Adhya</i>	<i>Samanyaja vikar</i> (48 disease that are caused by combination of doshas), 8 types of 4 disease, 7 types of 3 disease, types of 2 disease, 5 types of 12 disease, 4 types of 10 disease, 3 types of 3 disease ²⁸ .
<i>Maharogadhyaya</i>	<i>Samanya rogabheda</i> , specific disease of <i>Doshas</i> , 80 types of <i>Vatik nanatmaja vyadhi</i> , 40 types of <i>Paittik</i> and 20 types of <i>Kaphaja nanatmaja vyadhis</i> ²⁹ .

1.3.6 Yojana Chatuska: *Yojana* means intellectually planning. The intellect, which perceives things as an outcome of multiple causative factors when operating together is *yojana*. It helps the physician to take decision based on his medical knowledge, practical experiences, intelligence, observation and analytical skill to formulate an effective treatment. These necessities are also called as "*Rogabhaisajya Yojana*". It is placed after the *Roga Chatuska* as after understanding of the pathogenesis, the appropriate selection of drug and its formulation and determination of principle of management provided by *Yojana Chatuska*. Ayurveda says that each individual is unique; each responds differently to the many aspects of life, each possesses different strengths and weaknesses. Thus *yojana chatuska* is essential as it deals with all types of treatment modalities of various diseases which are available throughout the *samhita*.

Table 7: Yojana Chatuska and its contents

<i>Astauninditiya Adhya</i>	Describes 8 types of undesirable or consumable person, <i>atisthoola</i> (obese) and <i>atikrisha</i> (emaciated person) are described in detail ³⁰ .
<i>Langhanabrmhanya Adhya</i>	Describes 6 types of <i>Chikitsa- langhana, brimhana, snehana, swedana, rukshana</i> and <i>stambhana</i> , indication and contraindication of 6 types of <i>Chikitsa, Atiyoga</i> and <i>Ayoga</i> of <i>Chikitsa</i> ³¹ .
<i>Santarpaniya Adhya</i>	Definition of <i>Santarpana</i> and <i>Apatarpana</i> , diseases occur due to <i>Santarpana</i> and <i>Apatarpana</i> , <i>Chikitsa</i> of those <i>Vyadhis</i> ³²
<i>Vidhisonitiya Adhya</i>	Details about <i>rakta</i> (blood), characteristics of impure and pure blood and diseases due to vitiation of <i>rakta</i> , along with their etiology, symptoms and treatment, details about <i>Raktamokshana, Mada, Murcha</i> and <i>Sanyas prakarana</i> ³³

1.3.7 Annapana Chatuska: *Annapana Chatuska* is the one where the various types of foods, food materials & various ways of preparing food are told. The proper production and maintenance of Dhatus mainly requires complete knowledge regarding dietary regime because "*Pranah Pranabhutam Annam*" For that purpose *Annapana Chatuska* is described after *Yojana Chatuska*.

Table 8: Annapana Chatuska and its contents

<i>Yajjapurusiya Adhya</i>	Symposium on origin of human beings and diseases, factors responsible for growth of man and disease, also describes 155 <i>Agraya</i> (entities considered best in their category of drugs, food, procedure etc.) ³⁴
<i>Atreyabhadrakapya Adhya</i>	symposium on nature of <i>Rogas</i> , topic of <i>Dravyas</i> and their 63 variety according to <i>Rasas</i> , details about <i>Dravya, guna, Veerya, vipak, viruddhaahara</i> (dietic incompatibilities) ³⁵
<i>Annapanavidhi Adhya</i>	General consideration regarding diet, deals with a wide variety of food and beverages, along with their medicinal values ³⁶ .
<i>Bibidhasitapitiya Adhya</i>	Process of digestion and metabolism, doubts regarding wholesome ³⁷ diet, disease of <i>Dhatu</i> (body tissues) and their treatment, migration of <i>dosha</i> from <i>shakha</i> to <i>kostha</i> and vice versa.

1.3.8 Samgraha Dwaya: The *Sangrahadhyaya* comprising of the last two chapters, where the collection of different characteristics of life, body & physician (*Vaidya*) are elaborately described. Chapters of *sangrahadwaya* are

<i>Dashpranayataneeya</i>	Deals with 10 locations in the human body where <i>prana</i> (life) resides, <i>pranabhisaravaidya</i> and <i>rogabhisaravaidya</i> is mentioned ³⁸
<i>Arthedashmahamooliya</i>	Deals with importance of <i>Artha</i> (<i>hridaya</i> -heart), definition of <i>Ayu</i> , aim of Ayurveda, narrates topics (chapters) of other <i>Sthaana</i> ³⁹

2. DISCUSSION

Inquisitive power of mankind always promotes one to gain knowledge. Regarding *adhyayana* of Ayurveda the disciple should ask his teacher about eight topics that are about the *Tantra* (*Samhita*), *Tantrartha* (Scope of the *Samhita*), *Sthana* (*Sutra, Vimana* etc), *Sthananartha* (*Vishaya*), *Adhyaya* (Chapter), *Adhyayartha* (Scope of Chapter), *Prashna, Prashnartha*. On the same tract the questions regarding *chatuska* is also raised. This is a unique contribution of the *Charaka Samhita*. The descriptions related to *Bhaishajya* were placed under *Bhaishajya Chatuska*, related to *maintenance* of health were included in *Swastha chatuska* and so on. The division of the *Chatuskas* was not necessary in remaining *Sthanas*, as the chapters in the other *Sthanas* contain description regarding particular topics such as in *Chikitsa Sthana-Jwara Chikitsa, Gulma Chikitsa* etc. The topic wise sectioning provided by *Chatuska* is a requirement for *Sutra Sthana* but it is not possible to use the method for rest of the *Sthanas* as they explain some of the parts of *Sutrasthana*. The remaining *Sthanas* are the mere elaboration of these *Chatuskas*.

3. CONCLUSION

Charak samhita has divided the 30 chapters of *Sutrasthana* in 7 *Chatuska*. *Sutrasthana* is the base for whole *Samhita*. The methodology of *Chatuska* was adopted in this. Among *Brihatrayi* neither the *Sushruta Samhita* nor the *Vagbhata* (*Astanga Sangraha* and *Astanga Hridaya*) explain this methodology. *Chatuska* methodology is distinctiveness of the *Charaka Samhita*. The clinical application of *Chatuska* must be comprehended so that it finds its path of application, as *Chatuska* makes it easy for studying and understanding the *Samhita* thoroughly.

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