



A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW ON THE FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS OF SĀṆKHYA DARŚANA AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Sāṅkhya Darśana, one of the oldest and most influential systems of Indian philosophy, provides a comprehensive metaphysical framework that profoundly shaped the theoretical foundations of Ayurveda. Rooted in dualistic realism, *Sāṅkhya* elucidates the interaction between *Puruṣa* (pure consciousness) and *Prakṛti* (primordial matter) and systematically explains cosmic evolution through the enumeration of the twenty-four *Tattvas*. This review critically examines the fundamental concepts of *Sāṅkhya Darśana*, including *Triguṇa Siddhānta*, *Trividha Duḥkha*, *Satkāryavāda*, *Pariṇāmavāda*, *Pramāṇa*, *Tattva Nirūpaṇa*, and *Mokṣa* and analyses their philosophical and clinical implications within *Ayurveda*. Classical textual sources such as the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*, *Charaka Saṃhitā*, and *Suśruta Saṃhitā* were systematically explored to establish conceptual correlations between *Sāṅkhya* metaphysics and Ayurvedic principles of health, disease, cognition, and liberation. The review demonstrates that Ayurvedic doctrines concerning *Doṣa*, *Dhātu*, *Indriya*, *Manas*, and *Ātman* are deeply embedded in the *Sāṅkhyan* worldview. Concepts such as *Trividha Duḥkha* provide a holistic framework for understanding disease causation, while *Satkāryavāda* and *Pariṇāmavāda* explain physiological transformation, tissue metabolism, embryological development, and pathological progression. Furthermore, the *Triguṇa* theory contributes significantly to Ayurvedic psychology and behavioural sciences. The philosophical integration of *Sāṅkhya* into Ayurveda reveals a unified vision wherein metaphysical inquiry directly informs clinical understanding and therapeutic practice. This interdisciplinary synthesis not only highlights the epistemological depth of Ayurveda but also demonstrates the continuing relevance of *Sāṅkhya Darśana* in contemporary discussions on holistic medicine, consciousness studies, and integrative health sciences.

KEYWORDS: *Sāṅkhya Darśana*; *Ayurveda*; *Puruṣa*; *Prakṛti*; *Triguṇa*; *Satkāryavāda*; *Pariṇāmavāda*

INTRODUCTION

The term *Darśana* originates from the Sanskrit root “*dr̥ś*”, meaning “to see,” representing a direct realisation of truth and an inner vision of reality rather than mere sensory perception. As a practical and experiential system of wisdom, *Darśana* integrates metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and spiritual practice to understand the nature of the Self (*Ātman*), the universe (*Jagat*), and the path to liberation (*Mokṣa*). Indian philosophical systems are broadly classified into *Āstika* schools, which accept the authority of the *Vedas*, such as the six classical systems of *Sāṅkhya*, *Yoga*, *Nyāya*, *Vaiśeṣika*, *Mīmāṃsā*, and *Vedānta* and *Nāstika* schools like *Bauddha*, *Jaina*, and *Cārvāka*, which do not. This categorisation is rooted in epistemological acceptance rather than a simple belief in a deity, establishing a vision-based tradition whose ultimate goal is the cessation of suffering.

Sāṅkhya Darśana, regarded as one of the oldest traditions and echoed in the *Mahābhārata* and *Bhagavad Gītā*, is a system of dualistic realism focusing on two ultimate realities: *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*. Founded by the sage Kapila, traditionally identified as an incarnation of Vishnu and the “Original Knower”, the philosophy derives its name from *Saṅkhyā*, meaning the systematic enumeration or counting of the 24 *Tattvas* (elements). This “Philosophy of Number” aims to provide a precise understanding of the distinct nature of primordial matter and pure consciousness. Although Kapila’s original writings have not survived, the 5th-century *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* by Īśvara Kṛṣṇa remains the definitive authority. While some Western scholars



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once dismissed Kapila as a fictional figure due to varying Puranic accounts, a deeper understanding of Puranic methodology reveals a consistent lineage of thought centred on *Tattva-jñāna*, or the discriminative wisdom required to achieve spiritual liberation.

AUTHOR OF SĀṆKHYA DARŚANA: MAHARṢI KAPILA

Maharishi Kapila is traditionally recognised as the foundational figure of *Sāṅkhya* philosophy, though historical accounts often describe multiple individuals bearing this name. These include a descendant of Sage Gautama associated with Kapilavastu, the *Mānasa-putra* (mind-born son) of Lord Brahma known as the "Original Knower," and the son of Sage Kardama and Devahuti. According to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the latter is identified as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu and the primary proponent of *Sāṅkhya*. While Western scholars like Colebrooke and Max Müller initially dismissed Kapila as a mythological figure due to these varied Puranic narratives, such critiques often stem from a literalist interpretation that overlooks the specialised linguistic nuances and methodological frameworks of Puranic historiography, which synthesise these identities into a singular philosophical lineage.

The literary tradition of *Sāṅkhya* is defined by a transition from lost foundational works to extant authoritative texts. While the massive *Śaṣṭitantra* by Pañcaśikha has been lost to time, the system is preserved through the *Tattva Samāsa*, a concise set of 22 aphorisms, and the voluminous *Sāṅkhya Pravacana Sūtra*, comprising 526 sūtras across six chapters. Central to the school's survival is Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*, which serves as the definitive bedrock of the philosophy. This seminal work spawned a vast family tree of commentaries (*Vṛttis* and *Bhāṣyas*), ranging from ancient texts like the *Māṭhara-vṛtti* and *Gauḍapāda-bhāṣya* to the widely revered "gold standard," Vācaspati Miśra's *Sāṅkhyatattva-kaumudī*. Later scholars such as Aniruddha and Vijñānabhikṣu further revitalised the school, ensuring its academic rigour and relevance through synthesis with broader Indian philosophical traditions.

FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS OF SĀṆKHYA DARŚANA

TRIVIDHA DUḤKHA

Sāṅkhya philosophy identifies the "persistent assault" of three types of suffering - *Ādhyātmika* (internal physical or mental distress), *Ādhibhautika* (external harm from living beings or OBJECTS), and *Ādhi-Davīka* (uncontrollable natural or supernatural forces) as the primary catalyst for philosophical inquiry (*Jijñāsā*). While visible remedies like medicine provide temporary relief, they lack the certainty (*Aikāntika*) and finality (*Ātyantika*) required to prevent the recurrence of pain. *Sāṅkhya* addresses this by seeking the absolute "striking down" (*Abhighāta*) of the root causes of existence. Within the framework of *Satkāryavāda*, the theory that an effect pre-exists in its cause, this process is viewed not as the absolute destruction of suffering, which is impossible, but as its permanent mitigation or pacification through metaphysical knowledge.

This philosophical triad finds a direct clinical application in the *Sushruta Samhita*, where *Vyādhi* (disease) is defined as a condition arising from the association with *Duḥkha*. Sushruta categorises these into seven specialised types: *Ādhibala* (hereditary), *Janmabala* (congenital), and *Doṣabala* (dosha-imbalance) fall under *Ādhyātmika* suffering; *Saṅghātabala* (trauma) represents *Ādhibhautika* suffering; and *Kālabala* (seasonal), *Daivabala* (providential/supernatural), and *Svabhāvabala* (natural physiological processes like hunger or ageing) constitute *Ādhidavika* suffering. By aligning *Sāṅkhya*'s metaphysical inquiry with Ayurveda's diagnostic framework, this system provides a holistic view of health that accounts for everything from genetic factors and environmental trauma to the inherent temporal nature of the human body.

SRṢṬI UTPATTI

nāsādāsīnno sadāsīttādānīṅ nāsīdrajo no vyomā paro yat /

kimāvārīyaḥ kuḥ kasya sarmānambhaḥ kimāsīdgahānaṃ gabhīram //



na mṛtyurāsīdamṛtaṃ na tarhī na rātryā ahnā āsītprakṛtaḥ ।

ānīdavātaṃ svadhayā tadekaṃ tasmāddhānyanna paraḥ kiṃ cañāsā ॥ (ṛgveda 10/129)

The *Nāsadiya Sūktam* of the *Rigveda* provides the profound ontological foundation for *Sṛṣṭi* (creation), describing a primordial state of absolute neutrality. Neither the existence nor the non-existence, death, nor immortality prevailed. This "absolute", which breathes or does not breathe by its own nature. It represents a state of pure potential, and that defies the linguistic definition of the term used for it. In the framework of *Sāṅkhya Darśana*, this indescribable state is identified as *Mūla-Prakṛti* (Root Nature), the unmanifested seed of the universe. From this subtle origin, the *Tattvas*, defined as the principles that pervade and encompass all sentient and non-sentient beings, emerge through a systematic process of transformation (*Parināma*).

Sāṅkhya classifies these *Tattvas* into a fourfold hierarchy based on their causal nature. *Mūla-Prakṛti* is the primordial cause (*Avikṛti*) that is not an effect of anything else. Conversely, a group of sixteen elements comprising the mind, the ten *Indriyas*, and the five *Mahābhūtas*, are strictly an effect (*Vikāra*). Between these lies a group of seven elements, including *Mahat* (Intellect), *Ahaṅkāra* (Ego), and the five *Tanmātras* (subtle elements), which function as both causes and effects (*Prakṛti-Vikṛti*). Standing apart from this creative cycle is *Puruṣa* (Pure Consciousness), which is neither cause nor effect. The evolution of the material world is triggered when the proximity of the inactive *Puruṣa* disturbs the equilibrium of the three *Guṇas* (*Sattva*, *Rajas*, *Tamas*) within *Prakṛti*, leading to a cascading manifestation from cosmic intellect down to the dense physical elements.

PAṄGU-ANDHA NYĀYA

The *Paṅgu-Andha Nyāya* (Analogy of the Lame and the Blind) is used by *Sāṅkhya* to explain how two diametrically opposite principles, the inactive and conscious (*Puruṣa*) and the active and non-intelligent (*Prakṛti*), unite to trigger cosmic evolution. Individually, these two are not capable of creation: *Prakṛti* possesses the power to act but lacks the vision of consciousness, whereas *Puruṣa* possesses the vision of awareness but lacks the capacity for action. Their cooperation is likened to a lame man with clear vision sitting upon the shoulders of a blind man with strong legs; the lame man provides the direction, and the blind man provides the locomotion, allowing both to navigate the forest and reach their destination.

This union serves a dual teleological purpose defined as *Puruṣasya Darśanārthaṃ* (for the experience of *Puruṣa*) and *Kaivalyārthaṃ* (for the sake of liberation). *Prakṛti* requires the presence of *Puruṣa* to initiate manifestation, while *Puruṣa* requires the medium of *Prakṛti* to witness the world and, through a process of discrimination (*Viveka*), eventually recognise its own distinctness from matter. Thus, the evolution of the world of objects is not an accidental collision but a systematic cooperation where the blind activity of nature is guided by the silent intelligence of consciousness, ultimately facilitating the soul's journey toward *Mokṣa*.

TATTVA NIRŪPAṆA

1. PRAKṚTI / PURUṢA

The enumeration of the twenty-four *Tattvas* begins with the fundamental relationship between *Prakṛti* (the Unmanifest) and *Puruṣa* (Consciousness). While *Sāṅkhya* defines *Puruṣa* as neither cause nor effect, *Ayurveda* provides a broader clinical context, with Acharya Charaka describing *Puruṣa* both as the singular element of consciousness and as the *Ṣaḍdhātu Puruṣa*, the aggregate of the five *Mahābhūtas* and *Cetanā*. These two principles share several commonalities (*Sādharmya*): both are beginningless (*Anādi*), endless (*Ananta*), eternal (*Nitya*), and omnipresent (*Sarvagata*). They are further characterised as *Alinga*, meaning they lack a specific causative mark or origin, and *Anapara*, existing without a superior or comparable entity.



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Despite these similarities, their distinct nature (*Vaidharmya*) is critical for philosophical and medical discrimination. *Prakṛti* is defined as a singular, non-conscious (*Acetana*) entity composed of the three *Guṇas*. It is *Bīja-dharminī* (seed-like potential) and *Prasava-dharminī* (prolific in reproduction), yet it is *Amadhyastha*, meaning it is inherently involved in the qualities of pleasure and pain. Conversely, *Puruṣas* are described as innumerable (*Bahu*) and conscious (*Cetanāvanta*), yet they are devoid of the *Guṇas* (*Aguṇa*) and remain *Madhyastha*, the neutral, detached observers. This distinction clarifies that while *Prakṛti* provides the creative machinery, *Puruṣa* provides the illuminating awareness.

The *Sushruta Samhita* further elucidates the "Unmanifest" (*Avyakta*) as the causeless cause of the entire universe, characterised by its eightfold form (*Aṣṭarūpa*) and the equilibrium of *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*. *Avyakta* acts as the primary source from which all living and non-living substances originate. It serves as the universal substratum (*Adhiṣṭhāna*) for the many *Kṣetrajñas* (individual souls), functioning much like the ocean that contains and supports a multitude of diverse forms. By understanding these properties, one can perceive the systematic transition from the unmanifest state to the manifest world of the twenty-four *Tattvas*.

2. MAHAT

The first product of *Prakṛti*'s evolution is *Mahat*, also known as *Buddhi* (Intellect). In its psychological aspect, *Buddhi* serves as the ground for all intellectual processes, functioning to distinguish between subject and object and to design or categorise reality. It arises from a preponderance of *Sattva* within *Prakṛti*, and its primary function is *Adhyavasāya* (ascertainment and decisive judgment). In its *Sāttvika* state, *Buddhi* manifests the virtues of *Dharma* (righteousness), *Jñāna* (knowledge), *Vairāgya* (detachment), and *Aiśvarya* (potency); however, when dominated by *Tamas*, it manifests their opposites. While the senses and mind function for *Buddhi*, *Buddhi* itself functions for the Self (*Puruṣa*), providing the discriminative clarity necessary for the Self to realise its independence from matter.

3. AHAṆKĀRA

Following *Mahat*, the second manifestation is *Ahaṅkāra* (Ego), which introduces the sense of "I" and "mine." Through *Ahaṅkāra*, the Self wrongly identifies as an active agent, an owner of properties, and a striver for ends. Depending on the predominance of the *Triguṇas*, *Ahaṅkāra* is classified into three types: *Vaikārika* (*Sāttvika*), *Taijasa* (*Rājasa*), and *Bhūtādi* (*Tāmasa*). According to the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* and Vācaspati Mīśra, the *Vaikārika* form gives rise to the eleven *Indriyas* (mind, five sensory organs, and five motor organs), while the *Bhūtādi* form produces the five *Tanmātras* (subtle elements). *Taijasa Ahaṅkāra* acts as the energetic catalyst for both processes. Notably, Vijñānabhikṣu and the *Vedānta* school offer a slight variation, positing that only the *Manas* (mind) derives from the *Sāttvika* aspect, while the remaining organs and subtle elements arise from the *Rājasa* and *Tāmasa* aspects, respectively.

4. INDRIYA

The *Indriyas* (organs) are classified into three distinct groups: the five *Jñānendriyas* (organs of knowledge) responsible for perceiving sound, touch, form, taste, and smell; the five *Karmendriyas* (organs of action), which facilitate speech, prehension, movement, excretion, and reproduction; and the *Manas* (Mind). Both *Sāṅkhya* and *Ayurveda* recognise *Manas* as *Ubhayendriya*, an organ that partakes of both perception and action. Acharya Charaka defines the mind by its essential qualities of *Anutva* (subtleness) and *Ekatva* (oneness), noting that knowledge is produced only when the mind attends to the contact between the self, the senses, and their objects. The jurisdiction of *Manas* includes thinking, reasoning, and self-restraint, acting as the bridge before the determination of *Buddhi* begins.

In *Sāṅkhya* philosophy, these organs form the "Trayodaśa Karaṇa" (thirteen instruments), consisting of the three internal organs (*Antaḥkaraṇa*: *Manas*, *Ahaṅkāra*, *Buddhi*) and the ten external organs (*Bāhyakaraṇa*). During perception, the external organs act as the media for present objects, while the internal organs process this data across past, present, and future timelines. The process follows a specific sequence: the *Manas* coordinates sensory data into a determinate form, *Ahaṅkāra* personalises the experience as desirable or undesirable for the self, and *Buddhi* finalises the decision to act.



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A significant divergence exists between Sāṅkhya and Ayurveda regarding the composition of the *Indriyas*. While Sāṅkhya posits that only the *Indriyārthas* (sense objects) are *Bhautika* (material), Ayurveda maintains that both the *Indriyas* and their objects are *Bhautika*, composed of the *Pañcamahābhūtas*. Acharya Sushruta explains that a specific sense organ perceives its corresponding object because they share the same elemental origin (*Tulya-yonitvāt*). This Ayurvedic perspective is further systematised in Charaka's *Pañca-pañcaka*, which categorises the five sense organs, their constituent materials, their anatomical seats, their objects, and the resulting intellectual perceptions, providing a comprehensive framework for clinical and philosophical understanding.

5. TANMĀTRĀ AND MAHĀBHŪTA

The final stage of *Sāṅkhya* evolution involves the transition from the microscopic *Tanmātras* (subtle essences) to the macroscopic *Mahābhūtas* (gross elements). *Tanmātras* represent the "minutest form" or the potential generic essence of sound (*Śabda*), touch (*Sparśa*), form (*Rūpa*), taste (*Rasa*), and smell (*Gandha*). Because they are too subtle to be perceived by ordinary senses, they are termed *Aviśeṣa* (non-specific). In the description of the concept of *Tanmātras* in *Sushruta Samhita Sharira Sthana*, Dalhana comments that these are very subtle and cannot be ordinarily perceived, but can be perceived by 'yogis', and we know them by inference. From these five subtle potentials, the five gross elements *Ākāśa*, *Vāyu*, *Tejas*, *Jala*, and *Pṛthvī* emerge as *Viśeṣa* (specific) entities characterised as *Śānta* (placid), *Ghora* (terrible), or *Mūḍha* (stupefying) based on their sensory impact.

A critical concept shared by Sāṅkhya and Ayurveda is the systematic combination of these elements, known as *Anyonyānu-praveśa* (intermingling) or *Guṇa-vṛddhi* (increase of qualities). According to this doctrine, the elements do not exist in isolation; rather, each succeeding element incorporates the qualities of its predecessors. *Ākāśa* possesses only sound; *Vāyu* incorporates sound and touch; *Tejas* adds form; *Ap* includes taste; and *Pṛthvī* encompasses all five qualities. Acharya Sushruta emphasises that while all five elements are mutually interpenetrated and present in every substance in the universe, the specific nomenclature of a substance (as *Pārthiva*, *Āpya*, etc.) is determined by the preponderance (*Utkarṣa*) of a particular *Bhūta*.

This hierarchical evolution establishes that every bit of matter is an inseparable unit exhibiting all five sensory qualities in varying proportions. While Sāṅkhya focuses on the metaphysical transition from the subtle potential to the gross manifestation, Ayurveda utilises this framework to explain the physical properties of *Dravya* (matter). By understanding this "intermingling," the practitioner can perceive the subtle *Tanmātric* origins within the macroscopic *Mahābhūtic* world, bridging the gap between primordial essence and clinical reality.

TRIGUṆA SIDDHĀNTA

The *Triguṇa* theory serves as the functional foundation of *Prakṛti*, where *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas* govern all cosmic and psychological processes. According to the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*, *Sattva* is characterised by lightness (*Laghu*) and illumination (*Prakāśaka*), facilitating clarity and the acquisition of knowledge. *Rajas* is essentially restless (*Calā*) and activating (*Upastambhaka*), providing the necessary stimulation for motion and engagement in action. *Tamas* is heavy (*Guru*) and obstructive (*Varaṇaka*), leading to inertia, delusion, and the concealment of knowledge. Despite their opposing natures, these three *Guṇas* operate through mutual domination, dependence, and production, working in union toward the *Puruṣa*'s dual purpose of experience (*Bhoga*) and liberation (*Mokṣa*), much like the wick, oil, and flame of a lamp combine to produce a single light.

In Ayurveda, Acharya Sushruta applies this principle to the evolution of the *Viśeṣas* (products like *Mahat* and *Ahankāra*), stating they are entirely engrossed in these three qualities. Due to intimate attachment (*Añjanatva*) and being fully engrossed with *Prakṛti* (*Tanmayatva*), even the *Karmapurūṣa* is categorised as *Sāttvika*, *Rājasika*, or *Tāmasika*. *Sāttvika* traits include truthfulness, forgiveness, and wisdom; *Rājasika* traits manifest as excessive grief, pride, and lust; and *Tāmasika* traits result in dejection, ignorance, and excessive sleep. Furthermore, the *Guṇas* establish a direct relationship with the *Mahābhūtas*: *Ākāśa* is predominant in *Sattva*, *Vāyu* in *Rajas*, *Agni* in *Sattva-Rajas*, *Ap* in *Sattva-Tamas*, and *Pṛthvī* in *Tamas*.



Acharya Charaka extends this framework to the clinical understanding of the mind (*Sattva*), classifying it into *Śuddha* (pure), *Rājasa* (agitated), and *Tāmasa* (deluded). *Śuddha Sattva* is considered faultless due to its auspicious nature, whereas the latter two are deemed "with faults" (*Sadoṣa*) due to their association with anger and delusion. Charaka emphasises that the mind and body are mutually dependent and follow one another (*Anyonyānuvidhāna*). While the variations of these mental temperaments are theoretically infinite based on their combinations and degrees (*Taratama-yoga*), they provide a systematic rubric for understanding human behaviour and pathology in relation to the universal *Triguṇa* theory.

TRIVIDHA PRAMĀṆAM

Sāṅkhya philosophy establishes that the validation of all knowable objects (*Prameya*) depends entirely upon *Pramāṇa* (means of knowledge). While other schools may propose more, Sāṅkhya maintains that all valid knowledge is encompassed by three primary means: *Pratyakṣa* (Direct Perception), *Anumāna* (Inference), and *Āptavacana* (Authoritative Testimony). Perception provides direct sensory contact with objects; Inference allows for knowledge derived from a sign (*Liṅga*) and its relationship to the indicated object (*Liṅgin*); and Testimony bridges the gap for truths that remain beyond both sensory reach and logical deduction. In Ayurveda, Acharya Charaka aligns with this triad for clinical diagnosis (*Roga-parīkṣā*), though he introduces *Yukti* (rational application) as a fourth parameter in the broader context of investigating existence.

The mechanism of perception involves a systematic internal processing where the sense organs, mind, and intellect function like lamps to illuminate objects for the *Puruṣa*. Initially, sense organs, coordinated by the *Manas*, grasp an object; the mind then analyses its merits and demerits before presenting it to the *Buddhi* (Intellect), which produces the decisive knowledge (*Niścayātmika*) required for action. However, Charaka emphasises that this process requires a clear "instrument" (*Karaṇa*); just as a person cannot see their reflection in a dusty mirror or polluted water, the *Ātmā* cannot gain correct perception if the mind is afflicted or the senses are defective.

Crucially, both Sāṅkhya and Ayurveda acknowledge that the absence of perception does not imply the non-existence of an object. There are several *Pratyakṣa Bādhaka Hetus* (factors that obstruct perception) which explain why even existing things may remain unobserved. These include extreme distance (*Atidūrat*), extreme proximity (*Sāmīpyāt*), impairment of sense organs (*Indriya-ghātāt*), inattention of the mind (*Mana-नावस्थानāt*), and extreme subtlety (*Saukṣmyāt*). Other factors like physical obstructions (*Vyavahānāt*), being overpowered by stronger stimuli (*Abhibhavāt*), or being lost among similar objects (*Samānābhihārāt*) further limit sensory reliability. This realisation serves as the philosophical justification for moving beyond pure empiricism to embrace inference and authoritative scripture in the pursuit of absolute truth.

DVIDHA VĀDA

Sāṅkhya philosophy posits two primary theories of causation: *Satkāryavāda* (the theory of pre-existent effect) and *Parināmavāda* (the theory of transformation). *Satkāryavāda* is the hallmark of Sāṅkhya, asserting that an effect (*Kārya*) is not a new creation but a manifestation of what already existed in a latent state within its cause (*Kāraṇa*). This is famously mirrored in the *Bhagavad Gītā*,

nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ |

ubhayaorapi dr̥ṣṭo'ntastvanayostattvadarśibhiḥ || (Bhagavad Gītā 2/16)

which states that the real never ceases to be and the unreal never comes into existence. To prove that the effect is ever-existent, Sāṅkhya provides five logical justifications (*Hetus*): *Asat-akāraṇāt* (non-existent things cannot be produced), *Upādāna-grahaṇāt* (specific materials are needed for specific effects), *Sarva-sambhavābhāvāt* (everything cannot come from everything), *Śaktasya-śakya-kāraṇāt* (a cause produces only what it is potent to produce), and *Kāraṇa-bhāvāt* (the effect shares the same essence as its cause).

In Ayurveda, although the term *Satkāryavāda* is not always used explicitly in the root texts, the principle is foundational to both theory and practice. Acharya Sushruta applies this through *Kārya-kāraṇa Sambandha* to explain that all worldly



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substances are composed of the same *Pañcamahābhūtas* and *Guṇas* from which they originated. This relationship is essential for medical treatment, as it implies that the materials used for therapy must possess the same elemental essence as the body they are intended to treat. Commentators like Chakrapani further integrate this by applying *Satkāryavāda* to the *Vādamārgas* and the development of the fetus (*Garbha*).

Literary and Practical Application in Ayurveda

The literary application of *Satkāryavāda* is most evident in the Ayurvedic understanding of genetics and development. It explains that:

- **Congenital and Genetic Disorders:** Diseases like *Prameha* (diabetes) or *Kuṣṭha* (skin disorders) can manifest in offspring even without immediate causative factors (*Nidāna*) if the defects were already present in a latent, subtle form within the parental *Bīja* (seed/genes).
- **Latent Manifestation:** Secondary sexual characteristics and the complex organs of a fully developed fetus are considered present in an unmanifested state from the moment of conception, becoming macroscopic only with the passage of time.

Practically, the aim of Ayurveda is *Dhātusāmyatā* (equilibrium of tissues), which is the *Kārya* (effect) produced by six *Kāraṇas* (causes): *Sāmānya*, *Viśeṣa*, *Dravya*, *Guṇa*, *Karma*, and *Samavāya*. These causes are divided into *Sattāsiddha* (actual existence) and *Bhātisiddha* (conceptual existence). While *Sāmānya* and *Viśeṣa* are the intellectual principles guiding treatment, they cannot function without the *Sat* (existent) causes of *Dravya* (substance), *Guṇa* (quality), and *Karma* (action). Thus, Ayurvedic *Cikitsā* is a practical exercise in *Satkāryavāda*, using existent causes to manifest the pre-existing potential for health within the patient.

PARIṆĀMA VĀDA

Parināmavāda, the Theory of Transformation, is the logical corollary to *Satkāryavāda* in Sāṅkhya philosophy. It posits that the cause (*Kāraṇa*) does not merely produce an effect but actually transforms itself into the effect (*Kārya*). This is exemplified by the conversion of milk into curd; the curd is the *Parināma* (transformation) of the milk. In the context of *Sṛṣṭi Utpatti* (cosmic evolution), the entire manifest universe is considered the *Parināma* of the unmanifest *Avyakta*. Sāṅkhya further distinguishes between *Dharma Parināma*, where the qualities (*Guṇas*) of the cause change (e.g., the transformation of *Anna Rasa* into *Rasa Dhātu*), and *Lakṣaṇa Parināma*, where the cause retains its essential qualities despite a change in form (e.g., water turning into ice).

In Ayurveda, the principle of *Parināma* is indispensable for explaining physiological transitions, the progression of time, and the pathogenesis of diseases. Acharya Sushruta identifies *Parināma* as one of the six foundational factors (*Ṣaḍ-kāraṇas*) of cosmic evolution and expansion. In clinical pathology, Acharya Charaka classifies *Parināma* (often used synonymously with *Kāla* or Time) as one of the three primary causes of disease (*Vyādhi-hetu*), alongside *Asātmendriyārtha-samyoga* and *Prajñāparādha*. This highlights that the natural transformation of seasons and the ageing process inherently impact the equilibrium of the *Doṣas*.

Physiological Applications of Parināmavāda

The practical application of transformation is most evident in the Ayurvedic understanding of metabolism and growth:

- **Āhāra Parināma:** The conversion of food into bodily tissues is governed by the *Āhāra-parināmakara Bhāvas* (factors of transformation), which include *Uṣmā* (heat/Agni), *Vāyu*, *Kleda*, *Sneha*, *Kāla*, and *Samayoga*.
- **Dhātu-Parināma:** The sequential formation of tissues (*Rasād Raktam tato Māmsam...*) is a classic example of *Dharma Parināma*. In this process, the preceding *Dhātu* acts as the material cause for the succeeding one. This



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transformation occurs within the *Srotas* (channels), which are defined specifically as the pathways for *Dhātus* transforming (*Parināmam-āpadyamānānām*).

- **Garbha Poshana and Maturity:** The growth and maturation of the fetus are attributed to *Kāla-pariṇāma*. Sushruta beautifully illustrates this natural timing by comparing a full-term delivery to a ripe fruit that detaches from its stalk naturally through the passage of time (*Kālasya pariṇāmena*).

Ultimately, the entire spectrum of health and disease can be viewed through the lens of *Parināmavāda*. As noted by Acharya Vagbhata, the transition from a state of *Doṣa-vaiṣamya* (disease) to *Doṣa-sāmya* (health) is essentially a transformation. Whether it is the metabolic conversion of nourishment into life-sustaining tissues or the pathological transformation of healthy states into diseased ones, the principle of *Parināma* provides the mechanical explanation for all change within the living body.

THE CONCEPT OF MOKṢA

The concept of *Mokṣa* (Liberation) in Sāṅkhya philosophy is defined as the ultimate cessation of the cycle of birth and suffering. According to the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*, the destiny of the soul is determined by the interplay of conduct and knowledge: *Dharma* leads to higher rebirths (*Ūrdhva-gamana*), and *Adharma* leads to lower realms (*Adho-gamana*). However, neither leads to final freedom; only *Jñāna* (Discriminative Knowledge) results in *Apavarga* (Liberation), while *Viparyaya* (Ignorance) ensures continued *Bandha* (Bondage). Liberation is achieved specifically through *Viveka-jñāna*, the clear realisation that the *Puruṣa* is entirely distinct from *Prakṛti* and its three *Guṇas*.

Sāṅkhya illustrates this withdrawal with the simile of a dancer: just as a dancer retires from the stage after completing her performance for the audience, *Prakṛti* withdraws from the *Puruṣa* once her true nature has been fully revealed and understood. In this state of *Kaivalya*, the purpose of *Prakṛti* (both experience and liberation) is fulfilled. The *Puruṣa* remains as a detached witness (*Prekṣakavat*), unaffected and serene, realising "I have seen her," while *Prakṛti* ceases her creative activity, acknowledging "I have been seen." Even if the physical association appears to continue for a time, the "seed" of creation is burnt, and no further bondage is possible.

Mokṣa in Ayurveda

Acharya Charaka defines *Mokṣa* as the complete separation (*Viyoga*) from all contacts, occurring when *Rajas* and *Tamas* are eliminated from the mind, and the effects of past powerful actions (*Karma-saṅkṣaya*) are destroyed. This state of *Apunarbhava* (no rebirth) signifies the end of both mental and physical suffering. Charaka teaches that viewing the body as a singular, unified entity (*Saṅga*) leads to bondage, whereas analysing it as a collection of distinct parts (*Prthaktva*), essentially a medical application of *Viveka-jñāna*, leads to salvation. When the causative factors stop functioning, the cycle of birth and death concludes.

The commentary by Dalhana on the *Sushruta Samhita* further elucidates the teleological purpose of *Prakṛti*. He explains that although the entire manifest world (*Avyakta* to *Mahābhūtas*) is non-conscious (*Acetana*), it acts solely for the sake of the *Puruṣa*'s liberation (*Kaivalyārtham*). This is compared to how non-conscious milk is produced by a cow specifically for the nourishment and growth of the calf. Initially, the *Puruṣa* becomes so attached to *Prakṛti* that it forgets its own separate identity, experiencing the highs and lows of the *Guṇas*. Eventually, realising this misidentification, the soul seeks detachment. Paradoxically, the machinery of *Prakṛti* is the very tool required for the *Puruṣa* to witness the world and subsequently achieve the finality of *Mokṣa*.

THE CONCEPT OF ĀTMĀ

The concept of the *Ātmā* (Soul) in Ayurveda, particularly as described by Acharya Charaka, emphasises its eternal connection to certain subtle factors during the cycle of transmigration. The soul is never found in isolation while within the cycle of birth and death; it is perpetually associated with super-sensory, subtle elements and the residues of past actions



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(*Karma*). Furthermore, it remains linked to the mind (*Manas*), intellect (*Buddhi*), and the functional distortions of ego (*Ahankāra*) and passion.

A crucial aspect of this doctrine is the role of the mind and the *Guṇas*. The mind is inherently bound by *Rajas* and *Tamas*, and in the absence of true discriminative knowledge, these qualities lead to all psychological and spiritual defects. It is this "afflicted" mind, powered by the force of *Karma*, that acts as the primary driver for the soul's migration between bodies, motivating both virtuous and unrighteous actions.

The process of transmigration is described with physical and metaphysical precision:

- **The Subtle Vehicle:** When the soul moves from one body to another, it does not travel alone. It is accompanied by the mind and the four basic elements (*Bhūtas*), excluding *Ākāśa*, in their most subtle forms.
- **Perceptibility:** Because this transmigrating entity is exceptionally subtle (*Su-sūkṣma*), it remains invisible to the physical eye. Its form cannot be perceived through ordinary sensory experience; it is visible only to those who have attained "spiritual vision" or divine perception.

Ultimately, the *Ātmā* is the silent witness. Still, its journey through the *Samsāra* (cycle of existence) is dictated by the mind's velocity and the accumulated weight of past deeds, remaining inseparable from its subtle instruments until the moment of final liberation.

DISCUSSION

Sāṅkhya Darśana provides the most coherent philosophical foundation for Ayurveda by establishing a systematic explanation of consciousness, matter, causation, and human existence. The present review demonstrates that Ayurvedic principles are not isolated therapeutic doctrines but are deeply rooted in the metaphysical and epistemological structure of Sāṅkhya philosophy. The dualistic framework of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* forms the basis for understanding both physiological and psychological existence, where health represents harmonious interaction among the *Guṇas*, *Doṣas*, *Dhātus*, *Indriyas*, and *Manas*, while disease arises from disequilibrium and misidentification with material processes.

The doctrine of *Trividha Duḥkha* holds particular clinical relevance, as it establishes suffering as the primary stimulus for inquiry and healing. Ayurveda operationalises this philosophical concept by classifying diseases according to intrinsic, extrinsic, and cosmic factors, thereby offering a multidimensional model of pathogenesis that remarkably parallels modern biopsychosocial approaches. Unlike reductionist biomedical paradigms, Sāṅkhya-inspired Ayurveda interprets disease as both a physical and existential disturbance, emphasising restoration of systemic equilibrium rather than symptomatic suppression alone.

The theories of *Satkāryavāda* and *Pariṇāmavāda* further provide an important explanatory framework for Ayurvedic physiology and pathology. *Satkāryavāda* supports the concept that effects pre-exist within their causes, which aligns with Ayurvedic understanding of hereditary disorders, latent disease manifestation, tissue development, and therapeutic potential. Similarly, *Pariṇāmavāda* explains continuous transformation within the body, including digestion, *Dhātu* formation, ageing, and disease progression. These principles reveal that Ayurveda perceives the human body as a dynamic continuum of transformation rather than a static anatomical structure. Such perspectives resonate strongly with contemporary systems biology and metabolic sciences, where biological processes are viewed as interconnected and continuously evolving.

The *Triguṇa Siddhānta* also contributes significantly to Ayurvedic psychology and behavioural medicine. *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas* not only govern cosmic evolution but also determine mental constitution, emotional tendencies, cognition, and behavioural responses. This psychosomatic understanding provides a sophisticated framework for mental health assessment and highlights the importance of ethical conduct, sensory discipline, and spiritual cultivation in maintaining well-being. The close association between *Manas* and *Sharira* described in Ayurveda anticipates modern recognition of mind-body interdependence in psychosomatic disorders.



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Furthermore, the concept of Mokṣa reflects the ultimate aim shared by both Sāṅkhya and Ayurveda: liberation from suffering through discriminative knowledge (Viveka-jñāna). Ayurveda, therefore, extends beyond therapeutics into a comprehensive science of life that integrates preventive medicine, ethics, psychology, and spirituality. The philosophical synthesis between Sāṅkhya and Ayurveda underscores the holistic and integrative nature of classical Indian medical thought. Understanding these foundational concepts is essential not only for accurate interpretation of Ayurvedic literature but also for advancing contemporary integrative medicine and consciousness-based health research.

CONCLUSION

Sāṅkhya Darśana serves as the fundamental philosophical substratum of Ayurveda, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the origin of the universe, the nature of consciousness, human physiology, disease causation, and liberation. The doctrines of Puruṣa-Prakṛti, Trigūṇa, Satkāryavāda, Pariṇāmavāda, and Trividha Duḥkha are not merely abstract metaphysical constructs but actively shape Ayurvedic concepts related to Doṣa, Dhātu, Manas, Indriya, and therapeutic intervention. Through these principles, Ayurveda emerges as a holistic science that integrates physical, psychological, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of health.

The present review highlights that Sāṅkhya provides Ayurveda with both epistemological clarity and clinical applicability, enabling a deeper understanding of pathogenesis, transformation, mental constitution, and the ultimate goal of freedom from suffering. The dynamic interplay between consciousness and matter described in Sāṅkhya continues to hold relevance in modern discussions concerning systems biology, psychosomatic medicine, and integrative healthcare. Re-examining Ayurvedic principles through the lens of Sāṅkhya Darśana not only strengthens the theoretical authenticity of Ayurveda but also offers valuable insights for contemporary holistic and consciousness-oriented medical research.

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