



A Comparative Analysis Of Sarvabhuta Chinta Sharira Adhyaya With Sankhya Sutra: Literary Study

¹Charel Payal Suresh bhai, ² Dr. Niten Barman

¹PG Scholar, ²Associate Professor

¹Department of Samhita and Siddhanta,

¹Government Ayurvedic College, Jalukbari, Guwahati, Assam, India

Abstract: The chapter of Sushruta Samhita presents a philosophical explanation of the human body by tracing its origin to the unmanifest source (Avyakta or Prakriti) and by describing the ordered evolution of the cosmos through Mahat, Ahamkara, Tanmatras, senses, and the gross elements. The Sankhya Sutra tradition also explains reality through the dual principles of Prakriti and Purusha, the three gunas, and the gradual unfolding of the manifest world.

The study shows that Sarvabhuta Chinta Sharira Adhyaya is not simply a medical chapter. It is a philosophically informed literary text that adapts Sankhya metaphysics to Ayurvedic thought. Its significance lies in the way it connects cosmology with physiology, and metaphysical speculation with practical knowledge of the body

Keywords: Sankhya Darsana, Sushruta Samhita, Health.

Introduction

Indian classical literature is marked by an intimate relationship between philosophy and medicine. Texts do not isolate the physical body from the universe, or the individual from the cosmic order. Rather, they explain the body as part of a wider metaphysical structure. Sarvabhuta Chinta Sharira Adhyaya, the first chapter of the Sharira Sthana of Sushruta Samhita, is a strong example of this mode of thought. The chapter begins with the inquiry into all beings and proceeds to explain the origin of embodied life in relation to the structure of the universe.

The Sankhya Sutra tradition, associated with Kapila, is one of the oldest and most influential schools of Indian philosophy. It presents a dualistic metaphysics in which Prakriti is the material cause and Purusha is the conscious principle, while the world evolves through the interaction of the gunas. Because Sushruta employs the same conceptual vocabulary, a comparative literary study helps us understand how philosophical ideas were absorbed into Ayurvedic literature and reshaped for a medical purpose.

Need of the Study

This study is needed because Sarvabhuta Chinta Sharira Adhyaya is often read only as a chapter on cosmology or anatomy, while its deeper literary and philosophical structure is not always sufficiently discussed. A comparison with Sankhya Sutra shows that the chapter is built on a coherent philosophical base and not on isolated doctrinal statements. It also clarifies the relationship between Ayurveda and Sankhya, which is central to understanding classical Indian medical thought.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this paper is to study the literary and philosophical relationship between Sarvabhuta Chinta Sharira Adhyaya and Sankhya Sutra.

The objectives are:

- To explain the philosophical content of Sarvabhuta Chinta Sharira Adhyaya.
- To identify the corresponding Sankhya concepts reflected in the chapter.
- To compare the treatment of Prakriti, Purusha, the gunas, and the stages of evolution.
- To examine the literary style and structure of the two texts.
- To demonstrate the importance of the chapter as a bridge between philosophy and Ayurveda.

Methodology

This paper follows a qualitative literary and textual method. The primary source for the Sushruta side is the translated chapter of Sharira Sthana known as Sarvabhuta Chinta Sharira, which explicitly discusses the science of being in general. The Sankhya side is based on the available translation and summary of the Sankhya Sutras of Kapila, along with supporting summaries of Sankhya cosmology.

The comparison is thematic rather than historical. It focuses on core ideas, textual presentation, and literary purpose. The analysis is organized around major philosophical categories so that the correspondence between the two texts can be seen clearly.

Literary Background of the Texts

Sarvabhuta Chinta Sharira Adhyaya belongs to the Sharira Sthana of Sushruta Samhita, a section devoted to the human body, its formation, and its relation to life and disease. The chapter discusses the origin of the body from the unmanifest source and develops a systematic explanation of cosmic and bodily evolution. In the traditional understanding of Sushruta, knowledge of the body must begin with knowledge of the universe because the body is seen as a microcosm of the cosmos.¹

The Sankhya Sutra tradition is concise and philosophical. The system is known for its enumerative analysis of reality, especially the twenty-five principles, which include Purusha, Prakriti, Mahat, Ahamkara, the senses, mind, and the gross and subtle elements. It is an explanatory system that seeks to distinguish consciousness from matter and to show how suffering arises from confusion between the two.²

The comparison of these two texts is therefore meaningful because they share the same metaphysical architecture, though they apply it differently.

Comparative Analysis

Concept of the unmanifest source

One of the clearest similarities between the two texts is their acceptance of an unmanifest primordial source. In Sarvabhuta Chinta Sharira Adhyaya, this source is described as Avyakta or unmanifest Prakriti, the basis of all creation. It is not a visible entity, but a subtle and causal reality from which all forms emerge.³

Sankhya also begins with Prakriti as the foundational material principle. It is the state of equilibrium of the gunas before manifestation begins. This means that both texts reject a purely accidental or materialistic origin of the world. Instead, they present creation as a law-governed unfolding from a primordial source.⁴

Relationship between Purusha and Prakriti

Sankhya is well known for its dualism. Purusha is consciousness, silent and witnessing; Prakriti is active, unconscious, and productive. Liberation in Sankhya comes through discriminative knowledge, where one realizes that the self is distinct from material nature.

In Sushruta Samhita, the same distinction is retained, but with a different orientation. Purusha is not presented merely as a detached witness. Rather, it is linked with embodiment and consciousness within the bodily order. In other words, Sushruta uses the distinction between spirit and matter not to construct a purely metaphysical theory, but to explain how life, awareness, and function arise in the body.

This is an important literary difference. Sankhya is analytical and liberation-centered, whereas Sushruta is explanatory and life-centered.

Role of the three gunas

The three gunas—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas—are fundamental to both texts. In Sankhya, they are the basic constituents of Prakriti and explain the movement from equilibrium to evolution. They also account for the variety of the universe, because all change is the result of different combinations and dominance of the gunas.⁵

In Sarvabhuta Chinta Sharira Adhyaya, these same gunas are tied to the formation of cosmic and bodily reality. The text shows that the body is not made of inert matter alone; it is structured by dynamic qualities that affect mind, perception, and constitution. This makes the Ayurvedic use of the gunas more concrete and functional. The chapter turns a philosophical doctrine into a practical explanatory framework for bodily life.⁶

Evolution of reality

The doctrine of evolution is central to both texts. In Sushruta Samhita, evolution begins from Avyakta and progresses through Mahat, Ahamkara, Tanmatras, senses, and the gross elements. The sequence is systematic and hierarchical. Each stage arises from the one before it, and each adds a new level of specificity and materiality.⁷

Sankhya presents the same general pattern of manifestation, though in a shorter and more abstract form. It explains the transition from unmanifest to manifest reality through the disturbance of equilibrium in Prakriti. This shows a striking conceptual unity between the two texts. However, Sushruta expands the Sankhya framework to explain the structure of the human body and its relation to the larger universe.

Thus, evolution in Sushruta is not just a cosmological story. It is a medical-philosophical principle that explains embodiment.

Tanmatras and sense faculties

The treatment of Tanmatras further strengthens the comparison. In Sarvabhuta Chinta Sharira Adhyaya, the subtle elements serve as the basis for the gross world and the senses. They occupy an intermediate position between the primordial source and the material body. This intermediate role is important because it shows a gradual transition from the abstract to the concrete.⁸

Sankhya also recognizes subtle principles as part of the process of manifestation. While different texts may explain the sequence slightly differently, the underlying idea remains the same: reality unfolds in ordered stages, not in a single abrupt movement.⁹

In literary terms, this progressive arrangement gives Sushruta a strong didactic structure. The reader is led step by step from the highest principle to the most tangible forms of matter.

Literary style and structure

The style of Sarvabhuta Chinta Sharira Adhyaya is prose-based, explanatory, and teaching-oriented. It does not depend on extreme brevity. Instead, it unfolds its doctrines in a way that makes the theoretical basis of Ayurveda accessible to the student.

The Sankhya Sutra tradition is the opposite in style. It is aphoristic, compact, and highly compressed. This brevity is intellectually powerful, but it requires a commentarial tradition for proper understanding.

This stylistic difference is significant in a literary study. Sushruta aims at explanation through development, while Sankhya Sutra aims at precision through condensation. The same ideas therefore produce two different kinds of textual experience.

Philosophical Significance

The philosophical significance of Sarvabhuta Chinta Sharira Adhyaya lies in its effort to explain the body through cosmic principles.¹⁰ The body is not treated as an isolated biological object. It is understood as a product of the same principles that structure the universe. This is a major feature of classical Indian thought and one of the reasons the chapter is so important in Ayurvedic education.

At the same time, the chapter demonstrates that Ayurveda does not reject philosophy; rather, it uses philosophy as a framework for understanding health, embodiment, and function. Sankhya provides the conceptual grammar, while Sushruta gives it medical meaning.

Definite Comparative Findings

From the comparison, the following definite conclusions emerge:

- Sarvabhuta Chinta Sharira Adhyaya is deeply influenced by Sankhya thought.
- The chapter shares Sankhya's concepts of Prakriti, Purusha, gunas, and evolutionary unfolding.
- Sushruta adapts these concepts to explain the constitution of the body and the origin of embodied life.
- Sankhya is more philosophical and liberation-oriented, while Sushruta is more medical and explanatory.
- The chapter is an excellent example of interdisciplinary Sanskrit writing in which philosophy and medicine work together.

Discussion

The study makes it clear that Sarvabhuta Chinta Sharira Adhyaya is a key text for understanding the philosophical foundations of Ayurveda. It stands at the point where metaphysics enters medicine. The chapter shows that the body is not merely a physical structure but a product of cosmic evolution.

The comparison also reveals that Ayurveda is not philosophically secondary to Sankhya. Rather, it is a creative adaptation of Sankhya principles for practical and clinical understanding. Sushruta takes the philosophical categories and gives them a biomedical role. This transformation is a literary achievement as much as a philosophical one.

Therefore, the chapter should be read as an integrated text where cosmology, embodiment, and medical knowledge are united. This makes it especially valuable in a seminar discussion because it shows the living relationship between classical philosophy and Ayurveda.

Conclusion

The comparative study of Sarvabhuta Chinta Sharira Adhyaya with Sankhya Sutra demonstrates a close doctrinal relationship and a significant literary difference. Both texts share the same foundational ideas about Prakriti, Purusha, the gunas, and the graded evolution of reality. However, they differ in purpose and presentation. Sankhya presents a compact philosophical system, whereas Sushruta Samhita expands that system into a medical explanation of the body and its place in the universe.

This makes Sarvabhuta Chinta Sharira Adhyaya a text of exceptional value. It is not only a chapter in a medical treatise but also a literary expression of classical Indian metaphysics in Ayurvedic form. Its study helps us understand how ancient texts integrated philosophy, science, and literature into one coherent tradition.

REFERENCES

- [1] Sushruta. Sushruta Samhita. Sharira, Chikitsa evam Kalpasthana (Bhag 2). Dalhana Acharya's Nibandha Sangraha and Gayadas Acharya's Nyaya Chandrika commentary; Hindi translation by Dr. Keval Krishna Thakral. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia; 2014. Reprint 2022. Chapter 1
- [2] Kapila. Sankhyadarshanam. Vijnanabhikshu's Sankhyapravachana Bhashya with Pradeep Hindi commentary by Gajanan Shastri Musalgaonkar. 3rd ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan; 2003. Pg. no 124-127.
- [3] Sushruta. Sushruta Samhita. Sharira, Chikitsa evam Kalpasthana (Bhag 2). Dalhana Acharya's Nibandha Sangraha and Gayadas Acharya's Nyaya Chandrika commentary; Hindi translation by Dr. Keval Krishna Thakral. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia; 2014. Reprint 2022. Chapter 1
- [4] Kapila. Sankhyadarshanam. Vijnanabhikshu's Sankhyapravachana Bhashya with Pradeep Hindi commentary by Gajanan Shastri Musalgaonkar. 3rd ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan; 2003. Pg. no 124-127.
- [5] Kapila. Sankhyadarshanam. Vijnanabhikshu's Sankhyapravachana Bhashya with Pradeep Hindi commentary by Gajanan Shastri Musalgaonkar. 3rd ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan; 2003.
- [6] Sushruta. Sushruta Samhita. Sharira, Chikitsa evam Kalpasthana (Bhag 2). Dalhana Acharya's Nibandha Sangraha and Gayadas Acharya's Nyaya Chandrika commentary; Hindi translation by Dr. Keval Krishna Thakral. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia; 2014. Reprint 2022. Chapter 1
- [7] Sushruta. Sushruta Samhita. Sharira, Chikitsa evam Kalpasthana (Bhag 2). Dalhana Acharya's Nibandha Sangraha and Gayadas Acharya's Nyaya Chandrika commentary; Hindi translation by Dr. Keval Krishna Thakral. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia; 2014. Reprint 2022. Chapter 1
- [8] Sushruta. Sushruta Samhita. Sharira, Chikitsa evam Kalpasthana (Bhag 2). Dalhana Acharya's Nibandha Sangraha and Gayadas Acharya's Nyaya Chandrika commentary; Hindi translation by Dr. Keval Krishna Thakral. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia; 2014. Reprint 2022. Chapter 1
- [9] Kapila. Sankhyadarshanam. Vijnanabhikshu's Sankhyapravachana Bhashya with Pradeep Hindi commentary by Gajanan Shastri Musalgaonkar. 3rd ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan; 2003.
- [10] Sushruta. Sushruta Samhita. Sharira, Chikitsa evam Kalpasthana (Bhag 2). Dalhana Acharya's Nibandha Sangraha and Gayadas Acharya's Nyaya Chandrika commentary; Hindi translation by Dr. Keval Krishna Thakral. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia; 2014. Reprint 2022. Chapter 1