

## CHARAKA SAMHITA STHANAS: THEIR ORDER, MEANING AND RELEVANCE

Dr. Jyothy K. R.<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Dinesh Kumar Meena<sup>2\*</sup>, Dr. Abhinav<sup>3</sup>, Prof. Rani Singh<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Junior Resident, <sup>2,3</sup>Assistant Professor, <sup>4</sup>Professor

<sup>1,2,4</sup>Department of Siddhant Darshan, Faculty of Ayurveda, Institute of Medical Sciences,  
Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, 221005.

<sup>3</sup>Department of Panchkarma, Faculty of Ayurveda, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras  
Hindu University, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, 221005.

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### \*Corresponding Author

Dr. Dinesh Kumar Meena

Assistant Professor, Department of  
Siddhant Darshan, Faculty of  
Ayurveda, Institute of Medical  
Sciences, Banaras Hindu University,  
Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, 221005.



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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The *Charaka Samhita* is one of the principal classics of *Ayurveda*. Its contents are systematically arranged into eight *Sthanas*, each addressing a distinct aspect of Ayurvedic knowledge. **Objectives:** To review the eight *Sthanas* of *Charaka Samhita* and highlight their structure, scope, and significance in understanding the comprehensive framework of *Ayurveda*. **Materials and Methods:** This review article was prepared through a critical study of the *Charaka Samhita* and its *Ayurveda Deepika* Commentary and content of the *Sthanas*. **Results and Discussion:** The review revealed that the eight *Sthanas* collectively encompass fundamental principles, disease causation, diagnostics, anatomy, prognostics, therapeutics, pharmaceutical preparations and *Panchakarma* procedures. Their systematic arrangement demonstrates an integrated approach to medical knowledge and reflects the logical and

pedagogical excellence of classical Ayurvedic literature. **Conclusion:** The *Sthanas* of *Charaka Samhita* constitute a coherent and comprehensive framework that facilitates the study and application of Ayurvedic principles and remains highly relevant to contemporary Ayurvedic education and clinical practice.

**KEYWORDS:** *Charaka Samhita, Sthana, Sutrasthana, Nidanasthana, Chikitsasthana.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Ayurveda*, the traditional system of medicine of India, possesses a rich literary heritage that systematically presents its principles and practices. Among its classical texts, the *Charaka Samhita* occupies a distinguished position as a foundational treatise of *Kayachikitsa* (“*Charakastu Chikitsite*”) and serves as a primary source of Ayurvedic knowledge. The text is uniquely organized into eight major divisions known as *Sthanas*, namely *Sutra*, *Nidana*, *Vimana*, *Sarira*, *Indriya*, *Chikitsa*, *Kalpa* and *Siddhithana*. Each *Sthana* encompasses a specific domain of medical science and contributes to the comprehensive understanding of health, disease, and therapeutics. The methodical arrangement of these sections reflects the intellectual depth of ancient Ayurvedic scholars and their emphasis on logical classification of knowledge. Studying the *Sthanas* is essential for understanding the structural framework of *Charaka Samhita* and appreciating how diverse concepts of *Ayurveda* are organized into a coherent and interconnected body of medical literature.

## 2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

To contemplate the importance of the order of *Sthanas* of *Charaka Samhita* by going through *Ayurveda Deepika* Commentary of *Chakrapani Dutta*.

## 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This article has been prepared with thorough reference to the entire *Charaka Samhita* as well as the *Ayurveda Deepika* commentary.

## 4. RESULTS

*Charaka Samhita* which is indeed an exceptional work in the field of *Ayurveda* is traditionally attributed to *Acharya Charaka* and originated from *Agnivesa Tantra*. The compendium is arranged in eight *Sthanas* and the scope of each *Sthana* is explained.<sup>[1]</sup> *Sthana* is a section that deals with specific area of study.<sup>[2]</sup>

**Table No. 1: Enumeration of *Sthanas* and number of chapters included in each.**

	<i>Sthana</i>	No.of Chapters
1	<i>Sutrasthana</i>	30
2	<i>Nidanasthana</i>	8
3	<i>Vimanasthana</i>	8
4	<i>Sarirasthana</i>	8
5	<i>Indriyasthana</i>	12
6	<i>Chikitsasthana</i>	30
7	<i>Kalpasthana</i>	12

8	<i>Siddhithana</i>	12
	Total no.of Chapters	<b>120</b>

#### 4.1. *Sutrasthana*

The first and foremost *Sthana* is *Sutrasthana*. The *Sutrasthana* serves as the head of the *Charaka Samhita* as it encompasses the foundational concepts upon which the entire treatise relies on. It contains 30 chapters, organized into seven *Chatushkas* and two *Sangrahadhyayas*, ensuring an orderly presentation of its core concepts.<sup>[3]</sup> When combined, they offer a thorough framework that addresses medicine, therapy, dietetics, health and illness.

**Table No. 2: Division of *Chatushkas* and *Adhyayas* in *Sutrasthana*.**

	Division		Name of the Chapter
1	<i>Bheshaja Chatushka</i>	1	<i>Dirghanjivitiya Adhyaya</i>
		2	<i>Apamargatanduliya Adhyaya</i>
		3	<i>Aragvadhiya Adhyaya</i>
		4	<i>Shadvirechanashatasritiya Adhyaya</i>
2	<i>Swastha Chatushka</i>	5	<i>Matrashitiya Adhyaya</i>
		6	<i>Tasyashitiya Adhyaya</i>
		7	<i>Na Vegandharaniya Adhyaya</i>
		8	<i>Indriyopakramaniya Adhyaya</i>
3	<i>Nirdesha Chatushka</i>	9	<i>Khuddakachatushpada Adhyaya</i>
		10	<i>Mahachatushpada Adhyaya</i>
		11	<i>Tisraishaniya Adhyaya</i>
		12	<i>Vatakalakaliya Adhyaya</i>
4	<i>Kalpana Chatushka</i>	13	<i>Snehadhyaya</i>
		14	<i>Svedadhyaya</i>
		15	<i>Upakalpaniya Adhyaya</i>
		16	<i>Chikitsaprabhritiya Adhyaya</i>
5	<i>Roga Chatushka</i>	17	<i>Kiyantashirasiya Adhyaya</i>
		18	<i>Trishothiya Adhyaya</i>
		19	<i>Ashtodariya Adhyaya</i>
		20	<i>Maharogadhyaya</i>
6	<i>Yojana Chatushka</i>	21	<i>Ashtauninditiya Adhyaya</i>
		22	<i>Langhanabrimhaniya Adhyaya</i>
		23	<i>Santarpaniya Adhyaya</i>
		24	<i>Vidhishonitiya Adhyaya</i>
7	<i>Annapana Chatushka</i>	25	<i>Yajjah Purushiya Adhyaya</i>
		26	<i>Atreyabhadrakapyiya Adhyaya</i>
		27	<i>Annapanavidhi Adhyaya</i>
		28	<i>Vividhashitapitiya Adhyaya</i>
	<i>Sangrahadhyaya</i>	29	<i>Dashapranayataniya Adhyaya</i>
		30	<i>Arthedashamahamuliya Adhyaya</i>

Because it compiles the fundamental *Ayurvedic* principles into *Slokas*, it is also known as *Slokasthana*.<sup>[4]</sup> The style in which these core ideas are presented is reflected in the term *Sutra*, which literally means a brief statement with profound meaning. In addition to outlining important concepts, this section defines technical terms that are frequently used in the *Samhita*'s later sections.

The *Bheshaja Chatushka* presents important concepts like *Trisutra*, *Tridosha*, etc. and discusses medicines in both internal and external forms. Through *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, avoiding the suppression of natural urges, impulse control and *Sadvritta*, the *Swastha Chatushka* places a strong emphasis on maintaining good health. In addition to stressing the value of an accurate diagnosis, the *Nirdesha Chatushka* offers guidelines for healthcare management, defining the characteristics of a *Bhishak*, *Aushadha*, *Upasthata* and *Rogi*. The main focus of the *Kalpna Chatushka* is therapeutic purification, which includes the execution of *Shodhana* as well as preparatory measures like *Snehana* and *Svedana*.

The *Roga Chatushka* categorizes illnesses, from *Dosha*-based illnesses and *Madhumeha* to *Shiroroga*, *Hridroga* and *Vidradhi*. The *Yojana Chatushka* goes into detail about conditions brought on by both over- and under-nutrition, as well as treatment methods like *Langhana*, *Brimhana* and other therapies. Food and drink, dietetics, drug potency and the effects of diet on immunity and *Dhatu Poshana* are all covered in the *Annapana Chatushka*.

The *Sangrahadvaya* concludes by summarizing important concepts like the definition of *Ayu* (life), the ten seats of *Prana*, and the objectives and application of *Ayurveda*.

The *Sutrasthana* is notable for its poetic diversity from a literary perspective. Chapters are presented in both prose and verse, frequently as discussions among groups of sages or as conversations between *Atreya* and his disciple *Agnivesa*. There are four different types of *Sutras*: the *Ekiya Sutras*, the *Pratisamskartru Sutras*, the *Shishya Sutras*, and the *Guru Sutras*.<sup>[5]</sup> A *Tatra Sloka* summarizing the material is presented at the end of each chapter. *Sutrasthana*'s position as the head of the *Charaka Samhita* is justified by its logical flow and structural arrangement, which combine philosophy, practice and profession of teaching in a unique way.

#### 4.2. *Nidanasthana*

*Nidana* is that by which the group of five factors - *Hetu* (cause), etc. - is examined and determined.<sup>[6]</sup> Within the *Sutrasthana*, the author presents the etiology and symptomatology only in brief. In the subsequent section, the *Nidanasthana*, he provides a detailed explanation of these topics. Here, *Nidana* refers to the underlying cause. And it is explained in two ways: as that which generates disease - *Vyadhi Janaka* and as that which indicates or reveals disease - *Vyadhi Bodhaka* in general.<sup>[7]</sup>

This section describes the five diagnostic tools, which together are called *Nidana Panchaka*: *Nidana*, *Purvarupa*, *Rupa*, *Upashaya* and *Samprapti*.<sup>[8]</sup> In this *Sthana*, *Acharya* explains the eight important diseases in eight different chapters along with their *Nidana*, *Samprapti*, classification, *Lakshana* and *Upadrava*. They are *Jvara*, *Raktapitta*, *Gulma*, *Prameha*, *Kushtha*, *Shosha*, *Unmada* and *Apasmara*. *Acharya* also specifies in this *Sthana* that the physician, well versed in the specific characteristics of all diseases and the properties of all medicines cures all diseases and do not get confused.<sup>[9]</sup>

In the end of *Nidanasthana*, *Acharya* also describes the mythological origin of diseases, *Nidanarthakara Roga*, *Vyadhi Sankara*, *Shuddha Ashuddha Chikitsa*, *Hetu Sankara*, *Linga Sankara*, *Chikitsasutra Sankara*, *Sadhyaasaadhyata* of diseases and *Tiryak Gata Dosha Chikitsa*.

#### 4.3. *Vimanasthana*

*Vimanasthana*, also known as *Manasthana*, literally refers to “that by which special knowledge is measured or ascertained”.<sup>[10]</sup> It offers specific information on diet, body systems, epidemics, medical education, *Dosha*, *Bhaisajya* and patient examination. Since *Dosha* vitiation determines the onset, severity and management of disease, quantifying it is the main theme. Appropriate treatment is impossible without such evaluation.

*Vimanasthana's* eight chapters address a variety of topics. Beyond pathology, this section covers clinical skills, medical education, social health, dietary recommendations and personal health. It describes the ideal student, teacher and treatise, as well as the function of conferences and discussions in the advancement of medical knowledge. By connecting diagnostic knowledge (*Nidanasthana*) and therapeutics (*Chikitsasthana*), *Vimanasthana* provides physicians with the means to measure disease processes, evaluate patients and guarantee logical treatment.

#### 4.4. Sarirasthana

*Sarirasthana* or *Asrayasthana* is the part of *Charaka Samhita* that offers a thorough examination of the human being in all of its physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects.<sup>[11]</sup> *Acharya Charaka* stresses that no treatment can be successful without a thorough understanding of the body. The term “*Sarira*” literally means “body”, but in *Ayurveda*, it refers to more than just anatomy; it is the living seat of *Chetana*, or consciousness, which is made up of the five *Mahabhutas* in particular proportions and maintained by the interplay of the mind, sense organs and *Atman*.<sup>[12]</sup> As a result, *Sarirasthana* connects the *Purusha* (microcosm) and *Loka* (macrocosm) while explaining the cause, origin, condition, growth and transformation of the human being.

There are eight chapters in this section, and each one provides a different perspective. These chapters, which address issues like genetic inheritance, congenital abnormalities, foetal and psychological development, lifespan assessment, maternal and child health, and even spiritual well-being, come together to provide a comprehensive picture of human life - from conception to birth. Crucially, the section combines practical medical advice (pregnancy regimen, neonatal care, anthropometry, paediatric assessment) with philosophical ideas. As a result, *Sarirasthana* serves as a special link between philosophy and medical practice in addition to being a compilation of *Ayurvedic* embryology and anatomy. Studying it is essential to comprehending the fundamentals of life, preventing illness at its source, and guaranteeing a happy, healthy life that is in harmony with one's physical well-being and higher purpose.

#### 4.5. Indriyasthana

*Indriyasthana* or *Arishtasthana* is the section of *Charaka Samhita* that deals with the study of *Prana* signs as they are perceived by the sense organs.<sup>[13]</sup> Knowing the prognosis is thought to be crucial because treatment is only meant for diseases that can be cured. It is well known that a doctor who treats an incurable illness without having a thorough understanding of the prognosis forfeits wealth, knowledge and reputation.<sup>[14]</sup> This is why *Chikitsasthana* comes after the understanding of *Arishta Lakshana* (definite signs of death).

In this context, the term “*Indriya*” refers to *Prana* rather than just “sense organ”.<sup>[15]</sup> *Arishta* are indications that *Prana* is about to end. Since continuous awareness of these indications leads to success and financial gain in practice, doctors are thought to benefit greatly from knowing these characteristics. The sense organs are regarded as the indicators of *Prana* and

*Ojas* is identified as its seat. *Indriyadushti* or impairment of the sensory system, is a key idea discussed here.

This *Sthana* explains how the changes in *Varna*, *Svara*, *Gandha*, *Rasa*, *Sparsha*, *Cchaya* and *Prabha* are included among the prognostic characteristics in 12 chapters. Many of the signs referred to as *Arishta Lakshana* correspond to clinical features that are still acknowledged as poor prognostic indicators, even though some of these determinants may not be consistent with contemporary scientific reasoning. In terminal cases, doctors are advised by classical *Ayurvedic* texts to provide comfort and palliation rather than aggressive treatment.

#### **4.6. Chikitsasthana**

*Chikitsasthana* is also known as *Aushadhasthana* since it deals with maintaining health and treating illnesses and it is the most significant division of *Charaka Samhita*. This section was written to offer advice on how to live a long life and cure illness because the preceding sections do not go into detail about therapeutic measures.

*Kayachikitsa* or general medicine is one among the eight clinical branches of *Ayurveda*. It deals with management of generalised systemic diseases.<sup>[16]</sup> *Charaka Samhita* is considered a *Kayachikitsa Pradhana Grantha* because of its extensive exposition of therapeutic principles in the *Chikitsasthana*.

*Chikitsasthana* is structured so that each chapter starts with a thorough explanation of the etio-pathogenesis, classification, symptoms, and prognosis of diseases. This is followed by the *Chikitsa Sutra* (principles of treatment). Depending on the disease's stage, the management strategy involves *Langhana* or *Brimhana*, *Snehana* or *Rukshana*, *Svedana* or *Stambhana*, and *Shodhana* therapies. A variety of formulations are then described, including *Kashayas* (decoctions), *Tailas* (oils), *Ghrita* (medicated ghee), *Churnas* (powders), *Gutikas* (tablets), fermented preparations like *Asava*, *Arishta*, etc.

Almost all clinical specialties are covered in the section's thirty chapters. Rejuvenation, geriatric care, immunity promotion and reproductive health enhancement are covered in the first two chapters, *Rasayana Chikitsa* and *Vajikarana Chikitsa*. Beyond pharmacological treatment, *Chikitsasthana* encompasses concepts of *Bhutavidya* (psychiatry), *Agadatantra* (toxicology), *Shalyatantra* (Surgery), chrono-pharmacology and posology. As a result, the section serves as both a therapeutic guide and an extensive clinical practice manual.

#### 4.7. *Kalpasthanā*

*Kalpasthanā* or *Vikalpasthanā* discusses the pharmaceutics of therapeutic purification, particularly formulations for *Virechana* (purgation) and *Vamana* (emesis).<sup>[17]</sup> While *Basti* is elaborated in *Siddhistanā*, the specifics of their formulations are methodically presented in *Kalpasthanā*, while *Chikitsasthanā* prescribes these therapies for the management of disease. The emetic formulations are described first because *Virechana* is typically performed after *Vamana*. Each of the twelve chapters in this section, which is named after a primary drug, describes both emetic and purgative preparations. There are approximately six hundred formulations in different dosage forms, including decoctions, juices, pastes, powders, linctuses and foods, with six medications primarily indicated for emesis and nine for purgation.

By adding primary emetic or purgative medications with supportive substances, *Kalpasthanā* aims to provide safe, effective, and varied recipes.<sup>[18]</sup> With variations based on constitution, disease, season and *Koshtha*, these formulations are designed for patient suitability, palatability and efficacy. The principles of pharmaceutics - drug collection according to *Desha* (habitat), *Kala* (season), *Guna* (quality), and *Bhajana* (storage) - are crucially emphasized in *Kalpasthanā*. The concept of *Anupana*, nasal drug delivery, dosage schedules (*Vardhamana Matra*) and formulation modifications through *Samskara*, synergism, and antagonism are also covered. The *Ayurvedic* understanding of absorption, distribution and elimination is highlighted in these thoughts on drug pharmacokinetics.

*Mahabhūta* predominance is used to explain the pharmacological basis: purgatives dominated by *Prithvi* and *Jala* favour downward elimination, whereas emetic drugs dominated by *Agni* and *Vāyu* encourage upward expulsion.<sup>[19]</sup> In anticipation of later developments in *Rasasātra*, *Charaka* also outlines detoxification techniques (*Shodhana*) for toxic herbs such as *Danti* and *Dravanti*. Regional differences between *Kalinga* and *Magadha* traditions are discussed, along with the standardization of measures. The concept of *Snehapaka* is also explained in this *Sthana*.

#### 4.8. *Siddhistanā*

The final part of the *Charaka Samhita*, *Siddhistanā*, focusses on the standardisation and effective administration of *Panchakarma* treatments. The correct use of techniques like *Vamana*, *Virechana*, and *Basti*, the problems that arise from their incorrect administration, and their efficient management are all referred to here as *Siddhi*.<sup>[20]</sup> This section is called

*Siddhithana* because it describes the practical elements that guarantee therapeutic success.<sup>[21]</sup> Positioned immediately after *Kalpasthan*, which primarily describes various formulations used in purification therapies, *Siddhithana* serves as its practical continuation by focusing on the actual execution of these procedures in clinical settings. It emphasizes that theoretical knowledge alone is insufficient for a physician; rather, success in practice depends upon sound judgment, practical skill, and the ability to handle unexpected clinical situations effectively. The concept of *Siddhi* is closely associated with *Yukti* (rational and logical application), highlighting that successful outcomes in treatment are achieved through careful consideration of multiple factors such as the patient's strength, habitat and body constitution, season and timing, and the condition of the affected tissues.<sup>[22]</sup> Thus, *Siddhithana* underscores that repeated and reproducible success in therapeutics is possible only through proper planning, correct dosage, and timely administration of procedures.

Among the texts of the *Brihatrayi*, *Charaka Samhita* alone contains a separate *Siddhithana* devoted entirely to the successful conduct of *Panchakarma* procedures. A major portion of this section is dedicated to *Basti* therapy, reflecting its immense importance in Ayurvedic therapeutics. Detailed descriptions are provided regarding its indications, contraindications, formulations, administration techniques, complications, and their management. The twelve chapters of *Siddhithana* collectively discuss the proper performance of *Panchakarma* procedures, management of procedural complications, special *Basti* formulations, disorders associated with improper purification therapies, and measures for the protection of *Marma* or vital organs. It also highlights patient selection, withdrawal criteria, and psychological and physiological considerations essential for successful treatment. Historically, *Siddhithana*, along with *Kalpasthan* and seventeen chapters of *Chikitsasthan*, was restored and compiled by *Dridhabala*, whose contribution completed the *Charaka Samhita* in its present form. Therefore, *Siddhithana* may be regarded as the practical and scientific culmination of the *Charaka Samhita*, transforming theoretical principles into clinically applicable guidelines and ensuring the safe, rational, and successful administration of *Panchakarma* therapies.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The *Charaka Samhita* represents one of the most systematically organized medical treatises of ancient India. The sequential arrangement from *Sutrasthan* to *Siddhithana* reflects a deliberate pedagogical approach, progressing from fundamental principles to clinical application and successful execution of therapeutic procedures.

*Sutrasthana* establishes the theoretical foundations of *Ayurveda* by elucidating concepts such as *Tridosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, *Ahara* and *Dinacharya*, thereby serving as the philosophical and practical basis for all subsequent discussions. *Nidanasthana* and *Vimanasthana* complement these principles by presenting disease causation, diagnostic methodologies, and standards of clinical examination, emphasizing the importance of etiological understanding and rational assessment in medical practice. *Sarirasthana* further expands Ayurvedic thought by integrating embryology, anatomy, and philosophical concepts related to life and consciousness, demonstrating the holistic perspective of classical *Ayurveda*.

*Indriyasthana* occupies a unique position by focusing on prognostic indicators and *Arishta Lakshanas*, highlighting the significance of clinical prediction and patient outcomes. *Chikitsasthana* forms the therapeutic core of the text, detailing principles of treatment and disease management. *Kalpasthana* and *Siddhisthana* subsequently provide comprehensive guidelines regarding the preparation, administration, and successful completion of Panchakarma procedures, ensuring safety and efficacy in therapeutic interventions.

The interrelationship among these *Sthanas* reveals that *Charaka Samhita* is not merely a collection of isolated chapters but an integrated medical system wherein theoretical knowledge, diagnosis, prognosis, therapeutics and procedural medicine are interconnected. This systematic classification reflects an advanced understanding of medical education and clinical reasoning. Even in contemporary times, the *Sthanas* provide a structured model for teaching and practicing *Ayurveda*, demonstrating the timeless relevance and scientific organization of the *Charaka Samhita*.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The eight *Sthanas* of *Charaka Samhita* collectively represent a well-structured continuum of Ayurvedic knowledge, integrating fundamental principles, diagnostics, therapeutics and procedural sciences into a coherent and holistic medical system that remains relevant to contemporary healthcare and medical education. Their arrangement illustrates the profound scholarly vision of *Acharya Charaka*, who systematically classified medical knowledge into distinct yet interconnected sections to facilitate both learning and clinical application. From the foundational doctrines described in *Sutrasthana* to the successful execution of purification therapies explained in *Siddhisthana*, each *Sthana* contributes uniquely to the development of a complete physician and a rational approach to healthcare.

The sequential placing of the eight *Sthanas* demonstrates that *Ayurveda* is not confined to disease treatment alone but encompasses preventive medicine, diagnostic reasoning, prognostic assessment, understanding of human anatomy and embryology, therapeutic principles, pharmaceutical preparations and procedural medicine. This integrated approach reflects the holistic philosophy of *Ayurveda*, wherein health is viewed as a dynamic equilibrium of physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions.

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