



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Ayurveda

DECIPHERING SVASAMJÑA TANTRAYUKTI: A STUDY ON SPECIALIZED TECHNICAL TERMINOLOGY IN THE CARAKA SAMHITA

KEY WORDS: Ayurveda, Caraka Samhita, Svasamjña Tantrayukti, Medical Terminology, Ayurvedic Hermeneutics, Classical Sanskrit Texts, Trisutra, Medical Nomenclature.

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ABSTRACT

The Caraka Samhita, a foundational text of Ayurvedic medicine, relies on sophisticated interpretive methods known as Tantrayuktis to achieve conceptual clarity, precision, and brevity. This study highlights the role of Svasamjña Tantrayukti—a unique textual device where the author, Acharya Charaka, repurposes everyday Sanskrit words into specialized medical terms or creates new terminology specific to his text. By redefining common language into precise clinical parameters, the author establishes a standardized framework for Ayurvedic diagnosis, pathology, pharmacology, and treatment. To demonstrate this methodological approach, eleven key technical terms documented in the Caraka Samhita are analyzed alongside their original Sanskrit verses (Alokas), textual references, standard literal meanings, and specific clinical definitions. Examples include Trisutra (the three core pillars of medicine), Sakha (peripheral body tissues forming an external disease pathway), Mithuna (a precise ratio of honey and ghee), and psychiatric/symptomatic classifications like Atattvabhinivesa and Upasargatmika Trsna. Ultimately, understanding Svasamjña Tantrayukti provides essential insight into classical Ayurvedic methodology and guards against the misinterpretation of foundational medical concepts.

The Caraka Samhita stands as one of the cornerstone treatises of Ayurvedic medicine. Beyond its vast clinical insights, the text relies on sophisticated interpretive methodologies known as Tantrayuktis to maintain precision, clarity, and conciseness. Chief among these methodologies is Svasamjña Tantrayukti—the device wherein the author (Tantrakara) assigns specialized, non-conventional medical definitions to everyday Sanskrit words or formulates unique technical terminology peculiar to his own text.

By redefining general concepts into precise clinical constructs, Acharya Charaka created an unambiguous framework for medical diagnosis, therapeutics, and pharmacology. Below is a complete compilation of all the technical terminologies and Svasamjña examples documented in your text, accompanied by their original Sanskrit slokas, exact references, and detailed meanings.

1. Trisutra (त्रिसूत्र)

- Standard Meaning: "Three threads".
- Caraka's Technical Meaning: The three foundational pillars of medical science: Etiology (Hetu), Symptomatology (Linga), and Therapeutics (Ausadha).

हेतुलिङ्गौषधज्ञानं स्वस्थानुरपरायणम्।

त्रिसूत्रं शाश्वतं पुण्यं बुधे यं पितामहः॥(Caraka Samhita, Sutrasthana, 1/24)^[1]

The knowledge of Hetu (etiology/causative factors), Li ga (symptomatology), and Ausadha (therapeutics/medicines)—which is paramount for both healthy individuals and the diseased—constitutes the eternal and sacred Trisutra as understood by Brahma (Pitamaha).

2. Mithuna (मिथुन)

- Standard Meaning: A couple, a pair, or copulation.
- Caraka's Technical Meaning: The specific, equal combination of Honey (Madhu) and Ghee (Sarpih).

मिथुनमिति मधुसर्पिषोर्यहणम्॥(Caraka Samhita, Siddhasthana, Chapter 12 (Chakrapani Commentary on Svasamjña)^[2]

The term Mithuna in this text specifically signifies the combined intake of Honey (Madhu) and Ghee (Sarpih).

3. Sakha (शाखा)

- Standard Meaning: A branch of a tree or a branch/division of a subject.
- Caraka's Technical Meaning: The peripheral tissues of the body (Rakta, Mamsa, Medas, Asthi, Majja, Sukra, and the skin (Tvacha)), forming the outer path of disease (Bahya Rogamarga).

तत्र रक्तादयो धातवः त्वक् च शाखा, स बाह्यो रोगमार्गः॥(Caraka Samhita, Sutrasthana, 11/48)^[3]

Here, the tissues starting with Rakta (blood, muscle, fat, bone, marrow, reproductive fluid) and Tvacha (skin) are technically designated as Sakha. This constitutes the external pathway of disease (Bahya Rogamarga).

4. Bhuta Dhatri (भूतधत्री)

- Context: Sleep caused by natural night (Ratri Swabhava Prabhava).

रात्रिस्वभावप्रभवा मता या तां भूतधत्रीं प्रवदन्ति तज्ज्ञाः।

तमोभवामाहुरघस्य मूलं शेषाः पुनर्व्याधिषु निर्दिशन्ति॥(Caraka Samhita, Sutrasthana, 21/59)^[4]

The term Bhuta Dhatri (literally "the nourisher/mother of living beings") is used by Acharya Charaka as a technical term specifically to describe normal, natural night-time sleep that nourishes the body and sustains life.

5. Jentaka, Holaka, etc. (जेन्ताक, होलाक आदि स्वेद)

- Context: Peculiar nomenclature for different varieties of Sveda (sudation/sweating therapy).

सङ्करः प्रस्तरो नाडी परिषेकोऽवगाहनम्।

जेन्ताकोऽश्मघनः कर्षुः कुटी भूः कुम्भिकैव च॥(Caraka Samhita, Sutrasthana, 14/39)^[5]

Terms like Jentaka, Holaka, Karsu, and Kumbhika are specialized names for distinct types of fomentation/sweating techniques peculiar to Acharya Charaka.

6. Upasargatmika Trsna (उपसर्गात्मिका तृष्णा)

- Context: Peculiar term for a specific type of pathological thirst (Trsna).

पञ्च तृष्णा इति वातपित्तामक्षयोपसर्गात्मिकाः॥(Caraka Samhita, Sutrasthana, 19/4)^[6]

Charaka mentions 5 types of thirst (Trsna), among which he uses the technical term Upasargatmika—a term peculiar to Acharya Charaka to denote thirst caused as a secondary manifestation or complication of another underlying primary disease.

7. Dvistartha Samyogaja Chardi (द्विष्टार्थसंयोगजा चर्दिः)

- Context: A peculiar type of vomiting (Chardi) classified by Acharya Charaka.

पञ्च चर्दय इति द्विष्टार्थसंयोगजा वातपित्तकफसन्निपातोद्रेकोत्थाश्च॥(Caraka Samhita, Sutrasthana, 19/4)^[7]

Meaning: Acharya Charaka enumerates five types of Chardi (vomiting). Among them, the term Dvistartha Samyogaja (vomiting induced by contact or exposure to repulsive, unpalatable, or offensive things) is a

specialized term peculiar to Acharya Charaka.

8. Atattvabhinivesa (अतत्त्वाभिनिवेश)

- Context: A unique psychiatric condition described in the text.

अतत्त्वाभिनिवेशो यस्तद्धेतुत्वकृतिभेषजम्।

तत्र नोक्तमतः श्रोतुमिच्छामि तदिहोच्यताम्॥ (Caraka Samhita, Cikitsasthana, Chapter 10/55)^[9]

- Meaning: The technical term Atattvabhinivesa (perversion of intellect/mind leading to false beliefs or viewing unreality as reality) is a clinical term peculiar to Acharya Charaka.

9. Vyapeta Hikka (व्यपेता हिकका)

- Context: A specific type of hiccup (Hikka).

पर्यायादागतस्य हिकका या जत्रमूलादसन्तता।

सा व्यपेतेति विज्ञेया हिकका प्राणोपरोधिनी॥ (Caraka Samhita, Cikitsasthana, 17/33)^[9]

- Meaning: When discussing types of Hikka (hiccups), the term Vyapeta (a life-threatening type originating intermittently from the root of the supraclavicular region) is a classification peculiar to Acharya Charaka.

10. Utkruñca (उत्क्रुञ्च)

- Context: Pharmacological formulation/poultice term.

फलानां तैलयोनीनामुत्क्रुञ्चाः सशर्कराः।

मार्दवं जनयन्त्यग्रे स्निग्धा मांसरसास्तथा॥ (Caraka Samhita, Cikitsasthana, 15/227)^[10]

- Meaning: The term Utkruñca is a unique vocabulary choice peculiar to Acharya Charaka, used in place of the standard term Utkarika (a warm poultice or medicinal preparation).

11. Malapurasa (मलपूरस)

- Context: Botanical/herbal terminology used in therapeutics.

श्वित्राणां सविशेषं योक्तव्यं सर्वतो विशुद्धानाम्।

श्वित्रे संसन्नमग्र्यं मलपूरस इष्यते सगुडः॥ (Caraka Samhita, Cikitsasthana, 7/162)^[11]

- Meaning: The botanical term Malapurasa is peculiar to Acharya Charaka, who uses it in place of the conventional plant name Kakodumbarika (wild fig) in the treatment of Svitra (leukoderma/vitiligo).

12. Tridanda (त्रिदण्ड)

- Standard Meaning:**

Literally "three staves" or "three wooden sticks bound together" (traditionally referring to the triple staff carried by an ascetic/sannyasi representing control over mind, speech, and body).

सत्त्वमात्मा शरीरं च त्रयमेतत्त्रिदण्डवत्।

लोकस्तिष्ठति संयोगात्तत्र सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम्॥ (Caraka Samhita, Sutrasthana, 1/46)^[12]

- Caraka's Technical Meaning:**

The fundamental tripod of life—comprising Sattva (Mind), Atma (Soul), and Sarira (Body)—whose union forms the conscious living individual (Purusa) and serves as the subject matter (Adhikarana) of Ayurveda.

CONCLUSION

Mastering Svasamjña Tantrayukti is fundamental to unlocking the true intent of the Caraka Samhita. Through this clever literary device, Acharya Charaka transformed everyday Sanskrit vocabulary into a dedicated medical lexicon, giving familiar words specialized meanings tailored strictly for clinical practice. Whether defining Trisutra as the three pillars of medical knowledge, Sakha as the outer disease pathway, or Tridanda as the essential tripod of human existence, the text establishes an unambiguous language for healthcare.

For modern scholars and practitioners, recognizing these custom definitions is vital. Relying solely on standard dictionary translations can easily lead to misunderstanding

core principles, misdiagnosing conditions, or misapplying therapeutic procedures. By clarifying how Svasamjña Tantrayukti functions, this study highlights the precision of ancient Ayurvedic literature and helps bridge the gap between classical wisdom and contemporary clinical understanding.

REFERENCES

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