



Research Article

Importance of Indriyasthana in Charaka Samhita: A Comprehensive Review

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Abstract

Background: Indriyasthana is the fifth section of Charaka Samhita and comprises twelve chapters primarily devoted to prognosis (Arishta Lakshana). It equips physicians with methods to assess whether a disease is curable or incurable by observing alterations in the senses, complexion, voice, smell, dreams, mental state, and other clinical signs before initiating treatment. It is therefore considered one of the earliest systematic treatises on prognostic medicine.

Objective: To review the importance of Indriyasthana and evaluate its contribution to Ayurvedic diagnosis, prognosis, clinical decision-making, and its relevance to contemporary medical practice.

Materials and Methods: Classical Ayurvedic literature, especially Charaka Samhita with traditional commentaries, standard Ayurvedic textbooks, and published review articles on Indriyasthana were critically reviewed.

Results: Indriyasthana provides a comprehensive framework for prognostic assessment through Arishta Lakshana, enabling physicians to identify terminal conditions, determine the likelihood of recovery, and plan treatment ethically and rationally.

Conclusion: The principles of Indriyasthana continue to be clinically relevant for prognosis, critical care, palliative medicine, physician ethics, and evidence-based Ayurvedic practice.

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KEYWORDS: Charaka Samhita, Indriyasthana, Arishta Lakshana, Prognosis, Ayurveda, Clinical Examination.

1. INTRODUCTION

Charaka Samhita is one of the most authoritative texts of Ayurveda, consisting of eight Sthanas and 120 chapters. Indriyasthana, the fifth section, contains twelve chapters dedicated mainly to prognostic science. Unlike other sections that emphasise diagnosis and treatment, Indriyasthana enables physicians to evaluate the patient's remaining life expectancy and determine whether treatment is appropriate. This emphasis on prognosis demonstrates the advanced clinical reasoning of classical Ayurveda.

Aim

To review the importance of Indriyasthana of Charaka Samhita and its significance in Ayurvedic clinical practice.

OBJECTIVES

1. To explain the concept of Indriyasthana.
2. To describe the importance of its twelve chapters.
3. To evaluate its role in prognosis and clinical decision-making.
4. To correlate classical concepts with modern medicine.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This review is based on Charaka Samhita, Chakrapani commentary, standard Ayurvedic textbooks, and published review articles. Relevant literature was analysed and interpreted using classical Ayurvedic principles and contemporary medical concepts.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Concept of Indriyasthana

The term Indriya refers to sensory perception and the clinical indicators that reflect the patient's vitality. Indriyasthana explains Arishta Lakshana (fatal prognostic signs), which help physicians distinguish curable from incurable diseases before commencing treatment. It is therefore regarded as the classical foundation of prognostic medicine in Ayurveda.

Overview of the Twelve Chapters

The twelve chapters collectively describe prognostic signs based on:

- Complexion (Varna)
- Voice (Swara)
- Smell (Gandha)
- Taste (Rasa)
- Touch (Sparsha)
- Dreams (Swapna)
- Mental status (Manas)
- Behavioural changes
- Sensory abnormalities
- Disease progression
- Terminal clinical manifestations
- Physician's interpretation of Arishta Lakshana

Each chapter contributes to a systematic prognostic evaluation before treatment.

Clinical Importance of Indriyasthana

1. Prognostic Assessment

The primary contribution of Indriyasthana is prediction of disease outcome. It helps identify patients with favourable and unfavourable prognoses.

2. Identification of Arishta Lakshana

Arishta Lakshana include abnormal complexion, altered voice, unusual odour, disturbed perception, ominous dreams, and severe mental changes, which indicate grave illness or impending death.

3. Rational Clinical Decision-Making

The physician should evaluate prognosis before initiating therapy, thereby avoiding unnecessary or futile treatment in terminal conditions.

4. Physician Ethics

Indriyasthana emphasises that a physician should communicate honestly, treat only when beneficial, and protect the dignity of both patient and physician through sound clinical judgment.

5. Importance in Critical Care

Many prognostic features described in Indriyasthana resemble modern indicators of organ failure, neurological deterioration, septic states, and end-of-life care.

6. Holistic Patient Assessment

The text integrates physical, psychological, behavioural, and sensory observations into one comprehensive prognostic framework.

Modern Relevance

The concepts of Indriyasthana remain relevant in:

- Critical care medicine
- Prognostic scoring
- Palliative medicine
- Oncology
- Neurology
- Geriatric medicine
- Medical ethics
- Evidence-based Ayurveda

Several classical descriptions of neurological and terminal clinical manifestations have been explored in relation to modern neurological disorders and end-of-life care.

4. DISCUSSION

Among the eight sections of Charaka Samhita, Indriyasthana is unique because it focuses on prognosis rather than diagnosis or therapy. The detailed observation of complexion, voice, smell, dreams, sensory functions, and behaviour demonstrates a sophisticated clinical methodology. These principles encourage careful bedside examination, ethical decision-making, and individualised patient assessment. Contemporary medicine also relies heavily on prognostic indicators in intensive care and

palliative settings, making Indriyasthanana highly relevant even today.

5. CONCLUSION

Indriyasthanana is one of the most scientifically significant sections of Charaka Samhita. It provides a systematic framework for prognosis through the assessment of Arishta Lakshana and supports rational, ethical, and patient-centred clinical practice. Its teachings continue to offer valuable insights for modern Ayurvedic physicians, particularly in prognosis, critical care, and evidence-based decision-making.

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