



Review Article

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DARSHANA IN AYURVEDA: PHILOSOPHY IN PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, is deeply influenced by the philosophical frameworks of both Astika and Nastika darshanas. These schools contribute significantly to its theoretical foundations and practical applications. Astika darshans such as Sāṅkhya, Nyaya, Vaishesika, Yoga, and Vedanta provide essential insights into Ayurvedic concepts like the tridoṣa theory, body-mind constitution (prakriti), diagnostic reasoning, and the integration of physical and spiritual health. Sāṅkhya offers a metaphysical basis for understanding human physiology, while Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika support logic, epistemology, and pharmacological categorization. Yoga enriches preventive and mental health practices through mind-body discipline. On the other hand, Nāstika darśanas like Buddhism and Jainism shape Ayurveda's ethical outlook, emphasizing non-violence, mindfulness, and compassion in healing practices. Even Cārvāka's materialist approach contributes by promoting empirical reasoning and critical thinking. The synthesis of these philosophical traditions enables Ayurveda to function as a comprehensive, rational, and ethically grounded medical system that addresses health at physical, mental, and spiritual levels.

Key words -Ayurveda, Āstika Darshana, Nāstika darshana, Applied Philosophy

INTRODUCTION

In the context of Ayurveda, most philosophical influences are drawn from the Āstika Darshana. The applied aspects of Darshana (Indian philosophical systems) in Ayurveda are profound and foundational. Ayurveda, though a medical science, is deeply influenced by Darshana, especially Sāṅkhya, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā, and Yoga (those that accept the

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authority of the Vedas). However, there are indirect applied aspects of Nāstika Darshana (those that reject Vedic authority)

“Darshana” means vision or philosophical system. The six AstikaDarshana’s are:

1. Sāṅkhya
2. Yoga
3. Nyāya
4. Vaiśeṣika
5. Pūrva Mīmāṃsā
6. Vedānta (Uttara Mīmāṃsā)

Among these, Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, and Vaiśeṣika are directly and practically integrated into Ayurveda.

Applied Aspects of Darshana’s in Ayurveda

1. SankhyaDarshana - Core Idea: Dualism of Purusha (consciousness) and Prakriti (matter)

Applications in Ayurveda:

- Triguna Theory: Sattva, Rajas, Tamas — used in manasika vikara (mental disorders)
- Panchamahabhuta Siddhanta: Five elements (Akasa, Vayu, Teja, Apa, Pṛthvī) — basis for doshas, dhatus, dravyas¹
- Purusha–Prakriti concept → Fundamental in understanding the living being,

2. Yoga Darshana - Core Idea: Union of individual soul with the Supreme; discipline of mind and body

Applications in Ayurveda:

- Chitta-vṛtti-nirodha: Control of mental modifications — used in satvavajaya chikitsa
- Ashtanga Yoga (Yama, Niyama... Samadhi) — influences daily routine, mental hygiene
- Pranayama&Dhyana: Used for prevention and treatment, especially in stress-related disorders.

3. NyayaDarshana - Core Idea: Logic and reasoning; method of gaining valid knowledge (pramāṇa)

Applications in Ayurveda:

- Pramāṇa (means of knowledge): Pratyakṣa, Anumana, Aptopadeas — used in diagnosis (nidana) and treatment¹
- Logical reasoning in roga-vinischaya ²(differential diagnosis)
- Tools for debate, research, and education.

4. Vaishesika Darshana - Core Idea: Atomism; classification of reality

Applications in Ayurveda:

- Padārtha Vijnana: Category-wise understanding of substances (dravya, guṇa, karma, samanaya, vishesha, samavaya)
- Used in dravyaguna vijnana (study of medicinal substances)
- Explains guṇa-karma relationship in pharmacology and physiology

5. MimamsaDarshana - Core Idea: Ritual and action-based approach to dharma

Applications in Ayurveda:

- Emphasis on karma (action) as a means to health and well-being
- Influence on rituals, code of conduct, and ethical practice (āchāra rasāyana)

Astika Darshana	Key Application in Ayurveda
Sāṅkhya	Triguṇa theory, Panchamahabhuta, Prakriti-Purusha model
Yoga	Mind-body discipline, Sattvavajaya Chikitsa, Aṣṭāṅga Yoga, stress management
Nyāya	Logic and reasoning, diagnostic methods, epistemology (pramāṇa)
Vaiśeṣika	Padārtha classification, dravya-guṇa-karma, foundation of pharmacology
Mīmāṃsā	Ethical pactice, ritual conduct, concept of karma influencing health

Definition - Nāstika Darshana's do not accept the Vedas as the ultimate authority. The main ones are:

1. Cārvāka (materialist)
2. Bauddha (Buddhism)
3. Jaina (Jainism)

While Ayurveda is rooted in Āstika systems, these Nāstika Darśanas have contributed practically and ethically, especially in areas like psychology, ethics, and empirical observation⁴.

1. **Carvaka Darshana (Materialism)** - Rejects the soul, afterlife, and spiritual causation. Accepts only direct perception (pratyakṣha) as valid knowledge.

Applications in Ayurveda:

- Empiricism: Encouraged observation and physical evidence, important in clinical diagnosis.
- Pratyakṣha Pramaṇa: Reinforces importance of direct sensory perception in Ayurvedic diagnosis.
- Skepticism toward superstition: Encouraged rational approaches to treatment over blind ritualism.

However, Cārvāka is mostly rejected by Ayurvedic acharyas for denying non-material aspects of life (like ātma and karma).

2. **Bauddha Darshana (Buddhism)** - Denies ātma (no permanent self), emphasizes dukha, cause and effect, impermanence, and compassion.

Application in Ayurveda:

- Kṣaṇika-vāda (momentariness): Aligns with the Ayurvedic idea that body and mind are constantly changing, thus treatment must be dynamic.
- Theory of causation (pratītya-samutpāda): Similar to nidāna-pañcaka (cause-effect chain in disease).
- Psychology and mindfulness: Mental well-being is emphasized. Ayurveda's satvavajaya chikitsa echoes Buddhist mental practices.

- Ahimsa (non-violence): Reflected in Ayurveda's ethical emphasis on doing no harm, especially in surgery and medicine.

3. Jain Darshana (Jainism) - Believes in pluralism (Anekāntavāda), karma theory, and strict non-violence⁵.

Application in Ayurveda:

- Dietary ethics: Ayurveda's concept of pathya–apathya³ (wholesome/unwholesome food) aligns with Jain food discipline.
- Anekāntavāda (multi-sided view): Resonates with Ayurveda's approach to understanding disease from multiple angles (tridoṣa, mental, spiritual).
- Karma siddhānta: Reinforces Ayurvedic views on the mental and karmic causes of disease.
- Lifestyle and self-discipline: Ayurveda encourage cleanliness, restraint, and ethical living, which overlaps Jain ideals.

Nāstika Darshana	Key Concept	Applied Aspects in Ayurveda
Carvaka	Materialism, pratyakṣha only	Empirical diagnosis, skepticism of superstition, focus on physical health
Buddhism	No self, causality, compassion	Mental health, causality model in disease, mindfulness, ethics in healing
Jainism	Karma, non-violence, pluralism	Diet regulation, karma's role in disease, Anekāntavāda in diagnosis/treatment

DISCUSSION

The blending of philosophical ideas into Ayurveda shows how deep and wide the intellectual traditions of India are. Both the āstika and nāstika schools of thought have played a big role in shaping not just the basic beliefs behind Ayurveda but also how it is used in practical ways like diagnosis, treatment, ethics, mental health, and disease prevention. Among the āstika systems, Sāṅkhya is one of the most important in forming Ayurveda's theories. The ideas of Prakṛti and Puruṣa, along with the categories of tattvas, help explain how the human

body works and functions. The tridoṣa system—vāta (air and ether), pitta (fire and water), and kapha (water and earth)—comes from the five-element theory (pañcamahābhūta), which is based on Sāṅkhya's view of the universe.

Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika have also had a strong influence on how Ayurveda builds knowledge and organizes its structure. They emphasize pramāṇas, which are the ways to get true knowledge—especially through perception and reasoning. These methods are key in how Ayurveda looks at diseases and makes treatment plans. They also help in understanding the nature of substances, which is important for studying the properties of herbs and minerals.

Yoga, especially through Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras, is used in Ayurveda to deal with mental health. This includes practices like breathing exercises (prāṇāyāma), meditation (dhyāna), and postures (āsana). These are included in daily routines (dinacharya) and seasonal activities (ritucharya) to keep the body and mind in balance. Today, these practices are very popular for dealing with stress, anxiety, and lifestyle-related health issues.

Ethical values from Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta are also present in Ayurveda. The connection between moral duty (dharma), action (karma), and health, as well as the ethical responsibility of a doctor (ācāra), come from these traditions. The idea of health as a balance between the body, mind, and soul (ātman) is part of Vedānta's vision of achieving liberation (mokṣa) through health and mental peace.

Even though Nāstika schools don't accept the Vedas, they have a big impact on Ayurveda, especially in areas like ethics, psychology, and patient care. Buddhism contributes a lot in understanding the causes of suffering (dukha) and how to end it. Ayurveda's methods for treating mental issues often relate to Buddhist practices such as mindfulness (smṛti) and right behavior. These practices encourage self-awareness that helps in healing. The idea of compassion (karuṇā) in caring for patients and avoiding attachment to ego-driven desires is similar to Buddhist ethics.

Jainism has a strong influence on ethics and diet in Ayurveda. The principle of non-violence (ahiṃsā) affects dietary choices, especially the preference for vegetarian foods. Jain ideas of self-control, purity, and simplicity align with Ayurveda's emphasis on moderation in diet and lifestyle for better health.

Carvaka, often seen as a materialist school, still plays a small but important role. Its focus on direct experience and observation supports Ayurveda's own use of practical

knowledge and reason. Carvaka encouraged Ayurvedic thinkers to defend and improve their methods in a more grounded and evidence-based way.

Conclusion

The way Ayurveda uses different philosophical systems shows the close connection between philosophy and medicine in Indian traditions. The practical applications from both Astika and Nastika schools show how Ayurveda is a holistic, ethical, rational, and experience-based approach to healing. This deep philosophical foundation not only supports the theory of Ayurveda but also helps it stay relevant in modern and global health systems.

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