



Scan to know paper details and  
author's profile

# The Knowledge Tradition of Ancient India

*Dr. Divya Jyothi & Dr. Deepa K K, Member*

## ABSTRACT

The Knowledge Tradition of ancient India is a very unique and well-developed system. It teaches to understand every object from macro to micro level. The objects to be known are Pādārtha Vijñāna-Natural Philosophy, Mano Vijñāna- Psychology, Ātma Vijñāna- Science of the knowledge or soul and Tatva Vijñāna-Science of the knowledge of elements. Pramāṇa Vijñāna- Epistemology is used to examine and to know regarding all the above- mentioned objects. The knowledge of all these is required to achieve the Purushartha (four aims of life)- Dharma (righteous path), Artha (wealth), Kāma (desires) and Moksha(liberty). There are specific features mentioned for a science which is to be learnt, teacher and student. The whole paper details regarding the subjects and objects of the knowledge tradition of ancient India.

*Keywords:* indian knowledge, Caraka, tadition.

*Classification:* FOR code: 091599

*Language:* English



LJP Copyright ID: 392865

Print ISSN: 2631-8474

Online ISSN: 2631-8482

London Journal of Engineering Research

Volume 19 | Issue 3 | Compilation 1.0



© 2019. Dr. Divya Jyothi & Dr. Deepa K K, Member. This is a research/review paper, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 Unported License <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>, permitting all noncommercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.



# The Knowledge Tradition of Ancient India

Dr. Divya Jyothi <sup>α</sup> & Dr. Deepa K K <sup>σ</sup>

## ABSTRACT

*The Knowledge Tradition of ancient India is a very unique and well-developed system. It teaches to understand every object from macro to micro level. The objects to be known are Pādārtha Vjñāna -Natural Philosophy, Mano Vjñāna- Psychology, Ātma Vjñāna - Science of the knowledge or soul and Tatva Vjñāna -Science of the knowledge of elements. Pramāṇa Vjñāna - Epistemology is used to examine and to know regarding all the above- mentioned objects. The knowledge of all these is required to achieve the Purushartha (four aims of life)- Dharma (righteous path), Artha (wealth), Kāma (desires) and Moksha(liberty). There are specific features mentioned for a science which is to be learnt, teacher and student. The whole paper details regarding the subjects and objects of the knowledge tradition of ancient India.*

**Keywords:** indian knowledge, caraka, tradition.

**Author α:** Scientific Co-ordinator, Aapyam Institute of Indigenous Sciences and Research, - A unit of Aapyam Ayurveda Foundation®, #136, 4th Main, 4th Cross, Gauravanagar, JP Nagar 7th Phase, Bengaluru-560078, Karnataka.

**σ:** Member, Aapyam Institute of Indigenous Sciences and Research, - A unit of Aapyam Ayurveda Foundation®,#136, 4th Main, 4th Cross, Gauravanagar, JP Nagar 7th Phase, Bengaluru-560078, Karnataka.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Knowledge Tradition of ancient India is a very unique and well-developed system. During the ancient period, oral transmission of knowledge was in practice. It is true that Vedic science was transmitted orally. Even today this can be seen in a Gurukul System of Education especially in Mutts. After the evolution of writing, people started to write over clays, pillar, stones, the skin of animals, etc. Then they started to write

over palm leaves and started to preserve the knowledge of various systems pertaining to Nāṭyaśāstra (the science of dancing and acting), Kāvya (poetical composition), Nāṭaka (drama), Jyotiṣa (astrology), Gaṇita (mathematics) and Purāṇa (sacred works dealing with Hindu mythology) etc. Due to the invasion of several foreigners, there was a remarkable change in the knowledge transmission and Indian education system. Due to this discontinuity of the transmission; the treasure of knowledge is still hidden in manuscripts in India. It is shocking that not even 5% of available manuscripts has brought into light till date.

## II. COMPENDIA OF INDIAN KNOWLEDGE TRADITION

According to Indian knowledge tradition, all the existent knowledge of the universe has originated from the Veda, and one can get scattered references of all subjects in Veda. But the Bhaviṣyapurāṇa explicitly says that Veda deals with Yajña (the act of worship or sacrifice) and Karmakāṇḍa (a division which deals with ceremonial acts and sacrificial rites). Smṛti (Hindu law book) deals with Gṛhyāśrama (ritual work containing directions for domestic rites and ceremonies). The Purāṇa (mythology) expounds the subject which is not mentioned both in Veda and Smṛti. The subject matter dealt in Veda was difficult to understand for common man intellect. Hence it is needed to understand the same in a simple manner. Hence Vedavyāsa propounded the Purāṇa. The Purāṇa deals with wild range of subjects starting from Bhakti (devotion), Jñāna (knowledge), Vairāgya (freedom from all worldly desires), Sadācāra (good conduct), Sakāma karma, (actions done to fulfil desires) Niṣkāma karma (actions done without expectation), Yajña (act of sacrifice), Vrata (holy practice), Dāṇa (offering), Tapa (asceticism), Tīrthayātra (visiting

place of pilgrimage), Devapūjā (worshipping God) to Śrāddha Tarpaṇa (ceremony in honour of dead relatives)<sup>2</sup>.

The structure of every writings of ancient India has four basic concepts<sup>3</sup> viz;

*Abhidheya* – to be known

*Abhidhāna*- a science

*Prayojana* - benefits

*Sambandha*- is establishing a relation between all the above.

### III. PRAMEYA-OBJECTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Every science is formed to achieve four aims of life i.e. Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa. According to Nyāyaśāstra, the objects to be known to achieve these aims are-

ātmāśarīrendriyārthabuddhimanahaṅpravṛttidoṣapretyābhāvaphaladuḥkhāpavargastu prameyam | 4

*Ātmā*-icchādveṣaprayatnasukhaduḥkhajñānānyātmanoliṅgam |

The existence of Ātmā has inferred by emotions such as Icchā (willingness), Dveṣa (dislike), Prayatna (action), Sukha (pleasure) and Duḥkha (sorrow).

*Śarīra*- ceṣṭendriyārthāśrayaḥ śarīram |

The body is the abode for Ceṣṭā-actions, Indriya-sense organs and Artha- objects of sense organs.

*Indriya*-ghrāṇarasanacakṣustvakśrotrāṇdriyāṇi bhūtebhyaḥ |

The sense organs are Ghrāṇa(nose), Rasana (tongue), Cakṣu (eyes), Tvak (skin) and Śrotra (ears).

*Artha*- pṛthivyāpastejo vāyurākāśamiti bhūtāni | gandharasarūpasparśaśabdāḥpṛthivyādiguṇāstadarthāḥ |

The five elements are Pṛthvi (earth element), Ap (water element), Teja (fire element), Vāyu (air element) and Ākāśa (ether). The objects of these elements are Gandha (odour), Rasa (taste), Rūpa (form), Sparśa (touch) and Śabda (sound).

*Buddhi*-

buddhirupalabdhirjñānamityanarthāntaram |

Upalabdhi jñāna –understanding is the synonym for Buddhi (intelligent).

*Manas*- yugapajñānānutpattirmanaso liṅgam |

One can experience the existence of mind by the phenomenon of non-occurrence of dual emotions at a time.

*Pravṛtti*- vāgbuddhiśarīrārambhaḥ | Pravṛtti is the action initiated by Vāk (speech), Buddhi (intelligent) and Śarīra ( the body).

*Doṣa*- pravartanālakṣaṇā doṣāḥ |

The actions are done through speech, intelligent and the body results in Doṣa (mistakes).

*Pretyābhāva*- punarutpattiḥ pretyābhāvaḥ |

Taking birth, again and again, is considered as Pretyābhāva.

*Phalam*-pravṛttidoṣajanito'rthaḥ phalam |

Phalam (consequence) is the product of Pravṛtti (actions) and Doṣa (mistakes).

*Duḥkham*- bādhanālakṣaṇaṃ duḥkham |

The consequences will affect a person in the form of grief.

*Apavarga*- tadatyantavimokṣo'pavargaḥ |

Liberty from the grief is Apavarga.

All these objects include *Pādārtha Vijñāna* - Natural Philosophy, *Mano Vijñāna* - Psychology, *Ātma Vijñāna* - Science of the knowledge or soul and *Tatva Vijñāna* -Science of the knowledge of elements. *Pramāṇa Vijñāna* - Epistemology is used to examine and to know regarding all the above- mentioned objects.

### IV. PRAMĀṆA-TOOLS OF GETTING KNOWLEDGE

The search for the cause of miseries had resulted in understanding the world and its phenomenon. In the whole universe, there can be two types of experiences-an experience of existing and non-existing. These can be examined by the four types of Pramāṇa namely Āptopadeśa (scriptural testimony or sayings of sages), Pratyakṣa-direct

perception, Anumāna- Inference and Yukti – reasonings<sup>5</sup>.

*Śāstra lakṣaṇa* (Description of a science)

Caraka Saṃhitā, a well-known book of Āyurveda belonging to 500 BCE, explains the Śāstra lakṣaṇa (Description of a science)<sup>6</sup> as shown in the table1.

The actions are done through speech, intelligent and the body results in Doṣa (mistakes).

*Pretyābhāva*- punarutpattiḥ pretyābhāvaḥ |

Taking birth, again and again, is considered as Pretyābhāva.

*Phalam*-pravṛttidoṣajanito'rthaḥ phalam |

Phalam (consequence) is the product of Pravṛtti (actions) and Doṣa (mistakes).

*Duḥkham*- bādhanālakṣaṇam duḥkham |

The consequences will affect a person in the form of grief.

*Apavarga*- tadatyantavimokṣo'pavargaḥ |

Liberty from the grief is Apavarga.

All these objects include *Pādārtha Vijñāna* - Natural Philosophy, *Mano Vijñāna* - Psychology

*Ātma Vijñāna* - Science of the knowledge or soul and *Tatva Vijñāna* - Science of the knowledge of elements. *Pramāṇa Vijñāna* - Epistemology is used to examine and to know regarding all the above- mentioned objects.

## V. DESCRIPTION OF A SCIENCE

The search for the cause of miseries had resulted in understanding the world and its phenomenon. In the whole universe, there can be two types of experiences-an experience of existing and non-existing. These can be examined by the four types of Pramāṇa namely Āptopadeśa (scriptural testimony or sayings of sages), Pratyakṣa-direct perception, Anumāna- Inference and Yukti – reasonings<sup>5</sup>.

*Śāstra lakṣaṇa* (Description of a science)

Caraka Saṃhitā, a well-known book of Āyurveda belonging to 500 BCE, explains the Śāstra lakṣaṇa (Description of a science)<sup>6</sup> as shown in the table1.

Table 1: Description of a science

Features	Meaning
Sumahadyaśasvidhirapurūṣasevitam	learnt and adopted by successful and courageous people.
Arthabahulam	with abundant interpretations
Āptajanapūjitam	appreciated by good people.
Trividhaśiṣyabuddhihitam	understood by three types of students viz; Avara (less intelligent student), Madhyama (students of moderate intelligence) and Pravara (good intelligent students).
Apagatapunaruktadoṣam	without repetitions.
Ārṣam	narrated by the sages.
Suprañitasūtrabhāṣyasaṅgrahakramam	verses with commentaries and explanations
Svādhāram	self-explanatory
Anavapatitaśabdam	with a language accepted by every person and without wicked words
Akaṣaśabdam	devoid of words which are difficult to pronounce
Puṣkalābhidhānam	providing abundant knowledge
Kramagatārtham	educating step by step.
Arthatatvaviniścayapradhānam	giving a definite conclusion
Saṅgatārtham	allied with proper meanings
Asaṅkulaprakaraṇam	without confused statements
ĀsuprabodhakamLakṣaṇavat Udāharanavat	easily understandable by explanations and illustrations

The science endowed with all the above qualities can alleviate the ignorance of a person as an illuminating sun alleviating the darkness.

## VI. GURU PARĪKṢĀ- THE SELECTION OF A GOOD TEACHER

In every Indian science, Guru (a teacher) has been given an important role in the making of a qualified student. In Caraka one can find the

reference regarding the characteristics of a good teacher<sup>7</sup>. By examining the characters; a student has to select a teacher. The qualities of a good teacher are as shown in table 2.

*Table 2:* The qualities of a good teacher

Features	Meaning
Paryavadātaśrutam	with good theoretical knowledge.
Parṇaidṛṣṭakarmāṇam	well versed in practical knowledge.
Dakṣam	Diligent
Dakṣiṇam	Clever
Śucim	Honest
Jitahastam	Excellent
Upakaraṇavantam	endowed with all instruments
Sarvendriyopapannam	endowed with proper sense organs
Praktijñam	knows natural form or condition of anything.
Pratipattijñam	Confident
Anupaskutavidyam	Authentic
Anahankutam	without egoism
Anasūyakam	without jealous
Akopanam	without anger
Kleśakṣamam	Tolerable
Śiṣyavatsalam	Lovable
Jñāpanasamartham	with good memory

## VII. ŚIṢYA PARĪKṢĀ-THE SELECTION OF A GOOD STUDENT

The teacher has to select a student with appropriate qualities<sup>8</sup> as shown in the table3.

*Table 3:* The qualities of a student

Qualities	Meaning
Praśāntam	Calm
Āryapraktikam	with good character
Akṣudrakrmāṇam	not indulging oneself in cruel/insignificant activities
Rjucakṣurmukhanāsāvamaśam	With properly positioned eyes, mouth, nose and backbone

Tanuraktaviśadajihvaṃ	thin, red coloured, clear tongue
Avikṛutadantouṣhaṃ	With properly positioned teeth and lips
Aminmināṃ	devoid of stammering voice
Dhṛtimantāṃ	Courageous
Anahānkṛutaṃ	without egoism
Medhāvināṃ	Clever
Vitarkasmṛtisampannaṃ	devoid of illogical thoughts and with a good memory
Udārasatvaṃ	Liberal
Tadvidyakulajaṃ athavā tadvidyāvṛuttaṃ	born in the family of experts
Tattvābhiniveśināṃ	Endowed with applied knowledge
Avyaṅgaṃ	devoid of any deformity
Avyāpannendriyaṃ	with proper sense organs
Nibhṛtaṃ	free from passions
anuddhṛtamarthatattvabhāvakaṃ	with complete knowledge
Akopaṇaṃ	without anger
Avyasaniṇaṃ	without any addiction
Śīla	With morality
Śoucācāra	Genuine
Anurāga	Lovable
Dākṣya	Diligent
Prādākṣiṇya	Sincere
Adhyayanābhikāṃ	indulges oneself in self-study
Arthavijñāne, Karmadarśane cān anyakāryaṃ	always indulging oneself in knowing the things and in getting practical knowledge.
Alubdhaṃ	not covetous
Analasaṃ	Active
Sarvabhūtahitaiṣiṇāṃ	desires the wellness of all living beings
Ācāryasarvānuśiṣṭipratikaraṃ	following the orders of a teacher
Anuraktaṃ	Beloved

In Indian tradition, all the knowledge originated from God. A person who receives the knowledge when gives it to someone; then only he will be freed from debt of a teacher. The transmission of knowledge was continuous due to the take and give policy.

### 7.1 Adhyāpana vidhi (Methods of teaching)

The great sage Suśruta has explained the method of teaching as follows-

He should wear cleaned cloth after having a bath. He should sit nearby teacher. A teacher should explain the verse by Pada (word by word), Pāda

(1/4th part) or Śloka (whole verse) depending on the intelligence of the student. In this manner, a teacher has to repeat the verse along with the student. The way of chanting should be - Adruta-unhurried, Avilāmbita- continuous, Aviśāṅkitaṃ-without hesitation, Ananunāsikaṃ- not pronouncing through the nose, Suvyaktākṣaraṃ-with clear pronunciation of each word, Apīditavaraṇaṃ- not over pressing the word, AkṣibhruvoṣṭhahastairanabhinItaṃ- chanting a verse without moving eyes, eyebrows, lips and hands like a dancer, Susaṃskṛtaṃ- perfectly chanting, Nātyucchairnātinīcaīśca svaraiḥ- chanting without a high or low voice<sup>9</sup>.

## 7.2 Importance of Prabhāṣaṇam

After learning the whole science, a student should explain the learnt subject to others. If a person is unable to talk over the learnt subject, he is similar to a donkey carrying a bundle of sandal over its back without knowing its value<sup>10</sup>.

## 7.3 Siddhānta- Postulation of a theory

According to Caraka Saṁhitā, every theory of the Indian science has postulated after repeated observations and examinations. Every theory has proven by examining it with several causes and with logical reasonings<sup>11</sup>. It depicts the idea of how theory has established in ancient India which is applicable even today and will be advisable in the future. It provides an immense idea for a researcher to formulate new theories.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

In brief Indian system of knowledge has the following divisions-

*Pādārtha Vijñāna*-Natural Philosophy

*Pramāṇa Vijñāna*- Epistemology

*Mano Vijñāna*- Psychology

*Ātma Vijñāna*- Science of the knowledge or soul

*Tatva Vijñāna*-Science of the knowledge of elements.

To know these four types of examination tools are mentioned viz; Āptopadeśa, Pratyakṣa, Anumāna and Yukti. There is a selection criterion for a science-which is to be learnt, a teacher-from whom it should be received and the student-the receiver of the knowledge. Discussion with a well-versed person is believed to be a good source to improve the knowledge. Every theory of Indian science has postulated on repeated observations and examinations. This shows the systematic methodology of teaching and learning process prevailing in ancient India. Guidelines for scientific research is also expressed in such references, showing the existence of well-advanced system of study in a wide range of subjects. This is the reason why seekers of knowledge all over the world found ancient India to be the apt learning hub to quench their thirst for knowledge.

## REFERENCES

1. Samkshipta Bhavishyapurananka.Gorakhpur Press; 1992.pp.5 (Preface).
2. Samkshipta Bhavishyapurananka. Gorakhpur Press; 1992.pp.5 (Preface).
3. Chakrapanidutta, Commentator, *Charaka samhita, Sutra Sthana, Dirghanjivitiya Adhyaya*, 1/1, 2nd edition, Chukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi,2011;1-2.
4. The Nyaya Sutras of Gotama. Translated by Mahāmahopādhyāya Satīscandra Vidyābhūṣaṇa. The Paṇini Office, Bahadurganj, Allababad;1913.pp.4-7.
5. Agnivesha, Charaka, Dridhabala, *Charaka samhita, Sutra Sthana, Tisraishaniya Adhyaya*, 11/17, edited by Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya, 2nd edition, Chaukambha Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, 2011;70.
6. Agnivesha, Charaka, Dridhabala, *Charaka samhita, Vimanaa Sthana, Rogabhishagjitiya vimanam Adhyaya*, 8/3, edited by Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya,2nd edition, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, 2011;261.
7. Agnivesha, Charaka, Dridhabala, *Charaka samhita, Vimanaa Sthana, Rogabhishagjitiya vimanam Adhyaya*, 8/4, edited by Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya,2nd edition, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, 2011;262.
8. Agnivesha, Charaka, Dridhabala, *Charaka samhita, Vimanaa Sthana, Rogabhishagjitiya vimanam Adhyaya*, 8/8, edited by Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya,2nd edition, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, 2011;262.
9. Sushruta, *Sushruta samhita, Sutra Sthana, Adhyayansampradaniyam Adhyaya*, 3/54, edited by Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya,2nd edition, Chaukhambha Orientalia, Varanasi, 2014;16.
10. Sushruta, *Sushruta samhita, Sutra Sthana, Prabhashaniyam Adhyaya*, 4/4, edited by Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya,2nd edition, Chaukhambha Orientalia, Varanasi, 2014;17.
11. Agnivesha, Charaka, Dridhabala, *Charaka samhita, Vimanaa Sthana, Rogabhishagjitiya vimanam Adhyaya*, 8/37, edited by Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya,2nd edition, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, 2011;268.