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## CHARAK SAMHITA- COMPLETE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF AYURVEDIC SCIENCE

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## REVIEW ARTICLE

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CHARAK SAMHITA- COMPLETE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF AYURVEDIC  
SCIENCE

## ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is a science based on ancient Indian philosophy. It can appropriately be called as "The science of Living". Ayurveda has been in existence since the beginning of time. Therefore in Charak Samhita, Ayurveda has been described as Shashvata (eternal). The Charak samhita is an ancient Indian Ayurvedic text on internal medicine written by Acharya Charak. Acharya Charak has a great contribution towards Ayurved by giving such great literature. Acharya Charak has been referred as the Father of non-surgical Ayurvedic Indian Medicine. His principles, diagnosis and treatment retain their potency and truth even after a couple of millennia. Therefore Charak samhita is considered to be the most ancient and authoritative work on Ayurveda available today. This samhita is useful for those who want to improve their health and happiness. It is mentioned that a Vaidya who has studied many others book but not the Charak samhita then he will be criticize among the vaidyas who have studied the Charak samhita. In Siddhithana, Acharya Charak specifically mentioned that whatever is mentioned in this samhita is available elsewhere but things which are not mentioned here are not to be found any where else. This reference proves the importance of Charak samhita in the field of Ayurveda. Therefore it becomes necessary to study and understand the special features mentioned Charak samhita. This review article deals with the historical study of such a great personality of Ayurveda and his special contribution in the progress of Ayurvedic science.

**KEY-WORDS-** Agnivesha Tantra, Charak samhita, Punarvasu Atreya, Dridhabala, Ayurved Avataram

## INTRODUCTION:

*Ayurveda* is the most ancient indigenous medical system of India. According to various *Ayurvedic* literatures, *Brahma* (the creator) was the divine source of this science. The knowledge of *Ayurved* was recalled by Lord *Brahma*. He transfers his noble knowledge of *Ayurved* to God *Daksha Prajapati* who, in turn, passed it totally to twin brothers (*Ashvinikumars*) who were the physician of the Gods. The *Ashvinikumars* then proffered this knowledge to the king of gods i.e. Lord *Indra*. From *Indra*, the knowledge of *Ayurved* descended to earth in two different ways. According to *Charak samhita*, once upon a time, when the people on earth were suffered with various kinds of diseases, the sage, *Bharadwaja* was deputed by an assembly of learned teachers to go to Lord *Indra* to learn *Ayurveda* [1]. Then *Bharadwaja*, the semi-divine sage was instructed by *Indra* to spread this invaluable science of longevity on the earth [2]. On his return, *Bharadwaja* imparted his knowledge to *Punarvasu Atreya* and later their six disciples [3]. The present manuscript of *Charak samhita* has a long history behind it. The original source i.e. *Charak samhita* is identified as the *Agnivesha Tantra* based on the teachings of *Punarvasu Atreya*.

*Atreya* was a famous *rishi* who taught in the famous *Takshashila* university during the *Buddhist* era, however, he also traveled extensively and held symposia in different parts of the country. He is also known as *Atreya*. After study and due permission of their preceptor all six disciples namely *Agnivesha*, *Bhela*, *Jatukarna*, *Parashara*, *Harita* and *Ksharapani* compose their own tantra under the guidance of *Punarvasu Atreya*. The writing of this tantra is done only after obtaining permission from their preceptor. Of those, the *Agnivesha-Tantra*, composed by *Agnivesha*, was unique in depth and content. *Charak samhita* is composed in the form of questions and answers between *Atreya* and *Agnivesha* and his six disciples. Therefore it was considered the best. But in course of time this tantra became mutilated and now original work of *Agnivesha* is not available for study. Noticing this condition, a scholar by name *Charak* collect all the fragments of scattered tantra and revised with necessary correction and made it suitable for study. After revision, *Acharya Charak* renamed *Agnivesha Tantra* as *Charak samhita* and hence after this it came to be known as *Charak samhita*. But it is not easy to identify the chapters added, deleted or amended by *Charak*. To keep away our self from *Abhidhya dosha*, *Acharya Charak* clearly mentioned one quotation at the end of every chapter of *Charak samhita* which is "*Agniveshakrute Tante Charak pratisanskrite*" which means this tantra was originally composed by *Agnivesha* and organized or put together by *Charak*. After this redaction this text became more

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popular as *Charak samhita* in the name of the redactor. Many Ayurvedic experts assume that *Agnivesha tantra* continued to exist for a long time upto about 7<sup>th</sup> cent AD the period of Acharya Vagbhata who has quoted some verse from it. Charak samhita, Sushruta samhita and Vagbhata samhita are considered as the most important samhita of Kritayuga, Dwaparyuga and Kaliyuga respectively. In the course of some more centuries even this Charak samhita became mutilated and some portion is lost. Noticing this pathetic condition of an ancient and important text, Charak samhita was again revised by a Kashmiri Pandita named Dridhabala, son of Kapilabala residential of Panchanandpur [4]. The present form to Charak samhita was given to it by Acharya Dridhabala. He not only reconstitutes and restores the missing chapters but also added new chapters in samhita and made the samhita complete and suitable for study. It is not difficult to identify the chapter added by Acharya Dridhabala because he clearly mentioned in the last chapter of Charak samhita that he added total 17 chapters in Chikitsasthana and 12 chapters each of Kalpasthana and Siddhisthana [5] (total of 41 chapters which form one third of the entire text). From above sources we can conclude that Charak samhita has passed through the following three stages in its completion

- 1) 1<sup>st</sup> stage :- Punarvasu Atreya expounding the knowledge of Ayurveda and Agnivesha compiled the tantra
- 2) 2<sup>nd</sup> stage :- Acharya Charak redacting Agnivesha tantra which is popular as Charak samhita
- 3) 3<sup>rd</sup> stage :- Charak samhita redacted and revised by a Kashmiri Pandita Dridhabala

This work is sometimes considered a redaction of an older and more voluminous work, Agnivesha samhita, which is no longer extant. It describes not only the existing knowledge about medicine aspects but also the logic and philosophy behind the medical systems. It concentrates on the branch of Ayurveda called Kaya Chikitsa (internal medicine). Charak followed the Aatreya School of Physicians, which predominantly deals with treatments through internal and external application of medicine. Though the samhita contains all the theoretical knowledge of Ayurveda its focus is on healing the body, mind and soul of a patient in the minimum invasive manner that's Kaya Chikitsa. Hence, he placed great emphasis on the diagnostic part of the treatment. It is included in the list of three mostly authentic samhitas of Ayurvedic science which are known as "Brihatrayee" and held in high esteem since many millennia. Brihatrayee consists of Charak samhita,

Sushruta samhita and Ashtanga Hridya respectively.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is conceptual type of research. All sorts of references has been collected and compiled from various available Ayurvedic classics texts like Charak samhita and available commentaries on it. Research article is also searched from various websites related to Charak samhita. All matter is analyzed for the discussion and attempt has been made to draw some conclusions.

## PLACE OF ACHARYA CHARAK

Acharya Charka has not mentioned his birth place and proper introduction any where in Charak samhita which create curiosity among various historical and Ayurvedists. But he quoted north - west regions of India such as Himalaya, Panchala kshetra, Kailash and panchandapura etc. All these above references suggest that may be from north-west region of the India. Charak is considered as a son of Vishuddha krishi and disciple of Vaishyampayan.

## NATURE AND COMPOSITION OF CHARAK SAMHITA

The Charak samhita is a huge treatise on ancient Indian medicine. It was written in Sanskrit language. It is a voluminous text composed in both prose and poetry form. Poetry was known to serve as a memory aid. In ancient times this style helped aspiring Ayurvedic students to memorize the sutras. Charak samhita consists of 9295 Sutras and 120 adhyayas (chapters). The number '120' appears to bear some significance because Ashtanga hridaya, Kashyapa samhita and Bhela samhita also contain 120 chapters each. In Charak samhita Adhyayas are distributed into Ashtanga sthana (eight sections). Each section is further divided into numerous chapters. These 8 sections are as follows -

**Table No. 1 showing sections of Charak Samhita**

Sr. No.	Name of sthana	Total chapters	Total Verses	Total prose
1	Sutrasthana	30	1670	283
2	Nidanasthana	08	103	146
3	Vimanasthana	08	88	267
4	Sharirasthana	08	236	183
5	Indriyasthana	12	381	38
6	Chikitsasthana	30	4961	142
7	Kalpasthana	12	330	48
8	Siddhisthana	12	649	52
	<b>Total = 8</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>8419</b>	<b>1111</b>

17 chapters of Chikitsa sthana and complete Kalpasthana and Siddhisthana were added later by



Acharya Drdhabala. In the last chapter of Charak samhita there is a one statement that Charak samhita contains 120 adhyayas (chapters) and 12,000 Shloka [6], [7]. Contribution of Acharya Charak in Charak samhita can be decided on the basis of making comparison with Bhela and Harita samhita because Acharya Bhela and Harita was one of the colleagues of Agnivesha and student of Atreya Punarvasu. The heading of some chapters are based upon the first word occurring in the chapters which are also suggestive of its contents. For example –

#### First category

- The first chapter of sutrasthana is named as “दीर्घञ्जीवितीयमध्याय” as the first verse also start from the sentence like “अथातो दीर्घञ्जीवितीयमध्यायं व्याख्यास्यामः” [8]
- The third chapter of sutrasthana is entitled as “आरग्वधीयमध्याय” as the first verse start from the sentence like “अथातो आरग्वधीयमध्यायं व्याख्यास्यामः” [9]
- The fifth chapter of sutrasthana is named as “मात्राशित्तीयमध्याय” as the first verse start from the sentence like “अथातो मात्राशित्तीयमध्यायं व्याख्यास्यामः” [10]

#### Second category

In some other cases the title of chapter is based upon the matter discussed. For example -

- The name of ninth chapter of sutrasthana is “खुड्डाकचतुष्पादमध्याय”. Here the heading is suggestive of the content of the chapter [11].

In Charak Samhita, heading of 34 chapters belong to the first category and those of the remaining 86 chapters are of the second category.

#### INFORMATION ABOUT EACH STHANA

##### Sutrasthana

Charak Samhita starts with Sutrasthana which deals with various important fundamentals and basic principles of Ayurveda. It is the brain of whole samhita. Here there is a collection of various important shlokas related to various context are described. Therefore this sthana is also known as Shlokaasthana. This sthana consists of total 30 chapters. The first 29 chapters are arranged in 7 groups of four chapters each and last two chapters are Sangraha (summary) of the entire Ayurvedic science. Ayurvedavatarana (transmission of Ayurveda), definition and objective of Ayurveda are mentioned in detailed here. Snehakarma (Oleation) and Swedakarma (sweat therapy) and the cause of the illness are discussed. Qualities of

the Vaidya (physician), Rogi (patient), Oushadi (proper drug), Paricharak (compounder) and royal physician is mentioned very beautifully. Relation of doctor with patient is also described in detailed. Method of construction of healing centre (hospital) is elaborated. It also mentioned that treatment by quacks and warns that a person hit by lightning has a better chance of survival than a patient who falls into the hands of a quack physician. The composition of drug and the mode of drug action are also described here. Various attributes of foods ingredients including method of preparation and effects of foods ingredients on the human body are also described. Daily and Ritucharya (monthly regimes) and the set of laws associated with it, all about Adharniya vega (natural urges), all the four factors of therapeutics, considerations before treatment qualities, function, their sites of manifestation and treatment of the Doshas. Universality and eternity of Ayurveda is also explained. In short the essence of the whole treatise is wrapped beautifully in this sthana. This sutrasthana is again sub-divided into sapta chatushkas (seven quadrates) each consisting of four chapters dealing with identical topics.

These chatushkas are as follows: -

- 1) **Bheshaja chatushka or Aushadha chatushka:** From 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> chapter. In this chatushka there is a description of various drugs and basic principle of Ayurveda.
- 2) **Swastha Chatushka:** This chatushka consists of chapter no. 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>. In this chatushka various instructions are mentioned which is essential for maintaining preservation of health of a healthy individuals.
- 3) **Nirdesha chatushka:** This chatushka consists of chapter no. 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>. In this chatushka various instructions regarding various subjects of Ayurved are mentioned.
- 4) **Kalpana chatushka:** This chatushka consists of chapter no. 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup>. This deals with the requisite factors essential before starting the treatment.
- 5) **Roga chatushka:** This chatushka consists of 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> chapter. In this chatushka various types and number of diseases are described.
- 6) **Yojana chatushka:** This chatushka consists of 21<sup>st</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> chapter. This deals with administration of various therapies.
- 7) **Annapana chatushka:** This chatushka consists of chapter no. 25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> chapter. In this chatushka various types food, food materials various types of drinks.

Added to this there are two separate chapters (29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>). These last two chapters are grouped as Sangrahadhyaya.

##### Nidana Sthana

This is the second sthana of Charak samhita. This sthana deals in detail with the Nidana (etiology), Samprapti (pathogenesis), Purvarupa (prodromal sign and symptoms), Rupa (Clinical features) and prognosis of the diseases are described in detailed. In this sthana only 8 diseases are described because these diseases may predominant at the time of Acharya Charak. They are – Jwara (fever), Raktapitta (Bleeding disorders), Gulma (abdominal lump), Prameha (diabetes mellitus), Kushta (leprosy or skin disorders), Shosha (tuberculosis), Unmada (insanity) and Apasmar (epilepsy). These diseases are also known as Mahavyadis. In some cases principles of treatment is also furnished.

### Vimana Sthana

This is the third sthana of Charak samhita. In this sthana 8 chapters are described. The properties of taste, quantity of food, causes and management of Janpaddhwansa (epidemics diseases) is also described. Here detail descriptions about Srotas (channels of circulation), Aamashaya (stomach), 20 types of Krimi (parasites), Dwividha pariksha (two methods of examination), Trividha Pariksha (three methods of examination) and Dashavidha rogi pariksha (ten factors for examination of patient) is available. Examination of Vaidya (physician), Rogi (patient) and Oushadi (proper drug) is described in detailed. 4 types of Agni (factors responsible for digestion and metabolism) is also described. The logical ways of arriving at a diagnosis namely, observation, inference and interrogation and methods of study and teaching also discussed in this part. In Vimanasthana three methods of obtaining knowledge are described. They are procedure of study, procedure of teaching and procedure of debates. In the end of this sthana, guidelines for participating in the debates are also described. Some important fundamental principals are also explained here.

### Sharira Sthana

This is the fourth sthana of Charak samhita. This sthana comprises of total 8 chapters. In this sthana, there is a detail description of about anatomy and physiology of body. It also describes composition of body and factors responsible for growth of body. Proof of existence of Atman (soul) is given here. This sthana includes the description of the theory of birth and death. It describes the creations of universe and the human body. It also describes nature of human being, nature of mind and causes of diseases. Monthly development of the embryo, factors injurious to the growth of embryo and sign of bicardic stage of pregnant woman is also described. Description of organs and parts of the human body is also furnished here. Kaal and akaal mritu (timely and untimely death) and factors

responsible for the maintenance of normal span of life is explained in detailed.

### Indriya Sthana

This is the fifth sthana of Charak samhita. This sthana comprises of 12 chapters. In this sthana six types of Prakruti (natural disposition) are mentioned. Sign of imminent death and premonitory sign of sudden death is also discussed. 7 types of dream and their various results and process of manifestation of dreams are also mentioned. Prognosis of diseases and fatal sign are described on the basis of various descriptions regarding Swapna (dream), Swara (voice), Gandha (smell), Prabha (luster), Chaaya (shadow) Pratichaaya (reflected shadow) Rasa (taste) and Sparsha (touch).

### Chikitsasthana

This is the sixth sthana of Charak samhita. In this sthana, various diseases and their principal of treatment are described in detailed. This Sthana consists of 30 chapters out of which first chapter i.e. Rasayana Chikitsa (Rejuvenation Therapy) is divided into 4 sub - chapters namely (Abhaya Aamlakiya Rasayana Paad, Pranakamiya Rasayana Paad, Karaprachitya Rasayana Paad, Ayurvedsamithiya Rasayana Paad) and second chapter i.e. Vajikarana Chikitsa (Aphrodisiac therapy) is also divided into 4 sub - chapters namely (Sanyogasharmuliya Vajikarana Paad, Aasiktakshirikama Vajikarana Paad, Mashparnabhrtiyam Vajikarana Paad, Pumaanjatabaladikam Vajikarana Paad). In remaining 28 chapters there is a description of various diseases, treatment and Nidan parivarjan (avoiding the causative factors) are beautifully discussed.

### Kalpasthan

This is the seventh sthana of Charak samhita. This sthana contains total 12 chapters. This sthana deals exclusively with the various formulations of Vamaka dravyas (emetic drugs) and Virechaka dravyas (purgatives drugs) which are essential during Panchakarma. These all 12 chapters are supplemented by Acharya Dridhabala.

### Siddhisthana

The eight and last sthana of Charak samhita comprises of total 12 chapters. In this sthana there is a detailed description of Panchakarma therapy. Essential karma like Snehan karma (Oleation Therapy), Swedan karma (Fomentation Therapy), Vaman karma (Emesis Therapy), Virechana karma (Purgation Therapy), Asthapana basti (medicated enema of decoctions and medicated oils), Anuvasana basti (medicated oil enemas) and Uttar

basti (Useful in genitourinary diseases and infertility of female). There is also description of complications arising due to improper administration of drug and with their managements. In this sthana 36 types of Tantrayuktis are mentioned. These all 12 chapters of Siddhithana are supplemented by Acharya Dridhabala. Importance of Charak samhita is nicely and elaborately explained in detailed.

#### SPECIAL FEATURES OF CHARAK SAMHITA

- Charak samhita stands strongly as a representative of one branch of Ayurveda known as Kaya Chikitsa (internal medicine).
- Nomenclature of chapters of Charak samhita is based on the subject discussed in it and at times on the first word or phrase of the chapter.
- It is composed in poetic format which becomes easy to memorize the quotations.
- Charak prescribed three important Eshana (pursuits of life) like Praneshana (pursuits of healthy and long life), Dhaneshana (pursuits of wealth) and Parlokeshana (pursuits of another world) [12].
- Acharya Charak explains how to maintain our Oja dhatu through Rasayana therapy, particularly "Achara Rasayana" (behavioral recommendations) [13].
- Twenty types of Krimi (disease-causing parasites) are described by Charak. Out of them some residing outside the body and some others inside the human body [14].
- According to Charak samhita successful medical treatment depends on four factors: Vaidya (physician), Oushadi (proper drug), Rogi (patient) and Paricharak (compounder). These factors equipped with sixteen qualities (four of each) are responsible for success in any kind of treatment [15].
- He has emphasized the influence of diet on mind and body [16].
- According to Acharya Charak, Rasayana therapy (rejuvenation therapy) enhances the intelligence, memory power, will power, body strength, sweetness of voice and physical strength. It nourishes the Rakta (blood), Mansa (flesh) and Shukra (semen) and thus prevents chronic degenerative changes and illness. It gives freedom from chronic degenerative disorders like Arthritis and senile diseases [17].
- Similarly, Vajikarana therapy (aphrodisiac therapy) increases the time span of erections and helps in erectile dysfunction. Vajikarana transforms lean, thin and impotent man into powerful and vigorous [18].
- Acharya Charak mentioned the anatomy of the human body and various organs. He gave 360 as the total number of Asthi (bones), including teeth and sockets of the teeth in the jaw present in the body [19].
- Acharya Charak says that if a person drinks Madhya (alcohol) in right time, in right manner, in right quantity with some food then that Madhya is like ambrosia for that body [20].
- Charak samhita describes Poisonous plants and animals along with 24 types of treatment of their poisoning [21].
- Acharya Charak describes Dasha Pranayatniya (ten important repositories of life) [22].
- Acharya Charak quoted total 36 Tantrayuktis [23].
- "Achara Rasayana" (behavioral recommendations) is unique gift of Acharya Charak [24].
- Acharya Charak was the first person who explain the concept of Swabhoparamvada (the theory of natural homeostasis) [25].
- Acharya Charak never mentioned the sub-types of Pitta and kapha dosha, but he listed and mentioned the 5 sub-types of Vata dosha. They are - Prana Vayu, Udana Vayu, Apana Vayu, Saman Vayu and Vyan Vayu respectively.
- Acharya Charak mentioned ethical charter for medical practitioners two centuries before Hippocratic Oath [26].
- Charak has described that the Jatharaagni is responsible for the process of digestion and metabolism, complexion, strength, glow of vital essence, luster etc. Charak also mentioned Jatharaagni as the supreme king of all the metabolic process [27].
- Acharya Charak was the first physician to present the concept of Pachan (digestion), (metabolism) and Vyadhisamatwa (immunity).
- Acharya Charak has laid much emphasis on Aahara and Vihara (proper diet and proper regimen) by healthy individuals as well as patients. He also mentioned that a person who consumed wholesome foods will leaves for hundred years free from any kind of diseases [28].
- Charak samhita divides the animals and it's Mansa (flesh) in various categories [29].
- Charak described Hridaya (heart) as a controlling organ of body. Human Body is



composed of innumerable big and small channels. They not only supply nutrition to tissues but also carried out the waste and toxic products from body [30].

- Charak believed that Aahara (foods) and Oushadhi (drugs) as well as the body are composed of the same basic elements, viz., Prithvi, Apa, Tejas, Vayu and Akasha.
- According to Acharya Charak, professional discussion or debates are of two types [31].
  1. Sandhaya Sambhasha (friendly discussion) – which is participated with a view to ascertain the truth.
  2. Vigruhya Sambhasha (hostile discussion) – which is conducted with the purpose of defeating the opponent.

Some compounds preparations advised in the treatment for various ailments are provided with their names according to the method adopted. These names can be classified into the following categories.

#### COMMENTARIES ON CHARAK SAMHITA

Charak samhita is studied and referred by many students, teachers, research workers and physician who are practicing Ayurveda all over the country and abroad. Being a most popular samhita on Kaya- Chikitsa, various scholars compose their commentary from time to time. From various sources and citation it came to notice that more than 40 Sanskrit commentaries were written on Charak samhita. Out of them very few are available partly or fully. The following are the commentators with their work. It is our misfortune that we have lost many valuable commentaries on this most important treatise. Since the greatness of Charak samhita has spread too many countries therefore it is also translated into almost all regional languages of India and also of some other countries like Nepal, Ceylon, Burma and Arab. Charak samhita has attracted the attention of scholars of other countries also from early days and has been translated into many other languages. Some such important ones are as follows

#### ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF CHARAK SAMHITA

1. Avinasha Chandra kaviratna - The first person who translates Charak samhita in English language. It is published in year 1981. Due to some reason this translation is available incompletely.
2. Vd. Ram Karan Sharma and Vd. Bhagwan dash - Translation of text and critical exposition of Cakrapani datt's Ayurved Dipika. Total five volumes are published.
3. K.R. Srikantha Murthy – English translation of Charak samhita is published in year 2004

4. Acharya P.V. Sharma - Translation comes in four volumes, two of original text and two of commentary about the original work. It is published in year 1981

#### HINDI TRANSLATIONS OF CHARAK SAMHITA

1. Kashinatha pandey and Gorakhanath Chaturvedi (Vidhotini Tika)
2. Dr. Brahmanand Tripathi (Charak Chadrika)
3. Ravidutta shastry (Vaidyamanorama)

#### MARATHI TRANSLATIONS OF CHARAK SAMHITA

1. Charak samhita – Vd. P.G. Aathawale
2. Charak samhita – Vd. Y.G. Joshi

#### CONCLUSION

The Charak samhita is famous as one of the remarkable accomplishments of ancient Indian science. All these credit goes to Punarvasu Atreya, Agnivesha, Acharya Charak and Kashmiri Pandita Dridhabala who are the Preceptor, composer, redactor and amender respectively. Through his genius and intuition, Acharya Charak made landmark contributions to Ayurveda. He forever remains etched in the annals of history as one of the greatest and noblest of rishi-scientists. Charak samhita covers all aspects of medical science with special importance to Kaya Chikitsa and remains par excellent on that subject. Charak samhita not only gives knowledge about Ayurveda in its totality but also explain the logic and philosophy on which this system of medicine is based. Therefore his renowned work, the "Charak samhita", is considered as complete encyclopedia of Ayurvedic science.

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