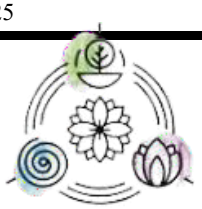
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Review Article

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"MIMAMSA AND VEDANTA INFLUENCES ON AYURVEDIC THOUGHT: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW"

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ABSTRACT

Background: Discussions of Ayurveda and philosophy usually centre on Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya and Yoga. The roles of Purva Mimamsa and Vedanta are less often examined, although both shaped the interpretation of authoritative texts and the Ayurvedic view of the self. **Objective:** To review the contributions of Mimamsa (rules of textual interpretation, concept of apurva and authority of the Veda) and Vedanta (self, consciousness and liberation) to Ayurvedic thought. **Methods:** Classical sources and standard histories of Indian philosophy were consulted. PubMed was searched in November 2026 for papers on Ayurveda in relation to Mimansa, Vedanta and darshana. **Results:** Mimamsa supplies principles for resolving conflicts between textual statements, which can be applied to Ayurvedic texts when Tantrayukti falls short; commentaries on the Samhitas often show a Mimamsaka perspective. Vedanta shapes the Ayurvedic account of the self, consciousness and the ethical ends of life, and appears in the definition of the person and in the concept of moksha. **Conclusion:** Mimamsa and Vedanta are important for interpretive method and for the Ayurvedic view of the person. Their study can strengthen the training of Ayurvedic scholars in reading the classics.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Mimamsa, Vedanta, Darshana, Hermeneutics, Atma, Moksha

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INTRODUCTION

The six orthodox schools of Indian philosophy, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Purva Mimamsa and Uttara Mimamsa (Vedanta), all regard the Veda as authoritative[1,2]. Ayurveda is traditionally regarded as an upaveda of the Atharvaveda and so shares this authority. Within this family, Mimamsa is concerned with the correct interpretation of Vedic statements and duties, and Vedanta with the nature of the ultimate reality and the self. A paper on the relevance of Mimamsa to Ayurvedic education notes that Mimamsa offers a system for resolving conflicts between statements in the Vedic texts, and that the same system can be applied to Ayurveda[3]. This review summarises the contributions of both schools.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Primary sources were the Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita and Ashtanga Hridaya in translation[4-6]. Interpretation of the philosophical schools relied on standard histories[1,2]. PubMed was searched in November 2026 with the terms Ayurveda, Mimansa, Vedanta, darshana and Tantrayukti. The principal indexed sources were a paper on Mimansa and Ayurvedic education[3], a review of the concept of mind in Ayurveda and the darshanas[7], a study of ancient criteria for scientific writing in the Charaka Samhita[8], and a commentary on epistemology and translation in integrative health[9].

OBSERVATION AND RESULTS

1. Mimamsa as a method of interpretation

Purva Mimamsa, associated with Jaimini, is a school of exegesis. It sets out rules for deciding the meaning of Vedic injunctions, for reconciling statements that appear to conflict, and for deciding which statements are primary and which are supportive. Its central tools include the identification of the purport (tatparya) of a passage, the ranking of authority among sources, and the classification of statements as injunction (vidhi), prohibition (nishedha), explanation (arthavada) and mantra[1,2].

Ayurveda has its own interpretive system in Tantrayukti, which gives thirty-six rules for reading a treatise and arranging its subject (Ch. Si. 12/41; Su. Utt. 65)[4,5]. A review of the Mimansa course taught for postgraduate Ayurveda students concluded that Mimansa becomes useful when the interpretive method of Tantrayukti falls short, and that certain Ayurvedic commentaries show a Mimamsaka approach. The same review reported that studying Mimansa encouraged students to read the texts independently and to form mature interpretations of obscure passages[3].

2. Application to Ayurvedic texts

Three Mimamsa principles are especially useful. The first is that a statement should be read in the context of its whole chapter, so that an isolated sentence is not given a meaning inconsistent with its purpose. The second is that a general rule may be limited by a specific exception. The third is that where two authoritative statements conflict, they may be harmonised by assigning each to a different condition, as in the apparent differences between the three Samhitas regarding the number of rasas or the number of types of a disease. Commentators such as Chakrapani and Dalhana use such principles repeatedly when explaining difficult verses[4,5]. The quality of the treatise itself is also judged by its structure, and the ancient criteria for good scientific writing preserved in the Vimanasthana have been compared with the modern introduction-methods-results-discussion format[8].

3. Vedanta and the self

Vedanta draws from the Upanishads and holds that the self (atman) is identical with the ultimate reality (Brahman), and that ignorance of this identity is the root of suffering. Within this broad framework, several sub-schools differ on the relation between the self and the world[1,2]. The Ayurvedic Samhitas do not take sides among the Vedanta schools, but they use the vocabulary of atman, chetana and moksha. Charaka describes the person (purusha) as the conjunction of the self, the mind and the body, and describes the self as the conscious principle without which the body is lifeless (Ch. Su. 1/46; Ch. Sha. 1)[4]. The final aim of the study of Ayurveda, stated in the closing portions of the Samhitas, is the attainment of the highest good through right knowledge and conduct (Ch. Sha. 5)[4].

A recent review of the concept of mind in Ayurveda and the darshanas places Ayurveda alongside Samkhya, Yoga and Vedanta in its account of the creation, structure and functions of the mind and of its perfection and release. The review argues that these sources give a body of understanding of mental life

that may interest both scientists and physicians[7].

4. Karma, rebirth and health

Mimamsa and Vedanta both accept the doctrine of karma. In Ayurveda, the role of past action (purvakrita karma, daiva) in the causation of disease is acknowledged, and the physician is advised to give priority to the present effort (purushakara), which is capable of overcoming a weak past action (Ch. Vi. 3; Ch. Sha. 1)[4]. The doctrine also explains why disorders appear without an apparent present cause and why the effect of treatment varies between persons. For modern research, this places limits on how far a causal explanation can be given in physical terms alone.

DISCUSSION

The contribution of Mimamsa and Vedanta to Ayurveda is mainly methodological and ethical, not clinical. Mimamsa teaches how to read a text and resolve contradictions, and Vedanta shapes the view of the person and of the final end of life. Both are of value for scholars who work with classical sources. They are, however, sources of interpretive rules and metaphysical premises, not of empirical findings. Care is needed in claiming that they validate clinical statements. A more productive approach is to use them as reading aids and as a means of making explicit the assumptions in classical statements before these are tested[9].

CONCLUSION

Mimamsa gives Ayurveda a tradition of exegesis that supplements Tantrayukti, and Vedanta gives it a language for the self and for the ultimate aim of life. Including both in the training of Ayurvedic scholars would improve the reading of the classics and the quality of interpretive work on them.

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