

## A Review on Concept of Atma with Speical Reference to Charak Samhita

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**Abstract :** *Ayurveda is the science of life which deals with healthy living. The ayurvedic texts apart from being a treatise on medical science also hold an asthetic view of life and consider the human body not only as anatomical entity seen through eyes they regard it as an entity which comes into existence when the sharir (body) combines with Atma (soul). Indian philosophy, Indian culture as well as Indian Medical science all hold a common view of accepting the existence of The Atma (soul). This concept is unique and less number of people are aware of it in the world. Our Indian philosophy also believes in karma (actions), destiny, rebirth and Paramatma (supreme spirit). The validation of this view of ancient sages is proven through Pramanas (scientific epistemology). Thus the article is a review on the concept of Atma as described in Charak Samhita. The concept of Atma and is though very interesting yet the reason why we cannot understand the essence of Atma is because all our sense organs, mind and the intellect have got a limited scope of knowledge but the all-pervading Atma monitors that knowledge which they possess. Thus the inferior object cannot visualize the superior object entirely. Everything else can only shine in the light of Atma. Substances or attributes are to be known and the one who knows is called the knower. Atma is the substance which is the knower.*

**Keywords:** *Ayurveda ,Atma ,Paramatma ,Charak Samhita*

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## **Introduction**

The dravya (substance or matter) having knowledge by samvaya (inseparable concomitance or inherence) is called the Atma<sup>1</sup>. Atma is all pervasive<sup>2</sup>. It is very difficult to describe Atma just like a ray of light cannot illuminate itself, our senses and our description cannot explain atma. Atma resides in the sharir and bears the testimony of sukha and dukha that is where sukha and dukha stay in samvayikarana<sup>3</sup>. The “Ap” dhatu stands in the word Atma stands for continuous movement & “At” dhatu stands for wide existence<sup>4</sup>. Atma is a dravya which is niravayava (devoid of a perceivable form) and is nitya<sup>5</sup> (immortal). It is the base of all chetna (lifeforms). All perceptions and knowledge (gyan) that the body acquires is possible only when the Atma is seated in the body. Atma can be imagined to be an instrumental for the sharira by which it experiences sukha or dukha according to the previous karmas. Atma thrives in the bondage of sharira until death thus it is always attached to some bhavas (attributes)<sup>6</sup>. Seldom is it freed from these bhavas and at that time it attains Moksha. Charaka has condemned those who don't believe in existence of soul<sup>7</sup> as soul is the essential factor for perception<sup>8</sup>. The soul is nowhere accepted in modern science, since western sciences try to define the life and universe on materialism or experiments, that can be sampled, tested, seen or validated. But Ayurveda in this perspective holds a different view, it validates its theories based on four types of Pramans viz. Pratyaksha (direct observation), Anumana (inference), Aptopadesh (Vedic knowledge) and Yukti (YUKTI) thus, it believes Ayu (life) is a combination of Sthool Sharir (anatomical body), Indriyas (ten senses), Satva (mind) and Atma (soul)<sup>9</sup>. Our ancient sages held the view that our present situation (in this life) is the resultant of our past actions (in the previous birth) and as we are paying off or bearing the fruits of our past we also are accumulating new karmas (actions or deeds) for which we shall be responsible in next rebirth. And so the cycle of birth and rebirth continues. The only thing instrumental in this cycle is the Atma that leaves the sharir (body) at the time of death and enters a new body in order to bear the resultant of previous karmas. Thus we see Atma is immortal and the sufferings of human do not end with death, Atma only changes the sharir and that nobody can escape the destiny that one's actions have destined. If one wants to end such sufferings one has to be freed from this cycle of birth and rebirth, that status is known as Moksha. Moksha<sup>1</sup> is desirable by all but it is only after the karmas are destroyed that the Atma attains Moksha and breaks free from sharira. In fact the union of atma with sharir comes into existence just to pay off for the previous karmas (deeds).

## **Material and Methods**

Various Ayurvedic texts with special reference to Charak Samhita have been referred for collecting information about the concept of Atma and systematically arranged for easy understanding and compilation .

## **Concept of Atma**

### **Definition of Atma**

There is a general perception that a living being is only the body which we can see through the eyes but, what is not perceivable by the panchindriyas (senses) through pratyakshapramana is explained on the basis of Aptopadeshpramana (testimony that the ancient sages gave) and Anumanapramana (inference) these are the scientific methods by which our acharyas have testified and validated the concept of Atma. Since Atma is not a dravya (substance) which can be verified by isolation or seen by the human eye thus when we talk about Atma we describe the lakshanas (characteristics) of it to know more about it. These characteristics are known as Atmalakshanas. Atma expresses itself in the form of different activities through its instruments viz. Gnanendriyas , Karmendriyas, Antarindriyas just like electricity expresses its effects through media like bulb, heater etc. If a person wants to know the nature of electricity he can draw an inference from the light of the bulb, the heat produced by the heater but if he wants to go deeper and discover more about the nature of electricity in true sense then we can say he will have to touch the live wire, which of course is not feasible . The same is the case about understanding the concept of Atma, if a person wishes to know more he can himself experience the mysticism by “Yoga” (meditation)<sup>11</sup> since practice of Yoga leads to Moksha <sup>1212</sup> Pandey Kashinath , Chaturvedi Gorakhnath ; Charak Samhita ; published by Chaukhamba Bharati Academy ; edition 2015 ; Sharirsthana; Chapter 1 ; verse 137 ; page 830.

### **Lakshanas of Atma**

Following are lakshanas of Atma<sup>13</sup> by which it manifests itself:

1. Prana (inspiration) and Apana (expiration)
2. Nimeshadi (movements like lid movements, locomotion, contraction , relaxation )
3. Jeevanam (attempt to maintain life)
4. Mano gati (travelling of mind from place to place)

5. Indriyantarasanchara (transfer of impulses from one sense organ to another)
6. Preranam (Initiation or conduction of impulses)
7. Dharanam (retention of impulses )
8. SwapneDeshantaraGamanam (travelling of mind to various places in dream state)
9. PanchatvaGrahanam (becoming a mass of panchamahabhootas at time of death)
10. DrishtasyaDakshinenaAshnaSavyenaAvagamasTadha (whatever knowledge is perceived by right side is also perceived by the left )
11. Ichcha (desire)
12. Dwesham( aversion)
13. Sukham (happiness)
14. Dukham( misery)
15. Prayatna(effort)
16. Chetna(activity)
17. Dhriti(control over senses and emotions)
18. Buddhi (intellect)
19. Smriti (memory)
20. Ahankara(ego)

#### **Tatvas(Components of Atma)**

About the contact of Atma with sharir the Atma comes into existence at the time of fusion of the shukra(sperm) and shonit (ovum)<sup>14</sup>. Atma is a nityapadarth& has been existing since shrishtiutpatti<sup>15</sup>. It is never destroyed but it keeps on changing the sharira whose support it needs to keep the cycle of birth and rebirth going along. It is believed that after the sthoolasharir ceases to live the Atma leaves the sharirand it becomes a shoonyagar. It is impossible to view this event with the help of the naked eye. Then the atma comes to be known as the “Ativahaka” purush. This is also known as the Lingasharir which is made up of 16tatvas<sup>16</sup> which are as following:

1. Man
2. Buddhi

3. Foursukshmahoot (panchtanmatra excluding Akash)
4. Tenindriyas

The Atma (soul) and the Mana (mind) are closely related such that the relation of the Atma and mana is “Satvanubandhi” means it can never be broken and Atma will take up a new sharir as per the karmas created in the previous yoni (lifeform) by this Anubandh. Atma according to the previous karmas leave Akashsukshmahoot aside & enters a new sharir after death<sup>17</sup>. About the origin of Atma it has no origin since it is Anadi, it is eternal immortal and present since the beginning. Thus it has no cause of its origin. There are two kinds of Atma: Paramatma is the entity that is present in the whole shrishti and thus we can conclude that Atma is also a part of Paramatma. Paramatma is the master of the universe. The fact that Atma and Paramatma are quite closely related can give the impression of the Paramatma being the sea and Atma being the drop of that vast ocean. Ayurveda establishes the Atma as a powerful padarth which makes us believe that the realization of the self can lead to the eternal Paramatma which is hidden in the shrishti.

#### **Swaroop (Forms) of Atma**

The answer to the question as to why the Atma is not visible to us lies in the fact that just like a dirty mirror is not able to create a reflection of oneself in the same way Atma though is present in us yet we are unable to see it in the absence of the light of our own buddhi. Ayurveda mentions that Atma has mystic powers and there is not much difference between the Atma and Paramatma. The term Atma & Paramatma have been used interchangeably at many a places & though the difference between them is quite clear yet they go hand in hand. Atma which is free from Sharira is Paramatma & the one who knows about it becomes the Purushuttama. Paramatma lives without the bondage of sharir whereas Jivatma lives in the bondage of sharir. The sthulasharir is the entity which we can see and by which we identify ourselves. At the time of death that sthulasharir turns into the sukshmarsharir. For life to begin the sukshmarsharir takes the support of the sthulasharir for its bhoga (actions). When this sthulasharir turns into sukshmarsharir the panchmahahoot leaves the sharir, and that sharir which is made out of panchmahahootas after death is returned to the universe by decomposition into panchmahahootas again. What is left are the 18 tatvas that remain attached to the Lingasharir till the sharir attains tatvagyan (knowledge in its true sense)<sup>20</sup>. Only then does it attain moksha. Atma is the most important link in the chain of gyanaupatti (perception of senses)

since when Atma communicates with the Mana, Mana communicates with Indriyas (sense organs) and the Indriyas in turn establish connection with arthas (objects) only then is any perception possible <sup>21</sup>.

### **Discussion**

The topic of Atma is very important concept described elucidely & elaborately in Ayurveda. In Ayurveda Atma is one of the nine dravyas<sup>22</sup> (matter that can be known). The topic of Atma & Paramatma raises many a questions in everybody's minds and since this concept is unique in Indian philosophy this article attempted to elaborately describe Atma. The purpose of the article had been to explain this basic principle of Ayurved Samhitawhich makes Ayurvedic Chikitsa very different from modern treatment since Ayurveda treats the Chikitsiyapurush rather than just the body. Thus we see that the concept of Atma is not merely philosophical rather it is the base of Ayurvedic principles and Ayurvedic treatment. The concept of Atma and Paramatma is also very intriguing for the people who want to know about the indian philosophy. Since Ayurveda is an "astik" science. It believes in Atma & Paramatma bearing testimony to this fact is the Daiva vyapashraya chikitsa<sup>23</sup>. Also the knowledge of Atma and Paramatma invokes a sense of asthetism in ourselves and leads us to believe that there is a solution to our worldly sufferings through detachment from our excess desires. The importance of detachment has been highlighted by Charak as Sarvasanyasa has been told to be the best for sukhopatti<sup>24</sup> which is possible by the knowledge of Atma and Paramatma. Ayurveda lays a great emphasis on tatvagyaana by which every padarth or subject could be understood in real sense, essence of which lies in knowing oneself or the jivatma. Although Charakacharaya has described so many characteristics of Atma actually here Atma that is all pervading acts like a platform for the exhibition of certain gunas, as long as there is no disturbance in the equilibrium of trigunasie. Satva rajas and tamas there shall be no expression of any aforesaid features. Thus Atma has immense power and the realization of the same results in ones enlightenment.

### **Conclusion**

The journey of self-realization is an interesting topic that most people want to know there is a saying that self-realization is God's realization, the reason behind which is clearly mentioned in the article. Knowledge of Atma and Paramatmainculcates within oneself a sense of humanitarian feelings and aestheticism. Since after understanding this concept we tend to see the world from different perspective and try to set free from the excess desires. The reason that

this concept has been dealt with in the very first chapter of Charak Sharir shows that knowledge of sharir is incomplete without knowledge of Atma & Paramatma. The Purusharth Chatushtya<sup>25</sup> mentions Moksha as the ultimate aim of life thus understanding Atma helps one to lead a meaningful life. This topic urges us to believe that we can also find the Paramatma in us by meditation. The Atma has also been described by the greek philosopher Socrates<sup>26</sup>, he compares the Atma to a beautiful girl all the people who pass by her side develop certain mental derangements seeing her beauty. All those accidents took place just because the girl stood there. The question arises whether the girl was responsible for all that? Legally she is not responsible but actually she alone is responsible, this example is that of Nimittakaran, similarly atma is nimittakaran of our actions and without Atma there is no existence of life in the universe. In the end a topic like this is as vast as an ocean so attempt had been made to summarize it in such a way as to give a brief description yet completely.

### References

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<sup>1</sup>Pandey Kashinath , *Chaturvedi Gorakhnath ; Charak Samhita* ; published by Chaukhamba Bharati Academy ; edition **2015** ; Sharirsthana; Chapter 1; verse 61 ; **page 815.**

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<sup>4</sup>Pandey Kashinath , *Chaturvedi Gorakhnath ; Charak Samhita* ; published by Chaukhamba Bharati Academy ; edition **2015** ; Sharirsthana; Chapter 1; verse 61 ; **page 815.**

<sup>5</sup>Pandey Kashinath , *Chaturvedi Gorakhnath ; Charak Samhita* ; published by Chaukhamba Bharati Academy ; edition **2015** ; Sharirsthana; Chapter 1; verse 35 ; **page 810.**

<sup>6</sup>Pandey Kashinath , *Chaturvedi Gorakhnath ; Charak Samhita* ; published by Chaukhamba Bharati Academy ; edition **2015** ; Sutrasthana; Chapter 11 ; verse 15 ; **page 214.**

<sup>7</sup>Pandey Kashinath , *Chaturvedi Gorakhnath ; Charak Samhita* ; published by Chaukhamba Bharati Academy ; edition **2015** ; Sutrasthana; Chapter 11 ; verse 20 ; **page 217.**

<sup>8</sup>Pandey Kashinath , *Chaturvedi Gorakhnath ; Charak Samhita* ; published by Chaukhamba Bharati Academy ; edition **2015** ; Sutrasthana; Chapter 1 ; verse 42 ; **page 12.**

<sup>9</sup> Pandey Kashinath ,ChaturvediGorakhnath ;CharakSamhita ;published by ChaukhambaBharati Academy ;edition 2015 ; Sharirsthana; Chapter 1 ; verse 142 ; page 831.

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<sup>11</sup>Pandey Kashinath ,*ChaturvediGorakhnath* ;*CharakSamhita* ;published by ChaukhambaBharati Academy ;edition 2015 ; Sharirsthana; Chapter 1 ; verse 139 ; **page 830.**

<sup>13</sup>Pandey Kashinath ,*ChaturvediGorakhnath* ;*CharakSamhita* ;published by ChaukhambaBharati Academy ;edition 2015 ; Sharirsthana; Chapter 1 ; verse 70 ; **page 818.**

<sup>14</sup>Pandey Kashinath ,ChaturvediGorakhnath ;CharakSamhita ;published by ChaukhambaBharati Academy ;edition **2015** ; Sharirsthana; Chapter 3 ; verse 3 ; **page 851.**

<sup>16</sup>DwivediB.K, Dwivedi Lakshmidhar; PadarthVijyan; published by Chaukhamba Krishnadas Academy;edition 2003; Chapter 2; **page 165.**

<sup>17</sup>Pandey Kashinath ,*ChaturvediGorakhnath* ;*CharakSamhita* ;published by ChaukhambaBharati Academy ;edition **2015** ; Sharirsthana; Chapter 2 ; verse 35 ; **page 847.**

<sup>18</sup>Pandey Kashinath ,*ChaturvediGorakhnath* ;*CharakSamhita* ;published by ChaukhambaBharati Academy ;edition **2015** ; Sharirsthana; Chapter 1 ; verse 16 ; page 801.

<sup>20</sup>Pandey Kashinath ,*Chaturvedi Gorakhnath* ;*CharakSamhita* ;published by ChaukhambaBharati Academy ;edition **2015** ; Sharirsthana; Chapter 2 ; verse 37 ; **page 848.**

<sup>21</sup>Pandey Kashinath ,ChaturvediGorakhnath ;CharakSamhita ;published by ChaukhambaBharati Academy ;edition **2015** ; Sutrasthana; Chapter 11 ; verse 20 ; **page 217.**

<sup>22</sup>Pandey Kashinath ,ChaturvediGorakhnath ;CharakSamhita ;published by ChaukhambaBharati Academy ;edition **2015** ; Sutrasthana; Chapter 1 ; verse 48 ; page 19.

<sup>24</sup>Pandey Kashinath ,ChaturvediGorakhnath ;CharakSamhita ;published by ChaukhambaBharati Academy ;edition 2015 ; Sutrasthana; Chapter 1 ; verse 15 ; **page 6.**



<sup>25</sup>TrikamjiJadavajiVaidya;CharakaSamhita; published by Chaukhamba Prakashan;edition **2009** ; Sutrasthana ;Chapter 5<sup>th</sup>;verse 81;**page 42.**

<sup>26</sup>Rao M. Rama Sundara ;AyurvediyaPadarthVigyan ;published by M. Madav ;**page 86.**

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