

**UNDERSTANDING SWASTHA CHATUSHKA THROUGH THE LENS OF VIDHANA  
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**How to cite this Article:** Dr. Spoorthi C. Mathad<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. Chetan M.<sup>2</sup> (2025). Understanding Swastha Chatushka Through The Lens Of Vidhana Tantrayukti. World Journal of Pharmaceutical and Medical Research, 11(12), 261–265.  
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Article Received on 07/11/2025

Article Revised on 27/11/2025

Article Published on 01/12/2025

**ABSTRACT**

Each Ayurvedic author employs a distinct style in composing a text. In the *Charaka Samhita*, *Acharya Charaka* employs the unique *Chatushka* methodology in the *Sutrasthana*, where the general principles of the *Shashtra* are concisely presented by grouping chapters into sets of four based on a common *Adhikarana*. Each *Chatushka* derives its name from its theme, ensuring comprehensive coverage of that subject while providing a clear and systematic structure. To understand and interpret the precise and unambiguous meaning of these chapters, tools such as *Tantrayukti* become essential. Among them, *Vidhana Tantrayukti* specifically aids in grasping the *sequential arrangement of subject matter* as per the author's intention. The order of narration reflects the framework and purpose behind the explanation, and without such systematic arrangement, the true structure of the *Shashtra* can be difficult to grasp. The *Swastha Chatushka* is one such *Chatushka* where *Acharya Charaka* presents the concept of *swasthya* in his own unique way. He does not directly addresses practices like *Dinacharya* or *Rutucharya*; instead, he explains them through the structured method of the *Chatushka*, giving the subject a unique form and depth. Hence, this study was undertaken to explore the methodology of narration adopted in the *Swastha Chatushka* using the interpretive lens of *Vidhana Tantrayukti*. A literary review of *Swastha Chatushka* of *Sutrasthana*, *Charaka Samhita* was carried out to understand the sequential arrangement of chapters as envisioned by the author. Application of *Vidhana Tantrayukti* provided a clearer understanding of the author's perspective, revealing the unique narrative framework of the *Swastha Chatushka* and highlighting *Charaka's* distinct contribution to the systematic exposition of Ayurvedic principles.

**KEYWORDS:** *Vidhana Tantrayukti*, *Swastha Chatushka*, *Ayu*, *Matrashitiya Adhyaya*, *Tasyashitiya Adhyaya*, *Navegandharaniya Adhyaya*, *Indriyopakramaniya Adhyaya*.

**INTRODUCTION**

Ayurveda is a science renowned for its unchanging and eternal principles that form the foundation of its wisdom. Among its sections, the *Sutrasthana* is regarded as the *Shira* of the *Charaka Samhita*<sup>[1]</sup>, as it elaborates the fundamental concepts that shape the entire treatise. It serves as a comprehensive compilation of core Ayurvedic principles, presented through a distinctive literary framework known as the *Chatushka methodology*, ensuring systematic coverage of all essential aspects of the science.

Understanding *Sutrasthana* is therefore essential for comprehending the remaining *Sthanas*, as it lays the structural and philosophical groundwork for the entire text. Within it, the *Swastha Chatushka* primarily addresses one of the foremost objectives of Ayurveda — *Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam*.<sup>[2]</sup> However, this section is not limited to a mere exposition of *Dinacharya* and *Ritucharya*; rather, it is narrated in a unique, purposeful sequence that reflects the author's deeper intent.

To grasp this intended meaning and the rationale behind the order of narration, one must understand the

methodology adopted by Acharya Charaka in structuring the text. This is achieved through the interpretative tool *Vidhana Tantrayukti*, which reveals the sequential arrangement and authorial logic behind the composition. Hence, this study employs *Vidhana Tantrayukti* as a lens to analyze and interpret the *Swastha Chatushka*, facilitating a deeper understanding of its literary structure and the author's intention in conveying the concept of *Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam*.

## OBJECTIVE

To critically analyze and interpret the *Swastha Chatushka* of *Charaka Samhita*, *Sutrasthana* using *Vidhana Tantrayukti*, in order to understand the methodology and sequential arrangement adopted by the author in its composition.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, a comprehensive review of *Vidhana Tantrayukti* was undertaken from various classical Ayurvedic texts including *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Ashtanga Sangraha*, and *Tantrayukti Vichara*. This review aimed to develop a clear understanding of its definition, purpose, and application in interpreting the structural framework of a text.

In the second stage, *Vidhana Tantrayukti* was applied and analyzed in the context of each *shloka* of the *Swastha Chatushka*, which comprises four chapters of *Charaka Sutrasthana*. Each *shloka* was examined to understand the rationale behind its inclusion, the sequential arrangement, and the relevance of its positioning within the respective *Adhyaya* and *Chatushka*. This analytical approach facilitated comprehension of the literary structure and methodological framework adopted by Acharya Charaka in composing the *Swastha Chatushka*.

Review of literature

- विधानं नाम सूत्रकारश्चविधायवर्णयति । (Ch. Si. 12/41, Ckp)

*Acharya Chakrapani* defines *Vidhana Tantrayukti* as understanding a subject matter as per the author's intention.<sup>[3]</sup>

- प्रकरणानुपूर्व्या अभिहितं विधानम् । (Su. U. 65/29)

*Acharya Sushruta* defines making a statement keeping in view of its precontext.

*Acharya Vagbhata* expresses a similar opinion.<sup>[4]</sup>

From these definitions, it can be inferred that *Vidhana Tantrayukti* serves as a methodological tool to comprehend the sequential arrangement of a text from the author's perspective.

## Swastha Chatushka

As the *Tantraprayojana* is *Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam*<sup>[2]</sup>, the *Swastha Chatushka* is explained immediately after the *Bheshaja Chatushka* to provide systematic guidelines related to *Swasthya*. The *Swastha Chatushka* comprises four chapters, each addressing a specific aspect about maintenance of swastha or prevention of disease.

- Matrashitiya Adhyaya** - Provides guidelines regarding appropriate *Ahara* and *Vihara*.
- Tasyashitiya Adhyaya** - Explains the suitable indulgence in *Ahara* and *Vihara* in accordance with seasonal variations (*Rutu*).
- Navegandharaneeya Adhyaya** - Discusses the *Adharana* and *Dharana* of *Vega* for prevention of diseases.
- Indriyopakramaniya Adhyaya** - Emphasizes *Sadvritta Palana* for maintaining mental and physical well-being.

Through the application of *Vidhana Tantrayukti*, the structure, sequence, and interrelation among these four chapters can be better understood in alignment with *Acharya Charaka's* view.

## OBSERVATIONS AND RESULTS

Sl. no.	Chapter name	Central Theme	Components of Ayu	Key Elements ( <i>Ahara</i> , <i>Vihara</i> , <i>Achara</i> )	Observations / Significance
1.	<i>Matrashitiya</i>	General guidelines for Maintenance of health through <i>Ahara</i> and <i>Vihara</i>	<i>Sharira</i> and <i>Indriya</i> primely. <i>Mana</i>	- <i>Matravat Ahara</i> - <i>Nitya/Anitya Upayoga</i> of <i>Ahara</i> - <i>Vihara</i> for <i>Sharira</i> & <i>Indriya</i>	Provides basic rules on balanced diet & controlled lifestyle; <i>Vihara</i> emphasizes preservation of <i>Indriyas</i> that are constantly in use.
2.	<i>Tasyashitiya</i>	Maintenance of health through <i>Rutu</i> -based modification of lifestyle	<i>Sharira</i> and <i>Indriya</i>	- Seasonal <i>Ahara</i> - Seasonal <i>Vihara</i>	Influence of <i>Kala</i> is unavoidable; thus adaptation of <i>Ahara-Vihara</i> in accordance with <i>Rutu</i> to maintain <i>Bala</i> , <i>Agni</i> , <i>Dosha</i> equilibrium and resulting into <i>Dhatu samya</i> .
3.	<i>Navegandharaniya</i>	Prevention of disease through Regulation of	<i>Sharira</i> , <i>Indriya</i> and <i>Mana</i> .	- <i>Vihara</i> - ( <i>Adharaniya vega</i> ) - <i>Achara</i> ( <i>Dharaniya</i> )	Prescribes correct conduct towards natural urges and mental discipline to prevent disease and preserve <i>Dhatu</i>

		natural urges & conduct		Vega)	samya.
4.	Indriyopakram anīya	Maintainance of health and prevention of disease by following Good Conduct	Indriya and Mana.	- Achara (Sadvritta)	Explains mechanism & sustenance of Indriyas, role of Sadvritta which promotes Shubha Pravritti, Prevents Ashubha Pravritti; emphasizes higher integration of mind & Atma.

## DISCUSSION

As the *Prayojana* of this *Tantra* is *Swasthasya Swastha Rakshana* and *Aturasya Vikara Prashamana*, hence after explaining *Bheshaja Chatushka*, for the maintenance of health and prevention of diseases, *Swastha Chatushka* is explained.

By the definition of Swastha.

**सुष्ठु निर्विकारत्वेनावतिष्ठत इति स्वस्थः**

*Swastha* is a state in which one truly remains free from disorders.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Means of Achieving Swastha

**स्वास्थ्यमुभयथा परिपाल्यते<sup>[5]</sup>**

1. **Vishuddha Ahara Acharabhyam Sada Kshiyamana Sharira Poshanena** — By following proper *Ahara* and *Achara*, which provide nourishment to the *Sharira* that, is undergoing continuous destruction.
2. **Pratyavaya Hetu Pariharena** — By avoiding causative factors (*Nidana's*) responsible for disturbance in *Dhatu Samyata*, which lead to diseases or imbalance in *Swastha Avastha*.

Thus, *Swastha Chatushka* explains both the maintenance of health and the prevention of disease or Measures for preserving *Swasthata*.

Before the commencement of *Swastha Chatushka*, the main components that deviates someone from being *swastha* were analyzed. It was discussed how proper adherence to these components could help one remain *swastha*.

The main components that are required to maintain *swastha* are discussed below.

Acharya Sushruta has stated that both *sharira* and *ahara* are formed by *panchamahabhuta*.

Acharya Charaka states that, the *karana* or *hetu* for *purusha/sharira vridhi* is *hitahara sevana/ consuming hitahara*.<sup>[6]</sup>

acharya charaka While describing the context of *dhatu samya*, he tells that one must consume *ahara* according to one's own *prakriti* in order to maintain *swasthata*.<sup>[7]</sup>

In the *prakarana* of *agrya dravya*, *anna* was quoted as *vrittikaranam shreshtam*.<sup>[8]</sup>

From these references, it can be inferred that *Sharira* and *Ahara* are both composed of *Panchamahabhuta*, and *Ahara* continually contributes to the development of *Sharira*. Hence, *Ahara* is considered a fundamental factor for maintaining *Swastha*, and thus concepts related to *Ahara* are primarily discussed in *Swastha Chatushka*.

In *Sharira Vichaya Sharira*, Charaka mentions that indulging in *Vihara* and *Ahara* opposite to *Desha*, *Kala*, and *Atma*, or inappropriate suppression or initiation of *Vega*, causes *Dhatu Vishamata* and thereby disturbs *Swasthata*.<sup>[9]</sup> This highlights the importance of *Vihara* in maintaining health; hence, concepts of *Vihara* are included in *Swastha Chatushka*.

In *Atulya Gotriya Adhyaya* of Charaka, while describing the state of *Niroga* which can be understood as state of *swasthata*, it is stated that *Swasthata* is attained through *Hitahara*, *Hita Vihara*, and following the advice of *Apta*.<sup>[10]</sup> This reinforces the significance of *Ahara*, *Vihara*, and *Achara* in maintaining health, and hence these concepts are elaborated in *Swastha Chatushka*.

Hence, by above references we understood that the main components for one to maintain *swasthata* is *ahara*, *vihara* and *achara*, what components of the *sharira* does these *ahara*, *vihara* and *achara* helps to maintain *swastha* is further understood with the reference from *dheerghanjeevitiya adhyaya* of *charaka samhita* which says, that the union (*Samyoga*) of *Sharira*, *Indriya*, *Satva*, and *Atma* sustain life (*Ayu*).<sup>[11]</sup>

From all these references, it can be concluded that *Ahara*, *Vihara*, and *Achara* are the three main elements required to maintain the state of *Swastha*. They help preserve the equilibrium of all four components of *Ayu* — *Sharira*, *Indriya*, *Satva*, and *Atma*. Thus, *Swastha Chatushka* provides guidelines for *Ahara*, *Vihara*, and *Achara* that nourish and sustain all components of *Ayu*.

Charaka adopted a distinctive literary style in the *Swastha Chatushka*. Its structure is based on systematic rules and guidelines pertaining to *Ahara*, *Vihara*, and *Achara*. Unlike *Dinacharya* and *Rutucharya* which appear in different *samhitas*, the *Vidhana* employed here by Charaka is uniquely structured, revealing his methodological approach.

### 1. Matrashitiya Adhyaya

The *Matrashitiya Adhyaya* provides general guidelines for maintaining health through both Ahara and Vihara.

Although all the elements Ahara, vihara and achara are crucial, but as both Purusha and Ahara are composed from the Panchamahabhuta itself, Ahara is considered primary and hence explained first.

#### a. Ahara – for Ksiyamana Sharira

Sharira is defined as one which undergoes continuous destruction. To balance this natural deterioration, proper and appropriate amount of food must be provided to ensure adequate nourishment. Guidelines regarding matravat ahara were described, emphasizing that the appropriate quantity (matra) of food depends on the state of one's agni and the nature of the food substance.

#### b. Vihara

##### i. For Ksiyamana Indriya

Indriyas, both jnanendriyas and karmendriyas, remain continuously active throughout the day and undergo gradual deterioration. Hence, guidelines regarding supportive viharas—such as anjana, dhoomapana, nasya, gandusha, moordhni taila, and sharira abhyanga—are provided to nourish the indriyas, enabling them to function efficiently.

##### ii. For Mana

Mana undergoes continuous changes in the expression of its gunas. Excessive expression of raja and tama gunas can lead to manasika diseases. To promote predominance of satva guna, guidelines include practices such as wearing nirmala vastra, using gandha-mala, and following danda dharana. These measures subtly influence mana, promoting calmness, confidence, social ease, uplifted mood, stress relief, and mental assurance.

Thus, this chapter provides comprehensive guidance on food and lifestyle practices for maintaining the health of Sharira, Indriya, and Mana.

### 2. Tasyashitiya Adhyaya

Following the general guidelines regarding ahara and vihara, the *Tasyashitiya adhyaya* provides specific guidance on ahara and vihara according to rutu (season).

Kala (time/season) is an element to which a person is always exposed, and it is beyond one's control and unchangeable. Kala has a significant impact on sharira, influencing the bala of sharira, agni, and dosha according to the prevailing rutu. Since kala cannot be altered, one must adapt lifestyle practices by modifying ahara and vihara in accordance with kala.

Thus, this chapter outlines rutu-based modifications of ahara and vihara to balance the bala of sharira, agni, and dosha, which in turn supports the maintenance of health.

### 3. Navegandharaniya Adhyaya

After discussing the maintenance of health through proper nourishment of sharira, indriya, and mana, the *Navegandharaniya adhyaya* addresses the prevention of diseases by avoiding nidana to maintain health. Nidana itself is a causative factor in the manifestation of diseases, and avoiding nidana is therefore a key step in staying healthy. This chapter provides guidelines regarding navegadharana, daraniya vega, and the proper practice of dharana and adharana of vega.

- **Navega Dharana:** Suppression of natural urges acts as Nidana and leads to disease; Hence, avoiding suppression of these vegas is emphasized by highlighting their harmful effects.
- **Dharaniya Vega:** Certain viharas or vegas, when expressed freely, act as nidana in the manifestation of diseases. Therefore, suppression of these vegas is recommended.
- **Dharana and Adharana of Vega:** Viharas such as vyayama, bhashya, and hasya can act as nidana if indulged in excessively, but when practiced appropriately, they contribute to health maintenance. Guidelines emphasize moderation, illustrating both the benefits of proper practice and the ill effects of excessive indulgence.
- In this way, the chapter explains prevention of diseases through the avoidance of nidana.

### 4. Indriyopakramaniya Adhyaya

After explaining the principles of maintenance of health and prevention of disease through Ahara and Vihara, *Indriyopakramaniya Adhyaya* focuses on similar principles with respect to achara.

Indriyas are the media through which one connects with the external world, but their proper function is impossible without the involvement of mana. Exposure of indriyas to the external world can lead to ayoga, atiyoga, or mithyayoga, which may cause disease. Therefore, sadvritta is explained as a means to ensure satmya indriyarthasamyoga/samyak yoga of indriya.

Through the framework of adhyatma dravya guna sangraha—including mana, manomatha, buddhi, and atma—achara directs an individual towards shubha pravritti and ashubha nivritti, enabling samyak yoga of both indriya and mana, and thus promoting swasthata.

In this way, all four chapters of the *Swastha Chatushka* collectively provide a comprehensive framework for the maintenance of health and prevention of diseases through appropriate Ahara, Vihara and Achara. The sequential arrangement reflects Acharya Charaka's deliberate *Vidhana*, where each chapter progressively expands upon the previous one, thereby justifying its placement and establishing the author's methodological coherence in presenting the concept of *Swastha*.



## CONCLUSION

Vidhana Tantrayukti serves as an essential interpretative tool for comprehending the literary construction of a Tantra by elucidating the sequential arrangement of the text from the author's perspective, thereby facilitating accurate interpretation and practical application of the concepts. As the Chatushka methodology is one of the distinctive contributions of the Charaka Samhita, the methodology adopted in framing the Swastha Chatushka is better appreciated when examined through the lens of Vidhana Tantrayukti. This approach clarifies the author's intention in systematically presenting guidelines related to Swasthya, thereby fulfilling the objective of the Swastha Chatushka. The analytical application of Vidhana Tantrayukti reveals that Acharya Charaka has uniquely structured the Swastha Chatushka to address every dimension of Swasthya by encompassing all components of Ayu—Sharira, Indriya, Satva, and Atma—thus presenting a comprehensive framework that justifies the purpose and relevance of the Swastha Chatushka.

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