

Enriching Classical Text Understanding – Contemporary Education for Samhita Adhyayana (Traditional Knowledge)

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ABSTRACT

Innovation in traditional teaching methods has the potential to revolutionize understanding of Classical texts. These methods, which mainly rely on lectures, textbooks, and memorization, have been criticized for being outdated and ineffective. However, innovation has allowed for new teaching strategies that focus on student-centered, active learning, and technology integration. These methods offer benefits such as increased engagement, improved retention of information, and better understanding of complex concepts. Teachers need to be technically advanced to cater to students' needs, as visual PPT, garden visits, the actual application of karmas, observing patients, verse recitation, discussions, debates, and general discussions can help students understand the practical application of classical texts. These technical innovations allow teachers to customize their approach to suit the diverse needs of their students, designing learning activities and lessons catering to different learning styles, interests, and abilities. This paper focuses on different innovations in traditional teaching methods as it is a valuable investment that can bring about progressive changes in understanding *Ayurveda*. By embracing innovation, we can make *Ayurveda* more accessible and effective for the future of our students.

KEYWORDS: *Traditional knowledge, Samhita Adhyayana, Charaka Samhita, Sushrut Samhita, Ashtang Hridaya, Teaching methods*

INTRODUCTION

Innovation in traditional *Samhita* teaching methods is a much-needed change that has the potential to revolutionize the understanding of *Samhitas*. The traditional teaching methods, which mainly relied on lectures, textbooks, Recitation, and memorization, have been criticized for being outdated and ineffective, or good enough to just pass the exam. However, innovation has allowed for the development of new teaching strategies that focus on student-centered, active learning, and the integration of technology as per the new NCISM syllabus.

Adopting innovative teaching methods offers several benefits, including increased engagement and participation in learning, improved retention of information, and a better understanding of complex concepts. By leveraging technology such as online platforms, gamification, and virtual reality, students can learn using more interactive and immersive

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techniques that help to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Therefore teachers also need to be technically advanced to cope with students' needs.

Visual PPT, Garden visits, Actual application of *karmas*, encouraging them to take *Ayurvedic* medicines in illness so as to understand their results, observing patients at an *Ayurvedic Clinic*, *Shloka* Recitation, Discussion over Practical application of every concept written in *samhitas*, Debates, and General discussions etc can make the student understand that learning *Samhita* is not just memorizing *shlokas*, it's much more than that. Understanding *shlokas* by each word and learning their practical application in daily life makes students confident enough to become *Vaidyas*. Moreover, these technical innovations in traditional teaching methods allow teachers to customize their approach

to suit the diverse needs of their students. This approach allows for designing learning activities and delivering lessons catering to different learning styles, interests, and abilities.

In conclusion, innovation in traditional teaching methods is a worthy investment that can bring about progressive changes in understanding the base of our Ayurveda. It allows the introduction of new techniques, tools, and strategies that can help to optimize learning outcomes while also making the learning process more engaging, interactive, and inclusive. So for it, even our teachers need to be a student. *Ayurveda* is a never-ending thing, but methods to learn it should be revolutionized completely as per the need of the hour. Young generations are sharp enough to question everything that is written in our Vedas. But once through our teaching methods we can make them believe in it, they can be the golden stairway for *Ayurveda* to the top. Ultimately, innovative teaching methods have the potential to transform the way we learn, paving the way for more efficient and effective clinical practices for the better future of our students.

DISCUSSION: -

1. DRAWBACKS OF CONVENTIONAL TEACHING METHODS

While traditional teaching methods have been widely used for centuries and can be effective in certain contexts, they also have some notable drawbacks.

- **Passive Learning:** Traditional methods often rely on a one-way flow of information from the teacher to the students. This can lead to passive learning, where students are merely recipients of information from the Samhita rather than active participants in the learning process. This results into gaining incomplete & improper knowledge of *Ayurvedic* concepts.
- **Limited Student Engagement:** Lectures and rote memorization can lead to disengagement among students, especially those with different learning styles or those who need more interactive and hands-on learning experiences. Reciting verses and explaining its meaning is tedious for teachers as well as for students.
- **One-Size-Fits-All Approach:** Traditional teaching methods typically follow a standardized approach, treating all students as if they have the same learning pace, interests, and abilities. This can lead to the neglect of individual learning needs and preferences. Students that come from a background where learning in English is required, experience significant challenges due to *Sanskrit* language. It is not sufficient to just study the

meaning of shlokas or other *Siddhantas*. It is essential to comprehend its clinical applicability.

- **Lack of Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills:** Traditional methods often focus on memorizing facts and information, leaving little room for fostering critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills.
- **Ineffective Knowledge Retention:** Relying heavily on rote memorization can result in short-term knowledge retention rather than long-term understanding and application of concepts.
- **Limited Personalization:** Traditional teaching may not adequately address the unique needs and strengths of each student, as teachers may find it challenging to cater to individual learning differences in a large classroom setting.
- **Reduced Student Motivation:** Repetitive and monotonous teaching methods can lead to reduced student motivation and interest in the subject matter.
- **High Teacher-Centered Approach:** Traditional methods often place the teacher at the center of the learning process, leaving little room for student-led learning and exploration.
- **Limited Use of Technology:** Some traditional teaching methods may not fully leverage the potential of modern educational technology, which can hinder the integration of interactive and multimedia learning experiences.
- **Overemphasis on Grades and Testing:** Traditional education systems tend to prioritize grades and test scores, sometimes at the expense of a deeper understanding of the subject matter.
- **Inflexibility:** Traditional teaching methods may be less adaptable to changes in the educational landscape, advancements in pedagogy, and the evolving needs of students in a rapidly changing world.
- **Limited Real-World Connection:** Some traditional teaching approaches may struggle to connect classroom learning to real-world applications and contexts, making it challenging for students to see the practical relevance of their studies.

2. CHALLENGES OF BAMS STUDENTS IN DECIPHERING THE CLINICAL IMPORTANCE OF SAMHITA

BAMS (Bachelor of *Ayurvedic* Medicine and Surgery) students often encounter challenges when trying to understand classical texts and concepts in *Ayurveda*. These difficulties can arise due to various

factors, including the complexity of the texts, cultural differences, and the specialized nature of *Ayurvedic* knowledge. Here are some common difficulties that BAMS students may face:

- **Language and Terminology:** Classical *Ayurvedic* texts are often written in *Sanskrit*, which may not be the native language of BAMS students. The complex terminology and archaic language used in these texts can make it difficult for students to comprehend the content accurately.

E.g. Difficulty in reading and understanding the *Sanskrit* language

- **Cultural Context:** *Ayurvedic* texts are deeply rooted in the historical and cultural context of ancient India. Concepts, references, and metaphors used in these texts may be unfamiliar to modern students, making it challenging to interpret the intended meanings.

E.g. Use of *Tantrayukti* to interpret verses from *Samhita*

- **Conceptual Differences:** *Ayurvedic* concepts and paradigms may differ significantly from the biomedical perspectives that BAMS students are exposed to. Understanding the holistic and nature-based approach of *Ayurveda*, as opposed to the reductionist approach of modern medicine, can be a cognitive shift for students.

E.g. *Tridosha Siddhanta*, *Shadrasa Siddhanta*

- **Complex Philosophical Framework:** *Ayurvedic* texts often delve into philosophical discussions and metaphysical concepts that require a deep understanding of Indian philosophies, such as *Samkhya* and *Vedanta*. These discussions can be challenging to grasp for students without a background in philosophy.

E.g. Study of *Darshana* as – *Samkhya Darshana*, *Yoga Darshana*

- **Lack of Practical Experience:** *Ayurveda* emphasizes experiential learning and direct observation of patients. BAMS students may struggle to relate theoretical concepts to real-world clinical practice, especially if they have limited exposure to clinical settings.

E.g. learning *Siddhanta* in the classroom but not understanding the application of it in OPD or IPD

- **Integration of Modern Science:** BAMS students are often required to integrate *Ayurvedic* principles with modern biomedical knowledge. This interdisciplinary approach can be complex and requires a solid grasp of both systems.

- **Limited Resources and Expertise:** Access to qualified *Ayurvedic* scholars and experts who can provide in-depth explanations and guidance on classical texts may be limited, especially in certain regions.

- **Time Constraints:** BAMS programs typically have a demanding curriculum, and students may not have sufficient time to delve deeply into the complexities of classical texts alongside other coursework and clinical training.

- **Lack of Practical Teaching Methods:** Traditional teaching methods may not effectively convey the nuances of classical *Ayurvedic* texts. Innovative pedagogical approaches that bridge the gap between ancient knowledge and modern learning styles may be lacking.

3. TEACHING ASHTANGA HRIDAYA BY INGENIOUS METHODS

The *Ashtanga Hridaya* is one of the most important classical texts in *Ayurveda* as its name suggests “Heart of all eight branches of *Ayurveda*”. For BAMS students *Ashtanga Hridaya* is much easier to study compared to other *Samhitas* as it is written in a poetic format and applying advanced teaching techniques to its study can greatly enhance students' understanding and engagement.

Here are some examples of how advanced teaching techniques can be applied to teaching *Ashtanga Hridaya*:

- **Concept Mapping and Visualization:** Use concept mapping tools to visually represent the interconnected concepts in *Ashtanga Hridaya*. For instance, you could create a concept map illustrating the relationships between *doshas*, *dhatus*, and *malas*, helping students see how these elements interact to maintain health.

- **Interactive Translation Exercises:** Provide students with a verse from *Ashtanga Hridaya* and ask them to collaboratively translate it into modern language. This exercise encourages students to engage with the text's language and context while promoting teamwork.

- **Real-Life Case Studies:** Present clinical case studies that align with concepts from *Ashtanga Hridaya*. For example, discuss a patient case involving imbalanced *doshas* by not following *Dinacharya* and ask students to analyze how the principles from the text could guide diagnosis and treatment.

- **Multimedia Resources:** Share audio recordings of correct pronunciation and recitation of select passages from *Ashtanga Hridaya*. Additionally,

create short videos that explain specific concepts, such as the six tastes (*Shad rasa*) or the process of digestion (*Agni*).

- **Interactive Online Platforms:** Develop an online platform where students can access interactive quizzes, flashcards, and discussion forums dedicated to the topics covered in *Ashtanga Hridaya*. This allows for self-paced learning and peer interaction.
- **Field Trips and Site Visits:** Organize visits to *Ayurvedic* clinics or centers where traditional practices are still followed. This allows students to observe how the principles from *Ashtanga Hridaya* are applied in real clinical settings. Visiting the herbal Garden can help students to understand the versatility of different medicines used in routine clinical practice.
- **Project-Based Learning:** Assign projects where students research a specific herb, formulation, or therapeutic approach mentioned in *Ashtanga Hridaya*. They can present their findings, including traditional uses and modern research, to the class. Also, students can make presentations about 13 *Vargas* explained in *Sutrasthana* with clinical relevance to the present era.
- **Regular Practice and Recitation of Verses:** Designate regular time for students to practice reading and reciting verses from *Ashtanga Hridaya*. This consistent practice helps improve language skills and builds confidence in understanding the text.

4. PROGRESSIVE WAYS TO TEACH CHARAK SAMHITA & SUSHRUT SAMHITA

➤ *Charaka Samhita:*

The archaic language and terminology can make *Charak Samhita* challenging to understand the text's nuances and meanings. The text employs a rich and specialized vocabulary that may not have direct equivalents in modern languages. Understanding and translating these terms accurately requires a strong grasp of both Sanskrit and *Ayurvedic* concepts. Concepts, references, and metaphors may be difficult to interpret without a comprehensive understanding of the historical and cultural context. Some concepts in *Charaka Samhita* may be abstract and require a deep understanding of *Ayurvedic* philosophy, such as the concepts of *doshas*, *dhatu*s, and *malas*. While there are translations and commentaries available, learners may find it challenging to access reliable and comprehensive modern resources for studying *Charaka Samhita*. The text often focuses on theoretical principles, and learners may struggle to bridge the gap between these concepts and their practical application in modern clinical settings.

Here are some extra methods which can be helpful in teaching *Charak Samhita*.

- **Socratic Questioning:** Instead of directly presenting information, ask probing questions to stimulate critical thinking. For instance, when discussing the concept of "*Tridosha*," ask students to explore how the three *doshas* manifest in various physiological functions and health conditions.
- **Flipped Classroom:** Assign reading from *Charaka Samhita* as homework and use class time for discussions, debates, and case studies related to the text. This approach encourages students to actively engage with the content and apply it to practical scenarios.
- **Role-Playing and Simulations:** Create a role-playing activity where students take on the roles of *Ayurvedic* physicians diagnosing and treating patients based on *Charaka Samhita* principles. This hands-on approach helps bridge theory and application. E.g. *Sambhasha Vidhi* from *vatalakaliya adhyaya*, Types of *Rasa* from *Atreyabhadrakapya adhyaya*
- **Collaborative Annotation:** Use digital platforms to collaboratively annotate specific chapters or verses from *Charaka Samhita*. Students can highlight important points, add explanations, and discuss interpretations, fostering peer-to-peer learning.
- **Modern Case Studies:** Present contemporary medical cases that align with *Charaka Samhita* concepts. Ask students to analyze how the principles from the text can be applied to diagnose and treat these cases. E.g. finding causes of *Grahan idosha* in patients of indigestion and treating accordingly by *Nidana-parivarjana*.

➤ *Sushruta Samhita:*

Learning *Sushruta Samhita*, another important classical text in *Ayurveda*, can present its own set of challenges. The text provides detailed descriptions of surgical techniques and procedures. Understanding and visualizing these procedures can be challenging. This *Samhita* covers a wide range of topics, including anatomy, surgery, medicine, and disease management. The extensive content can be overwhelming for learners to navigate and comprehend. It describes surgical procedures that were practiced in ancient times. Learners may find it difficult to relate these procedures to modern surgical practices without practical exposure.

Sushruta Samhita includes a technical vocabulary related to surgical instruments, procedures, and

anatomical structures. Mastery of this vocabulary is essential for accurate comprehension. The absence of visual aids, such as diagrams or illustrations, in the original text can make it challenging to visualize complex anatomical structures and surgical procedures. Translating the ancient surgical techniques described in *Sushruta Samhita* into modern medical practices and terminology can be a complex and nuanced process. To overcome these difficulties, learners can employ the following methods:

- **Visualization Tools:** Use available resources, such as anatomical illustrations and virtual anatomy apps, to visualize the surgical procedures and anatomical details described in the text.
E.g. *Shava Vicchedana Vidhi*
- **Case Studies:** Study real or simulated surgical cases to apply *Sushruta Samhita's* principles to practical scenarios.
E.g. *Yogya Vidhi*
- **Hands-On Practical Workshops:** Organize workshops where students learn and practice surgical techniques described in *Sushruta Samhita*. While not performing actual surgeries, students can simulate various procedures using models and props.
E.g. *Viddha Karma*
- **Interactive Online Platforms:** Develop an online platform with 3D models and simulations of anatomical structures described in *Sushruta Samhita*. Students can virtually explore these structures and understand their relevance to surgical practices.
E.g. *Hridaya, Middle Ear – Anatomy & Physiology*
- **Medical Illustrations and Visuals:** Share detailed medical illustrations from *Sushruta Samhita* that depict surgical instruments,

procedures, and anatomical structures. Discuss the significance of these visuals in understanding the text.

E.g. *Nasa Sandhan Vidhi*

- **Virtual Reality (VR) Experiences:** Explore the possibility of using VR technology to create immersive experiences where students virtually observe or participate in surgical procedures described in *Sushruta Samhita*.

E.g. learning Suture types

- **Clinical Observations:** Arrange visits to surgical clinics or hospitals where students can observe modern surgical procedures. Encourage them to identify connections between *Sushruta Samhita* and contemporary practices.

E.g. *Ksharasutra Vidhi* for Haemorrhoids

CONCLUSION:-

Samhitas are the most clinically advanced ancient source of tremendous knowledge. We ought to find answers to every clinical question we can ask nowadays in these classical texts. Addressing difficulties in understanding and deciphering *Samhitas* requires a comprehensive and balanced approach. BAMS programs can incorporate modern teaching methods, provide translations and interpretations of classical texts, offer practical experiential learning opportunities, and encourage interactions with experienced *Ayurvedic* practitioners to enhance students' understanding of classical *Ayurvedic* concepts. By applying these advanced teaching techniques to the study of *Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita & Ashtanga Hridaya (Brihatrayi of Ayurveda)*, educators can create a dynamic and interactive learning environment. This approach not only helps students comprehend the texts' content but also empowers them to apply ancient *Ayurvedic* knowledge in relevant and meaningful ways in their future practice.