

ANGULI PRAMANA SHAAREERA IN AYURVEDA CLASSICS: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda classics have given due importance to *anguli pramana shareera*, a concept based upon *swa-angula pramana*, due to the fact that it not only helps in measuring different parts of the body but also helps in assessing the life span, strength etc of the *aatura* and also the *swastha purusha*. Even today, the Forensic science with the help of Anthropometry measures the dimensions of different parts of the human body & skeleton to establish the identity of a person as well as estimation of stature, age, sex, race etc. As *anguli pramana* is based upon *swa-angula pramana* it is highly specific and individualistic in its approach which gives it an edge over the contemporary science. The concept has immense possibilities and should be explored. This article is an effort to revisit our *ayurveda* classics and better understand the importance of the concept.

Keywords: *Anguli Pramana Shareera, Angula, Swa-angula pramana.*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a science that deals with life and it emphasizes on understanding the functional and structural constitution of the body. *Pramana shareera* is of immense help in doing the same. The importance of *Pramana Shareera*, both in anatomical & physiological point of view is well known; whether it is in *Ayurvedic* or modern parlance. *Anguli pramana Shareera* has been explained to play a major role in determination of life span of a person. It is told that the person having appropriate measurements will attain long & a healthy life^{1a, 2a}. The concept of *Pramana Shareera* has been meticulously explained in *ayurvedic* classics. As early as 1000 B.C. *Pramana Shareera* was described by *Acharya Charaka* and *Sushruta* and later by *Acharya Vagbhata*. *Acharyas* have explained the *pramana* of different *anga-pratyangas* of the body^{1b,2b,3a}. *Pra-*

mana shareera has been explained to be utilized in the examination of the patient^{1c}. The *vaidya* has to and must examine the patient's *anga pratyanga pramana* to assess the life span to decide whether the treatment that is to be given by him would be fruitful or not^{2c}. *Anguli* is the unit measurement of the different *anga-pratyangas* of the body^{1d,2d,3b}. In modern science *pramana shareera* is correlated with anthropometry which is useful only for physical measurement in order to assess height, age, sex etc^{4a,5}. It is an integral part of Forensic science as it helps identifying the individual^{4b}. Whereas the *ayurvedic* concept of *pramana shareera* not only gives measurements of different body parts but also gives valuable information regarding life span of the person, strength etc.

PRAMANA SHAREERA- THE CONCEPT: *Pramana* has been given due importance in our classics. *Pramana* refers to the means of gaining knowledge in *Ayurveda*^{1e}. It is also the means to quantitatively express the dimensions & other constituents of the human body^{1f}. There are basically two types of *Pramanas* that we find in *Ayurveda* one is the *anguli pramana* and the other one is the *anjali pramana*. *Anguli pramana* which is based upon *swa-angula pramana*, is used for measuring the dimensions (*Ayama*, *vistara*, and *parinaha* etc) of the different *anga-pratyangas* of the body. It has been considered as one of the means to determine the *ayu* of the patient. *Anjali pramana* on the other hand is used for measuring other body constituents including fluids^{1g}. In *ayurveda*, *Pramana* is considered one among the tenfold examinations of the patient^{1h}. The patient has to be examined with reference to the measurements of his *anga-pratyangas*. Different measurements of the body parts are taken by using the fingers breadth of the individual as unit measurement¹ⁱ. It helps in the determination of the *ayu* of the patient. The patient or an individual having appropriate *pramana* of different *anga-pratyangas* mentioned is considered to attain *deerghayu*^{1j}

Before treating a patient 'Ayu' should be examined. *Pramana shareera* is one of the criteria to ascertain *ayu* of the patient. The other one being *sara*^{2e}. The patient having appropriate *pramana* of his *anga-pratyangas* will attain long life and prosperity and with moderate and poor measurements will attain medium and short lives respectively^{2f}.

A person having height equal to $3^{1/2}$ of his own *hasta* is said to have a happy life. It has been further explained that the measurements described do not apply to those belonging to the *ashta-nindita purusha*⁶.

There is a mention of the concept of 'Sama Shareera' in *ayurveda* classics. According to this the individual having equal height and arm span is considered to have *sama shareera* and will attain longevity, wealth, prosperity, *ojas*, strength etc^{1k}

DESCRIPTION REGARDING ANGULI: *Anguli*- These are the distal and movable parts of the upper limb. They are twenty in number^{2g} There are five types of *anguli*:^{2h}

- 1) *Angushtha* 2) *Pradeshini* 3) *Madhyama*
- 4) *Anamika* 5) *Kanisthika*

DESCRIPTION REGARDING ANGULI PRAMANA: *Pramana* is a tool through which valid knowledge is obtained^{1e}. *Anguli pramana* is a unit to denote the *Ayama* (length), *vistara* (width), *parinaha* (circumference), *utsedha* (height) etc.

ANGULI CAN BE TAKEN AS:

- 1) Width of the *madhyama parva* of the *madhyama angula*^{7a}.
- 2) *Nakha tala bhaga* of *angushtha*^{7b}.
- 3) Measurement obtained by taking the length of the *madhyama angula* and then dividing it by five²ⁱ.
- 4) Measurement obtained by taking width of the palm & then dividing by Four^{2j}

ANGULI PRAMANA SHAAREERA-CLASSICAL REFERENCES: The descriptions regarding the concept of *anguli pramana* are available in *ayurvedic* classics. It has been described in different contexts as *pramana* of different parts of the human body, as *pramana* of different instruments utilized in *shalya shastra*, *panchakarma* etc and as a unit measurement for measuring distance between two points and also measuring depth, length of different things.

VEDIC KALA: References regarding the *angula pramana* can be cited in *Yajurveda*. *Angula pramana* is utilized in *homa kund* preparation. Another reference in *yajurveda* tells that the length of *darbha* used for *homa* should be of 6 *angula pramana*.

In *Rigveda*, a reference regarding *parmatma* taking refuge in *dasha angula pradasha* is available

PURANA-UPANISHAD KALA: In *Va-raha-mihikya*, the ancient *Brihat Samhita*, a reference regarding 5 types of *Purushas* with their *Anguli Pramana* is available. According to *Bruhath Jaataka Swara*, *Samhanana*, *Pramana*, *Sneha*, *Akruthi* etc., are important in the diagnosis of disease

In *Srimat Tantrasara Sangraha* various *Pramanas* have been mentioned for making statues which is based upon *Swa-angula*^{8a}.

SAMHITA KALA: *Ayurveda* developed immensely during *samhita* period. It is sometimes referred to as the golden era of *Ayurveda*. A good amount of knowledge regarding *Pramana Shareera* is available in the classical *ayurvedic* texts written during the *samhita* period.

Charaka samhita: *Acharya Charaka* has explained *pramana shareera* as one of the tenfold examinations of the patient^{1h}. He has categorically mentioned the *anguli pramanas* of *anga-pratyangas* of human body.^{1b} He has put forth the concept of *sama shareera* which was later accepted by *Acharya Vriddha Vagbhata* also. This throws light on the fact that *pramana* concept can be a useful tool to assess the *ayu* of the *aatura*^{1k}.

Sushruta Samhita: *Sushrutacharya* has explained the *anguli Pramanas* of different parts of the body^{2b}. According to him a person with appropriate *Pramana* of *Anga-pratyangas* is bestowed with good health & long life.^{2a} *Acharya* has explained *pramana pariksha* as one of the criteria for assessing the *ayu* of the person^{2c}. The other one being the *sara pariksha*. *Acharya* has further explained that before proceeding with the treatment it is beneficial to examine the *ayu* of the patient^{2c}. Regarding the height of the individual

there has been some difference of opinion between *sushruta acharya* and *charaka acharya*. *Sushruta* has mentioned the height of man as 120 *angulas*^{2k}. *Dalhana* while commenting on it has explained that the height given by *sushruta* is measured by making the person stand on his toes with his arms raised^{2l}. While *chakrapani* comments that the *angula pramana* taken by *sushruta* is smaller than taken by *charaka* and there is actually no difference of the opinion between the two^{1l}. *Charaka acharya* stated that height of the person to be 84 *angulas*^{1m}. Similarly, *acharya vrud-dha vagbhata* also stated the optimum height to be 84 *angulas*^{3c}. *Chakrapani* has commented that height is to be measured from *padatala* to *shirahparyanta* that is the top of the head¹ⁿ.

KashyapaSamhita: *Acharya Kashyapa* has explained about the *anjali pramana* but he has not dealt with *anguli pramana*⁹.

BhelaSamhita: *Acharya Bhela* has not explained about the *angula pramana* of the *anga-pratyangas* of the body but in 'Ayur-lakshanendriya' chapter he has mentioned that if *lalata*, *nasika* and *karna* of a person are of 6 *angulas* each then he will attain the life span of 100 years.¹⁰

SANGRAHAKALA

AshtangaSangraha: *Vriddha Vagbhata* has also explained the *pramana* of different parts of the body^{3a}. He is in agreement on the *sama shareera* concept of *acharya charaka*^{3d}.

Ashtanga Hrudaya: Description regarding the *pramana shareera* is not found in *ashtanga hrudaya*. But *acharya* has explained that the appropriate height of a person is equivalent to 31/2 times the length of his *hasta*⁶.

MADHYA KALA

Vangasena Samhita: *Acharya Vangasena* in *Nidanapanchaka* chapter has explained the knowledge of *pramana* as one of the

criteria for the success of a physician^{11a}. In the same chapter while explaining about the *kudava mana*, he has mentioned about the *anguli pramana*^{11b}.

Sharangadhara Samhita: In *Maana-paribhasha* allusions of *anguli pramana* can be cited. While explaining about the *kudava pramana*, *anguli pramana* has been mentioned^{7c}. *Anguli pramana* of *anga-pratyangas* is not explained, different types of *pramanas* are explained in detail though. *Aadhamala* explained how unit measurement *angula* can be measured. According to one explanation the measurement of *angushtha nakhtala bhaga* is one *angula*^{7b} and the other one says the measurement *madhyama parva* of *madhyama anguli* of *madhyama kaya purusha* is one *angula*^{7a}.

Kautilya Arthashastra: In 'Deshakala-manam' chapter definitions of 'angula' has been explained. According to one explanation, 1 *angula* is that measurement which is obtained by sewing 8 *yavas* in the middle^{12a}. And according to another, one *angula* is the measurement of the *madhyama prakarsha* (prominence or elevation) of the *madhyama anguli* of the *madhyama kaya purusha*^{12b}. *Anguli pramana* has been used as a unit measurement for measuring lengths of different objects, depth, measuring land distances. In 'Tulamanapautavam' chapter, *Anguli pramana* has been utilized for making different types of weighing tools to measure the weight of gold, silver etc^{12c}.

CONCLUSIONS

All the *acharyas* have used *swa-angula* as the unit measurement for taking the measurements of different parts of the body. The concept of *swa-angula pramana* has been explained while explaining the measurements of the different parts of the body. The measurements of an individual are taken by using the individual's own

finger as the unit measurement to measure his or her body parts which seem to be more natural and scientific rather than measuring one's body with some other standard. *Ayurveda* has given importance to individualistic approach rather than a generalized one. This is true when it comes to measuring parts of the body or treatment of a patient for that matter. Two patients may be suffering from the same disease but the treatment given to both is different based upon the *dashvidha aatura pariksha*. *Angula pramana* has been mentioned in relation to *yantras* and *shastras* utilized in *Shalya tantra* and in *panchkarma* also different instruments like *basti netra*, *dhoom netra* etc. are prepared utilizing the concept of *angula pramana* and probably the *swa-angula pramana* of the patient or the person under treatment. Then there are explanations regarding the depth upto which the *uttarbasti netra* should be inserted into the patient's *yoni* or *mootra marg*. This is also probably based upon the concept of *swa-angula pramana*.

Specificity is the characteristic property of *swa-angula pramana*. This can be utilized in the field of medical science. If a person loses both his legs then rather than using the present anthropometric knowledge to make average based artificial limbs we can utilize the *swa-angula* based *pramana shareera* concept and prepare proportionate artificial limbs. *Swa-angula* concept can also be utilized in the field of sports and designing industries etc. This can be of help in the field of forensic medicine. The concept has immense possibilities which can and should be explored.

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