

ii. Definitions of śarīra, jñānendriya, karmendriya, mana, buddhi, citta, ahaṁkāra, ātmā

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Śarīra (Body)

Etymological Definition

- The Sanskrit root “√śr” or “śarī” implies “**to decay, to disintegrate.**” Consequently, **śarīra** means “that which undergoes **continuous change** or degeneration.”
- From an Ayurvedic standpoint, “śarīra” is not merely a physical mass; it is the **seat** of **consciousness** (ātman), operating through **mind (mana)** and **senses (indriyas)**.

Scriptural Context

Charaka Saṁhitā (Śarīra Sthāna 6/4) says:

“tatra śarīraṁ nāma cētanādhiṣṭhānabhūtaṁ pañca-mahābhūtavikāra-samudāyātmakaṁ...”

This highlights the body as a **composite** of the **five great elements (pañca-mahābhūta)**, **animated by consciousness**.

Ayurvedic Perspective

- Structure:** Formed by the **combination** of pañca-mahābhūtas, organized into **dhātus (tissues)**, **malas (wastes)**, and **srotas (channels)**.
- Function:** A means for the **soul (ātman)** to **experience** and **act** in the physical world.
- Dynamic Nature:** Always subject to **growth, maintenance**, and **decay** under the influence of doṣas (Vāta, Pitta, Kapha).

Indriyas (Faculties)

In Ayurveda and Indian philosophy, **indriyas** are the **tools** through which the mind interacts with the external world. They are divided into two categories: **jñānendriyas (sensory faculties)** and **karmendriyas (motor faculties)**.

Jñānendriya (Sensory Faculties)

Definition

- Jñānendriyas are instruments **of perception**, each dedicated to receiving a **specific type** of sensory input.

Five Jñānendriyas

- Chakṣu Indriya (Eyes)** – Visual perception (rūpa).
- Śrotra Indriya (Ears)** – Auditory perception (śabda).
- Ghrāṇa Indriya (Nose)** – Olfactory perception (gandha).
- Rasana Indriya (Tongue)** – Gustatory perception (rasa).
- Sparśa Indriya (Skin)** – Tactile perception (sparśa).

Scriptural Note

Caraka Saṁhitā (Sūtrasthāna) emphasizes that the **connection** of mind (mana) with the **appropriate sense organ (indriya)** and its object (viśaya) is essential for **complete cognition**.



Karmendriya (Motor Faculties)

Definition

- Karmendriyas are the **organs of action**, enabling an individual to **respond** and **engage** with the world.

Five Karmendriyas

- Vāk (Speech organ)** – Expression through language.
- Pāṇi (Hands)** – Grasping, holding, manipulation.
- Pāda (Feet)** – Locomotion.
- Pāyu (Anus)** – Excretion.
- Upastha (Genitals)** – Reproduction and sexual functions.

Philosophical Insight

- These faculties ensure **interaction** with the environment. In Ayurveda, **coordination** between jñānendriya (input) and karmendriya (output) is orchestrated by **mind** and influenced by **doṣic** states.

Mana (Mind)

Etymological and Functional Definition

- Mana** (mind) derives from the root “√man,” meaning “to think or contemplate.”
- Acts as the **internal coordinator** for perception (with sense organs) and action (with motor organs).

Ayurvedic Description

Caraka Saṃhitā (Sūtra Sthāna 8/4) indicates that cognition requires the **convergence** of ātman, mana, indriya, and arthas (objects of perception).

- The mind **selects, focuses, and interprets** incoming sensory data, then **directs** responses.

Attributes of Mind

- Anu (subtlety)**: The mind is intangible and subtle.
- Eka (singularity)**: Operates on **one** object at a time for a **clear** cognition process.
- Sankalpa-Vikalpa**: Engages in **thinking, reasoning, doubt**, and mental constructs.

Buddhi (Intellect)

Definition

- Buddhi** is the faculty of **discrimination, reasoning, and determination**. Often described as the “**decisive cognitive function**.”
- Distinct from mana, which deals with thought flow, buddhi specializes in **analysis** and **judgment**—the final resolution.

Role in Ayurveda

- Clinical Insight**: In diagnosing diseases, a practitioner uses **buddhi** to interpret signs/symptoms, deduce doṣic imbalances, and formulate treatments.
- Ethical and Moral Dimension**: Buddhi decides right vs. wrong actions, reflecting **sāttvic, rājasic, or tāmasic** influences.

Scriptural Reference

Bhagavad Gītā (ch. 2) portrays buddhi as the **steady** and **discriminative** faculty, essential for **wise decision-making**

and maintaining mental equilibrium.

Citta (Memory-Consciousness)

Definition

- In many Sanskrit texts, **citta** can denote **memory**, **stored impressions**, or the broader **mind-stuff** that contains **saṃskāras** (subconscious imprints).
- Acts as the **reservoir** where **past experiences** are recorded and from which **recollections** arise.

Ayurvedic Context

- Citta is **intricately linked** with manas and buddhi, forming a **triad** of mental faculties:
 - **Manas**: Perceives and contemplates.
 - **Buddhi**: Discriminates and decides.
 - **Citta**: Stores, recalls, and influences future cognition based on **past impressions**.

Clinical Relevance

- Disorders of memory (e.g., amnesia) or emotional trauma can be viewed as **imbalances** in citta's function.
- Ayurvedic therapies (like sattvavajaya, rasāyana for mental rejuvenation) aim to **harmonize** citta to promote mental well-being.

Ahaṃkāra (Ego-Sense)

Definition

- **Ahaṃkāra** literally means “**I-ness**” or ego principle.
- Represents the **sense of individuality**—identifying the **self** as distinct from others and the external world.

Philosophical Standpoint

- In **Sāṅkhya philosophy**, ahaṃkāra emerges from **mahat (buddhi)**, giving rise to **indriyas** and further differentiated existence.
- Ayurveda, drawing from Sāṅkhya, views ahaṃkāra as a **necessary** but potentially **distorting** force if excessive. Imbalanced ahaṃkāra can lead to **over-attachment, arrogance**, or ignorance.

Role in Health and Disease

- Excessive self-identification (ahaṃkāra) may fuel **stress**, anxiety, or doṣic aggravations. E.g., a **Pitta**-type individual with high ahaṃkāra might experience anger or competitiveness.
- Ayurveda's holistic approach (including mind-body practices) aims to **reduce** unhealthy ego-driven behaviors, fostering balance.

Ātmā (Soul/Self)

Etymological and Metaphysical Basis

- **Ātmā** denotes the **innermost essence**, the **conscious self** that is eternal and beyond physical constraints.
- In Vedānta, ātmā is the **unchanging** witness, while the **body-mind** complex is subject to birth-death cycles.

Ayurvedic Explanation

Caraka Saṃhitā (Śārīra Sthāna 1/46) underscores:

“Since the soul (ātman) is conscious, it is described as the doer (kartā).”

- Ātmā is the **core** that animates śārīra, employing mana, buddhi, ahaṃkāra, and indriyas to **experience** the world.



Clinical Implications

- Ayurveda considers **true health** as aligning with one's **ātman**, manifesting a **balance** of doṣas, a calm mind, and ethical behavior.
- Spiritual practices (meditation, yoga, ethical living) are advised for deeper **ātman-centric** well-being.

Interrelationship and Holistic View

1. **Śarīra** is the **physical instrument**;
2. **Jñānendriyas** and **karmendriyas** form the **channels** for receiving and acting upon external stimuli;
3. **Mana** processes and coordinates **thought**, while
4. **Buddhi** finalizes **decisions**;
5. **Citta** stores **impressions** and memories;
6. **Ahaṁkāra** gives the sense of **individual identity**;
7. **Ātmā** is the **supreme consciousness**, or the **true self**, witnessing the entire interplay.

In **Ayurveda**, optimal health arises when these faculties and principles function **harmoniously** under balanced doṣic conditions. Disturbances in any layer—be it mental, intellectual, or ego-based—can **manifest** as disease. Restoring **equilibrium** hence requires addressing **all** dimensions (physical, mental, spiritual).

Conclusion

These definitions—**śarīra**, **jñānendriya**, **karmendriya**, **mana**, **buddhi**, **citta**, **ahaṁkāra**, and **ātmā**—offer a deeply integrated lens into how Ayurveda interprets **human existence**. Rather than compartmentalizing the body and psyche, Ayurveda merges them in a **systemic** and **spiritual** continuum:

- The **body** is seen as the tangible realm of **ātmā's** expression.
- The **mind** (mana) orchestrates sensory and motor faculties, aided by **intellect** (buddhi) and **ego** (ahaṁkāra).
- The **citta** holds past experiences, shaping future cognition and behavior.
- Ultimately, **ātmā** stands as the silent witness, the **core** presence that drives life's purpose.

In clinical and philosophical practice, acknowledging each of these aspects fosters a **truly holistic** therapeutic approach—one that addresses the **roots** of imbalance and cultivates **comprehensive** well-being.