

A STRUCTURED METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY OF AYURVEDA COMMENTARIES

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Abstract : *Ayurveda Acharyas* emphasise that a *Bhishak* must possess both clarity of textual concepts and clinical competence. Such clarity requires a good understanding of the foundational texts. The *Samhitas* of *Ayurveda* are composed in *Sanskrit*, usually in a concise verse (*Shloka*) form, where extensive knowledge is expressed within limited words.

Accordingly commentators, who play crucial role in decoding the *Mula Grantha*, are expected to maintain a balance between scholarly exposition and practical relevance. This is because, extreme focus on either of the two, may hinder effective transmission of knowledge. Therefore, a commentator's role, is not just to explain the text, but to guide the readers into developing the way of thinking that integrates textual understanding with clinical insight.

In *Ayurveda* learning, commentaries function as effective pedagogical tools only when approached with inquiry. This approach requires awareness of their structure, interpretive tools, and underlying questions. Without such awareness, the depth of understanding remains limited. The framework proposed in this study aims to address this gap by providing a structured guide for analysing the components of a commentary. By organising lexical, grammatical, dialectical, and structural features, the framework enables scholars to examine not only what a commentator states, but why specific interpretive choices are made. While interpretation remains qualitative, the systematic categorization of interpretive features, allows patterns and tendencies to be identified in a transparent and replicable manner. The framework thus offers a structured tool for future research in *Ayurveda* and related disciplines.

IndexTerms - Ayurveda commentaries; textual interpretation; methodology; comparative analysis; Indian Knowledge Systems.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

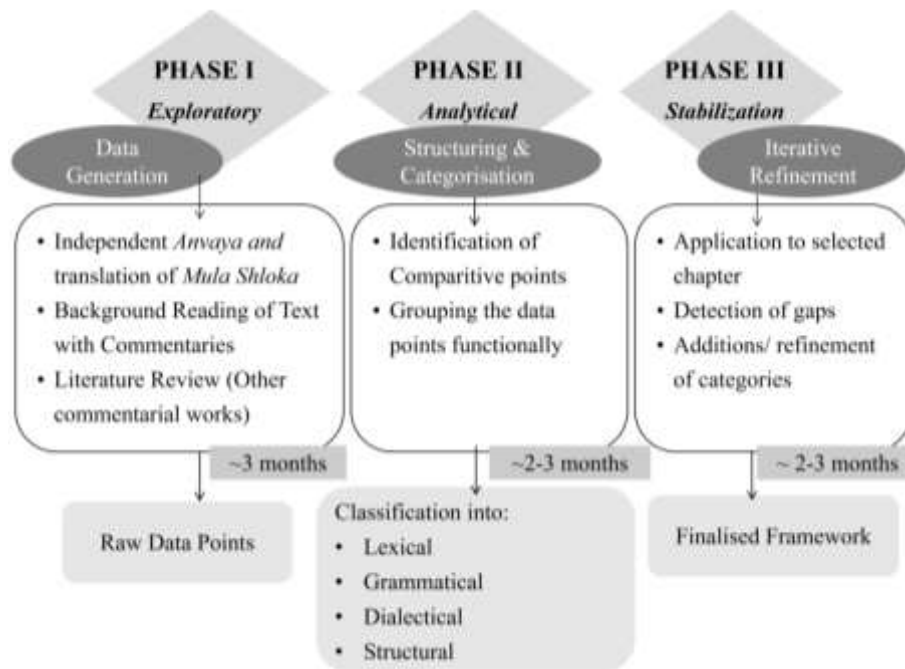
As most of the classical texts of *Ayurveda* are encoded in the *Sutra* format, it becomes increasingly difficult for an average scholar to understand the text. Commentators achieve this not only due to the depth in their understanding of the *Samhita*, but also because of their ability to structure the condensed knowledge of the *Sutra* into a descriptive version using a simpler narrative. The works of each commentator vary as it is influenced by their background, school of thought, philosophical orientation and unique interests which can alter their presentation style and the entire structure of commentary.

While most comparative studies on commentaries of *Ayurveda* texts depend on broad, qualitative observations without a clearly defined, replicable system; a few pioneering works have begun to establish a more systematic approach^{[1][2]}. These studies have proven the importance of a structured method, providing a toolkit for analyzing features like textual style (*Granthashaili*) and the application of interpretive tools (*Tantrayukti*) used by the commentators. Building upon these foundational efforts, this paper aims to contribute to an emerging sub-field- "commentarial studies" by presenting a synthesized, structured, and detailed framework.

This framework is designed to systematically gather evidence across several domains, allowing a researcher to move beyond anecdotal comparison to a data-driven analysis of the pedagogical, clinical, and scholarly priorities of pre-modern commentators. In this framework, each instance of a defined comparison point (e.g., *Nirukti*, *Samshaya*, *Tantrayukti* identification) occurring within the commentary on a single verse is treated as a discrete unit of data. Patterns are derived through a mixed method of analysis where, the objective data is collected by tracking the frequency and distribution of specific tools (eg., *Adhikarana*, *Vigraha*) which is complemented by a qualitative analysis, where, the clinical richness of a definition or the logical structure of an argument is examined. This approach of analysis allows for a comparison that is both broad in its evidence base and deep in its contextual understanding.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This methodology was developed during an ongoing dissertation work comparing the commentaries *Sarvangasundara* of *Arunadatta* and the *Ayurveda Rasayana* of *Hemadri* on chapters 11-14 of the *Ashtanga Hridayam, Sutra Sthana*.



2.1. Framework Development

Figure 1- Phases involved in the development of the methodological framework

Note: As this framework was developed during a dissertation comparing the commentaries on *Ashtanga Hridayam (Sutra Sthana, Chapters 11-14)*, the time duration present in the Figure 1 corresponds to that specific case study. While Phase I (*Anvaya* and translation) was conducted on all four chapters, Phase II (structuring and categorization) was done independent of chapter divisions. The duration noted for Phase III (Iterative refinement) reflects its application on Chapter 11, which acted as a pilot chapter for stabilising the framework.

This three-stage process was done to ensure that the final framework is both empirically grounded in the primary texts and contextually informed by prior scholarship, resulting in the comprehensive, multi-layered methodology detailed below as Table 1- Lexical Analysis, Table 2- Gramatical and Syntactical analysis, Table 3- Dialectical and Argumentative Framework, Table 4- Macrolevel Synthesis and Table 5- The Commentary’s Narrative Structure.

Table 1- Lexical Analysis

Comparison Criteria	Its value in Comparison
I] Lexical Analysis	Focuses on the meaning of individual words.
1.1) Pathabheda- Variant Readings They are found in the critical apparatus or footnote of the text. This is the observation made by the editor about the different versions of the text found in the manuscripts they collated.	If we find a major difference in the interpretation, we can first check this point to see if the difference can be explained simply by a variant reading in the <i>Mula Shloka</i> .
1.2) Padarthokti - Direct Synonyms It is a simple, direct, substitution by another word to clarify the meaning.	We can compare if a commentator prefers a very simple, common synonym or a more specific, technical, or clinical one, which reveals their intended audience and focus.
1.3) Nirukti - Etymological Breakdown It is the process of explaining a word’s meaning by breaking it down into its root (<i>Dhatu</i>), prefixes, and suffixes.	Comparing when and for which terms they provide a <i>Nirukti</i> reveals what concepts they considered important enough to explain the fundamental logic of the words.
1.4) Paribhasha- Descriptive Definition It is a descriptive sentence that explains a technical concept. It explains what something is or what it does.	We can compare whose <i>Paribhasha</i> gives clear functional understanding of the terms, and whether they are more focused clinically, or gramatically.

<p>1.5) Clarification of ambiguous terms Explaining the function of vague, seemingly insignificant words like ‘<i>Aadi</i>’ (etc.), ‘<i>Api</i>’ (also), ‘<i>Ca</i>’ (and).</p>	<p>This shows the depth in which commentator is analysing the text. Comparing how they interpret these terms can also reveal major differences in their understanding of the scope or clinical application of a verse.</p>
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Table 2- Gramatical and Syntactical analysis

Comparison Criteria	Its value in Comparison
<p>II] Gramatical and Syntactical analysis</p>	<p>Focuses on the rules of language and sentence structure.</p>
<p>2.1) Anvaya/ Vakyartha Kathanam- Systematic rephrasing It is the act of taking a <i>Shloka</i> which is in verse (<i>Padya</i>) form and rearranging it as a grammatically straightforward prose sentence (<i>Gadya</i>).</p>	<p>It clarifies the basic meaning of the verse, and provides a stable foundation for further interpretation. We can compare the consistency and style of their prose restatements.</p>
<p>2.2) Vighraha vakya/ Samasa analysis It is the grammatical breakdown of a <i>Samasa</i> (compound word) into its individual components establishing the relationship between the words.</p>	<p>It provides clarity on the grammatical structure of a compound, removing any confusions regarding the relationship between the words in it. The frequency and formality of <i>Vighraha</i> denotes the emphasis commentator gives on grammatical proof.</p>
<p>2.3) Comment on grammatical specificities Any comment on the structure of the word. For example, in a verb, its mood (e.g., ‘<i>Lat</i>’, ‘<i>Ling</i>’, ‘<i>Lot</i>’), voice (active or passive), form and all other specific grammatical analyses.</p>	<p>Analysing this helps reveal the specific meaning or process intended in the verse. Identifying these points allows us to compare their depth of grammatical knowledge and their ability to connect subtle grammar to significant clinical meaning.</p>
<p>2.4) Explicit mention of Sutra A direct citation of a grammatical rule from <i>Panini</i>’s <i>Ashtadhyayi</i> or other texts of sanskrit grammar.</p>	<p>They can signify formal grammatical scholarship and a commitment to justifying a point through classical knowledge.</p>

Table 3- Dialectical and Argumentative Framework

Comparison Criteria	Its value in Comparison
<p>III]Dialectical and Argumentative Framework (The Logic)</p>	<p>Analyzes the use of logical argumentation to teach or prove a point.</p>
<p>3.1) Problem raising and solving</p>	<p>They are pedagogical tools, which anticipate a reader’s confusion, structure the explanation, and helps the commentator to strengthen their own position by refuting potential counter-arguments. This indicates the style of commentating, pedagogical strategy, and level of engagement with deeper philosophical issues.</p>
<p>3.1.1) Samshaya- Doubt/Question A <i>Samshaya</i> is a simple, direct question for clarification. (Cha.Vi.8/43)^[3]</p>	
<p>3.1.2) Purva Paksha- Objection A <i>Purva Paksha</i> is a reasoned argument presenting a logical objection or opposing view.(Su.Ut.64/25)^[4]</p>	
<p>3.1.3)Uttara Paksha/ Siddhanta- The Answer / Established Conclusion It is the clarification given to a <i>Samshaya</i> (doubt) or the refutation of a <i>Purva Paksha</i> (objection).(Su.Ut.64/26,27)^[5] <i>Siddhanta</i> is the final principle(Cha.Vi.8/37)^[6] that the commentator establishes with regard to the <i>Mula Shloka</i>.</p>	<p>An argument is incomplete without its conclusion. Identifying the <i>Uttara Paksha</i> allows us to see the commentator’s final view point and understand the logic they use to arrive at it. It shows how they solve problems and establish certainty for the reader.</p>
<p>3.1.4) Hetu- Stating the Reason/ Cause It is a statement of causality(Cha.Vi.8/33)^[7] that clarifies why did they make such statement or how did they reach that <i>Siddhanta</i>. This provides the logical reason for their statement.</p>	<p>A commentator who frequently provides a <i>Hetu</i> gives importance to the reasoning behind the science. We can compare the types of reasons they give whether they are based on logic, clinical observation, or textual authority, to understand their intellectual priorities.</p>

Table 4- Macrolevel Synthesis

Comparison Criteria	Its value in Comparison
IV]Macrolevel Synthesis- Structuring the Knowledge	Analyzes how the verse is framed and what compositional tools are used or identified.
4.1.) Adhikarana/ Prakarana It is a formal introductory statement which labels the topic of the upcoming verse or section.(Cha. Si.12/41-44-Chakrapani) ^[8] (SU.UT.64/8) ⁹	The use of <i>Adhikarana</i> highlights the importance commentators give to arranging any information in a clear and structured way.
4.2) Coherence and context Any statement that explains how the current verse connects to the surrounding text.	It reveals their awareness of the text’s macro-structure. Identification of <i>Anuvritti</i> shows the grammatical focus, and <i>Sangati</i> shows a focus on the logical flow of ideas.
4.2.1) Sangati- Thematic Coherence <i>Sangati</i> is the broad, thematic link. It answers - “Why this topic follows that topic?”.	
4.2.2) Anuvritti - Grammatical continuation <i>Anuvritti</i> is the narrow, technical grammatical link (“Where do the missing words in this sentence come from?”).	
4.3) Interpretive Tools- The tools of textual composition and interpretation.	
4.3.1) Tantrayukti <i>Tantrayukti</i> are a standardized set of logical and interpretive tools that an author uses to compose and a commentator uses to understand the <i>Tantra</i> . (Cha.Si.12/41-44-Chakrapani) ^[10]	It answers- “Which commentator is more attuned to the logical structure of the text?”, “Do they use relevant <i>Tantrayukti</i> to understand the topic?”
4.3.2) Drishtanta/ Upama- Analogy/ Similie A <i>Drishtanta</i> is a tool where a familiar, example is used to explain an unfamiliar or abstract concept. (Cha.Vi.8/34) ^[11] An <i>Upama</i> (similie), often marked by “ <i>Iva</i> ” (as if). It is a specific type of <i>Drishtanta</i> .(Cha.Vi.8/42) ^[12]	Use of an analogy bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and the practical reality. Its presence shows the commentator’s writing style and clinical creativity.
4.3.3) Tacchilya <i>Tacchilya</i> is an interpretive principle based on habitual nature or close association. It is a form of non-literal interpretation where a quality or action is attributed to something because of its constant and inherent connection to it. (A.H. Ut. 40/80- Arunadatta) ^[13]	It allows a commentator to explain verses that would seem illogical if taken literally. Identifying when a commentator uses <i>Tacchilya</i> reveals which commentator moves beyond the direct, dictionary meaning of a word (<i>Abhidha</i>) to a more contextual, implied meaning (<i>Lakshana</i>) in order to preserve the clinical sense of the text.
4.3.4) Kalpana- Compositional Style <i>Kalpana</i> refers to the creative choices made by the original author to compose the text. It is the author’s intent behind the words. (A.H. Ut. 40/80- Arunadatta) ^[14]	Recognizing <i>Kalpana</i> helps to move beyond a simple literal reading to understand the author’s deeper intent and the cleverness of their composition. Comparing if and when a commentator points out a <i>Kalpana</i> is a direct measure of their literary and scholarly sensitivity.
4.3.5) Arthashraya <i>Ashraya</i> refers to the, technical, rule-based editing techniques an author uses to construct their sentences. (A.H.Ut. 40/80- Arunadatta) ^[15]	Understanding <i>Ashraya</i> helps us justify non-literal interpretations. Comparing the commentators’ ability to identify these technical mechanics separates a commentator who explains meaning from one who explains how the text is written.
4.3.6) Udaharana (Example) An <i>Udaharana</i> is a specific, concrete instance used to illustrate a general rule. Unlike a <i>Drishtanta</i> , an <i>Udaharana</i> provides a direct case.	A specific example shows the reader exactly how to use the principle in a real-world scenario. Comparison can be done on the detail and clarity of their examples.
4.4) Cross references It is the act of a commentator citing or quoting an external authority or text to support their argument, define a term, or provide context. This is different from internal references within the same text (which, in this paper, are classified as <i>Tantrayukti</i> like <i>Atitavekshana</i> and <i>Anagatavekshana</i> , even though they too serve the same purpose).	This is a primary method through which a commentator validates their interpretation through <i>Shabda Pramana</i> . By tracking which texts a commentator quotes, we can map their intellectual lineage. Does one commentator cite the <i>Brihat Trayi</i> more often? Does another cite texts other than <i>Ayurveda</i> , revealing a broader, more interdisciplinary scholarly background? Do they cite anonymous sources which are indicated by phrases like “ <i>Anye tu</i> ” (others say)?
4.4.1) Charaka, Sushruta, Ashtanga Sangraha	
4.4.2) Texts of Ayurveda apart from the ones mentioned above (Kharanadi)	
4.4.3) From others commentaries	
4.4.4) From texts other than Ayurveda- Paratantra	

4.4.5) Shloka without reference (Anye tu)	
4.5) Has commentator mentioned or discussed Pathabheda? This is when the commentator themselves discusses a variant reading, often using phrases like “ <i>Pathantaram</i> ” (another reading) or “ <i>Kecit Pustakeshu Etat Labhya</i> ” (this is found in some manuscripts).	A commentator who actively discusses variant readings is showing a concern not just for explaining the text, but for establishing the most authentic version of the text. Comparing the frequency and nature of these discussions provides a clear window into their role as editors and preservers of the textual tradition.

Table 5- The Commentary’s Narrative Structure

Comparison Criteria	It’s value in Comparison
V]The Commentary’s Narrative Structure It describes commentator’s step-by-step logical and narrative flow for that specific verse.	It helps counteracts the fragmentation of the granular analysis. It helps us answer the question: “What was their overall process for explaining this concept?”. Comparing these narrative summaries across many verses allows us to identify the consistent, strategic patterns that define the core difference between the commentators’ approaches.

3. RESULTS

As this is a pure methodology paper, the result is the framework itself. The detailed, analytical framework presented in the methods section is the primary finding of this research. It offers a systematic, transparent, and replicable framework for organising and analysing interpretive approaches within textual traditions, enabling both individual and comparative study.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. The Framework as a Tool for Profiling Contributions:

The primary utility of the proposed framework is its ability to synthesize granular observations into an assessment of a commentator’s contributions across the domains of scholarly and clinical contributions.

Assessing Scholarly Contributions: A commentator’s scholarly contribution, their ability to clarify the text as a refined literary work can be assessed by analyzing patterns across multiple data points. For instance, a high frequency of analysis in the domains of *Padarthokti* (1.2), *Vyakarana Vishesh* (2.3), or Interpretive Tools (4.3) indicates a strong focus on textual criticism and linguistic proof.

Assessing Clinical Contributions: Similarly, clinical contributions are not confined to a single category. They are revealed through a pattern of providing *Paribhasha* (1.4) which are more clinically useful, clear *Drishtanta* (4.3.2) which are easily grasped, or resolving confusions in the diagnosis through logical clarification- *Samshaya* (3.1), *Purvapaksha* (3.2), *Hetu* (3.4) and establishing a principle/ *Siddhanta* (3.3). The framework allows us to measure a commentator’s focus on helping the practitioner understand the patient.

4.2. Epistemological grounding

This framework also functions as a tool for epistemological analysis, revealing how a commentator validates their claims to knowledge (*Pramana*).

- The analysis of *Nirukti*, citations of *Panini Sutra* and referring other authoritative texts identifies the commentator’s reliance on *Shabda / Aphopadesha Pramana* (Authoritative Testimony).
- The identification of *Hetu* and the Dialectical Framework hints at the commentator’s use of *Anumana Pramana* (Inference) and *Tarka* (Logic).
- The analysis of *Tantrayukti* and *Sangati* reveals the commentator’s use of *Yukti* (Rational Application) to understand the architecture of the text.
- The analysis of usage of similies, description of symptoms in vivid experienced language, use of *Drishtanta*, can help us understand the use of *Pratyaksha* and *Upamana Pramana*.

By mapping the observed commentarial techniques to these foundational *Pramana*, the researcher can move beyond describing style to analyzing the *Darshanic* view point of a commentator.

4.3. Broader Applications and Replicability:

This framework, while developed through a case study of *Arunadatta* and *Hemadri*, is not restricted to the comparative use. It may be applied to the structured analysis of a single commentary or to the comparison of multiple commentaries. By organising traditional interpretive tools within a systematic analytical framework, the methodology allows interpretive patterns to be examined in a transparent and replicable manner. Its application may also extend to commentarial traditions in fields, such as philosophy (*Darshana*).

By organizing features such as lexical choices, grammatical explanations, dialectical reasonings and structural methods, this framework allow scholars to understand not merely what a commentator states, but why specific interpretive choices are made. This process facilitates a clearer understanding of the commentator’s intent and methodological priorities. With continued use, such

analysis cultivates an independent interpretive vision, allowing the scholars to engage more confidently with the primary texts, even without complete reliance on commentaries.

5. CONCLUSION

Acharyas repeatedly emphasise that a *Bhishak* must have both clarity of *Shastra* and competence in clinical application (Cha.Su.9/6, Cha.Vi.8/4)^[16](Su.Su.34/19)^[17]. Accordingly, a reader of a *Vaidyakiya Shastra* expects a similar balance from a commentator who draws practical understanding from concise expression of the *Mula Grantha*. Commentaries that focus only on scholarly explanations or solely on clinical pragmatism can hinder the effective transmission of knowledge. The role of the commentator, therefore, is not only to explain the text, but also to model a method of thinking that integrates textual understanding with clinical insight.

Commentaries can be great pedagogical instruments only when they are approached with inquiry. Such inquiry, however, requires an awareness of how a commentary is structured, the interpretive tools it uses, and the kind of the questions it seeks to address. Without this awareness, the reader remain confined to surface level understanding, as one cannot perceive what one does not know to look for. The analytical framework proposed in this study addresses this gap by offering a structured guide to identifying and examining the key components of a commentary.

The strength of this framework lies in its ability to organise rich interpretive observations into a clear and systematic structure that enables meaningful comparison and analysis. While interpretation remains fundamentally qualitative, the transparent identification and categorization of interpretive features allows patterns and methodological tendencies to emerge without diminishing the depth. By making interpretive processes visible and analytically traceable, the framework strengthens the evidential grounding of literary study while remaining rooted in the intellectual traditions of India. It thus offers a replicable methodological tool for future research in Ayurveda and related disciplines.

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