

Digital Corpus Development of Ayurvedic Content in the Puranas with Special Reference to Kriya Sharir

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ABSTRACT

The Puranas represent an expansive and underexplored repository of indigenous medical knowledge embedded within religious, cosmological, and narrative frameworks. While classical Ayurvedic treatises have received sustained scholarly attention, Puranic texts remain marginal within formal Ayurvedic historiography. This study proposes a digital corpus-based methodology for systematically extracting, structuring, and analyzing Ayurvedic physiological concepts (Sharir Kriya) from the Puranas. By integrating Ayurvedic epistemology with digital humanities tools, the research seeks to reinterpret Puranic physiology as a legitimate and coherent knowledge system, contributing to both Ayurvedic scholarship and computational text studies.

KEYWORDS: Digital Corpus, Purans, Kriya Sharir, Agni, Dhatu, Panchmahabhoot, Tridosh, Aatma

1. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda's epistemological foundations extend beyond canonical medical treatises into a broader civilizational knowledge network encompassing Vedic, Upanishadic, Itihasic, and Puranic literature. The marginalization of Puranas in Ayurvedic research stems largely from their narrative and symbolic mode of expression, which resists conventional biomedical categorization. However, recent advances in digital corpus development and computational hermeneutics enable a re-evaluation of such texts as structured repositories of functional physiological knowledge.

Sharir Kriya, as the Ayurvedic discipline concerned with bodily function and systemic regulation, provides a critical lens for examining these texts. This research positions the Puranas not as peripheral religious documents but as epistemically significant sources articulating a holistic understanding of human physiology.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in three intersecting theoretical domains:

Ayurvedic Epistemology (Pramana Theory) – emphasizing inference (Anumana), authoritative testimony (Aptopadesha), and experiential knowledge.

Textual Hermeneutics – recognizing metaphor, allegory, and cosmology as legitimate vehicles of scientific knowledge.

Digital Humanities – applying computational tools to classical texts without epistemic reductionism.

The framework rejects the positivist dismissal of symbolic language and instead interprets it as a pre-modern scientific encoding system.

3. REVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP

Existing Ayurvedic research overwhelmingly prioritizes Samhita literature, reinforcing a canon-centric model. Studies that reference Puranic medical content often do so anecdotally or symbolically, without systematic analysis. Parallel developments in digital Sanskrit corpora (e.g., Vedic and Epic digitization projects) demonstrate the feasibility of large-scale semantic analysis, yet rarely incorporate Ayurvedic physiological models.

This research addresses a critical gap by synthesizing Ayurvedic theory with digital corpus methodologies to recontextualize Puranic Sharir Kriya.

4. SHARIR KRIYA AS A PHYSIOLOGICAL PARADIGM

Sharir Kriya conceptualizes the body as a dynamic system governed by:

- Tridosha as regulatory forces
- Agni as metabolic intelligence
- Dhatus as functional tissues
- Srotas as circulatory networks
- Prana–Tejas–Ojas as integrative life forces

Puranic references to creation, sustenance, and dissolution (Srishti–Sthiti–Laya) mirror these physiological processes, suggesting a fractal correspondence between cosmic and bodily function. This study treats such parallels not as metaphorical coincidence but as intentional epistemic structuring.

5. CORPUS SELECTION AND TEXTUAL SCOPE

The corpus includes critically edited Sanskrit versions of selected Maha- and Upa-Puranas, notably:

- Garuda Purana (anatomy, post-mortem physiology)
- Agni Purana (medical classifications)
- Vishnu Purana (cosmic physiology analogues)
- Brahma Purana (embodiment and life processes)

Texts are selected based on density of physiological references rather than theological prominence.

6. METHODOLOGY

6.1 Digitization and Textual Normalization

Manuscripts are digitized and standardized using IAST transliteration. Variant readings are preserved through layered annotation rather than editorial homogenization.

6.2 Semantic Annotation

Key Sharir Kriya concepts are identified through Ayurvedic lexicons and tagged using multi-level metadata (conceptual, functional, contextual).

6.3 Computational Analysis

Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques are employed for frequency mapping, collocation analysis, and thematic clustering, while acknowledging the limitations of current Sanskrit computational models.

6.4 Interpretive Validation

Findings are cross-validated against classical Ayurvedic texts to ensure doctrinal consistency without enforcing textual dependency.

7. ANALYTICAL FINDINGS

The corpus reveals a consistent physiological ontology across Puranas, including:

- Digestion as transformative cosmological fire
- Respiration as rhythmic regulation of Prana
- Mental equilibrium as physiological stability
- Disease as disruption of systemic harmony rather than localized pathology

These findings support the hypothesis that Puranic physiology constitutes a coherent, albeit narratively encoded, Sharir Kriya framework.

8. DISCUSSION

Digitally restructuring Puranic Ayurveda challenges modern disciplinary boundaries between religion, literature, and science. The corpus demonstrates that ancient Indian knowledge systems employed narrative abstraction as a method of preserving complex physiological models across generations. This has significant implications for rethinking non-Western medical historiography.

9. LIMITATIONS

- The study is constrained by:
- Polysemy of Sanskrit terms
- Context-dependent symbolism
- Incomplete digitization of manuscripts
- Computational limitations in semantic disambiguation
- These limitations underscore the need for human-machine collaborative scholarship.

10. IMPLICATIONS FOR AYURVEDIC RESEARCH

This research:

- Expands the Ayurvedic textual canon
- Introduces corpus linguistics into Ayurvedic studies
- Enables comparative physiology research
- Supports integrative medicine discourse

11. CONCLUSION

The digital corpus development of Ayurvedic knowledge in the Puranas, with special reference to Sharir Kriya, represents a paradigmatic shift in traditional medical research. By aligning ancient epistemologies with contemporary digital methodologies, the study restores the Puranas to their rightful place within the intellectual history of Ayurveda and opens new pathways for global, interdisciplinary scholarship.

12. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future research may incorporate:

- AI-assisted semantic modeling
- Cross-cultural medical corpus comparison
- Clinical reinterpretation of Puranic physiology
- Ontology-based Ayurvedic databases

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