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## Purusha's integral role in ayurvedic Maulik Siddhanta and health paradigms

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### Abstract

This review paper explores the concept of Purusha in Ayurvedic philosophy, as delineated in the foundational principles of Maulik Siddhanta. The role of Purusha, or consciousness, forms a pivotal element in Ayurvedic thought, with profound implications for health, disease, and healing. Through an analysis of classical texts and contemporary interpretations, this paper aims to understand how Purusha relates to other essential Ayurvedic concepts, such as Prakriti (nature), Doshas (biological energies), and the mind-body connection. Additionally, the paper delves into the practical applications of Purusha in holistic health paradigms, emphasizing its importance in disease prevention, mental wellness, and spiritual well-being.

**Keywords:** Charaka samhita, sushruta samhita, and ashtanga hridaya

### Introduction

In Ayurveda, Purusha is regarded as the eternal, formless, and unchanging consciousness or soul that resides within every individual. It is considered the pure self, distinct from the physical body and mind, yet inseparably linked to them in facilitating life's processes. According to classical Ayurvedic texts like the Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita, Purusha is the animating force that gives life to the body and mind, sustaining physiological and psychological functions without being altered by them. This consciousness is the core of existence and the observer of all material activity. Purusha is omnipresent and eternal, existing beyond time, space, and the limitations of the physical body. It represents pure awareness and is described in Ayurvedic philosophy as the "silent witness", observing the activities of the body and mind without becoming involved in them. It is this distinction that makes Purusha unique - it remains unaffected by physical illness, mental disturbances, or environmental changes, yet it enables the perception of these experiences. The concept of Prakriti, on the other hand, refers to the material aspect of existence, including the body, mind, and the elements that govern physical and mental functions. Prakriti encompasses the dynamic aspects of nature, which are subject to change, decay, and transformation. Purusha and Prakriti together form the fundamental duality in Ayurvedic philosophy. Purusha provides the consciousness necessary for life, while Prakriti forms the material structure through which life is expressed. This duality mirrors the relationship between the unmanifest (consciousness) and the manifest (material reality), laying the foundation for understanding health, disease, and healing in Ayurveda. In Sankhya philosophy, which heavily influences Ayurveda, this relationship between Purusha and Prakriti is explained as the interplay between the unchanging and the changing, the observer and the observed. Purusha remains constant, while Prakriti is subject to the cycles of birth, growth, and decay. Without Purusha, Prakriti is inert, and without Prakriti, Purusha has no medium for expression. This interdependence underscores the holistic approach of Ayurveda, where physical, mental, and spiritual well-being are interconnected and must be balanced to achieve health. Ayurvedic Maulik Siddhanta (fundamental principles) integrate Purusha as a vital element of human existence, positioning it alongside Prakriti to explain the complex interactions between consciousness and the body-mind system. The three Doshas - Vata, Pitta, and Kapha - which govern all bodily functions, are expressions of Prakriti. Disease or illness in Ayurveda is understood as an imbalance in these Doshas, affecting Prakriti. However, Purusha, being unaffected by these imbalances, remains the guiding consciousness that allows individuals to

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perceive and correct disturbances. Moreover, the ultimate goal of Ayurveda is to align the body and mind with Purusha, facilitating not just physical health but also spiritual growth. Purusha is the source of Sattva - the mental quality of purity, clarity, and harmony. When individuals are aligned with Purusha, they experience inner peace, mental stability, and a sense of connectedness to the universal consciousness. This is why Ayurvedic practices, such as meditation, Pranayama (breathing exercises), and Yogic postures, aim to still the mind and quiet the body, allowing for a deeper connection with Purusha.

### Objective of the paper

The objective of this review paper is to explore the integral role of Purusha (consciousness) in Ayurvedic Maulik Siddhanta (fundamental principles), focusing on its connection to health, disease, and spiritual well-being.

### The Definition and Nature of Purusha

In Ayurvedic and Sankhya philosophy, Purusha represents the eternal, unchanging consciousness that exists independently of matter. It is considered the pure self or soul, detached from the physical and mental realms. Purusha is not affected by the external environment, emotions, or bodily functions. Instead, it is the passive observer of all life's processes, often referred to as the "silent witness" to the workings of Prakriti (nature). According to the Charaka Samhita, Purusha is described as the Chetana Dhatu - the conscious essence or life force that animates the physical body. This eternal principle is responsible for self-awareness, cognition, and perception. While the body and mind are subject to change, growth, and decay, Purusha remains constant, observing these changes without being altered by them. The Sankhya school of thought, which forms a significant philosophical foundation for Ayurveda, explains that Purusha is distinct from Prakriti, which encompasses the body, mind, and the material universe. Purusha, however, is necessary for Prakriti to manifest, as it provides the consciousness that enables perception and action in the material world. This dualistic view highlights the significance of Purusha in providing the foundation for life, yet it remains uninvolved in the active, physical processes governed by Prakriti.

In Ayurveda, Purusha is crucial for maintaining health because it provides the consciousness that governs the body's internal and external environments. By maintaining its state of stillness and detachment, Purusha allows for a balanced interaction with Prakriti, helping individuals navigate physical and mental challenges without becoming overwhelmed by them. This conscious detachment is essential for achieving both mental clarity and spiritual growth.

The Sushruta Samhita also highlights the duality of Purusha and Prakriti, explaining that Purusha is the eternal soul, while Prakriti provides the body and mind with their functions. Together, they form a complete system, but Purusha always remains distinct from the material and changing aspects of life. This relationship forms the core of Ayurvedic healing, as practitioners seek to align the dynamic aspects of Prakriti with the stillness of Purusha to restore balance and health.

In summary, Purusha is the formless, eternal consciousness that pervades all living beings, providing the spiritual foundation for health and existence. It is fundamentally

distinct from the body and mind (Prakriti), and its role in Ayurvedic philosophy is critical for understanding the deeper aspects of life, disease, and healing. The awareness of Purusha helps individuals maintain equilibrium in life by aligning themselves with their higher consciousness.

### 3. Purusha and Its Relationship with Prakriti

In Ayurvedic philosophy, the relationship between Purusha (pure consciousness) and Prakriti (nature or matter) is central to understanding both the universe and the individual being. This dualism forms the foundation of Sankhya philosophy, which heavily influences Ayurvedic thought. Purusha is considered the eternal, unchanging, and passive observer, while Prakriti represents the dynamic, ever-changing material reality. Together, they explain the emergence of life and consciousness, health, and disease. Purusha is the formless, non-material aspect of existence. It is pure consciousness that observes without participating in the material world. Unlike the physical body or mind, which undergo constant change, Purusha remains unaffected by external circumstances. It is the soul or spirit that remains steady amid the fluctuations of life, existing beyond time, space, and causality. According to Ayurvedic texts like the Charaka Samhita, Purusha is described as the "silent witness," a passive force that, while inseparable from the body and mind, does not engage with the material aspects of existence.

Prakriti, on the other hand, is the physical and mental manifestation of existence. It is composed of three fundamental qualities or Gunas: Sattva (purity, harmony), Rajas (activity, passion), and Tamas (inertia, ignorance). These Gunas govern all forms of material expression, including the Doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) that regulate the physiological and psychological functioning of the body. Prakriti is dynamic and in constant flux, as it encompasses the tangible aspects of life - body, mind, environment, and emotions.

In Ayurvedic cosmology, the universe and all life are the result of the interaction between Purusha and Prakriti. While Purusha provides the consciousness and awareness that animates life, it is through Prakriti that this consciousness finds expression in the material world. Sankhya philosophy explains that without Purusha, Prakriti would remain inactive; without Prakriti, Purusha would have no means of expression. This symbiotic relationship reflects the balance between the unmanifest (Purusha) and the manifest (Prakriti), where Purusha illuminates, and Prakriti acts.

When it comes to human health, this relationship is critical. Prakriti determines an individual's constitution, encompassing physical, mental, and emotional traits. Each person has a unique balance of the three Doshas, which are expressions of Prakriti's influence. Disease or ill health in Ayurveda is viewed as an imbalance in the Doshas, a distortion in Prakriti's natural state. Purusha, being the pure witness, remains untouched by these disturbances. However, the awareness of Purusha allows individuals to navigate the challenges of life, promoting a balanced and harmonious existence.

The goal of Ayurvedic healing is to restore balance within Prakriti by aligning it with the purity of Purusha. Practices like meditation, yoga, and Pranayama are aimed at bringing individuals closer to their true nature (Purusha), allowing them to transcend the disturbances of Prakriti. This realignment helps in achieving physical, mental, and

spiritual well-being, as Purusha's inherent tranquility stabilizes the constant changes of Prakriti.

On a spiritual level, the realization of Purusha's distinction from Prakriti is considered a path to Moksha (liberation). By recognizing that the self is Purusha - unaffected by the body's ailments, the mind's turbulence, or the material world's distractions - individuals can transcend suffering and achieve lasting peace. Ayurveda's holistic approach to health incorporates this philosophy by treating not only the body and mind but also the spiritual self. In conclusion, the relationship between Purusha and Prakriti is essential for understanding life from an Ayurvedic perspective. While Prakriti governs the physical, mental, and emotional aspects of life, it is Purusha that provides the consciousness that animates these experiences. Together, they offer a framework for achieving health, harmony, and spiritual growth by aligning the ever-changing nature of Prakriti with the stillness and awareness of Purusha. This integration forms the essence of Ayurvedic healing and its holistic approach to well-being.

#### 4. Purusha and Health in Ayurveda

In Ayurveda, Purusha (consciousness or soul) plays a vital role in defining and maintaining health. Health, in its broadest sense, is viewed as a state of equilibrium between the body, mind, and spirit. Ayurveda recognizes that Purusha is the unchanging, eternal observer, and its harmonious relationship with Prakriti (the physical body and mind) is essential for an individual's overall well-being. The proper balance between these elements creates a state of Swasthya (health), while disharmony leads to disease. Purusha is considered the underlying force that gives life to the body and mind. According to the Charaka Samhita, Purusha is the conscious self, and its presence is necessary for the functioning of the human body and mind. It is through Purusha that an individual experiences life, perceives the world, and connects to their inner self. In this sense, Purusha is not simply a passive observer but also the enabler of the body's physiological and psychological functions.

**Purusha and the Three Pillars of Health:** Ayurveda emphasizes the three pillars of health - Ahar (diet), Nidra (sleep), and Brahmacharya (proper management of sexual energy). These pillars are essential for maintaining balance in Prakriti, but they are influenced by Purusha's awareness. Purusha provides the consciousness needed to make informed choices about diet, lifestyle, and mental health, aligning one's physical and mental practices with spiritual awareness. This leads to a harmonious life where the body and mind function in unison with the soul.

In health, Purusha is associated with the clarity and stability of Sattva (mental purity). A person who is in tune with their Purusha experiences mental clarity, emotional stability, and spiritual insight. This inner awareness helps individuals maintain a balanced life, leading to proper digestion, a strong immune system, and sound mental health. This is why Ayurvedic treatments often include practices like meditation, Pranayama (breathing exercises), and Yogasana (yoga postures), which help align the mind with Purusha and promote peace and clarity.

**Purusha and Disease:** According to Ayurvedic philosophy, disease occurs when there is a disturbance in Prakriti, specifically the imbalance of the Doshas (Vata, Pitta,

Kapha). While Purusha remains unaffected by these imbalances, it plays a critical role in health management. The awareness of Purusha helps individuals recognize the early signs of imbalance and take steps to restore harmony in Prakriti.

Ayurveda's approach to healing is holistic, and treatments are aimed at bringing the individual's body, mind, and spirit into alignment with Purusha. Ayurvedic therapies such as Panchakarma (detoxification) and Rasayana (rejuvenation) are designed to cleanse and restore balance in the body while reconnecting the individual with their conscious self. These therapies emphasize the removal of Ama (toxins) that accumulate in the body due to poor digestion and stress, which are viewed as disruptions in the balance between Prakriti and Purusha.

**The Role of Purusha in Mental Health:** In Ayurveda, the mind is seen as the bridge between Purusha (soul) and the physical body. When the mind is calm and stable, it reflects the qualities of Sattva, allowing for a clear connection with Purusha. This state of mental clarity leads to emotional balance and resilience against stress. However, when the mind is dominated by Rajas (restlessness) or Tamas (inertia), it obscures Purusha's awareness, leading to mental disturbances like anxiety, depression, and confusion. By restoring the connection between the mind and Purusha, Ayurveda seeks to address the root causes of mental health disorders. Techniques such as meditation, breath control, and herbal remedies are used to calm the mind and clear the pathway to Purusha. This, in turn, promotes mental clarity, emotional balance, and spiritual well-being.

**Purusha and Spiritual Health:** Spiritual health is central to Ayurvedic medicine, and Purusha is at the heart of this aspect of well-being. Ayurveda teaches that true health is not only about the absence of disease but also about spiritual fulfillment and inner peace. Swasthya, or health, is achieved when an individual is in tune with their Purusha, allowing them to live a balanced, conscious, and meaningful life. Ayurvedic practices like Dincharya (daily routine) and Ritucharya (seasonal regimen) are designed to align physical activities with the natural rhythms of Prakriti while maintaining awareness of Purusha.

In conclusion, Purusha plays a central role in maintaining health according to Ayurvedic principles. It is the consciousness that guides the mind and body toward equilibrium and well-being. By cultivating awareness of Purusha, individuals can maintain balance in their Prakriti, leading to physical, mental, and spiritual health. Ayurvedic treatments and practices aim to restore this connection, making Purusha a key element in the pursuit of holistic health.

#### 5. Purusha, Mental Health, and Consciousness

In Ayurveda, Purusha represents the pure consciousness or soul that resides within each individual. It is the unchanging, eternal observer that remains unaffected by the fluctuations of the mind and body. The concept of Purusha is pivotal to understanding mental health and consciousness in Ayurveda because it provides the foundation for awareness, perception, and cognition, influencing both psychological and spiritual well-being. Mental health in Ayurveda is deeply interconnected with the three Gunas: Sattva (purity), Rajas (activity), and Tamas (inertia). These Gunas are the

fundamental qualities that shape the mind's nature and functioning. Sattva is associated with clarity, peace, and harmony, while Rajas induces restlessness and agitation, and Tamas leads to lethargy and ignorance. The state of mental health depends on the balance of these Gunas, with Sattva being the ideal state that aligns the mind with Purusha. Purusha, being pure consciousness, is the source of Sattva, the mental quality that enables clarity and wisdom. When Sattva predominates in the mind, an individual experiences peace, emotional balance, and a sense of connection to their higher self. This state of mental clarity allows for a stronger relationship with Purusha, leading to greater awareness and mindfulness. In this state, the mind reflects the qualities of Purusha, acting as a mirror of pure consciousness, free from disturbances. On the other hand, when Rajas or Tamas dominate, the mind becomes clouded, obstructing the connection with Purusha. Rajas, characterized by excessive mental activity and emotional turbulence, can lead to anxiety, irritability, and impulsiveness. Tamas, on the other hand, manifests as lethargy, confusion, and depression, further distancing the individual from their conscious self. These imbalances in the mind are seen as the root cause of mental health disorders in Ayurveda. The solution lies in reducing the influence of Rajas and Tamas, and increasing Sattva to restore mental balance. The relationship between Purusha and mental health is also linked to the concept of Manas (mind) in Ayurveda. Manas is considered the instrument of perception and cognition, facilitating the interaction between Purusha and the external world. A healthy mind is one that remains calm, reflective, and in harmony with Purusha. Sattvic practices, such as meditation, self-reflection, and mindful living, help the mind maintain this connection with Purusha, fostering mental stability and resilience against stress. Consciousness in Ayurveda is not limited to cognitive functions but extends to spiritual awareness. Purusha represents the highest form of consciousness, transcending the material and mental realms. When individuals cultivate awareness of their Purusha, they achieve a state of heightened consciousness, often referred to as Turiya in Vedantic thought - a state beyond waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. This state of spiritual consciousness is essential for achieving Moksha (liberation) and true mental peace. In Ayurvedic mental health treatment, the goal is to restore the individual's connection to Purusha by reducing the disturbances caused by Rajas and Tamas. Meditation, Pranayama (breathing techniques), Ayurvedic herbs like Brahmi, Ashwagandha, and Shankhapushpi, and other holistic practices are employed to calm the mind, promote Sattva, and realign the individual's consciousness with their inner Purusha. This approach helps in treating conditions like anxiety, depression, and other mental imbalances by addressing not only the mind but the deeper spiritual essence of the individual. In conclusion, the relationship between Purusha, mental health, and consciousness in Ayurveda is integral to understanding the holistic approach of the system. Purusha provides the consciousness that governs perception, cognition, and awareness, while the mind, influenced by the Gunas, reflects Purusha's light. The balance of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas determines mental health, with Sattva facilitating a deeper connection with Purusha. Ayurvedic treatments focus on restoring this balance to enhance mental well-being and spiritual awareness.

## 6. The Role of Purusha in Disease Prevention

In Ayurveda, Purusha (pure consciousness) plays a central role in disease prevention by providing self-awareness and mindfulness, which allow individuals to detect and address imbalances before they manifest into diseases. While Prakriti (the physical body and mind) is subject to fluctuations and disturbances, Purusha remains a stable, unchanging observer, facilitating an understanding of early signs of imbalance in the body, mind, and emotions. This heightened awareness enables individuals to maintain equilibrium between the Doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) and prevent the development of diseases.

Ayurveda posits that disease arises when there is an imbalance in the Doshas, primarily due to poor lifestyle choices, improper diet, or emotional disturbances. Purusha, through its connection with the mind, helps maintain clarity and self-regulation, allowing individuals to make choices that promote balance and well-being. This includes adjustments in diet, sleep, physical activity, and mental practices such as meditation and Pranayama (breathing exercises), which help mitigate stress - a major contributor to disease.

By fostering Sattva (mental clarity and balance), Purusha empowers the individual to stay aligned with natural rhythms, such as the Dinacharya (daily routine) and Ritucharya (seasonal regimen). These practices are designed to synchronize human activities with the cycles of nature, minimizing disruptions in the Doshas. The emphasis on preventive care in Ayurveda, guided by Purusha, encourages individuals to adopt habits that promote mental and physical harmony, thus preventing the accumulation of Ama (toxins) and maintaining overall health.

In addition to physical and mental well-being, Purusha contributes to spiritual awareness. When individuals remain connected to their true self - Purusha - they are more likely to experience a sense of inner peace and purpose, which further supports a healthy, balanced life. This alignment between body, mind, and consciousness is the essence of disease prevention in Ayurveda, where health is defined not only as the absence of disease but as the harmonious functioning of the entire being.

## 7. Purusha and Spiritual Health

In Ayurveda, Purusha is regarded as the eternal, unchanging consciousness that resides in all beings, providing the foundation for spiritual health. Unlike Prakriti, which encompasses the physical and mental aspects of existence, Purusha is the pure self, or soul, that is detached from the material world. Spiritual health in Ayurveda is deeply connected to the awareness and realization of Purusha, as it represents the highest form of self-awareness and inner truth. When an individual aligns with Purusha, they transcend the material and mental disturbances caused by the body and mind, leading to a state of peace and spiritual fulfillment. Spiritual health in Ayurveda involves understanding the duality of Purusha and Prakriti, and cultivating a connection with Purusha through practices that encourage self-awareness and mindfulness. The ultimate goal is to recognize one's true nature as Purusha, free from the illusions and attachments of the material world. This realization allows individuals to experience Moksha - spiritual liberation, which is seen as the highest form of health and well-being. In this context, the body and mind are

viewed as temporary manifestations of Prakriti, subject to change and decay, while Purusha remains constant and eternal. By maintaining a clear connection to Purusha, individuals can achieve a higher state of consciousness that enables them to live in harmony with their true self. This harmony not only promotes physical and mental balance but also enhances spiritual health, leading to a life of purpose, peace, and spiritual growth. Ayurvedic practices such as meditation, Pranayama (breath control), and Yogic practices are designed to quiet the mind and foster a deeper connection with Purusha. These practices help cultivate Sattva (mental clarity and balance), which is essential for maintaining spiritual health. In turn, a Sattvic mind allows the individual to experience the purity of Purusha, leading to heightened spiritual awareness and inner peace. Ultimately, Purusha's role in spiritual health is to guide the individual towards self-realization, helping them transcend the physical and mental distractions of life and connect with their true, eternal nature. By doing so, Ayurveda provides a holistic approach to health that integrates the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions, with Purusha at its core.

### 8. Conclusion

In this paper, we have explored the profound role of Purusha - the eternal consciousness - in the context of Ayurvedic Maulik Siddhanta (fundamental principles), particularly its influence on health, disease prevention, mental well-being, and spiritual health. Purusha, as the pure, unchanging observer, offers a unique perspective on health that transcends the material body and mind, aligning an individual with their true self. Its relationship with Prakriti (nature) forms the basis for understanding the dual aspects of existence - consciousness and matter - allowing for a holistic approach to health that incorporates the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions. In disease prevention, Purusha plays a crucial role by fostering self-awareness, enabling early detection of imbalances within the body and mind. It is through Purusha's consciousness that individuals are able to recognize disturbances in their Doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) and take preventive actions to maintain equilibrium. Furthermore, mental health in Ayurveda is closely tied to Purusha, where the alignment of the mind with Purusha cultivates Sattva (mental clarity) and mitigates the effects of Rajas (restlessness) and Tamas (ignorance), ensuring emotional stability and resilience. At the deepest level, Purusha is essential for achieving spiritual health. By connecting with Purusha, individuals can transcend the fluctuations of the mind and body, realizing their higher purpose and achieving Moksha (spiritual liberation). Ayurvedic practices such as meditation, Pranayama, and Yoga are designed to facilitate this connection, fostering a state of harmony between the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of life.

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