

How to interpret a Sanskrit Sutra? – let us keep it simple

The knowledge of Ayurveda has been documented by various maharishis in the form of sutras. **sūtra** literally means a thread that holds things together, and more metaphorically refers to an aphorism (or line, rule, formula) or a collection of such aphorisms. **sūtra**, being the most concentrated form of knowledge, plays a key role in the propagation of knowledge. Therefore to understand Ayurveda in order to become an Ayurvedic doctor, the first step is to know how to interpret a sutra (Shloka).

Interpreting a shloka can be quite tedious because of the lack of guidance on how to do it. . Interpretation is done according to some valid guidelines. Ignorance of this basic fact leads to variety of misinterpretation, which usually transcends the boundaries of Ayurvedic terminology. Sometimes you may find that reading the Hindi/English translation and learning it is definitely the easier way out. But what you miss out on is the chance to fully understand a concept or a theory. Let's see if you can translate it yourself.

Without making it too complicated, is there a way to know what the shloka is actually trying to tell us?

Here is how you approach a sutra (shloka)

पदच्छेदः पदार्थोक्तिः विग्रहो वाक्ययोजना ।
आक्षेपश्च समाधानं व्याख्यानं षड्विधं मतम् ॥

Padacchedaha Padarthokti vighraho vakyayojana|
Akshepascha samadhanam vyakhyanam shadvidham matam||

1. पदच्छेदः । - Padacchedaha – Break down the words
2. पदार्थोक्तिः । - Padarthokti – Understand the meaning of those words (translate)
3. विग्रहः । - Vighraha – Break down the sandhi samas
4. वाक्ययोजना । - Vakyayojana – Understand the formed sentence (form a sentence)
5. आक्षेपः । - Akshepa – Ask doubts once the sentence is understood
6. समाधानम् – Samadhanam – Get doubts clarified

These are the 6 parts of any description (shloka) – व्याख्यानं षड्विधं मतम् ॥
(vyakhyanam shadvidham matam)

Let us try to understand a shloka by the above method

आयुः कामयमानेन धर्मार्थसुखसाधनम् ।
आयुर्वेदोपदेशेषु विधेयः परमादरः ॥

अष्टांग हृदय सूत्रस्थान १/२

1. **Padaccheda** – Ayu - Kamaymanena- DharmaArthaSukh – Sadhanam
Ayurvedo-updesheshu – Vidheya – Paramadara
2. **Padarthokti** –
Ayu– life,
Kamaymanena – desirous of,
Dharma - right conduct and clarity of action for righteous life
Artha – wealth,
Sukh – contentment/happiness,
Sadhanam – the means of,
Ayurvedoupdesheshu – teaching of science of life,
vidheya – should do ,
paramadara – with paramount respect
3. **Vigraha** – Ayu – Kamayamanena- Dharma+Artha+Sukh- Sadhanam –
Ayurvedao + Updeshe shu – vidheya – param – adara
4. **Vakyayojana** – One who is desirous of life - the means of right conduct, clarity of action, wealth, and happiness - should give utmost respect and attention to the teachings and learnings of Ayurveda – the science of life.
5. **Akshepa** – But how to do this?
6. **Samadhan** – By learning, understanding and practicing the principles of Ayurveda.

श्लोकार्थ at a glance

आयुः कामयमानेन धर्मार्थसुखसाधनम् ।
आयुर्वेदोपदेशेषु विधेयः परमादरः ॥

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पदच्छेदः ।	आयुः - कामयमानेन - धर्मार्थसुख - साधनम् आयुर्वेदोपदेशेषु - विधेयः - परमादरः ॥
पदार्थोक्तिः ।	Life – desirous of - right conduct and clarity of action for righteous path – wealth – contentment/happiness – the only means is – should do or follow - teaching of science of life - with paramount respect.
विग्रहः ।	आयुः कामयमानेन, धर्म + अर्थ + सुख साधनम् आयुर्वेद उपदेशेषु विधेयः परम आदरः ॥
वाक्ययोजना ।	धर्मार्थसुख - साधनम् आयुः कामयमानेन आयुर्वेदोपदेशेषु परमादरः विधेयः ॥
आक्षेपः ।	कथं आदर विधेयः ?
समाधानम्	पाठ अवबोध अनुष्ठानैः परमादरः विधेयः ॥