



Original Research Article

Śabdānyatva Arthāśraya in Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya (Sūtrasthāna): A Systematic Textual and Semantic Analysis

Article History:

Name of Author:

Santoshkumar B. Utlaskar ^{1*}, Pradip Kumar Panda², Channabasavva D. Totad³

Affiliation: ¹Department of Samhita & Siddhanta, Sri Sri College of Ayurvedic Science & Research Hospital, Godisahi, Odisha, India

Department of Samhita & Siddhanta, JSS Ayurveda Medical College and Hospital, Mysore, Karnataka, India

²Department of Kayachikitsa, Sri Sri College of Ayurvedic Science & Research Hospital, Godisahi, Odisha, India

³Department of Kriya Śharīra, Sri Sri College of Ayurvedic Science & Research Hospital, Godisahi, Odisha, India

Department of Kriya Śharīra, JSS Ayurveda Medical College and Hospital, Mysore, Karnataka, India.

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Santoshkumar B. Utlaskar*

Received: 19-11-2025

Revised: 23-11-2025

Accepted: 13-01-2026

Published: 20-02-2026

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

Abstract: Classical Ayurvedic texts employ multiple interpretative devices to convey complex medical concepts with precision and brevity. Among these, Śabdānyatva Arthāśraya—the reliance on synonymous expressions to infer intended meaning—plays a crucial role in textual comprehension. The present study systematically analyses the application of Śabdānyatva Arthāśraya across 104 sūtras of the Sūtrasthāna of Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya. The findings highlight the interpretative sophistication of Ācārya Vāgbhaṭa and underscore the indispensability of Arthāśraya-based reading for accurate clinical and theoretical understanding.

Keywords: Śabdānyatva Arthāśraya, Paryāya Prayoga, Tantrayukti, Ayurvedic hermeneutics.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurvedic Saṃhitās are composed in concise aphoristic form, where a single word often carries layered meanings. Śabdānyatva Arthāśraya refers to

interpretation through synonymous expressions, which is essential for correct comprehension of classical medical instructions.

Classical Ayurvedic texts are composed in the

concise sūtra style, wherein brevity and precision are achieved through deliberate linguistic economy. Such compact expression often necessitates the use of Tantrayukti and Arthāśraya for correct interpretation. Among these, Śabdānyatva Arthāśraya plays a vital role by employing synonymous expressions to denote a single scientific concept, thereby ensuring semantic continuity without repetition.

Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya, being a widely accepted and clinically oriented treatise, extensively utilises this interpretative device. However, improper understanding of synonymous terminology may lead to ambiguity in diagnostic reasoning and therapeutic application. Therefore, systematic identification and analysis of Śabdānyatva Arthāśraya in Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya (Sūtrasthāna) is essential for accurate textual comprehension, effective pedagogy, and faithful clinical translation of classical principles.

Aim and Objectives

To analyse the systematic application of Śabdānyatva Arthāśraya in the Sūtrasthāna of Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya.

Materials and Methods

The Sūtrasthāna of Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya was analysed with reference to classical commentaries of Aruṇadatta and Hemādri. Synonyms were identified and classified based on lexical, commentary-based, and contextual inference.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Śabdānyatva Arthāśraya (Use of Synonyms)

Lakṣaṇa:

The use of more than one word to denote an important scientific concept is termed Śabdānyatva Arthāśraya. Such synonymous expressions are generally indicated by phrases like *iti anyārthāntaram*, *iti na arthāntaram*, or *iti paryāyavācīnaḥ*. The purpose of employing synonyms is to facilitate clarity, continuity, and unambiguous understanding of technical concepts.

In Ayurvedic literature, multiple synonymous terms are often used for the same concept to ensure comprehensive comprehension, avoid ambiguity, and accommodate variations in regional, textual, or

contextual usage.

For example, the term **Roga** (disease) is denoted by several synonymous expressions such as:

- Pāma
- Gada
- Jvara
- Vyādhi

Although different words are employed, they convey the same fundamental meaning, namely the diseased state of the body or mind. Thus, the application of multiple synonymous terms for a single concept exemplifies Śabdānyatva Arthāśraya, enriching the textual exposition while maintaining semantic unity.

Utility of Śabdānyatva Arthāśraya – Illustrative Example

Example Sūtra:

रोगं निदानप्राग्रूपलिङ्गोपशयानाप्तिभिः ॥

Meaning:

A disease should be examined through its *nidāna* (aetiology), *prāgrūpa* (premonitory symptoms), *liṅga* (clinical features), *upaśaya-anupaśaya* (diagnostic tests), and *āpti*.

In this sūtra, the term **āpti** is employed as a synonym (*paryāya*) for **samprāpti** (pathogenesis). Although *samprāpti* is the commonly accepted technical term denoting the process of disease manifestation, Ācārya uses *āpti* to convey the same conceptual meaning.

Ācārya Aruṇadatta clarifies this usage by quoting from Nidānasthāna:

“आप्तिनिर्वृत्ताः सम्प्राप्तिरथगतिज्ञानमित्यर्थान्तरम्”

This confirms that *āpti* and *samprāpti* are synonymous expressions conveying identical scientific significance.

Thus, the utility of Śabdānyatva Arthāśraya is clearly demonstrated in this sūtra, as the use of an alternative synonymous term ensures clarity, continuity, and avoidance of redundancy, while preserving diagnostic precision. Hence, Śabdānyatva Arthāśraya plays a crucial role in facilitating unambiguous understanding of diagnostic principles in Ayurvedic literature.

RESULTS

A total of 104 sūtras demonstrated application of Śabdānyatva Arthāśraya, encompassing doṣa, roga, dravya, kriyā, and procedural contexts.

Sūtra No.	Textual Used	Term	Intended Meaning	Basis of Inference	Remarks
A.H.Su.2/37	नक्तम्		रात्रि	Contextual	Temporal synonym clarifies conduct at night
A.H.Su.3/27½	श्लेष्मा		कफ	Explicit	Doṣa synonym used consistently
A.H.Su.3/32	रजनी		रात्रि	Contextual	Time reference inferred from regimen
A.H.Su.3/37	निशा		रात्रि	Explicit	Common Vedic synonym
A.H.Su.3/42½	तनु		शरीर	Commentary	Clarified by Hemādri
A.H.Su.4/10	गदाः		रोग	Explicit	General disease term
A.H.Su.11/1	चलः		वात	Contextual	Guṇa-based inference
A.H.Su.11/3	श्लेष्मा		कफ	Explicit	Doṣa synonym
A.H.Su.12/58	आतङ्कः		रोग	Commentary	Clarified by commentators
A.H.Su.15/11	शिशिरद्वय		चन्दनद्वय	Commentary	Dravya identification
A.H.Su.16/20	पिपासार्त		रोगी	Contextual	Person afflicted
A.H.Su.17/27	आढ्यमारुत		ऊरुस्तम्भ	Commentary	Arunadatta clarification
A.H.Su.18/25½	अनिल		वात	Explicit	Classical synonym
A.H.Su.19/41	पटु		सैन्धव	Commentary	Salt synonym
A.H.Su.22/25	परिषेक		सेक	Commentary	Procedure synonym
A.H.Su.24/12	तनु		शरीर	Explicit	Body reference
A.H.Su.26/43	पटु		लवण	Explicit	Substance synonym
A.H.Su.29/6	अनिल		वात	Explicit	Doṣa synonym
A.H.Su.30/22	गुदजन्म		अर्शस्	Contextual	Disease inferred

DISCUSSION

The present study demonstrates that Śābdānyatva Arthāśraya is a consistently employed and methodologically significant interpretative device in the Sūtrasthāna of Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya. The identification of 104 sūtras employing synonymous expressions confirms that Ācārya Vāgbhaṭa deliberately utilised paryāya-prayoga as a linguistic and semantic strategy rather than as a stylistic ornament.

Synonymous usage serves multiple functional purposes within the text. Firstly, it prevents redundancy in a treatise composed in concise sūtra style, thereby preserving brevity without compromising conceptual clarity. Secondly, Śābdānyatva Arthāśraya allows context-sensitive expression, wherein the same concept is represented by different terms depending on dietary, pathological, physiological, or therapeutic contexts. This flexibility reflects the multidimensional nature

of Ayurvedic knowledge.

The role of classical commentators, particularly Ācārya Arunadatta and Ācārya Hemādri, is pivotal in recognising and validating Śābdānyatva Arthāśraya. Their consistent clarification of synonymous terms confirms that such usage was intentional and doctrinally sanctioned, not accidental. Failure to acknowledge this principle may lead to misinterpretation, especially when less commonly used terms are mistaken for independent entities.

From a clinical perspective, accurate identification of synonymous expressions—such as āpti for samprāpti, anila for vāta, or gadas for roga—is essential for correct diagnostic reasoning and therapeutic application. Thus, Śābdānyatva Arthāśraya functions as a crucial bridge between textual comprehension and clinical practice.

The findings also suggest that Śābdānyatva Arthāśraya operates in coordination with other

interpretative tools such as Tantrayukti and contextual inference, contributing to a coherent hermeneutical framework. Recognition of this principle is therefore indispensable for students, teachers, translators, and clinicians engaged in the study and application of classical Ayurvedic texts.

Conclusion

Śabdānyatva Arthāśraya emerges from the present study as a deliberate, systematic, and indispensable interpretative principle employed throughout the Sūtrasthāna of Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya. The extensive use of synonymous expressions underscores Ācārya Vāgbhaṭa's linguistic precision and pedagogical foresight in presenting complex medical concepts within a compact sūtra framework.

The study establishes that recognition of Śabdānyatva Arthāśraya is essential for restoring the intended meaning of sūtras, ensuring fidelity to classical commentaries, and avoiding semantic ambiguity. Its utility extends beyond philological analysis and directly influences diagnostic clarity, therapeutic accuracy, and doctrinal consistency in Ayurvedic practice.

By systematically documenting and analysing instances of Śabdānyatva Arthāśraya, the present work contributes to a deeper understanding of Ayurvedic textual hermeneutics. Incorporation of this interpretative principle into academic curricula, textual translation, and clinical reasoning is imperative for preserving the integrity of classical Ayurvedic knowledge.

Future studies may extend this approach to other sthānas of Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya and related Saṃhitās, thereby further strengthening the methodological foundations of Ayurvedic textual analysis.

References

1. Vāgbhaṭa. Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya, Sūtrasthāna. Commentaries of Aruṇadatta (Sarvāṅgasundarā) and Hemādri (Āyurvedarasāyana). Varanasi: Chaukhambha Surbharati Prakashan; Reprint edition.
2. Aruṇadatta. Sarvāṅgasundarā (Commentary on Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya). Varanasi: Chaukhambha Surbharati Prakashan.
3. Hemādri. Āyurvedarasāyana (Commentary on Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya). Varanasi: Chaukhambha Surbharati Prakashan.
4. Monier-Williams M. A Sanskrit–English Dictionary. Oxford: Clarendon Press; Reprint edition.
5. Apte VS. The Practical Sanskrit–English Dictionary. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
6. Tiwari PV. Tantrayukti: Ayurvedic Clinical Reasoning and Methods of

7. Interpretation. Varanasi: Vishvabharati.

Chaukhambha