

**ISSN**INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

ISSN No. : 2584-2757

Volume : 04

Issue : 01

DOI : 10.5281/zenodo.23492550



Publisher

**ROGANIDAN VIKRUTIVIGYAN PG ASSOCIATION
FOR PATHOLOGY AND RADIOIDGNOSIS**

Reg. No. : MAHA-703/16(NAG)

Year of Establishment – 2016

ISI Impact Factor (2025-26): 1.345

IIFS Impact Factor (2026-27): 6.0

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF DIAGNOSTICS AND RESEARCH

An Introduction To Bhishak Kankayana Mentioned in Charaka Samhita and Evaluation of His Contribution To Ayurveda

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Article Info: Article Received on : 04/09/2026

Article Reviewed on: 10/09/2026

Article Published on : 15/10/2026

Cite this article as: - Waghe S. An Introduction To Bhishak Kankayana Mentioned in Charaka Samhita and Evaluation of His Contribution To Ayurveda. International Journal of Diagnostics And Research. 2026Oct20;4(1):180–8. doi:10.5281/zenodo.23492550

Abstract

Rishi Kankakayana was a famous physician of the ancient Balhika state (modern-day Baluchistan in Pakistan). The famous Indian epic Mahabharata states that unhygienic and undutiful people reside in the Balhika state. Famous Hastinapur King Shantanu's brother was Balhika. He founded this state. During Alexander the Great's time, this region was called **Bactria**. As per the Mahabharata, King Shantanu himself was a great physician. Great Ayurvedic scholars like Charaka, Sushruta, and Vagbhatta quote medicinal preparations made by Sage Kankayana, such as Kanakayana Vati, Kankayana Modaka, Almbushadi Choorna, etc. Many Ayurvedic commentators also quoted them. This shows the importance earlier scholars gave to the medicinal preparations made by Acharya Kankayana. According to the Charaka Samhita, Sage Kankayana also participated in various symposiums and discussions held from time to time in the ancient era. He participated in discussions on disease-aggravating aetiology and on the types of Rasa (tastes). *Vata kala Kaleeya Adhyaya*, and in discussions on foetal embryonic development. Sage Kankayana's presence in almost all ancient Ayurvedic discussions places him among the eminent doctors of the past. Rishi Kankakayana attended the conclave of rishis (sages) held beneath the mountains of the Himalaya some 7000 years ago to discuss the impact of diseases on human health. His presence at the first-ever ancient conference makes him a contemporary of Sages like Vishwamitra, Vasishtha, Agastya, etc. Hence, it becomes necessary to explore the life of the Sage Kankayana and his contribution to Ayurveda.

Keywords: *Brahma, Atma, Vidya*

Introduction :

Kankayana was the famous physician of the ancient Balhika state. Famous Hastinapur King Shantanu's brother was Balhika. He founded this state. King Shantanu himself was a great physician. It is likely that his King Shantanu may have learnt this art of medicine from his brother Balhika. During the time of Alexander the Great, this part was called **Bactria**. Now it is called as Baluchistan. The Atharva Veda also references Balhika desha. Rishi Kankayana attended the conclave of rishis (sages) held beneath the Himalaya mountains some 7000 years ago to discuss the impact of diseases on human health.^[1] Like other *rishis*, he also wrote a book called 'Kankayana Tantra'. We find references to medicinal preparations made by Rishi Kanakayana in various commentaries on Ayurvedic books like Chakradutta, Vrinda Madhava and Todarmala's Ayurved Saukhyam. Even ancient acharyas like Agnivesha and Charaka quoted Acharya Kanakayana's scholarly views and medicinal preparations in their books (*Samhitas*). Hence, it is necessary to explore the life of Rishi Kankayana and his contribution to Ayurveda.

Aim And Objectives :

Aim

To review the available classical references concerning Bhishak Kankayana and critically evaluate his contribution to Ayurveda.

Objectives

1. To compile the references to Bhishak Kankayana available in the classical Ayurvedic literature.

2. To examine his participation in the scholarly symposia described in the *Charaka Samhita*.
3. To study his views concerning disease causation, Rasa, Vata and embryonic development.
4. To review the medicinal formulations traditionally attributed to Kankayana.
5. To evaluate the significance of his contribution to Ayurvedic theory and clinical practice.
6. To identify the limitations of the currently available historical evidence concerning Kankayana.

Material And Methods :

The present study is a literary and conceptual review based primarily on classical Ayurvedic literature.

Primary textual sources included the *Charaka Samhita* and classical works that preserve formulations attributed to Kankayana. The study also considered relevant references from the Mahabharata, Atharvaveda, and Matsya Purana to contextualise the traditional association of Kankayana with Balhika.

The Ayurvedic material was reviewed under the following headings:

- identity and geographical association of Kankayana;
- references in the *Charaka Samhita*;
- participation in scholarly symposia;
- Kankayana's opinions on important Ayurvedic concepts;
- formulations attributed to Kankayana;

- transmission of his knowledge through later Ayurvedic texts.

The available evidence was classified conceptually into direct textual evidence, traditional historical interpretation, and inference to avoid attributing claims to Kankayana for which direct evidence is unavailable.

Review Of Literature :

Kankayana was a famous physician of the ancient Balhika state. According to the Mahabharata, the Balhika region is bordered by five rivers: Ravi, 2. Vyas, 3. Shatadru (Satalaja), 4. Vitasta (Jhelam), and 5. Sindhu. It also says that unhygienic and undutiful people live there. Kunti's son, Karna, believes the residents of Shakal city (now Sialkot, Pakistan) are very bad. He mentioned their eating habits as they eat beef mixed with garlic and drink alcoholic beverages made from jaggery. [2]

Kankayana was the famous physician of Balhik Dehsa. However, the Puranas contain no reference to Kankayana, although many Ayurvedic scholars quote Bhishak Kankayana's views.

In the Atharva Veda, also, the residents of Balhika *desha* (state) are labelled as indecent people. In the Atharva Veda, it is prayed that the microbes of Tuberculosis may leave the bodies of Indians and affect the people residing in the Balhika *desha*. [3]

In Charak Samhita, it is mentioned that the residents of the Balhika state consume food rich in salt. It is also mentioned that, because they consume hot, salty food, residents of Balhika state suffer from premature greying of hair and hair loss. It is also mentioned that people of Balhika state consume meat with large quantities of beverages.

According to the Matsya Purana, in the lineage of King Bharata, King Hasti was born in the 5th generation and founded the famous city of Hastinapura. One of King Hasti's sons was Ajameedha, who impregnated Doomini's wife. From her, Rishya was born, and Rishya's grandson was 'Kuru', who founded the Kuru/Kaurava Vansha (lineage). [4]

One of King Kuru's sons was 'Janhu'. In the 7th generation from Junhu, King Devatithi was born. His son was Daksha, and Daksha's son was Bhimsena. King Bhimsen had a son named Dilip. King Dilip's son was Pratipa. King Pratipa had three sons: viz., 1. Devapi, 2. **Shantanu**, and 3. Balhika. Balhika had seven sons, and all of them became kings of the Balhika state (*desha*). [5]

This Balhika *desha* is now called Baluchistan, located in present-day Pakistan. During Alexander the Great's time, this part was called **Bactria**. King Shantanu's famous son was Devavrata, also known as Bheeshma. King Shantanu, who ruled Hastinapura, was an expert in Ayurveda. A saying went that whoever King Shantanu touched was cured.

Contribution To Ayurveda

Acharya Kankayana participated in the symposium on disease-aggravating aetiology. In this symposium, he interacted with sages such as Kashiraj Vamaka, Maudgalya, Sharaloma, Vayorvid, Kaushika, Bhadrakapya, Bhardwaja, Hiranyaksha, Bhikshu Atreya, and Atreya Punarwasu. Acharya Kankayana holds that Prajapati Brahma is responsible for happiness and pain in the living and non-living worlds. [6]

Acharya Kankayana participated in the symposium

on types of Rasas. In this symposium, he interacted with sages such as Kashiraj Vamaka, King Nimi and Videha, Mahamuni Badisha, Kumarshira Bhardwaja, Purnaksh Maudgalya, Rajasrshi Vayorvid, Kaushika, Bhadrakapya, Bhardwaja, Hiranyaksha, and Atreya Punarwasu. Acharya Kankayana holds that Rasas are innumerable because the properties, actions, and tastes of the Rasas are also innumerable.^[7]

Acharya Kankayana participated in the symposium on *Vata Kala Kaleeya* (properties of Vata) Chapter. In this symposium, he interacted with sages such as Mahamuni Badisha, Kumarshira Bhardwaja, Rajasrshi Vayorvid, Kaushika, Bhadrakapya, and Atreya Punarwasu. Acharya Kanakayana is of the view that things similar to the properties of Vata aggravate it, whereas things having opposite properties alleviate the aggravated Vata.^[8]

Sage Kankayana participated in the symposium on embryonic organogenesis, as described in Charaka Sharirsthana, chapter 6, verse 12. Acharya Kankayana is of the view that, as the heart is the seat of consciousness, the heart develops first in the embryo.^[9]

Listening to the views of other scholars at the symposium, Acharya Kankayana opines that if the causes of disease are naturally nullified, then the importance of actions will be lost. Lord Brahma's son, Prajapati, had created this world of living and non-living things with immense determination. Hence, the creator of this world is responsible for both grief and joy.^[10]

Kankayan Modaka In Arsha (Piles)

Take bark of Haritaki (*Terminalia chebula*) in 5 *pala* (250 gram) quantity, Jiraka (cumen) 1 *Pala*

(50 gram), Maricha (*Piper nigrum*) 1 *Pala* (50 gram), Pipalli (*Piper longum*) 1 *Pala* (50 gram), root of Pippali 2 *Pala* (100 gram), Chitraka (*Plumbago zeylenicum*) 4 *Pala* (200 gram), Sunthi (dried ginger) 5 *Pala* (250 gram), Yavakshara 2 *Pala* (100 gram), Bhallataka (*Semocarpus anacardium*) 8 *Pala* (400 gram), powder of Surana (*Amorphophallus paeonifolius*) 15 *Pala* (800 gram) and make a fine powder of all. Then add jaggery in double the quantity and make 10-gram tablets. After consuming it take buttermilk. This tablet enhances appetite and alleviates irritable bowel syndrome and anemia. The ancient sage Kanakayana invented and prepared this for his students, who wanted to treat patients with piles without surgery or cauterisation.^{[11] [12]}

Kankayan Gutika In Gulma

(Abdominal Lump)

Take *Jivanti*, *Jiraka*, *Dhanyaka*, *Maricha*, *Girikarnika*, *Ajamoda*, *Upakunchi*, each in four *Shana* (16 gram) quantity, Hingu in six *Shana* (24 gram) quantity, eight *Shana* (32 gram) quantity of *Sajjikshara* and *Yavakshara*, *Lavanpanchaka* and *Trivrutta*. Take sixteen *Shana* (64 gram) quantity of each of *Danti*, *Shati*, *Pushkar*, *Vidanga*, *Dadima*, *Shiva*, *Chitrak*, *Amlavetasa*, *Shunthi*. Impregnate and triturate the mixture of all the above with the juice of *Beejapooraka*. The mixture can then be made into tablets. These tablets can be taken with ghee, milk, alcoholic drinks, sour juice or hot water. Sage Kankayana invented this tablet, which cures all types of Gulmas. If taken along with an alcoholic beverage, it cures Vatik Gulma. If taken along with cow's milk, it cures Pittaj Gulma. If taken along with cow's urine (*Gomutra*), it cures

Kaphaj Gulma. If taken along with Dashamoola decoction, it cures Tridoshaj Gulma. If taken along with camel milk, it cures Raktaj Gulma. This tablet also cures heart disease, Sprue, colic pain, parasitic infestation and piles.^[13]

Alambushadi Choorna

In Amvata (Rheumatoid arthritis)

Made by Kankayana

Take Alambusha, Amruta/Guduchi, Sunthi, Chitrak, Triphala, Kana/Pippali, and Vrudhdhadaru in equal quantities and make a fine powder. Ask the patient to take this powder with buttermilk or alcohol, or with Kanji or warm water, to remove Amavata and disorders of the liver and Spleen. It also alleviates the disease Visuchika.^[14]

OBSERVATION

Table No. 1 Kankayana In Nutshell

Sr	Parameters	Results
01	Residence	Ancient Balhika State
02	Parents	Unknown
03	Teacher	Unknown
04	Contemporary Rishis	Dhaumya, Vamadeva, Hiranyaksha, Ashwalayana
05	Ayurvedic Contribution	Kankayana Tantra
06	Famous Medicinal Preparations	Kankayana Gutika Kankayana Modaka Alambushadi Choorna
07	Reference in Ayurvedic Samhitas	Charak Smhita Vangasen Samhita Bhela Samhita Vagbhata Samhita Chakradutta Ayurved Saukhyam

Discussion :

The medicinal preparations made by Acharya Kankayana are quoted by Charaka, Sushruta, Vagbhata, Agastya, Todarmala, Chakradutta and by many commentators like Nischalkara, Chakrapani

etc. For treating the disease Gulma (Abdominal Lump), Todarmala states that Acharya Kankayana prepared a medicinal preparation called 'Kankayana Gutika'. For treating the disease Arsha (Piles), Acharya Kankayana prepared a medicinal preparation called 'Kankayana Modaka', which almost all scholars invariably advocate. For treating the Amvata (Rheumatoid arthritis), medicinal preparation called 'Alambushadi Choorna' prepared by Acharya Kankayana is stated by Chakrapani Dutta.

Acharya Kankayana holds that things similar to the properties of Vata aggravate it, whereas things with opposite properties alleviate aggravated Vata.

Acharya Kankayana holds that Prajapati Brahma is responsible for happiness and pain in the living and non-living world.

Acharya Kankayana holds that Rasas are innumerable because the properties, actions, and taste of the Rasas are also innumerable.

Acharya Kankayana holds that, since the heart is the seat of consciousness, it develops first in the embryo.

Acharya Kankayana opines that if the causes of disease are naturally nullified, then the importance of actions will be lost. Lord Brahma's son, Prajapati, had created this world of living and non-living things with immense determination. Hence, the creator of this world is responsible for both grief and joy.

Limitations Of The Present Study :

The present study has several limitations.

1. A complete original text of *Kankayana Tantra* is not presently available for direct critical examination.
2. Detailed biographical information concerning Kankayana, including his parents, teachers and precise chronology, is limited.
3. The geographical identification of ancient Balhika remains historically complex.
4. Some information concerning Kankayana is transmitted through later commentaries and secondary traditions rather than through independent writings by Kankayana himself.
5. The formulations attributed to Kankayana have undergone transmission through successive textual traditions, and therefore textual variants may occur between different editions.
6. Traditional claims concerning the antiquity of Kankayana should not automatically be equated with historically verified chronological dates.
7. Modern therapeutic interpretations of the formulations require pharmacological and clinical validation and should not be inferred solely from classical indications.

Future Scope :

Further research on Bhishak Kankayana may be undertaken in the following areas:

1. A critical textual study of all references to Kankayana across the major Ayurvedic Samhitas.
2. Comparative analysis of Kankayana's opinions as preserved in the *Charaka Samhita*, *Bhela Samhita*, *Vagbhata Samhita* and later compendia.
3. Identification and critical evaluation of manuscripts that may preserve portions of *Kankayana Tantra*.
4. Philological study of the term Kankayana and its relationship with the broader Kankayana tradition.
5. Historical-geographical investigation of Balhika and its association with ancient medical traditions.
6. Comparative study of Kankayana's embryological observations and those of other classical Ayurvedic authorities.
7. Pharmacological investigation of Kankayana formulations.
8. Experimental and clinical studies on Kankayana Modaka, Kankayana Gutika and Alambushadi Churna, subject to appropriate ethical and regulatory requirements.
9. Study of Kankayana's views on Rasa and their relationship with the development of Ayurvedic pharmacology.
10. Comparative examination of Kankayana's principle of similar and opposite qualities with the broader Ayurvedic framework of Samanya and Vishesha.

Conclusion :

Bhishak Kankayana occupies an important position in the intellectual history of Ayurveda. Although detailed biographical information about him is limited and his independent treatise is not presently available for direct examination, his name and views have been preserved in the classical Ayurvedic tradition.

His repeated participation in the scholarly discussions recorded in the *Charaka Samhita* shows that ancient physicians regarded him as an important authority. His contributions extend across several fundamental areas of Ayurveda. His view regarding Rasa highlights the importance of properties and actions in understanding substances. His explanation of Vata aggravation and pacification reflects the principle of similarity and opposition that underpins Ayurvedic therapeutics. His view of embryonic development and the early formation of Hridaya shows his engagement with Ayurvedic embryology and the relationship between the heart and consciousness.

His therapeutic legacy is equally significant. Preparations such as Kankayana Modaka, Kankayana Gutika and Alambushadi Churna are preserved in later Ayurvedic literature and demonstrate the practical dimensions of the tradition attributed to him.

Therefore, Kankayana should not be regarded merely as an obscure name in the *Charaka Samhita*. He represents an important ancient physician whose theoretical opinions and therapeutic formulations were sufficiently valued to be transmitted by subsequent generations of

Ayurvedic scholars.

At the same time, historical claims about his exact chronology, geographical location, and authorship of the *Kankayana Tantra* require further critical investigation. A balanced assessment therefore recognises both the strength of the textual evidence for his participation in Ayurvedic intellectual discourse and the limitations of the available biographical and chronological evidence.

The study of Bhishak Kankayana shows that Ayurveda's history is not limited to the better-known authors of the surviving Samhitas. Numerous physicians whose individual works have been lost nevertheless contributed to the development of Ayurvedic knowledge through their observations, debates and therapeutic innovations. Kankayana is an important representative of this forgotten but intellectually significant lineage

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Declaration :

Conflict of Interest : None

ISSN: 2584-2757

DOI : 10.5281/zenodo.23492550

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