Mimansa

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A B S T R A C T

This paper considers the relevance to Ayurvedic education of *Mimansa*, one of the six "orthodox" systems of ancient Indian philosophy, which, like Ayurveda, regard the Vedas as supremely authoritative. At the postgraduate level, *Mimansa* assists the study of Ayurveda because it provides a system of resolving possible conflicts between statements in the texts of the Veda, which can also be applied to Ayurveda, when its own methodology of interpretation given in *Tantrayukti* falls short. Indeed, certain commentaries on the Ayurvedic texts are suggestive of the *Mimansa* perspective. The article provides illustrations of this from the courses taught at the Institute of Research in Ayurvedic Medicine, Jnana Prabhodini, indicating some details of the courses taught, and recounting feedback from the students. These show that a course in *Mimansa* has a useful role to play in encouraging students' independent reading of the Ayurvedic texts and in maturing their own interpretations of sections that seem obscure.

Key words: Ayurveda, darshanas, education, *Mimansa*, pedagogy

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda traditionally looks back to certain of the six systems of Indian philosophy (the *Shad darshanas*) for its fundamental concepts. Today, Ayurveda curricula normally only include the first three systems, *Nyaya*, *Vaisheshika* and *Samkhya*, since their concepts are recognized as the foundation of Ayurveda's approach to the human organism. In ancient times, educated people were familiar with all six systems, viz. the three named above, together with *Yoga*, *Purva Mimansa* and *Uttara Mimansa* (*Vedanta*). All six regard the Vedas as supreme authority, i.e. they were orthodox, or "*Astik*", systems and were considered relevant to the practice of Ayurveda,

itself an "orthodox" system. In contrast, the heterodox, or Nastik systems, principally those due to Charvak, Buddhists, and Jains, do not acknowledge the authority of the Vedas.

This paper addresses *Maharishi Jaimini*'s *Purva Mimansa* and shows how its study has been found valuable in Ayurveda postgraduate study today, in particular, because its logic matures student interpretation and understanding of texts. Ayurveda's own methodology for interpretation of texts is given in *Tantrayukti*, for which a sound knowledge of grammar is a prerequisite. Details differ from text to text, however, and in cases where *Tantrayukti* fails, *Mimansa* may be helpful. Also, certain commentaries on Ayurvedic texts use the perspective of *Mimansa*.

As one of the six major *Astik darshanas*, *Mimansa* is a well-recognized school of Indian philosophy. Its nature is not philosophical advocacy. Rather, as a logical system of interpretation of Veda for carrying out the Vedic rituals, it has practical applications. The word *Mimansa* derives from the root *man* meaning "to know". The *Mimansa* system is oriented toward interpreting Vedic texts used in rituals. It does not apply to *Aranyaka* or *Upanishad* texts. Its scope is limited to the *Mantra* and *Brahmana* aspects of Veda, for which it elaborates ritualistic aspects. Such elaboration may create apparent controversies or ambiguities. One branch of a Brahman text may describe a ritual in a certain way, while another branch may describe it differently. The chronology of rituals may vary in different texts.

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Taken at face value, some sentences like "*Udite Juhoti*" and "*Anudite Juhoti*" appear to contradict each other, similarly for "*atiratre sodasinam gruhanti*" and "*natiratre sodasinam gruhanti*". In such cases, there is the utmost need to resolve the conflict to prevent potential controversy. Rather than leaving this to mere precedence or personal opinion based on expertise or seniority, the Vedic *Rishis* (sages) established a system of logic to overcome such issues. This constitutes the applied part of *Mimansa*. The resulting system is analogous to laws of jurisprudence, where every decision has to be taken with reference to an established structure. In a similar way, *Mimansa* offers a precise structure for interpreting Veda.

This article first offers an account of the *Mimansa* system, though for obvious reasons its ontological aspects cannot be included. It then illustrates its contemporary application to Ayurveda education with examples from courses held at Jnana Prabhodhini, where the author worked near Pune.

MIMANSA

Mimansa literature

As a philosophy or philosophical system, *Mimansa* arose as early as Veda was applied and rituals were practiced – in remote antiquity. However, *Maharishi Jaimini* is considered to be the pioneer of its literature because detailed documentation begins with the "*Mimansa Sutra*", which he compiled. It is divided into 12 *adhyayas* (chapters), hence it is also known as *dvadasalkshni*. *Shabaraswami*'s commentary (the *Shabarabhasya*) is the oldest, though later opinion divided into two schools of thought, the *Prabhakar* and the *Kumarila*. Reputed authors on *Mimansa* include *Madhavacharya*, *Parthasarathi Mishra*, and *Mandanamishra*.

Some basic assumptions of *Mimansa*

1. The system of *Mimansa* is based on the conviction that there is nothing redundant in Veda. Every sentence conveys a specific message and does so in a foolproof way.
2. *Mimansa* has its own approach to the *shabdabodh* (understanding of words), differing from those of both the *Nyaya* and *Vyakarana* systems.
3. *Apurva* or *Adrushta* is the assumption held by *Mimansakas* that every action generates a reaction or other result, not necessarily perceptible to sense. The names "*Apurva*" or "*Adrushtra*" for such results, respectively, imply "not existing previously" and "not seen".
4. The idea is that "*apurva*" relates to executed actions. Success of a complete performance depends on success of each separate action. It constitutes the

consolidated or cumulative result. If the Vedic verses involved are not properly interpreted, the resultant outcome may not be the expected or desired one. Today's manufacturing processes follow standard operating procedures (S.O.P.) to maximize output quality. *Apurva*'s perspective is the same, but its philosophical aspect is different. It answers the basic question: If a "*Yaga*" does not continue forever, how can its execution bring the benefits desired to those who perform the *yaga*. To this question, *Mimansa* philosophy answers that every action produces a "*Shakti*", which ultimately brings fruition. The analogy given is that of hot water: Even when heat is not being applied, the quality of "hotness" remains.

Apurva is the abstract resultant of any action performed, and the total *apurva* is the sum of the *apurvas* of all sub-actions performed within the specified frame. For example, if one wants to cook rice, one takes rice grains, washes them, adds water to the bowl, applies heat, until ultimately, the final rice is obtained for consumption. Here, the rice's final quality depends upon each component action. Every sub-action produces a result, with the final, overall result depending on every one of them.

Mimansa logic and how it works

Mimansa divides the entire Veda consisting of *Mantra* and *Brahmana* into five types, based on the assumption that the Vedas are self-validating and do not require any external tool for their validation. The five types are *Vidhi*, *Nishedha*, *Mantra*, *Namadheya*, and *Arthavada*.

Vedic sentences commanding or ordaining specific actions not previously known or validated by any other tool are *Vidhi*, e.g. 'one should perform *agnihotra yagya*'. The suggestion to do this is totally unknown till heard from Veda. This sentence tells one to do something stating it in the affirmative, so it is termed *Vidhi*.

Though generally advocating something, *Vidhi* has many subtypes. The *Vidhi* telling the mode of action is *Utaptti Vidhi*. That defining the status of superior and subordinate types of ritual is *Viniyog Vidhi*. That explaining the beneficiary or a qualifier of a ritual is *Adhikar Vidhi*. Further types of *Vidhi* help in the precision of ritual. Certain things can be done in many ways. A general human tendency is to choose the one requiring least effort. *Niyamav Vidhi* tells which one to select when many options are available. At the same time, *Parisankhya Vidhi* eliminates certain options, specifying which options to choose.

Nishedha are Vedic sentences suggesting one to refrain from doing certain things. They have negation attached.

In day-to-day life, such commands are understood by their expression, but in the logical framework of *Mimansa,* negation must have specific meaning. *Mimansa* provides a system to interpret such prohibitions.

Mantra verses relay intended messages as well as actions required during a ritual.

Namadheya is the name applied to any ritual or product received from a ritual.

Arthavada are sentences amplifying the message of *Vidhi* or *Nishedha* by praising them or cursing, respectively. These sentences are indirectly helping the basic message of the *Vidhi* or *Nishedha*.

According to *Mimansa*, these represent the gross divisions of Veda (*Mantra–Brahmana*), each having its own subdivisions. The framework establishes a perfect system in which, as in the global positioning system, one can assess the position of any Vedic sentence in relation to other Vedic sentences. Such clear and unambiguous positioning, and relative marking, constitutes a logical decision-support system. Being impersonal and logical makes judgments derived from the system free of human errors.

Some examples of application of *Mimansa* principles

When performing a ritual, it may be necessary to recall the message of the ritual. This is possible using either *Mantra* or *Brahmana* texts, but *Niyam Vidhi* asserts that the message should be recalled only with the *Mantra*.

Another verse directs one to apply an unctuous substance to sand particles. Here, there are four equally meritorious options. Another reference occurring in a different context suggests that "*ghrita* is *Teja*". Hence, *ghrita* is applied to sand particles because the strength of direct reference is present, making it the system's superior tool of validation in this context.

These examples provide instances of Vedic sentences being present for decision making, but on occasions no such Vedic sentence exists. *Mimansa* systematizes decision processes in such cases as well. In a sense, it forms a hierarchical ladder for decision making, making decisions taken like mathematical equations. Through the decision's judgments, human errors are minimized.

Mimansa thought process found in Ayurvedic texts

The ontological or applied part of *Mimansa* should not be expected to be accepted at par in Ayurveda, since Ayurveda has its own systems and methodology for expression and interpretation, known as *Tantrayukti*, a

system which differs from text to text. Sound knowledge of grammar is a prerequisite for learning *Tantrayukti*.

However, although the sages themselves established *Tantrayukti* for better interpretation of the texts, it has its limitations. *Tantrayuktis* are designed for specific texts. When queries arise regarding comparative arguments in the texts, or any enquiry at the gross ontological level, *Tantrayuktis* do not provide the answer; in such cases, the basis of *Mimansa* may become helpful.

Reflection of the *Mimansa* system in the interpretation of Ayurvedic texts

Some texts and commentaries on Ayurvedic texts are suggestive of the *Mimansa* viewpoint.
1. The "*Rasavaisesika* texts" are composed entirely in the *adhikaran* form which is typical of the *Mimansa* system (Dr. Leena Bavadekar Madhu Jeevan Oct. 2009).
2. Hemadri, in his commentary on the *Asthanga hridaya* (AH), explains not only the text but also its similarity to other respected texts, a method of classical *Mimansa*.
3. Elsewhere, Hemadri explains certain potentially controversial things, as in AH Ni. 1/2 where he explains that the terms divided into are respectively related to *sansarga* and *sannipata*, rather than to *kshaya* and *kopa*, as there are types of *vridhi sansarga* and of *kshaya sannipata* described in *dosabhediya adhyaya*.
4. The *Sharngadhara Samhita* describes a *guduchayadi kwath*. The commentator himself here points out a controversy, i.e. *guduchi* is considered *kaphapittahara* by Sushruta, so how can the *kwath* be said to be *vatahara*. He then explains that *guduchi* leaves are *Kaphapittahara* while the stem is *vatahara*. So, the stem is to be used in this particular *kwath* and not the leaves (Sha. Sam.Madhyam -2/836).

When should a student of Ayurveda learn *Mimansa*?

Traditionally, the best time for learning *Mimansa* is said to be after completing the study of Veda, i.e. when the student is well-versed in the information aspect of the texts, he should learn the applied aspect. Similarly, Ayurvedic students would be well advised to wait for their period of internship before learning *Mimansa*. They should have completed reading the basic texts before their internships, and they should find the applied part easier to face, since it is better understood when a system re-reading the texts is available.

Student experience is that study of *Mimansa* generates a specific methodology for reading each text. Analyzing information while reading, and exploring possible ambiguities and possible controversies becomes habitual.

Similarly, the student spontaneously starts comparing parts with each other and with the subject in totality. Compiling supporting or opposing references from other texts becomes automatic. In this way, reading *Mimansa* trains the student to become critic cum scholar.

MIMANSA COURSES AT JNANA PRABHODHINI

The Institute of Research in Ayurvedic Medicine of Jnana Prabodhini is a non-government organization working in the field of Ayurvedic production and training along with research. In order to introduce Ayurvedic students to the ancient *Mimansa* philosophy, a special 1-hour daily training program was organized lasting 30 days. In the past 2 years, a total of 20 students have taken it. The well-known *Mimansa* text, "*Arthasangraha*", is used as the course reference.

The content of the training included the following points:
1. Introduction to *Mimansa* as a *darshan shastra*, its basic assumptions and principles.
2. The scope of *Mimansa*, understanding each sentence (*shabdabodha*).
3. Comparison of *Mimansa* and *Tantrayukti*.
4. *Mimansa* as a logical framework for the interpretation of Vedic literature.
5. Its tools of validation (*pramana*).
6. Its views on *ishvara, atma, karmavipak,* etc.
7. *Mimansa*'s unique assumptions like *Apurva/Adrushta* etc.
8. *Mimansa*'s application to Ayurvedic texts, as in (4) above, is compared and contrasted to the results of applying *Tantrayukti*, by juxtapositioning the results of that and *Mimansa*. This leads to a classification and analysis of Vedic literature according to the *Mimansa* system, including its broad classification and interlinking of sentences.

Special attention is paid to *Mimansa*'s system of *arthanirnay* as a logical system, (4) and (5) above, since this can be used to resolve the apparent controversies, and also to arrive at definite conclusions.

Assignments
Between certain course lectures, students were allotted assignments, which they were expected to prepare and present in front of the class. No strict assessments were made, but group interactions followed everyone's presentation.

Each student was asked to choose any sutra/verse from either of the main Ayurvedic texts, and then to expand/ elaborate the sutra on the basis of following points:
1. Position of the sutra: the *adhikaran* (the topic) and the *adhikaran* tree, the *adhyaya*, the *sthana*, the text, e.g. the sutra Charaka Chikitsasthana 100/14 indicates that the sutra is from *gadhashakrut chikitsa adhikaran* (sutra 96) which is from *shushka arsha chikitsa adhikaran* (sutra 39), etc. This sutra appears in the *chikitsa shtana* of the *Charaka Samhita*.
2. Grammatical elaboration of the sutra: Literary meaning of each term, implied meaning of each term, suggestive meaning of the term.
3. Logical elaboration of the sutra: Considering the logical inferences from point 1 and point 2 plus cross references, similar references from the same text.
4. Overall review of the sutra: Comparison with other texts, possible logical derivations of the sutra.
5. The student's own opinion.
   The students chose sutras from *Charaka Samhita* as they were more familiar with that text. Every student made a presentation before the class where others interacted.

RESULTS OF THE COURSE

Observations
As a result of the course, students began reading texts using multireferential analysis applied to both *Mimansa* and *Tantrayukti* systems. "Reading between the lines" improved, as it became systemized and not just haphazard. This skill is of importance for reading texts that were originally compactified for easier commitment to memory.

Feedback from students
Indicated better reading and improved clinical practice.

Specific comments
• We developed a system of reading the texts. A framework is fast developed by students.
• Now we can logically interpret any sutra.
• It appears like a computerized system.
• We have a system to overcome apparent controversies.
• This is helpful to derive research hypotheses.

CONCLUSIONS

Training in *Mimansa* would be helpful to all postgraduate and research students in Ayurveda. It is not practical to teach *Mimansa* at the undergraduate level as students' recall of the texts is inadequate. They are also less experienced in clinical evaluation of patients and treatment. At the postgraduate level, however, the skills

gained by teaching *Maharishi Jaimini's Mimansa* improve understanding of the classic Ayurvedic texts. They also impart to the students greater ability to compare different texts and to make practical decisions on how to utilize difficult passages in practice – particularly those that require advanced, or otherwise difficult, interpretation.

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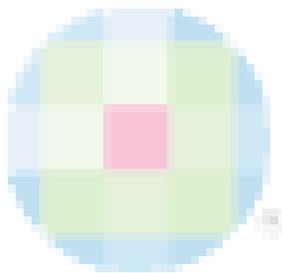
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