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Revisiting *Tantraguna*: Relevance of Classical Ayurvedic Writing Principles to the IMRAD Framework

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Abstract

Scientific writing has evolved into a standardised vehicle for the dissemination of research findings. The IMRAD, i.e. Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion format, is currently the dominant structure in biomedical publications. However, systematic principles governing scientific writing existed in antiquity. The concept of *Tantraguna*, described in the *Charaka Samhita Vimanasthana*, *Sushrutsamhita Sutrasthana* & *Sahityadarpana*, outlines essential qualities of an ideal scientific *Shashtra*, including clarity, structure, conciseness, objectivity, authentication, and logical organisation. This review critically analyses *Tantraguna* and compares it with contemporary scientific writing frameworks, particularly IMRAD. The findings suggest that ancient Ayurvedic scholarship incorporated sophisticated methodological and epistemological standards parallel to modern academic norms. Integrating classical principles with contemporary guidelines may enhance the ethical, structural, and communicative quality of scientific writing. This narrative review analyses classical Ayurvedic textual descriptions of *Tantraguna* from the *Vimanasthana* of the *Charaka Samhita* and compares them conceptually with the modern IMRAD framework used in biomedical publications.

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Introduction

Scientific communication is foundational to the progress of knowledge. The transformation of research findings into structured manuscripts allows replication, validation, and dissemination within the scientific community.^[1] Over the past three centuries, the scientific article has become the principal medium of scholarly exchange. Standardisation in format has enhanced clarity, reproducibility, and accessibility. The IMRAD structure, which is Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion, has emerged as the predominant organisational framework in biomedical journals.^[2] It evolved from earlier narrative formats and promotes logical sequencing of research components. Despite its contemporary dominance, structured methodologies for composing scientific treatises existed in ancient civilisations.

Classical Ayurvedic literature reveals a highly systematic approach to scholarly writing.^[3] The *Charaka Samhita*, one of the foundational texts of Ayurveda, attributed to Acharya Charaka, outlines criteria for evaluating authoritative manuscripts. These criteria, termed *Tantraguna*, are described in the eighth chapter of *Vimanasthana*. *Tantraguna* defines the essential attributes of a well-composed scientific treatise.^[4] Therefore, the present review aims to critically analyse *Tantraguna* as described in the *Charaka Samhita* and examine its conceptual parallels with the IMRAD framework used in modern biomedical research communication.

The *Tantraguna* described in the Charaka Samhita presents a remarkably advanced framework for scientific writing. Its principles, clarity, conciseness, structure, objectivity, authentication, and logical sequencing closely parallel modern IMRAD guidelines. Rather than viewing ancient and modern methodologies as distinct, a constructive synthesis may enrich scholarly communication^[5,6].

Historical Evolution of Structured Scientific Writing

1. **Development of the IMRAD Structure:** The IMRAD format gained prominence in the twentieth century as scientific disciplines expanded and journals required standardised reporting formats. It offers a clear delineation of research objectives, transparent methodological reporting, logical presentation of results and interpretive discussion grounded in evidence. The structure enhances literature retrieval and critical appraisal. However, critics argue that IMRAD may oversimplify the nonlinear nature of scientific reasoning and impose rigidity on narrative expression.^[7]
2. **Structured Writing in Ancient Ayurveda:** Ancient Ayurvedic scholars demonstrated remarkable uniformity in textual composition across *Samhitas*, compendia (*Samgraha-granthas*), and lexicons (*Nighantus*). Such consistency indicates adherence to well-defined compositional principles. In *Vimanasthana* of the *Charaka Samhita*, *Acharya Charaka* advises students to select authoritative treatises based on specific qualitative parameters i.e. *Tantraguna*. These parameters reflect epistemological, methodological, linguistic, and ethical standards.^[8]
3. **Tantraguna:** According to *Acharya Charaka*, the classical criteria of Scientific Writing are that the shrewd who wishes to be a physician, first of all, should analyse his own strength and weakness in the profession, the after-effects of his profession, his inclination, habitat and favourable time (age of learning) and then, after wisely search for a medical treatise.

“बुद्धिमानात्मनः कार्यगुरुलाघवं कर्मफलमनुबन्धं देशकालौ च विदित्वा युक्तिदर्शनाद्भिषग्बुभूषुः शास्त्रमेवादितः परीक्षेताविविधानि हि शास्त्राणि भिषजां प्रचरन्ति लोके; तत्र यन्मयेत सुमहद्यशस्विधीरपुरुषासेवितमर्थाबहुलमाप्तजनपूजितं त्रिविधशिष्यबुद्धिहितमपगतपुनरुक्तदोषमार्थं सुप्रणीतसूत्रभाष्यसङ्ग्रहक्रमं स्वाधारमनवपतितशब्दमकष्टशब्दं पुष्कलाभिधानं क्रमागतार्थमर्थतत्त्वविनिश्चयप्रधानं सङ्गतार्थमसङ्कुलप्रकरणमाशुप्रबोधकं लक्षणवच्चोदाहरणवच्च, तदभिप्रपद्येतशास्त्रमशास्त्रं ह्येवंविधममल इवादित्यस्तमो विधूय प्रकाशयति सर्वम्।”

Different medical treatises (and traditions) are available in society, from which one might select that has following characters: which is comprehensive providing all information, successful, followed by prominent and wise men (successful practitioners), with detailed meanings, regarded by authorities, useful to all three types of learners (with good, moderate and poor intellect), free from the deformity of reiteration, descending from the sages (which is written by experienced, intuitive person), with well- formed presentation, discussion and conclusion, having informative title and firm base free from weak and difficult words, having comprehensive knowledge of subject, with proper

sequencing of its contents, committed principally to arriving at the essence of thoughts, which reveals clear meanings and concrete conclusion, focused on the particular subject without wavering ideas and irrelevant content, quickly understandable with separated topics, effectively comprehensible, and having definitions showed with examples. Such a treatise, grounded in pure knowledge, is like the sun, which enlightens the whole subject while warding off darkness.^[9]

It comprises multiple characteristics that collectively define high-quality scholarly writing. Their relevance to modern research communication is discussed below.

1. **Sumahat (Well Comprehensive):** सुमहद्यशस्वि च धीरपुरुषासेवितं च; किंवा सुमहद्यशस्विधीरपुरुषैरासेवितमिति विग्रहः।

A scientific work should comprehensively address the subject without unnecessary verbosity. This aligns with modern expectations of adequate literature review and complete methodological reporting.^[10]

2. **Yashasvi-Dheera-Purusha-Sevita & Apta-Pujita (Accepted by scientific fraternity):** आप्तजनपूजितमिति बहुविधैराप्तैर्यथार्हमनुमतम्।

Authenticity is strengthened when a text is respected and used by experts. In modern terms, this corresponds to peer review, citation metrics, and scholarly validation.^[11]

3. **Arthabahulam (Concise and Meaningful & Well interpreted):** Scientific language must be economical yet information-dense. This parallels modern recommendations for precision and avoidance of redundancy. The meaning underlying the text is to be interpreted with due regard to the principles of elaboration & reduction.^[12]

4. **Trividha Shishya Buddhihitam (Universal Comprehensibility/ Clearly expressed):** उत्कृष्टमध्याल्पबुद्ध्यस्तिविधाः शिष्याः।

It indicates that a scientific apper should be clearly expressed, easily understood, and appealing to all types of people in a particular field.^[13]

5. **Apagata Punarukta Dosha (No Repetition of Content or without Plagiarism):** अपगतपुनरुक्तमिति कर्तव्ये यदोषपाठं करोति, तेनाधिकरणवशप्राप्तं यतः करोति ततः पुनरुक्तमदोषं भवति।

This principle discourages unnecessary repetition and anticipates modern concerns regarding plagiarism and redundant publication.^[14]

6. **Aarsham (Impartiality/Unbiased):** Study should be conducted & reviewed by an unbiased, genuine and scientific person. Bias, whether methodological, interpretative, or financial, compromises validity. This anticipates modern concerns regarding conflicts of interest and research integrity.^[15]

7. SupranitaSootra-Bhashya-Samgraha (Systematic Structure& in good format): It describes

the well-knit format of the writing. This tripartite framework mirrors modern article structure:^[16,17]

Ancient Component	Meaning	Modern Equivalent
<i>Sootra</i>	Concise principle	Declarative title/Thesis
<i>Bhashya</i>	Detailed explanation	Introduction-Methods-Results-Discussion
<i>Samgraha</i>	Summary	Conclusion

8. Swadharam (Evidence-Based Authentication): स्वाधरमिति शोभनाभिधेयम्।

Statements and Ideas are supported by appropriate evidence that demonstrates how conclusions have been drawn, as well as acknowledging the work of others. This principle aligns with modern referencing systems such as the Vancouver and Harvard styles and with the emphasis on reproducible methodology.^[18]

9. Anavapatita Shabda&Akashta Shabda (Without Vague & Clarity of Language): अनवपतितमिति अग्राम्यशब्दम्। अकृष्टशब्दमिति अकृच्छोच्चार्यशब्दं, किंवा प्रसिद्धाभिधेयशब्दम्।

Avoiding vague, ambiguous, or overly ornate language aligns with contemporary technical scientific writing guidelines^[19].

10. Pushkalaabhidhaanam (having abundant expression): पुष्कलाभिधानमिति सम्यगर्थसमर्पकवाक्यम्।

The script should be rich in synonyms with broader applicability.^[20]

11. Kramagataartham (Sequence): क्रमागतार्थमितिपरिपाट्यागतार्थम्।

According to the topic, the order in which the subject has been described is the proper way.^[21,22]

12. Arthatatvavinishchayapradhanam (Objective-Oriented Focus): A scientific paper should emphasise the determination of the central idea of the matter. This parallels a hypothesis-driven research design.^[23]

13. Sangartham (Well Organized): संगतार्थमितिप्रतिपादितार्थम्।

There should be no conflict in the sentences of *Purva* (before) & *Pashchata* (after). The subject should be according to the scripture chapters.^[24]

14. Asankulaprakaranam (Logical Organization/without complexity/amalgamation of subject): असंकुलप्रकरणमिति अमिश्रीभूतप्रकरणम्।

Sections of scientific work should not be intermingled. Modern manuscripts similarly require distinct sectioning for clarity.^[25]

15. Ashuprabodhakam (Transparent/ Crystal Clear): Writing should be uncomplicated, quick and easy to convey.^[26]

16. Lakshanavat & Udaharanavat (Definitions & Illustrations/Examples): लक्षणवदिति आयुर्वेदप्रधानार्थहेतुलिङ्गौषधाख्यासाधारणधर्मकथनवत्; किंवा प्रशस्तशास्त्रलक्षणवत्। उदाहरणवदिति दृष्टान्तवत्।

The work should provide Operational definitions, figures, and examples to improve interpretability consistent with present-day reporting standards.^[27]

Acharya Charaka also talk about the *Vakya Prashansa* (Syntactical Excellence), which is attained when the statement is free from syntactical deficiency, superfluity, incongruity, contradiction and breach of tradition. That is to say, where there is no room for further enquiry, the statement is considered to be of excellent type.^[28]

अथवाक्यप्रशंसा- वाक्यप्रशंसानामयथाखल्वस्मिन्नर्थे त्वन्यूनम्, अनधिकम्, अर्थवत्, अनपार्थक्यम्, अविरोद्धम्, अधिगतपदार्थं चेति यत्तद्वाक्यमनन्योयमिति प्रशस्यते।

1. *.Anyunam* (Not less than/deficiency) - No essential word should be less than.
2. *.Anadhikam* (Not exceeding/superfluity) - There should not be too many unnecessary words.
3. *.Arthvat* (Meaningful/Significant) - The sentence should have a clear meaning.
4. *.Anaparthakam* (Devoid of deprivation of meaning) -It should not be meaningless or useless.
5. *.Avirudham* (Incongruity) - There should be no conflict with each other.
6. *Adhigatapadartham*(Comprehensible) - The meaning of whose words can be understood.

Such a sentence is considered inapplicable (in which no fault can be found) and is called a praiseworthy sentence. These principles resemble contemporary recommendations for grammatical precision, semantic clarity, and logical coherence in scientific writing^[29].

Acharya Sushruta describes the qualities of *Shastra Lakshana* (characteristics of a scientific writing) in the *Sutrasthana*.^[30] According to *Acharya*, a scientific work should be well-explained, easily understood, free from obstacles or contradictions, and well-organised. Such a divine treatise enhances intelligence, is beneficial, and remains uncorrupted/consistent over time.^[31]

Natya Shastra, *Bharata Muni* identifies ten specific *Gunas*: *Shlesha* (cohesion), *Prasada* (clarity), *Samata* (evenness), *Samadhi* (concentration), *Madhurya* (sweetness), *Ojah* (vigour), *Padasaukumarya* (delicacy of phrasing),

Arthavyakti (perspicuity of meaning), *Udarata* (magnanimity), and *Kanti* (radiance) [32,33,34]. *Acharya Vamana*, in his treatise *Kavyalankarasutravritti*, posits that there are 20 poetic qualities (*Kāvya-guṇas*), which are divided into 10 *Śabda-guṇas* (qualities of sound/diction)

and 10 *Artha-guṇas* (qualities of meaning). These qualities are considered essential elements falling under the category of *Riti* (the soul of poetry) for enhancing poetic beauty and aesthetic appeal as mentioned below. [35,36,37]

Table 1: Shabda Gunas & Artha Gunas

S. No.	Shabda-Gunas (Word-based Qualities)	Artha-Gunas (Meaning-based Qualities)
1	<i>Shlesha</i> (Coalescence/Synthesis): Harmonious fusion of words	<i>Shlesha</i> (Subtle connection of meanings).
2	<i>Prasada</i> (Clarity): Use of easily understandable words.	<i>Prasada</i> (Clarity of meaning).
3	<i>Samata</i> (Smoothness): Evenness in rhythm or style	<i>Samata</i> (Uniformity in meaning).
4	<i>Samadhi</i> (Concentration): Concentration or a special sense found by a genius.	<i>Samadhi</i> (Metaphorical or deep meaning).
5	<i>Madhurya</i> (Sweetness): Delightful sound that pleases the ear.	<i>Madhurya</i> (Sweetness of sense)
6	<i>Ojas</i> (Grandeur/Strength): Use of compound words/grandeur.	<i>Ojas</i> (Semantic strength/Grandeur of meaning).
7	<i>Saukumarya</i> (Agreeableness): Gentle, easy, and pleasant sound.	<i>Saukumarya</i> (Delicacy of ideas).
8	<i>Udarata</i> (Exaltedness/Generosity): Elevated or non-vulgar language.	<i>Udarata</i> (Exalted idea).
9	<i>Arthavyakti</i> (Directness): Clear expression where meaning is immediately understood.	<i>Arthavyakti</i> (Clarity of the conceptual image).
10	<i>Kanti</i> (Loveliness/Brightness): Resplendence that pleases the mind	<i>Kanti</i> (Brightness/Charm of the theme).

According to Vishwanath [38,39], the author of the *Sahityadarpan*, has presented a detailed exposition of *Guna* (literary qualities) in the eighth chapter of his treatise on poetics, the *Sahityadarpan*. Vishwanath regards these qualities as *Upakarak* (aids or auxiliaries) to *Rasa* (aesthetic sentiment) and has established them as the inherent attributes or *Rasadharma*. Adhering to the tradition established by *Mammata*, Vishwanath primarily identifies three distinct *Gunas*:

- Madhurya:** The quality that melts or softens the mind.
- Ojah:** The quality that generates a sense of expansion or radiance within the mind.
- Prasada:** The quality that pervades the mind and is immediately intelligible.

The classification of these *Gunas* is based upon the three distinct states of the *Chitta*.

Discussion

Tantraguna and IMRAD Comparative Analysis, exhibited in Table 2, should be discussed in the following points.^[40]

- Structural Convergence:** Both systems emphasise sequential organisation, central thesis articulation, evidence-based reasoning, and conclusive summarisation. While IMRAD provides procedural segmentation, *Tantraguna* adds qualitative dimensions such as ethical neutrality and linguistic refinement.

- Epistemological Depth:** *Tantraguna* integrates logic (*Tarka*), strategy (*Yukti*), and illustrative reasoning (*Udaharana*). These elements underscore a holistic epistemology, extending beyond mechanical formatting.
- Ethical Dimensions:** Modern guidelines, such as those from the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), stress transparency, authorship responsibility, and conflict-of-interest disclosure. *Tantraguna*'s emphasis on *Aarsha* (unbiased scholarship) parallels these concerns.^[41,42]
- Implications for Contemporary Scientific Writing:** Integrating *Tantraguna* into modern frameworks may offer several benefits: Strengthened ethical awareness, enhanced clarity and conciseness, emphasis on intellectual coherence, balanced integration of structure and philosophical depth, and improved pedagogical approaches in research methodology training^[43].

For Ayurveda and other traditional sciences, *Tantraguna* may serve as an evaluative tool to assess textual quality and methodological rigour. While conceptual parallels are evident, it was originally intended for evaluating classical treatises rather than empirical research reports. Therefore, direct equivalence with IMRAD should be interpreted cautiously^[44].

Table 2: Comparative Analysis of Tantraguna and IMRAD Structure in Scientific Writing

S. No.	Tantraguna Principle	Literal Meaning	Functional Interpretation in Classical Context	Parallel in IMRAD / Modern Scientific Writing	Scholarly Significance
1.	<i>Sumahat</i>	Comprehensive	Covers all essential aspects of the subject proportionately	Complete coverage of Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion	Ensures completeness without excessive verbosity
2.	<i>Yashasvi-Dheera-Purusha-Sevita & Apta-Pujita</i>	Accepted by learned scholars	Recognised and utilised by experts in the field	Peer review, citation acceptance, scholarly validation	Establishes credibility and scientific authority
3.	<i>Arthabahulam</i>	Meaning-rich brevity	Profound meaning expressed concisely	Concise abstracts and focused reporting	Promotes precision and density of information
4.	<i>Trividha Shishya Buddhihitam</i>	Suitable for three levels of intellect	Understandable to advanced, moderate, and novice learners	Structured abstract, clarity of language, readability standards	Enhances accessibility and

					pedagogical value
5.	<i>ApagataPunarukta Dosha</i>	Free from repetition	Avoids redundancy and intellectual duplication	Anti-plagiarism norms, avoidance of redundant publication	Preserves originality and ethical integrity
6.	<i>Aarsha</i>	Unbiased, authentic	Composed by impartial and knowledgeable scholar	Conflict-of-interest disclosure, ethical research conduct	Safeguards objectivity and research validity
7.	<i>SupranitaSootra</i>	Well-composed aphorism	Concise statement of core principle	Declarative or descriptive title	Communicates central thesis clearly
8.	<i>Bhashya</i>	Detailed exposition	Elaboration of theory with reasoning and evidence	Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion	Enables comprehensive explanation and analysis
9.	<i>Samgraha</i>	Summary	Compilation of essential points	Conclusion / Summary section	Reinforces key findings and implications
10.	<i>Swadharam</i>	Properly supported	Arguments backed by authentic references	Referencing systems (Vancouver/Harvard), citation standards	Ensures evidentiary support and transparency
11.	<i>Anavapatita Shabda / Akashta Shabda</i>	Free from vague or harsh words	Clear, unambiguous terminology	Technical clarity, standardized nomenclature	Minimises ambiguity and improves comprehension
12.	<i>Pushkalabhidhanam</i>	Abundant expression	Use of meaningful synonyms and terminology	Terminological precision and keyword optimization	Enhances semantic richness and indexing
13.	<i>Arthatatvavinishchayapradhanam</i>	Focused on objective determination	Central theme without irrelevant digressions	Hypothesis-driven research, objective alignment	Maintains thematic coherence
14.	<i>Asankulaprakaranam</i>	Non-intermingled topics	Logical organisation of chapters	Section-wise structuring in IMRAD	Facilitates readability and logical flow
15.	<i>Aashuprabodhakam</i>	Quickly understandable	Transparent and easily graspable content	Reader-friendly structure and clarity	Improves knowledge transfer efficiency
16.	<i>Lakshanavat&Udaharanavat</i>	With definitions and examples	Scientific definitions supported by illustrations	Operational definitions, tables, figures, case examples	Strengthens conceptual clarity and applicability

Conclusion

Tantraguna offers not merely a formatting guide but an integrated philosophy of scientific discourse. Its revival and reinterpretation could meaningfully improve academic writing standards in contemporary research. It should carefully choose a reliable, well-structured, authoritative text, respected by scholars and clearly written. Such a text removes ignorance and brings true knowledge, just like the sun removes darkness.

Limitation

This review is conceptual and interpretative in nature. Historical reconstruction of ancient methodology involves translation-based inference. Further interdisciplinary studies involving Sanskrit scholarship, history of science and research methodology may deepen understanding.

Author contributions

SM and SSW conceptualised the study, and both authors approved the final version. SM drafted the first version of the manuscript with relevant suggestions and critical analysis from SSW. Both authors approved the version submitted for publication.

Data Availability Statement

As this is a narrative review, all data relevant to the study are included in the article.

Declaration of Use of AI

The authors used generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the manuscript writing process to improve the grammar and language of the work.

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