

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

The fundamental principle holds a strong ground in *Ayurveda*. Every medical stream has its own science in which its matter is developed, evolved and explained. From creation of living to issues of health, disease and its treatment these fundamental principles are the root. These can be enumerated as *Tridosha*, *Panchamahabhuta*, *Prakriti*, *Ojas*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, *Agni*, *Manas*, *Atma* etc. They are most unique and original approach to the material creation and it has all scope to incorporate the modern development in the elemental physics. The aim of *Ayurveda* is to maintain the proper equilibrium of *dosa*, *dhatu*, and *mala* constituent in order to preserve health in a healthy person and cure a disease in a diseased person. The presence of cognition as well as the absence of cognition is an indication of the mind. In the presence of senses with senses object and soul the man does not perceive a thing in the absence of mind that is to say that senses are unable to grasp the object in the absence of *Manas*. The term *Ojas* has been used in *Ayurveda* for the factor which prevents decay and degeneration of the body and provides strength and support against a disease. Concept of *Agni* which incorporates all activities and factors responsible for digestion and metabolism in the living organism as known today, knowledge to these fundamental principles is a key to health and diseases. Maintenance of health depend on good and sound knowledge of these. Detail will be given in full paper.

Keywords: *Ayurveda*, health, *dosa*, *Agni*, *mind*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the science of living being that imparts all the knowledge of life. *Ayurveda* helps to maintain the health in a person by using the inherent principles of nature to bring the individual back into equilibrium with their true self. *Ayurveda* has been existing since the beginning of time. Health is essential for enjoyment of all the worldly pleasures in a righteous manner. Promotion of positive mental health is essential for acquiring a state of eternal and supreme happiness, i.e. *moksha*. It defines a useful and harmful, happy and unhappy life and gives guidelines on what is beneficial, happy and unhappy life

and gives guidelines on what is beneficial and harmful to life. The basic principle of *Ayurveda* is a holistic system of health care. It is an alternative branch of medicine and treatment. The human body is more complex than any other form of life as on date. *Purusha*- the human body is aggregate of 25 elements, together with *Atma*- the spirit or soul. In order to explain the functional complexity of human body to be formed by three *Dosha* (humours), seven *Dhatu* (tissue) and *Mala* (metabolic end products) which are in equilibrium.¹

DIFFERENT IMPORTANT FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES AS PER

AYURVEDA ARE AS UNDER-PANCHAMAHABHUTA THEORY- The theory of *Panchamahabhuta*, have been considered in basic principles of *Ayurveda*. All living beings are created by the combination of five basic elements and the soul. *Acharya Charaka* conceives each individual i.e. the *Purusaas* well as the creation i.e. the *loka*² to be *Saddhatwatmaka* constitution i.e. consisting of the *Panchamahabhutas* plus *avyakta Brahma*. The *Akasa* (space), *Vayu* (air), *Agni*(fire), *jala* (water) and *Prithvi* (earth) are the five basic eternal substances called *Panchamahabhutas*³ are the ultimate essential physical constituents from which the physical world is derived. The various types of substances existing in the universe are created by intermixing of the five *Panchamahabhutas* with each other in a special and specific manner called *Panchapanchaka*.⁴ The homology of the five elements in food and medication on the one hand and in the body constituents on the other, has profound implications in the practice of medicine. Disorders of the body are the manifestations of perturbations in the equilibrium of body constituents including *dosas*. Perturbations involves the increase or decrease of *dhatu*s, which are restored to the normal range by administering substances with qualities opposed to those of the relevant *dhatu*s and *dosas*. This would be hardly possible in the absence of the homology between the body and the administered substances in terms of their composition.⁵ A person is seen in *Ayurveda* as a unique individual made up of five primary elements. These elements are ether

(space), air, fire, water and earth. Just as in nature, we too have these five elements in us. When any of these elements are imbalanced in the environment, they will in turn have an influence on us. The foods we eat and the weather are just two examples of the influence of these elements, certain elements are seen to have an ability to combine to create various physiological functions.⁶

These five *Mahabhutas* which are responsible for creation of the entire material world are not identical with space, air, fire, water and earth in the common sense. It is often argued that these *Panchamahabhutas* should not be considered as elements in the sense of modern physics because they are already the mixture of many other elements.⁷ Each gross *bhuta* is composed of *paramanus* chronological development of each *bhuta* has been explained via *uttarottaranupravesha* (i.e. each next *bhuta* has earlier *bhuta*) while the functional *panchamahabhautikadravya* is *anyonya* *anupravesha* (i.e. each *dravya* is composed by mixture of these *bhuta* units) and thus a gross *bhuta* is already a *Panchamahabhautic* structure. *Susruta* clearly described that these *bhutas* are intermixed with one another with predominance of one of them manifesting into the specific characteristic of the same.⁸ *Panchamahabhuta* have been considered to be five because the *Indriyas* are only also five.

TABLE1: THE PROPERTIES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE BASIC ELEMENTS⁹

	Prithvi (Earth)	Jala (Water)	Agni (Energy)	Vayu (Air)	Akash (Space)
1.Pr op-ertie	Heavy, rough, hard, slow, Inactive, steady,	Heavy, fluid, soft, inactive,	Light, rough, sharp, clear minute, atomic, hot, dry luminous, active spread high	Light, rough, clear,	Light, smooth, soft, Inac-

s	firm, clear, dense, large, bulky, neither hot nor cold	slimy, cold, dense, Large molecules viscid wet, moving in the direction of gravity	speed	minute, atomic, neither hot nor cold, active movement	tive, clear minute, neither hot nor cold, separation, differentiation
2.Movement	Downward	Downward	Upward	Centrifugal	Absent
3.Taste	Sweet, slightly Astringent	Sweet, slightly Astringent salty and sour	Pungent, slightly Astringent	Astringent, slightly bitter, Sour and Salty	Taste not manifest
4.Special sense	Smell	Taste	Vision	Touch	Sound
5.Special organ	Nose	Tongue	Eye	Skin	Ear
6.Body	All organs in the body, steady and large body	All fluids in the body	All over the body in manifest or unmanifest form	All body activities, pulsation and all gases	All body activities
7.Part of the body	Nails, bones, tendons, teeth muscles skin, stool, hair, spinal cord	Body fluids blood, fatty tissue kapha pitta, urine, stool, sweat, semen.	Pitta, heat, lustre	Inspired air, Expired air, all movements in the body	All body passage and cavities
8.Diet	Rice, Wheat, mineral salt,	Milk, fruits	Spices e.g. pepper(piper longum),Ginger(gingiberoffi	Various gases(air,	Popcorn, Guduchi

carrot, beet Shatavari		cinalis), hingu(Asafoetida), Chitraka(Plumbago zeylan- icum),Bhallatak(Semicarpus anacardium),Garlic(allium cepa)	oxy- gen),smo ke of various sub- stance	(Tinospora cordifolia)
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TRIDOSA THEORY- The theory of *Tridosha* is further biological application of the concept of *Panchamahabhuta*. Depending upon the rate of the predominance of *Vayu*, *Teja*, and *Jala*, the *Panchamahabhuta* and *Panchamahabhautic* structures have been categorised in three categories

Dosa	<i>Vata</i>	<i>Pitta</i>	<i>Kapha</i>
Predominance of Mahabhuta	<i>Vayu, Akasa</i>	<i>Agni</i>	<i>Jala, Prthvi</i>

These three *Panchamahabhautic dosas* constitute the living being, they are considered *dosas* because they have a tendency to get vitiated and to vitiate each other. They are also considered as *dhatu*s because they uphold the body. Thus the living body is a *Panchamahabhautic* structure derived by the transformation of these *Panchamahabhutas* into biologically effective matters like *tridosha* and *dhatu*s. So long as the *Panchamahabhautic* composition of these *dosas* and *dhatu*s remain in equilibrium a man remains healthy. The misbalance of the same factors is the cause of ill health and accordingly the aim of Ayurveda is to maintain the proper equilibrium of these constituent in order to preserve health in a healthy person and cure a disease in a diseased person.¹² Thus the three *dosas* are the primary essential constituents of the living being. Before going into the detailed descriptions of the nature of these three *dosas*, for the sake of gross understanding it may be stated that the entire physical volume in a living organism predominantly constitutes the *Kapha* system of the body. Similarly the entire chemical processes including the actions and

of living body constituent viz- *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*.¹⁰ Thus *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* are *Panchamahabhautic* structures with predominance structures with predominance of one are the other of the five the *bhutas*.¹¹

Table No2:

reactions of hormones and enzymes represent the pitta system. All kinds of movements and activities in the living organism are attributed to the *Vata* system. A balanced functioning of these three compartments of a living being presents with health. A disequilibrium and disharmony of these three constituents is the cause of illness.¹³ Susruta includes *Rakta* also as one of the *dosas* and considers the integrity of *Vata*, *pitta*, *Kapha* and *Rakta* as the basis of life.¹⁴

DOSAPRAKRTI-

Equilibrium of the three *dosas* is essential for health and there disequilibrium is the cause of disease.¹⁵ Life begins as a fertilised ovum, i.e. by fertilisation of ovum by the sperm. Constitution is primarily genetic in origin. Sperm and ovum carry with them the constitutions of both parents. At the time of conjugation, the dominant *prakriti*, i.e. *dosa* of sperm can either neutralise the dominants *prakriti* of ovum or exaggerate the dominant *dosa* or quality.¹⁶ On the basis of finer details seven types of *dosa prakriti* have been described three by the predominance of the three *dosas*, three

mixed types and the seventh being the *samadosa prakriti*.¹⁷

SAPTADHATUS-

Ayurveda describes seven types of primary *dhatu*s which are related to the physiology of basic nutritional and structural factors responsible to support or nourish the body. The *dhatu*s are responsible to support the body and the mind both and to promote growth as mentioned earlier the *tridosas* in the state of their normalcy are also kept in the category of *dhatu* (tissue) because they are also supporters of the body. The *Saptadhatus* are not only the supporters but are also nourisher of the body.¹⁸ In gross terms the seven *dhatu*s described in *Ayurveda* are referred to the seven primary tissues of the body. These seven *dhatu*s are considered the outcome of nutrition and they are constantly produced destroyed and reformed. The seven *dhatu*s are 1. *Rasa* (~plasma), 2. *Rakta* (~blood), 3. *Mamsa* (~muscle tissue), 4. *Meda* (~Adipose tissue), 5. *Asthi* (~bone tissue), 6. *Majja* (~marrow), 7. *Sukra* (~reproductive elements).¹⁹

THE CONCEPT OF MALAS-

Ayurveda presents unique concept that the *Malas* i.e. the excretory products of the body should also be considered as essential constituents of living body and they also perform some useful functions to support the body. As such the *Malas* to some extent also play the role of *dhatu*s i.e. as the supporters of the body. The term *Mala* refers to the polluting agents or impurities and also as the waste products. When the *Malas* are in the state of normalcy and do not produce a disease or ill health, they are considered as *Mala dhatu*s. After digestion the digested food is separated into the *Prasad* which is called *Rasa* and the *Kitta* i.e. the waste.²⁰ This *Kitta* includes the variety of polluting agents produced in the body. Such as *shakrit*(faeces), *Sveda*

(sweat), *Mutra* (urine) and even the abnormal forms of *Tridosas* and *Saptadhatu*.²¹ *Charaka* describes several types of *Malas* namely *Purisa* (stool), *Vitsneha* (faecal fat), *Mutra* (urine), *Sveda* (sweat), *Vayu* (flatus), *Pitta* (bile), *Khamala*, *Loma*, *kupamala*, *Kesa*(long hair) *Loma*(small hair), *Samshru* (beard) and *Nakha* (nail)²²

THE CONCEPT OF OJAS-

The term *Ojas* has been used in *Ayurveda* for the factor which prevents decay and degeneration of the body and provides strength and support against a disease. It is considered the essence of all *dhatu*s and stimulates *Slesma* in its gross qualities and functions.²³ *Chakrapanidatta* has described two type of *Ojas* 1. *Para* 2. *Apara*. According to *Acharya Charaka* the quantity of *Slaismic Ojas* is *Ardhanjali*²⁴ i.e. half an *Anjali* and the quantity of *Para Ojas* is *Asta Vindu* (eight drops). The *Para Ojas* is located in the *Hridaya*²⁵ while the *Apara Ojas* is located in the ten *Dhamanis* (~Artery) originating from the *Hridaya* (heart). According to *Charaka* the *Slaismic Ojas* is white, slightly reddish or yellow like ghee, it is sweet in taste like honey and has a particular smell.²⁶ According to *Susruta* the *Ojas* is watery, viscus, clear white and cold. It is soft, slimy and is the essence of all *dhatu*s and is responsible for promoting the stability of the body.²⁷ It is permeated in the entire body and its loss from the body leads to decay and degeneration of the body. *Charaka* believes that the *Dasamahamuladhamanis*²⁸ are the channels of transport of *Ojas* to the entire body. The *Ojas* in general besides providing biological strength to the body, is responsible for natural resistance against diseases i.e. *Vyadhi Kshamtva* or immunity.²⁹

THE CONCEPT OF AGNI-

Ayurveda postulates a very comprehensive concept of *Agni* which incorporates all activities and factors responsible for digestion and metabolism in the living organism as known today. *Agni* which in common language means fire, in technical terms in *Ayurveda* refers to the entire phenomenon of digestion and metabolism in the body at all levels. This is why *Charaka* says that the strength, health, longevity and all living processes during life are dependent on *Agni* so much so that the absence of *Agni* has been considered as absence of life. “*Santeagnau, mryate yukte ciram jivaty anamayah*³⁰” It converts food in the form of energy necessary for normal functioning of all living processes. *Ayurveda* describes thirteen type of *Agni* which has been classified- 1. *Jatharagni* or *Pachakagni*, 2. Seven *Dhatvagnis*, 3. Five *Bhutagnis*.³¹ The *Jatharagni* is located between the *Amasaya* and *Pakvasaya* i.e. Stomach and duodenum. It is responsible for digestion of ingested food. It burns and breaks all the respective *dhatu*s. After the action of *Jatharagni* the digested food is separated into its *Prasadabhaga* i.e. essence part and the *Kitta bhaga*.³² i.e. the waste product of the digested food. According to *Vagbhatta* the functions and physical properties of *Agni* are identical to *Pitta*.³³ *Pitta* is also located between the *Pakvasayas*, is *Panchabhautic* and is responsible for digestion and separation of food. *Jatharagni* is considered the chief of all the *agnis*³⁴ and governs the activity of seven *Dhatvagnis* and five *Bhutagnis*. The *Dhatvagnis* are seven kinds respective to each of the *Saptadhatus*. The *Dhatvagni* is primarily responsible for production of *Rasa Dhatu* from the digested materials available in the *Anna Rasa*. Each of the seven *Dhatvagnis* is responsible to bring about the transformation of appropriate nutrient materials, each kind of *Agni* being

responsible for the responsible for the synthesis of nutrition corresponding to one specific *sthaidhatu*. The *Jatharagni* governs the *Dhatvagni* and in turn governs the growth and decay of different tissues. The *Dhatvagni* appears to refer to the intermediary metabolism. *Ayurveda* conceives five kinds of *Bhutagni*. As is already known all the *Dhatu*s are *Panchamahabhautika*. Likewise all the nutrients are also *Panchabhautika* in composition. For each *Bhuta*, *Ayurveda* describes a specific *Agni* which is responsible for the finer metabolism of the individual *Bhuta* present in the *Ahara* and *Sthaidhatu*.

CONCEPT OF MANAS-

The important dimension of living being is the *Manas* or the mind. *Manas*, *Sattva* and *Chitta* have been used as synonyms in *Charaka Samhita*. According to *Acharya Charaka* the presence of cognition as well as the absence of cognition is an indication of the mind. In the presence of senses with senses object and soul the man does not perceive an object in the absence of mind that is to say that senses are unable to grasp the object in the absence of *Manas*.³⁵ Thus the role of some organ of attention is essential for the causation of cognition. This inner organ is the *Manas*. According to *Susruta* also the mind participate in sensory and motor functions.³⁶ *Charaka* and *Vagbhatta* both describe *Manas* as *Atindriya* i.e. transcending the senses.³⁷ According to *Chakrapani* *Manas* is *atindriya* because it is not the cause of knowledge of external objects by other sense organs.³⁸ *Tridosas* primarily work upon the body but *rajas* and *tamas* would upset the mind. *Charaka* recognised that the body and mind echoed each other in health and disease and that the final cause of most illnesses was imprudent conduct, which was rooted in the mind.³⁹ Apart from the effects of *rajas* and

tamas, the *tridosha* too are capable of destabilising the mind because their properties include psychological and intellectual traits. Thus the psychosomatic basis of illness finds major emphasis in *Ayurveda*.⁴⁰

CONCEPT OF ATMA-

The most important dimension of a living being is the *Atma*. *Charaka* like other Hindu philosophers believes that the *Purusa* the individual living being as well as the *Loka* or the universe both are *Saddhatvatmaka* entities consisting of the *pancamahabhuta* and the *Avyakta Brahma* i.e. the *Atma*, *Atma* is the conscious element of the living being and is considered to be the pure element and is the seer and *Karta*.

DISCUSSION

The most basic principle of *Ayurveda* is *lokapurushasamyata* on which this whole system has evolved. *Lokapurushasamyata* is based on *samanyawada*. *Loka* has sun, moon and wind representing *Agneya*, *saumya* further representing *Adana*, *Visarga* and *Vikshepa* which is represented by *Pitta*, *Kapha* and *Vata* in body. Thus *tridosha* being analogous to sun, moon, and wind, the living body is a *Panchamahabhautic* structure derived by the transformation of these *Panchamahabhutas* into biologically effective matters like *tridosha* and *dhatu*s. Health is defined as the balanced state of *dosa*, *dhatu*s and *malas*, both qualitatively and quantitatively and understanding the structure and functions of these basic units and how they are modified by various factors including stress and strain constitute the study of basic principles of physiology. *Psyche* is a tool to perceive knowledge and is responsible for *pravritti* or initiation in any activity. Its conjugation with *rajas* and *tamas* the two *doshas* are root to initiation while a purest form of *psyche* leads to salvatory stage. Attachment of *manas* with these

doshas leads to rebirth. *Ojas* is a concept in *Ayurveda* as a factor that promotes immunity and health. Diseases and health are dependent on status of *agni*. This *agni* in body works at gross level (*Jatharagni*) and at minute levels (*dhatwagni*, *bhutagni*). *Agni* helps in mechanism of chemical changes in body. *Aharapaka* is dependent on intensity and temperature of *agni*.

CONCLUSION

The fundamental principles of *Ayurveda* are eternal truths. Understanding the fundamental principles of *Ayurveda* will not only help mankind to live a better life, but will also help all the present as well as future scientists and research workers in understanding and opening the mysteries and intricacies of human life in better way.

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