

THE CLINICAL UTILITY OF BASIC PRINCIPLES OF AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the science that imparts all the knowledge of life. It defines health and factors responsible for its maintenance and promotion. 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. As every science has got some of its basic fundamentals on which the entire science is based, likewise Ayurveda has also got a few basic principles on which this science rests. Some of them are, Principle of *Panchmahabhuta*, Principle of *Tridosha*, Principle of *Sapta Dhatu* which constitute much of importance. Ayurveda being the ancient medical science has been described in Sanskrit language, in a specific manner, in brief form based on philosophical fundamentals. It is often accused as old, outdated, unscientific or impracticable by scholars or scientists of other disciplines who don't know or understand the facts about Ayurveda. Now when people using powerful synthetic drugs all over the world are looking towards Ayurveda as an alternative medicine, it is the duty of Ayurvedic people to propagate Ayurveda throughout the world in a right manner by applying the clinical utility of these principles. And for this, propagation of clinical application of these Ayurvedic Principles is more important than the propagation of Ayurvedic medicines or prescriptions.

Keywords: *Panchmahabhuta, Tridosha, Sapta Dhatu*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda defines a useful and harmful, happy and unhappy life and gives guidelines on what is beneficial and harmful to life.¹ It describes the etiological factors, pathogenesis, clinical manifestations, treatment and prevention of various disease states. It also gives the various prognostic factors, which help in assessment of life-span. In short, it discusses in detail all the aspects of human life. It is the science that imparts all the knowledge of life. It defines health and factors responsible for its maintenance and promotion. The aim of Ayurveda is to give guidelines for maintenance and promotion of health as well as prevention and treatment of diseases. In other words it teaches methods and means for constantly maintaining a balanced state of *Vata, Pitta, Kapha* i.e

maintenance of homeostasis in interior of the body. Its application can be comprehended into four stages:

1. Treatment of diseases (*Rognashini Chikitsa*)
2. Promotion of ideal constitution (*Prakritisthapini Chikitsa*)
3. Improving qualities of tissues (*Rasayani Chikitsa*)
4. Improving quality and strength of mind so that one attains a state of supreme and eternal happiness (*Naishthiki Chikitsa*)

Health is essential for enjoyment of all the worldly pleasures in a righteous manner². Promotion of Positive mental health is essential for acquiring a state of eternal and supreme happiness i.e moksha.³

The root cause of all human sufferings is ignorance, while that of all progress and

happiness is unclouded knowledge. The purpose of studying ayurveda is to constitute one's good not only in this life but even there after, as it not only alleviate suffering, but teaches to live a healthy, virtuous, wealthy, happy, and useful life. And to lead this life understanding the basic fundamentals of this science is the utmost priority.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To enlighten the basic fundamentals of ayurveda to its full perspective
- To understand these principles and utilize their clinical utility.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study Ayurveda elementary books such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, were referred to and analyzed in detail

PANCHMAHABHUTA PRINCIPLE

According to all Indian philosophies each and every object in this Universe is made up of five eternal elements *Akash, Vayu, Agni, Jala and Prithvi*. Just before the creation of universe all of these *bhutas* are in the state of inactivity but due to initiation of three inherent *Gunas* i.e *Satva, Rajas, Tama*, the activity of these *Bhutas* are started and the process of creation is started since *Prakriti* is endowed with these *Gunas*. Though all of the *Bhutas* are embraced by *Trigunas* still each of them have predominance and diminution of either of the *Trigunas* there by making these of different qualities and actions. This further implies that our body is also made up of five *bhutas* and the diet which we take also constitute of five *bhutas*. Therefore it is very necessary to identify the nature of dietic materials we take according to the necessity of our body. While prescribing one should remember the general rule that diet or drugs when taken, digested and assimilated in the body increase the similar qualities and elements in the body and on the other hand substances with the opposite properties antagonize the increased elements in the body and help to maintain the balanced state. Hence if the digestive power is weak, one should use spices which contain more of *agni mahabhuta*. If one has

burning sensation one should eat melon which contains more of *jala mahabhuta*.

CLINICAL UTILITY

As our bodies are composed of five *bhutas* and whatever diets we take those are also composed of five *bhutas*. Hence it is very necessary to know the nature of diet materials we take. Thus understanding this basic principle one can maintain the good health by eating healthy according to one's *bhuta* predominance and avoiding the apathy.

TRIDOSHA PRINCIPLE

Same as cited above, all the objects in this Universe whether they are animate or inanimate are made of five *bhutas*. They are formed by infinite permutation and combination of these five *mahabhutas*. Living creatures may not be able to utilize these physical elements as they exist in nature e.g. we cannot utilize carbon, nitrogen or hydrogen as it exists in nature. Hence we have to take these compounds in organic forms like sugars, fatty acids or amino acids. These organic compounds ultimately form the structural units of all living beings.

Ayurveda classifies all these structural organic units in three basic biological elements viz *vata, pitta, kapha*. These originate from from the biochemical combination of these five *bhutas*.

Vata originates from combination of *vayu* and *akasha*, *Pitta* originates from combination of *agni and jala*, *Kapha* originates from the combination of *jala and prithvi*. These *tridoshas* maintain the body when they are normal and balanced and if there is imbalance and abnormality in these three *doshas* individual become diseased. Acharya *sushruta*, quoted the importance of these *tridoshas* that as the universe is maintained by *soma* (moon), *surya*(sun), and *anil*(vayu) in the same way the individual's body is maintained by *Kapha, Pitta, and Vayu*.⁴ As soon as the life process starts i.e the fertilization takes places *Tridoshas* begin their role to maintain the individual till death. After the end of life there is no role of *Tridoshas* the body remains as *Panchabhautic*

hence the *Panchatva* is given to dead man. They are responsible for all the functions and transformations going on in the body. In a nutshell we can say that *Panchbhautic* structures i.e our body which is an anatomical entity support the physiological entity of *Tridoshas*. In ayurvedic classics also morphological descriptions of *Tridoshas* are not mention, only their qualities, character and functions have been mentioned. Acharya Sushruta has mentioned that all the diseases have their origin from *Tridoshas* as all of the universal objects cannot remain apart from *Trigunas*(*satwa, rajas, tamas*) in the same manner none of the diseases can remain apart from *Tridoshas*. Acharya Charaka has also mentioned in alike manner that the bird flying in the sky throughout the day not able to surpass its own shadow in the same way all of the diseases cannot originate apart from *Tridoshas*.

CLINICAL UTILITY

Tridoshas have the importance of maintaining the health and life while they are normal and balanced and producing diseases when they become imbalanced and deranged. Thus one can lead life that pacifies the predominant *dosha* in one's body by eating and doing activities that pacifies the same *dosha*. Substances similar to *vata* , *pitta*, *kapha*, when taken internally will increase *vata* , *pitta*, *kapha* molecules in the body respectively. On the other hand, substances having opposite qualities will decrease the number of *vata* , *pitta*, *kapha*, molecules in the body. Some examples:

Environmental Factors

Hot climate and exposure to sun will increase the number of energy particles entering the body and thus give rise to increased *pitta* in the body. On the other hand, exposure to cold environment will decrease the number of *pitta* molecules in the body.

Thus a person suffering from any disease in which there is decrease in number of molecules of *pitta* in the body can pursue the hot climate conditions to increase the *pitta* as ayurveda is based on *Samanya* and *Vishesh*

siddhant.⁵ (The law of similar and dissimilar)

Diet: Dry and bitter food substances dominate in *vata* molecules, hot and pungent substances in *pitta* molecules and sweet and fatty substances in *kapha* molecules

Medicines: The medicines having *usana virya*(warm potency), *katu vipaka*(bitter digested food) will simultaneously decrease *kapha* and increase *pitta* in the body.

Natural Urges: All the natural urges like micturition, defaecation, sneezing etc. are controlled by *vata*. Suppression or artificial induction of natural urges leads to increased *vata* in the body.

Psychological factors: Happy and contented state decreases mental as well as physical activity and hence leads to increased *kapha* in the body. On the other hand emotional upsets increase the mental and physical activity and give rise to increase in *vata* and *pitta*.

Activity and Rest: Any activity increases the breakdown and thus decreases *kapha* molecules and increases *vata* and *pitta* molecules. On the other hand rest and sleep promote increase in the number of *kapha* molecules in the body.

Age: In children, the rapid growth and development and dominant anabolic processes demand retention of *kapha* molecules which form the main structural units of the body. In young age, the increased metabolic processes lead to relative increases in *pitta* molecules. In the ages, the increased catabolic activities result in predominance of *vata* molecules.

Thus the law of similar and dissimilar can be applied to all the above parameters and balanced state can be achieved in the body when there is no manifestation of any kind of disease as all the *doshas* are in nearly balanced state.⁶

SAPTA DHATU PRINCIPLE: All the bodily structures are composed of *Sapta Dhatus* and because they maintain the body they are called *Dhatus*. The derivative meaning of *Dhatu* is to support and nourish

the body. Acharya Sushruta, quoted that *dosha, dhātu, malas* are like the root of the body.

There are basically two aspects of these Dhatus:

Dharana (support) and *Poshana* (Nutrition) *Dharana* denotes that these *Dhatus* are said to make the structural architecture of the body. *Sapta Dhatus* exist as concrete formed entities e.g. the circulating *rasa* and *rakta* (Plasma and Blood), *Mansa* (Muscular Tissue), *Medas* (adipose tissue), *asthi* (Bone tissue), *Majja* (Bone marrow) and *Shukra* (semen and other reproductive elements). These *Sapta dhatus* are being continuously formed, destroyed and reformed with necessary materials derived from *Ahar* (food) and thus maintaining a state of equilibrium. These Dhatus are of two kinds:

Sthayi or *Poshya Dhatus* (Stable or to be nourished) and

Asthai or *poshaka* (unstable or which nourishes)

Sthayi dhatus support the body by providing it with basic tissues and the *asthai* or *poshaka dhatus* are responsible for supporting nourishing and maintaining the *Sapta Dhatus* (*Sthayi Dhatus*). Acharya Charaka has mentioned in this context that *Ahara Rasa* (i.e. Digested diet) which is produced nourishes the *rasa, rakta, mansa, medas, asthi, majja, Shukra, Ojas* and the five senses basic structures known as *dhātu prasadakas* and also such parts of the body as the joints and related structures which bind them.⁷ The nutrient substances undergo transformations under the influence of their own specific transporting channels (*srotamsi*)⁸ The seven *dhatus* that support the body undergo two kinds of transformations i.e. *Prasada Paka* and *Kitta Paka* under the influence of its own *agni*. The *Prasada Paka* of *Ahar Rasa* (digested diet) nourishes seven *dhatus, Ojas*, which is responsible for the resistance and lustre of the individual essence of all Dhatus. *Kitta paka* nourishes *Sweda, Mutra, Purisha, Vata, Pitta, kapha* and *Malas* of eye, ear, nose, throat, mouth,

hair follicles and external genitals. The prime function of *Sapta dhatus* are to support the body. There are specific functions of each described *Sapta Dhātu* in Sushruta Samhita.⁹ *Rasa Dhātu* is responsible for zeal, health, ideal state of voice, complexion, ovum and sperms.¹⁰ It is also responsible for prevention of obesity and also of weight.¹¹ Thus, it maintains the body at optimum weight. The feeling of contentment, satisfaction or satiety comes from the *rasa dhātu* in the body. *Rakta dhātu* carries oxygen to all the tissues and thus maintains color, strength, health, happiness and life itself. It strengthens muscular tissue and is responsible for maintaining optimum functions of skin and other sense organs. It also maintains life, complexion and nutrition of tissues.¹² *Mansa Dhātu* gives strength to the body as well as to the adipose tissue. It covers and protects the internal organs.¹³ *Meda Dhātu* is present all over the body. However it is mainly present in the abdomen. Its main function is that of lubrication, strength to the body as well as the bones.¹⁴ *Asthi dhātu* supports the body and nourishes the *majja dhātu*. Muscles can exercise their action because they are attached to bones by tendons and ligaments. *Majja* represents tissue within and enclosed by bone. The function of *majja dhātu* include all the functions of brain and nervous tissue as well as bone marrow. *Majja* fills the bony cavities, gives strength and unctuousness to the body and nourishes *Shukra Dhātu*.¹⁵ *Shukra Dhātu* is responsible for strength, courage, love and happiness.¹⁶ *Ojas* represents the essence of all the previous seven tissues from *rasa* to *shukra*. It is the body fluid which is the store of energy.¹⁷

CLINICAL UTILITY

In this way all the essential elements and waste products of the body are nourishing the body in a balanced way which is responsible for *dhātu samya*.¹⁸ In this context Acharya Sushruta has mentioned that “*Dosha Dhātu Mala Moolam he Shariram*” *Doshas, dhatus and Malas* (waste products

of the body) are the *Mool*(root) of the body on which the body is supported and maintained.¹⁹ Every effort whether it is one's eating habits or lifestyle should cater to formation of all the *Sapta Dhatus* effectively in the body so that one remains healthy and live long life without any dreadful diseases.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda was written neither for earning money nor for deriving any enjoyment. As mentioned earlier, it was written by sages, who could not bear to see the sufferings of diseased people and whose only aim was to restore their health and happiness. And this can only be achieved if one understands the principles of this life of science well and apply it clinically as it is rightly said that one cannot think of a better donation than giving life back to a dying patient. Whether it is the principle of *Panchmahabhoot* or the principle of *Tridosha* or the principle of *Sapta Dhātu*, the balanced state of the body can only be attained by applying these in our day to day life. At last one cannot but appreciate the wisdom of our ancient masters who thought all these fundamentals. The beauty of Ayurveda lies in the way in which all the complex metabolic, physiological as well as pathological processes in the body are due to functioning of these elements which we recognize as *Tridoshas* (*vata, pitta kapha*), *Panchmahabhut* (*Akash, Vayu, Agni, Jala and Prithvi*), *Sapta Dhātu* (*rasa, rakta, Mansa, Medas, asthi, Majja and Shukra*). The practical utility of this line of thinking is tremendous as it not only simplifies the understanding and approach to the disease but makes it possible for the physician to prescribe rationally on the basis of symptoms even before the disease is manifested in the body.

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