CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF PANCHAMAHABHUTA SIDDHANT
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INTRODUCTION

In present days of globalization, all the rational sceptics are concentrated in finding the basic reasons for transformations or existence. The concept of Panchamahabhatas (five elements) is defined vividly and scientifically in Ayurveda classics. It is stated that human body is panchabhautika (penta elemental) and the food we eat is also panchabhautik, when the food undergoes digestion with the help of jatharagni (digestive fire) parthiv (Prithvi Dominant) properties of food nourishes the parthiv parts of body. In these manner symmetrical properties of mahabhutas (elements) gives nutrition to corresponding symmetrical organs of body¹. The objective of this review article is to study the conceptual as well as applied aspect of panchamahabhuta siddhant and to prove this principle as the base foundation of all other fundamentals viz. tridosha siddhant (theory of humours), garbhotpatti (foetal development), gunakarma vada (Theory of Property & Action of substances), deha sanghatana (body composition). panchamahabhut siddhant is universally accepted theory. Even it does not oppose the development of other

ABSTRACT

For true exploration and validation of Ayurveda in all its aspects, scientific inputs should conform to Ayurveda’s basic principles and philosophy. Till date so many studies have been done for elaboration of fundamental principles like Tridosha, Dhatu, Strotas, Agni, Oja, Ama etc. No any rewarding work has been done on Panchamahabhut siddhant and it is a still stalemate for us. In this perception present attempt is enlightened on clinical application and its importance in Ayurveda. Here emphasis has been given on evolution of Panchamahabhuta, its relation with other fundamentals like Dosha (humours), Rasa (tastes), garbhotpatti (embryonic development), Diagnostic methods and samskar (biotransformation). So on the basis of thorough knowledge and understanding of Panchamahbhat siddhant one can take an account of the causative factors for the imbalance of doshas and thereby discover the solution for the treatment. Detail literature reviewed regarding Panchamahabhuta theory in the form of dissertation, thesis, review articles, internet sources, modern concepts, souvenirs and these are used as material for present conceptual study. Panchamahabhatas are important components of the body both for physiological functions and in the pathogenesis of disease. Hence sincere trial by author to elaborate the concept of Panchamahabhuta in a systemic manner is done. It is very much essential for a good physician to develop with this concept to make the basic things more clear and strong. This study also concludes that each and every fundamental principle of Ayurveda is based on Panchamahabhuta theory.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Panchamahabhuta, diagnostic methods, biotransformation.
theories. In fact every dravya (substance) in this universe has its panchamahabhuta composition doesn’t matter whether they are chetan (living) or achetan (non living) 2. All the Karya dravyas (perceivable matters) existing in the world are panchabhatu tika. Panchamahabhutas are at the juncture of subtle to the more gross manifestation of the universe. But some people think that it is having less practical utility and more mental exercise. The reasoning of anything and everything which cannot be explained by tridoshas can be very well interpreted by panchamahabhuta siddhant. This concept of panchamahabhuta is capable in providing ultimate solution for the queries in the field of Ayurveda as per acharya Sushruta3.

In present scenario all branches of science are busy in finding the basic causes of existence. Even the most modernized equipment leads them to a more pensive problem. These are the limitations of theirs which has attracted them to eastern philosophy. Ayurveda can satisfy them with a more sound explanation on the basis of panchamahabhuta siddhant.

Evolution of Panchamahabhuta theory4
It takes place in 3 levels
a) First level: Evolution of Panchatanmatra (Subtle elements)
b) Second level: Bhutantarupravesha (Imitative pervasion)
c) Third level: Panchikaran (Reciprocal pervasion)
From avyakta (indistinct), a short look upto evolution of mahabhutas is as shown below in fig .1

Evolution of Panchamahabhuta theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avyakta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mahat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahamkaar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satvik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Indriyas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchatanmatra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchamahabhuta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In brief, evolution of Panchatanmatra from bhutadi ahamkar is as
Bhutadi ahamkar  Shabda tanmatra (akash)
Tanmatra is subtle quantum of mahabhuta category having a specific raja or tama. Philosophical science explained them as having a material form and indivisible further.

b) Second level - Bhutantarupravesha (Imitative pervasion)
At this level, tanmatras undergo some reactions to form the premolecules of mahabhutas.

c) Third level - Panchikaran (pentamerization or reciprocal pervasion)
The process in which molecules of the mahabhutas (primary existents) are combined with gross existents is called as Panchikaran (pentamerization).

Now the products which are going to act as single units in the manifestation of universe are formed. These conjugated forms of tanmatra are termed as mahabhutas. The Mahabhutas so formed, by the bhutantarupravesa and panchikaran reactions of tanmatra, undergo specific procedures of conjugation to form the manifested panchabhautika dravyas of the universe, around us. There is no any clear explanation in the classics about the reactions taking place in between mahabhutas, Acharya Chakrapani comments that these reactions of mahabhutas takes place due to Adrushta (Some unknown power). Hence no logic can be applied in this case; Acharya Sushrut in this regard described 3 types of conjugations taking place among mahabhutas to form panchabhautika dravya. These are:

- **paraspara-samsarga**: In this process two or more Mahabhutas come in contact and simply get attached to each other to form panchabhautika dravya.
- **paraspar-anugraha**: Anugraha means Upakara, give and take relationship, to enhance properties of each other. In this type of conjugation reaction, mahabhutas act in such a way that they will favour each other.
- **paraspar-anupravesha**: In this type of conjugation, Mahabhutas get submerged into each other. This paraspar-anupravesha procedure is of panchikarana again, but at Mahabhuta level.

Role of panchamahabhutas is not limited upto physical development of body but they are also involved in development of psychological properties. In Shantiparva (chapter from mahabharat) of Mahabharata it is clearly mentioned that the person having Prithvi mahabhut dominance in it shows Dhriti(capacity to bear anything), Jala mahabhut dominancy shows Soumya(aggreableness) behaviour, individual having Agni mahabhut dominance reveals Shoka(sorrowness), Vayu mahabbut dominant person shows bala (strength) and Swatantrata (independent nature) property and Akash mahabhut dominant persons are having Apratighat (unopposing) nature.

**Panchamahabhuta and embryonic development**

The amalgam of sperm and ovum when embedded in uterus along with
chetana then vayu Mahabhuta starts division in embryo to form dosha (humours) and avayavas (organs). Teja mahabhuta helps in biotransformation or provides energy, jala mahabhuta provides kledan (moisture). Prithvi mahabhuta provides strength by consolidation and Akash mahabhuta helps in overall embryonic growth by creating hollow structures of organs.

Shodhan dravya (purifying substances) and panchamahabhutas

Sushrut acharya stated that Virechan dravyas (purgative substances) are always having Prithvi and Jala mahabhuta dominancy since Prithvi and Jala mahabhuta are having Guru gunas (gravitational properties) and According to vaisheshik darshan (philosophy) adhopatana (gravity) is the prime property of guru guna. As Agni and Vayu mahabhutas are urdhwagami (upward moving tendency) and having laghu gunas therefore dravya with dominancy of these two mahabhutas helps in vaman karma (induced emesis). On the basis of these perceptions and inference we can make logic of other karmas (Actions).

Panchamahabhutas and Therapeutic actions

Drugs with predominance of Akash mahabhuta is having Sanshaman (Allievation) action on body, drugs which contains higher degree of Vayu mahabhuta acts as Sangrahika (Astringent), due to its shoshak (absorption) property it absorbs moisture, drugs with predominance of Agni Mahabhat helps in aggravating Jatharagni (digestive fire) which results in increasing appetite. Drugs having both Vayu and Agni mahabhut predominance acts as Lekhaniya dravya (scraping agent) and drugs of prithvi and jala mahabhuta dominance is having brumhana (weight gaining) action on body.

Clinical application of panchamahabhutas

1) Dhatusamyata (equillibrium state of dhatus): is the ultimate aim of our Ayurveda science. According to Acharya Charak principle of samanyam (similarity) helps in increasing degraded similar dhatus in body and when there is dhatu-viddhi condition we have to use vishesha dravyas (opposite substances) in treatment. To fulfil this purpose we must know the panchabhautik composition of therapeutic substances.

2) Tridosha Prakopa and Prasham (Vitiation and alleviation of humours): According to great sage Sushrut Vata, Pitta and Kapha are the main factors for the initiation of all pathogenesis inside the body, because of having their symptoms, their subsidence and scriptural evidence. As the entire universe is panchabhaautik, the entire disorders present in different forms do not exist without tridoshas. These variations are due to difference in panchabhautika composition of doshas.

Dravyas composed of Prithvi, Agni and Jala mahabhuta helps in alleviation of Vata dosha; Dravyas having dominancy in Prithvi, Jala and Vayu mahabhuta alleviates Pitta dosha and dravyas having predominance in Akash, Agni and Vayu mahabhutas reduces Kapha dosha. Dravyas which are rich in Akash, Vayu mahabhuta violates Vata dosha, Agni mahabhut predominant dravyas creates Pitta prakopa (Increases Pitta) while Prithvi and Jala mahabhut predominant dravyas aggravates kapha. In this way all dravyas are having different composition of mahabhuta properties. So by seeking accurate knowledge of properties of mahabhutas one can apply...
this knowledge to establish equilibrium of doshas.

3) **Panchamahabhutas and Trigunas**\(^{13}\) relation: Satvaparikshan (Mental strength examination) is the diagnostic tool to assess the manobal (Mental strength) of the patient. So by knowing the level of satva one can decide what to intervene in patient

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No</th>
<th>Mahabhuta</th>
<th>Mahaguna (3 major attributes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Akash</td>
<td>Satva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vayu</td>
<td>Raja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teja</td>
<td>Satva + Raja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jala</td>
<td>Satva + Tama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Prithvi</td>
<td>Tamas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1: Panchamahabhutas and Trigunas relation**

Thus from above table which shows relation between mahabhuta and mahaguna we can predict that certain dravyas can help in treating the psychiatric disorders by using panchabhautika dravyas in corresponding manovikara (mahaguna disorder).

4) **Panchamahabhutas and Rasa** (Tastes)\(^{14}\): Each of the rasas originate with predominance of two of the panchabhutas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rasa(Tastes)</th>
<th>Mahabhuta dominance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madhur(sweet)</td>
<td>Prithvi + Jala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amla(sour)</td>
<td>Prithvi + Teja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lavana(salty)</td>
<td>Jala + Teja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tikta(bitter)</td>
<td>Vayu + Akash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katu(acrid/pungent)</td>
<td>Vayu + Teja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kashaya(astringent)</td>
<td>Vayu + Prithvi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Panchamahabhutas and Rasa (Tastes)**

Even though the rasas are essentially constituted by the five bhutas(elements), the manifestation of certain bhutas in predominance during their origin results in the diversity. These rasas are solely responsible for dosha prakopa and manifestation of disease if used in improper way or by use of apathyakar aahar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No</th>
<th>Mahabhuta</th>
<th>Diagnostic Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Prithvi</td>
<td>Mala, Mutra, Sweda, Kapha by gandha Tanmatra (specific smell). Also in Diabetic coma, Diabetic keto acidosis. Weight and height measurement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jala</td>
<td>Rasa sarata Examination, CSF, sputum and ascitic fluid examination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teja</td>
<td>Fundoscopy (Colour etc. of eyes), digestion, body temperature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vayu</td>
<td>Respiration and Cardiac sounds, ECG, peristaltic sounds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ultimately wise physician must know the panchabhautika composition of dravyas to successfully treat the patient.

5) **Panchamahabhut and diagnostic methods:** The following table clearly shows the importance of panchamahabhutas in ancient and modern diagnostic methodology.
Table 3: **Panchamahabhut and diagnostic methods**

6) **Panchamahabhuta and dhatu**: All saptadhatus are panchabhautika\(^{15}\) and when there is dhatuvriddhi and dhatu-shaya conditions which are responsible for disease manifestations, At that time it is very much essential for physician to know the Permutation combination of mahabhutas of bhesaja (medicine) dravyas which he is using to treat panchabhautika dhatus. Also dhatvagni is also responsible for metabolic activities at the dhatu utpatti (tissue level)\(^{16}\).

7) **Panchamahabhuta and Samskaar (Biotransformation)**: The drug cannot be used as it is, in all types of patients, conditions & stages of the disease. The drug requires some modifications according to disease, kaal (time period) etc situations. So to make these modifications & formation samskaara is mandatory. Samskaar means imbibing different Gunas on the original Gunas of a Dravya\(^{17}\), every dravya is having its specific panchabhautika composition. The alteration in panchabhautika composition is taking place at every moment due to Agni Mahabhuta present in it. Samskaar is the only factor by which one can make modifications in panchabhautika composition of a dravya, thereby forming new dravya according to requirement. So, it is necessary to understand basic concept behind Samskaar and its relation with panchamahabhutas. This can be well understood by an example-when Ardraka (ginger) is soaked in lime water and dried in sunlight then its Jala Mahabhuta dominance gets decreased and Agni Mahabhuta dominance is increased comparatively, so that Ardraka having Guru Guna is converted into Sunthi having Laghu Guna. So by samskaras mentioned in classics & understanding the logic of pancabhautika alteration behind it vaidya (physician) can use the available dravyas as per need\(^{18}\). This Gunantaradhana is considered as biotransformation.

**DISCUSSION**

After entering the depth of any concept by reviewing the old literature and applying the concept through available materials & methods, next step is to test and interpret the obtained data through Anumana Prama. In ancient research methodology Panchavayava were designed to provide demonstrative inference of truth, under Pararthanumana (inference for others). One of the limbs of Panchavayava is Upanaya (Discussion), a step prior to Nigaman (Conclusion). Before establishment of truth as conclusion, discussion is mandatory. In spite of detailed appraisal a theory can be accepted only after proper reasoning of observations. Hence, the discussion is an important part of any scientific study. From the above review study it is very clear that Panchamahabhuta siddhant is involved in each diagnostic and therapeutic step. On the basis of thorough knowledge and understanding of Panchamahabhut siddhant one can take an account of the causative factors for the imbalance of doshas and thereby find out the solution for the treatment. The reasoning of anything and everything which cannot be explained by tridoshas, dhatus, can be very well interpreted by panchamahabhuta siddhant. The Rasa, Guna and Karma of any dravya can be altered by performing appropriate Samskaar on dravyas. For this
purpose, knowledge of theory of evolution of five elements and formation of panchabhatuki dravyas will be very useful.

CONCLUSION
The fruitful conclusions, which have automatically emerged through the discussion of the conceptual review study, are being presented here. All the available dravyas can be used as medicine but it requires proper logic and yuktī, also this is possible only after deep understanding of panchamahabhutas as it forms the foundation base of all other siddhanās (principles). The concept of Panchamahabhuta principle is peculiarity of Ayurveda. Though, Ayurveda is having similar views with Darshana shastras like Vaiśeṣika, Sankhya etc. in many aspects, but the concept of Panchamahabhuta in Ayurveda is moulded in such a way that, it becomes helpful in Nidan and Chikitsa, thereby fulfilling its aim of dhatusamya. Mahabhuta dominance of a panchabhautika dravya can be detected, but it is not possible to understand or predict the configuration of Mahabhutas, shapes and size of Mahabhuta-molecules due to limitations of human senses and intelligence. So in this regards the present review article also opens a new research window in the field of Ayurvedic fundamental research on this siddhant.

REFERENCES


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