



ISSN 2456-3110

Vol 7 · Issue 3

April 2022

Journal of
**Ayurveda and Integrated
Medical Sciences**

www.jaims.in

JAIMS

An International Journal for Researches in Ayurveda and Allied Sciences



Maharshi Charaka
Ayurveda

Indexed

Concept of *Panchmahabhut* and its utility

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ABSTRACT

The universe is called *Pancabhautic*. It simply means that everything in this universe is derived from these five basic elements. As it is the embodiment of the universe, everything which exists in the universe (*Bramhanda*) must be presented in the body (*Pinda*). In *Samkhya Philosophy Panchmahabhutas* are included under sixteen *Vikaras* (final products). According to *Vaisheshika Philosophy*, grossness appears in *Bhutas* in the stage of *Trisarenu* and they are called *Mahabhutas*. *Ayurveda* itself says human body is made up of *Panchbhautik Sanghatana* (*Akasha, Agni, Vayu, Jala and Prithavi*). *Ayurveda* emphasis on that development and maintenance of the body is done through the healthy lifestyles and diet (*Ahara*) etc. *Ahara* itself is *Panchbhautic* in nature. In this review utility of *Panchmahabhuta* is elaborated in the context of *Ayurvedic* relevance.

Key words: *Pancabhautic, Ayurveda, Brahmanda, Pinda, Ahara.*

INTRODUCTION

The man has five senses and through these he perceives the external world in five different ways. These sense organs are the ears, the skin, the eyes, the tongue and the nose. Through these, the external objects are not only perceived but also absorbed in to human body in the form of energy. These five types of sense are the basis on which the entire universe is divided, grouped are classified in five different elements and they are known as five *Mahabhuta* in Indian classics. They are named as *Akasa, Vayu, Agni, Jala, and Prithvi Mahabhuta*. As matter of fact each *Mahabhuta* has got the attributes of all other elements

and is named only one the basis that it has got fifty percent portion of the particular element. These factors have been discussed and accepted in Indian Philosophy under the topic of *Panchikarana* of *Mahabhutas*. The Phenomenon of *Panchikarana*, also resembles with modern concepts of physics and chemistry. The electrons, protons and neutrons, etc. present inside the atom, represent *Prithvi Mahabhuta* on the basis of their solidity. The force or cohesion, because of which, they remain attracted towards each other is the characteristic attribute of *Jala Mahabhuta*. The energy that is produced inside the atom represents the attributes of *Agni Mahabhuta*. The forces of movement of the electrons and space in the movement represent *Vayu* and *Akasa Mahabhuta* respectively.

Panchmahabhoota philosophical and Ayurvedic view

Mahabhutas are five viz *Akasa, Vayu, Agni, Jala* and *Prithvi* having sound, touch, vision, taste, and smell as their properties.^[1] In *Samkhya* philosophy *Pancha Mahabhutas* are included under sixteen *Vikaras*. According to *Vaisheshika* system, grossness appears in *Bhutas* in the stage of *Trisarenu* and they are called *Mahabhutas*.

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Submission Date: 07/02/2022 Accepted Date: 17/03/2022

Access this article online

Quick Response Code



Website: www.jaims.in

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Ayurvedic concepts regarding Akasa

According to *Charaka Samhita*, Akasa has only one quality of sound.^[2] According to *Sushruta Samhita*, it is a *Satva Guna* abundant substance.^[3] The qualities of material having *Akasiya* nature are recognised as soft, light, subtle and smooth qualities and promote softness, porosity and lightness in the body.^[4] In the development of the body, sound, the sense of addition, lightness subtlety and distinction are derived from Akasa.^[5] The *Tridosas* are originated as well as developed by *Mahabhutas*.^[6]

Qualities of Vayumahabhuta

Six attributes are available in *Vayu Mahabhuta*: 1- *Shabda*, 2-*Samkhya*, 3-*Parimana*, 4-*Prthaktva*, 5-*Samyoga*, 6-*Vibhaga*

Medicinal Qualities of Akasmahabhuta

In the development of the body, sound, the sense of addition, lightness subtlety and distinction are derived from Akasa.

Vayu Mahabhuta

Vayu substance possesses *Rajoguna* in excess.^[7] According to *Tarkasamgraha*, the substance which cannot be seen but can be experienced by touch is called *Vayu Mahabhuta*.^[8] *Vayu Mahabhuta* is produced from Akasa^[9] and is recognised by *Sparsa Guna*.^[10] The five type of *Vata* with its location and function has been discussed in the chapter 28 *Chikitsa Sthana* of the *Charaka Samhita* and treatment of disease occurring due to *Vata Dosa*.^[11] *Susruta Samhita* and *Astanga Samgraha* have described the five types of *Vata Dosa*.^[12] the five types of *Vatadosa* are as described below.

1. **Pranavayu** - It is located in head, chest, throat, tongue, mouth and nose and its functions are spitting, sneezing, belching, respiration and digestion.^[13]
2. **Udanavayu** - It is located in navel, chest and throat speech, effort, energy, strength, complexion are its function.^[14]
3. **Samanavayu** - It is located in channels carrying sweat, *Dosas* and water and seated beside the digestive fire provides strength to *Agni*.^[15]

4. **Vyanavayu** - It, being swift moving, pervades the entire body and performs the function of movements, extension, contraction, blinking etc.^[16]

5. **Apanavayu** - Testicles, urinary bladders, penis, navel thighs, groin and anus are the seats of *Apanavayu* retention and release of semen, urine, stool and foetus are the action of *Apana Vayu*.^[17]

Properties of Vayu Mahabhuta

They are nine in number - 1. *Sparsa*, 2. *Samkhya*, 3. *Parimana*, 4. *Prthaktva*, 5. *Samyoga*, 6. *Vibhaga*, 7. *Paratva*, 8. *Aparatva*, 9. *Samskara*.^[18]

Medicinal utility of Vayu Mahabhuta

Ayurvedic system is based on some fundamental principles. One of these is the theory that everything in the world is made of five *Mahabhutas*. *Tridosha* theory is established on the theory of *Panchmahabhutas*. *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha* is the *Dosas* and *Vatadosa* represents *Vayu* and *Akasa Bhutas*. *Charaka Samhita* while describing the function of the normal *Vata* in the body, states that in its normal state of functioning sustains all the organs of the body.

Tejasmahabhuta

Tejasmahabhuta, the destroyer of darkness and counting lightening (luminous colour) lustre is produced after and by *Vayu Mahabhuta*.^[19] *Satva* and *Rajogunas* are found in excess in this *Mahabhuta*.^[20] According to *Vaisesika Darsana Tejo Rupasparsavt*^[21] means the substance containing *Rupa* (colour and touch attributes is called *Teja* or fire. Heat is characteristic of fire.^[22]

Qualities of Tejasmahabhuta

It contain eleven attributes

1. *Rupa* - colour
2. *Sparsa* - touch
3. *Samkhya* - number
4. *Parimana* - measurement
5. *Prthakatva* - separation
6. *Samyoga* - combination

7. *Vibhaga* - division
8. *Paratva*
9. *Apartva*
10. *Dravatva* - liquidity
11. *Sanskara*.

Medicinal qualities of *Tejasmahabhuta*

Substance that are hot, sharp, subtle, light, non-unctuous, non-slimy and abounding the qualities of vision are dominated by *Tejas*. They are sour, saline and pungent in taste. They promote combustion, metabolism, lustre, radiance and colouring of the body.^[23] According to *Charaka Agni-(Tejas)* itself, which is included in *Pitta* in the body is responsible for producing wholesome or unwholesome effect in vitiated or unvitiated states, such as digestion, indigestion, vision, loss of vision, proper degree or otherwise of heat, normal and abnormal complexion, bravery, fear, anger, exhilaration and confusion, clarity and other such duals.^[24]

Jalamahabhuta

In the serial of manifestation, *Jala Mahabhuta* is generated from *Agni Mahabhuta*.^[25] *Satva* and *Tamas Gunas* remain in excess in *Jala Mahabhuta*.^[26]

Qualities of *Jalamahabhuta*

Fourteen attributes are available in *Jala Mahabhuta*;

1. *Rupa*
2. *Rasa*
3. *Sneha*
4. *Sparsa*
5. *Samkhya*
6. *Parimana*
7. *Prthaktva*
8. *Samyoga*
9. *Vibhaga*
10. *Paratva*
11. *Aparatva*

12. *Gurutva*
13. *Dravatva*
14. *Sanskara*.

Medicinal qualities of *Jalamahabhuta*

It has got a very important place in medical sphere. Sense organ related to it is responsible for taste. Taste - *Rasa* is of six types:1-*Madhura* or sweet, 2-*Amla* or sour, 3-*Lavana* or saline, 4-*Tikta* or pungent, 5- *Katu* or bitter, 6-*Kasaya* or astringent.

The *Rasas* when employed properly maintain the body and their incorrect utilization result vitiation of *Dosas*. In *Ayurvedic* medicine, the treatment is mainly divided in two types, viz. *Sodhana* and *Samana* treatment. To create balance in the different factors such as *Dosa*, *Dhatu* and *Mala* the theory of *Sad Rasa* is used in *Samana* type of therapy. On the other hand, in *Sodhana* - purification therapy, the vitiated *Dosas* are expelled out from the body by using *Vamana* - emesis, *Virechana* -purgation and *Basti* - enema etc. In this process, the material causing disease comes out from the body in liquid form with the help of watery elements.

A good number of the diseases such as *Tandra* - drowsiness, *Mukha Srava* - excessive salivation, *Apakti* - indigestion, *Galaganda* - goitre are primarily caused by *Kaphadosa* and *Jalamahabhuta* has an important role in the development of these disease.

Prthivimahabhuta

According to *Vaiseshikadarsana*, the substance containing the qualities of *Rupa*, *Rasa*, *Sparsa* and *Gandha* is called *Prthivi Mahabhuta*.^[27] *Gandha* - smell is the particular attribute of the *Prthivi Mahabhuta* and this property is not available in any other *Mahabhuta*, so *Nyaya Darsana* definition *Tatragandhavati Prthivi* is complete and free from defects.^[28]

Qualities of *Jalamahabhuta*

Fourteen attributes are available in *Jala Mahabhuta*: 1-*Rupa*, 2-*Rasa*, 3-*Gandha*, 4-*Sparsa*, 5-*Samkhya*, 6-*Parimana*, 7-*Prthaktva*, 8-*Samyoga*, 9-*Vibhaga*, 10-*Paratva*, 11-*Aparatva*, 12-*Gurutva*, 13-*Dravatva*, 14-*Sanskara*.

Medicinal qualities of Prthivi Mahabhuta

Prthivi Mahabhuta has an important role in the formation, giving a particular shape and growth of the body. Earth, minerals and vegetable kingdom etc. the objective form of the *Prithvi Mahabhoot*, play most important role in medical science. Minerals and vegetables are used as medicines. The equipments used in the treatment such as different type of pots, mortars, knife etc. are the manifestations of *Prthivi* elements. All the dietic materials are made from five elements.^[29]

Practical utility of Five elements in Ayurveda

Ayurveda, the applied aspect of philosophy, deals with mental, physical as well as spiritual aspect of the health. The body of an individual is composed of five *Mahabhutas*. In the development of an embryo, after the combination of sperm and ovum, the cells are divided due to *Vayu Mahabhuta*, *Agni* is responsible for cellular metabolism, *Jalamahabhuta* is responsible for wetness, *Prthivimahabhuta* for solidity and *Akasa* for expansion.^[30] Similarly the other worldly things, used as diet or medicine are also composed from these five elements.

In the normal body of living being, these substances remain in a particular balanced proportion-*Samadhatu*, *Samadosa*, *Sama Mala* and *Samakriya*. However, due to enzymatic action inside the human body the ratio of the five *Mahabhutas* or their equilibrium inside the body gets disturbed. However, the body has, a natural tendency to maintain equilibrium, it eliminates some of them *Mahabhutas* which are in excess and takes some of the *Mahabhutas* which are in shortage. The shortage of *Bhutas* is replenished through the ingredients of food, drink and action as well as from heat and air etc. The exogenous *Pancha Mahabhutas* are converted in to endogenous *Bhutas* through the process of digestion and metabolism. Actually the theory of five elements is very useful with the medicinal point of view.

DISCUSSION

After entering the depth of any theory by reviewing the old text and applying the concept through available

materials and methods and next step is to test and interpreted the obtained data through *Anuman Pramana*. Our *Acharya* designed a methodology called *Panchavayava Vakya*. In this methodology before establishment of any *Siddhanta* discussion (*Upanaya*) is necessary. From the above described review it is clear that for true exploration and revalidation of *Ayurveda* in all dimensions, scientific inputs should confirm to *Ayurveda* basic principles and philosophy. *Panchamahabhuta* concept is involved in method of *Ayurvedic* treatment. So, on the basis of knowledge of *Panchamahabhuta* concept *Chikitsaka* can maintain the *Dhatusamyam* and solve the problem of patients. For the aim of *Ayurveda Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanama Aturasya Vikara Prasmanama*, knowledge of *Panchamahabhuta* concept and its utility is very useful.

CONCLUSION

The development of the world, from an atom to mountain takes place from the five *Mahabhutas*. The objects of the sense organs the vision, taste, smell, touching and hearing depends on five *Mahabhuta*, as each of them is related to one *Mahabhuta* only. In the human body, these five elements are explained in term of *Dosas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*), *Dhatus* (blood, muscles etc. seven tissues) and *Malas* (urine, sweats, stools etc.) and in drugs and dietary substances they represents the *Rasas* (taste - *Madhura*, *Amla* etc.), *Guna* (hot-cold etc.) *Virya* (potency) and *Vipaka* (the final taste that arises after digestion and metabolism of a substance). So, the theory of *Panchamahabhuta* is very useful in the treatment purposes.

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How to cite this article: Vasu Singh, Harish Chandra Kushwaha, Sandeep Dwivedi, Amarjeet Yadav, Kamlesh. Concept of Panchmahabhut and its utility. J Ayurveda Integr Med Sci 2022;3:121-126.

Source of Support: Nil, **Conflict of Interest:** None declared.
