

## Ayurveda and Mystery of Panchmahabhuta in the Treatment of Human Soul

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### Abstract

According to Ayurveda, human being is a microcosm (miniature of the universe). It is evident then, whatever is present in the universe should also be present in the human composition. As Earth is composed of 71% of water and about same percentage of water is also found in the physique of babies, indicating that the human creation is truly a mixture of clay and water. Panchmahabhuta is one of the fundamental principles of Ayurvedic science having resemblance with the components of the earth. Panch = five; Maha = larger and Bhuta = elements, thus Ayurveda believes in five major elements in human beings like five major elements of the Earth such as atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, mantle and core. It is noticeable that Akash (sky) and Vayu (air) are components of atmosphere; Jala (water) corresponds to hydrosphere; Prithvi (Earth) relates with lithosphere and Agni (fire) resembles mantle and core. Out of 118 elements discovered so far, about 22% is identified in human beings (Panchbhuta of the body), which governs the physical, chemical and biological processes of the body. These elements are responsible for maintaining tridosha called as Vata, Pitta and Kapha. Malfunctioning in any of these tridoshas creates an imbalance in the human system leading to ailment and diseases. This paper endeavours to understand this Mystery of human creation and its coherence with Ayurvedic treatments and its ability to fight disease by interacting with corresponding natural elements of the universe.

**Keywords:** Ayurveda; Panchmahabhuta; Elements; Soul; Body

### Introduction

Ecclesiastically man is believed to be a union of three main components such as: 1. corporeal body; 2. immaterial intellect; 3. divine spiritual soul. The physical body is believed to be a composition of five basic elements of the universe; intellect as the by-product of the wisdom gained through constant acquiring of knowledge; and spirit (soul) as the divine entity which is eternal and everlasting. These three entities interact with each other in routine fashion unless there is interruption in the system due to corruption in physical or spiritual condition which can well be treated with the flinch of Ayurveda. We know that five major elements such as Akash (sky), Vayu (air), Prithvi (earth), Jala (water) and Agni

(fire) constitutes whole universe. Likewise human body (sarira), according to Ayurvedic science is also a composition of these five main elements of the nature. These elements are present in all the moving and inert objects including plants, animals and human beings and are generally referred as mahabhutas. Bhutas are having self identity and they are not created from any other source giving the similitude of human soul which is also self-identified, an entity not created from any element. Further these Bhutas give rise to five greater Bhutas called Panchmahabhuta which constitutes the whole universe indicating that human being is the micro- form (microcosm) of these Panchmahabhuta.

It is well known that human construction is penta-elemental that means it is Panchabhautic in construction and the nourishment we take is also panchabhautic, as such the properties of food nourishes the earthly (parthivi) parts of body. Thus the proportional properties of mahabhutas elements give energy to corresponding proportional organs of body [1]. Bhutas are called as karna-dravya (casual factors) that is Nitya (everlasting) which cannot be destroyed, and has characteristics of Su-suksham (invisible by naked eyes), these properties are assigned to human soul. In fact every Dravya (substance) irrespective it is present in the universe as chetan (living) or achetan (non living) has attributes of Panchmahabhuta composition in it [2]. Mahabhutas are effects of Bhutas (cause) which are instrumental for cause and effect theory believed in Hinduism called as Karma theory which is responsible for attaining moksha, freedom from the cycle of rebirth. As per Acharya Sushruta, anything and everything which cannot be interpreted by tridoshas can be very well explained by Panchmahabhuta Siddhant [3].

Application of Ayurvedic principles in daily life, not only prevent the occurrences of diseases but it enhance the preservation and promotion of quality of healthy living. We know that Human body ceases to exist in the body when Atman (soul) is detached from these Panchmahabhuta of the body after a specific assigned time of association with it called as life span. Death occurs when there is imbalance between one and more of these elements leading to ailments in the specific part of the body or sometimes even whole of the body in which these elements are affected. For instance Ayurveda believes that asti (bone tissues) are made out of Prithvi (Earth elements) and any disorder taking place due to imbalance in this element may lead to disease called as osteoarthritis. Ayurveda works on improving the Calcium content in the bones there by not only restoring it but maintaining the same to desired level to keep the bone tissues healthier. Thus it is paramount to understand the importance of mahabhutas not only in the creation of human but also in keeping the human structure healthier and free from ailments using the same constituents through which man is created. According to Advaita the human soul takes endless cycles of rebirth. Ayurveda describes that any type of suffering is identified by its attachment with body, mind or senses. This attachment to desires and lust ultimately corrupts the original pure and spiritual soul thereby keeping it connected again and again to the mind and body

(mahabhutas) which continues the cycle of rebirth. Ayurveda has potential to empower such sufferings by rejuvenating the elements which are corrupted on account of faulty life style and to liberate the soul from the effect of karma and liberate the soul from the cycle of rebirth [4].

### Material analysis

The study is the comparative analysis of the information of creation of man available in the religious scriptures such as Holy Quran, Bible and sacred Vedas. Further it compares the concept of Panchmahabhuta, with reference to material used for the construction of human being such as clay and water. Materials analysed for the study includes:

- Collection of materials pertaining to the Panchmahabhuta and components of earth.
- Consideration of Elements of earth present in human body. To study the reactions of elements with body as Acharya Chakrapani mentions that some reactions with mahabhutas take place inside the body due to Adrushta [5] (Some unknown power).
- Comparison of structure, properties and functions of elements of body, with those of structure, properties and functions of elements of earth, and studying the association of human soul with these composition [6].

### The Holy Qurān

Holy Scriptures such as the Qurān and the Bible mentions that man was first created from earth and the spirit of God was inhaled into him. When God decided to create the image of man he directed the angels to bring the soil from the earth. Angels collected soil from different parts of the earth (one of the part of Mahabhutas) and the clay was prepared with the mixture of soil with different properties. Soil which is fertile having capacity which support reproduction, minerals which has capacity to built body tissues and produce hormones. Minerals like calcium that gives strength to bones and teeth etc. The mixture was prepared with water and air and the inhaling of spirit into the nostrils (resembling burning of fire/energy). Thus human being is a product of earth not only in its creation but also for its sustenance as he uses plants and herbs for food and fibre and also as the perfect source to control and heal diseases. The mention of few remedial plants in the holy Quran includes:

- **Adas (Lentil):** In Chapter 2 verse 61 Holy Quran mentions the importance of use of the seeds of Lentils which is found very rich in – proteins, vitamin-B and glycoside which is used for the treatment of Diarrhea, dysentery, tumors, and many other disorders.
- **Yakteen:** It is mentioned in chapter 37; verse 146 of the Holy Quran that Yakteen or Bottle grout was produced as immediate remedy to the ailment of prophet Yunus when he was ashore out of the belly of fish in a condition of weakness and sick. It is an excellent fruit in the nature having a composition of all the essential constituents that are required for normal and good health of human beings. In the current traditional medicines this fruit is used for cardio-protective and cardio-tonic applications. This fruit is rich in vitamin C and is also used to cure pain, ulcers and other bronchial disorders.

The Holy Quran describes the Mystery of human creation with the relationship man forebears with the universe particularly with the Panchmahabhuta ascribed in Ayurvedic principles. Four types of relationship with universe are described in the Holy Quran as: (i) Man have dominion to grow, utilize and subjugate the universe around him for his own sustenance and fulfilling of needs. (ii) Man is described as the vicegerent of God on earth as such he should preserve it honestly and not act to destroy the same. (iii) A relationship of coherence in which man should understand that the natural resources of the universe are not his property but is the privilege of all living creatures of the time and of the future generations to come and eco-balancing of resources is the prime requisite of this relationship with universe. (iv) The human construction is from clay and water that are the common elements of earth as such this relationship is unique and should be aligned to the growth, sustainability and wellbeing through proper utilization of these resources.

### Upa-Veda

Ayurveda the literally meaning of which is life science is considered as Upa-veda of Rig-Veda one of the branches of Vedas. Nevertheless it is an unbroken chain of knowledge descended parallel to Vedic teachings and reaching mankind directly from the creator Brahma himself and its curative and healing power is as eternal

as its creator. The philosophy of Ayurveda while administering any treatment, physical or spiritual, view man as a complex structure, a composite of internal biological processes and external environments with which it interacts. The principles of Ayurveda that have withstood the test of time are derived from laws of nature my amalgamating subjective, objective, and intuitive approaches to gaining knowledge, incorporated with a deep understanding of the unseen intelligence of the universe. In Shantiparva of Mahabharata [7] it is clearly stated that the soul having earth element (Prithvi) dominance in it shows Dhriti (capacity to bear anything). It defines the coordination of our soul, body, mind and sense organs with that of the elements of nature including objects of the cosmos that includes sun, moon and other galaxy and their movements ascribing close relationship for healthy living.

### Buddhism

Like Ayurvedic medicine, Buddhism has its origin attached to Indian sub continent. Ayurveda prima facia deals with the treatment of body, Buddhism, on the other hand, deals with well-being of the mind and both aim at eliminating suffering. Buddhism focuses on the elimination of dukkha (sufferings), Ayurveda, on the other hand, deals with treating seven human ailments (Dukkha) covering all type of diseases like physical, mental, psychological and environmental [8]. Although Buddhist did not believe in the existence of God per say, they practiced this divine Ayurvedic treatment right from the time of Gautama Buddha. Nagarjunna, a follower of Buddha was famous in preparing herbal mix medicine with mercury and sulphur. He was pioneer in inventing many new drugs with the combination of herbs and different metals.

### Methodology and Discussion

These five elements; Akash (sky), Vayu (air), Agni (fire), Jala (water) and Prithvi (Earth) and combine with each other to form the powerhouse of the body called as the Tridoshas of the body which constitutes vata, pitta and kapha. Sushruta Acharya mentioned that Vire-chan dravyas (purgative elements) consists of earth (Prithvi) and water (Jala) dominancy. Since earth and water are having Guru Gunas (gravitational properties) vaisheshik darshan (philosophy) mentions that adhopatana (gravity) is the prime property of guru guna [9]. Understanding Tridoshas of the particular body is the key to remedying the diseased soul. Ayurvedic science emphasises

that any change in composition of tridoshas leads to an imbalance in the body, and our immune system and ability to fight diseases would depend on how easily we restore the desired balance of tridoshas in our body. It is important to study the impact of the five elements of the Mahabhutas (positive and negative aspects) in maintaining the balance of Tridoshas in the smooth functioning of the body. The more we assimilate the Panchmahabhuta, the more we will understand and relate to the environment and its effect on the functioning of the body. The best way to know these five elements is to understand their basic characteristics and how they relate each other to physical attributes.

According to Acharya Charaka principle of samanyam (similarity) helps in increasing degraded similar Dhatus in body [10] and when there is dhatu-vridhhi condition we have to use Vishesh dravyas (opposite substances) in curing these degradation condition [11]. To fulfil this purpose we must know the panchabhautic composition of treatment.

### Akash (sky)

The element representing Akash or Ether constitutes expansion and spread. In a balanced state of perfection, it generates knowledge and cognizance to realize new and innovative ideas. This element circumscribes everything around us and achieves ascendancy on the mind and the heart. Balancing of this element helps in synchronizing the energies with the Universal energies that enhances self-healing power. The chronic problems like depressions and addiction can be overcome when this element is under control. It is worth noting that without this element of sky other four cannot sustain, hence balancing of this element is very important.

### Tips to mingle with Ether energy

The colour of sky is generally blue hence keeping oneself surrounded by blue colour may help in associating with the sky.

The sky is wide spread one should meditate silently and feel the expanse of this element and sink into the natural peace.

Mingle with nature, feel its music, pay attentive ear to others conversations and think big and positive to enhance your knowledge and rhythm of healthy living.

### Vayu (air)

This element is the most essential requirement of our life. Soul-body function can only survive if this element exists. It represents growth and is connected with gestures, joy and happiness. In a perfect state of balance, Vayu induces courage and determination to achieve goals. When this element is the balanced state, the mind remains peaceful. Once this element is under control which is instrumental in controlling the fear and anxiety, the body can achieve capacity to get energy from other four elements of the mahabhutas.

### Tips to mingle with Air element

Rise up early in the morning and to allow ample of fresh air cleanse the lungs and all sense organs with calm and peace which is spread across in the cool air around.

Cool Exercise and yoga in the morning will cement the feeling of peace away from the noise of the busy day.

Eat and drink very slowly and with minimum of three cycles of inhaling and exhaling of air that is breathed.

### Agni (fire)

Fire is the active fuel behind all biological processes. In a balanced state, Agni persuades confidence and recognition. The fire element represents, love and affection that we owe to others. It is the spark inside our soul that allows us to feel enthusiastic that opens our mind that ultimately destroys all our ignorance and fills our mind with knowledge of truth and wisdom. The early morning rays from the most powerful source of Agni, the Sun has capacity to heal many disorders.

Although Agni, in its positivity is radiant it has negative traits that may influence hatred, greed and envy hence keeping this element under control is very important. Controlling inner fire will help person to be firm in right perspective of life, indiscriminate judgements and remain focused on the goals of life, it is very difficult to keep this element under control though.

### Tips to mingle with Agni element

- Expose in as much as possible to the early morning light as possible.

- See the bright side of every event and find healthy ways to burn off nervous energy.
- Swimming may help to soothe the Agni element and to keep it under control.

### Jala (water)

As Earth is composed of 71% of water and about same percentage of water is also found in the physique of babies, indicating that the human creation is truly a mixture of clay and water. It is mentioned in the Holy Quran and is testified by Science that life was first originated from water as such water has great potentiality of healing and sustenance. Water has nurturing and cultivating capacities. We can observe that when we take a bath, or go for swimming, the body naturally lighten very quickly. Water takes out despondency, balances our feelings, and makes our soul calm and focused. When Jala element is in a balanced state, it induces a spiritual and ethical attitude bringing in new ideas and restoring healthy energy in the body.

### Tips to mingle with Jala element

Avoid the state of dehydration by consuming sufficient water through the day.

Since the Jala element controls our feelings it is important to let your feelings flow freely like water.

It is proved that copper is good conductor of energy as such drinking water from copper vessels may help in boosting the positive energy in body.

### Prithvi (Earth)

The Prithvi or Earth element is the most dominant of all the Panchmahabhuta elements. Since the Earth is the source of stability, in a balanced state, it induces a feeling of stability and harmony. In other words, strengthening the Earth element enhances the strength of mind, determination and works towards advancement of goal.

### Tips to mingle with Prithvi element

Be down to earth person in terms of humility, pity and concerned to others.

Stay in touch with the earth in terms of walking or sitting on the ground, occasionally during the day.

Practice exercises such as yoga or martial arts that keep you connected to the earthly elements.

Man through his experiences has associated the importance of Panchmahabhuta in the treatment of human soul. It is true that spiritual entity "soul" remained a mystery till today and the body remains live only till the time soul mingles in the body. The body is called as dead when the soul departs from the body or rather the association of Atman is totally disconnected from the Panchmahabhuta of the body. But while the soul was connected with the body the relationship of soul-body and it's functioning happened only when there was balance between these five Bhutas (elements) of the body. Any imbalance in these elements may lead to disease formation which ultimately results in soul escaping the body if balance is not restored in time. For example Asthi in bone tissue is made of Prithvi (earth element) and if this element goes out of control disorder like osteoarthritis may occur. Thus from treatment perspective maintaining this balance in elements is very important in Ayurveda. The principle of treatment of Ayurveda is in knowing the dominance of element in the organ and the body cell.

We know that all objects will have dominion of one of the element in it although there is possibility that all five elements may constitute its creation. Pitta dosha and substances having predominance in Akash, Vayu and Agni mahabhutas reduces Kapha dosha [12]. For example stone is a represents of element of Earth but it will have constituents and qualities of other four elements in it, but the dominion element earth if falls weak then the disorder starts in the element and if not restored in time it may degrade with time. Similarly in human beings any disorder in the organ or part of the body if not restored by its dominion element it may lead to disorder such as neglecting in the constituents of bone may lead to its weakness and pain in joints etc.

Acharya Sushruta has explained the concept of Paraspara anupravesha (Mutual entry of one element into another). According to this principle Panchmahabhuta behave with specific quality inherent in them and is maintained in chronological order. For instance Akash (space) will have only one quality called shabdha

(soundness). This quality will be available in each and every object however small it may be. This quality will also be acquired by next Bhuta in the chronological order along with its own quality. That means Vayu will have two qualities like Sparsh (touch) which is its own quality and also shabdha (sound) a quality acquired from its predecessor Bhuta. The quality of Sparsh (movement) will be available in each and every object however small it may be [13].

In the same way Agni will have three qualities which include its own quality of rupa (brightness) and two acquired from Predecessor Bhutas. Whereas Water will have four qualities as rasa (liquidity) which gives adherence to all the particles within the objects will be added to the previous three qualities. It is obvious that Earth element will have all five qualities of its previous predecessors and the weight and mass of each and every element depends on the quality of the earth in it. According to the theory explained by Acharya, quality of lower element in chronology cannot enter into the quality of higher element; which means Akash will have only one quality and no Bhuta can ever enter into Akash. On the other hand, this theory also imply that since man is the creation of dust, all five qualities of Earth is present in it and as such the mystery of treatment of soul lies in understanding Ayurvedic science and its practical applications in healing any disorder caused by the deficiency in any of these Bhutas (elements) [14].

It is important to know that at the time of creation of universe firstly the prakriti (nature) and the purusha (soul) were united in the cosmic union. From this creation Mohit tatva (cosmic intelligence) was created. Mohit tatva gave rise to Ahamkara (egoism). Since prakriti is made of Tridoshas, the Ahamkara which is originated from prakriti also has three gunas-Vaikaarila, Taiijasa and Bhutadi gunas. The Bhutadi gunas along with Taiijas gave rise to Panch Tanmatras which in turn gave rise to Panchmahabhuta. These panchtamaras are micro elements called as Shabdha, Sparsh, Rupa, Rasa and Gandha which are specific qualities of mahabhutas in chronological order. Since these have originated from Bhutadi Ahamkara they are named as Bhutas (elements) and in the chronological order. Akash gave rise to Vayu which in turn gave rise to Agni and from which Jala was created and Jala gave rise to Prithvi each one having the qualities as mentioned in the supra.

## Results, significance and importance of Mahabhutas

Panchmahabhuta are very essential components of the physical body for its physiological activities and in the immunology of disease. Hence it is important to analyse the results of the Panchmahabhuta in the reconstruction of the damaged cells of the body. Ayurveda practitioners are therefore, required to study this concept very carefully to demonstrate with clarity with real world evidences particularly to the scientific community. The concept of soul explained in the religious scriptures, on the other hand, is very explicit on the fundamental principle of Ayurveda explaining the importance of the Panchmahabhuta theory [15].

It is very important to mention few clinical applications of Panchmahabhuta such as the composition of Dhatu in the body. Maintaining the equilibrium of dhatu in the body is very essential. According to Ayurvedic principles samanyama (similarity) helps in increasing affected similar Dhatus in body and when there is dhatu vridhhi (deterioration) condition we have to use Vishesh dravyas (opposite substances) for treatment. Understanding the Panchmahabhuta composition of the body and the therapeutic constituents of the medicine administered would settle this issue of maintaining the equilibrium condition.

Another important point is to maintain balance of Tridosha which is Vata, Pitta and Kapha. We know that human construction is entirely Panchabhautic and hence all disorders present in the body in different forms do exist on account of tridoshas. Whenever there are any variations these are due to difference in panchabhautic composition of doshas. Mahabhutas like Prithvi, Agni and Jala are instrumental in increasing the level of Vata dosha; Mahabhutas like Prithvi, Jala and Vayu are responsible for the elevating the Pitta dosha whereas Akash, Agni and Vayu are responsible in reducing the Kapha [16].

On the basis of thorough understanding of Panchmahabhuta theory physician can take an account of the causative factors for the imbalance of doshas in the body and in turn find out the solution for the treatment of the bodily disorders. However depending up on the type of composition of these Dravya required Samskaar can be performed on dravyas to suit the particular ailment. This is the beauty of Ayurveda where personalized treatment can be administered by carefully studying the body composition of the individual patient.

## Conclusion

All the available dravyas can be used in the treatment but it requires proper logic and study. This is possible only after deep understanding of Panchmahabhuta as it forms the basis of all other principles. The concept of Panchmahabhuta principle is the essence of Ayurveda. Though, principles of Ayurveda are having parallel views with Darshana shastras like Vaisheshika, Sankhya etc; the concept of Panchmahabhuta in Ayurveda is designed in such a way that, it becomes useful in Nidan and Chikitsa, thereby fulfilling its aim of Dhatusamyata. Although Mahabhutas dominance of a panchabhautic Dravya can be identified, but it is not possible to completely understand or evaluate the configuration of Mahabhutas, shapes and size of Mahabhutas-molecules due to limitations of human knowledge and intelligence [17]. So in this regards the present review article also knocks the possibility of new research in the field of Ayurvedic fundamental for understanding the connection of Panchmahabhuta in the treatment of human soul.

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