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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda (Sanskrit: आयुर्वेद; *yurveda*, the "the complete knowledge for long life") or

Ayurvedic medicine is a system of traditional medicine native to India and practiced in other parts of the world as a form of alternative medicine. In Sanskrit, the word *Ayurveda* consists of the words *Ayu*, meaning "longevity", and *Veda*, meaning "related to knowledge" or "science". Evolving throughout its history, *Ayurveda* remains an influential system of medicine in South Asia. The earliest literature on Indian medical practice appeared during the Vedic period in India. The *Sushruta Samhita* and the *Charaka Samhita* were influential works on traditional medicine during this era. Over the following centuries, *Ayurvedic* practitioners developed a number of medicinal preparations and surgical procedures for the treatment of various ailments. Before knowing the details of *Ayurveda* for a person who does not know about anything of *Ayurveda*, certain topics are necessary to know properly called as the basic principles of *Ayurveda*.

Keywords: Basic Principles, *Ayurveda*, Traditional Medicine, Alternative Medicine.

INTRODUCTION: Definition of health is that, state in which the structure and function of a particular individual is operating optimally and the individual is in a state of physically, mentally, and spiritually well-being¹. Both *Charaka*² and *Vaghbata* described the Ayurvedic state of health and defined as below-

- All three *Doshas* (Humors) are in equilibrium with regard to the individual *Prakriti*.
- All seven *Dhatus* (Body tissues), are in the proper state of strength and integrity.
- The *Agnis* (Digestive fires) are balanced resulting in proper appetite, digestion, and assimilation
- The *Malas* (Waste materials) are being produced and eliminated in a regular

manner

- The *Indriyani* (Sense organs) are functioning normally and the *Manas* (Mind) is undisturbed
- The individual is experiencing happiness and contentment.

Disease manifests as the opposite of some or all of the criteria for health listed above. It is a state of disequilibrium of the *Doshas*, *Dhatus*, *Agni* and *Mala*; the individual is out of harmony both internally and with relation to the environment and experiences unpleasant sensations and misery in some form (*Dukha*).

According to *Ayurveda*³, life is made up of four basic ingredients they are first, *Sharira* or physical body, second, *Indriya* or sensory-motor complex, third, *Satva*

(*Manas*) or mind, and finally *Atma* or soul, spirit, consciousness etc. To know Ayurveda in well manner and the details of Ayurveda, for a person who does not know anything about it, certain topics are necessary to know properly that are called as basic principles of Ayurveda. These principles of Ayurveda can be categorized as following:-

1. *Tridosha* theory
2. *Triguna* theory
3. *Sapta Dhatu* theory
4. *Ojas*
5. *Tri-malas* theory
6. *Pancha-mahabhutas* theory
7. *Twelve Agnis* theory
8. *Thirteen Sthula Srotas*
9. *Shat Kriya Kal* (Steps of disease manifestation)

REVIEW:

The above principles are detailed as follows:

(1.) ***Tridosha* theory of Ayurveda:** Ayurveda is the comprehensive, holistic, traditional health care system of India. Several aspects of Ayurveda are quite unique, among them the most fundamental and characteristic principle of Ayurveda is called "*Tridosha*" or the three Humors. *Tridoshas* or three body humors are called as *Tri-sthambha* (Three main pillars) of the body upon which all the physical body depends. The details of these humors are necessary for knowing the basic concepts of Ayurveda. The structural aspect of our body is made up of five elements, but the functional aspect of the body is governed by three biological humors. Ether and air together constitute *VATA*; fire and water, *PITTA*; and water and earth, *KAPHA*⁴. They govern Psycho-biological changes in the body and Physio-pathological changes too.

The sperm is the male seed, and the ovum is the female egg. They also contain *Vata-Pitta-Kapha* (VPK). Bodily *Vata-Pitta-Kapha* changes according to diet, life style and emotions. The father's lifestyle, diet, influences the sperm and emotions, and the ovum by the mother's. At the time of fertilization, when a single sperm enters a single ovum, individual constitution is determined. Every individual has a unique combination of these three *doshas*. To understand individuality is the foundation of healing according to Ayurveda, *Doshas* are to be seen as all pervasive, subtle entities, (i) *Vata* regulate movement and are represented by the nervous system⁵, *Pitta* is the principle of biotransformation and is the cause of all metabolic processes in the body⁶. *Kapha* is the principle of cohesion and functions through the body fluids⁷. In every person these three *Doshas* differ in permutations and combinations and thereby determine the physiologic constitution (*Prakriti*) of an individual⁸. *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* are distinctly present in every individual and express in each human being differently according to predominance of their different qualities (*Gunas*).

"What is *Vata*? How to balance it": *VATA* (The Air or Nerve System Humor) is dry, light, cold, mobile, active, clear, astringent, and it is dispersing⁹. *Vata* season is autumn, time of day is afternoon and early morning¹⁰.

***Vata* Personality--** *Vata* is dry, light, cold, mobile, active, clear, astringent, and it is dispersing. All of these qualities can manifest in an individual. For example, if a person has excess *Vata* in his or her constitution, because of the dry quality, he or she will have dry hair, dry skin, dry colon and a tendency towards constipation. Because of the light quality, which is

opposite of heavy, the *Vata* person will have a light body frame, light muscles, and light fat, and so will be thin and under weight, or "skinny-minny". Because of the cold quality, the *Vata* person will have cold hands, cold feet and poor circulation. They hate the cold season and love summer. Because of the mobile quality, *Vata* people are very active. They like jogging and jumping and don't like sitting in one place. *Vata* is subtle, and this subtle quality is responsible for the emotions of fear, anxiety, insecurity and nervousness. *Vata* is clear, therefore *Vata* people can be clairvoyant; they have clear understanding and perception. They understand things immediately, but forget things immediately. *Vata* is astringent, which is a drying and choking quality of taste, therefore the *Vata* person, while eating feels a drying choking sensation in the throat¹¹.

Types of *Vata*: *Vata* is further subdivided into five subtypes¹², these are as follows:

(1.) *Prana Vata* - Governs the senses, creative thinking, and reasoning, and enthusiasm, leader of all 15 categories of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. (2.) *Udana Vata* - Governs quality of voice, memory, movements of thought. (3.) *Samana Vata* - Governs movement of food through digestive tract. (4.) *Apama Vata* - Elimination of wastes, sexual function, menstrual cycle. (5.) *Vyana Vata* - Governs blood flow, heart rhythm, perspiration, sense of touch

Symptoms of *Vata* Imbalance: The symptoms of *Vata* imbalance can be described according to each five subtypes as:- (1.) *Prana Vata* - Worries, overactive mind, sleep problems, difficulty breathing. (2.) *Udana Vata* - Dry coughs, sore throats, earaches, general fatigue. (3.) *Samana Vata* - Slow or rapid digestion,

gas, intestinal cramps, poor assimilation, weak tissues. (4.) *Apama Vata* - Intestinal cramps, menstrual problems, lower back pain, irregularity, diarrhea, constipation, gas. (5.) *Vyana Vata* - Dry or rough skin, nervousness, shakiness, poor blood flow, stress-related problems¹³.

Tips to Balancing *Vata*: - *Abhyanga* (daily ayurvedic massage with various *Vata* eliminating oils). Warm temperatures. Stay warm in cold, windy weather, warm, cooked foods (less raw foods) to be eaten. Early bed time, lots of rest and sleep, favor warm, oily, heavy, sweet, sour, and salty tastes. Reduce light, dry, cold, pungent, bitter and astringent foods, avoid raw foods, juices, fasting and also avoid stimulants. Refrain from excessive aerobic activity.

(ii) **"What is *Pitta*? How to balance it":** *Pitta* (the Fire Humor) has hot, sharp, light, liquid, sour, oily and spreading qualities¹⁴, strong smell, like a fleshy smell, and has a sour or bitter taste.

***Pitta* Personality** - an individual has excess *Pitta* in the body, because of its hot quality, the person has a strong appetite and warm skin. The body temperature is a little higher than the *Vata* person. If hungry, he has to eat otherwise he will become irritable and hypoglycemic. The second quality of *Pitta* is sharp, therefore the *Pitta* person has a sharp nose, teeth, eyes, mind and while talking uses sharp words. They also have very sharp memory. Because of the oily quality, they have soft, warm, oily skin, straight oily hair, and the feces are oily and liquid. Because of the hot, sharp, and oily qualities, *Pitta* people have a tendency to grey prematurely, a sign of early maturity. *Pitta* girls get earlier menstruation and reach puberty earlier.

Pitta people are moderate in body frame and they do not like bright light. They like to read before they go to bed, and sometimes the *Pitta* person sleeps with a book on the chest. Because of too much heat in the body, *Pitta* person can get a receding hair line, or a big, beautiful, bald head. The next quality of *Pitta* is strong smell. When the *Pitta* person perspires, under the arm pit there is a typical sulphur smell, and if he doesn't wash his socks, they will have a strong smell. That's why a *Pitta* person loves perfumes. *Pitta* people are lovers of knowledge and have a great capacity of organization and leadership. They are often wise, brilliant people, but can have a controlling, dominating personality. *Pitta* people have a tendency towards comparison, competition, ambition and they have a quality of aggressiveness, so naturally they criticize. They are perfectionists¹⁵.

Types of Pitta: Like *Vata* the *Pitta* humour also are five sub types as following¹⁶:-

(1.) *Alochaka Pitta* - Governs functioning of the eyes, (2.) *Bhrajaka Pitta* -It is responsible for healthy glow of the skin, (3.) *Sadhaka Pitta* - Controls desire, drive, decisiveness, spirituality. (4.) *Pachaka Pitta*- Responsible for digestion, assimilation, metabolism for healthy nutrients and tissues. (5.) *Ranjaka Pitta* - Responsible for healthy, toxin-free blood

Symptoms of Pitta Imbalance: (1.) *Alochaka Pitta* - Blood shot eyes, poor vision (2.) *Bhrajaka Pitta* - Skin rashes, acne, (3.) *Sadhaka Pitta* - More demanding, workaholic (4.) *Pachaka Pitta* – Hyperacidity, (5.) *Ranjaka Pitta* - Early graying of hair, anger, toxins in blood.

Tips to Balancing Pitta - Avoid sesame and mustard oils, fish, buttermilk, whey, mutton, fasting, acidic fruits, alcohol, meat

and fatty, oily foods. Keep cool. Avoid hot temperatures and food. Favor cool, heavy, dry, sweet, bitter and astringent foods. Reduce pungent, sour, salty, warm, oily and light foods. Moderation in work, don't overwork allow for leisure time and regular mealtimes, especially at noon¹⁷.

(iii) **"What is Kapha? How to balance it":** *Kapha* (the water humour) Heavy, slow, cool, oily, liquid, dense, thick, static and cloudy¹⁸ - These are the important qualities of *Kapha*, and *Kapha* is sweet and salty.

Kapha Personality- Because of the heavy quality, *Kapha* people have heavy bones, muscles and fat. They will have a tendency to put on weight. A *Kapha* person may even do a water fast and will put on weight. *Kapha* is slow; therefore a *Kapha* person has slow metabolism and digestion. The *Kapha* person can work without food, while it is very difficult for a *Pitta* person to concentrate without food. *Kapha* is cool hence *Kapha* people have cool, clammy skin. The skin is cool, but within the G.I. tract the digestive fire is high therefore they have a strong appetite.

Kapha people have other qualities, thick wavy hair, and big, attractive eyes. They have slow but prolonged, steady memory. *Kapha* people are forgiving, loving and compassionate. Because of the slow quality, *Kapha* people walk slowly and talk slowly. They don't like jogging and jumping. They love eating, sitting and doing nothing¹⁹.

Types of Kapha: According to above two humors *Vata* and *Pitta* the *Kapha* humor also can be subdivided into five subtypes as following²⁰- (1.) *Tarpaka Kapha*-It is responsible for moisture nose, mouth, eyes and brain. (2.) *Bhodhaka Kapha* - Governs Sense of taste, which is essential for good

digestion. (3.) *Kledaka Kapha* - Governs moisture of the stomach lining for good digestion. (4.) *Avalambaka Kapha* - Protects the heart, strong muscles, and healthy lungs. (5.) *Sleshaka Kapha* - Lubricates the joints, Keeps skin soft and supple.

Symptoms of Kapha Imbalance:

(1.) *Tarpaka Kapha*-Sinus congestion, poor sense of smell,(2.) *Bhodaka Kapha* - Poor sense of taste, food cravings due to lack of fulfillment,(3.) *Kledaka Kapha* - Impaired digestion, poor absorption, (4.) *Avalambaka Kapha* - Lethargy, respiratory problems, lower back pain (5.) *Sleshaka Kapha* - Weight gain, oily skin, loose or painful joints

Tips to Balance Kapha: Vigorous regular exercise, a little each day. Warm temperatures, say warm in cold, damp weather. Fresh fruits, vegetables and legumes, favor pungent, bitter, astringent, light, dry and warm foods. Reduce heavy, oily, cold, sweet, sour and salty foods and early to bed, early to rise²¹.

Now that you have understood about the Fundamental principle of Ayurveda "Tridosha" and about *Dosha* predominance in *Prakriti*, you can understand the diagnosis and treatment part of Ayurveda better. Suppose you have a *Kapha* (water) dominant constitution then you may have a tendency to overweight, over-emotional nature or suffer congestion in the chest. So you should modify your diet, life style, daily routine and other activities accordingly, for example, avoid sleeping too much in the day or eating too many sweets, to maintain your health and also to cure the diseases. I hope that you will continue to explore Ayurveda to enhance your health and to gain further insights into this miracle we

call life.

Most people are a combination of two *doshas* i.e. *Dwandvaja prakriti*. They possess characteristics of both *doshas* involved depending on the percentage of the combination. A balanced constitution is ideal and extremely rare in which the balanced state of all the three *doshas* neutralizes the bad or unwanted qualities, support and bring out good qualities of the other.

Prakriti and diet: Dietary requirement should be modified according to the *prakriti* (constitution) of the individual. In general, an individual with *Vata prakriti* should take unctuous, warm, and sweet substances. One with *Pitta prakriti* should take cool, heavy, sweet, bitter and astringent food articles and *Kapha prakriti* person should consume food in which dry, warm, light, pungent, bitter and astringent tastes predominate. The diet chart gives the beneficial and non-beneficial food articles.

Susceptibility to diseases: *Vata prakriti* individuals are prone to diseases of the neurological system especially motor functions. The disease mostly affects the lower limbs since they are the predominant seat of *Vata dosha*. Also, these diseases are pronounced during the old age which is the period of *Vata* (*Vata kala*). Some of these diseases are tetany, wasting disorders (muscular atrophy), spasms, hemiplegia, convulsions, headache, insomnia, angina (*Hridgraha*), dysuria, rheumatism (*Amavata*), osteoporosis (*Asthisosha*), fissures on palm and soles (*Vipaadika*), swelling and stiffness of the thighs (*Urushthambha*), brachial palsy (*Avabahuka*)²².

Those with *Pitta prakriti* are prone to diseases of the digestive and metabolic

systems. The diseases mostly affect the abdomen i. e. the area between the breast and umbilicus. Also, *Pitta* disorders are pronounced in the middle aged which is the period of *Pitta* (*Pitta kala*) like intense localized burning sensation, stomatitis, acid regurgitation, jaundice, bleeding disorders, bluish discoloration of the skin²³.

Individuals with *Kapha prakriti* are prone to disorders of the respiratory system especially phlegmatic disorders. The diseases affect the upper parts of the body i.e. chest and above. Also, the disorders are pronounced during the early ages (childhood) which is the period of *Kapha* (*Kapha kala*). For example: drowsiness, excessive sleep, obesity, swelling of the neck (*Galaganda*), thick skin eruptions, congestion of the chest with phlegm, polyurea²⁴.

Prakriti and the seasons: Human beings constantly struggle against the changing environmental conditions to maintain optimum health and vigor throughout the day and in all seasons. The human body depends on the continuous holistic interaction between internal and external factors. When this interaction is in a state of equilibrium, man enjoys health and when this fails, either due to internal deficiency or hostile environmental factors, the balance is disturbed and leads to disease and disharmony. Environmental factors include the nature of the land, water and various atmospheric phenomena such as temperature, humidity, wind, rain and snow.

In summer, due to extreme heat and its dry and rough qualities, the digestive power is very low and the body loses water due to perspiration. These factors aggravate *Vata dosha* which has similar properties and causes accumulation of *Vata*. The

excessive heat, which is antagonistic to the cold quality of *Vata*, prevents it from being vitiated. During the rainy season, which follows the summer, the sudden change from hot to cold weather results in the vitiation of *Vata* thus causing diseases? The excessive heat in summer leads to increased exhaustion and reduction of body strength. Heat also results in the increase of the *Pitta dosha*. With the advent of rains on the dry and hot earth, the pungent taste of the land becomes sour and these results in the accumulation of *Pitta dosha*. The cool environment does not allow the *Pitta dosha* to be vitiated due to antagonistic action. Autumn, which follows the rainy season, is hotter and this leads to the vitiation of the already accumulated *Pitta dosha* and results in diseases. The extreme cold of winter leads to accumulation of *Kapha*. But due to extreme cold, the *Kapha* solidifies. Spring is warm, causing liquefaction of the accumulated *Kapha* and vitiates it causing disorders²⁵.

(2.)**Triguna Theory:** Instead of above three *Doshas* which govern the physical activity of the body, the another group of humors are called as *Manas dosha* (Psychic constitution) named as *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* (*Triguna*) symbolizing the psychic properties of a individual²⁶. *Sattva*, the foremost of *Triguna*, symbolizes the energy required for creation, *Rajas*, the second of *Triguna* symbolizes the particle movements and *Tamas* finally symbolizes inert material having a capacity to convert into new forms under the constant influence of *Sattva* and *Rajas*. It is interesting to hypothesize a resemblance between *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* to that of conditions available to primitive earth that acted decisively to begin the actual process of

origin of life.

(3.) **Sapta Dhatus** (The tissues which help in nourishing body): There are several definitions for *Dhatu* in Ayurveda. Few of them are given below- (a.) "*Shareera dharanathdhatawaha*²⁷" -The tissues which nourish the body and support it are called as *dhatu*.

(b.) "*Poshanadharanayoho*" - Those which nourish the successive tissue and support it. (c.) "*Dadhati datteya vaa shareera manaha praanaan*" -these tissues nourish and support the body, mind and life. *Dhatu*s are "*Shakti yukta dravyas*" i.e. they supply nutrients to other vital tissues and keep the body healthy. They nourish and support the successive tissues.

There are seven *dhatu*²⁸: (1.) *Rasa* - (Lymph), (2.) *Rakta* - (Blood), (3.) *Mansa*- (Muscles), (4.) *Medas* - (Fat or adipose tissue), (5.) *Asthi* - (Bone), (6.) *Majja* - (Bone marrow), and (7.) *Shukra* - (Semen, reproductive tissues, sex hormones).

Proportion of *Panchamahabutas* in *dhatu*²⁹:- *Rasa* (lymph) - *Jala* +, *Rakta* (blood) - *Jala* + *Agni* ++, *Mansa* (muscle) - *Prithvi* ++ *Jala*, *Medas* (fat) -*Jala* +++, *Prithvi* +, *Asthi* (bone) - *Prithvi* ++, *Aakasha*+, *Majja* (marrow) - *Jala* +++, *Pruthvi* +, and *Sukra* (semen) - *Jala* ++ *Pruthvi* +

The *Rasa dhatu* is derived from the digested food³⁰. It provides nourishment to each and every cell and tissue of the body. It is considered as similar to plasma. The *Rakta dhatu* is considered as the basis of life. It provides vitality and color to the body. It is similar to the circulating blood cells. The *Mansa dhatu* is derived from the blood and is responsible for providing physical strength to the body. *Meda dhatu* is derived from the muscle or *Mansa*

dhatu. It consists of adipose tissue, provides energy and lubricates the body. *Ashti dhatu* consists of bones tissues including the cartilages. Its main function is to provide support to the muscle tissues. *Majja dhatu* denoted the tissue of yellow and red bone marrow. Its main function is to provide viscosity to the body. The *Shukra dhatu* is derived from the core of *Majja*. The main function of this reproductive tissue is to help in the process of reproduction, provided satisfaction and strengthens the body³¹.

According to the concept of *Ayurveda*, *Shukra* is the most important *Dhatu* among all the others³². It states that one needs a hundred drops of blood to produce one drop of semen. It is the soul of all the other body tissues as it has the capacity of producing new life. Each *Dhatu* is developed from the layer of previous tissue, starting from the *Rasa* (fluid) *dhatu*. If the first layer is unhealthy, all the other layers get infected causing various health problems. Each organ and body systems are made up of the tissues or *Dhatu*s. Each *Dhatu* has its own metabolism or *Agni*. The metabolism of *rasa dhatu* converts the digested food into the energy. Every *Dhatu* acts as a precursor of the next *Dhatu*. Fluid or plasma is transformed into blood, blood prepares muscles, muscles produces fat, fat is further used to make bones, bones forms marrow and marrow ultimately produces semen and reproductive system.

*Dhatu*s are responsible for the immune mechanism of the human body. In case of wasting of *Dhatu*s, the body construction collapses leading to the end of life. Any kind of imbalance in the *Tridoshas* affects the *Dhatu*s as *Doshas* influenced the *Dhatu*s. This imbalance results in many disorders in different *Dhatu*s. *Rakta dhatu*

- loss of luster and cracks, *Mansa dhatu* – joints cracking and eye problems, *Meda dhatu* – hair problem, loose joints, thin body constitution and teeth and nail problems, *Asthi dhatu* – dry mouth, general weakness, bone diseases, lightness and thinness, *Majja dhatu* – lassitude, *Shukra dhatu* – impotence, non- ejaculation of semen and exertion³³. *Ayurveda* uses various therapies to balance the seven tissues.

(4.) *Ojas*: This is called as “*Mahadhatu*”, which means superior *dhatu*. It is divided into two types: *Para ojas*: located close to the pineal body. *Apara ojas*: located in the heart. This is fatty in nature³⁴. The characters of *Ojas* are described as:- *Veerya*: *Seeta veerya* (gives cooling effect after digestion). Color: White. *Kaphatmaka* (increases *Kapha*). *Ojas* protects all *dhatus* in the body balanced by the use of herbs, natural foods and variations in lifestyle.

(5.) *Tri-malas* (Waste materials of the body): *Malas* are the substances or waste matter to be thrown out of the body. They are actually by products formed as a result of various physiological activities going on in the body. *Purish* (stool), *Mutra* (urine) and *Sweda* (sweat) are considered as main excretory product of the body. These are also known as *Dushya* as these tend to be influenced to cause pathology or disease by imbalanced *doshas*. These are known as *Malas* due to its principle property of *Malinikaran* i.e. intoxication. *Malas* are the third in the trinity of the body after the other two- *doshas* and *dhatus*³⁵. According to *Ayurveda*, the only balanced condition of *doshas*, *dhatus* and *malas* is *Arogya* (good health or disease free condition) and their imbalance causes ill health or disease.

Significance of *Malas*: As a result of metabolic processes being carried out in

the body, essence of ingested food and waste products are constantly formed³⁶. If waste products are not being formed besides the essence i.e. beneficial products that nourish tissues, then metabolic process would be impaired ultimately leading to the formation of malformed tissues. So, there needs to be an appropriate segregation of essence of ingested food and waste product and excretion of the waste matter on appropriate time for maintaining health. *Malas* are actually the waste products of the body and their proper excretion from the body is essential, so that the proper health of the individual can be maintained because if the waste products are not thrown out they can intoxicate the body.

Three forms of *Malas*:-

(i) *Purish* (Stool):- *Purish* or Stool are human feces, a result of defecation. They are the waste product of the human digestive system. They vary in appearance from person to person depending on the state of the whole digestive system, influenced by diet and health. Normally stools are semisolid, with a mucus coating. Any discrepancy caused in its normal process of defecation can lead to constipation, diarrhea, flatulence, heaviness or pain.

(ii) *Mutra* (Urine):- Urine is another important excretion from the human body. It is actually a liquid waste product of the body secreted by the kidneys through a phenomenon of filtration from blood. In human body, it is excreted through the urethra. Any imbalance like increased or decreased urine can lead to problems like urinary infections, kidney stones, abdominal pain and various bladder disorders.

(iii) *Sweda* (Sweat):- Sweating or

Perspiration is known as *Sweda* in the terms of *Ayurveda*. It is basically a fluid that comes out of skin pores and primarily consists of water as well as various dissolved solids. It is basically a means of thermoregulation in human body. Any imbalance in sweat production can lead to itching, skin infections, irritation, burning sensation of body or reduced body temperature.

(6.) **Panchmahabhuta theory:** *Ayurveda* argues for life beginning from invisible components. While passing through many intermediate stages these components reach a physically visible stage called as *Mahabhuta* (*maha* = big, *bhuta* = first form of existence). These are *Akash* (space), *Vayu* (air), *Agni* (fire), *Jala* (water and *Prithvi* (earth). *Mahabhuta* are proposed to be the consolidation products of invisible formative units or *Tanmatra* (smallest possible component of *Mahabhuta* having similar properties, but invisible). These are *Akash* (space) *tanmatra*, *Vayu* (air) *tanmatra*, *Agni* (fire) *tanmatra*, *Jala* (water) *tanmatra* and *Prithvi* (earth) *tanmatra*. Eventually, a *Mahabhuta* in turn happens to be a consolidation and combination product of various *Tanmatra* in a predetermined differential order. It is interesting to note that only five types of *Tanmatra* and consequently five *Mahabhuta* are described in *Ayurveda*. This numerological agreement upon the number of *Mahabhuta* is in accordance with the physically perceptible forms of matter, its absence and also with the state of energy acting in transition. The five *Mahabhuta* are also linked to the five sense organs as means of their perception. It is further interesting to note that *Ayurveda* has described the element of *Agni* (fire) as a *Mahabhuta* long before the proposition of energy and

matter transitions by Einstein.

Modern science supports the proposition that five *Tanmatra* are the progenitors of their visible counterparts by describing basic formative particles (electron, proton and neutron- which could be the *tanmatras*) combining in different proportions and forming atoms, elements and compounds. *Ayurveda* says-

*Sarvam dravyam panchabhouticam*³⁷

Tridosha (three doshas namely *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*) fundamentally brings *Mahabhuta* theory into a practical, usable and understandable format for its application to the cause of human health. It forms the basis of Ayurvedic physiology and subsequently paves the way to its clinical application. *Tridosha* symbolizes the physico-biological properties of compounds made through a differential combination of *Mahabhutas*. *Tridosha*, therefore, represents the physiological functioning of a living body, which eventually is the property of its component material. Ayurvedic idea of disease and health is conceived around this concept by identifying a balance of *Tridosha* and eventually that of the *Panchamahabhuta* representing health. An imbalance of *Mahabhuta*, therefore leads to qualitative disturbance of physiological functions subsequently identified as a disharmony of *dosha* causing a disease.

Panchamahabhuta are also held responsible for the creation of nonliving things in the same way as they are to the living ones. *Sarvam dravyam hi panchabhauticam* is this generalization of *Ayurveda* about material composition, which lays the foundation to its understanding that every substance on earth has a potential as medicine (*Nanaushadhibhutam jagatkinchit*).

Sarvam dravyam hi panchabhauticam or every substance in the universe is composed of five basic elements only. This further shows a conceptual similarity between modern science and *Ayurveda* with reference to the idea of substance generation.

The theory of *Tridosha* (three doshas namely *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*) fundamentally brings *Mahabhuta* theory into a practical, as *Vata dosha* indicate *Vayu* and *Akash mahabhuta*, *Pitta dosha* – *Agni mahabhuta* and *Kapha dosha* – *Prithvi and Jala Mahabhuta*³⁸, usable and understandable format for its application to the cause of human health. It forms the basis of *Ayurvedic* physiology and subsequently paves the way to its clinical application.

(7.) *Agni* (Digestive capacity): *Agni* is the biological fire that controls the process of metabolism in the body. It powers the transformation of one substance into another. It includes all the changes taking place in the body and mind. *Agni* is found in the alimentary canal and digests food³⁹. The main function of *Agni* is the promotion of process of digestion. Therefore, the digestive abilities are related to the strength of *Agni*⁴⁰. Maximum number of diseases is directly or indirectly related to the improper functioning of *Agni*. It is responsible for neutralizing toxins, bacteria and viruses that hinders with the functioning of immune system.

Agni (fire), being one of the *Panchamahabhuta*, has the characteristic that it cannot exist without a base. In the body it exists in *Pitta dosha*⁴¹. For the metabolic processes in the body, there are three main groups of biological factors, probably exhibiting enzymatic functions (*Agnis*). *Agni* is responsible for the following functions: Digestion- indigestion

(*Pakti- Apakti*), Vision- absence of vision (*Darshanam- Adarshanam*), degree of heat (*Matra- Amatravamushmanala*), normal - abnormal complexion (*Prakrit-Vikarit varnam*), prowess- fear (*Shaurya- Bhaya*), anger - exhilaration (*Krodham- Harsham*), confusion-clarity of mind (*Moha- Prasadam*)⁴². For the metabolic processes in the body, there are three main groups of biological factors, probably exhibiting enzymatic functions (*Agnis*).

Thirteen types of *Agni*: There are around thirteen forms of *Agni* in the body that are responsible for digestion. The most important is *Jatharagni* that works at the gastrointestinal level and the main function is to separate the nutrients and waste from the ingested food. There are other twelve *Agni-Dhatvagnis* that are seven in number⁴³ and the *Bhutagnis* that are five in number⁴⁴. These twelve *Agnis* are related to the Dhatus and the *Panchamahabhootas*. The seven *Dhatagnis* metabolizes and regulates the physiological processes of the Seven Dhatus. It is a biochemical process that includes the anabolic and catabolic activities of the body. The five *bhutagnis* metabolizes the *Panchamahabhutas* present in the *Dhatus* of the body. The *Dhatvagnis* are a form of heat that is always present in tissues and is responsible for the proper functioning and development of the tissues. They also help in the regulation of digestion and assimilation of the *Panchamahabhutas* present in the ingested food.

“One” *Jatharagni* or *Koshthagni*: Present in the *Pachak Pitta*⁴⁵, single in number. It is responsible for the digestion and the absorption of nutritious substances during this process. The process of digestion (*Ahar pachan*) is divided in three stages, which collectively is called *Awastha-paka* and can be divided in the following-

Amavstha (Madhuravastha) Paka - in stomach, *Pachymanavastha (Amlavstha) Paka* - in 'grahani' (duodenum), *Pakavstha (Katuavstha) Paka* - in small and large intestine. As the *Rasa* changes in different phase of digestion these phase of digestion are called *Awastha-paka*. At the end of the digestion the digested food have their original *Rasa* which is in accordance with the *Rasa* of the ingested food. This is called as *Nistha-paka*. It is also called popularly as *Vipaka*. *Madhur rasa* and *Lavan rasa* have *Madhura Vipaka*, *Amla rasa* have *Amla vipaka* and *Katu, Tikta* and *Kashaya rasa* have *katu vipaka*.

“Five” Panchabutagnis: In Ayurveda it is believed that everything is made up of five elements and so is the body. These five elements are the *Panchmahabhuta* and are responsible for constituting every living being in the world. *Agni* transforms the *Asharir Mahabhuta* (external *Mahabhuta*) to *Sharira Mahabhuta*. Example - when we drink water *Jala Mahabhoota* (water) dominates and later the water is transformed by *Jala Mahabutagni* to the *Sharir Jala* containing five types of biological factors, it is responsible for the processing of the five basic elements into a composition useful to the body.

“Seven” Dhatvagnis: The third group contains seven types, each for the assimilation of the seven tissues. This assimilation takes place successively. From the absorbed nutritious substance, plasma (*Rasa*) is produced first; from plasma, blood (*Rakta*) is formed, then muscular tissue (*Mansa*), adipose tissue (*Meda*), bony tissue (*Asthi*), bone marrow (*Majja*) and the reproductive cells (*Shukra*)⁴⁶.

Besides performing all the metabolic functions *Agni* takes care of digestion (*Ahar pachan*) and in the absence of *Ahar*

it acts on the *Ama pachan* i.e. properly metabolize the improper metabolites. When *Ahar* and *Ama* are absence *Agni* does the function on *Dhatu* i.e. *Rasa, Rakta* etc. Digestion of *Dhatu* is a fatal condition in which *Dhatus* are broken down to get energy⁴⁷. The reduction or deficiency of the quantum of *Dhatu* in the human body leads to the disease called *Kshaya roga*. In Ayurveda it is believed that all the pathology occurs due to the impairment in *Agni (Kaya)*⁴⁸. Hence the correction of *Kaya* i.e. *Agni* is called the treatment or '*Kaya Chikitsa*' in Ayurveda. *Agnis* are further classified into four categories depending on the way of their manifestation in the human beings⁴⁹. These are: (i.) *Tiksnagni* (sharp):- It is produced by the predominance *Pitta dosha*. The people with excess of *Tiksnagni* are more prone towards inflammation and acidity. It implies strong digestion, circulation and immunity. In case of excess of *Tiksnagni* impurities gets accumulated in the *rasa* and *rakta dhatus*. (ii.) *Mandagni* (mild):- It is produced by the predominance of *Kapha dosha*. In people with *Mandagni* there is slow circulation and excess of secretions are formed. It shows symptoms like slow digestion, low appetite, cravings for heavy or sweet foods and a tendency to carry excess body weight. (iii.) *Visamagni* (irregular):- It is produced by the predominance of *Vata dosha*. People with *Visamagni* often have intestinal bloating, gastritis, constipation and abdominal disorders. It also weakens the immune system with regard to nervous system, bones and upper respiratory tract. It can promote irregular appetite, with intense periods of hunger alternating with lack of interest in food.

(iv.) *Samagni* (regular and balanced):- It is produced by the normal digestion of the three *Doshas*. It usually occurs in individuals who are well balanced; eat balanced diet, rest and exercise sufficiently. People with *Samagni* have normal appetite, satisfaction, normal bowel movements and emotional stability. Therefore, a balanced *Agni* is vital for good health. In every tissue and cell *Agni* is present and is necessary for maintaining the nutrition and autoimmune mechanism. Healthy *Agni* results in good digestion process, proper elimination, proper tissue formation, strong immune system, high energy levels, good circulation and pleasant body odor and breath.

(8.) **Thirteen Srotas (Body channels):** The literal meaning of the word *Srota* is body passages or body channels. These channels are present throughout the visible and invisible body of the cells, molecules and atoms. The body channels carry solids, liquids, gases, nerve impulses, nutrients, waste products and secretions in and out of the human body physiologies. According to some physicians human body is a network of appropriate nutrients and energies through the channels results in healthy mind and body⁵⁰. Any kind of blockage, deficiency or excess in the channels can result in various diseases⁵¹. *Srotas* or channels are present in all living things. Another definition of health is here – the unchecked flow of physical elements, thought and knowledge. Only three *Srotas* or channels are recognized by modern medical science – they are the *Anna vaha srota* (the digestive system), *Rakta vaha srota* (circulatory system) and the *Prana vaha srota* (respiratory system). *Charaka*, the ancient ayurvedic *acharya* lists thirteen *Srotas* in his book, the *Charaka Samhita*⁵². Three *srotas* for food, air and

water, Seven *Srotas* associated with *Sapta dhatus*, and three *srotas* for excretion. Presently there are sixteen *srotas* identified.

The body channels are classified in two categories:

- (1) Internal channels and
- (2) External channels.

The external channels have their natural openings on the surface of the body. The pair of ears, eyes and nostrils, the mouth, anus and the urethra is the nine openings of the channels opening externally.

There are thirteen *srotas* in the internal channels⁵³. Among thirteen *srotas*, three *srotas* connect the individual to the external environment by inhaling and exhaling air, food and water. These three *srotas* are: (1.) *Prana vaha srotas* – carries the breath to all parts of the body, (2.) *Udaka vaha srotas* – transports water, (3) *Anna vaha srotas* – transports solid and liquid foods. While the seven *srotas* associated with *sapta dhatus* are: (4.) *Rasa vaha srotas* – carries plasma and lymph, (5.) *Rakta vaha srotas* – carries blood cells specially hemoglobin, (6.) *Mansa vaha srotas* – carries muscle nutrients and wastes, (7.) *Meda vaha srotas* – supplies adipose tissues, (8.) *Asthi vaha srotas* – carries nutrients to bones and transports wastes, (9.) *Majja vaha srotas* – supplies bone marrow and nerves including the brain, (10.) *Shukra vaha srotas* – carries the sperm and ova and supply nutrient to them (11.) *Purisha vaha srotas* – carries faeces (12.) *Mutra vaha srotas* – carries urine (13.) *Sweda vaha srotas* – carries sweat. These last three *srotas* eliminates the metabolic waste from the body.

According to some ancient authorities, there are three more *srotas* related to lactation⁵⁴, menstruation⁵⁵ and the flow of

thoughts to the mind⁵⁶. These three *Srotas* are: (1.) *Artava vaha srotas* – carries the menstruation (2.) *Stanya vaha srotas* – carries the breast milk during lactation and (3.) *Mana vaha srotas* – carries thoughts, ideas, emotions and impressions. The food and activity that promotes the morbid tendencies of three humors are harmful to the body, elements results in blockage of the body channels⁵⁷. *Ayurveda* helps in diagnosing the affected *srotas*, its nature and extent of blockage and ultimately helps in knowing the process of disease. *Ayurveda* also takes the help of *doshic* imbalances, *dhatus* and *agni* in the assessment of disease. Two women-only *srotas* are: *Artava vaha srotas* carry menstrual fluid; *Stanya vaha srotas* carry breast milk⁵⁸.

(9.) ***Shat Kriya Kal*** (Steps of disease manifestation):- *Ayurveda* recognizes and elaborates six different stage process of disease manifestation that is collectively known as *Shat kriya kal*⁵⁹. The last two stages of this entire process involve the detection and complications of disease formation. Unlike *Ayurveda*, modern medicine recognizes the two stages of detection and complication as the core stages of disease formation. These six stages or better known as *shat kriya kal* in *Ayurveda*, are described as unique and they permit the thorough recognition and elimination of diseases long before it progresses into evidently differentiated clinical symptoms. In *Ayurveda*, *Ama*'s toxicity and the mobility of the *doshas* compose the key components in the complex disease process. The *Shat kriya kal* in *Ayurveda* or the better known as the six stages of disease process are described as follows:-

(i) ***Sanchaya*** (Stage of accumulation):- *Sanchaya* is the first phase of *Shat kriya*

*kal*⁶⁰ or disease formation meaning 'stored'. It is commonly referred as the period of accumulation when *Ama* produced during the improper *Prapaka*⁶¹ digestion that collects in the gastrointestinal tract of the body. This condition of disease manifestation is primarily associated with *Kapha* imbalance accumulates in the stomach. *Ayurveda* states that when *Ama* results from *Pitta* imbalance it gets collected in the small intestine and it accumulate in the colon when gets connected to a *Vata* dysfunction. The presence of the *ama* disturbs the proper functioning of the *Doshas* creating mild symptoms that can be easily felt⁶². Such symptoms signal physiological imbalance and people have a common tendency to ignore these symptoms as they disappear by themselves in a few hours. And this habit of ignoring them instead of recognizing and eliminating their root causes, people invite the disease process to gain a strong footing in the body. *Ayurveda*, these symptoms alert towards an imbalance in the body that is likely to occur.

(ii) ***Prakopa*** (Stage of disease process):- It is the second stage of *Shat kriya kal* in *Ayurveda*⁶³ or popularly known as the second stage of disease process. It is translated as provocation or aggravation. Though the *Prakopa* phase does not manifest the clearly differentiated clinical symptoms that allopathic medicine can recognize, the *Ayurvedic* physicians confirm the aggravated state of *ama* through pulse diagnosis. And accordingly, the *Ayurvedic* physician recommends some dietary and behavioral changes in order to reverse the *Prakopa* stage.

(iii) ***Prasara*** (Leave and spread phase):- It is the third stage of *Shat kriya kal* in *Ayurveda*⁶⁴. This third phase of disease

formation literally means to leave and spread. At this phase *ama* accumulates to such a degree that it finally starts to overflow in the gastrointestinal tract. The *doshas* transport along with the important nutrients to the *dhatus*. Its stickiness stops it from being transported back to the gastrointestinal tract. It is the stage of migration.

(iv) *Sthana Samshraya* (Stage of disease augmentation):- It is the fourth phase of *Shat kriya kal*⁶⁵. In *Ayurveda* it is also known as the *Dosha-Dushaya samurchhana* stage or *Samprapti* stage or stage of disease augmentation. *Sthana samshraya* literally means taking shelter in a place. The *ama* that has migrated from the gastrointestinal tract enters and lodges in a defective and weak *dhatu*. Once the *ama* accumulates in an area of low immunity, its basic qualities overwhelm the *Dhatu* and it causes dysfunction and structural damage of the body. It is the stage in which specific susceptibility to serious infections or degenerative diseases start. Several factors determine which specific *Dhatus* are predisposed to accept and be damaged by *ama*. A combination of the common factors like effects from previous illnesses, seasonal changes, stress, effects from past diet and behavioral choices, radiation and chemical pollutants, etc. produces weakness which opens certain tissues to diseases.

(v) *Vyakta* (Stage of symptom manifestation):- It is the fifth stage of *Shat kriya kal* in *Ayurveda*⁶⁶ and it literally means something which can be seen. This stage is the one in which clearly differentiated symptoms first appear. It is the stage of symptom manifestation. The disease process overwhelms the ability of the body to maintain immunity and healthy functioning. At this stage, structural

dysfunctions or damages have progressed to the point where the illness actually activates. The disease process manifests the symptoms that are used by the Western system for classification and diagnosis. (vi) *Bheda* (Stage of complications):- It is the sixth and final stage of *Shat kriya kal* in *Ayurveda*⁶⁷. This final phase is also known as the stage of complications. *Bheda* literally means differentiation. Stage five that is *Vyakta* confirms general diagnosis and the sixth stage confirms differential diagnosis. This phase offers a detailed understanding of the group of symptoms that have surfaced the fact that all the doubts regarding the nature of the disease are eliminated. This sixth stage is characterized by severe impairment of *dhatu* function, serious damage to the *Srotas* (the vessels within each *dhatu*) and the complications that involves related *dhatus*. The entire disease process can be aggravated by the toxic side effects of the drugs that are used to cure it. At this final stage, many of the diseases become a bit difficult to treat completely. Degenerative conditions and susceptibility to several infectious diseases do not develop overnight, it takes many years and the seeds of dysfunction occur as a result of inappropriate lifestyle and diet.

Shat kriya kal or the six significant stages of disease formation in *Ayurveda* provides the knowledge of how illness originates and manifests step- by-step. *Ayurveda* uses these six stages to remove both the signs as well.

Discussion and Conclusion:

On the basis of above review, we can say all the principles of treatment through *ayurvedic* methods are based on above nine theorems. *Ayurveda* has very vast number of methodologies of treatment but all are concise to a point that all

pathologies are happed or formed by three *doshas* i.e. *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*⁶⁸ and treatment depends upon *Panchamahabhuta* and all substances in the world are medicine⁶⁹ composed of these *Panchamahabhuta*. After knowing these, one can easily understands the *Ayurveda* and underlying point of interest of management and care of patients harmoniously.

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Source of support: Nil

Conflict of interest: None

Declared