

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PANCHABHOOTHA SIDHANTHA

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ABSTRACT :

Panchamahabhoota Siddhanta (principle of five elements) is considered to be one of the principles of Indian philosophy, which explains the integrity of all the living and non- living substances in this universe. *Panchamahabhootas* (principle of five elements) can be seen in two ways in philosophies -As a part of cosmogenesis and a part of *Dravya* (Matter).

The reason to understand the origin of the universe is that, the source of *Mahabhautika* (gross elements) evolution lies in it and to understand this concept as a whole, one has to understand its base. So it is mandatory for us to know the things which are using in our practice, from where they are originated. The basic principles of *Ayurveda* though genuine and of much utility, its analysis and implementation need more research.

Key words: *Panchabhoota, Avykta, Mahat, Ahankara, Pancheekarana.*

INTRODUCTION: Any individual who is not well versed in basic principles of any science and who does't have practical knowledge of the same will never succeed in his clinical endeavors. Any theory without practical application is considered to be like leading a blind path. *Ayurveda*, though a science with rich legacy is lacking implementation of its principles in some areas. One of such very less explored theories is that of *Panchamahabhoota*. According to *Darsana* (Philosophy) & *Ayurveda*, the individual is the epitome of the universe. All the material and spiritual phenomena of the universe are present in the individual. Similarly all that present in the individual is also contained in the universe. Visualization of the identity of the individual with the universe paves the way for Salvation. The body is described as the modified form of *Panchamahabhuta* (principle of five elements). Hence the description of the identity of individual and the Universe relates to *mahabhautika* (Gross elements) only. Theory of holism, different theories about cosmogenesis, theories about perceptual cognition and other allied principles like *tridosha* theory

(Theory of Three humors), *Rasa siddhanta* (Theory of six taste) etc, were developed on the basis of this basic theory of five elements. *Prithvi* (Earth), *Ap* (Water), *Tejas* (Fire), *Vayu* (Air) and *Aakasha* (Space) are the established elements as *Panchamahabhootas*, though some contradictions about inclusion of *Aakasha* (Space) among *Bhootas* (Elements) existed during some later development.

HISTORICAL ASPECTS: *Vedas* are considered to be the first recorded sources of knowledge. Indian pre-*vedic* civilization (Indus valley civilization) has also been well established through series of excavations, in which written are missing. *Vedas* mainly reflected man's concern and obligation towards nature and natural forces and were highly ritualistic and practice oriented in many ways. Knowledge in *Vedas* chiefly aimed to perform some *yagnas*, *tantras* or *mantras* (ritual sacrifice & chanting verses), where the performing man has a tendency to completely surrender before whom he is worshipping. These circumstances might have led the *vedic* civilization into some crisis like:

- A) They could not find explanations to many things due to lack of conceptual integrity of the believes and practices
- B) Other philosophical systems like Bhuddism tried to establish parallel thoughts and life styles through their deeds & practices which became a cause for set back of Hindu practices.

Both the above crisis led to the development in the field of all the knowledges. Vedic and non-Vedic sources of information influenced this and various philosophies and theories developed hereafter. The philosophies tried to draw a cause-effect relation in the evolution of the universe & man and this urge compelled them to formulate different theories about cosmogenesis. The basic assumption they postulated were:

- a) There should be a cause –effect relation for everything happening in this universe.
- b) As a part of the universe, man is a miniature of all the structural & functional aspects of universe.

These assumptions were the basis of almost all the theories, evolved thereafter. The most accepted theory of cosmogenesis was *Parinama siddhanta* (Theory of transformation), in which the universe was considered as evolved from a pre-existing chaos. *Panchamahabhoota* (Theory of five elements) theory was first appeared as an elemental part of the cosmogenesis, were final product of the cosmogenesis *Panchamahabhootas*, in a later development, especially that related to *Ayurveda*, considered as a unit of *panchamahabhootas* combined with *Atma*(Soul) only became the chief concern in the context of its practical application i.e., *Chikitsa* (Treatment).

Development of content of Panchamahabhoota siddhanta:

- 1) In the *Vedic* period, in some *Upanishads* the evolution of universe was established as from *vayu* & *jala*. Natural forces in the form of *Vayu* (wind), *Jala* (rain), *Agni* (sunlight), *Bhoomi* (earth) etc. were the subjects for worships in the *Vedic* period. This consideration can be one reason for the inclusion of these principles under the basic elements of the universe. Absence of all these might have considered as *Akasha* (Space)
- 2) Evolution of everything were explained from *sookshmavastha* (Minute stage) to *sthoovavastha* (Gross stage). in that sense a sequence from *Aakasa* to *bhoomi* has popularized
- 3) Another possibility of limiting the number into five was that regarding the perceptual cognition. The facilities are five only and thus there cannot be more number of elements than five
- 4) *Panchamahabhootas* can be seen in two ways in philosophies
 - a) As a part of cosmogenesis
 - b) As a part of matter(*dravya*)

The first aspect explains the functional significance of *bhootas* & the second are mainly the structural significance.

Origin of Universe: The reason to understand the origin of the universe is that, the source of *mahabhautika* evolution lies in it and to understand this concept as a whole, one has to analyze its base. So it is mandatory for us to know the things which are using in our practice, from where they are originated. When describing the evolution of the universe different theories were postulated by the different schools of thought. *Sankhya* put forth the *prakriti purusha siddhanatha* (Theory of basic primordial & causative element) as the source of the universe, whereas *Vaisesika* postulated the *paramanuvada* (Atomic

theory) and *Ayurveda* has merged both. These theories in their own perspective can be compared to the Big bang theory postulated by the scientists of modern metaphysics.

The *Prakrti* (Nature) as described by the Indian sciences show resemblance to the cosmic egg which is the sole source of the creation of the universe¹

THE MULA PRAKRTI (Basic primordial element): The *Mula prakrti*, the root principle of matter, though without a cause for itself is the cause of all inanimate and animate objects, manifested by the three *gunas* (Qualities) and *Ashta prakrti* (Eight primordial elements) and is the primordial entity of evolution.

In all *Sthavara* (Inanimate) and *Jangama* (Animate) *Srishti* (evolution), there is a mixture of *Satva* (enlightening), *Rajas* (Initiative) and *Tamas* (Covering). These *gunas* never stay in isolated form but stay in different proportions in all

The only difference is that in *Avyakta* (Unmanifested)(*Prakrti* + *Purusa*) these *gunas* are in *Samyavastha* (balanced state), where as in *Srishti* they are in *Visamavastha* (imbalanced).

Astarupam: (8 fold) *Mahat*, (intellect) *Ahankara* (ego) and *Pancatanmatras* (5 objects) are the seven *Rupas* or manifestation of *Prakrti*. These along with *Prakrti* itself form eightfold manifestation. *Dalhana* gives the reason that by *Silaputraka Nyaya*. *Avyakta* (unmanifested) has both *Rupa* (form) and *Rupitvat* (state of having form). But basically *Sankhya* has described two types of *Astavidha Prakrti-Mula Prakrti* and *Prakrti Vikrti*² (Primordial form and Productive form)

It has been already seen that *Prakrti* and *Purusha samyoga* (combination) resides in *Avyakta*. The *mula prakrti* cannot develop

on its own. Matter by itself cannot give rise to minds etc. so the principle of *Chaitanya* or Consciousness is posited owing to the influence of *Chaitanya* the root principle evolves into detail forms.

Mahat (Intellect): After the *Samyoga* (Association), *Prakrti* loses its *Triguna samyavastha* and also *Avyaktavastha*. Out of which *Mahat tatva* is the first one, it also called as *Buddhitatva*

To give decisions by looking at the *Karya-Karana bhava* (Cause and effect form) or to decide acceptance or non-acceptance of a subject is the function of *Buddhi*. This function is also called as *Vyvasaya* (Discrimination). It is of three types depending upon the dominancy of *Trigunas* and their functions differ accordingly hence is called as *Budhitatva*.

The term *mahat* signifies all pervasive nature of *Buddhi*.

Even after the *Mahat tatva* was formed, still its oneness with the *Avyakta* was undeterred, but *Ahankara* manifested its *Anekatva* (Multiplicity) and *Prthikatva* (Seperability), because of which we see different plants, animals, stones etc. And it also inculcates the same nature i.e. *Abhimaana* (ego) in Human beings³

Ahankara (ego) is a product of *Mahat* hence is manifested after *Buddhi* and is divided into *satvikadi* (*Satva, rajas, tamas*) three types

Ekadasendriya (Eleven faculties): Though *Ahankara* is *Trigunatmaka*, *satva guna* dominancy is more in *manas* (Mind) and *Buddhindriya* (Sensory faculties) compared to *Karmendriyas* (Motor faculties). *Indriyas* (Faculties) from *Srota* (Auditory) to *Jihwa* (Gustatory). They are termed to be *Buddhindriyas*. They are called so as they are capable of perceiving *Artha* (objects of sense organs) only when *Manas* is residing with them.

Tanmatra (Five objects of sex organs):

These are a subtle basic unit which later on gives rise to *Panchamahabhuta* and are not perceived by *Bahyendriyas* (External faculties).

EVOLUTION OF MAHABHOOTAS:

Akasa Mahabhuta: *Nyaya* and *vaisesika darsanas* have told *Akasa* to be *Vyapaka* (all pervasive), *sabda-gunavisista* (having special property of sound) & *Nitya* (Permanent), but *Upanishad* has given its origin from *Atma*.⁴ (Soul)

Sankhya has told its origin from *Sabda-Tanmatra* (object of sound) where as *vaisesika* from *Akasa paramanu* (Atomic level of space). One which is evolved cannot be *Nitya* (Permanent) and omnipresent hence a lot of controversies are found regarding *Akasa mahabhuta*. It can be said that, like *paramanurupa prthvi* (Atomic levelled earth) and *paramanurupa jala* (Atomic levelled water) are *nitya*, in the same way *paramanurupa Akasa* (Atomic levelled space) is *Nitya*.⁵ *Akasa* is said to be *Sarvamurta samayogi dravya* i.e *samyoga* with each *paramanu*, hence is omnipresent. At the beginning of the *Sristi Utpatti* (Process of evolution) *Akasa paramanu* with *Iswarecha* (God's wish) come together in the order of *Dvyanuka* (diatomic,. *Tryanuka* (Triatomic) etc.. to give rise to *Sthula Akasa* (Gross space). Therefore in *Srishti* its *Utpatti*(From starting) said to be from *Atman* (Soul). But according to *Nyaya darsana* though it is said to possess *Apratighatva* ⁶ (Un-obstructiveness). It does have *paramanus* as it gives rise to *murta dravyas* (Formed objects) like *Jala* and *Prthvi* by the rule of *Satkaaryavada* (Theory of existence of product in cause).

Susruta says *Mahabhootas* are nothing but the play of *Trigunas*. *Satva guna* is *Laghu* (Light) and *Prakaasha* (Which enlightens

with the knowledge about *Atman*.⁷) *Atman* is nothing but *Satva*, hence *Akasa Mahabhuta* is the first to originate from it.

Vayu Mahabhuta: Second *mahabhuta* to evolve in the order is the *Vayu mahabhuta* from *Sparsa Tantra* (object of touch) / *Vayu paramanu/Akasa* which is again *Amurta* and has *Sparsagunavisesa* along with the *sabda guna* of *Akasa* due to *Gunavidhi* (Increase of property).

Vayu mahabhuta is *Rajo Guna* dominant without which *satva* and *tamas* cannot proceed to perform their functions, hence *vayu mahabhuta* is second to originate.

Agni Mhabhuta: The third *mahabhuta* to evolve is the *Agni Mahabhuta* from *Rupa tanmatra* (Object of vision) / *Agni Paramanus/Vayu* having *Rupa* as *visesa guna* (Special property) along with the *gunas* of previous *mahabhutas*. *Agni mahābhūta* is *Satva & Rajo guṇa* dominant as it derives *guṇas* from the above two *mahabhutas*.

Jalamahabhoota: The fourth in row is the *Jalamahabhoota* originated out of *Rasa Thanmatra* (Object of taste)/*Jalaparamanus/Agni Mahabhoota*. Its *vishesha guna* is *Rasa* along with *Sabdhasparsha* and *Roopa*. *Karikavali* has given the *Bhaudhika gunas*(Physical properties) of *Jala*, like color of *Jala* is *Sukla Varna*(White colour). *Sparsa* (Touch) is *Seeta* (Cold) and *Rasa*(Taste) is *Madhura* (sweet). *Jalamahabhoota* is having dominance of *Satva* and *Tamo guna*.⁸

Prithvi Mahabhoota: This is the last *bhoota* to get evolve with *Gandha*(smell) as *vishesha guna* with all the *Gunas* of Preceding *mahabhootas*. Object having mass and shape is having predominance of *Prithvi Mahabhoota*. *Prithi Mahabhoota* is *Tamo guna* predominant which provides stability. Among the five *mahabhootas* the last four *Bhootas* have an important role in

the creation of Objects whereas *Akasha* is all pervasive.⁹

Dissolution of Mahabhootas: Dissolution of *Mahabhootas* takes place in the reverse order of creation.

Process of Pancheekarana (Pentamarisation): The word *Pancheekarana* (Pentamarisation) is not mentioned in the classical text. This word is found in *Upanishad* and was first conceptualized by *Sankaracharya* in his book named *Pancheekarana*.

DEFINITION: *Pancheekarana* is defined as the process by which the *Sukshamabhootas* combined together according to a set pattern. *Ayurveda* explains *Pancheekarana* with the help of another term as *Anyonyanupravesa* (Intermingling). The difference between the two terms is that the later one explains about the subsequent stage to *Anupravesha* of *Tanmatras* wherein the *Anupravesitha Tanmatras* (Intermingled objects) permute and combine so that each *Bhoota* which is formed will cause all the Five *Tnamatras*.

Process of Pancheekarana according to Vedantha: Each molecule of *Mahabhoota* divides into two parts and these parts may not be always equal.¹⁰

The first part of division again divides into four parts. These four parts also may not be equal proportion. One of these four parts gets exchanged with all four other molecules.

Now every molecule will have fractions of each other.

Tridosha & Panchamahabootha: As the *tridoshas* are the *Karyadravyas* (Products), they too are *Panchabhoudhika* in nature but predominance of one or two *Mahabhoota* influences its nature and functions.

*Vata- Vayu + Akasa*¹¹

Pitta- Agni

Kapha- Jala + Prithvi

Dhatus and Mahabhootas: According to *Chakrapani*, *Panchamahabhootas* are themselves termed as *Dhatus*

According to *Ashangasangraha*¹², Predominance of *bhoothas* is given below

<i>Rasa</i>	<i>Jala</i>
<i>Rakta</i>	<i>Agni</i>
<i>Mamsa</i>	<i>Prithvi</i>
<i>Meda</i>	<i>Jala+Prithvi</i>
<i>Asthi</i>	<i>Vayu</i>
<i>Majja</i>	<i>Jala</i>
<i>Sukra</i>	<i>Jala</i>

Specific Lakshana of Mahabhootas¹³: *Charaka* and *Kasyapa* have explained the *lakshana* of each *Mahabhoota* as:

Prithvi- Kharatwa (Solidity)

Jala- Dravatwa (Liquidity)

Agni- Usnatwa (Hotness)

Vayu- Chalatawa (Mobility)

Akasa-Apratighatatwa (Unobstructiveness)

DISCUSSION: The *karya dravyas* are infinite. *Mahabhootas* are the *karana dravyas*. *Ayurvedic* treatment modalities can be explained on the basis of *Panchabhootha* theory. Hence *Susrutha* opines that there is no need to think beyond *Panchamahabhoothas*. According to *Karyakaranasiddhanta* (cause and effect theory), we know that every *Karya* has a cause. Hence the *Trigunatmaka prakrti* is the cause of the *Mahabhootas*. During the evolution of *Mahabhoothas*, these *Trigunas* are also carried forward to be manifested in the objects.

According to *Ayurveda*, *Dravyas* are categorized into five based on the dominance of each *Mahabhootha*. *Dravyas* with *Akasa* and *Vayu bhootha* predominance can be utilized in decreased condition of *Vata*. Similarly in the case of other *Doshas* also.

According to *Susruta* the assessment of the changes in the *bhautika* configuration in the body is done with the help of *Sadvidha Pariksha* (six methods of examination). e.g.: to understand the changes happening in the *Akasa* can be analyzed by the examination of *Sabdha* (Sound). Similarly in the case of other *bhoothas* by the analysis of their respective *Gunas*.

For the better application of *Panchbhoota* theory in clinical practice, physician should be aware of the *Gunas* of *Mahabhoothas*. In major *Samhithas*, *Guna* (Property) and *Karma*(action) of *Mahabhoothas* are well explained. Based on this, increased and decreased level of *Mahabhootha* in the body should be inferred.

CONCLUSION: The *Pancha mahabhoothas* are the basic elements of the three among the four components of *Ayu* i.e *Sarira* (Physical body). But unfortunately this theory is not well explored, which has its roots in *Vedas*. *Panchabhootasidhanta* is a *Sarvatantrasindhantha* (Universal theory). This *Sidhantha* (Theory) is very much beneficial in understanding the theories of *Ayurveda* like *Tridosha* theory, *Rasaveerya*(Theory of taste and potency) theory etc.

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