

**CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF PANCHAMAHABHUTA SIDDHANT****Dinesh Prakash Todkari<sup>1</sup>, G.S.Lavekar<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Lecturer, Dept of Samhita Sidhant, Dhanwantari Ayurved College, Udgir, Maharashtra, India<sup>2</sup>Former DG, CCRAS- AYUSH, Ministry of Health & F.W. Govt. Of India, New Delhi, India**ABSTRACT**

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

**Keywords:** Ayurveda, *Panchamahabhuta*, diagnostic methods, biotransformation.

**INTRODUCTION**

In present days of globalization, all the rational sceptics are concentrated in finding the basic reasons for transformations or existence. The concept of *Panchamahabhutas* (five elements) is defined vividly and scientifically in Ayurveda classics. It is stated that human body is *panchabhautika* (penta elemental) and the food we eat is also *panchabhautik*, when the food undergoes digestion with the help of *jatharagni* (digestive fire) *parthiv* (Prithvi Dominant) properties of food nourishes the *parthiv* parts of body. In these manner symmetrical properties of

*mahabhutas* (elements) gives nutrition to corresponding symmetrical organs of body<sup>1</sup>. The objective of this review article is to study the conceptual as well as applied aspect of *panchamahabhuta siddhant* and to prove this principle as the base foundation of all other fundamentals viz. *tridosha siddhant* (theory of humours), *garbhoptatti* (foetal development), *guna-karma vada* (Theory of Property & Action of substances), *deha sanghatana* (body composition). *panchamahabhut siddhant* is universally accepted theory. Even it does not oppose the development of other

theories. In fact every *dravya* (substance) in this universe has its *panchamahabhuta* composition doesn't matter whether they are *chetan* (living) or *achetan* (non living)<sup>2</sup>. All the *Karya dravyas* (perceivable matters) existing in the world are *panchabhautika*. *Panchamahabhutas* are at the juncture of subtle to the more gross manifestation of the universe. But some people think that it is having less practical utility and more mental exercise. The reasoning of anything and everything which cannot be explained by *tridoshas* can be very well interpreted by *panchamahabhuta siddhant*. This concept of *panchamahabhuta* is capable in providing ultimate solution for the queries in the field of Ayurveda as per *acharya Sushruta*<sup>3</sup>.

In present scenario all branches of science are busy in finding the basic

causes of existence. Even the most modernized equipment leads them to a more pensive problem. These are the limitations of theirs which has attracted them to eastern philosophy. Ayurveda can satisfy them with a more sound explanation on the basis of *panchamahabhuta siddhant*.

#### Evolution of Panchamahabhuta theory<sup>4</sup>

It takes place in 3 levels

- a) First level: Evolution of *Panchatanmatra* (Subtle elements)
- b) Second level: *Bhutantaranupravesha* (Imitative pervasion)
- c) Third level: *Panchikaran* (Reciprocal pervasion)

From *avyakta* (indistinct), a short look upto evolution of *mahabhutas* is as shown below in fig .1

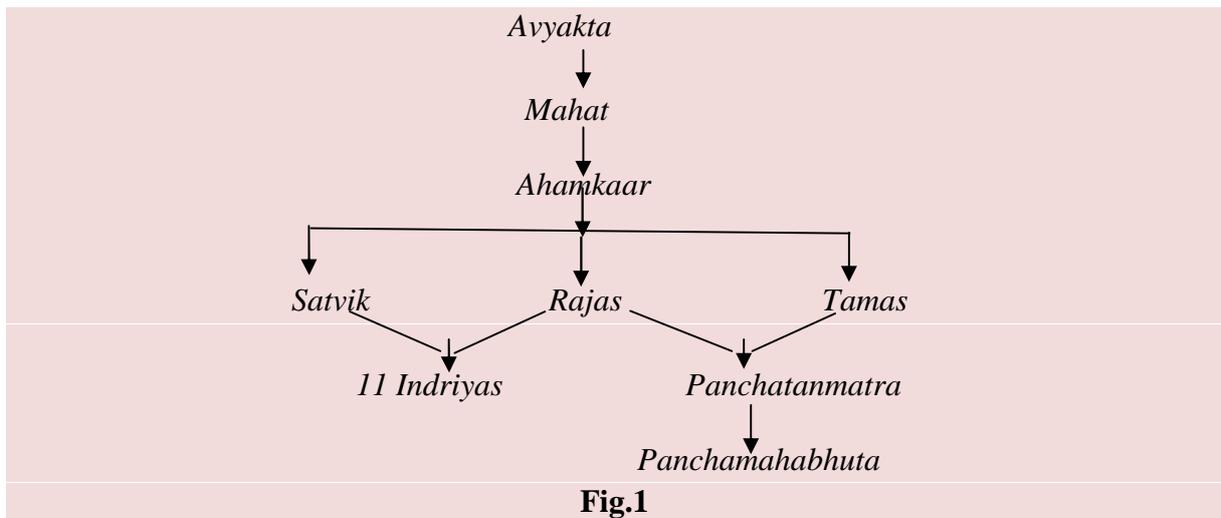


Fig.1

a) First level: - Evolution of *Panchatanmatra* (Subtle elements)

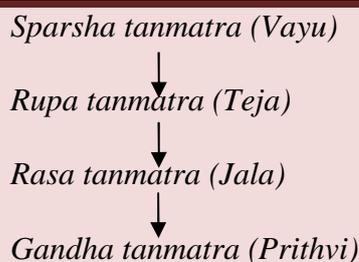
At the practical use level, *tanmatra* form of *mahabhutas* can be considered as eternal. The *Ahamkaar*(ego) manifested from *mahat* contains three charactersitics viz.

*Satva*(essence), *Raja*(energy) and *tamas*(mass). The *Rajas* motivates *tamas* in specific quantities, the first product of *Ahamkara* by these two in *shabda tanmatra*.

In brief, evolution of *Panchatanmatra* from *bhutadi ahamkar* is as

*Bhutadi ahamkar* → *Shabda tanmatra (akash)*





*Tanmatra* is subtle quantum of *mahabhuta* category having a specific raja or tama. Philosophical science explained them as having a material form and indivisible further.

**b)** Second level - *Bhutantaranupravesha* (Imitative pervasion)

At this level, *tanmatras* undergo some reactions to form the premolecules of *mahabhutas*

**c)** Third level - *Panchikaran* (pentamerization or reciprocal pervasion)

The process in which molecules of the *mahabhutas* (primary existents) are combined with gross existents is called as *Panchikaran* (pentamerization).

Now the products which are going to act as single units in the manifestation of universe are formed. These conjugated forms of *tanmatra* are termed as *mahabhutas*. The *Mahabhutas* so formed, by the *bhutantaranupravesha* and *panchikarana* reactions of *tanmatra*, undergo specific procedures of conjugation to form the manifested *panchabhautika dravyas* of the universe, around us. There is no any clear explanation in the classics about the reactions taking place in between *mahabhutas*, *Acharya* Chakrapani comments that these reactions of *mahabhutas* takes place due to *Adrushtha*<sup>5</sup> (Some unknown power). Hence no logic can be applied in this case; *Acharya* Sushrut<sup>6</sup> in this regard described 3 types of conjugations taking place among *mahabhutas* to form *panchabhautika dravya*. These are:

**paraspara-samsarga:** In this process two or more *Mahabhutas* come in contact and simply get attached to each other to form *panchabhautika dravya*.

**paraspar-anugraha:**

*Anugraha* means *Upakara*, give and take relationship, to enhance properties of each other. In this type of conjugation reaction, *mahabhutas* act in such a way that they will favour each other.

**paraspara-anupravesha:**

In this type of conjugation, *Mahabhutas* get submerged into each other. This *paraspar-anupravesha* procedure is of *panchikarana* again, but at *Mahabhuta* level.

Role of *panchamahabhutas* is not limited upto physical development of body but they are also involved in development of psychological properties. In *Shantiparva* (chapter from *mahabharat*) of *Mahabharata*<sup>7</sup> it is clearly mentioned that the person having *Prithvi mahabhut* dominance in it shows *Dhriti*(capacity to bear anything), *Jala mahabhut* dominance shows *Soumya*(aggreableness) behaviour, individual having *Agni mahabhut* dominance reveals *Shoka*(sorrowness), *Vayu mahabhut* dominant person shows *bala* (strength) and *Swatantrata* (independent nature) property and *Akash mahabhut* dominant persons are having *Apratighat* (unopposing) nature.

**Panchamahabhuta and embryonic development**<sup>8</sup>

The amalgam of sperm and ovum when embedded in uterus along with

*chetana* then *vayu Mahabhut* starts division in embryo to form *dosha* (humours) and *avayavas* (organs), *Teja mahabhuta* helps in biotransformation or provides energy, *jala mahabhuta* provides *kledan* (moisture), *Prithvi mahabhuta* provides strength by consolidation and *Akash mahabhuta* helps in overall embryonic growth by creating hollow structures of organs.

### **Shodhan dravya**(purifying substances) and **panchamahabhuta**<sup>9</sup>

Sushrut acharya stated that *Virechan dravyas* (purgative substances) are always having *Prithvi* and *Jala mahabhuta* dominance since *Prithvi* and *Jala mahabhuta* are having *Guru gunas*(gravitational properties) and According to *vaisheshik darshan* (philosophy) *adhapatana* (gravity) is the prime property of *guru guna*.

As *Agni* and *Vayu mahabhutas* are *urdhwagami* (upward moving tendency) and having *laghu gunas* therefore *dravya* with dominance of these two *mahabhutas* helps in *vaman karma* (induced emesis). On the basis of these perceptions and inference we can make logic of other *karmas* (Actions).

### **Panchamahabhutas and Therapeutic actions**

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

dominance is having *brumhana* (weight gaining) action on body.

### **Clinical application of panchamahabhutas**

**1) Dhatusamyata (equilibrium state of dhatus):** is the ultimate aim of our Ayurveda science<sup>10</sup>. According to Acharya Charak principle of *samanyam*(similarity) helps in increasing degraded similar *dhatus* in body and when there is *dhatu- vriddhi* condition we have to use *visheshha dravyas* (opposite substances) in treatment<sup>11</sup>. To fulfil this purpose we must know the *panchabhautik* composition of therapeutic substances.

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

*Dravyas* composed of *Prithvi, Agni* and *Jala mahabhuta* helps in alleviation of *Vata dosha*; *Dravyas* having dominance in *Prithvi, Jala* and *Vayu mahabhuta* alleviates *Pitta dosha* and *dravyas* having predominance in *Akash, Agni* and *Vayu mahabhutas* reduces *Kapha dosha*<sup>12</sup>. *Dravyas* which are rich in *Akash, Vayu mahabhuta* violates *Vata dosha*, *Agni mahabhut* predominant *dravyas* creates *Pitta prakopa* (Increases *Pitta*) while *Prithvi* and *Jala mahabhut* predominant *dravyas* aggravates *kapha*. In this way all *dravyas* are having different composition of *mahabhuta* properties. So by seeking accurate knowledge of properties of *mahabhutas* one can apply

this knowledge to establish equilibrium of doshas.

**3) Panchamahabhutas and Trigunas<sup>13</sup> relation:** *Satvaparikshan* (Mental strength

examination) is the diagnostic tool to assess the *manobal* (Mental strength) of the patient. So by knowing the level of *satva* one can decide what to intervene in patient

Sr.No	Mahabhuta	Mahaguna (3 major attributes)
1	Akash	Satva
2	Vayu	Raja
3	Teja	Satva + Raja
4	Jala	Satva + Tama
5	Prithvi	Tamas

**Table 1: Panchamahabhutas and Trigunas relation**

Thus from above table which shows relation between *mahabhuta* and *mahaguna* we can predict that certain *dravyas* can help in treating the psychiatric disorders by using *panchabhautika dravyas* in corre-

sponding *manovikara* (*mahaguna* disorder).

**4) Panchamahabhutas and Rasa(Tastes)<sup>14</sup>:** Each of the *rasas* originate with predominance of two of the *panchabhutas*

Rasa(Tastes)	Mahabhuta dominance
Madhur(sweet)	Prithvi + Jala
Amla(sour)	Prithvi + Teja
Lavana(salty)	Jala + Teja
Tikta(bitter)	Vayu + Akash
Katu(acrid/pungent))	Vayu + Teja
Kashaya(astringent)	Vayu + Prithvi

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

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

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

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

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

5)	Akash	To examine heart, lungs and abdomen and hollow structures like ear, nose and throat.
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**Table 3: Panchamahabhut and diagnostic methods**

**6) Panchamahabhuta and dhatus:** All *saptadhatus* are *panchabhautika*<sup>15</sup> and when there is *dhatuvridhhi* and *dhatukshaya* conditions which are responsible for disease manifestations, At that time it is very much essential for physician to know the Permutation combination of *mahabhutas* of *bheshaja* (medicine) *dravyas* which he is using to treat *panchabhautika dhatus*. Also *dhatvagni* is also responsible for metabolic activities at the *dhatu utpatti* (tissue level)<sup>16</sup>.

**7) Panchamahabhuta and Samskaar (Biotransformation):** The drug cannot be used as it is, in all types of patients, conditions & stages of the disease. The drug requires some modifications according to disease, *kaal* (time period) etc situations. So to make these modifications & formation *samskaara* is mandatory. *Samskaar* means imbibing different *Gunas* on the original *Gunas* of a *Dravya*<sup>17</sup>, every *dravya* is having its specific *panchabhautika* composition. The alteration in *panchabhautika* composition is taking place at every moment due to *Agni Mahabhuta* present in it. *Samskaar* is the only factor by which one can make modifications in *panchabhautika* composition of a *dravya*, thereby forming new *dravya* according to requirement. So, it is necessary to understand basic concept behind *Samskaar* and its relation with *panchamahabhutas*. This can be well understood by an example-when *Ardraka* (ginger) is soaked in lime water and dried in sunlight then its *Jala Mahabhuta* dominance gets decreased and *Agni Mahabhuta* dominance is increased comparatively, so that *Ardraka* having

*Guru Guna* is converted into *Sunthi* having *Laghu Guna*. So by *samskaras* mentioned in classics & understanding the logic of *pancabhautika* alteration behind it *vaidya* (physician) can use the available *dravyas* as per need<sup>18</sup>. This *Gunantaradhana* is considered as biotransformation.

## DISCUSSION

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

purpose, knowledge of theory of evolution of five elements and formation of *panchabhautik dravyas* will be very useful.

## CONCLUSION

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

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