

THE TRINITY CONCEPT IN ĀYURVEDA AND SĀNKHYA

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‘The Vedas and Upaniṣads which partly represent the corpus of ancient Indian literature, properly called śrutis clearly deliberate the procedure of creation. The creation principle is said as developing into five essential elements as evidently presented in all the life forms in the form of air, fire, water and earth, occupying the fifth element space. This is particularly significant in the context that it is from eternity that there arises the subtlest to the greatest of matter and for that everything that exists.. It is said in the Taittirīyopaniṣad : तस्माद्वा एतस्मादात्मनः आकाशः संभूतः आकाशाद्वायुः वायोरग्निः अग्नेरापः अद्भ्यः पृथ्वी । ‘From Eternity there arises ether, ether mixing with Eternity creates air, a more observable or experiential element, from air fire is generated, from fire water and from that prthvi or matter’. We can ascertain a logical conclusion to this concept. As air moves, it eventually creates friction or abrasion, which creates heat or fire. Heat produces moisture, thus creating water, if one tries to walk through water; one is slowed by its density or compactness. Finally water produces the hardest form of matter, i.e. earth. The Vedas and Upaniṣads state that all the creatures, including human beings are made up of combination of all the five essential elements.

The Sāṅkhya theory of cosmology describes the process of creation in the following way. The Spirit [Puruṣa] and Matter [Prakṛti] came together to create cosmic intelligence [mahattattva] out of the Mahat arises Ego or Ahankāra. Ahankāra then manifests as five elements [Pancmahābhūtas] to create the organic and inorganic worlds. These five elements come together and through different combinations becomes a new creature. And so each creation is slightly different from every other one in its constitutive mixture of elements and in the way they balance themselves. The particular combination of energies also is peculiar to each body when the creature enters this world.

None could contest the fact that Āyurveda is also based on these five elemental constituents. It accepts the sāṅkhya theory of creation. According to it the body is made up of seven Dhātus or Vital tissues [Saptadhātavah]. They are Rasa [Plasma] Rakta [blood] Māmsa [Muscle] Meda [Fat] Asthi [Bone] Majja [Marrows] and Shukra and Artava. Apart from this three there are also Śrotus, which are the vital body channels through which energy moves. If a channel becomes blocked by waste or by any other means, it will not function effectively. Energy can accumulate at the parts of blockage and thus the flow of energy can be inhibited in other areas. In addition to this Dhātus and Śrotus, there is also another concept i.e. Ama. Ama means the waste that accumulates in the body through poor digestion and absorption. Good health can be maintained by two ways—either by supporting the Dhātus as they need it, or through proper diet and by cleaning and removing any obstacles, to the clear functioning of the system. This means cleaning of the Ama. Further, it is important that Āyurveda accepts this specific combination of energies and elements and calls it the innate constitution i.e. Prakṛti. What we do with our constitution is up to us. Āyurveda certainly is the source book of our health, vitality and well-being.

How the five different elements combine is characteristically dealt with. According to it, the five elements come together to create three constitutive types. They are Vāta, Pitta and Kapha. If air and ether are predominant in one's constitution, his nature is referred to as Vāta. If fire and water take the lead in one's constitution Pitta is the result. If water and earth hold ascending role in one's body by birth it is Kapha. Āyurveda is evolved on this basic Tridoṣa theory and therefore they are indissoluble. Since the three humors are capable of getting vitiated due to their respective causes and modify or disturb the physiological function to initiate the process of the assault of the diseases, they came to be known as Tridoṣa. It is said as

शरीरदूषणाद्दोषाः धातवो देहधारणात्

वातपित्तकफा ज्ञेया मलिनीकरणान्मलाः शा सू ५.२४

Special seats of the Tridoṣa

Even though for performing all physiological functions Vāta, Pitta and Kapha pervades the whole body, they are having certain

special seats in the normal state. They are respectively lower, middle and upper portion of the body. In the Aṣṭāṅghrdaya it is said:

विकृताविकृता देहं घ्नन्ति ते वर्धयन्ति च
ते व्यापिनोपि हृन्नाभ्योरधोमध्योर्ध्वसंश्रयाः १.६

i.e. if the Heart and Nābhi are taken as two important conjunctive constituents in the body the region below the Nābhi is the seat of Vāta, the region between the hridaya and nābhi is the seat of Pitta and the region above the hridaya is the seat of kapha. Since the human body is constituted by Panca bhūtas they are also the seats of humors.

Humors	seats in Dhātus etc
Vāta	Asthi
Pitta	Rasa, Rakta, and lasika
Kapha	rasa, māmsa, meda, majja, sukra, muthra, purisa etc

तत्रास्थिनि स्थितो वायुः पित्तं तु श्वेतरक्तयोः ।

श्लेष्मा शेषेषु तेनेषां आश्रयाश्रयिणां मिथः ॥

The humor Vāta

Although the three humors are equally important and essential in the body for maintaining an equilibrium of steady state, in spite of many disturbing influences operating in them, Vāta appears to be the primary motive force in the body.

वातं तत्राधिकं कश्चित् प्राधान्यमुपहन्ति यः ।
यावत्तिष्ठन्ति वातो हि देही तावत्तु जीवति ॥
पित्तं पङ्गुः कफः पङ्गुः पङ्गुश्च मलधातवः ।
वायुना यत्र नीयन्ते तत्र गच्छन्ति मेघवत् ॥
विभुत्वादाशुकारित्वाद्बलित्वादन्यकोपनात् ।
स्वातन्त्र्याद्बहुरोगत्वाद्दोषाणां प्रबलोऽनिलः ॥

Atharva veda states that vāta is located in the upper portion of Mastiska.

मस्तिष्कादूर्ध्वं प्रेरयन् पवमानोधिशीर्षतः

Caraka also places the same location to vāta.

प्राणः प्राणभृतां यत्र श्रिताः सर्वेन्द्रियाणि च

यदुत्तमाङ्गमङ्गानां शिरस्तदभिधीयते च सू १६. ६२

There are five types of vātas.

Prāṇa is the force behind the sensations from all sense organs. Udāna, with the assistance of Prāṇa, conducts certain psychological functions. Śwāsa kriya is controlled by the Prāṇa and Udāna. Prāṇa and Udāna controls the most important vegetative functions of life. Udāna controls verbal expressions. The automatic nervous system functions with the help of Vyāna. Vyāna moves throughout the body and its main seat is the heart. Samāna resides in the digestive tract, it also separates the essence and waste from the food. Apāna moves to the urinary bladder and helps in secretion of semen, faeces, urine and menstrual fluids.

The Concept of Pitta

The term Pitta is derived from the root tap. There are five types of pittas. Namely Pācaka, Rancaka, Sādhaka, Ālocaka and Bhrājaka. Pācaka implies the digestive fire. Rancaka is located in the stomach, liver and spleen. It gives colour to blood. Sadhaka is located in the heart. It helps in performing mental functions such as knowledge, consciousness and intelligence. Ālocaka resides in the retina of the eyes and governs sight. Bhrājaka resides in the skin-regulating complexion.

The Concept of Kapha

Kapha is the product of water. "केन जलेन फलति इति कफः" The synonym śleṣma that is used frequently as the term kapha in derived from the root श्लिष आलिङ्गने सू 21.5 It is for the maintenance of our body strength. There are five divisions of kapha. Avalambaka is located in the chest and creates cohesion, softness and moistness and liquidity. Kledaka is placed in the stomach liquefying hard food masses. Bodhaka is found in the tongue and it is responsible for taste. Tarpaka is located in the head and nourishes the sense organs. Śleṣaka is located in bone joints and lubricates them.

Caraka and Suśruta have followed the Nyāya vaiśeṣika and Sankhya philosophies and also Vedānta theory of panchabhūtas. Vaiśeṣika and Nyāya agree in their essential principles regarding nature and qualities of the self and atomic theory of the universe especially the connection with the five elements. The classification and the characterization of the padārthas and development of the atomic theories gave the Vaiśeṣika its Viśeṣa [distinct] value. Therefore,

Caraka devoted the beginning of the first chapter to deal with these fundamental concepts of the Vaiśeṣika system. Vākbhata says that Pṛthvi is the repository as the source Ākāśa, Vāyu and Agni as accompanying cause by the combination of which the body is produced.

इह हि द्रव्यं पञ्चभूतात्मकं तस्याधिष्ठानं पृथ्वी योनिरुदकं
खानिलानलसमवायनिर्वृत्तिविशेषौ (अ सं सू २७.३)

In the Uttara tantra and by Vākbhata the Sāṅkhya analogy of the guṇas seems to have had very distracting influences and instead of trying to find out the three physiological positions of the doṣas these writers explain away the difficulty by a vague reference to the Sāṅkhya guṇas.

The Triguna concept of Sāṅkhya

For the Sāṅkhya philosophy Prakṛti is the base out of which the world originates. The tendency to manifestation in Sattva, activity-Rajas, is held in check by the tendency of non-manifestation and Inactivity-Tamas. It is called the state of equilibrium. When there is a disturbance of the Prakṛti there arises the evolution.

परिणामतः सलिलवत् प्रतिप्रतिगुणाश्रयविशेषात् [Sāṅkhya kārikā-16]
The three guṇas cannot be perceived but can be inferred from their effects. The first of this is called Sattva- it is potential consciousness and causes pleasure to the individual. [sukhaprakāśalāghavāh]. The second Rajas is the source of all activities and produces pain [Upaṣ-tambhakam Calam Ca Rajah], while the third characterized as that which resists activity and produces the state of apathy or indifference. (Guvuvaraṅakameva Tamah) The respective function of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are manifestation [Prakāśa], activity [Pravṛtti], and restraint [Niyama], producing pleasure, pain and sloth. The three Guṇas support one another and intermingle with one another. They are closely related as the flame in the oil and the wick of the lamp.

सत्त्वं लघु प्रकाशकमिष्टमुपष्टम्भकं चलञ्च रजः ।

गुरु वरणकमेव तमः प्रदीपवच्चार्थतो वृत्तिः ॥ का १३

All things are composed of the three Gunas ie Trigunātmakam and the differences of the world are traced to the predominance of the different Guṇas. As in the case of the Ayurveda the difference of the nature of the people is traced to the predominance of the different Doṣas.

In another verse it is explained :

प्रीत्यप्रीतिविषादात्मकाः प्रकाशप्रवृत्तिनियमार्थाः ।

अन्योन्याभिभवाश्रयजननमिथुनवृत्तयश्च गुणाः ॥ का १२

In the Astṅgahridaya it is said: as the three guṇas cooperate together for the production of the world in all its diversities in spite of the mutual opposition that exist among themselves, so the three doṣas also co-operate together in spite of the a natural opposition for the production of the diverse disease.

आरंभकं विरोधेपि मिथो यद्यद्गुणत्रयम्

विश्वस्य दृष्टं युगपद्व्याधेर्दोषत्रयं तथा १.२१

Dalhaṇa also says in his Suśruta's uttara tantra commentary thus:

रजोभूयिष्ठो मरुतः रजो हि प्रवर्तकं सर्वभूतानां पित्तं सर्वोत्कटं लघु प्रकाशकत्वात्

रजोयुक्तं पैत्तके कफस्तमोबहुलाः गुरुप्रावरणात्मकत्वादाहुर्भेषजाः

यद्येवं तत्कथं कफप्रकृते पुंसि सत्त्वगुणोपपन्नता पठिता युज्यते गुणद्वितयमपि कफे

ज्ञातव्यं सत्त्वतमोबहुलाः आपः

From this one can come to the conclusion that the concept of Sattva of the Sāṅkhyas corresponds to the Pitta concept of Ayurveda prakāśa is the quality of the sattva. Pitta element is responsible for human being to understand everything. The concept rajas of the Sāṅkhya corresponds to the vāta concept of Ayurveda for pravṛtti is the quality of the rajas and as well as of vāta. Vāta is the most movable among the three doṣhas. Tama concept of the Sāṅkhya corresponding to the śleṣma or kapha concept of the Tridoṣa for it always conceals.

Yet one cannot draw a clear-cut line to these tridoṣas and triguṇas, interlinking is seen everywhere. The same thing is said in the Āgama:

अन्योन्यमिथुनाः सर्वे सर्वे सर्वत्र गामिनः

रजसो मिथुनं सत्त्वं सत्त्वस्य मिथुनं रजः

तमसश्चापि मिथुने ते सत्त्वरजसो उभे

उभयोः सत्त्वरजसोर्मिथुनं तमः उच्यते

नैषामादिः सम्प्रयोगो वियोगो वोपलभ्यते इति

The same thing can be added to the tridoṣa too
अन्योन्यमिथुनाः सर्वे सर्वे सर्वत्र गामिनः
वातस्य मिथुनं पित्तं पित्तस्य मिथुनं कफः
कफश्चापि मिथुने ते वातपित्तावुभे
उभयोः वातपित्तयोर्मिथुनं कफः उच्यते
नैषामादिः सम्प्रयोगो वियोगो वोपलभ्यते इति

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