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GARBHA VYAKHYA AND ROLE OF PANCHAMAHABHOOT IN GARBHAVRUDDHI ANATOMY: AN AYURVEDIC REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

In the context of Ayurvedic embryology the three *Dhatus* that come together to produce a baby are *Shukra, Shonitha* and *Atma*. The five *Mahabhutas* are also involved in producing the embryo during its different stages of development and have specific functions during its evolution. Each *Mahabhuta* corresponds to one of the five states of matter; *Akashah, Vayuh, Agni, Jala* and *Prithvi*. Collectively, they are responsible for the development of the embryo through several different processes, including, but not limited to: cellular differentiation; cell division; cell feeding and the mere organization of cells. Thus, without an understanding of the *Panchamahabhutas*, it is impossible to understand *Garbhautpatti* according to the principles of Ayurveda. The current study aims to provide information regarding the effect of these five elements on the growth of embryos.

KEYWORDS: *Ayurveda, Shukra, Shonitha, Embryos, Panchamahabhutas, Garbha.*

INTRODUCTION

The field of *Garbha Sharira* resides within the greater study of *Sharira Rachana* and it is an important part of understanding how life originates and develops while in the womb. *Garbha Sharira* provides a holistic view of how a *Garbha* develops, how it is nourished, how its many *Anga* and *Pratyanga* develop, and how to ensure that a healthy child is born. Many sages in ancient India observed the stages of embryological development, and made logical conclusions based on their observations.[1-3] The Ayurvedic view of the formation of *Garbha*, is that the fusion of *Shukra* and *Artava/Shonita* occurs in the *Garbhashaya* in the presence of *Jevanatma* and *Kala*. The fusion of the two cells beings a wide and varied series of development processes based on the *Pancha mahabhuta*, *Tridosha* and *Manas*. The *Garbha* is therefore a compound of the *Shukra, Shonita, Atma* and *Kukshi*, along with the combination of all five of the great elements and *Jevan Shakti*. The *Garbha* will grow and develop through the functional involvement of the *Pancha mahabhuta* in following manner.[4-6]

- ✓ *Vayu* helps in the cell division and movement of cells
- ✓ *Teja* is the source of metabolism
- ✓ *Apa* is the source of nourishment
- ✓ *Prithvi* is the source of structural material
- ✓ *Akasha* provides the ability for differentiation and organogenesis.

Role of *Panchamahabhuta* in *Garbha Vriddhi*

The process of developing a new life, along with its physical differentiation from its original cellular form into tissues and organs, is dependent on the *Panchamahabhuta*. Each of the *Panchamahabhuta* contributes to *Garbha* development and has specific functions related to how embryonic cells form. *Akasha* allows the embryo to grow and develop as it provides the necessary cavity and channel structures for each of the developing organs. *Vayu* gives the embryo the potential for division and movement as it guides the separation and differentiation of embryonic cells. *Teja* performs the function of facilitating *Pachana*, which helps to develop and mature tissues and guide many of their

developmental functions.[5-7] *Apa* has the function of *Kledana* and nourishing the developing tissue, and helping to form the liquid balance needed for the tissue to develop. *Prithvi* is responsible for providing *Samhanana* to the developing tissues and aiding in the development of bones and muscle, which will eventually make up parts of a fully formed human. The month wise developmental process takes places as follows.[6-8]

- ✓ The fertilized ovum is described during the first month of development as being semi-liquid to *Kalala*.
- ✓ The second month is described as starting out as a more structured mass but still not having developed definitive features.
- ✓ By the third month of pregnancy, the *Anga* and *Pratyanga* have begun to emerge.
- ✓ The fetus is getting *Sthira* during the 4th month of embryonic development as seen by additional growth of the *Mamsa*, *Asthi* and *Meda*.
- ✓ There is continuous growth and maturation of the fetus from the 5th month until *Prasava Kala* during the 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th months. This entire description of embryogenesis shows how the five great elements of nature (*Panchamahabhuta*) work together in a systematic and integrated way to help an embryo grows and develops in structure.

The *Panchamahabhuta Siddhanta* forms primary basis for understanding of embryogenesis. According to Ayurveda, all living things are made from the 5 great elements of *Prithvi*, *Ap*, *Teja*, *Vayu* and *Akasha*. All these conditions directly influence how the foetus develops: *Prithvi* is responsible for rough tissues and ionizing through bones and muscles; *Ap* is responsible for the creation of living and non-living fluids in the body; *Teja* is responsible for chemical and physical changes in the cells of the body; and *Vayu* is responsible for movement, division and the functional behaviour of the body. Finally, *Akasha* influences the creation and shape of cavities and spaces in the body.[7-9]

Garbha's formation is contingent on four main factors known as *Garbha Sambhava Samagri*. These include *Ritu*, *Kshetra*, *Ambu* and *Beeja*. The evolution of tissues and organs during the organ differentiation period is best explained by using the concept of *Panchamahabhuta* as the dominant forces in different organ systems. *Panchamahabhuta* contributes significantly towards the development of fetus as depicted in **Figure 1.**[8-10]

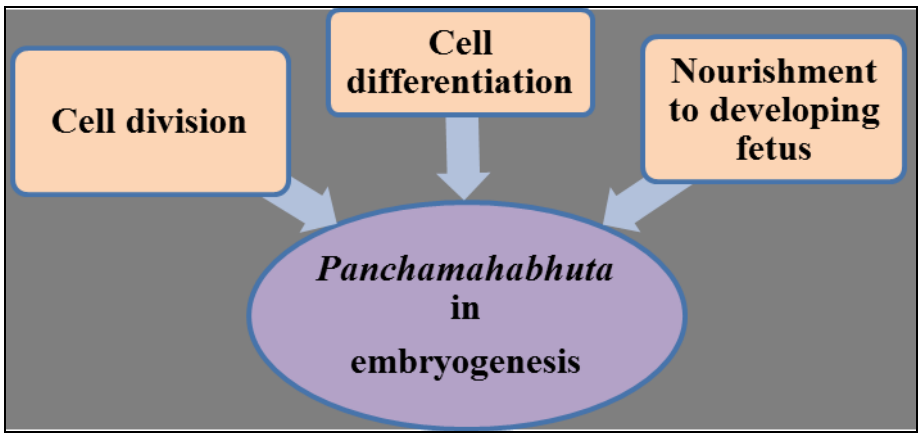

Figure 1: *Panchamahabhuta* Contribution in Embryogenesis.

Tissue/*Dhatu* & *Panchamahabhuta*

- In regards to *Asthi*, the dominant elements are *Prithvi* and *Vayu*, giving them their shape and support.
- *Rasa* and *Rakta* are created primarily by *Ap* and *Teja*, In Ayurveda, *Shukra* is classed as being *Saumya* which means peaceful while *Artava* is *Agneya*. These two elements combine to create a new living organism & start forming an embryo.
- *Vayu* enables *Vibhajana* (cell division and movement) by facilitating mitotic cell division and transporting/sorting zygotes, as well as coordinating cell division to ensure even distribution.
- *Teja* provides *Pachana* as evidenced by enzyme activity when the implanting embryo becomes nourished.
- *Ap* moisten & nourish as a result of *Kledana*, supporting growth, fluid balance and body fluids used for cellular growth.
- *Prithvi* enables *Samhanana* as in bones, muscles, hair, teeth, etc.
- *Akasha* creates new structures i.e. rectum, coelom and astragalus, etc.

If there are deficiencies of any of the *Panchamahabhutas* during the development of an embryo then there may be a potential risk of that defect occurring as the embryo matures into a baby. Before birth, the role of the *Panchamahabhutas* will include all the steps involved in creating life: fertilization through complete gestation. The *Panchamahabhutas* regulate several critical processes during this period: cell division; cell differentiation; nourishment for the developing fetus;

organization of the parts of the fetus into a functional whole (structure); and the arrangement of these parts in their respective positions in the developing organism. The correct; balanced; and proportionate amounts of these five elements will allow for the ideal formation of a complete; normal; healthy *Sharira* of the fetus. An imbalance of these elements will cause defective fetal development. The *Panchamahabhutas* also play a role in the development of the *Dosha* and in turn contribute to the Prakriti of an individual. Due to the fact that the developing fetus has a greater predominance of specific *Doshas* in utero, the *Doshas* will greatly affect the *Prakriti* of the person.[7-10]

CONCLUSION

The *Angotpatti* concept is described in the Ayurvedic literature and provides a systemic and unique perspective into fetal development through the coordinated activities of the *Panchamahabhutas*; the *Tridosha*; the *Beej* and the *Karma*. The *Sushruta Samhita* has outlined a method of describing the fetal development of organs by the month, and in many cases, aspects of this description have a conceptual similarity to the modern science of embryology. Ayurveda emphasizes the impact of mother on the developing fetus through nutrition and lifestyle factors by promoting the principles of *Garbhini Paricharya*. This promotes the preventive and developmental aspects of fetal health. The study of embryology from a comparative analysis will add to the scientific knowledge of embryology to provide a base for integrative research as well as developing natural antenatal care.

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