

**SAMHITA PRINCIPLES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF DISEASES: AN AYURVEDIC
REVIEW*****¹Dr. Sneha Pandharinath Khandare, ²Dr. Pradeep S. Pawar**¹PG Sch. Samhita and Siddhant, PMT'S Ayurveda College Shevgaon.²HOD of Samhita and Siddhant Department, MD Professor Ph.D.[Sch] MA Sanskrit, PMT'S Ayurveda College Shevgaon.***Corresponding Author: Dr. Sneha Pandharinath Khandare**

PG Sch. Samhita and Siddhant, PMT'S Ayurveda College Shevgaon.

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, the traditional system of medicine of India, has made a significant contribution to healthcare since ancient times and continues to gain worldwide recognition. Among its fundamental concepts, Samhita Siddhanta forms the cornerstone of understanding the etiology, pathogenesis, prevention, and management of diseases. Classical Ayurvedic texts describe essential principles such as Panchamahabhuta, Tridosha, Sapta Dhatu, and Srotas, which provide the theoretical framework for understanding normal physiology as well as disease processes. These principles play a crucial role in disease diagnosis, treatment planning, and health maintenance. Ayurveda also emphasizes the concept of Prakriti (individual constitution), recognizing that each person possesses a unique constitutional makeup determined by the predominance of the three Doshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. Accordingly, individuals are classified into seven constitutional types: Vata, Pitta, Kapha, Vata-Pitta, Vata-Kapha, Pitta-Kapha, and Sama Prakriti. Since the manifestation and progression of disease vary according to an individual's Prakriti, therapeutic interventions are personalized rather than disease-centered. Thus, the understanding of Prakriti is essential for determining disease susceptibility, prognosis, and appropriate treatment strategies. The classical Ayurvedic Samhitas employ these fundamental principles not only for the effective management of diseases but also for their prevention and the promotion of overall health. This review highlights the key Samhita principles and their significance in the holistic management of diseases from an Ayurvedic perspective.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Samhita Siddhanta, Panchamahabhuta, Tridosha, Prakriti, Disease Management.**INTRODUCTION**

Ayurveda, the ancient system of Indian medicine, considers health to be a state of equilibrium among the body's physiological components, including Doshas, Dhatus, Malas, Agni, and Srotas. Disease develops when this natural balance is disturbed due to internal or external factors.

Therefore, the primary objective of Ayurvedic treatment is to restore the disturbed equilibrium and re-establish normal physiological functioning. Understanding the stages of disease development enables physicians to identify the underlying cause, assess disease progression, and implement appropriate therapeutic interventions at different stages. This preventive and individualized approach forms the basis of Ayurvedic disease

management.

**DISEASE PATHOGENESIS AND PROGRESSION
ACCORDING TO AYURVEDA**

According to Ayurveda, disease evolves through six sequential stages (Shatkriyakala), which provide opportunities for early diagnosis and timely intervention before the disease becomes fully manifested. These stages are:

- Accumulation (Sanchaya)
- Aggravation (Prakopa)
- Dissemination (Prasara)
- Localization (Sthanasamshraya)
- Manifestation (Vyakti)
- Complication/Chronicity (Bheda)

Accumulation (Sanchaya)

The initial stage of disease involves the gradual accumulation of one or more Doshas—Vata, Pitta, or Kapha—at their respective physiological sites. Vata accumulates predominantly in the colon and nervous system, Pitta in the small intestine, liver, blood, eyes, and skin, while Kapha accumulates mainly in the stomach, chest, joints, and lymphatic tissues. At this stage, clinical symptoms are usually mild and reversible if appropriate preventive measures are adopted.

Aggravation (Prakopa)

During this stage, the accumulated Doshas become aggravated due to persistent exposure to causative factors such as improper diet, lifestyle, seasonal changes, or psychological stress. The vitiated Doshas exceed their normal physiological limits and become capable of initiating pathological changes within the body.

Dissemination (Prasara)

In the dissemination stage, the aggravated Doshas spread from their original sites throughout the body via the Srotas (body channels). This systemic movement disturbs the normal physiological functions and produces early nonspecific symptoms, including a generalized feeling of discomfort or ill health.

Localization (Sthanasamshraya)

Localization occurs when the circulating vitiated Doshas lodge in susceptible tissues (Dhatus) or weakened organs (Khavaigunya). Their interaction with vulnerable tissues initiates localized pathological changes and the Purvarupa (premonitory signs) of disease. For example, aggravated Kapha may localize in the channels of the head and neck, leading to region-specific disorders. Early recognition of this stage is essential, as appropriate treatment can prevent the progression to clinically manifested disease.

Manifestation (Vyakti)

The manifestation (Vyakti) stage is characterized by the appearance of definitive clinical signs and symptoms, indicating the complete expression of the disease. At this stage, the vitiated Doshas produce structural and functional alterations in the affected Dhatus and organs, resulting in a recognizable disease condition. Clinical diagnosis becomes possible as the characteristic features of the disease are fully expressed. If appropriate therapeutic measures are not initiated promptly, the disease may continue to progress and become more severe.

Chronicity (Bheda)

The final stage, Bheda (Complication/Chronicity), represents advanced disease progression in which pathological changes become well established and complications may develop.

Prolonged Dosha imbalance leads to extensive tissue damage, impaired physiological functions, and reduced

resistance of the body. Consequently, the disease may become chronic, difficult to manage, and associated with long-term complications. Early intervention during the preceding stages is therefore essential to prevent chronicity and improve treatment outcomes.

AYURVEDIC PRINCIPLES IN DISEASE MANAGEMENT**Tridosha Concept**

The Tridosha theory—comprising Vata, Pitta, and Kapha—is one of the fundamental principles of Ayurveda and serves as the basis for understanding the origin, progression, diagnosis, and management of diseases. According to Ayurvedic philosophy, these three Doshas regulate all physiological and biochemical functions of the human body. Health is maintained when the Doshas remain in equilibrium, whereas their imbalance (Dosha Vaishamya) leads to the development of disease.

Each Dosha possesses distinct qualities (Gunas) that determine its physiological functions. Vata is characterized by Ruksha (dry), Laghu (light), Sheeta (cold), Chala (mobile), Sukshma (subtle), and Khara (rough) properties and primarily governs movement, communication, and nervous system activities. Pitta exhibits Ushna (hot), Tikshna (sharp), Laghu (light), Sara (flowing), Drava (liquid), and Snigdha (slightly unctuous) qualities and is responsible for metabolism, digestion, thermoregulation, and transformation. Kapha possesses Guru (heavy), Sheeta (cold), Snigdha (unctuous), Manda (slow), Sthira (stable), and Picchila (slimy) properties and provides structural integrity, lubrication, nourishment, and immunity.

Functionally, Vata may be regarded as the force responsible for movement and neural regulation, Pitta as the principle governing metabolic and enzymatic transformations, and Kapha as the factor responsible for cohesion, stability, growth, and tissue nourishment.

Disturbance in the normal balance of these Doshas disrupts physiological homeostasis, resulting in pathological changes and disease manifestation.

Therefore, the primary objective of Ayurvedic treatment is to identify the predominant Dosha involved in the disease process and restore its equilibrium through appropriate dietary modifications, lifestyle interventions, herbal medications, and Panchakarma therapies.

Correction of Doshic imbalance forms the cornerstone of Ayurvedic disease management.

For example, disorders such as joint pain, Vatarakta (gout), abdominal distension, flatulence, constipation, neuromuscular disorders, and degenerative diseases are predominantly associated with aggravated Vata and require Vata-pacifying therapies. Conditions including hyperacidity, gastritis, fever, excessive thirst and hunger,

inflammatory disorders, liver diseases, and burning sensation are mainly related to aggravated Pitta and are managed by Pitta-pacifying measures. Similarly, cough, cold, sinusitis, obesity, edema, allergic disorders, sluggish digestion, and respiratory congestion are primarily Kapha disorders and respond to Kapha-reducing and Kapha-pacifying treatments.

Dosha-Specific Therapeutic Approaches

Ayurvedic management is individualized according to the functional status of each Dosha. Depending on the clinical condition, treatment may aim to promote, reduce, or pacify a particular Dosha.

Conditions Requiring Promotion of Kapha

Kapha-enhancing therapies are indicated in conditions characterized by excessive dryness, internal burning sensation, gastric emptiness, joint laxity, generalized weakness, emaciation, and insomnia, where nourishment and tissue stability are required.

Conditions Requiring Reduction of Kapha

Kapha-reducing measures are beneficial in disorders presenting with heaviness of the body, excessive sleep, nausea, lethargy, sluggish metabolism, obesity, and joint stiffness caused by Kapha accumulation.

Conditions Requiring Pacification of Vitiating Kapha

Kapha-pacifying therapies are recommended in conditions such as anorexia, impaired digestion, vomiting, excessive mucus production, cough, sinusitis, and heaviness of the limbs.

Conditions Requiring Promotion of Pitta

Pitta-promoting interventions are indicated in conditions associated with diminished digestive and metabolic activity, poor complexion, impaired thermoregulation, and reduced digestive fire (Mandagni).

Conditions Requiring Reduction of Pitta

Pitta-reducing therapies are employed in patients presenting with burning sensation, yellowish discoloration of the skin and eyes, inflammatory conditions, excessive body heat, fainting episodes, and weakness of the sensory organs.

Conditions Requiring Pacification of Vitiating Pitta

Pitta-pacifying treatment is useful in managing fever, hyperacidity, gastritis, inflammatory disorders, burning sensation, and other disorders resulting from aggravated Pitta.

Conditions Requiring Promotion of Vata

Vata-promoting measures may be considered in conditions characterized by sluggishness, diminished sensory perception, lethargy, and reduced responsiveness due to inadequate Vata activity.

Conditions Requiring Reduction of Vata

Vata-reducing therapies are indicated in individuals with excessive tissue depletion, roughness, constipation, dark complexion, insomnia, fatigue, pain, and neurological manifestations associated with increased Vata.

Conditions Requiring Pacification of Vitiating Vata

Vata-pacifying interventions are recommended for disorders such as joint pain, abdominal distension, musculoskeletal stiffness, swelling, neuralgia, tremors, and other painful conditions resulting from aggravated Vata.

Panchamahabhuta and Disease

The Panchamahabhuta Siddhanta is one of the fundamental concepts of Ayurveda, which states that all living beings and the entire universe are composed of five basic elements (Mahabhutas): Akasha (Ether/Space), Vayu (Air), Agni or Teja (Fire), Jala or Ap (Water), and Prithvi (Earth). These elements collectively govern the structural, physiological, and functional aspects of the human body. The harmonious interaction of the Panchamahabhutas maintains normal health, whereas their imbalance contributes to the initiation and progression of disease.

Each Mahabhuta performs distinct physiological functions. Akasha provides space for the formation of body cavities and channels (Srotas), Vayu governs movement, circulation, respiration, and neuromuscular activities, Agni (Teja) regulates digestion, metabolism, enzymatic activity, and cellular transformation, Jala (Ap) maintains hydration, lubrication, and fluid balance, while Prithvi imparts structural stability, strength, and firmness to body tissues.

According to Ayurveda, the relative predominance or deficiency of any of these five elements disturbs normal physiological homeostasis, resulting in pathological changes. Therefore, the concept of Panchamahabhuta serves as an important foundation for understanding disease pathogenesis, clinical diagnosis, and therapeutic planning. Restoration of the equilibrium among the five Mahabhutas through appropriate diet, lifestyle modifications, medicines, and Panchakarma therapies forms an essential component of Ayurvedic disease management.

The pathological manifestations associated with the imbalance of individual Mahabhutas are described as follows

Table 1: Relationship Between Panchamahabhutas and Pathological Conditions.

S. No.	Panchamahabhuta	Primary Sites (Sthana) and Physiological Functions	Associated Pathological Conditions
1	Jala (Water)	Constitutes plasma, saliva, digestive secretions, and other body fluids; maintains hydration, lubrication, and nutrient transport.	Dehydration, constipation, dryness of tissues, and impaired nutrient distribution due to reduced fluid balance.
2	Akasha (Ether/Space)	Forms body cavities such as the mouth, nostrils, gastrointestinal tract, and other hollow organs; provides space for physiological activities.	Disorders affecting hollow organs and cavities, including diseases of the ear, nose, throat (ENT), and certain cardiac conditions.
3	Vayu (Air)	Regulates respiration, circulation, movement, neuromuscular activities, and the functioning of Srotas (body channels).	Respiratory disorders, impaired circulation, neurological diseases, and obstruction of body channels (Srotorodha).
4	Agni (Fire)	Governs digestion, metabolism, enzymatic activity, and cellular transformation.	Digestive disorders, metabolic diseases, impaired digestion (Agnimandya), and metabolic dysfunctions.
5	Prithvi (Earth)	Provides structural support to bones, teeth, muscles, hair, and other body tissues; imparts stability and strength.	Obesity, diabetes-related complications, and disorders affecting hard tissues such as bones and teeth.

Panchamahabhuta in Disease Management

The Panchamahabhuta Siddhanta not only explains the pathogenesis of diseases but also serves as a guiding principle for the selection of therapeutic agents in Ayurveda. The pharmacological properties and therapeutic actions of Ayurvedic drugs are determined by the predominance of one or more Mahabhutas, enabling physicians to choose appropriate medications according to the patient's Doshic imbalance and disease condition.

- Akasha (Ether)-predominant drugs exhibit Shamana (pacifying) properties and help restore physiological balance by alleviating aggravated Doshas.
- Vayu (Air)-predominant drugs possess Shoshana (absorptive) and Sangrahika (binding) properties, making them useful in conditions associated with excessive moisture or abnormal secretions.
- Agni (Teja/Fire)-predominant drugs stimulate Agni (digestive fire), enhance digestion, improve metabolism, and facilitate proper tissue transformation.
- Drugs with predominant Vayu and Agni elements also demonstrate Lekhaniya (scraping) action, which is beneficial in reducing excess adipose tissue, removing metabolic toxins (Ama), and clearing obstructed body channels.
- Prithvi (Earth)-predominant drugs possess Brimhana (nourishing and anabolic) properties, promoting tissue growth, strength, and overall nourishment, and are indicated in conditions of tissue depletion and debility.

Thus, understanding the predominance of Panchamahabhutas in medicinal substances is essential for individualized therapeutic planning and effective disease management in Ayurveda.

Sapta Dhatu and Disease

The concept of Sapta Dhatus (seven body tissues) is another fundamental principle of Ayurveda that plays a pivotal role in maintaining structural integrity, physiological function, and overall health. These seven

Dhatus—Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa, Meda, Asthi, Majja, and Shukra—are formed sequentially through proper digestion and metabolism and provide nourishment and support to the body. Disturbance in the quality or quantity of any Dhatu results in tissue-specific disorders and contributes to disease development.

The assessment of Dhatu status is therefore essential for accurate diagnosis and treatment planning. Disorders of Rasa Dhatu are commonly associated with nutritional deficiencies, dehydration, and impaired tissue nourishment. Diseases such as Pandu (anemia) and Vatarakta (gout) involve vitiation of Rakta Dhatu. Abnormalities of Mamsa Dhatu may manifest as muscular weakness, myopathies, goiter, lymphedema, myoma, or sarcoma. Imbalance of Meda Dhatu is implicated in obesity, dyslipidemia, and emaciation, whereas disorders affecting Shukra Dhatu may result in infertility, sexual dysfunction, and reproductive disorders.

Restoration of Dhatu equilibrium is therefore an important objective of Ayurvedic therapy.

Biological Role of Sapta Dhatus

- Rasa Dhatu: The primary nourishing tissue, comparable to plasma and lymph. It supplies nutrition to all body tissues and maintains hydration and vitality.
- Rakta Dhatu: Corresponds to blood tissue and is responsible for oxygen transport, nourishment, maintenance of complexion, and sustaining life.
- Mamsa Dhatu: Represents muscular tissue, providing strength, stability, protection of internal organs, and support to the body's structural framework.
- Meda Dhatu: Corresponds to adipose tissue. It lubricates the body, stores energy, cushions internal organs, and supports the nourishment of Asthi Dhatu.
- Asthi Dhatu: Represents bones, cartilage, and other

supportive connective tissues. It provides structural support, maintains posture, protects vital organs, and enables movement.

- Majja Dhatu: Corresponds to bone marrow and nervous tissue. It fills the bone cavities, nourishes the nervous system, contributes to immunity, and

lubricates the body.

- Shukra Dhatu: Represents the reproductive tissue in both males and females. It is responsible for reproduction, fertility, vitality, tissue regeneration, and the maintenance of Ojas, the essence of immunity and strength.

Table 2: Dhatu-Specific Therapeutic Considerations in the Management of Diseases.

S. No.	Diseases/Clinical Conditions	Dhatu Requiring Nourishment (Brimhana) or Restoration
1	Nausea, generalized weakness, jaundice-like syndromes, sexual debility, premature greying of hair, skin wrinkling, and impaired tissue nourishment	Rasa Dhatu
2	Allergic disorders, stomatitis, bleeding disorders, abnormal leucorrheal discharge, leprosy (<i>Kushtha</i>), psoriasis, and other blood-related disorders	Rakta Dhatu
3	Corns, warts, tonsillitis, muscular rigidity, fibrositis, muscle wasting, contractures, and fatigue	Mamsa Dhatu
4	Obesity, polyuria, glycosuria, glandular enlargement, hyperglycemia, excessive sweating, diabetes mellitus (<i>Prameha</i>), and lipid metabolism disorders	Meda Dhatu
5	Osteoporosis, fractures, dental disorders, abnormal bony growths, renal calculi, gallbladder calculi, and other bone-related diseases	Asthi Dhatu
6	Joint pain, bone marrow disorders, degenerative diseases, musculoskeletal weakness, collapse, and leukemia	Majja Dhatu
7	Male and female genitourinary disorders, infertility, impotence, reduced libido, loss of vitality and complexion, erectile dysfunction, and reproductive disorders	Shukra Dhatu

Dosha–Dhatu-Based Approach to Disease Management

According to Ayurveda, the pathogenesis of many diseases involves the simultaneous vitiation of both Doshas and Dhatus. Therefore, effective treatment requires correcting the disturbed Dosha while restoring the integrity and function of the affected Dhatu. This integrated Dosha–Dhatu approach forms an important principle of individualized Ayurvedic management.

- Rakta–Pitta Disorders: Conditions such as hematemesis, hemophilia, purpura, and other hemorrhagic disorders are primarily associated with the vitiation of Rakta Dhatu by aggravated Pitta Dosha. Management focuses on pacifying Pitta, purifying Rakta Dhatu, controlling bleeding, and restoring normal tissue function.
- Rakta–Vata Disorders: Diseases such as Vatarakta (gout), hyperuricemia, and uric acid diathesis result from the interaction of aggravated Vata Dosha with vitiated Rakta Dhatu. Treatment aims to pacify Vata, purify Rakta Dhatu, alleviate inflammation and pain, and improve joint function.
- Rakta–Kapha Disorders: Conditions including bloody dysentery, mucous colitis with rectal bleeding, chronic throat infections, and certain inflammatory disorders may arise due to the vitiation of Rakta Dhatu associated with aggravated Kapha Dosha. Therapeutic measures focus on pacifying Kapha, improving circulation, eliminating excessive mucus, and restoring the normal physiological functions of Rakta Dhatu.

Thus, Ayurvedic management emphasizes treating diseases by considering the combined involvement of

Doshas and Dhatus, thereby addressing the underlying pathology rather than merely alleviating clinical symptoms.

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