



Review Article

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THE AXIOM OF SIX CATEGORIES IN AYURVEDA: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Āyurveda is Sarvapāriśada Śāstra which means that this system of medicine is inclusive as it incorporates the relevant principles derived from the Indian knowledge systems. Āyurveda takes into account mutually divergent views expressed in various philosophical systems so far as they do not oppose the Āyurvedic concepts. There are some similarities between Āyurveda and Darśana Śāstra, but both the streams are unique and independent. Everything in this universe can be grouped in these six categories. Āyurveda approves these six categories as six causative factors (Ṣaṭ Kāraṇa). These six factors produce the effect in the form of homogeneity of Dhātu (Dhātusāmya) which is the Prayojana of Tantra. So, to fulfil the aim of Tantra knowledge of six causative factors is necessary because in the absence of causative factors there will be no effect in the form of homogeneity of Dhātu (Dhātusāmya).

Keywords: Six causative factors (Ṣaṭ Kāraṇa), Āyurveda, Philosophical schools

INTRODUCTION

The Indian knowledge systems known as Darśana talk about the thought that begins from the resolution of the mystery of origin of this universe and the way of attaining complete eradication of the human sufferings. These Indian knowledge systems form the base of Indian medical system, Āyurveda. Āyurveda was recalled by lord Brahmā in a concise form called as Trisūtra which needed to be expanded so that all the categories of scholars could understand this system of medicine. Therefore, the seers of yore through their power of penance and special vision included the philosophical tenets relevant to Āyurveda. In the context of relevant philosophical systems, mainly the Sāṃkhya and Vaiśeṣika systems were incorporated to explain the principles of Āyurveda.

The Prayojana (aim) of both Śāstra are different and therefore they have been described in a different manner. Āyurveda is mainly related to the orthodox systems that is Āstika Darśana and amongst these systems, the philosophical school of Vaiśeṣika is intimately associated with Āyurveda. It is well known that the school of Vaiśeṣika and the grammatical system of Pāṇinī are useful to all the Indian sciences.¹ The main discussion of the Vaiśeṣika school is the six categories (Ṣaṭ Padārtha). Everything in this universe can be grouped in these six categories. Āyurveda approves these six categories as six causative factors (Ṣaṭ Kāraṇa). These six factors produce the effect in the form of homogeneity of Dhātu (Dhātusāmya).²

Āyurveda postulates the method for health maintenance (Sāstroktā Vidhī) which is twofold- renouncing the non-beneficial (Apathya Parīhāra) and following the beneficial (Pathya Upādāna).² The universal principle of the cause and effect (Kārya-Kāraṇa Siddhānta) is applied everywhere in Āyurveda. The seer Kaṇāda clearly states that 'in the absence of cause (Kāraṇa) there will be absence of an effect (Kārya)'.³ So, in the absence of these six causative factors there cannot be the

maintenance of health. It is therefore necessary to understand the six causative factors to fulfil the aims of Āyurveda.

These six causative factors are similitude (Sāmānya), dissimilitude (Viśeṣa), substance (Dravya), quality (Guṇa), action (Karma), and inseparability (Samavāya).² Āyurveda like the school of Vaiśeṣika, does not directly mentioned the negation (Abhāva) as a causative factor. The philosophical individuality of the Āyurveda can be seen in the sequence of these categories as the school of Vaiśeṣika mentions the name of six categories as substance (Dravya), quality (Guṇa), action (Karma), similitude (Sāmānya), dissimilitude (Viśeṣa), inseparability (Samavāya) and the possible reason of this change in the sequence maybe the practical application of these categories in Āyurveda. The first causative factor is the similitude (Sāmānya) as it is the cause of increase of the Doṣa leading to disease. This increase of Doṣa is managed by the application of the opposite called Viśeṣa. In the Vaiśeṣika philosophy, substance (Dravya) is given first place because it is the seat of quality (Guṇa) and action (Karma). Here, the predominance is given to the substratum while in Āyurveda, the priority is given to the factor responsible for the disease.

Āyurveda like the Vaiśeṣika philosophy classifies the categories into two 1) existent (Bhāva Padārtha) 2) non-existent (Abhāva Padārtha). The existent that is Bhāva Padārtha are those which can be positively validated by the Pramāṇa while the non-existent (Abhāva) is validated by negation.⁴ The six causative factors are again divided into two on the basis of condition of existence viz. actual physical existence (Sattā Siddha) and conceptual existence (Bhāti Siddha). The word Sattā is defined as that which is the cause of existence of substance, quality and action. It can be understood as the state of being. The remaining three categories namely similitude (Sāmānya), dissimilitude (Viśeṣa), inseparability (Samavāya) are known through the intellect as they are devoid of 'being' i.e. physical existence. To understand these three conceptual categories, the intellect acquired by the reading of treatise is necessary.

Āyurveda being an independent system of medicine utilises the concept of similitude and dissimilitude in the treatment procedure. These conceptual entities of similitude and dissimilitude cannot act without the substance, quality and action which are physically existing factors. Hence, one can conclude that the treatment in Āyurveda is accomplished through the six causative factors mentioned in philosophical school of Vaiśeṣika. The commentator Gaṅgādhara mentions the practical utility of these six causative factors. The details of these six causative factors with their application in Āyurveda is detailed below.

Similitude (Sāmānya)

The similitude is mentioned at the first position because the foundation of Āyurveda mentioned as Trisūtra depends on similitude.² The Trisūtra comprises of etiology (Hetuśūtra), the symptomatology (Līngasūtra) and therapy (Auśadhasūtra). The similitude being the cause of 'oneness', 'comparability' and 'increase' is the cause of increase of the Doṣa leading to disease. Gaṅgādhara opines that similitude is the cause and its effect is increasing all the entities and creating oneness.⁵ This similitude is present in many. Similitude is the one of the causes of increase but it is not the only cause of increase.² It can be said that wherever there is similitude, there will be an increase but wherever there is an increase, the similitude may or may not be the cause. The similitude will bring an increase when there is absence of opposite factor.

The similitude may be at different levels described as the similitude at the level of substance, at the level of quality and at the level of action. Based on extent of similitude it can further be divided into superior and inferior similitude. These varieties of similitude are utilised in the treatment in Āyurveda based on the status of disease and diseased. In the case of an accident involving a lot of blood loss, there is a need of blood transfusion which is considered as similitude at the level of substance and also superior similitude. Generally, in the routine medical practice, the physician uses the concept of similitude at the level of quality in the form of palliative treatment.

Dissimilitude (Viśeṣa)

Āyurveda mentions dissimilarity as a cause of decrease and diversity.² The Viśeṣa produces the intellect of difference which is responsible for knowledge of dissimilitude. Viśeṣa is the cause and its effect is decrease of all the entities and differentiation (uniqueness). According to philosophical school of Vaiśeṣika, Viśeṣa is the ultimate cause of difference called as Antyaviśeṣa i.e. the unique Paramāṇu (atom).³ All the entities of the world are ultimately made up of indivisible and unique subtle most units called atom (Paramāṇu). This is actual or ultimate cause of difference or uniqueness of an entity. This ultimate cause of difference (Antya Viśeṣa) is not used in Āyurveda system of medicine as the atoms cannot be found in utilizable form. The concept of general difference 'Sāmānya Viśeṣa' is applied in Āyurveda. This general difference is opposite of similitude. This concept is utilized in Āyurvedic treatment as the entities having different quality or action do not cause increase and ultimately lead to decrease. This ability to decrease is used to treat the increased Doṣa in Āyurvedic practice.

Āyurveda describes two types of dissimilitude - 1) dissimilitude based on opposition (Viruddha Viśeṣa) 2) dissimilitude without opposition (Aviruddha Viśeṣa).² Āyurveda generally prescribes the dissimilitude with opposition for management of diseases. The opposition may be at the level of substance, quality or action. This opposition leads to decrease. Sometimes, certain entities do not cause increase or decrease directly but ultimately lead to decrease. This kind of dissimilitude that ultimately leads to decrease is termed as dissimilitude without opposition i.e.

Aviruddha Viśeṣa. In this way, Āyurveda describes the dissimilitude in practical terms as a cause of decrease. It is important to note that that dissimilitude will lead to decrease only in the absence of similitude.

Quality (Guṇa)

The quality or attribute is the most significant entity described in Āyurveda and the philosophical school of Vaiśeṣika. The word Guṇa in Saṅskṛta originates from the root Guṇa Āmantraṇe meaning 'to invite'.⁶ The quality is the category which invites the world towards a substance. Āyurveda describes quality before the substance as the choice of substance is based on quality. The philosophical school of Vaiśeṣika describes the quality after the substance as the quality resides in a substance inseparably.

The quality and the substance having that quality are separate but inseparable. This relation between the substance and its quality is an eternal relation called as Samavāya. The quality resides in a substance in an inactive form just as the potential energy in a substance. The quality produces similar quality which differentiates it from substance and action.⁷ A substance produces another substance while action cannot produce another action. Rasavaiśeṣika defines quality as that having 'n' number of definitions.⁸ The philosophical school of Vaiśeṣika describes seventeen qualities having the description of attributes of senses, spirit and the physical entities.⁷

Ācārya Caraka describes the quality in a comprehensive manner categorizing them into four groups according to their utility. This comprehensive description of a quality is widely applied in the attainment of two aims of Āyurveda. The choice of food and medicine is based on the quality mainly physical attributes. Apart from the physical attributes, the essential attributes of physician that lead to success in his professional carrier are also described in Āyurveda. The utility of quality can be visualized in the diagnosis and treatment of the diseases.

Substance (Dravya)

The substance known as Dravya in philosophical schools and Āyurveda is the substratum of quality (Guṇa) and action (Karma). The uniqueness of substance is that it is the material cause for other substance. These characteristics of substance differentiate a substance from all other categories. Āyurveda utilizes substance in the form of food and medicine. A substance is the seat of taste (Rasa), potency (Vīrya), quality (Guṇa), transformed taste (Vipāka) and the special effect (Prabhāva).⁹ There are nine primary substances mentioned in the Indian classics which include five basic elements (Pañcamahābhūta), soul (Ātmā), mind (Mana), time (Kāla) and the direction (Dik).² These primary substances join to produce the secondary and tertiary substances. In this way, the substance act as a material cause that gives rise to other substances. The production of the three entities in the body namely the Doṣa, Dhātu and Mala occurs because of substances. The substances are chosen on the basis of the quality and desired action.

Action (Karma)

The action (Karma) is an independent cause of conjunction or separation.² It is seated in the Dravya. The action is unique as it ends as soon as the effect is produced.⁷ The substances produce other substances; the quality produces other qualities but the action cannot produce other action. The action is not a conceptual category like similitude, dissimilitude and inseparability. Āyurveda describes Karma as an action which is to be done by a physician to attain the status of health. It is achieved in two ways i.e. the efforts to maintain the health of healthy person and the efforts to restore health in diseased person. This includes all the treatment procedures mentioned in Āyurveda like the purification

(Śodhanakarma) and palliative care (Śamanakarma). The surgical procedure like incision, excision, cautery etc. also the practical application of action in Āyurveda.

Inseparability (Samavāya)

The inseparability (Samavāya) is a concept that describes the inseparable relation between the entities like quality and the substance having that quality; a part and the whole; action and the substratum of action; an individual and species; and the uniqueness in eternal entities.¹⁰ It is present in the formed substances known as Ayutsiddha Padārtha. This inseparability is the cause and its effect is the union or compounding. This is the causative factor which is responsible for “the production of effect through a cause”.

DISCUSSION

Āyurveda is a holistic system of medicine developed by the seers of yore who had the vision of present, past and future. The source of Indian knowledge has been the Veda and the associated texts. Amongst these texts, the philosophical schools have provided the base for development of Indian sciences including the traditional medical system, Āyurveda. Amongst the philosophical schools, most of the Indian sciences have relation with orthodox schools known as Āstika Darśana. The six orthodox systems of Indian philosophy are the foundation of knowledge tradition developed in India. Āyurveda is a system of health maintenance present since time immemorial and still continues to draw attention of health seekers across the world.

The Vaiśeṣika system of Indian philosophy is one such orthodox school which has affected the science of Āyurveda. Though the Vaiśeṣika school of Indian philosophy has a different aim from Āyurveda, the tenets of Vaiśeṣika philosophy have been utilized in Āyurveda in the form of basic principles of Āyurveda. It is said that the two traditions of Vaiśeṣika philosophy and the Paṇinī Grammar have impacted all the sciences of Indian origin. The basic theme of Vaiśeṣika philosophy is the six categories used in Āyurveda to fulfil its aim of health maintenance and treatment. All the entities of the world are incorporated under these six categories. The later philosophers included negation (Abhāva) as seventh category which finds its place in Āyurveda as well. These six categories are practically utilized in Āyurveda as causative factors of health, disease and management of disease. In the context of the terms related to debate (Vādamārga), Caraka starts with these six causative factors. It means that the discussion in Āyurveda is about these six causative factors. The commentators of Caraka Samhitā have also highlighted the importance of these six factors in Āyurveda and the unique approach of utilization of these six factors which is different from approach of Indian philosophical system. Based on the aim of complete eradication of all sufferings, the philosophical school of Vaiśeṣika describes the similarities and dissimilarities between these six categories while Āyurveda according to its aim of health maintenance describes the practical application of these six categories. The difference of approach can be visualized in the alteration of sequence of these six categories, the description of forty-one qualities (Guṇa) of Āyurveda as compared to twenty-four as philosophical schools; the approval of action as the procedure to restore health in Āyurveda; the non-acceptance of atom (Paramāṇu) postulated by Vaiśeṣika in Āyurveda, the practical application of similitude and dissimilitude as the cause of increase and decrease of body entities, and the use of inseparability to choose the food and medicine. These points clearly prove that the

medical system of Āyurveda is closely associated with the philosophical school of Vaiśeṣika but both of these systems have maintained their individuality.

CONCLUSION

The foundation of Āyurveda is laid on the tenets of orthodox Indian philosophical systems mainly the philosophical school of Vaiśeṣika. These eternal axioms of the philosophical systems have kept Āyurveda alive since long and makes it competent to compete with existing medical systems. The six categories of Vaiśeṣika are the base of selection of food and medicine necessary to attain the two objectives of Āyurveda. The food is chosen according to its quality and action which by the virtue of similitude increases the nutrients thereby producing the body entities. The balance of these nutrients is maintained through the application of the principle of Viśeṣa. Similarly, the medicine is also chosen based on its qualities and actions. In the context of theory of cause and effect described in the philosophical school of Vaiśeṣika, Āyurveda approves the atomic theory (Paramāṇuvāda) in the context of innumerability of the body entities (cells) and in the context of mineral preparations like ash (Bhaṣma) and Kajjalī. In this way, the Kaṇāda system is widely applied in understanding the basic principles of Āyurveda.

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