

CHAPTER-01

THE EVOLUTION

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52458/9788196830069.nsp.2024.eb.ch-01>

Ch.Id:-GU/NSP/EB/GHTAGA/2024/Ch-01

ABSTRACT

This chapter delves into the profound realms of Sankhya philosophy, which forms the basis for understanding the evolution of Panchamahabhoota (the five elements) in the context of Ayurveda. Sankhya philosophy provides a philosophical foundation for Ayurveda, connecting the physical and metaphysical aspects of the universe. Exploring the transition from Sankhya philosophy to the concept of Panchamahabhoota and how it intertwines with Ayurveda, particularly the Tridosha theory. Additionally, we will discuss how Ayurveda promotes both physical and mental equilibrium, emphasizing prevention as the key to holistic well-being.

Keywords: *Sankhya philosophy, Panchamahabhoota, Ayurveda, Tridosha theory, mental equilibrium, physical equilibrium, prevention, holistic well-being.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The ancient Indian philosophical system of Sankhya, often credited to the sage Kapila, offers profound insights into the nature of reality. At its core, Sankhya philosophy delves into the relationship between Prakriti (primordial matter) and Purusha (consciousness or spirit), which forms the foundation of the universe, the intricate journey from Sankhya philosophy to the understanding of Prakriti, Purusha, and ultimately, the Panchamahabhootas, the five fundamental elements of the material world.

Sankhya philosophy, one of the six classical schools of Indian philosophy, serves as a cornerstone in understanding the complex dynamics of our universe. This philosophy beautifully connects the metaphysical and physical aspects of existence. The core tenets of Sankhya philosophy underlie Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, leading to the development of the Tridosha theory. In this chapter, we will explore the profound connections between Sankhya philosophy, the Panchamahabhoota, and Ayurveda, emphasizing how this knowledge promotes both physical and mental equilibrium through prevention.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW/BACKGROUND

The Sankhya philosophy, founded by the sage Kapila, posits that the universe consists of two fundamental principles - Purusha (consciousness or spirit) and Prakriti (matter or nature).

2.1 Purusha in Sankhya Philosophy

In Sankhya philosophy, the concept of Purusha holds a central and profound place. Purusha, often described as pure consciousness or the witnessing self, is a pivotal

element in this ancient Indian philosophical system. Understanding the nature and role of Purusha is essential to grasp the dualistic framework of Sankhya philosophy, which posits the coexistence of Purusha and Prakriti as the fundamental elements of the universe.

2.1.1 Nature of Purusha

Purusha is characterized by its eternal, unchanging, and transcendent nature. It is beyond the realm of Prakriti, which encompasses the material world and its constantly changing attributes. Purusha is often depicted as the observer, the silent witness, and the source of unchanging consciousness within each individual.

In Sankhya philosophy, the multiplicity of individual Purushas is acknowledged. Each person is considered to have their own individual Purusha, which is distinct from the physical body and the mind. While the body and mind are subject to the transformations and fluctuations of Prakriti, Purusha remains untouched and unaffected by these changes.

2.1.2 Role of Purusha

The role of Purusha in Sankhya philosophy is primarily that of a spectator. It observes the activities of Prakriti without any direct involvement. The interactions and transformations within the material world are attributed to Prakriti and its inherent attributes, the Gunas. Purusha's detachment from these activities is a central aspect of Sankhya's dualistic perspective.

The liberation or moksha, sought by individuals in various Eastern philosophies, is often described as the realization of the distinction between Purusha and Prakriti. This realization leads to a state of profound freedom, where the individual recognizes their true nature as Purusha and transcends the influence of the material world. This liberation is often portrayed as the ultimate goal of human existence in Sankhya philosophy.

2.2 Prakriti in Sankhya Philosophy

In Sankhya philosophy, Prakriti is a fundamental concept that represents the primordial matter or nature, and it plays a central role in shaping the material world. Prakriti is regarded as the source and substance of all that is manifest in the universe, while it exists in contrast to Purusha, which represents pure consciousness or spirit.

Prakriti is often described as having three fundamental attributes, known as the Gunas, which are:

- **Sattva:** This Guna represents purity, harmony, and illumination. It is associated with qualities such as knowledge, balance, and serenity. Sattva is the Guna that gives rise to the finer aspects of creation and is responsible for clarity and goodness.
- **Rajas:** Rajas is the attribute associated with activity, restlessness, and desire. It is the Guna that impels movement and change in the material world. Rajas is linked to the qualities of passion, ambition, and the driving force behind various actions.
- **Tamas:** Tamas represents inertia, darkness, and delusion. It is the Guna responsible for resistance to change and is associated with qualities like ignorance, laziness, and stagnation. Tamas is the Guna that veils the true nature of reality.

These three Gunas, in various combinations and degrees, constitute the dynamic fabric of Prakriti. The interactions and transformations of these Gunas give rise to the diversity and constant change observed in the material world. Prakriti is the canvas on which the play of creation, preservation, and destruction unfolds.

The concept of Prakriti in Sankhya philosophy is essential to understand the nature of the material world and the process of liberation (moksha), which is achieved by recognizing the distinction between Purusha and Prakriti and transcending the influence of the material realm.

2.3 Mahat and Ahamkara in Sankhya Philosophy

In Sankhya philosophy, Mahat (also known as Buddhi) and Ahamkara are essential components that play a significant role in the framework of creation and understanding the human psyche. These concepts are vital for comprehending the complex interplay between Prakriti (primordial matter) and Purusha (consciousness) in the Sankhya system.

2.3.1 Mahat (Buddhi): The Cosmic Intelligence

Mahat, often referred to as Buddhi, is the cosmic intelligence or the universal intellect. It is the first evolved principle of Prakriti, arising from the interaction of the three Gunas – Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. Mahat is the subtlest and most refined aspect of Prakriti, and it is responsible for the discernment and discrimination that underlies all conscious activities.

Mahat serves as the basis for the development of the individual intellect in living beings. It is the faculty that allows individuals to perceive, reason, make decisions, and gain insight. In essence, Mahat is the source of cognitive and intellectual functions. It is the cosmic intellect that governs the rational and logical

aspects of human consciousness, guiding individuals toward understanding and knowledge.

2.3.2 Ahamkara: The Ego Principle

Ahamkara, often translated as ego or the "I-maker," is another crucial component of Sankhya philosophy. It is the principle of individuation, responsible for the sense of self and personal identity. Ahamkara arises from Mahat as a more concrete and self-identifying aspect of consciousness.

Ahamkara leads individuals to perceive themselves as separate and distinct entities, fostering the development of ego, personal identity, and attachment to the material world. It is the source of the "I" consciousness that influences an individual's self-image and self-identity.

Ahamkara is characterized by its association with the individual's identification with their physical body, mind, and material possessions. It plays a pivotal role in shaping an individual's desires, attachments, and motivations, which can lead to bondage with the material world.

3. SANKHYA PHILOSOPHY AND PANCHAMAHABHOOTA

3.1 The Origin of Panchatanmatras²

The Sankhya philosophy posits that the universe emerges from a state of primordial potentiality. In this state, the subtlest and most elemental entities are the Panchatanmatras, which are five in number, formed from the combination of Ahamkara and Tamas/Tamo Guna and represent the "subtle elements." These are:

- Shabda Tanmatra: The subtle sound element.
- Sparsha Tanmatra: The subtle touch element.
- Rupa Tanmatra: The subtle form element.
- Rasa Tanmatra: The subtle taste element.
- Gandha Tanmatra: The subtle smell element.

These Panchatanmatras are beyond the reach of the ordinary senses, representing the undifferentiated aspects of sensory perception.

3.2 Evolution into Pancha Mahabhootas³

The transition from Panchatanmatras to Pancha Mahabhootas is a fundamental step in Sankhya philosophy, representing the evolution of subtle elements into grosser forms. This transformation occurs in the following manner:

- **Shabda Tanmatra to Akasha Mahabhoota⁴:** The subtle sound element, Shabda Tanmatra, evolves into Akasha or Space. Akasha is the most expansive of the five Mahabhootas, representing the concept of 'emptiness' or 'void' and forming the backdrop for all existence.
- **Sparsha Tanmatra to Vayu Mahabhoota⁵:** Sparsha Tanmatra, the subtle touch element, transforms into Vayu or Air. Vayu is associated with the qualities of movement and touch, making it an essential component of the material world.
- **Rupa Tanmatra to Tejas Mahabhoota⁶:** The subtle form element, Rupa Tanmatra, metamorphoses into Tejas or Fire. Tejas represents the quality of light and heat, and it is a fundamental constituent of the universe.
- **Rasa Tanmatra to Ap Mahabhoota⁷:** Rasa Tanmatra, the subtle taste element, evolves into Ap or Water. Ap symbolizes liquidity and cohesion and plays a critical role in the formation of matter.
- **Gandha Tanmatra to Prithvi Mahabhoota⁸:** Gandha Tanmatra, the subtle smell element, transforms into Prithvi or Earth. Prithvi represents the solid state of matter and is the foundation of the physical world.

Sankhya philosophy's elucidation of the formation of Panchatanmatras and their evolution into Pancha Mahabhootas provides a profound insight into the fundamental building blocks of the universe. The transition from the subtle to the gross elements signifies the progression from the unmanifest to the manifest, from the abstract to the concrete. This understanding is integral to Sankhya philosophy's comprehensive framework for understanding the nature of reality. Understanding the nature of Panchatanmatras and thus Panchamahabhootas also gives a better idea about the subtle nature of our own human body and its composition.

4. AYURVEDA, PANCHAMAHABHOOTA AND TRIDOSHA

In Sankhya philosophy, the Panchamahabhoota represent the subtle and fundamental constituents of matter. Earth represents solidity, water is fluidity, fire embodies transformation, air symbolizes movement, and ether signifies space. These elements interplay to form the material world in all its diversity. The interplay of these

elements within the human body forms the basis of Ayurveda's Tridosha theory⁹. Ayurveda, often referred to as the "Science of Life," is deeply rooted in Sankhya philosophy. According to Ayurveda, the human body is composed of three fundamental bioenergetic principles called Doshas - Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. Vata corresponds to air and ether, Pitta to fire, and Kapha to water and earth. The balance and equilibrium of these Doshas within an individual are vital for good health¹⁰.

Dosha	Mahabhoota
Vata	Akasha, Vayu
Pitta	Agni
Kapha	Jala, Prithvi

4.1 Sharira: The Body

Charaka Samhita defines body as a balanced combination of Panchamahabhoota (Akasha, Vayu, Agni, Jala and Prithvi), Pancha Karmendriya (Vak, Pani, Pada, Payu and Upastha), Pancha Jnanendriya (Shabda, Sparsha, Rupa, Rasa and Gandha) and Manas (Mind). A combination made of these sixteen entities where Chetana (Atma/Soul) resides¹¹.

Diseases effects when there is an imbalance in the proportion of these sixteen entities. Thus, both physical and mental (manas) entity is important in maintenance of proper physiology of body thus maintaining health. Ayurveda places a profound emphasis on maintaining the equilibrium of Panchamahabhoota (the five elements) and Tridosha which are again a derivative of panchamahabhoota as the key to well-being and health. Panchamahabhoota are the fundamental building blocks of the universe and the human body. Each individual possesses a unique constitution or Prakriti, which is a specific combination of these elements, and this constitution greatly influences one's physical and mental attributes. The interaction of these elements within the body is intricately connected to the Tridosha concept, which represents three bioenergetic forces governing physiological and psychological processes. Vata, Pitta, and Kapha correspond to the dynamic interplay of Panchamahabhoota.

Maintaining the equilibrium of Tridosha inturn means maintaining the equilibrium of Panchamahabhoota combination of body and is central to promoting health and preventing diseases. Ayurvedic practices such as diet, lifestyle, herbal treatments, and therapies are all designed to harmonize these elemental forces within the body. This is done by identifying an individual's Prakriti, assessing the current state

of their Doshas, and prescribing personalized treatments to restore balance. Through this approach, Ayurveda addresses the root causes of diseases rather than merely alleviating symptoms, making it a comprehensive and preventive healthcare system¹². By recognizing that imbalances in Panchamahabhoota and Tridosha underlie various health issues. Ayurveda offers a holistic way to support overall well-being and vitality.

5. CONCLUSION

The profound connection between Sankhya philosophy, the Panchamahabhoota, and Ayurveda is undeniable. The five elements of Panchamahabhoota serve as the elemental basis for the human body's composition, giving rise to the Tridosha theory in Ayurveda. Balance and harmony among these Doshas are essential for maintaining both physical and mental equilibrium. Ayurveda's holistic approach to health emphasizes prevention through lifestyle, diet, and herbal remedies to maintain this equilibrium¹³.

In conclusion, the synergy between Sankhya philosophy, Panchamahabhoota, and Ayurveda underscores the deep-rooted connection between the metaphysical and the physical, paving the way for a holistic approach to well-being. This knowledge, designed for both the public and the medical fraternity, emphasizes that the prevention of mental and physical inequilibrium is not only possible but also essential for leading a balanced and healthy life.

"The cosmos is within us. We are made of star-stuff. We are a way for the universe to know itself."– Carl sagan.

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