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Concept of 'Sharira-Guna' In Ayurveda and Its Utility

Dr. Sunil Kumar Parashar^{1*}, Dr. Sunil Mewade²

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Kriya Sharir, Mansarovar Ayurveda Medical College, Bhopal, MP

2. Ayurveda MD in Kriya Sharir

Corresponding Author: Dr. Sunil Kumar Parashar

Email id: - drsunilparashar@gmail.com

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Abstract:

'Sharira Guna' term is first time used by Acharya Gangadhar in respect of the human body to explain its functions and 'Swaroop'. Yet 'Sharira Guna' and 'Gurvadi Guna' are same in name and number but there is difference in working because of the human body is 'Chetan Dravya' while rest is 'Achetan Dravya' i.e. drug or food. In Ayurveda, Physiology is described in term of 'Sharira Guna'. 'Guna of Vata, Pitta and Kapha' create difference in 'Prakriti' of individuals so that every individual has its specific 'Prakriti'. On the account of 'Guna', more than millions of combinations of 'Dosha' are possible. This is how Ayurveda can explain the subtle differences between individuals on the basis of 'Guna'. It is important for each one of us to know our 'Sharira Guna' which makes our 'Prakriti' in term of 'Dosha'. 'Sharira Guna' can influence the physiological and psychological behaviour of the person. This is need of hour to explore various concepts of Ayurvedic Physiology in terms of 'Sharira Guna' with its utility.

Key words: Sharira-Guna, Body Properties in Ayurveda, Utility of 'Sharira-Guna'

Introduction:

'Sharira-Guna' is the term used in respect of the human body to explain its functions and 'Swaroop'. 'Sharira Guna' term is first time used by Acharya Gangadhar (commentator of Charak Samhita) while dealing with 'food or medicine', term 'Gurvadi-Guna' is used. 'Gurvadi-Guna' means simply Guru + Aadi i.e. rest 19 Guna. Yet 'Sharira Guna' and 'Gurvadi Guna' are same in name and number but there is difference in working because of the human body is 'Chetan Dravya' while rest is 'Achetan Dravya' i.e. drug or food. Also before food or drug is going through body to influences 'Sharira Guna', it goes through various process like action of various 'Agni', to reach a specific type of site to act, also specific form to act. So food or drug 'Guna' are neither directly influences neither 'Sharira Guna' nor act in same way like 'Sharira Guna'. In Ayurveda compendia, Physiology is described in term of

'Sharira Guna'. Since, 'Sharira' is also 'Dravya' so it has same 'Guna' but for their significant role in function, a new term is coined as "Sharira-Guna". Achary Bhavmishra advocated role of 'Guna' in action of 'Dravya' as General (Samanya) causes 'Vradhhi hetu' while specific (Vishesa) causes 'Hraas hetu'. Similar 'Guna' Possesses both Body and 'Dravya'. Therefore 'Vradhhi, Kshaya and Samya' states of 'Dhatu' are attained, according to their 'Guna'.¹ Every individual is a unique entity with a constitution of his /her own so called 'Prakriti'. 'Prakriti' is the physical and psychological constitution of the individual which is determined on the basis of three 'Doshas'.² Further 'Guna of Vata, Pitta and Kapha' create difference in 'Prakriti' of individuals so that every individual has its specific 'Prakriti'. On the account of 'Guna', more than millions of combinations of 'Dosha' are possible.

This is how Ayurveda can explain the subtle differences between individuals on the basis of 'Guna'. It is important for each one of us to know our 'Sharira Guna' which makes our 'Prakrati' in term of 'Dosha'. 'Sharira Guna' can influence the physiological and psychological behaviour of the person. It is essential to study 'Sharira Guna' independently as these are parameters of tissue health as well as 'Dosha' equilibrium. This is need of hour to explore various concepts of Ayurveda Physiology in terms of 'Sharira Guna' with its utility.

Aim & Objective: To move undergraduate, postgraduate students, Ayurveda doctors towards higher level of thinking, connecting "big picture" of utility of 'Sharira-Guna' in Ayurveda Physiology.

Concept Of Sharira Guna: Acharya Charaka start the sixth chapter of Sharir Sthan entitled 'Sharira Vichayam Sharir' (Analytical study of the body) on which commentator Chakrapani states that Sharira Vichaya means components of body and by the knowledge of component of the body like blood etc. Properties, constitution, we also get knowledge of their symptom of increasing or decreasing. So, this knowledge of Sharira Vichaya is very beneficial to maintain the body components equilibrium and to be healthy.³ Acharya Charaka stated similar properties are found in Sharir Dhatu and food and this is why on the basis of similar properties, specific food is factor for growth of specific Dhatu and vice versa⁴ and these properties of Sharira Dhatu are countable viz. Guru, Laghu, Shita, Ushna, Snigdha, Ruksha, Manda, Tikshna, Sthira, Sara, Mrudu, Kathina, Vishada, Picchila, Shlakshna, Khara, Sthula, Sukshma, Sandra and Drava.⁵ Same 20 properties are stated by Acharya Charak in context of classification of food on qualitative aspect.⁶ So, similar attribute like Guru food increase body component which has Guru attribute while dissimilar attribute diminish the body component. In the same way similar attribute increases similar one while dissimilar diminish.⁷ 'Sharira Guna' is the term, which is used by Acharya Charak in context of how these

Guna are reside and accumulated in body viz Malbhuta & Prasadbhuta.⁸ Where Malbhuta are those which (if retained) cause affliction in the body are known as waste product such as smear in the body orifices of different origins moving outwards, Dhatus after full maturity, vitiated Vata, Pitta, Kapha and other similar entities rest are included in Prasadbhuta, which have twenty properties beginning with Guru (heaviness) and ending with Drava (liquidity) while as a Dravya, are seven Dhatu beginning with Rasa and ending with Shukra Dhatu.⁹ Commentator Acharya Gangadhar first time clearly stated and often uses this term 'Sharira Guna' due to its specific role in context of Sharira¹⁰. Acharya Vrddhavagbhatta also narrated as Dhatu i.e. Rasa, Rakta etc. and Mala are nourished via their respective Srotas with 'Santanvad' law in accordance of Sharira Guna.¹¹

Panchmahabhuta and sharir guna: Acharya Charaka state as "Guna are representative of 'Guni' (Panchmahabhuta) in the body.¹²" Acharya Gangadhar explores this concept and gave a relation between Panchmahabhuta and 20 Sharira Guna as 'Karya Guna' of 'Panchmahabhuta'.¹³ Sharira Dravya is made up of Panchmahabhuta and its relation with Chetana is 'Samvayi'.¹⁴

Table 1- Panchmahabhutic Origin of Body Entity:

s.no.	Entity	Panchabhautic origin
1	Vata Dosa	Prthvi+ jala
2	Pitta Dosa	Agni
3	Kapha Dosa	Aksha + Vayu
4	Rasa Dhatu	Jala
5	Rakta Dhatu	Jala + Agni
6	Mamsa Dhatu	Prthvi
7	Meda Dhatu	Jala + Prthvi
8	Asthi Dhatu	Prthvi + Vayu
9	Majja Dhatu	Jala
10	Shukra Dhatu	Jala
11	Mutra	Jala + Agni
12	Purisha	Agni + Vayu + Prthvi
13	Sweda	Jala
14	Kesha	Prthvi
15	Nakha	Prthvi
16	Stanya	Jala
17	Aartava	Agni

Discussion: Various references of applied aspect of Sharira Guna in different contexts suggest that Sharira Guna is very important concept of Ayurveda. Since, it is used in various concerns like in diagnosis, drug selection, to explain physiology and anatomy of body etc.

1. Rhythm of Dosha: Ayurveda classics mention rhythm of Tridosha i.e. its three states as- State of accumulation ('Sanchaya'), State of aggravation ('Prakopa'), State of suppression ('Sahamna') which can be explained on the basis of Sharira Guna. It can be diurnal as well as seasonal in accordance of time. Acharya Hemadri mention that Pitta Sanchaya is due to Tikshana Guna of Pitta with Sheeta Guna while Pitta Prakopa is due to Tikshana Guna of Pitta with Ushana Guna and Pitta Shaman is due to opposite Guna of Tikshana i.e. Manda Guna with Sheeta Guna. In same way Vata and Kapha Dosha Sanchaya, Prakopa, and Shaman are based on Sharira Guna.¹⁵ This is the rhythm of Dosha in accordance of Sharira Guna which is given in table- Thus, with the help of Sharira Guna knowledge we can apply it in various other concepts for adopting preventive as well as curative measures such as 'Dincharya and Ritucharya', with change in diet and lifestyle there are change in the state of Tridosha in accordance of its Guna resulting disharmony causing life style diseases.

Table 2- Seasonal Rhythm Of Tridosha According To Guna:

Dosha		Sanchaya	Prakopa	Shaman
1	Vata	Ruksha+ Ushna	Ruksha+ Shita	Snigdha+ Ushna
2	Pitta	Tikshana+ Shita	Tikshana+ Ushna	Manda+ Shita
3	Kapha	Snigdha+ Shita	Snigdha+ Ushna	Ruksha+ Shita

2. Prakriti: Concept of Prakriti play an important role in Aging, immune strength, causation in diseases etc. It decides and explains physical as well as physiological behaviour of an

individual. Acharya Charaka explain Prakriti on account of Sharira Guna such as-¹⁶ Vatika Prakriti- Khara Guna causes less elasticity of Srotas, Ruksha causes dryness of skin and hair, Chala Guna causes over movements of body parts and Asthir bones, joints, Shita Guna causes cold intolerance. Pattika Prakriti- Ushana Guna causes hotness of body parts, hot intolerance, Tikshna Guna causes Tikshna Agni and as a result more thirst and hunger also digest food quickly, Drava Guna causes loose muscles and joints excess sweating, urine and stool, weaker joints, ligaments and tired easily on work. Kapha Prakriti- Sthira & Guru Guna causes Sthira Shukra and for fertilisation Picchila Guna is also essential, Manda Guna causes less thirst and hunger but normal anabolism, Mridu, Slakshan and Snigdha Guna causes soft, shiny, slippery skin and hair. Thus, with the knowledge of our Prakriti on account of Sharira Guna, we stay healthy ever by designing our diet and life style opposite to our Prakriti

3. Dosha Vraddhi and Kshaya: Acharya Chakrapani mentions that Paradi Guna also resides in Sharira but not the cause of Vraddhi and Hrash as Gurvadi. So, only 20 Guru-aadi Guna are counted as Sharira Guna.¹⁷ Acharya Sushruta stated that whatever twenty Guna of Dravya describe here are same Guna also present in the body and Kshaya, Vriddhi, and equilibrium is maintained on the account of them.¹⁸ These are very important statements which help to understand Dosha Vraddhi and Kshaya and equilibrium state. As we know health is Dosha in equilibrium state while disease or unhealthy is Dosha in disequilibrium state (Vraddhi and Kshaya). Since physiological variation of Dosha are also observed in accordance of time, place, etc. we can say that Dosha kshaya Vraddhi are also possible in healthy individual up to their normal physiological limits. But in imbalanced state, they cross their normal physiological limits and tend to vitiate others. So termed as pathological or Vikrati. For examination of Vikrati, Acharya

Chakrapani stated that Vikalpa Samprapti is diagnosis of Dosha on the basis of Dosha Ansans or fraction such as sometimes as Sheetansha, sometimes as Rukshansha, etc. which clearly indicate that Dosha Kshaya Vraddhi are in accordance of their Guna.¹⁹ Further Dosha Samsarga and Sannipata are diagnosed on the basis of Sharira Guna. Acharya Chakrapani comments how can few countable Dosha produce uncountable disease? He said "Vibhinn shakti yogad bahun" which clearly indicate Shakti of Dosha are Guna.²⁰ In case of Samsarga and Sannipata, disease show main character or symptom as Dosha is prominent while recessive one also shows few symptoms. Commentator Dalhan commented the word 'Sarve' as "all Guna of particular Dosha" and Samsarga, Sannipata are done on the basis of these Guna and he also explained Dosha Anubandh – Anubandhya on the basis of Sharira Guna such as Anubandhya or Pradhan Dosha is said when Dosha is vitiated with their all Guna while Anubandhi or Apradhan Dosha is said when Dosha is vitiated with minimum 2 or 3 Sharira Guna.²¹ How can we done qualitative assessment of Vikrati on account of Sharira Guna an example is mentioned here as Acharya Chakrapani comments that 10 types of Kaphaj Prameha are originated from 10 Guna of Kapha. He further added that it does not mean that every Kaphaj Prameha involves all the 10 Guna of Kapha but sometimes 1 or more than 1 are possible in different 10 type's Kaphaj Prameha.²²

4. **Concept of Ojus:** Acharya Charaka states 10 Guna of alcohol are opposite to that of Oja. Acharya Charaka explain how 10 Guna of alcohol are opposite of Oja and reduce Bala of body.²³ Acharya Shusruta states in last stage of 'Mada' all body functions, action and Guna become inactive as 'Nashta Karma Kriya Guna'.²⁴ Visha: - Acharya Sushruta explains toxicity on the basis of Sharira Guna.²⁵ Term 'Visha' is broad and can be understood as anything that destroys the body by destroying Oja. Since, Madya, Aama Varodhika Aahar etc.

are also termed as 'Visha' in various contexts. So, this can be explained on the basis of such consideration. Now Ayurveda classics mention specific Sharira Guna of Oja as well as 'Visha' and their interaction causes death or diseases or deformity which can be explained on account of interaction of their Guna. This indicates how we can explain Oja and Visha on account of Sharira Guna concept. Just as honey bee collect honey from different flowers by little as essence from them, the Ojus is also formed from the best qualities of all Dhātu and maintain the body of human beings by virtue of its attribute.²⁶

5. **Digestion:** Acharya Chakrapani mentioned that during Post digestive phase, Dravya Guna are transformed in Sharira Guna as Parinaman. It does not mean that transformation takes place at once but the fraction of food as digested gets transformed part by part.²⁷ this is an important reference which indicate Sharira Poshan as a Dravya Poshan along with Guna Poshan also during Bhutagni Paka. It implies bio-transformation of Guna. Aahara Parinamkar Factors are also explained on the basis of Sharira Guna such as Ushma has Ushana and Tikshana Guna for Paka Karma, Kledaka Kapha has Drava Guna for Kledana Karma of food, Vayu has Ruksha Guna for Shoshan Karma etc.²⁸

Conclusion: Thus we can understand Ayurvedic physiology on account of Sharira Guna, which is previously known as Dosha Dhātu Mala Vigyan also. Dosha Dhātu and Mala possess same Guna which is main concept to explain Sharira Kriya in normal as well as in abnormal condition of Sharira.

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