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Critical Study Of *Chakras* W.S.R. To *Shaarir Vigyan In Ayurveda*

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ABSTRACT: The *chakras* are center of energy thought to be nexus of metaphysical and /or biophysical energy residing in human body and provides passage for energy to enter and exit from body regulating all types of energy flow i.e., physical, mental, emotional and spiritual and are connected to the network of psychic channels called '*Nadis*' which corresponds to nerves but are more subtle. They are thought to be located along a central, vertical axis (*Sushumna*) at front of the body. Their interaction and manifestation of these *chakras* in the body is facilitated mainly by Nervous and Endocrine system. *Ayurveda* and *Yoga* consider five *Vaayus* - *Apana*, *Prana*, *Samana*, *Vyana* and *Udana* which are the vital air, active in all human beings responsible for existence & life. Thus, each *chakra* corresponds with specific *vaayu*. These *chakras* and glands believed to work together in co-ordination. Disturbances in the subtle energy of these *chakras* gets manifested in the various diseases which are likely associated with corresponding glands and organs. That is why these *chakras* have its own importance in *Ayurveda*. These *chakras* are six in number – *Muladhara Chakra*, *Svadhishthana Chakra*, *Manipura Chakra*, *Anahata Chakra*, *Vishuddha Chakra*, *Ajna Chakra*. Since *Tantra Sharira* is briefly described in textbooks of *Rachana* and *kriya Sharira* mostly on functional and spiritual aspects, so to highlight structural and the functional correlation of *Chakras* in view point of *Ayurvedic Shaarir Vigyan* this study was initiated.

Key words – *Ayurveda*, *Chakras*, *Shaarir Vigyan*.

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INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, Yoga and Tantra are originated from the *Vedas*, therefore they have same fundamental principles of anatomy, physiology and treatment of human body. *Ayurveda* is the science of *Ayu* (life). This *Ayu* is described as combination of *Sharira* (corporeal body), *Indriya* (senso-motor organs), *Mana* (mind) and *Atma* (soul)^[1]. Each component has been given due importance of health and prevention of diseases. Among these, *Acharaya Charak* has given utmost importance to *Sharira* (body), as it is chief aspect on which all other things are based. On the other hand, they also said *Satva* (mind), *Atma* (soul) and *Sharira* (corporeal body), these three are like a pod; The *Loka* is sustained by their combination; they constitute the substratum of everything^[2]. The mind occupies a very important place in this trio

as much as the entire activities related to the body are controlled by it^[3]. Body has more materialistic aspect while mind and soul have both materialistic and spiritual prospective. There is also the description of *Doshas* in *Ayurvedic* literature as they compose the body, which are basically the physiological entity through which the body performs its function^[4]. Among them *Vaayu* is most important which governs all the functions of the body and also helps other *doshas* to perform their activities properly. This *Vata* is of five types named as- *Prana, Udana, Vyana, Samana, Apana*^[5]. They are five important subsidiary nerve centres in the brain and spinal cord. These centres unconsciously control the catabolic activity of the sympathetic portion through the fibres of the parasympathetic and are anabolic in nature. These centres are called

shaktis of the *chakras*^[6]. The word *chakra* is derived from “*kriyategatirenena*”; one which has the action of movement is called *chakra*. *Chakra* denotes a centre of power or energy (*pran*)^[7]. These *chakras* mentioned in the *Tantric* literature are six in number – *Muladhara chakra*, *swadhisthana chakra*, *Manipura Chakra*, *Anahata Chakra*, *Vishuddha Chakra*, *Ajana Chakra*. These are independent on their assign function. Each *chakra* has *shakti* (nerve plexus) controlling its own activity. In addition, there is a universal *Shakti* (spinal cord) has the power of controlling all these *chakras*.^[8]

AIMS AND OBJECTIVE –

1. To explore concept of chakras as defined in various scriptures of contemporary science.
2. Make them relatable and easily understandable through the rational mind in view point of physio-anatomical resemblance in both modern and Ayurveda.
3. To prove their significance in shaarir vigyan of Ayurveda.

MATERIAL AND METHOD-

For the material classical texts of Ayurveda viz. Charak Samhita, Sushruta Samhita and

Astanga Hridaya and their teekas are used to clear the concept of *Sharira* and *mana*. Supportive texts of contemporary science and journals were also utilized to comprehend the ancient concepts. These conceptual materials from both the streams of knowledge were compared and analyzed critically.

LITERARY REIVIEW- (A) Concept of

chakras - Being subtle, although these *Chakras* are not visible through the sense organs, so they have been assumed to be associated with various colors, symbols, animals, deities, sounds, elements, etc. so as to make them more relatable and easily understandable through the rational mind. In *Tantric* and *Yogic* teachings, each *Chakra* is symbolized by a lotus flower having different number of petals, representing number of *Nadis* leading to and from the *Chakra*. Thus, each of these *Chakras* is associated with an element, a sensory organ, and an organ of action. Coming to vibration, each of five elements has a corresponding seed sound or *Beeja Mantra*, thereby giving these *Chakras* a specific sound vibration. These *chakras* are located in various portions of *Sushumna* namely *Muladhara Chakra*, *Swadisthana Chakra*, *Manipura Chakra*, *Anahata*

Chakra, Vishuddha Chakra, Ajna Chakra.^[9]

Muladhara chakra – Appearance: Like a lotus of four petals. situated two fingers above *guda* and one finger below the *medra*. Four fingers in width. Color: All the four petals are blood red. Mahabhuta: At the center of this lotus is present square region of *prithvi*. Beeja: Cryptic letter lam. Beeja bearer: *Airavata* (King of elephants).

Swadhishtana Chakra- The second *chakra* is situated at the base of the penis. It has six petals. Its stalk is called *Swadhishtana*, the color of lotus is blood red, its presiding adept is called *bala* and its goddess- *Rakini*. He who daily contemplates on this *chakra* becomes an object of love and adoration to all beautiful goddesses. He fearlessly recites the various *Shastras* and sciences unknown to him before.

Manipura Chakra- This third *chakra* is situated near the navel; it is of golden color having ten panels. Its presiding adept is called *Rudra*- The giver of all auspicious things and the presiding goddess of this place is called the most scared *Lakini*. When the person contemplates on this *chakra*, he gets the power of called the *Patal*

Sidhi, the giver of constant happiness. He becomes the lord of desire, destroys the sower. He becomes lord of desires, destroys sorrows and diseases, cheats death, and can enter the body of another.

Anahata Chakra - In the heart, is the fourth *Chakra*, the *Anahat*. It has twelve petals. Its color is deep blood-red; it has the seed of *Vayu*, *yam*, and is a very pleasant spot. In this lotus is a flame called *Vanlinga*; by contemplating on this, one gets objects of the seen and the unseen universe. Its presiding adept is *Pinaki*, and the *Kakini* is its goddess. He who always contemplates on this lotus of the heart is eagerly desired by celestial maidens. He gets immeasurable knowledge, knows the past, present and future time; has clairaudience, clairvoyance and can walk in the air, whenever he likes.

Vishuddha Chakra - This *Chakra* situated in the throat, is the fifth, and is called the *Vishuddha* lotus. Its colour is like brilliant gold, and it is adorned with sixteen petals. Its presiding adept is called *Chhagalanda*, and its presiding goddess is called *Sakini*. He who always contemplates it, is truly the lord of the *Yogis*, and deserves to be called wise; by the meditation of this *Vishuddha* lotus, the *Yogi* at once understands the four *Vedas* with their mysteries.

Ajna Chakra - The two-petalled *Chakra*, called the *Ajña*, is situated between the two eye-brows, and has the letters *h* and *ksh*; its presiding adept is called *Shukla Mahakala* (the White Great Time); its presiding goddess is called *Hakini*. The wise anchorite, by knowing this, is never pulled down. This is the great light held secret in all the *Tantras*; by contemplating on this, one obtains the highest success, there is no doubt of it.

Sahasrara chakra - The lotus which is situated in the *Brahmarandhra* is called *Sahasrara* (the thousand-petalled). In the space in its center, dwells the moon. From the triangular place, elixir is continually exuding. This moon-fluid of immortality unceasingly flows through the *Ida*. The elixir flows in a stream – a continuous stream. Going to the left nostril, it receives from the *Yogis* the name of the “*Ganges*.” From the right-side portion of the *Ajna* lotus and going to the left nostril flows the *Ida*. It is here called *Varana* (the northward-flowing *Ganges*).

(B) Concept of shaarir -In Ayurveda, *shaarir* term is affiliated to both anatomical and physiological *bhaav*. Knowledge of both would make a complete Ayurvedic physician^[10]. There is so many definitions

of *Sharira* in Ayurveda from different point of view. If *Sharira* word is described from structural point of view it says that erosion of body occurs continuously because of continuous movement. It acknowledges the catabolic and anabolic processes. when it comes to functional point of view it says body is composed of balanced function of *tridoshas*, *saptadhaatu*, and thirteen *agnis*^[11]. According to *Acharya Charaka*, *Sharira* is composed of *panchmahabhoota* and *atma*. *Panchmahabhoota* i.e *Akash*, *vayu*, *agni*, *aap* and *prithivi* are to be considered as basic elements of body^[12]. This body (*Sharira*) is again divided in various parts (*ang-pratyanga*) for detailed study. According to *Acharaya Sushrut*, body is composed of *dosha*, *dhatu* and *mala*. As in Ayurveda said everything is *panchbhautik* in the world^[13]. So, these *dosha*, *dhatu*, *mala* are also *panchbhautik*. Among these three *doshas*, *Vata dosha* has prime control over all functions of body. It has five divisions. Firstly, *Prana vata* located in head and moves in the chest, throat supports mind, heart, sense organs and intelligence attends to excretion, sneezing, belching, inspiration and swallowing. *Udana Vata* is situated in the chest it moves in the nose, umbilicus, throat helps in initiation of speech, effort,

enthusiasm, strength, color, memory. *Vyana Vata* located in the heart moves all over the body and is responsible for all type of activities. *Samana Vata* located near digestive fire moves in *kostha* with holds, digests, absorbs and eliminates the food. *Apana Vata* located near large intestine moves in the waist, bladder, genitals and is responsible for elimination of semen, menstrual fluid, faeces, urine, fetus ^[14]. Importance of *mana* and *shira* is also described in Ayurvedic text. *Shira* is called as *uttamaanga* because it works as the control centre of all senses through which all activities of body is done. It is also considered as resides of *mana* and *vata* ^[15]. Somewhere *marma* points are also described under the chakras which are also the part of *Sharira vigyan* ^[16].

DISCUSSION

As we studied earlier that our *Sharira* is divided mainly in to two parts known as *Sthoola Sharira* and *Sukshma* or *Linga Sharira*. The *Sthoola Sharira* can be studied with the help sense organ by *pratyaksha pramana* whereas *Sukshma Sharira* cannot be studied with naked eyes. It can be seen by *Gyana-chakshu* or *Tapa-chakshu*.^[17] It has the predominance of *mana*. It also needs *Sthoola Sharira*

because it works as basic constituent in the formation of *sthoola Sharira*. As we know *satva*, *atma* and *Sharira* are the tripods of *Loka* to sustained, shows the importance of *mana* and *Sharira* both. *Acharaya Bhel* told that man resides in *shira* and *taalu* both. In between *tridoshas Vaayu* is defined as the controller and co-ordinator of *mana*, means *mana* works through the *vata*. It co-ordinates between *mana* and *indriyas* with the help of branches (*nadis*) arises from *shira*. That is why *Shira* is called *uttamanga* which controls all the *indriyas* to do the activities (catabolic and anabolic) in the body. This can be compared with the Nervous System of the body in modern anatomy. There is no description of *ida*, *pingla* and *shatchakras* in Ayurveda, but in *Tantric* literature, these all have too much elaboration surprisingly. As described in *Tantric* scriptures these *ida*, *pingla* and *shatchakras* all are situated out of the *shira* and their functions also partially free from brain but their coordinating centre resides in brain.^[18] In *Shat chakra Nirupana* told that *Meru* has three *nadis*, which start from neck outside of *shira* and goes up to the spinal cord. From out of three middle one is known as *Sushumna* (spinal cord) which gives rise to too many *nadis*. These *nadis* cross each other before their respective

endings and their origin in plexus of nerves called *chakras*. As we saw *Vayu* is prime controller and co-ordinator of body system and is of five kind. They are five important nerve centres in the brain and spinal cord. These centres unconsciously control the catabolic activity of the sympathetic portion through the fibres of parasympathetic and are anabolic in nature. These centres are called *shaktis* of the *chakras*. Every involuntary act is governed by these two set of fibres; when their activity is evenly balanced, their presence is not felt. When that balance is disturbed by over-activity of any of these fibres, the reflex centre is overstimulated to generate an impulse which carries information to the highest centre in the brain.^[19]

As we know *chakra* means 'wheel' is thought to be an energy point or node in the subtle body. They are considered loci of life energy, thought to vitalize the physical body and to be associated with interaction of a physical, emotional and mental nature. The nervous system, together with the endocrine system controls and integrates the activities of the different part of the body to maintain the homeostasis during the rest and the exercise.^[20] It has been now proved that the chief centres, where the

knowledge of action and sensation is manifested, are located in the cortex of the brain. These centres both receiving i.e. sensory and directing i.e. motor, and have their subsidiary centres in the two large swellings called the basal-ganglia in each hemisphere of brain. They are known as thalamus and the corpus straitum. The hypothalamus works as the connecting link between nervous and endocrine system because it produces the hormone to stop and start the production of other hormones throughout the body.^[21] In this way if we consider the site of endocrine glands and *shatchakra* in the body, individual chakra might be controlling endocrine glands present in the same area through *vata*.

CONCLUSION

By considering the above discussion we may conclude that-

1. In various scripture of *Tantra* and *Yoga*, *Shatchakra* are defined as the energy producing centres which are present in the subtle body. These are independent units carrying on their assigned functions. A universal *Shakti* (*Kundalini*) is controlling all these chakras along with their individual *Shakti*. We can say their spiritual and functional aspect is more defined.

2. When these chakras are compared with Ayurvedic and modern literature we find that there is a relation between *shira*, *mana* and *vata* which are the originator and

controller of *chakras* and in modern can compare with nervous system and endocrine system of the body.

Sr. No.	Chakra	Anatomical resemblance	Endocrinal resemblance	Physiological resemblance
1.	<i>Muladhara</i> or Root Chakra	Coccygeal Ganglion and Pelvic Plexus	Gonads	Site of <i>Apana Vayu</i>
2.	<i>Swadhishtana</i> or Sacral Chakra	Hypogastric, Abdominal and aortic plexus.	Testes and Ovaries	Site of <i>Apana Vayu</i>
3.	<i>Manipura</i> or Solar Chakra	Lumbar or Epigastric Plexus.	Pancreas and Adrenal Glands.	Site of <i>Samana Vayu</i>
4.	<i>Anahata</i> or Heart Chakra	Superficial and deep cardiac plexus.	Thymus	Site of <i>Prana Vayu</i>
5.	<i>Vishuddha</i> or Throat Chakra	Pharyngeal and Laryngeal plexus	Thyroid and Parathyroid	Site of <i>Udana Vayu</i>
6.	<i>Ajna Chakra</i> or Brow Chakra	Cavernous plexus	Pituitary and Pineal Gland	Site of <i>Prana Vayu</i>

3. However ancient Ayurveda do not have many references about them but still the concept of *Chakra* has got its own importance in Ayurvediya *Shaarir Vigyana*. As discussed, and conclude above these chakras are present along the

Sushumna (spinal cord) and formed by the groups of *nadis* (plexuses), which clears somewhere the anatomy of nervous system. They function under the control of *panchvaayus* and controls the body and mind whether an individual is conscious or

not. *Yoga Shastra* has references about certain concepts and procedure to get control over these Chakras in order to bring the state of *Dhatusamyata* and to avoid the

occurrence of any diseases thus signifying the importance of these *Chakras* in the body.

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