

Conceptual Understanding of Samanya and Vishesh Siddhanta in Ayurveda – A Review

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Abstract: *Samanya Vishesh Siddhant is one of the most important and practical principles of Ayurveda. It explains how different factors cause increase (Vridhhi) or decrease (Kshaya) in the body and helps in maintaining balance and health. This concept is derived from the philosophical principles of Nyaya-Vaisheshika and forms the basis for understanding physiology, disease development, and treatment in Ayurveda.*

According to this Siddhant, Samanya (similarity) leads to increase, while Vishesh (dissimilarity or opposition) leads to decrease. In simple words, substances having similar qualities increase similar components in the body, whereas substances with opposite qualities reduce them. [] For example, excessive intake of heavy and oily food increases Kapha Dosha, while light and dry substances help in reducing it.

This principle is widely applied in different branches of Ayurveda such as Sharira Kriya Vigyan, Roga Nidana, Chikitsa, Ahara Vidhi, and Dravya Guna Vigyan. It plays a vital role in understanding the balance of Doshas, Dhatus, and Malas and guides physicians in selecting appropriate diet, medicines, and therapies. Nourishing treatments like Rasayana therapy work on the principle of Samanya to enhance tissue growth and strength, whereas Shodhana therapies apply Vishesh to eliminate aggravated Doshas from the body.

Even in the modern era, Samanya Vishesh Siddhant remains highly relevant. Its concept can be compared with the idea of homeostasis in contemporary medicine, where balance within the body is essential for health. This principle also helps in managing lifestyle disorders such as obesity, diabetes, and hypertension through proper diet, lifestyle modification, and individualized treatment approaches. Therefore, understanding Samanya Vishesh Siddhant provides a strong foundation for holistic healthcare, disease prevention, and personalized treatment in Ayurveda. []

Keywords: Ayurveda, Samanya, Vishesh, Siddhanta, Dosha, Dhatu

I. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is considered one of the most sacred and valuable sciences among all Vedas because it aims not only to cure diseases but also to promote a healthy and meaningful life. Its primary objective is “Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam, Aturasya Vikara Prashamanam” — maintaining the health of a healthy individual and treating diseases in the diseased person. Ayurveda gives equal importance to prevention as well as cure, making it a complete science of life.[¹]

According to Ayurveda, health depends on the proper balance of Doshas, Dhatus, and Malas, whereas any disturbance in their equilibrium leads to disease. This imbalance may occur either due to Vridhhi (increase) or Kshaya (decrease) of bodily elements. Just as a tree survives because of its roots, Ayurveda is also deeply rooted in its fundamental principles. Important Ayurvedic principles include Tridosha Siddhanta, Panchamahabhuta Siddhanta, Dosha-Dhatu-Mala Siddhanta, Rasa-Guna-Virya-Vipaka Siddhanta, Prakriti Siddhanta, Karya-Karana Siddhanta, Loka-Purusha Samya Siddhanta, and Samanya-Vishesh Siddhanta. These principles guided ancient Acharyas in maintaining health and longevity, and they continue to remain relevant even in modern times.



Among these principles, Samanya-Vishesha Siddhanta plays a key role in maintaining the balance of Doshas, Dhatus, and Malas. This principle is included among the Shad Padarthas described in Charaka Samhita — Samanya, Vishesha, Dravya, Guna, Karma, and Samavaya. [ii] These concepts are also explained in the Nyaya-Vaisheshika philosophy, although the sequence differs because the objectives of Ayurveda and Darshana are different. While Darshana focuses on attaining Moksha (salvation), Ayurveda applies these concepts for preserving health and treating diseases.

The principle of Samanya and Vishesha is highly practical because processes of increase and decrease constantly occur in the body throughout life. According to this Siddhanta, similarity causes increase, whereas dissimilarity causes decrease. Therefore, aggravated Doshas are managed by using substances and activities having opposite qualities, while deficient body elements are nourished using similar qualities. Diet, medicines, and lifestyle all work on this principle.

Samanya for Doshas

The concept of Samanya explains that substances with similar qualities increase corresponding Doshas or body elements. For example, drugs possessing Katu, Tikta, Ruksha, Laghu, and Sheeta properties help in managing Vata Kshaya through Guna Samanya. Similarly, Amla, Lavana, Ushna, and Tikshna Dravyas help in correcting Pitta Kshaya, while Snigdha, Guru, Madhura, and Sandra substances are useful in Shleshma Kshaya. Milk (Ksheera) increases Kapha because of its Snigdha and Guru qualities.

Karma Samanya also contributes to Dosha balance because similar activities increase similar qualities within the body. Excessive movement such as running and swimming increases Vata due to the dominance of Chala Guna. Heat exposure and excessive exertion increase Pitta because of Ushna and Tikshna qualities, while excessive sleep and inactivity increase Kapha due to Sthira and Guru Gunas. [iii]

Vishesha for Doshas

Vishesha refers to the reduction of a Dosha or bodily element through the use of opposite qualities. For example, Ruksha, Ushna, and Tikshna Dravyas help reduce Kapha, while Snigdha and Guru substances pacify Vata. Cooling substances such as Yava help in reducing aggravated Pitta. Diseases caused by Pitta aggravation, such as Amlapitta, are treated with drugs having Madhura and Sheeta properties. Herbs like Guduchi, Shatavari, Patola, Kushmanda, and Gairika are commonly used because their cooling and soothing properties help relieve Pitta-related symptoms.

Lifestyle factors also influence Dosha balance through Karma Vishesha. Exercise and physical activity help reduce Kapha, while certain regimens like night awakening may aggravate Vata and disturb bodily equilibrium. [iv]

Samanya as Chikitsa

The principle of Samanya is widely applied in Ayurvedic treatment to increase deficient body elements. Shukra Kshaya can be managed using nourishing substances like Ksheera and Ghrita, which possess Madhura, Sheeta, and Snigdha Gunas. Mutra Kshaya is relieved using Ikshu, Varuni, and Manda because of their Madhura, Amla, and Lavana properties. Purisha Kshaya can be managed with foods such as Kulmasha, Yava, Shaka, and Kushmanda. Similarly, Vata Kshaya is corrected with substances having Katu, Tikta, Laghu, and Ruksha qualities, while Pitta and Kapha Kshaya are managed with substances possessing similar properties to the deficient Dosha.

Vishesha as Chikitsa

The principle of Vishesha is mainly applied to reduce aggravated Doshas using opposite qualities. Therapeutic procedures such as Langhana, Rukshana, Snehana, Swedana, Brimhana, and Stambhana are all based on Guna Vishesha. Similarly, Shodhana and Shamana Chikitsa work on the principle of using opposite qualities to eliminate aggravated Doshas and restore balance in the body.



Role of Samanya-Vishesha Siddhanta in Different Fields of Ayurveda

Tridosha Siddhanta

According to Tridosha Siddhanta, the proper balance of Vata, Pitta, and Kapha is essential for maintaining health, while their imbalance leads to disease. These three Doshas regulate all physiological and pathological activities of the body. The principle of Samanya–Vishesha Siddhanta plays a vital role in maintaining this Doshic equilibrium.

As per Samanya Siddhanta, substances and activities having similar qualities increase the corresponding Dosha, whereas according to Vishesha Siddhanta, substances with opposite qualities help in reducing or pacifying it. Therefore, both diet and lifestyle directly influence the condition of Doshas.

For example, Vata Dosha possesses qualities such as Ruksha (dry), Laghu (light), Sheeta (cold), Sukshma (subtle), Chala (mobile), and Khara (rough). Excessive fasting, stress, dry food, and overexertion increase these qualities and aggravate Vata. To balance it, substances having opposite qualities like Snigdha (unctuous), Guru (heavy), and Ushna (hot) are used. Therapies such as Abhyanga and intake of Ghrita help pacify aggravated Vata.^[v]

Shatkriyakala

Shatkriyakala is an important Ayurvedic concept that explains the six stages of disease development. The term means “six stages for therapeutic intervention,” showing that disease develops gradually and can be controlled if treated at the right time. These six stages are Sanchaya, Prakopa, Prasara, Sthanasamshraya, Vyakti, and Bheda.^[vi]

The principle of Samanya–Vishesha Siddhanta plays a major role in understanding these stages. According to Samanya Siddhanta, similar qualities increase similar Doshas, while Vishesha Siddhanta states that opposite qualities reduce them. Continuous intake of similar diet and lifestyle factors causes gradual aggravation of Doshas, leading to disease formation.

In the first stage, Sanchaya, Doshas begin to accumulate in their natural sites due to similar qualities. For example, excessive oily and heavy food increases Kapha. In Prakopa, these accumulated Doshas become aggravated and symptoms become more noticeable. During Prasara, aggravated Doshas spread throughout the body through different channels (Srotas).

In Sthanasamshraya, Doshas localize in weak tissues (Khavaigunya), initiating disease formation and producing premonitory symptoms. In the Vyakti stage, the disease becomes fully manifested with clear signs and symptoms. Finally, in Bheda Avastha, complications develop and the disease may become chronic or difficult to treat.^[vii]

Ritucharya

Ritucharya refers to the seasonal regimen followed in Ayurveda to maintain health according to climatic changes. Seasonal variations influence Doshas, Agni, Bala, and overall body functions. The principle of Samanya–Vishesha Siddhanta forms the basis of Ritucharya. According to this principle, similar qualities increase similar properties in the body (Samanya), while opposite qualities help maintain balance (Vishesha).

Each season possesses specific qualities that affect the body differently. If a person follows diet and lifestyle habits similar to seasonal qualities, Doshas may become aggravated. Therefore, Ayurveda recommends adopting opposite regimens to maintain equilibrium.

During Varsha, Sharad, and Hemanta Ritu, body strength (Bala) is relatively better due to the dominance of Snigdha and Soma qualities. In Hemanta, digestive power becomes strong, and nourishing foods are well tolerated. In contrast, during Shishira, Vasanta, and Grishma Ritu, body strength decreases because of environmental dryness, heat, or Kapha aggravation. For example, Grishma Ritu increases dryness and fatigue, so cooling and hydrating measures are advised, while in Vasanta, light diet and exercise help reduce aggravated Kapha.^[viii]

Dinacharya

Dinacharya refers to the daily regimen described in Ayurveda for maintaining health and preventing diseases. Ayurveda explains that proper daily habits help maintain the balance of Doshas and support physical as well as mental



well-being. The concept of Samanya–Vishesha Siddhanta is practically applied in Dinacharya, where opposite qualities are used to maintain Doshic equilibrium.

Practices such as Abhyanga and Vyayama are common examples of this principle. Vata Dosha possesses qualities like Ruksha (dry), Sheeta (cold), and Chala (mobile). Abhyanga, performed with warm oil having Snigdha and Ushna qualities, helps pacify Vata by providing lubrication, warmth, and stability to the body. It also reduces fatigue and promotes strength and relaxation.^[ix]

Similarly, Vyayama (exercise) helps reduce Kapha Dosha. Kapha has Guru (heavy), Snigdha (unctuous), and Sthira (stable) qualities, whereas exercise produces Laghu (lightness), Ruksha (dryness), and movement. Therefore, regular exercise reduces heaviness, lethargy, and excess Kapha while improving stamina and metabolism.

II. DISCUSSION

The principle of Samanya–Vishesha Siddhanta is one of the most important and practical concepts in Ayurveda. It explains that substances, activities, and lifestyles having similar qualities increase specific body elements (Samanya), while those having opposite qualities decrease or balance them (Vishesha). This principle forms the basis for understanding disease progression as well as its treatment. It helps physicians select appropriate Ahara (diet), Vihara (lifestyle), medicines, and therapeutic procedures according to the condition of the patient and the state of Doshas.

The concept is widely applied in both Shamana and Shodhana Chikitsa. In conditions where Doshas are deficient, substances with similar qualities are used to promote nourishment and restoration. On the other hand, when Doshas become aggravated, therapies and substances with opposite qualities are administered to bring them back to equilibrium. Thus, the therapeutic action of Ayurvedic treatment mainly depends upon the principle of similarity and dissimilarity.

Samanya and Vishesha also play a significant role in maintaining the balance of Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. Disease develops when Doshas are continuously exposed to aggravating factors with similar qualities. This process can be understood through the six stages of disease progression (Shatkriyakala) — Sanchaya, Prakopa, Prasara, Sthanamsamshraya, Vyakti, and Bheda. If these aggravated Doshas are not managed in the early stages using opposite therapies, the disease may progress into a severe or chronic condition. Therefore, timely application of Vishesha Siddhanta is essential for disease prevention and management.

Daily regimens and therapeutic practices are also based on this principle. For example, Abhyanga helps pacify Vata through Snigdha and Ushna qualities, while Vyayama reduces Kapha because of its Laghu and Ruksha effects. Similarly, disorders of Srotasa can be managed by adopting Ahara and Vihara opposite to the causative factors of Srotodushti.^[x]

III. CONCLUSION

According to Ayurveda, health is maintained when Doshas, Dhatus, and Malas remain in a balanced state, while their imbalance leads to disease. This imbalance occurs due to Vriddhi (increase) or Kshaya (decrease) of bodily elements. Therefore, maintaining equilibrium is essential for preserving health and preventing disorders.

The principle of Samanya–Vishesha Siddhanta plays an important role in restoring this balance. Substances and activities having similar qualities increase corresponding body elements (Samanya), whereas those with opposite qualities reduce or pacify them (Vishesha). Based on this principle, Ayurveda recommends suitable Ahara, Vihara, medicines, and therapies according to the condition of Doshas.

This Siddhanta forms the basis of many Ayurvedic concepts such as Dinacharya, Ritucharya, Shamana, Shodhana, and disease management. Thus, Samanya–Vishesha Siddhanta provides a logical and practical foundation for maintaining health, preventing diseases, and achieving holistic well-being.



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