



**CONCEPT OF ATMA IN AYURVEDA: A REVIEW**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Ayurveda* is not merely the science for treating illness but also the science of life which helps to maintain health. The main aim of *Ayurveda* is to maintain the health of a healthy individual and treating the illness, which is possible in living being. *Ayu* is nothing but *chetananuvritti* (continuity of life). *Atma* is said as *Chetana & karta*. *Atma* is the only *chetanyabhava* in the entire universe. Only till the time the body as *chetana*(soul) it's said to be living & is the subject to treatment. According to *Ayurveda*, physical body, mind and the soul are essential components of the human body. The factor that pervades all over the body or world is known as *Atma*. By the opinions of *Sthana* of *Atma*, we can say that *Atma* being all pervading, it is present all over the body in each *Anu*. It is only for our better understanding that we limit it within bodies of living creatures.

**KEYWORDS:** Atma, Chetana, Anu, Ayurveda.

**INTRODUCTION**

*Ayurveda* is not merely the science for treating illness but also the science of life which helps to maintain health. The main aim of *Ayurveda* is to maintain the health of a healthy individual and treating the illness, which is possible in living being.<sup>[1]</sup> According to Acharya Sushruta, an individual can be said as *svastha* only if the *doshas*, *agni*, *dhatus* and *malas* are in state of equilibrium along with spiritual, emotional and mental well being.<sup>[2]</sup> And to achieve the health one should be healthy physically along with spiritually. *Ayurveda* not only take care of physical part of life but it goes for deep analyses into spiritual part also & it is not possible to achieve physical and mental health without spiritual, mental & emotional. In *Ayurveda*, *Satva Atma & Sharir* are considered as three pillars (*tri-dond*) on which *Ayu*(life) depends.<sup>[3]</sup> And the *Adhikaran* of treatment is this *tri-dond*. So, for treatment *Atma* is the important component on which treatment depend. When the *Atma* leaves the body, the later become non – functional or dead even if all organs are intact. In the absence of *Atma* the organs cannot function, nothing can be felt or experienced by the body. Hence *Atma* has been considered as the basis of all consciousness.<sup>[4]</sup> Even at the time of the conception *Charak Acharya* explain, that it is not only the union of *Shukra* and *Shonita* but the union of *Shukra*, *Shonita* and *Atma* which is responsible for the formation of foetus.<sup>[5]</sup>

**AIM**

Concept of *Atma* in *Ayurveda* – A Review.

**OBJECTIVE**

To understand the concept of *Atma* in *Ayurveda*.

**MATERIAL AND METHOD**

For this study *Ayurvedic* literature is collected from classical text of *Ayurveda*.

**Review of Literature**

**Etymological Derivation**

*Atma* originates from the “*Ath*” or “*AP*”*Dhatu*, which means presence all over and remains in mobile.

**Definition of Atma**

*Atma* is said as *Chetana* and *karta*, in the entire universe the *Atma* is only *Chaitanyabhava* (sign of life) and the rest of all are *Achetana* or *Jada*(non living). It means that *Atma* is a factor which has complete proficiency over the eternal knowledge hence this is known as *Karta*, *Jnyata*, *Bhokta*. *Atma* cannot be perceived by any other sense except the divine vision. It is omnipresent. The *Atma* does not undergo any modification. Its presence in different types of creatures does not bear any distinction. It appears to have distinctions only on account of specific features of the body and mind of different types of creatures.<sup>[6]</sup>

**Four Features of Atma**

1. It spreads all over.
2. Moulds all things into its form.
3. It enjoys the previous deeds.
4. It is eternal.

**Table. 1: Meaning of synonyms of Atma.**<sup>[7]</sup>

• <i>Kshetragha</i>	• Which resides in body.
• <i>Vedayita</i>	• Proficiency of knowledge.
• <i>Vibhu</i>	• Wide spreaded
• <i>Sarvagha</i>	• Prevading in entire universe.
• <i>Sarusta</i>	• Cause of life.
• <i>Shakshi</i>	• Knower of everything.
• <i>Avyaya</i>	• Unchanged.
• <i>Avyakta</i>	• Unmanifested.
• <i>Shashwata</i>	• <i>Nitya</i> – Eternal
• <i>Drashta</i>	• Observer of everything.
• <i>Karta</i>	• The cause of creation.
• <i>Anadi</i>	• No origination.
• <i>Bhokta</i>	• The factor responsible to experience the <i>Karma</i> & <i>Karmaphala</i> .
• <i>Jnata</i>	• The knower of creation or knowledge.
• <i>Jeevatma</i>	• The <i>Chaitanya</i> of individual body.
• <i>Paramatma</i>	• The supreme soul of souls.
• <i>Ananta</i>	• No death or end.
• <i>Chikitsya purush</i>	• The <i>Shad</i> – <i>dhatwatmaka purusha</i> .

**Karan & Karana Dravya**<sup>[8]</sup>

*Manas*(mind), *Indriya*(sensory organs), & *Artha*(subject) are defined as *Karan* in *Ayurveda*. The *Atma* is considered to be *Karta* of *Manas*, *Indriya* & *Artha*. The *Atma* is a constant, cannot be manifested, unchanged and above all, eternal. The *Atma* with the help of *Manas*, *Indriya* & *Artha* succeeds in achieving the knowledge.

**Types of Atma**

According to *Ayurveda*, two types are given

1. *Jeevatma*
2. *Paramatma*.

*Upanishads* believe *Atma* is one and all pervading. Just as moon is one but several images will be seen in various pools and rivers similarly *Atma* though single has its images in each individual living being. The *Vedanta* too believes *Atma* is all pervading and one. Just as *Akash* though one, is classified as *Ghatakasha Mathakasha* even *Atma* has *upadi Bhedas*.<sup>[9]</sup>

**Jeevatma**

It is different in different bodies, all pervading and eternal. It is master of body. Experiences his own *Karma*, attains knowledge of body only. Proficient in attaining knowledge with the help of *Shareera*, *Manas*, *Indriya*<sup>[10]</sup>. Less energetic than *Paramatma*.

*Sukshma sharira* carries the *karma shesha* to other new body after death along with 17 *tattvas*, they are 4 *tanmatra*,<sup>[10]</sup> *Indriya*, *Manas*, *Buddhi* and *Ahankara*. It always associates with *Sthoola shareera*. It records the memory and carries the imprints of previous birth to new body in subtle form after the death hence called as *Karana Shareera*.

**Paramatma**

It is superior soul of all souls. Absolute knower of Creation. Utmost Energetic. Neither born nor die-eternal. Supreme source of Knowledge. No adhesion of *Vikara* or *Doshas*.<sup>[11]</sup>

**Atmotpatti & Sthana**

*Atma* is immortal and free from the circle of life and death. That is the reason, *Atma* is known as *Ajara*, *Anadi* & *Nitya*. But here we may consider *Utapatti* as the entry of *Atma* in body. In the formation of *garbha* (fetus), the fusion of sperm and ovum along with *Atma* is important factor.<sup>[12]</sup> *Shadanga*, *Vijanana*, *Indriya*, *Indriya Artha*, *Atma*, *Atma-guna* all are located in *Hrudaya*.<sup>[13]</sup> The *Sthana* of *Atma* is *Hrudaya*. *Atma* resides in *Hrudaya* and *Buddhi*, it is responsible for *Smruti* and *Gyana*. It is *Vibhu* and *Avyaya*, hence it is invisible to ordinary eyes. Visible only to *Divya Chakshu* of *Yogi*.<sup>[14]</sup>

Ten places where soul resides – *Jeevata Dhama*:(*ah.sa.anga vibhaga sharir 13*)

**Table No. 2: 10 Places Where Atma Resides.**

1. Shira (Head)	2. Rasana bandhana 3. (Area where the tongue is fixed in oral cavity – Frenulum).
4. Kantha (Throat)	5. Asra (Blood)
6. Hrudaya (Heart)	7. Nabhi (Umbilicus)
8. Basti 9. (Urinary bladder)	10. Shukra (Sperm)
11. Ojas (Vital fluid maintaining immunity)	12. Guda (Anal region)

**Atma Parimana & Lakshana**

*Charak* says *Atma* as *Vibhu* and hence *Sarvagata* & *Mahan* in *Parinama*. *Ramanuja* and *Vedantins* mention *Anu Parinama*. *Jains* mention *Madhyama Parinama* and *Vaisheshikas* mention *Mahat Parinama*. A few opine it is of *Anghusta Parinama* and blazes like rising sun.<sup>[15]</sup>

*Aacharya Charak* and *Sushruta* both have mentioned the *Lakshana* of *Atma*. *Aacharya Sushruta* has given<sup>[16]</sup> *Lakshan* of *Atma*. These *Lakshana* are related to *Jeevita Sharira* only.

*Lakshana* of *Atma* are considered as the signs of living person which are – inspiration and expiration, blinking of the eyes, life, mental perceptions, shifting of sense organ from one object to another, mobility and stability of mind, anticipation of death, knowledge of something visualized in the right eye by the left eye, desire, hatred, happiness, misery, effort, consciousness, stability, intellect, memory and ego.<sup>[16]</sup> These signs are not available in respect to a dead body. So they are considered to be characteristics of *Atma*. Even the *Pariksha*(examination) of *Atma*, is also done by these all *Lakshana*. Presence of these *lakshana* denotes life & the absence denotes death.

### **Jyana Utapatti with the Help of Atma**

*Manas, Indriya, Artha* are known as *Karana* and *Atma* is their *Adhistata* or *Karta* or Master. The *Atma* with the help of *Karana* or *Gynena* (*Shareera, Manas, Indriya, Artha*) gets success in attaining the knowledge.<sup>[17]</sup> One attains *Gyana*(knowledge), by involvement of *Manas*(*Achetana*) with the *Prayatana guna* of *Atma* along with *Vayu*(*Kriyasheela*). The *Atma* is responsible for *Jyana* which it attains due to its association with the *Karans*.

### **Atma importance**

The *Atma* is the vital force, it is *Pumaan*(along with *Shareera* and *Satva*). It is the main *Adhikarana* of this *Ayurveda Shastra*. It is for this *Pumaan* that this *Shastra* has been profounded.

In *Ayurveda*, *Atma* is considered as one among nine *Karana Dravyas* as it provides vitality and life to the *Mahabhutas*, it is quoted just after them in order.<sup>[18]</sup> These nine are the *Karana* for *Shrusti*. Based on presence or absence of *Indria* vitalized by the *Atma*, the *Karya Dravyas* are classified as *Chetana* and *Achetana* respectively.

While mentioning about *Chikitsaadihikruta Purusha*, whether the 24 or 25 *Tattva Purusha* or *Ek Dhatuja Purusha*, presence of *Atma* is unrefutable. Thus, *Chikitsan* too is done to *Shareera* only when associated with *Atma* not otherwise. The concept of rebirth too is due to *Atma* leaving a body on death and getting a new body in the form of rebirth for *Bhog* of *Karmaphala* of previous births. The *Atma* is the *Jnyanadhikarana* In attainment of knowledge the role of *Atma* is greatest as it is *Atma* which gets the knowledge and it initiates the process of *Jnyanopathi* too.<sup>[19]</sup>

### **DISCUSSION**

*Gamana* in context of derivation of *Atma* could be understood as : Movement of *Atma* from one *Deha* to other i.e. Rebirth; Movement of *Atma* with mind in dreams; Movement from one *Indriya* to other for grasping specific *Indriyatha*; Movement of *Atma* within the body from birth towards death.

The types, number, and *Parimaana* point towards an understanding that: *Atma* is one and all pervading; types are only *Upaadhi Bheda*.

The origin of *Atma* is impossible to trace due to its eternity. It could be contextually taken as its origin with every new birth of a living thing i.e; at the time of entry of semen into *Yoni* even *Atma* is said to enter.

*Atma* associates with eight *Bhavas* they are *Dharma, Adharma, Gnana, Agnana, Vairagya, Avairagya, Aishwarya, Anaishwarya*. It always associates with *Sthoola Shareera*.

*Atma* is indestructible. It continues to live even after the body gets destroyed. It is immortal and hence fundamentally different from body. Being guided by the associated past actions (*Karma*), the *Atma* who travel with the help of mind transmigrates from one body to another along with four subtle *bhootas*. This *Atma* cannot be perceived by any other sense except the divine vision.<sup>[20]</sup>

### **CONCLUSION**

*Atma* is a *Dravya*, responsible for life and activity. Its presence is essential for life, for Attaining Knowledge, for Birth and Rebirth. Thus, it is most important among the nine *Karana Dravyas*. The inseparable combination of soul, *Shareera* & *Mana*(mind) starts the process of life. It has been postulated that as long as the bond of soul, mind & *sharir* remains intact, the physiological and biochemical pathways function properly and it represents life. As soon as *Jeevatma* ceases from the relationship with *Shareera*, the consequence is the death.

When the life is resigned, combination of physical body, sensory organs, soul and mind forms a bond.

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