iii. Introduction to śarīra pramāņa

iii. Introduction to śarīra pramāṇa, saṃkhyā śarīra, anga-pratyanga-koṣṭhānga and āśaya

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Definition and Importance

- In Ayurveda, **pramāṇa** means "measurement" or "parameter." When applied to the body, **śarīra pramāṇa** refers to the **quantitative assessment** of the human body's dimensions, proportions, and capacities.
- The rationale for body measurement in Ayurveda:
 - $1. \ \ \textbf{Identifying the ideal physique} \ \text{corresponding to balanced dosas}.$
 - 2. **Detecting abnormalities** (e.g., excessive thinness, obesity, or disproportion) that may predispose an individual to certain diseases.
 - 3. Assisting in **surgical procedures** and general medical examination (particularly in **Suśruta Saṃhitā**, where detailed anthropometric guidelines help surgeons).

Types of Measurements

Ayurvedic texts discuss various units and methods of measuring the body:

1. Angula Pramāņa

- Angula literally means "finger breadth."
- o Often used as a **basic unit** for measuring length in the body (similar to an anthropometric measure).
- For instance, the classical texts mention that an individual's height is typically **84 angulas**, though the exact figure can vary by textual tradition.

2. Sva-Anguli Pramāṇa (Self-Finger Breadth)

 Each individual can measure their body proportions using their own finger breadth—emphasizing personalization of measurement.

3. Anjali Pramāṇa (Palms-Cup Measure)

- **Anjali** is formed by joining the two palms together.
- Used to measure **volume** (e.g., daily recommended quantity of water or certain foods in some contexts).
- o It is also used to estimate the volume capacity of specific body compartments.

4. Other References

 Classical texts like Suśruta Saṃhitā detail śārīra sthāna chapters enumerating body dimensions (e.g., circumference of chest, length of limbs) for both normal and abnormal presentations.

Relevance

- Diagnosis: Detecting disproportionate measurements can hint at doșic imbalances or congenital anomalies.
- Therapeutics: Adjusting diet, exercise, and treatments (like **panchakarma**) may aim to bring an individual closer to **ideal proportions** or healthy pramāṇa.
- Preventive Medicine: Encourages maintaining body proportions that support longevity and disease-free life.

Saṃkhyā Śarīra (Enumerations of the Body)

Concept of Samkhyā

- "Saṃkhyā" means "number" or "enumeration." In Ayurvedic anatomy, the concept of saṃkhyā śarīra involves listing and counting the body's constituents:
 - $\circ \ \ \textbf{Bones and joints}$
 - Muscles and ligaments

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- Channels (srotas)
- Marmas (vital points)
- Indriyas (sense organs)
- This enumeration helps practitioners **systematically study** the human organism and **understand** how structural elements are integrated.

Importance in Classical Texts

• Suśruta Saṃhitā (especially Suśruta Śārīra Sthāna) and Caraka Saṃhitā provide details of how many of each structure exist, serving as a blueprint for surgical precision and clinical examination.

Examples of Samkhyā Śarīra

- 1. **Asthi Saṃkhyā**: Ayurveda commonly notes **360 bones** in total, counting both major bones and cartilaginous structures. This differs from modern anatomy's standardized "206 bones," reflecting differences in classification (some cartilages or small bones may be counted separately).
- 2. Snāyu Saṃkhyā: Tendons/ligaments can be enumerated, offering insight into musculoskeletal network.
- 3. **Marmas**: **107 vital points** are detailed in classical texts; knowledge of their precise location and count is essential in surgery and marma therapy.

Anga, Pratyanga, Kosthanga

In Ayurveda, the body is broadly divided into major parts (anga), minor parts (pratyanga), and internal regions (koṣṭhānga). This classification aids in systematic anatomical study and clinical examination.

Anga (Major Limbs/Parts)

- Refers to larger divisions or main limbs of the body:
 - Śirā (Head)
 - Grīvā (Neck)
 - Vakşaḥ (Chest)
 - Pṛṣṭha (Back)
 - Śroni (Pelvic region)
 - Uru (Thighs)
 - ∘ Jānu (Knees)
 - Janghā (Lower legs)
 - o Pāda (Feet)
 - o Bāhu (Arms)
 - o Pāņi (Hands)
 - The exact grouping can vary among texts, but these are recognized as **primary divisions**.

Pratyanga (Minor or Secondary Parts)

- **Subdivisions** within each **anga**, typically smaller or more specific:
 - Examples include **fingers, toes, nails, eyelashes, eyebrows, lips**, etc.
 - Provide fine functionality (e.g., dexterity, fine touch, expression).

Koṣṭhāṅga (Organs or Internal Parts)

- Koṣṭha generally refers to the internal cavity or trunk region (thoracic and abdominal cavities).
- Koṣṭhāṅga includes the organs housed within:
 - 1. Hridaya (Heart)
 - 2. Yakrt (Liver)
 - 3. Pliha (Spleen)
 - 4. Vrikka (Kidneys)

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- 5. Kukşi (Lower abdomen): Stomach, intestines, etc.
- 6. Phupphusa (Lungs) in the thoracic cavity.
- Ayurveda emphasizes koşţha parīkṣā (examination of internal organs and GI tract function) to assess agni, digestion, and doşic balance.

Koştha - The GI Region

- **Koṣṭha** is sometimes used more narrowly to denote the **digestive tract** (stomach, small intestine, large intestine).
- Assessment: Koṣṭha can be mṛdu (soft/easy), madhyama (moderate), or krūra (hard)—influencing bowel habits and doṣic predispositions.

Āśaya (Seats or Reservoirs in the Body)

Definition

• Āśaya refers to "that which holds or contains." In the context of Ayurvedic anatomy, it denotes specific compartments or reservoirs within the body where doṣas, dhātus, or wastes are stored or transformed.

Types of **Ā**śaya

Classically, several āśayas are described, each hosting a different doşa or substance:

- 1. Udara Āśaya (Abdominal Cavity):
 - Includes the amāśaya (stomach) and pakvāśaya (large intestine), key sites for Vāta and partially Pitta/Kapha.
- 2. Hṛd Āśaya (Cardiac Region):
 - Seat of **Pitta** in many contexts, also considered the location for **consciousness** and **circulation**.
- 3. Śirā Āśaya (Head/Brain Region):
 - o Sometimes associated with Kapha or with overall cognitive function (central nervous system correlate).
- 4. Garbhāśaya (Uterus):
 - Specific to female anatomy, the seat for fetal development.

Additionally, certain texts mention **raktāśaya** (reservoir for blood), **annāśaya** (reservoir for food in the stomach), etc., each focusing on where a **particular substance** resides or is processed.

Clinical Importance

- Understanding āśaya helps in **diagnosing** location-specific disorders, e.g., identifying if pain or discomfort arises from the stomach (amāśaya) or intestines (pakvāśaya).
- Treatments can be targeted (e.g., virechana to clear the pitta āśaya, basti to clear vāta from pakvāśaya, etc.).

Interconnections and Clinical Applications

- 1. **Holistic Anatomy**: The Ayurvedic approach does not just focus on individual structures but sees them as **functionally interlinked**.
- 2. Disease Diagnosis:
 - **Śarīra pramāṇa** helps detect disproportion or obesity/malnutrition.
 - o Saṃkhyā śarīra clarifies the location/count of vital points (marmas), bones, etc.
 - Anga-pratyanga-koṣṭhānga knowledge is critical for localizing symptoms (e.g., diagnosing abdominal vs. thoracic pain).
 - Āśaya clarifies which doṣa or substance is primarily vitiated in a specific compartment.
- 3. Treatment Approaches:
 - **Therapies** (panchakarma, external therapies) are chosen and directed based on which **āśaya** or **aṅga** is involved.

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- Lifestyle and diet modifications are guided by understanding the koṣṭha type (digestion capacity) and overall body measurements.
- 4. Surgical Insights:
 - Suśruta, considered the father of surgery, relied heavily on precise enumerations and body measurements to plan incisions, identify marmas, and avoid iatrogenic injury.

Summary

- Śarīra Pramāṇa: Involves measuring the body via aṅgula pramāṇa, anjali pramāṇa, and other anthropometric methods to maintain proportional health and diagnose imbalances.
- Saṃkhyā Śarīra: Provides enumerations (bones, joints, marmas, etc.) giving a map of the body's structural elements.
- Anga-Pratyanga-Koşthanga:
 - **Aṅga** = major body parts (limbs, head, trunk).
 - **Pratyanga** = sub-parts or smaller sections (fingers, nails, ears, etc.).
 - Koṣṭhāṅga = internal organs in thoraco-abdominal cavities (heart, liver, intestines, etc.).
- Āśaya: The reservoirs or seats of doṣas, dhātus, wastes, or developing fetus; crucial for localizing pathology and planning targeted treatments.

By integrating these concepts—body measurements (pramāṇa), enumerations (saṃkhyā), gross anatomical divisions (aṅga, pratyaṅga, koṣṭhāṅga), and internal compartments (āśaya)—Ayurveda provides a comprehensive, functional blueprint of the human body. This holistic view is central for diagnosis, prevention, and management of diseases in the Ayurvedic system.

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