



## PRAKRITI AND ITS ROLE IN MAINTAINING HEALTH AND PREVENTION OF DISEASE

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### ABSTRACT

Ayurveda believes that every individual is a unique phenomenon and is indivisible from the cosmos. The five basic elements of this universe are manifested into three biological organizations known as Vata, Pitta and Kapha. At the time of fertilization, Vata, Pitta and Kapha determine by their permutation and combinations the constitution of an individual, which is called 'Prakriti'. This 'Prakriti' is the first creation of cosmos and is in itself a unique phenomenon. The knowledge of Prakriti helps in understanding the health and disease state of an individual and facilitates in promotive and curative aspects. Several studies are undergoing involving association of Prakriti with genotypes and chronic diseases. Prakriti if screened at an early stage of life can enable prevention of various chronic diseases via implementation of diet, lifestyle and habitual changes.

**KEYWORDS-:** *Prakriti, Biological organization, promotive and curative.*

## INTRODUCTION:

One of the key fundamental theories of Ayurveda is the concept of *Tridosha* involving the three *dosas* of Vata, Pitta and Kapha<sup>1</sup>. The ancient texts of Ayurveda mention numerous properties of *dosas* and how they affect a human being's physiology or Prakriti based on the dominance of one or more *dosas*. Ayurveda describes seven broad constitutional types (*Prakriti*) each with a varying degree of physiological, anatomical and psychological variations and predisposition to different diseases.<sup>2</sup>

Prakriti (constitution) assessment is the chief factor for analysis of strength of patient. It is also emphasized that patients suffering from similar disease do not respond to similar treatment modality because of variation in their constitution. This stresses the fact that strategy of treatment modalities is different in diverging patients. Universal management principle of disease also lays emphasis on role of Prakriti (constitution) i.e. if those drugs are used which are antagonistic to Prakriti (constitution) the disease is cured. In the description of Deha Prakriti, it has been stated that particular *Doshika Prakriti* persons are prone to develop that type of *Dosaja Vikaras*. Acharyas have also described measures for avoiding occurrence of these diseases by modification in diet and life style.

Prakriti once set is permanent for that individual. *Prakriti lakshan* as stated by *Acharya Sushruta* in *Sharira Sthana* quote that the temperament of a man is never aggravated nor does it suffer any deterioration or

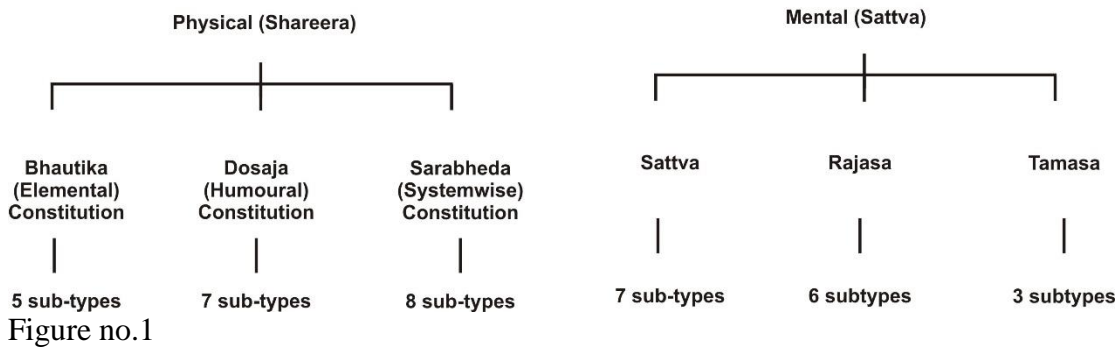
abatement. A change, abatement or deterioration in any particular case should be regarded as the harbinger of death<sup>3</sup>.

## CLASSIFICATION OF HUMAN PERSONALITY:

In Indian literature, the typology aspect of human personality seems to have been first described in Ayurveda as a special subject and in a systematic way. Ayurveda people probed into this field of personality from different angles in order to adjust the science of treatment based on the individual temperament and constitution.

Detailed descriptions are found in *Charaka* and *Sushruta* on the different classifications of typology of personality from different aspects and bases. *Vagbhata* in *Ashtang Samgraha* devotes a separate chapter '*Prakrthibhedhiya Adhyaya*' on the subject of typology from different angles. In *Ashtang Hridaya*, the divisions of classification based on the above mentioned two bases are called *Dosamayi* and *Gunamayi* Prakriti<sup>4</sup>. *Charaka* and *Sushruta* describe different typologies from humoral (physical homeostasis) and psychological (the predominance of three *amsaas* of satva) point of views. *Sushruta* gives another typology of *Bhautika Prakriti* (according to the predominance of *bhutas*). The bias of *bhautika prakriti* is also based on physical consideration. Another angle of typology is *Sarabheda* (Differentiation based on the various systems of the body). We can summarize the classification of typologies of personality as met in Ayurveda as follows:

TYPOLOGY OF PERSONALITY



TYPOLOGY BASED ON PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF PERSONALITY

There are three ways of classification of typology based on physical aspects of personality viz, *Bhautika*, *Doshaja* and the *Dhatubheda*. These represent the different Physical, Humoral and Physiological activities

of human organism. Detailed explanation of *Doshaja Prakriti* has been taken henceforth regarding its practical application in health and disease. *Manas Prakriti* (psychological constitution) will be detailed in next article

DOSAJA (DEHA) PRAKRITI (BIOPHYSICAL CONSTITUTION) –ITS KINDS AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

The words *dosa Prakriti*, *Deha Prakriti* and *Prakriti* have been used in the same sense in Ayurveda. Charak holds that the *Prakriti* is named according to the constitutional predominance of a particular *dosa*.

According to Vagbhatta, *Prakriti* is caused by the *dosas* inherent in the *Sukra* and *Artava* immediately before the conception. This is on the analogy of the production of worms (insects) in a poisonous substance. The *Prakriti* caused by *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* are inferior (*heena*), medium (*madhya*), and superior (*uttama*) respectively. The *Prakriti* caused by all the three *dosas* when they are in the state of equilibrium (*Sama Dhatu*) is the best among all. The *Prakriti* caused by combination of two *dosas* are *nindniya* (denounced). The example of poisonous worms is to indicate that, though they are born

from poison, they do not die of it, but continue to survive, similarly the *Prakriti*, though formed from the *dosas*, which are similar to poison, continue to manifest in the person as long as he lives<sup>5</sup>. According to Charaka, the use of term like *Vata Prakriti*, *Pitta Prakriti* and *Kapha Prakriti* is not correct, because in these types of constitution, there is always a dominance of *dosas* in the bodies of individuals. *Prakriti* means a normal or natural state and there should not be any dominance of *dosas* in the bodies of such individuals. So, such individuals are having the dominance of one or the other of the *dosas* and cannot be described to have the normal states of their body. Thus, to use the correct term, they are *Vatala* (having dominance of *Vata*), *Pittala* (having dominance of *Pitta*), and *Shleshmala* (having dominance of *Kapha*) and these do not indicate the normal states of their body<sup>6,7</sup>.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF VATALA INDIVIDUAL (VATALA PRAKRITI LAKSHANAM)

Vata is ununctous, light, and mobile, abundant in quantity, swift, cold, rough and non-slime. Various manifestations due to these

attributes of *vata* in human body having *vatala* type of constitution are given in the table below:

Attributes of Vata	Specific manifestations in the body of the individual having Vatala type of constitution
1. Ununctous ( <i>Ruksha</i> )	Ununctuousness, emaciation and dwarfness of the body; long drawn, dry low, broken, obstructed and hoarse voice; always keeping awake.
2. Light ( <i>Laghu</i> )	Light and inconsistent gait, action, food and movement.
3. Mobile ( <i>Chala</i> )	Unstable joints-eyes, eyebrows, jaws, lips, tongue, head, shoulder, hands and legs.
4. Abundance ( <i>Bahu</i> )	Talkativeness, abundance in tendons and veins.
5. Swift ( <i>Sighra</i> )	Quick in initiating actions, getting irritated and the onset of morbid manifestation, quick in affliction with fear, quick in likes and dislikes; quick in understanding and forgetting things.
6. Cold ( <i>Sita</i> )	Intolerance for cold things; often getting afflicted with cold, shivering and stiffness.
7. Rough ( <i>Parusha</i> )	Roughness in the hair of the head, face and other parts of the body, nails, teeth, face, hands and feet.
8. Non-slime ( <i>Visada</i> )	Cracking of the limbs and organs, production of cracking sound in joints when they move.

Because of the above mentioned qualities, individuals having Vatala type of constitution are mostly possessed of strength,

span of life, procreation, accessories of life and wealth in lesser quantity<sup>67</sup>.

#### DIETARY AND BEHAVIOURAL REGIMEN TO BE FOLLOWED

- Avoid eating foods that increase *Vata*, instead eat *pitta* and *Kapha* increasing foods, which are of sweet, sour and salt taste.
- Avoid hot and spicy foods, reduce intake of dry fruits and seeds.
- Massage the body with warm oil, bath in warm water, wrap the body with cloth.
- Under supervision of Ayurvedic practitioner cleanse the digestive system and body with oils, salty liquids, Ayurvedic preparations and panchkarma methods regularly.
- Avoid excessive physical activities.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF PITTALA INDIVIDUAL (PITTALA PRAKRITI LAKSHANAM)

*Pitta* is hot, sharp, liquid of fleshy smell, sour and pungent. Various manifestations due to these attributes in the

human body having *Pittala* type of constitution are as in the table given below

Attributes of Pitta	Specific manifestations in the body of the individual having Pittala type of constitution.
1. Hot ( <i>Ushna</i> )	Intolerance for hot things, having hot face, tender and clear body of port wine mark, freckles, blackmoles, excessive hunger and thirst; quick advent of wrinkles, graying of hair and baldness; presence of soft and brown hair in the face, head and other parts of the body.
2. Sharp ( <i>Tikshna</i> )	Sharp (demonstration of) physical strength, strong digestive power, intake of food and drink in large quantity, inability to face difficult situations and glutton habits.
3. Liquor ( <i>Drava</i> )	Looseness and softness of joints and muscles; voiding of sweat, urine and faeces in large quantity.
4. Fleshy smell ( <i>Visram</i> )	Putrid smell of axilla, mouth, head and body in excess.
5. Pungent and sour tastes ( <i>Amlam, Katukam</i> )	Insufficiency of semen, sexual desire and procreation.

By virtue of the above mentioned qualities, a man having Pittala type of constitution is endowed with moderate

strength, moderate span of life, moderate spiritual and materialistic knowledge, wealth and accessories of life.

#### DIETARY AND BEHAVIOURAL REGIMEN TO BE FOLLOWED

- Eat *Vata* and *Kapha* increasing foods, which are of sweet, bitter and astringent taste.
- Eat plenty of raw foods like salads, fruits and vegetables; avoid pickles and acidic drinks like alcohol, tea, coffee.
- Drink *Ghrita*, purgation therapy with drugs of sweet taste and cold potency.
- Try to maintain a cool environment, bath in cool water.
- Rest under moonlight and do not expose the body to too much sun.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF SLESHMALA INDIVIDUAL (SLESHMALA PRAKRITI LAKSHANAM)

Kapha is unctuous, smooth, soft, sweet, firm, dense, slow, stable, heavy, cold, viscous and clear. The various manifestations

in the human body having sleshmala type of constitution are given below:

Attributes of <i>Shleshma</i>	Specific manifestations in the body of the individual having Sleshmala type of constitution.
1. Unctuous ( <i>Snigda</i> )	Unctuousness of organs.
2. Smooth ( <i>Slakshna</i> )	Smoothness of organs.

3. Soft ( <i>Mrdu</i> )	Pleasing appearance, tenderness and clarity of complexion.
4. Sweet ( <i>Madhura</i> )	Increase in the quantity of semen, desire for sex act and number of procreation.
5. Firm ( <i>Sara</i> )	Firmness, compactness and stability of the body.
6. Dense ( <i>Sandram</i> )	Plumpness and roundedness of all organs.
7. Slow ( <i>Mandam</i> )	Slow in action, intake of food and movement.
8. Stable ( <i>Sthimitham</i> )	Slowness in initiating actions, getting irritated and morbid manifestations.
9. Heavy ( <i>Guru</i> )	Non slippery and stable gait with the entire sole of the feet pressing against the earth.
10. Cold ( <i>Sita</i> )	Lack of intensity in hunger, thirst, heat and perspiration.
11. Viscous ( <i>Vijjala</i> )	Firmness and compactness in joints.
12. Clear ( <i>Acha</i> )	Happiness in the look and face; happiness and softness of complexion and voice.

By virtue of the above mentioned qualities, a man having sleshmala type of constitution is endowed with the excellence of

strength, wealth, knowledge, energy, peace and longevity.

#### DIETARY AND BEHAVIOURAL REGIMEN TO BE FOLLOWED

- Avoid eating foods high in *Kapha* which are dry, penetrating and hot.
- Avoid fatty, fried foods and excess oil.
- Avoid excess sleep.
- Control addictions to sweet food.
- Do daily physical activity.
- Under supervision of Ayurvedic practitioner, cleanse the digestive system and body with *Ruksha* substance and panchkarma procedures regularly.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF DWANDAJA PRAKRITI

Individuals having constitution dominated by the combination of two *dosas* are

characterized by the combination of the manifestation of respective *dosas*.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF SAMA PRAKRITI

*Samadhata* type of individual is the one who has all the *dosas* in the state of equilibrium, is endowed with the qualities of

all the three types of individuals described above<sup>8</sup>.

#### CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Study of Prakriti helps the clinician in early prediction of disease susceptibility and thus prevention of possible diseases. It also

aids in successful prognostication in disease state and selection of appropriate and specific treatment in a given disease.



*Prakriti Pariksha* (examination) is a component of *Dasavidha Atura Pariksha* in Ayurveda.

Particular *Doshika Prakriti* persons are prone to develop that type of *dosaja Vikaras*. It has been observed that *Vatala Prakriti* persons are more susceptible to diseases like Anxiety neurosis, Thyrotoxicosis, Peptic ulcer and Tuberculosis, *Pittala* individuals to Hypertension, Peptic ulcer, Bronchial asthma and Rheumatoid arthritis, *sleshmala* individuals to Diabetes mellitus, Obesity, Osteoarthritis, Hypertension and Ishaemic heart disease. In view of this fact, the different diseases to which an individual is predisposed can be prevented by appropriate diet and life style modifications. In Ayurveda such preventive measures are listed in *Swasthvritta*, *Dincharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvrta* etc.

Also it has been seen that similar situations like coping with stress develop different diseases in persons of different *Prakriti*.

It is also emphasized that patients suffering from similar diseases do not respond to same treatment because of variation in their constitution. So unlike Western medicine, which takes the view that all people are less or more same and treats the condition rather than the patient suffering from it, Ayurveda stresses the fact that treatment modalities are different in diverging patients and prescribes drugs which are antagonistic to *Prakriti*.

## CONCLUSION

The interpretation of *Prakriti* is more systemic in Charaka samhita as compared to other Samhita. Self-assessment questionnaire are designed on the basis of explanation found in Charaka Samhita which in turn is based on the specific attributes (*Gunas*) of a particular dosa. So in this review article we want to conclude that by knowing the characteristics of each individual *Prakriti* and comparative study of *Tridoshaja Prakriti*, one can know his/her own *Prakriti* and by knowing it they can grab the benefits of Ayurveda in right way.

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