

REDEFINING TRIGUNA THEORY W.S.R TO HUMAN NATURE & METABOLISM

Varshney Pallavi¹ Swastik Suresh²

- ¹. Associate Professor, HAMC Campus, Uttarakhand Ayurved University, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India
². BAMS, MBA, M.Phil, Medical Officer Incharge, Ayurvedic & Unani Services, Govt. Of Uttarakhand, India

ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the knowledge of life. The basics of this science were defined by our sages by closely observing nature and the creatures dwelling in it. Initially lifestyle regimens were defined for maintaining the healthy life of individuals, later diseases and their cure were enumerated in detail in the sastras. For a long time the ideas available were blindly believed by people. Methodical data on use and substantiation of outcomes was hardly available in public domain. Standard treatment protocols for practitioners were not available. Organized documentation on Ayurvedic Pharmacoepidemiology and Pharmacovigilance for clinical practice, safety and adverse drug reactions were also not available as open access. But now the medical fraternity demands scientific validation. Through this article the *Trigunas* as explained in our classics have been reviewed. An attempt has been made to explain them in terms of scientific terminology. Present study presents a redefined view of *Trigu a* and proposes their interrelationship with human metabolism, Inter Relationship of *Satva, Rajas & Tamas, Trigu a & Panchmahabhootas*, somatic & psychological disorders with human consciousness, its relation with endocrinal system and pathology of *m nasika rogas* has been presented in this way they may be easily understood, assimilated and applied by our medical community.

Keywords: *Trigunas, Satva, Raja, Tama, Panchmahabhootas*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is an age old time tested philosophy which has been under unremitting practice since innumerable years. This science was originally envisaged by *Lord Brahm* and later transferred to other sages for the benefit of the ailing mankind. The legacy of this visionary work of *Vedic* scientists has streamed through Ayurveda for over 5000 years to the present scientific age. The human body they implicated was a unique permutation of five basic elements – *k a,*

V yu, Agni, Jala and *Prthv*. With the progression and development of life on earth; diseases also started evolving and henceforth started the quest of man to understand their origin and the method of their cure. Individualized medicine is one of the core principles of Ayurveda. Ayurveda lacked sophisticated equipments for study in those days and ancient *vaidika* scientists used the power of observation to study diseases and uncover drugs for their successful treatment.

With rising inquisitiveness people started understanding fundamental concepts of ayurveda and from amongst them one is that of "Triguna Theory". Initial knowledge of this basic concept was transferred orally and then written documents in the form of *stras* came into existence. While faith and skill are adequate for the traditional Ayurvedic practitioners, modern minds still demand scientific validation.

Aims & Objectives:

1. To present a review of the concept of *Triguna* as explained in our ayurvedic texts.
2. To present a redefined view of *Triguna* for the better understanding of the modern scientific community.
3. To understand the interrelationship of *Triguna* with human metabolism with supporting evidences.

Methodology:

To validate our theories in case of this study named Redefining *Triguna* Theory w.s.r to Human Nature & Metabolism, the facts have been taken from two main sources-First source of evidences is based on past, traditional and present nature of Ayurvedic *stras*. Here, the documentation of practice to support various claims is placed. The second source of evidences is based on scientific researches, treatment system and procedures used in Ayurvedic medicine in present era.

Inclusion Criteria: We included data that discussed *Triguna* and other supported theories of Ayurvedic literature. Researches were considered for study even if they referred to establishing a link between Modern Scientific Research and Ayurvedic Medical Science.

Exclusion Criteria: We have excluded documents that were without verified data or

related evidences and not concerned with *Triguna* Theory.

Results:

The concept of *Triguna* has been examined theoretically (Bose, 1966; Misra et al., 2000; Parameshwaran, 1969; Rao, 1971) and empirically (Das, 1987, 1991; Kapur et al., 1997; Marutham, Balodhi and Misra, 1998; Mathew, 1995; Mohan and Sandhu, 1986, 1988; Pathak, Bhatt and Sharma, 1992; Rao and Harigopal, 1979; Sebastian and Mathew, 2002; Sharma, 1999; Singh, 1972; Sitamma, Sridevi and P.V.K. Rao, 1995; Uma, Lakshmi and Parameshwaran, 1971; Wolf, 1998)".

Indian Ayurvedic researchers including foreign scientists are tremendously working to explore ayurvedic secrets and establishing its scientific facts through modern research methodology. Few fine examples of research work on ayurvedic principles in western countries are-

1. Research on Health promotion with a traditional system of natural health care.¹
2. Work Behavioral treatment for hypertension: through Meditation.^{2,3}
3. Inflammatory Mediators With special Reference to Their Free Radical Scavenging Effect.⁴
4. Ayurvedic Genomics: Establishing a Genetic Basis for Mind Body. ⁵
5. Science and Technology with Complementary and Alternative Medicine.⁶
6. The *D as* and their functioning in terms of contemporary biology and physical chemist.^{5,7}

Like the body the mind is also controlled and managed by *d as* and *gu as*. Ayurvedic intellectuals have defined *Triguna* as *Satva*, *Raja* and *Tama*. *Satva* is the quality which predisposes an individual towards

anything which is good. *Raja* and *Tama* are the factors which arouse the tendency to carry on with something harmful and so have been called as *M nasika d as*. According to *Samkhya* philosophy Nature (*Prakrti*) is constituted by three qualities (*Gu as*) - *Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. At the level of *m la prakrti* (original state of *Prakrti*) the three *gu as* are in equilibrium. The moment this equilibrium is troubled the *gu as* are thrown out of balance leading to a continuous cycle of changes. *Rajas* is distinguished by movement, dynamism and reactivity or *raga*. *Tamas* is characterized by ignorance, delusion and the power of resistance. This association between the body and mind is in fact a gross manifestation of the inter-relationship between *r rika* and *M nasika D as*. Therefore, inter relationship of *d as* is generally understood on the basis of *panchbhautika* foundation of *Trid as* and *trigu atmaka* composition of *pancamah bh tas*. This calculative method of prediction illustrates the schemata of affiliation of both kinds of *d as*, but such a process sometimes generates a disagreement and may lead to fallacy.

r rika and *M nasika d as* follow each other in the state of disease.⁸ *Su ruta* has evidently depreciated the five *mah bh ta* as being composed by the *Trigu as*.⁹ Body follows psyche and vice versa. Hence several types of psyche are illustrated as presentation by their resemblance with well recognized codes".¹⁰

Ayurvedic scriptures have revealed several classification of human personality i.e. *Manas Prakrti* on the basis of different types of psychic features.¹¹ They are based on the preponderance of three *Manas gu as* i.e. *Satva*, *Raja* and *Tama*.¹² *Rajas* state of mind corresponds to dynamicity, movement, rest-

lessness, desire, wrath, self-esteem, pride and resentment. While *Tamas* state of mind corresponds to mass, timidity, misery, fears, sleep, lethargy, gloominess.¹³ *Rajas* and *tamas* are the vitiators accountable for the expression of mental illness. Each personality has diverse nature and intellectual personality based on the predominance of these universal attributes, along with the body humors, *v ta*, *pitta* and *kapha*. The subsequent distinctiveness could be seen in people with *Satvika*, *Rajasa* and *Tamasa Prakrtis* according to *Su ruta*.

Satvik characters

Satva guna depicts goodness. When *sattva guna* is dominant, people are desirous of being comforting and caring. Such people have firm determination and have constancy of mind and senses. They are very wise and bear good knowledge. Such people understand the difference between good and bad actions. They do their work as their duty. Such people are free from doubts and always do their work calmly. These people greatly value spirituality. Respect, kindness; humbleness, self-control, and goodness of character are their core characteristics. Joy, satisfaction, nobility, broad mindedness, contentment, forgiveness, truth, straightforwardness, absence of wrath, purity- these are all the qualities of *Satva*.

Rajas characters

1. The traits of *Rajas* are-Excessive Despair (*Dukhabahulat*), Wandering-Spirit (*Asth na lat*), Intolerant (*Adhrti*), Pride (*Aha k ra*), Cruelty (*Ak ru yama*), Arrogant (*Dambh*), Conceit (*Man*), Joyful (*Har a*), Lust (*K ma*), Furious (*Kr dha ca*) - *Caraka Samhit r rasth na 4:38*

T mas characters: The qualities *T mas* are - Misery (*Vi ditvama*), Atheism

(*N stikyama*), Unrighteousness
(*Adharma lat*), Feeble-mindedness
(*Bud'dhinerud'dh*), Ignorance (*Ajñ nama*),
Sluggishness (*Akarman'ya lat*), Sleepiness
(*Nidr lutvama*)

– *Caraka Samhit r rasth na* 4:39

T mas suggests sluggishness, represents heaviness of the spirit and the incapability to perceive. The spirit is obscured by ignorance and panic. *T mas* favors a lack of intellectual commotion, thoughtlessness and a spirit subjugated by subliminal forces.

Analysis:

In order to contend with global challenges, Ayurveda experts need profound knowledge of various conditions causing diseases, their symptoms, investigations to be performed to diagnose diseases and their treatment. With the change in lifestyle and the hectic daily schedule, new diseases with fatal consequences are fast emerging. It is essential for Ayurvedic experts to be well aware of the knowledge existing in the medical world and have a proper understanding of pathology of the illness in the enlightenment of our Ayurvedic principles.

According to Ayurveda disease is auxiliary multifaceted psychosomatic incident. Ayurvedic literature affirms the association between the body and intellect in its approach to illness as well as wellbeing at various places. However the vitiated *d as*, *dh tus* and *malas* linger the physiological foundation of disease. *V ta*, *pitta* and *kapha* are the three physiological or '*Saririka D as*'. Ayurveda conceptualizes that apart from these three, there are two other predominantly psychological *d as* too, *mansika d as*- *Rajas* and *Tamas*. It is a well-established fact that body and intellect trail each other in various consequences.¹⁴

Inter Relationship of *Rajas* & *Tamas*

In general, *Rajas* and *Tamas* go in concert. The *Tamas* produces a darkening of the perception, which permits *Rajas* to plan false egotistical thoughts and ideas. Similarly, *Rajas* in excess drains vigor in too much movement and makes *Tamasik*, with a heavy and sluggish spirit.

Inter Relationship of *Triguna* & *Panchamahabhootas*

k a is predominant with *Satva*, *V ta* with *Rajas*, *Agni* with *Satva-Rajas*, *pa* (*Jala*) with *Satva-Tamas*, and *Prthv* with *Tamas*. Inferentially, since both *Caraka* and *Su ruta* clearly state that *v ta d a* is a combination of *k a* and *V ta*, *Pitta D a* of *Agni* and *pa* and *Kapha D a* of *pa* and *Prthv*, we can assume the *gu as* that are foremost in each of them. Hence, *v ta d a* is a combination of *Satva* and *Rajas* but is referred to as being chiefly *Rajasik*-as *Rajas* overtakes or is stronger than *Satva*. *Pitta d a* is said to be more *S tvika* in nature, though it has an element of *Rajas* and *Tamas* in it. *Kapha d a* is said to be more *t masika* in nature though it has an element of *Satva* in it (but no *Rajas*). We comprehend the *d as* in respect of the *gu as* exhibited by them due to the relative predominance of one or the other *pancamah bh ta* that they are made up of. *Trigu atmaka* portrayal of the structure of *pancamah bh ta* is the most applied facet of philosophical concept of *gu as* or *m nasika d as* in the field of science and medicine.¹⁵ This is valuable in deducing the performance demonstrated by persons depending on the dominance of one or the other *m nasika d a* or *gu as* that is constitutionally present in the person from commencement. This *Prakrti-gu as* combination is unique to every individual

and is not changeable during the course of their lifetime.¹⁵

Inter Relationship of Triguna with Diseases

'Vyadhi' and 'Roga' are the frequent expressions for disease in ancient Ayurvedic literature. As Caraka appropriately puts it, mind (*manas*) and body (*r rra*) along with the senses (*indriyas*) are the abode (*adhi h na*) of suffering (*v dan*). Human beings are classified as *s tvika*, *r jasika* or *t masika* according to the principal quality evident in them. Even food is classified as *s tvika*, *r jasika* or *t masika* according to the quality that it imparts to us on eating. Likewise the mind (*m nas*) is also subject to the influence of the three *gu as*. But the other two *d as* or *gu as* - *Rajas* and *Tamas* - are the psychological (*m nasika*) *d as*, just as *v ta*, *pitta* and *kapha* are the somatic (*r rika*) *D as*.

"From Satva is born knowledge, from Rajas craving, from Tamas arise confusion, delusion and ignorance" --- Bhagavad Gita XIV.

17

Inter Relationship of Somatic & Psychological Disorders

Likewise the mind (*manas*) is the substratum (*adhi h na*) of the psychological (*m nasika*) *d as* (*tamas* and *rajas*). Ayurveda scrutinizes these afflictions too as intellectual afflictions though predictably they are not measured as psychological diseases. These afflictions can direct to mental illness once they cross a verge. However one has to abide that the categorization of the ailments as well as *d as* into somatic (*saririka*) and psychological (*m nasika*) is not an impermeable categorization as many illnesses expose a fundamental interlinked mind-body communication. Somatic *d as* (*v ta*, *pitta* and *kapha*) are influenced by the

psychological *d as* just as psychological *d as* are influenced by the somatic *d as*.

Interrelationship of Triguna with reference to Human Consciousness

There are two basic laws of the - *m nasika d as* / *gu as* that are crucial in understanding their workings. The first rule of the *gu as* is 'the law of alternation'. The three *gu as* are ever in dynamic interaction. All three forces remain tangled, distressing each other in a variety of customs. *Rajas* and *Tamas* subsist in the field of *Satva*; *Tamas* and *Satva* are institute in the field of *Rajas*; and *Satva* and *Rajas* stir in the field of *Tamas*. The essence of the three qualities is their interaction. The second law of the *m nasika d as* / *gu as* is 'the law of permanence'. The *gu as* be inclined to cling to their scrupulous natures for a firm phase once they come into dominance. While it is initially difficult for *Tamas* to develop into *Rajas*, or for *Rajas* to become *Satva*, once they do so they will grasp on in that same eminence.¹⁶

Interrelationship of Trigunas with Endocrinal System

The three *d as* trigger the endocrine, exocrine glands and specific nerves to release suitable bio-chemicals (neuro hormones) at suitable time, which in turn activate the appropriate organs to be active consequently. Mind is the authority of physiology and pathology of the physical body. Thus the association of the mind has impact on the hormonal equilibrium of the body and its actions. Three *dh tus/d as* are the bio-physical aspects that preside over the different behavior of the physical body both in sound health and ill health, correspondingly. There are two kinds of thought waves. One is "sensory thought waves" formed by efferent nerve impulses, which receive their

stimulation from external sources-sensory organs. These waves are those that travel from a particular sensory entity en route for the mind. The second one is "Motor thought waves" formed by afferent nerve impulses which receive their stimulation from internal organs/sources transporting the instructions of the mind to the target places of action.

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda was intended to be open for innovative ideas, ethics and understanding for continuous progress. However, its development seems to be hindered during the last several centuries consequential in chronic stagnancy as of now. Tradition, pride and precedent glory-based emotional attitudes give the impression to be predominant among practitioners as against evidence-based pursuit of scientific research. A country in possession of healthy citizens is capable of excelling in all fields on the global stage. We can achieve this stage only when we have excellent quality of Health and Medical facilities with reference to Ayurvedic System of Medicine. Quality will come from continuous research and innovation with redefining of time tested principles. Ayurvedic students come from science background with an understanding of concepts and principles of biology. After studying ayurvedic texts and granthas in vast during course; the effectiveness of Ayurveda's practical wisdom is clear; however for most students even after graduation period a question still exists persistently-'If Triguna is valid, then why how, in scientific terms, do they work?' It's the extent of these three gunas- *Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*-that are believed to generate or annihilate synchronization in our lives. *Rajas* stands for action. Excess of *Raja*, directs an eternally agitated mind. *Tamas* supplies us with the capability

to complete what was generated by *Satva* and *Rajas*.

Ayurveda examines an individual's psychological constitution via the three *d as*, but the *Gu as* also play an important role as a factor of mental health and wellbeing. *Rajas* represents the spirit concerned by requirements and beliefs. It encourages stubbornness, anger, and diversion from shrewd thoughts. *V tadi d as* further vitiate the mind leading to affliction of the mind by *rajas* and *tama d as*. These *d as* eventually get stucked in *Man vaha srotas* and critically affect the mind and the intellect misplaces its balance.

Pathology of *M nasika Rogas*:

Body has an undeviating impact on *manas* and vice versa, hence the interaction between body and intellect i.e. *ar ra and manas* is the core of *sampr pti. c rya Caraka* while describing the aetiology of *m nasa vik ra* explains that these *m nasa vik ra* happen in an individual when the intellect of *alpa satva* individual is affected by the preponderance of *rajas* and *tamas*. "The *m nasika d as* including *Satva* comprise the magnetic field for the spirit. One *guna / m nasika d a* usually predominates and polarizes our intellect according to its individuality. Souls turn out to be *satvik, r jasika, t masika* in nature. Only an exceptional individual can become so absolutely dominated by one *m nasika d a* that the other lose their authority. Such extreme category for unsentimental illicit is complete *t masika* type, the tremendous achiever is complete *Rajasik* type, and the selfless saint is complete *Satvik* type. From the above discussion we can significantly conclude that *Ayurveda* considers the role of the *m nasika d as* as factors of health and well-being

while Yoga dwells on the *d as* relative to physiological performance.

7. Recommendations:

1. Ayurvedic system needs to first discover areas of redefinition of Ayurvedic concepts like Triguna, Tridosha theory and so on. Adequate human resources in terms of team of researchers having sound knowledge of research is necessary.

2. Due importance should be given to Ayurvedic principles while accepting of western models of Medicine in current healthcare research.

3. An Integrative Model of Health Care through Redefining Concepts approach should be made.

The Pros and Cons in this regard deserve to be fully discussed.

4. Traditional system of medicine principles must be constantly refined so that its knowledge gained may be integrated into the National health care schemes.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda requires research in the areas of basic and diagnostic principles so that the diagnosis can be made more pinpointed leading to more effective treatment strategies. Due to socio-political reasons, annotation (Pratisamskara a) of Ayurvedic samhitas could not be done in the last 2000 years, which is mandatory every 1000 years. This means that the present samhitas are lagging behind to present the knowledge. Many of the diagnostic tools have been missed in between and principles like Tridosha, Triguna Theory and Avarana are unexplained. Ayurvedic Medicine and Western Medicine cannot be truly integrated until our Ayurveda system has been proven to be effective clinically. Properly designed clinical trials may be initiated which must be supported by basic sciences research like

Triguna, Tridosha, Panchamabhuta theories. We must accept that becoming up to date is not an offense; it does not put off anyone from maintaining cultural distinctiveness. No tradition is a static body. Modernity results from evolving traditions. For instance, Charaka would not have ignored technologies like electron microscope if they had been available during his time.

Authors are in a opinion that redefined concepts of Triguna and other basic theories must be explored more for establishing ayurveda as a globally accepted science of Indian Medicine in future by upcoming researchers.

REFERENCES

1. Schneider RH, Kavanaugh KL, Kasture HS, Rothenburg S, Averbach R, Robinson D, Wallace RK. Health promotion with a traditional system of natural health care: Maharishi Ayur-Veda. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 1990, 5, 3: 1-27.
2. Schneider RH, Alexander CN, Wallace RK. Insearch of an optimal behavioral treatment for hypertension: a review and focus on Transcendental Meditation. From Johnson EH, Gentry WD, & Julius S. (eds), *Personality, Elevated Blood Pressure, & Essential Hypertension*, 1992, 291312. Hemisphere Publishing Corp, Washington DC.
3. Schneider RH, Staggers F, Alexander CN, Shepard W, Rainforth M, Kondwani K, Smith S, King CG. A randomised controlled trial of stress reduction for hypertension in older African Americans. *Hypertension*, 1995, 26: 820-827.
4. Niwa Y. Effect of Maharishi 4 [MAK-4] and Maharishi 5 [MAK-5] on Inflammatory Mediators With special Reference to Their Free Radical Scavenging Effect. *Indian Journal of Clinical Practice*, 1991, 1, 8: 23-27.

5. Bodeker G. *Second World Ayurveda Congress Symposium on Globalisation and Traditional Medicine*. Pune, 2006 14. Bodeker GC & Patwardhan B, *Ayurvedic Genomics: Establishing a Genetic Basis for MindBody Typologies, J Altern Complement Med* 2008; 14: 571-576.
6. *House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology. Complementary and Alternative Medicine*. 2000. Session 1999-2000 6th Report. The Stationary Office Ltd., London. ISBN 0 10 483 100 6 Order from: The Stationary Office, P.O. Box 29, Norwich NR3 1GN, UK [also available at <http://www.ukstate.com>]
7. Hankey A, *Ayurvedic physiology and etiology: Ayurvedo Amritanam. The Das and their functioning in terms of contemporary biology and physical chemistry. J Altern Complement Med* 2001; 7: 388-396.
8. *c rya Vaidya Jadavaji Trikamji., editor. Vimana-Sthana, Adhyaya. 3rd ed. Vol. 4. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthana; 2004. c rya Caraka, Caraka Samhita (with Ayurveda Deepika Commentary of Chakrapanidatta) p. 8.*
9. *Su ruta, Sthanam, III-1.20. Susruta Samhita. Murthy KR. Srikantha. (Translator). Vol.1. 3rd ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia; 2007. p. 640-4; Uttaratanttra.*
10. *Caraka. Sarira Sthanam, 36. Caraka Samhita. Sharma, Priyavrat. (Translator). Vol. 1. Delhi: Chaukhambha Orientalia; 1981. p. 435*
11. *Caraka Samhita edited by Vaidya Jadavaji, Trikamji c rya, Chaukhamba Surbharati Prakashan, Varanasi Reprint edition, 1992; Ca. Sa.4/37, Su. Sa. 4/80-96*
12. *Caraka Samhita edited by Vaidya Jadavaji, Trikamji c rya, Chaukhamba Surbharati Prakashan, Varanasi Reprint edition, 1992; Ca. Su. 8/5, Su. Sa.4/97*
13. *Astanga Hridaya, edited by Prof. K.R. Srikantha Murty, Krishnadas Academy, Varanasi, third edition 2000; A. Hr. Sha. 3/7.*
14. *c rya Vaidya Jadavaji Trikamji., editor. Shareera-Sthana. 3rd ed. Vol. 4. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthana; 2004. c rya Caraka, Caraka Samhita (with Ayurveda Deepika Commentary of Chakrapanidatta) p. 36.*
15. *Gupta SP. Psychopathology in Indian Medicine. Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan; Reprint, 2000. p. 305-20,333-40.*
16. *Frawley D. Yoga and Ayurveda. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd.; 2004. p.27,46, 75.*

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

Dr. Pallavi Varshney

C/o Dr.Swastik Suresh H.No.27-B ,
Keshav Kunj Sandesh Nagar Colony
Phase -3, Kankhal, Haridwar,
Uttarakhand. Pin- 249408.
Email - bel.pallavi@gmail.com

Source of support: Nil
Conflict of interest: None Declared