

A CONCEPTUAL STUDY ON IMPORTANCE OF PRAKRITI THROUGH AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Prakriti is defined as the state of an individual in its natural form. *Prakriti* is a unique concept in *Ayurveda*. *Prakriti* is formulated by the condition of *Tridosha* at the time of union of sperm and ovum inside the uterus. *Prakriti* means manifestation of special characteristics due to predominance of *Doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* the functional component of body). All the physiological process are directly controlled by *Vata-Pitta* and *Kapha* (three body humors) and *Mansika Doshas* (functional psychic factors) thus healthy status can be maintained by maintaining normality of *Prakriti*. By knowing the *Prakriti* one will know about the strength of a person to combat with the lifestyle diseases as person having equilibrium in *Prakriti* is said to be having best immunity and strength. Disequilibrium in *Prakriti* greatly increases the risk of lifestyle diseases. Hence in present work an attempt has been made to elaborate the concept of *Prakriti* in *Ayurveda* and its significance in evading lifestyle disorders. *Prakriti* is directly responsible for constitutional, temperamental, psychological and spiritual state of each individual. Disease occurs when there is a change in this original form at the psychological or physiological level. *Prakriti* remains same throughout life. *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned *Dashavidha Pariksha* in which *Prakriti* analysis is done first and *Vikriti* analysis next to understand the nature and severity of disease, reaction of body to the drugs (pharmacogenomics), selection of drugs and their doses, prognosis of the disease and preventive measures such as diet, diurnal and seasonal regimes. So *Prakriti* emphasizes on the individuality and plays an important role in diagnosis, preventive medicine, and therapeutics.

Keywords: *Prakriti, Ayurveda, Vikriti, Vata, Pitta, Kapha Dashavidha Pariksha*

INTRODUCTION

Prakriti is an important concept of *Ayurveda* that explains individuality and has role in prevention, diagnosis and treatment of the disease. The concept of *Prakriti* is unique to *Ayurveda*. It expresses unique trait of an individual that is defined by specific and permanent composition of *Doshas* right from birth.

Prakriti makes every person unique therefore no person can be exactly like other person. Physical, physiological, psychological characteristics differ from one person to other person depending on his/her *Prakriti*. *Prakriti* helps us to become aware of the disease we may become prone to, and to follow a preventive lifestyle. Once from *Prakriti* re-

mains constant for each individual throughout his/her lifetime.

Panchamahabhoota (the five basic elements) are manifested into the three biological entities known as *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. In every organism, these three *Dosha* regulate the functions of each & every cell and govern the all physio-pathological changes. At the time of fertilization, *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* determine by their permutations and combinations the constitution of an individual, which is called '*Prakriti*'. The '*Prakriti*' means 'the first creation'. Every human being is the first creation of the cosmos, and that's why every human being is a separate entity, a unique phenomenon. Constitution, Biotypology or Body-mind typology is a very important concept of *Ayurveda*. This concept is unique to *Ayurveda*.

Nirukti (Etymology):

- "*Pra*" means "First" and the "*Kri*" means "Creation". That is first creation is *Prakriti*.
- Equilibrium state of *Satva*, *Raja* and *Tama Guna*.
- "*Prakriti*" word is for Nature or Sign. (*Shabdastoma*)
- *Prakriti* means virtue.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

Present work has been done based on critical review of classical information, published research works, modern literature and research works conducted at various institutes. The possible correlation has been made between collected information and has been presented in systematic way.

FACTORS AFFECTING FORMATION OF PRAKRITI:

Factors which play direct or indirect role in the formation of *Prakriti* can be grouped under two heading:

1. *Garbhakalaj Bhava* 2. *Jatiprasaktadi Bhava*

1. Garbhakalaj Bhava:

These factors are as follow¹ –

A. *Shukra Shonita Prakriti* B. *Kala Garbhashaya Prakriti* C. *Matu-Ahara-Vihara Prakriti* D. *Mahabhuta-Vikara Prakriti*

A. *Shukra Shonita Prakriti:*

Shukra and *Shonita* are the main component for formation of foetus and they possess *Prakriti* deciding factors naturally. Characteristics & traits of parents are present very minutely in the *Shukra* and *Shonita*, which are responsible for similarities between offspring & parents.

B. *Kala Garbhashaya Prakriti:*

This *Kala* can be considered in three ways –

- a. *Sambhoga Kala*: Postures during sex and the *Dosha* present in the uterus have closely interrelated because certain *Dosha* get vitiated by different postures and thus influence the *Prakriti*.²
- b. *Garbhadharana Kala*: Seasons have their effect on body by increasing or decreasing *Vatadi Dosha*. So, at the time of fertilization, season also influences the formation of foetus through *Shukra* and *Shonita*.
- c. Age of parents: *Tridosha* remain in the body according to the age and affect the whole body along with the *Shukra* and *Shonita*.

C. *Matu-Ahara-Vihara Prakriti:*

Some scholars say that formation of foetus is influenced not only by mother's foods and activities but also by the regimens adopted by father. *Acharya* have told certain methods & principles like *Punsavana Samskara*, *Ritumaticharya*, *Garbhadhana* method etc., in order to have desired progeny. All these things also affect the *Prakriti* of the foetus.

D. *Mahabhuta-Vikara Prakriti:*

The *Matrijadi bhava* of the foetus are product of the *Mahabhuta*. Five types of *Bhautika Prakriti* are possible as per predominance of one of the *Mahabhuta* like this³ –

- a) *Vayavya Prakriti* - *Vatika Prakriti*
- b) *Tejas Prakriti* - *Paitika Prakriti*
- c) *Aapya Prakriti* - *Shleshmika Prakriti*
- d) *Parthiva Prakriti* - Having strong, large body built

e) *Nabhasa Prakriti* - Holy, pure, long-lived, having mouth, nose and ear with big openings

2. Jatiprasaktadi Bhava⁴:

After birth several changes occur in physical and mental status of an individual which later become a part of his/her personality. This is known as *Jatiprasaktadi Bhava* or *JatSharira Prakriti*. These can be temporary and changeable. 6 & 7 *Jatiprasaktadi Bhava* are described by *Acharya Charaka & Vagbhata* respectively.

TYPES OF PRAKRITI:

Prakriti is formed at the time of fertilization but it get influenced by the after birth situations. Although, original *Prakriti* is gestational and no changes can occur in this throughout the life.

Grossly, two main categories of *Prakriti* are –

- A. *Deha Prakriti* (Physical constitution)
- B. *Manas Prakriti* (Psychological constitution)

A. Deha Prakriti (Physical constitution): *Deha Prakriti* is also known as *Dosha- Prakriti*.

According to different *Acharya Deha Prakriti* is of following types –

a. **Charaka** : 7 types⁵

- 1. *Vataja Prakriti* 2. *Pittaja Prakriti* 3. *Shleshmaja Prakriti* 4. *Vata-Pittaj Prakriti* 5. *Pitta- Shleshmaj Prakriti* 6. *Vata- Shleshmaj Prakriti* 7. *Sama Dhatu Prakriti*.

b. **Sushruta** : 7 types as *Charaka*⁶ (*Su.Sha.4/62*)

c. A.S. & A.H. : 7 types as *Charaka* (*A.S.Sha.8/2 & A.H. Sha.3/83*)

d. *Sharangdhara Samhita* : 7 types

e. *Bhela Samhita* : 7 types

f. *Bhava Prakash* : 7 types

g. *Yogratnakara* : 7 types

h. *Harita Samhita* : 4 types (*Ha.S.I 5/15-16*) 1. *Vata Prakriti* 2. *Pitta Prakriti* 3. *Kapha Prakriti* 4. *Sannipata Prakriti*

i. *Kashyapa Samhita*: 7 types of *Prakriti* but mainly 3 types- (*Ka.Su. Lehadhyaya*)

- 1. *Vata Sthuna* 2. *Pitta Sthuna* 3. *Shleshma Sthuna*

Table 1: B. *Manas Prakriti* (Psychological constitution):

<i>Charak Samhita (Ch.sha.4/36-39)</i>	<i>Sushruta Samhita (Su. Sha.4/80-95,97)</i>	<i>Ashtanga Samgraha (A.S.Sha.8/16)</i>
<p>Satvika Prakriti (7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Brahma Satva</i> 2. <i>Aarsha Satva</i> 3. <i>Aendra Satva</i> 4. <i>Yamy Satva</i> 5. <i>Varuna Satva</i> 6. <i>Kauber Satva</i> 7. <i>Gandharva Satva</i> 	<p>Satvika Kaya (7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Brahma Kaya</i> 2. <i>Mahendra Kaya</i> 3. <i>Rishi Kaya</i> 4. <i>Yamy Kaya</i> 5. <i>Varuna Kaya</i> 6. <i>Kauber Kaya</i> 7. <i>Gandharva Kaya</i> 	<p>Manas Prakriti- 7 types</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Satvika</i> 2. <i>Rajasika</i> 3. <i>Tamasika</i> 4. <i>Satva-Rajasika</i> 5. <i>Satva-Tamasika</i> 6. <i>Rajas-Tamasika</i> 7. <i>Samguna Prakriti</i>
<p>Rajasika Prakriti (6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Aasura Satva</i> 2. <i>Rakshasa Satva</i> 3. <i>Paishacha Satva</i> 4. <i>Sarpa Satva</i> 5. <i>Preta Satva</i> 6. <i>Shakun Satva</i> 	<p>Rajasika Kaya (6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Aasura Kaya</i> 2. <i>Sarpa Kaya</i> 3. <i>Shakun Kaya</i> 4. <i>Rakshasa Kaya</i> 5. <i>Paishacha Kaya</i> 6. <i>Preta Kaya</i> 	<p>Ashtanga Hridaya: (A.H.Sha.3/7)</p> <p>No description about <i>Manas Prakriti</i>. Only qualities of <i>Satva, Raja & Tama</i> are given.</p>
<p>Tamasika Satva (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Pashav Satva</i> 2. <i>Vanaspatya Satva</i> 3. <i>Matsya satva</i> 	<p>Tamasika Kaya (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Pashav Kaya</i> 2. <i>Matsya Kaya</i> 3. <i>Vanaspatya Kaya</i> 	

Bhela Samhita: 7 types of *Manas Prakriti* are explained as *Divya Kaya* (Bhe.Vi.4):

1. *Brahma Divya Kaya*
2. *Deva Divya Kaya*
3. *Varuna Divya Kaya*
4. *Gandharva Divya Kaya*
5. *Pishacha Divya Kaya*
6. *Asura Divya Kaya*
7. *Maharaja divya Kaya*

Bhava Prakash: three types –

1. *Satva*
2. *Rajas*
3. *Tamas*

Kashyapa Samhita: 3 types – (Ka.S. Lakshnadhya)

1. *Satva* - 8 subtypes
2. *Rajas* - 7 subtypes
3. *Tamas* - 3 subtypes

Harita & Sharangdhara Samhita: No description about *Manas Prakriti* is available.

FEATURES OF DIFFERENT PRAKRITI PEOPLE:

Table 2: Characteristics of *Vata Prakriti*:⁷ (Ch.Vi.8/98)

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

Because of the above-mentioned qualities, individuals having *Vatata* type of constitution are mostly

possessed of strength, span of life, procreation, accessories of life and wealth in lesser quantity.

Table 3: Characteristics of *Pitta Prakriti*:⁸ (Ch.Vi.8/97)

Attributes of <i>Pitta</i>	Specific manifestations in the body of the individual having <i>Pittala</i> type of constitution
Hot (<i>Ushna</i>)	Intolerance for hot things, having hot face, tender body of portwine mark, freckles, black moles, excessive hunger and thirst; quick advent of wrinkles; graying of hair and baldness, presence of some soft and brown hair on the face, head, and other parts of the body.
Sharp (<i>Tikshna</i>)	Sharp physical strength, strong digestive power, intake of food and drink in large quantity; inability to face difficult situations and glutton habits.
Liquid (<i>Drava</i>)	Looseness and softness of joints and muscles; voiding of sweat, urine and feaces in large quantity.
Flesh smell (<i>Visram</i>)	Putrid smell of axilla, mouth, head and body in excess.
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 the accessories of life.

Table 4: Characteristics of *Shleshmala Prakriti*:⁹ (Ch.Vi.8/96)

Attributes of <i>Kapha</i>	Specific manifestations in the body of the individual having <i>Shleshmala</i> type of constitution
Unctuous (<i>Snigdha</i>)	Unctuousness of organs
Smooth (<i>Shlakshna</i>)	Smoothness of organs
Soft (<i>Mridu</i>)	Pleasing appearance, tenderness and clarity of complexion
Sweet (<i>Madhura</i>)	Increase in the quantity of semen, desire for sex-act, and number of procreation.
Firm (<i>Sara</i>)	Firmness, compactness and stability of the body.
Dense (<i>Sandram</i>)	Plumpness and roundness of all organs.
Slow (<i>Mandam</i>)	Slow in action, intake of food and movement
Heavy (<i>Guru</i>)	Non-slippery and stable gait with the entire sole of the feet pressing against the earth
Stable (<i>Sthimitham</i>)	Slowness in initiating actions, getting irritated and morbid manifestations
Cold (<i>Shita</i>)	Lack of intensity in hunger, thirst, heat, and perspiration
Viscous (<i>Vijjala</i>)	Firmness and compactness in joints
Clear (<i>Achha</i>)	Happiness in the look and face; happiness and softness of complexion and voice.

By virtue of the above-mentioned qualities, a man having *Shleshmala* type of constitution is endowed with the excellence of strength, wealth, knowledge, energy, peace and longevity.

Characteristics of *Dwandaja Prakriti*:

Individuals having constitution dominated by the combination of two *Doshas* are characterized by the combination of the manifestation of respective *Doshas*.

Characteristics of *Sama Prakriti*:

Samadhatu type of individual is the one who has all the *Doshas* in the state of equilibrium is endowed with the qualities of all the three types of individuals described above.

IMPORTANCE OF PRAKRITI:

The determination of *Prakriti* has significant importance in the healthy / unhealthy states of an individual. This information can be successfully applied clinically in diagnosis, treatment (for deciding appropriate drug, dose, duration, diet and lifestyle), and prognosis of the disease. Even the daily and seasonal regimens adopted for promotion of health also very according to *Prakriti*.

Further, the person to person variations in the manifestation of disease and, in turn, the response of medicines have led modern scientists to look forward to understand the individualized approach of

Ayurveda in treating the patients. Hence, the concept of *Prakriti* i.e. "Individual constitution" has emerged as an interesting area for modern researchers, which was well established in *Ayurveda* thousands of year back.

1) Diagnosis of diseases:

Dashvidhapariksa has been mentioned by *Acharya Charaka* while diagnosing the strength of the diseased person. *Prakriti* analysis is first one to be done while examining a patient.

2) Prognosis of diseases:

If the causative *Dosha* of an ailment is same as the *Prakriti* of the diseased person, the disease becomes *Krichrasadhya* i.e. difficult to cure. Similarly if the vitiated *Dosha* is different from one's *Prakriti*, it is very easy to treat.

3) Management of diseases/ Individualized Medicine:

Acharya Charaka has mentioned '*Prati Purusha siddhanta*' considering one's *Prakriti* and other factors specific to the diseased person while treating his/her ailment. The knowledge of *Prakriti* helps in drawing a line of treatment for diseased person. E.g. In *Amajavyadhi* like *Jvara*, for *Kaphaja* person one can adopt complete *Apatarpana Chikitsa* whereas in case of *Vataja* person that cannot be adopted completely.¹⁰

4) Promotion of Health:

Ayurveda encourages a person to take foods & indulge in those activities which are opposite to his/her *Prakriti* to live a healthy life style. The rejuvenative therapies like *Rasayana* and *Vajikarana* benefit most when they are administered according to one's *Prakriti*.

5) Agni status of individual:

Acharya Charaka has mentioned four types of *Agni* (Digestive fire) according to one's *Prakriti*.¹¹

Vishmagni (Disturbed) in *Vata Prakriti*

Tikshnagni (Increased) in *Pitta Prakriti*

Mandagni (Decreased) in *Kapha Prakriti*

Samagni (Normal) in *Samadosha Prakriti*.

6) Management of diseases/ Individualized Medicine:

Acharya Charaka has mentioned '*Prati Purusha siddhanta*' considering one's *Prakriti* and other factors specific to the diseased person while treating his/her ailment. The knowledge of *Prakriti* helps in drawing a line of treatment for diseased person. E.g. In *Amajavyadhi* like *Jvara*, for *Kaphaja* person one can adopt complete *Apatarpana Chikitsa* whereas in case of *Vataja* person that cannot be adopted completely¹².

7) Determination of Drug doses –

The dose of the medicine is decided according to one's *Prakriti*. In general the *Alpa* (minimum), *Madhya* (moderate) and *Pravara* (maximum) dose of medicine are adopted in *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha Prakriti* individuals respectively.¹³

8) Preventive Medicine-

In *Ayurveda* *Dinacharya* (Diurnal regime) and *Ritucharya* (Seasonal regimes) have been advised on the basis of *Prakriti*. The person can adopt these regimes as per need of *Prakriti* to keep body healthy and *Dosha* in equilibrium state. For example *Kapha Prakriti* persons need more exercise, *Laghuahara* to keep their body fit and they should avoid *Divasvapna*, whereas *Vata Prakriti* persons are advised to take nutritious and heavy food, do less exercise and can do *Divasvapna*. *Ayurveda* advocates extensive preventive measures in terms of *Sadvrita*

Svasthavrita, *Dinacarya*, *Ritucharya* etc. By determining the *Prakriti* of every individual, their health can be maintained by advocating them *Pathya Ahara* (Favorable foods and drinks) and *Vihara* (behavior and physical activities) and simultaneously restricting them to take *Apathya Ahara* (Unfavorable food and drinks) and *Vihara* (Behavior and physical activities).

9) Susceptibility to disease/Predictive Medicine:

Each *Prakriti* type is prone to specific diseases. *Prakriti* determines proneness of an individual for *Dosha* specific diseases. For example, *Kapha Prakriti* persons are more prone to *Kaphaja* vikara like *Agnimandhya*, *Pratishyaya*, *Medoroga*, *Prameha* etc. similarly *Vata Prakriti* persons are more prone to *Gulma*, *Aatopa*, *Sandhigatavata* etc and *Pittaja Prakriti* persons are more prone to diseases like *Amlapitta*, *Pandu*, *Kaamla*, *Raktapitta* etc¹⁴. The various observations show that there is more susceptibility of *Vata Prakriti* individuals to anxiety neurosis, thyrotoxicosis and tuberculosis, *Pitta Prakriti* individuals to hypertension, peptic ulcer, bronchial asthma and rheumatoid arthritis and *Kapha Prakriti* individuals to diabetes mellitus, obesity, hypertension and ischemic heart diseases¹⁵. *Vataja*, *Pittaja* and *Kaphaja* diseases are a little difficult to treat in persons belonging to *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha Prakriti* respectively. In view of this fact, the different diseases to which an individual is predisposed can be predicted timely and may be prevented or postponed by appropriate diet, drugs or regimen.

10) Genomic Medicine-

The concept of *Prakriti* and its relationship with genomics was hypothesized over a decade ago¹⁶. Subsequent studies have attempted to correlate *Prakriti* classification with genetic information and association of single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) in HLA DRB1¹⁷ CYP2C19,¹⁸ EGLN1,¹⁹ inflammatory and oxidative stress related genes,²⁰ CD markers for various blood cells,²¹ DNA methylation alterations²² and risk factors of cardiovascular or inflammatory diseases have been reported.²³ A preliminary study suggests that the *Prakriti* classification, as a founda-

tion for the practice of *Ayurveda*, has a genetic basis and does provide clues for further studies.²⁴

CONCLUSION

Prakriti has prime importance in both healthy and diseased persons. By understanding the individual constitution of every individual, we know which food, drink, exercise etc. are appropriate for maintaining their health. *Prakriti* is an important concept in *Ayurveda* to understand the nature and severity of disease, reaction of body to the drugs (pharmacogenomics), selection of drugs and their doses, prognosis of the disease and preventive measures such as diet, diurnal and seasonal regimes. *Prakriti* also determines the response of an individual to environmental factors, drugs and susceptibility to diseases making it one of the earliest known concepts of predictive, preventive and personalized or genomic medicine. So *Prakriti* emphasizes on the individuality and plays an important role in diagnosis, preventive medicine, and therapeutics. Thus *Prakriti* definitely has an important role in 21st century in dealing with the health problem.

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Source of Support: Nil

Conflict Of Interest: None Declared

How to cite this URL: Shyamveer Ghuraiya et al: A Conceptual Study On Importance Of Prakriti Through Ayurveda . *International Ayurvedic Medical Journal* {online} 2018 {cited September, 2018} Available from: http://www.iamj.in/posts/images/upload/2090_2097.pdf