

A Review on Concept of *Prakriti* and its Importance in Ayurveda

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ABSTRACT

Prakriti is a unique 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 prophylactic concept 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 a unique role in diagnosis, preventive medicine, and therapeutics. *Prakriti* is an important concept of *Ayurveda* that explains uniqueness at individual level. It expresses an individual's unique trait, which is defined by the specific and permanent composition of *dosha* from birth. Because *prakriti* makes each person unique, no two people can be exactly alike. Depending on one's *prakriti*, anatomical, physiological, and psychological characteristics differ from one person to the next. Each person's *prakriti* remains constant throughout his or her lifetime. Though all three *doshas* (*vata*, *pitta*, *kapha*) inhere in every human being one is dominant based on which an individual's *prakriti* is determined. Because *prakriti* underpins a person's susceptibility to disease as well as their responsiveness to therapy, it is critical in *Ayurvedic* medicine to determine a patient's *prakriti* before beginning treatment. The notion of *prakriti* is said to be beneficial in forecasting an individual's vulnerability to a certain ailment, as well as the prognosis and treatment options for that condition. In this review article we will explore more about *prakriti* and its importance in *Ayurveda*.

Key Words *Prakriti, Tridosha, Dosha, Ayurveda*

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INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the Indian traditional system of medicine describes a unique concept "*prakriti*". *Ayurveda* considers *panchamahabhuta* (*aakash*, *vayu*, *teja*, *jala* and *prithvi*) to be the basic constituents of this physical universe including the human

body. These *mahabhuta* manifests into *tridosha* (*vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*). Despite the fact that all three doshas exist in every human being, one is dominant and determines an individual's *prakriti*. They are discreet phenotypes and they are determined on the basis of physical,

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psychological, physiological and behavioral traits, and independent of social, ethnic and geographical variables. *Prakriti* of human being depends on genetic and acquired factors. The genetic constitution depends upon *shukra* (sperm) and *shonita* (ovum), while acquired constitution depends on environmental factors like age, race, heredity, climate, season, and region.

Prakriti formation of an individual:

According to *Acharya Charaka pancamaha bhuta* and *chetana* (soul) unite to form *purusha* and the nature of this *sharira* is known as *prakriti*¹. According to *Acharya Sushruta*, formation of *prakriti* takes place by the condition of *tridosha* at the time of union of *shukradhatu* (sperm) and *shonhita* (ovum) in the *garbhashaya* (womb) of mother. Predominance of any one, two, or all the three *dosha* (body humors- *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*) determines the characteristics features of the future child as *ekadoshajaprakriti* (*vataja*, *pittaja* and *kaphaja*), *dvandvaja* (*vata-pitta*, *vata-kapha*, *kapha-pitta*), and *samamishra* (*vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* in equal proportions)².

Factors affecting formation of Prakriti³

Factors which play direct or indirect role in the formation of *Prakriti* are as-

1. *Garbhakalaja Bhava* (Antenatal)
2. *ShukraShonita Prakriti* (Characters of Sperm-ovum)

3. *KalaGarbhashaya Prakriti* (Time of intercourse, fertilization and Age /nature of uterus)

4. *Maturaharavihara Prakriti* (Influence of mother's diet/behavior)

5. *Mahabhutavikara Prakriti* (Influence of *akash*, *vayu*, *teja*, *jala* & *prithvi*)

6. *Jatiprasaktadi Bhava*⁴ (Postnatal)

7. *Jatiprasakta Bhava* (Caste/Racial effect)

8. *Pratyatmaniyata*

Prakriti (Self/Idiosyncrasy)

9. *Kulprasakta Bhava* (Familial)

10. *Vayoanupatini Prakriti* (Age effect)

11. *Deshanupatini Prakriti* (Demographic effect)

12. *Kalanupatini Prakriti* (Seasonal effect)

Types of Prakriti

A. *Sharirika Prakriti*⁵ (Physical constitution)

1. *Vata*
2. *Pitta*
3. *Kapha*
4. *Vata-Pitta*
5. *Vata-Kapha*
6. *Pitta-Kapha*
7. *Vata -Pitta-Kapha*

B. *Manasa Prakriti*⁶ (Psychological constitution)

1. *Sattvika*
2. *Rajasika*
3. *Tamasika*
4. *Sattva-Rajasika*
5. *Sattva-Tamasika*

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6. *Rajas-Tamasika*

Characteristics of *SharirikaPrakriti*⁷

7. *SamagunaPrakriti*

Table 1 Features of *VataPrakriti*

Attributes	Manifestations
Ruksha (Dry)	Unctuousness, emaciation, and Body dwarfism; long drawn, dry, low broken, blocked, and harsh voice; incessant waking.
Laghu (Light)	Light and inconsistent gait, action, food and movement.
Chala (Mobile)	Unstable joints, eyes, eyebrows, jaws, lips, tongue, head, shoulder, hands and legs
Bahu (Abundance)	Talkativeness, abundance in tendons and veins
Shighra (Swift)	Hasty in beginning acts, becoming agitated, and the onset of pathological symptoms, quick in fear, loves and dislikes, and comprehending and forgetting things.
Shita (Cold)	Intolerance for cold things; often suffering with cold, shivering, and stiffness.
Parusha (Rough)	Acrimony in the hair of the head, face and other parts of the body; nails, teeth, face, hands, and feet.
Viashada (Non-Slime)	Cracking of limbs and organs, production of cracking sound in joints when they move.

These persons are endowed with lesser quantity of strength, span of life, reproduction, accessories of life and wealth.

Table 2 Features of *PittaPrakriti*

Attributes	Manifestations
Ushna (Hot)	Intolerant to heat, having hot face, delicate and fair organs, plenty of wine 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.
Tikshana (Sharp)	Sharp prowess, intense digestive power, intake of food and drink in large quantity; lack of endurance and glutton habits.
Drava (Liquid)	Lax and soft joints and muscles; excessive excretion of sweat, urine and feces.
Visra (Foul smell)	Foetid smell of axilla, mouth, head and body in excess.
Amla/Katu (Pungent/Bitter)	Little semen, sexual act and few progeny.

These persons are endowed with moderate strength, moderate span of life, moderate spiritual and materialistic knowledge, wealth and the accessories of life.

4.Features of *DvandvajaPrakriti*-

The two *dosha Prakriti* are characterized by the combination of the manifestation of respective *dosha*.

5.Features of *Sama Prakriti*-

Samadhatu Prakriti is characterized by combination of the manifestation of all the *doshain* accompaniment of equilibrium. These persons are endowed with the qualities of all the three single *doshaprakriti*.

Importance of *Prakriti*-

1) **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 *vajikaranha* benefit most when they are administered according to one's *prakriti*.

2) **Agni-status of individual:** *Acharya Charakahas* mentioned four types of *agni* (Digestive fire) according to one's *prakriti*⁸.

- *Viṣmagni* (Disturbed) in *VataPrakriti*
- *Tikshṇagni* (Increased) in *Pitta Prakriti*
- *Mandagni* (Decreased) in *KaphaPrakriti*
- *Samagni* (Normal) in *SamadoshaPrakriti*

3) **Determination the *Bala* (Strength)** –The comparative strength of different individuals can be decided by the type of *prakriti*. The November 10th 2021 Volume 15, Issue 3 Page 11

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kaphaprakriti persons are stronger than *pitta* and *vataprakriti* persons. Determination of strength is important while treating a person.

4) **Susceptibility to disease/Predictive medicine:** Each *prakriti* type is prone to specific diseases. *Prakriti* determines a person's susceptibility to *dosha*-related illnesses. For example, *kaphaprakriti* persons are more prone to *kaphajavikara* like *agnimandhya*, *pratishyaya*, *medoroga*, *prameha* etc. similarly *vataprakriti* persons are more susceptible to *gulma*, *atopa*, *sandhigata-vata* etc and *pittajaprakriti* persons are more prone to diseases like *amlapitta*, *pandu*, *kamla*, *raktapitta* etc⁹. The various observations show that there is more susceptibility of *vataprakriti* individuals to anxiety neurosis, thyrotoxicosis and tuberculosis, *pittaprakriti* individuals to hypertension, peptic ulcer, bronchial asthma and rheumatoid arthritis and *kaphaprakriti* individuals to diabetes mellitus, obesity, hypertension and ischemic heart diseases¹⁰.

Vataja, *pittaja* and *kaphaja* diseases are a little difficult to treat in persons belonging to *vata*, *pitta* and *kaphaprakriti* 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.

5) **Diagnosis of diseases:** *Dashvidhapariksha* 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.

6) **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.

7) **Management of diseases/ Individualized medicine:** *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned '*Pratipurushasiddhanta*' 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 specific 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 completely¹¹.

8) **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 *kaphaprakriti* individuals respectively¹².

9) **Preventive Medicine-** In *Ayurveda dinacharya* (diurnal regime) and *ritucharya* (seasonal regimes) have been explained on the basis of *prakriti*. The person can adopt these regimes as per need of *prakriti* to keep body healthy and *dosha* in equilibrium state¹³. For example *kaphaprakriti* persons need more exercise, *laghuahara* to keep their body fit and they should avoid *divasvapna*, whereas *vataprakriti* persons are advised to take nutritious

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and heavy food, do less exercise and can do *divasvapna*.

Ayurveda advocates extensive preventive measures in terms of *sadvritasvasthavirta*, *dinacharya*, *ritucharya* etc. By determining the *prakriti* of every individual, their health can be maintained by advocating them *pathyaahara* (Favorable foods and drinks) and *vihara* (behavior and physical activities) and simultaneously restricting them to take *apathyaahara* (unfavorable food and drinks) and *vihara* (behavior and physical activities).

10) **Genomic medicine**-The concept of *prakriti* and its relationship with genomics was hypothesized over a decade ago¹⁴. Following that, researchers sought to link *prakriti* categorization to genetic data and the relationship of single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) in HLA DRB1¹⁵, CYP2C19¹⁶, EGLN1¹⁷, inflammatory and oxidative stress related genes¹⁸, CD markers for various blood cells¹⁹, DNA methylation alterations²⁰ and risk factors of cardiovascular or inflammatory diseases have been reported²¹. A preliminary study shows that the *prakriti* categorization, which serves as a foundation for *Ayurvedic* treatment, has a genetic basis and may give information for future research²².

DISCUSSION

In the last few decades *Ayurveda* is being studied with lot of enthusiasm and there are many experts who teach *Ayurveda* to the tune of their

understanding. *Ayurveda* has given lot of importance to *prakriti*, because it has power to predict future illnesses. *Prakriti* shows an individual's susceptibility to *dosha*-specific illnesses, based on which his *prakriti* is determined. That indicates that someone with a *vata* dominant *prakriti* is more likely to get *vata* vitiated illnesses than someone with a *pitta* or *kapha* dominant *prakriti*. If the constitutional *dosha* and vitiated *dosha* are different, a medication must be formulated in such a way that it would calm the vitiated *dosha* while not increasing the vitiation of the constitutional *dosha*. This is especially true in the case of *vata* and *kapha* since their characteristics (*guna*) are diametrically opposed, and treating '*kapha*' may cause *vata* to grow. This statement is equally valid in terms of nutrition and lifestyle. If the constitutional and vitiated *doshas* are the same, the chosen drug(s) must be more potent. In the field of genetics, science has reached a breakthrough. Genetic mapping for predicting future diseases and managing them using genetic engineering is possible. World also have realized that classification of humans in major groups is not sufficient, and individual classification is required. *Prakriti* (genotype) knowledge will be beneficial in these studies. With *prakriti* understanding, many feared illnesses may be investigated. *Prakriti* analysis principles imply that various medicines should be used for different people with the same disease. Understanding this notion is the first step toward designing or customizing medication. Genome
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can be studied using knowledge of *prakriti* for preventing many dreaded diseases as previously said, *prakriti* knowledge is critical for medication selection. During both sickness and health, the individual might be offered advice on nutrition and lifestyle to help them maintain their best health. If '*prakritivinishchaya*' is not done, every case presentation would be incomplete. By following a good diet and, if necessary, making lifestyle adjustments, an individual can avoid illnesses to which his or her *prakriti* predisposes him or her. As a result, *prakriti* is extremely important in terms of prevention. In the event of sickness, the pathogenic process has consequences on the body that obscure some of the *prakriti* diagnostic characteristics. It is usually preferable to keep a record of one's *prakriti* in a healthy state. During sickness, many patients visit the doctor for the first time. In such situation, though not appropriate, rough diagnosis of the *prakriti* is sufficient for management of that disease. Ideally *prakriti* should be analyzed when the individual is healthy.

CONCLUSION

For getting The *Ayurvedic* Sciences' more excellent (significant) results, it is essential that everyone should know their constitutional type. Everybody's constitution is Unique. *Ayurveda* divides the population into seven constitutional kinds (*prakriti*), each with its own set of physiological, anatomical, and psychological characteristics, as well as a propensity to certain

illnesses. Whereas western medicine has traditionally tended to take the view that all the people are less or more same and has attempted to treat the condition rather the patient suffering from it and they consider that Everyone has the same anatomy and physiology, and the pathological illness process does not account for differences sufficiently between the people but *Ayurveda* classify the people in different individual constitution (*prakriti*).

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