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A Conceptual Review on Importance of *Prakriti* and its Assessment

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ABSTRACT

Prakriti is a unique concept of individuality that has been explained in our ayurvedic literature. It expresses particular trait of an individual that is defined by specific and permanent composition of *Dosha* at conception. *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* has mentioned different characteristics of different *deha prakriti*. In *Ayurveda* clinical methods such as pulse examination and *prakriti* assessment plays an important role. Various methods have been mentioned in our literature for *prakriti* assessment of an individual. *Deha prakriti* is the foremost factor which determines the pattern of susceptibility of an individual to different diseases, their prognosis, course and complications.

KEYWORDS

Prakriti, dosha, trait, Prognosis, Complications



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INTRODUCTION

The word *Prakriti*(constitution) has varying meanings in different contexts e.g. *samya*(equilibrium), *arogya*(health), *svabhav*(nature), *karana*, end stage of life, bodily constitution etc. *Prakriti* is specific composition of *Dosha* that is permanent through the life. *Ayurveda* has designed *prakriti* as *vataj*, *pittaj*, *kaphaj* or combination of any two or three of them. Categorisation has been done in human population in the form of *vata prakriti*, *pitta prakriti* and *kapha prakriti* individual. It has been observed that most of the lifestyle related disorders manifest by following regimen opposite to individual's *Prakriti* described in *Ayurveda*; in terms of *Ahara*(dietary habits) , *Dincharya* (daily regimen), and *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen).It clearly indicates that if someone want to live a healthy and happy life he or she must follow lifestyle according to his or her *prakriti*. The *prakriti* is believed to be determined at the time of conception and is influenced by the milieu interior of the womb and the dietary habits and lifestyle of the mother ¹. These *prakritis* exhibit attributes of the dominant *Dosha* in physical, physiological and psychological characteristics. The disturbance in equilibrium of these *doshas* can lead to

disease according to the *prakriti* of the person for example; a *pitta prakriti* person is described to be more prone to peptic ulcers, hypertension, and skin diseases, a *vata prakriti* person to backache, joint aches and crackling joints while individuals with *kapha prakriti* are prone to obesity, diabetes and atherosclerosis ².There exist a number of tools, mainly questionnaires for ascertaining the *prakriti* of an individual and there have been ongoing attempts of validating such a tool since long time. With respect to modern science in which some evidence is being generated is now known as Ayugenomics. The basic concept behind Ayugenomics is the fact that if the system of *tridosha* is prevalent in all organisms then there must be ways in which it is inherited. *Prakriti* must be a phenotypic phenomenon arising from a particular genotype. *Vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha prakriti* are found to have unique metabolic activities. According to *Ayurveda*, *kapha* is slow, *pitta* is fast, and *vata* is considered to have variable metabolism. Various studies have tried to establish correlation between specific *prakriti* types and different metabolic activities occurring in the body. Recently, a study was done that showed Body Mass Index (BMI) in *vata-pitta prakriti* was significantly less as compared to *kapha-pitta*



prakriti and the *vata-pitta prakriti* individuals were found to be having maximum platelet aggregation³. One of the associations of *tridoshas* has been hypothesized by Hankey in which it was suggested that the peptide coenzyme A, which occurs in all cells across all species-preserved through evolution and is associated with lipid metabolism, is linked with the *tridoshas* at the cellular level⁴. One more study describes the concept of *prakriti* in aging stating that the *pitta* predominance *prakriti* type individuals have high basal metabolic rate (BMR) and energy consumption leading to tissue destruction and premature aging and average life span, while *kapha* predominance *prakriti* type have a tendency to delayed manifestation of aging and longer life span⁵.

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.

CONCEPTUAL PART:

Basis of *prakriti*: *Vaata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* are basic factors responsible for health and

disease as well. Each *Dosha* possesses specific *Guna* or attributes. These attributes are defined according to pharmacological actions and form base for diagnosis, treatment and diet and lifestyle advice. *Sattva*, *Rajas*, *Tama* are *Triguna*. These are mainly psychological attributes, which also affect physical characteristics. These *Gunas* of *Dosha* are expressed in physical and psychological characteristics. As *Prakriti* is manifestation of composition of *Dosha* with specific *Guna*. *Prakriti* assessment is not only categorization of individuals but also evaluation of these attributes to estimate dominance of particular *Dosha* or *Guna*.

Types of *prakriti*: In our classic literature division of *prakriti* is based on *Tridosha*, *Triguna* and *Mahaabhoota* are: *Dehaprakriti*, *Maanasprakriti*, *Bhautikprakriti* respectively. *Prakriti* with reference to *Dosha* is known as *Dosh prakriti* or *Deh prakriti* as it expresses mainly physical characters. They are further categorised into seven types. *Ekdoshjaj* (One *Dosha*) types are concerned with one dominant *Dosha* they are three *Vaata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*. *Dvidoshaja* types exhibit dominance of two *Dosha* they are three (*Vaata Pitta*, *PittaKapha*, *KaphaVaata*) *Sama Prakriti* has three *Dosha* in balanced state⁶. Resembles *Kapha Prakriti*, *Parthiva Prakriti* has *Sthira*,



Vipula Shaarira (stable and large body) and *Kshamabhavana* (has

forgiveness), *Naabhasa* has large cavities and live longer and follow purity.

Characteristics of *Prakriti* ⁷:

	VATA	PITTA	KAPHA
PHYSICAL CHARACTERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Very tall or very short,lean appearance, Skin is darkish, dry, cracked, rough. -Non muscular. - Long or protruded face with a small nose, mouth and eyes. -Most of the facial portions are quite dry. -Teeth are irregular and often protruded. -Tires quickly, Walk quickly -Feeble, broken, hoarse voice -Hates cold & eats often 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Good body builds with muscles. -Skin complexion is quite fair, moles, warts, hyperpigmented patches. -Pointed chin and nose. -Color of the eyes is light blue, light grey. -Have soft and scanty hairs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Good body builds with muscles. -Oily skin. -Round face with big blue, black or light brown eyes. -Mouth is quite big with prominent teeth. -Maintain a cold body temperature. -Have pleasant appearance.
GENERAL CHARACTERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -They are quite creative, enthusiastic, artistic, enjoy liberty. -They are hyperactive and soon become restless or lose interest in what they do. -They have weak memory but can grasp quickly. -Short life expectancy, quick in getting diseases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An intellectual personality and are quite brave -Have a good memory and grasping power. -Are short tempered. are sharp and quick in action -Have moderate life expectancy. -Can never bear heat. -Can take decisions and organize affairs well. -Because of high metabolic rate they tend to eat and drink a lot. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Have slow and steady body movements. -Level of perseverance is quite high. - Mostly calm and considerate, caring nature -Appetite and digestion is poor. -Endowed with strength and health. they are long lived, capable of good resistance to diseases.
ILLNESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neurological diseases affecting the motor functions - Since Vata dosha occupies the lower part of the body they are mainly prone to diseases related to this area. -The diseases are more pronounced during the old age. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Acidity and Peptic ulcers. -Skin diseases like hyper-sensitive reactions, Photo-dermatitis. -Inflammatory conditions. -Psycho-somatic diseases due to persistent stress. -Metabolic disorders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Diseases in the upper parts of the body like the chest, lungs etc. -Respiratory problem -The diseases are pronounced during the childhood

IMPORTANCE OF *PRAKRITI*:

Prakriti in health and diseases:

Knowledge about *Prakriti* is prerequisite for assessment of *Vikriti* (pathology) hence it is important for diagnosis and therapeutics. Treatment is called as *Prakriti Sthaapana* as it reverse pathology. Primary

objective of *Prakriti* assessment is to estimate *bala praman*⁸. It is judgement of physical and psychological potential that illustrates status of *Dosha*, *Dhaatu*, *Mala*. *Dosha Praman* it is associated to nature and extent of *Dosha*. *Prakriti* assessment is a part of *Dashavidha*



Parikshaa (10-point evaluation) as described by *acharya Charak*.

Role in health:

Preventive Aspect: It has decisive role in *Swasthavritta* (restoration of health), which is the prime objective of *Ayurveda*. *Prakriti* based guidelines for diet and lifestyle result in healthy tissues and homeostasis of *Dosha*⁹.

Diagnostic Aspect: It forms basis for understanding *Sampraapti* (pathology), extent and *Vikalpana* (combinations) of vitiated *Dosha* and status of host factors. Prediction of proneness and severity of disease can be speculated that helps in prognosis judgment

Prakriti and disease proneness: Disease is a result of complex interplay between causative agents, environmental and host factors. Hence there are multiple factors that decide disease proneness. However some generalized assumptions can be made, if we know the *prakriti* of the individual. *Sama Prakriti* has good resistance and generally not prone to diseases. Other types are labelled as *Aatura* (diseased), as they have dominance of one or more *Dosha* and need regular preventive measures. Manifestation of disease in different *Prakriti* will be different though causative factors are comparable. Similar *Dosha* in *Prakriti* and

Sampraapti (pathology) leads to severe disease. These assumptions are based on presence of potent and similar *Hetu* (causative factors). For eg. *Kaphavardhaka Hetu* (excess *Guru, Snigdha, Manda* etc. *Guna*) cause severe *Kapha* disease to *Kapha Prakriti* individual than any other *Prakriti*.

Prakriti and Prognosis: It is important for judgement of prognosis. If *Vikaara Prakriti* (nature of disease) and *Prakriti* are similar then disease is difficult to manage (*Kashtasaadhya*). When *Prakriti* and disease are of different origin, it is easy to manage (*Sukhasaadhya*). *Kashyapa Samhita* has defined role of season (*Kaal Prakriti*) in relation to *Prakriti*. If season, disease and *Prakriti* are of same *Dosha*, disease is untreatable and has bad prognosis. Any two of these if similar, make disease difficult to treat.

Therapeutic role: Though treatment is based on multiple variables *Prakriti* has a role in: Selection of drug, dose, *Anupaana* (vehicle),

Samskaara (processing). Considering *Prakriti* along with other factors, some drugs or procedures are Indicated e.g. *Ghrita* for *Vaata* and *Pitta Prakriti* or Contraindicated e.g. *Svedana* for *Pitta Prakriti*¹⁰. Hence *Prakriti* assessment with other factors of *Dashavidha Parikshaa* should be



contemplated for total understanding of patient or healthy individual.¹¹

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

There is a huge importance of *prakriti* in diagnosis of particular disease and Total scenario of public health programmes can be changed by implementation of *Prakriti* and providing diet programmes accordingly and selection of drugs according to the *Prakriti* of patient. Knowing about one's constitution is of utmost importance to select what is beneficial for him. Thus *Prakriti* definitely has an important role in 21st century in dealing with the health problem.

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