

PRAKRITI (HUMAN CONSTITUTION) - AN INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY OF A HUMAN

Sharma Ravindra^{1*}, Malviya Reeta², Saraswat Vipin³, Shenoy Sumanth⁴, Rama Murthy A⁵

1. P.G. Scholar, Dept. of Dravyaguna. National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.
2. P.G. Scholar, Dept. of Dravyaguna. National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.
3. P.G. Scholar, Dept. of Dravyaguna. National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India
4. Ph.D. Scholar, Dept. of Dravyaguna. National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India
5. Professor, Dept. of Dravyaguna, National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

Received: 31-10-2012; Revised: 27-11-2012; Accepted: 29-11-2012

Abstract

A person with optimum health has a balanced constitution, i.e. sama-prakriti where all the three biological elements, namely, vata, pitta, and kapha are normal, both quantitatively as well as qualitatively. Very few individuals have a balanced or a healthy constitution. A vast majority of us have an unhealthy constitution where one, two or all three elements are abnormal. Depending on the dominant dosha which is abnormal, either qualitatively or quantitatively the constitution is labeled as vata prakriti, pitta prakriti and kapha prakriti and according to their permutations and combinations, i.e. vata-pitta, pitta-kapha, kapha-vata and vata-pitta-kapha. In addition, the environmental factors such as diet, activity, country, climate and age etc. also influence the constitution. In fetal life, maternal diet, activity and health will influence the constitution. Persons born with abnormal constitutions have a characteristic built and possess strong likes and dislikes. They are prone to or are susceptible to develop certain diseases whenever precipitating factors operate. They never enjoy optimum health. However, they do not realize their defects since they get used to the subnormal state of health right from birth. The man should fix his routine according to his constitution similarly; the physician should keep the constitution in mind while prescribing medicines (and diet) for a patient. So the theory of prakriti is useful for both people and physician.

Key words: Prakriti; Constitution; Optimum health; Three Biological elements.

*Address for correspondence:

Dr. Ravindra Sharma,
P.G. Scholar, Dept. of Dravyaguna,
National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India, 302002.
E-mail: reeta1785@gmail.com

Cite This Article

Sharma Ravindra, Malviya Reeta, Saraswat Vipin, Shenoy Sumanth, Rama Murthy A.
Prakriti (Human constitution) - An individual identity of a human. Ayurpharm Int J Ayur Alli
Sci. 2012;1(7):151-158.

INTRODUCTION

The constitution of a person is decided by the dosha predominant at the combination of sperm and ovum (fertilization) which becomes almost fixed for the whole life.^[1] The person of vatika constitution (vata-prakriti) is averse to cold, inclined to stealing, love music, has hands and feet cracked, hairs, nails, etc. rough, is impatient and unstable, lean and thin, ungrateful, vociferous, with quick movements, loitering, unsteady in social relations and has quivering eyes. The person of paittika constitution is intelligent, powerful, debating and has quick emotions of anger and compassion. They eat much, dislike heat and perspire heavily. The person of shlaishmika (kapha) constitution is handsome, grateful, patient, non-greedy, firm, stable, strong, tolerant, faithful and charitable. Constitution is also decided on the basis of psychic qualities sattva, rajas and tamas. The person of sattvika nature is pure and has positive outlook, is devoted to gods and teachers, happy, intelligent, critical, studious and adopts middle course.^[2] The person of rajasa nature is brave, has attachment and aversion, anger, passion, intolerance, greed, selfishness and is involved in enjoyments and violence. The person of tamasa nature is foolish, dull, fearful, averse to cleanliness, quarrelsome, dislikes good people, sleeps too much and eats stale food. Similarly there are also bhutaik prakritis (constitution according to predominance of bhuta's) which can be known from their respective features. To know a person, one should examine his constitution properly.^[3]

In born metabolic pattern (Prakriti)

Life begins as a fertilized ovum, i.e. by fertilization of ovum by the sperm. Constitution is primarily genetic in origin. Sperm and ovum carry with them the constitutions of both the parents. At the time of conjugation, the dominant prakriti, i.e. dosha of sperm can either neutralize the

dominant prakriti of ovum or exaggerate the dominant dosha or quality; e.g. a sperm with vata constitution can inhibit some of the characteristics of the ovum of kapha constitution, e.g. dry, light, rough and mobile qualities of kapha. On the other hand, the cold quality which is common to both would be exaggerated leading to extreme sensitivity to cold. The offspring in this case inherits vata-kapha constitution. On the other hand, if both father and mother, i.e. sperm and ovum are of vata constitution, the progeny would inherit a dominant vata constitution. However, all the characteristics of vata would manifest in a far exaggerated form compared to those present in the parents.^[4]

Physiology of characteristics of Vata, Pitta and Kapha constitution

All the biological elements have certain properties, e.g. vata is dry, pitta is hot and kapha is heavy. Since, these elements are the constituents of the entire body as well as of the mind; their qualities are reflected in the physical and mental characteristics of an individual.

Vata constitution

Vata is dry, light, mobile, extensile, quick, cold, rough and clear. The dry quality of vata in the body manifests in the form of a dry, slim and small body. They are constipated because of dry stools. The hair, nails, teeth and eyes appears dry. The voice is weak, low, cracked and dry. Because of dryness and light nature, the vata individual does not get sleep and is wakeful. Because of light nature of vata, the diet, movements and activities of the person are light and quick. The mobile nature of vata results in unsteadiness and excessive movements of joints, eyebrows, chin, lips, tongue, neck, shoulders and limb.

The extensile nature of vata becomes manifest in prominent blood vessels and fascia in

persons with vata constitution. Because of quickness of vata, such persons are quick to start their jobs but are irritable and get upset or emotionally disturbed quickly. They grasp quickly but forget as easily. The cold nature of vata gives rise to a cold body, intolerance to cold, stiffness of body, tremors or shivering. The roughness of vata results in rough hair, nails, teeth, face and limbs. The clear quality of vata manifests in the form of well differentiated parts of the body and cracking joints during movements. The natural desires and cravings are for food and environment having opposite qualities. Because of the combination of the above mentioned qualities, such persons are usually weak, beget a few children and have a short life-span. Due to their physical weakness and wavering nature, they usually do not earn enough money and are considered unfortunate.

Pitta Constitution

Pitta is hot, penetrating, liquid, slightly foul-smelling, sour and pungent in taste. Because of its inherent hot quality, pitta persons have a higher metabolic rate, they have a good appetite and they are often thirsty. They develop moles and skin eruptions. They have soft and scanty hair and a tendency towards baldness with premature graying of hair. Their skin gets wrinkled earlier. They have a delicate body and a tendency to develop stomatitis. They are unable to bear heat. Because of the penetrating property of pitta, people with pitta constitution have good digestive power and they eat and drink a lot and often. They are brave but cannot tolerate exertion. They get easily upset and angry and have poor endurance. Due to the liquid or fluid nature of pitta, their muscles and joints are soft and loose. They perspire a lot and excrete large quantities of stools and urine. Because of foul-smell, people with pitta constitution have a foul-smelling mouth and sweat. Because of the sour and pungent nature, they have limited

sex urge and libido, scanty semen and less children.

Such persons, because of the above characteristics usually have less knowledge, poor intellect; moderate means to earn money, moderate strength and medium span of life.

Kapha Constitution

Kapha is unctuous, smooth, soft, sweet steady, dense, slow, rigid, cold and clean. Because of unctuous nature of kapha, persons with constitution have oily bodies. Because of its soft quality the face and look is soft and clear. Because of the sweet quality of kapha, they secrete profuse quantity of semen, have good libido and beget many children. The steady quality of kapha gives compactness to the body and organs. The slow quality of kapha results in slow activities including slowness in eating. The rigid nature of kapha results in the slow onset of any activity and very mild emotional upsets. The heavy quality gives a steady and slow movement. The cold quality results in poor appetite, less thirst, cold body and scanty sweat secretion. They are calm and cool in temperament. The limited amount of water in kapha compared to pitta results in well-built and steady joints and ligaments. Clarity of kapha gives rise to pleasant appearance, colour and voice. The combination of the above qualities makes a person with kapha constitution a strong, learned, wealthy and an energetic individual with a long life.^[5]

Sama Prakriti (Balanced Constitution)

A person with a balanced constitution is strong and energetic. He enjoys equally well the burning heat of summer, the biting cold of winter and the heavy showers of monsoon. He can digest large quantities of heavy food and bear with ease the pangs of hunger and thirst. He does not fall a prey to disease. He has a

cheerful disposition, pleasing manners and a happy and contented state of mind.^[6]

Types of Prakriti

In Indian literature, the typology aspect of human prakriti, seems to have first described in Ayurveda as a special subject and in a systematic way. Ayurvedacharyas probed into this field of prakriti from different angles, in order to adjust the science of treatment based on the individual temperament and prakriti. Detailed descriptions are found in the Charaka and Sushruta on the different classification of prakriti of personality from different aspects and bases. Vagbhata in Astanga Samgraha denotes a separate chapter "Prakriti bhediya adyaya" on the subject of prakriti from different angles. If we collect and co-ordinate the whole literature available in ayurvedic samhitas, it is found that the fundamentals biases of typology theory are based either on physical (dosha or deha) or mental (manasika) considerations.

Charaka, mainly classifies the prakriti into two types. They are Deha Prakriti and Manasa Prakriti.^[7] In Kasyapa Samhita, kashyapa has described the extra 3 types of prakritis along with 7 prakriti. They are Vata sthuna, Pitta Sthuna and Shleshma sthuna.^[8]

Manasa Prakriti

Charaka mentioned 3 types in Sharira Sthana. They are Satwika, Rajasika and Tamasika. Sushruta mentioned 3 types in Sharira sthana, in the name of Satwika kaya, Rajsika kaya and Tamsika kaya. Here kaya means prakriti.^[9]

According to Astanga samgarha, the prakritis are 7 types. They are 1. Satwika, 2. Rajsika, 3. Tamsika, 4. Satwika Rajsika, 5. Satwika Tamsika, 6. Rajsika tamsika, 7. Samaguna prakriti.^[10]

In Bhela samhita, Bhela mentioned 7 types of divya kaya in manasa prakriti.^[11] Kashyapa and Bhava prakasha has also mentioned the above said 3 of mansika prakriti.

Bhautika Prakriti

This type of prakriti is only described by sushruta. This type of prakriti description is not available in any other samhita. In bhautika prakriti the term 'Bhautika' stands for panchamaha bhutas. Bhautika Prakriti are 5 types on the basis of predominance of pancha mahabhuta. They are 1.Parthiva, 2.Apya, 3.Tejasa, 4.Vayavya and 5.Nabhasa.^[12]

The Vayavya, Tejasa, Apya prakriti are just the same as are the vata pitta kapha dosha prakriti. According to sushruta the body of a person of parthiva prakriti is sthira, vipula and samashila in this temperament. The person of Nabhasa prakriti shareerang is pavitra, dirghyaya and the apertures of his nose ear etc. are larger in size. The living body is formed out of the vikara of pancha bhutas.

Dalhana Acharya commentator of Sushruta Sutra mentioend the 31 types of bhautika prakriti on the basis of tara tama bheda.^[13] They are Eka bhutaja (5 in number), Dwi bhutaja (10 in number), Tribhutaja (10 in number), Chatur butaja (5 in number), Sarva (1 in number).

Jati Prasaktaadi Prakriti

Sapta doshaj Prakriti, Pancha Bhautika and three manasika prakriti are collectively known as garbha prakriti along with these prakritis charaka mentioned 6 types of jaata shareera prakriti in indriya sthana. (Table 1)

I. Garbha Sareera Prakriti

Shukra Sonita Prakriti - Shukra shonita prakriti is formed depending upon the characteristic of parents. To get better

Table 1: Types of Prakriti

Garbha Shareera Prakriti	Jaata Shareera Prakriti
Shukra Shonita Prakriti	Jaati Prasakata Prakriti
Kala garbhaashaya Prakriti	Kula Prasakata Prakriti
Matra ahara viharaa Prakriti	Deshaanupatinee Prakriti
Manabhuta vikara Prakriti	Kala anupatinee Prakriti
	Vayo anupatinee Prakriti
	Pratyaatmaniyata Prakriti

progeny, Ayurveda has suggested same treatment to eradicate the morbidity of shukra (Semen) and artava (Ova).

1. Kala Garbha Prakriti - This type of prakriti formed during the period of pregnancy depending upon the psycho physical condition of mother only. It is paradoxical that act of fecundating only mother has to shoulder all the responsibilities for nine month. So any emotional strain experienced by mother will affect her baby. The physical and psychological build up of child determined at this stage is known as kaala garbhashya prakriti.

2. Matra Ahara vihara Prakriti - There is good reason to believe that any nourishment taken during pregnancy will be of great importance for the mother as well as for the child. Besides aushadha (drugs) consumed during pregnancy may also influence (good or bad) the child. The prakriti due to diet and mental behavior is known as maatra ahara vihara prakriti.

3. Mahabhuta Prakriti - According to Ayurveda the pancha mahabhuta also play an important role in the formation of prakriti now a days it is believed that the embryo is sensitive to sound. Solar eclipse and heavy cyclone also can damage the child lying in the womb. Thus repeated disturbances in the mahabhutas characters which are necessary for building the body

and nerve tissue may harm the child. This is known as mahabhuta Prakriti.

II. Jaata Shareera Prakriti

The prakriti formed due to environmental changes are given below-

1. Jaati Prasakta Prakriti – The Birth of child in a particular religion race or cast can form certain kind of prakriti. Communal riots can be cited as striking example.

2. Kala Prasakta Prakriti – The Birth in a particular pedigree also can play some part in the formation of prakriti. A child born for a business man parent will probably be a businessman.

3. Deshaanupatinee Prakriti – Prakriti formed according to the characteristic of certain place, region or geographical condition is known as deshaanupatinee prakriti. People born in topical countries are liable to be a victim of particular type of disease while those of cold countries will suffer from a different kind or diseases.

4. Kaala Anupatinee Prakriti – Time and particular season also play considerable role in the formation of prakriti. If a conception takes place when there is constant fear, civil war or aggression, naturally a mother will have to pass through mental strains and this will be

injurious to the child. Similarly drought, famine deluge etc. also contribute to formation certain type of psycho somatic built up of the pregnant lady and this will also affect the child.

5. **Vayoanupatinee** – It is believed in Ayurveda that there is predominance of kapha in the childhood, pitta in young age and vata in old age. It is also apparent that children are more prone to certain type of diseases due to provocation of kapha, similarly in young age and in old age certain type of diseases are very common which may not be found in children. This according to vayoanupatinee prakriti.
6. **Pratyatmaniyata Prakriti** – A subject having some sort of distinct characteristics known as pratyatmaniyata prakriti some may have dextrocardia, polydactylism, somnambulism etc. are examples of this kind.^[14]

Modern concept of prakriti's

For better understanding of the subject, available modern literature regarding personality of the individuals and its types is briefly reviewed.

Personality denotes a real individual and it covers whole nature of an individual. It refers to distinctive patterns of behaviors that characterize each individual adaptation to the situation of his or her life. Personality is influenced by physiological social chemical and biological factors.^[15]

The subject of constitution is bound up with that of heredity. The central doctrine of Greek medicine was that of temperaments and constitutions and the conceptions of Hippocrates are worthy of consideration. Even at the present day constitution. According to Draper, whose monograph on the subject should be consulted is "That aggregate

hereditarily characters influenced more or less by environment, which determines the individual reaction, successful or unsuccessful to the stress of environment.^[16]

John Hunder, Addison and other great clinical observer of that period believed firmly that the habits or physical form of the individual bears an important relation ship to disease. This physical form is the anatomical aspect of constitution and although by no means the only aspect it is one which has been most carefully studied and the only one which will be considered here. "The anatomical features of an individual form one of a set of basic unit characters, predetermined by heredity, and influenced to some extent by environment, which together make up the constitution." The anatomical aspects are related to psychological, physiological and immunological aspects and it was recognition of this fact which formed the basis of marvelous unconscious skill of the older physician. The three basic elements of the diseases problem are man, the lesion and environmental stress.^[17]

The capacity of an individual to react to the environmental stress is a constitutional quality, just as specific as body size and capable of the transmitted to this offspring. Longevity, which is the result and expression of a good constitution is certainly inherited, everyone knows of families, the majority of whose members reach the late 70's or 80's no matter what kind of like they may have led. This is the case with resistance to infection.^[18]

Sex has a profound influence on disease reactions, and this is determined by presence or absence of the extra chromosome. Size of a body has been shown in animals to be a unite character. The entire skeleton may be altered by a defect in a single gene, and the person may be a giant or a dwarf.^[19]

Race may play a part in predisposition to diseases. Thus certain diseases are peculiar to the race. The habitués of general built of the body is the resultant of a combination of height and weight. On this basis it is possible to divide into sthenic and asthenic groups. The sthenic individual is short and stout, with a wide costal angle and deep chest inclined to be florid of cheerful sanguine disposition, liable to gall bladder diseases, arterial hypertension and likely to die of arterio-sclerosis, apoplexy or coronary occlusion owing to defects in his germ plasma at the time of conception.

The asthenic individual is tall, with narrow costal angle, a palled countenance, easily fatigued and inclined to be melancholy. He has a long drooping stomach which empties poorly and intestines which sag, so that his melancholy may be aggravated by dyspepsia and constipation. He is likely to subject for peptic ulcer (Boyd's Pathology).^[20]

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda has a unique approach towards health care which covers both healthy as well as diseased. Being the first creation of the cosmos, every human being is a separate entity. This is a unique phenomenon where one man's food becomes another's poison. The concept of Prakriti helps to understand the typical constitution of an individual to know the physical compatibility and prone ness towards some diseases. This also helps to select the drug to treat a particular disease on the basis of its Panchabhoutic composition which perfectly fit to the problem to be corrected.

An individual with particular prakriti is relatively susceptible for various illnesses. Hence it can be said that the prakriti plays a role in Immunity (Natural Resistance) in a different way i.e. a group of illness affects a group of prakriti more.

For example, a person with Vata-Kapha Prakriti in a higher altitude with a blizzard blowing outside, if suddenly gets struck by a craving for ice cream in the midnight, what would be the consequences? The Vata- Kapha constitution itself being cold and in addition, the climate and environmental conditions also does not permit him to fulfill his desire to have ice cream. But the person being ignorant about his self constitution will surely go for it and next morning his system gets thoroughly clogged with kapha. This makes the knowledge of prakriti absolutely necessary to keep one's life healthy, happy and balanced.

Various classical texts have explained the Prakriti in their own unique way. This suggests the vast area that an individual's Prakriti could cover. It is important to note that the Acharyas have covered both physical and mental pattern of an individual, strongly suggesting the role of Mind in an individual's health.

Prakriti is resultant of maternal and paternal contribution along with other factors like - time of shukra-shonita samyoga, food and habits of a pregnant woman, internal environment of Garbhashaya. External environmental factors like desha etc. This concept is even supported by modern literature suggesting that, the prakriti of an individual is decided prior to his/her birth. This can not be changed in the later part of life. However, by adapting suitable Ahara-Vihara, one can alter his/her prakriti to a certain extent in order to attain a healthy life. Hence it is mandatory to know the concept of prakriti to adapt a suitable ahara and vihara to fulfill the aim of Ayurveda i.e. Swasthya Rakshana and Vikara Prashamana

CONCLUSION

A person can be said in perfect health only when both mind and body are in state of equilibrium and free from any imbalance.

Acharyas of Ayurveda have explained Sharirika and Manasa prakriti which stress upon the role of mind in an individual's health and these two faces of prakriti play important role in human life and they both depend on balanced ahara (diet) and vihara (behavior). If ahara (diet) and vihara (behavior) are properly balanced, participation in activities is well balanced including sleep and awakening then prakriti becomes balanced and kills all pain. Agni, koshta, Bala, etc of the individuals also depends on their prakriti. The knowledge of prikriti is utilised for predicting the proneness, severity, selection of a drug and its dose as a remedy and also in prevention of diseases in the form of suitable Ahara- Vihara to maintain health. Prakriti also plays an important role in the immunity (natural resistance) of individual body as well as in the disease producing phenomenon. Prakriti plays a role in Immunity (Natural Resistance) in its own way.

REFERENCES

1. Maharsi Susruta. Susruta Samhita. Ambika Dutta Shastri, editor. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan; 2007. p. 41.
2. Sharangadhara. Sharangadhara Samhita. Brahmanand Tripathi, editor. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Surbharati Prakashan; 2008. p. 87/64,65,66.
3. Maharsi Susruta. Susruta Samhita. Ambika Dutta Shastri, editor. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan; 2007. p. 39.
4. Maharsi Susruta. Susruta Samhita. Ambika Dutta Shastri, editor. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan; 2007. p. 37-38.
5. Vagbhata. Astanga Hrdayam. Brahmanand Tripathi, editor. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Pratishthan; 2011. p. 381, 382, 383.
6. Agnivesa. Caraka Samhita. Rajeswara Datta Sastri, editor. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Bharti Academy; 2007. p. 720, 772.
7. Agnivesa. Caraka Samhita. Rajeswara Datta Sastri, editor. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Bharti Academy; 2007. p. 192, 879.
8. Kasyapa Samhita. Tewari PV, editor. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Visvabharati; 1996. p.3-4.
9. Maharsi Susruta. Susruta Samhita. Ambika Dutta Shastri, editor. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan; 2007. p. 39-41
10. Srimad Vagbhata. Astanga Samgrah. Brahmanand Tripathi, editor. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Orientalia; 2010 .p. 224.
11. Girijadayalu Suklah, editor. Bhela Samhita. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Bharti; 1999 . p. 76.
12. Susruta. Susruta Samhita. Ambika Dutta Shastri, editor. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan; 2007.p.39.
13. Dalhana . Susruta Samhita. Jadavji Trikamji , editor. 3rd ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Surbharati Prakashan; 2008.p.362.
14. Agnivesa. Caraka Samhita. Rajeswara Datta Sastri, editor. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Bharti Academy; 2007.p.968.
15. Athavale VB, editor. Basic principles of Ayurveda. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia; 2004.p.78, 80.
16. Atmakuri Vinaya Kumar, editor. Principle of Ayurvedic Therapeutics. 1st ed. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publication; 1995.p.52.
17. Ravi R. Javalgekar, editor. An Introduction to Ayurveda. 1st ed. Jaipur: Publication Scheme; 2002.p.32,39.
18. Subhash Ranade, Rajendra Desh Pande, editor. Health and disease in Ayurveda and yoga. 1st ed. Maharashtra: Anmol Prakashan Pune; 1997.p.39-59.
19. Donald Van Howten, editor. Ayurveda & life impressions body work. 1st ed. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas Publishers; 1998.p.31,45.
20. Athavale, editor. Bala Veda. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Surbharti Prakashan; 2000.p.48.

Source of Support: Nil

Conflict of Interest: None Declared