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Prakriti - Voice Nexus w.s.r. to Voice Quality Improving Measures - A Conceptual Study

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ABSTRACT

Voice plays an important and fundamental role in building one's personality and communication skills. The professions like teaching, singing, narration and leaders are highly dependent on voice quality to meet their professional commitments. Surprisingly as per the study, the prevalence of voice disorders among those aged 24–34 years was about 6%. This expresses the need for public awareness focusing on improving voice quality. *Ayurvedic* classics show specific connections between vocal characteristics and *Prakriti*. *Prakriti* is an integral tool of P₄ medicine and also decides the specific pattern of susceptibility for disorders in individuals. This study aims to review the association between *Prakriti* and voice quality and to highlight the measures to improve the voice quality. For the topic *Ayurvedic*-modern literature along with related articles, journals were reviewed. Classical preventive measures in relation to their *Prakriti* could be the part of lifestyle in voice professionals helping in developing the strategies for voice care and in preventing voice problems.

Key words: *Prakriti, Individual's constitution, Voice, Voice quality.*

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of communication, the quality of one's voice serves as a vital conduit, conveying not only words but also emotions, intentions, and personalities. From boardrooms to broadcast studios, from classrooms to conference halls, the quest to enhance voice quality resonates across diverse contexts. Whether it's captivating an audience, fostering clearer

understanding, or imbuing dialogue with authenticity, the quest for improved voice quality stands as an enduring pursuit. In a world increasingly dominated by digital communication platforms, where face-to-face interactions are often supplanted by virtual exchanges, the importance of cultivating a compelling and engaging voice cannot be overstated.

Professional voice users, such as TV news broadcasters, heavily rely on their voice quality to fulfil their professional obligations. Consequently, voice quality becomes a major concern as they are prone to voice disturbances. Many broadcasters engage in prolonged and continuous voice use, punctuated by occasional periods of voice rest, particularly during crisis situations. Their vocal behaviours often involve loud and strenuous speaking and various postures. These improper vocal habits can lead to fluctuations in vocal quality, reduced vocal range, limited voice flexibility, and, occasionally, inflammation of the vocal folds, resulting in vocal fold lesions. A study conducted among news readers revealed common vocal

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problems, including throat dryness (63.8%), vocal fatigue (55.3%), hoarseness (29.8%), and sore throat (27.7%).^[1]

Ayurveda, an ancient discipline, is often referred to as the science of life. Its primary aim is to uphold an individual's well-being by harmonizing physical, physiological, psychological, and behavioural aspects. *Prakriti*, the unique constitution of an individual, is discernible through these multifaceted traits.

During foetal development, *Doshas* undergo intensification due to inherent factors. This non-pathogenic heightened state of *Doshas* remains consistent from birth until death, known as *Prakriti*.^[2] The *Prakriti* is subdivided into seven types: *Vataj*, *Pittaj*, *Kaphaj*, and three *Dvandaj*, along with one *Samadoshaj* type. Among these, *Samadoshaj* represents an excellent and homeostatic state, while the others are regarded as defective constitutions and are susceptible to various diseases.^[3] *Prakriti* influences every aspect through which an individual interacts and determines their health status. Texts indicate that lifestyle and activities should be tailored according to *Prakriti* for the maintenance of health.^[4] In this way *Prakriti* also decides the quality of voice. For instance, *Vata Prakriti* individuals have rough creaky and obstructed voice which is clearly indicated in texts and so these individuals are more susceptible to voice disturbances due to voice abuse. Therefore, we can utilize this concept in the prevention and management of voice problems in voice professionals and make them more competent by improving their voice quality.

AIM AND OBJECTIVE

To study and understand the association between voice and *Prakriti* and to shed light on voice quality improving measures in relation to *Prakriti*.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Only textual materials have been utilized for this study, from which various references have been gathered. The main Ayurvedic texts employed in this study include *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtang Sangrah*, *Ashtang Hridaya*, and the available commentaries on them. Additionally, modern texts,

related journals and websites have been reviewed for supplementary information.

DISCUSSION

After reviewing all the literature and various sources the following data related to concept of voice as well as *Prakriti* is mentioned below:

Concept of *Prakriti*

The word *Prakriti* has been derived from *Prakarshen Karoti Iti Prakriti* which means manifestation of special characteristics due to predominance. According to *Rasa-Vaisheshik*, *Prakriti* is a state which is formed at the time of fertilization due to eminence of *Dosha*.^[5] *Acharya Charaka* and *Sushruta* have stated that *Prakriti* can be identified at the time of fertilization due to predominant state of *Dosha* and it is purely physiological. The *Prakriti* is influenced by the factors like the quality of gametes, environment at the time of conception, nutrition taken by the mother, status of the uterus and the *Mahabhutas* comprising the foetus.

Ayurvedic concept of Voice

According to *Ayurveda*, the production of sound or speech occurs when *Vayu* circulates within the *Shabdavahi Dhamani*. The subtype of *Vayu* associated with speech production is *Udana Vayu*. *Sushruta* states that *Udana Vayu* is responsible for articulating speech in diverse forms, including language, music, and distinct pronunciations. Additionally, *Udana Vayu*, along with the exhalation function, contributes to the production of sound.^[6]

Modern concept of Voice and Speech

The process of production of voice is known as phonation. Phonation is a process of voice production as a result of vibrations of the vocal ligaments under the influence of exhaled air, occurring in the larynx and leading to the formation of the so-called larynx sound. To create a sound, it is necessary for the respiratory system and larynx to work together. To produce the sound, an adequate amount of air is needed, which when inhaled causes the vocal folds to vibrate. These vibrations consist of a cyclical, orderly, successive opening and closing of the glottis.^[7]

Speech is defined as the expression of thoughts by production of articulate sound, bearing a definite

meaning. It is one of the intellectual functions of brain. When a sound is produced verbally, it is called the speech. Speech depends upon coordinated activities of central speech apparatus (the cortical and subcortical centres) and peripheral speech apparatus (larynx or sound box, pharynx, mouth, nasal cavities, tongue and lips). All the structures of peripheral speech apparatus function in coordination with respiratory system, with the influences of motor impulses from respective motor areas of the cerebral cortex.

Inter-relationship between *Prakriti* and Voice

Ayurveda classics state a definite association between voice and *Prakriti*.

Kapha - These individuals have *Prasanna* (pleasant), *Snigdha* (Unctuous), *Gambheera* (deep) voice as *Mrudanga*, *Jaladha*, *Simha* and *Samudra*.

Vata - These individuals have *Pratata*, (open/free flowing), *Ruksha* (rough), *Kshaama* (feeble), *Sanna* and *Sakta* (*breaky/ creaky*), *Baddha* (*restricted/ obstructed*).^[8]

Pitta - Specific vocal characteristics have not been specified in the *Ayurvedic* classics but they can be the evidence of sharp and commanding voice with provocative speech pattern.^[9]

Disorders related to improper voice care are on the rise, necessitating proper preventive measures and restoration of normal physiology. *Ayurvedic* classics describe *Swarbheda* as a voice disorder, categorized into six types: *Vataja*, *Pittaja*, *Kaphaja*, *Sannipataja*, *Medaja*, and *Kshayaja Swarbheda*. Causative factors include excessive speaking, excessive reading, toxin consumption, singing, and exposure to extreme cold. These factors vitiate *Doshas*, leading to their accumulation in the *Swarvaha Strotas*, affecting voice quality. General treatment principles for *Swarbheda* involve *Snehana*, *Vamana*, *Virechana*, *Basti*, *Nasya*, *Avapidana*, *Mukhadhavana*, *Dhoomapana* and *Avaleha*.^[10]

CONCLUSION

Prakriti, a unique concept in *Ayurveda*, encompasses physical, physiological, psychological, and behavioural aspects. Voice, included in the physiological domain of

Prakriti, is directly influenced by the *Tridoshas*, with the quality of voice being affected by the predominant dosha in an individual's *Prakriti*. The characteristics described in classics show a definite relationship between voice and *Prakriti*. Delving into characteristics of *Prakriti - Voice* nexus reveal that *Vata* individuals are more prone to voice disturbances if not taken proper care. *Ayurvedic* Classics have provided different and unique preventive measures which can be included in daily regime or *Dinacharya*. *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned use of Milk duly cooked with the drugs of the *Madhura* group should be taken in combination with sugar and honey in a case due to the effects of loud speaking. A study was conducted amongst the teachers to evaluate the effect of *Ujjayi Pranayama* on voice quality. Majority of the subjects rated *Ujjayi Pranayama* technique as useful in prepping their voice by describing their voice as easy and better after performing *Ujjayi Pranayama*.^[11] Therefore, the inclusion of *Ujjayi Pranayama*, along with the *Aushadha Yoga* prescribed by *Acharya Sushruta* in *Swarbheda Adhyaya*, can be highly effective in managing voice disorders.

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