

Conceptual Study of Prakriti and Its Role in Maintaining Health: A Review Article


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DOI:10.21760/jaims.10.9.20

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Ayurveda (a Sanskrit word that means "science of life" or "knowledge of life") is one of the world's oldest whole-body healing systems. It contains several key concepts essential for understanding health and a wide range of diseases. Prakriti is a key concept in understanding health, which plays a vital role in determining one's overall well-being. In Ayurvedic texts there are two types of Prakriti but in this work, we will mention only Dehaj Prakriti. Acharya has described different Deha Prakriti in Ayurvedic Texts such as Vataja, Pittaj and Kaphaj Prakriti as main and Dwandaja Prakriti i.e. Vata-Pitta, Vata-Kapha and Pitta-Kapha and last one is Sama Prakriti i.e., when all the Doshas are in a balanced and harmonious state, it is referred to as Sama Prakriti. Ayurveda also suggests diet and regimen according to the Prakriti of a person. Prakriti plays a vital role in determining the prognosis and guiding treatment strategies for disease management. However, when it comes to maintaining health, an individual can only adopt a lifestyle that contrasts with their inherent Prakriti after a thorough assessment of their unique constitution.

Keywords: Prakriti, Tridosha, Health, lifestyle, unique constitution

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Manuscript Received
2025-07-10

Review Round 1
2025-07-25

Review Round 2
2025-08-05

Review Round 3
2025-08-15

Accepted
2025-08-25

Conflict of Interest
None

Funding
Nil

Ethical Approval
Not required

Plagiarism X-checker
11.25

Note



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Introduction

Ayurveda, often referred to as "the Science of Life," offers a holistic approach that emphasizes essential concepts for understanding both wellness and the root causes of various diseases. One of the key concepts in understanding health is *Prakriti*, particularly about the body's constitution. While both *Dehaj* and *Manas Prakriti* are important, this discussion focuses solely on *Dehaj Prakriti*. According to the role of *Doshas* in shaping *Dehaj Prakriti*, there are seven distinct types: *Vataj*, *Pittaj*, *Kaphaj*, the three *Dvandja* combinations, and the *Samadoshaj* type. Individuals with *Sama Prakriti* are typically healthy, while those with *Vata*, *Pitta*, or *Kapha Prakriti* are more prone to illness. *Prakriti* refers to the inherent *Dosha* constitution that an individual is born with, remaining constant throughout their life, from birth to death. *Ayurveda* recognizes that each individual's *Prakriti* is unique, so it adopts a personalized approach to treatment. According to *Acharya Charaka*, *Prakriti* serves as the foundational *Pariksha*, as outlined in the *Dashavidha Pariksha*.

From the time of conception, an individual's physical and psychological characteristics are shaped at the genetic level. These traits then undergo continuous development and maturation, ultimately resulting in the distinctive qualities of a fully developed human being. *Prakriti* plays a vital role in determining the prognosis and shaping the approach to treatment in disease management. Nowadays, the concept of *Prakriti* is being increasingly utilized across various aspects of an individual's personal, social, and professional life. Every biological system and species exhibit distinct characteristics and functions that are unique to each *Dosha*. According to *Ayurveda*, the body's functions are governed by the *Prakriti*, with each of the three *Doshas* dominating specific regions within the body. According to *Charaka*, a person's constitution (*Prakriti*) is influenced by several additional factors beyond the basic elements. These include the season during conception, the health and condition of the uterus, the mother's diet and lifestyle during pregnancy, the quality of both the father's sperm and the mother's ovum (*Sukra Sonita*), as well as changes in the fundamental elements (*Mahabhuta Vikara*). Understanding one's *Prakriti* is essential for making informed choices that promote overall well-being and longevity.

By identifying unique constitution, one can determine the most beneficial foods, herbs, exercise routines, therapies, and even career paths. This knowledge is not only a guide to physical health but also a path to deeper self-awareness, spiritual growth, and ultimately, self-realization. To maintain good health, two key principles must be followed: first, observing personal, ethical, and seasonal conduct; and second, avoiding habits and behaviour that conflict with one's natural constitution. Aligning one's diet and daily routine with their *Prakriti* promotes balance among the *Doshas* and supports the development of healthy body tissues. Consuming foods or following routines that increase heat in the body, potentially leading to health issues. It is seen in *Pitta* dominant *Prakriti* as internal body temperature is higher as compared to another *Prakriti*. So, taking more heat producing regimens might lead to several diseases.

Understanding *Prakriti*

Term *Prakriti* is derived from Sanskrit, where *Pra* means "original" or "primary," and *Kriti* means "creation" or "action." In *Ayurveda*, *Prakriti* refers to an individual's inherent physical, physiological, and psychological makeup, determined at time of conception. It is a unique combination of the three fundamental bio-energies or *Doshas* - *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* - which are manifestations of five elements (*Pancha Mahabhutas*): space, air, fire, water, and earth. According to *Ayurvedic* texts like *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*, *Prakriti* is formed by predominance of one or more *Doshas* at time of fertilization, influenced by factors such as parents' health, their *dosha* balance, and environmental conditions. Once established, *Prakriti* remains relatively stable throughout an individual's life, serving as a blueprint for their physical and mental characteristics, susceptibility to diseases, and response to treatments. *Prakriti* is not merely a static trait but a dynamic framework that guides how individuals can maintain balance (*Svasthya*) with their environment. It underscores *Ayurveda's* individualized approach, recognizing that each person's health needs are unique.

The *Doshas* and their role in *Prakriti*

To understand *Prakriti*, one must first grasp the concept of *Doshas*. The three *Doshas* are:

1. *Vata*: Composed of space and air elements, *Vata* governs movement,

Including circulation, respiration, and nerve impulses. It is associated with qualities like dryness, lightness, coldness, and mobility.

2. Pitta: Formed by fire and water elements, *Pitta* controls transformation processes such as digestion, metabolism, and intellect. Its qualities include heat, sharpness, and intensity.

3. Kapha: Made of earth and water elements, *Kapha* is responsible for structure, stability, and lubrication. It embodies qualities like heaviness, steadiness, and moistness.

Each individual's *Prakriti* is a unique blend of these *doshas*, with one or two typically dominating. This predominance shapes physical traits (e.g., body frame, skin type), physiological tendencies (e.g., digestion, metabolism), & psychological characteristics (e.g., temperament, stress response).

Classification of Prakriti

Ayurveda classifies *Prakriti* into seven primary types based on *Dosha* predominance:

1. Vata Prakriti: Individuals with dominant *Vata* tend to have a lean build, dry skin, and a tendency toward coldness. They are energetic, creative, and quick-thinking but may be prone to anxiety, irregular digestion, and joint issues.

2. Pitta Prakriti: *Pitta*-dominant individuals often have a medium build, warm skin, and sharp intellect. They are ambitious and focused but may experience irritability, inflammation, or acid reflux when imbalanced.

3. Kapha Prakriti: Those with *Kapha* dominance typically have a sturdy build, smooth skin, and a calm demeanor. They are nurturing and stable but may face issues like weight gain, lethargy, or congestion.

4. Vata-Pitta: A dual *dosha* type with characteristics of both *Vata* and *Pitta*, such as a lean but muscular build and a mix of creativity and intensity.

5. Pitta-Kapha: Combines *Pitta*'s drive with *Kapha*'s stability, often resulting in a strong physique and a balanced temperament.

6. Vata-Kapha: Features *Vata*'s agility and *Kapha*'s endurance, with a tendency toward dryness and sluggishness when imbalanced.

7. Tridoshic (Sama Prakriti): A rare balanced state where all three *Doshas* are in equilibrium, leading to robust health and adaptability. While these seven types are standard, *Prakriti* can vary in nuance, with subtle differences based on the degree of *Dosha*. Assessing *Prakriti* requires a detailed evaluation by an *Ayurvedic* practitioner, often through pulse diagnosis, observation, and questionnaires about physical and behavioral traits.

Prakriti and Health Maintenance

The concept of *Prakriti* is integral to *Ayurveda*'s approach to health maintenance. *Ayurveda* defines health as a state of balance among the *doshas*, bodily tissues (*Dhatus*), waste products (*Malas*), and mental faculties, with *Prakriti* serving as the baseline for this balance. By aligning lifestyle, diet, and therapies with one's *Prakriti*, individuals can prevent *Dosha* imbalances (*Vikriti*), which are the root cause of disease in *Ayurveda*.

1. Personalized Diet and Nutrition

Diet is a cornerstone of *Ayurvedic* health, and *Prakriti* guides dietary recommendations. Each *Dosha* responds differently to foods based on their qualities (e.g., hot, cold, dry, oily). For example:

- **Vata Prakriti:** Individuals benefit from warm, moist, and grounding foods like soups, stews, and cooked grains to counter *Vata*'s cold and dry nature. Avoiding raw, cold, or dry foods (e.g., salads, crackers) helps prevent digestive issues or anxiety.
- **Pitta Prakriti:** Cooling, mild foods like cucumbers, leafy greens, and sweet fruits balance *Pitta*'s heat. Spicy, sour, or acidic foods (e.g., chili, vinegar) should be minimized to avoid inflammation or irritability.
- **Kapha Prakriti:** Light, warm, and spicy foods like grilled vegetables, lentils, and ginger stimulate *Kapha*'s sluggish tendencies. Heavy, oily, or sweet foods (e.g., dairy, desserts) can exacerbate weight gain or lethargy. By tailoring diets to *Prakriti*, individuals can optimize digestion (*Agni*), nourish tissues, and prevent *Dosha*.

2. Lifestyle and Daily Routine (Dinacharya)

Ayurveda emphasizes a daily routine (*Dinacharya*) aligned with *Prakriti* to maintain health. For instance:

- *Vata* individuals thrive on routine, as their mobile nature can lead to irregularity. Practices like regular sleep schedules, warm oil massages (*Abhyanga*), and calming activities (e.g., meditation) stabilize *Vata*.
- *Pitta* types benefit from cooling and calming routines, such as early morning exercise, avoiding excessive heat, and practicing mindfulness to manage stress.
- *Kapha* individuals need stimulating activities like vigorous exercise, early waking, and dry brushing to counter their tendency toward lethargy.

Seasonal routines (*Ritucharya*) also consider *Prakriti*, as environmental changes can aggravate specific *doshas*. For example, *Vata* types may need extra warmth in winter, while *Pitta* types require cooling practices in summer.

3. Mental and Emotional Health

Prakriti influences psychological tendencies, and maintaining mental health requires addressing these predispositions. *Vata* individuals may be prone to anxiety and overthinking, requiring grounding practices like *Yoga* or journaling. *Pitta* types, with their intense nature, benefit from relaxation techniques to manage anger or perfectionism. *Kapha* individuals, who may lean toward attachment or lethargy, thrive with stimulating social interactions and goal-setting.

4. Disease Prevention

Prakriti determines an individual's susceptibility to specific diseases. For example, *Vata* types are prone to disorders like arthritis or insomnia, *Pitta* types to inflammatory conditions like ulcers, and *Kapha* types to obesity or respiratory issues. By understanding these predispositions, individuals can adopt preventive measures, such as avoiding aggravating factors (e.g., cold exposure for *Vata*, spicy foods for *Pitta*) and incorporating balancing practices.

5. Prakriti and Modern Medicine

Concept of *Prakriti* aligns with modern trends in personalized medicine, which recognize that genetic & environmental factors influence health outcomes. Recent studies have explored correlations between *Prakriti* & genetic markers, suggesting that *Dosha* types may reflect variations in metabolism,

immune response, and stress resilience. For instance, research published in the *Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine* (2015) found associations between *Prakriti* types and specific gene expressions related to metabolic pathways. Convergence of high-throughput omics with classical profiling has birthed "Ayurgenomics," which uses *prakriti* to pre-stratify cohorts before genomic analysis. SNP associations near CYP2C19, GSTT1 and HLA-DRB1 loci have been linked to *Pitta*, *Kapha* and *Vāta* types respectively, corroborating metabolic and immune variances. Epigenetic age acceleration appears slower in *Kapha* constitutions, while distinct DNA-methylation signatures in circadian-gene promoters differentiate *Vāta* and *Pitta*. Metabolomic profiling identifies higher plasma lactate in *Pitta* and elevated branched-chain amino acids in *Kapha*, resonating with classical "hot" and "cold" attributes. Government and private bio banks increasingly include *prakriti* metadata, enabling machine-learning models that predict constitution from minimal clinical variables with >85 % accuracy - useful where full questionnaires are impractical.

6. Assessing Prakriti in Practice

Determining *Prakriti* involves a comprehensive evaluation by an *Ayurvedic* practitioner. Common methods include:

- **Pulse Diagnosis (*Nadi Pariksha*):** A skilled practitioner assesses the pulse to identify *dosha*
- **Physical and Behavioural Assessment:** Observations of body type, skin texture, digestion, and temperament provide clues.
- **Questionnaires:** Standardized questions about preferences, habits, and health history help identify *Prakriti*.

Modern tools, such as software-based *Prakriti* analysis, are also emerging, combining traditional methods with data-driven insights. However, accuracy depends on the practitioner's expertise and the individual's self-awareness.

7. Challenges and Future Directions

A. Standardisation - Harmonising questionnaires and adopting common data elements will facilitate meta-analysis.

B. Causality vs correlation - Longitudinal, interventional studies are needed to establish whether *Prakriti*-aligned regimens causally improve outcomes.

C. Ethical and cultural considerations - Avoiding deterministic labelling and ensuring benefit-sharing with indigenous knowledge holders.

D. Integration into mainstream care - Cross-training biomedical clinicians and Āyurvedic physicians, and embedding constitution fields into electronic health records.

E. Artificial intelligence - Interpretable AI can translate complex multi-omic patterns into simple *Prakriti* descriptors for bedside use, but transparency and bias mitigation are paramount.

Emerging collaborations - such as the Indian Human Microbiome Initiative & pan-Asian pharmacogenomic networks - are already incorporating constitution data, heralding pluralistic, systems-medicine future.

Discussion

According to the passage from *Acharya Vagbhata Prakriti*, the *Doshik* constitution (predominance) that existed at birth continues to be unchanged from conception to death. The moment that the male and female gametes combined, also known as fertilization or conception, was when *Prakriti* was decided, according to *Acharya Sushruta*. For example, we say someone has *Vataja Prakriti* if the *Vata Dosha* outweighs the *Pitta* and *Kapha Doshas* (both quantitatively and qualitatively) at the time of birth. The main *Vata Dosha* affects a person's anatomy, physiology, mind, and immune system. The features are seen in light of the attributes and roles of *Vata Dosha*. Generally speaking, a person's lifestyle is the product of the interaction between their mental and physical abilities. Their lifestyle, which is rooted in the education they got as youngsters from their parents, siblings, peers, and other close family members, is reflected in their habits, conduct, diet, and overall way of life. Consequently, it needs complete psychological and organic command over the body's functions and senses. Disruption of these three processes - initiation, control, and coordination - results in lifestyle disruption and a range of lifestyle illnesses. *Ayurveda* lists "*Pragyapradha*" (intellectual blasphemy), as how this incident was characterized, as one of the three primary reasons for any illness. The act of suppressing any natural urge is a consequence of *Pragyapradha*, which also contributes to a number of bad habits that are the root cause of many illnesses.

A disease's underlying cause is the reversal of any neurotransmission or the improper removal of the waste products produced by metabolism, both of which lead to an accumulation of poisons. As a result, the habit of suppressing impulses in an unhealthy lifestyle may be one of the primary contributors to lifestyle disorders. In his explanation of *Ayurveda*, *Charaka* claims that the first step of treatment is the elimination of these built-up waste materials. To maintain the *Doshas'* normal functioning, a specific diet is necessary. Unhealthy eating habits that conflict with one's *Prakriti* significantly increase the risk of acquiring lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and many more. Poor dietary habits could include overindulging in specific foods, nutritional deficiencies, and consuming too much saturated fat and processed or processed foods. Both ends of the socioeconomic spectrum are impacted by this, and different diseases affect both groups. A sedentary lifestyle is one of the defining features of urbanization, development, and progress. The majority of city dwellers have jobs that hardly allow them any time for physical activity, and the vast majority of these occupations don't even require it. One of the main reasons why the *Dosha* malfunctions, particularly in the *Kapha* and *Pitta Prakriti*, is because of this, which raises the chance of developing lifestyle illnesses and chronic conditions such as hypertension and high cholesterol.

Obesity, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and other health issues can then be made worse by these circumstances. Additionally, it can make you feel more stressed and anxious as well as raise your risk for a variety of other health issues. People with *Kapha Prakriti* are more vulnerable to hyperlipidemic illnesses, even if *Kapha* has characteristics similar to those of lipid and adipose tissues. Obesity is one of the most pressing problems in today's society, as it greatly increases the risk of diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure. The characteristics of *Vata* are similar to those of psychosomatic processes. As a result, it is believed that *Vata Prakriti* is more susceptible to malnutrition and stress-related illnesses. Stress has a clear physical impact, in addition to its emotional and psychological consequences, as it exacerbates and increases the risk of disorders such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes, asthma, Alzheimer's disease, accelerated aging, and gastrointestinal problems.

Stress and anxiety can also make it harder to relax and get a good night's sleep, which can result in a number of other problems in addition to further health problems.

Conclusion

Prakriti is a cornerstone of *Ayurvedic* philosophy, offering a personalized approach to health maintenance. By understanding one's unique *Dosha* constitution, individuals can make informed choices about diet, lifestyle, and mental health practices to achieve balance and prevent disease. As modern medicine increasingly embraces personalized approaches, *Prakriti* provides a time-tested framework that complements genetic and environmental insights. By aligning with their *Prakriti*, individuals can cultivate resilience, vitality, and harmony, embodying Ayurveda's vision of holistic health.

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