

Conceptual study

Concept of Prakruti and its contribution towards globalization of Ayurveda

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ABSTRACT:

Ayurveda is one of the oldest health sciences with concepts of *tridoshas* and *prakruti*. Unique concept of *prakruti* makes this science a step forward towards personalized approach of treatment. *Prakruti* is one of the 10 ways of assessing a patient from *Dashavidha Atur Pariksha*. The *prakruti* is quite capable of providing a fair indication of physiological strengths and weaknesses, mental tendencies and susceptibility to illness of various types.

Uniqueness of Ayurveda comes into the form of *prakruti* i.e. once an individual's *prakruti* is detected, then we can be able to prevent and cure the disease by managing the *aahar-vihara* of the patient according to the predominant *dosha*. The description of features clearly suggests that the innate *doshaprakruti*s represent the phenotypes. This is necessary to personalize treatment in accordance with the basic principle of Ayurvedic therapeutics.

Since *aahar* is also considered as a type of *chikitsa*, a particular diet is suggested to be followed by the patient according to his/her own *prakruti* to prevent or cure the *vyadhi*. So the concept of *prakruti* finds a base role on which the whole skeleton of personalized treatment is framed.

KEY WORDS: Ayurveda, Prakruti, genotypes.

INTRODUCTION:

"It's far more important to know what a person has the disease than what disease the person has."

-Hippocrates .

Medicine today targets therapy to broadcast patient population, i.e. "ONE DRUG FITS ALL" approach, but the importance of personalized medicine has been long understood in medical profession like Ayurveda.

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian holistic medical science, practiced since 1500 B.C deals with body, mind and spirit and aims at preservation-promotion of health and prevention-cure of diseases. One of the key fundamental theories of Ayurveda involves a system of understanding health and disease known as the *tridosha*^{1,2,3}. This concept of *tridosha* involving the three *doshas* of *vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha* is a central principle of Ayurveda and followed by all the texts of

Ayurveda. The ancient texts of Ayurveda mention numerous properties of *doshas* and how they affect a human being's physiology or *prakruti* based on the dominance of one or more *doshas*. The *prakruti* of a person is quite capable of providing a fair indication of physiological strengths and weaknesses, mental tendencies, and susceptibility to illnesses of various types. Ayurveda emphasizes the treatment of disease in highly individualized manner as it believes that every individual is unique having different constitution. Ayurveda classifies all individuals into different *prakruti* types based on the theory of *tridosha* and each type has varying degree of predisposition to different diseases. This is independent of racial, ethnic or geographical considerations and may provide appropriate means of classifying genotypes to be considered collectively for

genotyping. The association of prakruti with metabolism, chronic disease, individual strength and behavioural aspect is very well mentioned in different Ayurveda text. The knowledge of which can be used for maintaining health of individual.

METHODS:

The literature search was performed using the following electronic database: Google, Google Scholar, PubMed, Science Direct, Cochrane Library, Different Research Journals using keywords like prakruti, dosha, prakruti genotypes, prakruti chronic disease, prakruti metabolism, prakruti personalized medicine, Ayurveda prakruti, Articles containing research done on prakruti and its relation to dosha and body were reviewed, screened and used for deriving conclusion in this article.

Prakruti -

According to ayurveda, the constitution or dosha of your mind and body is decided at the moment of conception. Depending upon the predominance of the five basic elements, three doshas and mental qualities in sperm (Shukra) and ovum (Shonita) at the time of conception, the individual prakruti is decided. As a result, you are born with a unique or distinctive combination of the pitta, vata and kapha doshas that remains exactly the same during your lifetime. This is known as Prakruti – a Sanskrit word which means nature or the original creation.^{1,2,3}

There are a large number of recognizable phenotypic features described for the prakruti types. The key features include the following^{1,2,3}:

Vata

1. Thin body frame, does not gain weight
2. Skin dry, rough, dark complexion, cracked
3. Hair dry and splitting
4. Quick performance of activities
5. Variable and/or poor appetite.
6. Physical working capacity less, resistance to disease usually poor
7. Prefers warm or hot food and climate.
8. Scanty perspiration, variable thirst
9. Tendency for constipation
10. Light sleep with many dreams
11. Prone to anxiety, worry and depression, unpredictable nature

Pitta

1. Medium body frame
2. Skin delicate, reddish complexion, warm to touch
3. Good/excessive appetite
4. Feels warm/hot sensation
5. Prefers cold food and climate, intolerance to hot food and climate
6. Tendency for loose motion
7. Excessive thirst and perspiration
8. Bright eyes, reddish sclera, yellow iris, sharp penetrating vision
9. Hair soft, premature graying, baldness
10. Intelligent, sharp memory, hot tempered, brave, jealous, aggressive, commanding nature

Kapha

1. Large, board body frame, tendency to gain weight
2. Skin thick, soft, smooth, firm, glossy, fair complexion
3. Good stamina but slow in physical activities
4. Deep and pleasant voice
5. Moderate appetite
6. Moderate perspiration, low thirst
7. Deep and sound sleep
8. Large eyes, calm, stable with whitish sclera
9. Hair thick, oily, wavy dark coloured
10. Calm, cool, joyful, polite good nature.

Importance of prakruti -

Prakruti finds a base role on which whole skeleton of personalized medicine is framed. Prakruti assessment is a part of Dashvidha Pariksha and is considered in totality with understanding of other minimum of 9 other aspects.

Prakruti is decided before birth of an individual based upon:

1. Shukra and shonita
2. Panchamahabhuta predominance
3. Matura ahara-vihara
4. Satva, raja, tama

Hence, prakruti of an individual does not change throughout his/her life. So according to the prakruti, the individual should be subjected to suitable ahara for prevention of vyadhi as ahara is also considered as chikitsa.

Prakruti and metabolism -

Prakruti or constitution of body consists of the *tridoshas* (*vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha*). The three striking constitutions of *prakruti* (*vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha*) present a set of metabolic tendencies which help in determining the reaction of body and mind when confronted by a stimulus. Generally, there is a natural predominance of one or more *doshas* in an individual. Each *prakruti* has specific physical, physiological, and psychological attributes (*gunas*) which totally depends upon involvement of each dosha in an individual. Every individual must maintain their balance of *doshas* as determined by their *prakruti* in order to remain healthy.

Vata, *pitta*, and *kapha prakruti* 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 *prakruti* types and different metabolic activities occurring in the body⁴. One more study describes the concept of *prakruti* in aging stating that the *pitta* predominance *prakruti* 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 *prakruti* type have a tendency to delayed manifestation of aging and longer life span⁵. Ghodke *et al.*, (2011) demonstrate a probable genomic basis for metabolic differences attributed by *prakruti* and concluded that *pitta prakruti* are fast metabolizers and *kapha* ones are slow and are influenced by different doses of CYP2C19 substrates. Thus it was apparent from this study that fast and slow metabolism was one of the major differentiating phenomena with respect to correlations between CYP2C19 genotypes and *prakruti*.⁶

There are number of studies have demonstrated or hypothesized the links of the Ayurvedic tridosha theory with various metabolic⁴. However, a number of these associations need to be further verified by more direct evidence.

Prakruti and chronic disease

Prakruti or a person's constitution of his/her *tridoshas* also has a clear link to the susceptibility one has for chronic diseases^{1,2,3}. This is quite widely known in Ayurveda, but is also now becoming more apparent in the wider knowledge scape of health in the light of recent evidence from modern or current health science.

Based on the properties of the three body types, the diseases which can affect the person in his life span can be predicted. The predominance of *kapha* body types for gaining weight is quite well known. This propensity to gain weight and for obesity is in turn linked with a number of chronic diseases such as heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes; all of which are increasingly viewed collectively as metabolic syndrome. Similarly looking at the properties of *pitta* body type it can be predicted that such individuals can have a propensity to develop ulcers, bleeding disorders, and skin disorders more common. *Vata* body types can have propensity to develop neurological problems, dementia, movement and speech disorders, arrhythmias, and related chronic diseases as well.^{7,8,9} However, of the three body types, classical texts suggest that *vata* type individuals will have maximum propensity for chronic disease.^{8,9,10}

DISCUSSION:

The concept of personalized medicine has been around for as long as people have been practicing medicine. Based on *prakruti* type the person differs in terms of their body structure, mental makeup, tolerance to various types of food and environment, and susceptibility to various diseases including the prognosis.¹¹ It is also well known that a person's *prakruti* is considered to be normal for that person and any derangement of the *doshas* of the person's constitution leads to diseases. The *prakruti* of a person is quite capable of providing a fair indication of physiological strengths and weaknesses, mental tendencies, and susceptibility to illnesses of various types^{12,13}. Since *prakruti* is related to certain physical and mental tendencies that determine susceptibility to diseases, the ancient texts of Ayurveda also provide guidelines for maintaining lifestyles in accordance with one's *prakruti* for continued healthy living in a personalized manner. Every individual must maintain their balance of *doshas* as determined by their *prakruti* in order to remain healthy.^{14,15}

By understanding the individual combination of *doshas*, gives best guidelines related to Aahara (food habits), vihara (practice and habits) on which lifestyle is based.

By understanding the individual combination of Tridoshas, gives best guidelines related to Ahara (food and drinks) Vihar (practices and habits) and Vichar (thought and behaviour) on which lifestyle is based. Daily and seasonal regimes can be advised and easily followed as preventive measures.

CONCLUSION:

Lifestyle modification and intervention based on concept of prakruti is helpful to maintain health of individual and prevention of illness. Based on the concept of prakruti the line of treatment and the combination of medicine and drugs can be modified for better and fast results. It acts as a personalized prevention and personalized medicine and thereby helps to overcome various health problems and also to cure diseases in better way and also to overcome lifestyle disorders.

Even though the concept of prakruti is well explained in the Ayurveda texts, there is the need of standardization of concept of prakruti as per the modern terms which will be suitable in modern world. But there is a wide scope in this field for research and further study.

Therefore, if we can standardize this concept of prakruti and propagate it worldwide, it can be used globally, people can be suggested with regimes and routines most suitable for their healthy life.

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