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Concept of *Prakriti* and its Applied Utility in Ayurveda

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ABSTRACT

For the sustenance of life on earth there are many factors which influence it viz, environmental, geographical, climatic, food, cultural and lifestyle etc. And that too is affecting the individuals differently, what is good for one can be harmful for other and the principle ailment behind this variation is *Prakriti*. This difference in constitution of an individual makes him or her different from others in a unique way. *Ahara* and *Vihara* are the key assessors of *Prakriti* as life depends on the food intake and our way of living totally. Effects of *Ahara* and *Vihara* on different constitutions (*Prakriti*) also have a wide diversity. **Materials and methods-** So to assess their relationship, present study has been selected. To fulfill the objective of the conceptual study, information regarding *Prakriti* diet lifestyle has been collected from *Samhita* and all the available commentaries and other texts of Ayurveda. **Discussion-** All the three factors affects each other in order to be in equilibrium.

KEYWORDS

Prakriti, Samhita, Ahara, Vih



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INTRODUCTION

The classification of *Prakriti* is based on differences in physical, physiological and psychological characteristics. It is independent of racial, ethnic or geographical considerations. Such individual variation in health and disease is a unique basic principle, described hundreds of years ago. A physician who knows the principles and their correct application in consonance with place, time and individual variation regarded as best physician.¹

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Material

To fulfill the objective of the conceptual study, information regarding *Prakriti* diet lifestyle has been collected from *Samhita* and all the available commentaries and other texts of Ayurveda.

Method

All the compiled literary material is critically analysed and reviewed in the light of hypothesis of present study. The discussion is done logically to reach a fruitful conclusion.

CONCEPT OF DEHA PRAKRITI

Deha Prakriti means predominance of *Dosha* that remains same throughout the life.² At the time of union of *Shukra* and *Shonita*, predominance of *Dosha* decides

the constitution of every individual.³ Role of *Dosha* in conception is described in following verse. This verse illustrates the advancement of concept of *Prakriti* in Ayurveda in primordial period.

देहजन्माख्यं दोषकार्यमाह- शुक्रेण युक्तमार्तवं
शुक्रार्तवं, तत्र तिष्ठन्तीति तत्स्थाः॥⁴

Three *Dosha*; *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* are autonomous, therefore are mainly considered. *Rasa*, *Rakta* etc. are dependent on *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. For this reason, they are given secondary importance. Commentators explain functions of *Dosha* at the time of conception. Sperm and ovum unite to form a conjugate *Dosha* descend through sperm and ovum and become active. Presence of *Dosha* in *Shukra Shonita* is logical concept to propose. It however, is not sufficient to explain practical interpretation like blind parents giving birth to children with sights.

RESPONSIBLE FACTORS

The 4 factors responsible in development of the *Prakriti* were clearly narrated only by Acharya Charaka, while according to Acharya Sushruta; only *Shukra* and *Shonita* were responsible. Though Sushruta hasn't explained such factors but have mentioned *Panchbhautiki Prakriti* which was same to *Mahabhuta Vikara* factors narrated by Charaka Acharya. Acharya Vagbhata hasn't described the *Mahabhuta* factor. To



understand the role of these factors a quick look on the *Satkaryavada* of *Samkhya Darshana* may be useful. Theory of *Satkaryavada* says that *Karya* (effect) is nothing but another form of *Karana* (cause). Qualities of *Karya* must be there in seed form in *Karana*. That's why to know *Karya* it is must to understand *Karna* with all its specificity and specialities. *Karana* again are divided into three: *Samvayi* or *Upadana Karana* (material cause), *Asamavayi Karana* (the energy which is needed to produce *Karya* from *Upadana Karana*) and *Nimitta Karana* (Assessory / Secondary factors). Among these three *Upadana Karana* is most important as the qualities and properties of *Upadana Karana* are expressed in *Karya*. *Garbha* (foetus) is a *Karya*. *Shukra* and *Shonita* can be considered as *Upadana Karana* for *Garbha*, hence the properties of *Shukra* and *Shonita* determine the *Prakriti* of *Garbha*.

Shukra Shonita Prakriti:

Shukra and *Shonita* are the first and vital factors for the formation of the *Prakriti*. In the description of factors which cause impairment on pregnancy (*Garbhopghatakara Bhava*), Acharya Chakrapani has narrated that these factors are present in mother as well as father.⁵ It is a well-known fact that all *Dhatu* and *Upadhatu* are substratum of *Dosha*. *Shukra* is *Kapha Pradhana* and *Artava* is *Pitta*

Pradhana substances but it does not means that no other *Dosha* resides in them. All the three *Dosha* resides in all body components as they are *Panchabhutatika*. The combination of *Shukra Shonita* thus gets a specific *Doshika* dominancy which expresses through physical, psychological and behavioural characteristics; commonly known as *Prakriti*.

Matura Ahara Vihara Prakriti:

Matura Ahara Vihara is the factor which affects the *Prakriti* before conception through *Shonita* and after conception to the *Garbha* as a whole. Specific kind of diet vitiate *Doshas*, ultimately result in abnormality of *Shonita* or *Doshika* predominance of *Shonita* which is one of the *Upadana Karana* as described earlier. It is said by Vagbhata that after conception foetus gets nourishment through *Rasa Dhatu* of mother. The process is described by words "*Upasneha Nyaya*" for this. Thus mother's diet directly affects the body components of Foetus; resulting in particular *Doshika* predominance as per the type of diet. Same can be said for *Vihara* of mother. The parents, especially the mother, should perform virtuous acts and resort to diets and regimens which are beneficial.⁶ The diet and regimens to be followed by a woman desirous of having a child of her choice have been mentioned by Acharya Charaka. The mother should also be asked



to adopt the food articles, regimen, manners and apparel of the people of those countries whom she wishes her child to resemble.⁷

Mahabhuta Vikara Prakriti:

The body of every living being is *Panchbhautika*, *Ahara* is also *Panchabhautika*, hence *Shukra - Shonita* are also *Panchabhautika*. *Jeevatma* enters with *Sukshma Bhuta* in union of *Shukra* and *Shonita*. These all come together and make the *Garbha Panchbhautika* by their final outcome. Dominance of *Mahabhuta* of *Shukra/ Shonita/* mother's diet decide the overall predominance.

Kala Garbhashaya Prakriti:

Kala is the factor which affects the foetus from inside and outside both. There is difference in the health status of two children of elderly Primi-para and timely Primi-para that indicate the age of parents. According to Acharya Sushruta, if the second child is born after 6 years of first child birth then it is harmful for second child.⁸ On the other hand *Dosha* gets influenced by seasonal variations that can also affect the *Prakriti* of the *Garbha*.

INFLUENCING FACTORS:

Acharya Charaka has mentioned these factors in very first chapter of *Indriya Sthana* in which the description of *Vikriti (Arishta)* is narrated. Acharya Chakrapani says that without knowing the physiology one can't understand the pathology.⁹

Prakriti is the natural state of an individual and only by understanding this original state of the body one can understand the possible derangement in the function. These influencing factors are *Jati* (cast), *Kula* (family), *Desha* (Geographical region), *Kala* (time factor) and personalised specifications.

Jati Prasakta:

Caste plays an essential role in shaping the personality of a man. It is observed that persons belonging to a particular community are generally hygienic and involves more in devotional activities. Acharya Chakrapani has given the example of *Brahmina Jati* and their virtuous nature. Concept of *Jati Prasakta* can be co-related with ethnic groups of modern times. An ethnic group is a category of people who identified with each other based on similarities such as culture, behaviour, language or physique. For eg. Sikhs are generally having good height, fair skin and brave in nature.

Kula Prasakta:

It is observed that certain tribe of people are good in sculptor art, carpentry, archery etc. Families have their own culture and traditions. Also most of the families have their specific identity. This reflects the *Kula* and family. Both *Jati Prasakta* and *Kula Prasakta* can be put under the hereditary factors. Hence both of them are



responsible for the specificity among different clans.

Deshanupatini:

Desha plays a definite role in the composition of *Prakriti*. In *Ayurveda* *Desha* has been classified into 3 kinds 1) *Anupa* 2) *Jangala* 3) *Sadharana*. These divisions have been made on the basis of climatic and soil conditions of particular place. The persons from *Anupa Desha* are by nature massive in structure and they have more tendencies to develop *Kaphaja* and *Vataja* diseases. People of *Jangala Desha* are very strong and thin and they are more predisposed to *Vataja* and *Pittaja* diseases. People of *Sadharana Desha* are found to have good strength, complexion and body built. This can be co-related with geographical effects in the human body.

Kalanupatini:

Kala mentioned by Acharyas in different contexts suggest its importance. In *Prakriti*, *Kala* is mentioned in 2 different aspects.

- 1) Factors responsible for development of *Prakriti* (*Kalagarbhashaya Prakriti*)
- 2) Factors influencing the *Prakriti* (*Kalanupatini*)

Kalanupatini Prakriti after birth. It means that proper development and strength of body and mind depends on the seasons. The preterm born and full term born baby has definite difference in their health and

immunity status, here *Kala* plays the role. Acharya Charaka has considered it as the most inevitable factor.¹⁰

Pratyatmaniyata:

Every person has some uniqueness in their nature which differ them from rest of the other. According to modern science, no two human bodies are exactly alike. Equally obvious is the fact that no two personalities are identical, their modes of variation seems infinite.¹¹

Balanupatini:

It is unique factor told by Vagbhata.¹² *Bala* affects both *Sharira* and *Manasa Prakriti*.

TYPES OF PRAKRITI:

Among the 7 types of *Sharira Prakriti*, first three are formed by each *Dosha* separately. They tend to fall ill easily. Those constitutions formed by the combination of two *Doshas* also tend to fall ill quickly, the disorders produced will have features of both dominant *Doshas*. They will be prone to disease related to hunger, thirst and other daily activities, hence it is difficult to treat them, their diseases can be pacified using drugs and therapies of dissimilar or opposite qualities and properties. The last kind of persons belonging to the constitutions formed from all the three *Doshas* (in equal proportion) can be managed with accustomed foods of all the tastes and with regimen as prescribed for



each season.¹³ This is said as best and ideal *Prakriti*, but in fact it is very rare because of diversity in diet and lifestyle.

Panchbhautiki Prakriti is mentioned only by Acharya Sushruta. Acharya *Vridhdha Vagbhata* has mentioned the 7 types of *Manasa Prakriti* while others have described 3 types i.e. *Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* and 7, 6 and 3 subtypes respectively. Further described that there are innumerable kinds of personalities due to different combination by *Taratamyata* of the *Gunas* like *Satva* and others, each of them intermixing with the features of the body, give rise to *Asankhya Bheda* of *Manasa Prakriti*.

CHARACTERISTIC OF PRAKRITI:

Acharya Charaka has elaborated the characteristics of *Prakriti* according to the *Guna* of *Dosha*. *Maharishi* Sushruta has also described the *Lakshana* regarding dreams whereas in *Kashyapa Samhita* additional description regarding *Manasa Prakriti*, is found. Both Acharya Vagbhata and *Vridhdha Vagbhata* follows the opinions of both Charaka and Sushruta. However in *Ashtanga Samgraha* and in *Ashtanga Hrudaya* some different characteristics were also found.

In *Ashtanga Samgraha*: Characteristics like '*Udbadha Pindika*, *Bahubhuka*, *Kinchita Unmilitadurmukhasupta* etc. in *Vata Prakriti*, '*Abhimani*, *Bhuri Ucchara*' etc. in

Pitta Prakriti and '*Balyeapi Arodanam*, *Maha lalata*, *Sthulavaksha*' etc. in *Kapha Prakriti* are mentioned

In *Ashtanga Hrudaya*: *Dhusara kasha*, *Vritta Netra* etc. in *Vata Prakriti*, *Pingal Netra* etc. in *Pitta Prakriti* and *Alpa Bhojane Api Balavan*, *Priyangu-Gorochana-Padmasu Varna* etc. in *Kapha Prakriti* like symptoms are mentioned; which are different from *Ashtanga Samgraha*.

APPLIED UTILITY OF PRAKRITI INFORMATICS

Prakriti is key factor in assessing different diseases. Practically it is found in practice that persons with *Vata Dosha* dominant *Prakriti* cannot continue treatment from a single physician for a longer duration. They due to *Chala-Anavasthitatava* of *Vata* keep changing their mind. *Pitta* predominant person are intelligent and understand every instruction of physician, but simultaneously they cannot tolerate *Ushna-Tikshna* drugs like *Trikatu* or *Panchakola*. *Kapha* dominant persons take time to understand the instructions; but once understand they follow it religiously still next instruction. They can tolerate all kind of treatment and drugs.

Another important aspect is difference in presentation of signs and symptoms in different *Prakriti*. Similar kind of *Hetu* produces the symptoms of different



intensity in different *Prakriti*. In some of the patients presentation is quite different. An example of *Guru- Snigdha Ahara* can be useful to understand this. *Guru Snigdha* diet when taken by *Pitta Prakriti* it will not produce *Amajirna*, such as it can produce in *Kapha Prakriti* patients.

Treatment protocol in different *Prakriti* in same diseases also get changed. *Amavata* or *Ama* condition can be taken as an example in this regard. *Trikatu*, *Panchakola*, *Vadavanal Churna* etc. medicines are useful for *Amavata* in *Kapha* dominant person; but they cannot be used in *Pitta* predominancy because of less or no tolerance. *Guduchi- Musta* etc. *Tikta Pachaka* drugs will be choice of drug in that condition. This is how importance and utility of *Prakriti* can be established.

DISCUSSION

There are so many individual variations found on the physical, psychological and spiritual basis and also with disease susceptibility and tolerance. Why everyone is not alike? Being the first creation of cosmos every human being is separate entity. Ayurveda is the first science that has identified these subtle intra specific alterations and offers unique fundamentals for classifying whole population so as to provide individualistic approach to health. The concept of *Prakriti* is one such

fundamental principle in Ayurveda which is unique in terms of its physical, psychological, Social and spiritual approach. Its uniqueness signifies as one person's food and way of living becomes fatal for others.

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