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## A CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON THE CONCEPT OF PRAKRITI AND ITS CLINICAL UTILITY IN HUMAN BEINGS

**Dr Megh A Patel<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Priya M. Patki<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Kavya Kala<sup>3</sup>, Dr. Tushar Parjapati<sup>4</sup>,  
Dr Abhishek N Bhuva<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>PG Scholar, Department of Kriya Sharir, Himalayiya Ayurvedic (P.G.) Medical College and Hospital Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

<sup>2</sup>Guide, Department of Kriya Sharir, Himalayiya Ayurvedic (P.G.) Medical College and Hospital Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

<sup>3</sup>Co- Guide, Department of Kriya Sharir, Himalayiya Ayurvedic (P.G.) Medical College and Hospital Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

<sup>4</sup>PG Scholar, Department of Kriya Sharir, Himalayiya Ayurvedic (P.G.) Medical College and Hospital Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

<sup>5</sup>PG Scholar, Department of Kriya Sharir, Himalayiya Ayurvedic (P.G.) Medical College and Hospital Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

\*Corresponding Author's Email id - megh1510@gmail.com

### Abstract

Prakriti is defined as an individual's natural state, determined by their genetic constitution. In Ayurveda, each person has a fixed Prakriti established at the moment of conception, when the sperm and ovum unite. The predominance of one, two, or all three Doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) in an individual's constitution dictates their Prakriti. This encompasses genetically determined anatomical, physiological, and psychological traits. Prakriti also influences a person's response to environmental factors, medications, and disease susceptibility, making it one of the earliest principles of preventive and personalized or genomic medicine. In contrast to Prakriti, Vikriti represents the diseased state of an individual. Understanding one's normal Prakriti is crucial for identifying abnormalities, highlighting its importance in diagnosis, preventive medicine, and therapeutic interventions. Although Prakriti assessment should ideally occur at birth, its influence extends throughout an individual's life. Within Shalyatantra (surgery), Prakriti plays a pivotal role. Despite limited literature explicitly addressing Prakriti's significance in Shalyatantra, understanding and considering Prakriti when determining treatment is essential, particularly in surgical and para-surgical techniques, as these procedures demand greater Manasika bala (mental strength).

**KEYWORDS** -Prakriti, Doshas, Vikriti, Clinical Diagnosis, etc.

## INTRODUCTION

Prakriti, derived from the Sanskrit word meaning "nature" or "constitution," represents an individual's natural state, determined by their genetic makeup. In Ayurveda, an ancient Indian system of medicine, Prakriti is a foundational concept that dictates a person's physical, physiological, and psychological traits. This intrinsic constitution is believed to be established at the moment of conception and remains unchanged throughout an individual's life.[1] The concept of Prakriti is pivotal in Ayurveda, as it influences health, disease susceptibility, and response to treatments.[2]

### Formation of Prakriti

Prakriti is determined at the time of conception when the sperm (Shukra) and ovum (Shonita) unite in the womb. The relative dominance of the three Doshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha—at this critical juncture dictates an individual's Prakriti. Each Dosha is a combination of two of the five fundamental elements (Panchamahabhuta):[3]

- **Vata** (Akash and Vayu)
- **Pitta** (Agni and Ap)
- **Kapha** (Ap and Pruthvi)

These elements manifest in different proportions in each person, creating unique constitutions. The interaction between the parents' Prakriti, the time of conception, and environmental factors further influence the formation of the individual's Prakriti.[4]

### The Three Doshas

#### 1. Vata Dosha:[5]

- **Elements:** Vayu and Akash
- **Characteristics:** Movement, dryness, coldness, lightness, irregularity
- **Physiological Functions:** Controls bodily functions related to movement, such as breathing, circulation, and nerve impulses
- **Psychological Traits:** Creativity, enthusiasm, quick thinking, and variability in mood

#### 2. Pitta Dosha:[6]

- **Elements:** Agni and Ap
- **Characteristics:** Heat, sharpness, intensity, and acidity

- **Physiological Functions:** Governs digestion, metabolism, and energy production
- **Psychological Traits:** Intelligence, assertiveness, determination, and leadership qualities

### 3. Kapha Dosha:[7]

- **Elements:** Ap and Pruthvi
- **Characteristics:** Heaviness, stability, softness, and coldness
- **Physiological Functions:** Provides structure, lubrication, and stability to the body
- **Psychological Traits:** Calmness, patience, loyalty, and a tendency towards lethargy

### Types of Prakriti [8]

Based on the dominance of these Doshas, Prakriti can be classified into the following types:

- **Vata Prakriti:** Dominance of Vata Dosha
- **Pitta Prakriti:** Dominance of Pitta Dosha
- **Kapha Prakriti:** Dominance of Kapha Dosha
- **Dual Prakriti:** Dominance of two Doshas (e.g., Vata-Pitta, Pitta-Kapha, Vata-Kapha)
- **Tri-Dosha Prakriti:** Balanced state of all three Doshas

Each type of Prakriti has its unique characteristics, strengths, and vulnerabilities. Understanding these can help tailor lifestyle, diet, and treatment plans to maintain health and prevent diseases.

### Aim and Objective

**Aim-** The primary aim of understanding Prakriti in Ayurveda is to utilize this foundational concept.

### Objectives

1. To systematically assess and determine the Prakriti of individuals using a combination of traditional Ayurvedic methods, including physical examination, questionnaires, and patient history.

2. To incorporate the concept of Prakriti into modern personalized medicine, creating a holistic approach that combines ancient wisdom with contemporary medical practices.

## **Material and Methods**

### **Materials**

#### **1. Ayurvedic Texts:**

- Classical texts such as Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, and other authoritative Ayurvedic scriptures for foundational knowledge and guidelines on Prakriti assessment.

#### **2. Assessment Tools:**

- Standardized Prakriti assessment questionnaires.
- Physical examination checklists.
- Diagnostic tools for evaluating Dosha predominance.

#### **3. Clinical Setting:**

- Ayurvedic clinics and hospitals for conducting practical assessments.
- Laboratories for biochemical and genetic analysis (if integrating modern techniques).

#### **4. Data Collection Instruments:**

- Patient history forms.
- Consent forms.
- Data recording sheets.
- Digital tools for data entry and analysis.

### **Methods**

#### **1. Literature Review:**

- Conduct a comprehensive review of classical Ayurvedic texts to gather detailed descriptions and guidelines on Prakriti and its assessment.
- Review contemporary research articles and studies that correlate Prakriti with genetic, physiological, and psychological parameters.

## 2. Prakriti Assessment:

- **Questionnaire:** Administer a standardized Prakriti assessment questionnaire to participants. The questionnaire should include questions related to physical traits, physiological functions, and psychological characteristics.
- **Physical Examination:** Conduct a detailed physical examination focusing on features such as body build, skin texture, hair type, and other physical markers.
- **Patient History:** Collect a thorough patient history, including dietary habits, lifestyle, environmental exposures, and familial health patterns.

### Concept of Prakriti [9]

Prakriti, in the context of Ayurveda, represents an individual's inherent constitution, which is determined by their genetic makeup and the predominance of the three Doshas: Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. This natural constitution is established at the moment of conception and remains constant throughout one's life, influencing physical, physiological, and psychological traits.

### Characteristics of Prakriti Types [10]

#### 1. Vata Prakriti:

- **Physical Traits:** Lean, light, dry skin, quick movements.
- **Physiological Traits:** Irregular appetite and digestion, light sleep, prone to constipation.
- **Psychological Traits:** Creative, energetic, quick to learn and forget, prone to anxiety and restlessness.

#### 2. Pitta Prakriti:

- **Physical Traits:** Moderate build, warm body temperature, oily skin, sharp features.
- **Physiological Traits:** Strong appetite and digestion, tendency to feel hot, prone to acidity and inflammations.
- **Psychological Traits:** Intelligent, focused, ambitious, prone to irritability and anger.

#### 3. Kapha Prakriti:

- **Physical Traits:** Sturdy build, cool and oily skin, slow movements.

- **Physiological Traits:** Steady appetite, slow digestion, sound sleep, prone to weight gain and congestion.
- **Psychological Traits:** Calm, steady, loyal, prone to lethargy and attachment.

### **Influence on Health and Disease [11]**

Prakriti profoundly influences an individual's health and their susceptibility to diseases. It dictates how one responds to environmental changes, diet, lifestyle, and stress. For instance:

- **Vata Prakriti:** Prone to disorders involving movement and dryness, such as arthritis, neurological issues, and digestive problems.
- **Pitta Prakriti:** Susceptible to inflammatory conditions, ulcers, skin rashes, and hypertension.
- **Kapha Prakriti:** Likely to experience conditions related to heaviness and congestion, such as obesity, diabetes, and respiratory issues.

The Charaka Samhita, one of the principal texts of Ayurveda, provides a detailed account of Prakriti (constitution). Charaka emphasizes the importance of understanding an individual's Prakriti for the purposes of diagnosis, treatment, and maintaining health.

### **Definition and Determinants of Prakriti [12]**

According to Charaka, Prakriti is the natural constitution of an individual, determined at the time of conception and influenced by the predominant Doshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. The formation of Prakriti is influenced by several factors:

1. **Genetics:** The Prakriti of the parents is inherited by the offspring.
2. **Season:** The season during conception affects the balance of Doshas.
3. **Time of Conception:** The specific time and conditions at the moment of conception influence Prakriti.
4. **Maternal Factors:** The mother's diet, lifestyle, and mental state during pregnancy play a crucial role.

### **Prakriti According Acharya Charak**

Charaka categorizes Prakriti into seven primary types based on the dominance of one, two, or all three Doshas:

1. **Vata Prakriti:**
  - **Physical Traits:** Lean body, dry skin, prominent veins, quick movements.

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- **Physiological Traits:** Irregular appetite and digestion, light and disturbed sleep, quick fatigue.
- **Psychological Traits:** Creativity, enthusiasm, quick thinking, but prone to anxiety and fear.

## 2. **Pitta Prakriti:**

- **Physical Traits:** Moderate build, warm body, oily skin, complexion, sharp features.
- **Physiological Traits:** Strong appetite and digestion, tendency to feel hot, prone to sweating.
- **Psychological Traits:** Intelligence, decisiveness, ambition, but prone to irritability and anger.

## 3. **Kapha Prakriti:**

- **Physical Traits:** Sturdy and heavy build, smooth and oily skin, slow movements.
- **Physiological Traits:** Steady appetite and digestion, sound sleep, endurance, slow to fatigue.
- **Psychological Traits:** Calm, steady, patient, but prone to lethargy and attachment.

## 4. **Dual Dosha Prakriti:**

- **Vata-Pitta Prakriti:** Combination of Vata and Pitta traits.
- **Vata-Kapha Prakriti:** Combination of Vata and Kapha traits.
- **Pitta-Kapha Prakriti:** Combination of Pitta and Kapha traits.

## 5. **Sama Prakriti:**

- **Balanced Prakriti:** Equal balance of all three Doshas, resulting in optimal health and resilience.

## **Characteristics and Implications**

Each Prakriti type has distinct characteristics that influence an individual's health, behavior, and susceptibility to diseases:

- **Vata Prakriti:** Individuals are more susceptible to conditions involving movement and dryness, such as arthritis, neurological disorders, and constipation.
- **Pitta Prakriti:** Individuals are more prone to inflammatory conditions, hyperacidity, skin rashes, and hypertension.
- **Kapha Prakriti:** Individuals are more likely to experience issues related to heaviness and congestion, such as obesity, diabetes, and respiratory conditions.

### Prakriti According Acharya Sushruta

According to Sushruta, Prakriti is the natural constitution of an individual, determined at the time of conception and influenced by the relative predominance of the three Doshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. Several factors contribute to the formation of Prakriti:

1. **Genetic Factors:** The Prakriti of the parents significantly influences the constitution of the offspring.
2. **Seasonal Influence:** The season during which conception occurs affects the balance of Doshas.
3. **Time of Conception:** The specific time and environmental conditions at the moment of conception play a crucial role.
4. **Maternal Health:** The mother's diet, lifestyle, and mental state during pregnancy are critical determinants.

### Types of Prakriti

Sushruta classifies Prakriti into seven primary types based on the dominance of one, two, or all three Doshas:

1. **Vata Prakriti:**
  - **Physical Traits:** Dry, rough skin; thin body frame; prominent veins; quick movements.
  - **Physiological Traits:** Irregular appetite and digestion; light, disturbed sleep; tendency to fatigue easily.
  - **Psychological Traits:** Creative, enthusiastic, quick to grasp new concepts but prone to anxiety and fear.
2. **Pitta Prakriti:**



- **Physical Traits:** Moderate build; warm body temperature; oily skin; sharp features.
- **Physiological Traits:** Strong appetite and digestion; tendency to feel hot; prone to sweating.
- **Psychological Traits:** Intelligent, focused, ambitious, but can be irritable and prone to anger.

### 3. Kapha Prakriti:

- **Physical Traits:** Sturdy build; cool and oily skin; slow movements.
- **Physiological Traits:** Steady appetite and digestion; sound sleep; high endurance but slow to fatigue.
- **Psychological Traits:** Calm, steady, patient, but can be lethargic and overly attached.

### 4. Dual Dosha Prakriti:

- **Vata-Pitta Prakriti:** Combination of Vata and Pitta traits.
- **Vata-Kapha Prakriti:** Combination of Vata and Kapha traits.
- **Pitta-Kapha Prakriti:** Combination of Pitta and Kapha traits.

### 5. Sama Prakriti:

- **Balanced Prakriti:** Equal balance of all three Doshas, which is rare but considered the most desirable constitution.

## Discussion

Prakriti, a core concept in Ayurveda, represents an individual's unique constitution, formed by the specific balance of the three Doshas: Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. This balance is influenced by genetics, the environment at the time of conception, and the lifestyle and health of the parents. Ayurveda posits that understanding one's Prakriti is crucial for maintaining health and preventing disease.[13]

## Prakriti Classification [14]

### 1. Vata Prakriti:

- **Traits:** Lean, dry skin, quick movements, irregular appetite.
- **Strengths:** Creativity, flexibility, enthusiasm.

- **Vulnerabilities:** Anxiety, insomnia, digestive issues.

## 2. Pitta Prakriti:

- **Traits:** Moderate build, warm body, oily skin, strong appetite.
- **Strengths:** Intelligence, decisiveness, strong metabolism.
- **Vulnerabilities:** Anger, inflammation, digestive disorders.

## 3. Kapha Prakriti:

- **Traits:** Sturdy build, cool and oily skin, slow movements, steady appetite.
- **Strengths:** Calmness, endurance, loyalty.
- **Vulnerabilities:** Lethargy, weight gain, respiratory issues.

## Determinants of Prakriti

Prakriti is determined by various factors, including:

- **Genetics:** The Prakriti of the parents plays a significant role.
- **Time of Conception:** The season, time of day, and even the planetary positions.
- **Maternal Health:** The mother's diet, lifestyle, and mental state during pregnancy.

## Practical Applications of Prakriti

Understanding Prakriti has several practical applications:

- **Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations:** Tailored advice to maintain balance and prevent disease.
- **Disease Prediction and Prevention:** Identifying predispositions to specific illnesses based on Prakriti.
- **Personalized Treatment:** Customizing treatments to suit the individual's constitution.

## Clinical Utility of Prakriti [15]

### Health Maintenance

Prakriti provides a blueprint for maintaining health. By understanding one's Prakriti, individuals can adopt a lifestyle and diet that supports their natural constitution, helping to maintain balance and prevent disease. For example, a Vata individual might benefit from

warm, moist foods and a regular routine, while a Pitta person might need cooling foods and stress management techniques.

### **Disease Prevention**

Prakriti plays a critical role in preventive medicine. It helps in predicting which diseases an individual is more susceptible to, allowing for early interventions. For instance, individuals with Kapha Prakriti may need to monitor their diet closely to prevent obesity and respiratory issues, while those with Pitta Prakriti might focus on managing stress and avoiding overheating.

### **Personalized Medicine**

Prakriti is the foundation of personalized medicine in Ayurveda. It allows for treatments to be customized to the individual's constitution, enhancing the efficacy of interventions and minimizing side effects. This personalized approach can be particularly beneficial in managing chronic conditions and improving overall quality of life.

### **Holistic Health**

Prakriti emphasizes the interconnection between body, mind, and environment. It supports a holistic approach to health, encouraging practices that nurture physical, mental, and emotional well-being. By aligning with one's natural constitution, individuals can achieve a state of harmony and balance, which is essential for true health and well-being.

### **Integration with Modern Medicine**

The concept of Prakriti aligns with modern personalized and genomic medicine, which also seeks to tailor healthcare based on individual genetic profiles. By integrating Prakriti assessment into contemporary medical practices, healthcare providers can offer more comprehensive and personalized care, improving patient outcomes and satisfaction.

### **Enhancing Self-awareness**

Understanding one's Prakriti enhances self-awareness, empowering individuals to make informed choices about their health and lifestyle. This self-awareness can lead to better health habits, improved stress management, and a more balanced life overall.

### **Conclusion**

The concept of Prakriti in Ayurveda is a profound and multifaceted one, serving as the cornerstone of Ayurvedic medicine. Rooted deeply in the ancient texts such as Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita, Prakriti represents the unique constitution of an individual,

determined by the balance of the three Doshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha—at the time of conception. This unique blend of physical, physiological, and psychological characteristics remains constant throughout an individual's life, influencing their health, behavior, and susceptibility to diseases.

**Conflict of interest- Nil**

**Source of Support- Nil**

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