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## **TRIDOSHA THEORY IN AYURVEDA: A COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF CHARAKA, SUSHRUTA AND VAGBHATTA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** The *Tridosha* theory is the fundamental physiological and pathological framework of *Ayurveda*, explaining the maintenance of health and the causation of disease. The three *Doshas* namely *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* govern all biological functions of the body and mind. Although the basic concept of *Tridosha* is common across classical texts, differences are observed in their descriptions, attributes, functions, and clinical applications among *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* of Acharya *Vaghbhatta*.

### **Aim:**

To critically review and compare the concept of *Tridosha* as described in *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*. **Objectives:** To study the conceptual foundation of *Tridosha* in classical *Ayurvedic* texts. To analyze similarities in the description of *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* among the three treatises. To identify textual and clinical differences in the interpretation of *Dosha* functions and characteristics. To understand the applied relevance of these variations in diagnosis and treatment. **Materials and Methods:** This study is a literary and comparative review based on primary *Ayurvedic* texts including *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, along with their authoritative commentaries. Relevant *Shlokas* were collected, compiled, and comparatively analyzed to highlight doctrinal similarities and differences. **Results:** All three classical texts unanimously

accept *Tridosha* as the governing principle of bodily functions. *Charaka Samhita* emphasizes the physiological and pathological dominance of *Doshas*, *Sushruta Samhita* highlights their anatomical and surgical relevance, while *Ashtanga Hridaya* presents a concise and clinically oriented synthesis. Variations are mainly observed in the elaboration of *Guna*, *Karma*, and applied clinical perspectives rather than in the core philosophy. **Conclusion:** The concept of *Tridosha* remains consistent in its foundational philosophy across *Charaka*, *Sushruta*, and *Vagbhata*, with minor variations reflecting each Acharya's clinical focus and scope of practice. Understanding these comparative perspectives enriches clinical reasoning and supports precise application of *Ayurvedic* principles in diagnosis and treatment.

**Keywords:** *Tridosha*, *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*, *Charaka Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*

## INTRODUCTION

*Ayurveda* is a comprehensive science of life that explains health and disease through fundamental principles governing the body, mind, and environment. Among these principles, the concept of *Tridosha* forms the core of *Ayurvedic* physiology and pathology. The three *Doshas* namely *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* are responsible for maintaining normal bodily functions when in balance and for producing disease when vitiated. Every structural and functional component of the body is influenced by the state of these *Doshas*, making *Tridosha* theory the backbone of diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment in *Ayurveda*.<sup>1</sup>

The concept of *Tridosha* is deeply rooted in the *Panchamahabhuta* theory, where each *Dosha* represents a specific combination of the five fundamental elements. *Vata* governs movement, neurological activities, and transportation, *Pitta* regulates digestion, metabolism, and transformation, while *Kapha* provides stability, lubrication, and nourishment. This functional division allows *Ayurveda* to explain complex physiological processes in a simple and holistic manner. The dynamic equilibrium of *Tridosha* ensures health, whereas their imbalance leads to structural and functional derangements.<sup>2</sup>

Classical *Ayurvedic* knowledge is primarily derived from the *Brihatrayi*, consisting of *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* composed by Acharya *Vagbhata*. Although all three treatises accept *Tridosha* as the fundamental regulatory system, each text presents the concept with a distinct emphasis. *Charaka Samhita* predominantly discusses the role of *Doshas* in physiological balance and disease causation, *Sushruta Samhita* correlates

*Doshas* with anatomical structures and surgical conditions, while *Ashtanga Hridaya* offers a concise and clinically applicable synthesis of earlier teachings.<sup>3</sup>

Understanding these similarities and differences in the description of *Tridosha* across classical texts is essential for developing a clear conceptual base and effective clinical application. A comparative study helps in appreciating the depth of classical thought and avoids fragmented interpretation of *Ayurvedic* principles. Therefore, this review attempts to comparatively analyze the concept of *Tridosha* as described in *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, highlighting their relevance in contemporary *Ayurvedic* practice.<sup>4</sup>

## **AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

### **Aim:**

To critically review and compare the concept of *Tridosha* as described in *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*.

### **Objectives:**

- To study the conceptual foundation of *Tridosha* in classical *Ayurvedic* texts.
- To analyze similarities in the description of *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* among the three treatises.
- To identify textual and clinical differences in the interpretation of *Dosha* functions and characteristics.
- To understand the applied relevance of these variations in diagnosis and treatment.

## **CONCEPTUAL STUDY**

### **TRIDOSHA IN CHARAKA SAMHITA**

In *Charaka Samhita*, the doctrine of *Tridosha* is established as the most fundamental principle governing both health and disease. Acharya *Charaka* clearly states that *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* are the prime biological regulators responsible for all physiological activities of the body and mind. These *Doshas* are formed from the *Panchamahabhuta* and function in coordination with *Dhatu*, *Mala*, and *Agni*. When *Tridosha* remain in a state of equilibrium (*Samyavastha*), they sustain normal bodily functions, strength, complexion, digestion, and mental clarity.

Disturbance in their balance (*Vaishamya*) is considered the primary cause of disease, making *Tridosha* the root of all pathological processes described in *Charaka Samhita*.<sup>5</sup>

A distinctive feature of *Charaka Samhita* is the emphasis on the **functional supremacy of *Vata***. Acharya *Charaka* describes *Vata* as the controller and motivator of both *Pitta* and *Kapha*, without which they become inactive. *Vata* governs movement, respiration, circulation, nerve impulses, and elimination processes. *Pitta* is responsible for digestion, metabolism, body temperature, vision, and intellect, whereas *Kapha* provides stability, lubrication, immunity, and nourishment. This functional differentiation allows *Charaka* to explain complex physiological mechanisms through *Dosha* dominance, association, and interaction.<sup>6</sup>

*Charaka Samhita* elaborates in great detail the concepts of *Dosha Prakopa*, *Prashamana*, *Vridhhi*, and *Kshaya*. Factors like improper diet (*Ahara*), faulty lifestyle (*Vihara*), seasonal variations, mental stress, and suppression of natural urges are described as causative factors for *Dosha* imbalance. Acharya *Charaka* correlates *Tridosha* with *Srotas*, explaining that vitiated *Doshas* obstruct or damage the body channels, leading to disease manifestation. The role of *Agni* is closely linked with *Pitta*, and deranged *Agni* further aggravates *Dosha Dushti*, producing *Ama* and chronic disorders.<sup>7</sup>

Another important contribution of *Charaka Samhita* is the clinical application of *Tridosha* in diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment planning. Disease classification, symptom expression, and therapeutic strategies are all based on *Dosha* predominance and combination. Acharya *Charaka* advocates individualized treatment based on *Prakriti*, *Dosha Avastha*, and *Roga Bala*. Therapeutic principles such as *Shodhana*, *Shamana*, *Ahara*, *Vihara*, and *Rasayana* are selected according to the state of *Tridosha*. Thus, in *Charaka Samhita*, *Tridosha* is not merely a theoretical concept but a dynamic and practical foundation for clinical decision-making.<sup>8</sup>

### **TRIDOSHA IN SUSHRUTA SAMHITA**

In *Sushruta Samhita*, Acharya *Sushruta* explains the concept of *Tridosha* with a distinct emphasis on anatomy, structure, and surgical relevance. While accepting *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* as the fundamental governing principles of the body, *Sushruta* presents them in close association with bodily organs, tissues, and regional anatomy. The role of *Doshas* is not limited to physiological regulation alone but is extended to explain structural integrity, tissue

response, and pathological changes seen during disease and injury. This approach reflects the surgical vision of Acharya *Sushruta* and aligns *Tridosha* theory with practical anatomical observation.<sup>9</sup>

A unique contribution of *Sushruta Samhita* is the clear description of **localization (Sthana) of Doshas** in different parts of the body. *Sushruta* correlates *Vata* predominantly with movement, sensation, and pain in specific regions, *Pitta* with metabolic and inflammatory activities in tissues, and *Kapha* with stability, cohesion, and lubrication of structures. This regional understanding helps in identifying the dominant *Dosha* involved in localized diseases. Such localization plays a crucial role in surgical planning, prognosis, and postoperative care, distinguishing *Sushruta*'s interpretation from more generalized descriptions found in other texts.<sup>10</sup>

*Sushruta* extensively explains the role of *Tridosha* in *Vrana*, *Shalya*, *Shotha*, and traumatic conditions. In wound pathology, *Pitta* is responsible for inflammation, discoloration, burning sensation, and suppuration, *Kapha* contributes to exudation, swelling, and granulation tissue formation, while *Vata* produces pain, dryness, irregularity, and delayed healing. This *Dosha*-based explanation allows a surgeon to assess the nature, stage, and severity of wounds and to choose appropriate surgical or conservative measures accordingly.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, *Sushruta Samhita* presents *Tridosha* in a highly applied, structure-oriented, and surgical framework. The theory is not merely conceptual but is deeply integrated into operative procedures, wound management, and trauma care. By correlating *Doshas* with anatomical structures and pathological responses, Acharya *Sushruta* transforms *Tridosha* theory into a practical clinical tool. This detailed and localized understanding strengthens diagnostic accuracy and enhances surgical outcomes, making *Sushruta Samhita* a cornerstone for applied *Ayurvedic* surgery.<sup>12</sup>

### **TRIDOSHA IN ASHTANGA HRIDAYA OF VAGBHATTA**

Acharya *Vaghbhata* presents the doctrine of *Tridosha* in *Ashtanga Hridaya* in a concise, systematic, and clinically balanced manner. Drawing upon the foundational concepts laid down in *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*, *Vaghbhata* reorganizes and simplifies complex philosophical ideas without diluting their core principles. The descriptions of *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* are precise and methodically arranged, making them easy to understand

and directly applicable in day-to-day clinical practice. This clarity reflects *Vaghbhatta's* intention to create a practical manual for physicians.<sup>13</sup>

A distinguishing feature of *Ashtanga Hridaya* is the compact explanation of *Dosha Guna* and *Karma*. Instead of extensive elaboration, *Vaghbhatta* presents essential qualities and functions of each *Dosha* in a structured and memorable form. *Vata* is described as the controller of movement and regulation, *Pitta* as the principle of digestion and transformation, and *Kapha* as the source of stability and nourishment. This concise presentation aids quick clinical assessment of *Dosha* predominance and facilitates rational therapeutic decision-making.<sup>14</sup>

*Vaghbhatta* further strengthens the practical utility of *Tridosha* by clearly explaining *Dosha Sthana*, *Prakopa*, and disease manifestation in a unified manner. The relationship between *Dosha*, *Agni*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, and *Srotas* is presented in a simplified yet comprehensive framework. Importantly, *Ashtanga Hridaya* bridges the gap between internal medicine and surgery by integrating concepts relevant to both *Kayachikitsa* and *Shalya*. This synthesis enables a holistic understanding of disease processes and their management.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, *Ashtanga Hridaya* stands out as a refined synthesis of earlier *Ayurvedic* knowledge, where Acharya *Vaghbhatta* harmonizes theoretical depth with clinical practicality. By standardizing and systematizing the teachings of *Charaka* and *Sushruta*, *Vaghbhatta* transforms *Tridosha* theory into a user-friendly and application-oriented doctrine. This balanced approach makes *Ashtanga Hridaya* highly relevant for both students and practitioners, ensuring accurate diagnosis and effective treatment based on *Tridosha* principles.<sup>16</sup>

#### COMPARATIVE TABLE OF *TRIDOSHA* CONCEPT AS PER THREE ACHARYAS

Aspect	<i>Charaka Samhita</i>	<i>Sushruta Samhita</i>	<i>Ashtanga Hridaya of Vaghbhatta</i>
Basic Orientation	Predominantly physiological and pathological	Predominantly anatomical and surgical	Concise, systematic, and clinically balanced
Core Approach to <i>Tridosha</i>	Explains <i>Tridosha</i> as the root cause of health and disease	Explains <i>Tridosha</i> in relation to structure, organs, and surgical conditions	Presents <i>Tridosha</i> as a practical synthesis of earlier views

Emphasis on <i>Dosha</i> Role	Focus on functional dominance, especially <i>Vata</i>	Focus on localization ( <i>Sthana</i> ) and tissue response	Focus on clinical applicability and clarity
Importance of <i>Vata</i>	<i>Vata</i> considered Pradhana Dosha controlling others	<i>Vata</i> mainly linked with pain, movement, and trauma	<i>Vata</i> described briefly but clearly as regulatory force
Description of <i>Pitta</i>	Linked with <i>Agni</i> , digestion, metabolism, intellect	Linked with inflammation, suppuration, discoloration	Explained as digestive and metabolic principle
Description of <i>Kapha</i>	Responsible for stability, strength, immunity	Responsible for granulation, healing, lubrication	Explained as supportive and nourishing Dosha
Relation with <i>Dhatu</i> and <i>Srotas</i>	Extensive explanation of <i>Dosha-Dhatu-Srotas</i> interaction	Explained mainly in relation to local pathology	Presented in simplified integrated manner
Clinical Application	Diagnosis and treatment based on <i>Dosha Avastha</i> and <i>Prakriti</i>	Surgical diagnosis, wound assessment, prognosis	Quick clinical assessment and treatment planning
Style of Presentation	Elaborate, analytical, and descriptive	Applied, observation-based, and surgical	Concise, organized, and physician-friendly
Overall Contribution	Foundation of Ayurvedic medicine	Foundation of Ayurvedic surgery	Standardized clinical textbook

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

- All three Acharyas accept *Tridosha* as the fundamental regulatory principle responsible for maintenance of health and causation of disease in *Ayurveda*.
- *Charaka Samhita* presents *Tridosha* predominantly from a physiological and pathological perspective, emphasizing functional dominance and disease causation.
- In *Charaka Samhita*, *Vata* is identified as the Pradhana Dosha, controlling the movement and regulation of *Pitta* and *Kapha*.
- *Sushruta Samhita* explains *Tridosha* with a strong anatomical and surgical orientation, correlating *Doshas* with organs, tissues, and regional structures.

- *Sushruta* highlights the role of *Tridosha* in *Vrana*, *Shotha*, *Shalya*, and traumatic conditions, making the concept highly relevant for surgical diagnosis and prognosis.
- In *Sushruta Samhita*, *Pitta* is mainly associated with inflammation and suppuration, *Kapha* with granulation and healing, and *Vata* with pain and abnormal movement.
- *Ashtanga Hridaya* of Acharya *Vaghbhatta* presents *Tridosha* in a concise, systematic, and clinically balanced format.
- *Vaghbhatta* integrates the views of *Charaka* and *Sushruta*, simplifying complex concepts while retaining their practical value.
- *Ashtanga Hridaya* clearly explains *Dosha Guna*, *Karma*, *Sthana*, and *Prakopa* in a compact manner, facilitating easy clinical application.
- Despite differences in presentation and emphasis, no conceptual contradiction regarding *Tridosha* is observed among the three Acharyas.
- The variations reflect the clinical focus and scope of each Acharya rather than disagreement in basic principles.
- A combined understanding of all three perspectives provides a more comprehensive and applied approach to diagnosis and treatment in *Ayurvedic* practice.

## DISCUSSION

The present comparative analysis highlights that the concept of *Tridosha* forms a common and unchanging foundation of *Ayurveda* across the works of Acharya *Charaka*, *Sushruta*, and *Vaghbhatta*. All three Acharyas unanimously accept *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* as the primary governing principles of physiological balance and pathological manifestation. The observed variations in description do not indicate conceptual disagreement but rather reflect differences in clinical orientation, purpose of the text, and method of presentation adopted by each Acharya.<sup>17</sup>

Acharya *Charaka* approaches *Tridosha* mainly from a functional and systemic perspective, emphasizing its role in disease causation, progression, and management. The strong focus on *Vata* as the controlling *Dosha* helps in understanding the dynamic nature of disease development. This view is particularly relevant in internal medicine, where multi-system involvement and chronic disorders are common. The detailed explanation of *Dosha Avastha*,

*Agni, Srotas, and Dhatus* interaction in *Charaka Samhita* provides a strong theoretical base for comprehensive diagnosis and individualized treatment.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast, Acharya *Sushruta* interprets *Tridosha* through an anatomical and surgical lens. His emphasis on *Dosha Sthana* and localized manifestations makes the theory directly applicable to conditions like *Vrana, Shotha*, trauma, and surgical complications. The clear correlation of *Vata* with pain and movement, *Pitta* with inflammation and suppuration, and *Kapha* with healing and granulation offers a practical framework for surgical assessment and prognosis. This applied interpretation demonstrates how classical *Ayurvedic* principles were adapted to meet surgical needs.<sup>19</sup>

Acharya *Vagbhata*, through *Ashtanga Hridaya*, bridges these two approaches by presenting a concise and clinically balanced synthesis of earlier teachings. By integrating the physiological depth of *Charaka* and the structural clarity of *Sushruta*, *Vagbhata* offers a streamlined yet comprehensive understanding of *Tridosha*. This synthesis enhances ease of learning and application, especially for physicians. Thus, the comparative study confirms that understanding *Tridosha* through all three perspectives enriches clinical reasoning and strengthens practical application in contemporary *Ayurvedic* practice.<sup>20</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The present comparative study concludes that *Tridosha* remains the central and unifying principle of *Ayurveda* as described by Acharya *Charaka, Sushruta*, and *Vagbhata*. Although each Acharya presents the concept with a distinct emphasis, functional in *Charaka Samhita*, anatomical and surgical in *Sushruta Samhita*, and concise yet clinically balanced in *Ashtanga Hridaya*, the core philosophy remains consistent. These variations reflect differences in clinical focus rather than contradiction. A combined understanding of all three perspectives provides a deeper conceptual clarity and enhances accurate diagnosis, rational treatment planning, and effective clinical practice based on *Tridosha* principles.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST -NIL

## SOURCE OF SUPPORT -NONE

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