

## PRAKRITI: UNDERSTANDING ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND APPLICATION IN AYURVEDA

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### ABSTRACT

*Prakriti* is a fundamental concept in Ayurveda that classifies individuals based on their inherent constitution, determined by the condition of the *Tridosha* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*) at conception. It represents an individual's genetically determined anatomical, physiological, and psychological constitution. Ayurveda categorises *Prakriti* into different types depending on the predominance of one, two, or all three *Doshas*. The concept of *Prakriti* has significant applicability in various aspects of health and disease management. *Prakriti* plays a crucial role in assessing *Bala* (strength), understanding *Koshta* (gut type) and *Agni* (digestive capacity), and guiding a personalised health approach. It influences mental status, disease susceptibility, prognosis, and treatment approaches. *Prakriti* also aids in disease diagnosis and helps formulate precise therapeutic strategies. Integrating *Prakriti*-based assessments, Ayurveda provides a holistic and individualized approach to maintaining health and managing diseases effectively.

**Keywords:** *Prakriti*, constitution, *Doshic* status

### INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the science of life that focuses on preventing and curing diseases. Maintenance of health is an essential aspect of Ayurveda. So, for proper health maintenance, life should be planned based on

prakruthi. *Prakriti* is a unique concept in Ayurveda. It is the physical, mental, and psychological constitution of an individual. *Prakriti* originates from two Sanskrit words: "Pra" and "Kriti." "Pra" signifies the

beginning or origin, while "Kriti" refers to the act of creation or formation. Thus, *Prakriti* represents the inherent nature or original state of an individual.<sup>1</sup>

The nonpathological doshic status of the body is inherent in an individual from birth to death. The concept of *Prakriti* in Ayurveda refers to an individual's natural constitution based on the balance of the three doshas—vata, pitta, and kapha—which is fundamental to personalised health management.

#### FORMATION OF PRAKRUTHI

Ayurveda describes various factors influencing the determination of *Prakriti* and fetal development. These factors can be both intrauterine and extrauterine. The constitution (*Prakriti*) of a fetus (*Garbha*) is determined by several factors, including the nature of the sperm and ovum, the timing of conception, the health of the uterus, the mother's diet and lifestyle during pregnancy, and the interaction of the *Mahabhutas* (fundamental elements). The predominant body *Doshas* in these factors become associated with the fetus, forming its *Doshic* constitution (*Dosha Prakriti*) from the earliest stages of development<sup>1</sup>. According to Susruta, the condition of *Doshas* present in *Shukra* (sperm) and *Arthava* (ovum) at their

union gives rise to specific characteristics in an individual, known as *Prakriti*<sup>2</sup>.

#### CLASSIFICATION

*Prakruthi* can be broadly classified as *Shareerika* and *manasika prakriti*. *Deha Prakriti* represents the anatomical and physiological aspects, while *Manasika Prakriti* pertains to the psychological and social dimensions. Based on *dosha* predominance, *prakriti* can be classified into *ekadoshaja* [predominance of one dosha], *dvidoshaja* [combination of *Doshas*] and *sama dosa* [balanced constitution]<sup>1</sup>.

A *Vata*-dominant *Prakriti* is considered inferior (*Heena*) in strength, a *Pitha*-dominant *Prakriti* is moderate (*Madhyama*), and a *Kapha*-dominant *Prakriti* is superior (*Uttama*). Among all constitutions, *Sama Prakriti*, where all three *Doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*) are in equilibrium, is considered the most ideal and superior as it ensures overall well-being. However, mixed constitutions (*Mishra Prakriti*)—*Vata-Pitta*, *Vata-Kapha*, and *Pitta-Kapha*—are undesirable (*Nindya*), making individuals more prone to diseases and imbalances. Thus, maintaining *Dosha* equilibrium is key to good health<sup>3</sup>.

Table 1 – Classification of *Prakriti*

Deha <i>Prakriti</i>	Manasika prakruthi <sup>4</sup>
<i>Ekadoshaja</i> – <i>Vata</i> , <i>Pitha</i> , <i>Kapha</i>	<i>Satvika</i>
<i>Dvidoshaja</i>	<i>Rajasika</i>
<i>Sama</i>	<i>Tamasika</i>

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIVIDUAL PRAKRUTHI

##### *Vata Prakriti*

Characteristics of *vata prakriti* individuals are rough (*ruksha*), light (*laghu*), mobile (*chala*), abundant (*bahu*), swift (*shighra*), cold (*sheeta*), coarse (*Parusha*) and non-slimy (*vishada*).

Table 2 Characteristics of *vata prakriti*

Properties	Characteristics of <i>Prakriti</i>
<i>Ruksha</i>	rough, underdeveloped and short stature, constant rough, weak, low, adhered and hoarse voice, wakeful
Light ( <i>Laghu</i> )	light and fickle movements, activities, diet and speech
Mobile ( <i>Chala</i> )	unstable joints, eyebrows, jaw, lips, tongue, head, shoulder, hands and feet
Abundant ( <i>Bahu</i> )	talkativeness and visually abundance of tendons and venous network
Swift ( <i>Shighra</i> )	hasty initiation, quick irritation and disorder, quick attachment and disenchantment, quick acquisition but with a poor memory (retention)
Cold ( <i>Sheeta</i> )	intolerance to cold, continuously infliction with cold, shivering and stiffness;

Coarse ( <i>Parusha</i> )	coarse hairs, beard-mustaches, hairs, nails, teeth, face, hands and feet,
Non-Slimy ( <i>Vishada</i> ).	cracked body parts and constant sound in the joints during movement.

Because of the presence of these qualities, the persons having a predominance of *vata* have a mostly low degree of strength, lifespan, progeny and wealth<sup>5</sup>.

### PITHA PRAKRITI

Characteristics of *Pitha Prakriti* individuals are hot (*ushna*), sharply acting (*tikshna*), liquid (*drava*), of fleshy smell (*visram*), sour (*amla*) and pungent (*katu*).

Table 3 Characteristics of *Pitha Prakriti*

Properties	Characteristics of <i>Pitha Prakriti</i>
hot ( <i>ushna</i> )	intolerant to heat, vulnerable to disorders due to heat delicate and beautiful body, plenty of moles, freckles, black-moles and pimples, excessive hunger and thirst, early appearance of wrinkles, graying and falling of hairs, mostly soft, scanty and brown beard/mustaches, hairs;
sharp ( <i>Tikshna</i> )	sharply acting and valor, intense digestive power, intake of plenty of food and drink, lack of endurance, frequently eating;
liquid ( <i>drava</i> )	lax and soft joints and muscles, excess perspiration, urination and defecation;
fleshy smell ( <i>visram</i> )	due to fleshy smell foul smell in axilla, mouth, head and body
sour ( <i>amla</i> ) & Pungency[ <i>katu</i> ]	There is less semen, libido and few progeny

Because of these qualities, people with a predominance of *pitha* are moderate in strength, lifespan, knowledge, understanding, wealth and means<sup>6</sup>.

### KAPHA PRAKRITI

*Shleshma* is unctuous (*snigdha*), smooth (*shlakshna*), soft (*mridu*), sweet (*madhura*), essence (*Sara*), dense (*sandra*), slow acting (*manda*), stable (*stimita*), heavy (*guru*), cold (*sheeta*), slimy (*vijjala*) and clear (*acchah*).

Table 4 Characteristics of *Kapha prakriti*

Properties	Characteristics of <i>kapha Prakriti</i>
unctuous ( <i>snigdha</i> )	unctuous organs
smooth ( <i>shlakshna</i> )	smooth organs
soft ( <i>mridu</i> )	he has pleasing, delicate and fair organs
sweet ( <i>madhura</i> )	person has abundant semen, libido and more progeny
essence ( <i>sara</i> )	compact and stable body;
dense ( <i>sandra</i> )	All organs are well developed and perfect
slow acting ( <i>manda</i> )	dull/ slow in activities, diet and speech
stable ( <i>stimita</i> )	delayed initiation, irritation and slow change of attitude /(disorders are slowly progressive)
heavy ( <i>guru</i> )	movements are supported with essence and stability
cold ( <i>sheeta</i> )	little hunger, thirst, heat and perspiration,
slimy ( <i>vijjala</i> )	well united and strong joint ligaments,
clear ( <i>acchah</i> )	clear eyes, face with clear and unctuous complexion and affectionate voice

### *Dvandaja Prakriti*

Because of these qualities, the *kapha*-dominated personality(*shleshmala*) people are strong, wealthy, learned, brave, calm and long-lived<sup>7</sup>.

*Dvandaja prakriti*[combination of two *doshas*] exhibit characters of two respective *dosas*<sup>8</sup>.

### *Samadosaja Prakriti*

In persons having equilibrium of all *dosa*, the characters of all of the three are found<sup>9</sup>.

## APPLICABILITY OF PRAKRITI

### 1. Applicability of *Prakriti* in Personalized Health Approach

*Prakriti* helps tailor diet and lifestyle based on an individual's unique constitution. *Prakriti* offers guidance on maintaining optimal health, providing detailed instructions on adapting diet and lifestyle according to one's *Prakriti*.

a. *Dinacharya*

b. *Ritucharya*

c. *Dietary plan*

#### a. Role of *Prakriti* in Planning *Dinacharya*

*Dinacharya* provides detailed guidelines on daily routines essential for maintaining good health. It includes practices such as *Abhyanga*<sup>10</sup> (oil massage), *Udwarthana*<sup>11</sup> (dry powder massage) *Vyayama*<sup>12</sup> (exercise) etc. The selection and intensity of these activities should be aligned with an individual's *Prakriti*. For instance, *Kapha Prakriti* individuals benefit more from *Udwarthana* and *Vyayama* to counteract their natural heaviness and sluggishness. In contrast, *Vata Prakriti* individuals should prioritise *Abhyanga*, as their body type requires more nourishment and stability to maintain balance.

#### b. Role of *Prakriti* in planning *Ritucharya*

When people understand their suitability for different seasons<sup>13</sup>, their lifestyle and diet contribute to strength and radiance. By following the recommended seasonal regimen, one can prevent diseases caused by the aggravation of doshas due to seasonal influences. *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimens) are recommended based on an individual's *Prakriti*. The selection and intensity of regimens in *ritucharya* should be aligned with an individual's *Prakriti*. One can follow these regimens to maintain overall health and balance the Doshas.

c. Role of *Prakriti* in planning diet and lifestyle  
People should avoid foods that are contrary to the well-being of their natural constitution. Overexertion, excessive exercise, frequent heavy physical labour, suppressing natural bodily urges, irregular routines,

skipping meals, and inconsistent sleep patterns all contribute to an increase in *Vata Dosha*. Similarly, foods such as curd (*Dadhi*), buttermilk (*Takra*), and sesame oil (*Tilataila*), along with emotional states like anger and sorrow, enhance *Pitta Dosha*<sup>14</sup>. So, an individual should plan their lifestyle accordingly.

### 2. Applicability of *Prakriti* on *Agni*

These four types of *Agni*, like *vishama*[irregular], *Tikshna*[sharp], *manda* [mild] and *sama* [balance], correspond to the four types of individuals. When *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* are balanced and normal, *Agni* remains stable and regulated. However, in individuals with a dominant *Vata* constitution, *Agni* becomes irregular [*vishama*] due to *Vata*'s influence on its site. In those with a predominant *Pitta* constitution, *Agni* tends to be sharp [*Tikshna*]. In contrast, in individuals with a dominant *Kapha* constitution, *Agni* is mild [*manda*] due to *Kapha*'s effect on its site<sup>15</sup>.

### 3. Applicability of *Prakriti* on *Koshta*

An accurate diagnosis of a patient's *Deha Prakriti* enables a physician to evaluate the state of *Koshta* (digestive system) and *Agni* (digestive capacity)<sup>16</sup>. Ayurveda categorises *Koshta* into three main types: *Krura Koshta*, *Mridu Koshta*, and *Madhyama Koshta*. *Koshta* varies based on the Doshas and, consequently, one's *Deha Prakriti*<sup>17</sup>. Typically, *Krura Koshta* is associated with *Vata Dosha*, *Mridu Koshta* with *Pitta Dosha*, and *Madhyama Koshta* with *Kapha Dosha*. When these three *Koshta* types are present in equal proportion, an individual experiences a fourth type of gut response known as *Sama Koshta* (*Madhyama koshta*)<sup>18</sup>.

### 4. *Prakriti* for Assessing *Bala* (Strength):

An individual's comparative strength can be determined based on their *Prakriti*. Those with a *Kapha Prakriti* [*balavan*]<sup>19</sup> are stronger than *Vata Prakriti* [*Na Dridha*]<sup>20</sup> individuals. Evaluating strength is essential in the treatment process.

### 5. *Prakriti* & susceptibility to various diseases

Individuals with specific *Prakriti* exhibit unique characteristics based on their bodily composition and are more susceptible to certain diseases. A person with *Vata Prakriti*, for instance, is more prone to *Vata*-related disorders compared to those with other

*Prakriti* types. The individuals with Vata-dominant *Prakriti* consume substances or engage in activities that aggravate Vata; the imbalance occurs more rapidly than with other Doshas. This principle applies similarly to individuals with Pitta or Kapha dominance<sup>21</sup>. The extent of this susceptibility is directly proportional to both the predominant Dosha in one's *Prakriti* and the Dosha dominance in a particular disease<sup>22</sup>.

6. One among *Dasavidha pareeksha* to evaluate patients.

Examination of the patient is conducted to determine the patient's life span or degree of strength and morbidity. *Dasavidhpareeksha* explained by Acharya Charaka is Constitution (*Prakriti*), morbidity (*vikriti*), *Sara*, compactness (*samhanana*), measurement (*pramana*), suitability (*satmya*), psyche (*satva*), power of intake and digestion of food (*aharashakti*), control of exercise (*vyayamashakti*) and age (*vaya*) for the knowledge of the degree of strength<sup>23</sup>. *Prakriti* is given the first position. It is an essential step in the examination of a patient.

7. Application of *Prakriti* in the prognosis of the disease

The similarity between *Roga Kaala* and *Prakriti* makes the disease difficult to cure. The ease of treating a disease is closely linked to the alignment between the causative *Dosha* and an individual's *Prakriti*. When the causative *Dosha* matches the person's *Prakriti*, the disease is classified as *Krichrasadhya*, indicating a more challenging treatment process. Conversely, if the vitiated *Dosha* differs from the individual's *Prakriti*, the disease is easier to manage and falls under the *Sukhasadhya* category. Additionally, factors such as seasonal influences (*Kala Prakriti*) and an individual's constitution (*Deha Prakriti*) also play a significant role in determining the disease's curability and shaping the therapeutic approach<sup>24</sup>.

8. Application of *Prakriti* in the treatment of a disease

Different *Dosha*-related ailments have specific therapeutic measures designed to address their unique imbalances. Excess *Vata* imbalance can be alleviated

using oils (*Taila*) and treatments such as *Vasti*. *Pitta* imbalance can be balanced with ghee (*Ghrita*) and purgation (*Virechana*), while *Kapha* imbalance can be managed with emesis (*Vamana*) and honey (*Madhu*)<sup>25</sup>. These treatments are carefully tailored to restore balance based on the particular *Dosha* involved in each condition.

9. Relation between *prakriti* and mental status of the individual -

The psychological traits of *Vata Prakriti* person are unstable, impatient, and violent<sup>26</sup>. *Pitta Prakriti* people are radiant and brave. They are intolerant of hot things; it is not easy to defeat them. They are unsparing to negative people while they behave softly to good people<sup>27</sup>. The psychological manifestation of *Kapha Prakriti* individuals is that they are slow in action, and they never get very depressed. These types of people are patient, hardworking and never get angry. The individual having the dual, *Doshas Prakriti*,

has psycho-. Somatic manifestation of both the *Doshas*. The dominant *Dosha* in dual *Dosha Prakriti* has more influence on their

Psychological and physical attributes of an individual. While

People having *Sama Prakriti* had characteristics of all the

Three *Doshas*. Because of their manifestation, *Kapha* and

*Sama Prakriti* are said to be the good *Prakriti* in all types of

*Prakriti* as they are capable of coping with all the psychological

Distress easily in comparison to others. Study shows that in the psychosomatic combination of an individual *Kapha. Prakriti* is said to be the most critical factor, and *Vata Prakriti* is more prone towards negative Mental Health Status. They face more mental issues<sup>28</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

The concept of *prakriti* is unique in Ayurveda. It is formed from birth and lasts until death. So, for proper

health maintenance, an individual should plan life based on prakriti. In broad classification, *ekadoshaja*, *Dvidoshaja*, and *samadoshaja prakriti* are present, and the prakriti concept can be applied in all aspects. The applicability of *Prakriti* extends across various aspects of health and disease management, including its influence on an individual's mental status, disease susceptibility, prognosis, and response to treatment. It also plays a crucial role in assessing Bala (strength), understanding Koshta (gut type) and Agni (digestive capacity), and tailoring a personalised health approach. Furthermore, *Prakriti* aids disease diagnosis, guiding effective therapeutic strategies. This holistic understanding underscores the significance of *Prakriti* in Ayurveda, emphasising its utility in personalised and precise healthcare.

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