

## Comprehensive Analysis of Personality- An Ayurvedic Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

Study of Personality has been a fascinating experience for Psychologists and researchers worldwide. Although Personality has been studied in a number of ways, the focus to unveil the complexities of human mind and behaviour with a single theory persists. Some theories explain the basic origins and makeup of personality, whereas others focuses on specific issues like influence of gene on Personality and how people differ in their behaviour according to varying situations in life.

As the Western psychological concepts and methods are not found very relevant with respect to different cultures; the need for developing indigenous Psychological assessment is recognised and the concept of Prakriti from Ayurveda-the Indian medical wisdom is emphasised here.

Ayurveda- the Science of Life has unique method of classifying human population based on individual constitution called Prakriti. This classification indicates constitution-physiological strength, weaknesses, mental nature and susceptibility to diseases. Charaka Samhitha, Ayurvedic classical text phrases how hereditary factors, intrauterine environment, post natal factors and socio cultural components influences Prakriti .This paper focuses on analysing studies of Personality made in the field of Psychology and to explore Ayurvedic Prakriti - a multidimensional approach to study different facets of human personality and its application in governing of health.

**Keywords:** *Personality assessment, Ayurvedic Prakriti, Transpersonal psychology, Ayurvedic genomics, Psychosomatic make up*

‘Personality is a dynamic, organised set of characteristics of a person which influences a person’s emotions, motivations, cognitions and behaviours in different situations.’<sup>[21]</sup> Personality includes three elements of an individual - physiological, psychological and environmental .According to Allport, “personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environment”<sup>[15,25,30]</sup>.

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Personality has been studied in different angles and different theories are synthesised. There is some description and useful insight in many of the personality theory but no single theory gives a condensed and comprehensive picture about it. There are some issues and controversies in Personality theory and Research to capture the ‘whole person’ in a single theory.<sup>[17]</sup> How it develops in the course of person’s lifetime, influence of socio-cultural variants and the factors governing Personality needs to be answered. Knowing the limitation of western Psychological approach, the indigenous and traditional medical system like Ayurveda is focused here for psychological assessment.

Ayurveda- the Indian Medical wisdom describes Personality as ‘Prakriti’, a Sanskrit word that means nature or natural form of constitution of an individual. It refers to one’s own constitution, which is individual specific means it is controlled by its own physiology.<sup>[30],[40]</sup>

“Prakriti”, the fundamental construct of an individual is determined by predominance of humour or Tridoshas at the time of conception.<sup>[37]</sup> The three doshas- Vata, Pitta and Kapha governs all the functions of the body at physical, mental and emotional levels. Thus Prakriti constitute physical, physiological, psychological and behavioural traits of an individual.<sup>[12]</sup> Such an approach from different angles has wide application in the study of Psychology, health, career and many other dimensions of life.

### OBJECTIVES

1. To analyse different theories of Personality in Psychology.
2. Explore Ayurvedic Prakriti- Its Formation, Classification, Significance and Application in Psychology, health care, career and other dimensions of life.

Proposed study is literature review. Theories of Personality in Psychology, Fundamental construct “Prakriti” as per Ayurvedic literature and Scientific reports or updates on Prakriti is analysed here.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 1. PSYCHOLOGY: <sup>[17, 14, 23]</sup>

Personality refers to distinctive qualities within a person, including thoughts and emotions and characteristics of a person’s behaviour.

Broad Personality theories can be grouped into four categories.

1. Type and Trait approaches
2. Dynamic approaches
3. Learning and behavioural approaches
4. Humanistic approaches

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Type and Trait Theories of Personality both focus on people's personal characteristics. Types are collection of individuals with some common characteristics. Traits are tendencies to behave relatively consistent and distinctive ways across situations. Although Type and Trait theories have enhanced our understanding of human behaviour but people's behaviour often varies with the situation they are in and people's performance can be influenced by response sets. The question remains whether this approach projects clear and complete picture of Personality.

Dynamic theories includes a search for the processes by which motives, basic needs and impulses not disclosed interact to shaping the individual's behaviour. Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic theory, Jung's Analytical Psychology, Defence Mechanisms in Dynamic theories have good influence but it is difficult to prove or disapprove many of their concepts and interpretations. Most of the Dynamic theories were based mostly on observations and evidence noticed in disturbed adults. They may not have represented the mainstream of their culture; thus can not be guaranteed as the final word on personality.

Learning theories highlights that many of the human behaviour that make up personality are either conditioned or learned. Learning and conditioning in Classical, Instrumental and Cognitive forms are highly relevant to Personality and its development. Many researchers value their approaches for their clarity and their experimental 'testability' but is also criticised for diminishing 'the person' in Personality. Human learning is not just a matter of acquiring specific muscle twitches in response to certain stimuli. Thus learning theories approach helps in understanding of behaviour in specific situations but cannot give a complete understanding of personality.

A humanistic theory highlights the significance of people's subjective attitudes, feelings and beliefs about self. Carl Roger's theory explains the impact of differences between a person's ideal self and perceived real self. Maslow focuses on the significance of Self actualisation. The above mentioned theories are meaningful to explore human mind and behaviour but are often criticised for their heavy reliance on subjective self report data. Knowing the limitations of the broad personality theories, some researchers have shifted to focused study pattern like is there any influence of gene on personality.

### 2 GENES AND PERSONALITY

Research especially on twins shows evidence for genetic contribution to Personality. Two general Personality manifestations have been studied: child temperament and adult traits (including a collection of traits linked to introversion-extraversion.)<sup>[17]</sup>

With reference to study by Catharine, Tom ( PMC June 2014)<sup>[6]</sup>, Extraversion has direct positive effects and good influence on wellbeing whereas the effect of Neuroticism is mainly indirect through chances towards psychological distress and physical ailments. Other non affective features of Extraversion and Neuroticism comprises differences in desires, with extraversion

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having a need for social contact, power and status and neuroticism comprises needs for acceptance, tranquility, order, savings, tranquility and vengeance.(Olson & Weber,2004)<sup>[20]</sup>.

Bouchard, (2004) Genetic influence on human psychological traits.<sup>[3]</sup> A survey shows mainly genetic component; some of the character may in fact be seen from birth or early childhood (Durbin et al 2005).

‘Personality and individual differences’ 38 (2005), study by Jose, Benado, Eva, Cecilia examines the association between the Big Five personality dimensions, demographic factors and subjective wellbeing.<sup>[16]</sup>

Another focused study in personality research is person-situation controversy.

### 3 THE PERSON SITUATION CONTROVERSY<sup>[17]</sup>

Some researchers have studied person-situation interactions by focusing on “the personality of situations” (Funder & Bern, 1977). In general, some people are strongly influenced by some traits. We also see some situations are ‘powerful’ influencing specific kinds of behaviour. Whereas other situations are less structured and thus “weak”; they permit personality traits to have stronger influence on people’s behaviour.

Which of these theories is the best that predict picture of “true” Personality remains a question. Though all of them reflect some light on the complexities of human nature but none can give a clear and complete picture of Personality. To overcome these limitations and to understand different facets of personality, description of Prakriti in Ayurveda (the Indian medical science) is explored.

## AYURVEDIC REVIEW

Ayurveda, the traditional medical wisdom of India is based on the doctrines of:

1. Panchamahabhuta- five elements that constitute the physical universe including the human body (macrocosm and microcosm).
2. Tridoshas- the three doshas- Vata, Pitta and Kapha is the constitutional base of every individual.

### 1 CONCEPT OF PRAKRITI

As everyone has a unique finger print likewise; every human being has a unique proportion of the three doshas at the time of conception. This forms ‘Prakriti’ that determines one’s individuality and is based on unique proportion of Tridoshas.

### TRIDOSHAS<sup>{7,18,32,37}</sup>

Tridoshas governs the physical, physiological and psychological characteristics of an individual .M.S Valiathan in his text ‘The Legacy of Charaka’ quotes “ Vata dosha governs the nervous and musculoskeletal system. At the cellular level, Vata dosha can be associated with signalling

pathways regulating cell growth, differentiation, and cell death. Pitta dosha is responsible for transformative processes such as digestion, metabolism, energy production, and maintenance of immunity. At the cellular level, Pitta dosha can be associated with action of enzymes, growth factors, hormones, and the reactions required for energy homeostasis and maintenance of basal metabolism. Kapha dosha acts to form and maintain body mass, shape and flexibility. At the cellular level, anabolic processes such as biosynthesis of macromolecules and the coordination of gene and protein function may be associated with Kapha dosha”.

Tridoshas fixed proportions in our body at the time of conception constitute the psychosomatic make up called Prakriti. Understanding Prakriti in Ayurveda ( its formation, classification, characteristics) further helps to understand physical, physiological, psychological and behavioural aspects of an individual.

## 2 FORMATION OF PRAKRITI

Ayurveda classical tests Ashtangahrdaya and Charaka Samhita sloka describes Deha Prakriti are of seven kinds based on the predominance of dosha in sukra (spermatozoan), askr (ovum) at the time of their union, the food habits and activities of pregnant woman (garbhini bhojya, chestha), and the intrauterine condition and season (garbhasaya ritu) <sup>[36]</sup>.

The above mentioned factors governs the development of foetus. There are also post natal elements which influence the features of an individual<sup>[7]</sup>. Charaka categorises these f factors governing Prakriti and commentary on Sushruta samhitha by Dalhana describes the same in sloka.<sup>[1]</sup>

**“tatr prakriti jatiprasakthi cha, kulaprasakthi cha, deshanupatani cha, kalanupatani cha, vayonupatani cha, pratiatmaniyata cheti”**

( C.S Indriya sthanam 1/5)

The Sanskrit sloka explains of postnatal factors that influence development of one’s Prakriti or personality.<sup>[21]</sup>

- 1.Jati prasakta- character of human race/religion in which he is born
- 2.Kula prasaktha-influence of caste/family in which he is born.
- 3.Desa anupatini-nature of habitat in which he lives.
- 4.Kala anupatini- kind of season/time
- 5.Vayas anupatini- stages of life
- 6.Prati atmaniyata- based on basic instincts.

Ref V.V.L Prasuna et al. Comparative study of Personality with Ayurvedic Prakriti IJAP(2014). Thus jati and kula- families with specific lifestyle, food habits, culture, belief system, thinking pattern; desha (place or geographical location), kala (season ), vayas (age), pratiatmaniyata- the distinct instincts shape up the individual peculiarities of body, mind and speech .Ayurveda thus

gives a complete and comprehensive description of the factors governing the Fundamental construct of an individual.

### **3 CLASSIFICATION OF PRAKRITI**

Prakriti is classified based on Tridoshas as Dosha Prakriti or Deha Prakriti. They are 7 in number; 3 Ekadoshaja with one dominant dosha, 3 Dvi doshaja exhibit dominance of two doshas and one Sama prakriti or Sama doshaja with three doshas in balanced state.

Genotype or phenotypic classification of people is relevant. The classification gives a good indication of physiologic strengths and weaknesses, mental tendencies, and susceptibility to illnesses of different kinds. Prakriti provides a guide to lifestyle and ways of healthy living appropriately individualized for each person.<sup>[31]</sup>

Ashtanga hrdaya and Charaka Samhitha, Ayurvedic literature explains the constitutions are hina (poor, weak), madhyma (medium or moderate), and uttama (best, strong) from each dosha- Vata, Pitta and Kapha respectively. The Constitution arising from Sama dosha-balance of all the three doshas is the ideal and from combination of two doshas are nindya<sup>[37]</sup> (denounced).

Three types of Manasa Prakriti based on Trigunas- Satwa, Rajas and Tamas ; Pancha bhuta Prakriti based on dominance of 5 elements- Prithvi, Ap, Tejas, Vayu and Aakasha is described in Classical texts (Sushrutha Samhitha and Ashtanga hrdaya).

Further, the characteristic features of Prakriti is beautifully described explaining the physical, physiological and psychological aspects .

### **4 CHARACTERISTICS OF PRAKRITI<sup>{7,10,21,31,33,39}</sup>**

Prakriti can be correlated as psychosomatic constitution of an individual based on dominance of dosha at the time of conception. <sup>[21]</sup>

#### **(A) VATA PRAKRITI**

##### **Anatomical Features**

Persons born with the predominance of Vata generally have thin, undernourished/ emaciated and lusterless body. They have dry, rough and cold skin; thin, scanty and rough hair with split ends; dry, rough and brittle nails. They have prominent veins and tendons, joints are rough, stiff and unstable and produce crackling sound while walking. Eyes are dry, unsteady and frequently moving. Their voice is obstructed, broken and hoarse.

##### **Physiological Features**

Appetite and digestion is inconsistent. They have varying habits of diet; desirous of oily, spicy, salty and sour foods. Bowels are hard. They have lesser amount of strength and procreation. Their sleep gets interrupted easily and of less duration, their eyes are half closed during sleep. Their dreams are adventurous- flying, climbing hills, jumping, roaming storms in the sky, etc.

They talk much and not very relevant. They are always restless and have habits like shaking legs, biting nails, etc. They are not able to tolerate cold climate and are fond of music, fun hunting/gambling, etc.

### **Psychological Features**

They are unsteady in respect of courage, memory, thinking, friendship; cannot control their senses, quick attachment and detachment, not civilised, are impolite and restless. They are fast in grasping new things but forget easily, are easily frightened, jealous, unfortunate, wrathful, of stealing nature and impulsive by nature.

### **(B)PITTA PRAKRITI**

#### **Anatomical Features**

Persons having predominance of Pitta have warm body and coppery red palm, sole, nails, eyes, palate and tongue. They are usually good looking with sharp features. They are of medium built, have delicate body with loose joints and lean muscles. They possess soft, sensitive skin with freckles and moles, wrinkles, reddish or pale yellow skin colour. Hair is thin, soft, brownish in colour and are prone to early greying and baldness. Their body hair is coppery in colour. Eyes are sharp, gets easily inflamed. And they have high pitch commanding voice.

#### **Physiological Features**

Pitta is born of fire, hence Pitta prakriti people have intense and severe thirst and appetite, cannot tolerate hunger or skip the meal. They take food in large quantities and eat frequently. They like sweet, bitter, astringent and cold foods and drinks and find comfort in them. They hate sunlight and heat and perspire heavily and emit bad odour from body. They expel soft faeces frequently and have excess urination. They cannot tolerate heavy physical work, and are afraid of discomfort. They are of medium life span and strength. In sleep, they dream of bright sunrays and fire, flowers of palasha, forest fire, lightning, etc. They are intolerant to hot climate and are fond of women, garlands, perfumes, water bodies.

#### **Psychological Features**

They are bestowed with good intelligence, are proud and courageous. They are very jealous and competitive, are afraid of discomfort, desirous of grandeur, like to be praised. They are of good conduct, clean, affectionate to dependents and cultured behaviour.

### **(C)KAPHA PRAKRITI**

#### **Anatomical Features**

Kapha dominant Prakriti people possess well defined, compact and good looking body with unctuous and well knit joints and muscles. They have majestic gait and stable movements. They have long arms, big, elevated chest and wide forehead. Skin is cold, wrinkle free, smooth, oily texture with light, clear and whitish complexion. Their hair is wavy, firmly rooted, thick and of bee-black colour. Nails are smooth, shiny and thick. Eyes are large, moist, attractive and look

pleasant with thick eye lashes. They have full , thick, moist and oily lips and have a very pleasant voice.

### **Physiological Features**

Kapha is moon like, cold and mild, hence persons of Kapha prakriti are mild in nature, not much troubled by hunger, thirst, strain and heat. They consume food which is bitter, astringent, pungent, hot, dry and less in quantity, and still remain strong. They possess slow and steady gait and activities, excessive and deep sleep. They dream reservoirs of water full of lotus, birds and clouds. They have less of speech , anger and appetite. They possess great vigour, strength and immunity.

### **Psychological Features**

They possess steady intelligence, righteous, benevolent in nature, do not speak harshly or abusively, greedless, peaceful, calm, obedient to teachers. They are often slow and lazy to take initiation, takes longer time to grasp new things but have good memory and retention once learnt a new skill. They are learned, dignified , greatly charitable, of forgiving nature, civilised and good in scriptural knowledge and views.

Ayurveda literature also describes of Manasa Prakriti based on Trigunas based from Sankhya philosophy.

## **5 MANASA PRAKRITI**

Manasa Prakriti are of three types-Sattvika, Rajasika and Tamasika based on Trigunas. Just as Deha or Dosha Prakriti, the three gunas -Tamas, Rajas and Sattva are the three important constituents of mind. Sattva represents pure virtue and knowledge. Rajas symbolises , anger, pride and jealousy .Tamas symbolises inertia, ignorance, and confusion. Tridoshas are termed Saririka doshas whereas Rajas and Tamas are categorised as Manodoshas.<sup>[36]</sup>

Charaka samhitha and other authentic Ayurvedic texts has detailed description of Prakriti based on Tridoshas .<sup>[7]</sup>

The concept of Tridoshas provides a guidance system for Ayurvedic psychology.<sup>[26]</sup> The etiology of physical and mental illnesses, along with associated therapeutic treatments and life style modifications is suggested in relation to the doshas. Ayurvedic psychology may hold particular relevance to the evolving field of transpersonal psychology and may also benefit from transpersonal research methods that honour the holistic essence of Ayurveda.<sup>[10]</sup>

Tridoshas are biological representatives of the body responsible for physiological functions in state of homeostasis and for pathological disorders in state of imbalance.



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1. Vata is necessary for movement and dynamism. Many of the nervous and psychiatric disturbances result from vitiated Vata dosha. Anxiety, fear, features of hallucination, delusion and psychosis are mainly Vataja.
2. At the psychological level, Pitta controls the faculty of intelligence, logic, discrimination and judgement- the so called illuminating capacity of the mind. Vitiating of Pitta dosha leads to aggression, intolerance, anti-social behaviours, irritability and outbursts of anger.<sup>[39]</sup>
3. At the psychological level kapha governs emotions and the capacity of the mind to hold on to forms. This contributes to calmness to the mind and stability but mental growth and expansion may be retarded. Kapha types are marked by with passivity, apathy, withdrawal, gloominess and depression.<sup>[10],[39]</sup>

### **Trigunas are psychological impressions of Tridoshas.**<sup>[32]</sup>

The sevenfold classification of people with respect to the gunas is similar to the sevenfold classifications of people with respect to the Dosha Prakriti. This indicates physical constitution leads to the corresponding psychological attributes in a person or vice versa as both are interdependent. The interplay between the mind (sattva), soul (Atman) and body (sarira) in a tripod allusion is the cornerstone of Ayurvedic philosophy. (Ref. Shilpa and Murthy: Psychological assessment from Ayurvedic perspective. 2016).

There are also Scientific reports – ‘Genome wide analysis correlates Ayurveda Prakriti’ (2015), study by CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad.<sup>[24],[12]</sup>

## **6 SIGNIFICANCE OF PRAKRITI**

### **SCIENTIFIC REPORTS VALIDATES AYURVEDIC LITERATURE**

Prakriti is the central theme in Ayurvedic Science in consideration of health and disease. Diagnosis, prognosis, unique treatment modalities, specific herbs, psychological assessment and life style modification is based on Prakriti Assessment.

Prakriti has a genetic association that could provide a methodology for categorising the human population based on phenotype clusters.<sup>[10]</sup> Genotypic or phenotypic classification of human populations is important in various epidemiological contexts,<sup>[32]</sup> such as better understanding disease (Pearson et al, 2003) and the drug response (Kirchheiner et al, 2004, Meyer, 2000). Prakriti specific treatment including prescription of medications, diet and lifestyle, is a distinctive feature of Ayurveda.

An experimental study revealed the utilization of Prakriti to correlate phenotypes with genotypes in the human population, which could have wide ranging implications for healthcare.<sup>[5,13,34]</sup>

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Experimental study of the Concept of Prakriti have shown statistically significant connection between the individual's Prakriti and the appearance of specific genes and biochemical parameters.<sup>[4][38]</sup>

Patwardhan Joshi & Chopra (2005) suggested a genetic correlation for the classical concept of Ayurvedic Prakriti ( birth constitution) by establishing an experimental association between human leucocyte antigen(HLA DRB1 gene ) and the three primary doshic types.<sup>[22]</sup>

Ayurvedic doshic evaluation pertaining to anatomical, physiological and psychological characteristics, such as physique, skin texture, digestive capacity and psychological temperament were separately done. Within HLA DRB1 gene, 14 alleles were examined with respect to hypothetical dosha correlates, as determined by the researchers and Ayurvedic Physicians. In Modern Medicine, different DNA sequences (or alleles) within the HLADR1 gene are associated with several chronic diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis, type 1 diabetes, ankylosing spondylitis and other conditions considered to have immunological basis. With in the HLA DRB1 gene, these 14 alleles were shown to be unevenly distributed between the three doshic types, with a higher predominance of disease related alleles (such as HLA DRB1\*13 allele) found in Vata types. This finding was consistent both with disease correlates associated with this allele and with classical descriptions of Vata disorders, which constitute the greatest number of illnesses in Ayurvedic Science.<sup>[2],[22]</sup>

Press information Bureau, Govt of India, Ministry of Science and Technology, 4 Nov 2015 quotes "A genome wide study reveals certain correlation between Ayurvedic Prakriti categorisation with genomic diversity. A study on the subject has been done by the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad. Analysis of Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms (SNPs) have shown that about 52 genes might be specific in individual's doshas or prakritis".

Subsequent studies have attempted to correlate Prakriti classification with genetic information and association of SNP in HLA-DRB1, CYP2C19, EGLN1, inflammatory and oxidative stress related genes, CD markers from various blood cells, DNA methylation alterations and risk factors of cardiovascular or inflammatory diseases have been reported.<sup>{12,19,27,28,29}</sup>

Thus the latest scientific findings on correlation between Ayurveda Prakriti with genomic diversity is a breakthrough in finding the genetic base for Ayurvedic concepts.

### NIH-PA Author Manuscript

National Institute of Health NIH-PA reveals 'Genome wide association uncovers shared genetic effects among personality traits and mood states'. Several SNP in known genes showed suggestive association with measures of neuroticism, extraversion, symptoms of anxiety,

depression and general psychological distress.(Am J Med Genet B Neuropsychiatr Genet.2012 September).

Bouchard and Loehlin states Personality traits are influenced in part by one's genetic make-up, with around 50% of their variation being genetic.<sup>[3]</sup>

Brandes and Bienvenu in their study mentions Personality is associated with health and other life characteristics and predict many aspects of psychiatric illness also, in particular Neuroticism is associated with anxiety and depression .

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Understanding the limitation and drawbacks of Personality theories in Psychology ; Concept of 'Prakriti' from Indian medical literature 'Ayurveda' is evaluated . What determines the individuality of a person? The insights in understanding human nature are explored. Prakriti classification based on Tridosha is significant to understand their peculiarities in physical, physiological, psychological and behavioural makeup. Scientific reports (Genome wide analysis correlates Ayurveda Prakriti, 2015) confirm the authenticity of Ayurvedic concepts by finding genetic base for Prakriti classification.

Genetic predisposition, constitutional base, mental factors, dietary habits and regime govern physical as well as mental health. Analysing Prakriti helps to understand different facets of personality- physical characteristics, functional aspects, metabolism, disease tendency, human behaviour and emotions. Thus Ayurvedic concept of Prakriti is a complete and comprehensive picture of Personality and has large implications in knowing "what type of a person suffers from a disease rather than what disease a person suffers from".[Rao V,Mind in Ayurveda,IJP 2002] Thus very relevant in early identification of disease, and its better management in preventive as well as promotive aspect.

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