

Research Paper

## Living in Harmony: Prakriti's Role in Cultivating Positive Health

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### ABSTRACT

Health and Well-being are the cardinal integrant of the Ayurvedic definition of 'Swasthya'. The ancient Indian system of medicine, emphasizes the importance of understanding one's *Prakriti* or natural constitution, in promoting overall health and well-being. Ayurveda is based on its own *sidhantas* (principles), among these are the "*Triguna and Tridosha sidhantas*", which govern the psycho-physiological processes of the body. The physical body is composed of the *tridoshas* (*vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*), whereas the individual's views and behaviours are influenced by the *trigunas* (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*). Each dosha and gunas has unique traits of its own and these attributes determine how the dosha and guna work in the body. The homeostatic balance of tridoshas and trigunas is central to the holistic concept of health, which encompasses the body, mind and spirit leading to a state of *Ananda* (bliss) and the imbalance causes poor health or illness even resulting in psychiatric disturbances. This review paper explores the concept of Prakriti and its role in cultivating Positive Health. Drawing from traditional Ayurvedic texts, contemporary research and philosophical insights, this paper examines how aligning with one's Prakriti can lead to a state of balance and harmony, ultimately contributing to optimal health outcomes.

**Keywords:** *Ayurveda, Prakriti, Triguna, Tridosha, Positive Health*

Health is the most aspired aspect in life, but, a longer life does not necessarily translate into better health. Despite eradication of major diseases like smallpox completely from the face of the earth, 'Health' is still a growing concern. When 'Health for All' is the goal of WHO popularized since 1970, the traditional Indian system of medicine-Ayurveda offers a model of balance. Health in its broadest definition was coined by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1946 and is described as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 2006). According to this definition, health includes not only bodily well-being but also mental and social welfare. Recent definitions of health include the "ability to adapt and self-manage in the face of social, physical, and emotional challenges" offered by Huber et al., (2011). This emphasises health as a beneficial resource to develop capacities for leading fulfilling lives.

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## Living in Harmony: Prakriti's Role in Cultivating Positive Health

This attitude of concentrating on capabilities and strengths rather than merely disease is consistent with the positive health approach. Building resources and skills to overcome challenges and advance is a component of positive health (Ryff, Singer, & Love, 2004). In his 2011 book, Seligman said that "people desire well-being in its own right and they desire it above and beyond the relief of their suffering." Positive health focuses on the balance of both feeling good (emotional well-being) and functioning well (psychological well-being) (Henderson & Knight, 2012). It also focuses on capacities and strengths rather than just managing weaknesses (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and promoting flourishing, thriving and optimal functioning; not just treat pathology (Keyes, 2002).

A paradigm change from the traditional disease-focused medical practise is positive health. According to Best et al. (2014), it employs a holistic framework that incorporates the psychological, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual facets of well-being. Applying positive health concepts enables healthcare to actively foster human growth and potential rather than only treating symptoms. It offers a paradigm for understanding health as the capacity to live well in a variety of circumstances and social groupings (Lomas, 2015). By including indigenous ideas on welfare and flourishing, the positive health discourse must be expanded. For instance, prakriti frameworks, offered by ancient Indian medical systems like Ayurveda, might enhance knowledge of good health (Hankey, 2001). The goal of the current study is to fill this vacuum in the literature by illuminating the relationships between indigenous ideas like Prakriti evolutes and aspects of well health.

### ***Ancient View of Health***

In Indian culture, the idea of health and well-being has a long history dating back to the Puranas and Upanishads. According to Palestine, Bhavsar, Goswami, and Evans (1986), the Hindu philosophy is a very rich source that deals with well-being, for example, Ayurveda mainly focuses on "*sama* or balance", Samkhya philosophy focuses on the "state of *samyavastha* or equilibrium of Trigunas and Tridoshas. The Charka Samhita goes into great detail about the idea of wellbeing. The most significant and well-known religious text among "Hindus" is "*Bhagavad Gita*." It includes the "Lord Krishna" teachings and especially on the concept of avoiding extremes. A person should make an effort to preserve some sort of harmony or equilibrium between joy and grief, in gain and loss, and in triumph and defeat. A person can only experience happiness and good health after that.

The ancient Indian science takes a holistic view where physiological and mental processes are intertwined rather than dualistically separated in line with perspectives from Vedic sciences emphasizing interconnectedness underlying observable material diversity (Mukherjee & Faille, 2010). The Charaka Samhita described health as a state of balance between bodily tissues, metabolic processes, sensory experiences and the consciousness principle enlivening the individual existence (Sharma & Clark, 1998). Imbalance manifesting from excess or deficit of functional energies at either gross physical or subtle levels of function is viewed as root biopsychosocial cause of disease in Ayurvedic etiology (Hankey, 2005).

"Prakriti," which means "nature," refers to the anatomical, physiological, and psychological states of people in their natural state, which is translated as a person's constitution (Sharma, 2002). The Sanskrit prefix "Pra" indicates original and "Kriti" means creation. This ancient science has its integrity to reflect on the distinctiveness of the individual and forecasting a personalized protocol for their prevention and cure from the ailments. The universe, including the human body, is said to be composed of five components, or

## Living in Harmony: Prakriti's Role in Cultivating Positive Health

*Panchamahabhutas*, (*Akasa, Vayu, Agni, Ap* and *Prithvi*). The *Tridoshas* (*Kapha, Vata, and Pitta*) and *Trigunas* (*Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas*) are made up of these five elements and regulate the physiological and psychological processes of the body, mind, and spirit. Both the *Trigunas* and the *Tridoshas* are composed, to varied extents and combinations, of the *Panchamahabhutas*. Their relative dominance serves as the foundation for the psychological variances among people. They contribute to personality development from the time of zygote formation, exhibiting a very distinct structure function-behaviour pattern and attribute of a person known as *Prakriti*. It determines an individual's behaviour, thought process, mental activities etc. (Patwardhan et al., 2016).

Beyond physical wellness, the ancient science identifies spiritual liberation and realization of pure consciousness as the ultimate goal defining health at the deepest level of human existence (Balodhi, J.P., 1987). However, sustainable happy functioning integrating ethical virtues and purposeful contributions depends on nurturing psychosomatic balance via daily conduct nurturing somatic integrity and mental equilibrium (Sharma, 2022). Recommendations hence encompass behavioural guidelines, seasonal routines, diet, yoga postures and meditation practices tailored to individual differences with the aim of preventing disease as well as progressing flourishing.

### ***The conceptual classification of Tridoshas—Vata, Pitta and Kapha:***

The sanskrit words '*tri*' and '*dosh*' signify "three" and "pollutant" or "vitiated factor" respectively. govern physiological and psychological processes (Lad, 2002). The field is beginning to gain broader recognition in modern medicine thanks to its link to science, which demonstrates how the doshas form systems of regulatory function, each with a specific area of responsibility (Hankey, 2001) and its current preliminary validation, are the initial moves toward gaining wider acceptance within contemporary medicine. (Hankey, 2005).

<b>Dosha</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Vata	Vata is characterized by when balanced, they are energetic, creative and flexible. When unbalanced, they are prone to worry and anxiousness (Joshi,2004).
Pitta	Pita is characterized by anger, jealousy, becomes more focused under stress.
Kapha	Kapha prone individuals are lethargic, prone to depression and are over attached (Tiwari,1995).

### ***The conceptual classification of Trigunas—Sattva, Rajas and Tamas:***

Triguna is an ancient Vedic theory describing three fundamental qualities or energies that underlie all the psychological properties in living beings (Gunas, 2010). These three gunas called sattva, rajas and tamas exist in varying proportions across individuals, and shape temperament and behaviour (Rao, Paranjpe & Dalal, 2008). This Prakriti-guna combination is unique to every individual and is not changeable during the course of their lifetime (Gupta, S. P., 2000).

<b>Gunas</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Sattva	Sattva is characterized by balance, peace, equanimity, and qualities such as cleanliness, truthfulness, dutifulness, detachment, discipline, contentment, and staunch determination. It has been said that sattvic quality is devoid of attachment and vanity and is completely unaffected by success or failure (Dasgupta,1961).
Rajas	Rajas is an intermediary between tamas and sattva (Prabhupada,1976). Rajas is

## Living in Harmony: Prakriti's Role in Cultivating Positive Health

Gunas	Characteristics
	characterized by agitation, worry and anxiousness and is intense, active and passionate. Attributes of rajas include intense activity, desire for sense gratification, little interest in spiritual elevation, envy of others, and materialistic mentality (Wolf, 1998).
Tamas	It is manifested in dullness, lethargy, fatigue, and even depression. Tamas is characterized by mental instability, rage, ignorance, haughtiness and powerlessness (Wolf,1998). They are characterized by ignorance, carelessness, idleness and sleep (Dasgupta,1961).

### *Need of the Study*

Health and Wellness has traditionally been conceptualized from a disease-oriented perspective focused on illness and dysfunction. However, the Positive health paradigm reconceptualizes health as encompassing capacities and strengths that enable well-being and flourishing. Positive health aligns with indigenous healing frameworks like Ayurveda that view health holistically across physical, mental, social and spiritual dimensions. The scientific study of positive health is still relatively new, with most prevailing models rooted in Western cultural assumptions that limit applicability to non-Western contexts. There is a need for culturally-syntonic theories and research on positive health incorporating non-Western perspectives. Concepts from Indian philosophy like Prakriti provide an ecological framework interweaving mind, body, environment and temperament.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Different Acharya in treatises have advocated that people who are in pursuit of health have to sustain the equilibrium between Sharira (body) and Manas (mind). Prakriti reveals everything about a particular individual. Assessment of psyche has been considered as one of the parameters used for assessment of *Aatura Dehabala* (patient's physical strength) during treatment plan in Ayurveda. Hence, the connotation of psyche plays an important role for both the psychiatric and physical ailments, and the better comprehension of state of the psyche can be understood by knowing the status of *Tridoshas* (Vata, Pitta and Kapha) and *Trigunas* (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas) which determine the individual's nature, belief and perception in different condition and situations. (Singh, 1972). *Acharya Charaka* has also expounded the relationship of Manas with Sharira. which shows the interrelationship of the body with the mind. This notion of inter relationship has been supported by so many modern research. For instance, study shows that low physical fitness level leads to stress, an unhealthy lifestyle and less mental satisfaction. Another study illustrates how the physical fitness component such as muscular strength and muscle endurance affect depression and anxiety etc. (Jung et al.,2013).

Individuals can be broadly categorized based on the gunas and doshas that are dominant in their physiology, or Prakriti. These evolutions faithfully capture an individual's physiological composition, psychological tendencies, and susceptibility to illness. According to Ayurveda, a person's Prakriti is a customized guide to living a healthy lifestyle that works for each individual. In the pre-pathologic stages of illness genesis, there is a great deal of emphasis on the functioning and homeostasis of gunas and doshas. The treatment of diseases in Ayurveda revolves around achieving this balance. *Samanya Vishesha Siddhanta*, a principle that deals with the conceptions of similarity and dissimilarity, plays a significant role in the Ayurvedic approach to health. It serves to harmonize the increased and decreased states of gunas and doshas to attain equilibrium in the body, thus enabling effective treatments (Santosh, Snehavibha Mishra, Bharat Gawande, 2020)

### ***Prakriti and Physical Health***

Specific prakriti types are more prone to certain illnesses due to imbalance in particular doshas. For example, vata predominant people are more susceptible to neurological, musculoskeletal and anxiety issues; pitta prakriti to inflammatory conditions and peptic ulcers; kapha to respiratory congestion, obesity and diabetes (Rastogi, 2011; Divya Shahu, S. K. Danga, S. Petkar, 2017). The dynamic balance of vata, pitta, and kapha doshas creates overall health by ensuring a harmonious balance between mind and body (Vamanrao, Pawar Ujwala and Saley Subhash, 2014). Prakriti types showed differential patterns on cardiovascular parameters like blood pressure and heart rate variability indicating connections with physical fitness (Rastogi et al., 2016). Vata and pitta prakriti exhibited lower pulmonary function compared to kapha prakriti, suggesting links with respiratory health (Ghodke et al., 2011). In another study Mishra, Singh and Dagenasis (2001) considered the disharmony of mental doshas (sattva, rajas and tamas) and body doshas (vata, pitta, and kapha) as the major cause of illness. Furthermore, modern science, particularly quantum science, has provided a new perspective of interconnected energy patterns within the universe that aligns with the Ayurvedic Tridosha concept, validating it as an effective healthcare system (Tiwari, A.K., 2005).

### ***Triguna and Positive Health***

Emerging studies provide evidence that Prakriti-based attributes relate differentially with certain facets of Positive health indicators. Misra (2002) found sattva guna levels predictive of heightened life satisfaction and positive affect compared to rajas action-orientation or tamas disengagement. Khanna et al. (2013) highlighted that sattva was positively correlated with various aspects of well-being, including psychological capital, personality, life satisfaction, and happiness, while rajas and tamas exhibited negative correlations. Another examination by Sundaeasamy et al. (2020) revealed associations between dosha mix and variability in affective disturbance linked to identity development considered vital to self-actualization. Zaidi and Singh (2001), obtained significant effect of sattva and rajas gunas on depression, the former leading to low depression and latter to high depression. Further the moderating role of all three gunas was found in the relationship between negative life events and depression. High sattva, low rajas and high tamas groups reported higher psychological well-being. Verma and Tiwari (2017) study indicated that the sattva and tamas gunas shaped the self-compassion and social well-being, eudaimonic and psychological well-being and overall human flourishing. Additionally, in the field of spiritual treatment, there is a focus on balancing the Panchamahabhuta's (the five elements) and trigunas to address diseases believed to be a consequence of Past Karma (Raj & Bhagat, 2023). Moreover, the assessment of Mānasa Prakriti in Ayurveda, which evaluates personality traits under the broad categories of triguna (sattva, rajas and tamas), is also indicative of an individual's psychosomatic constitution, thus linking the Trigunas with overall health (Singh et al., 2016).

### ***Tridosha and Positive Health***

Tridoshas showed negative association with social wellbeing in older adults (Kumar & Sharma, 2021). Unique triguna and tridosha profiles are associated with differential emotional processing and regulation linked to wellbeing (Rastogi, 2005). Shilpa and Murthy (2012) found vata dosha is a combination of sattva and rajas gunas, but is predominantly rajasic. Pitta dosha is a combination of sattva, rajas and tamas gunas, but is predominantly sattvic. Kapha dosha is a combination of sattva and tamas gunas, but is predominantly Tamasic. In another study by Shilpa and Murthy (2012) found tridoshas and trigunas are significantly correlated. The interdependent but complimentary roles of pita, kapha, and vata

## Living in Harmony: Prakriti's Role in Cultivating Positive Health

are incorporated into the Tridosha model of physiologic regulation in Ayurveda (Sharma, 1981-1986). Gaining recognition in modern medicine is a step toward demonstrating the doshas relevance to the present by demonstrating that they are unique systems with functions (Hankey, 2001). Mathew (1995), Mohan and Sandhu (1986, 1988), Pathak, Bhatt and Sharma (1992) have all undertaken both theoretical and empirical study on tridosha. However, there hasn't been much empirical study in this area.

Beyond well-being correlational analyses, initial evidence supports links between certain Prakriti and motivation for health behaviours like yoga and meditation. Specifically, Singh et al. (2002) noted predominant kapha and balanced dual doshas displayed greater lifestyle regularity around diet, exercise and relaxation whereas vata-pitta types showed irregularity. Furthermore, kapha and sattvic participants demonstrated better adherence with yoga recommendations compared to rajasic groups indicating variability in regimen sustainability tendencies based on innate energetics.

Prakriti analysis helps customize interventions to restore Triguna and Tridosha equilibrium through lifestyle, diet, herbs and yoga targeted to the individual constitution. Kapha types may need more active warming therapies than pitta types prone to hyperacidity (Rastogi, 2010). Prakriti tends to shape enduring behavioural and emotional tendencies of individuals. Vata prakriti manifests as quick, unstable and anxious temperament; pitta as driven, irritable and perfectionist; kapha as calm, stable and complacent (Santhosh et al., 2016). Integrating prakriti theory with cutting-edge OMICS, systems biology and positive psychology can potentially offer holistic pathways to cultivate positive health and wellbeing while accounting for individual differences. More rigorous research on prakriti using modern psychometric and biometrical methods is needed to unlock its applied value.

### *Aim & Objective of The Study*

The aim of the present review is to examine the comprehensive overview of the principles of Prakriti and its evolutes - Triguna and Tridosha and their interconnections and approaches in achieving holistic Positive health.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This theoretical research reviewed researches on Prakriti evolutes – Trigunas and Tridoshas and Positive Health from various books and journals available online. Databases like Pub Med, Scopus and Google Scholar were also searched for the parallel studies providing the supportive data.

## **DISCUSSION**

The aim of the present review was to investigate the thorough overview of the principles of Prakriti and its evolutes - Triguna and Tridosha principle as well as how these elemental and qualitative frameworks interact to produce holistic Positive health. Ayurveda and Samkhya philosophy from ancient India have long emphasized the importance of balance and harmony within the individual. Central to these teachings are the concepts of Tridosha and Triguna, which serve as foundational principles guiding both physiological and psychological functioning. While Tridosha represents the three bioenergetic forces governing bodily functions (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha), Triguna elucidates the three qualities influencing mental states (Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas). Imbalances in the Tridosha disrupt the physiological equilibrium, leading to various health ailments (Singh, 2019). Similarly, fluctuations in Triguna can manifest as disturbances in mental and emotional states,



affecting overall psychological well-being (Rastogi, 2019). Understanding the dynamic interplay between these principles is essential for achieving optimal health and vitality.

Ayurveda recognizes the individuality of every person, it also demands generalization and classification. Shakespeare summed it up best when he remarked, "The dust of two different types of clay might be same, but the dignity of the individuals made from them is not." This is a situation where Plato's adage, "It is far more vital to know as to what type of a person suffers an illness than what condition the individual is suffering from." The Indian system of medicine takes into account each person's distinct mental and physical constitution while determining their Gunas and Doshas. It's critical to consider a person's guna and dosha in order to have a complete picture of them, which are described in old Indian texts and customs (Srivastava, 2012).

Ayurveda states that the three gunas—sattva, tamas, and rajas—interact to determine how the body is affected by the mind. Through the trigunas (three qualities), the mind influences the body through the material states of the Panchamahabhutas, which contain the biochemicals that comprise the physical body- tridoshas (vata, pita and kapha). The Panchamahabhutas, or the five components that make up all matter in the universe, give the material basis for the three doshas, while the intellect impacts the body through the Trigunas. To be more precise, the three doshas trigger the release of biochemicals (neuro-humours) at the appropriate times from the endocrine, exocrine, and specific nerves, which in turn trigger the appropriate responses from the respective organs. Thus, the body's hormone levels and functioning are influenced by mental activity. Thus, the ancient Indian philosophy places paramount importance on the equilibrium of these gunas and doshas for robust well-being (Singh, 2010). The pinnacle of health is represented by this balanced state, in which the body performs at its best, the mind is clear and the spirit is lively. However, the intricacies of life's journey often lead to imbalances within these gunas and doshas. The relentless demands of modern life, stress, diet, and environmental factors can disrupt this delicate equilibrium. These imbalances might show up as mental disturbances like anxiety and depression or as physical disease such as digestive issues or skin problems.

The fundamental principle of ancient science is the restoration and maintenance of this delicate equilibrium. The age old practices of holistic living offers a roadmap to lead a life in harmony with one's unique constitution and the surrounding environment. Prakriti assessment provides the basis for etiology and classification of health conditions as well as preventative and curative interventions in Ayurvedic clinical practice. Individuals possess certain predominant and subordinate doshas and gunas conferring generalized physical, mental and emotional attributes that guide functional capability and susceptibility risks based on triggers that can aggravate or pacify constitutional tendencies (Santhosh et al., 2016).

To embrace harmony, one must pay attention to various aspects of daily life, including diet and nutrition, daily routines, yoga and exercise, and the healing potential of herbal remedies. The rising demand for wellness strategies is gaining momentum, and there is a pragmatic shift from investing in treatments for illness to proactive and wellness strategies. By integrating ancient wisdom with contemporary understanding, individuals can embark on a journey towards balanced living, encompassing physical, mental, and emotional well-being. By aligning with one's Prakriti and living in harmony with nature, individuals can cultivate positive health and well-being. The review underscores the significance of embracing Ayurvedic principles and philosophical insights in fostering a lifestyle conducive to optimal

health and vitality in the modern world. In addition to its impact on physical health, Prakriti influences an individual's mental and emotional well-being. It serves as a valuable resource for healthcare professionals, researchers and individuals interested in traditional Indian medicine system and holistic well-being. Further research and exploration into the role of Prakriti in health and wellness are warranted to unlock its full potential in contemporary healthcare practices.

### CONCLUSION

In the ancient science, the awareness of Prakriti unveils a transformative journey towards personalized well-being. Understanding your unique Prakriti opens the door to a realm of personalized health insights. It's a journey of self-discovery where you uncover the intricacies of your inherent constitution – Trigunas and Tridoshas. By balancing these fundamental qualities and energies within ourselves, we can lead a more harmonious and fulfilling life. This awareness provides a tailored roadmap to well-being, allowing you to recognize and address health challenges specific to your nature. By adopting, the principles of holistic health, we can enjoy better health, have increased energy, great enthusiasm, an enhanced sense of well-being and joy. It can help find purpose and meaning to life and promotes inner calmness. This can be Achieved by exercising our “Power of Choice”: choose wellness- oriented lifestyles, positive thoughts and attitudes.

### *Suggestions for future research*

There are several potential directions for future research elucidating the linkages between indigenous concepts like Prakriti and contemporary Positive Health frameworks that can enrich understanding of Well-being and inform design of culturally appropriate Positive Health interventions and policies. The pre-assessment of Prakriti can be used to determine a person's mental state, the severity of their illnesses, to adjust their medication dosage and plan for individualized psychotherapy.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

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