

## Chapter 5: Prakriti and preventive medicine w.s.r. to dietary guidelines

Puja Gupta<sup>1</sup>, Abhishek Singh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Rachana Sharir, Goel Ayurvedic Medical College & Hospital, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Samhita and Siddhanta, Goel Ayurvedic Medical College & Hospital, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India*

Corresponding Author: [pooja.fzb@gmail.com](mailto:pooja.fzb@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract:

Ayurveda's initiative of Prakriti, or constitutional type, is essential to comprehending a person's health and susceptibility for disease. According to Prakriti, people are classified in three types: Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. Each type has unique physical and mental characteristics. Ayurvedic preventive medicine emphasizes preserving equilibrium via dietary and lifestyle changes based on an individual's Prakriti. Dietary guidelines in Ayurveda are inextricably linked to Prakriti, ensuring proper digestion, metabolism, and disease prevention. Vata-dominant people benefit from warm, moist, and grounding foods, whereas Pitta people need cooling and moderate foods, and Kapha people thrive on light, dry, and spicy diets. Understanding Prakriti-based nutrition helps to avoid imbalances that lead to disease. Integrating Prakriti-based dietary principles with modern preventive medicine can improve personalized nutrition strategies and promote overall well-being. This approach is consistent with the growing emphasis on precision medicine, providing a time-tested framework for preventive healthcare via tailored dietary practices.

**Keywords:** Ayurveda, constitution, dietary guidelines, genetics, Prakriti, preventive medicine

## 1. Introduction

Our ancient sages' expertise in Ayurveda is still very beneficial today. It takes time to comprehend the profound knowledge contained in sutras. Prakriti is one of the fundamental concepts in Ayurveda. The term Prakriti refers to the inherent constitution (body type) of an individual. According to Ayurveda, every individual is born with a unique combination of TriDosha (three Doshas), i.e., Vata, Pitta, Kapha, and the TriDoshas govern the physiological and psychological functions of the body (Mishra, Y. C., 2017). Prakriti is a compound term consisting of the words 'pra' and 'kriti', where 'pra' indicates the first or primal and 'kriti' means something formed. Therefore, Prakriti is the meaning that is chosen first. According to Acharya Sushruta, Prakriti is determined when Sukra and Shonita meet in the womb; it follows that once a progeny's Prakriti is determined, it cannot be altered by anyone. Although the Prakriti may be influenced by certain factors, it cannot be changed.

The core idea of Ayurvedic medicine is to bring harmony and health to the entire system of Doshas, Dhatus, and Malas. According to Acharya Sushruta, Dosha, Dhātu, and Mala are the base for the body (Shastri. A, 2008). The Doshas' condition is subject to change. Since it deviates from the original pattern and generates interruptions that ultimately lead to some sort of disorder, this altered pattern is known as Vikriti or conditional state. Typically, the creation and activities of life can be viewed in two ways: physiological (Prakrit) and pathological (Vikriti). The science of life (Ayurveda) is concerned with maintaining good health and treating ailments.

The three Doshas, Vata, Pitta, and Kapha, are the primary forces influencing the body's development, feeding, and maintenance, as well as the primary pathogenic factors responsible for many diseases. These three Doshas are referred to as the 'Tristhuna' or Pillars of the Living Body. Identifying one's Prakriti is critical for health maintenance and disease prevention. Ayurvedic preventative medicine promotes lifestyle changes, including nutrition suggestions tailored to each individual's Prakriti. The goal of prevention is to stop the disease's cause. Therefore, preventing the disease's aetiology is preferable. Ayurveda believes that each person is unique and should be treated accordingly. This chapter investigates the notion of Prakriti, its importance in preventative care, and dietary suggestions for each body type (Prakriti).

## 2. Aims and Objectives

The primary aims of this chapter are:

1. To explain what Prakriti is and why it is important in Ayurvedic therapy.
2. To investigate the connection between disease susceptibility and Prakriti

3. To offer dietary recommendations based on research for Vata, Pitta, and Kapha Prakriti types.
4. To examine research that supports the Prakriti-based preventive medicine strategy.
5. To talk about the difficulties and potential paths for incorporating nutritional therapies based on Prakriti into contemporary healthcare. The objectives include evaluating traditional Ayurvedic literature, assessing current research investigations, and generating practical dietary recommendations for various Prakriti types in order to promote health and prevent disease.

## **2.1. Literature Review**

- Primary sources: Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya are examples of classical Ayurvedic books that serve as primary sources.
- Secondary sources: Peer-reviewed research articles from databases such as PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar are examples of secondary sources.

## **2.2. Research Criteria**

- Inclusion: Research on Ayurvedic preventive medicine clinical trials, Dosha-specific dietary treatments, and Prakriti categorization
- Exclusion: Opinion-based papers and studies that lack scientific support.

## **2.3. Data Analysis**

- Comparative analysis of traditional Ayurvedic principles and preventive medicine
- Prakriti-based dietary research is evaluated for their effectiveness in preventing disease.

## **2.4. Methodology Limitations**

- There is a lack of standardised Prakriti assessment instruments in contemporary studies.
- There have been very few large-scale clinical trials on Ayurvedic dietary interventions.

# **3. Different aspects of Prakriti utility**

## **3.1. Prakriti and Preventive Medicine**

The concept of Prakriti is well defined in Ayurvedic Samhitas, primarily: Charaka Samhita in Sutra Sthana, Vimana Sthana described the classification of

Prakriti and its impact on health and disease susceptibility. Sushruta Samhita mainly focuses on anatomical and physiological aspects of Prakriti and its role in the prevention of disease. Ashtanga Hridaya emphasizes daily and Dinacharya&Ritucharya based on Prakriti.

Acharya Charak says Swasthya swasthyarakshnam, means to maintain the health of healthy people. Our Samhitas provide detailed guidelines on how to prevent diseases by balancing an individual's inherent nature. (Shastri, K., & Chaturvedi, G. (Eds.).2005)

### **3.2. Prakriti and Genetics**

Ayurveda believes that the Prakriti of an individual is decided at the time of fertilization, which relates to genotype and factors affecting the Deha Prakriti, which represents phenotype, so we can say that epigenetics is a key factor of Ayurveda. Nature Scientific Reports (2015) in scientific research found a correlation between Prakriti types and genetic variations (HLA Geno polymorphism), suggesting that Ayurveda's classification system aligns with genomics.

### **3.3. Prakriti and Disease Prediction**

- Vata Prakriti- Vata Dosha is correlated with nervous system of body so persons with Vata Prakriti have been linked to higher susceptibility to neurological disorders (e.g., Parkinson's, anxiety disorders).
- Pitta Prakriti- Pitta Dosha is correlated with ushma or heat of body so the individuals show a tendency towards inflammatory diseases (e.g., gastritis, hypertension, autoimmune disorders).
- Kapha Prakriti- persons with kapha Dosha are more prone to metabolic disorders e.g., diabetes, obesity etc. because these persons have low digestive power.

### **3.4. Practical Applications in Preventive Medicine**

Ayurveda has a holistic science; it is person-based medicine that promotes one person's individual lifestyle to be healthy and protected from future disease. Thus, Ayurveda deals with not only maintain health of healthy people but also prevent future disease. Ayurvedic pharmacology, which emphasizes the use of natural substances, has the potential to offer effective and well-tolerated treatments for various health conditions. In fact, several conventional pharmaceutical drugs—such as digitoxin, reserpine, withanolides, taxol, and silymarin—have their origins in medicinal plants traditionally used in Ayurveda for managing serious diseases.

### **3.5. Ayurneutrogenomics**

Nutrigenomics or nutritional genomics is the science that deals with the study of the relationship between the human genome, human nutrition, and human health. Developing nutrigenomic concepts with the help of Ayurveda, that is Ahara, pathya etc., is known as Ayurneutrogenomics. (Müller, M., & Kersten, S., 2003). Knowing the ones individual Prakriti, one can eat the food that will be Hitkar to him and standardizing these metabolome or nutraceuticals with the biochemicals in the body may be used as preventive or therapeutic purpose both. Personalized diet plans based on Prakriti can help prevent chronic diseases like diabetes, obesity, and heart disease. (Shastri, K., & Chaturvedi, G. (Eds.), 2013).

### **3.6. Lifestyle Modifications based on Ayurveda in Public Health**

We have unique concepts of Dincharya and Ritucharya using this in daily life with accordance of Prakriti one can achieve the health goals. The Government of India (Ministry of AYUSH) is promoting Prakriti-based preventive medicine to integrate Ayurveda into public health programs.

### **3.7. Mental Health & Stress Prevention**

People with different Prakriti are found to have different stress-handling capacities. People with Vata Prakriti have unstable minds and low stress-holding capacity, while Kapha Dosha and Pitta Dosha are found to be important in mental health as they have high stress-holding capacity. Besides that, Manas Prakriti is also described by Acharya, according to which different mental traits are described. So, we use different meditations and yoga to fight the stress as per individual Prakriti, e.g., meditation for Vata and cooling Pranayama for Pitta. Research on Ayurvedic psychology supports Prakriti-based interventions for stress management.

### **3.8. Future Research & Global Interest**

- Universities like Harvard, Johns Hopkins, and AIIMS (India) are exploring Ayurveda's Prakriti concept in personalized medicine.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes Ayurveda as a valid traditional system and encourages research into its preventive applications.

## **4. Dietary guidelines**

The universe, according to Ayurveda, is made up of Panchmahabhuta; thus, the body, as well as Ahara, through which we feed the body, is made up of Panchmahabhuta. According to Ayurveda, Prakriti is unique for every individual,

which is the predominance of Dosha at the time of fertilization; thus, there should be specific dietary needs for specific individuals.

#### **4.1. Prakriti and Its Dietary Needs**

There are mainly three Prakriti based on different Doshas, that is, Vataj, Pittaj, and Kaphaj. Except for these, Dvandaj Prakriti like Vata-Pittaj, Pitta-Kaphaj, and Vata-Kaphaj Are Also Found. Sansargaj is a combination of all 3 Doshas: Vata-Pittaj-Kaphaj. These have different digestive powers, so according to these, the dietary needs of people change. according to Ayurveda, we can use diet, or Ahara, in two perspectives: one when healthy and the other when suffering from disease. (Shastri, K., & Chaturvedi, G. (Eds.), 2005.B)

For a person who is healthy, a diet should be according to his Prakriti, as by knowing Prakriti, we are able to understand the Doshik involvement in one's constitution. As we say, Ahara as Mahabhaishjya means greatest Bheshaj, so deciding one's Prakriti and food according to Prakriti plays an important role in one's lifestyle. (Bhishagaacharya, S., 2019). When a person is suffering from a disease, the Doshik involvement may be different as Prakriti. So, in diseased conditions, we should plan one's diet according to Prakriti and the disease suffered from.

Ahara is the most important part of one's lifestyle. As we know, Sharirik Dhatu are made up of Aharas. The good food we eat forms the Dhatus well; SharirikSaushthava, Bala, Oja, etc. depend on the food we eat. Just like when we talk about modern medicine or nutrients, we talk in terms of micro- and macronutrients. In the same way, when we talk about Ayurvedic Ahara, we must consider Dosha, Dhatu, etc. In this context, Prakriti plays the most important role, as Dosha must be in equilibrium to keep one healthy, and Prakriti is dependent upon Dosha. According to Vata, Pitta, and Kapha, the Dosha Ahara of an individual should be unique.

##### **4.1.1. Vata Prakriti**

Vata Prakriti Purusha is considered to be Ruksha, Sheetaguna. His digestive power is unstable; he is supposed to follow appropriate diet guidelines. Hot, sweet, and Snigdhapadartha are beneficial for Vata Prakriti Purusha. Legumes like split Mung, red lentils, Aduki, tofu, soy beverages, cooked grains (rice, wheat), and dairy products such as Dudh, Dahi, and Ghrit being Snigdha and Madhura are beneficial, as are nuts and sesame seeds. Ginger, garlic, cinnamon, turmeric, and cumin are beneficial. Vata is increased by age, the autumn season, afternoon time, travel, loud noise, cold, and wind, so be particular about diet at these times.

Foods that should be avoided in Vata Prakriti are dry, cold, and raw foods, as these are increasing the Vata Dosha. Excess caffeine, carbonated drinks, and bitter and astringent foods (e.g., green tea in excess, raw vegetables) should be avoided.

#### **4.1.2. Pitta Prakriti**

Pitta Possesses Qualities Like Ushna, Teekshana, Drava, Etc. So, The Food For Pitta Prakriti Persons Should Be Opposite To Them. Cold And Madhur Rasa Will Be beneficial to Pitta Prakriti Purush. They have a good digestive power, so food should be heavy. Cereals like wheat and pulses like Masoor, Channa, and Moong are Pitta Shamak. Milk, ghee, butter, and fresh buttermilk are beneficial. Vegetables such as snake gourd, white gourd, carrot, and beetroot and fruits such as pomegranate, apple, dried grapes, and ripe bananas are also good for Pitta Prakriti Purush.

Aloe vera, rose water, and fennel are good. Pitta is increased by summer, midday and midnight, intense heat, and excessive sunlight. Food with Ushna and Teekshnaguna, very hot food, should be avoided In Pitta Prakriti Purush. Spicy, oily, salty, and fried foods should be avoided. Drinks like alcohol, excess coffee, and tea are not to be taken.

#### **4.1.3. Kapha Prakriti**

Kapha has the qualities guru, Madhur, Snigdha, etc., so the food opposite to these qualities will be beneficial in Kapha Prakriti Purush. Kapha Prakriti Purusha has low digestive power and is prone to weight gain. Excess mucus, respiratory issues, proneness to diabetes, obesity, lethargy, etc. Therefore, their food should be light, warm, and dry. Spicy, katu, and Kashaya will be beneficial. Cereals like millets, barley, legumes, and green leafy vegetables should be consumed. Spices like black pepper, ginger, and mustard seeds are good. Low-fat and high-fiber food must be added to their diet.

Kapha increases in the early morning, later in the evening, and in the spring. Be most careful at these times, avoiding heavy breakfasts or late-night kitchen raids. Foods that are sheet, Madhur, and guru should not be included. Mahish Dugdh, Ghrita, etc., are not to be preferred as they increase Kapha. Vegetables such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, and cabbage are not good, and mutton and freshwater fish should be avoided.

### **4.2. Scientific Backing of Prakriti-Based Diets**

Modern research supports the Prakriti-based approach to diet:

- A study in the "Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine" (2017) found that Prakriti types show distinct metabolic and gut microbiome patterns, influencing digestion and nutrient absorption.

- Research in "Frontiers in Nutrition" (2021) showed that Prakriti-based diet plans improve metabolic markers and help prevent diseases like obesity and diabetes.
- Harvard Medical School & AIIMS (India) are conducting studies on Ayurveda's nutrigenomics, linking Prakriti with genetic predispositions.

## 5. Conclusion

According to Acharya, we are healthy if our Doshas are in samavastha, and everything we do is of no use if it would be unsuccessful to keep us healthy. Ahara, or diet, is the first thing to keep our body healthy, so it is important for us to understand the Prakriti and its relationship with Ahara. With the help of Prakriti and Ahara, we can not only keep ourselves healthy but also prevent future disease by taking the appropriate food, and again, the person who is suffering from disease can also take the Ahara Vihara according to the disease.

## 6. Reference

- Bhishagaacharya, S. S. (2019). Kashyapa Samhita (Revised ed.). Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan. (p. 378).
- Mishra, Y. C. (2017). Ayurvediya Kriya Sarira (1st ed.). Chaukhambha Publications. (pp. 23-34).
- Müller, M., & Kersten, S. (2003). Nutrigenomics: goals and strategies. *Nature reviews. Genetics*, 4(4), 315–322. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nrg1047>
- Shastri, A. (Ed.). (2008). Sushruta Samhita: Ayurveda Tattva Sandipika (Reprint ed., Part 1). Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan. (Sutra Sthana, p. 86).
- Shastri, K., & Chaturvedi, G. (Eds.). (2005). The Charaka Samhita of Agnivesha: Vidyotini Hindi Commentary (Reprint ed., Part 1). Chaukhambha Bharati Academy. (p. 15).
- Shastri, K., & Chaturvedi, G. (Eds.). (2005)b. The Charaka Samhita of Agnivesha: Vidyotini Hindi Commentary (Reprint ed., Part 1). Chaukhambha Bharati Academy. (pp. 586-587).
- Shastri, K., & Chaturvedi, G. (Eds.). (2013). The Charaka Samhita of Agnivesha: Vidyotini Hindi Commentary (Reprint ed., Part 1). Chaukhambha Bharati Academy. (pp. 570-571).