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THE THREE PILLARS OF BODY: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF TRIDOSHA IN AYURVEDIC PHYSIOLOGY

Priyanka Meena¹* and Babita Sharma²

¹P.G. Scholar, Department of Kriya Sharir, Pt. Khushilal Sharma Government (Autonomous)

Ayurveda College & Institute Bhopal, M.P.

²Professor and HOD, Department of Kriya Sharir, Pt. Khushilal Sharma Government (Autonomous) Ayurveda College & Institute Bhopal M.P.

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*Corresponding Author Dr. Priyanka Meena

P.G. Scholar, Department of Kriya Sharir, Pt. Khushilal Sharma Government (Autonomous) Ayurveda College & Institute Bhopal, M.P.

ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, describes a distinct physiological structure based on three fundamental bio elements called *Tridosha*. These *Doshas* in conjunction with *Dhatu* (Tissues) and *Mala* (Waste products) are considered the essential pillars sustaining the living body (*Dosha Dhatu Mala Moolatmakam Shariram*) This comprehensive study aims to delve into the conceptual, functional, and clinical aspects of *Tridosha* in Ayurvedic physiology. The origin, evolution, and functions of *Tridosha* in intrauterine and extrauterine life are thoroughly examined in this article, which also demonstrates how they support tissue formation, metabolic regulation, mental stability, and embryonic development. In order to demonstrate the body's rhythmic intelligence, it also looks at the cyclical variations of *Doshas* throughout the day and night, seasons (*Ritu*), life stages (*Balyavastha* to *Vriddhavastha*) and digestive phases.

Additionally, the study explores the multidisciplinary relationships

between Tridosha and other Ayurvedic Fundamentals:

- The elemental makeup is illustrated by *Panchamahabhuta* theory.
- *Triguna* theory, demonstrating the connections between mind and body.
- Shadrasa (Six tastes) and their therapeutic effects on Dosha balance.
- Agni and Kostha, connecting gut behavior with digestive strength.
- Ashraya-Ashrayi Bhava, which represents interaction of Doshas with Dushya.

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Loka-Purusha Samya Siddhanta, strengthening the parallel between the macro and

microcosms.

Biological rhytm of *Tridosha* on basis of day, night, age, food intake and season.

practical implications are underscored through Chikitsa (Treatment), where

individualized therapeutic strategies such as Vamana, Virechana and Basti are used according

to the dominant and exacerbated *Dosha*.

In summary, the *Tridosha* concept is not just theoretical rather, it is a dynamic, integrative, and

functional system that regulates etiology, physiological homeostasis and the comprehensive

management of illness. Tridosha is a fundamental component of both clinical and academic

Ayurveda since it enables a deep understanding of Ayurvedic diagnostics, lifestyle alignment,

and seasonal regimens.

KEYWORDS: Tridosha, Vata, Pitta, Kapha, Dushya, Panchmahabhut, Dhatu.

INTRODUCTION

Sharira is a living body. The different constituents of the body are grouped into three principal

categories, namely *Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *Mala*. Ayurveda considers no entity other than these three

constitutional elements of the living body. Dosha, Dhatu and Mala are root factors of living

body.

The factor which is not only capable of vitiation but also of vitiating other factors of the body

is known as Dosha. Both physical body and mind are the seats of Dosha. Dosha are divided

into two parts i.e. *Sharirika* and *Manasik*.^[1]

Sharirika dosha- The Sharirika Doshas are considered as Tridosha. The word Tridosha is

derived from two words i.e. Tri & Dosha. Tri is a numeric term that indicates -three and Dosha

is the factor that has peculiar features to pollute (*Dushana*) the body as well as the mind. This

concept of *Tridosha* involving the three *Doshas* of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. [2]

Briefly, Vata, Pitta and Kapha are the three Doshas (humours) in the body. The word 'briefly'

indicates that these are again of five types each Prana, Udana, Apan etc. The number of

Doshas is known as three by their mention; but mentioning that there are 'three' again

indicates the importance of these three as *Doshas*. At some places blood is also mentioned as

a Dosha, but this clearly refutes that blood is not a Dosha, and if it is mentioned, it is only

secondary. The body is sustained by the normalcy of these three and hence they are called *Dhatus* in normal condition. But these are the only three, which vitiate the bodily elements (Dhatus) and others and hence they are called by the name *Doshas*.^[3]

Vata- Term Vata is derived from "Va Gati Gandhanayo". Gati represents Gamana, Gyana, indicating *Utsaha*, and *Prakasha*. [4] *Vayu* or *Vata*, when in its normal condition, maintains the body, by providing ability to do efforts to do all activities and to do exhalation and inhalation, all activities of the body, and evacuate natural urges, helping the proper functioning of the *Dhatus* (bodily elements) and also of the sensory organs. ^[5]

*Pitta-*Term *Pitta* is derived from "*Tapa Santape*," which means "to burn " or "to heat". ^[6] *Pitta*, in its normal state, maintains the body by proper digestion, maintenance of body heat (temperature), faculty of vision, hunger, thirst, desire for food and taste, complexion, intellect, knowledge (*Dhi*), courage and softness of the body. [7]

Kapha- The term Kapha is derived from "Shlish Alingane." Alingana means to hold tightly. [8] Slesma or kapha provides stability (firmness) unctuousness, strength of joints, and ability to withstand all (good things and hardships).^[9]

Manashika Dosha- Manasika Dosha is indicated as the factor that pollutes the state of mind (Mana). Sattva is divided into three types i.e. Suddha Sattva, Rajas Sattva and Tamas Sattva. The Suddha Sattva is pure (Kalyanansha) and doesn't vitiate the Mana. So, it is not called Dosha. But the Rajas and Tamas have a destructive impact on Mana. So, they are called Manasika Doshas.[10]

AIM AND OBJECTIVE

- 1. To study the basic fundamentals of *Tridosha*.
- To study association between *Tridosha* and different *Ayurveda* fundamentals.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- 1. Classical textbooks.
- 2. Modern textbook.
- 3. Article from internet, journals.
- 4. Related source of data from internet.

DISCUSSION

1. Dosha-dhatu-malamulatmakam-sariram

Dosha, Dhatu and Mala are the three major categories into which the various bodily components are divided. The root causes of a living body are Dosha, Dhatu and Mala. In a living body, their typical functions maintain homeostasis. It's crucial that Dosha Dhatu Mala stay within physiological bounds and it is unhealthy to go above this limit on any side. These three entities are compared to the roots of a plant or tree by Dalhana, the Commentator of Sushruta Samhita.

Dalhaņa compares these three entities with roots of a plant. It means that Dosha, Dhatu, Mala are to living body what roots are to plants. Plants are utterly dependent for their life on roots. At beginning, it is root which sprouts first. Hence it is essential at commencement of life. In human life Dosha, originate first. They thus are essential for commencement of human body as they are responsible to grow unicellular zygote into multiple systems of which human body is comprised. They keep control on differentiation and formation of seven Dhatu. Together with Mala they originate human body.

Roots absorb vital raw material for plant to prepare food on which it upholds. Digestion of food human ingests is dependent on these *Dosha*, hence they are comparable with roots in nourishing the body. Seven *Dhatu* along with *Upadhatu* and *Mala* maintain all functions of living body and sustain it. Hence they are also comparable with roots. Roots proliferate underground to secure plant firmly to ground. Throughout life, due to this anchorage, plant remains secluded. Similarly *Dhatu*, *Upadhatu* along with *Mala*, support the body through out the life. Any impairment to roots results in damage to health or life of plant. *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala* are to living body what roots are to plants. Roots are important for plants. Origin, growth and sustenance and death of plant are dependent on roots. Similarly origin, Growth and sustenance and death of human body is dependent on *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*.

Vata, Pitta, Kapha Dosha, Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa, Meda, Asthi, Majja, Sukra, Dhatavah and Purish, Mutra, Sweda, Mala are like roots of living body. As roots are vital for trees amongst other organs like stem, branches etc. these Dosha, Dhatu, Mala are essential for human body. [11]

❖ In origin of body

Dosha entity starts functioning at very beginning of life. [12]

As per Acharya Chakradatta Dosha, Dhatu, Mala are compared to roots because as roots start

life of plants, these three categories start life of human. That organogenesis takes place, and that all these organs are composed of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, itself proves, that all these entities exist from beginning. Various compositions of some of organs are given here as an example From the essence of *Rakta* (blood) and *Medas* (fat) the two *Vrikka* (Kidneys) get formed; the two *Vrshana* (Testicles) get formed from the essence of *Mamsa* (Muscles), *Asruk* (Blood), Kapha and Medas (Fat). Heart is composed of part of *Rakta* and *Kapha*. Since fully developed baby is born with all organs in place, it is indicative of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala* participating in origin of body. Function of *Dosha* is to organize *Dhatu* in suitable way. Once arranged in correct order in intra-uterine life, they easily get maintained in further years. Since *Dhatu* creation is never without *Mala* creation, all these *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala* are playing major part in origination of body. [13]

❖ In maintenance of body in physiological state

Almost all compendia dictate role of *Dosha* in maintenance of health *Dosha* move in the entire body and carry out body functions, which are beneficial for the body and which are harmful for the body. In homeostatic condition they are responsible for the appropriate nourishment, strength, luster of the skin etc. and in disturbed status they are responsible for fetching the diseases in the body.^[14]

Vata, *Pitta* and *Kapha* only, are the causes for the origin of the body. By these (*Doshas*) only, which are not abnormal and which are spread in the lower, middle and upper parts respectively, this body is supported just like the house being supported by three pillars; hence these are called three pillars (of the body) by some authorities. These only, when abnormal become the causes for destruction (of the body).^[15]

Dosha are Mala. Hence whatever is true for them is also true for Mala. Yet, there is difference between Dosha and Mala. Dosha is originator of body and Prakriti. It circulates through out living body. This is not the case of Mala. Mala entity is neither originator of Prakriti not does it circulates through out living body. But after every reaction or metabolism it is created therefore they regularly have to be taken care of. Otherwise they also become nuisance for health. In this way Dosha, Dhatu, Mala plays a vital role in maintenance of health.

❖ In destruction of body

In homeostatic condition they are responsible for the appropriate nourishment, strength, luster of the skin etc. and in disturbed status they are responsible for fetching the diseases in the

body.^[16] In disturbed status the very *Dosha* become notorious and destructive.^[17] Without *Dhatu* living is impossible. *Jivana* or 'life' is one of many functions of *Rasa*, *Rakta Dhatu*.

All these things direct towards *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala* as responsible entities for origin of living body, maintenance of body in physiological limits and if fail to remain within normal range, destruction of body.^[18]

2. Evolution of tridoshas

Among the two sets of *Doshas*, *Prakrita* Doshas are responsible for *Prakriti* of an individual and it remains constant throughout the life. *Vaikrita* Doshas are formed from the waste products of *Ahara Rasa* both during Intra and Extra- uterine life. After formation, *Vaikrita* dosha will merge with *Prakrita dosha* and this entity together called "*Dosha*" in our body. [19]

Table No. 1

Prakrita dosha	Vaikrita dosha		
(During intra uterine life)	1 (During intra uterine life)		
Origin: At The Time Of Conception	 A.Through Maturasya Ahara After formation of Garbha, growth of foetus depends on maternal blood which provides all nutrients. 		
As Per Samkhya Philosophy Supported by	2. (During Extra-Uterine Life)		
Charaka and Sushrut Panchamahabhut	A. During Avastha Paka		
Vata Pitta Kapha	 Madhura Avastha Paka-Kapha Formation Amla Avastha Paka- Pitta Formation 		
As per <i>Vagbhatt</i> and <i>Kashyap</i> descent through	Katu Avastha Paka- Vata Formation		
	B. Mala of Aahar Rasa		
30	 Vata- during Sara, Kitta separation of digested food Pitta as Rakta-Mala- Pitta During replenishment of Rakta Dhatu during Kapha- as Rasa-Mala- Kapha during replenishment of Rasa Dhatu 		
Vata Pitta Kapha	 C. Vihara Exaggeration E.g. Vyayama- Vata Aatapa Sevana- Pitta Divaswapa-Kapha 		
	D. During <i>Vipaka</i>		
	Madhur Vipaka- Kapha		
	Amla Vipaka- Pitta		
	Katu Vipaka- Vata		

3. Biological rhytm of tridosh on basis of day, Night, Age, Food Intake and Season

Table No. 2: Biological rhytm of tridosh on basis of day^[20,21], Night.^[22,23]

Dosha	On basis of day	On basis of night
Vata	Divante / Evening	Nishante / Late -Night
Pitta	Divamadhye / Mid- day	Nishamadhye / Mid-night
Kapha	Divarambhe /Morning	Nisharambhe / Early night

Table No. 3: Biological rhytm of tridosh on basis of food intake. [24]

Dosha	Aahar paripak kala
Vata	At The End / Pakvavastha
Pitta	In The Middle/ Vidagdhavastha
Kapha	At The Beginning / Aamavastha

Table No. 4: Biological rhytm of tridosha on basis of age. [25]

Dosha	Vaya
Kapha	Balya
Pitta	Tarunya
Vata	Vrudha

Table No. 5: Biological rhytm of tridosha on basis of season. [26]

Dosha	Sanchay	Prakopa	Prasham
Vata	Grishma	Varsha	Sharad
Pitta	Varsha	Sharad	Hemant
Kapha	Shishira	Vasant	Grishma

4. Tridosha and Panchmahabhut relationship [27]

All body constituents are basically *Panchabhautic*. Yet the proportion of the *Panchamahabhuta* to each other is different in each entity. The entity is recognized by the name of *Mahabhuta* attaining the highest proportion.

Table No. 6: Dosha and Panhabhautic compositions.

Dosha	Mahabhut
Vata Dosha	Vayu +Aakash
Pitta Dosha	Agni
Kapha Dosha	Prathvi +Aapa

5. Tridosha and Triguna relationship. [28]

Table No. 7

Dosha	Mahabhut	Manogun pradhan
Vata Dosa	Aakash+Vayu	Rajogun
Pitta Dosa	Tej	Satvagun
Kaph Dosa	Prathvi+Aap	Tamogun

6. Tridosha and Shadrasa relationship

Tridosha and *Shadrasa* concept both are based on the same elemental theory i.e. *Panchmahabhut* and hence, they are intrinsically related. *Tridoshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *and Kapha*) are influenced by the six tastes, or *Shadrasas*, which are sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent, and astringent. Each taste has a specific impact on the doshas, and maintaining balance between the tastes is crucial for overall health.

Table No. 8

Dosha	Shamak Rasa	Kopak Rasa
Vata	Madhura, Amla, Lavana	Katu, Tikta, Kashaya
Pitta	Katu, Tikta, Madhura	Amla, Lavana, Kashaya
Kapha	Katu, Tikta, Kashaya	Madhura, Amla, Lavana

7. Tridosha, Agni and Kostha relationship^[29]

Agni plays a vital role in sustaining the body in a healthy state. It is responsible for the strength and longevity of life.

Table No. 9: Tridosa and Agni.

Tridosha	Agni
Vata	Mandagni
Pitta	Tikshnagni
Kapha	Vishamagni
Samdosha	Samagni

Table No. 10: Tridosha and Kostha.

Dosha	Koshta
Vata	Krura
Pitt	Mridu
Kaph	Madhyam

Agni is also influenced by Doshas and results in the formation of different types of Koshta.

8. Tridosha and Ashraya-ashrayi bhava relationship^[30]

Ashraya is one on which anything depends or rests while *Ashrayi* is something which inhabit the *Ashraya*, Another Synonyms term of *Ashraya-Ashrayi Bhava* is *Adhara-Adheya bhava*.

A. Ashraya and Ashrayi bhava relationship

Table No. 11

S. No.	Ashraya (Dosha)	Ashrayi (Dushya)	-	Vridhhi Chikitsha
1	Vata	Asthi	Aptarpana	Santarpana
2	Pitta	Rakta and Sweda	Santarpana	Aptarpana
3	Kapha	lamsa, Meda, Majja, Sukra, Mutra and Purisha	Santarpana	Aptarpan

B. Resemblance of Guna and Karma

Table No. 12

A aleman a	A alemani	Guna	Karma	Chikitsha
Ashraya	Ashrayi	Resemblance	Resemblance	Resemblance
Vata	Asthi(Exception)	Chala+Laghu	Exception	Exception
Pitta	Rakta	Visragandhata		Raktmokshan Virechan
Kapha	Rasa, Mamsa, Meda, Majja, Shukra	Snighdh	Sneha Dharyan	Vaman

9. Tridosha and Lok purush samya siddhanta relationship^[31]

Lok purush siddhanta is firstly mentioned in Yajurveda where it has been explained as: "Yat Pinde Tat Brahmande" ie what is in this body that all exists in this universe too. This seems to be similar to Pinda-Bramhand Nyaya described in Vedant Darshana. According to this Pinda-Brhmanda Nyaya, what is there in the universe same is present in the body. All the laws i.e. physical or chemical which apply to the external world (Loka) are also applicable to the human body (Purusha). As per Loka Purusha Samya Siddhanta, the air, sun and moon represent the Vata, Pitta and Kapha respectively in the body.

10. Tridosha and Chikitsa^[32,33]

To restore the health of a person, treatment must be based on the *Doshas* in each of their *Kalas*. *Samshodhana Chikitsa* like *Vasti*, *Virechana* and *Vamana* have opted for *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* during *Shravana*, *Margashirsha* and *Chaitra Masa* respectively. Mainly *Taila*, *Ghrita* and *Madhu* are always used for *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* respectively as *Samsamana Chikitsa*. *Samshodhana Chikitsa* gives precedence to cure the disease at its best.

CONCLUSION

The concept of *Tridosha -Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* forms the foundational framework of *Ayurvedic* physiology. These three *Doshas* are in charge of establishing and controlling physiological processes, as well as preserving equilibrium (Homeostasis) and affecting

mental and physical health. The *Panchamahabhuta* (Five elements), *Triguna* (Mental qualities), *Agni* (Digestive fire), *Dhatus* (Tissues), *Malas* (Wastes), and other biological rhythms like age, season, and digestion are all intricately connected to the *Tridosha*. *Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *Mala* are the roots of human life; they are necessary for its genesis, growth, upkeep, and, in cases when they are out of balance, its destruction, just like roots support and sustain a plant.

By encouraging harmony via nutrition, lifestyle, and seasonal routines, an understanding of *Tridosha* supports *Ayurveda's* preventive approach in addition to helping with diagnosis and treatment. Thus, the *Tridosha* theory is not merely a physiological model, but a holistic guide to healthy and balanced living.

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