



A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW OF PRAKRITI IN CLASSICAL AYURVEDIC TEXTS

Lakshmi Mahajan*

India.



*Corresponding Author: Lakshmi Mahajan

India.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19276152>

How to cite this Article: Lakshmi Mahajan*. (2026). A Conceptual Review of Prakriti In Classical Ayurvedic Texts. World Journal of Pharmaceutical and Life Sciences, 12(4), 19–22.

This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.



Article Received on 16/02/2026

Article Revised on 07/03/2026

Article Published on 01/04/2026

ABSTRACT

Prakriti represents the innate nature of an individual. It determines various physical, physiological, and psychological attributes such as body structure, appearance, strength, metabolism, digestion, and mental tendencies. In Ayurveda, *Prakriti* reflects the natural predominance of the three doshas - *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* in an individual. Any deviation from this natural state of dosha balance (*Prakriti*) is termed as disease (*Vikrti*). Since every activity, diet, and medicine influences the body's *doshas*, it is essential to choose one's lifestyle and diet according to one's *Prakriti*. Unlike the modern medical system, which emphasizes a generalized approach to health, Ayurveda advocates a personalized system of healthcare, tailored to maintain the dosha equilibrium unique to each individual. This review explores the classical understanding of *prakriti* and discusses its relevance in the context of modern scientific research and personalised medicine.

KEYWORDS: *Prakriti*, *vata*, *pitta*, *kapha*, *vikrti*, *dosha*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, emphasizes on holistic and personalised approach to health and disease. Unlike modern medicine, which largely focuses on generalized therapeutic strategies, Ayurveda recognizes that each person has a unique biological and psychological constitution. This individualized constitution is known as *Prakriti*. The natural, unchangeable state of doshas which exist throughout life is known as *Prakriti*.

According to the Ayurvedic framework, *Prakriti* is determined by the relative predominance of the three fundamental bio-energies — *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* — collectively known as the *Tridosha*. The balance among these doshas shapes the individual's physical build, metabolism, temperament, and disease susceptibility. *Prakriti* is established at conception and remains constant throughout life, influencing a person's physiological functions, behavioural tendencies, and adaptive capacity.

Classical texts such as the *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* provide detailed descriptions of various *Prakriti* types, their

characteristics, and their role in health maintenance and disease manifestation. This concept forms the foundation of personalized medicine within *Ayurveda*, guiding the selection of diet (*Ahara*), lifestyle (*Vihara*), and treatment (*Chikitsa*).

In recent years, scientific studies have attempted to explore the biological basis of *Prakriti* through genetics, immunology, and molecular biology = a field now referred to as Ayurgenomics. These interdisciplinary efforts highlight parallels between Ayurvedic constitutional typing and modern personalized medicine.

Definition and Meaning of Prakriti

Ayurveda defines two states of the body — *Prakriti* (natural state) and *Vikrti* (pathological state). *Prakriti* is the original constitution formed by the normal balance of *doshas*, while *Vikrti* arises from *dosha* aggravation. It further defines *Manasa Prakriti* as the natural disposition of the mind formed by the predominance of *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*.

Formation and Determinants of Prakriti

Charaka explains that *Prakriti* arises from multiple factors such as: the *Prakriti* (*dosha* predominance) of

sperm (*Shukra*) and ovum (*Shonita*), the season and timing (*Kala*) of conception, the nature of the uterus (*Garbhashaya*), and the environmental factors like *Desha* (habitat) and *Kala* (season). Thus, both hereditary (*Beeja Prakriti*) and environmental factors (*Desha, Kala, Ahara, Vihara*) influences shape the individual's constitution.^[1]

Vagbhata states that the relative dominance of doshas in sperm and ovum at conception determines the Prakriti of the offspring.^[2]

Types of Prakriti

Charaka mentions seven types of *Deha Prakriti* based on the predominance of *doshas*. Individuals are classified as *Vataja, Pittaja, Kaphaja* (single-dosha types), *Vata-Pitta, Pitta- Kapha, Vata-Kapha* (dual types), and *Sama Prakriti* (balanced type), which is considered superior.^[1]

Manasa Prakriti (Mental Constitution)

Mental constitution is formed by the relative predominance of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas—the three Manasika Gunas. Charaka describes *Satvika, Rajasika*, and *Tamasika Prakriti* as mental types corresponding to purity, passion, and inertia respectively.^[6]

Features of different individuals with different prakritis

1) Vata Prakriti

Vata is described as dry (*ruksha*), light (*laghu*), mobile (*chala*), abundant (*bahu*), quick (*shighra*), cold (*shita*), rough (*parusha*), and non-unctuous/non-slimy (*vishada*).^[3]

Individuals dominated by *Vata dosha* display bodily and mental features corresponding to these inherent attributes.

Attributes and Manifestations of Vata^[3]

- Ruksha (dry) and Parusha (hard)** - The body lacks oiliness, appears emaciated and small-framed, skin and voice tend to dryness and coarseness, voice may be low, cracked or hoarse, sleep is light or frequently disturbed.
- Laghu (light)** - The body lacks oiliness, appears emaciated and small-framed, skin and voice tend to dryness and coarseness, voice may be low, cracked, or hoarse, sleep is light or frequently disturbed.
- Chala (mobile)** - Instability is seen in joints, eyes, eyebrows, tongue, lips, head, shoulders, hands, and feet, restlessness and fidgeting are common.
- Bahu (abundant)** - Prominent veins and tendons, talkative nature, excess in thoughts or movements, exaggerated response to stimuli.
- Shighra (quick)** - Prompt in speech, action, and emotional reaction, rapid in decision and equally swift in change, quick to fear, anger, or delight, hurried comprehension and forgetfulness.
- Shita (cold)** - Dislikes cold exposure, easily affected by chills, shivering, or stiffness, feels comfort in warmth.

7. **Khara (rough)** - Roughness present in skin, hair, nails, teeth, and extremities, coarse texture of the body surface.

8. **Vishada (non-slimy)** - Joints and limbs exhibit cracking sounds on movement, dryness within tissues gives a sense of looseness or brittleness.

2) Pitta Prakriti

Pitta is characterized by heat (*ushna*), sharpness (*tiksha*), fluidity (*drava*), fleshy odour (*visra*), acidity (*amla*), and pungency (*katu*). Individuals of *Pitta*-dominant constitution display bodily and mental features that arise from these inherent attributes.^[4]

Attributes and Manifestations of Pitta^[4]

- Ushna (hot)** - Intolerant to heat and sun; warm or reddish complexion; delicate skin showing moles, freckles, or marks, profuse sweating, strong thirst and hunger, early graying or balding, tenderness of body parts.
- Tikshna (sharp)**- Sharp intellect and perception, decisive nature, strong digestive capacity, quick appetite, sometimes impatience or irritability, enjoys tasks requiring precision and analysis.
- Drava (liquid)** - Soft, somewhat loose musculature and joints, tendency to excessive perspiration, urination, and defecation, mild looseness of tissues, occasionally oily appearance of skin.
- Visra (fleshy smell)** - Distinct or strong body odour, especially from axilla, mouth, or scalp, predominance of sour-fetid smell due to metabolic intensity.
- Katu–Amla (pungent and sour)** - Excess acidity in secretions, craving for spicy and sour tastes, possible reduction in reproductive fluids due to heat, moderate sexual vigor quick satisfaction and tendency toward irritability.

3) Kapha Prakriti

Kapha is defined by unctuousness (*snigdha*), smoothness (*slakshana*), softness (*mridu*), sweetness (*madhura*), firmness (*sara*), density (*sandra*), slowness (*manda*), stability (*sthira*), heaviness (*guru*), coldness (*shita*), clarity (*vishada*), and endearing nature (*priya*). Individuals with *Kapha* predominance manifest these inherent *gunas* through both body and mind.^[5]

Attributes and Manifestations of Kapha^[5]

- Snigdha (unctuous)** - Skin, organs, and hair appear oily and glossy, body well-lubricated, joints and tissues are well-nourished and flexible.
- Slakshana (smooth)** - Smooth and even texture of skin, nails, and hair, graceful movement and soft touch.
- Mridu (soft)** - Gentle appearance, tenderness in body parts, clear, pleasing complexion and voice.
- Madhura (sweet)** - Naturally pleasant expression and gentle speech, high fertility, desire for companionship, healthy reproductive tissues.
- Sara (firm)** - Compactness and stability of

muscles and joints, balanced physique with steady endurance.

6. **Sandra (dense)** - All organs well-formed and nourished, good tissue strength.
7. **Manda (slow)** - Calm and deliberate in action, speech, and movement, eats slowly, digestion proceeds steadily but without intensity.
8. **Sthairya (stable)** - Mental and emotional steadiness, rarely agitated, tolerant of delay or difficulty.
9. **Guru (heavy)** - Solid build, deep voice, steady gait, walks with the whole foot touching the ground, impression of gravity and dignity.
10. **Shita (cold)** - Feels comfort in warmth, low tolerance for cold, reduced thirst, sweating, and digestive fire.
11. **Vishada / Acchha (clear)** - Bright, cheerful facial expression, clear, soft, and melodious voice, purity in intentions and behaviour.

The descriptions of *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha Prakriti* collectively represent the Ayurvedic understanding of human diversity. Each *Prakriti* expresses a distinct pattern of structure, physiology, and temperament arising from the predominance of one or more *Doshas*. Recognition of these constitutional traits enables the physician to predict disease tendencies, select appropriate *Ahara* (diet) and *Vihara* (lifestyle), and maintain the equilibrium essential for health. Thus, the doctrine of *Prakriti* reflects the Ayurvedic principle of individualized and preventive healthcare.

MANAS PRAKRITI

According to Ayurveda, mental constitution (*manas prakriti*) is formed by the predominance of the three *guna - sattva, rajas, and tamas*.^[6]

Each *manas prakriti* exhibits characteristic patterns of thought, emotion, conduct, and behavioural tendencies.

1) Sattvika Prakriti

The *sattvika* type represents purity, clarity, balance, and virtuous mental tendencies. Seven types of *sattva* have been mentioned by *charaka*.

Attributes and Manifestations of Sattvika Prakriti^[6]

1. **Brahma sattva** - Inclination towards dharma, respect for elders and teachers, truthfulness, calmness, devotion to learning, purity of conduct.
2. **Arsha sattva** - Respect for rishi, traditions, observance of vows, self-restraint, disciplined lifestyle, devotion to sacred acts.
3. **Aindra sattva** - Leadership qualities, nobility, generosity, truth-abiding, self-confidence, command over speech.
4. **Yamya sattva** - Justice-oriented, adherence to rules, impartiality, protection of the weak, fearlessness in the face of adversity.
5. **Varuna sattva** - Purity, softness in behaviour, compassion, non-violence, forgiving nature.

6. **Kauberia sattva** - Contentment, prosperity, good fortune, interest in righteous wealth and generosity.
7. **Gandharva sattva** - Appreciation of art, music, beauty, refined speech, joyful nature, harmonious expression.

2) Rajasika Prakriti^[6]

The *rajasika* type expresses activity, passion, ambition, instability, and emotional reactivity. Six types of *rajasika prakriti* have been mentioned by *Charaka*.

Attributes and Manifestations of Rajasika Prakriti

1. **Asura sattva** - Harshness, cruelty, pride, anger, intolerance, delight in domination or harm. strong ego.
2. **Rakshasa sattva** - Fierce temperament, sharp speech, fearlessness mixed with aggression, delight in conflict.
3. **Paisachca sattva** - Unpredictable behaviour, restlessness, fondness for improper food and conduct, distorted thoughts.
4. **Sarpa sattva** - Sudden emotional outbursts, jealousy, suspicion, retaliatory tendencies, instability.
5. **Shakuna sattva** - Constant movement, nervous energy, inconsistency, difficulty in maintaining steady focus.
6. **Preta sattva** - Obsessive tendencies, greed, indulgence in unclean or unwholesome acts, agitation.

3) Tamasika Prakriti^[6]

The *tamasika* type reflects ignorance, inertia, delusion, fear, and destructive tendencies. Three types of *tamasika prakriti* have been mentioned by *Charaka*.

Attributes and Manifestations of Tamasika Prakriti

1. **Pashava Sattva** - Over-attachment to food and sleep; sluggishness; inability to understand deeper knowledge.
2. **Matsya sattva** - Cowardice, ignorance, confusion, inability to discriminate right from wrong, excessive fear.
3. **Vanaspatya sattva** - Indolent, inactive, remains fixed in one place; limited intellect and driven mainly by eating and basic survival.

CONCLUSION

The concept of *Prakriti* forms the cornerstone of Ayurvedic philosophy and practice. It represents the unique natural constitution of an individual, established at the time of conception through the combined influence of *Shukra, Shonita, Kala, Garbhashaya, Desha*, and *Ahara-Vihara*^[1] All three major Ayurvedic treatises — *Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* — uniformly describe *Prakriti* as the state of equilibrium of *Tridoshas (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha)*, which determines the individual's physical, physiological, and psychological attributes. The sages of *Ayurveda* emphasized that this innate balance is unchangeable throughout life, though its expressions may vary with age

and environment. Knowledge of *Prakriti* is therefore essential for a physician to understand the patient's natural tendencies, disease susceptibility, and response to diet and treatment. Thus, a deep understanding of *Prakriti* provides the foundation for Ayurveda's individualized and preventive approach to health, reflecting timeless wisdom that continues to hold relevance in modern times.

REFERENCES

1. Charaka Samhita of Agnivesha, revised by Charaka and Drdhabala, Hindi commentary by Shastri K, Chaturvedi GN. Part 1. Vimana sthana Rogabhisagjitiya Vimana Chapter 8 verse 95 Varanasi: Chaukhamba Bharati Academy, 2019; 684.
2. Vidyanath R. Illustrated Ashtanga Hṛdaya of Vagbhata: Sutra-sthana (Text with English Translation), including Maulika Siddhanta. Sutra Sthana Chapter 1 Verse 9-10 Varanasi: Chaukhamba Surbharati Prakashan, 2022; 9
3. Charaka Samhita of Agnivesha, revised by Charaka and Drdhabala, Hindi commentary by Shastri K, Chaturvedi GN. Part 1. Vimana sthana Rogabhisagjitiya Vimana Chapter 8 verse 98 Varanasi: Chaukhamba Bharati Academy, 2019; 686.
4. Charaka Samhita of Agnivesha, revised by Charaka and Drdhabala, Hindi commentary by Shastri K, Chaturvedi GN. Part 1. Vimana sthana Rogabhisagjitiya Vimana Chapter 8 verse 97 Varanasi: Chaukhamba Bharati Academy, 2019; 685.
5. Charaka Samhita of Agnivesha, revised by Charaka and Drdhabala, Hindi commentary by Shastri K, Chaturvedi GN. Part 1. Vimana sthana Rogabhisagjitiya Vimana Chapter 8 verse 96 Varanasi: Chaukhamba Bharati Academy, 2019; 685.
6. Charaka Samhita of Agnivesha, revised by Charaka and Drdhabala, Hindi commentary by Shastri K, Chaturvedi GN. Part 1. Sharira sthana Mahati Garbhavakranti Shariram Chapter 4 verse 36 - 38 Varanasi: Chaukhamba Bharati Academy, 2019; 780–784.