

**UNDERSTANDING THE KOSHTA****Prof. Dr. S. Swaminathan***

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at discussing in brief the various types of koshtas and the relevant regime to be followed. Since each person is unique in constitution, the nature of digestion and excretion are different as well. Thus, the argument of healthy and unhealthy activities should be on an individual level and not at the level of a society or a race. This is a humble effort to deliver the concept of koshta in simple terms.

KEYWORDS: Vata, pitta, kapha, koshta.**INTRODUCTION**

Each one of us has suffered from 'indigestion' at least once in our lives. Diarrhoea, constipation, lack of appetite and such diseases are experienced by everyone at some point or the other. Irrespective of lifestyle, fast food and other such factors, one of the major reasons for such problems is that we do not understand how our body is structured. Some food items are branded wholesome, while others are unhealthy. We follow these standards as universal rules. The truth actually is that each person is a 'masterpiece' – so unique and distinct from others.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The following books have been made use of in presenting this article.

1. Ashtangahrudayam Dr. T. Sreekumar – I Volume, Publication Department of Harisree Hospital, Kerala, Updated fourth edition, 2013
2. Illustrated Susruta Samhita by Prof.K.R.Srikantha Murthy, Chaukhambha Oriental, Varanasi, Reprint 2008

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6. Agnivesa's Charaka Samhita text with English translation and critical exposition based on Chakrapani Datta's Ayurveda Dipika by Dr. Ram Karan Sharma and Vaidya Bhagwan Dash, Volume I, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, Seventh Edition, 2001

DISCUSSION

Each person's body is constituted in a different way. The human body, just like anything else in this universe, is made up of the five basic elements – prthvi (earth), ap (water), tejah (fire), vayuh (air), akashah (ether). Based on these, there are said to be three 'doshas' in the body, wherein akashah (ether) and vayuh (air) constitute 'Vata' dosha (वाय्वाकाशधातुभ्यां वातः), agni (fire) constitutes 'Pitta' dosha (आग्नेयं पित्तम्) and ap (water) and prthvi (earth) constitute 'Kapha' dosha (अम्भःपृथिवीभ्यां श्लेष्मा).

वायुः पित्तं कफश्चेति त्रयो दोषाः समासतः। विकृताविकृता देहं घ्नन्ति ते वर्तयन्ति च॥ (अ.ह.सू.१)^[1]

These three doshas protect the body just like the universe is protected by the wind, moon and the earth. Susruta says, विसर्गादानविक्षेपैः सोमसूर्यानिला यथा। धारयन्ति जगद्देहं कफपित्तानिलास्तथा॥ (सु.सू.२१/६)^[2]

Vata element represents wind, Pitta represents the sun and Kapha represents the earth. The centre of the body (madhyashariram) is referred to as 'koshta'. The word 'koshta' is derived from the root कृष्, meaning 'empty space enveloped by a wall'. It refers to the long channel located in the interior of the body.

Since the constitution of these factors is different, the quantity of each of these doshas in an individual is variable. Based on this variation, the 'koshta' or the centre of the body (madhyashariram) is classified into four.

कोष्ठः क्रूरो मृदुर्मध्यो मध्यः स्यात्तैः समैरपि ॥ (अ.ह.सू.१)

1. क्रूरः – वातोत्कर्षण– Predominance of Vata
2. मृदुः – पित्तोत्कर्षण – Predominance of Pitta
3. मध्यः – कफोत्कर्षण – Predominance of Kapha
4. समः – सर्वैः समैर्मध्य एव^[3] – Equilibrium of the three doshas

(वातोत्कर्षण क्रूरः। पित्तोत्कर्षण मृदुः। कफोत्कर्षण मध्यः। - हेमाद्रिः^[4])

These days, it is arbitrarily said that oil and ghee are to be avoided. “Oil free diet” is the trend of today. Whereas, the real fact is that, each person ‘requires’ variable amounts of these substances. For instance, a krura koshta person can be given liberal amounts of oil. A mrudu koshta person can be given liberal amounts of ghee. A person who has relatively more kapha may have restricted quantities. The word ‘krura’ roughly translates to ‘dry’, ‘rough’ or ‘hard’. Like a King extracting more tax from the people, krura koshta extracts more fluid from the material in the lumen and makes it dry. Over-taxation is cruel and hence the usage of the term ‘krura koshta’. Since they have very less ‘kapha’, which is the representative of the water element (ap), we can understand that they have very less lubrication in the internal organs. This is the reason that such persons tend to have hard bowel movements – they tend to constipate. Krura refers to poorly secretive and over absorptive. A person with relatively more pittam has adequate heat to cook the food with ease. Pittam, unlike Vata, is not a dry dosha (पित्तं सस्नेहतीक्ष्णोष्णं लघु विस्रं सरं द्रवम्). Thus, there is no scarcity of lubrication. The digestive system of a person who has mrudu koshta is therefore one with enough digestive heat and sufficient lubrication to ensure smooth bowel movement. Mrudu is overly secretive and poorly absorptive. This distinct contrast between the Krura koshta and mrudu koshta can be understood in the efforts required to purge each.

बहुपित्तो मृदुः कोष्ठः क्षीरेणापि विरिच्यते।

प्रभूतमारुतः क्रूरः कृच्छ्राच्छयामादिकैरपि ॥

(अ.ह.सू.18/34)^[5]

A person with predominant amount of pittam, having mrudu koshta is easily purged even by simple substances such as milk. But a person with predominance of Vata, having krura koshta is purged after much effort, using drugs such as Syama (*Operculina turpethum*) etc.,

Madhyama is optimally secretive and absorptive. When all doshas exercise their uniform influence, then also, koshta is called 'madhyama koshta'.

Every individual must understand his koshta. Our digestive system can be better understood by comparing it with an electric grinder. Just like water is added periodically to ensure lubrication, without which the perfect batter cannot be made, there needs to be sufficient water and lubrication for the digestion of food as well. Here, a krura koshta is a system which is naturally dry. Madhyama koshta is a system which is naturally moist. Mrudu koshta is a system with moisture as well as adequate heat.

The quality of the koshta to be krura, mrudu, madhyama, etc., are due to a variety of factors like dietary habits, individual constitution, age of the individual, psyche etc., It also depends heavily on the integrity and quality of the internal organs, which play a pivotal role in the maintenance of the requisite environment within the GI tract.

Patients with krura koshta and lot of intestinal gas with constipation are normally managed with medications like Gandharvahastadi eranda tailam. This is a medicated oil which facilitates the easy movement of gas and faecal matter through the anus and also gives a sufficient grease to the lumen of the intestine, thereby the patient is protected from future diseases like disc prolapse in the lumbar or in the cervical region of the vertebral column. Ailments like acute gastritis, burping, erratic digestion, muscle cramps, nervous disorders like facial paralysis, hemicrania, hemiplegia, paraplegia, quadriplegia, can very well be averted by giving this kind of a treatment to a patient who has a lot of gas and constipation problem.

Similarly, a mrudu koshta patient who could easily purge due to the predominance of pitta is more susceptible to disorders like reflux oesophagitis, perforations in the intestinal canal, stomatitis, anal burn, etc., Such a patient can be managed with drugs which are cooling and at the same time binding the faecal matter and pacifying the pitta dosha. Medicines like chandanadi lehyam, chyavanaprasham, shankha bhasma, abhraka bhasma, varatika bhasma, kamadugdha ras, dadimadi ghrutam, vidaryadi ghrutam, indukantam ghrutam, chandrasuradi

kashayam, kalashakadi kashayam are some of the medicines to quote here, which are proven effective in this kind of mrudu koshta cases.

CONCLUSION

It is highly essential to look into the examination of the intestinal lumen of any given case. In Ayurveda, to make a thorough judgment of the predominance of doshas – both in the gastrointestinal tract as well as in the internal visceral organs and then start the treatment for a perfect cure. An attempt made in this way will give a permanent solution to the ailments of the patient. This is normally neglected and treatment given based on the complaints of the patient does not prove fruitful when the gastrointestinal doshas are not taken into consideration for treatment. Each individual must understand his koshta and eat accordingly. It is said.

आहारसंभवं वस्तु रोगश्चाहारसंभवः। हिताहितविशेषाच्च विशेषः सुखदुःखयोः ॥ (च.सू.२८/४४)^[6]

Food is the source of both existence as well as diseases. Thus, happiness and sorrow are determined by the wholesomeness and unwholesomeness of the food consumed.

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