



## UNDERSTANDING OF “PITTA DOSHA”: AN AYURVEDIC CONCEPTUAL STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

In recent scenario acceptance for ayurveda is increasing day by day, the holistic approach of treatment, personalized care and medication are the reasons behind this. Considering the various concepts of ayurveda is need of hour today, but understanding these ancient concepts such as Tridosha, Saptadhatu, Strotasa, Panchamahabhuta in terms of modern science is one of the most difficult challenge today. *Tridosha* theory is one of the foundational theory of *Ayurvedic* science, and *Pitta* is one of the three *Doshas*, responsible for digestion, metabolism and transformation thus plays a crucial role in both states of well-being and illness. In this article we are reviewing ayurvedic literature thoroughly to understand the ayurvedic perspective of *Pitta Dosha*.

**KEYWORDS:** *Tridosha*, *Pitta Dosha*, types of *Pitta Dosha*.

### INTRODUCTION

The *Tridosha* theory of Ayurveda explains that there are three fundamental principles or forces, called *Doshas*, which govern the physiology of each individual. *Vata* is the *Dosha* involved in transportation in the body; from the transportation of molecules to the transportation of nervous impulses. It arises from the elements of ether and air and considered as the most dominant force because of its mobility. *Pitta* is the *Dosha* that governs the process of digestion, as well as all metabolic pathways inside each cell. It is formed from fire and water and responsible for each type of transformation inside the body. *Kapha* is the *Dosha* that governs structure and cohesion in the body. It is an expression of earth and water also considered as *Bala* i.e. strength in its natural and balanced state. The harmony of these three *Doshas* is the base of a healthy body, thus understanding of each is essential. In order to this a short ayurvedic description of *Pitta Dosha*, its types, mechanism of action and vitiation is summarized here.

### AIM AND OBJECTIVE

A detailed review of Ayurvedic literature to understand the concept of *Pitta Dosha*.

### MATERIAL AND METHODS

A critical review of *Pitta Dosha* mentioned in *Samhitas* in the light of commentaries had been done with review

of various scholarly articles from different journals and sites to understand the perspective of *Pitta Dosha*.

### *Pitta – the Metabolic Dosha*

This *Dosha* is formed by a combination of *Agni* (fire) and *Jala* (water) responsible for all the metabolic processes/changes that occur in the body. All those transformations or changes which are related to metabolism are because of *Pitta Dosha*. It is also considered as *Agni* inside the body. The foremost function performed by the *Dosha* includes digestion of food and then convert it into products which can be assimilate for nourishment and provides energy for various functions.

### Etymological derivation

Etymological derivations are significant for determining the basic qualities of *Dosha*, as here it indicates heat quality of *Pitta Dosha* by the phrase “Tap Santape” (Su. Su.21/5), “Ushmaamutpaadayati iti pittam” (Amarkosh Manushya varga/61).<sup>[1]</sup> *Shabda kalpdram* describes *Pitta* as *Tejah*, *Ushma*, *Agnih*, *Analah* etc. whereas in *Shabdsagar*, *Apte* and *Monier-Williams* dictionaries *Pitta* stands for bile, the bilious humour.

### *Panchabhautika Composition of Pitta Dosha*

*Panchamahabhuta*, or the five great elements - *Akasha* (space), *Vayu* (air), *Agni* (fire), *Jala* (water), and *Prithvi*

(earth), are considered the base of the universe. According to one of the basic tenets of Ayurveda “man is a microcosm of the very world that he inhabits”. The earth and man are made up of these five elements. So the Tridoshas are also composed of all these five Mahabhutas, but either of these five is predominant, with the other four are in lesser dominance. There can never be a state when one or the other Mahabhuta is absent totally. All five are essential to sustain life. Proper balance among these three Doshas is essential for good health. In context of Panchamahabhutika composition of Pitta Dosha, Acharya Vagbhatta states that it is Tejo Guna dominant, thus it renders hotness (A.hri.su/12/14).<sup>[2]</sup> to Acharya Kashyapa phrase “Agnimadityam cha Pittam” (vimana sthana) states Pitta is dependent on lord Agni & Surya. Acharya Shushruta and Vriddha Vagbhatta also supported dominance of Teja by phrase “Pittamagneyam” (su.su.42/5) and “Agneya Pittam” (A.S.su.20/30) The second main component of Pitta Dosha is Jala i.e. water, So it can be said that Pitta is made up of a unique combination of fire & water, with other three elements in fractions. It resides as liquid in the body and renders hotness.<sup>[3]</sup>

#### Guna Of Pitta Dosha in relation with Panch mahabhuta<sup>[4]</sup>

1. Sneha (unctuousness)	Prithvi, Agni, Vayu, Jala
2. Ushna (hot)	Agni
3. Tikshana (sharp)	Agni
4. Drava (liquid)	Jala
5. Sara (intense)	Jala
6. Amla (sour/acidic)	Prithvi + Agni
7. Katu (pungent)	Agni+Vayu

#### Whether Agni is different from Pitta or identical with the same?

According to Acharyas – there is no other Agni different from Pitta is found. Pitta being of igneous nature, comes forth with functions like burning (heat), digestion etc. and is metaphorically identified with Agni as internal fire, in deficiency of the qualities of Agni (Pitta) similar substances are used while in their excess cooling remedies are prescribed. Scriptures too advocates that there is no other Agni different from Pitta.

Now the point of difference between Agni and Pitta is considered. Pachana, pigmentation, vision etc. are the functions of Pitta. The statement beginning with “Na khalu” proves Pitta as identical with agni by perception. The further argument supports it by inference. Lastly the scriptural evidence is also in its favour. The question arises if Pitta and agni are identical then how does ghrita being Pitta pacifying stimulate agni? Similar is the case of goat milk, on the other hand fish etc., increases Pitta but do not stimulate agni. Day sleep aggravates Pitta but depresses agni. It is not so as, in fact Shushruta etc. have accepted difference between Pitta and agni. In pathogenesis of palita body heat (agni) and Pitta are mentioned separately. There are also other points which indicate difference between them as Pitta is liquid, unctuous and downmoving while agni is opposite to that. So the present statement of the identity of Pitta and agni is significant to show that the treatment of agni can be done through that of Pitta which has properties like rasa, virya etc. otherwise agni can't be tacked as it is devoid of such properties.<sup>[5]</sup>

#### Seat of Pitta Dosha

According to Acharya Shushruta “Pakva-amashya-madhyam pittasya” Pitta mainly seated in between Amashya and Pakvashya i.e. in the middle of body. “Pittasya yakritpleehanaau hridayam drishtivaka purvoktam cha” states the main locations of Pitta in the body i.e. the small intestine, stomach, liver, spleen, heart, blood, eyes, and sweat.<sup>[6]</sup>

#### Properties of Pitta Dosha<sup>[7]</sup>

According to Acharya Charak Ushna, tikshna, drava, visra, katu and amla are gunas of Pitta. Sara, atisnigdha, shuklaarun varjit varna are also stated in another concept.<sup>[8]</sup> According to Acharya Shushruta ushna, tikshna, ruksha, laghu and vishad are gunas of Pitta.<sup>[9]</sup> Bhel Samhita describes Ruksha, ushna, amla and katu gunas of Pitta.<sup>[10]</sup> Kashyap has explained about ushna, tikshna, alpa, laghu, drava for agni rupi Pitta.<sup>[11]</sup> According to Vriddha Vagbhat, Pitta is snehayukta, tikshna, ushna, laghu, visra, sara, and dravrupa.<sup>[12]</sup> Sharangdhar Samhita states that Pitta is ushna, drava and neel varna, mainly having sattva guna, sara, katu, laghu, snigdha, tikshna, and after paka (digestion) it become amla swaroop.<sup>[13]</sup>

#### Guna (quality) of Pitta Dosha according to different Acharyas

Guna	Charak Samhita	Sushruta Samhita	Ashtang Sangraha	Bhel Samhita	Kashyap Samhita	Sharangdhar Samhita
Ushna,	√	√	√	√	√	√
Tikshna,	√	√	√	-	√	√
Drava,	√	-	√	-	√	√
Visra	√	-	√	-	-	√
Amla	√	-	-	√	-	√ (After Paka)
Katu	√	-	-	√	-	√
Sara	√	-	√	-	-	√
Atisnigdha	√	-	Snehayukta	-	-	√
Shuklaarun	√	-	-	-	-	√

<i>Varjit Varna</i>						
<i>Ruksha</i>		√	-	√	-	-
<i>Laghu</i>		√	√	-	√	√
<i>Vishada</i>		√	-	-	-	-
<i>Sattva Guna</i>	-	-	-	-	-	√
<i>Neel Varna</i>	-	-	-	-	-	√

### Functions of Pitta Dosha

Equilibrium, Decrease and increase of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala* etc should be known by their natural characters and functions. Natural characters of *Pitta Dosha* has been mentioned earlier, here the functions of *Pitta Dosha* in state of equilibrium are discussed, as the characters of decrease or increase can be understood on the basis of characters or functions of *Dosha* during state of

equilibrium.<sup>[14]</sup> According to Acharya Shushrut “*Ragpaktyojastejomedhoshmakrit pittam panchdha pravibhaktamagnikarmanaanugrahm karoti*” (Su.Su.15/2) means coloring, digestion, vision, ojas with intellect and body heat, these functions are performed by *Pitta* which is further divided into five types and thus supports the body with the function of fire.

According to Acharya Sushruta and opinion of Dalhana	
<i>Ragakrita</i>	According to Acharya Dalhana <i>krita</i> is connected with Raga; means <i>Rasasya ranjakagni sanjam pittam</i> refers to the <i>Ranjakaagni</i> of <i>Pitta Dosha</i> indicates transformation of <i>Rasa Dhatu</i> into <i>Rakta Dhatu</i> is affected by <i>Ranjaka Pitta</i> (the red color is bestowed to <i>Rasa Dhatu</i> and converts it into <i>Rakta Dhatu</i> ).
<i>Paktikrita</i>	<i>Paktikrita</i> refers to <i>Pachakagni</i> of <i>Pitta Dosha</i> aiding in digestion of <i>Ahara</i> .
<i>Ojokrita</i>	<i>Ojokrita</i> denotes inter-relationship between <i>Sadhaka Pitta</i> and <i>Ojus</i> situated in heart and its role in maintenance of the same. <i>Medha</i> i.e. intellect, acquisition of knowledge is also performed by <i>Sadhaka Pitta</i> .
<i>Tejokrita</i>	<i>Tejokrita</i> refers <i>Alochakagni</i> , attributing role of <i>Alochaka Pitta</i> in imparting vision.
<i>Ushmakrita</i>	<i>Ushmakrit</i> indicates <i>Bhrajakaagni</i> situated in skin and upholds function of maintenance of body temperature.
According To Acharya Vagbhata	
<i>Pakti</i>	Digestion and metabolism
<i>Ushma</i>	Production and maintenance of body temperature
<i>Prabha</i>	Maintain lustre of the body
<i>Darshanam</i>	Enables visual perception
<i>Kshut- Trit</i>	Initiate and maintain normal hunger & thirst
<i>Ruche</i>	Promotes desire and relish for food
<i>Thanumardhavam</i>	Promotes suppleness of the body
<i>Bhudhi</i>	Intelligence
<i>Medha</i>	Promotes intellect
<i>Dhi</i>	Promotes intelligence
<i>Dhairyam</i>	Courage

*Pitta Dosha* *Vaishyama* manifests as *Vruddhi* (increase), *Kshaya* (decrease) and *Prakopa* (vitiation) and hampers above physiological functions of *Pitta Dosha*. *Dosha* *Vaishmya* manifests with various signs and symptoms in individual. *Vruddha Dosha* can develop into disease whereas *Ksheena Doshas* are incapable of developing a disease; even can be observe as diminution of normal functions of that particular *Dosha*.<sup>[15]</sup> So evaluation of particular *Vaishmya* i.e. *Vruddhi* or *Kshaya* should be performed in the patient by *Darshana* (observation) *Sparshana* (palpation) and *Prashna Pareeksha* (questioning).

***Pitta Dosha* is further divided into five types on the basis of above description which are as following:**

(1) ***Pachaka pitta*** – It is situated in the stomach and the

intestines, causes digestion producing *Annarasa* or chyle, and is responsible for the excretion of faeces and urine etc. Indigestion, acidity, and burning sensation at the throat, heart, and stomach take place, if *Pachaka Pitta* goes into its abnormal state.

(2) ***Ranjaka pitta*** – It colors the *Annasara* or chyle from out of the stomach, situated in liver & spleen and turns the same into blood. In its abnormal state it leads to production of *Rakta Pitta* (or haemoptisis) and troubles in the liver and the spleen.

(3) ***Sadhaka pitta*** – It exist in the heart, and help vision, memory and in the comprehension of anything. Ability of thinking disappears and a sense of helplessness and epilepsy appears in its abnormal state.

(4) *Alochoka pitta* – It resides in the eyes, and responsible for vision, thus its abnormality results in impaired vision.

(5). *Bhrajaka pitta* – It exists in the skin; and owing to its presence, luster of the body is noticeable, and absorption of any application on skin is possible. Skin diseases and discolouration of the skin are the manifestations of its abnormality.

## DISCUSSION

*Tridosha* theory is the foundation of *Ayurvedic* science, and the balanced state of these three is the basic requirement of a healthy state. *Pitta* dosha is crucial element of this equilibrium, responsible for all the transformations and energy formation inside the body through its functioning as *Agni*. Its types and functions are simultaneously harmonized with types and functions of other two *Doshas* to maintain the status of equilibrium. *Dosha Vaishyama* manifests as *Vruddhi* (increase), *Kshaya* (decrease) and *Prakopa* (vitiation) and hampers physiological functions of *Dosha* and manifests with various signs and symptoms in individual.<sup>[16]</sup> Identification of these *Lakshanas* paves way for precise understanding of *Samprapti Ghataka* involved in pathogenesis, thereby accomplish accurate diagnosis and thus fruitful treatment can be planned.

## CONCLUSION

*Pitta* in general does the bodily functions related to digestion and metabolism. All metabolic and catabolic activities, biochemical reactions, and the process of energy exchange are due to *Pitta*. There is always involvement of *Pitta dosha* in every reaction or changes take place inside our body. *Pitta dosha* is present at all levels of organizations, i.e., cellular level, single system level, and organization level in its different form and performing accordingly. In balanced state it work in assimilation and maintaining normal temperature and reflects as proper vision, lustre, cheerfulness and intelligence.

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