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Review Article

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Applied Physiology of *Dosha Vriddhi* (Aggravation) and *Dosha Kshaya* (Diminution)

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is an ancient system of health science. Also, it is accepted as the most ancient traditional medicine system. This science is based on the *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala* concepts. *Vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* are called as *tridosha*. Their equilibrium and internal homeostasis with a pleasant mindset keep the individual healthy. Any change to this condition is called *dosha vikriti* which causes disturbed systemic or local functions leading to a diseased condition. The process to bring back the state of equilibrium of *dosha* is called *Chikitsa*. Hence to regain the healthy status of the body, it is mandatory to get knowledge about normal physiological properties, actions, and factors affecting *dosha vriddhi* and *dosha kshaya*. This study aims to study the applied physiology of *dosha vriddhi* (aggravation of *dosha*) and *dosha kshaya* (diminution of *dosha*) with an objective to understand, the importance of the role of *dosha vriddhi* – *kshaya* in the treatment of disease. For this research article, all classical texts including *brihatrayi* and *laghutrayi* with a full commentary available in the Government Ayurveda College, Nanded library were reviewed. Database available on the internet as per the title was also reviewed. After the collection of the required data, the subject was discussed with knowledgeable persons.

Keywords: *Tridosha*, *dosha vikriti*, *dosha vriddhi*, *dosha kshaya*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is an ancient life science beholding the fundamentals of human life and nature. Natural equilibrium is the only most conducive state in which living things can survive. Similarly, only in a balanced state of *doshas* human body can survive. According to ‘*Pind Bramhand Nyaya*’ Nature and the human body are similar and both always try to stay in a state of equilibrium. The fundamental concept of *Ayurveda* includes *Panchamahabhuta Siddhant*, *Tridosha Siddhant*,

the concept of *Prakriti* and *Sara*, *Shatkriyakal*, etc. *Tridosha* i. e. three bio-energies namely *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* are responsible for the normal functioning of the human body ^[1] and imbalance between them will lead to the diseased condition. In every individual, the balanced state of *doshas* is different; hence *prakriti* of everyone is unique ^[2]. When harmony between *tridosha* is disturbed by any means, an imbalance between *dosha* will take place and in turn, leads to *dosha vikriti* ^[3]. Imbalance can

be of two types- *dosha vriddhi* (aggravation of *dosha*) or *dosha kshaya* (diminution of *dosha*). Without *dosha vikriti*, the disease will never occur as vitiated *doshas* are the root cause of it ^[4].

Any disturbance in this equilibrium or homeostasis by any means will lead to disaster in nature and disease in the body. So, we must look after challenges that try to disturb the equilibrium of the human body. The presence of equilibrium in the activities of *Dosha*, *Agni*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala* and the pleasant condition of the soul, sense organs, and mind is considered healthy ^[5].

The concept of *Tridosha* is one of the central doctrines of *Ayurveda*. These three bio-energies are capable of vitiation naturally or by artificial means. They are responsible for the critical functioning and homeostasis of living being. After their vitiation, the diseased condition can occur. Thus, the three *doshas* of the body are always responsible for events during the origin, existence, and dissolution of the body. *Acharya Sushruta* states that *vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha* are the basic constituents of the human body. In a normal state, they control *adho* (lower), *madhya* (middle), and *urdhwa* (upper) regions of the body respectively. *Doshas* are also called *Tristhuna* because they support the body as building pillars ^[6]. Hence any vitiation amongst them leads to disaster in the human body.

Vata dosha is a combination of *Akasha* (sky element) and *Vayu mahabhuta* (i.e. air element). It is mostly located in the lower regions of the body. *Vata dosha* can be further divided into five *subdoshas* according to the place acquired by them in the body, they are *Pranavayu*, *Udanavayu*, *Vyanavayu*, *Samanavayu*, and *Apanavayu*. Qualities of *vata dosha* are *ruksha* means dry, *laghu* means light, *sheeta* means cold, *khara* means rough, *sukshma* means minute and *chala* means continuous movement. The general functions of *vata dosha* are inspiration-expiration, various body activities, enthusiasm, elimination of waste material, and movement-related functions in the body.

Pitta dosha is made up of *Agni mahabhuta* i.e fire element. It is located in the middle part of the body. *Pitta dosha* can be further divided into five *subdoshas* - *Pachakapitta*, *Sadhakpitta*, *Aalochakapitta*, *Bhrajakapitta*, and *Ranjakapitta*. Qualities of *pitta dosha* include *ushna* means hot, *tikshna* means piercing, *sneha* means unctuousness, *laghu* means light, *visra* means foul smell, *sara* means smooth movement and *drava* means liquid nature. The general functions of *pitta dosha* in the human body are digestion, hunger, thirst, vision, maintenance of body temperature, appetite, glow, intelligence, etc.

Kapha dosha is a combination of *Aap* (water element) and *Prithvi mahabhuta* (earth element). It is located in the upper part of the body. *Kapha dosha* can be further divided into five *subdoshas* - *Avalambakakapha*,

Kledakakapha, *Bodhakakapha*, *Tarpakakapha*, and *Shleshakakapha*. Qualities of *kapha dosha* are *snigdha* means unctuousness, *sheeta* means cold, *guru* means heaviness, *manda* means slow, *slakshna* means smooth and *sthira* means steady. The general functions of *Kapha dosha* in the body are unctuousness, stability of body, heaviness, strength, patience, ungreediness, joint stability, etc.

Though the body is made up of five *mahabhutas* namely *Akash*, *Vayu*, *Agni*, *Aap*, and *Prithvi*. But the functional state is maintained due to three bio-energies namely *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. *Vata* is a form of kinetic energy that is responsible for the execution of all complex actions in the body. *Pitta* is a form of thermal energy that is responsible for metabolism. *Kapha* is a type of mechanical energy that gives binding strength to the body. When *doshas* are vitiated, the functional state of the body is disturbed. If *doshas* are aggravated then their sign and symptoms are increased, on the contrary when *doshas* are diminished then sign and symptoms are decreased. Immediate corrective measures should be taken to achieve the *samya* i.e. the state of equilibrium, otherwise, the disease will proceed. The treatment procedure should be based on the *Shatkriyakala*.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chief constituents of the body

Doshas are the chief constituents of the human body. The *Dhatu* word itself comes from the verb *dharana*, which means 'to support'. Though *doshas*, *dhatus*, and *malas* are present concurrently in the body throughout life, *doshas* are the most important ^[7]. Like the roots of a plant is the chief factor or basic support in all stages i.e. origin, sustenance, and destruction of the plant ^[8]. Similarly, *doshas* in a normal state (in their quantity, quality, and function) maintain the health of the person. When they become abnormal, they become the cause of diseases. So, three *doshas* of the body are given importance because *doshas* are *dehadharaka*. Amongst *dosha*, *dhatu*, and *mala*; *dosha* by nature are vitiators. When vitiated (by external factors), they vitiate others i.e. *dhatus* and *malas* in the body. All these pathogenic factors have their actions in the body both jointly and severally. It is not that the pathogenic factors are confined only to *vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha*. By permutation and combination, these factors take innumerable shapes. This can be classified into a threefold classification based on basic factors only. But is not possible to describe every one of them.

The common cause of *dosha vriddhi*^[9]

Doshas only are the chief cause of all diseases. Just as the bird flying for the whole day throughout the sky is not able to avoid its own shadow, just as all the things of the universe cannot exist separately from (devoid of) the three *gunas* (*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*); Similarly, all the different kinds of diseases, cannot be separated from the *doshas*. The increase in the quantity of *dosha* is mostly

due to *santarpana kaphanugat*, and *kshaya* is due to *vata* and *apatarpana*. Diet or behaviour which is similar to the *guna* of a *dosha* will lead to its increase and vice versa.

Common causes of *dosha kshaya*^[10]

The common causes of diminution *doshadi* are physical exercise, fasting, anxiety, intake of unctuous food and eating food in small quantities or habitual intake of food having one taste only, overexposure to wind & sun, excessive fear/grief, intake of unctuous drinks, vigil, excessive elimination of phlegm, blood, semen and other excreta, old age and period of *Adana* (absorption of energies due to unfavorable environment) and demoniac seizures.

The factors stated above relate to the diminution of all the *doshas* except *vata*. The causes of the diminution of *vata* are inadequate thinking, day sleep, etc. The diminution of *vata* may be caused even by fasting because fasting is responsible for the lack of excreta and unless there are excreta, the required quantity of *vata* cannot be produced.

Seasons causing fluctuation in the normal state of Dosha:^[11] While treating a disease, it is important to know the pathogenesis of the disease.

Vata gets infuriated in the Indian subcontinent season

1. *Varsha rutu* that corresponds to the months of July - August, 2. *Hemant rutu* i.e. November to December, and 3. *Shishir rutu* i.e. January to February. *Pitta* gets infuriated in 1. *Sharad rutu* i.e. September - October, 2. *Grishma rutu* i.e. May - June. *Kapha* gets infuriated in (1) *Vasanta rutu* i.e. March - April.

Lifestyle Factors responsible for variation in *Dosha* condition:^[12]

Vata gets infuriated due to holding of non-suppressible urges, overeating, sleeping at late hours, loud speaking, excessive talking, over-exercise, excessive traveling, overconsumption of spicy-bitter foods, stress, excessive coitus, fear, starvation and excessive exposure to cold. *Pitta* gets infuriated due to excessive eating of spicy, sour, hot, salty food, excessive alcohol consumption, and exposure to sunlight; exposure to fire, excessive anger/fear, heavy work, eating food before the digestion of previous meals, faulty sitting positions for long duration etc. *Kapha* gets infuriated due to day sleep, over eating of sweets, cold food products, heavy food, meat, milk products etc.

Factors responsible for variation in *Dosha* condition:^[13]

Vata get subsided by soothing, warm, salty, sour food, consumption of meat, alcohol, oil therapies, procedures like *basti*, massage^[14], sweating, *nasya*, bathing etc. *Pitta* get subsided by the use of bitter sweet, cold, products, consumption of milk, exposure to cold air, cold night, lying on floor, etc. *Kapha* gets subsided by dry, salty, bitter, spicy foods, by exercise, expectoration, coitus, walking, fighting, sleeping at late hours, etc.

Dosha sahaja samyatva (Harmony of *doshas*)^[15]

The three bio-energies *vata*, *pitta*, *kapha* never destroy each other. They coexist in a harmonious state, even though they are mutually contradictory attributes. This happens because of their *sahaja-samyatva* (natural wholesome disposition of coexistence) on the analogy of the virulent poison not causing any harm to the snake whose body contains it.

Vata, *pitta* and *kapha* have mutually contradictory attributes. For example unctuousness, sliminess and heaviness of *kapha* are contradictory to the ununctuousness, non-sliminess and lightness of *vata*. In spite of these contradictory attributes, they function jointly to maintain the health of a person and do not counteract each other because of *sahaja-samyatva* or natural and wholesome disposition of coexistence. It is this wholesomeness which prevents counter-activity. This natural disposition may be because of *karman* (genetic peculiarity) or because *vastu-svabhav* (specific attribute of the substance) or both. Whatever it may be, this phenomenon is *achintya* (i.e. no rational explanation can be provided for such a type of phenomenon). The fact that such perceptible phenomena do occur, cannot be rejected just by logic or argument.

Root cause of disease

Of all this diseases *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* are verily the root cause; because of having their symptoms, their subsidence and scriptural evidence. As the entire creation existing as a universe is never distinct from *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, the entire group of disorders present in different forms does not exist without *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*. Variations are due to the combination of *doshas*, *dhatu*s and *malas*; specific sites and etiological factors. If *dhatu*s are excessively vitiated by *doshas*, the nomenclature is given as *rasaja* (caused by *rasa*), *raktaja* (caused by *rakta*), and so on.

No *dosha* then no disease^[16]

As the disease does not exist without *doshas*, the wise physician should treat even the unmentioned diseases according to symptoms of *doshas*. The physician who after ascertaining the state of diminution, aggravation, equilibrium and occlusion of these *doshas*, administers appropriate therapies never fails to be successful in his efforts.

General features of vitiated *doshas*^[17]

Doshas when aggravated manifest their signs and symptoms in accordance with the degree of aggravation, those in the state of diminution give up their normal signs and symptoms and those in state of equilibrium operate properly. *Doshas* in the state of aggravation manifest the signs and symptoms of their vitiation in accordance with the degree of aggravation. That is to say, excessive, moderate and slight aggravation of the *doshas* reflects itself in the form of excessiveness, mediocrity or trifleness of the signs and symptoms. *Doshas* while in

the state of diminution, cease to manifest even their normal signs and symptoms. As a matter of fact, *doshas* in the state of diminution do not vitiate other *dhatu*s (tissue elements to cause diseases like *jvara*, etc. because they are themselves weak. They just represent a deviation from the normal state of *doshas* in the sense that they cease to manifest their normal signs and symptoms. *Doshas* in their equilibrium state operate properly.

Body being accustomed to accumulation of waste products, their decrease is more troublesome than their increase. Both increase and decrease are abnormal (*vaishamya*), hence the two terms *vridhhi* and *kshaya* are used to denote abnormality only in majority of the contexts. But while describing the properties of certain medicinal formula, the term '*vridhhi*' is used to denote even the normal growth of the *doshas*, *dhatu*s or *malas*, which is absolutely wrong. The appropriate terms to describe normal up and down variations are '*upachaya*' and '*apachaya*' respectively.

Different courses of *doshas* in the pathogenesis of diseases^[18]

Diminution, normal state, and aggravation, these are three conditions of *doshas* which is known as '*dosha gati*'. The aggravation of *dosha* invariably indicated by something in excess of their respective normal action. Thus, one can examine the normal condition, deficiency or aggravation of *doshas* as the case may be. If there is an increase in the normal action of a *dosha*, this would indicate that the given *dosha* is aggravated. For example, the aggravation of *kapha* would reflect itself in excessive unctuousness, coolness and sweetness.

The increase and decrease of the *dosha* should be controlled by avoidance and indulgence of foods which are disliked and liked respectively, if such foods are suitable. The *doshas* which have undergone increase and decrease generally produce desire for foods which are dissimilar and similar (in properties to those of the *doshas*) respectively; but the unintelligent person (patient or physician) do not recognise them.

The *dosha*, when increased produce their respective features (signs and symptoms) depending upon their strength, when decreased (they) cast off (do not produce signs and symptoms) and when normal, they attend to their normal functions. The very same *dosha* which when normal, are the causes for the (healthy) growth of the body, become the causes for its destruction when abnormal. Hence, by adopting suitable measures (food, activities, etc.) the body should be protected for their decrease (also) just as from their increase. Types of diseases according to *dosha*^[19]: *Jwara* is considered as the prime condition which appears next to all diseases and having extreme strength than any other disease is also divided in *doshaja* type. It means diseases also have their types as per involvement of *dosha*.

DISCUSSION

Tridoshas perform various functions in the human body which are necessary for its survival. Due to vitiation when they are increased above the normal level, their qualities and functions in the body are exaggerated. For example, if we consider *chala guna* (movement) of *vata dosha*, in an exaggerated state it will cause more and rapid movements in the body. When they are diminished below the normal level, their qualities and functions are decreased. Again for example, when *chala guna* of *vata dosha* is diminished, it will cause slowness of all the body movements. Also it should be noted that when a *dosha* is deficient, sometimes an increase in the respective opposite action is indicative of that deficiency. For example, in the event of the deficiency of *vata*, there is the aggravation of grief that stands in juxtaposition with morale which latter represents the normal action of *vata*. Similarly, non-vision and indigestion are aggravated in the event of the deficiency of *pitta*, and roughness of the skin is aggravated in the case of deficient *kapha*.

Deficiency of normal action of *doshas* does not necessarily lead to the aggravation of opposite action. If the enthusiasm goes down, it does not mean that grief would necessarily be in excess or if there is decrease in grief, it does not necessarily follow that there will be slight aggravation of enthusiasm. In other words there are two ways in which the deficiency of *doshas* is reflected - one is negative and the other is positive. The negative aspect is indicated by the decrease in the respective normal actions of the *doshas* and the positive one by an increase in the action of opposite qualities. The aggravation or deficiency of one *dosha* does not necessarily cause deficiency or aggravation of the other *dosha* respectively. If it were so, the *kapha* would always get diminished in the event of the aggravation of *pitta*. The *doshas* are not in juxtaposition with each other. In fact, the main symptom of deficiency in a given *dosha* is the decrease in its respective action.

Doshas which are normal, maintain and nourish the body; and in an abnormal state become the causes for the destruction of the body; hence the *doshas* are to be protected from becoming increased or decreased by following wholesome and beneficial food habits and regimen^[20]. The healthy condition should be preserved and in unhealthy condition, the physician should diminish or promote *doshas*, *dhatu*s and *malas* till the patient becomes free from disorder which is the indicator of equilibrium.

Best treatment is the one that removes disease completely from the body from its base and also does not lead to bad consequences or to other diseases^[21]. To achieve this goal, it's just not enough to know regarding *dosha samyata* but physician must have knowledge of *dosha vridhhi* and *dosha kshaya* also. While treating disease, application of this knowledge is key to success^[22] as

Tridoshas are not only basic physiological factors but also are the basic living units of body^[23].

CONCLUSION

The human body constitutes various principle factors like *Dosha*, *dhatu*, *mala* and *panchbhoutika* elements. Amongst them *doshas* have high influence of seasonal and lifestyle changes. Any fluctuation of *doshas* beyond their normal boundaries may lead to disease. While treating the diseases *doshas* have most important role than the other elements so it is important to know pathogenesis of disease. Drugs used in the therapeutics are of opposite characteristics than the vitiated *doshas*. Hence it is very important to understand the role of *dosha* in the therapeutics.

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