



The Normal and Abnormal Condition of Doṣās in Āyurveda (Sāmya and Vaisāmya of Doṣās in Āyurveda)

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Abstract – In Āyurveda, the concept of "Doṣās" refers to three fundamental bio-energies (Vāta, Pitta, and Kapha) that govern physiological functions in the human body. When these energies are in balance, the body and mind are in a state of health. When imbalanced, it leads to various physical and mental conditions, including disease. In a normal state, the three Doṣās work together in harmony to maintain the health of an individual. However, an abnormal condition occurs when one or more of the Doṣās become excessive or deficient, leading to various disorders. An Ayurvedic practitioner uses this understanding of Doṣās to diagnose and treat illnesses by restoring the balance of these energies in the body. In Ayurveda, the doṣās are three fundamental energies or biological forces that govern the functioning of the body and mind. They are called Vāta, Pitta, and Kapha. In a normal, healthy state, the doṣās are balanced, but when one or more become imbalanced, it leads to a state of illness or disease. An excess or deficiency of any doṣās can result in physical, mental or emotional imbalances. For example, an excess of Vāta can cause dry skin, constipation and anxiety, while an excess of Kapha can cause weight gain and sluggishness. Similarly, an excess of Pitta can lead to acid reflux, skin rashes and anger issues. The ultimate goal of Ayurvedic treatment is to restore balance to the doṣās, which can be achieved through various means including diet, lifestyle modifications, herbal remedies and cleansing practices. Thus, understanding the normal and abnormal conditions of doṣās is crucial in the diagnosis and management of various health conditions in Ayurveda.

Keywords: Doṣa, Āyurveda, tridoṣās, vāta, pitta, kapha, darśana, pramāṇa, Mānasika doṣās, Śārīrika doṣās, pañca mahābhūtas.

1. INTRODUCTION

'Doṣa' literally means "fault or blemish" and also the agencies (substances) which bring about fault, vitiation or pollution. These agencies may be either external or internal.

According to Āyurveda, there are two kinds of doṣās in the human body viz. (a) Śārīrika – that which pertains to the body and

(b) Mānasika—that which pertains to the mind.

Sariraka doṣās are three; – vāta, pitta and kapha and they vitiate the body. Mānasika doṣās are two—Rājasa and Tāmasa and they vitiate the mind. Both these kinds of doṣās are also intimately related, the change in one, brings about change in the other.¹

Śārīrika doṣās – vāta, pitta and kapha – more popularly called as tridoṣās, are substances found inside the body. They are, in fact, present in the śukra—the male seed (spermatozoa) and the ārtava—the female seed (ovum), which combine together to form the human embryo. The quantity of the tridoṣās at the time of



fertilisation is very little, but increases in quantity as the embryo develop, deriving nourishment from the mother. After birth, the tridoṣās are nourished by the food the person takes. Their quantity increases as age advances, reaches the maximum by adult life. They continue to exist in the body till death. Though called as 'doṣās' (vitiators), they are not harmful to the body always; they are materials formed by the body itself and are necessary for its functioning. They act as dhātus (supports) of the body when they are in their normal condition. Only when they become abnormal they act as doṣās (vitiators) and become malās (wastes).² Hence, they are also indicated by these terms.

The Tridoṣās - vāta, pitta and kapha are dravyas (concrete, material substances) having been formed from the pañca mahābhūtas; vāta is formed by combination of vāyu and ākāśa bhūtas predominantly; pitta from tejo bhūta, while kapha is from the combination of āpa and pṛthvī bhūtas;³ the qualities and functions the tridoṣās are naturally same as those of the bhūtas constituting them.

Vāta is amūrta (formless) asaṁhata (diffuse, all pervasive), adṛṣṭa (invisible the naked eye), dṛṣṭakarma (its functions being perceivable), karmānumeya (its presence to be understood by its functions); it possesses qualities such as rūkṣa (dryness), śīta (cold), khara (roughness), sūkṣma (subtleness, capacity of entering minutely), laghu (light in weight), cala (self-mobile, unsteady) and viśada (non-sticky). Its functions are, Prāṇadhāraṇa (support or maintain life) sarvaceṣṭākara (initiator of all activities of the body, sense organs and the mind). Its pramāṇa (quantity) cannot be specified as it is amūrta (formless) and asaṁhata (all pervasive) substance. On the basis of its location and functions, it is subdivided into five and named as Prāṇa, Udāna, Samāna, Vyāna and Apāna.⁴ Vāta is the chief among the doṣās, the other two, functioning as directed by vata.⁵

Pitta is drava (liquid) pīta (yellow in colour) and possesses qualities such as sasneha (slight unctuousness) tīkṣṇa, (penetrating deep), uṣṇa (hot, heat producing), laghu (light in weight); visra (foul odour), sara (mobile, fluid). Its functions are pāka (digestion of food and transformation of other materials) ūṣmā (production of body temperature), kṣut-triṣṇākara (production of hunger and thirst), darśana (vision), rāga (production and expression of colour), deha mārḍava (softness or suppleness of the body); and mental functions such as buddhi (reasoning, judgement), medhā (intelligence) abhimāna (self-assertion) etc. Its pramāṇa (quantity) is five añjalis (about 350 ml.) in an adult male. It is subdivided into five and named as Pācaka, Rañjaka, Bhrājaka, Alocaka and Sādhaka.⁶

Kapha-It is sthira (static, stable), mṛtsna (slimy), ślakṣṇa (smooth), guru (heavy) material, possessing qualities such as sita (cold), snigdha (moist, unctuous), manda (slow, sluggish), sweta (white colour) etc. Its functions are bestowing bala (strength) snigdhatva (moistness and lubrication), sthiratva (stability), dārḍya (stoutness, mass) vṛṣatta (fertility, virility) etc. Its quantity is six añjalis (about 420 ml.) in an adult male. It is subdivided into five and named as Avalambaka, Kledaka, Tarpaka, Śleṣaka and Bodhaka.⁷

1.1 Doṣa Sthānas (Seats)

The tridoṣās are found everywhere in the body. They reside within the dhātus (tissues) and also in the āśayas and avayavās (viscera and other organs) formed by the dhātus.⁸ They are present predominantly in certain places of the body and such places are known as Viśiṣṭa sthānas (special or chief sites) and the remaining as Anya sthāna (other or general sites). These are as follows.⁹

Table -1:

Doṣa	Viśiṣṭa sthāna	Viśiṣṭa sthāna
Vāta	Pakvāśaya	Kaṭi (waist), sakti (thighs), asthi (bones), śrotra (ears), sparśanendriya (skin) etc.
Pitta	Nābhi (area around the umbilicus)	Āmāśaya (stomach, duodenum, small intestine, liver, spleen, pancreas) rasa (plasma), lasīkā (lymph), rakta (blood) sveda (sweat) dṛk (eye) and tvak (skin) etc.
Kapha	Uras (chest)	Kaṇṭha (throat), śiras (head), kloma (pancreas), parvās (joints), āmāśaya (stomach), rasa (plasma), medas (fat), jihvā (tongue), ghrāṇa (nose). etc.,

1.2 Doṣotpatti and Śaṅcāra (Production and Circulation)

All the three doṣās are produced in the koṣṭha (gastrointestinal tract) only; kapha and pitta in the āmāśaya (upper and lower parts of the stomach) and vāta in pakvāśaya (large intestine). Thus getting formed there, they help in the digestion of food and formation of āhāra rasa (nutrient portion of food) which undergoes further transformation to become the rasa dhātu (first tissue of the body). The doṣās, then get mixed with this rasadhātu, which circulates all over the body supplying nutrition to all the other dhātus. So the tridoṣās are also circulating all over the body, through the channels of rasadhātu.

1.3 Doṣa sāmya (Natural Immunity)

Though the tridoṣas have qualities, properties and functions, opposite of one another, yet they do not destroy each other and abnegate each other's functions when they are normal. This special property is known as Sahaja sātmya (inherent immunity). It is explained with the example of a serpent which has a deadly poison in its body but still does not die of it.¹¹

1.4 Doṣa Sāmya and Vaiṣamyā (Normalcy and Abnormality)

As described previously, the doṣās have certain pramāṇa (quantity), guṇas (qualities) and karmas (functions). The condition, in which all these are in their usual, is called as doṣa sāmya (normalcy). This condition is conducive to svāsthya (wellbeing of the body, health). This sāmyatā (normalcy) of the doṣās is not stable and is undergoing change constantly, either towards Vṛddhi (increase) or towards Kṣāya (decrease). Both these are Vaiṣamyā (abnormal) and lead on to asvāsthya (ill-health) or roga (disease). Hence it is described, that doṣās have three Gati (states) viz.,

(1) Sthāna, sāmya or prākṛta (normal)



(2) Vṛddhi (increase) and

(3) Kṣaya (decrease)

The last two are vaiṣamya or vikṛta (abnormal).¹²

1.5 Dvidha Vaiṣamya (Two kinds of Abnormality)

Vaiṣamya (abnormality) takes place in two ways

(1) Svābhāvika or prākṛta (natural) and

(2) Vaikārika (unnatural).¹³

Svabhāvika is due to the effect of kāla (time) and vāya (age) etc. Vāta, pitta and kapha undergo increase and become predominant during the terminal (last), middle and early (commencement) periods of the age, day, night and time of taking food respectively. In other words, vāta increases or is predominant during old age, evenings, last part of digestion; pitta increases or is predominant during middle age, midday, midnight and middle period of digestion; kapha increases or is predominant during childhood, mornings, first part of the night and early period of digestion. This svabhāvika vaiṣamya (natural abnormality) is alpa (mild, little), and the human body will have become accustomed to it (sātmya). So it does not produce any disease.¹⁴

Vaikārika vaiṣamya (unnatural abnormality) results from indulgence in Ahitāhāravihāra (unsuitable foods and activities). Increase or decrease of the doṣās takes place in mild, moderate or profound degrees depending upon the strength of such unsuitable foods and activities. Such indulgence in unsuitable, does not happen daily but only rarely or occasionally. The human body will not be able to tolerate or withstand these abnormalities as it is not accustomed to them. So it gets into trouble, loses health and develops diseases. In the context of origin of diseases it is this unnatural abnormality that is given importance to.

1.6 Kāraṇas of Vaiṣamya (Causes of abnormality)

Āyurveda has borrowed the 'doctrine of Sāmānya and Viśeṣa' from Vaiśeṣika philosophy and made use of it to explain many events such as natural occurrences, usage of foods, drugs, therapeutically measures and so on. The principle of this doctrine is, that "combination of Sāmānya (similar) brings about vṛddhi (increase) whereas combination of Viśeṣas (dissimilar) brings about Kṣaya (decrease)".¹⁵

Sāmānya and Viśeṣa can be in three aspects viz., dravya (material, quantity), guṇa (quality) and karma (actions).¹⁶

In the context of Doṣavaiṣamya, it is explained that 'foods and activities which are sāmānya (similar in the form of material, qualities or functions) to each of the doṣa make for its vṛddhi (increase) whereas those which are viśeṣa (dissimilar in the form of material, qualities or functions) bring about its kṣaya (decrease).

The following are some such important foods and activities which cause vṛddhi (increase) and kṣaya (decrease) of the triḍasas.¹⁷

2. Vāta

(a) Vyāddhikara (Causing Increase)



Foods which are kaṣāya (astringent), kaṭu (pungent) and tikta (bitter) in taste; rūkṣa (dry), śīta (cold); activities such as upavāsa (fasting), vegadhāraṇodīraṇa (suppression or premature initiation of the urges of urine, faeces, etc.), ativyāyāma-vyavāya (excessive physical activities and sexual intercourse), viśama skhalana patana (improper jumping, falling, etc.), dhātukṣaya ((loss or depletion of tissues), mārgarodha (obstruction to the orifices, channels, pores, etc.), kriyātiyoga (excessive therapeutic procedures such as emesis, purgation, enemata, etc.), bhaya (fear), śoka (grief), cintā (worry) etc., and varṣārṭu (rainy season) and such others.

(b) Kṣayakara (Causing Decrease)

Foods which are madhura (sweet) amla (sour) lavaṇa (salt) in taste; snigdha (unctuous, fatty) guru (hard to digest) uṣṇa (hot) mṛdu (soft), uṣṇopacāra hot comforts) etc.

2.1 Pitta

(a) Vṛddhikara (Causing Increase)

Foods which are kaṭu (pungent), amla (sour) lavaṇa (salt) in taste; uṣṇa (hot), tīkṣṇa (punctuating into the tissues) vidāhi (which cause burning sensation during digestion); madyapāna (drinking of alcoholic beverages), upavāsa (fasting), excess exposure to sunlight and fire; krodha (anger), vyavāya (sexual intercourse) and śarat ṛtu (autumn), etc.

(b) Kṣayakara (causing decrease)

Foods which are kaṣāya (astringent) tikta (bitter), madhura (sweet) in taste; śīta (cold), manda (sluggish, slow), guru (hard to digest), atisnigdha (very fatty), sāndra (solid or semisolid), śītopacāra (cold comforts) etc.

2.2 Kapha

(a) Vṛddhikara (causing increases)

Foods which are madhura (sweet) in taste, drava (liquid), śīta (cold), guru (hard to digest), atisnigdha (very fatty), atibāhu (large in quantity); adhyaśana (frequent over-eating), avyāyāma (lack of physical activity) divāsvapna (day sleep) nidrādhikya (excessive sleep), mānasa avyāpāra (lack of mental work.)

b) Kṣayakara (Causing Decrease)

Foods which are tikta (bitter) kaṭu (pungent) and kaṣāya (astringent) in taste; rūkṣa (dry), uṣṇa (hot), laghu (light, quickly digest able) viśada (non-unctuous), uṣṇopacāra (hot comforts), vyāyāma (physical activities), jāgaraṇa (avoidance of sleep) etc.

3. Vikalpas of Vaisāmya (Subdivisions of Abnormalities)

Vṛddhi (increase) and kṣaya (decrease) have three subdivisions each viz., vṛddha (increase of first degree), vṛddha tara (increase of second degree) and viddhatama (increase of third degree) each succeeding one more powerful than its preceding one; similarly so, is kṣiṇa, kṣiṇatara and kṣiṇatama. Combinations of these six as applied to the three doṣas along with the combinations of normal doṣas are said to become 62 in number and enumerated in the texts.¹⁸



3.1 Balābala of vaiṣāmya (Strength of Abnormalities)

Compared between them, vṛddhi (increase) is baliṣṭha (strong, more powerful) than kṣaya (decrease). Doṣas in the state of vṛddhi (increase) will have become excess in their quantity, one or more qualities and functions. They are capable of producing their own characteristic features and also give rise to major diseases. In the state of kṣaya (decrease) the doṣas will have become reduced in their quantity, impoverished in their qualities and functions. So they are durbala (weak), not capable of expressing their own characteristic features, much less so to produce major diseases.¹⁹ As it is logical and customary to give importance and credence to the stronger one than the weaker, Ayurveda also says categorically that “all diseases are produced by vṛddha doṣās”. While describing the diseases the reference to the doṣās always indicates their vṛddhi (increase) only, but not their kṣaya (decrease).

However, sometimes, the kṣīṇa doṣās also might produce some symptoms which are troublesome, because the body is not so much accustomed to decrease of doṣās as it is accustomed to their increase.²⁰ These symptoms of decrease might also require some treatment, still they are not called as diseases.²¹

Dvididha Vṛddhi (two kinds of increase): Vṛddhi (increase) of doṣās is of two kinds viz.

(a) Cayapūrvaka (or sacaya) - with gradual accumulation, stage by stage or insidious increase. For example, indulgence in rūkṣāhāra (dry foods) for some days continuously produce mild vāta vṛddhi (increase) in the pakvāsaya (large intestine) first; in the next stage of increase, it spreads to its other seats and in further stages it spreads to the dhātus (tissues) and produces a disease after a reasonable time.

(b) Acayapūrvaka - without gradual accumulation, or sudden. For example; the news of death of a person or loss of a thing most loved, at once causes increase of vāta, which in turn produces diseases like mūrchā (faint) unmāda (insanity) etc. This kind of sudden (sahasā) increase is also in many stages but the stages O develop so quickly that it is not clearly discernable, so we call it sudden.

3.2 Effect of Doṣavaiṣāmya

Soon after the doṣās get increased, they bring about their own characteristic features (symptoms) first in their viśiṣṭa sthāna (special locale, site, residence) and next in other places (other parts of the body including the dhātus (tissues)).²² Thus doṣāvṛddhi acts as the cause for the origin of diseases.

If the doṣāvṛddhi is mild, it will be mitigated or subdued by the bala (strength) of the body and the origin of disease prevented.²³

If, on the other hand, it is moderate or severe, then administration of drugs, foods, etc., (cikitsā) becomes necessary.

3.3 Sāmya and Vaiṣāmya of Mānasika doṣās (Normal and Abnormal States of Doṣās of the Mind)

Manas (mind) is described as Triguṇātmaka (consisting of three guṇās) satva, rajasa and tamasa which take part in all its functions.²⁴ Each of them has its own specific features, which have been described earlier. All the things in the universe are also having these three ‘guṇās’ in them; man, animals, plants and even inanimate things possess these ‘guṇās’ in great or smaller proportion. Depending upon the predominance of each guṇa, all things in the universe (including man) have been broadly divided into three groups viz., Sātvika (in which satva guṇa is predominant), Rājasa (in which rajoguṇa is predominant) and Tāmāsa (in which tamoguṇa is predominant). The different kinds of foods and activities are also similarly classified.²⁵



The Trigunās also maintain a sort of sāmya (normalcy) and thus facilitate the manas (mind) to carry on its work without any trouble. This condition Triguna sāmya (normalcy) is thus a healthy state of the mind. This normalcy is also very unstable just as the normalcy of the Tridoṣās of the body. Indulgence in foods and activities which are similar in nature to each of these guṇas will make for its vṛddhi (increase) and those which are dissimilar will make for its kṣaya (decrease); though both vṛddhi and kṣaya are vaiṣamya (abnormality), vṛddhi (increase) is more powerful than kṣaya (decrease), the increased 'guṇa' exhibits its features predominantly. Abnormality of the guṇas, brings about abnormal functioning of the mind and leads to the production of diseases not only in the mind (mental) but also in the body (śārīraka).

Satva being pure and good is considered as ideal and beneficial to the mind and so termed as a Suguṇa (virtue), to be maintained and improved further. Its increase will lead to better health of the mind. The other two, Rajasa and Tamasa are both bad (durguṇa) and so are considered as doṣās (vitiators) of the mind. Their increase will cause many abnormalities in the mind and produces diseases.²⁶ All out efforts should be made not to allow increase of these two doṣās and proper treatment done when they undergo increase.

There exists a close relationship between the śārīraka doṣās and mānasika doṣās. Vāta and rajoṅga have identical qualities and functions. Similarly, kapha and tamas are identical in their qualities and functions. Pitta possesses the qualities and functions of satva. Foods and activities which cause increase or decrease of the śārīraka doṣās also bring about corresponding changes in the mānasika doṣās. Hence the manifestation of śārīraka lakṣaṇas (physical symptoms) in mānasika rogās (mental diseases) and mānasika lakṣaṇās (mental symptoms) in śārīraka rogās (diseases of the body).²⁷ So, it can be said that classification of diseases into śārīraka (somatic) and Mānasika (psychological) is only arbitrary and all diseases are psychosomatic; categorisation being based on the number and severity of the signs and symptoms.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the concept of Doṣās in Ayurveda is a fundamental understanding of the bio-energies that govern physiological functions in the human body. In a normal state, the three Doṣās are in balance, leading to physical and mental well-being. When imbalanced, it leads to various disorders. An Ayurvedic practitioner uses this knowledge of Doṣās to diagnose and treat illnesses by restoring the balance of these energies in the body. Thus, the normal and abnormal conditions of Doṣās play a crucial role in maintaining overall health and well-being in Āyurveda. Sāmya (normalcy) and Vaiṣamya (abnormally) of the doṣās pertain to their pramāṇa (quantity), guṇās (qualities) and karmās (functions). Vṛddhi (increase) and kṣaya (decrease), both are vaiṣamya (abnormal), vṛddhi is more powerful and causes diseases. Doṣās do not destroy each other, either in the normal or abnormal states. There is a close relationship between śārīraka and mānasika doṣās.

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