

## Review Article

# Understanding personality from *Ayurvedic* perspective for psychological assessment: A case

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### Abstract

The study of personality has fascinated psychologists since a long time. Personality as an area of study has grown so much that a wealth of literature is available. On the other hand, the socio-ethnic dynamics of human race in the emerging global village context provoking psychologists to develop a personality theory which can treat certain basic components of personality as invariants, so that irrespective of culture, race, and nativity could still be able to study personality which will have universal applicability and relevance, is still far away. In the above emerging backdrop, “*Ayurveda*” has perhaps an important role to play as it can enable providing a theoretical and empirical base of personality traits and types. These *Ayurvedic* concepts are applicable to all human beings irrespective of caste, color, sex or race. Therefore, it is interesting to build on the *Ayurvedic* knowledge which has already given us so much since time immemorial, and validate some of these issues related to personality from psychological perspective. There are already certain efforts in understanding *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas Gunas*. It can be furthered so that a comprehensive personality picture can be generated, which can have implications for health, career, education and many other dimensions of life. The present paper is a theoretical attempt in developing such a personality proposition which can be validated. Thus, the present paper only builds a theoretical framework for their possible empirical validity.

**Key words:** *Ayurvedic* typology, personality assessment, *Prakriti*, *Tridoshas*, *Trigunas*

## Introduction

In this day and age when the world has become a global village, people from one socio-demographic location can be found across the world, with a lot of cross mingling of relationships that stretch the barriers of place and time. In this scenario, the need of the hour is to develop a theory of personality that transcends this problem of cultural and racial bias to propound one that is valid across the world. For this, the basic requirement is that it should be universally acceptable, be of an elemental nature, and be valid to people across all genres. To understand this, the first source of knowledge that comes to mind to tackle the problem at hand is that of the Indian philosophical systems that have withstood the test of time to be applicable across millennia without losing their relevance and applicability to people from ages to the present day. The first discipline that comes to mind which is capable of identifying

people is that of *Ayurveda* with its exact science of medicine and which is capable of giving answers to questions that are posed at a biological and physical level as to the constituents of man and the reasons for his biological behavior.

“With the increasing realization that many of the western psychological concepts and methods lack relevance to different cultural systems, the need for developing indigenous psychologies was recognized all over the world (Kim and Berry, 1973)...”<sup>[1]</sup>

## Objectives

The main objectives of this paper are to consolidate a personality theory taking support of *Ayurvedic* literature from the psychological perspective and to make a case that personality testing taking *Tridosha* and *Triguna* could be a comprehensive perspective.

*Ayurveda*, with its defined constructs which are elemental and form the cornerstone of physiology as well as psychological delineations, their assessment, categorization and treatment options, is indispensable for developing a theory and methodology for assessment of *Prakriti*—more specifically, the

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psychological manifestation of the *Tridoshas* and the *Trigunas* combined—for a scientific, elemental and globally valid testing procedure and its obvious categorization. This would lead to globalizing the understanding of human behavior irrespective of caste, creed and religion, leading to a universal typology of people, helping in the ultimate need for psychology, that of understanding and predicting of human behavior and emotions. This has large implications in areas ranging from harnessing of human resources to early identification of diseases and their better management.

## The Manifestation of the Five Proto-elements in Man

One of the basic tenets of *Ayurveda* is that man is a microcosm of the very world that he inhabits. This implies explicitly that whatever man is made up of, the world too is made up of those same things or elements, but of different combinations and degrees. Here, by elements is meant the five *Mahabhutas*—that is, *Akasa*, *Vayu*, *Tejas*, *Ap* and *Prithvi*. The earth and man are made up of these five elements. In fact, *Ayurveda* postulates that all living beings on the earth, including the non-living too, are made up of these same five elements in varying degrees, specific to each form, matter and species, and according to a predetermined ratio that cannot be changed. These five elements combine with each other to form the three humors of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* (also called as the *Tridoshas* in unison) which is the cornerstone of *Ayurvedic* philosophy.

If changes do occur, then this leads to an imbalance in the organism, or a modified version of the organism is formed, the survival of which will depend upon its ability to adapt to its environment. *Ayurvedic* principles are drawn heavily from *Samkhyan* Philosophy.

“In *Ayurveda*, the three *Doshas* are considered to be universal principles that function in all aspects of material creation, including the mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms, the time of day, the seasons of the year, even the planets and galaxies. In this way, the human physiology is inexorably connected to the whole of existence. The *Doshas* have been correlated with systems theory in the field of physics, providing a sound theoretical basis for this *Ayurvedic* concept, and research utilizing a bio-statistical approach to quantify the *Doshas* reveals a sound empirical basis as well. A pilot study revealed the possibility of utilizing *Prakriti* to correlate phenotypes with genotypes in the human population, which could have wide-ranging implications for health care”.<sup>[2-4]</sup>

## The five elements combine to form the *Tridoshas* in biodiversity

“According to *Ayurveda*, the universe evolved out of the ‘unmanifested’ (*Avyakta*), which implies *Prakriti* (primordial matter) and *Purusa* (primordial consciousness). *Mahan* (intellect) then evolves from *Avyakta*, and *Ahamkara* (ego) follows. Ego has three different qualities (*Gunas*): *Sattva* (the pure), *Rajas* (the dynamic), and *Tamas* (the inert). *Sattva* and *Rajas* together then produce eleven *Indriyas* (sense and motor organs known as *Jnanendriyas* and *Karmendriyas*) and *Manas*. The *Gunas*, *Tamas* and *Rajas* combine to produce five *Tanmatras* (energy quanta), which in their turn produce the

five *Mahabhutas* (elements in the ancient sense, sometimes also called proto-elements). From these *Mahabhutas* the entire material world is made up... Living beings consist of the *Mahabhutas* as well as the *Indriyas*”.<sup>[5]</sup>

Dash,<sup>[6]</sup> in his book *Fundamentals of Ayurvedic Medicine* (pg. 16, 17), has explained the inter-relatedness of man with the environment and how the *Pancha Mahabhutas* have evolved in man to form the different body organs and organ systems. He says, “...man has five senses and through these senses he perceives the external world in five different ways. The sense organs are the ears, the skin, the eyes, the tongue and the nose. Through these sense organs, the external object is not only perceived, but also absorbed into the human body in the form of energy. These five types of senses are the basis on which the entire universe is divided, grouped or classified in five different ways, and they are known as five *Mahabhutas*... According to *Ayurveda*, the body of the individual is composed of five *Mahabhutas*. Similarly, other things of the world are also composed of five *Mahabhutas*. In the human body these five *Mahabhutas* are explained in terms of *Doshas*, *Dhatus* and *Malas*...”

The play of the five proto-elements or the *Pancha Mahabhutas* is not restricted to the physical body only. It finds expression in the mind too, which also is purported to be made up of the five elements. Frawley<sup>[7]</sup> in his book *Ayurveda and the Mind* is of the opinion that the mind transcends all the five gross elements and their inter-relationships. He further says that all the forms of earth, water, fire, air and ether can be observed, imagined and contemplated on. “Yet the elements do provide a key to how the mind works. Though the elements in the mind are more subtle than those in the body, they retain the same basic attributes and actions. We can understand the mental elements through the analogy of the physical”.

*Charaka Samhita* expresses this idea in verses 46–47 (as stated in *Mental Health in Ayurveda*)<sup>[8]</sup> as follows: “Mind, Soul and the Body—these three constitute a tripod, upon the meaningful combination of which the world is sustained. They constitute the substratum for everything, which is endowed with life. This (combination of the above three) is *Purusha* who is sentient and who is the subject matter for this science. It is for this that *Ayurveda* has been brought to light”. Verse 1-55 also states: “The body and the mind are the abodes of diseases as well as health. Proper body-mind interaction is the cause for happiness”.

## Review of Literature

“The concept of *Tridosha*, the *Ayurvedic* theory of physiologic regulation involving the integrated function of the three *Doshas*—*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*—is a cornerstone of *Ayurveda*, named in the first chapter of the earliest text, *Charaka Samhita* (Angot, 1993; Sharma, 1981–1986). Its connection to modern science, showing that the *Doshas* constitute systems of regulatory function, each with a particular area of responsibility (Hankey, 2001) and its present preliminary validation, are first steps to bringing the discipline wider acceptance within modern medicine”.<sup>[9]</sup>

From the *Ayurvedic* source, what has already been studied and

internalized in psychology is the concept of “*Triguna*”. “The theoretical expositions on *Triguna* and their manifestations in human nature have attracted the attention of Indian psychologists. The concept has been examined theoretically (Bose, 1966; Misra *et al.*, 2000; Parameshwaran, 1969; Rao, 1971) and empirically (Das, 1987, 1991; Kapur *et al.*, 1997; Marutham, Balodhi and Misra, 1998; Mathew, 1995; Mohan and Sandhu, 1986, 1988; Pathak, Bhatt and Sharma, 1992; Rao and Harigopal, 1979; Sebastian and Mathew, 2002; Sharma, 1999; Singh, 1972; Sitamma, Sridevi and PVK. Rao, 1995; Uma, Lakshmi and Parameshwaran, 1971; Wolf, 1998).<sup>[1]</sup> So far, what has not been explored is the study of “*Tridoshas*”, empirically from the domain of psychology.

“The ancient texts name many other properties of the *Doshas*. For example, all human beings can be classified according to the dominance of one or more *Doshas* in their physiology, their *Prakriti* (literally ‘nature’). The classification gives a good indication of physiologic strengths and weaknesses, mental tendencies, and susceptibility to illnesses of different kinds. According to *Ayurveda*, the *Prakriti*, including its distortion by life history, is of fundamental importance in maintaining health: It provides a guide to lifestyle and ways of healthy living appropriately individualized for each person. Early, pre-pathologic stages of the development of illness depend on the pressure on the functioning of the *Doshas*. Do they have the ability to cope with challenges presented? Simple knowledge of how they function, and what their state is at any time, can prevent disease, and help restore health more quickly.”<sup>[9]</sup>

Hankey (*Establishing the scientific validity of Tridosha*)<sup>[10]</sup> is also of the opinion, “the functions of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* are fundamental is confirmed by the fact that each represents an independent definition of ‘life’ used in modern biology”. He reinstates this statement by delineating the functions of the *Tridoshas* with the knowledge obtained by modern science, and more specifically, the area of biological, cellular, chemical sciences as we know them today. He is of the opinion, “... These three (homeostasis, the ongoing production of ‘negative entropy’, and inheritable structure)” (he is talking about the modern biological equivalents of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*) “have all been used as definitions of life. Comprising all three makes *Tridosha* the most powerful definition of life ever formulated!”

“Being based on systems theory *Tridosha* would apply to living organisms other than those found on earth. ... The possibilities for speculation are endless. But whatever the chemical basis for its reproducing forms, each organism in such a system of life would necessarily have to possess the systems functions named, and their regulation could justifiably be identified as ‘*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*’”. Hankey said,<sup>[10]</sup> “The analysis of *Dosha* function presented here confirms the experience of every practicing *Vaidya*: *Tridosha* is a simple and profound way to understand human physiological function, giving an accurate explanation of physiological function, including the means of regulation of all the major organ subsystems – and their principal organs. One of the most powerful aspects of *Tridosha* is that it presents physiological function from a holistic perspective.... In not losing sight of the whole when dealing with each component part, *Tridosha* reveals its sophistication as a description of physiological function from the perspective of the organism itself, ‘the organism as

a whole’ is the primary concept, and the functioning of its parts is secondary. Wholeness of organism functioning can only be maintained by coordinated regulation of functioning of each successive level of parts. In *Tridosha*, *Ayurveda* gets it right, setting the scene for descriptions of how to maintain wholeness of organism functioning, and when compromised how to restore it. In other words, it lays the ground for programs of both prevention and cure of ill health”. (Hankey, *Establishing the scientific validity of Tridosha*)<sup>[10]</sup>

“Every individual is different. What determines the ‘individuality’ of a person? How do we identify genotypes associated with phenotypes and classify the human population? Systematic surveys of genetic variation form the basis for determination of population frequencies, genetic linkage studies, and association studies relating genotype with phenotypes of interest to answer some of these questions (Bamshad *et al.*, 2003; Rosenberg *et al.*, 2002). Genotypic or phenotypic classification of human populations is important in various epidemiological contexts, such as better understanding disease (Pearson *et al.*, 2003) and drug response (Kirchheiner *et al.*, 2004; Meyer, 2000). The current classification of human populations is broadly based on ethnicity; geographical location, language, or self-reported ancestry. However, such commonly used ethnic labels are inaccurate representations of genetic clusters and do not reflect the underlying genetic makeup (Wilson *et al.*, 2001). The inability to explore such relationships is attributed to the complexity of human demographic history, which gives rise to neither an obvious natural clustering scheme nor an obvious appropriate degree of resolution (Editorial comment, 2001).<sup>[11]</sup>

Hence, from the above-mentioned numerous researches, we can see how different scientists are engaged in understanding the physical properties of the *Tridoshas* and how they work in tandem, to promote health and to understand their role in identifying and rectifying disease states. What is common to all of them is the underlying principle that the *Tridoshas* are the cornerstone of biological behavior which has far-reaching consequences for the study of the psychological implications that are implicit and explicit to the present researcher. This is from the medical perspective. But what about the psychological perspective? Is it not possible to use these same principles to understand the psychological basis of behavior in both the physical and the mental states? This is also a cornerstone of understanding the human psyche and has been quite neglected till date. Though the inherent interdependence of the physical and the psychological is talked of and acted upon in *Ayurvedic* medical perspective, it has not followed suit in psychology. The Cartesian dichotomy of the body and the mind did a lot to disturb this basic theory and it is only now that the world is realizing the value and the truth of the *Ayurvedic* principles of *Prakriti*, its manifestations and combinations.

## Delineation of the *Tridoshas*—*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*

According to *Ayurveda*, the human body (the physical entity) is composed of three fundamental categories called *Doshas*, *Dhatus* and *Malas*. The *Doshas* are three in number, the *Dhatus* are seven, and the *Malas* are three. The three *Doshas* (*Tridoshas*) are *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. Their psychological correlates

which play a role in the functioning and behavior of humans is the *Trigunas—Sattva, Rajas and Tamas*. These psychological attributes are not restricted or confined to humans alone, but are also attributed to almost all living beings, including the food we eat, and all other elements in the environment we live in, which are said to have a predominance of one or the other characteristic *Guna/Prakriti* which gives that matter its unique quality.

The *Tridoshas* are composed of all the five *Mahabhutas*, but one or the other 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.

- *Vata Dosha* is composed of *Akasa* (ether) and *Vayu* (air) *Mahabhutas*.
- *Pitta Dosha* is composed of *Tejas* or *Agni* (fire) and *Ap* *Mahabhutas*.
- *Kapha Dosha* is composed of *Ap* (water) and *Prithvi* (earth) *Mahabhutas*.

When we talk about imbalance of *Doshas*, we say that a person is *Vata, Pitta* or *Kapha* dominated. This does not mean an absence of the other two *Doshas*, but that the other two *Doshas* are suppressed compared to the dominant *Dosha*. This also does not mean that a person who is either of the *Dosha* dominated is not in good health. That particular dominant *Dosha* is his natural state of being or *Prakriti*. It is not ill health.

“*Prakriti* is specific for each individual. It is said to be determined at the time of conception (in modern terms, by the recombination of zygotic DNA from sperm and ovum) and remains unaltered over the individual’s lifetime. *Prakriti* specific treatment, including prescription of medications, diet, and lifestyle, is a distinctive feature of *Ayurveda*. We hypothesize that *Prakriti* has a genetic connotation that could provide a tool for classifying the human population based on broad phenotype clusters”.<sup>[11]</sup>

Each *Dosha* gives certain characteristic qualities to the person, based on which an individual can be classified as belonging to that particular *Dosha* type. Charaka and Sushruta recognize seven types or categories into which people can be classified, depending on the dominance of the *Doshas* in their body. They are said to belong to a particular *Prakriti* or constitution as follows:

1. People with dominant *Vata Dosha*, i.e. *Vata Prakriti* (or constitution).
2. People with dominant *Pitta Dosha/Prakriti*.
3. People with dominant *Kapha Dosha/Prakriti*.
4. People with dominant *Vata–Pitta Dosha* combination/*Prakriti*.
5. People with dominant *Vata–Kapha Dosha* combination/*Prakriti*.
6. People with dominant *Pitta–Kapha Dosha* combination/*Prakriti*.
7. People with balanced *Doshas* or with *Vata–Pitta–Kapha Dosha* combination/*Prakriti*.

This is accepted by all the different schools of *Ayurveda*, i.e. Charaka, Sushruta, Vagbhata, etc., to name a few. Varahamihira’s *Brhat Samhita* too has given detailed delineations of the human characteristics.<sup>[12]</sup>

## Delineation of the *Trigunas—Sattva, Rajas and Tamas*

*Prakriti* is composed of three *Gunas*: *Sattva* (white, knowledge, happiness, *pra*), *Rajas* (red, activity, pain, *kr*) and *Tamas* (dark, resistance or inertia, confusion, *ti*). Thus, it is endowed with all the necessary and sufficient powers of production, preservation and dissolution of the phenomenal world. Mainly, it is the material cause of multiplicity.<sup>[13]</sup>

The three *Gunas—Sattva, Rajas* and *Tamas*—also promote different kinds of temperament based on the dominance of one or the other *Gunas*. The temperament of a person can be discerned based on the “mode of worship, the type of food consumed and other activities of everyday life”.<sup>[14]</sup>

Sushruta clearly describes the five *Mahabhutas* as being constituted by the *Trigunas*. According to him (S.S. III. 1.20.),<sup>[15]</sup> *Akasa* is predominant with *Sattva*, *Vayu* with *Rajas*, *Agni* with *Sattva–Rajas*, *Ap (Jala)* with *Sattva–Tamas*, and *Prithvi* with *Tamas*. Inferentially, since both Charaka and Sushruta clearly state that *Vata Dosha* is a combination of *Akasa* and *Vayu*, *Pitta Dosha* of *Agni* and *Ap* and *Kapha Dosha* of *Ap* and *Prithvi*, we can deduce the *Gunas* that are predominant in each of them. Hence, *Vata Dosha* is a combination of *Sattva* and *Rajas Gunas* but is referred to as being predominantly *Rajasic*—as *Rajas Guna* overtakes or is stronger than the *Sattva Guna*. *Pitta Dosha* is said to be more *Sattvic* in nature, though it has an element of *Rajas* and *Tamas* in it. *Kapha Dosha* is said to be more *Tamasic* in nature though it has an element of *Sattva* in it (but no *Rajas*). Hence, we understand the *Doshas* in respect of the *Gunas* exhibited by them due to the relative dominance of one or the other *Pancha Mahabhutas* that they are made up of. “This *Trigunatmaka* description of the constitution of *Pancha Bhutas* is the most applied aspect of philosophical concept of *Gunas* in the field of science and medicine”.<sup>[16]</sup> This is invaluable in deducing the behavior exhibited by individuals depending on the dominance of one or the other *Dosha* or *Guna* that is constitutionally present in the person from conception—which is referred to as the particular *Prakriti–Guna* combination that a person exhibits. This *Prakriti–Guna* combination is unique to every individual and is not changeable during the course of their lifetime.<sup>[16]</sup>

Each *Guna* gives certain characteristic qualities to the person, based on which an individual can be classified as belonging to that particular *Guna* type. Charaka and Sushruta recognize seven types or categories into which people can be classified, depending on the dominance of the *Gunas* in their body. They are said to belong to a particular *Guna* combination, as follows:

1. People with dominant *Sattva Guna*.
2. People with dominant *Rajas Guna*.
3. People with dominant *Tamas Guna*.
4. People with dominant *Sattva–Rajas Guna* combination.
5. People with dominant *Sattva–Tamas Guna* combination.
6. People with dominant *Rajas–Tamas Guna* combination.
7. People with balanced *Gunas* or with *Sattva–Rajas–Tamas Guna* combination.

(*Charaka*<sup>[17]</sup> and *Sushruta Samhitas*,<sup>[16]</sup> Vagbhata’s *Ashtanga Hridaya*,<sup>[18]</sup> and *Dhanwantari* by Johari<sup>[19]</sup> and many other books and classical texts have emulated references to these seven types of *Doshas* and *Gunas*.)

Krishnan<sup>[14]</sup> says that Varaha Mihira, an eminent scholar,

using the “Guna” theory, presents a sevenfold classification of persons. They are *Sattvic*, *Rajasic*, *Tamasic*, *Sattvic-Rajasic*, *Sattvic-Tamasic*, *Rajasic-Tamasic*, and *Sattvic-Rajasic-Tamasic*. Quite evidently, the mixed types are recognized too, other than the basic three types of *Gunas*.

In the Indian psychological literature, *Guna* theory is already empirically tested and accepted.<sup>[1]</sup>

“Mental disposition (*Sattva*) is basically threefold: pure (*suddha*), violent (*Rajasa*), and dull (*Tamasa*), depending on the prevalence of each of the three *Gunas*. The first is largely free from defects (specially abnormalities with respect to speech, thought and bodily behavior), while the other two are defective or abnormal. The distinction is between the disease-free (the first type) and the disease-prone types (the other two types). Among the disease-prone types, one is dominated by excessive activity prompted by anger and other emotions, while the other is dominated by inactivity due to delusions and confusion. Each of these has varieties depending upon physical characteristics and psychological tendencies. It is recognized that the mind and the body are interdependent and that there is an impact of the mind on the body and of the body on the mind. There is also a hierarchical notion in describing the pure type as the best (*sreshtha*), the violent type as middling (*madhya*) and the dull type as the worst (*adhama*).<sup>[13]</sup>

Besides the basic seven types of *Prakriti* (*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* and their blends), *Ayurveda* recognizes 16 types of personalities based on the classical *Guna* theory. Both *Charaka* and *Sushruta Samhitas* have a description of these types. According to them, there are 7 types of *Sattva*, 6 of *Rajas* and 3 of *Tamas*, totaling 16 types of personalities under which all people can be grouped.

The seven types of *Sattva* are: *Brahma Sattva*, *Mahendra Sattva*, *Varuna Sattva*, *Kubera Sattva*, *Gandharva Sattva*, *Yama Sattva* and *Rishi Sattva*.

The six types of *Rajas Sattva* are: *Asura Sattva*, *Rakshasa Sattva*, *Paisaca Sattva*, *Sarpa Sattva*, *Praita Sattva* and *Sakuna Sattva*.

The three types of *Tamas Sattva* are *Pasava Sattva*, *Matsya Sattva* and *Vanaspatya Sattva*.

## Discussion

Keeping the above in the backdrop, the authors wish to develop their arguments on four issues as follows.

### **Trigunas are the psychological manifestations of the Tridoshas**

This sevenfold classification of people with respect to the *Gunas* is similar to the sevenfold classification of people with respect to the *Dosha Prakriti*. In fact, it is identical in as much as one is concerned with the body constitution (*Doshas* = *physical* = *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha Prakriti*), while the other is concerned with the mental or psychological characteristics exhibited by people with these *Doshas* (*Gunas* = *psychological* = *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas Gunas*). Taking these two striking classifications one step further, it would not be wrong to say that the physical constitution leads to the corresponding psychological attributes in a person or vice versa as both are interdependent. Indian tradition does not share the Cartesian

dichotomy of the body and the mind as is common in western psychological thinking. In fact, the interplay between the mind (*Sattva*), soul (*Atman*) and body (*Sharira*) in a tripod allusion is the cornerstone of *Ayurvedic* philosophy.<sup>[8]</sup>

### **Interaction of Tridosha and Triguna to complement the psyche of man**

In the words of Charaka, “The psyche is of three types—Pure, *Rajas* and *Tamasa*. The pure is said as devoid of defects due to having beneficial fraction whereas *Rajasa* and *Tamasa* are defective because of the fractions of agitation and ignorance respectively. Out of these three types of psyche, each one has got innumerable sub-divisions due to relative degrees and variations in interaction of psyche and body according to species. Body follows psyche and vice versa. Hence some of the types of psyche are described here as illustrations by showing their similarity with some well known symbols”.<sup>[17]</sup> After this, Charaka goes on to describe the 16 personality traits with examples, which has not been quoted here for obvious constraints. Though Charaka has described the 16 personality traits, he has not detailed them as much as he has detailed the biological aspects of personality, namely *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha Prakritis*. For a further understanding of the psychological aspects of these physical traits, we have to look elsewhere for the delineation.

“There are two basic laws of the *Gunas* that are crucial in understanding their workings. The first law of the *Gunas* is ‘the law of alternation’. The three *Gunas* are ever in dynamic interaction. All three forces remain intertwined, affecting each other in various ways. *Rajas* and *Tamas* exist in the field of *Sattva*, *Tamas* and *Sattva* are found in the field of *Rajas*, and *Sattva* and *Rajas* move in the field of *Tamas*. The essence of the three qualities is their interplay. Rarely is seen pure *Tamas*, pure *Rajas* or pure *Sattva*. There must ever be readiness for the *Gunas* to change. The second law of the *Gunas* is ‘the law of continuity’. The *Gunas* tend to hold their particular natures for a certain period once they come into dominance. Substances stabilize on the level of one of the three *Gunas*. While it is initially is difficult for *Tamas* to become *Rajas*, or for *Rajas* to become *Sattva*, once they do so they will continue in that same quality”.<sup>[20]</sup>

### **Understanding the working of Tridosha and Triguna to categorize/typcast people**

The classification of people into types can be noticed in a variety of literature ranging from dramaturgy (where it is restricted to heroes and heroines leading to around 384 varieties or types)<sup>[14]</sup> to sexual science like *Rathisastra* or *Kamasutra* where the authors expound about the classification of men and women on the basis of their physical and psychological characteristics. This shows that typology or categorizing people into different categories is not a new field of enterprise where Indian knowledge systems are concerned. Hence, being able to making use of this pre-existing knowledge base to develop the field further would be an obvious step in the same direction.

Although *Ayurveda* recognizes the uniqueness of every individual, generalization and classification of people into categories is necessary. To quote Shakespeare, “All men are not alike, clay and clay differs in dignity, whose dust is both alike”

(Cymbelline, 11-2) and Plato's aphorism too is relevant in this context—"It is far more important to know as to what type of a person suffers from a disease rather than what disease the person is suffering from".<sup>[21]</sup>

According to Frawley,<sup>[20]</sup> "Yoga examines individuals in terms of their mental/spiritual level according to the three *Gunas*. *Ayurveda* looks at individuals in terms of their psychophysical constitution through the three *Doshas*. Yet *Ayurveda* also considers the role of the *Gunas* as factors of mental health and well-being and *yoga* considers the *Doshas* relative to physiological functioning. For a complete ascertainment of the individual nature, both the *gunic* and *doshic* natures must be considered.... The *Doshas* are a biological classification that is horizontal in application with no necessary spiritual implications. A *Vata* type may be a saint or a sinner; the same is the case with the other two types. The *Gunas* are a spiritual classification that is vertical in nature. It has no necessary physical implications. A saint or sinner may be *Vata*, *Pitta* or *Kapha* in body" (pg. 46). Hence, it is necessary to understand and categorize people according to both the *Tridosha* and the *Triguna* classification as has been delineated in ancient Indian texts and scriptures. Trying to study people in exclusion of the other will not give a complete picture of the nature of human personality, which is a complex interplay of thoughts, emotions, predispositions and behavior, both conditioned and unconditioned.

### Effects of imbalance of the *Tridoshas* and *Trigunas*: Its predictive value

By knowing the inherent qualities of a person, it is easy to categorize a person as belonging to any of these three *Doshas*. But can all people be categorized into just these three groups knowing how wide a spectrum of differences we can see in them, in each and every aspect, be it the physicality or the psychological tendencies that they exhibit? What about those people who exhibit a combination of two or more *Doshas*? How and where are they to be represented? At this point of merger, can't a new group of people be created who exhibit the traits of both the categories that this line is trying to bifurcate? It is not possible that the *Doshas* are in balance at all times. How is the imbalance of the *Doshas* to be understood? How can the imbalance and the resultant state of behavior and thought processes that are exhibited by this imbalance be predicted? Can this imbalance be brought back into a state of balance? If so, as is dictated by *Ayurvedic* principles, then how is it to be done? What would be the resultant predictive value of these *Tridoshas* and *Trigunas*? How can this and their consequent behavior be understood? This is not only highly probable but very possible too, as dictated by logic and as stated in the *Charaka* and *Sushruta Samhitas*, and also in Vagbhatacharya's *Ashtanga Hridaya*. This viewpoint is expressed by Varaha Mihira<sup>[12]</sup> in his classification of people too.

"The three *Gunas* comprise the magnetic field for the soul. One *Guna* usually predominates and polarizes our mind and life according to its qualities. Souls become *Sattvic*, *Rajasic* or *Tamasic* in nature. However, in the ordinary, unrefined field of human nature, one *Guna* seldom prevails. After a time the other *Gunas* must assert themselves. Our lives are an interplay of dullness, distraction and virtue, with shifting currents of good and evil, truth and falsehood.... Only a rare human

being can become so totally dominated by one *Guna* that the other *Gunas* lose their power. Such extreme types are the hardened criminal or complete *Tamasic* type, the super achiever or complete *Rajasic* type, and the selfless saint or complete *Sattvic* type, but even these types can have their admixtures of the other *Gunas*. Both *Ayurveda* and *yoga* seek to reduce the lower *Gunas* of *Rajas* and *Tamas*. They are factors of mental and physical disease which *Ayurveda* addresses and the spiritual ignorance that *yoga* seeks to dispel".<sup>[20]</sup>

According to Rao,<sup>[22]</sup> "Plato observed that: "For this is the great error of our day that Physicians separate the Soul from Body.... *Ayurveda* says that the mind possesses three *Gunas* (attributes), viz. *Satva*, *Tamo* and *Rajo* (invisible qualities and energies), which are responsible for its activity on the body. Hindu scientists recognized this fact. After their deep study of the mind and its various acts, they grouped the activities of the mind into three categories and coined three generic names for each group as *Satvika*, *Rajasika* and *Tamasika*. Mind acts on the body through its *Trigunas* (three attributes) and their material states are *Pancha Bhutas*, which in the physical body constitute bio-chemicals. In other words, the bio-chemicals are the physical agents of *Trigunas*. *Trigunas* in their subtle states are energies, qualities of the mind. Mind acts on the body through *Trigunas*, *Pancha Bhutas* (the primordial elements which constitute the animate and inanimate objects of the universe) are the physical basis for three *Doshas*. The three *Doshas* trigger the endocrine and exocrine glands and specific nerves to release appropriate bio-chemicals (neuro-humors) at appropriate time, which in turn trigger the relevant organs to act accordingly".

"Thus the involvement of the mind has impact on the hormonal balance of the body and its activities.... The *Trigunas*, which are the qualities of the mind, are responsible for the difference in the moods (attitudes). The *Trigunas* transform into different combinations of *Tanmatras*, (which are the subtle physical forms of *Trigunas*), which form into thought waves and carry them to the target places. (Three *Dhatu/Doshas* are the bio-physical factors that govern the various activities of the physical body both in health and ill health, respectively.) There, the *Tanmatras*, which are subtle, transform into gross form of *Pancha Bhutas*. These are innate forms of *Tridoshas* that transform into bio-chemical substances (hormones, etc.) in a rapid succession to play their role in the physiology of the microcosm. There are two kinds of thought waves. One is "sensory thought waves" created by efferent nerve impulses, which derive their stimulation from external sources—sensory organs. These waves are those that move from a particular sensory object toward the mind. The second one is "motor thought waves" created by afferent nerve impulses which derive their stimulation from internal organs/sources that emanate from the mind in response to the sensory thought wave carrying the orders of the mind to the target places of action. Some are created directly from the mind as a consequence of any psychological episode and move toward the target places".<sup>[22]</sup>

"Mind influences the physiology and pathology of the physical body. This fact was realized by the founding fathers of *Ayurveda*. Therefore *Ayurveda* is defined as a philosophy and science of life..." (pg. 40). "It is the *Sattva Guna* that is responsible for preparing the mind to produce positive thought waves. *Sattva Guna* tries to bring a balance between the *Rajo* and *Tamo*

*manasika Doshas*, the pathological psychic factors, which are finally responsible for the disturbance of the three somatic factors (*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*). These three somatic factors are responsible for the various body ailments".<sup>[22]</sup>

Though there is some amount of work that is done in the field of *Ayurveda* by scientists to establish the scientific validity of the *Tridoshas*, there is a possibility and a need to empirically test and validate it from the domain of psychology. This would also lead to a better categorizing of people based on the *Trigunas*, where people know their inherent psychological constitution, modes of behavior and conduct, which would help them to understand themselves better, leading to better adjustment in both personal and professional lives. The ripple effect of this would be to choose the best people suited for a particular field of enquiry/work, wherein people are satisfied in their chosen professions, giving rise to a more harmonious society. The advantage of developing testing procedures that are in alignment with the laws of nature are evident, to say the least, where they would be applicable the world over, without cultural and racial overtones or biases. The uses and benefits of this exercise are innumerable and far outweigh the difficulties that would be faced in trying to develop a test of such truly global standards and applicability.

## Conclusions

By importing the knowledge systems of *Ayurveda* and the other ancient Indian scriptures which delineate the working of human behavior and mind in detail, psychology as a science would be enriched, and be able to provide answers to many questions which are puzzling western scientists even today to a large extent. Psychology is going to gain from this exercise of going within and deep into the matter of philosophical speculation that forms an integral part of Indian psychological thought and practice.

In the above backdrop, it should be possible to group people based on their physical characteristics and be able to predict their psychological manifestations. This would also give us an opportunity to see what kinds of people are prone to which kind of health risks and how it could be avoided or cured. This would also give medical professionals an opportunity to prevent diseases rather than look for cures alone. The opportunities that this field of enquiry has to offer across different spheres of human functioning today are unlimited, to say the least.

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## हिन्दी सारांश

# आयुर्वेदिक दृष्टिकोण से व्यक्तित्व का मनोवैज्ञानिक मूल्यांकन – एक अध्ययन

शिल्पा एस., सी.जी. वेंकटेशमूर्ति

‘व्यक्तित्व’ का अध्ययन काफी समय से मनोवैज्ञानिकों को आकर्षित कर रहा है। ‘व्यक्तित्व’ अध्ययन के क्षेत्र में इतना बढ़ गया है कि इस पर साहित्य का अपार खजाना उपलब्ध है। दूसरी ओर, मानव जाति की सामाजिक –जातीय गतिशीलता इस उभरते वैश्विक संदर्भ में मनोवैज्ञानिकों को ‘व्यक्तित्व सिद्धान्त’ को विकसित करने को प्रेरित कर रही है। ताकि संस्कृति, जाति और जन्म की विभिन्नता के बावजूद व्यक्तित्व अध्ययन की सार्वभौमिक व प्रासंगिक उपयोगिता सिद्ध हो सके। इस उभरती पृष्ठभूमि में शायद ‘आयुर्वेद’ की एक महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका है क्योंकि व्यक्तित्व के लक्षण और प्रकार को एक सैद्धान्तिक व अनुभवजन्य आधार प्रदान करने में यह सक्षम है। ये आयुर्वेदिक अवधारणाएं सम्पूर्ण मानव जाति को जाति, रंग व लिंग भेद के बावजूद लागू होती हैं। अतः इस ‘आयुर्वेदिक’ ज्ञान को, जिसने प्राचीनकाल से इतना कुछ दिया है और व्यक्तित्व के कई मुद्दों को मनोवैज्ञानिक परिपेक्ष्य में मान्य किया है, का निर्माण दिलचस्प है। सत्व, रज और तामस गुणों को समझने में पहले से कुछ प्रयास चल रहे हैं। इन प्रयासों को और आगे बढ़ाया जा सकता है, ताकि एक व्यापक व्यक्तित्व चित्र, उत्पन्न किया जा सके अथवा इसका सृजन किया जा सके जो स्वास्थ्य, कैरियर, शिक्षा और जीवन के कई अन्य आयामों के निहितार्थ हो सके। प्रस्तुत शोधपत्र एक व्यक्तित्व – प्रस्ताव जिसका वैधिकरण किया जा सके, को विकसित करने का एक सैद्धान्तिक प्रयास है। अतः यह लेख उनके व्यक्तित्व प्रस्ताव के संभव अनुभवजन्य वैधता के लिए केवल एक सैद्धान्तिक ढांचा बनाता है।



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