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TITLE

Clinical Assessment of *Prakriti* - A Pilot Study

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ABSTRACT

Background: Assessment of *Prakriti* (individual constitution) is one among the basic principles and ten major steps of examination of patients explained in Ayurveda. Individuals possessing constitution with equilibrium of three *Dosha* (bodily humors) named *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* are said to be excellent and those with two *Dosha* dominancy are condemnable. The persons with constitution of single *Dosha* predominance are said to be inferior, mediocre and good depending upon the respective *Dosha* involvement. In present day clinical practice, due to various reasons the assessment of *Prakriti* is being overlooked. **Aim:** The present study was aimed at analysis of physical features in gross level *Prakriti* assessment. **Materials & Methods:** The present pilot study was a single group single centre selective sampling survey study on 25 healthy adult participants who were included in the study after obtaining informed consent. 16 selected physical features of different *Prakriti* as per classical textbooks of Ayurveda were assessed in them with the use of specially prepared questionnaire. The observations made on each feature were given scores from 0 to 1 and the scores were summarized to calculate the percentage. *Prakriti* was assessed based on the percentage obtained for individual *Dosha*. **Results:** Among 25 participants, physical features of *Vata Dosha* were found to be 36.75% and that of *Pitta Dosha* and *Kapha Dosha* were 38.75% and 24.5% respectively. It was observed that 80 % of the participants belonged to *Tridoshaja Prakriti* whereas 20% belonged to *Dwidoshaja Prakriti*. It was also observed that the participants had a few clinical symptoms in common such as lumbago, menstrual irregularities, digestive disorders and constipation. **Conclusion:** At a gross level, assessment of *Prakriti* of individuals can be drawn by direct observation during clinical examination which will serve as a good tool in planning primary health care strategies in present day clinical practice. The study also demonstrated assessment of *Prakriti* in individuals who have limitations in effective communication. Studies in larger group are necessary to establish the same further.

Keywords: Individual Constitution, Physical Features, *Pratyaksha Pramana*, *Prakriti*, *Tridosha*

Introduction

Ayurveda is the science of life which stick on to the individualistic approach in both health care and cure of diseases. According to the principles of Ayurveda all individuals cannot be considered or treated in the same way or with same medicines. One of the major factors which makes individuals different from each other is *Prakriti* (Individual constitution) which influences their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual attitudes. The formation of individual constitution happens at the time of formation of *Grabha* (embryo). [1] This individual constitution is formed due to the dominance of three *Dosha* (body humors) which are called as the three pillars of life and on which the formation, health and disease state of an individual are dependent upon. At the time of formation of embryo which *Dosha* dominates, the constitution of the individual will be of the same *Dosha* dominancy. [2] The individuals possessing *Prakriti* formed by the balanced state of three *Dosha* is said to remain disease free in general and those who has constitution predominant with single *Dosha*, is said to be always suffering from one or the other health issues.[3] Thus possessing a good *Prakriti* itself is said to be the state of *Arogya* (Health). [4]

While describing the examination of patients, *Acharya Charaka* specifies that to understand and analyze the strength of an individual and the affected disease a clinician should examine a patient on the basis of *Dasha Vidha Pariksha* (Ten parameters of examination). [5] *Prakriti* is the first among them which shows the importance of its assessment in successful health care. There are seven major types of constitution explained in the classics of Ayurveda depending upon the predominance of individual *Dosha* namely *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*; predominance of two *Dosha* namely *Vata Pitta*, *Vata Kapha* and *Pitta Kapha* and equal dominance of three *Dosha* named *Sama Dosha Prakriti*. [6] *Prakriti* of an individual is influenced by these *Dosha* and accordingly physical, mental, emotional and intellectual features are seen in individuals. Thus a precise analysis of *Prakriti* incorporates exploration of multiple factors due to which it becomes time consuming task in routine clinical practice.

Many a times assessment of *Prakriti* considering multiple factors stay unfeasible due to lack of proper time, effort and interest of individuals in current clinical practice. But to have a proper treatment or health care strategy, examination of *Prakriti* of an individual is of utmost importance in clinical practice. Many a times it happens so that the patient or individual will be suffering from some disorders which hamper effective communication as in deafness, dumbness, behavioural disorders, psychological disorders and paralysis. Especially in younger children lack of proper communication stands as a major problem in history taking and clinical examination too. These issues initiated the present study as a preliminary attempt of *Prakriti* assessment by means of physical features alone which may give a gross idea about the *Dosha* involvement and thus a clinician can plan a primary treatment protocol or healthy lifestyle and diet based on the same. The present study was aimed at analysis of *Prakriti* at a gross level by assessment of physical features.

Methodology

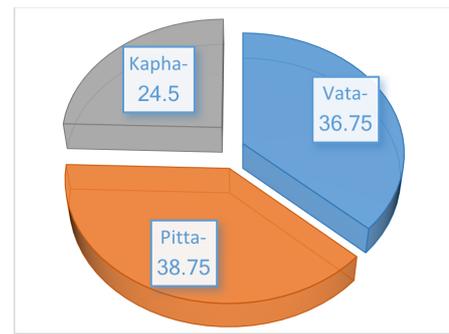
The present study was planned as a pilot study which was single centre single arm selective sampling survey study to monitor the feasibility and significance of assessment of *Prakriti* depending upon the physical features of the selected participants. The inclusion criteria was fixed as healthy volunteers of age between 17 to 70 years and those who gave consent to be included in the study. The exclusion criteria was those individuals suffering from any active illness and who are under treatment for the same. A total of 25 healthy volunteers were included in the study.

The method of data collection was by the use of a specially prepared questionnaire containing 16 selected physical features of *Prakriti* assessment according to the classical textual references in Ayurveda (Table no. 1). Each response was recorded and given scores accordingly from 0 to 1 to calculate the final score of individual features related to each *Dosha*. The sum was calculated and percentage of each *Dosha* specific features and according to each *Dosha* involvement, gross *Prakriti* was assessed.

Observations & Results

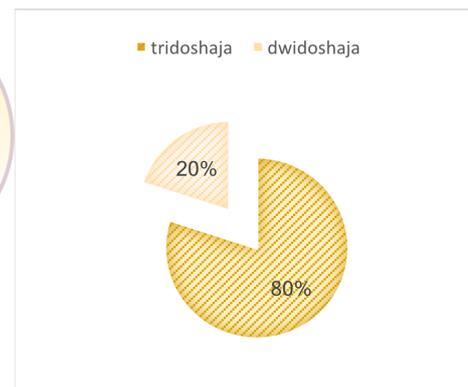
Among the 25 participants, physical features of each *Dosha* was calculated and presented as percentage. The features of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* *Dosha* were found to be in the following percentages respectively. (Chart no.1)

Chart No.1: Percentage of individual *Dosha* features in the participants



By analyzing the features of individual *Dosha*, percentage of participants belonging to *Tridoshaja* and *Dwidoshaja* *Prakriti* were also calculated as per shown in the Chart no.2.

Chart No.2: Percentage of *Tridoshaja* and *Dwidoshaja* *Prakriti* in the participants



Apart from *Prakriti*, it was also observed that the participants had a few clinical symptoms in common such as lumbago, menstrual irregularities, digestive disorders and constipation.

Discussion

Prakriti is a state where there will be balance of all *Dosha* and when there is derangement in this balanced state, onset of a disease happens. Assessing *Prakriti* is a better tool in selecting diet and lifestyle and planning the treatment strategy. Being one among the *Dasha Vidha Pariksha*, it is necessary to assess *Prakriti* of every individual during clinical examination. Although questionnaires are available which incorporates all the features of individual *Prakriti*, many times patients or individuals do not spare their time and take efforts to answer those questions to assess their *Prakriti*.

Table no. 1: Questionnaire containing 16 selected physical features of *Prakriti* assessment

Features	Vata	Pitta	Kapha
Frame of arms	Short and thin	Medium	Tough, thick, well built
Forehead	Small irregular margin	Medium sized irregular margin	Large straight margin
Eyebrows and eyelashes	Scanty, dry, irregular	Scanty brownish	Dense, smooth and moist
Hair	Scanty dry irregular	Brownish baldness	Dense, smooth and moist
Eyes	Small sized lacks glow, round unsteady, remains partially open during sleep	Medium sized reddish/yellowish	Almond sized and beautiful
Sclera	Smoky, blackish	Reddish/yellowish	White, glowing
Iris	Blackish	Blue/green/grey	Black
Nose	Small with their covering skin	Suitable for face	Big with thick covering skin
Lips	Dry, small sized cracked	Thin, red, small sized	Thick moist Big sized
Teeth	Irregular in shape & placement cracked & muddy	Yellowish regular in shape and placement	With big sized, regular in shape and placement
Tongue	Dry, small sized cracked	Thin, red small sized	Thick, flashy moist, big sized
Skin	Thin, dry, cracked rough	Soft, oily, has tendency to develop skin disease	Thick moist smooth
Complexion	Dark brown blackish	Pinkish	Fair
Palms	Small sized, dry, cracked has numerous palm lines	Medium sized, soft hot on touching sweating	Big sized fleshy, soft less palm lines
Soles	Small sized, dry cracked	Medium sized, soft, sweating	Big sized, fleshy, soft, big sized moist
Nails	Small sized, dry, brittle	Medium sized, pinkish, soft	Medium sized, pinkish, soft

* Size is measured based upon the *Svanguli Pramana* (measuring through ones own finger). The size of middle phalanx of middle finger of the volunteer is measured and converted into cms. Later the above parts are measured through tape and converted into *Anguli Pramana*, based upon which Small, Medium and Big sizes are defined.

The present study was planned to assess *Prakriti* at a basic level by observing the physical features of the participants which can be done in an easier way even at clinical set up. Although *Prakriti* assessment is based upon the physical, mental and emotional characteristics of an individual, assessing all the parameters in a limited time always stand as a challenging task. To overcome this limitation, the present study was planned to check the feasibility of assessing gross level *Prakriti* by considering only physical appearance of an individual.

Ayurveda insists on four *Pramana* (tools which helps in gaining any sort of knowledge) namely, *Aptopadesa* (Words of wisdom by scholars/sages), *Pratyaksha* (Direct observation), *Anumana* (Supposition) and *Yukti* (Logical reasoning). [7] In the present study for analysis of *Prakriti*, both *Aptopadesha* and *Pratyaksha Pramana* were used. *Pratyaksha Pramana* (direct observation) is a tool to validate the knowledge in the form of inspection of patients which can be adopted as an easy method to assess *Prakriti* at a gross level. By direct observation of physical features, the participants have filled the questionnaire with the assistance of the researchers.

Among the 25 participants, those with *Tridoshaja Prakriti* were more compared to *Dwidoshaja Prakriti*. As this was a pilot study involving only physical features, the importance of type of *Prakriti* according to number of *Dosha* involved stands trivial. The clinical ailments revealed by the participants such as lumbago, menstrual irregularities, digestive disorders and constipation need more thorough evaluation to connect its incidence in relation to their *Prakriti*. It is stated in Ayurveda that the individuals are prone to suffer from similar complaints to that of predominant *Dosha* forming their *Prakriti*.

The present study of *Prakriti* analysis plays an important role in case of individuals with defective communication such as disorders of speech, deafness, dumbness, facial palsy, psychological disorders and also in infants and children. In such cases, information regarding emotional and physiological factors involved in *Prakriti* cannot be assessed well. So to assess *Prakriti* in such cases direct observation of physical features will be an effective tool.

On an average, the time taken by the selected participants to fill the questionnaire of *Prakriti* was 10-15 minutes. Thus this can be made use of in the large scale study of *Prakriti*. The data analysis of the present study was a preliminary assessment which should be under the guidance of a statistician for the large scale study.

Conclusion

The present study demonstrated the preliminary assessment of *Prakriti* on the basis of only physical features of participants using questionnaire method. A main study with large sample size will be feasible with the same protocol for assessing gross *Prakriti* of individuals by analyzing physical features. As *Prakriti* does not only depend upon the physical features of an individual, the present method may be used as a preliminary tool to assess *Prakriti* and specifically in such individuals who are restricted in effective communication both in healthy and diseased. The protocol followed in this study is limited to only physical features in relation to *Prakriti* and so this cannot be considered as a complete assessment of *Prakriti*.

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