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Interrelatedness of Tridoshas and Trigunas in Personality An Empirical Investigation

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Tridoshas and Trigunas are composed of the Pancha Mahabhuta. One or the other Dosha and Guna is dominant singularly or in combination in man. There can never be a state when one or the other Pancha Mahabhutas and consequently the Tridoshas and Trigunas are absent totally. All are essential to sustain life. Though Tridosha and to a lesser extent Triguna is studied, understood and applied in Ayurveda, the present authors have studied their interrelatedness in the present study. They have studied the interrelatedness of the Tridoshas and their implications for our understanding of an integrated personality composition at the physical and psychological level wherein both are intrinsically related to one another.

Key words: Tridosha, Vata, Pitta, Kapha, Triguna, Sattva, Rajas, Tamas, Personality assessment.

One of the basic tenets of all systems of Indian philosophy is that man is a microcosm of the macrocosmic 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 with different combinations and degrees. Here, by elements is meant the five mahabhutasthat is Akasa, Vayu, Tejas, Ap and Prithvi. (Ether, air, fire, water and earth proto-elements respectively). These five elements combine with each other to form the three humors of Vata, Pitta and Kapha, (also called the Tridoshas in unison) which is the corner stone of Ayurvedic philosophy. (Sharma, P., 1981; 2004; Murthy, K.R.S. 2007). The Tridoshas are composed of all the Pancha Mahabhutas, but one or the other is predominant, with the other four in lesser dominance. There can never be a state when one or the other Pancha Mahabhuta is absent totally. All five are essential to sustain life. The Tridoshas constitute the physical-physiological components and are designed to understand

the physiology and pathology of living organisms including human beings.

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 (Rao, 1987;161). 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" (Krishnan, 2002). The Trigunas constitute the psychological components and govern all animate and inanimate existence. They also influence forces of living which are conceptualized as Vata, Pitta and Kapha. The behavior of human physiology, psychophysiology and patho-physiology

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reflect the *Vata-Pitta-Kapha* (*Tridosha*) dynamics, and this understanding helps in devising various assessments, treatments and management strategies.

The present authors have attempted to study the relationship between the Tridosha and Triguna. They have developed and standardized scales to assess psychological aspects of Tridosha and Triguna. This paper is the result of the study conducted wherein the ancient scriptures of Indian origin and tradition were consulted in devising Scales to understand and assess personality-both physical-physiological (Tridoshas) and psychological (Trigunas). Tridoshas are the physical components of the personality and the Trigunas are the psychological components of the personality. Both need to be studied and understood in tandem for a holistic understanding of personality. Negating the effect of either on the other is detrimental to the health and well being of an individual. With the above understanding in the backdrop, the present authors have studied the interrelationships of Tridoshas and the Trigunas in human personality empirically.

Review of Literature

There have been many researches which have discussed the relevance of the Ayurvedic theories and their interpretation and contribution to the study of psyche (Balodhi, J.P. 1987., Reddy, et.al., 1987., Balodhi, J.P. 2005., and Kapur, M. 2008) from the psychological view point, both from the perspective of health and ill-health.

Attempts have been made to bring into public and scientific scrutiny the basic tenets of Ayurvedic physiology and its ramifications for modern understanding again from Ayurvedic viewpoint to bring home the implications for current understanding and future knowledge creation (Hankey, A. 2001, 2005a, 2005b, 2008., Dwivedi, C.B. 2002., Joshi, R.R. 2004., Lyssenko, V. 2004., and Dilipkumar, K.V. & Vaidyaratnam V.P. 2007). These studies have dealt with the Tridoshas and their actions on human behaviour and how they contribute to mental health. They also study the dominance of the Tridoshas in ill health and give suggestions for their treatments (Dube, K.C., et.al., 1983, and Rao, V.A. 2002a, 2002b).

Researchers have studied the personality dynamics quite fondly through the years, and how personality has been understood from different schools of Indian thought like the perspective from the view of Samkhya metaphysics (Balodhi, & Singh, 1985); the Vedic understanding (Werner, 1978); Maharishi's Vedic psychology (Dillbeck, 1990); a discussion as to how personality theories can be constructed according to Vedanta (Paranjpe, 1988); traditional Indian personality concepts and the unrealized potential for a paradigm shift (Naidu, 1994); the probabilistic orientation of personality (Narayanan, & Annalakshmi, 2001); personality, self and life events (Naidu, 2001); typological conceptions in ancient Indian thought in the classification of people/ personalities (Krishnan, 2002, Singh, 2007; and Shilpa & Murthy, 2011a); the different personality types-both Indian and Western (Deo, & Kulkarni, 2004); Indian concepts of personality (Dash & Rout, 2004; Mohan, 2005); the Indian concepts of self and personality (Srivastava, U. 2004); the Indian approach to personality development (Vimala, 2004); and personality, organizational climate and job involvement (Elankumaran, 2004).

The relevance of the guna theory in the congruence of Eastern values and Western management practices have been explored (Innes-Brown, & Chatterjee 1999) as also personal memory telling and personality development (Thorne, 2000). An attempt is also made to compare and contrast the description of personality types given in Indian and Western trait psychology with special reference to addictive personality (Deo, & Kulkarni, 2002); a critical analysis of the guna concept has also been undertaken (Murthy, & Kumar, 2007); while guna being the three modes of nature have been explored along with the soul force and the four fold personality (Cornelissen; Personal Communication); and the psycho-dynamics of pursuit of excellence is efficiently explored as a movement towards expanding and refining four basic human endowments (Tripathi, 2007).

From a psychological standpoint, the trigunas might be considered to be the three fundamental components of the human mind (Kulkarni, 1972), as the "tendencies exhibiting themselves at different levels of consciousness" (Pathak, 1932, p.110), as the three aspects of human temperament and personality (Boss, 1966; and Parameswaran, 1969), or as a theory of individual differences (Paranjpe, 1988, Sitamma, 2005). Thus, a lot of efforts have gone in understanding Triguna and Tridosha.

Tridosha: 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 *Susruta* 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* (constitution or) *Prakriti*.
- 2. People with dominant Pitta Prakriti.
- 3. People with dominant Kapha Prakriti.
- 4. People with dominant Vata-Pitta Prakriti.
- 5. People with dominant Vata-Kapha Prakriti.
- 6. People with dominant *Pitta-Kapha Prakriti*.
- 7. People with balanced *doshas* or with *Vata-Pitta-Kapha Prakriti*.

Trigunas: In the Indian Psychological literature, *Guna* theory is already empirically tested and accepted (Murthy, & Kumar, 2007). 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

Susruta 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.

Table 1 about here

Conceptual framework

The Ayurvedic literature has sufficiently enabled us to understand that *Tridosha* and *Triguna* are two aspects of psychophysical and psychological aspects of man. In this backdrop, there is a need to verify it empirically. If it is established empirically, it can not only add a new empirical knowledge but also can take personality testing from Indian Psychological perspective a step ahead. Keeping in view the above the present researchers have attempted to study the relationships between *Tridosha* and *Triguna* empirically. Accordingly, the following hypothesis was formulated and tested.

Hypothesis : "The *Tridoshas* and *Trigunas* are significantly correlated."

METHOD

Sample: The sample comprised 407 adults who belong to different occupational groups covering Teachers, IT Professionals and Police Personnel of Bangalore City.

Tools: Respondents were administered the Mysore *Tridosha* Scale and the Mysore *Triguna* Scale. The Mysore *Tridosha* Scale

Table 1

Salient Characteristics of Tridoshas and Trigunas

	Constructs					
	Vata	Unpredictable, erratic in all behaviour, fast, restless				
Tridosha	Pitta	Short tempered, precise, sharp and decisive				
	Kapha	Stable, predictable, slow, dedicated and thorough in all activities				
	Sattva	Intelligent, fortitude, gentle, truthful, benevolent, virtuou				
Triguna	Rajas	Energy, harsh, angry, excessive activity, strong emotions, inclining towards violence and aggression				
	Tamas	Mass, heavy, obstructing, ignorance or lack of knowledge (confused), inactivity, sleep (more), generally dejected always, indecent				

is a 51 item, 3 point rating scale with a combined Alpha score of 0.959 (Shilpa & Murthy, 2011b). The Mysore Triguna Scale is a 63 item, 3 point rating scale with fairly high concurrent validity and a combined Alpha score of 0.965 (Shilpa & Murthy, 2012). The obtained responses were scored and tabulated and were subjected to inter-correlations.

Results and Discussion

The V, P, K, and S, R and T scores were subjected to inter-correlations and their coefficients were obtained. The obtained responses were subjected to descriptive statistics and correlations. It yielded the following.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics of VPK and SRT

Descriptive Statistics							
N = 407	Mean	SD					
Vata	11.38	4.00					
Pitta	19.24	3.82					
Kapha	21.44	4.64					
Sattva	39.12	9.50					
Rajas	18.19	5.72					
Tamas	7.60	6.46					

An analysis of the above table indicates that the above sample is more Kapha dominated followed by Pitta and Vata relatively. This is the general trend seen of VPK. For SRT the sample has more of Sattva, followed by Rajas and Tamas. It was attempted to see how VPK was related to SRT through inter correlations which yielded the following.

Table 3 about here

An analysis of Table 3 indicates that Vata is found to be significantly and negatively correlated with *Pitta* and *Kapha*. This means that Vata is inversely related to Pitta and Kapha, and also that when Vata increases, Pitta and Kapha decreases. Further, it is seen that Vata is significantly and positively related to Rajas and Tamas, which means that Vata is directly related to Rajas and Tamas. As Vata increases, Rajas and Tamas increase and when one decreases the other also decreases. According to Ayurvedic literature, Vata is correlated to Rajas. Vata is also correlated to Tamas, as can be seen in the following citation "Niyatastvanubandho rajastamasoù parasparaà na hi arajaskaà tamaù pravartate" (Charka Samhita; Vimana

Correlations										
N = 407		Vata	Pitta	Kapha	Sattva	Rajas	Tamas			
Vata	Pearson Correlation	1	147**	448**	458**	.324**	.456**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003	.000	.000	.000	.000			
Pitta	Pearson Correlation	147**	1	039	.200**	.136**	078			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003		.432	.000	.006	.114			
Kapha	Pearson Correlation	448**	039	1	.414**	052	201**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.432		.000	.297	.000			
Sattva	Pearson Correlation	458**	.200**	.414**	1	478**	769**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000			
Rajas	Pearson Correlation	.324**	.136**	052	478**	1	.238**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.006	.297	.000		.000			
Tamas	Pearson Correlation	.456**	078	201**	769**	.238**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.114	.000	.000	.000				
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).										

 Table 3

 Salient Characteristics of Tridoshas and Trigunas

Sthana, 6/9). Moreover, Tamas features like Stena (stealing), Maatsarya (Para guna asahanasheela - intolerance to merits of others), Anarya (Asatpurusha - not a noble man) are also referred in Vata body types (Su. Sha. 64-66). On studying the characteristics of Vata, Pitta and Kapha, (Table 3), it can be seen that the characteristics of Vata do not correlate with that of Pitta or Kapha. This shows that Vata is totally different from Pitta and Kapha. Hence according to the classics this correlation stands empirically validated.

An analysis of Table 3 also indicates that *Pitta* is positively and significantly correlated to *Sattva* and *Rajas*. It means, as *Pitta* increases, *Sattva* and *Rajas* also increases, and when *Pitta* decreases, they also decrease. *Pitta* is also negatively and significantly correlated with *Vata*. According to Ayurvedic literature, as *Pitta* is called Agni, *Agni Mahabhuta* is structured as *Sattva-Rajo* bahulo Agni, this correlation is perfect. This is as per the scriptures, and this correlation too is justified and stands empirically validated. On studying the characteristics of *Vata, Pitta* and *Kapha*, (Table 3), it can be seen that the characteristics of *Pitta* do not correlate with that of either *Vata* or *Kapha*. Hence according to the classics this correlation also stands empirically validated.

An analysis of Table 3 indicates that *Kapha* is found to be positively significantly correlated to *Sattva*, while it is negatively and significantly correlated to *Vata* and *Tamas*. It means, as *Kapha* increases, *Sattva* increases and also that as *Kapha* increases *Vata* and *Tamas* decreases. According to Ayurvedic literature, it is possible, because *Kapha* in normal state performs the *manasa karma* as *Kshama*, *Dhriti*, *Alaulya* which are characteristics of *Sattva* also. On studying the characteristics of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*, (Table 3), it can be seen that the

characteristics of *Kapha* is contrasting with that of *Vata* and *Pitta*. Hence according to the classics and the characteristics also, this correlation stands empirically validated.

However, as per classics Manda (slow), Guru (heaviness), Asheeghraarambha (delayed initiation) features attributed to Tamas are also referred in Kapha body type but these features could not be obtained in this study. Here, in this study the Sattvic features in Kapha body type are observed but none of the Tamasic features are observed in Kapha body type.

An analysis of Table 3 indicates that Sattva is found to be positively and significantly related to Pitta and Kapha while it is negatively and significantly related to Vata, Rajas and Tamas. It means, as Sattva increases, Pitta and Kapha increases while Vata, Rajas and Tamas decrease. They are inversely related. According to Ayurvedic literature, Sattva is a combination of Pitta and Kapha and hence this correlation stands to be empirically validated. In the same way, the table indicates that as Sattva increases, Rajas and Tamas decreases. On studying the characteristics of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas (Table 3), it can be seen that the characteristics of Sattva does not go hand in hand with the characteristics of Rajas and Tamas. Hence this correlation also stands empirically validated.

An analysis of Table 3 indicates that Rajas is found to be significantly positively related to Vata, Pitta and Tamas, while it is significantly negatively correlated with Sattva. It means that as Rajas increases, Vata, Pitta and Tamas also increase. Also, it means that while Rajas increases, Sattva decreases. According to Ayurvedic literature also, generally Rajas is correlated with Vata and Pitta. Rajas can also be correlated to Tamas according to Charaka, "Niyatastvanubandho rajastamasoù parasparaà na hi arajaskaà tamaù pravartate." Charka Samhita; Vimana Sthana, 6/9. Hence according to the classics this correlation also (Rajas with Tamas) stands empirically validated. On studying the

characteristics of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas (Table 3), it can be seen that the characteristics of Rajas do correlate with that of Vata, Pitta, but not with that of Sattva or Tamas. This can be understood by the conclusion that Tamas is an occurrence/ repercussion of the increase of Vata and Raias which lead to manasik doshas and are responsible for awry psychodynamic presentations in normal subjects as well as in diseased states. They contribute equally and together in the manifestation of a thought or behaviour. In other words, a thought or behaviour is the sum total of Rajas and Tamas psychodynamics ("niyatastvanubandho rajastamasoù parasparaà) and not a mathematical result of minuses and pluses of Rajasic and Tamasic characteristics. The positive correlation between Rajas and Tamas in the present study proves that in the manas as the Rajas characteristics reach high, Tamas features also increase. It is important therefore to employ measures that can regulate both of these than to contemplate on measures for each of Rajas or Tamas separately. But on the other hand, the characteristics of Rajas do not read well with that of Sattva, thereby validating the scriptures empirically.

In normal individuals, the *gunas* are auto-regulated. This means that in normalcy, when the activity of *Rajas* (initiator) is increased, *Tamas* (regulator) also increases in order to compensate the activity and bring the *Rajas* to normal level in healthy individuals. But in diseased subjects, this auto-regulation may be deranged.

An analysis of Table 3 also indicates that *Tamas* is found to be significantly positively correlated with *Vata* and *Rajas*, while being significantly negatively correlated with *Kapha* and *Sattva*. It means that as *Tamas* increases, *Vata* and *Rajas* too increase. It also means that if *Tamas* increases, *Kapha* and *Sattva* decrease. The previous correlation states that *Rajas* is significantly positively related to *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Tamas*, while *Rajas* is significantly negatively correlated with *Sattva*. If this were to be converted to a mathematical equation, then the present correlation too holds good and is empirically validated in light of the validation of the previous correlations of *Rajas*. However, *Kapha* features like *Alasya* (laziness) have also been referred in *Tamas Prakriti* in the classics which could not be seen in this sample. On studying the characteristics of *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* (Table 3), it can be seen that the characteristics of *Tamas* cannot be correlated with that of *Sattva*. Hence this correlation also stands empirically validated.

Hence when both the scriptures and characteristics of each of the *Doshas* and *Gunas* are studied, it can be observed and concluded that all the correlations are empirically and scripturally validated and justified.

As discussed earlier, the Ayurvedic literature does indicate and state that the Tridoshas (VPK) are physical and that the Trigunas (SRT) are psychological aspects of human beings. Ayurveda also states that the body, mind and the Atma are like a tripod in beings, especially the humans. Hence, they both are significantly related. The present study validates this point empirically. Hence the Cartesian dichotomy of the body and the mind is negated while establishing the total inter-relatedness of the body and the mind. What affects the body effects the mind and vice versa. They both are indivisible parts of a whole and need to be studied in tandem and in relation with one another. Studying one without the other will not give us a true and clear understanding and picture of a person as a whole. Hence we can conclude that the Tridoshas and Trigunas are inter-related. This also empirically validates the interaction of physical and psychological aspects of personality.

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