

Understanding personality dynamics from ayurveda

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The *Ayurvedic* concepts are applicable to all human beings irrespective of caste, colour, sex or race. Therefore, it is interesting to build on the *Ayurvedic* knowledge which has already given us so much since times 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. No. of words in Abstract: 104 No. of words in Article: 1427 Total no. of words: 1658

Keywords: *tridoshas*, *trigunas*, *prakriti*, personality assessment, *pancha mahabhutas*

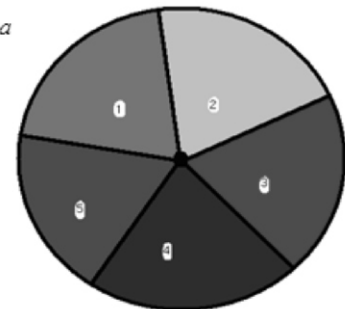
Ayurveda has drawn many of its principles from *Samkhya* Philosophy. Accordingly, the world is made up of the *Pancha Maha Bhutas*, which are *Akasa* (ether), *Vayu* (air), *Agni* (fire), *Ap* (water) and *Prithvi* (earth). One of the basic tenets of *Ayurveda* is that man is a microcosm of the very world that he inhabits.

This implies that whatever the world is made up of, man too is made up of those same things or *Pancha Maha Bhutas*, but with different combinations and degrees. In fact *Ayurveda* postulates that all living beings on the earth including the non-living too are made up of these same *Pancha Maha Bhutas* in varying degrees, specific to each form, matter and species, and according to a predetermined ratio that cannot be changed. These *Pancha Maha Bhutas* (*PMB*) combine with each other to form the three humors of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*, (also called as the *Tridoshas* in unison) which is the corner stone of *Ayurvedic* philosophy. [Jha (2004), Murthy (1996, 2007), Sharma, P. (1981)]. This pertains to the biological and the physiological aspect of man.

We know that the human body is made up of the *PMB*. These five combine to form the *Tridoshas* namely *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*, which every living entity is made up of.

Pictorial representation of the *Pancha Maha Bhutas*, along with colour identifications:

The *Pancha Maha Bhutas*:



- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. <i>Akasa Maha Bhuta</i> | == Light Blue Colour. |
| 2. <i>Vayu Maha Bhuta</i> | == Grey |
| 3. <i>Agni Maha Bhuta</i> | == Red. |
| 4. <i>Ap Maha Bhuta</i> | == Dark Blue. |
| 5. <i>Prithvi Maha Bhuta</i> | == Dark Brown. |

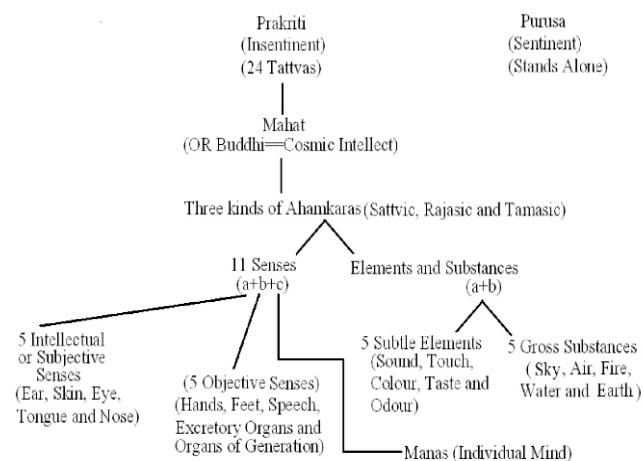
(The colours given to various *Maha Bhutas* (*MB*) are not prescribed in any text, but are those given by the authors, for a better understanding and conceptualization of the concepts and their interactions.)

The *Akasa* *MB* was the first to evolve and has only itself in it. From this evolved the *Vayu* *MB* which has itself and *Akasa* *MB* in it. This evolved into the *Agni* *MB* with itself, *Akasa* and *Vayu* *MB*'s. This further evolved into the *Ap* *MB* which consists of itself along with *Akasa*, *Vayu* and *Agni* *MB*'s.

This in turn evolved into the *Prithvi* *MB* which has itself and the other four *MB*'s. Hence *Akasa* *MB* is the first to evolve and has only itself, while the *Prithvi* *MB* is the heaviest which has all the other *MB*'s, with the other *MB*'s containing the previous evolutes in them along with their own *MB*'s.

The *Tridoshas* are composed of all the *PMB*, 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 *PMB* is absent totally. All five are essential to sustain life (Gupta, 2000).

Philosophical underpinnings from Samkhya:

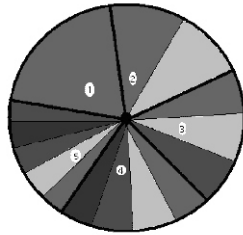


(The diagram is a pictorial representation of the *Samkhyan* (Jha, 2004) philosophical underpinnings of the evolution of this world and man, and is self explanatory. The information is based on *Samkhya* Philosophy; the pictorial representations here and elsewhere in the article are that of the authors only and not from any other source)

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Pancha Maha Bhutas (Continued):

- The *Akasa Mahabhuta* has only itself in it.
- The *Vayu Mahabhuta* has itself and *Akasa Mahabhuta* in it.
- The *Agni Mahabhuta* has itself, *Vayu* and *Akasa Mahabhutas* in it.
- The *Ap Mahabhuta* has itself, *Agni, Vayu* and *Akasa Mahabhutas* in it.
- The *Prithvi Mahabhuta* has itself, *Ap, Agni, Vayu* and *Akasa Mahabhutas* in it. Hence, *Prithvi* has all the elements or *Mahabhutas* in it in various combinations.



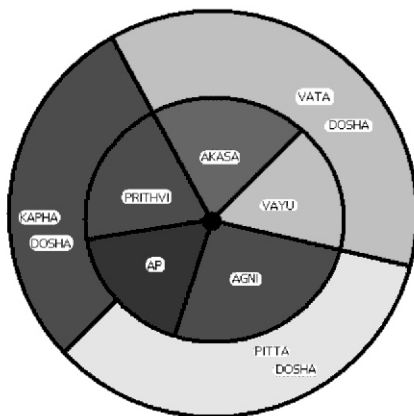
Vata Dosha is composed of *Akasa* (ether or sky) and *Vayu* (air) *MB*.

Pitta Dosha is composed of *Tejas* or *Agni* (fire) and *Ap MB*.

Kapha Dosha is composed of *Ap* (water) and *Prithvi* (earth) *MB*.

Each of these *PMB* are in turn responsible for the five organs of sense and their proper functioning, as follows (Athavale, 2004):

- *Akasa MB* = Sense of Hearing.
- *Vayu MB* = Sense of Touch.
- *Agni MB* = Sense of Vision.
- *Ap MB* = Sense of Taste.
- *Prithvi MB* = Sense of Smell.

Pancha Maha bhutas leading to Tridoshas

The *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 to humans alone, but are also attributed to almost all living beings including the food we eat, and all other things 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.

Proper balance between these three *doshas* is essential for good health. In a balanced state the *doshas* sustain the body by endowing good mental and physical health to the individual. When they are in imbalance, it leads to a dominance of one or more *doshas* (either alone or in combination), which is the cause of many ailments and

illnesses. The whole aim of *Ayurveda* is to restore proper balance between the *doshas* in the body, thereby restoring health, which leads to a sound mind too.

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:

- People with dominant *Vata* (constitution or) *Prakriti*.
- People with dominant *Pitta Prakriti*.
- People with dominant *Kapha Prakriti*.
- People with dominant *Vata-Pitta Prakriti*.
- People with dominant *Vata-Kapha Prakriti*.
- People with dominant *Pitta-Kapha Prakriti*.
- People with balanced *doshas* or with *Vata-Pitta-Kapha Prakriti*.

This is accepted by all the different schools of *Ayurveda Charaka, Sushruta, Vagbhata*, etc., to name a few. (Sharma, 1981; Murthy, 1996, 2007)

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 kind of food he eats, his behaviour and various other things. *Susruta* clearly describes the *PMB* as being constituted by the *Trigunas*. He specifies which of the *PMB* are responsible for each quality and delineates them accordingly. We can encapsulate them as follows:

- *Vata Dosha* is a combination of *Sattva* and *Rajas gunas*, but is predominantly *Rajasic*.
- *Pitta Dosha* is a combination of *Sattva, Rajas* and *Tamas gunas*, but is predominantly *Sattvic*.
- *Kapha Dosha* is a combination of *Sattva* and *Tamas gunas*, but is predominantly *Tamasic*.

Hence we understand the *Doshas* in respect of the *Gunas* exhibited by them due to the relative dominance of one or the other *PMB* that they are made up of. This applied aspect of the *gunas* in respect to the *PMB* is indispensable to us. This is invaluable to us in deducing the behaviour 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.

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:

- People with dominant *Sattva Guna*.
- People with dominant *Rajas Guna*.
- People with dominant *Tamas Guna*.
- People with dominant *Sattva-Rajas Guna* combination.
- People with dominant *Sattva-Tamas Guna* combination.
- People with dominant *Rajas-Tamas Guna* combination.
- People with balanced *gunas* or with *Sattva-Rajas-Tamas Guna* combination.

There are many sources from which one can draw, to study Indian psychology. One of the sources for developing Indigenous Psychology is the ancient Indian wisdom enshrined in a variety of texts and scriptures spanning from approximately 1500 BC to the nineteenth century AD.

To name a few from the Indian source, they are the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, The *Ramayana*, The *Mahabharata*, *Puranas*, the *Upa-Vedas*, etc to name a few.

The practical knowledge that has been enshrined within these texts is still being understood in different ways and contexts today, with all our so-called advancements in science and technology. But, even so, our understanding of these *Practical knowledge-based Psychological ideas* is limited to say the least. The sheer scope of empirical studies that need to be undertaken to come to a comprehensive understanding and linking of the knowledge bases and their further applied aspects is mind boggling to say the least. Though there have been initial forays to empirically prove the truth that have been stated in these texts and scriptures, and which have been handed down to us from many millennia, a very vast majority of the statements that we have taken for granted is yet to be scientifically tested; what has been done has been sporadic and insufficient for a thorough understanding of the subject in this case, the human behavior and its why's and wherefore's.

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