

## TRIDOSHA THEORY IN AYURVEDA: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

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## ABSTRACT

The Tridosha theory is a central tenet of Ayurveda, India's ancient system of medicine. It describes three fundamental bio-energies — *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* — which govern all physiological and psychological processes in the human body. This review explores the philosophical roots, physiological interpretations, clinical applications, and contemporary relevance of the Tridosha concept. It also discusses how Tridosha theory integrates with diagnostics, treatment, and preventive health strategies in Ayurveda.

## INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the "Science of Life," offers a holistic and individualized approach to health. At the heart of its physiological theory lies the *Tridosha* system, a unique model for understanding human constitution, pathology, and therapeutics.

The term *Dosha* (literally meaning "fault" or "that which can go out of balance") refers to the functional principles derived from the five great elements (*Panchamahabhuta*). The three doshas — *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* — are dynamic forces that govern the body's structure, function, and health. Their balance ensures health, and their imbalance leads to disease.<sup>[1]</sup>

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

This review was conducted by systematically collecting, screening, and analyzing published literature related to *Panchmahaboota*. Relevant studies were identified through electronic searches of major databases including **PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar**. The search strategy employed a combination of keywords and Boolean operators, such as "[*Tridosha*]" AND "[*Ayurveda*]" OR "[*Charaka*]"

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Origins and Theoretical Framework  
*Panchamahabhuta* Basis<sup>[2]</sup>

Each dosha is formed from specific combinations of the five elements:

- **Vata** = Ether (*Akasha*) + Air (*Vayu*)
- **Pitta** = Fire (*Agni*) + Water (*Apas*)
- **Kapha** = Water (*Apas*) + Earth (*Prithvi*)

These combinations determine their qualitative properties (*Gunas*), functional roles, and influence on

health.

## Dosha Characteristics

Dosha	Elements	Qualities (Gunas)	Primary Function
Vata	Air + Ether	Dry, light, cold, rough, mobile	Movement, communication
Pitta	Fire + Water	Hot, sharp, oily, light	Digestion, transformation
Kapha	Earth + Water	Heavy, slow, cool, smooth, stable	Structure, lubrication

Functional Roles of Tridosha<sup>[3]</sup>

## Vata Dosha

- Governs movement: respiration, circulation, nerve impulses.
- Controls communication between tissues.
- Responsible for creativity and adaptability.
- **Subtypes** (*Vayu*): Prana, Udana, Samana, Vyana, Apana.

## Pitta Dosha

- Manages digestion and metabolism (*Agni*).
- Controls body temperature and hormone regulation.
- Influences intellect and decision-making.
- **Subtypes** (*Pachaka, Ranjaka, Sadhaka, Alochaka, Bhrajaka*).

## Kapha Dosha

- Provides stability, immunity, and lubrication.
- Maintains tissue integrity and cohesion.
- Related to emotional bonding and calmness.

- **Subtypes:** *Kledaka, Avalambaka, Bodhaka, Tarpaka, Shleshaka.*

### Prakriti and Vikriti: Constitution and Imbalance<sup>[5]</sup>

#### Prakriti (Constitution)

- Determined at conception, based on doshic dominance.
- Individualized blueprint influencing physical traits, mental tendencies, and health vulnerabilities.
- Types: Vata, Pitta, Kapha, or dual/tridoshic combinations.
- **Prakriti** guides lifestyle and dietary recommendations.

#### Vikriti<sup>[5]</sup> (Imbalance)

- The current state of doshic deviation from Prakriti.
- Influenced by diet, lifestyle, emotions, seasons, and environment.
- Ayurvedic diagnosis focuses on detecting Vikriti for targeted treatment.

### Tridosha in Disease and Diagnosis<sup>[4]</sup>

#### Pathogenesis (*Samprapti*)

Disease occurs when a dosha accumulates (*Sanchaya*), aggravates (*Prakopa*), spreads (*Prasara*), localizes (*Sthanasamshraya*), manifests (*Vyakti*), and leads to complications (*Bheda*).

#### Diagnostic Approaches

- **Darshana** (observation): skin, body build, eyes, etc.
- **Sparshana** (palpation): pulse (Nadi Pariksha), temperature, touch.
- **Prashna** (interrogation): symptoms, habits, mental state.

Tridosha analysis is integral to diagnosing root imbalances and customizing treatment.

### Therapeutic Applications of Tridosha

#### Diet and Nutrition

- **Vata:** warm, moist, grounding foods (e.g., cooked grains, oils).
- **Pitta:** cooling, non-spicy, alkaline foods (e.g., cucumbers, milk).
- **Kapha:** light, dry, warming foods (e.g., legumes, spices).

#### Lifestyle and Routines

- Daily and seasonal routines (*Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*) designed to balance doshas.
- **Yoga**, meditation, and pranayama tailored to doshic type.

#### Panchakarma Therapies

- Detoxification procedures (e.g., *Vamana*, *Virechana*, *Basti*) target specific doshic imbalances.
- **Rejuvenation** (*Rasayana*) and tonics are also dosha-specific.

### Tridosha and Mental Health

Ayurveda also addresses psychological health through doshic theory:

Dosha	Mental Traits (in balance)	Mental Traits (in imbalance)
Vata	Creative, alert	Anxious, fearful, restless
Pitta	Focused, intelligent	Angry, jealous, critical
Kapha	Calm, compassionate	Lethargic, stubborn, depressed

Mental wellness practices in Ayurveda (e.g., *Satvavajaya Chikitsa*) consider these doshic tendencies.

### Scientific and Contemporary Relevance

Though the Tridosha system is non-linear and qualitative, modern studies increasingly validate aspects of Ayurvedic constitution typing:

- **Genetic correlations:** Research suggests links between *Prakriti* types and genetic markers.
- **Metabolic profiles:** Doshic types show variations in metabolism, stress response, and immune function.
- **Personalized medicine:** Ayurveda's constitutional approach aligns with modern trends in precision medicine and holistic health.

### Criticisms and Challenges

- Lack of standardized methods to assess Prakriti.
- Subjectivity in diagnosis and practitioner interpretation.
- Need for integration with evidence-based clinical trials.
- Complexity in translating ancient terminology into modern scientific language.

Nonetheless, the Tridosha model offers an invaluable framework for individualized, preventive, and integrative healthcare.

### CONCLUSION

The Tridosha theory is more than a physiological model — it is a lens through which Ayurveda views human health, behavior, and life itself. By addressing body, mind, and environment through the dynamic balance of Vata, Pitta, and Kapha, Ayurveda presents a time-tested and increasingly relevant paradigm for personal wellness and ecological harmony.

As global healthcare shifts toward personalization, sustainability, and holistic care, the Tridosha theory stands as a bridge between ancient wisdom and modern needs.

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