

**A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW ON THE ROLE OF VATA DOSHA IN INTRA-UTERINE  
LIFE, EXTRA-UTERINE LIFE AND LIFE PROCESSES****Dr. Akshay Babu\*<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Pradeep P.<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Pretty P.<sup>3</sup>**<sup>1</sup>P.G. Scholar, <sup>2</sup>P.G. Scholar, <sup>3</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Shareera Kriya, Sree Dharmasthala Manjunatheshwara College of Ayurveda & Hospital, Hassan-573201, Karnataka, India.**\*Corresponding Author: Dr. Akshay Babu**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Vata Dosha* is considered as the most important among the three *Doshas* because it is responsible for movement, initiation, and regulation of all physiological activities in the body. From the Ayurvedic perspective, *Vata* plays a major role throughout the human life, beginning from intra-uterine life to extra-uterine life and continuation of all life processes. During intra-uterine life, *Vata Dosha* is responsible for fertilization, division and differentiation of cells, formation of organs, growth of the foetus, and initiation of foetal movements. It supports circulation of nutrients from the mother to foetus and helps in the proper development of the nervous and musculoskeletal systems. At the time of birth, *Vata* is the primary force that initiates labour and expulsion of the fetus, marking the transition from intra-uterine to extra-uterine life. In extra-uterine life, *Vata Dosha* governs essential physiological functions such as respiration, circulation, digestion, excretion, speech, locomotion and sensory–motor activities. It also regulates higher mental functions like perception, cognition, enthusiasm, and adaptability. All voluntary and involuntary movements in the body are under the control of *Vata*. Throughout life processes such as growth, maintenance, aging, and death, *Vata* continues to play a dominant role. Balanced *Vata* ensures normal physiological functioning, while its imbalance leads to various functional and degenerative disorders. Thus, understanding the role of *Vata Dosha* in intra-uterine life, extra-uterine life, and overall life processes provide a comprehensive insight into human physiology from an Ayurvedic viewpoint and thereby highlights its fundamental importance in maintaining health and life.

**KEY WORDS:** *Vata Dosha, Intra-uterine life, Extra-uterine life, Life processes, Garbha Avastha, Physiological functions.***INTRODUCTION**

Ayurveda explains human life and health through the functional balance of the three *Doshas*—*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. Among them, *Vata Dosha* is considered the most significant because it governs all forms of movement and initiates the functions of the other two *Doshas*.<sup>[18]</sup> Classical texts describe *Vata* as *pravartaka* (initiator) and *niyanta* (regulator) of physiological and psychological activities, highlighting its fundamental role in sustaining life.<sup>[20]</sup>

Human life begins in the intra-uterine period (*Garbha Avastha*), where continuous processes of cell division, differentiation, growth, and organ formation take place. Ayurveda attributes these dynamic processes primarily to

*Vata Dosha*. From conception to foetal development and finally to the initiation of labor, *Vata* acts as the driving force responsible for transformation and movement within the developing foetus.<sup>[13]</sup>

After birth, during extra-uterine life, *Vata Dosha* continues to dominate all vital functions such as respiration, circulation, digestion, excretion, locomotion, speech, and sensory–motor coordination. It also plays a key role in higher mental functions like perception, cognition, enthusiasm, and adaptability to environmental changes. Thus, *Vata* remains active throughout all stages of life.<sup>[19]</sup>

Life processes such as growth, maintenance, aging, and

degeneration are also under the influence of *Vata Dosha*. While balanced *Vata* supports normal physiological functioning and longevity, its imbalance leads to functional disturbances and degenerative disorders.<sup>[22]</sup> Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the role of *Vata Dosha* in intra-uterine life, extra-uterine life, and overall life processes is essential for appreciating Ayurvedic physiology and its relevance in maintaining health and preventing disease.

This article aims to explore and explain the multidimensional role of *Vata Dosha* across different stages of human life, emphasizing its significance from conception to the end of life.

#### AIMS

- To explain the role of *Vata Dosha* in intra-uterine and extra-uterine life.
- To highlight the importance of *Vata Dosha* in regulating normal life processes.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

- Classical Ayurvedic texts such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, along with their authoritative commentaries has been referred.
- Textbook of embryology, articles from the pubmed and other sites has been referred.

#### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

##### ROLE OF VATA DOSHA IN INTRA-UTERINE LIFE

###### 1. VATA DOSHA IN GARBHA UTPATHI

Acharya Charaka has considered the formation of Garbha by five Mahabhutas such as *Akash*, *Vayu*, *Agni*, *Jala* and *Prithvi* and their *Vikara* (derivatives).<sup>[1]</sup> Thus the combination of *Pancha Mahabhuta* in association of the *Atma* (self consciousness) basically constitutes *Garbha*.<sup>[2]</sup>

###### 2. ROLE OF VATA DOSHA IN GARBHA VRIDDHI (GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT)

Sushruta has identified two factors for the development of *Garbha*. They are.

1. *Rasanimitta* (Nutritional factors)
2. *Marutadhmanimitta* (Infusion of Vayu).<sup>[3]</sup>

Kashyap's concept is that the finest particles of *Vayu* are responsible for union, division, activities like flexion, extension etc. as well as division of major and minor body parts, *Dhatu*s and *Srotas* (channels) due to their specific nature.<sup>[4]</sup> Maharishi Hareeta has also mentioned the importance of *Agni Mahabhuta* in reference to foetal growth in collaboration of *Vayu Mahabhuta*. But he has emphasized the role of *Vayu Mahabhuta* along with the role of *Agni Mahabhuta*, which helps in onward conversion of zygote into blastocyst (*Kalal*) and blastocyst solidifies into a formative mass. Now all the five *Mahabhuta* in association of *Vyan Vayu* converts the formative mass into *Pancha Pindikavastha* (five bud

stage). There are two *Pinda* (buds) for upper and two *Pinda* (buds) for lower limbs and fifth is for head neck (*Shir*). Again in this reference Acharya Hareeta says that *Udan Vayu* helps to develop pharyngeal pouches, lung buds and primitive heart. Similarly the *Apan Vayu* helps to open the outlets for excreta or *Payu* (vaginal, urethral and anal openings).<sup>[5]</sup>

#### 3. ROLE OF VATA IN MATERNAL – FOETAL CIRCULATION

It means that *Agni* is situated in umbilical region of the foetus. *Vata* blows within the *Agni* (fire) or *Teja Mahabhuta* due to which the body growth of *Garbha* further develops.<sup>[6]</sup> As *Vata* with the help of *Agni*, opens the *Srotas* (channels) in vertical, horizontal and oblique directions, so the development of the body takes in all directions.<sup>[7]</sup>

#### 4. ROLE OF VATA IN MONTHWISE DEVELOPMENT OF FOETUS

##### 4.1. ROLE OF VATA IN THE FIRST MONTH OF GESTATION

In the first event *Shukranu*, (spermatozoa) pierces the zona pellucida to enter the *Stri Beeja* (ovum) and thus the ovum gets fertilized.<sup>[8]</sup> Now segmentation process in the fertilized ovum sets in. The unicellular fertilized ovum (zygote) is transformed from one to two, then four into a sixteen (16) cell stage. It now looks like a mulberry and is called the morula. It is still surrounded by the zona pellucida. It consists of an inner cell mass, completely surrounded by an outer layer of cells. The cells of the outer layer give rise to a layer of nutritive cells called trophoblast, while the inner cell mass gives rise to the embryo proper or formative cell mass. So for this differentiation and cell division processes.<sup>[9]</sup>

##### 4.2. ROLE OF VATA IN THE SECOND MONTH OF GESTATION

In the second month, the growing embryo is acted upon by *Sheeta* or *Kapha* and *Ushma* or *Pitta*. *Vayu* converts it as *Ghana* (mass). It gives the shape of a solid mass of *Panchmahabhuta*. If it is felt like *Pinda* (lump) it should be diagnosed as male child, if *Peshi* (elongated like muscle) then it can be female and if it is like *Arbuda* (tumour) in shape it should be *Napunsaka* (hermaphrodite) child.<sup>[10]</sup>

##### 4.3. ROLE OF VATA IN THE THIRD MONTH OF GESTATION

According to *Charaka*, The foetus in the third month starts developing all the *Indriya* (sense organs) and *Anga Pratyanga* (body parts).<sup>[11]</sup>

##### 4.4. ROLE OF VATA IN THE FOURTH MONTH OF GESTATION

In this stage, foetus gets equipped with *Chetana*. It also expresses his own desires because the heart is the seat of *Chetana Dhatu*. So this stage is known as *Dauhrivadavastha*. So during this *Dauhrivadavastha*, if the desires of the mother has been ignored or suppressed

means it may lead to various abnormalities in the child. In this month, all the divisions of the *Anga* and *Pratyanga* become more developed.<sup>[12]</sup>

#### 4.5. ROLE OF VATA IN THE FIFTH MONTH OF GESTATION

According to *Charaka* during fifth month, the development of muscles and haemopoetic system is more speedy.<sup>[13]</sup> *Manas* (psyche) becomes more developed during this month. This means in the fifth month of intrauterine life, foetus gains further consciousness.<sup>[14]</sup> The *Hridaya* (heart) and *Mastulunga* (brain) has been said as the seat of *Mana* (mind). The peripheral nerves are associated with *Mastishka* (brain) and *Sushmna* (spinal cord). The different centres of *Gyanendriya* (sense organs) are also situated in the brain.<sup>[15]</sup>

#### 4.6. ROLE OF VATA IN THE SIXTH MONTH OF GESTATION

In this month the foetus gains health and its skin improves. Therefore, the mother loses general health and her complexion also becomes dull.<sup>[16]</sup>

#### 4.7. ROLE OF VATA IN THE SEVENTH MONTH OF GESTATION

This means in the seventh month all the body *Anga* (parts) and *Pratyanga* (subparts) of the foetus are apparently visible.<sup>[17]</sup>

#### 4.8. ROLE OF VATA IN THE EIGHTH MONTH OF GESTATION

This means in the eighth month the quantum of *Oja* does not remain constant but becomes unstable. In the eighth month which is also called *Oja Sancharmavastha*, *Oja* shifts from mother to foetus and from foetus to mother.<sup>[17]</sup>

#### 4.9. ROLE OF VATA IN THE NINTH MONTH OF GESTATION

During the time of delivery then with conjunction or action of *Prasuti Maruta* (*Apana Vayu* causing expulsion of foetus) takes a round turn thus brings head downwards and comes out or is expelled out from vaginal tract.<sup>[18]</sup>

### 5. ROLE OF VATA DOSHA IN EXTRAUTERINE LIFE

#### 5.1. Role of Vata in Resuscitation of New born

While the steps are being taken for delivering the placenta, for newly born child following actions should be done. They are as follows.

- Striking of two stone pieces near ears.
- Sprinkling of luke warm and cold water alternately over the face.
- If the foetus is devoid of movements, he should be fanned with a winnowing basket having black flaps till he recovers.<sup>[19]</sup>

#### 5.2. Role of Vata in Life Processes

a. *Vata Dosha* is responsible for the following functions such as

- *Utsaha* (enthusiasm)
- *Uchvasa* (Expiration)
- *Nishvasa* (Inspiration)
- *Chesta* (reflexes)
- *Vega Pravartanam* (initiation of urges)
- *Samyak gati of Dhatus* (Regulation of proper nourishment and transformation of Dhatus)
- *Aksha Paatava* (coordination and function of sense organs).<sup>[20]</sup> b. Main functions of *Vata Dosha* are as follows.
- *Praspanadana* (movement)
- *Udvahana* (managing the Indriyas or Indriya Dharana)
- *Purana* (intake of food)
- *Viveka* (separation of Sara and Kitta)
- *Dharana* (excretion and holding).<sup>[21]</sup>

#### 5.3. Role of Vata in Aging

- *Tridoshas* exhibit their marked presence in the end, middle and beginning of life, day and digestion (ingested food).
- End of the life is marked by the predominance of *Vata*.<sup>[22]</sup>
- End of life stage is marked by the following features such as
  - Dryness
  - Degeneration
  - Weakness
  - Tremors.<sup>[23]</sup>

### DISCUSSION

*Vata Dosha* is considered the most important among the three *Doshas* because it governs movement and initiates all activities in the body. From an Ayurvedic perspective, life itself is dependent on movement, and wherever there is movement, *Vata* is present. This is clearly seen from conception to the end of life.

In intra-uterine life, *Vata* plays a key role right from fertilization. The movement of sperm towards the ovum, union of *Shukra* and *Shonita*, and formation of the zygote are all actions that indicate the presence of *Vata*. Further, cell division, differentiation, and organ formation during embryonic development involve continuous activity and transformation, which are functions of *Vata*. Different types of *Vata* such as *Prana*, *Udana*, *Vyana*, *Samana*, and *Apana* contribute to the development of specific organs and systems. *Vata* also helps in maternal-foetal circulation by facilitating the movement of nutrients and oxygen through the umbilical cord.

Month-wise development of the foetus also reflects the action of *Vata*, especially in division of body parts, formation of limbs, development of sense organs, and initiation of movements. In the ninth month, *Apana Vayu* plays a major role in initiating labour and expelling the foetus.

In extra-uterine life, *Vata* continues to regulate essential physiological processes such as respiration, circulation, digestion, excretion, locomotion, speech, and sensory-motor coordination. It is also responsible for mental functions like enthusiasm, perception, and adaptability. Even during newborn resuscitation, stimulation of movement and breathing reflects the action of *Vata*.

In old age, *Vata* becomes predominant, leading to dryness, weakness, degeneration, and reduced functional capacity. This shows that *Vata* governs not only creation and maintenance but also degeneration.

Thus, *Vata Dosha* acts as the driving force behind *Srushti* (creation), *Sthithi* (maintenance), and *Laya* (dissolution) of life. Proper balance of *Vata* is essential for normal health, while its imbalance results in functional and degenerative disorders.

### CONCLUSION

*Vata Dosha* plays a vital and continuous role in all stages of human life, starting from conception to the end of life. During intra-uterine life, *Vata* is responsible for fertilization, cell division, differentiation, growth of the foetus, formation of organs, circulation of nutrients, and initiation of foetal movements. It also plays a key role in month-wise development of the foetus and finally initiates the process of labour and delivery through *Apana Vayu*.

After birth, in extra-uterine life, *Vata* governs all essential physiological functions such as respiration, circulation, digestion, excretion, movement, speech, sensory-motor activities, and mental functions like perception and enthusiasm. *Vata* is also responsible for initiating nervous stimuli, especially seen during resuscitation of the newborn.

Throughout life, *Vata* maintains growth, coordination, and functional balance. In old age, predominance of *Vata* leads to degeneration, dryness, weakness, and reduced functional capacity. Thus, balanced *Vata* is essential for normal physiological functioning, while its imbalance results in various functional and degenerative disorders.

Hence, *Vata Dosha* can be understood as the prime force behind *Srushti* (creation), *Sthithi* (maintenance), and *Laya* (degeneration) of the human body. Understanding its role helps in better appreciation of Ayurvedic physiology and emphasizes the importance of maintaining *Vata* balance for health and longevity.

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