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Concept of Vata Dosha in *Ashtanga Hridaya*

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Abstract

Now a day, we are seeing that people all over the world are getting affected by environment very easily Which leads many disorders in the body because of dis adjustment with the environment. Ayurveda tells us how to adjust yourself, but before adjusting anybody should have to know the body of his or her. *Dosha* has been considered as responsible factor for all physiological actions in the body which persists only in living. So, it becomes very important to maintain the normal physiological actions of the body via maintenance of *Dosha* in normal status. *Vata* is kind of physical *Dosha* and also considered as regulating factor of all the actions in human without which there is no action seen in human as per Ayurveda. So, without knowing the *Vata* properly nobody can cure or treat the diseases as well as maintain the healthy status. Concepts regarding *Vata* are available throughout in famous *Ayurvedic* book named as *Ashtanga Hridaya* written by *Vagbhata*. In full paper, all the useful materials related to *Vata* will be presented and discuss which are available in *Ashtanga Hridaya* i.e. property, seats, physiological actions, pathological actions, treatments etc.

Keywords: Vata Dosha, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, physiological actions

Introduction

Ayurveda is the science which deals not only about living beings but almost all the factors which affects us. Ayurveda is considered as fifth *Veda* as per *Kashyapsamhita* and *Brahmavaivartapurana* ^[1], because it provides us all the valuable knowledge which is fruitful not only in this life but also beyond this life. It also aims for removal of *Dukha* (misery), so we can get a healthy status. There are three most authentic book of Ayurveda and *Ashtanga Hridaya* is one of them (other two books are *Charaka samhita* and *Sushruta samhita*). *Ashtanga Hridaya* has been written by *Vagabhatta* (also known as *Laghu Vagabhatta*) who was the son of *Singhgupta* and his time period is considered around 7th century. It is written in *Sanskrita* in the form of simple and easily understood poetic verses. There are six *Sthanas*, one hundred twenty chapters and about seven thousand three hundred twelve *Sutras* in this book². It is systematized text book particularly based on detailed description of human pathophysiology and curative procedures. This is very much popularized practical book in recent days. The term *Ashtanga Hridaya* named because it describes eight limbs of *Ayurveda* under which entire treatment and procedures related to human being comes as an essence. Eight limbs are mentioned as followings i.e. *Kaya Chikitsa* (to treat the body especially based on *Agni*), *Bala Chikitsa* (pediatrics), *Graha Chikitsa* (psychiatry), *Urdhwanga Chikitsa* (to treat eye, ear and nose especially the parts above the clavicle), *Shalya Chikitsa* (surgery), *Danshtra Chikitsa* (Toxicology and jurisprudence), *Jara Chikitsa* (rejuvenation therapy) and *Vrisha Chikitsa* (aphrodisiac) ^[3].

Materials

Principle regarding *Dosha* is one of the main basic principles of Ayurveda. Human body constitutes *Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *Mala*⁴. There are three physical *Doshas* named as *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*⁵. All these three *Doshas* if vitiate then abnormality occur while in normal status maintain the body and continue the life ^[6]. It has also been stated that non equilibrium status of all these three *Doshas* creates disease and equilibrium status causes health ^[7]. *Vata* has been considered as responsible for all the good and bad in the body, does of all the actions, soul of all the things, possessor of all forms, chief of all living being, creator, supporter and controller of all, omniscient, destroyer, lord of death and death itself ^[8].

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Gunas (properties) of Vata Dosha

These are as follows i.e. non unctuous, light, cold, rough or coarse, subtle or fine, mobile ^[9], *Yogavahi* ^[10].

Sthanas (seats) of Vata Dosha in the body

It locates throughout the body, but according to region it resides below the navel area especially ^[11], *Pakvashaya* (large Intestine), lumber region, thigh region, ear, bones, *Sparshanendriya* (tactile sense) and especially in large intestine ^[12].

Biological actions of Vata Dosha in the body

Followings are normal physiological actions i.e. excitement, expiration, inspiration, passing of urges, effort, proper functioning and movement of *Dhatus* (*Rasa, Rakta* etc.) as well as normal performance of sense organs ^[13].

Prakriti (temperament) due to Vata Dosha

If a person born with the predominance of *Vata* (called as of *Vataja Prakriti*) will have hair and body which are cracked and dusky (lusterless), they hate cold, are unsteady in respect of courage, memory, thinking, movement (walking and others), friendship, vision and gait, talk more and irrelevant, possess very less wealth, strength, span of life and sleep, their voice is obstructed, interrupted, unsteady or harsh, they are atheists, gluttons, pleasure seeking, desirous of music, humor, hunting or gambling, desirous of habituation to sweet, sour, salty and hot foods, are lean and tall in shape, produce sound in the joint during walking, are not steadfast, cannot control their senses, not civilized (brutish, impolite), not liked by women, not have many children, their eyes are rough (dry), lusterless, round, unpleasant and resemble those of the dead, lids kept open while sleeping they dream as though roaming on the mountains, dwelling on trees and moving in the sky, person looks are non-magnanimous, bloated with jealousy, of stealing nature and having bulged calves, they resemble (in movements and mental behavior etc.) animals such as the dog, jackal, camel, vulture, rat and crow ^[14].

Causes of aggravation of Vata Dosha

There are various aggravating factors by which *Vata* gets aggravated such as by consuming foods which are bitter, salt

and astringent in taste, taking of less quantity, dry (moisture less fatless) taking food long after the usual time, suppression and premature initiation of the urges (of urine, flatus etc.), keeping an awake at nights, speaking in high pitch for a long times, effect of therapies (emesis purgation etc.) in excess (more than the required degree), getting of sudden fear, grief and worry, excess of physical activities and sexual intercourse during summer, terminal part of the day, night and food (digestion) ^[15].

Effects of increased and decreased status of Vata Dosha in the body

If *Vata* increased then following characters appear i.e. Lin and thin (emaciated) body, blackish appearance of body, desire of hot materials, tremor, abdominal discomfort, constipation, insomnia, senses are unable to perceive their objects, prattle, delusion and depressed ^[16]. Decreased status of it shows following characters i.e. Body part becomes lose and tired, less talkative, less in effort, impurity of intellect and also those diseases appear which have been mentioned in the increased status of *Kapha* (i.e. diminish gastric fire, excessive salivation, lethargic feeling, heaviness, whitish appearance in body parts, coldness, looseness in the body, dyspnea, cough and excessive sleep) ^[17].

Pathological actions of Vata Dosha in the body

Aggravated or vitiated *Vata* becomes as a causative factor of different abnormalities in body i.e. looseness or enlargement, dilation, cutting pain, loss of sensation, weakness, continuous pain, pricking pain, splitting pain, obstruction (stoppage), crushing pain, contraction (constriction), twisting, tingling, thirst, tremors, roughness, cavitation, dryness, pulsations (throbbing), curvatures, winding around, stiffness, withholding (loss of movement), feeling of astringent taste in the mouth, appearance of blue or crimson discoloration ^[18].

Types of vata, their seats, causes of aggravation and pathophysiological actions in the body

Vata has been categorized in five folds according to different seats and actions inside of the body which are summarized in the given below chart ^[19, 20].

Table 1: The seats of normal and causes abnormal functions

Name of Vayu	Seats	Normal function	Causes of aggravation	Abnormal functions	
Prana	Head,	Expectoration	By dryness (absence of fat), Excessive exercise	Disorder of eye	
	Moves in chest and throat,	Sneezing	-Fasting,	Nasal catarrh	
	Mind,	Belching	Large quantity of food	Facial palsy	
	Heart	Inspiration	Trauma	Thirst	
	Sense organs	Swallowing of food	Walking and suppression of urges	Cough Dyspnea etc.	
Udana	Intelligence				
	Chest	Initiation of speech	By suppression of	Obstruction of throat	
	Moves in nose, umbilicus and throat	Effort	Enthusiasm	sneezing,	Disorder of mind
		Strength	Complexion and memory	belching,	Vomiting
				vomiting, sleep	Loss of appetite
				Carrying heavy loads	Nasal catarrh
			Excessive weeping, laughing	<i>Galaganda</i> , and other disease above shoulder	
Vyana	Heart	Walking	Excess of	Diminution of masculine power	
	all over the body	Bringing the body parts downward	walking, sex, worry, exercise, action, dried	Enthusiasm	
		Opening & closing of eye	food, fear, joy and sorrow	Strength	
				Disorder of mind	
			Fever		

		All general activity of the body		Paralysis, Intermittent pain Horripilation Loss of tactile sensation Skin disease Herpes and other general body disorder
Samana	Near the place of <i>Agni</i> and <i>Kostha</i> (alimentary tract)	Withholds the food	Improper food	Abdominal pain
			Uncooked food	Tumbler of abdomen
		Digest & separate the essence and wastes from the foods and eliminates.	Cold and complex food	Disease of duodenum, intestine and stomach (alimentary tract)
			Sleeping or awake at improper time etc.	
Apana	- <i>Apana Pradesha</i> (large intestine) waist, bladder, penis, thigh,	Elimination of semen, menstrual fluid, faeces, urine and foetus	By indigestion of dry & heavy foods taken	Disease of large intestine
			By suppression of urges or excessive and premature initiation of those	Disorders of urine and semen
				Piles
			By excessive indulgence in riding of animals or vehicles or sitting	Prolapse of rectum etc.

Prana has been considered itself as cause of life (*Jeevita*) and *Udana* as a force (*Bala*) [21].

A specific concept of *Avarana* (occlusion) has also been told in reference to *Vata*. The *Avarana* of *Vata* by *Pitta*, *Kapha*, *Rakta* (the blood), *Mamsa* (the flesh), *Meda* (the fat and adipose), *Asthi* (the bone), *Majja* (the bone marrow), *Shukra* (the semen), *Anna* (the food), *Mutra* (the urine), *Vida* (faeces), *Sarva Dhatu* and mutual occlusion of all the five types of *Vata* with different signs and symptoms have been described in detailed [22].

Management of Vata Dosha

Management of *Vata* is difficult in comparison to *Pitta* and *Kapha*. In this book, there have been mentioned different diet, regimens, drugs, procedures and actions which help in management of it. First of all the oleation (by *Sarpi*, *Taila*, *Vasa* and *Majja*) therapy should be done in the disease caused due to pure *Vayu* (where *Pitta* and *Kapha* are not associated) [23]. In the condition of increased *Vata* the followings are the curative procedure i.e.–Oleation therapy (internal and external), sudation (diaphoresis), mild purification therapies (emesis and purgation), ingestion of foods which are of sweet, sour and salt taste, warm oil-bath, massage of the body, wrapping the body with cloth, threatening (frightening), bath (pouring of medicinal decoctions, water etc. on the body), wine prepared from corn flour and jiggery (molasses), enema therapy with fat (oil) and drugs of hot potency, adherence to regimen of enema therapy, comfortable activities, medicated fats of different kinds (sources) prepared with drugs causing increase of hunger and improving digestion especially *Anuvasana Basti* (oleation enema prepared from juice of fatty meat and oil) [24].

When *Vata* is enveloped in all the places of the body (all the tissues) the treatments which are not opposed to *Kapha* and *Pitta* and are *Vatanulomana* (helping the *Vata* to move downward) should be done immediately. Foods and drugs which are *Anabhisyandi* (not producing more moisture inside the body tissues), *Snigdha* (unctuous), which purifies the channels, *Yapanabasti* (enema therapy), *Anuvasanabasti* (oil-enema) prepared from drugs of sweet taste, milk. *Virechana* (purgation) should be administered after measuring the good strength of the person. Use of *Rasayana* (rejuvenator) always is highly recommended, especially of *Shilajatu* or purified

Guggulu along with milk or *Bhargavaleha* (*Chyavanaprashavaleha*) and also *Ekadashsitashita* [27].

Time of medication for the management of five types of *Vata* is as follows i.e. for the *Apana Vata* before the meal, for *Samana Vata* in the middle of the meal, for *Vyana Vata* after the morning meal, for *Udana Vata* after the meal (in the evening) and for *Prana Vata* between the morsels the medicine must be taken [26]. Upward moving therapy is useful in the condition of morbidity of *Udana Vata*. Downward moving therapy is useful for morbidity of *Apana Vayu*. For morbidity of *Samana Vayu* the *Shaman* therapy should be used, for the morbidity of *Vyana Vata* that therapy is applicable which have been mentioned for *Udana*, *Samana* and *Apana Vayu* and lastly the *Prana Vata* should be protected because of highest importance [27].

Discussion

In the *Ashtanga Hridaya* the *Doshas* have been said as biological humours. *Vata* has been considered as prime *Dosha* because of its active and governing nature. Etymological derivation of *Vata* is not mentioned. *Vata* is responsible for all the actions in the living body and considered as creator, supporter and controller of all. Non unctuous, light etc. properties have been told as well as specific character *Yogavahi* too. This *Yogavahi* property is only considered for *Vata Dosha* but not for *Pitta* and *Kapha*. *Vata* carries the property of other object with which it is associated in the combination, so called as *Yogavahi*. In this book location of all the three *Doshas* have been told after demarking the body into three halves and said that the *Vata* predominantly locates below navel. It is present throughout the body (thus its effect comes in entire systems) but specifically in *Pakvashaya* (large intestine). *Basti* (therapeutic enema) works in the region of *Pakvashaya* and expel out the deranged *Dosha* from here thus controls the *Apana Vata* as well as remaining *Vata* that makes the *Basti* (therapeutic enema) as best remedy of it. Common causes of vitiation of *Vata Dosha*, status of increased and decreased as well as normal biological action are mentioned. Pathological actions like *Sramsa* (enlargement), *Bhramsa* (dislocation) etc. occur unless until a specific force applied and also are mentioned similar to *Charakasamhita*. *Vata dosha* have been categorized into five according to different seats and functions i. e. *Prana*, *Udana*, *Samana*, *Vyana* and

Apana.

All the five subtypes of *Vata* have been mentioned in detailed with their seats, normal and abnormal functions. *Prana Vayu* locates mainly in the region of head so, mainly governs intellect, mind and senses. *Udana Vayu* is considered as *Bala* (force) because it helps in speech delivery via force created on palate etc. *Vyana Vayu* helps in almost all the physical action and is very quick in nature. *Samana Vayu* regulates *Agni* so, the taken food easily digests thus nutrient absorbs easily and healthy status occurs. *Apana Vayu* maintains homeostasis by expelling out non essence and waste products via lower openings. It has been especially mentioned in this book about specific cause of aggravation of each of five types of *Vata* separately which have been summarized in previous chart. A specific concept of *Avarana* has also been described similar to *Charakasamhita* but in brief here. *Avarana* has been told briefly in reference of *Vatavyadhi* (diseases occur by *Vata*). Management has been mentioned broadly such as *Vatanulomana*, medicated enema (*Basti*). Management of *Vata Dosh* has been described in two separate chapters, but unavailable as such for *Pitta* and *Kapha*.

Summary and Conclusion

As we know that time period of *Vagabhatta* comes after *Acharya Charaka* and *Sushruta*, so he has followed them which seems in the concept of *Vata Dosh* too. Considering the major importance of *Doshas* in the body *Vagabhatta* has described the *Vatadidoshas* in three different chapters in *Sutrasthan* (i. e. chapter 11, 12 & 13th of *Sutrasthan*).

There is no separate chapter available for other two *Doshas* (*Pitta* & *Kapha*), but giving the importance to *Vata Dosh* he has given detailed description of *Vatavyadhi* and its treatment in two separate chapters [chapter sixteen of *Nidanasthan* (*Vatavyadhinidan*) and chapter twenty one of *Chikitsasthan* (*Vatavyadhichikitsa*)].

In this book, all the property [i.e. *Guna* (characters), *Sthana* (seats), *Karma* (functions), *Vridhhi Lakshana* (increased status), *Kshaya Lakshana* (decreased status), *Prakriti* (temperament), *Vikaras* (pathological actions) etc.] have been described as described in previous books (*Charakasamhita* and *Sushrutasamhita*).

There is no description found regarding *Anjali Pramana* of *Vata* in the body which supports the *Vata Dosh* more likely to be as a qualitative factor but not a quantitative factor.

A special concept of *Avarana* has also been mentioned in reference to *Vatavyadhi* in this book but in brief only.

Causes for aggravation of each of the five types of *Vata Dosh* have been given specifically in *Nidanasthan* which is probably unavailable in previous *Ayurvedic* texts.

Conclusively it may be said that the *Vata* has been considered as everything for a living being as well as initiator, creator and destructor of the body thus showing the great importance of it from health and disease point of view.

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