

CONCEPT OF DEHA PRAKRTI VIS-À-VIS HUMAN CONSTITUTION IN AYURVEDA

J.S. TRIPATHI and R.H.SINGH

Department of Kayachikitsa, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi – 221 005, India.

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ABSTRACT: *The Ayurvedic literature exhibits a systematic information about psychosomatic constitution and its genetic & environment denominators. According to Ayurveda the psychosomatic constitution, as also known as Deha Prakrti, is represented by a vivid description of the Physique, Physiology & psychological make-up of an individual. The Deha Prakrti is essentially genetically determined and is likely to be influenced by a variety of environmental factors to some extent. Dehaprakrti is the foremost factor which determines the pattern of susceptibility of an individual to different diseases, their prognosis, course and complications.*

The Ayurvedic have tried to understand the inner dynamics of human being, which beyond the obvious facts of the flesh and body is responsible for the sum total of all the innate dispositions and by which the behaviour of an individual is guided indifferent situations. They have discussed this inner dynamic characteristic of an individual which is a portrait of his important dimensions of behaviour. They have given stress on constitutional, temperamental, psychological and emotional aspect of personality.

Ayurvedists have used the term *prakrti* in the sense of personality. Sushruta has also used the term *KAYA PRAKRTI* and *MAHA PRAKRTI* in the same sense. (S.S. III. 4/99). The following definitions regarding *Prakrti* are available in classics.

1) Sukra Sonita Samyoge yo Bhaveddosa utkatah!

Praktirjayate tena.....

(S.S.III/4/63)

2) Dosanusayita hyesah Dehaprakrti ucyate!!

(C.S.I./7/48)

3) Prakrtirnam Janmamantantaral bhavini Garbhavakranti kale Svakarnodrekajanita Nirvikarkarani Sthitih!

(Narasimhabhasya on Rasavaisesika)

Although so much importance has been given to the genetic factor in the determination of common physical & temperamental variations seen in population, various other factors like climatic, periodic, idiosyncratic factors are also said to be responsible for determination of the individual variations. *Garaka* regards that the foetus develops its *Prakrti* from the nature of Germplasm, Regimens of the mother, *Kal Grabhasaya Prakrti* and the nature of protoelement combinations (Mahabhut Vikara *Prakrti*) and among these

factors which ever element is predominant will be observed to influence the nature of

Now let us try to see what has been the approach of Ayurveda through ages, towards understanding of the concept of personality & various factors which are responsible for the development of Human organism & its personality.

- 1) Matrja
- 2) Pitraja
- 3) Atmaja
- 4) Satmyaja
- 5) Rasaja
- 6) Satvaja

In other reference *Caraka* classified the following factors influencing Prakrti as follows:

- 1) Jati Prasakta
- 2) Kula Prasakta
- 3) Desanupatini
- 4) Kalanupatini

While going through the main texts of Ayurveda, we find the following factors have been linked in one or the other way with the development of personality-

- 1) Atmaja Bhava
- 2) Purvajanmakrta Karma
- 3) Panca Mahabhutas
- 4) Sattvaja Bhava
- 5) Matrja Bhava

foetus. Therefore men are spoken of as such and such Prakrti & Dosaja susceptability.

Punarvasu Atreya while discussing *Garbhavakranti* (Embryology) in *Sharira Sthan* enumerates following bhavs responsible for the development of Human organism & its personality.

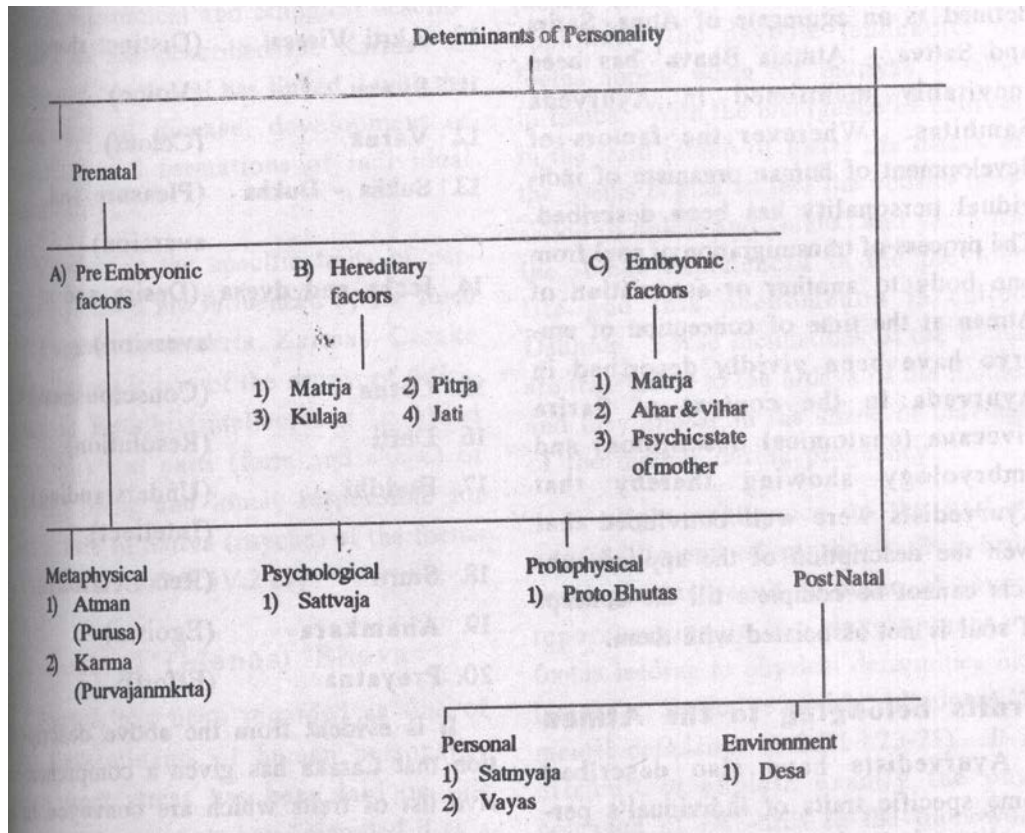
In *Viman Sthan* while describing *Prakrti*, he observes it to be influenced by four factors-

1. Sukra Sonita Prakrti
2. Kal Garbhashaya Prakrti
3. Maturahar Vihar Prakrti
4. Mahabhut Vikar Prakrti
- 5) Vayonupatini
- 6) Pratyatma niyata

These three references of *Caraka*, put together, give us the basic raw material for erecting the pillars about the approach of Ayurveda on the subject of determinants of Human organism and his personality.

- 6) Pitrja Bhava
- 7) Rasaja Bhava
- 8) Satmyaja
- 9) Jati
- 10) Kula
- 11) Desa
- 12) Vayas
- 13) Kala
- 14) Pratyatmaniyata

These determinants can be classified as follows, for the convenience of description.



This classification indicates that Ayurveda has laid great stress on the pre-embryonic factors. A great significance has been given to metaphysical, psychological and protophysical factors which are exclusively related to pre-embryonic period something thrilling to the modern schools of personality, which have limited themselves to the inter reaction between environment and heredity.

Ayurvedists have given due consideration to heredity & environment but they have equally emphasized other factors of pre-embryonic period which along with heredity and environment can better explain the Human personality at all levels i.e spiritual, psychological, emotional & physical in a more comprehensive and wholesome way. But before making any conclusive remarks

on this delicate subject, it will be worthwhile to look into the chief determinants in detail, so that a critical opinion may be formulated on this approach of Ayurveda.

1. Atmaja Bhava (Purusa)

Purusa has got a significant from fundamental as well as applied aspect in Ayurveda. Purusa has been regarded as the subject matter of this sciences which is defined as an aggregate of Atma, Sarira and Sattva. 'Atmaja Bhava' has been inevitably mentioned in Ayurveda Samhitas. Wherever the factors of development of human organism of individual personality has been described. The process of transmigration of soul from one body to another or association of Atman at the time of conception of embryo have been vividly

described in Ayurveda in the context of Sarira vivecana (anatomical description) and embryology showing thereby that Ayurvedists were well convinced that even the description of the applied subjects cannot be complete till the concept of soul is not associated with them.

Traits belonging to the Atman

Ayurvedists have also described some specific traits of individual's personality whose development is governed by the different determinants of personality. Caraka enumerates the following traits which are passed on from the Atman to the organism.

1. Transmigration capability from one species to another
2. Ayus (Life Span)
3. Atmajnana (Self Realization)
4. Manas (Psyche)
5. Indriyas (Senses)
6. Prana (Respiration)
7. Apana (Excretory urge)
8. Prerana (Inspiring capacity)
9. Dharana (Retention)
10. Akrti Visesa (Distinct shape)
11. Svara (Voice)
12. Varna (Colour)
13. Sukha – Dukha (Pleasure and aversion)
14. Iccha and dvesa (Desire and aversion)
15. Cetna (Consciousness)
16. Dhrti (Resolution)

17. Buddhi (Understanding)
(Intellect)
18. Smarti (Recollection)
19. Ahamkara (Egoism)
20. Prayatna (Effort)

It is evident from the above description that Caraka has given a comprehensive list of traits which are conveyed to organism through Atman. Some of the above traits are directly related to Atma (conscious factor), some direct consequence of Atma, some traits which are regarded as essential signs of life, some of them belong to intellect or closely associate with it, few of them are related to higher order of psychic factors.

2. Purva Janmakrta Karmas

Ayurvedas have counted Puruva Janmakrta Karmas as one of those factors which are responsible for the formation and development of human organism and individual personality although Caraka has not counted it as a specific determinant yet throughout the embryo logical, anatomical and etiological descriptions, he has described the Karmas as influential factor and has linked it with the occurrence of disease, development of organism and formation of individual personality.

Mentioning the specific traits of personality which are influenced by the force of Puruva Janmakrta Karmas Caraka says; karma is one of the causes of difference in Buddhi (intellect and its allied faculties) and akrti (form and shape) of human being and lonely responsible for the nature of Sattva (psyche) of the foetus (C.S.,IV.1.36; C.S., IV.2.27).

3. Sattvaj (Manas) Bhavas

Sattva has been regarded as one of the determinants of human personality and great stress has been laid on this factor. Ayurvedists have regarded it as a linking and integrative force of the different determinants, which are concerned with the development of human organism and its personality. (C.S., IV3.16). The importance of the role of manas in the process of transmigration of the soul from one body to another and its instrumental position for the fulfillment of cognitive functions is well known. Sattva exerts its influence even from the past life and its association with soul at the time of conjugation of sperm-ovum is regarded as an essential condition for the development of embryo.

Although psychic factor remains present from the pre-embryonic life yet apparently the psychic tendencies of foetus appear when the indriyas develop in foetus. With the emergence of indriyas in the third month of foetal life manas of the foetus begins to feel the vedana (sensation of Sukha and Dukha) and yearn for the things experienced in the previous life and this phenomenon is called Daurhda. These inclinations of the foetus are transferred to the hrdaya of the mother and they appear in the shape of cravings of the mother during pregnancy.

A slight negligence on the part of no fulfillment of mother's Daurhda cravings may result in some of severed repercussions in the development of foetus leading to physical deformities like lameness, defective vision, blindness or mental deficiency (S.S.III.3.23-25). It is difficult to explain exactly the phenomenon of Daurhda in the framework of modern embryological and physiological principles as the modern sciences does not touch this subject on the level of Psychological and Parapsychological level as has been described in Ayurveda. The concept of Daurhda may be

something very strange to the purely materialistic approach of modern medical science.

Regarding the differences in Psychic temperament and the determinants responsible for the variation in Sattva (Psyche), which have been called by Caraka as "*Sattva Vaisesyakara Bhavas*". According to him the following factors determine the different psychological endowment of the individuals.

1. Matr and Pitr Sattva (the various mental traits of the parents).
2. Sravanadi and Pathanadi of mother (thinking, readings, hearings and the behaviour of mother during pregnancy).
3. Purva Janma Krta Karma.
4. Abhyasa (Practice resulting into habits).

(C.S.IV 8.16).

Abyhas, the last determinant of psychic temperament becomes more important in view of learning theories of modern schools of personality. The habit is an outcome of man's repeated practices which ultimately become a part of the human behaviour. Caraka has called it as "*Sattva Visesabhyasa*".

Following traits of the individual are acquired by Sattva factor or the psychological traits found in the individual are-

1. Bhakti
2. Sila
3. Sauca
4. Dvesa

5. Smrti
6. Moha
7. Tyaga
8. Matsara
9. Saurya
10. Bhaya
11. Krodha
12. Tandra
13. Utsaha
14. Tiksnata
15. Mrduta
16. Gambheerata

These Bhavas factors are purely psychological traits and they still hold good & practical, even if we think if we think in terms of the framework of modern theory of traits of personality. There is possibility to further investigate whether all the psychological traits can be minimized to these sixteen fundamental '*Sattvaja Bhavas*'.

In the Atmaja bhavas most of these traits have been included which are more associated with the life factor or rather fundamental to the expression of consciousness whereas in Sattvaja Bhavas purely psychological traits and are related to the emotional & behavioural aspect of life.

4. Hereditary factors

Heredity stands for the transmission of mental & physical characteristics from parents to off springs. A thorough study of Ayurvedic literature reflects that the Mother and father chiefly exert their influence in the make up of the personality though Sukra & Sonita – the *Germcells of parents*.

Ayurvedists are unanimous in considering Hereditary factor as the *important* deterministic factor for constitution (Prakrti) of individual.

Caraka seems to go very deep into morphological description of Sukra & Sonita, as he successfully describes the microfine constituents of these Germ cells, viz. Bija-bhaga and Bijbhagavayava. These names suggest that they are in descending order sub constituents of the former and the latter is finer than former. It shows that ancient Ayurvedists had proved in the problem in somewhat with the similar approach as modern genetics and it was understood that the different finer constituents of germ plasm are responsible for the hereditary development. If all the literature on this subject found in different Ayurvedic texts is linked together in systematic manner, we find that parental germ cells and their sub constituents are mostly related to the following developments of the human organism –

- (1) The development of different organs and tissues of the body or for the formation of constitutional traits of the individual.
- (2) The congenital factors.
- (3) Sex determination.
- (4) Bala (strength) and other factors of growth.

Besides this, the traits which are developed in the foetus due to hereditary factors (i.e. Matrja and Pitrja Bhavas) have also been mentioned, which are purely of an anatomical interest. Ayurvedists also count Jati Prasakta and Kula Prasakta which are strictly hereditary factors and so both of

them are also responsible for the individual variations among the persons.

5. Non hereditary maternal factors

Ayurvedists have laid down that these maternal factors can only do their work in a suitable and specific environment which is mostly related to the other non hereditary factors of the mother. These may be compiled as follows –

- 1) Garabhasaya (Uterine factor)
- 2) Rutukala and Sahvasa Vidhi (Factors pertaining to the conception period).
- 3) Ahara of Matr (Diet of the mother).
- 4) Vihara of Matr (Behaviour of the mother)
- 5) The Sattva of Matr (Psyche of the mother)
- 6) Other methods of the birth of the child according to one's own wishes.

Ayurvedists have a definite view that other maternal circumstances and a well planned regimen along with developing a specific mental force (desirability of mother and temperamental disposition of the mother) may give us desired effects on the coming child in the respect of its condition, colour, sex and to some extent the psychological trends.

It is something very revolutionary and deserves due consideration by the scientists of this field. The details worked out by Ayurvedists may not be acceptable to modernist at present in the absence of positive evidences, but the fundamental approach of Ayurveda that the non hereditary maternal environmental factors

have a definite influence and the things can be improved or altered by adopting favourable and suitable measures cannot be easily discarded even today. It would be useful to mention the views given by Gardener and Murphy in their book “An introduction to Psychology”, to assess these concepts of Ayurveda. According to them “genes can do their work only in specific environment, first the mother's body and later the outer world. It has been found that the hereditary dispositions can do their work only by guiding the course of development along one or the other line; while the environment of mother's body maintain specific chemical conditions; supplying food and in other ways shaping the individual growth”. The author hold that in some species of rabbit with white fur, it is necessary only to change the light of the room in which the animal is breed and the colour of the fur turns out dark, rather than white.

Similarly some fishes which inherit a tendency to develop two eyes on the same side of head, if allowed to rear in water with a different salt content develop one eye on each side of the head like other fishes. Thus what is inherited in one environment is not inherited in another. The environment makes a difference of the hereditary dispositions. The above mentioned experiments indirectly support the Ayurvedists conviction that there is possibility to get the desired constitution and colour by changing the environmental circumstances and by adopting a specific regimen and dietic regulation.

These Ayurvedic hypothesizes give us a clearcut indication and a material for research to today's scientists, which if proved may provide a revolutionary instrument in the field of development of human organism and its personality.

6. Rasaja Bhava

Rasaja is taken in the sense of nourishing fluid or we may say the nutritional juice which nourishes the foetus. Caraka's recognition of this factor as one of the determinants of the organism and its personality really reflects his practical approach, in which this significant physiological factor has been given a due place. The following factors are said to be influenced by the Rasa and therefore they are known as Rasaja Bhava –

- 1) Abhinirvrtti of Sarira (Origin of Sarira)
- 2) Abhivrdhhi (growth)
- 3) Prananutbadha (life)
- 4) Pusti (Nourishment)
- 5) Trpti (Satisfactory)
- 6) Utsaha (enthusiasm)

(C.S.IV.3.12)

It is clear that these Bhavas are directly linked with nourishment so Caraka has appropriately put them under this determinant.

7. Satmyaja Bhavas

Satmya has been defined to be the condition which is agreeable to one's own self or his system; it is also called Upasaya (homologation). Caraka stresses that without using the asatmya things, foetus does not become defective and the men and women do not become sterile. According to him the following characteristics are developed due to this determinant and these are known as Satmyaja Bhavas.

1. Arogya (Health)
2. Analasya (free from sluggishness)
3. Alolupta (ungreedyness)
4. Indriyaprasadana (clearness of senses)
5. Svava(excellence of voice)
6. Varna (complexion)
7. Sukra Sonita Sampat (Verility)
8. Santosa (contentment)

8. The Kala (Time), Vayas (Age) and Desa (Climate) factors.

Ayurvedists have laid stress on Kala factor in many contexts, the occurrence of the disease and their treatment, seasonal regimen, dietic regulation and its metaphysical existence. The Kala-yoga factor has been regarded as one of those factors which are known as Sarira Vrddhikarabhavas and Balavrdhikarabhavas i.e. proper development of body and strength according to season and age.

In Ayurveda, Prakrti has also been called 'Vayonupatini' showing thereby that age factor also influences the make up of individual constitution and temperament. For example in jirnavastha the body tissues, sense organs, strength, energy, manhood, undertaking, retention, memory, speech and discrimination begins to decay, the element of body disintegrate and the Vata element predominates. The modern psychology has also paid a great importance to Vayas factor and exhaustive research work has been made by physiologists and psychologists in this director by virtue of which separate braches like child psychology, adult and Senile psychology have developed.

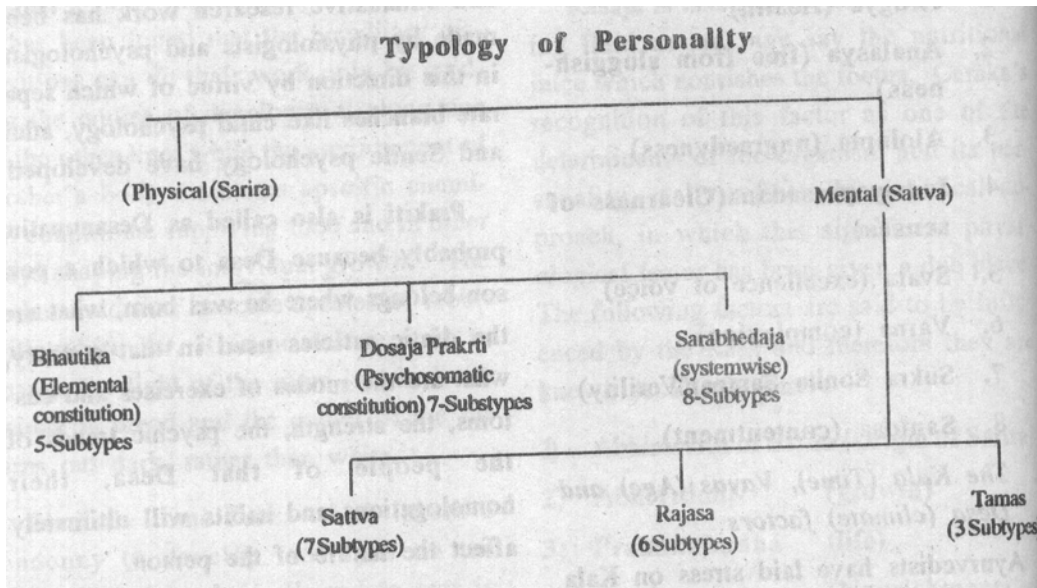
Prakrti is also called as Desanupatini probably because Desa to which a person belongs where he was born, what are the dietic articles used in that country, what are the modes of exercises and customs, the strength, the psychic trends of the people of that Desa, their homologations and habits will ultimately affect the nature of the person.

Classification of human personality as met in Ayurveda

The classification of human personality in Ayurveda is based on typological approach of classifying the personality. If we co-ordinate the whole literature available in Ayurvedic Samhitas, it is found that the fundamental biases of typology theory are based either on physical or mental

considerations. In Astanga Hrdaya, the divisions of classification based on above mentioned two biases are called Dosamayi and Gunamayi Prakrti (A.H.II. 3.83/104) Caraka and Susruta describe different typologies from humoral (physiological homeostasis) and Psychological (the Predominance of three Ansa of Sattva) point of view. Susruta gives another typology of Bhautik Prakrti (S.S.III. 4.79). The bias of Bhautik Prakrti is based on physical considerations.

Another angle of typology description based on physical consideration is found in Ayurveda and it is known as Sarabhoda (differentiation based on the conditions of the various systems of the body). The typologies of personality found in Ayurveda can be summarized as follows -



Although Ayurvedists have classified the personality separately into the physical and mental types but they were conscious of the underlying reality that human organism behaves in a wholesome and complex manner and physical & mental factors of personality cannot be isolated on two

different and independent substratum. They were of the view that the two biases of personality classification are necessary only for the specification of fields – and are just based on the predominance; otherwise they are intimately interrelated. That is why; the mental dispositions and traits have also been included in the description of Dehaja Prakrti

(various constitutional type). On the other hand, while describing the Psychological types, physical and constitutional factors have also been mentioned. Thus in spite of separate divisions based on physical and mental constitution, Ayurvedists have adopted a multifarious and multidimensional theory of personality.

Now if we have a glimpse over the theories proposed by the modern typology schools, they are either based on mental functions or on the physical characteristics or on the biosocial influences of the person. There is no theory which has been constructed on the integration of physical, mental and biosocial factors. Every type theory is singular in approach, although there is need of the approach of integration in the field of personality. So that a more ideal and complete type theory can be constructed.

With these limitations of modern approach to the subject, all recent approaches have become uniphasic and unilevel simplifications in the absence of any broad conceptual framework, which can include clinical and psychological typicalities.

At this juncture, Indian system of medicine provides a comprehensive, multiphasic and multidimensional theory of personality. It has within its literature, the broad conceptualization of Trigunatmaka mental typologies along with its physiological typicalities specified in terms of clinical types of Vata, Pitta and Kapha, which are intrinsically related to the physiologic, biophysical pathological and psychosomatic conditions of the body. These factors are more vital, dynamic and directly related to the health of an individual.

After going through the vast literature available, it can be safely predicted that here is a scope, of developing a new theory of

personality which may overcome the present limitations to a great extent.

Clinical Applications

Study of Prakrti will help clinician in the following respects.

- 1) Early prediction of disease susceptibility
- 2) Prevention of possible diseases
- 3) Successful prognostication in disease state.
- 4) Selection of appropriate and specific treatment in a given disease.

Prakrti and Sattva Parikhas (investigations) have been included in ten investigation methods i.e. *dasavidha-Atur-Pariksa* in Ayurveda.

The particular type of Psychosomatic constitution with specific Dosik constituents predisposes a particular individual to a particular type of illness. In view of this fact, the different diseases to which an individual is predisposed may be prevented or postponed by appropriate diet, drugs or regimen. This is in this context, that Ayurveda advocates extensive preventive measures in terms of Swastha Vrta, Sadvrta, Dincharya, Rtucharya etc.

The observations showing greater incidence of certain diseases in which the patients of certain prakrti are predisposed. Support the fact showing greater susceptibility of vatic individuals to anxiety neurosis, thyrotoxicosis, peptic ulcer and tuberculosis; Paittik individuals to hypertension, peptic ulcer, bronchial asthma and rheumatoid arthritis and Kaphaj individuals to diabetes mellitus, obesity, osteo arthritis, hypertension, and ischaemic heart diseases.

A similar stressful situation precipitate different types of stress disorders in person of different Prakrties. This is the reason why different persons inspite of being in similar situations develop different diseases. Thus an interaction between the environmental factors and the Dosa Prakrti determines the final outcome as specific illness or diseases. Thus besides external causes like various environmental factors, *Deha Prakrti* is the most important determinant of the nature of illness.

The application of knowledge of human personality in the field of diagnosis and treatment is the original *contribution of Ayurveda*. Although now, psychiatry and pscho-analytic schools have also started to give important to this subject while treating the patient for mental ailments but still the medical field does not recognize the important of this aspect in the treatment of physical diseases, whereas a great stress has been laid in Ayurveda on this aspect in the treatment of mental as well as physical ailments.

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