

BOOK 3: TRIDOSHA: IMPACTS ON MIND AND BODY

BOOK 3.1: Tridosha, An Introduction

1. Introduction

[Tridosha](#) is the most important concept in Ayurveda and makes the difference between "[Health](#)" and "[Disease](#)". The role of these three physiological entities - Vata, Pitta, and Kapha - govern our [mind](#), body, [health](#) and diseases.

The structure of the human body, as per Ayurveda, is formed by five Great Elements i.e. [Panchamahabhoota](#) ([air](#), [water](#), sun, [space](#) and [earth](#) and will be discussed in Topic 4) and the functioning are by virtue of [Tridosha](#) (three working entities). Hence [Tridosha](#) is formed by [Panchamahabhoota](#).

These three entities are

- **Vata**
- **Pitta**
- **Kapha**

These 3 entities have originated from five Great Elements as follows-

ELEMENTS	DOSHA
Akasha (space) & Vayu (air)	VATA
Agni (fire)	PITTA
Prithvi (earth) & Jala (water)	KAPHA

[Tridosha](#) is the most visible difference between living and non-living things and even between the living and the dead.

Various aspects of keeping [Tridosha](#) in balance will be discussed in this topic.

2. Definition of Tridosha

The literal translation of [Tridosha](#) is the *Three Faults*.

To give a practical and comprehensive meaning of [Tridosha](#) is complex and a variety of translations for Doshas have been given by many scholars from [time](#) to [time](#), addressing them as *powers, influences, humours* etc.

2.1. Types and number of Dosha

A. [Dosha](#) can be classified as-

1. Shareerika / Physical.
2. Manasika / Psychological.

B. Number of [Dosha](#) -

1. Physical [dosha](#) are three ([Tridosha](#)) : Vata, Pitta & Kapha.
2. Psychological [dosha](#) are two: [Rajas](#) & [Tamas](#);
3. [Satva](#) is a positive quality so escapes the address [Dosha](#).

C. The [Tridosha](#) Vata, Pitta and Kapha are, from [time](#) to [time](#), referred as:

1. "[Dosha](#)", as these have the potential to go out of balance to cause diseases and death.
2. "[Dhatu](#)", as they hold the body in place and are solely responsible for the total functioning / physiology.
3. "[Mala](#)", as sometimes, these need be thrown out of the body in certain volume to bless the body.

Still, they are commonly called [Dosha](#) because the potential to vitiate is unique whereas [Dhatu](#) qualities are seen in all body tissues as [Rasa](#), [Rakta](#), [Mamsa](#), [Meda](#) etc. and [Mala](#) qualities in urine, stool, sweat etc.

The most elementary definition of "[Health](#)" in Ayurveda is a *Balanced [Tridosha](#)*. In a person who is unhealthy, at least one [Dosha](#) is deficient or excessive, the quality is low, and its movement might be disorderly. These aspects are called *vitiation*.

3. Sites of Origin

At the [time](#) of conception, predominance of Vata, Pitta and Kapha determine the constitution of the foetus conceived. These three metabolic forces govern all biological, psychological and physiological functions of the body, [mind](#) and consciousness and have subtle properties. They determine personality traits as well. The unique individual constitution produces natural tendencies and individual preferences in food, flavour and temperature etc.

These [Tridosha](#) are spread all over the body, and in every cell. Every cell has got substances moving in and out (Vata), metabolism (Pitta) and immunity to resist degeneration/diseases (Kapha).

Still they have some special sites from where they control their respective actions all over the body. If vitiated, these [Tridosha](#) should be controlled /corrected in these prime locations first to regain [health](#).

These sites are

- Vata - Colon, Bladder, Pelvis, Bones, Legs, Skin and Ears
- Pitta – Stomach, Intestines, Plasma, Blood, Sweat, Skin & Eyes
- Kapha – Thorax, Head, Joints, Fatty Tissue, Stomach, Nose & Tongue.

Kapha has its seat in the chest, head, neck and stomach, Pitta in the small intestine and Vata in the large intestine. That is, the three doshas have their initial and dominant influence in the gastrointestinal system.

Ayurveda believes that *Food is Life*. [Tridosha](#) too, are produced by food only. The explanation is as follows:

- **Kapha Production:** When food enters the mouth cavity and stomach, in this first phase of digestion, a lot of saliva and gastric juices are secreted to convert the food into a semi-solid pulp (chyme). With the softness and watery contents increasing, this is called Kapha production and these organs in the upper half of body are called Kapha Production sites. This phase of digestion is called Kapha Phase, lasting for around first 4 hours after food intake.
- **Pitta Production:** Food next enters the small intestine and gets a lot of chemical secretions flowing in, as hydrochloric acid, bile, pancreatic juices, succus entericus etc. The increase in fiery liquid is understood as Pitta Production. All food breakdown metabolism takes place in this small intestine only. Being rich in fiery activities, it is called Pitta Phase of digestion, lasting from around 4th to 8th hour after food intake.
- **Vata Production:** After Pitta phase, all the useful ingredients of food have been digested, assimilated and absorbed. The wastage and [water](#) are now pushed to large intestine. This

organ has the most important function of reabsorbing the excessive [water](#) from the wastage, leaving only stool to be excreted. With every inch forward movement in the large intestine, [water](#) is reabsorbed, making the stool drier and drier. Dryness is the property of Vata and that is why this is called Vata production. This phase is called Vata Phase of digestion, lasting around 8th to 12th hour after food intake.

This is the basis to explain why particular body parts are associated to specific Doshas. This information is of great clinical importance as it forms the ground for [Panchakarma](#) detoxification (see Topic 9).

Since we are dependent on external sources of food, precautions, such as the [time](#) of eating, the amount, the quality, method of preparation, and their combination with spices, are all of great import in relation to how the body forms and functions.

Thus dietary considerations are frequent contributors to [health](#), [disease](#) and healing because of the principal sites of the three doshas in the gastro-intestinal tract.

4. Qualities and Actions of Tridosha

The physiological activity going on in the body could be classified into three categories:

- **Movement:** Vata [Dosha](#) is responsible for movement. The nervous system functioning by modern physiology for example, can be identified with Vata.
- **Transformation:** Pitta [Dosha](#) is responsible for transformation. The chemical process being carried out in the human body can be attributed to Pitta, including enzymes, hormones etc.
- **Lubrication and Stability:** lubrication is provided by Kapha [Dosha](#). Kapha [Dosha](#) also binds things together. The complete nutritional functioning, immunity, strength and the anabolic system, actually the whole physical volume of an organism and body fluids, heaviness, stability of body or [mind](#) can be attributed to Kapha.

Vata, Pitta and Kapha are considered in Ayurveda to be the representative of [Air](#), Sun and Moon respectively in the body. Their functions are similar to that of [Air](#), Sun and Moon in nature.

- [Air](#) and its representative Vata perform the function of movement or motivation in the universe and body respectively.
- Sun and its representative Pitta perform the function to absorb and transform in the universe and the body respectively.
- Moon and its representative Kapha perform the function to cool, nurture or grease the universe and body respectively.

Function	In the Universe by	In the body by
To Contribute	Moon	Kapha
To Take away	Sun	Pitta
Movement	Air	Vata

4.1. Vata

Vata is the most important of the three.

All the movements of any sort, physical or thought process, organic or inorganic, inside or outside the body are governed by Vata only. Even the other two Doshas cannot move in the body without the motivation from Vata. All achievements and exploration of any knowledge is again by the virtue of Vata only.

The main actions of Vata are

- Respiration
- Zeal
- Action
- Expulsion of Waste
- Control of Sense Organs & Nervous System
- Governs [Mind](#)
- Helps Metabolism

- Psychologically, Vata also governs feelings and emotions as nervousness, fear, anxiety, pain, excitement, over joyfulness, instant reactivity etc.

The main attributes of Vata are -

ROOKSHA	DRY
SHEETA	COLD
LAGHU	LIGHT
SOOKSHMA	SUBTLE
CHALA	MOBILE
VISHAD	CLEAR
KASHAYA	ASTRINGENT

4.2. Pitta

Pitta is responsible for the wisdom, digestion, metabolism, vision, body temperature, skin lustre, happiness etc.

Its qualities are

SNEHA	OILY
USHMA	HOT
TIKSHANA	SHARP
LAGHU	LIGHT
DRAVA	LIQUID
SARA	FLOW
KATU/AMLA	PUNGENT/SOUR

The main actions of Pitta are

- Transformation
- Digestion
- Absorption, assimilation & nutrition
- Metabolism
- Body temperature
- Skin coloration
- Vision

Psychologically, it governs intelligence and understanding, Pitta arouses happiness, anger, hate and jealousy, bravery, will power etc.

4.3. Kapha

All the growth, stability, smoothness, heaviness in body and [mind](#) are by virtue of Kapha only. Strength (which may be physical, mental) and immunity against diseases are provided by Kapha.

The main attributes of Kapha are

GURU	HEAVY
SHEETA	COLD
MRIDU	SOFT
SNIGDHA	UNCTUOUS
STHIRA	STABLE
PICCHILLA	STICKY

MADHURA	SWEET
---------	-------

The main actions of Kapha are

- Lubricates the joints
- Provides moisture to the skin
- Strength, vigour and stability
- Memory retention
- Sexual Potency
- Immunity

Psychologically, Kapha is responsible for emotions of attachment, dullness, greed, possessiveness, accumulation, and long-standing relations, positive or negative. It is also expressed in tendencies toward calmness, forgiveness and love.

4.4. Subbdoshas: Vata

All three **Tridosha** are present in every cell and are responsible for every activity of a living cell, tissue, organ, or **mind**. Still, an analytic view suggests to study each **Dosha** as five subtypes, having particular location and functions.

A tabular layout to understand the names of five subdosha of each **Dosha**, their sites, functions and related diseases is as follows -

Vata

SubDosha	Site	Function	Related disorders
Prana	Heart	Breathing and swallowing of food.	Heart Diseases, Bronchitis, Asthma, Cold, Hoarseness of voice etc
Udana	Throat	Speech and voice	Various diseases of eye, ear, nose and throat.
Samana	Stomach & small intestines	Digestion, assimilation, absorption of food	Indigestion, Diarrhea, Malnutrition etc.
Apana	Colon & pelvis	Elimination of stool, urine, semen, foetal and menstrual blood.	Diseases of bladder, anus & testicles, urinary system diseases etc.
Vyana	Heart	Circulation in whole body	Impairment of circulation, systemic diseases

Pitta

Sub -Dosha	Site	Function	Related disorders
Pachaka	Stomach & small intestines	Digestion	Indigestion, Anorexia
Ranjaka	Liver, spleen and stomach	Blood Function	Anemia, Jaundice, Liver diseases
Sadhaka	Heart	Memory and other mental functions.	Psychic disturbances, Cardiac diseases etc
Alochaka	Eyes/ Brain	Vision	Impairment of vision & mind
Bhrajaka	Skin	Colour and glaze of the skin	Skin diseases

Kapha

Sub -Dosha	Site	Function	Related disorders
Kledaka	Stomach	Moistens food, helps digestion.	Indigestion
Avalambaka	Heart	Energy, Strength	Laziness, Heart diseases
Bodhaka	Tongue	Perception of taste.	Impairment of Taste
Tarpaka	Brain	Nourishment to brain	Loss of memory, Impaired sense organs
Shleshaka	Joints	Lubrication of joints	Pain & deformities in joints.

5. Video

- Watch the video

<https://youtu.be/yQEb-IcijGI?t=5>

Book 3.2: Imbalance of Tridoshas

1. Introduction of Normal & Abnormal Dosha

This book will educate you about the most important clinical principle of Ayurveda i.e. [Tridosha](#) imbalance. It will underline the importance of this delicate balance and the causes, symptoms and management to the imbalance.

1.1. Video 1: Tridosha on Mind

Watch this video

<https://youtu.be/yQEb-IcijGI?t=2>

1.2. Video 2: Tridosha on Body

Watch this video on

<https://youtu.be/pawgWNPgyxM?t=1>

2. Causes of their vitiation

The [Dosha](#) can go into vitiation by two mechanisms –

1. Physiological
2. Pathological

The physiological vitiation is unavoidable but has lesser signs and symptoms. Thus we cannot escape this kind of vitiation but this is usually mild and being alert with particular [Dosha](#) can be a preventive way to stay healthy.

It occurs in the following four situations:-

Dosha	Physiological Causes of Vitiation
Vata	Last of – 1. Day, 2. Night, 3. Age and 4. Digestion
Pitta	Middle of – 1. Day, 2. Night, 3. Age and 4. Digestion
Kapha	Beginning of 1. Day, 2. Night, 3. Age and 4. Digestion

Pathological vitiations, on the other hand, are largely avoidable but if one is careless and does activities to vitiate a particular [Dosha](#), the symptoms can be troubling and proper diseases can set in.

The pathological causes are as follows -

1. Vata Vitiation is caused by-

- Excessive Intake of Dry, Cold, Light food items,
- Improper sleep during night
- Trauma
- Over Exertion & Traveling
- Ignoring Nature's Calls
- Excessive Coitus
- Erratic Diet habits
- Fear & Anxiety.

2. Pitta vitiation is caused by-

- Excessive intake of Hot/Spicy/Oily/Salty/Sour food
- Alcohol consumption
- Over Exercise
- Anger
- Fear
- Exposure to Heat.

3. Kapha vitiation is caused by-

- Excessive use of Cold/Heavy/Salt/Sweet/Oily food
- Intake of Milk & Its products
- Day Sleep/ Over sleep
- Lack of Physical Exercise
- Over Eating

3. Symptoms of vitiation

The symptomatology of [Dosha](#) vitiation is varied. Usually, this manifests itself as an increase in [Dosha](#) actions or properties and some compensatory decrease in some other [Dosha](#) actions or properties. For example, if we notice increased movements / tremors in a patient's limbs, we can call it an increase in Vata as Vata is mobile; also this can be seen as a deficiency in Kapha because Kapha is stable. Excessive dryness can be addressed as Vata increase or Kapha decrease and so on.

The sign and symptoms of any [disease](#), whether trivial or potentially fatal, only come from [Tridosha](#) imbalance so the range of symptoms is too exhaustive to be tabulated here. The clinical picture becomes complicated when two or all of the three [Dosha](#) are vitiated and there is a mixed outcome. Still, some of the expected manifestations of deficiency and excess (vitiating) of the individual doshas are as follows:

VATA	
Excess	Deficiency
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pains- the most important symptom• Restlessness• Low Concentration• Weakness• Loss of Weight• Hoarseness of Voice• Insomnia• Constipation• Dull/Dry skin / Hyper pigmentation• Desire for Hot Substances	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• lethargy• decreased body movements• uneasiness• loss of consciousness• dullness of mind• etc.
PITTA	
Excess	Deficiency
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yellow / Reddish Discolorations• Short temperament / Irritability• Increase in Body Temperature• Delirium• Burning Sensation• Loss of Strength• Insomnia• Increased Thirst• Desire for Cold Substances	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• dullness of complexion• indigestion• coldness.

KAPHA	
Excess	Deficiency
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heaviness & Rigidity• Swelling/Edema• Less Physical Activity• Increased Sleep• Decreased Body Temperature• Decreased Appetite• Itching• Breathlessness• Desire for warm weather / food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• sensation of dryness• burning sensations and feeling of emptiness• stiffness of the joints• thirst• weakness• insomnia.

Some individuals have a natural tendency towards excess or vitiation of a [dosha](#), and this may be seen as a "constitutional" condition. The constitution ([Prakriti](#)) is present since birth. Physical [Prakriti](#) does not change although there are effects of age, long-term dietary and behavioural patterns.

4. Line of treatment of vitiated Dosha

[Dosha](#) balance is essential for ideal [health](#). Therefore in balanced state, they are also known as [Dhatu](#). Each [Dosha](#) has its own specific properties. Diet, life style, drugs etc. with similar properties as those of [Dosha](#) increase the [Dosha](#) and vice versa. For example, Vata is dry, light and cold. Any diet or drug that have similar properties will increase Vata and any diet or drug that have properties like heavy, oily and hot will decrease Vata and so on.

4.1. Vata Dosha Management

Diet: Food forms an important tool to influence [Dosha](#). Vata is decreased by sweet, sour and saline tastes hence should be included in meals. Cold meals and drinks should be avoided. Hot food and drinks, some fats as Ghee, milk, oils can be included. As they have little appetite and irregular meal timings, Vata persons should eat small repeated meals. Grains as wheat, rice, oats being sweet in taste and heavy in Guna are advisable. Raw food should be avoided as the [Agni](#) is irregular. Meat if consumed should be from smaller animals and fish but red meat as beef should be avoided. Fresh cooked vegetables, pulses and smaller beans, nuts can be taken but peas, Arbi / Eddoe, Kidney beans, Radish should be avoided.

Lifestyle: There should be a regular routine in meals and lifestyle. Vata has a prominent feature of Irregularity; if one can regularise the routine, Vata is bound to come under control. Such a person is required to decimate exertion, mental and physical impulses and should try to be rational rather than impulsive. They can practice to take [time](#) to react. Then only they can express the most suitable response to a situation.

Moderate physical exercise can be done as Vata gets aggravated by strenuous exertion. Meditation in some form, Yoga and [Pranayama](#) are advisable as they de-stress the [mind](#) and body.

4.2. Pitta Dosha Management

Diet: Pitta is tamed by sweet, bitter, and astringent tastes. As the [Agni](#) is usually high in such persons, they can digest heavy food items as complex carbohydrates, ghee etc.

Cold potency food such as wheat, rice, milk, salads, green leafy vegetables, sweet fruits, are good for them but should avoid a lot of barbeques, sour fruits, onions, garlic, yoghurt, honey, nuts, fats, coffee, spicy, fried and salty foods, pickles, yogurt, ferments as vinegar, alcohols, cheese, fish, red meat etc.

Lifestyle: They should avoid alcohol and smoking. As these persons are perfectionists, they tend to stress too soon due to unmet deadlines. They should practise to give themselves sufficient room to keep stress at bay. Some light physical exercises and sports, such as swimming, are advisable. Meditation, Yoga and [Pranayama](#) can help balance Pitta.

4.3. Kapha Dosha Management

Diet: Food should be cooked, light, hot and free of fats. Kapha is reduced by pungent, bitter, and astringent tastes. Pungent spices as Black pepper, Ginger, Curcuma, Ajwain, Asafoetida, Cumin, onions, garlic, green leafy vegetables and sour fruits, corn, barley, fish, poultry are useful.

Excess of wheat, rice, potatoes, sweets, salt, milk, dairy, fats, cola drinks, chocolates, ice creams, sweet fruits as bananas, dates, grapes, pineapples, alcohols, red meat are Kapha enhancing so have to be avoided or minimised.

Lifestyle: Kapha brings dullness to [mind](#) and body so this kind of persons or patients should prefer walking, jogging, swimming, outdoor games and exercises to burn more calories than they consume. Alcohols cause weight gain and should be shunned. Excessive mental dullness can stress a Kapha person; Yoga and [Pranayama](#) can help in such cases.

5. Summary

The [Dosha](#) in normal state is [health](#) and imbalance is [disease](#). All the endeavour of Ayurveda medicine is to restore this balance. These can go into vitiation by physiological or pathological mechanisms. The physiological vitiation is unavoidable but has lesser signs and symptoms. Thus we cannot escape this kind of vitiation but this is usually mild and being alert with particular [Dosha](#) can be a preventive way to stay healthy. Pathological vitiations, on the other hand, are largely avoidable but if one is careless and does activities to vitiate a particular [Dosha](#), the symptoms can be troubling and proper diseases can set in.

The signs and symptoms of diseases only come from [Tridosha](#) imbalance. The symptomatology of [Dosha](#) vitiation is varied. Usually, this manifests itself as an increase in [Dosha](#) actions or properties and some compensatory decrease in some other [Dosha](#) actions or properties

Each [Dosha](#) has its own specific properties. Diet, life style, drugs etc. with similar properties as those of [Dosha](#) increase the [Dosha](#) and vice versa.

6. Reference books

1. Sushruta [Samhita](#) Sootra Sthana Chapter 15
2. Ashtang Samgraha Sutra Sthana Chapters 1, 19, 20, 21
3. Charaka [Samhita](#) Sutra Sthana Chapter 12
4. Charaka [Samhita](#) Sutra Sthana Chapter 20