



# Personality Development through Ayurveda

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## Research Article

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## Abstract

Personality is the trait which defines a person. According to Dunham, "Personality distinguishes us from other people and defines our general nature. Our overall personality is composed of a collection of psychological characteristics or traits that determines our personal preferences and individual style of behavior." This writing suggests that different people exhibit different personalities and that a person's personality comprises of a set of Physio-psychological characteristics which are determinant of a person's preferences and his/her individual behavior. In the Indian medical system of Ayurveda, Health is the result of balanced interplay between three functional principles of body which are termed as Sharirika Dosha -Vata, Pitta, and Kapha - that regulate physical functions & Mansika Dosha- Satva, Raja and Tama – that regulate one's psychological behavior. The relative proportion of these Sharirika & Mansika Doshas in an individual determines the person's psychophysical constitution which is termed as Prakriti in Ayurveda. Another term, Aachara Rasayana; is a unique concept in Ayurveda that implies moral, ethical, and benevolent conduct which plays an important role in development of personality. An equilibrium state of body, mind, social and spiritual well-being is defined as Health by Ayurveda. To attain this, there has been mentioned certain codes of conduct in Ayurveda which are all together known as Sadvritta (Code of conduct). All these together helps in achieving a better framework of personality according to Ayurveda. Thus, this article aims in finding various prospects that help in development of an individual's Personality.

**Keywords:** Aachara Rasayana; Mansika Dosha; Personality; Prakriti; Sadvritta; Sharirika Dosha

## Key Message

Personality plays a definite role in every field of life; i.e. personal or professional. Many people took advantage of their good personality traits and many of us get many negative consequences from it. Though developing a good personality is a bit difficult task but yet it is possible.

## Introduction

Personality may be defined as a dynamic, organized set of characteristics of a person that influences that person's emotions, motivations, cognition and behavior in different situations [1]. Personality basically includes three

elements of an individual - Physiological, Psychological and Environmental. Definition of Personality by Allport suggests that "The dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustments to his/her environment is termed Personality" [2-4]. There are some controversies to Personality theory and researches are being carried out to capture the 'whole person' in a single theory [5].

## Material and Methods

For this review article, various literatures of Ayurveda and modern science describing about personality and research studies on personality development are taken into

consideration.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Health is considered a “state of complete physical, mental and social and spiritual well-being” [6]. In today’s world, Subjective well-being indicators such as positive emotions, meanings, goal pursuit of an individual and self-actualization are instead neglected, despite growing evidence of their importance for health [7-9]. For instance, two persons having same degree of physical health may differ in their level of functioning based on some psychological features [10,11]. Thus, the claim for person-centered health care marks the assessment of psychological dimensions- a compelling and most wanted need in both research as well as practice [12-14]. Personality within western psychology (a scientific taxonomy of individual types) was developed through studies using natural languages as sources of human attributes. These studies further led to identification of a set of individual characteristics, that were variously categorized [15,16].

## Psychology

Personality refers to various distinctive qualities within a person, including thoughts and emotions and characteristics of a person’s behavior [5,17,18]. Several theories have been postulated for personality which can be broadly grouped into four categories:

- Type and Trait approaches.
- Dynamic approaches.
- Learning and behavioral approaches.
- Humanistic approaches.

Type and Trait Theories of Personality mainly focus on people’s personal characteristics. Types are the collection of individuals with some common characteristics. Traits may be defined as the tendency to behave relatively consistent and distinctive ways across many situations. Although Type and Trait theories have enhanced the understanding of human behavior but people’s behavior often varies with the situations they are in and people’s performance can be influenced accordingly.

Dynamic theories include a search for the processes by which motives, basic needs and impulses are not disclosed & which in turn interact to shape the individual’s behavior. Most of the Dynamic theories are based mostly on observations and evidence noticed in disturbed adults. They have represented the mainstream of their culture; thus cannot be guaranteed as the final word on personality. Sigmund Freud’s Psychoanalytic theory, Jung’s Analytical Psychology, Defense Mechanisms in Dynamic theories have good influence but it is difficult to prove or disapprove many of their concepts and interpretations.

Learning theories highlights that most of the human behavior that make up personality are either conditioned or learned. Learning and conditioning in Classical, Instrumental and Cognitive forms are highly relevant to personality and its development. Many researchers have done their approaches for their clarity and their experimental ‘testability’ but this theory is also criticized by many for diminution of ‘the person’ in Personality. Thus learning theories approach helps in understanding of behavior in specific situations but cannot give a complete understanding of personality.

Humanistic theory highlights the importance of people’s subjective attitudes, feelings and beliefs about one-self. Carl Roger’s theory explained the impact of differences between a person’s ideal self and perceived real self in a very efficient manner. Maslow focuses on the significance of self-actualization.

The above mentioned theories are meaningful to explore human mind and behavior but are often criticized for their heavy reliance on subjective self-report data. Knowing the limitations of the broad personality theories, some researchers have shifted to focused study pattern like is there any influence of gene on personality.

The Person Situation Controversy [17] some researchers have studied person-situation interactions by focusing on “the personality of situations”. In general, some people are strongly influenced by some traits. We also see some situations are ‘powerful’ influencing specific kinds of behavior. Whereas other situations are less structured and thus “weak”; they permit personality traits to have stronger influence on people’s behavior.

## Ayurvedic Concept of Personality

Ayurveda is the science of life. Personality in Ayurvedic context is not merely subjective criteria but rather a whole unique concept. According to Ayurvedic Acharyas, personality of an individual depends on many factors such as Prakriti, Sadvritta, Aachar Rasayana and Mansika Bhavas.

Every human being has a unique proportion of the three Doshas at the time of conception likewise everyone has a unique finger print. This forms ‘Prakriti’ which determines one’s individuality and is based on unique proportion of Tridosha. Prakriti is derived from a Sanskrit word meaning “nature” or natural form of constitution of an individual. It is one of the bases of classifying human population in general and according to Ayurveda, it is the prime factor responsible for the diagnosis and prognosis of diseases, selection of drugs for a particular disease, fixing the dose of medicines and therapeutic management. Prakriti gets ingrained in an organism right from the time of conception and gets

modified according to some factors like one's habitat, habit, age, environmental influences, lifestyle etc.

### Tridosha

Tridosha governs the physical, physiological and psychological characteristics of an individual. M.S Valiathan in his text 'The Legacy of Charaka' quotes "Vata dosha governs the nervous and musculoskeletal system. At the cellular level, Vata dosha can be assumed to associate with various signaling pathways that regulate cell growth, differentiation, and cell death. Pitta dosha is responsible for all the transformative processes such as digestion, metabolism, energy production, and immunity maintenance. At the cellular level, Pitta dosha can be associated with enzymatic actions, growth factors, hormones secretion, and the reactions required for energy homeostasis and maintenance of basal metabolism. Kapha dosha helps to form and maintenance of body mass, shape and flexibility. At the cellular level, several anabolic processes such as biosynthesis of macromolecules and the coordination of gene and protein function may be responsible with Kapha dosha". Tridosha are in fixed proportions in our body at the time of conception constitute the psychosomatic make up called Prakriti. Understanding Prakriti in detail (its formation, classification, characteristics) further helps to understand better the physical, physiological, psychological and behavioral aspects of an individual more precisely [5,18-21].

### Concept of Aachara Rasayana

Aachara Rasayana is a unique concept in Ayurveda that implies moral, ethical, and benevolent conduct. It aims at personal and public cleanliness, non-violence, truth, mental and personal hygiene, compassion, devotion, and yogic lifestyle. These behaviors bring about rejuvenation in one's body-mind system. One who adopts such conduct gains all the benefits of Rasayana therapy without physically consuming any medicine?

Rasayana remedy or recipe. Aachara Rasayana may act as a Rasayana in three main dimensions:

- In improving the personality.
- In improving the social relationship
- In improving the physical health.

### Concept of Sadvritta

According to Ayurveda, to achieve a healthy and disease free life everyone must follow certain codes of conduct (Sadvritta) mentioned in Ayurveda texts. These codes of conduct are equally important in developing the overall personality of an individual. These codes are classified in to following groups.

- Vyavaharika Sadvritta (Ethical codes of conduct).
- Samajika Sadvritta (Social codes of conduct).

- Mansika Sadvritta (Mental codes of conduct).
- Dharmika Sadvritta (Moral codes of conduct).
- Sharirika Sadvritta (Physical codes of conduct).

### Discussion

The development of Personality can be achieved by the means of following factors:

#### Prakriti and Personality Development

Ayurveda classical tests Ashtanga Hridaya and Charaka Samhita shlokas describes Deha Prakriti are of seven kinds based on the predominance of dosha in Shukra (spermatozoa), Shonita (ovum) at the time of their union, the food habits and activities of pregnant woman (garbhini bhojya, chestha), and the intrauterine condition and season (garbhasaya ritu) [22].

The above mentioned factors govern the development of fetus. There are also post-natal elements which influence the features of an individual. Charaka categorizes these factors governing Prakriti and commentary on Sushruta Samhita by Dalhana describes the same in shloka [19,23].

"Tatra prakriti jatiprasakthi cha, kulaprasakthi cha, deshanupatani cha, kalanupatani cha, vayonupatani cha, pratiatmaniyata cheti" (C.S Indriya sthanam 1/5). The Sanskrit shloka explains of postnatal factors that influence development of one's Prakriti or personality [1].

- Jati prasakta: Character of human race/religion in which he is born
- Kula prasakta: Influence of caste/family in which he is born.
- Desha anupatani: Nature of habitat in which he lives.
- Kala anupatani: Kind of season/time
- Vaya anupatani: Stages of life
- Prati atmaniyata: Based on basic instincts.

This can be very well understood by seeing an example that the family has very powerful impact on the development of a child, impacting attitudes, beliefs, opportunities, habits, and his/her personality traits. The family plays a critical role in determining who a child becomes and what he or she accomplishes. Likewise, Jati or Kula also adds some or other personality traits in an individual. For instance; a child born in the Brahmin family is more dedicated to Holy Books and a child in Kshatriya Family are subjected to learn a life of warriors.

Vaya also plays relevant role in developing Personality. It can be very well understood by the example that physical appearance and fashion choices we made aside, as we might think we will be essentially the same person in old age as

we were in adolescence. Similar is the case with our intellect property. Desha implies to the Habitat in today's perspective. An emerging hypothesis posts that a person usually chooses that habitat that best fits their personality and thus further aids in personality development.

### Personality Development through Aachar Rasayana (Behavioral Medicine)

Aachara Rasayana helps the individual in understanding the society and to know the role of an individual in society. One should strive to bring happiness, cheerfulness, and positive manas bhavas to all. This attitude is termed as Hitayu, which is characteristic of our Indian culture. It is now evidenced also that anger and hostility are associated with CHD outcomes and predict the development of atrial fibrillation. Untruthfulness, ungratefulness, disrespect for the gods, insult of the preceptors, sinful acts, misdeeds of past lives and intake of mutually contradictory food are the causative factors of kilasa (leukoderma). Shukra (semen) and Ojas (rasa or plasma including chyle) get diminished because of excessive emaciation as a result of jealousy, anxiety, fear, apprehension, anger, grief, excessive indulgence in sex, fasting and intake of less of nourishing food.

It is seen that people suffering from behavioral disorders have dysfunctional beliefs about self and others. This results ultimately into maladaptive interpersonal relationships which further impair intimate relationships and unpleased life. On the contrary, Daniel Goleman author of "Focus: The Hidden Driver of Excellence" states that the brain has heightened prefrontal activity and positivity results in enhanced mental functions such as creative thinking, cognitive flexibility, and even faster processing. Positive emotions actually widen our span of attention and it also changes our perception and focus on more of the "we" instead of the "me". Thus in a better way, it aids in the development of Personality.

### Personality Development through Sadvritta

Ayurveda defined health as an equal balance of body, mind, social and spiritual well-being. To achieve this, Ayurveda prescribes certain codes of conduct and this is known as Sadvritta (Code of conduct). Sadvritta originates from two words "Sad" means good and "Vritta" which means conduct or behavior or habits includes in our daily regimen. According to Ayurved, to maintain a healthy and disease free life everyone should follow Sadvritta mentioned in Ayurveda texts. These can be understood by Vyavaharika Sadvritta (Ethical codes of conduct) [24].

- Always speak the truth. Try to speak at the proper time with words which are beneficial, limited, sweet and meaningful.
- Whenever you go out for a walk, always carry an

umbrella, a walking stick and a turban (headwear). Because holding an umbrella prevents the effect of rain, breeze, dust, heat of the sun, snow etc. It is also good for color (complexion), eyes (vision), strength and bestows comfort [25].

- Same way holding a stick while walking dispels the fear from dogs, several types of reptiles, wild and horned animals. It prevents exertion and defects. It also bestows good mind, enthusiasm, strength, stability, courage and valiance. It also gives support to the body and removes fear.
- Always stop performing physical exercise before getting completely tired. Don't do over exercise. Because proper exercise brings about lightness, ability to work, stability, resistance to discomfort. It also stimulates the power of digestion. Excessive practice of physical exercise gives rise to tiredness, exhaustion, excessive thirst, bleeding from different parts of the body, darkness in front of eyes, cough, fever and vomiting [26].

### Samajika Sadvritta (Social Codes of Conduct)

- Be friendly to all living beings, pacify the anger, and console those who are frightened, help the poor, be truthful, peaceful, and tolerated of others harsh words and deeds of others.
- Keep a smile on your face and should begin the conversation first. Always respect guests and show hospitality towards them.
- Always remain in the company of teachers, elderly persons and successful person (siddha and religious) and always give respect and serve them.
- Avoid combing hair in a public place. Do not pick your teeth or finger the nose or ear in the presence of people.
- One should not laugh loudly and should not eliminate flatus with sound.

### Religious Codes of Conduct

- Person should not go out without touching gems, feet of respectable person, auspicious things and flowers. Always wear auspicious herbs which are protective from evil like Tulsi, Sahadevi and Rudraksha.
- Everyone should pay respect to the Gods, Cows, Teachers (preceptors) elderly people and those who have accomplished spiritual perfection.

### Code of Mental Activities

- One should not indulge in any activity without proper examination.
- Don't allow sense organs to control you. You have to control them.
- Don't postpone the things to be done at the proper time.



- Don't take quick action without examining it very well.
- Don't feel excessively exhilarated in achievements and depressed in loss. Should always remember normal mode of events happening since the cause of all things is definite and their effects are also definite.
- Sharirika Sadvritta (Physical codes of conduct).
- Always wear flowers and apply sweet scents (perfumes). Because use of perfumes and garlands stimulates libido, produce good smell in the body and enhances longevity and charm. It gives corpulence and strength to the body. It is pleasing to the mind.
- Always wear gems and ornaments. Because it adds to the prosperity, auspiciousness, longevity and grace and prevents danger from snakes, evil spirits etc. It is pleasant and charming. It is also conducive of Ojas.
- Follow a routine of oil massage on head, ears, nostrils and feet every day.
- Keep cleaning excretory passage of waste (urethra, anus, vagina, nose, skin etc.) and feet frequently. Clean them with water.

### Spiritual Well-Being/Development

Also, the ancient Indian model of "Personality", given in the Upanishads, consists of the 'five' sheaths. They are 'Annamaya' (food sheath), 'Pranamaya' (vital air sheath), 'Manomaya' (mental sheath), 'Vijnanamaya' (intellectual sheath), and 'Anandamaya' (bliss sheath). 'Annamaya'; a segment of human system is nourished by 'anna', that is, food. 'Pranamaya' is that segment which is nourished by 'prana', that is, 'bioenergy'. 'Manomaya' is the segment nourished by 'education'. 'Vijnanamaya' is nourished by 'ego' and 'Anandamaya' is the segment nourished by 'emotions' [27]. All these are equally important for the spiritual development of an individual and thereby personality development. These codes of conduct are equally important in developing the overall personality of an individual.

### Conclusion

Understanding the limitation and drawbacks of Personality theories in Psychology; Concept of 'Prakriti' from Indian medical literature 'Ayurveda' is evaluated. Genetic predisposition, constitutional base, mental factors, dietary habits and regime govern physical as well as mental health. Analyzing Prakriti helps to understand different facets of personality-physical characteristics, functional aspects, metabolism, disease tendency, human behavior and emotions. Thus, a better development of personality could be made keeping into consideration all these facts.

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