

## *Ananda Sanga Educational Institute*

# Ayurveda Self-Healing Program

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### **Module 2: Discovering Your Constitution**

- Determining Constitution – Body/Mind type
- Gunas and its Function
- Twenty Attributes

### **How to Discover Your Constitution (Prakriti)**

Before you can determine your constitution, an understanding of *Prakriti* is needed. A particular combination of energies were present in your parents bodies and minds when you were conceived, and when you enter the world at birth it is this that is know in Ayurveda as your innate constitution or *prakriti*. This essential constitution remains unchanged throughout the individual's lifetime, it is genetically determined. ***Prakriti* is thus your blueprint for this life!**

It is what gives us our physical characteristics, natural urges, attractions and aversions, and psychological tendencies, as well as our development of the highest order of human qualities: love, compassion and evolution of consciousness.

What does understanding your constitution mean practically? Each constitution has different needs. Meeting these needs assures balance and better chances for good health and peace of mind. It also offers you more informed choices in what health methods are most appropriate for you.

*Note:* Ideally to discover your constitution you would need to go to a skilled Ayurvedic Consultant who by observation and taking a pulse reading will assess your *prakriti*. From pulse examination he/she can ascertain what elements are in balance, what is out and what needs to be done.

By answering the listed questions you will find the elements that are present in your constitution. Answer the questions first by remembering yourself when you were **young, happy and healthy**. Be completely honest as it is only for your reference.

Each question has a choice of three answers; therefore we give each a total of 3 points (per row). You may find that the description fits you 100% and so give yourself 3 points, or you may feel 2 of the 3 are for you so you divide the 3 points into the proportion you feel fits (1,5 each or 2 and 1). If all 3 answers are appropriate, divide the points up equally, giving each description 1 point. Take your time and answer as accurately and honestly as you can.

**DISCOVERING YOUR CONSTITUTION (Prakriti)**

<b>ASPECT</b>	<b>VATA</b>	<b>PITTA</b>	<b>KAPHA</b>
Frame	Thin, very tall or very short	Medium, well-proportioned	Ample in build
Structure	Light bones, prominent joints	Medium bones	Heavy bone structure
Body Weight	Hard time gaining weight	Gain or lose easily, if you put your mind to it	Gain easily, hard time losing
Eyes	Small, active, dark eyes	Penetrating light green, grey or amber eyes	Large attractive eyes thick eyelashes
Skin	Dry skin, chaps easily	Oily skin and hair	Thick, cool, well-lubricated
Complexion	Dark, tan easily	Fair, sunburn easily	Tan slowly but evenly, skin stays cooler than most
Hair	Dark, rough, wiry or kinky	Fine, light, oily hair, blond, red or early grey	Thick wavy hair, a little oily, dark or light
Nails	Brittle	Flexible, but pretty strong	Strong thick nails
Speech	Fast	Sharp and cutting	Slow, monotonous
Taste preference	Sweet, sour, salty	Sweet, bitter, astringent	Pungent, bitter, astringent
Food	Like to snack, nibble	Like high protein foods, like chicken, fish, eggs, beans	Love fatty foods, bread, starch
Thirst	Variable	Usually thirsty	Rarely thirsty
Illness	Nervous disorders or sharp pain more likely	Fevers, rashes, inflammation more likely	Excess fluid retention or mucous more likely
Perspiration	Cold hands and feet, little perspiration	Good circulation, perspire frequently	Moderate perspiration
Climate	Prefer warm climate, sunshine, moisture	Prefer cool well ventilated places	Any climate ok, as long as it is not too humid
Appetite	Variable, can get very hungry, but may find 'eyes were bigger than stomach'	Irritable if you miss a meal or can't eat when hungry; good appetite	Like to eat, fine appetite, but can skip meals if you have to

Digestion		Sometimes good, sometimes not		Usually good		Fine but sometimes slow
Routine		Dislike routine		Enjoy planning and routine especially if you create it		Work well with routine
Mind		Creative thinker, change your mind easily		Good initiator and leader, have opinions and like to share them		Good at keeping an organization or project running smoothly, change mind slowly
Physical activity		Like to stay active		Enjoy activity especially competitive ones		love leisurely activities most
Exercise		Feel more mentally relaxed when exercising		Exercise helps keep emotions from going out of control		Exercise keeps weight down in a way a diet alone won't
Emotional temperament		Tend towards fear, insecurity and anxiety under stress		Tend towards anger, frustration or irritability under stress		Avoids difficult situations
Dreams		Often dream, but rarely remember them, fearful, flying, jumping, running dreams		Remember dreams easily, often dream in colour, fiery, angry, violence, war		Only remember dreams if they are especially significant or intense, watery, romantic dreams
Moods		Changeable moods and ideas		Forceful about expressing your ideas and feelings		Steady, reliable, slow to change
Sleep		Light sleeper, insomnia		Usually sleep well		Sound, heavy sleeper
Finance		Money is to be spent		Spend on special items or on purchases that will advance you		Easy to save
Sexual interest		Variable, fantasy life active		Ready sexual interest and drive		Steady sexual interest and drive

*Total scores.*

If they are less than 10 points apart then two doshas predominate - seldom but sometimes the three doshas are very similar which indicates you are *tri-doshic*.

*Vikriti*

This is the condition or **state of your health at this moment**. It often differs from your *prakriti* and may differ from moment to moment. *Vikriti* is the imbalance within the body that causes discomfort or disease. For example, if there is a predominance of *pitta* in someone, the weather on a very hot day would cause that person to experience

discomfort in the form of excess heat.

*If you do not feel healthy, happy and “in balance” right now - repeat filling in the table with another colour pen and answer the questions as you feel now, to determine **vikriti**.*

**There are Seven Different Constitutional Types:**

- *Vata*
- *Pitta*
- *Kapha*
- *Vata–Pitta*
- *Vata-Kapha*
- *Kapha-Pitta*
- *Vata, Pitta & Kapha*

When examining our **Prakriti** we refer to these as Vata Prakriti, Pitta Prakriti or Kapha Prakriti.

When examining our **Vrikriti** we refer to these as Vata Vikriti, Pitta Vikriti or Kapha Vikriti.

**To keep yourself in balance take into consideration these factors:**

**What You Can Do To Balance VATA**

- Keep warm
- Choose warming foods and spices
- Avoid extreme cold, and cold or frozen foods and drinks
- Minimise your intake of raw foods especially raw apples and cabbage family
- Take it easy on most beans, with a few exceptions
- Make sure food is warm, moist and well lubricated. Soup hot drinks and rice with a little oil or butter in it, are examples
- Emphasise sweet, sour and salty tastes in foods
- Keep a regular routine
- Create as safe, calm and secure environment for yourself as you can Keep a regular routine

**Rest, Routine & Regularity** are the keywords for *Vata*. Keep warm, moisture

**What You Can Do To Balance PITTA**

- Keep cool
- Avoid excess heat, steam and humidity
- Avoid excess oils, fried foods, caffeine, salt, alcohol, red meat, and hot spices
- Emphasise fresh fruits and vegetables
- Enjoy milk, cottage cheese and whole grains
  
- Emphasise sweet, bitter and astringent tastes in your food choices
- Get plenty of fresh air, walk in nature
- Trust your feelings and express them in ways that support you and those around you.

**Cool & Calm** are *Pitta* key words

### **What You Can Do To Balance KAPHA**

- Get plenty of physical activity everyday
- Keep your consumption of fat to a minimum, including fried foods
- Avoid iced foods and drinks, sweets and excessive amounts of bread
- Choose foods that are warm, light and dry
- Drink no more than 4 cups of fluid per day
- Emphasise pungent, bitter and astringent tastes in your food and herb choices
- Luxuriate in fresh vegetables, herbs and spices
- Get enough complex carbohydrates to sustain you and maintain an adequate energy intake
- Allow excitement, challenge and change into your life as much as possible

**Variety, Excitement & Change** are the key words for *Kapha*

**All living matter is a combination of the doshas.** For example if we look at trees - an old oak tree is solid, stable and could be categorised in the *kapha* dosha, whereas a willow tree is light, it moves a lot, we could say it has typical *vata* qualities. Our different foods are also a combination of the doshas, and so can affect our constitutional doshas accordingly.

## **Gunās and its Function**

*Prakriti*, (Primal Nature), is composed of three (3) prime qualities or ‘*Gunās*’ (meaning ‘what binds’). These *gunās* are *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. They are more subtle than the five elements, which arise through their activity. All aspects in the world are different combinations of the three *gunās*. It thus provides the key to all forms and processes of life. The science of the three *gunās*, like the science of the five elements, is one of the pillars of Ayurvedic and Vedic science.

### ***Sattva***

*Sattva* means the quality of stability, harmony, virtue or being (*sat*). It is said to be light in nature and luminous. It has inward and upward motion and brings about the awakening and development of the soul. *Sattva* gives happiness. It is the principle of intelligence.

### ***Rajas***

*Rajas* means the quality of distraction, turbulence or activity. It is said to be mobile and motivated. It possesses outward motion causes self-motivated or self-seeking action that leads to disintegration. *Rajas* creates pain and suffering. It is the principle of energy.

### ***Tamas***

*Tamas* means the quality of dullness, darkness and inertia. It is said to be heavy and veiling or obstructing. It has downward motion and causes decay, degeneration and death. *Tamas* causes delusion. It is the principle of materiality.

When the three *gunas* are in balance *Prakriti* returns to the unmanifest state in which all her potentials can be recognised at once. When out of balance the three *gunas* bring about the process of cosmic evolution.

The three biological *humors* (*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*) also arise primarily through *Rajas*, as they are kinds of mobile or vital energies. *Vata*, the biological air humor, is the same as the *Pranas*. *Pitta*, the biological fire humor, and *Kapha*, the water humor, also have five forms. The *humors* provide a physiological structure for the interplay of the organs and elements. This becomes the physical body.

### Three Gunas and the Five Elements

Under the predominance of *Tamas*, the five elements evolve with diversification according to the three *gunas*. Ether comes from *Sattva* (clarity), fire from *Rajas* (energy) and earth from *Tamas* (inertia). Air is composed of both *Sattva* and *Rajas* (lightness and movement). Water has both *Rajas* and *Tamas* (movement and inertia). Earth is pure *Tamas* (inertia and resistance).

### Three Gunas and the Mind

Though all the different *gunas* have their appropriate place in nature, they become factors of disharmony in the mind and it is mainly on the mental level that they are used in Ayurveda.

The mind appropriately is the domain of *Sattva* (clarity) and the mind itself is called *Sattva*. One's quality of *sattva* is reflected in the clarity of one's perception and one's peace of mind. When in balance in the mind the three *gunas* give perception of truth, when out of balance, they create ignorance and desire or false imagination, through which perception is blocked or distorted.

*Sattva* is the balance of *rajas* and *tamas*. Hence by increasing *sattva* in the mind one returns to peace and harmony and can merge back to Nature and Spirit. Ayurveda uses the three *gunas* for determining mental nature.

### Psychological Constitutions

Indian philosophy classifies human temperaments into three basic types: *Sattvic*, *Rajasic*, and *Tamasic*. These types all differ in psychological and moral disposition, as well as in their reactions to social, cultural, and physical conditions, as is described in the classical texts of Ayurveda.

*Sattvic* qualities imply essence, reality, consciousness, purity, and clarity of perception. People in whom *Sattvic* qualities predominate are loving, compassionate, religious, and pure-minded, following truth and righteousness. They tend to have good manners and positive behaviour, and they do not easily become upset or angry. Although they work hard mentally, they do not get mental fatigue, so they need only four to five hours of sleep at night. They look fresh, alert, aware, and full of lustre and are recognized for their wisdom, happiness, and joy. They are creative, humble, and respectful of their teachers. Worshipping God and humanity, they love all. They care for people, birds, animals, and trees and are respectful of every life and existence.

*Rajasic* individuals are loving, calm, and patient—so long as their own interests are served! All

their activities are self-centered and egotistical. They are kind, friendly, and faithful only to those who are helpful to them. All movement and activity is due to *rajas*, which leads to the life of sensual enjoyment, pleasure and pain, effort and restlessness. People in whom *rajasic* qualities predominate tend to be egoistic, ambitious, aggressive, proud, and competitive and have a tendency to control others. They like power, prestige, and position and are perfectionists. They are hard-working people but may be lacking in proper planning and direction. Emotionally they tend to be angry, jealous, and ambitious and to have few moments of joy. They suffer from a fear of failure, are subject to stress, and are quickly drained of mental energy. They require eight hours of sleep.

*Tamas* is darkness, inertia, heaviness, and a tendency toward materialism. Individuals dominated by *tamas* are often less intelligent. They tend toward depression, laziness, and excess sleep, even during the day. A little mental work tires them easily. They like jobs with less responsibility, and they love to eat, drink, sleep, and have sex. They tend to be greedy, possessive, attached, irritable, and uncaring toward others. They are willing to harm others for their own self-interest.

There is a constant interplay of these three *gunas* in everyone's consciousness, but the relative predominance of *sattva*, *rajas*, or *tamas* is responsible for an individual's psychological constitution.

## Twenty Attributes

Ayurveda encompasses a subtle science of attributes or qualities. These are also called *gunas*. *Charak*, the great Ayurvedic physician, found that all organic and inorganic substances, as well as thoughts and actions have definite attributes. These attributes contain potential energy while the actions express kinetic energy. According to Ayurveda, there are twenty basic attributes.

*Vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* each has their own attributes as discussed before, and substances having similar attributes will tend to aggravate the related bodily *humor* by the law of like increases like. E.g. *kapha* is cold, heavy, liquid, sticky and cloudy; so in the winter when these characteristics predominates in the external environment, internal *kapha* tends to be aggravated.

To understand and appreciate the Ayurvedic concept of attributes, one should meditate deeply upon them. The examination of the attributes is a very subtle experience and demands constant awareness. The concept governing the pharmacology, therapeutic and food preparation in Ayurveda are based on the action and reaction of the twenty attributes to and upon one another. Through understanding of these qualities, balance of the *tri-dosha* may be maintained.

### Twenty Qualities and Their Actions

<b>Heavy</b>	<b>Increases: Kapha</b> <b>Decreases: Vata &amp; Pitta</b> Increases bulk nutrition, heaviness, creates dullness, lethargy.
<b>Light</b>	<b>Increases: Vata, Pitta &amp; Agni</b> <b>Decreases: Kapha</b> Helps digestion, reduce bulk, cleanses, creates freshness and ungroundedness.
<b>Slow</b>	<b>Increases: Kapha</b> <b>Decreases: Vata &amp; Pitta</b> Creates sluggishness, slow action, relaxation and dullness.
<b>Sharp</b>	<b>Increases: Vata &amp; Pitta</b> <b>Decreases: Kapha</b> Creates ulcers, perforation, immediate affect on body, promotes sharpness & understanding.
<b>Cold</b>	<b>Increases: Vata &amp; Kapha</b> <b>Decreases: Pitta</b> Creates cold, numbness, unconsciousness, fear and insensitivity.
<b>Hot</b>	<b>Increases: Pitta &amp; Agni</b> <b>Decreases: Vata &amp; Kapha</b> Promotes heat, digestion, cleansing, expansion, inflation, anger and hate.
<b>Oily</b>	<b>Increases: Pitta &amp; Kapha</b> <b>Decreases: Vata &amp; Agni</b> Creates smoothness, moister, lubrication, vigor, promotes compassion and love.
<b>Dry</b>	<b>Increases: Vata &amp; Agni</b> <b>Decreases: Pitta &amp; Kapha</b> Increases dryness, absorption, constipation and nervousness.
<b>Slimy</b>	<b>Increases: Pitta &amp; Kapha</b> <b>Decreases: Vata &amp; Agni</b> Decreases roughness, increases smoothness, love and care.
<b>Rough</b>	<b>Increases: Vata &amp; Agni</b> <b>Decreases: Pitta &amp; Kapha</b> Causes cracking of the skin and bones; creates calmness and rigidity.
<b>Dense</b>	<b>Increases: Kapha</b> <b>Decreases: Vata, Pitta &amp; Agni</b> Promotes solidity, denseness and strength.

<b>Liquid</b>	<b>Increases: Pitta &amp; Kapha</b> <b>Decreases: Vata &amp; Agni</b> Dissolves, liquefies; promotes salivation, compassion and cohesiveness.
<b>Soft</b>	<b>Increases: Pitta &amp; Kapha</b> <b>Decreases: Vata &amp; Agni</b> Creates softness, delicacy, relaxation, tenderness, love and care.
<b>Hard</b>	<b>Increases: Vata &amp; Kapha</b> <b>Decreases: Pitta and Agni</b> Increases hardness, strength, rigidity, selfishness, callousness, and insensitivity.
<b>Static</b>	<b>Increases: Kapha</b> <b>Decreases: Vata, Pitta &amp; Agni</b> Promotes stability, obstruction, support, constipation and faith.
<b>Mobile</b>	<b>Increases: Vata, Pitta &amp; Agni</b> <b>Decreases: Kapha</b> Promotes motion, shakiness, restlessness, and lack of faith.
<b>Subtle</b>	<b>Increases: Vata, Pitta &amp; Agni</b> <b>Decreases: Kapha</b> Pierces, penetrates subtle capillaries; increases emotions and feelings.
<b>Gross</b>	<b>Increases: Kapha</b> <b>Decreases: Vata, Pitta &amp; Agni</b> Causes obstruction, obesity.
<b>Cloudy</b>	<b>Increases: Kapha</b> <b>Decreases: Vata, Pitta &amp; Agni</b> Heals fractures; causes unclearness, lack of perception.
<b>Clear</b>	<b>Increases: Vata, Pitta &amp; Agni</b> <b>Decreases: Kapha</b> Pacifies; creates isolation and diversion.

### Attributes of the *Tri-Dosha*

<b>Vata (Air &amp; Ether)</b>	<b>Pitta (Fire &amp; Water)</b>	<b>Kapha (Earth &amp; Water)</b>
Dry	Oily	Heavy
Light	Penetrating	Slow
Cold	Hot	Cold
Rough	Light	Oily
Subtle	Mobile	Slimy
Mobile	Liquid	Dense
Clear	Sour smell	Soft
Dispersing		Static