

Asian Resonance

Importance of Sheeta Guna of Vata

Abstract

Doshas–Vata, Pitta and Kapha are the three basic pillars of body. Their equilibrium state is considered as health where as imbalanced state is considered as diseased condition. The balance and imbalance state of these *Doshas* is directly related to the *Gunas* which they possess. If the *Gunas* are in balanced state they help in the normal physiological function of *Doshas*. There is a set of *Gunas* in each *Dosha* and each *Guna* has its own importance in physiological and pathological aspects of the *Dosha*. From these *Gunas*, we can assess either the *Dosha* is aggravated or depleted or in normal state. *Sheeta Guna* is present both in *Vata* and *Kapha Dosha*. But it show a divert action in both. Here is an attempt to describe the physiological assessment of *Sheeta Guna* of *Vata Dosha*.

Keywords: Dosh, Vata, Guna, Sheeta, Physiological Assessment.

Introduction

Doshas are those body constituents which are capable of evolving the physical constituents अप्रच्योत्तनजप्य'दोषानुशयिता हि एषां देह प्रकृतिः उच्यते।¹. They are capable of initiating a disease process independent of any cause. The *Ayurvedic* concepts of physiology, pathology, diagnosis, prognosis, medicine and therapeutics all are based on the doctrine of *Tridoshas* viz. *Vata, Pitta and Kapha*. They are designated as *Doshas* because of their capacity to vitiate and they themselves become vitiated by other factors. They are also known as *Dhatu*, as they support the body in its normal state. In other words *Vata, Pitta and Kapha* in their normal state are the main supporters of body.

Acharya Sushruta has mentioned *Tridosha* as *Tristhuna* because they support the body in their normal state.

1. वात पित्त श्लेष्माण एव देह संभव हेतवः। तैरेवाव्यापत्रैरधोमध्योर्ध्वसंनिविष्टैः शरीरमिदं धार्यतेऽगारमिवस्थूणाभिस्तिष्ठसृभिः, अतश्च त्रिस्थूणमाहुरेके।²
2. दोषाः पुनस्त्रयो वातपित्तश्लेष्माणः। ते प्रकृतिभूताः शरीरोपकारका भवन्ति.....।³. The Sharirika Doshas are three viz. Vata, Pitta and Kapha. During their normal state, they sustain the body.
3. प्रकृतिभूतानां तु खलु वातादीनां फलमारोग्यम्।⁴. In normal state *Vata* etc. is responsible for the maintenance of the health of the individual. So a wise man should try to keep them in their normal state.
4. वातपित्तकफा देहे सर्वस्रोतोऽनुसारिणः।⁵
5. सर्वशरीरचरास्तु वात पित्त श्लेष्माणः सर्वस्मिच्छरीरे कुपिताकुपिताः शुभाशुभानि कुर्वन्ति—प्रकृति भूताः शुभानि उपचय बल वर्ण प्रसादादीनि.....।⁶. The entire body is in fact the abode of all the three *Doshas* viz. *Vata, Pitta and Kapha* and as such these *Doshas* bring about good and bad results according as they are in normal and abnormal states respectively. When in a normal state, they bring about good results like growth, strength, complexion, happiness, etc.

Macrocosm, Microcosm and Dosh

1. अध्यात्मलोकोवाताद्यैलोकोवातरवीन्दुभिः।
2. पीड्यते धार्यते चैव विकृताविकृतैस्तथा।⁷

As the *Loka* (macrocosm) is afflicted or maintained respectively by the morbidity and normal state of the wind, sun and moon, so also the *Adhyatma-loka* (sentient world or microcosm) is either afflicted or maintained respectively by the morbidity and normal state of *Vata, Pitta and Kapha*.

1. विसर्गादानविक्षेपैः सोमसूर्यानिला यथा।
2. धारयन्ति जगद्देहः कफपित्तानिलास्तथा।⁸

Just like the *Soma* (moon), *Surya* (sun) and *Anila* (wind) holds the entire universe, *Kapha, Pitta and Vata* holds the entire body.

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Fill Some Details

अलसः मेदिनि

As per the *Medini Kosha* the meaning of *Sheeta* is *Alasa*.

Definition

1. हलादनः स्तम्भनः शीतो मूर्च्छातृट् स्वेददाहजित् ॥¹⁴
2. शीतस्तु हलादनः स्तम्भी मूर्च्छातृट् दाहस्वेदनुत् ॥¹⁵
3. यस्य स्तम्भने शक्तिः स शीतः ॥¹⁶

Acharya Sushruta has defined *Sheeta* as one which is especially responsible for *Hladana*, *Stambhanakarma* and is the causative factor for reducing the symptoms like *Daha*, *Murcha* and *Sweda*. The same definition has been given by Bhavapralasha. Hemadri defines it as the factor which has the capacity or potency to produce *Stambhana* and thus it is called as *Sheeta*. Chakrapani defines it as the one which is cool in feel.

The *Sheeta guna* is explained under the *Vimshati Guna* in classics.

1. गुरुमन्दहिमस्निग्धश्लक्ष्णसान्द्रमृदुस्थिराः ।
गुणाः ससूक्ष्मविशदा विशतिः सविपर्ययाः ॥¹⁷

Importance of Sheeta Guna

1. *Agneya* and *Soma guna* are the most predominant *Guna* in universe. Here the *SomaGuna* is nothing but the *Sheeta Guna* itself.
2. नानात्मकमपि द्रव्यमग्निषोमौ महाबलौ ।
व्यक्ताव्यक्तं जगदिव नातिक्रामति जातुचित् ॥¹⁸
3. *Viryas* are two *Sheeta* and *Ushna* because they are the leading *Guna* among *Vimshati Guna*.
4. उष्णशीतगुणोत्कर्षात्तत्र वीर्यं द्विधा स्मृतम् ॥¹⁹
5. *Rasas* are also considered as two viz – *Agneya* and *Soumya*.
6. केचिदाहु-अग्नीषोमीयत्वाज्जगतो रसा द्विविधा-सौम्या
आग्नेयाश्च । मधुरतिक्तकषायाः सौम्याः, कट्वम्ललवणा
आग्नेयाः, तत्र मधुराम्ललवणाः स्निग्धा गुरश्च,
कतुतिक्तकषाया रूक्षा लघवश्चा । सौम्याः शीताः,
आग्नेया उष्णाः ॥²⁰

Understanding of Karma of Sheeta Guna

If after administration of a drug, person feels *Hladana* or if there is *Stambhana* and reduction in the symptoms of *Daha*, *Trut*, *Murcha* and *Sweda*, one has to assume that this is the function of *Sheeta Guna*.²¹ Drugs which increase *Vata* by their *Ruksha*, *Sheeta guna*, *Kashya Rasa* and *Laghu* paka properties are called as having *Stambhana*. When we go through the properties and functions of drugs of *Vayaveeya dravyas*, we can find the *SheetaGuna* along with other *Gunas* and the functions like *Roukshya*, *Glani*, *Vaishadya*, *Vichara*, *Laghava*, *Prerana*, *Dhatuvyuhana* and so on. The *Vayaveeya Dravya* is mainly dominant with *Vayu Mahabhuta*. Thus we can find out the relation of *Vayu* with *Sheeta Guna*.²²

Vata is mainly dominant with *Vayu* and *Akasha mahabhuta*. The *Gunas* of *Vata* mentioned in classics are as follows:

1. तत्र रूक्षः शीतो लघुः सूक्ष्मश्ललोडथ विशदः खरः ।
विपरीतगुणैर्द्रव्यैर्मारुतः सप्रशाम्यति ॥²³

Even Sushruta and Vagbhata have the same opinion regarding the *Gunas* of *Vata*. The opposite properties of these *Gunas* helps in the reduction of

As the movement of the wind, sun and moon in the macrocosm are difficult of comprehension, similarly, the activities of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* in the body (microcosm) are difficult to ascertain. They can be ascertained by the *Gunas* which are attributed in them. By the *Vruddhi* and *Kshaya* of these *Gunas* in the body, we can assume that either the *Dosha* is increased or decreased. When we consider the *Tridoshas*, *Vata* is having the highest importance as it controls the other two *Doshas*. So ascertainment of *Vata* is very essential for the healthy condition. As mentioned earlier, by the *Gunas* attributed to *Vata* viz *Ruksha*, *Sheeta*, *Laghu*, *Sukshma*, *Khara*, *Vishada* etc we can assume the function of *Vata* in the body. Here is the description of physiological assessment of *Sheeta guna* of *Vata*.

1. लोकेवाय्वर्कसोमानां दुर्विज्ञेया यथा गतिः । तथा शरीरे
वातस्य पित्तस्य च कफस्य च ॥⁹

Vata as Sustainer of Life

Vata is the primal constituent of the living body whose structure is *Akasha* and *Vayu* and whose function is *Rajasika*. *Vata*, in its normal state of functioning sustains all the organs of the body. It consists of *Prana*, *Udana*, *Samana*, *Apana* and *Vyana*. It prompts all types of actions like;

1. It brings together different parts of the body.
2. It stimulates the digestive fire
3. It creates the gross and the subtle channels.
4. It moulds the shape of the embryo.
5. It is indicative of the continuity of the span of life.¹⁰

Vata in its natural state is responsible for all activities of the body. *Vata*, in fact constitutes the very life of living beings.

1. सर्वा हि चेष्टा वातेन स प्राणः प्राणिनां स्मृतः ॥¹¹

The body (organism) is made up of a number of minute entities (cells). Their union and disunion are controlled by *Vayu*. Commenting on this, Acharya Chakrapani says that by governing the union (*Samyoga*) and disunion (*Vibhaga*), *Vayu* plays a vital role in *Sharirarambha* and *Sariravinasha* process. This *Sharirarambha* and *Shariravinasha* certainly points at the anabolic and catabolic process taking place respectively which are part and parcel of life.¹²

Vagbhatacharya also mentioned that *Adushta Vayu* and *Dushta Vayu* are responsible for the *Sthiti* and *Laya* of the entire universe respectively, the same action is done by *Vata* in the body.¹³

Sheeta Guna:

The word *Sheeta* is etymologically derived from *Syai Dhatu*, adding *Kta* suffix, which means cold, cool etc.

Meaning

Cold, Cool, Chilly, Frigid, Dull, Apathetic, Sluggish, indolent.

Synonyms

Hima (A.H.Su. 1/18), *Sheetala*, *Alasa*
शीतलः शीतगुण विशिष्टः । तत् पर्यायः । सुषीमः, शिशिरः,
जड, तुषारः, शीतः, हिमः इत्यमरः ॥

According to *Amarakosha* meaning of *Sheeta* is cold in Nature and he has given the synonyms like *Shisira*, *Tushara*, *Himah* etc.

increased *Vata Dosha*. Thus we can say that *Sheeta Guna* does the aggravation of *Vata Dosha*.

Physiological assessment of *Sheeta Guna* of *Vata*

1. In *Vata Prakruti* people, generally we can find intolerance towards the cold. It has been even explained in the classics as-
2. शैत्यच्छीतासहिष्णवः प्रततशीतकोद्वेपकस्तम्भाः ।²⁴
Vata Prakruti persons are intolerance for cold things, often getting afflicted with cold, shivering and stiffness.
3. *Sheeta guna* plays a key role in *Sanchaya* and *Prakopa Avastha* of *Vata*. *Rukshadigunas* if associated with *Ushna* leads to the *Sanchaya* of *Vata Dosha* where as if they are associated with *Sheeta Guna* leads to is *Prakopavastha*.²⁵
4. उष्णेन युक्त रूक्षाद्या वायोः कुर्वन्ति संचयम् । शीतेन कोपमुष्णेन शमं स्निग्धादयो गुणाः ।।
5. Due to the *Yogavaahi* (penetrating) property, *Vayu* acts in both the ways, i.e. if it contacts with *Tejas*, it produce *Daha* and if it contacts with *Soma*, produces *Sheeta*.
6. योगवाहः परं वायुः संयोगादुभयार्थकृत्, दाहकृतेजसा युक्तः शीतकृत् सोमसंश्रयात् ।²⁶
7. पवने योगवाहित्वाच्छीतं श्लेष्मयुते भवेत् ।²⁷
8. During Hemanta (winter) *Rutu* in strong persons, the *Agni* (digestive power) as checked by the contact of cold wind becomes stronger and capable of consuming even the articles heavy in quantity as well as nature. Hence, when it (*Agni*) does not get proper fuel (diet), it absorbs the bodily *Rasa* that is why *Vayu* is vitiated during the cold season.²⁸
9. In *Charaka Samhita Sutra Sthana* 20thChap. Acharya Gangadhara has commented that *Sankocha* is due to Predominance of *Sheeta Guna*.²⁹
10. There are some diseases which are mainly due to *Sheeta Guna* of *Vata* like: *Urusthambha*, *Greevasthanbha*, *Shephasthanbha*, *Manyasthanbha*, *Vartasthanbha* and *Vartmasankocha*.³⁰ Even *Vataja Nadi Vrana*, *Vataja Grudrasi*, *Karna Kshveda*, *Vataja Yonivyapat*, *Manyasthanbha* etc. are also due to the involvement of *Sheeta Guna* of *Vata*. In all these diseases we mainly find the symptom of *Stambha* which is mainly caused by *Sheeta Guna*.
11. When we go through the *Nidanas* of some diseases like *Vataja Gulma*, *Kushta*, *Vataja Arsha*, *Vataja Grahani*, *Hikka*, *Shwasa* etc. we can find *Sheeta* as one of the important causative factor.
12. *Sheeta* is also considered as the aggravating factor/ *PrakopakaKarana* for some of the diseases like *Tamaka Shwasa*, *Vataja Kasa*, *Vatavyadhi*etc.
13. When *Vata* is predominant in *Jwara*, the diet and drink should be mostly *Guru*, *Ushna* and *Snigdha*, when *Kapha* is predominant then the diet and drink should be mostly *Laghu*, *Ushna* and *Ruksha*. *Vayu* is *Yogavahi* which carries the attributes of accompanying *Dosha*. Therefore

when there is combination of both *Vata* and *Kapha* then *Ushna Chikitsa* is indicated for such Patients.³¹

14. *Sheeta Guna* in *Chikitsa*: when we are giving the treatment of *Dosha* which is either increased or decreased, it is actually the treatment of *Gunas* of that *Dosha* which has been increased or decreased. Moreover the treatment will be successful only if it is directed towards normalizing the deranged *Guna* or *Gunas* rather than the *Dosha* as a whole. In some of the diseases like *Dahajwara*, *Raktapitta*, *Pittaja Kasa*, *Pittaja Visarpa* etc. we can find usage of *Sheeta Guna*.

Conclusion

Gunas represent the physical and physiological qualities of *Doshas*. *Gunas* of the *Doshas* has special significance since the *Vridhhi* and *Kshaya* of a particular *Dosha* can be inferred from the symptoms of increase or decrease of its *Guna*. *Vayu* is called as self –born and omnipotent because of independence, eternity and all pervasiveness; of all entities, this has universal characters and is worshiped by the entire world as this is the cause of origin, sustenance and destruction of beings. *Sheeta Guna* of *Vata* plays a key role in manifestation and treatment of various diseases. It is also helpful in the maintenance of the normal health of the body if utilized in proper manner and quantity.

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