

GURVADI GUNA AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE DOSHAS

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, emphasizes the concept of *Gurvadi Guna* (qualities) as fundamental attributes of substances and their interactions with the human physiology. These qualities, such as *Guru* (heavy), *Laghu* (light), *Snigdha* (unctuous), and *Ruksha* (dry), play a crucial role in maintaining health and causing disease by influencing the three *Doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*). This article delves into the scientific understanding of *Gurvadi Guna*, their characteristics, and their impact on the *Doshas*, drawing upon classical Ayurvedic texts and contemporary research.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, *Dosha*, *Gurvadi Guna*, *Panchabhuta*.

INTRODUCTION

The foundation of Ayurvedic physiology lies in the theory of *Panchamahabhutas* or five elements – *Prithvi* (earth), *Jala* (water), *Agni* (fire), *Vayu* (air), and *Akasha* (ether). These elements manifest as twenty *Gurvadi Guna*, which are paired opposites like *Guru-Laghu*, *Snigdha-Ruksha*, *Sita-Ushna* and others. These qualities are not merely sensory perceptions but represent inherent properties that determine the actions and effects of substances on the body. The three *Doshas* – *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* – are biological humours derived from the *Panchamahabhutas* and are responsible for various physiological functions.

AIMS

To study the concept of *Gurvadi Guna* & *Dosha* from Ayurvedic literature.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the *Gurvadi Guna* and their influence on the *Doshas*.
2. To discuss clinical importance of *Gurvadi Guna* in the *Dosha* management.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Ayurvedic classical texts, Past articles and internet sources were reviewed critically to understand *Gurvadi Guna* & *Dosha*.

OBSERVATION

The word *Guna* is derived from the root '*Guna Amantrane*',^[1] which means to invite. That which attracts or invites towards a particular object is called its *Guna*. Among all the *Gun*as mentioned in Ayurveda, *Gurvadi gun*as are given the most importance.

The term *Gurvadi guna* comprises of two words which are *guru* means heaviness and *adi* means first. The set of 20 qualities, the first among which is *guru guna*. As the list of qualities begins with *guru* quality, the entire group of qualities is called *gurvadi guna* i.e., 'the group of qualities begins with *guru* quality'.

Since these qualities are related to the tissues and substances of the body, they are also called as *sharirika gun*as. As they are found in body tissues and substances influencing them.^[2]

For understanding the basic principles of Ayurveda. *Shat padarth*as are most important. *Guna* is one among *Shat Padartha* which are *Samanya*, *Vishesha*, *Guna*, *Dravya*, *Karma* and *Samavaya*.

*Gurvadi gun*as, are 20 in number, have wide applicability in treatment as the same *gun*as predominate in the body too.^[3]

The major categories of *Guna* are *Sartha guna*^[4], *Gurvadi guna*^[5], *Adhyatmik guna*^[6] and *Paradi guna*^[7], amongst them *Gurvadi guna* is important one since these *Guna* affects action of *Dravyas* (*Ahara* and drugs) significantly.

Classification^[8]

- Charaka = 41 *Sartha Guna* (5) *Paradi Guna* (10) *Gurvadi Guna* (20) *Prayatna Guna* (6)
- Sushruta = 20
- Vagbhatta = 20
- Chakrapani = *Vaisheshika Guna* (*Adhibhoutika Guna*), *Samanya Guna* (*Adhibhoutika Guna* and *Aatma Guna*) (*Adhyatmika Guna*)
- Kanaada= 17
- Nyaya Darshana= 24
- Vedanta Darshana= Innumerable

Biological Action of *Gurvadi Guna*

The *gurvadi gun*as may be discussed with pharmacological exploration with certain parameters which may be discussed with the help of various biophysical and biochemical activities.

The 20 *Gurvadi Gunas* are qualities described in Ayurveda that categorize substances based on their physical properties. Here's a breakdown of each *guna* with examples and dosha influences:^[9-12]

1. *Guru* (Heavy)

- **Characteristics:** Difficult to digest, increases bulk, causes heaviness in the body.
- **Composition:** Earth (*Prithvi*) and Water (*Aapa*)
- **Example:** Meat, cheese, wheat, bananas.
- **Dosha Influence:** Increases *Kapha*, decreases *Vata* and *Pitta*.

2. *Laghu* (Light)

- **Characteristics:** Easy to digest, reduces bulk, creates lightness in the body.
- **Composition:** Air (*Vayu*) and Fire (*Agni*)
- **Example:** Popcorn, rice, leafy greens, apples.
- **Dosha Influence:** Increases *Vata*, decreases *Kapha*.

3. *Shita* (Cold)

- **Characteristics:** Cools the body, constricts tissues, reduces metabolism.
- **Composition:** Water (*Aapa*) and Air (*Vayu*)
- **Example:** Cucumber, watermelon, mint, ice cream.
- **Dosha Influence:** Increases *Vata* and *Kapha*, decreases *Pitta*.

4. *Ushna* (Hot)

- **Characteristics:** Heats the body, dilates tissues, increases metabolism.
- **Composition:** Fire (*Agni*)
- **Example:** Chili peppers, ginger, garlic, cinnamon.
- **Dosha Influence:** Increases *Pitta*, decreases *Vata* and *Kapha*.

5. *Snigdha* (Unctuous/Oily)

- **Characteristics:** Lubricates tissues, promotes moisture, increases softness.
- **Composition:** Water (*Aapa*)
- **Example:** Oil, butter, ghee, nuts, avocado.
- **Dosha Influence:** Increases *Kapha*, decreases *Vata*.

6. *Ruksha* (Dry)

- **Characteristics:** Absorbs moisture, creates dryness, reduces lubrication.
- **Composition:** Air (*Vayu*) and Earth (*Prithvi*)
- **Example:** Crackers, beans, popcorn, dry fruits.
- **Dosha Influence:** Increases *Vata*, decreases *Kapha*.

7. *Manda* (Slow/Dull)

- **Characteristics:** Slows down digestion and metabolism, creates dullness.
- **Composition:** Earth (*Prithvi*) and Water (*Aapa*)

- **Example:** Cheese, meat, heavy desserts.
- **Dosha Influence:** Increases *Kapha*, decreases *Vata* and *Pitta*.

8. Tikshna (Sharp/Penetrating)

- **Characteristics:** Increases digestion and metabolism, promotes clarity.
- **Composition:** Fire (*Agni*) and Air (*Vayu*)
- **Example:** Chili peppers, ginger, garlic.
- **Dosha Influence:** Increases *Pitta*, decreases *Kapha*.

9. Sthira (Stable/Static)

- **Characteristics:** Provides stability and firmness to the body.
- **Composition:** Earth (*Prithvi*)
- **Example:** Bones, muscles, grains.
- **Dosha Influence:** Increases *Kapha*.

10. Sara (Mobile/Flowing)

- **Characteristics:** Promotes movement and flow in the body.
- **Composition:** Air (*Vayu*)
- **Example:** Liquids, air, wind.
- **Dosha Influence:** Increases *Vata*.

11. Mridu (Soft)

- **Characteristics:** Creates softness and gentleness in the body.
- **Composition:** Water (*Aapa*) and Earth (*Prithvi*)
- **Example:** Ripe fruits, cooked rice, milk.
- **Dosha Influence:** Increases *Kapha*.

12. Kathina (Hard)

- **Characteristics:** Creates hardness and firmness in the body.
- **Composition:** Earth (*Prithvi*)
- **Example:** Bones, cartilage, raw vegetables.
- **Dosha Influence:** Increases *Vata*.

13. Vishada (Clear/Non-slimy)

- **Characteristics:** Cleanses and purifies tissues.
- **Composition:** Air (*Vayu*) and Fire (*Agni*)
- **Example:** Honey, certain herbs.
- **Dosha Influence:** Decreases *Kapha*.

14. Picchila (Slimy/Sticky)

- **Characteristics:** Creates stickiness and sliminess in the body.
- **Composition:** Water (*Aapa*)
- **Example:** Okra, oatmeal.
- **Dosha Influence:** Increases *Kapha*.

15. Shlakshna (Smooth)

- **Characteristics:** Creates smoothness in the body.
- **Composition:** Water (*Aapa*)
- **Example:** Ghee, oils.
- **Dosha Influence:** Decreases *Vata*.

16. Khara (Rough)

- **Characteristics:** Creates roughness in the body.
- **Composition:** Air (*Vayu*) and Earth (*Prithvi*)
- **Example:** Bran, dry skin.
- **Dosha Influence:** Increases *Vata*.

17. Sukshma (Subtle)

- **Characteristics:** Can penetrate deep into tissues.
- **Composition:** Ether (*Akasha*) and Air (*Vayu*)
- **Example:** Essential oils, certain herbs.
- **Dosha Influence:** Increases *Vata*.

18. Sthula (Gross/Dense)

- **Characteristics:** Has a bulky and dense nature.
- **Composition:** Earth (*Prithvi*)
- **Example:** Meat, bones.
- **Dosha Influence:** Increases *Kapha*.

19. Sandra (Dense/Concentrated)

- **Characteristics:** Has a thick and concentrated nature.
- **Composition:** Earth (*Prithvi*) and Water (*Aapa*)
- **Example:** Cheese, butter.
- **Dosha Influence:** Increases *Kapha*.

20. Drava (Liquid)

- **Characteristics:** Has a fluid nature.
- **Composition:** Water (*Aapa*)
- **Example:** Water, juice, milk.
- **Dosha Influence:** Increases *Kapha*.

Influence of *Gurvadi Guna* on the *Doshas*

Gunas are related with *Tridoshas* therefore balancing state of *Dosha* driven by some *Gunas of Ahara* and drugs, contrary to that sometimes *Guna of Hetu* vitiate *Dosha* leading to the pathological condition therefore *Guna* play vital role towards the physical and mental health status of person.

In Ayurveda, the *Gurvadi Gunas* are twenty fundamental qualities inherent in all substances. They play a crucial role in understanding how these substances affect the human body by influencing the *Tridoshas (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha)*. Here's a breakdown of their relationship:

- **Vata:** ^[13] Primarily influenced by *Ruksha* (dry), *Laghu* (light), *Chala* (mobile), *Shita* (Cold), *Khara* (rough), *Vishada* (Clear), and *Sukshma* (subtle) *Guna*.
- **Pitta:** ^[14] Mainly affected by *Ushna* (hot), *Tikshna* (sharp), *Snigdha* (oily), and *Drava* (liquid) *Guna*.
- **Kapha:** ^[15] Predominantly influenced by *Guru* (heavy), *Hima* (cold), *Mridu* (Soft), *Snigdha* (oily), *Sthira* (stable), *Picchila* (Sticky), and *Sandra* (dense) *Guna*.

The interplay between *Gurvadi Guna* and the *Doshas* is crucial in understanding health and disease. An imbalance in the *Doshas*, known as *Dosha Vriddhi* (increase) or *Dosha Kshaya* (decrease), can arise due to various factors, including dietary and lifestyle choices that involve substances with specific *Gurvadi Guna*.

For instance, excessive consumption of *Guru* (heavy) foods can lead to an increase in *Kapha*, potentially causing conditions like obesity, sluggishness, and respiratory issues. Conversely, excessive intake of *Ruksha* (dry) foods can aggravate *Vata*, leading to dryness of the skin, constipation, and nervous disorders.

Applications of *Guna*

These *guna* are present in the *aushadha and ahara*. The *dravya* having *guru guna* should increase the *dhatu* having the same *guna*. The *dravya* having opposite *guna* should decrease the *dhatu*. On this phenomenon, when there is *mamsa ksaya*, the *mamsa* is given and when there is *raktaksaya*, the *rakta* is given. If there is any exceptional cases or condition then depending upon the circumstances the proper *dravya* is to be given.

Scientific Understanding and Contemporary Research

Understanding *Gurvadi Gunas* is essential for Ayurvedic practitioners to diagnose and treat diseases effectively. By analyzing the *gunas* of a substance, they can determine its potential effects on the *Doshas* and prescribe appropriate remedies to restore balance.

The exact estimation of predominance of *guna* leading to vitiation of *doshas* helps us to understand the pathogenesis and treatment can be planned with the help of opposite *guna*. The detailed discussion about each and every *guna* helps to develop a better understanding and clarification of the concept.^[16]

While *Gurvadi Guna* are traditionally understood within the Ayurvedic framework, contemporary research is beginning to explore their scientific basis. Some studies have investigated the correlation between dietary qualities and their effects on physiological parameters.

For example, research on the glycaemic index of foods aligns with the concept of *Guru* and *Laghu*, where high glycaemic index foods can be considered *Guru* (heavy) due to their rapid impact on blood sugar levels.

Furthermore, studies on the effects of different food textures and moisture content on digestion and satiety can be related to the concepts of *Snigdha* and *Ruksha*. These investigations provide a modern perspective on the traditional understanding of *Gurvadi Guna*.

CONCLUSION

Gurvadi Guna are fundamental principles in Ayurveda that provide a comprehensive understanding of the qualities of substances and their influence on the *Doshas*. By understanding these qualities and their interactions, individuals can make informed choices regarding diet and lifestyle to maintain balance and prevent disease. While further research is needed to fully elucidate the scientific basis of *Gurvadi Guna*, the existing evidence and traditional knowledge highlight their significance in promoting health and well-being.

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