

Ayurveda: A Personal Discovery

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Abstract

This work represents the beginnings of my studies in Ayurveda, the traditional system of medicine in India and Sri Lanka, and the oldest known system of holistic healing and wellness. Throughout this study, I have attempted to incorporate both daily practices and therapeutic methods into my life as appropriate, in hopes of gaining experiential and practical knowledge of Ayurveda and of improving my own quality of life through Ayurvedic study and practice. Presented here is an overview of the concepts and practices of Ayurveda, a summary of what I have learned and an account of my personal experience.

Chapter One contains the history and basic philosophies of Ayurveda and details the fundamental aspects including personal constitution, the doshas and sub-doshas and Ayurvedic anatomy including the tissues and channels of the body.

Chapter Two addresses the Ayurvedic philosophy of disease, its stages, diagnosis and treatments, including panchakarma or detoxification. It also outlines daily Ayurvedic practices and the importance of diet, including the six tastes of food.

Chapter Three provides an account of my personal journey with Ayurveda over the course of this study: my activities, experiences and developing philosophies about Ayurveda as a lifestyle and a system of healing.

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Preface

Education can take many forms, and learning can occur by varied means. As we move through our days, we are shaped by many different encounters. We learn from our books, from the people in our lives and from our experiences. Education depends on the integration of this learning into our lives in a meaningful and useful way. Such is the purpose of this culminating study. In this program and in my adult life, my area of concentration has been religion, spirituality and holistic health, and this study is meant to bring together what I have learned through this program and through my own experiences. While my path through education has meandered and wound in many directions, I hope to examine what I have learned about holistic medicine and our spiritual connection through the lens of self-discovery. I have chosen to study Ayurveda, the ancient system of holistic healing which originated in India, and to apply what I learn to myself and my lifestyle choices as I continue on my journey towards wholeness and balance.

My educational path began in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, in the parochial school of St. Dorothy's. I attended Catholic schools for junior high and high school in suburban Philadelphia, in advanced and honors classes, and was active in several sports and activities. Somewhere around my junior year, I lost interest in school and was longing to travel and experience more of the world than suburbia would allow. I spent a half-hearted semester at a university in my home state of Pennsylvania and quickly decided this was not where I wanted to be. An opportunity arose to move to Atlanta, Georgia with a friend, and I jumped on board.

In the years that followed, I traveled around the US, working primarily in the hospitality and resort industries, eventually landing in Alaska. I spent several years in a small ski town just south of Anchorage, in a thriving community of people committed to personal freedom and enjoying life to the fullest. My time there was spent immersed in this active community. Outdoor activities such as skiing and snowboarding, hiking, mountain biking, and backpacking were my main pursuits as well as artistic endeavors in music, photography and various crafts. My personal studies included reading on human spirituality and consciousness, sacred geometry, energetic healing, yoga, herbal medicine and outdoor adventure.

In this environment, I grew and evolved physically, mentally and spiritually, having grand adventures in the physical world and awakening to the metaphysical. The connection between mind, body and spirit, the natural world and each other became more evident, and I began to shift from wanting the personal gratification of adventure and experience to the need to integrate and share the light which was awakening in me. I was ready for a change in lifestyle and a change in career. I had worked as a bartender or waitress, or in other areas of hospitality for over ten years and was ready to move on.

I was also tired of the consuming presence of alcohol in my life. Throughout my teenage years and my twenties, alcohol had played a major role in my social activity, and I witnessed many friends' deterioration from abusing alcohol and drugs. From small gatherings to music festivals to celebrations of personal or spiritual significance, all included alcohol, and no one seemed to question this. By my late twenties, I was tired of this element in my day-to-day life and was seeking a more meaningful and healthier

lifestyle. I struggled within my small community for a while, finding it necessary to withdraw from much of the social activity that had brought me happiness. I decided that I needed a change of location to encourage a change of lifestyle. I had long been attracted to massage therapy, having an innate talent for it, and decided to pursue the study of massage to change my career path and help me change my lifestyle.

Massage has been part of my life for as long as I can remember. I have always been a tactile person, and human touch is vitally important to me. When I was a young woman, my roommate had hurt his back and was under chiropractic care. As he did not have health insurance and could not afford numerous visits, the doctor taught me about trigger points, hypertonic adhesions which develop in the muscular and fascial tissue and can cause pain, decreased mobility and inhibited circulation and nerve transmission. He showed me how to address my roommate's problems, which helped generate my interest in massage therapy as a healing art, as I was able to cultivate my instinctual ability and gain confidence. I also have a long-standing interest in the energetic systems of the body and methods of energy healing, and massage offered an entry into that area of study. My personal use of herbal medicine and attempts at Alaskan gardening had raised my interest in other methods of holistic health care, and I began to explore naturopathic medicine as a possible career choice.

I first attended Pacific College of Oriental Medicine in San Diego. I entered into their massage program with the intent of continuing into the Oriental Medicine program. I loved San Diego, after three Alaskan winters, but only for a few months. As the autumn rolled in and there were no leaves to change, no crisp wind, no changes at all, I realized

this was not the place for me. I am very drawn to the mountains, to rivers, to forests. The ocean is wonderful, as long as I have the mountains as well. I also realized that the school I had chosen was not accredited for their massage program, only for acupuncture. As such, I would not be qualified to be licensed in most states. I saw no reason to continue there and left for the East Coast to visit my family and decide what to do.

As frequently happens in my life, I walked right into an ideal situation, and was provided with what I needed. A mile from my parents' home was a fully accredited massage school with an excellent program, which I attended while living in their house. Over that year, I learned much about the body and our natural healing abilities. I worked in massage from my fourth month of school on and also as a river guide on the Lehigh River in the Poconos, where I was learning whitewater kayaking. Attending the Pennsylvania School of Muscle Therapy was definitely a highlight of my life. In addition to the studies, all students receive bodywork weekly. Essentially, the students are healing as they learn, releasing what each needs to let go of in order to help others. This is a powerful idea, to heal oneself first, and this idea is part of what motivates me in this study.

When I finished massage school, I returned to Alaska and worked in a physical therapy clinic in Anchorage for close to two years. Here is where my true education as a therapist took place. I studied Myofascial Release, Cranio-Sacral Therapy and Reiki, worked with clients with acute injuries or long term chronic conditions and with their doctors who had prescribed the therapies I offered. I have yet to find as rewarding an environment in which to work. Every day, I helped people who were in pain. Every

person with whom I came in contact left their encounter with me feeling better, more empowered to help themselves heal, and more knowledgeable about the challenges they faced.

I also got to see firsthand how deteriorated the health care system had become, how corrupt the whole insurance industry is and how so many doctors and patients avoid the real problems with drugs. Most of my clients wanted to get off pain medication; many were women with Fibromyalgia who were grateful they had finally gotten a physical diagnosis instead of being told their intense and debilitating pain was psychosomatic. During this time, I realized that my gift to give the world was to be in the healing field. I knew that I needed to go farther than bodywork in order to truly share my skills. I became interested in naturopathic medicine and started looking into schools that offered this program.

At the same time, I was falling back into many of the old patterns that I had tried to run away from before in the highly social scene of my small town. For all of my promotion of a healthy lifestyle in my work, my own was not embodying these values. As has tended to be my way, instead of facing my own demons, I moved on, hoping they would not follow. But they always do. I left Alaska for California to see some friends and maybe start back to school to finish my bachelor's degree. I never made it; I was waylaid by the beauty of the Washington Cascades and a group of lovely friends with whom I spent a year, enjoying life but not following my path. Again, the gypsy in me called, and I headed south for California once again, stopping off in Ashland, Oregon to visit some friends. Once there, things rapidly fell into place, and in a matter of days I found myself

with a nice little home and a job, two blocks from Southern Oregon University. I would stay here; I committed to returning to school and set about establishing myself as a resident, planning to start school within the year.

That never happened either. It was then that my son decided to come along, in the context of a short-lived and turbulent relationship. As things with his father were rocky from the start and I wanted my son to know his family, I returned to the East Coast, settling in northeastern Pennsylvania, where we have been ever since. I let go of my dream of finishing my degree and heading on to naturopathy school for that moment.

As a single mother, time is a precious resource, and the idea of going back to school was too daunting for some time. When I discovered this program, I knew that I had found my means. I began my studies with Union Institute & University in the on-line BA option, as my son was too young to be left for a week without me. I studied Quantum Mechanics and how we as humans experience energy, in the hopes of better understanding energy healing and human consciousness. I then studied the branches of yoga, while concurrently completing a 250-hour yoga teacher training. This study offered me a deep look into the healing potential of yoga from a physical and emotional standpoint, and the spiritual capacity of the practice of yoga as a lifestyle. Through both of these studies, I reaped enormous benefits for both my professional goals and my personal development and self-discovery.

To satisfy my art and math requirements, I did my next study on sacred geometry and batik, creating batiks using sacred geometry motifs, such as the vesica piscis and the Fibonacci spiral. For some time, I had entertained the idea of becoming an elementary

school teacher and opted to enter into the Teacher Certification program. As I was required to come to residency for this option, I did my first cycle residency at Vermont College in July, 2009. After completing my study on the Foundations of Education, I decided that this was not the path for me and resumed my course of study in holistic health, bringing me to my culminating study. My study in The Foundations of Education not only presented me with the challenge to examine my own goals and my philosophies of education, it also brought me to residency in person, for which I am most grateful. I feel fortunate to be able to get to know the people involved in this program, both faculty and students, and to benefit from the combined wisdom and experience of all.

As I began my final study in this program, I looked back at the challenges I have faced and at those I will still encounter. One of my main purposes in this study was to become familiar with the healing tradition of Ayurveda, so as to better incorporate its wisdom into my own life and to my work as a massage therapist and yoga instructor. I hoped that this study would provide me with a deeper look into the nature of holistic health care as it treats the whole person in conjunction with one's environment, the seasons, genetics and multiple other factors. And I hoped to continue in my own holistic development through my personal involvement with this study. My goal was to incorporate the practices which I find appropriate for me, along with the suggestions of established Ayurvedic practitioners, into my lifestyle and experience this healing system firsthand. In doing so, I felt I could truly integrate my studies and make them my own while preparing myself to move forward towards my goal of continuing my education in medicine and holistic healing.

An holistic lifestyle is a multi-faceted challenge in the West. Throughout my studies I have encountered ideas and practices that fall far outside the accepted norms of American society. Over the years, I have watched as some of these alternatives move closer to the mainstream. In the western states, massage therapy has been an accepted form of treatment for over thirty years. In the eastern states, this process is just beginning. Our diets over the past hundred years have morphed from the whole and fresh cooked foods in the days before electricity made its way into every home to the current onslaught of processed, preserved, chemically treated or created, hormone and antibiotic filled substances which are doing so much damage to us. Is it any wonder we have so many cancers, autoimmune and otherwise “new” diseases to contend with? Thankfully the current trend for many is a return to whole foods, and there is recognition of the need for a healthy lifestyle, including diet, exercise, spirituality and positive relations with others. Ayurveda can provide the path that many Westerners are now seeking, as we sift through the overload of information and scientific study to map a simpler route for our lives. I hope to be a force of movement in this positive direction, for myself, my child and my community, contributing not only to the betterment of my own generation but also laying the foundation for the future by sending my child forth from a happy and healthy home with a knowledge of his own body and how it works, his mind and its limitations and possibilities, and his connection to the Divine and how to nourish and grow in spirit.

As American culture continues to move outside the safety of our cultural borders and tries to relate to the rest of the world in this ever growing global community, an understanding of differing cultures and their practices will help us cultivate tolerance,

give us the tools to bridge cultural gaps, and help us to enrich our own lives through the benefits of ancient wisdom in our modern world. As Ayurveda becomes a stronger presence in the Western world, it is also important to preserve this ancient wisdom in as original a context as possible and to recognize that new ideas and practices are not always an improvement. Ayurveda has the benefit of thousands of years of observation and practice. By negating ancient practices as outdated, we are denying ourselves of their wisdom. By ignoring the obvious cries for help that emanate from our bodies, minds and spirits, we are creating a far harder road than necessary and sabotaging our chances for true peace and happiness. By giving ourselves and our loved ones the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual nourishment we need, we are then able to share with the world the best selves we can present in health, compassion and gratitude, and in appreciation of what others have to offer.

As I talk with people about my study, I notice a great interest paired with some trepidation about the practices of Ayurveda as well as with the lesser known practices of yoga. I sense in many a genuine interest to learn more about themselves as individuals, not just about a disease or a diagnosis. I hope that through this study I may be able to share what I learn with others to help them begin their own discovery of Ayurveda and of themselves as well as continuing my own studies in this field. I would also like to see Ayurvedic and other holistic practices incorporated into our system of healthcare. American healthcare needs to be more inclusive of preventative and non-invasive methods of healing. By treating the whole person, we can better facilitate true healing, and I hope to help bring about this change by sharing my experience and knowledge with

others. By learning and incorporating Ayurveda into my life, I can more fully contribute to the world in my roles as a healer, as a mother and as a resident and steward of the Earth. In order to heal others, we must first heal ourselves. If I want to share what I learn, I also must embody it and be able to provide an example and the wisdom of direct experience. This is the foundation of my study and embodies the gift I hope to bring to the world as a conscious being and as a holistic practitioner.

Chapter One

Foundations of Ayurveda

Ayurveda is a system of holistic medicine of Indian origin, rooted in the concept of universal connection between nature and humanity. It is a comprehensive system for treating disease and illness, and a blueprint for living a happy and balanced life in harmony with the planet and all who inhabit it as well as with oneself. Ayurveda is a Sanskrit word meaning “the wisdom of life,” derived from its two root words, *ayus*, which means daily life or life cycle, and *vid*, meaning knowledge or wisdom (Gerson 2). Ayurveda is a practice of health and wellness instead of a science of sickness. Practitioners recognize each person’s unique qualities and treat the individual, not the disease. The aim of Ayurveda is to live in harmony with ourselves and the world around us, according to the natural law and order, to restore wholeness where there is fragmentation, and to preserve it once attained. We are not here to rule and conquer the Earth and universe but, rather, to recognize our place in it and our responsibilities to all with whom we share it. The oldest known system of medicine, Ayurveda strives to bring balance to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual self, and to encourage an individual’s self-discovery as he or she travels the path of existence.

Ayurveda originated in what is now India over 5000 years ago. Beginning as an oral tradition among the people of the Indus River valley, it took written form as part of the Vedas, the ancient Hindu books of knowledge and sacred writing. The Vedas are considered to be of divine origin (Godagama 19). The *Rishis* or sages of this culture are credited with receiving and transcribing the information, hymns and stories within them.

The primary Ayurvedic texts are the *Charaka Samhita*, the *Sushruta Samhika*, and the *Astanga Samgraha*. The traditional story from the *Charaka Samhita* says that the Rishis left their villages and gathered in the Himalayas to contemplate the nature of disease and how to eradicate it. Information and understanding was gained through meditation and communication with the divine, specifically the Hindu god Indra. The *Charaka Samhita* primarily deals with internal medicine, the diagnosis and treatment of disease and maintaining wellness. The information in the *Sushruta Samhika* is said to have come from the Hindu god Dhanvantari (Gerson 10) and contains detailed procedures for surgery as well as herbology, toxicology and psychiatry. The *Astanga Samgraha*, written by Vagbhata, tied the first two writings together and expanded on the treatments of disease.

Yoga, meditation and mantra practices, along with Ayurveda, are part of the *Rig Veda*, the first of four texts, dating from around 1500 B.C. Three more followed: the *Soma*, *Yajur* and *Atharva Vedas*. The *Rig Veda* and *Atharva Veda* both contain information about Ayurvedic practices related to healing and surgery (Tiwari Balance 8). These texts, along with *The Upanishads*, comprise what is known as *shruti*, or received wisdom. It is upon these writings that the *Samhikas* are based. Other sacred writings, such as Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, are known as *smirti*, remembered knowledge (Gerson 8).

For thousands of years, Ayurveda dominated the Indian culture as the premiere system of medicine and a branch of the path to enlightenment. Through observation of the natural world and through practice, more was added to the system of Ayurveda. The

sages studied the macrocosm of nature and the universe to better understand the microcosm of the world within the body, mind and spirit. Information was utilized not only by the doctors and sages who studied the medicine of Ayurveda but also by the individuals who incorporated the daily *sadhana*s, or sacred practices, into their daily lives. As a preventative measure, Ayurveda was also practiced by every parent and healer in the villages as a part of everyday life. And so Ayurveda continued to be passed down orally. In the 1600's the British company, the East Indian Trading Company, slowly began to take over throughout India, and India became a colony of the British Empire in the 1800's. The practice of Ayurveda was outlawed, books destroyed and doctors executed to make way for Western medicine, which the British claimed to be more advanced (Zadlo Consultation, 02/09/10 ; Warrior & Gunawant 74).

However, more advanced meant less affordable, and the poor in the villages continued to rely on the daily practices and dietary aspects of Ayurveda. The orthodox Hindus, scholars and monks also continued the practices, thus keeping the traditions alive. When India gained its independence from Britain in 1947, Ayurveda was officially adopted as the state recognized system of medicine, and much of the information was again allowed to surface and be freely incorporated into practice. Today, India has a strong system of Western medicine to complement Ayurveda, and most doctors who are trained in India study both allopathic and Ayurvedic medicine. This strikes a beneficial balance, with Western medicine's strengths in treating infectious disease, trauma and emergency care complementing Ayurveda's holistic methods for the prevention and treatment of most illnesses and chronic conditions. With the growing awareness of the

short-comings of Western medicine in these areas and the need for less invasive therapies and healthier lifestyle choices, Ayurveda is gaining recognition throughout the world. Along with this, there is a strong push among practitioners to keep the traditions strong and intact, to not allow its practices to be diluted to fit the Western lifestyle, as has occurred with the practices of yoga and meditation (Warrior & Gunawant 74).

A vital element in understanding Ayurveda is the concept that humanity is not separate from nature. The philosophies are based on the premise that all life stems from nature and from the Divine. The Self is a manifestation of the Divine, a part of the cosmic whole. Steeped in the traditions and myths of the Hindu faith, some of the fundamental belief structures can be difficult for people in Western cultures with a strong Christian influence to comprehend, such as the belief in reincarnation or the memories we accumulate from lifetime to lifetime. While one does not need to share these beliefs to practice Ayurveda, these concepts are part of the core foundation on which Ayurveda is based and thus are necessary for a true understanding. A simplified version of the Ayurvedic story of creation tells that in the beginning, all was consciousness, pure energy. The first vibrations manifested in the cosmic sound of *Om*. From this cosmic vibration, the five elements of ether (space), air, fire, water and earth were born. The movement of ether from the vibration of *Om* produced air, while the friction of its movement created the heat and light of fire. Fire and ether generated the liquid water. Water solidified to form earth. From earth came all living things: herbs, plants, animals and humankind (Gerson 13).

These five elements form the basis of life. It is important to note that they should

not be considered in a literal sense, such as the water which covers most of our planet; that is a manifestation of the Ayurvedic element but not its defining principle. The elements should be considered as energies or forces, of which their names are representative. As such, water refers to cohesive power, that which attracts and binds together, and to its fluid nature. The element of fire refers more to the transformative power which it possesses and to the heat it produces than to the flame which comes from the spark of a match. The force of movement is exemplified by the element of air, while earth is the solidity of matter. Ether, or *akasha*, is space, the element in which all else exists.

Each element corresponds to a sense and sense organ within the body. Space governs hearing, and its organ is the ears. Air governs touch, and its organ is the skin. Fire's sense is sight, and its organ is the eyes; water is its taste, and its organ is the tongue. Earth is smell, and its organ is the nose. The five elements in some combination comprise all that exists.

Element	Sense Organ	Sense
Space	Hearing	Ears
Air	Touch	Skin
Fire	Sight	Eyes
Water	Taste	Tongue
Earth	Smell	Nose

In our bodies, the five elements give rise to the *tridosha*, the three forces that govern our structure and function, our biological processes, our characteristics and tendencies. *Dosha* can be translated as “that which goes quickly out of balance” (Tiwari,

Secrets 5), “that which darkens or decays” (Gerson 14), or “roughly as force or fault” (Godagama 25). Essentially, dosha refers to imbalance, to whatever is happening in the self to cause dysfunction physically, mentally, emotionally and/or spiritually. An example of how the “Westernization” of Ayurveda has already begun is the misconception surrounding the doshas. The doshas are commonly believed to be body types, ways of categorizing ourselves, much like astrological horoscopes. The doshas are actually the states of imbalance, while the classification, or individual constitution, is known as *prakriti*.

Prakriti is consistent from birth; it will not change. Ayurveda seeks to bring into balance each individual’s prakriti, not to create a balance of all three doshas uniformly. Prakriti is stated in terms of the appropriate combination of the doshas. Each of us has aspects of each dosha, though usually two will dominate. Some have a balance of all three and or only one dominant dosha. Prakriti indicates one’s tendencies in terms of emotional and mental characteristics and responses, physiological responses and needs, and immune function. It also indicates what diseases one may be susceptible to, what path a disease may follow and how imbalances will manifest. Determining the prakriti is the first step in Ayurvedic diagnosis.

The concept of the doshas exemplifies homeostasis, the body’s tendency to constantly seek balance. When in balance, the doshas are energies, operating unnoticed as they influence the functions in our body. We recognize them when they become unbalanced, when they present as a disease. The three doshas are *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*, and each is comprised of two of the five elements. The following chart details the major

characteristics of each dosha (Svoboda Women 23).

Vata	Pitta	Kapha
dry	oily	oily
cold	hot	cold
light	light	heavy
irregular	intense	stable
mobile	fluid	viscous
rough	liquid	smooth

Vata is air contained in space and embodies the principle of movement. The characteristics of vata mimic that of wind: light, dry, rough, cold and quick, to name a few. People with dominant vata tend to be very tall or very short, small framed and underweight, with dry skin and hair. They can have restless minds and a quick demeanor in speech and movement. They are sensitive in nature and prone to anxiety and nervousness. They prefer heat and are creative and active. As a mobile force, vata controls activities such as the movement of air through the respiratory system, blood through the circulatory system, food through the gastrointestinal tract and impulses through the nervous system. It gives us the capacity to adapt and grow. Vata occupies the lower portion of the body, and the empty spaces such as the sinuses, the abdominal cavity and the lungs. The main site for vata is the colon.

There are five forms of vata known as the five airs. Each air has a primary site and function in the body. *Prana* is respiration, the breath of life. Its main locations are the head and the brain, and it regulates the functions of the lungs and heart. It is also a part of *jathara agni*, the body's main digestive fire. Prana is our life force, and when inhibited by

vata imbalance can cause heart and lung afflictions and breathing difficulties like asthma. “When our bodies can no longer sustain the timely rhythm of our breath, the eternal song of the heart is silenced” (Tiwari, Secrets 8). Prana is revitalized through respiration. The breathing techniques of *pranayama*, yogic breathwork, were developed to help replenish prana.

Udana, the second air of vata, translates as “rising air.” Its location is the throat and chest, and it is responsible for our voice and speech, for the clarity of our mental functions and for preserving our memories. Vocal and speech impairments and loss of memory present when udana is vitiated. The practice of *mantra*, which is the repetition of sacred words or phrases, and the practice of silence both strengthen udana. *Samana*, or “equilibrating air,” is rooted in the small intestine and provides the air necessary for the combustion of agni. It also aids our ability to discern and assimilate stimuli. Samana’s movement is linear, like that of peristalsis (Lad Textbook Vol I 51). Imbalance of this air can cause digestion problems, diarrhea, and a loss of discrimination. The air of elimination is *apana*, which is seated in the colon. Translated as “downward moving air,” it rules elimination of waste from the lower body, and cultivates our awareness of what we need to sustain us and of what excess we need to let go. When impaired, it can cause over-attachment and diseases of the eliminatory and reproductive organs. The fifth air is *vyana*, the “pervading air,” which distributes oxygen through the body by means of the circulatory system, as well as moving pitta and kapha through the body (Gerson 22). Vyana manifests as our personal freedom and interaction in community. When disturbed, fever, circulatory problems and diarrhea can result.

Subtype	Governing Element	Primary Sites	Functions	Direction
Prana	ether	head, brain	to fill the space	downward, inward
Udana	air	diaphragm, throat	moves upward	upward
Samana	fire	small intestine, navel	isolation, separation, splitting	linear
Apana	earth	colon, pelvic cavity	holding	downward, outward
Vyana	water	heart, whole body	pulsation, throbbing	circular, circulation

(Lad, Textbook Vol I 46)

The dosha *pitta* comes from the elements of fire and water, and is the power of digestion and transmutation. The body's water protects it from the burn of the body's fire, which provides the necessary heat for life. "Pitta is the Sanskrit word meaning 'to heat' or 'to burn', and is responsible for all biochemical activities" (Warrior & Gunawant 50). This includes all metabolic activity, heat production, intellectual stimulation and assimilation, and "our ability to digest ideas and impressions and to perceive the true nature of reality" (Gerson 15). The general characteristics of pitta include hot, sharp, liquid, oily and mobile. Pitta-dominant people exhibit characteristics that stem from these qualities. They tend to be of medium build, with muscular development, smooth skin and a red or yellow complexion. They dislike heat, are prone to sunburn, sweat profusely and have strong appetites. They are active and can be aggressive or quick to anger. They are sharp and intelligent and make good leaders and organizers. As a force of transformation, pitta works to digest food and stimuli, and helps to control and balance the opposite

forces of vata and kapha. Pitta provides the cosmic fire of life, the energy and passion of the Universe, and stimulates us to perceive, understand and evolve. Pitta's areas of weakness lie in the fire of the ego, with the tendency toward anger and preoccupation of self. It occupies the central region of the body and is primarily seated in the small intestine.

The five fires of pitta begin in the stomach with *pachaka*. It resides in the small intestine and stomach and is the main energy of digestion. It is the main digestive element of jathara agni. It helps to regulate body temperature, separates nutrients from waste and enables us to discriminate and assimilate information effectively. Malfunction of pachaka creates indigestion and affects all other aspects of pitta. The second fire is *ranjaka*, which is the fire of the blood. It promotes production of blood and gives the blood its color and oxygen. It is located in the liver and spleen. Ranjaka is the fire of personality and when balanced gives us the ability to calm our passions while retaining our playfulness and sense of gratification. When imbalanced, ranjaka will appear as rage, as stomach complaints such as ulcers, liver dysfunction or blood diseases like anemia.

Sadhaka resides in the heart with prana and in the grey matter of the brain, and governs our intelligence, memory, creativity and clarity. Sadhaka is "said to be the fire that forges the mind body connection, allowing consciousness to permeate the human physiology" (Gerson 25). Sadhaka pitta is also part of the brain's neuro-chemical system (Lad Textbook Vol I 62). Disturbed sadhaka can cause severe emotional difficulties, drug addiction, and mental dysfunction. The fourth fire of pitta, *alochaka*, governs the eyes and vision, both our physical vision and our creative vision and sense of hope. Visual

impairment and headaches can manifest with imbalance. The final fire is *bharajaka*, the fire of the skin. It governs all activities of the skin, such as assimilation of nutrients and elimination of wastes, and regulates body temperature. It is also provides us with stereognosis, our ability for three dimensional tactile perception (Lad Textbook Vol I 64). Bharajaka teaches us to shine our inner light and beauty. When imbalanced, fevers and skin conditions like psoriasis and eczema can result.

Subtype	Governing Element	Primary Sites	Functions
Pachaka	fire	small intestine; stomach	digestion, absorption and assimilation of food
Ranjaka	water	liver; spleen; stomach	produces bile, liver enzymes; gives color to blood
Sadhaka	ether	brain (gray matter); heart	conscious thinking and emotions; comprehension
Alochaka	air	eyes	maintains iris color; visual perception
Bhrajaka	earth	skin	Maintains skin color, temperature, texture; stereognosis

(Lad Textbook Vol I 55)

Kapha is born from the unity of earth and water. Earth provides the structure and stability while water encourages fluidity and movement. Kapha means “to keep things together, to embrace, cohering” (Gerson 26). It brings strength and structure to the body, mind and spirit, and embodies compassion, patience, loyalty and love at its highest expression. “Solid as a rock, cool as a glimmering stream in the moonlight; such is the essence of kapha” (Tiwari, Life 52). The main characteristics of kapha include heavy, cool, stable, sweet, oily and soft, and these traits are evidenced by kapha-dominated

people. They have large, solid frames and gain weight easily, thick skin and hair, large eyes, a slow and regular metabolism, and a strong and resilient immune system. They are calm and slow to anger, which can also manifest as laziness or a lack of motivation. They are compassionate and loving, loyal and forgiving, but can succumb to attachment and greed. In addition to kapha's function of providing the form and structure for the physical body, it helps prevent excess of the other two doshas and offers the peaceful energy which sustains us. It provides mucus to lubricate joints and form the protective mucus membranes. Kapha's primary place of residence is in the stomach.

Like vata and pitta, kapha has five subdoshas, located in various regions of the body, which help to carry out its functions. *Kledaka* is located in the stomach and is responsible for aiding proper digestion and absorption of food. It generates mucus for the various membranes in the body and provides the moisture for the flow of metabolism. From an emotional perspective, kledaka also helps assimilate emotions, that they may be understood and integrated before being sent out again, bringing balance and fluidity to allow us to flow into helping others (Tiwari, Secrets 14). Disturbances of kledaka kapha can bring heaviness in the abdomen, poor digestion and nausea. The second of the five waters, *avalambaka*, is located in the heart and lungs and nourishes the heart with the water of plasma and the limbs with energy. It also produces compassion and the maternal, protective and nurturing instinct. When imbalance occurs, it will present with laziness, heart trouble or lung issues.

Bodhaka exists in mouth and tongue. It provides saliva, the fluid for taste and early digestion. Just as it is vital for taste perception, so too it governs the moderation of

our sensory perception, helping us to control and discern the beneficial from our sensory input. When disturbed, eating disorders like anorexia and obesity can occur. *Tarpaka* is located in the head and brain and provides the water of the cerebral spinal fluid, which lubricates the spine and nourishes the brain and nervous system. It records memory in our conscious and subconscious minds. *Tarpaka* also brings the sensations of calm and harmonious well-being. When out of balance, the sense organs can become dull and the memory can falter. The last of the waters is *sleshaka*, which provides the synovial fluid for the joints in which it resides. *Sleshaka* means “that which connects,” and emotionally it connects us with others, bringing the gift of patience and unconditional love. Symptoms of imbalance include arthritis, bursitis and other joint inflammation and pain.

Subtype	Governing Element	Primary Sites	Functions
Kledaka	fire	stomach; GI tract	gastric secretion; digestion and absorption
Avalambaka	air	lungs; pleural cavity; heart; respiratory tract; spine	support; holds emotions; supports all kapha systems
Bodhaka	water	oral cavity	salivary secretions; taste; swallowing; speech
Tarpaka	ether	brain (white matter); myelin sheath; cerebral spinal fluid	subconscious thinking and emotions; memory
Sleshaka	earth	joints	lubricates joints (synovial fluid); nourishes bones

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In addition to the doshas, the three *gunas* also influence one’s prakriti. The three primary gunas are *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*. *Tamas* embodies the principle of heaviness and resistance. *Rajas* is active, stimulating, in motion. *Sattva* is purity of consciousness,

positive, with lightness and clarity. The gunas are described by several authors as psychological components depicting the state of the mind and function in an individual balance according to one's constitution. Like doshas, one guna will predominate in a person's psychological prakriti. Tamas is considered the lowest state of being, and sattva the highest. They can become imbalanced by stress and negativity, poor diet and unhealthy lifestyle choices (Warrior & Gunawant 60; Godagama 37). Scott Gerson describes gunas as opposite qualities, with tamas and rajas being the equal and opposite forces manifesting the universe, both complementary and antagonistic. One is the force of resistance and one is the force of motion, with sattva as the balancing force. Additionally there are ten pairs of gunas recognized as exerting influence on human physiology, such as hot and cold, hard and soft (Gerson 51-52).

Maya Tiwari expounds on this view by classifying tamas, rajas and sattva as three fundamental forces that influenced the creation of the elements. Tamas embodies the system of support in the universe. It is involved in the physical functions of the body and is most closely affiliated with kapha. Rajas is the motion and organization of the universe. It influences the psychological functions of the body and the vata dosha. Sattva is most influential on the pitta dosha and effects every aspect of the human body, especially our awareness. "The principle of harmonic and cosmic intelligence, sattva, maintains universal and individual stasis and awareness" (Tiwari, Secrets 3-4).

As evidenced by these varied descriptions of the same terms, aspects of Ayurveda can be interpreted to varying degrees of depth, just as the language of Sanskrit has layers of meanings for the same word. This accentuates a core difference between the Western

perspective of life and that of Ayurveda. Western thought, especially in medicine, wants everything clearly stated, labeled, compartmentalized and put in its proper place.

Ayurveda recognizes that life and nature are not so easily separated and labeled, that there are connections that cannot be ignored and overlap in definition, no matter how messy it may seem. There are choices as to how I may view any aspect of the universe, depending on where I stand, from what perspective I am looking, and just how deeply I want to dig. Just as humanity functions from different levels of awareness, like *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*, so the universe and life on Earth do as well. *Tamas* can be the lowest expression of the human psyche, wrought with delusion and apathy, as described by Warrior and Gunawant (61), or the “seed of instinct in all life” (Tiwari, Secrets 3). Each of these authors chose to explore the *gunas* from a different level of awareness, just as the wisdom of life, Ayurveda, is available to whatever depths we choose to pursue it. As such, these three characteristics are used to describe food, activities, processes and people on a variety of levels throughout Ayurveda.

From the *gunas* and the *doshas* arise the remaining pieces of Ayurvedic anatomy. The *dhatu*s are the bodily tissues, which are created in succession from the nutrients from digested food. The *dhatu*s continue the cycle of creation as tissues die and are regenerated. As food is taken in and digested, it forms the liquid substance known as chyme, or *ahara rasa*. With the help of *agni*, the digestive fire, *ahara rasa* is converted into *rasa dhatu*, or plasma, the first of the seven *dhatu*s. Plasma delivers nutrients to all tissues as it is moved through the body by *vata* and consists primarily of the element of water. *Rasa dhatu* is the foundation of the process of regeneration, and healthy and

appropriate food choices are vital to having a good quality and supply of *rasa dhatu*. The condition of *rasa dhatu* is often evident in the condition of the skin (Gerson 33). Good skin, vitality, memory and concentration indicates a good supply of *rasa*.

Dhatus	Bodily Tissue	Physical Function
Rasa	plasma	nourishment
Rakta	red blood cells	stimulation
Mamsa	muscle tissue	buffering the body
Meda	adipose tissue	lubrication
Asthi	bones and cartilage	supporting the body
Majja	marrow, nerve tissue, connective tissue	filling of the bones
Artava/ Shukra	female/male reproductive tissue	procreation

Each *dhatu* is formed from the previous one, and each has its own *agni*, or transformative force. Depending upon the quality of the previous tissue, too much or too little of any tissue could be produced. *Rasa dhatu* then forms *rakta dhatu*, blood, which is comprised mainly of the fire element. *Rakta* brings oxygen to the body, and its quality can be seen in the hands and feet, lips and tongue. Too much *rakta* causes inflammation of the skin while too little causes low blood pressure and dry skin. Blood forms muscle tissue, or *mamsa dhatu*, of the element of earth, which in turn forms *medas dhatu*, fatty tissue, of the element of water. *Mamsa* brings strength and stability when properly formed. Too much creates lethargy and excess fat; too little causes muscle wasting and fear. Healthy *medas dhatu* results in flexibility and healthy joints, while excess leads to increased fatty tissue, especially around the abdomen. Too little *medas* causes joint cracking and atrophy.

Medas dhatu forms *asthi dhatu*, which is bone and cartilage tissue, is governed by air and earth, and refines to become *majja dhatu*, bone marrow. The elements of fire and water dominate bone marrow tissue, which in turn forms either *shukra* or *artava dhatus*, sperm or ovum tissues. Asthi dhatu in excess causes prominent joints and teeth; deficient asthi results in stiff joints and brittle teeth. When healthy, asthi conveys strength and stability of the skeletal system. Majja, or bone marrow, also leads to joint pain and osteoporosis when diminished, and infections and fatigue when excessive. The last of the seven dhatus, the reproductive tissues, create vitality, fertility and healthy desire when balanced. In excess, they create obsession in males and heavy menstruation and weight gain in females, and lead to symptoms of depression, impotency and fatigue when diminished. As Godagama notes, “The last is the tissue with the highest potential - to create new life and perpetuate the species” (Godagama 42).

The dhatus illustrate the need for a healthy diet suited to each individual’s prakriti, as advocated by Ayurveda. Each progressive layer depends on the health and vitality of the one before it. An excess or lack anywhere along the line will aggravate or weaken the whole self. The dhatus are subject to the influence of the seasons and respond quickly to treatment in the form of herbs and *panchkarma* therapies, the Ayurvedic system of complete detoxification, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Once the cycle is complete, what remains is *ojas*. Ojas can best be described as our life energy. It derives from the final dhatus, which have the power to create life. Ojas thrives or diminishes as our life force and can be likened to our immune system. When it is vibrant, we are healthy. When it weakens, we become sick, and when it is destroyed, we die. Ojas is

strengthened through meditation and practice of the *sadhanas*, or sacred practices, that are appropriate for each individual. These can include diet, the use of herbs, yoga, exercise, restraint from drugs and alcohol and moderation in all aspects of life. *Ojas* naturally decreases with age.

With the activity of the *dhatu*s and *ojas* comes the production of waste materials, a natural by-product of the various metabolic functions in our bodies. There are three main waste products, known as *malas*, whose elimination are vital to health. The three *malas* are *purisha*, or feces, *mutra*, urine, and *sveda*, sweat. The processes of elimination of the *malas* are governed by *vata*. Aggravated *vata* will frequently show up as difficulties with elimination of *purisha*, but other imbalances in the *doshas* will manifest in the removal of *malas* as well. When elimination is compromised and waste builds up in the body, numerous diseases can result, such as arthritis, bronchitis, sciatica, low back pain, liver, kidney and gastrointestinal disorders, headaches and metabolic disorders.

A fourth *mala* known as *ama* presents when the imbalances move past their original location and begin to spread through the body. *Ama* can be considered the seed of disease (Tiwari, Secrets 22). *Ama* is a material that is whitish, foul smelling and sticky, and is the result of undigested food decaying in the colon. One cause of *ama* is decreased *agni*, the digestive fire. *Ama* will continue its decomposition if not addressed and will produce toxins which circulate through the body and accumulate in the tissue. *Ama* is evident as a whitish or yellowish coating on the tongue and should be addressed as early as possible. Mental *ama* arises from unethical lifestyle practices and an excess of unresolved emotions such as anger, greed, and possessiveness. *Ama* is generally

addressed through detoxification practices and bringing the doshas back into balance.

The final piece of the physical anatomy of Ayurveda is the srotas, or channels. All matter is transported through the srotas, which correspond to the circulatory system, the nervous system, gastrointestinal tract, lymphatic system, genito-urinary tract and respiratory system. Ayurveda identifies thirteen srotas, some of which have equivalents in Western anatomy and some that do not. Three srotas connect the body with the external environment by bringing in food, water and air. Seven supply nutrients to the tissues, and three eliminate waste (Gerson 40-41). If the flow of any of these channels becomes blocked or diminished, disease will result. Women have two extra channels, one which eliminates waste from the uterus during menstruation and one which carries breast milk in a nursing mother. Panchakarma therapy and herbal remedies are effective for clearing obstructed srotas.

Ayurveda also recognizes the energetic anatomy of the body, as is vital to its holistic approach to wellness. The nadis are the energetic pathways, along which are located the marma points, small centers of convergence of these pathways. Marma points and nadis correspond to the acupuncture points and meridians in Oriental Medicine. Ayurvedic massage is the primary treatment plan involving these points, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The subtle body's energetic anatomy includes three main channels and multiple energy centers called *chakras*. The three main nadis, the *sushumna nadi*, *ida nadi* and *pingala nadi* transport prana, the life force, and divide into the fourteen other nadis. The main channel, the *sushumna nadi*, runs along the spinal cord, from the inferior

hypogastric plexus, just anterior to the sacrum, to the space between the two hemispheres of the brain. The ida and pingala nadi are the channels to the left and the right of the sushumna, respectively. The ida is the feminine and the pingala the masculine; the ida reflects lunar energy and the pingala solar energy (Tiwari, Secrets 28). The ida runs from the left genital to the left nostril and the pingala does the same on the right. Both flow in a spiral pattern, crossing over each other and the sushumna. At three points along their paths, the nadi plexes corresponds with a chakra. Chakra means “wheel,” and these energy centers spin when healthy, as their name suggests. There are seven major chakras and hundreds of minor chakras. The seven major chakras correspond to areas where nerve plexes are branching out from the spine. Each chakra is identified with an element, an organ or region of the body, a color, a sound, an endocrine gland and many other characteristics. In Ayurvedic treatment, chakras may be addressed through yoga or meditation.

Ayurveda clearly outlines daily practices, diet and life choices that help to keep prakriti in balance and maintain physical mental emotional and spiritual health. When an imbalance occurs, an Ayurvedic practitioner will seek the root of the imbalance using various diagnostic methods, such as pulse and tongue diagnosis, and questionnaires to help determine prakriti. These same methods are then applied to determine one’s *vikriti*, or the current state of dosha imbalance. Once determined, various treatment methods are prescribed, including dietary and lifestyle changes, herbs, massage and detoxification, all of which will be discussed in the next chapter. By addressing the whole self, based on the philosophies described here, Ayurveda can accomplish its goal of treating the individual

instead of the disease. By recognizing the connection among all aspects of the body and between ourselves and our environment, we can utilize the philosophies and methods of Ayurveda to prevent illness and sustain ourselves in happy and productive lives. The system of Ayurveda has the experience of over 5000 years of observation and application, and continues to be a viable and valuable resource for health and happiness.

Chapter 2

Disease: Prevention and Treatment Through Ayurveda

The practice of Ayurveda serves to promote health, happiness and longevity by not only treating disease and disharmony but also by preventing it through lifestyle choices and daily practices. The Ayurvedic view of disease and treatment differs greatly from that of Western medicine. Western medicine tends to view disease as an enemy or an intruder, something to be battled and exorcised. Ayurveda views disease more as a communication from the body, mind or spirit that imbalance exists or a part of the self needs attention and takes a more nurturing approach. As David Frawley points out, the highest purpose of Ayurveda is self-realization, a form of self-healing (Yoga 6). As such, it is important that preventative actions and methods of treatment operate harmoniously with the self, doing no further harm in the attempts to return to homeostasis, the state of equilibrium. When the body is functioning at its highest potential, it provides the support for the mind and spirit to strive for the highest potential as well.

True health comes not strictly from physical health but from the harmony of the mind and spirit with the body, with nature, with society and with the universal self (Svoboda Prakriti 5). Ayurveda recognizes spiritual and mental imbalances to be equally as important as the physical roots of disease. An individual is considered healthy when all systems are functioning in balance: when food is being digested and waste eliminated properly, the doshas are in their respective balance, and all the senses are functioning and there is harmony among the body, mind and spirit (Lad Science 37). The process of disease begins when any of these systems is afflicted and can be of physical, psychological or spiritual origin. One's prakriti can indicate one's susceptibility to certain

types of diseases, based on each dosha's primary residence--kapha in the stomach and lungs, pitta in the small intestine and vata in the colon. Mentally, vata people are prone to fear-related imbalances, pitta to anger and kapha to attachment and greed when the doshas are not in harmony. Ayurvedic treatment centers primarily around the doshas, and one's prakriti is the foundation of treatment and diagnosis.

Ayurveda identifies three factors that ultimately bring imbalance. *Prajnaparadha* involves willfully disregarding our needs and can be translated as an "offense against wisdom" (Svoboda Prakriti 115) or "misuse of the mind and body" (Gerson 86). It is the choices we make against our better judgment or a misconception or misunderstanding that leads us to unhealthy choices. Overeating is a good example of prajnaparadha. One may feel full but continue to eat, ignoring inner wisdom, whether it be a physical, mental or emotional desire. Another cause of imbalance lies with sensory overload known in Ayurveda as *Asatmyendriyārtha samyoga*. It includes excess or inappropriate sights, sounds, smells, tastes and tactile sensations. Americans seem to have an affinity for loud and violent forms of entertainment and strong tastes. There is a prevalence of unnatural smells from chemical products and foods, and a general lack of healthy touch in our culture, be it in the form of affection, healing touch or natural fibers. These factors contribute to heightened stress and will eventually manifest as a physical or mental disease. *Kalaparinama* translates as "being out of harmony with the rhythms and cycles of nature" (Gerson 87). Ayurveda sees the changing seasons, times of day and cycles of life as factors in disease if one does not follow the natural changes of the body and the Earth. These three causes can be further broken down into thirty-two specific factors,

including environmental, traumatic and karmic factors, as outlined by Vasant Lad in The Textbook of Ayurveda, Volume II (5-10).

Disease can be caused from internal or external factors. The process of disease, *samprapti*, follows six stages in reference to the doshas. First is accumulation, *sanchaya*, when excess gathers in the primary site of each dosha. Provocation, *prakopa*, occurs when the dosha begins to overflow from its primary site and then spreads through circulatory channels in stage three, known as *prasara*. Stage one and two can generally be addressed by dietary modifications and stress relief, depending on the situation, if the imbalance is recognized by the individual. *Prakopa* will generally present as indigestion, constipation, irregular sleep patterns and other mild but obvious changes in the normal function of the body. The body will produce cravings which are the opposite of the current state, designed to restore balance. Once the imbalance begins to travel, the aggravated dosha will create cravings in the body which serve to increase its strength and ability to continue the process. Sugar exemplifies this action in that eating excess sugar creates the craving for more. It is not a lack of sugar which creates that particular craving but rather the excess Kapha which results from too much sweet that takes over. In *prasara*, the third stage, the mild conditions of the second stage intensify and manifest as skin disorders, muscle and joint pain, fevers, diarrhea, bronchitis and asthma, among others.

In stage four, the excess dosha deposits itself in a region weakened by “previous trauma, genetic predisposition, accumulated emotional stress, repressed emotions or other factors” (Lad Textbook Vol II 27). In *sthana samshraya*, the fourth stage, the dosha

invades the tissue and tries to establish itself. If successful, the earlier symptoms continue to intensify and will usually become disturbing enough to motivate someone to seek professional help if he or she has not done so already (Gerson 75). If the immunity of the tissue is strong, or if corrective action is taken, the disease process can be reversed at this stage. The dosha will be unable to anchor itself in the tissue and will return to its primary site, where further corrective action will bring the body back into balance. This process is called pacification or *prashamana* (Lad Textbook Vol II 28).

The fifth stage is the manifestation or *vyakti* of disease. In Western medicine, it is at this stage when a disease is classified and diagnosed as a specific pathology which presents with certain symptoms. It is here that treatment must become more aggressive and preventative measures are no longer effective, though they should still be employed as nourishing or strengthening activities. The sixth stage, *bheda*, is the maturation of disease, when “the unique complications of the disease are fully developed” (Gerson 76). This stage brings the breakdown of internal structures such as organs or tissues and begins to affect areas surrounding the location of the disease. For example, a vata condition allowed to progress to the sixth stage can manifest as degenerative disc disease or osteoporosis (Lad Textbook Vol II 29). This is a severe change to the structure of the system. In these final stages of disease, treatment becomes more difficult and the effects often irreversible. As Vasant Lad summarizes, “Disease is a process of abnormal/ imbalanced movement of the doshas, while health is a process of their normal functioning. The key is awareness” (Textbook Vol II 29).

Six Stages of Disease		
Sanchaya	Accumulation	Dosha accumulates at its own site
Prakopa	Provocation	Dosha fills its own site
Prasara	Spread	Dosha spreads through the body
Sthana Samsraya	Deposition	Dosha localizes at a site of weakness
Vyakti	Manifestation	Dosha manifests as symptoms, changes in the tissue
Bheda	Differentiation	Final stage, disease, structural changes in the body

Ayurveda views both disease and health as a dynamic process. As with the Western concept of homeostasis, the body, mind and spirit are always changing, adjusting, regulating in an attempt to maintain their equilibrium. If health is the goal, awareness and right action are necessary to help the process along. Otherwise, disease is the result.

Disease travels through the body with the action of vata, the principle of movement. The movement takes place through the three courses of disease. In stage one and two, the gastrointestinal tract is the site of the dosha imbalance, the primary site for each dosha. The GI tract is also known as the internal course. The middle course includes the connective and adipose tissue, the circulatory, lymphatic, muscular, nervous systems and the organs. The external course is the skin, blood, plasma, hair and other superficial tissues. Disease usually begins in the internal course and moves to the middle course and external course if left unchecked. This generally occurs in stage four of the disease process, when the doshas begin to spread beyond their boundaries.

The physical root of disease lies with digestion or *agni*, the primary digestive fire. Agni is our internal heat, essentially cooking what we eat in the oven of our stomach to begin the processes of nutrition and tissue formation. When there is improper digestion due to decreased agni, undigested food remains in the system. As this food ferments, it forms *ama*, a sticky, foul smelling substance that coats the stomach and intestines and will manifest on the tongue. Undigested food can also show up in the feces. Ayurveda views ama as a highly toxic substance. If left in the body, the toxins created by ama will spread to the other vessels and organs of the body, causing dysfunction. If allowed to continue, it will repress immunity and cause disease of the affected areas. This disruption of digestion can be caused by aggravated doshas or can lead to dosha imbalance. Mental ama results from undigested experiences or concepts which are hard to process, assimilate or release.

The diagnosis of disease in Ayurveda is a multi-faceted process. Most practitioners utilize a questionnaire to get the process started. However, as pointed out by Ayurvedic practitioner Ed Zadlo, intake forms are not decisive. Variables exist based on the client's level of self-awareness and perception of self (Zadlo Consultation, 02/09/10). The seasons and stages of life also influence one's *vikriti*, or current state of health, as do lifestyle and diet. The goal is to bring the *vikriti* into balance with the *prakriti*, one's basic constitution. To do so, the *prakriti* must first be determined, then the *vikriti*. Using pulse and tongue diagnosis, intake forms or questionnaires and personal observation of the client's physical state and demeanor, an Ayurvedic practitioner can assess both *prakriti* and *vikriti*.

Beginning with observation, *darshanam*, a practitioner can assess body type, posture, skin condition and tongue. Even the lines in the face give indication of health factors (Lad Textbook Vol II 63). Palpation is then used to confirm the observations. *Sparshanam*, or palpation, involves both superficial and deep methods of determining disorders in glands or organs. Percussion can also be used, as variance in sound coming from an area of the body can indicate accumulated dosha. The third category of examination is *prashnam*, or questioning.

Various methods are employed in Ayurvedic diagnosis. The pulses are measured at the wrist using the first three fingers. The closest to the wrist is where the vata pulse resides, then pitta, then kapha. There are seven layers of pulse. The most superficial indicates vikriti while the deepest indicates prakriti. In between, a seasoned practitioner can also assess the health of the dhatus, ojas, tejas and prana. The deep pulse also indicates the health of various organs, which are assessed individually and classified according to the strength or weakness of the pulse. Becoming skilled at pulse diagnosis takes a great deal of practice and quiet awareness to be able to listen to the subtleties of this diagnostic tool.

Practitioners will sometimes assess the state of urine and feces, either by examination of the malas or by questioning. The tongue is examined as an indicator of prakriti and vikriti as well. The size, shape and color is observed, as well as any presence of a coating, which indicates ama. When ama is present, the breath will have an unpleasant odor. The color of the ama is also indicative of an imbalanced dosha. A brown coating indicates vata, yellowish for pitta and white for kapha. Different sections of the

tongue correspond to organs in the body, so abnormalities in a particular region of the tongue can indicate a disturbance. Practitioners also assess one's constitution by the qualities of a client's speech, through touch to determine pain, inflammation or edema, as well as skin temperature to help determine prakriti. The eyes are examined and concepts similar to that of iridology are applied. Each area of the pupil corresponds to an aspect of the self, whether physical or emotional, and can be diagnosed by the presence of spots or color changes in the area. In addition, the nails can be examined for ridges, spots or disfigurements which indicate imbalances.

Ayurveda views disease through the lens of the doshas, and disease is classified in terms of imbalanced, aggravated or depleted doshas. The methods of diagnosis are employed to discern the presence and activity of the doshas, and treatment prescribed to restore an individual to her or his prakriti. This is a foundational concept of Ayurveda. An author whom I encountered in the course of my study debates this core concept, claiming that constitution is not the best way to approach disease and treatment. Tarabilda refers to ancient Ayurveda, which he classifies as the practices before the Vedas were written down, before Charaka and Sushruta. "The ancient Ayurveda indicates that one's constitutional type neither determines nor directly influences one's disease tendencies" (Tarabilda 59). He asserts that ancient Ayurveda treated according to the seven basic diseases, of which all other diseases are merely symptoms. The seven root diseases are the diseases of lightness, heaviness, heat, cold, dryness, oiliness and a mixed type of disease. These also correspond with the six tastes, which will be discussed later in this text.

This theory does not negate the role of the doshas in Ayurveda but raises the question of the accuracy of using them as the sole basis for diagnosis and treatment. Tarabilda cites the ineffectiveness of Ayurveda for certain conditions as well as case studies and patient comments to illustrate his theory. When addressed through the lens of the seven diseases, sometimes treatments will correspond to the treatments prescribed for the doshic method of diagnosis and sometimes not. He describes a strong correlation between ancient Ayurveda and *jyoshi*, or Vedic astrology, which was lost and separated somewhere in antiquity and which his theory reunites to offer a more comprehensive means of healing. As Ayurveda seeks to address the root of disease and not just the symptoms, differences in the base philosophies concerning the root of disease can exert a profound influence in the course of treatment. Tarabilda's ideas offer a radical move from Ayurveda as it is practiced today, both in India and in the West. It contains an appealing simplicity in the involved and sometimes confusing system of Ayurveda and presents an opportunity for further exploration and discussion for anyone interested in the study of this ancient system.

The treatment of disease in Ayurveda takes an approach which is as holistic and comprehensive as the system itself. Treatment of disease begins with prevention. Prakriti determines the starting point for lifestyle choices, such as diet and daily practices. As good digestion is the key to health, diet is one of the main pillars upon which Ayurveda rests. Diet varies according to constitution or to imbalances that may be prevalent and according to the season. As the seasons change, so does the dominant dosha. Imbalances in the prominent dosha of the season are more likely to occur, so altering diet can prevent

this. Certain practices are recommended, such as prayer and conscious preparation and consumption without the distraction of books or television, allowing 5-6 hours between meals for proper digestion, eating only when hungry, chewing thoroughly and refraining from eating when emotionally upset and from overeating. It is advised to fill the stomach one third full with food, one third with water and leave one third empty to allow for digestion. The quality of food is also of paramount importance. The fresher a food is, the more nutrients and life sustaining energy it retains. Ayurveda does not advocate leftovers and advises that food be eaten within twenty four hours of being prepared, even in light of the advent of refrigeration. The act of eating can be viewed as a sacred practice, an act of nurturing and nourishing, and should be treated as such.

Foods are classified according to rasa or taste, potent energy or virya, and the post-digestive taste, vipaka. The six rasas play a huge role in dietary choices and treatments. Each taste is associated with certain properties and relevant elements, and serves to either increase or decrease each dosha. The following chart details the six tastes and their properties.

Rasa	Virya	Vipaka	Elements	Action	Foods
Sweet	Cold	Sweet	earth and water	Increases kapha Decreases vata and pitta	Grains, sweeteners, sweet fruits, milk, beans
Sour	Hot	Sour	earth and fire	Increases kapha and pitta Decreases vata	Citrus fruits, tomatoes, yogurt
Salty	Hot	Sweet	water and fire	Increases kapha and pitta Decreases vata	Salt, Sea vegetables
Pungent	Hot	Pungent	fire and air	Increases pitta and vata Decreases kapha	Onion, Garlic, chilis
Bitter	Cold	Pungent	air and ether	Increases vata Decreases pitta and kapha	Leafy greens, many spices
Astringent	Cold	Pungent	earth and air	Increases vata Decreases pitta and kapha	Pomegranates, blackberries

Ideally, meals are structured with each of the six tastes in varying amounts. As the majority of foods are classified as sweet, the potential of overeating sweet foods outweighs the likelihood of over-indulgence in astringent foods. As the doshas can be nourished or aggravated by food choices, prakriti and season are the dominant factors in dietary choices. In keeping with the theory of like increases like, a food with the same characteristics as a dosha will significantly increase the presence of that dosha. Others will increase it only slightly. Sweet increases kapha, pungent increases pitta and bitter increases vata. Each constitution can find its dietary balance by including the appropriate amounts of each tastes. Salty, bitter and astringent are meant to be used in small amounts,

and bitter will benefit pitta the most and vata the least. Salty and sour are best for vata, but can be used by pitta and kapha in small quantities.

The virya, or energy, of a food indicates its effect on the system. The virya of a food describes the “immediate heating or cooling response” which occurs when a food enters the digestive system (Tiwari Life 60). Foods with a heating virya promote metabolism, digestion and circulation and fuel agni, the digestive fire. In excess they can cause inflammation, hypoglycemia, ulcers and high agni. Cooling foods promote growth, relieve inflammation and decrease body temperature, but in excess they dull agni, slow the metabolism, inhibit digestion and growth, and cause the formation of ama (Lad Textbook Vol I 251). Virya is well illustrated by Amanda Morningstar when she writes “Think of a time when you tried to put a sweet dessert on top of an already ample meal, and it just sat there like a sodden lump. In moments like these, the pungency and warmth of a small cup of fresh ginger tea can be appreciated.” (Morningstar 18). This statement provides a good example of the dynamic and fluid dance that is Ayurvedic cooking. By learning the various properties of foods, herbs and spices, the balance of nature can be brought to our plates and internalized through our nourishment and digestion.

The vipaka of a food is its post-digestive taste and describes its effect on the tissues and digestive system on a cellular level. Vipaka also effects the quality of the malas or the wastes. “Vipaka’s effect is systemic and takes place after the food has been metabolized” (Morningstar 20). The three vipakas are sweet, sour and pungent. Sweet promotes growth and helps elimination of the malas. Sour promotes metabolism and creates an acidic environment in the malas. Pungent promotes breakdown of wastes and

has a drying effect but can block channels of elimination (Lad Textbook Vol I 252-3). As with all rules, there are exceptions to these classifications. When a particular food does not fit the mold and shows a different action than those it resembles it is called *prabhava*, meaning “an unpredictable action” (Lad Textbook Vol I 254). For example, honey has a sweet rasa but a heating virya. Limes are sour but have a cooling virya rather than heating.

Foods are also classified according to the three gunas: sattva, rajas and tamas. Tamasic food is heavy, dulling, stagnating. Commercially farmed meat and dairy products, white flour and processed foods are examples of tamasic foods. Rajasic food is stimulating, heating, mobilizing. Rajasic foods include fermented foods, peppers, eggs, white sugar and citrus. Sattvic foods are grown, harvested and prepared ethically and with consciousness. Milk from free range grass-fed cows who are treated humanely is a sattvic food. Organically grown vegetables and fruits, grains, seeds and ghee are sattvic foods when prepared fresh and consumed in a reasonable amount. Any food eaten in excess can become tamasic. The dietary goal of practitioners of Ayurveda, like yoga, is to follow a primarily sattvic diet, though small amounts of rajasic and tamasic foods should be included for true balance. A sattvic diet helps to develop the qualities of love, acceptance and awareness, a clear mind and a peaceful spirit. As David Frawley says “Eating is our first interaction with our environment. If that is not based upon love and compassion, all our other actions are bound to suffer” (Frawley Yoga 167).

A sattvic diet is vegetarian in the world we inhabit, as it is not possible for most to obtain meat that has not been adversely affected by its environment and in a way that

honors the sacrifice of the animal. The principal of *ahimsa*, nonviolence, is at the heart of the vegetarian diet. Ahimsa is one of the *yamas*, or restraints, in yogic philosophy and to practice ahimsa means to cause no harm or suffering. The meat available to most Westerners comes from animals who suffer tremendously at the hands of their human captors. The use of hormones, antibiotics, improper feed, captivity and a life of fear and pain render the meat unfit for human consumption, and the ethical implications of participating in such cruel and disgusting practices as factory farming are dire. Commercial dairy farming also makes the milk obtained unfit to drink. As the resurgence of grass-fed cows continues, more people will have access to suitable dairy products and healthier meat. However, meat is rajasic and for those wishing to follow a sattvic diet, vegetarianism may be the best choice.

In addition to dietary advice, Ayurvedic preventative measures include the use of herbs, which are classified like food, yoga, exercise, meditation and *pranayama*, or breath work. These activities are meant to be included in the daily routine, or *dinacarya* (Gerson 121). The practice of yoga, which is a lifetime study in itself, includes the practices of pranayama, *dharana* or sensory withdrawal, and *dhyana*, meditation (Frawley Yoga 283). These practices, along with asana or the practice of yoga postures, have been developed to support and balance each dosha, according to the nature of each, and the physiological, mental and emotional effects of each posture, method of breathing or meditative practice. In general, vata needs strengthening and stabilizing asanas and a slow and gentle practice. Pitta benefits most from a relaxing and cooling practice, using postures to calm and release stress and tension. Kapha needs an invigorating practice to

counteract their natural lethargy, asanas which are warming and stimulating (Frawley Yoga 216-24). These same guidelines apply for pranayama as well. These practices have been developed to an extensive depth but remain rooted in Ayurvedic philosophy.

Other daily routines include hygienic practices like daily bathing, brushing the teeth and scraping the tongue and nurturing practices like self massage with an appropriate oil. Ayurveda advocates specific times of day which are best for certain activities, such as rising before dawn to perform morning cleansing routines, yoga and meditation. “It’s good to perform your routine in the morning before you go out into the world, since it provides ‘armor’ to you for your foray into the external environment” (Svoboda Prakriti 102). It is advised that clothes be made of natural fibers, in colors appropriate for each dosha. The midday meal should be eaten around 12 or 1 pm and should be the main meal of the day. The evening meal should be eaten before 7 pm and followed by a short walk. Ayurveda advises against reading or watching television in bed and allots the time after retiring but before sleep as the appropriate time for sex. Distinctions are made between sleeping positions, pets, traits in a spouse, personal surroundings and work environments based on prakriti (Svoboda Prakriti 102-110).

When preventative measures and beneficial lifestyle choices prevail, the opportunity for disease to develop is minimized. However, when disease takes hold, there are numerous treatments available through Ayurveda. After assessing the client’s constitution and the nature of the disease or imbalance, a practitioner will make dietary recommendations, which may include the use of medicinal herbs, and will suggest appropriate treatments. The first step is to remove ama, should it be present. Fasting is the

most effective way to do this. Fasting is the abstinence from food to allow the digestive system to clear and recharge and allow diminished agni to strengthen. Sometimes this can be accomplished through following a mono-diet as opposed to fasting, which can be contraindicated according to the situation. Vata imbalances do not improve with fasting and can worsen. Kapha conditions are greatly improved with fasting. It is recommended that people with a kapha prakriti fast regularly to keep the digestive system clear. Other therapies include aromatherapy, the use of gems and stones, color therapy, *mantra* or the recitation of sacred sounds, and alchemical preparations, using precious metals to create healing compounds. Colloidal silver is an example of such a substance.

The complete system of Ayurvedic detoxification is called *panchakarma*, the five actions. The goal of panchakarma is to “restore the body’s natural processes through the vital forces whose task it is to rid the body of its wastes” (Tiwari Secrets 267).

Panchakarma is an initially depleting then rejuvenating therapy which encourages and supports the body’s own methods of detoxification. The process begins with preliminary treatments of massage, *abhyanga*, to relax and nurture the body, mind and spirit before beginning. There are numerous techniques and practices involved in abhyanga, including the use of different oils as appropriate for each dosha, specific forms of head massage and the stimulation of *marma* points, which are junctions where various channels and prana meet. Massage techniques will be discussed in more depth later. Fomentation, the induction of sweating, is known as *svedana* and helps to “liquify and uproot the aggrieved doshas, rendering them ready for expulsion from the body” (Tiwari Secrets 120). Techniques of svedana range from a sauna or steam tent to the use of hot medicated

compresses. These preliminary treatments are vital to the success of panchakarma, as the process of releasing toxins is best done slowly.

The five actions of panchakarma consist of *vamana*, emesis or vomiting; *virechana*, purgation through the bowels; *niruha vasti*, medicated enema; *anuvasana vasti*, oil enema; and *nasya*, nasal insufflation. The ancient practice of bloodletting was once part of panchakarma and the vastis were two parts of one action (Tiwari Secrets 267-8). Vamana or emesis therapy is conducted by ingesting an herbal emetic and inducing vomiting. The goal is to eliminate excess kapha, which resides in the stomach, by emptying the contents of the stomach. Fasting can be used as an alternative to vamana (Tiwari Secrets 273). Virechana, or purgation therapy, entails ingesting an herbal laxative to cleanse the intestines. It is primarily used for excess pitta, whose primary site is the small intestine. Vasti therapy, the use of enemas, is used primarily to relieve excess vata, as vata accumulates in the colon, and can be helpful for pitta and kapha conditions as well. Niruha vasti uses medicated decoctions and is an eliminating therapy. Anuvasana vasti uses herbal infused oils and is considered a nourishing therapy (Tiwari Secrets 309). Nasya therapy uses oils or other medicated substances administered through the nasal passages. Its goal is to reduce kapha from the head and neck, including the sinuses (Gerson 126).

Panchakarma is an involved method of treatment and must be conducted by an Ayurvedic practitioner. The process will generally take about thirty-five to forty days, including preliminary treatments. It is vital to allow the proper amount of time. As the goal is to detoxify completely, each dhatu or layer of tissue is purged and must be given

ample time to develop anew. Each tissue takes five to six days to develop, so to address all seven dhatus would require that length of time (Zadlo Consultation 02/09/10). Timing panchakarma according to the seasons is crucial as well. The ideal time is during the change of seasons between summer to fall for vata, from winter into spring for kapha and from spring into summer for pitta. The tissues are most relaxed and willing to let go of toxins at the change of seasons, and the doshas must be fluid before they can be removed. This tends to occur at the end of the season which aggravates the particular dosha being removed (Tiwari Secrets 269). In addition to the elimination therapies of panchakarma, a nourishing diet and restful lifestyle must be followed for the duration of the treatment to allow for the regeneration of the tissues. The numerous retreat centers offering three, five or ten day panchakarma treatments do not allow for the true practice of panchakarma in such limited time and could do more harm than good.

The success of any treatment lies in the willingness of the patient to take personal responsibility for her or his health, well-being and happiness. With self-discipline, focus and adherence to the daily routines and diet guidelines, one may never need treat a serious imbalance or disease. In the treatment of disease, when guided by an Ayurvedic practitioner or an allopathic doctor, the patient's actions outside the treatment room, attitude and sense of hope play a crucial role in the process of health. This personal investment is often lost in conventional Western treatments as the patient puts more hope in the seemingly omnipotent physician, the endless stream of chemical treatments and the option of simply removing the offending body part if all else fails than in the innate wisdom of the body and the self. Ayurveda allows this wisdom to be utilized, encouraged

and supported by both preventative measures and treatments, as is the nature of holistic healing. Health is a process, a dance of subtleties, of checks and balances in a constant state of motion, break-down and regeneration. As summarized by Robert Svoboda “Your health is a dynamic condition, not a permanent state. There is no limit to the harmony possible in you, and no limit to the harmony you can create around yourself” (Prakriti 190).

Chapter 3

A Personal Perspective of Ayurveda

My own interest in Ayurveda began several years ago while completing a teacher training program for hatha yoga. Part of our curriculum included an introduction to Ayurveda, sufficient to pique my interest but not enough information to engage in practice. I did a little reading on the subject in the short times between the terms of this program but, again, not enough to gain an understanding or to implement appropriate measures. To this end, a major component of this study is experiential. I wanted to develop a personal practice of Ayurveda and observe the effects of these practices in my own life, partly to cultivate a genuine understanding and working knowledge of the system and partly for the opportunity to incorporate these practices into my daily life. This chapter will recount my experiences of the past two months of Ayurvedic practice and consultation as well as my conclusions about the system as a whole.

Ayurveda is more than a routine; it is a way of life. With advice and procedures for every aspect of daily life, Ayurveda offers a map for the journey of life and the many different paths one can follow. Ayurveda recognizes that humanity is a varied species and there are few absolutes. No one diet will be appropriate for everyone, nor will any one type of breathing be optimal for all. Different branches of yoga exist to be practiced by those most drawn to them. Every element of life has been examined and classified over thousands of years of practice. Every practice has been refined and customized for each constitution through application and observation. Individuality is taken into account within the practices of Ayurveda and honored to the extent that we each have our own path in all aspects of life. Individuality is not touted like a flag of permission for excess

and extremity, as it has become in Western culture, but rather as a basis for discovering our strengths and weaknesses and making the best choices for ourselves. “Life without limits perverts your reality; it sours your sweetness, or turns it bitter” (Svoboda Women 67). Yet Ayurveda retains the warmth and nurturing of human existence. It is not a closed and cold system but rather a warm, fluid and adaptable art, flowing towards a happy and productive life.

The first step in the practice of Ayurveda is discovering your prakriti, your personal constitution, which serves as a starting point for both lifestyle choices and diagnosis and treatment of imbalance. I am pitta-kapha, meaning I have a dominant pitta element and a lesser but prevalent kapha influence. Everyone has aspects of each of the three doshas, but generally one or two will prevail. Over the years I have taken numerous questionnaires, through magazines, websites, books and practitioners. I had always thought the kapha aspect of myself to be the strongest, and paid little to no attention to the pitta influence. Through the study of prakriti, the diagnosis of Ayurvedic professionals, a greater self-awareness and the willingness to acknowledge the less pleasant aspects of myself, I am now better able to recognize my strong pitta nature.

The next step is determining what imbalances are present and creating a treatment plan to bring the body, mind and spirit back into balance. To this end, I sought out Ayurvedic practitioners to confirm my self-diagnosis and treatment plans. At the beginning of this study, I contacted two practitioners, Ed Zadlo, an American-born and trained practitioner, and Shekhar Annambhotla, who was born and trained in India. Both doctors have also been trained in therapeutic yoga and Dr. Shekhar in massage and

panchakarma as well. I scheduled an appointment in mid-February with Ed Zadlo and in early March with Dr. Shekhar.

I had several weeks to get some reading in and to develop my self-diagnosis before meeting with Ed Zadlo. I determined that I was pitta-kapha with excess and aggravated kapha, as evidenced by my fatigue and excess weight, and aggravated pitta, which I determined from the digestive problems I had been experiencing for several months, my restless and disturbed sleep and anxiety. All of these symptoms had arisen since the onset of winter, beginning in early November. I initially wrote them off as the stress of school and life, then the holidays, with the hustle and bustle and overindulgence they bring. Next came residency for school, a week in a hotel with little time for yoga or relaxation, eating out for every meal and drinking more wine and coffee than is usually my habit. I deduced that I needed to stabilize pitta and lessen kapha. I began following a kapha-reducing diet, which was very similar to what I had considered my optimal diet. I also perceived my problems to be manifestations of hypothyroidism, which is common in my family. And indeed they are, from a Western perspective: slow metabolism, weight gain, fatigue after eating. But this did not explain the other symptoms which I knew were changes in my daily life but I didn't really recognize as symptoms. As I can now realize, I was diagnosing and devising treatment based primarily on diet and physical symptoms and activity, the prevailing Western tendency.

At my consultation with Ed Zadlo, I learned much about the differences between Ayurvedic and Western medicines' thought patterns and diagnostics. After confirming my pitta-kapha prakriti through observation, pulse diagnosis and a questionnaire, he

determined that my vikriti, or current condition, indicated a vata imbalance, that my pitta and kapha were actually slightly deficient for my state of balance, and my vata was excessive. This was determined through interview, pulse and tongue diagnosis. Vata imbalance manifests in the colon first, causing constipation, and can cause restless and disturbed sleep patterns and fatigue. Vata imbalances are frequently caused by periods of stress or anxiety and exacerbate those feelings when left untreated. The seasons also influence dosha prevalence. Winter is when vata needs to be nourished, spring is when excess kapha can easily accumulate, and summer is the time when pitta can most easily become aggravated. Additionally, vata-nourishing diets are almost completely opposite of kapha-reducing diets, so the foods I was eating were further aggravating the disturbed vata. All the above-stated factors combined to create in me excess vata, which is not part of my birth constitution and was wreaking havoc on my digestive system. He also diagnosed me with low agni, or digestive fire, and low samana and udana vata. Samana vata is responsible for fanning the digestive fire, and udana, the “rising air,” governs our speech and expression as well as our spiritual pursuits (Atreya 22).

Agni can be diminished by overeating or by an excess of raw foods, and low agni causes the build-up of ama in the form of undigested food. Though my agni was low, there was no indication of ama, which usually manifests as a thick coating on the tongue. I tend to eat a lot of raw foods and had recently returned from eating salads for lunch and dinner while at residency. I have learned, even before this study, that I tend toward emotional eating, especially of sweets when upset or anxious. By Ayurvedic standards, Americans habitually overeat at every meal. Ayurveda suggests an ample serving to be

the amount you could scoop with your two hands, filling only one-third to one half of the stomach at a meal, and allowing at least five hours between meals for proper digestion (Tiwari Secrets 350). Considering these factors, I was not surprised by a diagnosis of low agni and samana vata. Udana vata is compromised by mental and emotional factors, such as feeling inhibited to speak your truth when necessary (Zadlo Consultation 02/09/10). I can only speculate the cause of this imbalance to be the need to hold my tongue to keep the peace with my son's father and the lack of musicmaking and singing in my present, which has always been such a vital aspect in my life.

The first step was to address the vata imbalance. I was instructed to follow a vata-reducing diet, which was completely opposite the diet I had developed over the years for myself, but also to eliminate the strongest pitta aggravators. I have long suspected a wheat allergy and try to avoid wheat products. However, wheat is a primary grain choice for both vata and pitta. I do not digest dairy products well, but milk is a staple for vatas and pittas. I could not remember the last glass of milk I'd had. Many other aspects seemed foreign, such as having dietary permission to eat sweets and grains in moderation and to make liberal use of oils and healthy fats. The most difficult adjustment was limiting vegetables such as nightshades, cruciferous and raw vegetables, which were absolute staples to my regular diet. Physically it was easy, but mentally it was a stretch.

The easiest and most immediate change was removing meat from my diet. I originally adopted a vegetarian diet at age fifteen and, like many young vegetarians, subsisted on french fries, pasta and cheese. In my twenties, I had a bit more sense and ate a soy-based diet, along with vegetables, pasta and cheese. In my late twenties, I began

eating meat again, mainly because I had access to fresh local fish and game hunted by friends. This removed the ethical concerns I had about being an omnivore. After I resumed eating meat, I began studying nutrition as an area of personal interest and came to consider grass-fed, free range meat and wild-caught seafood to be highly beneficial to me. My body seemed to second this thought with greater energy and seemingly higher metabolism. Eventually, I slipped back into consuming commercially farmed meat, for lack of other resources and for convenience and cost. I never really felt good about that and had considered eliminating meat for some time.

My Ayurvedic studies have inspired me to do just that. As I began to look back at various time periods of my life and changes in my diet, I realized that my increased energy was not attributable to meat alone but also to increased intensive activity and a joyful and pleasurable time of life. I also realized that in my days as a vegetarian, I had never really had a good diet and could not accurately assess how my body fared without eating meat. As meat is not part of a cleansing or rejuvenating diet, except possibly for the severely emaciated, I would have temporarily eliminated it anyway. I plan to continue as a vegetarian, primarily for ethical reasons, and to evaluate my health and metabolism after six months to get a more accurate gauge.

In addition to dietary changes, I was advised to take several herbal formulas. Triphala is a mixture of *amalaki*, *haritaki* and *bibhitaki*, three Indian fruits, and is useful for multiple purposes, such as clearing ama from tissues, as a laxative, for skin diseases and for balancing all three doshas (Svoboda Women 146). Trikatu is comprised of ginger, black pepper and long pepper and is also used to dispel ama from the body. “Trikatu is an

expectorant, decongestant and a stimulant; as such it is used to relieve conditions of coldness, mucus and stagnation in the body” (Tiwari Secrets 439). Trikatu is heating and beneficial for both vata and kapha disorders, but must be used with awareness by pitta-dominant people. In addition to these two formulas, I was given a blood cleanser which consisted of numerous herbs, including neem leaves, tumeric and burdock. I began taking all three as tablets, but due to their high cost, I purchased trikatu and triphala in bulk form and now take it in food or in warm water.

I was given appropriate breathing techniques, such as ujjayi breathing, familiar to yoga practitioners. Ujjayi is the pranayama used during asana practice to generate heat and maintain focus. This was suggested to help strengthen udana vata. Agni Sara, the breath of fire, was recommended to stimulate agni and samana vata. Daily massage with sesame oil was suggested as well as lubricating the nostrils in the morning and evening before bed with sesame oil. I was advised to sip warm water throughout the day and to avoid cold food and drink and stress. The idea was to counteract the dry, cold and hard nature of vata and mid-winter with warming, soothing practices but not so much as to aggravate my pitta nature.

So I began my slow and steady treatment, feeling firsthand the effects of the culture of instant gratification in which I participate. As I frequently tell my massage clients, the problems don't arise in an hour and they will not be resolved in an hour. I had already begun incorporating some sadhanas into my daily routine, but the list of advisable daily practices is lengthy. It is difficult and time-consuming to properly employ all practices in a day. Remembering that these schedules were developed in a very different

culture with a very different social climate is important to keep from feeling overwhelmed. I originally committed myself to a rather lengthy morning and shorter evening routine. However, after a few weeks of practice, as time restraints for my schoolwork began to become pressing, I realized that there simply was not enough time in the day for me to live in my present life and continue with all of these practices. So, in the spirit of adaptability, I would select on a daily basis which practices to leave out that day. Some days, meditation would take precedence. Other days, perhaps a longer practice of yoga asana felt right. If I knew I would be getting exercise later in the day, I might skip asana and focus on pranayama, breathwork. After my initial consultation, I had a better idea of what was most important.

A typical day's practices begin upon arising, before dawn. While engaged in my studies with this program, I have gotten accustomed to rising between 4:30 and 5 am, as this is the only time I have to read without disturbance. For this study, I needed to divide this time between reading and Ayurvedic practices, so time management became even more of a challenge. However, I benefited from reduced stress and improved focus, making my work easier in the long run. Immediately upon arising, I drank a glass of water. This practice, like several others, was already a common way to start the day and one which has been part of my daily routine for a long time. After using the bathroom, I brushed my teeth and scraped my tongue. My stainless steel tongue scraper is one of my favorite tools to come out of this study, and I highly recommend them to everyone. I applied sesame oil inside my nostrils, which proved an excellent treatment for congestion and a tonic for improved breathing capability.

Next I performed self-massage with a warm oil, sesame, coconut or jojoba oils, depending on the season. Sesame oil is heating and very good for vata imbalances but too much for pitta. Coconut is good for pitta but too heavy for kapha. Jojoba is not mentioned in any of the Ayurvedic texts but is an oil I frequently use and seemed appropriate for occasional use. I rotated the oils depending on how I felt the previous day, which I continue to do. If I felt too warm the previous day, I would use coconut instead of sesame oil. This could be evidenced by not only body temperature but also by angry temperament, burning upon elimination, redness in the whites of the eyes or diarrhea. With awareness and practice, these subtleties became very obvious. Some mornings I added essential oils, being careful not to use anything too warming. As I already have experience with essential oils and massage, I thoroughly enjoyed this routine and was glad to add it to my daily regimen. The purpose of self-massage is to increase circulation and lymph flow, help detoxify and nourish the tissues, promote relaxation and reduce mind/body stress. The vehicle of the skin absorbs whatever is used on it, so the healing properties of various oils and essential oils are obtained through massage as well.

Depending on the day, I would then move on to asana practice, pranayama or meditation. Some days, as time allowed, I did all three, but usually could only fit in one or two. Vigorous exercise is not indicated for vata imbalance. I tried to choose more calming and grounding asanas, as opposed to the more intensive practice I usually have. Then I showered and had some tea, generally a rooibos chai with *tulsi* or holy basil. Then I would do my reading until my son woke up. I had lightened my work schedule at the beginning of the term, for which I was most grateful as the days went on. So on days

when I was not working, I could resume my studies after getting my son off to school as well as walk or ski in the woods with my dogs. I practiced quiet observation, whenever possible, of the world around me but mostly of myself.

My diet consisted primarily of kicharee, a cleansing dish made with mung beans, basmati rice, tumeric, coriander, ginger and cumin, as well as oatmeal with honey or maple syrup, steamed greens or root vegetables, fruits and the occasional toast or pasta. I used ghee, clarified butter, as my primary cooking oil and made liberal use of herbs and spices. Ghee “has the ability to increase the agni in all of the tissue levels without aggravating pitta” (Atreya 91). After several weeks of this, I had noticed numerous changes. I could tell when I had too much heat, due to foods or activities, or when I had not had enough. I had been cold all winter long, which is very much out of character for me as I generally thrive in winter and love to be outside in the snow. I noticed some relief of this pervasive cold and much improved sleep. Instead of insomnia, I now had trouble getting up in the morning but still felt the effects of food immediately as fatigue after eating. I still felt stressed at times but was usually able to deal with it more effectively and detach instead of feeling consumed. However, my mood did vary greatly through this time, and I started noticing correlations between my mood and my activities and diet. Physically my digestion seemed slightly improved, though not completely back to normal.

During the course of these weeks, I conducted a few dietary experiments. As previously mentioned, I have not tolerated wheat products well for several years and generally steer clear of them. During this initial balancing phase, I allowed wheat into my

diet to see how it would affect me, thinking that perhaps I had been wrong and it was excessive vata at the root of the problem all along. Previously I had noticed constipation, lethargy and gas after ingesting wheat. I began by eating a little once in a while, then incorporating a small amount into one meal each day. This felt fine to me, and I did not notice any of the digestive troubles. One day I ate wheat at every meal, partly as an experiment, partly out of convenience as I was away from home much of the day. By the evening, I noticed a difference and, by the next morning, felt absolutely awful: heavy, irritable and fatigued. My digestion had noticeably slowed and my abdomen was distended. The following day I fasted on water and herb tea to allow my digestive fire to rekindle. It did and I began to feel better.

For me, this raised the question of food allergies and how Ayurveda addresses these. Ayurveda considers allergies to be symptoms of a greater imbalance, but no specific mention of food allergies is made. I have not found any information on food allergies in my reading, but my perception is this: anything in excess will have a negative effect and what constitutes excess varies depending upon prakriti and will not be the same for everyone. Some diagnosed food allergies may be foods which are not advisable for certain doshas. Wheat increases kapha but pacifies pitta. For a pitta-kapha constitution like mine, small amounts of wheat have no ill effect and may be beneficial during the summer when pitta is at its highest. However, because of the kapha aspect, wheat should not be a staple food, nor should it be consumed in the spring, when kapha is most likely to become aggravated.

March arrived, and I noticed a change as the seasons began to change. The period of late winter and early spring is when kapha will most likely go out of balance, and I began to feel this in myself. I was still following the vata-nourishing schedule and began to wonder if I shouldn't switch to a kapha-reducing routine. Ed Zadlo had advised me to follow the vata plan until spring, but here in northeast Pennsylvania, the beginning of spring isn't always clearcut. I began slowly incorporating more vegetables, cutting out heavy fruits, sugars, pasta and bread. I went out of town for several days just before mid-March and did not practice pranayama, asana or meditation much nor abide by my dietary sadhanas. Though I did nothing to excess by usual standards, I had drinks and snacks that I have not had for some time. I considered this another experiment for my study, as well as a respite from my rigid routine for a few days. After three days, upon returning home, I again felt weighed down and irritable. I was congested and fatigued and subject to mood swings over the next few days. The weather had also changed drastically in my absence. I left with over a foot of snow on the ground and came back three days later to bare ground and the mud of early spring. The days that followed brought warm spring days and the need to shed winter's skin, just in time for my meeting with Dr. Shekhar.

In mid-March I went for a consultation with Dr. Shekhar. Using the same diagnostic tools of pulse, tongue, observation and questionnaire, he diagnosed a kapha imbalance, confirming my thoughts that it had indeed been time to switch routines. He agreed with Ed Zadlo's diagnosis and treatment of a vata imbalance during the winter, but advised following a kapha diet and routine now that spring had arrived and my vata was

back in balance. I was very interested in panchakarma and discussed the possibility of a modified cleanse, which he wholeheartedly supported and gave me the instructions and materials for a seven day detox program. I scheduled to return in one week for a massage treatment and went home armed with a renewed motivation and a bagful of herbs.

The cleanse consisted of oleation therapy or *snehana*, using oil to help liquify the doshas and transport them to the digestive tract, where they can then be eliminated (Atreya 88-89). As I have extensive experience with juice fasts and other methods of detoxification, this program seemed odd as it uses milk and oils as the primary substances. In the morning, I drank a cup of warm organic milk with a prescribed spice mixture and a specific amount of ghee. Day one was one teaspoon of ghee, and it increased by one teaspoon each day until day five, when I used five teaspoons of ghee in the cup of warm milk. The pleasant taste and richness of the drink make it far more palatable than it sounds. I was advised to skip breakfast, which is recommended for kapha in general, and instead have four cups of a specific tea throughout the day. I was given three types of tea made by Dr. Shekhar: a kapha-invigorating blend, a kidney-adrenal blend and a prana blend. I rotate each tea, drinking one type or more each day, for the duration of the spring or until they are finished. In the evening, I took another milk drink, this time with castor oil and the spice blend, between nine and ten o'clock.

Food choices during this cleanse vary. A straight water fast is not recommended for any length of time in Ayurveda. As Dr. Shekhar said "If you are hungry, eat." He recommended a seven day kicharee diet to aid the cleansing process, and to continue with daily massage and hot baths. Instead of sesame oil, I was to use almond or no oil at all.

Dry brush massage is appropriate for kapha. If one does not wish to follow a mono-diet of kicharee, the appropriate diet for one's prakriti should be followed. For me, this means kapha-reducing foods but always cooked, as raw foods are more difficult to digest. A kapha-reducing diet consists of beans and vegetables with select grains, like quinoa, buckwheat and millet, and select fruit, like apples, pears and grapes. Basmati rice is fine for occasional use. All spices are good for kapha, especially dry, warming ones to combat kapha's wet, cool nature. However, with pitta, one has to be careful of too many warming foods.

Dr. Shekhar advised me to continue triphala and trikatu but to stop the blood cleanse. He also provided me with a cooking spice of tumeric, cinnamon, ginger, coriander and black pepper to use in my kicharee. On the sixth day of the cleanse, I took two abhaya pills, an herbal laxative, in addition to the castor oil milk drink at 6 a.m. The sixth day is to be a day of rest at home as the body eliminates the toxins which have transported to the digestive tract. This is virechana or purgation therapy, one of the five panchakarmas. The following morning I was to administer niruha vasti, a medicated herbal enema therapy, to complete the process and then follow the cleanse diet for several days after. My massage was scheduled for late morning on the seventh day.

I began this course of action with complete conviction and commitment. Over the course of the next few days, the simplicity of the system gave way to the inherent disorder of life, and my efforts were thwarted a bit here and postponed there. For example, I frequently fell asleep before taking the evening milk drink. The milk itself, though organic, felt so wrong to me. I continued it for the week, to gauge the results, but

it left me with a heavy feeling, instead of the lightness usually provided by a cleanse. My work schedule interfered with eating regular meals on several days.

I returned to Dr. Shekhar the following week feeling halfway there. He agreed with my perception and said that vata would be eliminated first, then pitta and lastly kapha. When I described my experiences, he felt that I had gotten rid of vata and pitta, but still needed to address the kapha. I was interested in continuing the cleanse, which he supported and gave me more of the virechana and vasti supplies. I also expressed my distaste for milk and was advised to use soy, almond or hemp milk. On this visit I also received several panchakarma preparatory therapies, namely *abhyanga*, massage therapy, and *svedana*, steam therapy.

Abhyanga is also tailored to each individual's needs. For a vata imbalance, a lighter, healing sattvic touch is indicated to pacify vata. Pitta needs a firmer, rhythmic style, a rajasic touch to mobilize the dosha, while kapha receives a deep and intense touch, a tamasic touch to break up stagnation (Atreya 76-78). My massage began with a head and scalp massage using a warm medicated oil. The touch was primarily rajasic, designed to mobilize pitta, with a deep tamasic touch in areas of blockage. It was an invigorating yet relaxing massage, consisting primarily of deep petrissage and vibration, with stripping and direct pressure in areas of greater tension. It was very different than any massage I have received before and used a great deal of warm oil. After the massage, I moved into the steam tent for svedana therapy, which added to the effects of the massage. I noticed a difference in the overall feeling and nature of Ayurvedic massage from Western styles of bodywork. Though difficult to verbalize, my best description of

the Ayurvedic treatment was practical as opposed to the nurturing feel of much of the bodywork which I have experienced. The client's comfort and security was considered within the scope of the task to be accomplished, but it was not a soothing treatment. The closest correlation I can make is to that of sports massage in technique and medical massage in tone. For the remainder of the day, I felt rather foggy, calm and content, though various emotions did surface throughout the day as is common with bodywork of all kinds and highly beneficial.

During the course of this cleanse, I have run an emotional gamut from peaceful observation and contentment to extreme sadness and feelings of hopelessness. Being familiar with detoxification, I recognize these feelings as part of the process, but it always fascinates me how much our selves will hold on to and how powerful our release can be. My skin has gone through several stages as well. I found it fascinating that I had one spot where my skin broke out on my jaw line, exactly where I had a crown put on a broken tooth last year. Red spots continue to surface and disappear around my left eye, which is a site for pitta, and every so often my body will heat up quickly for no apparent reason. While there was no indication of ama before, my tongue now sports a coating which varies from yellow (pitta) to white (kapha). My low back on the left side around the kidney gets continually sore, as it does if I drink too much caffeine, at the site of a hip injury from years ago. When I reported these localized responses, Dr. Shekhar explained that wherever the weak spots are is where ama will be stored and where it will manifest as it releases, as I had learned in my studies as well.

Overall, my experience with my home version of panchakarma has provided an excellent introduction to the powerful nature of this detoxification program. The biggest challenge to me has been moving slowly, allowing the body the time it needs to safely and effectively cleanse. And it is not over yet. As I write this, I am still following the cleansing diet to prepare for another round of virechana and vasti therapies in an attempt to eliminate any residual pitta and excess kapha from my system, and have scheduled a post-treatment massage session as part of the rejuvenation process. As most of the techniques I am using are reduction techniques, the week following the panchakarma is vital to rejuvenate the tissues and the body. As with any detox program, if not careful, one can negate all the benefits. “If you ingest toxic substances or keep toxic thoughts and emotions they now have a direct path to the deeper layers of the body—the site of serious diseases” (Atreya vii). Another challenge has been the limited time in each day to devote to the practices which would greatly amplify the effects, such as yoga, pranayama, meditation and rest. I can appreciate why panchakarma needs to be done as a total vacation from the day-to-day activities of life. For me, my roles as a mother, massage therapist and student, plus the daily stresses of life, feel like an inhibiting factor to a complete detoxification.

I have gained some valuable insights over the course of my panchakarma experience and over the course of this study in general. My awareness of the actuality of my life and the lifestyle of Westerners has deepened immensely. We subject ourselves to massive amounts of physical, mental and emotional stress through our lifestyle choices, and many of us never even realize there are other ways. We don't have the confidence or

self-discipline to move out of the mainstream, even to bring truth and happiness to ourselves and our children. Our self-imposed stress is killing us and robbing us of the opportunity for happy, peaceful and productive lives, which to me is even sadder than the disease we bring upon ourselves. Throughout this study, I have been fully aware, perhaps for the first time, of the immediate effects of stress. Generally, when under duress, I tend to deal with what needs to be dealt with and the effects hit me later. I have noticed a change in my reactions to stress over the past several years, that they are becoming more immediate and harder to control, that they manifest noticeably in my physical body as well as in my emotional self. For some time but especially during this study, I have attempted to observe, to step back for a clearer view. I can now clearly feel the fight or flight reaction, the rise of adrenaline and the engagement of the sympathetic nervous system, the aggravation of vata and pitta in response to stress. While I am getting better at observation, the challenge of reaction still remains. I notice how immediate the effects are of what triggers certain desires and cravings, how my digestion is affected and the havoc that ensues if I ignore the cause.

According to Ayurveda, eighty percent of disease begins with problems in the digestive system (Douillard 75). If we take the signals sent by our digestive system seriously, we can truly make use of preventative measures. Just as pain is the body's way of saying something is wrong, digestive reactions are communicators of the beginnings of disease. For example, every year for the past three years in late winter and early spring, I have had acute inflammation in my wrists. It has been diagnosed as tendonitis and arthritis, and I have addressed it primarily through chiropractics, ice, herbal remedies like

arnica and rest, which meant taking time off from work as performing massage is one of the main aggravators. During this time, I generally can not do any weight-bearing on my hands, as I usually do in my yoga practice or while riding a bicycle, and I lose quite a bit of range of motion and strength. This year it did not happen. It is now the end of March and I have had no sign of this yearly affliction.

Arthritis can be an vata, pitta or kapha affliction, depending on how it presents. Mine was inflammatory, therefore a pitta form of arthritis. According to Ayurvedic theory, whichever dosha is disturbed creates ama, which is carried by vata to the colon and then dispersed into the tissue, manifesting as arthritis (Lad Remedies 129). Using this theory, I can speculate that by the time the change of season arrived, I had already controlled my excess pitta and pacified vata, so this chain reaction did not occur as it had in years past. The same process occurs for other diseases and chronic conditions; it is their manifestations that differ. While I am generally a healthy person, I usually get a cold or stomach flu at least once each winter. This year, neither myself nor my son have had a single illness. At the change of season, I began to feel a little congested and I noticed the same in my son. However, by changing over to a kapha-reducing diet, these symptoms immediately disappeared. Keeping the colon clean and digestion working properly does seem to lie at the root of good health.

Throughout this study, I have found the negative to be far more dramatic than the positive. For example, on the mornings when I practice pranayama, I notice a serenity and an ability to breath more deeply and completely throughout the day. When I practice yoga, which includes ujayii breathing, I feel just as grounded and centered. When I

practice meditation, I can more easily step into the role of the observer and remain calm and centered in the face of daily stressors. If I do these on most days, I not only feel exceptionally good but also like my true self, a subtle effect not always consciously acknowledged. When I do not engage in these sadhanas, just like when I don't eat what is best for me, the effects are dramatic, immediate and undeniable. The healthier and more alive the Self is, the more affected we are by the small disturbances.

My experiences and conclusions from this study serve to validate the theories of Ayurveda for me. But one of the most important lessons learned is that the practice of Ayurveda is a dynamic, lifelong activity and cannot be encapsulated into a specific conclusion or result. Its practice is a constant journey of self-discovery, consisting sometimes of minor tweaks and adjustments, sometimes of major lifestyle changes. As a blueprint for happiness, it demands our full attention to the realities of ourselves and the discipline to observe and honor what we find within. This self-recognition and self-regulation in the current American culture can be challenging and is not the path for everyone. For those willing to honor their limits, to own their strengths and weaknesses and to remain flexible, the practice of Ayurveda offers an opportunity to reach our highest potential in health and happiness. The harmony found by living with nature, following her cycles and honoring the natural law is still accessible, even in our over-indulgent society of consumers and the consumed. "True freedom is the ability to be totally adaptable" (Svoboda Prakriti 4). As is always the case, with freedom comes responsibility. Ayurveda can help direct this self-autonomy in the most beneficial

direction for each individual, while promoting the balance and unity of nature within ourselves and for the benefit of all.

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Interviews

Ed Zadlo Consultation 02/09/10

Dr. Shekhar Consultations 3/16/10, 3/23/10

Annotated Bibliography

Atreya. Secrets of Ayurvedic Massage. Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press, 2000.

Atreya is an Ayurvedic instructor and writer in Europe, where he serves as director of the European Institute of Ayurvedic Studies. In Secrets of Ayurvedic Massage, he presents various techniques of Ayurvedic massage and treatments, including *abhyanga* and *snehana*, both types of massage, and *svedhana*, steam therapy. He presents *marma* points and details techniques and contraindications for their use in treatment as well as the different types of touch. While he does present some base information, the author suggests alternate sources of reading for Ayurvedic foundations. He discusses *panchakarma*, the Ayurvedic method of detoxification, and the role of massage in the process. I found this book to be a good gateway to a deeper understanding of Ayurvedic massage, with comprehensive information and detailed instructions for the therapist who wishes to incorporate Ayurvedic techniques into his or her practice.

Conte, Patrick J. Converging Paths of Ancient Ayurveda and Modern Medicine. East Hanover, NJ: Patrick J. Conte, 2007.

Patrick Conte is an American physician who also trained as an Ayurvedic practitioner. His purpose in writing this book is to explain the practices and theories of Ayurveda in terms of Western medical views, and to detail the common threads between these two types of medicine. Conte describes the basics of Ayurveda in simple and understandable terms while drawing comparisons with applicable Western ideas in anatomy, physiology, pathology and preventative care. He examines standard Western medical treatments such as drug therapy from an Ayurvedic perspective as well as the Western concepts of isolating symptoms and diseases versus the Ayurvedic ideals of whole-self wellness. This book offers an excellent discussion about combining Western and Ayurvedic medicine for optimal health and wellness. I found it to be an interesting and beneficial addition to my study and would recommend it for anyone interested in holistic health.

Douillard, John. Perfect Health For Kids: Ten Ayurvedic Secrets Every Parent Should Know. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2008.

John Douillard is a naturopath and Ayurvedic doctor who has gained experience in a variety of settings, including the Maharishi University and Deepak Chopra's Ayurvedic clinics. He is the father of six children and offers this book as a guide for parents seeking to use preventative care for their children and to better understand and guide their children as they grow. After providing methods of assessing your child's constitution and a brief explanation of some of the basic ideas of Ayurveda, Douillard takes the reader through the stages of childhood and the afflictions—physical, mental and emotional—that affect today's children. He keeps his tone light as he discusses such

subjects as diet, antibiotics, ADD and stress, and offers approaches for dealing with a child's reaction to life's challenges based on individual constitution. I gained much from this book for both my own understanding and my role as a parent. This book is written for a Western audience and does not delve into the practices of Ayurveda in great depth. While some base knowledge of Ayurveda is helpful, it is not necessary to make use of the information presented.

Frawley, David. Yoga and Ayurveda: Self-Healing and Self-Realization. Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press, 1999.

Yoga and Ayurveda takes the reader on a journey through the basic premises of Ayurveda through the lens of yoga. Frawley begins with discussions of the doshas, gunas, five elements and other fundamental aspects of Ayurveda and of various branches of yoga, such as jnana, raja, and bhakti, as well as the eight limbs of raja yoga. After providing this foundational knowledge, he moves forward through numerous aspects of Ayurveda, including prana and agni, the subtle body and energetic anatomy, and the role that various yogic practices play in maintaining harmony. Key attributes to this book are the correlations and distinctions made between Ayurvedic practices and yogic practices, how to engage the more spiritual aspect of yogic lifestyle through the practice of Ayurveda, and how certain ideas are interpreted from a yogic perspective. I found it highly beneficial for this study and for my personal practice of yoga and Ayurveda. By outlining appropriate diet, breathing techniques, meditation and asana practices for each constitution, the reader is able to use the information presented to incorporate yogic and Ayurvedic lifestyle choices and practices. The specific information tailored to individual constitutions allows for a more effective use of these practices, and embodies the nature of Ayurveda as being medicine geared towards the individual. David Frawley is a Doctor of Oriental Medicine, Vedic scholar and Ayurvedic practitioner and educator.

Gerson, Scott. Ayurveda: The Ancient Indian Healing Art. Brewster, NY: NIAM Press, 2001.

Scott Gerson is a medical doctor and Ayurvedic practitioner who serves as the president of the National Institute for Ayurvedic Medicine. His book offers a simple and comprehensive introduction to the study and practice of Ayurveda and is specifically geared for the Western reader. Beginning with an overview of Ayurveda, Gerson provides a brief history of its origins and practice in ancient India and a brief description of the Vedas, the sacred writings from which Ayurvedic teachings came. He discusses basic concepts such as the five elements, determining one's constitution, the pathways and tissues of the body, and the six tastes. He leads the reader through the process of diagnosis and treatment of disease and imbalance, and provides a short discussion of *panchakarma*, the process of total detoxification. This book offers a concise overview of Ayurveda for the beginning student and is written in a manner that is easy to comprehend for Westerners who are unfamiliar with the core differences in perspective between

Western allopathic medicine and Ayurveda. It does not provide information or plans for implementing Ayurvedic practices in one's own life, aside from a strong advocacy for meditation.

Godagama, Shantha. The Handbook of Ayurveda. Rutland, VT: Journey Editions, 1998.

The Handbook of Ayurveda offers an overview of the intricate and ancient healing tradition of Ayurveda. Dr. Godagama is an Ayurvedic practitioner who has studied both Ayurvedic and Western medicine, and practices in London in an integrative clinic. He discusses the many the elements of Ayurveda in his writing, providing a brief summary of the diverse methods of diagnosis and treatment, including diet, exercise, panchakarma, herbs, yoga and pranayama. He provides information on how to incorporate aspects of Ayurveda into one's lifestyle, specifically geared for the Western reader. His explanations are simple and easy to understand, though no one topic is discussed in depth. This book provides a good starting place for the study of Ayurveda by making the reader aware of the basics.

Lad, Vasant. Ayurveda: The Science of Self-Healing. Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press, 1984.

The Science of Self-Healing is provides an excellent overview of Ayurveda. Dr. Lad provides brief but comprehensive information on the fundamentals of Ayurveda, including doshas and prakriti, gunas and dhatus. He discusses the process of disease, diagnosis and treatment in a manner geared toward the Western reader. He also includes information on the six tastes and dietary choices for each prakriti or doshic imbalance. When presenting yoga, Dr. Lad offers specific asanas for each dosha as well as breathing techniques. He also provides brief information on herbs, Ayurvedic astrology, color and gem therapy and metallurgy. I found this book to be very helpful for my study, as the information is presented in a less technical manner than Dr. Lad's textbooks yet is still thorough and practical. I would recommend this book as a resource to any students of Ayurveda and to those wishing to acquire a basic understanding and the beginnings of a working knowledge of Ayurveda.

Lad, Vasant. Textbook of Ayurveda Volume I: Fundamental Principles. Albuquerque, NM: The Ayurvedic Press, 2002.

Vasant Lad is a reknowned and respected Ayurvedic doctor and educator who is one of the primary figures responsible for bringing Ayurveda to the Western world. His Textbook of Ayurveda: Fundamental Principles is the first of two which are part of the curriculum for his Ayurvedic practitioner program at the Ayurvedic Institute in New Mexico. It offers a thorough and technical discourse on the history and foundations of Ayurveda, including its philosophies and practices. Every aspect is addressed in great detail. Lad presents all the base concepts of Ayurveda, including the elements,

constitution, the doshas, dhatus, and the various channels and systems in the body. He utilizes diagrams and tables to illustrate and compare the many and varied characteristics of each dosha, and offers a thorough presentation on digestion and nutrition. I found this book to be extremely informative and am confident it will serve as a valuable reference for years to come.

Lad, Vasant. Textbook of Ayurveda Volume II: A Complete Guide to Clinical Assessment. Albuquerque, NM: The Ayurvedic Press, 2006.

Perhaps of even greater value than his first textbook is Lad's second volume of the Ayurvedic textbook dealing with assessment, the nature of disease and the possible treatments. As can be expected with a textbook, the information is more comprehensive and technical than others I have encountered. Lad details the process of disease, formation of ama, the effects on the dhatus and the manifestations of specific imbalances. The reader is taken step by step through the process of assessment, with many diagrams to clarify. Each dosha's predisposed diseases are examined in detail, as are the channels or srotas through which all movement occurs. While this book presented more information than necessary for a study of this nature, it offered me a far more complete understanding than I could have otherwise attained and exposed me to information not presented elsewhere.

Morningstar, Amanda. Ayurvedic Cooking for Westerners. Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press, 1995.

Ayurvedic Cooking for Westerners provides information and recipes, both Western and Eastern, created from the framework of Ayurvedic dietary principles. The author begins with concise descriptions of the five elements, three doshas and constitutions. She offers more detailed information on the six tastes, including the post-digestive effect, and the three *gunas*, or qualities, and how they relate to food. The rest of the book is devoted to recipes, which are categorized according to the appropriate meal from a Western perspective. Each recipe utilizes simple ingredients, most of which are readily available, and information about each dish's effect on the three doshas. Interspersed throughout these sections are short discourses on various subjects, such as the effects of eating meat, soy products, and healthy mentalities towards food. The author has studied and practiced Ayurveda and Ayurvedic cooking, and offers these recipes for those wishing to incorporate Ayurvedic principles of diet into their lives through mostly familiar foods primarily in American culture. Ayurvedic Cooking for Westerners is a helpful tool in both the information it provides, especially on the tastes and qualities of food, and in the practical application of the recipes.

Svoboda, Robert. Ayurveda for Women. London: David and Charles, 1999.

Ayurveda for Women explores Ayurvedic medicine through the lens of a woman's health and wellness. Svoboda, who I feel is an excellent writer on Ayurveda, is a Westerner who was educated in India and has a talent for bridging the gap between the cultures. In Ayurveda for Women, he offers some base information about the practices of Ayurveda on physical, mental, emotional and spiritual levels, and then applies it to specific concerns for female readers. He discusses the menstrual cycle and how Ayurveda views and treats various disorders, pregnancy, childbirth and children's health, and menopause, among others. He also examines women's roles socially and culturally and how Ayurveda can play a part in good health. I found this book to be extremely useful for both my study and my life as a woman. I truly enjoy Svoboda's writing style and his talent for weaving the spiritual aspects of Ayurveda throughout his writing in valid and moving ways.

Svoboda, Robert. Prakriti: Your Ayurvedic Constitution. Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press, 1988.

Robert Svoboda is an Ayurvedic doctor who was the first Westerner to graduate from an Indian Ayurvedic school. As such, he is able to present traditional Ayurvedic theories and practices in a manner that the Western mind can more easily understand. Svoboda takes the reader through the fundamental concepts of Ayurveda in a manner different from many other authors in that he begins with the individual, the self and its prakriti or constitution, and then elaborates on the practices and philosophies of Ayurveda. His information is comprehensive yet practical for the Western reader. He even describes which vices are the least damaging according to one's constitution, helping to exemplify the realistic nature of Ayurvedic, which can be difficult to envision in our modern lifestyles. The second half of the book is devoted to disease, its causes and cures. Svoboda provides detailed information about specific categories of disease which plague the Western world today and shows how Ayurvedic philosophy describes them and how they can best be prevented or treated through lifestyle choices. I found this book to be of great value, in theory and application. Svoboda is able to strike the balance between making Ayurveda truly accessible to the Western lifestyle without denying the highly spiritual and holistic nature of this system. He does not shy away from any concepts in an effort to "Westernize" his material but, instead, presents Ayurveda in an applicable context for his target audience.

Tarabilda, Edward. Ayurveda Revolutionized: Integrating Ancient and Modern Ayurveda. Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press, 1997.

Ayurveda Revolutionized presents an alternative and unique perspective on the modern practice of Ayurveda, both in India and the West. Tarabilda is a Vedic scholar,

Ayurvedic practitioner and author who studied and taught at the Maharishi University in Iowa and with Vasant Lad at the Ayurvedic Institute. Through his work, studies and personal explorations in meditation he compiled a theory which questions the foundation upon which modern Ayurveda stands, as he states “that the basis of Ayurveda is not rooted in individual constitution, but rather in seven basic disease tendencies” (i). He claims that the pre-Vedic healers used the seven basic diseases, of which all known diseases are symptoms, as the foundation for treatment and that Ayurveda was strongly linked with *Jyoshi*, Vedic Astrology. As the practice of astrology became diluted and weakened, so did Ayurveda, until they became separate entities, rendering each less effective. He argues that this is the main reason why many Ayurvedic treatments are not effective, and that treatment based solely on constitution can exacerbate a disease. He suggests considering both angles, as the title suggests, integrating the two theories for the greatest benefit. Throughout the book, he provides case studies and client feedback to support his argument. I found this book to be a fascinating source of alternate information on Ayurveda, and consider Tarabilda’s thesis to be worthy of further exploration.

Tiwari, Maya. *A Life of Balance*. Rochester, VT: Healing Arts Press, 1995.

A Life of Balance is an excellent handbook for implementing the lifestyle advocated within the practice of Ayurveda. Maya Tiwari began her studies in Oriental Medicine and Naturopathy while battling cancer in her twenties. She successfully healed herself using holistic means and continued her studies to become a Vedic scholar and *Bramacharini*, a Hindu monk. She has studied and lived the practices of Ayurveda to a great depth, and *A Life of Balance* offers her experiences and knowledge to the beginning student. The book begins with a brief history of Ayurveda and background information on the spiritual and energetic roots of its philosophies. Tiwari then guides the reader through explanations of the basic concepts of Ayurveda, including a self-assessment to determine one’s *prakriti*, or constitution. She then provides practical information for each *prakriti*, complete with appropriate food lists and menus, cyclical information for living in harmony with time and with the changing seasons, and utilizing the six tastes. In her discussion of *sadhanas*, or sacred practices, she details the activity involved in cultivation, preparation and consumption of food in harmony with Ayurvedic principles. The last section of the book consists of recipes for traditional Indian foods. I enjoyed Tiwari’s perspective, strongly based in the traditions of the Ayurvedic lifestyle and the spiritual foundation on which these traditions are built, and would recommend this book to students of natural healing and to all who wish to pursue a holistic lifestyle.

Tiwari, Maya. *Secrets of Healing*. Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press, 1995.

In her second book, Tiwari offers in-depth information on the healing practices of Ayurveda and presents her information with strong references to the Vedas. As she takes the reader through the varied processes involved in Ayurvedic diagnosis and treatment of imbalances and illnesses, she builds on the spiritual foundations provided in *A Life of*

Balance and offers not only practical information but also a vibrant discussion of the energetic components of this system of healing. This book details the practice of *panchkarma*, the Ayurvedic system of detoxifying the body, as one would experience in a traditional setting. Some practices are appropriate for self-care; some are meant to be administered only by a trained professional. Detailed descriptions of massage therapy, use and types of oils, emesis, purgation and *pranayama*, or breathwork, are some of the therapies included in Secrets of Healing. I found this book to be extremely helpful, with the practical information I needed to get a firmer grasp on the concepts and practices of Ayurveda to which I had already been exposed. As the information here gets more technical than her previous work, this book is best for students of Ayurveda and those who are ready to embrace the practices with a deeper level of commitment. Though more technical, Secrets of Healing still offers a highly spiritual perspective, with excellent insight by the author.

Warrior, Gopi and Deepika Gunawant. Ayurveda: The Ancient Indian Healing Tradition. Rockport, MA: Element Books, 1997.

Ayurveda: The Ancient Indian Healing Tradition guides the reader through the tenets of Ayurveda with beautiful illustrations, photographs and diagrams. It is written more from the Indian perspective than from a Western one and seems geared to introduce and validate Ayurveda to the Western world. I found information here that was not presented elsewhere, some of which was contradictory to what I had already read but offering a valuable perspective. The book is set up in an aesthetically appealing format and is easy to comprehend. Many elements of Ayurveda are covered, including the history of Ayurveda, foundations of the five elements, Ayurvedic anatomy, diagnosis and treatments. Also covered are various yoga postures, meditation, breathing techniques and detoxification. While the authors do not go into great depth on any one topic, they still give a good overview of the philosophies and practices of Ayurveda and offer thoughtful and practical insight into its application for Western culture. Both authors are experienced Ayurvedic practitioners practicing in Great Britain.

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Interviews

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