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Ayurveda

MANTRA

Spices
In Ayurveda

Agni
The power of
digestion

Understanding the
Ayurveda

Awaken your water

Abhyanga
The Massage Therapy

February - March 2016

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Welcome to the first issue of **Ayurveda Mantra!**

A Message From Editor & Founder;

Dear Reader,

It is with much joy and anticipation that we celebrate the launch of “Ayurveda Mantra” magazine with this inaugural issue. On behalf of the Editorial Team, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to the readership of Ayurveda Mantra. I take this opportunity to thank our authors, editors and anonymous reviewers, all of whom have volunteered to contribute to the success of the magazine. I am also grateful to Dr. Anil Mehta for making Ayurveda Mantra a reality.

It is my expectation this magazine will give our Ayurveda community an academic voice and a venue for discourse that will move us forward clinically and intellectually. Ayurveda Mantra provides an ideal forum for exchange of information on all Ayurvedic topics and more in various formats: case studies / best practice articles written by experts which can help us to meet the health challenges in daily life. I hope you will find Ayurveda Mantra informative and that it will become an essential part of your professional life.

Finally, we wish to encourage more contributions from the Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopath community and other health professionals to ensure a continued success of the magazine. Authors, reviewers and guest editors are always welcomed. We also welcome comments and suggestions that could improve the quality of the magazine.

Thank you for reading this message.

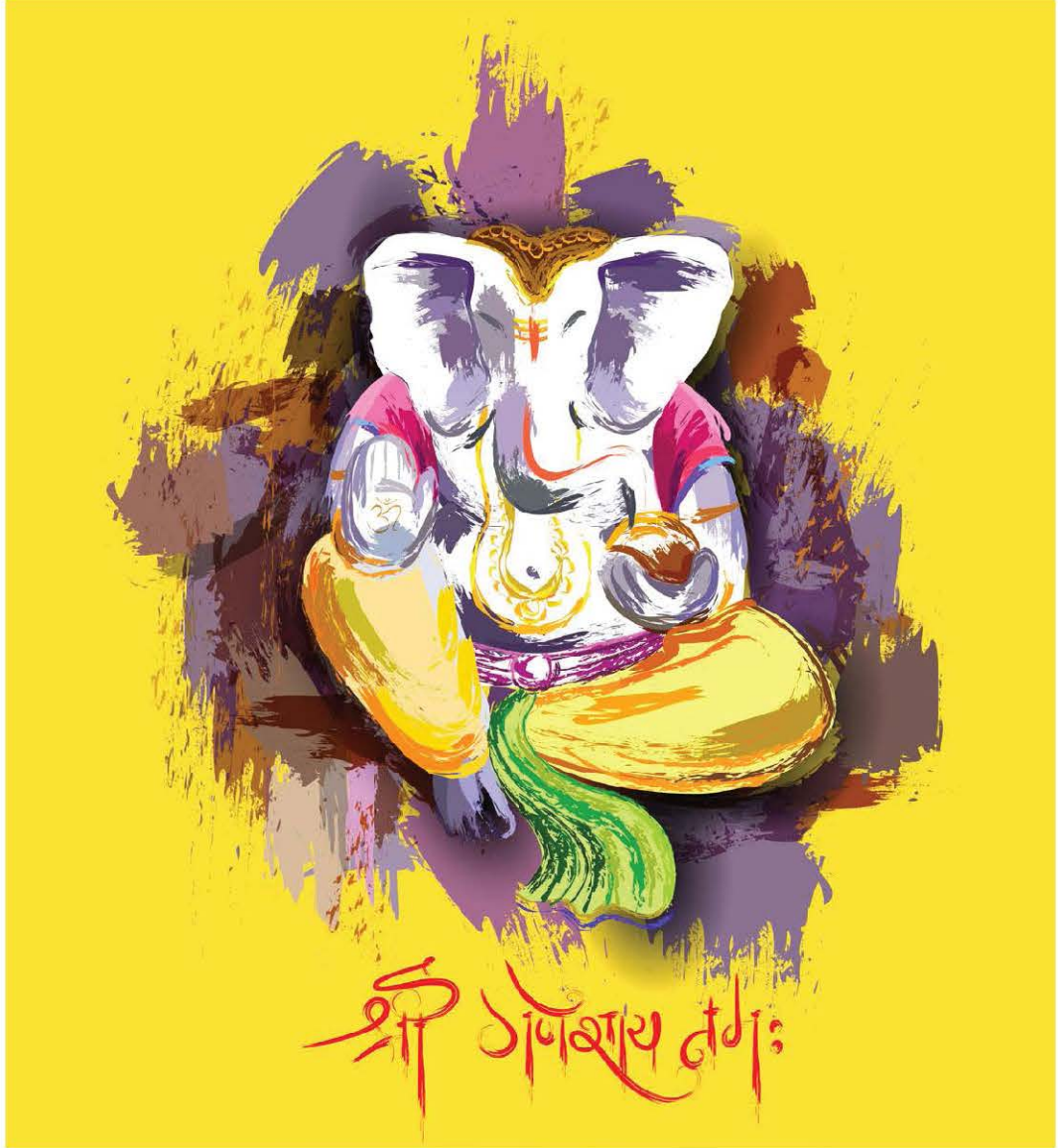
With Love and Gratitude,

Paul Batth

Ayurveda MANTRA

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Understanding Ayurveda

The Original Medicine of India

By Paul Batth



The Divine creation of the eternal macrocosm is the most precious Divine gift and Life is its quintessence. Entire cosmos have originated from the basic substances - The Panchmahabhutas (Sky, Air, Fire, Water and Earth). Ayurveda - The world's oldest science of healing, is the Divine largess to humanity, for health and beauty. Ayurveda is derived from the four principle Vedas: the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and the Atharva Veda. Ayurveda is not an alternative but the original science of healing, known to this world, which originated in the Indian subcontinent about 5,000 years ago. Ayurveda is derived from two words, ayur and veda and Charak Samhita expands upon this definition, telling us that ayu is the "combination of the body, senses, organs, mind and soul", the factors responsible for preventing decay. Ayurveda has both a spiritual and a practical basis, the spiritual perspective engendering the practical aspects. According to Ayurveda, all human beings consist of three aspects - the physical, the subtle and the causal.

The traditional Indian Medicine, Ayurveda was based perfectly on empirical observations and practice rather than philosophy alone. The earliest Indian literature, The Vedas, which date from about 3,000 B.C., contain detailed descriptions of numerous disorders and their treatments. Ayurveda, as Vedic Medicine is known, was based largely on Herbal treatment, although early Vedic Physicians also used various surgical techniques and invented artificial limbs and eyes. The Vedic era ended in about 800 B.C., but the medical traditions of Ayurveda survived and were further developed under Brahmins, the so called caste of wise-men in India. As a result, by 500 A.D., the Indian Medicine had become a scientifically based perfected system of treatment.

Charak Samhita (An ancient Ayurvedic text narrated by Lord Agnivesh), signifies "Only that, which can bring about a cure, is a true medicine and only that who can relieve his patients of their ailments is the true physician" (Sutrasthanam, Chapter I, Verse 134). Even an acute poison can become an excellent drug if it is properly processed and administered and on the other hand, even the most outstanding drug, if not properly processed and administered, becomes an acute poison. Ayurveda provides a complete description of Life, Age, Health and the ways of the human body's optimum functioning. The vedic science of Ayurveda that deals with the principles and practices of the ways of the healthy and happy living, claims Prakriti (The nature) and Purusha (The man) as the root factors behind the creation of the world. Man is considered as a boon of nature, the supreme, who in himself bears all the characteristics of his originator and the ability to procreate. Ayurveda may be regarded as an allegory of health and the most important and remarkable accomplishment of the Indian Heritage. Ayurveda as a thesaurus of health, provides basic intellectual elements and principles of medicine. The traditional medicines used in Ayurveda are of herbal, mineral and animal origin whose efficacy has already been proven scientifically now. The "Perfect Health Philosophy" of Ayurveda believes and proposes that he who is in the habit of taking balanced and suitable food comprising of all essential nutritional elements, leads a perfect and happy life. The entire system of Ayurvedic treatment is based on correcting and balancing of Tridoshas (The three humors or the blemishes or the metabolic components of the body), Sapta-Dhatus (The seven physical elements of the body or the vital components) and Malas (The end product of elimination or the bodily excreta's), which when get excited or vitiated, due to exogenous or endogenous causes including deficiency of nutritional ingredients, result in the impairment of body functions or disease. It may be trite but certainly a true remark that "we start dying the day we are born". The decay and degeneration, causing discomfort, disorder, disease or debility and ultimately culminating in death of the organism, are a part and parcel of our biological being.

HEALTH AND AYURVEDA at its simplest; HEALTH is the absence of physical and mental diseases. W.H.O. makes the description wider by adding that "All people should have the opportunity to fulfil their genetic potential". This includes the ability to grow and develop physically and mentally without the impediments of inadequate nutrition or environment contamination, and to be protected as much as possible against infectious diseases. Ayurveda had made this concept of Health even wider (centuries ago) by describing Health as the perfect state of well-being of the organism when it functions optimally without evidence of disease or abnormality beside the balance of Physical, Physiological, Psychological, Sentimental and Spiritual functioning of the living body.

According to Ayurveda, Debility can be described as generalized weakness and lack of energy, vigor or strength, which may be caused by various Physical or Physiological disorders. And when associated with Psychological, Sentimental or Spiritual-disorders, it also represents a lack of desire or ambition and loss of power or sensation along with non-specific symptoms like fatigability, insomnia, drowsiness, lethargy, unwanted anxiety, loss of appetite, lack of interest in personal or family matters, etc. All the cheerful pleasures of nature's priceless gift of Human life are solely dependent on the perfect state of Health. And in today's scientific and mechanical era of Space-age, the load of work and problems is increasing every moment which is becoming burdensome day by day, leading ultimately towards a dull life associated with unwanted debilities. According to a Fundamental concept of Ayurveda, a perfectly balanced diet containing all essential nutrients plays a vital role in maintaining a perfect state of Health. The basis of a good diet is variety because none of a single food contains all nutrients essential for Health. Ayurveda has stored in its vast treasure, a wide range of herbal formulations to supplement the nutritional deficiencies for maintaining a perfect state of health & to fulfill the desires of Longevity.

Ayurveda clearly stresses upon the need and suggests numerous valuable therapies and remedies for rejuvenation and virility to attain a perfect state of Health essential for Longevity.

The W.H.O. objective HEALTH FOR ALL has been the basic concept of Ayurveda ever since the day of its inception that refers to treat and cure the ailing, restore health and take all measures to retain the Health of human beings. In addition, "Ayurveda aims at not only curing the disease but also enhancing the body vitality to combat the disease and minimize the chances of relapse. Ayurveda epitomizes the philosophy of total health care..." (Traditional Medicine and Health Care Coverage- a W.H.O. publication, Geneva, Switzerland, 1983 p. 52). Interestingly, without forgetting the principles of nature and theories of natural constitution, Ayurveda suggests innumerable recipes to supplement the body with such essential nutritional ingredients available from nature's own resources for the cure of or protection from disease. The basic motive of Ayurveda is to treat and cure the ailing and suffering, and maintain the health of human beings, ever since the day of its inception. Treating with Ayurveda means worshipping nature.



*By Paul Batth
Editor & Founder
Ayurveda Mantra*

AyuMantra

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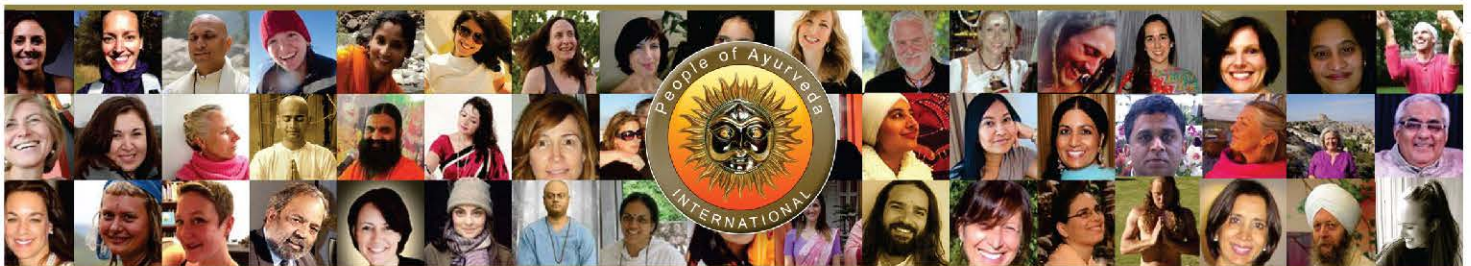
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5 Ayurvedic Rituals for the Whole Family

BY MEENAKSHI GUPTA

A ritual is a stable and balanced regularity whether it is executed daily or once-in-a lifetime; it is grounding and rooted. A ritual, no matter how simple or composite, is a time to unite with prodigious consciousness and the senses. The experiences are meant to be pure, or sattvic. Stability and purity are two qualities that can invite all type of body type of all ages into a state of healing. According to Ayurveda Sarvam dravyam Panchabhautikam, all creation arises out of five great elements known as mahabhutas. Our body is also formed by the panha mahabhutas. Ayurveda's wisdom is simple: Stay aligned with nature—your own true nature—and you will experience greater health and happiness. To keep these five elements balanced, these five simple activities can become daily rituals for your own healing and sanity, and can be easily made into a family ritual.

*annam brahma raso Vishnu
pakto devo maheshvarah
evam jñaktva tu yo bhunkte
anna dosho na lipyate*

EARTH: START YOUR DAY WITH A PRAYER BEFORE LEAVING THE BED

Thank you God for this beautiful day before me. May joy, love, peace and compassion be part of my life and all those around me on this day. I am healing and I am healed. O! Mother Earth, who has the ocean as clothes and mountains and forests on her body, who is the wife of Lord Vishnu, I bow to you. Please forgive me for touching you with my feet. After this prayer touch the ground with your right hand, then the same hand to the forehead, with great love and respect to Mother Earth.

WATER: AWAKEN YOUR DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

Drinking a cup of warm water first thing in the morning is great for improving digestion. The warm water serves to stimulate the gastrointestinal tract and peristalsis—the waves of muscle contractions within the intestinal walls that maintains bodily flow.

FIRE: SAY A PRAYER BEFORE MEALS

The fire element is representative of agni, which helps us digest our food and transform all of our life experiences into memory. Ayurveda suggests eating meals with full attention on your food for optimal digestion. The first step is to turn off or turn away all electronic devices while eating and say a prayer before meals to awaken our digestive fire.



AIR: WAKE UP DURING BRAHMAMUHURTA AND GO FOR A DAILY WALK

Brahmamuhurta or amritvela—the ambrosial hours—also known as God’s Hours is the one-and-a-half-hour period before sunrise. After a good night’s sleep, the mind is refreshed, calm and serene. At this time, there is a preponderance of sattva or purity in the mind as well as in the atmosphere. Sleeping later than 6:00 a.m. causes the channels of communication to be clogged with impurities, leading to depressed moods and slow communication between the heart, soul & mind. Making this a daily ritual can bring about great changes in your mood and even your biorhythms. The fresh air will fill your body with prana and help you connect with your inner self.

ETHER: SING

Ether creates the space for the other elements to fill. The mind is composed of ether. While the mind becomes easily disturbed, ether represents the substratum upon which thoughts and emotions ride like waves upon the ocean. The sattvic or undisturbed mind is the essence of ether. Whether it’s chanting OM alone in a morning practice, your favorite chant, or Meditation, it keeps the ether element in a balanced state, boosting our mood and energy.

Ah, how important it is to keep all special rituals going to check in with our souls, and make sure we are on the right track to leading the life we want.

Author - Meenakshi is an accomplished ayurvedic practitioner, with a degree in Masters of Ayurveda. She was classically trained in India and has been practicing and teaching ayurveda worldwide since 1998. She has natural flair for a life devoted to the study and practice of ancient Indian science. She knows first-hand what a difference it can make on one’s wellness by simply understanding an individual’s unique body type and making small simple changes to one’s diet and lifestyle. Her specialties are wellness counseling, lifestyle management, and Panchakarma therapies (natural detox & rejuvenation). She may be reached at ayurroots@gmail.com

*The creative energy in the food is Brahma.
The nourishing energy in the body is Vishnu.
The transformation of food into pure
Consciousness is Shiva.
If you know this, then any impurities in the
food you eat will never become part of you.*

Agni: (fire)

The Power of Digestion



"If the doors of perception were cleansed, Everything would appear to man as it is: infinite" -William Blake

Before you start reading this article, ask yourself "what image does the word fire conjure in my mind?" I have asked this question to many people and some of the responses were...

** A burning forest, * Fire enlightened on a stove, * A firefighter in action, * An erupting volcano*

While all of these are perfectly valid answers, my purpose in asking this question was to show you how differently a Vaidya (Ayurveda Doctor) looks at an element of nature. For a Vaidya, fire is a light in your eye, fire in the belly is more than just a metaphor, fire is the heat in your body and creative energy in your brain!

In Bhagvad Gita, Lord Krishna says...

*"Aham vaisvanaro bhutva
praninam deham asritah
Pranapana-samayuktah
pacamy Annam catur-vidham"*

"I am the fire of digestion in the bodies of all living entities, and I with the help of prana & apan, digest the four kinds of foodstuff" which is Bhaksya, Bhojya, Lehya, and Choshya.

Agni, according to Ayurveda, is an important concept for any physician who practices Ayurveda. Agni is the dragon of the digestive system for every creature. Agni is digestive fire, source of life, a sign of life and a presence of unseen energy. Constitutional fire is responsible for digestion. It is the availability of fire that determines the production of gastric juices: hydrochloric acid, bile, enzymes; in short, the caustic chemicals that are required for the breakdown of food and its conversion into micronutrients that can be assimilated by the body and bulk matter that needs to be eliminated.

When Agni is strong, food is digested properly and you feel harmonious inside out. But whenever this fire is weak, there is not enough digestive power to metabolize food and toxins of various kinds, largely from undigested food particles called ama in Ayurveda which accumulate and breed disease.

Ayurveda views the health of the body as the functioning of a biological fire-governed metabolism. If this essential part is functioning effectively, the whole body will be nourished, full of life and vibrancy.

Certain herbs such as ginger, cayenne, and most carminatives (cooking spices) have a medicinal value to keep your Agni lit. I recommend taking these herbs as teas, they may help enkindle Agni which will burn away toxins. Herbs which are pungent and bitter in taste decrease ama (undigested food).

Here are some recommended herbs for your agni: Aloe Vera, black pepper, cardamom, cayenne pepper, cinnamon, fennel seeds and ginger root.

As long as Agni is functioning correctly, the process of breaking down food, absorbing and assimilating it into the body will work effortlessly. An individual with a healthy and active Agni will result in a healthy and vibrant body. Longevity depends upon Agni.

Agni Tea Recipe (Recipe Source: Dr. Vasant Lad)

Ingredients:

- 1 quart Water
- 1 pinch Cayenne
- 2 handfuls Minced ginger root
- 2 tbsp. Sucanat or other sweetener
- 1 to 2 tsp. Rock salt

Preparation:

Bring all of the above ingredients to a boil. Boil for 20 minutes.

Take the pot off the burner and cool for a few minutes

Add the juice of 1/2 lime. Do not boil the lime juice.

Pour into a thermos and enjoy throughout the day!

Agni Tea is a simple beverage that helps to regulate and stimulate your digestive capacity, improving all the functions of digestive Agni.

Ayurveda spells health as "b-a-l-a-n-c-e". Keep your Agni balanced and you will enjoy your life to the fullest! Use your fire energy to know yourself better. A doctor knows the human body, but they can never know your body better than you! Here, I would like to summarize with Rigveda Mantra. Recite the "Agni mantra" to improve dissimulation in your body, maintain proper functioning of all organs and for overall vitality:

*"Om Vaisvanaraya Vidhmahe Lalelaya Dhimahi Tanno
Agni Pracodayat"*

*May we realize the Vaiswanar –the fire God! Let us
meditate on that seven tonged mystic fire.*

May Agni –the fire- God illuminate us!

Hari Om tat sat!

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Let's Awaken Our Water

BY MEENAKSHI GUPTA

During my childhood days I remember my grandmother storing water in a copper vessel overnight and asking us to drink from it first thing in the morning. She claimed that the water stored in a copper vessel was healthy for the mind and body. Now when I see these ancient customs reemerging and my own findings with the healing ideologies of Ayurveda, I look back and think that I should have taken my grandmother's advice more seriously. Copper is considered an essential mineral for our body. Ayurveda recommends storing water overnight in a copper jug and drinking it in the morning to maintain good health. The water stored in such a manner is called 'Tamra Jal' and helps to balance all the three doshas (body humors- Kapha, Vata and Pitta). Doshas is a Sanskrit word meaning 'mind-body constitution' and all three doshas are present in every cell, tissue, and organ – for movement, metabolism, and fluidity – they are essential components of our life.

Copper has electromagnetic energy which is called Prana Shakti. Drinking water that is stored for 8-10 hours in a copper vessel is very much beneficial for a body to stay healthy. Copper makes the water ionic which helps to maintain the body's pH (acid-alkaline) balance.

• **Copper's Antimicrobial**

Power: According to a 2012 study published in the Journal of Health, Population, and Nutrition, storing bacterially contaminated water in copper for up to 16 hours at room temperature considerably reduces the presence of the harmful microbes so much that the researchers inferred that "copper holds promise as a point-of-use solution for microbial purification of drinking-water".

• An additional study from the University of South Carolina had researchers explore the purifying power of copper, and found that "Antimicrobial copper surfaces in intensive care units (ICU) kill 97% of bacteria that can cause hospital-acquired infections," resulting in "a 40% reduction in the risk of acquiring an infection". The research was done in a hospital ICU. The research found that the rooms with copper-surfaced objects had less than half the infection incidence than those rooms without copper. Infection rates for MRSA and VRE were also significantly lower in the copper-containing rooms as compared to rooms without copper.

• **Brain Stimulant:** Our brain works by transmitting impulses (or orders) from one neuron to

another through an area known as the synapses. These neurons are covered by a sheath called the myelin sheath that acts as a conductive agent – helping the flow of impulses. How does copper figure here you ask? Well, copper actually helps in the synthesis of phospholipids that are essential for the formation of these myelin sheaths. Thereby, making your brain work much faster and more efficiently. Apart from that, copper is also known to have anti-convulsive properties (prevents seizures).

• **Aids In Weight Loss:** If diet just doesn't seem to be helping you lose weight, try drinking water stored in a copper vessel on a regular basis. Apart from fine tuning your digestive system to perform better, copper also helps your body break down fats and eliminate it more efficiently.

• **Slows Down Ageing:** If you are worried about the appearance of fine lines, copper is your natural remedy. Packed with strong antioxidants and cell forming properties, copper fights off free radicals – one of the main reasons for the formation of fine lines. It also helps in the production of new and healthy skin cells that replace old dying ones.

- Copper has anti-inflammatory properties and helps in arthritis and other inflammatory pains. This asset is especially great to relieve aches and pains caused due to inflamed joints. In addition to that, copper also has bone and immune system strengthening properties, making it the perfect remedy for arthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

- **Can Fight Off Cancer:**

Cancers can be debilitating for both the patient and their family. How does copper help? Well, copper has

very strong antioxidant properties that helps fight off free radicals and negate their ill effects – one of the main reasons for the development of cancer. According to the American Cancer Society the exact mechanism of how copper helps prevent the onset of cancer is still not known but some studies have shown that copper complexes have a considerable anti-cancer effect.

Keeping A Copper Vessel

Copper oxidizes naturally and needs to be cleaned at regular intervals. Traditional methods of cleaning copper include rubbing the copper with a mixture of salt and tamarind paste or fresh lemon juice. If not lime, try salt or baking soda and vinegar to clean it. Allow your water to remain in the jug overnight or at least 8 hours for best effects. In the morning, enjoy a daily dosage of energized water.

No wonder our ancestors had copper vessels to hold their drinking water. Would you presume their lives were longer and healthier as opposed to the modern aqua-filtered counterparts? A debate may be on, but again, copper water is definitely good for us.

Author - Meenakshi is an accomplished Ayurveda practitioner, with a degree in Masters of Ayurveda. She is classically trained in India and has been practicing and teaching Ayurveda worldwide since 1998. She has a natural flair for a life devoted to the study and practice of ancient Indian science. She knows first-hand what a difference it can make on one's wellness by simply understanding an individual's unique body type and making small simple changes to one's diet and lifestyle. Her specialties are wellness counseling, lifestyle management, and Panchakarma therapies (natural detox & rejuvenation). She can be reached at ayurroots@gmail.com



A woman with long dark hair is lying down, her head tilted back, eyes closed, and mouth slightly open. Above her head is a large, ornate brass pot with a pattern of small star-shaped cutouts. The pot is suspended by a thin rod. The background is a soft, warm, golden-brown color, suggesting a spa or massage setting. The lighting is warm and focused on the woman's face and the pot.

Abhyanga

Ayurvedic Massage Therapy

*Professor Ish Sharma.
MD, PhD Ayurveda.*

Ayurveda believes in prevention being better than the cure of diseases. The ideal lifestyle mentioned under ideal daily routine /Dincharya stresses upon Abhyanga, along with other preventive components.

Massage consists of different types of touch and pressure techniques and can bring about dramatic changes in the health of the body and mind. Ayurvedic massage is an ancient Indian art, which has adapted these techniques for healing, relaxation and treating ailments.

HISTORY

Massage is the oldest healing system. The history of massage dates back several centuries and has been practiced in all ancient cultures among the Indian, Chinese, Greek, and Roman. The use of Massage for the purpose of healing had great importance in ancient cultures as it was one of the few treatments available. This therapy is described in the ancient Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata as a means of ensuring good health. The Kamasutra mentions massage among other foreplay practices for enhancing vitality and sexual attraction between partners.

AYURVEDIC MASSAGE METHODS

Ayurvedic massage has always been an important part of overall Ayurvedic treatment. The aim of Ayurvedic massage is to prevent / excrete build up of toxic substances and restore the balance of energies Vata, Pitta & Kapha inside the body. In order to achieve this, Ayurvedic massage uses various medicated oils and powdered herbs. The use of these substances varies according to:

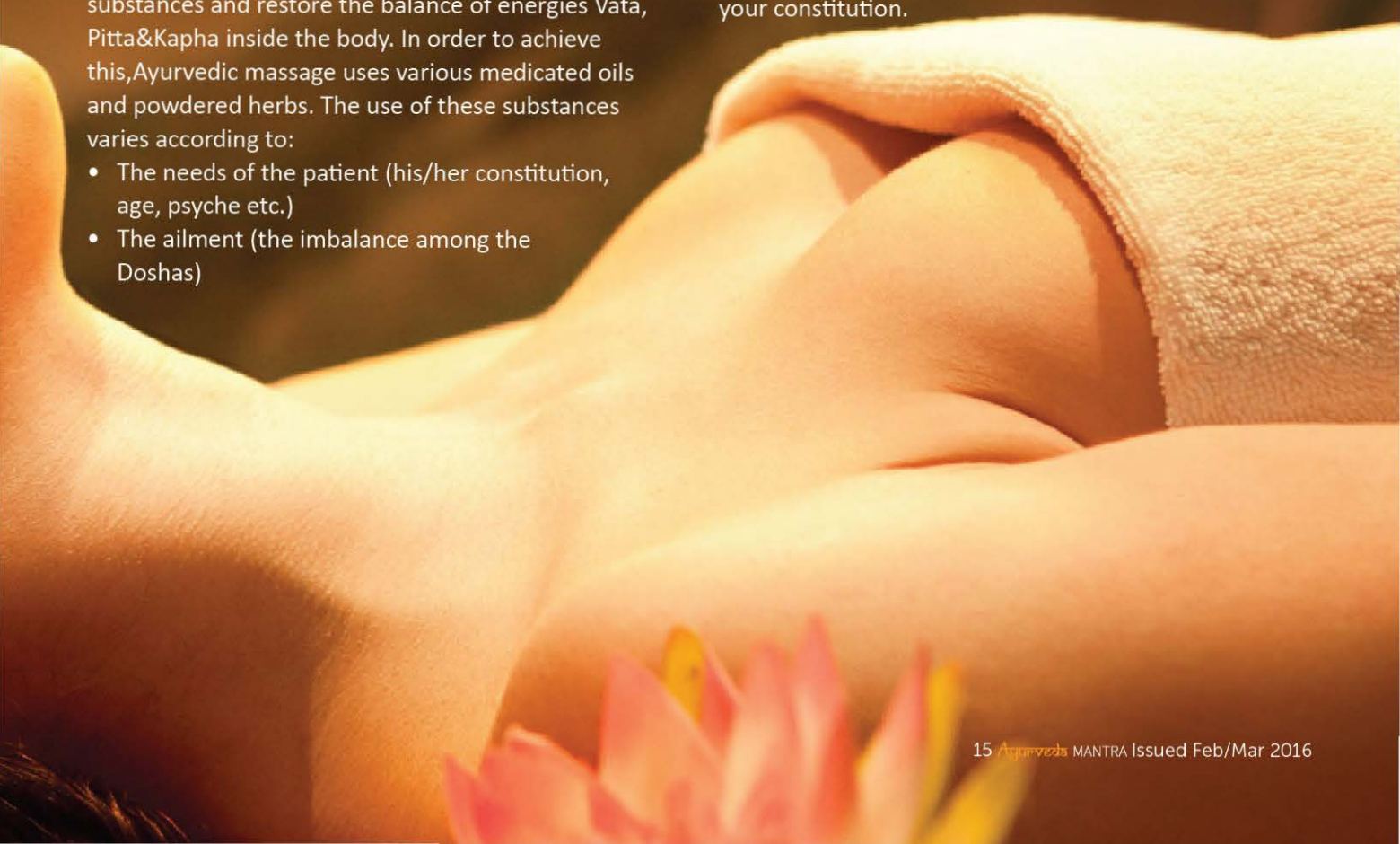
- The needs of the patient (his/her constitution, age, psyche etc.)
- The ailment (the imbalance among the Doshas)

REQUIREMENTS

- A Massage should be done when the stomach is empty. It should never be given immediately after a meal.
- The massage room should be warm and relaxing to control Vata.
- Massage can be done either on the massage table, which is about the height of one's waist, or it can be on the floor.
- The table should be properly covered with clean cloth, so that the patient is mentally comfortable during the massage. For other procedures like head massage and oil drip on the head, a special type of table should be used which facilitates recovery of the massage oil from the body of the patient.
- The masseur should be healthy. He should not be suffering from any contagious skin disease and should have short and well-manicured nails so they will not harm the patient.
- The oil to be used for massage should be warm; aroma can be added.

MASSAGE & THE BODY CONSTITUTION

There are three Doshas which define the constitution: Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. We are made up of a combination of these Doshas, a balance in the three means good health. If they are out of balance they can be brought back into our individual natural balance, completely or partially through massage specific to your constitution.





MASSAGE FOR PEOPLE WITH A VATA CONSTITUTION

People belonging to Vata constitution are dry and unstable by nature. Hence, oily massage should be given in the morning or before a warm bath in the evening. This kind of oil massage lubricates dry skin and protects the joints.

Vata people are very sensitive to touch so warm oil should be used. Sesame oil is best for alleviation of dryness, coldness, stiffness and pain. Important medicated oils are Dashamula oil, Mahanarayana oil, Vishagarbha oil etc. A physician should be consulted for best results.

Generally, for people of Vata constitution, herbs / oils that have a 'hot potency' such as ginger, basil, camphor, jatamansi and eucalyptus are used.

MASSAGE FOR PEOPLE WITH A PITTA CONSTITUTION

The people of Pitta constitution have a rapid metabolism and tendency for fever and inflammatory diseases. Their skin is sensitive and easily gets rashes or gets inflamed. For Pitta constitution, cooling massage oil should be used. Coconut and sandalwood oil is most suitable for such people. Both these oils calm the mind and cool the body. Sunflower oil is useful for inflamed skin. Medicated oils can also be used. Essential oils include lemongrass, lavender, jasmine and sandalwood, which have cooling effects.

MASSAGE FOR PEOPLE WITH A KAPHA CONSTITUTION

These people have thick and oily skin. They need massage to improve their circulation and lymph drainage. As far as possible, oil should not be used for persons with this constitution. For the best massage, powdered herbs should be used. These are dry and have hot potency. A small amount of oil can also be used. These oils should have hot potency like mustard oil or sesame oil. The massage should be vigorous and deep. For people of the Kapha constitution, the essential oils for massage are basil, ginger, clove, and eucalyptus.

BENEFITS

The additional release of Endorphin Hormones from the hypothalamus gland is responsible for most physical & psychological benefits of massage. Massage therapy improves functioning of the circulatory, lymphatic, muscular, skeletal, and nervous systems and may improve the rate at which the body recovers from injury and illness. Massage involves holding, causing movement of soft tissue, and/or applying pressure to the body. Below are the benefits of various massage:

- Nourishes the Body - The massage increases the muscle tone and improves stamina, vitality, and virility. It also helps activate digestion and the elimination of the body's waste like sweat, urine, stool etc.
- Promotes Longevity - The function of vital organs and tissues as well as the life span can be enhanced.
- Induces Proper Sleep- Physical and mental well-being, nourishment, strength, sexual ability, capacity to perceive knowledge which depends upon proper sleep. Massage is a powerful agent, which induces sound sleep.
- Increases Strength of the Skin- The massage increases the resisting power against physical and mental pressure, stress and strain, agonies, sorrows and anxiety. Improves general tolerance & patience.
- Overcomes fatigue – Fatigue due to routine work, mental stress and strain can be corrected by regular massage.



PHYSICAL BENEFITS

- Helps relieve muscle tension and stiffness as it removes accumulated Lactic Acid- reduces fatigue.
- Fosters faster healing of strained muscles and sprained ligaments; reduces pain and swelling; reduces formation of excessive scar tissue.
- Reduces muscle spasms.
- Provides greater joint flexibility and range of motion.
- Enhances athletic performance.
- Promotes deeper and easier breathing.



MEDICAL INDICATIONS

People find that therapeutic massage can help with a wide range of medical conditions, including:

- Chronic pains
- Circulatory problems
- Depression
- Headache
- Insomnia
- Anxiety and stress
- Arthritis
- Asthma and bronchitis
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Frozen Shoulder
- Sinusitis
- Sports injuries

Massage therapy can stimulate weak, inactive muscles and, thus, partially compensate for the lack of exercise and inactivity resulting from illness or injury. It also can hasten and lead to a more complete recovery from exercise or injury.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Therapeutic massage may not be recommended in some cases, such as in people with:

- Acute fevers
- Conditions with Amatoxins & anorexia
- Acute Inflammation
- Infectious diseases
- Certain forms of cancer
- Certain skin conditions
- Certain cardiac problems
- Diabetes – only dry massages

If you have one of these or some other diagnosed medical condition, always check with your doctor before seeking a massage.

- Improves circulation of blood and movement of lymph fluids.
- Reduces blood pressure.
- Helps relieve tension-related headaches.
- Effects of eye-strain.
- Enhances the health and nourishment of skin.
- Improves posture.
- Increases production of WBC – better immunity.
- Stimulates production of Synovial fluid.
- Assists in venous flow to heart, decreases load.

MENTAL BENEFITS

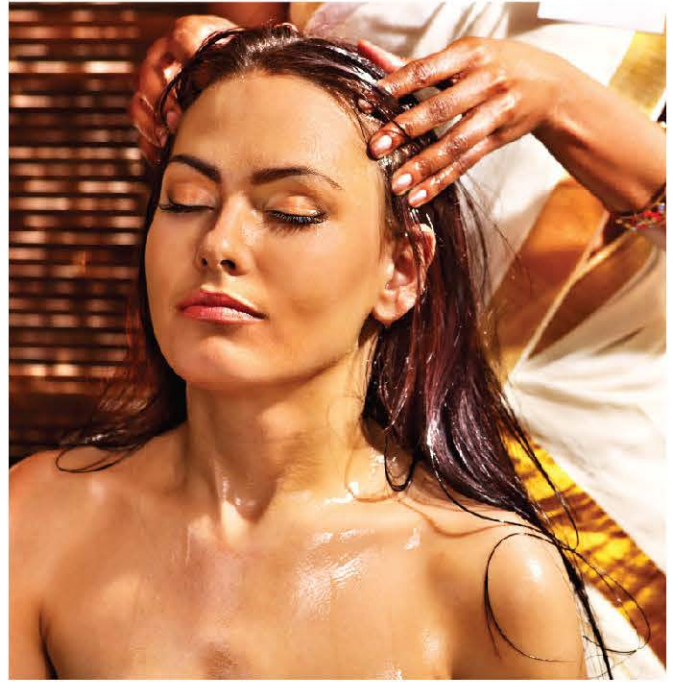
- Helps relieve mental stress.
- Improves ability to monitor stress signals and respond appropriately.
- Enhances capacity for calm thinking and creativity.
- Satisfies needs for caring, nurturing touch.
- Generates a feeling of well-being.
- Reduces levels of anxiety.
- Increases awareness of mind-body connection.



RESEARCH

Research on the effects of massage therapy has been ongoing for over 120 years. A surge in research over the past 20 years has resulted in more than 2,500 published studies. Among research findings, the important ones are:

- Massage increases activity level of the body's natural "killer cells", boosting the immune system.
- Office workers massaged regularly were more alert, performed better and were less stressed than those who weren't massaged.
- Massage therapy decreased the effects of anxiety, tension, depression, pain, and itching in burn patients.



We notice that Abhyanga Massage is a very useful, non invasive, humane & personal approach to health and assists natural healing capacities. One can easily adapt this as a lifestyle practice on a weekly basis or a brief massage just before a shower & derive all the aforesaid benefits.



AUTHOR

Professor Ish Sharma. MD, PhD Ayurveda.

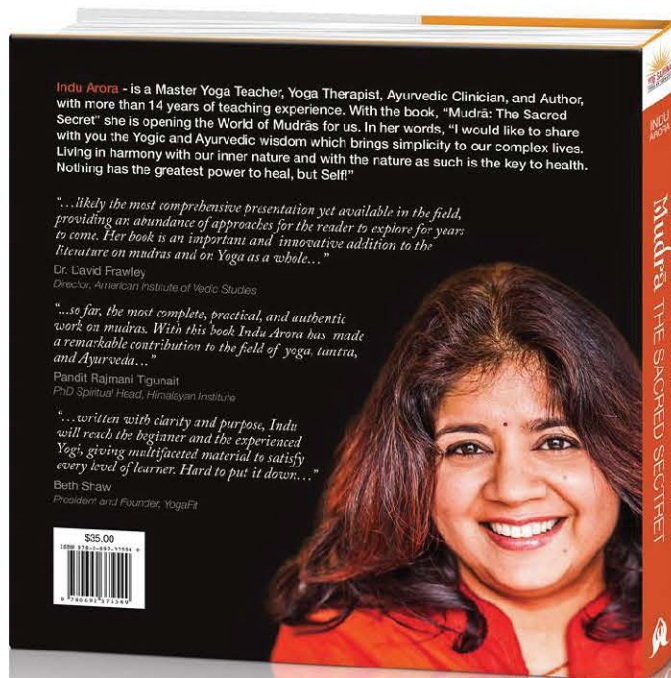
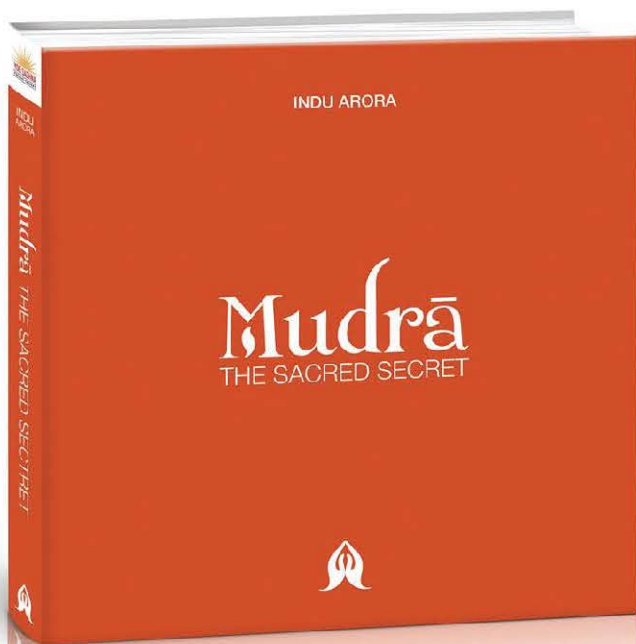
Dr. Ish Sharma did masters and Doctorate in Ayurveda from the reputed National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur and is currently working as the professor, department of RogaNidana, Babe ke Ayurveda college, Moga, India. He is a Panchakarma expert and Ayurveda physician and speaker of international repute.

- Abdominal surgery patients recovered more quickly after massage.
- Premature infants who were massaged gained more weight and fared better than those who weren't.
- Autistic children showed less erratic behavior after massage therapy.
- Helps fast weight gain for pre term infants.



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The Mudra of Creation and Annihilation of Space Ether – Akasha Mudra

BY INDU ARORA

Akasa is the “spaceelement” and Vardhaka means “to increase.” This Mudra is commonly known as AkasaMudra, it is also called AkasaVardhaka Mudra in Ayurveda. It is an Asamyukta (single hand) Mudra. It belongs to the Yoga Tattva Mudra Vijnana and Yogic tradition.

Among the five elements, it is Akasha which is all pervasive and indestructible. This element brings us the awareness of everything and nothing at the same time. The root of the word “sukha” and “Dukha” is alsoakasha. “Kha” means space and “Sukha” here means a pleasant space whereas “Dukha” means an unpleasant, undesirable space. With this Mudra we invite the pleasantness of space within us and around us.

FORMATION

Join the tip of the middle finger with the tip of the thumb, keeping the rest of the three fingers (little, ring, and index) straight. The best time for practicing this Mudra is in the morning, by sitting in either Sukhasana or Padmasana.

BENEFITS

1. As the name suggests, this Mudra is a combination of ether element (middle finger) with the sun (thumb) and thus come the powers to heal any ailment pertaining to sound. It is excellent to increase the sensitivity to hear sounds. It is a boon in combination with Sunya Mudra for those hard of hearing.
2. This Mudra activates the calcium and phosphorus absorption into the bones, so it is helpful in cases of weak bones, like osteoporosis and osteopenia.
3. Due to its inherent quality of releasing tensions and keeping the mind calm and serene, this Mudra is practiced during meditation. It is also a great Mudra for an anxious and ever-processing mind.
4. It is a first aid in case of dizziness.
5. This Mudra is successful in taking care of the “lockjaw” experienced at times during yawning, or during mental tension or over-exertion.

PRACTICE

Hold this Mudra in one or both hands, 3 times a day for 5 minutes in each practice cycle.

Keep the palms facing up and hand comfortably resting on the knees. Practice in cross legged seated position or seated on a chair. Observe the changes in body temperature, breath pattern, taste in mouth, bodily sensations and shift in the state of mind.



From the book, “Mudra: The Sacred Secret” by Indu Arora ©2015 Reprinted with permission of Yogsadhna LLC. Order the book from

https://www.yogsadhna.com/shop/details/mudra:_the_sacred_secret

Indu Arora is Ayurveda-Yoga Therapist and Master Teacher. She is the author of “Yoga-Ancient Heritage Tomorrows Vision” and “Mudra-The Sacred Secret”. She is the recipient of “Ayurveda Yoga Gem”, “Ray of Hope”, “Jewel of India”, “Jewel of Yoga” and “Sage” award for her contribution to Yoga and Ayurveda. Her philosophy is “Nothing has the greatest power to heal, but Self”. www.yogsadhna.com

A white ceramic cup filled with a golden-brown ginger tea, garnished with a slice of lemon. The cup sits on a white saucer. In the background, there are pieces of ginger root and fresh green mint leaves. In the foreground, there is a piece of honeycomb and more ginger slices.

Herb of the month: GINGER

A Universal Medicine

By JaideepNagrath

Ginger extracts have been extensively studied for a broad range of biological activities including antibacterial, anticonvulsant, analgesic, antiulcer, gastric antisecretory, antitumor, antifungal, antispasmodic, antiallergenic, and other activities. Gingerols have been shown to be inhibitors of prostaglandin biosynthesis. Scientific studies show that gingerol, one of the primary pungent principles of ginger, helps counter liver toxicity by increasing bile secretion. Ginger has potent anti-microbial and anti-oxidant (food preservative) qualities. A recent study, furthering ginger's reputation as a stomachic, shows that acetone and methanol extracts of ginger strongly inhibits gastric ulceration.

In traditional medicine, removing toxin is one of the major uses for ginger. It is given as an antidote to poisoning from food, from drugs and from other herbs. This was recognized by physicians and herbalists in the West, too. Peter Holmes reminds us of this in his classic text, *The Energetic of Western Herbs*, which has an excellent review of the true nature, properties and uses of hundreds of herbs. He quotes Henry Abraham (1794) who states that ginger is a corrective of many medicines (which) taketh away their malice. Diagnostic elements of ginger are Essential oil, Oleo-resinous matter, Gingerberene, gingerol and shogaol.

Ayurvedic concept

The most sattvic of spices is known as Ginger in English and Sonth or Adrakhin traditional Indian texts. According to Ayurveda, it has Katu-rasam (bitter taste), Ushna-veeryam (hot potency), Vata-kapha-har-prabhavam (blemish correcting effect on air and phlegm), Katu-vipakam (pungent after-effect), Laghu-snigdha-gunam (mild and unctuous property) and is valuable as a suppressant and remedy for 'Kapha and Vatta' disorders. It is referred to as Vishava-bheshaj (the universal medicine) and Maha-aushadhi (wide-spectrum medicine).

A very important concept in Ayurveda is that of Agni (the digestive and metabolic fire). If food and other inputs are properly burnt up, processed and digested, they will not create the toxin called Ama which is destroyed by Agni, improved by ginger. In traditional Chinese medicine, removing toxin is one of the major uses of ginger. It is given as an antidote to poisoning from food, from drugs and from other herbs. Vata is suppressed by a sweet taste, sweet metabolite and Kapha is due to its hot nature. Ayurveda considers ginger a pungent herb par excellence, it does not have the concentrated irritant pungency of chilli, which can sometimes be too strong. Yet, it is irritant enough to challenge the muscle and blood vessels and wake them up. Ginger also challenges the internal organs, particularly the digestive system, where it is said to awaken the agni. Symptoms of low agni include poor digestion, poor absorption, poor circulation, constipation, poor resistance, a tendency to catch cold and influenza, congestion, body odors and obesity (all latter because there is insufficient fire to balance the water).

All of these problems are precisely those which ginger treats. An imported concept in Ayurveda is that of Agni, or digestive and metabolic fire. If food and other inputs are properly burnt up, processed and digested, they will not create toxin, called 'Ama', which collect in deposits around the body. The furring up of the arteries with cholesterol is a kind of 'Ama' deposit, as is arthritic deteriorations of joints. When agni is improved by ginger, it destroys 'Ama'. The poisons and digested wastes are removed. Digestive symptoms such as nausea which are the result of toxins are treated and in the long term, conditions such as atherosclerosis, allergies and rheumatic problems are prevented. It greatly inhibits the bacteria in the colon that work away at any undigested sugars, creating gases. But at the same time it is now

known that a more important action is to create more complete digestion and foods further up in the digestive channel. It can be seen to bring blood to the stomach walls and that it has been proved to be what is known as a cholagogue which means it stimulates the flow of bile; this is certainly an advantage in the digestion of fats and the elimination of waste. It helps absorption of the other constituents. Ginger acts as an aromatic, carminative, stimulant, sialagogue and digestive and is used with success in nervous diseases and as an Aphrodisiac. It relieves gas and cramps in the abdomen, including menstrual cramps due to cold.



Traditional uses of ginger in indian culture

Ginger, in its ancient references, has been called Maha-aushidhi (a Great Medicine) and used as a carminative and anti-fermenting medicine. Ginger is esteemed for its flavor, pungency, aroma and medicinal value. Even Greek physicians like Galen, Avicenna, Pomose etc. have been using Ginger, in various forms, to rectify the imbalance of morbid functions of body, treatment of paralysis caused by phlegmatic imbalance, treatment of gout and gouty arthritis and even as an aphrodisiac.

The calorific value of Ginger has been rated 67. Fresh ginger has been used for cold-induced disease, nausea, asthma, cough, colic, heart palpitation, swellings, dyspepsia, loss of appetite, and rheumatism. Ginger is useful for taste and appetite as a food-seasoning spice for all kinds of foods and can be added to tea. In nineteenth century India, one English writer observed that a popular remedy for cough and asthma consisted of the juice of fresh ginger with a little juice of fresh garlic, mixed with honey. Ginger in paste form with a bit of water can also be applied topically as a pain-reliever for headaches and toothache. A paste of dried ginger powder is applied to the temples to relieve headache. To allay nausea, fresh ginger is mixed with a little honey, topped with a pinch of burnt peacock feathers.

The use of Ginger as a regular spice reduces the risk of indigestion, flatulence, dyspepsia, hyperacidity etc. due to heavy intake of non-vegetarian and fried fatty foods. Ginger strained after boiling with water, and by adding fresh lemon juice and a pinch of rock salt can also be used as an appetite stimulant, taken just before meals. This recipe cleans the tongue, throat, increases

the appetite and produces an agreeable sensation. Ginger mixed with honey and hot water, can also be used as an excellent remedy for non-specific coughs and colds. Gingerboiled in water with fennel seeds and mixed with honey is an excellent diaphoretic mixture which increases sweating to reduce fever in influenza. It also acts as an expectorant in bronchitis, asthma, whooping cough and phthisis. Half teaspoonful of dried Ginger powder mixed with honey and taken with a half-boiled egg once daily at night for a month will tone up the sex stimulating centers and helps to cure impotency, premature ejaculation and spermatorrhoea. A similar recipe of Ginger added with boiled milk, also helps to cure female-frigidity.

Modern research on the use of ginger

Digestive System Actions:

Ginger is a classic tonic for the digestive tract. Classified as a bitter aromatic, it stimulates digestion and keeps the intestinal muscles toned. This action eases the transport of substances through the digestive tract, lessening irritation to the intestinal walls. Ginger may protect the stomach from the damaging effect of alcohol and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (such as ibuprofen) and may help prevent ulcers.

Allergies and asthma:

Dried ginger can help in the management of allergies and asthma by offsetting the effect of the platelet-activating factor (PAP). PAP initiates inflammatory processes in allergy and asthma. It was found to become more active after changes in blood chemistry that occur in a high-fat diet.

Atherosclerosis and high cholesterol: (Arthritis, bursitis, fibrocystic breasts, lymphedema, and pain) Ginger inhibits the production of immune-system components called cytokines. These chemicals are believed to create a long-term tendency toward inflammation. Ginger also stimulates blood circulation. These effects of ginger are taken advantage of in treating a number of disorders marked by swelling and pain, such as arthritis. Studies have also shown that ginger can relieve pain without the side effects typically found when using nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and steroids.

Anti-nausea/Anti-vomiting Actions:

Research is inconclusive as to how ginger acts to alleviate nausea. Ginger may act directly on the gastrointestinal system or it may affect the part of the central nervous system that causes nausea. It may be that ginger exerts a dual effect in reducing nausea and vomiting.

Fever, influenza and sore throat:

Ginger contains a chemical called zingibain that dissolves parasites and their eggs. In laboratory trials, ginger extracts have been shown to kill the anisakid worm (a parasite occasionally found in raw fish) within sixteen hours. Ginger tea is useful as a supplement in treating schistosomiasis, a parasitic disease also known as bilharzia, bilharziosis or snail fever.

IN A NUTSHELL, wonderful multipurpose recipes can also be self-created with Ginger for a wonderful cure of any ailment. For regular use, the Vedic texts suggest a dose of 1/2 to 2 grams of dried Ginger powder with honey two to three times daily. Majority of Ayurvedic remedies contain ginger in one form or another as an effective portion of the complex herbal formulations. It is said that Ginger alone can make even the illiterate person a successful physician.





Importance of Spices as Herbs in Ayurveda

By Ismat Nathani

Ayurveda uses many spices to alter long-standing conditions by eliminating metabolic toxins. Also known as 'cleansers', certain herbs improve the immunity of the person, thereby reducing conditions such as fever.

Herbs such as ginger, black pepper, long pepper, cinnamon, coriander and turmeric are known for their alterative properties.

Spices such as cumin, fennel and peppermint are used as antacids, neutralizing the acid produced by the stomach, to retain healthy gastric acid needed for proper digestion.

Antibiotic herbs like turmeric are useful in inhibiting the growth of germs, harmful microbes and bacteria.

Ayurvedic practitioners recommend certain antipyretic herbs such as black pepper, sandalwood, safflower and coriander to reduce fever and the production of heat caused by some conditions.

An important medical property of herbs is to serve as antiseptics. Aloe, sandalwood and turmeric are commonly used antiseptics with high medicinal value.

Through the ages, Indian sages have been using anti-venomous spices & herbs which act against poisonous matter from animals such as snakes.

Certain aromatic herbs like cardamom and coriander are renowned for their appetizing qualities. Other aromatic herbs such as cloves, peppermint and turmeric add a pleasant aroma to the food, thereby increasing the taste of the meal; they serve as digestives and condiments for the food as well.

Apart from being aromatic, saffron, cinnamon, nutmeg and cardamom are also great astringents which help digest fats and reduce free radicals in the body.

Top Ten Ayurvedic Spices:

1. Turmeric

Turmeric has many useful therapeutic qualities, including: anti-oxidant, anti-tumoral/anti cancerous, anti-microbial, anti-inflammatory, anti-hepatotoxic, anti-hyperlipidaemia, and insect repellent effects. It is widely used to heal wounds and cuts.

Turmeric is contraindicated during pregnancy and for those with diagnosed gall bladder disease.

2. Ginger


Ginger is perhaps the best herb for digestion and the safest to consume during pregnancy. It helps break down proteins relieving the stomach and intestines of gas and aiding digestion of fatty foods.

Its warming quality improves and stimulates circulation and relaxes the muscles surrounding blood vessels, facilitating the flow of blood throughout the body. It has been widely shown to prevent as well as treat motion sickness, relax the stomach and relieve the feeling of nausea.

Studies demonstrate its extract can help reduce the levels of LDL (bad) cholesterol in the body, reducing the risk of developing heart disease.

Whenever possible, choose fresh ginger over the dried form for a superior ginger flavour, higher levels of gingerol and ginger's anti-inflammatory compound.





3. Cumin

Cumin has shown beneficial mutagenic and blood-clotting effects. Other effects include: estrogenic, antispasmodic, diuretic, aphrodisiac, carminative, stimulative, and analgesic.

4. Coriander

Coriander seeds are a good household remedy for many Pitta disorders, particularly those of the digestive tract or urinary system.

The essential oil of coriander has been shown to stimulate secretion of gastric juices, and as such is useful as a carminative and spasmolytic agent. The Ayurvedic use is for digestive and gastric complaints, chest pain, upper abdominal pain, bladder infections, rashes associated with leprosy, fever, dysentery, and as an external poultice for headache.

5. Saffron

Saffron is used in small proportions. It helps to increase appetite, reduces indigestion, diarrhoea, vomiting and acidity. It acts as a cardiac tonic and is used to treat diseases, which originate from vitiation of blood. It helps in easy flow of urine and hence is used in retention of urine. Saffron rejuvenates both the male and female reproductive system.

6. Clove

The dried clove flower buds, which are pungent and aromatic, are used in cooking and for therapeutic purposes.

Clove oil applied externally, has stimulating effects on the skin, producing heat and redness.

Clove powder and oil are very effective in treating fever, problems related to the head, nausea, hypertension, disorders of the nose, sore gums, toothache, earache, chest pain, coughs, digestive problems, diarrhoea, cholera, intestinal worms, arthritis, backache, blisters, boils, burns, sexual debility and morning sickness in pregnancy. Over use of clove can cause excess heat and can result in skin rash.

7. Cinnamon

Cinnamon has been used as a home remedy for many diseases. It is used for treating rheumatism and other inflammations. Cinnamon extracts are active against *Candida albicans*, the fungus responsible for vaginal yeast infection, and also *Helicobacter pylori*, the bacterium responsible for stomach ulcers. Cinnamon extracts have also inhibited the growth of cultured tumour cells. It is also useful as a food preservative to inhibit the growth of common food-borne bacteria such as *Salmonella* and *E. coli*. Use should be limited to small quantities.



8. Fennel

Fennel seed has been shown to stimulate gastrointestinal motility and has demonstrated an antispasmodic effect in higher concentrations.

Fennel seeds are considered one of the most balanced and sattvic of all spices. They are one of the best herbs for digestion, strengthen agni without aggravating pitta, stop cramping and dispel flatulence. One-teaspoon of roasted seeds can be taken after meals, by themselves or with rock salt. They combine well with cumin and coriander as three cooling spices. Fennel seeds are excellent for digestive weakness in children or in the elderly.

They are calming to the nerves. Their aroma acts upon the mind and promotes mental alertness. For urinary problems, they combine well with coriander. Fennel can be used for digestive weakness where hot spices and peppers might overheat or over stimulate. They work to stop the griping of purgatives and can help promote menstruation and promote milk flow for nursing mothers."

9. Nutmeg

Nutmeg, commonly called Jaiphal, is akaphaand vata-dosha suppressant. It helps reduce convulsions, pain and inflammation because of its hot potency. It also helps clear the respiratory passage and normalizes the digestive system.

10. Ajwain

Since ancient times Ajwain has been used as a carminative medicine. Ajwain water, distilled from the seeds, is a cure for flatulence, indigestion & low appetite. This water is a household medicine not only in south India but also in Srilanka, Malaysia and even in some Arabian countries. Some very valuable unani medicines are prepared from ajwain seeds.

Contributed by

Ismat Nathani, MSc, DNM

Founder & Director Centre for Ayurveda & Indian Systems of Healing-Education, Research & Development

How Does Ayurveda Make Sense?

By Gauri Junnarkar MS, RD, LD, CDE, BAMS

Ayurveda is one of the oldest health sciences in the world. It is said to have originated more than 5000 years ago. 'Ayurveda' is a Sanskrit word, made of two parts 'Ayur' meaning life and 'Veda' meaning science; hence, Ayurveda essentially means 'Science of life'. Through this article we are going to explore the question, "how does Ayurveda make sense?"

Ayurveda is a unique holistic health science which focuses on the mind-body relation and the importance of balance between the various physiological components to ensure health. The beauty of this unique science is that its principles can be applied to any person, at any time and at any place. Ayurveda is one of the oldest sciences to talk about personalized wellness in the form of Prakriti. According to Ayurveda, every person is born with a Prakriti (constitution) which is dominated by the presence of doshas in various ranges. The doshas that are most prominent define a person's Prakriti.

Ayurveda texts such as 'Charak Samhita' go in great depth about the typical characteristics of each dosha Prakriti. The Prakriti description contains external features, physiology, likes and dislikes, appetite, sleep and much more. This leads us to question if the ancient Ayurveda texts were referring to genetic traits. This question was explored further in a recent research study done by Govindaraj P, et al. which looked at the 'Genome wide analysis of Prakriti'. The study found that various characteristics described for each Prakriti type resembled a particular phenotype, hence strengthening the belief that Prakriti may have a genetic basis. We can say that Ayurveda was way ahead of its time by providing the concept of personalized wellness.



Ayurveda emphasizes that a person's ahara (food), Dincharya (daily routine) and infact rutucharya (seasonal routine) should be in harmony with a person's Prakriti. Way before the world discovered vitamins, minerals and their physiological role in the body, the concept of balanced diet was written in Ayurveda. The emphasis is to eat foods belonging to all six tastes such as sweet, salty,sour, pungent, bitter and astringent at every mealto ensure that a balanced diet is being consumed.

The goal of Ayurveda is "SwasthasyaSwathyarakshanam, aturasya vicar prashmanam cha". This means protecting the health of a healthy individual and eliminating the disease. The greatness of this science lies in the fact that it not only emphasizes restoring health and balance in the body, but also believes in being preventive in nature by promoting and protecting health.

The core principle of Ayurveda is that ofTridosha (three doshas). According to this, our body contains three basic dosha'sor humors called Vata, Pitta and Kapha in various levels. Vata stands for the wind element and is responsible for all the movements within our body. From the macro to micro level, every movement within the body, may it be nerve impulses, peristalsis, muscle action or breathing can be attributed to Vata.

Metabolism and transformation functions such as digestion, absorption and assimilation are said to be governed by Pitta.When Ayurveda talks about Pitta, it is just not talking about bile, but different enzymes and hormones that are necessary for digestion and metabolism to take place. Hence, these can also be considered as various forms of Pitta.

The third Dosha is Kapha,also known as Phlegm. It is the dosha that provides structure, binds tissues together and gives biological strength. The functions of joint lubrication, wound healing and mucous production inside body cavities can be attributed to Kapha.

Besides theDoshas, the principles of Agni, Ojas, Dhatus, Malas and Gunas are also fundamental to this great science. Agni is the digestive or the metabolic fire. The role of Agni is transformation and is the key element of Pitta. A person having low metabolic or digestive fire, aka Agni,may suffer from loss of appetite and indigestion. If the Agni is not functioning properly in a person, it may also give rise to Ama(i.e. toxins or undigested metabolites). This Ama, when accumulated within the body for a prolonged period, could give rise to various illnesses. The texts also describe Ojas in detail.

It is said to be the extract of all the Dhatus(tissues) and the substance that maintains life. Prana is described as the energy or life force within every cell of the body. Just as in modern physiology, the body is made of various tissues and Ayurveda talks about sevendhatus or tissues. These being Rasa (plasma), Rakta (blood), Mamsa (muscle), Meda (fat), Asthti (bones), Majja (bone marrow) and Shukra (reproductive tissue). Besides this,Malas or wasteproducts are described, these being urine, feces and sweat.

Ayurveda doesnot stop at providing details about body physiology but goes in great details about mind attributes or Gunas, these beingSatva (balance), Rajas (hyperactivity) or Tamas (hypoactivity), thus providing a deep and sound connection between mind and body. The Panchamahabhoot or five element principle is also fundamental in Ayurveda. As per this great science, just as the universe is made up of five basic elements: Akasha (ether), Vayu (air), Tejas (fire), Apa (water) and Prithvi (earth), our body is also composed of these elements. Thus the secret of good health in Ayurveda as described in Sushrut Samhita is "SamadoshaSamaAgni cha SamaDhatu mala kriyah, prasannaatmeindriyamanahSwasthyaitbhidiyate." It means:when Tridoshas, Agni, Dhatus and Mala are in balance and the soul, senses and mind are in a pleasant state, then a person is said to be in good health. What a beautiful concept of health and wellness that brings together the body, mind and soul!

Ayurveda is truly a nature's science that promotes natural wellbeing. It is the science of life. It is the science that creates harmony between us and nature. It emphasis on us recognizing our biorhythms and making that mind-body connection.Ayurveda is a whole encompassing health system that goes beyond physical health and puts equal emphasis on mental health - that is why Ayurveda makes so much sense.

Author-Gauri has more than 14 years' experience in the field of Ayurveda. She is a dedicated nutrition professional with 9+ years' experience as registered/licensed Dietitian and 5+ years experience as a certified diabetes educator. Gauri's expertise includes Ayurveda, Panchakarma, and Nutrition and Diabetes education. She can be reached at:

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Does Ayurveda Recommend Fasting?

By Dr. Anil Kumar Mehta



WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting is an integral part of Indian tradition and culture. It means that someone willingly abstains from certain or all foods, drinks or both. According to the Vedic traditions, fasting is a time for inner reflection and is useful for health. The Sanskrit word for fasting is "Vrata", which also means to vow or to promise.

VRATA

A Vrata consists of one or more actions, including complete or partial fasting on specific days, a pilgrimage (Thirtha) to a particular place(s), a visit and Darshan (upliftment from looking at an image of God) and Puja (ceremonial act of showing reverence to a God, traditionally with flowers) at a particular or more than one temple, reciting mantras and prayers and performing puja and Havans (offering fire to God).

There are four categories of Vratas:

1. Vara: fasts on weekdays.
2. TithiVratas: fasts on certain days of the lunar months.

3. Masa Vratas: fasts undertaken in a particular lunar month.
4. Samvatsara: fasts that could extend an entire year.

Vratas can be very diverse in their degree of restrictiveness. For instance, one can leave out solid foods from the diet or one particular type of food or consume only one type of food. But rarely, one abstains from eating all foods.

Acknowledged categories of food restriction are:

- Anahar: grain consumption.
- Palahari: one who eats fruit.
- Dudhahar: consumption of milk or milk products.
- Nirahar: strictly water intake.

The duration of a fast might be diverse for each individual person, but the purpose is traditionally the same: gaining liberation and inner purity. According to the ancient Hindu texts, Vrata assists the person doing the Vrata to achieve and fulfill his desires, while performing Vratas brings the divine grace and blessing.

FOOD AND RELIGION

According to Hindu traditions, food and religion are related. First of all, religion was used to regulate cycles of agricultural and human growth through prayers and offerings and secondly, religion gives us a framework or perspective in which the soul can ripen and develop. In Ayurveda, feeding the body and the soul are extremely important and completely intertwined with our health. In Hindu religious traditions, this is clearly visible in the fact that religion and food have formed a symbiosis.

Within various Hindu traditions, there are different types of fasts. For instance, women fast on different occasions, like "karvachauth". This is a day on which married women fast for the long life, prosperity and health of their husbands. After sunrise the women observe a strict (vegetarian) fast, which is broken after sighting the moon at night with their husbands. They end it with offering water and flowers to the moon.

Another important occasion for fasting is Shiva-ratri. This fast is considered to be the most important fast for the devotees of Lord Shiva. It is believed that if a devotee observes Shiva-ratri fast with sincerity, pure devotion and love he is blessed with the divine grace of Lord Shiva.

Though most people consume only milk, juice and fruit, some don't even consume a drop of water all through the day and night. These days are being celebrated together, but people also fast individually. This in honour of their devis (goddesses) and devatas (gods). Each day of the week is dedicated to one of these many Hindu deities. Depending on personal beliefs, one can set aside a certain day or days for fasting. For instance, devotees of Shiva tend to fast on Mondays, while devotees of Vishnu fast on Fridays and Saturdays.

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The duration of a fast might be diverse for each individual person, but the purpose is traditionally the same: gaining liberation and inner purity. According to the ancient Hindu texts, Vrata assists the person doing the Vrata to achieve and fulfill his desires, while performing Vratas brings the divine grace and blessing.

WHAT IS THE AYURVEDIC VIEW ON FASTING?

In Ayurveda, fasting is seen from an overall health perspective. It eliminates toxins from the body and purifies body, mind and soul in this way. The body becomes light and the mind will become soft and peaceful which will improve mental and spiritual capacities. In the night, we all undergo a short “fast”, which eliminates the toxins from our body. However, this may not be enough, according to Ayurveda. In modern day life, we are all exposed to many toxins: environmental toxins, stress, negative emotions, lack of exercise, refined food, food additives etcetera. If this build-up of toxins – called Ama in Ayurveda – is too large, this will cause imbalance and finally develop into illness. To prevent this storage of toxins, Ayurveda recommends its extensive detoxification program Pancha Karma, which consists of different cleansing therapies such as massages, sweat therapies, diet and a definite elimination from the toxins from the digestive tract. But as a home-cleansing therapy, we can observe a fast with only liquids and very easily digestible foods, such as fruit- and vegetable juices and pureed vegetable soups. This will give the metabolism the opportunity to clean up what was left behind. However, in Ayurveda we Ask Ayurveda Does Ayurveda recommend fasting?

It is utmost important to know who the person is, more precisely: what his body constitution is, his lifestyle, eating habits, digestive capacities etc. The body constitution is the health profile of a person, his metabolic blueprint and it tells exactly what his strengths and susceptibilities are. Before fasting is observed, it is very important to look at the individual constitution. If a person has Vata-constitution, he should not observe fasting for more than three days. Actually, eating at the right times is for Vatas already fasting, because they tend to be very irregular. If a Vata-person considers to do a fast, it is best for him to ask for proper medical guidance, since Vatas have more difficulty staying grounded.

A fast for more than four days will aggravate Pitta. For Pittas a fast for one day per month is advised. But it is unquestionable, that fasts work best for Kapha-type persons. They can do a liquid fast for 1 day per week. Kaphas can skip meals, but they can also observe prolonged fasts. Their body will burn Ama and feel lighter, more energetic, they will have more mental clarity and will overall feel happier.

DIGESTION

The main reason why Ayurveda recommends fasting, is that it is beneficial for overall digestion. In general, Ayurveda sees a relationship between health and the digestive strength/fire called Agni. A healthy and strong digestive fire will burn the sticky toxic material Ama, which can build up throughout the body and slow digestion and elimination down. Ayurveda considers the accumulation of Ama in our cells and tissues to be the underlying cause of disease and illness. Furthermore, Ayurveda says that digestion- and therefore health – can be improved by regularly restricting the food intake. But, at the same time, this can be dangerous, or at least risky if not performed under professional medical supervision. The digestive secretions that are essential for our health, metabolism and the build-up of our body tissues, are derived from the food or meals that we have digested. Prolonged starvation of nutrients will lead to deficiencies in secreting digestive products in the stomach, liver and pancreas for example. It is also highly important, after a period of fasting, to restart the delicate digestive process and “rekindle the flame” under careful professional guidance. If this is not managed properly, this may lead to a generalized toxic condition (Ama).



GUIDELINES

There are 4 basic types of fasting in Ayurveda:

1. Eating only light foods.
2. Consuming only fruits, vegetables or juices.
3. Abstaining from solid foods and drinking only water or herbal tea.
4. Abstaining from both food and water.

The following recommendations are for people who are healthy according to their body constitutions. For people with health problems, it is advised to follow the fast that is advised for the dosha that is most imbalanced.

Signs of effective fasting. After a fast, one should experience:

- Lightness in the body, increased energy and mental clarity.

- Regular bowel movements, without gas or bloating.
- A clean tongue and fresh breath.

As mentioned before, different types of fasting are possible and these are merely recommendations. We cannot cease to underline though, that if you consider fasting, please consult your Ayurvedic practitioner or ask for professional guidance.

Dr. Anil Kumar Mehta, Director, Founder of EISRA (European Institute of scientific Research on Ayurveda) Esd.1989



Season And Seasonal Regimen

IDENTIFICATION AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE GLOBE

VAIDYA SUDIPT RATH & VAIDYA MEENAKSHI GUPTA

The living system is a representation of the outer universe. Every natural phenomenon is reflected and represented within the individual. Ayurveda understands that the universe is nurtured and governed by three cosmic forces: Soma (Moon), Surya (Sun) and Anila (Air). These three forces are represented by Kapha, Pitta and Vata which nurtures and governs the living system (Sushruta Samhita Sutra Sthana : 21/8). Soma is responsible for the increase in Bala (strength), accumulation of energy and pertains to Sheeta (Cool) character. Surya is responsible for extorting Bala out, utilization of energy and pertains to Ushna (Hot) character. Anila is the carrier of Sheeta and Ushna to reach the sites of function. Therefore, any change in cosmic energy systems such as the Moon, Sun and Air shall influence the status and balance on the three doshas within the living system.

Moon, Sun and Air are not static factors but keep on changing giving their movement. These changes consequently effectuate changes in the universe and the living system. The changes in the universe normally follow a definite pattern both within a day and also over a period of time. It is a chronological time period but it is the common signs seen during that period that define a season.

Classification Of Year – Ayan & Ritu (Solstice And Season)

The year is thus classified on the basis of the similar changes seen in the universe consequent to the rotation and revolution of the cosmic forces. The year according to Ayurveda is divided into two periods Ayana (solstice) depending on the direction of the movement of the sun. The time between the winter and summer Solstice is called Uttarayana (northern solstice) and the time between the summer and winter solstice is called Dakshinayana (southern solstice).

Uttarayana - (Winter – Spring – Summer)

Uttarayana indicates the ascent or northward movement of the Sun from the Tropic of Capricorn to the Tropic of Cancer. This movement can be compared to the gradual movement of earth around the sun. In this movement, the rays of the sun fall perpendicularly at a 30 degree meridian of the North Pole on June 21st every year, known as the summer solstice.

This period is also known as Aadan Kala (period of the year, where nature drains energy from living systems) as the Sun takes a northern course extorting the unctuous portion (Snehansha) from the earth (due to the progres

sively decreasing distance between the earth and sun), the winds become intense, dry and absorbing.

This dries up unctuousness from the earth to produce dryness. It then causes debility within the human being. There are 3 seasons in this period – Shishira(Winter), Vasant (Spring) and Grishma (Summer). The innate strength of the individual reduces progressively from winter to summer, being at its lowest in the summer. (Ch.Su.6/6)

Dakshinayana - (Rainy – Autumn – Early Winter)

Dakshinayana indicates the descent or southward movement of the Sun from the Tropic of Cancer to the Tropic of Capricorn. This movement can be compared with the gradual movement of the earth around the sun to the position, in which the rays of the sun fall over a 30 degree meridian of the South Pole perpendicularly on December 21st every year, known as the winter solstice.

This period is also called Visarga Kala (the period of the year where the universe gives energy to living systems) as the sun takes a southern course. The winds are not very Ruksha (dry) and the moon is having unobstructed strength (due to progressively increasing distance between earth and sun) to replenish the earth continuously with its cold rays. There are 3 seasons in this period - Varsha (Rain), Sharad (autumn) and Hemant (Early Winter). The innate strength of the individual increases progressively from Rainy to Early Winter, being highest in early winter. (Ch.Su.6/5)

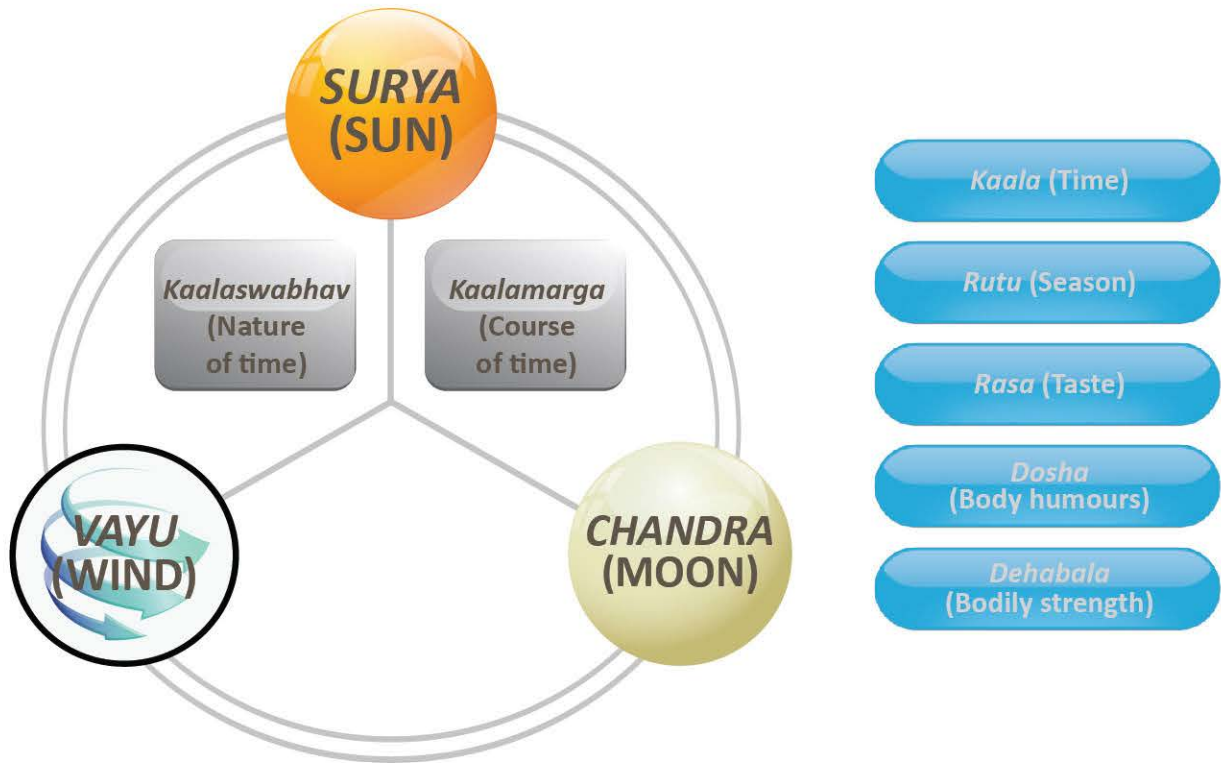
Importance Of Season In Approach To Health –
As discussed above the living system goes through continuous changes on a daily and seasonal basis. Some of these changes are beneficial and some detrimental to health. Thus, a daily and seasonal regimen is needed to be followed to maximize the benefits of favorable changes and to minimize the effects of detrimental changes. These regimens are known as Dinacharya (Daily regimen) and Ritucharya (Seasonal Regimen). Extensive details on daily, seasonal life style, dietary and therapeutic regimens are described in Ayurvedic texts.

How To Identify Seasons In Different Parts Of Globe -

The challenge now lies in how to identify these possible changes and respond to them. Though consequent upon normally observed patterns both day and seasons are divided into chronological time frames. The principle states that one must determine the day and season on the basis of the features seen in nature. Therefore, each season has been provided with determinant features in nature. These features reflect the logical effect of changes on the moon, sun and air. Once they are seen in the place where the individual lives, then only can the suitable regimen be followed. It is quite possible due to natural reasons, the features may come early, late, or do not come at all. Thus a rigid adherence to daily and seasonal regimen without assessing the features of nature is not advisable.

To explain further, in Ayurveda, a classic description of six seasons is found and all the six seasons are not seen in all parts of India. India extends approximately 3,200 kilometers from north to south. Seasonal variations are observed as the distance from the north to the south increases. Likewise a considerable seasonal variation is seen in different regions and countries in the world. This poses a challenge in adopting a seasonal regiment when season patterns are different than described in texts. It needs an understanding of the relative orientation of concepts of seasons within regions to bring the Ayurveda concept of seasonal regiment into practice as a basic component of health worldwide.

Ayurveda states that the sun, the wind and the moon are responsible for the appearance of time, season, Rasa (taste of substances), Dosha and Dehabala (innate strength of body) according to the nature and course of time they follow (Cha.Su.6/5). Ushna – Sheeta (Hot - Cold), Ruksha – Snigdha (Dry - Unctuous) and Tikshna – Manda (Sharp – Dull) are three pairs of Gunas (properties) of the sun, wind and moon. Along with their permutation, combination also plays a significant role in the advent of time, season, Rasa (taste of substances) , Dosha and Dehabala (innate strength of the body).



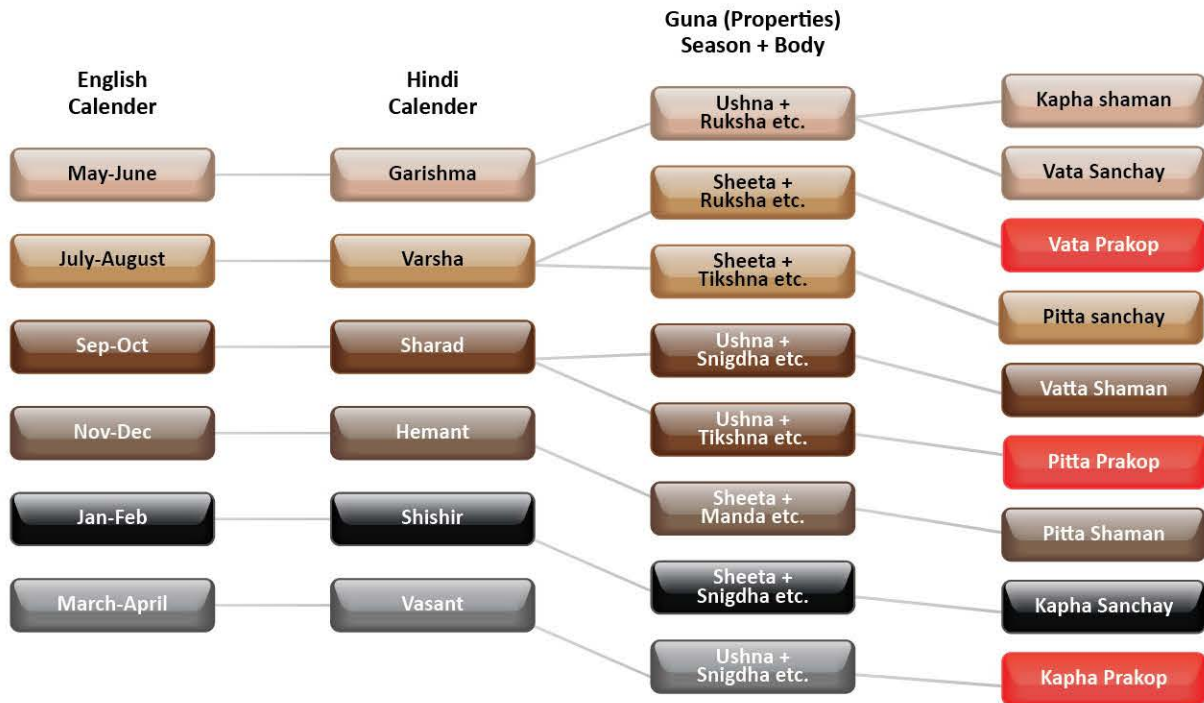
Consideration of different seasons in different regions in accordance to Ayurveda (in terms of Doshik involvement) is very important for framing the seasonal regiment. These regimens have to be planned according to the status of the Doshas. This status of the Doshas can be understood on the basis of proper acquaintance with seasons and ultimately three factors involving the seasons:

1. Appearance of the three pairs of properties (i.e. Snigdha-Ruksha, Sheeta-Ushna and Manda- Tikshna) with their permutations and combinations in the environment.
2. Their order
3. The status of Doshas due to previous seasons



Combinations of Gunas (properties) in six Rutus are as follows (Ah. Su.12/19, 20, 21)

Seasonal fluctuations in Guna and Dosha status (Classical)



Conclusion -

Status of the Doshas depends upon the combination and order of the properties (Guna) appearing in the different seasons. The main properties (Guna) are Ushna – Sheeta (Hot - Cold), an association of other properties like Ruksha – Snigdha (Dry - Unctuous) and Tikshna – Manda (Sharp - Dull). Due to changes in the seasons, it effects the status of the Doshas like Sanchaya (accumulation), Prakopa (aggravation) and Prashama (alleviation).

We can predict the seasons from the signs seen in a particular place at a particular time and then plan a seasonal regimen for that time by assessing the properties in different places on the earth on these parameters. In the next article, we will view one of the few places on the globe as an example to show how seasons can be identified.

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Diet for Anaemia

By Nishi Batth

SIMPLE GUIDE FOR IMPROVEMENT

Anemia is mostly due to a nutritional deficiency of certain nutrients such as iron, vitamin B12 and folic acid. Since the origin of this disorder is mostly due to dietary deficiency it is necessary to alter diet to provide the missing nutrients and thus improve the condition. Anemia is a common problem in every age group due to inadequate diet and low intake of iron. Anemia can be resolved from the modification of a diet based on the cause of anemia and the nutrient that is deficient. Iron deficiency anemia is the most common form of anemia. Regular consumption of iron rich foods such as vegetables and leafy greens will cure this condition to some extent. Another kind of anemia is the megaloblastic anemia that is caused due to lack of vitamin B12 or folic acid in the diet. Folic acid deficiency can be fulfilled with the intake of green leafy vegetables and vitamin B12. Deficiency can be completed through a diet rich in meat, egg, liver and all animal food. Milk and milk products are also rich in vitamin B12 so it is a good option for vegetarians.

GOOD FOOD FOR ANEMIC PATIENTS

Apple: Apples are rich in iron, arsenic and phosphorus and highly beneficial in the treatment of anemia. One apple should be eaten daily.

Apricot: This fruit is excellent fruit for the treatment of anemia on account of its high iron content. Apricot has essential amount of copper that makes iron readily available to the body. The regular intake of apricots increases the hemoglobin level in the body.

Banana: Being rich in iron content, bananas also stimulate the production of hemoglobin in the blood. Thus they are beneficial in the treatment of anemia.

Mango: Unripe mango or green mango is valuable in treating blood disorders because of its high vitamin C content. It increases the elasticity of the blood vessels and helps in the formation of new blood vessels. It aids the absorption of food iron.

Raisins: As a rich source of easily assailable iron, raisins enrich blood and thus useful in treating anemia.

Beetroot: Red beet root is associated with blood forming qualities. Due to its high content of iron it regenerates and reactivates the red blood cells, supplies fresh oxygen to the body and helps the normal function of vesicular breathing. It is thus extremely useful in the treatment of anemia.

Fenugreek: Fenugreek helps in blood formation. The cooked leaves are extremely useful for adolescent girls to prevent anemia. Also associated with onset of puberty. Sprouted fenugreek seeds are equally good.

Spinach: There is a high grade iron content in spinach. After its absorption in the system, the formation of hemoglobin and red blood cells take place. It is thus highly beneficial in building up the blood and in the prevention and treatment of anemia.

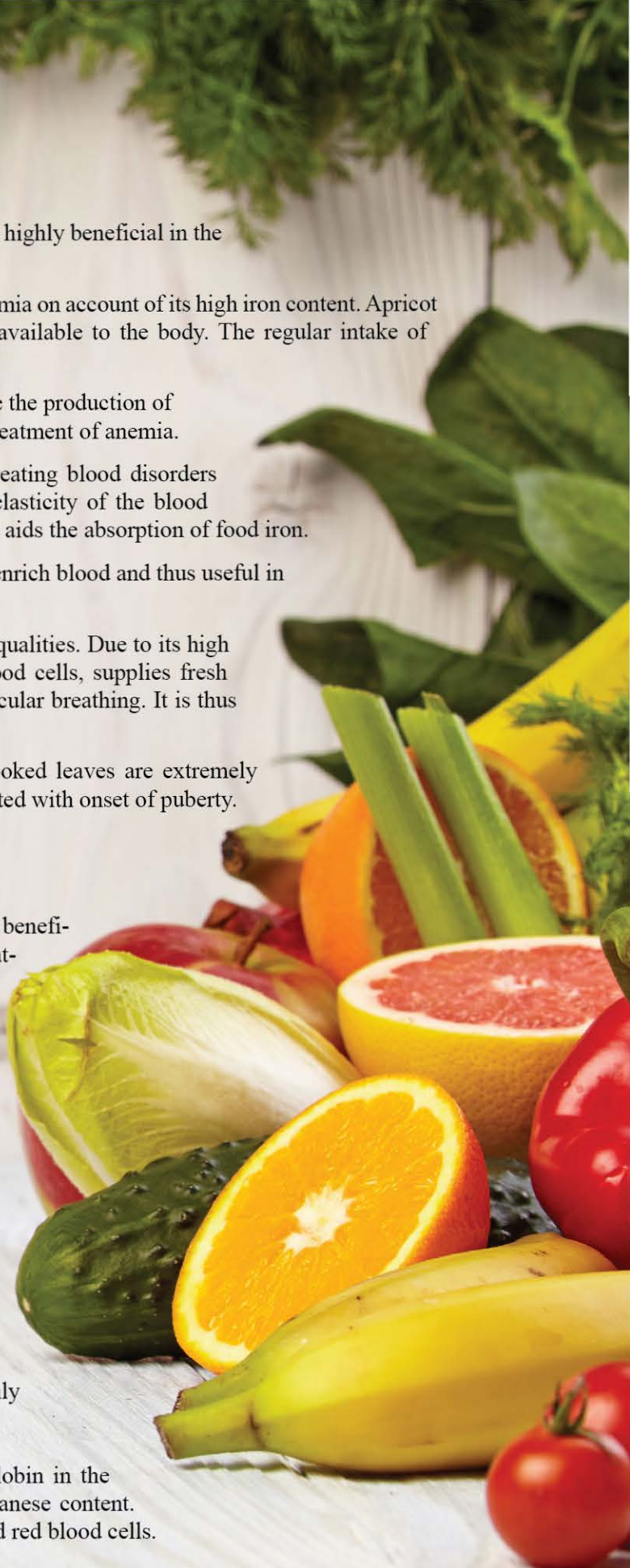
Bengal gram: Fresh juice of Bengal gram leaves is very rich in iron, therefore it is highly recommended.

Almonds: Contain copper in organic form. The copper along with iron and vitamins acts as a catalyst in the synthesis of hemoglobin.

Sesame seeds: An emulsion of sesame seeds is prepared by grinding and straining them after soaking them in warm water for couple of hours. This emulsion mixed with a cup of milk and sweetened jaggery should be given to patients suffering from anemia.

Sunflower seeds: The flour made from sunflower seeds is one of the richest sources of iron in any food. It is highly beneficial in the prevention and treatment of anemia.

Honey: There is a remarkable effect in building hemoglobin in the body. This is largely due to high iron, copper and manganese content. Honey helps maintain the right balance of hemoglobin and red blood cells.





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