

Dinacharya: Changing Lives Through Daily Living

By Dr. Claudia Welch

The Purusha or self-conscious personality is born from Rasa. Therefore an intelligent person should carefully preserve his bodily rasa by adopting a proper regimen of diet and conduct.¹

Ayurveda, literally “the science of life”, seeks to support a rich, flavorful life on all levels. The Sanskrit word *rasa* translates as “juice” or “flavor.” It is also the name of the primary nutritional substance of the body that is associated with plasma, lymph and chyle.¹¹ If *rasa* is healthy, the entire body is likely to have vitality and the mind will feel satiated, content and find enjoyment in life.

If we want to support healthy *rasa*, Ayurveda has taught that we need to have appropriate daily routines. We need to develop habits that support balance and health within shifting environments. A fundamental tenet of Ayurveda is that “like increases like.” For example the relative heat of midday will increase the heat in the body and mind and increase the power of *agni*, the digestive fire. This means that we will have greater digestive capacity in the middle of the day and so this is the best time to eat our main meal. The early morning, being cool and a time of change, is a beneficial time to create internal heat through exercise and to engage in a routine that centers the mind.

Each time of day comes with inherent qualities. While morning and evening tend to be cool and are related to change, midday is a time of action and appetite. If we are interested in maintaining a healthy equilibrium, it is incumbent upon us to recognize these qualities and learn how to respond in a manner that maintains balance. How we respond will, in part depend on our individual constitutions. What will feel good to one person may cause irritation or anxiety in another.

If we understand a little bit about our own constitutions, we can better understand how to develop daily routines that support health.

While each of us has a unique constitution, Ayurveda describes three main constitutional forces, called *doshas*. Below, we will learn about these three *doshas* and then how to use Ayurveda to develop appropriate daily routines. If you already know about the *doshas*, you can skip to the next section.

The Three Doshas

Ayurveda uses the concept of the three *doshas* to understand peoples’ constitutions and current imbalances.

There are as many different constitutions as there are human beings. For the sake of practicality however, Ayurveda has categorized three main constitutional forces. These forces or *doshas* are called “Vata,” “Pitta,” and “Kapha.” In a nutshell, *Vata* refers to the catabolic, motive force in the body, *Pitta* to the metabolic, transformational force and *Kapha* to the anabolic, stable, structural force of the body.

While all three *doshas* are necessary forces in everybody's constitution, they are present in each of us in different ratios. A *Vata* predominant person, for example, may move, talk and think faster than others, *Pitta* folks may be more fiery and ambitious; and the people with more *Kapha* may have more physical stamina and be slower to change.

Vata, *Pitta* and *Kapha* are positive forces in the body, but due to exposure to various qualities in our physical or emotional environment, any of them may increase or, less often, decrease beyond what is appropriate for our constitution. This may cause imbalance in the body or mind and creates an environment more hospitable to disease. Once we learn how to recognize which *doshas* are high, we can learn how seasonal and daily routines can play a role in restoring balance.

Each of us has a unique proportion of the three *doshas* in our constitutions. Ayurveda teaches us that if a *dosha* increases beyond its original, natural proportion for us, it fosters an environment where disease can flourish.

It is common for our predominant *dosha* (*Vata*, *Pitta* or *Kapha*) to increase more quickly than other *doshas* because we tend to perpetuate what we know the best. For example, if your dominant *dosha* is *Pitta*, you may be intellectually bright, due to the hot and sharp qualities of this *dosha*. However, this very quality that is inherent in *Pitta* may eventually aggravate it and create mental or physical "burn out."

Medicines are substances that decrease the excess *dosha* by providing the opposite qualities to it. For example, if excess mental wrestling has resulted in "burn out," a comfortable, soft couch and a cool mind can be effective remedies. If *Pitta* has increased due to excess heat, coolness can be the medicine. Is there too much moisture? Use dryness. Each *dosha* has inherent qualities, and knowing which qualities are aggravated or affected, we can better understand how to restore balance.

Vata

Tatra ruksho laghu sheetah, khara sukshma chalo nilah
The qualities of Vata are dry, light, cool, rough, subtle and mobileⁱⁱⁱ

This Sanskrit line lists the main qualities of *Vata* and provides a key to understanding what it means to have a predominance of *Vata*, either constitutionally or currently.

The main qualities of *Vata* are dry, light, cool, rough, subtle and mobile. A *Vata* predominant individual's strengths and weaknesses both reflect these qualities.

Because *Vata* is inherently cool, we find that cool weather and cool foods, the cool seasons and times of day, and even cool emotions may cause *Vata* to increase. Likewise, dry seasons, foods, environments or emotions will increase the dry quality and thereby increase *Vata*.

Suppose you are a *Vata* individual. One of the qualities of *Vata* is dryness. You live in a dry climate, like a desert, and you regularly snack on dry crackers. This added dryness adds to the dry quality of *Vata*, which you already have plenty of. This usually increases *Vata* and can lead to dry conditions like constipation or dry skin. We could find equivalent examples for each of *Vata*'s qualities.

When the natural qualities of *Vata* increase, you will find yourself with too much of it and may experience some of the following signs or symptoms:

- The *dry* and *rough* qualities may manifest themselves as dry or brittle skin, lips, hair, nails or bones (e.g. osteoporosis), as constipation, gas, bloating or dry, hard stools, or as feeling lonely or "dry" emotionally. You may also feel extra sensitive to loud noises.
- The *light* quality may manifest itself as giving you a lanky physique but excess lightness may manifest as being underweight, having muscle wasting, light bones, insomnia or feeling "spacey" or insecure.
- The *cold* quality may lead you to feel cold more easily than others around you, have cold hands and feet, crave warmth and have an aversion to wind. Emotionally, you may tend towards fear and anxiety.
- The *subtle* quality may express itself as being introverted, creative and having an active fantasy life. In excess though, it may lead you to be prone to over-identification with others or increased sensitivity to other's emotions.
- The *mobile* quality may lead to a healthy ability to "multi-task" or, in excess, to scattered attention, a fidgety tendency, tremors, tics, twitches, spasms and nervousness. It may manifest as extremes, as in being very tall or very short or being drastically different weights at different times in your life.

As like increases like, opposite qualities can serve to antidote a *dosha*'s increased qualities. For example, as *Vata* is already cold, cold weather or food could increase *Vata*, leading to aggravation. We could then use warm food and a warm place to antidote the cold quality and restore balance. Qualities opposite to *Vata* are moist, grounding, warming, smooth, oily and stabilizing. It is therefore best for *Vata* individuals to seek out physical and emotional environments, routines, and foods that possess these opposite qualities.

The ideal environment for a *Vata* individual is warm and wet, like Hawaii. Sweet or grounding scents, like the essential oils of rose, jatamansi or mitti; sweet music and sweet emotions are also good "medicines" for *Vata*.

The mobile quality can drive *Vata*-types to do "a thousand things" at one time. This can lead to exhaustion of the nervous system, which in turn causes emotional and physical restlessness and eventual "dis-ease." While moving fast comes naturally to *Vata* people, it might be beneficial instead for them to move through life as if they were, say, *tai chi* masters. If there must be constant movement it is good if it is smooth, slow and conscious movement, lest we exhaust ourselves.

While a routine can feel contrary to your nature, it can be extremely beneficial for you to incorporate one into your life. For example, rising and going to bed at about the same time every day, giving regular time to do meditation and gentle yoga or other strengthening exercise that is easy on the joints. Have regular meals, chew food thoroughly and take a breath before moving on to your next activity. While daily routine is useful for everybody, it is perhaps most important for a *Vata* individual.

Pitta

***Pittam sasneha tikshnoshnam laghu visram, saram dravam
Pitta is oily, sharp, hot, light, fleshy-smelling, spreading and liquid^{iv}***

The main qualities of *Pitta* are oily, sharp, hot, light, fleshy smelling, spreading and liquid. These qualities express themselves generously throughout the *Pitta* person's mental, emotional and physical make up. You may find them reflected in your strengths and weaknesses.

Pitta is inherently hot. Hot weather, hot foods, the hot seasons and times of day, and even hot emotions can increase *Pitta*. Likewise humid environments will increase the liquid quality and thereby increase *Pitta*.

Suppose you are a *Pitta* individual. You visit the equator for a vacation and you sunbathe daily for several hours and enjoy hot, spicy food each day for one week. At the end of the week you suffer from an acute rash and terrible heartburn and find yourself in an awful temper. Ayurveda would say that your heat-increasing indulgences exacerbated the natural heat in your *Pitta* constitution and lead to hot conditions "erupting" in your body and emotions.

If *Pitta* is elevated, you may be experiencing some of the following signs or symptoms:

- The *oily* quality allows for softness of skin but, in excess, can manifest as oily skin, acne or perhaps the quality of being a "snake oil salesman"; manipulating situations to your advantage.
- The *sharp* quality may manifest as a sharp, bright intellect or, in excess, as a sharp tongue, gastric ulcer or irritability, judgment, impatience, criticism of self or others, intolerance, frustration or excessive perfectionist tendencies.
- The *hot* quality can manifest as a warm, rosy complexion, warm body temperature, strong metabolism and appetite or, in excess, as gastric or peptic ulcers, heartburn, acute inflammation, red, inflamed or light-sensitive eyes or a hot temper.
- The *light* quality may lead you to have a slender body or to get light-headed or nauseated if you miss a meal.
- The *fleshy-smelling* quality may manifest as a strong body odor.
- The *spreading* quality may manifest as a tendency to spread your name or influence or opinion around the local or global neighborhood. This quality can also manifest as a spreading rash or virus.
- The *liquid* quality may manifest as excess sweating, stomach acid or diarrhea.

Qualities opposite to *Pitta* are those that are dry, dull, slow, cool, heavy, sweet smelling, and stabilizing. It is therefore best for *Pitta* individuals to seek out physical and emotional environments, routines, and foods that possess these opposite qualities.

The ideal environment for a *Pitta* individual is cool and dry. Cold weather sports like skiing and ice-skating or early morning exercise is best. Sweet smells, like the essential oils of rose, and khus; melodic music and sweet emotions are also good "medicines" for *Pitta*.

Because the *Pitta* person tends to be pretty sharp, it is easy for her to feel that, if she just works long and hard enough, she can control everything. It is this quality, on a global scale, that allows human beings to think nothing of controlling or manipulating nature to bend to our idea of what is best. This works well if it is a balanced approach, enabling us to predict nasty weather and thereby prepare for it or to diagnose certain illnesses and thereby enable us to treat them better. An extreme example of this outlook is manipulating genetic material without regard to problematic future ramifications. An incredibly extreme example of this outlook gone out of control would be that of a dictator attempting genocide in an attempt to align global reality with his personal view of how things should be.

On a more personal scale, this tendency may lead us to strive for control and personal domination in our relationships or career, or we may allow our rampant personal ambition to drive us into eventual mental or physical "burnout."

One of the best medicines for *Pitta* is surrender. If we can develop a gentle faith in, or relationship with, a divine power or natural force that we believe can do a fine job of orchestrating our personal and universal life, then we can give our wills a rest and take some pressure off. For this reason, it is beneficial for *Pitta* individuals to enjoy regular meditation. (And *really* enjoy it; not just do it as if it is another task they need to master).

Kapha

Snigdha shita gururmandah slakshno mritsnah sthirah Kaphah
Kapha is unctuous, cool, heavy, slow, smooth, soft and static"

The main qualities of *Kapha* are unctuous, cool, heavy, slow, smooth, soft and stable. It is also dense, cloudy and viscous. These qualities manifest themselves throughout the mental, emotional and physical make up of someone who has a lot of *Kapha*. You may find them reflected in your strengths and weaknesses.

Because *Kapha* is inherently cool, heavy and wet - cold weather, heavy foods or wet seasons tend to increase *Kapha*.

Suppose you are a *Kapha* individual. If you eat a large bowl of ice cream (heavy, dense wet and cold,) at night (cold) in winter in Vermont (cold, wet), you can be sure that *Kapha* will increase in your system. The next morning you may find yourself with a cold,

having gained a pound or two (the increase of heavy and dense) and less likely than ever to move (static).

If your *Kapha* is elevated, you may be experiencing some of the following signs or symptoms:

- The *unctuous* quality can allow for smooth joint function but if pronounced, can lead to oily hair or oily skin.
- The *cool* quality may manifest as cool skin and a laid-back, cool temperament and a preference for hot, dry weather. In excess it can cause low appetite and sluggish digestion.
- The *heavy* quality may manifest as a large, sturdy, grounded physical and emotional constitution. In excess, it can lead to being overweight, experiencing a subjective feeling of heaviness in the body or mind, difficulty rising in the morning, feeling slow, foggy, dull or lethargic.
- The *slow* quality may manifest as a slow gait or a slow, steady pace that you can maintain. In excess, you may get slow metabolism or stuck in a pattern that may not be the best for you.
- The *soft* quality can manifest as a soft heart that is easily empathic or having soft skin. In excess, someone may become overly sentimental or cloying.
- The *stable* can be an asset that friends, family and colleagues probably recognize and perhaps lean on, but in excess could become stubbornness, complacency or sluggishness. You could become so stable that you are disinclined toward any physical activity.
- The *dense* quality can manifest as good stamina and strong, well-formed muscles and bones. This enables the *Kapha* constitution to withstand vigorous exercise. This quality is also responsible for dense, luxurious hair. In excess it is related to mass, confusion or being too easily attached or possessive,
- The *sticky* quality can be healthy, like the mucous lining of the gastrointestinal tract or, in excess, can manifest as having too much mucous, a thick, white coated tongue and slow, sticky or sluggish bowel movements.

Qualities opposite to *Kapha* are predominantly warm, dry, light and active. It is therefore best for *Kapha* individuals to seek out physical and emotional environments, routines, and foods that possess these opposite qualities.

Although *Kapha* may be able to tolerate a wide variety of temperatures, the ideal environment is a warm and dry one. Active sports like jogging, hiking, biking or competitive sports, especially in the morning, are best. Aromatic, invigorating or heating scents, like essential oils of hina or myrrh and light and lively music are also good "medicines" for *Kapha*.

One of the best medicines for *Kapha* is activity. It is well worth the effort for the *Kapha* individual to find that golden key to what motivates them. For example, if you have a difficult time motivating yourself to exercise regularly, you could enter yourself in a local

bike race. This may give you just that extra push and you may be surprised by how much you enjoy yourself.

One of the wonderfully practical aspects of Ayurveda is that anything can be used as a medicine because everything that exists has a quality. This includes but is not limited to herbs, foods, drinks, environments, colors, smells and lifestyles. Knowing which *dosha* is high for you can help you make choices in your life that can help maintain balance. However you live your life, there are guidelines for a daily routine that the Ayurvedic sages outlined in the classic ancient Ayurvedic texts *Ashtanga Hridayam* and *Charaka Samhita*. With some small modifications depending on which *dosha* is prevalent for you, this daily routine can benefit most of us, most of the time. If we understand the law of the macrocosm and microcosm, we can understand why a daily routine can be healing.

The Law of Macrocosm and Microcosm

According to the Law of Microcosm and Macrocosm, everything that exists in the vast external universe, the macrocosm also appears in the internal cosmos of the human body, the microcosm. Charaka says, 'Man is the epitome of the universe. There is in man as much diversity as in the world outside, and there is in the world as much diversity as in man.' When the individual becomes aligned with the universe, the lesser cosmos functions as a harmonious unit of the greater. Dr. Robert Svoboda^{vi}

The above is a succinct explanation of the Law of Microcosm and Macrocosm that is accepted by Eastern Medicine—whether Ayurveda or Traditional Chinese Medicine. If everything that exists in the macrocosm exists in the microcosm, then the reverse must also be true: that everything that exists in the microcosm exists in the macrocosm. This can have profound implications. But first let us look at some various examples of this law at work.

In Ayurveda, a common application of this law is in the elemental macro and microcosms. In the human being, as well as in the universe, there are five creative elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether—and three forces: one that governs movement, one transformation and the third governs structure. In the Universe these forces are called *anila*, *surya* and *soma*, respectively. In the human, they are the *doshas*: *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*, respectively.

The microcosm will always reflect the macrocosm. For example, in the fire of summer—governed by *surya*—we may have more of a tendency to suffer from internal *Pitta* conditions, such as ulcers, anger or skin rashes. The macrocosm of the seasonal environment is affecting the microcosm of the human environment.

The microcosm affecting the macrocosm is expressed in the now famous example of the butterfly flapping its wings in one part of the world and this affecting whether patterns on far away continents. Sometimes clearly expressed and at other times subtle or difficult to perceive, the Law of Macrocosm and Microcosm is nonetheless a fundamental principle in Ayurveda.

While not as frequently evoked as our elemental macro and microcosms, there are also temporal microcosms and macrocosms. In these, each time cycle is a microcosm of the next. There is the 24-hour cycle of night giving way to daytime. This daily rhythm goes on and on and on, mimicking the grander cycles: The cycles of seasons, where the winter with its cold, lifeless months melt into the new growth of spring. The cycles of a lifetime, where a man goes from death into birth and from birth again into death. The cycle of 84 lakhs (8.4 million) births and deaths before the soul arrives in the human body with its unique opportunity to reunite with the Divine. The cycle of age upon age moving from dissolution into manifested reality; from wisdom to ignorance and back to wisdom.

While we may have little or no control over the grander cycles of the ages, the 84 *lakhs*, (one lakh equals 100,000, so 8,400,000) of births we are said to cycle through, our birth into the human body this time around, and the yearly seasonal cycles, we have a chance every day to take advantage of a new cycle, be reborn and act wisely.

If we overlay the 24-hour cycle microcosm over the cycle of a lifetime, we see that predawn through early morning roughly corresponds to pregnancy, birth and early childhood. Morning corresponds to later childhood, midday to midlife, and late afternoon through twilight equates to old age or the twilight of life. Nightfall signifies death and nighttime resonates with the mysteries encountered by the unembodied soul between lifetimes.

If this law of Macrocosms and Microcosms is valid, then it stands that we can affect the macrocosm of a lifetime via the microcosm of a 24-hour cycle. If we can affect our lifetime by how we live a day, it follows that it is therefore important *how* we pass our days. The sages who first delivered the precepts of Ayurveda were well aware of this and outlined a daily routine, called *dinacharya*, which serves as a guideline for us to follow. It provides a structure that we can adjust according to our various needs and constitutions.

Dinacharya: A Daily Routine^{vii}

... the different parts of the day and night are marked by variations of heat, cold, etc. [or in other words] the deranged bodily humors such as Vata, Pitta and Kapha naturally and spontaneously accumulate, aggravate, or subside during the different parts of the day^{viii}

The *Charaka Samhita* and the *Ashtanga Hridayam* are two ancient classical Ayurvedic texts that are still referenced today. These classics outline a routine for daily conduct. They begin with a morning routine as follows, and discuss general approaches to life that are beneficial.

Wake up during brahmamuhurta

The healthy person should get up (from bed) during brahmamuhurta, to protect his life.^{ix}

Brahmamuhurta or *amritavela*—the ambrosial hours—are names for the early hours of each day. My Guruji included 3am through dawn in these ambrosial hours.

The first moments of a day, like the first seconds of an infant's life, are minutes that can set the tone for an experience. If we allow the first attention of the day to be peaceful, grateful and infused with a sense of joy, it is more likely that our day will be pleasant.

Eliminate

Early morning is a natural time to urinate and have a bowel movement, as *apana vayu*, the downward flowing energy in the body, is active at this time. This is a time when we should not be in a rush, and should allow the natural rhythms of our bodies to carry out their functions. *Triphala*, a mixture of three dried, powdered fruits, is commonly used in Ayurvedic medicine to support regular bowel habits and healthy digestive tracts.^x

Brush teeth

Neem, an extremely bitter herb, is said to be especially good for oral health. These days, there are *neem* toothpastes available. Bitter, astringent and pungent herbs are said to be best for fighting cavities, as they are *Kapha*-pacifying and often have antibacterial and antiviral activity.

Scrape the tongue

This is best done with a smooth tongue scraper made of gold, silver, copper, tin, brass or stainless steel. Tongue scrapers are U-shaped and it is most effective to hold the two ends and scrape from the back to the front of the tongue several times; each time discarding the collected material. Then swish your mouth with clean water and spit out the dirty water.

This routine cleans and freshens the mouth far more than simply removing plaque from the teeth. It also offers an opportunity to consider the appearance of the tongue coat daily. If the coat is thick, it is better to eat a simple, easy-to-digest diet until it clears up, as the coat is an indicator of the health of the digestive tract and the rest of the body. Ideally, the coat should be easily scraped off, leaving a pink, uniformly shaped tongue with no coat, but it should not appear raw either. If you are not sure what a healthy tongue looks like, most young children still have healthy looking tongues, as long as they don't have colds, are on pharmaceutical drugs, or are ill. If your tongue is not clean after you scrape it, it is a good idea to check with your health care practitioner to learn how to address your health.

Drink a glass of warm water

It is good to drink water after brushing your teeth and scraping your tongue, as you will not then swallow the bacteria collected over the course of the night. It can also aid in peristalsis.

Gargle with warm sesame oil

Gargle with warm, untoasted sesame oil to provide strength to jaws and voice, development of face, maximum taste and relish in food. Ayurvedic classics teach that this practice benefits the throat, lips, prevents dental cavities, roots the teeth firmly, reduces dental sensitivity and pain and help make the teeth strong enough to chew even the hardest food items.

Massage gums with warm sesame oil

Ayurveda teaches us that, if *prana*—life force—circulates smoothly, then blood will circulate smoothly, too, and will carry nutrition to, and waste from tissues, and that this supports the health of the tissues. My periodontist seems to agree with this as he has explained to me that the health of my teeth depend on the health of my gums. Massaging the gums with warm, untoasted sesame oil increases *prana* and blood flow to the gums.

Apply daily cooling salve or cool water to your eyes

A daily salve would need to be recommended by your natural health care provider, but anyone can enjoy splashing some cool water in their eyes in the morning. The eyes have a lot of work to do, especially in this computer-dominated age. Dr. Vasant Lad regularly recommends the use of a drop of food-grade rose water or castor oil in each eye and I have experienced benefit from this practice, but it is important not to put anything in your eyes without the guidance of a trained health care practitioner who knows you and your eyes. If you are not able to consult with someone or if you are not comfortable putting anything in your eyes, you can simply splash some cool water in your eyes, to cool and refresh them.

Meditate

O traveler get up; it is dawn-it is not right that you continue sleeping.

One who awakes, he finds, One who is asleep, he loses.

Get up and open your eyes from slumber and meditate on your Master.

Kabir

Joanne Marie 7/15/09 1:41 PM

Comment [1]: Or – the early bird catches the worm. Ha! Couldn't resist putting that here..

From Ayurveda to Ammachi to Swami Sivananda, to my own lineage and to Christian and other religious traditions, early morning hours are emphasized as being the best ones for meditation, prayer and obtaining true knowledge.

During these hours, the environment is serene; the mind is quieter and more inclined within. There is a quietness and peace in nature that can center the mind and refresh our senses.

Saints from many traditions have told us to lovingly meditate in these hours. Whenever my Guruji would put us in meditation in these hours he would say, “Never understand meditation as a burden. Always do it lovingly.” As with anything the saints say, there are secrets to this that go deeper than the obvious meaning. The obvious meaning here is that love and longing pull us closer to the Divine, while doing *sadhana* (spiritual practices) as a chore may render it little more than an exercise in mental focus. However, we will see that it is possible that approaching *sadhana* with love can also aid our physical, mental, emotional well-being and serve to reformat negative patterns that may have been established in utero or during birth.

Meditating with a loving attitude will exert a healing influence on the *Vata* that is predominant during predawn and dawn, and the resulting relaxation will allow for the smooth flow of *prana*. *Prana* is the equivalent of *Qi* in Chinese Medicine and martial arts

and it is well known in these paradigms that *qi* cannot flow if the practitioner or patient is not relaxed. This is also a common understanding in the practice of *hatha* yoga: that if the practitioner is not relaxed, *prana* will not be able to flow. So, if we are tense and result-oriented or rushed while we do our spiritual practices in the morning, the *qi* or *prana* cannot flow and this results in disturbance in the body, mind or spirit where *prana* flows. On the other hand, if we are so relaxed that we sleep through these hours, we encourage *tamas*, or the force of inertia in our lives, to create obstacles to the free flow of *prana*.

Chew aromatic herbs

Cardamom or mint is readily available. These can be chewed well and swallowed. The Ayurvedic classics teach that this practice leads to increased clarity, relish for life and food as well as freshening the mouth.

Exercise

...lightness of the body, ability to do hard work, keen digestion, depletion of excess fat, stable and distinct physique accrue from exercise. Persons suffering from diseases of Vata and Pitta; children, the aged and those having indigestion should avoid it.^{xi}

Exercise to the point of excessive sweating and exhaustion is a product of the common “more is better” approach that often prevails in many modern cultures. It is easy to think that nothing much is happening when we watch a yogi’s slow progression from one posture to the next or the *qi* gong practitioner who may not sweat or even breath heavily, but if we simply observe adept practitioners of yoga, *tai qi* or *qi gong*, we can find that they are in pretty good—sometimes very impressive—physical condition. Ayurveda teaches that it is ideal to exercise to half your capacity; that is, to stop at the appearance of sweat on the forehead, nose, armpits, joints of the limbs and the beginning of a dry mouth. This too is only recommended for a strong person and in cool seasons. Otherwise only mild exercise is optimal. Ayurvedic classics detail many problems that arise from too much exercise, including bleeding diseases, difficult breathing and emaciation. Excessive exercise, along with insomnia, too much sex, laughing, speaking and other endeavors that spend excessive *prana*, exhaust the person “just as a lion, after vanquishing an elephant.”^{xii}

In general, it is best for *Kapha* individuals to exercise strenuously. Weight lifting, brisk hiking, jogging, running and energetic forms of yoga all serve to energize and stimulate *Kapha* folks in a positive manner. *Pitta* people do well to exercise moderately. Swimming, brisk walking, moderate hiking and challenging but moderate forms of yoga are good choices. Those with a predominance of *Vata* benefit most from gentle exercise like brisk walking, gentle yoga, *qi gong* or *tai qi*.

Abhyanga or Warm oil self massage

Abhyanga should be resorted to daily, it wards off old age, exertion and aggravation for Vata; bestows good vision, nourishment to the body, long life, good sleep, good and strong skin... It should be avoided by persons suffering from aggravation of Kapha, who have just undergone purificatory [sic] therapies (like emesis, purgatives etc) and who are suffering from indigestion.^{xiii}

As a lubricated axis becomes strong and jerk-resistant, the body becomes firm, smooth and free from Vata and tolerant of exertion and exercise.^{xiv}

One unique feature of Ayurvedic medicine is its generous use of oils for therapeutic purposes. *Abhyanga* is the anointing of the body with warm, often herbal oils. While it is beyond the scope of this eBook to detail what oils to use and how to perform *abhyanga*, it is a powerful medicine and you can learn details from Appendix C in the book *Balance Your Hormones, Balance Your Life* or in *Abhyanga: Ayurvedic Oil Massage* on my website: <http://drclaudiawelch.com/resources/articles/abhyanga-ayurvedic-oil-massage/>.

Administer nasya (nasal) oil

Nasya is an oil or an herbal oil that is either applied to the inside of each nostril, or sniffed in through each nostril. The fathers of Ayurveda taught that this would benefit the head, face, hair, vision, smell, hearing, stiff neck, headache, facial paralysis, lockjaw, rhinitis, migraine, head tremors, veins, joints, ligaments and tendons of skull; that the face becomes cheerful and well developed, the voice melodious, stable and grave. We are advised to keep wind free and warm, take good food and control our sense organs. Very particular methods of making *nasya* are detailed, including descriptions of many drugs boiled 100 times in pure rain water, with the remaining decoction added to equal quantity of goat milk, etc. While most of us do not have access to all the listed herbs or time to prepare such a concoction, most of us will do well with warm, untoasted sesame oil or herbal oil. It is wise, again, to check with your health care practitioner to determine what would be best for you. I like Super Nasya Oil at the Ayurvedic Institute at www.Ayurveda.com.

Oil ears with warm oil

While some people enjoy filling each ear with about 10 drops of warm oil and leaving it in each side for about 10 minutes, others are more comfortable simply moistening the pinky finger with warm, untoasted sesame oil and lubricating the inside of the ear with this. *Vata* collects in empty spaces in the body and has a particular affinity with the ears and the sense of hearing, so this practice can help to pacify *Vata*, especially in the ears. It can be effective at helping ear diseases that are due to increased *Vata*, like tinnitus, loss of hearing, as well as in local tissues like a stiff neck, trigeminal neuralgia and TMJ.

Apply some warm oil to top of head

Classics advise to moisten the head with warm (not hot) oil daily to prevent headaches, hair loss, graying or thinning hair and to keep the sense organs cheerful and to promote sound sleep.

Foot massage

Massaging warm oil into the feet, especially the soles of the feet, is said to benefit not only our overworked feet, but also the vision. In the common massage practice called reflexology, each part of the feet represents a different organ or system of the body and so is a micro system that can affect the whole of our body. While most of us can't get a

daily, deep massage to our entire bodies, we can get some benefit by giving our feet a good massage each day.

Udvaartana

Udvaartana is the practice of massaging the body with soft, fragrant powders. It is said to mitigate *Kapha*, liquefy fat and produce stability, compactness and strength in the body and to support excellent health of the skin.

Bath & Grooming

Ayurvedic classics teach that bathing is purifying, aphrodisiac, life and appetite promoting, destroys fatigue, sweat and dirt, is resuscitative and promotes immunity and strength and valor; it removes itching, dirt, exhaustion, sweat, stupor, thirst, burning sensation and even sin. Perhaps this is Ayurveda's equivalent statement to "cleanliness is next to godliness." While it is so highly rated, there are some specific considerations that the classics outline:

- Pouring warm water over the body bestows strength, but the same over the head, leads to loss of strength of the hair and eyes.
- Contra-indications for bathing: facial paralysis, diseases of the eyes, mouth and ears, diarrhea, flatulence, putrid nasal discharge, indigestion and immediately after eating.
- Along with bathing, one should cut hair, nails, and mustache, keep the feet and orifices (ears, nose, eyes, feet, urethra and anus) clean of waste to promote intelligence, purity and longevity.
- After bathing, apply natural pleasing fragrances, like natural essential oils of aromatic flowers or other plant parts. These produce good smell, longevity, charm, nourishment, strength and pleasing manners.
- After applying a fragrance, dress in clean clothes which are not extravagant but are pleasant to look at. This practice enhances charm, fame, life span, removes inauspiciousness and produces pleasure
- Wear precious stones, potent hymns and herbs in an amulet.
- Wear ornaments that contain gems, to support *ojas*—a refined substance of our bodies that is responsible for immunity as well as spiritual progress. Gems can also support various planetary strengths and mitigate others, if prescribed by a competent Jyotishi, or astrologer.

Wear footwear

Just as massaging the feet can benefit vision, Ayurveda encourages the use of footwear to benefit eyesight and tactile sense organs as well as to protect the feet. It is also said to support good energy and healthy libido.

Once weekly apply an irritating drop to the eyes

The eye is full of tejas and has risk of troubles especially from slesman (Kapha) hence rasanjana should be used once a week, to drain it (Kapha) out...^{xv}

Rasanjana is prepared from the decoction of daruharidra (berberis aristata). It is an irritant and so used to produce more lacrimation.^{xvi}

It may sound odd to irritate the eye, but there is a reason for it. The eyes contain a great deal of *tejas*, which is a heating and transformative force in the body. *Kapha* can come to protect the channels of the eyes from being damaged by the heat of *tejas*. This *Kapha* can then become stagnant. If the eye is caused to significantly tear once a week, this can clear out the channels of the eyes. This should only be done under the guidance of your health care practitioner. These drops should only be applied at night, as the eyes are weaker during the day, and their *tejas* is increased and aggravated by the sun.

General Life Guidelines

While the above guidelines outline a daily morning routine, our Ayurvedic classics do not provide such an intensive regimen for the rest of our day. Instead, the Ayurvedic sages understood that, after our morning routine, most of us will go out into the world and need to attend to our jobs and families. However, there are some general life guidelines they include in their discussion of daily routine, that are useful to keep in mind as we go about our business. Some recommendations are simple, like using an umbrella, which is just common sense. Others, like some of the moral ideals, are more difficult to master even in a lifetime.

Use an umbrella

Use one, if necessary, to protect against rain or intense sun. While the sun is healthy, too much can aggravate the health of skin and increase heat in general in our bodies.

Avoid harsh environments

Avoid direct breeze, sun, dust, snow, dew, strong winds, or extreme weather.

Have a good posture

Specifically during certain activities. For example: don't sneeze, belch, cough, sleep dine or copulate in improper postures, lest you throw your back out or create some other problem.

Avoid spending time in improper places

The classics instruct us to avoid the shade of a holy tree or other shrine in which deities reside and to avoid dirty and unholy things. Along these lines, they advise us not to spend the night in trees, social or religious places and, what to speak of nights, to not even spend our days in places of slaughter, forests, haunted houses and burial grounds.

In the modern day we may not be aware of where ethereal beings may be spending time, but we can use our intuition and avoid places that feel dark, dirty, contaminated or otherwise polluted or depressing, unless we have good reasons to do otherwise. Such places might include graveyards, slaughterhouses, bars, dark and dirty alleys or other places that tend to attract energies that resonate with these qualities. Whether or not disembodied spirits are a concern to you, it is wise to avoid many of the same places, as they are places where thieves, thugs or diseases tend to prevail.

Managing natural urges

Natural urges like coughing, sneezing, vomiting, ejaculating, passing gas, eliminating, laughing or crying, should not be either repressed or initiated prematurely by force, lest the smooth movement of *prana* be aggravated. Suppressing these urges can lead to stagnant *prana* or *prana* that is forced to move in an unnatural direction. This is never a good idea, as when *prana* moves in a wrong direction, disharmony and eventually disease is bound to result.

Regarding many of these urges, Ayurveda recommends covering your mouth when you sneeze, laugh, or yawn. You may not have realized it, but your mother was practicing Ayurveda when she told you the same thing. Spraying our germs around our environment is a good way to perpetuate illness. We can also add that it's a good idea to wash hands regularly, especially when we are sick or people around us are ill. Washing hands, while rubbing them together for 20 seconds, under warm water, is one of the best methods to avoid delivering or recycling germs. No need to get carried away, however, and use Triclosan-laden antibacterial hand-sanitizers every five minutes. It is usually natural to be exposed to our environments and for our immune systems to rise to the challenges.

Miscellaneous

Don't sit on your own heels for long, make ugly movements of the body, or blow your nose forcefully unnecessarily. This is an odd assortment of admonishments, but useful. Sitting on the heels too long can encourage sciatica. Making "ugly movements" of the body means to make jerking movements, which can encourage pulled muscles. For example, my sister, on her first time out on cross country skis, flailed her arms and limbs in a comical way that made us all laugh, until the next morning, when her low back was so painful that she could barely walk.

I don't know what would make someone blow his nose forcefully or unnecessarily, but it would not be a good idea. Forceful blowing can burst local blood vessels, stimulate nosebleeds and can disturb the smooth flow of *prana* in the head.

Another recommendation involves the use of smoke inhalation of certain herb mixes and its proper and improper uses. Smoking is not advisable these days as most people have contraindications for it and the herbs, methods and pipes that were used a thousand years ago are specific, complicated and were prepared in manners and with herbs that are not available to most of us today.

Pace yourself

It is odd that we often consider fatigue a sign of weakness of character, when we honor other natural urges. If we are hungry, we eat. If we are thirsty, we drink. But, if we're tired, we immediately think, "what's wrong with me?" It may be that there is nothing wrong. You simply need to rest. The Ayurvedic classics advise that we stop the activities of the body, of speech and of the mind before getting exhausted. This can help us preserve *prana* - our life force - and stay healthy.

Protect your eyes

Don't gaze at the sun for long, carry heavy weight on your head or stare at objects, which are minute, shining, dirty or unpleasant. In modern times, we can include staring too long at a computer screen, television or prolonged reading. The eyes have an associated *srotas*, or channel, that is one of the channels of the mind. How we affect our eyes affects our minds.

Protect all your sense organs

The five sense organs are the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin. The classics advise that they should neither be too strained nor too lazy. As with the eyes, the other sense organs are also affiliated with the channels of the mind, so affect it accordingly.

Eat

While it is beyond the scope here to get too deeply into dietary concerns, there are a few guidelines that apply to most people.

- Maintain proper strength of digestion, by eating one-third to one half of the saturation point.
- One should regularly consume rice, pulses, rock salt, amla (a main ingredient in chyavanprash)^{xvii}, barley, pure water, milk, ghee and honey.
- Avoid taking food, sex, sleep or studies at dawn or at dusk.
- Eat only after digesting the previous meal.
- Eat the main meal of the day in the middle of the day, when digestive capacity is greatest.
- Eat that which is suitable to you, in limited quantity.
- Generally follow the guidelines below for *how* to eat:

Enjoy:

- ❑ Mostly whole, freshly cooked foods including cooked grains
- ❑ Warm, mushy, nourishing foods
- ❑ Warm drinks
- ❑ Chewing your food thoroughly, in a calm environment
- ❑ Taking a deep breath after swallowing your last bite, before going on to your next activity
- ❑ Eating meals at regular times every day

Avoid:

- ❑ Fruit or fruit juice within a half hour of any other food
- ❑ Highly processed foods (like frozen, canned, packaged or fast food)
- ❑ Cold food
- ❑ Raw food (fruits, veggies, salads), especially in the morning and evening. They are okay to have in the middle of the day, especially in warm weather.
- ❑ Cold or carbonated drinks
- ❑ Deep fried food
- ❑ Refined sugar
- ❑ Caffeine, especially coffee
- ❑ Alcohol (the classics tell us not to engage in anything associated with making, distributing or consuming wine)

- ❑ Red meat
- ❑ Eating while anxious or upset

For more specific foods that are appropriate for each individual, you can consult with an Ayurvedic dietary consultant.

Take up means of livelihood congruent with ethical living

All human activities are meant for the happiness of all the living beings; such happiness is based on dharma (righteousness, right moral conduct); hence every person should adopt (follow) righteousness always.^{xviii}

Ayurveda suggests choosing an occupation that helps you achieve your life goals *and* that is also in accordance with high ethical standards.

The ancient sage Charaka taught that the best way to support healthy *rasa* and protect immunity is to make efforts to maintain a serene mind and to acquire knowledge. He taught that practicing non-violence is the surest way to encourage longevity, developing courage and prowess are the best ways to promote strength, learning is the ideal way to support nourishment, controlling the sense organs is the best method to promote happiness, knowledge of reality is the best method to promote pleasure and celibacy is the best of all paths.^{xix} Charaka was not just a philosopher. He wrote one of the fundamental texts of Ayurveda over a thousand years ago and this text is still referred to today. It is a very practical text. This makes Charaka's advice all the more powerful, as he was a man who well knew the effects of habits, foods and practices on the health of the body.

In modern society happiness is associated with gratification of our sense organs, and that too in short order. If we are not able to satisfy our desires we feel dissatisfied. Charaka is teaching the opposite. If we control our sense organs and the desires associated with them, then we will find a life of contentment. This is closely related to a life of celibacy.

My grandfather guru used to say that celibacy is not simply avoiding lustful thoughts & deeds, but requires chastity of each sense organ. Chastity of the ears requires not listening to gossip or harsh words. Chastity of the eyes requires us to refrain from looking at others with lust, enmity or rancor. Chastity of the tongue requires us to refrain from quarreling, spreading gossip, using harsh, abusive or dishonest words, and to avoid speech that causes dissension, division or discord, speaking with harmful intention. One should speak appropriate to the occasion, with words that are good, in brief, which are truthful and pleasant. We can also discipline our sense of taste by consuming a *sattvic* (pure & balanced) diet in moderate proportions, so as not to disturb the digestion and state of mind.^{xx} We can discipline the senses of smell and touch by curbing our desires for indulgences beyond necessary and by utilizing purposeful and healing scents and touches.

Ayurveda teaches that pursuing a life of peace and study is more likely to ensure happiness than a life of chasing ambition and desire, which is more apt to ensure an exhausted nervous system and an imbalanced mind.

Adopt a middle path

The classics teach us to adopt a middle path, avoiding extremes in all dealings. This has quite a daoist flavor as well. Often we might be resistant to this idea, feeling that it does not leave room for passion or enthusiasm in life. However, careful observation may show that those who are practicing life on the middle path may have a more sustainable enthusiasm with a high degree of contentment, whereas one who indulges passionately in his desires never seems to satisfy them. Curbing our desires results in less violence, theft, jealousy and inappropriate or hurtful sexual activity.

Have compassion with all living beings

If we were to summarize the rules of conduct that the classics recommend, we could turn to the Golden Rule: *Treat your neighbor as you yourself would like to be treated*,^{xxi} but we are also given some specific recommendations as follows:

- We need not be naive but neither should we suspect everyone
- We should give gifts, within reason and help those who have no means of livelihood, who are suffering from diseases or are afflicted with grief, to the utmost extent. Beggars should not be disappointed or abused
- We should become well versed in the art of adoring others
- We should serve friends with affection and good deeds
- We should keep good company; that is, those who try to lead ethical lives
- We are not to find fault, or perpetuate misunderstandings or faithlessness with our elders, scriptures or other sources of wisdom. On the contrary, they should be worshipped
- Even the animals, insects and ants should be treated as one's own self
- One should be helpful to his enemies, even if they are not helpful
- One should maintain a centered mind in the face of good fortune or bad
- One should be envious of the cause of the good welfare of others, but not of the effect. That is to say, it is worthwhile to emulate skill and ethical living, but not be envious of its result—like wealth or happiness—in others

The Healing Potential of the Daily Routine

It is interesting to notice that, while general life principles are given as guidelines to live our lives, the bulk of specific directions are geared towards a morning routine, from waking sometime between 3am and dawn, to meditating, grooming, exercising and bathing. All this takes place before breakfast. From breakfast on we are left to our discretion, to apply ethical living to our particular needs and patterns. Why is so much emphasis given to our early morning routine?

If we consider again the concept of the microcosm and macrocosm, we may find an answer. As mentioned earlier, predawn through early morning would correlate with conception, life in utero, birth and early childhood.

Whenever we see a pattern that dates back as far as we can remember in our lives, we can guess that it has its inception in conception, pregnancy, birth or very early childhood. These are the stages of life most crucial to forming lifelong patterns and rhythms because

all our organs, meridians and proclivities are developed during this time. Physical, mental, spiritual and emotional patterns established then are difficult to change because they are so deeply ingrained. Imbalances during these critical early stages often create *khavaigumyas*—challenge areas—that can last a lifetime.

Many people have difficult lifelong physical or emotional patterns that may be the result of trauma suffered during these early stages of life. One may feel a vague, free-floating sense of anxiety for her entire life. Another may have always had a weak digestive system. Still another may find herself unable to have healthy intimate relationships. Often there is a sense of hopelessness about changing these tenacious patterns.

It was the opinion of Sant Ajaib Singh ji Maharaj, my Guruji, that there is always hope for change and healing. He told me “a doctor should always think that he will be able to find the goodness; he will be able to find the cure of the pain of the person.” My Guru didn’t tell me that there were certain conditions that were impossible to treat. He told me that the outcome of a treatment was not my concern; that was in the hands of the Divine, but that it is our job, both as doctors and patients, to make our best efforts.

If we apply our law of microcosms and macrocosms to this dilemma, we see that we could use predawn through early morning as a window of opportunity every day to affect old, stubborn patterns and thereby change or heal negative patterns. Each morning we have a new opportunity to establish healthy pathways that will replace the negative ones created during our pregnancy or birth, or to reinforce the positive ones that may have been created. Each new day ushers in a cascade of new possibilities and a shower of second chances.

If we follow the daily routine that the Ayurvedic sages recommend, we will be harmonizing *Vata* and cleansing the channels of the mind—affecting vitally important forces in pattern development. *Vata* is active both at birth and the pre dawn through early morning hours. It is, by nature, easily affected by both positive and negative influences. It also, serves to affect the development of the mind, through *prana*, our life force.

The meditation and oil massages outlined in the daily routine both serve to pacify *Vata*. Additionally, we can notice that all the sense organs—the eyes, ears, nose, skin and mouth are cleansed or oiled. Remember that the sense organs are associated with the channels of the mind.^{xxii}

When we meditate *lovingly* during predawn, we are able to accept nourishment or food of the Lord in the same way that we might have received sustenance during our in utero and birth experience. When we follow this and the rest of the morning routine, we pacify *Vata*, *prana* flows freely, our mental and physical apparatus becomes well organized and we are delivered into the new day as a healthy individual. And perhaps we are healing the relative macrocosm of our in utero and birth experience at the same time, thereby benefiting our entire life.

Now, if the microcosm of our lifetime can be lovingly affected, then perhaps even the macrocosm of the ages will be positively affected.

While we have gone into the daily routine in some detail, here is a summary of the morning routine.

A Morning Routine

Wake up during predawn hours
Eliminate
Brush teeth
Scrape the tongue
Drink a glass of warm water
Gargle with warm sesame oil
Massage gums with warm sesame oil
Apply cooling salve or cool water to eyes
Meditate
Chew aromatic herbs
Exercise appropriately for your constitution
Abhyanga (Self massage with warm oil)
Administer nasya (nasal) oil
Lubricate ears with warm oil
Apply some warm oil to top of head
Foot massage
Apply body powders
Bath & grooming
Apply natural fragrances
Dress in clean, pleasant clothes
Wear footwear

ⁱ Sushruta Samhita:Sutrasthanam:XIV:11

ⁱⁱ Rasa is derived from the root “Ras” to go, as it continuously flows through and permeates every vital principle of an animated organism. It is successively transformed into each tissue of the body. Rasa flows out of the heart and “constantly soothes, maintains and irrigates by transudation the body, and further contributes to its growth, and supports life owing to the dynamical effects of causes which lie beyond the ken of human understanding. The nature and course of this rasa, which runs through the whole system, can be inferred from the growth, attenuation, or other modified conditions of the body.” Sushruta Samhita:Sutrasthanam:XIV:3

ⁱⁱⁱ Ashtanga Hridayam: Sutrasthanam: I:11 Vagbhata. Translated by prf. K. R. Srikantha Murthy. Ashtanga Hridayam. Krishnadas Academy, Varanasi. 1991.

^{iv} Ashtanga Hridayam: Sutrasthanam: I:11

^v Ashtanga Hridayam: Sutrasthanam: I:12

^{vi} Svoboda, Robert E., Ayurveda: Life, Health and Longevity. Penguin Books. 1992.

^{vii} Charaka Samhita: Sutrasthanam:II and Ashtanga Hridayam: Sutrasthanam: II

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- ^{viii} Sushruta Samhita: Sutrasthanam; VI:15
- ^{ix} Ashtanga Hridayam:Sutrasthanam:II:1a
- ^x Triphala is commonly found in India and widely available online or at herbal vendors, like www.banyanbotanicals.com and other places. It is good to use organic Triphala, to avoid it entirely if pregnant or in certain other conditions. It is important to check with your health care practitioner before including this or any herbal compound in your daily routine.
- ^{xi} Ashtanga Hridayam: Sutrasthanam: II
- ^{xii} Ashtanga Hridayam; Sutrasthanam;II:14
- ^{xiii} Ashtanga Hridayam: Sutrasthanam: II
- ^{xiv} Charaka Samhita: Sutrasthanam:II
- ^{xv} Ashtanga Hridayam:Sutrasthanam:II
- ^{xvi} ibid
- ^{xvii} Chyavanprash is an herbal jam that is used regularly in Ayurveda to support health, strength and stamina. It is available at www.banyanbotanicals.com as well as many other places.
- ^{xviii} Ashtanga Hridayam:Sutrasthanam:II:20
- ^{xix} Charaka Samhita: Sutrasthanam:XXX:13-15
- ^{xx} Sattvic diet is one that consists of whole grains, pulses, vegetables, fruits and a moderate amount of dairy. It avoids fermented, old, burned food, meat, fish and eggs, as well as intoxicants and very spicy food.
- ^{xxi} Ashtanga Hridayam:Sutrasthanam:II 46
- ^{xxii} For further information on the channels of the mind, see Dr. Claudia Welch's Secrets of the Mind: The 10 Channels Revealed, also on www.bigshakti.com