

# Health, Harmony and Peace of Mind Through Ayurveda

The journey toward perfect health and the journey toward enlightenment are in many ways parallel paths. As we grow and evolve as spirits, we learn to live in ever-greater harmony with our environment. Harmony brings peace of mind and, according to Ayurveda<sup>[1]</sup>, perfect health.

The term for perfect health in Ayurveda is Svastha. Literally translated Svastha means "to be fully established in the Self". Hence, when we are fully established in knowing our true nature as God, we express our full potential. This represents optimal health for that person.

Ayurveda is a journey to perfect health, peace of mind and, ultimately, to enlightenment. By the very laws of Sankhya philosophy, human incarnation is disharmonious. Once incarnated, humanity forgets its true nature as spirit and lives as a physical being guided by the senses. This journey is one of the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain and suffering. This simplistic and, as some writers have stated, animalistic existence brings about both physical and emotional pain and suffering. The process of healing is the process of remembering. When a person remembers their true nature as spirit, they become empowered to master the senses and make choices that bring harmony, not pleasure. The fruit of this action is peace of mind and well-being.

When we live out of harmony we suffer. In the physical body suffering takes the form of pain and symptoms of disease. Ayurveda understands that these symptoms are simply the body's voice communicating that we are living out of harmony. When we change our life and re-create a life of greater harmony, our bodies reflect this change. There is less suffering. The greater the change toward harmony, the more radiant the body becomes.

The mind is no different. It is subtler, but the same laws apply. Symptoms of a diseased mind include unhappiness, depression, sadness, anxiety, anger and any other emotion other than peace of mind. These symptoms are also communicating that we are living out of harmony, that some aspect of our life is disharmonious.

Healing is the process of returning to harmony. Once back in harmony the body and the mind have no reason to communicate symptoms. The body becomes at ease; the mind becomes at peace. In this state, awareness reawakens to its true nature as spirit. Self-realization has occurred and the individual soul continues its advance toward enlightenment. When Self-realization occurs twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, the door opens to becoming a Jivan Mukta; a liberated soul, and enlightenment ensues.

Ayurveda teaches us that we are all unique individuals. We were conceived with a unique constitution<sup>[2]</sup> or fundamental balance of energies that define who we are on the physical level. It defines what we are naturally attracted to and what causes us to move out of balance and experience disease. Depending on our constitution, we thrive in a particular environment. We take our environment in through the senses, which are the portals to our body and consciousness. The energies we take in either blend with us or disrupt our harmony. Proper diet (taste), aromas (smell), sounds (hearing), colors (vision), and touch are essential to maintaining internal equilibrium. When harmonious impressions are taken in, the body is healthy and the mind peaceful. When disharmonious impressions are taken in, the body and mind suffer. Hence, Ayurveda focuses on helping individuals understand themselves as unique beings. With that understanding, a person can become empowered to make choices that are in harmony with who they are. Ayurveda teaches us that nothing is right for everyone but everything is right for someone. Ayurveda is the path of understanding what is right for you.

Ayurveda also teaches us that it is not only the intake of sensory impressions that determines our well-being it is our lifestyle as a whole. Proper daily regimens are essential: A regular schedule that includes meditation, yoga practices, abhyanga<sup>[3]</sup> (morning application of body oil), proper eating

habits and proper hygiene brings about good health and peace of mind. When combined with proper intake of sensory impressions, the depth of the peace and well-being we experience is infinite.

### The Three Constitutional Types and Their Path Toward Health, Harmony and Peace of Mind

#### Vata Individuals

The constitution of vata individuals contains a great deal of air and ether, which means they tend toward the qualities of coldness, lightness, dryness and instability. These qualities may be experienced as feeling cold easily, having a thin body structure, dry skin, a tendency to move quickly, difficulty staying focused and frequent changes of interests. These individuals have a lot of interests and often drift from teacher to teacher, job to job, and relationship to relationship.

It is important for people with this constitution to follow a lifestyle that emphasizes opposite qualities. Warm or cooked heavy foods provide nurturing and grounding. Oil in the food and applied to the body alleviates dryness. Regular routines and disciplines create stability and improve focus.

#### Pitta Individuals

The constitution of pitta individuals contains a great deal of fire and a small amount of water. These people tend to feel hot, have oily skin and a moderate body build. They tend to be focused, goal oriented individuals with a competitive and intense nature. Pitta individuals tend to complete what they begin before moving on to the next goal. They enjoy the satisfaction of completion but experience emotional and physical turmoil when failing or losing.

People of pitta nature are balanced by a lifestyle that emphasizes cool and dry impressions through the senses as well as greater spontaneity and playfulness. For example, raw salads and foods that are not too spicy are best. These individuals find it easy to adopt routines, but more playfulness and less seriousness is needed to bring balance.

#### Kapha Individuals

The constitution of kapha individuals contains great amounts of earth and water. These people tend toward the qualities of heaviness, coldness, oiliness and stability. They tend to move slowly, act slowly and stick with the routines they develop. Their challenge can be in adopting new routines, as change is difficult. These individuals also have a tendency toward becoming overweight and lethargic.

People of kapha nature require the qualities of lightness, dryness and warmth to bring them balance. Light, spicy cooked foods are best. Oils are to be avoided. A routine emphasizing spontaneity and movement is essential.

Creating a lifestyle in harmony with our constitution is not easy but it is the most important thing in life. The difficulty associated with the task causes many seekers of good health and peace of mind to give up. But why? Do we expect peace of mind, perfect health and enlightenment to be easy? If it were easy we would all have it and then why would we be here? Sankhya philosophy teaches us that we are only here to experience creation and re-learn about ourselves as spirit. The journey of our learning is the journey of the soul finding its way back to God. If we knew everything, what would there be to experience and learn? Each of us must simply do our best and realize that growing toward perfect health and enlightenment takes time. With this attitude, wherever we are on the journey is perfect. We can love ourselves in spite of our perceived imperfections. With self-love comes patience. Patience is a peaceful tool to carry on the journey toward both perfect health and enlightenment.

Hari Om Tat Sat

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