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## **Ayurveda for a Better World**

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### **Abstract**

*Ayurveda, the knowledge of life is regarded as the oldest form of healthcare in the world and its fundamentals can be found in the Hindu scriptures called the Vedas. The objective of this paper is to spread awareness about our health and overall well-being by working towards balance and harmony within all aspects of the self and not by fighting diseases. This paper narrows down its concern to the understanding of “doshas”, “rasas”, “rasayanas”, “panchakarma” and “yoga”. The paper also forwards some remedial measures for common maladies to strike a balance between body, mind and soul.*

### **Introduction**

*What is Ayurveda?*

It is very difficult to maintain balance in today's life. In this fast-paced life with fierce competition polluted environment and adulterated food, having a healthy life is a dream. Even if one is able to concentrate on the physical body, the emotional upheavals take its toll. Having a balance between the two is simply impossible. Modern medicine with its side effects and drug resistance is becoming really challenging. Ayurveda has stepped in and people are embracing it as it lays emphasis on prevention rather than cure by restructuring life style and aligning body, mind and the soul. So, what exactly is Ayurveda? Ayurveda is a holistic knowledge about life. It is a Sanskrit term formed by conjoining two words --- 'Ayus' and 'Veda', which stand for life and knowledge respectively. It

means the knowledge of life or the science of life (Sachdeva, 2011). It encompasses mind, body (including your senses) and your soul. Its objective is to achieve health and well being by working towards balance and harmony within all aspects of the self.

It is regarded as the oldest form of healthcare in the world and its fundamentals can be found in the Hindu scriptures called the Vedas. (Rig Veda, Sam Veda, Yajur Veda, Atharva Veda). According to the Vedas, Dhanwantari was regarded as the world's first surgeons and a source of Ayurveda. Shrusrut was his disciple and was known as the father of surgery who wrote Sushrut Samhita. Charaka is another contributor of Ayurveda who is referred to as the Father of the Indian Medicine. He wrote Charaka Samhitā, an important text on medicine in Ayurveda.

### **Basic Principles of Ayurveda - Tridoshas**

A human being is a microcosm of the Universe and human body consists of the same elements the universe is made of. Ayurveda presumes that the universe is made of five elements ---- *Prithvi, Aap, Tej, Vayu, Akaash*. i.e. earth, water, light, air and space.

These elements are represented in humans in the form of three energies or dynamic forces termed '**Doshas**'. They are *Vat, Pitta* and *Kapha* (Kapur, 2016:18). The following table describes the doshas and their function in the human body.

**Table1. The Three Doshas**

SN	Doshas	Meaning	Manifestations
1	<b>Vaat</b> Air and space	<b>That which moves things</b>	It pertains to air and ether elements. Most of the physical phenomena is ascribed to the nervous system This energy is generally seen as the force, which directs nerve impulses, circulation, respiration, and elimination
2	<b>Pitta</b> Fire and water	<b>That which digests things</b>	It pertains to fire and water elements. The entire chemical process operating in the human body including enzymes, hormones and the complete nutritional system.
3	<b>Kapha</b> Water and earth	<b>That which holds things</b>	It pertains to water and earth elements. <i>Kapha</i> is responsible for activities of the skeletal and the anabolic system, actually the entire physical volume of an organism.

It is believed that we can maintain good health by maintaining a good balance of the *doshas* in our life. When the *doshas* function normally, the body gets sustenance and, the moment there is a flaw in the equilibrium of the *doshas* we suffer from various ailments. The body starts decaying. Ayurveda identifies three basic metabolic body types corresponding to three basic life energy forces, or *doshas*. Each person's constitution is seen as a mixture of these *doshas*. When any of the *doshas* increases or recedes the body becomes sick. We then have to get back the right balance by maintaining the right food, right behavior, and some medicines. In a similar manner, our whole life span, body part, a single day/night and seasons can be represented according to the prevalence of *Vat*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* (Marisal 2015). It also states the remedies to balance the *doshas*.

**Table2. The Doshas according to Time**

S N	Element s	Life	Body	Day	Nigh t	Seasons	Remedy
1	<i>Kapha</i> Water and earth	Childhood	Upper part	Morning 6 to 10 am	6 pm to 10 pm	is influenced in Spring (February-April)	Techniques like vomiting to bring out the toxic materials accumulating within the body
2	<i>Pitta</i> Fire and water	Adulthood	Middle part	Afternoon 10 to 2 pm	10 pm to 2 am	is affected during Autumn (October-December)	Go for purgation in Autumn
3	<i>Vaat</i> Air and space	Old age	Lower part	Evening 2 to 6 pm	2am to 6 am	June to August (the concluding part of Summer)	Take medicated enema towards the fag end of Summer

According to *Sushrut Samhita* a person who is cheerful in mind, body and spirit, has healthy appetite and whose natural urges are normal is a healthy person. All his *doshas* are balanced.

### Classification of Rasas

**Aahar** means food. According to taste food is divided into six '**rasas**'. The Sanskrit word for taste is *rasa*. These *rasas* are responsible for aggravating the *doshas* or even calming them. Food is very important in Ayurveda as it helps in maintaining the balance of the *doshas* and even in rectifying the imbalances.

The following chart shows the different types of *rasas* (Krishnan, 2018), the *doshas* they are made of, their examples and their positive as well as adverse effects on the body.

**Table3. Types of Rasas**

SN	Rasas	Doshas	Example	Positive Effect on the body	Adverse Effect on the body
1	Madhur sweet	Earth and water	Mango, honey, rice, sugar, milk, tubers , bananas , apricots	nourishes, builds and strengthens	fat diseases, obesity, diabetes
2	Amla sour	Earth and fire	lime, citrus	stimulates appetite and digestion	loss of strength,
3	Lawan salty	Water and fire	Rocksalt, pickles	lubricates tissues, holds water	wrinkles, thirst, loss of strength, baldness
4	Katu pungent or acrid	Fire and air	Pepper, ginger, chillies, onions, garlic	improves metabolism	thirst, depletion of strength, fainting
5	Tikta bitter	Air and ether	Bitter gourd, methi, neem, turmeric, radish, spinach and spices.	cleanses and detoxifies, reduces fat	gas or stomach upset
6	Kashai astringent	Air and earth	Alum, tamarind, lentils, cabbage, cauliflower, tea	cleanses blood Maintains blood sugar	gas or constipation

In Ayurveda taste is made up of different components. When we put the substance in our mouth it is known as **rasa**. Then the effect this taste has on digestion is its **virya**. It is in the form of heating or cooling effect it has on the

body. Taste also has a more long term and subtle effect on the body and its metabolism. This post digestive effect is known as **vipak** (Dubey et al 2011). For instance, for hot chilli peppers, one immediately experiences its pungent taste and heating energy; observing a numbing sensation in the faces and urine the next day. Rasas have direct effect on doshas. Madhur ras has water and earth elements hence it's heavy, cool and moist. This *dosha* in excess will aggravate *kapha* but it will balance *vata* and *pitta*. The following table shows the elements the *rasas* are made of, their qualities, and the *doshas* they balance or aggravate. This also indicates that we can make changes in our diet according to the diseases i.e. if a person is suffering from cough and cold he must avoid sweets.

### Qualities of Rasas

SN	Rasas	Elements	Qualities	Balances	In excess aggravates
1	Madhur sweet	Earth and water	Heavy, moist, cool	Vata and pitta	Kapha
2	Sour	Earth and fire	Warm, moist, heavy	Vata	Pitta and kapha
3	Lawan Salty	Water and fire	Heavy, moist, warm	Vata	Pitta and kapha
4	Katu Bitter	Fire and air	Hot, light, dry	kapha	Pitta and vata
5	Tikta pungent or acid	Air and ether	Cool, light, dry	Kapha and pitta	Vata
6	Kashai astringent Air and earth	Air and earth	Cool, light, dry	Pitta and kapha	Vata

### Rasayanas

*Rasayanas* or rejuvenation therapy helps to promote longevity in healthy individuals. They replenish the vital fluids of our body promoting zest and vitality. *Rasayanas* have micronutrients which boost the immunity, vigour, vitality and longevity (Dua, 2009). The following rasayanas are widely used.

1. **Triphala:** It consists of three fruits i.e. amla, haritaki and bibhitak. It balances digestion and elimination. It's also good for cholesterol balancing, kidney cleansing, cardio vascular health and respiratory health.

2. **Pippali:** It pacifies vitiated *vata*. It is one of the best herbs for enhancing digestion, assimilation and metabolism of the foods we eat
3. **Haritaki:** It is a one of three herbs used in triphala, the primary Ayurvedic tonic for maintaining health. It is a rejuvenative for *vata*.
4. **Ghee:** It (clarified butter) is among the best rejuvenating and longevity-promoting foods. It aids digestion and calms the nerves. Ghee's rate of absorption is high, making it an excellent medium for transporting the nutrients of other foods to the tissues.
5. **Chawanprasha:** It belongs to the category of 'Rasayana' preparations. These are valued for their support of youthfulness, vigor, and vitality of the body and ability to forestall the aging process, senility and debility. It aids the proper functioning of cells and acts as a rejuvenative tonic and protects against diseases.

## **Panchakarma**

*Panchakarma* is the cleansing process prescribed in Ayurveda if toxins in the body are abundant. (Joshi, 1997). They are described below:

- a. **Snehan**  
Snehan means massage that can be done with sesame oil on the body all year long. In winters massage can be done with mustard oil. Massage cleanses different toxins from the body channels and nourishes the body tissues stimulating internal functions. Massage heals insomnia, exhaustion, weakness of nerves, unhealthy dry skin, and laziness.
- b. **Swedan**  
Swedan is like sauna or hot fomentation which removes the impurities released by massage.
- c. **Vaman**  
Vaman is induced vomiting by giving medicines. It removes kapha toxins and is beneficial in bronchial asthma, chronic allergies, vitiligo, hyperacidity, chronic indigestion, nasal congestion, obesity, psychological disorders, skin disorders etc.
- d. **Virechan**  
Virechan is purgation. It removes *Pitta* toxins from the body that are accumulated in the liver and gallbladder. It completely cleanses the gastro-intestinal tract. It is used in chronic fever, diabetes, paraplegia, hemiplegia, joint disorders, digestive disorders, constipation, hyperacidity etc.
- e. **Basti**  
Basti means enema. It cleanses the accumulated toxins from all the three doshas, *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. It is useful in hemiplegia, paraplegia, colitis, convalescence, constipation, digestive disorders, backache and sciatica, obesity, piles etc.

## Yoga

Patanjali's 'Yoga Sutra' gives guidance on how to gain mastery over mind and emotions and advice on spiritual growth. The word Yoga is derived from 'yuj' which means to join together so this can be considered as the union of mind and body (Nicholas, 2016). The health of the body is dependent on the health and balance of the mind. Yoga has the following six branches:

- **Hatha yoga:** It involves asanas and pranayamas.
- **Raja yoga:** It is also known as Astanga Yoga and focuses on meditation. The branches of Astanga yoga are – Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi.
- **Karma yoga:** It focuses on doing the right karma.
- **Bhakti yoga:** It's a path of devotion to practice acceptance and tolerance.
- **Jnana yoga** – The path of wisdom through study.
- **Tantra yoga** – Focuses on ritual and ceremony.

The asanas practiced under yoga can be beneficial in relieving anxiety and depression, arthritis, asthma, cardiovascular disease, chronic pain, chronic heart failure, hypertension, back pain, mental health etc.

## Common ailments

Some common ailments can easily be cured by ayurvedic drugs. The chart below gives the ailment, its symptoms and treatment.

**Table5. Common Ailments and their Treatment**

SN	Ailment	Symptoms	Treatment
1	Arthritis	Inflamed joints leading to pain.	Sinhanaad guggul, Dashmoolarishta, Rasna guggul, Yograj guggul
2	Asthama	Attacks of labored breathing, chest constriction and coughing	Sitopaladi churna, Trikuti churna, Vasa churna
3	Diarrhoea	Frequent liquid or watery stools	Kutaja churna, Hingwastak churna
4	Constipation	Difficulty in passing bowels	Avipattikar churna, Swadishta virechan churna
5	Gastritis	Burning sensation, vomiting	Kamduha, avipattikar churna, shukti bhasma, shutshekhar
6	Dyspepsia	Loss of appetite	Lawan bhaskar churna
7	Diabetes	Over eating, oversleeping, increased frequency of	Chandraprabha vati, Arogya vardhini,

		micturation, loss of weight	Shilajit vati, vasant kusumakar
8	High blood Pressure	Severe headache, heaviness	Sarpagandha tablets, Linseed oil, lasunadi bati

## Conclusion

Health is wealth. In this modern era we are losing our health as we are unable to maintain balance in our lives. Knowledge of Ayurveda will enable us to make changes in our food and lifestyle to maintain equilibrium. Yoga and meditation will promote mental health and such balanced bodies will be able to work for the betterment of the society. It's not just physical health that is important but a pure clean mind is an asset. Most of the modern day tragedies take place because of imbalanced mind. Hence, a life led on the principles of Ayurveda will be tranquil, peaceful and satisfying making our world a better place to live in.

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