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Ayurveda and Health

excerpted from *Conquering Chronic Disease*

Through Maharishi Vedic Medicine by Kumuda Reddy, MD

Your body is an expression of Nature's pure intelligence. It is constructed of the same intelligence that composes every atom in creation. As the *Charaka Samhita* puts it, "All the material and spiritual phenomena of the universe are present in the individual. Similarly all those present in the individual are also contained in the universe."

The same system of Natural Law, born of that pure intelligence and perfect organizing power that orchestrates the totality of creation, also guides the functioning of human life. Health is the result of living in accord with these Laws of Nature.

Everything in Nature—including the human physiology—unfolds from five basic elements, called *tanmatras*, which constitute the essence of the five senses. These subtle elements are the finest expression of material creation, and they are found at the "boundary" between consciousness or pure intelligence and matter. This picture of the finest strata of the objective world correlates with the profile of creation provided by quantum physics. Physicist John Hagelin, Ph.D., points out that physics has identified five major "spin types" that give rise to all of the elementary particles of physics, and that these spin types closely resemble the properties of the five tanmatras.

Five grosser elements, called *mahabutas*, unfold from the tanmatras as their more concrete expression. The mahabutas are the basic building blocks of the objective world. They structure the entire universe and everything in it—including your body and mind. From subtlest to most concrete, they are *akasha* (space), *vayu* (air), *tejas* or *agni* (fire), *apas* (water), and *prithivi* (earth).

It's easy to observe the five elements in Nature. For example, if you walk by a lake, you'll find yourself treading on the ground (earth), feeling the wind (air) in your hair and looking at the sun (fire) sparkling on the waves (water). As you move forward, your body moves through the subtlest element, space.

You are part of Nature, therefore these five elements are also the basic building blocks

of your own body. The brain is composed of two-thirds water. Much of the body is composed of hollow space. Digestion breaks down food with heat (fire). The lungs breathe in air; and your bones are composed of the same chemicals and structure as the earth. The human body is an integral part of the body of Nature as a whole. For example, in the Vedic system, the same word (*agni*) refers both to the sun



and to the digestive fire. This is one meaning of the expression, "As is the individual, so is the universe."

To make it easier to analyze the human body, Maharishi Vedic Medicine reduces these five elements to three basic principles, called *doshas*: *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. These three doshas—*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*—are composed of the five mahabutas. The three doshas are the fundamental operators of every function in the mind and body. They each have different responsibilities. *Vata* governs motion. A thought moving through the mind, food moving down the digestive tract, blood moving through veins, breath expelled from lungs—*Vata* governs all these movements.

Pitta governs heat, metabolism, and energy production. The conversion of food, air, and water into energy is controlled by *Pitta* dosha, as are hormonal cycles and functions. *Kapha* dosha controls physical

structure and fluid balance. The formation of bones, muscles, and lymphatic systems are all in *Kapha*'s realm.

Each of the three doshas has different qualities that appear in mind, body, and emotions. *Vata* is fast moving, quick, light, cold, minute, rough, dry. It is often called the king of the doshas, because the other doshas are inert without it. *Pitta*'s qualities are hot, sharp, light, acidic and slightly oily. *Kapha* is heavy, oily, slow, cold, steady, solid and dull.

Different people have different proportions of the three doshas. Someone with a predominance of *Vata* will have a quick and lively mind and may walk fast. More *Kapha* might produce oily skin or strong muscles. Someone with a lot of *Pitta* in his body may digest food more quickly or feel overheated when he exercises.

The doshas are also found all around us in Nature. The seasons provide one obvious example. In the cool, wet spring, *Kapha* is more evident. In the hot summer, *Pitta* dosha dominates. Winter expresses the cold, dry, windy qualities of *Vata*.

The three doshas are present at every level of our mind-body system. Ayurvedic texts describe the different functions of the three doshas in complete detail. Each of the three doshas has five subdoshas, which are located in different parts of the body. The subdivisions of *Vata* all relate to movement. The subdivisions of *Pitta* are concerned with digestion, heat, and metabolism. Those under *Kapha* are concerned with moistening and maintaining body structure.

When the three doshas are in balance, you enjoy perfect health. However, the doshas are constantly fluctuating and can easily lose their equilibrium. The normal qualities of the doshas then become exaggerated and create discomfort in mind, body, or emotions. If the imbalance continues to build, it leads to disease.

Balanced *Vata* creates mental alertness, normal elimination, sound sleep, strong immunity and a sense of exhilaration. If *Vata* is out of balance, it might produce dry



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 AT THOMAS JEFFERSON UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL PRESENT

MEDICAL YOGA 2004


3 SUNDAY WORKSHOPS: MARCH 14 – APRIL 25 – MAY 23




Classical Yoga
Practical / Discussion
 Vijayendra Pratap, PhD
All 3 Sundays – 11:00am




**Ayurveda
 and Health**
 Kumuda Reddy, MD
March 14 – 2:00pm





**Yoga as
 Therapy**
 Sat Bir S. Khalsa, PhD
April 25 – 2:00pm



**Energy
 Healing**
 Zdenko Arsenijevic,
 Serbian MD
May 23 – 2:00pm

(215) 592-YOGA (9642) ■ **YogaResearchSociety.com** ■ yogasearch@aol.com
 AT THOMAS JEFFERSON UNIVERSITY, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, USA

or rough skin, insomnia, constipation, fatigue, tension headaches, intolerance of cold, low weight, anxiety and worry.

Signs of balanced Pitta include normal body heat and thirst, strong digestion, a shiny complexion, sharp intellect and contentment. Rashes, inflammatory skin diseases, peptic ulcers, heartburn, visual problems, excessive body heat or sweating, premature graying or baldness, and hostility and irritability are all signs that Pitta is out of balance.

When Kapha is normal, a person enjoys muscular strength, vitality and stamina, strong immunity, affection, generosity, courage, dignity, stability of mind and healthy joints. Imbalanced Kapha produces oily skin, slow digestion, sinus congestion, nasal allergies, asthma, cysts and other growths, and obesity.

One important way that the three doshas express themselves is through body tissues, called dhatus, meaning “that which sustains.” Ayurvedic texts identify the seven types of body tissues as:

- Rasa* – plasma, the first product of digestion and metabolism
- Rakta* – blood, including hemoglobin
- Mamsa* – muscle tissue

- Meda* – fat tissue
- Asthi* – bone tissue
- Majja* – bone marrow, tissue of the nervous system
- Shukra* – reproductive tissues

The doshas govern the dhatus, and the dhatus make up the organs of the body. The Ayurvedic texts define disorder in the body as abnormality of the doshas and dhatus. Their equilibrium is equivalent to normality or health.

Healthy elimination is another important area related to balanced dhatus and doshas. The process of forming each of the dhatus produces normal waste products, called *malas*. If there is some blockage, toxins and impurities accumulate, restricting the natural flow of intelligence and nourishment in the body.

The subdoshas, dhatus, and malas together are the main components of the human body, and the body, mind, and consciousness together make up the total picture of health.

**Dr. Kumuda Reddy will present “Ayurveda and Health”
 on March 14th at Medical Yoga 2004**