

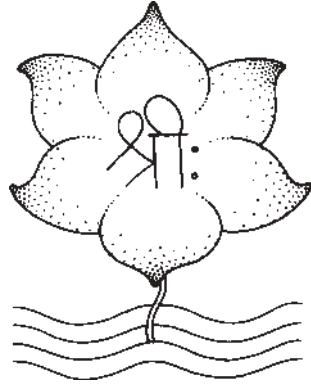
# AYURVEDA

The Science of Self-Healing

by Dr. Vasant Lad



A PRACTICAL GUIDE



*Dedicated to Mother, Father,  
Satguru-Hambir Qaba and Dear Pappu,  
who taught me about life, love,  
compassion, simplicity and humility.*

# Acknowledgements

This author wishes to acknowledge the following individuals whose efforts have contributed to the creation of the text:

*Angela Werneke*, artist, who is responsible for all the art contained in this book including the cover, charts, diagrams and tables. Angela's work has contributed an additional dimension to the book.

*David Mackenzie*, photographer, whose overall input on the artistic presentation is much appreciated.

*Malinda Elliott* and *Harriet Slavitz*, editors, who spent much time and effort and gave their total dedication in preparing the manuscript.

*Lavon Alt*, typist, who produced the index.

*Susan Voorhees*, *Becky Vogel*, *Peter Fisk* and *Win Hampton*, models, who gave their time and effort in posing for the photographs.

*Jim Redlich*, for his support and commitment to Ayurveda.

*Lenny Blank*. Lastly, the author wishes to express here a special thanks to Lennyji, who has provided the guidance and inspiration for the book. Without his total commitment and dedication, this book would still be lying on the shelf of this author's mind. There are no words to express this person's gratitude to my dearest friend.

# PREFACE

The author's inspiration for this book grew out of a strong belief that Ayurveda should be shared with Westerners in a simple, practical way. Heretofore, Ayurveda has been viewed in the West as an esoteric science. Yet it is a simple, practical science of life whose principles are universally applicable to each individual's daily existence. *Ayurveda speaks to every element and facet of human life, offering guidance that has been tested and refined over many centuries to all those who seek greater harmony and peace and longevity.*

The knowledge supplied in this book will be of lasting value to the reader. The science of Ayurveda is based not on constantly changing research data, but on the eternal wisdom of the *rishis* who received this science, expressive of the perfect wholeness of Cosmic Consciousness, through religious introspection and meditation. Ayurveda is a timeless science and the reflection and elucidation here, it is hoped, will serve the reader throughout his or her life.

Ayurveda is concerned with eight principle branches of medicine: pediatrics, gynecology, obstetrics, ophthalmology, geriatrics, otolaryngology (ear, nose and throat), general medicine and surgery. Each of these medical specialties is addressed according to theories of the five elements (Ether, Air, Fire, Water, Earth): the *tridosha*, or three bodily humors: the seven *dhatus*, or body tissues; three *maias* (urine, stools, sweat): and the trinity of life: body, mind and spiritual awareness. These concepts are fully elucidated in this introductory text.

This book is mainly concerned with presenting a basic overview of Ayurveda, including techniques of examination, diagnosis and treatment: promotion of longevity: the use of herbal remedies and other practical everyday aspects of maintaining health.

Once the student has acquired a basic overview of Ayurveda, a wealth of ancient knowledge still remains to be explored in writings of the Ayurvedic sages, such as the surgeon Sushruta (who, more than 2,000 years ago, wrote a classic text on surgery, *Sushruta Samhita*), and through the teachings of modern Ayurvedic physicians. The writings of Sushruta impressively anticipated much of modern medicine. He treated in detail, among other topics, postmortem dissection and plastic surgery procedures which, centuries later, were used as the basis for modern plastic surgery. Sushruta perfected techniques for knitting broken bones with nails; he identified vital points on the body, *marmas*, which are related to the vital organs. External trauma to these points may be extremely serious or fatal. Among his other numerous contributions, Sushruta also devised a special treatment of bloodletting to cure blood-born disorders. It should be obvious, from this brief highlighting, that we have much to learn from the ancient Ayurvedic masters.

The wisdom of Ayurveda is recorded in Sanskrit, the ancient language of India. Therefore, the author sometimes employs Sanskrit terms to explain certain Ayurvedic medical concepts when no adequate English translation may be made. On their first appearance in this text, each of these words is clearly and simply elucidated.

This is the author's first book, and he wishes to acknowledge his mentors in Ayurveda, especially: *Vaidya* B.P. Nanal; the Tilak Ayurveda Mahavidhyalaya Medical School where the author studied and was later appointed as a lecturer and professor of Internal Medicine: and the Seth Tarachand Ramnath Ayurvedic Hospital where the author received his practical training as physician in residence and where he later served as Medical Director. In addition he wishes to thank his students and friends whose love, compassion and support inspired him to write this text. He offers thanks also to the reader who, in his commitment to learning and to his own growth process, opens himself to the science of Ayurveda as it is set forth in these pages.

Dr. Vasant Lad  
Santa Fe, New Mexico  
January 1984

## Chapter I

# History and Philosophy\*

**A**yurveda encompasses not only science but religion and philosophy as well. We use the word *religion* to denote beliefs and disciplines conducive toward states of being in which the doors of perception open to all aspects of life. In Ayurveda, the whole of life's journey is considered to be sacred. The word *philosophy* refers to love of truth and in Ayurveda, truth is Being, Pure Existence, The Source of all life. Ayurveda is a science of truth as it is expressed in life.

All Ayurvedic literature is based on the *Samkhya* philosophy of creation. (The roots of the term *Samkhya* are two Sanskrit words: *sat*, meaning "truth," and *khya*, meaning "to know.") The reader is asked to cultivate an open mind and heart toward the philosophy of *Samkhya* because of its intimate connection with Ayurveda.

The ancient realized beings, *rishis*, or seers of truth, discovered truth by means of religious practices and disciplines. Through intensive meditation, they manifested truth in their daily lives. Ayurveda is the science of daily living and this system of knowledge evolved from the *rishis'* practical, philosophical and religious illumination, which was rooted in their understanding of the creation.

They perceived, in the close relationship between man and the universe, how cosmic energy manifests in all living and nonliving things. They also realized that the source of all existence is Cosmic Consciousness, which manifests as male and female energy — *Shiva* and *Shakti*.

The *rishi* Kapila, who realized the *Samkhya* philosophy of creation, discovered twenty-four principles or elements of the universe,\*\* of which *Prakruti*, or creativity, is the most basic.

*Purusha* is the male, while *Prakruti* is the female energy. *Purusha* is formless, colorless and beyond attributes and takes no active part in the manifestation of the universe. This energy is choiceless, passive awareness.

*Prakruti* has form, color and attributes: it is awareness with choice. It is Divine Will, the One who desires to become many. The universe is the child born out of the womb of *Prakruti*, the Divine Mother.

*Prakruti* creates all forms in the universe, while *Purusha* is the witness to this creation. It is primordial physical energy containing the three attributes, or *gunas*, found in all nature, the evolving cosmos.

The three *gunas* are *satva* (essence), *rajas* (movement) and *tamas* (inertia). These three are the foundation for all existence. They are contained in balance in *Prakruti*. When this balance is disturbed, there is an interaction of the *gunas* which thus engenders the evolution of the universe.

The first manifestation from *Prakruti* is Cosmic Intellect. From *Mahad*, Ego (*Ahamkar*) is formed. Ego then manifests into the five senses (*tanmatras*) and the five motor organs, with the help of *satva*, thus creating the organic universe. The same Ego further manifests into the five basic elements (*bhutas*) with the help of *tamas*, to create the inorganic universe.

*Rajas* is the active vital life force in the body which moves both the organic and inorganic universes to *satva* and *tamas*, respectively. So *satva* and *tamas* are inactive, potential energies which need the active, kinetic force of *rajas*. *Satva* is creative potential (*Brahma*); *rajas* is a kinetic protective force (*Vishnu*); and *tamas* is a potential destructive force (*Mahesha*). Creation (*Brahma*), Protection (*Vishnu*) and Destruction (*Mahesha*) are the three

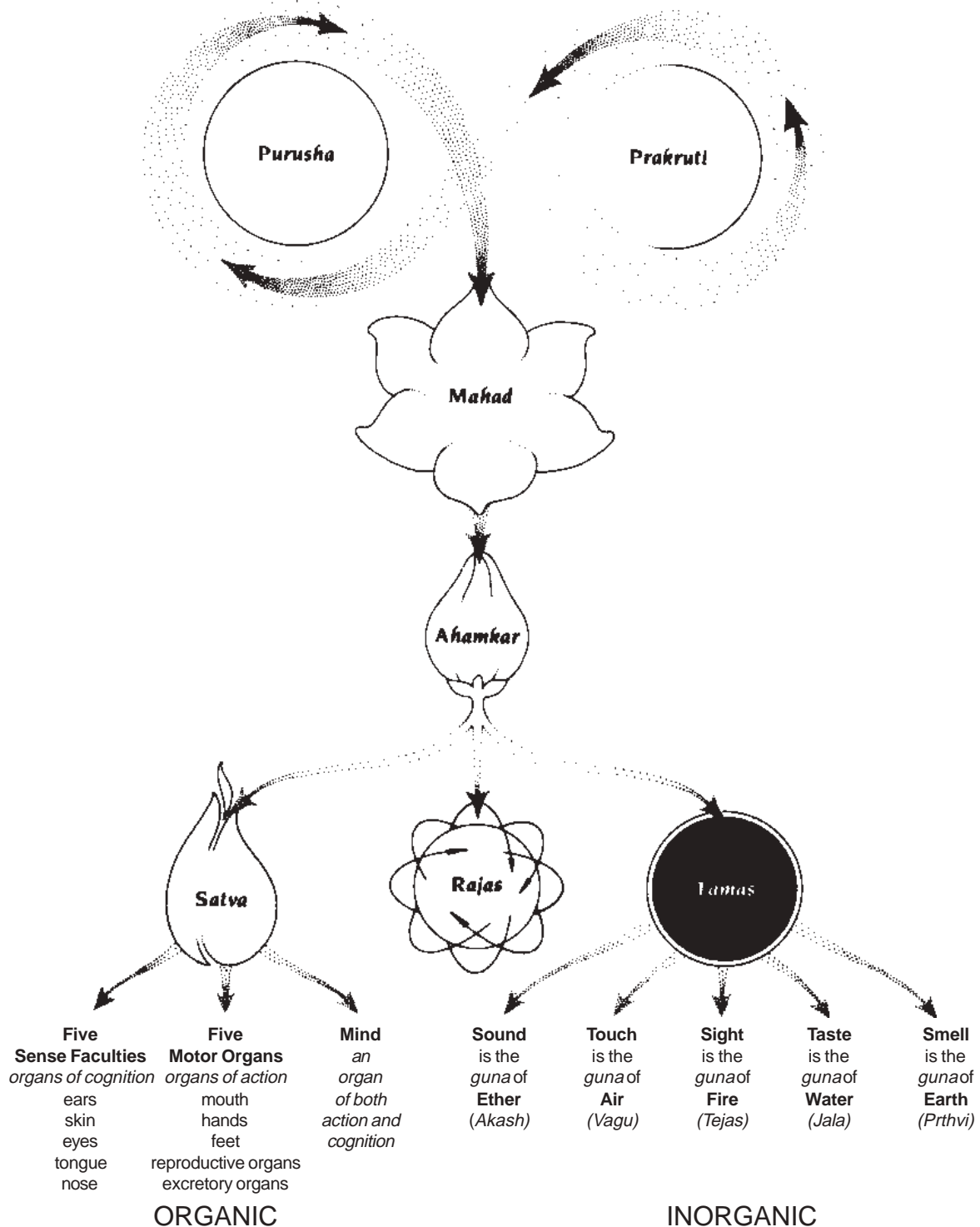
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\*This chapter, which may be difficult for readers who have no prior knowledge of the subjects discussed, may be read first, last or at any point that is comfortable.

\*\* The specific 24 principles or elements in the *Samkhya* philosophy are the following:  
*Prakruti*: *Mahad*. *Ahamkar*: Five Sense Faculties: Five Motor Organs: Mind: Five Senses, i.e.,

# Chart I – *Samkhya* Philosophy of Creation

**Purusha** is unmanifested, formless, passive, beyond attributes, beyond cause and effect, space and time. **Purusha** is Pure Existence. **Prakruti** is the creative force of action, the source of form, manifestation, attributes and nature. **Mahad** is the Cosmic intelligence or *Buddhi*. **Ahamkar** is ego, the sense of “I am.” **Satva** is stability, pure spect, awakening, essence and light. **Rajas** is dynamic movement. **Tamas** is static. It is potential energy, inertia, darkness, ignorance and matter.



manifestations of the first cosmic soundless sound, aum, which are constantly operating in the universe. The accompanying chart illustrates this manifestation of the universe.

## THE FIRST LIFE SCIENCE

Ayurveda is a holistic system of medicine that is indigenous to and widely practiced in India. The word Ayurveda is a Sanskrit term meaning “science of life.” *Ayu* means “life” or “daily living,” and *Veda* is “knowing.” Ayurveda was first recorded in the *Vedas*, the world’s oldest extant literature. This healing system has been practiced in daily life in India for more than 5,000 years.

## AYURVEDA AND HUMAN POTENTIAL

Ayurveda teaches that man is a microcosm, a universe within himself. He is a child of the cosmic forces of the external environment, the macrocosm. His individual existence is indivisible from the total cosmic manifestation. Ayurveda views health and “disease” in holistic terms, taking into consideration the inherent relationship between individual and cosmic spirit, individual and cosmic consciousness, energy and matter.

According to the teachings of Ayurveda, every human being has four biological and spiritual instincts: religious, financial, pro-creative and the instinct toward freedom. Balanced good health is the foundation for the fulfillment of these instincts. Ayurveda helps the healthy person to maintain health, and the diseased person to regain health. It is a medical-metaphysical healing life-science, the mother of all healing arts. The practice of Ayurveda is designed to promote human happiness, health and creative growth.

Through studying the teachings of Ayurveda, the practical knowledge of self-healing may be acquired by anyone. By the proper balance of all energies in the body, the processes of physical deterioration and disease can be impressively reduced. This concept is basic to Ayurvedic science: the capability of the individual for self-healing.

## AYURVEDA, YOGA AND TANTRA

Ayurveda, Yoga and Tantra are the ancient life-disciplines that have been practiced in India for centuries. They are mentioned in the scriptures of the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. Yoga is the science of union with the Divine, with Truth: Tantra is the most direct method

of controlling the energy that creates the ultimate union with Truth:  
and Ayurveda is the science of life.

The purpose of each practice is to help the individual to achieve longevity, rejuvenation and self-realization. The object of the practices of Yoga and Tantra is liberation, although only certain disciplined individuals are able to achieve this ultimate goal through these practices. However, Ayurveda can be practiced successfully by anyone for the achievement of good health and longevity.

In the spiritual evolution of a man, Ayurveda is the foundation, Yoga is the body and Tantra is the head. It is necessary first to understand Ayurveda in order to experience the practices of Yoga and Tantra. Thus, Ayurveda, Yoga and Tantra form an interdependent trinity of life. None of these practices stands alone. The health of the body, mind\* and consciousness\*\* depends on the knowledge and practice of these three in daily life.

## AYURVEDA AND THE WESTERN MIND

Western medicine and thinking tend to generalize and to categorize individuality. For instance, according to the Western concept of normality, what is common in a majority of people constitutes the norm. Ayurveda holds that

*Ether, Air, Fire, Water, Earth. Purusha is often considered to be subsumed under Prakriti, as are the three Gunas, i.e., Satva, Rajas and Tamas. (See Chart 1 on Samkhya Philosophy of Creation.)*

\* “Mind” in this context, and in the following pages, denotes the operations of the reasoning intellect.

\*\* “Consciousness” here denotes the intuitive operations of the soul in direct communication with the Divine Principle and Source of all life.

normality must be evaluated individually, because every human constitution manifests its own particular and spontaneous temperament and functioning.

In the East, the key to understanding is acceptance, observation and experience: in the West, it is questioning, analysis and logical deduction. The Western mind, generally, trusts objectivity, while the Eastern gives more emphasis to subjectivity. Eastern science teaches one to go beyond the division between subjectivity and objectivity. This difference in approach may explain why some Westerners experience difficulty in comprehending the methodology of Ayurveda.

Many statements made in this introductory text on Ayurveda may elicit the questions, “How?” and “Why?” The author reminds the reader that such questions, though inevitable, are not always answerable. Even in modern Western medicine, some concepts are proven to “work” without the reasons behind the phenomena being fully understood: e.g., though antibiotics are used to destroy the bacteria which form toxins in the body, no adequate explanation exists to explain how and why toxins are formed from bacteria. Furthermore, Ayurveda is truly a holistic science, one in which the sum of many elements comprises its Truth. To question details before a strong overview of the whole science is acquired will prove unproductive and unsatisfactory. The reader is therefore respectfully advised provisionally to accept statements that may at first appear to lack adequate explanation, until he has begun to master the body of Ayurvedic knowledge as a whole.



## CHAPTER 11

# The Five Elements and Man

**A**yurveda evolved in the meditative minds of seers of truth, the *rishis*. For thousands of years their teachings were transmitted orally from teacher to disciple, and later they were set down in melodious Sanskrit poetry. Though many of these texts have been lost over time, an abundant body of Ayurvedic knowledge survives.

Originating in Cosmic Consciousness, this wisdom was in-tuitively received in the hearts of the *rishis*. They perceived that consciousness was energy manifested into the five basic principles, or elements: Ether (space), Air, Fire, Water and Earth. This concept of the five elements lies at the heart of Ayurvedic science.

The *rishis* perceived that in the beginning the world existed in an unmanifested state of consciousness. From that state of unified consciousness, the subtle vibrations of the cosmic soundless sound *aum* manifested. From that vibration there first appeared the Ether element. This ethereal element then began to move: its subtle movements created the Air, which is Ether in action. The movement of Ether produced friction, and through that friction heat was generated. Particles of heat-energy combined to form intense light and from this light the Fire element manifested.

Thus, Ether manifested into Air, and it was the same Ether that further manifested into Fire. Through the heat of the Fire, certain ethereal elements dissolved and liquified, manifesting the Water element, and then solidified to form the molecules of Earth. In this way, Ether manifested into the four elements of Air, Fire, Water and Earth.

From Earth, all organic living bodies, including those in the vegetable kingdom such as herbs and grains, and those in the animal kingdom, including man, are created. Earth also contains the inorganic substances that comprise the mineral kingdom. Thus, out of the womb of the Five Elements all matter is born.

The five basic elements exist in all matter. Water provides the classic example: the solid state of water, ice, is a manifestation of the Earth principle. Latent heat (Fire) in the ice liquifies it, manifesting the Water principle: and then eventually it turns into steam, expressing the Air principle. The steam disappears into Ether, or space. Thus the five basic elements. Ether, Air, Fire, Water and Earth, are present in one substance. All five originated in the energy issuing from Cosmic Consciousness: all five are present in all matter in the universe. Thus, energy and matter are one.

### MAN AS MICROCOSM

Man is a microcosm of nature and so the five basic elements present in all matter also exist within each individual. In the human body are many spaces which are manifestations of the Ether element. There are, for example, the spaces in the mouth, nose, gastrointestinal tract, respiratory tract, abdomen, thorax, capillaries, lymphatics, tissues and cells.

Space in movement is called Air. Air is the second cosmic element, the element of movement. Within the human body. Air manifests in the larger movements of the muscles, the pulsations of the heart, the expansion and contraction of the lungs and the movements of the stomach wall and intestines. Under a microscope, even single cells may be seen to move. Response to a stimulus is the movement of afferent and efferent nerve impulses, which are sensory and motor movements. The entire movements of the central nervous system are governed by bodily Air.

The third element is Fire. The source of Fire and light in the solar system is the sun. In the human body, the source of Fire is the metabolism. Fire works in the digestive system. In the gray matter of the brain cells, Fire manifests as intelligence. Fire also activates the retina which perceives light. Thus, body temperature, digestion, the thinking processes and vision are all functions of bodily Fire. All metabolism and enzyme systems are controlled by this element.

Water is the fourth important element in the body. It manifests in the secretions of the digestive juices and the salivary glands, in the mucus membranes and in plasma and cytoplasm. Water is absolutely vital for the functioning of the tissues, organs and various bodily systems. For example, dehydration resulting from diarrhea and vomiting must be treated immediately to protect the patient's life. Because this element is so vital, bodily Water is called the Water of Life.

Earth is the fifth and last element of the cosmos that is present in the microcosm. Life is possible on this plane because Earth holds all living and nonliving substances to its solid surface. In the body, the solid structures — bones, cartilage, nails, muscles, tendons, skin and hair — are derived from Earth.

## THE SENSES

The five elements manifest in the functioning of the five senses of man, as well as in certain functions of his physiology. Thus, the five elements are directly related to man's ability to perceive the external environment in which he lives. They are also related, through the senses, to five actions expressing the functions of the sensory organs.

The basic elements — Ether, Air, Fire, Water and Earth — are related to hearing, touch, vision, taste and smell, respectively.

Ether is the medium through which sound is transmitted. Thus, the ethereal element is related to the hearing function. The ear, the organ of hearing, expresses action through the organ of speech, which creates meaningful human sound.

Air is related to the sense of touch: the sensory organ of touch is the skin. The organ of action for the sense of touch is the hand. The skin of the hand is especially sensitive, and the hand is responsible for the actions of holding, giving and receiving.

Fire, which manifests as light, heat and color, is related to vision. The eye, the organ of sight, governs the action of walking and is thus related to the feet. A blind man can walk, but that walking has no definite direction. Eyes give direction to the action of walking.

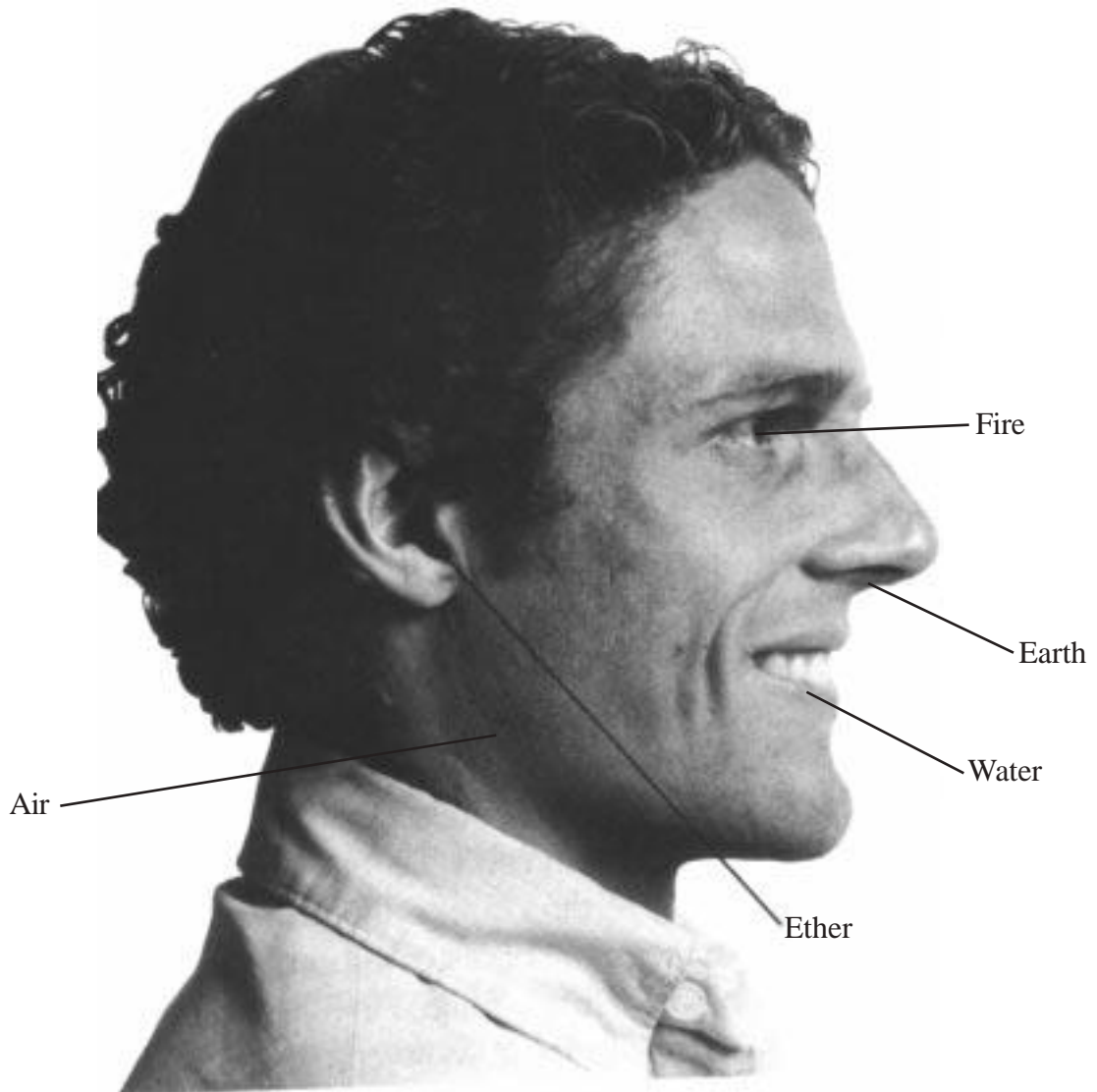
Water is related to the organ of taste: without water the tongue cannot taste. The tongue is closely related in function to the action of the genitals (penis and clitoris). In Ayurveda, the penis or clitoris is considered the lower tongue, while the tongue in the mouth is the upper tongue. The person who controls the upper tongue naturally controls the lower tongue.

The Earth element is related to the sense of smell. The nose, the sensory organ of smell, is related in function to the action of the anus, excretion. This relationship is demonstrated by the person who has constipation or an unclean colon: he experiences bad breath and his sense of smell becomes dull.

Ayurveda regards the human body and its sensory experiences as manifestations of cosmic energy expressed in the five basic elements. The ancient *rishis* perceived that these elements sprang from pure Cosmic Consciousness. Ayurveda aims to enable each individual to bring his body into a perfect harmonious relationship with that Consciousness.

Table 1  
**The Five Elements,  
 the Organs of the Senses, and Their Actions**

<u>ELEMENT</u>	<u>SENSES</u>	<u>SENSE ORGAN</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>ORGAN OF ACTION</u>
Ether	Hearing	Ear	Speech	Organs of Speech <i>(tongue, vocal cords, mouth)</i>
Air	Touch	Skin	Holding	Hand
Fire	Seeing	Eyes	Walking	Feet
Water	Taste	Tongue	Procreation	Genitals
Earth	Smell	Nose	Excretion	Anus



## CHAPTER III

# The Human Constitution

**E**ther, Air, Fire, Water and Earth, the five basic elements, manifest in the human body as three basic principles, or humors, known as the *tridosha*. From the Ether and Air elements, the bodily air principle called *vata* is manifested. (In Sanskrit terminology, this principle is called *vata dosha*.) The Fire and Water elements manifest together in the body as the fire principle called *pitta*. The Earth and Water elements manifest as the bodily water humor known as *kapha*.

These three elements — *vata - pitta - kapha* — govern all the biological, psychological and physiopathological functions of the body, mind and consciousness. They act as basic constituents and protective barriers for the body in its normal physiological condition; when out of balance, they contribute to disease processes.

The *tridosha* are responsible for the arising of natural urges and for individual preferences in foods: their flavors, temperatures and so on. (See Chapter VIII for a description of the mechanics of these preferences.) They govern the creation, maintenance and destruction of bodily tissue, and the elimination of waste products from the body. They are also responsible for psychological phenomena, including such emotions as fear, anger and greed: and for the highest order of human emotions such as understanding, compassion and love. Thus, the *tridosha* are the foundation of the psychosomatic existence of man.

The basic constitution of each individual is determined at conception. At the time of fertilization, the single male unit, the spermatozoon, unites with the single female element, the ovum. At the moment of this union, the constitution of the individual is determined by the permutations and combinations of bodily air, fire and water that manifest in the parents' bodies.

In general, there are seven types of constitutions: (1) *vata*, (2) *pitta*, (3) *kapha*, (4) *vata-pitta*, (5) *pitta-kapha*, (6) *vata-kapha* and (7) *vata-pitta-kapha*. Among these seven general types, there are innumerable subtle variations that depend upon the percentage of *vata-pitta-kapha* elements in the constitution.

The constitution is called *prakruti* in Sanskrit, a term meaning "nature," "creativity" or "the first creation." In the body, the first expression of the basic five elements is the constitution. *The basic constitution of the individual remains unaltered during the lifetime, as it is generally determined. The combination of elements present at birth remains constant. However, the combination of elements that governs the continuous physiopatho-logical changes in the body alters in response to changes in the environment.*

Throughout life, there is a ceaseless interaction between the internal and external environment. The external environment comprises the cosmic forces (macrocosm), while the internal forces (microcosm) are governed by the principles of *vata-pitta-kapha*. A basic principle of healing in Ayurveda holds that one may create balance in the internal forces working in the individual by altering diet and habits of living to counteract changes in his external environment.

## UNDERSTANDING TRIDOSHA

According to Ayurveda, the first requirement for healing oneself and others is a clear understanding of the three *dosha*. The concept of *vata-pitta-kapha* is unique to Ayurveda and it holds the potential for revolutionizing the healing systems of the West. However, the concept of the three principles and the Sanskrit words, *vata-pitta-kapha*, are very difficult to translate into Western terms. *Vata* is a principle of movement. That which moves is called *vata*. Therefore,

Diagram 1  
The Seats of Vata, Pitta, Kapha

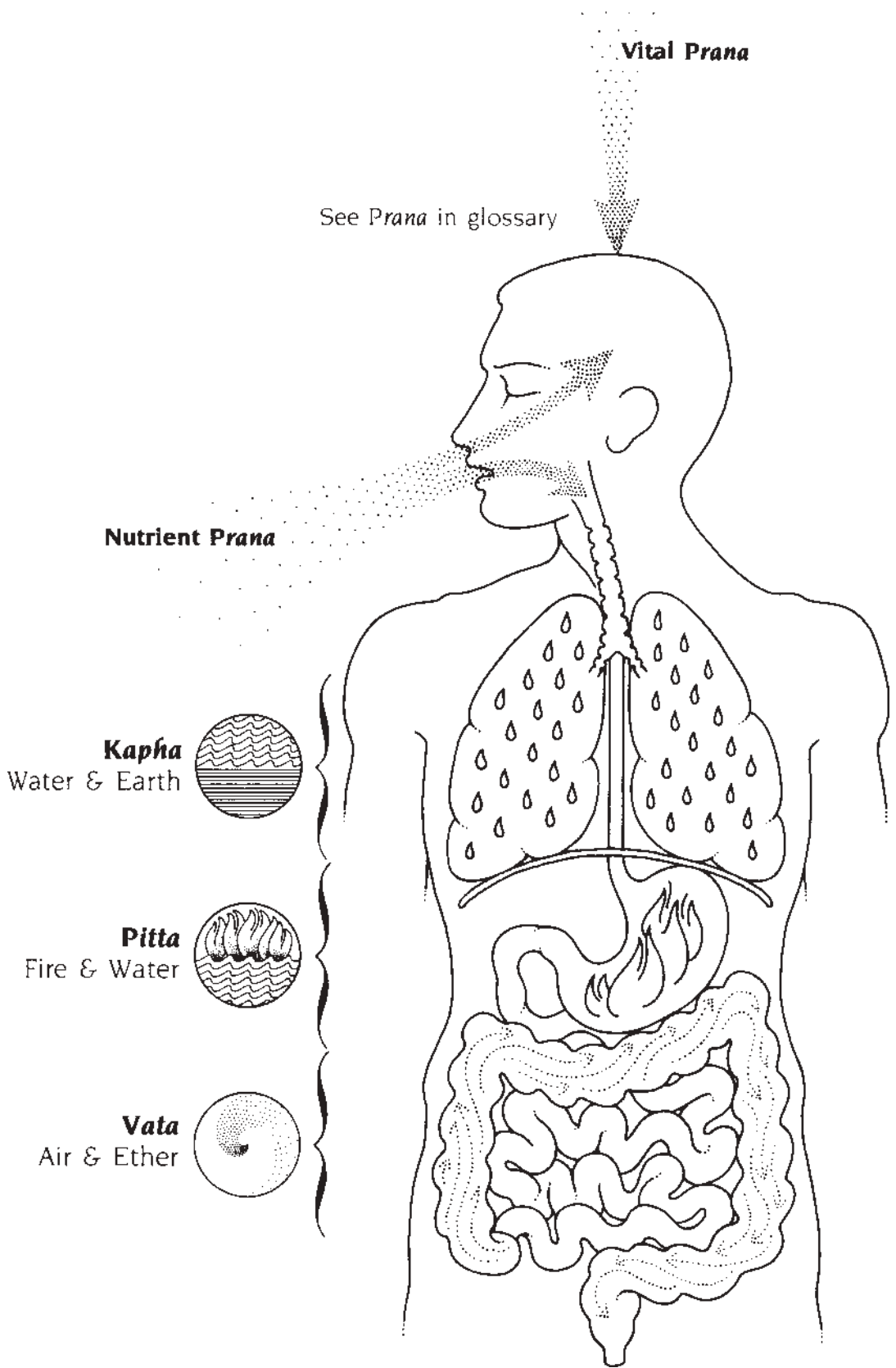
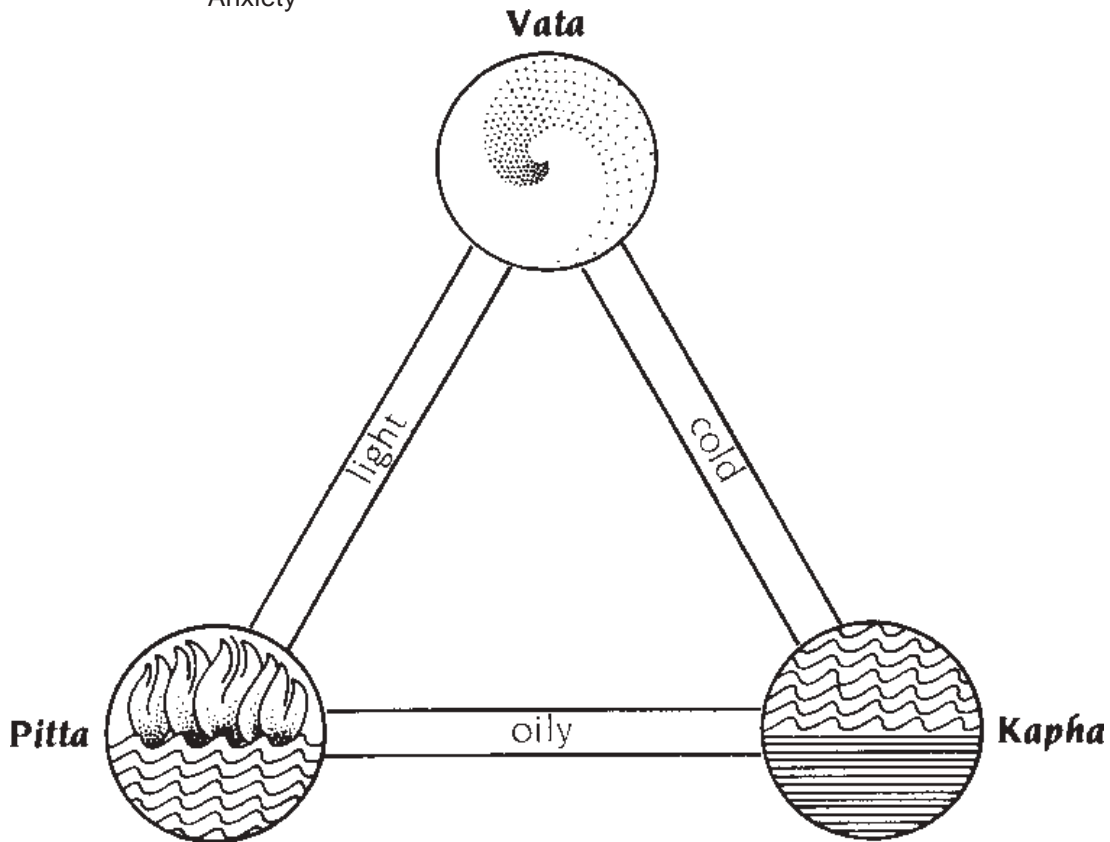


Chart 2

## Functions of *Tri-dosha*

<u>VATA</u>	<u>PITTA</u>	<u>KPHA</u>
(Air + Space)	(Fire & Water)	(Water + arth)
Movement	Body Heat	Stability
Breathing	Temperature	Energy
Natural Urges	Digestion	Lubrication
Transformation of Tissues	Perception	Unctuousness
Motor functions	Understanding	Forgiveness
Sensory functions	Hunger	Greed
Ungroundness	Thirst	Attachment
Secretions	Intelligence	Accumulation
Excretions	Anger	Holding
Fear	Hate	Possessiveness
Emptiness	Jealousy	
Anxiety		



Pitta & Kapha have oiliness in common  
Pitta & Vata have lightness in common  
Vata & Kapha have cold in common

*vata* may be translated as the bodily air principle. However, the element of Air in the external atmosphere is not the same as the air in the body. Bodily air, or *vata*, may be characterized

as the subtle energy that governs biological movement. This biological principle of movement engenders all subtle changes in the metabolism. *Vata* is formed from the two elements Ether and Air. *Vata* governs breathing, blinking of the eyelids, movements in the muscles and tissues, pulsations in the heart; all expansion and contraction, the movements of cytoplasm and the cell membranes, and the movement of the single impulses in nerve cells. *Vata* also governs such feelings and emotions as freshness, nervousness, fear, anxiety, pain, tremors and spasms. The large intestine, pelvic cavity, bones, skin, ears and thighs are the seats of *vata*. If the body develops an excess of *vata*, it will accumulate in these areas.

*Pitta* is translated as fire, although the term does not literally mean "fire." The fire of a candle or the fire in a fireplace may be seen; however, the bodily heat-energy, the *pitta-dosha*, which manifests as metabolism is not visible in this way. *Pitta* governs digestion, absorption, assimilation, nutrition, metabolism, body temperature, skin coloration, the luster of the eyes; and also intelligence and understanding. Psychologically, *pitta* arouses anger, hate and jealousy. The small intestine, stomach, sweat glands, blood, fat, eyes and skin are the seats of *pitta*. *Pitta* is formed from the two elements Fire and Water.

The translation of *kapha* is biological water, and this bodily principle is formed from the two elements, Earth and Water. *Kapha* cements the elements in the body, providing the material for physical structure. This *dosha* maintains body resistance. Water is the main constituent of *kapha*, and this bodily water is responsible physiologically for biological strength and natural tissue resistance in the body. *Kapha* lubricates the joints: provides moisture to the skin: helps to heal wounds: fills the spaces in the body; gives biological strength, vigor and stability; supports memory retention; gives energy to the heart and lungs and maintains immunity. *Kapha* is present in the chest, throat, head, sinuses, nose, mouth, stomach, joints, cytoplasm, plasma and liquid secretions of the body such as mucus. Psychologically, *kapha* is responsible for emotions of attachment, greed and long-standing envy; it is also expressed in tendencies toward calmness, forgiveness and love. The chest is the seat of *kapha*.

A balance among the *tridosha* is necessary for health. For example, the air principle kindles the bodily fire, but water is necessary to control fire, otherwise the bodily fire would burn the tissues. *Vata* moves *kapha* and *pitta*, since *kapha* and *pitta* are immobile.

Together, the *tridosha* governs all metabolic activities: anabolism (*kapha*), catabolism (*vata*), and metabolism (*pitta*). When *vata* is out of balance, the metabolism will be disturbed, resulting in excess catabolism, which is the breakdown or deterioration process in the body. When anabolism is greater than catabolism, there is an increased rate of growth and repair of the organs and tissues. Excess *pitta* disturbs metabolism, excess *kapha* increases the rate of anabolism and excess *vata* creates emaciation (catabolism).

In childhood, anabolism and the *kapha* elements are predominant, since this is the time of greatest physical growth. In adulthood, metabolism and the element of *pitta* are most apparent, because at this stage the body is matured and stable. In old age, catabolism and *vata* are most in evidence, as the body begins to deteriorate.

## DETERMINING THE INDIVIDUAL CONSTITUTION

The accompanying chart is provided to help the reader determine his or her individual constitution. In addition, a detailed description of the three types of constitutions follows. *It is important to remember that these descriptions reflect the pure aspect of each constitutional element: however, no individual constitution is made up solely of any one element. Rather, each person is a combination of all three elements, with a predominant tendency toward one or more.\**

\*These characteristic types must be further adjusted according to racial tendencies and cultural preferences, since different races and cultures have natural proclivities for specific body and lifestyle characteristics, e.g., Africans have dark skin and Indians eat hot food.

The reader is therefore cautioned not to draw strong or definite conclusions about himself or herself based on these fundamental descriptions. The determination of one's particular constitutional type, using this chart, should serve only to draw general awareness to various areas of life, such as diet, in order to encourage a regimen that will promote good health.

## VATA CONSTITUTION

People of *vata* constitution are generally physically underdeveloped. Their chests are flat and their veins and muscle tendons are visible. The complexion is brown, the skin is cold, rough, dry and cracked. There usually are a few moles present, which tend to be dark.

*Vata* people generally are either too tall or too short, with thin frames which reveal prominent joints and bone-ends because of poor muscle development. The hair is curly and scanty, the eyelashes are thin and the eyes lusterless. The eyes may be sunken, small, dry, active and the conjunctiva is dry and muddy. The nails are rough and brittle. The shape of the nose is bent and turned-up.

Physiologically, the appetite and digestion are variable. *Vata* people crave sweet, sour and salty tastes and like hot drinks. The production of urine is scanty and the feces are dry, hard and small in quantity. They have a tendency to perspire less than other constitutional types. Their sleep may be disturbed and they will sleep less than the other types. Their hands and feet are often cold.

These people are creative, active, alert and restless. They talk fast and walk fast but they are easily fatigued.

Psychologically, they are characterized by short memory but quick mental understanding. They will understand something immediately, but will soon forget it. They have little willpower, tend toward mental instability and possess little tolerance, confidence or boldness. Their reasoning power is weak and these people are nervous, fearful and afflicted by much anxiety.

Each constitutional type also exhibits certain patterns in interactions with the external environment. *Vata* people tend to earn money quickly and also to spend it quickly. Thus, they tend to remain poor.

## PITTA CONSTITUTION

These people are of medium height, are slender and body frame may be delicate. Their chests are not as flat as those of *vata* people and they show a medium prominence of veins and muscle tendons. They have many moles or freckles which are bluish or brownish-red. The bones are not as prominent as in the *vata* individual. Muscle development is moderate.

The *pitta* complexion may be coppery, yellowish, reddish or fair. The skin is soft, warm and less wrinkled than *vata* skin. The hair is thin, silky, red or brownish and there is a tendency toward premature graying of hair and hair loss. The eyes may be gray, peen or cooper-brown and sharp; the eyeballs will be of medium prominence. The conjunctiva is moist and copper-colored. The nails are soft. The shape of the nose is sharp and the tip tends to be reddish.

Physiologically, these people have a strong metabolism, good digestion and resulting strong appetites. The person of pitta constitution usually takes large quantities of food and liquid. Pitta types have a natural craving for sweet, bitter and astringent tastes and enjoy cold drinks. Their sleep is of medium duration but uninterrupted. They produce a large volume of urine and the feces are 'yellowish, liquid, soft and plentiful. There is a tendency toward excessive perspiring. The body temperature may run slightly high and hands and feet will tend to be warm. Pitta people do not tolerate sunlight, heat or hard work well.

Psychologically, pitta people have a good power of comprehension: they are very intelligent and sharp and tend to be good orators. They have emotional tendencies toward hate, anger and jealousy.

They are ambitious people who generally like to be leaders. Pitta people appreciate material prosperity and they tend to be moderately well-off financially. They enjoy exhibiting their wealth and luxurious possessions.



## KAPHA CONSTITUTION

People of *kapha* constitution have well-developed bodies. There is, however, a strong tendency for these individuals to carry excess weight. Their chests are expanded and broad. The veins and tendons of *kapha* people are not obvious because of their thick skin and their muscle development is good. The bones are not prominent.

Their complexions are fair and bright. The skin is soft, lustrous and oily; it is also cold and pale. The hair is thick, dark, soft and wavy. The eyes are dense and black or blue: the white of the eye is generally very white, large and attractive. The conjunctiva does not tend to redness.

Physiologically, *kapha* people have regular appetites, the digestion functions relatively slowly and there is less intake of food. They tend to move slowly. They crave pungent, bitter and astringent foods. Stools are soft and may be pale in color: evacuation is slow. Their perspiration is moderate. Sleep is sound and prolonged. There is a strong vital capacity evidenced by good stamina, and *kapha* people are generally healthy, happy and peaceful.

Psychologically, they tend to be tolerant, calm, forgiving and loving; however, they also exhibit traits of greed, attachment, envy and possessiveness. Their comprehension is slow but definite: once they understand something, that knowledge is retained.

*Kapria* people tend to be wealthy. They earn money and are good at holding on to it.

Table 2  
The Human Constitution (*Prakruti*)

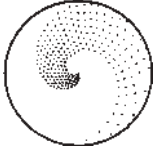


ASPECT OF CONSTITUTION	 <b>VATA</b>	 <b>PITTA</b>	 <b>KAPHA</b>
○ Frame	Thin	Moderate	Thick
○ Body Weight	Low	Moderate	Overweight
○ Skin	Dry, Rough Cool, Brown, Black	Soft, Oily, Warm, Fair, Red, Yellowish	Thick, Oily Cool, Pale, White
○ Hair	Black, Dry, Kinky	Soft, Oily, Yellow, Early Gray, Red	Thick, Oily, Wavy Dark or Light
○ Teeth	Protruded, Big and Crooked, Gums Emaciated	Moderate in Size, Soft Gums, Yellowish	Strong, White
○ Eyes	Small, Dull, Dry, Brown, Black	Sharp, Penetrating, Green, Gray, Yellow	Big, Attractive, Blue, Thick, Eyelashes

Table 2, continued

ASPECT OF CONSTITUTION	VATA	PITTA	KAPHA
<input type="radio"/> Appetite	Variable, Scanty	Good, Excessive, Unbearable	Slow but Steady
<input type="radio"/> Taste	Sweet, Sour, Saline	Sweet, Bitter, Astringent	Pungent, Bitter, Astringent
<input type="radio"/> Thirst	Variable	Excessive	Scanty
<input type="radio"/> Elimination	Dry, Hard, Constipated	Soft, Oily, Loose	Thick, Oily, Heavy, Slow
<input type="radio"/> Physical Activity	Very Active	Moderate	Lethargic
<input type="radio"/> Mind	Restless, Active	Aggressive, Intelligent	Calm, Slow
<input type="radio"/> Emotional Temperament	Fearful, Insecure, Unpredictable	Aggressive, Irritable, Jealous	Calm, Greedy, Attached
<input type="radio"/> Faith	Changeable	Fanatic	Steady
<input type="radio"/> Memory	Recent Memory Good, Remote Memory Poor	Sharp	Slow but Prolonged
<input type="radio"/> Dreams	Fearful, Flying, Jumping, Running	Fiery, Anger, Violence, War	Watery, River, Ocean, Lake, Swimming, Romantic
<input type="radio"/> Sleep	Scanty, Interrupted	Little but Sound	Heavy, Prolonged
<input type="radio"/> Speech	Fast	Sharp and Cutting	Slow, Monotonous
<input type="radio"/> Financial Status	Poor. Spends Money Quickly on Trifles	Moderate. Spends on Luxuries	Rich Moneysaver. Spends on Food
<input type="radio"/> Pulse	Thready, Feeble, Moves Like a Snake	Moderate, Jumping Like a Frog	Broad. Slow, Moves Like a Swan

Note: Circles have been provided next to the aspects for those who wish to determine a general idea of individual constitutional make-up. Mark V for Vata, P for Pitta, or K for Kapha in each circle according to the description best fitting each aspect

To experience characteristics different from one's respective dosha might indicate a derangement of that dosha.



## MENTAL CONSTITUTIONS

On the mental and astral planes, three attributes, or *gunas*, correspond to the three humors that make up the physical constitution. In the Ayurvedic system of medicine, these three attributes provide the basis for distinctions in human temperament and individual differences in psychological and moral dispositions. The three basic attributes are *satva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.

*Satva* expresses essence, understanding, purity, clarity, compassion and love. *Rajas* implies movement, aggressiveness and extroversion. The *rajas* mind operates on a sensual level. *Tamas* manifests in ignorance, inertia, heaviness and dullness.

People of *satvic* temperament have healthy bodies and their behavior and consciousness are very pure. They believe in the existence of God and are religious and often very holy people.

Individuals of *rajas* temperament are interested in business, prosperity, power, prestige and position. They enjoy wealth and are generally extroverted. They may believe in God but they also may have sudden changes of belief. They are very political.

*Tamasic* people are lazy, selfish and capable of destroying others. They generally have little respect for others and are not religious. All their activities are egotistical.

The person of *satvic* temperament attains self-realization without much effort while *rajas* and *tamasic* types must make more effort to attain this state.

These three subtle mental energies are responsible for behavioral patterns, which may be altered and improved through the practice of spiritual disciplines such as yoga. The Ayurvedic physician (*vaidya*) can assist in this behavior modification. He is familiar with the functioning of these attributes — *satva*, *rajas* and *tamas* — and he can determine which predominate in the individual by observing behavior and diet. Using these practical clues, he can assist and guide the patient toward a more balanced mental and physical way of living.



## Chapter IV

# Disease Process

**H**ealth is order; disease is disorder. Within the body, there is a constant interaction between order and disorder. The wise man learns to be fully aware of the presence of disorder in his body and then sets about to reestablish order. He understands that order is inherent in disorder and that a return to health is thus possible.

The internal environment of the body is constantly reacting to the external environment. Disorder occurs when these two are out of balance. To change the internal environment in order to bring it into balance with the external environment, one must understand how the disease process occurs within the psychosomatic being. Ayurveda provides explanations of disease that make it possible to restore order and health from disorder and disease.

In Ayurveda, the concept of health is fundamental to the understanding of disease. Dis means “deprived of,” and *ease* means “comfort.” Therefore, before discussing disease, we must understand the meaning of comfort or health. A state of health exists when: the digestive fire (*agni*) is in a balanced condition; the bodily humors (*vata-pitta-kapha*) are in equilibrium; the three waste products (urine, feces and sweat) are produced at normal levels and are in balance; the senses are functioning normally; and the body, mind and consciousness are harmoniously working as one. When the balance of any of these systems is disturbed, the disease process begins. Because a balance of the above-mentioned elements and functions is responsible for natural resistance and immunity, even contagious diseases cannot affect the person who is in good health. Thus, imbalances of the body and mind are responsible for physical and psychological pain and misery.

### DISEASE CLASSIFICATION

According to Ayurveda, disease may be classified according to its origin: psychological, spiritual or physical. Disease is also classified according to the site of manifestation: heart, lungs, liver and so forth. The disease process may begin in the stomach or in the intestines, but manifest in the heart or lungs. Thus, disease symptoms may appear in a site other than the locus of origin. Diseases are also classified according to the causative factors and bodily *dosha*: *vata-pitta-kapha*.

### DISEASE PRONENESS

The individual constitution determines disease-proneness. For example, people of *kapha* constitution have a definite tendency toward *kapha* diseases. They may experience repeated attacks of tonsillitis, sinusitis, bronchitis and congestion in the lungs. Similarly individuals of *pitta* constitution are susceptible to gallbladder, bile and liver disorders, hyperacidity, peptic ulcer, gastritis and inflammatory diseases. Pitta types also suffer from skin disorders such as hives and rash. Vata people are very susceptible to gas, lower back pain, arthritis, sciatica, paralysis and neuralgia. Vata diseases have their origin in the large intestine; pitta diseases in the small intestine; and *kapha* disorders in the stomach. Imbalanced humors in these areas will create certain signs and symptoms.

The imbalance causing the disease may originate in the consciousness in the form of some negative awareness and it may then manifest in the mind, where the seed of the disease may lie in the deeper subconscious in the form of anger, fear or attachment. These emotions will manifest through the mind into the body. Repressed fear will create derangement of vata; anger, excess *pitta*; and envy, greed and attachment, aggravated *kapha*. These

imbalances of the *tridosha* affect natural body resistance (the immune system · *agni*) and thus the body becomes susceptible to disease.

Sometimes, the imbalance causing the disease-process may first occur in the body and then manifest in the mind and consciousness. Foods, living habits and environments with attributes similar to those of the *dosha* (humor) will be antagonistic to the bodily tissues. They will create an imbalance that is first manifested on the physical level, and later affects the mind through a disturbance in the *tridosha*. For instance, disturbed *vata* creates fear, depression and nervousness; excess *pitta* in the body will cause anger, hate and jealousy; aggravated *kapha* creates possessiveness, greed and attachment. Thus, there is a direct connection between diet, habits, environment and emotional disorders.

Impairment of the bodily humors, *vata-pitta-kapha*, creates toxins (*ama*) that are circulated throughout the body. During this circulation, toxins accumulate in the weak areas of the body. If the joint is a weak area, for example, disease will manifest there. What creates these toxins and bodily weaknesses?

### KEY TO HEALTH OR DISEASE – ‘AGNI’

Aani is the biological fire that governs metabolism. It is similar in its function to *pitta* and can be considered an integral part of the *pitta* system in the body, functioning as a catalytic agent in digestion and metabolism. *Pitta* contains heat-energy which helps digestion. This heat-energy is *aani*. *Pitta* and *aani* are essentially the same with this subtle difference: *pitta* is the container and *aani* is the content.

*Pitta* manifests in the stomach as the gastric fire, *aani*. *Aani* is acidic in nature and its action breaks down food and stimulates digestion. *Aani* is also subtly related to the movement of *vata* because bodily air enkindles bodily fire. In every tissue and cell, *aani* is present and necessary for maintaining the nutrition of the tissues and the maintenance of the auto-immune mechanism. *Aani* destroys micro-organisms, foreign bacteria and toxins in the stomach and small and large intestines. In this way, it protects the flora in these organs.

Longevity depends upon *aani*. Intelligence, understanding, perception and comprehension are also the functions of *aani*. The color of the skin is maintained by *aani*. and the enzyme system and metabolism totally depend upon *agni*. As long as *aani* is functioning properly, the processes of breaking down food and absorbing and assimilating it into the body will operate smoothly.

When *aani* becomes impaired because of an imbalance in the *tridosha*, the metabolism is drastically affected. The body's resistance and immune system are impaired. Food components remain

undigested and unabsorbed. They accumulate in the large intestine turning into a heterogeneous, foul-smelling, sticky substance. This material, which is called *ama*, clogs the intestines and other channels, such as capillaries and blood vessels. It eventually undergoes many chemical changes which create toxins. These toxins are absorbed into the blood and enter the general circulation. They eventually accumulate in the weaker parts of the body, where they create contraction, clogging, stagnation and weakness of the organs and reduce the immune mechanism of the respective tissues. Finally, a disease condition manifests in the affected organs and is identified as arthritis, diabetes, heart disease and so on.

The root of all disease is *ama*. There are many causes for the development of *ama*. For example, whenever incompatible foods are ingested, *agni* will be directly affected as a result of the toxins, or *ama* created from these poorly digested foods. If the tongue is coated with a white film, this symptom indicates that *ama* exists in the large intestine, small intestine or stomach, depending upon which part of the tongue is coated. (See section and diagram on tongue diagnosis in Chapter VI.)

*Ama* develops when *agni's* function is retarded; however, over-active *agni* is also detrimental. When *agni* becomes hyperactive, the digestive process burns away, through overcombustion, the normal biological nutrients in the food and emaciation results. This condition also lowers the body's immunity.

## REPPRESSED EMOTIONS

Toxins are also created by emotional factors. Repressed anger, for example, completely changes the flora of the gallbladder, bile duct and small intestine and aggravates *pitta*, causing inflamed patches on the mucous membranes of the stomach and small intestine. In a similar manner, fear and anxiety alter the flora of the large intestine. As a result, the belly becomes bloated with gas, which accumulates in pockets of the large intestine causing pain. Often this pain is mistaken for heart or liver problems. Because of the ill-effects of repression, it is recommended that neither the emotions nor any bodily urge, such as coughing, sneezing and passing gas, should be repressed.

Repressed emotions create an imbalance of *vata* which in turn affects *agni*, the body's auto-immune response. When *agni* is low, an abnormal immune reaction may occur. This reaction may cause allergies to certain substances, such as pollen, dust and flower scents.\*

Because allergies are closely related to the immune responses of the body, individuals who are born with an abnormal immune reaction often suffer from allergies. For example, a person born with a *pitta* constitution will be naturally sensitive to hot, spicy foods which aggravate *pitta*. In the same way, repressed *pitta* emotions such as hate and anger also may increase the hypersensitivity to those foods that aggravate *pitta*.

People with *kapha* constitutions are very sensitive to foods that aggravate *kapha*. In such individuals, *kaphagenic* foods such as dairy products produce disturbances like cough, cold, congestion and wheezing. Individuals who repress *kapha* emotions such as attachment and greed will have allergic reactions to *kapha* foods. Ayurveda recommends that emotions be observed with detachment and then allowed to dissipate. When emotions are repressed, that repression will cause disturbances in the mind and eventually in the functioning of the body.

## THE THREE MALAS

Imbalances in other bodily systems, such as the waste systems, also may result in disease. The body produces three waste products, or *malas*: feces, which are solid; and urine and sweat, which are liquid. The production and elimination of these is absolutely vital to health. Urine and feces are formed during the digestive process in the large intestine, where assimilation, absorption and discrimination between essential and nonessential substances take place. Feces are carried to the rectum for evacuation; urine is carried to the kidneys for filtration and then stored in the bladder for elimination; and sweat is eliminated through the pores of the skin.

Though they are considered bodily waste products, the urine and feces are not strictly waste. They are, in fact, to some extent essential to the physiological functioning of their respective organs. For example, feces supply nutrition through intestinal tissues: many nutrients remain in the feces after digestion. Later, after these are absorbed, the feces are eliminated.

Feces also give strength to the large intestine and maintain its tone. If a person has no feces, the intestine will collapse. A person who suffers from constipation lives longer than one who suffers from diarrhea. If diarrhea continues for fifteen days, death will follow. However, one can experience prolonged constipation and live, though it will cause problems in the bodily systems. Constipation creates distention and discomfort, flatulence and pains in the body, headache and bad breath.

The urinary system removes the water, salt and nitrogenous wastes of the body. Urine is formed in the large intestine. This waste product helps to maintain the normal concentration of water electrolytes within the body fluids. The functioning of this *mala* depends upon the water intake, diet, environmental temperature, mental state and physical condition of the individual.

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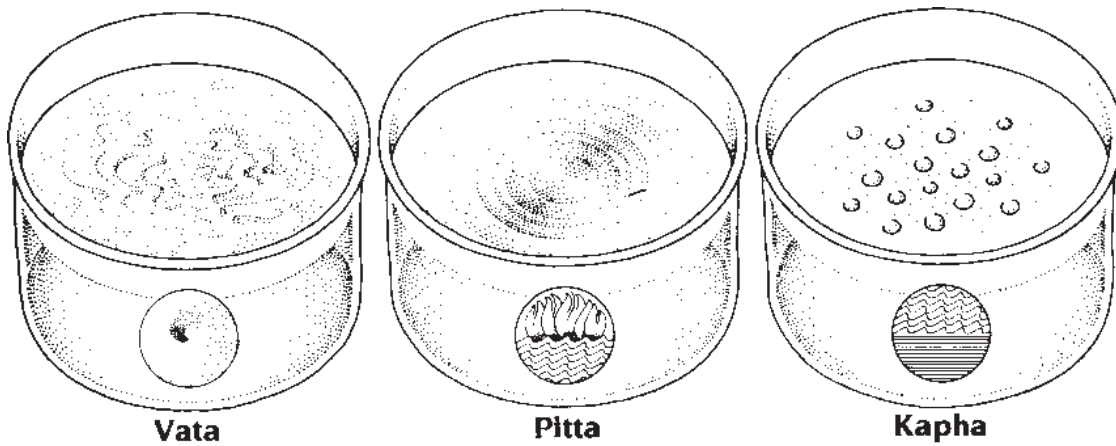
\*Because of their origin in repressed emotion, allergies cannot be radically cured by the use of antihistamines. Intestinal parasites are another cause of allergy. For instance, if threadworms, round-worms or amoebas are present in the large intestine, an allergy to pollen grains might result.

### Chart 3

## Examination of Urine

The body fluids, such as blood (*rakta*) and lymph (*rasa*) serve to carry wastes [*malas*] away from the tissues that produce them. The urinary system removes water (*kleda*), salt and nitrogenous wastes (*dhatu malas*). The urinary system also helps to maintain the normal concentration of water electrolytes within the body fluids. It helps to regulate the volume of body fluid and aids in the control of red blood cell production and blood pressure. Thus, the urine helps to maintain the balance of the three humours — *vata - pitta - kapha* — and water.

**Clinical Examination of Urine:** In a clean vessel, collect the early morning urine in mid-stream. Observe the color. If the color is blackish-brown, this indicates a Vata disorder; if the color is dark-yellow, a Pitta disorder. Also, when there is constipation or the body has less intake of water, urine will be dark yellow. If the urine is cloudy, there is a *Kapha* disorder. A red color in the urine indicates a blood disorder.



### Oil Drop Test

With a dropper, place one drop of sesame oil in a sample of urine. If the drop spreads immediately, the physical disorder is easy to cure. If the drop sinks to the middle of the urine sample, this indicates illness is difficult to cure. If the drop sinks to the bottom, illness may be very difficult to cure.

If drop spreads on the surface in wave-like movements, this indicates Vata disorder. If drop spreads on the surface with multiple colors visible like a rainbow, this indicates Pitta disorder. If drop breaks up into pearl-like droplets on the surface of urine, this indicates *Kapha* disorder. Normal urine has a typical uremic smell. However, if the urine has a foul odor, this indicates that there are toxins in the system. An acidic smell which creates a burning sensation indicates excess Pitta. A sweet smell of urine indicates a possible diabetic condition. In this condition, the individual experiences goose bumps on the skin while passing urine. Gravel in the urine indicates the likelihood of stones in the urinary tract.

The color of the urine depends upon the diet. If the patient has a fever, which is a *pitta* disorder, the urine will become darkish yellow or brownish. Jaundice, which is also a *pitta* disorder, causes dark yellow urine. Bile pigmentation may give the urine a greenish color. Excess *pitta* may create high acidity in the urine. The substances that stimulate urination, such as tea, coffee and alcohol, also aggravate *pitta*.

If the body retains water, the urine will be scanty and this water will accumulate in the tissues. This condition, in turn, will affect the blood and increase the blood pressure. So, balanced urine production is important for the maintenance of blood pressure and volume.

Ayurvedic texts state that human urine is a natural laxative that detoxifies poisons in the system and helps absorption in the large intestine as well as the elimination of feces. If one takes a cup of urine (passed in mid-stream) every morning it will help to cleanse and detoxify the large intestine.

Perspiration is a by-product of fatty tissue. Sweating is necessary to regulate the body temperature. Sweat keeps the skin soft, maintains the flora of the pores of the skin and also maintains skin elasticity and tone.

Excessive sweating is a disorder that can create fungal infection and reduces the natural resistance of the skin. Insufficient sweating will also reduce the resistance of the skin and it will cause the skin to become rough and scaly, creating dandruff.

There is a special relationship between the skin and the kidneys since the excretion of watery wastes is primarily the function of these two organs. Thus, perspiration is indirectly related to the formation of urine. Like urine, perspiration is related to *pitta*. In summer people perspire profusely, but their urination is reduced because waste products are eliminated through perspiration. In winter, many people perspire less and urinate more.

Excessive urination may cause too little perspiration production and excessive perspiring may result in a scanty volume of urine. Thus, it is necessary that the production of perspiration and urine be in balance. Diabetes, psoriasis, dermatitis and ascites (dropsy) are examples of diseases resulting from an imbalance of perspiration and urine in the body.

Excessive perspiration reduces body temperature and creates dehydration. In the same way, too much urination also creates dehydration and also will cause coldness of the hands and feet.

## THE SEVEN DHATUS

The human body consists of seven basic and vital tissues called *dhatus*. The Sanskrit word *dhatu* means “constructing element.” These seven are responsible for the entire structure of the body. The *dhatus* maintain the functions of the different organs, systems and vital parts of the body. They play a very important role in the development and nourishment of the body.

The *dhatus* are also part of the biological protective mechanism. With the help of *agni*, they are responsible for the immune mechanism. When one *dhatu* is defective, it affects the successive *dhatu*, as each *dhatu* receives its nourishment from the previous *dhatu*. The following are the seven most important *dhatus* in serial order:

- 1) *Rasa* (plasma) contains nutrients from digested food and nourishes all the tissues, organs and systems.
- 2) *Rakta* (blood) governs oxygenation in all tissues and vital organs and maintains life.
- 3) *Mamsa* (muscle) covers the delicate vital organs, performs the movements of the joints and maintains the physical strength of the body.
- 4) *Meda* (fat) maintains the lubrication and oiliness of all the tissues.
- 5) *Asthi* (bone) gives support to the body structure.
- 6) *Majja* (marrow and nerves) fills up the bony spaces and carries motor and sensory impulses.
- 7) *Shukra* and *Artav* (reproductive tissues) contain the ingredients of all tissues and are responsible for reproduction.



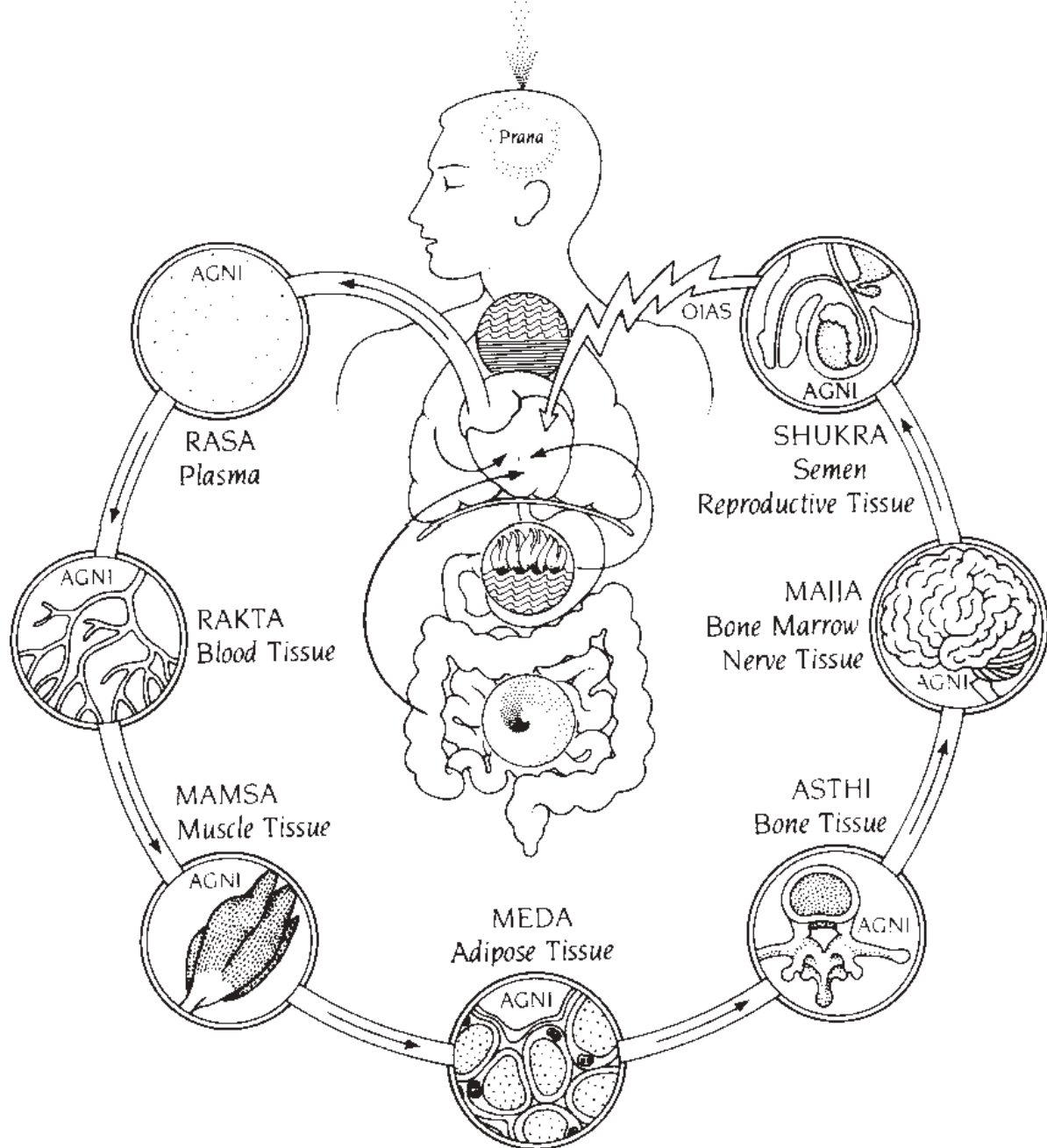
The seven *dhatu*s are understood in a natural, biological, serial order of manifestation. The post-digestion of food, called 'nutrient plasma,' *ahara rasa*, contains the nutrition for all the *dhatu*s. This 'nutrient plasma' is transformed and nourished with the help of heat, called *dhatu agni*, of each respective *dhatu*.

*Rasa* is transformed into *rakta*, which is further manifested into *mamsa*, *meda*, etc. This transformation results from three basic actions: irrigation (nutrients are carried to the seven *dhatu*s through the blood vessels): selectivity (each *dhatu* extracts the nutrients it requires in order to perform its physiological functions): and direct transformation (as the nutritional substances pass through each *dhatu*, the food for the formation of each subsequent *dhatu* is produced). These three processes — irrigation, selectivity and transformation — operate simultaneously in the formation of the seven *dhatu*s. The *dhatu*s are nourished and transformed in order to maintain the normal physiological functions of the different tissues, organs and systems.

When there is a disorder in the balance of *vata-pitta-kapha*, the *dhatu*s are directly affected. The disturbed *dosha* (*vata*, *pitta* or *kapha*) and defective *dhatu*s are always directly involved in the disease process. Health of the *dhatu*s can be maintained by taking steps to keep *vata-pitta-kapha* in balance through a proper diet, exercise and rejuvenation program.

Chart 4

## The Circulation of Nutrients and Transformation of *Dhatu*s



**THE SEVEN DHATUS:** 1) **RASA** (plasma) – maintains functions of menstruation (ARTAVA) in the uterus and lactation (STANYA) in the mammary glands. 2) **RAKTA** (blood tissue or red blood cells) – maintains muscle tendons (KANDARA) and blood vessels (SIRA). 3) **MAMSA** (muscle tissue) – maintains flat muscle (SNAYU) and the skin (TWACHA). 4) **MEDA** (adipose tissue) – maintains subcutaneous fat (VASA) and function of sweat (SWEDA). 5) **ASTHI** (bone tissue) – maintains teeth (DANTA), nails (NAKHA) and hair (KESHA). 6) **MAJJA** (bone marrow, nerve tissue) – maintains function of lacrimal secretion (AKSHIVIT SNEHA). 7) **SHUKRA** (semen, reproductive tissue) – maintains function of sexual organs.

## CHAPTER V

# Attributes

Ayurveda encompasses a subtle medical science of attributes or qualities. These attributes are also called *gums*. Charak, the great Ayurvedic physician, found that all organic and inorganic substances, as well as all thoughts and actions have definite attributes. These attributes contain potential energy while the actions express kinetic energy. Attributes and actions are closely related since the potential energy of the attributes eventually becomes action or kinetic energy. According to Ayurveda, there are twenty basic attributes. The accompanying table shows these twenty attributes and their actions.

After close observation of the universe and man, Charak categorized the twenty basic attributes into ten antagonistic pairs (*e.g.*, hot and cold; slow and fast; dull and sharp; wet and dry). These opposite forces function together. The universe as a whole is the manifestation of the two most basic opposites, male and female energy. Thus it is possible to understand the universe in terms of the interactions of opposing forces that manifest as the basic attributes.

*Vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* each have their own attributes, and substances having similar attributes will tend to aggravate the related bodily humor by the law of like-increases-like. For instance, the summer season has attributes similar to those of *pitta* — hot, dry, light, motile and penetrating. Naturally, in the summer, *pitta* in the body will be aggravated. *Vata* is light, subtle, dry, mobile, rough and cold. So, in the fall season, which also exhibits these attributes, *vata* will tend to be aggravated in the human constitution. Lastly, *kapha* is liquid, heavy, cold, sticky and cloudy; so in winter when these characteristics predominate in the external environment, internal *kapha* tends to be aggravated.

If one continually takes substances with attributes opposite to those in their body, those opposite attributes will become dominant and may result in derangement. For instance, a *vata* individual naturally has an excess of light attributes. However, if the individual continually ingests heavy *kapha*-causing foods, which inhibit the light attributes of the body, over a period of time that individual's bodily attributes will be altered from *vata* (light) to *kapha* (heavy). In this way, the attributes of the body may be changed, in spite of the inherent natural tendencies of the constitution.

To understand and appreciate the Ayurvedic concept of attributes, one should meditate deeply upon them. The examination of attributes is a very subtle experience and it demands constant awareness. If one eats hot, spicy chilis, for instance, what do the senses reflect? Because of the sharp and penetrating action of this food, one immediately experiences such bodily sensations as heat, sweating and a burning sensation in the mouth. Also on the following day, the urine and feces might create a burning sensation.

The concepts governing the pharmacology, therapeutics and food preparation in Ayurveda are based on the action and reaction of the twenty attributes to and upon one another. Through understanding of these attributes, balance of the *tridosha* may be maintained.

Table 3

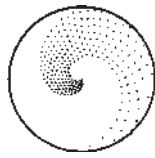
## The Twenty Attributes (*Gunas*) and Their Actions

1. Heavy (*Guru*)—Increases *Kapha*; decreases Vata and Pitta. Increases bulk nutrition, heaviness. Creates dullness, lethargy,
2. Light (*Laghu*)—Increases Vata, Pitta and Aani; decreases *Kapha*. Helps digestion, reduces bulk, cleanses. Creates freshness, alertness, ungroundedness.
3. Slow (*Mawaa*)—Increases *Kapha*; decreases Vata and Pitta. Creates sluggishness, slow action, relaxation, dullness.
4. Sharp (*Tikshna*)—Increases Vata and Pitta; decreases *Kapha*. Creates ulcers, perforation, has immediate effect on body. Promotes sharpness, quick understanding.
5. Cold (*Sdita*)—Increases Vata and *Kapha*. decreases Pitta. Creates cold, numbness, unconsciousness, contraction, fear, insensitivity.
6. Hot (*Ushna*)—Increases Pitta and Agni; decreases Vata and *Kapha*. Promotes heat, digestion, cleansing, expansion, inflammation, anger, hate.
7. Oily (*Snigada*)—Increases Pitta and *Kapha*, decreases Vata and A^ni. Creates smoothness, moisture, lubrication, vigor Promotes compassion, love.
8. Dry (*Ruksha*)—Increases Vata and Aani; decreases Pitta and *Kapha*. Increases dryness, absorption, constipation, nervousness.
9. Slimy (*Slakshna*)—Increases Pitta and *Kapha*. decreases Vata and Agni. Decreases roughness. Increases smoothness, love, care.
10. Rough [*Khara*]—Increases Vata and Agni: decreases Pitta and *Kapha*. Causes cracking of skin, bones, creates carelessness, rigidity.
11. Dense (*Sanara*)—Increases *Kapha*, decreases Vata, Pitta and Agni. Promotes solidity, density, strength.
12. Liquid (*Drava*)—Increases Pitta and *Kapha*, decreases Vata and Agni. Dissolves, liquifies. Promotes salivation, compassion, cohesiveness.
13. Soft (*Mruau*)—Increases Pitta and *Kapha*, decreases Vata and Agni. Creates softness, delicacy, relaxation, tenderness, love, care,
14. Hard [*Kathina*]—Increases Vata and *Kapha*, decreases Pitta and Agni Increases hardness, strength, rigidity, selfishness, callousness, insensitivity.
15. Static (*Stnira*)—Increases *Kapha*, decreases Vata, Pitta and Agni. Promotes stability, obstruction, support, constipation, faith.
16. Mobile [*Chala*]—Increases Vata, Pitta and Agni; decreases *Kapha*. Promotes motion, shakiness, restlessness, lack of faith.
17. Subtle (*Sukshma*)— Increases Vata, Pitta and Agni; decreases *Kapha* Pierces. Penetrates subtle capillaries. Increases emotions, feeling,
18. Gross (*Sthula*)— Increases *Kapha*; decreases Vata, Pitta and Agni. Causes obstruction, obesity.
19. Cloudy (*Aviia*)—Increases *Kapha*; decreases Vata, Pitta and Agni. Heals fractures. Causes unclearness, lack of perception.
20. Clear (*Visdaaa*)—Increases Vata, Pitta and Agni; decreases *Kapha* Pacifies. Creates isolation, diversion.



## Table 4

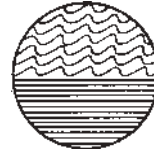
### Attributes of the Tri-dosha



**VATA**  
dry  
light  
cold  
rough  
subtle  
mobile  
clear  
dispersing



**PITTA**  
oily  
penetrating  
hot  
light  
mobile  
liquid  
sour smell



**KAPHA**  
heavy  
slow  
cold  
oily  
slimy  
dense  
soft  
static

### Elements of the Tri-dosha

**VATA**  
Air + Ether

**PITTA**  
Fire + Water

**KAPHA**  
Earth + Water



## CHAPTER VI

# Diagnosis

In the West, the term *diagnosis* generally refers to identification of the disease after it has manifested. However, in Ayurveda, the concept of diagnosis implies a moment-to-moment monitoring of the interactions between order (health) and disorder (disease) in the body. The disease process is a reaction between the bodily humors and the tissues. The symptoms of disease are always related to derangement of the balance of the *tridosha*. Once we understand the nature of the imbalance, balance may be reestablished through treatment.

Ayurveda teaches very precise methods for understanding the disease process before any overt signs of the disease have manifested. By detecting early symptoms of imbalance and disease reaction in the body, one can determine the nature of future bodily reactions. Day-to-day observation of the pulse, tongue, face, eyes, nails and lips provide subtle indicators. Through these, the student of Ayurveda can learn what pathological processes are occurring in the body, which organs are impaired and where *dosha* and toxins have accumulated. Thus, by checking the body's indicators regularly, pathological symptoms can be detected early and preventative measures taken. Ayurveda teaches that the patient is a living book and, for understanding and physical well-being, he or she must be read daily.

### EXAMINATION OF THE RADIAL PULSE

As the diagram shows, the radial pulse is felt with the first three fingers: the index, middle and ring fingers. To make a complete examination of the pulse, the doctor faces the patient and takes the pulse of each of his patient's wrists. The indicators of the pulse vary from the left to right side, so it is best to check the pulse on both sides of the body. The pulse should not be taken after exertion, massage, eating, bathing or sex. The pulse will also be affected by sitting near heat or by taking strenuous exercise. The pulse may be taken at other points on the body as well. (See pulse points diagram.)

To check your own pulse, keep your arm and wrist slightly flexed. Place your three fingers lightly on the wrist just below the radial bone (wrist bone) and feel the throbbing of the pulse. Then decrease the pressure of your fingers slightly to sense varying movements of the pulse.

The position of the index finger denotes the place of the *vata dosha*. When *vata* is predominant in the constitution, the index finger will feel the pulse strongly. It will be irregular and thin, moving in waves like the motion of a serpent. This type of pulse is therefore called the "snake" pulse and it indicates aggravated *vata* in the body.

The resting place of the middle finger denotes the pulse of the *pitta dosha*. When *pitta* is predominant in the constitution, the pulse will be stronger under the middle finger. It will feel active and excited and will move like the jumping of a frog. Hence, it is called the "frog" pulse. This pulse denotes aggravated *pitta*.

When *kapha* is predominant, the throbbing of the pulse under the ring finger is most noticeable. The pulse feels strong and its movement resembles the floating of a swan. It is called the "swan" pulse.

Not only the constitution, but also the status of the body's organs can be determined by examination of the superficial and deep pulsations. The beats of the pulse not only correspond to the heartbeat, but they also reveal something about the important meridians that are connecting *pranic* currents of energy in the body. These currents circulate through the blood, passing through the vital organs such as the liver, kidney, heart and brain. By feeling the superficial and deep pulsations, the sensitive examiner can detect the conditions of these various organs. Each finger rests on a meridian of the element associated with the *dosha* of that place. (See hand chart.) For example, the index finger which rests on the *vata dosha* detects bodily air; the middle finger which touches on *pitta* detects fire; and the ring finger which feels the *kapha* pulse, water.

The index finger rests on the patient's right wrist at the site for feeling the activity of the large intestine with a superficial touch; firmer, deeper pressure is applied, the activity of the lungs may be sensed. If very prominent

Diagram 2

## ***(Nadi) Pulse Diagnosis***



### **EXAMINATION OF PULSE**

Keep the arm slightly bent, and flex the wrist slightly. Place the three fingers superficially to feel the throbbings of the pulse. Slightly loosen the fingers to feel different movements of the pulse.

Diagram 2 A

**IDENTIFICATION OF THE PULSE**



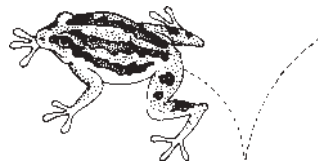
Fast, Narrow, Feeble, Cool, Irregular.  
Rate is 80-100 beats per minute.



1) The placement of the index finger denotes the pulse of Vata. When this pulse predominates, the index finger feels the throbbing more strongly. Also, the pulse feels like the movement of a snake, quick and slithery.



Jumping, Excited, Prominent, Hot, Moderate, Regular.  
Rate is 70-80 beats per minute.



2) The placement of the middle finger denotes the pulse of Pitta. When this pulse predominates, the middle finger is strongest. It is active and jumpy like the movement of a frog.



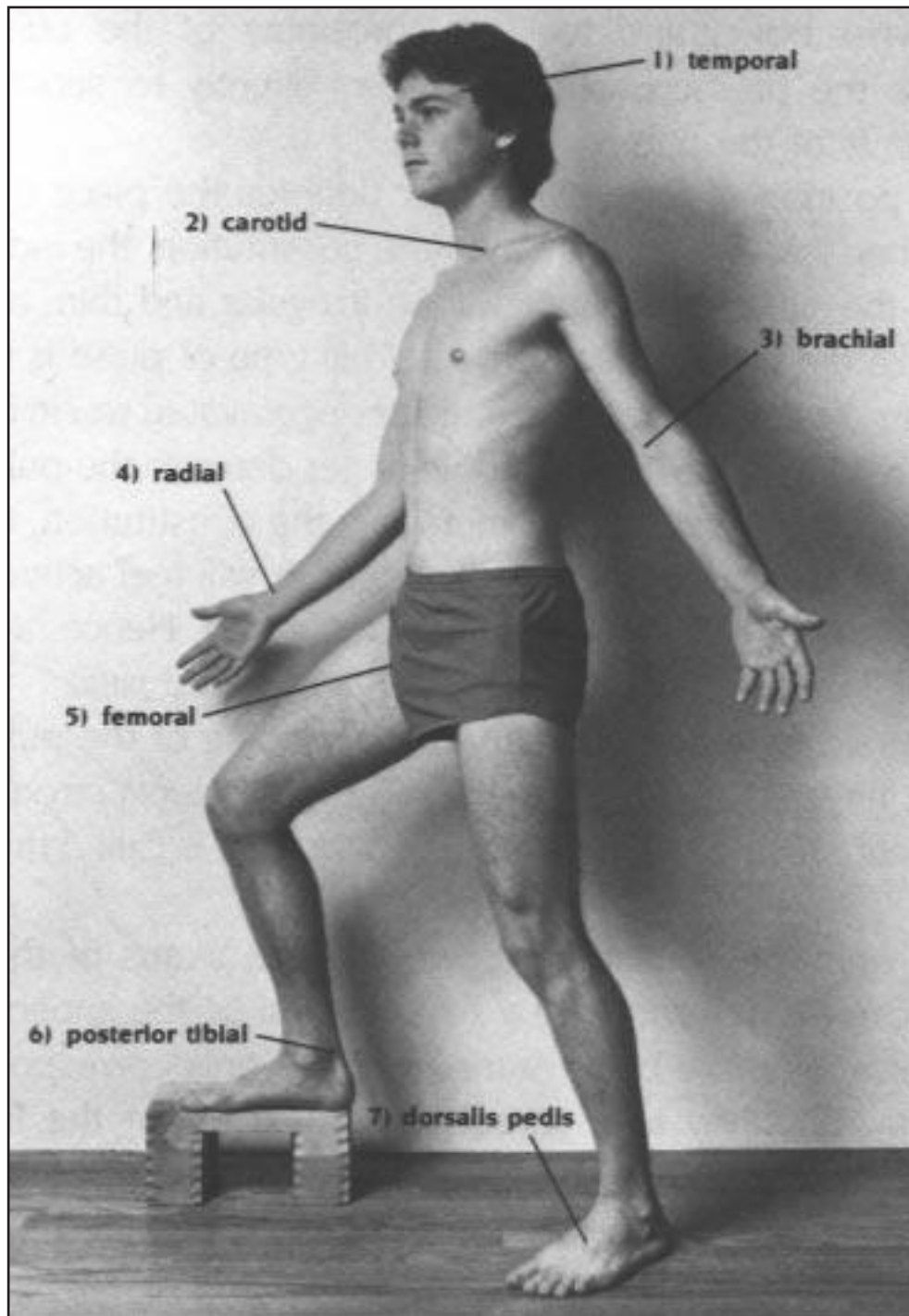
Slow, Strong, Steady, Soft, Broad, Regular, Warm.  
Rate is 60-70 beats per minute.



3) The placement of the ring finger denotes the pulse of Kapha. When this pulse predominates, the ring finger feels strongest. This pulse is slow and resembles the floating of a swan.



Diagram 3  
**PULSE POINTS**



**THE PULSE MAY BE CHECKED:** 1) At the temporal artery, just above the temple on the side of the head. 2) At the carotid artery, on the side of the neck above the clavicle. 3) At the brachial artery, on the inside of the arm above the elbow. 4) At the radial artery, on the wrist. 5) At the femoral artery, on the inside front of the leg where it joins the pelvis. 6) At the posterior tibial artery, on the foot behind the ankle. 7) At the dorsalis pedis artery, on the top of the foot.

Diagram 4  
**The Meridians and  
The Basic Five Elements**

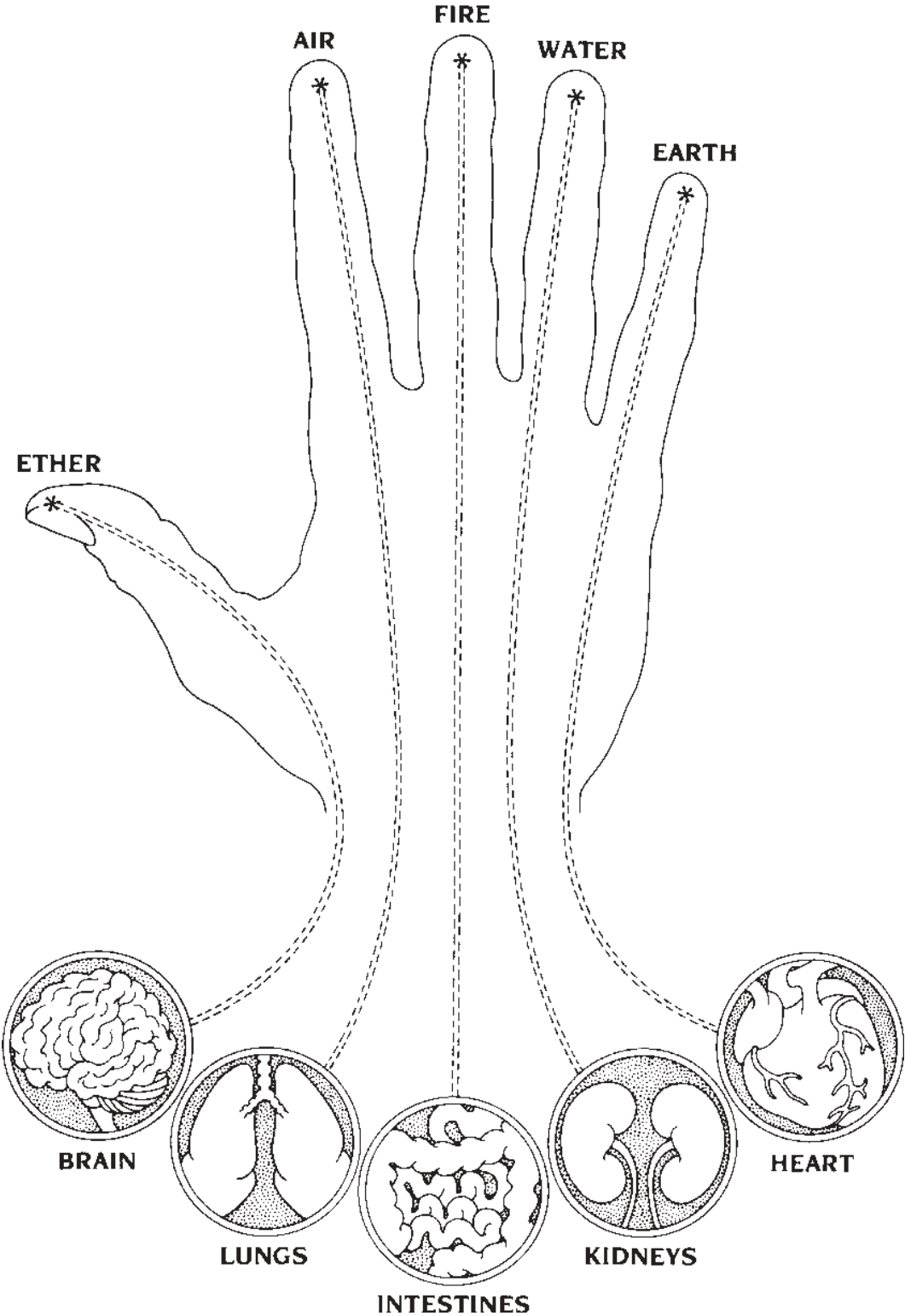
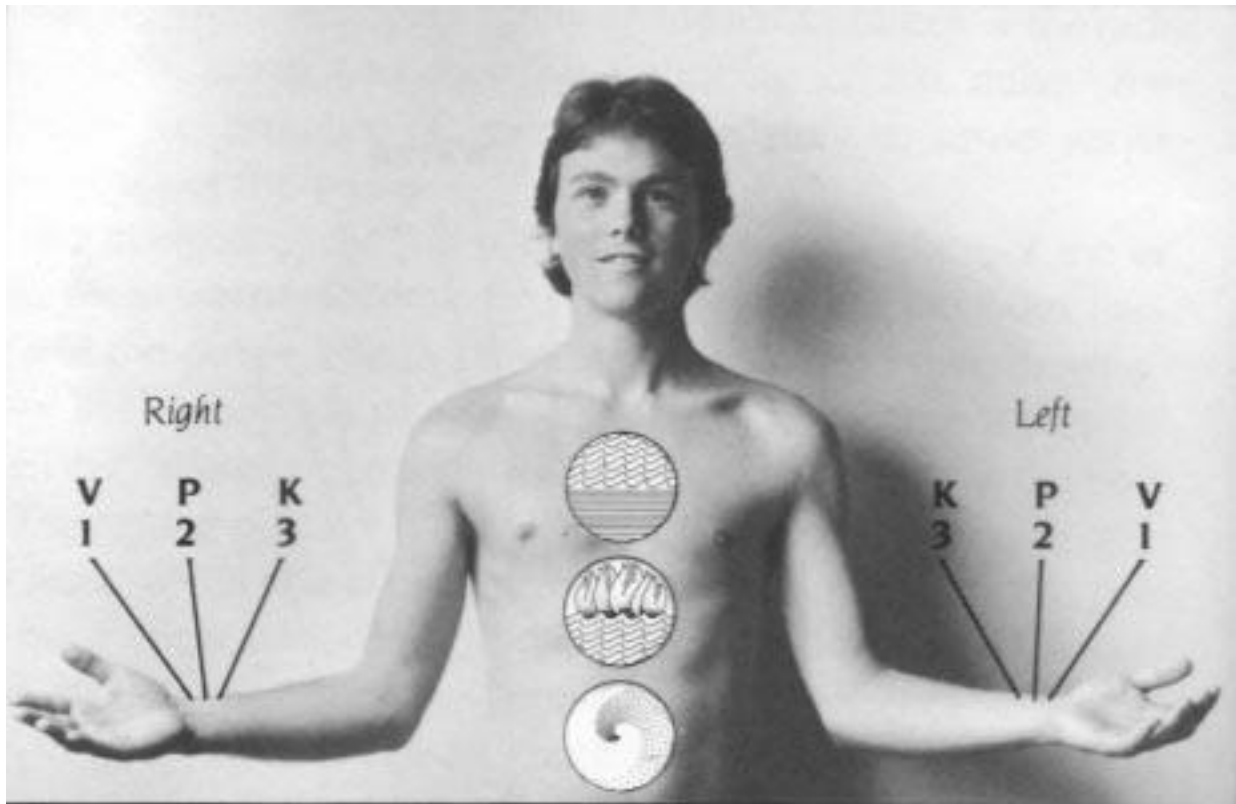


Diagram 5

## The Pulse and the Organs



**SUPERFICIAL TOUCH:** 1) Large Intestine, 2) Gall Bladder, 3) Pericardium. **DEEP TOUCH:** 1) Lung, 2) Liver, 3) *Vata-Pitta-Kapha*.

**SUPERFICIAL TOUCH:** 1) Small Intestine, 2) Stomach, 3) Bladder. **DEEPTOUCH:** 1) Heart, 2) Spleen, 3) Kidney.

**PULSE SHOULD NOT BE CHECKED:** 1) After Massage, 2) After Taking Food or Alcohol, 3) After Sunbathing, 4) After Sitting Close to a Fire 5) After Hard Physical Labor, 6) After Sex, 7) While Hungry, 8) While Taking a Bath.

**PULSE RATE IN RELATION TO AGE:** 1) Baby in the Womb – 160, 2) Baby after Birth – 140, 3) Birth to One Year – 130, 4) One to Two Years – 100, 5) Three to Seven Years – 95, 6) Eight to Fourteen Years – 80, 7) Adult Average – 72, 8) Old Age – 65, 9) Sickness – 120, 10) Time of death – 160.

throbbing is felt when the index finger on the right side is applied superficially, then *vata* is aggravated in the large intestine: if the deep pulse is strong and throbbing, there is congestion in the lungs. The middle finger resting on the right wrist can detect the status of the gallbladder with superficial touch and the liver with deeper pressure. The ring finger senses the pericardium (outer covering of the heart) when applied superficially; and, with a deep touch, the harmonious relationship of *vata-pitta-kapha* is detected.

The index finger resting superficially on the patient's left wrist monitors the activity of the small intestine, while the heart is monitored by deep pressure. With superficial pressure of the middle finger, the activity of the stomach is observed; and deep pressure reveals the status of the spleen. The ring finger applied superficially reveals the

condition of the bladder while deep pressure checks the functioning of the kidneys. To learn this technique of examination of the pulse requires attention and day-to-day practice.

You can feel the variations in your pulse at different times of the day. You can also note changes in the pulse after urination, when you are hungry or when you feel anger. Observing such changes, you will begin to learn how to read the pulse.

## TONGUE DIAGNOSIS

The tongue is the organ of taste and speech. We perceive taste through the tongue when it is wet; a dry tongue cannot perceive taste. The tongue is also the vital organ of speech, used to convey in words, thoughts, concepts, ideas and feelings. Examination of this important organ reveals the totality of what is happening in the body.

Look at your tongue in the mirror. Observe the size, shape, contour, surface, margins and color. If the color is pale, there is an anemic condition or lack of blood in the body. If the color is yellowish, excess bile exists in the gallbladder or there is a liver disorder. If the color is blue (provided one has not eaten blue-berries), there is some defect in the heart.

As shown in the diagram, different parts of the tongue are related to different organs in the body. If there are discolorations, depressions or elevations on certain areas of the tongue, the respective organs are defective. For example, if you see the impressions of the teeth along the margin of the tongue, this indicates poor intestinal absorption.

A coating covering the tongue indicates toxins in the stomach, small intestine or large intestine. If only the posterior part is coated, toxins are present in the large intestine: if the middle of the tongue is coated, toxins are present in the stomach and small intestine.

A line down the middle of the tongue indicates that emotions are being held along the vertebra] column. If this line is curved, it may indicate a deformity in the curvature of the spine.

## FACIAL DIAGNOSIS

The face is the mirror of the mind. The lines and wrinkles in your face are revealing. If disorder and disease are present, they will be indicated on the face. Observe the different parts of your face carefully in the mirror. Horizontal wrinkling on the forehead indicates you have deep-seated worries and anxieties. A vertical line between the eyebrows on the right side indicates your emotions are repressed in the liver. A vertical line between the eyebrows on the left side indicates your spleen is holding in emotions.

When the lower eyelids are full and puffy, it indicates that the kidneys are impaired. A butterfly-like discoloration on the nose or on the cheeks just below the kidney region (see accompanying dia-

gram) means the body is not absorbing iron or folic acid and the digestive metabolism is not working properly because of low *aqni*.

Generally, a person of *vata* constitution cannot gain weight. Therefore, his cheeks become flat and sunken. A person whose metabolism is slow (*kapha* constitution) will retain water, fat and the cheeks will be plump.

The shape of the nose can indicate the constitution. A sharp nose may denote *pitta*; a blunt nose, *kapha*; and a crooked nose, *vata*.

## LIP DIAGNOSIS

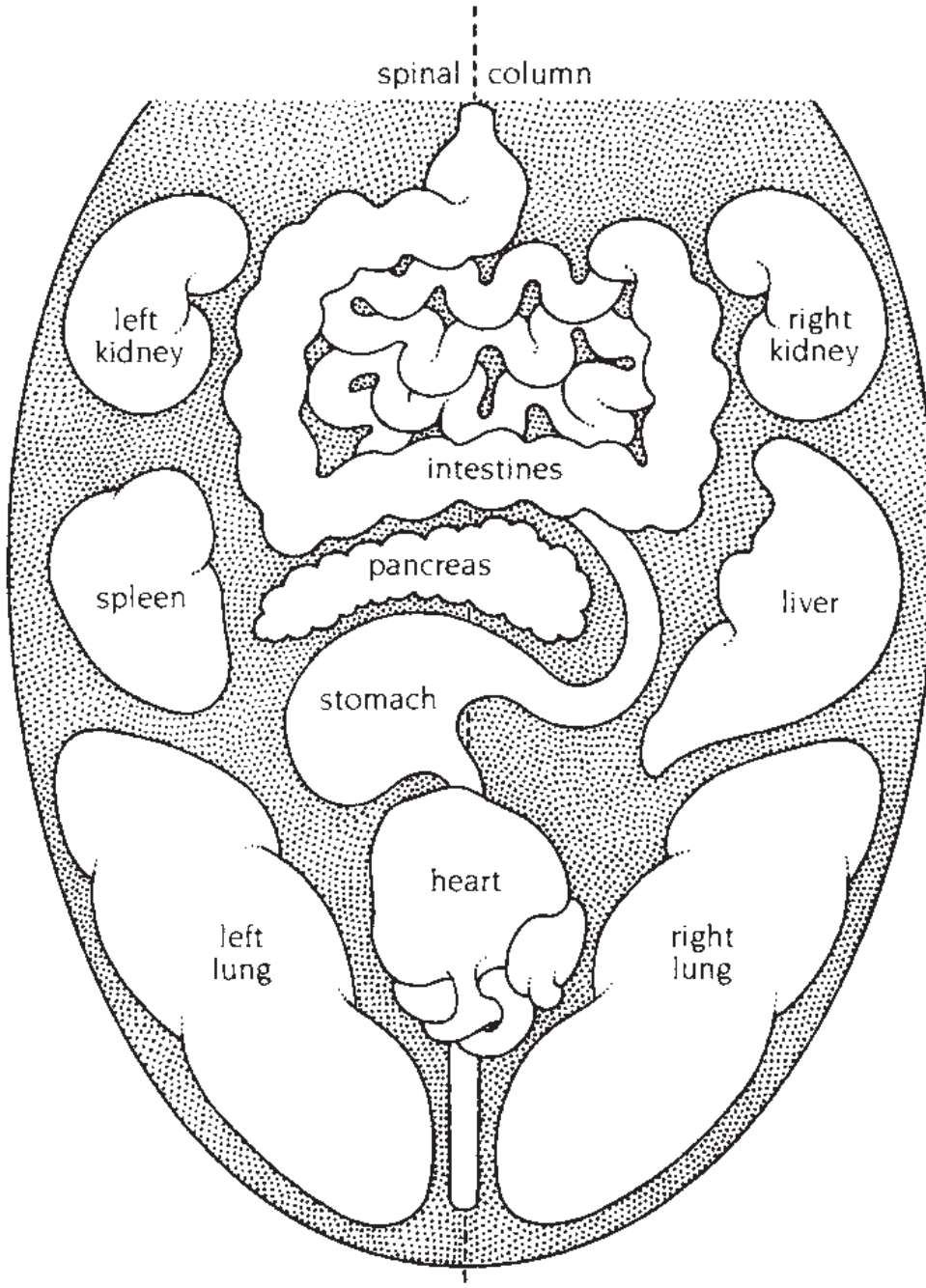
As with the other features of the body (*e.g.*, tongue, nails, face, eyes), the lips, too, reflect the health or disease of the various physical organs.

One should observe the size, shape, surface, color and contour of the lips. If they are dry and rough, this indicates dehydration or a *vata* derangement. Nervousness and fear also create dryness and tremors of the lips. In anemia, the lips become pale. As a result of chronic smoking, the lips become blackish-brown. Repeated attacks

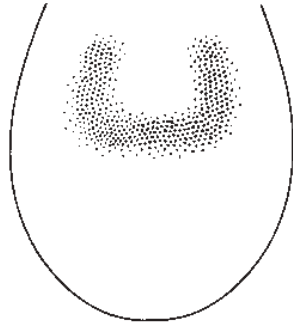
Diagram 6

## Tongue Diagnosis (*jihva*)

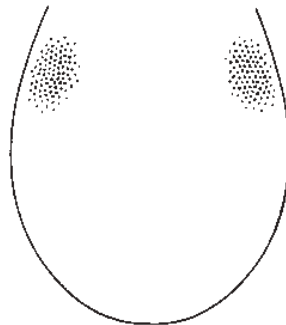
**CONDITIONS:** A discoloration and/or sensitivity of a particular area of the tongue indicates a disorder in the organ corresponding to that area (see diagram). A whitish tongue indicates *Kapfia* derangement and mucus accumulation; a red or yellow-green tongue indicates *Pitta* derangement; and a black-to-brown coloration indicates Vata derangement. A dehydrated tongue is symptomatic of a decrease in the *dhatu Rasa* (plasma), while a pale tongue indicates a decrease in the *dhatu Rakta* (red blood cells).



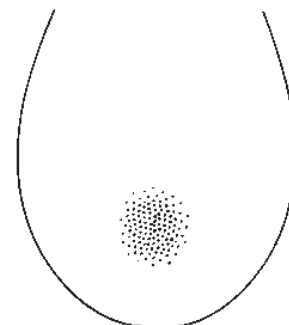
Note: This diagram is used to look at one's own tongue in a mirror. It is a mirror image.



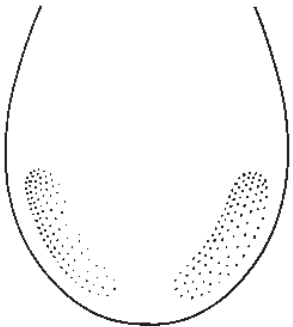
**sensitive colon**



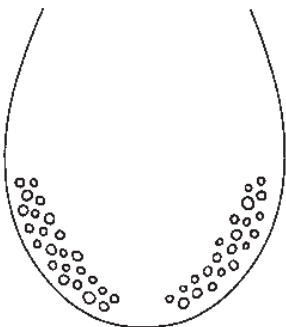
**kidney disorder**



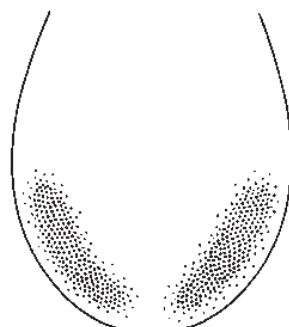
**delicate heart**



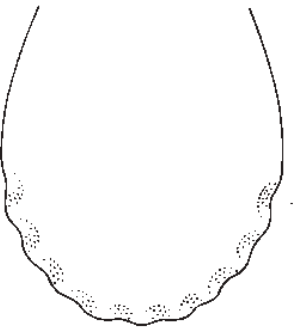
**delicate lungs**  
(depressions)



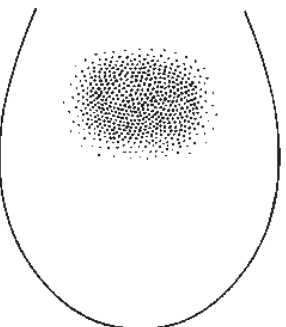
**bronchitis**  
(froth)



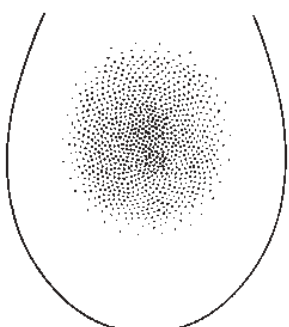
**pneumonitis**  
(brown)



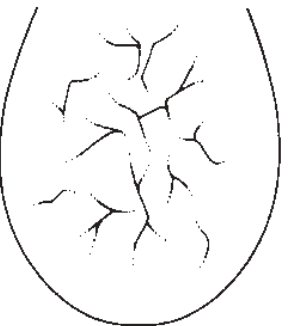
**unabsorbed nutrients**  
(impression of teeth)



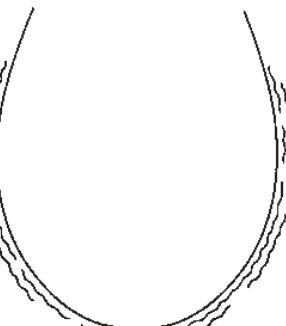
**toxins in colon**  
(white)



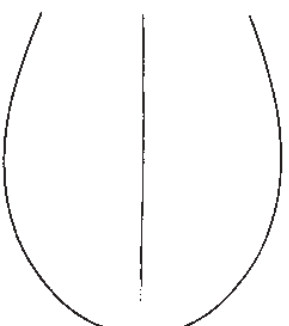
**toxins in GI tract**  
(white with red perimeter)



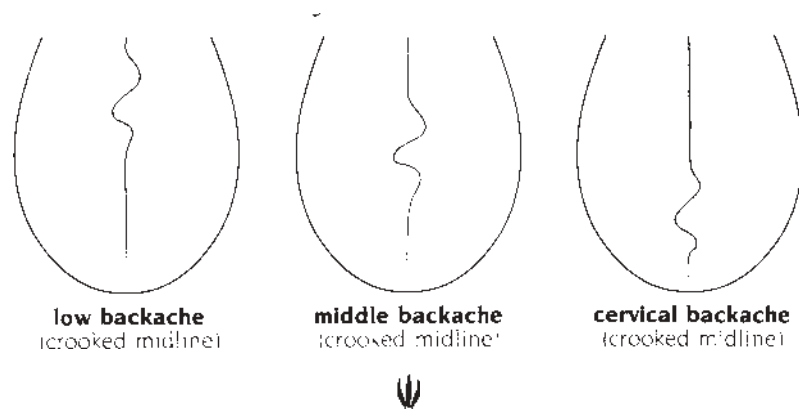
**chronic Vata**  
**derangement in colon**  
(cracks)



**deep-seated fear**  
**or anxiety**  
(tremor)



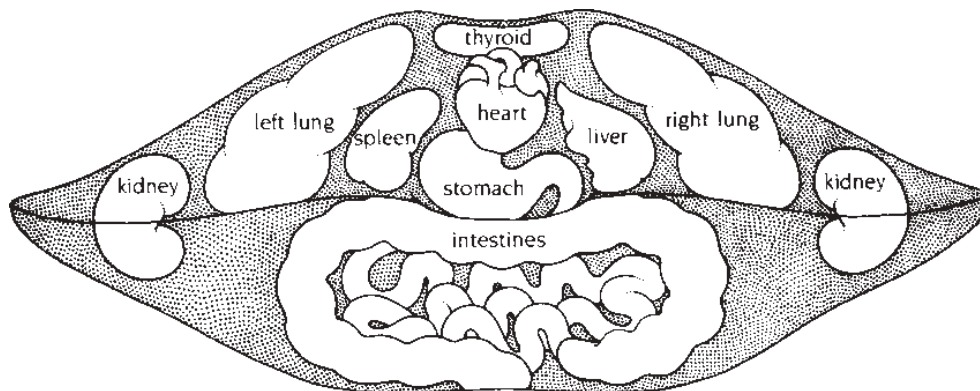
**emotion**  
**along spinal column**  
(midline)



of inflammatory patches along the margins of the lips indicates the presence of herpes and a chronic *pitta* derangement. If there are multiple pale brown spots on the lips, poor digestion or worms in the colon are indicated. If a jaundice condition exists, the lips become yellow. In heart disorders, because of lack of oxygen, the lips become blue. Discoloration of the various areas of the lips indicates a disorder of the respective organ. (See diagram.)

### Diagram 8 Lip Diagnosis (*Ostha*)

**CONDITIONS:** *Vata* lips are thin and dry, *Pitta* lips are red, and *Kapha* lips are thick and oily. Dry or cracked lips indicate dehydration and *Vata* derangement. Pale lips are symptomatic of anemia. Brown spots are a sign of chronic indigestion and can mean the presence of worms in the colon. Herpes, blisters or ulcers on the lips indicate *Pitta* derangement. Tremors of the lips are a sign of fear or anxiety.



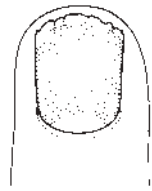
Note: This diagram is used to look at one's own lips in a mirror. It is a mirror image.

### NAIL DIAGNOSIS

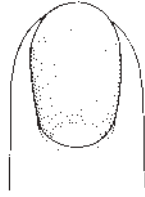
According to Ayurveda, the nails are a waste product of the bones. Look at the size, shape, surface and contour of your nails. Also, observe whether they are flexible, soft and tender, or brittle and easily broken.

If the nails are dry, crooked, rough and break easily, *vata* predominates in the body. If the nails are soft, pink, tender, easily bent and slightly glistening, *pitta* predominates. When the nails are thick, strong, soft and very shiny with a uniform contour, then *kapha* predominates.

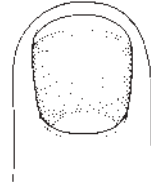
Diagram 9  
**Nail Diagnosis**



**VATA**  
 brittle

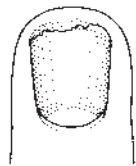


**PITTA**  
 soft, pink, tender

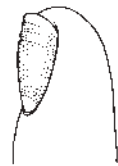


**KAPHA**  
 thick, strong oily

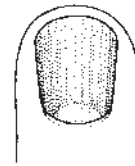
**CONDITIONS:** Coloration of the nail can denote a particular disorder. If the nail is pale, anemia is indicated. A yellow nail is a sign of a delicate liver, while a blue nail is symptomatic of delicate lungs and heart. If the luna (the crescent at the base of the nail) is blue, a disturbed liver is indicated. A red luna is a sign of cardiac failure.



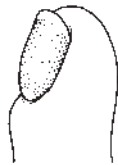
**nervousness**  
*Vata* derangement  
 (bitten nail)



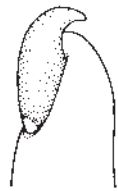
**malnutrition**  
*Agni* derangement  
 (stepped surface)



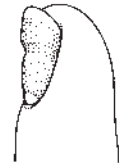
**malabsorption**  
*Vata* derangement  
 (longitudinal striations)



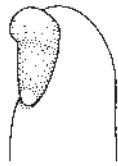
**delicate heart & lungs**  
 poor *Prana*  
 (clubbed nail)



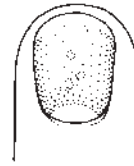
**chronic cough**  
*Kapha* derangement  
 (parrot beak)



**chronic fever or  
 long-standing illness**  
 (transverse groove)



**chronic lung infection**  
*Kapha* derangement  
 (bump at end of nail)



**calcium or zinc  
 deficiency**  
 (white spots)



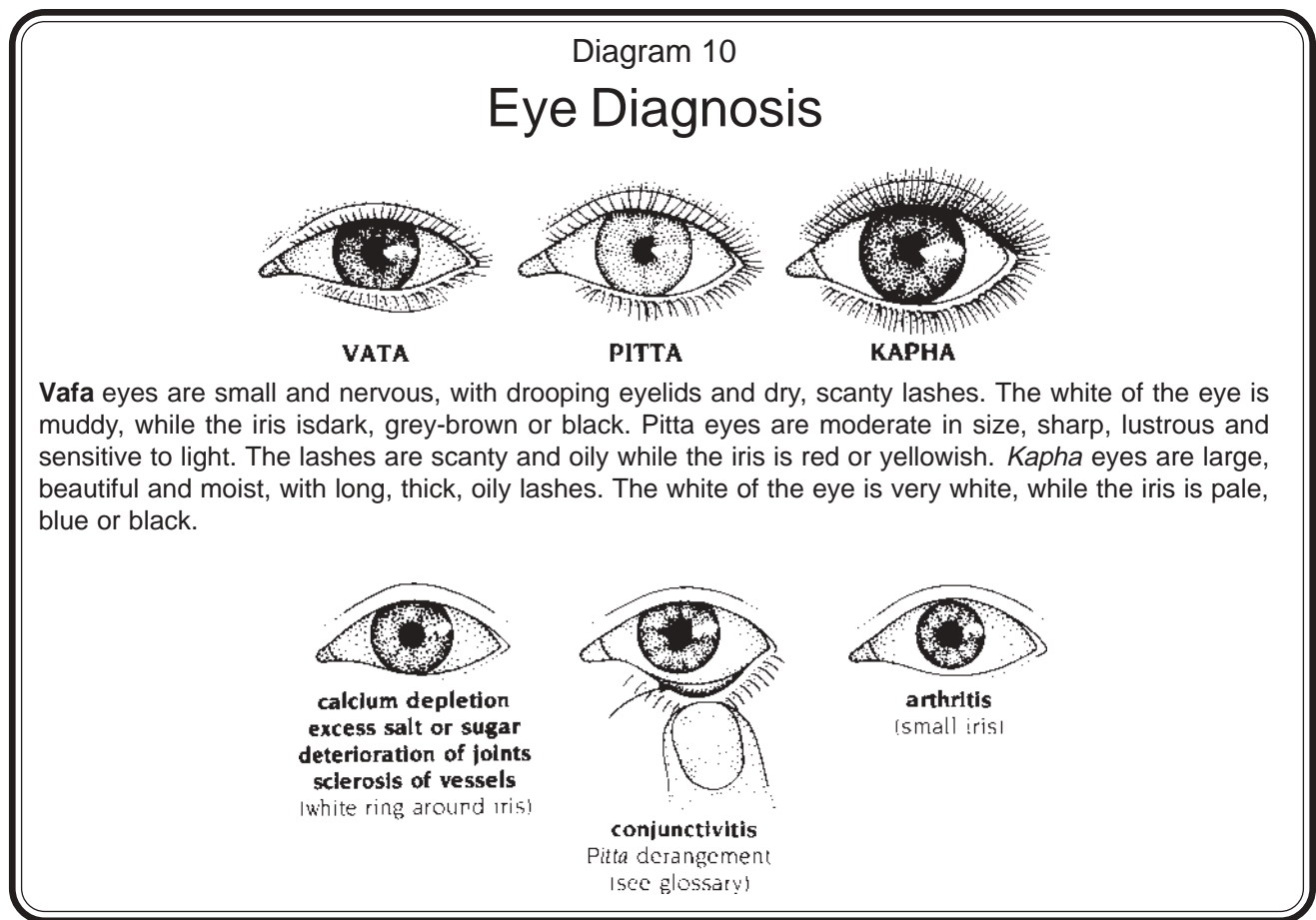
Longitudinal lines on the nails indicate malabsorption in the digestive system. Transverse grooves on the nails reveal defective nutrition or a long-standing illness.

Sometimes the nails become prominent, convex and bulbous like a drumstick. This condition, which is called clubbing, indicates delicate lungs and heart. When the nail is spoon-shaped and concave so that it will hold a drop of water an iron deficiency exists. White spots on the nail indicate a zinc or calcium deficiency.

Pale nails indicate anemia. Undue redness shows an excess of red blood cells. Yellow nails indicate a delicate liver or jaundice. Blue nails show a weak heart.

Each finger and the thumb correspond to an organ of the body. The thumbnail corresponds to the brain and skull and the index finger to the lungs. The middle finger relates to the small intestine and the ring finger to the kidney. The little finger relates to the heart.

A white spot on the ring finger indicates calcium deposits in the kidney. If the spot is on the middle finger, there is unabsorbed calcium in the intestine. If the white spot is on the index finger, it indicates calcium deposits in the lungs.



## EYE DIAGNOSIS

Eyes that are small and blink frequently show a predominance of *vata* in the body. Excessive blinking shows deep-seated nervousness and anxiety or fear. A drooping upper eyelid indicates a sense of insecurity, fear or lack of confidence, deranged *vata*.

Big, beautiful and attractive eyes indicate a *kapha* constitution.

Pitta eyes are lustrous and sensitive to light, with reddened whites and have a tendency to be nearsighted. According to Ayurveda, the eyes derive their energy from the basic fire element. The fiery energy in the retina results in sensitivity to light. Thus, people of *pitta* constitution, having an abundance of fire in the body, often have eyes that are hypersensitive to light.

If the eyes are prominent, there is a dysfunction of the thyroid gland. If the conjunctiva is pale, anemia is present; if it is yellow, the liver is weak.

One should also examine the color, size and shape of the iris. A small iris indicates weak joints. If there is a white ring around the iris, there is excessive intake of salt or sugar. In the middle-aged, this also may be a sign of bodily stress. If the white ring is very prominent and very white (especially in the middle-aged), this indicates degeneration in the joints. The joints will pop and crack and arthritis and joint pain are likely. Brownish-black spots in the iris indicate unabsorbed iron in the intestine.

In addition to the diagnostic techniques mentioned in the previous pages, Ayurveda also employs other means of clinical examination, namely, palpation, percussion, auscultation and inquiry. Additionally, there are examinations of the heart, liver, spleen, kidney, urine, stool, sputum, sweat, speech and physiognomy.

## CHAPTER VII

# Treatment

All Ayurvedic treatment attempts to establish a balance between the bodily humors, *vata-pitta-kapha*. As discussed in the fourth chapter, disease results when these three are out of balance. According to Ayurvedic teaching, the initiation of any form of treatment (whether it be medication, acupuncture, chiropractic, massage, allopathy or any other) without first eliminating the toxins in the system that are responsible for the disease, will only push these poisons deeper into the tissues. Symptomatic relief of the disease process may result from superficial treatment. However, the fundamental cause of the illness will not be affected and the problem will therefore manifest again in the same or another form. There are two types of Ayurvedic treatment: elimination of toxins and neutralization of toxins. These treatments may be applied on both the physical and emotional levels.

### EMOTIONAL RELEASE

Let us first deal with the emotional or psychological factors. Anger, fear, anxiety, nervousness, jealousy, possessiveness and greed are common human emotions. Yet most people learn in childhood not to express these negative emotions. As a result, one begins at an early age to repress the natural expressions of these feelings. The science of Ayurveda teaches that the individual must release these emotions which, if they remain repressed, will cause imbalances resulting in disease-causing toxins. The Ayurvedic technique for dealing with negativity is: observation and release. For example, when anger appears, one should be completely aware of it: watch this feeling as it unfolds from beginning to end. From this observation, one can learn about the nature of the anger and then let the anger go, release it. All negative emotions may be dealt with in this way. Ayurveda teaches that through awareness all negative emotions can be released.

Fear is associated with *vata*; anger with *pitta*; and greed, envy and possessiveness with *kapha*. If one represses fear, the kidneys will be disturbed; anger, the liver; greed and possessiveness, the heart and spleen.

### THE PANCHA KARMA

For numerous ailments such as excess mucus in the chest, bile in the intestines, *kapha* in the stomach or gas accumulation in the large intestine, physical elimination may be used. For such treatment, Ayurveda suggests *pancha karma*. These processes are cleansing to the body, mind and emotions. *Pancha* means "five" and *karma* means "actions" or "process". The five basic processes are:

vomiting; purgatives or laxatives; medicated enemas; nasal administration of medication and purification of the blood.

### THERAPEUTIC VOMITING (*Vaman*)

When there is congestion in the lungs causing repeated attacks of bronchitis, cough, cold or asthma, the Ayurvedic treatment is therapeutic vomiting (*vaman*), to eliminate the mucus-causing excess *kapha*. First, three or four glasses of licorice or calamus root tea are administered: then vomiting is stimulated by rubbing the tongue, which releases emotions. Or, in the morning before brushing the teeth, one may take two glasses of salt water, which will aggravate *kapha*. Then rub the tongue to induce vomiting. Once the mucus is released, the patient will feel instantly relieved. Congestion, wheezing and breathlessness will disappear and the sinuses will become clear.

## Chart 5 – Emesis Therapy (Vaman)

### *Elimination through the Upper Pathways*

*Vaman* is the cleansing of *Kapha* and the elimination of mucus & congestion.

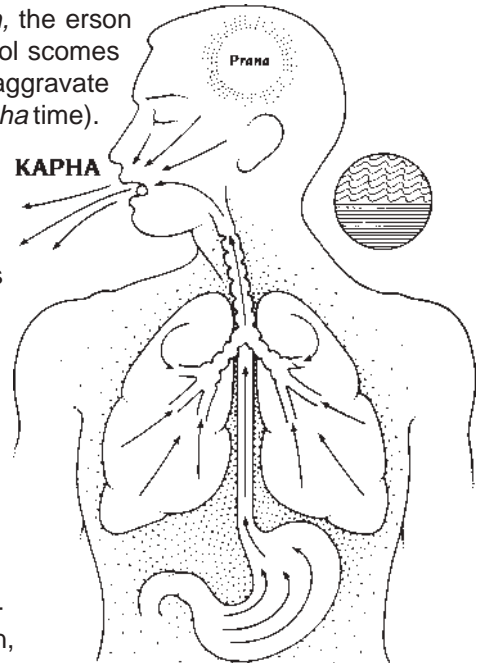
**PC-Emesis Measures:** Oil massage and fomentation are administered the night before the day of *Vaman*. One to three days prior to *Vaman*, the person should drink one cup of oil two to three times a day until the stool becomes oily, or he feels nauseated. He should also eat a *Kaphagenic* diet to aggravate *Kapha* in the system. *Vaman* should be given in the morning (*Kapha* time). The person should eat Basmati rice and yogurt with much salt early in the morning, which will further aggravate *Kapha* in the stomach. The application of heat to the chest and back will liquify the *Kapha*. The person should sit calmly on a knee-high chair, and drink a concoction of licorice and honey, or calamus root tea. This emesis preparation is measured and recorded before being drunk, so that at a later time the amount of vomitus from the decoction can be determined. After drinking the decoction, the person should feel nauseated. He should then rub the tongue to induce vomiting, continuing until bile comes out in the vomitus. The degree of success in this treatment is determined by: 1) the number of vomitings (8 is maximum, 6 medium, 4 minimum), and 2) the quantity of vomitus (1 quart maximum, 1½ pints medium, 1 pint minimum).

**Post-Emesis Measures:** Resting, fasting, smoking medicated cigarettes, and not suppressing natural urges, i.e. urination, defecation, gas, sneezing, coughing

**Indications:** Cough, cold, symptoms of asthma, Kapha fever, nausea, loss of appetite, anemia, bleeding through lower channels, poisoning, skin diseases, diabetes, lymphatic obstruction, chronic indigestion, edema (swelling), epilepsy, chronic sinus problems, repeated attacks of tonsillitis.

**Contra-indications:** Childhood, old age, debility, hunger, heart disease, cavities in the lungs, bleeding of upper channels, menstruation, pregnancy, emaciation, grief, obesity

**Emetics (Substances):** Licorice, calamus, salt, cardamom, nux vomica



## Chart 6 – Purgation Therapy (Virechan)

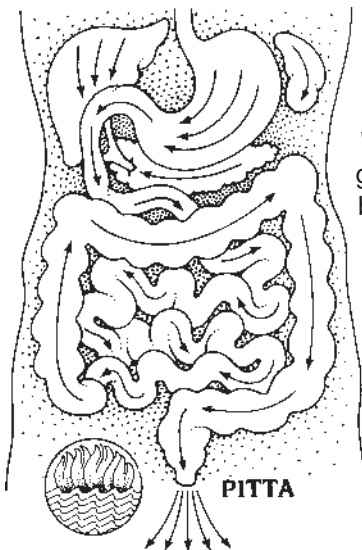
### *Elimination through the Lower Pathways*

*Virechan* is the cleansing of *Pitta* and the purification of blood toxins. It can be given three days after *Vaman* therapy. If *Vaman* therapy is not indicated, it can be administered directly. To prepare for *Virechan* therapy, oil and fomentation must be applied to the rectum and abdomen respectively. *Virechan* cleanses the sweat glands, small intestine, colon, kidneys, stomach, liver and spleen.

**Indications:** Skin diseases, chronic fever, piles, abdominal tumours, worms, gout, jaundice

**Possible Contra-Indications:** Childhood, old age, debility, acute fever, low *Agni*, indigestion, bleeding from lower channels, cavities in lungs, diarrhea, foreign body in stomach, immediately after *Vaman*, emaciation, ulcerative colitis, prolapsed rectum

**Virechan Substances:** Senna, prune, bran, flaxseed husk, dandelion root, psyllium seed, cow's milk, salt, castor oil, raisins, mango juice.



Therapeutic vomiting is also indicated for skin diseases, chronic asthma, diabetes, chronic cold, lymphatic obstruction, chronic indigestion, edema (swelling), epilepsy (between attacks), chronic sinus problems and repeated attacks of tonsillitis.

### PURGATIVES (*Virecfum*)

When much bile is secreted and accumulated in the gallbladder, liver or intestines, an allergic rash or skin inflammation, such as acne or dermatitis, as well as chronic fever, ascites, biliary vomiting or jaundice may result. The Ayurvedic treatment for this condition is administration of purgatives or laxatives (*virechan*). A number of fine herbs grown in the United States can be used for this treatment. For example, senna leaf tea is a mild laxative. However, in people of *vata* constitution, this tea might create griping pain, since its action aggravates peristaltic movement in the large intestine.

An effective laxative for *vata* or *pitta* constitutions is a glass of hot milk to which two teaspoons of *ghee* have been added. (The preparation of *ghee* is described in Appendix C - Recipes.) This laxative, taken at bedtime will help to relieve the excess *pitta* causing the bile disturbance in the body. In fact, purgatives can completely cure the problem of excessive *pitta*.

When purgatives are used, it is important to check the diet. The patient should not eat foods that will aggravate the predominant humor or cause the three humors to become unbalanced. (For more details on diet, see Chapter VIII.)

Purgatives should not be given to persons with low *aqni*, acute fever, diarrhea, severe constipation or bleeding from the rectum or the lung cavities. Nor should they be administered when a foreign body is present in the stomach, after enema, or in cases of emaciation, weakness or prolapsed rectum.

### ENEMA (Basti)

Ayurvedic enema treatment (*basti*) involves introduction into the rectum of medicinals such as sesame oil, calamus oil or herbal decoctions in a liquid medium. Medicated enema is the complete treatment for *vata* disorders. It alleviates constipation, distention, chronic fever, the common cold, sexual disorders, kidney stones, heart pain, vomiting, backache, neck pain and hyperacidity. Many *vata* disorders such as sciatica, arthritis, rheumatism and gout also are treated with enemas. *Vata* is a very active principle in patho-genesis, and there are at least eighty different *vata*-related disorders. *Basti* is a complete treatment for eighty percent of these diseases.

Medicated enemas should not be given if the patient is suffering from diarrhea or bleeding from the rectum. An oil enema should not be given to persons having chronic indigestion, cough, breathlessness, diarrhea, diabetes or severe anemia: nor to the aged or children below seven years of age. Decoction enemas (herbs boiled in water) should not be given for acute fever, diarrhea, cold, paralysis, heart pain, severe pain in the abdomen or emaciation. Oil or decoction enemas should be retained for a minimum of thirty minutes; however, it is best to retain longer if possible.

### NASAL ADMINISTRATION (*Nasya*)

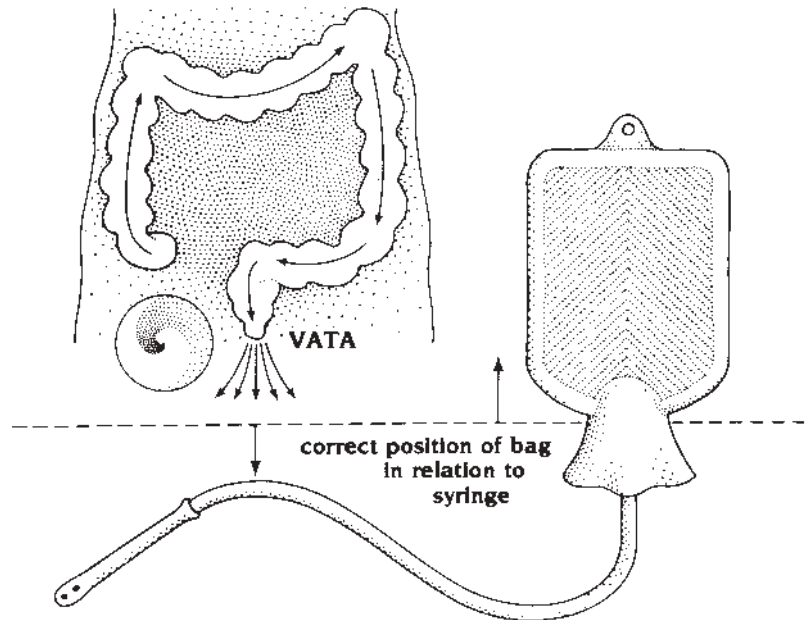
The nasal administration of medication is called *nasya*. An excess of bodily humors accumulated in the throat, nose, sinus or head is eliminated by means of the nearest possible opening. The nose is the door to the brain and to consciousness: *pram* or life energy, enters the body through breath taken in through the nose. *Prana* maintains sensory and motor functions. Nasal administration of medication helps to correct the disorders of *prana* affecting the higher cerebral, sensory and motor functions.

Nasal administration is indicated for dryness of the nose, sinus congestion, hoarseness, migraine headache, convulsions and certain eye and ear problems. In general, nasal medication should not be administered after a bath, food, sex or drinking alcohol, nor should it be applied during pregnancy or menstruation.

Chart 7

## Enema Therapy (Basti)

*Elimination and medication through the Lower Pathways*



Vata is the main etiological factor in the manifestation of disease. Vata is responsible for the retention or elimination of feces, urine, bile and other excretas.

Vata is mainly located in the colon. Bones are also the site of Vata. Hence, the medication administered rectally works up to the *AsthiDhatu*. The mucus membrane of the colon is related to the outer covering of the bones (periosteum), which nourishes the bones. Therefore, any medication given rectally goes into the deeper tissues, like bones, and corrects Vata disorders.

**Types of Enemas:** 1) Oil Enema—1/2 to 1 cup of warm sesame oil (for chronic constipation), 2) Decoction Enema —1/2 cup of gotu kola or comfrey decoction (see licorice decoction listed under licorice *ghee* in recipe section) with 1/6 cup of warm sesame oil, 3) Nutrition Enema - 1 cup of warm milk, 1 cup of meat broth or 1 cup of bone marrow soup.

**Indications:** Constipation, distention, low back ache, gout, rheumatism, sciatica, arthritis, nervous disorders, Vata headache, emaciation, muscular atrophy.

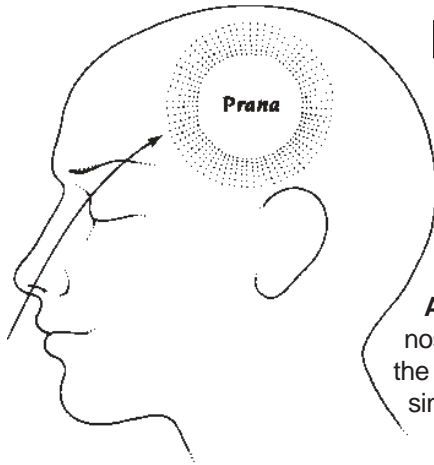
**Contra-Indications:** 1) Oil Enema - Diabetes, obesity, indigestion, low *agni*, enlarged spleen, unconsciousness, 2) Decoction Enema - Debility, hiccough, hemorrhoids, inflammation of anus, diarrhea, pregnancy, ascites, diabetes, 3) Nutrition Enema - Diabetes, obesity, lymphatic obstruction, ascites.

Breathing also can be improved through nasal massage. For this treatment, the little finger is dipped into *ghee* and inserted into the nose. The inner walls of the nose are slowly massaged, going as deeply as possible. This treatment will help to open the emotions. (Nose tissue is tender and for this application the fingernail must be kept short to avoid injuring the delicate mucus membranes.) Since most people have deviated nasal septums, one side of the nose will be easier to penetrate and massage than the other. The finger should not be inserted forcibly. The massage should proceed by slow penetration, the finger moving first in a clockwise, then in a counterclockwise

Chart 8

## Nasal Administration (Nasya)

*The Nose Is the Door to the Brain and Consciousness*



**Types of Nasya:** 1) *Virechana* (cleansing with use of powders or herbs), 2) Nutritional *Nasya* (for *Vata*), 3) Sedative *Nasya*, 4) *Nasya* Decoctions, 5) *Ghee* or Oil *Nasya*, 6) Nasal Massage

**Administration of Powder:** A dry powder of gotu kola is blown into the nose with a tube. It is used in *Kapha* disorders, i.e. headache, heaviness in the head, cold, running of nose, sticky eyes, hoarseness due to sticky *Kapha*, sinusitis, cervical lymphadenitis, tumours, worms, skin diseases, epilepsy, drowsiness, Parkinsonism, chronic rhinitis, attachment, greed, lust.

**Nutritional Nasya:** Use ghee, oils, salt. Nutritional *Nasya* is used in *Vata* disorders, i.e. migraine headache, dryness of voice, dry nose, nervousness, anxiety, fear, dizziness, emptiness, negativity, ptosis, bursitis, stiffness in the neck, cervical spondylosis, dry sinuses, loss of sense of smell.

**Sedative Nasya:** Use aloe vera juice, warm milk, juice of asparagus root, gotu kola juice. Sedative *Nasya* is used only in *Pitta* disorders, i.e. hairfall, conjunctivitis, ringing in the ear.

**Oil Nasya:** Decoctions and oils together are used in *Vata*, *Pitta* or *Kapto* disorders.

**Nasal Massage:** Dip the clean little finger into the appropriate oil and insert into each nostril as deeply as possible. The nasal passage is then lubricated through this gentle massage. Nasal massage helps to relax the deeper tissues and can be done every day or any time one is under stress.

As shown in the diagram, the person should lie on the table with the head down and the nose facing up. Put 5 drops of oil or decoction as needed into each nostril. Lie in this position for one minute or more.

**Contra-Indications:** Pregnancy, menstruation; after sex, bathing, eating, or drinking alcohol

**Substances Used in Nasya:** Calamus powder, gotu kola, onion, garlic, black pepper, cayenne, ginger, *ghee* oil decoctions.

direction. By this means, the emotions that are blocked in the respiratory tract will be released. One may use this treatment each morning and evening. In this way, breathing patterns will change as the emotions are released and the eyesight also will improve.

### BLOOD-LETTING [*Rakta Moksha*]

Toxins that are absorbed into the bloodstream through the gastrointestinal tract circulate throughout the body. They may manifest under the skin or in the joint-spaces, creating disease. In such cases, elimination of toxins and purification of the blood is necessary.

For repeated attacks of skin disorders such as urticaria, rash, eczema, acne, scabies, leucoderma, chronic itching and hives, blood-letting (*rakta moksha*) is indicated. It also is effective in cases of enlarged liver and spleen, and for gout.

Pitta is manifested in the waste products of the blood, so in many *pitta* disorders, such as rash and acne, the toxins are circulated in the blood system. Thus, for many pitta ailments, extracting a small amount of blood from the vein relieves the tension created by the toxins in the blood.\*

Blood-letting also stimulates antitoxic substances in the blood stream which helps develop the immune mechanism in the blood system. Thus, the toxins are neutralised enabling radical cures of many blood and bone disorders.

Blood-letting also is contra-indicated in cases of anemia, edema and weakness. This treatment is not recommended for young children or the aged.

Some substances such as excess sugar, salt, yogurt and sour-tasting foods are toxic to the blood. In certain blood disorders, to keep the blood pure, these substances should be avoided.

Burdock root tea is the best blood-purifier. For blood-carried disorders such as allergy, rash or acne the patient should take a milk laxative and the next evening begin burdock root tea therapy. The tea is made from one teaspoon of powder in one cup of hot water. If taken every night, the action of the herb will begin to purify the blood. Other blood-purifying herbs are saffron, sandalwood powder, turmeric and calamus root powder. Pomegranate juice, orange juice and asparagus root are also beneficial for blood ailments. These may be used after blood-letting has been performed.

## PALLIATION

Following treatment to eliminate the most serious toxins, the process of palliation (*shamana*) is employed. Palliation involves neutralizing the toxins by enkindling *agni* and stimulating the digestion through fasting. Toxins also may be neutralized by internal use of hot, pungent herbs such as ginger and black pepper. Sustained hunger and thirst, exercise, sunbathing and sitting in the fresh air are other means of neutralizing toxins.



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\*This procedure should be administered only by a physician.



# CHAPTER VIII

## Diet

Ayurveda teaches that each individual has the power to heal himself. Thus, this science of life offers everyone the freedom to recover health by understanding the body and its needs.

Fundamental to the individual's ability to remain healthy, according to Ayurveda, are the maintenance of a sound diet and a stable, healthy routine. Also important are the pursuit of traditional practices such as yoga and breathing exercises; and an understanding of the spiritual practices that can create harmony and happiness.

Diet should be chosen to suit the individual constitution. If one understands the constitution and its relationship to the qualities of various foods, then it is possible to select a proper diet. One needs to take into account the taste of the food (sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter or astringent) and also whether it is heavy or light, hot- or cold-producing, oily or dry, liquid or solid. The seasons of the year must also be considered in choosing diet.

The accompanying table provides a list of the foods that are helpful or harmful for each constitution. The up-pointing arrows next to each food category on the chart indicate that these substances aggravate the corresponding factor. The down-pointing arrows indicate foods that decrease the humor such foods being good for the individual of that particular constitution. For instance, dry fruits, apples, melons, potatoes, tomatoes, eggplant, ice cream, beef, peas and green salad aggravate *vata*. Thus, they should not be taken in excess by a person of *vata* constitution. Conversely, sweet fruits, avocados, coconut, brown rice, red cabbage, bananas, grapes, cherries and oranges are beneficial for people of *vata* constitution.

Increase of the *pitta dosha* will be caused by spicy foods, peanut butter, sour fruits, bananas, papayas, tomatoes and garlic. Foods that inhibit pitta are: mangoes, oranges, pears, plums, sprouts, green salad, sunflower seeds, asparagus and mushrooms.

Bananas, melons, coconut, dates, papayas, pineapples and dairy products increase *kapha*. However, dry fruits, pomegranates, cranberries, basmati rice, sprouts and chicken are beneficial for people of *kapha* constitution.

During summer, when the temperature is high, people tend to perspire excessively. Pitta predominates at that time of year. It is not good to eat hot, spicy or pungent foods then because they will aggravate pitta. During autumn, when the wind is high and dry, more *vata* is present in the atmosphere. At this time, one should avoid dry fruits, high protein foods and other foods that increase *vata*. Winter is the season of *kapha*; it brings cold and snow. During this period one should avoid cold drinks, ice cream, cheese and yogurt. Such foods will increase *kapha*.

When considering diet, the quality and freshness of food are important factors. There also are certain foods that are incompatible when eaten together, such as fish and milk, meat and milk, yogurt and beef, and sour fruits and milk. In addition, most melons should be eaten alone. In combination with other foods, they create clogging and may prevent absorption by the intestines. These effects could cause an imbalance in the *tridosha*. Toxins result when these incompatible foods are ingested together.

The intake of food should be regulated by the condition of the *agni*, the digestive fire in the body. Do not eat unless you feel hungry and do not drink unless you are thirsty. Do not eat when you feel thirsty and do not drink when you feel hungry. If you feel hungry, it means your digestive fire is enkindled. If you drink at this time, the liquid will dissolve the digestive enzymes and the *agni* will be reduced.

Table 5

# Food Guidelines for Basic Constitutional Types

*NOTE: Guidelines provided in this table are general. Specific adjustments for individual requirements may need to be made, e.g. food allergies, strength of agni, season of the year, and degree of dosha predominance or aggravation.*

	VATA		PITTA		KAPHA	
	NO ▲	YES ▼	NO ▲	YES ▼	NO ▲	YES ▼
<b>FRUITS</b>  ▲ Aggravated dosha ▼ Balances dosha	Dried Fruits Apples Cranberries Pears Persimmon Pomegranate Watermelon	Sweet Fruits Apricots Avocado Bananas Berries Cherries Coconut Figs (fresh) Grapefruit Grapes Lemons Mango Melons (sweet) Oranges Papaya Peaches Pineapples Plums	Sour Fruits Apricots Berries Bananas Cherries Cranberries Grapefruit Grapes (green) Lemons Oranges (sour) Papaya Peaches Pineapples (sour) Persimmon Plums (sour)	Sweet Fruits Apples Avocado Coconut Figs Grapes (dark) Mango Melons Oranges (sweet) Pears Pineapples (sweet) Plums (sweet) Pomegranate Prunes Raisins	Sweet & Sour Fruits Avocado Bananas Coconut Figs (fresh) Grapefruit Grapes Lemons Melons Oranges Papaya Pineapples Plums	Apples Apricots Berries Cherries Cranberries Figs (dry) Mango Peaches Pears Persimmon Pomegranate Prunes Raisins
<b>VEGETABLES (Raw)</b>	Broccoli Brussels Sprouts Cabbage Cauliflower Celery Eggplant Leafy Greens* Lettuce* Mushrooms Onions (raw) Parsley* Peas Peppers Potatoes (white) Spinach* Sprouts* Tomatoes	Cooked Vegetables Asparagus Beets Carrots Cucumber Garlic Green Beans Okra (cooked) Onion (cooked) Potato (sweet) Radishes Zucchini	Pungent Vegetables Beets Carrots Eggplant Garlic Onions Peppers (hot) Radishes Spinach Tomatoes	Sweet & Bitter Vegetables Asparagus Broccoli Brussels Sprouts Cabbage Cucumber Cauliflower Celery Green Beans Leafy Greens Lettuce Mushrooms Okra Peas Parsley Peppers (green) Potatoes Sprouts Zucchini	Sweet & juicy Vegetables Cucumber Potatoes (sweet) Tomatoes Zucchini	Pungent & Bitter Vegetables Asparagus Beets Broccoli Brussels Sprouts Cabbage Carrots Cauliflower Celery Eggplant Garlic Leafy Greens Lettuce Mushrooms Okra Onions Parsley Peas Peppers Potatoes (white)
	* - These Vegetables are OK in moderation, with oil dressing.					
<b>GRAINS</b>	Barley Buckwheat Corn Millet Oats (dry) Rye	Oats (cooked) Rice Wheat	Buckwheat Corn Millet Oats (dry) Rice (brown) Rye	Barley Oats (cooked) Rice (basmati) Rice (white) Wheat	Oats (cooked) Rice (brown) Rice (white) Wheat	Barley Corn Millet Oats(dry) Rice (basmati, small amount) Rye

Table 5, *continue*

	<b>VATA</b>		<b>PITTA</b>		<b>KAPHA</b>	
	NO ▲	YES ▼	NO ▲	YES ▼	NO ▲	YES ▼
<b>ANIMAL FOODS</b>	Lamb Pork Rabbit Venison Seafood	Beef Chicken or Turkey (white meat) Eggs (fried or scrambled)	Beef Eggs (yolk) Lamb Pork Seafood	Chicken or Turkey (white meat) Eggs (white) Rabbit Shrimp (small amount) Venison	Beef Lamb Pork Seafood	Chicken or Turkey (dark meat) Eggs (not fried scrambled) Rabbit Shrimp Venison
▲ Aggravated dosha ▼ Balances dosha						
<b>LEGUMES</b>	No Legumes except Mung Beans, Tofu, Black & Red Lentils		All Legumes OK except Lentils		All Legumes are Good except Kidney Beans. Soy Beans. Black Lentils & Mung Beans	
<b>NUTS</b>	All Nuts are OK in Small Quantities		No Nuts except Coconut		No nuts at All	
<b>SEEDS</b>	All Seeds are OK (in moderation)		No Seeds except Sunflower & Pumpkin		No Seeds except Sunflower & Pumpkin	
<b>SWEETENERS</b>	All Sweeteners are OK except White Sugar		All Sweeteners are OK except Molasses & Honey		No Sweeteners except Raw Honey	
<b>CONDIMENTS</b>	All Spices are Good		No Spices except Coriander, Cinnamon, Cardamom. Fennel, Turmeric & Small Amount of Black Pepper.		All Spices are Good Except Salt	
<b>DAIRY</b>	All Dairy Products are OK (in moderation)		Buttermilk Cheese Sour Cream Yogurt Almond	Butter (unsalted) Cottage Cheese Ghee Milk Coconut		
<b>OILS</b>	All Oils are Good		Corn Safflower Sesame	Olive Sunflower Soy	No Oils except Almond. Corn or Sunflower in Small amounts.	

It is food that nourishes the body, mind and consciousness. How DU eat is very important. While eating, one should sit straight and void distractions such as television, conversation or reading. Focus our mind upon and be aware of the taste of the food. Chew with ve and compassion and you will clearly experience the taste. Taste does not originate in food, it originates in the experience the one who eats. If your *agni* is impaired, you will not taste the food properly. The taste of food depends upon *agni*. Spices help to enkindle *agni*, as well as to cleanse the body and to enrich the taste of the food. Each mouthful should be chewed at least thirty-two times before it is swallowed. This practice allows the digestive enzymes in the mouth to do their work properly and, in addition, it gives the stomach time to prepare for the arrival of the masticated food. It is important that one eats at a moderate speed.

How much food you take at one time also is important. One-third of the stomach should be filled with food, one-third with water and one-third with air. The amount of food eaten at a meal should be the equivalent of two handfuls of food. If one eats in excess, the stomach will expand and demand additional food. An overeater's stomach expands like a balloon. Overeating also results in the creation of additional toxins in the digestive tract. The food becomes a poison that the body must eliminate through effort. One should eat and drink with discipline and regularity for eating is a meditation. Eating in this way will nourish your body mind and consciousness and will also enhance longevity.

Water plays a vital role in maintaining balance in the body. Water may be taken in the form of fruit juices. Although fruit juice should not be taken during meals, water is necessary at meals. One should sip water while eating. Water taken with meals becomes a nectar that aids digestion. If a quantity of water is drunk after the completion of a meal, the digestive juices will be diluted and digestion hampered. Climate will affect the amount of water the body requires.

If there is indigestion, one should observe a warm-water fast. This practice will aid cleansing and increase *aym*. Cold water will cool down *agw*, therefore, ice cold water is poison to the system and hot water is nectar. The digestion is affected when one drinks a lot of water. Too much water can result in retention and additional body weight.

## FASTING

Before a fast is undertaken, consideration must be given to the individual constitution. In the West, people sometimes observe fasts for ten, fifteen, twenty or more days without considering their constitutions. This lack of understanding of constitutional requirements may have detrimental effects.

A person of vata constitution should not observe a fast for more than three days. Not eating increases lightness in the body and *vata* (bodily air) is also light. So, the *vata* element becomes impaired if a fast is continued too long and this impaired element will create fear, anxiety, nervousness, and weakness.

The same restriction on length of fasting holds for individuals of *pitta* constitution. A fast of more than four days will aggravate *pitta*, increasing the fire element in the body. This increased *pitta* will cause psycho/physical reactions of anger, hate and dizziness.

People with *kapha* constitutions, however, may observe prolonged fasts. They will feel a pleasant sensation of increased lightness, greater awareness and an opening of consciousness. Clarity and understanding will improve.

If a juice fast is undertaken, it is important to remember that grape juice is good for the *vata* constitution; pomegranate juice for the *pitta* constitution; and apple juice for the *kapha* constitution. Each day of the fast, drink about one and one-half quarts of the juice diluted with water.

The digestive system is resting during a fast. It is important not to place strain on the *agni*. the digestive fire, during this time. During fasting, the digestive fire becomes enkindled and, since there is no food to digest, *agni* slowly burns away the long-existing toxins in the intestines.

Ayurveda teaches that during a fast certain herbs such as ginger, black pepper, cayenne pepper and curry, which have medicinal value because of their hot, spicy attributes, may be used to help neutralize toxins in the system. If these herbs are taken in the form of tea, they will help enkindle *agni* which will burn away toxins.

When one is observing a fast, physical strength and stamina should be watched. If it becomes noticeably less, the fast should be discontinued.

Fasting is recommended when there is fever, cold, constipation or arthritic pain. If there are toxins, or if *ama* exists in the large intestine, fasting is indicated.

For the normal, healthy individual, a warm water fast (one to two quarts per day) is advisable at least one day a week. This practice allows the digestive system to rest.

## VITAMINS

In the West, taking vitamins is regarded as a means to create or maintain good health. Physicians and health-professionals prescribe vitamins routinely to their patients and such practices as taking massive doses of vitamin C to prevent colds are common. However, if the individual constitution is not considered, such doses of vitamins may create imbalances in the *dosha*. The human body has a capacity to generate the vitamins it needs and dependence upon external vitamins, without consideration of the individual constitution and condition of *agni*, may create an excess of vitamins in the body (hypervitaminosis).

Many people who regularly take vitamins and minerals to supplement their diets continue to suffer from the same deficiencies for which they are taking supplements because they are unable to properly digest, assimilate and absorb these natural and synthetic vitamins.