

YOUR
IRRESISTIBLE
LIFE

4 Seasons
of Self-Care

through Ayurveda
and Yoga Practices
that Work

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Foreword by Maya Tiwari



Chapter 3

Ayurveda: It Doesn't Have to Be Complicated

Ayurveda is derived from two roots: *Ayu*, meaning life; and *Veda*, which means knowledge. The knowledge of life, the science of life, is Ayurveda. Today, we associate Ayurveda with India and it can get confusing because some people think they have to eat Indian food or wear traditional Indian clothing to practice Ayurveda. Not so.

Ayurveda is an inclusive healing modality. It is the mother of all medicine, and, at its essence, it understands everything through the lens of the five elements theory. In India, this art and science has been developed, notated, and systemized for over 5,000 years.

The profound transformational practices within the scope of Ayurvedic Medicine are still being used today because they work, irrespective of culture or belief system. However, throughout time, every ancient culture and civilization embodied an understanding of living in harmony with nature: This organic evolution is how Ayurveda also originated.

- By observing Nature, we realize we are Nature: We are not separate.
- The five elements—earth, water, fire, air, and ether—make up everything on this planet, including you and I.
- We are all beautiful expressions of a unique alchemical combination of these five elements in distinct form. No two people have the exact same ratio of earth, water, fire, air, and ether.

When you learn the principles of Ayurveda, you will see how timeless and applicable they are to every single being. You will be empowered by connecting to the qualitative embodiment of how the five elements are not some esoteric idea, but a practical and applicable system to understanding how you can be balanced and healthy. This universal knowledge will be your greatest ally throughout your life as your health and needs continue to change. Awareness is the key to healing.

We must first be aware that we are not living in balance before we are inspired to make a change. So often it takes a major trauma or sickness before we are literally forced to reassess the way that we have been living our life. Sometimes, this comes in the form of an accident or disease; sometimes, it may be a divorce or loss of a loved one that wakes us up to the realization that we are not living the life we really want to be living.

Sharing A Realization of My Life Out of Balance

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For me, it was an illness that the Western medical world was not able to diagnose or even treat that catapulted me into fully absorbing the practices and philosophy of Ayurveda. On one of my pilgrimages to India, I became very ill. A plethora of symptoms (fever, vomiting, diarrhea, delirious behaviour, sweating, coughing, and extreme fatigue) left me lying on a wooden bed at the ashram, wishing I were anywhere but there. I pushed through the illness, feeling guilty for not contributing to duties and chores, doing 16 hours of karma yoga per day.

After leaving the ashram, I continued on my planned journey, traveling through South-East Asia for seven months. It was not until I returned home to Canada that I was able to admit that I wasn't well. Previously, I was able to dance eight hours a day, but after my journey through Asia, just walking up a flight of stairs was exhausting.

I was sent by my family doctor to a foreign disease specialist in Toronto where every test known to man was conducted for all manner of illness: diabetes, parasites, AIDS, hepatitis, and on and on. I gave more blood than I thought I had and became really good at peeing into tiny plastic containers. After months of patiently waiting for my appointment with the specialist, I anticipated receiving a definitive diagnosis of my condition and a suitably great action plan. Nope.

I was told there was nothing wrong with me.

But, but, but . . . I wanted to scream. Cry. Give up. How could the specialist tell me there was nothing wrong with me when my body was clearly sick, exhausted, and depleted of all energy? I moved home to live at my Dad's place. I didn't have energy to hold down a job, let alone teach Yoga to anyone.

I knew there had to be something on this planet that could help. I set out to take my healing into my own hands. Enter Ayurveda. My healing was a process: It was not a quick overnight recovery, but through understanding my constitution and its imbalance, I was able to eat the proper foods, take the right herbs, and create a daily routine that had stable, lasting effects.

Ayurveda is now seamlessly incorporated into my life: It is not something I "do". It is the innate way that I live in accordance with nature by aligning with the seasons, times of day, and by knowing myself enough to adjust my thoughts or actions to prevent the accumulation of disease in my mind or body.

Prevention is always preferred over waiting until a full-blown disease erupts.

Disease does not happen overnight. It is often a process that happens over time with many subtle (or not so subtle) signals that the body, mind, or emotions have been trying to communicate, but we do not want to hear.

We want discomfort to go away, and yet, it does not. Over time, the knock at our door gets louder until we cannot ignore the steam train that just crashed through our living room with the horn screaming—*Pay Attention!*

Life wants us to pay attention, to learn the lessons we came here to learn and to be the best human being we can possibly be. This book was not written to help you get a better job, re-paint the bedroom, or wear more stylish clothes: This book was written to assist in connecting you to the deep calling from your soul that is asking you to wake up to the beauty and power that you are. You are a being of infinite potential who is sometimes trapped in fearful conditioning from society, your family, and your past.

Living in accordance with Nature takes us out of our comfort zone and into a fluid rhythm unique to us. Sound good?

Well, the transition from where we are to where we want to be, can, at times, be challenging. It leaves us oscillating on the threshold between who we have been and who we want to be. We must consciously choose and then take action, walk through the doorway, down the hallway, and into the garden of our life.

On this journey, you will need a guide who has tread the path to warn you about possible obstacles and to hold the torch to them as you take each step. We all have that light within us: We also benefit from having an external light in the world to assist us on our journey.

Let this book guide you as the deep, textured unfolding of your body, mind, and heart expand into a state of balance, ease, and grace.

Welcome to your Ayurvedic experience—a philosophy that is as ancient as human kind, delivered to you in a form that your mind, body, and schedule can digest.

Ayurveda 101

Ayurvedic principles stem from the basic understanding that everything is comprised of the five elements in varying degrees, so therefore, everyone and everything is unique. It is because we are all inimitable, we must understand what foods, lifestyle, and environment will be most supportive to us as an individual.

Your distinctive make-up is called your *dosha*, or constitution. Your *dosha* is an expression of your physical, mental, emotional, and energetic make up. At the moment of conception, your true nature is established: It is the blueprint, the ratio of the five elements that make up your *dosha*. Your true nature is called *prakruti*.

It is important to understand your *prakruti* to balance your self in a way to feel your best, to be healthy and happy. However, throughout your life you will go out of balance. Sometimes, a life's imbalance can begin in the womb if the mother is drinking alcohol, doing drugs, or is subjected to a trauma or stress.

Other times, the imbalance begins early on in childhood, as many parents do not understand Ayurvedic principles about how each child requires different care. Poor food choices for the individual, trauma, stress, moving, or even climate can begin to have an adverse effect that years later may manifest as a full-blown illness.

Into our teenage and adult years, the propensity for imbalance to occur accelerates as stress increases. Sometimes, we are simply trying to keep it all together in our life, with no time or energy to pay attention to the details of eating and living in accordance with our *dosha*.

The off-kilter state, however subtle or gross, is called, *vikruti*. The task of Ayurveda is to assist us in making the journey from our current state of imbalance—*vikruti*—back to our true nature (*prakruti*), where health is restored.

The five elements make up the three *doshas*: *vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha*.

The Ayurvedic *Doshas*

Vata = Air + Ether

Pitta = Fire + Water

Kapha = Earth + Water

Responsible for movement

Responsible for metabolism

Responsible for lubrication and structure

Primary location: colon

Primary location: small intestine

Primary locations: upper half of the stomach, chest

Let us now look at the five elements and see how they reveal to us the qualities that make up our psychobiological structure/constitution, or *dosha*. The elements have the following qualities:

EARTH: heavy, solid, dense, thick, dry, cold, rough, static, hard, stable

WATER: fluid, cold, moist, soft, smooth, heavy

FIRE: hot, sharp, clear, dry, light, subtle, mobile, penetrating

AIR: mobile, cold, dry, light, clear, rough, sharp, hard, subtle

ETHER: clear, light, dry, cold, mobile, sharp, subtle

Ayurveda is a qualitative science, as opposed to the Western model of quantifying everything. Understanding the qualities of food, thoughts, the time of year, and even the disease, makes it clear about how to achieve balance. The opposite qualities will be the ones that restore homeostasis.

Dosha Qualities

| Vata Qualities | Qualities to Balance | Pitta Qualities | Qualities to Balance | Kapha Qualities | Qualities to Balance |
|----------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Dry | Oily | Oily | Dry | Heavy | Light |
| Light | Heavy | Penetrating | Superficial | Slow | Fast |
| Cold | Hot | Hot | Cold | Cold | Hot |
| Rough | Soft | Light | Heavy | Oily | Dry |
| Subtle | Gross | Mobile | Still | Dense | Clear |
| Mobile | Still | Liquid | Dense | Soft | Sharp |
| Clear | Cloudy | Sharp | Soft | Static | Mobile |

One basic principle of Ayurveda is that like increases like . . . and opposites reduce.

When we understand this, then all we need to do is simply look to the qualities of certain symptoms to understand how to come back to balance by welcoming in the opposite attributes.

For example, let us take the case of “Angry Angela” who has heartburn and acne. These symptoms are both of *pitta* nature: hot, inflamed, oily, sharp and intense. For Angry Angela to soothe her heartburn and acne, she would need to incorporate cooling foods (such as cilantro, basmati rice, mint, pomegranate, bitter leafy greens, and cucumber) into her diet. She could also increase her participation in cooling, non-competitive activities (like swimming, walks in the moonlight, laughing with friends, *pitta*-pacifying yoga). Most importantly, she needs to look at the mental and emotional aspects of underlying *pitta* emotions, such as anger, intensity, judgment, and perfectionism.

Each *dosha* has a balanced expression and an imbalanced expression.

No one *dosha* is better than the other, they all have their strengths and weaknesses. Even though we may be predominant in one or two of the *doshas*, we are made up of all five elements and, thus, all have earth, water, fire, air, and ether in different ratios to make up our individual unique self.

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This means that *you* are perfectly YOU.

Vata individuals in balance are creative, insightful, intuitive, active, imaginative, vibrant, and spontaneous due to the qualities of air and ether.

When out of balance, *vata* types may exhibit anxiety, nervousness, worry, insomnia, constipation, dry skin, bloating, gas, hyper-activity, fatigue, underweight, restlessness, muscle spasms, joint aches, intolerance of cold, low back pain, and an inability to handle stress.

To balance *vata*: follow a *vata*-pacifying diet; stay warm; drink warm fluids; eat cooked, slightly spiced, grounding/nourishing foods; avoid stimulants like alcohol and caffeine; self-massage with sesame oil; have a routine for eating, sleeping, waking; do not spend energy you don't have; do a gentle yoga practice, and practice *nadi shodhana pranayama* (that you will learn in the Fall Section).

Be particularly attuned to the *vata* practice in the Fall and early Winter season.

Pitta individuals in balance are focused, ambitious, compassionate, bright, dynamic, vibrant, and make great leaders.

When out of balance, *pitta* types may act out with anger, aggression, manipulation, judgment, impatience, rashes, heartburn, fever, diarrhea, excess body heat, excess discharge of sweat, hot flashes, acne, visual problems, halitosis, acid stomach, and any "itis"—colitis, liver issues, and burn out.

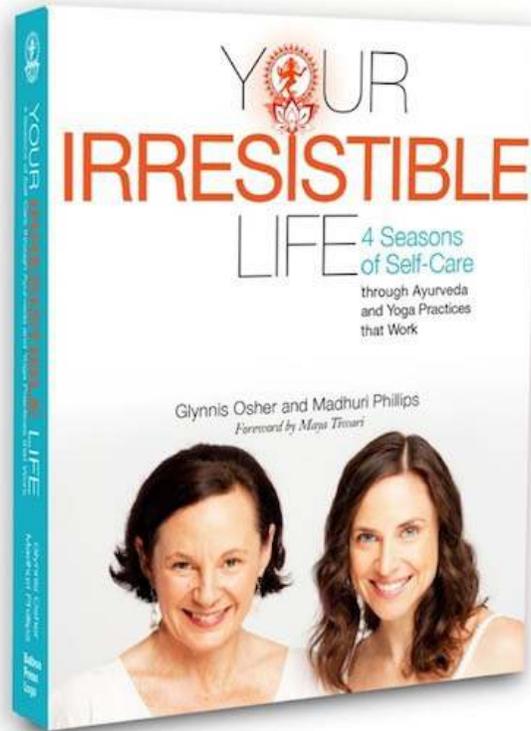
To balance *pitta*: follow a *pitta*-pacifying diet; stay cool; avoid competitive sports and focus on less goal-oriented forms of exercise or fun; avoid the hot sun in the middle of the day; relax in nature; eat when you feel hungry; and practice *sheetali pranayama* (that is taught in the Summer Section).

Be particularly attuned to the *pitta* practice in the Summer season.

Kapha individuals in balance are calm, nurturing, patient, reliable, consistent, stable, loving, serene, and have an excellent memory.

When out of balance, *kapha* types may be stubborn, passive, lethargic, apathetic, greedy, depressed, sleep excessively, or have slow digestion, swelling, upper respiratory congestion, obesity, nasal allergies, chills, or nausea.

To balance *kapha*: follow a *kapha*-pacifying diet; have ample spice in the diet; wake early; exercise daily; avoid over-eating; and practice *kapalabhati pranayama* (that can be found in the Spring Section).



Easy-to-follow food routines, Yoga practices, beauty secrets, home remedies, cleanses, and self-care suggestions that will bring you radiant health for life.

If you desire amazing energy, glowing skin, restful sleep, excellent digestion, and a positive outlook this illuminating Ayurveda and Yoga guidebook is for you!

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