

The Diseases of Modern Life and the Ayurvedic Approach

Bhaswati Bhattacharya

‘Pay particular attention to your health, but too much coddling of the body will, on the contrary, also spoil the health. If there is not the strength of knowledge, nobody would care twopence for your ringing of the bell.’¹

VERY FEW PEOPLE CAN SAY that they know no one with any chronic disease. The karma and comfort of modern life has created societies around the world and the diseases of lifestyle. Most of these diseases today are due not to one event or mishap, but rather to decisions made long ago in our choices around food, exercise, sleep, daily routines, work, relationships, medical care, and spiritual world view.

Ayurveda is the oldest systematic thinking about health and disease created by humans. It is also part of human karma that the last century has seen humans cast the views of Ayurveda out of daily reach, relegating it to derogatory terms of being only preventive, useless, and unscientific. Thus, the wisdom of Ayurveda is practised by very few people in its authentic form, using it for curing disease, promoting healthy longevity, and enhancing wisdom.

Ayurveda is a world view that advocates human allegiance and surrender to the forces of Nature that are described partially in modern physics, chemistry, and biology. As these forces, described in encoded form in the Vedas and advocated by the Hindu world view, are uncovered slowly by the modern sciences, society is newly discovering science that in fact was already

described but only for those who had the maturity to decipher the magic of the truth. Ayurveda simply states these truths in typical sutra form; those who ponder on each sutra may unravel the message encoded quietly in the terms, much as DNA is coiled and supercoiled, and when fully opened, has revealed the blueprint of life.

Evidence-Based Ayurveda

The problem with Ayurveda today is not the science itself nor the theories or knowledge of healing according to Ayurveda. The science itself is quite sound and can be demonstrated through observation of humans using it properly under the guidance of a knowledgeable person. The problem lies with the common human understanding of it, access to it mentally and practically, and how to apply it to human lives, which are riddled with habits of the westernised, urban, modern, industrialised lifestyle.

Medical sciences have ‘discovered’ and unravelled clues about the body, health, and disease, grounding the ciphered truths that remain wrapped in Ayurvedic verses. The findings of modern biomedical sciences substantiate with biochemical or radiological reasoning why certain Ayurvedic prescriptions were made for certain diseases.

The Human Microbiome

An ecosystem of microbes—bacteria, fungi, viruses, and one-celled organisms—coexist on

and in the human body. Long thought to be sterile, the gut is now known to harbour a hundred trillion of the body's nine hundred trillion organisms. The human body itself has one hundred trillion cells, one-tenth the number of microbes it hosts. Each individual has a different collection of organisms, called a microbiome, and they change with diet, environment, diseases, and

Creating the ability to connect the conscious mind with the inner pharmacist is the work of yoga. This has been proven many times by watching the abilities of yogis.

hygiene. In fact, the organisms growing on the left hand differ from those growing on the right hand. The lungs of two people living in the same home have different organisms. These organisms start to inhabit the body when the foetus makes its way into the world through the birth canal, then suckles its mother's breast.

What is the purpose of these microbes? They make vitamins that the body cannot, especially B vitamins and K vitamins. They have enzymes that the human body does not have, and therefore break down compounds we eat that we cannot otherwise digest. They signal our immune system to make signals crucial to the development of our defence system. They salvage carbohydrates that would otherwise waste some of the plants we eat. They produce some of the precursors of healthy fats, short-chain fatty acids—SCFA, that our body requires in order to prevent 'bad fats' from accumulating in our system. They produce antibiotics that we cannot make, thereby preventing disease bugs from infesting our body.

The idea of food being defiled because someone has partly eaten it, popular in Indian culture, makes sense when we think about the microbiome. Attention to contamination of our

ecosystem and its bugs with another person's ecosystem could result in imbalance. It is one reason that Ayurveda and common Hindu culture advocates hygiene, not sharing utensils, and inner clothing. The seventh chapter of the Ayurvedic text *Madhava Nidana* discusses in detail the twenty types and four origins of these microbial organisms, some of which were native in the gut. It also discusses worms and other parasites. Ayurveda also discusses the concept of *satmya*, a person's individualised approach to health and wellness based on what she or he grew up eating, thinking, and breathing, and thus the balance that the person maintained with those foods, temperatures, and behaviour. A specific microbiome correlates highly with this personalised and individualised approach to treatment planning and is one of the reasons why the same treatment cannot work successfully for two people with the same disease symptoms.

The Power of Intention

In the 1990s, a series of experiments done in New Jersey explored the power of the mind to convert energy into matter, pushing the ideas of post-modern physics. The now-famous PEAR experiments, of the Princeton Experimental Anomalies Research team, examined the ability of participants to imagine in their minds and convert a series of random number generators to create non-random numbers. They also calculated matter in black boxes, applied concentrated focus and power of the mind, and found changes in the quantity of matter. These are widely rejected by people who cannot reconcile the power of the mind to manifest intention into actual matter.

However, there continue to be experiments. In the 1970s experiments were done in the cardiac care unit, with non-relatives praying for patients. Termed accessory prayer, the intervention was shown repeatedly to positively affect

the outcome and patients' health compared to another blinded, randomly-assigned group for which no prayer had been done. Dr Larry Dossey has collected these experiments and pontificated over their significance, concluding that non-local prayer and mindful intention can affect the subjects of our intention. Business coaches guide people to develop their abilities to move projects forward, create wealth through intention, and shift conditioned behaviour. Ayurveda absolutely advocates the training of the mind to create what we want in our lives.

Food as Medicine

Mainstream legitimate medicine, also called Allopathy or biomedicine, has long stated that diets do not impact the body significantly and are not curative, and therefore cannot be considered medicine. Until the past decade, physicians could be de-licensed for using foods and nutrition as their primary medicine. However, the past several years have shown that foods impact our gut and our microbiome; foods impact our development of cardiovascular disease; foods impact our development of obesity, which is one of the main risk factors for many chronic diseases. Ayurveda advocates the how, when, and what of food as a key pillar of health and intervention of diseases.

Inner Pharmacology

While many modern scientists are committed to the idea that a placebo is equivalent to nonsensical or non-therapeutic interventions, what this means is that the power of the mind to create changes is the actual mechanism of placebo. Ayurveda does not discount the power of the mind. In the absence of or despite the presence of an external drug, the mind's inner pharmacy dispenses an array of hormones, antibiotics, neurotransmitters, and everything the

body needs when it is healthy. Keeping the inner pharmacist in tune with the body is the challenge. Creating the ability to connect the conscious mind with the inner pharmacist is the work of yoga. This has been proven many times by watching the abilities of yogis. A successful yogi may have control over her or his autonomic nervous system, physiology, breath, and other functions considered uncontrollable. Ayurveda seeks to empower the inner pharmacy by maintaining harmonious currents of thought, action, and communication between the mind, body, senses and soul. Such inner harmony creates a clean space for the gradual opening of the mind to control the body.

Chemistry and Metals

Since World War II, the mainstream world has convinced the public that heavy metals are dangerous, because they are toxic. People have come to blame complex diseases on heavy metal poisoning, completely dismissing the knowledge that metals were purified and bound to herbs and incinerated to produce small particles that could be absorbed easily and safely by the body. These *bhasmas* would penetrate into those sites where cancer cells grew and hidden infections flourished rampantly, and would kill the fast growing cells. The metals were then carefully chelated out of the body using a series of purifying and rejuvenating steps tailored to the fire, strength, and constitution of the patient. If the step was done with the guidance of an Ayurvedic expert, the metal could be brought out of the body safely and easily, supported by diet, exercise, sleep, and proper supportive medicines. Ayurvedic *bhasmas* are still widely in use to the tune of lakhs of doses per year, as they are very effective when prescribed and guided by Ayurvedic physicians, who are competent in their use. Most of the side effects occur from improper medicine makers and incompetent medicine prescribers.

Epigenomics

Decades after the DNA was discovered, the machinery used to regulate and read the DNA came under investigation. Over the past fifty years, it has been discovered that there are more components to the genetic story. RNA and protein, which are written in the DNA code, have a multitude of functions, one of which is to open and close the DNA strands. Modern molecular biology has revealed that chemicals that enter into our body can make their way to the DNA to affect how it is read. Foods, environmental toxins, poisons, medicinal molecules, and cellular signals can and do affect the DNA structure and function. People, who change from their ancestral diet, have now been shown to change the way their DNA is read, or expressed. The science of these expressions on top of—epi—the message of the DNA—genome—is called Epigenomics, and this research is revealing the powerful role of processed foods, heavy metals, nanoparticles, and cancer promoters.

The Doshic World

Ayurveda suggests to us that if we live with the ebbs and flows of nature, and better understand the direct relationship between our health and the flows of our activities, we can get a greater understanding and begin more competent self-care.

The three principles of Doshic philosophy ground the relationship of the world as a constant movement between energy and matter. The principle of all that flows as gas is called *Vata*, with qualities similar to air and ether: cold, dry, light, mobile, and rough. Everything in our body and our environment that flows is influenced by *Vata*, which in fact is most things. *Vata* is the initiator and the instigator, the beginner of processes.

The principle of all that transforms is called

Pitta, with qualities similar to fire and water: sharp, fiery, acidic, and flowing. Everything in our body and our environment that is transformed is influenced by *Pitta*, including our enzymes, our digestion, our interpretation of information that comes into our being—such as light, other beings, sound, thoughts. The principle of all that flows as liquid is called *Kapha*, with qualities similar to water and earth: stable, cool, heavy, and grounding. Everything in our body and our environment that is grounding, lubricating, and sustaining in the material form is influenced by *Kapha*.

According to Ayurveda, the loss of the complete, unbounded vitality that is *Ojas*, is described by the disease complex of *Prameha*, an increase in urination that foreshadows the development of chronic diseases such as diabetes mellitus, obesity, and problems with the cardiovascular system. In modern medicine, these are sometimes called metabolic syndrome.

Diseases due to our choices and our lack of courage to take control of our power to choose lie at the heart of many conditions called ‘Lifestyle Diseases.’ These ailments are often associated with the modern, urban, westernised way of living, though many of them existed in the ancient days when Ayurveda was captured into the classic texts of Ayurvedic medicine, beginning around 500 BCE. These conditions include cardiovascular diseases, chronic fatigue, arthritis, chronic migraine, low back pain, constipation, irritable bowel syndrome, hypothyroid, diabetes, psoriasis, eczema, dry eyes, hyperacidity, ulcers, uterine fibroids, and varicose veins. In fact, many of these diseases are conditions in which chronic inflammation in the body creates pain, breakdown of tissues, and an imbalance between the hormones and signals of the body.

Unlike any other system of medicine, Ayurveda describes the beginnings of lifestyle diseases

in great detail and has a unique and accurate ability to prognosticate or predict what can happen to a person if these etiologic factors continue and the mind remains unbridled.

The sign of vigour, the sign of life, the sign of hope, the sign of health, the sign of everything that is good, is strength. As long as the body lives, there must be strength in the body, strength in the mind, [and strength] in the hand (6.62).

Svastha Vritta I: Attitude is Foremost

The first factor described in Ayurveda for the pursuit of health and cure from disease is the mind. Factors that lead to mental worries, grief, and discontentment are the first step down the slippery slope of disease. In the *Charaka Samhita*, the acharyas focus on factors that promote longevity, strength, nourishment, delight, and happiness.² The first step is control of the mind and a conscious awareness of what a person allows into her or his environment or actively takes into her or his being.

Attitude is the first principle that is required for cultivating the knowledge, practices, and behaviour that will promote health. Choosing to have a positive attitude in all situations is a learned behaviour from our parents, schooling, environment, and various teachers. Fatalist or negative attitudes do not promote health. Trusting that each of us has a place in the universe helps us to belong. You must know that the flow of the universe includes *you* as a variable in the almost infinite equation of variables, and that your best efforts and positive attitude will attract good things into your life. This is called the power of intention in the modern day, and it has been used by yogis to create and manifest all that is needed in the form of matter from energy.

Non-violence is the foremost promoter of longevity of life. The attitude of non-violence is

more than an outward lack of violence and passivity. It also includes an active attitude of promoting harmony in the world. It asks the mind not to engage in the foes of worry, anxiety, hatred, resentment, fear, lust, gluttony, and over-indulgence in passions which lead to addictive desires that beget violence. Examples are numer-

The greatest promoter of strength is the concept of celibacy. In Ayurveda, celibacy encompasses prowess and fortitude from good quality tissues of the body.

ous, and can be found if we analyse the causes of most wars on the planet.

The greatest promoter of strength is the concept of celibacy. In Ayurveda, celibacy encompasses prowess and fortitude from good quality tissues of the body. Foods and activities that promote *Ojas* give a strong mind, body, resilience, good immunity, and resistance to disease.

Knowledge is the great promoter of nourishment and grounding, for nourishment is not only food but the knowledge that underlies our pursuit of food. In holistic nutrition courses, nourishment is taught as fulfilment in our work, relationships, inner pursuits, a sense of spirituality, and our physical body. Food, diet, nutrition, and calories only form a part of nourishment. True knowledge promotes our awareness of what is real food for our bodies and naturally prevents us from wanting processed, dead food. True knowledge also shields our desires for unhealthy foods that lead to diseases such as obesity and inflammatory conditions in the gut, which further lead to inflammatory conditions in the body.

Self-control of the sense organs is said to be the greatest promoter of delight and the ability to be content. The discipline of yoga and the practice of spirituality, both address the yoking of the mind, with its infinite possibilities and

quick movements. The sense organs, the five senses of knowledge, interface our mind and soul with the world. Over-stimulation of the sense organs leads to addictions, uncompensated desires, and other enemies of the mind. Under-stimulation leads to withdrawal, depression, lack of connection, and hopelessness from a lack of experience. Aberrant stimulations lead to perverted thoughts that make us see the world in patterns that are not harmonious with the way Nature flows. Thus, self-control allows us to engage our hearing, touching or feeling, sight, smell, and taste to the world around us and to enjoy the balance that is Nature. This attunement to harmony gives us delight and the contentment that is often translated as happiness.

True intimacy with oneself, one's soul, mind, and body, as well as emotional trust and harmonious mental intimacy with family, friends, and teachers allows each of us to lead a harmonious life, and protects us from the imbalances that disarm us and lead to disease.

Why spend so much time on the mind when discussing lifestyle diseases? The mind controls our intake, attitude, and conditioned behaviour. When we can change these, we can change the course of our diseases. It is simple, but it is not easy for most adults.

Svastha Vritta II: The Practical Use of Ayurveda in Modern Life

Lifestyle science is known as *Svastha Vritta* in the discipline of Ayurveda, to ground oneself, *sva-stha*, in correctness, *vritta*. After the foundation of a good mind-body connection is laid, the pillars of good preventive health are cast. The main components include understanding and counselling of proper sleep, self-control, food, rest, and medicines.

Many guidelines are given by Ayurveda, but the observable truth is that most of today's

Ayurvedic physicians in India do not practise the guidelines in their own lives. Therefore, patients find it difficult to accept what they are told. Ayurveda requires us to 'walk the talk'. Furthermore, many Ayurvedic physicians do not explain how to make their guidelines practical and usable in today's world, where money and time are always in shortage. How do we make them practical in this urbanising, modern, Western world?

Things that mark the modern world—money, commerce, materialism, superficial relationships, cellular phones, internet, television, electronics, technology, artificial and processed foods—make it difficult for us to simplify our lives. In fact, society would prefer that we do not have simple lives, as the rules of commerce and profit require us to psychologically favour those industrialised, comfort-centric ideals. In protest, spiritually-evolving people in the West have begun a movement toward a simple, less material life. The tiny house movement is a group of people who consciously choose to live in smaller houses, with fewer possessions that are more functional towards their goals in life, with a greater emphasis on *doing* and *being* and less on *having*.

Ayurveda teaches us that to preserve health, we must reconnect with the balance of Nature. To do this while living in the modern world, there are a few practical guidelines for curing lifestyle diseases. Known broadly as *Vihara*, they involve the knowledge, attitudes, and practices that we call our lifestyle. They revolve around food, exercise, sleep, daily routine, work, time, relationships, medical care, and having a spiritual world view.

(To be concluded)

References

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1–8, 1989; 9, 1997), 8.416–7.
2. See *Charaka Samhita*, Sutra Sthana, 30.13–5.

THIS MONTH

We have been given some wonderful texts by our forefathers, people who wanted us to lead meaningful lives. These texts are often inaccessible because of their language, institutions they are associated with, or the ideologies they have come to symbolise. How to access the nuggets of wisdom hidden in these texts and practise them in our lives are dealt with in **The Manuals of Life**.

The tussle between faith and reason is as old as humanity. Religion needs not mere faith but also astute reason. One's faith is strengthened by reasoning. The need for having both faith and reason is emphasised by Swami Pavitrananda, former Minister-in-charge, Vedanta Society of New York. This is an edited transcript of a talk delivered in 1953.

Goddess Lakshmi has been always considered to be the Hindu goddess of prosperity. In **Lakshmi**, Alok Dutta, a litterateur, artist, and social activist from Kolkata, gives us a different interpretation of the form of this goddess that is famous in West Bengal.

The message of Sri Ramakrishna has reached various regions of the globe. Swami Vivekananda envisioned a monastery for women that would be managed and membered only by nuns. In the spirit of Swamiji's vision, **The Sri Sarada Devi Ashrama of South Africa** was born. Pravrajika Ishtaprana, the head of this ashrama, describes the origins of this monastery and its activities of prayer and service.

Ayurveda, the science of life, gives key insights into the holistic life of an individual, not

just one's physical health. In **The Diseases of Modern Life and the Ayurvedic Approach**, the Ayurvedic way to tackle present-day lifestyle diseases is discussed by Dr Bhaswati Bhattacharya, research scholar of Ayurveda at the Banaras Hindu University, clinical assistant professor of Family Medicine at Weill-Cornell Medical College, New York, and the founder-director of The Dinacharya Institute, New York.

In **Love for All**, the practice and teachings of love in the lives of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Chaitanya are compared by D K Sen, former director of the Geological Survey of India, Kolkata.

The coming of Indians including Swami Vivekananda to Freemasonry is discussed in the third instalment of **Masonic Vedanta** by Guy L Beck, a scholar, author, musician, educator, historian of religions, musicologist, a Fulbright-Nehru senior research fellow and visiting fellow at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, Oxford University, UK, lecturer in Religious Studies and Asian Studies at Tulane University; and adjunct professor of Religious Studies at Loyola University, New Orleans.

In the sixth instalment of **Memory**, Swami Satyamayananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Kanpur, explains retentive intelligence and the destruction of memory.

The way we perceive emotions is significantly influenced by the paradigm shift described in the book **How Do You Feel?** by A D (Bud) Craig, the Atkinson Research Scientist at the Barrow Neurological Institute, Phoenix. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

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(Continued from the previous issue)

Food

THE FOOD WE EAT and the diet we plan are essential therapeutic tools in Ayurveda. We have three opportunities each day to medicate ourselves: they are breakfast, lunch, and dinner. We also have three opportunities each day to poison ourselves: they are breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Examine not only what you eat, but from where the food is obtained, how it was processed, how much time has elapsed since it was alive. Do not eat old food. Notice how fast you eat, where you eat, when you eat, what your cravings and appetite are, and whether you pay attention to the diversity of nutrients you intake, not just the calories. Spend conscious time observing, appreciating, and visually and mentally digesting what you will put into your mouth, connecting it with the universe before connecting to your body.

Ayurveda emphasises the need for all six tastes in every meal in order to evoke all the necessary digestive enzymes and fires needed for proper nourishment: sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent, and astringent. It tells us to eat only to fill one-third of the stomach. It tells us to eat clean, fresh food.

We need to avoid bad food combinations, known as *viruddha*, such as fruit with milk, or fish with milk, or many fruits together, or yogurt with fruit. Different enzymes are required

by the stomach and the small intestine to properly digest and absorb them, and these *viruddha* combinations are thought to disturb the fires of the belly.

Get into the kitchen! Spend time learning how to cut vegetables, use fire, and prepare foods. Think good thoughts and pray when you cook, as the energy from your mind travels through your hands and those of your fellow cooks into the food you prepare. When you involve yourself in the cooking, you learn to be more coordinated, more graceful, and more skilled. Goddess Lakshmi is said to visit the home of those with clean, well-set kitchens, as the birth of food is the beginning of the grounding and wealth that we give our physical body.

Set up a kitchen pharmacy, with a live aloe plant, a live tulasi plant, a glass container of turmeric, several types of salt, a bottle of pure ghee, and glass containers of digestive spices such as cumin or *jeera*, coriander or *dhaniya*, carom seeds or *ajvain*, fennel or *saunf*, cinnamon or *dalchini*, cardamom or *elaichi*, and dried neem leaves.

Exercise

Daily walking in Nature is a great way to lower our excess Pitta, and its fiery, goal-obsessed tendencies of a modern lifestyle. Nature's harmony seeps into our being when we take time to be among trees, earth, water, grass, and the flows and sounds of Nature.

Exercise that involves the mind and gives it responsibility over the body is better than passive movements of the muscles done by someone else in physical therapy or mindless gymnasium work.

Learn your limits of exercise, both the minimum and the maximum. Too little exercise stagmates the body, the circulation, the mind. Too much exercise or too severe discipline aggravates the amount of softness needed to keep the mind and body united.

Exercise is to challenge the body to its healthy fullest. Each person's capacity is different and should be used regularly in order to keep it usable. Use it or lose it.

Find a way to learn some yoga. Yoking of the mind to the body is the ultimate power, more than guns or words. Learn how to use *pranayama*, *asanas*, *dhyana* for strengthening one's being and cultivating inner power.

Sleep

Spend time away from work and stressful

interactions in the hours before sleep. Use the time for bonding, good relationships, enjoyment, and appreciation. Bring inner light into your environment after sunset. The Ayurvedic prescriptions for a healthy night routine involve a fruitful end of the day and preparations for the night ahead, including meals, relationships, preparation for the next day, and sleep.

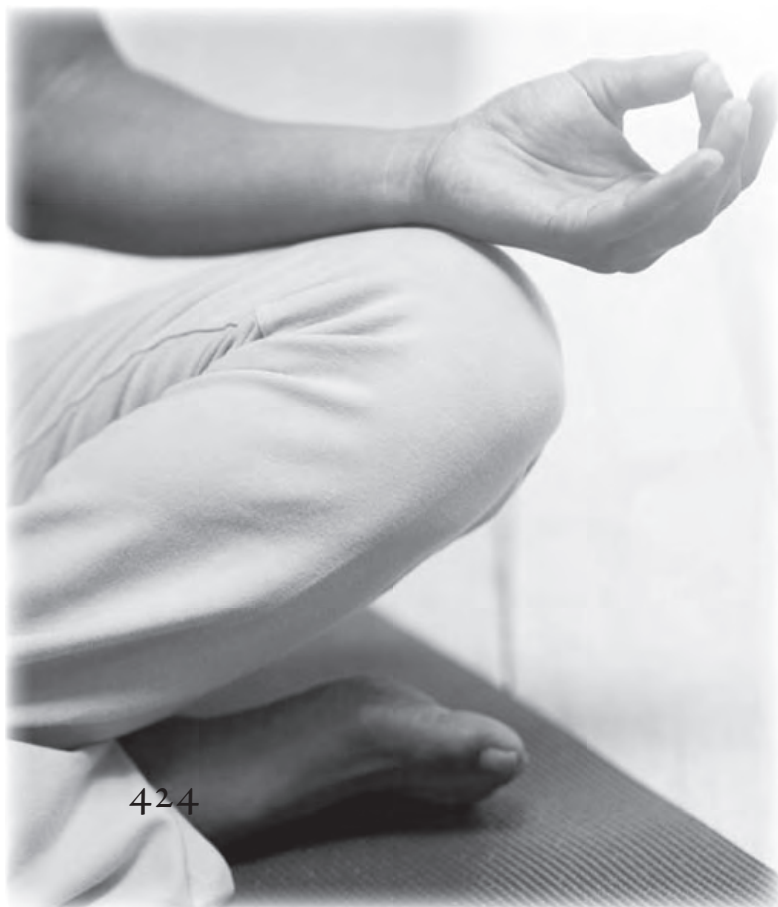
Each person needs a different amount of sleep. That amount differs slightly based on how the day's events stressed the body. Emotional traumas, violence, and anger require more time in sleep. People with heavier bodies, or with toxins in their bodies, need more time in sleep.

Never sleep with the crown of the head facing north. The alignment of the chakras has its own flow and should not be in alignment with the magnetic field of the earth. When you sleep with the head facing north, your body cannot find its own true north. Educate yourself on some laws of Vastu, and move your house interiors to optimise the energy in your space. Health often changes for people as they observe the laws of Vastu.

Sleep in a clean, well-darkened room if possible. The pineal gland in the brain generates clock-like hormones and regulates the chronobiology of your system based on clear ideas of night and dark. Sleep is the restful practice of rest and requires conscious preparations to block out all unnecessary sensory disturbances while you sleep.

Wash your feet, your hands, your face, and your mouth before sleep. Rid yourself of the dirt and grime of the day before entering into the sacred abode of sleep. That dirt and grime will feed unhealthy bacteria on your microbiome as you sleep so it is better not to encourage them.

Go to bed early. Get up at *brahma muhurta*, forty-five to ninety minutes before dawn. This will regulate your brain's hormone centers and



cure many metabolic lifestyle diseases if you rise early consistently. To do this, you have to plan to get the household to bed early. Set rules for no TV, no computer after 10 p.m.

Daily Routine

The early morning routine after rising should involve examination of the body's rhythms and cleansing of the channels and senses that take in the world. Wake early. Lie in bed and observe how your gut is feeling. Pray to the ground before touching the motherland, and walking on it all day. Empty bowels and bladders. Wash hands. Wash face. Rinse eyes with cool water. Rinse nose with cool water. Rinse mouth with cool water. Brush teeth. Scrape tongue. Rinse mouth. See yourself. See an auspicious object. Hear an auspicious sound. Smell a sweet smell. Taste a sweet glass of clean, pure water. Then start the day.

The basic principles of hygiene and good conduct in society are the foundations of modern public health. In Ayurveda, these principles include self-care, elimination of wastes, and conduct that does not put others at risk of getting injured or sick.

Set up your home to be prone to Ayurvedic recommendations. Keep a copper jug for storing water and keeping it naturally cool. Have the altar space accessible for prayer and worship. Create storage in the kitchen for easy, clean food preparation. Keep the bathroom clean and free from stagnant water. Invest in good plumbing and good storage areas.

Work

Love the work you do, if you cannot choose to do the work you love. Understand that some connection lies between you and your job for a purpose. That is why you have your job and someone else does not. Once you do your best at your job,

things shift. A hard workplace means you are not learning some lesson that you need to learn. Do not be lazy at work. Just this one rule will change your life and mind's contentment.

Shift your relationship with money. Make a budget to learn what you actually spend. Save ten per cent of what you earn. Spend ten per cent of what you earn on things you love. Use the other eighty per cent judiciously. Clean your financial papers and keep them tidy. A clean wallet and clean financial actions translate to clean energy in the mind and body and often affect health.

Be impeccable with your word. When you say anything to anyone, keep the commitment. Renegotiate if you will be late or unable. Do not keep people waiting. Say nothing if you cannot say good things honestly: remember that non-violence comes before truthfulness. Do not gossip about others. Do not say bad things about yourself or your family, even if you feel compelled. These principles of self-control and positive mental rightfulness according to one's conscience are known in Ayurveda as *Sadvritta*.

Time

The three main causes for the development of imbalance, and then pathology, drive the study of Ayurveda. They are *prajnya-aparadha*, or disrespect against the inner knower of true wisdom; *indriya-asatmya*, the misuse, overuse, and underuse of the senses; and *parinama*, the changes and challenges of time. Slavery to time is both a tool for discipline, but also a tool for slavery. We must free ourselves regularly from time-bound activities, deadlines, and goal-oriented activities. Time will keep moving forward, and take our minds with it. But if we remind ourselves of our true nature of being timeless, we will not fall prey to the thoughts and worries that time will enshackle.

One evening every week, do not use any electronic equipment, look at a watch, or have a fixed alarm. Go to bed early. Spend the evening freely and surrender to the sun, which will arise the next morning and pull you in its wake. For a night, be free. Ayurveda has therapeutic practices, where patients are kept free from clocks, even sequestered from the sun in *kuti-praveshika* or prescriptive lightless hut-living, in order to move them into the space of timelessness for healing quickly.

Relationships

Materialism is a ploy to anchor us to society. The real lessons and values of life are in relationships. Treasure and maintain ten to twelve people in your life with grace and care, and treat the others well but with less openness and intimacy.

Make your relationship with your inner self the main relationship of your life. Be more conscious of what your gut is telling you. Ayurveda tells us that the vast majority of our diseases begin in our mind and in our gut. When you feel confused, weak, angry, or afraid, drop that thought down into the heart, radiate from the heart down to the belly, and feel where in the belly the feeling goes. Feel your feelings. Do not ignore them. Process them. That will mature you.

Use your material things to maintain good relationships with people. Do not use relationships with people to maintain material things. Spend your money on experiences of enrichment and for helping others.

Taking Care of the Body

Listen to your body but do not blindly act on whatever it urges you to do. When your body starts driving you to do what it wants, step back and see that your body is trying to make you a slave. Strengthen the mind and shift the energy of the sexual urge to an energy focused on

the second chakra, the *svadhishtana*, the center of creativity. Work on a creative project, as the urge is actually calling you to renew your relationship with creativity. Use music, art, and dance to sublimate your sexual drives into a positive expression.

Keep your face at its best. Not only is it the region for four of your senses; light reflecting from it is what will likely greet people when they first see you. Much of healthy attraction occurs when others can see you clearly. Clean the skin gently, using upward strokes. Clean it in the morning and when you enter from outdoors. Sleep on clean pillow covers and do not put the same pillow on your feet or legs that your face touches. Keep artificial face products off the face. Do face yoga, postures that exercise the many muscles of the face, to keep the tissues toned. Do not squint.

Medical Care

Get educated. Learn more about your body. There are books, and good readings on the Internet, but the best teachers are healthy, wise, old people who are retired doctors or midwives. Their lives are the proof of how to live strong and long.

Make your physician learn more. Show your doctor what works for you. Your herbs and foods are just as important medicines as any tablets, and your physician should open her or his mind about the many ways of healing the body. Pay your doctor only when she or he gives you what you need. This is difficult, but it is a necessary feedback to shift their behaviour when doctors abuse their privileges. A little activism by you will shift the thinking of people around you who are claiming to care for your health.

Be aware that most people who are selling you health products are not able to give you accurate, pure truth, as their job is to bias you into purchasing their service or product. Do not

watch commercials on television about health products. Ask your doctor or nurse to teach a course for you and similar patients on better ways to work with your condition. Do not consult family or friends who are doctors who are not healthy. If they cannot 'walk the talk,' they are not really able to teach themselves accurately and cannot teach you.

Get regular check-ups at the clinic to keep on schedule with medications you are taking. Know what your height, weight, and blood pressure are. Find an old, smart doctor and visit her or him regularly, based on your condition.

Ensure that you have a plan for mental health care. Someone to talk with regularly is important: good friends, a wonderful spouse, a good sports partner, your parents, or elder relatives that respect you. If not, then formal counseling from an objective, trained mental health counsellor is important so that you can learn coping skills.

Set up a routine for taking your medicines. Ayurveda advocates for a helper to every patient who had a chronic disease, knowing that medicine alone does not cure lifestyle conditions successfully in most cases. Lifestyle diseases require us to be more conscious of how our lifestyle prevents us from taking those steps we need. Use the alarm clocks on your cellular phone to alert you on taking your pills or Ayurvedic treatments and routines. Have someone close to you remind you to take your medicines. Find someone to help you with oil massages, body care, or medicine preparation. Set up a pill box weekly so that you can have your medicines at hand.

Promote a healthy microbiome of organisms that live to benefit themselves and your body. Wash with soap only when excessively dirty or sweaty. Ayurveda advocates the use of environment-friendly dirt removers like lemon, yogurt,

bicarbonate, ash, and hot water. Do not over-use hand sanitizers. Put clothes for drying in the sun that has natural UV and antibiotic rays. Eat homemade yogurt when your appetite is healthy and your gut fire is high.

Use clothes medicinally. Called *ayurvedastra*, Ayurveda advocates the embedding of medicinal herbs such as turmeric, neem, and tulasi into cotton cloth for wearing. Examples include neem-soaked-and-dried burkhas, cotton scarfs soaked in turmeric and neem for neck rashes and skin tags and pillow covers soaked in neem for face rashes.

From April until October in most of India, wear cut cloth as few hours as possible during the day and night. For men, dhotis and sarongs are best. For women, sarongs, sarees, and shawls are best. They allow the body to breathe, and they promote evaporation of sweat. Wear pure fabrics only: cotton, linen, wool, and silk.

Spiritual World View

Ayurveda emphasises the power of the mind and the need for understanding our inner selves. Meditation every day is important. Rituals such as lighting of the lamp at sunrise, high noon, and sunset are modern reminders of the coming and going of the energy of the sun in the daily environment. These times can be used for mantra and engaging the inner self. Holidays are holy-days and should remind us to spend time with the inner holy self.

Cultivate relationships with Nature and animals. Plant a garden. Spend time every day somewhere amidst Nature to remember the connection of your spirit with the rest of the universe. Be aware of the changes in seasons and learn to adapt your routines consciously to the changes in the heat, the light, the waters, the vegetables that the earth produces. This practice of living in tune with the seasons is known in Ayurveda

as *ritucharya* and involves conscious choices of temperature and routine, such as eating soups in the cool season and cucumber in the warm season; or drinking hot, freshly-boiled water in the cold weather when the belly is not hot.

Find something new to learn each day that is inspiring. It will connect your spirit with your dharma when you take any steps forward. Ayurveda states that the first of the three main causes for disease is disrespect against the inner knower of true wisdom. When our conscience tells us to do something, who is telling us? From where does that wisdom come? That intelligent knower is the one-conscious, Brahman, to which we connect during our meditations. That stillness gives us the ability to hear and know that true wisdom. The rest of the time we move ignorantly against that true wisdom.

Svastha Vritta III: Embracing the Goal of Life, Hita

Ultimately, the reason we want to be cured from lifestyle diseases is to find and live in *Ayus*, roughly translated as 'The Good Life', called *hita-ayu* in Ayurveda.

A healthy long lifespan is marked by a state of aligned and awakened conscience and consciousness; a state of animation and hope, with flow in line with the environment; and strong sustenance of the physical and mental body-mind.


It is not one without suffering; it is one that allows a person to exist in a state of happiness no matter what happens for a few moments or lessons, and in a state of knowing one has lived a purposeful life. The good life is achieved by excelling in factors that promote longevity, strength, nourishment, delight, and happiness.

The *Charaka Samhita* details the qualities of the good life:

Detailed in the last chapter of the *Charaka Samhita*, Sutra-sthana, chapter 30, shloka 24,

the acharyas list the qualities of The Good Life:

Those who lead the good life have a content life, are not afflicted with physical and mental ailments, are endowed with youthfulness, enthusiasm, strength, virility, are endowed with reputation, manliness, boldness, those who have knowledge of the arts and sciences, those who have use of their sensory and motor faculties, objects of senses, and ability of the sense organs, those who are endowed with riches and various luxurious articles for enjoyment, those who achieve whatever they want and move as they like: these people lead a happy life. The good life is only achieved by having a useful life, with the following attitudes: are well-wishers of all creatures, do not aspire for the wealth of others, are truthful, peace-loving, examine things before acting upon them, are vigilant, enjoy the three important desires of life: virtue, wealth, and pleasure without the one affecting the other, respect superiors endowed with the knowledge of arts, sciences, and tranquility, serve elders, have full control over the six foes of passion, anger, envy, pride, and prestige, are constantly given to various types of charity, meditation, acquisition of knowledge, and solitude, have full knowledge of the power of Spirit and are devoted to it, make efforts both for the existing as well as the next life, are endowed with both memory and intelligence: these people lead a useful life.³

Ayurveda has not survived over five thousand years of conquests, fires, natural calamities, environmental changes, wars, and famines, to become extinct from the influences of modern living, modern medicine, and modern lifestyle diseases. Ayurveda is dynamic, contemporary, and evolving, amidst its constancy. Like Nature, it is strong and supple. If you take ten steps towards learning authentic Ayurveda, Ayurveda will take twenty steps to teach you about The Good Life. 

References

3. *Charaka Samhita*, Sutra Sthana, 30.24.

THIS MONTH

WE SUFFER FROM an intrinsic defect in our beings. This is a problem that needs to be addressed if we need to attain peace and fulfilment. **The Inward Gaze** deals with our 'manufacturing defect' of seeing only the external and not the internal. It also discusses how to get rid of it.

In **Women Gurus in Hinduism**, Karen Pechilis, NEH distinguished professor of humanities and professor of Asian and comparative religions at Drew University, New Jersey, discusses various aspects of the lives and public work of women spiritual leaders in Hinduism.

Durga is the goddess of the conquest of good over evil. She is worshipped in all splendour across the world. Her form has deeper meaning hidden from the casual eye. This deeper significance and its meaning in our lives is brought out in **Durga** by Alok Dutta, a litterateur, artist, and social activist from Kolkata.

Finding Vedanta is the story of the coming to Vedanta as a path to peace and fulfilment by Peter Kowalke, a volunteer at the Vedanta Society of New York and an avid traveller.

Prayer and meditation have functions beyond religion. They have social and therapeutic roles. **The Power and Mystery of Prayer and Meditation** is a sociological study of these activities by Dan A Chekki, emeritus professor of sociology at the University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg.

In the second and final instalment of **The Diseases of Modern Life and the Ayurvedic Approach**, a complete framework for leading a healthy life with a holistic vision is outlined

by Dr Bhaswati Bhattacharya, research scholar of Ayurveda at the Banaras Hindu University, clinical assistant professor of family medicine at Weill-Cornell Medical College, New York, and the founder-director of The Dinacharya Institute, New York.

Swami Vivekananda's involvement in Freemasonry and how he adopted many of its tenets are discussed in the fourth and final instalment of **Masonic Vedanta** by Guy L Beck, a scholar, author, musician, educator, historian of religions, musicologist, a Fulbright-Nehru senior research fellow and visiting fellow at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, Oxford University, UK, lecturer in religious studies and Asian studies at Tulane University; and adjunct professor of religious studies at Loyola University, New Orleans.

In the fifth instalment of **Memory**, Swami Satyamayananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Kanpur, explains the identity of the self, the concepts of karma and rebirth, and discusses how mental impressions, *samskaras*, are formed and also compares it with Plato's doctrine of anamnesis.

Encountering Religion in the Workplace is a book by Raymond F Gregory, who practised as an attorney in New York for more than forty years, specialising in employment discrimination. Using some case studies, he elaborates on various implications of and difficulties arising out of mixing religion and work, both in the factory and in the office. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

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