

energy. The human body is an excellent demonstration of tangible matter, dhatus and malas, intimately interacting with doshas, which are more energy than matter until, that is, they manifest as diseases in the organism. In a state of balance or equilibrium, doshas are considered an energy force in that we cannot visibly detect them as they move through and support bodily function. In a state of imbalance or disequilibrium the doshas become visible as mucus, bile, wind, and physical matter. When these early signs of disorder are ignored, imbalances can quickly become full-blown diseases.

In this unique system of explaining health, air and space—both ethereal elements—form one of the three doshas called Vata. Here air exercises its power of mobility only when space is available. The elements fire and water form a second dosha called Pitta. Here the bodily water protects the heat of the body from burning through. An example of bodily fire is the acid in our stomachs, which, if leaked from the stomach, is capable of burning the organism with the force of a raging fire. Water is the buffering force that contains the body's fires. The elements water and earth congregate to form the third dosha called Kapha. Because of their mutual density, water gives earth its fluidity. Without water, earth would become stagnated and inert. Thus, the Kapha dosha enables a certain fluidity in the body without depriving it of its solid support. These three doshas co-exist in all living organisms. The degree to which each dosha exists within a person determines the individual's constitution, commonly referred to as body type.

In Ayurveda, the individual dosha is the primary consideration in diagnosis. Although there are numerous causes of diseases, such as hereditary, congenital, external, and providential factors, aggravation of the doshas is present as either a result or cause of ill health.

PHYSICAL NATURE OF THE DOSHAS

In the cosmos at large, Kapha's external nature of water and earth express themselves as the forces of cohesion, absorption, and stability. Pitta's external nature of fire expresses itself as the force of transmutation and dynamism. Vata's external nature is air, the force of mobility and exhilaration, as well as space, the field where all activities occur in dynamic containment.

Each dosha also has a primary function in the body. Vata is the moving force, Pitta is the force of assimilation, and Kapha is the force of stability. Together, they are a stupendous example of three seemingly adversarial characters in potential harmony as a result of each dosha's intricate balance of force in the body. Vata, the most dominant of the doshas, governs bodily movement, the nervous system, and the life force. Without Vata's mobility in the body, Pitta and Kapha would be rendered lame. Pitta governs enzymatic and hormonal activities, and is responsible for digestion, pigmentation, body temperature, hunger, thirst, and sight. Further, Pitta acts as a balancing force for Vata and Kapha. Kapha governs

the body's structure and stability. It lubricates joints, provides moisture to the skin, heals wounds, and regulates Vata and Pitta.

Vata, Pitta, and Kapha pervade the entire body, but their primary domains are in the lower, middle, and upper body, respectively. Kapha rules the head, neck, thorax, chest, upper portion of the stomach, fat tissues, and the joints. Pitta pervades the chest, umbilical area, stomach, small intestines, sweat and lymph glands, and the blood. Vata dominates the lower body, pelvic region, colon, bladder, urinary tract, thighs, legs, arms, bones, and nervous system.

Apart from its main site, each dosha has four secondary sites located in different areas of the body. Each dosha then has five sites considered to be its centers of operation, which include the various outreach systems because of which the entire body functions. The doshas interact continuously with the external elements to replenish their energy within the body. Each of the three doshas' five sites has a specific responsibility towards the maintenance of the organism. Because the doshas also exist in the more subtle aspects of the body and universe, planes that actively affect the physical aspects, they are energetically much more influential in the maintenance of our overall health than their mere physiological expressions in the body would suggest. In fact as they manifest within the physical body, they need to be continuously discarded to prevent the body from decaying.

PHYSIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL NATURE OF THE DOSHAS

Five Airs of Vata

The five sites or centers of operation and systemic outreach through which Vata casts its influence on the entire organism are called the five airs of Vata, namely: *prana*, respiration; *udana*, throat; *samana*, stomach; *apana*, colon; and *vyana*, circulation.

Air of Respiration: Prana

Prana is the first air of the universe and of the body. Although located in the body between the diaphragm and throat, it not only pervades the region of the heart and chest, but also up into the face and brain. Prana aids in the chewing and swallowing of food and provides immediate nourishment to all vital tissues of the body. The system is constantly being rejuvenated through the natural rhythm of the breath's inhalation, exhalation, and timely retention. The activity of the colon is attuned to the respiration's rhythm, extracting prana from the digested food and diffusing it into all of the tissues in the body. When the colon is disturbed and unable to fulfill its natural ability to extract and diffuse prana, this unused prana becomes waste—a great waste, indeed.

Prana facilitates all movement in and out of the body. It moves in the region of the heart, causing it to beat; it carries food through the esophagus into the stomach. Prana sustains the heart, arteries, veins, senses, and our wisdom faculty,

buddhi. When prana cannot function properly, our very life force is threatened. Respiratory ailments such as bronchitis and asthma result. Heart ailments and the impulse to vomit are also related to prana's imbalance. Excess Vata, which collects in the colon, joints, and other Vata locations, can lead to such conditions as painful joints and bones, arthritis, and gastritis, among others. A major cause of many diseases is the accumulation of Vata in the colon, also due to the impairment of prana.

Prana is replenished through respiration. To promote optimal health through pranic breathing, the sages devised an elaborate system of breathing exercises known as *pranayama*, which is the practice of cleansing and controlling the breath. The exercises for breath maintenance include three phases: expiration, inspiration, and retention. A fourth phase, called the silent breath, is practiced by adept yogis who have mastered the variations of the other three phases. Modern science is not yet equipped to distinguish between a yogi practicing the silent breath and someone who has physically died.

Prana: The Silent Witness

On the cosmic plane, prana is considered the first air of creation. Being the finest of the airs, it has been infused into the life of all organisms by the creator since the beginning of time, energy, and matter. Prana is referred to by the ancients as the "soul within the body," and as the cosmic breath of the Atman, the Essential Self. At our most sublime level of existence, prana is the silent witness to our journey in life. This is why it is said to sit on the throne of the heart. According to the Vedas, the heartbeat is synchronized with our breath, beating four times the speed of each normal breath. When our bodies can no longer sustain the timely rhythm of our breath, the eternal song of the heart is silenced. Broken hearts prevail when the intuitional language imbued by prana in our body is forgotten. Pranayama, the breathing practices referred to above, yoga postures and meditation, seasonal cleansing therapies such as pancha karma, and Vata-nourishing foods are all excellent ways to revitalize prana.

Air of the Throat: Udana

Udana, the second air of Vata, and prana are somewhat analogous to the sympathetic and the parasympathetic nervous systems. Udana, which means "rising air," flows upward from the umbilicus through the lung and into the throat and nose. Known as the air of ejection, it provides us with our vocal powers and clarity of sense perceptions. It also preserves our body's natural forces, such as its strength of will and capacity for effort.

Udana has the supreme task of keeping track of the number of breaths we expend. Vedic lore tells us that each person, according to his or her karma, is given a certain number of breaths at the time of conception. When this ration is used up, the person dies. Our normal breathing pace is slow and rhythmic. When

our body is functioning properly, we take approximately sixteen breaths per minute. Therefore, according to the ancients, when we breathe faster or hold the breath, due to fear, anxiety, and so on, we are shortening our life.

An equally supreme task is udana's capacity to preserve memory, both experiential (memories gathered within a present lifetime) and cognitive (cumulative memories carried into all lives from the beginning of creation through all time). Impairment of udana can result in loss of memory, impaired speech, giddiness or heaviness in the head, deep-seated fears, and a shortened life span.

Udana: Keeper of Memory

At the subtle level, the creator infused, through the breath, the eternal air of udana into all living creatures, in order to track our various experiences and lives. Udana is the creator's time clock within us. Every breath we take expends karma. When the breath is long, cool, and rhythmic, we are able to increase our life span and to better serve the purpose of our journey. When the breath is shallow, rushed, and fatigued, we shorten our stay and leave the travel unfinished. The cosmic breath we received produces sound. Our voice is a reminder of our sacred origin since it expresses breath through the sound of the creator. Through wholesome and kind utterances, we are able to maintain our cognate privilege as humans. All harmonious sound produced by humans resonates with the vast and immutable consciousness. Likewise, all disharmonious noise we utter or create, whether through our own voices or mechanical devices, results in the impairment of memory, both experiential and cognitive, as well as alienation from our cosmic nature.

Udana's lesson is one of alertness and sanity. When we are able to control our sound, we protect udana. In this protection, we preserve our nature of awareness. Then we are able to hear the distant flight of a hawk, the silent crawling of the sand. We are better able to read the universal signs and to observe with reverence the sacred staff given us to walk the journey. In our own personal harmonious resonance we are able to maintain the innate link with creation, braided, as we are, to all creation through breath.

Although as separate human beings we are involved in different activities and functions, at various speeds, our cosmic nature is to remain "phase coherent" with the universe. To give an analogy: a number of pendulum clocks were mounted on the same wall by a Dutch physicist. Initially, each one ticked at its own speed, but, after a short while, they began ticking in unison. Their independent behavior became synchronized as a result of the sympathetic resonance of the collective sound waves created within the wall. The breath that ties the entire creation and all of its species together works in the same way. By becoming aware of our breath, we are essentially tuning in with, joining, the harmonic coherence of the universe.

Out of this cosmic resonance, the Vedic seers culled invaluable mantras which, when uttered repetitively and intoned properly, create a gravitational field of vibration.

Within this protective field we reverberate with all of nature. This cosmic system of sound, resonating between creator and creation, replenishes our intuitive impulses. Udana invites us to implode into the sonority of our origin where the lines between internal and external energy and matter dissolve.

The practice of silence, pranayama, yoga, wholesome activities such as the planting of herbs and foods, grinding grains and spices, seasonal cleansing of the internal body, daily cleansing of head, eyes, ears, nose, throat, Ayurvedic massage, and Vata-nourishing foods are all sadhanas to keep the udana in our body in balance.

Air of the Stomach: Samana

Samana, the third air of Vata, is located between the diaphragm and navel. It aids the movement of food through the stomach and small intestines, fans the fires of digestion by stimulating the production and activity of gastric juices and digestive enzymes and helps in the assimilation of nutrients extracted from our food. Samana is the moving force that transports these nutrients to the various tissue elements and discharges wastes into the colon. When the samana air is disturbed, it can cause mucus accumulation in the stomach, indigestion, poor assimilation, and diarrhea.

Samana: Keeper of Balance

At the subtle body level, samana represents our inner flexibility and spirit of discernment. Samana teaches us to discriminate between what is valuable and what is to be discarded as our desires for material things grow. Its lessons are rooted in our ability to balance, an apt task given its location in the mid-body. Sadhanas such as yoga, tai-chi, pranayama, Ayurvedic massage, Ayurvedic purgation therapy, and Vata-nourishing foods help samana to remain healthy and balanced.

Air of the Colon: Apana

The fourth air of Vata, apana, is located in the colon and the organs of the pelvic region. Also known as the air of elimination, apana's primary function is to relieve the body of feces, urine, flatus, semen, and menstrual waste. Its downward pressure maintains the fetus and the flow of its eventual birth. Apana is the most dominant of the five airs, situated as it is in Vata's primary location. Apana maintains the delayed nutrition of prana in the organism. When apana is impaired, diseases of the bladder, anus, testicles, uterus, and obstinate urinary diseases, including diabetes, prevail.

Apana: Keeper of Empty

On the subtle plane, apana is our spirit of non-attachment to material possessions. Patanjali's yoga sutras inform us that the moral restraint of greedlessness is necessary before we can truly access our cognitive memories. True to its downward force of elimination, apana teaches us how to nourish ourselves, and to let go

of that which is in excess. Sadhanas such as seasonal cleansing of the internal body, especially Ayurvedic enema therapy, Ayurvedic massage, pranayama, warm baths, aroma therapy, and Vata-nourishing foods help to rejuvenate apana.

Air of Circulation: Vyana

Vyana is the fifth and final air of the Vata and is located in the heart. It diffuses the energy derived from food and breath throughout the entire organism including the skin. Circulatory in nature, Vyana functions in the body's circulation channels, such as the blood vessels, to transport nutritive juices and blood throughout the body. Vyana also carries sweat from the glands to the skin and is the force behind bodily expressions such as yawning and blinking. When vyana malfunctions, there is dryness of the skin and other body extremities, poor circulation, and diseases such as fever and diarrhea.

Vyana: Keeper of Charity

At the subtle level, vyana is expressed as our attention to charity and personal freedom. Teaching us to circulate in the community, to influence goodwill and charity, it gives us our inward mobility and influential nature which we are urged to express gently within activity. Sadhanas such as yoga, pranayama, body brushing, baths, aroma therapy, Ayurvedic massage, and Vata-nourishing foods rejuvenate vyana.

Five Subsidiary Airs

In addition to these five airs, Vata also has five minor subsidiary airs. *Naga* is the air which releases abdominal pressure by belching. *Kurma* controls the movement of the eyelids to protect the eyes from dust and dirt particles, light, and so on. *Krekara*, the air which causes sneezing and coughing, prevents external substances from passing up into the nasal passages. *Devadatta* controls our yawning reflex, which provides additional oxygen to a tired body. Finally, there is the air of *dhananjaya*, which remains in the body after death, sometimes causing bloating and movement in the corpse.

Five Fires of Pitta

Pitta, formed from the elements of fire and water, also is said to reside in five sites. These sites are the centers of operation and systemic outreach through which the Pitta dosha influences the entire organism; they are: *pachaka*, stomach; *ranjaka*, blood; *sadhaka*, heart; *alochaka*, eyes; and *bhrajaka*, skin.

Fire of the Stomach: Pachaka

Pachaka is referred to in Ayurveda as the first fire of the body. It exists in the small intestine, duodenum, gall bladder, liver, and pancreas, and supports the remaining four fires, to be discussed below. Pachaka's main action is the dissolving

and digesting of the food we eat. It also regulates body temperature. Once digestion has taken place, pachaka separates the food's nutritive elements from its waste elements. An imbalance in this first fire, pachaka, causes indigestion as well as a revulsion for food.

Pachaka: Keeper of the Flame

At the subtle body level, pachaka is the fire responsible for proper assimilation at the mental level. It teaches us the fine art of discrimination by enabling us to develop an alert and discerning mind. Meditation is a superb sadhana to replenish pachaka. Seasonal cleansing of the internal body, fasting, cooling baths, Ayurvedic purgation therapy, aroma therapy, and Pitta-nourishing foods appease pachaka.

Fire of the Blood: Ranjaka

True to its name, ranjaka, the second fire of Pitta, controls the formation and preservation of blood. Located in the liver, spleen, and stomach, ranjaka provides the blood with its color and oxygen. When ranjaka is impaired, bile compounds may appear in the blood and diseases such as anemia and jaundice may follow.

Ranjaka: Keeper of Passion

At its subtle level of functioning, ranjaka teaches us the spirit of invigoration and gratification. When we learn the lessons of the second fire, we are able to maintain a calm but colorful mind and tame the passions of the body. Ranjaka teaches us to play, to stimulate, satisfy, and finally to give back this invigoration to the universe. Sadhanas such as active sports, seasonal cleansing of the internal body, cooling activities, and Pitta-nourishing foods are all revitalizing to this fire.

Fire of the Heart: Sadhaka

The finest of the fires, sadhaka, the third fire, is central to the activity of Pitta. It reigns, along with prana, in the heart. In concert with udana, it governs memory and the retention and wellness of all mental functioning. When sadhaka is impaired, there may be psychic disturbances, mental disorientation, extreme emotional states, and cravings for extreme foods, drugs, and so on.

Sadhaka: Keeper of the Spirit Flame

At the subtle level, this fire is the most effective and efficient in the human body, mind, and spirit. It works within our deeper self and aids in the preservation and unfolding of our cognitive memories. Sadhaka teaches humility and cognitive truth. It allows us to cross over from the state of experiences into the fullness of our own immortality. Sadhanas such as meditation, pranayama, yoga, cleansing of both the internal and external body, studies of the sacred lore, and Pitta-nourishing foods are vital to the maintenance of excellence in the sadhaka fire.

Fire of the Eyes: Alohaka

Alohaka, the fourth fire of Pitta, exists in the pupils of the eyes. It animates sight, gives the eyes their lustre, and diffuses light and its spectrum of colors throughout the body. When the fourth fire is vitiated, there is impairment of vision and yellowness may appear in the eyes.

Alohaka: Keeper of Vision

At the subtle body level, this fire gives creative vision, hope, and alertness. It teaches consideration and accommodation of all creatures, and shows us how to accept ourselves from our very beginnings. Sadhanas such as eye exercises, painting, picnicking, strolling, sitting by a stream, seasonal cleansing of the internal body, and Pitta-nourishing foods help to maintain alohaka's equilibrium.

Fire of the Skin: Bhrajaka

The fifth fire, bhrajaka, is located in the skin, giving the skin its lustre and gleam. Bhrajaka protects the body from the depredation of the elements and facilitates the assimilation of light, wind, water, and oil through the skin. When this fire is disturbed, skin diseases such as psoriasis, eczema, and leukoderma may result.

Bhrajaka: Keeper of Beauty

At the subtle level, bhrajaka teaches cleanliness and inner luminosity. It gives us *rasa*, beauty, both internal and external. Its intention is to teach us how to share our light and influence everything in our midst with our gleam, brightness, and effervescence. Sadhanas such as cleaning and decorating our living space, daily bodily cleansing (i.e., skin brushing and anointing the body), aroma therapy, seasonal internal cleansing of the body, and Pitta-nourishing foods help to keep bhrajaka in good condition.

Five Waters of Kapha

Kapha, formed from the elements water and earth, also manifests in five doshic sites, through which centers of operation and systemic outreach it influences the entire organism. The five waters of Kapha are: *kledaka*, stomach; *avalambaka*, heart; *bodhaka*, tongue; *tarpaka*, head; and *slesaka*, joints.

Water of the Stomach: Kledaka

The first water of Kapha, kledaka, originates in the stomach. It is the cause of mucus formation in the body. Most important of the waters, kledaka's moist foamy liquid aids digestion, liquifies foods, and nourishes the remaining waters of Kapha. When this first water is aggravated, the digestion process becomes impaired, heaviness of the abdomen prevails, and nausea may also occur.

Kledaka: Keeper of Moisture

At the subtle body level, kledaka, as the keeper of moisture, teaches us the art of fluidity. We are asked to assimilate our emotions before effusing them. We can then pour oil into dryness, water into the thirsty, and fluidity into the stagnated. Only when our own nature is finely lubricated in this way can we flow into helping others. Sadhanas such as yoga, tai-chi, walking, Ayurvedic massage, Ayurvedic emesis therapy, Kapha-nourishing foods, and giving water and food to the poor, all help to maintain kledaka's balance.

Water of the Heart: Avalambaka

The second water of Kapha, avalambaka, resides in the chest and heart. It provides plasmic tissue to the heart, thereby insulating it from heat. Avalambaka also provides the limbs with their energy. When this water is disturbed, laziness and lethargy ensue. Heart originating diseases such as rheumatic fever and pains in the pericardium may also occur.

Avalambaka: Keeper of Love

At the subtle level of existence, avalambaka gives us our protective, embracing, and maternal nature. It teaches us to support the nature of Mother Earth. When we discover our own instinct for nurturing, we are then able to allow all creatures to share equally in the universe's love, light, wind, and rain. Sadhanas such as cooking, feeding the family and the poor, fasting, seasonal internal body cleansing, gardening, and Kapha-nourishing foods help us to replenish this second water of Kapha.

Water of the Tongue: Bodhaka

Bodhaka, the third water of Kapha, is the estuary which joins the five waters of the body's river. It sends water to the tongue and palate and gives the perception of taste. It registers each of the six tastes in nature and sends the appropriate impulses to the receiving tissues long before the food is ingested. Bodhaka water also liquifies food.

When this water is disturbed, crimes against the body's natural instincts are committed, due to the impairment of taste. Diseases such as obesity, bulimia, and anorexia ensue, creating, in turn, *ama*, the foul, undigested remnants of food which stick in the tissues and promote disease. Generally, a thick white coating on the tongue indicates the presence of *ama* in the body.

Bodhaka: Keeper of Esteem

At the subtle level of existence in the body, bodhaka guards our perceptions. It teaches us not to violate our sensory mechanisms, especially the sense of taste. It shows us how to esteem ourselves by being discerning and learning moderation. As a result, we are meant to share the knowledge of the discretionary use of our senses. Sadhanas such as fasting, seasonal body cleansing, Ayurvedic emesis

therapy, Ayurvedic massage, wholesome physical activities, and Kapha-nourishing foods refine our spirit of bodhaka.

Water of the Head: Tarpaka

Tarpaka, Kapha's fourth water, flows in the brain and spinal cord as cerebro-spinal fluid. It soothes the sense organs and, as a result, lubricates and protects the nervous system. When this water is out of balance, the sense organs become impaired. Loss of memory and dullness of sensory perceptions are the natural result.

Tarpaka: Keeper of Peace

At the subtle level, tarpaka washes the senses clean and gives us our innate nature of calm and satisfaction. It teaches the lessons of living lightly on the earth. We are urged to use only that which is necessary to help us gain health and equilibrium. It shows us how to listen to the sacred song in the wind, rain, and light, how to cognize our essential gifts and appropriate activities, rather than craving and pursuing material possessions.

The sadhanas to maintain harmony in tarpaka are meditation, pranayama, yoga, wholesome physical exercises, daily cleansing of the body, head, eyes, ears, nose, and throat, the seasonal cleansing of the internal body, studies of the sacred lore, and Kapha-nourishing foods.

Water of the Joints: Slesaka

The fifth water of Kapha, slesaka, is located in the joints. It lubricates the joints and gives them their solidity. Slesaka's unctuous gel protects the joints from heat, and the circulation of its synovial fluid gives ease and flexibility of movement. When this water is impaired, the joints may become swollen, painful, and dysfunctional.

Slesaka: Keeper of Patience

Slesaka, meaning "that which connects," was the original Sanskrit term given to Kapha. True to its intentions, slesaka gives us the ability of connectiveness in our lives. She teaches us maternal love and gives us the power to love and to nourish. We are to learn from her to embrace even those who may not appear to be deserving of kindness. Slesaka teaches enormous cohesion and patience with all of life. The sadhanas which augment slesaka and maintain her balance are maternal activities such as nourishing oneself and others, yoga, early rising, wholesome activities, seasonal cleansing of the body, fasting, and Kapha-nourishing foods.