

The classical text *Yoga Vasistha* has some intriguing points on healing and the interface of body and mind.

"Illnesses (vyadhi) and psychic disorders (adhi) are sources of sorrow. Their avoidance is happiness, their cessation is liberation. Sometimes they arise together, sometimes they cause each other and sometimes they follow each other. Both these are rooted in ignorance and wickedness. They end when self knowledge or knowledge of truth is attained."¹²³

This quote points out the mental cause of disease interlaced with the resultant loss of happiness and discernment. When one is lost, the other factors are soon to follow. Emotional happiness and health are one and the same though we may perhaps see them as different dimensional aspects of the state of loss of health. This is a universal experience, as we can see from the following quote from a master healer of the Jewish tradition.

"The basic cause of illness is unhappiness,
and the great healer is joy."
Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810)¹²⁴

We cannot cure ourselves of a malady unless we know what it means to be healthy. In the same respect we perceive directly when we are unhappy because intuitively we understand what happiness is. The great Jnana Yogi, Ramana Maharshi declared that "The desire for happiness is a proof of the ever-existent happiness of the (spiritual) Self. Otherwise how can desire for it arise? If headache were natural to human beings, no one would try to get rid of it. One desires only that which is natural to him: happiness, being natural, it is not acquired."¹²⁵

This being the case, he said in his primal teachings of the path of self inquiry entitled Who am I? that "Since all living beings desire to be happy always, without any misery, since in everyone supreme love exists only for oneself, and since happiness alone is the cause of love, in order to obtain that happiness, which is one's very nature and which is experienced daily in deep sleep, where there is no mind, it is necessary for one to know oneself."¹²⁶ This is the highest teaching for the removal of all suffering regardless of where it is experienced as mental, physical, emotional or spiritual. The path of Self knowledge is for the removal of all suffering.

The *Yoga Vasistha* goes on to point out that "physical ailments are caused by ignorance and its concomitant total absence of mental restraint that leads to improper eating and living habits. Other causes are untimely and irregular activities, unhealthy habits, evil company, and wicked thoughts. They are also caused by the weakening of the nadi or by their being cluttered or clogged up, thus preventing the free flow of the life-force. Lastly, they are caused by unhealthy environment."¹²⁷

These concepts form the foundation of what we call Natural Healing through maintenance of a healthy lifestyle. The previous quote shows that these contem-

porary concepts were well known in ancient history. Let us learn from the lessons of the past that we might lessen or expedite our healing today. By manifesting the Yogic lifestyle and incorporating Ayurvedic precepts, we can avoid or lessen the effects of illness and increase our mental and physical well being.

The overlap of Ayurvedic health care and Yogasana as sadhana is fairly extensive. "Medicine works on the body because it has a specific taste (rasa), quality (guna), potency (virya), effect (vipaka), and capacity (prabhava). Similarly, an asana has a perfect shape or correct formation (rasa), peculiar quality (guna), definite potency and intensity (virya), final resultant effect (vipaka), and specific nurturing capacity (prabhava).¹²⁸

A Yogi's goal is similar yet different from that of an Ayurvedic physician. For the Ayurvedic doctor, the goal is to balance the doshas so that health may be maintained or restored. For the Yogi, the goal is to optimize health for the pursuit of Spiritual Liberation (moksha). More time is spent on spiritual practices than on health maintenance. I am not too concerned with the maintenance of health via balancing the doshas if in so doing one lessens the time and commitment to their spiritual sadhana.

A yoga student in England framed the question beautifully when he asked Yoga Master Desikachar "Did your father, Krishnamacharya, think that defects in the body are blockages which impair an individual's ability to move towards self realization?" Desikachar responded, "The very purpose of Yoga for him was to ensure that the body does not become an obstacle. That is the only reason for practicing Yoga and for maintaining health. If a person has perfect health, then why should he practice? So it was a step towards devotion. That's why when his own spiritual teacher became sick; my father (Krishnamacharya) became his Yoga teacher. The body should not become an obstacle for devotion. That is the only purpose for practicing health programs for the body."¹²⁹

As a Yogi, I see all my clients as Yoga students whether they declare themselves to be or not. My goal is to enrich the foundational qualities of the balanced doshas. In this way their Vata quality will produce more sensitivity and intuition as to how pranic energy guides them. The goal for Pitta quality is to strengthen discernment so that they can know the mind as the source of spiritual light. For the Kapha quality, my goal is to encourage its qualities of compassion and open heartedness so that they can sustain more love and acceptance of themselves as they are. This ultimately will lead to the inner Self revealing its Presence.

An Ayurvedic practitioner may strive to increase the qualities that are opposite to the dosha qualities that have increased. The natural tendency is for your predominant constitutional quality to increase. So for a Kapha predominant client, they would recommend a Pitta increasing practice such as Ashtanga Yoga that heats the student and makes them sweat. In contrast, I strive to teach students to work with, rather than against, their predominant dosha. My idea is not to deny, lessen, or criticize it; but rather to seek a practice that brings attention to the dosha. When we focus our attention on the dosha (or any object of awareness), it

will tend to increase (because prana increases from concentration); revealing its qualities more clearly. Then one can see what quality of the dosha needs emphasis in order to elevate it to a higher level.

In the case of Kapha, we want to direct attention to doing Yogasanas where we prolong the hold of the poses, thus bringing attention to the balanced state of Kapha - strength, stamina, open heart, humility and strive to enhance these qualities. As most seekers know, doing sadhana with sincerity and devotion can imbalance the doshas. The purpose of yoga is as a spiritual practice to remove the obstructive patterns laid down by years or even lifetimes of fixed mental attitudes and behaviors. The seeker is encouraged to develop a relationship with their body based on "consistent earnest effort and detachment from the results of that effort" as per Patanjali's recommendations for how to attain success (*Yoga Sutras I, 12*).

Kriya Yoga of the Yoga Sutras

Certainly one can utilize Yogasanas to help maintain balance in the unstable doshas, yet the Yogini as spiritual practitioner knows better than to put all their attention into only health. The concern for health is balanced with the need for purification, or Kriya Yoga. In chapter two of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, Patanjali defines how to purify the mind through self discipline so that it can attain a higher level of consciousness capable of knowing the Self, which can lead to samadhi, regular periods of absorption in the Self.

Kriya Yoga consists of the first half of chapter two, sutras 1-28. The techniques of Kriya Yoga consist of self-study (swadhyaya), self-discipline and purification (tapas), and devotion to the Divine Presence (Isvarapranidhana). From following these guidelines as a practice rather than merely a philosophy, the student will evolve the three primal doshic qualities of biological and psychological functions. The yogic practices of self-study evolve the subtle air and ether qualities of Vata into Prana promoting greater perception, intuition and peace of mind. The practices of self-discipline and purification evolve the fire and water of Pitta into tejas giving the mind strength and the capacity for directing willpower into radiant discrimination. Similarly when devotion to "the Lord of your understanding" is sustained it produces humility and awareness of Oneness; this is the experience of ojas, created from the more fundamental quality of Kapha's earth and water. Once you understand and deeply connect with knowing yourself as love, there will be a movement towards living a life of increasing selfless service to others.

When these three qualities are balanced they naturally evolve from Vata to Pitta to Kapha. The practices that balance Vata and restore Prana will create the sensitivity that allows for Pitta to become balanced and generate tejas. This in turn sets up the conditions under which Kapha will evolve and create the nurturing substance of ojas. The cycle of balancing the doshas is Vata - Pitta - Kapha then back again, but now to a higher, more evolved Vata. The process of balancing the doshas tends to elevate their expression towards their essential nature as prana - tejas -

ojas. Thus as we work on improving ourselves through our daily practice of Yoga sadhana, our goal is to evolve our experience of ourselves into one of more loving kindness extended both to and from others and ourselves. On an emotional level this looks like Vata's imbalance as fear being overcome through faith and dissolving into it, resulting in knowing the truth directly. Pitta's judgment is transformed by inspiration into inspiration. Kapha's attachment to a personal truth is overcome by love until it becomes love.

The cycle begins with self observation (swadhyaya), sitting quietly and just looking at your current situation in life. By persisting in Self inquiry, insight will arise as the Prana rises. When this Prana is fully developed it elicits a creative energy from the higher mind. A physical sign of this evolution is that your body relaxes in the lower abdomen and pelvic region. These are signs that Vata has returned home and is becoming balanced and evolving into Prana. Initially this can produce sensations of sexual arousal in some people, these sensations will relax with time and a deeper balance born of the sattvic state of Prana will develop. It is natural that any area where expression has been repressed will be sensed as discomfort - until spiritual and mental health can find their personal expression.

A natural sign of this creativity is the arising of Pitta's energies of passion, vitality and the desire to freely act. There is an enthusiasm to share the vitality and joy that is natural to Pitta. For Pitta to fully evolve, the increased energy needs to be sustained until it creates a bodily reaction. For this to occur there must be a certain degree of regular discipline that consistently generates tejas. When this is sustained long enough, the abdomen, Pitta's home, becomes warm and softened. One sign of deep Pitta balance is that the central abdomen is felt to be the warmest part of the body.

This in turn gives one a feeling of satisfaction, natural to a healthy sign of Kapha, the heart is full and the righteousness of your actions is clear. Your mouth may literally become juicy, salivating with pleasure. When allowed to continue ojas will be born in the heart a sense of God's grace (Isvarapranidhana) will arise as gratefulness and gratitude pours over the soul, just from the pleasure of existing.

Evolution of the Vata - Pitta - Kapha Cycle

Into Self Inquiry

How do we begin this cycle? Inquiry into the Self. More specifically the question that evolves Vata into Self inquiry is - where is my energy? This can be emotional, physical, or subtle sensation that may not be recognizable with a particular label such as warmth, or fear, or hunger. Scan everywhere. By body scanning with the intention of simply finding the strongest sensations; you will begin to learn from your body kinesthesia. Do not try to label the sensations as that will distract you from learning from the raw experience. Merely look for the sensation, then place your hands there and give it your full attention. You might breathe into the area to give it more energy/awareness. Allow the currents of sensation to build until they captivate you.

When you are fully in the felt experience, then ask what the questions that will help Pitta to evolve - what does this energy want to do? Or where does this energy want to go? Let the energy build, again regardless of how it takes form. It may take the form of more thoughts, emotions, sensations, or intuitive insights. Keep repeating this process until there is a clarity that feels truly authentic. Do not rush. It is most important to uncover the Truth, not as you want it to be, but as it is. Begin to move with the increased energy, allowing the currents of sensation to physically express themselves no matter how it may look or feel. Continue to explore how to open yourself until there is a warmth and immediacy of presence in the motion.

When complete there is a feeling of resolution, and a naturally arising stillness. Then, the Kapha questions - "What will fulfill this desire/energy? What nurtures me?" - can be utilized until they generate the quality of ojas. The answer to wait for is a primal feeling of joy, which will arise naturally. Viewed from an Ayurvedic perspective, this deep joy occurs when the doshas are balanced. From a Yogic perspective, it arises of its own accord as the nature of the heart.

One who is established in a comfortable posture
while concentrating on the inner Self alone,
naturally becomes immersed in the spontaneous
arising of the Heart's ocean of bliss.

Siva Sutras III, 16¹³⁰

In summary this path of inquiry is a bodily oriented series of questions based on looking at your energy body as the Spirit of guidance -

For evolving Vata - Where is my energy? Once you clearly locate it then ask.

For evolving Pitta - What does it want to do? And then do what your energy guides you to do.

For evolving Kapha - What takes me to completion? And finish what the energy has led you to until a deep stillness arises.

When this cycle is done there is a tremendous feeling of Prana. Pranayama is the balancing of the Pranic field within the body/mind complex that produces the awareness of Spirit. Open to each of these feelings, desires, and nurturing qualities and retain the gifts that arise from this meditation in your pelvis, belly and heart homes of the tridoshas.

Ayurvedic View of the Serenity Prayer

The Serenity Prayer is well known as the central offering of humility in the twelve step programs of recovery from addictive behavior and substances. It was given to Bill W., the co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, as part of the foundation for connecting to a Higher Power than yourself as a source for freedom from addiction.

God (Higher Power) grant me
the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.
Thy will, not mine, be done.¹³¹

From an Ayurvedic perspective, the Serenity Prayer is an expression of the culmination of the doshas balanced and elevated to their higher expressions. The experience of serenity is a lofty expansion of Vata as Prana comes home to bring the mind to its root of stillness. Courage is the natural expression of Kapha balanced then elevated to its higher mode as ojas, centered resting in the heart space. Wisdom is the experience of Pitta in its elevated state as tejas, which naturally produces insight, as the spiritual state unveiling the true nature of the mind as light.

When one is under stress, this prayer is very helpful for balancing all the doshas, if done repetitively with earnest seeking and surrendering to the Higher Power in whatever form you conceive that Presence to be in your life. Although I have never had the difficulty of alcoholism, I have personally found it to be of profound help during the most difficult periods of my life.

Yoga Pranic Healing

The popular contemporary concept of health as it relates to Yoga is defined in the principles of holistic health. The root origin of the word health is from the word whole. Whole health incorporates a full sense of well-being, mentally psychically, physically and spiritually. This fullness of health includes calmness and serenity, intuitive functions operating at peak capacity, physical well being with abundant energy for daily tasks and the unpredictable changes life brings, and a spiritual well being from knowing the creator and being in a relationship based in humility with their Higher Power as they conceive It to be.

"Health and happiness are often mentioned in the same breath, and maybe this is why: physiology and emotions are inseparable. I believe that happiness is our natural state, that bliss is hardwired. Only when our systems get blocked, shut down, and disarrayed, do we experience the mood disorders that add up to unhappiness in the extreme." ¹³² Taken all together, this can be considered the concept of holistic health or well-being.

For the Yogi, the concept of healing is rooted in the same process as the disciplines leading to self-realization. The Sanskrit word for health is swastha, which literally translated means "living in one's own Self." Thus, health and spirituality are interconnected from both the Yogic and Ayurvedic perspective. It is a return to the "wholeness of life" by reconnecting your sense of self to the whole. The difference is that the Yogi does not stop there, but looks at all of the aspects of personality, when made whole, leads to the fullness of the radiant light of the inner Self.

One such experience of this light is described in the classic Advaita (nondual) text of the Astavakra Samhita,

Light is my very nature;
I am no other than light.
When the universe manifests itself,
verily then, it is I that shine.¹³³

In the same manner that one light manifests as the different colors of the spectrum when it becomes differentiated from its pure state, so also sound, feeling, taste and touch are also subdivided by the senses into distinct recognizable forms. While Pitta is the dosha that expresses light, the Ayurvedic subdosha referring to the primal quality of light is Pachaka Pitta. The Yogic concept of healing is based largely on the energies perceived through the second sheath, the pranamaya kosha, made of Prana. The quality of our Prana determines the quality of our physical, emotional and mental health.

The five Pranas function on a physiological level through the air element, but they function as emotions and subtle feelings as the ether element. To the Yogini, this energy is conceived as the breath but in a subtle dimension. Just as we can feel and see the effects of the wind without seeing wind, we can feel pranic effects without seeing prana. The Yogini can utilize the connection of breath and Prana to reintegrate with eternity. One definition of prana is "that which is infinitely everywhere."¹³⁴ This principle is the underlying characteristic of holistic healing. When we are healthy, we are healthy within our selves and our relationship to everyone and everything we encounter are healthy. When we are connected to the omnipresent, we are whole. When healing takes place, there is a reformation of the material world back to its primal elements.

Physicists tell us that the particles that make up the physical world including our body have been here since before the "Big Bang," can we not also have faith in the truth of those Yoginis who gave gone before us stating their direct experience that prana is eternal? Where the two meet is in the common ground of the unexplainable, of mysticism.

One of my teachers taught that the world can be perceived on three levels. First, there is the known - that which we perceive with our mind and senses. The Yoga Sutras I, 7 describes the means of arriving at correct understanding from four sources - "direct perception, inference, revelation from reflections on the scriptures, or from the testimony of one who knows."¹³⁵ The second field of perception is the unknown - that which we may speculate on but have yet to comprehend but which can be known by directing our attention to seeking knowledge over a period of time. The third is the Unknowable - that which is not subject to perception by the mind and its constituent parts. By definition the last attribute of the world will always remain AS IT IS, unchangeable, infinite, yet Unknowable.

Experiencing Prana

How does one have a personal experience of this energy? A simple exercise to experience the body's prana can be done by rubbing your hands together until the friction creates heat in your palms. Separate your hands about a foot and bring them slowly close together until you experience something tangible yet non-physical between them. Gently move in and outward at the edge of this plane of energized space. If your sensitivity is elevated, you can also perform the same experiment by lightly touching your torso and slowly withdrawing from it. Focus your mind on the sensation that arises as your hands separate from your torso and as they come close together again. That tangible force felt around your body is Vyana Prana, commonly called the aura.

Swara Yoga - Yoga of the Breath Current

Another experiment to familiarize yourself with prana is to simply notice which nostril is most open. Take in a deep breath or close one nostril at a time and notice whether there is a difference between the nostrils. Sometimes you may perceive that both nostrils are evenly open, although it is more common for one or the other to be more open.

For the Yogi, this shows the pathway of a subtle form of prana that passes through nostril channels called the Ida and Pingala nadi. Ida means left, and Pingala means right, while nadi comes from the word nad meaning movement. The nostrils are the gross openings to subtle energy channels through which conscious awareness moves. When the nadis are closed, the individual experiences a dullness or inability to perceive, due to the predominance of the tamas guna. This form of Yoga practices aim at increasing openness in the channels to promote self-awareness and heightening sensitivity.

In the medieval period of Yogic literature, what is now practiced as physical or Hatha Yoga was done in a fashion to transform the three middle veils (koshas) composed of the subtle energy body. This transformation is called Tantra Yoga. The root tan means energy and tra means to transform. The root to the word Hatha is the two syllables ha and tha, meaning sun and moon. This refers to the Tantrik concept of the energy body possessing a polarity of right and left which flowed through the Ida and Pingala nadis. Thus by balancing the flow in the two nostrils, the mind could be refined into its subtle constituent components and more easily disciplined. Swara Yoga is the specific path that focuses upon this practice. Swara means the "sound of one's own breath." It is an ancient science that reveals how the movements of prana can be controlled by manipulation of the breath.

A subtler experiment is to observe which nostril is most open with your arms and legs first uncrossed, then crossed. You can also try this by interlacing your fingers. When the pranic channels are unobstructed by congestion from excess Kapha, the side that is on top will reveal the nostril that is dominant. That is if your right arm, finger, or leg is on top, then your right nostril will become more

open and more breath will flow through. This change usually takes from 10-60 seconds, so if you didn't observe a difference wait longer and breath more deeply. What neurological mechanism makes this occur is not understood in terms of physiology. The Yogis focused their internal exploration experiments on reflexes that affected respiration and the sense of self and took advantage of them to alter their state of mind.

My last Hatha Yoga teacher, Indra Devi, was a master of this practice. Indra Devi was known as the "first woman of Yoga" as she was the first Western woman (from Latvia in northwest Russia) to be trained as a Yoga teacher by Krishnamacharya in 1937. Through his encouragement she spread yoga throughout the world.

"Yoga gives great importance to our relationship with the universe, and therefore it teaches a breathing that is different from the usual breathing, a breathing that reflects our inner attitude while we are performing it. This attitude is one of devotion, that is, of communion with the All, and should be maintained all the time one is doing deep breathing."¹³⁶

Indra Devi believed that the alternating current was a living Presence that could be observed and cultivated to create an organic state of Yoga. She was adept at manipulating the pranic movements through her finger dexterity and often played finger games with me. She cautioned students not to cross their arms and legs (except at the ankles) as it interfered with the cosmic (Adya) Prana's ability to be received. She explained that by cultivating this awareness we would be more naturally open to others and to be blessed with the Presence of love and light that was the underlying reality of all life. She lived an extremely full life, passing away 3 weeks prior to her 103rd birthday in Buenos Aires, Argentina in April of 2002. Indeed I feel blessed in having her as my teacher over a 25 year period of my life.

Nostril predominance and brain hemisphere function have an opposite correlation. "Breath coming in through the right nostril cools the right hemisphere of the brain, causing the left hemisphere to become active. Breath coming in through the left nostril has the opposite effect."¹³⁷ The "right hemisphere of the brain is superior in terms of representational and visual spatial functions, in perception and discrimination of musical tones and speech intonations, in emotional responses, and in understanding humor and metaphor. In broad terms, the right hemisphere functions are holistic, spatial and hence are labeled 'artistic'. The left hemisphere is superior in motor and verbal skills, and appears to be specialized for logical and analytical operations; it categorizes things and reduces them to their parts in order to understand them. The right hemisphere is dominant in 97% of the population, while the left hemisphere is dominant in only 3%."¹³⁸

Two of the methods used by Yogis to alter the predominant nostril current are the use of a Yoga Danda (a short crutch used as a sitting wooden staff) and lying on the side. Both of these methods take advantage of what I call the axillary reflex.¹³⁹ This reflex, when stimulated by pressure on the upper chest wall in the armpit (axillary) region, causes "the breathing force to be increased in the nostril on the side opposite to the Yoga Danda and decreased in the nostril on the same

side."¹⁴⁰ This is according to studies by Bhole and Karambelkar reported in the first journal of yoga physiology research "Yoga Mimamsa" dating to 1926.

The Yogis researched states of consciousness as they related to nostril dominance patterns and began to notice that one nostril dominance might be better suited for certain activities and emotional states. The shift in prana creates this nostril dominance called the Swara. Essentially the Swara shows which direction prana is beginning to flow. By observation of this change we can uncover whether or not our mind and actions are in harmony. The yogi's findings were recorded in texts such as the Shiva Swarodaya in a dialogue between Isvara and Devi (God and Goddess). "This knowledge of the Swara (current) is not merely for asking mundane questions. You should cultivate it for the sake of the Self (Atma). If you have the knowledge of Swara, it is not necessary to consult the date, stars, days, planets, gods, conjunction of the stars or disorders of the Ayurvedic dosha humors, before starting any project."¹⁴¹ Shiva Swarodaya 28-29.

The text explains that left nostril breathing is sedative, so this is a time for meditation, sleep, spiritual practice and, for women having sexual relations. Often, by lying on the right side, the left nostril becomes dominant and it is easier to fall into a deep sleep this way. Right nostril dominance is stimulating, it is best for eating, hard physical work, purification practices and, for men, having sexual relations.

The implications of this phenomenon are that we are not victims of a given emotional state. We do have power to change our state of consciousness and emotionality. According to the principle researcher in this phenomenon, Dr. Shannahoff-Khalsa "If you want to alter an unwanted state, just breathe through the more congested nostril."¹⁴²

There are three Swaras - one flows through the left nostril, another through the right, and the third when both nostrils are equally open. This third channel is known as the sushumna nadi. These three currents correspond to mind (chitta), life force (prana) and spirit (Kundalini or the atma), respectively. Mind controls the sensory nerves and organs. Prana controls the five organs of action - speech, hands, feet, reproductive and excretory organs. Spirit is the witness consciousness. As the breath flows through the alternating currents, a rhythm is created.

"If the Swara (current) is irregular, it is a clear indication that something is not functioning properly in the body."¹⁴³

Healing through the Five Pranas

Prana	location	motion	breath
Adya Prana	head, chest, heart	down & in	inhalation
Samana	small intestine	circular inward	pause after inhalation
Udana	throat, diaphragm	upward	1st phase of exhalation
Apana	large intestine	down & out	last phase of exhalation
Vyana	circulatory, lymph	diffusing outward	pause after exhale

There are many experiences of the five pranas. Some arise naturally from the increased sensitivity that comes from regular physical discipline. Some result from years of deliberate training under the guidance of a master in meditation or Yoga. Some dancers can also experience this; especially those who have learned to observe and participate in the greater dance that is within the human body. As one dancer described it -

"In the study of rhythm you can think of five main breaths.

Thinking of feeling the breath that rises
will lift you onto your toes with chest high.

Think of the breath that descends, and the chest is
forced down with the knees tending to give.

The breath that is horizontal will lead the body in full, round movements.

The breath that articulates is the breath you can
think of as being anywhere in the body.

The general breath is what we know as simple,
unconscious inhaling and exhaling."¹⁴⁴

These five motions are a Divine Dancers experience of the five pranas -
- Udana - Apana - Samana - Vyana - Adya Prana, respectively.

Adya (Primary) Prana

The primary prana, Adya Prana, is formless, omnipresent and unchanging. This is the universal Prana that Desikachar defines as "that which is infinitely present." From the awareness of this energy one's consciousness gains a feeling of universal connectedness. In the individual, this subdosha of Vata is experienced in the body as coming downward and inward. "The prefix *pra* of the word *prana* means forward, toward or prior and relates to absorption."¹⁴⁵ It is commonly thought of as the movement of the inspiratory breath, yet it is not exactly that. More appropriately, it is the energy behind that motion, it comes first and the breath follows second. Like all pranas, it has many qualities; it can be balanced or imbalanced, excessive or diminished, moving home or displaced, pure or mixed with the features of other pranas. The very act of perceiving it, influences it. A state

of acceptance and respect is central to helping someone heal. Allowing neutrality that comes from detachment to a specific outcome, increases the Adya Prana. Nurturance increases the Adya Prana.

Healers have this energy consistently. They don't need to obtain it from some place outside the Self; in fact it increases by expanding our perspective of what it is. By remembering the Tantrik experiential concept that what is outside is also inside, healing can happen spontaneously and naturally. The healing that happens through this prana is the most unexpected and unpredictable, because it comes from a place beyond mind - and even beyond good intentions. Health and well-being are natural states of Adya Prana, and the Yogi as healer, accepts whatever comes.

The Adya Prana governs respiration in general and inspiration specifically; it also regulates our capacity for intake in general, especially for sensory and intellectual information. When we stop listening to the message that Adya Prana gives us, we experience stress. From the pranic point of view, illness is due to ignoring the advice of the messages that the pranas are constantly sending. As we observe our pranas we can see what the inner teacher is seeking to enhance or lessen. When digesting food samana prana is likely to be active, but if we do not listen to this prana and engage in physical exertion then the prana becomes corrupted and as a result Adya Prana diminishes. Then we cannot take in the instruction of what we are seeking to do in our physical activity. As a result of this inattentiveness we may become careless and then injured.

Samana Prana

The second prana is Samana Prana. Samana means "to breathe together" from the roots "sam" meaning together and "na" meaning to breathe, or "equalizing air" from the root sama meaning "same." It predominates during the pause that follows the inspiratory motion of Adya Prana. It forms a circular pattern, spreading outward from the central abdomen to the upper right side across the upper abdomen then down the left side towards the pelvis. Thus it follows the path of the colon or large intestine. This prana's primary function is to receive nourishment by aiding digestion. This prana is related to Pitta's quality of discernment. When Samana Prana is healthy we can discern what is beneficial and allow it to come in. Thus, it governs digestion on all dimensions. It helps us to digest what we have received through the Adya Prana into the five senses, whether it is food, visual imagery, music, or physical touch. Samana Prana is also predominant in the arterial circulatory system as it spreads outward to all the tissues and cells.

Udana Prana

The third prana is Udana Prana or "upward moving" prana. It is the initial upward motion of the exhalation from the abdominal cavity. Its direction and force are opposite to the Adya Prana. It is the force through which excess Kapha is best expelled, up and outward through the orifices of the head. When it is functioning

well, we discharge what is not beneficial and what is unwanted. It can generate feelings of happiness and lightness. Though when it is in excess it makes us light headed, dizzy, and disoriented.

When Udana Prana is evolved to a higher dimension of self, it propels spiritual awakening. It is then called Kundalini, meaning "coiled serpent". During quickening of Spirit, the serpent like force uncoils from its resting place and moves in the subtle body channel of the sushumna nadi, clearing out memories, impressions, attitudes, and suppressed emotions that are no longer beneficial. Though Kundalini awakening is not directly spoken of in the *Yoga Sutras*, the spiritual purification process is referred to in a general manner in the first portion of the second chapter of the *Yoga Sutras* as the Kriya Yoga cited earlier.

It is best to move into the experience of Udana Prana as a spiritual force with the support of a spiritual community or an experienced spiritual teacher. This is because spiritual awakening can be confusing or disorienting when compared to what one hears in superficial conversation or reads from books. Each spiritual path is different and what characterizes a beneficial purification to one group is seen as a potentially harmful practice to another group. Otherwise spiritual awakening can easily be misunderstood for the awesome gift of Grace that it truly is.

Apana Prana

The fourth prana, Apana, comes at the end of the exhalation. Apana refers to the "downward moving" prana. It promotes a feeling of acceptance and relaxation in the lower abdomen and pelvis. Its primary motion is downward and outward, and it is the force behind the expulsion of excessive Pitta and Vata. When Apana prana is unhealthy, these imbalanced doshas can cause problems in the site where they are obstructed and excessive.

Apana's primary function is to remove waste material from the body through the pelvic orifices. It is the energy behind urination and defecation. In women, it is the force pushing the menstrual fluid and the fetus from the uterus. I have experienced guiding a friend in the cultivation of her Apana Prana on the last night of her pregnancy. She was 43 and was having her first and only child as a single mother from artificial insemination. I taught her to lengthen the exhalation and relax her lower abdomen and pelvic region (the home site of Apana Prana). For 8 hours she was experiencing ecstatic waves of Adya and Udana Pranic energy moving downward and upward through her body. These waves generated a host of ecstatic experiences that included repetitive orgasms, visions of Kundalini's primal quality as radiant light, and insights into how she could let more friends into her life to assist her at learning motherhood. She very exuberantly told me that this was the most joy and happiness that she had ever experienced in her life. Finally at 6 am she felt Daniel ready to come out of her uterus. She delivered within an hour of her arrival at the hospital.

Vyana Prana

The fifth and final prana is Vyana, "vi" means "apart or to separate," and is the subtle energy during the pause following natural exhalation. It spreads outward in a circular motion opposite to that of Samana prana, except its spiral moves inward while Samana spirals outward. It functions as venous circulation and on the psychic realm we experience it as our aura, a protective bubble that keeps us safe from harm. This Prana is often felt as a protective force warning us when danger is near or to warn us when we are in questionable situations. It is through this prana that we dream, travel in space and time, and have out-of-the-body experiences. When evolved, Vyana Prana is a doorway to meditation and ultimately to the continuous awareness of the True Self. One method taught by Patanjali for the evolution of this prana is given in his *Yoga Sutras* I, 34.

Or another way to lessen the obstacles
and keep the mind serene
is to forcibly exhale
then retain the prana
during the pause
following the exhalation.¹⁴⁶

By this practice, the Apana Prana becomes prominent and with it the pause becomes lengthened. Through that pause the presence of unity consciousness is more accessible.

Healing the Mind through the Doshas

The primary issues for which people enter psychotherapy can be framed from an Ayurvedic dosha viewpoint as fear, anger, and attachment. These are excess of Vata, Pitta, and Kapha respectively. Fear is Vata's twisted form of the search for peace. People challenged by this situation are described as 'tight assed', 'anxiety ridden', or as 'making mountains out of molehills'. When Vata is balanced, fear and anxiety become resolved and serenity is restored.

Anger is Pitta's twisted form of search for vitality. It is commonly described as the feeling of your 'guts tied up in a knot' or the need to strike out to protect yourself from perceived threat. When Pitta is harmonized, the intestines relax and peristalsis resumes producing all the drive and enthusiasm one could ever hope for.

Attachment is Kapha's twisted form of a search for love, abundance, and acceptance. People with this difficulty are said to be 'tight fisted', 'closed hearted', or as 'stuck in the mud'. When Kapha's attachments are resolved then it helps to promote solid, lasting relationships that are healthy, nurturing and loving. This extends both inwardly to tissue and organ relationships and outwardly into social relations.

"Whatever the individual soul experiences within in dreams on account of the Vata, Pitta, and Kapha, that he experiences outside too, and in that field his own organs of action function appropriately. When agitated or disturbed inside and outside, he experiences a little disturbance if the disturbance is slight, and he experiences equanimity if they are in a state of balance or equilibrium. . . When they are in a state of equilibrium, the jiva residing within them sees the whole world as it is, as it really IS, non-different from Brahman."¹⁴⁷

The major emphasis on healing using Yoga techniques is keep the focus on your own sadhana as the most appropriate means to health. Returning to the Self is health. Only from healing yourself can the understanding of how to heal others emerge. As each of the doshas become refined they produce a quality that uplifts the mind making spiritual qualities more accessible. Vata produces prana that increases intuition. Pitta creates tejas that gives the experience of everything as light. Kapha produces ojas that gives both physical and mental endurance and persistence.

Apex of the Doshas - Prana, Tejas, Ojas

Through the process of balancing and evolving the doshas - Vata, Pitta, and Kapha - their subtle elements become generated. These are respectively called Prana, Tejas and Ojas. Together, these three are the composition of the subtle body. They are the matter behind Pranayama kosha, Manomaya kosha and Vijnanamaya kosha. Vata, Pitta, and Kapha; they relate to the gross functions of breath, digestion and physical health. The subtler essence relates to the soul's desire for Spirit, higher intelligence and devotion to the Source. It is the transformation that the Ayurvedic practitioner seeks through her/his cultivation of the life science. For the Yogi, these are naturally arising from doing elevated practices and being in the company of illuminated souls.

This form of Prana is different than those mentioned previously in the subdoshas. This Prana is the physical essence of Spirit as it manifests in the body. Prana evolves from the balance of the subtle functioning of the physiology and seeks to go beyond the identification of the self with the body. Prana promotes to the ordinary tissue and the mind's ability to adapt to change, also, contributing to creativity and the desire to evolve. Prana provides us with the desire to procreate, the will to live and sustain life. It is the breath of life imparted to the individual through live organic foods. This results in the feeling of connectedness to the cycle of life. In the mind, it manifest as peace.

From healthy Pitta, comes the fire of discernment that directs one toward good and creates indifference to that which is destructive. The being instinctively knows the difference between healthy and unhealthy activities and is able to make consistent choices for the betterment of themselves and those they serve. Tejas is the refined component of the Pitta dosha that particularly manifests in the Manomaya Kosha as intelligence and the ability to assimilate new information. Tejas is the

light of consciousness whose source is the all-pervasive Self as Purusha. Tejas is the discriminative factor of the being that results from a spiritual illumination. It is the fire of higher intelligence that builds one's passions to know the truth of human existence. It is the one that asks, "Who am I?" and "Why am I here?" It manifests as the spiritual quest and the craving for living in the light of Spirit.

Ojas builds upon the foundation of a balanced Kapha, as physical and emotional strength and stamina, into creating a vibrant and healthy immune system. Ojas is the refinement of Kapha and manifests on all the bodies. For the physical body, it is expressed as the stamina of the immune system. Ojas in the pranic body, it is the vitality and vigor of the Life Force. In the mind it is joi de vie. In the wisdom body, it is the quest for an ever-deepening understanding and love of knowledge. In the bliss body, it is the loss of self and the bliss of the nature of the Self as perpetual, ever unfolding Love. This strength, stamina and health lead to an open heart. It is much more than physical health and the absence of pain. Ojas manifests physically as our sexual fluids and additionally in women, it is the life giving force of a mother's good heart becoming breast milk. Its fullest expression is love of all life.

These three forces are more interrelated than the tri-doshas. While it is true that an imbalanced Vata will lead to Pitta and Kapha derangements, an excess or diminishment of Prana, Tejas or Ojas will more immediately change the others. Low Ojas will tend to excite Prana and Tejas. While increased Prana tends to dry out Ojas, diminished Prana tends to decrease the flow of Ojas.

The Heart of Healing

The first chapter of the Yoga Sutras contains the practices for meditation and experiencing the Divine Presence. Patanjali begins with the highest teaching in the opening sutra:

"With great respect and love
now the blessings of
Yoga instruction can be offered."¹⁴⁸

That's the key for profound healing. Developing your qualities of respect and love, and cultivating the goodness of your own Heart allows humility to come forth. This must be developed before one can be a Yogi or a healer. If one doesn't come from that place, they're not going to be very successful at experiencing Yoga's depth. The first sutra's message is that you have to come from that place of "great respect and love" in order to both give and receive the teachings. If we're in a place of respect and openness and our attitude is open and available to serve, we don't need instruction in asana, and don't even have to be told about chakras and subtle energy fields, because we're wide open. But if we're not at that level, we have to learn these things and that is the curriculum for the second archetypal student in Patanjali's systematic teachings, which is cited in the second chapter.

You don't need to ask how to cultivate openness. You are naturally open and receptive to life. You go around with the attitude, "God is within all life and That One is going to teach me; what can I learn?", and you are automatically drawn to very, very high teachers. You are pulled to teachers who can move you ahead and are indifferent to teachers who are inappropriate for you.

Ayurvedic Yoga Therapy Approach to Disease

The scope of Ayurvedic medicine is equivalent to Internal Medicine yet it goes beyond what we consider Allopathic Internal Medicine to be in that it incorporates a holistic perspective. The definition of Ayurveda is given in the medical textbook Caraka Samhita, Sutrasthanam I, 41-42 as "that science is designated as Ayurveda where advantageous and disadvantageous as well as happy and unhappy states of life along with what is good and bad for life, its measurement and life itself are described. The term 'ayus' stands for the combination of the body, sense organs, mind and soul, and its synonyms are dhari (the one that prevents the body from decay), jivita (which maintains life), nityaga which serves as a permanent substratum of this body) and anubandha (which transmigrates from one body to another)." ¹⁴⁹

In India, Ayurvedic physicians are trained to maintain health through the recommendation of beneficial activities for diet, use of herbs, lifestyle, family planning, and even the satisfaction of natural urges with aphrodisiacs.¹⁵⁰ This is meant to assist the individual in fulfilling the four goals of life - righteous duties (dharma), appropriate financial abundance (artha), sensual pleasure (kama), and spiritual liberation (moksha).

The Yogi seeks to utilize basic Ayurvedic principles help to cultivate and maintain a healthy disciplined lifestyle focused on spiritual fulfillment and ultimately realization. The Yogi is more like the minister who is more focused on your soul's evolution than your physical health. Of course a highly evolved person will be empathetic to all your concerns, and may have a broader based competency for dealing with them.

Krishnamacharya's ancestor from the 9th century, Nathamuni composed a text called the Yogarahasya. It contains some intriguing comments on integrating concerns for health and healing.

"For earning a livelihood or for the service of God, good health and a strong body are absolutely essential.

A person with disease, whether rich or poor, a king or a scholar can never have mental quietude.

Some diseases are cured by asana practice, some by pranayama, some by regulated diet and some by meditation. And some diseases are cured by religious activities.

When the body is diseased use asana practice to cure; when the mind is dis-

turbed, make use of the techniques of pranayama.

When medicines cannot remove a disease, then definitely, the proper practice of yoga will help.

To cure many types of diseases, many different techniques have to be tried and adapted. However asana practice must always be accompanied by regulation of the breath."¹⁵¹