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Stáv for Health and Well Being

Stáv is a 1500 year old tradition of mind/body/spirit training handed down from generation to generation by the Hafskjold family in Norway.

Stáv is the study of reality, learning to see and seek to understand the nature of Orlog, the primal-law of the universe.

Stáv literally means: 'knowledge of the rune staves' the runes being archetypal symbols which have been used in Northern Europe for thousands of years. The runes have many forms and uses, the Hafskjold-Stáv teachings are a living tradition of using the runes in everyday life.

This Booklet is primarily concerned with the Stáv approach to improving and maintaining your personal health and well being. The information contained is drawn from the teaching and example of Ivar Hafskjold and the tried and tested knowledge of the Hafskjold traditions which have stood the test of 15 centuries.

Explained are the basic principles of working with Mott (the physical body) and Megin (the energy body). The Stáv approach to diet, the benefits of performing the 16 stances, the importance of sleep and a balanced lifestyle and the role of herbs and trees in the Hafskjold tradition.

The authors have both trained with Ivar Hafskjold for several years and have drawn on their own experience of living the Stáv way of life.

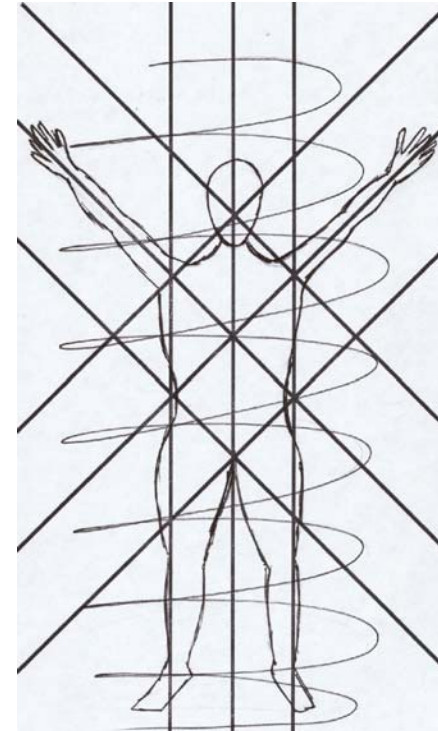
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Stav

for Health and Well Being



An Introduction to the Health benefits of
Practising the Hafskjold-Stav Tradition

by David Stone and Graham Butcher
based on the teachings of Ivar Hafskjold

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Stav for Health and Well Being

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Booklet: Stáv for Health The health benefits of practising Stáv by David Stone and Graham Butcher

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Stáv for Health

If you think that Stáv may be of interest to you then details of publications and training opportunities can be found on the inside of the cover. *G. Butcher*

Stáv for Health

Introduction

Stáv is a method of learning to work with the Orlog and thus live out our Wyrð. In order to do this we need to tap into the infinite Megin energy of the universe. So this book is about health in relationship to our true nature and destiny. The greatest cause of ill-health and dis-ease is working against nature and being out of tune with our inner needs and aspirations. Thus the greatest source of health and most effective method of healing is to learn to live in harmony with nature and to know and meet our true needs.

In this booklet we have concerned ourselves mainly with the Stáv principles for improving and maintaining our personal health and well being. The information contained here is drawn from the direct teaching and example of Ivar Hafskjold and the tried and tested knowledge of the Hafskjold traditions which have stood the test of 15 centuries. Anyone who has undergone martial arts training with Ivar, as David and I have done over many years, will testify that he is stronger and fitter than most men of half his age.

We have also tested these principles in our own lives over a period of several years and have drawn on both contemporary research and our knowledge of other traditional systems. We hope you too will benefit from what we have learned.

Graham Butcher, July 2000

Basic Principles of Stáv for Health

A great deal is said these days about becoming a Healer. People want to learn 'how to heal people.' Stáv does offer practices to this end, but really it is the wrong attitude. The main principle of Stáv in health matters is to not need to be healed.

The main ability Stáv teaches is to see Reality - to see things as they really are, not as we think they are or would like them to be. This ability allows us to see our own state of health and to

maintain and gradually improve it through changes in such areas as lifestyle, diet, attitude. Therefore, Stáv makes use of the maxim Prevention is better than Cure - by maintaining our health, we don't need to be healed. However, Stáv also allows for the fact that this is the real world, as mentioned in the Havamal:

'The foolish man thinks he will live forever if he keeps away from fighting; But old age won't grant him a truce, even if the spears do' Stanza 16.

People do become ill, they do have accidents, and so Stáv provides for dealing with these. Again, though, the ability to see Reality comes into it's own, and the Stáv way is to recognise when there are problems with health: it's better to deal with a slight ailment than to wait until it's developed into something more serious.

Healing in Stáv is both holistic and symptomatic. It is holistic in that it deals with the WHOLE person, treating the entire problem, not just the physical manifestations of it. Questions such as 'why am I ill?' 'why am I ill now?' need to be considered, as many illnesses relate to more than simply being exposed to bacteria or viruses. Sometimes it is due to a need to rest or to get away from an unpleasant situation that has caused the illness. Sometimes it is a manifestation of another problem such as bad diet, irregular exercise. Sometimes it's the result of a deep psychological problem that we're not even aware of. All these things can cause illness, and to truly heal them the underlying cause needs to be found out and rectified.

Stáv healing is also symptomatic because it's a practical system and recognises that sometimes it is best to work on the actual symptom - the physical manifestation of disorder - rather than the underlying cause. For instance, if someone is spurting blood from a cut artery the important thing is to staunch the flow, not consider how it happened!

That is obviously an extreme example, but it reflects the need to

priority should be to relax again. This will keep the activity enjoyable, actually maximise progress because no energy is being wasted and minimise the chances of injury.

Secondly, correct technique is also crucial, whatever activity you embark upon study and practice the best possible technique. This includes walking the dog or digging the garden as much as seemingly more sophisticated activities such as fencing or dancing. Be fully conscious and mindful of what you are doing at all times and then the greatest benefit will come from it. You will also be making the best use of the stamina or strength that you do have, it is more important not to waste energy than it is to exert our selves.

Thirdly, cultivate patience, do activities regularly with the emphasis on doing them as well as possible and with a truly relaxed state of mind and body without being concerned about abstract 'results'. Simply see the pleasure of the doing as its own reward. Don't try and measure yourself against what others have succeeded or failed at, there will always be someone better than you and some one worse. It is your own health and well being that matters. By developing a cheerful and relaxed approach to improving our own fitness we may also inspire others to work on theirs. *G. Butcher*

Conclusion

We hope that you have found this booklet both interesting and informative. We had fun learning what we have shared with you here and we benefit from practising it in our everyday lives.

But, as with all books, the contents are only helpful if acted upon. So, if you already practice a way of mind/body/spirit development then we hope that we encouraged you and maybe gave you something extra to work with. If not then we suggest that you get out of that armchair and get on with something.

Secondly there is strength, the ability to exert force with the body, either against another object, by lifting, pushing or distorting, or by moving the body's own mass by lifting, jumping or pulling. Assuming that bones, joints, ligaments and tendons are all in good order then strength depends upon the condition of the muscles. Strength depends upon regular exertion of the muscles against resistance, this may be weights or devices which achieve a similar effect by friction or hydraulic methods. A training session three times a week will bring benefits, there is usually little point in training more frequently than this since the muscles need time to recover fully between each session.

Thirdly there is flexibility or suppleness. This refers to the body's ability to move freely in all the directions it was meant to be able to. This depends upon muscle fibres, joints, ligaments and tendons being able to move and extend fully. To achieve this depends upon regular extension of all the joints in the body. This is one of the benefits of practising the Stances on a daily basis, or an activity such as Yoga or Tai Chi where a comprehensive, yet gentle, stretching takes place.

It would be unwise to try and suggest specific exercises in a booklet of this kind since direct supervision from an experienced teacher is the only way to develop a really effective and safe exercise program. Just be careful of teachers who subscribe to the 'no pain, no gain' school of thought. This may be fine for Marines in training or budding first division foot ball players.

For the rest of us I would suggest that three principles are essential: Relaxation, technique and patience.

Firstly, relaxation. We should always approach training, or indeed any activity in a relaxed frame of mind, if you do find yourself getting tense and anxious during training then the first

be able to recognise when a problem needs the closer attention of holistic treatment, and when it is best to simply treat the immediate problem and not worry too much about the whys and wherefores. The methods contained in this booklet give details for dealing with health matters both a holistic and a symptomatic point of view .

Many of the principles and techniques described in this booklet are primarily for maintaining one's own health. Nevertheless, they can also be applied to other people. By learning to recognise our own health fluctuations and to deal with them before they turn into anything more serious, we become better qualified to assist other people to do the same. This is the real skill in healing: not so much to be able to cure all who come to you, but to assist and encourage them to take responsibility for their own health and well being and not to need to be healed. *D. Stone*

The Stances

The fundamental daily practice of Stáv is performing the Stances. These are 16 exercises with the emphasis on: Cultivating deep and natural breathing, maintaining slow and deliberate movements, developing good posture and balance and creating mental focus with relaxation. The stances are performed in a specific way, beginning facing North, bowing, taking nine deep breaths, clapping twice and then moving into each stance breathing in and exhaling as you move out of the stance. Each stance makes the shape of each of the runes with the body.

The stances are performed twice each day, with the first set the emphasis is on the right side of the body and with the second set the emphasis is on the left side. The second set finishes with the 2 claps, the 9 breaths and another bow to the North. The stances may be done one set in the morning and the other in the evening or all at once at your convenience. Stáv training sessions will usually begin and end with each set of the stances. I personally

Stáv for Health The Stances



Fig. 1

Stáv for Health

life where your health and fitness is your responsibility and no one else can be expected to take charge of it for you.

So give yourself a test. (Or be honest with yourself and consider whether you could even contemplate trying these suggestions.) Can you walk three miles and run one hundred yards (as if to catch a bus)? Can you lift half your body weight from the floor, pull yourself up on a bar from the floor twice in succession or perform five push-ups? Can you climb in and out of a low slung sports car? Pick an object off the floor without bending the knees? Put the hands behind the head and pull the elbows into a straight line with the head?

These are fairly arbitrary tests but they represent the kind of challenge that may present itself if a car breaks down and you have to walk for help, picking up a hurt child, pulling yourself out of a ditch or pit or even just accepting a lift in a friend's new car and not looking like a complete idiot when its time to get out again. Should you wish to take up hill walking, a vigorous sport, horticulture or a fairly ambitious do-it-yourself project then the demands could be heavier than those imposed by my suggested tests.

There are three aspects of fitness being tested here. Firstly, there is stamina, this is the ability to sustain activity over a period of time, serious walking, running, swimming or cycling all require a degree of stamina. So would digging over a patch of ground or sawing up a quantity of logs. Stamina basically requires a strong heart and efficient lungs with good circulation. A sudden and otherwise inexplicable loss of stamina should be investigated medically since it could indicate the early stages of a serious problem such as blocked arteries. Plenty of fuel for the body is equally vital, see Chapter Five on healthy eating. Assuming there are no medical obstacles and nutrition is adequate then stamina is best developed by activity sustained for at least thirty minutes three times a week.

few points to bear in mind. Most can also be applied when taking from your garden:

Make absolutely sure of what you are picking. There are medicines and poisons growing side by side in the natural world, and some can be very similar in appearance.

Ensure that what you are looking for is all right to gather - some wild plants and flowers are protected by law. Gather herbs on a dry day, preferably in the morning, but after the dew has dried. Don't gather near busy roads or fields that have been sprayed with chemicals.

Don't take too much, especially from a single plant. Take only what you need. Use scissors or secateurs rather than tearing the plant - a cut plant can rejuvenate, one ripped up by the roots can't.

Use the herbs as soon as possible, or else preserve them straight away, before the Virtues can leach out.

If you buy herbs ready dried from a herbal shop, try to find out how long they've been stored, and in what conditions they were grown. If the shop keeper is reluctant to tell you, it may be that they have been stored a long time, and so may not be as efficient as fresher ones.

The eighteen traditional herbs and trees in the Stáv system, for reference, are shown on fig. 4 *D. Stone*

Exercise

We all seem to take it for granted that exercise is good for us and we should all be fit. But what is meant by fitness and what is the sensible and healthy approach to taking exercise? If you join the military or a sports team the fitness instructors will have their own ideas of what is necessary to get you fit for service or competition. In this book we are more concerned with everyday

like to do the first set before breakfast and the second set just before supper.

Once a week an advanced student of Stáv will do a more sophisticated set of the stances which incorporates a chant. There are actually 5 ways of doing the stances altogether and the version described here is the method taught to beginners and used during public access courses. Other methods are taught when the student is ready.

It would be very difficult to teach the stances from a book, a video is better for seeing them done but a course where face to face tuition is given is really the only way to learn them properly. So here I will concentrate on describing the potential benefits of performing the stances regularly in the hope that the reader will seek to find out more. The basic principles also apply to Yoga, Tai-Chi or Qi-gong and other similar exercise systems so the information here will be of interest to students of these disciplines as well.

The emphasis needs to be on the 'regular and long term' application of the stances. Doing the sequence once or twice is unlikely to reverse a long term chronic condition just as, for example, brushing one's teeth for the first time is unlikely to reverse tooth decay or one bowl of salad to eliminate obesity. But doing the stances on a regular basis will have the following benefits:

It promotes deep and natural breathing using the diaphragm as well as the ribs and intercostal muscles. This develops an awareness of breathing since each breath has to be synchronised with movement and posture. Although breathing is an autonomic reflex it can be much more than that. In the same way that anxiety and tension tends to restrict normal breathing, hyper-ventilation being an extreme example, then relaxed and controlled breathing, as when performing the stances, will bring about relaxation and reduce tension and melt away anxiety. Whatever may be happening to us we do always have the opportunity to control our

breathing. Aware breathing is the first stage of inner knowledge and control of one's inner state.

Practising the stances also promotes balance and correct skeletal alignment, the majority of our fellow creatures use their spine as a bridge supported at both ends by the hind and fore limbs. By contrast, our backbone acts as a column and as such its alignment and balance is critical to our manoeuvrability and general health and well being. The stances which depend upon one leg (Bjork Þ and Rei Þ) and by the turns between the stances which require a very deliberate and controlled weight transfer develop this alignment and require good balance. Some days one's balance will be much better than others. This tells us a great deal about our inner state, any morning that I find difficulty in balancing in the stances mentioned above I know I will have to be extra careful when riding my motorcycle for one example.

The stances gently stretch and tone the whole body with each stance putting the emphasis on different joints, sinews and muscles and thus maintaining and developing the mobility and flexibility of the body. This is pretty much what you would expect of any gentle and focused exercise system but the stances will take you much further than this.

On occasion there is the feeling, not so much of "doing" the stances as being "lifted" into each stance almost as if invisible cords were lifting you into each position. I see this as a sign that my body is allowing itself to be guided by the Orlog itself. This is not something you can force and it doesn't happen even to an experienced practitioner everyday, but it shows me that we can align ourselves with a greater power and be guided and supported by it.

The stances are also about opening up to the megin (see next section for more details about this) both receiving and earthing it, in performing the stances the life energy is encouraged to flow through us.

Tein Seid goes much deeper than this and can be used to help relieve the underlying problems as well as the symptoms. This short introduction can not offer any realistic instruction on this subject, but there are many books available for both these ways of using herbs.

Tein Seid also goes into the more magical aspects of using herbs for healing, including the use of herbs as charms. There were many different types of plants that were supposed to ward off various diseases and also to keep evil spirits away or to encourage good luck. These may have had a placebo effect on the carrier - they believed the charm would do them good, so they were free from worries and stress, which allowed their own Megin to flow un-impeded and so kept them healthy. On a more esoteric level, it's possible that the Megin patterns of the plants were able in some way to work with the Megin patterns of the carrier's own body, and so lend their support. Whether this is even possible is unknown and unknowable, but there are many instances of charms being used and having a positive effect.

There are eighteen herbs and eighteen trees that are part of traditional Stáv, but really the best way of using plants for health is to look around at what you have growing locally. It is best to use plants from your own locality as they are part of the place you live in and are therefore on more of a wavelength with you. When using herbs in this way, the best approach is not to say "I've got X problem, what will help with it?", but to find out, while you are still healthy, what plants there are and what they will do. In this way, whenever you need them you know exactly what to get and where it is. This works when treat health matters in both symptomatic and holistic way.

When gathering wild herbs from the countryside, there are a

Tein Seid

Tein Seid is a practise within Stáv that can be loosely defined as herbalism. Tein means stick or wand, but it also refers to plants. Seid is a deep philosophical concept, but for the purposes of this it can be defined as inner knowledge. Therefore, a loose interpretation of Tein Seid could be 'thorough knowledge of plants'.

This is more than the basic practise that is referred to as herbalism these days. Tein Seid can include use of many different plants, not just specifically herbs, and use of them in many different ways. Such things as homeopathy, Bach remedies, aromatherapy come under the heading of Tein Seid. It can also refer to the practise of cooking plants, not just to make herbal brews and remedies, but for normal eating, demonstrating how Tein Seid can be related to the Stáv aspects of dietary principles.

The ability of herbs to assist with restoring or maintaining health is defined through Megin. A plant is a living organism, and so has Megin flowing through it. As Megin flows through different organisms, it forms different 'patterns', unique to that structure. These patterns within plants affects our own Megin patterns in different ways. This accounts for the properties, or Virtues, found in herbs. Some Virtues assist our Megin flow, and are regarded as medicines, others oppose the flow of our own Megin and are called poisons.

The use of herbs for healing and health maintenance, like all other aspects of Stáv, can be used both for symptomatic and holistic treatments. Herbal 'first aid' is as far as most people get who only dabble in Tein Seid. They consider their symptoms, such as a sore throat or stomach disorder, and find herbs that can relieve them. This is fine as far as it goes, but

Finally, the stances can give us specific messages in a very profound way. Each stance relates to a rune and each rune has specific meanings and associations. When performing the stances sometimes one is missed out and this should not be seen as an accident. I have been doing the same 16 stances daily for almost 8 years now and it still happens to me on occasion. When it does it is time to stop and consider the association. This is the intuitive mind trying to tell me something important and a moment's reflection usually shows me what my real issues are. This is simply part of the process of coming to "know thyself" which is inherent in the way of Stáv. It does not require long periods of introspection or elaborate divination procedures. When the runes want you to know something the stances provide them with a method of communicating between your intuitive (subconscious) mind and rational (conscious) mind and getting it to take notice and, if necessary, action. *G. Butcher*

Mott and Megin

Mott and Megin are the intrinsic health energies within the Stáv tradition. They are related to the Anglo-Saxon terms Might and Main.

Mott refers to the physical body, the muscle, bone, blood and all the other parts that make up a physical body. This is the vehicle from which we experience the world and so it needs to be maintained and kept in good order so we can experience life to the full.

This is accomplished by keeping an eye on how it's performing, noting any problems that seem to be arising and dealing with them before they get too bad. Regular exercise, a sensible diet and sufficient rest are the main ingredients to healthy Mott.

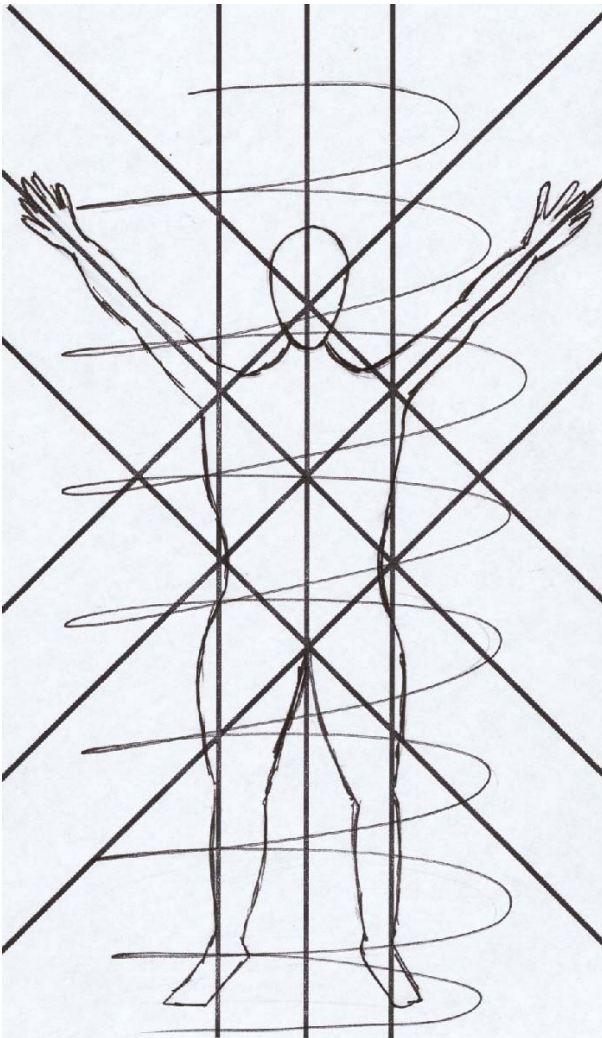
If it gets damaged or becomes ill, the body has an array of devices that it uses to repair itself. These can be assisted by

Stáv for Health

various methods of healing such as first aid, surgery, manipulation techniques and a bit of good old fashioned pampering. These are all means of healing the Mott - the physical body.

Mott can be rather gruesomely described as the part that ends up on the butcher's slab, or on the mortuary table. In this, it demonstrates one of the great mysteries of life - the fact that a living body and a dead body are physically the same. Eventually decomposition begins to occur, but for a brief time there is no real difference between the state of Life and the state of Death, except that something is lacking in the latter.

There is no real definition for what that Something is in Western medicine and science. There are various clinical and philosophical debates about at what point someone becomes 'dead', and



Stáv for Health

The Herbs and Trees Important in Stáv

<u>Rune Association</u>	<u>Tree</u>	<u>Herb, Grain or Berry</u>
⚡ Fe	Hazel	Barley
ᚢ Ur	Pine	Plantain
Þ Thor	Rowan	Burdock
ᚦ As	Ash	Oats
ᚷ Rei	Elder	Coltsfoot
ᚢ Kreft	Spruce	Wormwood
⚡ Hagl	Beach	Bear Berry
ᚢ Nod (Urd)	Alder	Nettle
ᚢ Nod (Verdandi)	Willow	Raspberry/Strawberry
ᚢ Nod (Skuld)	Elm	Dandelion
ᚢ Is	Juniper	Mugwort
ᚠ Ar	Holly	Bilberry
ᚱ Sol	Oak	Camomile
ᚢ Tyr	Linden	Comfrey
ᚢ Bjork	Birch	Flax
ᚢ Mann	Hawthorn	Lilly-of-the-Valley
ᚢ Laug	Apple	Leek (Garlic or Onion)
ᚢ Yr	Yew	Yarrow

fig. 4

eating, drinking, smoking etc. - but their meanings go much deeper than this. Indulgence is allowing yourself excess in anything, be it food, drink or something like rest or company. It is acknowledging that you want this, and allowing yourself.

This is offset by Abstinence, the realisation that going to extreme of Indulgence causes problems. Indulgence in food makes us sick and/or fat, Indulgence in activity makes us exhausted, Indulgence in solitude makes us isolated and shut in. Similarly, Abstinence to extreme is just as bad: Abstinence in food makes us ill and/or malnourished, Abstinence in activity makes us lazy and slow, abstinence in solitude makes us over dependent on others and a bother to them. This is a holistic view, that all extremes are harmful, even ones that seem to be opposing something bad. Within life it is sometimes necessary to go to either extreme, but it must be remembered that we need to offset each extreme and not allow them to take over our lives. A healthy lifestyle comes from this balance. We shouldn't deny ourselves as this only makes us want it more, but neither should we give in too easily as this makes it all the easier to indulge the next time. By finding the balance between the six headings around the Bind Rune, we will find our mind calmer and our body better tuned, and then we can get in touch with our spirit and find a deeper balance.

Odin comments and gives advice on this general idea of balance in the Havamal:

'Much too early I've come to many places, but sometimes too late; The ale was all drunk, or sometimes it wasn't yet brewed: the unpopular man seldom chooses the right occasion.' stanza 66

'A man shouldn't hold onto the cup, but drink mead in moderation.' stanza 19

'[Sometimes] it is necessary to speak, or to be silent' stanza 19

'I tell you to be cautious, but not over cautious.' stanza 131 *D. Stone*

there are many descriptions of the processes within the Mott that occur in the lead up to death and once death has taken place, but there is no clear definition of what actually separates a living body from a dead body. Within Chinese medicine, and various other cultural beliefs, there is a definition. The Chinese call it Chi, and say that this is the intrinsic Life Force that flows through a living body, and it is this Chi that is absent from a dead one. In the Stáv tradition, this Life Force is called Megin. Megin, like its cultural counterparts Chi, Ki, Prana, Odoyle, Orgone etc is much deeper than 'just' the Life Force, but for the purposes of this booklet only its connection to health and healing will be discussed.

Megin is inherent in all life and flows into, through and out of the body, energising, revitalising and repairing the Mott as it goes. This flow is continuous and is recognised in other traditions as meridians and chakras. As with all things that flow, however, Megin at times becomes blocked or restricted and so prevented from flowing efficiently through the whole body. Blocked Megin manifests in the physical body as discomfort or pain and can result in illness.

Many things can cause Megin to become blocked or restricted. Improper posture is one, and muscular tension is another. Many negative states of mind can block Megin and cause discomfort. Some of these are referred to as expressions, so familiar are they in the everyday world: butterflies in the stomach, heavy hearted, a lump in the throat, a weight on the shoulders. Many headaches, neck aches and back aches are due to blocked Megin, some through purely physical tensions, others through mental tensions. These in turn weaken our Mott and leave it less able to fend off the bacteria and viruses that constantly bombard us, resulting in physical illness as well as energy imbalance.

In health issues, problems are Mott related when they are purely physical - cuts, bruises, strains, sprains, broken bones, concussion, etc. All other ailments are Megin related - illness, fever,

infection etc. Even problems that appear to be Mott related, such as tiredness and exhaustion, are actually Megin related as they are caused by insufficient Megin flow. Usually, of course, a problem in either Mott or Megin can create a problem in the other, which is one of the main reasons it's important to not allow such problems to develop. Within Stáv there are three basic ways of healing and maintaining health through the Megin. The first has already been discussed - remain aware of the condition of your Megin, correct your posture, learn to relax and above all learn to release emotional concerns once they are no longer an immediate problem. This will help to ensure your Megin remains flowing and performing it's function without interference. The second method of healing through Megin is to increase your own Megin levels. This will be particularly effective against physical problems, such as damage to the Mott. By increasing the level of Megin in the affected area, it assists with the healing process, but also frees up some of your intrinsic Megin to continue working on the rest of your body. This will help reduce the effects of shock, and ensure the rest of the Mott is healthy and able to function adequately even with the damage.

The third method of healing with Megin is to decrease the Megin of the invader. This is particularly effective against bacteria and viruses. These are life forms which are struggling to survive, just as you are. Therefore they have their own Megin that is assisting them. By drawing the Megin away from them, it leaves them weaker and so the antibodies and defence systems of the body are able to eliminate them. We have always got sufficient Megin within our body - if we didn't we'd be dead. Sometimes, though, the Megin we have isn't used efficiently. There are methods and techniques within the Stáv system for increasing the efficiency of Megin, which are described below and in the previous section on the stances. *D. Stone*

people have.

Companionship, however, also needs to be offset by solitude. We are all individual beings, and as such we need a time to get off by ourselves to listen to the quiet, inner voice and reflect upon our own ideas. This solitude might involve utsette or similar - the Stáv practise of taking oneself out into the natural world to be alone - or simply slipping outside or into another room for a few moments. 'If you've a friend, one whom you trust, go to see him often.' stanza 119

'The loved man is loathed if he sits too long in someone else's hall.' stanza 35

'...I found myself going astray. Rich I thought myself when I met someone else, for man is the joy of man.' stanza 47

The final pair, Feast and Fast need to be offset by one another. We need to eat in order to stay alive, and many health problems can be resolved by reviewing our diet. Eating is a pleasure, and not one to be forcibly avoided.

Nevertheless, eating needs to be offset by periods of not eating. This allows our body time to digest and utilise what has already been eaten, and also helps to prevent weight problems.

The Havamal says on this subject:

'Should you happen to be travelling, make sure you are well fed.' stanza 116

'The greedy man, unless he guards against this tendency, will eat himself into life long trouble.' stanza 20

This Bind Rune can be summed up as finding the balance between Indulgence and Abstinence.

Indulgence and Abstinence offset each other and could be regarded as being the two halves of the Bind Rune, although this is not entirely the case. The obvious association with Indulgence and Abstinence is in what are commonly known as 'vices' - over

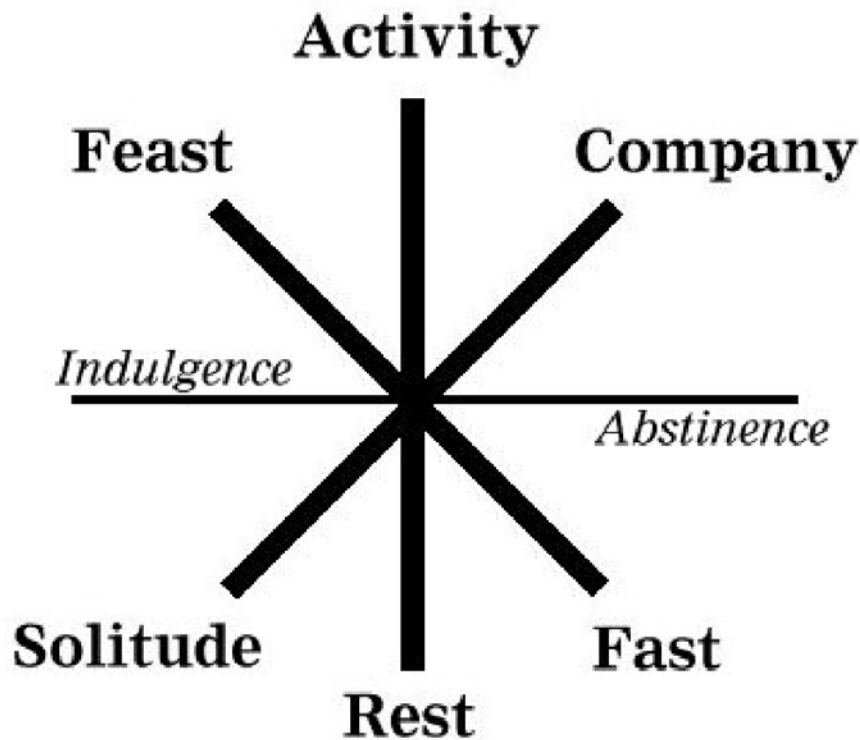
Balanced Lifestyle

Fig. 3

Practical work with Mott and Megin

One of the ways that I developed an interest and, eventually, skills, in healing was through teaching martial arts and self defence to older people. I often found that they simply could not get into some of the positions necessary for training. Without regular use joint mobility can decline and without assistance it can be difficult, if not impossible to recover. Once recovered correct exercise will maintain mobility in the future but certain steps can be necessary to make it possible. It became apparent to me that there were two issues here. One was simply the alignment and mobility of the joints and the other was muscular tension and energy blockages. The physical aspect of the body we call "Mott" and the energy aspect we call "Megin". Each requires the other for Mott without Megin is dead (and soon decaying meat) and whether or not Megin can exist outside of a living body is a philosophical question which I do not intend to debate here.

However it is possible to work on oneself using self manipulation techniques. In Stáv terms the stances are the basis for this since they teach us how the body should work, reveal where it is not in correct alignment and begins the process of correcting this through daily practice. Also, a simple set of wrist exercises will enhance mobility, strength and flexibility in this vital part of the body and go a long way to countering problems such as repetitive strain injury. See fig. 2 for these. Do these exercises gently, the idea is not to inflict pain on oneself but to gradually enhance the range of movement. Then there are the foot massage exercises which can be done with the fingers or a tein (small wooden wand with rounded corners.) To massage the feet sit with one leg straight out in front and the other leg folded and resting on the top of the extended leg. Begin by grasping the heel and rotating the ankle through its maximum range of movement. Then crunch the toes down and up and then take each toe in turn and wiggle it to its maximum movement. The take 2 fingers (or the tein which should be oval or diamond in section) and insert between each

Wrist Exercises

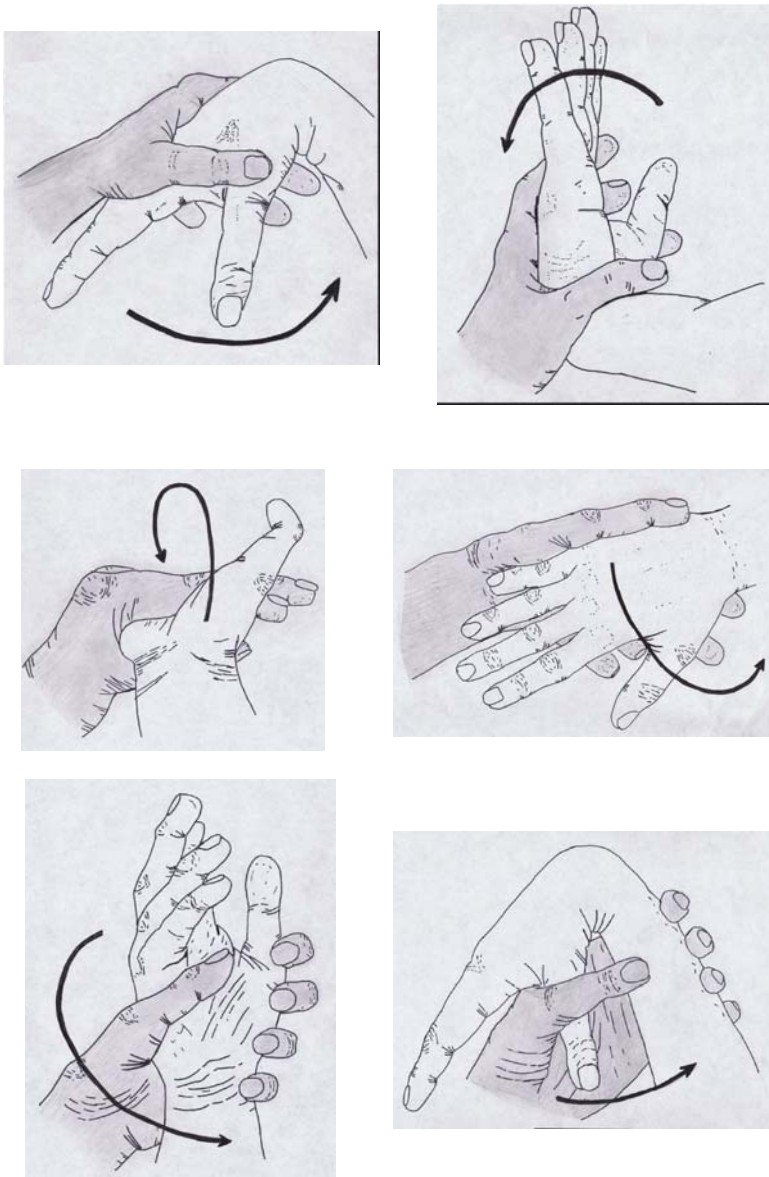


Fig. 2

the privy outside.' stanza 112

'Much he neglects, the man who sleeps in in the mornings.
Wealth is half-won by the vigorous.' stanza 59

'The slumbering wolf does not get the ham, nor a sleeping man
the victory.' stanza 58. *D. Stone*

Balanced Lifestyle

One of the main things any student of Stáv learns is that it is important to find and maintain balance. This is most graphically obvious in the martial aspects of Stáv when to lose one's balance can be to lose the fight, but it is important to remember that balance is not just a physical matter of standing upright. Just as our body needs to be balanced, so do our mind and spirit.

The following Bind Rune demonstrates the balances that must be maintained in order to achieve a healthy, balanced lifestyle. See fig. 3

Activity needs to be offset by Rest. If we perform a physical activity, we have to rest to allow our body to rejuvenate. The same can be said of the mind: many people don't realise that excessive mental activity leaves one just as tired as physical activity. Therefore the mind needs to be rested when it's been exerted, too.

The reverse of this duo is also true: Rest needs to be offset by Activity. Too much physical rest leads to the body getting out of condition and not being ready and able when called upon. Many unemployed people find themselves unable to build up motivation for the simplest of tasks, due to excessive Rest.

The second pair, Company and Solitude, also need to offset each other. As gregarious beings, we all need companionship, a time to be with others. No one is an island, everyone needs other people around them, sometimes for the fun of it, sometimes for support in difficult times, sometimes to explore ideas that different

Stáv for Health

soon as we realise we're becoming unwell, or we've had an injury, go to bed. Don't struggle on regardless, no one will thank you for making yourself worse, and it's often better to take an evening or a day in bed and get the problem sorted than to soldier on, feeling lousy, and end up making yourself really ill.

Many people protest that they can't go to sleep 'just like that.' That doesn't matter. Go to bed, get the room as dark as you can and lie there with your eyes closed. It can help to use breathing patterns similar to those used in the performance of the stances. The important thing is that you relax, with your eyes closed and your mind still. The very fact you are unwell will assist and you will soon drift off to sleep.

These points, obviously, can be employed on a nightly basis to help you get the most out of your night's sleep. The fact of sleeping for health maintenance doesn't mean it should only be used for when you are actually ill and ignore the rest of the time. Listen to your body and go to bed when you are feeling sleepy, regardless of whether the clock says it's too early. Your own body is a much better indicator of when it's time to sleep than any clock. If you wait until you are feeling tired, you are actually in the early stages of sleep deprivation. In this instance you will go straight into the deeper sleep levels and miss out on the first two, lighter, levels of sleep. By going to bed early, not only do you get a better balance of sleep during the night, but it is also easier to wake up without the need of dream-shattering alarm clocks. By waking up naturally, you are refreshed and ready to face the day.

To finish this section, what better than to give the last word to Odin for his advice on the subject of sleep from the Havamal:

'No man will blame you if you go early to bed.' stanza 19 'The foolish man lies awake all night and worries about things; he's tired out when morning comes and everything's as bad as it was.' stanza 23

'Don't get up at night, except to look around or if you need to visit

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pair of toes and rotate extending the gap between each toe. Then massage the whole of the foot beginning at the top of the big toe and work right down to the heel. Then massage back up the foot again and finish by gently slapping the foot between the hands to stimulate blood and megin flow. Then change feet and do the other one.

When you have got the hang of these try exchanging with a partner to get the feel of working with some one else's body. More advanced partner work can be done on the spine, neck, shoulders and other parts of the body but they are best taught in a class since they require a profound understanding of the stances and need supervised tuition. When working with a partner be gentle as these can be painful. Ask them to tell you when to stop and do so, it could be your turn next time!

Mott work does have its potential dangers but they are fairly obvious and so long as you are gentle with yourself and, if working with a partner, stop when they ask you there should be no real problems. Working with Megin is more unpredictable and also more problematical from a scientific point of view. Megin is the energy which permeates all things and brings vitality to all living things. It is the life force which David has already discussed in some detail in the previous chapter. The problem with Megin is not so much how to use it or get it, (if you are alive then it is present) but how to avoid the negative effects of someone else's Megin

A good example is when someone has had chronic long term pain in their back. This is often located at the back of the shoulders or lower down under the shoulder blades. It is not necessarily the consequence of an accident (although it may originally have been) but it is painful and will reduce mobility. As a healer you may be asked to do something about this. If you try rubbing the area (massaging) several things may happen: Firstly it may be nothing, the body can often hang onto tension and be

reluctant to let it go, at least at first. Secondly the tension may gradually ease up as the muscles un-knot and the back slowly returns to full mobility. Or, thirdly, the tension and pain may ease up almost instantly and, rather mysteriously, transfers to exactly the same spot on the healer's body as if the energy had been conducted away to a new home. This I believe is most likely to happen to those whose own Megin is flowing freely thus providing an easy path.

To someone who is performing energy exercises (such as the stances) on a regular basis this should not be too much of a problem since next time the exercises are done the excess Megin can be grounded and dispensed with. Anyone doing regular healing will have to develop ways of cleansing the energy that they absorb from those they heal. Those trained in Tao-



them. Go to bed calm. Many people hang on to problems long after they've ceased to be immediate issues - problems at work, issues to be resolved, money worries. Consider the fact that none of them are actually affecting you right at this moment. Worrying about things creates a cocktail of chemicals in your body as your 'primal self' attempts to ready your body to deal with them. Worrying means that this cocktail is still being produced, even though the problems are far away. By acknowledging that they are no longer an immediate concern it becomes easier to let them go and relax. Listening to some gentle music or reading something inspirational can help calm your thoughts. Certainly trying to sleep straight after an argument or dramatic film won't help. Allow time for your mind to calm down from the activity and images of the day. When random thoughts continue to run around your mind and won't settle down, there are meditation techniques that can be applied. One of the simplest is to slowly and deliberately count from 100 down to 1, allowing your breathing to dictate the speed you count. This requires enough concentration that your mind has to focus on it and so has to abandon the random thoughts, but not so much concentration that it keeps you awake. Very often this will quieten your mind into a relaxed state so that, even if you are still awake, you will be gaining some of the benefits of sleep.

When an animal becomes ill or is badly hurt, it invariably finds a safe place to curl up in and it goes to sleep. It stays there until it has healed sufficiently to continue living, or it dies. This is a natural way of dealing with illness and injury, and one that is employed within the Stáv tradition.

When we are unwell, the best thing is to go to bed and sleep. Don't read, don't lie there watching television, sleep. This is very often all we need and will cure the ailment before it has a chance to take a firm hold. Obviously, this relates to the basic principles of health through Stáv, and being aware of our state of health: As

turning cycle of the day. Midnight in this instance is not the time according to the clock, but rather it is the mid point between sunset and sunrise. Therefore, the hours before midnight are getting darker and further from the sun, while during the hours after the world is becoming lighter and waking up again.

Our sleep pattern consists of four levels. All of them occur throughout sleep, but the first two levels predominate in the first half of sleep while the third and fourth predominate in the second. Level three is deep sleep and level four is dreaming or REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep. It would seem that levels one and two, which are lighter levels of sleep, are best taken as the cycle of the day is winding towards midnight, while the deeper levels are best once the day has turned and is heading back towards daylight. While we sleep, the Mott is completely relaxed and releases many of the tensions that build up in it. Similarly, the mind is relaxed. Both these factors help the Megin to flow unimpeded through the body, strengthening it and allowing it to heal any problems that have cropped up during the day. Mental problems are also soothed during this time. Quite apart from the fact we get a few hours of not having to think about them, many seemingly insurmountable problems become resolved during the sleep period.

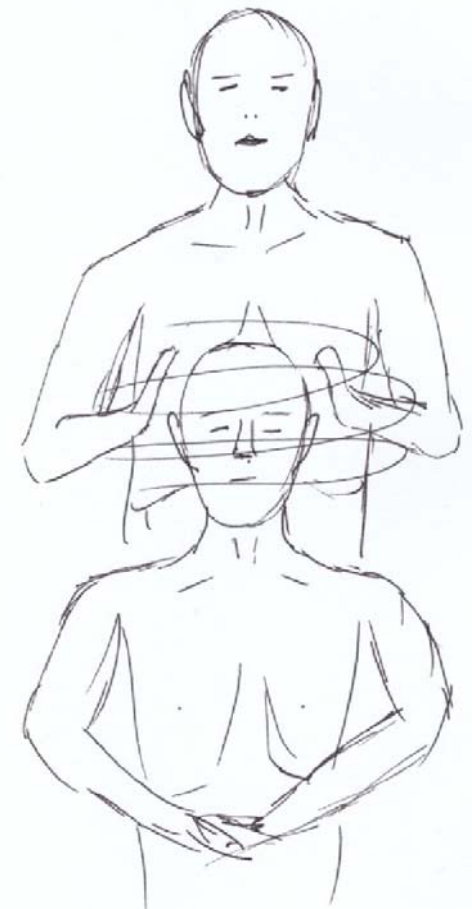
Certain techniques can be employed to help to relax the body and mind prior to sleep to ensure it is as restful as possible. Your bed should not be too soft as a sagging mattress causes the spine to curve. The pillow should allow your head to lie without your neck being bent upwards or downwards. Ensure your bedroom has good ventilation to allow a ready supply of oxygen. This is particularly important in modern, central heated houses in which the air can take several days to be completely renewed. As you lie in bed, focus on the different parts of the body and notice where there are any tensions. Tense them harder, then allow them to relax. Similarly with your mind, look for thoughts and images that are running around, acknowledge them and release

st or Shiatsu methods will describe this as the affect of the Chi or Ki. Western methods which recognise only the Mott aspect of the body may have difficulty in recognising the effect of the Megin phenomenon. But the more the Megin is able to move freely within the body the more likely you are to shift the Megin in someone else's.

You can try this for someone who has a headache or similar affliction:

Cup the hands with the right inside the left with the tips of the thumbs gently touching. Take 9 slow, deep breaths and relax imagining the energy circulating around the body and connecting through the hands. Then slowly place the hands on either side of the affected part of the body you are healing and take another 9 breaths while still imagining the Megin

flowing through a circuit which now includes the patient. Then slowly withdraw and gently shake the hands away from the body to break the circuit. See what happens. You should only do this if



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you are regularly practising some form of energy exercise to ground the surplus Megin and replenish your own system. G. Butcher

Diet

The primary concern of Stáv is things that can be done daily as essential parts of everyday life. As well as breathing the other daily activity for most of us is eating. Starvation kills in a matter of weeks yet lack of proper attention to diet may also be responsible for much of the ill health we see in modern Western society where food is plentiful. The first point to acknowledge here is that, generally speaking, Western man has never been healthier and the ever increasing life span of the average Westerner concurs with this. Where there is more disease it is often because the longer people live the more likely they are to get sick. Certainly diseases such as cancer have always had the potential to occur but most people didn't live long enough to develop them. Likewise heart disease which mainly affects people in their forties or even later. If the average life span is less than fifty, as indeed it was until well into the 20 th century then incidents of these diseases are going to be fairly rare.

There have been many theories about different food stuffs and their relationship to the prevalence of specific diseases. But the only really proven links are between smoking and lung cancer and alcohol and cirrhosis of the liver, and neither of these have anything to do with eating as such. In deed it is likely that many diseases that were formally thought to be caused as a reaction to certain foods may in fact be as a result of viral or bacterial infections.* It is therefore the body's immune system that protects against disease and the stronger the immune system the less likely

* Consider for example the Helicobacter bacterium which was discovered to be the cause of alimentary tract ulcers by Barry Marshall in 1984

ref: p.177 of The Rise and Fall of Modern Medicine by JLFanau LB 1999

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So those are our simple principles: A staple in the diet. A regular pattern of eating throughout the day. As much natural food as possible and a regular intake of fresh water (at least 4 pints a day and more in hot weather). There is no "Stáv Diet" as such, just a sensible approach to eating and drinking based on these simple principles. G. Butcher

Sleep

One of the main methods of maintaining and improving the flow of Megin in the Stáv system is through sleep. Many people in the modern, Western culture have lost track of just how important sleep is, and of getting the right sort of sleep.

Something that is certainly forgotten is the old country maxim that 'one hours sleep before midnight is worth two hours after.' This has been demonstrated to be accurate, and reminds us of the



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toxins. The blood is constantly filtered by the kidneys and surplus water removed along along with these toxins in the form of urine. The more fresh water taken in the more effectively the kidneys can do their job. If fluid is taken in in other forms then the impurities dissolved in them have to be removed by the water present in the drink. This especially applied to alcoholic drinks. The classic example of this is a hangover which is mainly the effect of dehydration due to the body excreting the alcohol along with more water than was taken in. The only real cure for a hangover is lots of water.

Thirdly: the liver has to take care of the problems caused by too little water passing through the system. In extreme cases this results in the classic alcoholic's disease of cirrhosis of the liver. If there is insufficient water being taken into the system the kidneys cut down their activities and reduce the amount of urine produced to maintain the body fluid level. This means that the toxins accumulating in the blood stream are not being removed so the liver has to take on the role and stores the these substances in fat cells. This results in a less healthy body and more fat being deposited with obvious consequences for weight and well being. Also it will affect energy levels. The real task of the liver is to convert carbohydrate into glycogen for the muscles to use for energy. If the liver is tied up with toxin management it will not be able to devote as much effort to this as it should resulting in fatigue. Thus for endurance the most important factors are un-refined carbohydrate and a lot of water. So called high energy foods such as chocolate or mint cake will probably exacerbate the situation.

This can be why a properly conducted detoxification diet often results in headaches, a furred tongue, skin reactions and other rather unpleasant reactions at first. The liver is at last able to start breaking down the toxins stored in the fat and release them from the body.

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a disease will strike or if it does the more quickly it will be cured.

Thus the emphasis in Stáv for health is on keeping one's Megin as strong as possible and trying to work in accordance with the Orlog as we live out our own true Wyrd (personal destiny). The human digestive system works in accordance with its own Orlog and it is in co-operating with this principle that we can eat for health. These are the principles which Ivar Hafskjold emphasises and practices in his own life. Ivar looks and moves like a man 15 years younger than his real age which speaks for itself.

The first principle of eating for health in the Stáv tradition is the Staple Diet: We need a staple food in our diet. Every culture has one as the basis for their nutrition. This is usually something widely available, reasonably cheap and rich in carbohydrate and fibre. In the orient it is rice in its 'brown' un-refined state. In cooler parts of the orient it is wheat. In Southern America it is Maize. In Ireland it is potatoes and in other parts of Europe various forms of grain, Wheat, Barley, Rye and in the more Northern parts such as Scandinavia, Oatmeal. It is Oats that will particularly concern us here but the principle applies to all staple diets.

The staple should provide slow burning carbohydrate which will sustain you through a large part of the day. It takes time for the body to extract all the nutrition available compared to a high fat and sugar meal which may contain a good deal of energy but tends to get absorbed by the body too quickly, gets stored as fat and leaves the body craving for more food soon after. The staple should contain a high proportion of fibre which gives the gut something to work on ensuring good bowel movements and will tend to absorb and carry through any toxins which were in danger of accumulating in the alimentary tract. Finally the staple provides a consistent diet for the fauna and flora which colonise our digestive tracts and provide essential enzymes to assist in the breaking down of food stuffs and extracting nutrients from them. The staple is as much for the benefit of our inner residents as it is

for us. This thought should certainly help us realise our interdependence on the natural world.

The second principle has to do with timing our eating. The day can be evenly divided into 4 hour intervals. This is about the time that the body needs to go through a digestive cycle and be ready for the next meal. In Northern Europe we have big differences in the time we should be awake between summer and winter. If we start with midnight we should be asleep and only characters in Enid Blyton boarding school novels should eat at that time. In summer in Scandinavia it is light before 4 am and on a farm in summer this may well be when work begins, at the end of the day labours may not finish until 8 pm. In this case 5 meals a day are possible and probably necessary. At the equinoxes work may not start until after 8 am and will probably have to finish at dusk (around 4 pm). So 3 meals will be sufficient. Apparently in Scandinavia before electric light and the television messed up our natural rhythms it was quite normal to be up and about only for a couple of hours a day in mid winter so one meal was quite adequate. So try to use this pattern to allow adequate time for full digestion and if possible have the biggest meal in the middle of the day and the staple, probably porridge, for breakfast.

The third principle is to keep the diet as natural as possible. Food loses a great deal of its nutritional value as it is processed and refined in the modern food industry. Essential vitamins are destroyed and the Megin originally present is lost and preservatives and flavourings are added in which, if not actually harmful, certainly have no nutritional value. That is not to say that if you like kippers, bacon, salami, smoked cheese and pickles that you should not eat them, I love such things, but they should be eaten for pleasure and as an extra to a diet of the staple plus fresh fruit, vegetables and natural grains and pulses. If you can grow your own, so much the better. In recent years the government has recommended 5 portions of fresh fruit and vegetables daily and this is as good a guideline as any. As for the organic set against

industrial agriculture debate I don't have a strong opinion one way or the other. Organic agriculture is almost certainly better for the environment but how much difference it makes to the consumer still seems to be open to debate. The quantity and regularity with which you eat fresh produce is more important than how it was grown. If you do grow your own then you have the option of going organic. But when you have had your crop devastated by ravenous molluscs you may find yourself being very attracted to the idea of slug pellets. There is always the possibility that organic agriculture has a considerable appeal to a public usually far removed from the actual experience of growing food.

The fourth principle is: Drink enough fresh water. This is one single factor that can make an enormous difference to health. Many people claim not to like water and rely on tea, coffee, soft drinks or beer and other alcoholic drinks for their fluid intake. But the body needs a regular supply of fresh water to remain genuinely healthy. There are three good reasons for this:

Firstly it is vital to maintain the fluid level in the body. Luckily our systems are pretty good at controlling this and genuine dehydration should only occur if we are stuck in a desert with no access to drinkable fluids at all. Having said that any A & E doctor or nurse will confirm that in hot weather many people end up in casualty departments having collapsed and are suffering from nothing more than dehydration. So don't assume that just because you are not in the middle of the Sahara that it couldn't happen to you. Particularly vulnerable are old people who rely on others to provide them with drinks. Sometimes allowance is not made for hot weather and dehydration can set in. If you do find yourself, or someone complains of, feeling unwell in hot weather then the first thing to do is drink a pint of fresh water followed by similar a quantity at hourly intervals. It will usually take care of the problem.

Secondly; the body relies on water to keep the body cleansed of