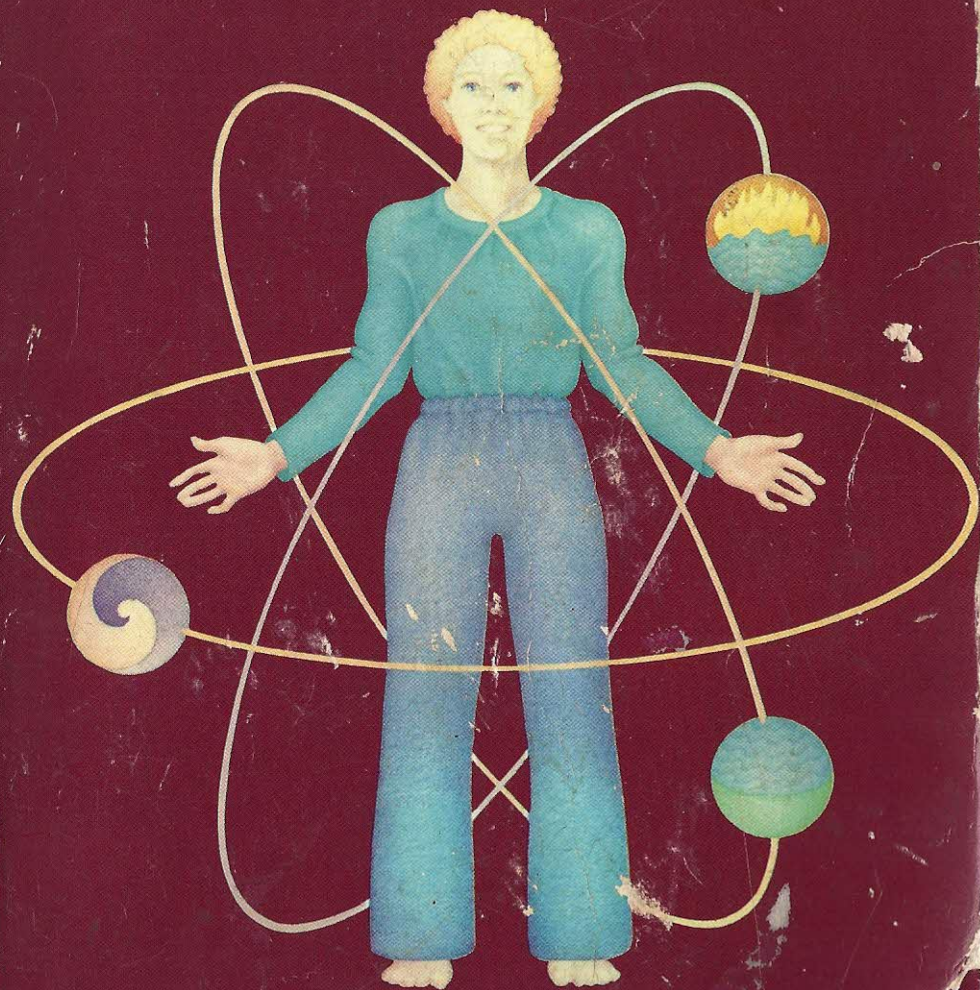


AYURVEDA

The Science of Self-Healing

by Dr. Vasant Lad



A PRACTICAL GUIDE

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Santa Fe, New Mexico

This book is a reference work based on the author's educational, teaching and practical experience. The information contained herein is in no way to be considered as a substitute for consultation with a duly licensed physician.

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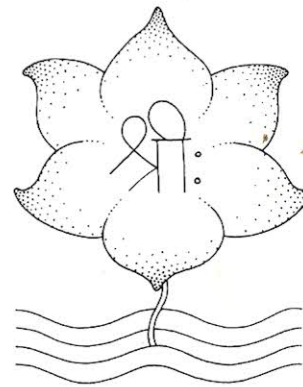
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Dedicated to Mother, Father,
Satguru-Hambir Baba and Dear Pappu,
who taught me about life, love, compassion,
simplicity and humility.

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PREFACE

The author's inspiration for this book grew out of a strong belief that Ayurveda should be shared with Westerners in a simple, practical way. Heretofore, Ayurveda has been viewed in the West as an esoteric science. Yet it is a simple, practical science of life whose principles are universally applicable to each individual's daily existence. Ayurveda speaks to every element and facet of human life, offering guidance that has been tested and refined over many centuries to all those who seek greater harmony and peace and longevity:

The knowledge supplied in this book will be of lasting value to the reader. The science of Ayurveda is based not on constantly changing research data, but on the eternal wisdom of the *rishis* who received this science, expressive of the perfect wholeness of Cosmic Consciousness, through religious introspection and meditation. Ayurveda is a timeless science and the reflection and elucidation here, it is hoped, will serve the reader throughout his or her life.

Ayurveda is concerned with eight principle branches of medicine: pediatrics, gynecology, obstetrics, ophthalmology, geriatrics, otolaryngology (ear, nose and throat), general medicine and surgery. Each of these medical specialties is addressed according to theories of the five elements (Ether, Air, Fire, Water, Earth); the *tridosha*, or three bodily humors; the seven *dhatus*, or body tissues; three *malas* (urine, stools, sweat); and the trinity of life: body, mind and spiritual awareness. These concepts are fully elucidated in this introductory text.

This book is mainly concerned with presenting a basic overview of Ayurveda, including techniques of examination, diagnosis and treatment; promotion of longevity; the use of herbal remedies and other practical everyday aspects of maintaining health.

Once the student has acquired a basic overview of Ayurveda, a wealth of ancient knowledge still remains to be explored in writings of the Ayurvedic sages, such as the surgeon Sushruta (who,

more than 2,000 years ago, wrote a classic text on surgery, *Sushruta Samhita*), and through the teachings of modern Ayurvedic physicians. The writings of Sushruta impressively anticipated much of modern medicine. He treated in detail, among other topics, post-mortem dissection and plastic surgery procedures which, centuries later, were used as the basis for modern plastic surgery. Sushruta perfected techniques for knitting broken bones with nails; he identified vital points on the body, *marmas*, which are related to the vital organs. External trauma to these points may be extremely serious or fatal. Among his other numerous contributions, Sushruta also devised a special treatment of bloodletting to cure blood-born disorders. It should be obvious, from this brief highlighting, that we have much to learn from the ancient Ayurvedic masters.

The wisdom of Ayurveda is recorded in Sanskrit, the ancient language of India. Therefore, the author sometimes employs Sanskrit terms to explain certain Ayurvedic medical concepts when no adequate English translation may be made. On their first appearance in this text, each of these words is clearly and simply elucidated.

This is the author's first book, and he wishes to acknowledge his mentors in Ayurveda, especially: *Vaidya* B.P. Nanal; the Tilak Ayurveda Mahavidhyalaya Medical School where the author studied and was later appointed as a lecturer and professor of Internal Medicine; and the Seth Tarachand Ramnath Ayurvedic Hospital where the author received his practical training as physician in residence and where he later served as Medical Director. In addition he wishes to thank his students and friends whose love, compassion and support inspired him to write this text. He offers thanks also to the reader who, in his commitment to learning and to his own growth process, opens himself to the science of Ayurveda as it is set forth in these pages.

Dr. Vasant Lad
Santa Fe, New Mexico
January 1984

History and Philosophy *

Ayurveda encompasses not only science but religion and philosophy as well. We use the word *religion* to denote beliefs and disciplines conducive toward states of being in which the doors of perception open to all aspects of life. In Ayurveda, the whole of life's journey is considered to be sacred. The word *philosophy* refers to love of truth and in Ayurveda, truth is Being, Pure Existence, The Source of all life. Ayurveda is a science of truth as it is expressed in life.

All Ayurvedic literature is based on the *Samkhya* philosophy of creation. (The roots of the term *Samkhya* are two Sanskrit words: *sat*, meaning "truth," and *khya*, meaning "to know.") The reader is asked to cultivate an open mind and heart toward the philosophy of *Samkhya* because of its intimate connection with Ayurveda.

The ancient realized beings, *rishis*, or seers of truth, discovered truth by means of religious practices and disciplines. Through intensive meditation, they manifested truth in their daily lives. Ayurveda is the science of daily living and this system of knowledge evolved from the *rishis'* practical, philosophical and religious illumination, which was rooted in their understanding of the creation.

They perceived, in the close relationship between man and the universe, how cosmic energy manifests in all living and nonliving things. They also realized that the source of all existence is Cosmic Consciousness, which manifests as male and female energy — *Shiva* and *Shakti*.

The *rishi* Kapila, who realized the *Samkhya* philosophy of creation, discovered twenty-four principles or elements of the universe,**

* This chapter, which may be difficult for readers who have no prior knowledge of the subjects discussed, may be read first, last or at any point that is comfortable.

** The specific 24 principles or elements in the *Samkhya* philosophy are the following: Prakriti; Mahad; Ahamkar; Five Sense Faculties; Five Motor Organs; Mind; Five Senses, i.e.,

of which *Prakruti*, or creativity, is the most basic.

Purusha is the male, while *Prakruti* is the female energy. *Purusha* is formless, colorless and beyond attributes and takes no active part in the manifestation of the universe. This energy is choiceless, passive awareness.

Prakruti has form, color and attributes: it is awareness with choice. It is Divine Will, the One who desires to become many. The universe is the child born out of the womb of *Prakruti*, the Divine Mother.

Prakruti creates all forms in the universe, while *Purusha* is the witness to this creation. It is primordial physical energy containing the three attributes, or *gunas*, found in all nature, the evolving cosmos.

The three *gunas* are *satva* (essence), *rajas* (movement) and *tamas* (inertia). These three are the foundation for all existence. They are contained in balance in *Prakruti*. When this balance is disturbed, there is an interaction of the *gunas* which thus engenders the evolution of the universe.

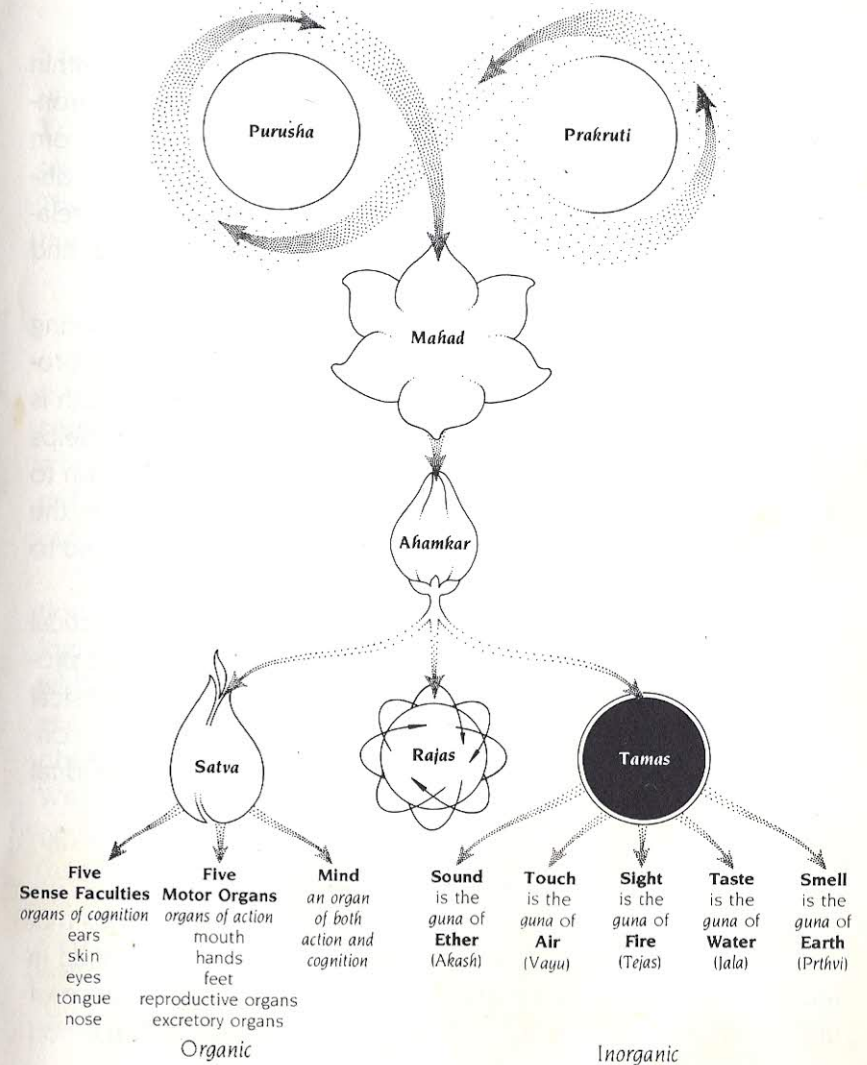
The first manifestation from *Prakruti* is Cosmic Intellect. From *Mahad*, Ego (*Ahamkar*) is formed. Ego then manifests into the five senses (*tanmatras*) and the five motor organs, with the help of *satva*, thus creating the organic universe. The same Ego further manifests into the five basic elements (*bhutas*) with the help of *tamas*, to create the inorganic universe.

Rajas is the active vital life force in the body which moves both the organic and inorganic universes to *satva* and *tamas*, respectively. So *satva* and *tamas* are inactive, potential energies which need the active, kinetic force of *rajas*. *Satva* is creative potential (*Brahma*); *rajas* is a kinetic protective force (*Vishnu*); and *tamas* is a potential destructive force (*Mahesha*). Creation (*Brahma*), Protection (*Vishnu*) and Destruction (*Mahesha*) are the three manifestations of the first cosmic soundless sound, *aum*, which are constantly operating in the universe. The accompanying chart illustrates this manifestation of the universe.

Ether, Air, Fire, Water, Earth. *Purusha* is often considered to be subsumed under *Prakruti*, as are the three *Gunas*, i.e., *Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. (See Chart 1 on Samkhya Philosophy of Creation.)

Chart 1 Samkhya Philosophy of Creation

Purusha is unmanifested, formless, passive, beyond attributes, beyond cause and effect, space and time. *Purusha* is Pure Existence. *Prakruti* is the creative force of action, the source of form, manifestation, attributes and nature. *Mahad* is the Cosmic Intelligence or *Buddhi*. *Ahamkar* is ego, the sense of "I am." *Satva* is stability, pure aspect, awakening, essence and light. *Rajas* is dynamic movement. *Tamas* is static. It is potential energy, inertia, darkness, ignorance and matter.



THE FIRST LIFE SCIENCE

Ayurveda is a holistic system of medicine that is indigenous to and widely practiced in India. The word Ayurveda is a Sanskrit term meaning "science of life." *Ayu* means "life" or "daily living," and *Veda* is "knowing." Ayurveda was first recorded in the *Vedas*, the world's oldest extant literature. This healing system has been practiced in daily life in India for more than 5,000 years.

AYURVEDA AND HUMAN POTENTIAL

Ayurveda teaches that man is a microcosm, a universe within himself. He is a child of the cosmic forces of the external environment, the macrocosm. His individual existence is indivisible from the total cosmic manifestation. Ayurveda views health and "disease" in holistic terms, taking into consideration the inherent relationship between individual and cosmic spirit, individual and cosmic consciousness, energy and matter.

According to the teachings of Ayurveda, every human being has four biological and spiritual instincts: religious, financial, procreative and the instinct toward freedom. Balanced good health is the foundation for the fulfillment of these instincts. Ayurveda helps the healthy person to maintain health, and the diseased person to regain health. It is a medical-metaphysical healing life-science, the mother of all healing arts. The practice of Ayurveda is designed to promote human happiness, health and creative growth.

Through studying the teachings of Ayurveda, the practical knowledge of self-healing may be acquired by anyone. By the proper balance of all energies in the body, the processes of physical deterioration and disease can be impressively reduced. This concept is basic to Ayurvedic science: the capability of the individual for self-healing.

AYURVEDA, YOGA AND TANTRA

Ayurveda, Yoga and Tantra are the ancient life-disciplines that have been practiced in India for centuries. They are mentioned in the scriptures of the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. Yoga is the science of union with the Divine, with Truth; Tantra is the most direct method

of controlling the energy that creates the ultimate union with Truth; and Ayurveda is the science of life.

The purpose of each practice is to help the individual to achieve longevity, rejuvenation and self-realization. The object of the practices of Yoga and Tantra is liberation, although only certain disciplined individuals are able to achieve this ultimate goal through these practices. However, Ayurveda can be practiced successfully by anyone for the achievement of good health and longevity.

In the spiritual evolution of a man, Ayurveda is the foundation, Yoga is the body and Tantra is the head. It is necessary first to understand Ayurveda in order to experience the practices of Yoga and Tantra. Thus, Ayurveda, Yoga and Tantra form an interdependent trinity of life. None of these practices stands alone. The health of the body, mind* and consciousness** depends on the knowledge and practice of these three in daily life.

AYURVEDA AND THE WESTERN MIND

Western medicine and thinking tend to generalize and to categorize individuality. For instance, according to the Western concept of normality, what is common in a majority of people constitutes the norm. Ayurveda holds that normality must be evaluated individually, because every human constitution manifests its own particular and spontaneous temperament and functioning.

In the East, the key to understanding is acceptance, observation and experience; in the West, it is questioning, analysis and logical deduction. The Western mind, generally, trusts objectivity, while the Eastern gives more emphasis to subjectivity. Eastern science teaches one to go beyond the division between subjectivity and objectivity. This difference in approach may explain why some Westerners experience difficulty in comprehending the methodology of Ayurveda.

Many statements made in this introductory text on Ayurveda

* "Mind" in this context, and in the following pages, denotes the operations of the reasoning intellect.

** "Consciousness" here denotes the intuitive operations of the soul in direct communication with the Divine Principle and Source of all life.

may elicit the questions, "How?" and "Why?" The author reminds the reader that such questions, though inevitable, are not always answerable. Even in modern Western medicine, some concepts are proven to "work" without the reasons behind the phenomena being fully understood; e.g., though antibiotics are used to destroy the bacteria which form toxins in the body, no adequate explanation exists to explain how and why toxins are formed from bacteria. Furthermore, Ayurveda is truly a holistic science, one in which the sum of many elements comprises its Truth. To question details before a strong overview of the whole science is acquired will prove unproductive and unsatisfactory. The reader is therefore respectfully advised provisionally to accept statements that may at first appear to lack adequate explanation, until he has begun to master the body of Ayurvedic knowledge as a whole.



The Five Elements and Man

Ayurveda evolved in the meditative minds of seers of truth, the *rishis*. For thousands of years their teachings were transmitted orally from teacher to disciple, and later they were set down in melodious Sanskrit poetry. Though many of these texts have been lost over time, an abundant body of Ayurvedic knowledge survives.

Originating in Cosmic Consciousness, this wisdom was intuitively received in the hearts of the *rishis*. They perceived that consciousness was energy manifested into the five basic principles, or elements: Ether (space), Air, Fire, Water and Earth. This concept of the five elements lies at the heart of Ayurvedic science.

The *rishis* perceived that in the beginning the world existed in an unmanifested state of consciousness. From that state of unified consciousness, the subtle vibrations of the cosmic soundless sound *aum* manifested. From that vibration there first appeared the Ether element. This ethereal element then began to move; its subtle movements created the Air, which is Ether in action. The movement of Ether produced friction, and through that friction heat was generated. Particles of heat-energy combined to form intense light and from this light the Fire element manifested.

Thus, Ether manifested into Air, and it was the same Ether that further manifested into Fire. Through the heat of the Fire, certain ethereal elements dissolved and liquified, manifesting the Water element, and then solidified to form the molecules of Earth. In this way, Ether manifested into the four elements of Air, Fire, Water and Earth.

From Earth, all organic living bodies, including those in the vegetable kingdom such as herbs and grains, and those in the animal kingdom, including man, are created. Earth also contains the inorganic substances that comprise the mineral kingdom. Thus, out of the womb of the Five Elements all matter is born.