

# THE TOP 7

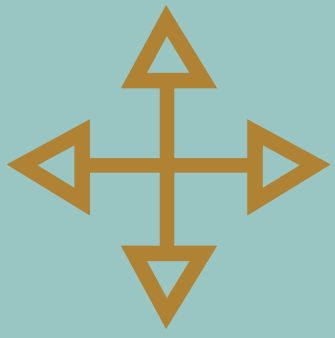
## FOUNDATIONS OF AYURVEDA



understanding the base  
principles to Ayurveda's  
vastly rich teachings

Ariel Wright-Swortfiguer





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# about the author



Hello and welcome! My name is Ariel Wright-Swortfiguer, often known as Ariel Wright, and here I wanted to take a moment to quickly introduce myself and my transformative experience with Ayurveda.

My life began in Alaska, born and raised in the interior of Fairbanks. I lived in Fairbanks for most of my entire life until recently, I moved to the states to see more of this world and to feel out what I could create being so far away from my homeland. However, when I first encountered Ayurveda it was back in Alaska, a seeming miracle it had found me. You often wonder how anything finds its way up there, especially in the depths of winter!

This wealth of wisdom couldn't have arrived any sooner because at the time I had been struggling with some of the deepest anxiety and depression I had ever experienced in my life. The health of my mind, body, and spirit were dwindling and I felt



I had no idea how to restore balance back to my being. I did what I knew, eat a plant based diet, exercise, do yoga and meditate, but there was something missing and I just couldn't seem to figure out how to nourish and replenish myself...



At that time I had been going to the University of Alaska Fairbanks for what felt like an eternity. About 5 years, slowly working away at my Bachelors of Science in Biology with emphasis on nutrition, I couldn't help but wonder... why am I doing this? Where did I think this was taking me? And was it worth the exhaustion I was going through while working a full time job as well?

Well, the answer is no, though I am deeply thankful for that experience. It took my sister traveling to me after finishing her yoga training in California and



bringing me a very simple vegan Ayurvedic cookbook. The introduction of this cookbook presented the philosophy of Ayurveda, something which I had never heard of in my life. After all my years of doing yoga, how had I never heard of this before?!

A few short moments later, I knew, this was it. This was the wisdom I was missing and felt innately that the ancient knowledge here would propel my healing journey far beyond what I could even imagine. With deep faith, discipline, and perseverance I got myself together and committed to the California College of Ayurveda where I studied for over a year allowing the rich teachings to flow into my life and replenish what had felt broken for so long.

Years later, I am still studying, practicing, and teaching. Rejuvenated and inspired, I am elated to share my story with you and to further open up your curiosity about Ayurveda's rich well of ancient knowledge and wisdom! So now you might be asking yourself, what exactly is Ayurveda? Follow me and let's find out!





# WHAT IS AYURVEDA?



Ayurveda is an ancient healing system founded in the roots of India. It is believed to be thousands of years old and is the oldest known medical system around on the planet today. Ayurveda is Sanskrit, one of the oldest transcribed languages, and when translated means the Knowledge of Life. 'Ayuh' or 'Ayus' meaning life and 'Veda' meaning knowledge, thus we have a science to navigate us to a deep knowing of our lives and our truths.





Ayurveda is essentially the flip side of the same coin as Yoga. Both ancient philosophies reigning from the same region and Vedic texts. So one who pursues the path of Yoga should take time to study and understand Ayurveda to further propel a path to optimal health and self-realization.

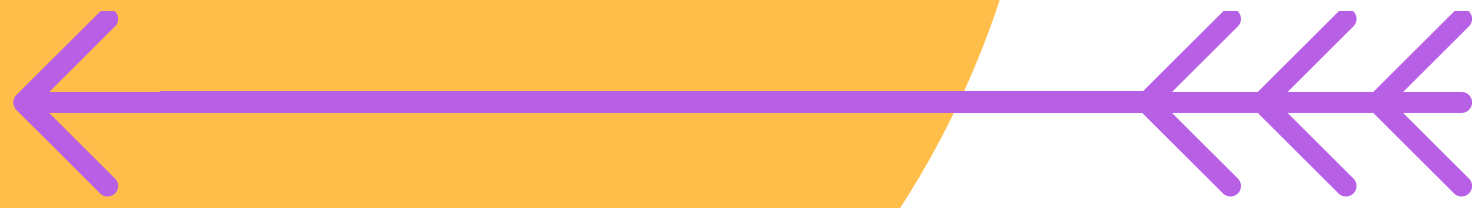
Ayurveda works with individual human life to heal disease, maintain vitality, and to bring us closer to our self as spirit. As an ancient medical science, the fundamental principles work with the physical body to restore health and bring longevity to one's life while simultaneously bringing balance and peace to one's mental and spiritual body.

Ayurveda is a very complex structure, but has some fundamentals to root your knowledge in. In this eBook I will lay out some of the key principles I have learned that allowed greater access to intuitive healing through Ayurveda. These will hopefully lead you to deeper insight and a greater curiosity to learn more about the harmony between your mind, body, and soul ~ Om





# SANKHYA PHILOSOPHY



There are six classical schools of Indian philosophy, in Sanskrit they're called the *Shad Darshanas*. Ayurveda envelops a part, if not all, of each school of thought. These six philosophies are Sankhya, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Yoga, Mimamsa, and Vedanta, although Ayurveda relies mostly upon Sankhya. Here I will briefly go through Sankhya philosophy, but in my online tutoring I will delve deeper into it, as well as the other classical schools.

Sankhya philosophy begins with a story of creation and how all things came to be. In brief, pure potential



consciousness known as Purusha, planted its seed within pure potential matter known as Prakriti, and through this conception birthed the whole of the universe along with plants, animals, planets, and people. Before this, Purusha and Prakriti were unmanifested energy, until emerging together they became the manifested expression of life itself – consciousness, physical vessels, senses, experiences, spirit. It is believed these two energies came together to know itself, in full expression of all their potential.

Though this a grossly shortened version of the story and all the acting elements, this illustration attempts to answer some of the most common and important questions of life itself...



## **WHO ARE WE?**

At our truest essence we are the Creator. Each and every living thing is an expression of creation coming to know itself through its own personal experience.

Through our individuation we were able to separate and

become autonomous in order to have the potential to fully experience all things. Ultimately, we are the Creator getting to know itself and at the core we are all the same and all One.



## **WHERE DID WE COME FROM?**

According to Sankhya philosophy we came from pure potential consciousness, Purusha, and pure potential matter, Prakriti. These are believed to be the two driving energies of creation and exist etherically with no form attached.

## **WHY ARE WE HERE?**

We are here because Purusha desires to know itself. Purusha is soul and the soul is the observer of life. Through our experiences and the experiences of all things throughout time, Purusha is observing its expression as its getting to know itself. Thus we are souls observing as we live our life.

## **WHERE ARE WE GOING?**

The aim of life is for our soul to find its way back home to Purusha. It is believed to be the journey we are all on, though most are unconscious of it. This journey is one towards self-realization and enlightenment, awakening to our true nature as spirit. Spirit being the Oneness of all things that ever were, are, and will be. Once we can live in a place of conscious connectivity day in and day out, the soul will finally be liberated from the cycle of death and rebirth.



# HOW DO WE GET THERE?

We must be released from the cycle of karma. Karma is the force that binds us to the cycle of life and death, and when we live from the ego and not the spirit, we are continually binding the contract with karma. This life is designed for learning; learning to discern between truth and illusion. When we act in ways that serve the ego, we are serving the illusion. Until we are acting from spirit, we will stay in the loop of karmic imprisonment.





# THE THREE CAUSES OF DISEASE



There is believed to be about three causes of disease in Ayurvedic text. Though some could say there is more around five, the ones I will expand on are the top three offenders. These being the unwholesome conjunction of the senses, intellectual blasphemy, and time and motion.

## CONJUNCTION OF THE SENSES

Ayurveda believes the primordial cause of

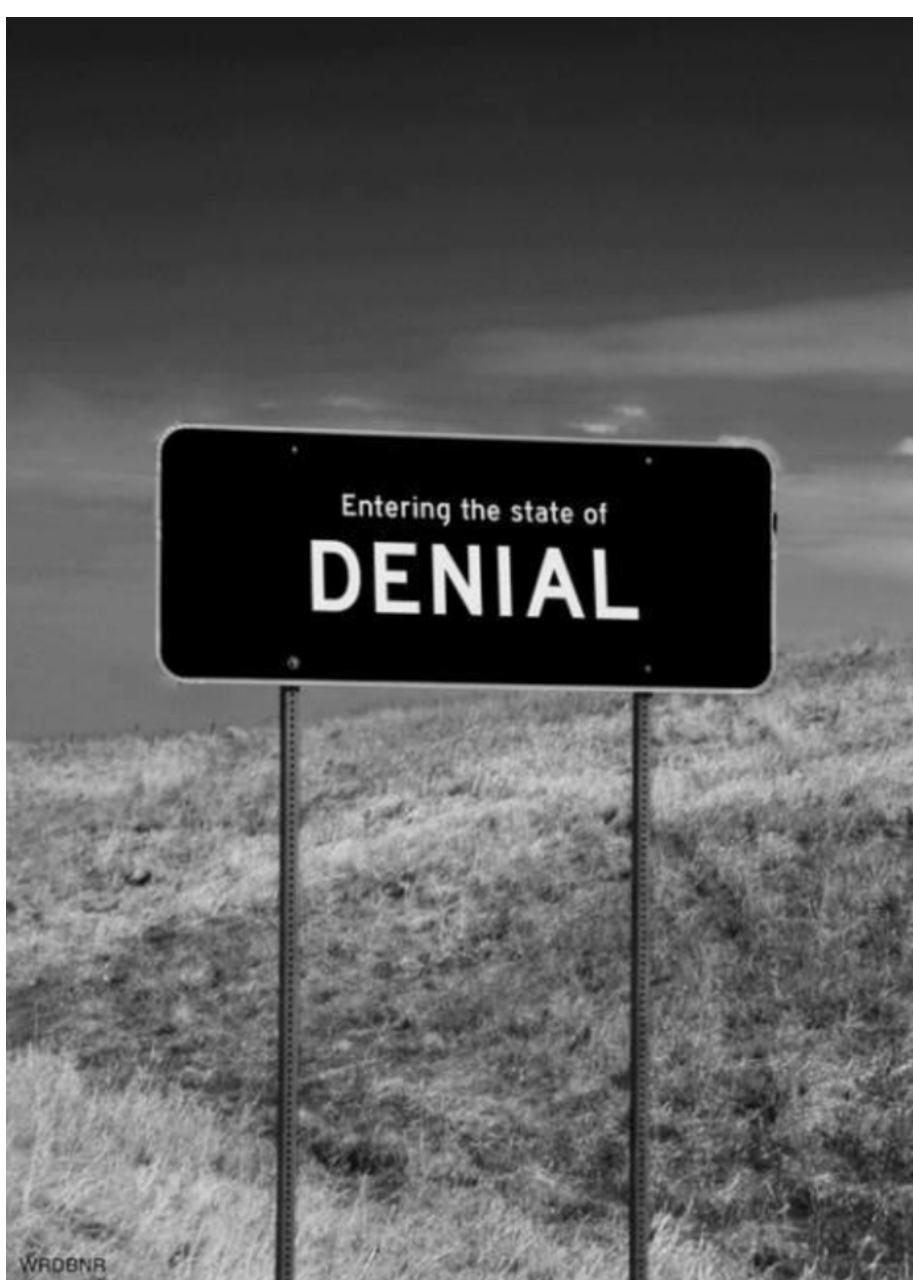
disease is forgetting our own nature as spirit. In this forgotten state, we live primarily as ego. What is ego? Ego is the five senses at which we experience the world through – taste, touch, sound, sight, and smell. When we live solely in this way, we navigate our lives seeking pleasure for these senses.





We will overindulge in rich foods, sexual appetites, constant noise, drugs, laziness, and so on. These indulgences lead to disharmony throughout the body, mind, and spirit and eventually lead to disease. Ayurveda aims to achieve harmony through the five senses to restore health and vitality back to the body via herbs and spices, asana, meditation, massage therapy, sound therapy, color therapy, and aromatherapy.

## ***INTELLECTUAL BLASPHEMY***



Much like the conjunction of the senses, intellectual blasphemy has similar roots. The difference here is the knowing we are overindulging in sensory desires. Often times we are unaware that such foods and activities are harmful to us and act from a place of unconsciousness. However, once the

consciousness becomes clear that such actions are unhealthful and aggravating to one's body and mind, they should stop immediately.

But do we? Sensory pleasure can be simply overwhelming for many of us and even after we know processed foods are harmful and drugs kill our bodies,



for some reason we tend to overlook this truth and proceed with the disharmony. This is to deny the truth within ourselves, and that denial of our truth will lead us into disease. This is also the beginning of denying ourselves as spirit by choosing not to listen to our innate knowing and intuition.

## **TIME AND MOTION**

Lastly, time and motion... Though this might seem as simple as the body aging and decaying over time, Ayurveda suggests there are two different types of time; linear and biological. Linear time is static and is the time that determines when our bodies naturally break down over time. However, biological time is dynamic and is determined based on our thoughts and actions.



The pace of biological time changes based on how slow or fast we are moving in our physical life as well as in our mental

life. The busier our pace becomes, the more rapid our thoughts become. This causes stress on our organs, hormones, mental/chemical composition, nervous system, immune system, and more. Ultimately the faster we are mentally and physically moving the faster our bodies age, and the slower we are moving the slower our bodies age.



Ayurveda utilizes the practice of Yoga to bring the mind under control, slowing it down so that it doesn't run rampant. Generally, when the mind slows down the body follows allowing stress to reduce, the nervous system to calm, and the ability to access present moment peace and healing.



# THE FOUR GOALS OF LIFE



Vedic knowledge teaches there are four basic goals of human life and that every person is in one way or another, motivated by them to some degree. The nature of these influences can either be expressed by our higher Self or our lower self. When expressed through our higher Self (spirit), these pursuits keep us healthy and alive, but when expressed through our lower self (ego), leave us ill and depleted. These four goals are known as kama, artha, dharma and moksha.

## **KAMA**

*Kama* translated means pleasure and is the pursuit of pleasure and ecstasy, that being the primary goal of the senses. As described earlier, the overindulgence of the senses leads to disease and disharmony, but it is the sheer motivation from our senses that keeps us alive. Yes, we absolutely can self-indulge in delicious food and sex, however, it is also these things that are good for us and propel life as we know it. Pleasure drives us to



procreate and to intake desirable food to keep our lineage going and our bodies strong. Kama initially serves two functions in human life; to preserve life through attraction to what's pleasurable and to cause disease by overindulging in what is pleasurable.

"If Ayurveda were a religion, nature would be its goddess and overindulgence would be the only sin."

- Dr. Robert Svoboda

## **ARTHA**

*Artha* means prosperity, and is the pursuit of what is needed to support life. To be prosperous is to be able to provide for oneself and one's family, needing for no less



and desiring for no more. In modern times this means to have sufficient money, a home, clothing, and potentially transportation. When living in the higher Self, we pursue to have no waste of food or material items and no need to indulge in these things. However, when living in the lower self, material items, status, and the like become sole driving forces that motivate us through life. This force becomes one of carelessness, waste, and a forever dissatisfaction until more is obtained. Great disease in the heart and soul will result from this dissatisfaction

and until self-realization is pursued, there will always be an underlying emptiness.

## DHARMA



*Dharma* has a few different translations, one meaning duty and the others meaning right livelihood or divine purpose.

Divine purpose is personally my favorite! This divine purpose may awaken in people at different times of life and at its simplest is known as your job. But what really is your job? Does career mean your purpose in this life? Our job should be something that utilizes our innate talents and skills while being a contribution to a just society or community. We should feel energized and fueled by our duties in this position while feeling like we are living out our truth in this lifetime. When we are performing our job solely in the pursuit of money and power, the disconnect of energy begins. We are no longer fueled and vital with pure intent, but rather blinded and poisoned by selfish indulgence of our own status. This neglect of our truth and others will surely lead to disease.



# MOKSHA

*Moksha* means liberation and is the goal of our higher nature. To pursue liberation is the force behind all spiritual growth and evolution and moves people towards their highest virtues. Though seemingly unconscious at first, the desire to release the soul from the cycle of life and death becomes more conscious as one's spiritual journey progresses. This pursuit involves subduing the desires of the ego and surrendering one's path to spiritual awareness that leads to the betterment of all things. When acting from ego, actions will be from judgement of 'good and bad' or 'right and wrong'. Though noble, it is still judgment, and eventually one should move from a place of knowing that leads to the highest potential for all. Another ego expression of moksha is the "holier than thou" attitude towards others, propelling one into a position of spiritual arrogance. There mustn't be an attachment to the outcome of obtaining liberation, just as there shouldn't be attachment to material goods and goals



# BODY CONSTITUTION



Identifying your personal body constitution is arguably one of the most important aspects to studying and practicing Ayurveda. The three doshas make up the elemental structure of the mind and body. I will go further in the doshas and doshic theory in the next section. The constitution of a person refers to the ratio or balance of these three doshas and is categorized into two different states the body is currently in – *prakruti* and *vikruti*.

## **PRAKRUTI**



*Prakruti* means “the original creation” and refers to the balance of the doshas within you at the moment of conception. Each of us has our own unique body type and the ratio of the doshas present is often expressed in percentages. You will learn later about the doshas vata,



pitta, and kapha, and the key roles they play in keeping the mind, body, and spirit healthy and high vibration. If this original balance was maintained, we would feel clear and energetic, propelled forward to self-realization. However, as time goes on and external forces work upon us, the doshas become imbalanced...

## VIKRUTI

*Vikruti* means “after creation” and refers to the state of the doshas within the body at this present moment. It’s few and far between that our prakruti and vikruti will be the same. Typically we will see an imbalance of the doshas causing disease or distress to one’s mind, body, or both. This is because the three doshas are strongly influenced by the environment we surround ourselves with and affected by our daily routines and the stresses we face. In order to reinstate balance, we must first identify the prakruti to know where the doshas should be in their state of balance, identify where they are now (vikruti), and how to bring them back to a state of equilibrium.



# DOSHIC THEORY



VATA



PITTA



KAPHA

Doshic theory introduces the three doshas with their ten qualities, elemental properties, responsible organs, and their governing action. Though there is much to expand on with the three doshas, I will keep it basic for the sake of introductions! There are 20 qualities and each dosha contains ten of them. By understanding the nature of the 20 qualities you can better understand the nature of the five elements, the body, the disease, and the remedies one needs to bring harmony back to the body, mind, and spirit. As you may have guessed, the three doshas are vata, pitta, and kapha...

## **VATA DOSHA**

Vata dosha represents the air and ether elements of





the five elements and in definition is that which moves things. Vata's governing action is movement and is responsible for many different movements from thoughts in the mind, nervous impulses, breath, and much more. There are five sub doshas of vata that allow greater detail for all of vata's site actions, but will go into those in my online teachings! The ten qualities that characterize vata are cold, dry, light, subtle, flowing, mobile, sharp, hard, rough, and clear. We utilize these qualities to gain a feeling for how and where vata has moved within one's life and body and how to remedy the imbalance. Some of the major organs and systems vata governs are the large intestine, lungs, skin, and nervous system.

## **PITTA DOSHA**

Pitta dosha represents the fire and water elements and in definition is that which digests things. Pitta's governing action is digestion and metabolism and is responsible for digesting food and information, turning it into nutrients and knowledge. There are five subdoshas of pitta that allow greater detail for all of pitta's site



actions, but again we will go into those later. The ten qualities that characterize pitta are hot, moist, light, subtle, flowing, mobile, sharp, hard, rough, and clear. Again, these qualities help identify where pitta may be imbalanced within someone's life, body, and mind. Some of the major organs and systems pitta governs are the small intestine, lower stomach, blood, eyes, liver, and spleen.

## KAPHA DOSHA



Kapha dosha represents the earth and water elements and in definition is structure and stability. Kapha's governing action is lubrication, growth, stability, and immune strength, keeping the body strong and

secure through all hardships of life. There are five subdoshas of kapha as well that allow greater detail for all of kapha's site actions which we'll go into in the courses. The ten qualities that govern kapha are cold, moist, heavy, gross, dense, static, dull, soft, smooth, and cloudy. You can see the qualities of kapha differ the most from pitta and vata. Some of the major organs kapha governs are the stomach, plasma, liquids of the body, and synovial membranes.



# THE THREE GUNAS



The three gunas are ways Ayurveda uses to describe the states of one's consciousness. It is a language to assess where one's state of mind may be on their journey to self-realization. Whichever guna may be most dominant in a person's life will reflect their soul's evolution as it grows from ignorance to awareness to transcendence. The three gunas are known as *rajas*, *tamas*, and *sattva* and here I will go through them in brief but will delve much deeper into them in private online teachings.

## TAMAS



*Tamas* essentially means ignorance. It is the quality of inertia and darkness, being completely blocked

off from spirit. A tamasic mind is one with little mental activity, self-awareness, inquiry, or deep thinking and

feeling. Tamasic individuals may appear happier and more content than others, and you may not recognize their lack of awareness because often their health can appear strong. The expression “ignorance is bliss” brings about the illusion that the tamasic mind is living peacefully, without a care. Due to the immediate lack of stress, health can seem flourishing. However, these individuals have many suppressed emotions and when they do break, they can be very harmful to themselves or others. To be completely disconnected from spirit, is to be completely disconnected from one’s life and this tamasic bliss is based in a false reality.

## **RAJAS**

Rajas essentially means disturbance. A place of turbulence and activity where the mind gets lost and distracted more easily. In this high energy



state, a person can lose their connection to Spirit, becoming fully encompassed in their life dramas and emotions unable to see the bigger picture beyond themselves. They are too lost in the waves of their mind and feelings to see things crisp and clearly, to observe and reflect, to be calm and content. Though rajasic individuals do have a high level of awareness,



this allows them to get glimpses of the illusions that surround them. Their struggle will be releasing the ego enough to attain the awareness about themselves. It is difficult for them to see what isn't always pleasant, causing them to be unhappy, caught up in self-improvement, and may tend towards being physically and emotionally ill.

## **SATTVA**



Sattva is the quality of clarity and purity. Unlike tamas and its illusion of bliss, sattva is the embodiment of bliss. And unlike rajas chronic mental activity and disturbance, sattva is the state of mind that is calm and still, like a smooth, untouched lake. Like the untouched lake at night, it reflects the light from the moon and stars like a mirror. Much like the sattvic mind, it reflects the light of one's spirit and

arrives in the world with unconditional love and absolute faith. Individuals with a sattvic consciousness are unattached to the physical world, seeing it for all its beauty and impermanence, they do not get lost in dramas and emotional waves. They do not suppress these emotions, they transcend them by seeing nothing to be angry, sad, or afraid about through their clarity of mind and spirit. So here we have evolved through the three states of consciousness; ignorance, awareness, transcendence.





# THE THREE SUBTLE HUMORS



The three subtle humors, also known as the three subtle energies or subtle doshas, make up another part of Ayurvedic psychology like the three gunas. Though these qualities may be called subtle, they deserve nothing short of a very long explanation! But for introductions sake, we will keep it brief and accessible. These subtle energies not only affect the mind and body, they also provoke spiritual evolution. Learning to work with these energies will help one attain clarity, peace, mental stability, vital physical energy, and higher consciousness. These three subtle energies are called prana, tejas, and ojas.

## **PRANA**

Prana has many definitions and varies depending on the context. A couple commonly used meanings are 'life force' or 'breath'. Prana embodies the air element and within the physical body manifests itself as vata dosha along with all the five sub doshas of vata.

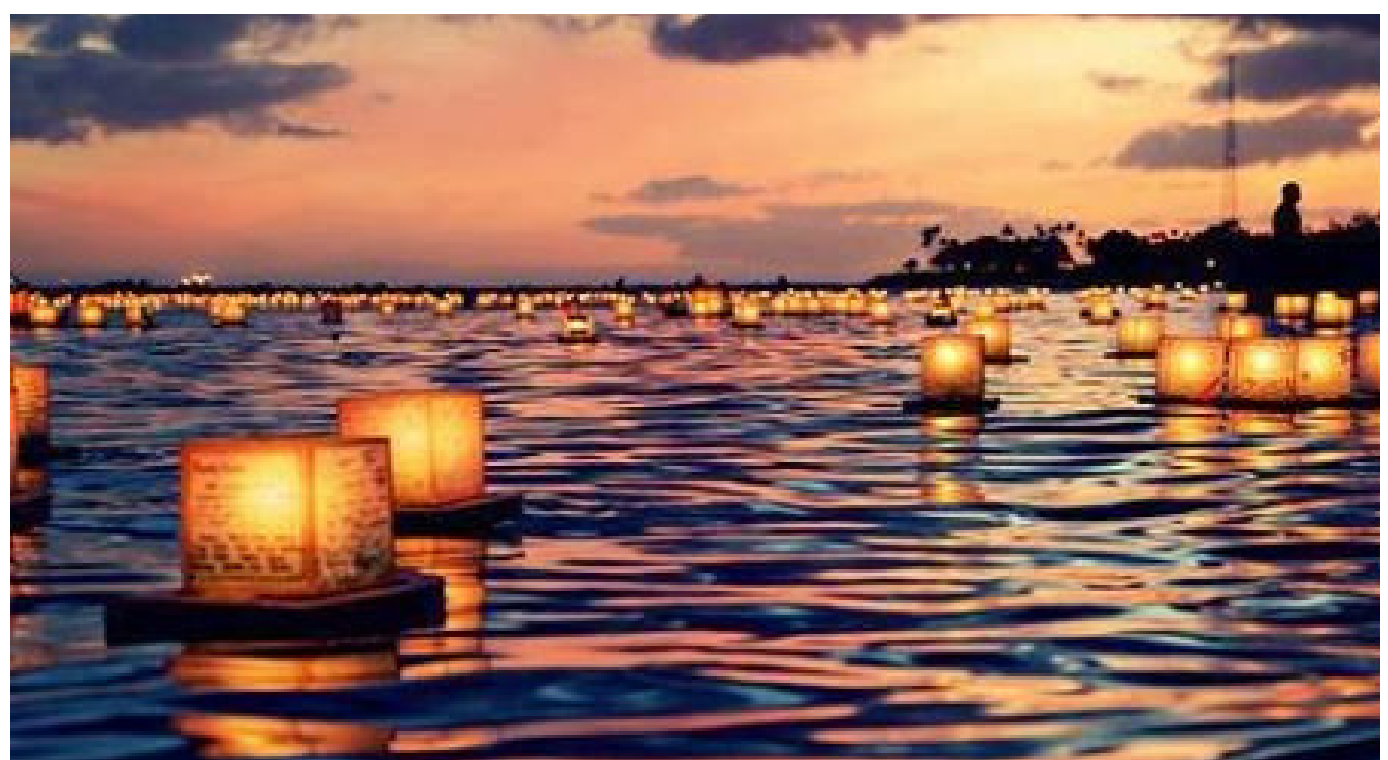


These energies move through different states showing signs and symptoms of each. The three states are in excess, deficient, and balanced. When a

person is experiencing excess prana they will be overly excitable and lose the ability to focus becoming easily distracted, though appear to have great enthusiasm. When prana is deficient, an individual loses motivation and enthusiasm for life appearing rather depressed. And when prana is balanced, a person will experience a healthy enthusiasm for life showing peace and joy in one's speech and actions. They reflect inner stillness, with their mind moving at a steady pace and their breath full and deep.

## **TEJAS**

Tejas also takes on different meanings in varying contexts, but essentially means fire, light, or illumination. Tejas



embodies the fire element and manifests itself in the physical body as pitta dosha and agni. Agni is digestive fire; tejas takes the form of agni and agni



resides within pitta just as pitta resides within agni. For simplicity's sake, tejas, pitta, and agni all take on similar roles and qualities, the dominant being fire and digestion. Again, tejas manifests itself in the three varying states of deficient, in excess, and balanced. When an individual is experiencing deficient tejas they lose their ability to discriminate and discern the truth. They become incredibly impressionable and passive, not questioning what they're told. When tejas is in excess an individual becomes overly discriminating and critical. They tend towards anger, being right, and are closed off to new ideas and perspectives. And when tejas is balanced, a person will discern easily from fact and fiction, seeing past illusions. They will be positive and open-minded towards ideas and others, seeing things with clarity.

## OJAS



Let's keep up with the theme that ojas also has varying definitions based on its context. Still trying to keep it simple for now! Ojas essentially means "force of contentment and stability". Ojas embodies the water element and is the purest form behind

kapha dosha. It is the positive force that protects tissues from harm and drives the immune system. Ojas is also witnessed in the three states of deficient, in excess, and balanced. When deficient, the mind fatigues quickly and there's a loss of contentment. If severe, a person is unable to be satisfied and loses mental stability. When ojas is in excess, an individual will become overly content with the way things are even if they are not healthy. Complacency takes over and an overall loss of motivation and laziness seeps in. And when ojas are balanced, there is great mental stamina, energy for deep, intellectual thinking, and an impenetrable ability to endure stress. There is stability and calmness.





“AN OUNCE OF PRACTICE IS WORTH A TON OF THEORY...”

-SWAMI SIVANANDA



Ayurveda is so rich in its discipline, all of this has been very difficult to brief. There are MANY amazing books out there to get you more familiar & integrating Ayurveda into your daily life. Some great places to start are Sahara Rose's Idiots Guide to Ayurveda & Eat Feel Fresh or get more technical with Dr. Vasant Lad's text books.

In my experience, Ayurvedic wisdom grows slowly within & blossoms at all the right times. You can join me for more application in my course & coaching program Intuition Upgrade to dive deeper into your personal journey with your intuition & Ayurveda or do 1-on-1 tutoring & learn at your own pace! Lets learn together! Om~