

# Modern-Day Ayurveda

A South Indian clinic follows traditional methodologies—which foreshadow such cutting-edge insights as epigenetics, sound therapy and quantum physics



EDUCATIONAL INSIGHT

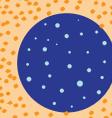
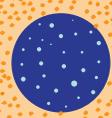
An accomplished doctor prescribes a remedy after considering the patient's nature, the disease's nature and the time of year.

*Tirukural, verse 949*

BY DR. KULREET CHAUDHARY

As a doctor who has extensively studied and practiced both Western and Eastern medicine, I believe we need to bridge the gap between the two in terms of their approaches to understanding biology, blending research and discoveries from both worlds in order to create a united and enhanced understanding of life. In our current system, an artificially divisive line has long been drawn between Western and alternative medicine as if one must necessarily be abandoned for the other—when, in fact, the two, taken together, offer advances in treatment that don't exist in one discipline alone. As mystical as healing tools such as mantra can initially seem, I believe in uncovering the science and looking at the biological models to explain why and how any component works to sustain or restore our health. Although ayurvedic medicine as it was practiced by the ancients is slowly beginning to reemerge in modern medical research, we haven't yet embraced the capability and dynamism of the human body and spirit. If we can synthesize the evidence-based practice of Western medicine with the metaphysical concepts of ancient cultures and alternative medicine, we will be rewarded with stunning discoveries.

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*Nature's pharmacy: Using a granite mortar and pestle, a practitioner grids herbs, turmeric, ginger and peppercorns in careful proportion to help a patient's body heal itself*



# Ayurveda

## India's Age-Old Healing Science

"The doctor of the future will give no medicine, but will interest his patients in the care of the human frame, in diet and in the cause and prevention of disease." —THOMAS EDISON

EVERYBODY TALKS ABOUT THE GENES THAT THEY RECEIVED from their mother and father for this trait or the other, but in reality, those genes alone have very little impact on life outcomes. Our biology is way too complicated for that and deals with hundreds of thousands of independent factors. "Genes are absolutely not our fate," remarked pioneer genomic researcher Craig Venter, known for leading the first draft sequence of the human genome in 2000 with the National Institutes of Health (NIH). "They can give us useful information about the increased risk of a disease, but in most cases they will not determine the actual cause of the disease, or the actual incidence of somebody getting it. Most biology will come from the complex interaction of all the proteins and cells working with environmental factors, not driven directly by the genetic code."

It was a forward-thinking speech, a visionary approach to the human genome and our future health, and yet it unwittingly recalled the ancient Eastern traditions—ayurvedic medicine among them—that similarly maintain that we are in constant genetic communication with our environment. Although epigenetics focuses on the physical body—specifically the way our genes are turned on and off when altered by external circumstances—Eastern medical philosophy considers the subtle energy body as well, maintaining that it, too, has a profound effect on DNA expression and, by extension, our health. The two branches of knowledge have remarkably analogous views on the effects of lifestyle on genetic expression and, subsequently, cellular modification.

Both Eastern and Western traditions, for example, indicate that genetic inheritance is far-reaching in that a trauma suffered by one's

ancestors might still play out down the line, affecting not only an individual's children but also their children's children and future generations from there. What modern science now calls an "epigenetic imprint" was known as "ancestral karma" in Vedic medicine.

In fact, when experienced ayurvedic practitioners take the pulse of their patients, we can often glean the traumas from generations past. I once had a patient—I'll call her Emma—while running my neurology practice in San Diego. She was battling severe digestive issues. Though she had been suffering since childhood and had tried a variety of Western treatments and medicines in addition to natural therapies throughout her life, she was still unable to hold down her food much of the time. She frequently either vomited or suffered diarrhea after eating a meal. Emma was in her late fifties, with a regal presence that shone through despite her being hunched and emaciated due to her disorder. At five foot seven, she was barely ninety pounds. As soon as I felt Emma's pulse, a picture of starving people came into my mind with another flash of a young boy indicating to me that the memory of whatever this was still persisted in her DNA. "Which generation in your family went through a famine?" I asked.

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**South Indian clinic:** (clockwise from right) Author Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary examines a patient's pulse, a key tool in determining the vitality of organs and systems; meditation and hatha yoga are essential to the ayurvedic approach to regaining balance in body and mind; the Sri Narayani Holistic Centre, which Dr. Kulreet heads, is located in the pristine plains of South India.

She blinked a couple of times and then said that a distant relative on her father's side—she believed it was her great-great-grandfather—had lived in southern Ireland during the Great Famine, between the years of 1845 to 1849, during which a million people died, the greatest loss of life in nineteenth-century Europe. Many others, including Emma's great grandfather, emigrated. From that generation onward, the family, including Emma's mother and grandmother, had suffered what they considered to be hereditary digestive issues.

Interestingly and coincidentally, given Emma's situation, the most significant studies of trans-generational transmission of trauma were based on the Dutch Famine, known to those in German-occupied Netherlands as the *Hongerwinter*, which occurred near the end of World War II when a German blockade cut off food and fuel shipments from farm towns to the northern parts of the country. More than twenty thousand men, women and children died. Millions of others suffered but survived. Among this population were pregnant women whose children, as studies in the 1980s showed, later grew up to have high rates of obesity, diabetes and mental illness. By the time this group reached old age, the risks increased, according to L. H. Lumey, an epidemiologist at Columbia University: the *Hunger Winter* cohort (as those who were in utero during the Dutch Famine are referred to by researchers) died at a higher rate than people before or afterward. "We found a ten percent increase in mortality after 68 years," said Dr. Lumey, who, along with his colleagues, reviewed the death records of hundreds of thousands of Dutch people born in the mid-1940s. Furthermore, when the grandchildren of men and women exposed to the famine were studied, they, too, were reported to



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have had higher rates of illness. In my work with Emma, I prescribed herbs and mantra meditation, but I also asked that she address and connect with her ancestral history in a way that I felt would release that trauma from her body. She was dubious, but also determined to wrestle her life back from this mysterious illness. I started by having Emma chant a bija mantra as well as work with a Reiki practitioner to help her make the connection between her digestive issues and the fear and loss that her great-grandfather experienced during the Dutch Famine. She knew a bit of his story from family lore—that he had large, pale blue eyes, that he'd seemed a fairly nervous person but very kind, too—and so she was able to bring some detail to her imagined sense of her great-grandfather. In doing this, she began to feel a kind of kinship with him when she thought about him in her mantra meditations.

In India, in order to address ancestral karma, people perform special ceremonies such as the *puja* ceremony, a spiritual ritual often used to honor someone after they die. (The Sanskrit word *puja* means reverence, homage, adoration, worship.) Sometimes, too, Indian families make an offering on their ancestors' behalf, such as giving a cow to a poor family. In fact, every year Hindus spend fifteen days in a period of ancestor worship called *Pitru Paksha* devoted to the remembrance of ancestors, during which they donate food to the hungry and reflect on the contributions of their forefathers. In ayurvedic medicine, by doing a positive thing and creating good karma, the idea is that you release some of the negative or troubled karma that has been passed down. In Emma's case, I asked that she do something equivalent to



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honor her family, such as making donations to food banks on behalf of her great-grandfather.

The notion that doing good can have meaningful health outcomes was evidenced by a remarkable 2013 study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, wherein a team of professors from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of California, Los Angeles, showed that acts of genuine goodness can have measurable impacts on our genetic expression and health outcomes. According to their research, the human body is able to perceive when the pursuit of wellbeing is aimed at a noble purpose and when it is being sought for simple self-gratification. They found that different gene regulatory programs are engaged for each. When a more “positive affective experience” (i.e., a noble purpose) is the goal, there is a down-regulation of the CTRA gene profile, associated with cardiovascular, neurodegenerative and neoplastic diseases, which are conditions that cause tumor growths.

Emma had been living for so long as if she, too, were in a famine, that it took us nearly two years to shift her cellular memory and mind toward a healthier track. But, little by little, with Emma’s unyielding determination and her willingness to try things that, at first glance, seemed to have little to do with her digestion, her so-called genetic disorder did resolve itself. When we finished working together, Emma was up to 125 pounds and her body was able to metabolize food normally. It was, from my perspective, quite a beautiful transformation. I was so pleased, of course, that Emma was feeling better, and looking so healthy, but I also enjoyed watching her psychological growth as she unburdened herself of such long-held subconscious anguish.

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**Divine healings:** (right) *Dhanvantari, the Deity of ayurveda, holds a pot of herbs, nature’s medicines, in a traditional Kerala-style artwork by Saji;* (below) *two trained attendants apply herbs to the body of a patient, part of a multi-day regimen of health*



SAJI/EXOTIC INDIA

# The Basics

## Striving for Balance

**T**HE WORD *AYURVEDA*, DERIVED FROM THE SANSKRIT ROOT *ayus*, meaning “life” or “longevity” and *veda*, meaning “science” or “sacred knowledge,” can be traced back to India five thousand years ago. A description of this practice is found in ancient Vedic texts such as the *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*, which offer richly detailed depictions of the physiology and interrelated systems of the body, the variations in human constitution, as well as the use of herbs and herbal mixtures, in addition to rituals for achieving and maintaining health. It is a complete system for managing all aspects of health including healing disease, increasing longevity, performing surgery with precise instruments of the doctors’ own making, and addressing ethical dilemmas and spiritual development.

Ayurvedic medicine embraces the ancient system of *koshas* (sheaths) and *chakras* as part of its understanding of the subtle and physical bodies. The five sheaths make up the biofield, or subtle energy body; the *chakras* are the energy centers that transmit the information from the biofield to the body. A third part of this diagnostic system is the *doshas*.

Ayurvedic medicine considers the human body also to be made up of the five elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth), which combine to form three fundamental physical-mental-emotional types, or *doshas*: *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*. Discussion of the doshas can be found as far back as siddha medicine, so it’s likely that this philosophy developed earlier and then was partly adopted by ayurvedic medicine. Creating balance between the physical, mental and emotional in each of us requires a dynamic harmony among the five elements in the body as expressed through the doshas. Ultimately, these five

elements that exist in the universe also exist within us. But while the sheaths and chakras are energetic, the doshas are emblematic of what is happening in the entire human biofield. Here we can draw another parallel to epigenetics: What geneticists call a phenotype is the observable physical interpretation, or characteristic, for a set of genes in the DNA. In ayurvedic medicine, the doshas offer the observable physical interpretation, or characteristic, of the entire human biofield. Where a geneticist would say that our DNA offers instructions that our bodies follow, an ayurvedic practitioner would say the biofield performs that function. Ultimately, both terminologies express the same fundamental concept—that the body is an expression of information gathered at a primary level.

Ayurvedic medicine takes this idea one step further, however, in that it uses the doshas—which delineate different body-mind types, each with specific responses to diet, seasons and the environment and each with its own set of predispositions to illness—to make diagnoses and offer health plans for explicit changes in lifestyle, diet, stress and environment in order to cultivate the highest potential of health in a person.

Each dosha type is defined as a combination of two of the five elements that constitute the universe and a correlated set of qualities. *Vata*, for example, is a combination of the lighter elements, ether and air. This dosha governs all movement, including blood flow, contraction of the heart, breathing and communication of cells through nerve impulses. *Pitta* is a combination of fire and water and represents digestion, metabolism and transformation, including appetite and endocrine functions. *Kapha* is a combination of the heavier

## Vata Dosha

**A** PERSON WITH PREDOMINANT VATA TENDS TO BE slight and fine-boned; Audrey Hepburn was a good example of this type. Vata represents movement for all bodily processes; its characteristics are dry, light, quick, cold, rough, subtle, mobile and clear. On a seasonal basis, vata is at its peak in the fall, when it is generally windy and dry, and at the change of each season. Vata types are always in motion—they are alert and tend to walk and talk fast. They grasp concepts quickly but also forget them just as quickly; and they are flexible in their ideas and creativity. As such, one of the basic principles for this dosha is to create regularity in the daily routine to help ground the moving energy.

In the body, vata resides in the colon, brain, ears, bones, joints, skin and thighs. Vata people tend

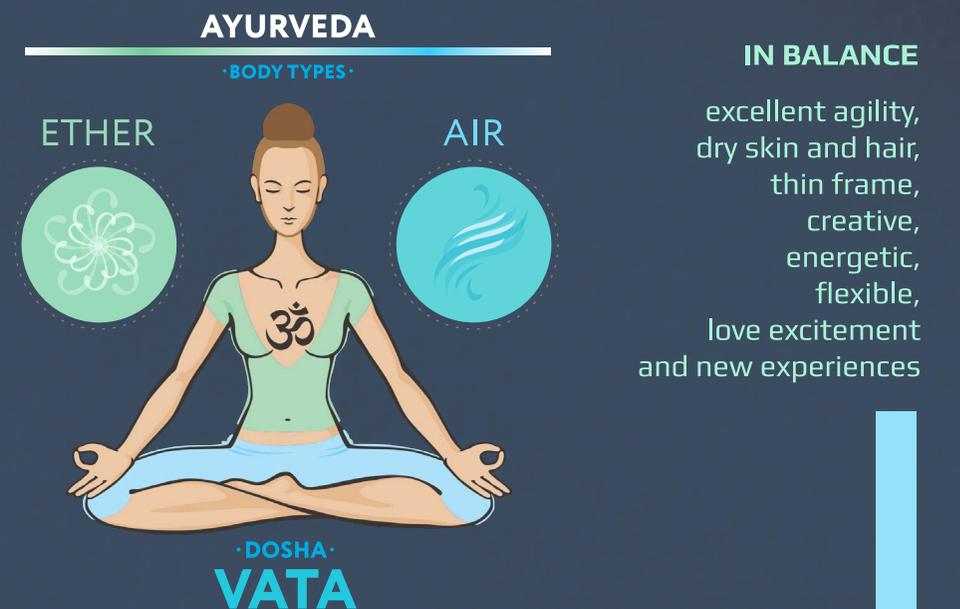
to be more susceptible to diseases involving the principle of air—such as emphysema and pneumonia—as well as arthritis, gas, dry skin and hair, neurological conditions, constipation and mental confusion.

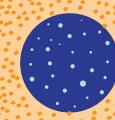
When out of balance, vata individuals can feel unstable in the midst of change; they also become fearful, nervous and anxious. Given their wiry energy, vata types fatigue easily and often need a lot of sleep.

The bija mantras prescribed to help bring vata back into balance are those that help calm the hyperactive qualities of this dosha. The first is Hrim (pronounced *hreem*), which is a specific mantra for the heart, emphasizing the physical health of the heart but also creativity and compassion. The second is Klim (pronounced *kleem*), which promotes blood flow and digestion as well as smooth skin. It can also help calm the brain



SHUTTERSTOCK





elements—earth and water—and regulates structure and cohesion of the body, including strength, fluid balance and weight. Although ayurvedic medicine asserts that each person is made up of all three doshas, there is typically one that is dominant. But, just as life isn't static, people can have a combination of two doshas, with one dosha rising to be more powerful at different points in life. Disease, it is believed, is caused in the body by either an excess or deficiency of vata, pitta or kapha, an imbalance which ultimately causes cellular dysfunction.

At the core of ayurveda is the belief that, by engaging in a meditation practice and by altering our diet and lifestyle according to the dominant dosha or doshas within us, we can modify our genes and alter disease. As an ayurvedic practitioner, I don't tell all of my patients to eat a vegan diet or that they should all walk ten thousand steps a day; those prescriptions would not benefit every dosha. Instead, I would suggest to someone with a vata physiology to do gentle yoga, while I may tell someone else with a kapha build to aim for twenty thousand steps a day. Ayurvedic medicine also offers behavioral recommendations to improve the mental health or life circumstances for a particular constitution. Again, I would not give the same advice to everyone. A patient who is having trouble with budgeting—be it with time and energy or, speaking more literally, with money—will need different counsel based on the dominant dosha. A vata patient, for instance, is more likely to give far too much away in all circumstances and, therefore, I would advise that person how to not spend down so many resources, financial or otherwise. On the other hand, kapha individuals are more likely to be overly cautious, depleting themselves in a counter-intuitive way by spending much of their time and

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attention on hoarding their energies and coffers. I would encourage this person to behave a bit more freely, offering more of themselves in relationships and making charitable donations. In this way, the doshas offer not only detailed epigenetic prescriptions but holistic approaches to health and well-being.

The ayurvedic plan offered for each dosha contains thorough instructions for daily and seasonal routines—including the time to go to bed and when to wake up, the time to eat, the time to exercise, and the time to meditate, among other activities. Diet and nutrition are advised, right down to the texture and qualities of the food. The season and even geographic location of the person are considered when tailoring a diet for each dosha. The ayurvedic plan also has recommendations for behavior, including how to interact with peers, as well as those who are younger and older. Broadly, advice and guidance should be given to

those who are younger, and respect should be given to teachers and elders. Love and compassion should be extended above all else. These behaviors, ayurvedic medicine signifies, affect health on the physical level. They not only make the world a better place—they also restore the mind and body.

**Food as medicine:** (above) ayurveda places great stress on natural foods, like this dosa and chutney at the Vellore clinic; (below) oil is slowly poured into the nostrils of a patient to cleanse and detoxify the sinuses

# Mantras & More

## The Role of Sound in Healing

**I**N ADDITION TO OTHER ASPECTS OF AYURVEDA, EACH DOSHA HAS a specific bija mantra meant to bring the body back into balance. Typically, it is recommended to chant the bija mantra for at least fifteen minutes a day once the dosha imbalance has been identified. Start by chanting out loud and then, once it feels comfortable to do so, chant it silently in your mind. Continue to chant this mantra in your practice until the symptoms of dosha imbalance resolve. For example, this will be apparent when the qualities of a vata dosha feel more grounded, when those of a pitta dosha feel cooled down or when someone who has balanced a kapha dosha feels more stimulated. Once this occurs, revert back to the chakra mantra (explained on page 46), which is great for keeping all of the doshas in maintenance. The bija mantras for the doshas are a correction for an acute issue in the short term, whereas the chakra mantra is a form of long-term maintenance.

The healing power of mantras and sound is inextricably woven into ayurvedic medicine. Mantras are a vehicle for raising individual consciousness to universal consciousness while also reversing both mental and physical disorders. Bija mantras are a potent way to alter the body. Therefore, they are a crucial part of the prescription when helping a patient to balance the doshas.

Just as important, mantras also once played a fundamental role in the preparation of medicine. Traditionally, the entire process was, in fact, inseparable from sound. In training to be an ayurvedic doctor, the student would first live with his teacher and engage in a committed mantra practice meant to enliven the consciousness of the aspiring physician. When the guru deemed his student receptive enough

to imbibe the knowledge of ayurvedic medicine, he would begin to plant the seeds for the ayurvedic herbs—chanting a specific mantra for each one. When the herbs were harvested, another mantra was engaged; these mantras were chanted yet again while the herbs were administered to patients.

Over the last several hundred years, however, as ayurvedic medicine has become more popular and institutionalized in India, it has been taught using methods akin to Western medicine. Sadly, modern life does not allow for the long, intensive training once required to be an ayurvedic practitioner; there are only a few people left in the world who are taught in the classic way.

Thanks to my childhood mantra practice, I have inadvertently approached the study of ayurveda in the traditional way. Because of this early exposure to mantra meditation, its profound influence in ayurveda was a natural connection for me to make as I shifted my neurology practice toward integrative medicine. Most modern-day ayurvedic physicians, however, have not been raised with a mantra meditation practice and therefore don't have a full appreciation for the important role it plays in this system. Over time, the discipline has become less holistic. In general, mantras are no longer used during the preparation of the herbs—today they are processed in factories. Ironically, many modern ayurvedic physicians focus mainly on physical complaints, dismissing mental and spiritual complaints as irrelevant to their practice. Sadly, when mantra practice is not used to purify and equip the mind of the healer and strengthen the effect of the herbs, and is not included as part of the prescription for patients, the benefit is not nearly as effective.

## Pitta Dosha

**P**ITTA INDIVIDUALS EXEMPLIFY MANY OF THE QUALITIES of fire: hot, intense, penetrating, sharp and agitated. Pittas have a powerful intellect and a strong ability to concentrate. As such, pittas are high achievers, ambitious and driven: think Steve Jobs. Success, accomplishment, and satisfaction in one's activity are important for pitta individuals.

Pittas are usually of medium size and weight. They have very strong digestion when they are in balance and naturally warm body temperature. Pitta individuals have soft and fine hair and are prone to early graying or balding. Pitta has a lot of energy. One of pitta's main challenges is not using up more energy reserves than is available due to



their naturally competitive and passionate nature. When out of balance, pittas may suffer from skin rashes, burning sensations in the gut or skin, excessive body heat, and heartburn.

Pitta is dominant, perhaps appropriately given the blazing nature of this dosha, during the summer. The tendency of pitta is to get overheated and impatient; the basic principle, therefore, for keeping pitta in balance is to keep it cool—physically and emotionally.

Two cooling bija mantras that are useful for balancing this dosha are: Aim (pronounced *aym*), which opens the voice and lungs and clears the senses, and Srim (pronounced *shreem*), which can



### OUT OF BALANCE

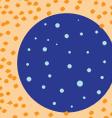
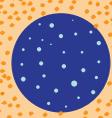
skin rashes  
heartburn  
excessive body heat  
burning sensations  
short-tempered  
argumentative



### IN BALANCE

perfect digestion  
lustrous complexion  
strong appetite  
precise  
sharp-witted  
direct  
outspoken





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Psychological conditions, in particular, are much more difficult to cure through herbs and diet alone. Returning to the ancient traditions of sound in ayurvedic medicine is essential to the efficacy of this discipline. Without it, it is impossible to understand the full nature of the human body or its ultimate goal of attaining access to the higher consciousness, and energy, of Brahman. To that end, we must turn to the earliest notions of sound within ayurvedic medicine and explore the ancient philosophy of sound as a form of yoga as I do in my book, *Sound Medicine*.

#### A Mantra for Balancing the Chakras

I was taught a chakra mantra by Sri Sakthi Amma. It is unique in that it combines all of the bija mantras for the chakras with another mantra, Om Namah Shivaya—with the aim of creating a connection to the universal consciousness through the five elements that serve as the building blocks for the material world (ether, air, fire, water and earth). When the mantras are combined in this way, they create a powerful alchemy for a specific purpose—which, here, is to uniformly move energy through all of the chakras, clearing out obstructions to health while also bringing the body into closer participation with the universal energy field.

#### THE BIJA MANTRAS FOR THE CHAKRAS

Root Chakra	(mūlādhāra)	Laṁ
Sacral Chakra	(svādīsthāna)	Vaṁ
Solar Plexus Chakra	(maṇipūra)	Raṁ
Heart Chakra	(ānāhata)	Yaṁ
Throat Chakra	(viśuddha)	Haṁ
Third Eye Chakra	(ājñā)	Om̐
Crown Chakra	(sahasrāra)	Om̐

#### SRI SAKTHI AMMA'S CHAKRA MANTRA

In a most subtle way, the chakra bija mantras combine with the sacred mantra Om Namah Śivaya, in that the first bija of each pair (in bold) is one syllable of the mantra.

HARE OM̐  
NAM, LAM̐  
MAM, VAM̐  
ŚIM, RAM̐  
VAM̐, YAM̐  
YAM̐, HAM̐  
ŚIVA OM̐  
SWĀHĀ

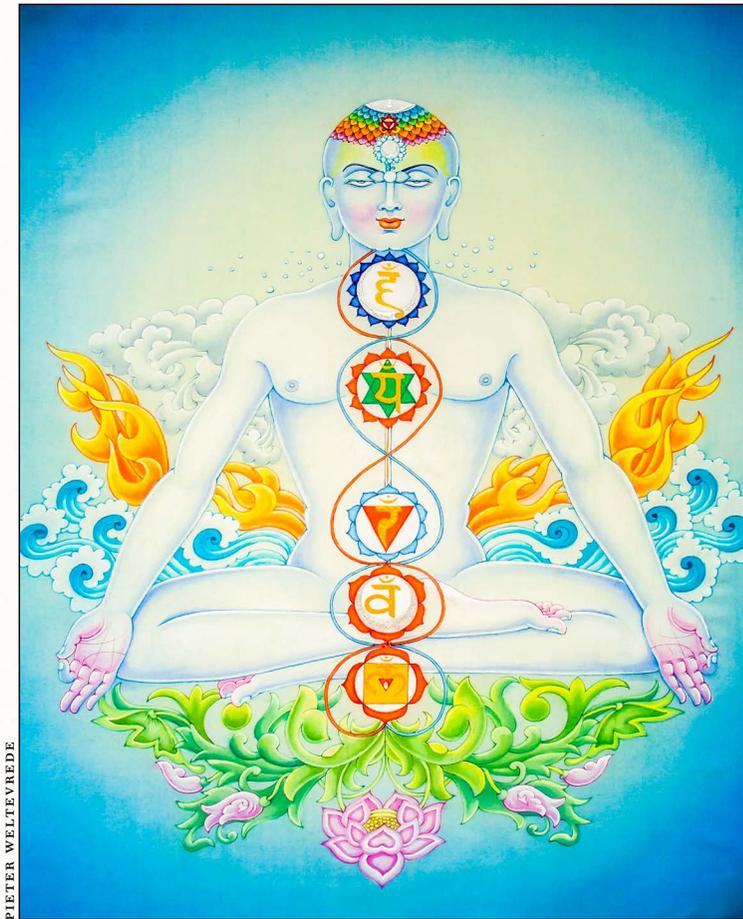
#### PRACTICE

Chant this mantra aloud for ten minutes for three days, fifteen minutes for the next ten days, and then twenty minutes each day thereafter. Once it becomes familiar, you may chant it silently.

Always chant the entire mantra, in order to disseminate energy equally throughout the body. I do not recommend chanting a single bija mantra—if, for example, you want only to activate the throat chakra—because this can build up disproportionate heat in one area and cause an imbalance.

For those interested in hearing the version of the chakra mantra that my husband and I recorded, you can find it on my website: [drkulreetchaudhary.com](http://drkulreetchaudhary.com).

*Natural healing: (left) patient at the Sri Narayani Holistic Centre in Vellore, India, is bathed with oils, an important part of the extensive remedies; (right) artist's depiction of the chakras, with ether, air, fire, water and earth depicted behind; (below, left) healer palpates a patient's forehead to energize the nervous system*



PIETER WELTEVREDE

## Kapha Dosha

**T**HE QUALITIES OF KAPHA ARE HEAVY, STEADY, SLOW, COLD, soft and solid. Kapha individuals, consequently, tend to have a slow metabolism, shun exercise, and gain weight easily. They have large physical frames but with well-developed muscles and joints. Physically, kaphas have a great deal of strength, stamina and endurance. They learn slowly but their long-term memory is excellent. They tend to be deep sleepers and often have trouble waking up in the morning.

When kapha types are in balance, they tend to be generous, have loving personalities, and remain stable and grounded in the midst of chaos—they are like the eye of a hurricane. Oprah Winfrey strikes me as a kapha in this way. When kapha individuals get out of balance, however, they can experience greed, possessiveness and



lethargy. The key to keeping kapha in balance is to stay mentally and physically stimulated.

Kapha individuals are more likely to have diseases connected to the water principle, such as flu, sinus congestion, excess mucus production, obesity, diabetes, water retention and headaches. Winter and spring are the seasons when kapha accumulates most in the body, and spring is an ideal time for seasonal detoxification programs, because kapha begins to “thaw” as the temperature gets warmer, and toxins are ready to be released from the body.

There are two warm and stimulating bija mantras that help to balance the kapha dosha. Hum (pronounced *hoom*) stimulates energy throughout the body, from the digestive tract to the immune system to the brain. Dum (pronounced *doom*) is,

### AYURVEDA

· BODY TYPES ·

WATER



EARTH



· DOSHA ·

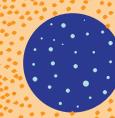
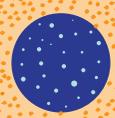
KAPHA

#### OUT OF BALANCE

sleep excessively  
overweight  
suffer from asthma,  
depression,  
diabetes;  
resistance  
to change  
stubbornness

#### IN BALANCE

excellent stamina  
large and soft eyes  
strong build  
thick hair  
smooth skin  
loyal  
patient  
steady  
supportive



# What Is My Dosha?

It will be helpful to know, in a general way, which of the three doshas is commanding your character and constitution. Despite the fact that each of us is, of course, a unique combination of the three doshas, best evaluated in person by an ayurvedic practitioner, answering the following questions will help you get a basic sense of which nature most represents your body and mind.

## FRAME

- a) I am thin and slender with prominent joints and lean muscles.
- b) I have a medium, symmetrical build with good muscle development.
- c) I have a large or stocky build.

## SKIN

- a) My skin is dry and rough.
- b) My skin is warm, reddish in color and easily irritated.
- c) My skin is moist and oily.

## HAIR

- a) My hair is dry, brittle or frizzy.

- b) My hair is fine, thin or prematurely gray.
- c) My hair is thick and wavy.

## EYES

- a) My eyes are small and active.
- b) I have a penetrating gaze.
- c) I have large, pleasant eyes.

## JOINTS

- a) My joints are thin, prominent and have a tendency to crack.
- b) My joints are loose and flexible.
- c) My joints are large, well knit and firm.

## BODY TEMPERATURE

- a) My hands and feet are usually cold, and I prefer warm environments.
- b) I am usually warm, regardless of the season, and prefer cooler environments.
- c) I am adaptable to most temperatures but do not like cold, wet days.

## UNDER STRESS ...

- a) I become anxious or worried.
- b) I become irritable, intense or aggressive.
- c) I become withdrawn or depressed.

## SLEEP

- a) I am a light sleeper with a tendency to awaken easily.
- b) I am a moderately sound sleeper, usually needing less than eight hours to feel rested but have vivid dreams.
- c) My sleep is deep and long. I tend to awaken slowly in the morning.

## WEATHER

- a) My least favorite is cold weather.
- b) My least favorite is hot weather.
- c) My least favorite is damp weather.

## WEIGHT

- a) I tend to lose weight easily.
- b) I maintain my weight easily.
- c) I gain weight easily.

## APPETITE

- a) On a daily basis, my appetite varies and I have delicate digestion.
- b) I feel uncomfortable if I skip a meal and I can eat almost anything.
- c) I like to eat, but can skip meals easily. I have a slow digestion.

## BOWEL MOVEMENTS

- a) Tend to be hard with occasional constipation.
- b) Tend to be loose with occasional diarrhea.
- c) Tend to be well-formed or sticky with occasional constipation.

## PERSONALITY

- a) I am lively and enthusiastic by nature. I like change.
- b) I am purposeful and intense. I like being efficient and in control.
- c) I am easygoing and caring. I like to support others.

## ACTIVITY

- a) I like to be active, and it can be hard to sit still.
- b) I enjoy activity that has a purpose, especially competitive.
- c) I like leisurely activities and staying home.

## WALKING

- a) I walk quickly.
- b) I have a determined walk.
- c) I walk slowly and steadily at a leisurely pace.

## MOODS

- a) My moods change quickly, with a tendency toward anxiety.
- b) My moods change slowly, but I can become angry easily.
- c) My moods are mostly steady and most things don't bother me.

## MEMORY

- a) I learn quickly and forget quickly.
- b) I have a good memory.
- c) I learn slowly but have a good long-term memory.

## ORGANIZATION

- a) I am good at getting things started, but not at getting things done.
- b) I am very organized and can focus on a project from start to finish.
- c) I need help getting things started, but I am good at seeing things to the finish.

## MONEY

- a) I spend money almost as quickly as I make it.
- b) It is important for me to

have money, and I spend it on expensive, luxury items.

- c) I don't like to spend money and prefer saving it for a rainy day.

## IN RELATIONSHIPS, I USUALLY ASK ...

- a) What is wrong with me?
- b) What is wrong with you?
- c) Are you sure there is something wrong?

## WHEN OUT OF BALANCE, I FEEL LIKE ...

- a) A leaf in the wind.
- b) A raging inferno.
- c) A bump on a log.

## MY MOTTO IN LIFE IS ...

- a) Throw caution to the wind and live for today.
- b) No pain, no gain.
- c) Don't worry, be happy.

If you chose mostly A's: you are primarily vata.

If you chose mostly B's: you are primarily pitta.

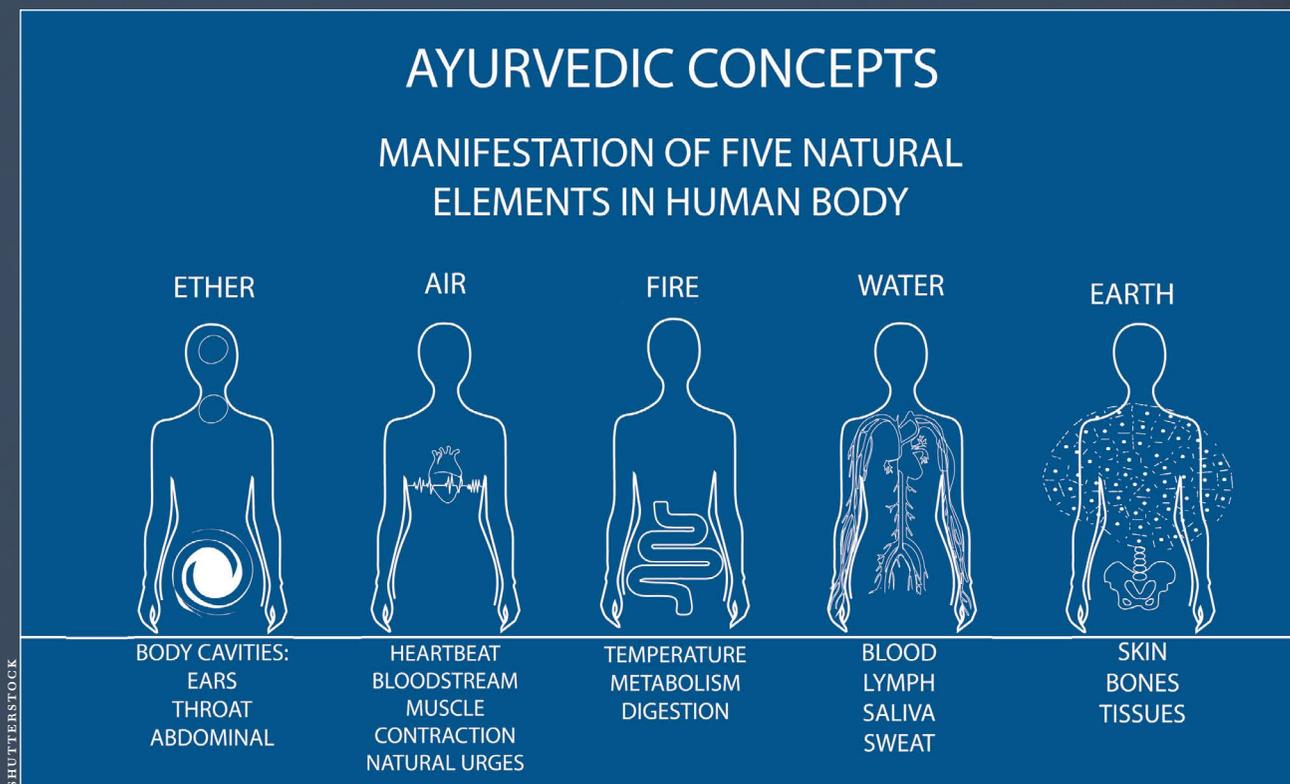
If you chose mostly C's: you are primarily kapha.

.....  
**Elementary:** (left) the newly inaugurated Sri Narayani Holistic Centre in Vellore, India; (below) a chart summarizes ayurveda's understanding of the relationship of the elements and the human systems



GABRIEL SWITT

SHUTTERSTOCK



# Sound Medicine

## Healing with Vibration

“Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and life to everything.” —PLATO

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary, the author of this Insight, published a new book this year entitled *Sound Medicine*, sharing her years of experience with this subtle healing art. Here is an excerpt.

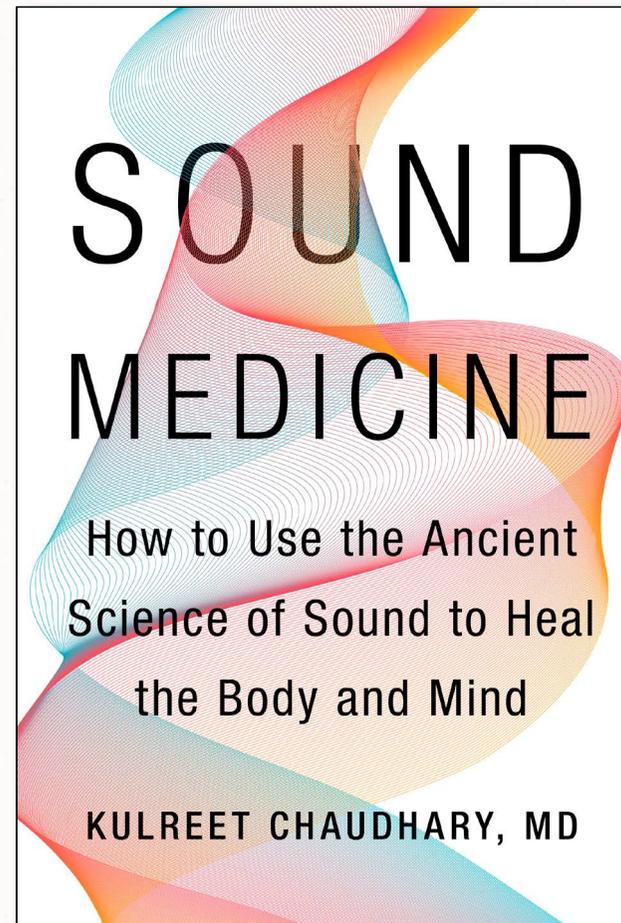
LOOKING BACK ON MY LIFE HISTORY, IT MAKES SENSE THAT IT has always felt effortless for me to move between the world of sound medicine—with elements drawn variously from ancient cultures and quantum physics—and the world of neurology, with its more intellectual, independent approach to the body. My early exposure to both Vedic medicine and quantum physics helped me to understand the dissonance between my inner reality—the timeless, disembodied realm of my meditations—and the external reality, in which I collectively took part at medical school and in the professional world.

Yet even with this particular ability to straddle both worlds, I still find it a challenge to wrap my mind around some of the more black-and-white models of science. In medical school, for example, I had difficulty with chemistry as well as classical physics—not because I couldn’t understand the principles, but rather because I struggled to accept them as being ultimately true. Some of the concepts stood in stark contrast to the way I intuitively understood the world. When we learned about how neurotransmitters work with receptors, for

example, I was steeply challenged by the notion that all it takes for a neurotransmitter to bind to a receptor—triggering the electrical signals that inform our complex thoughts and rich emotions—is for it to randomly slam into it. (When this happens, the neurotransmitter “unlocks” the cell’s response—giving rise to the term “lock-and-key”—causing changes to it.) There is something so inelegant about this idea, as if our thoughts arrive on a system akin to bumper cars. It felt at odds with the sophisticated design of our brains; it just didn’t seem a complete or thorough enough explanation to me.

I also couldn’t accept that the intense energetic connectedness I’d encountered in my mantra meditations—the same energy that had helped my patients to improve their health—should be omitted from medical explanations to patients. I knew that deepening our connections with our silent inner realities and letting go, if only temporarily, of the ping-ponging thoughts and unchecked emotions we experience all day long has a measurable and dramatic effect, making me and my patients not only physically and mentally healthier but also happier and more capable in our everyday lives.

The current Western model doesn’t have a definitive, or complete, explanation for what creates consciousness. We know that too much or too little of a particular neurotransmitter can have a negative psychological outcome; we understand that information from the



brain is relayed to the body via the spinal cord and the peripheral nerves in the peripheral nervous system. But how our complex thoughts and emotions actually form is not accounted for in these mechanisms. I have come to believe that there is something missing from our understanding, something that would account for how our bodies receive and transmit information.

The answer to that question, and the way I have come to bridge the gap between physiology and consciousness, is a sense of spirituality. Before you mistake my use of this word to mean that I am trying to imbue medicine with religion, let me explain. In the Vedic tradition, the spirit is considered to be that which animates the body and gives us consciousness, as well as the ability to be aware of oneself in the world. It is the distinguishing mark of living things and our vitalizing force. Early Greek philosophers would have called this the soul, but you could also call it qi, as Chinese philosophy refers to this energy flow, or Brahman in the manner of the Vedic scholars. I do not believe there is only one right term; I mean all of these things when I refer to spirituality. If we don’t take into account that which makes us living beings—that is, if we discount energy as a meaningful entity in medicine—we cannot comprehensively address our health.

In Western thought, quantum physics is uniquely reflective of energy’s underlying and essential role in the universe; indeed this discipline describes nature at the smallest scales of energy levels. Throughout my studies, it has been a place of profound resonance for me, since it proposes scientific explanations, as well as a modern context, for the metaphysical revelations of Vedic medicine. I believe that holding in mind both the sense of spirit proposed by the ancients and the rigor and research of science will allow us to open our minds to valuable and beneficial therapies, particularly in the realm of sound medicine.

Vibratory vitality: (above) Cover of the author’s newest book; (below) inner courtyard of the clinic in Vellore, India, overseen by the author

## From the Book

WHY DOES A BABY’S CRY INSTANTLY FLOOD A MOTHER’S body with a myriad of stress hormones? How can a song on the radio stir up powerful emotions, from joy to anger, regret to desire? Why does sound itself evoke such primal and deeply felt emotions?

Sound is a vibration that travels through air, water and solids. It’s produced by all matter and is a fundamental part of survival for every species. Yet there is a hidden power within sound that has only begun to be investigated. From leading neurologist, ayurvedic expert and author Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary comes *SOUND MEDICINE: How to Use the Ancient Science of Sound to Heal the Body and Mind*, a rigorous scientific investigation of the healing power of sound. This practical guide demonstrates how readers can use sound to improve their mental and physical well-being, taking them on a journey through the structure of the mouth, ears and brain to understand how sound is translated from acoustic vibrations into meaningful neurological

impulses. Dr. Chaudhary explains how different types of sound impact the human body and brain uniquely, and explores the physiological effects of sound vibration, from altering mood to healing disease.

Blending ancient wisdom with modern science, *SOUND MEDICINE* traces the history of sound therapy and the use of specific mantras from previously unknown texts—traced back to the Siddhas, a group of enlightened masters who created a healing tradition that served as the precursor to ayurvedic medicine—to explain the therapeutic application of sounds for a wide range of conditions. Dr. Chaudhary offers practical, step-by-step lessons for using music and mantras, whether you’re a beginner or searching for a more advanced practice, to improve your health in body, mind and spirit.

Hardcover: 272 pages, 6 x 9 inches; Harper Wave, 2020. Link to Purchase the Book: [bit.ly/SoundMedicineAmazon](https://bit.ly/SoundMedicineAmazon)



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary is an integrative neurologist, neuroscientist and the former director of Well-spring Health at Scripps Memorial Hospital. She received her Internship in Internal Medicine at UCLA and her Neurology Fellowship from UCSD. She has participated in over twenty clinical research studies in the areas of multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, ALS and diabetic peripheral neuropathy. She is currently the head of the Sri Narayani Holistic Centre in Tamil Nadu, India, where she is implementing the use of sound medicine into the treatment of chronic disease, and also studying the ancient Siddha texts that have been hidden from public view for centuries. Dr. Chaudhary is the author of *The Prime* and a new book, *Sound Medicine*. She has appeared as a medical expert on numerous programs, including The Dr. Oz Show and Home & Family.

For more information visit: [drkulreetchaudhary.com](https://drkulreetchaudhary.com). For more about the Sri Narayani Holistic Centre, visit [snhcentre.com](https://snhcentre.com).