

## **AYURVEDA'S BASICS – PREREQUISITE FOR AYURVEDIC COOKING**

Ayurveda (the Atharva Veda) is part of the Vedas – the world's oldest scriptures of spiritual knowledge and wisdom handed down by the ancient Rishis and enlightened Sages of the Himalayan Mountains more than 5,000 years ago in response to the needs of the time. Ayurveda is a holistic healing system; it means the Science of Life. It has both a philosophical and practical basis.

According to the Hindu tradition, Ayurveda was passed on by Brahma (Creator) to Indra (the king of gods) who passed it on to Bhagirath (a sage) for the benefit of humanity to cultivate and expand their consciousness. Dhanvantari represents the protector deity of Ayurvedic knowledge and the incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

Ayurveda has gained its popularity in the West because of its timeless and ancient nature. It is non invasive. It applies to all levels of existence (body, mind and soul – the trinity) and is all about achieving optimum health and well-being, balance and harmony.

Everything on planet Earth is made up of five elements (Pancha Mahabhutas): space/ether, air, fire, water and earth. This concept of five elements lies at the core of Ayurvedic science. The earth is the body, water - blood, fire – acids and enzymes, air – breath, and space – vibration that holds all things together.

The five elements are coded into three biological forces that govern the physiology, chemistry, psychology and other vital and subtle processes in the body. These three forces are known as three Doshas (biological humors) or the Tridosha. When the doshas are balanced, a person experiences vitality, health and wellbeing. When the doshas are out of balance, a person experiences a state of disharmony, lack of vitality and discomfort that creates dis-ease in the body and the mind.

The three doshas are:

VATA (space and air) - transportation  
PITTA (fire and water) - transformation  
KAPHA (earth and water) – augmentation

The five elements are related to our five senses (organ/s):

Space to hearing (ears)

Air to touching (skin)

Fire to seeing and forming (eyes)

Water to tasting (tongue)

Earth to smelling (nose)

VATA (space and air) is a principle of movement/mobility. It governs the movement of all systems in the body: blood flow (circulation), the lymphatic flow and evacuation in the body; the nervous system, and the life force/breath, prana. Vata is quick and irregular. Its seat is in the colon. Vata time is 2 – 6 am/pm. It reaches its height after the age of 52.

PITTA (fire and water) has metabolic and transformative qualities. Pitta governs the enzymatic and hormonal activities and is responsible for digestion, pigmentation, body temperature, hunger, thirst and sight. Pitta is fast and decisive. The seat is in the small intestines. Pitta time is 10 – 2 am/pm. It is predominant from the ages of 18 (puberty) to 52.

KAPHA (earth and water) is dense, heavy and solid. It governs the body's structure and stability. It lubricates joints, provides moisture to the skin and heals wounds. Kapha is slow and methodical. The seat is in the stomach. Kapha time is 6 – 10 am/pm. It rules from the ages of 0 to 18 years old.

Gunās are primordial, very subtle cosmic energies that exist in nature/universe in perfect equilibrium – homeostasis in the body.

SATTVA (pure essence) represents equanimity, peace and harmony

RAJAS (movement) represents activity, passion and transformation

TAMAS (inertia) stands for heaviness, stability, solidity and passiveness

Prakriti – dosha signature, an optimal state of health, perfect equilibrium

Vikruti – vitiated dosha by stress and inner conflict, out of balance

VATA person has a light, flexible body, either very tall or very small and has big protruding teeth. He/she has small recessed, dry eyes, irregular appetite and thirst. Vata types tend to be delicate in health and desire few or no children. They are excited, alert and quick to act without much thinking. They have a good imagination and enjoy daydreaming. Vata individuals may have fears of darkness, heights and enclosed space. Their faith is flexible and ready to change. If they make money, they like to spend it on trifles.

PITTA people have a sensitive and reactive body with a medium frame and weight. They seldom gain or lose weight. Their eyes are bright and tend to be sensitive to light. Pitta individuals have a strong appetite and thirst and like cold drinks and sweets. They have excellent capability for learning, understanding, focus and concentration. They are highly disciplined and eager to take a leadership role. They love noble professions and often make large amounts of money. They like to spend their money on luxurious items.

KAPHA people have a strong and large body frame, large eyes, strong teeth and thick, curly hair. They have thick, smooth, oily and hairy skin. Kapha people have a steady appetite and thirst and tend to have slow digestion and metabolism. They gain weight easily and have difficulty losing it. They crave sweets and salt. They love eating, sitting and sleeping for a long time. They have deep, stable faith with love and compassion, and a calm and steady mind. They are good money-savers.

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