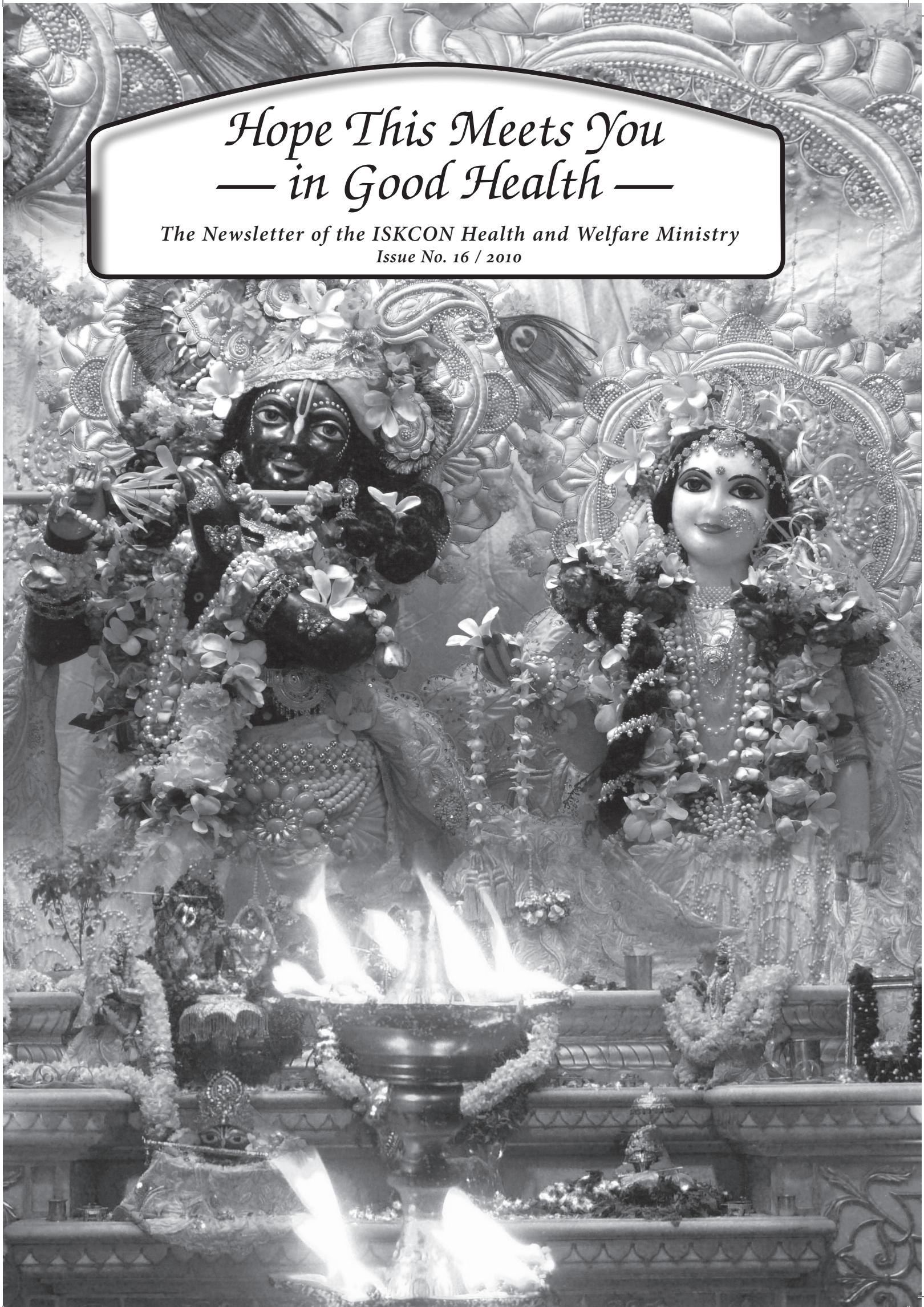


*Hope This Meets You
— in Good Health —*

*The Newsletter of the ISKCON Health and Welfare Ministry
Issue No. 16 / 2010*



Message from the Minister

In 1967, Srila Prabhupada wrote to a disciple: "Be careful about your health first. This information is not only for you but all my noble sons. I am an old man. I may live or die it does not matter. But you must live for long time to push on this Krishna Consciousness movement."

In modern society, being healthy is uncommon, and the means of keeping or regaining health is often expensive and expressed in complicated ways.

Srila Prabhupada, however, recommended cleanliness, regulation, and a pure consciousness. With its four regulative principles prohibiting flesh eating, intoxication, illicit sexual connections, and gambling, a Krishna consciousness lifestyle is quite conducive to staying fit. Additionally, eating food offered to Lord Krishna, or God, and chanting His holy names with love and attention will further prevent all kinds of unwanted deficiencies.

Prahladananda Swami
ISKCON Minister for
Health and Welfare



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- The information contained herein is in no way to be considered as a substitute for consultation with a duly licensed health-care professional.

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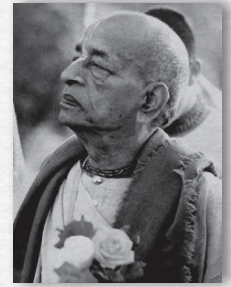
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QUOTES FROM SRILA PRABHUPADA



■ If you are elephant you eat hundred pounds, but if you ant you eat one grain. Don't eat hundred pounds imitating the elephant. You see? God has given food to the elephant and to the ant. But if you are actually elephant then you eat like elephant. But if you are ant, don't eat like elephant, then you'll be in trouble. So here it is said, "There is no possibility of one's becoming a yogi O Arjuna, if one eats too much or eats too little." Very nice program. Don't eat too little. You eat whatever you require. But don't eat more. Similarly don't sleep more. If you can keep your health perfect, but try to reduce it.

— Srila Prabhupada, lecture on *Bhagavad-gita*, Los Angeles, 17 February, 1969.

■ Those who have studied... The ants are very much fond of being intoxicated. Therefore, they find out sweet, sugar. Sweet is intoxication. Perhaps you know, all. The liquor is made from sugar. Sugar is fermented with acid, sulphuric acid, and then it is distilled. That is liquor. Therefore too much sweet eating is prohibited.

— Srila Prabhupada, lecture on *Bhagavad-gita*, London, 25 August, 1975.

■ Life's desires should never be directed toward sense gratification. One should desire only a healthy life, or self-preservation, since a human being is meant for inquiry about the Absolute Truth. Nothing else should be the goal of one's works.

— *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 1.2.10.

■ The necessities of life for the protection and comfort of the body must not be unnecessarily increased. Human energy is spoiled in a vain search after such illusory happiness. If one is able to lie down on the floor, then why should one endeavor

to get a good bedstead or soft cushion to lie on? If one can rest without any pillow and make use of the soft arms endowed by nature, there is no necessity of searching after a pillow. If we make a study of the general life of the animals, we can see that they have no intelligence for building big houses, furniture, and other household paraphernalia, and yet they maintain a healthy life by lying down on the open land. They do not know how to cook or prepare foodstuff, yet they still live healthy lives more easily than the human being. This does not mean that human civilization should revert to animal life or that the human being should live naked in the jungles without any culture, education, and sense of morality. An intelligent human cannot live the life of an animal; rather, man should try to utilize his intelligence in arts and science, poetry and philosophy. In such a way he can further the progressive march of human civilization. But here the idea given by Srila Sukadeva Gosvami is that the reserve energy of human life, which is far superior to that of animals, should simply be utilized for self-realization. Advancement of human civilization must be towards the goal of establishing our lost relationship with God, which is not possible in any form of life other than the human.

— *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 2.2.4, purport.

■ Human activities diseased by a tendency toward sense gratification have been regulated in the Vedas under the principles of salvation. This system employs religion, economic development, sense gratification and salvation, but at the present moment people have no interest in religion or salvation. They have only one aim in life — sense gratification — and in order to achieve this end they make plans for economic development. Misguided men think that religion should be maintained because it contributes to

economic development, which is required for sense gratification. Thus in order to guarantee further sense gratification after death, in heaven, there is some system of religious observance. But this is not the purpose of religion. The path of religion is actually meant for self-realization, and economic development is required just to maintain the body in a sound, healthy condition. A man should lead a healthy life with a sound mind just to realize *vidya*, true knowledge, which is the aim of human life. This life is not meant for working like an ass or for culturing *avidya* for sense gratification.

— *Sri Isopanisad*, Mantra 11, purport.

■ Why should you eat meat? Why should you eat, drink, and all nonsense? Be little frugal. No *aindriya priti*, *kamasya nendriya priti* *jivetayavata*. You simply taste such foodstuff, *krishna-prasada*, so that you can lead very healthy life and execute your Krishna consciousness business. It is not that you have to voluntarily stop and make yourself weak. No. In the *Bhagavad-gita* also it is said, *yuktahara-viharasya, yoga bhavati siddhira*. Artificial starving, artificial *vairagya*, has no meaning. You should live nicely, but not for sense gratification. That is the recommendation of the *sastra*. Don't indulge in sense gratification, but live very healthy life so that you can execute Krishna consciousness. *Kamasya nendriya priti* *jiveta yavata-jivasya tattva-jijnasa*. The real business is *jivasya*. Our, we living entities, our real business is *tattva-jijnasa*. This *tattva-jijnasa*... Therefore *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is commentary on the *Brahma-sutra*, *Vedanta-sutra*. As *Vedanta-sutra* gives the code, *athato brahma jijñasa*: this life is meant for *brahma-jijñasa*, inquiry about Brahman.

— Srila Prabhupada, lecture on *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 1.2.8, Bombay, 26 December, 1972.

AYURVEDA 102

Prahladananda Swami continues his series on Ayurveda and describes the science of what to eat, when to eat, and how to eat — all major factors in remaining healthy.

There are two main physical boundaries that protect our bodies from external invaders: the skin and the digestive tract. The skin protects our internal environment from potential marauders like germs or viruses. The bowels stop undigested food from entering directly into our bodily tissues — the food is processed and transformed to be eligible to become an integral part of the body. Otherwise, if there were a rupture in the gastrointestinal tract and food entered undigested into the body's cavities, the food would be treated as an alien invader and the immune system would deal with it accordingly. Thus, the immune system is another level of bodily defense that is controlled by material nature called the *ahamkara*¹.

The Sanskrit word "*ahamkara*" means "I am the doer" (from "*aham*," which means "I am," and "*kara*," "the doer"). However, according to the *Bhagavad-gita* (9.10), Lord Krishna is the actual doer and the one who moves the material energy through His energy called *maya*. Nevertheless, material nature creates bodies for individual living entities whose material personalities are controlled by *ahamkara*. Though a living entity's body may comprise trillions of cells, in a healthy body they cooperate with one another under the command of this agency of the external energy.

¹ In the *Bhagavad-gita*, the Lord mentions that the living soul, who is a particle of His spiritual energy, is different from the material body. The soul's identification with the material body is called *ahamkara*. This *ahamkara* is not unreal but is the material body's commander, and it maintains the sense of identity for the body's innumerable cells, so that they work cooperatively. However, the soul's sense of being the commander of these cells is what is actually unreal, for the soul can simply desire; it is the Supreme Lord who fulfill those his desires through the material energy. Because of past activities, either in present or previous bodies, different desires arise within the mind of a soul conditioned by the material energy. When someone understands which desires are favorable and unfavorable for good health, he or she can decide to accept favorable desires and reject detrimental ones. Knowledge of what is favorable and unfavorable for good health is found in the Ayurvedic science.

The body's most subtle defense system is the aura, which blocks unwelcome negative vibrations from entering into our consciousness. In a healthy body, disease does not take root because the digestion functions properly and the immune system and aura are strong.

As far as eating is concerned, it is important to understand that what we can digest and assimilate counts far more than what we eat. In Ayurveda, what we can digest is called "food," what we cannot digest is "poison," and what helps our digestion is "medicine." Digestion begins when food touches the tongue. This contact sends messages to the brain and stomach about what kind of food has been ingested, so the stomach prepares the proper gastric juices that contain the enzymes for digestion.

Disease usually begins when the digestive process becomes imbalanced, so food is not properly digested. Instead of ingested food producing nutrients, *ama*, or toxins, is created. These toxins act as food for unwanted elements, such as parasites, viruses, and germs, and encourage them to spread and eventually perhaps overwhelm bodily systems, which can lead to various diseases. Our health depends on acting intelligently as well as on a suitable lifestyle and eating habits.

Generally, a living entity survives by eating. The main energy responsible for digestion of this food is the digestive fire, *agni*. There are four different states of *agni*: 1) *sama*, 2) *vishagya*, 3) *tiksa*, & 4) *manda*.

- 1) *Sama-agni*: *Agni* is balanced and digestion goes on in a regulated way with the essential materials of the food being assimilated by the body.
- 2) *Vishagya-agni*: *Agni* is variable. A person with such *agni* sometimes has constipation and sometimes diarrhea. *Vishagya-agni* is usually associated with *vata dosha*.
- 3) *Tiksa-agni*: *Agni* is high. The fire of digestion is too high and the food and its essential parts are rapidly burned; even large meals are digested in a short time. Although such a person may be continuously hungry and eat large meals, little of the digested food is assimilated, since most of it is incinerated. *Tiksa agni* is usually associated with *pitta dosha*.
- 4) *Manda-agni*: *Agni* is low. Digestion

is slow and food remains undigested and unassimilated. *Manda-agni* is usually associated with *kapha dosha*.

Regulation of one's bodily necessities is an important method to achieve the balanced and healthy state of *sama-agni*. In the *Bhagavad-gita* (6.17), Lord Krishna confirms the importance of living a balanced lifestyle: "He who is regulated in his habits of eating, sleeping, recreation and work can mitigate all material pains by practicing the yoga system."

Digested food is formed into seven different kinds of tissues that are the support of the body. These tissues are called the seven *dhatu*s. They support the gross physical body and the subtle mind. The seven *dhatu*s are: 1) *rasa* (plasma), 2) *rakta* (blood), 3) *mamsa* (muscle), 4) *medas* (fat), 5) *asti* (bones), 6) *majja* (bone marrow), and 7) *sukra* and *arthava* (the male and female reproductive system respectively). When the seven *dhatu*s are strong and well formed, the most subtle form of the immune system is created from the reproductive energies called *ojas*. If *ojas* is strong in the body, the digestive fires within the body remain in balance and the psychological processes that keep the body and mind healthy remain vigorous.

Ojas supports the energies of *tejas* and *prana*. *Tejas* controls all the subtle and gross fires within the body and is responsible for digestion on the subtle and the gross physical platforms. *Prana*, on the other hand, supplies energy for movement and activity. If *ojas* is strong, the other subtle energies, *tejas* and *prana*, can work at full capacity within the body.

Ojas is formed from the essence of the reproductive system, that is, *sukra* (semen) and *arthava* (ovum). If there is lack of digestion on the level of the *dhatu*s (bodily tissues) then *sukra* and *arthava* will have some deficiencies.

In issue 15 of *Hope This Meets You in Good Health*, my article "Ayurveda 101" gave details of the three *doshas* that determine a person's constitution and the six tastes that comprise our everyday experiences physically, emotionally, and mentally.

In Ayurveda, there is a *sutra*, an aphorism, which states: "Like increases like and opposites balance each other." Our best doshic balance is the balance of *doshas* we

had at the time of our birth. Good health throughout life depends on keeping as close as we can to that original doshic balance. Our balance at the time of birth is called *prakriti*, and any subsequent imbalance is called *vikriti*. If we have one *dosha* prominent in our constitution, there is a tendency to imbalance that *dosha*. If there are two *doshas* equally prominent in our constitution there is a tendency to imbalance both *doshas*, or to minimize the lesser *dosha*.

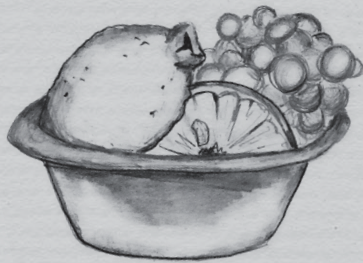
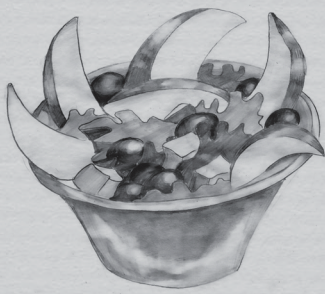
Keeping the *doshas* in balance is aided by a balanced lifestyle. Although Ayurveda considers a balanced mental and emotional life as the greatest influence on the *doshas*, our physical activities are generally easier to control. Of the four important daily activities in life — eating, sleeping, mating, and defending — eating serves as the basic activity. Eating is the foundation for either balancing or unbalancing our *doshas*.

Each doshic energy keeps two of the basic elements in balance: *vata* balances Air and Ether, *pitta* Water and Fire, and *kapha* Water and Earth. These elements are general categories for the different material energies. For example, Air is the energy that moves all other material elements. Fire is the energy that transforms all other elements from one state to another, such as transforming ice to water or water to steam. Water is the element that "glues" different material elements together, like the water that holds together the flour when making dough for bread. Earth is the energy that provides stability.

There are six tastes that are also composed of different material elements (see following chart):

TASTE	ELEMENTS
Sweet	Earth + Water
Sour	Earth + Fire
Salty	Water + Fire
Pungent	Air + Fire
Bitter	Air + Ether
Astringent	Air + Earth

The process of digestion produces different *doshas* according to the tastes of our foods. Our health depends on regularly eliminating the *doshas* and not creating any imbalances in our diet and lifestyle



that would aggravate the *doshas* or impede the digestion. Generally, the *doshas* are eliminated through the *malas*, i.e., stool, urine, and sweat. However, Ayurveda also provides different purificatory methods to assist the elimination of the *doshas*. The properties of the tastes depend on the elements of which they are comprised:

Sweet

The Sanskrit word for sweet is *madura*, which has a number of meanings, such as agreeable, pleasant, melodious, and sweet. The main qualities of sweet are heavy, cooling, and oily. Sweet pacifies both *vata* and *pitta*, but increases *kapha*. The sweet taste is strongly present in all foods containing sugar, as well as foods like licorice. It is also present in the highest number of foods, and includes all foods that are considered carbohydrates, such as grains, as well as foods such as milk. The amount of sweet taste found in any given food is relative. For example, rice may not appear sweet, but if something bitter is taken first and then some rice, the sweet quality of the rice will become more apparent.

The sweet taste is anabolic, that is, it helps you build bodily tissues. It gives strength and stability to the body and enhances energy and vitality. It relieves hunger and thirst. Love is considered sweet, but too much sweet can cause stagnation and block the channels of the body. When the sweet taste is not properly digested, it serves as food for pathogens, such as viruses, bacteria, and parasites. Overindulgence in sweet taste can also thicken the blood and can lead to high cholesterol, high triglycerides, and narrowing of the arteries. When in balance the sweet taste creates love and joy — the “sweet taste of success.” When out of balance it can lead to greed, material complacency, and attachment.

Sour

The Earth element in the sour taste aids in building the body, and the Fire element helps digesting. The Sanskrit word for sour is “*amla*,” which means “acidic” and “that which easily ferments.” Sour increases *pitta* and *kapha* and decreases *vata*. Its properties are liquid, light, heating, and oily. All fermented foods have the taste of sour as well as sour cream, yogurt, vinegar, green grapes, unripe mango, and citrus fruits, such as lemon and grapefruit.

Sour, with its Fire element, sharpens the senses and aids digestion. It can also give a sense of refreshment and encourage the elimination of wastes. However, because of the presence of the Earth element, it can also clog the channels of the body when used excessively. Especially in a person of *pitta* constitution, it can cause acidity, heartburn, and diseases, such as gastritis and ulcers. Avoid sour foods when you have diarrhea or dysentery.

Sour sharpens the consciousness and brings awareness and discrimination. Too much sour can increase envy and jealousy (as exemplified in the story of the “the fox and the grapes,” in which the fox jumped for grapes, but when it could not reach them, he declared: “They were anyway sour”). Vasant Lad, a respected Ayurvedic physician, points out: “When a relationship ends, there is often a sour taste in the mouth, which is a sign of judgment and rejection.”¹

Salty

The Water element of the salty taste gives the quality of being laxative, the Fire element of being antispasmodic. The salty taste increases *pitta* and *kapha* and reduces *vata*, and, used in moderation, it enhances the flavor of other foods. In excess, it creates water retention; in great excess, vomiting. It helps reduce flatulence by removing gas from the colon. Salt is necessary to help keep the proper electrolyte balance in the body and softens and loosens the tissues. Salt is found in all kinds of forms from table to rock salt and is also found in seaweed and tamari.

Too much salt may thicken the blood vessels and produce high blood pressure. It can also aggravate skin conditions. In general, use of mineral rock salt does not aggravate *pitta* as much as other kinds of salt such as sea salt.

In balance, the salty taste will tend to increase the zest for life and aid in increasing inquisitiveness. In excess the salty taste will create excessive “lust,” as exemplified by the “Old Salt” sailor who, after a long sea journey, came back to a port to unrestrictedly gratify his senses.

1 Lad, Vasant D. *Textbook of Ayurveda*. Albuquerque, New Mexico: The Ayurvedic Press, 2002.

Pungent

The pungent taste contains Fire and Air elements and is called *katu* in Sanskrit. The Fire element heats the body and the Air element lightens and dries the body. The pungent taste increases *pitta* and *vata* and decreases *kapha*. Initially, it will decrease *vata* because of the warming effect of the Fire element on *vata*. However, longer use will tend to increase *vata* because of pungent's drying effect.

Spices such as chilies, ginger, cloves, and black pepper have the pungent taste. Foods such as garlic, onions, and radishes are also pungent.

The pungent taste tends to improve appetite, help digestion, burn fat, and remove clots and stagnation from the body. In excess, however, it will cause burning sensations, thirst, and dry out the reproductive elements in the body and thus cause sexual debility. Furthermore, excessive use will aggravate *vata* and cause tremors, insomnia, and muscle pain. Psychologically, pungent sharpens the mind and aids enthusiasm and determination. However, in excess it can increase anger and frustration, as in a "pungent retort."



Bitter

The bitter taste, with its Air and Ether elements, is the lightest of all the tastes. These elements will tend to increase *vata*, but decrease *pitta* and *kapha*. Examples of the bitter taste are found in turmeric root, bitter melon, aloe vera, dandelion root, neem, and sandalwood. Although not a common taste in the modern western diet, it is also found in coffee. Vasanta Lad says, "Bitter taste improves all others tastes, because if you have a little bitter then any food will taste good."

Bitter cleanses the liver, reduces all kinds of toxins and heat in the body, and kills germs. It can relieve high blood sugar. And because of its dry and light qualities, it helps kindle the digestive fire. However, in excess, bitter can be debilitating and dry up the body, for it dries all sexual secretions and thus supports celibacy. Bitterness causes introversion and introspection. In excess, it can create aversion and isolation within the mind. Hence the saying, "The bitter taste of failure."

Astringent

Composed of Earth and Air, the astringent taste can be restricting and drying. It increases *vata* and decreases *pitta* and *kapha*. The astringent taste is found in food such as unripe bananas, beans, and chickpeas. Its binding properties are useful in cases of constipation, and aid in curing ulcers. But in excess it also dries the bodily fluids causing loss of sexual potency and lack of circulation.

Astringent tends to cause the mind to become introverted. However, in excess it can also scatter the mind and cause fear and anxiety.

As far as mixed tastes are concerned, oranges, for example, taste both sweet and sour. But if we cut an orange, eat the first half, and then eat something sweet, like honey, we will notice that the second half of the orange will taste more sour and less sweet than the first. What has changed? Our ability to taste sweet has been satiated by the honey. Thus, while eating the second half of the orange, the sour taste in the orange became more prominent.

Effects of the Tastes on the Doshas

TASTE	EFFECTS		
	Vata	Pitta	Kapha
Sweet	↓ (decreases)	↓	↑
Sour	↓	↑	↑
Salty	↓	↑	↑
Pungent	↑ (increases)	↑	↓
Bitter	↑	↓	↓
Astringent	↑	↓	↓

To summarize: Health is achieved when 1) the *doshas* are balanced according to one's basic constitution (*prakriti*), 2) the fire of digestion (*agni*) is balanced, and 3) the soul coordinates the senses, mind, and intelligence to work harmoniously.

In the next issue, I will explain the effect of taste on the different cells. •

A MATTER OF



LIFE & DEATH

By Raga Manjari Devi Dasi

How can we prepare for death in a way that will enhance our life and ease our final moments? Rather than waiting for the unpredictable eleventh hour, we can start to ponder these questions today. Awareness of our mortality puts our life into clearer context, inspiring us to savor every second, whilst helping us to face our final moments with calm, courage, and confidence.

Never Say Die

My first encounter with death wasn't pretty. He lay on a steel table like a bizarre buffet at a surgeon's convention, leathery skin sliced from throat to groin exposing every gory detail. Lifting the cold hand which had once held life in its grasp, I thought of all the impressions it had left behind. Now it was like a macabre horror prop, dropping with a dead thud. Fellow students responded to this morbid reminder of their mortality with shock and disgust. However, later talk quickly digressed from the deadly serious subject of death to a livelier discussion of the latest movies. Why dwell on the depressing, anti-life topic of death when it poses such an unsolvable, unstoppable, unbearable quandary? As cancer survivor and cyclist Lance Armstrong remarked, "Death is not exactly cocktail-party conversation."

So to allay the unanswerable anxiety death arouses we voluntarily impose a state of self-induced death "amnesia" on ourselves. However hard we try to evade death, with over 250,000 people dying daily and over five million annually, it resurfaces unexpectedly through occasions of personal loss or global grief. The *Mahabharata* called this the greatest wonder in the world: every day people die, yet we delude ourselves into thinking we can escape death's clutches.

Our death-denying, death-defying society is expert at shunning the stigma of dying. The media either oversimplifies it or dresses it up. The overkill of detached press coverage on death and the cool executions played out in video games and movies compound to deaden our empathy with life's great adversary. Society also conspires to keep death cloaked. Today, we are much less exposed to dying people, who are generally confined to hospitals, hospices, and funeral homes, whereas in the past most people died at home.

Avoiding death belies society's unwillingness to face the dilemmas of ageing, disease, and pain as these are contrary to the valued assets of youth, health, productivity, wealth, beauty, and power. Since old age, disempowerment, and suffering are intolerable concepts, we distract

ourselves by disproportionately focusing on pleasure, longevity, and health. Dylan Thomas' advice to "Rage against the dying of the light" is a positive survival instinct but is simply denial if not tempered with the sobering acknowledgement of our inevitable demise.

Still, the search for eternal ambrosia continues. Some are convinced that they can conquer death through cryogenics, cults of immortality, or medical miracles. But by hoping we can cheat death, we are only cheating ourselves of a valuable life-enhancing perspective. Death will darken our door one day and, ready or not, we can't ignore its knock.

With the wisdom to tackle the deep import of our own deaths we realize that our enemy is not death — our enemy is ignorance. As Deepak Chopra suggests: "Fear of death should be renamed ignorance of death." The light of understanding guides us through this dark, unfamiliar territory, so we make out its life-affirming message: to appreciate the promise in every moment and avoid what Norman Cousins called the greatest tragedy, "Not death, but what dies inside us while we live."

Time Flies

Winged clocks once adorned funeral parlor walls, a reminder that time flies, so we

We need to disregard others' approval or disapproval, and judge our success in terms of our inner voice. This may lead to so-called eccentric choices at times, but others will eventually respond positively to the genuine joy springing from our self-actualizing life.

should utilize it well. Death's time bomb is ticking in all of us, rarely giving warning of when it's going to detonate. Most deaths are sudden and unexpected, with heart attacks taking the highest toll in Australia. We can't always count on our doctors telling us when we're likely to go either (Powers & Butler mention that only 20 per cent of doctors say they'd give this information voluntarily despite 80 per cent of patients requesting information).

If we fail to acknowledge the fleeting nature of life, believing things will continue indefinitely, we can postpone and procrastinate dreams for an anticipated future that may suddenly foreclose on us. If we think we have forever, we are more likely to take things and people for granted, delay dreams, hold grudges, and leave issues unresolved until tomorrow. Survivors of near-death experiences often return with a life-changing realization that life is fragile and transient, and are grateful for every bonus moment as an irreplaceable gift and opportunity. According to Raymond Moody's extensive surveys, such survivors also tend to be more compassionate, patient, humanitarian, intuitive, and loving. After glimpsing their mortality, they acquire a more serene acceptance of death and less attachment to material things, valuing life's depth above its length. This echoes the Buddhist axiom that we should love people and use things rather than use people and love things.

Though our physical presence may not endure eternally, our contribution to the world can. The death deadline can be a driving force, a muse inspiring us to greater heights, as Michelangelo confessed: "No thought exists in me which death has not carried with his chisel." For those who believe in karma or an afterlife, death is a moral watch guard, eventually holding us accountable for the consequences of our actions. We can view death as our final feast, a spread of dishes from our life's deeds. If we have lived a satisfying life,

we will relish the meal with pride and feel nourished by meaningful memories. If we die dissatisfied, we may leave with a bad taste and emotional indigestion. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, pioneer of the hospice movement put it succinctly, "If we really want to live, we must have the courage to recognize that life is ultimately very short, and that everything we do counts. When it is the evening of our life, we will hopefully have a chance to look back and say, it was worthwhile, because I have really lived."

Preparing for the Deadline

After an elderly family member suffered a near-fatal stroke, I asked the family if they felt prepared for death if it came. "Don't be such a pessimist," they said, shocked by my enquiry and not considering death's eventuality realistic. Whether we're ten or a hundred and ten, it's never too late, or too early, to ponder death's influence on our life. When the Dalai Lama turned fifty-eighth, he was asked what he was going to do with the rest of his life. When he replied, "I plan to prepare for death," the reporter enquired with concern, "Are you sick?" The Dalai Lama chuckled, "No, but physical dissolution is inevitable." The more prepared we are for death, the less shock impact will be felt at the sudden halt. As Fontaine said, "Death never takes the wise man by surprise; he is always ready to go."

The main approaches to daily death preparation can be summarized by the five R's:

1. Refine character and values
2. Re-evaluate priorities
3. Redefine goals
4. Resolve issues
5. Remember death

1. Refine Character and Values

Honestly examining our character flaws can be confronting. However, our continued evolution depends on an acceptance that there is always room for improvement, whilst forgiving ourselves for failings. If we are too close to

see ourselves objectively, we can consider observations valued people have made about our nature.

Much of our personality and values are molded by external influences — either social or familial — where we unconsciously acquire traits or ideals through others. We sometimes compromise our true self and values, because we want to be loved, accepted, successful, powerful, or secure. It takes courage to release ourselves from what Thoreau called, "The curse of conformity" and live in accordance with our authentic self. We need to disregard others' approval or disapproval, and judge our success in terms of our inner voice. This may lead to so-called eccentric choices at times, but others will eventually respond positively to the genuine joy springing from our self-actualizing life.

To refine your character, ask questions like, "Am I living in accordance with my authentic self?", "When I'm dying, will I regret the way I am now?", "Am I happy with the way I treat myself and others?", and "How can I be a better and happier person, starting today?"

Once you have formulated clear answers, devise a plan to address each issue. If you are violating your inner voice, how could you start honoring it? How could you treat others with more love and respect? As the quality of tomorrow is determined by your choices today, resolve to initiate changes now.

2. Re-evaluate Priorities

Our vision of life's big picture can get distorted if we're too shortsighted. The great leveler of death brings everything into perspective, posing the focal question: "Did I use my time well?" We can constantly examine our priorities in light of our true character and values.

While enjoying the present, we may need to prioritize with a long-term sense. Helpful questions we can answer to re-evaluate priorities include: “Will this matter if I die tomorrow?”, “What could I do that would matter?”, “What areas of my life bring me joy?”...

For example, given that there are alternative options, is it important that we work ourselves to death in a destructive job just for money? Or as Stephen Corey put it: “How many people on their deathbed wish they had spent more time in their office?”

Sometimes we neglect our health, relationships, and spirituality in pursuit of more tangible rewards like wealth, prestige, and power. While enjoying the present, we may need to prioritize with a long-term sense. Helpful questions we can answer to re-evaluate priorities include: “Will this matter if I die tomorrow?”, “What could I do that would matter?”, “What areas of my life bring me joy?”, and “How can I bring joy to others?”

Integrating some selfless priorities into our life doesn't have to mean cramming every moment with philanthropic feats. But what's vital is that even if we can't actively help others, we are cautious not to harm them, but will extend kindness and compassion whenever possible and remember that every loving thought or deed is a seed sown for a favorable future.

3. Redefine Goals

If you only had two years to live, what would you like to achieve? How would you contribute to the world? The universe has a very specific job vacancy tailored for each individual's unique skills and qualities. Our task is to discover how we can make a positive impact on this world, leaving it a better place through our presence. In this way, awareness of death can be a constructive rather than a catastrophic impetus.

To check that your goals are aligned with your values and priorities, inquire: “Will my present goals make me happy on my deathbed?” and “What could I

achieve that would enhance my life now and at death?”

Take time to fill in as many details as you wish. Think in terms of aims in the areas of spirituality, career, relationships, creativity, and pleasure. Take daily steps towards these goals, so that every sunset sees you closer to your destination.

4. Resolve Issues

We all live with regrets, guilt, shame, and grief from past events and behavior. Carrying this burden only becomes heavier as we are dying. To lighten our emotional baggage we can extend forgiveness, gratitude, and apologies to others and ourselves. If we postpone this, it may be too late. When issues remain unresolved, grief is deeper and closure more difficult. As hospice advocate Christine Longaker said, “After a loved one dies, the pain that stays with us is the love we held back.” Why wait until our deathbed to open up to people when, if we do it now, we can live with a clear conscience and develop deeper relationships over time. Ask yourself if you were to die soon, whom you would want to express the following to: “I'm sorry,” “I forgive you,” “Thank you,” and “I love you.”

Communicate these sincerely to your list of people at the next opportunity. Irrespective of their response, you will feel a load lift and greater ease with open communication. Most importantly, say these things to yourself with an accepting and loving attitude — forgiveness is the key to a peaceful passage.”

5. Remember Death

We avoid with equal dread the two definite things in life: death and taxes. But most of us are already more experts at dying than paying taxes. Every second thousands of our cells are disintegrating — minor dress rehearsals for the final dissolution. Simultane-

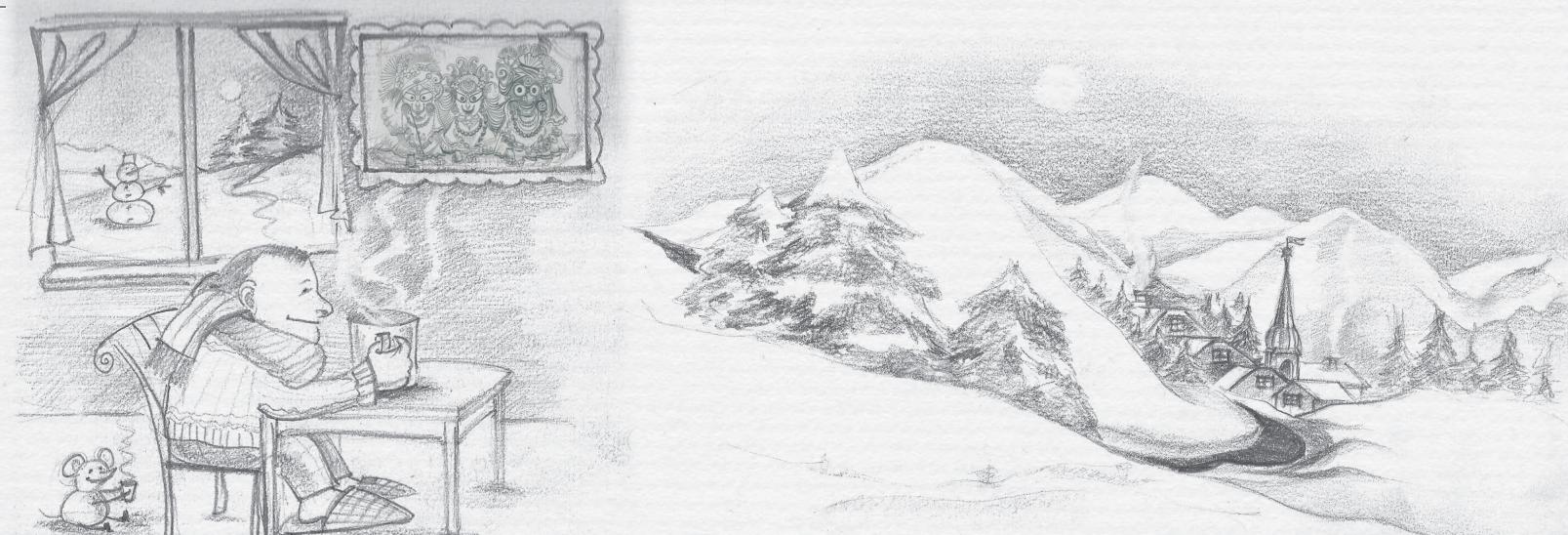
ously, thousands of cells are being created, reminding us of the cosmic cycle of degeneration and renewal.

If you believe in reincarnation, it is possible you've died thousands of times already, but in daily life, we easily forget death's lessons. To remind ourselves, we can view every setback and loss as a minor death. Coping with difficulties in an equipoised and detached way helps us to face death with serenity and courage. Though we crave constancy, life and death are rife with uncontrollable and unpredictable challenges. Hardships are catalysts for us to grow in a direction that helps us to die with strength. They are rungs in a ladder which raise us to a heightened awareness of the fluctuating human condition. Embracing impermanence can help us to adapt to change and find consolation in the realization that “This too shall pass.”

Growing old is Nature's way of preparing us to face loss, so we often progressively lose certain capabilities, looks, position, and sometimes loved ones. Practical ways to grow accustomed to death are volunteering at a hospice, view a cadaver, attend funerals, visit graveyards, and assist the elderly. Studying death in greater depth through books, teachers, and films can also give us reassuring wisdom about what to expect. The journey to a fulfilling life is directed by the compass of death. We know we're heading on course if we can answer “yes” to the question, “If I were to die tomorrow, would I feel prepared?” If not, we still have some distance to cover.

(To be continued)

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STAYING HEALTHY

By Ananga Sakhi Devi Dasi

Have you ever wondered why springtime sunshine brings runny noses? Or why cold winter nights increase joint pain? Why do you feel so hungry in the winter and less in the summer? All these questions can be answered by studying our body's external environment. It is interesting to note how few individuals consider their environment as a factor in their healthcare.

But think for a moment. Surely the body works differently when the sun blazes outside than when you struggle against cold, blistering winds. Similarly, a plant growing outside changes tremendously in different times of the year — it blossoms, bears fruit, and loses its leaves. If plants go through such rapid changes in their different external environments, surely we must all experience some level of change, even if it may not be as drastic as that of a plant's life.

I remember when I first started my clinical practice of Ayurveda a few years ago. I was surprised to see how most patients did not relate the food they were eating to the state of their health. Rather, they were concerned with popping vitamin pills, going to the gym, and watching their external looks. They never considered what was happening to them internally. It was at that point that I realized how simple, basic information was life-changing for them. By learning how, when, and what to eat, their health was rapidly improving.

Ayurveda is a wonderful science that literally covers everything one needs to know about health. The aspects of Ayurveda that I find particularly useful are the ones that cover our general well-being, known as *svastha vrtam*. This includes two main areas: 1) *dinacarya*, or your daily routine, and 2) *ritucarya*, your seasonal routine. By following these two simple routines, one can drastically change the state of one's health. All it takes is a simple understanding of the three *doshas* and how these *doshas* affect us.

Basic Principles of the Three Doshas

The tridoshic system is the basis of Ayurvedic medicine. The five basic elements of the universe — ether, air, fire, water, and earth — are the basic building blocks of everything in this universe. They combine to form the three *doshas*. Ether and air form *vata*, fire and water form *pitta*, and water and earth form *kapha*. Everything in the universe can be categorized in relation to *vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha*, this includes our own bodies, the food we eat, the herbs or medicines we take, our environments, etc.

At the time of our conception some of the basic elements were more prominent than others and this has given us our lifelong bodily constitution known as *prakriti*. Depending on our *prakriti*, we are susceptible to certain diseases, prefer certain climates, activities, and foodstuffs. By understanding



ALL YEAR ROUND

what our *prakriti* is, and thereby following an appropriate diet and lifestyle plan, we can stay strong, healthy, and free from disease.

External Environment

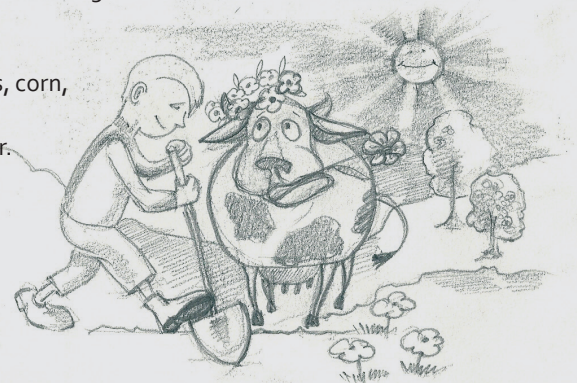
Our external environment is a key factor that should always be taken into consideration when assessing our diet and lifestyle routine. Such a routine means that no matter which part of the world you are in, what time of the year it is, or how you eat, your life should slightly change. By understanding the main changes that occur during each of the different seasons in the year, we can incorporate appropriate changes that are required for our personal body constitutions. As different parts of the world experience different seasons, the purpose of this article is to provide the basic information required for each season. Individuals can then apply this information depending on where they are. Since India experiences six seasons, the Ayurvedic texts have incorporated all six seasons in detail. It is important that you apply the season appropriate for your personal area.

Winter: Hemanta and Shishira

Winter has been divided into two seasons, but as the changes are practically the same for both, I will discuss them as one season. During the winter months, the atmosphere is generally cold, dry, and light, this creates an environment in which the *vata dosha* in our bodies is easily impaired. Therefore, during this season, the main aim is to keep the *vata dosha* in its natural balance. If not, you may suffer backaches, joint pains, and dryness of the body, both internally and externally.

Because of the cold external environment, the body works extra hard to keep warm, so the digestive fire is strong in the winter months. This explains why we are often drawn to heavy nourishing foods in the winter. If we do not eat correctly, the strong *jatharagni* (digestive fire) will digest the bodily tissues, which also causes *vata* to increase. To stay well balanced in the winter, the following guidelines are recommended:

- Take warm, heavy, and nourishing foods, like milk, wheat, rice, potatoes, grains, corn, sugarcane, jaggery, and oils.
- Use spices such as: cumin, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, turmeric, and black pepper.
- Prefer sweet, sour, and salty tastes.
- Drink hot water.
- Take warm oil massages with *vata*-pacifying oils. Oils such as sesame seed oil may be used. The massage should be mild and not vigorous.
- Do physical exercise at half your strength.
- Use pastes of saffron, *kasturi*, and fumes of *aguru*.





- Avoid unnecessary exposure to cold air and expose the body to sunlight whenever possible.
- Wear warm clothing made of silk, wool, and cotton.
- Your bed should be warm and covered.
- Avoid activities and foods that increase *vata*.
- Avoid fasting.

Spring: Vasanta

During the winter months, *kapha dosha* tends to increase in the body because of the food and the lifestyle in those months. However, when the springtime sunshine appears, it liquefies the accumulated *kapha* in the body, which often causes runny noses, sinusitis, and colds. At the same time, the digestive fire is no longer as strong as it was in the winter months and starts to get affected. Therefore, it is important not to let the *kapha dosha* get impaired during this season.

- Follow a *kapha*-pacifying diet — eat light, nourishing foods that are easy to digest (barley, wheat, honey, and mango juice are specifically recommended).
- Avoid a heavy, oily, sweet, or sour diet.
- Take water boiled with herbs, like sandalwood and *musta*, or water with honey.
- Avoid sleeping during the day in this season, for this increases *kapha dosha*.
- Increase the amount of exercise. The body is now able to tolerate the extra exertion, which will also help control *kapha*.
- Apply sandalwood, camphor, and kumkum on the body.



Spring is the season to cleanse and pacify *ka-*

pha. Therefore, the *panchakarma* procedure of *vamana* (emesis) is prescribed. Note that normally this is not done at home, because it requires detailed consultation with a trained Ayurvedic physician. *Nasya*, or applying specific drops of different preparations in the nasal passage, is also recommended, for this helps to clear excessive *kapha* located in the head region and is very useful in cases of sinusitis, hay fever, and many other disorders.

Summer: Grishma

In some countries, summer is very hot, while in others the season is a lot milder. For instance, in the UK a hot summer would likely be front-page news. However, one should consider the environment the body is accustomed to. For example, a hot Indian summer would affect someone living in the UK much more than someone born and raised in India. It is very important to consider your personal situation and which of the guidelines should be given more attention.

In a country where the sun beams and rain delays its fall, the sun begins to evaporate moisture from the earth. This creates a dry environment in which *kapha* decreases and *vata* increases. Therefore, your diet and lifestyle should ensure that both *vata* and *kapha* are controlled.

- Adopt a sweet, cold, liquid, oily diet and drinks. Ghee, milk, rice, grapes, honey, dates, cinnamon, cardamom, coconut, and plantain are good.
- Keep hydrated by drinking plenty of water.
- To promote coolness in the body, cornflour with cold water and sugar are recommended after a cold bath.
- *Rasala*, a preparation of yoghurt churned with pepper and sugar, is also excellent in this month.
- Try cooled buffalo milk with sugar.



- Avoid hot, sour, salty, and pungent foods.
- Limit physical exercise, because the body is weak during this season.
- Sleep in a cool room during the daytime.
- Apply sandalwood during the nighttime to keep the body cool and improve your sleep. (You can also wear pearls, which are also cooling.)
- Try drinking sandalwood water.
- Sprinkle your bed sheets with sweet scented water.
- Surround yourself with fragrant flowers, wear garlands, wear thin light clothes, and use fans.

Monsoon: Varsha

In many countries, especially in the West, this season does not exist, for the rain tends to fall throughout the year. However, in some countries this period is known as the rainy season, in which the summer heat is cooled down by the rain. The previous months are also classified as the months of dehydration, but it is during the monsoon that the rainfall begins to hydrate the world. Because of the changing environment, the body and digestive fire become weak. *Vata* increases, which in turn affects other *doshas*. The main consideration during this season is to ensure that the *vata dosha* is controlled, so the other *doshas* are not affected.

- Take sour, salty, and oily foods; this helps pacify the *vata dosha*. Barley, wheat, rice, and vegetable soup are excellent.
- Take pure boiled water (cooled down) with honey.
- Adopt measures to ensure that the digestive fire is strengthened. This includes herbs known as *deepan dravyas*, ginger powder, cumin, cloves, black pepper, and long pepper. An herbal mix known as *panchakola* is also effective.
- Use more honey than usual, but still moderately, because excessive use can increase *vata*.
- Avoid sleeping during the day.
- Limit your exercise.
- Avoid exposure to the sun.
- Applying oil all over the body in this season is important, because it helps counteract impairment of *vata* in the body. Take a bath once the oil is applied.
- Avoid humidity within the home.
- The monsoon is an excellent season for detoxification

and performing the *panchakarmas* and the cleansing procedures of *vamana* (emesis), *virechana* (purgative), and *basti* (enema) are recommended. The *doshas* are easily rebalanced in this period.

Autumn: Sharat

Because of the moisture and heat in the monsoon period, there is an accumulation of *pitta* in the body. When the autumn sun appears, *pitta* gets further impaired. In autumn, *pitta* is the *dosha* to monitor, so it is wise to adopt a diet and lifestyle that pacifies *pitta* during this season.

- Take sweet, light, cold, bitter food and drinks. Rice, barley, *mung dal*, sugar, *amalaki*, honey, and wheat are excellent choices.
- Avoid oily, fatty foods, and yoghurt.
- Use ghee, especially with bitter herbs like *neem*, *guduchi*, and *katuki*.
- Avoid excessive exposure to the sun.
- Do not sleep during the day or expose yourself to winds and frosts.
- Apply pastes of sandalwood, *usira*, and camphor.
- Expose yourself to the cool moonlight in the evenings.

Following the above guidelines, which specifically apply during their respective seasons, should keep your body healthy and balanced all year round. The general understanding and principles, however, should always be followed.



Hazards: Lead Found in Indian Spices and Powders

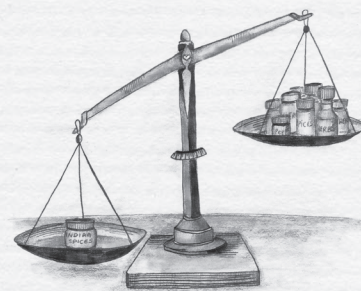
By Roni Caryn Rabin

Lead has been found in house paint and imported toys, and now it appears Indian spices and ceremonial powders may contain lead at levels that may be hazardous to children.

Sindoor, the vermillion powder applied along the hairline or as a dot on the forehead, had the highest contamination levels of some 157 products tested by Boston researchers, with some samples consisting of almost 50% lead, according to a paper published early online in the journal *Pediatrics* on 15 March.

Pediatricians at Children's Hospital Boston and investigators from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health tested the products after four young children were referred to the hospital with elevated blood lead levels.

The source of a 3-year-old girl's elevated lead level was traced



to a religious powder she ingested regularly, and a 1-year-old boy's lead was traced to spices and herbs. But two baby boys had elevated lead in their blood from ceremonial powders that were rubbed on their heads regularly.

"With infants, everything ends up in their mouth because they will eventually touch the residue," said Dr. Cristiane Gurgel Lin, chief author of the paper.

Testing found that only about one-quarter of spices had any detectable lead, but 58% of ceremonial powders and 81% of cosmetics tested contained lead. All three samples of sindoor tested positive and contained high amounts of lead, possibly because lead was added as a pigment.

Source: *New York Times*, 22 March, 2010

The Dangers of Inactivity

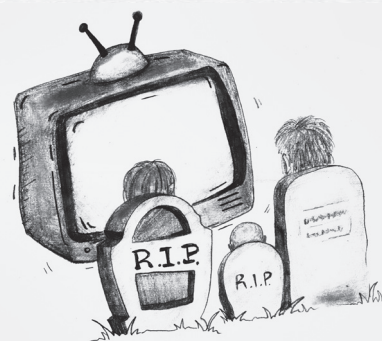
By Jeannine Stein

Watching television for hour upon hour obviously isn't the best way to spend leisure time — inactivity has been linked to obesity and heart disease. But a new study quantifies TV viewing's effect on risk of death.

Australian researchers found that each hour a day spent watching TV was linked with an 18% greater risk of dying from cardiovascular disease, an 11% greater risk of all causes of death, and a 9% increased risk of death from cancer.

The study, released Monday in *Circulation*, a journal of the American Heart Assn., looked at health data among 8,800 men and women older than 25 who were part of the Australian Diabetes, Obesity and Lifestyle Study. Participants recorded their television viewing hours for a week, and researchers separated the results by amount of viewing: those who watched less than two hours of TV a day, those who watched two to four hours a day, and those who watched more than four hours a day.

The subjects also had oral glucose tolerance tests to determine blood sugar and gave blood samples to establish cholesterol lev-



els at the beginning of the study. People with a history of cardiovascular disease were not included. In a follow up about six years later, 87 people had died due to cardiovascular disease and 125 of cancer.

Researchers found a strong connection between TV hours and death from cardiovascular disease, not just among the overweight and obese, but among people who had a healthy weight and exercised.

People who watched more than four hours a day showed an 80% greater risk of death from cardiovascular disease and a 46% higher risk of all causes of death compared with those who watched fewer than two hours a day, suggesting that being sedentary could have general deleterious effects. The numbers were the same after the researchers controlled for smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, an unhealthy diet, and leisure-time exercise.

"What we showed was that irrespective of a person's exercise level, sitting for four or more hours watching television was

linked to a significant increase in risk of death compared to watching lower amounts of TV," said Dr. David Dunstan, lead author of the study and professor and head of the Physical Activity Laboratory at the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute in Victoria, Australia. "The message here is that in addition to promoting regular exercise, we also need to promote avoiding long periods of sitting, such as spending long hours in front of the computer screen."

To him, the results weren't unexpected. "When we're in that sitting posture, we're not using our muscles, and we know from extensive evidence that muscle contractions are important for the body's regulatory processes, such as the ability to break down glucose and use it as energy." That can cause insulin resistance, which can trigger a spike in blood sugar levels, possibly leading to type 2 diabetes.

Dr. Prediman K. Shah, director of the cardiology division of the Cedars-Sinai Heart Institute, agreed. He pointed out that muscles become deconditioned when not used, triggering harmful

physiological changes. "If your activity is slowing down, you metabolize cholesterol less and synthesize it more," he said.

Even sporadic exercisers who sit for long periods need to increase their daily activity.

"The physical activity we do over a 24-hour period is important," says Dr. Gerald F. Fletcher, a cardiologist at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Fla., and a spokesman for the American Heart Assn.

That means taking the stairs instead of the elevator, gardening, walking the dog . . .

"For couch potatoes, sitting on your duff is hazardous to your health," Shah said. "The bottom line is: keep moving."

Source: *Los Angeles Times*, January 12, 2010: <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jan/12/science/la-sci-tv12-2010jan12>

Dangerous Receipts

By Steve Watson

Scientific Study finds 40% of all store receipts are covered in dangerous hormone-disrupting chemical

A scientific study has found that receipts from ATM's, grocery stores, fast food restaurants, and gas stations contain massive amounts of bisphenol A (BPA), the harmful chemical that is known to cause fertility problems and cancer.

Huge quantities of the chemical were discovered coating 40%, or two fifths, of all U.S. thermal activated paper receipts in a study conducted by the Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit organization in Washington, D.C. The group commissioned the University of Missouri Division of Biological Sciences to undertake the research. The laboratory, one of the world's foremost research facilities, found that in some cases pure BPA made up 3% of the total weight of the receipt.

The lab also discovered that the chemical was easily transferable from the receipt onto anything it came into contact with, including the skin of anyone handling the paper. Previous studies, including recent research by Swiss scientists, have found that BPA from receipts can transfer to skin and penetrate

so deeply that it cannot be washed off and may even enter the bloodstream. Some of the researchers also discovered that alcohol-based sanitizers can increase BPA penetration into the skin. There are also concerns that BPA from receipts could be transferred from skin onto food and enter the body through ingestion.

Major retailers using the BPA-containing receipts include McDonald's, CVS, KFC, Whole Foods, Walmart, and the U.S. Postal Service, according to the EWG research. Safeway was found to have the highest amounts of BPA on their receipts, at a level of up to 41 milligrams.

There are readily available non-BPA thermal paper receipts already being used by thousands of retailers, therefore the route of exposure to the chemical in this instance could be easily rectified, the EWG says. "Our point is that 60% of the receipts had no BPA or very insignificant traces. This is one exposure that's easily fixed. Retailers can easily make the transition to BPA-free paper," Anila Jacob, a senior scientist at EWG told the *Toronto Star*.



BPA is currently found in many plastic water bottles and used in the lining of soda, food, and baby-formula cans. Research has confirmed that the chemical can leach from the containers into the food or liquid within. The EWG study found that the total mass of BPA on a paper receipt is 250 to 1,000 times greater than the amount typically entering food from BPA laced containers. The group states that BPA contamination of food should remain the priority, but that this latest information is also highly disturbing.

Although the FDA and the EPA, citing just two chemical-industry studies, still officially consider the synthetic estrogen-like chemical to be safe, hundreds of independent studies, which the feds have ignored, have linked BPA to genital abnormalities, early puberty, cancer, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and fertility problems. Four U.S. states, including Maryland and New York State, as well as Canada, have not been willing to wait, and have recently banned BPA due to the evidence of its links to health

problems. Biomonitoring surveys by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have found BPA in the bodies of a stunning 93% of all Americans over the age of 6.

Interestingly, in light of the recent findings with paper receipts, EWG analysis of the CDC data has found that people who reported working in retail industries had 30% more BPA in their bodies than the average U.S. adult, and 34% more BPA than other workers. Another new study from the Journal of the American Medical Association found that higher levels of BPA in people's urine were associated with cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and liver problems. The research found that people with the highest BPA levels were twice as likely to suffer from diabetes or cardiovascular problems than those with lower levels.

Source: www.infowars.com, 3 August, 2010.

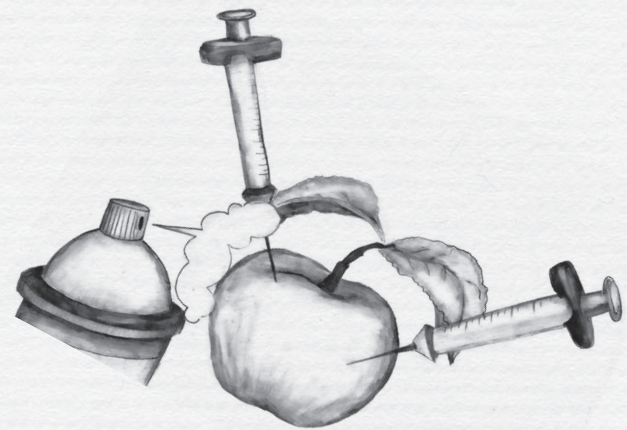
Tripura, India, Gets Tough against Chemical Contamination of Food

To prevent rampant use of chemicals in food items for preservation, the Tripura Health Department has initiated a move to impart training to food inspectors to implement the Food Safety Standards Act 2006.

Director, Health Service (Preventive Medicine) Dr R. K. Dhar said here today that Calcium Carbide was being used for preservation and early ripening of fruits while Melamine and Formalin were being used in sweet foods and beverage processing outlets in the State.

He said following latest communiqué of the Union Health Ministry, the State Government appointed a safety officer and after extensive and rigorous training on the Act as well all related issues of food safety, food inspectors would be enforcing the law.

"Since Tripura does not have enough production of seasonal fruits, the traders were importing premature fruits from various parts of the country and the consignment is transported to the state almost after a fortnight. After reaching here local fruit dealers use calcium carbide for ripening that triggers serious health complications and pollutes the environment," Dr Dhar underlined.

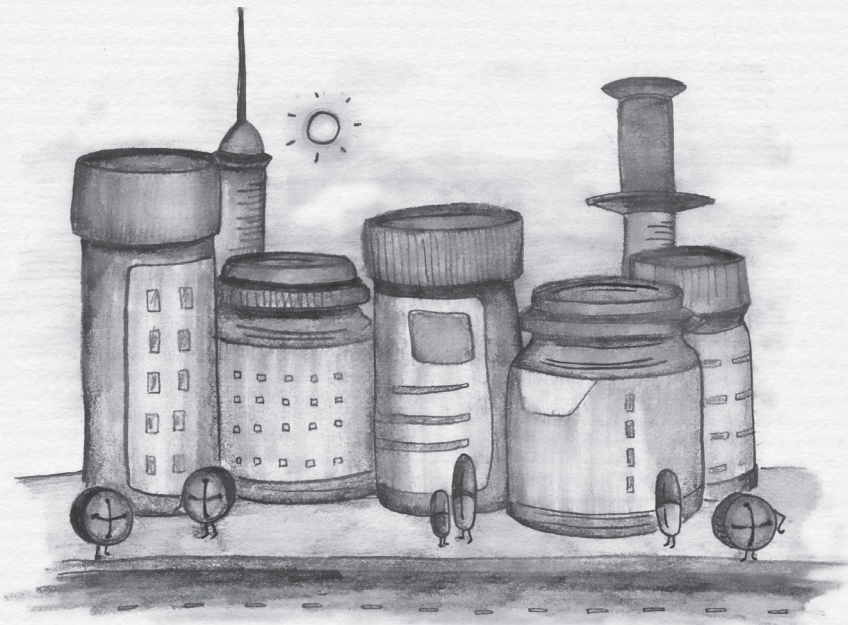


Similarly, the sweet foods and beverage processing units here used Melamine in high concentration in milk and mixed formalin to preserve perishable food items, Dr Dhar pointed out, adding that though Formalin directly affected the human body after consumption, Carbide generates harmful acetylene gas when exposed to the atmosphere.

These kinds of chemicals not only reduce the food value but also cause diseases like cancer, heart syndrome, liver and kidney related diseases, and also affect the eye-sight of human beings, which had compelled the State Government to think seriously on the issue.

Under Food Safety Standards Act 2006, all the food processing units and sellers and vendors need to have voluntary disclosure regarding non-use of harmful chemicals and at the same time, every seller, including hawkers and small vendors, would require to take license, Dr Dhar added.

Source: www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in, 7 September, 2010.



A Nation of Drug Addicts

By David Gutierrez

In Stephen Harrod Buhner's book, *The Lost Language of Plants*, Buhner exposes how we are polluting our environment with the pharmaceuticals that are intended to heal us. This is in addition to the billions of pounds of industrial waste that is going into the environment.

In the USA, in 1991, for example, there were \$42 billion of pharmaceuticals sold. A short eight years later, in 1999, that number rose to \$113 billion. This drug use is at epidemic proportions. There were 2.8 billion prescriptions written last year, yet there are only 280 million people in America. That's 10 prescriptions per person in America. Antidepressants, tranquilizers, psychiatric drugs, chemo therapy drugs, pain killers, fungicides, antibiotics, etc.

The toxic waste from the pharmaceutical drugs is beginning to show enormous repercussions in our environment. After these pharmaceutical drugs are ingested, they return to the environment.

There are over one million chemotherapy patients in the USA every year with 650,000 tons of chemo bodily waste entering the sewage system each year. These chemotherapy agents are not easily biodegradable, so as they are excreted back into the environment, they are still very toxic.

And then, of course, everyone knows about the overuse of antibiotics. In 1949, there were 156,000 lbs of antibiotics produced. By 1999 there were 50 million lbs of antibiotics produced. 20 million lbs goes into the animal feed – to the pigs and chickens and cows. Animals are saturated with antibiotics to keep them alive, and those antibiotics again are consumed by people. Those antibiotics end up back in the water table. So the American soil

today is awash with antibiotics. These antibiotics are not biodegradable. They are still killing bacteria in the soil.

But the cycle of life requires bacteria. When the leaves fall from the trees, bacteria convert those leaves into mulch, into nutrient material that the next generation of plants utilizes to grow.

The two top prescription drugs in America are Premarin, which is a conjugated oestrogen hormone, and Synthroid, a synthetic thyroid hormone. Chris Metcalf at Trent University in Canada found 400 parts per trillion of Estrone in local waste water. This ends up being recycled into tap water, ground water, and is being consumed.

And it's not just in America – German scientists found 30–60 pharmaceuticals present in the tap water and ground water samples they tested.

This means that even if we're not taking prescription drugs, we're still exposed to them via the water table. This is a very new phenomenon – it has happened just in the last generation. So we're just now beginning to experience the side effects.

It's critical that we protect ourselves from these environmental toxicities and build our immune systems, so that we are not affected.

Source: Based on an interview with John Easterling, treasure hunter, rainforest explorer, and founder of Amazon Herb Company. Originally published February 10, 2009. NaturalNews.com. See also: www.amazonprosperity.com/Toxicity.htm



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