

Universal Attributes and Doshic Theory

आयुर्वेद

In chapter one we considered the Shad Darshan, the six philosophies, which Āyurveda accepts as a basis for its thought. We also briefly discussed the five elements. In this chapter we will go into greater detail about the elements and come to a better understanding of how these basic principles lie at the heart of Āyurvedic science.

We will first try to understand the inanimate world and will then connect to the animate world through doshic theory. The purpose of this approach is to bridge a model of physics to a model of physiology through gunas (universal attributes) and karmas (actions).

The Five Elements and Their Attributes

The rishis perceived that in the beginning the world existed in an unmanifested state of Consciousness, avyākta—meaning unmanifest. From that state the subtle vibrations of the cosmic, soundless sound Aum manifested. From the subtle vibration of Aum came the Ether or Space element. This ethereal element then began to move and through its subtle movements created the Air element, which is Ether in action. The movement of Air produced friction and through friction

heat was generated. Particles of this heat combined to form intense light and from this light the Fire element emerged. Thus, Ether produced Air and it was Air that further manifested into Fire. The heat of Fire dissolved and liquefied certain ethereal elements, forming Water that then solidified to form the molecules of Earth. In this way, Ether manifested into the four elements of Air, Fire, Water, and Earth.

From Earth, all physical bodies for organic living beings were created, including both the plant and animal kingdoms. Earth was also the origin of all inorganic substances that comprise the mineral kingdom. Thus, out of the womb of the Five Elements all matter was born.

The five basic elements exist in all matter. Water provides the classic example: the solid state of water, ice, is a manifestation of the Earth principle. Latent heat (Fire) in the ice liquefies it, revealing the Water principle. Eventually water turns into steam, expressing the Air principle. The steam disappears into Ether or Space. Thus the five basic elements—Ether, Air, Fire, Water, and Earth—are all present in one substance. All five originated from the energy within Cosmic Consciousness and all five are present in all matter in the universe. Thus, energy and matter are one.

Man is a microcosm of the universe and, therefore, the five basic elements present in all matter also exist within each individual. In the human body, many spaces are aspects of the Ether or Space element. The spaces in the mouth, nose, gastrointestinal tract, respiratory tract, abdomen, thorax, capillaries, and tissues are all examples of Space.

Air is the element of movement. All movements involve Air as an element, because it alone moves everything. Any time there is motion, it means Air is present. The nature of the elements themselves determines the nature of physiology. Within the human body, Air is present in the pulsations of the heart and the expansion and contraction of the lungs. Under a microscope, even a single cell can be seen to move. Response to a stimulus is the movement of afferent and efferent nerve impulses, which are sensory and motor movements respectively. Movements of the nervous system are also governed by the Air principle present in the body.

The third element is Fire. The source of Fire and light in the solar system is the sun. In the human body, the source of Fire is metabolism. Fire works in the digestive system as well as in the gray matter of the brain, where Fire manifests as intelligence. Fire also activates the retina to perceive light.



Therefore, body temperature, digestion, thinking processes, and vision are all functions of bodily Fire. All metabolism and enzyme systems are controlled by this element.

Water, the fourth element, manifests in the body as the secretions of digestive juices, in the mucous membranes and in plasma and cytoplasm. Water is vital for the functioning of all the systems of the body. For example, dehydration resulting from diarrhea and vomiting must be treated immediately to protect the patient's life.

Earth, the fifth element, is also present in the microcosm of the human being. Life is possible on this planet because the Earth holds all living and non-living substances to its solid surface. In the body, all solid structures are derived from Earth.

Table 3: The Senses and the Elements

Jñānendriya (Sensory Faculties)	Sensory Organs	Karmendriya (Faculties of Action)	Motor Organs	Tanmātrās (Objects of the Senses)	Maha Bhūtas (Elements)
Hearing	Ears	Speech	Vocal Cords	Shabda (Sound)	Ether
Tactile perception	Skin	Giving and receiving	Hands	Sparsa (Touch)	Air
Vision	Eyes	Walking	Legs	Rūpa (Form)	Fire
Taste	Tongue	Procreation	Genitals	Rasa (Taste)	Water
Smell	Nose	Excretion	Excretory organs	Gandha (Odor or Smell)	Earth

The Five Elements and Tanmātrās

The five elements manifest in the functioning of the five senses as well as in certain functions of human physiology. Tan means subtle and mātrā means elements. The tanmātrās, the subtle elements, are the objects of the five senses. The five tanmātrās are sound, touch, form, taste, and odor or smell; the five senses are hearing, tactile perception, vision, taste, and smell. The tanmātrās are the ways in which the objective world is sensed. The five elements have functional integrity with the five sensory organs, which allows us to perceive the external environment. Their presence is the reason for the existence of the senses themselves. (see illustration on page 7)

The tanmātrās form the Common Ground for the expression of the objective world and the entire world exists on

this Ground. Another meaning of tan is mother, and mātrā also means matter—the mother of matter. The mother of this whole world is the tanmātrās. The tanmātrās are in the womb of the Cosmic Mother, Prakruti. It is this energy that gives rise to the objective five elements. Each element is related primarily to one tanmātrā but can contain a portion of the others as well. Ether comes out of shabda tanmātrā (sound); Air out of shabda and sparsha tanmātrās (sound and touch); Fire out of shabda, sparsha and rūpa tanmātrās (sound, touch and sight); Water out of shabda, sparsha, rūpa and rasa (sound, touch, sight and taste); and Earth out of shabda, sparsha, rūpa, rasa and gandha (sound, touch, form, taste and odor).

These five elements—Ether,⁸ Air, Fire, Water, and Earth—are also related to the five organs of action—mouth, hands, feet, genitals and excretory organs—which allow us to respond to the input we receive from the objective world. Ether is the medium through which sound is transmitted and is thus related to the function of hearing. The sensory organ of hearing is the ear. The organ of action associated with the sense of hearing is the mouth and vocal cords, which produce sound.

Air is related to the sense of touch and the sensory organ of touch is the skin. The organ of action related to the sense of touch is the hand. The skin of the hand is especially sensitive and the hand is responsible for the actions of holding, giving, and receiving.

Fire, which manifests as light, heat, and color is related to vision. The sensory organ of vision is the eye. The organ of action related to the sense of vision is the feet. A blind man can walk but his walking has no direction. Eyes give direction to the action of walking.

Water is related to taste. The sensory organ of taste is the tongue. Without water the tongue cannot perceive the different tastes. The related organ of action is the reproductive system. The tongue is closely related in function to the action of the genitals (penis and clitoris). In Āyurveda, the penis and clitoris are considered the lower tongue and the tongue in the mouth is the upper tongue. The person who controls the upper tongue has control over the lower tongue and vice versa.

Earth is related to the sense of smell. The sensory organ of smell is the nose. The organs of action related to the sense of smell are the excretory organs. The nose is related to the anus.

8. Ether is the preferred term when referring to the five elements. Space normally refers to physical space.



This relationship is demonstrated by the fact that a person who has constipation or an unclean colon experiences bad breath and a dull sense of smell.

The Basic Attributes of Tridosha—Vāta, Pitta, Kapha

According to Āyurvedic philosophy, the entire cosmos is an interplay of the energies of the five elements—Ether, Air, Fire, Water, Earth. Āyurveda groups the five elements into three basic types of energy or functional principles that are present in everybody and everything. There are no single words in English to describe these principles, so we use the original Sanskrit words vāta, pitta and kapha, called the three doshas or tridosha. Dosha literally means “fault,” “impurity,” or “mistake.” However, that definition is not adequate in this context. Dosha is a specific word used by Charaka, Sushruta, and Vāgbhata. Dosha is organization. As long as the doshas are normal in quality and quantity, they maintain a harmonious psychophysiology. The moment they go out of balance, they corrupt or pollute or vitiate the dhātus (bodily tissues) and then they become dosha (here meaning impurity). Therefore, dosha is that which becomes vitiated and then affects the bodily tissues, leading to disease. But in a healthy way, dosha means three principles that govern psychophysiological response and pathological changes. The doshas—vāta, pitta, and kapha—bind the five elements into living flesh. The concept of support is a natural function of these principles of physiology we call vāta, pitta, kapha. They are the agents of DNA which form the blueprint for the physiology. They are energy complexes; these complexes are known by their attributes, or gunas.

Energy is required to create movement so that fluids and nutrients get to the cells, enabling the body to function. Energy is also necessary to metabolize the nutrients in the cells and is utilized to lubricate and maintain cellular structure. Vāta is the energy of movement, pitta the energy of transformation, digestion or metabolism, and kapha the energy of lubrication and structure.

In Āyurveda, body, mind, and consciousness work together in maintaining balance. They are simply viewed as different facets of one’s being. To learn how to balance body, mind, and consciousness requires an understanding of how vāta, pitta and kapha work together. According to Āyurvedic philosophy, the entire cosmos is an interplay of the energies of the five basic elements—Ether, Air, Fire, Water, and Earth. Vāta, pitta and kapha are combinations of the five elements that manifest as patterns in all creation.

Ancient Āyurveda might have classified human beings into five body types based upon the predominant element. But as Ether is essentially inert and Earth is the solid, supporting foundation of creation, these two elements did not lend themselves to a typology as well as did the active, mobile, and changing elements of Air, Fire and Water. Āyurveda incorporates the three active elements as the primary elements in the principle of tridosha.

Every dosha is composed of all five elements. However, two elements are predominant in each.

Vāta is Air and Ether.

Pitta is Fire and Water.

Kapha is Water and Earth.

Vāta, pitta, and kapha are the very foundation of Āyurveda. The concept of the humors or principles—wind, bile, and phlegm—found in the Greek medicine of the past is likely an offspring of Āyurveda.

Vāta. In the body, vāta, principally composed of Ether and Air, is the subtle energy associated with movement. It governs breathing, blinking, muscle and tissue movement, the pulsation of the heart, and all the movements in the cytoplasm and cell membranes. In balance, vāta promotes creativity and flexibility. Out of balance, vāta produces fear, anxiety, and abnormal movements.

Pitta. Principally made up of Fire and Water, pitta expresses itself as the body's metabolic system. It governs digestion, absorption, assimilation, nutrition, metabolism, body temperature—all transformations. In balance, pitta promotes understanding and intelligence. Out of balance, pitta arouses anger, hatred, jealousy, and inflammatory disorders.

Kapha. Kapha is principally a combination of Earth and Water and is the energy that forms the body's structure, and provides the "glue" or cohesion that holds the cells together. Kapha supplies the water for all bodily parts and systems. It lubricates joints, moisturizes the skin and maintains immunity. In balance, kapha is expressed as love, calmness, and forgiveness. Out of balance, it leads to attachment, greed, possessiveness, and congestive disorders.

Attributes (Gunas) and Their Effects on Doshas

Charaka, the great Āyurvedic physician of ancient times, found that all organic and inorganic substances, as well as all thoughts and actions, have definite attributes. These attributes



contain potential energy and express the static nature of a substance, while the actions express kinetic energy. Attributes and actions are closely related since the potential energy of the attributes eventually becomes action, or kinetic energy, released when the substance undergoes chemical transformation such as burning or digestion. According to Āyurveda, there are twenty basic attributes.

Charaka categorized these attributes into 10 opposite pairs (e.g., sharp and slow or dull, dry and oily, liquid and dense). These opposite forces function together. Basically, the universe is the manifestation of the two opposites, male and female energy. Actually it is possible to understand the universe in its entirety in terms of the interactions of opposing basic attributes. These pairs of opposites must be understood as having relative relationships—relative to subject, relative to individual and also relative to standard normality. Nothing is absolute.

Table 4: The 20 Attributes and Their Relationship to the Tridosha

Vāta	Pitta	Kapha
Dry	Hot	Heavy
Light	Sharp	Slow / Dull
Cold	Light	Cold
Rough	Liquid	Oily
Subtle	Mobile	Liquid
Mobile	Oily	Slimy / Smooth
Clear		Dense
		Soft
		Static
		Sticky / Cloudy
		Hard
		Gross
Elements of the Tridosha		
Space + Air	Fire + Water	Water + Earth

Vāta, pitta, and kapha each have their own attributes, in fact each of these terms is really only a name for a grouping of attributes. Vāta represents the collection of dry, light, cold, rough, subtle, mobile, and clear qualities. Pitta, similarly, is made up of hot, sharp, light, liquid, mobile and slightly oily qualities. Kapha includes attributes of heavy, slow or dull, cold,

oily, liquid, slimy or smooth, dense, soft, static and sticky or cloudy.

In Āyurveda there is a law which states that like increases like. When similar qualities come together, their quantitative expression increases. For example, the summer season has attributes similar to those of pitta—hot, liquid, light, mobile, and penetrating. Therefore, in the summer pitta in the body will be increased. Vāta is light, subtle, dry, mobile, rough, and cold. So, in the fall season, which also exhibits these attributes, vāta will tend to be increased in the human constitution. Kapha is liquid, heavy, cold, sticky and cloudy. In the winter when these characteristics predominate in the external environment, internal kapha tends to be increased.

The concepts governing Āyurvedic pharmacology, therapeutics, and food preparation are based on the 20 attributes. Through an understanding and application of the actions of the attributes, balance of the tridosha can be maintained.

We will now consider each of these attributes and their effects on tridosha. The section called “The Twenty Attributes (Gunas) and Their Effects on the Doshas” on page 287 details these attributes and their actions on the doshas and agni.

Guru (Heavy). The heavy quality increases kapha and decreases vāta and pitta. Guru promotes growth in the body. Meat, cheese, yogurt, and sugar are heavy. Eating heavy foods may cause weight gain. Sleep is also heavy and sleeping for 10 hours leaves a person feeling heavy throughout the day. Eating and not doing much physical activity is heavy. To some extent we need the heavy quality for nourishment, groundedness, centeredness, and stability. However, too much of this quality slows digestion and metabolism, and creates dullness.

Laghu (Light). The light quality increases vāta and pitta and decreases kapha. The opposite of heavy is laghu. This quality makes the body alert and attentive. But too much of this quality creates spaciness, ungroundedness, and instability. It creates insecurity, fear, and anxiety.

Manda (Slow/Dull). The slow quality increases kapha and decreases vāta and pitta. Manda creates sluggishness, slow action, relaxation and dullness, as well as calm, quiet, and silence. Rich and fatty foods induce this quality.

Tikshna (Sharp). The sharp quality increases vāta and pitta and decreases kapha. The opposite of manda is tikshna. Sharp qualities are present in cayenne pepper and other spicy



foods. Fire is hot and sharp. This quality improves learning, concentration, understanding, appreciation, and comprehension. In excess, it can create ulcers.

Shīta (Cold). The cold quality increases vāta and kapha and decreases pitta. Shīta creates cold, numbness, unconsciousness, contraction, stagnation, fear, and insensitivity in the body. Cold promotes accumulation of mucus, thus raising kapha. The cold quality cools down pitta, slows digestion and reduces immunity. Exposure to cold weather reduces the natural resistance of the throat and may help promote a sore throat, if your internal fire, or agni, is not strong enough to give protection.

Ushna (Hot). The hot quality increases pitta and decreases vāta and kapha. The opposite of cold is ushna. The hot quality stimulates gastric fire, improves circulation, digestion, absorption, and assimilation. It liquefies kapha, as fire melts wax, and calms vāta, because vāta is cold. The hot quality promotes cleansing. If you eat hot curry, your sinuses begin to run, because heat liquefies kapha and removes it from the system. Green chilies and cayenne pepper are hot. Hot causes increase of pitta, and since pitta is hot, it can make a person irritable and angry.

Snigdha (Oily or Unctuous). The oily quality increases pitta and kapha and decreases vāta. Snigdha brings relaxation. It creates smoothness, moisture, lubrication, and vigor. It promotes compassion. Love is oily, liquid, and nourishing because it has the quality of snigdha.

Rūksha (Dry). The dry quality increases vāta and decreases pitta and kapha. The opposite of snigdha is rūksha. It creates dehydration and makes the stool hard and dry, causing constipation. Rūksha stimulates fire, because fire is dry. This quality causes choking, constriction, spasm, and pain. Dry weather causes aggravation of vāta under the skin, causing the skin to become dry, rough and cracked. Fear, nervousness and loneliness are dry. Rūksha creates isolation, separation, and rejection. When a person is lonely, the dry quality is aggravated.

Shlakshna (Slimy/Smooth). The smooth quality increases pitta and kapha and decreases vāta. Cheese and oils increase pitta, avocado and ghee increase kapha. This quality lubricates and makes the body flexible. Shlakshna prevents osteoporosis and arthritic changes.

Khāra (Rough). The rough quality increases vāta and decreases pitta and kapha. The opposite of smooth is khāra. Khāra increases dryness, absorption, and constipation. All raw

vegetables are rough and provoke vāta. The rough quality is also present in garbanzo beans, adzuki beans, black beans, and pinto beans. Even after being cooked, they are still rough, astringent, produce gas, and increase vāta.

Sandra (Dense). The dense quality increases kapha and decreases vāta and pitta. Meat and cheese are dense. Sandra increases the compactness of the body and makes a person more grounded. When vāta is provoked, people may crave meat, which brings a feeling of stability. Sandra promotes solidity, density, and strength. The firmness and solidity of healthy muscle tissue is kapha. The dense quality overall is kapha increasing.

Drava (Liquid). The liquid quality increases pitta and kapha and decreases vāta. The opposite of dense is liquid. However, the word liquid doesn't give the total significance. Sandra means dense, highly concentrated, and drava means less concentrated, diluted. For example, water is drava, liquid, diluted. But if you continue adding salt to water, the stage comes when the salt stops dissolving. That salty water is highly concentrated and dense. Kapha has these qualities of dense, liquid and salty. Drava dissolves and liquefies. The liquid quality promotes salivation, compassion, and cohesiveness. Excessive intake of water will cause water retention and increase kapha.

Mrudu (Soft). The soft quality increases pitta and kapha and decreases vāta. Mrudu creates softness, delicacy, relaxation, tenderness, love, and care. It provokes mucus and increases kapha in the system. The soft quality calms vāta, because vāta is rough. Love is soft while anger is hot, sharp and penetrating; fear is dry and rough. Sleeping on a soft water bed increases kapha.

Kathina (Hard). The hard quality increases vāta and decreases pitta. In later stages of disease, it also increases kapha such as when a tumor is formed. The opposite of mrudu is kathina. Kathina increases hardness, strength, rigidity, selfishness, callousness, and insensitivity in the mind. In pneumonia, the lungs become hard. Sleeping on a hard bed increases vāta. Callouses on the hands or feet is kathina.

Sthira (Static). The static quality increases kapha and decreases vāta and pitta. Sthira promotes stability and support. Sitting quietly induces the static quality and brings stability and healing.

Chala (Mobile). The mobile quality increases vāta and pitta and decreases kapha. Chala is the opposite of sthira. Chala promotes motion, shakiness, and restlessness. Our thoughts,



feelings and emotions are mobile. Insecurity and shakiness come from mobile quality. The mobile quality increases vāta in the system, while the static quality brings groundedness. Jogging, jumping, and physical activity are examples of chala.

Sūkshma (Subtle). The subtle quality increases vāta and pitta and decreases kapha. Many drugs and herbs are sūkshma, subtle. For example, marijuana increases vāta and pitta and makes a person spacey. Alcohol and aspirin are also subtle and especially increase pitta.

Sthūla (Gross). The gross quality increases kapha and decreases vāta and pitta. Sthūla causes obstruction and obesity. Meat and cheese are gross and increase kapha. The opposite of sūkshma is sthūla.

Vishada (Clear). The clear quality increases vāta and pitta and decreases kapha. Vishada pacifies but creates isolation and diversion. The opposite of āvila is vishada. An excess of clear quality can manifest from too much cleansing, such as excessive enemas or purgatives. Too much cleansing increases vāta and pitta.

Picchila (Sticky). The sticky quality increases kapha and decreases vāta and pitta. Picchila causes cohesiveness in body and mind. In excess, it can cause attachment which is a sign of high kapha. This twentieth guna is sometimes called **āvila (cloudy)**⁹. The cloudy quality increases kapha and decreases vāta and pitta. Āvila causes lack of both clarity and perception. All dairy products are āvila and increase kapha.

Āyurveda uses these 20 qualities as a therapeutic guide, a diagnostic tool, and a clinical barometer in order to pinpoint which quality has provoked vāta, pitta or kapha.

Prakruti: Your Unique Body Type

Each person's combination and proportions of vāta, pitta and kapha are determined by the genetics, diet, lifestyle, and emotions of the parents, among other factors, at the time of conception. The combination of the three doshas, which forms the person's constitution and is set at conception, is called prakruti. Prakruti is simply the unique psychophysical makeup and functional habits of a person.

There are seven possible combinations of vāta, pitta and kapha. For example, a person might be mostly kapha with a

9. The qualities of the twenty gunas are described in more than one way. Picchila is used by some authors and āvila is used by others.

secondary characteristic of pitta and a small amount of vāta. In Āyurveda this would be written $V_1 P_2 K_3$. A person might be equally pitta and vāta with a small amount of kapha. This would be written $V_3 P_3 K_1$. The numbers serve to suggest the ranking of each dosha. A few rare individuals are born with a constitution where all three doshas are equal in quality and quantity, $V_3 P_3 K_3$. These people experience good health and excellent digestion. However, the majority of people will have one or two doshas predominant. With proper diet and lifestyle, these people can maintain balance and optimal health. The prakruti, as one's genetic code, does not change during one's lifetime, except in rare cases.

Not every person with the same ratio of doshas in their prakruti is identical. This is because, even though the quantities of the doshas are the same, the qualities express in different ways. For example, a person with V_3 may be more cold while another with the same proportion may be more dry.

There is also a state called *vikruti*, which reveals the present state of the three doshas. If the present state of the doshas is the same as prakruti, that person is balanced and healthy. In a person of excellent health, the proportions of vikruti will be the same as prakruti. But more likely there will be a difference, for vikruti reflects any aspects of diet, lifestyle, emotions, age, environment, etc., that are not in harmony with one's prakruti. An Āyurvedic physician can establish this difference through a variety of procedures that include taking a life history, analyzing the face and tongue, and taking the pulse. It is this difference between prakruti and vikruti that provides the Āyurvedic physician with precise information to formulate a program for restoring health. No matter what the constitution, it is possible to achieve optimal health through proper diet, cooking methods, lifestyle, and an attitude toward life that specifically suits each individual.

There are four general categories which describe prakruti: janma prakruti, deha prakruti, dosha prakruti, and manas prakruti.

Janma Prakruti. Janma prakruti is also called karma prakruti, because it reflects the effects of karmic influences on the constitution. We are bound to birth and death by karmic forces that influence the physical, mental, astral, and causal bodies. The cause of birth is desire. When we take birth (at the moment the soul enters the fetus), the karmic momentum of the individual manifests from the causal to the mental body then to the astral body and finally to the physical body. The resulting



individual constitution is janma prakruti. We have chosen our parents through karmic bonds. Moksha (liberation) cannot be attained until all karmic seeds are roasted in the flame of attention, meditation.

Janma prakruti is the genetic prakruti, which is determined at the moment of conception. This genetic prakruti is a combination of the ratios of VPK in the mother and the father at that time. Diet, lifestyle, and mental/emotional factors affecting the parents can influence the qualities of VPK in their sperm and ova.

Deha Prakruti. Deha prakruti is the current bodily prakruti. It includes the fetal prakruti during pregnancy, which is influenced by the mother's diet, lifestyle, environment, and mental/emotional states. Janma (genetic) prakruti can be altered by these maternal influences and long-standing congenital abnormalities may result, which means deha prakruti is different from janma prakruti. For instance, due to aggravation of the doshas in the fetus caused by the mother's diet and lifestyle, the baby could develop cleft palate or spina bifida.

Deha prakruti reflects the dharma associated with a particular birth. Behind every dharma is karma, which is action. Dharma is duty, responsibility. The mother's dharma and actions influence the baby's constitution. The deha prakruti is also a physical expression of the causal, mental, and astral bodies. The physical/psychological makeup reflects the dharma that the individual has taken birth to perform, and the individual will possess abilities that make it possible to fulfill that dharma.

Dosha Prakruti. Dosha prakruti represents the ratio of doshas present at the time of birth, when the baby takes its first breath. The season, time, place, date, and planetary disposition at birth can all affect dosha prakruti. Dosha prakruti is deha prakruti expressed in terms of vāta, pitta, and kapha.

Manas Prakruti. Manas prakruti is a term that defines the mental constitution. Manas prakruti is described in terms of the three gunas—sattva, rajas, tamas. Sattvic qualities of mind are clarity, alertness, attentiveness, love, compassion, and cooperativeness. Rajasic qualities are self-centeredness, selfishness, and restlessness. Rajas is movement; the movement between the observer and the observed, between subject and object. Tamasic qualities express as dullness, gloominess, depression, sadness, and laziness. Tamas is crystallization of experience.

Manas prakruti is also part of your genetic code. Right at the time of fertilization, the sperm and ovum join, carrying vāta,

pitta, and kapha from the parents. Similarly, they carry sattva, rajas, and tamas from the cosmic mind. The cosmic mind maintains equilibrium of sattva, rajas, and tamas. Cosmic tamas creates darkness. Cosmic sattva creates the rising of the sun. Cosmic rajas creates the movement of the earth and galaxies. So, in the cosmic mind, sattva, rajas, and tamas are perfectly harmonized, qualitatively and quantitatively. That is why there is order in the cosmos. Nevertheless, at the time of fertilization, an individual soul's past life karma yields the qualities of that karma into an enclosure of jīvātman, a tiny bubble of the ocean of consciousness, which is formed because of a movement of sattva, rajas, and tamas.

Therefore, at fertilization, sattva, rajas, and tamas, in a particular permutation and combination, yield into the consciousness of the fertilized ovum. There is embryonic consciousness and within that consciousness, there are embryonic manas, smṛuti, buddhi and ahaṁkāra. In the embryonic smṛuti, we carry past life memory. In the embryonic buddhi, the embryo has the capacity to discriminate and digest thoughts.

According to Āyurveda, the heart is the seat of the mind. Manas prakṛti, the mind, is expressed during the third month of pregnancy when the heart is developing. There is also unmanifest embryonic mind that we may call the subconscious mind. We have a subconscious mind and the cosmos has a subconscious mind. The cosmic subconscious mind is in a pre-Big Bang state. When the Big Bang occurred, the cosmic subconscious became conscious and creation occurred.

In summary, janma prakṛti, the genetic code at the time of fertilization, does not change. Deha prakṛti can change through the actions of the mother. Similarly, manas prakṛti is subject to change. A person who is born with more rajasic quality can see his manas prakṛti change to a predominance of sattva through meditation, yoga, contemplation, or the guidance of a spiritual master. The purpose of manas prakṛti is to be a springboard, so that you can balance on this springboard and jump into the cosmos. Manas prakṛti can be used to make a quantum leap into the cosmic order. It does not matter if you are tamasic. Just say, "Yes, I'm tamasic; that's fine." You can acknowledge this in yourself. Once you know you have tamasic qualities, the tamas begins to change. A mad man does not know that he is mad. The moment he knows he is mad, in that moment his madness goes away. That is the beauty of manas prakṛti.



Characteristics of the Vāta Individual

The Sanskrit term vāta is related to the verb *vah*, meaning vehicle, to carry or to move. So vāta is the principle of mobility that regulates all activity in the body, from how many thoughts one might have during a given period to how efficiently food moves through the intestines. The vāta quality is responsible for joy, happiness, creativity, speech, sneezing, and elimination, to name just a few functions. Vāta is in charge of the vital life essence, prāna. Thus when vāta (prāna) leaves the body, life ceases.

Vāta has the qualities or attributes of dry, light, cold, rough, subtle, mobile (erratic), and clear, with an astringent taste, and brownish and blackish colors. How these qualities translate into the makeup of the vāta individual is shown in the chart of vāta attributes. Physically, vāta persons have light, flexible bodies and big, protruding teeth. They have small, recessed, dry eyes. With irregular appetite and thirst, they often experience digestive and malabsorption problems. Vāta types tend to be delicate in health, so may have few or no children.

In their behavior, vāta individuals are easily excited. Indeed, they are alert and quick to act without much thinking. They have good imaginations and enjoy daydreaming. Vāta individuals are loving people but may love someone out of fear or loneliness. Fears of darkness, heights and enclosed spaces are not uncommon in vāta individuals. Their faith is flexible and ready to change, but the change does not necessarily last for long. Because of this tendency to change, vāta people may often move furniture or residence to keep from feeling bored. They do not like sitting idle and seek constant action. Due to their active natures, they make good money but spend it on trifles and have difficulty saving. (see “The Attributes of the Vāta Individual” on page 42)

Characteristics of the Pitta Individual

The word pitta is derived from the Sanskrit word *tap*, meaning to heat and to be austere. Pitta represents the Fire principle in the body. Literally everything that enters the body must be digested or “cooked,” from the sight of a full moon to a strawberry popped into the mouth. In addition to the gastric fire, pitta also includes the enzymes and amino acids that play a major role in metabolism, and even the neurotransmitters and neuropeptides involved in thinking. Some of pitta’s responsibilities are regulating the body heat through chemical transformation of food and giving a person appetite, vitality, learning, and understanding.

Pitta is hot, sharp, light, liquid, spreading, and slightly oily in nature. It is sour, pungent, and bitter to the taste, and has a fleshy smell. It is associated with the colors red and yellow. These qualities are revealed in the body of the pitta person, as shown in the chart of pitta attributes. By virtue of these attributes, pitta people have a sensitive and reactive body with a medium frame and weight. They seldom gain or lose much weight. They may have sharp, yellowish teeth with soft and, at times, bleeding gums. Their eyes are bright but tend to be sensitive to light. Pittas usually have strong appetite and thirst and like cold drinks and sweets.

Pitta types have excellent capability for learning, understanding, and concentrating. They are highly disciplined and excellent leaders. These people are blessed with wisdom, which is sometimes reflected by baldness—so much wisdom indeed that it “burns” off their hair! Pitta individuals never yield an inch from their principles, which sometimes leads them to fanaticism. They may give a wrong answer but with great confidence.

As a matter of fact, they can be judgmental, critical, and perfectionistic, and tend to become angry easily. They love noble professions and often make large amounts of money to spend on luxurious items. They like perfume and jewelry. They may not have a strong sex drive. Overall, the pitta constitution is endowed with moderate strength, much material knowledge, wealth, and a medium span of life. (see “The Attributes of the Pitta Individual” on page 43)

Characteristics of the Kapha Individual

The phrase kapha comes from two Sanskrit roots, *ka* meaning water and *pha* meaning to flourish—that which is flourished by water. Kapha’s nature is also Earth, so Earth and Water give kapha its definitive qualities. Kapha comprises all our cells, tissues and organs. Kapha molecules tend to stick together to form dense masses and give the body a chubby shape. Lubrication of joints and organs, strong muscles and bones, cellular secretions, and memory retention are all part of kapha’s function.

Water and Earth give kapha the qualities of heavy, slow, cool, oily, liquid, slimy, dense, soft, static, sticky, cloudy, hard, and gross. It has a sweet and salty taste and is white in color. The presentation of these qualities in the kapha constitution is in the table of kapha attributes.

These qualities give a strong and large body frame, large eyes, strong teeth and thick, curly hair to people of kapha



constitution. They have thick, smooth, oily and hairy skin. Kapha people have a steady appetite and thirst, but tend to have slow digestion and metabolism. These characteristics often result in weight gain, which kapha people have great difficulty in shedding. At times, cravings for sweet and salt lead to water retention. They love eating, sitting, doing nothing, and sleeping for a long time.

Kapha people are blessed with a deep, stable faith, with love and compassion, and a calm, steady mind. They have good memory, a deep melodious voice, and a monotonous pattern of speech. A kapha person makes and saves money. Extravagances may be spending a little amount on cheese, candy and cakes. An unbalanced kapha suffers from greed, attachment, possessiveness, and laziness. All in all, the healthy kapha individual is endowed with excellent strength, knowledge, peace, love, and longevity, due to a strong constitution. (see "The Attributes of the Kapha Individual" on page 44)

Table 5: The Attributes of the Vāta Individual

Attributes	Manifestations in the Body, Mind & Emotions
Dry	dry skin, hair, lips, tongue; dry colon, tending toward constipation; hoarse voice
Light	light muscles, bones, thin body frame, light, scanty sleep; underweight
Cold	cold hands, cold feet, poor circulation; hates cold and loves hot; stiffness of muscles
Rough	rough, cracked skin, nails, hair, teeth, hands and feet; cracking joints
Subtle	subtle fear, anxiety, insecurity; fine goose-pimples; minute muscle twitching, fine tremors
Mobile	fast walking, talking, doing many things at a time; restless eyes, eyebrows, hands, feet; unstable joints; many dreams; loves travelling and does not stay at one place; swinging moods, shaky faith, scattered mind
Clear	clairvoyant; understands immediately and forgets immediately; clear, empty mind, experiences void and loneliness
Astringent	dry choking sensation in the throat; gets hiccoughs, burping; loves oily, mushy soups; craving for sweet, sour and salty tastes; tendency toward constipation
Brownish-black	Dark complexion; dark hair and eyes; color of vāta āma, e.g. dark coated tongue



Table 6: The Attributes of the Pitta Individual

Attributes	Manifestations in the Body, Mind & Emotions
Hot	good digestive fire; strong appetite; body temperature tends to be higher than average; hates heat; gray hair with receding hair line or baldness; soft brown hair on the body and face
Sharp	sharp teeth, distinct eyes, pointed nose, tapering chin, heart-shaped face; good absorption and digestion; sharp memory and understanding; intolerance of hard work; irritable; probing mind
Light	light/medium body frame; does not tolerate bright light; fair shiny skin, bright eyes
Liquid	loose liquid stools; soft delicate muscles; excess urine, sweat and thirst
Spreading (mobile)	pitta spreads as rash, acne, or inflammation over the body or affected areas; pitta subjects want to spread their name and fame all over the world
Oily	soft oily skin, hair, feces; may not digest deep-fried food which can cause headache
Sour	sour acid stomach, acidic pH; sensitive teeth; excess salivation
Pungent	heartburn, burning sensations in general; strong feelings of anger and hate
Bitter	bitter taste in the mouth, nausea, vomiting; repulsion toward bitter taste; cynical
Fleshy smell	fetid smell under armpits, mouth, soles of feet; socks smell
Red	red flushed skin, eyes, cheeks and nose; red color aggravates pitta; does not tolerate heat and sunlight; color of pitta without āma
Yellow	yellow eyes, skin, urine and feces; may lead to jaundice, over production of bile; yellow color increases pitta; pale yellow coloring is normal pitta, but dark yellow is color of pitta āma

Table 7: The Attributes of the Kapha Individual

Attributes	Manifestations in the Body, Mind & Emotions
Heavy	heavy bones, muscles, large body frame; tends to be overweight; grounded; deep heavy voice
Slow/Dull	slow walk, talk; slow digestion, metabolism; sluggish gestures
Cool (Cold)	cold clammy skin; steady appetite and thirst with slow metabolism and digestion; repeated cold, congestion and cough
Oily	oily skin, hair and feces; lubricated, unctuous joints and other organs
Liquid	excess salivation; congestion in the chest, sinuses, throat and head
Slimy/Smooth	smooth skin; smoothness of organs; smooth, gentle mind, calm nature
Dense	dense pad of fat; thick skin, hair, nail and feces; plump rounded organs; firmness and solidity of muscles; compact, condensed tissues
Soft	soft pleasing look; love, care, compassion, kindness and forgiveness
Static	loves sitting, sleeping and doing nothing
Sticky	viscous, cohesive quality causes compactness, firmness of joints and organs; loves to hug; is deeply attached in love and relationships
Cloudy	in early morning mind is cloudy and foggy; often desires coffee as a stimulant to start the day
Hard	firm muscles; strength; rigid attitude
Gross	causes obstruction; obesity
Sweet	the anabolic action of sweet taste stimulates sperm formation increasing quantity of semen; abnormal function may cause craving for sweets
Salty	helps digestion and growth, gives energy; maintains osmotic condition; abnormal function may create craving for salt, water retention
White	pale complexion; white mucous; white coating on tongue; color of kapha āma

