

Ayurveda means the knowledge of life. This philosophical and medical system is a branch of Vedic understanding dating back at least four thousand years.

Every being contains a slightly different blend of the five elements. To somewhat simplify things, Ayurveda distilled the five elements into three doshas or qualities, within a living being. These three doshas contain a mixture of the five elements. As humans, we contain a mixture of these doshas. Usually two of the three are predominant, creating genetic differences in personality, energy levels, and appearance. In Ayurveda understanding, when the energies in the body are out of balance, disease can follow. The cure for disease is to restore the body's natural harmony through lifestyle appropriate for the particular dosha, and of course yoga practice.

Determining your dosha can help you understand your natural tendencies and plot a course of action to stay as balanced as possible. As an example, someone with Kapha constitution (strong in earth and water energies) may have great patience and endurance and not get rattled if they miss a meal, but cultivating speed and determination may be a challenge. Yoga practice for this constitution might emphasise the fire and air elements of a dynamic practice rather than a slow, restorative postures. This type of practice may not be initially appealing to a constitution strong in Kapha energy. Those of us with plenty of Vata in our constitution might find long holds in asana practice irritating and challenging in the same manner. Balanced practice includes working with your weaknesses as well celebrating your strengths.

As a meditation teacher, embodying these five energies, observing them in students and employing them specifically toward encouragement, are all part of the art of effective teaching. The strongly Pitta student may need to be reminded not to go beyond their edge into injury. The Vata student should be encouraged to keep their feet rooted. The Kapha student may need to be awakened from Shavasana regularly.

The 3 Doshas:

Kapha – Earth & Water

Pitta – Fire & Water

Vata – Air & Space