



PART 1

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF ĀYURVEDA

Chapter 1: Foundation

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Chapter 1

FOUNDATION

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the anthropological and philosophical origins of Āyurveda.
- To understand the bioenergetic and spiritual models underlying the system of Āyurveda.

1.1 ORIGIN OF ĀYURVEDA

According to tradition, the teachings of Āyurveda were recollected by Brahmā, the Lord of Creation, as he awoke to begin the task of creating the universe that we inhabit now. This idea suggests that Āyurveda transcends the period of this universe, stretching beyond the concept of time itself, having no beginning and no end. Brahmā taught this knowledge to Dakṣa Prajāpati (the protector of all beings), whom in turn taught it to the Aśvinī Kumāras (the twin holy physicians), who in turn taught it to Indra (King of the Gods). When disease and illness began to trouble humanity the great ṛṣis ('sages') of the world assembled in the Himalayan mountains, seeking to learn Āyurveda from Lord Indra. Among these sages one named Bharadvāja volunteered and made the journey to Indra's court on Mount Kailash,¹ where he undertook the study of Āyurveda. In a few short quatrains Lord Indra expounded the entire teaching of Āyurveda, and the profound nature of this unfolded like a lotus in the illuminated mind of the accomplished sage. After he had heard and understood this teaching Bharadvāja returned to establish the first school of Āyurveda, and revealed this knowledge to the assembled sages. These sages in turn taught this knowledge to their own disciples, and one named Punarvasu Ātreya held a competition to see which student best understood *kāya cikitsā*, or the practice of internal medicine. Among his students the treatise of Agniveśa was judged best, celebrated by all who heard it, and thus the *Agniveśa saṃhitā* became the authoritative text on internal medicine. Although this text is no longer available it exists in a revised and edited version compiled by the physician Caraka, whose *Caraka saṃhitā*, with the later additions of Dṛḍhabalā, is now considered the most authentic

and authoritative text on the subject. A contemporary of Ātreya was Kasiraja Divodāsa Dhanvantari, the sage who revealed the art and science of surgery, or *śalya cikitsa*, to his student Suśruta (whose name means to ‘listen sweetly’).² Suśruta compiled Divodāsa’s teachings into a text, which along with the later revisions of the renowned Buddhist scholar Nāgārjuna, forms the *Suśruta saṃhitā*, the primary Āyurvedic text on the theory and practice of surgery. Another important early text is the *Kāśyapa saṃhitā*, which is concerned with the theory and practice of paediatric and obstetric disease (*kaumārabhṛtya*). Unfortunately only portions of this text have survived the millennia, and the remainder of the original texts on each of the separate specialities of Āyurveda are either hidden, have been damaged over time, or have been completely lost. Fortunately both the *Caraka* and *Suśruta saṃhitās* are broad enough in scope that they describe almost the entire system of Āyurveda.³

The *Caraka saṃhitā* states that the term ‘Āyurveda’ is derived from two words, *āyus* and *veda*. Many Āyurvedic commentators define *āyus* as ‘life’, but *Caraka* expands upon this definition, telling us that *āyus* is the ‘... combination of the body, sense organs, mind and soul’, the factor (*dhāri*) responsible for preventing decay and death, which sustains (*jīvita*) the body over time (*nityaga*), and guides the process of rebirth (*anubandha*). The second part of the word is *veda* and can be translated as ‘knowledge’ or ‘science’, but more specifically suggests a deeply profound knowledge that emanates from a divine source, and hence Āyurveda is known as the ‘divine science of life’.

As a *śāstra* (‘teaching’) of the *Vedas*, Āyurveda is allied with the four principle Vedas of ancient India, which similarly issued forth from Lord Brahmā at the time of Creation. The Vedas include the *Ṛg veda*, *Yajur veda*, *Sāma veda* and the *Atharva veda*, and are considered by Hindus to be a sacred knowledge, an eternal and unending truth called the *sanātana dharma*. The Vedas can be organised in a few different ways, including into six *āṅgas* (‘limbs’) or six *darśanas* (‘perceptions’). Among the six *darśanas* the theoretical structure of Āyurveda draws primarily from the *Nyāya*, *Vaiśeṣika* and *Sāṅkhya darśanas*. Both the *Nyāya* and *Vaiśeṣika darśanas* are concerned with logic, analysis and distinction, whereas the *Sāṅkhya darśana* is a kind of ontology that describes the emanation of the universe from a divine source

(see Ch. 2). To a lesser extent Āyurveda also draws upon the other three *darśanas*, including *Mīmāṃsā* (knowledge and ‘interpretation’ of Vedic rituals and rites), *Yoga* (‘union’, spiritual discipline) and *Vedānta* (‘esotericism’). Although the teachings of the Vedas are at the theoretical core of Āyurveda, the practice of medicine in India has also been influenced by the later spiritual traditions of India, especially during the Buddhist period (c. 600 BCE–700 CE). (Note. BCE = before common era; CE = common era.) During this time several famous centres of medical learning evolved that taught an apparently advanced knowledge of surgery and other specialties, such as the *Takṣaśilā* university in what is now modern-day Afghanistan. One of the more interesting historical accounts of ancient Āyurvedic practices comes to us from the *Vinaya piṭaka* of the Pāli Canon, which recounts the tales of the famed physician Jīvaka Komārabhacca.

Both the *Caraka* and *Suśruta saṃhitās* are highly technical texts, and many subsequent Āyurvedic scholars felt the need to contribute to the storehouse of Āyurvedic literature, to make it easier to understand, to simplify and arrange the material in a more accessible way. Among these Āyurvedic scholars was Vāgbhaṭa (c. 600 CE), author of the *Aṣṭāṅga Sangraha* and the

Box 1.1 Jīvaka Komārabhacca

Jīvaka was a famous Āyurvedic physician during the 6th century BCE, and personal physician to the Buddha. His life began under very humble circumstances, when he was found lying in a trash heap, having been abandoned by a prostitute. He was discovered by chance by a prince who found him still ‘living’ (*jīva*), named him Jīvaka, and raised him as a son. At a young age Jīvaka travelled to Takṣaśilā to study medicine. As part of their final examinations the teacher asked his students to search through the forest and find one thing that could not be used as a medicine. As the students made their way back from their search, each one of them had found something that had no use as a medicine. After waiting an exceptionally long time Jīvaka finally returned to his teacher, crestfallen and empty handed. He had found no substance which could not, in some way, be used as a medicine. To his surprise the teacher congratulated Jīvaka and gave him his blessing as a physician. The rest of the students were berated: only Jīvaka had truly understood the heart of Āyurveda.

Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya, who created these texts for those of us of 'weaker intellect'. The **Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya** is his most succinct compilation of the teachings of both Caraka and Suśruta. Together, the teachings of Caraka, Suśruta and Vāgbhaṭa form the **bṛhat trayī**, the 'greater triad' of surviving texts that are the heart of Āyurvedic literature. Standing beside these is the **laghu trayī**, or lesser triad, composed of comparatively later texts including the **Mādhava nidānam** (c. 700 CE), **Śāraṅgadhara saṃhitā** (c. 1300 CE) and the **Bhāvaprakāśa** (c. 1300 CE). Besides these texts, however, there are many more that are highly respected among Āyurvedic physicians, including the **Cakradatta** (c. 1100 CE) and the **Bhaiṣajyaratnāvalī** (c. 1700 CE). Due to the hard work of modern Āyurvedic scholars such as Dr K. R. Srikanthamurthy and Dr P. V. Sharma, many of these works are now available as English translations.

Given that the **Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya** is eminently suitable to those of us suffering from an intellectual deficit I have chosen it as my primary inspiration, as well as additional materials from other texts listed in the bibliography, and teachings that have been communicated to me personally. Translated into English, the **Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya** literally means the 'heart' (**hṛdaya**) of the 'eight limbs' (**aṣṭ + āṅga**) of Āyurveda, which are the eight specialties originally revealed by Bharadvāja. These **āṅgas** or **cikitsā** ('treatments') are:

1. **Kāya cikitsā**: general internal medicine
2. **Bāla cikitsā**: treatment of infants and children
3. **Graha cikitsā**: treatment of spiritual possession and medical astrology
4. **Ūrdhvāṅga cikitsā**: treatment of the eyes, ears, nose and throat
5. **Śalya cikitsā**: treatment requiring the use of a knife, i.e. surgery
6. **Damṣṭrā cikitsā**: treatment of animal inflicted wounds, poisoning, i.e. toxicology
7. **Jarā cikitsā**: treatment of ageing; i.e. **rasāyana** ('rejuvenative') therapies
8. **Vṛṣa cikitsā**: treatment of impotence and sterility, i.e. **vajīkaraṇa** ('aphrodisiac') therapies.

Vāgbhaṭa tells us in the second verse of the **Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya** that '... persons desirous of long life which is the means for achieving **dharma** ('duty'), **artha** ('wealth') and **sukha** ('satisfaction') should repose utmost faith in the teachings of Āyurveda'. I humbly invite the reader to consider this present text

not the word of the **ācaryās** ('wise teachers') but as a condensed and hopefully useful guide for practitioners and lay persons alike. Any interpolations, inaccuracies or mistakes are my own and are not reflective of the vast storehouse of wisdom that is Āyurveda.

1.2 PHILOSOPHICAL ORIENTATION OF ĀYURVEDA

It seems to be an inherent aspect of human nature to recognise the basic duality that pervades life. The ancient Chinese describe the dynamics of yin and yang, Judeo-Christian culture teaches the concepts of good and evil, and Jungian psychoanalysis organises the psyche in terms of anima and animus. Even the binary function of the computer on which I am writing this text is an example of this intrinsic duality. Āyurveda, too, recognises this duality, although its characteristics are unique. According to **Vedānta**, the last and most profound of the Vedic **darśanas**, what we call reality is really a self-developed illusion called **māyā**, created and perpetuated by the ignorance of the ego. It is this conditioned existence that fragments an experience of **brahman**, the 'vast expanse' of the Whole, which is unattributed and unknowable. The attainment and integration of **brahman** into our consciousness is the **mokṣa**, or liberation from this world of illusion, where suffering ceases and one merges with the Totality. The ego with its ignorance, aversion and attachments clings to this fragmented world, inventing semantical, personal, cultural and social realities that blind us to our true nature, that we are God:

**Pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇam idam pūrṇāt pūrṇam
udacyate
pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evā-
vaśiṣyate**

'That is the Whole. This too is the Whole.
The Whole comes out of the Whole.
Taking the Whole from the Whole,
The Whole itself remains.'

-**Isa Upaniṣad**, invocation

There is perhaps no other hymn in the Vedic literature that so clearly defines the orientation of holism and holistic medicine. It is a realisation that transcends the knowledge we gain from our corporeal existence,

where the fragmentation of knowledge ceases to obscure true understanding, where we arrive at a knowing that is complete, and yet cannot be described:

Avijñātam, vijñātām, vijñātam, avijñātām

‘It is not understood by those who understand it,
It is understood by those who don’t understand it.’
-*Kena Upaniṣad*, 2:3

Within a human being this pervasive and yet unrealised state of totality is called the *jīvātmān*, and it is this that is the ‘seed’ or spark of life. From the accumulated *karma* (‘actions’) of repeated births, through the ignorance and desires of the *ahaṃkāra* (‘ego’), each of us have bound up our true nature with tremendous *saṃskāras* – actions whose fruits have yet to be realised. It is our reaction to these fruits, either by luxuriating in or by being repulsed by them, that generates further *karma*, binding us to *saṃsāra*, the wheel of life and death. Thus the path that leads us from *dukha* (‘suffering’) to *sukha* (‘happiness’) lies between the push and pull of life. It is a paradoxical state, to be remote yet fully engaged, remaining as the Chinese Taoists say, as ‘. . . an uncarved piece of wood’. Freed from desire, ignorance and hatred, *karma* never has a chance to develop, and that which comes to fruit is allowed to ripen, without inducing a conditioned response. In this state of being the aspirant is freed from birth, and ‘. . . sees how all things pass away’, entering into the abode of *nirvāṇa*.⁴

1.3 THE *Pañca kośa*: THE FIVE SHEATHS OF BEING

According to the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* a corporeal being is born with five sheaths (*pañca kośa*) that are organised into three bodies (*śarira*). The *sthūla śarira* or ‘gross body’ is definitive of physical being and is the corporeal manifestation of all the other *śarira*: the gross yet highly organised manifestation of matter. It is also called the *annamaya kośa*, or ‘food sheath’, and is discarded upon death. Progressing inwards, we come next to the *sūkṣma śarira*, or ‘subtle body’, which comprises three *kośas* or ‘sheaths’:

1. The *prāṇāmaya kośa*, comprising the five ‘winds’ or *prāṇas* (*prāṇa*, *apāna*, *udāna*,

vyāna and *samāna*) which provide the impetus and energy for all actions in the body (see 2.9 The *subdoṣas*: subdivisions within each *doṣa*). The five *prāṇas* are the vital force that underlies the function of the five *karma indriyās* (‘organs of action’), i.e. the mouth, hands, limbs, eliminative organs and genitalia.

2. The *manomaya kośa*, comprising the five *jñāna indriyās* (‘organs of knowledge’), i.e. the nose, ears, eyes, skin and tongue. When these five senses are activated by the *citta*,⁵ or innate consciousness, they form the *manas*, or ‘lower mind’.
3. The *vijñānamaya kośa*, comprising the *ahaṃkāra* (‘ego’) and *buddhi* (‘intellect’, or higher mind).⁶

The *sūkṣma śarira* is equivalent to the astral body of Western occultism, where the body exists in an energetic form but nonetheless retains aspects of individuality. It is a subtle realm experienced by most people in trance states, dreams and visions. As the *sūkṣma śarira* contains the five senses (*jñāna indriyās*) and the five organs of action (*karma indriyās*) with which we receive sensory information and act upon it, all corporeal activities are first manifest within this realm. It is within this subtle arena that everything we think or feel becomes manifest. Whether or not this manifestation occurs on a corporeal level is dependent upon the strength and clarity of a given thought or emotion. In the physical realm manifestation occurs relatively slowly, and because of this one

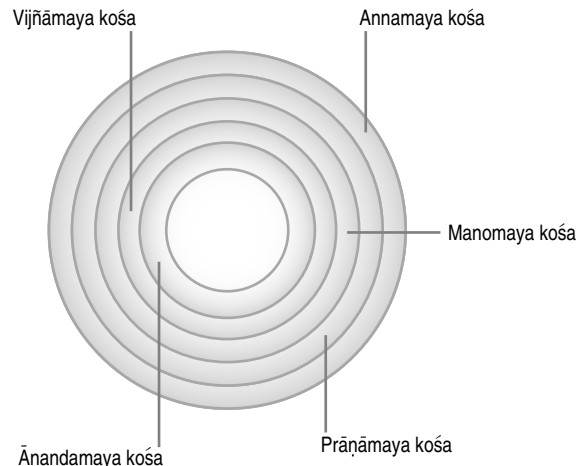


Figure 1.1 The *pañca kośa*.

thought or feeling may be countered by another. This is why, if we want to obtain a result on a physical level, we must purify our intent and develop clarity about what it is we want. This is one of the purposes behind the use of *mantra*, which through the repetition of special sounds organises consciousness in the *sūkṣma śarīra* around a single purpose or vibrational quality. The *sūkṣma śarīra* is also the realm within which the *cakras* exist, and through the conscious and directed flow of *prāṇa* ('vital force') through the energetic channel that connects them (i.e. the *suṣumnā nāḍī*), we can awaken the spiritual energy in these energy centres. Many extrasensory abilities such as clairvoyance or the influence and guidance of other beings, such as channelling, occur within the *sūkṣma śarīra*.

The final body is the *kāraṇa śarīra* ('causal origin'), also known as the *ānandamaya kośa*, or 'bliss sheath'. This is perhaps the most appropriate place for us to designate the soul, the interface between the lower and higher aspects of our being. It is the most subtle state of being, beyond the push and pull of the ego (*ahaṅkāra*), resting in pure knowledge (*jñāna*), acting as the impetus for the development of the increasingly grosser forms of a living being.

The *jīvātman*, the individuated aspect of *brahman*, interfaces with these five sheaths to provide life, and in association with *karma*, is bound to them, to *saṃsāra*, the never-ending cycle of birth, death and rebirth. As beings evolve spiritually, consciously progressing inwards towards the attainment of *mokṣa* ('liberation'), they may find themselves partially existing within these subtle realms, developing certain spiritual powers called *siddhis*, such as clairaudience, clair-sentience or clairvoyance. It is even possible to be reborn within the heavenly realms of the *sūkṣma śarīra*, although this temptation is considered to be a serious pitfall in spiritual development. The *sūkṣma śarīra* is the realm in which the *devas* ('heavenly beings') and *asuras* ('demons') are said to exist, enjoying the power and pleasure of the astral realms, living as immortals, or rather, as beings with extraordinary longevity and subtle powers. It was for this reason that the Tibetan *Bardo Thodol* ('Book of the Dead') was written, as a set of instructions to guide the dead past the enticing, yet illusory astral realms and onward to the greater realization of *brahman* (in Tibetan, 'dzogchen'). The beings that are said to exist within these subtle realms maintain different levels of awareness, some focused entirely on their own pleasures and desires, and others

with a more noble intent, working towards their further development and for the benefit of all living beings. Fully realized beings, however, understand that any state of being is still a state in which *karma* and its fruit can be generated and thus know that they are subject to the unyielding power of impermanence and decay.

So far we have learned that *prakṛti* represents the created world, synonymous with the concept of *māyā*, or self-created illusion. Although Āyurveda is the study of *prakṛti*, it is a path of knowledge that is designed to explain phenomena within the veil of *māyā*, a path through which we gain insight into its illusory nature. Āyurveda does not deny the importance of physicality, but advocates a specific methodology that facilitates the realization that *prakṛti* is *puruṣa*. Thus, the correct study of Āyurveda and the practice of *dharma* will automatically lead us to the path of *brahman*.⁷

1.4 THE *cakra* SYSTEM, *kundalinī* AND *aṣṭāṅga* YOGA

Another system that provides a context for the practice of Āyurveda is the *cakra* system. This system, like the *pañca kośa* theory, describes the fundamental aspects of being, but also allows for a specific understanding of spiritual development and its concomitant effects upon the body, mind and emotions. The *cakra* system represents the dynamic structure of the subtle body, the etheric octave of the physical body. The term *cakra* means 'wheel,' and the seven major *cakras* are hierarchically arranged energy vortices within the subtle body:

1. *Mūlādhāra cakra*: the 'root' *cakra*
2. *Svādhiṣṭhāna cakra*: the 'sex' *cakra*
3. *Maṇipūra cakra*: the 'digestive' *cakra*
4. *Anāhata cakra*: the 'heart' *cakra*
5. *Viśuddha cakra*: the 'throat' *cakra*
6. *Ājñā cakra*: the 'third-eye' *cakra*
7. *Sahasrāra cakra*: the 'crown' *cakra*.

Each *cakra* represents certain energetic, mental and physical qualities, and from a spiritual perspective, certain life challenges and spiritual attainments.⁸ These seven energy vortices are connected by the *suṣumnā nāḍī*, the central axis or channel (*nāḍī*) of the body, like beads on a string. The *suṣumnā nāḍī* originates in the *kānda*, or 'bulb', and rises upwards through the body and each *cakra*, terminating at a region that corresponds with the crown of the head. The *kānda*

represents a mass of potential energy within the lowest energetic levels of the physical body, thought by many to correspond with the sacral plexus. Although the impetus of this spiritual energy is to rise upwards through the *suṣumnā nāḍī*, its movement is held in check by the continuous flow of *prāṇa* ('vital force') within two lesser channels that flow on either side of the *suṣumnā nāḍī*, called the *idā* and *pingalā nāḍīs*:

- The *idā nāḍī*, or 'channel of comfort', represents the preserving aspects of the physical body and the feminine aspects of consciousness. It begins on the left side of the *kānda*, rises up the back of the body, over the back of the head to the *ājñā cakra*, or 'third eye', drops down and terminates in the left nostril.
- The *pingalā nāḍī*, also known as the 'tawny current', represents the activating aspects of the physical body, as well as the masculine aspects of consciousness. It originates on the right side of the *kānda*, rising upwards over the back of the right side of the head to the *ājñā cakra*, drops down and terminates in the right nostril.

For most humans the *idā* and *pingalā nāḍīs* are the main pathways of energetic flow in the body, representing the duality of life and death, and the duality of consciousness. As *prāṇa* flows through them, the *nāḍīs* activate the dualistic and potentially negative aspects of each *cakra*. When the flow of *prāṇa* is disrupted or blocked in these areas the result could be a variety of physical, emotional or mental problems that represent elemental qualities of the disturbed *cakra*. To this extent, treatment can be given to improve energetic flow within the *idā* and *pingalā nāḍīs* to restore health, but in the spiritual tradition of *hatha yoga*, the aspirant seeks to resolve all pain and suffering by directing *prāṇa* into the *suṣumnā nāḍī*, the central channel. When *prāṇa* is directed into the *suṣumnā nāḍī* it awakens *kundalinī*, the 'serpent power' of the Transcendent. *Kundalinī* is the potential mass of psychospiritual energy of the body, the capacity for spiritual transformation. It is the active, feminine aspect of the Divine called *śakti* that remains tightly coiled in the lowest aspect of the etheric body in spiritually unevolved beings.

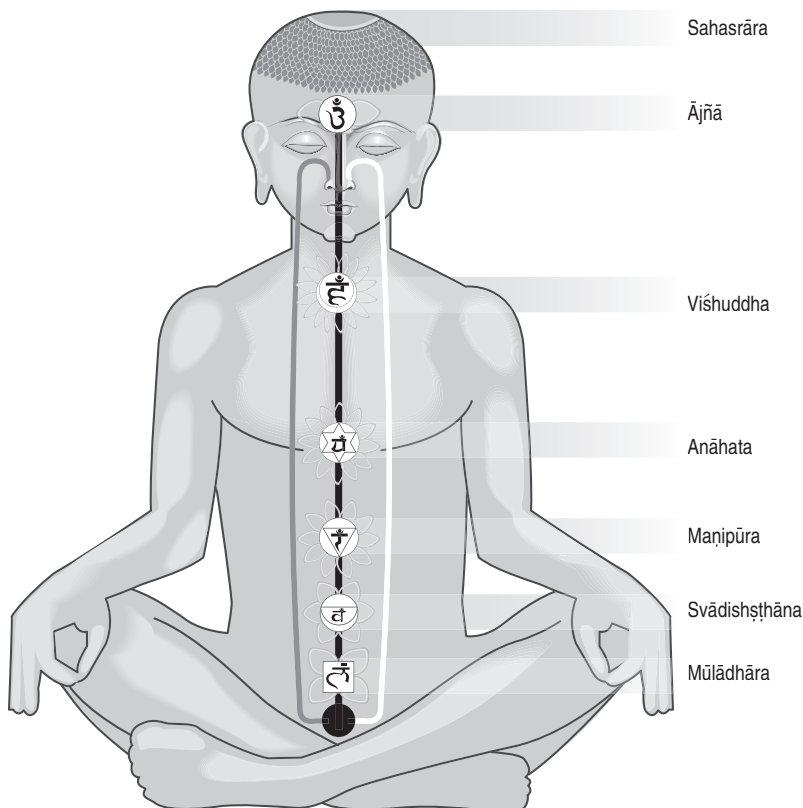


Figure 1.2 The *cakra* system.

Although there are a great many paths to spiritual liberation in India, most advocate a methodology that is more or less based upon *aṣṭāṅga yoga*, the ‘eight’ (*aṣṭ*) ‘limbs’ (*āṅga*) of ‘spiritual union’ (*yoga*). *Aṣṭāṅga yoga* is a highly specific set of guidelines that are traditionally considered to be the safest method to awaken *kundalinī*, and can be practiced by anyone of any faith or spiritual practice. The eight limbs of *aṣṭāṅga yoga* are:

1. **Yama**: moral observance; skillful thoughts, works and actions directed externally
2. **Niyama**: self-restraint; skillful thoughts, works and actions directed internally
3. **Āsana**: posture; physical training
4. **Prāṇāyama**: breath control; breathing exercises
5. **Pratyāhāra**: sensory inhibition; restraint of the senses
6. **Dhāraṇā**: concentration; the ability to direct the mind
7. **Dhyāna**: meditation; the ability to commune with that which we seek to understand
8. **Samādhi**: ecstasy; complete integration.

The first five limbs of *aṣṭāṅga yoga* are taken to make up *hatha yoga*, and the latter three relate to the practice of *rāja yoga*. The term *hatha* is derived from two words: ‘*ha*’ meaning ‘darkness’ and ‘*tha*’ which means ‘light’. Thus *hatha yoga* is the path that seeks to unite the primordial aspects of the sun and the moon, the archetype of male and female, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. *Hatha*, however, also means ‘forceful’, referring to the practice of self-discipline and the effort it takes to rouse oneself to the calling of spiritual development. The goal of *hatha yoga* is the formation of a ‘yogic body’ (*yoga deha*), a body that is free from disease and the limitations of an ordinary human body, purified and cleansed for *rāja yoga*.

While many confuse *hatha yoga* with the practice of *āsana*, *hatha yoga* has a much broader outlook than the series of physical exercises it is often thought to be in the West. Ultimately the *āsanas* only serve to relax the body, making it able to withstand long periods of meditation. According to Patañjali, the author of the *Yoga sūtra*, the only physical position (*āsana*) that it is important to cultivate is one that is ‘stable’ and ‘pleasurable’ (*sthiraśukhamāsanam*), allowing for complete physical relaxation and mental clarity. Absolute proficiency in all the different *āsanas* is not considered necessary by most Indian spiritual traditions.

Rāja yoga, or the ‘royal’ *yoga*, comprises the last three elements of *aṣṭāṅga yoga*, representing the teachings of *Vedānta* and the conscious direction of the mind towards spiritual liberation. Such an approach may combine an emphasis upon breathing techniques (*prāṇāyama*), *mantra* and devotional exercises (*bhakti*). Other methods such as *dhyāna* (‘meditation’) are practised to facilitate a conscious understanding of the nature of self, where subject and object become one (*samādhi*).

Although *aṣṭāṅga yoga* provides a clear path to divine knowledge, the actual practice involves a great deal of subtlety and aspirants are encouraged to seek instruction from experienced practitioners. The release of *kundalinī* is not a thing to play with, and without preparation the premature release of *kundalinī* is said to result in a variety of conditions, including inexplicable illness, erratic behaviours, anxiety, psychosis and memory loss. For those who are interested in researching *kundalinī* perhaps the best place to begin is with the works of Gopi Krishna, who, in his book *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man*, lucidly describes his experience with the awakening of the ‘serpent power’:

‘Suddenly, with a roar like that of a waterfall, I felt a stream of liquid light entering my brain through the spinal cord. Entirely unprepared for such a development, I was completely taken by surprise; but regaining self-control instantaneously, I remained sitting in the same posture, keeping my mind on the point of concentration. The illumination grew brighter and brighter, the roaring louder, I experienced a rocking sensation and then felt myself slipping out of my body, entirely enveloped in a halo of light.’

(Krishna 1971)

The awakening of *kundalinī* is the event that underlies the great revelations of all spiritual traditions, when the creative energy (*śakti*) of the individual unites with the ultimate awareness of the One (*śiva*). Through consistent spiritual practice *kundalinī* can be awakened from her dormant state, and like a snake-charmer we patiently entice this spiritual awakening to liberate us from the world of *saṃsāra*. As *kundalinī* is called, she awakens each *cakra* to its purist potential, providing deep and truly profound insights into the nature of being.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Either literally, perhaps to a sage-King of the Himalayan tribes-people; or through meditation and revelation, Mount Kailash representing the pinnacle of human consciousness and divine revelation. In his role as King of the Gods, Indra represents the natural order which preserves life, harmony and goodness – in this sense, Āyurveda is an inherent principle of living in harmony with this natural order, i.e. *vis medicatrix naturae*.
- 2 The *Suśruta saṃhitā* reveres Divodāsa as Dhanvantari, an incarnation of Viṣṇu and the God of Āyurveda. By some accounts Divodāsa receives this knowledge directly from Indra, whereas in others he receives it from Bharadvāja.
- 3 So far the debate as to the true age of the *Caraka* and *Suśruta saṃhitās* is unresolved. European indologists have dated the original authorship of these texts anywhere from the time of the Buddha (c. 600 BCE) to around 200 CE. In contrast, indologists from the sub-continent contend that the knowledge contained in these texts is much earlier, preserved over time by an ancient oral tradition. As the original authors, P. V. Sharma dates Atreya and Divodāsa to before 1000 BCE, while the *Caraka saṃhitā* itself was compiled some time between the 3rd and 2nd century BCE, and the *Suśruta saṃhitā* by about the 2nd century CE (Sharma 1992, 1999)
- 4 *Anguttura-Nikāya* VI:55, Pali Canon; *nirvāṇa*, lit. 'extinction,' from the root *nir* ('to cease'), and *vā* ('to move').
- 5 The term *citta* is derived from the Sanskrit root of '*cit*' meaning to be 'aware.'
- 6 Within the *vijñānmaya kośa* the *ahaṅkāra* and *buddhi* compete for our attention, and together generate 'mundane knowledge' (*vijñāna*), as opposed to the higher aspects of knowledge, called *jñāna*, which is the preserve of the *buddhi* and not influenced by the instability of the *ahaṅkāra*.
- 7 It is not my intention to suggest that anyone need accept the religio-philosophical tenets of Hinduism to practice Āyurveda. Today in modern India people from every kind of faith study and practice Āyurveda. There is, however, a spiritual component to Āyurveda that cannot be denied: it is fundamental and cannot be separated out without seriously damaging the integrity of the system. Thus the reader is invited to adapt the study of Āyurveda to his or her own personal or religious philosophy. A purely existential or materialistic view of life, however, is incompatible with the principles of Āyurveda.
- 8 The *Mūlādhāra cakra* relates to the element of earth and the psychology of fear and instinct; the *Svādhiṣṭhāna cakra* relates to the element of water and the psychology of sensuality and desire; the *Maṇipūra cakra* relates to the element of fire and the psychology of anger and will; the *Anāhata cakra* relates to the element of wind and the psychology of compassion and love; the *Viśuddha cakra* relates to the element of pervasiveness and the psychology of insight and wisdom; the *Ājñā cakra* relates to the element of pure consciousness (*buddhi*) and the cessation of duality; the *Sahasrāra cakra* represents *nirvāṇa* ('the ceasing of all movement') and *mokṣa* ('the final liberation').