

## **Ayurveda – What is it?**

***By Dr. Shaun Matthews***

Contrary to popular opinion, Ayurveda is not the long lost cousin of Darth Veda, Ayurveda is actually the traditional system of healing in India. It is concerned with how to live your life in harmony with Nature, in this sense it looks at our relationship with the external world of people, weather, food and colour as well as our relationship with ourselves. It offers a holistic paradigm for how to live a life with peace of mind and a deep sense of purpose. It is also part of a series ancient, interlocking sciences, which include Yoga, Vedic astrology and Vedic architecture and which address the practical as well as the spiritual needs of human kind.

Ayurveda is derived from two words in Sanskrit, the language of ancient India, “Ayus” means life and “Veda” means knowledge it is thus the knowledge of life and longevity. Ayurveda is much more than just a system for the treatment of disease, it concerns itself with how to live a life well lived, so that you have no regrets at the end of your life. Central to this approach is living your life in line with your dharma, which is that path that will carry you through your life and will not only support you but also your friends, family and community. When we are living in line with our life purpose, there are profound benefits for our health and sense our well being. Our life force is immeasurably stronger, as is our resistance to disease.

Ayurveda understands the world in energetic terms and seeks to balance the three basic energies in the bodymind called doshas. These are known as Vata, Pitta and Kapha dosha and each individual’s constitution has different amounts of the three doshas in its makeup. Once you have found out your unique dosha body-type you can then balance it by changing your diet and lifestyle. For example, someone with a Vata dominant body-type is sensitive to the cold, prone to worry, more highly strung and more likely to suffer from dry skin and constipation. These individuals tend to do better with warm, moist food, warm living environments, regular routines and plenty of down time to unwind their minds.

The beauty of Ayurvedic treatments is that they work through the five senses, thus Ayurveda utilises food as medicine, music therapy, massage using oils medicated with various herbs, aromatherapy and colour therapy. Ayurveda also makes use of various Yogic practices to balance the bodymind including yoga postures, breathing exercises and meditation. It offers an elegant and practical way to live gracefully and in tune with nature.