

# FOOD IS MEMORY

According to Ayurveda, food is the only medium that carries ojas, prana, and tejas into our vital tissues. As such, it is the primary source by which memory, energy, and vibration are trans-mitted from the universe to all the species. Furthermore, the Vedic principle of panchamahabhutas - space, air, fire, water, and earth - informs that the elements are continuously transmuting each other to create atoms, molecules, minerals, foods, and life-forms. Food is the keeper of all five elements; in its transformation the body of life is formed. Our harmonious relationship to food can unravel the vast mystery of being in time and space. Food takes us through the complete cycle of being, from the original cosmic seeds to the fragile sprout, to the flourishing plant and its fruits - our sustenance. The food cycle is our complete memory. It teaches us to know our body, mind, spirit and purpose. Food is memory. Eating is remembering. Food is the most powerful transformer of consciousness in human life.

In our present time of forgetfulness, we need to reclaim and explore the food sadhanas - mindful thoughts and conscious activities that replicate the sacred in nature and bring us in harmony with the great cycles of the cosmos.

The Earth has been continuously refining herself from the beginning of time. Every species she contains contributes to the evolution of the universe. Each tree and mountain, cloud and stream reflects the light of the universe. Cosmic memory

is held and refined by the genetic code, the DNA, of all life forms. For this reason, cosmic communion prevails among each of the Earth's inhabitants. Our thoughts and actions set the stage for remembering. Every food, every motion, every desire, every dream is memory of present, past, and future. All vital memory is congealed within these three aspects of the whole. Recognizing that we are inherent knowers of the elements is to remember our true nature of consciousness.

According to the principle of panchamahabhutas, each and every physical thing in the universe is composed of the same five elements of Ayurvedic theory - earth, water, fire, air, and space. Thus, we are formed from the same ingredients as a tree or a squirrel, a grain of sand or a drop of rain. The earth is our physical body and water is its fluid; fire is the acids and enzymes of the body; air is the prana and breath, and space is the vibration of all the vital systems together. The five elements in our foods nurture the five elements in our bodies and sustain proper functioning of our tissue memories. The smell of earth stirs fresh memory of scent; water brings forth our prodigious memory of taste; fire enables us to digest the universe and to transform it into cosmic intelligence; air allows us to feel, touch, and perceive reality; and space gives us the vibratory power to intuit, and to know Truth. Put differently, the elements that nourish us are the same elements that are within us. When we recognize this integral connection, that we are sustained by the five elements of nature, we understand that each bite of food is a blessing from Mother Nature. This realization is the beginning of sadhana, the point from which we start to build the foundation for a healthful spiritual life.

## **Cognitive Memory – Hidden Gift of the Heart**

Maya Tiwari has been developing her theory on three Templates of Memory for the past three decades. Cognitive memory, according to Maya, resonates with a function of the ahamkara. It is not the experiential memory which we recall from day to day. It is the essential pre-recorded history of our cumulative passages through all time. In the example of a single bead and the entire mala/rosary, each life is considered to be one of the beads, and the mala represents the sum total of all lives of each person. We are unable to recall cognitive memory in the same manner that we remember our childhood experiences or what we wore yesterday,

and so on. This memory is not guided by the will of the mind or the sense organs. Experiential memory is a function of the mind. Cognitive memory is the hidden mala within the heart-self. The wellspring of cognitive memory is where our intuitive powers lie; it is this component of memory that supports our ability to be aware. For example, when you close your eyes, you can still see the forest, or the stars in the sky; or the waves in the ocean. The reason we are able to visualize these images without our sight is, in part, due to the vast function of memory. In a cognitive memory recall, you are able to not only visualize the ocean or the forest, you will also experience a cognitive sense that there is a storm in the ocean (if there is a storm coming) or a certain light in the forest, or a meteor dashing across the starry firmament.

Often times when we cannot explain a sense of truth, a gut feeling, a sixth sense, or have a distinct impression of having been somewhere or known someone before, we dismiss these fleeting moments of absolute reality as existential sensory perception or vague misperceptions. In actuality, these are the only times when we have been truly conscious. These are the times when the antics of the body and mind have been quiet enough for some splinter of truth to unveil itself. The living memory guides us through the trammels of the world and this specific bead of life. Cognitive memory guides us through the beads of all the lives until the mala of all existence is complete. We are able to access this essential memory only when we understand the true self, and our actions become sadhanas connected to the earth.

This eternal memory occurs through our deepest vibratory field which lies within the function of the space element. This memory is held by the ahamkara which is supported by prana. When the field of sound is distorted, it directly impinges the prana body, and we begin to lose connection with our eternal vibrations. The gravitational force of space is the field of sound. Our memory is held within this resonance. The misuse of earth's resources directly relates to the slackening of the gravitational grasp of space. As a result our capacity to hold eternal memory, which is received through cosmic vibration is wearing thin. In meditation, we are taught to silence the mind and sit in the self. In understanding this silence, we begin to understand the self. True meditation is a living dynamism. It doesn't exist necessarily in the sitting and silent postures. It pervades every action when it sprouts from a deeply conscious self. The beauty of the self is that it shows us how

to step out of our shadows and bask in her light, if we are alert and undistracted by the cacophony of living. This cognitive self, or ahamkara, is available to us through our daily sadhanas. Sadhana is the wholesome activity which invokes the cognitive memory. It refines our vibratory powers and enables us to strengthen the spirit. The endless distractions and superficial countenances, have cast us in a myopic spell, and we have lost access to this inner guide. Without it, we are becoming a universe of living amnesiacs. The knowledge of the life force is not new. We have almost all known it at some time in our past. But we have forgotten. And now we need to strum the chords of ahamkara in order that we may remember the immortal secrets of all life and health.

More than two thirds of the information which is stored in our memory bank within the present life is comprised of invalid memories. A valid memory is one which resonates with universal truth. The truth is that which can be verified. My memories of cancer is verifiable since I was the bearer of the disease. Whether or not your children are birth through you, you can verify their status as your children. Actual experiences can always be confirmed. However, hearsay and belief systems are not always verifiable. The conclusions we file as a result of our undependable senses and mind are usually not dependable. We do not have to experience every truth, personally, in order to verify them, nor are the ones we experience always what we think they are. However, in the continuum, the truth usually reveals itself if we refrain from conclusions and condemnations. Our memory space is filled with false and useless information, which interphase with our thinking process. All traditions were founded originally on truths. Unfortunately, the demise of these essential traditions is due, in part, to the endless compilation of the involute imposition of human corruption, personal greed, selfish power, and so on. The mind of the universe is sustained in good health only when her memory holds the imprint of valid experiences. The human mind functions in the same manner.

The whole mechanism of what we accept to be a truth must be scrutinized. Every moment of each day we form opinions based on incomplete data, these opinions are invariably filed into memory without resolve. We compile memory data with every breath. It is a stupendous task to sift through the details of everything we hear. That is why the ancients exhort us to listen with a discriminate heart and refrain from jumping to conclusions. As we begin to become more alert and obser-

vant of our intake, we will gradually store less invalid information in our memory banks.

A lie cannot exist in honesty. A fish cannot survive in clay. Acorns will not fall from the pear tree. The invalid cannot be stored in an observant mind. The practice of sadhanas is essential to dissolve the excess data of invalid memories and to maintain a healthy and honest cognition. Sadhanas are the gifts which the universe gave the humans to cleanse themselves and to live gently upon the earth, the foundational principle of life which the Wise Earth School revived and restored to put back into the vast holistic science of Ayurveda education the intuitive aspects for self-healing.

According to Maya Tiwari, we experience the creation through both the individual and collective cognition. Each living person has a set of imprints which are compiled from life to life. Every being has an inherent memory refined from the beginning of time.

The chamois wobbles on its lanky legs minutes after its birth. The memory of its species has sustained from the very first fallow deer. The human birth is a stupendous feat. We are transformed by the force of fire into beings who live on the breath of the air. Before we can stand on two feet, we float in an environment of amniotic fluid like little tadpoles. We emerge, kick, crawl, stand, and finally forget the inherent memory of origin.

It is said in the Vedas, that the memory of all lives is remembered by the embryo at the exact moment that it leaves its watery domain and begins to emerge into the open world. This passage is the biggest transformation the human ever experiences. Gradually we lose cognition of our inherence and begin to function experientially.

The lymph, blood, muscle, tissues, nerves, fat cartilage, and sperm and ovum, all carry the memories which shape the body and mind of each organism. These memories adapt each life form to the demands of its present environment and function through all rebirths. The memory of each individual mode as well as the collective existence of the universe is forever braided in us.

The Sanskrit character samskaras refers to the imprints of all karma which form the singular identity of each of us. Every species is a form of remembering. The mountain goat has the memory of billions of eons stamped in the structure of its feet. A structure which defies gravitation as the goat climbs to tremendous heights. The sages observed the goats and understood them to be the living symbol of freedom -- the freedom from the cycles of rebirths. Aja is the Sanskrit character given to the goat. Translated, it means "the one which has transcended birth." The original human tribes knew the memory of the universe because they observed the wild animals with whom they shared the earth. The early humans knew their nature and sought to discover their memory by competing with the wild animals. When they conquered the animal, they inherited full recognition of that animal's power and symbol. Essentially, they sought to remember that which was forgotten in the brilliant flash of birth.

We are given infinite clues and symbols in this universe to stir cognitive memory. The animals and plants are powerful guides, but every grain of sand can remove the fog of remembrance when we learn to observe.

Sadhanas awaken the deeply imbedded healing codes which are part of the emergent cognition of a timeless universe. There is a beautiful story in the Puranas which describes the essence of time. Narada, in search of the knowledge of the self, approached Lord Krishna and asked, "What is Maya?"

Lord Krishna replied, "Before I reveal Maya, I need a drink of water." Narada spotted a small village in the distant lowlands and made his way there to get water for Lord Krishna.

He knocked on the door of a small house in the village. A beautiful damsel opened the door, and he completely forgot his reasons for being there. He was caught in the brake of love. The next day he returned to the same house. He wanted to catch a glimpse of the exquisite creature. Still he had no memory of the thirsty Lord whom he kept waiting.

In time, Narada was wedded to this damsel. They bore three children and lived a happy and contented life. After many years, his father-in-law died, and Narada inherited his house. Twelve years passed. There was a great flood, and Narada

lost everything. He lost his wife, children, and house. In his attempt to save his family, he was washed ashore. He looked up and beheld Lord Krishna in the same spot where he left him so many years ago.

"Narada, what took you so long?" asked the Lord. "I have been waiting here for you for half an hour!" Twelve years of human time had been only a drop of half hour in celestial time. That is the truth of Maya. The physical time is different from the time which prevails the spirit. How often have years elapsed in between a visit to our loved ones and when we embrace them again, the time in between seemed to have never happened?

Where is the truth of time in the dream state when we lose ourselves in timelessness? Elaborate braids of dreams occur within split seconds of time as we know it. Cognition happens in like manner. It is not an organized sequence within the time and space of existence, but rather the split second which opens the vast and beginningless. We experience reality in a partial, self-absorbed mode, fluttering from the boughs of life. Reality exists in its entirety of truth and memory. The truth of all time is refined within our memory. This cognitive memory is the entire creation held in stasis within a tiny seed. The seed is the self.

Cognitive memory is based in the reality of nature. Time washes away all superfluities and the resin of eternal truth remains. Maya tells her story, as follows: I remember the memories which came to comfort me through my intense pain to be serene and simple. During my cancer years the twelfth and final surgical operation had to be done without general anaesthesia. It had become too dangerous a procedure since I was anaesthetized eleven times within a one year period. The procedure lasted eight hours. I saw my gut pulled out of my stomach and smelled the deep brine and blood of being. I heard my father sing. It was "Red River Valley," one of his old, favorite tunes. I was three or four years old then. I heard the plop, plop of smooth black mud as my sister and I were carried on a long dirt path to visit my favorite aunt. I felt the coolness of her hut, which was daubed with cow dung. The filtering eastern light streaming from the small aperture wrapped me, and I was transported to my truth of being. We must have spent many days in that far away hut, surrounded by the brambles of gooseberry bushes and the briers of sweet white flowers. Swathed in cognition, time stood still.

I awoke in the cold recovery room to the warm smiles of my physicians. I felt no pain. Many hours of a difficult procedure passed in the twilight of moments. That afternoon, I got up and washed my hair.

There are many sadhanas which, when practiced consistently, yield great inner fortitude and stir cognitive remembering. A simple walk through the forest, sitting in the river or ocean, riding a horse, walking barefoot on the early morning grass, working with the hands, digging into the soil, sowing the seeds of a garden, sitting in the self, observing silence, chewing contentedly, being with prayer, singing a song, chanting, practicing the yoga asanas, or do-in the morning, dancing, doing tai-chi, hiking in the mountains, swimming in a stream, walking in an orchard and smelling the unplucked fruits, are just a few of the endless sadhanas which erase the invalid and give life to the primal self.

### **Ahamkara**

*"The self is the dearest of all things and only through the self is anything else dear. The self is the origin of all finite happiness, but it is itself limitless, transcending definition. It remains unaffected by deeds, good or bad. It is beyond feeling and beyond knowledge. It is in the ever present in the meditation of a sage."*

- Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

The Vedas define the individual self as ahamkara, the "I" former. This "I" is not the Freudian definition of the ego, but rather the vehicle bestowed upon each birth for its specific journey. The ahamkara is the individual ego and when it is displaced, fragmented, or shifted from its primal core of universal confidence, the disease process begins. The ego is in essence the remembering self which is the union of body, mind, and spirit.

The ego as the vehicle of the self, is the memory containment of all past and future experiences. This ego is conditioned from life to life through conception in the womb. This identity is influenced from life to life by the maternal ovum, the paternal sperm, the time and season of conception, the state of the mother's womb, the

foods and emotions of the mother and the seasons through which the embryo grows into a child. The core of the Ayurvedic science of health is based on Prakriti, the first creation. It is this prakriti which translates as the individual constitution of a person.

There are also the karmic or casual factors pertaining to the individual birth. Each rebirth is the cosmic effect of the cause of prior lives. Each life becomes a journey towards its eventual attainment of self-knowledge. This knowledge ends the cycle of rebirths as the empowered mortal shuffles off its coils permanently and becomes one with pure consciousness. We are reborn, bereft of the body, experiential memory, mind, and senses of our prior existence. The Ancients recognized these mechanisms to be subjected to the pursuits of apparent reality. They understood the primal cognition which retires us from the cycles of births and deaths, to be beyond the perceptions of body, mind, memory, and senses.

The knowledge of the unity of the body, mind, and spirit is the fundamental basis to secure good health. The primal mechanism of each manifest being is the ahamkara. It is this delicate and intricate frame which operates with memory and registers each and every behavior prodded by conscious or unconscious actions from the inception of each life. A damaged ego leaves the process of immunity vulnerable and volatile. It is the very first cause of ill health. A fragile ego reacts to its environment by shrouding it with various facades. It resists changes and maintains an injured mind. The mind's mechanism rushes to defend its ego by enveloping it, to protect from the harshness of its perceived reality.

In the early stages of life, this protection is very necessary, while the factors which may contribute to a weak and abhorrent sense of self persist. A life whose maturity is still shaping and whose grasp is still forming, is defenseless to come to its own aid. The protection of that life's ego is provided by the parents, teachers, and so on. When these primary protectors are at fault, the young mind exercises its singular defense by insulating and blocking its natural outflow. The result is the beginning of a weak and often times useless sense of self. As this life reaches its early adulthood, certain set patterns of defenses and isolation have already formed. It is immensely difficult for this person to initiate the opening of such painful scars. This infliction remains unhealed and raw within the damp, gray

shelters of the mind, until that individual finds the courage to expose the self. Or until providence forces that person through difficult passages such as fatal illnesses to accept the fragmented ego in order to begin the healing process.

A firm and wholesome ego is requisite before the awareness of the whole cognitive self is gained. The practice of reparatory sadhanas and a meditative life are necessary for this the self to become conscious and thus alive to each moment. The process of healing may take many lifetimes, but this is the very process which inspires its dweller to shine within itself, and thus reflect its beauty on the world. The discovery of self is the natural dynamism of health. When we resonate in the galactic dance of the universe, we achieve the supreme state of human wellness. Good health is a continuous process. All that which is beautiful is constantly changing and redefining towards the "becoming" of its conscious nature.

External pursuits of health are ineffective and a huge waste of time and energy. These pursuits have created mega-industries of profit for those who are empowered by their own fragile sense of the holistic, and have granted divergence to those who choose newer veils to shroud their pain. There is, essentially, no alternative to the process of salubrious well-being. It is hard and dedicated work to discover the real self. It takes great compassion and honesty with ourselves. All healing begins with the forgiveness of our protectors who were also helpless prey to their own difficult circumstances.

The race of time in healing is measured by factors other than what we recognize as days, weeks, months and years. When we think in terms of time and material achievements, we are unable to break free of our fetters. We constantly strive to present a perfect package of perfect health measured against the pseudo-beauties of commerce. The accomplishment of inner quiet signifying peace of mind, equates to years of aging. The acceptance of the self as it is, is the greatest health of all. For this, time stands still. As we begin to nurture the wounds of the ego, time actually reverses and we gain our youth for the very first time. This immortality is maintained by living in the present without moments or minutes. This is the basis of holistic health. The necessary accessories of health, such as foods and sadhanas, are employed concurrently. It is all woven into the whole grasp of the self.

## Food Creates Dhatus

From the perspective of Ayurveda nutrition, the universal intention of nature's food is to fulfill and revitalize the memories of the dhatus, vital tissues. The memory-rich body of every species can be fed and replenished only by the sympathetic resonance carried within the cosmic memory of a good seed. Formed from the same substance of cosmic memories, the good seed and the human body are eternally intertwined. Neither the seed, rooted to the earth, nor the body, a mobile entity, can exist without each other. Hold a good seed in your hand, and know that it unfolds the entire universe from within itself.

Taittiriya Upanishad says, "From the Earth came herbs. From herbs came the seed that gave life to humans." In other words, food for humans is annam - that which is formed from the primordial five elements of nature and grows on the earth - plant and mineral life (with the exception of some animal milk). The plant is our most ancient ancestor. All life took birth from this sacred food of creation. As it emerged into its manifested state, the plant absorbed the universe's first memory, that of yajna, or divine sacrifice. The Vedic seers recognized that the universe is founded on the act of sacrifice, and plants unflinchingly adhere to this standard. Plants exemplify the earth's memory of selflessness and nurturance. They bend before the tides of the seasons and yield their food to all creatures. Season after season, they dazzle us with their beauty, bringing forth exquisite flowers, fruits, fragrances, colors, and joyous sustenance. In winter, they retreat into the earth to replenish the cosmic memory of their seed. In spring, they push through the dense soil to reveal their tender sprouts.

Nature's complex set of rhythms and transformations are replicated into the dhatus through transference of the plant's memory imbedded in her good seed. In essence, the vital tissues are formed from the same memory code or language that exists in plant life, and both are sustained by nature's memories and rhythms. According to Ayurveda, the body consists of seven vital tissues, dhatus. They are, rasa (plasma), rakta (blood), mamsa (muscle), medas (fat), asthi (bone), majja (marrow) and sukra/artava (sperm/ovum, reproductive tissue). The seven stages of a fruitful human life are identical to the seven stages of a fruitful plant. The chain of

feeding occurs through the seven tissue layers of the human body in the same way that the plant is nourished through its seven phases of transformation from seed to plant. The life cycle of a plant begins with a good seed, one that retains its essential nature from the well of universal memory and has not been tampered with or genetically manipulated. The seed successively transforms to sprout, young plant, mature plant, flowering plant, fruitful plant, and then returns back to the earth as seed. At every stage, the plant may be harvested and prepared as food. After it has been ingested, and a human being is physically and spiritually nourished, the malas and roughage are restored to the earth thereby nourishing her fertility. There, peacefully huddled in the womb of the Mother, the seed waits for its moment in time, then pierce through the earth to fulfill its cosmic destiny.

## First Dharma: Ahimsa

The rishis espoused ahimsa - living in harmony with all life through the transparent and conscious act of nonviolence and non-hurtfulness. The living principle of ahimsa informs that each life form — including space, air, water, earth, forest, and even a speck of sand — possesses consciousness and energy. According to the Vedas, ahimsa is the foremost human obligation in fulfillment of dharma, divine law. For the system of dharma to be universally valid, it must meet all the necessities of life - it must provide love, compassion, support, health, prosperity in all states of existence to all peoples and must be adept at serving the manifold needs and conditions of all communities. Ayurveda meets all the universal requirements of a dharma system. From the beginning, the Vedic tradition has advocated harmony among all peoples and all life forms, and this awareness has led to the ethical virtues common in Hindu lifestyle that are based on ahimsa - nonviolence, non-hurtfulness, in other words, reverence for all forms of life and the protection of nature's resources.

Evidently, we are at a critical juncture in the evolution of spiritual understanding. Do we have the spiritual resources necessary to meet the present challenges? Evidently we do. For timeless eon, the essential truths of living in accordance with divine law proclaimed by the rishis, have been common knowledge throughout

the world confirmed again and again as necessary to the welfare and harmony of life and living.

Ayurveda gives us the knowledge to cultivate the reverence that allows human consciousness and its infinite diversity to express itself in oneness. Unfortunately, our modern lifestyle with its acquired dependencies and deep-rooted imbalances alienates us from harmony. Human actions have severely trespassed nature's resources. For example, we attempt to artificially 'enrich' our foodstuffs with vitamins and minerals which previously were removed from them at great cost; or assault the edible plant and other species by integrating and/or trading their life generating DNA components between them to "create new scientific discovery." Genetic manipulation of our food deliberately alters the tanmatra - energy quanta - so that the food at its very essence forgets what it is supposed to do when we ingest it. We are nourished not only by the vitamins, minerals, and enzymes in food, but also by its resonant field of memories that commune with our tissues. When that memory is tampered with, the resulting food does not satisfy our physical, mental or spiritual needs. We overeat in a futile attempt to assuage our real hunger.

Modern science and technology constantly struggles to control that which they have fragmentized and are attempting to reconstruct 'scientifically' to create a false whole. These deranged actions of our humankind have escalated the loss of species and the destruction of the rain forests and its prehistoric life. As a result the memories they carried with them that necessarily fill the web of life to maintain universal stasis, is lost.

Humanity must recover its intrinsic memory of ahimsa - compassion - if we are to survive our present predicament. Ahimsa is a commitment to harmony. There can be no peace on Earth until we eradicate the mentality of violence. For this, we have to stop killing. If the paramount karma of humanity is to manifest peace, then we must first understand what it means to live peacefully. Peace cannot be gained without the personal cultivation of inner harmony and health for all humankind and compassion for all species. Health, and harmony cannot be achieved at any level while any form of life suffers. Health cannot be partial to the human species at the expense of other species. By divine ordinance, every species has a primordial and fundamental right to life and to live. The primeval right of the hu-

man is the right to live. The primeval right of the animal is the right to live. Vegetarianism as a way of peaceful living is a primal necessity toward the cultivation of ahimsa - inner harmony, inner health and world peace.

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