

**A New Year. A New Start.
Renew yourself in an Ayurvedic way.**

A start of a new year is always refreshing and this year why not begin it anew in an Ayurvedic way. **Dinachariya**, the daily routine set out in the scriptures, is the ideal place to start. Before embarking on the daily routines, the previous year should be looked at and evaluated. This is done to review the good things which happened during the year, to be grateful for them and remember. It is also a time to think about how the next year is going to progress; the hopes which are going to be fulfilled.

Let us look at Dinachariya first, as set out by Acharya Vagbhata in Ashtanga Hrdayam. The first step is to ideally wake up in the '**Brahma Murta**'. This is the period before dawn, between 3-6am. Awakening at this time enables you to experience the day before it is 'born' It is an ideal time of the day for meditation and study as the mind is at its most relaxed and calm. The external environment is also calm at this time of day; especially if you live in a large city, this could be the only time of day where the traffic and noise is at a minimal level. During the summer months this period would be earlier in the day than during the winter months due to the earlier sunrise so it is also important to take the season into consideration.

Once awake, the initial thoughts should be to whether the previous day's food has been properly digested. An indication of this is whether the body feels light and refreshed. When food has not properly digested, the body feels heavy, drowsy and there is a puffiness around the eyes. So once it has been established that the eyes are clear and the body feels light, it is time to get up.

The next stage in our daily routine is the elimination of malas or waste and impurities from the body. The bowel movements should be comfortable and the body feel light once they have been removed. The teeth are then brushed, tongue cleaned and the face, eyes and feet washed. These all enable the body to wake up fully and then more thorough cleansing procedures can be completed.

The first sense organs to be cleansed are the eyes. This process is called **Anjana** or purification of the eyes. A few drops of medicated oil are put into each eye and the corresponding dirt which accumulates is removed. This procedure is excellent to prevent future eye problems and to enable a clearer vision.

The next cleansing process is **Nasya** or nasal drops. Again a few drops of medicated oil are put into each nostril and inhaled deeply. The oil 'scrapes' excess kapha in the form of mucus and this is then removed through the mouth. The nasya procedure is excellent

for removing excess kapha from the head region, it strengthens the head and neck, is said to stop greying of the hair and improves the complexion.

The next purification method is **Gandusha** or gargling, again with medicated oil. The oil is kept in the mouth and allowed to flow between the teeth and gums. The oil is removed and takes any excess kapha with it. This process is ideal in strengthening the teeth and gums. It is good for mouth diseases such as ulcers and also strengthens the throat and voice.

The final purification of the sense organs is called **Dhoomapana** or medicated smoke. A wick is made up with medicated herbs and the smoke from this when lit is inhaled through the nose. The smoke is then exhaled through the mouth. This process is good in preventing colds, headaches, throat diseases and asthma.

Once all the sense organs have been cleansed the mind should have become clearer and it is time to make the most of Brahma Murta- the ideal time of the day to study. If you are a student it is a good time to read up on some of your texts. As it is the start of the new year it is nice to read some scriptures and reflect on them. The routine of dinachariya carries on after this quiet moment of contemplation.

Abhyanga or full body oil application is the next method set out by Acharya Vagbhata. This may not be convenient to do everyday due to time restraints and if the Vikruti (present state dosha) is a Kapha or Pitta. Kapha constitution can do the oil application once in a week and Pitta twice in a week, unless it is time restraints and then at least once a week or fortnight should be manageable. Vata vikruti is in need of the oil application greatly and it should be endeavoured to find enough time to do this. The full body oil application starts with the head and then the full body is oiled using long, sweeping movements. This calms the mind and body and again is an excellent way to start the day afresh. If again time is not sufficient then according to the scriptures the head, ears and feet should at least be massaged. Oil should be regularly applied to the head to enhance the strength of the head and the sense organs. It is good for the hair and produces a sound sleep. Oil for the ears is good to prevent ear diseases. The feet are oiled to reduce dryness of the soles and massaging the feet is also good for the eyesight.

Exercise or **Vyayama** is the next part of the day. It is extremely important to have a daily place for exercise in your life. It sharpens the mind and body, increases agni (the digestive fire), gives a lightness to the body and makes one more efficient. Acharya Charaka states in Charaka Samhita that exercise should not be done to exhaustion as this causes a strain on the body and an undue increase in vata. There should be a slight breathlessness and perspiration of the body should start. Hatha Yoga should be adequate for most people but with our increasingly sedentary lives where we do not walk as much as we used to, it is also important to add some cardio-vascular exercise. Salutations to the Sun can be perfect for this as the whole body is used and if a sufficient number are performed there is breathlessness. Again it may not be possible to exercise daily due to time restraints but at least four times a week is recommended. It is also

necessary to take Vikruti into account again, and this time kapha needs more exercise than vata. It should also be noted that the Dinachariya routines are for healthy people and if there are more problems in the body or mind more evasive Ayurveda procedures of cleansing and treatment are used.

The powder massage or **Udwartana** is then set out. This will remove the oil after the Abhyanga and also reduce kapha and medus (fat) from the body; and improve the lustre of the skin. Again time restraints and constitution will come into the picture. Once a week or fortnight depending on when Abhyanga is performed is ideal. Kapha constitutions should perform this process more often than vata constitutions.

Bathing is the next daily routine carried out. Warm water should be used and hot water should never be used on the head as it reduces the strength of the hair and eyes. After bathing a light can be lit and a short prayer said. This can be done with a religious form in mind or to the higher self. It is important to acknowledge that there is an energy which is greater than ours in the universe and by praying we are sending out the message of gratitude. The light symbolises knowledge and the darkness is ignorance. So by lighting a lamp or candle, the light removes the darkness as does knowledge remove ignorance.

The whole Dinachariya may seem a lot to do before the work day begins, but if you start with small steps you will see huge differences and this in turn will make you want to do more and more of the daily routines. It is not necessary though to do all of them, it is more important to do the routines with a spiritual awareness and properly rather than rushing through them.

Once the daily routines have become integrated into everyday life, the mind will definitely become clearer and free from Ama (impure substance). It will become easier to meditate and become aware of the inner self. As it is the start of the new year it is perfect to meditate on the direction we would like the year to head. We can consider our goals, expectations and dreams. This can be a powerful meditation as once the mind has the thought; the outcome is more likely to occur. The mind is the root of all our ailments, but is also the root to our healing. We can make our own reality in our minds so make it a positive, happy one.

In summary then; the previous year should first be looked at and reviewed in order to progress with the coming year. Daily routines of cleansing the sense organs and body, alleviating vata, and stimulating agni and the mind should then be completed. After the mind has become clearer and free of Ama, it is then time to start looking ahead to the year and doing some positive meditation. I hope you all have a happy and renewing start to the year.

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