

# Maharishi Ayurveda

## A Bahá'í Exploration\*

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### Abstract

Ayurveda is the traditional health system of India. Maharishi Ayurveda is the restoration of Ayurveda in a system adapted for universal application in the modern world. This article explores the parallels between the Bahá'í writings on health and healing, and the principles of Maharishi Ayurveda. After an introduction to Ayurveda, the article provides a comparative assessment of the understanding of homeostasis, pathogeny, and the mind-body relationship. It then outlines some of the therapeutic strategies of Maharishi Ayurveda and examines how they correspond to the Bahá'í writings on healing. The article does not purport to be a comprehensive discourse on Maharishi Ayurveda. It is, rather, a layperson's brief exploration from a Bahá'í perspective. It is neither attempted nor indeed possible to include all the pertinent Bahá'í writings, as they are voluminous and transcend the scope of this article.

*The world of being shineth, in this Day, with the resplendency of this Divine Revelation. All created things extol its saving grace, and sing its praises. The universe is wrapt in an ecstasy of joy and gladness. The Scriptures of past Dispensations celebrate the great Jubilee that must needs greet this most great Day of God. (Bahá'u'lláh)*

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**Note from the Editor of *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies*:** Readers of this article are asked to take note of the following quotation from the Bahá'í writings: "No specific school of nutrition or medicine has been associated with the Bahá'í teachings. What we have are certain guidelines, indications and principles which will be carefully studied by experts and will, in the years ahead, undoubtedly prove to be invaluable sources of guidance and inspiration in the development of these medical sciences" (from a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, cited in *Lights of Guidance* 297).

Ayurveda is a science to maintain perfect health.<sup>1</sup> It is an integral part of the Vedic literature, the world's most ancient divine scriptures still extant. Two of the most important Ayurvedic texts are *Caraka Samhita*, a treatise on general medicine, and *Sushruta Samhita*, a classic text on surgery. Ayurvedic medicine has been practised in India for thousands of years. It became fragmented when India was occupied by foreign nations. (Consequently, the current poor levels of health in India can provide no measure of its effectiveness.) Ayurveda is a comprehensive and preventive system of health care. It has application in surgery, gynaecology, ophthalmology, paediatrics, obstetrics, toxicology, internal medicine, and many other fields of medicine. Maharishi Ayurveda is the reconstruction of the original completeness of Ayurveda by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi<sup>2</sup> in collaboration with many of the world's greatest Ayurvedic scholars and physicians.<sup>3</sup>

## Background

The ancient *rishis* (seers) identified the source of all life as consciousness—that essential unity which animates all existence. By interacting with itself (*Purusha*, the eternal unmanifest reality, in conjunction with *Prakriti*, (likewise eternal, unmanifest, but assuming a creative function) consciousness unfolds, manifesting itself in all the various expressions of nature (*Sushruta Samhita* 2: 114-17). Bahá'u'lláh affirms that all existence originates from one unified divine principle:

*The world of existence came into being through the heat generated from the interaction between the active force and that which is its recipient. These two are the same, yet they are different. (Tablets 140)*

In the *Lawh-i-Aiyi-i-Núr* (Tablet of the Verse of Light), Bahá'u'lláh expounds on this theme:

*Know that the first tokens that emanated from the pre-existent Cause in the worlds of creation are the four elements: fire, air, water, and earth.... Then the natures (ustuqusát) of these four appeared: heat, moisture, cold, and dryness—those same qualities that ye both reckon and know. When the elements interacted and joined with one another, two pillars became evident for each one: for fire, heat and dryness, and likewise for the remaining three in accordance with these rules, as ye are aware. By them God created all that there is in the worlds of creation, whether of the higher or lower realms. In whatsoever thing these natures came into equilibrium that thing endured the passage of time, as ye behold with the sun and the moon; and in whatsoever thing these natures came not into balance, that thing passed quickly into extinction, even as ye observe to be the case with the creatures of the lower worlds. (Má'idiy-i-Asmání 4:82)<sup>4</sup>*

Some of the most recent developments in quantum physics lend support to the view that finite matter emerges from a single supersymmetric field known as the unified field, where the four fundamental forces of nature—electromagnetism, strong and weak interactions, and gravitation—are completely unified (Freedman, van Nieuwenhuizen, “Supergravity” 126-43). It can be surmised that the unified field corresponds to “universal reality” in the following quotation:

*The first thing which emanated from God is that universal reality, which the ancient philosophers termed the “First Mind,” and which the people of Bahá call the “First Will.” This emanation, in that which concerns its action in the world of God, is not limited by time or place; it is without beginning or end—beginning and end in relation to God are one. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions 203)*

This surmise is corroborated by ‘Abdu’l Bahá’s affirmation that the First Will (also referred to as the Primal Will) “is the inner reality of things, and all existing things are its manifestations (*mazáhir*) . . .” (*Makátib* 3:356).<sup>5</sup>

According to Maharishi, the unified field sequentially gives rise to the diversity in creation through a process of self-referral and self-interaction (Maharishi, *Life Supported* 25-26; Chandler, “Introduction” 9-10). In physics, this process is known as spontaneous symmetry breaking: The unified field moving within itself generates the fundamental forces of nature and the fundamental matter fields. From the interaction of these fields, potential is transformed into actuality: The physical structures arise, specifically the DNA molecule (Wallace et al., “Vedic Physiology” 8-9).

A statement of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá suggests that creation unfolds in a sequential manner: “. . . the mind proveth the existence of an unseen Reality that embraceth all beings, and that existeth and revealeth itself in all stages (“Tablet to Dr Auguste Forel” 222).

The transformation of consciousness into matter is described in Ayurveda as follows: *Prakriti* contains three *gunas* or attributes; *sattva* (essence), *rajas* (energy), and *tamas* (inertia). Five elements arise out of the interaction of the *gunas*: *akash* (space), *vayu* (air), *agni* (fire), *jala* (water), and *prthvi* (earth) (*Caraka Samhita* 1: 6-7; *Sushruta Samhita* 2: 114-21).<sup>6</sup> These elements constitute all of the physical universe: A basic premise of Ayurveda is that the elements which exist in the macrocosm (nature) are also present in the microcosm (the individual) (*Caraka Samhita* 1: 440; *Sushruta Samhita* 2: 118-21). This is affirmed in the Bahá'í writings. The following quotation has a broader meaning but is relevant nevertheless. Quoting ‘Alí, Bahá’u’lláh writes: “Dost thou reckon thyself only a puny form / When within thee the universe is folded?” (*Seven Valleys* 34). This premise is also restated by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “. . . all parts of

the creational world are of one whole” (*Bahá'í World Faith* 364). In reference to animals and vegetables, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá writes, “...the animal, as to its body, is made up of the same constituent elements as man” (*Selections* 153). “All the elements that are combined in man exist also in vegetables” (*Some Answered Questions* 258).

### Homeostasis, Pathogenesis, and the Mind-Body Relationship

Ayurveda teaches that an individual’s uniqueness is defined by the unique proportion of the five elements (*Caraka Samhita* 1: 447; *Sushruta Samhita* 2: 119-21).<sup>7</sup> These five elements combine to form three governing principles known as doshas.

DOSHA	COMBINATION OF ELEMENTS	MAJOR FUNCTIONS
Vata	Akash, Vayu	Movement and Elimination
Pitta	Agni, Jala	Metabolism and Digestion
Kapha	Jala, Prthvi	Cohesion and Structure

(*Caraka Samhita* 1: 7, 131, 399; *Sushruta Samhita* 1: 120-21)

Although in differing proportions, all *doshas* are present in an individual’s physiology. The predominant *dosha(s)* determine the individual body type (“Maharishi Ayurveda psychosomatic type”) (Glaser, “Maharishi Ayurveda” 100-101). Each psychosomatic type has corresponding physical and psychological characteristics that predispose an individual to different diseases when the doshic balance is disturbed. For example, since *agni* is present in *pitta*, individuals of *pitta* psychosomatic type are thought to be prone to anger and susceptible to inflammatory diseases.<sup>8</sup> Primary attention therefore is given to preserving the doshic balance (*Caraka Samhita* 1: 8, 131; *Sushruta Samhita* 1:127, 194, 196, 202). The importance of maintaining homeostasis is made clear in the Bahá’í writings:

...the human body is composed of numerous elements, but in the measure of an especial equilibrium. As long as this equilibrium is maintained, man is preserved from disease; but if this essential balance, which is the pivot of the constitution, is disturbed, the constitution is disordered, and disease will supervene. (‘Abdu’l Bahá, *Some Answered Questions* 257)

Ayurveda teaches that to preserve the doshic balance, there must be harmony between the mind and body, and between the individual and the environment (*Caraka Samhita* 1: 7, 121, 131, 447),<sup>9</sup> because the same laws of nature are present in the cosmos as in the human body (Maharishi, *Life Supported* 111-12). Ayurveda therefore regards the individual and the environment as interdependent.<sup>10</sup> ‘Abdu’l-Bahá addresses the importance of this relationship:

*Were one to observe with an eye that discovereth the realities of all things, it would become clear that the greatest relationship that bindeth the world of being together lieth in the range of created things themselves, and that co-operation, mutual aid and reciprocity are essential characteristics in the unified body of the world of being, inasmuch as all created things are closely related together and each is influenced by the other or deriveth benefit therefrom, either directly or indirectly. (Cited in Compilation 1: 71)*

According to Ayurveda, biological and environmental rhythms get out of synchronization when there has been some violation of natural law, such as the practice of harmful habits, repression of emotions, environmental abuse, or incorrect diet (*Caraka Sarnhita* 1. 7, 120-21; *Sushruta Samhita* 1: 123, 201-3).<sup>11</sup> ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains that there are many different causes of disease: “. . . lustful appetites, . . . sin and contumacy (*Selections* 152-53), and sorrow (*Star* 19:254) among others. Maharishi Ayurveda identifies the first expression of the disease process on the quantum level, where consciousness, mind, and body interact (Chopra, “Bliss” 72). Quantum means the smallest possible unit of energy. The quantum level is therefore the deepest level of matter. Dr. Deepak Chopra has coined the term “quantum mechanical body” (“Bliss” 63). This conception of the human body enables one to regard it as “a silent flow of intelligence, a constant bubbling up of impulses that create, control and become your physical body” (Chopra, *Perfect Health* 10). The quantum mechanical body is viewed then, not as a static entity, but rather as a “flow of intelligence” subject to constant change. This view extends to embrace existence itself (Chopra, “Bliss” 71-73). The Bahá'í writings also put forward the view that existence is in a process of constant change. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá writes:

*Creation is the expression of motion. . . . All created forms are progressive in their planes, or kingdoms of existence, under the stimulus of the power or spirit of life. The universal energy is dynamic. Nothing is stationary in the material world of outer phenomena or in the inner world of intellect and consciousness. (Promulgation 140)*

Maharishi Ayurveda teaches that the disease process begins when there is a disruption in the “flow of intelligence.”<sup>12</sup> “Flow of intelligence” may be equated with “mind force” in the following quotation:

*The mind force—whether we call it pre-existent or contingent—doth direct and co-ordinate all the members of the human body, seeing to it that each part or member duly performeth its own special function. If, however, there be some interruption in the power of the mind, all the members will fail to carry out their essential functions, deficiencies will*

*appear in the body and the functioning of its members, and the power will prove ineffective.*

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections* 48)

Chopra uses a computer analogy to describe the mind-body relationship. He asserts, “To change the printout out of the body, you must learn to rewrite the software of the mind” (*Perfect Health* 12). The mind writes the computer program, which in turn creates the printout, i.e., the physical body (Chopra, “Bliss” 62). Every thought the “program” processes in turn generates a chemical reaction in the body.<sup>13</sup> The computer analogy can be demonstrated by the placebo effect. The placebo effect is the change in health status as a result of expectation rather than of a specific treatment. The Bahá’í writings acknowledge the effect of thought processes on the physical body: “. . . the sudden realization of a chief desire will give such joy that the nerves will be excited by it, and this excitement may produce health” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions* 255).

The reader may ask to what degree the computer model is compatible with the Bahá’í understanding, because in the Bahá’í view the critical condition for well-being is obedience to Bahá’í teachings. The point in question then is how congruent are Maharishi Ayurveda measures with Bahá’í principles. The discussion below will attempt to show that the measures improve physiological functioning and promote behavior in accordance with environmental and biological rhythms. It follows then that the adoption of such measures would be compatible with obedience to Bahá’í teachings. This writer still maintains, however, that we are all subject to the Will of God; therefore good health is dependent not only upon personal effort but also upon God’s grace. Maharishi Ayurveda teaches that treatment is regarded as most effective when it is applied on the quantum level (Chopra, “Bliss” 72). According to Chopra, more power is available on this level than on the gross level of the physiology: “What is at work here is the quantum principle, which reveals that the most subtle levels of nature hold the greatest potential energy” (*Perfect Health* 8). He cites the example of the laser, “which takes the same light that is emitted by a flashlight, and by organizing it into coherent quantum vibrations boosts its power enough to cut through steel” (*Perfect Health* 8).

### **The Mental Approach: Transcendental Meditation**

The mental approach operates on the quantum level (Chopra, “Bliss” 72-73). It is therefore regarded as the most powerful therapeutic strategy. In Maharishi Ayurveda, Transcendental Meditation (TM) (a mental technique) is the primary prevention approach. The TM technique has been described as a systematic means for taking the conscious mind from active levels of awareness to more abstract and fundamental levels of mental activity, resulting in

the experience of pure consciousness” (Hagelin, “Is Consciousness” 62). During the experience of pure consciousness, the mind remains fully alert while experiencing profound silence, a state which has been shown to have physiological correlates such as decreased respiration rate and increased basal skin resistance (Dillbeck, Orme-Johnson, “Physiological Differences” 879-81). Extensive research demonstrates TM’s remarkable range of benefits.<sup>14</sup>

Meditation has an important role in the Bahá'í teachings:

*The spirit of man is itself informed and strengthened during meditation; through it affairs of which man knew nothing are unfolded before his view. Through it he receives Divine inspiration, through it he receives heavenly food.*

*Meditation is the key for opening the doors of mysteries. In that state man abstracts himself: in that state man withdraws himself from all outside objects; in that subjective mood he is immersed in the ocean of spiritual life and can unfold the secrets of things-in-themselves....*

*This faculty brings forth from the invisible plane the sciences and arts. Through the meditative faculty inventions are made possible, colossal undertakings are carried out; through it governments can run smoothly... (‘Abdu’l Bahá, Paris Talks 175)*

Some readers may find a semantic difficulty with the word meditation. It is not proposed that TM equates with “meditation” as it is most frequently employed in the Bahá'í writings; to imply reflection on the Word of God:

*Meditate upon that which hath streamed forth from the heaven of the Will of thy Lord, He Who is the Source of all grace, that thou mayest grasp the intended meaning which is enshrined in the sacred depths of the Holy Writings. (Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets 143)*

An in-depth discussion is not possible within the confines of this article. Chopra, however, addresses this point (*Quantum Healing* 182-83).

## The Super Radiance Effect

The “Super Radiance Effect” or “Maharishi Effect” can be defined as the improved quality of life produced when, in one place, the square root of one percent of a population practises the Maharishi Technology of the Unified Field (MTUF)—TM and the TM-Sidhi program (Hagelin, “Is Consciousness” 64-65). The TM-Sidhi program is a set of specific procedures prescribed in the Vedic literature that train the individual to function from the level of the unified field (Chandler, “Introduction” 20). As Maharishi describes it:

In this program, human awareness identifies itself with that most wide and most powerful level of nature’s functioning and starts to function from there. The purpose of the TM-Sidhi program is to consciously create activity from that level from where nature performs. (*Life Supported* 74)<sup>15</sup>

Research has repeatedly demonstrated that the group practice of the MTUF has the effect of decreasing crime and accident rates, and of reducing violence and international conflict.<sup>16</sup> According to physicist Dr. John Hagelin, the Super Radiance Effect illustrates the principle known as constructive interference (*Scientific Research* 71). In applying this principle to society, it is found that the effect generated is proportional to the square of the number of individuals practising the MTUF (Hagelin, “Is Consciousness” 65). If, as research findings suggest, the Super Radiance Effect contributes to the peace-making process, Bahá'ís could expect references to be made to such an effect in the Bahá'í writings. I submit the hypothesis that the following quotation refers to the MTUF:

*In the treasuries of the knowledge of God there lieth concealed a knowledge which, when applied, will largely, though not wholly, eliminate fear. This knowledge, however, should be taught from childhood, as it will greatly aid in its elimination. Whatever decreaseth fear increaseth courage. Should the Will of God assist Us, there would flow out from the Pen of the Divine Expounder a lengthy exposition of that which hath been mentioned, and there would be revealed, in the field of arts and sciences, what would renew the world and the nations. A word hath, likewise, been written down and recorded by the Pen of the Most High in the Crimson Book which is capable of fully disclosing that force which is hid in men, nay of redoubling its potency. We implore God—exalted and glorified be He—to graciously assist His servants to do that which is pleasing and acceptable unto Him. (Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle 32)*

When Shoghi Effendi was asked about the meaning of this passage, his secretary replied on his behalf: “Unfortunately it would seem that the knowledge ‘which could largely eliminate fear’ has not been disclosed or identified by Bahá'u'lláh, so we do not know what it is” (*Bahá'í News* 210: 3). As the first major experiment to measure the sociological effects of the collective practice of the MTUF was not conducted until 1983, the Super Radiance Effect was not known about at the time this letter was written.<sup>17</sup>

To test the hypothesis, it is necessary to determine whether the theoretical understanding and research into the MTUF are consistent with Bahá'u'lláh's exposition in *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*. A brief inquiry is offered here.

First and foremost, the sociological measures of reduced violence and international conflict cited above constitute powerful evidence to suggest that the application of the MTUF satisfies the primary condition: “eliminate fear.”

What other pointers are provided? We find: “that force which is hid in men.” It has already been contended that the unified field (which, according to Hagelin is “experienced as the most fundamental state of human awareness” [“Is Consciousness” 59]) is the unification of the four fundamental forces of nature (Freedman, van Nieuwenhuizen, “Supergravity” 126-43). Thus, this



statement provides support to the view that the organizing power of the unified field accords with a literal interpretation of “that force which is hid in men.” A careful scrutiny of the Crimson Book (the Book of the Covenant, and the book “which is capable of fully disclosing that force . . .”) sheds more light. We find:

*O ye My Branches! A mighty force. a consummate power lieth concealed in the world of being. Fix your gaze upon it and upon its unifying influence, and not upon the differences which appear from it. (Bahá'u'lláh, “The Book of the Covenant,” Tablets 221)*

It can be conjectured that “mighty force” may also be identified as the organizing power of the unified field. On what basis is this conjecture made? Bahá'u'lláh tells us that this “mighty force” has a “unifying influence.” It has been asserted that a unifying influence is generated when individual consciousness functions from the level of the unified field during the practice of the MTUF (Hagelin, *Scientific Research* 70; Orme-Johnson, et al., “International Peace Project” 806). This assertion is supported by research which shows that coherence is generated during the practice.<sup>18</sup> Bahá'u'lláh also tells us that “differences” appear from this “mighty force.” If this interpretation of “mighty force” is correct, it would follow that “differences” may refer to the diversity of the phenomenal world, which, according to Maharishi, emerges from the unified field (*Life Supported* 25-26; Chandler, “Introduction” 10). Bahá'u'lláh provides one further instruction: “Fix your gaze upon it and upon its unifying influence, and not upon the differences which appear from it.” It is possible that Bahá'u'lláh is exhorting human beings to detach themselves from the phenomenal world, and to turn their attention to the spiritual realm. The inference here, that the unified field is in the spiritual realm, may find support in the following excerpt from a letter written by Shoghi Effendi: “The essence of existence is a spiritual reality because invisible forces of the spirit are the origin of matter and the foundation thereof” (cited in Brown, “A Bahá'í Perspective” 29).

Equally striking is the point in Bahá'u'lláh's exposition in *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* “. . . there would be revealed, in the field of arts and sciences, what would renew the world and the nations” (32). This quotation provides a further pillar of support to the hypothesis since the MTUF also has experimental and applied values in the arts and sciences. Its ability to show how a discipline relates to the unified field of natural law is providing profound insights into many traditional academic disciplines (Dillbeck, “Maharishi Technology” 398-99).<sup>19</sup>

Given that international peace is the “most momentous question of this day” (‘Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in *Compilation 2*: 168), and given the research findings on the MTUF, this technology merits serious examination.

## Diagnosis and Individualized Treatment

A distinctive advantage of Ayurveda is that its diagnostic methods (in particular pulse diagnosis) can identify an imbalance at the unmanifest level (*Caraka Samhita* 1: 325-28; *Sushruta Samhita* 1: 210; Rigby, “New Perspectives” 82), allowing treatment to intervene before disease becomes manifest, when it can be difficult and costly to treat.<sup>20</sup> (These methods are in sharp contrast to those in Western medicine, which can generally only recognize disease when it is organically obvious.)

Individualized treatment is a distinguishing feature of Ayurveda. As explained above, individuals are vulnerable to different diseases according to their unique combination of *doshas*. To maximize immunity to disease and to achieve balance by eliminating excessive accumulation of the *doshas*, treatment must be tailored to the needs of the individual. The *vaidya* (Ayurvedic practitioner) takes into account the individual's psychosomatic type, condition, environment, and other influencing factors (*Caraka Samhita* 1:124, 326, 448; *Sushruta Samhita* 1: 185-86, 210, 232). Individualized treatment is affirmed by ‘Abdu’l Bahá:

*The skillful physician does not give the same medicine to cure each disease and each malady, but he changes remedies and medicines according to the different necessities of the diseases and constitutions. (Some Answered Questions 94)*

## Therapeutic Strategies

There are many therapeutic strategies in Maharishi Ayurveda.<sup>21</sup> Most strategies enliven innate self-repair mechanisms and increase internal biological strength (Rothenberg, Averbach, “Three Important Studies” 3). Ayurvedic treatments are therefore preventive as well as curative. It is the intelligence (order) in a treatment that triggers the healing process (Chopra, “Bliss” 69-70). “Intelligence” may be equated with “mind” in the following quotation: “All that we see around us is the work of mind. It is mind in the herb and in the mineral that acts on the human body, and changes its condition” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star* 8.18: 233). It is relevant to point out here that the use of herbs and minerals comprises important rejuvenation strategies in Ayurveda. This use will be discussed in more detail below.

The Bahá'í writings make it clear that many approaches can be used to restore health:

*The state or condition through which healing takes place is the condition of the heart. By some this state is reached through pills, powders, and physicians. By others through hygiene, fasting, and prayer. By others through direct perception. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Star 8.18: 233)*

## Diet

‘Abdu’l-Bahá foresaw the use of dietary measures:

*When the science of medicine reaches perfection, treatment will be given by foods, aliments, fragrant fruits and vegetables, and by various waters, hot and cold in temperature. (Some Answered Questions 258-59)*

Diet is regarded as extremely important in Ayurveda and therefore deserves special attention. According to Ayurveda, a person can intuitively gravitate towards the foods she or he requires to maintain balance (*Caraka Samhita* 1: 231; *Sushruta Samhita* 1: lxiii). ‘Abdu’l-Bahá affirms this view: “... when the constitution is in a state of equilibrium, there is no doubt that whatever is relished will be beneficial to health” (*Selections* 155). He cites the example of animals, which have no knowledge of pharmacopoeia and yet are able “according to a natural law” to differentiate between numerous plants and find the one that will cure their disease (*Selections* 154). This ability is conditional upon the constitution’s being in a “state of equilibrium.” Ayurveda teaches that many people have strayed far from their natural diet and in so doing developed a doshic imbalance (*Caraka Samhita* 1: 448). Consequently their power of discrimination does not function as accurately as it might. Accordingly, the Maharishi Ayurveda practitioner recommends dietary programs that are specifically prescribed to redress the doshic imbalance (*Caraka Samhita* 1: 447-48; *Sushruta Samhita* 1: lxii, 186). The taste and the quality of food affect the doshas. For example, unctuous (oily) foods increase *kapha* and decrease *vata*. A person with a *vata* imbalance would therefore be advised to increase intake of these foods, especially when *vata* is aggravated (*Caraka Samhita* 1: 448-49; Glaser, “Maharishi Ayurveda” 102). ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has stated:

*It is the function of a skilled physician to determine which constituent of his patient’s body hath suffered diminution, which hath been augmented. Once he hath discovered this, he must prescribe a food containing the diminished element in considerable amounts, to re-establish the body’s essential equilibrium. (Selections 154)<sup>22</sup>*

Waters are also used. Differing amounts and temperatures are prescribed according to psychosomatic types and seasons (*Sushruta Samhita* 2: 497).

## Pharmacology

The pharmacology of Ayurveda is an extensive science that has been refined by many centuries of experience. The ancient Ayurvedic texts detail the properties and effects of a vast number of herbal and mineral remedies. According to Ayurveda, plants contain chemicals that counterbalance undesirable effects of their active ingredients. Therefore, the entire part of the plant is commonly used, an important reason why iatrogenic illness—illness caused

by the adverse effects of treatment—is avoided (Glaser, “Maharishi Ayurveda” 95-96, 100). (This method is in contrast to the common practice in Western medicine of using the active ingredient in isolation.<sup>23</sup>) Since Ayurvedic principles are based on natural law (which is universal), the knowledge is not confined to the indigenous flora of India. Ayurveda recognizes that the native plants of a given country are the most beneficial for the health of the people living in that country. Research is being carried out on the medicinal value of flora from many countries.<sup>24</sup>

Special herbal and mineral preparations are used in rasayana therapy. Rasayanas are health-promoting treatments that revitalize the essence of the physiology (*Caraka Samhita* 2: 3-4; *Sushruta Samhita* 2: 515). Recently, the knowledge of an ancient and long-lost rasayana renowned for its health-bestowing properties, namely *amrit kalash*, has been revived, chiefly by Dr. Balaraj Maharishi. Traditionally, it is considered to enhance immune response, promote homeostasis, and increase a sense of well-being (Glaser, “Maharishi Ayurveda” 94). Research on “Maharishi Amrit Kalash” is at the initial stage. However, findings to date appear to confirm traditional observations.<sup>25</sup>

## Eating Habits

In Ayurveda, the manner in which a person eats is as important as the type of food eaten because if food is properly digested, a vivifying principle called *ojas* is maximized. Ojas is essential for strength and immunity (*Caraka Samhita* 1: 120; *Sushruta Samhita* 1:130, 556-64).<sup>26</sup> Maharishi Ayurveda recommends a number of “Body Intelligence Tips” (Chopra, *Perfect Health* 256) to increase ojas and promote perfect digestion. Many of these recommendations are enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh in “Tablet to a Physician” (*Star* 13.9: 252).<sup>27</sup> In the following pairs, the first quotation is from “Tablet to a Physician,” unless stated otherwise, and the second quotation is from *Perfect Health* 256.

- \* “O people, do not eat except when you are hungry.” “Eat only when you feel hungry.”
- \* “Do not take nourishment except when [the process of] digestion is completed.” “Wait until one meal is digested before eating the next.
- \* “If two diametrically opposite foods are put on the table do not mix them.” “Drink milk separately from meals, either alone or with other sweet foods.” (In Ayurveda there are a number of foods that should not be mixed [*Sushruta Samhita* 1:186-88].)
- \* “If a man eats too much, he ruins his digestion...” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks* 49) “Leave one third to one-quarter of your stomach empty to aid digestion.”

The Bahá'í writings affirm numerous additional Ayurvedic practices such as the taking of a light breakfast (*Star* 13.9: 252).

## Sound

Therapeutic use of sound (*Gaudharva-Veda*) is a powerful approach in Maharishi Ayurveda. Voice and melodic sounds are used to heal disorders and to restore balance in the physiology. To explain: Maharishi Ayurveda teaches that unmanifest sounds (resonance frequencies) form the basis of the quantum mechanical body. Imbalances occur when these sounds get out of synchronization. An imbalance can be corrected by matching the complementary frequency, a principle called “complementarity” (Chopra, “Bliss” 68-70). It is of interest that Transcendental Meditation heals by the same principle. In this technique, a sound is used internally in an abstract form on the level of thought. Significant recognition is given to the healing effect of sound in the Bahá'í writings:

*A fine voice when joined to beautiful music causes a great effect, for both are desirable and pleasing. All these have in themselves an organization, and are constructed on natural law. Therefore, they correspond to the order of existence like something which would fit into a mold. . . . When it is so, this affects the nerves, and they affect the heart and spirit. (‘Abdu’l Bahá, quoted in Compilation 2: 78)*

## Conclusion

It is hoped that the interested reader will be moved to investigate further the wealth of Maharishi Ayurveda—not only for one’s own health but more importantly to enable one to better serve the Kingdom. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá points out the effect of good health on one’s capacity to serve:

*Between material things and spiritual things there is a connection. The more healthful his body the greater will be the power of the spirit of man; the power of the intellect, the power of the memory, the power of reflection will then be greater. (Star 8.18: 229-230)*

It is hoped also that Bahá'í Vedic scholars will further explore and elaborate on subjects discussed in this article. Bahá'ís are advised to weigh knowledge in the balance established by the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, so that anything not in keeping with the Word of God can be disregarded and that which is valuable, accepted. With this exhortation on one hand, and ‘Abdu’l Bahá’s exhortation to “Put all your beliefs into harmony with science. . .” (*Paris Talks* 146) on the other, Bahá'ís will be well armed to make a discerning assessment of the value of Maharishi Ayurveda. For my own part, this preliminary survey has brought me to the realization that Maharishi Ayurveda has the mechanics to put many of the Bahá'í teachings into practice and help to make Shoghi Effendi’s vision a reality:

*The enormous energy dissipated and wasted on war, whether economic or political, will be consecrated to such ends . . . to the extermination of*

disease, to the extension of scientific research, to the raising of the standard of physical health, to the sharpening and refinement of the human brain,... to the prolongation of human life, and to the furtherance of any other agency that can stimulate the intellectual, the moral, and spiritual life of the entire human race. (World Order 204)

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## Endnotes

1. Ayurveda has been given recognition by the World Health Organization. See, for example, "Traditional Medicine: Views from the South-East Asia Region."
2. Maharishi is the founding teacher of Transcendental Meditation and the founder of several institutions and organizations, including the World Federation of Ayurveda (1985) and the Iowa-based Maharishi International University (1971). This university combines study of traditional disciplines with study and research in consciousness. It is accredited through the Ph.D. level by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Maharishi's work, which has its basis in the Vedic tradition, is open to empirical verification. Many rigorous studies have been published in major scientific journals.
3. The author discusses "Maharishi Ayurveda" as distinguishable from "Ayurveda" for two reasons. First, her research and experience is in Maharishi Ayurveda. Second, a number of major distinctions (identified in this article) exist between the two. However, she readily acknowledges that Ayurveda is widely practised in India and elsewhere. Ayurveda is referred to where applicable.
4. Provisional translation by Keven Brown, "A Bahá'í Perspective" 35-36.
5. Provisional translation by Keven Brown, "A Bahá'í Perspective" 24. The preceding quotation reveals the Bahá'í view that God is the progenitor of the creative process, not the creative process itself. Some schools of Vedic philosophy hold a pantheistic view. Bahá'í scholar Dr. Moojan Momen argues for a resolution of the dichotomy from a relativist position in "Relativism: A Basis for Bahá'í Metaphysics."
6. The reader will observe that the space element, *akash*, does not appear in Bahá'u'lláh's exposition above. A deeper understanding of the function of this element will help to resolve this apparent distinction. This subject is dealt with in more detail in Deepak Chopra, *Perfect Health* 58-59. The above description of *Sankhya* philosophy of cosmic evolution is a radical simplification. A detailed comparative assessment cannot be made here, as the author is not qualified to do so. Moreover, it would require a paper

- of its own. Interested readers should consult Deepak Chopra, *Total Health*; Moojan Momen, “Relativism”; and Keven Brown, “A Bahá'í Perspective.” For a discussion of the apparent correspondences between the structures of existence described in *Sankhya* philosophy and those described in modern theoretical physics, see Hagelin, “Is Consciousness” 75-76.
7. This subject is dealt with in more detail in Deepak Chopra, *Total Health*.
  8. It is of interest that pitta individuals are also susceptible to liver disorders (*Sushruta Samhita* 2: 52), as Bahá'u'lláh writes “. . . anger doth burn the liver . (quoted in Esselmont, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* 108). Admittedly, Bahá'u'lláh may not have intended this statement to be interpreted literally, but it is certainly consistent with an aggravated pitta condition.
  9. This subject is dealt with in more detail in Deepak Chopra, *Perfect Health*, ch. 2.
  10. This subject is dealt with in more detail in Deepak Chopra, *Total Health*.
  11. This subject is dealt with in more detail in Deepak Chopra, *Perfect Health*, ch. 4.
  12. This subject is dealt with in more detail in Deepak Chopra, “Bliss.”
  13. The mind body relationship is dealt with in more detail in Deepak Chopra, *Quantum Healing*.
  14. See, for example, David Orme-Johnson, “Medical Care Utilization.” This study found that regular participants in the TM program had lower medical utilization rates than did other members of the same insurance carrier. For example, outpatient visits per 1000 were 46.8% fewer than the norm for children (0 to 18), 54.7% fewer for young adults (19 to 39), and 73.7% fewer for older adults (40+).
  15. For research, see for example, R. Keith Wallace, et al., “Systolic Blood Pressure.” This study found that subjects practising the TM and TM-Sidhi programs showed a significantly lower systolic blood pressure than were the norms for the general population.
  16. For Bahá'ís, it is indubitably clear that “that which the Lord hath ordained as the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for the healing of all the world is the union of all its peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith” (Bahá'u'lláh, *Compilation 2*: 157) and that the principal means for its establishment is the Covenant. However, Bahá'u'lláh also counsels: “In all circumstances one should seize upon every means which will promote security and tranquillity among the peoples of the world” (*Tablets* 171). For research on the group practice of the MTUF, see for example, D. W. Orme-Johnson, et al., “International Peace Project.” This study found that the group practice of TM and the TM-Sidhi program in Jerusalem during August and September, 1983, resulted in reduced conflict in Lebanon and improved quality of life in Israel. Dependent variables included war deaths in Lebanon; Israeli national stock index; crime rates,

etc. Other variables such as temperature and holidays were explicitly controlled. A review of research design, methods of data collection, controls, etc., is not possible within the confines of this article.

17. See for example, M. C. Dillbeck, "Intervention Studies." In this experiment at Maharishi International University from December 17, 1983, to January 6, 1984, the group practising the Maharishi Technology of the Unified Field numbered more than 7000, which is approximately the square root of 1% of the world's population. This study showed that there were reductions in international conflicts (36%, based on newspaper content analysis), a rise in a worldwide economic index (measured by market value of the stock markets in nineteen countries), decreased traffic fatalities in the United States, etc.
18. See for example, M. C. Dillbeck and E. C. Bronson, "Short Term Longitudinal Effects." This study found that EEG coherence increases longitudinally over time as a result of the practice of the TM program.
19. See for example, Rhoda Orme-Johnson, "A Unified Field Theory."
20. Explanation of pulse diagnosis in Deepak Chopra, *Perfect Health* 137. Medical comment in David Lovell-Smith, "Diagnosis by the Pulse." Research in R. Schneider, et al., "Physiological and Psychological Correlates." This study found that Maharishi Ayurveda psychosomatic types were found to overlap with modern systems of typing. Ayurvedic pulse diagnosis was used to diagnose psychosomatic types.
21. For a discussion of the major healing approaches of Maharishi Ayurveda, see Deepak Chopra, *Perfect Health*, ch. 7. It is notable that Maharishi Ayurveda treatments are standardized worldwide. It is not possible within the confines of this article to discuss all major approaches.
22. Since many of the Bahá'í writings have not yet been translated into English, the author does not yet have access to a number of relevant tablets such as the Lawh-i-Tibb. About this tablet Keven Brown writes: "In the Lawh-i-Tibb (Tablet of Healing) Bahá'u'lláh outlines a healthful regimen, which if followed, He says, will preserve the normal equilibrium of the natures of the body and ensure that the primary substance (*asI*) remains in its pristine purity (*Alwáh* 224)" ("A Bahá'í Perspective" 40).
23. The author wishes to acknowledge the advancement of Western medicine, in particular in surgery and other treatments in crisis management. There are, however, many aspects in Western medicine in which Maharishi Ayurveda has been shown to offer improvements, such as the prediction of therapeutic response, cost effectiveness, and patient compliance. See Byron P. Rigby, "New Perspectives." It should be understood that Maharishi is committed to the integration of Ayurveda with Western medical practice. This commitment, together with his rigorous scientific approach, substantive published research on Transcendental Meditation, the

- extensive ancient texts, and Ayurveda's internally consistent theoretical framework has attracted the interest and support of a considerable number of medical doctors. See Jay L. Glaser, "Maharishi Ayurveda" 91 and Ronni L. Scheier, "MDs Eager" 104.
24. For commentary, see "Maharishi Ayurveda, Vanaushadhi Samrat Dr Balaraj Maharishi." For research, see for example G. W. H. M. Janssen, "The Application of Maharishi Ayur-Veda." This study found Maharishi Ayurveda to be effective in the treatment of ten chronic diseases. Seventy-nine percent of 126 patients had significant improvements after three months' treatment with herbal preparations. No harmful side effects were noted. The ten chronic diseases were: bronchial asthma, eczema, psoriasis, chronic bronchitis, hypertension, chronic sinusitis, chronic constipation, rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes mellitus, and headaches (including migraine headaches).
  25. See, for example, H. M. Sharma and R. V. Panganamala, "Inhibition of Human Platelet Aggregation." This study found that Maharishi Amrit Kalash reduced the aggregation of blood platelets in the test tube. These findings indicate that it may be useful in the prevention of cardiovascular disorders associated with the formulation of blood clots.
  26. This subject is dealt with in more detail in Deepak Chopra, *Perfect Health*, ch. 12. In regard to alcohol, Maharishi Ayurveda teaches that it "destroys ojas" (Chopra, *Perfect Health* 259) and therefore, to quote `Abdu'l-Bahá, "weakeneth the nerves and consumeth the mind" (quoted in *Throne* 43).
  27. A full translation of "Tablet to a Physician" is not yet available. The following is an excerpt from a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi: "The Tablet to a Physician was addressed to a man who was a student of the old type of healing prevalent in the East and familiar with the terminology used by the medical men of those days. These terms are quite different from those used by modern medicine, and one would have to have a deep knowledge of this former school of medicine to understand the questions Bahá'u'lláh was elucidating" (quoted in letter from the Universal House of Justice, dated 8 June 1989, which appeared in the *Bahá'í Studies Bulletin* 4:3-4 [1990]: 58).