

RadioReverb Interview – 15th November 2007

Interview with Sascha & Rebecca Kriese on The Holistic Network, Radioreverb 97.2 FM, presented by Jaynie Ralph & Milly Hartley, Brighton

What is Ayurveda?

Ayurveda is the Traditional Indian system of medicine. It is about 5,000 years old and based on Vedic philosophy, which states that everything in the universe is composed of five elements (ether, air, fire, water, earth). According to Ayurveda, these five elements manifest in living beings as the three *doshas* (they are called *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*), which control all physiological functions. To put it simply, when these *doshas* are in balance, we are well and healthy, but when they are out of balance, problems and diseases can develop on physical, mental and emotional levels.

Does Ayurveda primarily treat disease?

Being a medical system, Ayurveda obviously deals with the treatment of disease, but the word Ayurveda (it is Sanskrit) actually means 'Science of Life'. That is because Ayurveda focuses much more on *preventing* disease. It can do this by restoring the normal function of the three *doshas* and by keeping them in balance. This in itself promotes naturally health, happiness, wellbeing, longevity and real quality of life.

Being an ancient Indian system of medicine, can Ayurveda actually be applied in the West today?

Definitely – Ayurveda is universal! It is based on time-tested principles and universal laws that are applicable to any culture, country or climate at any time. Ayurveda sees every being as a unique individual and has an understanding of each person within the specific life context of that individual, i.e. what constitution they have, where they live, how they live, what their work is, what they eat, etc. There are many internal and external factors that need to be considered in order to get a clear picture.

How did you two come across Ayurveda?

Ten years ago both of us were working in theatre...but we both felt a real pull to make a change in our life. So, before embarking on something new, we decided to take a break and go travelling for a year in India. We didn't know what Ayurveda was, but had been recommended the Ayurvedic clinic of Dr. Naram in Bombay. Initially we planned to stay two weeks, but ended up staying five months studying and working in the clinic. This experience totally transformed our lives.

What happened in this clinic that transformed your life?

We saw Ayurveda working! We saw results. Hundreds of people came to the clinic every day with all sorts of diseases like arthritis, diabetes, asthma, cough and cold, skin diseases, headaches, depression, heart disease, cancer, HIV ... the whole spectrum. And we saw these people come back two weeks

or a month later and they were better! Pain was reduced, digestion had improved, energy levels were higher, tiredness was less ... really good results and all without side effects! But the amazing thing was, patients were also smiling, happy, very energetic and enthusiastic... and we thought 'what is going on?'. Okay, they were taking herbs, following diet, making lifestyle changes, having treatments, but there was something else that created a real shift in these patients ... and this, as we gradually realised, had to do with Dr. Naram's work as an Ayurvedic pulse reader.

What do you mean by 'Ayurvedic pulse reading'?

Pulse reading is a diagnostic method and also a very effective communication tool. An Ayurvedic pulse reader is someone who understands a person's body, mind and emotions and how body, mind and emotions of that person are working here and now. This is the definition of pulse reading according to the lineage we belong to. This lineage called *Siddhaved* is an unbroken line of Ayurvedic physicians that goes back 23 generations. The art and science of pulse reading has been passed down in our lineage directly from teacher to student in a practical, clinical way – and that's how we have learned it and are still learning – from our teacher Dr. Naram in Mumbai.

Did you learn Ayurveda only in India?

No, when we returned from India, we enrolled on a 3-year degree programme in Ayurvedic medicine at Thames Valley University in London and then spent two years of clinical training in various hospitals, clinics and private practices in India. In 2004 we graduated, started practising in London and have recently set up our own practice here in Brighton. Our clinic is called Ayuseva, which means 'Service of Life'.

What do you offer at your Ayuseva clinic?

We offer Ayurvedic pulse reading consultations, Ayurvedic nutrition and lifestyle advice, *marma* therapy, different Ayurvedic treatments like massage, *shirodhara*, and we run Ayurvedic cooking workshops – they are really great fun! We also offer residential retreats, where people stay for up to 4 weeks and undergo a very deep cleansing process called *panchakarma* – it's a sort of Ayurvedic 'MOT for body, mind and emotions'. An intense process, but a wonderful opportunity to 'clear out' on deeper levels and to embrace life with more clarity, grounding and purpose. But in short, our main goal with everything we offer at Ayuseva is to inspire and to empower people to consciously create the life they want to live – with good health and a lot of happiness and enthusiasm.

When people come to you for consultation, what can they expect?

A consultation usually lasts 1½ hours. We take people's pulse right at the beginning – before they say what symptoms they have or why they have come. Then we tell them what we feel in their pulse in terms of *dosha* balance – or imbalance – and how that translates to their current state of body, mind and emotions. Afterwards they communicate their issues to us and we then take a detailed case history. As part of a consultation, we always give tailor-made guidelines for diet and lifestyle, i.e. what to eat,

what to avoid, what to do, what better not to do for some time, etc. We usually also recommend some supplements, when a *dosha* imbalance needs to be addressed. You see, just eating healthy food and having a good lifestyle does not deal adequately with already existing problems that were caused by unhealthy actions or decisions in the past. Whatever has accumulated, be it blocks or toxins or mucus or undigested stuff – and that can be physical, mental or emotional – it needs to come out in order for the body to function correctly. Food alone, even the best food, cannot do such clearing work. For this we need the specific action of herbs and minerals that can remove stagnated matter, clear our channels, create good circulation and thus enable the healthy food we eat to actually reach and nourish our tissues. This is why supplementation and healthy eating habits always have to go hand in hand. We need to clear out old stuff *and* also make sure no new blocks are formed.

What health problems are you mainly dealing with in your practice?

We get quite a range of cases – and of all ages. Many people come because they want to improve their energy levels, they are feeling exhausted, their digestive system is sluggish, they are not sleeping well, or have cough and colds, hay fever, hormonal imbalances or skin problems. Others suffer from back ache, neck pain, stiffness, arthritis etc., which Ayurveda treats very effectively. A lot of women come with gynaecological and fertility problems, or want support during their pregnancy and after delivery. A lot of our patients suffer from low focus, memory loss, anxiety, nervousness, frustration or depression due to the stress of modern life or because of challenges in their relationships. We find Ayurveda very effective here in creating a sense of grounding and emotional balance. Quite a number of our patients suffer from low self-esteem, they can't make decisions, feel somehow blocked – their life is not flowing and they feel stuck. Ayurveda has powerful techniques that bring clarity, restore a sense of purpose and help people get clear about their vision.

In terms of public safety, are Ayurvedic practitioners regulated in the UK?

Yes, they are. Currently, there are two voluntary bodies for Ayurvedic professionals in the UK that oversee the qualification of their members, the insurance, continuing professional development, adherence to codes of ethics and conduct etc. These bodies are the Ayurvedic Practitioners Association, which we belong to, and the British Association of Accredited Ayurvedic Practitioners. However, this regulatory set up for Ayurveda is about to change, because the Department of Health is in the process of statutorily regulating Ayurveda in the UK in the next two years. This means that Ayurvedic practitioners will be officially recognised as health care providers and become regulated like GPs by a Government council.

What are your plans for the future?

Our main focus is on establishing our practice here in Brighton. Another thing we are very excited about is teaching. We already teach pulse reading as a post-graduate subject in the UK and at various Ayurveda institutes and schools in Europe – which we enjoy a lot and certainly want to continue and

develop further. But the next really big project for us is an Ayurvedic retreat centre in the country. We want to create a residential place in a very beautiful, natural setting where people can stay, take time out and disassociate from their 'normal' lives to reconnect with who they really are. It should be a space and an atmosphere in which cleansing, healing and personal transformation can occur easily and naturally. This of course requires silence and closeness to nature, so we'll have to look for an appropriate place in the next few years and also find a team of people who share this vision. But we are already very clear about this dream and confident that it will manifest in the not too distant future.