

# **VATA DHARA**

*An essay about a medicated oil used for Vata Dhara treatments.*

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## VATA DHARA OIL

Dhara is a treatment performed by pouring a stream of liquid (medicated oil or medicated water) on one or more parts of a person's body. There are many different types of Dhara in Ayurveda, used for different purposes and according to the condition and constitution of the patient. In this paper we are focusing on one specific medicated oil used for Vata Dharas, which contains the following plants:

*Durba* or *Cynadon Dactylon*  
*Kuvalam* or *Aegle Marmelos Correa*  
*Shatavari* or *Asparagus Racemoses Wild*  
*Palapatta* or *Alstonia Scholaris*

Vata Dhara is either used for treating people with a Vata Prakriti (constitution) or for balancing the doshas by manipulating Vata. Sickness comes when balance is not present in a body. If for simplicity's sake, we focus on the doshas only, when one dosha moves away from its balance the other doshas are also losing their balance. More precisely: Vata goes out of balance first, causing the early stage of the disease; it can mimic the other doshas, making you think that Pitta or Kapha is causing a problem (more than 50% of the disorders are Vata in origin); Vata is the king among the doshas, because when it is in balance, Pitta and Kapha generally are too. It controls *movements* and therefore, by definition, the movement of the other doshas. Balancing Vata, therefore, is vitally important for everyone, regardless of the Prakriti or Vikriti of the person.

Our four plants have a few similar properties and others that are not that similar, but allow us to treat all the 3 doshas since they are complementary: this is because balance is achieved by treating the *whole*.

Ayurveda classifies herbs (plants), foods and drinks in 5 categories; each of them has its own therapeutic effects. These categories are Taste (Rasa), Element, Heating or Cooling effect, Post-digestion effect and Special Properties. Table-1 lists these categories, and a few others, for each of our plants. For more extended information on all the uses of the plants and the actual parts used, please refer to the individual essays available by e-mailing to [info@ayu.nl](mailto:info@ayu.nl).

**Table-1**

	<b>PLANTS</b>			
	<b>DURBA or CYNADON DACTYLON</b>	<b>KUVALAM or AEGLE MARMELOS</b>	<b>SHATAVARI or ASPARAGUS RACEMOSES WILD</b>	<b>PALAPATTA or ALSTONIA SCHOLARIS</b>
<b>DOSHA</b>				
Kapha / Pitta / Vata	pitta↓ kapha↓	vata↑, vata↓*, pitta↓ kapha↓	vata↓ pitta↓	vata↑
<b>RASA</b>				
Sweet (Earth+Water) K+ Sour (Earth+Fire) P+ Bitter (Air+Ether) V+, Astringent (Ether+Air)V+, Salty (Water+Fire) PK+, Pungent (Fire+Air) P+	sweet astringent*	bitter astringent sweet	bitter sweet	bitter/astringent
<b>DHATUS</b> (Tissue)				
Plasma (Rasa), Blood (Rakta), Muscle (Mamsa), Fet (Medas), Bone (Asthi), Nerves/Fluid/Marrow (Majja), Reproductive (Shukra)	Plasma, Reproductive	Plasma, Blood, Nerves, Semen	All of them	
<b>ELEMENT</b>				
Ether / Air / Fire / Water / Earth	water/earth	air/water/earth /ether	air/ether/earth/ water*	air/ether
<b>VIRYA</b> (effect of digestion)				
Cooling / Heating	cooling	cooling	cooling	cooling
<b>VIPAK</b> (effect after digestion)				
Sweet / Sour / Sharp	sweet	sweet/pungent	sharp	sharp
<b>GUNA</b> (quality)				
Dry/Wet, Light/Heavy		Wet, (Light)* Heavy		
<b>PRABHAVA</b> (special potency)	bleeding disorders; diuretic; intestine regulator.	blood cleanser; stomach, heart and intestine, regulator;	influence the blood circulation, breathing and digestive	blood cleanser, tonic, aphrodisiac, stomach and intestine

		reduces inflammation; aphrodisiac; anti-bacterial and virus; hypochondria, melancholia.	system, tonic, reduces inflammations , sedative, good against nervous disorders, aphrodisiac, good for women	disorders, fever, reduces inflammations.
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**Table-1**

Table-1 **Note** \*: the items in blue with an asterisk diverge, depending on the source of information.

The plants mentioned above are all extremely useful to cure blood related issues at different stages, from blood cleansing up to cure a real blood disorder like a heart condition. They are all used for intestinal, stomach and urinary system problems, especially to reduce inflammations. Actually these plants are used to treat a wide spectrum of inflammations. They have great depurative properties, not to mention their anti-bacterial and anti-viral qualities. This makes us conclude that we will use this Dhara on a person with mainly these disorders. More specific qualities of this medicated oil are grouped in Table-2 in the Appendix.

Now, the properties of the plants are quite clear and, since they are fairly in line with each other, it makes sense to use them all combined in a single medicated oil. So, how do we go from the actual plants to a oil usable in a Dhara? This process is called Snehakalpana and allows us to turn pulverised herbs into a product (our medicated oil) that has the same Vyriam (strength) and Prabhava (spiritual energy) of the individual herbs, and keeps it for many months after preparation.

For our preparation we will process the herbs in order to obtain the powder, then we will put them in an oily mix made with a combination of sesame oil, ghee and milk This mixture will be cooked and filtered.

The medicated oil will be used on the body after warming it up (slightly hot).

The treatments will last 15 minutes, according to the suggested Dhara duration for a Vata constitution.

Why do we say that this medicated oil is for Vata Dhara oil? Because the properties of the plants are as such that they treat mainly Pitta and Kapha aggravation. More precisely, an aggravated Pitta (too much fire and water) can be related to inflammations, fevers and eyes, skin, stomach problems. Pitta is also hot and moist; our oil has cooling and dry energies, i.e. very useful to reduce excess Pitta.

An aggravated Kapha (constipation, congestion, fluid retention, sluggish, etc.) produces problems at mucous membranes, respiratory congestion, allergies, the person need a tonic and de-clutter all his internal systems. The dry energy of our oil will definitely help depleting (reducing) Kapha.

The cooling and drying energies, and sweet/bitter/astringent Rasas will help in reducing Pitta and Kapha aggravations. If we look at the properties and medicinal qualities of our plants we can definitely say that they will increase the dryness (Vata+), reduce the hot (Pitta-) and reduce the heavy (Kapha-), therefore we have just made an oil that will allow us to treat a patient by a Vata Dhara.

Maybe it is also important to mention that, in order to release a problem from our body we need movement, i.e. the unwanted disorder has to “go out”, and this is controlled by Vata.

It is important to remember that, even if in this paper we are focussing mainly on the physical effects of our treatment, Dharas are very much affecting the mind. Mind is also governing health; in fact our plants have also Vata pacifying properties that allow the mind to rest and let the healing happen (e.g. sedative, anti-hypochondria and melancholia, promotes vitality and mental improvements, good against nervous disorders).

### **Remarks**

When crosschecking the qualities of the plants expressed in ayurvedic terms (dosha, guna, rasa, energy, dhatu, etc) different sources gave different answers. This is quite confusing. For example the IOU-TASTAM papers and the Ayurveda Encyclopaedia were often in disagreement about the effect on doshas and the taste of the plants. See the notes at the bottom of Table-1.

**APPENDIX****Table-2**

<b>Healing qualities</b>	<b>CYNADON DACTYLON</b>	<b>KUVALAM</b>	<b>ASPARAGUS RACEMOSES WILD</b>	<b>PALAPATTA</b>
<b>Inflammatory (ontstekend)</b>				
Antiseptic (desinfecterend)				
Suppurative (ettering)				
Haemostatic (bloedstelpend)	X			
Vulnerary (genezend/helend)				
Emollient (verzachtend)	X	X	X	X
Unctuous (zalvend)				
Anti-inflammatory		X	X	X
Anti-bacterial	X	X	X	X
Anti-viral	X	X	X	X
<b>Digestion (spijsvertering)</b>				
Digestive (Spijsvertering bevorderend)		X	X	X
Constipating (verstopping)				
Carminative (reinigend)				
Anthelmintic (worm verdrijvend)				X
<b>Elimination (verwijderend)</b>				
Diuretic (vocht uitdrijvend)		X		
Laxative (laxerend)			X	
Expectorant (slijmoplossend)				
<b>General (algemeen)</b>				
Sedative (kalmerend)			X	
Tonic/Strengthening (opwek./versterk.)	X		X	
Depurative (zuiverend)			X	X
Aphrodisiac (geslachtsdrift verhogend)		X	X	X
Promotes vitality (verh. Levenskracht)				
Ophthalmic (ooglijders)	X	X	X	
Urinary problems		X	X	
Cardiotonic (hartkrachtversterkend)		X		X
Sudorific (zweetdrijvend)				
Febrifuge (koortsmiddel)		X		X
Anodyne (pijnstillend)	X	X		
Rejuvenative (verjongend)				
Mentally improvement	X		X	X
Antispasmodic			X	

**Table-2**

## **Bibliography**

The sources of information for the completion of this essay are:

- Individual essays:  
*Cynadon Dactylon*: C.Fintelman, E.Ghermandi  
*Aegle Marmelos Correa*: E.Ghermandi  
*Asparagus Racemoses Wild*: D.Dekker  
*Alstonia Scholaris*: C.Fintelman
- IOU-TASTAM papers
- “The Ayurveda Encyclopaedia” Swami Sada Shiva Tirtha
- “Perfect Health” Deepak Chopra