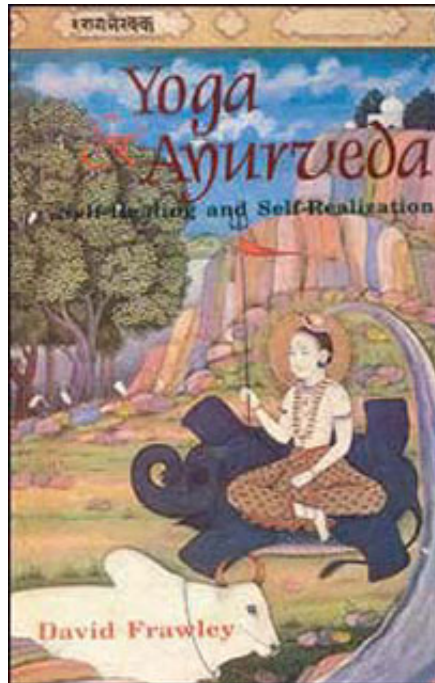


# David Frawley Yoga and Ayurveda

Reading excerpt

[Yoga and Ayurveda](#)

of [David Frawley](#)



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# 7

## *Prana, Tejas and Ojas*

### Secrets of Yogic Alchemy

*You are the ancient born Rishi, the one ruler of the universe through the power of Ojas.*

RIG VEDA VIII.6.41

**Y**oga is an alchemical process of balancing and transforming the energies of the psyche. To approach it we must understand how to work with these energies in a practical way. In this chapter we will introduce a deeper level of the doshas that is important relative to yogic practice. Vata, pitta and kapha have subtle counterparts called prana, tejas and ojas, which could be called "the three vital essences." These are the root or master forms of vata, pitta and kapha that control ordinary psychophysical functioning and, if reoriented properly, energize higher spiritual potentials as well. They are not simply forces of the physical body but of the subtle and causal bodies as well.

Prana, tejas and ojas are the essential or beneficial forms of vata, pitta and kapha that sustain positive vitality. Unlike the doshas, which are factors of disease, they promote health, creativity and well-being and provide the support for deeper yogic and meditational practices.

Prana — primal life-force: the subtle energy of air as the master force and guiding intelligence behind all psychophysical func-

tions, responsible for coordination of breath, senses and mind. On an inner level, it governs the unfoldment and harmonization of all higher states of consciousness.

Tejas — inner radiance: the subtle energy of fire as the radiance of vitality through which we digest air, impressions and thoughts. On an inner level, it governs the unfoldment of all higher perceptual capacities.

Ojas — primal vigor: the subtle energy of water as the stored-up vital reserve, the basis for physical and mental endurance; the internalized essence of digested food, water, air, impressions and thought. On an inner level, it is responsible for nourishing and grounding the development of all higher faculties.

These three forces are interrelated. Prana and tejas are rooted in ojas and can be regarded as aspects of ojas. Tejas is the heat and light energy of ojas that has an oily quality and, like ghee, can sustain a flame. Prana is the energy and strength that comes from ojas after it has been kindled into tejas. Ojas proper is the potential, the stamina of the mind and nervous system for holding tejas and prana. Ojas has the capacity to turn into tejas (heat), which has the capacity to turn into prana (electricity).

Prana, tejas and ojas resemble the concepts of *chi*, the Yang and Yin of Chinese medicine. Prana, as the life-force and cosmic breath, is like the primordial chi, which also relates to wind and spirit. Tejas as the power of will and vigor resembles original Yang, which is the primal fire. Ojas, as endurance and stamina, resembles primordial Yin, which is the essence of water.

The main rule of ayurvedic treatment is to prevent any of the doshas from becoming too high because in excess they cause disease. The dosha predominant in our constitution tends toward excess and must be restrained through the appropriate lifestyle

regimen. This is achieved through following the right diet, herbs, exercise, and meditation that counter doshic proclivities.

In the practice of yoga a new rule comes into play. The yogi seeks to increase all three forces of prana, tejas and ojas. As these are the purified forms of the doshas, they do not have the same disease-causing power. These three vital essences only cause problems if one is increased at the expense of the others. They are basically wholesome energies that aid in renewal and transformation. The question is how to keep them growing at a similar rate so that their imbalance does not cause problems.

Increased prana is necessary to provide the enthusiasm, creativity and adaptability necessary for the spiritual path, without which we lack the energy and motivation to do our practices. Increased tejas provides the courage, fearlessness, and insight to take us along the path, without which we make wrong choices and judgments or fail to be decisive in what we do. Increased ojas is necessary for the peace, confidence and patience to keep our development consistent, without which we lack steadiness and calm. Should any of these factors be insufficient, our spiritual growth will be limited. These same factors increase positive health in both body and mind, and are helpful in treating all diseases, particularly of a chronic nature, including promoting rejuvenation.<sup>17</sup>

## Functions of Prana, Tejas and Ojas

To understand these three forces let us examine how they function in the different aspects of our nature.

### Reproductive System

Prana, tejas and ojas are nourished by the reproductive fluid which functions as their support in the physical body. They are three aspects of the transformed reproductive fluid (*shukra*). Ojas

is the latent state of the reproductive fluid that provides not only reproductive power but strength in general and nourishes all the bodily tissues from within, particularly the nerve tissue. Ojas is our power of endurance and ability to sustain us, not only sexually but through all forms of exertion, physical and mental.

Tejas is the activated state of the reproductive fluid when it is transformed into heat, passion and will power. This occurs not only in sexual activity but whenever we are challenged or need to exert ourselves. Tejas gives us valor, courage and daring. In yoga this force is necessary to enable us to perform tapas or transformative spiritual practices. Prana is the life-creating capacity inherent in the reproductive fluid. This aids in longevity and rejuvenation and stimulates the flow of prana through the nadis, giving a deeper energy to the mind. Without the proper reserve of reproductive fluid, we will become deficient in prana, tejas and ojas. Wrong or excessive sexual activity depletes all three forces.

### Endocrine System

Prana, tejas and ojas relate to the endocrine system. Prana governs equilibrium, adaptability, and growth processes. The pineal and pituitary glands, which are the master controllers of growth and intelligence, are prana predominant. This is why most disorders in the growth process, like in people who are unusually tall or short, are generally vata (air) problems.

Tejas governs metabolism and digestion. Thyroid and pancreas functions are tejas predominant. Most deep-seated metabolic problems are tejas in nature. Ojas governs reproduction and energy reserve and dominates in the testes, ovaries and adrenals. Most problems of the reproductive system are ojas related. Ojas also allows us to handle stress through sustaining adrenaline.

## Immune System

Prana, tejas and ojas give energy to the immune system. Ojas is the basic capacity of the immune system, our potential to defend ourselves against external pathogens. It provides endurance, resistance and strength to ward off diseases.

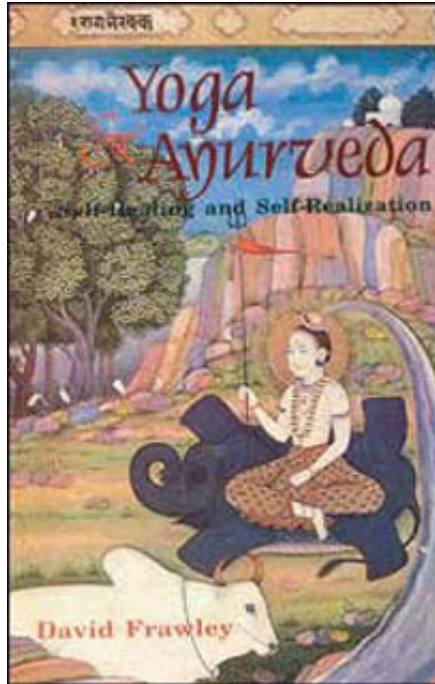
Tejas is the immune system which is able to burn and destroy toxins when activated. It generates the fever that the body produces to destroy the pathogens which attack it. Tejas is our ability to overcome acute diseases, which are generally infectious in nature. Tejas is ojas converted into heat, warmth and vitality. It is our ability to mobilize our immune systems forces.

Prana is the long-term activation of the immune function to project and develop life-energy which manifests when we are dealing with a chronic disease. It is the adaptability of the immune system and sustains all long-term healing processes. With sufficient prana, tejas and ojas, no disease can approach us. Increasing prana, tejas and ojas helps all low immune conditions.

## Nervous System and Nadis

The nervous system is the master system governing all bodily systems. The three vital essences are responsible for its proper function. Prana governs the discharge and coordination of nerve impulses, which are pranic and vata forces. When deranged, it causes hypersensitivity, tremors and imbalances in the nervous system. Tejas provides acuity of perception and feeling. Deranged tejas burns out the nervous system, causing inflammation and scarring of the nerve tissue. Ojas gives endurance and stability through the nervous system. It is responsible for the lubrication of the nerve channels. Nervous breakdown or nervous exhaustion occurs through low ojas.

Prana, tejas and ojas govern the movement of impulses through the nadis as well. Ojas is the fluid that lines the nadis, cushioning the flow of energy through them. Tejas is the heat



David Frawley

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