

SNEHA RAICHADA

Masterclass: Daily Ayurvedic Routine to Nourish The Body & Prevent Disease

Jason Prall:

Hello, and welcome to the masterclass with Sneha Raichada. Today we're going to be talking about some very, very practical tips and tools that you can use from Ayurveda's wisdom to help keep you healthy and actually to bring back some balance in your life. So, Sneha, what do you got for us today?

Sneha Raichada:

So a couple of different tips. What I like to start off with is like bookends, because we always think the morning is a fantastic time. It kind of sets you up for your day and then the night, kind of a reflection back and then setting you up for sleep. We don't think about that, but sleep is so good in the sense that if I don't get sleep, then my next day is messed up. So the bookends I feel are super important.

Sneha Raichada:

One bookend that I like to do in the morning time is pranayama. Pranayama is also part of our daily routine or dinacharya and there's so many different things that we can do, but pranayama is one of my go-tos. Even if I'm running late and I don't have time, I will still make 10 minutes for pranayama.

Sneha Raichada:

Matesh, who's another practitioner, and my husband, whenever he's talking to his clients, he's like, okay, do you have 15 minutes? The client's like, no. There's no way I have 15 minutes. He's like, do you have 10 minutes? He's like, no, I don't have 10 minutes. Then he's like do you have one minute for me? And the client, you can't say no to one minute. Everyone has one minute in the day.

Sneha Raichada:

So when you think pranayama, which we'd say is like breath work, you don't have to think this long, arduous one hour routine. It is just starting to become conscious of your breath. So in the morning, whether you have one minute or 10 minutes or an hour, depending on how complex you want to get, it can get that way. But I'm saying as a little hack in the morning, breath. Breathe. And it can be as simple as soon as you wake up. You don't even have to do anything major. You just get up, scan your body. How are you feeling that day? Is there any tension? How did you sleep? The neck feels tight, the low back. What's going on? And then just start with a deep breath.

Sneha Raichada:

And sometimes individuals don't even understand what a deep breath is and that's okay. Our society doesn't teach us that. They don't even actually value that to be honest with you. If you look, everyone's usually breathing up here, this is shallow breathing. This is the upper lungs. So a good way to really understand is how am I breathing, even if you're just laying in bed. So this is how simple it is. You can lay in bed, just put your hand and just say, okay, breathe into your hand and allow the hand to raise up and lower down.

Sneha Raichada:

And I'm just showing it like exaggerated so you can see what I'm saying. Then, put your hands a little bit lower, right along where the bra strap would be for a female or right along the edges of the rib. Can you breathe into your hands there? So then it's expanding the hands out and in. Just taking two, three breaths right here. We're within a minute still guys. It's just two to three breaths up here, two to three breaths down here. We're only at six or seven breaths so far. If you find that you're having difficulty just expanding, then you know, okay, this is where I need to stay. This is where I need to work. You're guiding that breath deeper. If you're able to do this, then go deeper, put the hands over the belly, right around the belly button or right under the belly button. Same thing. Can you guide your breath so the hands start floating above and coming out? In and out. Same thing. Sometimes you can't do that. And that's okay too.

Sneha Raichada:

This is awareness within the body of where is my breath? How much can I flow it? So this is just a simple, what we call yogic breath, deep breath, or hara breathing, which is this area of the body. And slowly we have to train our body to do that, and this is a simple thing you can do every morning. Literally it's like three breaths, three breaths, three breaths. That's a minute, Jason. Who doesn't have a minute to do that?

Jason Prall:

Right. It's super easy. And there's another breath that I love too that Dr. Lad teaches, which is the so-hum.

Sneha Raichada:

Yes.

Jason Prall:

So maybe you can share that with us and maybe why is it a so-hum and what's going on there? Why is it so valuable?

Sneha Raichada:

This is a beautiful breath. It's mantric. It's mesmerizing and it's breath work. So it's calming the mind down. It's releasing everything and it's building the system all at the same time. It's balancing everything. This is actually one of his mantras that he got from his teacher, from his guru. And so-hum is breathing in all the beauty, breathing in the prana, breathing in life and love and compassion and forgiveness, and hum is the exhalation. It is breathing out anything that doesn't serve us. And that can be different from moment to moment.

Sneha Raichada:

And the beautiful thing about so-hum is you can do it any time. No one knows you're doing it. You could be sitting at an airport, you could be at your work desk, you could be at home, you could be hanging out on the sofa with your kids right next to you and doing the so-hum breath. That's the beauty of it.

Sneha Raichada:

And you're not actually saying so-hum, that's why people don't know you're doing it. It's internal. It's within the mind. You're saying in your mind so as the breath goes in and then hum as the breath goes out and you can get very deep into this breath also.

Jason Prall:

Am I breathing in the nose and out the mouth?

Sneha Raichada:

In through the nose and out through the nose. We want to focus on that nose breathing. And again, if we were talking, like if this was a breath class, we'd go into the science of that. But there's a huge science behind breathing in and out of the nose. So everything mentally you're saying it and you're breathing in and out through the nose and keeping the mouth closed. There's different visualizations. So again, you can go really in depth with this, but to keep it really simple and accessible for everyone, you just breathe in so and breathe out hum. And then you'll see, it'll just become a natural rhythm. And you're not forcing the length, I will emphasize that. It is whatever your natural of your breath is. However your inhalation is and however long your exhalation is. But you'll see, as you start practicing this, especially the yogic breath that we just talked about too, that inhalation and that exhalation time will start expanding.

Sneha Raichada:

And the beautiful thing is the gap in between, that's what I love about breath work. That's where the magic really happens. It's like I'm doing the work. It's like when you go to the gym, you're physically doing it. But the magic actually happens afterwards in the recovery phase of the muscle and the healing phase, and that's where the magic happens in breath work is in that gap. And you'll start realizing that gap because once you realize the physical and the physiologic gap that's happening in the breath, it'll start happening mentally and emotionally. You'll start experiencing this calmness, this silence, this beauty that is wordless. You can't even describe it and you just are in that moment.

Jason Prall:

So yeah, in between that little breath, that inhale and exhale is where essentially nothing and everything exists. It's this bliss state, it's this pure awareness. And it's like how do we capture that and expand that as much as we can? That's a beautiful one. So I'm breathing in the nose, I'm saying so internally, so, and I'm also kind of feeling or recognizing or putting my awareness on all the beauty that is. Everything that I'm grateful for, everything that's just so beautiful about life. And as I exhale, I'm saying hum, and I'm letting go of all the things that don't serve me. So simple. It's so simple. I love that.

Jason Prall:

And it doesn't matter how long it is. It's like however long you can do it, just start bringing that into your morning practice and even evening practice or even throughout the day, as many times as you can bring that in as good. What other things do you find that are super valuable for your clients that you can work throughout the day to help restore balance, to help bring a little bit more equanimity?

Sneha Raichada:

The other piece I would say from a digestion piece, which also affects our equanimity. If I'm not eating well, then I'm not feeling good.

Jason Prall:

Totally.

Sneha Raichada:

So same thing. In digestion, really simple, and I know it's going to sound like what? That's a tip? I already know this. Don't overeat. It's so simple. And we always hear this, keep one-third for air, one third for liquid, one third for food. That air is that not overeating piece. We have to be able to digest things, have to be able to move within the system. So how do I know that I'm overeating? Some people, we're not aware. I sure wasn't aware before of like, wait, feeling acidity, feeling gas, feeling bloating, having constipation or having diarrhea, having sluggishness, being sleepy after I eat. These are all signs that digestion is not going well. We think, oh, I always have gas after I eat, and we think of it as a normal thing. No, it's common, but it's not normal.

Sneha Raichada:

So if I'm feeling these things, then I know that, wait a minute, my stuff is not digesting well, I need to back off a little bit. So that's a big one when it comes to digestion is really become aware of your body. How do you feel after you eat? And that will tell you, did I eat the right food? Did I eat too much? That's a huge one I would say just from an awareness standpoint.

Jason Prall:

That's great. One of my teachers that's not from the Ayurvedic sort of circle, but it's interesting, he is Indian background. He just says after you eat, you should feel nothing. You shouldn't feel full, you shouldn't feel tired, you shouldn't feel energized even. You should just feel kind of the same. I love that. And so the stomach essentially, one third food, one third liquid, one third air. I think one of the things that I think helps me with this is to start to eat slower, to chew my food more thoroughly and to slow down. Because oftentimes I can't tell if I'm full until it's too late if I'm eating too fast and so slowing that down is really helpful.

Jason Prall:

What about hot water? This is a cool one that I've brought into my practice. When I first started this, I thought it was really weird. I thought it felt strange because drinking hot water but it's supposed to be tea or something, but it's not tea, it's just water. Why am I taking the time to do this? And a lot of us in the West, we like cold water, we like ice cold water. So talk to me about water and why that's such a good tip to bring in.

Sneha Raichada:

Yeah, this is fantastic. I was going to go there. In the West culture, when we go out, ice cold water as soon as you sit at the table and then they're like what do you want to drink, and it's like a Coke with half of it's ice. No, in Ayurveda, no. Imagine our fire, our digestion, it's like a fire, like a campfire. How do we build that campfire? We're giving oxygen to it, that air component. We give a little fuel to it, which is our enzymes and the spice of our food and the little bit of food that's giving it content to keep it building basically, like adding wood to the fire. But if I'm at a camp site and I just douse it with water, what happens? It goes out.

Sneha Raichada:

Same thing happens in our body. So drinking that ice cold water, or just downing a whole thing of water while you're eating, you're just putting that fire out. You're putting that digestive capacity out. And when that happens, then I'm not digesting my food and I'm going to start spilling. That metabolic waste starts building up in the system. I start feeling sluggish, I start feeling heavy, I start feeling bloated or all of these other symptoms that we all have felt before.

Sneha Raichada:

So hot water is the exact opposite. One, because the water has been heated, it's easier to digest. Believe it or not, we have to digest water also. Not just the physical foods, not just the apple and the sandwich and the broccoli, but we have to digest water as well.

Jason Prall:

Throughout the day.

Sneha Raichada:

So one, it makes it easier to digest.

Jason Prall:

Throughout the day I'm going to be drinking hot water as opposed to cold water.

Sneha Raichada:

Exactly. Yeah. And then if I want to sip on something while I'm eating, then it's okay to sip on a little hot water. Don't sip on that ice cold water. Just think of the digestive fire, think of your campfire. What's going to help build the campfire and that'll help guide you of what you need to be doing. But that would be the biggest tip also is when you're eating, try to minimize your liquids, and if you're going to have liquid, make it hot water. Don't make it that big supersized Coke or Sprite. Not that I have anything against that stuff, but that's just not the time and place for it.

Jason Prall:

Absolutely. And again, I think it's important to highlight in Ayurveda how important digestion is as a quality, as a concept. So if we can understand the importance of digestion as a concept, then a lot of our attention goes into this aspect. How do I improve digestion? How do I stop inhibiting my own digestion? And this becomes... Because if we can trust that the body can take care of things as long as it's digesting, then that's such a big aspect. But if I'm working against the body's natural tendency or what it wants to do, then of course things are going to start to go awry. So it's really working... and there's a concept in Ayurveda that is basically offense against wisdom, I think, which is such a simple thing, that we're sort of doing things that we should know, or we actually do know that is not good for us. It's not ideal. And so this is an area I think where we can bring awareness to and say, look, I know digestion is important. How do I start supporting that more?

Jason Prall:

So what are some other things? I know there's a bunch of herbs that can be used either in tea or adding to our food or spices to help with whatever we're eating and how important that is.

Sneha Raichada:

I'll give you two simple teas and they kind of balance each other, so depending on what's going on with the individual. If I need to build that campfire, I need to build digestion, have a ginger tea. It's so simple. You just take a little bit of ginger, let's say a one inch piece of ginger. You can shred it, you can just throw whole pieces if you want to make it really simple into let's say about two cups of water. Put the pot on, let it boil for about three minutes and then strain it, and then you can sip on it and you can add a little honey to it or your sweetener of choice, a little lime to it. It's fantastic. It starts building that campfire, that digestive capacity.

Sneha Raichada:

Let's say you're the other opposite side of the spectrum, you have too much campfire. You're always hot. You're always hungry, but you still need to be able to digest it. Because we think in Ayurveda, remember it's a balance. Having too much campfire is not good either. The whole forest is going to burn down. Same thing. If I have too much heat in the system, anything I eat just burns. It just turns into ash. So even my nutrients, it could be organic, it could be local, it could be seasonal, all these things that I'm doing, but it'll just turn into ash and I can't capture any of the nutrients for my system. So I may need to calm some of that fire down.

Sneha Raichada:

So another simple tea is called CCF that Dr. Lad always talks about. It's cumin, coriander, and fennel. These are fantastic digestive things and they're kitchen herbs. So it's nothing extravagant that's only available at a certain time and from a certain region of the world or anything. Cumin, coriander, and fennel. They're whole. You just take equal parts of these and take basically a mixture of it, maybe a teaspoon or a couple of teaspoons, depending on how strong you like it. Same thing, put it into two cups of water, boil it for three minutes, strain it and sip on it. It is fantastic.

Sneha Raichada:

So even if you feel like, hey, I want something to drink with my meal, a ginger tea or a CCF tea is fantastic to have during the meal or post-meal or before meal, or if just for hydration purposes even throughout the day if you need it as well.

Jason Prall:

Beautiful. And we can add some of these herbs to our food too, right? Depending on what we're eating, they might be a nice addition to what we're eating.

Sneha Raichada:

Yes, definitely. Spicing the food I think we don't realize is so important. Even something as simple just as black pepper. Who doesn't have black pepper, right? Every restaurant has salt and black pepper on their tables. Both of these things are amazing, just spicing and seasoning the food helps it to digest. So it's fantastic.

Jason Prall:

Well, I think we started to learn some of this from our science when we talk about turmeric and the beautiful aspects of turmeric, now science has recognized, oh, a little bit of black pepper turns out that it actually helps activate some of the cumins that are in turmeric.

Sneha Raichada:

That's right.

Jason Prall:

So course Ayurvedists have known this forever and they have little combinations of trikatu and other things that really work well in combination. I love that. And with seasoning food too, some of this stuff like lime is another really good one that we can add to food to help with digestion. What about lime?

Sneha Raichada:

Lime is fantastic. Lime also has the sour acidic quality so it helps with digestion. But in Ayurveda we get really, really technical and specific. So we even contrast between the lime and lemon. Lemon is considered more heating. So depending on if you need that heat and you need that punch, you can do lemon, but a lot of us in the Western world, very masculine, very go, go, go, go, go. We may not need that punch necessarily, but we need a little bit of that digestive help. So then we say, hey, go towards lime. Lime is considered a little cooling so it's not overly heating with that extra punch, but it gives that sour and that acidity quality, which helps with the digestion.

Sneha Raichada:

So adding lime to our foods, and we know this, lime also helps us to digest certain minerals and vitamins and stuff within our body. Adding lime on top of spinach, adding lime into a salad, adding lime on to your kitchari that we talked about. It is fantastic. It is a great digestive.

Jason Prall:

Beautiful. I love that. Well, there's a couple of things I would love for you to cover, which is the use of oils. There's a lot of different ways that we can use oils and ghees and what have you. So what are some of those ways that we can bring in at home that are relatively safe, that I can use daily or fairly often?

Sneha Raichada:

The type of oil you use makes a difference. Again, in Ayurveda it's all about the doshas, all about the gunas. Some oils are considered a little bit more heating, some oils are considered a little bit more cooling, depending on which one you need. So a good oil traditionally is ghee, and ghee, it's getting more prevalent. But before, I remember Dr. Lad used to say when he first came to the States, he would just ask people do you know what ghee is and he had to describe it. But ghee is fantastic. You can cook with ghee, you can put it on top, it's beautiful. It actually, when we talk about the concept of ojas and nourishing and also kindling agni, ghee does all of these things so it's fantastic and it doesn't matter if you're vata, pitta, kapha, what's out of balance, what's in balance, ghee is going to help you all the way around.

Sneha Raichada:

Olive oil is fantastic. That is a very common oil that's very known right now in the West and it's olive oil with this, olive oil with that. Only thing I would say is cooking with olive oil in high temperatures and those kinds of things, it can actually degrade the oil, the molecular components, and then it can do the exact opposite of what we want olive oil to do. So I recommend putting olive oil on top, on food versus cooking with it.

Sneha Raichada:

Another good one is sunflower oil is considered more like a cooling oil or a coconut oil. If you have more heat and you have more of that campfire just going all over the place and you want to cook with oil, go toward a sunflower oil or coconut oil. These are fantastic oils and cooking with the oil is fantastic because it helps to bring the qualities of that oil into that food. And oils and fats in our Western society have just gotten a bad rep. I mean, a super bad rep. It's like, man, if we could just reverse time a little bit, it's fantastic for our joints, it's fantastic for lubrication, it's fantastic for motion and mobility. It gives us a sense of satiation, contentment, of love, of compassion. So don't shy away from the oils. It's all about a balance. Don't shun it, but don't go crazy overboard with it. But these are fantastic ways.

Jason Prall:

That's great. I love that. And for those who are vegan too, olive oil is a great way to do that as well. So what about using these oils on our skin? This is a big one too where the dosha really matters. But there are oils out there that some companies make that are tridoshic too, so they work with everybody in a balanced way. Talk to me about that, because that's something that I've brought into my practice is just using oil on the skin. What is that and why is that a good practice?

Sneha Raichada:

I put oil on my skin almost every day, Jason. Especially... think of it from a guna standpoint, from a quality again. What is oil? Oil is soft, it's unctuous, it's lubricating. So if you're an individual that feels dry skin, cracking, popping joints, these are all dry, light, rough qualities, exact opposite of oil. Then you are the perfect candidate for putting oil on your body.

Jason Prall:

Or even mental, right? If I'm kind of all over the place and I can't sit still, I don't sleep well. These are some things that oil can help with too, right?

Sneha Raichada:

Yes, yes. Oil helps to just ground us down. When we think of oil, we don't think of it as a light thing. It's a heavy substance. So it's going to help ground us down mentally, physically, emotionally. I've seen it on myself, I've seen it on my clients. You're scattered, you can't really focus. It's like oh, I have this thought and then I have this thought, and then you're like, wait, how did I even get on that topic? If you're one of those, oil is fantastic.

Sneha Raichada:

Like you said, there's different types of oil. There's cooling oils and there's heating oils and then there's the tridoshic which kind of balances it. So if you're not quite sure am I heating, am I cooling, which one do I need? Then stick with the tridoshic because then that's going to help you either way.

Sneha Raichada:

And a simple one is if you don't have time to put oil on your body, because I do it in the mornings. Essentially I wake up, brush my teeth, scrape my tongue, and then I put oil on my body, and then I jump in the shower and then I'm off. I'm going to my daily stuff. But let's say I don't have time to put the oil on my body, then a fantastic little trick is in the evening time, this is a good ritual for the evening time is get a little bit of oil, just like a quarter size in your palm, rub it, and then you can rub it on the soles of the feet. And then you put some socks on, and then just a little quarter size and you rub it into the scalp and

it doesn't even have to be all over the head, even just right along the center area. We have certain things called marma points and pressure points or acupressure points, whatever you want to call it. And they help actually to stimulate or ground down into the nervous system.

Sneha Raichada:

So before bedtime, this is going to start affecting our nervous system. We do so many things throughout the day, Jason, from talks like this to running around with the kids and playing and meetings and who knows what else? We need to ground down, we need to relax, we need to become calmer in order for me to even get into that state of sleep, and this is a fantastic ritual in the evening time to do and it just calms you down. You can cover your head after you put the oil on, and again, remember it's just a quarter size. So it's not like you're drenched with oil or anything, but if you have, depending on how the air blows in your room you're sleeping in, I just say cover up the head so that way you don't get a cold draft or anything like that. And then just put some socks on your feet so everything doesn't get oily.

Sneha Raichada:

But again, it's just a quarter size so it's not even that much oil, but it's fantastic and you'll notice a difference in your sleep. And there's different types of oil. There's a particular oil called bhringraj oil which has these herbs, bhringraj herbs, kind of cooked into the oil. It is really, really nice and it calms everything down, calms the nervous system down. But if you don't have accessibility to that, any oil, sunflower oil, coconut oil, just take any simple oil, sesame oil and just again, quarter size, soles of the feet, socks, top of the head and a little head covering, and then you'll see you will sleep like a little baby.

Jason Prall:

I love that and I've gotten my neem oil here.

Sneha Raichada:

Okay.

Jason Prall:

This is for my pitta and I just love neem. And this is the cool thing about some of the oils is that you can add these herbs and start to balance some of these qualities.

Sneha Raichada:

Yes.

Jason Prall:

Again, for me, and I've been typically very dry too in my life, so that excess vata, that quality that comes in. Vata and pitta is a heck of a combination, so this has been such a beautiful trick for me to bring my vata into balance, that dryness. Again, popping, cracking joints. It's really, really been nourishing in that way. And of course, when you add some of these cooling herbs and things, you can then bring that... you can pacify some of that pitta. It's such a cool trick to bring in. And again, these are things that I think are so important to bring in daily. As we add some of these things, these pranayamas, these practices of oil and herbs and playing with food in a more intelligent way and hot water instead of cold water, these are very, very sort of subtle and yet very powerful tools that on a daily basis if we accumulate these good practices over the months and the years, it's going to make a massive, massive difference.

Jason Prall:

Again, I think there's always some deeper aspects I think that need to come in for some deeper balancing and what have you, but this makes all of that stuff so much easier. We're not going to be swimming against the current quite so much when we bring in these practices. I know AyurPrana has got a lot of these other practices and we can use oil in the nose, there's specific practices there. We can do eye washing, we can bring oil into the ears. Right, right. So oil is a very useful tool. And again, we can even drink oil in certain ways to help bring in some other qualities of loosening some things in the GI tract.

Jason Prall:

There's just a lot of different ways. And so again, I would encourage everybody to go to AyurPrana and check out some of the things that they're doing and always adding more. Some of this panchakarma, it comes into that way too, the pickled ginger and all these things. Unless there's anything else you've got, Sneha, that's off the top of your head. This has been great. Any other tools or tips before I let you go?

Sneha Raichada:

The last thing I'll say is for that evening part, because it really sets you up for that next day also, is that breath work. You can incorporate that breath work in the morning or in the evening. Just calm that body down. Take a reflection and just let it all go through that so-hum breath, even as you're falling asleep. It's a beautiful way just to wind down the day and just go into that deep sleep mode as well.

Jason Prall:

Beautiful. Thank you so much, Sneha. This has been fantastic. Again, everybody check out AyurPrana, and everybody we'll see you on the next one.

Sneha Raichada:

Awesome. Thank you, Jason.