

Elements of The Great Earth for Healing & Beauty

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Using stones, sand, crystals, oil, flower essences, herbal compresses and poultices, magnets and other elements from the earth as platforms for healing dates back more than 5,000 years. These primordial, natural forms of healing are extraordinarily effective. This effectiveness can be elevated by the transference of authentic compassion and trust between the therapist and the client. This compassion then becomes imprinted within the matrix of each element. The attributes of each earth element can be associated with one or more of the five great elements. This philosophy comes from the ancient science of Ayurveda, which is the ancient healing system of India. Once you learn how to use each element in accordance and harmony with each unique client, profound healing can manifest.

Shila Abyhangha (*shila* - stone, *abhy* - to rub, *anga* - limb), is Sanskrit for stone massage. **Heated stone massage is a form of *swedhana*, meaning thermotherapy, a modality used during Pancha karma. Pancha karma is a form of internal and external purification of the body, mind and soul using many ancient bodywork techniques and nutritional modalities from India. Shila abyhangha dates back thousands of years and can be traced to the ancient healing traditions of almost every culture. One of the most popular ways to use heated stones in India is to wrap them with herbs, in a warm, moist cloth, creating a poultice for joint or muscle pain. Large, flat warm stones, used with warm oil, can be glided across tight muscles. The ingestion of specially prepared ashes of specific gemstones can be used for healing and balancing the five great elements. Diamonds, rubies, and emeralds were crushed, heated, prepared, and ingested exclusively by the royalty of India long ago as part of pancha karma.**

During an interview with Dr. Naina Marballi, BSAM, DAC, I discovered “Shila Abyhangha” was part of the panchakarma program at Poddar Ayurvedic Center, which was part of her doctoral curriculum at Bombay University in India. She explained that shila abyhangha intensified the effects of pancha karma. **As an Ayurveda charya graduate of Bombay University, Dr. Naina runs Ayurveda’s Beauty Care in NYC along with her gifted partner Amita Banjeree. When Dr. Naina visited Sacred Stone in Rhode Island and saw all the heated massage stones lined up in my 18 quart turkey roaster, she smiled and said, “I recognize this stone for the belly, and this stone for the....” and so on!**

Dr. Naina explains, “Stones push the oil deeper into the tissue, opening the pores and relaxing the tissue, making it more receptive. The heat from the stones is detoxifying and the snehana (oil massage) is rejuvenating.”

Of the many beautiful art forms of Ayurvedic massage, snehana, **is one of the most nurturing techniques, whereby the body is treated internally or externally (or both) with herbal, warm oils. Snehana can also refer to the word “love”. I can still hear the words of Dr. Vasant Lad’s while I was a student in his class in 1997, “Love is oily”. I believe he meant this metaphorically and in many other ways.**

The purpose of heated stone massage can be for cleansing, toning, conditioning, moisturizing, hydrating,

detoxifying, rejuvenating, exfoliating and beautifying. Medically, heated stones can help burst and relieve boils and abscesses, pain in the body, nervous disorders, gas and bloating, sciatica and spondylitis.

“Every ingredient in the cosmos has a healing effect...every plant, flower, stone, leaf, bark, aroma and even vastu shastra (E. Indian Feng Shui)...we just need to learn how to use them properly. Ayurveda simply uses natural ingredients from the kitchen and the garden for healing. Pills are not always the only remedy. Breath, sleep, diet and yoga are the four pillars of nourishment for the body, mind and soul. Ayurveda gives importance to beauty because the body is a sacred temple of the soul. Heated and chilled stones can be used on the face to impart a radiant glow and the marmas (Marma is a Sanskrit word for “doorway” in the body) can be activated by firm pressure with small stones and crystals.” Dr. Naina

Cold, white quartzite stones reduce inflammations (especially if used with neem or castor oil), stimulating vascular expansion and contraction when used in conjunction with warm stones. If cold stones are used to massage the entire body, especially if the climate is cold, it can be very disconcerting and aggravate systemic ether and air elements within the body. The face is an exception because it is a site of the fire element that responds well to cold therapies. If you use hot and cold stones for gliding at the same time (hot in one hand, cold in the other), you will confuse your client and confusion is an emotion that can imbalance a couple of the five great elements within the body. Here are some examples of cold quartzite stone applications:

- **Cocooning:** a technique that involves surrounding the body part with cold quartzite stones to relieve muscle and joint inflammation. Thermo-therapy cocooning involves building a cocoon of heated stones around a site or injury that is swollen or painful from stiffness or coldness within the body. Cocoons are applied at the beginning of each treatment and removed mid-way for assessment and specific injury-related protocol.
The cocoon is left on for about 10 minutes.
- **Thermal Contrasting:** a technique that involves gliding and alternating hot and cold stones on the skin. By alternating these extreme sensations, we stimulate vascular constriction and expansion, thereby. This can be done on the face to firm the skin with more blood flow and on the belly to stimulate peristalsis in cases of constipation or stagnation.
- **Cryo-facial Balancing:** a technique that involves cold quartzite stones smoothed along the face will calm irritated skin on the face after waxing or a professional aesthetic peel.
- **Eye Balancing:** a technique that involves small, flat, cold quartzite stones laid upon the eyes to cool irritated, inflamed eyes.

There are many benefits of laying stones directly on the skin as opposed to over sheets or towels. You may as well use a traditional heating pad if you are not going to allow the client to actually feel the stones directly against the skin. The skin and the senses are sites where the air and ether elements exist, specifically located in the nerve endings. When one is warmed via the skin, it sends messages to the brain that ‘all is well.’ One feels grounded and stable. If the client is open and receptive, laying stones directly on the skin will help calm

the entire nervous system. In particular, warm stones laid directly along the spine while the client is prone on the massage table will quiet chatty clients and renew the sweetness of life. At the end of the treatment, client's faces are rosy and glowing. Some clients go into the alpha-beta state and some journey into a deep slumber that can be even more refreshing than an 8 hour night's sleep.

Sensory acuity will heighten awareness and help the client discern between the various textural distinctions of each unique stone. Some stones are slightly abrasive while others feel smooth as silk. The client will have fun telling you their experience of each stone as you glide the stone along their body. Stones, such as pumice, are less dense and have a light, ethereal quality. Their composition is porous. These stones are also very stimulating to the skin and will counter-balance the earth and water elements within the body. Stones found along the ocean will have a denser quality, especially if their mineral composition is mostly granite. This dense quality will help counter-balance ether, air, fire and water elements within the body. Stones found along in-land river beds will help counter-balance the fire elements within the body, as their energy is more cooling by nature. If a stone feels round, smooth and unctuous, it will help create vitality and radiance, enhance the "energy-body" and balance ether, air, water and fire elements within the body when placed strategically along marma points and around the body.

The parasympathetic nervous system is the site of kinesthetic awareness of tactile sensations. 'Touch' is connected directly to the air element. Touch, accompanied with warmth, compression, stillness, compassionate intention and love, can soothe the air element within the body. The more a client feels tuned into their skin, the more connected they will become to their soul. The skin and the senses can be a focal point for meditation. Finding euphoria with the senses, such as touch, is considered a 'Raja Yoga', which is a path to enlightenment via the senses. Touch is one of the five senses. "The senses are ruled by the planet Venus. Venus also governs the spiritual path called Raja Yoga." *The Global Oracle by Edward Tarabilda.*

"With a gentleness, a gentle hand, touch, for there is a spirit in the earth."

Wordsworth

The texture of the stone is crucial for deep bodywork. Basalt stones are ideal for layouts supporting the neck and for light gliding on clients who are sensitive to deep massage. New England sea stones have the most texture and the best shapes for edging. Textured sea stones are velvety smooth, not slippery smooth. They are more porous, thereby giving them a high grip factor, enabling more control.

Stones have subtle and extreme color variations that correspond with one of the five great elements. A greenish hue is indicative of oxidized parts of copper sulfide deposits and soothes the attribute of oiliness and edema in water, fire and earth imbalances within the body. The bluish stones help cool internal and external inflammations.

Some stones may have foliations or stripes of muted reddish colors or burnt orange, which soothe the oily attributes of oozing, red inflammation and/or swelling due to excessive cold and wet conditions. They

have a balancing effect on the copious oil used during Ayurvedic oil massage (abyhanga).

A clear pink color will soothe the attributes of the earth and water elements such as heaviness, lethargy, greed and swelling. These elements are responsible for the emotion of deep-seated grief and sadness. A clear rose quartz is very effective when it is placed on the heart marma point, which is located mid-chest in line with the nipples. If a client is experiencing heavy grief due to the loss of a loved one, then a raw, unpolished ruby would be appropriate at the heart marma point. A ruby may also be placed on the third eye as it amplifies the energy of the pituitary, which will promote mental concentration and sharp intuition. This is why many yogis and gurus choose to wear a red bhindi between their brows.

Stones of muted blue gray will help counter-balance excessive fire, water, ether and air elements within the body. This color instills peacefulness, removes anger and nourishes the auric field. Blackish brown stones soothe all the elements, since black is a mixture of all colors. Regardless of color, all warm stones soothe cold and excessive ethereal qualities within the body.

Ayurveda recognizes five directional flows within the body. Stone healing is most calming when *Apana Vayu*, a Sanskrit word meaning “the downward flow” of prana. When this is activated, the healing effects are heightened. *Apana* vayu belongs to *muladhara* (the first) and *svadhisthana* (the second) chakras. The earth element of stone makes it the perfect vehicle to reconnect us with the earth’s grounding, stable force.

The first stones applied to the body during the initial layout are on the *muladhara* and *svadhisthana* chakra. Stones are laid upon the body in sequence of the chakra order, ending at the crown. The order of removal (a.k.a. ‘de-stoning’) is important, removing from top to bottom chakras. This sequence allows *muladhara* and *svadhisthana* to remain awakened as long as possible during the treatment, encouraging *apana* vayu and helping connect our clients to the earth.

Ayurveda recognizes five terminal ends of the body:

1. crown of the head.
2. ears.
3. genitals.
4. hands.
5. soles of the feet.

“Terminal Clearance” describes the release of toxins and residue at and through each of the terminal ends. This can be achieved by using “gentle wringing and squeezing” strokes, virtually pulling and pushing the toxins out of the body in the direction of one or any of the terminal ends. After gently wringing and squeezing, glide heated, textured stones with a firm pressure along the muscles towards the terminal ends. This is called “Stone Flushing”. After you perform terminal clearance as a therapist, be sure to shake out your own hands and transform any negativity to golden or white light with your mind’s eye. Once the body is clear, send breath and light through your hands, into your client during gentle *ujjayi* (yogic breath technique) exhales because Nature dislikes a vacuum. If you “vacuum” the toxins, there will

beclear space within the “energy-body” that will need to be filled with light and compassion to prevent more toxins from filling the space.

Compression therapy, using stones and sandbags, has a two-fold benefit. First, the application of compression initiates the relaxation response. Then, after the compression is removed, the body experiences an amazing sense of weightlessness and an incredible lightness of being. Compression immobilizes the muscle, so there is a surrendering that must occur on the part of the client. Clients will surrender when they feel safe. When the body stops twitching and wiggling to find comfort, only then can we attain the inner stillness we all seek.

The most profound healing takes place in the presence of emotions such as trust, love and compassion. According to the work of Manfred Klein, an Australian concert pianist, love is experienced, cell-to-cell, *by pressure*. He discovered this when he realized he could move his audience to tears simply by the way he applied pressure to the keys. It had nothing to do with the melody. He determined that love had a ratio of 1.168 based on the pressure that is made and the duration of that pressure. This ratio is known as the *golden mean ratio*. The way we apply pressure to our clients is what will create the space for the client to heal.

Sandbags create a perfect amount of pressure and can be heated on an electric radiator or portable heating unit. They are used to help re-educate parts of the body that are too far forward or backward, causing misalignment. Laying sandbags on the top of the thighs will encourage the femurs to ground more deeply into the hips sockets, thus pacifying ether and air elements within the body. It also helps redirect the energy downward (apana vayu) by simply increasing body awareness in the legs.

Deep tissue stonework requires an enormous amount of focus to stay tuned into the texture of the client's muscle and your client's pain threshold. It is helpful to use one hand for manipulating the stone and the other hand in front of it or behind it. We call this hand the “mother” hand. This mother hand acts to reassure, nurture and stay tuned into the tissue. This mother hand acts as a natural “calming agent”, especially if you invoke Durga or Mother Mary and ask her to guide your hand.

Finger-shaped stones can be anchored into the palm of the therapist's hands and held parallel to the thumb. These stones are ideal for opening blocked marma points (used gently) or releasing acupressure points. They also can be used as an adjunct to the thumb during Shiatsu treatments. The heat at the tip of the stone helps penetrate the blockages of excess earth elements within the client and saves the therapist's thumbs.

“Edging” is a simple deep tissue stone technique using the edge of the stone. Edging is done with one hand gently gripping the stone like a tool, which glides along the muscle sheath with deep, slow pressure for myofascial release, while the other hand acts as the “mother hand.” Edging can be used to follow the direction of the muscle fiber, or for cross-friction and is an intensified, modified version of effleurage.

When the flat side of a stone is used in a continuous slow motion along muscles using copious amounts of oil and strong pressure, we simply call it “gliding.” Gliding is another modified version of effleurage and in this case, the stone is used as an extension of the hand rather than a tool, which means the hands are held flat against the stone. The motion must be slow and intentional, otherwise, the treatment will not be calming.

In addition to edging and gliding, another technique is called “flushing”, using the flat side of the stone as an

extension of the hand. The heat, wide surface, and pressure will help flush out what was dislodged from edging. Flushing in the direction toward the feet is an Ayurvedic principle, affirming and activating *apana* vayu. The feet, considered one of the terminal ends in the body, stores excess and residual debris and releases them into the earth. The earth transforms this debris.

Spinning stones on the body is an extremely powerful technique. Why spin a warm stone on the body? *"Energy travels more intensely as it spins."* says Richard Gordon, founder of Quantum Touch. Velocity and intensity of energy is heightened when a stone is spun firmly on a body part, such as a chakra, which is a spinning wheel of light and energy within the body. Spun slowly and with meaningful intention, a vortex can be created and healing can be activated within the physical and "energy-body". Depending on the intention of the therapist and the direction of the spin, energy, thought, prayer, color or emotion can be delivered and/or released from the body more intensely. Barbara Brennan workshop (author of *Hands of Light*) Boston, 1998. Knots in the muscles can be released effortlessly.

"Everything that exists has Being, has God-essence, has some degree of consciousness. Even a stone has rudimentary consciousness; otherwise, it would not be and its atoms and molecules would disperse. Everything is alive." Eckhart Tolle

The chakras are centers of consciousness. What we are doing is inserting, or applying, a focal point around which consciousness will attend, as it will in its own wisdom. When we spin stones, the consciousness of the stone is drawn deep into the belly of the chakra, allowing the client to simply choose to release negativity, open and expand, strengthen, heal or find balance and beauty.

Helpful Hints When Using Stones and Crystals For The Purpose of Healing and Massage

1. The backside of the body represents the unconscious mind is more sensitive to heat than the frontside.
2. When gliding the stones along the body, avoid bony areas. Stay on the fleshy part of the muscles.
3. In order to stay fully connected to your client, even if you are gliding one stone, use both your hands.
4. Nothing can ever replace the human touch, so Sacred Stone Therapy incorporates both the human touch and the stones. The reason for massaging each body part *before* you glide the stone, is to lubricate the skin so the stones will glide more easily.
5. The stones will naturally want to click together as you are gliding them. Surrender to the stones and allow them to guide you from time to time. Remember it's a partnership/union between you, the stones, the Creator, and the client.
6. Stone massage is the perfect anecdote for ticklish clients! For some unexplainable reason, the stones remove the tickle!
7. As a bonus and if you have time, once all the stones near the spine have been removed, place a large, clear quartz crystal at the top of the spine with the point directed toward the crown of the head. Immediately place another large, clear quartz crystal at the base of the spine with the point directed towards the feet. Quartz terminators are eager to work and are powerfully effective. This particular layout will bring all energies center and connect the client both to the heavens and to the earth. It is symbolic of the way Ayurveda regards the body as a pole with two ends.
8. Sacred stone therapists should be aware of proper breath techniques. It is recommended that Sacred Stone Therapists take yoga classes in order to learn ujjayi breath. Mouth breathing is a turn off to your client and will cause you, as the therapist, to lose energy. Send the power of prayer, intention, color and sound with your ujjayi exhale. Don't try too hard. Allow the breath to move through you effortlessly. Allow the Creator to move through your breath. Ultimately, you are a channel for the Creator.
9. It is possible to extract negativity with your inhale, allowing your hands to be like a sponge. Be sure to shake your hands out after.
10. It is possible to grip your client's ethereal body and expand it with your inhale. You may fill this expansion with the light of the Creator.
11. For male clients with lots of body hair, glide the stones in the direction of the hair growth, especially if you are using textured stones. This is the natural direction of *apana* vayu.
12. A stationary stone will be experienced as "hotter" by the client, than a moving stone. A stone that moves more quickly will reduce the burn factor. Once it has cooled to a comfortable warm temperature, slow the pace down.

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