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July 5, 2011

Wear Your Herbs: Yoga Off the Mat

Posted by [Sophie Herbert](#)

It's common knowledge that consuming certain botanicals can have healing powers. Did you know, however, that simply surrounding ourselves with such plants can provide benefits? If you're a gardener, I'm sure you know what I'm talking about. Plants, and their extracts, have energy.



Vastra uses medicinal herbs for their all-natural dyeing process.

My attention was immediately caught by *Vastra*, a new *ayurvedic* clothing company seeking to revive something called *Ayurveda* (*ayur* meaning "life" or "health" in Sanskrit and *vastra* meaning "clothing"). *Ayurveda* was a branch of *Ayurveda*, the extremely holistic medicinal system invented in Kerala, India about 5,000 years ago. This "clothing for life" was dyed with medicinal plants and herbs. *Vastra* is following in the footsteps of the ancient physician Charaka, who helped his patients create a healing environment by surrounding themselves with *ayurveda* clothing, bedding, wall covers, and more.

In a nutshell, *Vastra* founder Sri Narayan, who hails from Kerala told me, "In *ayurveda* the skin's used as a mechanism for delivering medicines, and medicated oils are massaged and infused into the body for treating many health conditions and well as for tonifying/wellness benefits. *Vastra* clothing creates an encapsulation or micro-environment of medicinal herbs and sustains it around the skin as long as one is wearing it as apparel or using it as clothing or bedding, and just like the skin absorbs toxins that it comes in touch with, it also acts as a conduit for the beneficial effects of plants and herbs used in the dye."

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Vastra's clothing is not only good for those who wear it, but also for the earth and the community. Every product is made with patience and control using 100% organic cotton and yarn. There are absolutely no chemicals used in the dyeing process (something almost unheard of in the modern clothing industry!). Six main healing botanicals are used in combination with other herbs. There are: turmeric, indigo, tulsi, neem, cuscus, and sandalwood. Read more about their unique benefits [here](#). The fabrics are dyed by the Vastra team at the Handloom Weavers Community near Trivandrum, the capital of Kerala.

Certain key members of the community worked for years to revive the ancient dyeing techniques of their ancestors of the Kuzhuvila family, some of whom were Ayurvedic physicians themselves. Sri, who's lived in Washington D.C. for the past decade, met these members during a trip to India a few years back. He fell in love with the work they were doing and, in due time, Vastra was born.

Vastra employs the tribal people of Kerala to harvest the herbs as much as possible. As someone who has spent time in the tribal hills of the neighboring states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, providing sustainable jobs to the tribal people is invaluable. After existing peacefully amongst nature for thousands of years, many tribal people struggle with the transition into the "modern" socio-economic system. Vastra provides a way for these people to use their ancient wisdom and live sustainably.

Additionally, Sri and his team are hoping to inspire people worldwide to think more about the origin of their cloth items. Likewise, they are ambassadors for the great science of ayurveda.

To find out more about this fascinating process please visit <http://www.vastra.us/index.html>. Their online store, which will carry clothing, scarves, fabric, and bedding is coming soon!

Sophie Herbert is an alignment focused yoga teacher (and perpetual student), a singer-songwriter, and a visual artist. She has lived, studied, and volunteered extensively in India; teaches yoga in Brooklyn and Manhattan; and recently released her first full-length album, "Take a Clear Look." Please visit her website at SophieHerbert.com.

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 Posted by [Sophie Herbert](#) on July 5, 2011 in [Wellness](#), [Yoga](#)

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