

# masterclass

## MAJOR ARCHETYPES OF THE MATERIA MEDICA

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This pullout and keep series includes:

Sulphur

Calc carb

Lycopodium

Pulsatilla

Silicea

Nat mur

Sepia

Lachesis

Pulsatilla is so intimately connected with the archetypal patterns of our collective unconscious that its image has been invested with mythological and symbolic meaning. These are significant to our understanding of the remedy's dynamic influence.

The myth of Adonis the beautiful young man beloved of both Aphrodite (Venus), goddess of love, and Persephone, goddess of the underworld, who bitterly contended with each other for his company and love, provides a triangle of possessive and obsessive love, jealousy, seduction, selfishness, guile, vindictiveness - two amorous, insatiable women and a compliant, dependent, effeminate toy boy. The muse Calliope who was called upon to arbitrate in this sensitive matter decreed that Adonis should spend one third of the year with Aphrodite, one third with Persephone and, in order to recuperate, the rest by himself. Aphrodite however did not play fair and won the day (and night) by constantly wearing her irresistible magic girdle, causing Adonis to give not only his third of the year to her, but also Persephone's. The myth ends with Adonis being gored to death, whilst out hunting. His attacker was Aphrodite's enraged lover Ares (Mars), the god of war, in the guise of a wild boar. It was a scheming, green-eyed Persephone who had told Ares of Aphrodite's infidelity. From the earth soaked with Adonis' blood, anemones sprang to life. However there are those who say that they sprang from the tears of the goddess of love herself, when she witnessed his death.

This legend is replete with Pulsatilla emotions, behaviour and situations. So many young girls of the Pulsatilla type fall precociously under the power of the goddess of love, become sexually active at an early age, easily persuaded and lead by beautiful young men (Adonis) or by the macho, swaggering male (Ares), and are such easy victims for seduction, abuse and date rape. Remember that even in modern idiom Pulsatilla is from Venus, her lover is from Mars. The male Pulsatilla is often an Adonis, beautiful rather than handsome, of a gentle, timid, sweet disposition, easily lead and persuaded, with a rather immature, girlish, androgynous appearance.

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# Pulsatilla

**So much of Pulsatilla's nature** and disposition can be predicted in the appearance and growth habits of this small plant which prefers growing on sunny hillsides, usually in great numbers or at least in small clusters, rarely solitary. Here it is exposed to the winds, and the rich carpet of gently hanging flowers yields to the slightest breath of air, which passes through it like a rippling wave, changing direction continuously with the vagaries of the wind. In this attractive scene we are made aware of a small, uncertain ego, uneasy when alone, needing the support of others and the confidence this can bring; an indecisive, fickle nature bending to the whims of circumstance, opinion and demand, but also a temperament both supple and guileful, able to compromise, yield and go with the flow.

Photo: Freemans Homeopathic Pharmacy, Glasgow



**The common names** of a plant are often valuable, revealing the impression it made upon the community, or giving us information about how it was used, medicinally or otherwise. The Greek name anemone is derived from *anemos*, the wind, and Pulsatilla comes from the Latin *pulsare* to pulsate, as indeed the carpet of flowers does, to the rhythm of the wind. The folk name "windflower" describes the same characteristic. Its love of windy hillsides emphasises the type's strong need for fresh open air and dislike of stuffy, close conditions that intensify both the emotional and physical symptoms. The preference for a sunny aspect reveals sensitivity to the cold, which is often forgotten in Pulsatilla. "Chilly but craves the open air." This chilliness is increased if they are unwell or in pain.

**The bell-shaped flower** has deep purple petals and a rich golden centre. Before it opens fully, it inclines its head gently and bashfully, as if in timid submissiveness and resignation. Another folk name for the plant is "shamefaced maiden". These are strong characteristics of the Pulsatilla child and young woman. The temperament is mild, gentle, shy and reserved. They are reluctant to speak up for themselves or express an opinion. Often they are very attractive and know all too well how to use their natural assets in subtle and

seductive ways to captivate and influence others, and to fulfil their desires, through the solicitation of tears, coyness, flirtation and appealing helplessness. Invariably Pulsatilla gives that she may receive. The entire plant is seductive, its stem, branches, leaves and even the inflorescence being covered with fine hairs which give it a fluffy, cuddly appearance which invites contact and cherishing. In human terms Pulsatilla is soft, sensual, inviting and tactile - a true daughter of Aphrodite.

**Habitat can also** furnish us with clues and even reveal medicinal relationships. Pulsatilla generally grows best in sandy soil, which provides good drainage. This favours the plant because it requires very little water. Homeopathically Silicea, sand, is Pulsatilla's closest relation. They follow each other well and Silicea children often develop infections or conditions that respond to treatment with Pulsatilla. It is interesting to note that the Pulsatilla patient is rarely thirsty, even when suffering from fever. But as we have seen in its response to the wind, Pulsatilla is fickle and changeable by nature, and some species prefer a lime rich soil, showing the plant's close relationship to Calc carb.

**This beautiful, purple and gold anemone** bears a mysterious affinity for the immature, vulnerable and dependent state of the human psyche. As such it is one of the most fundamental remedies of the materia medica, frequently indicated in homeopathic paediatric practice. As a species homo sapiens are completely helpless and unable to fend for themselves at birth, our lives being characterised by a prolonged period of dependency, even extending into the third decade of life, a highly developed interdependent social structure, and frequently closing with a period of enforced dependency in old age. Dependency runs like a thread through the Pulsatilla mental picture revealing itself as a need for support, security, shelter, sympathy and love, motivating the behaviour and even influencing physical development and hormonal function.

**Blood and tears** are related to Pulsatilla. Sometimes it is the remedy for the blood and tears of life experience, so often in the role of victim; sometimes it is simply for those who are naturally weepy and possibly anaemic, with scanty, pale menstruations that are unnaturally delayed. Both copper and iron are essential for blood formation. Cuprum like Pulsatilla is a remedy for severe cramping pains at the menstrual period, and also for the ill effects of suppressed or delayed menstruation, which can occur due to swimming in cold water or getting the feet wet. Both remedies are indicated for the persisting anaemia and detrimental effects resulting from excess iron tonics - that is, for the abuse of iron, and by symbolic extension for the abuse of the chauvinist or misogynist Mars - for the abuse of the lover, father, brother, son, be the abuse emotional, physical or sexual.



*Venus de Milo - in human terms Pulsatilla is soft, sensual, inviting and tactile, a true daughter of Aphrodite*

## the pulsatilla adult

The **changeableness** of the plant, and therefore also of the remedy and the patient, is made even more apparent when we consider the great number of naturally occurring subspecies there are, and the vast array of colours that are represented. There is no doubt that changeability and capriciousness are as important Pulsatilla traits as is dependency. Pulsatilla must always be thought of when symptoms are always changing and unpredictable. Likewise their emotions and moods are unstable and swing from one extreme to the other, even during the course of a day. They may appear mild and pleasant, and then after a while, seemingly without reason, become irritable, peevish and tearful. In matters of friendship and romance they may prove fickle, going where they think they will benefit most rather than being influenced by loyalty and commitment. They are

also extremely indecisive, wavering and uncertain, quite dependent on the opinion, advice or support of others. The physical symptoms reveal the same variableness – when one set of symptoms comes on another vanishes, discharges are forever changing their colour, consistency and amount, no two headaches, no two periods, and in diarrhoea no two stools, are the same. Pains, especially joint pains, are not fixed, tending to wander from one part to another.

**The inflorescence** broadcasts a strong message through its vivid colours – purple and gold. The purple petals point to a powerful influence upon the venous system. The veins of the hands, forearms, feet and legs are full and prominent. It is a remedy for varicose veins, piles and inflammation of the veins – phlebitis. Venous drainage from the legs is sluggish. Symptoms are worse from permitting the limbs to hang down. In hot weather and when travelling, especially during flights, the legs tend to swell and deep venous thrombosis (DVT) can be a threat. Chilblains are common, but even without such definite lesions, the extremities may appear reddish-purple, inflamed and swollen in cold weather. Heat aggravates the chilblains causing them to itch and burn. Inflamed parts tend to take on a bluish or purple hue rather than appearing red.

**The striking contrast** between the colour of the petals and the gold of the reproductive organs indicates a marked affinity for the generative sphere and hormonal function of both male and female. Many problems develop at puberty, during pregnancy, after childbirth or at the menopause, and pre-menstrual aggravation of the emotional or physical condition is common. Yellow and yellow-gold show Pulsatilla's connection to the third or solar plexus chakra and therefore with the stomach, gall bladder, liver, pancreas, and spleen. These patients often complain of being liverish. They feel much worse after eating, and suffer all manner of indigestion, heartburn, flatulence, distension and heaviness, especially after rich foods, fatty food, ice cream, pastries, pork and eggs. The combination of purple and gold, and therefore of veins and liver, indicates a remedial action upon the portal circulation.

**Pulsatilla sprang** to life from blood and the central core element of haemoglobin, the respiratory pigment of blood, is iron. Small wonder that in her weakness, "anaemia", she longs for Adonis/Mars, "iron", that to attain him she is manipulative and seductive and that when she wins him her love is dependent, desperate, obsessive, smothering, possessive and jealous and that when she loses him she weeps inconsolably and declares that she cannot live without him. But she is also the windflower, able to sway and yield to life's gusts and buffeting without snapping. Soon she will shift her dependency to the arm of another. She is a survivor!

# the pulsatilla child

**The development** of the Pulsatilla dependency state may be precipitated by various early life experiences. These may even be prenatal. Rejection or separation from parental love are potent causes and may give rise to life long feelings of being forsaken or abandoned. It may commence whilst still in the uterus due to the mother's conscious or unconscious rejection of the pregnancy. Much to the disappointment of the parents the baby may be the wrong sex. Many other reasons for lack of bonding and separation may play a role – incubation, failure to breast-feed, post-natal depression, infant or maternal ill health, adoption, working mother, divorce and parental death. Such a child is likely to develop recurrent Pulsatilla infections. They become high care children, constantly weeping, whining, whimpering and wailing, demanding attention and nurturing, wanting to be carried, cuddled and held close and intolerant of being left alone or losing contact. They suffer separation fear.

**Excessive parental care**, love and protection may be a cause. The Pulsatilla child becomes addicted to the warmth and security of such intense parental love. Often the mother herself is a Pulsatilla, dependent on the emotional and sentimental satisfaction of lavishing love on her dependent infant. She may encourage and prolong the period of dependency by delaying weaning, persisting with inappropriate baby talk, dressing the child in clothes too young for its age. A state of infantilism is encouraged.

**Paradoxically** lack of love is an equally potent cause of eliciting the Pulsatilla state. A child growing up in an environment devoid of love and care, or when such attention is qualified and dependent on behaviour acceptable to strict parents, develops a deep sense of insecurity and the belief that love and care must be bought through certain behaviour. There is often the feeling that they are not worthy, loveable or valuable, with damage to their sense of identity. They develop a desperate need for love from whatever source possible and by whatever means possible and once achieved they will cling to it desperately. They will produce whatever behaviour is necessary to win the security and affection they crave. They may become model children, unnaturally well behaved, neat and tidy, always fearing that any misdemeanour may alienate them from parental love.

**These behaviour** patterns persisting into adolescence and adulthood expose the archetype to manipulation and victimisation. "I'll be whoever you want me to be – just love me!"

**They are full** of fears, especially of separation, rejection, betrayal, being forsaken, being alone, of the dark, dogs, ghosts, dentists and doctors, the opposite sex, people, particularly strangers, of what people will think of them, unfamiliar situations and surroundings. These fears are worse at twilight and may last a lifetime.

**To the dependent child** maturity and responsibility are not welcome; they are frightening. They resist taking responsibility for their lives and subconsciously resist maturation. This is more conspicuous in girls than in boys. These mild, weepy girls suffer delayed puberty, and when the periods finally begin they are often late or very irregular. Even when the menses are established they are easily suppressed.

**In similar** manner all the sequential functions of womanhood and motherhood may be repressed, producing celibacy, infertility, abortion, miscarriage, and, in pregnancy, malpresentation, protracted labour, uterine inertia, retained placenta, milk failure. Sometimes Aphrodite is not denied but welcomed. In response to dependent need, often lack of love at home, the Pulsatilla body buds early with sensual promise, like the flower, a siren call for love and identity. It does not matter whom they are dependent upon as long as there is just someone.

**In response to** the circumstances they experience, they will shift their dependency or obsession from parents, to a member of the opposite or same sex, from one relationship to another, to a marriage partner, from one marriage to another, to their own children, to some strange belief about food, anorexia, bulimia, promiscuity or celibacy, or to some cult or religion. Despite their indecisiveness and inconstant nature, once fixed upon some dependency or strange notion, they are rigid and immovable. Fanaticism is the most crystallised form of Pulsatilla dependency. It is their extreme defence against insecurity.

Next issue: David Lilley looks at Silicea

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