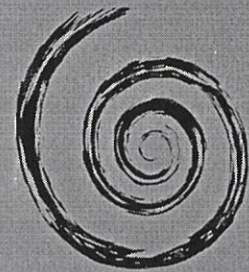


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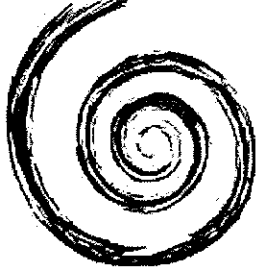


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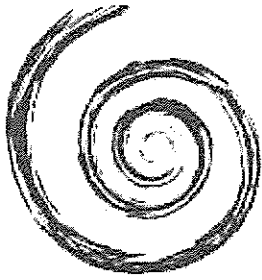
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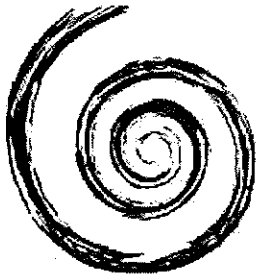
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## Philosophy of Yoga and Ayurveda: A Parallel

**Abstract:** Yoga and Ayurveda are both closely connected fundamentally holistic disciplines rooted in Vedic tradition. They intersect in the somatic and psycho spiritual wholeness. Yoga focuses on spiritual integration through self transcendence culminating in self realization. Ayurveda focuses on psychosomatic integration through comprehensive health care culminating in openness to self transcendence and self realization. Yoga and ayurveda are sister sciences that developed together and repeatedly influence each other. They are integral part of great system of Vedic knowledge which states that the entire universe is One Self. In this paper I am try to explore how both yoga is a science of self-realization and ayurveda is a science of self-healing which leads to spiritualism.

**Keywords:** Yoga, Ayurveda, Three gunas, Three Doshas, Self realization, Self healing, Prana, Healing Power, Ashtanga Yoga.

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Yoga and Ayurveda are both closely connected fundamentally holistic disciplines rooted in Vedic tradition. They intersect in the somatic and psycho spiritual wholeness. Yoga focuses on spiritual integration through self transcendence culminating in self realization. Ayurveda focuses on psychosomatic integration through comprehensive

health care culminating in openness to self transcendence and self realization.

Yoga and Ayurveda are two interrelated branches of the same great tree of Vedic knowledge that encompasses all of human life and the entire universe. In this regard, it is important to understand the respective roles of Ayurveda and Yoga in the Vedic system. Yoga and Ayurveda are not merely two separate but related healing disciplines of India. Each has its unique place and function, but each overlaps into the other on various levels. Ayurveda is one of the four Upavedas or secondary Vedic teachings, along with Gandharva Veda (music), Sthapatya Veda (directional science), and Dhanur Veda (martial arts). These Upavedas apply Vedic knowledge along specific lines to supplement the Vedic quest for wholeness and liberation. Ayurveda is probably the most important of these because it addresses all aspects of healing and well-being for body and mind.

Some thinkers say that Patanjali, who compiled and codified the Yoga Sutras in the centuries just before or just after the first millennium, also outlined the Charaka Samhita, one of the foundational texts of ayurveda. But yoga and ayurveda share even more than that. Both reinforce the philosophy of Samkhya, which gives us a map of the universe and an explanation for how cosmic consciousness manifested itself into form.

Samkhya is a dualistic system, that everything can be categorized as either Purusha (pure consciousness) or Prakriti (matter or form). All physical existence derives from prakriti, which has three qualities, known as gunas: sattva, tamas, or rajas. From these three qualities arise the five elements, as well as the senses, the sense organs, the motor organs, the mind—24 universal principles in all. Ayurveda's methods are based on these principles. When all are balanced, the individual is healthy. When something is imbalanced, the disease process begins. Most yogis are aware of ayurveda's concept of the tri doshas such as kapha (earth/water), pitta (water/fire), vata (air/space). The ayurvedic treatments such as shirodhara have found its way into spas and studios in modern times. Ayurveda encompasses a vast range of

diagnostic techniques and remedies such as tongue analysis, cleanses, herbology, mantra, and even gem therapy.

In this classical Vedic scheme, ayurveda is the Vedic system developed specifically for healing purposes. There is no other Vedic system of healing apart from ayurveda. Yoga is the Vedic system of spiritual practice or sadhana. All Vedic sadhana or spiritual practice involves some form of Yoga practice. This means that Yoga is not originally or inherently a medical system. It does not address either physical or psychological disease or their treatment in a primary manner. Yoga aims at relieving spiritual suffering, which it defines according to the kleshas or spiritual afflictions starting with ignorance (avidyà) of our true nature as pure consciousness, which leads us to a false identification of ourselves with our transient bodies and minds. Yoga is an inner spiritual practice, what is called sadhana in Sanskrit. This does not mean that we cannot use yoga as a medical therapy, but this is not its primary intent or orientation. But to do so we need to apply yoga in a different manner than what it was originally meant to be.

Ayurveda is Vedic science of healing for both body and mind. Yoga is Vedic science of realization that depends upon well functioning body and mind. Both discipline developed together and have always been used together. Yoga and Ayurveda are far more than physical exercise or bodily healing system as we tend to view them today. Both classical Yoga and Ayurveda looked at whole human being not only as body but both mind and soul. Both address all our needs from physical health and well being to enfoldment of our higher consciousness. Integral yoga is traditionally called panch kosa yoga and integral ayurveda is called as panch kosa ayurveda meaning yoga and ayurveda of five sheaths which refers to the physical body, prana, mind, intellect and soul as well as our higher self. It is defined as yoga and ayurveda of three bodies (physical, astral and casual) or body, mind and soul. Yoga builds upon the foundation of ayurveda and similarly ayurveda is unfulfilling to the human psyche as it is evolved towards self realization. The practice of two sciences is necessary for the achievement of their

independent goal. It is said, yoga rest upon ayurvedic medicine for its health implications, ayurveda rely upon yoga for it's for its mental and spiritual dimension.

For ayurveda, three doshas, which describe as how the building blocks of the life unstable yet follow certain specific pattern. For yoga three gunas are more primal qualities that regulates subtler realm to control the direction of all life activities. In yoga and ayurveda, the universe is seen as manifestation of these three fundamental biological properties. The first property possesses creativity that expresses itself as movement in which element air and space is predominant. In ayurveda this property is known as 'Vata'. In yogic literature this same biological property is refined into higher subtler form of energy called 'prana', which governs rhythm, motion and sensitivity of the mind. The second property is transformation which expresses itself as energy or vitality through the element of fire and water, called 'pitta' in ayurveda. Tejas is a refined form of pitta that creates discernment, the higher function of mind composed of the essence of light. The third property is preservation, which expresses nourishment through the elements of water and earth called 'kapha'. Ojas is the refined form of kapha providing the foundation of all nurturing qualities that become immune system, breast milk and placenta. The ayurvedic practitioner finds life force in food and all other manifestations of the material world. For example lack of vata would be directly experienced as excessive moisture while an overabundance of vata would be experience dryness- raw foods not consumed enough will increase mucous while in excess increase dryness. Ayurveda believes that food is the primordial substance from which the body is created, nurture and ultimately will dissolve in it.

The study of ayurveda tells us how changes in diet, lifestyle, exercise and spiritual practices of yoga promote health and longevity. Ayurveda directs us to live a life of fulfillment as stated in Charka Samhita in section Sutrasthanam Chapter I Sutra 55, "The body and mind constitute the substrata of diseases and happiness (positive



health). Balanced utilization (of time, mental faculties and the object of sense organ) is cause of happiness.”<sup>1</sup>

In this classical Vedic scheme, ayurveda is the Vedic system developed specifically for healing purposes. There is no other Vedic system of healing apart from ayurveda. Yoga is the Vedic system of spiritual practice or sadhana. All Vedic sadhana or spiritual practice involves some form of Yoga practice. It does not address either physical or psychological disease or their treatment in a primary manner. Yoga aims at relieving spiritual suffering, which defines according to the kleshas or spiritual afflictions starting with ignorance (avidya) of our true nature as pure consciousness, which leads us to a false identification of ourselves with our transient bodies and minds. Yoga is an inner spiritual practice, what is called Sadhana. If our aim is to turn Yoga into a medical system, in the Vedic scheme this requires turning Yoga in the direction of ayurveda. Yoga for healing should be applied according to ayurvedic guidelines of diagnosis, treatment, and health maintenance if we want to keep yogic healing within the scope of Vedic knowledge. In fact, there was never any yogic system of medicine in India apart from ayurveda historically, not only among the followers of the Vedic tradition but also among the followers of non-Vedic traditions.

Patanjali Yoga Sutra have sections like Samadhi Pada, 'section relating to Samadhi or deep meditation', Sadhana Pada, 'section relating to spiritual practice', Vibhuti Pada, 'section relating to yogic powers', and Kaivalya Pada, 'section relating to liberation'. The yogic exploration of consciousness, the subtle energies of prana and mind, and various types of spiritual practices are all inter-connected. Yogic texts contain discussions of meditation, concentration, mantra, ritual, pranayama, asana, and related factors but as part of spiritual practice, not as a therapy.

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<sup>1</sup>Mukunda Stiles, '*Ayurvedic Yoga Therapy*', Lotus Press USA, first edition 2007, ISBN- 978-0-9409-8597-1

We do not find any Chikitsa Padas or therapy sections in the usual Yoga texts. The term Chikitsa does not occur in the Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and is not a major topic of concern in Yoga philosophy too. The concern of classical Yoga is Sadhana, not Chikitsa, which is regarded as the field of ayurveda. In Yogic texts we do not come across a discussion of disease, pathology, diagnosis, or treatment strategies apart from the approach of ayurveda. What we do find commonly in Yogic texts are discussions of the pranas, senses, mind, nadis, and chakras, worship of deities, discussion of the inner Self and nature of consciousness, as well as the types of samadhi or inner absorption. Some yogic texts regard disease as one of the main obstacles to yoga practices.

Both of these sciences have eight branches: Ashtanga yoga and Ashtanga ayurveda. The two have a common understanding of health of the body being dependent on the health and balance of the mind. They share virtually the same metaphysical anatomy and physiology, which consists of 72,000 nadis (subtle channels), seven main chakras (energy centers), five bodily sheaths and the kundalini shakti (energy). Yoga is believed to be a natural way of healing. The basic principle of ayurveda is based on the shloka: 'Yat Pinde Tat Brahmande' (from the Puranas) which means that the microcosm is equal to the macrocosm. In other words, whatever is within us, in our cells, is equivalent to that which is in the universe. This understanding sparked an overwhelming sense of gratitude in me, knowing that every aspect of nature has the answers to good health.

Yoga and ayurveda are sister sciences that developed together and repeatedly influence each other. They are integral part of great system of Vedic knowledge which states that the entire universe is One Self and that the key to cosmic knowledge lies in our own minds and hearts. Yoga is a first and foremost a science of self realization. It provides key to all spiritual development mainly through meditation and other yogic practices by acquiring the knowledge of our true nature beyond time, space and sufferings. Ayurveda is primarily a science of self healing aim at relieving the

diseases of body and mind. It is self healing means it helps in restoring wholeness with our inner self as its ultimate goal, which is a spiritual healing. Ayurveda's aim is to alleviate both bodily and mental diseases and promoting both psychological and physical well being. Yet the ultimate goal of classical ayurveda, like classical yoga is self realization the highest form of self healing. Ayurveda helps us to attain optimal health not for materialistic enjoyment but to provide wholesome foundation and sufficient energy to pursue the yogic health.

The link between yoga and ayurveda is 'prana' or 'life force'. Yoga is intelligence of prana seeking greater evolutionary transformations, while ayurveda is its healing power seeking to consolidate the life systems it has already developed. Both yoga and ayurveda together are complete discipline, which can transform our existence from the physical to the deepest spiritual levels of our being with extraordinary vitality and creativity on all levels.

Modern Yoga therapy largely consists of the application of Yoga asanas as an adjunct physical therapy for the treatment of diseases as primarily diagnosed and treated by modern medicine. Yoga therapy as asana therapy does not unfold the full healing potential of classical Yoga and its many methods. It keeps Yoga subordinate in a secondary role, reduced primarily to a physical application. A full application of the methods of Yoga for healing purposes, we need a complete medical system that follows the philosophy, principles, and practices of Yoga, and that can employ not only asana as a therapy but also pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, and samadhi, and which follows a yogic life style (yamas and niyama). Ayurveda develops its view of the body and mind, and nature and healing from the background of Yoga philosophy as outlined through the twenty-five tattvas of the Samkhya system. Ayurveda provides us a complete mind-body system of medicine in terms of all aspects of diagnosis and treatment that reflects a Vedic and Yogic approach, values, and wisdom.

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A real Yoga therapy must consider all eight limbs of Yoga. It cannot just isolate the physical aspects of Yoga like asana. Otherwise it is caught in the same type of physical reductionism that too often occurs in modern medicine. In this regard, not only asana has important therapeutic application, but all the limbs of Yoga. The first two of the eight limbs of Yoga, the yamas and niyamas, the yogic principles and practices of right living, provide the foundation necessary to sustain any spiritual or healing practice. They also provide an ideal code of conduct for doctors, therapists, and Yoga teachers. Asanas are the 'external medicine' of Yoga. It primarily treats musculo-skeletal disorders, but indirectly can benefit many other conditions and can provide an ideal form of exercise for everyone. Yet without the proper diet, its healing potentials are limited, as bodily activity is going to reflect the nutrition the body receives. Asana works best in the context of Ayurvedic dietary and life-style recommendations.

Pranayama can be called the 'internal medicine' of Yoga. It brings prana or vital energy directly into the body and can be used to direct prana in various ways as needed. Pranayama directly impacts the doshas or biological humors of Ayurveda (vata, pitta, and kapha), which are modifications of prana. Pranayama primarily treats conditions of the respiratory, circulatory, and nervous systems but through these has a powerful impact on all physical and psychological conditions. Pranayama is a great aid for the use of herbs and functions much like them to correct the movements of energy within our physiological and psychological systems.

As all forms of healing involve altering the movement of prana and increasing the healing power of prana, pranayama is a primary and direct form of healing for body and mind, whereas asana is secondary and indirect. This means that a real Yoga therapy even for the physical body must emphasize pranayama over asana and employ asana in the context of pranayama. Pratyahara is the internalization of energy necessary for deep healing or for true meditation to occur. If we have not reached the stage of pratyahara, we are still not really practicing Yoga as a sadhana or spiritual practice. In



pratyahara, one withdraws the prana and mind within. For real healing, the body and mind must be put in a relaxed state and the energy directed within. Many forms of treatment like massage or panchakarma are largely simulated forms of pratyahara, putting the patient into a condition of deep rest in which all toxins can be removed from the body.

The internal practices of Yoga (dharana, dhyana, and samadhi) or the inner aspect of Yoga are primarily for treating the mind and used in Ayurveda mainly for dealing with psychological disorders. This means that classical Yoga therapy is primarily a psychology employing mantra and meditation. Yoga as applied according to Ayurveda is one of the most powerful approaches for healing the mind and emotions that is available in the world today.

I would like to conclude that, it is necessary to reintegrate yoga and ayurveda in order to bring out the full healing and spiritual potential of each. Bringing ayurveda into yoga provides a yogic and Vedic system of medicine to allow for the full healing application of all aspects of yoga. For a truly holistic and spiritual approach to medicine and healing, we need both Yoga and ayurveda.

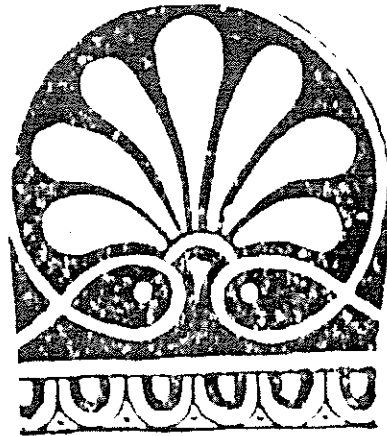
This reconnection of Yoga and Ayurveda will also provide the basis for a real dialogue with modern medicine addressing not only specific therapies but also the real causes of disease and how to maintain health and well-being in society. It can add a spiritual and preventative dimension to modern medicine as well as adding important new keys for the understanding of disease and for applying natural therapies. Both yoga and ayurveda teaches that we should pray or chant daily universal prayers for peace and great healing energy. "May all beings find happiness, may all be free of disease, may all see what is auspicious, and may no one suffer. Aum peace, peace, peace."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु ख्याताः सर्वे भवन्तु निरामयाः। सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद्दुःखमागमयेत्।ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः। David Frawley, 'Yoga and Ayurveda: Self-Healing and Self-realization' Motilal Banarasisdas publishers private ltd, Delhi-110007, ISBN-81-208-1699-4

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