

Review Article

A Glimpse on Ashtanga Yoga in Ayurveda

Dr. Archana I.^{1*}, Dr. Mahesh Vyas², Dr. A.S. Baghel²

¹PhD Scholar, Dept. of Basic Principle, I.P.G.T. & R.A., Gujarat Ayurveda University, Jamnagar.

²Associate Professor, Dept. of Basic Principle, I.P.G.T. & R.A., Gujarat Ayurveda University, Jamnagar.

Corresponding author

Dr. Archana I

Email: drarubhat@gmail.com

Abstract: Ayurveda being the science of life found its base in Shatdarshanas (six orthodox systems of philosophy) for its fundamental aspects. These elementary aspects are very much needed for the applied aspect of Ayurveda. Yoga philosophy being one among the Shatdarshana also influenced Ayurveda in various ways. The Ashtanga Yoga (eight fold practice of Yoga) described in Yoga Sutra of Patanjali is its glimpse in Ayurveda in the form of Sadvrutta, Swasthavrutta, Achara Rasayana, Dinacharya, Dharaneeya Vega and so on.

Keywords: Yoga, Ayurveda, Ashtanga yoga, Chitta

INTRODUCTION

Yoga and Ayurveda are two closely related spiritual or sacred sciences rooted in the Vedic tradition of India. Ayurveda is the Vedic science of healing for both body and mind where as Yoga is the Vedic science of self realization that depends upon a well functioning body and mind. Both disciplines developed together and have always been used together. Both the systems look at entire aspect of human being, not only the physical aspect, but even psychological and spiritual phases. Ayurveda being a Life science mainly stress upon ensuring the Arogya – healthy life in all its dimensions which is considered as essential to attain the four kinds of instincts of life – Dharma (virtuous act), Artha (acquisition of wealth), Kama (gratification of desire) and Moksha (final emancipation) [1]. Yoga on the other hand also aims at achieving the Moksha by the way of controlling the Vruttis of mind [2]. Thus both the systems are practice under the same motto i.e. attainment of Moksha (ultimate salvation).

Ashtanga yoga and Ayurveda

Until and unless, person cannot overcome from the afflictions of Chitta (mind) and not get control over his Buddhi (intellect), he cannot get the Tatva Jnana (knowledge of supremacy) [3]. This is the reason why Yoga Darshana advocates Ashtanga yoga (eight fold path of meditation). They are Yama (abstention), Niyama (observances), Asana (postures), Pranayama (controlling of breath), Prtyahara (control over sense organs), Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation) and Samadhi (absorption) [4]. The first four are considered as external methods of purification and the last three are the internal methods of purification of mind. Pratyahara act as the bridge between both external and internal path ways [5]. Descriptions of the same are present in Ayurveda in various contexts either in the form of Sadvrutta (good conduct), Achara

rasayana (code of conduct), Swasthavrutta (healthy regimen), Dinacharya (daily regimen), Chikitsa sutra (treatment methods) etc. Following is the description of Ashtanga yoga as described in YogaSutra of Patanjali along with the reference of the same in Ayurveda.

Yama

It refers to Samyama or to hold together, restrain, suppress, control. It includes Ahimsa (not harming), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (abstinence from sexual desire) and Aparigraha (no greediness) [6].

Ahimsa

Not to trouble any living creature either physically, mentally and verbally is considered as Ahimsa [7]. In Ayurvedic classics it has been incorporated under Sadvrutta [8] and Achara Rasayana [9]. While describing ten sinful activities of body, speech and mind which are to be avoided Himsa is quoted as one [10]. The reference that, one should treat every living creature even the inferior creatures like ant, insects etc. as his own self without hurting them is also found in Ayurveda [11]. Ahimsa is considered as ultimate factor to impart Prana (life) in all the creatures [12]. Maitri (friendship), Karunyata (compassion) are considered as the qualities of physician to be enriched in [13], the same has been mentioned in Yoga sutra as Chitta prasadaka Vruttis [14].

Satya

Yoga considers Satya as the one which exactly the person has spoken, thought and imagine while talking with others. [15]. Truthfulness is the first factor explained in Achara rasayana.[9]. As a part of code of conduct (Sadvrutta) which has to be followed, it is mentioned that one should not practice untruthfulness [8]. While describing the four fold qualities of patients,

it is depicted that he should tell everything truly without any hesitation, as it is very essential for the physician to get the complete picture of his illness leading to easy and effective treatment [16].

One of the tools of attaining the true knowledge as explained in Ayurveda is Aptopadesha (Testimony) which is based on Apta (authority). It is highlighted that, Aptas are one who tells the truth always and what they tell is worth to believe and practice [17]. Among the various factors which fulfill the criteria of being Hitayu (healthy life) is Satyavadi (telling truth), then only one is considered to be leading a wholesome life [18].

Asteya

Not to steal anything from anyone is considered as Asteya. Practice of this helps in attainment of all the good things in life [19]. Steya (stealing) is considered as one among the Dashavidha papa Karmas [10] and is incorporated under the category of bodily urges which has to be withhold in Ayurveda [20].

Brahmacharya:

Abstinence from sexual urges is considered as Brahmacharya and it helps in increase of potency [21]. Ayurveda gives due consideration to Brahmacharya and thus it has been integrated under Traya Upastambhas (three fold sub pillars of body). It is described that Brahmacharya imparts increase of Strength, complexion and life span [22]. As a part of Achara Rasayana, it is suggested to avoid alcohol and sexual interest [9]. In the context of Agrya (paramount issue) Brahmacharya is considered as Ayushya (one which imparts life span) [23]. Ayurveda quotes excessive intercourse as the main causative factor in the manifestation of various diseases like Gulma [24], Kushta [25] and employs practice of Brahmacharya in many disease conditions [26-27].

Aparigraha

Word meanings of Parigraha are surrounding, or enfold, or envelop [28]. It is considered as Moha/greed. Aparigraha is just opposite to Parigraha meaning to free from this attachments of external pleasures [29]. Dana is considered as a part of Sadvrutta [30]. Regular practice of Dana for needy people is considered as a quality to assess the Hitayu [31].

In this way the factors explained under Yama by Yogasutrakara are found in Ayurveda under the heading of Sadvrutta and Achara Rasayana.

Niyama

The rules and regulations which must be followed are mentioned in Niyama (observance of spiritual rules). They include Shoucha (purity), Santosha (contentment), Tapa (mortification), Swadhyaya (study) and Ishwarapranidhana (devotion to God) [32]. Word Niyama factually means restraint of mind, or any fixed rule or law, or determination [33].

Niyama is included under the Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa meant for the psychological disorders [34]. A wounded person should perform the duties such as Yama, Niyama as a precautionary method to get protected from the bad effects of Nishachara (malignant stars and spirits) [35]. As a part of code of conduct it is strictly recommended that Charakacharya one should not break the Niyamas [36].

Shoucha

Shoucha (purity) refers in terms of both external and internal cleanliness where, cleanliness of body comes under the first category, mind and speech under the second category [37]. In Ayurveda external cleanliness is said to be attained through Lepana (anointment), Snana (bathing), Dantadhavana (tooth brushing), Kavalagraha (gargling), wearing clean and white cloths, removing of nail, hair etc procedures [38]. Purity of speech is attained by the practice of Dharana (holding) of words which are Suchaka (back biting), Anruta (lying), Kalaha (useless quarrels), Apriya (unpleasant utterances), Abaddha (irrelevant talk), Parusha (harsh words), Atimatra (excessive talk), Akalayukta (talking at improper time) etc.[39]. Similarly the purity of mind is attained through Dhi (intellectual capacity), Dhairya (patience), Jnana (knowledge), Atmadi vijnana (knowing one's self), Samadhi (absorption) etc. [40]. Avoiding of Mithyayoga (wrong utilization) of mental factors like Bhaya (fear), Shoka (fear), Krodha (anger), Lobha (greed), Moha (confusion), Maana (vanity), Irshya (envy)etc., also help in attaining psychological purity [39]. Ashuchi (dirty) either external or internal is considered as one of the causative factor for psychological disorders like Unmada [41], Apasmara [42]. The reference regarding Shoucha as one of the best qualities of physician [43], teacher [44] and the student [45] to be endowed, is also found in Ayurveda.

Santosha

Yoga considers, by Sukha (happiness) person feels Santosha [46]. While describing Anumana Pramana (Inference) – a tool to get cognition, it is said that through Santosha one can assess the satisfaction [47].

Tapa

According to Yoga Shastra, by the regular practice of Tapa (austerity), mind, body and sense organs become free from their afflictions [48]. Ayurveda considers Aptas (authority) are said to be free from Rajas and Tamas which they have attained by the regular practice of Tapas. Because of this, their words are considered as authentic [17]. A person who practices Tapa regularly will definitely have Hitayu [49]. Under Achara rasayana it is mentioned that one should do regular practice of Japa, Shoucha, Dana and Tapasya [50].

Swadhyaya

Yoga Shastra refers learning of Moksha Shatra (treatise dealing with Salvation) or chanting, worshipping of divinity, as taught by the Teacher at the initiation of teaching as Swadhyaya [51]. Learning of Ayurveda itself is holistic as it helps in the maintainance of health there by attaining the ultimate goals. The entire Adhyayana vidhi explained by Acharyas refers for Swadhyaya itself which is a part of Dinacharya (daily regimen) [52].

Ishwara Pranidhana:

Devoting oneself completely to the divinity is considered as Ishwara Pranidhana. Yoga sutra suggests that by this all the miseries get eradicate and it will be helpful to perform Yoga sadhana [53]. Practical application of dedication towards God is found in many contexts of Ayurveda like Vishnusahasra Nama is suggested to chant for curing all types of Jwara [54].

Asana

The stable posture which gives comfort is considered as Asana [55]. In Ayurveda particular nomination of Asana along with its Rogadhikara (in the context of disease) is not mentioned as described in Hatha yoga [56], rather we find mentioning some of the postures which are to be avoided to keep the body healthy [57] [58]. We find description of some of the conditions where it is suggested to sit in a stable and relaxed position like while describing the Adhyapana Vidhi (teaching methodology) it is suggested that the disciple should sit in a holly and equally distributed are with comfortable position so that he can concentrate on the subject by controlling his mind from the external activities [59]. Some of the specific postures are considered as the causative factor for disease, for example; Utkataka, Vishama and Kathina Asana (sitting on the heels, and on uneven and hard seats) habitually for long periods is said to be one of the major cause for disease Arshas [60].

Pranayama

Controlling of Shwasa (inhalation of air into body) and Prashwasa (exhaling the air out of body) is considered as Pranayama according to Yoga Shastra [61]. Pranayama as a mean to treat disease by withholding the breath is found in few places of Ayurveda as in the conditions of fainting [62], when the eye ball has gone deep inside [63], when food matter or mucous is directed into the nostrils [64].

Pratyahara

The act in which mind is controlled and withdrawn from the sensory objects is called Pratyahara [65]. Mind is given upmost importance in the practice of Yoga. Ayurveda too acknowledge the significance of Mind in maintainance of health and production of disease [66]. It is considered that the Hina (less), Mithya (wrong) and Ati (excess) utilization of Kala (time), Artha (sense organs and their objects) and Karma (actions) are the cause for all diseases either

physical or psychological on contrary their Samyavastha (balanced utilization) leads to health [67],[68]. The main leading constituent for Asatmya Indriyarthasamyoga (unwholesome contact of sense with their objects) and Prajnaparadha (impairment of mental factors) is the Mind. Mind along with its objects, intellect and Atma (Soul) plays an important role in every aspect of the human being either good or bad deeds [69].

Dhyana, Dharana and Samadhi

The above factors from Yama to Pratyahara are the Bahiranga (external paths) practices of Yoga which help in the psycho – somatic well being of the human being where the Dhyana, Dharana and Samadhi are the processes in sequence to attain complete spirituality which are considered as the Antaranga (internal) paths. All the three are together considered as Samyama [70].

The psychological disorders explained in Ayurveda are treated through these paths. It is considered that Tadvidya seva (render service to the intellectual person well versed in treatment), Jnana (knowledge), Vijnana (comprehension), Dhyana (concentration), Trivarga anvekshana (following the code of conduct related to virtue, wealth and desire) and Samadhi (Absorption) are considered as the way to treat the Manasika Rogas (psychological disorders). The same when get afflicted are considered as the major cause for disease under the heading of Prajnaparadha [71]. Main ground for the beginning of Ayurveda is itself to eradicate various miseries, as they became the obstacle for the performance of Dhyana (concentration), Dharana (meditation) and Samadhi (absorption) in ancient sages which are the keys to attain the four fold goals of life [72]. This is the reason, seers found a remedy called Ayurveda which includes attainment of overall health viz. physical, mental and spiritual [73].

Ayurveda describes Moksha or salvation as an absolute detachment of all contacts by virtue of the absence of Rajas and Tamas in mind and diminution of effects of potent past actions. This is the state after which there is no more material and psychological acquaintances [74]. Ayurveda also stress upon the state of higher achievements of Yoga practices i.e. Samadhi in the name of Satyabhuddhi [75]. Ayurveda defines Yoga as a conduit to attain the ultimate salvation which is nothing but absence of afflictions from Rajas and Tamas leading to complete detachment from the external world [76]. This definition is as like the definition of Yoga in Yoga sutra– “*Yogah Chitta Vrutti Nirodhah*” ||

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The definition of Healthy is considered as the well being of all the factors viz. physical, psychological, social and spiritual in Ayurveda. Physicians of Ayurveda have much emphasized on the

preventive aspect rather on the curative portion. Mind is considered as one of the important aspects both in prevention and manifestation of diseases. Mind itself is the leader which initiates the senses and their objects to perform various activities making them to enjoy various happiness and miseries. Mind again, is the factor which, through its two important characters viz. Rajas and Tamas, encircles the Soul, thus initiating it in worldly pleasures. Both Ayurveda and Yoga agree the role of Manas in disease manifestation and thus strictly suggested to control it. In this way the mottos of both the systems become identical. Yoga employs Ashtanga Yoga, which is the step by step procedure to control the Chitta Vruttis and thus attaining the ultimate happiness. On the other hand, in Ayurveda the same theories of Yoga are found, but are incorporated to fulfill the main objective of Ayurveda viz. Health. Ayurveda suggests, for attainment of ultimate goals of life like Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, Arogya (health) is very necessary. This is the reason; seers of Ayurveda incorporated various rules and regulations, code of conducts, preventive aspects along with the disease and its treatment. The description of Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama and Pratyahara has their own significant in Ayurveda. They are either has been incorporated in Sadvrutta, Achara Rasayana, or under Dinacharya, Swasthavrutta or as Adharaneeya Vegas, or under treatment modalities. They are being explained according to the applied aspects to attain the health. For examples, Asana in Yoga is mainly concerned with specific type of posture to be practiced. But in Ayurveda we will not find quoting of any particular name of Asana rather some specific postures are said to be the cause for various diseases. Prana vayu has been given the upmost importance in Ayurveda since it is the life and is the controller of all the activities in and outside of the body. In the Upanishads there is an aphorism saying that “the head of all the sense organs is the Mana (mind) and the controller of mind is Vayu”. Hence controlling of it is very essential, as its affliction leads to various disease conditions.

In this regard, Ayurveda being the science of life incorporates various concepts Yoga Darshana, especially the ways to attain control over mind. Mind is the most important factor in the manifestation of disease. It is also the leading factor which leads the sense organs and also encircles the soul. Controlling of the same is very essential in attaining the complete health including spiritual well being. Both Ayurveda and Yoga integrate the same motto as their main objective, former mainly for the psycho-somatic well being latter, psycho-spiritual welfare. Both the system there by, aims at attainment of Absoluteness.

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