



## YOGA AND HEALTH WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HATAYOGAPRADIPIKA

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### Introduction

Yoga, one of the six classical *Darśanas* of Indian philosophy, was propounded with the primary objective of overcoming the threefold sufferings (*tritāpa*), namely *ādidāivika*, *ādibhautika*, and *adhyātmika*. Among these, the disturbances arising from the mind are considered the root cause of human suffering. Patanjali, in the *Yoga Sūtras*, defines yoga as *cittavṛttinirodha*, emphasising mastery over the fluctuations of the mind as the means to liberation and well-being. The *Yoga Sūtras* are systematically arranged into four *pādas-Samādhi*, *Sādhana*, *Vibhūti*, and *Kaivalya*- and present the eightfold path (*Aṣṭāṅga Yoga*) comprising *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Āsana*, *Prāṇāyāma*, *Pratyāhāra*, *Dhāraṇā*, *Dhyāna*, and *Samādhi*.

Among the major streams of yoga practice, *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga* and *Haṭha Yoga* evolved as prominent schools, both emphasising disciplined living, physical purity, control of bodily and mental activities, and ultimately mental equilibrium. *Haṭha Yoga*, as expounded by Ādinātha and systematically compiled by Svātmārāma in the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*, places special importance on *āsana*, *ṣaṭkarma*, *prāṇāyāma*, *mudrā*, and *bandha* as preparatory steps for higher yogic realisation.

Ayurveda, particularly through authoritative texts such as *Caraka Saṃhitā* and *Aṣṭāṅga Hr̥daya*, accords equal importance to the interdependence of body and mind, describing them as being in an *ādhāra-ādheya* relationship. Mental factors such as *rāga*, *dveṣa*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada*, and *mātsarya* are recognised as causative factors for both psychological and somatic disorders. Concepts like *satvṛtta*, *dinacaryā*, proper diet (*āhāra*), regulation of digestive fire (*agni*), and balance of *doṣas* and *guṇas* reflect a holistic health framework that closely parallels yogic principles.

In this context, the present paper attempts to examine yoga and health with special reference to the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*, correlating its yogic practices—particularly *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, and dietary regulations—with classical Ayurvedic concepts. The study highlights yoga as a comprehensive discipline aimed not merely at physical fitness but at integrated physical, mental, and spiritual health.

### The eight parts/steps of yoga and health

Yoga, one of the six Darsanas in Sanskrit literature, was written to overcome the three-fold sorrows called *ādidāivika*, *ādibhautika*, and *adhyātmika*. Considering the mind and its activities as the prime factor responsible for all types of sorrows, Patanjali explains the benefit of the Darsana is to get well control over the activities of the mind (*yogaścittavṛttinirodha*):<sup>1</sup>. Patanjali Yogasutra consists of four padas named Samadhipada, Sadhanapada, Vibhutipada and Kaivalyapada. Yoga Darsana gives importance to Pranayama, Dhyana, Dharana and Samadhi: among the eight-fold divisions of yoga, Yama Niyama Asana Pranayama Pratyahara Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi. Ashtanga Yoga and Hatha Yoga are the two schools of yoga that came into existence. Both follow the eightfold division of yoga and give importance to the body and mind, though a disciplined lifestyle with the support of yama and niyama, physical exercises with the support of Asanas, holding or controlling of mental activities through Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi. Ayurveda Ashtangahridaya starts with the sloka *rāgādirogan satatānuṣaktān...* giving more importance to mind and the emotions like raga dvesha lobha moha mada and matsarya and related disorders like Anxiety Delusion and Detachment. Arunadatta says that the body and mind are in Adhara-Adheyabandha. So, any disorder in the mind can affect the body, and any disorder in the body can affect the mind, like the famous quotation, a healthy body is the seat of a healthy mind, and a healthy mind constitutes a healthy



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## Yama:

Nonviolence, Speaking Truth, no stealing, Celibacy, Forgiveness, Endurance, Compassion, Meekness, Habit of taking the Required Food and Cleanliness are the Yamas enlisted in Hatha yoga. In Ayurveda, ten Ninditakarmas are mentioned (AH-S 2/21-22). Among them, a few like Violence, Stealing, Speaking Harsh Words, and Telling Lies are the Yamas mentioned in Hata yoga. It is also mentioned that one should take the required food only after proper digestion of the previous meal in Ayurveda. Caraka mentions Brahmacharya as a satvrita to maintain and get good health.

## Niyama:

Discipline Contentment, Belief in God, Charity, Serving God, Hearing Discourses on The Principles of Ultimate Reality, Shame, Intellect, Chanting the Names of The Gods and Performing Sacrifices. Caraka Acharya in Caraka Samhita mentions four types of Ayu. They are Hitayu, Ahitayu, Sukhayu and Dukhayu (CS-vi). While describing Hitayu, he mentions the one who is a well-wisher of all beings, abstains from taking others' wealth, observes the three purusharthas without conflicting one another, worships respectful people and gods, engages in charity, penance, knowledge and peace and controls over attachment, aversion, envy, intoxication and conceit can enjoy the Hitayu.

## Yoga Asanas and physical exercise:

Among the eight parts of yoga. Asana is the part related to physical fitness. There are various asanas which are helpful to maintain good health and cure diseases, they can improve muscular strength and endurance, cardio fitness and flexibility. utkaṭāsana engages the whole body, including the quadriceps, hamstrings, calves, core, back and shoulders. The mālāsana is a deep squat that strengthens the back and thigh muscles. bhujāṅgāsana strengthens the back muscles by lying on the stomach and lifting the chest. tāḍāsana stretches the chest, arms, spine, legs and abdominal muscles. Muscle strength is the main sign of good health. The very important advantage of yoga asanas is that it strengthens the muscles and keep them flexible too.

## Ayurveda and exercise:

Ayurveda includes physical exercise in the daily regimens (dinacaryā) the daily resumes where they say the benefits of physical strength are lightness of the body, ability to do the activities tirelessly and comfortably, improvement of the digestive fire, reduction of the fat and well-proportioned physical structure. The main benefit is improving the digestive fire (AH-S-2/10). The main cause of the diseases is an imbalance in digestive fire. The proper functioning of the three doshas in Ayurveda is because of the proper digestive fire, and the balance in the digestion is the first symptom to infer the balance of the three doshas. All the channels in the body are placed in the māṃsadhātu like the lotus thread in the pond (SS-SR-3/16). So, the proper stability of the muscles is important for the proper functioning of the channels.

The Asanas in yoga are mainly for improving muscle strength and flexibility so that the channels, including the Manovahasrotas, stay healthy anatomically and functionally.

Hatha yoga is a school of thought that is believed to be expounded by Adinatha, and the Hatayogapradeepika is a description of Hatha yoga written by Swatmaramayogi who was a disciple of Sreenatha. There are so many yogis' names mentioned in the first chapter, Hatayogapradeepika, who are well versed in Hata yoga. It is said that the siddhas are capable of breaking the sceptre of death. The characteristics of the hut for the practice of Hata yoga are mentioned. Overeating, exertion, overtalkativeness, not adhering to the disciplined way of life, company of bad people, and unsteadiness are mentioned as the destructive causes. Courage, daring perseverance, discriminative knowledge, faith and aloofness from bad company are said to be the factors that bring success. Ashtanga Hridaya in Satvritta, all these are mentioned, and well-controlled intellect, courage and self-realisation, etc., are mentioned as the medicines for the mental doshas.



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The asanas are considered the primary accessory of Hatha yoga. matsyāsana increases the digestive fire and is capable of destroying very severe diseases caused by poor digestion (HP-1/28-29). This may be because the stretching of abdominal muscles helps to open the gastrointestinal tract and remove the bloating. Here, the author says that the practice awakens the kundalini, giving stability in the quality of the moon in man. Generally, in Ayurveda, the term Chandra or soma is used for śīta:. Snigdha is the prime factor for the proper growth and stability of the body. Pascimatana asana carries the air from the front to the back of the body. It kindles the digestive fire, reduces fat in the stomach, and makes the man diseaseless(HP-1/31). mayūrasana is the asana that kindles the digestive fire and helps to digest the powerful toxins formed in the stomach, and it can digest the poison called kālakūṭam viṣam(HP-1/33). The term viṣam in Ayurveda is generally related to the toxins and the nature of the food, which is prepared substances, which are not to be mixed together. The author says that the performance of this asana is capable of digesting kadaśanabhuktam. It can balance the doshas.

It also cures diseases like gulama: udara: etc. śavāsana can remove fatigue and provide rest for mental activities. Padmasana is a remover of diseases (HP-1/34). The siddhāsana is said to be the best among the 84 asanas, like the eating habit of taking only required food among the Yamas, and nonviolence among the Niyamas. This asana is capable of cleansing 14000 nadis in the body (HP-1/41).

The Asanas in yoga are capable of giving strength and flexibility to muscles, as there are various types of stretching of muscles during the posture. It also increases digestive fire. This improves the digestion of the food and conversion of the vital elements(dhatu). The strength and flexibility of the muscles support the anatomical and functional stability of the channels(srotas). In Ayurveda, obstruction of the channels is said to be the disease. Even this is because of the imbalanced digestive fire. The Asanas in yoga improve the digestive fire and avoid the obstruction in the channels.

### Food and its qualities in yoga:

The Mitahara is defined as the food that satisfies  $\frac{3}{4}$  of hunger with food well-cooked with unctuous dravyas and madhurarasa(HP-1/60). The healthy food includes wheat red grains, shashthika grains, milk, ghee butter, candy, honey, dry ginger patola, the five major harmless vegetables like green gram and divine water (HP-1/65). The food should be rich with nourishing factors, madhurarasa, unctuous substances, pleasing to the mind and providing proper development of the vital elements called dhatu.

The food which is heated again, dry, excessively salted and sour, low-grade grains and leaves are rejected and contraindicated.

Ayurveda divides food into two categories, dravadravya and dravya. Among the Dravya Vargas, Toyavarga is placed in the beginning itself. jīvanam, tarpaṇam hṛdyam, hlādi, buddhiprabodhanam, mṛṣtam, śītam, laghu and amṛtopamam(AH-S-5/1-2). Here, gaṅgāmbu is told as the water which is originated from the sky and is purified by the rays of the sun, the moon, and the wind. That is nothing but the divyam toyam mentioned yoga. Next is kṣīravarga: there also, the milk of the cow is considered the best. All the byproducts of milk are good for health. It is ojasyam and dhātuvardhanam(AH-S-5/20-21). Then they enlist the remaining liquid substances. Among the grains, etc., śālī: that is, red rice is very good (AH-S-6/5). Among the pulses, the mudga is said to be pathya. In the Sakavarga Patola, is enlisted the first. It is also svadu pakam. It is clearly instructed that dry foods should be avoided. Then all the other food substances are listed. It is also told that odano viṣam sandro yadatyāvisrāvayatamiva(AH-S-7/3). Another beautiful chapter on food is mātrāśītīyam. It is very clearly said that if the food is heavy or less than the required quantity, then the dosha that gets vitiated is vata(AH-S-8/3). They mention another term, viruddhānam. It is also like poison only. The consumption of ahara and vihara should be based on the ṛtu prakṛti agnibalaṃ kala: etc in ayurveda. The six tastes should be consumed considering all individual and seasonal factors. Intake of a single taste is said to be harmful.



## pranayama:

The prāṇāyāma: should be performed only after the yogi becomes physically strong by the practice of asanas. athāsane ḍṛdhe yogī vaśī hitamitāśana: prāṇāyāmān samabhyaset. cale vāte calaṃ cittam niścale niścalam..... here it is clear that after becoming physically fir with the Asanas one should try to do pranayama for the mental equilibrium. malākulasu māruto naiva madhyaga: here the madhyga is considered as the sushumna and as well movement in madhyavega(HP-2/4). sarvadharmeṣu madhyamām is a very famous quote in ayurveda. Kumbhakas should be performed gradually four times during the day and night. Morning, noon, evening, and midnight as per Hatha yoga. It should be practiced 80 times each of these four times. (HP\_2/11). The lakṣaṇam told here for three different stages while performing the pranayama. In the beginning there will be sweat, in the middle stage, there will be quivering, and at the end, the breath will be made steady and motionless (HP-2/12). One should take ghee in the first stage when the pranayama is begun. There the author says

**prāṇāyāmayuktena sarvarogakṣayo bhavet |**

**ayuktābhyāsayogena sarvarogasamudbhava: || (HP-2/16)**

This is very very important instruction when one practices the pranayama as per Hatha yoga, if it is not done properly, hiccups, breathing disorders, cough pain in the head, ear, etc. will happen because of the increased vata. dhauti: basti: neti: trāṭakam naulikam and kapāla bhāti are said to be the ṣaṭkarma in Hata yoga. Practice of dhauti cures coughing, breathing disorders, enlargement of the spleen, skin disorders, and the diseases caused by kapha. (HP-2/25). Basti cures gala plīhā udaram and many of the diseases caused by all three doshas. It also provides the pleasantness of the dhatu senses, mind, lusture to the skin and completely removes the doṣacaya (HP-2/27-28). Especially jalabasti: neti: is the cleaner of the brain and good eyesight, etc. trāṭakam removes eye diseases and tandrā of the senses. Naulikam increases the digestive fire, etc. If a person performs the ṣaṭkarma, he will be free from all the diseases caused by kapha. Then he can perform the pranayama comfortably. prāṇāyāmenaiva sarve praśuṣyanti malā: iti is a line in Hata yoga. brahmādayo'pi tridaśā: pavanābhyāsatatparā: is beautiful in Hata yoga signifies the importance of pranayama. mārute madhyasañcāre manasthairyam prajāyate. There are many Kumbakas mentioned afterwards with a lot of benefits including curing various diseases. He says there is nothing injurious for the practice of mudra, which is capable of removing the toxins formed in our body because of the wrong food patterns and use of the dravya. After this, various bandha are explained like uḍḍyānabandha mūla bandha: etc. He mentions the increase of digestive fire is the foremost benefit, there are many stages explained like arambhāvasthā ghatāvasthā etc.

Caraka acharya says in vātakalākaliyam chapter that vayustatantrayantradhara: pravarttakaśceṣṭānām uccāvacānām niyantā praṇetā ca manasa: ,,.,.,.,.(CS-S-12 /1) Vayu is the powerful mahabhuta dhatu and dosha, or maintains the body and actions inside the body and outside the body. The important quality of vayu is said to be cala in Ayurveda. As Ayurveda accepts vayu as a pañcabhūtātma. Many of the diseases, the mental emotions are enlisted as the causative factor of the diseases. It is not only in the nidānā of mental disease but also physical diseases, the body and mind relation is like ādhāra and ādheya Thus, any defect in the mind can affect the body and any defect in the body can affect the mind. Almost all the daily regiments, seasonal regiments, and satvritta give more importance to the three instruments of knowledge like mind, intellect, and soul. That is why the definition of a healthy man is including the prasannātmedriyamanā: There are many references in chandokhyopanishad supporting the relation between the mind and food. Bhagawadgeeta defines three types of food satvika rājasika and tāmasika. Ayurveda accepts the triguṇā: in the darśanāni. But it does not say satvam as dosha, but rajas and tamas are considered as doshas. The balance activities of the three doshas and three gunas of the mind is the condition where satvaguna is predominant in the mind. Rajas is generally influenced by the calaguna of the vayu and tamasika guna is the inactive state of the kaphaguna. Pittam generally joins with vata and creates vata more cala in its imbalanced conditions. So, Rajas is the mental dosha where Vata and Pittam act. rajastamasca manaso dvau ca doṣāvudāhrudau| dheedhairyātmadivijñānaṃ mano doṣauśadham param. Another important factors in Ayurveda are dhī dhṛti and smṛti. The impairment of these three is responsible for diseases in life according to Ayurveda.



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## pratyāhāra:

pratyāhāra: is drawing within one's awareness. It is a process of retracting the sensory experiences from their objects. It is a step of self-extraction and abstraction. This empowers one to stop being controlled by the external world, to fetch one's attention on seeking self-knowledge and experiencing the freedom innate in one's inner world.

## dhāraṇā:

dhāraṇā is holding one's mind into a particular inner state, subject or topic of one's mind. The mind is fixed on a mantra, an object, on a place without jumping from one to another. This is termed as dhṛti: in Ayurveda. Impairment of this may lead to

## dhyānā:

dhyānā is integrally related to dhāraṇā. One leads to another. dhāraṇā is a state of the mind, whereas dhyānā is the process of the mind. Patanjali defines contemplation as the mind process where the mind is fixed on something and then there is a course of uniform modification of knowledge. Adī Shankara in his commentary on the yogasutra distinguishes dhyana and dharana by explaining dhyana as the yoga state where there is a stream of continuous thought about the object uninterrupted by other thoughts of a different kind of the same object. Dharana is focused on one object but aware of its many aspects and ideas.

## samādhi:

samādhi: is an equilibrium state of mind and the objects. It's of two types, samprajñāta and asamprajñāta. The first is with the support of an object of meditation, and the second one is without the support of meditation.

The Patanjali Yogasutras are considered to be the source for the Ashtangayoga in the present form, where all the eight parts or steps are utilized for achieving the union of jivatma and paramatma, or body and mind, or realization of oneness of all for removing all the three types of dukhas or sufferings. Yoga is not simply a physical exercise or mental exercise but a wholesome approach for maintaining the health of the body and mind to live a happy life both worldly as well as spiritually. In Ayurveda, the types of physical or mental exercises are mentioned because Yoga as a Darsana and a practice was very well known to the public at that time. So it is understood that Ashtanga Yoga was utilized by the people. In the present society also, it is preferred because of its wholesome approach for good physical and mental health. It is very important that all the eight parts should be taken into consideration when we practice yoga. We should never reduce asanas value as only physical exercise and pranayama as an exercise for mental equilibrium. They may help but one must give equal importance to all the eight parts.

## Conclusion

Yoga, as presented in both the *Yoga Darśana* and *Haṭha Yoga* tradition, emerges as a complete system for the maintenance of physical and mental health. The *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* clearly emphasises that yogic success depends upon disciplined living, moderation in food (*mitāhāra*), regulation of bodily functions, and gradual purification through *śaṭkarma*, *āsana*, and *prāṇāyāma*. These practices strengthen the body, kindle the digestive fire, purify the *nāḍīs*, and stabilise the mind, thereby preparing the practitioner for higher states of yoga.

Ayurveda substantiates these principles by recognising digestive fire (*agni*) as the cornerstone of health and obstruction of channels (*srotorodha*) as the root of disease. The strengthening and flexibility of muscles achieved through yogic *āsanas* support the anatomical and functional integrity of the *srotas*, including *manovaha srotas*. Dietary guidelines of yoga, especially *mitāhāra*, closely align with Ayurvedic dietary principles concerning wholesome food, appropriate quantity, avoidance of incompatible foods (*viruddhāhāra*), and seasonal and individual considerations.



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Further, the practices of *prāṇāyāma* and higher limbs such as *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi* play a crucial role in regulating *vāta*, calming the mind, and restoring balance among mental *doṣas*—*rajas* and *tamas*. Ayurveda also recognises *dhī*, *dhṛti*, and *smṛti* as vital faculties for health, whose impairment leads to disease, thereby reinforcing the yogic emphasis on mental discipline.

Thus, yoga should not be reduced merely to physical postures or breathing exercises. Its eightfold path represents a holistic approach that integrates ethical conduct, disciplined lifestyle, physical conditioning, mental purification, and spiritual realisation. The relevance of this comprehensive framework remains significant in the present era, where lifestyle disorders and psychosomatic illnesses are prevalent. Proper understanding and practice of all the eight limbs of yoga, as described in the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* and corroborated by Ayurvedic principles, can contribute profoundly to sustained physical health, mental balance, and overall well-being.

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