



Two Complete Healing Sciences: Ayurveda and Yoga

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“Health is...
A disease-free body,
A quiver-free breath,
A Stress-free Mind,
An Inhibition-free Intellect,
An Obsession-free Memory,
An Ego that includes all,
And... a Soul which is free from sorrow.” ~Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

Health is the very nature of life. It denotes vibrancy and enthusiasm. It is the optimum life force. Real health is when your consciousness is alert, intellect is sharp, energy is high and there is a willingness to learn more and more. If you are physically fit but mentally lethargic or depressed, there is no health. The harmony between the rhythms of body, breath, intellect and memory is health. If you look at it this way then health assumes a different dimension. Health is not just lack of illness. If you are sick then the term health means lack of illness. ~Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

World Health Organization’s Perspective:

Health is universally acknowledged to be more than simply the absence of disease or infirmity. **The World Health Organization Constitution defines health to be state of complete mental, physical and social well-being.**

Introduction to the Two Holistic Healing Sciences – Ayurveda and Yoga:

The beginning of the 21st century marks the importance of holistic health like never before. It has seen the intensification of global crises impacting personal to global wellness, and a search for its long lasting solutions. Today the world is looking for alternative hypothesis and practices for leading a healthy life after this outburst of unsustainability in the modern systems of education, medicine, agriculture etc., one can name it. The psycho-somatic dimensions of most of ailments are now well proven. The modern era is of life-style disorders which requires

solutions in terms of leading a healthy and holistic life. Any system which is limited only to physical aspects will not lead to sustainable outcome. The modern medicine has its own importance but it is inadequate till it is not interwoven with the ancient healing methods which are wholesome and all inclusive. Ayurveda and Yoga are two sister sciences of the same great Vedic knowledge that address such problems and also has methods to tackle the existing crisis. It is important to understand the respective roles of Ayurveda and Yoga in the Vedic system. Yoga and Ayurveda are not two separate entities as perceived but are well connected ancient healing disciplines of India. Each has its unique place and function, and each overlaps in a space that could embrace each other yet they have their own identity. Once a yoga teacher asked an ayurvedic doctor about the relationship between yoga and Ayurveda, the doctor said, “Ayurveda is the science and yoga is the practice of the science.” As per classical Vedic study, Ayurveda is the Vedic system developed specifically for healing purposes. Yoga is the Vedic system of spiritual practices. *All Vedic spiritual practice involves some form of Yoga practice.*

Ayurveda which translates as "knowledge of life," dates back 5,000 years to the ancient Sanskrit texts, the Vedas. It's a system of healing that examines physical constitution, mental disposition, and spiritual outlook in the context of the whole existence. The term “Yoga” itself means to unite, combine, harmonize or integrate. A truly yogic approach is inherently an integrative approach in harmonizing the five dimensions of this human entity namely, body, breath (prana), senses, mind and consciousness. It cannot be limited to just physical level be it therapeutic applications or just the feeling of living. A true yogic approach comprises of the blend of all the above mentioned dimensions and aspects of healing. That is why classical Yoga has an eightfold approach comprising of life-style practices and values: 1. Yama (ethical and moral codes), 2. Niyama (respect for the self), 3. Asana (physical postures), 4. Pranayama (breathing techniques), 5. Pratyahara (relieving from

sensory attachments), 6. Dharana (concentration) 7. Dhyana (meditation), and 8. Samadhi (ultimate bliss and self-realization). It is when we practice these 8 limbs of yoga together that we derive its whole benefit for self-transformation. If we limit Yoga practice to asana or physical postures alone, it is not complete and we might still be having the tendencies of focusing on the outer material reality and losing track on the inner reality of prana, mind and consciousness. It will be similar to playing on the shore of the vastly deep ocean. Though Ayurveda and Yoga are complete sciences by themselves, yet it is important to integrate both in order to bring out the full healing benefits and spiritual potential of each. When practiced together, they can provide way of living and a complete model of preventive health. Bringing Ayurveda provides an accurate holistic diagnosis, herbal treatment, dietary and life style recommendations that complement well with the spiritual approach of Yoga. Bringing Yoga into Ayurveda adds a spiritual and psychological dimension to Ayurvedic treatment, without which Ayurveda may remain limited to a physical model.

Combining Ayurveda and Yoga offers a complete system of well-being for body, mind and consciousness, which perhaps

has no parallel anywhere else in the world. It can become the prime force of universal healing that is so much needed today. It can add a spiritual and preventative aspect to modern medicine as well as deeper dimensions for the understanding of disease and for practicing natural therapies that can be extremely cost effective and long lasting in contrast to high tech commercialized modern medicine.

I welcome the initiative of AAPNA (Association of Ayurvedic Professionals of North America) to standardize and popularize these healing sciences in the USA by organizing many conferences round the year. Their international conference held on the long weekend of 4-6 July at the Art of Living Retreat Center, Boone, NC - "Ayurveda and Yoga for Optimum Health" provided a wonderful platform to understand health with a greater vision and role of Ayurveda and Yoga in healthy living with many eminent and pioneering personalities of the world.

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