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"YOGA DARSHANA AND AYURVEDA: SHARED PRINCIPLES OF MANAS, AHARA AND ACHARA"

Ananya Iyer[1]

AFFILIATIONS:
1. Ira Consultancy & Research Organisation, Bhosari, Pune, Maharashtra 411026

CORRESPONDENCE:
Ananya Iyer

EMAILID:
ananya.iyer25@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Background: Yoga and Ayurveda are described as sister sciences. Both give a central place to the mind and to conduct, yet their relationship is usually discussed in general terms and not on the basis of the classical texts. **Objective:** To review the concepts of manas (mind), chitta, ahara (diet) and achara (conduct) in the Yoga Sutras and the Ayurvedic Samhitas, and to identify points of agreement and difference. **Methods:** The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, the Charaka Samhita, the Sushruta Samhita and the Ashtanga Hridaya were read in translation. PubMed was searched in November 2026 for reviews on manas, Yoga Darshana and Ayurveda. **Results:** Both traditions treat the mind as the instrument of knowledge and the site of suffering, and both attribute mental health to the balance of the gunas. Yoga emphasises restraint of mental fluctuations through practice, while Ayurveda emphasises regulation of ahara, vihara and sadvritta, with sattvavajaya and daivavyapashraya chikitsa for the mind. **Conclusion:** Yoga and Ayurveda share a theory of mind and conduct but differ in aim and method. Their complementarity is best described through exact textual comparison.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Yoga Darshana, Manas, Chitta, Ahara, Achara, Sadvritta, Sattvavajaya

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INTRODUCTION

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras define yoga as the stilling of the fluctuations of the mind (YS 1.2)[1]. The Sushruta Samhita defines health as a balanced state of the doshas, agni, dhatus and malas together with the well-being of the senses, mind and self, and it assigns to the mind a place beside the body as a seat of disease and health (Su. Su. 15/41)[2,3]. The shared interest in the mind has led to frequent claims about the unity of Yoga and Ayurveda. A closer reading shows overlaps and also specific differences, which this article sets out.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Yoga Sutras were read in the commentary of Taimni[1], and the Samhitas in standard translations[2-4]. Secondary sources on the history and philosophy of the two traditions were consulted[5,6]. PubMed was searched in November 2026 with the terms Ayurveda, Yoga, manas and mind. Three indexed reviews relevant to the subject were identified: one on manas tattva in Yoga Darshana[7], one on the concept of mind and brain in Ayurveda and the darshanas[8], and a broader review of Ayurveda in preventive, metabolic and mind-body medicine[9].

OBSERVATION AND RESULTS

1. The mind in Yoga

In the Yoga Sutras, the mind is called chitta, and its fluctuations (vritti) are of five kinds: pramana, viparyaya, vikalpa, nidra and smriti (YS 1.6). The disturbances that scatter the mind are listed as disease, mental dullness, doubt, carelessness, laziness, sensual craving, false perception, failure to reach a stage and instability in it (YS 1.30)[1]. Control comes through practice (abhyasa) and non-attachment (vairagya), supported by the eight limbs: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. The review by Amin and colleagues finds that Yoga Darshana accepts the importance of the mind in perception and in the process of birth, and that the Ayurvedic Samhitas share this view[7].

2. The mind in Ayurveda

In the Samhitas, manas is the sense-organ beyond the senses, the eleventh indriya, which is both a sense and an action organ and which has the qualities of atomicity and unity (Ch. Sha. 1)[2]. Its objects are chintya, vicharya, uhya, dhyeya and sankalpya, and its functions are control of the senses, self-restraint, hypothesis and reflection (Ch. Su. 8/4)[2]. Its disorders are traced to rajas and tamas, while sattva is the quality that maintains health. The review by Adluri also notes that Ayurveda describes the structure, location and function of the mind in relation to prana and the tridosha, and groups people by types of sattva[8].

3. Ahara and the mind

Both traditions connect food with mental state. In Yoga literature the sattvic diet is held to support clarity. In Ayurveda, ahara is one of the three pillars of life and the cause of the body's growth and of the quality of the mind (Ch. Su. 11/35; Ch. Su. 27)[2]. The Samhita states that food nourishes not only the dhatus but also the manas, and that a correct diet in quantity, quality and timing helps to preserve sattva. The Ashtanga Hridaya extends this to the daily and seasonal regimens, setting out what should be eaten and avoided (A.H. Su. 2-3, 8)[4].

4. Achara, sadvritta and the ethical code

The Yamas and Niyamas of Yoga find their Ayurvedic counterpart in sadvritta and achara rasayana. These include truthfulness, non-injury, cleanliness, generosity, respect for teachers, moderation in speech and avoidance of excess in food, sleep and sexual activity (Ch. Su. 8/17-29; A.H. Su. 2)[2,4]. In both systems, conduct is not a matter of social convention alone but part of the preservation of health. The Samhita also states that mental health depends on the avoidance of the three kinds of misuse: asatmendriyartha samyoga, pragyaparadha and parinama (Ch. Su. 11/42)[2].

5. Treatment of mental disorders

Ayurveda lists three forms of treatment: daivavyapashraya (spiritual), yuktivyapashraya (rational, with drugs and diet) and sattvavajaya (psychological) (Ch. Su. 11/54)[2]. Sattvavajaya aims to restrain the mind from harmful objects, and it includes counselling, reassurance, and practices of meditation and breath control that are close to Yoga. The Yoga Sutras provide a detailed technique for this restraint. A review of Ayurveda in mind-body medicine suggests that mood and sleep regulation are among the areas where Ayurvedic and yogic practices have been proposed as adjuncts to care, while stressing that the quality of evidence is uneven[9].

DISCUSSION

Yoga and Ayurveda agree on the primacy of the mind, on the role of the gunas, and on the role of diet and conduct. They differ in aim. Yoga treats the mind chiefly as an instrument to be disciplined for liberation, and health is a means. Ayurveda treats health as a value in its own right and views liberation as an additional goal. In method, Yoga relies on practice and renunciation, while Ayurveda draws on drugs, diet, procedures and counselling. For research, this means that a trial of a yogic practice is not a trial of Ayurveda, and a combined intervention should specify which components belong to which tradition. It also means that any claims about shared mechanisms need to be tested rather than assumed.

CONCLUSION

Yoga and Ayurveda share a theory of mind, conduct and diet, but each has its own aims and methods. Their relation is best understood by comparing exact textual positions. Such comparison can support carefully designed integrative studies of mental health and sleep.

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