

80 - THE YOGA – AYURVEDA CONNECTION

- In the Western culture Yoga practice is associated mainly with a variety of courses, **excursuses for strengthening and tightening of the body**. In almost every city, there are at least several yoga centers that offer different type of yoga classes and everyone is free to choose the type of yoga that brings him the most pleasure.
- **The Ayurveda medicine** became popular in our latitudes 20 years ago, as many people associate this Vedic holistic system with the prevention and treatment of various diseases through natural healing.
- **At first glance, it seems that between Yoga and Ayurveda there is no connection, right?**
- One of the systems is a healing system that focuses primarily on the **health**, while the other one is an Indian system for **physical excursuses to improve tone and stress reduction**.
- If you think this way, soon you will be very surprised when you find out that...
- **Yoga and Ayurveda** are two closely related aspects of the **Vedic science** – the ancient Indian philosophy of consciousness. Both ancient systems come from the same culture, have the same historical origin, they develop and improve together. Furthermore, they share the same philosophy, language and methodology.
- It is difficult to define the exact time of their formation, but if we consider the first data available for them (the monograph the „**Yoga Sutras**” of Patanjali it is around 500 BC, as the first Ayurveda treatises date from 700 to 150 BC), so we can say that both Indian systems occur at approximately the same time.
- **Ayurveda**
- Ayurveda is an **ancient Indian medicine**, the philosophy of which is based on a comprehensive study of the man's individuality, his characteristics and connection with the entire world.



- The name of the **Vedic holistic medicine** comes from Sanskrit and means „**science of life**” or „**the art of longevity**”. According to Ayurveda, man is a unique creature, integral in its essence, of the Universe. All that is inside a person exists also in the microcosm around him.
- As a science of life, Ayurveda is not just a medical system that treats diseases, but it is a science of the right way of life aimed at achieving optimal health, longevity and youth. This holistic system helps us heal, leads us on the path to self-realization, makes us unlock our vital energy. In Ayurveda the health, mind and spirituality have to go along and develop together. Because it is not enough just to be alive, you have to have higher goals and aspirations that will make your life meaningful and valuable. Ayurveda defines wellbeing as **harmony of the body, mind and higher Self**. And exactly this drive to the Self connects this science to Yoga.
- **Yoga.** **Yoga** relates to our consciousness as our main center. This is a science, the main goal of which is man to reach pure consciousness, internal harmony and bliss. The term „yoga” also comes from sanskrit and means „**union**”, „**unity**”. Yoga is not only a path from the physical to the spiritual, but it is a union between the individual and universal consciousness. It **balances the mind and body** by gradually allowing the person to rediscover his full potential at all levels – psychological, physical and spiritual.
- **What is the connection between Yoga and Ayurveda?**
- *The basis of Yoga is Ayurveda, and the fruit of Ayurveda is Yoga.*
- According to the legends, the knowledge of the two systems was given by the Gods to the ancient Indian sages, and then passed on to the people. Both traditions are unique due to their harmony and honesty, greatness and beauty of the ideas that have no analogue in any other culture. The goal of Yoga, as well of Ayurveda is to help the man and to take care of his wellbeing. We can call **Ayurveda „yogic medicine”**, because it follows a yogic approach to healing. The yoga system, as a science of self-realization, is the ultimate goal of Ayurveda as a science of life.
- In Ancient India these two aspects of the Vedic science don't exist separately. Yoga was taught only after the student has understood [the essence of Ayurveda](#). Because only after the development of the physical component can be achieved health, and when the person is healthy, he can achieve emotional perfection and spirituality.
- Ayurveda provides the basis for the health and wellbeing of the body and mind by recommending the right **diet, herbs, exercises, massages and lifestyle**. Yoga, on its part, teaches us how to develop higher consciousness through various methods, **asanas, pranayama and meditation**.
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- Man is not only a physical body or a set of biochemical processes. He is a complex of physical part, soul and mind, in which Ego is embodied. That is why our real potential is not only physical, but psychological, emotional, spiritual. We need realization at all these levels.
- While the physical body is the foundation, the spirituality – the ultimate goal, the mind is the main tool for development. We need a healthy system that affects the human nature in a complex way. Yoga and Ayurveda are connected not only by a common cultural and historical background, but together they form the overall understanding of health and achievement of self – awareness of human being. Ayurveda, by identifying the **constitution (prakriti)** of an individual, allows the choice of the right yoga practices for him: asanas, meditation, [cleansing techniques](#), as well harmonization of the yoga practice according to personal biorhythms and to **the circadian and seasonal cycles**. The Yoga practice shows us the way to cleanse the spirit and spiritual self-realization. Briefly said, one system can't function without the other one, because they are the two sides of the same coin. Each one of these two healing Indian disciplines has its own unique place and function, but each one of them overlaps with the other at different levels.
- **Two healing practices, one main goal**
- **Similarities:**
- Both Yoga and [Ayurveda practices](#) recognize that maintaining a healthy body is vital for the implementation of the four main goals in each person's life: **Dharma, Arta, Kama and Moksha**.
- Both sciences believe that the [balance of the three Doshas](#) is of great importance in order to maintain good health.
- In the yogic, as well in the Ayurveda systems, a balanced eating regime has to be followed, and the use of [Ayurveda herbs](#), doing meditation, pranayama, asanas, mantras and practices that heal the body, mind and spirit are encouraged.
- According to Yoga and Ayurveda, good health is the basis of the psychological, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.
- Both practices use methods to cleanse the body that stimulate the natural detoxification of the organism, following natural routes of expulsion. In Ayurveda **Panchakarma procedure** (5 cleansing actions) is applied, in Yoga the procedure is called **Shat Karma** (six actions).
- Both systems have almost the same anatomy and physiology, which consists of 72 000 fine channels (Nadi), seven main energy centers (chakras), five body shells and Kundalini Shakti (energy).
- Both practices have 8 branches: **Ashtanga Yoga and Ashtanga Ayurveda** and they adopted the theory of **Panchamahabhuta** – the five basic elements (Air, Earth, Ether, Water, Fire).

- **Differences between the Yogic and Ayurvedic approach**
- Despite the existing similarities, there are some minor differences between the two sciences.
- Ayurveda provides balance of body and mind, using all that nature can give us – **plants, stones, fragrances, water, air.**
- Yoga helps the **harmonization of the consciousness and the physical body** using special techniques such as asanas, breathing practices (pranayama), meditation, prayers pronouncing certain sounds. If we want to be more specific, we can say that Ayurveda is more medical, while Yoga is more spiritual practice aimed at liberation from the suffering. Despite these little differences in the approaches, Yoga and Ayurveda have one ultimate goal and both lead to one: man reaching a higher level of self-awareness and improving his health.
- **Yoga, Ayurveda and Prana**
- Prana connects the body and the mind. It also connects Ayurveda (which, as it was already described, is more concerned with the body) and Yoga (which deals more with the mind). Prana or „**the power of life**” is a manifestation of the divine powers. According to the Vedic philosophy, the full healing and transformation of man is accomplished through Prana, which ultimately is the power of the spirit. Everything that we perceive – food, impressions, even our breathing, all this is a means for Prana. Prana connects us with our higher Self. Yoga leads a person to calmness and balance, and **the yogic excersices** have protective and healing finction. Although most people associate **yoga with the physical excersices**, in fact it is focused on improving the **spirit, mind and body.**
- **Yoga practice** helps the impementation of the natural order and balance in metabolic and hormonal levels, improves the metabolism, reduces stress and the diseases related to it such as hypertension, diabetes, asthma, obesity.
- **Yoga is a science for unification with the Primary Being**
- Ayurveda is a science of existence, of everyday life. This ancient **Indian hollistic system** is a priceless source of knowledge that teaches us how to exist in complete harmony with ourselves and with the world around us. Ayurveda and Yoga are two sides of the same coin, two inextricably linked parts of an **ancient Vedic science.** Both systems are aimed at the goal to make our lives better and valuable, showing us how to understand our nature in order to make the right choices and to undertake the proper measures to be healthy, happy and to achieve spiritual peace within us and with the world that surrounds us. They can help us understand our own role in the Universe of consciousness and to find our higher Self.