



Yogic Strategies for Balancing Tridosha

An Integrative Approach to Holistic Health

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Abstract : Today, people of all ages are focusing on holistic health and they are realizing that Ayurveda has always been a complete and natural healing system. This traditional system of medicine, viz Ayurveda, focuses on balancing the body, mind, and soul rather than just treating a disease.

Ayurveda works on the principle of 'Tridosha'- Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. The three energies control all the body's functions, physiological as well as psychological. When these three Doshas are balanced, we stay healthy; when they are disturbed, illnesses arise. Yoga and Ayurveda; which are ancient Indian practices and part of Vedic wellness system, if compared, both focus on holistic health and development of mankind. Yoga, being a complimentary practice of Ayurveda, helps to keep the body's energy or Tridoshas, in balance through Shatkriyas (cleansing techniques), Asanas (postures), Pranayama (breathing exercise), Mudra-Bandh and Dhyana (meditation).

This research explores the theoretical relationship between Yoga and the Tridosha and the objective of the study was to see how yoga helps to balance the three Doshas of the body and how it can play a crucial role in management of Holistic health and development. The study examines the ancient Ayurvedic and Yogic literatures, which helps to examine the key points which has been provided in the texts for Tridosha Management. Also, this study combines the Ayurveda and Yoga for best understanding of holistic health and emphasizes how these Doshas can be balanced with help of Holy practice of Yoga and leading a better physical and mental well-being

Key words - Holistic Health, Ayurveda, Tridosha, Yoga

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced lifestyle, 'Holistic health' has become more important than ever, as stress, anxiety and depression are some of the most common problems faced by people of almost all ages. Holistic health focuses on the physical, mental, emotional and social health of the person. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."ⁱ

Today's modern lifestyle, which is fast-paced requires holistic health that looks at the root causes of health problems, such as lifestyle, emotions, and the environment. Ayurveda and Yoga offer natural ways to maintain the balance between the lifestyle and health. These practices not only maintain physical health but are also helpful in maintaining mental peace and emotional stability, leading to a healthier and more suitable lifestyle.

1.1 Ayurveda

Ayurveda is an Upveda of Atharv or Rigveda, or a Panchama Veda. It is also regarded as an Upanga of Atharva Vedaⁱⁱ. The traditional Indian system of medication which is 'Ayurveda' is a timeless and powerful healing system and is seen as one of the best approaches to natural medicine. The history of Ayurveda is believed to be as old as the universe itself, which was created by lord 'Brahma' (Hindu mythological God of Creation)ⁱⁱⁱ at the time of creation and later passed down to the 'sages' for the well-being of humanity. The roots of Ayurveda can also be found in ancient holy book, i.e. the 'Vedas'.

Ayurveda focuses on treatment or healing through the theory of 'Tridosha'. The word Tridosha has been derived from the Sanskrit word 'Tri' which means 'three' and 'Dosh', meaning 'pollutant'. In Ayurveda, it is believed that these three Doshas, viz. 'Vata', 'Pitta' and 'Kapha' are the energies that are responsible for the philosophical as well as psychological body functions. Each individual has a unique combination of these Doshas. When this set of Doshas, viz. energies, are balanced, then the person experiences good health. But on the other hand, any imbalance between them can lead to various problems/diseases.

Hence, it can be said that the ultimate goal of Ayurveda is to maintain a balance between these three Doshas through therapies, diet, lifestyle and herbal medicines. By understanding the type, one can easily lead a balanced and disease-free life through Ayurveda.

1.2 Yoga

Similarly, Yoga is also an ancient practice that dates back thousands of years and has been passed down through generations. The teachings of yoga are not just about physical exercises but about how to connect the mind, body, and spirit. It was seen as a means to attain 'self-realization' and a spiritual path to attain the 'almighty'.

"यत्रोपरमते चित्तं निरुद्धं योगसेवया।

यत्र चैवात्मनात्मानं पश्यन्नात्मनि तुष्यति॥"^{iv}

Meaning, "In the stage of salvation, or samadhi, one's mind is completely restrained from material worldly activities through the practice of yoga."

Thus, we can see the practice in ancient texts like the 'Shrimad Bhagavad Gita', where it shows how yoga has always been part of human life and provides us with clear evidence of how this yogic wisdom has been an essential part of spiritual and physical well-being for mankind.

Yoga doesn't only have spiritual aspects but is also seen for its therapeutic benefits. It is a scientifically proven way for mental and physical wellbeing.^v It increases strength and flexibility, reduces stress, anxiety and lifestyle-related disorders.

Just as Ayurveda focuses on balancing the Tridosha, yoga helps us to align the body, mind and soul through Shatkriyas (cleansing techniques), Asanas (postures), Pranayama (breathing exercise), Dhyana (meditation) and Mudra-Bandh. By understanding the theoretical connection between Ayurveda and yoga we can easily conclude that yoga can be a proven method for Tridosha management.

II. TRIDOSHA AND IMBALANCE

2.1 TRIDOSHA

As above mentioned, Ayurveda focuses on treatment or healing through the theory of 'Tridosha'. According to Ashtangasangrah-

वायुः पित्तं कफश्चेति त्रयो दोषाः समासतः"^{vi}

Meaning, "Vata (Air), Pitta (Bile), and Kapha (Phlegm) are the three fundamental doshas (bio-energies)."

The word Tridosha has been derived from the sanskrit word 'Tri' which means 'three' and 'Dosha', meaning 'pollutant'. In Ayurveda, it is believed that these three Doshas viz 'Vata', 'Pitta' and 'Kapha' are the energies that are responsible for the philosophical as well as psychological body functions. Each individual has a unique combination of these Doshas and when this set of Doshas, viz. energies, is balanced, then the person experiences good health. However, an imbalance in any Dosha can lead to physical and mental disturbances. According to Maharishi Vangbhatt-

"रोगस्तु दोषवैषम्यं दोषसाम्यरोगतां।"^{vii}

Meaning, "Changes in these pollutants are the root cause of disease".

2.1.1 VATA

"रूक्षःशीतःलघुःसूक्ष्मःश्लथःविशदःखरः

विपरीतगुणैः द्रव्यैः मारुतिः संप्रशाम्यति ।।"^{viii}

Meaning, "Vata Dosha has the qualities of dryness, coldness, lightness, subtlety, looseness, clarity, and roughness. It can be pacified by substances that have opposite qualities."

The Vata Dosha is one of the three elements of the body, which is composed of air and space elements. It governs all the movements of the body, including digestion and breathing. Individuals with dominance in Vata, may find the following:

- Thin and light body and may find difficult to gain weight
- Dry skin and rough hair
- Constipation and bloating
- Light sleep or sometimes Insomnia

Types of Vata –

In Ayurveda, the Vata Dosha has been divided into five parts each having separate functions and works.

Type of Kapha	Location	Function	Disease due to Imbalance
Kledan Kapha	Chest	Controls breathing, thinking and digestion	Anxiety, insomnia, breathlessness, neurological disorders
Snehan Kapha	Lower Abdomen	Excretion, Urination and Digestion	Constipation, bloating and urinary problems
Rasan Kapha	Navel region	Digestion, absorption of food	Indigestion, bloating, loss of appetite
Avlamban Kapha	Throat	Speech, memory, energy, upward movement	Speech disorders, asthma and cough
Shleshmak Kapha	Throughout the body	Blood flow, muscle movement throughout the body	Poor circulation, joint pain, muscle stiffness

2.1.2 PITTA

"पित्तं द्रवगुणं पीतं नीलं सत्त्वगुणोत्तरम् |
कटुतिक्तं विदग्धं च ज्ञेयं चाम्लं ब्रजेत् ||"^{ix}

Meaning, "Pitta Dosha possesses the quality of liquidity, has a yellow or blue, and enhances Sattva Guna (purity and intelligence). It has a pungent and bitter taste. It is also considered acidic and sour in nature."

The Pitta Dosha is the second element of the body which is composed of fire and water elements. It controls metabolism, digestion, body temperature, and intelligence. Individuals with the dominance in Pitta may find the following:

- Warm body temperature
- Sharp intellect and competitive nature
- Impatience and anger
- Inflammation and skin issues

Types of Pitta –

In Ayurveda, the Pitta Dosha has been divided into five parts each having separate functions and works.

Type of Pitta	Location	Function	Disease due to Imbalance
Pachaka Pitta	Stomach, Small Intestine	Digestion, absorption, and metabolism of food	Acidity, ulcers, indigestion, acid reflux
Bhrajaka Pitta	Skin	Maintains skin colour, texture, and glow	Acne, rashes, skin allergies, pigmentation
Ranjaka Pitta	Liver, Spleen, Blood	Formation and maintenance of blood	Jaundice, anaemia, liver disorders
Alochaka Pitta	Eyes	Controls vision and eye health	Eye strain, weak eyesight, cataracts
Sadhaka Pitta	Heart, Brain	Governs emotions, intellect, and memory	Stress, anxiety, depression, heart diseases

2.1.3 KAPHA

"कफः स्निग्धो गुरुः श्वेतः पिच्छिलः शीतलस्तथा |
तमोगुणाधिकः स्वादु विदग्धो लवणो भवेत् ||"^x

Meaning, "Kapha Dosha is unctuous (Snigdha), heavy (Guru), white (Shveta), slimy (Pichhila), and cold (Shitala) in nature. It is predominant in Tamo Guna (inertia). Its taste is sweet (Svādu), acidic (Vidagdha), and slightly salty (Lavaṇa)."

The Kapha Dosha is the third element of the body, which is composed of earth and water elements. It provides stability, strength, lubrication, and immunity in the body. Individuals with the dominance in Kapha may find the following:

- Weight gain
- Sluggish digestion
- Congestion
- Emotional dullness

Types of Kapha –

In Ayurveda, the Kapha Dosha has been divided into five parts each having separate functions and works.

Type of Kapha	Location	Function	Disease due to Imbalance
Kledan Kapha	Stomach	Lubricates and protects stomach lining, aids digestion	Slow digestion, nausea, excessive mucus, indigestion
Snehan Kapha	Head	Nourishes brain, maintains emotional stability	Brain fog, depression, excessive sleep
Rasan Kapha	Throat	Controls taste perception and throat lubrication	Loss of taste, throat infections, excessive salivation
Avlamban Kapha	Heart, Lungs	Provides strength, stability, and supports respiration	Congestion, asthma, bronchitis, excess phlegm
Shleshmak Kapha	Whole Body, Joints	Lubricates joints, maintains flexibility and movement	Joint stiffness, arthritis, swelling

According to a blog by 'Gynoveda', "Ayurveda divides the different body types into seven categories. Hence, it is possible for a person to be: vata, pitta, kapha, vata-pitta, pitta-kapha, vata-kapha, or tri-dosha. However, there is no 'best' or 'perfect' body type or Dosha. Each of the categories have their own advantages and disadvantages."^{xi}

In simple terms, we can say that every body type in Ayurveda is unique. Hence, we should understand our body type and maintain balance for good health.

III. YOGA AND TRIDOSHA BALANCE

Descriptive After exploring the significance of Tridosha, we now understand its vital role in maintaining overall health and harmony in one's life. Yoga being a complementary practice of Ayurveda, serves as a powerful tool to balance these energies or the Tridosha. If we carefully look at the phrase quoted by Maharishi Patanjali-

"योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः"^{xii}

Meaning, "Yoga is restraining the mind-stuff (Chitta) from taking various forms (Vrttis), we can conclude that since Tridoshas viz. Vata, Pitta and Kapha, influence both the body and the mind, their imbalances often show restlessness, anger or fatigue and through the help of yoga or by performing this holy practice these imbalances are regulated.

3.1 Vata Dosha

It's the most active Dosha of the human body, as it is governed by air elements. This Dosha is responsible for movement and flexibility in the body and the mind. When the Vata Dosha is imbalanced, it can lead to anxiety, restlessness, dryness, constipation, joint pain, and poor circulation.

According to an article by 'Ekhart Yoga', "a Vata type will greatly benefit and can be balanced from a grounding, calm, and contemplative practice."^{xiii}

Asana- Vata Dosha needs low, steady, and grounding poses that create warmth and stability. The asanas like Tadasana, Marjriasana, Veerbhadrāsana, Vrikshāsana etc can be the best asanas as help bring stability, warmth, and calmness to an overactive Vata body and mind.

Pranayama- An imbalance in the Vata Dosha often leads to shallow breathing, anxiety, and irregular energy flow. Hence this needs Pranayama that calms the restless mind, improves oxygen flow, and brings stability. The practice of Nadishodhan, Ujjayee and Bhramari Pranayama can be helpful in balancing Vata Dosha.

Mudra- Mudras help control and save energy, which can feel spread out when Vata Dosha is out of balance. Practice of Vayu Mudra can be helpful.

Bandhas- Bandhas regulate the prana (life energy) and help improve stability. The Practice of Mula Bandha and Jalandhar Bandha can be helpful as these helps to improve digestion and prevent energy loss.

Shatkriya- Since Vata imbalance can cause dryness, constipation, and poor circulation, the practice of Basti, Nauli and Jal Neti can be helpful as they can help in removing dryness from the body and balance the Vata.

3.2 Pitta Dosha

The Pitta Dosha is the one which is responsible for how the body transforms food into energy. This is governed by fire and water elements and is responsible for digestion, metabolism and transformation in the body. "Whichever functions of the body, that are associated with fire (as in digestion), light (as in vision, body appearance, and skin color) and temperature, Pitta is involved."^{xiv}

Hence the Yoga practices for Pitta should be cooling, calming, and gentle to reduce excess heat and promote inner peace.

Asana - Pitta needs cooling, relaxing, and heart-opening poses to release tension and balance energy. Asanas like Paschimottanasana, Ardha Matsyendrasana, Dhanurasana, Bhujangāsana etc can be helpful to release the heat, calm the mind and cool the body.

Pranayama - Pitta imbalance often leads to overheating, frustration, and digestive issues. The practice of Sheetli, Sheetkari and Chandrabhedhi Pranayama be seen as the best ways to balance the Pitta Dosha.

Mudra - Mudras help balance energy and cool down an overactive Pitta. Apan Mudra, Jal Mudra etc. can be found beneficial for the Pitta balance as they cool the body, reduce stress and balance the emotions.

Bandhas - Bandhas regulate prana (life energy), but for Pitta, they should be used carefully. The practice of Jalandhar Bandh can be helpful for the same as it helps in digestion and controls the energy flow.

Shatkriya - Shatkriyas help detoxify the body and remove excess heat. Jal Neti and Kunjal are the best cleansing techniques for the Pitta Dosha.

3.3 Kapha Dosha

The Kapha Dosha is the one that is responsible for keeping the body strong and protecting it from illness. This is governed by earth and water elements hence making it cool, heavy and moist.

Yoga practices for Kapha should be energizing, stimulating, warming and excessively Dynamic. According to Dr. Vasant Lad^{xv}, stimulating, energizing, and heat-generating asanas are recommended as these asanas activate the metabolism and improve circulation in the body.

Asana - Kapha Dosha needs dynamic, stimulating, and heat-generating poses to boost circulation and energy. The Asanas like Utkatasana, Trikonasana, Naukaasana, Bhujangasana, Sun Salutation etc can be found best in Kapha as they help to reduce heaviness, warm the body, and boost metabolism.

Pranayama - Kapha imbalance leads to slow digestion, congestion, and low energy. Hence Bhastrika and Suryabhedhi Pranayama can be found beneficial during the Kapha imbalance.

Mudra - Mudras help stimulate and activate Kapha energy, reducing dullness. The Surya Mudra and Prana Mudra can be beneficial as they improve metabolism.

Bandhas – Kapha can benefit from stimulating Bandhas that activate flow of energy. Udiyana Bandha and Jalandhar Bandha can help boost energy and improve digestion.

Shatkriya - Shatkriyas helps in removing excess mucus, toxins, and heaviness from the body. Cleansing practices like Jalneti, Kapalabhati etc can help in balancing Kapha as they clear the blockages and removes excess Mucus from the body.

IV. CONCLUSION

The integration of Yoga with the Tridosha viz. Vata, Pitta and Kapha demonstrates its effectiveness as holistic health practice. The three energies govern the body philosophically and psychologically and any imbalance in these three Doshas can lead to various health concerns and problems in the lifestyle of an individual. The Practice of Asanas, Pranayama, Mudras, Bandhas and Shatkriyas helps to stabilize these Doshas and promotes the overall well-being of the body which automatically reduces the risk of any disease or illness.

The theoretical explanation shows how specific yogic practices can help to counter the Dosha imbalance and restore it naturally. Vata imbalance can benefit from grounding and stabilizing yogic techniques, Pitta from cooling and calming methods, and Kapha from dynamic and stimulating practices.

By integrating these yogic strategies with the Ayurvedic principle of Tridosha, one can create a balanced lifestyle according to their body type. The provided strategies not only help with immediate health issues but also support long-term well-being and inner peace.

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