

Original Article

Role of Yoga and Ayurveda in Preventive Health Care

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Abstract

Preventive health is an essential component of wellbeing and longevity. Traditional Indian systems such as Yoga and Ayurveda emphasize holistic health through lifestyle regulation, mental harmony, dietetics, and therapeutic practices. While modern healthcare often prioritizes treatment after illness manifests, these traditional systems focus on maintaining balance in body, mind, and environment to prevent disease before onset. This paper explores both systems' philosophical foundations, preventive health strategies, clinical evidence, and practical applications—supported by classical Sanskrit slokas and authoritative texts like the Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Patanjali Yoga Sutras. The paper highlights their role in disease prevention, mental health promotion, lifestyle management, and alignment with global sustainable development goals. The integration of Ayurveda and Yoga into modern healthcare systems can contribute significantly to sustainable, equitable, and holistic health care.

Key Words: Yoga, Ayurveda, Preventive Health

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Introduction

Health is no longer defined merely as the absence of disease but as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. Modern healthcare systems largely focus on curative and pharmaceutical interventions, often neglecting preventive and lifestyle-based approaches. This has resulted in an alarming increase in non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, cardiovascular disorders, anxiety, and depression. The concept of healthy living in Ayurveda is very simple and is supported by scientific principles that one must follow for optimal health and wellbeing. Now a days people are becoming much more aware of healthy lifestyle and immune system. The concept of holistic healing taking into account the mind, body and spirit is being well accepted worldwide. Ayurveda has evolved from ancient traditional practice to scientifically proven modern recent advancement. This has made Ayurveda more attractive than conventional system of medicine in many parts of the world. Preventive health care is a multi-dimensional approach aimed at **maintaining wellness, reducing disease risk, and enhancing quality of life**. In the context of growing lifestyle disorders globally (e.g., diabetes, hypertension, stress-related illnesses), holistic preventive strategies integrating traditional wisdom and modern science are increasingly relevant. Modern health challenges—chronic diseases, stress, lifestyle disorders—necessitate holistic preventive strategies. **Yoga** (union of body, mind, and spirit) and **Ayurveda** (science of life) offer time-tested frameworks that address not only disease management but health preservation and promotion.

Philosophical Foundations

Definition of Swasthya (Health) in Ayurveda

In Sushruta Samhita (Sharira Sthana, Ch. 1) and Charaka Samhita (Sutrasthana, Ch. 30/1), health (Swasthya) is described as the balance of body, mind, and soul, including proper functioning of the dosha s (biological humors), dhatus (tissues), agni (digestive/metabolic fire), and mala (waste products), along with a state of happiness and contentment.



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Sanskrit Shloka (Charaka Samhita, Sutrasthana 30/1):

“सत्त्वा, द्वातानं, शरीरं च समं वर्धमानं च यथोचितं, तथा चित्तसन्तुलनं स्रवणं, स्वस्थम्”

(Translation: Health is the state in which the doshas are in balance, tissues are functioning properly, metabolic fire is normal, excretory functions are proper, and the mind, senses, and soul are content and in harmony.)

A commonly cited condensed form from Charaka Samhita is:

“दोषा धात्वा मलाः सात्त्विकं मनः च भावितं यथोचितं चित्तेः स्वास्थ्यम्”

(Swasthya is when the doshas, dhatus, malas, and mind are in proper balance and the person is happy in mind and soul.)

Key Elements of Swasthya

1. **Dosha Balance** – Vata, Pitta, Kapha in equilibrium.
2. **Dhatu Integrity** – Tissues are nourished and functional.
3. **Agni (Digestive/Metabolic Fire)** – Proper digestion and metabolism.
4. **Mala (Excretory Functions)** – Normal elimination of waste.
5. **Mind and Spirit** – Mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

Ayurveda defines health as balance—physical, mental, spiritual (swasthasya swasthya rakshanam).

Sanskrit Sloka:

“स्वस्थस्य स्वास्थ्यं रक्षणम् | आत्मनः प्रतिपत्तिः अरोग्यं प्रसह्यते ||”

(Charaka Samhita: Sutrasthana 1.25)

Translation: “Preserving the health of the healthy and treating the diseased is the scope of Ayurveda.”

Ayurveda employs **dinacharya** (daily routines) and **ritucharya** (seasonal regimens) to maintain biological rhythm and prevent imbalance.

improve their mental and physical health, its significance only increases. It's critical to recognise that it is a comprehensive

philosophy that incorporates breathing exercises, meditation, and body and the mind. It also improves flexibility, lowers stress, and

Preventive Strategies in Ayurveda

1 Daily Life (Dinacharya)

Numerous daily practices are recommended by Ayurveda in order to maintain excellent health, live a long and active life, reach one's full potential, and realize oneself. These behaviors are: Brahma Muhurta (rising early), Oral cleanliness, Scraping the tongue, Abhyanga (massage with oil), Snana (bath), Vyayama (physical exercise), Ahara (consumption of a balanced and wholesome diet).

Ratricharya (Night Regimen): This comprises practices like taking a balanced and nutritious diet, performing Vyavaya/Maithun (sex), and taking proper Nidra (sleep). Routines promote balance of Doshas and strengthen immunity (Ojas).

Clinical Implications: Proper routines enhance digestion, sleep quality, metabolic balance, and reduce disease predisposition.

2 Seasonal Regimens (Ritucharya)

Sanskrit Sloka:

“ऋतुदोषसंहारहेतुं ...” (Sushruta Samhita)

Translation: Seasonal changes bring doshic variations; preventive management reduces disease onset.

Ritucharya (Seasonal Routine): Ritucharya is the term used to describe the unique practices that must be adhered to at different times of the year to prevent the development of illnesses. While unctuous meals should be consumed throughout Hemant, Shishira, and Grishma seasons, dry foods must be consumed during Sharad and Vasant seasons. While hot food is advised in the other three seasons, cold foods must be consumed during Grishma and Sharad. Seasonal changes should be incorporated into the eating plan. Acharya Bhavmishra stated that by following these seasonally appropriate guidelines, one might steer clear of the prevalent illnesses associated with each season. Adjust diet and lifestyle according to seasons to prevent doshic imbalance and illness.

3.3 Dietetics (Ahara Vidhi Vishesh)

Food is medicine when chosen according to one's constitution (Prakriti).

Sanskrit Sloka:

“आहारश्चेष्टमलयसंस्कारः...”

(Charaka Samhita: Sutrasthana 27.8)

Translation: Food undergoes transformation affecting body tissues; proper diet is essential for harmony.

Ayurveda emphasizes:

- Food quality and compatibility (*Viruddha Ahara* avoidance)
- Balanced taste (*Rasa*)
- Digestive strength (*Agni*)
- **Ethical living (*Sadvritta*)** *Sadvritta*: Following *Sadvritta* leads to *Arogya* (health) and *Indriyavijaya* (victory over the senses). *Sadvritta* is necessary for overall well-being, covering physical, mental, social, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of life. *Sadvritta* can be classified into the following categories: *Vyavaharika Sadvritta* (Social conduct), *Samajika Sadvritta* (Community conduct), *Mansik Sadvritta* (Mental conduct), *Dharmika Sadvritta* (Ethical conduct), *Sharirika Sadvritta* (Physical conduct).
- **Words of Wisdom**: The path of righteousness is the path of happiness. There is no happiness without righteousness, and therefore, all must tread the path of righteousness. • *Achara Rasayan* (Rasayana effects of good conduct): Good conduct, i.e., truthfulness, non-violence, and compassion, is essential to derive the effects of any *Rasayana* (rejuvenating therapy).
- **Preventive Measures**. As per *Acharya Charak*, one can keep oneself away from disease by adhering to three main principles: Those who remove the accumulated *Doshas* of early winter in the spring, summer in early rains, and rainy season in autumn, will never be afflicted with seasonal diseases. One who leads a healthy diet and conduct, is cautious, keeps away from attachment to sensual pleasures, exercises liberality, practices equality, speaks the truth, exercises forbearance, and respects the elderly will be free from disease. He whose intellect, speech, and actions give rise to good, and whose mind and wisdom are humble, and who practices penance and persistent effort in *Yoga*, will never fall a victim to disease. — *Ayurveda for Environmental Health According to Acharya Charaka's "Loka Purusha Samayata Siddhanta,"* an *Ayurvedic* theory, each person reflects every element in the cosmos. According to this theory, all living things and the environment are interconnected, and achieving total well-being necessitates harmony and balance. With the onset of the *Anthropocene*, ecological harm can be avoided by reorienting human existence toward harmony with nature. Although each human being has their own *Prakruti* (constitution), *Sarata* (strength), and *Aahar* (diet), all are influenced by common factors like location and air. These factors can lead to illnesses and, in severe cases, death when they are disrupted or tainted. This is called "*Janapadodhwans*," and it arises from the disruption of *Kala* (time), *Jala* (water), *Desh* (region), and *Vayu* and air. The goal of *Ayurveda* is to regulate and correct air, water, region, and time disruptions. The sun's rays purify the air by eliminating pollutants, and fire likewise purifies the air by eliminating impurities.

Yoga

Yoga aims at cessation of mental fluctuations (*chitta vritti nirodhah*).

Sanskrit Sloka:

“योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः ॥”

(*Patanjali Yoga Sutras 1.2*)

Translation: “Yoga is the restraint of the fluctuations of the mind.” Yoga promotes harmony, self-realisation, and general health in addition to its mental and spiritual advantages. It has developed into a holistic practice that promotes a healthy way of living by nurturing the foster mental clarity in today's hectic society which is popular way for individuals to enhance their physical health and achieve balance in their hectic lives. As more people look for methods to increase moral behaviour in addition to physical activity. There are several health advantages to incorporating it into one's daily practice, including improve physical and mental well-being individuals to enhance their physical health and achieve balance in their hectic lives. As more people look for methods to increase. It's critical to recognise that it is a comprehensive moral behavior in addition to physical activity. There are several health advantages to incorporating into once daily practice including improve physical and mental wellbeing.

1Eight Limbs of Yoga (*Ashtanga Yog*):

1. **Yama**: Ethical restraints
2. **Niyama**: Observances
3. **Asana**: Physical postures
4. **Pranayama**: Breath control
5. **Pratyahara**: Withdrawal of senses
6. **Dharana**: Concentration
7. **Dhyana**: Meditation
8. **Samadhi**: Deep absorption/unity

These collectively form a preventive and promotive health paradigm

2Role of Yoga in Physical Health

Scientific studies show that Yoga:

- Improves cardiovascular health
- Enhances flexibility and strength

- Regulates blood pressure and blood sugar
- Improves immunity

philosophy that incorporates breathing exercises, meditation, and moral behaviour in addition to physical activity. There are several improve their mental and physical health, its significance only.

Role of Yoga in Mental Health

Yoga and meditation reduce:

- Stress and anxiety
- Depression and insomnia
- Cognitive decline

By regulating the nervous system, Yoga supports mental sustainability

Preventive Strategies in Yoga

1 Asana and Physical Health

Postures improve musculoskeletal strength, balance, flexibility, and organ function.

Example:

- **Tadasana (Mountain Pose)** for posture and alignment
- **Vrikshasana (Tree Pose)** for balance and proprioception

Physiological Impact: Stimulate vagal tone, improve circulation, and regulate endocrine function.

2 Pranayama and Respiratory Health

Controlled breathing modulates autonomic nervous system, reduces stress responses, and improves pulmonary capacity.

Examples:

- **Nadi Shodhana:** Balances hemispheric brain activity
- **Kapalabhati:** Enhances metabolic detoxification

3 Meditation and Mental Health

Meditation reduces stress hormones, enhances emotional regulation, and fosters resilience—critical for preventive mental health.

Sanskrit Sloka:

“तत्र स्थितौ यदा वातः प्रसादं मनसा चित्तस्य...”

(Yoga Vasistha)

Translation: When mind and senses are at ease in a stable posture, all disturbances calm down.

Yoga is not only physical exercise but a holistic system that combines posture, breath regulation, and mindfulness. Scientifically, regular Yoga practice has been associated with reduced stress hormone levels (e.g., cortisol), better cardiorespiratory fitness, improved lipid profiles, and enhanced mental well-being factors integral to disease prevention.

Mechanisms of Preventive Action

1 Modulation of Physiological Systems

Yoga influences multiple body systems including cardiovascular regulation (reducing blood pressure and improving heart rate variability), respiratory efficiency, and metabolic functions. Structured protocols such as the Common Yoga Protocol demonstrate improved lipid profiles and other cardiovascular parameters within short durations of practice.

Ayurvedic principles of nutrition (*ahara*), daily routines (*dinacharya*), and seasonal practices (*ritucharya*) adjust metabolic processes and support maintenance of homeostasis. Balanced diet, herbal formulations, and lifestyle regulation enhance digestive efficiency and indirectly support immune competence.

2 Stress Regulation and Mental Health

Chronic psychological stress is a major risk factor for non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Yoga and Ayurvedic behaviorist principles (including *Achara Rasayana*—behavioral rejuvenation and ethical living) promote mental hygiene, emotional regulation, and resilience. Scientific literature on psychoneuroimmunology supports mind-body practices that lower stress and modulate immune responses.

Evidence in Preventive Health Domains

1 Non-Communicable Diseases

Emerging clinical research indicates that Yoga and Ayurveda can be integrated into lifestyle modification programs to reduce the risk and progression of NCDs. In India's NPCDCS-AYUSH integration project involving prediabetic and type 2 diabetic patients, combining Yoga and Ayurvedic interventions with lifestyle modifications led to significant improvements in blood sugar control and symptoms, underscoring their preventive value in chronic disease management.

2 Immune Function and Infectious Diseases

During global health challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, preventive aspects of Yoga and Rasayana (rejuvenation) therapies were explored for immune modulation and supportive care, suggesting that both systems may contribute to improved host defense when integrated with public health strategies.

3 Wellness and Healthy Aging

Ayurvedic rejuvenation therapies (*rasayana*) and routine Yoga practice have been associated with improved mobility, muscle strength, and quality of life in elderly populations, indicating preventive potential in age-related functional decline.

Integrative Approaches with Modern Medicine

Modern preventive medicine is increasingly exploring integrative models that combine conventional medical practices with traditional systems. The Indian National Health Policy and AYUSH integration initiatives stress the inclusion of Yoga and Ayurveda into preventive health strategies targeting NCDs and lifestyle disorders.

Challenges and Future Directions

While promising, mainstream integration faces challenges including the need for standardized protocols, greater clinical research with robust methodologies, and increased collaboration between modern health professionals and traditional practitioners. Scaling evidence-based practices and routine outcome monitoring will enhance the credibility and application of Yoga and Ayurveda in preventive care.

Integrative Mechanisms: Ayurveda + Yoga

Aspect	Ayurveda Focus	Yoga Focus
Mind-Body Harmony	Dosha balance, mental equilibrium	Breath-mind alignment
Stress Regulation	<i>Sadvritta</i> , <i>Achara Rasayana</i>	Meditation, Pranayama
Immunity	<i>Bala</i> enhancement, herbal support	Parasympathetic activation
Lifestyle	Daily/Seasonal regimens	Ethical practices, mindful living

Both systems target **homeostasis**, **stress reduction**, **optimal metabolism**, and **self-regulation**.

Discussion

Complementarity

Ayurveda provides personalized preventive prescriptions, while Yoga offers universal mind-body regulation tools.

Challenges and Future Directions

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Conclusion

Yoga and Ayurveda offer comprehensive preventive health frameworks that synergize lifestyle regulation, mental well-being, dietary balance, and physical conditioning. Scientific evidence supports their roles in improving physiological and psychological health markers, reducing risk factors for lifestyle diseases, and enhancing quality of life. Integrating these ancient systems within modern preventive medicine has substantial potential to address global health burden.

Appendix: Key Sanskrit Slokas and Their Sources

- Health Definition:** स्वस्थस्य स्वास्थ्य रक्षणम्... – Charaka Samhita
- Yoga Definition:** योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः – Patanjali Yoga Sutras
- Seasonal Health Management:** ऋतुदोषसंहारहेतुं... – Sushruta Samhita
- Diet and Transformation:** आहारक्षेपमलयसंस्कारः... – Charaka Samhita
- Meditation Calmness:** तत्र स्थितौ यदा वातः... – Yoga Vasistha

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