

# Radikal Freedom - Yoga as realisation



## Remedy for all Diseases

In Ayurveda a separation between mind where desire rises and body where desire is acted out is conceptually and practically impossible.

In the western world, history and culture creates a split between the thinking mind and the feeling body, with the thinking and reasoning mind being glorified and the feeling body condemned as dark and demonic.

If there is a schism in the continuity of existence in Ayurveda then it is between the microcosmic of the individual and the macrocosmic of the universe, and this split is addressed through belief, practice and treatment.

Mind function in Ayurveda and its root philosophies of Sankhya, Nyaya Vaisesika and Buddhism are called manas.

Manas is itself a derivative of the sattva guna, the subtle and pure energetic strand of existence manifested through the 'I maker' ahamkara.

Budhi, the principle from which ahamkara arises is more closely equated with cosmic or great intuitive mind.

Manas deluded by maya, the illusion of separation, functions through avidya or ignorance of true identity and from fear of death (abinivesha). Manas acting through raga, the desire of grasping onto good experiences as a way to avoid change and its ulterior motive fear of death sustains this sense of separation or maya. Manas acting through dvesha or unhealthy aversion from difficult experiences or sensations leads to the pulling away from experience as a way of avoiding change and is also a futile attempt to avoid death. Dvesha also then sustains this illusion of separation or maya.

It is this complexity of unconscious ahamkaric behaviours through which we lead ourselves into imbalance, extreme imbalance being disease.

In this way desire and aversion is the root of all disease if acted out through unconscious behaviour. The root of raga and dvesha is of course avidya, in both Buddhist and Yogic texts it is this root, avidya that is categorised as the source of all suffering.

The remedy of all suffering (disease) is then real intelligence, wisdom (prajna) or bodhi, another way of saying this is knowing the truth of who one is, beyond ahamkara, in this realisation desire is no longer unconscious and when acted on leads to greater balance.

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According to classical Ayurveda manas also has the four functions of indriya bhigraha, directing the senses; svasya nigraha, controlling itself; uha, reasoning through connection with sensory input and the soul; vicara, the capacity of discrimination.

These functions are not seen as discrete and separate from those of the body.

Ayurveda asserts that both mind and self reside in the heart and that mental illness arises when the heart does not function properly or when the connecting structures (channels and ducts) between the heart and the brain that carry the humours (dosas) and vital elements (dhatus) have in some way become impaired and no longer function effectively.

The physiological theory of the three humours, the tridosa, is the root of understanding disorders of mind and body as somato-psychic or psyche-somatic, as in Ayurveda there is no separation between these two sides of this being alive.

Susruta states there are four types of mental disturbance rooted in upset humours, a fifth due to shock and a sixth due to poisons. Psychopathology results from upset humours reaching the heart where the mind is located and then blocking the connecting structures between the heart and head.

The diagnosis of vata unmada (wind madness) has its root in problematic food or inappropriate food intake, the diagnosis of pitta unmada (bile madness) is rooted in the excessive eating of sour and harsh foods or foods with the property of heat. Diagnosis of sem unmada (phlegm madness) is caused by lack of exercise and eating overly rich foods. Further diagnoses arise as these types of madness from unbalanced humours themselves caused by imbalance in diet combine to give wind-bile, wind-phlegm and bile-phlegm madness as well as the incurable wind-bile-phlegm madness.

These conditions are all caused by eating or doing the wrong things at the wrong time, this itself is rooted in desire or aversion, aversion to exercise, desire for overly sweet foods and so on.

Caraka the great Ayurvedic physician equates the body which includes the sense capacities, along with the mind and the self as the three aspects of the tripod of the person or purusha, Clearly in this formula mind is seen as a separate component integrated within the unity of the purusha.

It is this trinity of our experience that is seen as the subject matter of Ayurveda

Embodied life according to Ayurveda is a unit in one place at one time composed of the five great elements, five cognitive senses along with their objects, plus the active senses, thinking mind, ego, intellect and individual soul. All of these components are themselves in turn aspects of the energetic strands that make up all of life, all of nature, the gunas. The three gunas are sattva as equilibrium or conscious being, rajas as activity or kinetic energy and tamas as inertia or unconscious being, these three themselves being functions of the great principle of individuation ahamkara, the I maker that creates the polarised experience of duality, of subject and object, of male and female. Ahamkara is itself a function of mahat or bodhi the great mind or cosmic intelligence.

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Clearly mind and body can be seen as separate components within a unified lifeform and yet clearly they can be seen as aspects of the gunas, mind as a function of sattva and the body as a function of tamas, yet both ultimately derivatives of ahamkara.

Ahamkara is constantly redefining itself in a new and continual reestablishment of 'self'. Consciousness however is said to be omnipotent and omnipresent, the truth of purusha, it is beyond the reach of thought and immune to any impermanence.

Mind and body however are temporary and impermanent and compared to the reach and authority of consciousness are momentary illusions.

Yet it is precisely this authority of consciousness manifested through the sattva principle that gives it authority over tamas as the body, in this way healthy thoughts and desires create health, dark and hopeless thoughts and desires surrender the body to disease. Individual health leads to family health, family health is community health is world health. In this way of understanding, health depends on ones level of awareness of oneself as consciousness. As one desires and visualises ones self becoming (consciously or unconsciously), so ones ahamkara enables one to become.

A key word for health in Sanskrit is Svastha meaning 'established in one-Self' ones true Self of course is omnipotent, omnipresent consciousness.

Yet it is not really the omnipresent consciousness that is the focus of Ayurveda but the rest of the assemblage of us that makes life, and this assemblage can be affected by anything entering or exerting an effect on the system of the assemblage.

Things can nourish it, acting as food, balance it, acting as medicine or toxify it leading to disturbance, termination and fragmentation.

Caraka's law of like and unlike states that like increases like, thus thinking, desires and habits change physiology and vice versa. We become what we desire, eat, think and do. Repetition and resonance then create our reality.

In this way thinking, desiring and the daily actions of doing are the ways of affecting the whole assemblage of our being. Indeed it is inappropriate or unwholesome association of sense and object, Caraka's general theory of inherent affinities (asatmyendriyarthasamyoga) where the senses act like invisible hands acting from desire and aversion, leading to grasping thoughts, beliefs, events, behaviours and relationships to objects, incorporating them within the assemblage where they either nourish, balance or toxify.

Imbalance as toxification is expressed through disturbed function of the doshas, as pathologies of the five great elements, different factors weaving together to create the unique manifestation of imbalance.

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The invisible hands of the senses motivated by desire (raga) such that 'all disease begins with raga' states Vagbata another famous Ayurvedic physician, and as Caraka states desire takes the mind away from balance and contentment. The Manu Smriti is the written source of the concept of exchange through proximity, such that any kind of proximity allows for a potential exchange of pathogen, emotion or thought form, a theory of bio-moral-ecological transaction which recognises the inter relationship of all things and states the connection and possible interactions on every level.

Ayurvedic therapeutic process thus focuses on daily regimen (dinacharya or pattiyama) as a means of balancing the mind and focusing desire through physical behaviour and function. Daily regimen is prescriptive, beyond desire or aversion and can include diet, exercise, prayer, routines, restrictions on ones sex life etc, all this restrains rampant or unhealthy desire or aversion and their consequences bringing the individual microcosm back into balance and harmony with the macrocosm.

The daily, seasonal and social routines encouraged seek to ensure somatic needs and bio-moral-ecological transactions are optimised and satisfied no matter where the mind and its desires may roam.

For Caraka, the greatest sin is non-belief in the soul. The imperative of believing in rebirth is the foundation of the social and religious system with fear of retributive karma and desire for freedom leading one to follow the 'path of righteousness' which for Caraka includes obeying the Guru, schooling, religious duty, getting married, begetting children, the mores or perhaps maws of society?

Maintenance of the status quo and upholding the socio-religious framework of society becomes inextricable from individual somato-psychic wellbeing.

Within this framework prajnaparadha (crime against wisdom), which can also be understood as desire for that which within the bio-moral-ecological transactional sphere that leads one to greater imbalance is the source of disease yet also becomes a crime against received, socialised belief and the collective social view on the nature of reality.

Prajnaparadha is then ones inability, unwillingness, or desire for difference or separateness as microcosm, to remain in state of harmony with the macrocosm which is most deeply understood as the socio-religious order and its belief system of divine order.

Prajnaparadha rooted in desire leads to inappropriate behaviour that is on any level indigestible, this leads to digestive weakness and mental or somatic incapacity to assimilate resulting in unprocessed 'food' residue or ama which obstructs channels and ducts. This obstruction prevents vata from moving which then gets 'angry' stewing tissues and wastes in all directions until they find a resting place and generate a 'disease being' which is invigorated by vata's pseudo life force and nourished by the toxicity of ama.

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The decoctions prepared by Ayurvedic doctors such as provide medicines that will help cook the food in the body, and also ensure anuloma guna (the right flow)

The ultimate treatment however, to eliminate all miseries according to Caraka is 'elimination of the allurements of desire'.

In this framework anything can be medicinal if it serves the purposes of balance and moderation in thinking, desiring and behaving, if it serves the identification of unhealthy beliefs, desires and habits and contributes to replacing them with healthy belief, desires and behaviour.

It is the complexity of unconscious ahamkara behaviours that can lead on organism into imbalance and disease. Desire and aversion (raga and dvesha) is thus the root of all disease if acted out through unconscious behaviour. The root of raga and dvesha is of course avidya, in both Buddhist and Yogic texts it is this root, avidya that is categorised as the root of all suffering.

Susruta the great Ayurvedic physician repeats this concept with the statement:

“the ultimate medicine for the humours of the mind consists of wisdom, steadfastness and a knowledge of the Self”

The Self of course is that aspect of our assemblage that is beyond desire, that is pure untouched, unborn, undying unchanging consciousness.

This realisation then steps one beyond identification with ahamkara and its functions, beyond desire and aversion into greater well-being as a unity with the greater truth of pure consciousness, microcosm in harmony with macrocosm.

Christopher Gladwell