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Yogic Practices According To Ayurvedic Constitution

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ABSTRACT

Yoga and Ayurveda, both sciences have many unique features which can greatly enrich the current system of health care delivery and medicare besides their role in the upliftment of the social, mental and spiritual status of humanity at large. There is sufficient potential in Yoga and Ayurveda to enrich the health care and medical management in the present time. It is true need to interpret both sciences which will really show magical results and actually works together as a system to balance physical and mental health of an individual. In present study, the effort is made to suggest *yogic kriya* according to ones *prakriti* as per Ayurveda to maintain the state of health and also in diseases.

KEYWORDS

Yogic Kriya, Ayurvedic Constitution, Health



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INTRODUCTION

Health is much more than mere absence of disease¹. One can say that health is a state of complete balance at the level of body, mind and consciousness. It is a state of happiness and sense of well-being emotionally as well as physically². The aims of Yoga and Ayurveda are same i.e. attainment of salvation³. And also both sciences help to maintain health by preventing diseases and used as a part of treatment in diseases. Yoga and Ayurveda have been used from ancient days as allied sciences, so now they should be developed and synthesized in the light of modern science according to the needs of present day society. These ancient sciences appear to have great potential of helping the humanity at large as regards to the current problems of health and psychosocial crisis in the modern world.

According to Ayurveda, every individual is unique. The individualistic features are the manifestations of *Prakriti* or constitution⁴. Everyone has varying degrees of each of the three *doshas* which make up your basic nature. The balance of the *dosha* fluctuates throughout your life, and can become balanced or imbalanced by factors related to your lifestyle, diet, health and illness, or environment. *Asana* is useful for all three *doshic* constitutions. It can be used to keep you in balance or correct an imbalance that

may arise as a result of stress, illness, lifestyle or major life event. An effort is made here to establish interrelationship of *Yogic Kriya* and the Concept of *Prakriti* (constitution) in Ayurveda.

MATERIALS & METHODS

Yoga and Ayurveda:

The word 'Yoga' means to combine or to integrate and thus may be helping in union of the *atma* and *param atma*⁵. The science of Yoga is thus the science of man in depth, the science of conscious evolution or the science of human possibilities.

Yoga is a system of mental and spiritual development with a scope of mental transformation.

yaaogaiEca<avaRRi<ainaraoQa : ⁶

There are eight constituent parts of the discipline of yoga.⁷

- 1) *Yama* (Abstinences)
- 2) *Niyama* (Observances)
- 3) *Asana* (Body postures)
- 4) *Pranayam* (Energy control)
- 5) *Pratyahara* (Abstraction)
- 6) *Dharana* (Concentration)
- 7) *Dhyana* (Meditation)
- 8) *Samadhi* (Absorption or Trans)

Thus, *Ashtang yoga* consists of:

Ethical practices: *Yama, Niyama*

Physical practices: *Asanas, Pranayama*

Sensorial Practices: *Pratyahara*



Mental Practices: *Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi*

According to Ayurveda, *Vata, Pitta and Kapha* are three main *doshas* which are the primary forces behind all physiological and psychological functions. *Vata*, energetic humor, controls destruction. *Pitta*, the thermogenic humor, organizes body activities after conversion. *Kapha*, the cohesive humor, is responsible for maintaining the creation.

Only healthy individual can achieve the four main objectives of life- service to society and self status (*Dharma*), service to the family by earning money (*Artha*), service to self and enjoyment (*Kama*) and self realization (*Moksha*)⁸. Maintaining health is a continuous process, because *doshas* are in continuous state of fluctuation. Hence, constant active effort is required to achieve balance in *doshas*.

Yoga procedures are useful to correct the imbalance of *doshas*. Yoga also accepts that for maintaining health there must be normal movement of *doshas* from compact tissues to hollow organs.

In Vedic literature, Yoga is the holistic science of union, knowledge of one's True Self. Ayurveda is the science of living, of daily life⁹. The concept of ever-present consciousness underlying all creations lies at the heart of both Ayurveda and in practice of the *yoga asana*. Both Yoga and

Ayurveda shows same goal i.e. complete connection and integration of mind and body. Yoga and Ayurveda are interdependent.

Asana depending on dominant dosha:

To balance *vata*:

- Practice *Asana* that release tension in the hips, lumbar spine and sacroiliac joints.
- *Asanas* in sitting poses and forward bendings e.g. *Virabhdrasana* and *Uttanasana, Paschimottanasana* (Fig.15), *JanuSirsasana, Padmasana* (Fig.7).

To balance *pitta*:

- Practice *Asana* like *trikonasana, bhujangasana, Chandra namaskar* that release tension from the mid-abdomen. Also gentle backbends and other chest-opening, hip-flexor lengthening poses.
- Practice *pranayam* like *shitali* which helps to create coolness in body.

To balance *kapha*:

- Practice *asana* that heats the body considerably (sweating is good).
- Standing postures combined with movement like *surya namaskar, adhomukha svanasana, ushtrasana* and stretching like *setu bandhasana* are great for *kapha*.

Concept of Prakriti (Constitution)

प्रकृतिः शरीरस्वरूपम् ¹⁰



Prakriti means individual nature.

Constitution is an important concept of Ayurveda. It is the unique nature of every individual. Maintaining health, prevention of diseases, achieving longevity and treatment of diseases depends on this fundamental theory of understanding human being¹¹.

शुक्रशैणितसंयोगेयोभवेद्योषः उक्तः प्रकृतिर्जायते तेन ^{१२}

Constitution is formed at the time of union of sperm and ovum. Once this proportion sets, it remains permanent for the lifetime of that individual. Every individual has different physical, physiological and psychological functions. The predominance of *dosha* determines the *doshic* constitution, the functional or the energetic condition of the body.

It is postulated that person of different constitution are susceptible to different categories of diseases and need different approaches in the care of their health and disease.

As a result of this, Ayurveda prescribes a different program for each individual based on his constitution and the nature of imbalance within it.

Types of Constitution¹³:

A) Physical Constitution [fig.1]:

According to *pancha mahabhautic* predominance in *prakriti* :

- **Ether and Air in Vata prakriti**– show lean body frame with low weight and large openings like ear, nose etc.
- **Water and Fire in Pitta prakriti** – copper colored skin and hairs with medium body frame and have rapid metabolism.
- **Water and earth in Kapha prakriti**– show heavy and robust body frame with good musculature.

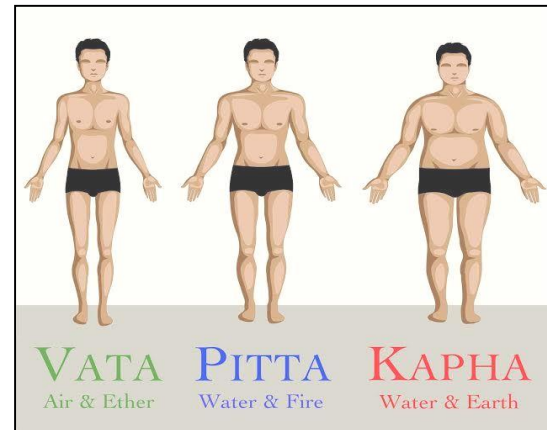


Fig.1 Panchamahabhut predominance and *Prakriti*
B) Psychological Constitution:

According to predominance of *Triguna* :

➤ *Sattvic constitution*: These individuals are intelligent, having good memory and natural instinct for observing healthy life style. They are polite and joyful and accept their status and wealth as it is. There are no strong desires for gaining more wealth or status. They have faith in Divine power. They are calm and quiet nature persons and they react to pain and pleasure in proper manner.



➤ *Rajasic constitution:* These individuals have average intelligence and variable memory. They possess dynamic energy and hence they are not satisfied with the position they have. They constantly strive for more and more possessions, power and money. They are ambitious and industrious in nature. Usually these persons are hot tempered and are egoistic; sometimes they are brave and cruel also.

➤ *Tamasic constitution:* These individuals are unintelligent with poor memory, lazy and ignorant and are not curious to learn any new science or work. They are unclean in body, mind and speech and are mainly interested in eating, drinking and sleeping than doing any physical or mental work.

C) *Physiological Constitution*

Based on permutation and combination of three *doshas*

- Single type – *Vata, Pitta, Kapha*
- Dual type – *Vata-Pitta, Vata-Kapha, Pitta-Kapha* and
Kapha-Vata, Kapha-Pitta, Pitta-Vata
- *Tridoshaja* – *Vata-Pitta-Kapha*

Assessment of Constitution¹⁴ [Fig.2]:

Vata constitution: These persons are lean and are either too long or too short. They do not have good musculature and hence can't carry out heavy manual work. Their skin

and hairs are dry, rough and kinky and they complain of cold hands and feet. Their joints and veins are exposed and hence can be seen easily. Their voices are often high pitched, dry and very much talkative in nature.

Pitta constitution: These persons have medium frame and smooth musculature. Their body metabolism is very rapid. Their skin and hairs are smooth with brown color and smooth texture. They are extremely creative with new ideas, lot of energy, sharp intellect and have good joyful nature. Their voice is soft and they like to speak up to the point.

Kapha constitution: These people have robust and heavy frame, hence they can carry out good manual work. They do not require large amount of foods and drinks as their body metabolism is slow. Their skin and hairs are smooth and oily.

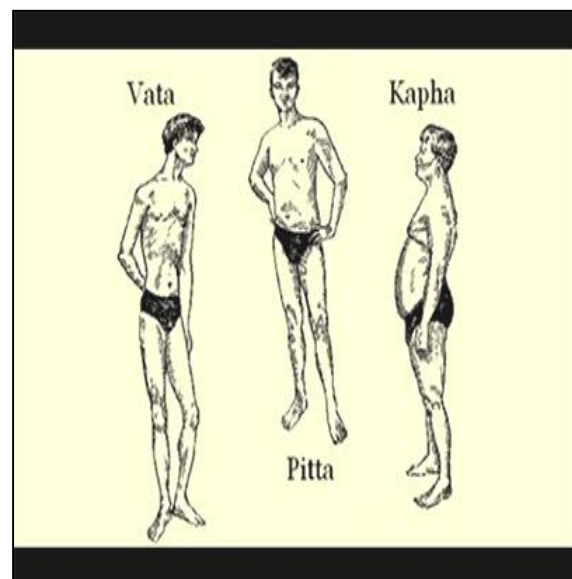


Fig 2 Assessment of *Prakriti*



Prakriti And Yogic Kriya :

Vata Prakriti¹⁵

Asana:

Asana that compress the lower abdomen will help to balance *Vata dosha* as that is the main seat for *Vata dosha*.

Following asana are good to control and regulate *Vata dosha*.

1. *Sukhasana (Fig.3)*
2. *Swastikasana*
3. *Ardhapadmasana*
4. *Padmasana (Fig.7)*
5. *Vajrasana (Fig.6)*
6. *Siddhasana (Fig.5)*
7. *Pawanmuktasana (Fig.8)*

Pranayama:

- *Suryabhedan pranayama* which decrease the *sheet guna of Vata* in the body
- Chanting mantras like *ram, sham, hum, rhim, shrim*
- *Raj yoga and Jnana yoga*

ShuddhiKriya:

- Practice *Nauli (Fig.17)*
- *Basti* is also useful to control *vata*.

Pitta Prakriti¹⁶

Asanas:

Asana that directly affect the liver and spleen regulate the strength of the digestive fire and balance *pitta dosha*.

Some of them are as follows:

1. *Viparitarani (Fig.11)*
2. *Sarvangasana (Fig.9)*

3. *Halasana (Fig.10)*

4. *Mayurasana (Fig. 12)*

Pranayama:

- *Shitali and Sitakari* reduces *ushnaguna of Pitta dosha*.

Left nostril breathing is useful for this purpose.

- Chanting of mantras like *ram, sham, hum, rhim, shrim*
- *Raj yoga and Jnana yoga*

ShuddhiKriya:

- *Dhauti (Fig.18) & Shankha prakshalan*
- Practice of *Tratak (Fig.19)*

Kapha Prakriti¹⁷

Asana:

Asana that produces more heat, helps to balance *Kapha dosha*.

Following asana is helpful to balance *Kapha dosha*

1. *Bhujangasana (Fig.14)*
2. *Dhanurasana (Fig.13)*
3. *Sarvangasana (Fig.9)*
4. *Halasana (Fig.10)*
5. *Pashchimottanasana (Fig.15)*
6. *Shirshasana (Fig.16)*

Pranayama:

- *Solar Pranayama and Bhastrika, Ujjayi pranayama*
- Chanting Mantras like *aim, rhim, hum, om* is useful



- *Bhakti yoga* and *karma yoga* are useful

ShuddhiKriya:

Dhauti (Fig.18), *Jala* (Fig.20) or *Sutra Neti* (Fig.21) for removing excess *Kapha* from sinus. *Kapalbhati* (Fig.22) for increasing *Agni*.

*Vata-Pitta Prakriti*¹⁸

Asana :

1. *Swastikasana*
 2. *Ardhapadmasana*
 3. *Padmasana* (Fig.7)
 4. *Vajrasana* (Fig.6)
 5. *Pawanmuktasana* (Fig.8)
- practices of *Pranayam*
 - Chanting of mantras like *ram, sham, hum, rhim, shrim* are good
 - *Raj yoga* and *Jnana yoga*

*Vata-Kapha Prakriti*¹⁹

- *Asana:*
 - 1. *Parvatasana*
 - 2. *Vajrasana* (Fig.6)
 - 3. *Pavanamuktasana* (Fig.8)
- *Pranayam*
 - *Rajyoga* and *Jnanayoga*

*Pitta –Kapha Prakriti*²⁰

- *Pranayam*
- *Asana:*
- 1. *Dhanurasana* (Fig.13)

2. *Sinhasana*
3. *Matsyendrasana*
4. *Mayurasana* (Fig.12)

*Pitta –Vata Prakriti*²¹

- *Asana:*
 - 1. *Swastikasana*
 - 2. *Ardhapadmasana*
 - 3. *Padmasana* (Fig.7)
 - 4. *Vajrasana* (Fig.6)
 - 5. *Pawanmuktasana* (Fig.8)
- *Pranayam*
 - Chanting of mantras like *ram, sham, hum, rhim, shrim*
 - *Raj yoga* and *Jnana yoga*

*Kapha –Vata Prakriti*²²






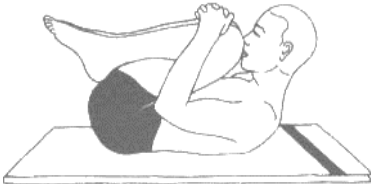
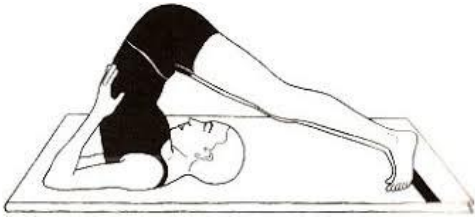




- *Asana:*
 - 1. *Parvatasana*
 - 2. *Vajrasana* (Fig.6)
 - 3. *Pavanamuktasana* (Fig.8)
- *Pranayam*
 - *Rajyoga* and *Jnanayoga*

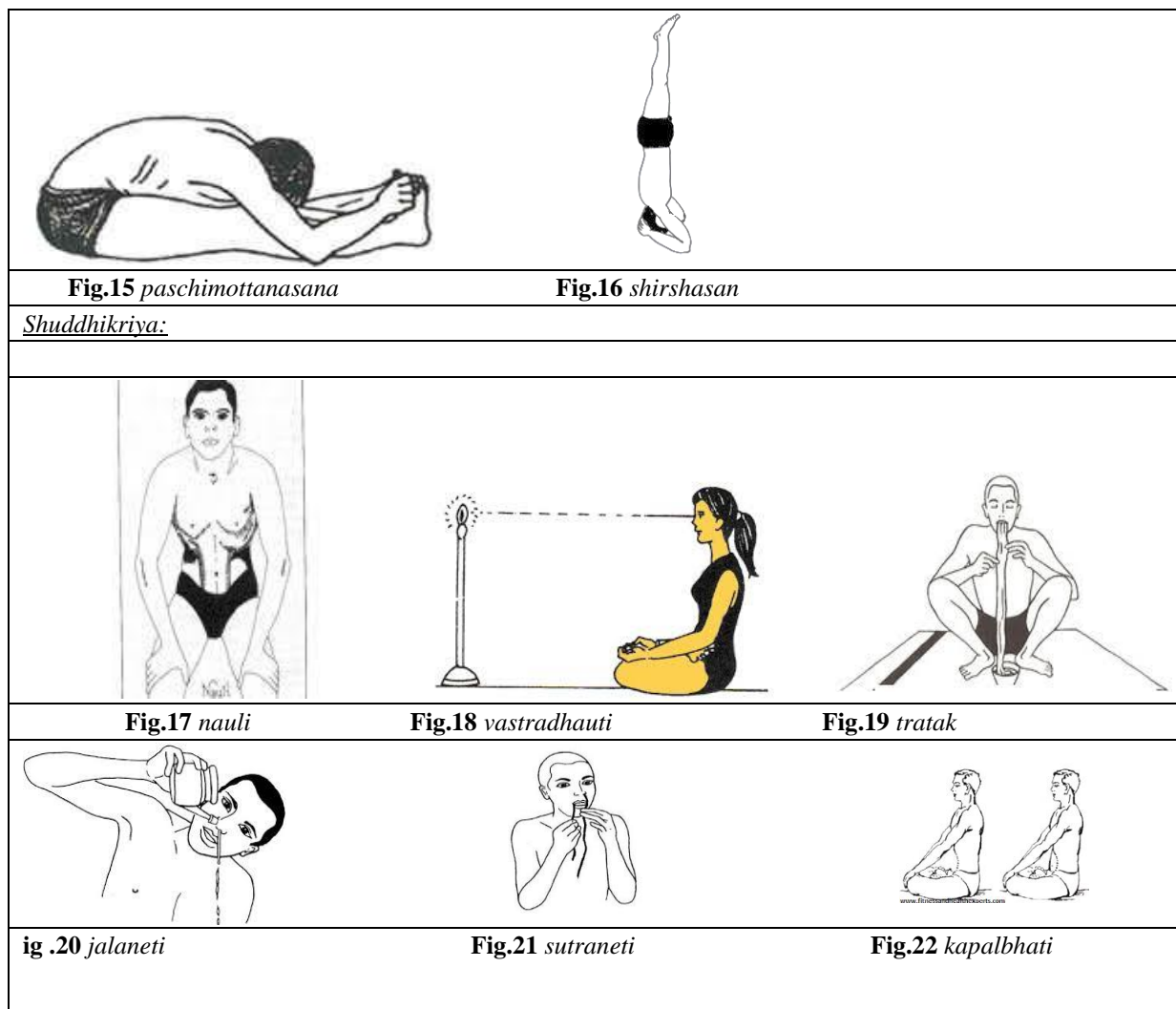
*Kapha -Pitta Prakriti*²³

- *Pranayam*
- *Asana:*
- Dhanurasana* (Fig.13)
- Sinhasana*
- Matsyendrasana*
- Mayurasana* (Fig.12)

ASANAS FOR VATA



| | | |
|---|--|--|
|  |  |  |
| Fig.3 sukhasana | Fig.4 ardha padmasana | Fig.5 siddhasana |
|  |  |  |
| Fig.6 vajrasana | Fig.7 padmasana | Fig.8 pawanmuktasana |
| Asanas For Pitta | | |
|  | | |
| Fig.9 sarvangasana | Fig.10 halasana | |
|  |  | |
| Fig.11 viparitkarani | Fig.12 mayurasana | |
| ASANAS FOR KAPHA | | |
|  |  | |
| Fig.13 dhanurasana | Fig.14 bhujangasana | |



ShuddhiKriya (Shat Karma)

Nowadays, lifestyle has become so fast and busy resulting in imbalance in *doshas*, so one needs both external and internal purification.

The *Shatkarmas* that purifies the body and activates all vital organs of the body are as follows²⁴

- i. *Neti*
- ii. *Dhouti*
- iii. *Nauli*
- iv. *Basti*
- v. *Tratak*

vi. *Kapalbhati*

*Shatkriya practices according to Prakriti*²⁵:

Dhauti– cures cough, asthma, splenomegaly, leprosy and similar skin diseases and twenty other diseases caused by *Kapha dosha*.

Basti– cures *gulma*, splenomegaly and all diseases arising due to vitiation *Vata, Pitta and Kapha* dosha

Jalabasti – resolves all *doshika* vitiations.

Neti - purifies the region of the skull and makes the sight capable of perceiving



subtle things. It also quickly removes all diseases of *kapha* in head and neck.

Trataka—relives all diseases of the eyes and *tandra*.

Nauli – Stimulates the digestive fire, improves digestion, produces happiness and destroys all diseases and disorders of the humors.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

The role of mind in immunity has been stressed in both Yoga and Ayurveda. In rejuvenation treatment for increasing immunity has been made very clear by many Ayurvedic texts. Similarly, yoga text has given methods to increase the strength of mind for this purpose. One should adopt all procedures for increasing the *Sattvic* quality of mind-*Sattvic* diet and *Sattvic* behavior. Ayurveda has explained the ethical regime for the same purpose.

The *Yama and Niyama* are the paths of prevention. *Asanas, Pranayam and Pratyahar* help to keep *tridoshas* under control and finally *Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi* help to keep the mind and ego under control. Asana bring balance, vitality and endurance.

Yoga asana balance the physical body and creates a flow of energy that helps to treat illness. According to Ayurveda,

doshas plays main role in maintaining the health of the body. So, above said *asana* helps to keep these *doshas* in balanced state.

Each Yoga asana influences the sites of the *dosha* explained in Ayurveda i.e. lower abdomen for the *Vata*, middle region for *Pitta* and stomach and chest for *Kapha*.

Yoga helps to balance:

- *Vata dosha* which calms nervous system, relax the muscles and makes the mind stable. *Kapalabhati or Sitali* aggravates *Vata dosha* should be avoided in imbalanced *vata dosha*. Practice *pranayam* to settle energy, calm the mind to reduce the increased *vata dosha*. eg. *bhramari, nadishodhan, ujjayi pranayama*.
- *Pitta dosha* which improves the strength of digestion and creates coolness and calmness in the body. *Sitali* can be practiced in hyperacidity and ulcers.
- *Kapha dosha* which in turn removes excess congestion which makes the body lighter. Practice *asana* working on the abdominal region and open the chest area. eg. *shalabhasan, dhanurasan* (fig.13)

When two *doshas* are dominant, practice combination of *asana* and *pranayam* to balance both *doshas*.

Ayurveda maintains both physical and mental health, while yoga helps for enlightenment and free their minds.



So, if one knows his *prakriti*, may practice suitable *asana* and *pranayam* to balance *dosha* will help in maintaining the health. Practicing, yoga and ayurved, together in a unique and individual way to rejuvenate, balance *doshas* allows the authentic life that nature intended.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

For maintenance of health, every person should know his or her constitution. If the daily activities, diet, occupation and behavior are not adjusted to balance the constitution, then the *doshas* will imbalance, giving rise to its characteristic diseases.

Using this concept, we can suggest different *yogic kriya* according to one's constitution to balance *doshas* in the body. Thus maintains the health. If the constitution is known herbs, diet and other regimens including yogic practices can be advised correctly both for disease treatment and to promote longevity.

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