

## HATHAYOGA AS HOLISTIC SYSTEM OF MEDICINE\*

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### ABSTRACT

This is an age of pollution and people are busy with their daily work in a greater degree than ever before with increased stress and strain. Some of the present systems of medicine including allopathy are inadequate to fulfil the demands of the time. Humanity is at the cross roads not knowing which way to turn. There does not appear to be an alternative but to seek remedy in holistic medicine, which is the treatment of the person as a whole—the body, mind, spirit and senses. It appears that there is no one school of medicine which will completely help the ailing humanity. It is high time that all branches of medicine get together. Mankind has to take advantage of all systems. In the treatment of physical ailments holistic doctors are combining traditional medical techniques with the more unconventional methods with focus on the mind, spirit and senses. Hypnosis, acupuncture, acupressure, osteopathy, psychic and spiritual healings and meditation are utilized as adjuncts to traditional therapy.

The paper aims at clarifying some misunderstandings of this system in the hope that the practitioners of other systems of medicine may use this system for prevention and cure of diseases. This is a challenging task but worthwhile to eliminate or alleviate human suffering.

This is an age of pollution of water, air and food due to rapid industrialization, consequent to the development of science and technology. Pollution leads to various disorders. Nature has its own various remarkable and valuable ways of curing diseases. The common vegetables which form part of daily food have various medicinal properties. The proper utilisation of food, water and air are greater challenge to the present world. Some of the present conditions of the world with civil wars, starwars and space sickness etc.<sup>15</sup> are increasing the rate of mental tension among people.

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Some of the present systems of medicine including allopathy are inadequate to fulfil the demands of the time. Humanity is at the cross roads not knowing which way to turn. An attempt has been made in this paper to study the role of alternate medicine for total health care i.e. holistic medicine.

Despite the advancement of science, technology and medicine, there has been a spurt in diseases. It appears that there is no one school of medicine which can completely help the ailing humanity. A recent report says that many basic drugs made in India are harmful; more than 10,000 of the basic drugs produced in the country are worthless and nearly 40 percent of them are either harmful or potentially hazardous, the voluntary health association of India claims.<sup>6</sup>

There are certain short comings in Allopathy, Unani, Ayurveda, Homoeopathy and Naturopathy. It is high time that all branches of medicine get together. Mankind has to take advantage of all the systems. There does not appear to be an alternative but to seek remedy in holistic medicine.

#### **CONCEPT OF HOLISTIC SYSTEM :**

The word holistic is derived from the Greek word *holos* which means entirety or completeness of a substance. In most medical and psychological treatments, the spiritual dimension of life is discounted.<sup>1</sup> Many people have begun to recognise the one-sidedness of particular approaches to treatment: patients and physicians alike are seeking to supplement pharmacological and surgical treatment with diet, exercise, biofeedback, and other ancillary. But this is not holistic treatment.

#### **HOLISTIC ASPECTS OF HATHA YOGA :**

Yoga applies the process of purification to all aspects of the human being. The ecological situation in which consciousness finds itself includes the human being, his environment, his body and all its functions—the air he breathes and the food he eats, his relationship with others and his manner of relating himself to others, his emotional states and habits, desires and thoughts. Yoga is truly a holistic science.

In the more orthodox western therapies, the mind, body and spirit are separated into three distinct areas, with specialists to deal with each of them independently. However, in the Yogic model, medical,

psychological and spiritual needs are dealt with synergistically. The Yoga therapist treats the human being as a whole and seeks to understand how the various aspects of a person function together. A fundamental tenet of Yoga therapy is that there is body-mind-spirit-integration.

Ayurveda has certainly influenced and consequently contributed a good deal to the Hathayogic school. For instance, in the case of physical imbalances and diseases, Hathayoga has fully accepted the Ayurvedic theory of *tridoṣa* in principle and practice<sup>10</sup>. Yogendra emphasised that Ayurveda accepted Yoga as the superior system and even exhorted that whenever Ayurveda failed to give results, recourse should be made to Yoga<sup>24</sup>.

The use of psycho-physical practices for the eradication of disease is a special contribution of Hathayoga. The yogic practices are selected on the basis of *deha prakṛti*. Ayurvedic references in Hatha Yoga have already been explicated and reported by the present writer.<sup>29</sup>

Hathayoga as a holistic system does not consist of mere *kriyas* and treatment but lays great stress on control of diet, social attitude and personal habits so as to bring about beneficial changes in the whole of the metabolic process. It is truly an integrated approach, treating man as a whole.<sup>12</sup> It is recommended that the practitioners of other systems of medicine may use yoga for prevention and cure of diseases.

#### ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE :

Alternative Medicine is, by definition, an alternative to some thing else. That something else in our context is the modern medicine.<sup>2</sup> The WHO during the deliberations at Alma Ata in 1978 defined health as a holistic, psychosomatic state of a person rather than simply as lack of disease. This understanding, namely, well-being of both the mind and body is very essential in the present context of physiological disorders grossly outstripping the purely somatic diseases.<sup>19</sup>

Modern medicine is technology oriented, expensive, doctor-centred and basically alien to India. The traditional medicines are mostly local, patient-centred, less expensive and, most important non-iatrogenic. The source of *aṣṭakarmas* of Yoga is the *pañcakarmas* of Ayurveda. While Yogis use only pure water and air for such irrigations, in the *pañcakarmas* medicated solutions are prescribed instead.

## INFLUENCE OF AYURVEDA :

Patanjali, the great exponent of Yōga (200 B.C.) says in the *kaivalyapāda* of his *Yogasūtra* that *Siddhi* can be attained even by the application of herbs or medicines.<sup>5</sup> (*ausadhi*). In the commentary of this *Sūtra*<sup>26</sup> Vyāsa<sup>6</sup> (5th c. A.D.) Vācaspati<sup>27</sup> (980 A.D.) and Sāyana Mādava<sup>4</sup> (1380 A.D.) say that *Siddhi* by *ausadhi* refers to the school of Yogins who attained perfection with the help of *rasāyana*. In Patanjali's *Yogasūtras*, we get the word *vyādhi* (disease) described as one of the disturbing factors of the mind. But Patanjali does not deal with therapeutic effects of Yoga anywhere in his *sūtras*. Ayurveda was considered as the system of therapeutics. In the works of the medieval period and mainly in Hathayoga literature, we get a glimpse of Yoga having been looked at from a therapeutical angle.

Ādinātha says the following in the fourth, *paṭala* of his '*Khecari Vidya*'.<sup>9</sup>

'*Ausadheṇa vinā Yogī na kvacit siddhimāpnuyāt*' sometimes the Yogi is not able to achieve success without the use of medicines; but they are of a *kalpa* type.

Maṭsyendranātha<sup>21</sup> (10 c. A.D.) the founder of Nātha cult advocated the treatment of diseases through '*rasāyana*'. Śrīnivāsa Bhaṭṭa Mahāyogīndra quoting this important verse in *Haṭharatnāvalī* (1-74) states as follows :

"*Rasamāre māre hemakare malajāre jāre rogahare*". By applying some chemical process, gold can be got, by burning out the dirty things in the body one can be free from diseases.

Gorakhnatha<sup>19</sup> (11 cent. A.D) supported the *kāyasiddhi* in *Amaraughā Prabodha* (1-28). Further he says that no medical book can cure a patient, so no theoretical knowledge can make one a Yogi (74) :

"*Kāyenaiva parikṣeta vākpaṭuḥ kim kariṣyati*  
*cikitsāpāṭhamātreṇa roginah kim kariṣyati*"

In the work of Ātmārāma<sup>7</sup> (1534-1634 A.D) the well-known author of *Haṭhapradīpikā* (V-22) the actual use of drugs is not mentioned but references to the medical concept are found (*ausadhikathanam*) : e.g :

‘Vaidyaśāstroktavidhinā kriyām kurvīta yatnataḥ  
Kuryādyogacikitsām ca sarvarogeṣu rogavit’

Ātmārāma had conceived quite a big range of diseases (14) like chest pain, pain in the sides, backache, headache, asthma, blood infection etc. and considered remedial measures to cure them.<sup>22</sup>

Ayurvedic ideas of Haṭharatnāvalī of Śrīnivāsabhaṭṭa Mahāyogīndra<sup>21</sup> (1625–1695 A.D.) have already been reported by the present author.

In Satkarma Sangraha<sup>11</sup> (17 cent) of Raghava, attempts have also been made to synthesise the basis of *pañchakarmas* with that of *śatkarmas*. Several herbs and their powders are prescribed for a number of diseases along with yogic practices.

Sundaradeva<sup>17</sup> of Haṭha Saṅketa Candrikā (1675–1775 A.D.) was a *vaidya* as well as a *yogi*. It is important to note the unique classification of Yogasanas followed in the above work by Sundaradeva in *tridoṣa* concept i.e. vāta, pitta and kapha.

Vemana a famous yogi<sup>16</sup> poet (1550–1650 A.D.) of Andhra region was an expert in Ayurveda and Siddha. He advocated the use of Ayurvedic medicines including *bhasmas* of iron, gold, etc.

### ANDHRA SCHOOL OF KRIYA YOGA (SIDDHA) :

In Andhra there appears to have flourished a school of *kriyayoga* the origin of which is attributed to Agastya and not to Patanjali. It is reported by Malayandi that one of the inscriptions in the Kurnool cave is interpreted to mean ‘*Siddhāntamu*’: Who was the author of this Siddhānta philosophy? There is ample evidence to show that it was taught by lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti. He was the author of Yoga: he was a great teacher. Where did he teach and who were his disciples? Saint Manickavacagar in his *Thiruvāsagaram* (3rd cent A.D.) had referred to the great teacher Dakṣiṇāmūrti having given his first ever sermon on the mount in Mahendragiri (Srikakulam Dist of A.P.). Among his famous disciples were Agastya and Nandivara<sup>14</sup>. A work entitled ‘*Kriyayoga*’ (manuscript) by Gonnepūli Ādiveṅkatayogi (17th c. A.D.)<sup>8</sup> attributes *kriyāyoga* to Agastya. This work contains two chapters treating yogic practices in the first chapter and the preparation of *rasāyana* like *sindhūram*, its utility along with yogic practices and the greatness of

*Rāmatārakamantra* in the second. Here the author upholds the great sage Agastya as the originator of *kriyāyoga*. This is clear in the following verse :

Utpanno yogamārgoyam bhavatā sthāpitaḥ punaḥ

From this it appears that there existed an independent Yoga method which was lost and was later reestablished. At other places in the work Agasthya is mentioned as the originator of *Kriyāyoga* :

“Agastyo Yoginām śreṣṭhaḥ kriyāyogamakalpayat” (I-63)

“Ayameva kriyāyogohyagastyamuninā kṛtaḥ” (I-69)”

From these it appears that there existed an independent treatise on *kriyāyoga* by Agastya.

*Kriyāyoga* is considered to be the greatest of all yogic practices. The fear of death is removed and all diseases are cured. It gives strength, energy, skill and tranquility of the mind. This is the aim of *kriyāyoga* described in the text as follows :

“kriyāyogakramoyam hi mahāyogaikasādhanam  
mṛtyubhītipraśamanam sarvaroganivāraṇam  
balapuṣṭipradam prajñācittaśāntikaram punaḥ” (I-52)

In short it has the aim of ‘*Kayasiddhi*’ with *sindūra bhasma*.

“Bhakṣayetkāyasiddhyartham sindhūram sarvasiddhidam”.

This *Kriyāyoga* is a rare combination of Yoga and *rasāyana*. From this we can fairly assume that this was a new modification of the *kriyāyoga* doctrine, as the author mentions *rasāyana* and Yoga as the means of salvation.<sup>20</sup>

Some of the Yogic treatises of tradition may now be mentioned in general and Andhra Yogis in particular who support the *rasāyana* school in their work.

Viśvanātha Avadhūta<sup>18</sup> (1874 A.D.) mentions several herbs, *bhasmas* and *guru-bhasmas* in his yogic work *Sanārī Viśveśvara Saṁvādam* in Telugu.

### **SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF HATHA YOGIC THERAPY :**

It is found that yogic therapy has no diagnostic method of its own.<sup>9</sup> Hathayoga texts described a disease in terms of *dhātvaiṣāmya* or the *tridoṣa* theory of Ayurveda.

Hatha yogic therapy has a wide scope in the life of an individual not only to remove the ailments but also to maintain good health of the body, mind and spirit. Sometimes one is not able to explain the rationale completely but there are a number of cases where unbelievable or miraculous results are obtained through Hathayogic therapy. It seems that Hathayogic therapy works on the principles of establishing "Homeostasis" in the organism as a whole.<sup>9</sup>

Hatha Yogic therapy can be effective only in some of the chronic, functional disorders. It does not seem to be useful in all diseases or the disorders of acute and structural nature. This is where alternative medical therapies can play an important role in health care. It is not the intention to make a case for the abolition of allopathy. On the contrary, it is recommended that by taking advantage of the best alternative therapies and combining them with the finest in technological medicine, people should be able to enjoy a standard of health at low cost.

Hatha yoga needs to be reoriented and standardized in the 21st century in tune with modern technology and science. There is a great need to subjective experience counterchecked by objective observation and experimentation. It is unfortunate that some of the modern researchers on fundamental research on Yoga do not include in their investigation the role of diet and the psychological aspects of the practitioner.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENT STUDY :**

Within the limits of this study the following conclusions may be drawn :

1. There is a great need for alternative medicine to achieve health for all by 2000 A D.
2. Hathayoga is viewed as a holistic system of the 21st century. The aim of Hathayoga is to maintain the homeostasis of body, mind, and spirit.
3. The influence of Ayurveda and Siddha on Hathayoga from 10th century A.D. to the 19th century is also summarized here.

4. In certain cases, Hathayogins accepted the use of herbs and *bhasmas* in their daily life.
5. It is advisable to make a synthesis of all medical systems.
6. This comparative survey of Hathayoga as a holistic system reveals that some of the methods of Hathayoga can very well be adopted by other systems of natural therapy.

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intivenuka tīga imglīka muṇḍaga  
pāradambu galuga basiḍiyela  
sattu, pottu jesi sādhipavacchurā

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सारांश

## हठयोग होलिस्टिक (पूर्णता) चिकित्सा प्रणाली के रूप में

एम. वेंकटरैड्डी

आज का युग दूषित है और लोग अपने दैनंदिन कार्यक्रम में पहले से कहीं अधिक दबाव व पीडा से व्यस्त हैं। वर्तमान समय की कुछ चिकित्सा प्रणालियाँ जिसमें अलोपती सम्मिलित है, लोगों की आवश्यकताओं को पूर्ण करने में अपर्याप्त है। मानवता चौराहे पर खड़ा है और उसको किस दिशा में मुडना है पता नहीं। यहाँ पर कोई विकल्प नजर नहीं आता, लेकिन होलिस्टिक चिकित्सा से सहायता प्राप्त करना हो जो कि व्यक्ति का पूर्ण रूप से उपचार है यथा शरीर, मस्तिष्क, जीव तथा इन्द्रियों का। ऐसा दिखाई देता है कि यहाँ पर कोई ऐसा एक चिकित्सा का स्कूल है जो कि पीडित मानवता को पूर्णरूप से मदद कर सके। अब समय की आवश्यकता है कि चिकित्सा की सभी शाखाओं को एकजुट होना होगा। मनुष्य को इन सभी प्रणालियों से लाभ उठाना होगा। भौतिक पीडाओं के उपचार में होलिस्टिक चिकित्सक परम्परागत चिकित्सा तकनीक को अधिक स्वच्छन्द पद्धतियों द्वारा मस्तिष्क, जीव तथा इन्द्रियों पर केन्द्रित कर रहे हैं। हृिपनासिस, आकुपैक्चर, आकुप्रेशर, स्टीयोपेथी, मनोविज्ञान तथा आध्यात्मिक स्वास्थ्य एवं चिन्तन को परम्परागत उपचार के लिए अनुबन्ध किया जा रहा है।

इस लेख का उद्देश्य यह है कि वह उस प्रणाली की कुछ गलत फहमियों को स्पष्ट करे जिससे यह आशा बन सके कि अन्य चिकित्सा प्रणालियों के प्राक्विशनर्स (अभ्यास करनेवाले) इस पद्धति का उपयोग बीमारियों की रोकथाम एवं उपचार के लिए कर सकें। यह एक चुनौती का काम है फिर भी मानव व्यथाओं को निकाल फेंकने या कम करने में समर्थ है।