

# Yoga and Ayurveda—A Case for Working Together

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In light of the International Yoga Day celebrated for the first time on June 21, 2015, all over the world, the rise in the popularity of yoga within the past couple of decades, and its potential for health and wellness, one wonders if Ayurveda will ever reach such a level in the public psyche.

Do yoga and Ayurveda compete with each other? Do they have conflicts with each other? Are they compatible with each other? Are they a part of each other? These are some of the fundamental questions that arise in the minds of those who come across these two systems of health and wellness.

## Global Business and Market

First, consider a few facts about the global impact of Yoga and Ayurveda. Globally, yoga is currently an \$80 billion dollar industry, with the United States accounting for about \$27 billion, or about 34% of the market. On the other hand, the global herbal trade, where Ayurveda is included, is more than a \$120 billion global industry. The United States has been estimated to carry about 11% of the herbal product trade. It is estimated that the herbal trade will be worth \$7 trillion by 2050. Just to put these figures in perspective, the global health care industry in 2015 is \$9.3 trillion, of which the U.S. share is about \$4 trillion.

The prospect of Ayurveda from the trade point of view alone is astonishing, although most of the herbal trade globally is not carried out under the ambit of Ayurveda. Ayurveda is of course more than just herbal products. It is an entire health care system that prevents people from getting sick, and it also provides curative treatments to the sick and diseased. It is a formal medical system that is taught in Ayurvedic medical colleges in India, which number in the several hundreds.

Historically, Portuguese colonizers of Goa in India made the trade of herbal medicine into a very profitable business in the 16th and 17th century, according to the historian Professor Timothy Walker of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. Interestingly, most of the Indian herbs were what would be classified as spices, such as cardamom, ginger, clove, etc.



Thus, there are multiple favorable conditions for Ayurveda to be expanded in the near future. It is already a larger industry globally, and is more amenable to scientific analysis and support than yoga, in terms of the pharmacological effects of herbs and other Ayurvedic concepts.<sup>1-2</sup> The current business of herbal products (Ayurveda) is about a third of what it is for yoga in the United States, providing more opportunity for expansion. Furthermore, Ayurveda is expandable through cooking and food, which obviously touches everyone on a daily basis. Finally, Ayurveda is a solid academic field with well-defined curriculum and degree programs, making it a possible to place it on institutional foundations.

## Philosophical Connection

To address the questions about yoga and Ayurveda, one must look at them beyond the business and trade issues where they may be perceived as competing with each other. Health in Vedic philosophy is defined as a balance in body and mind. Ayurveda generally focuses on the body whereas yoga deals with

the mind, but it is the equilibrium between the two that determines health, which in Sanskrit is called *swasthya*, meaning to be established in self. The self is the *atma* or soul which completes the constitution of *tridanda* in Ayurveda that makes the immortal essence of a living individual.<sup>3</sup> Thus, yoga and Ayurveda are integral parts of the system for human health and well-being.

Ayurveda and yoga are sister sciences, according to Ayurveda master Vasant Lad. "Yoga is the science of union with the Ultimate Being. Ayurveda is the science of living, of daily life. When yogis perform certain postures and follow certain disciplines, they open up and move energies [*pranas*] that have accumulated and stagnated in the energy centers [*cakras*]."<sup>4</sup>

Ayurveda recommends specific types of yoga that are suitable for a person, according to his/her body constitution. For example, for asthma in a *Vata* constitution person, the recommended *asanas* are backward bend, plough, knee to chest, and corpse, whereas for a *kapha* constitution person the recommended *asanas* are half wheel, bow, boat, shoulder stand, palm tree, fish, and cobra.<sup>4</sup>

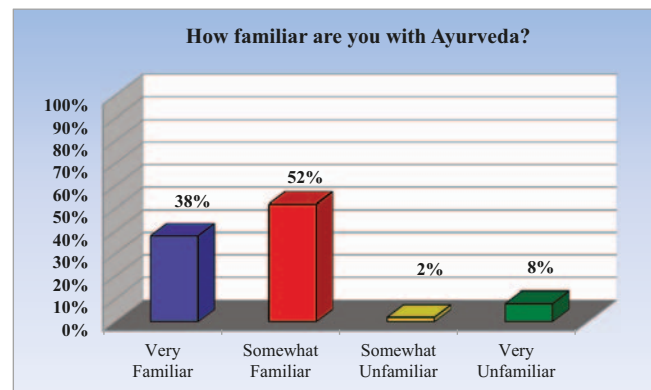
Similarly, there is a correlation between Patanjali's *astanga* yoga and Ayurveda's *astacakra*, according to Acharya Balkrishna of Patanjali Yog Peeth, Haridwar, India. In this scheme, *Yamas* (non-violence,

truth, non-stealing, celibacy, non-covetousness), *Niyamas* (cleanliness, satisfaction, penance, study of self, and surrender to supreme), *Asanas* (postures), *Pranayamas* (breath extension), *Pratyaharas* (sensory withdrawal), *Dharana* (concentration), *Dhyana* (meditation), and *Samadhi* (deep transcendental meditation) are associated with *muladhara*, *swadhisthana*, *manipura*, *anahata*, *visuddhi*, *ajna*, *manas*, and *sahasrara cakras*, respectively.<sup>3</sup>

It is quite clear that the basic practices of Ayurveda and yoga are intertwined through prana, the primordial energy that is the source of all vital forces of *tridoshas* and *trigunas*, both of which interact with the mind for the ultimate reflection from *atma* or the self. Pranayama of yoga and Tejas of Ayurveda allow the creation of balance in life forces. The question is, will *prana* intertwine Ayurveda and yoga in advancing this knowledge in today's world for public health and harmony?

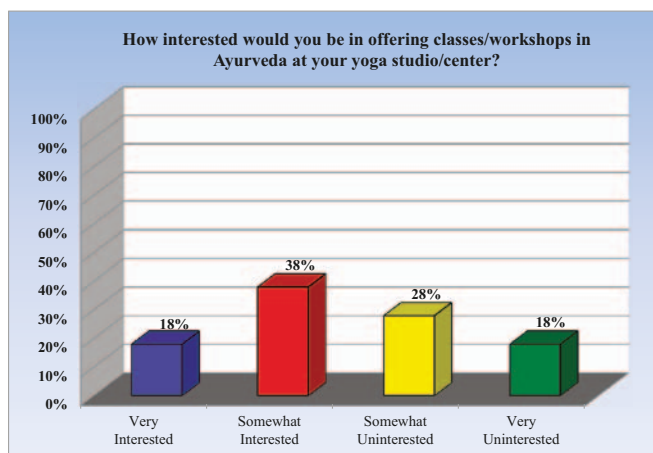
### Ayurveda Survey of Yoga Studio

In 2013 we conducted a limited survey of local yoga studios in the New England region to gauge the awareness, need, and interest in Ayurveda. Here are the results based on 50 studios which responded to the questionnaire.



It is highly encouraging that 90% of yoga studios are familiar with Ayurveda. However, not a single one of these studios offered any classes on Ayurveda. When asked if they offer workshops on Ayurveda, 20% of respondents answered in the affirmative, suggesting there is interest in the field. For the future, there are encouraging prospects for Ayurveda and yoga to work together, as over 50% of yoga studios would like to offer Ayurveda classes.





In terms of their 2012 income, 14% of respondents had annual revenues of less than \$25,000, 8% had annual revenues of \$25,000–\$49,999, 14% had annual revenues of \$50,000–\$99,000, 8% had annual revenues of \$100,000–199,999, 4% had annual revenues of \$200,000 or more, and 52% did not know or had no response.

It seems, therefore, that there is a need, willingness, and business opportunity for yoga studios to join hands with Ayurveda service providers to expand their offerings, increase revenue, and advance the use of Ayurveda.

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### References

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- 4 Lad, V. Longevity. In *Ayurveda – the science of self healing*. 1984; Chapter XII, pp. 109–128.

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