ABSTRACT

Introduction and Background: Yogashastra and Ayurveda are two ancient Indian sciences that have evolved separately over millennia. Many masters have contributed to the growth and development of these sciences and they have produced seminal literature and body of knowledge in both these streams. The goals and objectives of these two sciences differ from each other and accordingly their approaches too differ from each other.

Both in Yogashastra and Ayurveda, the concept of Vayu has very important place. Current effort is undertaken from the viewpoint to unravel the complementary and contradictory aspects and explore the possibility of combining the concepts so as to evolve the holistic approach.

Aim: To compare the concept of Vayu as described in Yogashastra and in Ayurveda.

Discussion and Results: Yogashastra the concept of Vayus is aimed solely at attaining mastery over the bodily Vayus by following Yogic disciplines to attain Moksha or final emancipation of the soul from the unending cycle of birth and death. This puts the Yogic discussion of Vayus in the realm of highest spiritual practices with the ultimate conceivable goal of human life that can be taught only by the accomplished masters and eligible seekers who fulfil the strictest eligibility criteria stipulated by Yogic discipline.

On the other hand in Ayurveda the concept of Vayus is from the perspective of knowing physiology and causes of various diseases and their treatment by means of various therapies and medicines. All these things are essentially corporeal in nature and do have worldly goals to achieve.

KEY WORDS: Vayu, Prana, Yogashastra, Ayurved.

INTRODUCTION:

Yogashastra and Ayurveda are two ancient Indian sciences that deal with well being (Kalyana) of human life as a whole. There are similarities and areas of
differences in the concept of Vayu in both these ancient sciences. One wonders how the great sages and researchers of the yore from both these fields separately thought about this concept and came to similar and/or different conclusions. At this juncture, when the accumulated knowledge and literature on both these sciences is available for deeper inquiry and investigation with modern scientific aids and research methodologies, it is worthwhile to compare this concept in two shastras in comprehensive manner.

**AIM:**

To compare the concept of Vayu as described in Yogashastra and in Ayurveda.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS:**

The very nature (it is a conceptual and literary research project) and scope of research on the concerned topic implies its research methodology. The research topic demands very wide and comprehensive references from the seminal literature on the topic of research both from Yogashastra and Ayurveda.

Accordingly, the classics written by great masters will be referred for concrete references, detailed descriptions and discussions on the topic of research. The relevant information and data thus gleaned shall be arranged properly to evolve homogeneous and seamless understanding of the concept of Vayu in each of two shastras namely Yogashastra and Ayurveda.

From the understanding thus established, the keen comparison shall be made between the two distinct approaches and areas of similarities and differences shall be established, elaborated and presented.

**DISCUSSION AND RESULTS:**

‘Vayu’ is a Sanskrit word that signifies different meanings such as air, God of the wind, wind, breath, wind of the body or vital wind or the chief Vayu of body, one of the five elements of nature etc. Sanskrit word ‘Vata’ is used synonymously with the word ‘Vayu’. Vayu is the entity that signifies speed and spread - वायु - वा गति गन्धनयो: The ‘Vayu’ has wider connotations that pervade everything that has speed and spread along with the force to act and strength to carry things with it. The concept of ‘Vayu’ with reference to human life has a great significance both in Ayurveda and Yogashatra. We try to compare the adoption of this concept in Ayurveda and Yogashatra and show the similarities and differences thereof.

Before we proceed with the central theme of our discussion, let us revisit the concept of Vayu. As we have discussed before, Vayu is something that makes itself evident with its speed and spread along with the force to act and strength to carry things with it. It is the principle of strength, dynamism and all pervasiveness that we are trying to capture rather than the physical phenomenon itself. It is the essence of the phenomenon, the ‘windiness’ of the wind that we must distillate and put in perspective in order to take our discussion forward. Here, we are talking about Vayu pertaining to living human body from the points of view of both Ayurveda and Yoga.
At this juncture, it is imperative for us to ponder over the concept of Prana. The Sanskrit word Prana is made by putting prefix ‘Pra’ before Dhatu ‘An’ which signifies the life force or the vital energy. Thus, the word Prana means the vital energy or the very quality that differentiates the living from the non living: the sentience, the cognition, the consciousness, the psychosomatic gamut, the corporeal and the metaphysical domains, the occult, the mystical, the unknown, the unexplored etc individually and all rolled in one.

Ancient Indian Darshanas termed Prana as a vital energy residing in the living body and, for the sake of our limited topic, we can safely assume the same to be Brahman or Atman.

For eg.:

प्राणं देवा अनु प्राणतन्ि। मनुष्य: पशवश्च ये। प्राणो हि भूतानामामुः। तस्मात्तवायुपस्यायणां। सबंभवं त आयुपस्य ये प्राणं ब्रह्मोपासिे। - तैत्तिरियोपनिषद् तृतीय अनुवाक

Devas follow Prana and perform activities of Prana (Pranam Kriya). Similarly humans and other animals also perform activities of Prana (Pranam Kriya) and remain active.

प्राणं देवा अनुप्राणतन्ि। प्राणात्मक अन्याय: प्राणायम् प्राणं ब्रह्मोपासिे। तत्तथाभवं भव: प्राणतन्ि प्राणायम् कृत्वम्। - तैत्तिरियोपनिषद् तृतीय अनुवाक

Agni etc. Devas follow Prana in the form of Vayu which is endowed with the power of Prana and perform activities of Prana. Different organs follow Prana and perform different activities. All humans and animals perform different activities because of Prana.

This is the soul of the earlier mentioned Annamay Kosh (the body form made up of food)-the one who lives in Annamay Kosh. Who? This is the one who is Pranamay (with Prana).

“Prana in the body of individual (jivatma) is part of the cosmic breath of the Universal Spirit (Paramatma)”. - Light on Yoga by B.K.S.Iyengar

Thus, in Yogashastra also this Prana only is believed to exist in the living body in the form of different Vayus performing different functions at various places.

Doshas in Ayurved:

दोषधािुमलामूलं ति शरीरं, तस्मात्तदेवयां लक्षणमुवास्यानामाधारय। - सु. १५.३

As per Ayurveda, Dosha, Dhatu and Mal are root factors of the living body. Their normal functions maintain homeostasis in the living body. These factors are responsible for birth, sustenance and death of human body. We keep Dhatu and Mal out of discussion and focus our attention on Doshas. Vata, Pitta and Kapha are three Doshas.

ते शरीरिकजन्मान:। -अंस.शा. ८.१२

-Chakradatta
**Doshas** start functioning at the very beginning of life. Doshas organize Dhatu in proper order in intra-uterine life so that they are maintained subsequent to birth.

Dosha is the original form of the word वाति (Vati), वायू (Vayu). वाति शुभ (Vati Shubha) and वायू अशुभ (Vayu Ashubh) are the two principles of Ayurveda, the former is good and the latter is bad.

Doshas traverse the whole body and perform beneficial as well as harmful functions. When body is in homeostatic condition, Doshas ensure good nourishment, strength and glow of health on the skin etc. When disturbed, Doshas cause diseases.

By applying another grammar rule (आिो युक् कृिो उण्) उण् is applied to root verb which, by rule, becomes युक् and by removing क् we get word वायु वात पुलल्लंगे, वा अधिक तः = वाता:। स्थरमात्रविशेषणुपकृिे पवतुमेिे पवतुमेिे वा। - शबदस्तोम

Thus, both ‘Vata’ and ‘Vayu’ are exact synonyms of each other and both signify same action and function.

- चू. २०.१०

Doshas traverse the whole body and perform beneficial as well as harmful functions. When body is in homeostatic condition, Doshas ensure good nourishment, strength and glow of health on the skin etc. When disturbed, Doshas cause diseases.

In homeostatic condition, the three Doshas are balanced and act as pillars of healthy body. When disturbed, these Doshas cause diseases and harm to body.

Out of aforementioned three Doshas, we will restrict our discussion to Vata Dosha only as it has the relevance to our current topic. Sanskrit words Vayu, Pavan, Marut, Anil, Samir are synonymous to the word Vata. In the word Vata, the root word is ‘वा’ गतियंगमयरिति धातु:, तन् is applied to this verb and न न is removed so as to get the word वात्, by rule.

Gatiyamayari poi dhatu : - रामेंगियाणिमन्दिरुप्तुयत्तं - ३३.८६ - उ. ३७३ - इति मूलोत्पन्न तन् प्रत्यये वात् इति रूपम्। - डल्लण

By applying another grammar rule (आिो युक् त्रिन कृिो) उण् is applied to root verb which, by rule, becomes युक् and by removing क् we get word वायु वात पुलल्लंगे, वा अधिक तः = वाता:। स्थरमात्रविशेषणुपकृिे पवतुमेिे पवतुमेिे वा। - शबदस्तोम

Thus, both ‘Vata’ and ‘Vayu’ are exact synonyms of each other and both signify same action and function.

- चू. २१.१३

In Ayurveda, Doshas remain in two conditions in body: physiological and pathological. In physiological condition they help body maintain body physiology thus leading to good health and when vitiated they cause diseases. Vata is the leader of three Doshas, or biological controllers.

- In Yoga, there is no concept of Dosha. The concept of ‘Vayu’ in Yoga is not limited to physiology or cause of diseases. It transcends the connotations of physical health and medical investigative purpose and embraces not only the universal domain of healthy, productive, peaceful and disease free corporeal living but also
resolution of metaphysical issues and attainment of Moksha or final liberation of the soul.

- In Ayurveda, Vata Dosha is supposed to be vitiated either by other two Doshas viz. Kapha and Pitta or by external factors which are limited to chiefly Aahar (diet) and Vihaar (life style) which belong to material plane of life and the vitiation thus caused is remedied by medicinal treatment which originates from different Dravyas (existing elements).

- On the contrary, in Yoga, it is firmly believed and stated that Vayus in body are manifestations of Prana which is the cosmic life force. On the basis of sound experimentation by different Yogis of the yore it is firmly postulated that it is possible for the human individual to attain total mastery or control over Vayus in body and arouse the Yogic power called Kundalini to attain the final emancipation of the soul or the Moksha.

- In Ayurveda, there is a therapeutic approach to disease treatment called Tridoshchikitsa. In Tridoshchikitsa, of major significance in Vatachikitsa as Vata is the leader of three Doshas (वायुस्तंत्रयंत्रधर: ...)

- In Yogashastra, there is a distinct discipline of Pranayama by which the seeker practices and masters the Vayus and controls their functions inside the body so as to attain blissful and healthy physical existence and control over the mind and its functions so as to eventually achieve the spiritual salvation or Moksha (liberation of the soul).

- In Ayurveda, there is a sharp focus on treatment of diseases and physical well being of the human being with mental and spiritual health as consequential outcome. Vaatchikitsa plays a major role in this:

- In Yogashastra, the aim is not limited only to physical and mental well being and disease free living. Yogashastra aims at having total control over functioning of body, mind and spirit by disciplining the Vayus in body and attaining total control over them though Pranayama. The final aim of Yogashastra is to terminate the endless cycle of birth and death and attain the Parampada wherefrom the soul never comes back to earthly existence.

- In Vatachikitsa in Ayurveda, there are clear prescriptions – dos and don’ts – of Ahaar (diet) and Vihaar (lifestyle) so as to avoid vitiation of Vata Dosha. These prescriptions depend on seasons and climactic conditions and overall Prakriti of the person. There exists whole body of knowledge of different Dravyas (the substances with medicinal properties) which are used in Vatachikitsa. Thus, the Vatachikitsa in Ayurved is supported by body of knowledge
about diverse materials pertaining to foods and medicines and the physical climactic conditions and body climate and their interrelationship. The results of Vaatchikitsa are self-evident and visible to the observers.

- In Yogashastra, the abstract idea of controlling the bodily Vayus through Pranayama and different Mudras is at the centre. The very procedures of Pranayama and Mudras are elaborated and these do not need any material or other assistance except the exact knowledge and guidance received from a capable Master or Guru. Once the seeker masters these practices, what transpires inside his/her body, mind, intellect and spirit is not visible to any outsider but it only can be experienced by the Yogi himself. The distinguishing feature of Pranayama and related Yogic practices is that it needs no other instrument/s but one’s body to attain the highest result of total control over the nature and its forces and the perpetual bliss of Moksha.

- In Ayurveda, any person of either gender belonging to any age group, if falls sick, is benefitted by Vatachikitsa and regains his/her vigor and vitality after undergoing due treatment and following all ‘dos and don’ts’ strictly.

- In Yogashastra, a seeker who wishes to pursue discipline of Yoga and practice Pranayama and control over Vayus, must follow strict codes of conduct namely Yama, Niyama, Asana etc. and must have reached renunciation of or enlightened detachment from corporeal life.

- In Ayurveda, the concept of nadis (astral tubes/channels/vessels etc) is not discussed very elaborately. It is limited to nerves only. Rather, in Ayurveda the spinal cord itself is referred to as Sushumna Nadi as a part of anatomy of nervous system. In Vatachikitsa, not much importance is given to Sushumna or any other nadi except in the treatment of related ailments.

- In Yogashastra, Nadis (astral tubes/channels/vessels etc) are discussed in great details as the retainers and conductors of different Vayus as Pranashakti and there is great emphasis put on Nadishuddhi as a vital Part of Pranayama. In Yogashastra, Sushumna Nadi has a special significance as the conductor of spiritual energy and the chief instrument in awakening and conducting Kundalini power.

- In Ayurveda, there is no mention of Kundalini as the dormant spiritual energy in human body that can be awakened by controlling the Prana and Apan Vayus chiefly.

- In Yogashastra, there is not only distinct mention of Kundalini as...
the dormant spiritual energy situated in *Muladhar Chakra* in coiled form, but the whole Yogic discipline is aimed at controlling, chiefly, *Prana* and *Apan Vayus* inside the body and directing them to awaken this dormant energy and cause it to rise through *Sushumna Nadi* to reach Brahmarandhra and attain *Moksha*.

- In Ayurveda, all Vayus are considered to be involuntary in nature and attaining mastery over individual Vayus is not discussed. Consequently, there is no concept of attainment of different *Siddhis* (special attainments by mastering Vayus and thereby controlling forces of nature). Also in Ayurveda, there is no concept of doing ‘Sanyam’ on specific places or locations in body to get rid of ailments or to attain special powers.

- In Yogashastra, the central theme itself is all about establishing control over Vayus in body and there is distinct mention of Siddhis (special attainments by mastering Vayus and thereby controlling the forces of nature) by establishing mastery over individual Vayus such as *Prana Jay, Apan Jay, Saman Jay, Udan Jay* etc. Also, Yogashastra elaborately describes the effects of doing ‘Sanyam’ on different specific locations or places in body, in terms of remedies from ailments and attainment of different *Siddhis*.

- In Ayurveda, the highest importance is given to *Vata Dosha* which is termed as the leader of all three *Doshas*.

- In Yogashastra, Vayus of body are central to all Yogic practices and the whole discipline of Yoga revolves around controlling these Vayus.

- In Ayurveda, just as in Yogashastra, five chief Vayus are mentioned namely *Prana, Udan, Saman, Vyan* and *Apan*.

- Thus, in Ayurveda, the discussion of Vata is constrained in scope to Vata as a chief biological controller, as a *Dosha* in vitiated condition as a cause of various diseases and in general, from medical point of view.

- In Ayurveda, there is no specific reference to colour and texture of any Vayus.

- In Yogashastra, the colours and textures of different Vayus are described.

- In Ayurveda, five Vayus namely *Prana, Udan, Saman, Vyan* and *Apan* are mentioned.

- In Yoga, the concept of Vayu is more elaborate in the sense unlike Ayurveda, in all, ten Vayus are described in Yoga viz. *Prana, Udan, Saman, Vyan, Apana, Naag, Kuurm, Kukkar, Devadatta* and *Dhananjay*. 
## Sthana and Karma of Vayus in Ayurveda and Yogashastra

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Vayu</th>
<th>As in Ayurveda</th>
<th>As in Yogashastra</th>
<th>Place (Sthana) and Functional Area</th>
<th>Place (Sthana) and Functional Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Prana</td>
<td>Head, Chest, Neck</td>
<td>Belching, Expectoration, Ingestion of food, Respiration, Sneezing, Sustains whole body,</td>
<td>Heart, Mouth, and Nose, Navel Sphere, Big toe, Throat</td>
<td>Breathing, Sustains Jeevatma, Separates food and water inside abdominal cavity, Spread blood and other fluids, It imparts power to pulsate ie the very life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Udan</td>
<td>Chest, Nose, Umbilicus, Neck</td>
<td>Speech, Strength, Energy, Glow of skin, Memory, all body functions</td>
<td>Throat, Leg Joints and Hand Joints, All joints of body, Upper and Lower Limbs,</td>
<td>Lifts the unwanted substances in body upwards,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Saman</td>
<td>In Gastro-Intestinal Tract as digestive fire</td>
<td>Digestive fire, Circulates Doshas, Excreta, Semen, Ovum etc., Ingests, digests, Churns, absorbs and assimilates.</td>
<td>Navel region, Occupies whole body, Upper and Lower Limbs</td>
<td>Nourishes the body, Keeps all Vayus closer to each other, Transports food etc all over the body with the help of Agni, Helps Prana spread blood and fluids all over body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Vyan</td>
<td>Heart and Whole Body</td>
<td>Constrictions, Eyelid Reflexes, Relaxations and other body movements, Circulation of Rasas, Sweating and other excretions, Bleeding, Coital Discharge of Semen, Permeating intra-cellular spaces, Sweating, Yawning etc.</td>
<td>All organs of body, two ears, thigh, waist, shoulders, neck, seat, eyes, Heels, Throat, Spleen etc.</td>
<td>Facilitates breathing, Creates Sound, To ingest and to throw out,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Apan</td>
<td>Lower Body, Pelvis, Bladder, Penis, Thighs</td>
<td>Reflexes of groins, penis, testes, ejaculation of semen, delivery of babies and menstruation, Discharge of urine and feces</td>
<td>Anus, Reproductive Organs, Thighs and Knees, Abdomen, Waist, Groins</td>
<td>Excretory functions such as discharge of urine and feces,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Naag</td>
<td>Skin, bones, throat to mouth.</td>
<td>Belching, Hiccups, Vomiting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Kuurm</td>
<td>Eyes</td>
<td>Opening-closing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The difference in concept of Vayu in Ayurveda and Yogashastra is on account of the fact that in Yogashastra, the focus is solely on Moksha which is the fourth Purushartha while in Ayurveda the focus is on achieving good health so as to perform all four Purusharthas namely Dharma, Artha, Kaam and Moksha to the best possible extent.

CONCLUSION:

From the above discussion it can be concluded that in Yogashastra the concept of Vayus is aimed solely at attaining mastery over the bodily Vayus by following Yogic disciplines to attain Moksha or final emancipation of the soul from the unending cycle of birth and death. This puts the Yogic discussion of Vayus in the realm of highest spiritual practices with the ultimate conceivable goal of human life that can be taught only by the accomplished masters and eligible seekers who fulfill the strictest eligibility criteria stipulated by Yogic discipline.

On the other hand in Ayurveda the concept of Vayus is from the perspective of knowing physiology and causes of various diseases and their treatment by means of various therapies and medicines. All these things are essentially corporeal in nature and do have worldly goals to achieve.

Thus, it can be obviously concluded that concept of Vayus in Yogashastra is much more comprehensive than in Ayurveda.

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