

On Yoga and Chiropractic

There are many philosophies on health, but two major divisions, usually categorized as Eastern and Western points of view. As small as the world is today, it was only a matter of time before these seemingly different points of view would meld. I will mostly use yoga as an example of Eastern philosophy, and chiropractic as an example of Western philosophy.

There are just as many Eastern philosophies as there are Western philosophies. Both East and West are trying to attain longevity and vitality. One Eastern philosophy that is becoming increasingly popular is yoga. While there are many different forms of yoga, most have the purpose of using the body as a vehicle for enlightenment.

There are five main principles in yoga philosophy:

1. proper relaxation that trains the body to release muscle tension, conserve energy, and let go of all worries and fears;
2. proper exercise done through yoga postures (*asanas*), which systematically work all parts of the body by stretching the muscles and ligaments, thereby keeping the spine and joints flexible while improving circulation;
3. proper diet of natural foods to keep the body light and supple, while giving a high resistance to disease;
4. positive thinking and meditation to help remove negative thoughts and calm the mind; and
5. proper breathing.

I mention breathing last, as this is the focus of my paper. Proper breathing is breathing fully and rhythmically, thereby making use of all lung capacity, eventually increasing oxygen intake. (It's interesting to note that the sacral pump's function would be increased if both posture and breathing were practiced more). Yoga breathing exercises (*pranayama*) train a person to recharge the body and control the mental state by controlling the flow of life force (*prana*). *Prana* is in matter, but it is not matter. This is conserved through the chakras, which are centers of energy. There are seven chakras, six of which correlate to neurological plexuses:

1. *muladhara* (sacral plexus)
2. *swadhisthana* (prostatic plexus)

3. *manipura* (solar plexus)
4. *anahata* (cardiac plexus)
5. *vishudda* (parallel to the laryngeal plexus)
6. *ajna* (between the eyebrows and corresponds to the cavernous plexus)
7. *sahasrara* (pineal gland), known as the crown chakra.

Nadis are nerve channels through which *prana* flows. The *sushumna nadi* is the spinal cord; and the *pingala nadi* and *ida nadi* are correlated with the sympathetic ganglia of the spinal cord. *Asanas* and *pranayama* are designed to purify *nadis*. When these *nadis* are blocked, *prana* cannot flow freely, and poor health results.

Chiropractic is based on a law that governs the universe. It states that there is a universal intelligence in all matter that continually gives it all its properties and actions, therefore maintaining it in existence. This is divided into living and nonliving matter. Living matter has a finite portion of universal intelligence called innate intelligence. (Nonliving matter only possesses universal intelligence.) This innate intelligence governs the body without a person's conscious thought. For example, the body knows how much hydrochloric acid to secrete in the stomach without having to think about it. This innate intelligence maintains the active organization of matter. Innate intelligence expresses itself throughout the innate brain. This is what innate intelligence uses to assemble mental impulses. These mental impulses are small bundles of innate intelligence. There is also an innate body. This is defined as the cells supplied with mental impulses for the involuntary functions (i.e., metabolism, growth, heart rate, etc.). This is equivalent to Deepak Chopra's quantum mechanical body.

There are also the ideas of the educated brain and the educated body. The educated brain is used by innate intelligence as an organ for memory, reason, education and other voluntary functions. The educated brain is viewed as another organ with a specific function. Some areas of gray matter serve as the educated brain, such as the frontal lobe. The educated brain is supplied with mental impulses from the innate brain via the nervous system. The educated body all the tissues supplied with mental impulses from the innate brain via the educated brain for the purpose of voluntary function (i.e., skeletal muscle movement).

Having given a brief synopsis of yoga and chiropractic philosophies, I will concentrate on the yogic idea of *prana* and innate intelligence. How they are controlled and related. Innate intelligence is in living matter, whereas *prana* is in all matter. Intelligence is divided into universal (which everything possesses) and innate (which only living matter possesses). *Prana* is not divided into living and nonliving, but all things are energy (vibrating at a different rate). Innate intelligence relates to distinctly organized matter called "living." Since matter without innate is not living, innate intelligence is considered the source of all living activity. *Prana* is the life force in matter, but is not matter (as is innate intelligence). *Prana* flows along the neurological pathways (as does innate intelligence). If this flow of energy is interrupted, disease will result. This energy has been called many different names by many different cultures (i.e., vital energy, life force, *qi*, etc.). Regardless of what one calls it, without it there is no life.

According to yogi philosophy, this energy can be affected by breathing techniques. (Yoga breathing is not the only way to control breathing. There are a vast number of methods, - *qigong*, Zen meditation, visualization, etc.). If this is true, it may be possible to get in touch with and control our innate and eventually universal intelligence.

It is easier to go from innate to breath than from breath to innate, I make the analogy to running uphill (breath>innate) and downhill (innate>breath). It is very easy to go downhill, because that is the way gravity works, much like innate intelligence. It does not take training or conditioning to accomplish this. This is similar to the way the body relates to innate intelligence. Innate intelligence programs run at optimum and without thought, as when after a candy bar is eaten, the body produces insulin to increase glucose uptake into cells. In this way, innate intelligence runs downhill.

Running uphill is different. It takes training, time and dedication. Comparatively, to affect our innate, it takes training, time and dedication. Using this principle of breathing and its relation to innate, we can affect innate intelligence. Perhaps breathing is the best way to get in touch with our innate, because it bridges the gap between innate body and the gap between innate body and educated body. The breathing mechanism is part of the innate body; we breathe but don't think about it. We can, with education, stop this innate function at any time. This could be the window needed for self-awareness and realization.

By focusing on breathing, we can get in touch with our bodies, becoming more aware of how we feel, what hurts, our digestion and pulse, etc. Innate intelligence can make one conscious of that need by stimulating the educated brain. This is via the reticular activation system. Sometimes in the everyday hustle we neglect to eat, postpone going to the bathroom, etc. We are so caught up thinking about a multitude of matters that we don't listen to our bodies. The educated brain can only concentrate on a few things at a time. The brain stem can filter out signals from our bodies and prioritize incoming messages from the body. For example: You've been running around trying to get work done, when suddenly you realize you're hungry. Since eating gives us energy, it is a crucial signal to the brain. Unnoticed is that pain in your foot, until you stop working or are finished eating. This is the reason for breathing exercises. By increasing one's energy and controlling it, one may be able to relieve chronic problems. This has been shown in several studies on *qigong* and health, and yoga and health. In studies, *qigong* practitioners have shown increased immunity response,^{1,2} improved efficiency of approximately 20 percent³ in ventilation equivalent for O₂ and CO₂, and improved mental concentration and calming affect on brain activity.³

By turning our thoughts and senses inward, we are able to get in touch with our bodies. If we get in touch with the innate brain via mental impulses, we eventually get in touch with our innate. If we use mental impulses to affect our innate intelligence, we eventually affect the entire organism, and perhaps get directly in touch with innate intelligence. Regardless of the exact mechanism, the goals of self-awareness and healing can be obtained.

Yoga has also been studied for its therapeutic effects. It has helped lower glucose levels in noninsulin-dependent diabetics;⁴ it can reduce weight and increase calmness;⁵ and it has reduced symptoms and drug requirements in bronchial asthma patients.⁶ It has reduced visual and auditory reaction times and increased respiratory pressures, breath-holding times and hand grip strength.⁷ Yoga has also helped in rheumatoid arthritis⁸ and osteoarthritis.⁹ It has also had beneficial effects with anxiety¹⁰ and various psychosomatic disorders.¹¹ In one study, hatha yoga showed lower levels of cortisol, plasma prolactin concentration, higher concentration of plasma growth hormone, and

decreased heat rate.¹²

I would now like to take the time to point out some other similarities between chiropractic and yoga, such as diet and exercise. Chiropractic and yoga firmly believe that you are what you eat. A pure and moderated diet is the best possible guarantee of physical and mental health, bringing harmony and vitality to body and mind. In chiropractic philosophy, there is a concept of limitation of matter. Innate intelligence works 100 percent of the time and is perfect, however, the material it works in is not. The material is the body, and it (unfortunately) has a tendency to get old and break down. To be at optimum health, innate intelligence must have an optimum medium in which to work. An optimum body, via good nutrition, would give innate intelligence as close to a perfect medium as is physically possible.

Another mutual concept is exercise. Exercise is essential to health. There must be a certain amount of activity for our bodies to be healthy. Unfortunately, I believe the American society has put an overemphasis on exercise to the point of stressing the body to induce subluxation. Yoga is a "no-stress" exercise that lets people work at their own pace and endurance. Ironically enough, during the asanas, posture is continually focused upon. This prevents subluxation and the impingement of vital energy. This brings up another similarity: The idea of positive thought is also inherent in chiropractic philosophy. There are three things that can induce a subluxation, causing an impingement on vital energy. They are: trauma (bodily harm); toxins (poor nutrition, environmental, self-induced, as through cigarette smoking), and thought. Negative thoughts can cause stress on the body, thereby causing muscle tension, and possibly a subluxation.

Given the similarities between yoga and chiropractic, I believe yoga is an effective lifestyle that works wonderfully in conjunction with chiropractic.

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AUGUST 2001