



Adhyatmika Guna and its casual relationship with health and disease

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Adhyatmika Guna, including Buddhi (intellect), Sukha (happiness), Dukha (misery), Iccha (desire), Dwesha (hatred), and Prayathna (effort), represent essential spiritual and psychological qualities that significantly influence both mental and physical health. These qualities interact with the body's natural systems, affecting emotional stability, cognitive function, and overall vitality. Ayurveda, with its holistic approach, emphasizes the importance of balancing these Adhyatmika Guna to maintain harmony between the body, mind, and spirit. In Ayurvedic philosophy, these Gunas are seen as interconnected with the Doshas (biological energies) and Dhatus (tissues), directly influencing an individual's health and susceptibility to disease. Buddhi (intellect) governs decision-making and stress responses, Sukha (happiness) and Dukha (misery) impact emotional health, while Iccha (desire) and Dwesha (hatred) can lead to psychological strain and imbalances in bodily functions. Prayathna (effort) reflects the body's resilience and ability to heal. An imbalance in these qualities can disrupt the body's equilibrium, leading to physical and mental disorders. This paper highlights the significant role of Ayurveda in addressing these Gunas and promoting a state of health, well-being, and disease prevention through spiritual and psychological balance.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Darshan, Adhyatmika Guna, Buddhi (Intellect), Sukha (Happiness), Dukha (Misery), Iccha (Desire), Dwesha (Hatred), Prayathna (Effort), Mind-Body Connection, Holistic Health

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Introduction

Ayurveda recognizes *Guna* as principle *Karana* and categorizes them into four subclasses viz *Vishesha*, *Gurvadi*, *Adhyatmika*, and *Paradi Gunas*. These subclasses are interrelated and frequently exist in a supportive relationship with one another. Among these various *Gunas*, *Adhyatmika Guna* plays a crucial role in impacting all dimensions of health. The key components of this *Guna* include *Buddhi* (intellect), *Sukha* (happiness), *Dukha* (misery), *Ichha* (desire), *Dweshha* (hatred), and *Prayathna* (efforts). These *Guna*, play a crucial role in enhancing overall health by reducing stress and promoting positive emotions, while also serving as vital coping mechanisms during disease, helping individual navigate challenge with resilience & hope.

Materials and Methods

Concepts related to *Adhyatmika Gunas* are analyzed from the perspective of their application in both health and disease points of view from Ayurvedic literature, Philosophical literature internet sources, and various journals. Further understanding has been proposed regarding the title.

1. *Buddhi* (Intellect)

According to *Samkhya Darshana*, *Buddhi* is considered '*Adhyavasaya*'.^[1] *Adhyavasaya* is the term applied to all activities carried out by inanimate *Buddhi* (*Achetana*) by the activation of animate (*Sachetana*) *Atma*. *Tarkasangraha* has also explained *Buddhi* as the *Karana* /cause of all *Vyavhara*. The term *Vyavahara* implies all the transactions with a definite aim and it is generated when *Atma* interacts with the *Indriyatha*. In Ayurveda, the concept of *Buddhi* (intellect) plays a central role in mental health and overall well-being. *Buddhi* is formed through sensory inputs received by the *Indriyas* (sensory organs) and processed by the *Mana* (mind), leading to higher intellectual functions. These faculties serve as agents that manifest intellect through their respective actions.

It is of two subtypes

1. *Smriti* (Memory)-Memory results from a specific conjunction of Soul and mind and Sanskara.
2. *Anubhava* (Experience)-The knowledge collected through the conjunction of sense organs and soul is called experience.^[2]

Clinical Utility

Key functions of intellect in Ayurveda are categorized into three important faculties: *Dhi* (intellect), *Dhriti* (self-control or patience), and *Smriti* (memory). These faculties work together to maintain mental stability and clarity. When any of these faculties is impaired, it can lead to psychiatric disorders. *Prajnaparadha*, the imbalance or disturbance of *Dhi*, *Dhriti*, and *Smriti*, is considered the root cause of mental disturbances such as anger, passion, fear, confusion, and grief.^[3] This imbalance also affects the *Karmaja* (result of actions) and *Atmaja* (soul-related) diseases, ultimately leading to mental health issues. Therefore, a balanced intellect (*Buddhi*) in Ayurveda is crucial not only for physical health but for maintaining mental harmony, emotional well-being, and spiritual stability. The theory of Multiple Intelligences, proposed by Howard Gardner, suggests that there are various types of intelligence, including linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligence.^[4]

Buddhi, or intelligence, in this context, can be associated with the ability of the mind to influence the body's health. Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) is a field that studies how mental processes like intelligence, stress, and emotions influence physical health, particularly the immune system.^[5] Cognitive processes also (which involve intelligence) influence how we perceive and respond to stress, which can either strengthen or weaken the immune system. The more informed and discerning a person is, the better they can manage stress, leading to better overall health.

2. *Sukha* (Happiness)

In the Bhagavad Gita, happiness is linked to inner peace and the realization of one's true nature. Lord Krishna explains that true happiness arises from selfless action (*Karma Yoga*), devotion (*Bhakti Yoga*), and knowledge (*Jnana Yoga*). Happiness is not dependent on external circumstances but on the state of the mind. It is a result of living in harmony with one's *Dharma* (righteous duty) and maintaining detachment from material desires.^[6]

True happiness, according to Ayurveda and Darshan Philosophy, arises from the influence of *Sattva Guna*, which provides clarity of mind and enlightens an individual.

It encompasses the clarity of the senses, a sense of lightness, detachment from material possessions, freedom from arrogance, as well as qualities such as love, contentment, compassion, gentleness, forgiveness, simplicity, and mildness.[7] Collectively, these virtues represent different manifestations of happiness and joy. In Ayurveda, the ultimate goal of human activities is to attain happiness (*Sukha*), not just for oneself but for all living beings. This happiness is rooted in *Dharma*, which refers to performing one's duties in alignment with righteousness and proper conduct.[8]

3. *Dukha* (Sorrowness or misery)

Dukha attribute is contrary to *Sukha* as both are attributes of the soul.[9] Nobody likes it and desires it. In the Bhagavad Gita, *Dukha* is seen as a part of life due to the transient nature of the material world. Suffering is understood as the result of attachment to desires, and one can transcend *Dukkha* by following the path of righteousness (*Dharma*), devotion (*Bhakti*), selfless action (*Karma Yoga*), and knowledge (*Jnana Yoga*). In Buddhism, *Dukha* is one of the fundamental concepts. The Buddha's teachings are built around the Four Noble Truths, the first of which states that life is inherently marked by *Dukha*. Suffering arises from birth, aging, illness, and death, as well as from attachment, craving, and ignorance. According to Ayurveda, desires are the root cause of all miseries, and the elimination of desires leads to the eradication of all miseries.[10]

Sukha-Duḥkha and their Clinical Utility

Happiness and miseries are also known by the conjunction of soul, mind, senses, and objects[11] Research into the relationship between happiness and health is developing rapidly, exploring the possibility that impaired happiness is not only a consequence of ill health but also a potential contributor to disease risk. Happiness encompasses several constructs, including affective well-being (feelings of joy and pleasure), eudaimonic well-being (sense of meaning and purpose in life), and evaluative well-being (life satisfaction).[12]

Ayurvedic texts thoroughly explore the concepts of *Sukha* and *Dukha Ayu*, providing a clear understanding of their practical implications. *Acharya Charak* posits that individuals who are free from mental and physical disorders, blessed with youth, vigor, strength, vitality, a good reputation,

Courage, expertise in both art and science, as well as the capacity to perceive sensory objects, wealth, and an array of luxurious items for pleasure, who achieve whatever they want and move as they like, lead a happy life and those lacking these attributes tend to lead an unhappy existence.[13] It accepts happiness as the basic and essential factor for health (*Swasthya*). Also in Ayurveda science, health is equated with happiness, while the disease is perceived as *Duḥkha*. Acharya Suśruta defined diseases as a result of the combination of suffering and classified them into three types such as *Adhyatmika*, *Adhibhautika*, and *Adhidaivika* misery. [14] This description projects that *Sukha* and *Dukha* have been given a lot of attention in every aspect of health.

4. *Ichha* (Desire) attribute

Individuals consistently seek to attain pleasure while striving to eliminate pain. The longing for what is currently inaccessible to us is characterized as desire.[15] In the Bhagavad Gita, desire is depicted as a natural force of the mind that can either lead to spiritual growth or bind the individual to the material world. Lord Krishna explains that desire is a fundamental aspect of human nature but warns that when desires are uncontrolled, they lead to suffering and distraction from one's *Dharma* (righteous path). The source of desire, which is considered a flaw, serves as an accomplice to *Dharma*. Desire and aversion generate both *Dharma* & *Adharma* through their inherent inclinations.[16]

Clinical Utility

The desire attribute is very important in day-to-day life as well as in medicine too. Research by *Deci and Ryan (1985)* on Self-Determination Theory emphasizes that intrinsic motivation, driven by personal desires for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, leads to better psychological health and well-being. This motivation is linked to increased life satisfaction, better coping mechanisms, and lower levels of stress on the other hand chronic activation of the stress response due to unmet desires contributes to long-term psychological and physical health problems, including anxiety, depression, and cardiovascular disease. *Sapolsky (2004)* further emphasizes that prolonged stress, which often arises from unfulfilled desires, can lead to chronic diseases like hypertension, autoimmune disorders, and gastrointestinal problems.

Emotion regulation strategies, such as cognitive reappraisal, help individuals manage their desires in a healthy way, reducing the physiological effects of stress on the body. Therefore, understanding and managing desires is an essential aspect of maintaining both mental and physical well-being.

5. Dvesa (Aversion)

Characteristic that causes an individual to experience sense of burning is referred to as *Dveṣa* (aversion). Sorrow, along with its associated memories, intertwined with both soul & mind, serves as catalyst for formation of aversions.[17] In all the conditions of Aversion, the anger persists.

Clinical Utility

It is an emotion often characterized by dislike, disgust, or repulsion towards certain stimuli or experiences. In the context of health, aversion can have profound effects on the body and mind, influencing physiological responses, stress levels, digestion, and overall well-being.

In Ayurveda, as described in the *Charak Samhita*, aversion, especially when triggered by unpleasant stimuli such as disgust, can disrupt digestion. Aversion causes psychological stress, which, in turn, can affect the digestive process. When a person experiences aversion (e.g., disgust from food, smells, or sights), it leads to a disturbed mental state, which hampers the digestion of food.[18] According to Ayurveda, undigested food (referred to as *Ama*) is a key factor in the development of diseases. This idea parallels the modern understanding of how emotions like aversion can influence gut health. Acharya Charka further emphasizes the necessity of managing emotions such as anger, jealousy, and aversion, which are often regarded as suppressible urges.[19] If left uncontrolled, these emotions can lead to significant detriment, impacting both mental and physical health. This viewpoint highlights the critical role of managing aversion in achieving overall well-being and preventing disease.

6. Prayatna (Efforts) Attributes

In the Upanishads, *Prayatna* has a more philosophical flavor, referring to the effort involved in seeking knowledge (*Jnana*). It suggests a striving for enlightenment, where the effort is directed toward realizing one's unity with Brahman (the ultimate reality).[20]

Any individual inclines or engages himself in any action due to willingness (desire) or aversion. He does the work which is liked by him and discards whatever is not liked. The enthusiasm or zeal which provokes a person to act should be understood as *Prayatna*. *Prasasta Pada* divides it into two groups viz. essential for life (*Jivan Pūrvaka*) and based on desire and aversion (*Iccha-Dweshya Purvak*).

Clinical Utility

Effort in the form of regular physical activity is crucial to maintaining health and preventing diseases. Scientific studies consistently show that consistent effort to engage in physical exercise improves cardiovascular health, boosts the immune system, and lowers the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and obesity.

A systematic review published in *The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* (2015) concluded that active rehabilitation efforts, such as physical therapy exercises, improve outcomes for patients recovering from musculoskeletal injuries and surgeries.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *Adhyatmika Guna* stands as a cornerstone in Ayurveda's holistic approach to health, deeply influencing the mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of an individual. *Adhyatmika Guna*, by incorporating essential elements such as *Buddhi* (intellect), *Sukha* (happiness), *Dukha* (misery), *Iccha* (desire), *Dweshya* (hatred), and *Prayatna* (efforts), influences not only an individual's experience of health and illness but also the broader domain of medicine. These *Guna* help physicians to diagnose and treatment of patients. When these attributes are balanced and nurtured, they contribute to reducing stress, fostering positive emotions, and promoting a resilient mindset. This, in turn, enhances overall well-being and supports the body's capacity to heal. During illness, the strength of *Adhyatmika Guna* provides individuals with vital emotional resilience, helping them to face adversity with hope and perseverance. Therefore, the importance of *Adhyatmika Guna* in the perspective of health and disease cannot be overstated, as it is integral to maintaining harmony within the mind and body, and serves as a vital tool in promoting healing, recovery, and overall health.

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