Vyadhi (disease) is considered one of the nine obstacles (antaraya) to integrative oneness of Yoga (samadhi) according to Maharishi Patanjali (Yoga Darshan I: 30). Patanjali also enumerates manifest symptoms such as duhkha (mental or physical pain), daurnanasya (sadness or dejection), angamejayatva (anxious tremor) and shvasa prashvasah (respiratory irregularities) as concomitant expressions of mental disturbances (Yoga Darshan I: 31). These antaraya are one of the major causes of disintegration (vyadhi) according to the late Dr ML Gharote, an eminent Yoga expert of Kaivalyadhama. He has described samadhi as the ideal state of health which is disturbed by the chitta vikshepa (disturbances in mind) due to the kleshas and antarayas. He has further also stated that mind is responsible for bondage and liberation as well as happiness and unhappiness. According to him the purpose of Yoga is to lessen the impact of these factors (klesha tanakaranam) and promote the state of integration (samadhi bhavanam). Maharishi Patanjali gives us a clue to control the mental agitation by advising us to concentrate on slow and deep flow of respiration to still the mind (prachchhardana vidharanabhyam va pranasya - Yoga Darshan I: 34). He also advises concentration on a painless inner state of luminosity to produce stability and tranquillity (vishokava jyotishmati- Yoga Darshan I.36).

Patanjali has also explained the primary causation of stress based disorders through concept of pancha klesha (psychological afflictions). These are avidya (ignorance of the ultimate reality leading to bodily identification), asmita (a false sense of identification), raga-dwesha (addiction and aversion), abhinivesha (clinging on to life for fear of death), (avidya asmita raga dwesha abhinivesha kleshah -Yoga Darshan II: 3). Avidya as the root cause enables other kleshas to manifest in different forms from time to time. They may be dormant, attenuated, manifest or overpowering in their causation of pain and suffering. (avidya kshetram uttaresham prasupta tanu vichinna udaranam- Yoga Darshan II:4).

As a proponent of preventive medicine, he advises us to prevent that which can be prevented so as to avoid future pain and suffering (heyam duhkham anagatam -Yoga Darshan II: 16). This helps us to understand that disease is not something to be feared but is an indicator of where we have been erroneous in our lifestyle, thinking pattern or diet. When this is done with awareness and conscious self analysis is made, it can become an impetus for healthy change putting us back on the right track to a happier and healthier life. Suffering or duhkha can be a dynamic springboard in our evolution if we have the right attitude towards it and don’t wallow in self pity. Yoga helps train our whole process of thinking thus creating right attitudes for evolutionary growth, every moment of our life.

The Yogic concept of health and disease enables us to understand that the cause of physical disorders stems from the seed in the mind and beyond. Adhi (the disturbed mind) is the cause and vyadhi (the physical disease) only the manifest effect in the Yogic scheme of things. By paying careful attention to personal history, one can nearly always trace origins of psychosomatic disease back to patterns of mental and emotional pressures.
From the Yogic viewpoint of disease it can be seen that psychosomatic, stress related disorders appear to progress through four distinct phases. These can be understood as follows:

1. **Psychic Phase:** This phase is marked by mild but persistent psychological and behavioural symptoms of stress like irritability, disturbed sleep and other minor symptoms. This phase can be correlated with *vijnanamaya* and *manomaya koshas*. Yoga as a therapy is very effective in this phase.

2. **Psychosomatic Phase:** If the stress continues there is an increase in symptoms, along with the appearance of generalized physiological symptoms such as occasional hypertension and tremors. This phase can be correlated with *manomaya* and *pranamaya koshas*. Yoga as a therapy is very effective in this phase.

3. **Somatic Phase:** This phase is marked by disturbed function of organs, particularly the target, or involved organ. At this stage one begins to identify the diseased state. This phase can be correlated with *pranamaya* and *annamaya koshas*. Yoga as a therapy is less effective in this phase and may need to be used in conjunction with other methods of treatment.

4. **Organic Phase:** This phase is marked by full manifestation of the diseased state, with pathological changes such as an ulcerated stomach or chronic hypertension, becoming manifest in their totality with their resultant complications. This phase can be correlated with the *annamaya kosha* as the disease has become fixed in the physical body. Yoga as a therapy has a palliative and quality of life improving effect in this phase. It does also produce positive emotional and psychological effects even in terminal and end of life situations.

Often, however, the early stages of the disease process are overlooked and the final stage is seen as an entity unto itself, having little relationship to one’s living habits and patterns. This is because modern medicine only looks at the physical aspects and neglects effects of *pancha kosha* and *trisharira* on health and disease.

One of the major Indian concepts of disease causation is the imbalances of *tridosha*. This is found in numerous classical texts of Yoga and Ayurveda like *Shiva Swaredaya*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Charaka Samhita* and *Tirumandiram*. According to the Dravidian poet-saint Tiruvalluvar, disease results from *tridosha* imbalance (*miginum kuraiyunum noiseyyum noolor valimudhalaa enniya moondru -Tirukkural 941*). *Vata* is the energy of the body that moves like the wind and causes flow in the body. It may be related to the nervous system as well as joints that enable us to move. *Pitta* is related to bilious secretion and is the cause of heat in the body. It is the energy of catabolism that is essential for digestion. *Kapha* is the glue that holds everything together and is the energy of anabolism helping generative and regenerative processes. According to Mark Halpern, Founder-Director, California College of Ayurveda, USA the *tridosha* fluctuate constantly. As they move out of balance, they affect particular areas of our bodies in characteristic ways. When *vata* is out of balance—typically in excess—we are prone to diseases of the large intestines, like constipation and gas, along with diseases of nervous system, immune system, and joints. When *pitta* is in excess, we are prone to diseases of the small intestines, like diarrhoea, along with diseases of the liver, spleen, thyroid, blood, skin, and eyes. When *kapha* is in excess, we are prone to diseases of the stomach and lungs, most notably mucous conditions, along with diseases of water metabolism, such as swelling.

*Tirumandiram* of Tirumoolar, the 3000 versed Tamil treatise by the Dravidian saint has prescribed the practice of Yoga at different times of day to relieve disorders arising from

Yoga Vashista a great text of Yoga describes causation and manifestation of disease in an admirable manner. It describes both psychosomatic as well as non-psychosomatic ailments. It attributes all psychic disturbances and physical ailments to the fivefold elements (pancha mahabhuta) in a manner similar to other systems of Indian medicine. Samanya adhija vyadhi are described as those arising from day-to-day causes while sara adhija vyadhi is the essential disease of being caught in the birth –rebirth cycle that can be understood in modern terms as congenital diseases. The former can be corrected by day-to-day remedial measures such as medicines and surgery whereas the sara adhija vyadhi doesn’t cease until knowledge of the self (atma jnana) is attained. The Guru Stotra from the Vishvasaraatantra also takes a similar line in saying that the ultimate ‘wisdom of the self’ gained through the Guru destroys karmic bondages from many births (anekajanma samprapta karma bandha vidhahine atmajana pradanena tasmai srigurave namah-Guru Stotra, verse 9). It is interesting to note that traditional Indian thought views the very occurrence of birth on this planet as a disease and a source of suffering! Tiruvalluvar reiterates this when he says, “It is knowledge of the ultimate truth that removes the folly of birth” (pirappu ennum pedaimai neenga chirappu ennum chem porul kaanbadhu arivu- Tirukkural 358)

Yoga understands that physical ailments that are not of a psychosomatic nature can be easily managed with surgery, medication, prayers, douches and lifestyle modifications as required. Various Yoga techniques may also be used to help correct the physical ailments and restore health with regeneration, recuperation and rehabilitation as necessary. Accident prevention is an important benefit of a Yoga life, for better alertness, reflexes and physical condition enables one to prevent accidents as well as avoid getting traumatized both physically and mentally by such occurrences.

Yoga Vashista gives an elaborate description of the mechanism by which psychosomatic disorders occur. Mental confusion leads to agitation of prana (life force) and haphazard flow along nadis resulting in depletion of energy and / or clogging up of these channels of vital energy. This leads to disturbance in the physical body with disturbances of metabolism, excessive appetite and improper functioning of the entire digestive system. Natural movement of food through the digestive tract is arrested giving rise to numerous physical ailments. We need to remember that this text is many thousands of years old whereas the concept of psychosomatic disorders in modern medicine

![Yoga Vashista Diagram](image-url)
has only been realized and accepted in recent times. Our ancients had great inner vision and it is up to us to realize their dreams and understand the great message they have left for humanity.

According to *Shivaswarodaya*, a classical text on *Swara Yoga*, disease develops when *swara* (smooth and regular air flow) in the nostrils do not adhere to their fixed timings and days. Normally *swara* flows in the nostrils in a certain pattern according to phases of the lunar cycle. It is also said that in case a disease develops due to erroneous functioning of *swara*, then a correction of that malfunctioning can cure that disease. The use of different techniques is also advocated for changing *swara* to relive various disorders.

Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri, founder of Ananda Ashram at Pondicherry has written extensively about the relationship between health and disease. He says, “Yoga views the vast proliferation of psychosomatic diseases as a natural outcome of stress and strain created by desire fostered by modern propaganda and abuse of the body condoned on all sides even by religion, science and philosophy. Add to this the synthetic “junk food” diet of modern society and you have the possibility of endless disorders developing…even the extinction of man by his own ignorance and misdeeds”.

He explains the root cause of disease as follows. “Yoga, a wholistic, unified concept of oneness, is *adwaitam* or non-dual in nature. It suggests happiness, harmony and ease. Disease is created when duality or *dwaitam* arises in the human mind. This false concept of duality has produced all conflicts of human mind and the vast list of human disorders. Duality (dis-ease) is the primary cause of man’s downfall. Yoga helps return man to his pristine, whole nature. All diseases, maladies, tensions, are manifestations of divisions of what should be man’s complete nature, the *atman* or ‘Self’. This ‘Self’ is “ease”. A loss of “ease” creates “dis-ease”. Duality is the first insanity, the first disease, the unreasonable thought that “I am different from the whole…. I am unique. I am me.” The ego is a manifestation of disease. Only a distorted ego could feel alone, suffer from “the lonely disease”, in a Universe, a Cosmos totally filled with the ‘Self’. It is interesting that the one of the oldest words for man is *insan*. Man is “insane”. A return to sanity, “going sane,” is the subject of real Yoga *sadhana* and Yoga *abhyasa*. Yoga *chikitsa* is one of the methods to help insane man back onto the path of sanity. A healthy man or woman may be known by the term-Yogi”. A very strongly worded yet very true statement indeed from the Lion of Pondicherry!