



RECENT ADVANCES IN YOGIC THERAPY AND PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT:

Yoga is being looked upon as prime therapy for stress/lifestyle disorders due to stress and wrong lifestyle. According to yoga, disintegration due to the mental disturbance is nothing but the disease. Stress is produced when there is a negative interaction between the self-projection and environment. Women having stronger and positive marital relationship with their husband were less affected. Yoga as a therapy, Although Yoga was developed for spiritual development and not as a therapy, during last 50 to 60 years, it has been observed that the yogic practices not only help in maintaining the health by removing health problems but also establishes the mental peace and a sense of well-being. The yogic therapy helps us to get healed completely due to its holistic approach. Yoga has been included in Ayurveda and naturopathy as a supporting part of therapy. Now it has been almost established that regular yoga practice helps in the management of above lifestyle disorders. That is why all the stress management programs include yoga.

KEYWORDS:

YOGA THERAPY, STRESS, DISEASE, AYURVEDA, NATUROPATHY.

INTRODUCTION:-

In this 21st century, Yoga is being looked upon as the prime therapy for human sufferings due to stress and wrong lifestyle. We have successfully controlled the diseases like Malaria, Typhoid, Small pox, Tuberculosis arising out of infections, caused by germs, bacteria, virus etc. but doctors and scientists have realized that in spite of good number of medicines, most sophisticated diagnostic tools and other medical facilities, it is difficult to cure the patients suffering from stress/lifestyle disorders such as, Hypertension, Hyper-acidity, insomnia, Heart diseases, Diabetes, Asthma, Arthritis, spondylitis etc. with the conventional line of treatment. These diseases are more hazardous than usual infectious diseases. The human existence has been challenged by these germless diseases.

CONCEPT OF HEALTH

Health does not mean only absence of disease but a jubilant feeling of well-being at physical, mental, social and of course at a spiritual level. Ayurveda says, when all the systems remain in equilibrium and the mind, organs and the soul are in a pleasant condition, it is considered as health. Happiness comes from within and does not depend on material gain or physical enjoyment (Nagarathna¹). That is why the mental health is very important. Disturbances at the mental level can alter the neuro-musculo-glandular mechanism of the body. It can also disturb the autonomic balance and hence the vital regulatory systems like cardio-vascular system and endocrine system. Therefore happiness and contentment are essential components of health.

CONCEPT OF DISEASE

According to yoga, disintegration due to the mental

disturbance is nothing but the disease. This is the age of speed, competition, too much workload, addiction, tension and stress. Modern technology has given us innumerable luxurious gadgets with which we think that we shall be happier and more comfortable. But now we have realized that this Western materialistic culture cannot bring peace and happiness. On the contrary it is adding more problems to our life. Out of dissatisfaction, frustration and dejection, stress is produced when there is a negative interaction between the self-projection and the surrounding environment. The self-projection is influenced by our modern lifestyle, which is mainly influenced on account of our cravings, desires, likes and dis-likes, attitudes, ambitions, beliefs, negative emotions, competition, hopes and failures.

THE MODERN LIFESTYLE

The way we eat, perform the exercises, take rest, play, behave with others, think, plan, sleep are all included under 'Life-style'. Most of the time, in a quest of maximum earning for the fulfilment of our desires, we choose wrong life-style. Improper diet and its irregular timings, mental tensions, inadequate rest and sleep, addiction, physical exertion and absence of exercise, are some of the components of the wrong life-style. The number of patients suffering from mental disorders is increasing day by day. This is the outcome of the present-day life style. The mental disturbance and the unrest manifests on the physical level.

The adverse environmental conditions, social, political and economic situation are also constantly influencing us. As a result, the stress is generated. If we are unable to cope up with the stress, slowly our mental balance is

disturbed. With the imbalanced mind, our responses to the incoming stimuli also move towards the negative direction. Sudden mental irritation or depression, frequently changing mood, lethargy, mental unrest, decreased tolerance and patience are the first signs of disturbed mind. Under such conditions our digestive system is greatly affected. In the absence of proper nutrition, and inadequate blood circulation, our immunity is impaired and the disease process gets the suitable ground to set in. The weakest organ is often affected. It is now revealed that the heart attacks are due to wrong life-style, too much exertion, hangover, pressure of the work, disinterest in work, increased level of cholesterol and the coronary blockages.

It is known that with the continuous stressful situation, the levels of adrenaline and nor-adrenaline remains elevated, causing spasm of the coronary arteries while increase in cortisol level causes formation of blockages in the arteries speedily. Thus the stress, which is actually the defense mechanism of the body to protect us in danger, now becomes destructive for us.

Emotional stress also plays its role in stress disorders. Kaplan² and his colleagues found that Cynomolgus monkeys developed coronary artery blockages due to emotional stress. These monkeys have their specific social organization and are aware of their social status just like humans.

20 women were suffering from rheumatoid arthritis (RA) as a result of stress due to worse interpersonal relationship (Zautra³). Women having stronger and positive marital relationship with their husband were less affected.

YOGA AS A THERAPY

Although Yoga was developed for spiritual development and not as a therapy, during last 50 to 60 years, it has been observed that the yogic practices not only help in maintaining the health by removing health problems but also establishes the mental peace and a sense of well-being. The yogic therapy helps us to get healed completely due to its holistic approach. Yoga has been included in Ayurveda and naturopathy as a supporting part of therapy. Now it has been almost established that regular yoga practice helps in the management of above lifestyle disorders. That is why all the stress management programs include yoga.

PRINCIPLES OF YOGA THERAPY

System of yoga works mainly on the following principles

1. PROMOTION AND MAINTENANCE OF HEALTH

This is mainly achieved through the passive stretching during the yogic practices and improved circulation, effective removal of the toxic substances including the waste material and by balancing the autonomic nervous system. The cardio-respiratory endurance, minimum muscular fitness, flexibility, respiratory capacities are improved within 15 to 30 days of yoga practice.

2. PREVENTION OF DISEASES

This is mainly done by improving the resistance power of the individual. The regulatory systems are stimulated for their optimum functions. It builds up proper level of confidence and tolerance in the individual with positive thinking and appropriate attitudinal changes. Overall immunity is also improved. The homeostasis is maintained and yoga acts as the prophylactic medicine.

3. TREATMENT OF HUMAN BEING AS A WHOLE

There is an integrated approach of yoga. It promotes positive mental health by culturing correct emotional make up of a person. Social, spiritual, mental and physical as well as environmental aspects of the personality are tackled by the yogic code of conduct. It also improves interpersonal relationship in the family. This is mainly achieved by using selected asanas, pranayamas, kriyas and meditation. Hathayoga is an empirical system of practices that establishes the homeostasis in the regulatory processes of the body (Deshiraju⁴, Roldan⁵) by developing adequate muscle tone, mental relaxation, emotional steadiness as well as the autonomic balance. That is why the root cause is removed completely.

SURVEY OF THE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Swami Kunalayanand was the pioneer to investigate the effects of yogic practices on the scientific basis right from 1924. These were the fundamental experiments in the field of yoga. He could explain the technique and the mechanism of the yoga practices in terms of physiology. Later on many scientists conducted scientific researches in yoga in order to study the effects of various yoga practices on normal human beings. Maximum therapeutical investigations have been done in the last 3 to 4 decades. Datey⁶ for the first time found the relaxative posture - shavasana most effective for the management of **hypertension**. Later on, Patel^{7&8} and Udupa⁹ not only confirmed these results but further reported a reduction in catecholamine level after the yogic therapy. Rajalaxmi also could treat 20 patients of hypertension effectively with yoga. Parkodi found that Shavasana practiced for 5 months could reduce blood pressure and catecholaminemetabolism and improved adreno-cortical function. Sharma treated 27 patients of hypertension with shavasana for 2.5 months successfully. Tulpule¹⁰ showed that a set of relaxativehathayogic postures could prevent myocardial infarction. Beraet al¹¹ has reported that Shavasana is more effective in recovering the physiological stress than resting in chair or in supine position. Neuromuscular efficiency has been found at optimum level in case of yoga practitioners in normal as well as stressful condition (Gore¹²).

Bhole¹³ revealed that **Asthma** could be controlled successfully in 69% patients with the yogic treatment in which vastradhauti was found very effective (Gore¹⁴) for correcting the respiratory mechanism. Gore¹⁵ found that one month yogic training could improve pulmonary

functions of asthmatics. PEFR of normal subjects was found to improve significantly after 45 days yogic training (Gore¹⁶). Gopal¹⁷ has reported a significant improvement in blood pressure and respiratory functions as a result of yoga training. Raja Laxmi treated 15 patients of bronchial Asthma with yogic treatment for 20 to 90 days and found that their vital capacity, PEFR and breath holding time were increased. On the basis of these investigations, it seems that yoga helps asthmatics by improving their broncho-pulmonary functions, different respiratory capacities, tranquilizing the mental and emotional instability and by establishing balance in hormonal secretions.

DIABETES mellitus is another stress disorder where the number of patients is increasing day by day. After Udupa and Singh⁹ reported significant reduction in blood sugar in normal subjects, many doctors came forward to conduct scientific studies on yogic treatment for diabetes. Rugmini and Sinha¹⁸ investigated 123 diabetics and found the yogic treatment effective in 64% patients. Koshti¹⁹ Studied serum proteins in diabetics before and after 6 weeks yogic treatment and found that A : G ratio was corrected along with the reduction in blood sugar. Gore²⁰ found 15 min shavasana, for two times a day for 45 days, along with other yoga postures, responsible for reduction in insulin intake from 44 units to 24 units.

Besides this, yoga therapy was also tried in other clinical conditions e.g. **Obesity** (Gharote²¹), **insomnia** (Joshi), **Epilepsy** (Parkodi), **Mental retardation** (Rajlaxmi, Udupa⁹, Singh) and **neuroticism** (Kocher²²) with encouraging results. Trataka, one of the six cleansing processes of Hath yoga has been found most effective in eradicating the suppressed wishes and to bring about psychophysiological relaxation (Gore²³ et al). Om recitation has been found to be a powerful psycho-physiological technique for calming and relaxing the mind (Bhagal²⁴ and Gore²⁵). Since 1991, Yoga has been included in the rehabilitation program of the mental patients, suffering from **psychotic depression**, **neurotic depression**, of the Govt. Mental hospitals at Thane and Nagpur. The encouraging results such as reduction in restlessness, mental irritation, decreased negative thinking and increased concentration, sleep pattern and positive attitude have been observed. The yogic routine included selected asanas, Anulomvilom and Bhramari pranayama, Om recitation as well as Dhyana. Here yoga is acting as a supporting therapy. According to Dr. Lavatre, Ex-superintendent of Mental hospital, Thane, yoga therapy is seen more effective in case of neurosis. Oak and Bhole²⁶ has treated patients of neurotic depression and inguinal hernia successfully with yogic therapy. Recently in Vivekananda Yoga Kendra*, 18 patients of **anxiety neurosis** were treated with yoga therapy for 4 weeks. More emphasis was given on Pranayama and Shavasana. Increase in GSR, decrease in RR increase in BHT and CE as well as psychological status of the patients. A sense of well being and deeper relaxation was felt by all the patients.

Pedro²⁷ showed positive results of yogic therapy for anxiety, neurosis and depression. Udupa⁹ also studied effect of 3 months yoga therapy for anxiety neurosis and have observed improvement together with a reduction in the levels of acetylcholine and catecholamine in blood and urine. Several studies have been reported on the yogic treatment for effective control of **spondylitis, backache, arthritis, rheumatism, menstrual disorders and gastro-intestinal disorders** etc. Recently Dean Ornish²⁸ has proved that the **heart diseases** can be reversed and the bypass surgeries may be avoided when the patients would follow the yogic life style. Improvement in cardiovascular efficiency due to one month yoga training was long back reported by Ganguly et al²⁹. All these studies reveal that the yogic therapy has got a definite potential to heal the patients suffering from psychosomatic disorders due to its holistic approach.

Recently SVYASA, Bangalore demonstrated the usefulness of yoga even in extreme environmental calamities, based on post tsunami study on Andaman islands (Telles et al, 2007). Depression (Janakiramaiah et al, 2000), Schizophrenia (Duraiswamy 2007), Epilepsy (Satyaprabha 2008), have been successfully managed by yoga therapy at NIMHANS, Bangalore. Studies on Yoga therapy for IBS (Deepak K.K, 2004) at AIIMS, New Delhi, studies on yoga for complicated pregnancies (Naendran, 2005) indicate yoga therapy as the ultimate solace to the human being. Studies on efficacy of yoga therapy on Obesity, diabetes and arthritis (Telles 2010), Neuroticism (Telles, 2012), mental wellbeing in school teachers and BSF personnel (Telles, 2018) increase this hope further.

RECENT ADVANCES IN YOGA THERAPY CONCEPT

Today many scientists and doctors are engaged in scientific investigations regarding documentation of the potential of yoga as a therapy. It is revealed that mere practice of few asanas and pranayamas will not be sufficient to fetch the cure but the yogic therapy based on the physical, mental and spiritual teachings will definitely be a successful yoga therapy. Educational correction at the psycho-physiological foundation status of the patient is necessary along with the physical practice. This will uproot the root cause and the patient will be cured. We are supposed to cure the patient and not the disease. So it is wrong to say "yoga for diabetes", "yoga for arthritis" and so on. Patient should be made independent to manage his own health problem through self-healing and maintain the healthy body, mind and spirit. The role of yoga as a preventive measure should also be promoted in the society. The important role of proper lifestyle for the health and happiness should also be emphasized. Many hospitals in India and other countries have established special yoga cell to make the yoga available to the patients as a supporting therapy.

LIMITATIONS OF YOGIC THERAPY

Like any other therapy yoga therapy also has limitations. Truly speaking, we should consider it as a supporting treatment which would help the healing process. Patience, experience, skill and missionary attitude is very much required while treating various patients particularly the neurotics and the heart patients by yogic therapy. Proper selection and application of yogic practices is very important. In case of patients of hysteria, psychosis and depression, yoga therapist should be very careful. The author has seen personally that sometimes patient's condition gets aggravated due to yoga therapy. In case of diseases like leprosy, cancer, malignant tumors, fibrosis, fractures, poison and when there are severe structural or pathological changes, the yogic therapy is not advisable. Yogic therapy is most effective in case of psychosomatic diseases as mentioned above. It is a marvelous prophylactic regime. Let us say that the 21st century would be full of health, happiness and peace if everybody of us practices yoga.

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