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A study of integrated approach of yoga

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Abstract

The integrated approach to yoga therapy (IAYT) model developed by Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samasthana (S-VYASA) ^[1] is based on the principle that “the root of all psychosocial illnesses is in the mind; which causes an internal imbalance due to long standing stressful and demanding situations of life.”^[1] Intense surges of uncontrolled excessive speed of responses to these demanding situations at an emotional level (*Manomaya Kosa*), conflicts between value systems (*Vijnanamaya Kosha*), and strong likes and dislikes at the psychological level (*Manomaya Kosa*) are responsible for imbalances at gross levels (*Pranamaya and Annamaya Kosas*).

Keywords: Yoga, stress, emotional

Introduction

IAYT slows down the loop of uncontrolled speed of thoughts (stress) through several techniques that use the principle of “successive stimulations followed by progressive relaxation and the rest” to correct the imbalances, promote “mastery over the mind” and harmonize the disturbances at each of the five levels (*Pancha Kosa*).

Based on the above Pancha Kosa concept, the IAYT model incorporates varied yogic practices at each level to help patients with different disorders deal with their problems ^[3]. The *Annamaya Kosa* practices include:

Asana: A stable and comfortable posture, which gives deep relaxation to internal organs by massaging them thoroughly; all organs of the body start functioning in a harmonious manner and the mind becomes tranquil

Diet: Simple vegetarian wholesome food that calms down the mind (Sattvic diet) is recommended as it helps to maintain internal harmony in the body as well as mind ⁽³⁾

Loosening exercises: Reduces joint stiffness, strengthens the muscles of the body and increases physical stamina.

The Pranayama Kosa practices include:

Breathing exercises and cleansing breath: Increases awareness about breathing, clears the lungs, corrects breathing pattern, and increases lung capacity;

Pranayama: Slows down breathing rate and restores autonomic balance thereby calming the mind. The *Manomaya Kosa* practices include: Cyclic meditation: Practices with repeated stimulations and relaxations; Om meditation and mind sound resonance technique (MSRT) for creating awareness and slowing down the mind and Devotional sessions: For emotional culture through “Bhakti Yoga” and The *Vijnanamaya Kosa* Practices include Lectures and yogic counseling using yogic concepts of fearlessness for stress management. All the above practices are incorporated with the aim to help a person achieve the final state of self-knowledge, the *Anandamaya Kosa* (Bliss), a state of blissful silence with awareness, perfect poise and freedom of choice where the mind is not troubled by stressful thoughts and fears. Thus, the IAYT can be understood as a holistic model, which corrects the imbalances at physical, mental and emotional levels. All components of the IAYT are mutually exclusive of each other in theory; for the IAYT model to have its desired effect, all the components need to be integrated and provided to have a desired effect on each of the five levels of existence. No component singularly can claim to be the IAYT, nor could possibly have the same effects as the whole

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model. IAYT has been shown to have complimentary benefits in the treatment of mind body diseases such as bronchial asthma, mental deficiency, arthritis, cancer and stress during pregnancy.

Research Study

Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj, the founder of Ananda Ashram at ICYER, Pondicherry and one of the foremost authorities on Yoga in the past century, has explained the concept of Yoga Chikitsa in the following manner.

“Yoga Chikitsa is virtually as old as Yoga itself, indeed, the ‘return of mind that feels separated from the Universe in which it exists’ represents the first Yoga therapy. Yoga Chikitsa could be termed “man’s first attempt at unitive understanding of mindemotions-physical distress and is the oldest wholistic concept and therapy in the world.”

To achieve this integration at all levels it is essential that we take into consideration a healthy life nourishing diet, a healthy and natural environment, a wholistic lifestyle, adequate bodywork through Asanas, Mudras and Kriyas, invigorating breath work through the use of Pranayama and the production of a healthy thought process through the higher practices of Jnana and Raja Yoga. The application of Yoga as a therapy can be correlated with the Pancha Koshas (the five aspects of our existence) and various Yoga practices may be used as therapeutic interventions at different levels in this respect.

At the Annamaya Kosha (anatomical level) Jattis (simple units of movements), Mudras (gestures for energy generation and conservation), Kriyas (structured movements), Asanas (steady and comfortable postures) along with the dietary modifications are useful. At the Pranamaya Kosha (physiological level) Shat Karmas (cleansing actions), various Pranayamas, development of breath awareness and working on breath-movement coordination with emphasis on balancing Pranic energy is to be done.

At the Manomaya Kosha (psychological level) there are numerous practices such as Trataka (concentrated gaze), Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation), Japa and Japa-Ajapa practices that are useful. Various aspects of concentration such as the Mandala Dharana and other Yoga Drishti techniques are also available in the Gitananda tradition for this purpose. When trying to deal with the Vijnanamaya Kosha (intellectual level), Swadhyaya (self-analysis), Satsangha (lectures and spiritually uplifting exchange) along with the wonderful Jnana Yoga and Raja Yoga relaxation and concentration practices of Yoga are useful. We must remember that according to Swamiji, we thankfully cannot disturb the Vijnanamaya and Anandamaya Koshas. However what can happen is that we get the other three bodies out of sync with the higher two and so suffer consequences of such ignorant actions.

Significance of the Study

Stress is a cognitive or emotional response made by the individual towards any situation, which demands adjustment. When the demands of the situation exceed the ability of the individual distress results, which may manifest in mental and physical symptoms of abnormality.

The practice of Yoga exercise helps in building up the coping ability. The practitioner of Yoga exercise slowly becomes aware of the inherent dormant potentialities and thus prevents himself from becoming a victim of distress.

As yoga exercise relaxes the physical as well as mental stresses, it relaxes the whole nervous system. Stress-related

disorders evolve gradually through four stages. In the first stage, psychological symptoms like anxiety and irritability arise due to over activation of the sympathetic nervous system. Yoga exercise can be considered as a highly effective practice for reducing stress on the basis of the study, as yoga exercise releases the stress of the students of higher classes. Practice of yoga exercise also reduces the anxiety of male and female subjects both. It may have positive results for the other age groups and occupations also.

Conclusion

To understand and work with the Anandamaya Kosha (universal level) it is important to loose sense of the limited individuality. Learning to implement principles of Karma Yoga (Yoga as skilled action performed without expectation) and following the principle of action in relaxation help us to achieve a sense of joy in all activities. A realization that we live in a blissful universe and that all life is joy is to be brought about in this intervention through use of Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga and other aspects like Bhajana, Yogic counseling and Satsangha.

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