



ISSN: 2456-4419

Impact Factor: (RJIF): 5.18

Yoga 2018; 3(1): 1215-1217

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www.theyogicjournal.com

Received: 13-11-2017

Accepted: 18-12-2017

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Therapeutic promises of yoga

Satyapal Singh and Kanhaiya Agrawal

Abstract

Yoga is an art of life management and a universal means for self-realization. It is an ultimate attempt for the fusion of embodied consciousness with supreme consciousness that subsequently proceeds from the practice of social adjustment (Yam), moral observance (Niyam), postures (Asana), breathing mechanics (Pranayama), senses withdrawal (Prathyara), concentration (Dharana), meditation (Dhyan) and super consciousness (Samadhi). Regular practice of yoga is supposed to empower corporate health, happiness and harmony and hence wealth too. Yoga can be used for different purposes such as physical fitness, flexibility, stress management, psychosomatic well-being, emotional rectification, cultivation of good habits and for prevention & management of a wide range of disorders.

Keywords: yoga therapy, stress, immunity, psychosomatic

Introduction

It is now considered that most of the chronic disorders like diabetes mellitus, bronchial asthma, hypertension, coronary artery diseases, COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases), obesity, chronic liver diseases, psoriasis, arthritis, etc. are resulted due to faulty lifestyle. Therefore, the lifestyle modification is considered sheet anchor for the prevention and management of such type of disorders^[1].

Stress or distress, obesity, respiratory disorders, digestive disorders cardiovascular problems, low backache and genitourinary disorders are prevalent at corporate world and leads to the significant decline in the corporate health as well as wealth and thus regular yoga practice is found more helpful for total health promotion, disease prevention and rehabilitation of an individual. Particularly, yoga has been found effective to manage work related stress and disorders directly or indirectly affected with stress like asthma, obstructive pulmonary diseases, chronic bronchitis, cardiovascular disorders (ischemic heart disease, coronary artery disease, angina, chronic heart failure, hypertension), irritable bowel syndrome, hyperacidity, colitis, indigestion, diabetes, gastro-esophageal reflux disease, premature ejaculation and sex related disorders of either sex^[2].

Importance and application of yoga therapy can be better explained and understood via bio-psycho-socio-spiritual model. Yoga therapy improves musculoskeletal functioning, cardiopulmonary functioning, make the autonomic nervous system (ANS) more responsive and also improves endocrine functioning. Psychosocially it enhances self-esteem, social support induces positive mood and elevates compassionate understanding and mindfulness^[3]. Similar hypothesis is supported as “well-rounded yoga practice” which may provide benefits at structural, physiological, psycho-emotional and spiritual levels^[4].

The long-term activation of the stress-response system and its subsequent overexposure to stress hormones can interrupt the homeostasis. Various disorders have been related to chronic stress. These include Anxiety, Depression, Digestive problems, Heart disease, Sleep problems, Weight gain, Memory and concentration impairment and chronic pain. Yoga should be practiced as preventive measure or as therapeutic measure to combat many diseases^[5, 6].

Yoga Therapy

The Yogic concept regarding disease and health allow us to understand that the physical disorders stems out 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

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things. By taking proper disease history of the patient we can trace origins of psychosomatic disease back to patterns of mental and emotional pressures.

As per the yogic view point psychosomatic and stress related disorders appear to progress through four distinct phases. These can be understood as follows^[7].

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 therapy is very effective in this phase.
2. **Psychosomatic Phase:** on continuous exposure to the stress there is an increase in the disease progression assessed by its 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 therapy is very effective in this phase too.
3. **Somatic Phase:** This phase is characterized by impaired functions of various 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 Annamayakoshas. Yoga therapy is less effective in this phase and may need to be used in combination with other modalities of treatment.
4. **Organic Phase:** This phase is characterized by full manifestation of the disorder and pathological changes such as an ulcerated stomach or chronic hypertension. This phase can be correlated with the Annamaya Kosha as the disease got fixed in the physical body. In this phase Yoga as a therapy has a palliative effect and improves the quality of life. The therapy produces positive emotional and psychological effects even at terminal of situations.

Indian system of traditional medicine, the Ayurveda described the imbalance in the Tridosha (three biological humors) as the root cause of all the disorders and the same concept is also mentioned in some ancient text books on yoga or yogic practices. Yoga therapy improves the flow of 'Pranic Life Energy' to all parts of the body especially in the diseased parts. Prana is life and without it there cannot be healing. The principles of 'Pran', the energy driving the various physiological functioning of the body need to be understood and applied as per needs of the patient. There should be focus on the 'Saman Vayu' in the disorders of digestion & metabolism and on 'Apan Vayu' in the disease of pelvis.

There are seven centres for meditation in the body. Each centre is connected with its relevant endocrine gland as below...

Chakra Endocrine gland

Mooladhara Sex gland

Swadhisthana Connecting sex gland and adrenals

Manipuraka Adrenal gland

Anahata Thymus gland

Vishuddhi Thyroid gland

Agnya Pituitary

Brahmarandhra Pineal

The present day lifestyle is laden with the ill effects of stress. Stress according to yoga is an uncontrolled surge of emotions like intense desire, anger, anxiety etc. With the chronic exposure of the stress one loses his capacity to come out of the clutches of the loop of intensely heightened activity that

shows up as imbalances in the function of the autonomic nervous system which reflects in the form of anxiety, fatigue, addictions etc. Role of yoga to reduce the force and speed of these violent surges of emotions has been validated by many workers through psychophysiological studies^[8,9].

The bad-habit triad of smoking, excess alcohol intake and overeating seems to be risk factor for a wide range of lifestyle disorders. Healthy living is governed by several factors. Healthy living affects physical and mental health and on other side is influenced by living environment personal factors, family relation and the consumable food ingredients normally. Following are the major factors which affect the lifestyle^[10].

- Exercise.
- Physical and mental disorders.
- Over all food and nutrition.
- Regulated respiration process.
- Stress-free routine.
- Contentment.
- Normal digestion and excretion
- Level of moral and traditional values.
- Physical and mental paucity.
- Positive thinking.
- Daily routine in compliance with nature.
- Control of lust and submission to God.
- Physical and mental total relaxation.

Application of yoga for the first component (absence of disease) of the WHO definition of health has been highlighted. Now there should focus on promotion of positive health at the physical, mental, social and spiritual level^[11].

Discussion

Yoga is a practical training of mind and body having three principle outcomes, it makes us more aware of our natural wisdom, promotes the physical and mental health and also helps to recover from a particular illness and teaches us how to behave and co-operate with others. It brings about deep change of attitude. The entire thrust of our life is to devote total attention to every action and at the same time to trust in the power of sacred.

Corporate yoga promotes total health, happiness, harmony and four human intelligences- rational intelligence, creative intelligence, emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence. Scientific validation and standardization of the effects of yoga practices at individual and corporate level follows bio-psycho-socio-spiritual research model. The general mechanism of yogic effects and efficacy of yoga for managing work stress, improving health problems related to stress, respiratory, cardiopulmonary, digestive and genitourinary systems in organizational family is portrayed on the basis of concerned research findings. Regular practice of yoga therapy promotes general well-being and optimal intelligences of organizational family. Adequate health of workers or employees leads to productivity at work, productivity at work leads to business competitiveness which further leads to economic prosperity and well-being which is again associated with employees' good health.

Cognitive intelligence that can be slightly enhanced and maintained through yoga practice is helpful for sound managerial capabilities and technical skill empowerment. Realization of consciousness is the only one by which one can know everything in the universe. The man is nothing but the extended and perceptual activity of consciousness. Yoga blends the two states tension and relaxation. Yoga enables everyone to move towards that state of developed

consciousness. The main purpose of practice of Preksha Dhyana Yoga (To see inside with deep concentration) is to purify the mental state.

The Yoga Therapy characterizes by the management of diseases by means of Yogic practices which may be physical or mental or both. It aims at obtaining relief from pain and suffering. Yoga is a means of attaining perfect health by maintaining harmony and achieving optimum functioning on all three levels (namely physical, mental and spiritual) through complete self-control. The overall benefits of Yoga therapy can be summarized as follows^[12].

- Provides firm muscle tone, bright eyes and clear complexion which contribute to the radiant appearance of the person. This combined with good posture and grace of movement, makes for a pleasing outward appearance.
- It gives flexibility and strength.
- Asanas stretches and strengthen muscles and put joints through their full range of movement.
- It also gives good posture and better look to a person.
- Provide smooth and efficient breathing.
- Yoga Posture, Yogic breathing, relaxation and meditation all help to calm and still the mind and thus help in reducing the stress and also help in immunomodulation.
- Pranayama strengthens the diaphragm and encourages deeper, freer breathing.
- Provides better sleep and concentration.
- Help to cope well with stress.
- It massages all the internal glands and organs of the body in a thorough manner.
- The improvements to your health and the ability to relax deeply that come with yoga make you more resilient.
- Promotes physical, mental, emotional and psychosocial health, reduces the psychosocial stress and help in immunomodulation and thus ultimately helps in the prevention and the management of various psychosomatic disorders including psoriasis.

In this way yoga therapy found to be more effective to increase the immunity, the stamina and the strength of the different systems within the body.

Conclusion

Yoga is recognized as a preventive as well as therapeutic measure to combat various disorders. Yoga is a cost-effective therapy, eternal and universal means for workplace wellness & excellence that needs to be included as an indispensable part of our culture. By promoting general well-being it minimizes medical expenditure and leads to increase performance and productivity. Continuous exposure to the stress and altered immunity due to various factors is the root cause of many disorders at present time. Since the yoga therapy reduces the bad effects of chronic stress and modulate immunity therefore, it should be promoted by various means.

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