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## **APPLICATION OF YOGA CONCEPT IN THE HEALTH IMPROVEMENT**

**Summary:** *Different yoga techniques can be used as a support in healing disorders, i.e. in bringing health back, in regeneration, recovering and rehabilitation. In this paper we research effects of accepting yoga as a life philosophy, but also effects of yoga practice. Results show that yoga can be recognized as efficient method in medical prevention, in overcoming different disorders, as well as in rehabilitation. Connection of modern medical praxis and yoga practice give extraordinary results and can be perceived as a serious proposal for the further medical orientation.*

**Key words:** *yoga, yoga concept, health improvement, yoga sutras.*

Yoga is a spiritual science for the integrated and holistic development of our physical, mental and moral-spiritual aspects of being. The philosophy of yoga is practical and applicable in our day-to-day living. Yoga has been documented to normalise physiological function and recent advances in the field of research have shown that it has sound scientific basis. Yoga is first and foremost a **moksha shastra** meant to facilitate the individual to attain the final freedom, liberation. One of the important by-products of the yogic way of living is attainment of health and well being. This is brought about by right-use-ness of the body, emotions and mind with awareness and consciousness. This must be understood to be as healthy a dynamic state that may be attained in spite of the individual's **sabija karma** (genetic predispositions) and the environment into which they are born. For thousands years, yoga and Indian medical systems consider health to be important precondition for spiritual growth. The definition of asana given in the Yoga Sutra as **sthira sukham** implies the state of steady well being at all levels of existence (*sthira sukham asanam- Yoga Darshan II:46*). Through the practice of asana we can attain a state that is beyond dualities leading to a calm and serene state of well being (*tato dvandva anabhighata - Yoga Darshan II: 48*).

Practicing yoga techniques may help to correct the physical ailments. Health disorders can be perceived in phases as they appear:

### **1) Phase of psychic manifestation and yoga practice contribution**

This phase is marked by mild but persistent behavioural symptoms of stress like irritability, disturbed sleep and other minor symptoms. This phase can be correlated with **vijnanamaya** and **manomaya** koshas. Practicing yoga techniques (asana, pranayama, dharana, dyana, kriya, mudra, bandha) in this phase is very efficient. Health condition normalizes and sleep becomes regular, deep and refreshing.

### **2) Psychosomatic Phase**

If disorder continues, there is an increase in symptoms. Physiological symptoms are characterize this phase. Appearance of occasional hypertension and tremors is directly correlated with manomaya and

pranamaya koshas. In this phase, techniques of pranayama (energy control through breathing) are very effective.

### **3) Somatic Phase**

This phase is marked by disturbed function of organs. 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 in this phase, in cooperation with a medical doctor, has a palliative and quality of life improving effect. 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 cognitive-affective patterns of the patient. This is because modern medicine only looks at the physical aspects and neglects effects of **pancha kosha** and **trisharira** on health and disease.

In order to create an environment conducive to the development of healthy and happy individual and to prevent the lifestyle disorders that are threatening humankind, there should be considered technology and methodology that yoga offers through many practical 'day-to-day' methods of action. Some of these tools for positive health are as follows.

#### **Awareness of body, emotions and mind**

Development of awareness is a starting point of yoga philosophy and practice. Awareness brings direct insight, light of knowledge (vidya) and health. Awareness is present in every activity. In practicing asanas (exercises), breathing is synchronized with movement and concentrated attention. Development of awareness is a process. Today, this yoga technique is present in all schools of psychotherapy and in almost every newer concept of intelligence.

#### **Improvement of dietary habits**

Most disorders are directly or indirectly linked to improper dietary patterns. Presence of awareness in adoption of the dietary patterns is very important. It shows that individual is aware of importance of his/her health condition and that he/she expresses tendency to actively participate in health creation, by adopting new habits.

#### **Physical and mental relaxation**

Relaxation is most often all that most patients need in order to improve their physical condition. Stress is the major culprit and may be the causative, aggravating, or precipitating factor in many psychosomatic disorders. Doctors are often found telling their patients to relax, but never tell them how to do that. Yoga relaxation part of every yoga session is most important for it is during it that benefit of practices done in the session seep into each and every cell producing rest, rejuvenation, reinvigoration and reintegration.

## **Yoga pranayama techniques**

Rapid, uncontrolled, irregular breathing is a sign of illness. Slow, deep and regular controlled breathing is a sign of health. Breath is the link between body and mind and is the agent of physical, physiological and mental unification. When breath is slowed down, metabolic processes are also slowed. That is the moment for renovation, healing and rebuilding. If breath is calm, mind is calm and life is long.

## **Pratyahara (awareness and separation from the sensory impressions)**

To bring the agitated mind under control, and take it on a journey into our inner being is fundamental in finding a way out of the 'disease maze' in which patient is entangled like a fly in the spider's web. Breath work and sensory control are the base of the yoga training of mind. It is conducted with the yoga master guidance.

## **Yoga and types of prana**

Yoga considers reality to be made of energies. Prana is life and without it there cannot be healing. There are different types of prana and each of them is responsible for regular functioning of the certain physiological functions and regions. In patients of digestive disorders, focus must be on the samana vayu whereas in pelvic conditions it needs to be on apana vayu. The fifth chapter of the Hathayoga Pradipika has a detailed analysis of various malfunctions of the vayu and their correction.

## **Improvement of the stress amortization**

Yoga practitioners note that development of awareness improves resistance towards different stressors. Yoga practice is pragmatic. When face to face with the innumerable thorns in a forest, one may either choose to spend all their time picking them up one by one while other thorns continue falling or choose to wear a pair of shoes and walk through the forest. The difference is in attitude. Choosing the right attitude can change everything and bring about a resolution of the problem by healing the core.

## **Yoga practice strengthens self-confidence**

Life is full of challenges that are there only to make us stronger and better. The challenges should be understood as opportunities for change and faced with confidence. Yoga practitioners learn that they have the inner power to overcome each and every challenge. We never get challenges that are beyond our capacity.

## **Facilitate natural emanation of wastes**

Natural emanation of waste from the body is very important and it is attained by practicing shuddi kriyas like dhauti, basti and neti. Accumulation and stagnation of waste materials either in inner or outer environment always causes problems. Yogic cleaning practices help wash out impurities (mala shodhana) thus helping the process of regeneration and facilitating healing.

## **Taking responsibility for personal health**

Patient should understand that ultimately it is him/her who is responsible for his/her own health and well being and must take the initiative to develop health. Yoga fixes responsibility for our health squarely upon our own shoulders and gives us chance to actively participate in our health improvement. If we do healthy things we are healthy and if we do unhealthy things we become sick. No use complaining

Bhavanani, A.B. (2011): Application of Yoga Concept in the Health Improvement. In: P.Nikic, ed. *Proceedings "Yoga – the Light of Microuniverse" of the International Interdisciplinary Scientific Conference "Yoga in Science – Future and Perspectives"*, September 23-24, 2010, Belgrade, Serbia. Belgrade: Yoga Federation of Serbia, p. 189-193

that we are not well when we have been the cause of our problem. As Swamiji Gitananda Giri would say: "You don't have problems - you are the problem."

### **Health and happiness are your birthright**

Health and happiness are your birthright, claim them and develop them to your maximum potential. Yoga helps in regainin the birthrights and attaining the goal of human life. The art and science of yoga has infinite possibilities for providing answers to most health problems troubling modern humankind. However we often misunderstand this science and want it to be a miracle pill. A pill that we take only once, and want all the problems to vanish into thin air.

### **Conclusion**

Yoga is a wholistic science and must be learnt and practiced with a holistic view. Dedicated practice of Yoga as a way of life is no doubt a good recommendation to medical prevention but also a yoga therapy. It is very important that, along with practicing asanas, individual adopt stated yoga principles and help patients to understand them and integrate them into their lives. Yoga doesn't have to be a method for resolving symptoms, but serious proposal for prevention as well as goor method in the process of healing and rehabilitation.

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