



ROLE OF YOGIC PRACTICES AND THERAPUTIC IMPLICATIONS ON IMPROVEMENT OF QUALITY OF LIFE: A REVIEW PAPER

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Abstract

Yoga is an in-depth, holistic improvement and science of controlling the thoughts, thus it is the only science that deals simultaneously with all aspects of the philosophy, psychology and practicality of conscious evolution. The goal of the study is to evaluate the conclusions that therapeutic effects of yoga and to give a detail analysis that, how yoga can improve the quality of life. Health care practitioners should be aware of the nature of yoga and the evidence of its various therapeutic effects as participation rates in mind body fitness programs like yoga camp. As a result, this paper provides details on the therapeutic benefits of yoga, which have been researched in numerous populations in relation to a wide range of different diseases and disorders. The tools and technology of yoga are discussed along with important aspects of the integration of yoga and modern scientific medicines. According to its definitions therapeutic yoga involves instruction in yogic teachings and practices prevent, reduce or eliminate structural, physiological, emotional and spiritual pain suffering or limitations. It also involves the application of yogic posture and practices for the treatment of better health. Thus it shows that yoga as a holistic development which improves overall health and quality of life by increasing muscular strength, power, flexibility and also improving respiratory and cardiovascular function assisting in the treatment of addiction recovery, reducing stress and anxiety, decreasing the perception of depression, improving the sleep-quality and generally enhancing well-being. Overall, the research suggests that the practice of yogic techniques and therapies can be a powerful tool for improving quality of life and promoting overall health and well-being.

Keywords- Therapeutic-Yoga, Holistic Development, Anxiety.

Introduction:

The word “yoga” comes from a Sanskrit root “yuj” which means union, or yoke, to join, and to direct and concentrate one's attention. Yoga is a way of life, an experiential science of human nature that enables us to realize our real selves. Swami Vivekananda said, “Yoga is really one of the grandest sciences take up the study of this science as you would any other science of material nature and remember there is no mystery and no danger in it.” Yes, Yoga is the original, timeless, science of the “self”. Yoga could be rightly termed the science of infinite human possibilities as it enables us to manifest in totality, our inherent potentiality. It is an in-depth, holistic, science of man and indeed the only science that deals simultaneously with all aspects of the philosophy, psychology and practicality of conscious evolution. Yoga not only has the concepts but also the tools and technology needed for us to find out and realize “Our Self”. While modern science tends to look outward through an experimental model, Yoga enables us to search the depths of our own self thus realizing the ultimate truth of reality through an experiential model.

Tools and Technology of Yoga (Yoga-Vidhi):

The process of Yoga is one of the understanding and achievement of Mind Control. The Yogis discovered that the mind has many levels such as Mudha (dull and inert mind), Ksipta (distracted mind), Viksipta (partially distracted mind), Ekagra (controlled mind),. They also found that the whirlpool like mental patterns (Citta-Vrtti) were fivefold; namely Pramana (conception), Viparyaya (misconception), Vikalpa (imagination), nidra (sleep) and Smrti (memory). They realized that without controlling these mental fluctuations there was no hope of conscious spiritual evolution. This is why Maharsi Patanjali says in the Yoga Darsana, ‘Yoga is the stilling of the whirlpools of the mind (yogascittavrtti nirodhah-I:2). Once this is achieved the Yogin rests in his essential self (tadadrastuhswarupe vasthanam-I:3). The method to achieve this state is through dedicated and determined practice and dispassion.

Integrating Yoga & Modern Medical Treatments:

We are today faced with numerous debilitating chronic illness related to aging, environment and hedonistic lifestyle, such as cancer, diabetics, osteoporosis, and cardiovascular diseases as well as many incurable diseases such as AIDS. Modern medical advancements provide the rationale for the integration of various traditional healing techniques including yoga to promote healing, health and longevity. It is imperative that advances in medicine include the holistic approach of yoga to face the current challenges in health care. The antiquity of yoga must be united with the innovations of modern medicine to improve quality of life throughout the world.

Therapeutic Yoga:

Therapeutic yoga is a type of yoga practice that is specifically designed to address specific physical, mental, or emotional health conditions. It involves the use of yoga poses, breathing techniques, meditation, and relaxation to help individuals manage and improve their overall health and well-being. Therapeutic yoga is often used as a complementary therapy to conventional medical treatments for a range of health conditions such as back pain, anxiety, depression, insomnia, arthritis, and cardiovascular disease. It can also be helpful in managing chronic pain and improving flexibility and strength. Therapeutic yoga can be practiced in a variety of settings, including one-on-one sessions with a yoga therapist, group classes, or as part of a comprehensive treatment program. The ultimate goal of therapeutic yoga is to help individuals improve their overall health and well-being, and to support them in achieving greater sense of balance and harmony in their lives.

Holistic Development:

Holistic development is an approach to personal growth that focuses on developing all aspects of an individual's being - physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual - in a balanced and integrated way. Rather than focusing solely on one aspect of development, such as cognitive or physical development, holistic development recognizes that all aspects of a person's life are interconnected and that they all contribute to overall well-being. Holistic development involves developing a sense of self-awareness, empathy, and social consciousness. It involves learning to manage emotions, communicate effectively, build positive relationships, and develop a strong sense of personal identity and purpose. It also involves engaging in activities that promote physical health, mental well-being, and spiritual growth. Holistic development can be achieved through a variety of practices and activities, such as *mindfulness meditation, yoga, exercise, healthy eating, creative expression, community service, and spiritual practices*. By focusing on all aspects of an individual's being, holistic development aims to promote a sense of balance, well-being, and fulfillment in life. It recognizes that personal growth is not just about achieving external goals, but about developing a deeper understanding of oneself and one's place in the world, and cultivating a sense of meaning and purpose in life.

Yoga and Ayurveda:

Firstly, allopathic medicine and Yoga may seem to be totally incompatible and in some ways even antagonistic to each other. Practitioners of either system are often found at loggerheads with one another in typical modern one-upmanship. However it is my humble endeavor as a student of both these life giving, life changing and life saving sciences, to find the similarities that exist between them and build a bridge between these two great sciences, of today's world. It would of course be much easier to build a bridge between yoga and Ayurveda as both share many similarities of concepts such as the Trigunas, Tridosas, Cakras and Nadis. They also understand that a healthy balance between body, mind and soul leads to total health. Diet and behavior are given importance in both systems and the ultimate goal of both is the attainment of moksha. Both modern medicine and yoga understand the need for total health and even the World Health Organization has recently added a new dimension to the modern understanding of health by including of Yoga and now that even the WHO has come around to understanding this point of view, there is hope for a true unification of these two systems. Modern medicine has the ultimate aim and goal of producing a state of optimum physical and mental health thus ultimately leading to the optimum well being of the individual.

The role of yogic practices and therapeutic implications on the improvement of quality of life has been a popular area of research in recent years. The potential and manifest integration of Therapeutic Yoga with modern medical science can be discussed under different sub headings as follows:

Anatomy and Physiology:

The study of anatomy and physiology is a great meeting point for modern medicine and Yoga. Yoga therapists and practitioners can benefit from the intricate and detailed 'break-down study' of modern medicine where the body is broken down into many systems, then into many organs, many tissues and finally into billions of cells. On the other hand the Yogic "holistic" view of the "pancha-kosa" (the five sheathed existence) can help modern doctors realize that we are not just, 'one-body' organisms but have four more bodies that are equally if not more important. We are a manifestation of the Divine and have, not only the physical body but also an energy body, a body of wisdom and a body of eternal bliss. An understanding of the psychic anatomy and physiology of Nadis, Chakras and Bindus when coupled with the practical understanding of the details of the physical body can inspire real knowledge of the self in all health care personnel.

Prevention from various Diseases:

Modern medicine has come to realize the importance of prevention only in recent times but the role of preventive medicine is still very limited. Yogic lifestyle that includes the Yama and Niyama can help prevent a great many of the modern diseases like Hepatitis B and AIDs. Cleanliness that is taught through Saucha can help prevent and limit the spread of contagious and infectious diseases. Mental peace and right attitudes of Yoga such as PratipaksaBhavanam (taking the opposite view), Samatvam (equanimity of mind) and vairagya (dispassionate detachment) can help prevent many of the psychosomatic ailments running wild in the modern world. If these Yogic values as well as practices such as Asanas, Pranayamas, Kriyas and Dhyana are inculcated in the modern human race, we can prevent virtually all

diseases that abound today. Communicable diseases as well as degenerative disorders of the body can be well prevented in a true manifestation of the adage, "A stitch in time saves nine". However the 'will' to do so is also of paramount importance as there is no money or fame in prevention and we don't know what we have prevented because we have prevented it from happening.

Promotive Health:

Yoga is an excellent tool for promotive health that can enrich modern medicine. The practice of Yoga leads to the efficient functioning of the body with homeostasis through improved functioning of the psycho-immuno-neuro endocrine system. A balanced equilibrium between the sympathetic and parasympathetic wings of the autonomic nervous system leads to a dynamic state of health. Great Yogi *Swatmarama* in the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, one of the classical Yoga texts gives us the assurance, "One who tirelessly practices Yoga attains success irrespective of whether they are young, old decrepit, diseased or weak". He gives us the guarantee that it improves health of all alike and wards off disease, provided we properly abide by the proper rules and regulations.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well being and not merely absence of disease or infirmity. WHO has also in recent times suggested a fourth dimension of spiritual health but has fallen short of defining it without confusing it with religion. From a Yogic perspective it is heartening that the WHO definition gives importance to 'well being' that is a vital aspect of 'being' healthy as well as 'feeling' healthy. There is no use in a doctor telling patients that all their investigations are 'normal' when the patients themselves are not feeling 'well'. This qualitative aspect of health is something that yoga and Indian systems of medicine have considered important for thousands of years. The definition of asana given in the Yoga Sutra as *sthira sukham* implies this state of steady well being at levels of existence (*sthira sukham asanam*-Yoga Darshan II:46). Patanjali also tells us that through the practice of asana we can attain a state that is beyond dualities leading to a calm and serene state of well being (*tat tvanasi*-Yoga Darshan II:29). Yoga aims at enabling the individual to attain and maintain a dynamic *sukhasthanam* that may be defined as a dynamic sense of physical, mental and spiritual well being. *The Bhagavad Gita defines Yoga as samatvam meaning thereby that Yoga is equanimity at all levels*

Management of various Diseases and Disorders:

Yoga doesn't negate the use of drugs and other methods of modern medicine. Maharishi Patanjali in his Avatara as Carak didn't shy away from the need to use medicinal herbs as well as surgical methods when necessary for the benefit of the patient. The system of Ayurveda is more in tune with the Yogic views of healing in this regard but definitely the modern antibiotic treatment of infectious diseases as well as the emergency medical and trauma management techniques of modern medicine must be understood to be life-savers in times of need. A symbiotic relationship between the techniques of modern medicine and yoga can help the patient more than a dogmatic refusal to see the 'other side'. Yoga has a lot to offer in terms of psychosomatic disorders and in stress related disorders such as diabetes, asthma, irritable bowel syndrome, epilepsy, hypertension, back pain and other functional disorders. Yoga can help to reduce the dependence in patients suffering from diabetes mellitus, hypertension, epilepsy, anxiety, bronchial asthma, constipation, dyspepsia, insomnia, arthritis and dermatological disorders. According to *Dr Steven F Brena*, "Yoga is probably the most effective way to deal with various psychosomatic disabilities along the same, time-honored, lines of treatment that contemporary medicine has just rediscovered and tested. Asana are probably the best tool to disrupt any learned patterns of wrong muscular efforts. Pranayama and Pratyahara are extremely efficient techniques to divert the individuals and interiorize them, to achieve control of one's inner functioning. Moreover, in restoring human unity, the yoga discipline is always increasing awareness and understanding of ourselves, adjusting our emotions, expanding our intellect, and enabling us not only to function better in any given situation, but to perform as spiritual beings with universal values. yoga therapists must work in tandem with medical doctors when they are treating patients who have been on allopathic treatment. There are many instances where the patient stops medical treatment thinking that it no more necessary as they have started yoga. This leads to many catastrophes that could be easily avoided by tandem consultations with a medical specialist. Similarly many modern doctors tend to tell the patient to take up yoga or relaxation and forget to mention to the therapist what they actually want the patients to do. Most allopathic medications need to be tapered off in a progressive manner rather than being stopped suddenly. We often find this mistake in regard to corticosteroids as well as cardiac medications where sudden stoppage can be harmful. We must remember Plato's words when he said, "the treatment of the part shouldn't be attempted without a treatment of the entirety," meaning that the treatment of the body without treating the mind and soul would be a useless waste of time.

Act as a Rehabilitation:

Yoga as a physical therapy has a lot to offer patients of physical and mental handicaps. Many of the practices of physiotherapy and other physical therapies have a lot in common with yoga practices. Mentally challenged individuals can benefit by an improvement in their IQ as well as in learning to relate to themselves and other better. As their physiological functions improve with yoga, the combination of yoga and physical therapies can benefit such patients as well as those with learning disabilities. Musculoskeletal problems can be treated by the combination to improve function as well as range of movement, strength and endurance abilities. Balance and dexterity can also be improved by the combination therapy. The use of yoga can help those recovering from accidents and physical traumas to get back on their feet faster and with better functional ability. An example of this was Dr Swami Gatananda Giri who managed to get back on his feet and function normally after a debilitating stay in full body cast for more than six months. Swamiji used to say, "Modern medicine kept me alive, but yoga gave me back my life as otherwise I may have been a cripple for life". Yoga also has a lot to offer those suffering from drug and substance abuse in assisting them to get back to a normal life. Yoga helps develop their self-control and will power and also gives them a new philosophy of living. This is vital as otherwise they will lapse into their old negative habits.

Helps in Maintaining of a Healthy Diet:

This is a place that modern medicine and yoga can give a patient as well as normal person the proper holistic values of a proper diet. Modern research shows us the benefits of 'break-down study of foods on the basis of their physical and chemical properties. This is important for the person to know how much of each constituent of food is to be taken in the proper quantity. Yoga can help a person to learn the right attitude towards food as well as understand concepts based on the Trigunas and Tridosas for better health. Yoga teaches us that the cause of most disease is through under, over or wrong digestion. Yoga also teaches us about the approach to food, the types of food as well as the importance of timings and moderation in diet. A combination of the modern aspects of diet with a dose of Yogic thought can help us eat not only the right things but also in the right way and at the right time thus ensuring our good health and longevity. Therapeutic Yoga emphasizes the importance of not only eating the right type of food but also the right amount and with the right attitude. Importance of not eating alone, as well as preparation and serving of food with love are brought out in the yogic scheme of right living. Guna (inherent nature) of food is taken into consideration to attain and maintain good health. Modern dietary science of diet can learn a lot from this ancient concept of classification of food according to inherent nature as it is a totally neglected aspect of modern diet. Yogic concept of "Mitahara". It is the specific guidelines for an individual's constitution, health status, and other factors, but some general principles include choosing whole, natural foods over processed and artificial ones, eating a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, and proteins, and avoiding foods that are excessively spicy, oily, or heavy.

Act as a Relaxation Agent:

Most of the medical doctors understand that it is important to relax in order to get better. The problem is that, though the doctor tells the patient to relax, they don't tell them how to do so and maybe in fact they don't know the answer themselves in the first place. Haltha yoga and jnana yoga Relaxation practices help relax the body, emotions and mind. Relaxation is a key element of any yoga therapy regimen and must not be forgotten at any cost. Savasana has been reported to help a lot in hypertensive patients and practices such as Savitri Pranayama Candra Pranayama, Kaya Kriya, Yoga Nidra, and Anuloma Viloma Pranayama are also available to the person requiring this state of complete relaxation. It is important to remember that relaxation on its own is less effective than relaxation that follows active physical exertion.

Coping with various skills:

Yoga has a lot to offer those who unable to cope with death and dying as well as those suffering from incurable diseases. The yoga philosophy of living sees death as an inevitable aspect of life that cannot be wished away. Swami Gitananda Giri used to tell us that the whole of life is, but a preparation for the moment of death, so that we can leave the body in the right way. Those who are taking care of the dying as well as those taking care of patients of incurable diseases and major disabilities are under an extreme amount of stress and Yoga practice as well as its philosophy helps them gain the inner strength necessary to do their duty. Yoga can help break the vicious spiral of pain-drug dosage-pain and by doing so help reduce the drug dosage in patients suffering chronic pain. It has been reported that yoga help improve the quality of life in patients suffering from cancer and also helps them cope better with the effects of treatment. It relaxes them and helps them sleep better. As someone rightly said, "Therapeutic Yoga may not be able to always cure but it can surely help us to endure".

Aging process:

Aging is inevitable and Yoga can help us to age gracefully. Modern medicine tries to help retard aging and help people look better by costly surgical methods that are only an external covering over the underlying aging process. Healthy diet, regular exercise, avoidance of negative habits and cultivation of the positive habits and a healthy lifestyle can help us to age with dignity. Yoga can also help our 'silver citizens' retain their mental ability and prevent degenerative disorders such as Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's and various other dementias. Physical accidents such as falls can be minimized and many an artificial hip, knee shoulder replacement surgery can be avoided.

Psycho-therapy:

In the field of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis we can find a lot of ancient Yogic concepts being reiterated time and again. Many modern psychotherapeutic concepts such as identification, projection, and transference are similar to concepts in yoga psychology. Yoga psychology integrates diverse principles within a single body. C G Jung had a great interest in yoga and the eastern thought and said, "Cakras represent a real effort to give a symbolic theory of the psyche". His 'Centre of Personality' concept based on dream analysis is very similar to the Yogic concept of a central psychic or spiritual personality. He also correlated Cakras to the archetypes that abound in the collective unconscious. Yoga helps the psychotherapist in training self awareness, and in the self regulation of body, diet, breath, emotions, habit patterns, values, will unconscious pressures and drivers. It also helps in relating to the archetypal processes and to a transient being. It offers an integrated method rather than one that is found in isolation in many different therapies. The theory of Kleshas is an excellent model for psychotherapy while emotional therapies of Yoga include Swadhyaya, Pranyama, pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Bhajans. Development of proper psychological attitudes is inculcated via the concepts of Vairagya, Cittaprasadanam as well as Patanjali's advise on adopting the attitudes of Maitri, Karuna, Mudita and Upeksha towards the happy, the suffering, the good and the evil minded persons. Yoga also has a lot to offer in terms of spiritual therapies such as Swadhyaya, Satsanga, Bhajans and yogic counseling. It is also interesting to note that both Yoga and psychoanalysis share common ground in understanding that symptoms of the disease are often willed by the patients. While all psychoanalysts must undergo psychoanalysis themselves, it is taught in yoga that one must first undergo a deep Sadhana, before attempting to guide others on the path. However while psychoanalysis searches the unconscious, yoga attempts to understand and explore the super conscious.

Lifestyle Modification:

Yoga helps patients take their health in their own hands. They learn to make an effort and change their life style for the better so that their can improve. Life style modification is the buzzword in modern medical circles and Yoga can play a vital role in this regard. Yogic diet, Asanas, Pranayamas, Mudras, Kriyas and relaxation are an important aspect of lifestyle modification. To live a healthy life it is important to do healthy things and follow a healthy lifestyle. The modern world is facing a pandemic of lifestyle disorders that require changes to be made consciously by individuals themselves. Yoga places great importance on a proper and healthy lifestyle whose main components are Acara (healthy activities on a regular basis), Vicara (right thoughts and attitude towards life), Ahara (healthy, nourishing diet) and vihara (proper recreational activities to relax body and mind).

Women's Health:

Women are the chosen ones blessed with the responsibility of the future of our human race. Healthy mothers give birth to healthy babies and a great future ahead. Yoga has a lot to contribute in combination with modern medicine to the health status of womankind. Puberty and menopause because easier transitions with the help of Yoga and many eminent Yoginis have said that they were not even aware of a single menopausal symptom as they went through this difficult period in a woman's life. Similarly our young girls can vouch for the fact that their pubertal changes and menarche has been relatively smoother than their counterparts who don't practice Yoga. The benefits of Yoga in terms of family planning are also an important aspect that needs further study, as they can be an effective part of the contraceptive armory. The risk of side effect is negated and the entire control restored to the individuals themselves. The oli Mudras as practiced in the Gitananda Yoga tradition have great potential in the regard and also the Swara Yoga theories of conception have a lot of exciting possibilities. Once conception occurs. Yoga helps the young mother to be, to prepare herself physically and mentally for the upcoming childbirth. Yoga helps open the joints of the pelvis and hip as well as strengthen the abdominal muscles for childbirth. Later, simple Prannayama and relaxation techniques help the new mother relax and enjoy the new experience of her life. Post partum introduction of simple practices along with breathing, relaxation and a lot of crawling helps her come back to normal earlier and this can be used in all maternity hospitals along with allopathic management. Yoga practices can also help reduce the drug dosage in medical problems that often complicate a normal pregnancy such as diabetes, asthma and hypertension.

Research works:

The positive benefits of Yoga research are of vital significance and understanding of how the various practices work in different conditions and in normal situations are of great value for both the science of Yoga as well as for the world of medicine. Yoga therapists can benefit a lot by a scientific understanding of Yoga postures and other techniques. This will bring about a rational approach to Yoga therapy rather than a haphazard application of individualistic knowledge. Under the department of AYUSH, Morarji, Desai Notional institute of Yoga has created advanced centers for Yoga in JPMER, NIMHANS, AIIMS and DIPAS to promote all aspects of Yoga in these in these premier medical institutions of India. Various private institutions are running in our country and doing their best to propagate Yoga-Vidya. Yoga therapy is being used both in conjunction with modern medicine or alternative systems of medicine as well as on its own in various centers. Various conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, mental depression, bronchial asthma etc. have been found to be relieved by Yoga therapy and centers such as ICYER at Ananda Ashram, SVYASA, Kaivalyadhama, the Yoga institute and Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram are doing a great deal of work in this field. Many studies are badly constructed and many-a-time we find that the Yoga practices performed by the patients have no real relation to Yoga at all. The higher aspects of Yoga are still not in the 'researchable' realm of modern science. Dr V S S M Rao writes that, "the tradition of Yoga is so perfect that we have to seek ways of expounding it in modern scientific terminology instead of simply evaluating it in terms of current concepts of science, which is expanding so rapidly that a time may come when man would like to live by his intuition rather than by scientific planning, bristling with conflicts and balancing a number of variables not completely understood".

Conclusion:

Yoga, a form of mind-body implementation, has become an increasingly extensive therapy used to maintain wellness, and alleviate a range of health problems and ailments. Yoga should be considered as a complementary therapy or alternative method for medical therapy in the treatment of stress, anxiety, depression, and other mood disorders as it has been shown to create a greater sense of well-being, increase feelings of relaxation, improve self-confidence and body image, improve efficiency, better interpersonal relationships, increase attentiveness, lower irritability, and encourage an optimistic outlook on life. It 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! Yoga is a holistic science and must be learnt and practiced with a holistic view. Though the interest for Yoga-Vidya in the west is growing day by day and more and more people are turning towards Yoga, this is not the same in our country. Lack of proper infrastructure and absence of a proper systematized approach in the propagation of Yoga are still drawbacks in our nation. The practice of yoga has been found to have a positive impact on physical, mental, and emotional health, leading to an overall improvement in quality of life. Yoga has been shown to reduce stress and anxiety, improve mood, increase flexibility and strength, and lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Mindfulness-based interventions, which often incorporate yogic practices such as meditation and deep breathing exercises, have been found to be effective in reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and chronic pain. Studies have also shown that yoga can improve sleep quality, which is essential for overall health and well-being. Yoga has been found to be particularly beneficial for individuals with chronic conditions such as arthritis, multiple sclerosis, and chronic pain. Practicing yoga in a group setting can also provide social support and a sense of community, which can further improve quality of life. Overall, the research suggests that the practice of yogic techniques and therapies can be a powerful tool for improving quality of life and promoting overall health and well-being.

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