

Traditional Yoga and Its Essentials

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Abstract

The word Yoga comes from Indian philosophy, it literally means union and in this context refers to the union of the individual's soul with the universal. There is simply no other discipline quite like yoga because it utilizes the body, mind and spirit, all in one practice. Yoga is indeed a spiritual path that is based on ancient sacred philosophy, but one does not need to make an ethical decision when practicing yoga, rather finding your own path is wholly accepted. The holistic benefits of yoga are suitable for the young or old, sick or well, with any religious background. The secrets of yoga are inwardness, concentration, and purification of mind and body with cleansing thoughts and food. The mean differences were tested for significance at 0.05 level of confidence using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) among the three groups on selected Physiological, Bio Chemical and Psychological variables were considered as the effect of Traditional Yoga (Group I) and Tibetan Yoga (Group-II) practices on Type II Diabetic women. It was concluded that the Yogic practices of Traditional Yoga and Tibetan Yoga decreased the Physiological variables such as BMI, Blood pressure and Pulse rate; decreased the Bio-chemical variables such as Fasting blood sugar, HbA1c, Total Cholesterol and reduced the Psychological variable Anxiety and improved the other Psychological variables such as Work & Social Adjustment and Satisfaction with Life than the Control group among Type II diabetic women.

Keywords: *Traditional Yoga, Philosophy, Bio Chemical, Diabetic Women*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Health Status is usually measured in terms of life expectancy at birth, infant mortality rate, fertility rate, crude birth rate and crude death rate. These indicators of health are determined by numerous factors such as per capital income, nutrition, housing, sanitation, safe drinking water, social infrastructure, health and medical care services provided by government, geographical climate, employment status, incidence of poverty and the like. It is a well-known fact that India is, next only to China, the second largest country in terms of population in the world. But the health status of a great majority of the people is far from satisfactory as compared to China and other developed countries. However, over the last five decades or so, India has built up health infrastructure and manpower at primary, secondary and tertiary care in government, voluntary and private sectors and made considerable progress in improving the health of its population (Ray 2003; Bhat and Babu 2004). However, India is one of the major countries where communicable Diseases are still not under control. The incidence of new fatal diseases such as AIDS/HIV, hepatitis-A is on the increase and tuberculosis and malaria still take a high toll. Chronic non-communicable diseases such as heart diseases, diabetes and cancer are also in the rise (Bhat and Babu 2004)

Therapeutic Yoga is basically a system of self-treatment. According to yogic view, diseases, disorders and ailments are results of some faulty ways of living, bad habits, lack of proper life style. The diseases are this resultant state of a short or prolonged malfunctioning of the body system. This malfunctioning is caused due to certain errors of the individuals. Since the root cause of a disease lies in the mistakes of the individual, its cure also lies in correcting the mistakes by the same individual. Thus it is the individual himself who is responsible in both the cases that is, for causing as well as for curing the disease. This being the basic assumption in this system about the nature of the trouble and its remedy, there is total reliance on the effort of the patient himself. The yoga expert shows only the path and works no more than a counselor to the patient.

2. TRADITIONAL YOGA

Yoga is an ancient art based on a harmonizing system of development for the body, mind and spirit. The continued practice of yoga will lead you to a sense of peace and well-being and also a feeling of being one with their environment. The word Yoga comes from Indian philosophy, it literally means union and in this context refers to the union of the individual's soul with the universal. There is simply no other discipline quite like yoga because it utilizes the body, mind and spirit, all in one practice. Yoga is indeed a spiritual path that is based on ancient sacred philosophy, but one does not need to make an ethical decision when practicing yoga, rather finding your own path is wholly accepted. The holistic benefits of yoga are suitable for the young or old, sick or well, with any religious background. The secrets of yoga are inwardness, concentration, and purification of mind and body with cleansing thoughts and food.

3. HISTORY OF TRADITIONAL YOGA

1. Vedic Period

The oldest written records of Indian culture and yogic activities are found in the Vedas, which are a compilation of hymns and rituals over 3000 years old. The Vedic Yoga, also known as Archaic Yoga, revolves around the thought of reuniting the visible material world with the invisible spiritual world by sacrificing certain things. In order to practice these rather long rituals successfully it was necessary to be able to focus the mind to a very high level. This inner focus as a means to enhance the sensory and human ability is the root of all Yoga.

2. Pre-Classical Period

This period in Yoga history spans about 2000 years, until year 200. The most central Yoga literature from this period is the Upanishads - a collection of texts revolving around meta-physical speculation. They are just like the Vedas considered as enigmatic revelations. As opposed to the public rituals of the Vedic period, the Upanishads were secret scriptures. Some of these 200 Gnostic texts are directly related to Yoga and are about the complete connectedness of all things. Yoga was now slowly finding its form. As Yoga and its secret teachings spread from teacher to student or from guru to yogi, the concept of an individual system of thought began to take shape.

Classical Period

The eight-limbed Yoga described in the Sutras by Patanjali is usually referred to as Classical Yoga. The Yoga Sutras were most likely written around year 100-200 A.C. and consists of about 200 aphorisms (words of wisdom). Here Yoga is presented in a systematic and approachable way, and many yogis see it as an important source of yogic understanding. Almost all serious Yoga practitioners will at some point study this literature and it has been published with commentary many times since it was first published.

4. Post-Classical Period

The great number of independent yoga schools that were developed during the period after the Yoga sutras, is usually referred to as post-classical Yoga. As opposed to Patanjali's Yoga, the Yoga of this era was, very much like the postclassical and Vedic traditions, characterized by a non-dualistic nature. A few hundred years after Patanjali, the evolution of Yoga took an interesting turn - the potential of the human body now became an interesting field of study. Yogis of the past had not paid very much attention to the (physical) body, as they focused all their energy on contemplation and meditation. Their goal was to leave their bodies and the world, in order to re-unite with the shapeless reality - the soul.

4. MODERN YOGA

Modern Yoga is said to have begun at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, 1893. During this meeting the young Swami Vivekananda from India made a deep impression on the American he introduced to Yoga. Vivekananda became the most popular from members of the Parliament, and he subsequently toured the US giving lectures on Yoga. Many Yoga masters would later cross the ocean and follow in his footsteps, spreading Yoga to all corners of the continent. Yoga schools were founded and increasing numbers of people fell in love with the yogic forms of exercise. Many masters also went to Europe where the reception, for some reason, wasn't quite as warm. Yoga, in

the form of Hatha Yoga, debuted in the consciousness of the American masses when Russian born Indra Devi called "the first lady of Yoga", opened a Yoga studio in Hollywood in 1947. She taught movie stars like Gloria Swanson, Jennifer Jones and Robert Ryan, as well as educating hundreds of Yoga teachers.

5. YOGA TODAY

Yoga has gained tremendously in popularity during the last few years and today over 30 million people practice Yoga on a regular basis. Yoga is the most rapidly growing health movement of today, despite having existed for thousands of years already. People's attitude towards health, spirituality, way of life and our place in society have changed quite dramatically, as people are looking for answers for their everyday problems. In these chaotic times our environment is fighting for survival and we humans suffer more and more from physical and psychological stress, with new diseases developing while old ones, that we thought we could handle with antibiotics, returns with an vengeance in the midst of our society. We can't always control these developments, but we can learn to face them. And to this end, Yoga is as good an invention as it has ever been.

6. YOGIC CONCEPT OF BODY AND HEALTH

A Kosha usually rendered "sheath", one of five coverings of the Atman, or Self according to Vedantic philosophy. They are often visualized like the layers of a onion. According to the Kosha system in Yogic philosophy, the nature of being human encompasses physical and psychological aspects that function as one holistic system. The Kosha system refers to these different aspects as layers of subjective experience.

Layers range from the dense physical body to the more subtle levels of emotions, mind and spirit. Psychology refers to the emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of our being. Together, all aspects make up our subjective experience of being alive.

The five sheaths (pancha-kosas) are alluded to in the fourteen verse of the Atma bodha. From gross to fine they are:

- Annamaya kosha, food-apparent-sheath
- Pranamaya kosha, air-apparent-sheath
- Manomaya kosha, mind-stuff-apparent-sheath
- Vijnanamaya kosha, wisdom-apparent-sheath (Vijnana)
- Anandamaya kosha, bliss-apparent-sheath (Ananda)

According to Vedanta the wise man should discriminate between the self and the koshas, which are non-self.

Annamaya kosha - The food sheath. The food sheath is the gross, physical body. It includes the five organs of perception (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch) and the five organs of action (Apprehension, locomotion, articulation, excretion, pro creation). It is called food sheath because food or anna enabled it to come into being, it is maintained by food, and it ultimately ends up as food or the constituents of food.

Pranamaya kosha - The vital air sheath. There are five vital airs that correspond to five physiological functions of the mind and body. They are called the five pranas. Together they constitute the vital-air sheath. They have been given this name because they are related directly to your breath.

1. Prana (in breath) -- affects faculty of perception: the functioning of the five senses
2. Apana (out breath) -- affects faculty of excretion: eliminates, "throws out" or evacuates the wastes of the body
3. Samana -- affects faculty of digestion; digests food received by the stomach
4. Vyana -- affects faculty of digestion; distributes digested food to different parts of the body through blood stream
5. Udana -- affects the faculty of thought-absorption: takes in fresh knowledge.

These five faculties (pranas) are sharp and clear in youth. With age, the pranas lose their strength and vitality. This is why sight, hearing, etc. begin to fade with time and also the faculties of excretion, digestion and circulation become weak in old age. Our capacity to absorb and accept new thoughts and ideas is also reduced in old age. The vital air sheath (pranamaya kosha) is subtler than the food sheath (annamaya kosha). It controls the food sheath. When your

pranas function properly your physical body remains healthy and strong. When they work inefficiently the body is adversely affected.

Manomaya kosha - The mind sheath. The mind is comprised of passions and emotions, feelings, thoughts and impulses. It is full of likes and dislikes. The mental sheath controls the vital air and food sheaths. For instance, when the mind is disturbed, the physiological functions (pranas) and the physical body are affected.

Vijnanamaya kosha - The intellect sheath. The intellect thinks, reflects, reasons, discriminates, judges, etc. It analyses and distinguishes between pairs of opposites. It controls the above three sheaths.

Anandamaya kosha - The bliss sheath. The bliss sheath consists only of mental impressions or tendencies in seed form called vasanas. When you are in deep, dreamless sleep you are in bliss sheath.

When you cross the bliss sheath and move to other sheaths, you experience the dream and waking states of consciousness. Vasanas are inactive in deep sleep, but they manifest in the form of thought in the dream state, and actions in the waking state. Consequently you experience mental agitation, be it great or small, positive or negative, as long as you remain in the dream and waking states. When you enter deep, dreamless sleep, all your mental agitations cease and you experience undisturbed peace and bliss. This is why this sheath is called the 'bliss' sheath. However, the bliss experienced in deep sleep is material -- not to be confused with God's absolute divine bliss! This ADHI (stress) spread from one place to and occupy the entire body known as VYADHI (diseases). If stress occurs in the Astral body (sukshuma sarira) it reflects in the physical body (sthoola sarira). So as a result the entire body became prey to deadly diseases and disorder.

Adhi / Vyadhi: Our thoughts are transmitted to the body through the neuro-endocrine system. Scientists have found that these mental processes such as thoughts and emotions cannot be separated from bodily mechanisms and function as all thought and emotions are involved in biochemical and neurological activities. Here adhi (mental/emotional disturbances in the manomaya kosha or astral sheath) cause corresponding disturbances at the physical level (annamaya kosha). These disturbances are called vyadhi. This is transmitted through the intermediary of the pranamaya kosha (or energy body) causing disturbances in the prana. The good news is that we can consciously work with the body and/or pranamaya kosha to effect healing in the manomaya kosha and vice versa, we can consciously work in the manomaya kosha to effect positive healing changes in the pranamaya and annamaya koshas.

It is believed that a lasting cure is only possible when the causal disturbance is completely remedied; i.e., the previously unhealthy tensions and conflicts between the bodies or sheaths have been harmonized and resolved. Here the adhis which originate in the manomaya kosha are considered causal and primary which in turn cause physical ailments (vyadhi). These adhis can also occur in the Vijnanamaya kosha and/or karmic sheath when our belief systems are out of sync with the inner wisdom karmic body and/or strong unresolved karmic forces are at play. Thus when the adhis are destroyed in the subtle or causal bodies, then the vyadhis are no longer generated or manifest. In addition there exist two kinds of adhis. One is ordinary or samaya (caused by the mind or emotions) and the other one is called, sara, which is intrinsic to a more causal spiritual malaise that can be successfully treated only through processes that affect the life style, belief system, self-identification process, karma, or in general our energetic relationship that we cling to as "s(S) elf" in relationship to "Reality" i.e., through modalities which reach into the Vijnanamaya and anandamaya koshas.

In either case, physical disease is caused by disturbances/corruption and/or obstruction of the nadis (psychic nerves) and energy patterns which have become disrupted, distorted, and patterned into corruptive patterns causing degeneration, dissipation, dis-ease, pain, suffering, stasis, and death. Thus effective therapy is aimed at removing the source of the disturbances, opening up these blocked pathways, and rechanneling and re-patterning the energy flow.

7. CONCLUSION

The mean differences were tested for significance at 0.05 level of confidence using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) among the three groups on selected Physiological, Bio Chemical and Psychological variables were considered as the effect of Traditional Yoga (Group I) and Tibetan Yoga (Group-II) practices on Type II Diabetic

women patients. The results proved that there were significant differences in selected physiological, biochemical and psychological variables due to twelve week yogic practices among Type II diabetic women.

1. It was concluded that the Yogic practices of Traditional Yoga and Tibetan Yoga decreased the Physiological variables such as BMI, Blood pressure and Pulse rate; decreased the Bio-chemical variables such as Fasting blood sugar, HbA1c, Total Cholesterol and reduced the Psychological variable Anxiety and improved the other Psychological variables such as Work & Social Adjustment and Satisfaction with Life than the Control group among Type II diabetic women.

2. It was concluded that Yogic practices of Traditional Yoga was slightly effective than Tibetan Yoga in decreasing Blood pressure, Pulse Rate, BMI, Fasting blood sugar, HbA1c, Total Cholesterol, in reducing Anxiety and improving Work & Social Adjustment and Satisfaction with Life among Type II diabetic women.

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