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REVIEW ARTICLE

YOGA AND MENTAL HEALTH-A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

*Durga, E.,

Associate Professor, Ahalia Ayurveda Medical College, Palakkad

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ABSTRACT

One of the most ancient systems of medicine, Ayurveda, the science of life, developed thousands of years ago, even today continues to stun the scientific faculties all over the world by its highly evolved concepts. Ayurveda and Yoga are ancient sciences having greater popularity in modern era. Both of them having a common philosophical platform. Both sciences serve the humanity for a healthy life. Both of them have a holistic approach. The prevalence of psychosomatic diseases is significantly increased now a days. Today, stress generated through the fast life plays the pivot role in this regard. Hence present generation is keen to preserve the mental health. Ayurveda and Yoga are having preventive and curative modality which can compliment in managing stress. Yoga is a practical science which can teach us how to control the mind and the emotions. Ayurveda recognizes yoga as its psychotherapy. Yoga helps to minimize Rajas and Thamas by uplifting Satva. Similarly Hatayoga works as an effective practice to provide adequate exercise to the body. The most important objective of Yoga is to attain liberation or Moksha. It is obtained through Jnana yoga, Karma yoga, Bhakti yoga and Raja yoga. Various practices of Yoga can certainly make changes in an individual at physical, mental, emotional and intellectual levels. Such changes will minimize the animal instincts and maximize the humane qualities. Ayurveda makes the body conducive to practice mind control. Yoga prepares the mind to transcend to the higher state of being.

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INTRODUCTION

The term yoga is derived from the root yuj which means union. The union denotes that of Jeevatma and Paramatma. Patanjali in Yoga sutra defines Yoga as Chitta Vritti Nirodha. There are five types of Chitta Vrittis. They are Pramana, Viparyaya, Vikalpa, Nidra, and Smriti. All vrittis are again classified in to Klishta and Aklishta.

Definitions of Yoga

- Mana Prashamanopaya Yoga Ityabhidheeyate. Means techniques to pacify the thoughts of mind.
- Sidhyasidhyo samo Bhootva Samatvam Yoga Uchyate Means state of equanimity gain or loss.
- Yoga Karmasu Koushalam means skill in action.
- Charaka explains Yoga as a state where mind gets attached to soul.

Aim of Yoga is to attain a state of ultimate happiness-pure consciousness or bliss.

Patanjali Yoga sutra is considered as the most authentic text in Yoga. Hata Yoga is an important stream of yoga for common man. In Hata yoga, Ha means mental energy and Ta means life force energy. It includes mainly for components namely Asanas, Kumbhakas, and Mudras. Patanjali, who has propounded the Yoga sutra, introduced a systematic protocol for Yoga practice in the form of Ashtanga Yoga. Continued practice (Abhyasa) and renunciation (Vairagya) are the two key factors for progressing in the field of Yoga. Patanjali describes eight steps as practical measures to attain Samadhi as follows.

- Yama
- Niyama
- Asana
- Pranayama
- Pratyahara
- Dharana
- Dhyana
- Samadhi

These steps are supposed to be practiced in a sequential manner. Among these eight steps first four are known as external (Bahiranga) and the last four are internal (Antaranga).

*Corresponding author: Durga, E.,

Associate Professor, Ahalia Ayurveda Medical College, Palakkad

Yama and Niyama are ethical guide lines. Physical strength and energy are emphasized in Asana and Pranayama respectively. Pratyahara is actually the link between Antaranga and Bahiranga. Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are higher psycho spiritual practices and together they are called Samyama.

Yama (Abstinence): The literal meaning of word Yama is control or abstinence. As a first step certain self control measures are suggested to uplift the moral values. Patanjali identified the following five as yama. They are Ahimsa, Satyam, Asteya, Brahmacharya and Aparigraha.

Ahimsa: The literal meaning of Ahimsa is non-violence. Here the term Ahimsa is used to mention the avoidance of action, speech and thought, which can injure any living being physically or mentally.

Satya: The literal meaning of Satya is truthfulness. One must be truthful in his speech, act and thought. As he establishes in truthfulness, whatever he say will become fruitful.

Asteya: Asteya means non-stealing or restraint from possessing the property belonging to other persons.

Brahmacharya: Brahma means pure consciousness and charya means action. Hence Brahmacharya means action of a person whose awareness is absorbed in pure consciousness. Non-indulgence in sex is to be observed by those who practice Yoga to attain liberation.

Aparigraha: The literal meaning of Aparigraha is non-hoarding. The tendency to store anything more than what one requires is called hoarding.

According to Hata Yoga Pradipika, Yama are ten in number. They are

- Ahimsa
- Satya
- Asteya
- Brahmacharya
- Kshama
- Dhriti
- Daya
- Arjava
- Mitahara
- Saucha

Niyama (observances): Niyama means observances. Under the heading of Niyama, Patanjali suggests certain good habits which help the development of total personality.

Saucha: Refers to internal and external cleanliness. Saucha also consists of purification of mind. A pleasurable feeling is the nature of mind. Everything is pleasurable for a Satvika person.

Santhosha: Means contentment. Lack of contentment is one of the major causes of misery. Without contentment one cannot control his mind and meditate. Hence one should have contentment with whatever he possesses. Contentment gives a superlative happiness.

Tapas-means austerity. Tapas is a practice of body and mind to perfect them. Constant practice of Tapas enables Yogi to overcome the sufferings caused by heat, cold, rain, hunger and thirst.

Svadyaya: means self study. When a Sadhaka is exposed to different interpretations of self, it will enable him to erase many misunderstandings. Patanjali says that repeated chanting will facilitate realization of the intended deity. Known as Jnana yoga.

Ishvara pranidhana: Dedication to divinity or surrender to the God is an important method to attain the highest state of existence. i.e., liberation. Thus Ishvara pranidhana appears to be an alternative and independent path of achieving the ultimate reality. This path of yoga is known as Bhakti yoga.

According to Hata Yoga Pradipika, Niyamas are

- Tapas
- Santhosha
- Astikya
- Dana
- Ishvara pujana
- Sidhantha vakya sravana
- Hri
- Mati
- Japa
- Huta

Asana: Asana is defined as the steady posture comfortable for the practice of meditation. Asanas are not only a form of physical exercise but also the method of gaining the perfect mental and physical relaxation. Yogasana specifically influence various internal organs and make them functionally more efficient. Two important characteristics of yogasana are effortless activity and awareness of expandedness.

Pranayama: Patanjali defines Pranayama as breaking the cycle of inhalation and exhalation. It means Pranayama is a technique to control the motion of exhalation and inhalation of breath. The breath is the most important sign of energy in the body. In order to get the control over the energy, initially one has to regulate the breathing. Breathing is regulated by the expansion and contraction of lungs. According to Hata Yoga Pradipika, Pranayama is said to be of three types-1. Exhalation (Rechaka), 2. Inhalation (Puraka), 3. Retention (Kumbhaka). Through Pranayama, one can control the wavering tendencies of the mind.

Pratyahara: Pratyahara is drawing in of the senses by giving up their own objects and settled in the original state of mind. As a matter of fact, Pratyahara is a bridge between the Bahiranga and Antharanga phases of Ashtanga Yoga.

Dharana: When the mind is localized within a location (Desa bandha), it is called Dharana. Dharana is a technique to hold the mind on some particular object.

Dhyana: When the mind is fixed on an object, the practitioner gradually shifts to the next stage, i.e., Dhyana. Dhyana is a stage of defocusing. According to Patanjali the unbroken flow of awareness in that object is Dhyana.

During Dhyana, practitioner will be able to visualize or imagine on the object without any effort or strain, which he focused during Dharana.

Samadhi: At the stage of Samadhi the practitioner becomes one with the object that he meditated. In Samadhi all the forms become insignificant and reflect only its meaning. In the final stage of Samadhi, person transcends to the state of super consciousness.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to Ayurveda, Rajas and Thamas are two Doshas of mind. Rajas is the basis of excitatory emotions and Thamas causes inhibitory emotions. All the disorders of mind are attributed to either Rajas or Thamas. Yoga and Ayurveda are having a single goal, i.e., moksha. Ayurveda makes the body conducive to practice the mind control. Yoga prepares the mind to transcend to the higher state of being. As a medical science, it is the responsibility of Ayurveda to offer remedy to disorders of body and mind.

But when it comes to the level of psychic discomforts, both the treatment of Manodosha and practice to attain Moksha are one and the same. In both, Rajas and Thamas are to be reduced and Satva has to be enhanced. All yoga techniques are aiming at this goal. Hence Ayurveda also accepted Yoga as a treatment modality to manage the aggravated Manodoshas.

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