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Yoga as a Tool for Life

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Abstract - Yoga is one of the six schools of Indian philosophy and is also part of ayurveda which is an Indian traditional medical system. Health is promoted by seeking balance between the physical, spiritual, psychological, and social aspects. The main objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive overview of the situation regarding yoga as a tool for life, and explore the possible strategies that could be effective in combating the spread and awareness of yoga for healthy life. Yoga's comprehensive methodology includes many techniques that serve the popular goals of enhancing or restoring fitness and health. Good health is not a miracle or a stroke of luck. In addition to genetic factors, a number of common sense lifestyle changes can influence the quality of life. These include diet, exercise and stress reduction. In addition, the role of yoga, meditation and spirituality as adjuncts to promotion of healthy living is being explored. The practice of yoga regulates body physiology through control of posture, breathing, and meditation. Hence Yoga helps in enhancing health and sense of well-being. There are several asana suggested in Yoga that actively works upon human body to help to achieve a perfect balance between body requirements and energy produced. By balancing the hormonal production and organ functioning, yoga helps in healing several diseases and optimum healthy life.

Keywords - exercise, health, meditation, relaxation, yoga

I. INTRODUCTION

Chronic diseases are now the leading cause of death worldwide, and their impact is steadily increasing. In response, WHO has called for the strengthening of national strategies for the prevention of cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes [1]. A review of relevant literature concerning the health behaviors of children indicate that children tend to be physically inactive [2], and are not developing activity levels that will endure into adulthood. Physical inactivity is a well-documented risk factor for obesity and other chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease [3].

Yoga is both preventive and therapeutic and has shown to offer both physical and mental benefits to the body and mind. Yoga is distinctly different from other kinds of exercise as it generates motion without causing strain and imbalances in the body. Therefore the practice is an ideal complement to other forms of exercise and an extreme advantage to

any sport. The "postures" are the physical positions that coordinate breath with movement and we hold these positions to stretch and strengthen different parts of the body. They systematically work all the major muscle groups, including the back, neck, and shoulders, deep abdominals, hip and buttock muscles and even ankles, feet, wrists and hands. Although most poses are non aerobic in nature, they do in fact send oxygen to the cells in the body by way of conscious deep breathing and sustained stretching & contraction of different muscle groups. Yoga can help to check any imbalance in muscular development and will enable the body to function more efficiently. If the body is flexible and supple, it will be less prone to sports injuries as the joints will be kept lubricated. "When the surface of a lake is still, one can see to the bottom very clearly" this is impossible when the surface is agitated by waves. In the same way, when the mind is still we can control mental agitation by focusing on perfect concentration.

There is a long-standing interest in the health benefits of Yoga in India and other non-Western cultures. Yoga is currently experiencing a marked increase in popularity in the West, primarily in health clubs and wellness centers. [4]. In the Yoga Sutras, the sage Patanjali tells us that, "The pains that are yet to come can be and are to be avoided." This aphorism reminds us that the future may hold suffering, and that suffering can be reduced or averted through the way we live today. Yoga can create a foundation for a lifestyle that supports a long and healthy life [5].

Yoga

The word 'Yoga' means 'yoke' or 'union' and connotes the interconnection of mind, body, and spirit [4]. There are different approaches to yoga including spiritual, therapeutic, and developmental [6]. Many styles of yoga are based on the eight-fold path outlined in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras [7]. Also known as the eight limbs of yoga, the eight-

fold path includes: attitudes toward others/restraints (*yamas*), rituals/ self observances (*niyamas*), physical practice of postures (*asana*), breathing practice (*pranayama*), withdrawal of the senses (*pratyahara*), concentration (*dharana*), meditation (*dhyana*), state of enlightenment (*Samadhi*) [8].

Health

Health is the quality, resulting from the total functioning of the individual that empowers him to achieve a personally satisfying and socially useful life. [9]. Health is defined as a state of a complete physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being, and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity. Physical fitness is a condition in which an individual has sufficient energy and vitality to accomplish daily tasks and active recreational pursuits without undue fatigue [10].

The world health organization (1948) has defined health not as the mere absence of disease, but rather as a state of “complete mental, physical, and social well –being”. Each of the mental, physical, and social dimensions of health is characterized by positive and negative poles. Positive health is associated with an optimum lifestyle, a comfortable level of stress, a feeling of well-being, a capacity to enjoy life, and a tolerance of environmental challenges, whereas negative health is associated with increases in various measures of morbidity and premature mortality [11].

Yoga includes five vital tools for healthy life. Yoga’s comprehensive methodology includes many techniques that serve the popular goals of enhancing or restoring fitness and health. Good health is not a miracle or a stroke of luck. In addition to genetic factors, a number of commonsense lifestyle changes can influence the quality of life. These include proper exercise, proper breathing, proper diet, positive attitude & meditation and proper relaxation. In addition, the role of yoga, meditation and spirituality as adjuncts to promotion of healthy living is being explored.

The paper based on the qualitative methodology and by using descriptive narrative mode for identifies the major thematic concerns on Yoga as a tool for life.

II. AIM OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study is to provide a comprehensive overview of the situation regarding yoga as a tool for life, and explore the possible strategies that could be effective in combating the spread and awareness of yoga for healthy life.

Proper Exercises (Yoga posture-Asanas)

Yoga comprises of some simple and effective body movements, which strengthen one’s back, tones the stomach muscles, and reallocate body weight. These body movements are known as *asanas*, or poses. The *Asanas* have evolved over centuries and work wonders in keeping the body healthy and the mind peaceful. If performed in a right manner, these Yoga poses or positions help to tone muscles, lubricate joints and massage the body. Not only this, the *asanas* also enhance body endurance and increase flexibility. These postures bring physical and mental stability, along with health and vigor; they exercise the nerves, glands, ligaments, and muscles.

Proper breathing (Pranayama)

The science of breath is called in Sanskrit pranayama. [12] ‘*Pranayama*’ (the practice of voluntary breath control, consisting of conscious inhalation, retention and exhalation) is often practiced in conjunction with “*dhyana*” (meditation), and “*asanas*” (physical posture) [13]. Versions of pranayama vary from single nostril breathing to belly breathing. Pranayama consists of three phases: “*puraka*” (inhalation); “*kumbhaka*” (retention) and “*rechaka*” (exhalations) that can be either fast or slow [14]. Although all pranayama has three phases, different forms of pranayama evoke dissimilar and sometimes opposite responses in the subject depending on variables such as which nostril is used or the speed of the respiration. Pranayama has been researched mostly for its beneficial applications in treatment of cardiovascular diseases such as hypertension [14]; [15]; [16], pulmonary disease such as asthma, autonomic nervous system imbalances [17], and psychologic or stress related disorders [16]; [18].

Proper diet

The corner-stone of diet is balance. Care should be taken to eliminate those items from the daily intake

which are considered harmful in case of a particular disease. Preparation of a diet chart according to body condition and the nature of disease of a patient is a must. The most common items of diet for almost all patients of therapeutic yoga are fruits, salad, leafy vegetables, green vegetables, wheat bread and pulaos. Some basic principles of eating; to eat slowly, to eat only 75% of the capacity: to eat at least 2 hours before bed time at night; to avoid drinking water while eating; not to eat hot, spicy, fried and roasted food, to avoid coffee, tea and tobacco in any form and finally to avoid alcohol, should be followed by them who accept Yoga-Therapy. Yogic diet aims at harmonious development, physical, mental and spiritual.

Positive Attitude and Meditation

The word 'meditation' is used to describe a number of different uses of the mind, from contemplation and concentration to devotion. Meditation can certainly be looked on as a healing process emotionally, mentally and physically. It acts as powerful tonic; it is a mental and nerving tonic as well. The holy vibrations penetrate all the cells of the body and cure the diseases of the body.

Proper Relaxation.

The regular practice of various yoga techniques and inculcating the yogic values in daily life will go a long way towards not only reducing the stress levels but also in giving us that elusive "peace of Mind". Yogic relaxation practices such as *shavasana* and yoga *Nidra* help to create a sense of awareness and relaxation in the whole body as well as the mind [19].

III. DISCUSSION

"Yoga is an invaluable gift from our ancient tradition. Yoga embodies unity of mind and body, thought and action, a holistic approach that is valuable to our health and our well-being. Yoga is not just about exercise; it is a way to discover the sense of oneness with self, the world and the nature." [20].

The importance of individuals and populations making healthier choices and following lifestyle patterns that foster good health." In this regard, the World Health Organization has also urged its member states to help their citizens reduce physical

inactivity, which is among the top ten leading causes of death worldwide, and a key risk factor for non-communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer and diabetes. But yoga is more than a physical activity. People from all walks of life have practiced yoga, recognizing its unique embodiment of unity between mind and body. Yoga brings thought and action together in harmony."

In a statement UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also pointed out the global benefits of Yoga: "Yoga is a sport that can contribute to development and peace. Yoga can even help people in emergency situations to find relief from stress."

In the words of one of its most famous practitioners, the late B. K. S. Iyengar, "Yoga cultivates the ways of maintaining a balanced attitude in day-to-day life and endows skill in the performance of one's actions.

Yoga is generally perceived to be a way of keeping oneself healthy and happy. However, if one truly understands the concept of yoga as a complete way of life, one can clearly see its benefit for changing the paradigms of its practitioners. Such a change in the psycho-motivation of people is useful at the organizational level also. However, so far, very few empirical studies have been undertaken to establish such a link. The main contribution of this article is to fill this gap. Using a controlled scientific experimentation of employees in a manufacturing unit, we provide an empirical assessment of the impact of the yoga way of life on positive organizational factors.

Yoga is a form of mind-body fitness that involves a combination of muscular activity and an internally directed mindful focus on awareness of the self, the breath, and energy. Four basic principles underlie the teachings and practices of yoga's healing system. The first principle is the human body is a holistic entity comprised of various interrelated dimensions inseparable from one another and the health or illness of any one dimension affects the other dimensions. The second principle is individuals and their needs are unique and therefore must be approached in a way that acknowledges this individuality and their practice must be tailored accordingly. The third principle is yoga is self-empowering; the student is his or her own healer. Yoga engages the student

in the healing process; by playing an active role in their journey toward health, the healing comes from within, instead of from an outside source and a greater sense of autonomy is achieved. The fourth principle is that the quality and state of an individuals mind is crucial to healing. When the individual has a positive mind-state healing happens more quickly, whereas if the mind-state is negative, healing may be prolonged.

IV. CONCLUSION

Yoga is the natural form of exercise. It is not just a mere physical activity; yoga is the complete health resource that includes meditation as well as physical exercise. If you practice yoga then it not only improves health physically but also increases the mental stability. [21].

The amazing thing about Yoga is that its positive effects on the health and mind are visible over time. Another specialty about Yoga is its wide choice of asanas. Depending upon the stamina and overall health, you can choose from the mild pranayams, asanas to high intensity asanas. It is a medication without the actual use of medicines. Moreover, no visible side effects are associated with the practice of Yoga on a regular basis. All you need to know is the most appropriate exercises meant for the structure of body, while choosing the asanas of the activity and the right way of performing the asanas, because any wrong attempt can cause sprains and injuries.

The practice of yoga regulates body physiology through control of posture, breathing, and meditation. Hence Yoga helps in enhancing health and sense of well-being. There are several asana suggested in Yoga that actively works upon human body to help to achieve a perfect balance between body requirements and energy produced. By balancing the hormonal production and organ functioning, yoga helps in healing several diseases and optimum healthy life.

V. IMPLICATION

Yoga enhances the mind-body connection, which can improve the mood and physical health - and even lighten various psychological disorders. Improved depression, body image struggles, eating

disorders, and even physical problems such as back pain and asthma are some of the health benefits of yoga practice and meditation.

- Preventing the diseases
- Deduction of Stress
- Maintaining the regular function of the body
- Prevention of obesity
- Improves fitness of the person

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