



Yoga and Vyayama: Traditional mind-body technique of ancient India

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Abstract

Yoga and Vyayama is the traditional mind-body techniques of ancient India. It is evident from the ancient Indian literature that Yoga and Vyayama of Ayurveda were used as mind-body medicine for maintaining health by large. It is believe that Yoga and Vyayama are the most important and integral concept of ancient Indian life style. Any system and process will be accepted by the common man if it can prove its usefulness in day-to-day aspects of life. We have also seen that now modern society is all set for yoga and vyayama. Why? 'Yogvyayama' offers man a conscious process to solve the menacing problems of unhappiness, restlessness, violence attitude, emotional upset, hyper-activity, chronic illness related to inactivity etc., in the society. Both these ancient mind-body method helps to evoke the hidden potentialities of man in a systematic and scientific way by which who becomes a complete individual. All his faculties – physical, mental, intellectual and emotional- develop in a harmonious and integrated fashion to meet the all round challenge of the modern technological era with its hectic speed.

Therefore the objective of this review study is to explore the traditional concept of Yoga and Vyayama as found in the age old Indian literature and its scientific application for health and wellness in modern times.

Keywords: positive health, fitness and wellness

1. Introduction

Yoga and Vyayama of Ayurveda is the term of Indian origin, while the concept of "Mind-Body Medicine" is essentially the western one. Yoga and Ayurveda are sister science that influence each other throughout history, rooted in the Vedic tradition of India. Ayurveda is the science of healing for both body and mind. Yoga is the science of self realization that signifying the harmonious relationship between mind and body. Both disciplines developed together and have always been used together. [Frawley and Bhogal, 1998]. Yoga literally means 'Integration' at all levels of one's existence- from the physical, sensory, emotional, mental and spiritual to the highest self-realization.

Vyayama is the term specifically used in Ayurveda tradition for physical exercise or activity. Various important features of Vyayama such as adequacy of exercise, types of exercise, indication and contraindication of exercise etc. are described in detail in Ayurveda. [Tipton, 2008 and Mondal, 2013] ^[5, 3]. It is evident from the ancient Indian literature that Yoga and Vyayama of Ayurveda were used as mind-body medicine for maintaining health by large. It is believe that Yoga and Vyayama are the most important and integral concept of ancient Indian life style.

2. Objective of the study

The objective of this review study is to explore the traditional concept of Yoga and Vyayama as found in the age old Indian literature and its scientific application for health and wellness in modern times.

2.1 Yoga and Its origin

The exact time and origin of Yoga is a great controversial issue among the researchers of different allied disciplines such as Archeology, Ancient Indology, History, Ayurveda and Yoga. Therefore, it is really difficult task to understand the evolutionary stages of the development of Yoga.

Now, according to Indian mythological tradition lord Siva is said to the founder of Yoga and parvati his said to the first discipline. The first books to refer to Yoga were the ancient 'Tantras' and later the 'Vedas' which were written about the time when the Indus valley culture was flourishing (3000-2000BC). From the excavations of the of the Indus valley we get the evidence that Yoga in some form was practices during that period. The scholars of different disciplines differ in their opinion regarding the relation of Indus valley civilization with Vedic civilization; whereas there is a strong agreement that Yoga is found in the Vedic literature (Gharote, 2006). The exact evidence of Yoga is available in the Upanisads. In Kathopnised the word Yoga has been in its technical sense. Svetasvatara Upanishad is regarded as the most authentic book on Yoga vidya as it describes the essence of Yogic practices and their physiological effects. Likewise several other Upanisads Kena, Mundaka, Mandukya, Taittiriya, Chandoga etc. describe Yoga in different way. The two important Indian epics (1000BC.-200AD.) i.e. Ramayana and Mahabharata are the rich source of information about Yogic practices. After the age of Ramayana and Mahabharata, a complete treatise on Yoga was written by Rishi Patanjali. This Yoga sutras consist of just 196 aphorism, divided into four

sections entitled Samadhi pada, sadhnapada, vibhutipada and kaivalyapada. Patanjali has presented this ancient Yoga vidya in such a scientific and rational way that every theory, hypothesis and principle put forth by Patanjali can be tested through modern scientific methodology (Karambelkar,). Therefore, the Patanjali Yoga sutras (300BC.) are the first and oldest systematic discussion on Yoga available to us. The period of smrti literature starts from the times of Patanjali. Some smrties had been composed before 500BC. and they were written till about 1000AD. This smrti literature tried to combine Yoga with the daily rituals. We also get an extensive description of Yoga practices in Buddhism (563-483BC) and Jainism tradition. The reference of Yoga is also found in Purans. Purans like siva, vayu, brahmanda etc. describe the Yogic Kriyas. Vishnupuran explain about yama and Niyama. There are others Purans which explain about asana and pranayama also. In the medieval period (700-1200AD) a vast literature on tantras were produced. There are Buddhist tantras, Hindu tantras and Jain tantras. The tantrikas substituted a Yoga of enjoyment for the Yoga of abstinence and asceticism. As an aid to Rajayoga, Hathayogawas developed and become very popular through the nathcult. Many of the hathayogic practices seem to have their origin in trantrism. In the tradition of nathcult, the nathyoga laid a great emphasis on preparing the body as a great vehicle for the higher spiritual experiences. In the tradition of bhakti cult, we found the strong reference of Yoga practices in contemporary bhakti literature. The parampara (tradition) of Yoga vidya continues even today in this modern period without any break. We have briefly seen how Yogic concepts were developed from pre-vedic age to the modern age. Therefore Yoga has two origins one from Vedas and the other from tantras. To be very specific to the word 'Yoga' is mentioned in all four Veda samhita. Briefly vedic science deals with the deep knowledge of Yoga in various contexts. Since it deals with yagna (sacrifice), upasana (worship) and karmakandas (rituals) but in between there are enough references where it deals the different steps of Yoga. In fact the Veda explores the importance of Yoga as: the action without which on yagna (sacrifice) of a wise person gets completed is "Yoga", because without Yoga nothing can be done as it exists in every karma (action). Vedic literature somehow deals with the different steps of Yoga. It discusses the various Yamas and Niyama as well as it also deals with Asana and Pranayama. Tantrally means technology and refers to various techniques or methodologies of Yoga including Mantra. Tantra and the Veda are complementary to each other.

2.2 Vyayama and Its origin

Vyayama or physical exercise is an essential component of Ayurveda system of prevention health care or science of positive health. Vyayama is the term, especially used in Ayurveda for the physical activities, the concept of which is very similar with the "physical Exercise in the present time". During the period between 7th BC.to 15th century AD. Important literature pertaining to Vyayama-Vida was created. Two books i.e. Manasollasa of king Someswara and mallapurana were the most important sources of study. Ayurveda is considered as one of the important UpaVeda, which mentioned Vyayama or physical exercise for

preventive, curative and rehabilitative measure. An extensive explanation of Vyayama was given in the three most important texts of Ayurveda i.e. Charaka Samhita, Susruta Samhita and Astanga hrdayayam.

2.3 Application of Yoga and Vyayama as a mind- body medicine

Mind – Body medicine focuses on the interactions among the brain, mind, body and behavior of the individual towards positive health.

The psycho-physiological approach of yoga is of profound importance to correlate with the concept of mind-body medicine for prospecting health and wellness. The ancient thinkers of India never regard man as a mere biological entity, rather paid more attention to the functioning of the mind and its inner mechanism. In recent times psychology also accepted this basic aspect to recognize the correlation between the body and mind interaction as a whole. (Dynamics of Yoga practical Yoga psychology). Peoples life style has undergone drastic changes in modern times, adversely affecting their health in many ways. Yoga is proving to be a boon in coping with the stresses and disorders cause by undesirable life style changes. The recognition of the mind-body relationship by the scientific medical community, Yoga has increasingly become a part of modern medicine. (Bijlani). Mind, when it is disturbed, may make the body prone to psycho-physiological disturbance (viksepa) leading to in-co-ordination between various organs thus lowering the efficiency of the body. According to Yoga mind has a very significant role to play not only in psychosomatic diseases, but also in every other form of disease, including the acute ones. (Kunalayananda and Vinekar).

Traditional Yoga holds mental and bodily processes as mutually interdependent phenomena. From the Yogic view, the mind, the body and the pure consciousness are not held as separate entities. Therefore, structure and function of human body too have been described as intimate correlated with mind-body-pure consciousness complex in Yoga science, in a remarkable way.

The concept of positive health was first introduced by Acharya Charaka. According to Charaka body, mind and soul, these three entity of human being are like a tripod; the human is sustained by their combination, they constitute the substratum for everything. (Samiran Mondal). The Sushruta, another ancient authority of Ayurveda explain the of Vyayama as follows: "Any act that causes fatigue to the body is known as Vyayama. Acharya Charaka in his classical writings, has emphasizes the necessity of graduated physical exercise (Vyayama) for restoring the health of unhealthy persons and patients. He defines Vyayama as the performance of such exercise as would give courage to the mind and strength and steadiness to the muscles (Sandhya Pandey and A.K.Pandey). The science of positive health as discussed in Ayurveda covers the entire life-span of the human beings. It's also discuss the pattern of growth and development of the body and mind, body types of the individual and psycho-physiological needs of different periods of the physical exercise, body power for exertion, collectedness, power of long-term need; but also it eliminates all toxin of the body and increased the digestive fire, physical and mental strength.

So preventive, promotive and curative aspect of Vyayama practice has been proved so earlier in Indian system of medicine thus helps to get controls over the mind-body complex.

2.4 Significance of Yoga in Health and Wellness

The applications of Yogic techniques are multidimensional. Within the wide range of Yogic method available in the Yogic scriptures, the present researcher identified the following important techniques for the benefit of human life styles-

Yama and Niyama: Its control the yogi's passion and emotion and keep in harmony. Yama (social discipline) means restraint or abstention. It has five moral practices- non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, Bramhacharya and non-acquisitiveness. Niyama (individual discipline) means physical and mental rules of conduct towards oneself.

Suryanamaskara: Suryanamaskara or sun salutation is a very ancient technique of paying respect or expressing gratitude to the sun that is the source of all forms of life on the planet. Symbolically the sun becomes our source of energy. Suryanamaskara is a Yoga warm up routine based on a sequence of grace fully linked asanas.

Asana: Asana means holding the body in a particular posture to bring stability to the body and poise to the mind. The practice of Asana brings firmness to the body and vitality to the body and mind.

Kriya: The shatkarmas consists of six techniques. They can make the body clean and strong, free of diseases, remove toxins and improve concentration. It can also improve the flow of prana in to technique are- Dhauti, Bhasti, Neti, Trataka, Nauli and Kapalabhati all are make the body strong and healthy.

Pranayama: Prana means breath, respiration, life, vitality, wind, energy or strength. It also connotes the soul as opposed to the body. Pranayama thus connotes extension of breath and its control. This control is over all the functions of breathing, namely- inspiration, expiration and holding the breath.

Mudra and Bandha: Mudra is a symbolic or ritual gesture. While some mudras involve the entire body, most are performed with the hands and fingers. Bandha may be defined as a particular focused and intentional action involving pressure, contraction or force on the muscles or some other bodily or sensate phenomena.

Meditation: meditation is a practice where an individual train the mind or induces a mode of consciousness. Meditation can also help us to understand our own mind. We can learn how to transform our mind from negative to positive, from disturbed to peaceful, from unhappy to happy.

2.5 Significance of Vyayama in Health and Wellness

Dinacharta The daily regime or routine is called "Dinacharta" in sanskrit. 'Din' means 'day' and 'acharya' means 'to follow' or 'close to'. According to Ayurveda to

maintain a healthy and disease free life one should follow a daily routine or schedule. Dinacharya is one of the best things that you can do to prevent disease, stay in balance and treat almost every illness. Routine covered by Dinacharya include: waking time, elimination, hygiene, massage, exercise, meditation, relaxation and sleeping.

Ritucharya: The word Ritucharya as made of two words- Ritu means seasons, charaya means do's and donts (regimen). Vyayama during four seasons namely Sarat (autumn), Sisira (winter), Hemanta (early winter), Vasanta (spring). (van.D). Vyayama is especially beneficial in four seasons because according to the law of nature, water becomes cold, clear and the sun rays are mild.

Mode of Vyayama: The foundation of Ayurvedic concept of shareera mainly lies on vayu, pitta and kapha, these are three bio- regulating principles present inside the body and are known as tridoshas. Which control the various physiological function, the Vyayama acts on doshas and dhatus to regulate them if it is followed properly. (Moharer).

Indication and Contraindication: Vyayama is contraindicated for person whose is suffering from the diseases of vata and pitta dosha, raktapitta, kara, fever. Vyayama is also contraindicated for the those who have become very lean and whose routine work involves enough physical activity.

3. Conclusion

Yoga postures as the main exercise system practiced historically in India. Yoga and vyayama is an important preventive, curative and rehabilitative measure. The use of the yoga and vyayama is highly effective in maintenance of health and attaining longevity. According Samhita ancient time India was familiar with the science of yoga and exercise and its beneficial effect and suggested vyayama or exercise for the body and yoga for the mind and soul. According to ayurvedic text, Caraka samhita and susruta samhita identified vyayama or physical exercise is essential for a person to maintain his normal health & has also prescribed vyayama in connection with both measures preventive & curative. Physical exercise is not only lightness of the body, but also it removes of all imperfections and augmentation of the digestive fire.

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