



A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW ON YOGA THERAPY

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ABSTRACT

Yoga is the science which deals with every aspect of the human being. In modern times our old rich cultural heritage of ancient India has been revived with its therapeutic benefits and the term "Yoga Therapy" came into existence. Yoga therapy works on the development of overall health, prevention from the diseases, and rehabilitation or cure from the diseases. The aim of this study was to explore the concept of yoga as a therapy and its therapeutic benefits, also the benefit of yoga therapy in the COVID-19 pandemic. To identify the studies related to yoga therapy the data was searched systematically through Books, online search engines, and online databases on PubMed, Google Scholar, MEDLIN, PsycINFO. After screening, the studies which were very closely associated with the topic were included in this study and their references were used to write conclusion more effectively. Yoga therapy works on the root cause of the problem. Apart from giving relief from problems yoga enlightens the mind. When a person practices yoga regularly, yoga can make tremendous changes in a person's life. Yoga makes a healthy body and mind. With the proper and supervised practice of yoga, you can protect your body from various diseases. Research studies reflect that yoga therapy can be the best treatment for various physical and psychological problems.

Keywords: Yoga, Yoga Therapy, Ashtanga Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Pranayama, Panch Kosha, Lyengar yoga, and COVID 19 Pandemic.

Introduction

For us, yoga is not only the combination of various exercises, methods of meditation, or cleaning techniques but it is the part of Indian Philosophy and culture which we have inherited from our ancestors. Yoga is the part of six orthodox (astika) schools of Indian Philosophy (Iyengar, 1979). Some people believe that the yoga form which we are practicing nowadays is the part of tantra yoga which was developed by tantric civilization and it has existed more than 10,000 years ago in India & all over the world. Tantra yoga deals with the expansion of consciousness and liberating energy (Saraswati, 2005). Ancient Tantras was the first book of yoga and after that Vedas were written at the time of Indus Valley Civilization. Upanishads were written after Vedas in which yoga was described in a more specific way. Then Vedanta had written to explain Vedas in the concluded form so that it can be easy for the common man to understand the concept (Saraswati, 2005). Philosophy of yoga "Yoga Sutra" was written by Maharshi Patanjali in which he described the system of yoga practice by which we can achieve the ultimate level of spirituality. It was the first systematic book specifically written on patterns and practices of yoga to maintain



better health, to cure the body from various diseases and for the holistic development of an individual through various types of yogic practices.

In Patanjali yoga sutra 1:2, yoga is described as: "Yogas Chitta Vritti Nirodha" It means that yoga eliminating the fluctuations and distractions of the mind.

The word Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root Yuj meaning to bind, join, attach, and yoke, which can direct us towards the path of self-realization & leads the mind towards ultimate satisfaction (Iyengar, 1979), (Saraswati, 2005). Yoga is comprised of physical, mental, and spiritual activities that are collectively working for the development of an individual's physical health, mental health, and spiritual health. Maharshi Patanjali explained eight limbs of yoga that is called Asthanga yoga (Yam, Niyam, Asan, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi) which shows us the way of active & meaningful lifestyle for healthy and long-living (Iyengar, 1979). Lord Gautam Buddha attracted the focus of the people towards meditation, ethics, and morality around the 6th century which was almost ignorant by the people at that time. Yogi Matsyendranath, a guru of Gorakhnath added Nath cult and yogic poses with the meditation (Saraswati, 2005). Guru Gorakhnath had written a book on Hath yoga. Swami Swatamaram also wrote Hath Yoga Pradipika (Light on Yoga). Swami Swatamaram did not emphasize more on Yam and Niyam of Asthanga yoga. With this, he made hath yoga more suitable and convenient for beginners (Saraswati, 2005; (Muktibodhananda S., Satyananda S. & Svātmārāma, 2006). He emphasized more on the body and mental practices. Meditation, cleansing techniques, mudras, and bandh are the practices that also have a direct impact on

the human body. It helps to stimulate Nadis "energy channel of the body" which are solely responsible for increasing life force "Pran Urja" in the body which benefits in the prevention of many diseases (Muktibodhananda et al. 2006).

After the technological invention and its faster adaptation, the physical participation of people is reduced in many places as they were assisted by the technology for their routine tasks. Lack of physical activity can be the major cause of chronic diseases. These chronic diseases caused premature deaths (Booth, Roberts, & Laye, 2012). The mortality rate has also been increasing in India for the past few years due to non-communicable diseases (Mathur & Mascarenhas, 2019). Now to treat these diseases people are more dependent on medication to keep them healthy but long term dependency on medication cannot solve the problem. The overdose of any kind of medicine has some side effects on our body. Medication definitely helps in faster recovery of the health but one type of medication may impact other parts of the body negatively. So excessive intake of medicine for diseases is always dangerous and it may cause another problem in the body. Overuse of medicine can further lead to death also (Medicines and side effects, 2020). So to deal with this dangerous situation people accepted yoga as a complementary medicine and after realizing its benefits they have started practicing it. Now yoga: our old rich cultural heritage of ancient India has been revived with its therapeutic benefits and the term "Yoga Therapy" came into existence.

Methodology

To identify the studies related to yoga therapy the data was searched systematically through Books, online search engines, and online



databases on PubMed, Google Scholar, MEDLIN, PsycINFO. At first, the data were searched by using "yoga" and "Yoga therapy" as a keyword into the advanced search option of the database. After receiving the basic information the second search was started for benefits of yoga therapy, the process of yoga therapy, and the development of yoga and yoga therapy all over the world. Most relevant information was gathered related to this review after reading books, articles, abstracts, systematic reviews and meta-analysis, clinical trials, and randomized controlled trials. After screening the studies very closely associated with the topic were included in this study and their references were used to write conclusions more effectively.

Yoga Therapy

Yoga therapy is the therapy which utilizes techniques and methods of yoga for therapeutic purpose. It works for the healing of the body in a natural way. Yoga therapy includes asana (Exercises), Pranayama (Breathing exercises), Dhyana (Meditation), Dharana (Visualization techniques), Shatkarma & Kriyas (Cleansing techniques) and modification in these techniques to manage individual's health and wellness.

Swami Gitananda Giri defined yoga as a "science and art of mastering the mind" (Bhavanani, 2020) which is the most essential part of yoga therapy. Because our mind leads our body so it's very important to have control over the mind. In Kathopanishad yoga is defined as "A state of mastery over the senses and mind" (Bhavanani, 2020) by which we can overcome any type of physical, mental, emotional, and social problems, also it can help to improve the spiritual aspect of an individual.

According to Ganesh Mohan, Svastha Yoga, and Ayurveda

"Yoga therapy is the application of Yoga to individuals to empower them to progress toward greater health and freedom from disease" (Bhavanani, 2020).

According to IAYT Educational Standards for the Training of Yoga Therapists (IAYT)

"Yoga therapy is the process of empowering individuals to progress toward improved health and well-being through the application of the teachings and practices of Yoga" (Contemporary Definitions of Yoga Therapy – IAYT, 2020).

Development of Concept of Yoga Therapy

As we know yoga was originated in ancient India. At that time people were conscious and very much aware of the scientific benefits of yoga on the human body so yoga was the part of every once daily routine work. With the time the modifications were made in the original form of yoga and its sequences to make it easier for everyone (Saraswati, 2005). In India yoga is related to the culture so people were used to practicing it from a religious point of view and also yoga directed the path of ultimate reality. But it was very difficult for everyone to follow the difficult path of self-control and self-realization so in modern times the scientific aspect of yoga was introduced by Swami Kulvalayananda. He presented yoga as a new method of healing and rehabilitation of the human body so that everyone can understand its value and practice it easily. From India the knowledge of yoga spread in all neighboring countries. Swami Vivekananda has introduced the concept of Yoga in the United States in 1893 when he represented India at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago (Clegg, 2018; Murphy, 2017) He presented a lecture on Yoga & depth of Indian religion



(Hinduism) and described yoga as a "Universal Religion". After that lecture people got attracted to yoga and credit for introducing yoga in the western countries is goes to Swami Vivekananda (Murphy, 2017). Swami Vivekananda had written a book on Raja yoga in 1896. This book was very famous in America and very soon it was popularized in Europe also (Simões, 2015). In India Swami Kulvalayananda founded Kaivalyadhama Health and Yoga Research Center (Kaivalyadhama) in 1924 to spread spiritual and therapeutic benefits of yoga for the common people of modern India. His purpose behind starting of Kaivalyadhama was to promote scientific researches in the field of Yoga. He established a scientific platform for the researchers to present the benefits of yoga on the human body with the help of scientific research so that people can understand the physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual benefits of yoga and its therapeutic uses. He also started one research journal "Yoga Mimamsa" which was purely based on scientific investigations done in the field of yoga (Kulvalayananda, 2020). Also Sri Tirumalai Krishnamacharya is known as the father of modern Yoga and contemporary therapy. He was the yoga guru of BKS Iyengar, A. G. Mohan, and TKV Desikachar. They all were very famous in the field of yoga and contemporary therapy and promoted this area of treatment all over the world (Clegg, 2018). This scientific presentation of yoga attracted the attention of modern people towards the therapeutic aspects of yoga. Now yoga made its different place as a therapy in modern society. The Indian health ministry also included yoga as a therapy in their medical treatment system. To prevent health from various diseases and to promote healthy living Union Ministry of Health and Family

Welfare introduced the Department of Indian Medicine and Homeopathy (ISM & H) in 1995 which was renamed as Department of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy) in 2003 (AYUSH National Health Portal of India, 2015). The health portal of India mentioned the global acceptance of yoga for its therapeutic benefits (YOGA National Health Portal of India, 2016). Indian National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers (NABH) included 44 AYUSH Hospitals in Central Government Health Scheme till 1st January 2015 and more than 40 NABH Accredited AYUSH Hospitals "till 2021" to promote these practices (CGHS Empanelment Scheme for AYUSH Hospitals, 2015; NABH Accredited AYUSH Hospitals, 2018). In special reference to COVID -19 pandemic ministry of AYUSH also released several advisories, specific guidelines are issued for yoga practitioners, a number of research works are going on and the ministry of AYUSH is working on other related areas to find out the solution (Coronavirus disease 2019, 2020; Danhauer et al., 2017).

Likewise, Yoga therapy now is becoming more and more popular and international yoga day celebration increased the popularity of yoga all over the world. Now people are accepting its significant benefits which are working on prevention and cure of the diseases. Yoga therapy is used for the treatment of various physical and psychological health problems related to the human body (Booth et al., 2012).

How Yoga Therapy works

Basically, yoga in the form of complementary therapy works to provide relaxation to the body and mind. It helps to control/ slow down the breathing system and channelizing the pranic shakti with the help of Nadis (Iyengar, 1979; Bhavanani, 2020). These yogic practices



maintain the structural system of the body (Rasa, Rakta, Maamsa, Medas, Asthi Majjaa, Sukra) and help to balance the Vata (wind), pitta (bile) and Kapha (phlegm) dosha in the body (Bhavanani, 2020). When an imbalance occurs in the body's structural system, state of mind, psychological issue, and social relations then our body responds in the form of physiological problems or psychological problems. So yoga therapy helps to balance those specific issues in the body while treatment with its specific limitations (Bhavanani, 2020). In the natural healing process yoga works on a different aspect of the body. According to the yoga human body is made up of five sheaths and physiology of the human body is depends on the functioning of all these five sheaths. Our soul is covered by these five sheaths. The diseases and disorders can be avoided if people will focus on proper development and nourishment of all these sheaths of the body (Saraswati, 2005; Bhavanani, 2020; Vallath, 2010; Mishra, 2019) these sheaths are:

Annamaya kosha (Physical Sheath): Physical Sheath of the body is nourished and sustained by the food which we have consumed because the whole body mechanism depends upon the energy which was produced after metabolism with the help of vital energy system. Our diet not only affects our body structure but it also affects the functioning of the body systems, our mind, our emotions, and our spiritual health also. In yoga and Ayurveda, there are three types of guna "qualities" that are Sattvic, Rajasic, and Tamasic. When sattvic guna works are the balanced state of body and mind. It contains the purity of thoughts, quality and it keeps the body healthy. When Rajasic guna activates than the person will be more energetic and creative to try new tasks and when tamasic guna activates then the person

feels distracted with negative energy and lethargic. So it is very essential to maintain balance in all three types of qualities. Our selection of lifestyle, diet, and behavior depends on these three qualities, and diseases occurred when we have an imbalance in them and it affects the physical sheath of the body. So yoga helps to keep Annamaya kosha efficient by controlling all three Gunas "qualities" of an individual and maintaining balance in it with the help of yogic practices (Vallath, 2010; Mishra, 2019).

Pranamaya kosha (Vital energy Sheath): This vital energy sheath is nourished by the bioenergy "Prana Urja". The best way of developing vital energy sheath is pranayama by which a person can control the breathing which is the vital life force. It can be possible with the support of pranayama techniques, breathing sequences, pranayama exercises, and synchronization of breathing with the asanas. The pranayama practice helps in prevention from various physical and psychological health problems (Vallath, 2010; Mishra, 2019).

Manomaya kosha (Mental Sheath): With the help of knowledge and education mental sheath is nourished. Proper knowledge and understanding make individuals capable of thinking about the purpose of life, the value of a healthy lifestyle, and the role of an individual towards society. Various physical & mental practices, Pranayama, meditation, and visualization techniques help to develop the mental sheath of the body (Vallath, 2010; Mishra, 2019).

Vijnanamaya kosha (Intellectual Sheath): Intellectual sheath is nourished by the ego. The more we have control over our ego the more we have a chance to improve our rational thinking. It cultivates the thoughts and



directed us towards selflessness (Vallath, 2010; Mishra, 2019).

Anandamaya kosha (Bliss Sheath): Bliss sheath is nourished by the emotion. Often many of our problems are associated with emotions. Yogic practices provide us knowledge by which we can see the reality of life. This reality supports an individual to have control over the emotions whether they are positive emotions or negative emotions. The main cause of disappointment is the expectation and once we are disappointed it causes negative emotion in our mind. This negativity hinders the happiness of the individual. So yoga helps us in having control over the emotions so that the person can feel satisfaction and joy in life (Vallath, 2010; Mishra, 2019).

o, once all five sheaths of the body are developed and nourished properly then it can protect the body from various diseases when any type of imbalance occurred in any sheath then the diseases develop (Bhavanani, 2020; Mishra, 2019). While designing a yoga intervention program the following step should be remembered (Sherman, 2012):

- o Present health status of the patient and medical history
- o Finding out the root cause of the problem
- o Careful investigation of the lifestyle of the patient
- o Designing of treatment series
- o Planning of specific yogic activity program.
- o Intensity and duration of the program.
- o Modification in intervention as per the patient's condition.
- o Continuity in practice.
- o Time to time checkup.
- o Assessment of treatment series for better outcomes.

Benefits of Yoga Therapy

Physical Health Benefits of Yoga Therapy-

Regular yoga practice provides an active lifestyle, it develops and strengthens our body structure, it improves the functional efficiency of all the body systems, increases energy flow in the body, maintains hormonal balance, develops flexibility, balance & coordination in individual, etc (Iyengar, 1979; Saraswati, 2005; Bhavanani, 2020). Yoga therapy also helps for the treatment of physical health problems that are Diabetes, High blood pressure, Obesity, Pulmonary disorders, Neurological Diseases, Postural deformities, Muscular problems, Lower back pain, Arthritis, Osteoporosis, and Brain Injury, Some types of cancer, musculoskeletal disorders, Metabolic disorders and also it supports to improve the condition and physical limitations of differently-abled children, etc. (Bhavanani, 2020; Nagendra, 2020; Lee et al., 2019; Hartfiel et al., 2017; Garg et al., 2015; Telles, 2020).

Psychological Health Benefits of Yoga Therapy

Continuous practice of yoga develops the disciplined lifestyle, it makes an individual mentally tough & emotionally strong, it improves self-control & feeling of selflessness, it is the best way to develop coping skills and a positive approach towards life (Iyengar, 1979; Saraswati, 2005; Bhavanani, 2020). Yoga therapy is most effective for the Psychological health problems that are Stress, Depression, Neurosis – Anxiety, Internal tensions and Conflicts, Threat, Poor Coping and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Brain Disorders – Schizophrenia, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Eating Disorders, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (Bhavanani, 2020; Hartfiel et al., 2017; Garg et al., 2015; Raveendran, Deshpandae, & Joshi,



2018; Daukantaitė et al., 2018; Azami et al., 2018).

Benefits of Yoga Therapy in COVID-19 Pandemic

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is the infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) which is related to respiratory illness (Stephens, 2017). This is the condition when we are experiencing global health crises that need some strong resolution as soon as possible. The immunity system of an individual plays an important role in receiving infection from another person. Those who are going through medical treatment for cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases, cancer, and diabetes are having more probability to catch coronavirus disease (Stephens, 2017). On the basis of previous successful researches on the effect of yoga therapy on various diseases and psychological problems “AYUSH ministry” government of India released advisory named “guidelines for yoga practitioners for COVID -19”. In this advisory, they have mentioned the specific set of yogic postures (asana), breathing exercises (pranayama), meditation techniques and cleansing techniques (kriyas) with the objective to improve the immunity of the participants, for the prevention of vulnerable population and to provide psychosocial care to the people who are in isolation (Coronavirus disease 2019, 2020). Also other researchers presented studies which show the yoga therapy can perform an effective role as complementary medicine for prevention and cure for coronavirus disease because it is proven in other researches that yoga can boost immunity, prevent the body from various diseases and also works on making mental status strong (GUIDELINES for YOGA

PRACTITIONERS for COVID 19, 2020; Tillu et al., 2020; Majumdar, Nagarathna, & Nagendra, 2020).

It is very hard to say that when coronavirus vaccine will come but till then we can opt and practice highly reliable techniques of yoga with expert guidance. Yoga therapy can be very effective for the people who are in stress due to lack of activity, lockdown, and social distancing. A systematic yoga intervention program is needed to be planned which can help in finding justified outcomes with no biases (Majumdar, Nagarathna, & Nagendra, 2020).

Restrictions of Yoga Therapy

As research proved that yoga therapy has a significant effect on various diseases but it's a slow process that cannot work on emergency conditions (Bhavanani, 2020). In serious cases it is necessary to take proper medical assistance on time. In such types of conditions, yoga therapy can be used for rehabilitation purposes. Once you have opted yoga therapy to maintain your better health then it is essential to make it a part of life because in this constant practice is required.

Conclusion

Studies indicates that the yoga was very popular in ancient time and the systematic literature and available shreds of evidence show that yoga is originated from ancient India “in the pre-Vedic period”. After practicing yoga for so many years the Indian sages presented yoga's significant effect on human beings and its therapeutic aspects in front of the world. The systematic and scientific approach of therapeutic yoga was accepted by the whole world and now yoga is spread almost every part of the world. Yoga therapy is very much popular and used as complementary medicine



for various diseases now. The initiative to celebrate International yoga day also performed an important role to make each individual aware of yoga and its benefits throughout the world.

Research work shows that the continuation of yoga practice can help in body development, prevention from diseases, and in the treatment of various physical and psychological problems. This is the high time to focus on the lifestyle and dietary pattern. Regular yoga practice can keep an individual free from diseases. It works on every aspect of human health and fitness whether it is physical or mental. In the case of coronavirus disease, yoga therapy also plays an important part. People who live a physically active lifestyle opted yoga to make them fit and energetic at home during the lockdown period. Yoga therapy also worked as the stress buster for the people at home. Sometimes allopathic treatment is necessary to save a patient's life, at that time it is not wrong to choose that option for treatment but yoga therapy heals the body in a very natural way. Yoga therapy works on the root cause of the problem. After regular practice person feels major changes in their life. Apart from giving relief from problems yoga enlightens the mind. When a person practices yoga regularly, yoga can make tremendous changes in a person's life. Yoga makes a healthy body and mind. With the proper and supervised practice of yoga, you can save your body from various diseases and it can also improve balance in Ida and Pingla Nadi which stimulates Sushumna Nadi and this balance protects the body from many diseases. Channelization of energy through yoga also supports maintaining balance in punch kosha which prevents our body from numerous diseases and problems. Yoga therapy is the best treatment for all types of

physical and psychological problems. Regular practice requires a high level of dedication and faith in it. So if the person has faith in yoga therapy and he/she is completely dedicated to it yoga therapy has tremendous positive results.

Recommendations

It is very essential for adults to start yogic practice in the early stage of life so that the body can be prevented from various diseases. It is the best idea if we can provide regular systematic basic yoga practice to the kids as per their age and physical competency.

It is essential to include yoga therapy with medical science on a large scale. It might be very beneficial for the quick recovery of patients. People will definitely increase their faith in yoga therapy if it will be advocated by their doctors as a part of the treatment as well.

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