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YOGA AND MEDICAL SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Yoga is an ancient Indian way of life, which includes changes in mental attitude, diet, and the practice of specific techniques such as yoga asanas (postures), breathing practices (pranayamas), and meditation to attain the highest level of consciousness. It is a psycho-somatic-spiritual discipline for achieving union and harmony between our mind, body, and soul and the ultimate union of our individual consciousness with the universal consciousness. Pranayama is derived from two Sanskrit words, namely, prana, which means vital force or life energy, ayama means to prolong. When a person practices yoga, with yogic attitude (attitude of patience, persistent practice, overcoming obstacles within self, that is, trouncing laziness, anger, delusion, and desire for being different or better than others), there are several changes in physiology.

KEYWORDS

yoga, mental attitude, asanas, yogic attitude.

INTRODUCTION

Yoga is largely based on the philosophy of Samkhya. Holding that the evolution of the world occurred in stages, Yoga attempts to reverse this order so that a person reenters his or her state of purity and consciousness.

Yoga recognized that life is not matter only; there is something more to it. Modern scientific thought centered on perceptible being is discovering the contraindications in its understanding. Theory of quantum entanglement tells us that quantum mechanical states of any two objects are in communication even when they are separated in a space like manner.

Yoga helps us deal not only with comprehensible paradoxes but also the invisible. Yoga allows us to harmonize the nuances of body, mind and spirit. It allows discovering the self to heal the self by attaining an absolute equipoise by integrating our building blocks beyond matter and energy. It heals our five-layered existence of which the physical world is grossest (Annamaya). Next to that are the sheaths invisible, Pranamaya (Breath energy), Manomaya (Mind being), Vijnanamaya (intellect, wisdom) and Anandamaya (Bliss, divinity). Yoga has been shown to minimize complication of surgery, improve patient reported outcomes after surgery, reduce analgesic requirements, and reduce hospitalization.

Yoga is widely recognized as an effective tool in inculcating a healthy lifestyle thus acting as a vaccine against lifestyle related disorders. Apart from preventive and therapeutic benefits, yoga is capable of elevating our existence by harmonizing our energies with cosmic force thus enhancing our abilities.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This paper discusses about the effect of yoga in medical science. It also helps to provide a comprehensive review of the benefits of regular yoga practice. It also strives to describe why yoga is important for health. It also highlights nature of yoga and the evidence of its many therapeutic effects.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The prepared paper is a descriptive study in nature. The study has been carried out based on the collection of the relevant secondary data. Secondary data collection was based on various sources such as published books, articles published in different journals & newspapers, periodicals, conference paper, working paper and websites, etc.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of study were based on:

1. To study about Yoga.
2. To study why yoga the best medicine.
3. To know the effectiveness of yoga in Cancer.
4. To understand the risks and side-effects of yoga.

MEANING AND DEFINITION OF YOGA

Yoga is a physical, mental, and spiritual practice or discipline which originated in India. There is a broad variety of schools, practices and goals in Hinduism, Buddhism (including Vairayana and Tibetan Buddhism) and Jainism. The best-known are Haṭh yoga and Raja yoga.

The term yoga comes from a Sanskrit word which means yoke or union. Traditionally, yoga is a method joining individual self with the Divine, Universal Spirit, or Cosmic Consciousness. Physical and mental exercises are designed to help achieve this goal, also called selftranscendence or enlightenment. On the physical level, yoga postures, called asanas, are designed to tone, strengthen and align the body. These postures are performed to make the spine supple and healthy and to promote blood flow to all the organs, glands, and tissues, keeping all the bodily systems healthy. On the mental level, yoga uses breathing techniques (pranayama) and meditation (dyana) to quiet, clarify, and discipline the mind.

EIGHT STAGES OF YOGA

Generally, the Yoga process involves eight stages.

- 1) Yama - ethical standards and sense of integrity. The five yamas are: ahimsa (nonviolence), satya (truthfulness), asteya (non-stealing), brahmacharya (continence) and aparigraha (non-covetousness).
- 2) Niyama - self-discipline and spiritual observances, meditation practices, contemplative walks. The five niyamas are: saucha (cleanliness), samtosa (contentment), tapas (heat, spiritual austerities), svadhyaya (study of sacred scriptures and of one's self) and isvarapranidhana (surrender to God).
- 3) Asana - integration of mind and body through physical activity.
- 4) Pranayama - regulation of breath leading to integration of mind and body.
- 5) Pratyahara - withdrawal of the senses of perception, the external world and outside stimuli.
- 6) Dharana - concentration, one-pointedness of mind.
- 7) Dhyana - meditation or contemplation - an uninterrupted flow of concentration.
- 8) Samadhi - the quiet state of blissful awareness.

SEVEN SCIENTIFIC EXAMPLES OF WHEN YOGA IS THE BEST MEDICINE

Here are seven populations who can benefit from yoga:

- 1) **Type 2 Diabetes:** Yoga has been found to reduce blood sugar and drug requirements in patients with type 2 diabetes. Additional benefits for type 2 diabetics include the reduction of oxidative stress, improved cognitive brain function, improving cardiovascular function, and reducing body mass index, improved well-being and reduced anxiety.
- 2) **Asthma:** Yoga practice improves the condition of those with bronchial asthma.
- 3) **Elevated Cortisol (Stress):** Yoga practice has been found to **decrease serum cortisol** levels which have been correlated with alpha wave activation. Yoga also compares favorably in this respect to African dance, the latter of which raises cortisol. Women suffering from mental stress, including breast cancer outpatients undergoing adjuvant radiotherapy, have been found to respond to yoga intervention with lowered cortisol levels, as well as associated mental stress and anxiety reduction.
- 4) **Fibromyalgia:** Yoga improves the condition of patients suffering from fibromyalgia.
- 5) **High Blood Pressure:** Yoga has been found to reduce blood pressure in patients with pre-hypertension to stage 1 hypertension. Yoga has also been found to reduce blood pressure in more severe conditions, such as HIV-infected adults with cardiovascular disease. Yogic breathing is one of the most effective forms of yoga for this health condition, with both fast and slow-breathing exercises having value.
- 6) **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder:** Yoga has been found to be efficacious in improving obsessive-compulsive behavior.
- 7) **Computer Eye Strain:** Yoga practice reduced visual discomfort in professional computer users.

BREAST CANCER COGNITIVE PROBLEMS

Cancer survivors often report cognitive problems. Furthermore, decreases in physical activity typically occur over the course of cancer treatment. Although physical activity benefits cognitive function in non-cancer populations, evidence linking physical activity to cognitive function in cancer survivors is limited.

Yoga can effectively reduce breast cancer survivor's cognitive complaints and prompt further research on mind-body and physical activity interventions for improving cancer-related cognitive problems.

BREAST CANCER DISABILITY

Secondary arm lymphedema continues to affect at least 20% of women after treatment for breast cancer, along with pain and a range of motion restrictions requiring lifelong professional treatment and self-management.

The 8-week yoga intervention reduced tissue induration of the affected upper arm and decreased the QOL subscale of symptoms. Arm volume of lymphedema and extra-cellular fluid did not increase. These benefits did not last on cessation of the intervention when arm volume of lymphedema increased. Further research trials with a longer duration, higher levels of lymphedema and larger numbers are warranted before definitive conclusions can be made.

CANCER-RELATED FATIGUE

Fatigue is one of the most frequently reported, distressing side effects reported by cancer survivors and often has significant long-term consequences. It is found that yoga can produce invigorating effects on physical and mental energy, and thereby may improve levels of fatigue.

RISKS AND SIDE EFFECTS OF YOGA

- 1) Yoga is low-impact and safe for healthy people when practiced appropriately under the guidance of a well-trained instructor.
- 2) Injury due to yoga is an infrequent barrier to continued practice, and severe injury due to yoga is rare.
- 3) Women who are pregnant and people with certain medical conditions, such as high blood pressure, glaucoma, and sciatica, should modify or avoid some yoga poses.
- 4) Beginners should avoid extreme practices such as headstand, lotus position and forceful breathing.
- 5) Individuals with medical preconditions should work with their physician and yoga teacher to appropriately adapt postures; patients with glaucoma should avoid inversions and patients with compromised bone should avoid forceful yoga practices.

CONCLUSION

Mind-body exercise such as yoga couples sustained muscular activity with internally directed focus, producing a temporary self-contemplative mental state. It also triggers neuro-hormonal mechanisms that bring about health benefits, evidenced by the suppression of sympathetic activity. Thus, it reduces stress and anxiety, improves autonomic and higher neural center functioning. It also improves physical health of cancer patients. Considering the scientific evidence discussed thus far, it is fair to conclude that yoga can be beneficial in the prevention and cure of diseases.

Rapidly emerging in the Western world as a discipline for integrating the mind and body into union and harmony, when adopted as a way of life, yoga improves physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual health. Yoga offers an effective method of managing and reducing stress, anxiety and depression and numerous studies demonstrate the efficacy of yoga on mood-related disorders.

Currently, treatment for anxiety and depression involves mostly psychological and pharmacological interventions; however, mind-body interventions are becoming increasingly popular as a means to reduce stress in individuals. Yoga, a form of mind-body exercise, has become an increasingly widespread therapy used to maintain wellness, and alleviate a range of health problems and ailments. Yoga should be considered as a complementary therapy or alternative method for medical therapy in the treatment of stress, anxiety, depression, and other mood disorders as it has been shown to create a greater sense of well-being, increase feelings of relaxation, improve self-confidence and body image, improve efficiency, better interpersonal relationships, increase attentiveness, lower irritability, and encourage an optimistic outlook on life.

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