

## **YOGA: AN ANSWER TO LIFESTYLE DISORDERS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Man is running blindly after material pleasures and is ready to pay any price for it. In this modern age of advanced technology, communication, electronic gadgets, the level of facilities available for our convenience has increased but it has somehow also lead to an increase in our problems related to psychosomatic and spiritual health. Human life is more stressful in the present era. A particular lifestyle of person is a cumulative product of his/her physical capacity coordinated with psychological functioning displayed in the form of habits, behaviors, dietary and living pattern based on his own training sought from childhood and also gained from his immediate companions including parents, siblings, peers etc. Lifestyle disorders are primarily resulted due to improper diet (mostly fat & sugar rich diet) and dietary patterns, lack of exercise (sedentary lifestyle), bad habits like alcohol drinking, smoking, uncontrolled desires, late night sleep, day sleep and psychosocial stress. Common lifestyle disorders include hypertension, coronary artery disease, bronchial asthma, diabetes mellitus, obesity, chronic liver diseases, psoriasis, arthritis, cancer, etc. An association between such faulty life style and Lifestyle disorders was reviewed from different ancient Indian classics. The subject material has reviewed from different related journals and also searched on internet.

Yoga provides great options for the prevention and management for lifestyle disorders, particularly, Yoga has been found effective to manage work related stress. Different Yoga practices works on the principles of proper relaxation, proper exercise, proper breathing, proper diet, positive thinking and meditation. Yoga based lifestyle involves life style modification based on the concepts of promotion of psychosomatic and spiritual health and proper living. This way Yoga is found more effective for promotion of psychosomatic & spiritual health, prevention and management of lifestyle disorders and rehabilitation as well.

**KEYWORDS:** Lifestyle Disorders, Yoga, Yogic Practices, Yoga Based Lifestyle, Stress

### **INTRODUCTION**

Yoga is an ancient discipline aimed at balancing the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health of an individual. It is an art of life management and a universal means for self realization. Different lifestyle disorders include hypertension, coronary artery disease, bronchial asthma, diabetes mellitus, obesity, chronic liver disease, psoriasis, arthritis, cancer, etc. Yoga provides great options to combat these diseases. The concept of Yoga therapy seems more advance and ancient compared to modern medical science. Lifestyle disorders are non-infectious and non-transmissible, but are likely to continue progressively unless intervened [1].

Aurobindo defines Yoga as ‘a practical discipline incorporating a wide variety of practices whose goal is the development of a state of mental and physical health, well-being, inner harmony and ultimately a union of the human

individual (Atma) with the universal and transcendent existence (Parmatma) [2].

Globalization, technological advancements, intermixing of work cultures, recessions and subsequent changes in the nature of work are in fast pace. Consequently, stress is associated with everyone at workplace whether rich or poor, young or old, male or female and no one is immune from it. Stress may be the biggest single cause for illness or premature death.

It is now considered that most of the chronic disorders like diabetes mellitus, bronchial asthma, hypertension, coronary artery diseases, COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases), obesity, chronic liver disease, psoriasis, arthritis, cancer etc. are resulted due to faulty lifestyle. Therefore, the lifestyle modification is considered sheet anchor for the prevention and management of such type of disorders [3]. Yoga based lifestyle involves life style modification and modification in diet and dietary patterns based on the concepts of proper living for overall promotion of well being. Yoga based lifestyle includes simple and safe practices at physical, mental, emotional, intellectual and spiritual levels to reach a state of mastery over the modifications of the mind through effortless blissful inner awareness during all practices [4-5].

It is found that Yoga based lifestyle has been effectively used for the prevention and management of various chronic illnesses. Yoga techniques that include physical postures, regulated breathing, meditation and relaxation help to manage the life style better and have the potential of bringing down the prevalence of different types of lifestyle disorders through various direct and indirect mechanisms.

Yoga is an ultimate attempt for the fusion of embodied consciousness with supreme consciousness that subsequently proceeds from the practice of social adjustment (Yam), moral observance (Niyam), postures (Asana), breathing mechanics (Pranayama), senses withdrawal (Pratyahara), concentration (Dharana), meditation (Dhyan) and super-consciousness (Samadhi). Regular practice of Yoga is supposed to empower overall health, happiness and harmony and therefore help in the prevention and management of a wide range of lifestyle disorders [6].

## **ROLE OF YOGA IN THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF LIFESTYLE DISORDERS**

Lifestyle has changed from being an indicator of the overall well being of an individual to a cause of disease and now lifestyle has itself become an object of medical attention and thus the cause of concern. Due to urbanization and adapting western culture in India the lifestyle has been disturbed like low activity level, sedentary lifestyle, etc. which contributes significantly to the risk of developing the metabolic syndrome and other lifestyle related disorders. Therefore, by adapting the principles of Yoga for diet and lifestyle modification we can impede lifestyle disorders. The etiology of disorders fundamentally lie in the environment and lifestyle of an individual, hence the promotion of health and prevention of disease too should lie upon their correction and management. In this perspective, the Yogic practices help for prevention and management of lifestyle disorders. In order to live a healthy and active life, a sound mind in the sound body is very essential and all the Yogic practices promote physical as well as mental health. Modified from [7]

Patanjali has explained the primary causation of stress based disorders through concept of Pancha Klesha (five psychological afflictions). These are Avidya (ignorance of the ultimate reality leading to physical identification), Asmita (a false sense of identification), Raga and Dwesha (addiction and aversion), Abhinivesha (clinging on to life for fear of death). Avidya as the root cause enables other Kleshas to manifest in different forms from time to time [8].

Psychological stress is thought to undermine host resistance to infection through neuroendocrine mediator

changes in an immune competent individual. To impede stress and related disorders, allergic disorders, auto-immune disorders, cancer and other lifestyle disorders Yoga provides great solutions and further role of Yoga practices has been experimented upon [9].

There is a paucity of epidemiological data on the overall prevalence of lifestyle disorders in India because of the country is huge with very diverse population that has different social and cultural characteristics, even today, there is inadequate access to healthcare institutions for many rural communities, urbanization of lifestyle since the urban people are having less physically active lifestyle, more exposure to products and technologies that could be unhealthy for them and psychosocial stress arises due to unemployment. Modified from [10]

Basically, four major streams of Yoga are described in Indian classics which are as follows [11-12].

- Karma Yoga (The Yogic path of undertaking selfless deeds by using attained wisdom, power and prosperity).
- Bhakti Yoga (The Yogic path of devotion).
- Gyana Yoga (The Yogic path that prioritizes rational thinking over knowledge).
- Raj Yoga (The eightfold Yogic path synthesized by sage Patanjali).

Raj Yoga has metaphorically comprised of eight subsequent limbs, Yama (universal ethics/social codes), Niyama (individual ethics), Asana (physical postures), Pranayama (breath control), Pratyahara (control of the senses), Dharana (concentration), Dhyan (meditation), and Samadhi (bliss)[13].

Level of four human intellects viz. spiritual, emotional, creative and rational which is acquired by an individual governs his/her way of feeling, thinking and behavior and undoubtedly can be regarded as the determinants of human personality and human excellence too. Optimal health (physical, mental, social and spiritual) and the four elements of intelligence can be promoted and sustained by regular Yoga practices.

Lang horst et al. analyzed the effects of a comprehensive lifestyle modification program in 60 patients with ulcerative colitis. It is a structured 60 hour training program over a period of 10 weeks which included stress management training, psycho-educational elements and self-care strategies, on health-related quality-of-life, psychological distress, and some clinical parameters. The 60 patients were randomly assigned to an intervention group or a usual-care control group. Comparison of the measurements taken at baseline, after 3 and 12 months, showed significant improvement in the quality of life and emotional well-being of the participants as compared to controls [14].

During meditation the energy level increases and if it is retained, a number of benefits occur like metabolic changes, electro-physiological changes, improvement in motor functions, perceptual ability and athletic performance, improvement in intelligence, learning and academic performance, development of personality, biochemical and cardiovascular changes, quality of life and productivity, increased creativity, increased energy and dynamism, reduced negative impact of stress, increased resistance to disease, etc.

Yoga Asanas (poses) have been developed over centuries of research and experience. They have been found to be extremely effective. We should adopt Yoga positions and preferably Yoga routine in our life. Yoga results in number of benefits in terms of correcting metabolic disorders, overcoming stress and mind behaviors that seem beyond our control and changing firmly entrenched attitudes or personality disorders. Integral Yoga ensures all round personality and health

development by concentrating on Yoga positions, meditation, Pranayam techniques and body cleansing methods.

### **Yogic Diet**

Yoga emphasizes the importance of not only eating the right type of food but also in the proper amount and with the right attitude, also preparation and serving of food with love are brought out in the Yogic scheme of healthy living. Guna (inherent nature) of food is taken into consideration to attain and maintain good health. Modern dietary science can learn a lot from this ancient concept of classification of food according to inherent nature as it is a totally neglected aspect of modern diet. Most disorders are directly or indirectly linked to improper dietary patterns that need to be addressed in order to find a permanent solution to health challenges. Diet is one of the most important lifestyle changes that need to be implemented in the management of any lifestyle disorder [15].

According to Yogic concept food can be categorized into three groups which are Satvik, Rajsik and Tamsik. Satvik food is positive, non-irritant, pure, agreeable, nourishing and easily digestible. It promotes purity of mind and inner strength and is conducive to higher thinking and intelligence, keeps body healthy and mind at peace. Rajsik food is negative and irritant. It comprises of heavy proteins, fats that are difficult to digest and assimilate. This type of food excites emotions, causes disease, obesity and restricts the soul to material achievements. Tamsik food is devitalizing and stale. It comprises mostly of processed and tinned foods. Food if reheated several times loses its qualities and harms the systems are also a type of Tamsik food. Yoga prescribes a balanced diet that comprises of pure, light and nutritious food. It should have cereals like wheat, pulses like Moong, green leafy vegetables cooked in mustard or groundnut oil. Milk and dairy products like curd, Mattha (butter milk), Paneer should also be included in diet. More stress should be laid on consuming colored vegetables and fruits which are a good source of vitamins e.g. brinjal, apples, citrus fruits, banana etc. [16]

### **DISCUSSION**

Promotion of total health, happiness, harmony and four human intellects i.e. rational, creative, emotional and spiritual are major benefits of Yogic practices. Scientific validation and standardization of the effects of Yoga practices in an individual follows bio-psycho-socio-spiritual research model. The general mechanism of Yogic effects and efficacy of Yoga for managing work stress, improving health problems related to stress, respiratory, cardiopulmonary, digestive and genitourinary systems in organizational family is portrayed on the basis of concerned research findings. Regular practice of Yoga culture is directly linked to wellness and optimal intellect of organizational family.

Stress is the major culprit and may be the causative, aggravating, or precipitating factor in so many psychosomatic and lifestyle related disorders. Relaxation is most common Yogic practice that most patients need in order to improve their physical condition. In addition to its preventive and restorative capabilities, Yoga also aims at promoting positive health that will help us to tide over health challenges that occur during our lifetime. This concept of positive health is one of Yoga's unique contributions to modern healthcare as Yoga has both a preventive as well as primitive role in the healthcare. It is also inexpensive and can be used in tandem with other systems of medicine in an integrated manner [17].

Proper health and happiness in an individual develops maximum potential in life to do anything as much possible. The ultimate goal of human existence is not health and happiness but is Moksha (liberation). Yoga helps us to regain our birthrights and to attain the ultimate goal of human life.

Yoga is an India's oldest scientific and perfect spiritual discipline and is a method of training the mind and body

for discovering spiritual truths. Yoga is science of life which offers us simple, easy remedies, techniques and methods of health and hygiene to assure physical and mental fitness with a minimum of time, effort and expense. Yoga is a practical training of mind and body and a technique for achieving purest form of self awareness, devoid of all thoughts.

A regular practice of Yoga usually 30 to 50 minutes daily with faith in "self", proves a blessing in the form of spiritual illumination which slowly develops into awareness of reality. If a human being can live strictly according to nature he will have total health and happiness, because such a way of life is balanced. The blessing of total health comes to those who find their own individual lifestyle and adhere to it.

Yoga has simple and effective body movements that strengthen our back, firm the stomach and redistribute body weight. Yoga exercises stretch and tone the body muscles. To increase endurance and improve flexibility, toning muscles, lubricating joints and massaging the body Yoga Asanas or positions are the best among all exercises. Yoga postures bring physical as well as mental stability. These Asanas were developed thousands of years ago and have evolved over centuries. Asanas exercise the nerves, glands, ligaments and muscles. In other words, Yoga exercises are the most comprehensive method of self care. Although the Asanas are very powerful, the effect becomes dramatic when they are done in the proper way. The mind must be in harmony with the body movements, for this it is essential to equip over selves with the other tool of integral Yoga [18].

The main aim of science of living is the building of spiritual-scientific personality. Science of living is the name of a coordinated and harmonized system like Yoga and Ayurveda. There are three aspects of Science of living which are co native, emotional and practical. Science of living aims at...

- Finding out the rules of life by which all these three aspects can be achieved.
- Finding out the rules by which a proper balance between emotional and intellectual development can be established.
- Finding out the rules by which intellect, pure consciousness and inner-self can be aroused.

On viewing modern life on a higher perspective, we can see that it is a mere medium to attain material and physical gains. Health and peace do not find priority in modern life. Money is the prime need of most people. To actually prove utility and meaning of life one has to remain healthy and happy. Only a healthy body with a healthy mind can make use of physical and material pleasures provided to him and he can find the true meaning of life. In this context, the great Ayurvedic physician, Charka stated that at first one should preserve and maintain health because only with healthy body one can able to achieve his goal in life [19]. Certain factors that inhibit Yogic practices in modern life are time management, lacking or fulfillment in life, physical capacity, irregular diet, environmental factors and lack of Yogic education. To keep the mind free from stress, meditation can prove to be very beneficial especially for students.

The modern medical system has replaced almost all the traditional systems of medicine in different parts of this globe because of its rational basis. It has proved itself most effective in saving man from the fatal hands of contagious and infectious diseases. However, rapidly increasing incidence of stress related ailments and lifestyle disorders are posing a great challenge to the modern medical system. It is here that Yoga appears to make a vital contribution to the modern medical system.

Man is running blindly after material pleasures and is ready to pay any price for it. One is so engrossed in

attaining success in life that he is ready to take any path even it is immoral and against principles. In this world of cut throat competition man does not even have time for himself, one does not have time to think about his own identity as a human being and life has become totally mechanized. Discarding the need of own body and emotions, one is just engaged in making more and more money. In this life of blind race love, tolerance, peace, happiness is of the greatest need, but these feelings have become meaningless despite their importance in human life [20].

Yogic philosophy not only lays stress on physical well-being but also on mental and spiritual fitness. At present, many things like violence, corruption, abuse, etc. have a negative impact on the delicate minds of children. The various films, television programmes, cartoon shows etc, depict a lot of violence which makes the child aggressive there after grows up into an impulsive and violent individual. By adopting Yoga in life young children can control their minds, and keep themselves relaxed. Yoga provides inner power and strength to discard the evils of society and to avoid negative things like- violence, corruption, drugs abuse, anger, stress etc. In this perspective, Ayurveda described Satvavajaya Chikitsa, which is method of restraining or withdrawal of the mind from unwholesome objects (Arthas) [21].

The physical ailments that are not of psychosomatic nature and not related to unhealthy lifestyle can be easily managed with surgery, medication, etc. Various Yoga techniques may also be used to correct the physical ailments and to restore health with regeneration and rehabilitation as necessary. Accident prevention is an important benefit of Yoga practices by promoting better alertness during driving a vehicle. Better reflexes and physical condition enables one to prevent accidents as well as avoid getting traumatized both physically and mentally by such occurrences. The psychosomatic and lifestyle disorders can be easily prevented and managed by different Yogic practices. This way Yoga provides great options to promote psychosomatic health, for healthy living and betterment of overall wellbeing and therefore Yoga can be considered as science of life and art of living.

## CONCLUSION

In present era, hurry, worry, curry and continuous exposure to psychosocial stress lead to compromise or an unhealthy life style. The science of Yoga has numerous practical techniques as well as advice for proper life style in order to attain and maintain health and well being. The art and science of Yoga has infinite possibilities for providing answers to most health problems troubling modern humankind. Yoga is a holistic science and must be learnt and practiced with a holistic view. The dedicated practice of Yoga as a way of life is no doubt a panacea for psychosomatic disorders, stress related and lifestyle disorders and helps us to regain our birthright of health and happiness.

Modern life gives more stress on luxury and material pleasures and these become priority for most people leading to an imbalanced life, full of deformities. In modern society with increase in stress, violence, disasters, Yoga comes out as the best remedy and tool to discipline one's life. Yoga teaches the way of life in all aspects like, eating, habits, cleanliness, self management etc. Yoga or Yogic practices help in promotion of positive health at physical, mental, social and spiritual level and to develop good habits especially in students for their personality development and bright future. Ultimately Yoga aimed at promotion of overall wellbeing and positive lifestyle by restoration of normalcy in all systems of the human body with special emphasis on the psycho-neuro-immuno-endocrine axis.

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