

Holistic Approach of Yoga for Health – A Light on Classical References

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Abstract

Yoga is the science that imparts all the knowledge regarding life. It explains health and factors responsible for its maintenance and promotion. Health is essential for enjoyment of all the worldly pleasures in a righteous manner. One can overcome from the most of health problems through the proper adaptation of Yogic principles. Yoga can be used as a therapeutical science in curing and preventing various psychosomatic diseases and its holistic approach can be used to maintain physical, mental, social and spiritual health. The objective of the present paper is to give a light on classical references related to the holistic approach of yoga for health

Keywords: Yoga, Holistic approach, Health.

Introduction

Everyone wishes to keep himself free from physical, mental and spiritual miseries. The history of medicine to maintain proper health is as old as the history of mankind. According to Indian tradition, the four primary objectives of human life are: *dharma* or to perform religious rites, *artha* or to acquire wealth, *Kama* or to satisfy the worldly desires and *moksa* or to attain salvation. One should maintain good health for the achievement of these objectives.

Traditional systems of medicine developed in various parts of the world during different ages. A systematic shape was given to them in different ancient centers of civilization and culture. Yoga is the science that imparts all the knowledge regarding life. It explains health and factors responsible for its maintenance and promotion. Health is essential for enjoyment of all the worldly pleasures in a righteous manner. Promotion of positive mental health is essential for acquiring a

state of eternal and supreme happiness, i.e. *moksha*. It defines a useful and harmful, happy and unhappy life and gives guidelines on what is beneficial and harmful to life. It describes the aetiological factors, pathogenesis, clinical manifestations, treatment and prevention of various diseases.

Indian concept

According to Indian system, the human body is composed of three fundamental elements called *dosas*, *dhatu*s and *malas*. The *dosas* govern the physio-chemical and physiological activities of the body, while *dhatu*s enter into the formation of the basic structure of a body cell, thereby performing some specific actions. The *malas* are substances, which are excreted after the food partly utilised in the body. These three elements should be in a dynamic equilibrium with each other for the maintenance of health. Any imbalance of their relative preponderance in the body results in disease.

Vagbhata in *Astangahrdaya* says,

“*Vayuhpittamkaphascetitrayosahasmasatah* |

Vikrtavikrtadehamghantitevartayantic a” [A.H. : I,6]

Vayu (vata), Pitta and Kapha are the three doshas, if they are normal they sustain the body, if they are abnormal they destroy the body.

Further he says,

“*rogastudosavaisamyamdosasamyamarogata*” [A.H. : I, 20]

Roga (disease) is the effect of disequilibrium of the doshas, while health is the result of the equilibrium of the doshas.

Great Indian Surgeon Susruta explains the concept of health as follows:

“*Samadosahasamagniscasamadhatumalakriyah* |

Prasannatmendriyamanahsvasthaityabhidyate | |

[S.S. : 15, 48]

A person one who has got *samadosa* (balanced *tridosas*), *samagni* (proper digestion), *Samadhatu* (healthy *dhatu*s and their normal transformation from one *dhatu* to another), *malakriya* (normal excretion) along with enlightened state of *atma* (self, consciousness), *indriya* (sense organs) and *manas* (mind) is said to be a ‘*Swastha*’ (healthy person).

Indian system emphasizes the preservation as well as promotion of positive health, and prevention of diseases, which are its primary objectives; the secondary one being the cure of manifested diseases. In addition to food and drinks; the several prescriptions and prohibitions are described for different parts of the day (*dinacarya*), for different seasons (*rtucarya*) and for social conduct (*sadvrta*) which help in the maintenance of positive health and prevention of diseases.

Yogic approach

The great science of yoga is India’s unequalled gift to mankind. We don’t know what unknown diseases are in store

for us in the future. The refinement in health should be such that we should be sensitive to the slightest change in our cells. This is possible by the regular yogic practices.

The present day medical science is more ‘ill-health’ oriented than ‘health’. Efforts are directed to find out therapies for the treatment of various diseases, which are manifested. Preventive measures are mostly directed towards some of the infective diseases and allergic conditions. Some of the vaccines are later found ineffective and some have so many side effects. Yoga, on the other hand, emphasizes upon the preservation as well as promotion of positive health; prevention of diseases is its primary objective and the cure of manifested diseases is secondary. Some of the classical references taken from Yogic texts, which emphasize the importance of health aspects, are listed below:

Maharshi Patanjali says,

“*heyamduhkhamanagatam*” [P.Y.S: II, 16].

“The pains (miseries), that is yet to come can and is to be avoided”.

Because of our poor lifestyle, too much of competition, excessive hurry-worry, wrong kind of eating and sleeping habits, mental and social conflicts the health collapses. Apart from the functional unity of different parts of the body, yoga believes in the close relationship between the body and the mind. Mental factors effect the functioning of different parts of the body, and vice versa. In addition to the body and the mind, the condition of soul (*atma*) is also taken into account to determine the health, and for the treatment of diseases.

Maharshi Patanjali says,

“*yogascittavrttinirodhah*” [P.Y.S : I, 2].

“Yoga is the restraintment of the modifications of the *citta*”. Since *cittaviksepa* is the cause for all

psychosomatic diseases, one can prevent and cure them by the holistic approach of Yoga. Hathapradipika says,

“*calevatecalamcittamniscaleniscalambhav
et|Yogisthanutvam-apnotitato-vayumniro-
dhayet*”||

[H.P. : 2,2]

“As long as breathing is unsteady, the mind remains unsteady. When breathing becomes steady the mind also becomes steady. Hence one should control the breathing”. This is the concept of *pranayama*. Therefore the technique of *pranayama* can be used to control the unsteady mind.

Patanjali explains the importance of yoga as follows.

“*yoganganustanadasuddhiksayejanadipti
ravivekakhyateh*” [P.Y.S : II, 28]

“By following and practicing the different limbs of yoga, the impurities of both body and mind are destroyed and one gets the knowledge of discrimination”. This explains that one can overcome from all kinds of health problems through the proper adaptation of Yogic principles.

PatanjaliMaharshi explains the concept of *cittaviksepa* as follows:

“*vyadhi-styana-samsaya-pramada-
alasya-avirati-bhrantidarsana-
alabdhabhumikatva-
anavastitattvanicittaviksepaste\$ntarayah*”
[P.Y.S. : I, 30]

“Disease, mental laziness, doubt, lack of enthusiasm, lethargy, clinging to sense enjoyments, false perception, non-attaining concentration and falling away from the state when obtained are the *cittaviksepas* and are obstacles to yoga”.

“*duhkha-daurmanasya-angamejayatva-
svasaprasvasa viksepas sahabhuvah*”
[P.Y.S. I, 31]

“Grief, mental distress, tremor of the body and irregular breathing are the symptoms accompanying *cittaviksepa*”. These can be

considered as the symptoms of psychosomatic diseases.

Patanjali further explains the remedies to overcome from these *cittaviksepas* as follows

- “*tatpratishedarthamekatatvabhyasah*” [P.Y.S. I, 32]
“Practice of one subject should be made”.
- “*isvarapranidhanadva*” [P.Y.S. I, 23]
“By self surrendering to God”.
- “*tajjapahtadarthabhavanam*” [P.Y.S. I, 28]
“Repetition of Omkara and meditating on its meaning is the powerful remedy to overcome *cittaviksepa*”.
- “*maître karunamuditopeksanam
Sukhaduhkhapunyapunyavisayanam
bhavanatascittaprasadanam*” [P.Y.S. I, 33]
“*Cittaprasadana* (calmness of mind) can be attained by cultivation of habits of friendship towards happiness, compassion towards unhappiness, delight in the virtuous and in difference towards the wicked people”.
- “*pracchardhanavidharanabhyamvapr
anasya*” [P.Y.S. I, 34]
“By restraining the breath after complete exhalation”.
- “*visokavajyotismati*” [P.Y.S. I, 36]
“By concentrating on the inner effulgent light (in between the eyebrows or on the lotus of the heart), which is beyond all sorrow”.
- “*vitragavisayamvacittam*” [P.Y.S. I, 37]
“By meditating on the heart of a holy person who has given up all attachment to sense objects”.
- “*svapnanidrajanalambanamva*” [P.Y.S. I, 38]
“By meditating on the knowledge that comes in sleep”.
- “*yathabhimatadhyanaadva*” [P.Y.S. I, 39]
“By meditating on any one holy thing that appeal to one as good”.

Similarly, one can find so many classical references in *Patanjala yoga sutra* as well as in *Hathapradipika* and *GherandaSamhita*, related to the concept of health. Some of them are given below:

- “*kayendriyasiddhirasuddhiksayattapasah*” [P.Y.S.II, 43]
“The result of Mortification is bringing powers to the organs and the body, by destroying the impurity”.
- “*tatodvandvanabhigatah*” [P.Y.S.II, 43]
“One can overcome the dualities of both body and mind by the practice of *asanas*”.
- “*hathasyaprathamangatvadasanampurvamucyate* |
Kuryattadasanamsthairyamarmarogyamcangalaghavam” || [H.P:II, 43]

“Asana, being the first limb of Hathayoga is dealt with first. Asana brings mental as well as physical steadiness, health and a feeling of lightness”.

Therapeutical benefits of different yogic practices like *asanas*, *kriyas*, *pranayamas*, *bandhas* and *mudras* are explained in hathayogic books.

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- GherandaSamhita says,
“*satkarmanasodhanamcaasanenabhav eddrdham* |
Mudrayasthiratacaivapratyahanadhi rata” || [G.S.: I, 10]
“The *satkarmas* purify the body; *asanas* strengthen the body; *mudra* brings about steadiness, *pratyahara* results in calmness”.
- “*pranayamallaghavamcadhyanatpratyaksamatmanah* |
Samadhinanirliptamcamuktirevanasamsayah” || [G.S.: I, 10]

“*Pranayama* leads to lightness; *dhyana* gives realization of the self and *samadhi* leads to isolation, which is, verily liberation”.

Conclusion

One can overcome from the most of health problems through the proper adaptation of Yogic principles. Yoga can be used as a therapeutical science in curing and preventing various psychosomatic diseases and its holistic approach can be used to maintain physical, mental, social and spiritual health.
