

An assessment on the Role of Psychological factors for the Manifestation of Various Disease Conditions with Special Reference to Classical Texts

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Abstract:

Yogic system considers that mind and body are closely intertwined. Modern scientists also recognize the both Psychological and Physical factors influence one another. Recent studies provide clear and convincing evidence that psychological factors is the main cause for the manifestation of Disease. Irregular diet, Lack of Physical activity, and changes in the lifestyle are increasing the incidence of diseases day- by- day in the present era. This clearly shows that psychological factors are also playing a major role for the current Health scenario throughout the globe. Centuries ago, the Classical Texts like Patanjali Yoga Sutra, Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Siva Samhita, Gheranda Samhita, and Sreemad Bhagavad Gita, Yoga vasista, Thirukkural, Thirumandhiram, shivapurana, gives a reason and Solution for the Psychological Illness which manifests the Diseases both Physically and Mentally. Yogic practices helps to achieve Mental, Emotional, and Physical balance. Regular Yoga Sadhana could be helpful in contributing the Physic Factors, thereby helping in Preventing disease caused by these factors.

Key words : Yoga Chikitsa Concepts, Classical Texts, Psychological factors.

Introduction

Yoga is a spiritual science for the integrated and holistic development of our physical, mental and moral-spiritual aspects of being. The philosophy of Yoga is practical and applicable in our day-to-day living. Yoga has been documented to normalise physiological function and recent advances in the field of research have shown that it has sound scientific basis. In between these two extremes lie the states of normal health and disease. For many, their state of health is defined as that 'state' in which they are able to function without hindrance whereas in reality, health is part of our evolutionary process towards Divinity. The lowest point on the dynamic health continuum with lowest speed of vibration may be equated with lowest forms of life and mineral

matter while the highest point with highest speed of vibration may be equated with Divinity. The process of human evolution passes through numerous forms on the journey from the lowest to the highest. This journey is very well brought out in a verse from the Shivapurana of Dravidian culture that describes the evolutionary journey from the non-moving state of rocks, grass, small plants and trees to the moving state of worms, various animals, birds and snakes up to the human state and finally ending at the divine state of sages and celestial beings (pull a agippoodaay puzhuvaay maramaagip pal viruga magipparavaiyaayppaamba agikkallaa ymanidhara ayppeyaaykk anangalaa yvalasurarag imunivaraay ththevaraaycc ellaanindra iththaavar asanggamath thulellappirappumpirandhuilaitthenember umaan -Sivapurana verse 30). Yogi

Swatmarama in the HathayogaPradipika, one of the classical Yoga texts gives us the assurance, “One who tirelessly practises Yoga attains success irrespective of whether they are young, old decrepit, diseased or weak”. He gives us the guarantee that Yoga improves health of all alike and wards off disease, provided we properly abide by the rules and regulations. (yuvaavrddhoati vridhho vaavyaadhitudurbalo pi vaaabhyaas aatsidd h i maapno t isarva yogesh vatan dritah -HathayogaPradipika I:64)

Yogic concepts of Health

Yoga is first and foremost a moksha shastra meant to facilitate the individual to attain the final freedom, liberation or emancipation. One of the important by-products of the Yogic way of living is attainment of health and well being. Yoga also helps maintain and sustain this dynamic state of health after it has been attained through disciplined self effort. Structural aspects of the human being: Yoga considers that we are not just the physical body but are of a multifold universal nature. Concepts of panchakosha 3 (fivefold aspects of our existence) and trisharira (threefold aspect of our bodily nature) help us understand our multi-dimensional real nature where health and result from a dynamic interaction at all levels of existence. At the level of the gross body, Yoga and Ayurveda consider that the human body is made up of seven substances. These saptadhatu are rasa (chyle), rakta (blood), maamsa (flesh), medas (adipose), asthi (bone), majjaa (marrow) and sukra (semen). Both these ancient health sciences understand importance of tridosha (three humors) whose balance is vital for good health. Health is further also understood as harmony of pranavayus (major energies of physiological function), upapranavayus (minor energies of physiological function) and stability of nadis (subtle energy channels) with proper function of all chakras (major energy centres that may be

correlated to the psycho-neuro-immunoendocrine axis). Tridoshas and health: The tridosha theory of health and disease that developed during the late Vedic period (circa 1500-800 BC) is common to virtually all Indian systems of medicine. Tridosha concept has correlation with panchamahabhutas (elements of the manifest universe) as well as triguna (inherent qualities of nature). Health is understood to be the balanced harmony of the three humours in accordance with individual predisposition while disease results from an imbalanced disharmony. Qualities of physical health according to Yoga: The Yogic view of health is exemplified in Shvetaasvatara Upanishad where it is said that the first signs of entering Yoga are lightness of body, health, thirstlessness of mind, clearness of complexion, a beautiful voice, an agreeable odour and scantiness of excretions (laghutvama rogyamalo lupatva mvarnaprasadamsvarasausthavamcagangh assubhomootrapureesam Yoga pravrittimpra thamamvadanti- Shvetaasvatara Upanishad: II-13). The Hatha yoga Pradipika echoes these qualities when Yogi Svatmarama says, “Slimness of body, lustre on face, clarity of voice, brightness of eyes, freedom from disease, control over seminal ejaculation, stimulation of gastric heat and purification of subtle energy channels are marks of success in Hathayoga”. (vapuhkratsvam vadanepasannat aanaadasp utatvam nayananesuni rmalear ogataabin dujayognid iipanamnaa diivishuddhir hatha siddhi lakshanam- HathayogaPradipika II-78). In the Patanjala Yoga Darshan we find an excellent description of the attributes of bodily perfection (kaya sampat). It is said in VibhutiPada that perfection of body includes beauty, gracefulness, strength, and adamant hardness (rupalavanyaba lavajrasamhanana kaya sampat-Yoga Darshan III: 47). The effulgence that is characteristic of good health is also mentioned when it is said that deep concentration on samana (energy of

digestion) leads to radiant effulgence (samanajayatjvalanam -Yoga Darshan III:41). Qualities of mental health according to Yoga: Yoga not only considers physical health but also more importantly mental health. Qualities of a mentally healthy person (stithaprajna) are enumerated in the Bhagavad Gita as follows: • Beyond passion, fear and anger (veeta raga bhayakrodhah-BG II.56) • Devoid of possessiveness and egoism (nirmamonirahamkarah- BG -II.7) • Firm in understanding and unbewildered (sthiraabuddhirasammudhah-BG - V.20) 4 • Engaged in doing good to all creatures (sarvabhutahiteratah- BG V.25) • Friendly and compassionate to all (maitraharunaevaca- BG XII.13) • Pure hearted and skilful without expectation (anapekshahsucirdaksah- BG XII.16) The central theme of Yoga is the golden mean, finding the middle path, a constant search for moderation and a harmonious homeostatic balance. Yoga is the “unitive impulse” of life, which always seeks to unite diverse streams into a single powerful force. Proper practice produces an inner balance of mind that remains stable and serene even in the midst of chaos. This ancient science shows its adherents a clear path to the “eye of the storm” and ensures a stability that endures within, even as the cyclone rages externally. Maharishi Patanjali tells us that we can gain unexcelled happiness, mental comfort, joy and satisfaction by practicing contentment (santoshatanuttamahsukhalabhahYogaDarsan II: 42). This link is quite apparent once we think about it, but not too many associate the need for contentment in their greed for anything and everything in this material world.

Relationship between food and health:

Yoga emphasizes the importance of not only eating the right type of food but also the right amount and with the right attitude. Importance of not eating alone, as well as preparation and serving of food

with love are brought out in the Yogic scheme of right living. Guna (inherent nature) of food is taken into consideration to attain and maintain good health. Modern dietary science of diet 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. We are what we eat! The great Tamil poet-saint Tiruvalluvar offers sane advice on right eating when he says, “He who eats after the previous meal has been digested, needs not any medicine.” (marunthuen avaendaa vaamyakk aikkuarundiyaat huatrathu poatriunnin-Tirukkural 942). He also says that life in the body becomes a pleasure if we eat food to digestive measure (attraalalavuarinthuungaaghduudambupettr aannedithuikkumaaru-Tirukkural 943). He also invokes the Yogic concept of Mitahara by advising that “eating medium quantity of agreeable foods produces health and wellbeing” (maarupaad uillaathaundim arutthuunninoo rupaadu illaiuyirkku -Tirukkural 943).

Yogic methods to attain and maintain health

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. Bahiranga practices such as yama, niyama, asana and pranayama help produce physical health while antaranga practices of dharana and dhyana work on producing mental health along with pratyahara. It will suffice to say here that Yoga works towards restoration of normalcy in all systems of the human body with special emphasis on the psycho-neuro-immuno-endocrine axis. 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. It is also inexpensive and can be used in tandem with other systems of medicine in an integrated manner to benefit patients. In the GherandaSamhita, a

classical treatise on Hathayoga, the human body is likened to an unbaked clay pot that is incapable of holding the contents and dissolves when faced with the challenge of water. It is only through intense heat generated by practice of Yoga that the human body gets baked, making it fit to hold the Divine Spirit. (aamakumbha ivaambhastho jeeryamana hsadagatahy oganalenasamdah yaghatash uddhimsa macaret- GherandaSamhita I:8) Tirumoolar has given numerous references to therapeutic benefits of Yoga for attaining and maintaining health in his monumental Tirumandiram. He emphasizes Swara Yoga concepts when he says, “If breath flow dominates in left nostril on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays no bodily harm can occur” (velliventhingalvilangumbudanmoondrunt halliidatthetayangumeyaamaagilolliyakaay atthukoonamilaiyendru- Tirumandiram 791). He has further described the human body as the temple of the divine and stresses on the proper preservation of the body with reverence and care. (udambinaim unnamizhukke ndrurunendambin ukkulleyuruporulkandenudam buleuttaman koilkondaanendrudam binai yaanirunthombugindrene –Tirumandiram 725). He has emphasized purification of internal organs to attain an imperishable body with perfect health (chuzhattri kkodukkavech uttikkazhiyunjchuzhatr imalatthaikkamalathaippoorithu uzha ttrikko dukk umubayamarivaarkkuaz hat triththavirththudalanjanamame- Tirumandiram 726). According to Swami Kuvalayananda, founder of Kaivalyadhama positive health does not mean mere freedom from disease but is a jubilant and energetic way of living and feeling that is the peak state of well being at all levels – physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual. He says that one of the aims of Yoga is to encourage positive hygiene and health through development of inner natural powers of body and mind. In doing so, Yoga gives special attention

to various eliminative processes and reconditions inherent powers of adaptation and adjustment of body and mind. Thus, the development of positive powers of adaptation and adjustment, inherent to the internal environment of man, helps him enjoy positive health and not just mere freedom from disease. He emphasizes that Yoga produces nadishuddhi (purification of all channels of communication) and mala shuddhi (eradication of factors that disturb balanced working of body and mind). According to Swami Kuvalayananda, Yoga helps cultivation of positive health through three integral steps: 1. Cultivation of correct psychological attitudes (maitri, karuna, mudita and upekshanam towards those who are suka, dukkha, punya and apunya).

Yogic concepts of Disease

Vyadhi (disease) is considered one of the nine obstacles (antaraya) to integrative oneness of Yoga (samadhi) according to Maharishi Patanjali (Yoga Darshan I: 30). Patanjali also enumerates manifest symptoms such as dukkha (mental or physical pain), daurmanasya (sadness or dejection), angamejayatva (anxious tremor) and shvasaprashvasah (respiratory irregularities) as concomitant expressions of mental disturbances (Yoga Darshan I: 31). These antaraya are one of the major causes of disintegration (vyadhi). He has described samadhi as the ideal state of health which is disturbed by the chittavikshepa (disturbances in mind) due to the kleshas and antarayas. He has further also stated that mind is responsible for bondage and liberation as well as happiness and unhappiness. According to him the purpose of Yoga is to lessen the impact of these factors (kleshatanukaranam) and promote the state of integration (samadhibhavanam). Maharishi Patanjali gives us a clue to control the mental agitation by advising us to concentrate on slow and deep flow of respiration to still the mind (prachchhardanavidharanabhyamvapranas

ya - Yoga Darshan I: 34). He also advises concentration on a painless inner state of luminosity to produce stability and tranquillity (vishokavajyotishmati- Yoga Darshan I.36). Patanjali has also explained the primary causation of stress based disorders through concept of panchaklesha (psychological afflictions). These are avidya (ignorance of the ultimate reality leading to bodily identification), asmita (a false sense of identification), raga-dvesha (addiction and aversion), abhinivesha (clinging on to life for fear of death), (avidyaasmita raga dveshaabhiniveshakleshah -Yoga Darshan II: 3). Avidya as the root cause enables other kleshas to manifest in different forms from time to time. They may be dormant, attenuated, manifest or overpowering in their causation of pain and suffering. (avidyakshetra mutta reshamp rasuptat anuvicchinna udaranam- Yoga Darshan II:4). As a proponent of preventive medicine, he advises us to prevent that which can be prevented so as to avoid future pain and suffering (heyamdukhkhamanagatam -Yoga Darshan II: 16).The Yogic concept of health and disease enables us to understand that the cause of physical disorders stems from the seed in the mind and beyond. Adhi (the disturbed mind) is the cause and vyadhi (the physical disease) only the manifest effect in the Yogic scheme of things. By paying careful attention to personal history, one can nearly always trace origins of psychosomatic disease back to patterns of mental and emotional pressures.

From the Yogic viewpoint of disease it can be seen that psychosomatic, stress related disorders appear to progress through four distinct phases. These can be understood as follows:

1. Psychic Phase: This phase is marked by mild but persistent psychological and behavioural symptoms of stress like irritability, disturbed sleep and other minor symptoms. This phase can be correlated

with vijnanamaya and manomayakoshas. Yoga as a therapy is very effective in this phase.

2. Psychosomatic Phase: If the stress continues there is an increase in symptoms, along with the appearance of generalized physiological symptoms such as occasional hypertension and tremors. This phase can be correlated with manomaya and pranamayakoshas. Yoga as a therapy is very effective in this phase

3. Somatic Phase: This phase is marked by disturbed function of organs, particularly the target, or involved organ. At this stage one begins to identify the diseased state. This phase can be correlated with pranamaya and annamayakoshas. Yoga as a therapy is less effective in this phase and may need to be used in conjunction with other methods of treatment.

4. Organic Phase: This phase is marked by full manifestation of the diseased state, with pathological changes such as an ulcerated stomach or chronic hypertension, becoming manifest in their totality with their resultant complications. This phase can be correlated with the annamayakosha as the disease has become fixed in the physical body. Yoga as a therapy has a palliative and quality of life improving effect in this phase. It does also produce positive emotional and psychological effects even in terminal and end of life situations. Often, however, the early stages of the disease process are overlooked and the final stage is seen as an entity unto itself, having little relationship to one's living habits and patterns. This is because modern medicine only looks at the physical aspects and neglects effects of panchakosha and trisharira on health and disease. One of the major Indian concepts of disease causation is the imbalances of tridosha. This is found in numerous classical texts of Yoga and Ayurveda like Shiva Swarodaya, SushrutaSamhita, CharakaSamhita and Tirumandiram. According to the Dravidian poet-saint Tiruvalluvar, disease results from tridosha

imbalance
(miginumkuraiyinumnoiseyyumnoolorvali
mudhalaenniyamoondru -Tirukkural
941).

Conclusion:

Health and happiness are your birthright, claim them and develop them to your maximum potential. Yoga helps us regain our birthrights and attain the goal of human life. When we remember to inculcate these principles of Yoga in our practice and help our patients to understand them thus assimilating them in their own lives, we are practicing Yoga. If not it is merely –Yogopathy, the

symptomatic management of conditions using techniques of Yoga! The art and science of Yoga has infinite possibilities for providing answers to most health problems troubling modern humankind. However we often misunderstand this science and want it to be a miracle pill. A pill that we take only once, and want all the problems to vanish into thin air! 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 problems related to psychosomatic, stress related disorders helping us to regain our birthright of health and happiness.

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