

Harnessing Yogic Practices for Optimal Health and Well-being: A Review Study

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ABSTRACT:

Since ancient times, humans have been trying to improve their lifestyle through yogic practices. Even today, somebody has accepted the effectiveness of Yoga from a therapeutic point of view. Clinical health practices of Ayurveda and Yoga have protected to a great extent from harmful effects of coronavirus, whether physical or mental. Yoga therapy takes care of the body, prana (vital force), and mind simultaneously. Yoga is also most prevalent because it does not require any kind of medical resources and medicines etc. Yogis have explained Yoga as an art of living a systematic life. Yoga therapy pays attention to all the dimensions of holistic health, such as physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects. WHO (1948) also defines holistic health as "health is not merely the absence of disease, rather complete health is a state of physical, mental, and social well-being." The yogic lifestyle positively covers all these dimensions of complete health. Yoga philosophy states that the seer is well-known in his true nature. Through the research done in yoga therapy, human beings' physical, mental, and emotional ailments like asthma, diabetes, arthritis, migraine, stress, anxiety, and depression have been competently treated successfully. Therefore, yoga has been demonstrated to be a boon for human civilisation from a therapeutic point of view. Treatment of many diseases has been made possible through the regular practice of Yama-Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Dhyana, Yoga-Nidra, etc. It is completely clear from the scientific research evidence that yoga therapy takes proper care of an individual's overall health.

Keywords: Yogic Practices, Meditation, Harnessing, Health, Well-being.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Health is the most crucial pillar to attaining a blissful life. Good health develops a balance among physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being. The word health is derived from two words— self (Swa) + stable

(*sthā*); here, ‘*swa*’ means self, and ‘*sthā*’ represents position. Therefore, health means being in oneself (Bhagat, Om. 2018). Better health is an excellent achievement in itself, which everyone wants to secure. An individual's propensity to be always healthy and sound motivates person to lead a happy, productive and blissful life. Only a healthy person can contribute to the economic development and welfare of the family, society, and the nation. It is natural and universal in humans to crave to be completely healthy. Only a healthy person can build a better personality. (**Sao, A. & Sao, A., 2019**). In the modern period, medical resources are abundant; still, man is struggling for good health. Many new diseases are emerging today as a result of poor dietary habits or a sedentary lifestyle. Many emotional disorders are seen even in young children (**Cramer, H. et al., 2017**). Today, in this scientific age, numerous sophisticated medical equipment is available to modern hospitals. Psychology has also developed many new dimensions of medicine. As a result, the treatment of many deadly diseases like cancer, brain tumour, heart disease, etc., has become possible. But still, there is a question— Why is it that medical science cannot provide holistic health benefits to human beings even after having rich medical facilities? The people of today need a kind of health management system which offers holistic health to human beings. Holistic health means achieving a state of happiness and well-being with the total health care of body, mind, emotions, and soul. This can be possible only through yoga therapy. (**U. K. Essays, 2018**).

Yoga therapy does not only treat the physical ailment, but it also treats mental and emotional ailments. Yoga therapy does not work like any pain killer medicine that brings immediate relief, whereas the root cause of the disease is suppressed, not cured. Yoga therapy also manages the hindrances of the life of ordinary men along with the diseases, so it usually takes more time to cure the disease. Still, it works on the root cause of disease and ultimately destroys it. In a true sense, for the treatment of the body, the modern medical system has also made a lot of progress, but allopathy still does not have excellent results in mental and emotional aspects. Yoga therapy is more beneficial for such problems (**Woodyard, C. 2011**). Generally, Yoga therapy improves the mental health of the person and the disorders arising at the level of mind like stress, anxiety, fear, depression, etc. Research in this field clearly shows that yoga therapy provides better solutions to psychosomatic ailments. Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, and meditation methods have always been beneficial in balancing emotional, neurotic, and intense impulses (**C. Betal, 2017**). In the yoga philosophy, Yoga is defined as the restraining of the mind-stuff (*yogaścittavṛttinirodhah*॥ P.Y.S.-1/2) that is, the stopping of the Vrittis of the mind is Yoga. Vrittis are the intense impulses that create an imbalance between the chitta (mind) and the emotions, which affect human beings physically, mentally, and emotionally. Ayurveda has also mentioned all these dimensions as necessary while defining holistic health. (**S. Niranjananand, 2004**).

2. Yoga for Well-being:

Health is the complete well-being of human beings with a joyful life. In the Yogic system of therapy, no medicine or surgery is used like allopathy. Instead, Yoga involves some special techniques in which foreign matter is removed through the body and thus, the possibility of emergence of disease is eliminated. In addition, yogic techniques move the body parts and organs, thereby maintaining a balance between the muscular and the nervous system (**S. Ramharsh, 2017**). Through scientific researches done on Ashtanga Yoga; Yama,

Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi and the main parts of Hatha Yoga-Shatkarma, Asana, Pranayama, Dhyan Mitahara and Nadanusandhan etc., it has been made completely clear that Yoga may be helpful to maintain the holistic health. It is clear from all these researches that yoga therapy contributes to maintaining a state of physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being.

Along with curing the disease, Yoga therapy also organises an individual's lifestyle. Yoga provides a healthy life and a happy state for a long time by bringing changes in the bad habits of human beings. The greatest achievement of man is to be healthy. If there is no health, there is no scope for enthusiasm and new opportunities in human life. Through Yama-Niyama, a person can establish a balance between his personal and social behaviour and discharge a better ethical lifestyle. Therapeutic Yoga is a system of medicine. From yogic perspective, diseases arise due to uncontrolled lifestyle, bad habits, and rites of man. Being affected by these wrong habits, imbalances and diseases arise in weaker parts of the body and gradually affect the whole functioning of body. Yoga therapy sometimes treats many diseases simultaneously and successfully curing them (**Shukla, Atul 2007**). Yoga therapy is a complete science of understanding, diagnosis and healing. If Yoga is followed holistically, it leads to the multidimensional development of personality. Yoga as therapy is only a single dimension. Another component that today's man views as minor but will be seen as a big revolution in the future is Yoga in management and administration efficiency. Spirituality is the third most helpful dimension, as it allows the ordinary person to live a more balanced and proper existence.

Yoga is a science that focuses on the art of living and teaches people how to live happy and healthy lives. Maharishi Patanjali has also clearly said in *Yoga Darshana- tada draṣṭuh svarūpe'vasthānam* || (PYS-1/3). that means that the soul is established in its own form is the state of Yoga. In the state of disease, a person remains very sad. But if he practices Yoga regularly, then all his sorrows and pains go away. One can attain holistic health by practicing Ashtanga Yoga as described in Patanjali Yoga Darshan. The eight limbs of yoga are Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. These limbs of Yoga positively affect all aspects of health. In fact, each of the yoga limbs of Ashtanga yoga can improve health, but still these yoga limbs have independent and special effects.

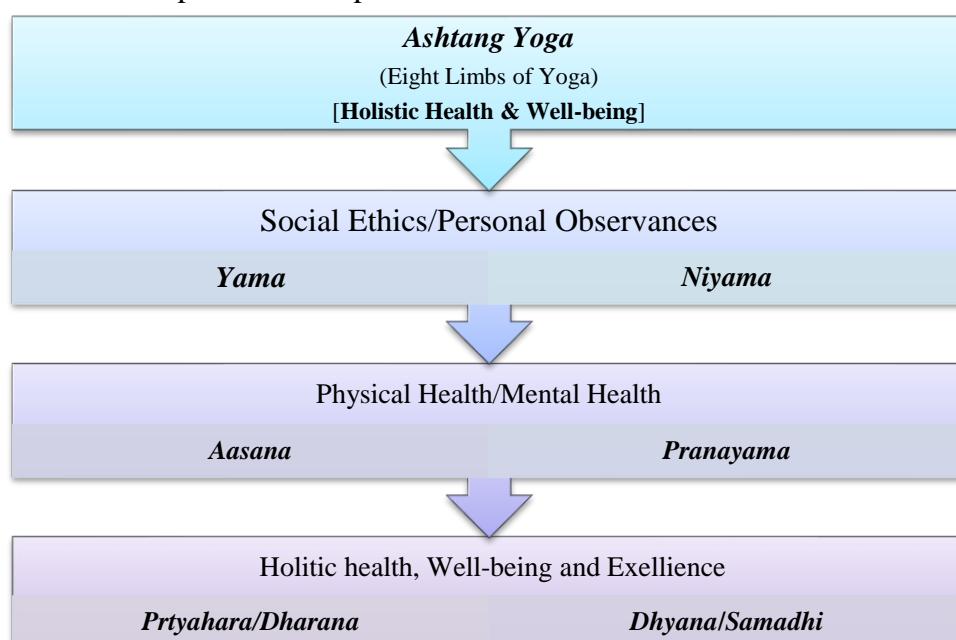


Figure 1: Ashtanga Yoga and its relation with different health factors.

3. DISCUSSION:

1. **Social health:** In Yogic science, through universal moral education in the form of Yama-nyama and five modesties (*Panch-sheel*), every human being can make his personal and social status completely healthy and happy. From the point of view of yoga therapy, the person who is not skilled in social dealings, who is unable to present himself properly in the social environment, for them, through yoga therapy, the treatment of *Yama-nyama* and five principles is given.

ahimsa-satyāsteya-brahmacaryāparigrahāyamāḥ // (pys-2/30)

2. **Social Ethics (Yamas)** – (i) Nonviolence (*Ahimsā*), (ii) truth (*Satya*), (iii) non-stealing (*Asteya*), (iv) sexual restraint (*Brahmacharya*) and (v) non-avarice (*Aparigraha*).

śauca-santoṣa-tapa-svādhyāyeśvara - pranidhānāni niyamāḥ // (pys-2/32)

3. **Personal Observances (Niyama)** – (i) Internal and external cleanliness (*Soucha*), (ii) being happy and satisfied (*Santosha*), (iii) atonement (*Tapas*), (iv) Self-assessment (*Swadhyaya*) and (v) Surrender to the supreme power (*Ishvarapranidhana*).

4. **Five Modesty (Panch sheet):** Do not commit violence, do not steal, do not commit adultery, do not lie & do not take intoxicants. Through the practice of these moral values, man can overcome his wrong habits and organise psycho-physical processes, which have a positive effect on physical and mental health.

5. **Physical health:** The state of disturbance in the physical system is called disease. When the body becomes inactive and contaminated due to continuous wrong habits, then diseases start arising. In the state of disease, the body's mechanism and metabolic system are unable to function properly, due to which disturbances in other body parts and internal organs start to arise. Many diseases arise at physical level like diabetes, arthritis, blood pressure, migraine and backache etc. Yoga therapy has played an important role in curing all these diseases. Better results have been obtained from research works in Yoga, in which many diseases have been cured by Yoga without medicine. Through the practice of asanas, efforts are made to cure diseases by balancing the flow of blood in joints and muscles of the body. Many diseases arising at the physical level can be cured by yoga therapy.

6. **Mental health:** Yoga is a high-level psychology that goes deep into the mind and settles the distorted consciousness. The main cause of mental diseases is suppressed frustrated feelings, due to which man becomes a victim of mental diseases like constant stress, anxiety, depression and frustration. Yoga therapy first of all settles the suppressed feelings of man. The practice of meditation and pranayama settles the hormonal disturbances which have a positive effect on the nervous system, which leads to improved mental state. Yoga therapy removes the disorders of the mind and creates the power to generate positive thoughts within the person, so that he can easily face the ideological impulses coming in his life.

7. **Emotional health:** Emotional health is a very big and serious problem in modern times. The solution of this type of health problem is not even with modern medical system to a great extent, but yoga therapy basically creates changes in the person with the aim of emotional balance. Yoga therapy inspires

them to lead a peaceful life by providing them a realistic view of the many problems of life. Many research works in the field of Yoga have clarified that the root cause of emotional neuroticism is the disordered living and distorted thought system of the person. Many practices of Yoga like – Yoga Nidra, Pranayama, Antarmauna, Pratyahara, Dharana and Dhyan etc. enhance and control human emotions.

8. **Spiritual health:** Yoga along with therapy makes human aware of some new principles and practices of life, in which a person rises above materialistic resources and gets knowledge of self-reflection and self-motivation. Yoga keeps the body healthy as well as motivates the mind to move towards a higher level of thoughts. It is the aim of every person to lead a peaceful and joyful life. The moral education of Yoga also makes a person spiritually satisfied and successful. Therefore, it is clear that yoga therapy is the only therapeutical approach by which a person can manage the whole dimensions of health simultaneously. Yoga therapy provides a high-level direction to the human lifestyle, which regulates behaviour as well. Yoga not only provides complete health to the person but also keeps on motivating him to stay healthy, so the purpose of Yoga is to keep a healthy person healthy, to remove the disease of the sick person and to maintain mental devotion towards the practice of Yoga continuously in order to not to suffer from any kind of sickness and disease in near future.

4. CONCLUSION:

The main objective of the present research is to establish the awareness and attitude towards Yoga among the individuals, so that they can keep their whole life healthy and happy. Yoga is the way to lead a normal life to the heights, which includes a state of health, prosperity and well-being. Yoga teaches a person to live a quality life with health. Yoga therapy primarily places great emphasis on both the quality of life and well-being aspects. Positive results of yoga therapy have been seen in continuous research studies. Along with curing the disease, regular yoga practice also works to reduce the chances of disease occurrence in future. People practicing Yoga on a regular basis are mainly found to be healthy and balanced. Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that yoga therapy spiritually affects the overall health of human beings. As a result, it can be said that yoga therapy provides health benefits by establishing a balance between all these dimensions physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual.

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