

HEALTH MANAGEMENT THROUGH YOGA AND NATUROPATHY

—*Dr Sohan Raj Tater*

What is yoga?

Yoga is a science as well as an art of healthy living. It is no way limited by race, age, sex, religion, caste, creed and any other boundaries and can be practiced by those who seek an education on better living and those who want to have a more meaningful life. **Yoga is the surest way of complete health. Yoga is the science of life and the art of living.** It is India's oldest scientific, perfect spiritual discipline. Yoga is a method of training the mind and body for discovering spiritual truths. Yoga is science of life, it 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 neither a sect nor an ideology but a practical training of mind and body. Yoga is also a technique for achieving purest form of self-awareness, devoid of all thoughts.**

Integral Yoga equips us with the right tools to handle life's uncertainties in a remarkable calm manner. It is nothing mystical—just a practical and scientific guide to an improved way of life. It is the science that harmonizes the mind body connection most effectively. It is a power tool for facing life's challenges with an attitude that will delight us. It has four major tools which are well meshed into one another :

- (i) Postures (Asanas) for physical exercise.
- (ii) Meditation for mind exercise.
- (iii) Breathing (Pranayam) for channeling energy correctly.
- (iv) Deep relaxation.

Naturopathy is a philosophy of balancing the energy system of the body—physical, emotional and spiritual using the natural methods, prevent stress and distress on the organs and promotes overall well-being and rejuvenation.

Benefits of Yoga

At the physical level yoga and its cleansing practices have proven to be extremely effective for various disorders. Yoga is beneficial as follow :

(a) Increasing flexibility

Yoga has position that act upon the various joints of the body including those joints that are never really on the "radar screen" let alone exercised.

(b) Increasing lubrication of the joints, ligaments and tendons

The well researched yoga positions exercise the different tendons and ligaments of the body. Surprisingly it has been found that the body which may have been quite rigid starts experiencing a remarkable flexibility in even those parts which have not been consciously work upon.

(c) Massaging of all organs of the body

Yoga is perhaps the only form of activity which massages all the internal glands and organs of the body in a thorough manner, including those such as prostate-that hardly get externally stimulated during our entire lifetime. Yoga acts in a wholesome manner on the various body parts. This stimulation and massage of the organs in turn benefits us by keeping away disease and providing a forewarning at the first possible instance of a likely onset of disease or disorder. One of the far-reaching benefits of yoga is the uncanny sense of awareness that it develops in the practioner of an impending health disorder or infection. This in turn enables the person to take pre-emptive corrective action .

(d) Complete detoxification

By gentle stretching muscles and joints as well as massaging the various organs, yoga ensures the optimum blood supply to various parts of the body. This helps in flushing out of toxins from every nook and cranny as well as delayed ageing, energy and remarkable zest of life.

(e) Excellent toning of the muscles

Muscles that have become flaccid, weak or slothy are stimulated separately to shed excess flab and flaccidity.

Attitude training in Yoga Therapy

Most of the Asanas and Pranayam are classified as if they are for particular physical or mental problems. For example matsyendrasana Asana is good for a diabetic patient or savasana is good for controlling high blood pressure. As a matter of fact, only Asanas or Pranayam is not going to help if it is done in a mechanical pattern or form. There are other factors, which are playing a major role in recovery process. The yoga therapist must and should impart the technology and philosophy of this science while providing the training to their patients. The traditional poses are not at all suitable to the needs of the men of this age where our life style is completely different from those of the old days. It is more important to teach more simplified versions as yoga is non-specific when it comes to effective and positive results, especially if other factors are not incorporated, for example, diet, routine, positive attitude, openness to accept the changes and learning new healthy habits etc. These other factors are :

(i) Awareness

A person who is practicing yoga as a therapy must understand the reason for this practice. It is not important that the pose should be perfect in order to get its benefit but more important is the awareness of the body and attitude.

(ii) Concept

The concept of pose and Pranayam must be explained and should be very clear before its practice. The scientific explanation is a must.

(iii) Commitment

There has to be a commitment from both the sides-the therapist and the practitioner. There must be a mutual understanding that one is there to explain and teach and the other is there to learn, recover and gain.

(iv) Dedication

Quite often people are taking up yoga as an experiment. Sometime when all other doors are closed, people come to yoga practice and expect a miracle or instant change or recovery. Just as there is a big difference in allopathic medicines and herbal medicines, likewise there is a big difference between other holistic physical training and yoga. Once the person feels

some positive results, he has to practice on a regular basis as a routine. Once a week, one hour practice is not going to help.

(v) Trust and faith

Just as a patient trusts his doctor or any other health practitioner, in the same way there has to be a faith and trust in whatever the patient is practicing during yoga therapeutic sessions. It is very important that a good relation is maintained during the treatment and follow up sessions.

(vi) Attitude

Often, people who believe in other faiths or religions are not ready for certain yoga practices when it comes to the philosophy and devotional practices for relaxation and meditation. The attitude is that "I want to learn yoga but I do not want to learn philosophy, I am here to learn only poses and breathing." In other words, "I want to learn swimming but without getting wet. It is very important for a therapist to provide the scientific explanations with spiritual support. All yoga practices are based on the laws of the nature. It is very true that the science of yoga was developed in India and majority of Hindu people practice that. The base is of Hindu, Jainism and Buddhism faith-but as a way of life. All Hindu, Buddhist and Jain scriptures and literature are explaining yoga, one has to have some sort of knowledge of Bhagwat Gita, Preksha Dhyana, Patanjali Yoga Sutra, Health Yoga Pradipika and such texts.

Here the intention is not to teach the religion but the philosophy behind the practice. If certain techniques are practiced with a certain attitude then it helps, more than a mechanical practice e.g. chanting of OM as an universal sound. Many attitudes are cultivated while practicing any pose. Each and every move can provide a space to learn a certain attitude if explained and developed during its regular practice. It could be from gross to the subtlest level, that will help the practitioner in the long run to change his life style and in cultivating healthy habits.

Health Management through yoga positions (Asanas)

Yoga 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 huge benefit in terms of :

- (i) Correcting metabolic disorders.
- (ii) Overcoming stress and mind behaviours that seem beyond our control.
- (iii) 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.

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, yoga asanas or positions are the best among all exercises for toning muscles, lubricating joints and massaging the body. Yoga postures bring physical as well as mental stability. These asanas were developed thousands of years ago and have evolved over centuries. They work wonders in keeping the body healthy and the mind peaceful. 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 the right way. The mind must be in harmony with the body movements, for this it is essential to equip ourselves with the other tool of Integral Yoga.

We must always begin with simple poses and gradually overtime move towards the complex ones. It is not as if maximum benefits cannot be achieved with simple positions. Quite contrary, maximum benefits would be achieved by what is "acceptable" to our body. To achieve the maximum benefits of yoga, a specific yoga routine must be developed by first basic positions to free various rigid joints and get the mind in suitable mode. Only then we should be moving to these positions. The process of yoga is just as important as the result.

Health Management through Preksha Dhyana

The main purpose of the practice of Preksha Dhyana is to purify the mental states. Mind is constantly choked by contaminating urges, emotions

and passions. This hampers the flow of wisdom. The hurdles of uncleanness must first be removed. When the mind is cleaned, peace of mind automatically surfaces. Balance of mind, equanimity and the state of well being are also experienced simultaneously.

It should always be remembered that the ultimate aim of sadhana is purity and equanimity-freedom from contamination of passions. The state of well-being are also experienced simultaneously.

It should always be remembered that the ultimate aim of sadhana is purity and equanimity-freedom from contamination of passions. The state of well-being is not our ultimate aim ; it will inevitably ensure ; nevertheless it is not the objective.

Similarly peacefulness is also a secondary benefit and will always be achieved, but not the aim. We have to transcend both these mental states to reach our ultimate purpose, viz. total purity of mind and goodness. Preksha Dhyana is an uncomplicated, easy to learn technique of meditation. It is comprised of the following :

- (i) Kayotsarga (Total relaxation)
- (ii) Antaryatra (Internal trip)
- (iii) Swash Preksha (Perception of breathing)
- (iv) Sharir Preksha (Perception of body)
- (v) Chaitnya kendra Preksha (Perception of psychic centres)
- (vi) Lesya Dhyana (Perception of Psychic colours)
- (vii) Bhavana (Auto-suggestion)
- (viii) Anupreksha (contemplation)

We live in the age of tensions and because we are confronted with more and more situations that produce stress, increasing numbers of people at younger ages are suffering from hypertension which results in high blood pressures, heart attacks and premature deaths. Our most pernicious anxiety involves common problems of daily life such as the daily commute in a congested city, rising cost of living, unabating shortages of daily necessities, polluted air and water. These and many other insoluble difficulties appear to have been built into our daily life. Bodily movements, speech and mental functions are three fold activities of our organism. One of the facets of meditational practice is reduction or total cessation of each of these

activities. Three types of meditational practices thus ensure from the trinity of activities. As per prominent Jainacharya Mahapragya inventor of Preksha Dhyana total health consists of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health.

Health Management through Naturopathy

(I) Cure of Heart disease by Naturopathy

Millions of people in the world suffer from the diseases of the heart and blood vessels. The heart which is muscular pump, keeps the blood circulation continuous. But when there is a break down of this complicated mechanism, blood supply to a part of the body may be affected leading to what is known as heart attack. But with naturopathy the following cardiovascular diseases can be cured :

Coronary Thrombosis-sudden blocking of one of the arteries.

Arteriosclerosis-hardening of arteries.

Degenerative heart disease-gradual decay of blood vessels due to excessive smoking of tobacco. Hypertensive Heart disease-straining of blood vessels due to high blood pressure. This leads to hardening of blood vessels, hence diminishing the supply of blood.

High blood pressure (Hypertension)-Blood pressure remains high leading to disorder like lack of strength, bad temper, visionary troubles, tiredness, headache, coldness of hands and feet.

Nature cure

- Routine-Mudpack
- Specific—full massage (reverse direction), neutral spinal spray, ice massage to spine.

(II) Diabetes

Diabetes a very old disease, has a common feature-excessive accumulation of sugar in blood, due to malfunctioning of pancreas. The general prevalent method of treating the diabetic patient is to inject insulin to compensate what could be produced by the pancreas. The yogic treatment restores the normal functioning of the pancreas and other endocrine glands. The chemistry of the body becomes normal leading to a healthy body.

Nature cure

- Routine-Enema, mudpack
- Specific-full massage, partial massage to abdomen, cold abdomen pack, cold hip bath.

(III) Cancer

Cancer has affected millions in the entire world. It is the fobia of the disease which causes more suffering than the cancer itself. In cancer, floating starved non-functional cells group together and manifest themselves as tumours, ulcers and cancer.

Nature cure

- Routine-Enema, mudpack, cold spinal spray/bath, wheat grass juice therapy, grape diet.
- Specific-full massage, steam bath, under water massage, cold circular jet.

(IV) Obesity

Obesity is becoming a common health hazard and leads to many other diseases like coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, psychosomatic disorders and a shorten life span. **The main cause of obesity is excessive eating.** The best method to control weight is to reduce the intake of protein, carbohydrates and fat and increase the supply of mineral and vitamins and also increase exercises.

Nature cure

This method of cure involves body purification. The method lightens the body and makes it free from toxins and morbid matter which in turn results in problem free weight loss. The procedures are :

Full body dry friction-for 10 minutes daily.

Enema (colon irrigation)-with Luke warm water, alternate days.

Stem bath-20 minutes, twice in a week.

Hot foot bath-20 minutes, 5 days per week.

Heath Management through chakras—centres of consciousness

Level-I of Amrit Yoga-chakra 1 to 4

A primary focus of Amrit Yoga is to build heat by charging battery of the body, which is based in the lower three centres. As this energy is aroused

and consciously directed from the lower chakras to the upper ones, our biological prana awakens to its evolutionary potential. Awakened prana, called kundalini, carries out healing and cleansing at an accelerated level resulting in the purification of the nerve channels in the body as well as cleansing kriyas-all of which prepare the body for accelerated spiritual development.

(i) Muladhara chakra (Roots, alignment, Earth)

Muladhara is the body in physical space and time, developing groundedness, stability and foundation. In Amrit Yoga, the attention is alignment in all poses, building awareness and strength in the legs especially all standing poses. Anything that stabilizes and roots the foundation reinforces muladhara.

(ii) Swadhisthana chakra (sensation, flow, Water)

In swadhisthana chakra we become aware of the senses, sensation (pleasure/pain) and emotions that accompany each pose. We allow our awareness of ecstatic energy to build in the second half of the pose. Suggested poses include pigeon, bridge and the spinal twist.

(iii) Manipura chakra (flower, Fire)

In manipura, our fire (spiritual heat) is stimulated. We "jump-start" the battery of the body, the physical storehouse of energy, through strong standing poses like the warrior. The willful aspect of the practice is also associated with chakra three. Here we are building the battery in the belly and then consciously directing that energy upward. This is an essential part of conscious generation and directing of energy is necessary for prana to awaken and move upward to higher centres.

(iv) Anahat chakra (Awakening to the spiritual path)

In Anahat, we are asked to open the heart. This requires spiritual commitment to let the ego drop away. In Amrit Yoga the heart energy is engaged with the use of the arms, with mudras, giving and receiving movements, some heart opening poses can be camel, yoga mudra, cobra, half locust (opens arms and heart meridians) Breath and the fourth chakra are closely connected (lungs).

Level-II of Amrit Yoga (chakra 5 to 7)

(v) Visuddha chakra (Internal/external)—the power of sound vibration

Visuddha chakra is more apparent in Level II of Amrit Yoga, but also in level I—we turn into vibration of prana that sources the movement. Use sound vibration when in the pose and the power of our word (opening intention and om) to create the vibration field we intend. Become aware of our own inner dialogue and if it serves us or not. In Amrit yoga the throat chakra may be stimulated through chanting, bridge, camel and shoulder stand postures.

(vi) Ajna chakra—the third eye

Meditation, witness, meditative, awareness pratyahar, deep absorption without choosing for or against what is present in Ajna chakra. In the second half of the pose and third eye integration-consciously allow energies to grow with meditative attention and draw freed energies upwards toward the third eye for integration. All forward bending poses where the head is lower than the heart brings attention and energy to the third eye (child, yoga mudra, wide angle forward bend)

(vii) Sahasrar chakra (silence)

In the sahasrar, the elixir of Amrita comes through silencing the fluctuations of the mind. This is the entry into the bliss body which can happen in the second half of the pose, in third eye meditation integration or in any pose. All these practices of Amrit Yoga are intended to reach the final point of stilling the modifications of the mind, which is always associated with the seventh chakra.

References :

- (1) Preksha Dhyam : theory and practice—Acharya Mahapragya, Jain Vishva Bharati, Ladnun (Raj.), edition 2003.
- (2) Article by Manjari Bhatt, Yoga teacher and therapist—Yoga Education centre, Ontario.
- (3) Website—www.realbondmarketing.com
- (4) Meditation and Yoga—Masahiro Oki, published by Oki Yoga publication, Japan, first edition, 1978.
- (5) Karma Yoga—Yogiraj Vethathiri Maharshi-Vethathiri publications, Erode (T.N.), third edition, 1995.
- (6) Yoga Praxis—Yoga Maharshi Swami Deva Murti, 1971-72, International Yoga centre, Schloss Aubach, West Germany.