

LIFE STYLE MANAGEMENT THROUGH IMMUNITY, YOGA AND NATUROPATHY

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Immunity Functions

The immune system is a collection of organs, cells and specialized tissues that work together to defend our body against harmful bacteria and viruses (pathogens). One of the most fascinating abilities of a properly functioning immune system is that, while defending against dangerous pathogens, it can determine between what is supposed to be in the body and what is foreign and should be attacked. The important components-tonsils, appendix, heart and stomach which all function to make this defense system work exceptionally well. This defense system is the best managed by flowing component blood, which flows to each and every cell of the body, giving diet to every cell.

There is a mantra in organized sports that says, defense is king. Animals are no different. In today's world, with germs lurking around every corner, it pays to have a strong defense. We are talking about the body's natural defense mechanism, the Immune System. Cells of the immune system are found in our bone marrow, lymph nodes, spleen, thymus, tonsils and in the liver of embryos. When microorganisms, such as bacteria or viruses invade the body, nonspecific defense mechanisms provide the first line of defense.

There are primary deterrent which ensure protection from numerous germs. There are physical deterrents (including the skin and nasal hairs), chemical deterrents (enzymes found in perspiration and salivo) and inflammatory reactions. These particular mechanisms are named approximately because their responses are not specific to any particular pathogen. Think of these as a perimeter alarm system on a house. No matter who trips the motion detectors, the alarm will sound. In cases where microorganisms get through the primary deterrents, there is a backup system – the specific defense mechanisms – which consists of two components : the humoral Immune System and the cell mediated Immune System.

(i) The Humoral Immune System

The humoral immune system protects against bacteria and viruses presents in the fluids of the body. This system uses white blood cells, called B cells, which have the ability to recognize organisms those donot belong to the body. In other words, if this is not your house, get out. Intruders are referred to as antigens. B cells produce antibodies that recognize and bind to a specific antigen to identify it as an invader that needs to be terminated.

(ii) The cell mediated Immune System

This immune system protects against foreign organisms those have managed to infect body cells. It also protects the body from itself by controlling cancerous cells. White blood cells involved in cell mediated immunity system are called T cells. Unlike B cells, T cells are actively involved with the disposal of antigens. They make proteins called T cell receptors that help them recognize a specific antigen. There are three classes of T cells which play specific roles in the destruction of antigens : cytotoxic T cells (which directly terminate antigens), helper T cells (which precipitate the production of antibodies by B cells), and suppressor T Cells (Which suppress the response of B cells and other T cells)

There are serious consequences when the Immune System is compromised. Three known disorders are – allergies, severe combined immunodeficiency (T and B cells are not present or functional, and HIV/AIDS (severe decrease in the number of helper T Cells).

Ancient Science : Yoga

Yoga is a practical science. Indian psychology with its ideology and technology : as a holistic system for promoting harmony at physical, mental, emotional, social and lastly at spiritual level. When this balance is disturbed by accident, illness, disorder or the stress created by any illness : physical or mental. Yoga can help restore it, and help cure or manage the illness. Yoga therapy is the adaptation of Yoga practices for people with health problems. Although ordinary Yoga classes can improve general health and resolve mild complaints but they may be ineffective or can be even harmful for serious conditions. In such cases, yoga therapy

can help people by tailoring yoga lifestyle to their individual needs, taking in account their health problems, flexibility, capacity, capability, habits, constitution and circumstances.

With the popularity of yoga in the country, its true depth has been diminished. In many cases, it has just a form of vigorous application of yoga postures for exercise. The focus on the physical aspect of Hath yoga has definitely had a powerful and beneficial impact. Today's practice may provide the breadth but certainly not the depth of authentic yoga. Purpose of the practice of yoga is the same as the meaning of the word yoga. Yoga means integration of the fragmented forces of our being that shows us as tension in the body, restlessness in mind, and emotional reaction. Regardless of what Asans, Pranayam or other technique we practice, it must be aimed at regaining harmony of body, mind, heart and soul.

The spirit of yoga is manifest at a formless level. Yoga is incomplete without the internal, invisible component. The internal part of yoga represents the subtler form that must be brought into synchronicity through the external form. When inner and outer, external and internal, come together in harmony, our practice make a quantum leap to a whole new level. During our practice, the most important principles to apply are : Intention, meditative inward focus, and the posture of Consciousness. As a result, the posture of consciousness we cultivate on the yoga mat is automatically available in our interpersonal relationships. It bleeds into everyone of our daily life activities. Whatever we do outside becomes internalized; what is inside becomes externalized. There is no difference for the posture of consciousness – it is inside out and outside in.

If we go just through the medium of the mind alone to recondition yourself, we never have power. This is because the part of our mind that is in control works according to neuro-glandular functions of the past. These patterns can be dissolved through the practice of Yoga Nidra, Third eye meditation, physical postures, diet, pranayam if we are consciously engaged. We then alter the karmic patterns and disintegrate their power through meditative awareness. By moving past the medium of the mind with the technique of yoga nidra, we are able to directly address the source cause, and remove the root of our habit patterns. Instead of using our life energy to struggle with a multitude of effect, we are able to directly resolve a single cause, which instantaneously and automatically eliminates the multitudes of effects. Yoga

Nidra is a powerful technique which takes us into the forth dimension, where all of these shifts can happen spontaneously and effortlessly.

(i) Yoga Therapy

Yoga, the origin of Indian health care practices have crossed its boundaries in the past due to its authenticity and practical positive results which have been approved by allopathic practitioners from ages and to the date. Yoga therapy practitioners are qualified yoga teachers with further training in human physiology, anatomy and applications of yoga to medical conditions. Yoga therapy utilizes practices from India, which date back thousands of years and are part of traditional Indian health care system. Critical research trials show that yoga therapy practices are among the most effective known methods for managing the psychosomatic diseases and disorders, stress related conditions, which are so common today. This is because Yoga bridges the gap between body and mind, ranging across the whole spectrum from physical to mental from gross to subtle.

Yoga therapy is more effective than other therapies. The allopathic science has only two tools with them to fight back with any disease or disorder : medicine and surgery. Medicines masks the symptoms and surgery removes the problem temporarily but chances are of redeveloping. Even medical sciences are also non-specific when it comes to its effectiveness. After all men have invented all these sciences, so it cannot be as perfect as nature yoga - the science is based on the laws of the nature. We all accept that human mind cannot be comparable with Mother Nature. After all its mother nature who makes and creates the man. So there are always limitations in man's discovery. Yoga offers variety of tools. They are suitable to individual needs, conditions, capacity and capability. It offers poses, breathing techniques, Mudras, Bandhas, cleansing techniques, Relaxation techniques. It provides physical as well as mental training through its five major branches - namely – Astanga Yoga, Hath Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Karma Yoga. Person can practice in any positions : standing, sitting and laying. It offers every thing, and a total package covering human life from 'womb to tomb' – birth to death. It deals with the root cause of the problem and helps in removing the cause not just symptoms Certain conditions those are not curable, it helps patients to manage the problem and helps in maintaining the conditions so it does not go from bad to worst.

(ii) Yoga and Prana

According to yogic point of view, the body is made up of 5 elements ether, air, fire, water and earth. All these are associated with the 5 prana Vayus. The five prana Vayus are like the limbs of a man which comprise the one body. It is the prana which moves in the body like energy waves and can be likened to an electromagnetic field where the energy is in constant motion. Prana is the basis of life and can be controlled through breath. It is through the breath that prana and consciousness are essentially linked. From the time of conception up till 4 months, the fetus services on mother's prana. After 4 months it is said that the prana enters the fetus and then its bodily functions are active and an individual life begins. However the child becomes independent only when death occurs the physical body dies, the mind dies, but not the soul. Death is a process of disintegration in which all 5 elements go back to their original source-water to water, earth to earth etc. When prana leaves the body there is no force to animate it. On death when prana leaves, the consciousness departs; the magnetic force which held the body together deteriorates and hence the body dies.

It is yoga which works on this vital life force 'the prana' to bring harmony into our lives. Yoga works through the physical body, by working on the pranic movements.

(iii) Different types of Yoga

For the purpose of annihilating all pains of human being, it was ultimately found that one has to combine energy with the soul. Ultimately energy had to be brought from uncontrolled to controlled stage. To achieve this many methods were devised and all these methods are called Yoga. The different types of Yoga are classified as follow :-

(a) Bhakti Yoga

It is for those who are very sensitive and can attach themselves to a deity. They should be capable of surrendering everything to that deity and they will ultimately reach the stage of realization from the intensity of devotion and strong faith.

(b) Mantra Yoga

It is intensive chanting of Mantra in a specific manner as advised by the Guru. This result in the fusion of mental and physical energy with cosmic energy and makes the practioner ready for Samadhi state.

(c) Jnana Yoga

It is meant for those who are superior in intellect to analyze every thing in meditation and come to a conclusion, thereby gradually taken to the level of Samadhi and realization.

(d) Raja Yoga

Raja Yoga is a combined aspect of the above three including some other sections. Asthanga yoga comes under this section.

Hath Yoga is purely action oriented and has its own merit. There are various sub parts in this type of Yoga. This type of Yoga has become famous across the world. Kriya Yoga forms a subsection of this Yoga. Kundalini yoga is an advanced practice of Kriya Yoga and is not recommended for ordinary enthusiasts.

(iv) The Importance of Yoga poses

Yoga poses have been developed over centuries of research and experience. They have been found to be extremely effective in :

- (1) Increasing flexibility of the body and freeing all the energy blocks. Besides increasing flexibility, this leads to a healthier body.
- (2) Helping to lose excess flab and weight – another cause of ill health.
- (3) Massaging the internal organs of the body and the rarely stimulated parts such as thyroid gland.
- (4) Helping to treat several health disorders – from common ones such as backaches and arthritis to “seemingly” unrelated disorders such as stammering.

(v) Meditation, Pranayam (Breathing), Relaxation and cleansing

Meditation is not technique but a way of life. Meditation means “a cassation of the thought process.” It describes a state of consciousness, when the mind is free of scattered thoughts and various patterns. The observer (one who is doing meditation)

realizes that all the activity of the mind is reduced to one. An ordinary person may consider meditation as a worship or prayer. But it is not so. Meditation means awareness. Whatever we do with awareness is meditation. “Watching our breath” is meditation; listening to the birds is meditation. As long as these activities are free from and other distraction to the mind, it is effective meditation. With regular practice of a balanced series of techniques, the energy of body and mind can be liberated and the quality of consciousness can be expanded. This is not a subjective claim but is now being investigated by the scientist and being shown by an empirical fact.

Meditation, Pranayam (Breathing), Relaxation and cleaning are very important aspects of yoga, yet the most ignored. We should include these aspects in our daily lifestyle to obtain huge benefit in terms of :

- (1) Correcting metabolic disorders.
- (2) Overcoming stress and mind behaviors that seem beyond our control.
- (3) Changing firmly entrenched attitudes or personality disorders.

Integral Yoga is a very important school of yoga that ensures all round personality and health development by concentrating on Yoga positions, meditation, pranayam techniques and body cleansing methods.

Harmony with cosmos by Naturopathy

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.

We have to understand the word Sanatan Dharma in order to understand Religion. Sanatan means eternal, the one, which does not have beginning or end and Dharma means ‘duty and discipline’. Very clearly Lord Krishna has explained this in Bhagavad Gita as “Manav Dharma”. How to live a disciplined life by performing one’s duty as human by following various paths of Yoga. Sanatan Dharma is not established by any one God or prophet but completely based on the laws of Mother Nature : the five natural elements : air, fire, water, earth, ether. On earth it covers all creatures and nature in all forms. Indian Philosophies or schools of thoughts are completely based on it. Yoga is one of these schools. So naturally it is based on the laws of Mother Nature. It has nothing to do with any particular “faith or religion” as per the modern meaning of term. Yoga practically is a way of life and a healthy life

style. To use five natural elements : air, fire, water, earth, ether for sustaining one's health or for curing diseases arose due to imbalance of these elements is called Naturopathy. So harmony of these five natural elements is Naturopathy. With the help of Naturopathy we can have harmony with cosmos or say Mother Nature.

Lifestyle Management Through Immunity, Yoga and Naturopathy

(1) Immunity through correct food

A 1999 study of American Cancer Society suggests that over one third of 5,63,100 cancer deaths were caused by nutrition. But more importantly, on the brighter side, it concluded that most of these could have been prevented. Despite of our improved standard of living, why are infections and disease more rampant. Why are our bodies not able to respond effectively. The answer lies in eating habits. Little do we realize that being fed on junk food and the rushed eating habits are taking a heavy toll of our physical and mental health. Some of us have begun to acknowledge the downside of these foods by restoring to “health diets” such as “high fibre”, “low cholesterol”, “diet foods” etc. But herein lies the problem. We go overboard in the opposition direction. This leads to a unique set of problems. As years pass by, donot be too surprised if we have a whole new set of illnesses caused by these so-called “health diets”.

Yoga has developed an eating philosophy and a concept of balanced whole foods diet. These powerful principles help in maintaining a healthy food along with a stress-free mind. What is most important is that they have existed for centuries and it is not some recently developed untested and “unproved food”. Ancient yogis foods must be as close to their “Whole” or natural state as possible. Such foods are called whole foods and are not pre-processed in any way. The key to true health is to have a balanced whole foods diet. Such a diet ensures that the three functions of digestion-absorption, assimilation and elimination – work in perfect harmony.

Often “synthetic” or “processed” foods create conditions that disrupt the harmony between these three functions. Over years , this leads to severe physical and psychological problems. How we go about adopting a wholefood routine? Firstly, we must set aside time for eating. We owe that commitment to ourselves. Food cannot be treated as one of those rushed affairs one we realize the gains, we will be wondering why we did not do it before. The next is to get down to wholefoods selection, setting

wholefood menu plans and preparing wholefoods dishes. The golden rule of wholefoods cooking is to keep it simple.

(2) Yogic lifestyle management

The most appropriate method to attain optimum health naturally is the system and science of yoga. Yoga is not only a series of physical postures or meditative practices. It is a lifestyle which can be lived by everyone, not necessarily those who are sanyasis, sadus or renunciates. It is a form of understanding, of realizing our interactions in life, trying to improve them, trying to understand the needs of the body, the needs of the mind and also the needs of the spirit. This is the concept of yogic life-style : living according to the laws of the body and the laws of the nature.

Lifestyle is the keyword for well-being. From the yogic perspective, health does not just mean a disease free body. This ancient science believes in a holistic approach to health of which the body, mind and the spirit are integral and independent parts. Yoga claims to endow perfect physical, mental and social well being even under stressful conditions. Thus the yogic meaning of well being is more than just psychological. It means physical fitness, mental aligity and spiritual verve. This psychosomatic spiritual approach emphasizes that we cannot think of sound health by only caring for one or two components of body, mind and ignoring the other. This results in an imbalance due to which harmony of personality is lost and the person suffers from psychological and psychosomatic problems. The rise in mental health problems in developed societies of the world is mainly due to ignoring the spiritual dimension of health and living an individualistic lifestyle. So yogic lifestyle aims at the evolution of mind. It talks of the journey from gross to most subtle. This is conceived in yogic literature as the journey from Annamaya Kosha to Anandamaya Kosha.

(3) Training of mind

Yoga says that there are certain methods to extricate yourself from the sticky side of the mind. In order to again harmonize and balance ourselves, we need to develop certain qualities aspects of our nature, beginning with the ability to release the tensions through the process of relaxation. Relaxation is a systematic approach to letting go of the accumulated blockages, not only in the mind but also in the body.

After we are able to relax physically, mentally and emotionally, we are instructed through yoga to develop personal awareness, *Sajagta*, in order to witness ourself interacting with the world, society, family and with our own limitations, ambitions and aspirations. Awareness is the result of leading a yogic lifestyle. Afterwards, with awareness, we have to develop a sense of positivism towards ourselves. When positive expressions are developed through the practices of reflection, concentration and introspection, which in common language is known as meditation, then we are able to harmonize the inner personality. We need to realize that there are ways to regulate our lifestyle. Regulation of lifestyle is the keyword here for the well being of the human personality.

(4) Attaining life force with Bandhas

Energy or life force flows through us, to keep us alive. It is the flow of this energy, which regulates our bodily and mind functions. Irregularity in this flow or pattern leads to various ailments and mental tensions. Life force is like water, it has to flow through our body and provide a certain amount of energy to each of our cells. Sometimes, due to our lifestyle or thinking, these flows get disturbed, certain parts of our body get either too much or too less of energy. The energy may not be reaching some places and at other parts there may be stagnation of energy. Such imbalances lead to headaches, backaches, constipation, sexual disorders, stomach ailments or any other disorder depending on one's imbalance.

Besides Pranayam, Bandh is another yogic practice to regulate this life force. Bandha in Sanskrit means to “lock or tighten”. In Bandha practices, the breath is locked or concentrated in a particular area of the body. The body is tightened to retain the energy in that part some time. This locking of life force has a lot of beneficial effects. Bandhas help in massaging of the internal organs and removal of stagnant blood. Besides, the practice of Bandhas regulates the nervous system, delays aging, increase vitality and leads to spiritual development. Bandhas help to release the psychic knots. Psychic knots are like whirlpools of energy created in the wrong areas of our body, over yours because of our lifestyle. These knots prevent the natural flow of energy, leading to imbalances.

Conclusion

This way with the help of Immunity, Yoga and Naturopathy we can achieve our total health i.e. physical, mental, emotional and social. So as far as possible we should use these sources to keep our body healthy without any disease because these sources are related to mother Nature which is supreme of all. One should follow the laws of body and laws of Mother Nature to keep him healthy. Only the healthy man can attain happiness and peace of mind – the ultimate goal of life.

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