Yoga and naturopathy: The true science of healing

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Yoga

Till the recent past, Yoga was considered very exotic and secret, being practiced by hermits and saints for spiritual enlightenment. But things have changed dramatically in recent years, with Yoga coming to light and catching the attention of medical scientists of different systems, it has become an important part of our health care system.

According to Yoga classics, there are two meanings of Yoga. If the word 'Yoga' is derived from the root 'Yujir Yoge', it means 'to unite' or 'to bind' or 'to Yoke'. According to Yajnavalkya Samhita, Yoga means 'the Union' i.e. union of the individual spirit (Jivatman) with the universal spirit (Parmatman). If the word 'Yoga' is derived from the root, 'Yuj Samadhau', it means spiritual absorption.

According to Maharishi Patanjali Yoga is defined as the 'Cessation of modification of Chitta (mind), which results into individual soul abiding in itself and thereby attaining God realization and spiritual perfection'.

Although there are many definitions of Yoga they all emphasize the same thing, i.e. Yoga being the union of individual spirit (Jivatman) with the universal spirit (Parmatman), which is achieved by the practitioners after cessation of thought process in the highest stage of Samadhi (Meditation)- the state of enlightenment and divine bliss.

The eight limbs of Yoga as defined by Maharishi Patanjali in his Yoga Aphorism are - Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharma, Dhyana and Samadhi. They are formulated on the basis of deep psychological understanding of human personality.

Yama (Restraint)—Yoga emphasizes on conscious observations of certain rules for self-discipline. Under Yamas come certain firm determinations such as Ahimsa (Non-injury), Satya (Truthfulness) Asteya (Non-stealing), Bramcharya (Celibacy), Aparigrah (Non-accumulation beyond needs). They restrain oneself from the evils of social environment and inculcate higher moral values with a view to discipline and regulate one's
behaviour and attitude towards social problems.

*Niyamas (Observance)*—Niyamas emphasize the cultivation of positive and spiritual attitude towards the dualities of life like pleasure and pain, failure and success, censure and praise, etc. and generate high ethical qualities.

Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras describe five Niyamas. They are Shauch (cleanliness), Santosh (contentment), Tapa (austerity), Swadhyaya (study of scriptures), Ishwara Pranidhana (devotion to God).

*Asana (Postures)*—These deal with a series of purificatory and postural exercises that are meant for the progressive development and discipline of human personality. The Yogic physical postural exercises today are regarded by some people as confined to physical development alone. But actually, physical culture of Yoga means slow, smooth, well-coordinated and graduated movements of different parts of the body done in harmony with breathing and mental one-pointedness. A set of Asanas, Mudras and Pranayamas practiced with faith, perseverance and insight, rejuvenates the brain, heart, lungs, liver, pancreas, kidneys, bowels, all nerves, muscles, tissues, and glands of the body by ensuring oxygenated and balanced blood supply, increased appetite, vigour, control over seminal fluids, senses and mind, and imparts increased vitality, vigour and longevity to the practitioners.

*Pranayama (Regulation of breath)*—This refers to regulation and control of breath and it helps in removing veil over manifestation of knowledge and acquiring fitness for Dharana.

*Pratyahara (Withdrawing of senses)*—This refers to withdrawal of senses from their objects. When separated from their corresponding objects the organs follow the nature of mind. This brings control over the organs.

*Dharana*—It is the mind’s (Chitta’s) fixation on a particular point in space. When continuous flow of similar mental modifications takes place, it is called Dhyana.

*Dhyana*—Dhyana or Meditation is a process of prevention of mind from wandering or indulging in unhealthy thoughts through a psychological control of mind. It entails a collecting together of our dispersed psychic energies. The continuous flow of thoughts is checked and the mind is fixed at one desired object. The fixation of mind gradually gathers concentration and can be extended over longer duration with practice. This continuous fixing of mind on the desired object becomes spontaneous and habitual, which is termed as meditation (or Dhyana).

*Samadhi*—It is in fact the final stage of Yogic practice where there is a development of mind for comprehension of Yogic spiritual philosophy with a view to acquire discriminative wisdom. With sustained and regular practice, a Yogi gradually gets submerged in the Divine virtues like knowledge absolute, power absolute and bliss absolute and eventually becomes one with God by acquiring superhuman knowledge, power, bliss and purity.
**Naturopathy**

There is a growing awareness today about health and fitness among the masses. Large sections of health-conscious people have started reviewing and questioning the modern lifestyle. Most healthcare specialists today believe that most of the diseases from which mankind is afflicted today are the outcome of the wrong living habits, wrong eating habits and wrong thinking habits i.e. faulty living style, unnatural food habits and of the increasing pollution of the environment. That is why a system like Naturopathy is gaining more and more acceptance across the globe. Nature cure is an art as well as a science of healthy living and a drugless system of healing based on well-founded philosophy. It has its own concept of health and disease and the principles of treatment.

Nature cure is defined as a system of man building in harmony with the constructive principles of nature on physical, mental, moral and spiritual planes of living. It has a great health promotive, curative and rehabilitative potential.

In fact, Nature cure is a very old method of living and curing diseases. The main concepts of Nature cure are morbid matter theory and the concept of vital force. The fundamental difference between Nature cure and other systems is that its theory and practice are purely based on a ‘Holistic View point’ unlike the latter’s approach, which is specific. Nature cure does not believe in the specific cause of disease and its specific treatment but takes into account the totality of factors responsible for the disease such as one’s unnatural habits, thinking, working, sleeping, relaxation, sexual indulgence, etc. It also considers the environmental factors involved that disturb the normal functioning of the body and lead it to a morbid, weak and toxic state. For treatment purpose, Nature cure primarily tries to correct all the factors responsible for the diseases and allows the body to recover itself. A Nature cure physician simply helps in nature’s effort to overcome disease by applying correct natural modalities and controlling the natural forces to work under safe limits. The five main modalities of treatment in nature cure are Air, Water, Heat, Mud and Space.

Naturopaths believe that the human body is composed of five great elements (or Pancha Mahaa Bhootas). Imbalances of these create diseases. These five elements include Air, Water, Earth, Heat and Space. Treatment by these is what is called Nature Cure. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation was an ardent advocate of Nature Cure. He added Rama Naam (Prayer) as a modality to it. Apart from above stated panch maha bhoot therapies i.e. Air Therapy, Fire Therapy, Hydro Therapy, Mud Therapy, Fasting, Nutrition and Dietetics, some other therapies such as Exercise, Massage, Electrotherapy, Yoga, Chromo-therapy, etc. are also practiced by Naturopaths.