

Yoga and Naturopathy

Yoga: Introduction

Till the recent past, Yoga was considered very exotic and secret, being a forte of the hermits and saints who practiced it in aloofness to attain spiritual enlightenment. But things have changed dramatically in recent years, with Yoga coming to light and catching the whims of the West. Yoga has now become a household word and has gathered popularity, especially as a system of health care. Consequently, a network of big and small institutions of Yoga has come up. There have been known cases of various diseases being cured by yogic methods. But to make Yoga more popular, a lot of research work needs to be conducted in this field. Since most of the diseases, from which people suffer, are a result of wrong life style and bad eating and living habits, Yoga has the potential to cure many of them. This is so, because according to Yoga, if natural principles of living and eating are strictly followed, then many diseases will disappear.

There are many definitions of Yoga. 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, 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 Bhagwad Gita, the word Yoga means "Equanimity of Mind", which can only be acquired after getting established in discriminative wisdom (which is a consequent of strong meditation). While according to Maharishi Patanjali, Yoga is defined as the "cessation of modifications of **Chitta**, which results into individual soul abiding in itself and thereby attaining God Realization and Spiritual perfection." The system of Yoga is more than 5000 years old and Gita has rightly described it as ancient (**Puratan**) and eternal (**Sanatan**). It was the Samkhya Philosophers who

evolved the concept of Yoga and its origin can be traced in **Upanishads** and ancient **Vedic** texts. According to them, Yoga is the process of self-culture, self-evolution, self-discipline and self-realization.

Although there are many definitions of Yoga, but 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 practitioner after the cessation of thought process in the highest stage of **Samadhi** (meditation) - the state of enlightenment and divine bliss.

Maharishi Patanjali, who around 300 BC compiled, modified, systematized and refined Yoga as a system of all round development of human personality through **Ashtanga Yoga** in his Yoga aphorism, is called the father of Yoga.

The eight limbs of Yoga - Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharna, Dhyana, and Samadhi - are formulated on the basis of multifarious psychological understanding of human personality. According to Yoga, five sheaths envelop the individual soul - Bliss Sheath (Anandmaya Kosa), Intellect Sheath (Vijnanamaya Kosa), Mind Sheath (Manomaya Kosa), Vital Sheath (Pranamaya Kosa), and Gross Sheath (Annamaya Kosa). Each latter Sheath is comparatively gross, less effective than the former. Yoga administers Asanas, balanced diet and cleaning acts for the purification and vitalization of Annamaya Kosa or Gross Sheath; Pranayama and Science of Swara for the purification and vitalization of Pranayama Kosa; Yamas, Niyamas, Vairagya (detachment) and Pratyahara for Manomaya Kosa; Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi, Self-Study, and company of holy men for the stabilization and purification of Intellect Sheath; Nirbija Samadhi, para Vairagya and absolute detachment for the conservation and invigoration of Bliss Sheath that culminates in the attainment of God realization and liberation.

Yama: Yoga emphasizes on conscious observation of certain rules for self-discipline and self-education called Yamas and Niyamas. Under Yamas come certain firm determinations to restrain oneself from the evils of social environment and to inculcate higher moral values with a view to

discipline and regulate ones behavior and attitude towards social problems.

Niyamas: 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 generates high ethical qualities like sincerity, honesty, straightforwardness, cheerfulness, courage, detachment, patience, perseverance, tranquility, self-control, truth, harmony and uprightness. Yamas contain rules for social conduct while Niyamas are rules for personal purification i.e. physical, mental and spiritual upliftment.

The practice of Yamas, and Niyamas that manifest themselves in the form of actions that show harmlessness towards all living beings, truthfulness, honesty, celibacy, non-hoarding of worldly objects, cleanliness, contentment, austerity, control of lust, anger and infatuation, study of holy books and practice of Japa and selfless action, pave way for increasing the power of concentration, mental purity and steadiness.

Asanas: 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-co-ordinated 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 practised 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, control over seminal fluids, senses and mind, and imparts increased vitality, vigour and longevity to the practitioner. A list of important asanas is given under annexure 3(i).

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 fixation of mind on the desired object becomes spontaneous and habitual, which is termed as meditation (or Dhyana)

Meditation is the final stage of Yogic practice where there is a development of mind for apprehension 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 life style. Most healthcare specialists today believe that many diseases from which the mankind is afflicted today are the outcome of the wrong living style and the 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 and 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 developing 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.

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 disease 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.

Naturopathy is a simple, unsophisticated, accommodative and cheap system of health care when compared to other systems of medicine. Its origin dates back to our ancient texts on health and longevity. Most of the principles and practices of naturopathy like Morbid Matter theory, fasting, nutrition, dietetics, cleansing acts, massages, exercises etc and the concepts of vitality, panchamahabhutas (five great elements) were familiar to our Vaidyas, and Rishis and have been in use in our country over the past many years. This is not the case with other countries where Naturopathy as a system of medicine gained popularity much later after pioneering works of Louis Kuhne, Adolf Just and Henry Lindlahr. In India, Naturopathy owes its revival of sorts to Mahatma Gandhi who adopted Nature Cure not only in his personal life but also in his national program, giving it a great fillip. His active interest inspired a number of thinkers and consequently, led to the establishment of many Nature Cure hospitals and centres.

Nature Care movement started in India when Louis Kuhne's book "New Science of Healing" was translated in Hindi, Urdu and Telugu. With the concepts being more or less familiar, Kuhne's philosophy and practices were easily grasped and imbibed by the practitioners.

Naturopaths believe that the human body is composed of five great elements (or pancha Maha Bhutas) imbalances of which create diseases. These five elements include Air, Water, Mud, Heat and Space. Treatment by these is what is called Nature Cure. The general treatment modalities and diagnostic methods employed in Nature Cure are the following: -

- ?? **WATER THERAPY:** Also called Hydrotherapy, it is the most ancient remedial method. Water is employed in different forms in the process of treatment as it produces several types of physiological effects depending on temperature and duration. This method is the most widespread and is used in almost all treatments.
- ?? **AIR THERAPY:** Air is amongst the most important sources in life. Fresh air is essential for good health. Air Therapy is employed in different pressures and temperatures for different diseases.
- ?? **FIRE THERAPY:** In Nature Cure treatment, various temperatures are employed through different heating techniques to produce specific effects. It believes that existence of all the living beings depend upon "Agni" (or Fire).
- ?? **SPACE THERAPY:** Naturopaths believe that congestion in the body causes disease. The best way to avoid congestion of mind and body is by fasting (or what is called Fasting Therapy).
- ?? **MUD THERAPY:** Mud is employed in the treatment of various diseases like constipation and skin disease because it absorbs, dissolves and eliminates the toxic materials and rejuvenates the body.
- ?? **FOOD THERAPY:** Naturopaths believe that ones eating habits are reflected in ones physical and mental health. Most of the diseases are tractable through Food Therapy.
- ?? **MASSAGE THERAPY:** Massage is generally employed for tonic, stimulant and sedative effects. It is an effective substitute for exercise.
- ?? **ACCUPRESSURE:** This therapy utilises the fact that there are different points on hands, feet and body, which are associated with different organs. By applying pressure on these selected points, related organs can be diagnosed and consequently liberated of their ailments.
- ?? **MAGNETO THERAPY:** Magnets of different powers and shapes are used in the treatment, by direct application on different parts of the body or through either charged up oil or water.
- ?? **CHROMO THERAPY:** This therapy makes use of the fact that sunrays comprise seven colours of varying wavelengths, each affecting the body differently. These colours are employed through irradiation on body or by administering charged water or oil and pills.

The diagnostic methods consists of two ways:

?? IRI-DIAGNOSIS: In this method, the whole body is reflected in different regions of Iris (in the eye). Disease conditions can be well diagnosed by this analysis.

?? FACIAL DIAGNOSIS: The physical appearance reflects the deposition of toxins in different organs. Disease condition in different organs of the body can be diagnosed by observing these effects.

Education in Yoga and Naturopathy:

The practitioners play a very important role in making any system popular. Yoga and Naturopathy has been into Indian culture since ancient time. Indians did not separate Yoga from daily life in fact it was a part of everyday routine. Indians have always practiced naturopathy. Still nowadays with help of government agencies and other non- government agencies, various courses are held in yoga and naturopathy in order to make the system more systematic. During 1999 the number of registered practitioners were 402 all over India. The only state which has more than hundred practitioners is Andhra Pradesh. This is not surprising since Yoga and Naturopathy is more prevalent and famous in South rather than North of India. The number of institutionally qualified practitioners is more than non-institutionally qualified. From the table when the practitioner for Indian System of Medicine and Homeopathy is compared with the Yoga and Naturopathy practitioner the percentage is as low as less than 1 percent. Annexure 3(ii) lists the statewise number of Registered practitioners in naturopathy as on 1.1.1999.

Various degree, diploma and other courses are offered in Yoga and Naturopathy. The diploma courses are offered are generally of one year duration. Degree courses have a duration for three years. Yoga is also offered as a subject in the Bachelors Degree courses in many of the universities. Ph. D program in yoga therapy is offered for two to three years. The degrees that can be attained in Yoga and Naturopathy are N.D, B.N.M.S, H.S.C, D.N.M.S and C.N.M.S.N.D.- (Doctor in Naturopathy) -This degree program is of a 3-year duration and is taught in many colleges and institutes.

B.N.M.S- (Bachelor in Naturopathy Medicine Science)- It is 5½ years degree course offered by the Indian Institute of Yoga and Naturopathy in Nagpur. There are not many institutes that offer this course.

D.N.M.S- (Diploma in Naturopathy Medicine Science)- This degree course has a duration of 3 years and is offered by many institutes.

C.N.M.S - Certificate in Naturopathic Medicine Science. This is one-year program offered by various institutes.

Besides this many other courses are offered in Yoga and Naturopathy in institutes throughout the country. M.D. courses are also offered in this stream. A list of various institutes providing various courses in Yoga & Naturopathy is given as Annexure 3 (iii). Annexure 4 lists the teaching and training facilities in naturopathy in India as on 1.4.1998.

In the recent years many NGO's and voluntary organizations have come up to establish Yoga and Naturopathy Health Homes as well as Degree level Colleges. At present there are four such colleges in India, one in Karnataka, two in Tamil Nadu and one in Andhra Pradesh. These colleges are affiliated to Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, Bangalore, MGR Medical University, Chennai and University of Health and Sciences, Vijayawada respectively. The approach of this Medical Education Course encompasses Yoga and Naturopathy philosophy, emphasizes the clinical tools and modalities necessary to establish a successful practice. These colleges are endowed with theoretical, practical and clinical facilities, which help them to train the students multi-dimensionally. Some universities have established a Yoga Department in which Teacher's Training Programs of one-year duration is organized. There are 28 universities that impart Certificate, Diploma and Degree courses in Yoga. UGC is also promoting this system by financing 28 universities to start Yoga courses in various universities. Some Universities are imparting Yoga education ranging from certificate to Ph.D. level courses. Many universities are likely to start Yoga department very soon. In many foreign universities, the faculty of Yoga has been established and research work is in progress. Some states have proposed to include Yoga in the school curriculum.

There are many countries other than India where Yoga is being practiced regularly for treatment of psychosomatic disorders. In many of the Western countries Naturopathy is recognized and is greatly emphasized. There are several Colleges in various parts of USA, Germany, Britain etc. offering education in this system. This is a good sign for India to tap these markets as it has a reasonable number of Yoga & Naturopathy practitioners.

Health-Clubs, Training Institutes

In Yoga and Naturopathy, meditation and different natural therapies are an integral aspect. With changing life style and global scenario, there have been changes in almost all the stream of traditional science to suit contemporary requirements. Various health clubs and training centers were opened up to help people get training and therapies comfortably. Now people do not have to really go into ashrams and forests to meditate. Traditional system like Naturopathy has also evolved from its traditional model. Nowadays, all kinds of electronic equipments are provided in these health clubs and training centers for physical exercises are prescribed by yoga. Naturopathic treatment also uses modern scientific machines to provide natural therapies.

Individuals generally own these health clubs and training centers. They are registered under the Society's Act in jurisdiction of different states; no central regulations are there for these private institutes. These institutes are many in number and as such, no federal record is maintained. This is one of the most upcoming sectors. Many private training institutes also give training in yoga as free services, but most of them charge for their services. Their services are more popular in metropolitans and cities where people face problems like depression, stress, asthma, etc. due to pollution and conditions prevailing in cities.

Now the corporate sector is also entering this field. Yoga training and classes are organised in the offices during lunch hours as an incentive. Another reason for providing such incentive is to combat the stress due to increasing workloads in the corporate sector. They all see it as a good

source of recreation and relaxation that also improves the efficiency of their worker.

This changing face of our age-old tradition should not be looked with contempt or as a threat to our traditional system. It is just preserving the traditional system and imbibing it in today's lifestyle. Initially the students who got the training were small children or people not interested in worldly affairs, but now the trend has shifted as common people and fitness fanatics have started taking interest in this particular system of health preservation. In ancient period yoga was taught by a Guru or a Yogi but today this role has been taken over by yoga teachers and fitness trainers. Till 1960's the education in yoga was given in Ashrams, communes and retreats but now various gyms/health clubs, spas, yoga centers and workplace classes are used for the purpose. Yoga used to be a part of living style and sacred for pilgrimage but today these classes are organised during lunch hour or as an evening or day classes. Due to all these changes, the face of yoga institution has also undergone a change.