

## YOGA FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Yoga is one of the fast reviving sciences which has received worldwide attention during recent years. This arousal of interest in Yoga appears largely for its health potentials. A study of the ancient concepts of Yoga in related classics would reveal that Yoga as initially conceived is essentially a spiritual discipline. It was developed in good old days to raise the level of Consciousness in an individual by way of continued *Sadhana* on a prescribed *path*. There was no design to develop Yoga as a health science, though practitioners of Yoga enjoyed good mental and physical health.

On the contrary, the assessment of the current trends indicates that Yoga has migrated substantially from a pure spiritual discipline to a scientific discipline, from a matter of individual *sadhana* to a subject of social interest and from a limited Indian art to an international science of global significance. Thus Yoga has developed fast in all its dimensions. But the central stream of revival and development of Yoga is in the direction of promotive health care.

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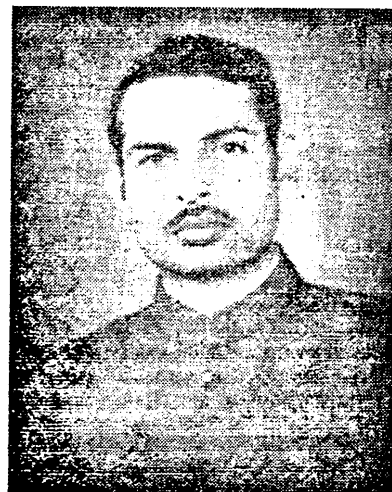
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It would be seen that Yoga in ancient times was conceived as a scientific discipline and was added with appropriate technology for application of the same for human uplift. As also stated by Professor Anantharaman (Personal Communication) the expressions like '*Adhyatma Vidya*' and '*Yoga-Vidhi*' seen in *Kathopanisad* and '*Brahma Vidya*' and '*Yoga Sashtra*' in *Bhagavadgita* indicate that Yoga was conceived in good old days as Science (*Vidya*)

as well as Technology (*Vidhi*). As interpreted by him Yoga is the Science of Man in depth, is the Science of Total Man and is the Science of Human Possibilities. On the other hand Yoga is the Technology of Conscious Evolution, is the Technology of Self-Unfoldment and Personality Development. Thus unlike the approach of modern Science and Technology, Yoga is a much more comprehensive Science and Technology and deals with Matter, Energy and Consciousness.

However, in present times Yoga is approached by various persons with following aspirations viz., (1) *Swasthya* i.e. Yoga for positive health, (2) *Chikitsa* i.e. Yoga for Therapy, (3) *Siddhi* i.e., Yoga for Paranormal Powers and (4) *Prajna* i.e. Yoga for expansion of consciousness i.e., superconsciousness (the transcendental aspect of Yoga).

The main reason of the fast explosion of global interest in Yoga in recent years is the matching explosion of social stress in the western world resulting due to rapid urbanisation and industrial development. The modern affluent society is facing a great social stress and tension in life due to non-alliance to the law of nature by the modern life. Such a state of affairs has not only made the human life stressful but has also lead to the development of a number of newer diseases of psychological origin manifesting in the body as major psychosomatic diseases like hypertension, ischaemic heart disease, diabetes mellitus, peptic ulcer and similar many others. The modern medicine has utterly failed in prevention and treatment of this class of ailments. It is in this context that Yoga has emerged as a remedy for promotive, preventive and even curative care of psychosomatic disorders. Thus the central stream of research and development in Yoga is the evaluation of the mental health potentials of Yoga.

The mental health is an aspect of total health of an individual which is considered as a state of physical, mental and social well-being. Hence, one finds it difficult to define mental health as a separate entity. The main difficulty in defining mental health is due to the fact that mental health is a relative state. The framework of mental health of an individual is relative to many allied factors including the social, moral and ethical norms of the society in which he or she is living, because the individual is the outcome of his environment.

Due to above limitations mental health is difficult to define. However, for practical purposes the mental health is usually defined as a state of emotional well-being. Hilgard & Atkinson rightly state that despite a lack of consensus in defining the normal personality, most psychologists would agree on the following qualities as indicative of good mental health. These characteristics do not distinguish sharply between the mentally healthy and the mentally ill; they represent traits that the normal person possesses to a greater degree than the individual diagnosed as abnormal:— 1. Efficient perception of reality, 2. Self-Knowledge, 3. Ability to exercise voluntary control over behaviour, 4. Self-esteem and acceptance, 5. Ability to form affectionate relationship and 6. Productivity.

It is presumed that the comprehensive practice of Yoga would impart above qualities to the personality of an aspirant. Besides, another important dimension of the effect of Yoga on mental health would be a reduction in the level of anxiety. Practice of Yoga helps an individual in coping with anxiety and thus makes the life comfortable and free from too much of anxiety and tension. Thus Yoga may be utilised as a promotive and preventive care for mental health. In addition, appropriate schedules of Yoga Therapy may be developed also as a method of curative treatment of early psychosomatic diseases.

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