

## Yoga is an Armory for Enhancing Positive Mental Health During COVID-19

The COVID-19 outbreak has induced public and global mental health crisis as well as a huge psychosocial experiment. COVID-19 has created a state of crisis for many (Guo et al 2020). The wide range of measures and preparedness, which include social distancing, social isolation, quarantine, washing hands, lockdowns, and travel bans, have halted and interrupted the spread of the virus (Van et al 2020). There have been a number of stressors during this lockdown that have caused distress among the population, such as quarantine, pay cuts, unemployment, insecurity, fear, crime, rape, etc. Although quarantine is a required preventive measure to curb the spread of infectious diseases, several studies have shown that quarantine has a negative psychological effect on people (Brooks, et al., 2020).

Yoga is one of the most impressive subjects of interest among the international community. During COVID19, the media (electronic as well as the print) regularly carrying special programmes and features on this Indian philosophy of yoga. Yoga is an ancient science based on a harmonizing system of development for the body, mind and spirit. Yoga is a branch of Indian soteriology, i.e., a technical system whose purpose is to achieve 'freedom', 'release', or 'salvation' for its practitioners. The ultimate goal of Yoga is 'Self-realization' which means 'the realization of one's true identity as the self'. Originally, the philosophy of yoga has emerged from Ancient Indian literature. Indian literature is a vast treasure of knowledge based on systematic, scientific and empirical research by Authoritative Research scientists (Maharishis).

The human relationship with physical objects is neither eternal nor he can get everlasting pleasure by

indulging in the enjoyment of these physical objects. Whereas, creature's relationship with God is eternal. It was in the past, it is in the present and it will even be in the future. But, in the present material age the Vedic culture, civilization, rites, rituals etc. and the spiritual and the moral education has become less important for the society. This physical age can only give us mental stress, anxiety and other illness. The solution of mental ailments like amorousness, anger, avarice, indulgence, ego, hate, malice etc. is not possible through physical science or by mammon.

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The solution of these mental ailments is possible only through spiritual knowledge by reading, listening, ruminating, pondering, speaking to others and practically accepting it in operational form.

Today, thousands of physical scientists are involved in doing research and experiments for inventing new ideas, concepts and objects; and discovering events, sites and facts. And they think that progress of physical science gives a path for the redemption of all sufferings.

However, they have ignored the metaphysical concepts like God, soul, reincarnation etc. as they are beyond the scope of science, and can't be proved and verified by sciences. And due to this, the science of God and soul, and the aim of Salvation/Kavalya are left behind. But the result of all this is that, in spite of such a development of physical science, human being is suffering from immeasurable sorrow and it is increasing day by day. So, until the science of God and soul, and the ultimate aim of human, i.e., God realization or salvation is not accepted, till then this world would be immersed in the ocean of sorrow.

So, the importance of Yoga can be understood in such a way that every being wants to get rid of sorrow and simultaneously wants to attain everlasting ecstasy. And this is not possible until a person clearly understood the concepts of Heya (sorrow that can be avoided), Heyhetu (Reason of sorrow), Haana (Salvation/Moksha) and Haanopaaya (Means of achieving Salvation/Moksha) as propounded in the Yogadarshana. Yogadarshan describe Rajyoga (Ashtanga Yoga) which is organized in eight parts: viz- Yama (self-control), Niyama (Discipline), Asana (physical exercises), Pranayama (breath control exercises), Pratyahara (withdrawal of the senses from external objects), Dharana (concentration), Dhayana (meditation), Samadhi (complete realization). These eight steps of Rajyoga provide systematic instruction to attain inner peace, clarity, self-control and realisation.

The modern society is the most technological

advanced society which makes life more convenient and luxurious. Today, it's impossible to imagine life without cell phones, computers, internet, television, video games etc. They are also the main source of entertainment these days. Even education and shopping are also online. One may have thousands of friends on Facebook and Whatsapp. But in real life, social contact of the people with each other is ending with technological advancement. The new disaster COVID19, which came in the year 2020, has further severely broken the social fabric. The constant breakdown of the fabric of social bonding is also one of the causes of social tension. It ultimately contributes in increasing mental and psychological tension.

The technological advancement makes the life extremely sedentary; people have forgotten physical activities and hence cause health problems. Due to over addiction of young generation to technology obesity is constantly spreading like an epidemic all over the world. Symptoms of hypertension, cardiac arrest, diabetes and kidney failure is gradually increasing day by day. In such a situation the arrival of COVID19 makes the situation more frightening and dangerous especially for the people suffering from these diseases. Constantly suffering from diseases also causes mental and psychological tension.

Besides the technological sufferings, environmental degradation and food adulteration, COVID19 is the latest and one of the largest threats for life in the world today. Toxic air pollutants can cause respiratory problems like Asthma, Pneumoconiosis, Bagassosis, Byssionosis, Silicosis, Anthracosis, Siderosis, Asbestosis, Tobacosis, Farmer's lung, Lung cancer, Pneumonia etc. If the person of the above diseases gets hit by the COVID 19, it may prove to be the last nail in his coffin.

In present situation, COVID19 is the main culprit which causes mental stress to almost every person. The overloading fear of physical illnesses and death due to COVID19 has greatly increased mental stress,

psychological disorders and mental diseases like depression, insomnia, sleep disorders, illness anxiety disorders, acute stress disorder, adjustment disorder, anxiety disorders, personality disorders, dissociative disorders, substance-related and addictive disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, agoraphobia, panic disorder, phobic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, eating disorders etc.

It's difficult to control and manage these mental health related disorders. But their management can be learnt and to this end yoga is the best way of managing these social, mental, psychological stresses.

Yoga is a physical and mental therapy. Yoga provides potential adjunctive therapies for SARS-Cov-2 and COVID-19 diseases(William et al 2020). The very essence of yoga lies in attaining health and fitness, relaxed state of living, mental peace and improved concentration power. Age, sex, caste, religion etc. is no bar in yoga. Yoga can enhance emotional control, and improve self-efficacy, self-confidence, and overall quality of life (Ransing et al 2020).It improves mental performance and also enhances cognitive performance. Yoga practice relaxes mind and provides peace, calmness and patience.

British Psychological Society asserted through various studies that Yoga soothes a person's mind and relieves worries by discharging tension and stress. According to a study published in the Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, Yoga protects the adolescents from mental illnesses and provides mental health. According to a Harvard University article, Yoga helps in regulating a person's stress response system and ultimately helpful in reducing anxiety and depression. According to American Psychological Association, yoga is immensely effective in reducing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms. Yoga enhances mental clarity and sensual awareness, relives stress patterns, and sharpens concentration.

Studies on Pranayamas assert that Pranayama practice meliorates the autonomic functions and are also lucrative in stress related disorder treatment. Pranayamas and Asanas have been proved to be a better mental and psychic energy enhancers and mood elevators.

The yoga and meditation (also a part of yoga) has a very desirable impact on stress and anxiety management, it shows an improvement in measures of anxiety, depression and pain scores. During COVID19 pandemic the studies reveal that meditation practice has the potential to provide support as a low cost complement treatment with anxiety for all. Structural and functional brain changes have been found in the people who were involved in long-term traditional meditation practice (Behan,2020).The mindfulness meditation significantly reduces the severity of depression, anxiety and stress symptoms (Khandelwal 2020).It can also effectively mitigate the psychological negative consequences of the Covid-19 outbreak, helping in particular to restore well-being in the most vulnerable individuals (Matiz et al 2020).Performing yoga is beneficial towards managing mental health (Bhattacharjee & Acharya,2020).In nutshell,yoga may provide an effective, evidence-based preventive or therapeutic supplementary or alternative intervention for COVID-19 related mental health issues (Ransing et. al., 2020)

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