

EXPLORING YOGA PHILOSOPHY'S IMPACT ON CONTEMPORARY MENTAL HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

The modern generation suffers from imbalanced lifestyles, high workloads, materialistic cravings, and hectic lives, which contribute to increased stress and disturbed interpersonal connections. Anxiety over the future and restless needs are the main sources of sorrow. Having material items from outside sources cannot bring about happiness, as happiness is a state of mind. Yoga is both an art and a science. The foundations of yoga philosophy have been documented in Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, which dates to around 200 AD, and the skill of proper living was developed and practiced in India thousands of years ago. The secular practise of yoga has its origins in Indian culture. The way of living encouraged transcendence of the soul. The goal of Patanjali's yoga practice is to unite the individual self with the Ultimate One. This union can be attained by controlling and letting go of the mind's constantly changing "vrittis." Patanjali Yoga teaches the precise kind of discipline and training to achieve mental balance. While the general public's perception of yoga is restricted to its asanas, the practice of yoga involves eight steps that emphasise physical health, self-discipline, internal and external cleaning, and meditation, which all contribute to mental and spiritual clarity. Everyone can see the physical benefits of yoga, but practicing it can also have psychological and spiritual benefits, such as a sense of well-being and stress reduction as well as a sense of transcendence or connectivity to God or Spirit. The Yoga Sutra by Patanjali has a significant influence on mental health because it presents a comprehensive strategy for wellbeing. The Sutra places an immense value on achieving non-attachment and mastering mind control as ways to uncover the real, joyful self and, eventually, put an end to suffering. According to the Yoga Sutra, this traditional discipline is mainly mental in nature, with physical components acting more as a means than an end. People can experience a sense of release from suffering via consistent effort and practices like physical postures and breathing exercises, which improves mental health and general well-being. Also, yoga-based therapies have been demonstrated to improve mental health outcomes by influencing physiological markers of stress, reducing stress reactivity, and altering the structure and function of the brain. This study seeks to explore the impact of yoga philosophy on mental health and provides a comprehensive description of all aspects of yoga practiced to attain inner peace.

Keywords: Yoga Philosophy, Mental Health, Yoga Sutra, Health, Yoga Therapy.

Introduction

The digital age that modern civilization is living in allows for instant access to everything. With the support of science and technology, we have access to a wide range of facilities that improve our quality of life, including computers, televisions, macro- and micromachines, mobile phones, the internet, multimedia, artificial intelligence, etc. (Naikoo et al., 2018b). Despite having everything in life, the so-called global generations of today are less satisfied than ever. There are several reasons behind that. People these days are excessively preoccupied with their jobs. They are too busy to be concerned about their personal well-being. It's possible that globalization makes people more like productive machines

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(Kaul, 2017). According to the World Happiness Report 2019, negative feelings such as anxiety, melancholy, and anger have been increasing globally, reaching as high as 27%. The prevalence of several specific disorders was estimated, including any substance use disorder (44%), antisocial personality disorder (26%), major depression (19%), schizophrenia (7%), and bipolar disorder (8%) (Barry et al., 2024b). The story then shifts to discussing how yoga promotes health and happiness, describing it as a holistic approach with multiple facets, including mental, spiritual, physical, and cultural wellness at the nexus of modern mental health techniques and yoga philosophy (McCall, 2007). The purpose of this study is to investigate the complex ways that yoga philosophy affects and adds to modern perspectives on mental health.

The ancient Vedic and Upanishadic books, which are said to have started around 2700 BC, provide an understanding of the historical roots of the notions associated with yoga. This time frame is frequently called the pre-classical era of yoga. The Rig Veda is the first source to introduce the term "yoga," which comes from the Sanskrit word "yuj" (1500–1200 BC, hymn 5.81.1).

Concept of Yoga Philosophy's

As a way to heal the body, mind, and soul, yoga is an ancient art form that focuses on scientific principles. Yoga initially emerged as a technique to help people grow wiser and more knowledgeable in order to be happier. Yoga is a centuries-old practice for happiness and a calm way of life, not just a physical workout (Jamwal et al., 2019).

In Ashtanga Yoga, as taught by Patanjali, there are eight limbs to yoga practice. The eight elements of yoga practice are as follows: pranayama, which involves methods to increase energy, mainly through breathing exercises; yama, which concerns behaviour in society; niyama, which refers to personal conduct; asana, which includes physical postures; pratyahara, which refers to the withdrawal of the senses; Samadhi, or self-realization; Dharana, or concentration; and Dhyana, or meditation (Satchidananda, 1990).

Objectives

- To explore philosophy-based practical solutions that lead to happy life in present era.
- To describe the concept of yoga philosophy in aspect of mental health
- To explore the philosophy of connections between mind and body.

Methods

This descriptive study aims to investigate the prevalence and patterns of yoga philosophy integration in contemporary mental health practices. It evaluated the significant perspectives on mental wellness that the Patanjali Yoga Sutras provided. The purpose of this research is to provide detailed and relevant information for the pursuit of happiness in the contemporary world by offering insights into attaining mental wellness based on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and overall yoga philosophy.

Understanding the Roots of Mental Disruption and Happiness Deficiency Insights from Yoga Philosophy

The peace of mind is the source of happiness, according to Patanjali's yoga sutras. It is correctly termed "vrittis," and it occurs when the "Chitta," or mental material, refrains from taking on different forms. There are three distinct states of the mind; the lazy or foolish mind is referred to in yoga as tamasic. The term "rajasic" describes an enjoyable or lively mental state. Additionally, the term "sattvic" describes a quiet or serene mental state. It follows the end of "Vrittis," or mental activity (McKibben, 2024).

Concept of Psychosomatic Disorders According to Yoga

According to the Yoga Vashishtha book (Chapter II, verses 709–723), mental imbalances (Adhi) lead to psychosomatic disorders, which then spread to the vital life force and settle in the physical body (Vyadhi). The weaker organ gets damaged as a result of this process, which affects the physiology and operation of that organ (Kavuri et al., 2015). Psychosomatic disorders (Adhi-Vyadhi) originate from disturbances occurring at a level higher (Adhi) than the mental plane (Manomaya Kosha), which causes mental body instability. This leads to an unstable prana channel and an irregular flow of prana, which eventually cause diseases (Vyadhi) in the physical body (Annamaya Kosha). These illnesses have an impact on metabolic processes, which can result in hypo- and hyper-functioning. They also contribute to an unhealthy state, which can lead to depressive symptoms (Bhavanani, 2013).

Relationship between Mind & Body

According to **Hathapradipika (Chapter 2 verse 2)**,

चले वाते चलं चित्तं निश्चले निश्चलं भवेत् ।

योगी स्थाणुत्वम् आप्नोति ततो वायुं निरोधयेत् ॥२॥

cale vāte calaṁ cittam niścale niścalaṁ bhavet |
yogī sthāṇutvam āpnoti tato vāyurṁ nirodhayet ||2||

The mind is compared to an uncontrolled monkey that jumps around. This natural tendency makes it extremely difficult to keep it motionless. According to Hatha yoga, the mind will naturally become quiet if you just let it be and focus on your vital energy and autonomic bodily systems. Brain waves become rhythmic and brain activities are regulated when nerve impulses are regular and constant. Breathing is one of the most important bodily functions that has a direct connection to the brain and central nervous system. Also, it shares a few traits with the brain region known as the hypothalamus, which regulates emotional reactions. The brain region called the hypothalamus is in charge of converting perception into cognitive experience. Breathing irregularly causes this center to receive irregular impulses, which leads to abnormal reactions.

The Yoga Sutras' fundamental philosophy provides important new insights into the treatment and prevention of psycho-somatic diseases, which are conditions in which psychological variables interact with physical symptoms. The Yoga Sutras place a strong emphasis on the relationship between the mind and body and how mental moods affect physical health. As per Patanjali, the body's homeostasis can be affected by mental fluctuations, or chitta vritti, which can result in psychosomatic illnesses (Taimni, 1961). Yoga philosophy addresses psychosomatic disorders through various practices outlined in the Sutras, such as asana (physical postures), pranayama (breath control), and dhyana (meditation). These practices help individuals cultivate self-awareness, emotional regulation, and resilience to stress, which are essential for managing psychosomatic symptoms (Khalsa et al., 2015). By calming the mind and promoting a state of inner balance, yoga reduces physiological arousal and enhances the body's natural healing mechanisms (Streeter et al., 2012). The Yoga Sutras' ethical principles, such as ahimsa (non-harming) and santosha (contentment), support mental health and emotional stability, both of which are essential for treating psychosomatic illnesses (Bryant, 2009). People can experience significant changes in their physical and emotional well-being by incorporating these philosophical ideas into therapeutic therapies, which will ultimately increase their general vitality and well-being.

Yoga as Therapy

Yoga Sutras, attributed to the sage Patanjali, serve as a profound guide for spiritual and psychological transformation. According to Desikachar (1996), they provide a systematic approach to understanding the mind and its fluctuations. Utilizing techniques outlined in the Yoga Sutras can be therapeutic, aiding in managing mental health issues (Streeter et al., 2012). Through practices like asana (postures) and pranayama (breath control), individuals can cultivate self-awareness and emotional regulation (Khalsa et al., 2015). The concept of "*chitta vritti nirodha*", or calming the fluctuations of the mind, is central to yoga therapy (Taimni, 1961). By observing and detaching from thought patterns, practitioners can alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression (Kirkwood et al., 2005). The Yoga Sutras place a strong emphasis on developing viveka, or discernment, which allows people to identify negative thought patterns and swap them out for positive ones (Muktibodhananda, 2012). The practices of dharana (concentration) and dhyana (meditation), which have been demonstrated to improve cognitive function and lower stress, are also incorporated into yoga therapy (Gard et al., 2014). A moral basis for individual development and interpersonal interactions is also supplied by the ethical precepts found in the Yoga Sutras, such as ahimsa (non-harming) and satya (truthfulness) (Bryant, 2009). The wisdom of yoga addresses the interdependence of the mind, body, and spirit and provides a comprehensive approach to healing. Through the incorporation of these age-old teachings into contemporary therapeutic approaches, people can develop more inner peace and wellbeing.

Importance of Yoga Philosophy for Mental Health and Happiness

The ancient book known as the Yoga Sutras, given to the philosopher Patanjali, contains the philosophy of yoga, which provides significant insights into the development of happiness and mental health. Patanjali outlines a comprehensive system that takes into consideration all the facets of human existence and offers helpful advice for achieving emotional stability, inner calm, and long-lasting contentment. Using the knowledge of the Yoga Sutras and the results of recent research, the study investigates the role that yoga philosophy plays in fostering mental health and happiness.

Central to the Yoga Sutras is the concept of *chitta vritti nirodha*, which pertains to the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind. Patanjali posits that the incessant activity of the mind, characterized by fluctuations between thoughts and emotions, is the root cause of suffering and discontentment. Through practices such as asana (physical postures), pranayama (breath control), and meditation, individuals can gradually quiet the mind and attain a state of inner stillness, known as samadhi (Patanjali, 1963). Numerous studies have corroborated the beneficial effects of yoga practices on mental health and well-being. For instance, research has demonstrated that regular yoga practice reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression, enhances mood, and improves overall psychological functioning (Cramer et al., 2013; Pascoe et al., 2017). These findings support the claim made by Patanjali that higher happiness and fulfillment result from developing mental peace and emotional equilibrium. The Yoga Sutras' ethical precepts, which include ahimsa (non-harming), satya (truthfulness), and santosha (contentment), function as a framework for moral behaviour and interpersonal interactions (Bryant, 2009). Following these guidelines helps people develop a sense of inner harmony and integrity, which supports societal harmony and mental health. According to research, upholding moral principles like compassion and integrity improves one's subjective well-being and fosters a sense of social connectivity (Lyubomirsky et al., 2011). Furthermore, yoga philosophy emphasizes the cultivation of self-awareness and mindfulness, which are essential components of mental health and happiness. Through practices like svadhyaya (self-study) and dhyana (meditation), individuals develop a deeper understanding of their thoughts, emotions, and behavioral patterns, enabling them to respond skillfully to life's challenges (Khalsa et al., 2015). Research indicates that mindfulness-based interventions reduce stress, improve emotional regulation, and enhance overall well-being (Keng et al., 2011). Contemporary research provides empirical support for the efficacy of yoga practices in enhancing mental health and well-being. Therefore, embracing yoga philosophy can serve as a pathway to realizing the profound interconnectedness of mind, body, and spirit, leading to a life of greater fulfillment and happiness.

Discussion

Yoga philosophy, which has its roots in ancient writings such as Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, is becoming increasingly important in modern mental health treatment and study. It has a complex effect on mental health, affecting many aspects of wellbeing such as resilience, stress management, and emotional control. The mind-body connection and the integration of the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of wellness are important aspects of yoga philosophy. Recent studies have offered empirical evidence to support the positive impacts of yoga philosophy on mental health outcomes. For example, studies have demonstrated that mindfulness-based practices derived from yoga philosophy, such as meditation and breath awareness, reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression (Pascoe et al., 2017). Moreover, yoga philosophy promotes a holistic approach to well-being by addressing not only symptoms but also underlying causes of psychological distress. One key mechanism through which yoga philosophy impacts mental health is by enhancing self-awareness and self-regulation. The practices of self-reflection (svadhyaya) and ethical conduct (yamas and niyamas) outlined in the Yoga Sutras facilitate introspection and personal growth, leading to greater psychological resilience and inner peace (Khalsa et al., 2015). Yoga promotes acceptance and non-judgmental awareness of present-moment experiences, which is central to mindfulness-based interventions for stress reduction and emotion regulation (Keng et al., 2011). Yoga offers practical tools for coping with adversity and cultivating positive emotions. For instance, the cultivation of gratitude, compassion, and contentment, as advocated in the Yoga Sutras, fosters a positive outlook on life and buffers against the negative effects of stress and adversity (Lyubomirsky et al., 2011). By incorporating these principles into daily life, individuals can enhance their psychological well-being and experience greater fulfillment and happiness.

Conclusion

Yoga philosophy has a great deal of potential as a therapeutic technique when its effects on modern mental health are reviewed. Yoga philosophy offers a comprehensive approach to mental health that addresses the interdependence of mind, body, and spirit. It is based in ancient wisdom and is bolstered by contemporary science. Mental health providers can provide people useful tools for stress management, mood regulation, and improving general well-being by incorporating the ideas and practices of yoga philosophy into therapy procedures. Integrating yoga philosophy into study and practice holds potential for fostering resilience, healing, and flourishing in the contemporary world as the field of mental health continues to develop.

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