

Yoga and Positive Psychology as a Practice Tool in the Biological Processes

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Abstract: The background of this paper was Yoga and Positive Psychology as a practice tool in the biological processes. The paper aimed to review the concept of biological processes and the interconnection of these physical processes with the mental wellbeing of an individual. This qualitative analysis also reviewed the importance of yoga and the growing field of positive psychology being adapted by multiple health care organisations and practitioners as a practice tool for the betterment of both mental and physical health. The conclusion of this review analysis was that yoga and adaptation of the components of positive psychology in an individual's lifestyle can help in boosting physical wellbeing. Yoga has proved to be a good treatment plan in ailments of many health problems and heart diseases.

Keywords: Biological processes, yoga, positive psychology, wellbeing, cardiovascular diseases

Introduction: Humans as living beings work on the mechanism of biological processes that take place within them. These biological processes can simply be defined as processes that help living organisms to survive and mould their abilities to interact with their surrounding environment. The fundamental processes of any life form incorporate organisation, metabolism, responsiveness, movements and lastly reproduction. But humans who represent the foremost complex form of life, have extra necessities apart from these basic processes, for instance development, respiration, digestion and the excretion process. All of these biological processes are intertwined. Every bit and part of the human body, starting from the tiny cell to the whole-body structure, works in a harmonious rhythm. This rhythm of functioning of the human body is very much essential for a stable balance, resulting in the healthy living of a person. Life threatening disease like cancer and person's death is the cause of disturbance in these biological processes (SEER Training Modules, 2022). Mental wellbeing and physical wellbeing are closely integrated. Analysis has reported consonant interdependent link between deficient mental wellbeing (as depression, anxiety, stress) and expanded threat of inmedicable health disorders

and maladies like overweight, hyperpiesia, diabetes mellitus and cardio-respiratory disorders (Luppino et al., 2010; Steptoe & Kivimaki, 2013; Suls & Bunde, 2005). Furthermore, people recognised with health-related issues are reported to be more prone to mental issues (Luppino et al., 2010), which might be a contributor to their future health issues (Moussavi et al., 2007). The traces left behind by the ancient Indian civilization shows that people of that era had better mental and physical wellbeing in comparison to the present civilization. The major cause of this healthy wellbeing of ancient people was their positive and healthy mind, uses of yogic practices and their lifestyle which helped them to be resilient to mental and physical illness. Today, with the increasing threat of mental and health issues has led us to adapt those ancient yogic and psychological practices to deal with this ever-growing problem. Today, yoga is progressively being applied in clinical settings for a wide array of psychological and physiological health problems, especially problems related to stress and worries, and has displayed a very promising viability (Riley & Park, 2015). At present, not only yoga that's being practised for the well-being of health but also psychology is being more popularised among people in maintenance of healthy wellbeing. Most of the research examines the pair of mental and physiological wellbeing from the angle of disease by concentrating on the ill physical or impeding performance of physiological health. However, current studies have shown that positive psychology may play an important part for the wellbeing of physiological health (Kubzansky et al., 2015).

Yoga is not a newly developed practice; its roots are attached to the ancient era. Yoga is a very old mind-body application which comprises breathing techniques, various body stances and traditional practice of meditation (Ospina et al., 2007), the very first aim of yoga was to stimulate a higher level of awareness (Bonura, 2011). Whereas, Positive psychology is a newly introduced field in psychology, it centres upon the examination of human development and capacities, it offers few similitudes with the fundamental standards of yoga as a behavioural application to upgrade an individual's production and involvement (Butzer et al., 2016).

Yoga practised in this modern era sums up numerous prospects of yoga which permit every individual to acknowledge alterations in life; this encompasses various components for instance : YAMA (ethical code), NIYAMA (self-discipline), ASANAS (postures or positions), PRANAYAMA (mindfulness of breathing), PRATYAHARA (detachment from senses),

DHARNA (concentration), DHYANAA (contemplation or positive, careful centre on the present), SAVASANA (state of rest) and SAMADHI (rapture) (Bhavanani, 2011; Iyengar, 2000). Few of these components of yoga are interlinked with the theories that have successfully grabbed the focus on hypotheses and research basis in the field of positive psychology. For instance the two major elements of yoga, Yama and Niyama which are defined as self-restraint, will power and self-consciousness can be perceived as associated with the idea of 'flow' in positive psychology. The concept flow means being completely engrossed or consumed to the present minute. Although in the practice of flow an individual is detached from his own self but remains conscious of the present minute and is able to balance the optimum degree of command in the task completion (Csíkszentmihályi, 2008). In the course of practising yoga, one is capable to escalate self-awareness and focus and is able to reach mindfulness and state of meditation (Germer et al., 2005; Hart, Ivtzan, and Hart (in press); Murphy & Donovan, 1997; Walsh, 1999). Practice of yoga has been detailed to lead to an increment in empathy (Walsh, 2001) and is described to interlink self-awareness with higher degree of sympathy, appreciation, and regard for both human and nonhuman connections, thoughts, trust and hope (Radford, 2000). Likewise, in positive psychology, it strives to escalate mindfulness and at the same time also improves wellbeing and generates self-awareness and makes one aware of their surrounding environment, as well as regulates mind and emotions (Levine, 2000).

From past few years, it's been observed that there is hike in disorders like progeria (premature ageing syndrome), heart and blood vessel diseases (heart disease), multiple sclerosis (cerebral palsy, poliomyelitis, paralysis, debilitation, debility, decrepitude etc.), Fibrositis (Chronic Fatigue Syndrome), Presenile dementia (Alzheimer). Along with medicines, experts have established that practice of yoga, mind-body therapy can be a useful substitute for the medication method (Mohammad et al., 2019). In numerous researches it has appeared that yoga boosts the redox wellbeing of physical health whose instability has been well demonstrated to be a reason for various health problems. The effect of yoga on autoimmune or monogenic disorders has displayed that it back-pedal memory loss, decreases uneasiness, sadness and tension or stress, all being the symptoms of acute and chronic disorders (Mohammad et al., 2019). Evidence has been found that along with yoga, and the awareness and adaptation of the elements of positive

psychology helps in balancing the physical wellbeing of an individual. The central core of positive psychology engages the study of the positive sensations, feelings or emotions; human traits and values, and positive organisations (Seligman, 2002). Seligman gave the re-examined form of his prosperity hypothesis (well-being theory), Seligman (2011) presented the model which he named PERMA, which encapsulate five poles of well-being of an individual i.e. positive sensations or emotions, commitment, connections or relationships, meaning and achievement (Butzer et al., 2016). There is amassing proof which justifies that positive emotions bestow advantage to a person far more than just the internal attitude of feeling joy or happiness. Higher degrees of the positive influence are linked with way better circumstantial and future healthy wellbeing possibilities (Pressman et al., 2005), regardless of many other studies and well known impact on wellbeing are considered for (Kubzansky and Thurston 2007; Chida and Steptoe 2008). There are few probable passageway through which well-being of positive psychology may bestow superior wellbeing possibilities; the positive impact of the elements of positive psychology has been related with sound ways of life (Grant et al., 2009); there may be a general heredity substratum that impacts positive affect and wellbeing or health; positive influence may be a pseudonym scale for other psychosocial components which impact wellbeing of an individual, for instance social back or support and different coping techniques. There's moreover emerging proof that there's a coordinate passageway between positive influence and wellbeing, including decreased psychophysiological stimulation of neuroendocrine, autonomous, resistant and fiery passageways (Dockray & Steptoe, 2010). Wong (2011) proposed that components of positive psychology circulate around the differentiation between assimilation of happiness and meaning of life, which was termed by Ryan and Huta (2009) as hedonic motivation; which is related to feeling of positive sensations or emotions and eudemonic motivation, which is further related to interpretation and aim or goal in individual's life. These two assimilations or orientations represent two different mind-sets that can guide to different prognosis regarding one's basic principles, life pathways and decisions, ultimate concerns, style of living, unique attributes and all this eventually leading to health or wellbeing (Ivtzan & Papantoniou, 2014). In this review paper, we will try to understand the application of yoga and positive psychology as tools in understanding and examining biological processes.

Literature Review: The most prominent health issues that world population is facing today are the threat of chronic disorders. The range of these long term disorders, numerous debilitating states, and the economic pressure that they force, have been rigorously reported (Derryberry, 2004). According to the past collected data, the major cause of health problems today are linked with psychological issues like stress, anxiety, depression and many more due to unhealthy and stressful lifestyle and socio-environment. Various researches and studies have proved that mind and body are connected with each other and work in an alignment. Disbalance in mental health can lead to poor physical health and can be the onset of many life threatening disorders. To aid this growing rate of various health issues, clinicians and health practitioners have started the application of traditional yoga and psychological therapies to help individuals to maintain a healthy mind and body.

Yoga and Positive Psychology as a practising tool in Biological Processes: Yoga is centred on the 'internal' happening that takes place within an individual. The legitimate practice of yoga demands self-analysis (introspection), meditation (reflection), intense application of one's self. It's a bridge that connects an individual to his thoughts, emotions, principles, assumptions, allowing oneself to explore deeper and his actual self. In accordance with this concept it's difficult to perceive yoga and psychology as two different entities. In any case, as near as the association is between yoga and psychology, it is indeed more closely connected to the subfield of positive psychology (Ackerman, 2022). The bond between yoga and positive psychology is very well built; however at the beginning, the yoga began with little difference, but now has become a very general practice adapted in the West as a set out to improve health (Ivtzan&Papantoniou, 2014). Plenty of research has been organised on the effect of yoga on psychological health. The overall conclusion is that yoga has various positive impacts on one's psychological health that is far beyond from the impacts of other low- to- medium- effects of

physiological activities and these effects are probable due to the chemical reactions in the brain (Grazioplene, 2012).

Today, one of the leading causes of health problems is 'Stress'. Aldwin(2007) proposed that stress generally means, 'the type of events experienced by an individual, caused from interaction between individual and his environment, from either over arousal or can be due to under arousal, resulting which individual suffers from psychological or physiological stress' (Riley & Park, 2015). Stress is interpreted as a state of where there is a huge discrepancy between the expected responsibility of an individual and capability of an individual to fulfil those responsibilities (Bloom et al., 1985). It has been reported to be one of the major causes of many mental disorders like acute stress disorder, affective disorder, and many other psychosomatic disorders (for eg. irritable bowel)(Lee, 2006; Mol et al., 2005; Post, 1992; Tomb, 1994). Work-related stress, in particular, is found to be related to depressive episodes and also to be one of the main causes of temporality and prevalence of cardiovascular disease (Karasek et al., 1981; Wang, 2005).

Recent analysis on the 'effect of yoga on stress' shows that around 25 of 35 issued articles presented a remarkable decrease in degree of stress after the practice of yoga (Li & Goldsmith, 2012). Many aspects of psychology have been introduced as a pathway through which yoga reduces stress. The following aspects involve development of positive mind set against stress (Malathi&Damodaran, 1999; Taylor, 2003; Woodyard, 2011), awareness of one's self (Arora &Battacharjee, 2008), introducing various coping mechanisms to deal with stress (Heilbronn, 1992; Kinser, Bourgiognon, Whaley, Hauenstein, & Taylor, 2013; Rizzolo, Zipp, Stiskal, & Simpkins, 2009), assessment of command over oneself (Bonura, 2008; Roehr, 2008), spiritual-mindedness (Evans, Cousins, Tsao, Sternlieb, &Zeltzer, 2011; Moadel et al., 2007), compassion (Braun, Park, &Conboy, 2012) and consciousness or mindfulness (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Chiesa &Serretti, 2009; Evans et al., 2011). All these above mentioned aspects are the foundation of positive psychology.

Suggested biological instrument through which yoga might diminish stress involves the visceral motor system known as autonomic nervous system (ANS) (Brown &Gerbarg, 2005a; Evans et al., 2011; Field, 2012; Malathi&Damodaran, 1999; Michalsen et al., 2005), The hypothalamic–

pituitary–adrenal axis (HPA axis or HTPA axis) (Innes, Vincent, & Taylor, 2007; Purdy, 2013; Ross & Thomas, 2010), yoga also impact the function of endothelial and release of nitric oxide (NO) also known as nitrogen monoxide (Dunn, 2008; Michalsen et al., 2005), stimulates endogenous cannabinoids or endocannabinoids (ECs) and opiates (Michalsen et al., 2005), produces fiery and gastrointestinal hormone. Responses (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 2010; Yadav & Mhapatra, 2012), activates activities of limbic system (Riley, 2004), activates the PNS (peripheral nervous system) involving GABA (Gamma-Aminobutyric acid) (Streeter, Gerbarg, Saper, Ciraulo, & Brown, 2012).

In yoga, control on breathing impacts the control over the autonomic nervous system (ANS), which causes many useful results on various organs of the human body. ANS is a type of involuntary response of the human body and consists of sympathetic (SNS) and parasympathetic (PNS) (McCorry, 2007). When an individual practices the pranayama while holding breath for a longer time, the PNS is accelerated, which results in a decrease in metabolic rate and the consumption of the oxygen. Whereas, with short breath, it causes the unfavourable impact of increase in consumption of oxygen and higher metabolic rate (Jerath et al., 2006). ANS is the chief operator of the cardiovascular system, a sturdy maintenance of Sympathovagal adjustment guarantees a stability (Telles et al., 2017). The effect of yoga practice has been reported for Type A insulin resistance syndrome, a disease related to cardiovascular system (Innes et al., 2005), yoga is being used as a complementing diagnosis for life threatening disease cancer (Smith & Pukall, 2009), it's been used in the rare and dangerous psychological disorder, schizophrenia (Vancampfort et al., 2012) and also being used as substitute and complementing method for treating asthma (Sharma et al., 2012) hasnot been reported ((Telles et al., 2017).

The sacred holy book of Hindu, Bhagwat Gita promotes us to do work without thinking of its outcome. When we attach ourselves with the outcome it results in a rise of stress, rivalry, and anger or even hatred. These negative emotions of stress gives birth to heart problems, mood disorders like depression and suicidal tendencies. Positive psychology in aid to these negative emotions works upon the components and elements that lead an individual to pleasant and satisfactory life (Kumar & Kumar, 2013). Positive psychology is being highly popularised in the therapy and diagnosis of health problems. Positive psychology unlike other fields of psychology,



works upon the positive aspects to balance a healthy wellbeing. As it has been evidently proved that a healthy mind leads to a healthy body therefore, positive psychology works upon the positive effect which can help an individual to a peaceful mind resulting in a stress free mind and protecting the body from various acute and chronic diseases. Positive psychology studies how happiness and well-being can be enhanced. It includes empirical research and study concerning the individual strengths and social-environment in the advancement of satisfactory wellbeing. The central pillars of positive psychology are happiness (contentment), hope (desire), creativity (originality) and wisdom (insight) (Carr, 2013). Understanding and promoting the concept of happiness and the wellbeing of an individual are the central core of positive psychology (Seligman, 2002). Identification of the contributory factors of happiness is not an easy task (Diener, 2000; Diener & Suh, 1999). Positive psychology is focused on two variants of well-being i.e., eudemonic and hedonic. Positive feelings and emotions like happiness and satisfaction, comes under hedonic wellbeing, it works upon the aspects that make life pleasant or unsatisfactory (Diener et al., 1999; Kahneman et al., 1999). Although both concepts of wellbeing are distinct in nature but in the process of operationalization of positive affect in research both wellbeing compliments each other. The option which measure to use for analysis might be dependent on the conceptual model which being examined, in consideration of how they are link to the biological systems, the benefits and drawbacks should be kept in consideration (Kashdan et al., 2008; Scollon et al., 2009). There is a possibility that the sum of hedonic mood measures are also the eudemonic proxy measures (Diener, 2009). But, that doesn't mean they both lead to same biological pathway, hedonic wellbeing and eudemonic wellbeing can have distinct or can have same impact on biological pathways (Ryff et al., 2004) and keeping up the contextual and practical qualification between both the wellbeing might be essential in comprehending the real nature of affiliation of positive wellbeing and biology (Dockray & Steptoe, 2010). The impulse to analysis the biological relates of the positive impact arise from the relation of positive wellbeing with physical wellbeing, and research and studies has proven that mental health is connected to physical wellbeing (Pressman & Cohen, 2005; Howell et al., 2007). Changes in the cardiovascular mechanism, particularly in exhalation of heart beat and blood pressure, signifies ordinary reactions to challenge. Modification in the range of arousal or in affective conditions are related to the changes in the activity of the cardiovascular system through sympathetic

nervous system (Lovallo, 2004). Increased levels of cardiovascular activity are generally associated as a threat to physical health, whereas decrease in level of basic activity of the cardiovascular system might constitute less threat to health. The passage to bridge the positive impact and cardiovascular mechanism is resolved by the kind of emotional depth experienced by an individual. Some of the positive impactful conditions are, happiness, that signifies the condition of electrification (arousal), results in rise of activities in cardiovascular system, particularly the heart beats and blood pressure, accordingly many other positive emotions, for instance contentment with one's life, may be related lower cardiovascular reactivity. Therefore, the intensity of arousal and degree of feeling or emotion is an important benefactor of positive affect and the activation of biological processes (Dockray & Steptoe, 2010).

Practice of mindfulness is a progressively well-known therapeutic approach for diagnosing physiological problems and mental disorders. Using therapeutic approaches with instruments recognizable to cognitive behavioural practitioners, the disciplines and use of mindfulness provides assurance for introducing various fundamental components of positive psychology. It is suggested that the intervention of mindfulness stimulates positive alteration by reinforcing metacognitive skills and by altering schemes related to feelings, wellbeing and health problems (Hamilton et al., 2006).

Conclusion: Existence of living organisms from single cell organisms (bacteria) to complex forms (humans) is dependent upon biological processes. Biological processes enable living organisms to survive and mould their abilities to interact with their environment. Studies have shown these biological processes are intertwined with the psychological processes and both are interdependent on each other. Present-day, we are at threat of pre-existing and new variants of acute and chronic disorders. According to the analysis, the practising of traditional yoga and adapting the components of positive psychology in an individual's lifestyle can help in boosting physical wellbeing. Many clinician and healthcare practitioners have started the application of yoga and positive psychology in therapeutic intervention, which has shown promising results in ailment of many health problems like cardiovascular diseases and asthma. Today yoga and positive psychology has become popularised intervention tools for biological processes.

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