

NIYAMA: THE OBSERVANCES INTERVENING LIFE STYLE DISORDERS

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ABSTRACT

Life style disorders are the results of imbalanced activity adopted by our sense organs. By balancing the activities of our sense organs i.e. neither suppressed nor exaggerated, one can be free from life style disorders. Ashtanga Yoga described by Maharishi Patanjali can provide great intervention for prevention of life style disorders and can have additive effect in the management of such disorders. Among Ashtanga Yoga, Niyama i.e. Shaucha, Santosha, Tapa, Swadhyaya and Ishwara Pranidhana can be considered as the root or base for prevention as well as for management of life style disorders. If an individual won't follow Niyama, none of efforts either by physician or by individual itself are of any use. Therefore an effort has been made to explore the role of Niyama in prevention and management of life style disorders as a whole.

KEY WORDS: *Life Style Disorders, Niyama, Ashtanga Yoga*

INTRODUCTION:

It is better to prevent life style disorders which are defined as disorders linked with the way people live their life. *Ayurveda* works on the principle of maintenance of health by adopting a healthy life style and prevention of disease. Treatment portion comes later. *Maharishi Pantanjali* has described *Ashtanga Yoga* which itself is a complete and perfect lifestyle. In *Ashtanga Yoga*, *Niyama* is the observances or rules that play a major role in living healthier and happier life.

Life style disorders are commonly caused due to bad eating habits like eating junk food, packed and processed food containing excessive sugar, trans-fats and sodium contents, vegetable oils, dairy products, cold drinks, alcohol, smoking, drug addiction, reduced physical activity etc. Behavioural factors like unemployment, poor social environment, poor working conditions may also cause these disorders.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Various text books regarding literature of *Ashtanga Yoga* w.s.r to *Niyama* were consulted, analysed thoroughly. Internet services were also used for better understanding regarding the topic.

NIYAMA - THE RULES OR OBSERVANCES:

Five *Niyamas* have been described in *Patanjali Yoga Sutra: Shuacha, Santosha, Tapa, Swadhyaya, Ishwara Pranidhna*. *Niyama* aims at organising the life of an individual [1].

A. *Shaucha* - Purity

Purification means elimination of all those elements and conditions which prevent an individual from exercising their proper functions and attaining goal in view. Purity can be explained in two ways: Purity of the physical body and Purity of the mind. With the ordinary purity of physical body, individual become more sensitive. Cleanliness is mostly a matter of sensitiveness. He can see the things in their true light. The feeling of disgust towards one's own life i.e. *Swang Jugupsa* develops due to purification. It means individual has become more sensitive enough to see the things as they really are. A person who feels disgust from his own body is not likely to feel any attractions towards bodies of others i.e. *Paraih Asansarga*. [2]

Purity of physical body can be achieved by ordinary external processes like:

- Bathing,
- *Yogic Kriya* like *Neti, Dhauti, Basti* etc,
- Following appropriate *Dincharya*.
- By adopting good eating habits. eg. Eating good quality food, Quantity of food in appropriate amount, taking meal timely etc.
- By *Shodhana Kriya* like *Vamana, Virechana, Shirovirechana* etc. from time to time.

Purity of mental purification including fundamental character is developed by adopting:

- *Tapa*
- *Swadhyaya*
- *Pratyahara, Dharna, Dhyana*
- *Ishwara Pranidhana*

Purification of mind leads to cheerful mindedness, one pointedness, Control of the senses, Fitness for the vision of the self. [3]

B. *Santosha* – Contentment or Satisfaction

The result of developing perfect contentment is superlative happiness [4] i.e. a positive state of mind. The chief cause of our constant unhappiness is the perpetual disturbance of mind caused by all kinds of desires. When a particular desire is satisfied there is a temporary cessation of unhappiness. If the desires are eliminated and mind becomes calm; that is a true happiness. This subtle and constant joy is called *Sukha* which comes from within.

Santosha can be achieved by:

- Adopting properly the methods of *Shaucha*.
- Own mental efforts.

C. *Tapa* - Austerities

Tapa is the personal endeavour of discipline undertaken to achieve goal. By doing proper *Shaucha* and by gaining the state of *Santosha*, *Tapa* becomes easy. The essential purpose of *Tapa* is to purify the body and bring it under the control of the will. The outcome of *Tapa* is *Kaya Siddhi* and *Indriya Siddhi*. [5]

- *Kaya Siddhi* ie. Perfection of body.
Beauty, fine complexion, strength and adamant hardness constitute the perfection of the body. [6]
- *Indriya Siddhi* ie. Perfection of sense organs
Mastery over the sense organs by performing *Samyama* on their power of cognition, real nature, egoism, all pervasiveness and functions is perfection of sense organs. [7]
- *Ashudhhi Kshaya* ie. Destruction of impurities.

Kaya Siddhi can be achieved by:

- Regular *Asana*
- *Pranayama*
- Appropriate food regimen
- *Shodhana* of the body (detoxification)

Indriya Siddhi can be achieved by:

- *Pranayama* - The functions of sense organs depend on current of *Prana* which is controlled by *Pranayama*.
- *Samyama*. [8]

The impurities of the body can be destroyed by *Tapa*, are as follows: [9]

- *Kama* - Abnormal desires, excessive desires or desires of things which are not necessary to the individual and he is living happier life without them. e.g. excessive sexual desire.
- *Krodha* - Anger or wrath.
- *Lobha* - The greed i.e. strong desire for possession and constant focus on possessing material especially the things which belong to others. e.g. greed of junk food and soft drinks, Greed for tobacco, alcohol and drugs of addiction.
- *Moha* - The over attachment to the things or persons which create error of judgement leading to wrong knowledge or beliefs.

- *Pancha Klesha* - The five conditions about which mind is always going through a tug of war, are *Avidya* (lack of true knowledge or misapprehension about reality), *Asmita* (inability to differentiate between right and wrong or when one don't want to accept difference between truth and false), *Raga* (over attachment), *Dvesha* (aversions), *Abhinivesha* (clinging ignorantly to the life).

D. Swadhyaya - Self study or self realisation.

It is contemplation of one's own motives, behaviour, plans, circumstances and environment. Its main purpose is to open channels between an individual and the object of his search. *Swadhyaya* begins with intellectual study it must be carried through the progressive stages of reflection, meditation, *Tapas* etc. to the point where the individual is able to gain all knowledge or devotion from within, by his own efforts.

By following correctly previous three steps, *Swadhyaya* reveals true knowledge of the things by its own. After gaining the true knowledge our discriminating power evokes more and our judgement become sharper in the frame of 'what to do and what not to do?'

E. Ishwara Pranidhana - Surrender to the higher being.

Previous four *Niyamas* if followed correctly then the fifth step i.e. *Ishwara Pranidhana* will become easy and more spontaneous. *Ishwara Pranidhana* develops *Para-Vairagya*, breaks the bond of the hearts, eliminates the desires of the personality, and thus naturally and inevitably reduces the mind to a state of *Chitta Vritti Nirodha* which is nothing but *Smadhi*. These *Chitta Vrittis* are caused and maintained by the 'I' consciousness which gives rise to innumerable desires and keep the mind in the state of constant agitation in order to satisfy those desires. If an individual surrenders himself to higher being he also feels free from *Panchklesha* and *Ashudhis* like *Kaama*, *Krodha*, *Lobha*, *Moha*, *Raga-Dwesh* etc. [10]

DISCUSSION -

Life style disorders are better prevented by adopting ideal life style. *Ashtanga Yoga* is a complete life style in itself but in this paper special emphasis has been given on *Niyama* which can be considered as the base for adopting ideal life style. Life style modification can also reduce the severity and progression of life style disorders.

A. *Shaucha* - Purification of physical body by adopting *Yogic Kriyas*, healthy diet and by appropriate *Dincharya* (daily regimen) can prevent life style disorders by balancing *Sharirika* as well as *Mansika Doshas of the body*. *Shodhana* of the body should also be done once annually i.e. *Vamana* during *Vasanta Ritu* (spring), *Virechana* during *Sharada Ritu* (autumn), *Basti* during *Varsha Ritu* (rainy season). It helps individual to stay calm, positive, relaxed in stressful conditions, focussed on his goal, and makes him physically fit.

B. *Santosha* - If an individual is contented, happy with his life, his mind become calm and it can prevent stress and many Psycho-somatic disorders.

C. *Tapa* - It is a kind of burning oneself in such a way and creating oneself that much stronger so that unfavourable conditions can not harm one's existence in any way. *Tapa* can be to undergo behavioural changes by burning anger, stress, abnormal desires, greed, attachments, aversions etc. which are causing any kind of interruption in happy living. Benefit of *Tapa* is perfection of body and sense organs, after destruction of impurities. *Tapa* is the personal endeavour of discipline undertaken to achieve goal. e.g. Getting up early in the morning, doing *Yogasana*, *Pranayama*, *Meditation* daily, sticking to healthy diet and activities etc.

D. *Swadhyaya* - One's own study leads to evaluate the factors which can play major role in prevention of the diseases. An individual must have an interrogation session with himself daily so that he can evaluate '**What is direction of life and how desirable changes lead to more fulfilment of health, which factors are harmful for health?**' If he knows the answers to these questions, then he would be able to adopt good measures to maintain health.

Studying spiritual and religious literature gives better direction to the life, helps in formation of a good fundamental character of an individual.

E. *Ishwara Pranidhana* - If an individual believes in higher being, he feels secured, enjoys everything in life, lives in proper way, makes efforts in good direction, no easy breakdowns, tackle hurdles of life easily. If an individual surrenders himself to higher being our body, soul, mind will become in the state of osmosis with that higher energy which facilitate right thought and right action and makes us to move in the state of healthy existence. Thus there is no question of any life style disorder.

F. In life style disorders there is involvement of psycho-somatic factors. e.g. Stress leads to depression, inappropriate intake of food leads to obesity, anger as well as excessive intake of sodium and fats leads to hypertension etc. These all *Niyamas* can act on mind as well as on physical body of the individual. Therefore, merely by following *Niyamas* one can prevent these disorders as well as maintain good health in diseased case.

CONCLUSION -

The conclusion can be drawn that if *Niyama* are followed from early stages of life, life style will become ideal. There will not be the development of life style diseases. The prevalence of life style disease will start decline in the population.

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