

The Role of Yoga and Spirituality at the last stage of the life span

Ms. Kavitha S^[a] & Dr. Kumidini Achchi^[b]

Abstract

Yoga is considered as a bringing connection to the physical, psychological and spiritual aspects of life of all age group. Yoga is a holistic package for happy living, is acts as a technique to unite body, mind, breath and connect the inner core of being – the spiritual aspects of our lives. Spirituality gives inner strength to manage difficult situations. In the modern period, well – being is viewed as the physical, psychological, social, spiritual aspects. But, for the elders (last lifespan year) suffering from various types of the problems such as stress, anxiety, isolation, attempts of suicides, depression, health problems, reduced social contacts and interaction, etc., are common among the both institutionalized as well as non-institutionalized elders.

A study was conducted to assess the role of the yoga and spiritual aspects of the elders; an explorative research design was adopted and interview schedule as a tool to collect data from 60 elders both living at institutionalized (Old age homes) as well as non-institutionalized (Family) elders of the Mysuru district of Karnataka state was selected for the study. Simple descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data.

A study reveals that level of knowledge, interest of yoga and spiritual belief and practices to reduced physical, psychological, social illness among the geriatric population is considered as important in the modern phenomenon. Thus, yoga, meditation and spiritual practices is considered as cheapest means to gain positive strength and stress free life at the end of the life span.

Key Words: Yoga, Spirituality, elders, life span

<p>^[a] Ms. Kavitha S, Research Scholar, JSS Research Foundation, University of Mysore, Mysore - 06. Ph.No. (0) 8867778753, E-mail: kavithasiddappaji@gmail.com</p>	<p>^[b] Dr. Kumidini Achchi, Assistant Professor, PG Department of Social Work, JSS College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Ooty Road, Mysuru-25 Ph. No: (0)9448504356, E-mail: kumudiniachchi@gmail.com</p>
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1. Introduction:

Yoga is considered as a holistic package for the happy living. The word ‘yoga’ is derived from the Sanskrit root ‘yuj’ which means ‘to join’ or ‘to yoke’. Yoga means to connect or unite our mind, body, spirit and connect to the inner core of our being – the spiritual aspects of our lives. Yoga is considered as a bringing connection between physical, psychological and spiritual aspects of life of all age group. WHO, 1948 defines, ‘Health is a complete state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’. The most important determinant of health for the well-being of an individual is spirituality and spiritual aspects in life.

Spirituality gives inner strength to manage difficult situations. In the modern period, well – being is viewed as the physical, psychological, social and spiritual aspects. In the modern technological era, problems related physical, psychological, social, emotional, cultural issues are becoming paramount among the all the age group due to urbanization, modernization, impact of western culture, modern day employment etc., People of all the age group, suffers from one type of physical, psychological, social, emotional illness, but elders are not an exceptional to these types of problems. Age group of 60 years and above is considered as ‘elders’ or ‘senior citizen’ or ‘aged’ or ‘dependent population’. In the human lifespan, old age is considered as last span of life or terminating stage or it is also called as second childhood period(Uma, 2012) because an elder requires same type of care and support as child including physical, social, psychological, cultural issues.

In the present phenomenon elders (last lifespan year) suffering from various types of the problems such as stress, anxiety, isolation, attempts of suicides, depression, health problems, reduced social contacts and interaction, etc., are common among the both institutionalized as well as non-institutionalized elders mainly due to the modern type of nuclear family system.

In India, the population of elders is growing at a greater rate due to the decrease fertility and mortality rate. This results in the elderly population is growing from 19.9 million in 1951, 76 million in 2001, 103.8 million in 2011, 116.10 million in 2016, 143.20 million in 2021 and 173.2 million in 2026 (Integrated Programme for older persons(Revised effect from 01.04.2015) thus, India is considered as second largest elders population in world. (Census of India, 2011) At present 100 million elders in India.

As the population of elders is growing at an alarm rate, the problems relating to physical, psychological, social, cultural, emotional, economic problems will increase due to the changing functions of the joint family system to nuclear family which results in lack of care and support for elders. Various types of the physical problems such as diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, cardio logical etc., and psychological problems like depression, stress, anxiety, dementia, insomnia, etc., Choudhary, 2014 says that 10 percent of people over 65 years have depression and an estimated 2 percent have suffering from severe depression in India. Thus, due to the various development in the modern society where role and responsibilities of the family to care and support elders is shifting from family to society.

On the other part of the society, institutional support (old age homes or day care centers) is growing at an alarm rate to provide care and support the elders who are destitute, lack family care, neglected etc., In 2009, 1,276 old age homes are in India (Directory of Old age Homes in India, 2009). In Karnataka, 91 old age homes in 2009 and 203 old age homes in 2013 (Handbook of Senior Citizen, Government of Karnataka Report, 2013) were exist to provide care and support for the elders in need. Thus, institutionalized as well as non – institutionalized elders are suffering various type of physical, psychological, social, emotional illness which needs to be addressed where significance of the yoga, meditation and spirituality plays major role in reducing the problem to a great extent.

Many studies have conducted relating the significance of yoga, meditation and spirituality in geriatric care, one such study stated that yoga and spirituality results in the happiness, life satisfaction, increase morale, helplessness, new hope and maintain good social support (19 out of 20 studies) in society. (Cotton et. al, 1999)

Sehgal, 2005 says that role of yoga, meditation is considered as useful method in solving various health problems and to promote good health among the elders.

Coyle, 2002 said that yoga and spirituality results in positive association with well-being, improves psychological functions and marital satisfaction, reduced negative association with suicide, mental illness, and alcoholic and drug abuse. Yoga results in maintaining good health and brings positive strength, hope and peace, whereas spirituality results in a sense of hope, peace, love and joy, heightened a sense of physical and emotional well-being, forgiveness to increase human happiness.

Having this literature background a study was conducted to understand the significance of yoga and spirituality for the geriatric population in the modern day phenomenon.

2. Objectives of the study:

The study aims is achieving the below said objectives.

1. To find out the significance of yoga and its benefits in geriatric care and support.
2. To gauge the effects of the yoga and it uses for the institutionalized as well as non – institutionalized elders.
3. To find out the role of spirituality in improving the well-being of elders
4. To find out the measures to improve the concept of yoga and spiritual aspects in geriatric care.

A study was conducted to assess the role of the yoga and spiritual aspects of the elders; an explorative research design was adopted and interview schedule as a tool to collect data from 60 elders both living at institutionalized (Old age homes) as well as non-institutionalized (Family) elders of the Mysuru district of Karnataka state was selected for the study. Simple descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data.

3. Results and Discussions:

Table 01: Showing the demographic profile of respondents.

Demographic Profile	No. of Respondents		Percentage	
	IE	NIE	IE	NIE
60 – 69 Years	08	10	16.00	20.00
70 – 79 Years	13	08	26.00	16.00
80 Years & above	09	12	18.00	24.00
Sex				
Males	12	10	24.00	20.00
Females	18	20	36.00	40.00
Educational Qualification				
Educated	23	19	46.00	38.00
Highly Educated	7	11	14.00	28.00

(IE – Institutionalized Elders, NIE – Non-Institutionalized Elders)

In the present study, elders above the age group of 60 years were considered as respondents, the data from the above table shows that demographic profile such as respondents of different age group, sex and educational qualification of the elders, 16.00 percent of the institutionalized elders and 20.00 percent of the non-institutionalized elders belong to the age group of 60 – 69 years, 26.00 percent of institutionalized elders and 16.00 percent of non-institutionalized elders come under the age group of 70-79 years, 18.00 percent of the institutionalized elders and 24.00 percent of non-institutionalized elders belong to the age group of 80 years and above. Thus, majority of the elders are between the age group of 70 -79 years from institutionalized elders and 80 years and above from non – institutionalized were considered for the present study.

24.00 percent of male elders and 36.00 percent of females elders from the institutions and 20.00 percent males elders and 40.00 percent females elders from the non-institution settings were considered for the study.

Majority of the elders are pose limited education, 46.00 percent of institutionalized elders have educated and 14.00 elders are highly educated. 38.00 percent of the elders living in families are educated and 28.00 percent of the elders have highly educated. Respondents taken for the study both from the institutionalized as well as non-institutionalized have basic educational qualification.

Table 02: Showing the level of Knowledge of Yoga, meditation and Spiritual practices.

	Good		Average		Poor	
	IE	NIE	IE	NIE	IE	NIE
Frequency	09	10	14	12	7	8
Percent	18.00	20.00	28.00	24.00	14.00	16.00

(IE – Institutionalized Elders, NIE – Non-Institutionalized Elders)

The level of knowledge of yoga, meditation and spiritual practices among the respondents were shown through above table. 18.00 percent of the institutionalized elders and 20.00 percent of the non-institutionalized elders have good knowledge, 28.00 percent of elders living at institutions and 24.00 percent of elders living at family have average or less knowledge and 14.00 percent of the institutionalized elders and 16.00 percent of the non – institutionalized elders expressed poor knowledge about yoga and spiritual practices. Due to the lack of awareness, lack of interest, lack of physical strength among the elders to practice yoga daily and many of the elders of institution and non – institution practice spiritual practices such as worshipping god, chatting mantras, visiting temples etc., Thus, majority of the elders have some knowledge of yoga and its benefits but unable to practice daily to lack of energy, and practice some spiritual aspects to improve the psychological and social well-being.

Table 03: Showing the level of interest to practice yoga, meditation and spiritual practices.

	Practices	Small extent		Moderate		Very High	
		IE	NIE	IE	NIE	IE	NIE
Frequency	Yoga and Meditation	12	15	13	12	5	3
Percent		14.00	30.00	18.00	24.00	10.00	6.00
Frequency	Spiritual Practices	6	4	10	12	14	12
Percent		12.00	8.00	20.00	24.00	28.00	24.00

(IE – Institutionalized Elders, NIE – Non-Institutionalized Elders)

From the above table, the level of interest to practice yoga, meditation and spiritual practices among elders living at institution as well as non-institution were shown. 14.00 percent of the institutionalized elders and 30.00 percent of non – institutionalized elders shown small extent of the interest to practice yoga and meditation. 18.00 percent and 24.00 percent of institutionalized and non-institutionalized elders shown moderate interest and 10.00 percent of elders living in institution and 6.00 percent of the non institutionalized elders have very high interest to practice yoga and meditation, limited respondents shown interested to practice due to high awareness and knowledge about the yoga and its benefits.

Spiritual beliefs and practices are common among the old age period because due to plenty of time is available. 12.00 percent of institutionalized elders and 8.00 percent of the non-institutionalized elders have small extent of interest, 20.00 percent of institutionalized elders and 24.00 percent shows moderate interest and 28.00 percent and 24.00 percent of institutionalized as well as non-institutionalized elders majority of women shown high interest to practice spiritual practices than men. Thus, elders of the both institution as well as non-institution shown lack of interest to practice yoga in daily life both men and women, but majority of women elders practice spiritual practices in their daily life than elderly men.

Table 04: Showing the level of acceptance of Yoga, Meditation and Spiritual practices.

	Good		Average		Poor	
	IE	NIE	IE	NIE	IE	NIE
Frequency	10	6	12	15	8	9
Percent	20.00	12.00	24.00	30.00	16.00	18.00

(IE – Institutionalized Elders, NIE – Non-Institutionalized Elders)

From the above table, level of acceptance of oldest practices in India such as yoga, meditation and spiritual practices in the modern phenomenon to increase quality of life among the elders at the last span of human life. 20.00 percent of institutionalized elders and 12.00 percent of non-institutionalized elders shown high level of acceptance through proper awareness and knowledge, 24.00 percent and 30.00 percent of the institutionalized as well as non-institutionalized elders shown average acceptance level due to the lack of physical strength, energy to practice yoga and lack of interest in spiritual aspects. 16.00 percent of institutionalized elders and 18.00 percent of non-institutionalized elders have shown poor

level of acceptance level. Thus, Majority of institutionalized and non-institutionalized elders shown high level of acceptance of yoga and spiritual practices mainly due to increasing level of physical, psychological, social, emotional, cultural problems in modern technological period.

Role of Yoga and Spirituality in Geriatric care:

Yoga is considered as the art to harmonizing system of development for the body, mind and spirit which results in a sense of peace and well-being. Yoga, with its roots in ancient Indian philosophy, is used for physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Spirituality plays an important role in Indian society for all age group, as one gets older, the role of spirituality become stronger. The importance of yoga and spirituality for elders as follows:

1. Yoga therapy helps in improving the strength and flexibility in joints and muscles, which helps in reducing problems such as osteoporosis, reduction in bone density and weakening of bones.
2. Yoga and Pranayamas improves sense of balance between the physical (body) and psychological (mind) aspects of elders to great extent.
3. Yoga and pranayamas (breathing exercises) improves the lung functions and improve the overall function of systems of body.
4. Meditation, yoga asanas and pranayamas results in reducing level of stress, lower blood pressure, regulate blood sugar and cholesterol, stroke, heart diseases and diabetes.
5. Yoga and meditation results positive and contented state of mind and make pain free body and improves quality of sleep.
6. Spirituality and its practices results in healthy behavior, which helps in psycho-social support, and also effective solution for stress, anxiety, fears, anger and frustration.
7. Spirituality helps to develop a sense of harmony, inner freedom, love and freedom and to maintain good relationship with family, friends, and community to maintain positive environment.
8. Spiritual aspects helps to reduce various psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, stress and to help to improve the quality of life and holds good thought, feelings, attitude etc.,
9. Spiritual beliefs results to maintain positive relationship through spiritual meditation, reading spiritual magazines, discussion spiritual matters will reduce the physical and psychological problems.
10. Spirituality helps to maintain physical, psychological, social, emotional well-being among the elders.

4. Conclusion:

Thus, yoga therapy, meditation and spiritual aspects is considered as a mind and body therapy which results in physical, psychological, social, emotional, cultural issues in the modern technological era. Elders are unable to practice yoga therapy due to lack of energy and strength. But, pranayamas (breathing exercises), meditation and practices of simple yoga exercises helps maintain good body and mind at last span of life span (old age). Right awareness about the yoga, meditation and spiritual aspects is helpful to maintain stress free life in the modern technological era. Yoga therapy, meditation and spiritual belief results in improving the quality of life and self-efficacy, self-competence and maintaining physical fitness among the elders of institution as well as non-institution. Thus, these are the cheapest means to have stress free life during the modern age.

5. References

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