Psychophysiology of Yoga and its’ application in therapy

Raghavendra Bhat
Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana, India

Traditionally, Yoga has eight classical techniques called *astanga yoga*. Three of these eight techniques are widely practiced world over, they are: Yoga postures [*asanas*], voluntarily regulated yoga breathing [*pranayama*] and meditation [*dhyana*]. This presentation gives an overview of psycho-physiological studies on yoga postures, regulated breathing and meditation. Yoga (postures) practice has shown to increase brain GABA levels suggesting application of yoga in treating anxiety and depression. Yoga breathing is a collection of specific breathing patterns. Breathing through left and right nostrils has distinct physiological effects. Breathing through right nostril [*surya anuloma-viloma*] has shown to be physiologically arousing with increased oxygen consumption, heart rate, respiratory rate and an increased in the low frequency component of heart rate variability analysis. Whereas breathing through left nostril [*Chandra anulom-viloma*] is physiologically relaxing which is evident through decreased heart rate, respiratory rate, increased galvanic skin resistance and decrease in oxygen consumption. Interestingly, breathing through alternate nostrils [*anuloma-viloma*] had a balancing effect. All forms of meditation induce relaxation responses. Our studies on meditation have shown increased alertness and reduced arousal (sympathetic activity) following meditation. This is in line with traditional understanding of meditation as a state of ‘alertful rest’. Further, concept of health and disease in modern medicine and Yoga texts will be presented. According to yoga, man is in perfect health and homeostasis in his normal state. All diseases are classified as (a) stress-related (adhija) and (b) not stress related, e.g., injuries (anadhija). Yoga has been considered especially useful in the management of stress related disorders.

bhatyoga@gmail.com