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## A Study on Significance of the Yoga in Geriatric Care

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### Abstract

Yoga means to connect or unite our mind, body and spirit. It can be practiced by the people with different religious beliefs, ages and abilities. Yoga is considered useful in the geriatric care for the elders living in the institutions. In the modern day, elders are suffering from various types of physical and psychological illness such as diabetes, arthritis, heart problems, respiratory diseases, depression, anxiety, stress etc., thus, yoga and pranayamas are considered as useful in geriatric care.

A study was conducted to assess the significance of the yoga in the geriatric care; an explorative research design was adopted and interview schedule as tools to collect data from 60 elder respondents living in the various institutions (old age homes) of Mysore districts of Karnataka state was selected for the study. Chi-square statistical test was used to analyze the data by using SPSS.

Study reveals that level of knowledge and interest of the yoga among the geriatric population and opportunities for learning yoga and pranayama is considered important for the geriatric care in modern phenomenon. Thus, yoga and pranayamas were considered as a cheapest means of gaining new strength and energy for the institutionalized elders in the modern technological era to have a stress free life.

**Keywords:** *Yoga, Geriatric care, pranayamas, institutionalized elders.*

### Introduction

**“In the Practice of Yoga the Ultimate aim is one self- development and self- realization”**

The word ‘Yoga’ is mainly derived from the Sanskrit root ‘yuj’ which means ‘to join’ or ‘to yoke’. Yoga means to connect or unite our mind, body and spirit. It can be practiced by the people with different religious beliefs, ages and abilities. The act of yoga is usually a physical activity which able to keep our body and soul in peace, through this way enhanced the physical and psychological well-being.

In the modern technological era, physical/health problems, mental/psychological illness, emotional illness are rapid mainly due to every aspects of development such as urbanization, modern day employment, lack of time for recreational services in the busy work schedule, lack of nutritious foods results in various psychological problems such as depression, stress, anxiety etc., bound to cope up in present day phenomenon.

All the age group of human beings suffers from one or other physical/psychological problems, 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) [2]. Because an elder requires same type of care and support as child.

In the modernized society, as traditional system of the care and support for the elders are given by single institution that is Joint family system, where elders are care, dined, support and nourish to a greater extent. But, due to various advancements, joint family system is diminishing and results in dependent population (elders) are suffering from various types of physical illness such as diabetics, hypertension, arthritis, respiratory disorders, vision and eye problems, dementia etc., and psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, stress, mood disorder etc., due to lack of care and support from modern separated family system.

### Demography of Indian Ageing

Developing countries such as China, India and Indonesia are projected to have the largest number of elderly by 2025. The elderly population in India is expected to grow from 7.6 Million in 2001 to 137 million by 2021. Even within the elderly population, people over 80

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years of age are increasing rapidly, posing great demands on the health-care services in the coming years. India is considered as second largest elders population in world. (Census of India, 2011) At present 100 million elders in India.

As their population is increasing at an alarm rate the problems relating to physical, psychological, emotional, social, economic, cultural issues are also becoming paramount in the recent years. Ageing is associated with multiple medical conditions mainly due to deteriorating physiological reserves and impaired immune mechanisms. Epidemiological and population ageing studies report that chronic, non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and arthritis are integral part of ageing and also high prevalence of psychiatric disorders such as depression and dementia in elderly ranging from 9% to 35%. Further, sleep disturbances, excessive day-time sleepiness, insomnia, night time awakenings, snoring, restlessness and periodic leg movements during sleep are reported in elderly. These sleep disturbances were strongly associated with respiratory symptoms, physical disabilities, use of non-prescription medications, depressive and anxiety symptoms, cognitive dysfunction and poorer self-perceived health among the elders to a greater extent.

**Yoga and its Benefits**

Yoga is one such mind body intervention which is increasingly being explored for therapeutic potentials in elderly. Yoga, with its roots in ancient Indian philosophy, is used for physical, mental and spiritual well-being. It is a system of stretching and positional exercises to promote good health, fitness and control of mind.

**The following are benefits of Yoga**

- a. Increased strength, balance and flexibility - both mental and physical
- b. An enhanced ability to manage stress.
- c. A deepened sense of connection with others
- d. Improved mood and sleep.
- e. Helps to control blood sugar level for the diabetes patients.
- f. Decreases body pain and acts a pain relief therapy.
- g. Enhance the respiratory function
- h. Increase bone density and prevent osteoporosis.
- i. Helps to reduce depression and increase human happiness.

Many studies have been conducted relating to the significance of the yoga among elders population, one such study stated that yoga is useful for the elders in psychophysiological effects as well as therapeutic benefits. It used as a preventive health care programme for the elderly to reduce various physical as well as psychological problems. (Haber, 1983) [1]. Further, regular practice of yoga shows greater improvements in the psychological well-being and lowered the hypertension.

Yoga would be useful for the promotion of positive health in older persons. Yoga and pranayamas is proven an effective method for improving health in addition to prevention and management of diseases. Yoga is also reported to reduce stress, anxiety and improves autonomic functions. (Pallav Sengupta, 2012) [3].

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

**Objectives of the study:** The study aims is achieving the below said objectives.

- 1. To find out the effectiveness of the yoga in the modern world.
- 2. To gauge the effects of the yoga for elders living at institutions.
- 3. To find out significance of the yoga for elders in geriatric care.
- 4. To find out the measures to improve the concept of yoga and its significance for the elders in geriatric care.

To achieve the above objectives, the study adopts explorative research design and interview schedule techniques as tool to elicit data from the 60 elder respondents living at institutions such as old age homes were considered for the study. To carry out the study, four old age homes are selected from the Mysore district of Karnataka state was selected, out of fifteen elders from the each old age homes are selected for the study using simple random sampling method. Chi-square statistical test was used to analyze the data by using SPSS.

**Results and Discussion**

**Table 1:** Showing the Demographic profile the institutionalized elders.

Age - Group	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years & above
Frequency	38	18	04
Percent	19.00	9.00	2.00

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 of the elders, 19.00 percent of the elders are between the age group of 60-69 years, 9.00 percent are between the age group of the 70-79 years and 2.00 percent are between the age group of the 80 years and above. Thus, majority of the elders are between the age group of 60 years and above were considered for the present study.

**Table 2:** Showing the level of knowledge of the respondents about yoga and its benefits.

	Good	Average	Poor	Chi-Square	P
Frequency	46	13	1	54.300	.000
Percent	76.7	21.7	1.7		

Knowledge of the yoga helps to know about the significance and health benefits for the elders. The above data shows that, level of the knowledge about the yoga and its benefits for the elders living at institutions. 76.7 percent of the elders have good knowledge about the yoga therapy, 21.7 percent of the elders have average level of knowledge about the yoga and its practices and 1.7 percent elders have poor knowledge. Thus, from the above table it is shows that majority of the elders have a very good knowledge about yoga and its benefits through awareness programme, by reading newspapers, magazines, books and sharing the knowledge with others. Institutionalized elders have good knowledge of yoga and its significance. But, majority are fail to practice due to diminishing physical strength and energy. When chi-square test was applied to these frequencies, chi-square test revealed a significant value (X<sup>2</sup>=54.300; p=.000), having 'good' response high.

**Table 3:** Showing the level of interest of the respondents in practicing yoga.

	Regular	Periodic	Not interested	Chi-Square	P
Frequency	39	18	3	32.700	.000
Percent	65.0	30.0	5.0		

Levels of interest for practicing yoga by respondents are shown through above table, 65.00 percent of elders were interested to practice yoga regularly through simple exercises, 30.00 percent of respondents practice yoga periodically due to lack of interest and physical strength to practice regularly and 5.00 percent of respondents shows lack of interest due to various health and psychological problems. Thus, majority of institutionalized elders showed interest to practice yoga but, various types of the health problems and decreased physical energy hinder them to a greater extent.

When chi-square test was applied to these frequencies, chi-square test revealed a significant value ( $X^2=32.700$ ;  $p=.000$ ), having 'good' response high.

**Table 4:** Showing the opportunities for learning yoga in present condition.

	Yes	No	No response	Chi-Square	P
Frequency	42	17	1	42.700	.000
Percent	70.0	28.3	1.7		

In the modern day phenomenon, learning of the yoga is beneficial in the present condition due to increasing physical, psychological, social, economical, cultural issues are becoming paramount. To reduce these problems to certain extent, practice of yoga and meditation is important the institutionalized elders in present condition. In the above table, opportunities for learning yoga were shown, 70.00 percent of respondents shows good opportunity for learning yoga and 28.00 percent of respondents expressed that no opportunity for learning yoga in the present phenomena due to lack of knowledge, interest, health problems etc., and 1.7 percent of respondents has expresses no responses. Thus, though opportunities for learning yoga for the institutionalized elders are high but they practice is very limited. But, during the present day conditions, practice of yoga is considered as necessary aspects to the modern day elders.

When chi-square test was applied to these frequencies, chi-square test revealed a significant value ( $X^2=42.700$ ;  $p=.000$ ), having 'good' response high.

**Significance of practice yoga in end of the lifespan**

1. Yoga therapy increases bone density and strengthen bones, decreasing the risk of bone degenerative diseases like osteoporosis, reduction in bone density and weakening of bones.
2. Yoga and pranayamas (breathing exercises) increases the functions of the lungs and reduces respiratory problems.
3. Yoga and pranayamas work together to simulate the nervous system and the brain, increases memory and powers of concentration and relieving anxiety.
4. Yoga, pranayamas and meditation helps in reducing the levels of stress, lower blood sugar, cholesterol level, decreases the risk of stroke, heart diseases and diabetes to a greater extent.

5. Yoga results in positive thinking and balanced state of mind through various types of asanas, pranayamas and relaxation.
6. Yoga helps to increase the strength and flexibility in joints and muscles.

**Conclusion**

Thus, yoga is considered as a mind-body therapy which brings both psychological and physical well-being in all age group including elders. Though, elders are unable to practice yoga regularly mainly due to diminishing physical strength and energy. Pranayamas (breathing exercises) were considered as the most effective for the elders to maintain the physical health and psychological balance to maintain stress free life. Yoga therapy for institutionalized elders helps in improving the quality of life and self-efficacy, self-competence and to maintain physical fitness. Thus, yoga and pranayamas were considered as a cheapest means of gaining new strength and energy for the institutionalized elders in the modern technological era to have a stress free life.

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