

Emotional Health: Lessons from COVID-19

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Abstract— Physical and mental health is contingent on the emotional state of an individual. The COVID-19 pandemic caused profound emotional distress in some form in every individual. Sahaja Yoga Meditation (SYM) with its unique method can help in attaining a well-balanced state of body and mind. The main aim of SYM is to attain a state of “thoughtless awareness”, and thus the individual achieves “mental silence”. SYM works on the principle of awakening the innate energy present in dormant state in the triangular sacrum bone of human beings. Through simple meditative technique, once awakened, this innate energy pierces all the subtle energy centers (chakras) present in the body and actualizes in the limbic system of the brain. SYM is the only form of meditation that takes into consideration the “psyche” and “soma” aspect of human beings. Studies have shown beneficial effect of SYM in the treatment of hypertension, asthma, epilepsy, depression and anxiety. Thus, with regular practice of SYM, an individual achieves an over-all balanced state – physical, mental and emotional.

Keywords—physical health, mental health. Emotional health, Sahaja Yoga Meditation

- Health is defined “as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being” (WHO). This definition stand on 3 pillars: physical, mental and social. The first part, i.e the physical aspect implies absence of disease or disability. The second part i.e the mental aspect means that how well an individual is able to cope up with the daily stress. The third part i.e the social aspect depends mostly on the emotional state of an individual where he can establish a balance between his internal environment and external environment. Physical health can be affected by diseases and the individual present with various signs and symptoms. A qualified physician with the help of modern technology and treatment method is very quick to alleviate the same. And thus, a person becomes physically fit. But, even the most advanced technology and treatment available fails to cure mental illness or establish an internal balance state in the individual. Thus, most of the time, the mental and emotional health remains neglected. According to a scientific brief published by World Health Organization (WHO), in the first year of COVID-19 pandemic, global prevalence of anxiety and depression escalated by almost 25% [1]. This is a serious concern for

all health-care providers and policy makers across the globe and thus should be addressed appropriately and promptly.

- Stress is an inevitable part of our modern lifestyle. Our body is inherently and intricately programmed to respond to stressful situations. For example, on seeing a tiger, immediately, our sympathetic system gets activated which release of adrenaline, our body’s response to combat “flight and fight” situations. This physiological “acute” stress response is intricate to our survival but “chronic” stress give rise to various mental and physical problems like depression, anxiety, cardiovascular disease, diabetes etc. It is imperative to understand that stress response in an individual depend upon 3 factors: a) individual perception of stress b) ability to cope with stress c) type of stress/stressor. Thus, the manifestations of stress are different in every individual.
- The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst to our already-existing stressful life. The effect of pandemic was wide-spread. There were multiple stressors during covid-19 pandemic. The first and foremost was social isolation. Additional factors included, restricted movement, fear of contracting the infection, financial loss, uncertainty about the future, loss of loved ones, inadequate medical response. In health-care providers, mental exhaustion was the leading cause of stress. The vulnerable population, like immune-compromised individuals, pre-existing psychiatric or substance-abuse problems, were at increased risk of the adverse outcome of the pandemic. Health services were severely disrupted due to the pandemic and mental health care was not spared either. Thus, individuals who needed mental health care were deprived of the due attention and intervention at the right time. As explained, there may be certain individuals who might have adapted, but it can be concluded that emotional distress in some form was ubiquitous in all individuals during the pandemic.
- As a health-care provider, it is the utmost need to address the issues of the pandemic. Undoubtedly, vaccination was the answer to the SARS-COV-2 infection. Telemedicine tried to fill the gap in the health-care delivery and now it is considered as the future of health-care. Public health measures are now being reformed and strengthened to deal with similar scenarios in the future. People have now become more

conscious about the need to bring necessary changes in diet and lifestyle. But, even with all these intervention we fail to recognize a key factor that is necessary to achieve the social well-being of an individual i.e emotional consistency. The emotional balance of an individual is the main determinant of over-all health-physical and mental. For example: the master control of a machine is responsible for the proper functioning of the various parts. If due to some problem the master control gets affected, the individual part of the machine gets hampered and thus the machine becomes dysfunctional. Now, if we fix the individual part, the machine will work for some time but in challenging situations, it will again fail. So for proper functioning we need to fix the master control instead of the individual parts. Therefore, without achieving emotional balance, all our efforts in managing and treating physical and mental health will be futile.

- But how to achieve the emotional balance? With the current treatment, intervention or therapy available, it is difficult to be in emotional balance state. Sahaja Yoga meditation (SYM) could be the answer to this grave issue. It is a unique form of meditation that utilizes simple techniques. The main objective is to attain a state of thoughtlessness i.e. decreased mental activity and thereby achieve mental peace or silence. Through mental silence, the attention is focused on the “present” moment and there is complete state of joy and happiness. Thus, it causes the inner transformation of an individual. It works on the principle of harnessing the innate energy (Kundalini), invariably present within us in the triangular sacrum bone. Once activated, this energy passes through the energy centers of our body and actualizes in the limbic system which is intricately connected with the hypothalamus, the center which plays a vital role in the stress adaptation of our body. Researches have shown that with regular practice of SYM for 15-20 minutes, the activity of sympathetic nervous system reduces drastically whereas the parasympathetic activity becomes predominant [2]. Various studies have shown that SYM has a positive role to reduce stress, anxiety and depression and thus improve the overall quality of life [3]. In a recent study, it has been successfully demonstrated that long term SYM causes positive plastic changes in the neurons of brain as evidenced by larger gray matter volume. Positive changes are also observed in cortical and subcortical regions of the brain associated with sustained attention and stress modulation [4].
- Thus, to conclude, COVID-19 pandemic had profound ramifications on all aspect of our life. The physical, mental and social functioning of an individual was severely jeopardized, causing emotional imbalance. Sahajayoga meditation, if practiced daily can prove beneficial in attainment of a balanced state: physical, mental

and emotional. It is high time we acknowledge the importance of emotional balance in the over-all health of an individual.

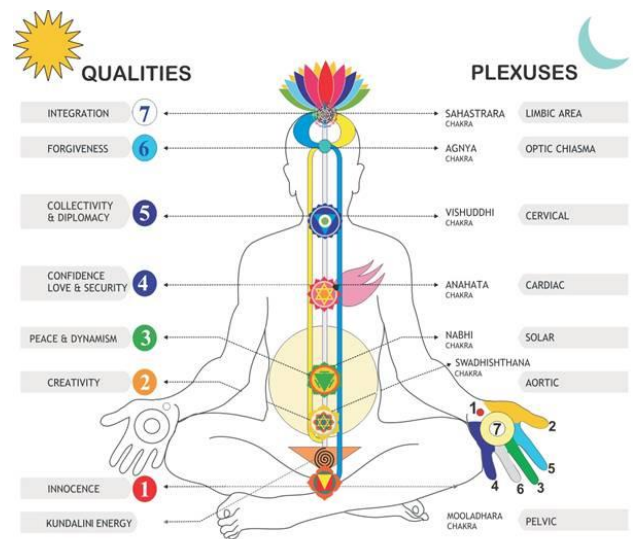


Figure 1: The Subtle system. Kundalini energy is present in the triangular sacrum bone. Through Sahaja Yoga meditation this energy gets activated and actualizes in the limbic system. Hypothalamus is strategically located in the limbic system. Hence, through Kundalini awakening, the hypothalamus-hypophyseal-adrenal axis is modulated which gives deep relaxation and reduces stress.

• Takeaway message:

1. Emotional balance is a key factor to achieve over all well-being of an individual.
2. Sahaja Yoga Meditation is a unique form of meditation that utilizes simple methods.
3. Daily practice of Sahaja Yoga meditation for few minutes will helps in controlling our thoughts, reduction in physical ailments and depression and anxiety.

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