Yoga as therapy-1: YOGA THERAPY OR YOGOPATHY?

Modern Yoga therapy seems to have lost touch with the real essence of Yoga. Yoga aims to help us regain our psycho-physiological balance by removing the root cause of the disharmony (dūkka sāmyoga viyogam- Bhagavad Gīta).

Dwaitam or duality is the main initial cause of the imbalance that may then manifest through the psycho-somatic stress mechanism through the various Koshas (aspects of existence) as various disorders depending upon the propensity of the individual.

Tūtvālluvar the great Tamil mystic says in his Thirukkural, “Look for the disease, look for the primary cause of it and then treat it”. Similarly sage Vāshistha tells Lord Rāma in the Yoga Vāshistha that the essential disease (sara adhīja vyādhi) is that of being caught in the vicious birth-rebirth spiral. He also says that this essential disease can be remedied only by Atma Jnana or the inner awareness of the higher Self.

Unless we aim to correct the manifest psycho-somatic disassociation as well as the underlying ignorant jaundiced perception of reality in the individual, we are not practicing Yoga Chikitsa (Yoga therapy).

Managing and suppressing the manifest symptoms with Yoga techniques is just as good or bad as modern Allopathy that focuses on symptomatic management without ever getting close to the real cause of most disorders. How many doctors look at the emotional and psychological issues that are the primary cause of the problem in so many of their patients?

When Yoga therapists make the same mistake of merely treating the manifesting symptoms without remedying the cause, I prefer to call it YOGOPATHY.

An example of this Yogopathy is when they use Shavasana to manage patients of hypertension quoting research that has shown that Shavasana reduces blood pressure. Real Yoga Chikitsa would try to look for the primary cause of the patient’s hypertension and try to tackle that along with Shavasana for symptomatic management. Without an attempt to do so, it is merely Yogopathy.

Another common example is of using the left nostril Chandra Nadi Pranayama to lower the blood sugar or using the right nostril Surya Nadi Pranayama to relieve bronchoospasm without looking for the real cause of the patient’s diabetes or asthma.

I recently encountered a Yoga Therapist who said that he advised his patients to do their prescribed Pranayama while watching television to help them save their precious time! When queried on the fact that “Prana flows where the mind goes”, he retorted that he was talking of therapeutic Pranayama whereas I was talking of spiritual Pranayama!!!

THE RISHIS MUST BE TURNING IN THEIR SAMADHIS!