



THE REVIEW ARTICLE ON YOGA IN OUR HEALTHY LIFE

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Abstract:

Yoga has been the subject of research in the past few decades for therapeutic purposes for modern epidemic diseases like mental stress, obesity, diabetes, hypertension, coronary heart disease, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Individual studies report beneficial effect of yoga in these conditions, indicating that it can be used as non-pharmaceutical measure or complement to drug therapy for treatment of these conditions. However, these studies have used only yoga asana, pranayama, and/ or short periods of meditation for therapeutic purposes. General perception about yoga is also the same, which is not correct. Yoga in fact means union of individual consciousness with the supreme consciousness. It involves eight rungs or limbs of yoga, which include yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, and samadhi. Intense practice of these leads to self-realization, which is the primary goal of yoga. An analytical look at the rungs and the goal of yoga shows that it is a holistic way of life leading to a state of complete physical, social, mental, and spiritual well-being and harmony with nature. This is in contrast to purely economic and material developmental goal of modern civilization, which has brought social unrest and ecological devastation.

Keywords: Yoga, Healthy life, meditation, mental stress, pranayama, yoga.

Introduction:

Yoga is a healthy way of life, originated in India 2000-4000 years ago. Now, it is believed to be a form of science accepted all over the world.¹ The western culture is also accepting it as a healthy form of scientific exercise. Although the origin of yoga is obscure, it has a long tradition. Yoga for a common person contains the practices of yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, kriya and meditation, which are helpful to keep oneself physically fit, mentally alert and emotionally balanced.² This ultimately prepares ground for the spiritual development of an individual. The main emphasis of the present yoga curriculum for school-going children is to develop their physical fitness, mental development and emotional stability. Posture or asana form an important basis of this curriculum. These have, therefore, been given more weightage.³ Though other yogic activities have also been included in the curriculum.

The word 'Yoga' is derived from Sanskrit root yuj which means 'join' or 'unite'. This may be taken as the union of body, mind and soul, and is used in the literature both as an end as well as means. As an end, yoga signifies 'integration of personality' at the highest level. As means, yoga includes various practices and techniques which are employed to achieve the development of such integration.

History of Yoga:

Yoga has its origin thousands of years ago in India. It has originated from a universal desire to attaining happiness and getting rid of sufferings. According to yogic lore, Shiva is considered the founder of yoga. A number of seals and fossil remains of Indus Valley Civilisation, dating back to 2700 BC indicates that yoga was prevalent in ancient India. However, systematic reference of yoga is found in Patanjali Yogadarshana. Maharishi Patanjali systematised the yogic practices. After Patanjali, many sages/yogis contributed to its development and as a result yoga has now spread all over the world. In this sequence, on 11 December 2014, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) with 193 members approved the proposal to celebrate 'June 21' as the 'International Yoga Day'.⁴

Definition of Yoga: Patanjali defines "Yogashchittavritti nirodhah"⁵ Yoga is a process of gaining control over the mind. By so controlling the mind we reach our original state; "Tada Drashtuh Svarupe avasthanam"⁶ (Yoga Sutras: 1.3) Then the Seer establishes himself in his causal state. This is the technique of 'mind control' prescribed by Patanjali. Control involves two aspects- a power to concentrate on any desired subject or object and a capacity to remain quiet any time. Rarely, the second capacity of man, to remain calm and silent, has been harnessed. Hence, Yoga mainly emphasizes, this second aspect. Yoga is thus a skilful, subtle process and not a brutal, mechanical gross effort to stop the thoughts in the mind and thereby becomes a process for elevating oneself through calming of mind.

The Four Branches of Yoga

1. **Karma Yoga:** This involves doing action with an attitude of detachment to the fruits of action. This makes man release himself from the strong attachments and thereby brings in him a steadiness of mind which verily is Yoga “Samatvam yoga uchyate”⁷ (Geeta 2.48). Instruments of action and understanding (karmendriyās and jnanendriyās) get cleansed.

2. **Bhakti Yoga:** This control of emotions is the key in the path of worship. In this modern world, man is tossed up and down due to emotional onslaughts. The path of Bhakti is a boon to gain control over emotional instabilities by properly harnessing the energy involved in it.

3. **Jnana Yoga:** The age of science has made man a rational being. Intellectual sharpness is imminent. Analysis forms the tool. The path of philosophy is apt for the keen intellectuals and is centered on the analysis of ‘happiness’, the vital contribution of Upaniñads. Also many other fundamental questions regarding the mind, the outside and inside world and the reality are taken up. Basic questions are raised even involving the intellect itself to reach the very basis of intellect.

4. **Raja Yoga:** Culturing of mind is the key for success in almost all endeavors in our lives. The yoga of mind culture or psychic control gives a practical and easy approach to reach higher states of consciousness. It is based on the Austang Yoga of Patanjali’s Yoga system.

Aastang Yoga:

The major contributions of Patanjali’s Yoga Sutrās is popularly known as ‘Austang Yoga’//2.29//⁸, which gives a comprehensive and systematic approach for developing the mind. The eight limbs are;

1. Yama -the disciplines 2. Niyama -the injunctions 3. Asana -the posture of the body 4. Pranayama -the control of Prana, the life force 5. Pratyahara-restraint of senses from their objects of enjoyment 6. Dharana -focusing of mind 7. Dhyana –concentration 8. Samadhi -super consciousness.

Common Yogic Practices:

Yoga propound several practices such as yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, shatkarma (cleansing practices), mudra, bandha, dharana, dhyana (meditation). Here, we will discuss those practices which are commonly used.

Yoga for our Healthy life:

Yoga has become very popular not only in our country but also in many other parts of the world. Yogic practices lead to the development of holistic health. As said in the introduction, Yoga specifically means a connection of body and mind. It contributes to the promotion and maintenance of healthy body and sound mind. We can develop abilities like agility, balance,

coordination, strength and flexibility by performing yogic practices. These also improve physical, mental and emotional health.⁹

Surya Namaskara: Surya means Sun and Namaskara means salutation. It is basically saluting the Sun through postures. Surya Namaskara is a series of 12 physical postures. These postures stretch various muscles and spinal column and give flexibility to the whole body.

1. Stand erect with feet together. Join the palms together in front of the chest in a namaskara mudra. Remain in this posture for a few seconds.

2. Inhaling, raise both arms above the head and slightly bend trunk backward. Remain in this posture for a few seconds.

3. Exhaling, bend forward from the waist keeping the arms by the side of the ears until palms touches the floor on both sides of the feet and the forehead touches the knees. Remain in this posture for a few seconds.

4. Extend the right leg behind as far as possible. Bend the left knee and keep the left foot on ground between the palms. Remain in this posture for a few seconds.

5. Exhaling, bring the left leg back to join with the right leg. Simultaneously, raise the buttocks and lower the head between the arms so that the body forms a triangle with the floor. Try to place the heels flat on the ground. Remain in this posture for a few seconds.

6. Gently lower knees, chest and chin to the ground with normal breathing. Toes, knees, chest, hands and chin should touch the floor. The buttocks are kept up. Remain in this posture for a few seconds.

7. Lower the hips while pushing the chest forward, and raise the trunk upward until the spine is fully arched and the head is facing up. The legs and lower abdomen remain on the floor. Inhale while raising torso. Remain in this posture for a few seconds.

8. Exhaling, lower the trunk keeping the palms flat on the floor. Place both feet flat on the ground. Raise the buttocks and lower the head between the arms. Remain in this posture for a few seconds.

9. Inhaling, extend the left leg behind as far as possible. Bend the right knee and keep the right foot on the ground between the palms. Remain in this posture for a few seconds.

10. Exhaling, bring the stretched left foot forward. Join both legs, straighten the knees and bend forward. Bring the head near the knees. Palms should be placed on floor beside the feet. Remain in this posture for a few seconds.

11. Inhaling raise both arms and the trunk slowly. Bend backwards with arms stretched up. Stay in the posture for a few seconds.

12. Breathing out, come to an erect and straight position. Bring the hands in front of the chest and join the palms together in namaskara posture. Breathe normally in this position. Remain in this posture for a few seconds.⁹

Tadasana: Tada in Sanskrit means ‘Palm tree’. This is called Tadasana because in it the body imitates a ‘Palm tree’. This tree is known for its height and also for being vertically straight. Hence, it has been named tadasana.¹⁰

Limitations of Tadassna- Those having complaints of reeling sensation should not practise it. Avoid performing this asana if knee oints and ankle joints are having pain and stiffness.

Vrikshasana: This is a balancing asana. The Sanskrit word vriksha means ‘tree’, thus, this is the ‘Tree Posture’. In the imagination of the tree, foot seems as a roots, leg is the trunk, arms as the branches and leaves, head as top of the tree, all make the posture in the shape of a tree.¹¹

Makarasana: Makarasana is a relaxative posture. The posture is called Makarasana as the body in this asana resembles the shape of makara. In Sanskrit makara means crocodile.

Paschimottanasana: Pashchimottanasana means stretching the posterior region. In Sanskrit, Pashchima means 'posterior' and uttana means 'stretch-up'. In this posture, posterior muscles of the body get stretched hence, it is called Pashchimottasana.

Dhanurasana: In Sanskrit Dhanur means ‘bow’. This is called the bow posture because in this posture the body resembles a bow with its string attached to it.

Chakrasana: Chakra means 'wheel'. In this asana, the body assumes the shape of a wheel, hence, it is called Chakrasana. This asana improves flexibility of whole body especially the back.

Vajrasana: This is a meditative posture. It is the only asana which can be practised immediately after taking meals. In the final posture spine must be erect. Heels should be outside and buttocks should be resting on the heels.

Bhujangasana: Bhujanga in Sanskrit means cobra (snake). In this asana, the body looks like a cobra, hence it is called Bhujangasana. In this asana take Breathe comfortably. Practice this asana as per the optimal capacity without any discomfort.¹²

Pawanamuktasana: The Sanskrit word pawana means ‘air’ or ‘wind’ and mukta means ‘freedom’ or ‘release’. This is called as the ‘wind relieving posture’ as it assists in releasing trapped digestive gas from the stomach and intestines.

Gomukhasana: Go means ‘cow’ and mukha means ‘mouth’ or ‘face’. In this asana, the position of legs look like the face of cow, hence, it is called Gomukhasana.

Shalabhasana: In Sanskrit Shalabha refers to 'locust' (grasshopper) and asana means 'posture'. The final posture of this asana imitates a locust (grasshopper).

Matsyasana: Matsya means 'fish'. In this asana the body takes the posture of a floating fish, hence it is called matsyasana.

Halasana: Hala in Sanskrit and Hindi means 'plough'. In the final position of this asana, the body resembles the shape of a plough.

Shavasana: It is a traditional relaxing posture. The posture is called shavasana as it resembles a dead body. In Sanskrit, shava means a 'dead body'. In this asanas Take a comfortable supine position which offers least resistance to the gravity. Continue focussing on the natural breathing. Let the breathing be as natural as possible with attention on the abdominal movements and also on the sensations of the touch of air within the nose walls.¹³

Pranayam:

Kapalabhati: Kapalabhati is considered a kriya (cleansing practice) which cleanses the specific parts of body by detoxifying them. In Sanskrit, Kapala means 'skull' and bhati means 'shine'. Kapalabhati is supposed to cleanse frontal brain.¹⁴

Anuloma-viloma Pranayama- The Anuloma means 'towards' and Viloma means 'reverse'. In this pranayama nostrils are alternatiely used in reverse order for each inhalation and exhalation. This pranayama is also called Nadishodhana pranayama. Anuloma - viloma Pranayama reduces the anxiety and brings harmony to the mind and body.¹⁵

Bhastrika Pranayama: The word Bhastrika has been taken from a Sanskrit word bhastra which means 'a pair of bellows'. In this pranayama, we imitate the action of bellows by inhaling and exhaling rapidly and forcefully.

Seetkari Pranayama: In Seetkari Pranayama, a sound of 'see' or 'seet' is made during inhalation, hence, it is called Seetkari Pranayama. Seetkari Pranayama keeps the mind cool and enhances concentration. It tranquillizes body and mind both. It helps in controlling thirst and hunger.

Bhramari Pranayama:

The word bhramari is derived from a Sanskrit word bhramara which means a 'black humming bee'. In Bharamari Pranayama, a sound resembling the sound of a black bee is produced, therefore, it is called Bhramari Pranayama. It improves concentration. The sound which resonates in the brain, removes tension and anxiety.¹⁶

Importance of Yoga:

Good health is the right of every human being. But this right depends on individual, social and environmental factors. Along with environmental or social factors to a large extent, we can

develop a better immune system and a better perception of oneself so that other conditions do not affect us adversely and we can achieve good health. Health is a positive concept. Positive health does not mean merely freedom from disease, but it also include a jubilant and energetic feeling of well-being with an amount of general resistance and capacity to easily cultivate immunity against specific offending agents.¹⁷

Yoga is one of the most powerful drugless system of treatment. It is having its own concept of wellness which has been scientifically understood and presented by many. Yoga can be adopted as lifestyle for promoting our physical and mental health. Yoga, if introduced at the school level, would help to inculcate healthy habits and lifestyle to achieve good health. The aim of yoga thus, at the school level, is to encourage a positive and healthy lifestyle for physical, mental and emotional health of children. Yoga helps in the development of strength, stamina, endurance and high energy at physical level.¹⁸ It also empowers oneself with increased concentration, calm, peace and contentment at mental level leading to inner and outer harmony.

Benefits of yoga doing in daily routine:

1. Yoga improves strength, balance and flexibility.
2. It improves concentration.
3. It removes excess fat.
4. Yoga benefits heart health.
5. Yoga relaxes you, to help you sleep better.
6. Yoga can mean more energy and brighter moods.
7. Yoga helps you manage stress.
8. It gives energy to the body.
9. Yoga promotes better self-care.
10. Yoga helps with back pain relief.
11. Yoga can ease arthritis symptoms.
12. Yoga connects you with a supportive community.
13. It improves blood circulation all over the body.
14. It provides flexibility to the whole body.
15. It warms up the body.

Discussion:

These reviews suggest a number of areas where yoga may be beneficial, but more research is required for virtually all of them to more definitively establish benefits. physical fitness can be improved by training, using either yoga or conventional exercises, it is of interest that in individuals with pain yoga may have beneficial effects with overall moderate effects sizes. However, these effects were strong particularly in healthy individuals, but much weaker in patients with chronic pain conditions. The beneficial effects might be explained by an increased physical flexibility, by calming and focusing the mind to develop greater awareness and diminish anxiety, reduction of distress, improvement of mood, and so forth. Because patients may recognize that they are able to be physically active, even despite of persisting pain symptoms, they may therefore experience higher self-competence and self-awareness, which contributes to higher quality of life.

Conclusion:

This review of literature reveals promising early evidence that yoga practice can positively impact brain health. The public interest towards yoga and meditation is increasing day by day due to their beneficial effects in mental and physical health. Since the ancient time, yoga has been used as a holistic relaxation practice which is effective against hypertension, obesity, anxiety, insomnia and aging. The weight of available evidence suggests that yoga practice is safe and can bring many health benefits to practitioners, whether they are young, old, healthy, recovering from illness or looking for a therapeutic option to help them to manage a chronic condition. Conceivably, asanas particularly have a positive effect on fitness and physical flexibility with a secondary effect on the mental state, while the pranayama practices and relaxation/ meditation techniques may result in greater awareness, less stress, and higher well-being and quality of life. However, this remains to be shown in well-performed future studies. this review can offer the preliminary groundwork for researchers to identify key brain networks and regions of interest as we move toward advancing the neuroscience of yoga.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Not Applicable

ABBREVIATIONS: Not Applicable

SOURCE OF SUPPORT: None

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12. Bhujangāsana: Gheranda Samhita.ii.42, with some variation, Kirana Tika-ii. 46 on Yogasutra, Hathayoga Samhita-49, Shri Yoga Kaustubha-62, Yogamarga Pradipa-19, Yoga Rahasya of Nathamuni-ii.14, Jaypur Central Museum-7174.
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14. A variation of BhastrikaKumbhaka of Gheranda Samhita-v.70-72, Kumbhaka Paddhati-164-165, Hathapradipika, Hatharatnavali-22-24, Hathatatvakaumudi-x.12-14, Yuktabhavadeva-vii.110-118.
15. Hathapradipika, It has visualization and internal retention breath. Additionally, Gheranda Samhita-v.38-45 has time units for inhalation, retention and exhalation.
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