

Practical Effectiveness of Yoga

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ABSTRACT

It is true that Yoga is ancient. In fact, its origin is shrouded in antiquity. No one really knows when Yoga was first developed or who gave it to man. There are many historical conjectures which even suggests that the Gods themselves taught Yoga to man. The fact is that yogic practices were known even in the Vedic times, Indian Rishis of ancient times, recognised the unalterable fact of life, namely that man is not a mere body, not a mere mind, but a body mind complex in which one reacts on the other end in which one cannot be separated from each other. No modern educationist and thinkers could possibly disagree with such a comprehensive view of man. Yoga is the physical, mental and spiritual practice, which originated in ancient India with a view to attain a state of permanent peace. The term Yoga is derived from either of the two roots, yujr yoga (to yoke) or Yujsamadhu (to concentrate). The yoga sutras of Patanjali define Yoga as "the stilling of the changing states of mind". Yoga has also been popularly defined as "union with the divine". Yoga even emphasizes that mind influences the body more than the body influences the mind. In the present paper, we have discussed about several benefits of Yoga which can be highly used as a source of development for individual as well as social well being.

KEYWORDS: Spiritual, Physical, Mental, Individual, Social, Divine, Benefit

INTRODUCTION

It is a popular saying that a sound mind could lead to a healthy body. Everybody has the right to be happy. Happiness and peace comes from within. Healthy body makes us free from physical pain and thus mind will not get disturbed. In Yoga various types of meditation are taught and it helps to focus on inner-self. It helps to focus on positive thinking and push all the negative thoughts away. Every disease and sickness is considered nothing more than an imbalance in the natural harmony of the body and mind. Restoring this balance leads to true healing. Yoga has become very popular world wide as the people realize the importance of self-contentment and inner peace. The Yoga philosophy emphasizes on both the physical postures, mudras, etc. and also internal Yoga of Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi so that the physical and mental health can be accomplished. Yoga in today's day to day fast life, trains the body, mind and spirit to become strong and flexible, release stress and create inner peace, while developing a deep connection with ones spirit, intuition and personal power. All of these are essential for living a healthy balanced life. The main aim of Yogic Philosophy is attainment of the higher state of the mind through a systematic progress. For this Patanjali presents eight-fold Yogic

practices in Yogasutra. The word yoga means the communication of the present self with the higher universal self (Vivekanand S., 1893).

PRACTICAL UTILITIES OF YOGA

The benefits of yoga are unlimited. At the physical level, Yoga and its cleansing practices has proven to be extremely effective for various disorders. Many people who practice Yoga say that it reduces anxiety and stress, improves mental clarity, and even helps them to sleep better. The Science of Yoga and its techniques have now been reoriented to suit modern sociological needs and lifestyle. Experts of various branches of medicine including modern medical science are realizing the role of these techniques in the prevention of disease and promotion of health. Daily practice of Yoga is beneficial in itself, leading to improved health, emotional well being clarity and joy in living. Yoga is a subject which can be looked at intellectually and some useful and beneficial ideas imbibed.

Experience Yoga shows us that regular practice of the Asanas and Pranayama exercises plus the harmonious disposition of the consciousness help us to quickly develop tendencies inside us towards a positive mental approach" (Bimali, D.N. and Joshi, K.L. 2005). Even a discussion of these subjects helps one relieve mental tensions and change attitudes. Simple asanas help to stretch and relax the whole body and neutralize tensions. The sincere practice of Yoga postures can benefit all level of experience. Yoga establishes deep calm, self-confidence and keeps you fit (Brena S.F., 1972). If one considers the specific health benefits it can be classified under two forms of benefits as follows:

PHYSICAL BENEFITS

- **Flexibility:** Yoga has positions that act upon the various joints of the body. It has been found that the body which may have been quite rigid starts experiencing a remarkable flexibility in even toes parts which may have not been consciously worked upon. Stretching the light body in new ways will help it to become more flexible, bringing greater range of motion to muscles and joints.
- **Strength:** Many Yoga poses requires the support to the weight of our own body. Balance on one leg (such as in Tree Pose) or supporting the body with arms (such as in Downward Facing Dog).
- **Muscle Tone:** Muscles that have become flaccid, weak or sloth are stimulated repeatedly to shed excess flab and flaccidity and a by-product of getting stronger, one can expect to see increased muscle tone. Yoga helps in shaping long and lean muscle.
- **Pain Prevention:** Increased flexibility and strength can help prevent the causes of some types of back pain. Many people who suffer from back pain spend a lot of time in some sitting work or sitting on a computer or driving a car. That can cause tightness and spinal compression, which can be prevented with the help of Yoga.
- **Better Breathing:** Most of us breathe very shallowly into the lungs and do not give much thought how we breathe. Pranayama focuses the attention on the breathing and teach us how to better use our lungs, which benefits the entire body. Certain types of breathing can also help clear the nasal passages and even calm the central nervous system, which has both physical and mental benefits.

MENTAL BENEFITS

- **Mental Calmness:** Yoga asana practice is intensely physical. Concentrating so intently on what our body is doing has the effect of bringing calmness to the mind. Yoga also introduces us to meditation techniques, such as watching how we breathe and disengagement from our thoughts, which help and calms the mind.
- **Stress Reduction:** Physical activity is good for relieving stress, and this is particularly true for Yoga. Because of the concentration required, our daily troubles, both large and small, seem to melt away during the time we are doing our Yoga. This provides a much needed break from our stress.
- **Body Awareness:** Doing Yoga will give us an increased awareness of our own body. We are often called upon to make small, subtle movements to improve our alignment. Overtime, this will increase our level of comfort in our own body.

Figures



Figure 1: Physical Benefits

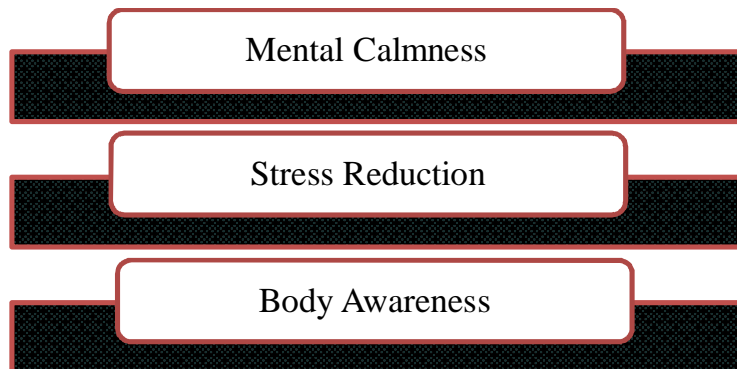


Figure 1: Mental Benefits

Here it does not end. There are many more other benefits which are listed out below:

- In other systems of physical exercises, the internal organs of the body do not get proper exercise, while Yoga asanas give sufficient exercise to the internal organs of the body.
- Improves blood circulation, massages internal organs and glands for optimum health.
- Enhances sensory activity, mental focus, concentration, mental clarity, will power and determination.
- Dissolves pre-competition anxiety and stress. Helps to balance and manage emotions that could focus concentration and judgement.
- Practicing Yoga can help to control the blood- pressure through breathing techniques.
- Regular practices of Yoga controls the diabetes and proper Yoga exercises may lower blood glucose.
- Regular practice of Yoga reduces the symptoms of Yoga and even reduction in asthma.
- Pranayama tones up the stomach, the liver, the bladder, the small and the large intestines and the digestive system too.

YOGA'S VIEW OF DISEASE

Yoga considers that most diseases are due to insufficient life force, either in the body as a whole, or blockage of life force to one part of the body. This leads to a lowered body resistance or immunity to diseases. Those practicing Yoga have learned many centuries ago that most diseases are due to reduced immunity. Medical Science is gradually coming to the same conclusion. When the whole body has lowered life force, the result is a lowered vitality level, poor health and susceptibility to infection. No infections would occur if the body's life force is high enough to fight off the infections. Pathogens (bacteria, fungus, viruses and so on) are a normal part of life and will only cause trouble when the body's resistance is too low to keep them in check. The best way to increase the general life force of the body is by good nutrition, sufficient deep sleep, a positive mental attitude and Yoga.

The ancient Yogins were all aware of the importance of the spine in relation to disease, since most of their Asanas or Postures were designed to make the spine more flexible to prevent spinal misalignments. Some of the asanas will even correct minor spinal misalignments. The spine is so important for a high vitality level, good health and the correction of many health conditions that a whole science of healing has been developed to correct spinal misalignments.

HEALING EFFECTS OF YOGA

Yoga has been use for disorders such as: Acid Stomach, Addictions, Asthma, Backache, Bronchitis, Cancer, Cold, Constipation, Depression, Diabetes (not a cure), Eyestrain, Headache, Heart Disorders, Hypertension, Migraines, Obesity, etc. All of the above facts of the modern world are quite pertinent and experienced by each one of us. The puranas as have rightly pointed out the importance of Yoga at the physical, mental or psychological and intellectual level which would be useful for the betterment of the individual and social life of the modern world. Even modern teachers of Yoga have emphasized Yoga in this respect and even modern Doctors/Physicians have realized the importance of Yoga in curing different kinds of physical and mental disorders (Chaged B., 2008).

CONCLUSION

1. Yoga should be taken as a method to obtain effective health and maintain the physiological harmony of the body, as well as to achieve a state of mental perfection by progressing spirituality, as a result of complete self- control.
2. Yoga is a universal path on which all of those who have determination may start whatever age, social status, belief or religion.
3. Yoga does not contain any mysteries and is accessible to everyone. There is just one condition- it must be practised long time, regularly with faith and under proper guidance.
4. Yoga gives hope and self – confidence to all those who are disappointed by their materialistic life or are inextricably bound up in all sorts of problems.
5. Yoga is a unique method for us to allow our personality to unfold to its fullest extent.
6. Yoga teaches us to live reasonably and avoid uselessly wasting our energy and shows us how to exercise self control and preserve a positive attitude towards universal love.

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