

Yoga for Holistic Health

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Received on 13.07.2019; Accepted on 13.11.2019

Abstract

Mankind has been concerned about their health, protection from evils of diseases and suffering since the dawn of civilization. Since then they started to practice yoga which cures various health disorders and brings peace to the mind. Here an attempt has been made to collect available data related to yoga with respect to holistic health.

Keywords: Yoga; Holistic health; Mind.

How to cite this article:

Chetan Nimbalkar, Ravichandra Menthe, Mahadev P Mangane, *et al.* Yoga for Holistic Health. Indian J Ancien Med Yog. 2019;12(4):141–144.

Introduction

Yoga is an ancient philosophy and practice of health and well being, which has been originated in India many thousands of years ago – designed to develop union of body, mind and spirit. Then people were supposed to live physically very active in order to survive in those conditions. There were no machineries to rely on for everyday tasks, no plumbing systems etc. The routine of daily life provided people with all of the exercise they needed.

It was in this physically demanding world that yoga originated, not to give people more physical exercise, but as a system of healing with special emphasis on the mind. Yoga not only means asana, it also address all dimensions of the human system: body, breath, mind, personality and emotions. Yoga is mind–body technique which involves relaxation, mediation and a systematic set of physical exercises synchronized with breathing.

Being holistic, it is the best means for achieving physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being of the practitioners. This can be achieved by systematic and disciplined practice of yoga.

Yoga

Yoga facilitate and controls the mind from the objects and provokes to mix with atma, i.e. soul to attain moksha (salvation), which is eternal, the utmost goal and ultimate solution for absolute happiness which is devoid of the risk of sorrow, pain, difficulty and rebirth. In recent years, plenty of research has been carried out on therapeutic effects of yoga. In fact, from the studies it is observed that the practice of yoga contributes enormously to one's physiological and psychological growth.

Branches of yoga

The knowledge of yoga can be better obtained by the following seven yogas viz., *Rajayoga*, *Hatayoga*, *Kundaliniyoga*, *Mantrayoga*, *Layayoga*, *Karmayoga* and *Bhaktiyoga*.

Rajayoga:

For samyag-yoga-siddhi, practicing the *ashtangayoga* is important. They are as follows:

Yama: It means accepting good qualities like: *Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, Aparigraha*.

Niyama: It means following the good qualities like: *Shaucha, Santosha, Tapasya, Swadhyaya, Ishwara – pranidhanam*.

Asana: Bending or moulding the body in different posture for maintenance of health and to cure the diseases.

Pranayama: Restricting the breath to purify the indriyas and to improve mental concentration by *rechaka, puraka* and *kumbhaka* activities.

Pratyahara: Controlling the mind by restricting the indriyas from their objects.

Dhyana: It gives the meaning as meditation.

Dharana: The power of concentrating the mind on *shatchakra*.

Samadhi: Union of mind & soul. *Samayag – yoga – siddhi* gives miraculous achievements known as *Asthasiddhis*. They are: *Anima, Mahima, Garima, Laghima, Prapti, Prakamyta, Ishatwaand Vashitwa*.

Hatayoga:

In this Yoga the importance is given for *Antah – parimarjan* by practice of *Shat karma*. They are – *Dhauti, Vasti, Neti, Trataka, Nauli, Kapalabhati*.

Layayoga:

It (there are two types in it) is of two types – *Pranalaya* and *Manolaya*.

Bhaktiyoga:

It is worshipping the God for no cause or desire. The nine types in it are *Shravana, Kirtana, Smarana, Pada-seva, Archana, Vandana, Dasya, Sakhya* and *Atma – nivedana*.

Karmayoga:

It is the way of putting all our efforts to work and responsibilities with love and devotion without any expectations.

Kundaliniyoga:

By the regular practice of ten types of mudras, the *Kundalinishakti* which is present at *Muladhara chakra* get stimulated, it travels through *Sushumna, Ida* and *Pingala Nadi* and ultimately reaches the *Brahmarandra*. It is the sign for *atma-nairmalya*, i.e. *Kaivalya* (Salvation).

The ten types of Mudras are: *Mahamudra, Mahabhandha, Mahavedha, Kecharimudra, Udyanabhandha, Mulabhandha, Jalandhara-bhandha, Viparitarini, Vajroli* and *Shaktichalana*.

Mantrayoga:

The practice of mantras helps to achieve the super natural powers. The intent of all the above yogas is to control the sense organs and mind for the union of *Atma* with *Paramatma*, i.e. *Supreme soul*, which is known as *salvation* (*Moksha*).

Benefits of yoga

Yoga normalizes and regulates electrical and chemical impulses, the brain, heart rhythm, blood pressure, skin's capacity for resistance. It also contributes in curing the mental disorders like anxiety, depression, panic attacks and moodswings. It enhances memory, ability, heal old traumas, improve emotional stability, render joy and also happiness.

It strengthens our body muscles, improves flexibility, reflexes and stamina. Reduces fat, improves circulation and stimulates the immune system. Keeps one younger biologically. Relaxes and helps to handle stress situations more easily. It produces the happy and positive feelings so that one can enjoy the way they are and their uniqueness. Perk's up one's powers of concentration and creativity. It also boosts emotional stability. Develops a sense of well-being and calm.

It has a great impact on personality development, it brings great amount of energy and charisma to live with a great confidence and keeps our motivation high.

Yoga at home; Tips: Choose convenient time and comfortable place. Practice on relatively empty stomach. Wear very light and stretchable clothes.

Warm up a little before getting into intense yoga postures. Be gentle and be consistent. Include a variety of yoga techniques.

Discussion

Yoga is systematic set of practices carried through a meditative way, through this one can expand consciousness and awareness to greater extent which helps to focus only on the essentials of life with inner peace and salvation by overcoming the sufferings caused by dysfunctional perception and cognition. It is the way to the enlightened and omniscience consciousness to understand the actual and the perceived reality.

It is a technique for entering into other bodies, generating multiple bodies and the attainment of other supernatural accomplishments.

Yoga is not simply exercise or type of gymnastics, the entire aim of yoga is to understand what body, mind and soul is. Also it has a great deal of benefits on human body and systems, it rejuvenates and strengthens our muscles, nerves, bones, all our body systems to function well for longer time.

All the body system are coordinated with each other. Cardio-Respiratory System: Practicing yoga leads to significant decrease in oxygen consumption, heart rate and diastolic blood pressure. Shavasana and pranayama are helpful in achieving deep psychosomatic relaxation. Shavasana itself proved to be effective in the treatment of hypertension.

Pranayama helps in improving ventilatory functions in the form of lowered respiratory rate and increase in the forced vital capacity, forced expiratory volume.

Musculoskeletal System

The systematic set of musculoskeletal stretches performed during the yoga strengthens and improves musculo-skeletal co-ordination which further improves flexibility, agility, endurance of the body since it is the framework of the human body system.

As like in the musculoskeletal, the series of practiced poses and counter poses bring the good neuro-muscular co-ordination, great synergy, improved anaerobic power, increased steadiness, stamina, strength and relaxed orthostatic tolerance.

Nervous system

Consistent practicing of yoga results in improved awareness and attentiveness. As per

Electroencephalographic study a practicing yogi and meditation improves alpha rhythm and increases the brains hemispheric coherence and homogeneity. Practicing meditation improves the focus which brings clarity of thoughts and helps to keep focused by avoiding mental distractions. It increases the tranquility and awareness. This ultimately leads to increased concentration and improvement in other important cognitive domains.

Sleep: Yoga has been reported to increase the quality of sleep. (a consistent practice meditation) Following cyclic meditation, the self-rating of sleep based on visual analog scales showed an increase in the feeling that the sleep was refreshing, an increase in feeling "good" in the morning, an overall increase in sleep duration. It was observed that consistent practice of yoga improves both the objective and subjective quality of sleep.

Anxiety: Practicing yoga leads to significant reduction in anxiety, depression and tension. It also helps to overcome stress and helps for subjective well-being, vigor and decrease in salivary cortisol, fatigue and depression, increases physical well-being, relieves headache and back pain. From this it is clear, yoga has got a potential role as a component in the management of depressive and anxiety disorders.

Digestive System

The consistent practice of yoga postures has a great deal of benefits on the digestive system. Performing stretches serves like a internal massage on digestive tract and abdominal area covering and relaxing stomach area, liver, pancreas and intestines. It helps to strengthen the muscles of internal organs by ensuring proper flow of blood and oxygen.

Metabolic processes are activated in organs and tissues, saving them from stagnation. A large amount of enzymes are generated in order to support the absorption of nutrients, while intestinal peristalsis is improved, excretory process function better. Hence, in this way yoga helps digestive system to function in proper manner.

Endocrine System

Studies have shown that practice of yoga orchestrates fine tuning and modulates neuro - endocrine axis which results in beneficial changes. The long term regular practice of yoga increases the sensitivity of the insulin and attenuation of the negative relationship between body weight or waist circumference and insulin sensitivity, also increases the sensitivity of B cells of pancreas to the

glucose signal.

Reproductive System

From case studies of pregnant women it is observed that the regular practice of yoga postures with pranayama followed by meditation for the duration of an hour a day resulted in increase in birth weight and decrease in pre-term labor, reduction in physical pain from baseline to post intervention in second trimester, greater reduction in perceived stress and anxiety in third trimester.

Consistent yoga practice proven to be a great secret of a healthy physique and mind, a higher energy levels which increases productivity, it brings a great deal of charisma and enthusiasm which makes us enjoy our daily activities and maintain a healthy lifestyle. This great deal of energy with great consciousness brings awareness and helps to tackle any kind of stressful situations with joyous attitude in our everyday life. It also helps to keep calm, kind, humble and compassionate in uncontrollable situations.

Most importantly, it not only makes us healthier and fitter, it also makes us happier and better human beings, undoubtedly, that is the most vital requirement of our times.

Conclusion

The yogic path to holistic well-being, therefore, is both extremely comprehensive and highly specific to each person.

Yoga does not treat specific diseases or specific symptoms ; as stated earlier, it treats the individual and his entire human system : the physical body, the breath, the mind and the emotions. Yoga is a blessing for the whole humanity. Yoga helps in developing our total personality in an integrated and holistic manner.

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