

ANALYSIS OF YOGA FOR HEALTH & PHYSICAL FITNESS IN THE MODERN HUMANITY

Reena

M. P.ed student

Maharni kishori jat kanya mahavidhalya , rohtak

ABSTRACT

Yoga is the only science which takes care of the all-round development of three essential elements- body, mind and soul together. Yogic Practice is a holistic science which includes the culture of the body, the mind as well as the spirit. Yoga, not only improves physical and mental health and intellectual ability, but also improves character and behaviour of men by nipping in the bud the devil in them with the help of Yama-Niyama. This provides a strong moral foundation to men's life on which they build their physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual super-structure, and prove themselves to be a man or a woman in the real sense of the term. Yoga is a philosophy which first developed in India, in which physical exercises and meditation are believed to help people to become calmer and united in spirit with God. Yoga is a type of exercise in which you move your body into various positions in order to become more fit or flexible, to improve your breathing and to relax your mind.

Key words : Yoga, life, meditation, mind

INTRODUCTION

The word 'Yoga' is not unfamiliar to us. We have some ideas about it, though the ideas may be wrong or right. At one time, yoga was confined to very few dedicated people, initiated to that order by their Gurus, most of whom were ascetics and hermits. The general belief, even among the educated people, was that yoga was meant only for those people who had left their worldly life and started living in hermitage, and not for the householders. But, after it has been popularised among the masses by yogis like Swami Ramdev, Shri Ravi Shankar and others, through mass-media, particularly through television and mass-yoga-camps, it is now widely practised by the common people, irrespective of gender, religion, caste, birth, age and profession, in order to gain relief from ailments and to lead a healthy, happy and prosperous life.

IMPORTANCE OF YOGA

In the present-day world, the diseases of psycho-somatic origin, such as hyper-tension, heart-diseases, asthma, diabetes, insomnia are increasing very fast and the modern medical science has failed to cure these diseases. After a lot of scientific experiments done on patients undergoing yogic treatment, it has been found to be the most effective treatment for all these ailments. Here lies the importance of yogic practice. It is found to be the best means of leading a tension-free life, which keeps men free from physical, mental, as well as, psycho-somatic disorders. Yoga education is a holistic education which includes physical, mental, emotional, intellectual, moral, spiritual, social as well as environmental education, due to which the practitioner of yoga becomes healthy in the true sense of the term. Other than yoga, there is no such system which prepares a man holistically and therein lies the importance of yoga.

Yoga for General Physical Fitness of an Individual

The vital role played by yoga in general physical fitness is related to health. The lifestyle changes leading to positive energy balances has been the curative factor for many of the metabolic disorders like hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and obesity related problems that affects the general physical fitness or health of an

individual. Yoga which is a time tested method, has shown great positive influence on physical, mental, psychological, social and spiritual personality of an individual. (Chya,2006)

It is an interesting fact that people who practice yoga regularly can markedly grow up taller as their vertebra stretches. There are innumerable benefits which people get from yoga and because of this reason, yoga has become one of the fastest growing form of exercise in the world. Yoga, in reality, creates balance of mind as well as of body. It helps in developing flexibility and strength. Different poses or Asanas of yoga have different physical and mental benefits. There are numerous Asanas of Yoga and each has its own amazing benefits to the mind, body and soul of an individual.

Significance of Physical fitness

Physical fitness contains the identified thoughts about general fitness, It is the capacity to carry out the day's activities without undue fatigue and state of health and well-being (Essential of Physical of Education by Singh, Ajmer).

Physical fitness is for the most part realized through proper nourishment, exercise and rest. Yoga is one of the most important practices that significantly enables an individual to reach an ideal level of general fitness.

BENEFITS OF YOGA

- Yoga encourages overall health and wellness.
- Yoga brings balance in mind, body and soul.
- Yoga improves and regulates circulatory, respiratory and digestive systems.
- Yoga improves focus and concentration level.
- Yoga helps in a whole range of ailments including asthma, high blood pressure, lower back pain, arthritis.etc.
- Yoga promotes flexibility and suppleness, strength and stamina, and tones the internal as well as external organs.
- Yoga lubricates joints, ligaments and tendons.
- Yoga decreases soreness of muscle.
- Yoga restores energy levels.

Following are the main components of Yoga, that are helpful in maintaining health and general physical fitness of an individual to carry out day - to - day activities.

- Asanas
- Pranayam
- Meditation
- Surya Namaskar

Asanas

“Asana is a steady and comfortable posture of body”

The word Asana comes from the Sanskrit word “Aas.” The two characteristics of Asana are ‘stability’ and comfort’. It practically answers all questions related to the Asana. So Patanjali defines ‘Asana’ in his epic “YOGA SUTRA as “**Sthira Sukham Asanam**”. Asanas are special patterns of posture that stabilize mind and body through stretching. They serve the purpose of establishing proper rhythm in the neuromuscular tonic impulses and improve the general muscle tone and fitness of individuals.

Some Asanas that affect the general physical fitness

Shavasana



Benefits:

- Resumes cardiovascular flow to normal.
- Slows heart rate and decreases pulse rate.
- Promotes complete unwinding.
- Relaxes mind and body.

Paschimottanasana



Benefits:

- Head to knee posture assists in offsetting glucose levels and metabolism.
- Improves adaptability of sciatic nerve and ankle, knee and hip joints.
- Improves mental concentration and co-ordination.
- Strengthens and extends hamstrings.
- Mobilizes joints.

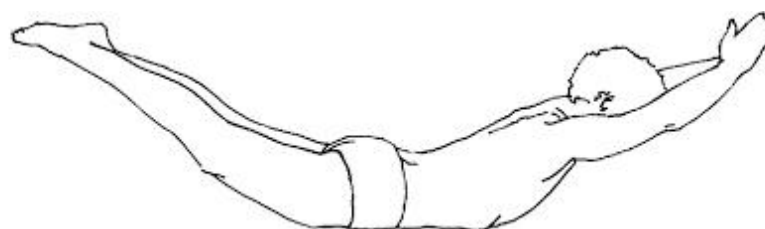
Tadasana



Benefits:

- Improves and cures the flat foot problem.
- Adds to mobility, agility and flexibility of the entire body.
- Releases stomach tension.
- Helps in the increase of height.
- Stretches the spine and relieves lower back torment.

Poorna Shalabhasana



Benefits:

- Improves the functioning of liver and spleen.
- Helps to cure loss of appetite and controls blood sugar level in the body.
- Full Locus increases strength in the middle spine; it helps in curing body postures defect sceoliosis, kyphosis, spondylitis and in slipped disc problem.
- It opens up the rib cage and increases its elasticity.
- It also tones up abdominal muscles, upper arms, hips and thighs.

Pranayam

“Pranayam means controlling the prana”

The word Pranayam is derived from the the Sanskrit word called “Prana’ and “Ayama.” The word prana denotes the air that is exhaled from the body, Ayama has two meanings - to elongate and to with hold.



Benefits:

- Regulates breathing rate.
- Increases life span.
- Improves blood circulation.
- Makes heart healthy.
- Promotes proper functioning of various body organs.
- Pranayam controls respiratory impulses.
- Positively influences the functioning of the brain.
- Promotes mental health by enhancing the flow of blood to the brain.

Meditation

The term *meditation* refers to a broad variety of practices that include techniques designed to promote relaxation, build internal energy or life force (*qi*, *ki*, *prana*, etc.) and develop compassion, love, patience, generosity and forgiveness. A particularly ambitious form of meditation aims at effortlessly sustaining single-pointed concentration meant to enable its practitioner to enjoy an indestructible sense of well-being while engaging in any life activity.



Meditation is the practice involving control of the functions of the brain. It starts with the initial withdrawal of the senses from external objects and gradually leads to a state of complete oblivion of the external environment, In the physical body, meditation has the following benefits:

- Regulating of blood flow.
- Slowing of heart rate.
- Lowering of high blood pressure.
- Decreasing of muscular tensions by lowering of oxygen consumption in mental tension and headaches.
- Enhancing of the immune system.
- Decreasing of respiratory rate.
- Accelerating of post-operative healing.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that Yoga occupies a highly esteemed place, from time immemorial. Our worldly lives are always full of pain and suffering. We give in our endless efforts in order to gain or overcome relief from such sufferings and also to gain happiness. And as a result of our efforts, pleasure comes to our lives, although for a temporary period. The universal importance of yoga lies in the fact that its regular practice with sincerity and devotion drives away worldly pains and sufferings for good and the practitioner enjoys permanent peace and bliss. In the present-day world, the diseases of psycho-somatic origin, such as hyper-tension, heart-diseases, asthma, diabetes, insomnia are increasing very fast and the modern medical science has failed to cure these diseases. After a lot of scientific experiments done on patients undergoing yogic treatment, it has been found to be the most effective treatment for all these ailments. Here lies the importance of yogic practice. It is found to be the best means of leading a tension-free life, which keeps men free from physical, mental, as well as, psycho-somatic disorders.

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