



Contribution of Yoga towards the Positive Enhancement of Health

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Abstract

Yoga can help to check any imbalance in muscular development and will enable both mind and body to function more efficiently. Practicing of yoga asanas strengthen the muscles, release physical tension and improve concentration and poise. Yoga makes limbs balanced strong and relaxed. The standing poses improve balance and muscle flexibility. Yogic practice can help players to relax and replenish their energy after strenuous games. It also promotes calm, clear thinking even in situations that call for fast reactions. Yoga stretches and strengthens all muscles of body and brings peace and calm to the mind and spirit. This article summarizes the importance of yoga with some practical examples.

Keywords: Yoga, Health, Living, Society.

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Introduction

Yoga is as old as civilisation. Early Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali are universally accepted as constituting the verbal foundation of the Yoga tradition. Among these, the Yoga Sutras provide the basis and inspiration for most of today's tradition of Yoga. In its recorded history and continuous evolution, Yoga has come to represent not only the ultimate goal, but also the many practices, techniques, methods and ways that to move towards that goal. Thus the literature includes numerous yogic paths. Yoga's classical definition is derived from the Sanskrit root "Yuj". Yoga represents the study, path and the means to proceed and also the absolute aim, which includes the following core concepts: the union of opposites, the effect the outside world has on the body, the yearning for and seeking of form of liberation; the merging of the individual consciousness with the Universal consciousness and the interest of discovering and attaining one's true self.

Yoga has shown through its long history that it represents the effort that we are going to make in achieving something, the path that will take us to the ultimate achievement and the progress that we are going to make along the way, and ultimately, the end result: the sum of total of our achievements. Experiencing life with awareness, with exposure to great depths of Yogic literature, reinforces my motivation and provides the drive to devote the effort required to follow the Yogic path.

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Science of Yoga

The science of yoga works on physical, mental, emotional, psychic and spiritual aspects of a person. When imbalance is experienced at this level, the organs, muscles and nerves no longer function in harmony, rather they are in opposition to each other. Therefore yoga aims at bringing the different bodily functions into perfect co-ordination so that they work for the good of the whole body. Yoga is one of India's wonderful gifts to mankind. One of its valuable qualities is that it builds up a store of physical health through the practice of a system of exercises called asanas which keep the body cleansed and fit. Yoga believes that exercise is essential for speedy removal of toxins and for keeping blood circulation and all internal processes functioning smoothly. Yoga is a science and it is based on observation and experiment. This method of observation and experiment is regarded in the west as a distinctly modern innovation, but as a matter of fact it was adopted in India in very ancient time by the 'ishis. Through the process of close observation and constant experiment they discovered the fine forces of nature, as also the laws that govern our physical, mental and spiritual being. Yoga was first summarized and systematized around the second century A.D. by a man known as Patanjali who discusses the nature of enlightenment, the means of attaining it, the obstacles and problems of practice and the ways of overcoming them. Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root 'YUJ' which means to join. The English word 'YOKE' also comes from the same root. Originally the literal significance of the two words were almost the same. The root verb 'YUJ' signifies to join oneself to something. Thus in its primary meaning it conveys the same idea of preparing for hard work (sports etc.) as the common English expression to go into the harness. The effort required is mental or physical, according to the

object in view. If the object be the acquirement of perfect health or longevity, the effort of both mind and body to accomplish this through certain practices is called yoga. Yoga derives its philosophy from Indian metaphysical beliefs. The word yoga comes from Sanskrit language and means union or merger. The ultimate aim of this philosophy is to strike a balance between mind and body and attain self-enlightenment. To achieve this, yoga uses movement, breath, posture, relaxation and meditation in order to establish a healthy, lively and balanced approach to life. Though the exact origins of Yoga are unknown but Yoga is considered to be the oldest physical discipline in existence. Yoga, thus symbolizes balance in every area of life. In the earlier times, the rationale of the Yoga postures and breathing exercises was to bring stability and relaxation so that practitioners could prepare for the rigors of meditation, sitting still and alert for long periods of time. In modern context also Yoga can play an important role in maintaining a fine balance between work and healthy mind.

Yoga is a science of right living and it works when integrated in our daily life. It works on all aspects of the person: the physical, mental, emotional, psychic and spiritual. The word yoga means 'unity' or 'oneness' and is derived from the Sanskrit word 'yuj' which means 'to join'. There are too many misconceptions clouding the science of Yoga. People perceive it to be some kind of black or white magic, sorcery, physical or mental debauchery through which miraculous feats can be performed. For some it is an extremely dangerous practice which should be limited to only those who have renounced the world. Few others think it to be a kind of mental and physical acrobaticism that is compatible only to a Hindu mind. Human mind is subject to certain weaknesses which are universal. Avidya wrong notions of the external world, asmita wrong notions of oneself, raga-longing and attachment for sensory objects and affections, dweshad is like and hatred for objects and persons, and abinivesha or the love of life are the five defects of the mind that must be removed. Yoga, the constant meditation and introspection eradicate these mental flaws.

Description of Yogic Practices

Pranayama (Anuloma-Viloma)

From a sitting position the subjects were asked to inhale through left nostril for 5 seconds and block the right nostril with right thumb. Then block the left nostril with fingers and hold the breath inside for 5 seconds. Then open right nostril and exhale for 10 seconds. The total duration of the process was 20 seconds. After that the subjects were asked to block the left nostril with right index finger and inhale for 5 seconds through right nostril and block the right nostril as well and hold in breath for 5 seconds then open the left nostril and exhale for 10 seconds. Repeat this process.

Surya Bheda

The subjects are asked to sit on Padmasana or Siddhasana. Close the eyes. Keep the left nostril closed with his right ring and little fingers. Slowly inhale without making any sound as long as you can do it comfortably through the right nostril. Then close the right nostril with his right thumb and retain the breath firmly pressing the chin against the chest (Jalandhara Bandha). Hold on the breath till perspiration oozes from the tips of the nails and roots of the hairs (hair follicles). This point cannot be reached at the very outside. The period of Kumbhaka were gradually increased. This was the limit of the sphere of practice of Surya Bheda Kumbhaka. Then exhale very slowly without making any sound through the left nostril by closing the right nostril with the thumb. Repeat OM mentally with Bhava and meaning during inhalation, retention and exhalation. Exhale after purifying the skull by forcing the breath up.

Ujjayi

The subjects are asked to sit on sit on Padmasana or Siddhasana. Close the mouth. Inhale slowly through both the nostrils in a smooth, uniform manner till the breath fills the space from the throat to the heart. Retain the breath as long as subjects can do it comfortably and then exhale slowly through the left nostril by closing the right nostril with your right thumb. Expand the chest when you inhale. During inhalation a peculiar sound was produced owing to the partial closing of glottis. The sound produced during inhalation should be of a mild and uniform pitch and continuous.

Ardha-Matsyendrasana



Method:

- ❖ Bend left knee, place left foot under right hip.
- ❖ Bend right knee, place right foot on left side of left knee.
- ❖ Hold left knee or right foot with the left hand - keep right knee on the left of left arm.

- ❖ Trunk to right, look back over right shoulder, right hand on ground or on waist as close to left thigh as possible.
- ❖ Repeat with left knee bent and trunk turning to left.

Benefits:

- ❖ Increase the elasticity of the spine, and massage the abdomen and internal organs

Badrasana



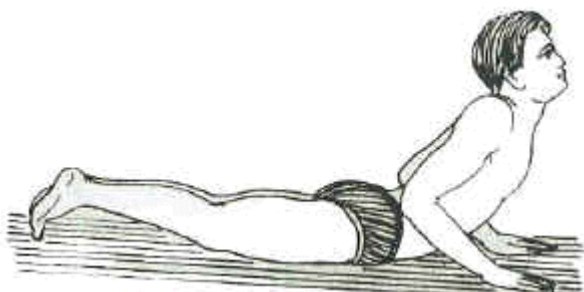
Method:

- ❖ Sit holding feet together.
- ❖ Heels as close to body as possible.
- ❖ Head up, chin down.
- ❖ Normal breathing.

Benefits:

- ❖ Specially recommended for those suffering from urinary disorder.
- ❖ The pelvis, the abdomen and the back get stimulated through a plentiful supply of blood.
- ❖ Keeps the kidneys, the prostate and the bladder healthy.

Bhujangasana



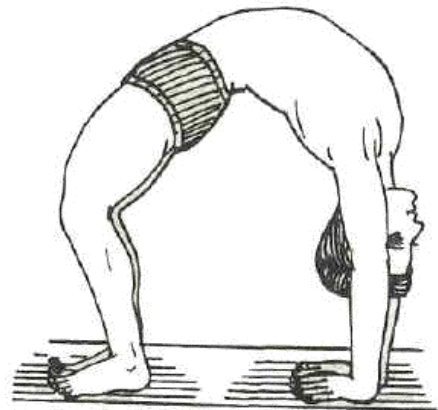
Method:

- ❖ Lie on your stomach, forehead on the ground, hands under shoulders.
- ❖ Raise your upper body by the strength of the back muscles, head up.
- ❖ Don't take help of the hands, they may remain on the ground or held on the back over the hips.

Benefits:

- ❖ Helps in keeping the dorsal spine elastic and strong.
- ❖ Backache due to overstrain can be thus relieved.
- ❖ Helps considerably in reducing abdominal fat.

Chakrasana



Method:

- ❖ Lie on your back.
- ❖ Bend knees, place feet apart and close to hips, place hands overhead, palms besides ears and shoulders.
- ❖ Push with hands and, without moving feet, raise trunk as high as possible to curve the back into an arch.
- ❖ Look on the ground between the hands.

Benefits:

- ❖ Builds a flexible back, stimulates the nerves of the spine.
- ❖ One of the powerful back bending postures.

Halasana



Method:

- ❖ Lie on your back, arms alongside.
- ❖ Raise legs and in Sarvangasan (you may take help of hands on the hips), then lower them

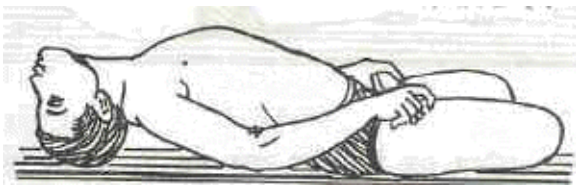
overhead, knees straight, ankles stretched, toes pointed and touching the ground.

- ❖ Arms stay on ground as in the beginning, palms on the ground.
- ❖ The posture resembles the shape of a plough.

Benefits:

- ❖ Makes the spine flexible, creates energy, and blood of the muscles of the back.
- ❖ Aids the functioning of the thyroid and thymus glands thus helping retain the individual's youthful physical characteristics for a longer period.

Matsyasana



Method:

- ❖ Sit with legs in Padmasana - knees bent, feet on opposite thighs, heels towards the abdomen.
- ❖ Lie on your back. Placing hands near the head for support
- ❖ Lift your back above the ground, keep the top of your head on the ground over a padded surface, e.g., a towel.
- ❖ Keep your hands on your feet.
- ❖ Normal breathing.

Benefits:

- ❖ Makes the neck flexible and strong, increases the size of the rib cage, widens the windpipe and thus helps deep breathing.
- ❖ Relieves the neck after sarvangasana.

Pashchimottasana



Method:

- ❖ Lie on your back, legs straight, arms overhead, hands together, palms facing up.
- ❖ Sit up, take hands overhead, back straight,
- ❖ Then bend forward to hold the big toes, head between arms and touching the knees.

Benefits:

- ❖ Reduces abdominal fat.
- ❖ Removes wind from the intestines and increases appetite.

Pavan-Muktasana



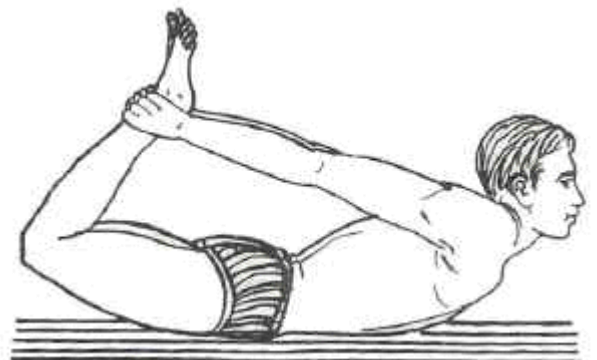
Method:

- ❖ Lie down on your back.
- ❖ Breath in. Then fold the left leg from the knees.
- ❖ Hold the fingers together and bring the folded leg to touch the stomach.
- ❖ Lift the head and touch the nose to the knee. The other leg remains straight. Hold the breath.
- ❖ Come to original position and leave the breath.
- ❖ Follow the same for the other leg.

Benefits:

- ❖ Removes gas from the abdomen and reduces abdominal fat.
- ❖ Increases the flexibility of the knees and hips.

Dhanurasana



Method:

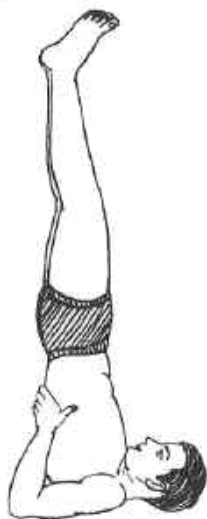
- ❖ Lie on your stomach.
- ❖ Bend knees, hold the ankles.
- ❖ Pull your hands and push with your legs, knees together, till the trunk forms an arch with only the stomach on the ground and Look up.
- ❖ After releasing the posture lie for a while in Shavasana.

Benefits:

- ❖ Reduces abdominal fat.

- ❖ The compressing of the spinal column, pressing the nerves with the scapula minimizes blood circulation while in the asana.
- ❖ But when the pose is released a greater supply of blood is endured to those very regions increasing spinal flexibility and definitely raising the vitality.

Sarvangasana



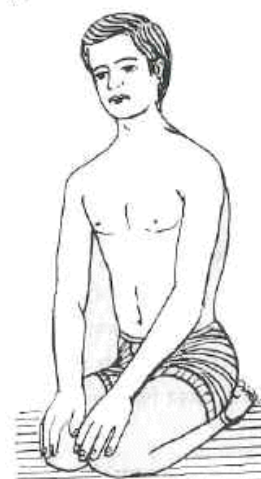
Method:

- ❖ Lie on your back, arms alongside.
- ❖ Raise both legs together - taking support of hands on the hips and the elbows on the ground.
- ❖ Straighten the body - feet, knees, hips and back form one vertical column from the base of the neck to the tip of the toes, feet stretched, toes pointed, chin pressed against the chest.
- ❖ Normal breathing.
- ❖ Lie on your back, arms alongside.
- ❖ Raise both legs together - taking support of hands on the hips and the elbows on the ground.
- ❖ Straighten the body - feet, knees, hips and back form one vertical column from the base of the neck to the tip of the toes, feet stretched, toes pointed, chin pressed against the chest.
- ❖ Normal breathing.

Benefits:

- ❖ Promotes healthy secretion of the circulatory, respiratory, alimentary and genito-urinary systems.
- ❖ Keeps the spine flexible preventing the bones from early ossification.
- ❖ Supplies large quantity of blood to the spinal roots of the nerves, thereby giving them sufficient nourishment.

Vajrasana



Method:

- ❖ Sit on your heels.
- ❖ Hands on knees, abdomen drawn in, chest up, back straight, shoulders squared, head erect.
- ❖ Normal breathing.

Benefits:

- ❖ Aids digestion and helps cure sciatica.

Savasana



- ❖ Lie flat on the back with the arms beside and in line with the body, palms facing upward.
- ❖ Move the feet slightly apart to a comfortable position and close the eyes. Relax the whole body. Do not move any part even if discomfort occurs.
- ❖ Let the breathing become rhythmic and natural. Become aware of the inhalation and exhalation.
- ❖ Count the number of respirations: I in, I out, and so on, continue to count for a few minutes. If the mind starts to wander bring it back to the counting.
- ❖ If you can keep the mind on the breath for a few minutes, the mind and body will relax.

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