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## Yoga a way to attain physical, mental and spiritual health

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### Abstract

Yoga is the science of life and the art of living. It is India's oldest scientific, perfect spiritual discipline. Yoga is a method of training the mind and body for discovering spiritual truths. Yoga is science of life; it offers us simple, easy remedies, techniques and methods of health and hygiene to assure physical and mental fitness with a minimum of time, effort and expense. Yoga is neither a sect nor an ideology but a practical training of mind and body. Yoga is also a technique for achieving purest form of self-awareness, devoid of all thoughts.

**Keywords:** Yoga, historical, spiritual, mental and health

### Introduction

Yoga in Daily Life is a practice consisting of eight levels of development in the field of physical, mental, social and spiritual health (Yadav, Kumar, Kumar, & Kumar, 2015) [5]. If body is physically healthy, mind is the concern treated, clear, and stress is low. These give the spaces in connecting with loved ones and maintain socially healthy relationships. If you are in peace and healthy you are in touch with your inner self, with others and your surroundings on a much deeper level, which further helps to your spiritual wellbeing.

This word "yoga" is derived from the Sanskrit root YUJ which means "To Join", "To Yoke" or "to unite". Yoga also refers to an inner science which comprises of a variety of methods by which human beings can obtain union between the body and mind to attain self-realization. The very aim of Yoga practice or sâdhana is to overcome all types of sufferings that further leads to a sense of freedom in every aspect of life with holistic health, happiness and harmony (Ayush, 2020) [2]. Yoga helps increasing the flexibility of spine. It improves physical condition of body and heightened awareness to the importance of relaxation. Yoga teaches you how to focus on breathing while holding the poses. This attention to breath is very calming as it dissolves both stress and anxiety.

### History

As per the Yogic lore, Shiva has been seen as the first yogi or âdiyogi and the first guru or âdiguru. Several thousand years ago, on the banks of Lake Kantisarovar in the Himalayas, âdiyogi poured his profound knowledge into the legendary saptarishis or "seven sages". These sages further carried this powerful Yogic science to all parts of the world including Asia, the Middle East, northern Africa and South America (Ayush, 2020) [2].

In India, the Yogic system found its fullest expression. Agastya, the saptarishi who travelled across the Indian subcontinent, shaped this culture around a core Yogic way of life (Ayush, 2020) [2]. Yoga is considered as an "immortal cultural outcome" of the Indus Saraswati Valley Civilization – dating back to 2700 BC – and has proven itself to indulge in both material and spiritual uplift of humanity. A number of seals and fossil remains of Indus Saraswati Valley civilization with yogic motifs and figures performing Yoga sâdhanahints the presence of Yoga in our ancient India (Ayush, 2020) [2]. Yoga was being practiced in the pre-Vedic period, the great sage Maharishi Patanjali systematized and codified the Yogic practices of that time, its meaning and its related knowledge through Patanjali's Yoga Sutras.

The main goals of "Yoga in Daily Life" are:

- Physical Health

- Mental Health
- Social Health
- Spiritual Health
- Self-Realisation or realisation of the Divine within us

#### These goals are attained by:

- Love and help for all living beings
- Respect for life, protection of nature and the environment
- A peaceful state of mind
- Full vegetarian diet
- Pure thoughts and positive lifestyle
- Physical, mental and spiritual practices
- Tolerance for all nations, cultures and religions

**1. Physical Health:** “Yoga in Daily Life” the classic Asanas and Pranayamas are divided into an eight-level system, beginning with “Sarva Hita Asanas” that mean, Exercises which are good for everyone. Seven other parts comes after this basic level and it lead progressively through the practice of Asanas and Pranayamas. “Yoga for Back Pain”, “Yoga for Joints”, “Yoga for Seniors”, “Yoga for Managers” and “Yoga for Children. Greater factor in maintaining good health is the food that we eat. What we eat affects both our body and psyche - our habits and qualities.

**2. Mental Health:** Both negative thoughts and fears create an imbalance in our nervous system and through this our physical function. This is the cause of many illnesses and sorrows. Mantra practice, the observance of ethical principles, the keeping of good company and the study of inspiring texts to purify and free the mind. A very important tool in self-investigation and self-knowledge is the technique of “Self-Inquiry Meditation”, a step-by-step meditation technique of Self-Analysis.

**3. Social Health:** Social health is the basically ability to be happy too, within oneself and to be able to make others happy. This precept embraces the principle of non-violence, in thought, word, feeling and action. Prayer, meditation, Mantra, positive thinking and tolerance, lead to spiritual health.

**4. Self-realization or Realization of Devine with in us:** Raife unconquerable will Practice self-control and self-mastery. Do not argue. Try continuously for Self-realization. Moksha is the highest or supreme good of life. It is freedom from births and deaths. It is not distraction. It is to destroy this little “I” within us.





#### The Four Primary Types of Yoga







- **Karma:** yoga is the path of serve through selfless action for the good of others – for example, Mother Teresa’s works to serve poor people as a way to connect the feeling of God with humanity.
- **Bhakti:** yoga peruse the expression and love of the Divine through devotional rituals. Forms of this path include regular prayer, chanting, singing, dancing, ceremony, and celebration. For example, bhakti yoga is practiced and shared in the uplifting music of kirtan or devotional chant vocalist and spiritual leader Krishna Das.
- **Jnana:** yoga is the path of intellect and wisdom, and its components include study of sacred texts, intellectual discussions, philosophical debate, and self analysis. Socrates was a jnana yogi, as are modern-day yoga scholars such as David Frawley and Ravi Ravindra.
- **Raja:** yoga, also known as the “royal path,” refers to the journey toward personal enlightenment. This path consists of balancing the three main yoga types - karma, bhakti, and jnana – while combined the eight limbs, or stages, of yoga (humankinetics.com, n.d.).

**1. The Eight Limbs of the Royal Path:** The Tree of Yoga The widely practiced Yoga sadhanas are:

- **Yama:** Restraints
- **Niyama:** Observances
- **Āsanas:** kuryat-tadasanam- sthairyam
- **Prānāyāma:** Flow of in-breath and out-breath. It consists of Puraka, Kumbhaka, Rechaka
- **Pratyāhara:** Withdrawal
- **Dharana:** Attention insight the body and mind or concentration
- **Dhyāna:** Meditation
- **Samādhi:** Integration (humankinetics.com, n.d.)

**Table 1:** Types of asana

Types of asana, with dates and examples					
Type	Described	Date	Example	English	Image
Standing	TK	20 <sup>th</sup> C	Parsvakonasana	Side angle	
Sitting Meditation	GS 1:10-12	10th-11th C.	Siddhasana	Accomplished	
Reclining	HYP 1:34	15th C.	Shavasana	Corpse	
Inverted	HY	11 <sup>th</sup> C	Sirsasana	Yoga headstand	

Balancing	VS	13 <sup>th</sup> C	Kukkutasana	Cockerel	
Forward bend	HYP 1:30	15 <sup>th</sup> C.	Paschimottanasana	Seated Forward Bend	
Backbend	HYP 1:27	15 <sup>th</sup> C.	Dhanurasana	Bow	
Twisting	HYP 1.28-29	15 <sup>th</sup> C.	Ardha Matsyendrasana	Half Lord of the Fishes	
Hip-opening	HYP 1:20	15 <sup>th</sup> C.	Gomukhasana	Cow Face	
Core strength	ST	19 <sup>th</sup> C	Navasana	Boat	

Source: Asana Wikipedia

### Techniques of Pranayama

Yogic techniques result in improving one's overall performance. Pranayama is an important, but little known part of Yoga. Until now, this art and science of yogic breathing was almost completely unknown to the common man like many other ancient Indian arts. Pranayama is control of inspiration and expiration. The inspiration of prana-vayu is shwasa and expiration is prashwasa and the termination of both is characteristic of Pranayama.

### Advantages of Yoga

Some of the Advantages of Yoga are as follows (38 Ways Yoga Improves Health, n.d.):

- Improves brain function
- Lower stress levels
- Alters gene expression
- Increases flexibility
- Lowers blood pressure
- Improves lung capacity
- Relieves anxiety
- Relieves chronic back pain
- Lowers blood sugar in diabetics
- Improves sense of balance
- Stronger bones
- Healthy weight
- Lowers risk of heart diseases

Yoga as a practice has loads of benefits that positively affect an individual both physically and mentally. Whether it is reducing your blood pressure or raising your pain tolerance, listed below are a few things that yoga works on (13 Benefits of Yoga That Are Supported by Science, n.d.):

1. Enhanced Circulation
2. Improves Posture
3. Uplifts your mood
4. Lowered Blood Pressure

5. Reduces Stress
6. Increases Strength
7. Anxiety Management
8. Better Cardiovascular Endurance
9. Fights Depression
10. Increase Immunity
11. Increased Metabolism
12. Improves sleep

### Precautions

Precautions to be taken while practicing Yogic exercises:

- **Practice Yoga in the Right Way:** practicing correctly is very important, as you have to maintain the rhythm of breathing and the movements of your body parts. If you do not do the exercise or the pranayama properly, it is possible you may get some negative results.
- **Practice Yoga in the Presence of a Yoga Teacher:** If you are a beginner, you should start practicing yoga either in the presence of a yoga teacher or join yoga class so that you can learn the basics and the do's and don'ts of yoga.
- **Yoga with Health Problems:** Although there are pranayamas that help you get rid of ailment like blood pressure, blood sugar, asthma and many other health problems, it is advisable that if you have any serious medical problem and you are on medication, do not do exercise or quit medicines without the advice of a doctor or an expert.
- **Strenuous Yogic Exercises:** One should practice only those yogic exercises that are recommended.
- **Effects of Peace:** While practicing yoga, it is advisable that the room should be extremely peaceful. If yoga is done in a quiet place, it has further positive effects on mind, body and soul, fresh air is a very important aspect.
- **Yoga in an Empty Stomach:** It is recommended that yoga should be practiced in an empty stomach preferably

early in the morning or in the evening as well.

- **Diet:** You should keep a watch on your diet while practicing yoga and try to increase intake of vegetables and fruits. Drink at least 8-10 glasses of water as water is a great detoxifier and helps clean the body from inside.
- **Routine:** Try to maintain routine and practice yoga on regular basis. This will have positive impact on your mind, body, and soul and help you improve your overall health. Along with these tips, make sure you practice yoga on a clean mat and prefer the floor. Never do yoga exercises or pranayamas on sofa or bed. Once you start practicing regularly, you will find that slowly and steadily there are improvements in every walk of life. As you go on practicing, you will find that your concentration and control on your breathing process is increasing (Precautions while Practicing Yoga, n.d.).

### Restrictions in Yoga

Yoga, Asanas also shouldn't be practiced in conditions like fractured bones and in diseases like ulcers, tuberculosis and hernia.

### Negative Effects of Yoga Exercises

Practicing yoga in conditions like chronic osteoporosis, blood pressure (H/L), spine problems, pregnancy and ear problems may increase or aggravate these conditions. At least half an hour gap should be maintained after difficult workouts for practicing yoga. Overstretching and strain in neck, shoulders, spine, legs and muscles are common as yoga injuries (Side Effects of Yoga Exercises: Yoga Precautions, n.d.).

### When Yoga should not be done?

Tadasana shouldn't be practiced in chronic cardiac problems. Pregnant women should practice it under strict supervision. Trikonasana should be avoided in acute backache condition. Padmasana may make arthritis, worse, slipped disk and injuries. Pregnant women and person who are suffering from peptic ulcer, hernia, arthritis, and cardiac problems should avoid this yoga. Maximum precautions should be taken by people who are experiencing high blood pressure (Side Effects of Yoga Exercises: Yoga Precautions, n.d.).

### Contra-indication in Yoga Practices

Ardhamatsyendrasana show opposite effects in case of stiff spine, pregnancy, backache, arthritis and abdominal problems. Contra-indications are also related with Pascimottanasana as this yoga should be avoided by people who experienced abdominal ulcer and abdominal inflammations. Ustrasana may also show unfavourable reaction that is having high blood pressure (Side Effects of Yoga Exercises: Yoga Precautions, n.d.).

### Side Effects of Pranayama

Pranayama should be avoided by those people who are facing breathing problems. Chronic patients shouldn't hold their breath during Pranayama. Pranayama should be practiced in a well ventilated place (Side Effects of Yoga Exercises: Yoga Precautions, n.d.).

### Conclusion

Most people practice what is called Hathayoga which includes physical postures (Asanas) and some breathing techniques (Pranayama). Asana and Pranayama are only two of these eight limbs and help to setup a strong foundation toward achieving the objectives of yoga.

Yoga helps a man to reach the ultimate goal through Tattva Jhana. The ultimate goal is Samadhi. Regarding the Samadhi: Pt. Damodarsastri describes various types and stages of Yoga, various definitions of Yoga and techniques for attaining Supreme Bliss, i.e. Samadhi.

Healing benefits of Yoga are so great that we feel better at the end of every Yoga session than before we began and life runs effortlessly when we keep up a steady discipline than when we do not. Yoga increases our understanding of life. The driving force of yoga is aimed at the monumental, lifechanging discovery of whom and what we actually are. This is exactly how yoga works, how it makes us feel good.

For quality wise improvement in performance, to increase resistance power, mental abilities and for self-mastery, yoga has been proved as a great science (Yadav, Kumar, Kumar, & Kumar, 2015) <sup>[5]</sup>.

“Yoga is not an ancient myth buried in oblivion or unconsciousness. It is the most valuable inheritance of the present; it is the essential need of today and the culture of tomorrow.”

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