

Benefits of Yoga on you

Dr. Hanumant R. Lunge

Director of Physical Education Shri Shivaji Arts and Commerce College, Amravati. (M.S.)

Abstract:

Yoga the ancient Indian word for “union of mind and body” is far more than a physical fitness regimen. It helps one achieve optimum physical and psychological health. Yoga is the answer to all these problems. Since persistently high levels of stress hormones, particularly cortisol, can undermine function of the immune system, here too yoga can help.

Introduction

Yoga comes from the Sanskrit word ‘Yuj’ which means to unite or to join. People generally think that yoga is a series of exercises with twisted body poses, it is not so. The main aim of Yoga is to help one connect with one’s inner spirit, which is connected to the universal spirit or God. Yoga creates a balance between the body and the mind and to attain self-enlightenment. Yoga brings stability to the body and the wavering mind. In order to accomplish it, Yoga makes use of different movements, breathing exercises, relaxation technique and meditation. Yoga is associated with a healthy and lively lifestyle with a balanced approach to life. It is the union between the mind, body and spirit. It involves the practice of physical postures and poses, which is referred to as ‘Asana’ in Sanskrit. Our modern day lifestyle is too hectic and puts a lot of stress on us which in turn causes a lot of life style problems like obesity, hypertension, high cholesterol, diabetes etc. Yoga is the answer to all these problems. It offers harmless solutions to these problems in the form of relaxation. Studies in the field of medicine suggest that Yoga is the only form of physical activity that provides complete exercise to the body as it incorporates different aspects of science, philosophy and art. It is one of the most effective and integrated systems for gaining control and experiencing supreme joy in life. It helps one achieve optimum physical and psychological health. It is a system of physical, mental and spiritual techniques and is a practical, lively approach to life. It is the master key to open the realms of everlasting bliss and deep-residing peace. Major branches of Yoga in Hindu philosophy include Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, and Hatha Yoga. Yoga has gained immense popularity during the last few years and today over 30 million people practice Yoga on regular basis. Yoga is the most rapidly growing health movement of today, despite having existed for thousands of years already.

Why Yoga?

Therapeutic yoga is an inherently holistic approach, simultaneously working on the body, mind, and spirit. Various [yoga practices](#) systematically strengthen different systems in the body, including the heart and cardiovascular system, the lungs, muscles, and the nervous system. [Yoga practices](#) can improve function of the digestive system, foster psychological well-being, and improve oxygen delivery to tissues. Yoga also can help the body more efficiently remove waste products, carcinogens, and cellular toxins. Most people in the West live stressful lives, and yoga—and by extension [yoga therapy](#)—is perhaps the best overall stress reduction system ever invented. Stress has been linked to a wide variety of medical problems, from migraine headaches and irritable bowel syndrome to potentially life-threatening conditions such as diabetes, osteoporosis, and heart disease. Since persistently high levels of stress hormones, particularly cortisol, can undermine function of the immune system, here too yoga can help. While yoga by itself can alleviate a number of problems, it is particularly effective as a complement to other forms of health care, both alternative and conventional.

Hatha Yoga Yoga, as we have already seen, is the process of attaining self-relation. However, we are concerned solely with Hatha Yoga with its object of purifying the body.

Hatha is derived from Ha meaning the Sun and Ta meaning the Moon. This is a physical process regulating the inflow of breath in the two nostrils. But we must always remember that the purpose of Yoga, of any kind, is the evolution of the soul. Hatha Yoga as known to us today is drawn mostly from Gheranda Samhita and Hatha yoga pradipika. These two works seem to be from the same source since many lines from each repeat in the other.

Hatha Yoga can be divided into 7 heads:

1. Bodily purification
2. Asanas
3. Musras
4. Pratyahara
5. Pranayama
6. Dhyana
7. Samadh

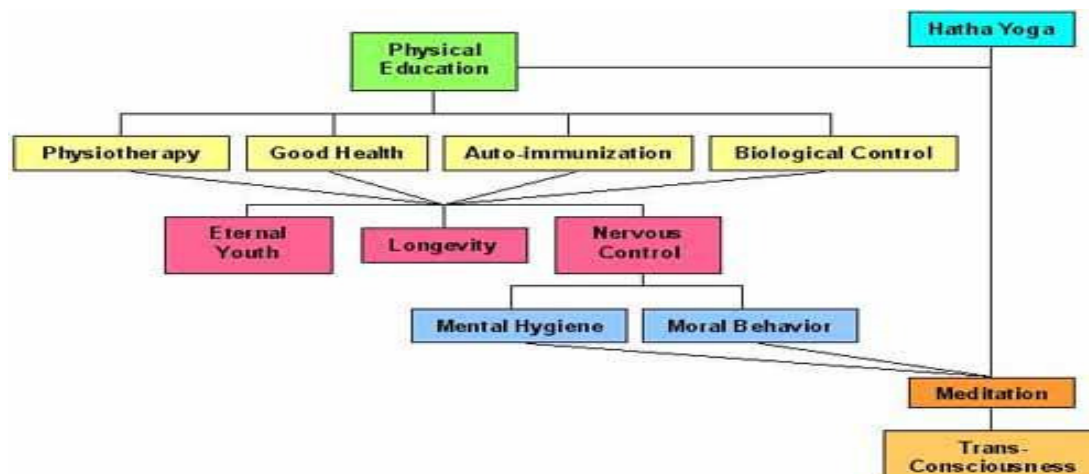
Anyone above 14 years of age can do Yogasanas. Sick people may also do them. Pregnant women must discontinue the practice after the 3rd month. Women must refrain from practice during the 4 days of menstruation each month. People suffering from heart disease must be careful and take up yogic practices only under expert supervision. Generally too, these asanas are best learnt from an able and competent teacher. Asanas are best performed in the morning on an empty stomach. Where time does not permit they can be done in the evening, but not permit they can be done in the evening, but at least 3 hours should elapse after the last meal. Regular practice at the same place and time gives good results soon. Diet must also be regulated. Vegetarians can carry on with their usual food but excessively spicy, oily and rich foods should be reduced gradually, and wherever possible eliminated. Meat, eggs, fish are to be avoided. So also hard drinks. Freshly cooked food, fresh vegetables, plenty of fruits and greens and milk are the best foods for practitioners of Yoga subject, of course, to one's resources. Canned, refined and processed foods are best avoided since they can cause faulty elimination. If Hatha Yoga is faithfully practiced, benefits will start showing in the form of a youthful face and figure, graceful posture and carriage, clear complexion, improved blood circulation and all-round general health.

The Benefits of Hatha Yoga

The word hatha comes from the Sanskrit "ha," meaning sun, and "tha," meaning moon, and refers to the integration of the active and receptive aspects of ourselves. Specifically, consciously performing yoga poses leads to a body that is both strong and flexible; a mind that is alert yet calm; an ability to both take action and to surrender; and an awareness of self and others. By turning the attention to the breath during hatha yoga practice, we slow down our busy thoughts and become more present to each moment.

Yoga is much more than "a new-found ability to touch your toes." Asanas have an all-pervading effect on the physical and mental functioning of the body:

- 1)Physical - Through healing, strengthening, stretching and relaxing the skeletal, muscular, digestive, cardio-vascular, glandular and nervous systems.
- 2) Mental - Through the cultivation of a quiet and a peaceful mind, alertness and concentration
- 3)Spiritual - By preparing for meditation.



Regular yoga practice offers numerous benefits to body, mind, and spirit, including

1) Toning and strengthening. As a form of isometric exercise, the prolonged holding of yoga postures tones the muscles as well as internal organs

2) Increasing flexibility. Gently holding yoga poses at the edge of comfort stretches and lengthens muscles, tendons, and ligaments allowing them to become more flexible.

3) Improves respiration. Deep breathing during yoga practice opens the chest and strengthens the diaphragm.

4) Improves concentration. Moving mindfully while maintaining awareness of the body and breath develops focus, attention, and concentration.

5) Promotes relaxation. The combination of gentle stretching, deep breathing, meditation, and guided relaxation releases body tension and calms the nervous system and emotions, giving a sense of renewal to the body, mind, and spirit.

6) Builds internal and external awareness. As a focused practice, yoga builds awareness of the body and feelings, along with increasing awareness of the needs of others, our communities, and our world.

7) Facilitates improved health. In addition to exercising the mind and muscles, yoga exercises and massages the glands and organs and increases circulation throughout the body, resulting in improved digestion, elimination of toxins, and the promotion of overall health.

Reference

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