

Review Article

Important Benefits of Astanga Yoga

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A B S T R A C T

Yoga is a science having history of more than 5000 years. In Shiva Samhita, it is believed that the art of yoga originated from Lord Shiva himself and Parvathy was his first disciple Presently more than 150 countries across the Globe have accepted the science of Yoga and adopted the practice of yoga in their daily routine. Acharya Charaka said "Yogo Moksha Pravartakaha" which means yoga will help us to attain Moksha which is ultimate goal of all the living beings. In yoga shastra it is said that Manasika Dosha can be corrected and prevented by practice of yoga where as Sharirika Doshas can be corrected by Ayurveda. Some classical text books of Yoga like Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Gheranda Samhita, Shiva Samhita, Patanjali Yoga Sutras explains in detail about the practice and benefits of yoga shastra.

Keywords: Yoga, Ayurveda, Moksha, Health

Introduction

What is Yoga?

The word Yoga is derived from Proto-Indo - European word "Yugam" from root Sanskrit word "Yeug". 'Yujiyate anena iti yogah'- which means to unite or combine, here it can be correlated with union of Jeevatma and Paramatma or union of mind and body.¹

- Yoga is a skilled performance (Bhagavad-Gita).
- State of equilibrium between body and mind.²
- Controlling of Chittavrutti is done by yoga (Patanjali Yoga Sutra).
- Yoga is a technique to pacify the thoughts of mind (Yoga Vasishta).

Who is Swastha or Healthy?

Acharya Sushruta opines that a person whose Dosha, Agni, Dhatu, mala kriyas are normal and Atma, Indriya, Manas are in state of peacefulness is considered as Swastha.³

According to WHO Health is defined as the complete state of Physical, Mental and Social wellbeing and not merely

absence of disease or infirmity.⁴

There are different dimensions of health⁵ which needs to be intact to claim a person as Healthy, they are:

- Physical Dimension: This concerns more about physical fitness. Maintaining physic with good muscle tone, skin complexion, strong bones, proper evacuation of urges and all the organs performing their functions properly.
- Mental Dimension: This is about balancing of mind in an equilibrium state even when we are happy or sad.
- Social Dimension: Giving our best to the society in a more positive way for the overall development and living in harmony.
- Spiritual Dimension: Having faith towards God and respecting, treating others beliefs equally.
- Vocational Dimension: Maintain good friendly environment with our colleges and trying our best to be more productive economically.
- Political Dimension: Rules and regulations made by the government to protect the rights of citizens of the country.

Astanga Yoga

Maharshi Patanjali in his Patanjali Yoga sutras has explained in detail about the eight-fold paths of Yoga to attain Moksha.⁶

- Yama-Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (Truthfulness), Asteya (Non-stealing), Brahmacharya (Celibacy), Aparigraha (Non desire for others things).
- Niyama-Shoucha (Cleanliness), Santosha (happiness), Tapa (Penance), Swaadyaya (Knowing self), Eshwara Pranidana (Devotion to God).
- Asana - The posture where one is comfortable is Asana. Based on posture Asanas are divided into Standing, Sitting, Supine and Prone series and based on action it is divided into Meditative, Relaxative and cultural series of asanas.
- Pranayama - Regulation of Breathing and control over the flow of vayu (air) can be achieved by following proper Rechaka (Exhalation), Pooraka (Inhalation) and Kumbhaka (withholding) of air which can be mastered through eight types of Pranayama techniques known as Astha Kumbhakas. They are Suryabhedana, Ujjayi, Sheetali, Sheetakari, Bhastrika, Bramari, Moorcha and Plavani.
- Pratyahara - Controlling and Withdrawing of all the functions of the sense organs from the worldly desires and keeping them in pure nature of Citta is Pratyahara. It is known as bridge between Antaranga yoga and Bahiranga yoga.
- Dharana - Fixing the mind within a point or area is Dharana.
- Dhyana - Unbroken continuation of concentration is Dhyana. They are of two types Saguna Dhyana- Concentrating deeply on an Idol or Symbol Nirguna Dhyana- Concentrating on Atma.
- Samadhi - It is a stage where our Jeevatma breaks all the bondages and mingles with Paramatma.

Discussion

1. By following the principles of Yama, one follows nonviolence in all aspects, truthful, does not crave for others things, can easily mingle with the society, they will always treat others as their own family members (Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam) gains more respect by all for their good and humble nature. This plays a major role in maintaining good mental, social and occupational health. These rules are made mainly for the benefit of the whole society.
2. By following Niyama one can be clean and tidy mentally and physically, he realizes about self before judging others, believes in God and stays happy. These rules mainly help in individual development.
3. Asanas are the physical postures which has to be learnt day by day by regular practice and with the guidance of Guru, it gives us perfect strong and healthy body. It

- basically helps in improvising the Physical dimension.
4. Pranayama is achieving control over breathing, it helps us in mastering slow and steady breathing technique which improves blood circulation to the whole body, increases lung capacity and also enhances lifespan. This helps in boosting the physical and mental health.
5. Pratyahara is getting rid of worldly pleasures which enhances concentration, Dharana is fixing our Aim at particulars and Dhyana is penance which help in further focusing which keeps the individual happy mentally and spiritually due to which political harmony can be achieved.
6. Samadhi is complete union of Jeevatma with Paramatma where there will be no rebirth, no desire and no sad feelings. One attains the stage of permanent blissfulness and remembered by the world even after the death.

Conclusion

In the above mentioned Astanga Yoga Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama are considered as Bahiranga yoga (physical attributes) and Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi as Antaranga yoga (Mental attributes). Even though Astanga yoga's are told in the Vedic period still its concepts play a major role for maintaining various dimensions of Health in a proper way, which lead to more happy and healthy living. Each one is beneficial in its own way which has been explained further. Hence by implementing the ideology of Astanga Yoga in present era one can always be cheerful and bouncing with full of life and also these principles have a positive effect on all the dimensions of Health.

Conflict of Interest: None

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