

The Importance of Yoga, Pranayama and Meditation in Our Life

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I. INTRODUCTION

Yoga is an art form which helps in attaining good health and is for living a holistic life. It has been developed and perfected over the centuries by the sages and wise men of ancient India. Yoga is not a religion, a metaphysical doctrine or a philosophy. It can make amazing improvement in our health, appearance and youthfulness. Yoga has many benefits for both mind and body. Yogic exercise can be done by any age group and even by the most unfit people. Yoga is also the most comprehensive of all exercises as it benefits each part of the body. The term yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root “yug” meaning union Yoke or communion, it is union of our will with the nature and the supernatural. It is yoking of all the powers of the body, mind and soul. The disciplining the intellect the mind, the emotions and the will, Lit is the experience of on self with one’s inner being.

Yoga is defined as a 'Unitive Discipline', the discipline that leads to inner and outer union, harmony & joy. Yoga is indeed associated with certain metaphysical notion but the practice in itself does not require any religious or spiritual adoption. Even open-minded agnostics can practice Yoga with great benefit. Asana means the state of posture in which one can remain study, calm, quite & comfortable, both physically and mentally. Pathanjali in his “Yoga Sutra” he defined yogasanas as “ Sthirum Sukkam Asanam” meaning that posture which is steady & comfortable .

Health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental, spiritual and social well being. Life is the modern age, has become so complex that seen and unseen hazards to health have proliferated to an alarming degrees. Our environment has been so badly degraded that education for proper health care has assumed unprecedented importance. The healthy state is pre education for a life of joy of which peace or tranquility is the primary ingredient. As a positive state, health implies abundance of vitality and vigorous, alertness, clarity and posies. A truly healthy person is not even conscious of the functioning of any his internal organs. It is automatic and smooth, tension that may arise from external factors do not disturb this smooth functioning.

Yoga asanas are time tested exercises for the harmonious development of a sound body and mind. This is a science of body culture which has come down to us from the ancient sages as a part of our great cultural heritage. It ensures revitalization of the body metabolism by total relaxation of the system. It frees one from the undue stress and strain which have become part parcel of modern life.

II. THE BENEFITS OF YOGA

A. 10 Health Benefits of Yoga in Daily Life

Weight loss, a strong and flexible body, glowing beautiful skin, peaceful mind, good health – hatever you

may be looking for, yoga has it on offer. However, very often, yoga is only partially understood as being limited to asanas (yoga poses). As such, its benefits are only perceived to be at the body level and we fail to realize the immense benefits yoga offers in uniting the body, mind and breath. When you are in harmony, the journey through life is calmer, happier and more fulfilling.

Yoga is all-round fitness

You are truly healthy when you are not just physically fit but also mentally and emotionally balanced. As Sri Sri Ravi Shankar puts it, "Health is not a mere absence of disease. It is a dynamic expression of life – in terms of how joyful, loving and enthusiastic you are." This is where yoga helps: postures, pranayama (breathing techniques) and meditation are a holistic fitness package.

This is where yoga helps: postures, pranayama (breathing techniques) and meditation are a holistic fitness package. The benefits accrued by being a regular practitioner are numerous. Some very discernible ones are:

- Improves health
- Gives mental strength
- Increases physical power
- Protection against injury

Yoga for weight loss

What many want! Yoga benefits here too. Sun Salutations and Kapal Bhati pranayama are some ways to help lose weight with yoga. Moreover, with regular practice of yoga, we tend to become more sensitive to the kind of food our body asks for and when. This can also help keep a check on weight.

Stress relief

A few minutes of yoga during the day can be a great way to get rid of stress that accumulates daily - in both the body and mind. Yoga postures, pranayama and meditation are effective techniques to release stress. You can also experience how yoga helps detox the body and de-stress the mind at the Sri Sri Yoga Level 2 program.

Inner peace with Yoga

We all love to visit peaceful, serene spots, rich in natural beauty. Little do we realize that peace can be found right within us and we can take a mini-vacation to experience this any time of the day! Benefit from a small holiday every day with yoga and meditation. Yoga is also one of the best ways to calm a disturbed mind.

Improved immunity

Our system is a seamless blend of the body, mind and spirit. An irregularity in the body affects the mind and similarly unpleasantness or restlessness in the mind can manifest as an ailment in the body. Yoga poses massage organs and strengthen muscles; breathing techniques and meditation release stress and improve immunity.

Yoga helps to live with greater awareness:

The mind is constantly involved in activity – swinging from the past to the future – but never staying in the present. By simply being aware of this tendency of the mind, we can actually save ourselves from getting stressed or worked up and relax the mind. Yoga and pranayama help create that awareness and bring the mind back to the present moment, where it can stay happy and focused.

Better relationships:

Yoga can even help improve your relationship with your spouse, parents, friends or loved ones! A mind that is relaxed, happy and contented is better able to deal with sensitive relationship matters. Yoga and meditation work on keeping the mind happy and peaceful; benefit from the strengthened special bond you share with people close to you.

Yoga increases energy

Do you feel completely drained out by the end of the day? Shuttling between multiple tasks through the day can sometimes be quite exhausting. A few minutes of yoga everyday provides the secret to feeling fresh and energetic even after a long day. A 10-minute online guided meditation benefits you immensely, leaving you refreshed and recharged in the middle of a hectic day.

Better flexibility & posture by Yoga

You only need to include yoga in your daily routine to benefit from a body that is strong, supple and flexible. Regular yoga practice stretches and tones the body muscles and also makes them strong. It also helps improve your body posture when you stand, sit, sleep or walk. This would, in turn, help relieve you of body pain due to incorrect posture.

Better intuition

Yoga and meditation have the power to improve your intuitive ability so that you effortlessly realize what needs to be done, when and how, to yield positive results. It works. You only need to experience it yourself. Remember, yoga is a continuous process. So keep practicing! The deeper you move into your yoga practice, the more profound are its benefits.

III. PRANAYAMA AND MEDITATION

Prāṇāyāma (Sanskrit: प्राणायाम *prāṇāyāma*) is a Sanskrit word alternatively translated as "extension of the *prāṇa* (breath or life force)" or "breath control." The word is composed from two Sanskrit words: *prana* meaning life force (noted particularly as the breath), and either *yama* (to restrain or control the prana, implying a set of breathing techniques where the breath is intentionally altered in order to produce specific results) or the negative form *ayāma*, meaning to extend or draw out (as in extension of the life force). It is a yogic discipline with origins in ancient India.



A. Benefits of Pranayama

Reduced Rate of Breathing

With pranayama, you can teach yourself on how to breathe deeply and slowly. This will help you lessen the rate of breathing from 15 breaths per minutes to 5 to 6 breaths. Once you have successfully understood the process on how to reduce the breathing rate, you can also reduce the “wear and tear” of your internal organs. It relaxes the body’s nerves and tensions, lowers blood pressure and a lot more.

Increases Life

Based on the philosophy of Yoga, longevity of life depends on the breathing rate. As you lower your breathing rate, you also increase your life. For an instance, if tortoise only takes 4 to 5 breaths per minutes, it also has the ability to live for 200 years and more.

Improves Blood Circulation

Breathing lets the fresh and oxygenated blood during the inhalation travels from the lungs and then, to the heart”. Heart is the one that pumps the blood through blood vessels and arteries of the body. Because of this, the blood circulation can be improved. More prana, cosmic energy, or oxygen can reach the various parts of the body.

Healthy Heart

One of the most hardworking organs is none other than the heart. Heart beats almost one-hundred times daily and it pumps blood “day in” and “day out” nonstop throughout your life. This is the one that determines your

life quality and expectancy in old age. Having enough oxygen in your blood means more oxygen to be found in the heart's muscle.

Improved Mental Health

This practice provides people the freedom from any harmful and negative mental conditions such as depression, anger, lasciviousness, arrogance, excessive want for money and more. By practicing pranayama, you can control mind fluctuations and prepare yourself for deep meditation. You will experience inner peace, better concentration, better memory, better sleep, lightness of the body and more.

Meditation is a practice where an individual trains the mind or induces a mode of consciousness, either to realize some benefit or for the mind to simply acknowledge its content without becoming identified with that content, or as an end in itself. The term meditation refers to a broad variety of practices that includes 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 sustained single-pointed concentration meant to enable its practitioner to enjoy an indestructible sense of well-being while engaging in any life activity. The word meditation carries different meanings in different contexts. Meditation has been practiced since antiquity as a component of numerous religious traditions and beliefs. Meditation often involves an internal effort to self-regulate the mind in some way. Meditation is often used to clear the mind and ease many health concerns, such as high blood pressure, depression, and anxiety. It may be done sitting, or in an active way—for instance, Buddhist monks involve awareness in their day-to-day activities as a form of mind-training. Prayer beads or other ritual objects are commonly used during meditation in order to keep track of or remind the practitioner about some aspect of that training. Meditation may involve generating an emotional state for the purpose of analyzing that state—such as anger, hatred, etc.—or cultivating a particular mental response to various phenomena, such as compassion. The term "meditation" can refer to the state itself, as well as to practices or techniques employed to cultivate the state. Meditation may also involve repeating a mantra and closing the eyes. The mantra is chosen based on its suitability to the individual meditator. Meditation has a calming effect and directs awareness inward until pure awareness is achieved, described as "being awake inside without being aware of anything except awareness itself. In brief, there are dozens of specific styles of meditation practice, and many different types of activity commonly referred to as meditative practices.

What is meditation?

Meditation is relaxation. It is not about concentration, it's actually about de-concentration. It's not about focussing one's thoughts on one thing, but instead on becoming thoughtless.

What are the benefits of meditation?

1. A calm mind
2. Good concentration
3. Better clarity
4. Improved communication
5. Relaxation and rejuvenation of the mind and body

IV. 5 HEALTH BENEFITS OF MEDITATION

With meditation, the physiology undergoes a change and every cell in the body is filled with more prana (energy). This results in joy, peace, enthusiasm as the level of prana in the body increases. On a physical level, meditation:

1. Lowers high blood pressure, lowers the levels of blood lactate, reducing anxiety attacks
2. Decreases any tension-related pain, such as, tension headaches, ulcers, insomnia, muscle and joint problems
3. Increases serotonin production that improves mood and behavior
4. Improves the immune system
5. Increases the energy level, as you gain an inner source of energy.

V. 11 MENTAL BENEFITS OF MEDITATION

Meditation brings the brainwave pattern into an *alpha state* that promotes healing. The mind becomes fresh, delicate and beautiful. It cleanses and nourishes you from within and calms you, whenever you feel overwhelmed, unstable, or emotionally shut down. With regular practice of meditation:

1. Anxiety decreases
2. Emotional stability improves
3. Creativity increases
4. Happiness increases
5. Intuition develops
6. Gain clarity and peace of mind
7. Problems become smaller
8. Meditation sharpens the mind by gaining focus and expands through *relaxation*
9. A sharp mind without expansion causes tension, anger and frustration
10. An expanded consciousness without sharpness can lead to lack of action/progress
11. The balance of a sharp mind and an expanded consciousness brings perfection

Meditation makes you aware - that your inner attitude determines your happiness.

VI. CONCLUSION

Yoga improves mind-body co-ordination by increasing physical tone and awareness while improves mind and breathe control. Meditation has being proven to reduce anxiety, stress and muscular tension. Systematic and regular practice of yogasanas helps individual to become health conscious & gives that individual an idea of educating others regarding health, wellness and maintain good health.