

YOGA AND QUALITY OF LIFE**Dr. Babaso Nivrutti Ulape**

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Introduction

Throughout the ages, the practice of Yoga has evolved. We all are living in such a state that life has become so fast, eventful and with lots of stress. We are running behind materialistic world on endless path, meanwhile our journey takes some curves where physical as well as mental pressure reach to such a level where we need a genuine pause of calmness. The body goes beyond the limits of saturation and fails to perform further. Here, Yoga is the answer. In ancient times, to practice it was to reach a state of higher consciousness, which not everyone was able to achieve; but today, however it is practiced universally.

Yoga is for everyone. It can be tailored to suit each individual's capabilities to develop and improve the inner as well as outer balance of the body. The term Yoga is generally used for yogasanas, it is true but does not fulfill the whole meaning. It is a path towards liberation of soul and told that should be practiced in day to day life. Every science has foundation where the theories have been explained and then we apply those in practice, likewise Hathyoga Pradipika is the most important text for Yoga¹. If we look around the world more and more people are turning to yoga as means of getting good quality of life; because the society demand for wellness. It is the reason behind the health sector to be called wellness industry, prior named as illness industry.

Basic Nature of Yoga^{2, 3, 4}

First we will see the origin of word 'Yoga'. The origin comes from a Sanskrit word 'Yuj'. 'Yu' means to unite and to separate, to unite with real and to separate from unreal. When consonant 'j' is attached, it means energy or direction. Hence the actual meaning of Yoga is discipline or integration. The classical literature is found in Yogasutra of Patanjali, the period of which is around 3rd century BC. However, we do find various references of Yoga in Rigveda and Yajurveda.

“Yogen chittasya paden vacham malam sharirasya tu vaidyaken /

Yopakarottam pravaram muninam Patanjalin pranjalirantosmi ||”

-Yogavartik.

It means, Yoga helps to attain stability of mind, to improve vacha and also helps to excrete mala means waste materials out of the body; in short purifies the body.

Yoga is a fine art and seeks to express the artist's abilities to the fullest possible extent. While most of the artists need an instrument, such as a paintbrush or a piano, to express their art, the only instruments a yogi needs are his body and his mind. The ancient sages compared Yoga to a fruit tree; from a single seed grow the roots, trunk, branches and leaves. The leaves bring life-giving energy to the entire tree, which then blossoms into flowers and sweet fruits. Likewise, Yoga too, transforms darkness into light, ignorance into knowledge, knowledge into wisdom and wisdom into unalloyed peace and spiritual bliss. The sage Patanjali was a master of Yoga, he told 196 Yogasutras.

Basic Principles

Both Ayurveda and Yoga share the same fundamental principles. They follow same human anatomy and physiology. The basis of understanding the human body is the same for both sciences and accepts common principles from the Sankhya system of philosophy⁵. Both Ayurveda and Yoga are based upon the principles of three attributes sattva, rajas and tamas and the theory of panchamahabhutas prithvi, jala, tej, vayu and aakash. These together along with soul form human body.

“Yoge mokshe cha sarvaasam vedananamavartanam /

Mokshe nivrutthi nishshesha yogo moksha pravartakah //”

-Cha. Sha 1/137

Yoga is the ultimate answer to attain Moksha means liberation. Once person gets moksha, then he is free from all the miseries of life. All strings of desire become free from the materialistic world⁶.

Aims & Objectives

Yoga involves meditation, patience, silence and peace. I would like to call it 'Yadnya', meaning sacrifice or surrender. We do yandnya before holy sacred ceremony to attain good outcomes. Likewise it is also a sacrifice of the outer materialistic world for achieving the inner or higher objects that is peace, moksha means liberation^{7, 8}. All other things are just for the joy for time being and hence we could lose it anytime but once we get the real joy of liberation, it will be the highest attainment in life. Since ages, the sages are practicing it for this reason only. The primary aim of Yoga is to restore the mind to simplicity and peace, to free it from confusion and distress. This sense of calm comes from the practice of yogic asanas and pranayam. Yoga teaches us that the goal of every individual's life is to take the inner journey to the soul. When there is perfect harmony between body and mind, we achieve self realization. When our physical state is not perfect, it causes an imbalance in our mental state. The practice of Yoga helps us to overcome that imbalance. Yogasanas tone the

whole body. They strengthen bones and muscles, correct posture, improve breathing and increase energy.

Being an Ayurveda disciple, I would like to discuss something about the subject of Swasthavritta. Swastha means the state of prasanna Atma, Indriya and Manas. Sage Sushruta the father of surgery gave a beautiful verse,

**“Samadoshah samagnishchya samadhatumalakriyah |
Prasannatmendriyamanah swastha ityabhidheeyate ||”**

-S. Su 15/41

Hence the aim of every individual should be being Swastha and it can be accessed through the hands of Yoga.

Vritta means conducts whatever person follows in his day to day life like daily regimen, seasonal regimen to be healthy.

After looking at the aims in brief, now we will see the objectives for life. Sage Charaka says⁹,

“Dharmarthakaam mokshanam aarogyam moolam uttamam |”

-C. Su 1/15

Dharma is service to society, Artha is service to family, Kaam is service to self and Moksha is the ultimate liberation after self realization these are considered to be the main four objectives of life. As mentioned earlier other things are considered just for the time being and materialistic. The property what we gain through such a novel conducts will remain for lifetime, while other things will be destroyed as time passes. Hence the hunger of correct reasons is necessary to develop and it can be regulated with the practice of Yoga for sure.

Materials & Methods^{10, 11, 12}

Materials as such are not required except proper mindset. There are various methods as follows.

1. Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga

It can be called as the classical system of Yoga consisting eight limbs named Yama, Niyam, Asana, Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharan, Dhyana and Samadhi. These are sequential stages and each step must be understood and followed.

Yama explains the codes of ethical behavior to be observed and followed reminding us of our responsibilities as social beings. It has five principles. These are: Ahimsa or non-violence, Satya or truthfulness, Asteya or non-stealing, Brahmacharya or chastity, and Aparigraha or freedom from desire.

Niyam is the positive current that brings discipline, removes inertia and gives shape to the inner quench to follow the yogic path. The principles of Niyam are Shauch or cleanliness, Santosh or contentment, Tapas or austerity, Svadhyay or the study of one's own self which includes body, mind, intellect and ego. The last principle is Ishvar pranidhan or devotion to God.

Asana means different postures. There are eighty-four postures have been described. All Yoga postures require slow contraction and slow relaxation with concentration on breathing. Performing an asana helps to create and generate energy. Staying in an asana organizes and distributes this energy.

Pranayam is the breathing technique for controlling prana. Asana and Pranayam are interrelated, while performing asana one must have control over the breathing. Prana means vital energy which includes will power and ambition, while ayam means stretch, expansion and extension. Once we start deep breathing with calm mind, then one can experience the actual act of respiration. Pranayam has three movements- prolonged inhalation, deep exhalation and prolonged stable retention.

Pratyahar is the method for withdrawal of the mind from senses. It is the state in which a person must be detached from the objects of enjoyment through the senses. When the senses withdraw from objects of desire, the mind is released from the power of the senses, and then the mind turns inward and is set free.

Dharan means focusing the mind for concentration, Dhyan means meditation with concentration. Samadhi is a state of total absorption. The experience of Samadhi is achieved when the knower, the knowable and the known become one. When the object of meditation engulfs the mediator and becomes the subject, self-awareness is lost. This is a state of Samadhi. Ultimately, it is Samadhi that is the fruit of disciple of Ashtang Yoga.

We will discuss some subjects regarding the Yogasana. Asanas keep our body as well as our mind healthy and active. What is Yogasana? An asana is not a posture that we assume mechanically. It involves a thoughtful process at the end of which a balance is achieved between movement and resistance. Yogasanas cover the basic positions of standing, sitting, forward bends, twists, inversions, back bends and lying down.

Newcomers to Yoga must start from simple basic postures and once they get acquainted with the movements and stability of mind, then they can practice some difficult asana. Tadasan, Uththita Trikonasana, Veerbhadradasana, Uttanasana, Dandasana, Veerasana, Badhdha Konasana, Paschimottanasana, Gomukhasana, Shirshasana, Sarvangasana,

Ushtrasana, Dhanurasana, Shavasana, etc are some selected Yogasanas that can be followed in day to day practice¹³.

The classification is made as meditative and physical asana. Those which involve mental activity are meditative such as Padmasana, Siddhasana, and Sukhasana.

Rules & Techniques

Some rules must be followed about Yogasana to get maximum benefit.

1. Yogasanas should be done in the morning. It is preferable to practice them after bathing because it makes the body light and fresh, hence increasing its elasticity. It should be done on empty stomach.
2. The place of asana must be clean and peaceful along with enough ventilation and fresh air.
3. A blanket or Yoga mattress should be spread on ground.
4. One should not talk while doing asana. Attention should be on the breath. Greater the concentration, greater the advantage to the body and mind.
5. One should start with simple and easy asana. Then gradually one can perform next asana. Patience and faith are required to do Yoga regularly.
6. A Yoga practitioner is required to pay due attention to his food. It should have sattvik qualities like light, easily digestible, fresh, little sweet and not spicy.
7. One should not eat at least for half an hour after doing Yoga.

Discussion

As said earlier, Yoga is for everyone. It is the path towards holistic health and releases the creative potential in life. Yogasana along with Pranayam reduce stress and pain from both aspects, physical as well as mental. Age is not the criteria to conduct Yoga. Only the mind should be awake and ready to follow it sincerely. Supervision is another important subject, means a proper guideline by a Yoga teacher is necessary; because he is the one who shows the path towards light and encourage us to perform it regularly.

Getting good quality of life for common people like us and attaining liberation for a yogi; these are the prime aims and Yoga definitely helps to get that. Good quality life is not just having lavish living ambiance and freedom from disease; of course it is but when, the body built up with good cells, tissues, muscles, glands, nerves, joints and each system of the body being in a state of perfect balance and harmony. The health should be maintained at proper age, once that age passes then no one can bring it by any means.

Most types of exercise are competitive. Yoga although non-competitive is nevertheless challenging. The challenge is to one's own will power. It is a competition between one's

self and one's body. Asana, one of yoga's most significant tools, help the sincere student develop physically and spiritually. It is believed that if one put our whole heart into the practice, can become a master of circumstances and time.

Ashtang Yoga is important topic to be studied by any Yoga disciple as it provides stability to body and mind. Asana and Pranayam both are interrelated. The control over breathing is essential to perform them with fine touch.

Summary

The human body is like temple. We should keep it pure and clean for the sake of soul to reside in. The science of Yoga is like an art of music. There is a rhythm within the body, and that can only be maintained by paying attention to good quality of life. Yoga, once the domain of a select few, is now universally practiced. Its popularity can be attributed to its clinical effects on both the mind and the body. It enables practitioners to enjoy a profound sense of well-being.

Words fail to convey the total value of yoga. It has to be experienced. Yoga is a light, which once lit, will never go. The better our practice, the brighter will be the flame. The primary aim of yoga is to restore the mind to simplicity and peace, to free it from confusion and distress. The practice of yoga fills up the reservoirs of hope and optimism within us. It helps us to overcome all obstacles on the path to good quality of life along with spiritual contentment, and then it is a rebirth.

Yoga is the golden key which unlocks the door to peace, tranquility and joy of liberation. Health is not a commodity to be bargained for. It has to be earned through sweat. Regular practice improves our self confidence and will power. The very important aspect of Yoga is that it teaches us to control the effect of brain upon the body. Specific asanas work on the various systems of the body. Yogasana will help to transform individual by taking the person away from an awareness of just the body, toward the consciousness of the soul.

Yoga is for all of us. Yoga teaches us to live and to be in symmetry, because it is itself symmetry. Yoga is a mirror, to look at ourselves from within. The growth in quality of life depends upon efforts taken while conduction of yoga.

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