



Yoga: A Sacred Method Of Preserving Our Physical, Mental And Spiritual Well-Being

Mr. Tarun Sarkar

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Philosophy, Egra Sarada-Shashi Bhusan College, West Bengal, India.

Abstract: In the current times, health should be given highest priority in the current situation. It was best expressed by the Swiss-born physician Paracelsus, who said, "Health isn't everything, but without health, everything is nothing." In today's frenetic atmosphere, people's overindulgence in social media and the amount of time they spend on it, coupled with their strong indifference in sports and physical activity, weakens them over time mentally and physically as well as most critically, impedes societal growth. People's physical and mental healths are deteriorating day by day. As a result, a kind of anxiety or melancholy is emerging. They thus develop stress or a form of mental depression. This leads to a variety of forms of social degeneration. People are becoming impatient more often. Their hurried judgments have caused them to encounter a number of issues. For no apparent reason, they are growing despairing. Some people are making drastic choices, such as ending their own lives. The finest method for removing it is the path of yoga. The father of Yoga Philosophy, Maharshi Patañjali, mentioned Astāngayoga and asserted that it is a path to God-worship or liberation. However, yoga's spiritual path leads us to the ultimate understanding and eliminates the separation between the individual and the universal selves, offering us eternal happiness. The necessity or significance of yoga has grown significantly in the modern era since it promotes mental and physical development that is robust and youthful. When we practice yoga and maintain physical health, stress is insurmountable and our minds are strengthened for work. Regular yoga practice promotes body, mind, and soul harmony and leads to a person's holistic development. In addition to controlling issues and worries, yoga meets our daily necessities.

Keywords: Social Media, Stress, Liberation, Astāngayoga, Social Degeneration

I. INTRODUCTION

"Yoga is a timeless pragmatic science evolved over thousands of years dealing with the physical, moral, mental and spiritual well-being of man as a whole." (Iyengar, 1979)

In the age of science and artificial intelligence (AI), due to increasing anxiety and worry, we are leading our lives without controlling our mind and body. The mind is often distracted and pensive. Additionally, numerous materials are readily available to engage and captivate the mind. TV, cell phone, Facebook, WhatsApp and many other types of addictions and burdened with various families, social and financial problems, the mind is often distracted and confused. The mind never gets a chance to stay in its own. Gradually fatigue, lethargy and depression appear in the mind and in turn affect body. To control our mind and body first we need to keep ourselves healthy, strong and pure and simultaneously purify our inner selves. Negative thoughts and fears are bad for our nervous system and in turn, affect our mind and body. These effects cause various diseases. To get rid of all these diseases, we need to purify our thoughts, freedom of inner self and self-confidence. To gain these qualities, yoga is considered a very effective and natural tool that has been shown throughout different ages.

The concept of Yoga has been flowing since ancient times in India. The term 'Yoga' was first mentioned in the R̥kveda approximately four thousand years ago. It is believed that yoga was prevalent much earlier than that. According to the ancient scriptures, Devādideva Mahādeva is the originator of yoga. Although the importance of Yoga is described in various books published later, there is no separate coherent yoga śāstra then. Yoga is considered Guptavidya and Gurumukhividya in that time, and the Guru only

teaches yoga to their suitable disciples. There were no special opportunities for the general public to learn and practice yoga. At that time, many methods of yoga are believed to have disappeared.

II. DEFINITION AND MEANING OF 'YOGA'

The word 'Yoga' originates from the Sanskrit root 'Yuj', which means 'to join' or 'to combine'. According to the ancient sages, yoga is the union of the individual soul with the supreme soul, i.e., it is the realization that one's own self is not separate from the divine but is one with the universal consciousness. This realization results in spiritual freedom and inner peace. Maharshi Patañjali's Yogasūtra is the first foundational book on Yoga which was written almost 2200 years ago. In Yogasūtra, he defines 'Yoga' as- "Yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ" (Yogasūtra- 1.2). To understand the meaning and significance of yoga, we have to first of all break down this definition into its parts. The definition consists of four terms. They are Yoga, Citta, Vṛtti and Nirodha. Let's find out the meaning of each Sanskrit phrase. 'Yoga' is generally translated as 'union,' but in this definition, yoga is interpreted as the practice and discipline aimed at achieving a higher state of consciousness and spiritual growth. 'Citta' is interpreted as the mind or consciousness. It encircles not just the rational thinking aspect but also emotions, memories, and sensory perceptions. 'Vṛtti' refers to 'fluctuations' or 'modifications'. Vṛttis are the various thoughts, distractions, and activities of the mind that can disturb its calm state. 'Nirodha' refers to absolute 'cessation' or 'control' means the absolute control or restraint of our mental modifications. If we incorporate all the words, the meaning of 'Yoga' can be understood as 'Yoga is the absolute control or cessation of fluctuations or changes in the mind'. Yoga is the process through which it is possible to gain control over our mental faculties or functions, such as thinking, judging, feeling, imagining, etc. In other words, yoga is to tie the body and mind in one harmony and build life beautifully through the coordination of thought and action. Now the question is, how can one attain this goal?

In sūtra number 29 of the second chapter of the Yogasūtra, Maharshi Patañjali stated that this goal can be achieved by practicing eight limbs of Aṣṭāṅgayoga - "Yama-niyama-āsana-prāṇāyāma-pratyāhāra-dhāraṇa-dhyāna-samādhayo'ṣṭāv-aṅgāni"(2.29). 'Yama' means 'ethical restraints'. 'Niyama' means 'personal observances' or 'self-disciplines'. 'Āsana' means 'bodily posture'. 'Prāṇāyāma' means 'breathing control'. 'Pratyāhāra' means 'withdrawal of senses'. 'Dhāraṇa' means 'concentration'. 'Dhyāna' means 'meditation'. 'Samādhi' means 'contemplation'. Among these limbs, Āsana, Prāṇāyāma and Dhyāna which are known as Hatha Yoga, are being given the utmost priority in modern yoga science.

Āsana(Bodily Posture): The word 'Āsana' comes from the Sanskrit root 'Ās' which means 'to seat'. A fixed and comfortable position in a certain posture is called Āsana. Āsana is a helpful technique to prepare our body for meditation. Physical fitness and mental fortitude are achieved through Āsana.

Prāṇāyāma(Breathing Control): The word 'Prāṇāyāma' comes from two Sanskrit roots, 'prāna', means 'vital force' and 'āyām' means 'control'. Inhaling and exhaling in a certain pattern by disrupting the normal breathing rhythm is called Prāṇāyāma. It is a technique for controlling the normal breath and prāna (vital force). After doing Āsana for a long time, the body becomes suitable for Prāṇāyāma.

Dhyāna(Meditation): When the mind remains fixed on a particular center of the body for a long time after settling in the state of conception, it is called meditation. 'Om' or any other sacred mantra can be chanted in that state. During this time, the body and mind are driven in a kind of rhythm. The mind becomes full of joy.

In addition to these limbs, some aspects of yoga practice have been added in modern times to purify physical, mental and spiritual health, like- Nāḍī, Kundalinī, Śaṭkarma, Mudra, Bandha. Lets Explain them briefly-

Nāḍī: The word 'Nāḍī' comes from the Sanskrit root 'nād' which means to move or flow. The use of the word Nāḍī in Yogaśāstra refers to the dynamic pathways or currents of the body that carry food, water, blood, air and mental emotions from one place in the body to another. In many cases, Nāḍī refers to various nerves or nerves in current medical science.

Kundalinī: In ancient times, sages called the root energy or spiritual energy center of our body as Kundalinī or Kulkundalinī. The word 'Kundalinī' means round or twisted. Since this energy exists in the form of a coil, it is named Kundalinī. Awakening the Kundalinī energy through constant practice and practice of Āsanās, Prāṇāyāma, Mudrās, Bandhas, etc. is the main objective of yoga practitioners. Regarding Kundalinī, Swāmi Vivekānanda stated that if this Kundalinī Śakti is awakened, the person becomes prone to imagination. The divine spirit is revealed in him. The door of knowledge will open for them. Then you don't have to look for knowledge in books, the mind will work for you as a book of infinite knowledge.

Śaṭkarma: Yogaśāstra lays special emphasis on body purification. Any dirt or contamination inside the body is harmful to health. There are various compound cleansing methods to detoxify the body by removing these unwanted substances from the body. Such as Dhauti, Vasti, Neti, Trāṭak, Naulī, Kapālbhāti.

These 6 methods are known as Śaṭkarma. They are especially effective in purifying the pulse. All the combined methods by which the harmful substances and pathogens accumulated inside the body are removed from the body and the various parts of the body are cleansed are called dhauti. Vasti refers to the lower abdomen or the lower part of the navel. The process by which excrement is removed from the body is called Vastikriyā. Netikriyā refers to the simple method of removing the dirt and pollutants accumulated in the nasal passages and throat. Trāṭak is very effective in keeping the eyes clean and improving eyesight. Naulī is an action, or cleansing technique, that engages the abdominal muscles. Kapālbhāti is a breathing exercise that increases the brightness of the forehead so that the area remains clean.

Mudrā: The word 'Mudrā' is derived from Sanskrit the root 'mud' which means to delight or give pleasure. According to this meaning, whatever gives us pleasure is known as mudrā. In other words, mudrā is the thing or process from which or by the practice of which pleasure is derived. Practicing different types of mudra in the yogic process brings joy to the mind of the practitioner. He can take his yoga practice to a higher level and get a special pleasant feeling in body and mind. As a result of regular practice of various mudrās, the functioning of the major pulses and glands of the body is particularly improved. A beautiful coordination is created between nerve and muscle activity. As a result, it is easy to maintain physical and mental health and the body can be kept free from diseases.

Bandha: Bandha is the term for fastening something or blocking the passage. Bandha practices attempt to direct prāṇa vāyu or prāṇa śakti in a certain direction by holding back the bodily air. The ancient yogis tried to awaken the Kundalinī energy through closed practices and direct this energy into the spinal cord. By various mechanisms of Bandha, the particular part of the body or the nerve-muscle is gradually contracted and kept under control. During this time, the internal pressure of the body increases greatly. As a result of contraction and expansion, the related organs and glands work like humans, improving blood circulation and increasing their efficiency.

III. BENEFITS OF YOGA

Yoga provides a lot of benefits for physical and mental health as well as on spiritual and social levels. We can say yoga is a complete science of health because yoga helps in the physical, mental, spiritual and social health development of our lives. Looking at it from this point of view, it can be said that yoga has completely fulfilled the definition of good health given by WHO. The prevalence of yoga is increasing day by day worldwide. Now yoga is being taught in various institutions, such as yoga practice centers, adult education centers, health institutions, sports clubs, rehabilitation centers, schools, colleges, universities, etc. Yoga practice does not require any acrobatic skills. It is a very simple practice. It can be practiced by unfit, physically challenged, sick, pregnant women, etc., and enjoy its benefits. Although yoga is an ancient practice, scientific studies have shown that yoga plays an important role in improving physical, psychological and spiritual well-being.

a) Physical Benefits:

1. Yoga can increase muscle strength and physical flexibility.
2. Yoga improves posture.
3. Lower heart rate and improve heart health.
4. Aid in digestion and other bowel issues.
5. Improve respiratory and circulatory health.
6. Improve sleep regulation and reduce insomnia.
7. Help individuals achieve their desired weight, as yoga is a crucial form of exercise to help individuals lose weight.
8. Release muscle tension and aches.

b) Psychological Benefits:

1. Encouraging mindfulness practices that ease tension and anxiety.
2. Encouraging healthy lifestyle choices since yoga improves flexibility, strength, and balance in both the body and mind.
3. Promoting constructive and beneficial emotional requisition practices to enhance mental and emotional well-being.
4. Yoga is used as a mindfulness-based intervention strategy to assist people in achieving addiction recovery.
5. By boosting confidence and self-esteem, yoga might assist people in managing their anxiety or depression symptoms that are linked to feelings of worthlessness or loneliness.
6. Yoga can help regulate emotions, leading to greater emotional stability.

c) Spiritual Benefits:

1. Enhanced Self-Awareness: Yoga encourages a closer relationship with oneself, which increases self-awareness and contemplation.
2. Mind-Body Connection: Yoga leads to a more balanced state of being by bringing the mind and body into harmony.
3. Sense of Inner Peace: Many people discover that practicing yoga increases their level of contentment and inner serenity.

Besides all of these benefits, yoga teaches us to breathe healthily and through breathing, we get rid of stress and anxiety. Regular practice of yoga leads to good and deep sleep. As a result, ailments like insomnia are cured. Practicing yoga keeps the body fresh and energetic throughout the day and keeps fatigue or laziness away from us. Yoga acts as a natural way to cure various diseases by increasing the body's immunity. Yoga is very important for many children who suffer from hyperactivity and mental disorder, as yoga practice controls their mind, thoughts, and imagination, etc. Even yoga practice can keep away our negative habits, deal with the problems of life and make life all around beautiful. Yoga practice gives new life to many mental patients. By practicing yoga, individuals who have experienced physical, mental, and emotional trauma can gradually return to a healthy and normal life. All things considered, yoga is a holistic discipline that can improve well-being in a variety of ways.

IV. IMPORTANCE OF YOGA

There are different types of yoga exercises according to the needs of men and women of different ages. Indian yoga has been welcomed everywhere in the country and abroad, irrespective of caste, religion, etc. and yoga has today assumed a universal form. By practicing yoga, a sense of discipline, punctuality, sense of brotherhood, respect for elders, mutual cooperation, strength of character, etc. are significantly increased in people. In the era of extreme development of science, many things have happened, but no method has been discovered to influence people's thinking and regulate their behavior. Physical benefits are obtained as a result of the practice of yoga in accordance with the rules and regulations, and amazing mental changes are taking place along with it, this is undoubtedly a remarkable aspect of yoga. However, it is not seen to think about this aspect. Dr. K.S. Joshi said that if science could teach us how to behave, then mankind today would have been immensely happy and free from any human problems. It has come to our attention that science is not capable of doing that.

Chronic stress is making people's healthy lives miserable. Yoga has become an important tool for managing stress. Maharshi Patañjali also considered yoga as a way to control the tendencies of the mind. Yoga is defined as the art of living, by which a healthy mind and a healthy body enable all individuals to achieve their work goals. Ācharya Rajneesh (Osho) said that yoga is an experimental science beyond religion, belief and superstition. Yoga is the art of living and a complete medical system. It is a complete path to the royal side. All texts and definitions given by scholars make it clear that yoga contributes to the overall development of a person by changing the course of his life. Yoga is considered by the individual as a means of physical development, where a healthy body is the foundation of life, which helps in achieving goals. Yoga has the potential to provide a person with a stress-free life. Yoga can reduce stress in just a few minutes and for some time. Regular exercise improves physical and mental health. New energy flows through the person's body and he works more efficiently. Yoga connects a person with spirituality, which helps relieve stress arising from work. Regular practice of yoga can significantly reduce stress.

A variety of exercises- Āsanās, Prāṇāyāma, Dhyāna (Meditation) etc. practices bring a sense of perpetual calmness. Through regular yoga practice and mental counseling, many people have been cured of mental illness and significant changes in behavior have occurred. Our mind is introverted during prāṇāyāma, mudrā and meditation practices. Contentment comes deep into the mind through yoga practice. As a result of yoga practice, every nerve and muscle in the body becomes refreshed and active. Body and mind gradually return to their own rhythm. The darkness accumulated in the sky of the mind gradually disappears. A person discovers a new life and a new joy of living.

V. UNIFICATION OF BODY, MIND AND SOUL

Human beings are governed by physical, mental and spiritual components. Practicing yoga can have a holistic effect on balancing body, mind and soul. Yoga unifies the body, mind, and soul through a combination of physical postures (Āsanās), breathing techniques (Prāṇāyāma), and meditation practices. Here's how it works: Āsanās are the physical component of yoga practice. They involve various body positions that improve strength, flexibility, and balance. By focusing on the body's movements and sensations during Āsana practices, practitioners develop a deeper awareness of their physical selves. This awareness helps to cultivate a mind-body connection, where the mind becomes more attuned to the sensations and needs of the body. Prāṇāyāma, or yogic breathing exercises, are integral to yoga practice.

Controlled breathing patterns help to regulate the flow of energy (prāna) in the body and calm the mind. By consciously directing the breath, practitioners learn to control their physiological responses and quiet the fluctuations of the mind. This enhances mental clarity, focus, and emotional balance. Meditation is a fundamental aspect of yoga that involves training the mind to achieve a state of focused awareness and inner stillness. Through meditation practices, practitioners learn to observe their thoughts without attachment or judgment, fostering a sense of inner peace and tranquility. This heightened awareness extends beyond the meditation session, enabling practitioners to maintain mindfulness in their daily lives. A deeper understanding of oneself and their place in the world can be achieved by observing the mind's tendencies and cultivating present-moment awareness.

VI. CONCLUSION

If we want to choose an exercise system that is suitable for all classes of mankind and brings mental health, cheerfulness, and spiritual consciousness while keeping the body healthy, strong and neutral, then yoga should be chosen. Yoga is a subject that everyone, young and old, needs to have some knowledge about it. Boys and girls, young and old, rich and poor, everyone should do yoga. Yoga exercises are useful for students, teachers, employees, businessmen, patients, doctors and all classes of people. This knowledge will be useful at some point in life because we all want to be healthy. By increasing interest in yoga, we can take a step towards a wellness society. Regular practice of yoga gives the space to connect with people and maintain healthy relationships with them.

The aim of yoga is thus to encourage a positive and healthy lifestyle for the physical, mental and emotional health of humans. At the physical level, yoga can develop strength, stamina, endurance and high energy. Yoga is the source of increasing concentration, calm, peace and contentment at a mental level which leads to inner and outer harmony. Not only for physical illness or any other problem but also for healthy, strong and active people, there is a need for yoga practice for physical fitness, mental improvement and maintaining mental balance and bringing mental cheerfulness. It can be said with certainty that Yoga can play an important role in solving humanitarian problems in the current era of unrest by bringing people under one umbrella, as yoga gives the space to connect with loved ones and maintain socially healthy relationships with other people. To practice yoga, we require time, but before that, we must acknowledge the necessity of it and be deeply motivated to practice it. Only then lack of time will no longer appear as an obstacle. Once you start, you will see that the time of yoga practice will increase gradually and the yoga habit will develop. This is the foremost requirement for the development and advancement of society. Finally, we can conclude the discussion by taking a quote from Sri Aurobindo- "All life is Yoga, while Yoga as a sādhanā is a methodized effort towards self-perfection, which brings to expression the latent, hidden potentialities of being." (Aurobindo,1914).

REFERENCES

1. Adling, R.B & Bangar, D.B.(2017). Benefits of Yoga in Daily Life. International Journal of Physical Education and Sports and Sciences, 11(02), 1-4. www.ignited.in
2. Baro, S.(2020). Yoga and Stress Management. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Education and Research, 5(4), 09-11.
3. Bhargava, D., & Trivedi, H. (2018). A Study of Causes of Stress and Stress Management among Youth. *IRA International Journal of Management & Social Sciences (ISSN 2455-2267)*, 11(3), 108. <https://doi.org/10.21013/jmss.v11.n3.p1>
4. Carrington, H.(1920). *HIGHER PSYCHICAL DEVELOPMENT (YOGA PHILOSOPHY)*. Dodd, Mead and Company, New York.
5. Hemamalini, R., Ashok, V., & Sasikala, V. (2018). A Study on Stress Management and its Impact among Students. *International Journal of Academic Research in Economics and Management Sciences*, 7(3). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarems/v7-i3/4439>
6. Iyengar, B.K.S.(1966). *Light on Yoga*. Schocken Books, New York.
7. Kaswan, P.(2022). YOGA: A COMPLEMENTARY TOOL FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT. International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts,10(2), a936-a940.
8. Manikandan, P.(2018). Importance of yoga in daily life. International Journal of Yogic, Human Movement and Sports Sciences; 3(2): 288-291.
9. Osho, R.(2002). *Yoga: The Science of Living*. Penguin India, Delhi.
10. Pandit, M.P.(1975). *All Life is Yoga*. Dipti Publications, Pondicherry.
11. Ramacharaka, Y.(1904). *HATHA YOGA or THE YOGI PHILOSOPHY OF PHYSICAL WELL-BEING*. Yogi Publication Society, Chicago.
12. Sadhguru, (2017). *Adiyogi: The source of yoga*. India: Harpercollins Publisher.

13. Sharma, M. (2014). Yoga as an Alternative and Complementary Approach for Stress Management: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, 19(1), 59–67. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2156587213503>
14. Shirkrishna(2012).*Essence of Prāṇāyāma*. Kaivalyadhama, Mumbai.
15. Sivananda, S.(2012).*MEDITATION ON OM AND NIANDUITYA UPANISTIAD*. The Divine Life Society, Uttarakhand.
16. Sivananda, S.(2006).*PRACTICE OF YOGA*. The Divine Life Society, Uttarakhand.
17. Sivananda, S.(1997).*THE SCIENCE OF PRANAYAMA*. The Divine Life Society, Uttarakhand.
18. Uma K, Nagendra HR, Nagarathna R, Vaidehi S. The integrated approach of yoga: a therapeutic tool for mentally handicapped children: a one-year controlled study. *Journal of Mental Deficiency Research*, 1989; 33:415-421.
19. Uppal,S.(2015).*Yoga: A Healthy Way of Living*. National Council of Educational Research and Training. New Delhi.

