



Yoga: A Key to Holistic Way of Living with Ease

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Abstract

The purpose of a key is to unlock the lock similarly Yoga as a means has immense potential to unlock our hidden potential buried within us each individual apart from all the differences. A little awareness about how yoga works and regular practice can make the difference. In present day the meaning of living is shrinking day by day from blooming with your fullest potential to just merely existing. In that situation happiness seems to be a mirage and an occasional affair. As there is a make believe we have set, some of the parameters which are also faulty like after 40yrs you will be in the grasp of lifestyle diseases, but is it true or according to whom it is true? Who set the bar? We all are different human beings or individuals how one size fit for all? Demographic data shows that the average age of male and female has increased in this decade. Isn't it our responsibility to lead a healthy and happy life for ourselves, our society and at last for country (if we are happy and healthy we can be in a better position in health and happiness index compared to other countries). Let's talk about why and how yoga will unlock benefits: The main objective of Yoga is "chittavrittinirodaha" which means restraining of the mental modifications and realisations of true potential. Maharishi Patanjali presented the eightfold path of Yoga or Ashtanga Yoga for the overall development of the human personality these are:



1. Yama
2. Niyama
3. Asana
4. Pranayama
5. Pratyahara
6. Dharana
7. Dhyana
8. Samadhi

These above mentioned eight-fold approach of yoga collectively help us

- Feel more energetic, enthusiastic through out the day by toning muscles and glands. Yoga practices in the morning enables us to better use oxygen in the body by improving the capacity of our lungs.
- Boosts natural immunity against various infectious diseases. Yoga increases our stamina and cardiovascular endurances, reduces cholesterol and maintains blood pressure levels.
- Yoga works on the metabolic system, increasing digestion and better absorption of nutrition and regularising bowel movement
- Yoga improves memory and power of concentration with the help of controlled breathing exercises and meditation.
- Helps in coping with stress, anxiety, depression naturally and induces better sleeping
- Hence bring forth a feeling of happiness and well-being

A life with ease is a life without disease and Yoga is the need of the hour for everyday and everybody.

Keywords: Yoga, well-being, happiness, pranayama, meditation.

Yoga is considered the science of right living and it need to be incorporated in our daily life. It works on all aspects of our life like mental, physical, emotional, spiritual in a harmonised and balanced way by practicing asana, pranayama and meditation. Swami Satyananda Saraswati rightly said “Yoga is not an ancient myth buried in oblivion. It is the most valuable inheritance of the present. It is the essential need of today and the culture of tomorrow.” The very word ‘Holistic was used by a 20th century African soldier and statesman Jan Christian



Smuts, to describe matter, life and mind. But the dictionary meaning of Holistic is interconnected even in medicine too the meaning is treatment of the whole person, taking into account mental and social factors rather than just the symptoms of an illness. Though this is modern term, but it was in practice since Vedic age as Yoga talk about the concept of body - mind -soul complex that forms the basic tripod of health better known as the proper lifestyle of modern times.

After knowing what yoga is, it's eight limbs, how it is interconnected, and the concept of holistic health. Now we will explain in detail how this eight limbs described by Maharishi Patanjali is similar to modern days Holistic health and well being:

Yama is how you perceive the world around you, your social behaviour and moral principles what you should do and don't. They are of five kinds:

- **Ahimsa** or nonviolence meaning doing no harm to any creature in thought or deeds.
- **Satya** that is truthfulness, telling no lies.
- **Asteya** is non stealing do not steal material objects.
- **Brahmachariya**(celibacy): purity in sexual life, it also indicates interest in every aspect of education and have a balanced outlook regarding success and failure in life.
- **Aparigraha** means non-possessiveness or leaving the hoarding and collecting habits
- **Niyama** it denotes the inner discipline and responsibility, how we treat ourselves.

There is five Niyama:

- **Saucha**(purity): Keep yourself clean by taking baths physical and for mental and spiritual levels it is achieved through the practice of five yamas which help clear away all the negative attributes of body mind and soul.
- **Santosha** or contentment is the state where you are grateful and mindful of what you have seek happiness from that, take the responsibility of your future growth from where you are now.
- **Tapas** or austerity which means self discipline and self control in body mind and speech it is needed for achieving higher goals in life
- **Svadhya** or self study of sacred texts or books which uplift your life



- **Ishvara Pranidhana** is living with an awareness of the Divine, be devoted to God or whatever you consider divine and offering all the credit to the Almighty for one's achievements.
- ❖ **Asanas:** comprises bodily posture for the activation of some of the dormant psychological systems which helps stabilise the body and mind. Asanas are mainly Centred upon the spinal column, this improves the conduction of neural impulses to the muscles, as well as the blood supply to the spinal column. Increased blood supply provides adequate nutrients to all the muscles and joints and at the same time removes toxins effectively.
- ❖ **Pranayama:** refers to the regulation of breathing like inhalation, retention and exhalation. Practicing Pranayama purifies and removes distractions of the mind so that it's become easier to concentrate and meditate. Pranayama reduces the instabilities of the mind increases tolerance and patience in the practitioner.
- ❖ **Pratyahara:** means withdrawal of the senses and nonattachment with the usual sensory inputs which otherwise are quite troublesome.
- ❖ **Dharana:** It teaches the mind to focus on one point or image, the goal is to still the mind and push away superfluous thoughts by fixing the mind in one point it may a candle flame, a flower, or any mantra. In Dharana concentration is effortless.
- ❖ **Dhyana:** Meditation increases inner awareness and reduces stress by tranquilizing the mind. Regular practitioners experience calmness, freshness and a feeling of well being throughout the day. Meditation increases willpower and rational thinking.
- ❖ **Samadhi:** is the ultimate goal of the eight-fold path to Yoga. This is pure contemplation, super consciousness, in which the knower and the known become one. Those who have achieved Samadhi are enlightened.

By the word Holistic Health we mean the physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual health of a person and with the help of this five aspects a person lives a healthy and happy lives. It is important to understand that if one area of health is compromised mostly other areas will be affected. Yoga affects the way we see things, instead of seeing diseases as something to be feared and quickly eradicated yoga teaches us that it is the



disease that indicates we are making errors in our lifestyle or thinking. It shows us that we must make some changes if we want to be healthy, happy and fulfilled life. Lack of awareness from our part allows diseases to creep in when we are sick, we are forced by nature to wake up to our transgressions of natural laws. Regaining our awareness through yogic practices is the key to health. The yogic process brings about rebalance, insight, understanding and appreciation of the universal, natural laws, which operates in the world we live in. Each and every sincere individual should try to regain positive physical and mental health through the practice of yoga, and it can give them insight into the fundamental errors they are making in the names of lifestyle diseases. Which is the result of lifestyle disorders mostly from our part: the way we eat, sleep, work, interact with people, think, plan, etc. are included in our life style. Most of the time it has been observed that due to laziness and maximise our earning with minimum work we choose wrong lifestyles mostly sedentary in nature improper diet, wrong timing of foods inadequate rest and compromised night sleep, no exercise along with social, political, economic and environmental factors also burdened our physical and mental health. The result of all this self torture starts manifesting as lifestyle diseases/disorders as diabetes, high BP, cholesterol problems, PCOD in females, asthma problems etc. It is only Yoga that has the power to recuperates the natural strength of the body and mind to eliminate disturbing factors on the gross and subtler levels. Lifestyle diseases can be cure and endure by yoga as it enhances healing power by maintaining the equilibrium or homeostasis, through the development of optimum muscle tone, giving complete mental relaxation and constructing the proper emotional make up.

As we all know yoga works on the holistic principle of harmony and unification. It creates a balance in the nervous and endocrine systems which directly influences all other systems and organs of the body as imbalances in the endocrine system effects irregularities and efficiency of the nervous system decreases and diseases starts manifesting. Yoga is a very beneficial for endocrine system as it supports the healthy functioning of adrenal glands by reducing stress responses. Yoga encourage the secretion of certain hormones and regulating certain hormones through compression and decompression of the specific glands which provides non-pharmacological replacement of hormones. Yoga cannot stop disease or discomfort but it



has the power and potential to reduce inflammation and building coping mechanisms naturally and boost the immune system.

The ultimate goal of human life is to be happy, healthy and contented and to achieve that we have follow some of the yogic practices every day in a ritualistic manner.*practice yoga(asana, pranayama, meditation for healthy body and mind)When all the anatomical and physiological factors are in balance condition we experience optimum health and to main mental and physical health we have to practice yoga asana everyday to purification of the nadis by removing obstructing toxins from the body. Reconditioning of the neuromuscular and glandular system so that adequate immunity is regained. Cultivation of proper psychological attitude so as to increase the ability of individual to cope with the stressful situation. Long lasting beneficial, physiological and psychological changes will take place only after repeated every day practice for a longer period. Asana release and divert energy from our upper and lower extremities to the internal organs in our or abdomen, chest and brain. Asana distribute this energy as per the priority basis. This is achieved by raising the hands and legs from the ground or folding them together without a rise in pulse rate. The extra energy produced by the internal organs is returned to our extremities during the relaxative asanas resulting in the increase of the endurance, power of their muscles. Asanas are mainly centred upon the spinal column. This improves the conduction of neural impulses to all the muscles as well as the blood supply to the spinal column. Increased blood supply provides adequate nutrients to all the muscles and joints and at the same time removes toxins effectively. Alternate contraction and stretching of various muscles during asanas give rise to alternate positive and negative pressure changes that stimulates various endocrine glands. Happy hormones happy humans old rule. The best time for asana practice is during the early morning hours(preferably bhahmamuhurta)in empty stomach after clearing bowel and a quick cold bath(activates the nervous system) in the guidance of a guru or trained yoga teacher. Yoga asanas are mild exercises so recommend for every one but before doing that we must consult a general physician if there is any medical condition unsuitable for yoga practices or contraindications. But pranayama(avoid kapalbhati if there is any high blood pressure issues)and meditation is for everyone as it is helpful for reducing inflammation, oxidative



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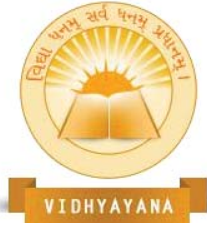
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stress, anxiety and mild depression as meditation induced good sleep by calming the nervous system and anger control mechanisms.

In conclusion:

Yoga practice is a must for physiological wellness and mental balance. Our ancestors given us the key to live a healthy and happy lives by following an ideal lifestyle, but evolution deluded and distracted us many times but health emergencies (epidemics/pandemic) back us in track and remind us of our ancestral heritage and saves us from encountering potential existential threat. Now a days Yoga is a means of maintaining health and well being is more and more popular than ever. It is the key we genetically inherited but the uses is entirely depending upon us whether we use it to unlock the immense potential of health happiness and living with ease or just ignore it and invite disease!!



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Apart from these references my decade long practice as a Yoga Therapist and Counsellor and reading of ancient literatures and modern research helped me to enhance my knowledge in this field.