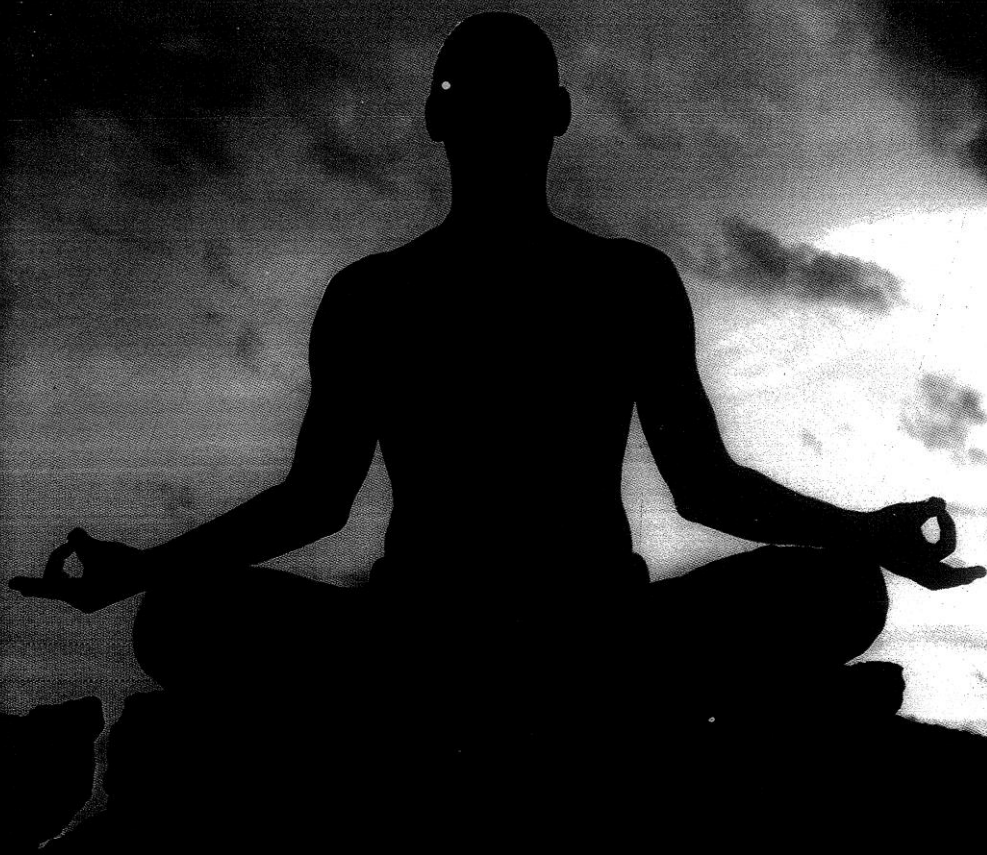


CHAPTER 6

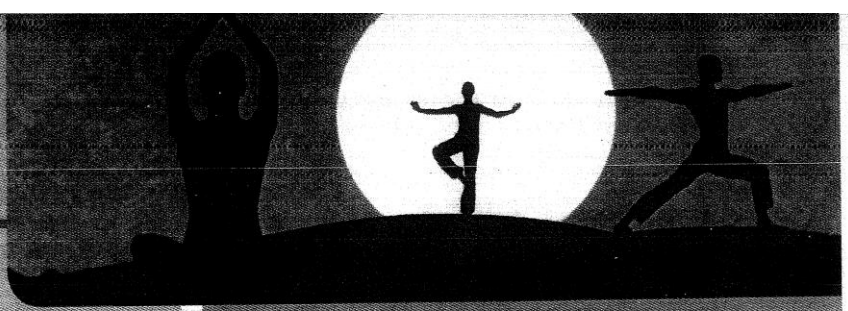
YOGA AND STRESS MANAGEMENT





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Learning Outcomes

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- Discuss the concept of human psyche
- Explain the concept of frustration, conflicts and psychosomatic disorders
- Identify the relationship between mind and body
- Describe the meaning and concept of mental hygiene and role of yoga in mental hygiene
- Discuss the concept of mental health in yogic perspective
- Explain the concept of prayer and meditation for mental health
- Understand the concept of stress with relation to modern science and yoga
- Identify the role of yoga in stress management and life management as well



Introduction

Stress and anxiety have become an integral part of the human life. They affect our emotional and physical health in a big way. Stress can sometimes impel us to act in a positive manner while on the other hand it may have a negative effect. It may give rise to the feelings of rejection, disruption, depression and anger. Thus, it may lead to various problems related to health, such as stomach upset, headache, sleep disorder, rashes, high blood pressure, ulcers, stroke and heart disease. In most severe cases, it may also trigger suicidal tendencies.

In this chapter, you will explore about stress. What is stress? How it degenerates and how it can cause grievous harm to our body. Also you will be able to gain information regarding the psyche of the human mind, frustration, conflicts, psychosomatic disorders, relationship between the mind and the body, mental hygiene, and the role of yoga in mental hygiene, the positive effect of prayer and meditation on mental health, psycho-social environment, concept of stress according to modern science and yoga, and finally, you wind up this chapter with the role that yoga plays in stress and life management.

6.1 Human Psyche

Psychology refers to the scientific study of human mind and human behaviour. Psychology also refers to the application of such knowledge to various spheres of human activity including issues related to daily life - eg. Family, education and work – and the remedy for mental health problems. It is not easy to understand the nature of human mind as it is hidden and subtle.

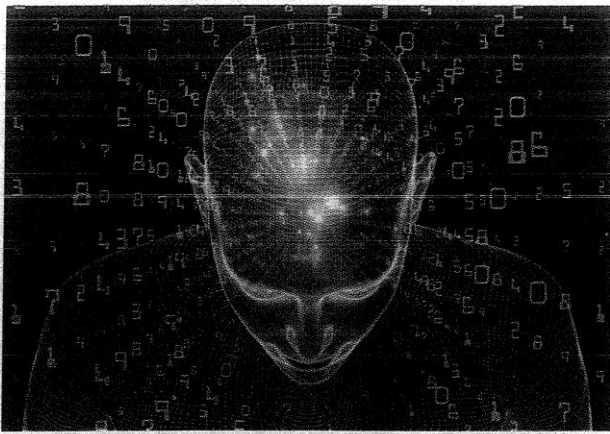


Fig. 6.1: Human Psyche

Psychology deals with the study of:

- First: soul
- Second: mind
- Third: consciousness
- Lastly: observable behaviour

Nowadays, psychology is the science of both mental and behaviour processes. Therefore, in the light of Yoga, Psychology is embedded in philosophical studies.

To sum up, psychology is an analytic and scientific study of mental process and behaviour. Psychologists study such phenomena as perception, cognition, emotion, personality, behaviour and interpersonal relationship.



Most-common Mis-conceptions

Generally, people consider that yoga is not effective for chronic physical injuries or aches. In many studies, people who are suffering from low-back pain have been recommended that by adopting carefully a set of yoga postures may help in reducing pain along with helps in improving several functions such as ability to move and walk. By practising yoga (with other forms of regular exercise), recent studies suggest that it may help in providing various health benefits like reducing blood pressure and heart rate, relieving depression and anxiety.

Yogic and Modern Concepts

The term “Yoga” was first cited around 3,000 B.C. in the text of *Rig Veda* in ancient India. Yoga was then considered to be mainly a meditative practice. In recent years, the typical perception of people regarding Yoga has shifted considerably.

Historically, “Traditional Yoga” has been taught verbally. Usually, principles of Yoga are communicated in the style of *sutra*, where brief outlines are expanded upon verbally.



Example

Yoga is defined in 196 Sutras of the *Yoga Sutras*. It is then discussed and described to the students by their teachers. Likewise, the great depth of “*Om mantra*” meaning is defined only in twelve verses of the *Mandukya Upanishad* and is explained verbally. The word ‘Yoga’ is specifically contained in 700 verses of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Over ten percent of the 700 verses of the *Bhagavad Gita* have the word ‘Yoga’.

According to the ancient sages and instructors, Yoga is a complete system, wherein though the poses are small but beneficial. All *asana*s and postures come under the umbrella of the term ‘Yoga’. The true end Yoga is spiritual in nature.

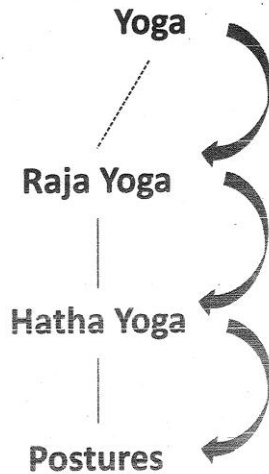


Fig. 6.2: Traditional View of Yoga and Postures

The yoga history can appropriately be categorized into FOUR broad classifications:

- Vedic Yoga
- Pre-classical Yoga
- Classical Yoga
- Post-classical Yoga

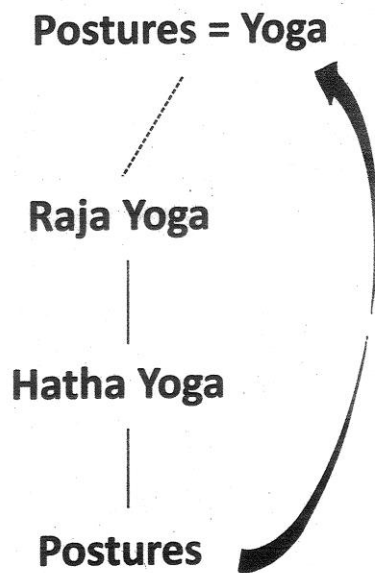


Fig. 6.3: Modern View of Yoga and Postures

The relative postures of yoga have been elevated in the modern times. It helps people to understand the term “yoga”, which refers to *asanas* or physical postures and its main objective is physical fitness.

Most-common Mis-conceptions

Yoga is understood to be a physical system with a spiritual element. Unfortunately, there is a dominant viewpoint regarding yoga that it is merely a program of physical exercises. Such false viewpoint is spread by those classes, institutions, magazines, books, teachers and various students of modern yoga who either have no knowledge or little knowledge about the objectives of yoga. They have no interest in the spiritual purposes of ancient, authentic, traditional yoga and yogic meditation. Therefore, the actual truth is that ‘Yoga with a physical element is a spiritual system’.

Behaviour and Consciousness

Today, Psychology is the science of both human behavior, and the working of human mind.

Behaviour

Behaviour highlights the actions or reactions of an individual with respect to his/her internal or external situation. Psychology studies how and why an individual behaves in a particular manner under different circumstances.

A psychologist examines and analyzes the human behaviour with two perspectives: Overt and Covert

Overt behavior refers to a behavior which is visible and is external.

Example

The way an individual eats his food or plays a game are examples of an overt behavior.

Covert behaviour is invisible. It refers to what happens internally in the minds of human beings.



Example

Thinking is an example of a covert behaviour.

The Upanishads are a store-house of psychological material. The nature of mind and its functions and different psychological phenomena—normal, abnormal, pathological, paranormal, and spiritual—are explained in the Vedas and Upanishads. The core themes, according to the ancient philosophical tradition are centered around self, soul, human nature, human existence, and human experience.

The ancient Indian model of “Personality”, given in the Upanishads, consists of the ‘five’ sheaths. They are ‘*Annamaya*’ (food sheath), ‘*Pranamaya*’ (vital air sheath), ‘*Manomaya*’ (mental sheath), ‘*Vijnanamaya*’ (intellectual sheath), and ‘*Anandamaya*’ (bliss sheath). ‘*Annamaya*’; a segment of human system is nourished by ‘*anna*’, that is, food. ‘*Pranamaya*’ is that segment which is nourished by ‘*prana*’, that is, ‘bioenergy’. ‘*Manomaya*’ is the segment nourished by ‘education’. ‘*Vijnanamaya*’ is nourished by ‘ego’ and ‘*Anandamaya*’ is the segment nourished by ‘emotions’.

In Indian psychological thought the term ‘personality’ has not been used in a strict sense, instead the concept of *Swabhaava* referred in scriptures covers all aspects of one’s personality. *Swabhaava* refers to the attributes of the spirit that are manifested in the essential traits of one’s personality. “*Dharma*, says the *Gita*, is action governed by *Swabhaava*, the essential law of one’s nature. And this *Swabhaava*, is at its core, is the pure quality of the spirit in its inherent power of conscious Will, and in its characteristic force of action” (Kalapana Srivastava, 2012).

Mental Processes

Consciousness is the fundamental entity, which is non-physical, inactive, placid, indescribable and non-associative, (“*Nirajanam Nishkriam Shantam Nirvadyam Niranjanam*”) (Shvetashwar, 6/19) but endowed with self-directed will power (*Swasankalpa Shakti*) to create, retain and annihilate all concepts of knowledge of the Self and Universe.

Consciousness depicts the quality or state of awareness comes under the scope of psychology in modern times. However, some of its concerns have their roots in occultism, mysticism and religion. In psychology, the emergence of the consciousness study reflects a change in people’s mentality. Most of the people question about their possibility of growth and self-actualization rather than how to get rid of pathological symptoms.

In the normal state of consciousness, an individual is unaware of his full potentialities and depends on the knowledge gained through the sensory perception for the expansion of his consciousness. The field of consciousness can be expanded by the development of the capability of non-sensory intuitive cognition of knowledge through yogic techniques, so as to reach the super-conscious state, in which an individual has a direct intuitive revelation of knowledge. In the final state of yogic attainment the individual consciousness merges with the Supreme Consciousness, which is verily yoga or Self-Realization.

6.2 Frustration, Conflicts and Psychosomatic Disorders

STRESSORS

Stressors refer to those situations where an individual finds him/her unable to cope up and deal with under certain difficult situations.

In this section, students will understand the various sources and nature of stress that result in disturbed mental health. Several types of frustrations and conflicts are the outcome of ineffective coping with the stressors. Stress imposes certain demands on the individual which he/she finds himself/herself unable to deal with. Constant failure and disappointment to meet with the stressors demands may produce mental stress in the individuals.

Conflict and Frustration

An individual may be stressed out when he/she faces the problems to attain his/her goals which may create frustration and conflict in him/her. Thus, a conflict in the mind may become more stressful the intensity of frustration increases. Usually, an incompatible situation is the reason for conflict.

Conflicts arise when an individual is faced with two or more alternatives from which he has to choose one, thereby necessarily forsaking the other alternatives.

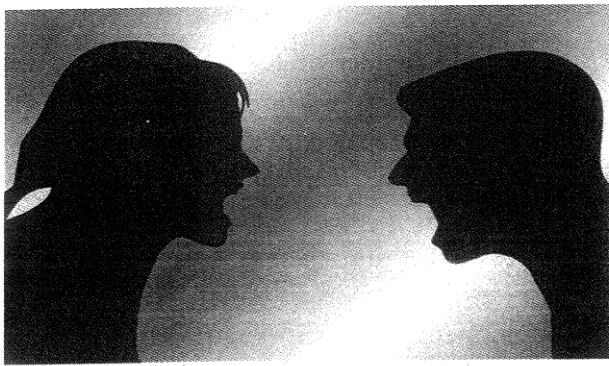


Fig. 6.4: Facing Conflict

Depending on the situation and nature of goals, an individual may face three categories of conflict which are as follows:

a) **Approach-approach conflict:** Such conflict may take place when individuals have to select between two or more desirable goals, and when both goals appear necessary. This sort

of conflict can be considered as “a problem of plenty”.



Example

Selecting from the invitations of two parties on the same day is an example of approach-approach conflict.

b) **Avoidance-avoidance conflict:** Such conflict may take place when individuals have to select between two or more undesirable goals. Avoidance-avoidance conflict is also termed as “*caught between the devil and the deep blue sea*”.



Example

A youth with little educational qualifications has to choose either unemployment or a low-paid disagreeable job. This kind of conflict can create serious adjustment problems, because even the resolution of the conflict may bring frustration rather than relief.

c) **Approach-avoidance conflict:** In this kind of conflict the individual has a strong tendency to approach and to avoid the same goal as well.



Example

A man may want to marry because of some social reasons, as security. But he fears that after getting married he would be accountable and lose his personal freedom. Such type of conflict is usually resolved by accepting some positive and negative characteristics of the goal. Thus, sometimes approach-avoidance conflict is also known as “*mixed-blessing*” conflicts as it involves several alternatives.

Frustration refers to thwarting or preventing from the accomplishment of a goal. It is an experiential state which may be either the outcome of the absence of a desired goal, or blocking of motives and needs through some external forces that may produce difficulties and prevent the fulfilment of wants.



Fig. 6.5: Frustration and Depression

Obstacles or hindrances can be social and physical as well as internal and external which may frustrate an individual. It may arise due to death of loved ones, unhealthy interpersonal relationships and accidents.

Personal characteristics, for example lack of self-discipline, inadequate physical competencies and physical can be sources of frustration. Frustrations may often cause special difficulties, such as mindlessness, loneliness, losses, failure and lack of resources.

Thinking is the function of the mind. Mind is defined as conglomeration of thoughts. Thought is one unit of mind. Different thoughts are arranged in a meaningful sequence and are continuously on the flow like the incessant movement of waves in an ocean. The type of thoughts decide the nature of mental activity. For example, if you solve the problem of Law of Motion the thoughts are all related to that topic and you call it intellect. If they are about the intense feeling of a disaster, you call it an emotion and so on. You may assign different names to different types of thoughts, such as intellect, memory, and creativity. The yogis described the sequence of events in the *manomaya kosha* as follows. The information that has to be gathered from the external world is perceived by the mind which flows out through the doors of perception called the *indriyas*. After this the meaning is analyzed by the intellect. After this processing, we play on our emotions, which

is the most important modification of mind. The emotional reaction in the mind to a situation differs from person to person as the reaction is interpreted with relation to the memories and experiences is stored. All emotions are initially in the form of either 'likes' or 'dislikes'. Their initial wave of activity proceeds on with several chain reactions of thought processes that could be named as positive or negative emotions. Negative emotions are all those destructive and violent emotions which are characterized by distress and unhappiness, which at times manifest themselves and sometimes are suppressed by the mind. Anger, fear, hatred, jealousy, tension, depression, anxiety and frustration are the example of negative emotions. These violent and destructive functions of the *manomaya kosha* is what we call stress and that is recognized as the root cause of many of the psychosomatic illness including diabetes. On the other hand contentment, satisfaction, peace, bliss etc., are examples of positive emotions which are constructive and rejuvenating in nature. Sometimes positive emotions are violent too. Some of the examples of violent positive emotions are excitement, thrill, joy, passionate love, etc.

In the second chapter of the *Bhagvad Gita*, Lord Krishna explains how our senses become the cause of our suffering. We, in our daily lives, constantly perceive material objects. Gradually we get attached to them and get a strong desire to possess them. But then it is not possible to possess everything man wants. This leads to disappointment. In turn, disappointment turns into anger and from anger comes delusion. Delusion arises confusion in memory which further leads to a loss in the powers of intelligence and discrimination. Final outcome of the these activities is devastation.

*dhyāyato vishayAn pumsaH sangas teshupajAyate
sangAt saijAyate kAmaH kAmAt krodho 'bhijAyate*
(2.62)

When a man thinks of material objects, attachment for them arises in him, from attachment desire is born; from desire anger arises.

*krodhād bhavati sammohaù sammohāt smāti-vibhramāù
smāti-bhraāçäd buddhi-nāço buddhi-nāçāt praëacyati*
(2.63)

From anger comes delusion; from delusion comes a loss of memory; from loss of memory comes the destruction of discriminative power; from destruction of discrimination man perishes.

The senses are so strong, impetuous and restless that they forcibly carry away the mind of even a wise person striving for perfection. One develops attachment to sense objects by thinking about them constantly. Desire to possess them comes from attachment to the objects perceived by senses.

Anger comes from unfulfilled desires.

Delusion or wild ideas arise from anger.

The mind is bewildered by delusion.

Reasoning is destroyed when the mind is bewildered.

One abandons the right path when reasoning is destroyed.

The *Bhagavad Gita* emphasizes the importance of withdrawing the senses from the sensuous objects, and transcending them through self control to experience inner peace and supreme happiness. Since the senses are responsible for the instability of the mind and thereby for the delusion, it needs to be actively disengaged from them as they go habitually to them. By disengaging the mind from sensuous pleasure man can fully concentrate upon his inner self. The withdrawing the mind in this way can be compared to the manner in which a tortoise withdraws its limbs. Thus, a yogi can gain mastery over his senses. This is called *pratyahara*. (2.85)

How do we attain peace?

Patanjali says: *sukhanushayi ragah* i.e., 'attachment is that which dwells on pleasure'. He also says:

dukhanushayi dveshab, which means, 'aversion is that which dwells on pain'. This is a natural tendency as we all know that our mind runs after things which are agreeable or produce pleasant sensations. Anything that is disagreeable, or anything that produces unpleasant sensations, we try to avoid. Not to speak of humans even animals do that.

We also notice that different feelings arise in our minds like anger and hatred. They remain dormant in our subconscious mind for sometime, and later on they become aroused by certain conditions which produces provocation of some kind. For instance, if somebody says unkind words, we instantly get enraged, and want to take revenge. This is a natural tendency of the human mind. At first the feeling of anger rises slowly, and gradually it produces a wave in the mind. That wave again overpowers us and we lose the sight of our condition and relations. We lose our memory and become violent. All these things first rise in a slow minute form, like in the form of bubbles, and then gradually take the form of violent waves. All these different feelings are described as the waves of the mental ocean. They bring bondage and suffering in the end. It has been said before that when any disagreeable feeling, like that of hatred, jealousy, or anger, arise, we can overcome them by going through mental modification by trying to arouse softer and opposite feelings.

raga-dvesha -vimuktas tu vishayAn indriyaischaran

Atma-vashyair vidheyAtma prasAdam adhighacchati

(2.64 BG)

But a self-controlled man, despite moving among the material objects with his senses under restraint, and having free from attraction and repulsion, attains peace and bliss.

Psychosomatic Disorders

Psychosomatic disorders are disorders which originate in the psyche or mind of a person and result in ailments in the *soma* or the body. Most

often, psychosomatic diseases are caused by stress. They are characterized by somatic signs and symptoms which are not related to any specific physiological dysfunction.

It is a fact that any kind of physical symptom (such as palpitation) can be psychosomatic in nature. Furthermore, psychological stresses can cause physical symptoms, such as headache, hypertension, psychogenic impotence, and digestive problems.



Did You Know?

High levels of stress hormones can interfere with memory. Stressful events that cause the release of certain hormones can make you forget things you should know. This helps you to explain why your mind goes blank when you stand up to give a presentation or why test-anxiety causes you to forget information you know. Normal memory function returns when the levels of stress hormones return to normal. This is yet another good reason to practise some pretest deep breathing and relaxation.

6.3 Relationship between Mind and Body

What is going on in your mind determines what is happening in your body. For decades scientists have studied how stress affects the body, how thoughts and emotions relate to our experience and stress.

The interconnection between the mind and body was proposed by several ancient healing methods. According to Hippocrates, the father of western medicine thought that health is achieved through a balance of mind, body and environment. This theory is proved by the science of the modern day which has determined that an individual's emotions and thoughts play an important role in all aspects of their health. This means that by taking care of our psychological well-being, we may be able to prevent medical illness or speed our recovery when we are sick.

The entire behaviour is effectively managed and controlled by the coordination and functioning of the nervous system. Psychology studies human behaviour which involves both body and mind. They are interrelated and interact with each other. Mental functions and physical states affect each other. Body and mind are two aspects of living.

Mind is regarded as a function of the body; it does not exist apart from the body. It is a sum total of various mental processes, such as observing, knowing, thinking, reasoning, feeling, imagining, remembering, and judging.

There is a close link between mind and body and their relationship can have a positive effect on quality of life as well as individuals health. State of emotions, beliefs and attitudes that ranges from compassion to love to anger and fear can trigger chain reactions which affect heart rate, blood chemistry as well as the activity of each human cell and organ - from the stomach and digestive tract to the immune system. Also, emotions can affect the individual's body's reaction to strains and stresses. This can cause various physical problems, backaches and headaches.

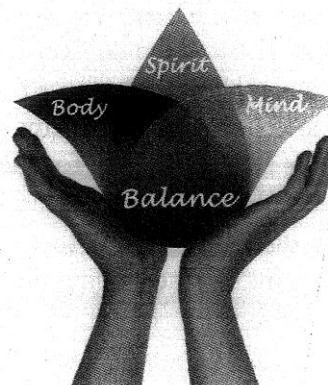


Fig. 6.6: Balance among Mind, Body and Spirit Leads to Healthy Living

Thus, the treatment which can improve and increase the awareness between mind and body relationship helps with:

- Fatigue

- Chronic pain
- Stress
- Smoking
- Excess weight
- Substance abuse

6.4 Role of Yoga in Mental Hygiene

Mental health is closely linked with the mental hygiene. Mental Hygiene is a science that deals with the procedure of achieving mental health and preserving it in the society. The key objective of mental hygiene is to attain proper mental health. Thus, mental hygiene is a means to achieve mental health; thus it can be said that:

- Mental hygiene is the means and,
- Mental health is the end.

Definition

Many authors have given various definitions of Mental hygiene which are described below:

According to Klien, "*Mental hygiene is an endeavour to aid people to ward off trouble as well as to furnish ways of handling trouble in intelligent fashion when it cannot be warded off.*"

According to Rivillin;

- Mental hygiene means the application of a body of hygiene information and technique.
- It is taken from the sciences of Psychology, Child Psychology, Education, Sociology, Psychiatry, Medicine and Biology.
- It cares for the purpose of the preservation and improvement of mental health of the individual and community.
- It is meant for prevention and cure of minor and major mental diseases and defects of mental, educational and social maladjustments.

Objectives of Mental Hygiene

Some of the key objectives of mental hygiene are given below:

- **To develop self-respect and respect for others:**
 - ❖ One of the major factors that may lead to most of the of emotional disorders is the loss of self-respect.
 - ❖ An individual who likes himself can like others, and an individual who dislikes himself would find it difficult to like anybody else.
 - ❖ The main goal of mental hygiene is to help one to respect oneself.
- **To help realize one's potentials:**
 - ❖ Each and every person has certain potentials.
 - ❖ Mental hygiene helps each person to develop those potentials.
- **To understand one's limitations and tolerate the limitations of others:**
 - ❖ Mental hygiene can assist one to understand one's own limitations and tolerate others' limitations as well.
- **To cause harmonious development:**
 - ❖ Mental hygiene aims at the harmonious development of the physical, mental and spiritual capacities of and individual. This would help people to make adjustments with their circumstances.
- **To create happiness:**
 - ❖ The next objective of mental hygiene is to develop a positive attitude towards life.
 - ❖ This will help in creating a sense of happiness in an individual and he/she would live happily in the world.

- **To enable one to make effective adjustment:**
 - ❖ Mental hygiene helps a person to make effective adjustments in all situations and all spheres of life, for example at work, in school, society, home and with self.
- **To enable one to know his or her self:**
 - ❖ As most of the people do not know themselves because they are unaware about their limitations, weaknesses, potentials, etc. This makes them suffer from different kinds of complexes.
 - ❖ So, mental hygiene helps each person to know himself/herself.



Learning ACTIVITY

Formulate the general principles of mental hygiene.

6.5 Mental Health: A Yogic Perspective

Mental hygiene and mental health are the two sides of a coin. The pre-requisite situation for maintaining sound and good health is referred to as Hygiene.

Concepts of mental health include subjective well-being, perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence, intergenerational dependence, and recognition of the ability to realize one's intellectual and emotional potential. It has also been defined as a state of well-being whereby individuals recognize their abilities, are able to cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and make a contribution to communities. Mental health is about enhancing competencies of individuals and communities and enabling them to achieve their self-determined goals. (Basavanthappa, B.T., 2007).



Example



Geeta is afraid of ant. Rohit suffer from serious headache 2 or 3 times a week. Doctor says nothing is wrong with him. Then what is the reason of this? When we ask people if they like them-selves, they answer differently. Some give positive reply, while some do not. But some may say "I don't know". There are times when we also say, "I hate myself". From the above statement it is quite clear that some people are well adjusted while others are not. This is a problem of adjustment.

Yoga system teaches how to reduce the mind substance into its simplest form, by the method of suppression (*nirodha*), Which means to reduce the mind into consciousness (*chaitanya*).

Patanjali has said that the mind can be restrained by practice and renunciation (*abhysasa* and *vairagya*). The practice (*abhysasa*) means the repeated sustained efforts (*yama*) for securing the state of steadiness and calmness, and when steadiness is once attained, the mind goes back to its pure state, and is transformed I to pure consciousness.

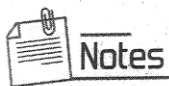
Patanjali says: '*tasmin sati svasa-prasvasayorgativicchedah pranayamah*'. *pratyahara* is making the mind introspective: '*sva-vishaya-sam-prayoge chittasya svarupanukara ivendriyanam pratyaharah*'. Then comes *dharana* which means concentration. It is the process of concentrating different modifications of the mind on to a point: '*desavandhaschittasya dharana*'. Next comes *dhyana* or mediation: '*ta-atra pratyayaitatanata dhyanam*'. Then comes *Samadhi* or super conscious state of the mind which is known as god consciousness. Patanjali says: '*tadevarthamatra-nirbhasam svarupa-sunyamiva samadib*'. (Swami Aabhedananda, 1967).

The differences between mentally healthy and unhealthy persons are as follows:

Mentally Healthy Persons	Mentally Unhealthy Persons
1. Are aware of their own self and have respect for others.	1. Unaware of their own self and also they disrespect others.
2. Can tolerate limitations of others and also know their own limitations.	2. Cannot tolerate limitations of others and also cannot understand their own limitations.
3. These people know that all human behaviour is casual.	3. These people cannot understand the reason of a certain behaviour.
4. These people know the basic wants which motivate and stimulate behaviour.	4. These people do not know the basic wants which motivate and stimulate behaviour.

Table 6.1: Distinction between Mentally Healthy and Unstable Persons

The WHO defined health not merely as an absence of infirmity or disease, but as a complete state of mental, social and physical well-being. Recently spiritual well-being has been added as the fourth facet of health.



Asanas can be considered as physical exercises, *pranayamas* as breathing exercises and meditation as a mental exercise.

The people who are practise Yoga may experience various factors which have profound effect on the individual's mental health.

1. Reduced Tension

Most of the individuals who are practising Yoga experience "steadying the mind", "calming the spirit," or "freeing the mind from mental disturbances." Certain benefits which are experienced are mental fatigue, depression,

confusion and irritability and reductions of nervousness. A person can experience a relief from the pressure of his "compulsions." Thus, his/her nervousness, particularly any kind of jitteriness or anxiety, would disappear or subside.

2. Mental Agility

The positive benefits from yogic exercises is called renewal of mental agility. Thus, willingness and attentiveness as well as capacity and mood for attentiveness and alertness to tackle difficulties revive.

For example a person may not be able to renew endless enthusiasm late in a working day or noon time, but the efforts for recharging mental energies can rekindle a full measure of enthusiasm and willingness. Traditional phrases, for example restored "spiritual vitality" intend to convey the idea of mental resilience, agreeableness, spryness, and feelings of self-sufficiency and confidence.


3. Enriched Personal Values

Personal values are the following:

- a. **Avoidance of Fear:** Yoga helps in curing various mental illnesses which range from ambiguous feelings of insecurity, oppression, frustration to severe or acute on one hand and to particular forms of insanity on the other hand.
- b. **Acceptance of Faith in Life:** Confident living is the main objective of Yoga. Its purpose is to replace pessimism with an appreciation of life not only on any particular day but everyday. When a person attains any yogic spirit he/she can say with the Stoics, "I accept the universe." If a person does not accept all of it due to some difficulties that may remain unavoidably troublesome, he/she will accept the difficulties which he/she has and may wish not to have any more difficulties.

4. Harmonious Social Values

Yoga helps in reducing your frustration or annoyance with others, and others' frustration or annoyance with you. You tend to irritate others less if you become less irritable yourself. One also tends to be less irritated by the problems presented by others in front of one.



Most-common Mis-conceptions

Many people consider yoga to be an early morning regime. However, yoga is not about time but about discipline. It is a discipline of human body that syncs with our mind and soul all through the day. Yoga is not merely limited to your physical self or restricted to a routine life.

6.6 Prayer and Meditation for Mental Health

In the context of healthcare, prayer is very important as it is most widely used in Yoga. Mental health concerns are weakened by poor self-care and stress. Studies show that 90% of patients with severe illness sometimes feel relief by prayer. Prayer is regarded as the most widely practiced healing or remedial modality among all types of alternative medicines.

Following points are given below which help in identifying how prayer helps in improving the health:

- **The relaxation response:**
 - ❖ Prayer elicits the relaxation response.
 - ❖ It helps in lowering blood pressure and other factors heightened by the stress.
- **Secondary control:**
 - ❖ Prayer releases control to something greater than oneself.
 - ❖ It can lessen the stress of needing to be in charge.

- **The placebo response:**
 - ❖ Prayer increases a person's expectations and hopes.
 - ❖ In turn, it has positive effect on health.
- **Healing presence:**
 - ❖ Prayer can help in bringing a sense of loving or spiritual presence.
 - ❖ It can also align us with an immersion in God a universal consciousness.
- **Positive feelings:**
 - ❖ Prayer can elicit our feelings of hope, forgiveness, compassion, and gratitude.
 - ❖ Most of our feelings are related to wellness and healing.
- **Mind-body-spirit connection:**
 - ❖ When prayer calms or uplifts, it inhibits the release of cortisol and hormones.
 - ❖ Thus, it helps in minimizing the negative effect of stress on the immune system and assists in healing.



Fig. 6.7: Praying Supports Inner Health and Peace

Prayer and meditation are beneficial on mental well-being in the following ways:

- Give intense respite
- Provide internal serenity
- Aid in countering complications and increasing awareness

- Assist in improving focus and fortitude
- A vent for discharging fury and relieving stress, misery and anxiety
- Advantageous in optimizing one's creative potential

Patanjali Yoga Sutra emphasises Om Meditation:

'Pranavasya japah pranavabhidheyasya cha ishwarasya bhavana'

The mind of the yogi, who constantly repeats the pranava, and habituates the mind to the constant manifestation of the ideas it carries, becomes one pointed. And so it has been said: 'let the yoga be practiced through study, and let study be effected through yoga. By yoga and study together, the highest self shines.'

The contention of *vachaspati mishra* is the 'repeated thinking or understanding' (*bhavana*)_means making it enter the mind over and over, until it becomes the very substance of the mental existence. The mind feels bliss in the one lord alone. And so it has been said: 'Lord then becomes gracious to him up to his attaining the faculty of trance (*Samadhi*) and its fruit.

The ancient practice of meditation is as integral part of yoga as the poses are, and they have the same intention: not to tune out, but to tune in to a frequency long forgotten, or perhaps undiscovered. To meditate is to become acutely aware of what's going on within you; it's about learning to tame your mind so that you can focus all your energy and awareness on the task at hand.

Meditation is especially beneficial for reducing stress. Studies show it can also reduce depression and anxiety, and help people manage chronic pain. Meditation can benefit people who have mental health conditions, as well as those who do not.

When you meditate, you clear away the information overload that builds up every day and contributes to your stress.

As stated in the *Bhagvad Gita*, Meditation is the tool to achieve self-realisation. In a secluded

place, establish a posture with a straight back. Concentrate between the eyebrows or on the tip of the nose. Fix the mind on the self (*atman*). Develop one pointed concentration called *dhyana* and achieve self-realisation (or Union with God) in the state called *samadhi*. Observing moderation in everything, with strict celibacy, one overcomes the lower self in order to gain the higher self. Thus, the yogi no longer relishes the pleasures of the senses. He cannot be deluded any more. He abides in the self. Needless to say that many modern organisations and individuals are practicing meditation to tackle emotional upsets such as frustrations, conflicts, inferiority complexes, stress and burnout.

The traditional practice of meditation is regarded as an essential one of yoga like the postures. It tunes into a frequency perhaps undiscovered or long forgotten. To meditate is to be aware of what is going on within you. Thus, it is about learning to that you are able to apply all your awareness and energy on the task at hand.

Meditation is specifically beneficial in minimizing stress. Researches depict that it can also help in reducing anxiety and depression and help people in managing their chronic pains and aches. It benefits people who are mentally healthy as well as those who are not.

When a person meditates, he/she clears is cleansed of the overloaded information which builds up daily and contributes to his/her stress.

Following are the emotional benefits of meditation:

- Minimizing negative emotions
- Concentrating on the present
- Attaining a new perspective on the situations which are very stressful
- Increasing self-awareness
- Building skills of managing the stress



In case of medical conditions arising out of stress, meditation can also be beneficial.

Therefore, some researches recommend that meditation helps in managing symptoms of conditions for example:

- Problems related to sleeping
- Pain
- Depression
- Anxiety disorders
- Cancer
- Asthma
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease

6.7 Psychosocial Environment

The climate and culture of the place of work is known as psychosocial environment. “Psychosocial morbidity” or “psychosocial dysfunction” refers to those problems which take place in one’s psychosocial functioning. Thus, this depicts a lack of atrophy or development of the psychosocial self that may often occur together with other dysfunctions, which may be cognitive, emotional, or physical in nature.

Stress may take place when a person has problems to deal with it. According to biologists, stress is defined as a negative feeling which is experienced by a person whose body does not properly respond to a threat. The stress which may originate from any kind of communication with people is known as psychosocial stress. Hence, stress may manifest itself in various forms, for example high blood pressure, rapid heartbeat, sweating, feelings of sadness or irritability and dizziness. Reasons of psychological stress which can be classified as acute or chronic are termed psychological stressors.



Example

Some of the examples of psychosocial stress are:

- threat to a person’s social esteem, social status, respect or/and acceptance within a group
- threat which a feel that he/she has no control over
- threat to a person’s self-worth

The threats which are given in the above examples may lead to stress that are responded by our body. Several methods are there to manage the psychosocial stress as it results from the inside (our thoughts about it) as well as the outside (what we are dealing with) and can have impact on several areas of our lives. Therefore, treating issues related to psychosocial stress and maintaining wellness, yoga is regarded as a natural as well as readily available approach.

Many psychologists are examining the importance of performing yoga with people who are the survivors any kind of trauma. Yoga is the most effective technique in curing them as compared to psychotherapy techniques. Personally practising yoga and accepting a stance based on the principles of yoga, for example non-judgment, spirituality, and compassion along with the connection of all living things can assist in relieving stress, enhancing compassion as well as potentially making a person a better therapist. When a person can come up to a level of making peace with himself/herself, there may be more nurturing that can they exude toward their patients.

Importance of Mental Health (Yamas and Niyamas)

As the animal body wants food to sustain, in the same way human mind requires *Yamas* and *Niyamas* to uplift itself and function in a balanced way.

The first step in the *Ashtanga Yoga* is *Yama* which sets the foundation which is a yoga of social

conduct. Thus, there are five *Yamas* and five *Niyamas* which are explained below:

Following are five *Yamas*:

1. **Ahimsa:** *Ahimsa* is the highest virtue. *Ahimsa paramo dharmah*. Practising of *Ahimsa* is not just refraining from abuse or physical violence which could be an approach of civilized social conduct. *Ahimsa* also addresses to health of the mind. Some of the verbal types of not practising *Ahimsa* are offensive language, backbiting, comparison, sarcasm, criticism and cynicism. Further, the body gestures of disregard and denial have to be observed for all these are the expressions of mind which are unhealthy and which may lead to disturbing and unhappy relations.
2. **Satya:** Practising of truthfulness is the next *Yama*. Mostly people do not try to speak untrue outright. Sometimes people speak partial truth in an inarticulate or deceitful manner, or speak some words that are understood and interpreted in a different way. It may not be untrue as a common understanding... but then it is NOT TRUTH. Why? What is it mirroring you? What are you trying to hide?
3. **Asteya:** The third *Yama* relates to avoid stealing. As it is not good to use a service or facility, or take a thing which is not given by its owner, *Asteya* means trying to get that to which one is not entitled. It is having no desire to have other people's belongings and to resist from taking anything of others.
4. **Brahmacharya:** In a narrower sense, *Brahmacharya* is understood as celibacy or sexual abstinence. In a wider sense, it is understood as moderation in sensual and sexual pleasures. Etymologically, *Brahmacharya* refers to "walking on the path leading to Reality". This means that to not give into one's indulgences and weaknesses that are associated to excess of exercise, sleep, or

food; it could be cravings for addictions, objects, and relations.

5. **Aparigraha:** This means non-covetousness or non-hoarding. What belongs to others is referred as *Asteya*, whereas what to do with one's own is *Aparigraha*. Any relationship, possession, ideas, objects, situations, etc., all show a sense of experience only. The continuous experience of one with one's possessions brings in the feelings of 'I, me, mine' and once these get a space they increase the vice of possessiveness and sometimes become ideologies, resulting into limitations and stagnation.

The social behaviour guidelines are the *Yamas*. These are very much relevant these days and demands a sensible response towards anybody at anytime. A mature and sensible handling is required by issues which relate to social behaviour.

Yoga related to personal conduct is *Niyamas*, which is the second step in *Ashtanga* Yoga. *Niyamas* are basically the observances, and its every day 'To Do' list follows below:

1. **Shauca (Purity):** It implies to have a proper observance towards cleanliness and purity in terms of thoughts, words and deeds. Here it means to think beyond the normal and daily routine of personal hygiene and attire. One gets thoughts of shirking when the mind is not willing to be structured. So note the excuses of mind and find out the reason for the same. The excuses do not depend upon the kind and level of work or activity. One should spend 2-3 minutes daily in the early morning with the nature, such as grounds, open lawns, sunrise, seashore, fresh air, holy place and space. Doing this gives a positive beginning to the day.
2. **Santosha (Contentment):** This implies to be happy, relaxed and contented without any conditions or reasons. It is that balanced



state of joy which does not fluctuates with the external attractions of abundance or limitations as well. *Santosha* is a feeling of internal completeness.

3. **Tapa (Austerity):** Tapa is a big term; it involves asceticism, penance and voluntarily vows taken by oneself. It encompasses discipline, commitment and consistent actions. It discourages lethargy and lay back attitude. One should begin by making a small household or personal goal commitment. It is the true way to make the mastermind follow the commands. In case the mind does not follow commands it reveals limitations and negativity, while in the case of following commands the mind expresses a positive energy and takes a step ahead towards self-growth.
4. **Swadhyaya (Self-study):** It is the study of one's self, the pure self. *Swadhyaya* practices involve study of scriptures, learning under a living Guru, learning from a Saint/Scholar, *Satsang* (company of truth or like-minded people), listening to spiritual discourses, etc.
5. **Ishwarapranidhana (Surrender to Ishwara):** It means to surrender. The actions, which we perform, bear the fruits as per the law of Karma. We are here for playing the role we are subjected to, and while doing so, progress towards the fulfillment. On this journey holding on to our ego, attachments, possessions, cannot take us beyond pain, misery and suffering. *Ishwarapranidhana* helps us to realize our limitedness. By surrendering we are able to take a step back and accept the higher direction.

6.8 Concept of Stress - A Modern View

Definition of Stress

Selye and Levi have defined stress as a non-specific, conventional and phylogenetic basic response pattern, the primary function of which is to prepare the body for physical activity such as resistance or flight (called Eustress) If, however, the subject lacks the means of restoring either to fight or flight i.e. of relieving the stress reaction, stress gives rise to distress which manifests itself in the form of psychosomatic symptoms or disorders.

Eustress and Distress: There are two kinds of stress that are distinguished by Selye and Levi. Eustress is synonymous with healthy essential stress produced, for example, by joy, or by any other kind of positive impulse, sensible recreational activities, sports, hobbies etc.

Distress is synonymous with morbidness, stress that has to be controlled, e.g. continuous mental or physical strain of any kind, anger, frustration, states of tension seemingly without hope. However, even high and prolonged Eustress can turn dangerous in cases as in IHD due to strong excitations associated with Eustress too. Thus, stress is the reaction to a demanding situation in the human physiology. Stress can occur at two levels—Physical and Psychological (1) Physical stress, like accidents, burns, major surgeries, major infections, etc., which make demands on the entire physiology. (2) Psychological stress which can occur independently or as a reaction to physical stress. Examples are – fear, anxiety, tension, worry, jealousy, hatred, anger, excitement, emotional conflicts, etc. It may be temporary stress, demanding only an immediate adaptation process. Or, it may be a long-standing one, leaving

deep-seated subconscious impressions leading to prolonged tension. In modern society with fast moving vehicles, rapid industrialisation and with a highly sophisticated lifestyle, there could be hundreds of stimulations which produce both these types of stress. Accordingly the incidence of physical trauma has increased steeply (today accidents cause the highest number of deaths in day to day life).

Stress Reaction

What happens in your body due to stress reaction?

- Stored sugar and fats pour into the blood-stream to provide fuel for quick energy.
- The breath rate shoots up, providing more oxygen.
- Red blood cells flood the blood-stream, carrying more oxygen to the muscles of the limbs and the brain.
- The heart speeds up and blood pressure soars, ensuring sufficient blood supply to needed areas.
- Blood-clotting mechanisms are activated to protect against injury, muscles tense in preparation for strenuous action.
- Digestion ceases, so that blood may be diverted to the muscles and the brain.
- Perspiration and saliva increase.
- Triggered by the pituitary gland, the endocrine system steps up hormone production.
- Bowel and bladder muscles loosen.
- Cortisone pours into the system, as do the hormones epinephrin and norepinephrin.
- The pupils dilate, allowing more light to enter.
- All scnses are heightened.

Stress According to Yoga

Stress according to Yoga is imbalance. Imbalance is misery. At the mental and physical levels, it is excessive speed and thus a demanding situation which causes pain and leads to ailments and diseases. Imbalances at the emotional level manifest as upsurges which are caused by strong likes and dislikes. At the psychological level the imbalances lead to conflicts and often manifest as petty and narrow ego-centric behaviour. Lack of holistic knowledge and a balanced outlook, at the subtle levels are responsible for imbalances found at gross levels. Thus, while understanding stress, a holistic concept of man is kept in view and not merely his bodily existence. The *Taittiriya* Upanishads has presented this holistic concept of man systematically as having five major sheaths of existence. Stress is studied and understood at the body level physical by modern medical systems as an imbalance of the neuro-endocrine systems and the neuro-transmitter level. Emotional imbalances in the form of strong likes and dislikes bring about imbalances in *Prana* (the vital energy) in the *Pranamaya Kosha* which percolates to the *Annamaya Kosha* causing stress symptoms and hazards. Origin of desires and action guided by strong likes and dislikes (and not by what is right and wrong) will be the expression of imbalance at *Manomaya Kosha*. In *Vigyananamaya*, the *Avidya* goes on reducing until in *Anandamaya kosha* it is all bliss. This state is the totally stress-free state.

Thus, in the Upanishads, a more fundamental and generalized concept of stress is presented. The great sage Patanjali uses the term *klesha* which aptly describes stress. In his text '*Yoga Sūtras*' (Yoga aphorisms) the *Kleshas* have been described thus: *avidyaasmit-raga-dvesabbinivesab klesab* (PYS 2-3) In our original state we are totally stress-free. We are blissful. That state, devoid of any tension and pressure, (even) thinking or feeling, is the source

of all bliss, knowledge, creativity and freedom . We may call it perfection. Patanjali calls it *Svarupa* or Self.



Fig. 6.8: Stress and Anxiety have become a part of Our Lives

The main reasons that cause stress in modern life are the following:

- **Number of obligations:** A number of health problems in today's life is the result of continuing stress one is facing daily, the reason of such stress could be any, such as bad marriage stress, or a very demanding job, or any other stressor. When one experiences chronic stress, the affected system is the autonomic nervous system and this causes stress.



With the increase in stress cycle and its levels, health problems both at physical and mental levels are becoming increasingly a serious issue.

The stress causes a chain reaction; firstly it causes overwork, then overwork causes tiredness and exhaustion, depletion is the outcome of exhaustion and excessive depletion causes collapse and a number of diseases. At first the symptoms are comparatively mild, like chronic headaches and an increase in the level of sensitivity towards cold.

Visits to doctors concerning stress issues have an estimate of about 90%. The common diseases which associate with stress are prolonged form of insomnia, muscle pain, mental disorders, depression, diabetes, cancer and sexual dysfunction.

- **When the enemy is himself/herself:** Many a times people deliberately damage themselves by becoming impatient towards others, or due to tensions caused by psychological pressure. It's not only the external factors which cause tensions or stress, an individuals' internal thinking and perceptions, such as undermining oneself causes more stress in the following ways:

- ❖ *Negative or adverse thoughts:* Many a times an individual's enemy is his/her own mind. The manner and way in which a child talks to himself/herself is followed throughout the life and this plays a very important role in his/her overall development. If a person is adapted to negative thinking and speaking it becomes the main reason and cause of stress. Overall positive thinking is a real heal from stress and negativity.
- ❖ *Conflicts dealing with poor skills:* A human life is full of conflicts and nobody is spared out of it. One should know how to deal with conflicts properly so that the relations with others get stronger and do become a burden. Being humble does not mean that we are giving a chance to others to treat us badly.
- ❖ *Suspicious or Pessimism:* Such kind of people are able to analyse the situations and things which get worse than in reality by forecasting the possible opportunities and solutions presented before them.
- ❖ *Overburdened with commitments:* Everybody possesses a different level of handling stress. Some can handle higher levels of stress, whereas others may not.

Person who are overburdened with responsibilities are more prone to stress.

6.9 Role of Yoga – Stress and Life Style Management

The practice of yoga helps one in stress reduction by promoting the relaxation; this is ultimately the contrary of stress. The three main elements, i.e., individual's body, mind and breathe get benefited by practising yoga, as these are real victims of stress issues.

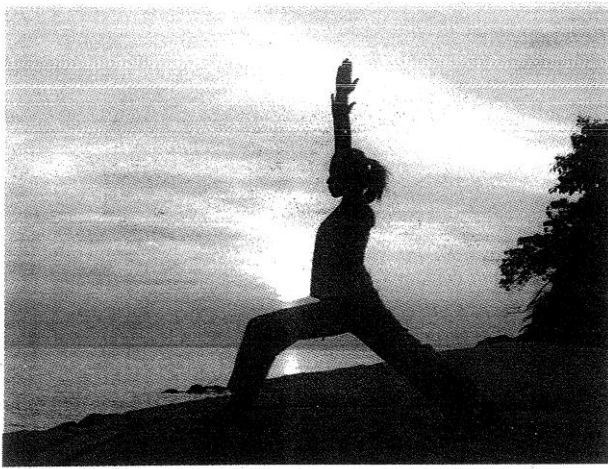


Fig. 6.9: Yoga for Relief and Stress Management

Yoga for Stress Relief

Let's discuss some *yogasanas* for stress relief. Generally, any *asana* which gives a good and thorough stretch to the spinal column will provide relaxation and relief in stress.

1. **Paschimottanasana (Sitting Forward Bending Pose):** *Paschimottanasana* is so called because *paschim* refers to the back and *uttana* means stretching. Hence, *Paschimottanasana* means stretching of the back. Sitting forward bending pose gives increased energy and opening to the lower abdomen.



Fig. 6.10: *Paschimottanasana*

How to Perform

- Start with sitting on the mat and stretching legs out in front of you.
- Keep the spine erect and legs flexed toward you.
- The thumb, middle and index fingers should be used to catch the toes and then the upper body is bended and moved forward.
- Exhale and slowly bend to touch your forehead to your knees; try bending as much as possible.
- Draw your belly button towards your spine as your exhale and bend.
- Stretch the arms out in front of you. Hold the pose for 5-10 moments initially and steadily augment the duration.
- Inhaling, come back up to the sitting position.
- Breathe out and lower the arms.

Benefits

- Helpful for weight-watchers in reducing abdominal fat.
- Cures enlargement of the spleen and liver.
- Stimulates endocrine glands, kidneys, liver and pancreas.
- Increases the peristalsis of the bowels.
- Diabetes, piles are cured and the back muscles are rendered flexible.

- It is said that in *Paschimottanasana*, the *anahat nada* can be heard by an expert practitioner.
2. **Setu Bandhasana (Bridge Pose):** The word ‘*Setu Bandhasana*’ is made up of three words; *setu* which means bridge, *bandha* which means lock, and *asana* which means posture. This pose is generally used to strengthen and stretch the back and abdominal muscles along with opening the lungs and chest.

How to Perform:

- Loosen up yourself on your back; your feet should be fixed behind your hips, and your knees should be up.
- Raise your hips up to a relaxed position, and keep a slab below your sacrum.

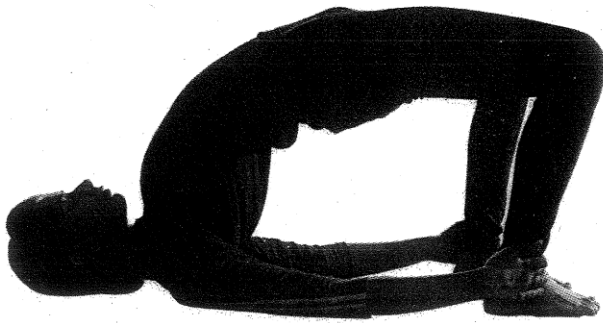


Fig. 6.11: *Setu Bandha Sarvangasana*

Benefits

- The chest, neck, and spine gets stretched
- Lessens stress and mild depression by calming the brain
- Abdominal organs, lungs, and thyroid are get stimulated
- Tired legs get rejuvenated
- Improvement in digestion
- Helps in relieving the signs of menopause
- Relieves menstrual discomfort

- Relieves anxiety, fatigue, backache, headache, and insomnia
 - A therapy for sinusitis, asthma, osteoporosis, and high blood pressure.
3. **Shavasana (Corpse Pose):** This *asana* resembles a dead body laid down, so it is known as *Shavasana* or Corpse Pose. This is usually a position of relaxation and rest, and is customarily practised almost at the end of a yoga session. This pose also offers wonderful meditative benefits; completing this pose has been shown to help reduce stress.

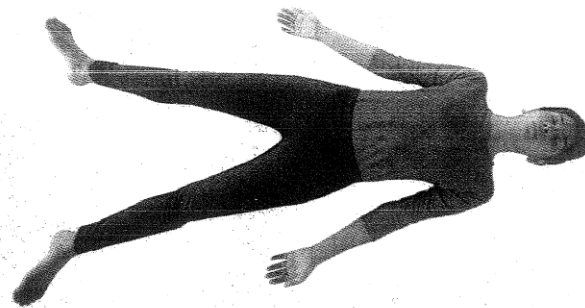


Fig. 6.12: *Shavasana*

How to Perform

- Lie down on the mat.
- Keep the hands on the ground by the sides with palms facing upward.
- Stretch the legs straight and keep them close to each other.
- Close the eyes. Breathe slowly.
- Relax all muscles, nerves, joints, etc.
- Start the relaxation process from toes to head.
- Imagine tiredness getting remove from every part of your body.
- You may repeat “OM” or any holy mantra or remember God.
- Do not sleep.

- Continue being in this state for 10 minutes and then finish your practice.

Benefits

- It rejuvenates body, mind, and spirit.
- Nervous system is relaxed by this pose and mind calmness is achieved
- Helpful in relieving stress
- Body relaxation is realized
- It also decreases beta brain waves and shifts to slower brain waves
- Reduces insomnia hence, helps in improving sleep of practitioner
- Reduces fatigue and headache
- Helps in relieving depression

Effect of Yoga on Positive Health

The benefit of yoga on an individuals' glucose levels, suffering from diabetes, and other chronic health conditions is immense. The symptoms of mental illness as well as of anxiety, depression, schizophrenia and obsessive-compulsive disorder are highly relieved by effective benefits of yoga. On making a comparison between results of studies related to the effects of yoga, and exercises on both healthy and disease segments of population, yoga gives much better positive results as compared to other physical exercises, and it also improves a variety of health-related outcome measures, which includes HRV (Heart Rate Variability), blood glucose, blood lipids, salivary cortisol, and oxidative stress. The subjective measures of fatigue, pain, and sleep in both healthy and ill populations improve more with the practice of yoga.



SUMMARY

- Psychology is the science of both mental and behavioural processes. Therefore, in the light of Yoga, Psychology is embedded in philosophical studies.
- Psychology refers to the science of activity of people that leads to an understanding of nature of human behavior. The psychologist can examine and analyze the human behaviour with two perspectives: Overt and Covert
- Consciousness depicts the quality or state of awareness which has come up as a field of psychology in modern times.
- Stress imposes certain demands on the individual which they finds unnecessary and hard to cope with. Stressors refer to the situations which an individual perceives as difficult to cope up and deal with.
- Conflicts arise when an individual is faced with two or more alternatives from which he has to choose one, thereby necessarily forsaking the other alternatives. A conflict may become more stressful when it involves intensity of frustration. Usually, an incompatible situation becomes the reason for conflict.
- Frustration is an experiential state which may either be the outcome of the absence of a desired goal, or blocking of motives and needs through some external forces that may generate difficulties and prevent the fulfilment of wants.
- Psychosomatic disorders are disorders which originate in the psyche or mind and result in ailments in the *soma* or the body. Psychosomatic diseases are caused by stress.

- The interconnection between the mind and body was proposed by several ancient healing methods. There is a close link between mind and body, and their relationship, which can have either a positive or a negative effect on both quality of life and human health.
- Mental Hygiene is a science that deals with the procedure of achieving mental health and preserving it in the society.
- Prayer is regarded as the most widely practised healing or remedial modality among all types of alternative medicine.
- “Psychosocial morbidity” or “psychosocial dysfunction” refers to the problem which may take place in one’s psychosocial functioning.
- The first step in *Ashtanga Yoga* is *Yama* which sets the foundation of social conduct. Thus, there are five *Yamas* and five *Niyamas*.
- Stressors cause stressful and oppressive feelings. A stress situation could be positive or negative, and this is determined by the individual’s reaction towards the stress-causing event.
- The practice of yoga helps one in stress reduction by promoting relaxation. The three main elements, i.e., individual’s body, mind and breathe get benefitted by practising yoga, as they are prone to stress issues.
- The benefits of yoga on a person’s glucose levels, suffering from diabetes, and other chronic health conditions are immense.



KEYWORDS

Stress: Stress is described as a reaction of the individual when he/she finds that the demands made upon him/her are greater than his/her resources to handle the same.

Behaviour: Behaviour is an action which can be followed, documented and quantified; this comprises initially the actions done by living beings or organisms, that is, their motion in universe.

Psychosomatic Disorders: They are ailments brought about by stress. They can also be called as somatic symptoms and signs which are not linked to any particular physiological dysfunction.

Mental Hygiene: It is a discipline which is concerned with the method of achieving mental well-being and conserving mental fitness in the world.

Santosha: *Santosha* means to feel happy and contented.

Tapa: *Tapa* is voluntarily accepted austerities, penances and vows.

Shauca: *Shauca* means to practise hygiene and freshness of thought, expression and action.

Swadhyaya: *Swadhyaya* refers to the study of one’s Self, the pure Self.

Ishwarapranidhana: *Ishwarapranidhana* means to surrender to Ishwara.



SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Short Answer Questions

1. Define stress. Identify the major stressors in life and the usual responses to them.
2. “Frustration and conflict pervade human living”. Explain.
3. Write down the types of conflicts. Explain how conflicts and frustration lead to stress.
4. What is the relationship between mind and body?
5. Mention the desirable ways of coping with stress.

Long Answer Questions

1. What is mental hygiene? Write down the role of yoga in mental hygiene.
2. What is mental health? Explain the characteristics of mental health.
3. Discuss the ways in which yoga will lead to mental health.
4. Prayer and meditation are helpful for mental health. Discuss in detail.
5. Explain the relevance of *Yamas* and *Niyamas* in the context of mental health.



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CHAPTER 7

COMMUNICATION STRUCTURE





Structure*

- Learning Outcomes
- Introduction
 - 7.1 Communication Skills
 - 7.2 Environment of Yoga Classes - Do's & Don'ts
 - 7.3 Work Activities and Qualities of Yoga Teacher/Instructor
 - 7.4 Effective Teaching Skills
 - 7.5 General Pointers on Teaching a Class
 - 7.6 Yoga Course Schedule
 - 7.7 Teaching Process of Yoga Practice
 - 7.8 Managing and Executing Yoga Classes
 - 7.9 Teaching Techniques
 - 7.10 Motivation and Adherence Techniques
- Summary
- Keywords
- Self-Assessment Questions
- Further Readings



Learning Outcomes

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the importance of communication skills and its types
- Learn Do's and Don'ts of environment of yoga classes
- Discuss the work activities and qualities of yoga teacher/instructor
- Describe effective teaching skills of a teacher/instructor
- Illustrate various general pointers on teaching a class
- Explain yoga course schedule
- Discuss teaching process of practice, its benefits and limitations
- Describe managing and executing yoga classes
- Explain various teaching techniques
- Discuss motivation and adherence techniques



Introduction

Effective communication skills are an imperative if you wish to be a successful professional. So lead a good social life with spiritual progress wherein relationships are fulfilling. In order to be creative one has to acquire effective communication skills. This implies good listening ability too. Listen to your student's words attentively, understand the meaning behind those words and watch their body language closely. Yoga entails a life long education to teachers as well as students.

This chapter will make you realize the importance of communication skills. It will teach you the do's and don'ts to keep the environs of a classroom congenial and use the general pointers to make your teaching effective and purposeful. You will also learn various instructing and motivational techniques.

* Denotes that the content is specific to level 2 yoga aspirants.

7.1 Communication Skills

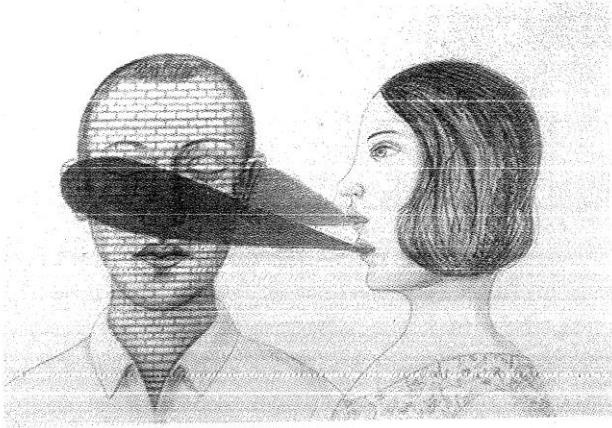


Fig. 7.1: One-to-One Communication

Communication skills are an essential part of teaching Yoga. A Yoga instructor/teacher should have ability to express a body of skills and knowledge to his/her students in an effective manner. Simply put, it is not enough to know the material all around; an instructor/teacher must have the ability to impart the skills to the students in a useful manner. While teaching Yoga, the instructor/teacher must have the ability to demonstrate the poses, depict them, and help the students execute them excellently. Communication lies at the heart of having the ability to teach others about Yoga.

Direct cues and comments are ideal while instructing in a Yoga session. Students are commonly focused on the Yoga instructor/teacher only briefly, and afterwards their attention directs to their own bodies. When we analyze a flowing asana practice, students must figure out how to flow through all postures easily, while getting the advantages every posture offers. In the event that an asana pose is new for the students, they will concentrate on the teacher to get legitimate form, but when students are comfortable with each pose, and Yoga class becomes more reflective and personal for the individuals.

Yoga instructor/teacher also needs to manage students in a non-intimidating and friendly

manner. Students should feel comfortable enough to ask for assistance and ask questions throughout the duration of the class. If the Yoga instructor/teacher presents an unfriendly attitude, this may work for certain students, but in the long run this approach will most likely end up in losing the respect of students who are eager to learn the deeper aspects of Yoga.

Body language plays an essential role in communication. It incorporates posture, eye contact, facial expressions, and gestures. Yoga instructor/teacher should work to make eye contact with students when talking to them separately, as well as while addressing the whole class. Avoid looking away, crossing your arms, appearing distracted or agitated. Body gestures should remain inviting and open. Make your students feel valued and welcome during each Yoga class by maintaining smile on the face and keeping the atmosphere happy and relaxed.

Voice tone and volume are essential for establishing a pleasant environment for practising Yoga. Students commonly expect the room to be calm and quiet, which lends itself to quiet voices. The teacher/instructor requires to make himself or herself heard, of course, but do so in a voice that is not too brash or loud. Vary the tone of your voice when giving cues to give a relaxing environment. Few Yoga poses require more explanation than others, including postures you are presenting for the first time. Use a louder voice slightly when teaching students about new pose. Remember that silence is okay, too, and various individuals crave that about Yoga class. Do not feel as if you need to fill every second with knowledge, cues, and advice.

The key to better communication in your classes, when you teach is to present the first round and walk around the room assisting and communicating the students. You are helping, observing, and maintaining a communication association, in this way, through precise instruction with the class.

The efforts to communicate will make students comprehend clearly that certain class duration is fixed aside for them.

If a particular Yoga instructor/teacher is not concerned to assist, make eye contact and communicate, a student might get the sentiment as he/she has become one of the outermost parts of the class.

Keep in mind when you put your best efforts in the class as a group cluster, you have done what is necessary in the class. After class, when Yoga teacher/instructor stays back to answer questions is certainly very special.

The aim of communication is to instruct the students in a proper way. Two aspects are included in this, which are as follows¹:

1. Communicate the instructions
2. Understand the instructions completely

Features of Communication

The following are some of the valuable features of communication:

1. Communication can be in oral and written forms.
2. There should be at least two people available for communication.
3. One of them would communicate the instructions and other would follow them.
4. Communication is inclusive of instructing, listening, and understanding the instructions.
5. In all kinds of activities, communication is an essential art.
6. In each training, communication is such an art, in which a flow of wisdom continues from the trainer to the disciple.

¹ Part of the information has been sourced from "Yoga Tree: Fundamental Principles of Yoga, Patanjali Yogpeeth, Haridwar".

7. Through conversational communication by instructors, wisdom, technology, values, ideas, and ideals are communicated.

Two Types of Communication²


The figure given below shows various sources of information transfer.



Fig. 7.2: Information Transfers through Communication

1. Communication through conversation
 - ❖ Selection of language
 - ❖ The volume of the voice
 - ❖ Reliable presentation
 - ❖ Simple accent
 - ❖ Technical support for the presentation
2. Communication through non-conversation
 - ❖ Gestures
 - ❖ Physical feelings
 - ❖ Facial expressions
 - ❖ Communicating through the looks
 - ❖ Communicating message through gestures
 - ❖ Physical angles
 - ❖ Dress code
 - ❖ Art of communicating without speaking

² Part of the information has been sourced from "Yoga Tree: Fundamental Principles of Yoga, Patanjali Yogpeeth, Haridwar".



Did You Know?

The feeling of security among students can be enhanced by encouraging forthright and open communication between a Yoga instructor/teacher and his/her students. Irrespective of whether a student is new to your class or not, encouraging open lines of communication is utmost essential when you are instructing a student through a series of physical poses and *pranayama* practices.

The Art of Verbal Communication

Language matters in all aspects of life. What we say and how we say it—makes an important effect on the quality of our student’s experience. Altogether, correlate how frequently your students are hearing your words to how often they are seeing your demonstrations and receiving your instructions.

Provide Landmarks

Do you remember how confused you were when you first practised yoga—figuring out which foot was your right, which leg was your left, and following the instructor/teacher in mirror image? There is no easier way to give instructions to your students with clarity than by using understandable landmarks in the room such as the clock, windows, altar, and so on. Think about teaching twists, for instance. Your student’s bodies are so overlapped, crisscrossed, and tied up, that their right is on their left and their left is on their right. So instead of saying, “Turn your torso to the left,” tell your students to “Rotate your torso toward the windows (or, whatever conspicuous landmark is to the left of your students).” Telling your students to face a landmark in the room instead of a cardinal direction will make a big impact on them.

Allow Space

If your directions are clear and you provide adequate pause after each instruction, your students will be able to follow along. If, however,


you give 10 instructions in a row without any pause or break your students will be lost. Always give time for the students to digest your words before blazing ahead.

Edit Yourself

Do not tell your students everything you know about each posture. Certain instructors/teachers are tempted to fill every second of class with precaution, instruction, personal revelation, lore, and more. But this is not a storytelling seminar, this is yoga class so do not overload the students to compete with yourself. Stick to an average of 3 instructions per posture. You can use more instructions to get them into the posture, be judicious once they are in the asana. If these instructions are associated with each other, clearly descriptive, as well as relevant to the overall theme of the class, they will give the students enough to work with while allowing them to have their own experience.

Use your Student’s Names

As a yoga student yourself, you are aware that everyone spaces out in class once in a while. Truthfully, whose eyes do not glaze over after ninety minutes of generalized and impersonal instructions? Make your teaching more intimate and skilful by using the student’s names. In place of repeating the same instructions, look at the students, and help them expand, clarify or deepen their poses by relating to them directly.



Example

Try saying, “Rohit, please relax your neck and soften your jaws,” or, “Ram, please bend your front knee more deeply.”

Personalizing instructions is the best way to make your communication relevant and direct; it is also a good way to take care of the students. The

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added bonus is that everyone else in the room that needs to relax his/her neck will most likely follow suit. Obviously, you should use an encouraging and soft tone when you use student's names so that people do not feel like they are being scolded or singled out.

Use Direct Command, Images, Analogies and Stories (when appropriate)

Different students learn through different ways. Also, different students resonate with different types of instruction. Some will hear you when you give straightforward, direct commands like "press the top of your femurs back." Others will hear you more clearly when you provide an image or an analogy to articulate an instruction. Some students will only engage when you share a personal story that highlights a teaching. Don't force yourself to use a style of language that doesn't resonate with you, but do your best to vary your language and style of delivery so that more students can learn from you.

Caution

Keep in mind, some will learn by listening carefully to your cues, some will be able to copy just by watching, and others will gain more from your support. All yoga students cannot learn from you in a similar manner. Being a yoga teacher, you should be a decent listener when it comes to all practitioners' queries or doubts.

7.2 Environment of Yoga Classes- Do's & Don'ts

When students come to the mat, there is an implied contract they make with you as a teacher. Staying safe, honoring one's self, and practising *ahimsa* (non-violence) is of primary importance. As teacher/instructor, however, we cannot be fully responsible for our student's safety and security.

We require teaching them to build self-awareness and to take responsibility for themselves. This may mean learning to self-adjust, respect their limitations, and practise with more love and less ego for their wellbeing.

Notes

As yoga is a spiritual and holistic practice, no matter what style of practice is being done, it is very essential to have a holistic environment for yoga. The environment of a yoga class is a good energy that enhances the yoga learners as well as the teacher/instructor through the practice of yoga.

Do's

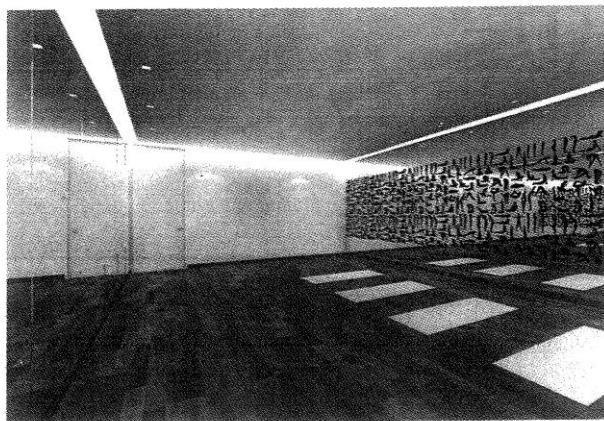


Fig. 7.3: A Spacious Yoga Class

1. The class space must be comfortable and safe engaging the students for a joyful practice. It is appropriate to take yoga classes in the atmosphere where there is no pollution and the air is fresh and clean.
2. For every practitioner, 6×3 feet space is needed to sit and lie on the floor while doing exercises.
3. The space should be energetically rich and robust. The space should be large enough to let the yogis practice with ease. The space requires for fitting at least two Yoga mats lay in

a horizontal manner and other lay in a vertical manner. For maneuvering around the mat, space must be adequately wide. Mat should be made of cotton or of a bad conductor (electrically non-conductive material) of heat.

4. Around the yoga practice area, it is best to have plain walls. There are various reasons behind this. First is to minimize any kind of disturbance. You do not need the attention to move away from yourselves through your wandering eyes that are continually seeing at distinct things within the particular space. The wall is a great assistant or prop for working on few asanas like handstand, headstand, half-moon, and different balancing poses.



Caution

Around the yoga practice area, it is very necessary to have light-coloured walls because colours may be a great mood changer. A light coloured wall gives a cool and calming effect.



Example

Do not place a dustbin while practicing nearby your mat because it is generally unhygienic as well as very distracting. At the time of practice, we involve in deep breath in yoga and it is essential to inhale clean as well as fresh air and not polluted air.

8. Fresh air will convey the practice of yoga to another level. We will absolutely like to inhale fresh air as opposed to stale air into our body. Taking in the fresh air makes the mind as well as body healthier and fresher. For keeping a well-ventilated space, let the windows remain open. If there is no fresh wind, it is best to turn on a fan on the moderate speed mode that rotates to make sure better air circulation. Likewise, in an air-conditioned room also, it is possible to practise yoga. Warming up is essential as it allows us to go for deep stretching poses which protects from muscle injuries.

5. The music played during class should merge with the practice.
6. It should invite the students to ask questions related to their practice so that all practising students can learn. But most of all, the energy, the teacher/instructor brings in to her students, should be of the kind that is motivating, inspiring, energetic, joyful, soothing, relaxing, trusting, honoring, educating and inviting the students to release themselves into the safe environment without any inhibitions.
7. Once you have your righteous place for yoga practice, make sure to keep it mess free as well as clean. Keep the floor or any nearby furniture, etc. free of clutter and dust. This creates positive energy for an orderly practice.

Don'ts

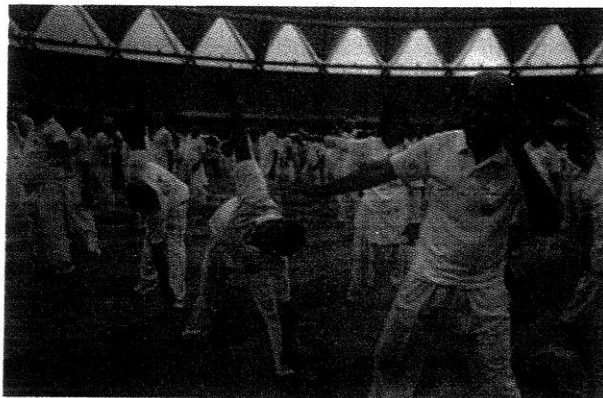


Fig. 7.4: Distraction in Yoga Class with Cell Phone

1. The space should not be congested.
2. The music should not be distracting.
3. Cell phone ringing should not impinge on the yoga class environment.

4. Once the class begins, there should be no chatter that has nothing to do with the practice itself. But most of all, there should be no negative energy either from the space itself, the teacher or the student.



Most-common Mis-conceptions

Many things can be controlled in yoga classes. There are things that may not be under the control of the yoga teacher/instructor teaching in a leased space or the student attending the class, but what one can be in control of is one's attitude, perspectives and the energy one brings into any space, as any environment can be turned joyful for the practising *yogi* with the right attitude. When both the teacher/instructor and the student make a joint effort to get to know each other, a wonderful student – its teacher relationship is formed and the practice reaches joyful heights.

Work Activities



Fig. 7.5: Various Yoga Postures

7.3 Work Activities and Qualities of Yoga Teacher/Instructor

Yoga instructors/teachers are professionals who teach yoga that uses controlled breathing and postures techniques to enhance strength and flexibility. To become a yoga instructor, in any style, specialized and comprehensive training is mandatory. All yoga instructors/teachers must complete a training program in yoga and within the field, have the option of specializing in a specific discipline. A yoga instructor/teacher has been trained in specific yoga philosophies and techniques in order to teach yoga in one-on-one settings or to groups. Yoga for physical fitness can sculpt and tone the body as well as lower mental stress levels.

Being a yoga instructor/teacher, you would teach individuals various 'Yoga' poses (positions). Yoga instructor can also instruct regarding how to maintain visualization, meditation, and controlled breathing. The tasks for Yoga instructor would include:

1. Designing lesson plans as well as the course
2. Ensuring syllabus is well-planned before the start of the class
3. Recognizing the requirements of beginners, mixed ability groups and experienced students
4. Instructing a wide range of yoga postures from simple moves to more complex ones
5. Adapting poses for individual conditions like arthritis or pregnancy
6. Instructing proper breathing habits, from basic breathing techniques to breath control exercises
7. Assessing students achievements and progress
8. Reviewing your own teaching skills and courses



Skills, Interests and Qualities

To become a yoga teacher/instructor, you will need to have:

1. An interest and belief in yoga
2. Training and experience in yoga practice
3. A good level of personal fitness, strength and flexibility
4. A caring approach and an interest in people
5. The ability to motivate individuals and groups
6. Good oral communication skills

7.4 Effective Teaching Skills

Teaching a multilevel class with grace is the hallmark of an experienced teacher/instructor, but there are strategies you can use even if you are just beginning to teach yoga.

Role of Teacher/Instructor

A teacher/instructor acts as a mirror to practitioners' conditioning and experiences. His role includes the following:

1. Instructor may be a witness to practitioners' performance. To observe their emotional challenges, physical patterns, habitual actions, and so on.
2. In the class, to conduct the yoga practice as per the practitioners needs, not as per the teacher's/instructor's own needs.
3. To support practitioners to observe the reality of their circumstances.
4. To empower practitioners to notice their state for themselves and promotes their freedom.
5. To provide practitioners' permission to be where they are and to respect their current condition.
6. To direct practitioners to focus on their real experience over practices.

7. To begin where practitioners are and take them where they have not been before by giving them a tool that will help them.
8. To help practitioners cultivate beneficial actions and attitudes.
9. To develop practices that work on the breath, body, mind, thinking, emotional state, intellect, and so on.
10. To teach by modelling or inspiring rather than telling.
11. To treat practitioners appropriately as well as equally.

Attitude of Teacher/Instructor

1. Follow the *Niyamas* and *Yamas*.
2. Show your love and enthusiasm for yoga through your practice and actions through your expressions and gestures through your voice and words.
3. Stay centered.
4. Be motivational as well as inspirational.
5. One should admit and show his/her limitations towards the specific area such as scope of knowledge, physical limitations and so on.
6. Be honest and modest.
7. Provide straightforward feedback in a non-harming way.
8. Be always non-discriminatory.
9. Be polite, respectful, courteous, and compassionate
10. Be patient with your students and with yourself
11. Be strong and confident in your actions and words.
12. Respect and honour the sources of your knowledge.

Relationship between Teacher and Student

Communication Expectations

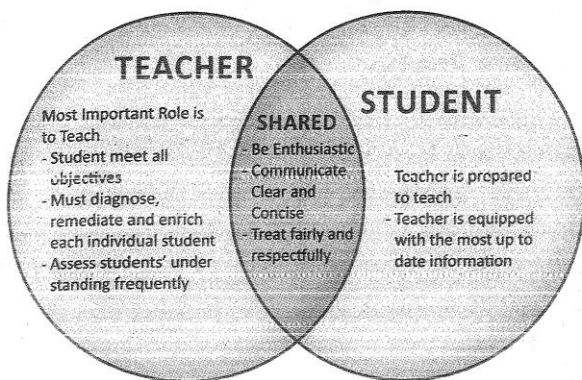


Fig. 7.6: Relationship between Teacher and Student

One of the keys to success is relationship between teacher/instructor and student. It should have the following essential elements:

1. Teacher/Instructor must behave in a way that encourages trust.
2. Teacher/Instructor should have good experience.
3. Teacher/Instructor and student should respect each other. If teacher and student do not respect each other, the relationship might end. The teacher is not just a specialist. He has tested these teachings and knows they have worked for him. Student must evaluate and experiment whether they work for them also and become eager and curious to explore them in order to get benefits and knowledge.
4. Teacher should be willing to support students and help them in that exploration.
5. Teacher/Instructor must do his best to help and support his students in their voyage.
6. Teacher/Instructor must maintain respect and relationship between teacher/instructor and student.

7.5 General Pointers on Teaching a Class

Teach from your knowledge and experience.

Always remember that how it felt being a beginner.

Time



Fig. 7.7: Importance of Time in Yoga

1. Reach timely and make sure that the training room is ready, e.g., tidy, right temperature, and so on.
2. Be punctual and start the class on time.
3. At the end of session, give students time to ask relevant questions.
4. End the session on time.
5. Leave training room organized for next teacher/instructor.

Room Arrangement

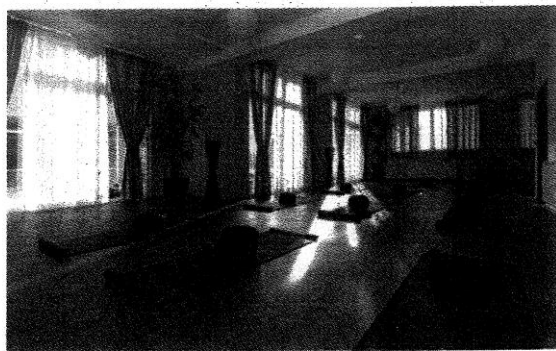


Fig. 7.8: A Well-arranged Yoga Class Room

Room arrangement is affected by shape (rectangle, round and square) of room and size (small, large).

1. Small room: It registers only few students who can comfortably sit in the room and that permits for each student to have his/her own space.
2. Large room: It uses smaller or a corner space for spatial reference and optimal communication.
3. Minimize distractions like clocks, windows, doors, mirrors and so on.
4. Organize props and mats in orderly and a neat pattern (saucha), e.g., in the rectangular room, place props on side of mat and mats should be parallel to short wall.
5. Room arrangement should be according to the postures being taught.

Teacher/Instructor Position

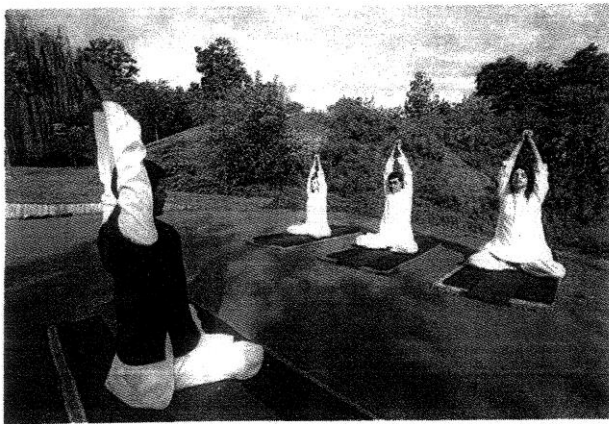


Fig. 7.9: The Position of the Teacher while Performing Yoga

1. Position the students and yourself in such a way that you can see all students and that they can also see you, e.g., taller students at the last.
2. When you are speaking face the students.
3. Move around the room in the same direction in order to make sure that all students are

given attention or notice and to maintain a focused, grounded atmosphere.

4. Walk around the training room to connect with all students.

Student Position

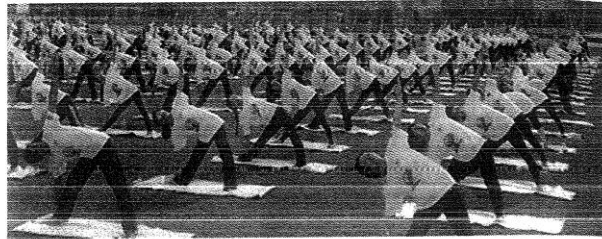


Fig. 7.10: Students Position

1. Let students have specific choice in where they want to be.
2. Group students in such a manner that they feel more comfortable, e.g., with similar limitations, with friends or similar physical concerns.



Example

If a student's size or height blocks vision of other students too much, then either ask the student if he/she would be willing to alter his/her position or alter your position.

First Class

1. Meet/Greet students.
2. Indicate where coats, shoes, and valuables can be positioned.
3. Give the location of yoga props and equipment, fire exits, washrooms, etc.
4. Direct placement of props and mats.
5. Ask students about their yoga stories, physical injuries or limitations.

Pacing

1. Pace of the teacher/instructor should be as per the level of the students.

For instance, give beginner more freedom to make mistakes.

2. Pace fast enough to get student's attention, yet slow enough for them to understand ideas to adjust and work on the basis of their requirements. Fast pace can lead to contracted as well as inhibited breathing and slow pace can increase fatigue.
3. Pace class to have time for breath-work, clean-up, relaxation, closure, meditation, etc.
4. Pace the class such that you have taught a well-rounded class within the time allotted.

Voice

1. Your voice should be audible enough for all students. Project your sound till the back of the room.
2. Explain in mature tone like you are talking to adults.
3. Speak on your out breath.
4. Stay grounded and relaxed.

5. Regulate your tempo and tone to focus the student's attention on the quality of the practice, e.g., slow and soft for relaxation; quick and strong for energizing poses.
6. Do not speak too quickly while explaining the philosophy or a pose, and pronounce well.
7. Use an authoritative, enthusiastic, inspiring, commanding but kind tone.

Adjustments

1. Let practitioners identify you do adjustments.
2. Adjust those practitioners who require the most enhancements.
3. Always give verbal guidelines earlier to physical adjustments.
4. Soothe the practitioners with your prop, body, and so on.
5. Let them know that they can request to not be adjusted.
6. Let the student know about the adjustments in the poses.
7. Position of instructor should be for the most beneficial and effective adjustment.

7.6 Yoga Course Schedule

A general course schedule for any Yoga class should include the following things:

Title Name	Learning Objectives	Subject Description
<i>Asanas (Yoga Postures)</i>	This will provide students the understanding of the benefits and contraindications for each <i>Asana</i> , and the way to reduce the risk of injuries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sun salutation • Twelve basic yoga poses • Several asana variations, from intermediate level to advanced • Deep relaxation with autosuggestion • Postural alignment • Release of blocked energy • Training classes for all age groups

Contid...



Pranayama	Students will learn the different techniques of <i>Pranayama</i> , the aspects of breathing and their effect on the body and mind.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expands capacity of the lungs • Balances the two hemispheres of the brain • Relaxes the nervous system • Purifies the nadis (subtle energy channels) • Awakens the inner spiritual energy • <i>Kapalabhati</i> (lung cleansing exercise) • <i>Anuloma Viloma</i> (alternate nostril breathing) • <i>Ujjayi, Surya Bheda, Bhastrika, Sitali, Sitkari, Bhramari</i> • The three <i>bandhas: Moola, Jalandhara, Uddiyana</i>
Kriyas	Students will learn the different kinds of purification <i>kriyas</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Neti, Tratak, Kapalabhati, Dhauti, Nauli and Basti</i>: six classical purification exercises for the nose, eyes, air passages, oesophagus and stomach, abdominal organs and large intestine. • Demonstration and explanation of the practices and their effects. • Individual instruction
Yoga Anatomy and Physiology	Students will learn the relevance and application of the foundational principles to the practice of yoga vis-à-vis the physiological systems of the body.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the foremost body systems • The effects of <i>pranayama</i> and <i>asanas</i> on the respiration, cardiovascular system, digestion, and muscular and skeletal systems, endocrine system, etc. • The nine systems of the body • Physical culture and Yoga • Nutrition and diet
Teaching Practice	This will provide students the understanding of various teaching practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to teach the breathing exercises as well as twelve basic poses to beginner students and intermediate students • General pointers on teaching a class • Setting up of a proper environment for class • Beginners' Course • Advanced Postures • Yoga for Pregnancy, Older Citizens, and Children • Relaxation
Yoga Nutrition	Students will learn about a conducive diet for practicing Yoga. Beyond mere dos and don'ts, the curriculum looks in depth at the effect of specific foods on the systems as well as how distinct foods can restrict or support one's spiritual and physical development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How diet affects the mind • Vegetarianism – for spiritual, health, and ethical reasons • Proper balance of the key nutrients • Ayurvedic principles of nutrition

Contd...

Meditation	Students will get practical instructions for meditation practices, and how to guide meditation classes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is meditation • Guide to meditation • Why meditate • Types of meditation • Twelve-step daily practice • Effects of experiences in meditation • <i>Mantras</i> spiritual energy in sound • <i>Mudras</i> – types and significance
Hatha Yoga	This will help students to understand what is <i>Hatha Yoga</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moral and Ethical principles • Body – <i>prana</i> (life energy) – mind • From control over the mind, over the body to control, and meditation
Patanjali Yoga	This will provide students the understanding of self-realization or liberation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ashtanga</i> – the 8 steps of yoga • Various concepts in <i>Patanjali Yoga Sutras</i> • Concentration and meditation
Kundalini Yoga	This will provide students the understanding of cosmic energy and how to tap its resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Seven <i>Chakras</i> • The awakening of cosmic energy
Bhakti Yoga	Understand what is Devotion and its Path.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bhakti Yoga</i> as discussed in <i>The Bhagvad Gita</i> • Ways of Devotion • Qualities of a devotee
Karma Yoga	Understand the Path of selfless action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Karma Yoga</i> as discussed in <i>The Bhagvad Gita</i> • Definition of Yoga in <i>The Bhagvad Gita</i> • The law of <i>Karma</i>, i.e. cause and effect • <i>Karma Yoga</i> - selfless service
Jnana Yoga	Students will get to know about various philosophies of life. Understand the Path of Knowledge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Jnana Yoga</i> as discussed in <i>The Bhagvad Gita</i> • Steps in <i>Jnana Yoga</i> for Realization of Truth (<i>Sadhana hatustaya</i>) • <i>Sravana, Manana, Nidbidhyasana</i>
The Bhagvad Gita	This will provide students the understanding of perspectives on Yoga as given in the <i>The Bhagvad Gita</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered one of the greatest spiritual texts of the world, <i>The Bhagvad Gita</i> is also a textbook of Yoga. It has profound and subtle teachings on Yoga and contains a universality which embraces every aspect of human actions.

Table 7.1: General Course Schedule

7.7 Teaching Process of Yoga Practice



Fig. 7.11: Yoga Practice

In the following sections, you will understand the teaching process while practicing yoga.

Describing the Practice

Practice is a process for being present in the moment with an abiding sense of wholeness and freedom that brings about an experience of being fully energized, alive and in bliss. By way of a self-transformation practice, yoga provides us a set of tools for untying the binding knots that create stagnation deep in our being and create patterns of holding. The art of teaching the *asana* practice is one of guiding students into an expanding awareness of yoga.

When thinking about *asana*, we can identify a variety of essential elements: relaxing, being present, breathing, stabilizing, rooting, moving, energetically engaging, and aligning. But when expressed in an integrated practice—that is, when doing yoga—these elements are not separable but are portion of practice. We also begin with these qualities, gradually refining and honing them through the practice while the practice is one of the movements into these qualities.

Demonstration

Use demonstrations wisely. Demonstrating a posture or an approach can be very instructive,

because a student cannot see the form of his own posture. Viewing the posture from another perspective is very helpful and can often explain what words alone cannot.

Nevertheless, demonstrations have the effect of breaking the continuity of flow within a class and altering the direction of concentration for the student. When you decide to use a demonstration, make sure it counts by doing the following:

- Make sure every student can see and hear you. Ask them to gather near you.
- Be concise as you explain the approach you want them to employ, or the focus of the posture you are demonstrating. Stay with one or two main points.
- If you are using a student to demonstrate on, quietly ask her permission first.
- When you have finished the demonstration, thank the students for their attention and the student you have demonstrated on.
- Move the students to go back to their mats and perform the same pose again, employing what was highlighted in the demonstration.

Silent Demonstration

It is an interesting and powerful phenomenon that the part of the brain used to control a given part of the body will also respond to a visual cue—if it is demonstrated in silence. Bypassing the language center of the brain can result in a deeper kinesthetic understanding. To perform a silent demonstration, do the following:

- Tell your class you will be demonstrating in silence, and tell them why.
- Ask them also to be silent.
- Move into the posture you are demonstrating with the breath.
- Point to the part of the body that is the focus of your demonstration and perform the approach you are highlighting.

- Move out of the posture before you begin speaking again.

Demonstration with Counts and Breathing

Rehearsing regular, careful breathing can be empowering and calming and can also assist with anxiety related wellbeing issues ranging from panic attacks to digestive issues. Since breathing is something we can manage, it's an essential tool for achieving a clear and relaxed mind state.

Breathing practices comprise counting (which is one of their reflective qualities and you require focusing on the numbering to stay with the practice) of couple of things:

- The timing of each portion of the breath and the quantity of seconds in every breath.
- Counting a number of breaths.

Timing breaths

Pranayama practices depend on timed breathing and the length of every breath is demonstrated in seconds. So for a successful practice you are going to require perceptible sound made by something. The least complex technique is a mechanical clock that makes a perceptible clicking noise every second. One of the alternative solutions for timing is a metronome.

Counting breaths

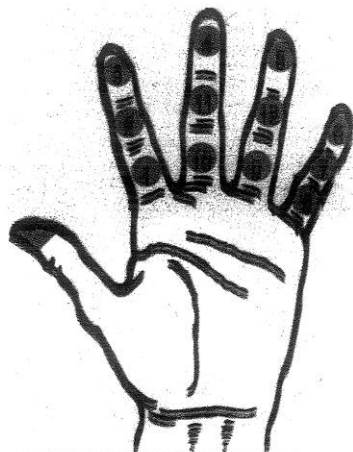


Fig. 7.12: Counting Breaths

To count breaths we will use left-hand. By using left-hand technique we can count number up to twelve. It is easy to do by placing and moving the thumb over twelve numbered areas on the hand. We begin a counting sequence by placing the thumb on the first location and every time we begin a new breathing cycle by inhaling, we move the thumb one position forward. With certain practice you will become habitual with the connection of fingers and numbers.

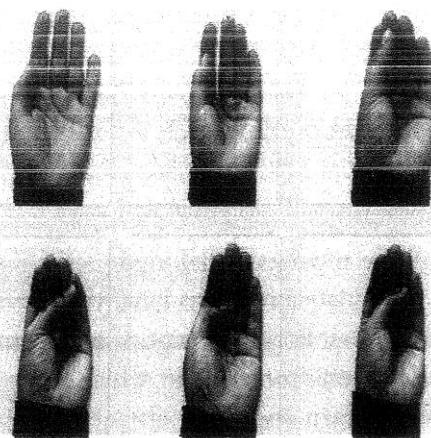


Fig. 7.13: Counting on Fingers

Take a seat in a calm position with the head inclined slightly forward and spine straight.

Gradually take deep breaths and close your eyes gently. Then try the breath come naturally without trying to affect it. Ideally it would be slow and quiet, but rhythm and depth might be varied.

- To begin the exercise, count "one" to yourself as you exhale.
- The next you exhale, count "two," and so on up to "five."
- Then begin a new cycle, counting "one" on the next exhalation.

Do not count higher than "five," and do not count at the time of inhale, count only when you exhale. You will know the attention has wandered when you find yourself up to "eight," "twelve," even "nineteen."

Limitations of Practice

Managing, injury illness, and scheduled days off:

As yoga instructor/teacher, if we do not teach, we do not get paid. This means we need to be careful about getting sick, do everything we can to take care of ourselves. Be cautious about anything that may cause accident or injury and be judicious and organized about taking days off.

Finding you do not have sufficient time in the day to also practice yoga for yourself:

The funny thing about being a yoga instructor/teacher is that there are several days when you will wonder, as an instructor/teacher, you will need to practice what you preach as well as make your own practice a priority, being creative about how and when you will do your own yoga.

One of the most essential ingredients for being a good yoga instructor is to have your own regular and strong practice. Being a good instructor means, creating an environment in which your students are able to learn and really open their hearts. This can happen when there is a connection between teacher and student.

Explaining Subtle Points

Understanding the human body that is, its limitations and its capabilities that can help instructor/teacher understand how to carefully and safely instruct students. It is necessary to create modifying postures and balanced sequences totally depend on a student's capabilities. By placing all the focus on the body we ignore several benefits to the spirit and mind. If *asana* is done correctly, the breath is paired with attention and movement is focused on a *drashti* (point of focus).

The following are the certain points which must be considered by every yoga instructor/teacher/trainer and communicated to yoga students:

1. **Holding Your Breath:** Staying cautious towards how breathe is of utmost importance

when practising yoga. Yoga teacher/instructor always points out this one major mistake that must be avoided.



Example

Cardiac patients need to be particularly more careful not to hold the breath when practicing *asanas*. This is more like gently monitoring what works for the body, beyond what an instructor can teach. Yoga translates into good life and good health given that you practice it carefully.

2. **Pushing Too Hard:** Certain yoga poses may seem simple and easy relatively from the outside, they work deeper muscles and tissues, and must be practiced with care and awareness. Students mainly need to push themselves at the outset, driven by pride and require proving themselves fit and fine. Unluckily, this brings about soreness the next day. So listen carefully to the instructions of the instructor/teacher and also do not force yourself.



Fig. 7.14: A Person Pushing Too Hard

3. **Comparing Yourself to Others:** Every group or class has that one super-adaptable yogi who appears to master each move smoothly. Fight the inclination to compare and get down on yourself. On the off chance that you get tripped up examining yourself against everyone else in the class, not only will you get a crick in your neck, you will also get a crimp in your fun. You will become disappointed and perhaps even convince yourself that yoga is not for you.
4. **Coming to Class with a Full Stomach:** When you have a full stomach, not only are most yoga postures uncomfortable, but also blood supply is channeled to your stomach to process the supplements from your food, leaving your muscles shortchanged on the energy they require for a fruitful practice.
5. **Comparing Yourself with the Person on the Next Mat:** To injure yourself in a yoga class is to try doing what the individual next to you is doing and match his/her reach or stretch. We all have distinct body shapes, which vary according to injuries in the past, age, genetics, diet, etc.



Did You Know?

If you are copying or imitating the person who is performing next to you, it might cause injury to you because stretching limit in each person varies.

6. **Focusing Yourself:** Every class has intelligent, average and poor students, so do the yoga classes. Your class may also have super-flexible yogis who seem to perform it effortlessly without actually showing any strain. And, they have a core that you can't even match. If you get yourself engaged in measuring yourself against others in the class, you will ruin your yoga session. You will more

likely become more frustrated and may even think that yoga is not meant for people like you. This wrong notion should never cross your mind, rather understand the fact that yoga is for everyone. For this, you need to focus on your personal session that is not about anyone but you. Always remember that everyone is different and yoga poses are about treating their individual bodies.

Questions and Answers Session

Many students have doubts about yoga. The question and answer session gives them a preferable way to the procedure, practices and principles so that they can learn about them.



Example

Questions Discussed during the Group Yoga Session

Warm up

- How long have you been practising yoga?
- Where have you been practising?
- Do you practice alone or with a partner or friend?
- What is your definition of yoga? How would a person who practices yoga define it?
- How would a person who doesn't practice yoga define it?
- What did you expect when you started to practice yoga?

Starting Yoga (Cues to Action)

- How do people make the decision to start yoga?
- What makes them continue to practise?
- What was it like for you when you started out?

Perceived Benefits

- What health benefits, if any, do people expect when they practice yoga?
- What illnesses or health concerns might yoga help? Are there any that yoga would not help or would make worse? Do any of you practice yoga to help you with a specific illness or health concern? How has yoga affected this condition?

Contd...



- Does yoga prevent diseases?
- Do you think yoga helps people like you to sleep better?
- What do you think are some of the benefits of practicing yoga?

Perceived Barriers

- Why don't people in general practise yoga?
- When people don't practice yoga as often as they'd like, why do they do so? How does that make a person feel?
- What expenses do you associate with yoga? How do people perceive the financial cost of yoga?

Close

- Would it be okay to contact you if we have follow-up questions?
- Are there any other thoughts about yoga that you would like to share with us?

Lesson Plan

1. Observe students and match the practice to their requirements. Reflection and observation are essential to determine the objective of the practice i.e., to determine what is required.
2. Identify the objective of practice: spiritual, therapeutic, preserving health, mind control, and so on.
3. Always use one tool instead of many. This often leads to good insight.
4. Always keep things simple.
5. Adapt for special situations, conditions, and concerns and design to fit a specific context.
6. Move from gross to subtle.
7. Set up something and then take it deeper, subtler.
8. Set the intention.

7.8 Managing and Executing Yoga Classes

In the sections given below, you will understand how a teacher/instructor will manage and execute his/her yoga classes.

Format of Lesson Plan

Theme/Focus: _____

Centering: _____

Pranayama (may go at the beginning or end): _____

Meditation (may go at the beginning or end): _____

Warm-ups: _____

Opening postures/building heat: _____

Challenging Postures: _____

Cool-down Postures: _____

Shavasana: _____

Closure: _____

Preparing Daily Routine for Aspirants

Dividing the session into different parts aids in comprehension of the demonstration of a yoga session. The divisions of the session are mentioned below:

- **Introducing the class:** Greeting pupils with expressions of inspiration and gradual advancement into pre-warm up.
- **Groundwork:** Pre-warm up includes gentle stretches and a general idea to the sort of yoga postures that will be observed in the warm up course.
- **Warm Up:** Generally, atleast 20 minutes of yoga practices are followed in continuation
- **Meditation:** Directed meditation and imagining methods. Several meditation methods are there that you can practice to monitor you in your Yoga class.
- **Relaxation:** Typically, *Shavasana*, which is a posture that includes lying down on your backbone and relaxing. Trainer can stay quiet; he can provide some guidance, or thorough supervision during this stage. It is pleasant to

to promote cardio-vascular and cardio-respiratory fitness. A warm-up course does not generally have anything too vigorous but motivates incessant motion to generate inner warmth, improving internal blood flow and decreasing the chance of harm.

lie down as trainer/ instructor at the end of a yoga class but practitioner will need some supervision.

Class Objectives

A class objective mainly deals with the aspects of teaching and yoga class. It is a comprehensive subject. Following are the examples of class objectives which must be dealt carefully in a balanced class.

1. **Toning major muscle groups:** During yoga class, toning must be done effectively, efficiently and safely. It is important for all high quality yoga session.
2. **Stretching main group of muscle:** Safely stretching generally involves long time durations within a stretch. At such durations, many practitioners often get tired and bored. They feel that they are not progressing when an instructor selects to stretch the muscles safely and correctly. Flexibility is important for any progress of students.
3. **Inspire practicing good breathing:** At the time of yoga session, it is the duty of an instructor to encourage students to practice good breathing. While doing yoga, sometimes student's breathing can become non-existent and shallow. So, observing students while practicing it is essential to give their suggestions frequently on breathing.
4. **Protecting the practitioners:** In this, it is the duty of an instructor to find out the students who are highly risked. Highly risked students are those who are the beginners, injured or frail. So, in order to minimise the chances of any injury, provide them special assistance.
5. **Teaching good meditation:** For an instructor, it is important for them to learn how to teach good meditation as it is regarded as the essence of yoga practicing.

6. **Present-day yoga in a clear and an understandable manner:** Try to learn the essence of present-day yoga in a clear and an understandable manner. This is sign of a great yoga instructor/teacher.

Maintaining Records of Aspirants

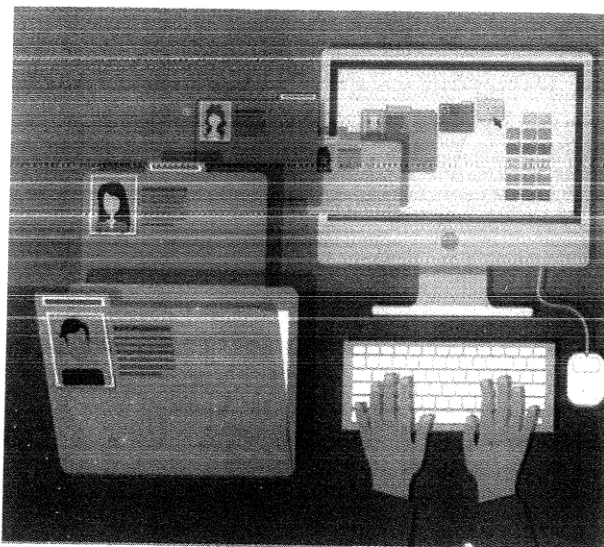


Fig. 7.15: Maintaining Records of Aspirants

Records refer to the evidence related to the process which the instructor has taken in order to discharge their duty and responsibility of care. Following are the records which must be maintained:

- Maintaining records of physical capacity and strength along with the experience of students
- Registers
- Questionnaires related to students' health
- Maintaining records of incidents/accidents
- Risk Assessment Checklist
- Emergency Procedures Checklist
- Work structures with respect to teaching together along with session plans depicting the practices taught and changes offered. (In case during teaching session, there is any modifications then it must be carefully noted)

For maintaining records of the aspirants the following points must be worked upon:

1. **Enrolment:** Enrolment records of students should be kept for certain period of time. These are only accessible to those students who take prior appointments. Records must be confidential and are maintained by the school authorities.
2. **Attendance:** Many classes use a student sign-in sheet for each yoga session. The teacher/instructor simply notes the number of students signed-in and compares it to a quick count of people in the class. Information from these sheets can be transferred to individual student cards that include name, address and phone number, and a statement that the student waives any claim against the yoga class for bodily injury. The back of this card is then used to note the date of each session attended.
3. **Progress Report:** It is the duty of the Yoga teacher to maintain truthful and adequate notes on each class/session/student's progress.

Progress of a yoga teacher can be identified and measured by the practitioners of the class such as how they move independently while doing flawless poses throughout the session. A yoga teacher must view the abilities and qualities of their participants over time in order to measure his/her overall performance.

In order to find out and identify the progress of the student, it is important to implement and understand clear goals during yoga session. Successfully telling and informing the practitioners of goals along with observing their attempts while attaining those goals is regarded as "The Art of Living". Thus, when practitioners attain those goals, we can identify our qualities and abilities to permit perfect students.

Identify different methods so as to evaluate the effectiveness of being a yoga teacher by figuring out the flexibility as well as the endurance and muscle strength of the students. This flexibility can be seen in the students through the postures they are doing. Therefore, with the help yoga postures muscle endurance of the students can also be measured when you hold them in pose.

Measuring Class Effectiveness

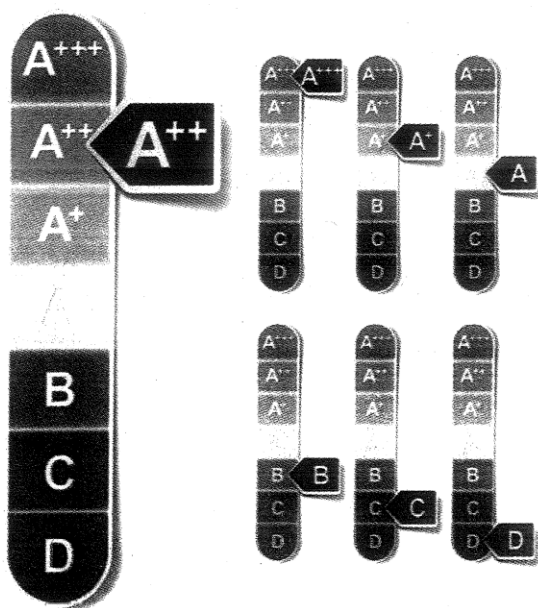


Fig. 7.16: Parameters of Measuring Class Effectiveness

Feedback

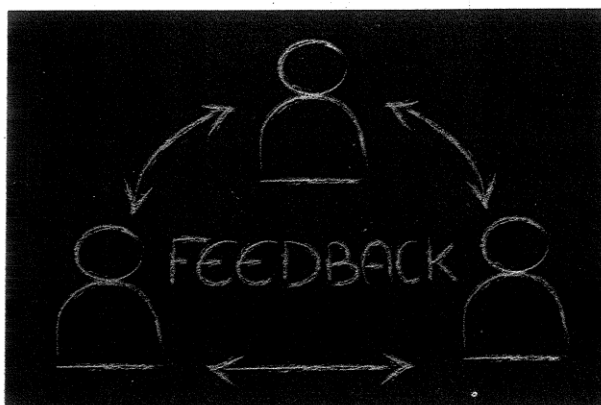


Fig. 7.17: Feedback

Before joining the class, the students should be made to fill an Enrollment Form. At the end of the class and course, the students are requested to

fill a Feedback Form. It can be concluded from the Feedback Forms that the students have benefited from the yoga class.

7.9 Teaching Techniques



Fig. 7.18: Teaching Techniques and Aids

Over the years, classes of yoga have changed a lot. Today various techniques of teachings such as presentations have entered new heights of insight and wisdom. You can find various teaching methods of yoga but the practitioners may learn either by hearing, feeling, seeing or by combination of senses. Some of the practitioners may have dominant sense so it is important for any yoga teacher to be aware of that while teaching. This is the main reason of the integration of teaching methods for Yoga. Some of your students may not like your method of teaching, so it is the teacher's responsibility to communicate effectively with vast majority of students.

Observation

Observation mastery is a teaching art form and a highly effective way to help advance your students' poses, assist them with their form and build trust in the student-teacher relationship. Safety is a huge priority in a yoga class and it's essential that students feel secure, nurtured and well attended to. It's our job as a teacher/instructor to encourage consistency in the practice and a healthy curiosity

about the body. That is why being able to truly observe your students and teach to what you are observing is critical as a yoga teacher/instructor.

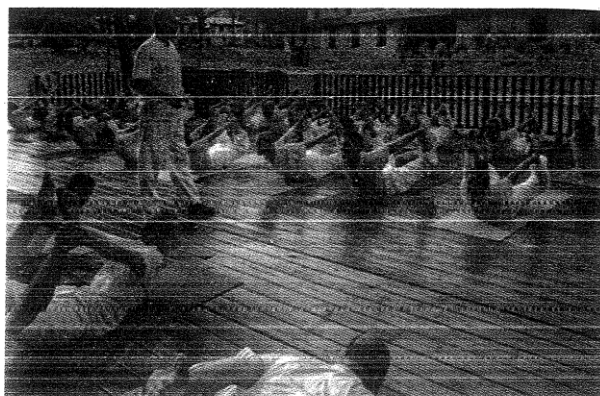


Fig. 7.19: Students Being Observed by Teacher

The moment students enter into the room, yoga teacher must watch their students' facial expressions and body language so that get you can analyze their state of mind. This will help you to understand how well you are aware of your students. You may be able to express if any of them are having physical issues such as from the manner they hold their shoulders and arms, move their feet, position their neck along with their energy sense such as if they are feeling calm, dragging or agitated.

Yoga teacher will get some general information about their students when they begin to move. Some of the information is as follows:

- Student's abilities
- Weak spots
- Range of motion
- Understanding of the poses
- General body awareness

The above information is important while deciding who wants help, what needs to be changed and how much to challenge the group.



Example

Here's an example of the things that you can be watching before you even begin the movement part of your session.

Physical	Walking Pattern, Posture, Ease of Movement, Body Asymmetries, Tension Areas, Sitting Position and so on.
Physiological	Complexion, Total Energy, Pattern of Breathing, and so on.
Mental/ Emotional	Pattern of speech, Focusing ability, Mood and so on.

Important observation skills required by the Yoga teacher/instructor are as follows:

1. While giving instructions, observe and monitor students how they are performing as per your instruction.
2. Teach them from what you have observed and monitored.
3. Analyze what is right according to you and then try to improve it.
4. After instructions have been given, try to pause for some time and then observe them. And if instructions are not properly followed then you must "Repeat, Rephrase and Try again".
5. Walk around the whole room so that you do not miss observing any student.
6. Find out those students who have some limitations or special concerns.
7. Observe form, eyes, energy, facial expression, skin, breath, attitude, etc.
8. Monitor whether the practitioners are touching their bodies, which will help you examine where exactly they are feeling pain or discomfort.

Instructions

Proper instructions must be given to all the students both beginners as well as advanced. Instructions are of two types:

1. Command – creates power - firm, ground, lengthen, extend, draw, press.
2. Passive – produces the state of the pose – allow, release, sense, feel.

So while giving instructions, some of the points that must be followed are given below:

1. Clarity while speaking.
2. Language must be simple and plain.
3. Define and use specific terminologies whenever required, such as Sanskrit words, anatomy terms, etc.
4. Explain the intentions which are associated with postures and cautions must also be mentioned.
5. Give correct and accurate information and try to be economical.
6. Provide one thing which needs to be focused.
7. Try to be precise and direct while giving instructions, such as "stand in Tadasana."
8. Select those words which are related to students' experience.
9. Try to be direct and avoid using words or expressions like: "If you feel like..." or "If you want to...".
10. Emphasis must be laid on the experiences of the students instead of prescriptions.
11. Try to deliver specific instructions, that is, instructions must be made clear when they are specific or general for a student by using their name.
12. Pause and repeat after instructions are given.
13. Direction of Movement

- ❖ Relate to left/right leg or front/back leg.
 - ❖ Acknowledge whether the students are being observed by you or not.
 - ❖ Use some portion of the room area for reference such as windows, front, back, doors, etc.
 - ❖ Usages of comparisons like move this way and then that way and finally experience and understand the change.
 - ❖ Ask queries such as “Is the front knee turned in or out?”
2. Convey specific traits such as kindness, safety, sensitivity, confidence, professionalism and authority.
 3. Slowly release touch so that the practitioners do not become shocked or unbalanced.
 4. Apologize if you unintentionally touch an inappropriate part of the practitioners’ body and go ahead.

Demonstration

Touch

Touch is also regarded as one of the tool of teaching yoga. This is another technique of guiding and informing the students. With this touch technique used by yoga teachers, the practitioners can very well sense what exactly they are performing. They can also learn and understand the actions which are significant in a posture in a concrete manner. At times, touch is about protecting the individuals who might be at risk of injury and also support them in a difficult pose while balancing. Therefore, for emotional reasons also touch is important as a method to acknowledge practitioners and make a connection with them.

Types of Touch

1. Appropriate - comforting, investigating, alerting, directing, stabilizing, adjusting.
2. Unethical/Inappropriate - invasive, sensual, unnecessary, random such as touching sexual, vulnerable or sensitive areas.

There are some rules which must be followed by a yoga teacher which are as follows:

1. Before touching, take permission from student.



Fig. 7.20: *Pranayama* Demonstration Pose

Yoga techniques are difficult and complex and these qualities can vary from just simple to probably a complex one. Yoga instructor’s/ teacher’s one of the important tasks is to make the posture execution process as simple as possible. A little more focus and step by step practice is required from teacher’s end when it comes to teach students about complex poses or techniques such as *pranayama*. If an instructor/ teacher wants easy and smooth movements, he/ she must have concise verbal cues and accuracy in physical demonstration. Before starting with demonstration of yoga techniques, it would be

good and advantageous if some information related to background of yoga and its postures is given to students. The information should comprise yoga technique history, posture's purpose, and description of technique's precision. Along with benefits, students should also know about possible risks and concerns of different yoga techniques. Before starting up with new poses or techniques, initially make students watch the whole technique performed by you. Then ask them to perform the technique by following the verbal cues they noticed during the demonstration. New yoga poses should be practiced a few times prior to adding them in daily routine.

The following are the important points in demonstrating techniques:

1. Although demonstrations are useful and beneficial, but lengthy demonstrations can slow down the rhythm of a class.
2. Timing of the demonstration – before or after students do a pose.
3. Get props ready before demonstration.
4. Be in that position so that you are visible by all the students. The students who are sitting in front either sit or kneel down so that the students at the back can see.
5. Wait until everyone is present before starting the demonstration.
6. Make eye contact to ensure students are watching.
7. Name the pose (Sanskrit/English). Talk about the pose benefits.
8. Demonstration must also include some changes first and then final pose, wherever applicable.
9. Point or gesture to the body part that you are concentrating on.

10. Demonstration must be concise and clear, that is, short demonstration is more effective than long demonstration.
11. Repeat demonstration concisely once or twice to make your points clear.
12. Make sure that instructions which are verbal must match physical movements.
13. Demonstrate the procedure of moving in and out of a posture. More injuries occur when coming out of a pose.
14. Try to demonstrate the misalignments after you have witnessed them and not before.
15. If you cannot demonstrate what you are teaching, select and request a practitioner so you can be effective and clear. Lastly, acknowledge the practitioner for demonstrating.



Caution

An excessive amount of demonstrating can make some yoga students feel like they are only an augmentation of their workout. Demonstrating can be troublesome when you are walking around the room making physical adjustments and assists. While you are walking around the room, there are times, when it is best to quickly exhibit in an area where students who don't normally have the best angle can get a chance to see you. As your yoga classes expand in size, it is savvy to have other instructors in the class to support with adjustments. This additional consideration from an assistant gives each yoga student the ideal learning experience.

Liability is a part of the responsibility being a Yoga teacher/instructor. With a specific end goal to ensure that each of the students is safe, you should know your students. Yoga teacher/instructor needs to be mindful if a student has an injury, health problem, and few other areas of concern. When you know your students, you can give particular props, advice and modifications to

them for postures that may pose a risk. It is also essential to break down more complex yoga poses into simple steps. Until the posture is complete, show each step and demonstrate how to Proceed to the next step.

7.10 Motivation and Adherence Techniques

Motivating students and encouraging them to return is essential to extend the progress of participants and the size of training classes. Combine the proven sound techniques, latest research and practitioner's requirements to design the most influential cutting-edge yoga class. Yoga classes must surround the following elements:

- Cardio-respiratory yoga practices
- Muscle strengthening yoga practices
- Flexibility improvement yoga practices
- Breathing practices
- Muscle endurance yoga practices
- Mental practices
- Relaxation

For students, blend of the above elements together in an effective and safe yoga class is required to depict a balanced healthy experience. The amount and type of information that can be understood by a student totally depends on his/her current stage of progress in case of yoga.



Learning ACTIVITY

Critically examine the program prepared by you to teach to the beginners in your class and the way it will help your students to overcome their injuries.



SUMMARY

- Communication lies at the heart of having the capacity to explain others about Yoga.
- Yoga instructors additionally need to approach students in a non-intimidating and friendly manner.
- When you teach, the key to better communication in the classes is to demonstrate the first round.
- A yoga class environment is good energy that enhances the yoga students as well as the teacher/instructor through the yoga practice.
- A yoga teacher/instructor should finish a training program in yoga within the field and have the choice of specializing in a specific discipline.
- Practice is a process for being present in the moment with an abiding sense of wholeness and freedom that brings about an experience of being fully energized, alive and in bliss.
- Demonstrating a posture or an approach can be very instructive because a student cannot see the form of his/her own posture.
- The practicing yoga art assists in controlling the person's body, mind and soul.
- Over the years, yoga classes have altered and grown permitting teaching methods, presentations, and techniques to enter new heights of insight and wisdom.
- Observation mastery is a teaching art form and a highly effective way to help advance your students' poses, assist them with their form and build trust in the student-teacher relationship.

- Touch is an alternative way of guiding and informing students as well as a teaching tool, and of being supportive to them.



KEYWORDS

Communication: Communication is the act of conveying intended meaning from one entity to another group through the use of mutually understood semiotic rules and signs.

Verbal Communication: Verbal communication is the process of exchange of information or a message between two or more persons through written or oral words.

Teaching Skills: The teaching skills are defined as a group of teaching acts or behaviours intended to facilitate students learning directly or indirectly.

Pacing: Pace of class establishes the tone for the practice, produces different effects for the mind and body and moulds the experience for the students.

Course Schedule: The course schedule is published before advising and registration begin for each session.

Demonstration: It involves depicting by proof or reason, explaining or making clear by use of experiments or examples.

Practice: Practice is the act of rehearsing the behaviour over and over, or engaging in an activity again and again, for the purpose of improving or mastering it.

Warm Up: It commonly comprises a steady increase in intensity of joint mobility exercise, physical activity and stretching.

Observation: It is the process of watching someone or something.

Motivation: It is an internal process that makes a person move towards a goal.



SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Short Answer Questions

1. As a yoga teacher/instructor, what are your working activities?
2. What are the do's and don'ts of the environment of your yoga classes?
3. Discuss demonstration through counts and breathing with respect to practising yoga.
4. What are the tips to make your question and answer session more effective?
5. How will you prepare daily routine and lesson plan for your students?
6. What is the motivation and adherence techniques?
7. Why is maintaining records important for students?
8. Define silent demonstration.
9. How will you convey subtle points for your students?

Long Answer Questions

1. Do you think that communication plays a very important role while taking yoga classes? If yes, give reasons to support your answer.
2. What is the style of the training and will it make you a versatile teacher/instructor?
3. Discuss how you feel about the role of a teacher/instructor?
4. "Teaching a Yoga class is composed of observation skills, cueing skills, assisting, and showing modifications when needed.



You never want to turn your back on your students and to your own yoga practice. It is a wonderful thing when one can perform a technique, but a teacher is being tested for his or her ability to lead a class.” Elucidate.

5. Describe various teaching techniques while taking a class.
6. How will you prepare your daily routine and lesson plan for the students?
7. How will you measure the effectiveness and performance of your students?
8. Highlight the general pointers while teaching a yoga class.

9. What is the most important thing for you in life and how do you imagine teaching Yoga can relate to this?



FURTHER READINGS

The complete illustrated book of Yoga- Swami Vishnudevananda

Asana, Pranayama, Mudra, Bandha – Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Teaching Practices – Book Published by Kaivalyadhama.

CHAPTER 8

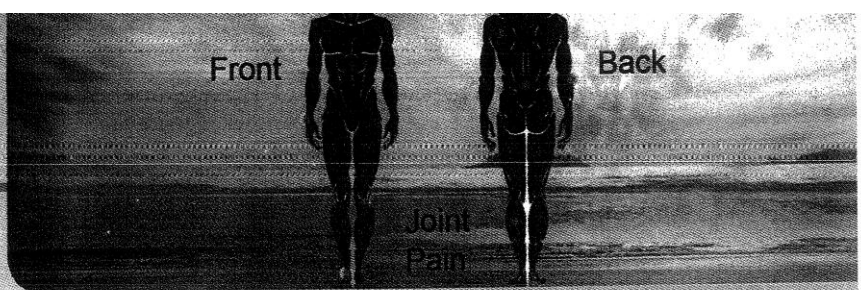
FAMILIARITY WITH BODY JOINTS AND VYAYAMA





Structure

- Learning Outcomes
- Introduction
 - 8.1 Movement of Key Joints
 - 8.2 Sukshma Vyayama
 - 8.3 Shat Kriyas
- Summary
- Keywords
- Self-Assessment Questions
- Further Reading



Learning Outcomes

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the movement of key joints of the body while doing *yogasanas*
- Discuss the importance of *sukshma vyayama*
- Understand the details of *shat kriyas*



Introduction

Movement of joints in an individual's body is useful for learning yoga. Human body has various joints which require movements and lubrication. Lubrication is supplied by the food that we consume every day and movements in joints are provided by yoga and other activities. In our day-to-day life, some of the joints in our body are rarely used and some of them are overused which may result in creating problems at the later phase of life. Therefore, basic movements in joints are essential in order to maintain them in healthy and proper condition.

Doing yoga does not make any changes in our fluids but it helps in moving our fluids around whole body. Yoga helps in circulating the fluid in our joints. This helps in keeping the joints supple, healthy and strong. As blood in our body circulates in veins and arteries and lymph flows around all cells through the spaces, they help in its cleansing of metabolic by-products, and blood gets replenished with nutrient and oxygen. The practice of yoga helps in developing the mind and body as a whole, though this is not the substitute for any medicine.

As a daily practice, adoption of yoga makes the body mentally and physically fit. It is a way of living a healthy life, which is natural and free from all side effects. It improves the quality of life and restores strength and energy in the body.



8.1 Movement of Key Joints

Joints are the place in our body where two or more than two bones are connected with each other which help us to swing, turn and bend our head, torso and limbs. These movements in our body help in making the various poses of yoga. Also, joints are vulnerable to many injuries. Hence, it is important to understand the benefits of performing yoga so as to prevent and heal the joint injuries.

By improving flexibility and muscle tone, yoga makes sure that joints work smoothly and well in regular doings and also during sports. *Yogasanas* help in maintaining the balance of strengthening and stretching which lengthens ligaments, tendons and muscles. Regular routine of yoga helps in preventing conditions such as osteoarthritis in which the cartilage protects the joint to deteriorate. Repetition of exercise will help in squeezing nutrients and blood in the cartilage in order to be healthy and compresses body joints.

One of the first and foremost advantages of yoga is improved flexibility. Continuous practice of yoga may loosen the muscles as well as connective tissues which is adjacent to the joints and bones. Thus, this is the main reason why yoga is related to reduced pains and aches. Yoga assists in maintaining strength of the muscle and building muscle mass which help in protecting them from conditions like back pain, osteoporosis and arthritis. According to various studies, meditation, *asana* or combination of these two will help in reducing the pain in people who are suffering with chronic conditions, back pain and arthritis.



Most-common Mis-conceptions

Yoga is universal and same for everyone.

This is yet another popular misconception. Each body is different, so are the needs of every individual. All the *asanas* can be modified, to a certain extent, keeping in mind the requirements of each person.

Bones

The most essential part of our body that forms the structural framework is the Bones which consist of blood vessels, cells, connective tissue, and calcium salts. These have different sizes and shapes and are acted upon by the muscles. Thus, the bones shape reflects its function. There are different kinds of bones in our body which are as follows:

Flat Bones

- These bones consist of protective function that is skull.
- These bones give wide surfaces for muscular attachment that is shoulder blades.

Long Bones

- These bones are found in the limbs.
- These bones act as levers for locomotion and support.
- Short bones function for compactness and strength.

Daily practice of yoga helps in strengthening of bones as it involves weight-bearing exercise in different directions.

Joints and Ligaments

Bones are connected with one another with the help of joints. Few joints are unbending like the sacroiliac joint which have either little movement or have no movement. While other joints may allow bones to form levers and move freely that pivot or hinge with each other. Such joints are known as synovial joints as they have synovial fluid that permits them either to move or glide against each other and lubricates the opposite surfaces. There are various types of synovial joints such as:

- Hinge joints

- Ball as well as socket joints (bi-axial and multi-axial)
- Gliding joints
- Pivot joints
- Saddle joints



Example

Following are the examples of various kinds of joints:

- **Hinge**
 - ❖ Elbow, knee.
 - ❖ This type of joint permits a wide range of movement in only one plane.
- **Multi-Axial Ball and Socket**
 - ❖ Shoulder joint and Hip
 - ❖ This joint permits movement in all planes that is; it allows wide range of movement and rotation.
- **Bi-Axial Ball and Socket**
 - ❖ Wrist, jaw and fingers that is among the proximal row and radius of the carpal bones
 - ❖ This joint permits movement without any rotation in two planes.
- **Gliding**
 - ❖ Spine, wrists carpal bones
 - ❖ This joint allows less gliding movement where bones glide past with one another.
 - ❖ This bone joint is characterised by the two flat bony surfaces that butt against one another.
- **Pivot:**
 - ❖ Top of the neck (rotation of the radius at the radioulnar joint)
 - ❖ This joint allows rotational movement around a long axis.
 - ❖ Here bones can twist or spin around other bones.
- **Saddle**
 - ❖ Thumb
 - ❖ This joint allows ball as well as socket movement with very less rotation that is side to side and back and forth.

The place where bones articulate, in actual they do not touch with each other. Cartilage covers the articulating surfaces which allows the movement in joints and helps in protecting the bone. Also, cartilage absorbs the fluids which lubricate the body joint. Thus, this helps in keeping the fluid from dissipating.



Caution

Postures that involve excessive bending of the knee can be hard on the joints and aggravate a knee condition.



Did You Know?

An exercise helps in strengthening the joints by keeping the muscles resilient around body joints in order to build strong joint stability. Thus, strengthening of joints refers to strengthening of muscles which supports the joints.

All joints in our body are bound together through muscles and ligaments which connect one bone to another bone. Ligaments get torn because of too much stress on joints that may occur due to ankle and knee injuries. Muscles in our body are attached to cartilage and bones through ligaments or tendons. Muscles make movement by contracting. Therefore, muscles may function as motors and bones as levers. A tendinous fibre which connects underlying structures and skin to the muscles is called Fascia. The terms "origin" and "insertion" indicate the place where the bones are attached by muscles for the most common joint movement.

- "Origin" of the muscle is on the bone which is relatively stationary
- "Insertion" of the muscle is on the bone which is most often moved

For example: In flexion of the elbow, forearm is mostly moved. Therefore, biceps as well as the triceps mostly take their origin from the upper shoulder and arm then insert on the forearm.

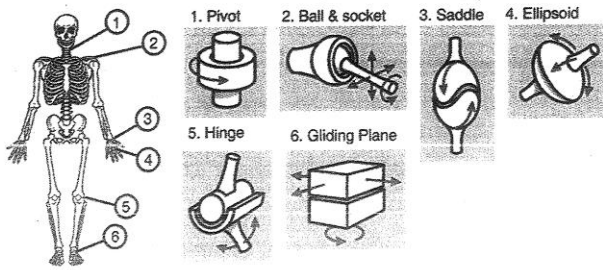


Fig. 8.1: Various Body Joints

Neck Joint

The part of the spine which is found inside the neck is known as the cervical spine. This spine is more susceptible to injury. Other spines are protected from every injury as they are surrounded by the torso. Cervical spine is enclosed with few ligaments and muscles, but is essential to have wide range of motion. Many people experience neck strain because of prolonged or repetitive neck flexion or extension which mainly occurs due to:

- Wrong posture while standing or sitting
- Cradling a mobile/phone between ear and shoulder
- Awkward position while sleeping

You can minimize the strain by gradually stretching and strengthening the muscles of the neck. While doing this, it is important to note that you should not roll your head while stretching your neck.

Shoulder Joint

The body's most movable joint is the shoulder.

Each of these contributes to shoulder and arm movement via a process known as joint "coupling."



Caution

Shoulder joint is considered as a ball and socket joint but the socket part of the joint, Glenoid Fossa, is not as deep as that of the hip joint. This puts the joint at a greater risk for acute and severe injuries.

Shoulder work is a foundation for nearly all poses of *Hatha Yoga*. Pain in upper portion of the back stems from the tendency to slump in the spine and also around the shoulders. This slump may cause the blades of the shoulder to slide away from the spine which may causes weakening of muscles. Ultimately, these muscles get harden into tough bands in order to protect them from such continuous strain.

The pain in the upper portion of the back is reduced marginally by having common shoulder stretches, and sometimes can even make the problem worse. This is due to the stretching which may often focus on pain without addressing its deeper causes. Main cause of slumping is usually found in the front part of your body which lies in the upper chest of the shoulder area.

Stiffness in the muscles of the upper chest pulls the shoulders both down and forward, though rotating the upper portion of the arms inward. Thereby, the most insistent reason of chronic back pain in the upper portion could be diminished through releasing the tension in muscles.



Notes

Most of the problems in the shoulder are due to the breakdown of soft tissues. Excessive use of shoulder can break down the soft tissue faster as individuals get older.



Did You Know?

The purpose of warming up is to increase the temperature and improve circulation of joint structures and muscles so as to make movement of the body easier, less stiff along with minimizing the injury risk. The body will feel relaxed and somewhat warmer, if a person is successful in doing a warm-up. A person can do stretching after every session of an exercise to cool down. Many people like to do stretching only after their warm-up.



Did You Know?

Vyayama can be broken up into three or four 10-minute sessions per day. Vyayama (moderate intensity), if it is done on most days of the week, is proved to be one of the most effective exercise. However, doing vyayama once or twice per week is better than no vyayama at all.



Notes

Most symptoms of sciatica can be alleviated and usually, entirely prevented by a consistent, safe, intelligent and therapeutic yoga practice.

Trunk Joint

The body where the femur, that is a thighbone, meets pelvis, that is hip bone, is an actual hip joint of a person.

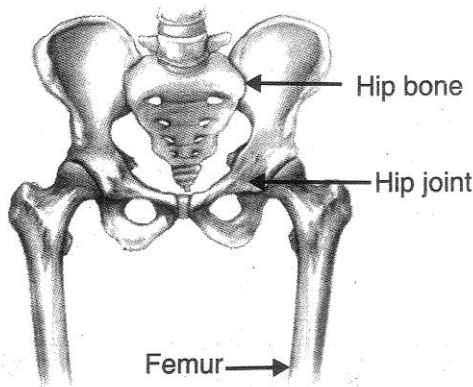


Fig. 8.2: Trunk Joint

The movable and flexible part of the body is a hip joint. Motion takes place at the hip point where both the pelvis and femur move in relation to one other. You can find many movements at hip joint which includes:

- **Hip extension:** In *shalabhasana*, moving the thigh behind you

- **Hip flexion:** Think diving forward from *tadasana* to *uttanasana*
- **Hip abduction:** Moving thigh out to the side such as back leg in warrior 2
- **Hip adduction:** Moving the thigh toward your midline and imagine pose of eagle
- Rotation both internal as well as external

Ideally most of the motions would be fluid. Sometimes, the movement of the hip joint is limited to one or more planes which result in hips that we experience as “tight”.

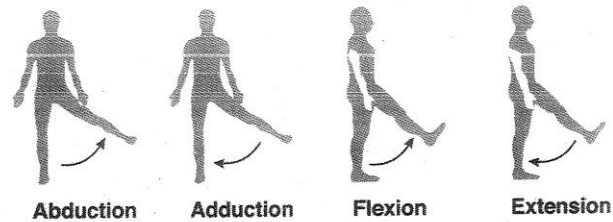


Fig. 8.3: Hip Joint Movement I

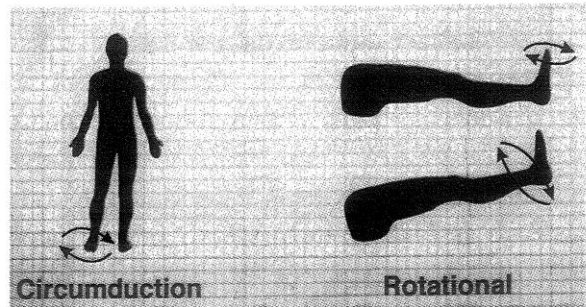


Fig. 8.4: Hip Joint Movement II



Notes

While standing when you bend forward, you are bending from your waist and this will contract abdominal muscles only. And if you are bending from your hips then both your erector spinal muscles and abdominal muscles will contract (strengthen/use).

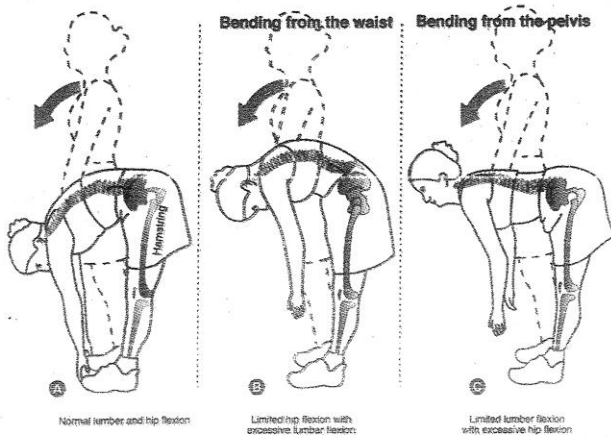


Fig. 8.5: Hip Joint Movement III

Knee Joint

The main function of kneecap in the femur is to slide along with a groove. So, in order to perform better, it has to move well and smoothly within that groove. In case, it is moving on “off track” and it sometimes does then it destabilizes the knee along with grinds away at the cartilage underneath. This results in knee replacement surgery where many people think that its essential cartilages are “gone.” The fact about cartilage is that it can grow back and albeit slowly. In this, the major problem is that if imbalance pulls of muscles on the kneecap and is not corrected timely then it will continue to grind the cartilage down faster than the time it takes for the body to replenish it.

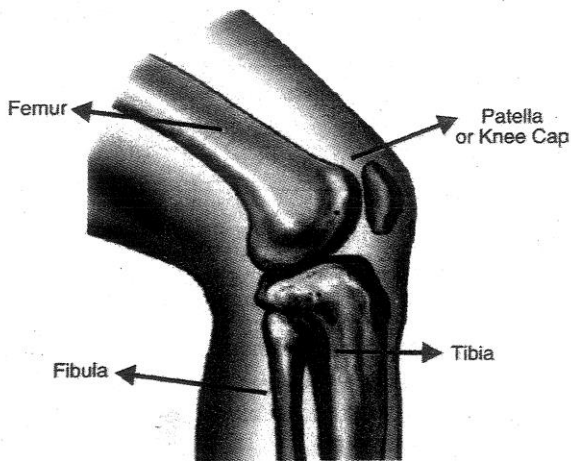


Fig. 8.6: Knee Joint I

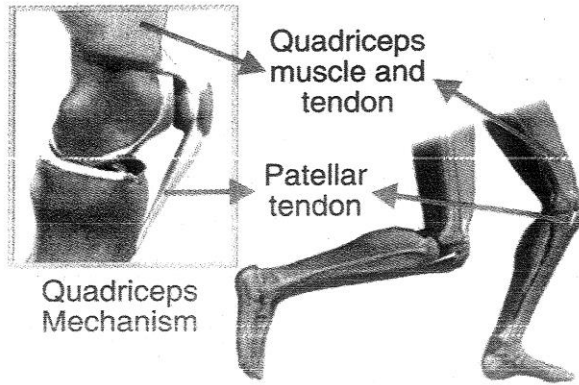


Fig. 8.7: Knee Joint II

The reason why the kneecap goes off track is that it mainly lies in the quadriceps. Quadriceps is the group of 4 muscles which join above the knee into a single quadriceps tendon. Kneecap is attached and surrounded by this tendon. It continues down below the kneecap as the patellar ligament and is attached to the shin bone which is called tibia. The kneecap is passed by the quadriceps tendon just like a rope over a pulley. Like a pulley, kneecap enhances the quadriceps strength so as to straighten the leg by 30%. Kneecap is regarded as having one of the most significant mechanical functions. For leg straightening, both the kneecap and the quadriceps form the “extensor mechanism”. Misalignments arise where the “rope” of quadriceps exerts a sideways pull on the kneecap “pulley” which creates friction in this mechanism.

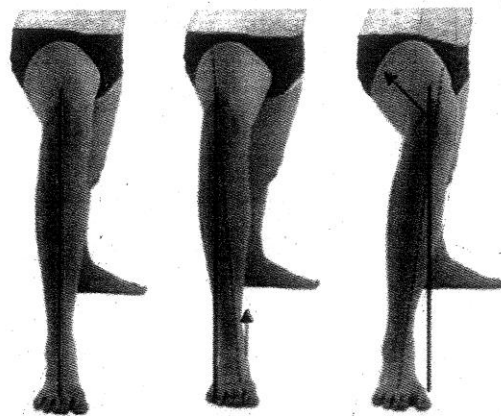


Fig. 8.8: Knee Joint III

Misalignment is get corrected by doing *Hatha* yoga where standing poses are specifically effective. Misalignments in several *asanas* can increase the chance of imbalances which may result in injury. It can sometimes worsen prevailing problems rather than improving them. Good alignment as well as accurate tracking is easy to attain once you are aware of what consideration to be taken care of.

Ankle Joint

There are three bones which are involved while articulating the ankle -

- Tibia
- Fibula
- Talus

The longest bone is tibia and fibula which is found in the lower leg. The bone which is lateral to tibia and relatively thinner is fibula. Both of these bones are tied together by the interosseous membrane and the ligaments. The bone which is in wedge-shaped is talus which fits into the mortise created by the bound tibia as well as fibula. The articulation of tibia, fibula and talus bones is maintained by muscular attachments, multiple ligamentous attachments and a fibrous capsule.

Lateral part of the ankle joint is stabilized by three separate ligaments which are:

- Anterior talofibular
- Calcaneofibular
- Posterior talofibular ligaments

Mainly, the deltoid ligament is a ligament where most of the support derives from a collective group of ligaments.

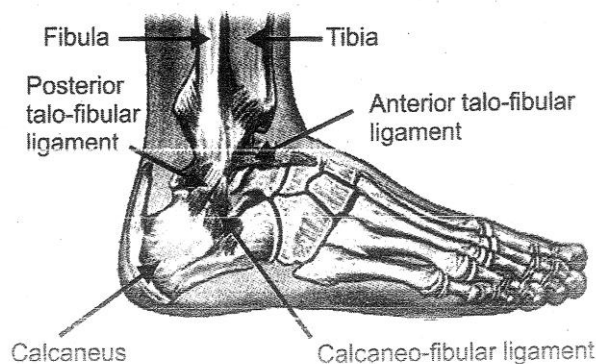


Fig. 8.9: Ankle Joint

8.2 Sukshma Vyayama

Sukshma Vyayama is the system of the physical and breathing exercises which helps to sequentially work out all joints of a body, to warm it up. This system has a strong purifying effect on body energy of a human.

In this world, the oldest element in yoga which is unknown to many yoga schools today is *Sukshma Vyayama* which was propagated, designed and developed initially by *Maharishi Karthikeyaji Maharaj* of the Himalaya. He had great compassion and empathy for humanity and taught Swami Dharendra Brahmachari (1924-1994), who in turn propagated it across the modern world.

However, literature of the *Hatha Yoga* is full of references to the philosophical importance which is attached to the *Mudras* and *Bandhas*. Both in India and abroad, many of the yoga schools in the modern era have ignored comfortably this aspect maybe because of their own unfamiliarity and ignorance of this particular subject. *Mudras* and *Bandhas* in fact are very complex. This can only be practiced by the modern yogis in the original form which is prescribed in the texts of yoga such as *Siva Sambhita* and *Hathayoga Pradeepika*.



Did You Know?

In *Sukshma Vyayama*, every little activity or movement releases the stress. A person can start understanding and knowing the *prana* (energy) movement mechanism within himself/herself.

In the world, the most important and beautiful facet of *Yogic Sukshma Vyayama* is that it is only the system of exercises where every body part such as every muscle, joint and organ is taken into consideration. Here a specific exercise or even a set of exercises which is linked with a particular kind of breathing in a particular kind of position having particular point of mental concentration is recommended.

Therefore, firstly we cover the head which is at the top, then:

1. The neck
2. The shoulders, elbows, wrists, arms, fingers and toes
3. The trunk
4. The hip joint
5. The knees, ankles, foot and toes

Hence, the sequence mentioned above which actually covers from top to toe is something which is very exceptional in the whole world (past, present as well as perhaps the future too).

Thus, by its name *Yogic Sukshma Vyayama* is only applied to the subtle body (*Sukshma Sarira*) which is prescribed to the gross body (*Sthula Sarira*). One of the separate exercises which is successful in gross body is *Sthula Vyayama*.

Sukshma Vyayama is same as other gross exercises like running and swimming, several cultural and physical exercises. However, *Yogic Sukshma Vyayama* is at a different footing. According to

Indian traditional philosophy, it is only meant for those human beings who have the subtle body.

Following are the important components or features of *Sukshma Vyayama* –

1. Breathing
2. Concentration point
3. Actual exercise includes motion (many times yet not always)

Different kinds of breathing include - very deep, very light or even very fast, mostly through nose or at times through mouth. Thus, it is just a brief of *Sukshma Vyayama*.



Notes

There is no preparation or time required for *Sukshma Yoga*. Such less exercise accelerate subtle channels of energy. For example in a session of 7 minutes, a person can feel an extremely palpable change.

The benefits of *sukshma yoga* once again are immense and are direct and immediate. The following are some noteworthy points about *sukshma yoga*.

1. Preferably it must be carried out twice a day that is both morning and evening, or can be done once a day in the morning
2. Can be done either after bath if water is cold or before bath if water is warm
3. Can be done before the intake of any type of food
4. Can be done on a comfortable surface
5. Can be done either indoors or in open air
6. Can develop extraordinary levels of faculties and capabilities both physical and mental of different traits of the personalities.

For those who have maladies and problems of different kind, *Sukshma Vyayama* alone is capable of curing and preventing without taking the help of *kriyas*, *asanas* or *pranayama*. Though we do not prohibit the other aspects, *Sukshma Vyayama* is solely capable of handling the problems that is both preventing and curing, enhances and improves the energy (*vigour*) and strength of different systems and organs in the human body.

Therefore, *Sukshma Vyayama* is nonetheless a minor exercise, which is done from toes to head. Whole series of joint movements is mentioned below.

Sukshma Vyayama from Head to Toe¹

A person must practice joint movements before doing any *asana* so as to make flexibility in body and fit for any *asana*.

Greevasanchalana (Neck Movements)

Aim: To increase the flexibility of neck joints.

Precaution: An individual who is having problems in neck such as spondylitis must avoid bending forward.

Procedure: Following are the steps which need to be followed:

For Greevasanchalana I -

- Stand or sit in a relaxed posture
- Keep your neck straight
- Then gradually without jerk, bend your neck forward as much as you can
- Then come back to your normal and relaxed posture
- Then bend your neck backward
- Then back to normal
- Then to the right and to the left

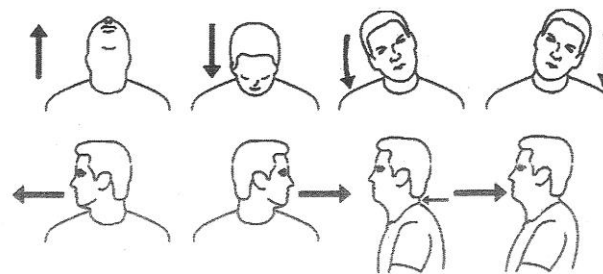


Fig. 8.10: Greevasanchalana I

For Greevasanchalana II -

- Keeping the neck straight
- Gradually without any jerk, clockwise rotate your neck from left shoulder to backwards and then to the right shoulder and to front
- Beginning from your right shoulder, start repeating this in anticlockwise direction

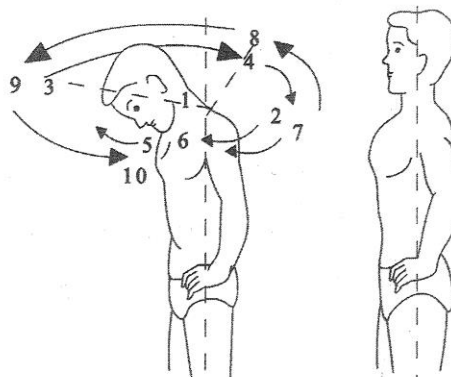


Fig. 8.11: Greevasanchalana II

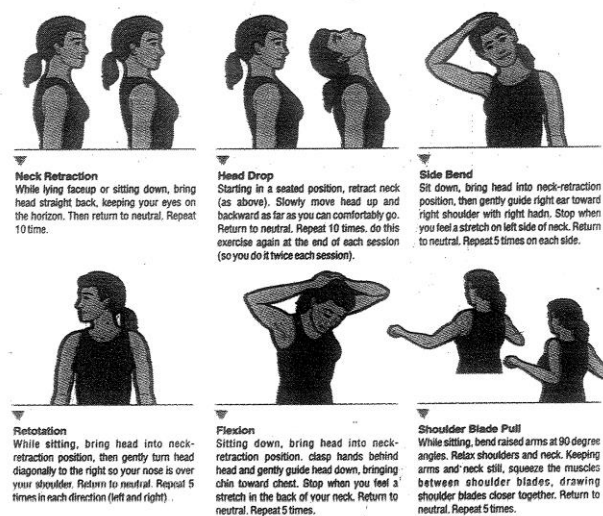


Fig. 8.12: Common Neck and Shoulder Stretches

¹ Part of the information has been sourced from "Yoga Tree: Fundamental Principles of Yoga, Patanjali Yogpeeth, Haridwar".

Neck and Head Movements

1. Head

- ❖ Keep one hand on forehead while other on back.
- ❖ Then five times press your head.

2. Neck

- ❖ Firstly, your fingers must be interlocked. Then, place your fingers on the back of your neck. After that, push your neck in forward direction. Perform this at least five times.
- ❖ Sit straight and take the neck first towards the right shoulder and then towards the left shoulder. Subsequently, bend your neck forward so as to touch your chin to your chest. Then as far as possible bend backwards. Finally, neck should be rotated in both directions.
- ❖ Placing the palms against the respective ears, press the head in between the palms 4-5 times.
- ❖ Interlock the fingers of the hand such that the palms are against the sides of the head, and the fingers are on top of the head. Now, press the head and release the same 4-5 times.

- Then, gradually without any jerk, lift both of your shoulders upwards near your ears as much as you can
- Finally, come back to your normal and relaxed posture

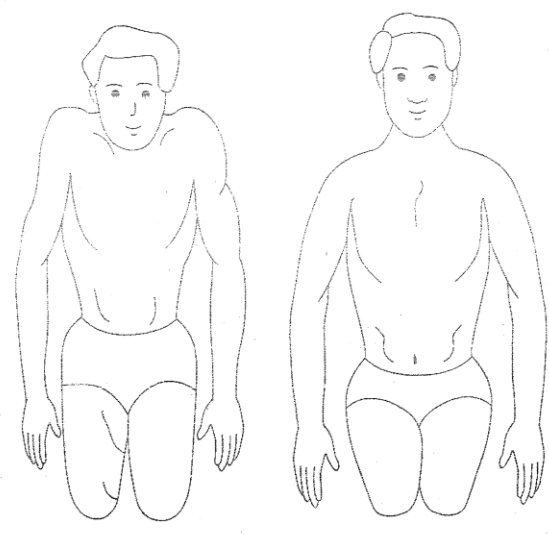


Fig. 8.13: Skandhasanchalana 1

For Skandhasanchalana 2 -

- Firstly, your body must be straight
- Then, fold your hands. Place your left fist on your left shoulder and right fist on your right shoulder.
- Then, bring together your elbows near your chest
- Then, gradually without any jerk, rotate both the arms in an opposite direction that is anticlockwise left arm and clockwise right arm
- Finally, repeat this in an opposite direction that is anticlockwise left arm and clockwise right arm

Skandhasanchalana (Shoulder Movements)

Aim: To increase the flexibility of shoulder joints.

Procedure: Following are the steps which need to be followed:

For Skandhasanchalana 1 -

- Stand or sit in a comfortable and relaxed posture
- Then, straighten your body with arms by side

Benefits: This position is effective for people suffering from back problems.

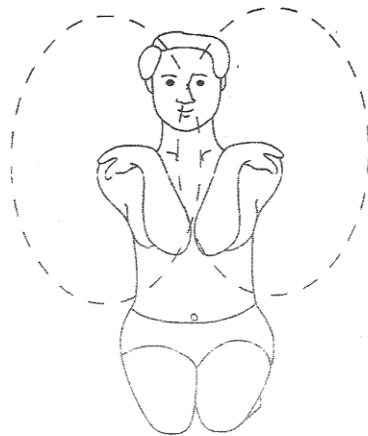


Fig. 8.14: *Skandbasanchalana 2*

Elbow Movements

Place the palms on the shoulders and bring the elbows together in front of the chest. Now, separating the elbows, rotate each elbow separately so that the chest expands and contracts, the shoulder joints are completely exercised, and the neck muscles are equally exercised.

1. Finger movements

- ❖ Make the hands into fist form tightly and release them.
- ❖ Bend and straighten each finger separately at the finger joints.

2. Wrist movements

- ❖ With hands in fist form, thumb inside; rotate each wrist clockwise and anti-clockwise 5-10 times.

3. Elbow movements

- ❖ With both the hands stretched straight in front, slowly bend hands at your elbows and bring the fingertips to the shoulders. Repeat 5-10 times. This can be done keeping the hands separate or together.

4. Hand movements

- ❖ Place the hands straight in front of you with fingers in fist form and slowly rotate the hands keeping the elbows straight. Repeat 5-10 times.

- ❖ Hold the hands straight in front, palms facing downwards and slowly raise the hands up above your head and bring them down. Repeat 5-10 times.
- ❖ Holding the hands on the sides in line with each other, palms facing upwards, fold them at the elbows to bring the fingers touching the shoulders. Repeat 5-10 times.
- ❖ By holding your hands in front and place palms facing each other. Now, breathe in and take the hands away from each other, in the process expanding the chest and taking the hands as much back as possible. Repeat 5-10 times.
- ❖ Interlock the fingers of your hands at the back of your neck, elbows in line with each other. Now, breathe in and twist to the left side, elbows remaining in a straight line. Breathe out and revert to the starting position. Repeat it on the right side. Repeat 5-10 times.

Waist Movements

Stand with legs slightly apart. Place the palms on the respective waist and slowly start rotating the waist in clockwise and anti-clockwise directions. Repeat 5-10 times in each direction.

Knee Movements

Stand comfortably with both the legs placed together. Now place your palms on the respective knees and slowly bring the buttocks slightly down. In this position, slowly rotate the knees together. A slightly different version involves rotation of the knees with the knees going apart in opposite directions and then coming together.

Leg joint movements

- For the toes.
- Stretch one ankle and stretch the foot toes also. Now, bend the toes downwards and then take them upwards. Repeat with both feet.

Ankles and the total leg:

- Press the soles of the feet and release while sitting.
- Then, sit with both of your legs stretching out in front. After that fold your right leg at your knee and put your right ankle on your left thigh. Now hold your toes and the heel of your right leg and rotate your right ankle. Similarly, hold with one hand your right knee and your right ankle with another hand and try to rotate the lower leg from the knee to the ankle. Do similarly with the left leg folded at the knee.
- Sit down and stretch both your legs as wide apart as possible. Now raise both the hands up, upper arms touching the ears. Slowly turn towards the left side and bringing the trunk down, try to hold the left toes with both the hands, the forehead coming as close to the left knee as possible. Similarly, repeat this on the right side.
- This involves rotation of the ankle joints one at a time either standing or sitting. The rotation should be done both, clockwise and anti-clockwise. Further, the ankle joint can also be exercised by simultaneously stretching the toes as far away from the ankle joint as possible and bringing the toes as close to the shin as possible.

1. For the legs:

- ❖ Stand comfortably with your palms at the respective waist sides. Now raise slowly your right leg up as much as you can by keeping your knees straight as well as bring it back. Repeat with the other leg.
- ❖ Stand comfortably with your palms at the respective waist. Now raise the right leg up and keeping the knees straight, rotate the right leg clockwise and anti-clockwise. Repeat the same with the other leg.

2. For the knees:

- ❖ First, sit down on the floor. Together bring the soles of your feet. Hold the toes with both the hands. Now make the movements of the knees up and down like the flapping of the butterfly wings.
- ❖ Stand comfortably with both the legs together. Now place your palms on the respective knees and slowly bring the buttocks slightly down. In this position, slowly rotate the knees together. A slightly different version involves rotation of the knees with the knees going apart in opposite directions and then coming together.
- ❖ The complex of *Sukshma Vyayama* exercises can be performed as a separate self-sufficient practice lasting one and a half or two hours, allowing to work out the whole body, or as a warm-up which will help loosen up muscles and joints before performance of *asanas*, and will make *Hatha Yoga* practice more effective.
- ❖ Uniqueness of *sukshma vyayama* is safety from traumas and its availability for different categories of people both for young and for elderly. Despite simplicity, *sukshma vyayama* is very effective and can be performed by both healthy and sick.



Example

If the condition of health does not allow a person to practice *asanas*, he can start with regular practice of *Sukshma Vyayama*, which can gradually help him to get rid of many illnesses. *Sukshma Vyayama* is an excellent practice for the beginners who will prepare themselves for more difficult practices and also for experienced yogis who can raise efficiency of their practice.

Benefits of regular *Sukshma Vyayama* practice:

- Removes blocks and tightness in muscles, strengthens them
- Increases flexibility of ligaments
- Increases body mobility and makes it flexible
- Develops coordination and equilibrium
- Improves blood circulation and metabolism
- Strengthens immunity
- Increases vital lung capacity
- Increases endurance
- Facilitates cleaning of *nadis*
- Activates energy centres (*chakras*)
- Prepares for practice of more complex *asanas* and *pranayamas*



Most-common Mis-conceptions

Yet another misconception is that women who are pregnant must refrain from practising yoga. There are various *asanas* and each *asana* has specific assistance for a pregnant woman. When a woman is pregnant, yoga helps her in keeping both her mind and body comfortable and relaxed. So, unlike other exercises, it is important for any pregnant woman to take advice from a yoga instructor before doing any form of exercise.

8.3 Shat Kriyas

Shat Kriyas are designed to make human body both healthy and strong. In *Hatha Yoga*, they are also known as the six purification techniques.

- 'Shat' refers to six
- 'Kriya' refers to a technique or a method

Shat kriyas are regarded as the preliminary steps towards advanced practices of meditation, *pranayama* and *asanas*. The ancient Rishis identified the significance of healthy body for each and every

activity whether spiritual or worldly. The main aim of *Hatha Yoga* is to make both mind and body fit for higher practices of the *Raja Yoga* (as explained in the text '*Hatha Yoga Pradeepika*').

There are six techniques in *Shat Kriyas* which while making body strong and clean, improve concentration, eliminate toxins and help in making our body free from diseases. Also, it can improve the movement of *prana* into the organs and the *pranic* meridians or *nadis*. Following are the six techniques: –

- *Dhauti*
- *Basti*
- *Neti*
- *Trataka*
- *Nauli*
- *Kapalbhati*

All of the above techniques must be learned from a knowledgeable and an experienced instructor. Now, we will discuss each of these techniques briefly one by one.

1. ***Dhauti/Kunjali:*** *Vaman dhauti*, *danda dhauti* and *vastra dhauti* are the three popular *dhauti/kunjali kriyas*. It is practiced in early morning with an empty stomach so as to make stomach clean. It is a technique of eliminating undigested food particles from the former day's meal that had resulted in sticking of food to the stomach lining. These cause digestion problems. The person practising *kunjali* must drink warm saline water about 1-1½ litres (In 1 litre of water adds one table spoon of salt approximately). Then the person vomits the whole water out. The best position to vomit is to bend over along with put his/her 3 fingers at the tongue root. The vomit reflux is made by stimulating the tongue root which throws the salt water with the impurities out of the stomach. This is continued until whole water is removed.



Fig. 8.15: *Vaman Dhauti*

In *danda dhauti*, a hollow rubber tube of about 14 inches is used. After consuming about 1-1½ litres of saline water, this rubber tube is slowly inserted into the stomach through the mouth. Then when the practitioner bends slightly forward, the entire water comes out from the rubber tube as if from a tap, thereby cleansing the stomach completely.

In *vastra dhauti*, a cotton cloth around 22 feet long is dipped first in the saline water. This is then carefully swallowed. After that, it is slowly pulled out. In this manner, it cleans the inner linings of both food pipe and stomach. All this must be done under the supervision of an expert.



Fig. 8.16: *Vastra Dhauti*

2. **Basti***: *Basti* basically signifies the cleaning of the bowels (intestines). It nowadays corresponds to enema. While practising it, usually water is drawn in from the anus into the colon by contacting with abdominal muscles. In this process, a rubber tube can also be taken. After that water must be thrown out of the anus, therefore cleaning the colon of particles which may stick for a long period of time in the large intestine of human body. This is known as yogi's "enema" method.

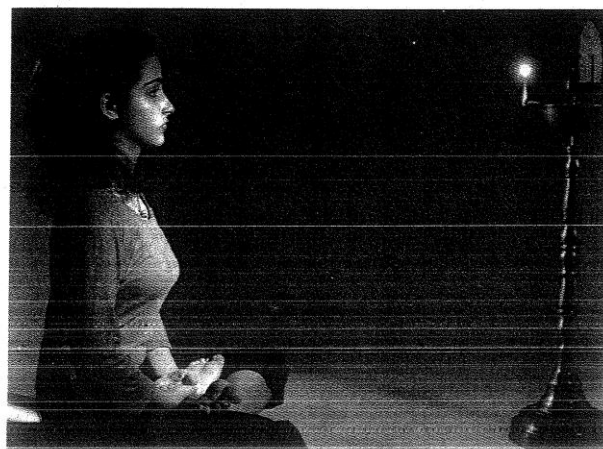
Another method in yoga of cleaning the intestine is known as '*Sankha Prakshalana*' which involves drinking slightly warm saline water around 5 litres. This saline water does not get absorbed by the intestine. It rather pulls out toxins and waste from the intestinal walls and throws it out with the help of the rectum. Today, the most common practice is to perform the smaller version of *Shanka Prakshalana* known as *Laghu Shanka Prakshalana*. In this, only 2 litres of saline water is taken. A person has to go to the toilet many times for example, 3 – 5 times until plain water is released from the rectum. Therefore, this helps in a completely cleaning of the intestinal tract.

3. **Neti**: *Jala neti* and *sutra neti* are the two common forms of *neti* practices. *Jala neti* is the procedure of cleaning the nasal by taking a small pot called *Neti* pot which has a long spout on one side and is filled with warm saline water. Then the spout is put in the left nostril. The person who is practising it bends his head towards right side and allows the water from the left nostril into the nasal cavity, which then released out from the right nostril. Again the pot is filled with the saline water. This procedure is again repeated by putting the spout in the right

nostril and then tilting head towards the left side. This procedure cleans the sinus cavities and the nose. Therefore, this help in relieving sinusitis, allergies, migraine and mild headaches. With the help of a rubber catheter (*sutra*), *Neti* can also be performed which is known as *Sutra Neti*. In this, the catheter is put into one nostril and then it is pulled out from the throat as well as out of the mouth. The nostril passage is cleaned by using gentle motion of to and fro of the catheter tube. Same is repeated with the other nostril. Thus, both methods of *Neti* have the effect of de-sensitizing on the membranes in the nose, hence relieving rhinitis, allergies, and so on. Also, *Neti* stimulates few nerve centers in the upper passage of nasal. *Neti kriya* is performed as a *pranayama* practices preparation. *Jala neti kriya* must also be followed by the *kapalbhati*. It is done so that there is no remnant of saline water in the nasal cavities.

Fig. 8.17: *Jal Neti*Fig. 8.18: *Sutra Neti*

4. **Trataka:** Steady gazing on any object is called *trataka*. The two basic types of *trataka* are *antar trataka* and *bahya trataka*. It eradicates mental disturbances and develops memory power and concentration. It includes gazing steadily at a point. On a steady candle flame, Gazing is performed without blinking of eyes. Such practice helps in steadiness of mind and improves eyesight.

Fig. 8.19: *Trataka*

5. **Nauli*:** The practice of churning the abdominal muscles by taking the 3 bulks of abdominal muscles in a sequence that is right, center and left and giving the impact of the abdomen being churned is called The *Nauli*. Also, rotation of the muscles is practiced both clockwise and anti-clockwise. This helps in removing digestive disorders along with toning up the entire organs in the abdomen. This practice may take a few months for someone to become its master as it is regarded as a difficult practice for the beginners. This procedure includes isolating the abdominal muscles which is also known as the rectus abdominus muscle which is done on both sides of the abdomen and then using it to move and churn the organs internally. Thus, it helps in improving the functions of each and every organ of the abdomen. Four kinds of *Nauli* which should be practiced are *Vama Nauli* that is using left abdominal muscles, *Dakshina Nauli* that is using right abdominal muscles, *Madhya Nauli* that is using both left as well as right abdominal muscles and churning that is rotating of abdominal muscles both clockwise as well as anti-clock wise.

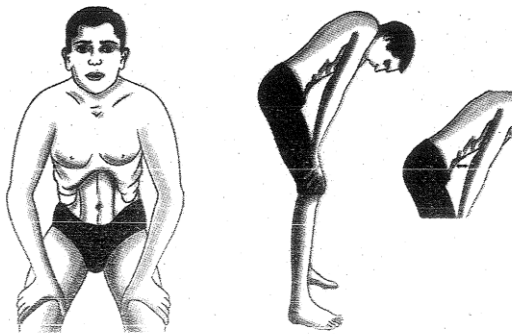


Fig. 8.20: Nauli (Front View) Fig. 8.21: Nauli (Side View)

6. **Kapalbhāti:** *Kapalbhāti* may be technically known as frontal brain cleansing. It involves forceful rapid exhalation. In *kapalbhāti*, we reverse the natural breathing pattern in which inhalation is active and exhalation is passive. However, many take *Kapalbhāti* as a kind of *pranayama*. In the *Hatha Yoga* texts, its classification comes under the *Shat Kriyas*. *Kapalbhāti* is regarded as one of the most powerful process of cleaning where the air is expelled forcefully from the lungs by taking out stagnant CO₂ (carbon dioxide) which is accumulated in the lower parts of the lungs. The exhalation is forceful in *kapalbhāti* whereas the inhalation is passive. Thus, this procedure is repeated for few rounds. *Kapalbhāti* is one of the healing practices for several diseases. *Kapalbhāti* is said to be an effective technique for reducing weight because it results in raising the Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR) in the body.

Though *Kapalbhāti* is considered as a *Kriya* in *Hatha Yoga* texts, it involves breathing and therefore may be considered as a *Pranayama* practice. Incidentally, *Pranayama* is considered as *parama tapa*, i.e., the highest form of purification practice.

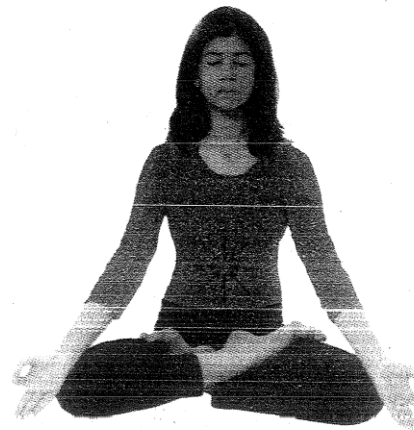


Fig. 8.22: *Kapalbhāti*

The *Shat Kriyas* must be practiced with the help of an experienced and knowledgeable yoga teacher/instructor. Daily practices can aid in maintaining good health. It can also purify the whole body.

Caution

While performing *Kunjaj/Dhanti*, drink water in sitting posture. Lukewarm water with a little salt added to it should be preferred. *Kunjaj* should also not be practised by persons who are suffering from high blood pressure, any kind of heart disease and high blood pressure.

SUMMARY

- The practice of yoga helps in developing the mind and body as a whole, though this is not a substitute for any medicine.
- *Yogasanas* help in maintaining the balance of strengthening and stretching which lengthens ligaments, tendons and muscles.
- Joints are the places in our body where two or more than two bones are connected with each other which help us to swing, turn and bend our head, torso and limbs.

- Bones are connected with each other with the help of joints.
 - All joints in our body are bound together through muscles and ligaments which connect one bone to another bone.
 - Shoulder joint is considered as a ball and socket joint but the socket part of the joint, Glenoid Fossa is not as deep as that of the hip joint.
 - The movable and flexible part of the body is a hip joint.
 - The main function of kneecap in the femur is to slide along with a groove.
 - There are three bones which are involved while articulating the ankle – Tibia, Fibula and Talus.
 - *Sukshma Vyayama* is the system of the physical and breathing exercises which helps to sequentially work out all joints of a body, to warm it up.
 - *Shat kriyas* are regarded as the preliminary steps towards advanced practices of meditation, *pranayama* and *asanas*.
 - There are six techniques in *Shat Kriyas* - *Dhauti*, *Basti*, *Neti*, *Trataka*, *Nauli* and *Kapalbhati*.
- *Sukshma vyayama*: It is a system of the physical practices which helps to sequentially work out all joints of a body, to warm it up. This system has a strong purifying effect on energy body of a human.



SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Short Answer Questions

1. What is the difference between bones, joints and ligaments?
2. Mention *sukshma vyayama* for neck joint.
3. What do you understand by *Greevasanchalana*?
4. Name the six purification practices in *Hatha Yoga*.
5. What is *neti kriya*? Write down its procedure.
6. Name the three popular *dhauti kriyas*.

Long Answer Questions

1. Discuss the significance and benefits of *sukshma vyayama*.
2. Explain some *sukshma vyayama* for shoulder joints.
3. Discuss the significance and benefits of *shat kriyas*.
4. Discuss the benefits of *kapalbhati*.
5. Name the types of *trataka* and discuss the benefits of *trataka*.



KEYWORDS

- **Asana:** A posture in *hatha yoga*.
- **Ligaments:** Ligaments are bundles of connective tissue that connect one bone to an adjacent bone.
- **Shat kriyas:** This includes six purification techniques in *Hatha Yoga* designed to make the body strong and healthy.

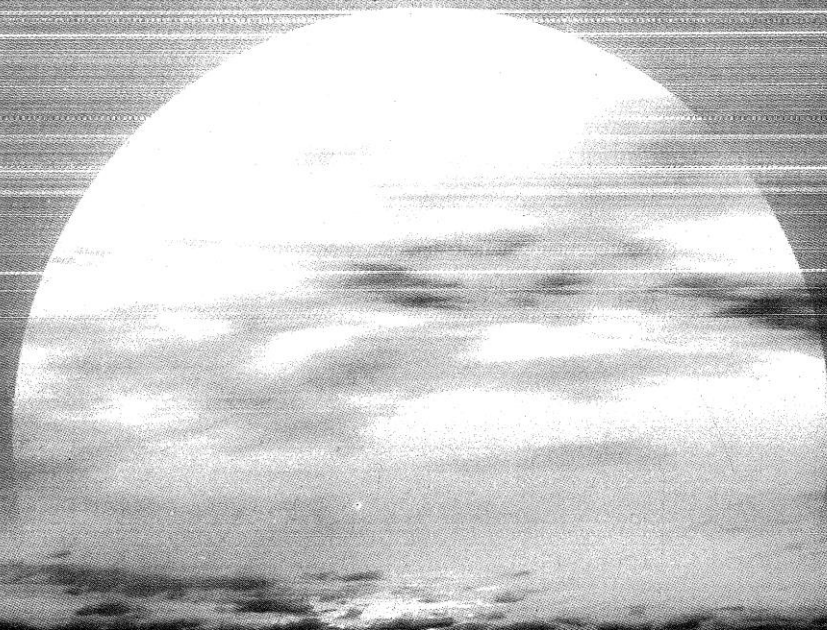


FURTHER READING

Hatha Yoga texts – various authors

CHAPTER 9

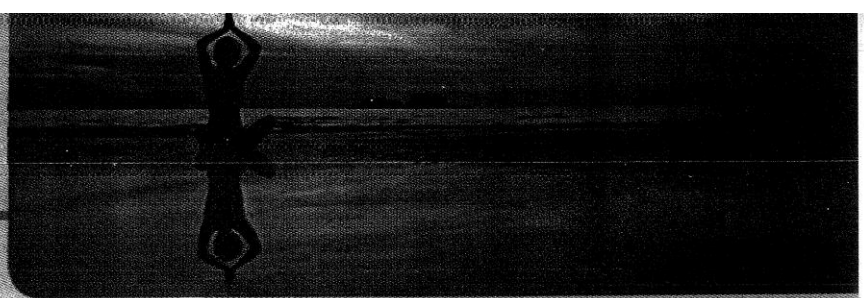
SURYANAMASKAR AND ASANAS





Structure

- Learning Outcomes
- Introduction
 - 9.1 Introduction to Suryanamaskar (The Sun Salutation)
 - 9.2 Technique of Suryanamaskar Practice
 - 9.3 Asanas
 - 9.4 Five Spinal Movements in Yoga
- Summary
- Keywords
- Self-Assessment Questions
- Further Readings



Learning Outcomes

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the esoteric importance of *suryanamaskar*
- Learn the technique of *suryanamaskar* practice
- Grasp the technique of practising yoga *asanas* and identify their benefits
- Understand the different spinal movements related to yoga *asanas*



Introduction

Suryanamaskar and the yoga *asanas* are a blessing bestowed to mankind by the ancient sages who devised practical methods to tame the body and mind for higher spiritual and material pursuits. According to the sages, body and mind are interrelated. An unhealthy body will house an untamed mind. Hence, it makes sense to keep the body healthy so that the mind is fit enough to succeed in all its good undertakings. Yoga *asanas* make that possible in a very scientific manner. Although it is important to learn the *asanas*, the practitioner must know the right technique and contra-indications of *asana* practice as well. This chapter discusses the advantages of doing *Suryanamaskar* and then it goes on to describe different *asanas* and movements of the spine.

9.1 Introduction to Suryanamaskar (The Sun Salutation)

The *Suryanamaskar* or offering salutations to the Sun, is practised in the early morning or evening, facing the Sun. The Sun is the revered and celebrated deity for health and long life. Being the immensely radiant and life-giving force on Earth, the Sun is the representation of the invisible Supreme Power that nurtures and sustains the universe.

A well-balanced growth of the body and mind alone is an essential prerequisite for a human being to live in the world in peace, and fulfil his or her aspirations. According to the sages of ancient India, a sickly body makes it impossible for the mind to reach the higher realms. In other words, a diseased body is a serious obstacle in the path of spiritual development. A healthy and strong body, housing an undeveloped or diseased mind, is not helpful either. A healthy body and a keen mind, with the inner spirit in deep slumber are like a castle of sand prone to destruction by the gushing waves of the sea. What is ideal is to strive for balanced development of the body, mind and spirit to achieve perfection. *Suryanamaskar* is a great tool to realise this goal.

Suryanamaskar is a well-devised mixture of yoga *asanas* and breathing. Before practitioners undertake the practice of advanced yogic postures and breathing exercises in *pranayama*, the spine and body muscles should be flexible enough. The series of postures in *Suryanamaskar* reduce visceral fat, bring flexibility to the spine and limbs, and also enable the practitioner to breathe right.

All in all, there are twelve postures each stretching various ligaments and giving different movements to the vertebral column. The vertebral column is bent forward and backward alternately with deep inhalation and exhalation of breath and a little of retention of breath in some cases. Whenever

the body is bent forward, the contraction of the abdomen and diaphragm, throws out the breath. When the body bends backward, the chest expands and deep inhalation occurs automatically. In this way the body becomes flexible and the lungs begins to function which results in correct breathing. In addition, the mild but effective postures boost circulation of blood. At the same time, the sun's life-giving rays play on the man's body, sucking away the toxins along with perspiration invigorating circulation and imparting life to the human organism – the life which the sun alone can give. The life giving *Suryanamaskar* exercise renders the inflexible muscles and spine of a person devoid of any stiffness.



Most-common Mis-conceptions

It is believed that *Suryanamaskar* should be practiced only during day time facing the sun but the fact is that it is not mandatory to practice *Suryanamaskar* before the morning sun. Busy office-goers and other people can practise it at any time of the day or in the evening with an empty stomach.

Thus, *Suryanamaskar* is a boon for the mankind to attain perfect harmony between the body, mind and spirit.



Did You Know?

In different schools of yoga, *suryanamaskar* is practised differently.

9.2 Technique of Suryanamaskar Practice¹

It is customary, though not mandatory, for every practitioner to offer a prayer to the Divine

¹ The 12 poses mentioned to be verified.

before commencing the *Suryanamaskar* practice; because as the wise ones say, it is the Divine Grace that makes any positive endeavour a success.

Prayer to the Sun

*II Om Suryam Sundaralokanathamamritam
Vedantasaram Sivam,*

*Jnanam Brahmamayam Suresamamalam Lokaikachittam
Svayam;*

*Indradityanaradhipam Suragurum Trailokyachudamanim,
Brahmavisbnusivasvarupahridayam Vande Sada
Bhaskaram.II*

Meaning: I always adore *Surya*, the sun, the beautiful Lord of the World, the Immortal, the auspicious, the absolute knowledge, of the form of *Brahman*, the Lord of the gods, ever-pure, the one true consciousness of the world itself, the Lord of *Indra*, the gods and men, the preceptor of the gods, the crest-jewel of the three worlds, the very heart of the forms of *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva*, the giver of light.

Besides, the practitioner should mentally chant the *mantra* associated with every *asana* of *Suryanamaskar*.

Note: Chanting of mantras is not mandatory in the performance of *Suryanamaskar*.



While practicing *Suryanamaskar*, one's movements should be slow, not jerky. The breathing should be steady and rhythmic. Forceful inhalation, exhalation and retention strains the lungs and should be avoided.

Posture No. 1: If working out in the morning, stand at the edge of your mat facing the sun with folded hands in the prayer pose. Keep the legs together and stand straight. Breathe normally.



Fig. 9.1: *Pranamasana*

Chant: *Om Mitraya Namah* (Prostration to Him who is affectionate to all)

Posture No. 2: Keeping the palms in the prayer position, slowly inhale and raise the arms above the head. Stretch the arms backwards as much as you can. The inhaling and raising of hands should be in unison. As you progress, tilt the pelvic slightly forward. Make sure that you are reaching up with your fingers when you bend backwards. Breathe normally.



Fig. 9.2: *Hastottanasana*

Chant: *Om Ravaye Namah* (Prostration to Him who is the cause for change)

Posture No. 3: Slowly exhale and bend forward till the palms are kept flat in line with the feet. Touch the knees with your head keeping the legs straight without bending. In the beginning, you may bend the knees to bring the palms down to the floor, or you may touch your feet with the finger tips in the final posture. But after practicing for a few days, make a gentle effort to keep the legs straight. Breathe normally.



Fig. 9.3: Padabastanasana

Chant: *Om Suryaya Namah* (Prostration to Him who induces activity)

Posture No. 4: After slow and deep inhalation, push your right leg back in a long backward step and gently place your right knee on the floor. Keep the hands and the left foot firmly on the ground without moving sideways; raise the head, and look upward. The left knee should be between the hands in the final posture. Breathe normally.

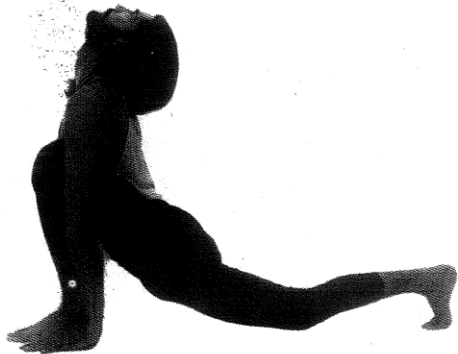


Fig. 9.4: Vama Asvasanalanasana

Chant: *Om Bhanave Namah* (Prostration to Him who diffuses Light)

Posture No. 5: Exhale, lift the hips and the tail bone up, chest downward in an ‘inverted V’ posture. Try as much as possible to keep your heels in contact with the floor. Look towards the navel or your knees in the final posture. Breathe normally.

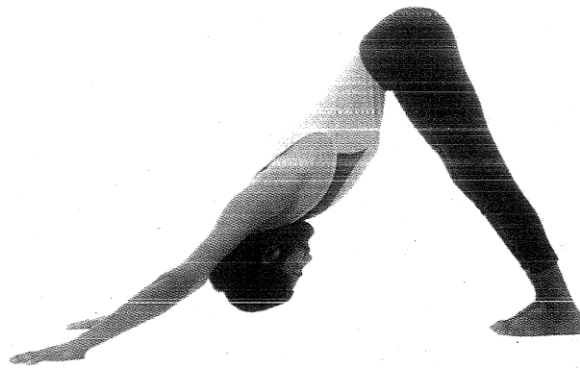


Fig. 9.5: Parvatasana

Chant: *Om Khagaya Namah* (Prostration to Him who moves in the sky)

Posture No. 6: Exhaling slowly, lower the body and let eight limbs of the body—two toes, two knees, two hands, chest and chin—touch the floor. The abdominal region is to be kept slightly raised. Breathe normally.



Fig. 9.6: Sashtangaasana

Chant: *Om Pushne Namah* (Prostration to Him who nourishes all)

Posture No. 7: While inhaling, slowly raise your head and bend the spine backward as much as possible. You may keep the elbow bent for a few days of practice. Look up toward the sky or the ceiling in the final posture. Breathe normally.

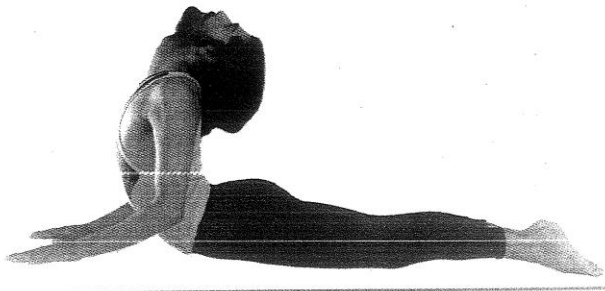


Fig. 9.7: *Bhujangasana*

Chant: Om Hiranyagarbhaya Namah (Prostration to Him who contains everything)

Posture No. 8: Exhale, lift the hips and the tail bone up, chest downward in an 'inverted V' posture. Try as much as possible to keep your heels in contact with the floor. Look towards the navel or your knees in the final posture. Breathe normally.

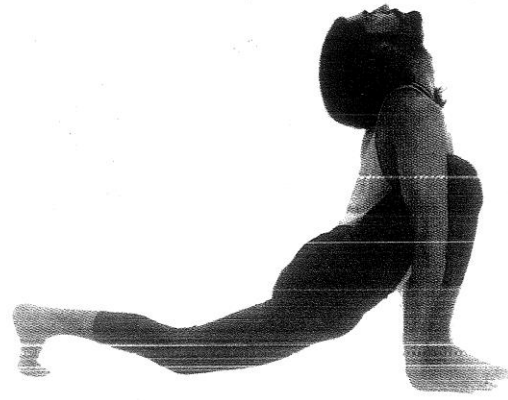


Fig. 9.9: *Dakshina Aivasañcālanāsana*

Chant: Om Adityaya Namah (Prostration to Him who is the son of *Aditi*)

Posture No. 10: Exhale, bring the right leg also forward and come back to Posture No. 3.

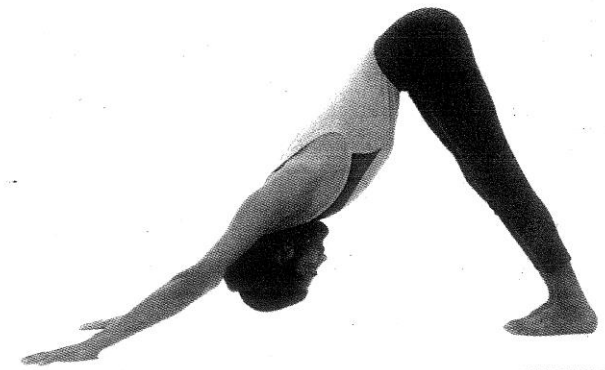


Fig. 9.8: *Parvatasana*

Chant: Om Marichaye Namah (Prostration to Him who possesses rays)

Posture No. 9: Inhale and bring the left foot along the level of the hands. The right foot and knee should touch the ground. Look forward (Same as Posture No. 4).

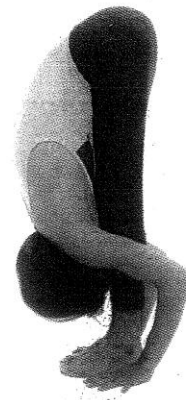


Fig. 9.10: *Padahastanasana*

Chant: Om Savitre Namah (Prostration to Him who produces everything)

Posture No. 11: Inhale and raise the hands overhead and bend backward as in Posture No. 2.



Fig. 9.11: *Hastottanasana*

Chant: *Om Arkaya Namah* (Prostration to Him who is fit to be worshipped)

Posture No. 12: Slowly bring your hands as in the first Posture. Exhale and relax in *Pranamasana*.



Fig. 9.12: *Pranamasana*

Chant: *Om Bhaskaraya Namah* (Prostration to Him who is the cause of lustre).

Notes

Suryanamaskar prepares the body for *asana* practice. Hence, it should be performed by the practitioner before the yoga *asanas*.

These 12 poses repeated twice make one round of *Suryanamaskara*.

After completing *Suryanamaskar* practice, lie down flat on the ground on your back and relax each and every limb one by one from the toes to the crown of the head. This is called *Shavasana* (the corpse pose). If one feels tired or nauseous after a few rounds, the practitioner may stop with that and increase the number gradually (one every day or every two days) while ensuring that the body does not undergo discomfort during the practice. The number may be increased according to each one's capacity. Advanced and physically fit practitioners are capable of doing 108 rounds of *Suryanamaskar* at a stretch without much strain.

Caution

Generally, *Suryanamaskar* should not be practiced by people suffering from acute cases of high blood pressure, hernia, heart diseases, and those who have had a stroke. People with back problems should practice it after consulting a yoga expert. It should not be practiced during fever and inflammation. *Suryanamaskar* should be avoided during menstruation as well.

9.3 Asanas

The practice of yoga *asanas* purifies, heals and strengthens the psycho-physiological structure. It enables grasping the subtle truths about life and the realm beyond. For the ardent spiritual aspirant, *asanas* make the practice of *yama* and *niyama* easier. It prepares you to deal with the modern day lifestyle problems. It sharpens the intellect and enhances the memory. Words cannot describe the glory of yoga *asanas*. It is for the sincere practitioner to realise it for himself or herself. *Asanas* could be classified into easy *asanas* and tough *asanas*.



Did You Know?

Sarvangasana, *Shirshasana* and *Paschimottanasana* are a few of the *asanas* propagated by the seers and yoga *gurus* as the ultimate *asanas* for keeping perfect health. They are more than enough to save your doctor's bills. They offer benefits which no modern exercise can bestow.

Easy Asanas

1. **Matsyasana (The Fish Pose):** *Matsya* in Sanskrit means "fish". By assuming this posture, the practitioner floats like a fish on water. Therefore, this *asana* has been named *Matsyasana*. This *asana* is best performed immediately after *Sarvangasana*.

How to Perform

- ❖ Sit in *Padmasana* on a mat spread on the floor.
- ❖ Slowly move back by resting the elbows on the mat.
- ❖ Arch the back by lifting the chest and trunk and bend the neck backwards.
- ❖ Draw the head back and rest it on its crown.
- ❖ Catch hold of the big toes and gradually increase the arch by pressing further back the position of the crown of the head and pulling the toes by the hands.
- ❖ Focus on the heart *chakra*, the throat *chakra*, the crown *chakra* and the rear end of the spine. Breathe normally.
- ❖ Retain the posture for 20 seconds to one minute. Release the toes by resting on the elbows and rest the back of your head on the ground. Slowly get up and sit in *Padmasana* and release the legs one by one.
- ❖ The duration of the posture may be increased as one progress in practice.

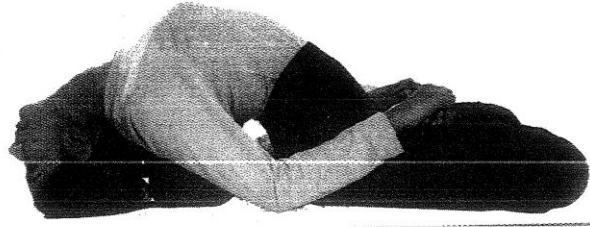


Fig. 9.13: *Matsyasana*

Variation

Beginner practitioners can stretch their legs and keep their palms under the hips and practise this *asana*, in case they are unable to sit *Padmasana*. The palms may also rest on the thighs during practice.

Benefits

- ❖ Stretches the chest and dorsal portion of the spine is expanded well and breathing becomes better.
- ❖ Removes spasms from bronchial tubes.
- ❖ Helps the patients who are suffering from asthma.
- ❖ Tones the thyroid, parathyroid, pituitary and pineal glands.
- ❖ Improves flexibility of pelvic joints.

Contraindications: People with high or low blood pressure can avoid this *asana*. Migraine and insomnia patients should also refrain from doing the Fish Pose. Those who have had serious lower-back or neck injuries, cervical problems, etc. are strongly recommended not to practice this pose.

2. **Paschimottanasana (Seated Forward Bend):** *Paschimottanasana* is so called because *paschim* refers to the back and *uttana* means stretching. Hence, *Paschimottanasana* means stretching of the back. There are many benefits of this posture; the main and most obvious one is to provide a complete stretch of the entire backside of the body from the back of the head through the heels.

How to Perform

- ❖ Sit on the mat with legs stretched out in front of you.
- ❖ Keep the spine erect and legs flexed toward you.
- ❖ Catch the toes with the thumb, index and middle fingers and bend the upper body forward.
- ❖ Exhale and slowly bend to touch your forehead to your knees; try bending as much as possible.
- ❖ Draw your belly button towards your spine as your exhale and bend.
- ❖ Stretch the arms out in front of you. Hold the pose for 5-10 seconds to begin with and gradually increase the time duration.
- ❖ Inhaling, come back up to the sitting position.
- ❖ Breathe out and lower the arms.



Fig. 9.14: *Paschimottasana*

Variation

Beginners can keep the face between the knees while bending forward.

If you find it tough to do the full *Paschimottasana*, perform the partial pose with right leg and right hand and then with the left leg and left hand.

Benefits

- ❖ Helpful for weight-watchers in reducing abdominal fat.

- ❖ Cures enlargement of the spleen and liver.
- ❖ Stimulates endocrine glands, kidneys, liver and pancreas.
- ❖ Increases the peristalsis of the bowels.
- ❖ Diabetes and piles are cured, and the back muscles are rendered flexible.
- ❖ It is said that in *Paschimottasana*, the *anahat nadu* can be heard by an expert practitioner.

3. ***Trikonasana* (The Triangle Pose):** The Sanskrit meaning of the term *Trikona* is triangle. When *Trikonasana* is demonstrated, the body appears like a triangle. It is a very easy *asana* and can be done by novice practitioners as well.

How to Perform

- ❖ Stand straight keeping your legs wide apart as seen in the picture (Fig. 9.15).
- ❖ Now stretch your arms wide horizontally in line with the shoulders and parallel to the ground.
- ❖ Slowly, bend toward your right keeping the left knee straight.
- ❖ Touch the right toe with the fingers of the right hand.
- ❖ Bend the neck slightly to the right. It is alright if it touches the right shoulder.
- ❖ Now raise the left arm toward the sky.
- ❖ Fix your gaze upward.
- ❖ Remain in this pose for a minute. Breathe slowly.
- ❖ Come back to the original position and repeat with the other side.
- ❖ Do this *asana* for 3-6 times on each side.

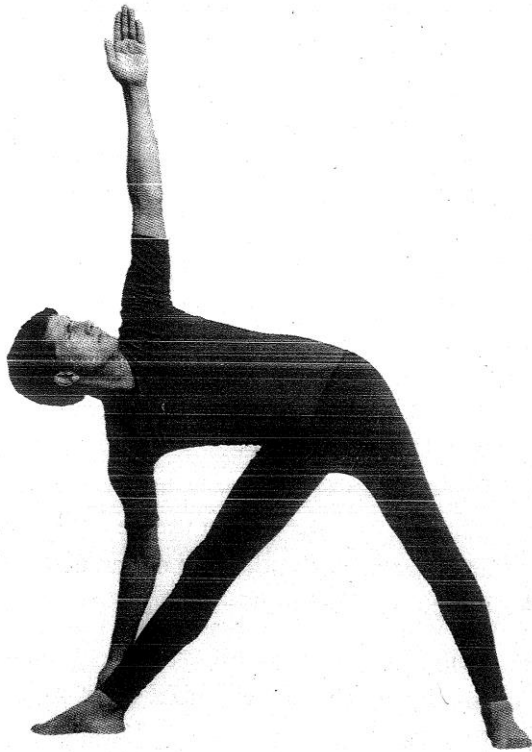


Fig. 9.15: *Trikonasana*

Benefits

- ❖ Renders the *Meru Danda* or the spine flexible.
- ❖ Reduces anxiety, stress, back pain and sciatica.
- ❖ Increases peristalsis of the bowels and improves appetite.
- ❖ Stretches and opens the hips, groins, hamstrings, and calves; shoulders, chest, and spine

Contraindications: This pose should not be practiced by those suffering from migraine, diarrhoea, low or high blood pressure, or neck and back injuries. Persons with high BP can practice this pose without raising the head toward the sky.

4. ***Bhujangasana* (The Cobra Pose):** The Sanskrit meaning of *Bhujang* is “cobra.” When this posture is demonstrated, the raised trunk

and head of the practitioner resembles the raised hood of a cobra. Hence, this posture is known by the name of *Bhujangasana*.

How to Perform

- ❖ On a mat, lie flat on your stomach.
- ❖ Relax your muscles.
- ❖ Place the palms firmly on the ground just below the shoulders.
- ❖ Raise your elbows pointing them towards the sky.
- ❖ Now inhale and using the strength of your arms and the back, raise the head and the upper body just like a cobra.
- ❖ Let the body from the navel downwards to the toes touch the ground.
- ❖ Stretch the spine backward vertebra by vertebra. Tilt your head backward and look toward the sky.
- ❖ Hold this pose for 5- 10 seconds.
- ❖ Now exhale and slowly return to the original position. Relax.
- ❖ Repeat this process 3-4 times, if you are a beginner. Advanced practitioners can repeat it for 6-7 times.



Fig. 9.16: *Bhujangasana*

Points to Remember

- ❖ It is important to keep the shoulders relaxed while holding the pose. Beginners may keep the elbows bent slightly. Advancing practitioners can keep the arms straight to deepen their practice.
- ❖ Keep your feet close to each other. Breathe and smile to reap in the full benefits of the *asana*.

Benefits

- ❖ Relieves hunchback, back pain, lumbago, myalgia of the back and constipation. Makes the back spinal column flexible like the snake.
- ❖ Awakens the *Kundalini Shakti* that is sleeping dormant in the *Muladhara Chakra* or the Root *Chakra*.
- ❖ Improves the appetite by rousing the digestive fire.
- ❖ Helps women in toning the ovaries and the uterus.
- ❖ Cures amenorrhoea (absence of menstruation), dysmenorrhoea (painful or difficult menstruation), leucorrhoea (white discharge), and various other utero-ovarian diseases.
- ❖ Makes delivery easy and normal in women.

Contraindications

- ❖ *Bhujangasana* should not be practiced by pregnant women or those with fractured ribs or wrists.
 - ❖ People recovering from abdominal surgeries must avoid practicing this posture till full recovery.
5. ***Shalabhasana* (The Locust Pose):** *Shalabh* in *Sanskrit* means “locust.” When this *asana* is demonstrated, the body looks like a

locust. Hence, we call it *Shalabhasana* or the locust pose.

How to Perform

- ❖ Lie on the mat on your stomach.
- ❖ Make sure you rest your chin on the ground.
- ❖ Your toes should be in contact with the floor.
- ❖ Now place your hands on the ground below your inner thighs.
- ❖ Now lift up your head a little. (You can inhale or breathe in and then lift the legs. This pose can also be maintained by holding the breath.)
- ❖ Using the strength of your arms, raise the legs in the air and hold them in that position.
- ❖ Rest your body on your abdomen.
- ❖ Hold for 5 seconds and then bring down the legs to the mat.
- ❖ This completes one round of *Shalabhasana*. You can repeat it 6-7 times.



Fig. 9.17: *Shalabhasana*

Benefits

- ❖ Tones the muscles of the abdomen, thighs and legs.
- ❖ Clears the intestines of the accumulated decaying faecal matter.
- ❖ Works on the abdomen and the back to make them stronger.

- ❖ Burns visceral fat, i.e. fat surrounding the liver, pancreas, kidneys, etc.
- ❖ Cures sluggishness of liver and hunchback.
- ❖ Removes lumbago and dyspepsia.
- ❖ Improves appetite.

Contraindications: Pregnant women and those recovering from abdominal surgery must avoid performing this *asana*.

6. **Dhanurasana (The Bow Pose):** *Dhanurasana* has been named so because in Sanskrit, *Dhanur* stands for “bow”. This posture makes a wonderful combination with *Bhujangasana* and *Shalabhasana*. These three *asanas* beat sloth and inertia like nothing else. They can be performed as counter poses after *Halasana* and *Pashchimottanasana* (forward-bending poses).

How to Perform

- ❖ Lie on your stomach with the face downward.
- ❖ Keep the arms at the sides.
- ❖ Gently fold your legs so as to bring them towards the hips.
- ❖ Raise your hands backwards and catch hold of the ankles with the hands (and not the toes).
- ❖ Raise the head and chest.
- ❖ Now try to stretch the upper body and the legs as much as possible.
- ❖ See to it that the body weight is on the abdomen, not the pubic bone.
- ❖ Keep the arms and forelegs straight.
- ❖ Make sure your body forms a convex arch in the final position.
- ❖ Breathe normally and repeat this process 5 or 6 times.



Fig. 9.18: *Dhanurasana*

Benefits

- ❖ Benefits the abdominal region by curing indigestion and other gastro-intestinal diseases.
- ❖ Cures chronic constipation, dyspepsia and sluggishness of liver.
- ❖ Removes hunchback, rheumatism of legs, knee-joints and hands.
- ❖ Reduces body fat, energises digestion.
- ❖ Alleviates congestion of blood in the abdominal viscera and tones them.
- ❖ Prevents premature ageing of bones.
- ❖ Relieve menstrual disorders.

Contraindications: *Dhanurasana* should not be practiced by persons suffering from high or low blood pressure, hernia, neck injury, pain in the lower back, headache, migraine or a recent abdominal surgery.

Women should avoid practicing this posture during pregnancy.

7. **Ardh Matsyendrasana (Half Spinal Twist Pose)*:** In Sanskrit, *Ardha* implies “half.” This pose has been named after the great *Rishi Matsyendra*, who first taught this *asana* to the students of *Hatha Yoga*. *Matsyendra* was a blessed disciple of *Lord Shiva*. *Ardha Matsyendrasana* is half as compared to

Matsyendrasana. This pose bends and twists the spine from side to side, and thus renders it perfectly flexible.

How to Perform

- ❖ Sit up with the legs stretched out before you in front of the mat, keeping the feet together and the spine erect.
- ❖ Now bend the left leg and place the heel of the left foot beside the right hip (optionally, beginners can keep the left leg straight).
- ❖ Take the right leg over the left knee.
- ❖ Place the left hand on the right knee and the right hand behind you.
- ❖ Twist the waist, shoulders and neck in this sequence to the right and look over the right shoulder.
- ❖ Keep the spine erect.
- ❖ Hold and continue with gentle long breaths in and out.
- ❖ Breathing out, release the right hand first (the hand behind you), release the waist, then chest. Finally, the neck and sit up relaxed yet straight.
- ❖ Repeat to the other side.
- ❖ Breath out, come back to the front and relax.



Fig. 9.19: *Ardh Matsyendrasana*

* Denotes that the content is specific to level 2 yoga aspirants.

Benefits

- ❖ Cures lumbago and other muscular pains of the back.
- ❖ Improves the elasticity of the spine.
- ❖ Massages the muscles and organs of the abdominal region.
- ❖ Benefits those suffering from constipation and dyspepsia.
- ❖ Tones the nervous system and the vertebrae of the spinal column.

8. ***Padahastasana* (Standing Forward Bend):** In Sanskrit, *Pada* means “feet” and *Hasta* means “hands”. Since this *asana* is demonstrated by touching the feet with the hands, it is known as *Padahastasana*. It is similar to *Pashchimottasana*. The only difference between the two *asanas* is that *Padahastasana* is performed while standing.

How to Perform

- ❖ Stand straight with your hands down close to the body.
- ❖ Keep the heels close and toes apart.
- ❖ Now inhale and raise the hands above the head.
- ❖ Slowly, exhale and bend the body downwards bringing the hands to catch hold of the toes.
- ❖ Make sure you draw the belly in as you exhale while bending.
- ❖ Keep the knees stiff and straight.
- ❖ Keep the forehead between the knees.
- ❖ Try using the strength of your trunk to get closer to the knees.
- ❖ Hold the pose for 2 to 10 seconds.
- ❖ Come back slowly to position one.

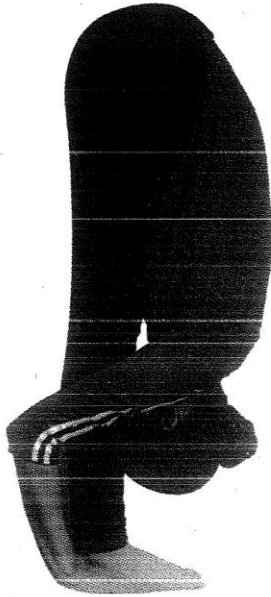


Fig. 9.20: Padabastasana

Variation

People with inflexible bodies or fat people may find it difficult to touch the toes with their hands due to abdominal fat and stiffness of muscles. In such cases, bend the knees slightly and then catch hold of the toes. However, straighten the knees after catching hold of your toes.

Benefits

- ❖ Dissipates *Tamas* or laziness.
- ❖ Eliminates excess fat around the abdomen and thighs.
- ❖ Purifies and strengthens *Sushumna Nadi*.
- ❖ Lengthens the legs after three months of practice.

Contraindications: Forward-bending is strictly prohibited for people with lower back problems.

9. **Vajrasana (The Adamantine Pose):** *Vajra* in Sanskrit means “diamond.” Due to the regular practice of this *asana*, the practitioner

attains a strong body. The spine or *Meru Danda* becomes firm and strong as a diamond. Hence, this posture is known by the name of *Vajrasana*.

How to Perform

- ❖ Sit on a mat resting the hips on the heels and the thighs on the calf muscles.
- ❖ Keep your hands on your knees and keep the head straight.
- ❖ The part from the toe to the knee should touch the ground.
- ❖ The whole burden of the body is put on the knees and ankles.
- ❖ Beginners may feel slight pain in the knees and ankle joint. No need to worry as it is a passing pain. Massage the paining parts and the knee and ankle joints with the hands.
- ❖ Keep the knees quite close.
- ❖ Sit like this, keeping the trunk, neck and head in one straight line.
- ❖ This is the most common *asana*.
- ❖ You may sit in this *asana* for as long as you want, especially after dinner for better digestion of food.



Fig. 9.21: Vajrasana

Benefits

The health of knee joint depends on the secretion of Synovial Fluid. *Vajrasana* boosts blood circulation in the knees and maintains its secretion even in old age.

- ❖ Aids digestion of food and removes flatulence.
- ❖ Benefits the dyspeptics.
- ❖ Strengthens the nerves and muscles of the legs and thighs and heals sciatica.
- ❖ Myalgia in the knees, legs, toes and thighs disappears.



Did You Know?

Vajrasana is the only pose which is prescribed to be performed even after eating a meal.

Contraindications: People with knee problems are strictly prohibited from doing *Vajrasana*.

Variations

Keep the heels a bit separate. The anus and the hips are kept between the two heels and the legs by the side of the two thighs. Now perform the following poses:

10. ***Kurmasana* (Tortoise Pose):** Press the buttocks firmly with the soles. Keep the head, neck and trunk erect. Keep the hands on your hips or on the knees or on the sides of the chest.

Ardha Kurmasana

Sit in the same *Vajrasana* and stretch your hands to your face level, palms facing together and slowly bend and lie down on the ground on the support of your hands.

These *asanas* heal the sprains and pain of muscles and joints.

11. ***Garudasana* (The Eagle Pose):** The Sanskrit word *Garud* translates into “eagle.” When this pose is demonstrated, the body looks like that of an eagle. Hence, this *asana* is popular by the name of *Garudasana*.

How to Perform

- ❖ Stand up straight.
- ❖ Now raise the left leg and take it round the right leg from the front of the body like a creeper.
- ❖ The left thigh should cross the right thigh.
- ❖ Now, follow the same procedure with your arms as well.
- ❖ When you stand as instructed above, steadily bend and try to keep the toe of left foot facing downward.
- ❖ Hold the pose for a few seconds and return to the original position.
- ❖ Repeat while standing on the other leg.



Fig. 9.22: *Garudasana*

Variation

Advancing practitioners can deepen their practice by looking at the tips of your thumbs once you are in the full pose. Typically the thumb tips point a little bit off to the side of the upper arm. Press the mound of the upper thumb into the bottom hand and turn the thumb tips so they point directly at the tip of your nose.

Benefits

- ❖ Strengthens the nerves and bones of the legs and hands.
- ❖ Cures sciatica, rheumatism of the legs and hands.
- ❖ Nourishes and develops the bones of the vertebral column.
- ❖ Cures hydrocele and swelling of the testicles.
- ❖ Builds up the calf muscles.

Contraindications: People with recent knee, ankle or elbow injury should avoid practicing this pose.

12. **Baddha Padmasana (The Locked-up Lotus Pose):** In Sanskrit, the word *Baddha* means “locked-up” and *Padmasana* “lotus pose.” It is a type of *Padmasana*. This *asana* must be practiced daily for a period of six months to derive full benefits.

How to Perform

- ❖ Sit in *Padmasana*² with legs crossed.
- ❖ The heels should touch the lower abdomen.
- ❖ Then take your right hand behind the back.
- ❖ Catch hold of the right leg with the forefinger and middle finger of the right hand.

- ❖ Then take your left hand behind the back and catch hold of the toe of the left leg with the forefinger and middle finger of the left hand.
- ❖ Now press the chin against the chest. Look at the tip of the nose. Breathe slowly.
- ❖ Hold this position for as long as you can. The longer, the better.

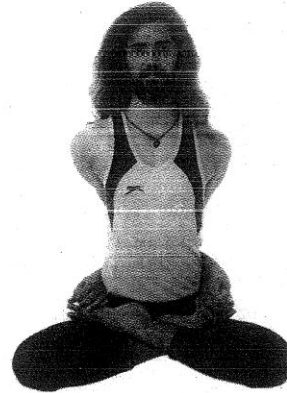


Fig. 9.23: *Baddha Padmasana*

Variation

People who find it tough to hold both the toes at the same time can practise *Ardha Baddha Padmasana* (half-pose) to start with for 1 month. As they progress, they can practice *PurnaBaddha Padmasana* (full-pose). Practise *Ardha Baddha Padmasana* on the right as well as the left side.

Benefits

- ❖ Cures chronic diseases of the stomach, liver, spleen and intestines.
- ❖ Improves health, vigour and vitality.
- ❖ Removes hunchback.
- ❖ Purifies nerves of the waist, hip, feet and legs.
- ❖ Stimulates the Solar Plexus or the *Manipura Chakra* located behind the navel and energises the practitioner.

² *Padmasana*: Refer to Chapter 10.

- ❖ Helps in maintaining *Brahmacharya* among striving yogis.

13. **Shavasana (The Corpse Pose):** *Shavasana* has been named after the Sanskrit word *Shava* or “corpse.” It is performed at the end of *asana* practice simply for unwinding and relaxation.

How to Perform

- ❖ Lie down on the mat.
- ❖ Keep the hands on the ground by the sides with palms facing upward.
- ❖ Stretch the legs straight and keep them close to each other.
- ❖ Close the eyes. Breathe slowly.
- ❖ Relax all muscles, nerves, joints, etc.
- ❖ Start the relaxation process from toes to head.
- ❖ Imagine tiredness getting removed from every part of your body.
- ❖ You may repeat “OM” or any holy mantra or remember God.
- ❖ Do not sleep.
- ❖ Continue being in this state for 10 minutes and then finish your practice.

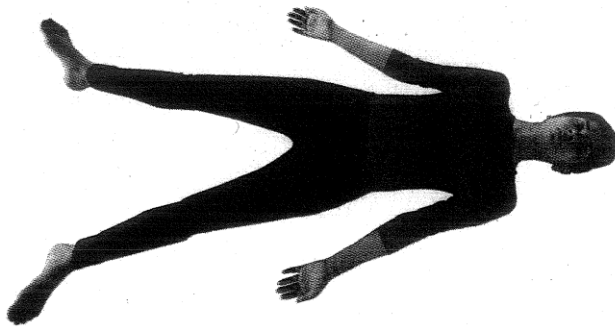


Fig. 9.24: *Shavasana*

Benefits

- ❖ Gives comfort to the mind and body.
- ❖ Cools down the body.

- ❖ Relaxes the muscles, joints and organs after a strenuous practice.

Tough Asanas

1. **Shirshasana (The Headstand):** The Headstand is called the King of *Asanas*. It is a cure for almost all physical maladies. The name *Shirshasana* has been derived from the Sanskrit word *Shirsha* meaning “head” and *Asana* meaning “posture.”

How to Perform

- ❖ On a mat, sit on the two knees.
- ❖ Interlock the fingers and place the finger-lock on the ground up till the elbow.
- ❖ Now, keep the top of your head on this finger-lock or between the two hands.
- ❖ Slowly raise the legs till they become vertical.
- ❖ Retain this pose for five seconds in the beginning. Increase the time duration gradually to 15-30 minutes.
- ❖ After holding the pose, slowly bring the legs down.

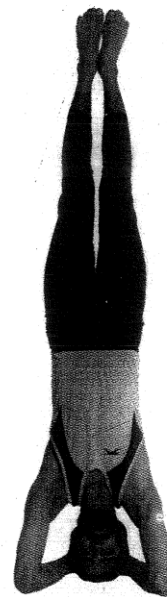


Fig. 9.25: *Shirshasana*

Benefits

- ❖ Illumines the psychic faculties and awakens the *Kundalini Shakti*.
- ❖ Removes intestinal disease and increases mental power.
- ❖ Purifies blood and works as a wonderful nerve tonic.
- ❖ It improves vision, concentration and memory.
- ❖ Cures disease of the eye, nose, head, throat, stomach, genito-urinary system, liver, spleen, lungs, renal colic, deafness, gonorrhoea, diabetes, piles, asthma consumption, syphilis, etc.
- ❖ Stimulates the digestive fire also known as *Jatharagni*.
- ❖ Slows down ageing process.
- ❖ Eases out uterine and ovarine troubles and removes sterility.

Contraindications: Practitioners suffering from abnormal blood pressure, glaucoma, detached retina, chronic thyroid disorders, neck or shoulder injuries, must consult a trained yoga expert before performing the shoulder stand.

Notes

- *Shirshasana* must be practised under the supervision of a trained teacher only.
- While performing this *asana*, avoid jerky and hasty movements.
- Ask someone to assist you in performing this pose or take the support of a wall initially.
- Breathe through the nose and not through the mouth.
- People who are good at balancing can easily do this *asana*.
- It is important to practise this *asana* for 2-3 months at a stretch to master it.

2. ***Sarvangasana* (The Shoulder Stand):** The word *Sarva Anga* in Sanskrit means “the whole body.” Since, this *asana* works on the entire body, it is named *Sarvanga asana*. This is an important *asana* and a highly beneficial one. The Shoulder Stand is also known as the Queen of *Asanas*.

How to Perform

- ❖ Lie down on the yoga mat on your back.
- ❖ Slowly raise the legs lifting the trunk, hips and legs vertically.
- ❖ Support the back with two hands.
- ❖ Rest the elbows on the ground. Press the chin against the chest and form a chin-lock firmly known as *Jalandhara Bandha*.
- ❖ Allow the back, shoulder portion and neck to touch the ground closely. Do not allow the body to shake from side to side.
- ❖ Keep the legs straight.

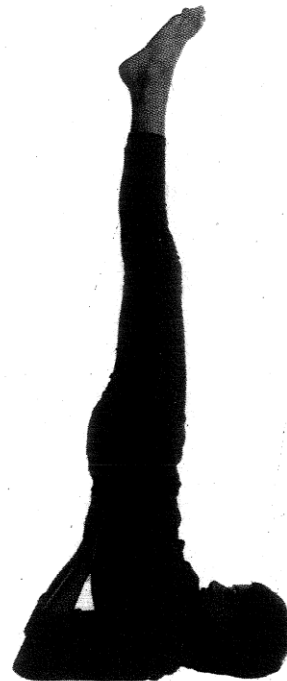



Fig. 9.26: *Sarvangasana*

- ❖ Hold this posture for 30-60 seconds in the beginning and gradually increase the duration to 30 minutes.
- ❖ Breathe normally in the final position.
- ❖ Once you finish, bring the legs down very slowly in a graceful manner, without any jerks.

 **Notes**

This *asana* can be done every morning and evening. It should immediately be followed by *Matkyasana* (the fish posture). This will relieve pains in the back part of the neck and enhance the benefits of *Sarvangasana*.

Benefits

- ❖ Stimulates the thyroid and parathyroid glands and normalises their functions.
- ❖ Preserves the youth by keeping the spine elastic.
- ❖ Helps the yogis who strive to achieve sexual continence.
- ❖ Improves circulation of blood to the brain.
- ❖ Stretches the heart muscles by returning more venous blood to the heart.
- ❖ Cures constipation, indigestion, diabetes, visceroptosis, varicose veins and menstrual disorders.
- ❖ Awakens *Kundalini* and stimulates the digestive fire.
- ❖ Helps in achieving perfect health.

Contraindications: Practitioners suffering from abnormal blood pressure, glaucoma, detached retina, chronic thyroid disorders, neck or shoulder injuries must consult a trained yoga expert before performing the shoulder stand.

3. **Halasana (The Plough Pose):** In Sanskrit, *Hala* means plough; hence, this pose is called *Halasana*.

How to Perform

- ❖ On the mat, lie flat on your back.
- ❖ Keep the hands at the side of your body with palms facing downward.
- ❖ Keep your feet together and lift them very slowly without bending the legs.
- ❖ Do not raise the arms or the trunk.
- ❖ Draw your legs up to make a 90 degree angle.
- ❖ Now slowly lower the legs to bring them on the ground above the head; try touching your toes to the ground.
- ❖ The knees should be kept straight while holding the posture.
- ❖ The legs and thighs must be in one straight line.
- ❖ Press the chin against the chest.
- ❖ Breathe slowly through the nose.
- ❖ Hold this position for 5-10 seconds.
- ❖ After finishing the practice, slowly bring your legs down to the mat.

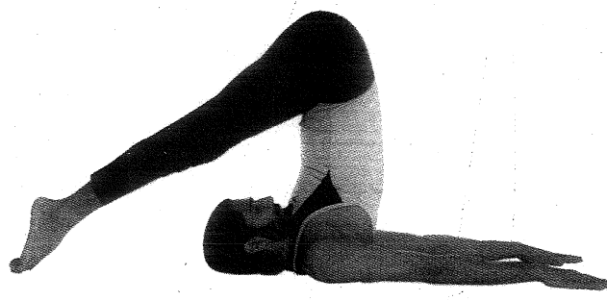


Fig. 9.27: *Halasana*

Variations

- ❖ Practitioners who find it tough to lift their waist can practice placing pillows under it.

- ❖ Those who are unable to touch the floor with their toes can use a chair or a stool to place their big toes on it for a few days of practice.
- ❖ Advancing practitioners can slowly bring their hands to catch hold of the toes.
- ❖ Beginners may feel pain in the lower back while practicing *Halasana*. However, they need not worry as the pain will go away after a few days of practice.

Benefits

- ❖ Prevents degeneration of bones, thus promoting longevity and youth.
- ❖ Nourishes spinal nerves, bones and muscles of the back due to the flow of blood.
- ❖ Treats *myalgia* (muscular rheumatism), lumbago, sprain and neuralgia.
- ❖ Renders the vertebral column or *Meru Danda* soft and elastic.
- ❖ Keeps the practitioners agile, alert and nimble.
- ❖ Tones the abdominal, rectal and thigh muscles.
- ❖ Cures obesity, chronic constipation, congestion, spleen and enlargement of liver.

Contraindications: People suffering from lumbago, neck pain, spondylitis and high blood pressure are not advised to practice *Halasana*.

4. ***Chakrasana* (The Wheel Pose):** *Chakra* stands for “wheel” in Sanskrit. This posture has been named *Chakrasana* because the human body appears like a wheel or a semi-circle in the final position of this *asana*. Young girls and boys with a flexible spine can easily demonstrate this posture.

How to Perform

- ❖ Lie down on the back.
- ❖ Keep the feet and palms of the hand firmly on the ground.
- ❖ The palms must be kept by the side of your head and the elbows pointing upward.
- ❖ Now walk your feet closer to your hips and raise your body off the ground by using the strength of your arms, thereby making a curve of your spine.
- ❖ Hold the posture for 5 seconds to begin with.
- ❖ Now, carefully and slowly bring your body down to the floor without any jerk.
- ❖ First release the hips, followed by the lower back, the upper back, the neck and finally the head.
- ❖ This posture can be practised for 2-3 times in a session.

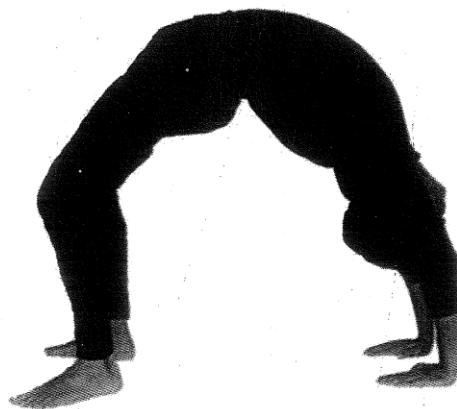


Fig. 9.28: *Chakrasana*

Benefits

- ❖ Uplifts the mood of the practitioner.
- ❖ Prepares the practitioner for active work.
- ❖ The muscles of the back and abdomen become strong.

- ❖ Abdominal organs including the digestive, excretory and the reproductive organs, get toned.
- ❖ Benefits all the parts of the body.



Notes

If the practitioner experiences pain in the neck and shoulders after practicing *Sarvangasana*, he should immediately perform *Chakrasana* to counter the pain.

Contraindications: Those suffering from heart diseases, high blood pressure, vertigo as well as those who have undergone any surgery in the recent past should refrain from doing this *asana*.

5. ***Kakasana* (The Crow Pose):** *Kakasana* has been named so as in Sanskrit the name implies “the crow.” When *Kakasana* is demonstrated, the body resembles like a crow.

How to Perform

- ❖ Stand with your feet hip-width apart.
- ❖ Keeping the knees bent, bend down and place the hands on the floor directly below the shoulders. Spread the fingers well on the floor.
- ❖ Flex your elbows and keeping your weight on the mounds of the feet, take the knees towards the upper arms, close to the armpits.
- ❖ Contract the leg muscles and press the legs towards the sides of the body. Contract the pelvic muscles and the hips together and feel the compactness and lightness on your feet.
- ❖ Maintaining the posture thus, tilt the pelvic slightly forward. The head and the torso also move forward and the feet feel even lighter.
- ❖ Pressing the palms firmly on the floor, focus on a point in front of your hands.
- ❖ As you are balancing on your toes, the feet feel light as there is hardly any weight on them.
- ❖ Squeeze the hips and the legs inwards and contract the abdomen.
- ❖ Adjust the weight on the hands by lifting or lowering the pelvis so that you are comfortable.
- ❖ Keeping the knees high on the arms and the thighs and legs close and well aligned, focus your attention on your breathing. This will help to stabilize the body and maintain balance.
- ❖ As breathing becomes smooth and rhythmic, the body will begin to feel stable, alert and light.
- ❖ With the abdomen held firmly and the body weight distributed equally on both hands, shift the torso forward so that the feet are towards the buttocks.
- ❖ Lift one foot at a time so that you don't lose your balance and hit your nose on the floor.
- ❖ Lifting the chin up so that the head is kept up will also prevent such a disaster.
- ❖ Once you are able to balance your body, try to straighten the arms as much as possible and then lift the head, trunk and legs up keeping the lower part of the body firm. Breathe normally as you hold the pose for 4 to 5 seconds.
- ❖ To come out of the posture, first bend the elbows and then slowly lower the toes onto the floor.

- ❖ Go back to squatting position and then release the posture.
- ❖ Tension in the wrists can be relieved by rotating them.
- ❖ Stand up, close your eyes and become aware of the energy flowing through the arms, shoulders, chest and pelvis.



Fig. 9.29: *Kakasana*

Variation

Beginners can keep a folded blanket on the floor in front until they have mastered the pose.

Benefits

- ❖ Increases physical and mental balance.
- ❖ Develops mental tranquillity.
- ❖ Strengthens the wrists and forearms.
- ❖ The working of the energy systems in the body are changed because of the body standing on the hands instead of on the legs.

Contraindications: Persons with wrist or arm injuries are not advised to practice this pose. Consult a yoga expert before practicing it.

6. **Mayurasana (The Peacock Pose):** In Sanskrit, The name of this *asana* derives from

the Sanskrit words *mayura* meaning 'peacock' and *asana*, meaning posture. A beginner may find it difficult to do this *asana*. Yet with a little practice over a few weeks, one can master this *asana*. All one needs is patience and perseverance.

How to Perform

- ❖ Sit on folded legs with the knees wide apart. Then fold the arms and join them together from the elbows to the wrist in front of you. Let the palms face upwards.
- ❖ Lean forward and place the palms on the floor so that the fingers point to the body. Bend the hands slightly at the elbows and let the arms and elbows touch each other.
- ❖ Now press the elbows to the upper abdomen or the midriff area.
- ❖ Then keeping the abdomen firm, drop the head gently to the floor.
- ❖ Slowly straighten the knees, and take the legs back, one at a time keeping the metatarsals on the floor.
- ❖ Hold the buttocks firmly. Keep the shoulders rounded facing slightly downwards.
- ❖ Now raise the head up and look in front of you.
- ❖ Next, shift the weight of your body forward by pushing the buttocks forward. Ensure that legs are held firmly.
- ❖ As you shift the body weight forward, the feet should come off the ground.
- ❖ Keep the body aligned so that it is balancing on the hands and is parallel to the floor.

- ❖ Maintain the posture for about 10 seconds initially and slowly but steadily increase the duration to a minute.
- ❖ Then very slowly, take the feet and then the head down to the floor. Repeat the *asana* 2 or 3 times.

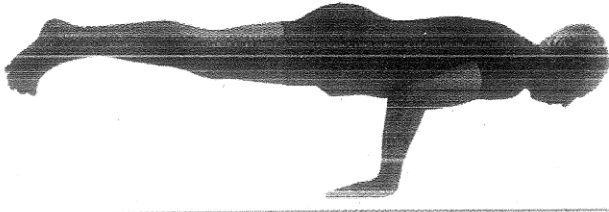


Fig. 9.30: *Mayurasana*

Benefits

- ❖ By doing *Mayurasana*, the entire digestive system gets toned. Organs like the stomach, liver, intestines, kidneys, pancreas and the spleen get revitalised.
- ❖ *Mayurasana* ignites the digestive fire. Digestion becomes so effective that one is said to be able to digest any kind of food, even poisonous food. The *asana* helps to reduce toxins produced by undigested food in the intestines. As such, it is an effective detox pose.
- ❖ The *asana* increases one's energy and sexual vitality.
- ❖ It strengthens the muscles of the arms and shoulders, and helps in treating conditions like constipation, piles and diabetes.
- ❖ *Mayurasana* can truly be said to be the gateway to perfect health.

Contraindications: This *asana* should be avoided if you have medical conditions like hernia, high blood pressure, heart problems and ulcer. Also women should avoid it during

menstruation and pregnancy. Always attempt this *asana* on an empty stomach.

Other Asanas

1. **Tadasana:** *Tadasana* gets its name from the Sanskrit words *tada* meaning a palm tree and *asana*, meaning posture. One resembles a palm tree in this *asana*. By practicing this *asana* regularly, one's posture improves. It also helps to increase height in children. *Tadasana* stretches the arms, the chest, the abdominal muscles, the spine and the leg muscles along with giving a sense of balance.

How to Perform

- ❖ Stand with your feet planted firmly on the ground. See that your feet and legs are touching each other.
- ❖ Straighten the hands by the sides of your body and focus your attention to a point in front of you.
- ❖ Raise your toes, balancing yourself on your heels. Remain thus for 5 to 10 seconds.
- ❖ Then, slowly bring the toes back to the floor tilting the pelvic bone slightly forward.
- ❖ Lift the entire trunk up from the sides and let the chest open out.
- ❖ Hold the head erect so that the crown of the head is parallel to the ceiling. Lift from the base of the skull so that the neck gets lengthened in the process.
- ❖ Then pressing your toes firmly on the ground, raise the legs up – first the ankles, then the calves, the thighs and the finally the entire torso from the hips upwards.
- ❖ Maintain the posture for 1 to 2 minutes focussing your attention on your breath, which should be steady. As you inhale,

feel as though the breath is rising from the floor and travelling up your legs to your stomach all the way up to your head.



Fig. 9.31: *Tadasana*

- ❖ As you exhale, feel as though your breath is travelling down from the head through your stomach, down to your feet.
- ❖ Relax the body and repeat the process once again.
- ❖ In the next attempt, as you raise your legs, lift your arms up over your head and bring your arms down along with the legs as you exhale.

Benefits

- ❖ *Tadasana* improves the posture of the body.

- ❖ It improves the flexibility of the ankles, knees and the hip joints.
- ❖ The regular practise of this *asana* will make the spine supple.
- ❖ One's balance improves with regular practice. *Tadasana* is also said to increase height.
- ❖ It is beneficial to those suffering from visceroptosis or pain in the backbone.
- ❖ Respiration, digestion and elimination of waste from the body improve with regular practice.
- ❖ The practitioner gets proper control over his muscular movements.
- ❖ Over a period, the entire nervous system gets strengthened with this practice.
- ❖ Modified *Tadasana* is one of the poses used during the practice of *Shankaparakshalana* or the cleaning of the stomach and intestine. This quickly moves the saline water which one drinks during the process to the lower intestine and rectum, thereby quickening the cleansing process.



Notes

Ensure that your breathing is in rhythm with the raising and lowering of your arms.

Contraindications: *Tadasana* should not be performed if you experience giddiness or suffer from vertigo, low blood pressure or have a severe headache.

2. ***Utkatasana:*** This *asana* is also known as Chair Pose, Fierce Pose or Powerful Pose. The term *utkat* means intense or powerful. *Utkatasana* is an intense or powerful pose. The practitioner performing this *asana* looks like he is sitting on a chair. The intense pose is so powerful that it strengthens the body.

How to Perform

- ❖ Stand erect as in *Tadasana*.
- ❖ Keep the big toes and heels of the feet slightly apart.
- ❖ Suck the abdomen in towards the spine – this will give support to the spine. Open out the chest by pushing the dorsal vertebrae forward. Take the shoulders and the upper arms down.
- ❖ Then, with a deep breath, lift the arms above the head. The arms can either be kept facing each other with the palms joined or they can be kept parallel to each other.
- ❖ Then bend the body, taking the lower ribs close to the pelvis. Exhale, bend the knees and try to make the thighs parallel to each other as much as you can. See that the feet are behind the knees and the torso is leaning slightly over the thighs so as to make a right angle with the upper part of the thighs. Keep the inner thighs parallel to each other and press the top of the thigh bone firmly into the heels.



Fig. 9.32: *Utkatasana*

- ❖ Fixing the shoulders firmly in their sockets, bring the tailbone down towards the ground towards the pubis. This will elongate the lower back.
- ❖ Maintain the pose from 30 seconds to one minute. Release the pose by straightening out the knees with an inhalation and with an exhalation bring the arms to the sides of the body in *Tadasana*.

Benefits

- ❖ The muscles of the spine, hips and chest get exercised.
- ❖ The muscles of the torso and the lower back get strong.
- ❖ The muscles of the thighs, knees, calves and ankles get toned.
- ❖ It keeps the body in a state of balance and the mind, resolute.
- ❖ Reduces symptoms of flat feet
- ❖ Stimulates the heart, diaphragm, and abdominal organs

Notes

A tip for beginners: Practise a few inches away from a wall so that when you get into the pose, the tailbone will get the support of the wall.

Contraindications: This *asana* should not be performed if one suffers from chronic knee pain or problems concerning the knees, arthritis, sprained ankles, damaged ligaments, headache or insomnia (sleeplessness). In case you are going through your menstruation cycle or you have some lower back pain, you may do *utkatasana*, but very carefully.

3. ***Ushtrasana*:** *Ushtra* means camel in Sanskrit, and this pose resembles a camel. It is known to open up the heart *chakra*, and increase strength

and flexibility. *Ushtrasana* is performed on the knees. This *asana* gives the body a good backward bend and hence, it is used as a preparatory pose for deeper backbends.

How to Perform

- ❖ Begin the *asana* by kneeling on your mat and placing your hands on your hips.
- ❖ You must ensure that your knees and shoulders are in the same line and the soles of your feet are facing the ceiling.
- ❖ Inhale and draw your tailbone in towards your pubis. You must feel the pull at the navel.
- ❖ While you are doing that, arch your back. Gently slide your palms over your feet and straighten your arms.
- ❖ Keep your neck in a neutral position. It should not be strained.
- ❖ Hold the position for about 30 to 60 seconds before you release the pose.



Fig. 9.33: *Ushtrasana*

Benefits of *Ushtrasana*

- ❖ This *asana* helps improve digestion as it massages the internal organs.
- ❖ It opens up the chest and frontal portions of the torso.
- ❖ It strengthens the back and the shoulders.

- ❖ It helps alleviate pain in the lower back.
- ❖ It makes the spine more flexible and also helps in the betterment of your posture.
- ❖ It relieves menstrual discomfort.

Contraindications: *Ushtrasana* is not advisable for those suffering from low blood pressure, insomnia or migraine. Don't do it even if you have problem in the lower back or an injury in the neck. Remember to always work within your capacity and if you have any medical problem, discuss it with your doctor before practising yoga.

Notes

When you are starting off, it may be difficult to reach for your feet with your palms, without causing a strain in your back or neck. Turn your toes and elevate your heels. If you still can't reach for your legs, use a wooden block and place both your hands on them.

Make sure you do not hold this pose for more than 20 seconds when you are a beginner.

4. ***Pavanamuktasana:*** *Pavanamuktasana* is also known as Wind Releasing Pose. It is beneficial to cure gas problems and poor digestion. Regular practice of *Pavanamuktasana* helps to stimulate bowel movement which is very necessary for removing waste material.

How to Perform

- ❖ Lie flat on your back and keep the legs straight and breathe deeply and rhythmically.
- ❖ Inhale slowly and lift the legs and bend in the knee. Bring upwards to the chest till your thigh touches to stomach. Hug your knees in place and lock your fingers.
- ❖ Try to touch the knee with your nose tip. This is not easy at the first time. But with regular practice you can do this.

- ❖ Hold this position for 20 to 30 seconds. You can extend it till 1 minute as per your capability.
- ❖ Now exhale slowly and come back to the original position that is *Shavasana* (Lie straight).
- ❖ This is very beneficial for stomach abs. The results are very impressive. Practice 3 to 5 cycles each day.

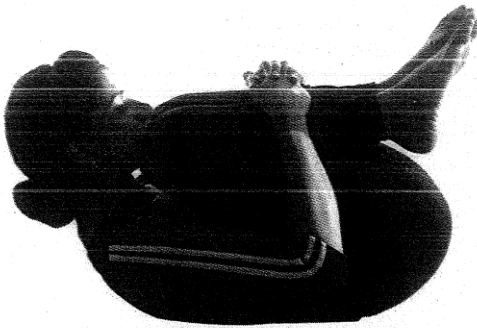


Fig. 9.34: *Pawanamuktasana*

Benefits

- ❖ *Pawanamuktasana* cures acidity, indigestion and constipation.
- ❖ *Pawanamuktasana* is an excellent practice to strengthen the abdominal organs.
- ❖ All kinds of gastrointestinal problems can be cured with regular practice of this *asana*.
- ❖ People having problem with passing gas, acidity, arthritis, pain in the waist and heart problem get good relief in this *asana*.
- ❖ It not only strengthens the back muscles but also relieves back pain.
- ❖ It helps to remove flab around the abdomen.
- ❖ This *asana* is good for the reproductive organs and gives good relief for any menstrual problems.

Contraindications: Anyone who has undergone abdominal surgery should not do this *asana*. Even people suffering from hernia or piles should avoid this *asana*.

Pregnant women are advised not to practice this *asana*. Those who suffer from pain, stiffness or has injury in the neck should do the *asana* keeping the head on the floor.

5. ***Vrikshasana* (Tree pose):** *Vrikshasana* is also known as the Tree Pose. *Vriksh* in Sanskrit means tree. The posture resembles a strongly rooted tree and hence the name. When one does this *asana*, one's body looks steady, balanced and graceful like a tree. The *asana* warms up the body and prepares it for more difficult poses.

How to Perform

- ❖ Stand in *Tadasana*. Lift the right leg up and place the sole of the right leg on the inside of the left thigh close to the groin with the toes pointing down.
- ❖ Now, raise your hands up and at the same time give a good upward stretch to your body by lifting it up from the sides. Then join the palms on top.



Fig. 9.35: *Vrikshasana*

- ❖ Stretch up the hands as far as possible. Hold as long as you can while breathing deeply.
- ❖ Fixing your eyesight on some fixed point in front of you will help you in maintaining the balance.
- ❖ Then slowly, bring the hands down and then bring down the right leg on the floor next to your left leg.
- ❖ Now lift up the left leg and place the left foot on the inside of the right thigh.
- ❖ Lift both hands and join the palms above your head.
- ❖ Hold the pose as long as you can.
- ❖ Bring the arms down and put the leg down and relax.



Notes

While doing all balancing poses, eyes should be kept open.

Contraindications: Those who suffer from high blood pressure should not raise their arms above the head for a long period of time. They can be held at the chest in the 'anjali' mudra (hands folded in prayer). It is best that you avoid practicing this pose if you suffer from insomnia or migraine.



Notes

In the beginning, you might find it difficult to bring the left foot above the right knee. In such cases, you can place your foot below the knee. But, as mentioned earlier, never place the foot on your knee. Also, initially it might be hard to stay steady and keep your balance. You could practice this asana by holding the wall for balance.

To enhance and aid concentration, take several deep breaths before the practice and also fix your gaze on an object right in front of you.

9.4 Five Spinal Movements in Yoga

Yoga addresses the five different movements of spine: it flexes, extends, bends to the side, rotates and lengthens; also called Axial Extension. To achieve good health, practise yoga poses that focus on the back and neck, and perform the five movements of the spine.

Flexion

Bend forward and touch your toes. That is flexion, a movement of the spine that boosts circulation to your brain and vital organs, and stretches your leg and back muscles. Yoga poses that emphasize flexion include *Marjariasana*, *Padabastasana* and the *shishu asana* (child's pose). To enter the child's pose, kneel on the floor, sitting on your heels with your big toes together and your knees separated about the width of your hips. Reach your arms in your front, palms facing down, and lay your torso in between your thighs, with your forehead resting gently on the ground. Exhale and inhale several times, expanding wide throughout your ribcage and back.

Extension

Extension is a movement of the spine that involves reaching your spine upward while your spinal discs expand in front and compress in back. Yoga works extension with backbend postures, such as *Bhujangasana*, *Setubandhasana* (bridge pose), *Chakrasana* and *Ushtrasana*. These extension postures stretch and strengthen the secondary curve of the cervical and lumbar spines, and are natural stress-reducers. *Bhujangasana* protects against injury and relieves stubborn back pain as well. (This asana is already explained above).

Lateral Flexion

Your spine is in lateral flexion whenever you bend to your right or left side. Your spinal discs expand

on your left and compress on your right when you bend to the right and vice versa. Bending to the side also strengthens your oblique muscles, improves your balance and encourages a flexible spine. *Trikonasana* is one of the poses that work lateral flexion.

Axial Rotation

Axial rotation involves twisting or rotating your spine. You twist and turn your body throughout the day and if the spine is not kept in great shape a quick movement, such as a look behind you, could become a disastrous injury. Yoga implements different twisting postures that lubricate the spine and increase your range of motion. *Vakrasana* and *Ardhamatsyendrasana* are examples of *asanas* which involve axial rotation.

Axial Extension

Axial extension is a movement of the spine that straightens and lengthens your spine, allowing you to expand your breathing, stretching your back muscles and lengthening your spine upward. *Tadasana* may be an example of axial extension.



Learning ACTIVITY

Maintain a diary of the changes you observe in your body and mind after *asana* practice. Track your progress every month.



SUMMARY

- The *Suryanamaskar* or offering salutations to the Sun, is preferably practiced in the early morning or evening facing the Sun.
- A well-balanced growth of the body and mind alone is an essential prerequisite for a human being to live in the world in peace and

fulfil his or her aspirations. *Suryanamaskar* is a great tool to realise this goal.

- There are twelve postures in *Suryanamaskar* each stretching various ligaments and giving different movements to the vertebral column.
- The life giving *Suryanamaskar* renders the inflexible muscles and spine of a person flexible.
- *Suryanamaskar* reduces visceral fat, brings flexibility to the spine and limbs, and also enables the practitioner to breathe right.
- *Suryanamaskar* is a boon for the mankind to attain perfect harmony among the body, mind and spirit.
- *Suryanamaskar* practice should ideally begin with a prayer to the Sun God.
- *Sarvangasana*, *Shirshasana* and *Paschimottanasana* are a few of the *asanas* propagated by the seers and yoga *gurus* as the ultimate *asanas* for keeping in perfect health.
- *Halasana*, *Chakrasana* and *Ardha Matsyendrasana* are ideal for keeping the spine flexible.
- *Shavasana* must be performed at the end of *yogasana* practice.



KEYWORDS

Kundalini: The coiled up serpent-like divine energy that lies dormant at the base of the spine is called *Kundalini*. *Kundalini* can be awakened by *Pranayama*, *Asanas* and *Mudras* by *Hatha Yogis*; by concentration and training of the mind by *Raja Yogis* and by devotion and perfect self-surrender by *Bhaktas*.

Matsyendra Nath: The *Vedic* sage who was turned into a human from a fish by Lord Shiva after the former overheard the Lord revealing the

secret divine knowledge of Yoga to his consort *Parvati*.

Suryanamaskar: Salutation to the Sun or Prostration to the Sun.



SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Short Answer Questions

1. How many steps are there in one round of *Suryanamaskar*?
 2. Name two visible and subtle benefits of *Suryanamaskar* practice.
 3. Write down any two conditions under which *Suryanamaskar* should not be done.
 4. Name any four postures that keep the spine elastic and supple.
 5. Which posture is performed at the end of *asana* practice?
 6. Name the tough *asanas* and easy *asanas*.
2. Write about any five yoga *asanas* and their important benefits.
 3. Write down the significance of contraindications and complementarity in performing of *asanas*.
 4. Discuss the significance of *asanas* in curing modern day lifestyle problems.
 5. According to the science of yoga, what are the five spinal movements? Explain briefly with suitable example.
 6. Explain the contraindications of *Shirshasana* and *Mayurasana*.



FURTHER READINGS

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B.K.S Iyengar, "Light on Yoga", HarperCollins Publishers India, 2006

Asana, Pranayama, Mudra, Bandha – Swami Satyananda Saraswati

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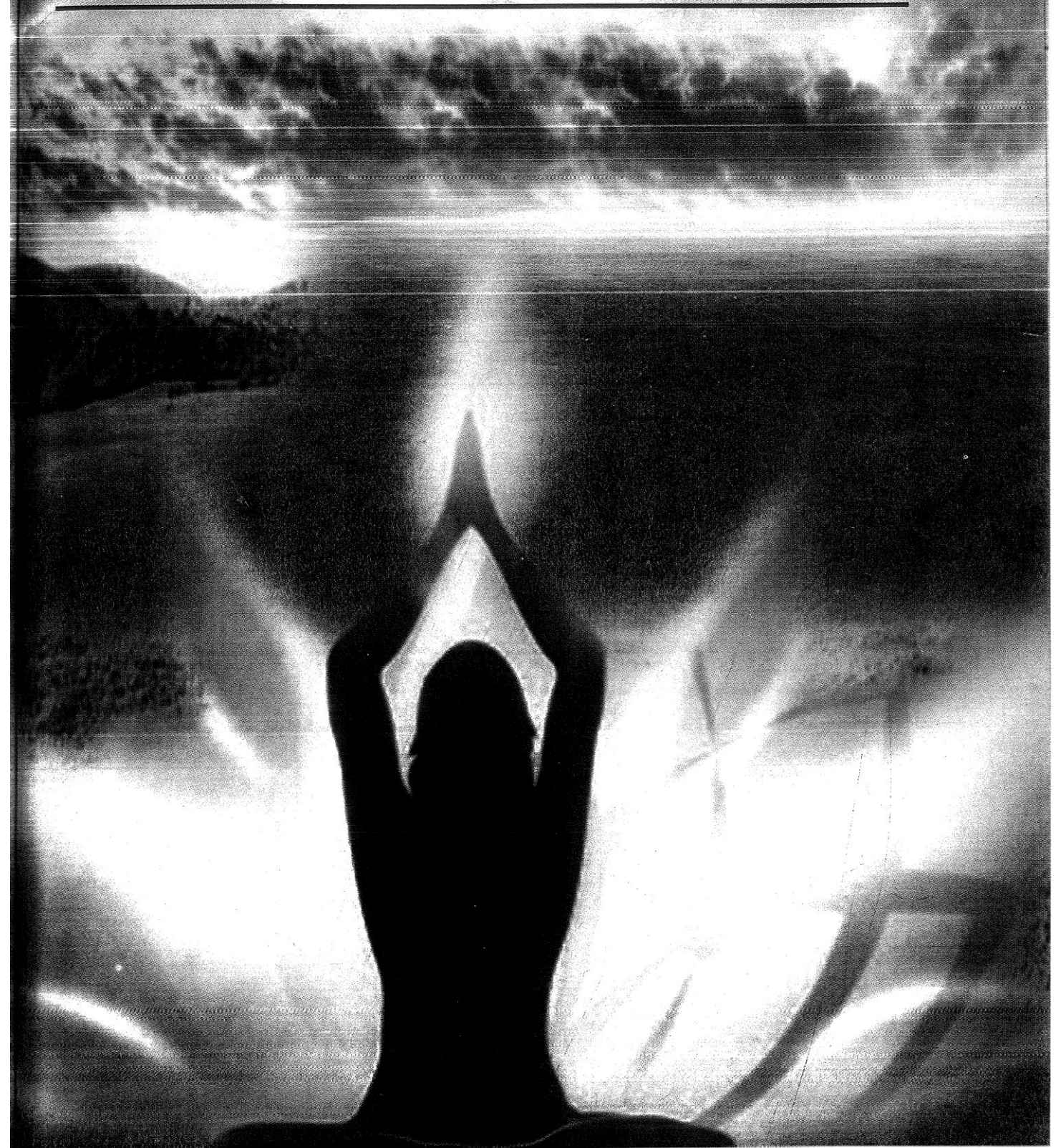
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Long Answer Questions

1. What is the importance of *Suryanamaskar*?

CHAPTER 10

MEDITATION AND PRANAYAMA





Structure

- Learning Outcomes
- Introduction
 - 10.1 Introduction to Pranayama
 - 10.2 Meditation – The Concept
 - 10.3 Practical Techniques of Meditation
- Summary
- Keywords
- Self-Assessment Questions
- Further Readings



Learning Outcomes

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define and understand the concept of *pranayama*
- Comprehend the concept and ability of full *yogic* breathing
- Understand the importance of meditation
- Appreciate the benefits of meditation
- Appreciate the concepts of *Mudras*, *Mantra*, and *Japa*



Introduction

Accessing your inner power with the help of breath is a useful tool. It will help you live life to its fullest. *Pranayama* is the control and extension of the breath, which awakens *Prana*, or the life force. Practicing the way you inhale and exhale can help you manipulate your vital energy to successfully activate or soothe your mood.

It may be interesting to note that only sixty seconds of intentional breath work can help you shift your mood dramatically. Simple controlled breathing exercises can allow you to channelize and redirect your energy in the positive direction, and help you achieve results you never imagined possible. In this chapter, we will discuss the correct methods to perform breathing exercises, along with understanding the significance of *pranayama* and meditation in improving our daily lives.

10.1 Introduction to Pranayama

Breathing is a vital process that starts at the time of birth and stops when a person dies. During breathing, the life sustaining oxygen is provided to all parts, organs and cells of the body. *Pranayama* is the formal practice of controlling the breath, which is the source of our *prana*, or vital life force. The word *prana* represents the vital energy responsible for life or life force, while *ayama* means “control (by stretching/expanding)”. Hence, *pranayama* translates to “control of the life force”. This is accomplished by manipulating breathing. One can control the rhythms of *pranic* energy with *pranayama* and attain a healthy body and mind.

When we breathe, we take in vital energy and remove waste products or toxins out of the body and mind. Breathing includes inhalation and exhalation, which is called *Puraka* and *Rechaka* in *yoga shastra*, respectively. *Pranayama* or breath control involves retention of breath (known as *Kumbhaka* in Sanskrit) wherein air is retained internally or externally. The halt of breath or retention of air after inhaling is called *Abhyantara* or *Antara Kumbhaka*, while that after exhaling is called *Bahya Kumbhaka*. Retention of air increases the level of *prana* (energy) in the body, and also regulates the flow of *pranic* energy throughout the body. *Pranayama* is thus a means to channelize energy in the body thereby removing ailments and slowing down the aging process of the body.

In *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*, *pranayama* lays emphasis on breathing (inhalation, exhalation and retention), whereas in *Hatha Yoga*, *pranayama* is equated with *kumbhak* or retention.



Did You Know?

In his *Yoga Sutras*, Patanjali mentions *pranayama* as a means of becoming fit for doing *dharana* (concentration) practice, as also for removing the shroud of impurities covering our inner light.

Sitting Postures for Pranayama

Pranayama and meditation can be performed in five classical sitting positions or postures. The order of the poses should be as follows:

- *Siddhasana*
- *Padmasana* and *Ardha Padmasana*
- *Swastikasana*
- *Sukhasana*
- *Vajrasana*

***Siddhasana* (The Accomplished Pose):** Sit with the legs straight. Bend the right leg and place the heel of the right foot touching the perineum region. Now bend the left leg and place the left foot on top of the right calf such that the small toe and the fourth toe are in between the calf and thigh muscles of the right leg. Now, bring the big toe and the second toe of the right foot between the calf and thigh muscles of the left leg. In this position, the ankles of both the feet are placed one over the other. If it is difficult to keep the body upright or the knees do not rest on the floor, then sit on a cushion, at the appropriate height.

Notes

Siddhasana is given a place of the pride among all the *asanas* in *Hatha Yoga*. As a meditative pose, it provides the widest base of support; hence, it provides maximum balance and stability. The heel touching the perineum region stimulates the *muladhara chakra*, thereby facilitating the awakening of *kundalini*. In the case of females, this *asana* is referred to as *siddhayoni asana*.

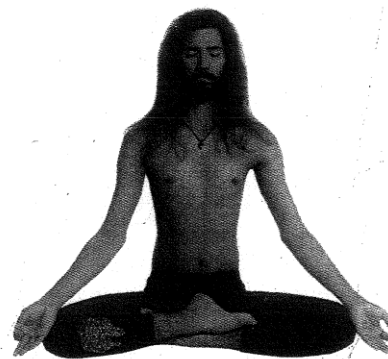


Fig. 10.1: *Siddhasana* Pose



Notes

The movements during breathing are no longer separated. One Full Yoga Breath includes one, smooth, continuous flow of breath in and out, involving non-jerky movement of the abdomen, chest, and collarbone.

Padmasana (The Lotus Pose): Spine erect, legs outstretched on the floor or on a mat, bend the right knee and place the right foot on the left thigh. Bend the left knee and place the left foot on the right thigh. This pose can be performed with either knee first, then the other knee to follow. The soles of both feet should face the ceiling and the heels should be brought close to the abdomen. With both the feet firmly planted on the opposite thigh in a cross, place your hands on the knees in chin *mudra*. You can also adopt *padma mudra*, with the right palm placed on the left palm rested on the heels, thumbs in contact with each other. Head, back of the neck and spine must be in one straight line. Chin should be parallel to the floor.

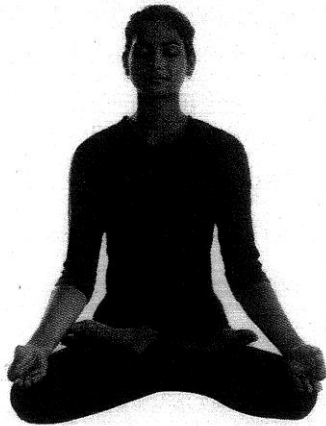


Fig. 10.2: Padmasana

Ardha Padmasana (The Half Lotus Pose): Sit erect, bend the right knee and place the right foot close to the left thigh on the floor. Bend the left knee and place the left foot on top of the right thigh. Try to bring the left heel as close to the abdomen. Alternately, the left knee may be bent first. Both the knees should be grounded. You

may even place a folded blanket under the bottom to give the spine a lift. Hands in chin *mudra* or *padma mudra*. This pose may be adopted by those who cannot do *Padmasana*.

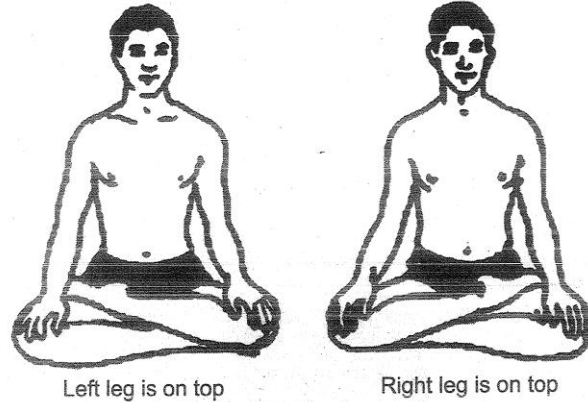


Fig. 10.3: Ardha Padmasana

Swastikasana (The Auspicious Pose): Sit on the floor, bend the left knee and bring the sole of the left foot in contact with the inside of the right thigh. Bend the right knee and place the right foot between the left thigh and calf muscle. Ensure that both the heels do not touch the pubis. The toes of the left foot must be pulled up slowly to rest in between the right thigh and calf. Place your hands on the knees in chin or *jnana mudra*. Spine must be erect. Close the eyes and observe the breath.



Fig. 10.4: Swastikasana

Sukhasana (Simple comfortable cross-legged pose): Sit down on a mat and place the right foot under the left thigh and the left foot under, or in front of, the right calf on the floor. If it is difficult to keep the body upright then sit on a cushion at an appropriate height. This posture is recommended for those who have difficulty sitting for a long period of time in *Siddhasana*, *Vajrasana* or *Padmasana*.

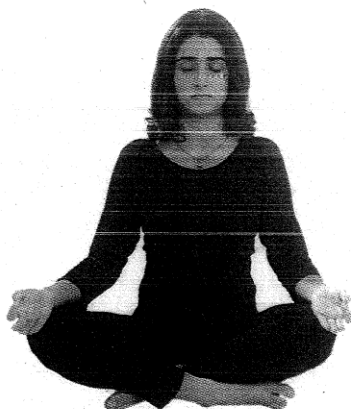


Fig. 10.5: *Sukhasana*

Vajrasana (The Adamantine Pose): Fold both the legs, keeping your hips on the heels. Let your toes point out behind you; the big toes should be touching each other. Sit over the gap formed by the parted heels. Keep the head, neck and spine in a straight line. Place the palms on the thighs.



Fig. 10.6: *Vajrasana*

Notes

Check list for *Pranayama* practitioners

- The eyes should be closed during *Pranayama* practice.
- The upper body should be straight and erect.
- The head, neck, and back should be aligned.
- The shoulder and abdominal muscles should be relaxed.
- The hands should be resting on the knees in any comfortable *mudra*.
- The body remains motionless during the practice.
- The mood should be tranquil and relaxed.

Full Yogic Breath – Concept and Demonstrated Ability

A normal breath is distinguished by three phases – inhalation, exhalation, and pause after exhalation. These three put together is what is referred to as respiration. One phase follows the other. The inhalation forms the active part of the breath. The exhalation is the passive part of the breath – the phase of relaxation. The pause in breathing arises naturally at the end of the exhalation phase and lasts until the impulse to inhale occurs of its own accord.

Notes

The exhalation in *Pranayama* practices should last approximately twice as long as the inhalation.

Quiet, rhythmic, and deep breathing is decisive for our health. It has a harmonising and calming effect on body and mind. On the other hand, breathing that is too rapid and shallow has a negative influence on us, as it can intensify nervousness, stress, tension, and pain. Therefore, all exercises in Yoga, including breathing exercises, should

be performed gently with full awareness. Avoid breathing through the mouth, instead breathe through the nose. The nostrils act as a passage for filtration, moistening, and warming the air.

Caution

A frequent mistake made with regard to breathing is to draw the abdomen. Sucking in the abdomen during inhalation hampers deep breathing. Comfortable clothing must be donned during practice.

What was once normal and rhythmic breathing during infancy has, over a period of time, got vitiated due to habitually incorrect breathing without awareness. The full yogic breath can help us restore healthy breathing practice. In fact, The full yogic breath has become more of a fundamental requirement to improve our breathing than merely a corrective health technique. The full yoga breath involves three types of breathing, namely abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing, chest or thoracic breathing, and collarbone or clavicular breathing. Let us understand each of these individually, along with the correct method to perform them.

Abdominal Breathing

Abdominal breathing or vertical breathing is the natural way of breathing, in line with the structure of our organic body. Inhalation pushes the diaphragm down, thereby releasing the abdominal organs outward. There is a resultant expansion of the belly. Exhalation pulls the diaphragm upwards, flattening the abdomen. While inhalation is dynamic, exhalation is passive. Abdominal breathing optimises the lung capacity and makes the breath rhythmic and relaxing.

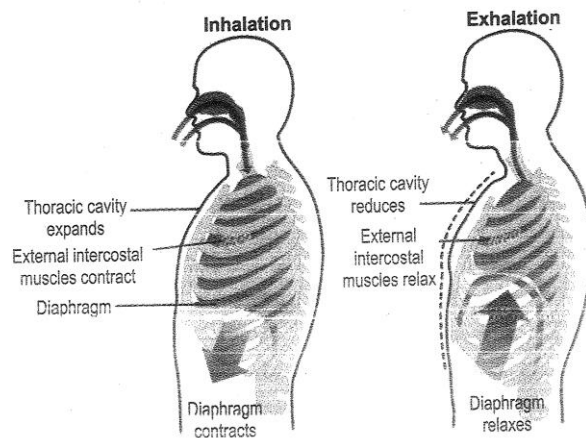


Fig. 10.7: Movement of the Diaphragm during Breathing

Notes

The functioning of the diaphragm must be optimal, since it is linked to vital organs like the heart, lungs, liver, spleen, pancreas and stomach. Correct movement of the diaphragm results in better intake of oxygen without exertion.

Step-by-Step Guide to Diaphragmatic Breathing

1. Either lie down or sit on a chair with feet firmly grounded or sit in cross legged position. While lying down, place the hands in line with the shoulders, palms facing the ceiling. Gently close your eyes.

Caution

Just like in a seated position, in a supine position also, the head, neck and the spine must be in a straight line. When lying down, lift your head and take a look at your feet to check that the head, neck and the back are in a straight line.

2. Relax your body and place the palms of your hands on the abdomen with your fingers pointed toward your navel. Place your

stretched out fingers on either side of your abdomen with the middle fingers at the navel.

3. Inhale and allow your diaphragm to move downwards. Feel the expansion of your abdomen. Do not put any pressure on your abdomen muscles; let them expand naturally.
4. When you are ready to exhale, simply repeat the movement in your mind. Your abdomen will deflate as the air is expelled. Ensure that your exhalation is as slow as possible. This will help you to breathe rhythmically.
5. Once you start breathing in a natural flow, start deepening, lengthening and extending your breathing. In simple words, let the abdomen expand fully as you inhale and deflate it completely on exhalation.
6. Practise this until you feel your abdomen expanding without any tension or effort.



Keep the chest still during this entire process of breathing; only move the abdomen.

Chest or Thoracic Breathing

In thoracic breathing, there is a heaving of the chest or rib cage. The rib cage expands in all directions with an inhalation. With an exhalation, the ribs revert to their original position. The intake of oxygen is lower than abdominal breathing and the breath tends to be fast. In moments of stress and worry, our breathing becomes heavily chest oriented instead of the more relaxing abdominal breath. The unconscious use of this more rapid form of breathing creates a heightened state of tension. To break this unfavourable cycle, slow and deep abdominal breathing is of great assistance. Thoracic breathing is a powerful breath technique for healing respiratory ailments.

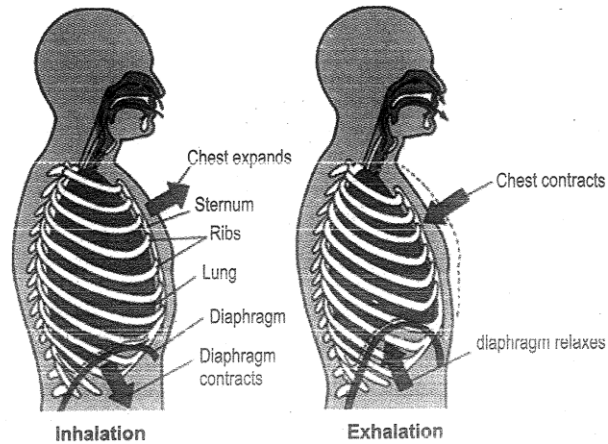


Fig. 10.8: Chest Movement during Breathing

Steps to Perform Thoracic Breathing

1. Take the same position as the one during abdominal breathing and stay relaxed.
2. Place the palms of your hands lightly on your ribcage with your fingers stretched out. Your little fingers should touch the lower ribcage, while your fingertips should be holding your ribcage. The thumbs should be facing the armpits at the top of the ribcage.
3. Do not keep your shoulders lifted or tense; they must be completely relaxed.
4. Start breathing normally. You will observe that your chest moves slightly up at inhalation and down with exhalation. Observe this pattern for a few moments.
5. Remember to keep the abdomen still, moving only the chest while breathing.
6. Once the desired pattern of breathing is set, begin to deepen, lengthen and extend that movement. On inhalation, expand and lift the rib cage, filling the lungs completely with air. Then on exhalation, let the lungs collapse fully.
7. Practise this till the time you feel relaxed and confident about breathing through the chest.



Did You Know?

With thoracic breathing, you will feel more power in your breathing when it is done correctly. This expands the entire chest cavity, fills the middle of the lungs with air, and frees the heart from pressure. There is more resonance to the voice when the ribcage is open and relaxed, which is an invaluable technique for singers and speakers.

Collarbone or Clavicular Breathing

This is the last step before the One Complete Yoga Breath. With this type of breathing the air flows into the top of the lungs. With inhalation, the upper part of the chest and collarbones are lifted, and with exhalation, they go lower. The breath is very shallow and rapid. This type of breathing occurs in situations of extreme stress and panic, or where there is great difficulty in breathing.

Steps to Perform Clavicular Breathing

1. Take the same position as during abdominal and thoracic breathing and keep your body relaxed.
2. Place your fingertips gently on the part of your collarbone where the bone juts up and out.
3. Inhale and let your chest expand and rise at the same time that your collarbone rises. The centre of the collarbone (in the area of the larynx) will create an "indentation" in your throat if you are doing it right.
4. Slowly exhale and let your chest and collarbone return to their normal position.



Caution

Prevent your shoulders from rising up and down; only the collarbone should rise while breathing.

In a healthy and natural breath, all these three variations, i.e., diaphragmatic breathing, thoracic breathing and clavicular breathing occur. Each is united with the other into a flowing wave, which proceeds from the bottom to the top of the lungs with 'the inhalation, and from the top to the bottom with the exhalation. With the inhalation, the abdomen extends forward and the chest is expanded. With the exhalation the chest and the abdomen return to their original position. When one practises this type of breathing utilising the full lung capacity naturally and without any force, one is said to be practising the full yogic breath.

The Full Yogic Breath

The full yogic breath is a wonderful combination of the three types of breathing discussed above.

1. Take the position that you followed in above breathing exercises. Check the position of your head with the rest of your body to be sure it is centred and straight.
2. Begin slowly by inhaling through the nose, while keeping the mouth closed. Let the air fill your lungs without stopping the movement.
3. Continue to inhale smoothly until your ribcage has expanded sideways.
4. Without stopping the breath, continue until your chest has expanded and your collarbone has risen.



Notes

The movements during breathing are no longer separated. One Full Yoga Breath includes one, smooth, continuous flow of breath in and out, involving non-jerky movement of the abdomen, chest and collarbone.

5. Feel the air filling your chest. Retain your breath, but only for as long as you are completely relaxed and comfortable.

6. Now start exhaling slowly in exact reverse motion. Allow the breath to flow out and your abdomen to sink.
7. Continue to exhale as slowly as you can, fully focus on your breath being expelled upward and now reaching for your ribcage. Feel the energy of your breath move through the ribcage as you continue to exhale and expel the energy from your ribcage into your larynx.
8. Continue to exhale, and feel how all the energy of your breath has left your body. Your chest and collarbone are now fully relaxed.
9. It is completely normal if you feel slightly dizzy or lightheaded after practicing the Full Yoga Breath. In fact, this indicates that your brain is being filled with more oxygen than usual, and is a sign that you are doing it right.



Caution

Yogic breathing must be practised in a physically and mentally relaxed state. A physically relaxed state is essential, as it is only then that the body muscles can stretch and relax properly without creating any kind of tension. A mentally relaxed state is necessary for full concentration, relaxation, and proper breathing. By exhaling consciously, one can considerably assist in the relaxation of the muscles.

Different Types of Pranayama – Knowledge, Benefits, and Precautions

This section discusses different types of *pranayama* along with the correct method of their practice, benefits, and precautions.

Anulom Vilom or Nadi Shodhan (Alternate Nostril Breathing)

This practice is also considered as a *kriya* (*nadi shodhana kriya*) particularly when it is not accompanied by *kumbhak* or retention.

Anulom Vilom pranayama is one of the most excellent breathing exercises. While performing this *pranayama*, it is recommended to keep the right hand in *Pranava Mudra*. In this *mudra*, the first two fingers of the right hand are to be fully bent and last two fingers are to be kept straight and held together. Now straighten the thumb and bending the right hand at the elbow, place the curved fingers in such a way that they come near the lips. Keep the hand from shoulder to elbow slightly away from the chest. Keep the right hand thumb on the right nostril and last two fingers on the left side of the nose.

To perform *Anulom Vilom pranayama*, follow the steps given below:

- Sit comfortably on a mat.
- Close the right nostril with right thumb and breathe from left nostril. Then close left nostril with the small and ring finger and breathe out from right nostril.
- Now breathe in deeply with right nostril and then close the right nostril and breathe out deeply with the left nostril.
- Repeat the exercise for 10 times to begin with.



Fig. 10.9: *Anulom Vilom Pranayama*



Did You Know?

The right nostril represents *Pingala nadi* (Sun principle or energy), whereas the left nostril represents *Ida nadi* (moon principle or mind). According to *Hatha Yoga*, many adverse health conditions occur due to imbalance between the *Ida* and *Pingala nadis*. Alternate nostril breathing balances these two forces.

Health benefits of *Anulom Vilom pranayama*:

- Equalises breathing through both the nostrils, thereby creating a wholesome personality conducive to meditation.
 - Facilitates proper supply of oxygen in the body; and carbon dioxide is effectively removed.
 - Allows deep breathing and improves lung function. More oxygen is made available per breath, making the breathing most efficient.
 - Improves blood circulation and purifies blood. This is useful for patients with heart-related problems.
 - Helps in managing stress. Regular practice offers energy in the body and releases stress and anxiety.
 - Calms the mind and reduces anxiety, depression and other mental illnesses. It also reduces hyperactive disorders related to the mind.
 - Balances *Ida* and *Pingala*, removes all blockages in the *pranic* energy channels, which may lead to spiritual awakenings.
 - Cleanses, strengthens and tones the nervous system, which also helps in improving concentration.
 - Prevents diabetes or keeps it under control.
 - Removes blockage of arteries, and relieves hypertension.
- Increases the glow of the skin.
 - Benefits the patients suffering from asthma, headache, migraine, neurological problems, depression, and gastric problems.

Some precautions to be followed during *Anulom Vilom pranayama*:

- This breathing exercise should be ideally practiced in the morning in fresh air with empty stomach.
- People who have undergone heart surgeries, abdominal surgeries, or brain surgeries should consult their medical consultant before starting practice.
- It should be practiced after emptying the bowel and bladder.
- Beginners, particularly young children, pregnant women or elderly should practice *Anulom Vilom* only under expert guidance.
- Overstraining of chest muscles should be avoided. Under no circumstances should the breathing be forced.
- Set the duration of inhalation and exhalation as per your physical strength and fitness.



Example

Start with a duration you are most comfortable with, for example 4 seconds of inhalation and 4 seconds of exhalation. Later, it can be increased up to 20 seconds or even more.

Bhastrika Pranayama (Bellows Breath)

Bhastrika in Sanskrit means 'bellows'; hence, *Bhastrika pranayama* literally means a breathing exercise that resembles the blowing of bellows. It is an excellent breathing exercise that can be practiced slowly or fast as per our convenience. In this *pranayama*, the body gets maximum amount of oxygen due to complete inhaling and exhaling.

 **Notes**

Traditional *bhastrika pranayama* involves two steps: *Kapalbhati* and *Pranayama*. There are several varieties of *Kapalbhati* and *Pranayama*, thereby giving rise to several varieties of *Bhastrika*. What is described below is the most popular practice of *Kapalbhati*, also known as *Bhastrika*.

To perform *Bhastrika pranayama*, follow the steps given below:

- Sit comfortably on flat ground.
- Take a deep breath through both nostrils and fill the lungs with air.
- After full inhalation, quickly exhale with great force making a hissing sound.
- Inhale deeply and exhale completely.
- Gradually increase the rapidity of inhalation and exhalation.



Fig. 10.10: *Bhastrika Pranayama*

 **Caution**

In *Bhastrika pranayama*, the force has to be applied while breathing in and breathing out. You can determine how much force to apply while inhaling and exhaling respectively, keeping your health and endurance in mind.

Health benefits of *Bhastrika pranayama*:

- *Bhastrika* as described above is the most energising practice of *pranayama*. It raises the BMR (basal metabolic rate) thereby increasing the calorie consumption in the body.
- Rhythmic inhalation and exhalation stimulates circulation of cerebral fluid, creating compression and decompression in the brain.
- Rhythmic diaphragm movements stimulate heart and lung muscles, thus improving blood circulation and strengthening lungs.
- Accelerated blood circulation and rate of gas exchange in each cell produces heat and washes out gases.
- Relaxes the body and mind and improves concentration.
- Relieves stress, depression and hypertension.
- Increases appetite and provides effective cure for obesity.
- Provides cures against health ailments such as asthma, headache, migraine, neurological problems, gastric problems, arthritis, and throat infection.
- Increases warmth in the body and helps prevent common cold.
- Flushes out toxins from the body and cures illnesses of respiratory track.
- Imparts glow to the skin.

Some precautions to be followed during *Bhastrika pranayama*:

- Patients with high blood pressure or heart disease should not practice *Bhastrika pranayama*.
- People with low stamina should avoid doing this *pranayama* too often.
- This *pranayama* should be practiced under expert guidance.

Chandrabhedan or Chandrabhedi Pranayama

This *pranayama* is called *Chandrabhedi* as its practice stimulates the cooling process brought about by the stimulation of the para-sympathetic nervous system. It is also called left nostril breathing. While doing this *pranayama*, one should breathe in through the left nostril and breathe out through the right nostril. To perform *Chandrabhedi pranayama*, follow the steps given below:

- Sit in a meditative pose or in a comfortable position on the floor.
- Keep your back straight and shoulders relaxed.
- Close your right nostril and inhale slowly through the left nostril. Fill up your lungs to maximum capacity.
- Inhale from the left nostril.
- Close the left nostril and exhale slowly through the right nostril.
- This completes one round of *Chandrabhedi pranayama*.

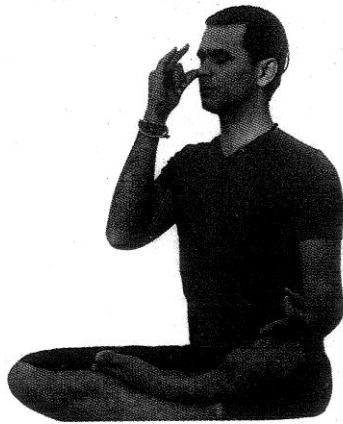


Fig. 10.11: *Chandrabhedi Pranayama*



Caution

Those suffering from heart disease or asthma should not practise holding of the breath in any *pranayama* for long durations.

Health benefits of *Chandrabhedi pranayama*:

- Reduces the flow of gall.
- Cools the body and reduces body heat.
- Gets rid of heart burn and laziness.
- Is beneficial in cases of mental tension, agitation, high blood pressure, heart disease, etc.

Some precautions to be followed during *Chandrabhedi pranayama*:

- This *pranayama* should not be done during winters. It must be practiced only in summers.
- Right nostril should be pressed with thumb of right hand, while left nostril should be pressed with ring finger of right hand.

Suryabhedana Pranayama

This *pranayama* is also called right nostril breathing. While doing this *pranayama*, one should breathe in through the right nostril and breathe out through the left nostril. To perform *Suryabhedana pranayama*, follow the steps given below:

- Sit in a meditative pose or in a comfortable position on the floor.
- Keep your back straight and shoulders relaxed.
- Inhale slowly and deeply from the right nostril. Fill up your lungs to maximum capacity.
- Open the left nostril and exhale slowly.
- This completes one round of *Suryabhedana pranayama*.



Fig. 10.12: *Suryabhedana Pranayama*

Health benefits of *Suryabhedan pranayama*:

- Boosts the nervous system, especially the sympathetic nervous system.
- Helps in regenerating the lung tissues and enhances their capacity.
- Strengthens the immune system and increases the efficiency of digestive system.
- Soothes and invigorates the nerves, and cleans the sinuses.
- Purifies the brain and destroys intestinal worms and diseases arising from excess of wind (*Vayu*).
- Cures rhinitis and various sorts of neuralgia.
- Provides relief to people suffering from asthma, cold, low blood pressure, and gastric problems.
- Increases the body temperature and provides warmth; hence particularly useful and effective for people with cold hands and feet.
- Removes the *Kapha* (mucus) imbalance in the body.
- Helps in weight loss and is very effective against obesity.
- Beats anxiety, depression, low energy, stress management, and other mental illnesses.

Some precautions to be followed during *Suryabhedan pranayama*:

- The eyes, temples, eyebrows, and the skin on the forehead should remain completely passive and show no sign of strain.
- Persons suffering from high blood pressure or heart trouble should not hold their breath after inhalation.
- It should not be performed if you are suffering from any kind of fever as it increases the heat in the body.

- Avoid *Suryabhedan pranayama* if you are suffering from high *Pitta* or acidity, or have recently recovered from diarrhoea.

Ujjayi Pranayama (Victorious Breath)

The prefix 'Uj' means upwards or superiority in rank. The word *Jay* in Sanskrit means "conquest, victory, triumph or success". In *Ujjayi pranayama*, the lungs are fully expanded and the chest is puffed out like that of a proud conqueror. It involves shallow breathing aimed at flexing the diaphragm.



Fig. 10.13: *Ujjayi Pranayama*

To perform *Ujjayi pranayama*, follow the steps given below:

- Sit erect in a comfortable position.
- *Ujjayi* involves partial closure of the glottis both while inhaling and exhaling. This is done by tightening the throat region slightly.
- Inhale slowly and deeply through both nostrils with the generation of a hissing/whispering sound. Fill the lungs to their maximum capacity.
- Exhale slowly, deeply, and steadily again generating the same sound, until the lungs are completely empty.


Notes

Ujjayi pranayama, when performed without the retention of breath and in a reclining position, is ideal for persons suffering from high blood pressure or coronary troubles.

Ujjayi is the only breathing practice which is prescribed to be performed while sitting, standing as well as lying down.

Health benefits of *Ujjayi pranayama*:

- Aerates the lungs, removes phlegm, gives endurance, soothes the nerves, and tones the entire system.
- Reduces the risk of diseases caused by accumulation of bile, wind or phlegm.
- Stimulates the thyroid gland.
- Eases diseases of the lungs, chest and throat.
- Improves oxygenation needed in many body functions.
- Clears the lungs and nasal cavity and strengthens the vocal cord.
- Helps alleviate indigestion and irregular bowel movements.
- Proves effective in pain reduction, insomnia, and migraine.

Given some precaution to be followed during *Ujjayi pranayama*:

Avoid it if you suffer from cardiac problems.

Bhramari Pranayama (Humming Bee Breath)

The original Sanskrit word for *Bhramari* is *Bhramar*, or humming bee. This *pranayama* involves creating a sound similar to the humming bee. It is an excellent breathing exercise that helps release agitation, frustration and anger, and is one of the best exercises for calming the mind.


Notes

The traditional *Bhramari* breathing involves generation of the humming bee sound both during inhalation and exhalation.

To perform *Bhramari pranayama*:

- Sit erect in a comfortable position and close your eyes.
- Raise bent arms to shoulder level and close the ears with your thumbs.
- Place the index finger gently on your eyelids; the middle finger lightly on your nostrils; and the ring and small fingers above and below the lips, respectively.
- Inhale slowly and deeply to fill the lungs completely.
- Exhale slowly through the nostrils.
- Produce the sound of a humming bee (“*hmmmm*”) through larynx (sound box) while exhaling.



Fig. 10.14: *Bhramari Pranayama*



Did You Know?

For best results, this *pranayama* should be practised at night or in early morning.

Health benefits of *Bhramari pranayama*:

- Makes voice sweet and melodious and helps in clarity of speech.
- Calms the body, and relieves stress, tension, anger, and anxiety.
- Cures hypertension and depression.
- Helps in controlling high blood pressure.
- Strengthens the vocal cords.
- Increases concentration.
- Very helpful for pregnant women for easy and trouble free childbirth.

Some precautions to be followed during *Bhramari pranayama*:

- *Bhramari pranayama* should be done on an empty stomach.
- If you feel dizzy while practising, stop the exercise and start normal breathing.

Sheetali Pranayama

The word *Sheetali* means “cooling” in Sanskrit.

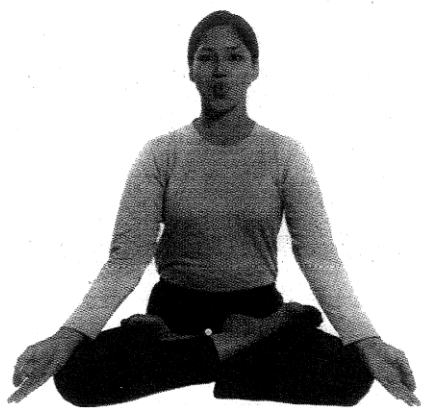


Fig. 10.15: *Sheetali Pranayama*

To perform *Sheetali pranayama*:

- Start inhaling through the mouth by rolling the tongue out of the mouth.
- After inhalation, close the mouth and slowly exhale through the nostrils.

Some precautions to be followed during *Sheetali pranayama*:

- This *pranayama* can lower blood pressure. Therefore, necessary precautions must be observed during its practice.
- You may feel little cold or tingling sensation in the throat due to cold air, but this is normal.
- Under no circumstances the breathing should be forced.
- Stop the practice if you feel dizzy and continue to breathe normally

Health benefits of *Sheetali pranayama*:

- The practice of *Sheetali Pranayama* calms the mind, reduces the stress or fight - flight response. It cools the body and mind. The blood pressure is also lowered. This *pranayama* is very effective in hyperacidity or even ulcers.
- *Sheetali* breathing reduces the body temperature. This may have positive effect on the endocrine glands and nervous system.
- In the ancient text of *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, Swami Swatmaram says that the practitioner becomes young and attractive by practicing this *pranayama*. Further, he says that this *pranayama* removes excess heat accumulated in the system, reduces excess bile, corrects the disorders of spleen and cures fever.
- *Sheetali pranayama* gives control over hunger and thirst. It has a calming effect on the entire nervous system, and stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system which induces muscular relaxation and is very effective in stress management.

Sheetkari Pranayama

In *Sheetali pranayama* and *Sheetkari pranayama*, we breathe through the mouth just like python, hen and offspring of deer.

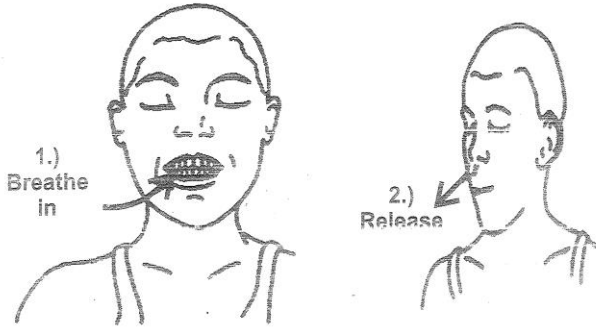


Fig. 10.16: *Sheetkari Pranayama*

The practitioner of *Sheetkari* can alleviate his or her thirst in the absence of water. *Sheetali* and *Sheetkari pranayama* are similar; the only difference between them is the technique of breathing used to practice them. In *Sheetali*, we breathe by folding the tongue, and in *Sheetkari* we inhale through the teeth.

To perform *Sheetkari pranayama*:

- Sit in any comfortable yogic posture.
- Fix the tongue on the upper or lower layer of teeth and inhale slowly through the mouth, generating a hissing sound. This breathing is similar to the saliva generated in the mouth when we eat anything hot and spicy.
- After inhaling, close your mouth and breathe out through the nose.

Health benefits of *Sheetkari pranayama*:

- Cools down the body temperature.
- Helps curing in spleen and indigestion.
- Effective in dental problems like pyorrhoea.
- Controls body temperature.
- Calms the mind.

- Reduces emotional excitement and stress.
- Beneficial in case of depression.

Some precautions to be followed during *Sheetkari pranayama*:

- If you are suffering from cold and cough, asthma or other respiratory problems, tonsillitis should not practice *Sheetkari* and *Sheetali pranayama*.
- Those suffering from low blood pressure are strictly advised not to perform this *pranayama*.

Notes

Sheetkari pranayama is the variation of *Sheetali pranayama*. People who are not able to fold the sides of the tongue in *Sheetali pranayama* can perform *Sheetkari pranayama*.

Benefits of Pranayama

As a technique for control of *prana*, *pranayama* practices result in the stock of *prana* increasing in the body, and the frequency of *pranic* vibrations increasing. The first brings about an increased energy level and the second brings about an increased awareness level.

Pranayama practices have benefits at all levels for human beings – physical, physiological, mental and spiritual. Some of these benefits are as described below.

Every organ in the body, including heart, brain, lungs, digestive organs, endocrine glands, and excretory organs have rhythms. Breathing, too, has a specific rhythm. *Pranayama* brings the breath in natural rhythm by controlling the process of inhalation, exhalation and retention. Breathing influences almost all the systems of the body. Hence, it helps to maintain the natural rhythm of all body organs, and allows them to function properly for major part of our lives.

With *pranayama*, one can master the process of breathing more slowly and more deeply. Reduced breathing rate has multiple benefits for the body like slowing down the heart rate, minimizing the wear and tear of internal organs, improving blood circulation lowering blood pressure, and slowing down the aging process.

Pranayama increases lung capacity. This is actually helpful for those suffering from respiratory illnesses such as asthma and emphysema to overcome the fear of shortness of breath.

Pranayama controls the fluctuations of mind and prepares it for meditation. The combination of *Pranayama* and meditation makes the body feel light. It provides inner peace, improves sleep, sharpens the memory and refines concentration.

Pranayama helps in increasing oxygen supply to the brain and provides complete relaxation to the nervous system. A fitter and calmer mind is a path to deep relaxation, which also increases the mental and physical powers of endurance.

Research suggests that manipulating the breath can alter how we feel. Breathing has a significant impact on emotions like anger, fear, joy or sadness. Right breathing not only calms the body and mind, but also helps control negative emotions, such as anger, depression, jealousy, hatred, greed, arrogance, etc.

Yogic breathing practices increase the levels of leptin, a hormone produced by fat tissue that signals the brain to inhibit hunger. Intensive yoga practice may benefit health by altering leptin and adiponectin production in the body. Leptin has a pro-inflammatory role, while adiponectin has anti-inflammatory properties.¹

By combining *asanas* with *pranayama*, deep relaxation and meditation, we shift the balance of our stress regulation systems in our brain and our body. Practising various Yoga techniques including *pranayama* affects the activity of our genes, lowers our heart rate and blood pressure and decreases the production of “stress” hormones, which reduces the symptoms of mental and physical distress.²

Practising *pranayama* on a daily basis can benefit those suffering from respiratory or heart problems, insomnia, nervous disorders, migraines, or any disorder which occurs due to absence of proper relaxation.

10.2 Meditation – The Concept³

According to the *Astanga yoga* of Patanjali, ‘*Dhyāna*’ is seventh rung of the *yogangās*. *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana*, *prānāyama* and *Pratyāhāra* all these five *Angās* are considered to be *bahya*, external *Angās*, whereas *dharana*, *dhyana* and *Samadhi* are *antarik*, inner *Angās*. To enter into the grandeur inner kingdom and build a bridge to the inner and outer worlds, *dharana* works like a bridge whereas *dhyāna*, the meditation is equal to a gate way of the inner world. There may be so many traditions and paths in this world and all of them may have different kinds of practices to follow to reach ultimate goal. But all of them have no differences about meditation. Therefore, meditation is the most essential part of the practice. According to *yoga sūtrās* of Patanjali, following *Yama*, *Niyama* etc. great steps, mastering the *Asanas*, practising different kinds of *prānāyama*, one becomes able to get rid of the impurities and control on the senses. Then only one can attain Concentration or

¹ Janice K. Kiecolt-Glaser, Lisa M. Christian, Rebecca Andridge, Beom Seuk Hwang, William B. Malarkey, Martha A. Belury, Charles F. Emery, and Ronald Glaser, “Adiponectin, Leptin, and Yoga Practice”, PubMed Central, 2012.

² Sat Bir Singh Khalsa and Jodie Gould, “Your Brain on Yoga”, Harvard University, 2012.

³ Part of the information has been sourced from “*Yoga Tree: Fundamental Principle of Yoga, Patanjali Yogpeeth, Haridwar*”.

Dharana, which is the process of holding or fixing the attention of mind onto one object or place:

desabandhascittasya darana

(*yogadarsana* 3.1)

Tatra pratyajñakatānatā dhyānam'

(*yogadarsana* 3/1-2)

The concept of meditation is the most misunderstood or inadequately understood in modern times. Basically, all meditation techniques are related to the mind. They involve controlling the mind to finally transcend the mind. This state of transcendence is referred to in *Hatha Yoga* as *unmani* or *manonmani awastha*. In the wake of practising meditation, several benefits ensue as by-products, such as efficient functioning of the body, a general state of well-being and overall equanimity.

Meditation is commonly associated with practices to still the mind. There are various forms of meditation to suit different levels of practitioners. Interchangeably referred to as contemplation, meditation practices typically involve breath observation, auto suggestion, visualisation, *mantra* chanting, rotation of beads in *japa*, concentration on an object of choice and non-judgemental awareness of thoughts. These practices entail training the senses and the mind to disassociate from the object and stand apart as a witness. Thoughts are viewed without any identification, analysis, judgement, resistance or verbalising. Meditation practice helps in develop concentration or single pointedness.

In its truest sense, meditation is a state of being – one must be meditative in and through all our actions. What starts of as a technique of practice, slowly evolves into a state of being. The softness and tranquillity of the 30 minutes of practice carries itself forward through the rest of the day. Once perfected, the meditative stance percolates and permeates through all thoughts and deeds 24/7.

Naturally once the mind is meditative, the fluctuations of the mind lose their power to overwhelm and sway the individual. There is greater clarity and sharpness in seeing things as they are without the pre-conditioned colouring of memory and judgement. The reflecting medium of the mind becomes clearer and purer to reveal the light of intelligence. Muddy waters cannot reflect the brilliance of the sun, only pure and placid waters reflect the sunlight. So also, a mind which has been cleared of its dross through the technique of meditation, is tuned to reflect the light of awareness.

Scriptures lay great importance on meditation as the highest vocation for mankind. Training the senses and the mind is a pre-requisite to being meditative. Buddhist monks are known to practice mindfulness in their day to day activities. Mindfulness is referred to being aware of what you are doing at the time of doing, no matter what you are doing.

10.3 Practical Techniques of Meditation

For a novice to sit in meditation without any thoughts is an uphill task. Therefore, practitioners are advised to begin with a support such as the breath or a deity of choice. By using a support, the vagrant mind is given a limited field within which it is allowed to meander, like a farm animal tied to a pole has a fixed radius for wandering.

Concentration Meditation

The mind needs something to get attached to. Concentration meditation entails focusing the mind on a single point, such as the breath, or a mantra, a candle flame, rotation of beads in *japa*, auto-suggestion for visualization of an object of choice preferably, a deity or *ishta devta*. Concentration meditation practice takes time to build up, it is advisable to practice for a few

minutes initially and continue the practice with fervour and determination.

The mind will wander but try to refocus the mind and bring it back to the object of meditation. Involuntary thoughts will occur, but over a period of time, the mind gets channelized to remaining focused on the object of meditation for longer durations. You will notice that this practice helps in developing our concentration ability in our daily activities as well.

Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness meditation practice entails a free flow of thoughts as and when they come. The practitioner is required to simply stand apart from the thoughts and not identify with or judge them.

Through this practice, the practitioner slowly realizes that the thoughts by itself have no power, it is the unnecessary identification with the thoughts that causes any agitation. The mind is a continuous flow of thoughts. By being mindful of the thoughts that occur, their value judgement is withheld, leading to a correct evaluation of the thought. Through mindfulness meditation, you realise that thoughts tend to flow in preconditioned patterns. Continuous practice helps in the development of state of internal harmony and balance.

You can practice a combination of both concentration and mindfulness meditation.

Simple Meditation Techniques for Beginners

- Make a firm resolve that 'I will meditate daily'. Start off with a daily target of two minutes of sitting still. Gradually, keep increasing the time.
- Try to meditate at a fixed time and a fixed place. The body will slowly get into a groove of meditating and will naturally veer to the spot of meditation at the given time. Ideally,

one must meditate in the morning, when the cosmic rhythm is conducive to silence and stillness. The place for meditation must be kept clean and away from noise. If it is not possible to meditate at a fixed time and a fixed place, choose any time of the day that works best – try not to skip any single day of practice. It's only two minutes – you owe it to yourself.

- If you forget to meditate, set a reminder either on the phone or stick a post-it near your bedside.
- Please do not worry about where to sit, what mat should you use, how should you meditate. You need not sit on the floor – sit comfortably on a chair or on your couch, keeping the back erect. Ensure that there are minimal external disturbances. Wear comfortable clothing.
- Once you are comfortable sitting for two minutes, then start optimizing on the posture. Keep the head, neck and back in one straight line. As you progress, you will notice that you can stay longer and longer in your practice.
- Observe the state of the mind – is it restless, agitated, oscillating? How is the breath – is it smooth, interrupted, deep, shallow? Simply watch and do not try to change anything yet.
- If you feel drowsy, then take a deep breath and forcefully exhale – repeat this a couple of times.
- Gradually increase the time spent in practice. You will enjoy these moments of stillness and want to practice more and more – a self – stroking cycle.
- When your mind wanders, get rid of the futile thoughts immediately.

The Difference between Dharana and Dhyana

This difference is beautifully brought out in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali. Here, *dharana* refers

to confining the mind to one object and in this process, all the efforts are expended in bringing the mind again and again to the object from its continuous distractions.

When the individual becomes successful in the above process and can hold his attention continuously on the one object without any distraction, he is said to be in a state of *dhyana* or meditation.

Incidentally, when this *dhyana* becomes prolonged and intense, wherein the self nature of the meditator is as if not there, and the process of meditation is as if not there and only the object of meditation shines forth, it is said to be *Samadhi* state.

Each time the mind evades you, runs here and there and you bring it back that is called concentration. Concentration is trying to fix the mind on one thing – single-mindedness. Meditation is when you have tried concentration and are successful.

Performance of Mudras, Mantra and Japa

There are various types of *mudras*. These *mudras* can be classified as *hasta mudras*, *maan mudras*, *kaya mudras*, *adhara mudras*, and *bandhas* (*mudras* used in *pranayama*). Some important *mudras* practiced in yoga are *ashwini mudra*, *khechhari mudra*, *vipritakarani mudra*, *drona mudra*, *padma mudra*, *shambhavi mudra*, *simba mudra*, etc. A brief description of some examples of *mudras* are given below.



Notes

Mudra is defined as *mudam anandam dadati iti mudra*, i.e., that which provides delight or joy is *mudra*.

The physical body is made up of five elements namely – Sky or space (*Akash*), Air (*Vayu*), Fire (*Agni*), Water (*Aap*), and Earth (*Prithvi*). Imbalance of these elements disrupts the immunity system

and causes disease. The imbalance can be removed by connecting one part of the body with another in a particular manner through *Mudras*.

When a finger representing an element is brought into contact with the thumb, that element is brought into balance, and the disease caused by that imbalance is cured. *Mudras* stimulate electromagnetic currents within the body which balance various constituting elements and restore health. The joining of fingers creates an effect on the human body.

Five fingers for balancing the five elements:

Thumb	Fire
Index	Air
Middle	Sky or Space
Ring	Earth
Little	Water

Mudras for Health Benefits

Gyan Mudra

Method: Join the tips of the index finger and thumb and keep the other 3 fingers stretched and joined. The same *mudra* when performed with the palms facing downwards is called *chin mudra*.

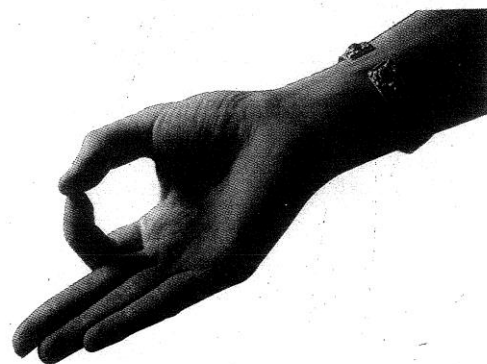


Fig. 10.17: Gyan Mudra

Benefit: Effective in cases of mental ailment, imparts happiness, the intellect develops, and memory is sharpened.

Prana Mudra

Method: Join the tip of the thumb with tip of little and ring finger. Keep other two fingers straight.

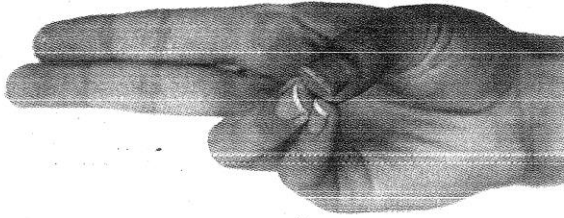


Fig. 10.18: Prana Mudra

Benefit: Helps in pumping the life force into your body. Beneficial for all types of diseases. Imparts special power to the eyes.

Khechari Mudra

Method: *Khechari mudra* is a yoga practice where the tongue is rolled up to touch the soft palate initially and then with due practice it is inserted into the nasal cavity behind the palate.

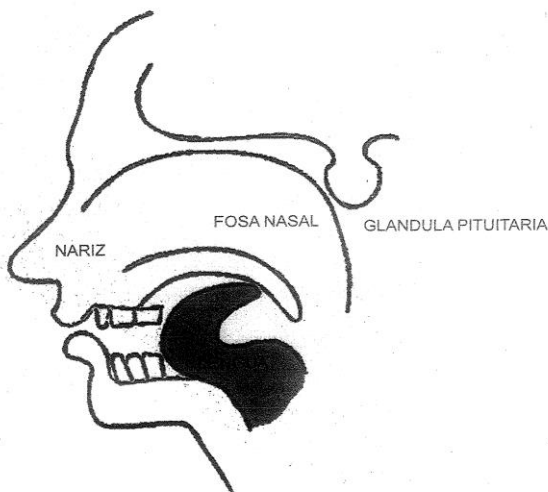


Fig. 10.19: Khechari Mudra

Benefit: Helps to overcome thirst, hunger, decay and delay death.

Shambhavi Mudra

Method: *Shambhavi mudra* essentially involves gazing at the eyebrow center.

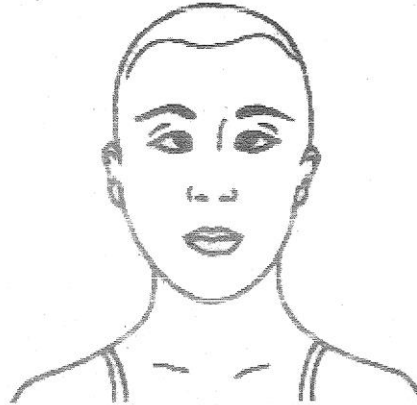


Fig. 10.20: Shambhavi Mudra

Benefit: Helps to transcend the mind and reach higher states of consciousness. It can help one reach the state of *Samadhi*. *Shambhavi* helps to strengthen the eye muscles. By constant practice, the muscles can sustain the position for a long period of time for prolonged meditation. *Shambhavi mudra* activates the *Ajna chakra*.

Ashwini Mudra

Method: *Ashwini mudra* is done by contracting the anal sphincter muscles in a rhythmic manner.

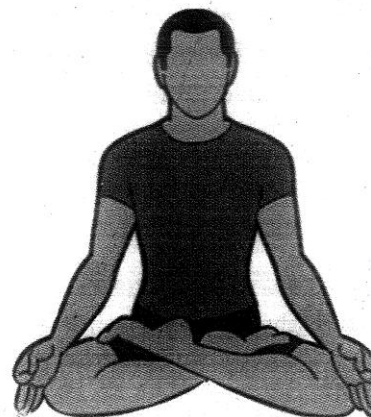


Fig. 10.21: Ashwini Mudra

Benefit: *Ashwini mudra* gives control of the anal muscles just like a horse. It helps to remove constipation. According to *Gheranda Sambita*, the practice of *Ashwini mudra* can awaken the dormant *Kundalini Shakti*. It also removes all diseases of the rectum.

When to practice Mudras

Mudras can be adopted at any time – while waiting, sitting, standing, talking or walking. The effect of the *mudras* is seen only after long duration of practice. That is the reason why *mudras* are not so popular as compared to other practices of yoga like *asanas* and *pranayama*.

Japa

Japa is the repeated chanting of a *mantra* or a name of a deity. *Japa* can be practised in a meditative posture or while performing daily activities. *Japa* practice makes the mind single pointed. A mind trained in *japa* can reach higher states of consciousness easily. The more one thinks of an object, the more one gets attached to it. *Japa* practice brings about a closer connect with the object of meditation. Start today, start now. *Japa* is the easiest *sadhana* to perform, given our busy lives.

Mantra chanting or *japa* of *mantras* can be done in four ways:

1. *Vaikhari* – loud, audible chanting
2. *Upanshu* – whispering chanting, audible only to the person who is chanting
3. *Mansik* – mental chanting
4. *Likhit* – *japa* by writing

Japa becomes effortless when practised continuously. *Ajapa japa* is the continuous resonance of a *mantra* in one's being resulting from fervent practice over a prolonged, uninterrupted period of time. It is like an earworm that plays in the background constantly.

Varieties of Japa

Mental Repetition

One method of *Japa* is mental repetition of a *mantra* (or “*mantram*”).

Beads

In order to aid concentration, a support in the form of a string of rosary beads may be used. The *japa mala* may be made of *tulsi* beads or *rudraksha* beads. It usually contains 108 beads or 51 beads. The off head of the *mala* is called the *meru*. The *mala* must be placed at the conjunction of the ring finger with the thumb. Turn each bead with the thumb and middle finger and repeat the *mantra* with every turn, keeping the index finger apart.

The index finger is typically used in an accusatory manner pointing to the ‘other’. The index finger represents the ego, duality, separateness. Thus the index finger is kept apart in *japa*.

Complete one round of 108 times, do not cross the *meru*. Turn the *mala* at the *meru* and re-start the next round of *japa*. The *meru* is a symbol of the Supreme and as such, must not be crossed before the next round. The *mala* may be kept around the neck or in a cloth bag.

Mantrachakras

Another form of *japa* practised by Buddhist monks involves the rotation of prayer wheels.

Mantra

Mantra means the combination of two words “*man*” and “*tra*”. *Man* represents mind and *tra* comes from *trayati*, which means “to protect”. Therefore, *mantra* is that which protects the mind – *mananat trayati iti mantra*.

Most of the *vedic mantras* have seers/*rishis* who have given them to the world. For example, Maharishi Vishwamitra became the recipient of the *Gayatri Mantra* and shared it with the world for its spiritual welfare.

Mantras may be pure sounds (*bija mantra*) or prayers to God. *Bija mantras* bring about their effect due to the vibrations generated by their chanting, whereas *mantras* which are prayers lead to blessings from God.

There are *Vedantic Mantras* like –
Tat Tvam Asi – That Thou Art
Aham Brahma Asmi – I am Brahman
Sivoham Sivoham – I am Shiva

There are *Pauranic mantras* such as –
Om Namah Shivaya
Om Namo Narayana
Sri Ram Jaya Ram Jaya Rama
Hare Rama Hare Krishna

Japa must not be performed mechanically by merely rolling beads or mindless muttering. *Mantra* chanting must be done sincerely with intense fervour and a spirit of surrender and devotion. *Mantras* have the power to bring about a transformation in one's personality. In the *Gita*, Lord Krishna proclaims "I am, among the Yogas, the *japa yoga*".

Some Important Vedic Mantras

Gayatri Mantra

The *Gayatri mantra* is one of the oldest available divine hymns from the *Rig Veda*. *Gayatri mantra* chanted with the right understanding of its sacred meaning can remove negative tendencies in the mind. This *mantra* is not chanted for the purpose of material gains but it is an appeal to the Pure Consciousness to illumine our intellect, i.e., a prayer to unveil the light of the Self within. The uniqueness of *Gayatri mantra* is that the vibrations generated by chanting *Gayatri mantra* bring about the same effect as when the *Gayatri mantra* as a prayer is fulfilled.

The *Gayatri mantra* constitutes three lines of eight syllables each.

"*Om Bhub Bhuvah Svaha* (this line represents the *lokas* or fields of consciousness as *vyahrti* and is technically not part of the *mantra*)

Om Tat Savitur Varenyam

Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi

Dhiyo Yonaha Prachodayat"

"We meditate upon the auspicious light of the Lord Sun, may thy heavenly light illumine our intellect."

Shanti Mantra

"*Om. Sahanavavatu. Saha nau bhunaktu.*

Saha veeryam karvavahai.

Tejasvinav adhitam astu; ma vidvishavahai.

Om. Shantih! Shantih! Shantih!"

"*Om.*

Om, May we all be protected

May we all be nourished

May we work together with great energy

May our intellect be sharpened (may our study be effective)

Let there be no animosity amongst us

Om. Peace! Peace! Peace!

Benefits of Meditation

Meditation stimulates the *para* sympathetic nervous system which results in relaxation of the body and mind. The following physical benefits have been noticed –

- Controlled blood pressure
- Better blood circulation
- Normalised heart rate
- Slower respiration
- Less anxiety
- Delay in onset of mental ailments such as depression, alzheimer's disease

These benefits are by-products of the practice of meditation and not the goal of meditation. The goal of meditation is to enable the practitioner sharpen his awareness so that he may discover his true essence i.e., the Divinity within, which is shrouded by a veil of impurities. Meditation practice is about being in the present moment, away from regrets of the past and worries of the future. A seasoned meditator tends to be poised through ups and downs and maintains a sense of balance. He/she is not enslaved by his senses and is relatively free from attachment.

Obstacles and Ways to Overcome Them

In *Patanjali Yoga*, *Antarayas* or obstacles on the path of Yoga are so because they are distractions of the mind. These obstacles don't allow the practitioner of Yoga to get concentrated. Concentration being the first stage in *Patanjali Yoga* Meditation, these *Antarayas* can be considered as obstacles on the Path of Meditation. The nine *antarayas* or obstacles are as follows:

- i. *Vyadhi* (Physical illness),
- ii. *Styan* (Mental languor or listlessness),
- iii. *Samshaya* (Doubt),
- iv. *Pramada* (Heedlessness or misplaced priorities),
- v. *Alasya* (Physical laziness),
- vi. *Avirati* (Stubborn attachment to sense objects),
- vii. *Bhranti Darshana* (Illusion or misunderstanding),
- viii. *Alabhda Bhumikatva* (Non-attainment of firm ground), and
- ix. *Anvasti Tattva* (Non-maintenance of firm ground).

In The *Bhagavad Gita*, the 6th Chapter is entitled as *Dhyana Yoga*. This Chapter explains the obstacles on the path of Meditation. Meditation is walking on the razor's edge of awareness. External obstacles on the path of meditation are generally because of

lack of preparation. This includes inappropriate lifestyle wherein food, sleep, recreation and work are not taken care of. Also, for meditation to be successful, the place of meditation should be such that it is quiet, comfortable, clean, undisturbed and uncluttered. The seat of meditation should be neither too high nor too low and a bad conductor preventing flow of energy from/to earth. The posture (*asana*) adopted for meditation should be comfortable enough for the practitioner to remain steady for the duration of medicine.

The internal obstacles to meditation pertain to expectations from meditation, agitated mind, worldly fears about meditation, holding to our identity even while meditating, focusing on objects other than the object of meditation, non-regularity in meditation, lack of sustained enthusiasm, etc.

The two most common initial obstacles in meditation are *Laya* (sleep) and *Vikshepa* (agitations or distractions), either the mind dozes off to sleep or restlessly moves from one object to another.



SUMMARY

- *Pranayama* is the control and extension of *Prana* (life force energy) through breathing.
- *Pranayama* brings the breath in natural rhythm by controlling the process of inhalation, exhalation and retention.
- By combining physical postures and exercises (*asanas*), with *pranayama*, deep relaxation and meditation, we shift the balance of the stress regulation systems in our brain and our body.
- In *pranayama*, one should utilise the diaphragm efficiently to get more oxygen without making more efforts.
- A frequent mistake in breathing is drawing the abdomen in as the chest expands, rather than relaxing the abdomen forward. Drawing in the abdomen considerably impairs deep

breathing. Often tight clothing inhibits this natural movement.

- *Siddhasana* is given the pride of place among all the *asanas* in *Hatha Yoga* and is best suited for *pranayama* and meditation.

KEYWORDS

Pranayama: It is the formal practice of controlling the breath, which is the source of the *prana*, or vital life force.

Diaphragmatic Breathing: It is also called vertical breathing that utilizes the diaphragm and considered as an efficient way to inhale air.

Chest or Thoracic Breathing: It is also ribcage breathing, since the ribcage quite literally moves in and out sideways like an accordion and the lower ribs float out with each breath.

Collarbone or Clavicular Breathing: This is the last step before the One Complete Yoga Breath. With this type of breathing the air flows into the top of the lungs. With an inhalation, the upper part of the chest and collarbones are lifted and with an exhalation, they lower again.

Anulom Vilom or Nadi Shodhana Pranayama: This is one of the excellent breathing exercises that are performed by inhaling from one nostril and exhaling from the other, thus it is also called Alternate Nostril Breathing.

Bhastrika Pranayama: *Bhastrika* in Sanskrit means “bellows”; hence, *Bhastrika pranayama* literally means a breathing exercise that resembles the blowing of bellows.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Short Answer Questions

1. What are the steps to perform diaphragmatic breathing?

2. Is it normal if one feels a little dizzy after practicing the full yogic breath?
3. Define *Siddhasana*.
4. Define the concept of meditation.
5. What are the practical applications of meditation?
6. What is unique about *ujjayi* breathing?

Long Answer Questions

1. Define *Pranayama* and its benefits.
2. What is the right way to perform full *yogic* breathing? Discuss.
3. Explain *Vajrasana*, *Ardha Padmasana* and *Padmasana*.
4. Describe any three different types of *Pranayama*.
5. Describe the significance of meditation.
6. Explain *mudras*, *mantras* and *japa* in your own words.

FURTHER READINGS

The complete illustrated book of Yoga-Swami Vishnudevananda

Meditation and Mantras—Swami Vishnudevananda

Light on Yoga – Shri BKS Iyengar

Light on Pranayama - Shri BKS Iyengar

Asana, Pranayama, Mudra, Bandha-Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Prana and Pranayama-Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Yoga Nidra - Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Pranayama by Swami Kuvalyananda

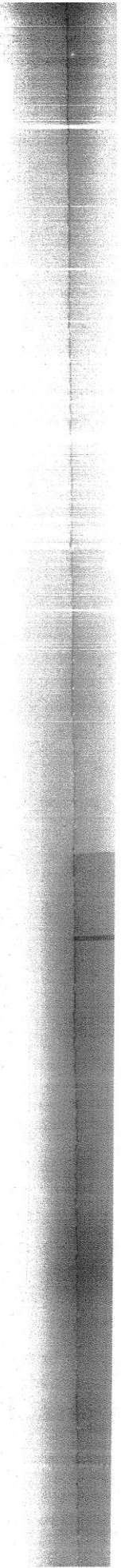
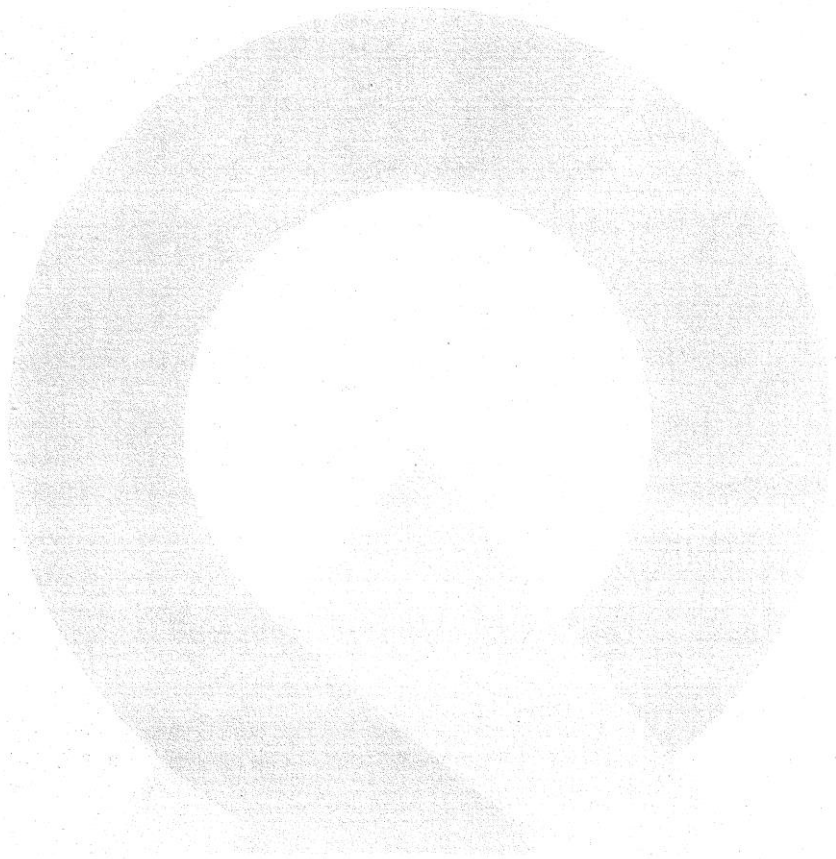
Hatha Yoga Pradipika – interpretation by various authors

Patanjali Yoga Sutra-interpretation by various authors

CHAPTER 11

TEACHING PRACTICE







Structure

- Learning Outcomes
- Introduction
 - 11.1 Teaching Yoga
 - 11.2 Principles and Skills for Educating Aspirants
 - 11.3 Teaching Yoga in a Group Setting
- Summary
- Keywords
- Self-Assessment Questions
- Further Readings



Learning Outcomes

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the concept of practising yoga
- Explain the objectives, nature and scope of teaching yoga
- Appreciate the importance of teaching principle
- Analyse teaching principles
- Describe the benefits of teaching yoga in a group setting



Introduction

The purpose of teaching – practice is to induce change in the student. The basic aim of teaching is to make someone learn. The teacher/instructor merely arranges the environment for learning and stimulates and guides the students' activities in that environment. It is the teacher who teaches, and it is the responsibility of the student to learn by making honest efforts and grasp the facts revealed by the teacher. Teachers simply bring the student into a learning environment and enhance the efficiency of the learning process.

Teaching is a science in the sense that it involves logical and systematic arrangement based on certain principles. It is an art, which means that it cannot be reduced to a formula. It is an art that requires sensitivity to factors affecting the student and his/her environment for learning, which must be suitably modified according to his/her needs.

The entire educational process of teaching and learning revolves around the most important factor – the student. Teaching practice generally focuses on development by adding something new to one's experiences. There are two phases involved in the educational process, namely teaching and learning. Teacher/instructor is a person who stimulates learning in the students by organizing and guiding certain experiences of the individuals under his leadership. He is essentially an educator who 'brings out' all that is best in the student.

11.1 Teaching Yoga

Teaching Yoga transmits dual benefits apart from its wonderful concepts of learning. The person who teaches yoga to others benefits learners by making a contribution to the good health and ultimately happiness in their lives. Yoga teachers themselves are benefited in the form of their self-confidence building, development in communication skills, and getting an advantage of the opportunity to step out of their own mind by focusing their energy on learners. The thought that one can easily get rid of his/her own tensions and can discover happiness and joy in life by serving others is given by the great Siddhartha Gautama.

As yoga practitioners and educators, one of our main tasks is to create a zone of respectful silence, in which others can explore and express their thoughts and feelings, and learning and teaching can happen most effectively. The ancient yoga texts are replete with teachings of the essential role of inner and outer silence as necessary for *svadhyaya* (self-study) and the cultivation of mindfulness and inner peace.

The word ‘silence’ is defined in the *Maitri Upanishad* by many names. According to it silence is “tranquil, soundless, fearless, sorrowless, blissful, satisfied, steadfast, immovable, immortal, unshaken, and enduring.

It is from there that we bring our best selves into the world, acting from places of wisdom, clarity, and self-awareness rather than self-interest. Practicing silence allows us to become attuned not only to our inner wisdom, but also to the presence of others and what it is they need from us.

In other words, instead of filling the space, we pause, wait, and listen. This does not mean that we are not participating in conversation—rather we are allowing our interactions with others to flow freely without imposing our needs, agendas, or anxieties. We learn to pause rather than push. This can be remarkably challenging if our tendency is to help out, or fix things.

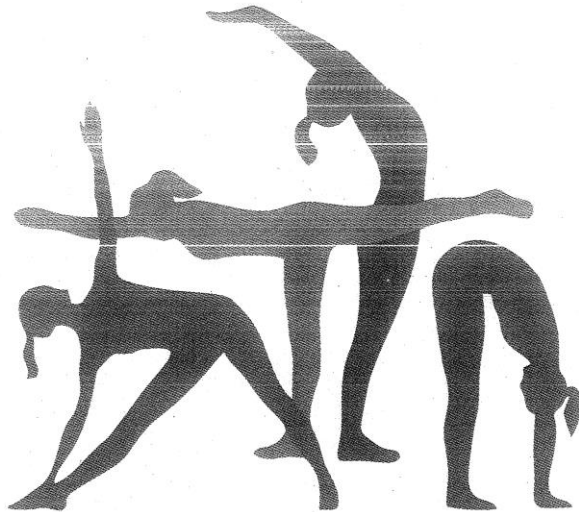


Fig. 11.1: Yoga Practice

The practice of *shavasana*, which lasts for a few minutes at the end of a yoga practice in which participants are asked to lie on their yoga mats in “corpse pose,” offers an exceptional opportunity to play with our capacity to pause and create space. Although being still in a state of relaxation sounds appealing, it can be incredibly challenging, particularly in the context of a hectic, non-stop life.



Most-common Mis-conceptions

It is believed that only slim people can practise yoga. But the fact is yoga can help a practitioner lose weight and live a healthier lifestyle irrespective of his/her body type. Different forms of yoga are available for different people to avail their benefits. Do not be discouraged.



Notes

Yoga has a long rich history, its emergence could be traced back to some 5,000 years ago. Some eminent researchers take its emergence back to over 10,000 years ago. Innovation, practice and development are the three key parts in which yoga history is divided.

Environment of Training¹

The atmosphere of class should be clean and no foul smell should be there.

1. It is appropriate to take yoga classes in the atmosphere where there is no pollution, and the air is fresh and clean.
2. For every practitioner 6 x 3 place is needed to sit and lie on the floor while doing exercises.
3. Mats should be placed in the classroom or the practitioner should bring along with him.
4. Mat should be made of cotton or of a bad conductor (electrically non-conductive material).
5. In the environment there are several key points:

For example, heat, social harmony, classification on the basis of intelligence and financial sources. If all are alike, it is most appropriate for conducting the class.

Yoga Teaching Steps

The whole yoga teaching process centres round the most important principle and that is 'to feel natural and calm'.

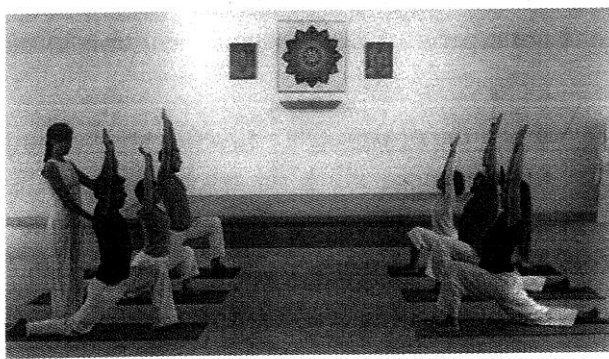


Fig. 11.2: Teaching Yoga

The following are some tips for teaching yoga. They will help you feel calm and ready in both favourable and unfavourable conditions.

1. **Be prepared:** Be thoroughly prepared as regards the practices as also the theoretical subjects which you propose to teach. It is a good practice to prepare yourself adequately irrespective of the level of practitioners you are teaching.
2. **Start with enough time while going for the class:** There is nothing worse than getting caught in traffic or missing your bus and arriving out of breath and panicked – or in worst case getting late. If it is possible, do not keep anything pre-planned in the hours leading up to your start time so you are definitely not rushing from one scenario to the next. Arrive well ahead of time.
3. **Introduction:** It is a nice practice to introduce yourself as well as take brief introductions of the students especially in the first session.
4. **Start class with silence or meditation:** It is preferable to start each session/class with a silence and meditative practice. This creates the necessary atmosphere for yoga teaching and learning. This is as much necessary for you as it is for the students.
5. **Be pleasant:** It is always good to maintain pleasantness in your demeanor and speech. This inspires and comforts the students.
6. **Laugh off mistakes:** Did you mix up left and right? While performing warrior techniques or postures did the side of the body get skipped by you? Do not feel awkward because it is natural to do so just laugh out and breathe out the error you made. One should acknowledge his/her error and must do whatever is required to fix it up, with the intention of not repeating it in the future and getting the job done in a right way.

¹ Part of the information has been sourced from "Yoga Tree: Fundamental Principles of Yoga, Patanjali Yogpeeth, Haridwar".

7. **Express thanks to students:** The instructor should thank his/her students at the end of the class or session, it doesn't matter how the instructor feels about expressing thanks to students. One should show the gratitude and grace towards the students for sharing their space with you.
8. **Accept the situation:** In case the class gets messed up by you and in reality the class is not going well, forget the bad thing as soon as possible otherwise it will be tough for you to come back in the same form of teaching and with more confidence. Learn from the good and bad situations aroused in the class and accordingly strategies your class.
9. **Keep teaching:** The more a teacher teaches the better he/she gets. The teacher will be able to build up more confidence with his/her better performance and this would result into good teaching. Always recall the main reason and purpose what made you to choose teaching yoga, this will help you to be on the right track. One should always remember the passion which brought one to yoga in the first place and work on that to let that passion shine.



Preparation is a must for teaching.

The Scope of Practicing Yoga

1. Training of yoga has a wider scope. Once a person chooses to become a yoga instructor/teacher, he/she is benefited himself/herself more than the others. A yoga instructor can experience a growth in his/her personality. The recent popularity in the field of yoga

has provided many new opportunities for yoga professionals to work as instructors in resorts, gym, schools, health centres, tourist resorts, housing societies and also in large organizations. TV channels act as a source to add values to their viewers' lives by hiring proficient yoga instructors and broadcasting their yoga sessions. Self-employment is one more opportunity available to yoga instructors by opening self owned yoga classes/centres. Now-a-days a number of famous people, such as many film stars, hire their personal instructors for practicing yoga.

2. As far as the remuneration part is concerned, it is usually good as the employers vary from middle class individuals to the wealthy one. On the other hand, it is also depends on the teacher's/instructor's expertise.

The Need for Referral to Other Professional Services

The yoga instructor/teacher will find the need for referring prospective aspirants of yoga to other professionals in a number of situations which are as follows:

1. When the teacher has enough students and is not capable of devoting sufficient time to the prospective aspirant.
2. When the prospective aspirant is approaching for a purpose which the teacher is incapable of fulfilling.
3. When an aspirant has reached a plateau in his progress with a teacher, the latter can direct the aspirant to another teacher.

Yoga can Make You Work Faster

Mind of yoga practitioners becomes calm and focused, if they practise it on a regular basis.

This results into an increased level of productivity and efficiency at work, and it also shoots up the success rates. One might be surprised to see how he/she is able to finish some work in minimum possible time about one-two hours, which took more time when performed earlier. And the effort which you make to achieve this is just 30 minutes of yoga practice in the morning time. One has to begin with stretching his/her body with active yoga postures, and then following up with *pranayama* and after that getting into depth of meditation for a blissful experience.

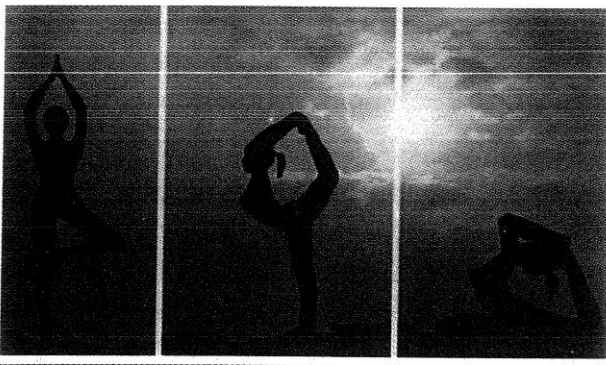


Fig. 11.3: Yoga in Daily Routine

Observed Capacity for Well-Developed Communication Skills

Some of the essential qualities include attention, awareness, self-examination, intention, and skilful action. Behaving mindfully involves communicating from a place of awareness, while maintaining an intention to hold space for others. But when we feel stressed, excited, threatened, triggered, or defensive, it can be very difficult not to react in ways that serve our immediate needs or interests rather than considering how our responses might best serve our relationships.

Listening

The instructor/teacher should have the obvious quality of deep listening.

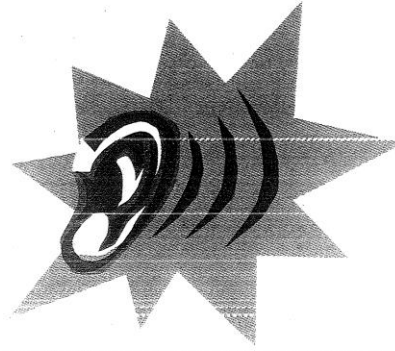


Fig. 11.4: Listening

While this may seem simple enough, it is one of the most difficult and most essential traits in the teaching profession.

How to Speak and Communicate

Express yourself in a Right Manner: Always convey what exactly you mean and must mean what you had conveyed. One should be concise, to the point and clear.

Always Explore and to Explain: Always be prepared to provide relevant and appropriate information required by your partner to make him/her better understand your view point. Never expect this, that others will be able to read your mind without your view point expression.

Never Speak Arguably: This simply means here that never give such statements which may provoke arguments. Consider the example, revealing that how to present your fear to your partner without passing arguable statement, one may say: "I feel tensed and scared when you pull me too fast." This simply conveys that when your partner pulls you during a specific yoga pose with a speed, this gives you a feeling tension and fear and as what you had said was true so it couldn't be argued.

Concentrate on Appreciation: It has been found in the studies of psychological theories that a ratio of 5:1 for appreciation to complaint is recommend. One should always focus on the

positive aspects of the students and encourage them by appreciating for it.

Turn your Criticisms into Requests: The instructor/teacher can be critical about the student's performance in a way that it stimulates the student to perform better. The instructor/teacher can turn his/her criticisms into polite advice for better performance.

Never Blame: Whenever listeners are blamed, they come forward to defend themselves and put a stop on their listening. Doing communication without pointing out the faults and blames in each other is vital. Always try to understand the situation and communicator rather than using the overpower tactic.

Make a Shift from Blame to Wonder: Analyse yourself and find out that whether any contribution to the communication problem arising is made by you. Think over the problems and situation because this will shift mind from critical thinking to creative thinking which helps in developing a healthy relationship rather than being in a state of 'I am Right'.

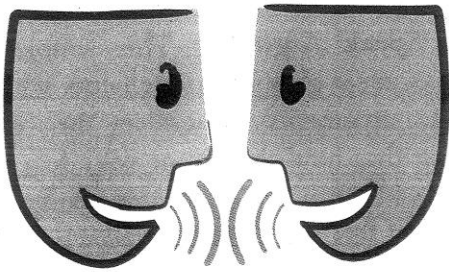


Fig. 11.5: Speaking and Communicating

How to Listen?

Be Attentive: When a person pays attention and avoids distractions this shows that he/she is interested in listening to the person who is speaking to him/her. It is not possible for a person to express his/her opinions and thoughts in anticipation what the speaker would say.

Body Language: Your body language should show that you are listening to the speaker, always maintain proper eye contact with the speaker, be in the habit of nodding to make sure that you are attentively listening and never cross your arms while listening or talking to some body.

Be a Generous Listener: One should react in a proper manner on what the speaker said with accuracy. One must also express respect to the feelings of person. Listen in such a way that you able to listen what the speaker didn't able to convey, it simply means to listening the emotions of speaker.

Complete Understanding: Always check whether you are able to understand the message properly. One can check this by converting the message in his/her own words such as "Do you mean...?" "Are you saying ...?" Be attentive and focus at every angle. All these will help you to discover that are you able to understand the same, what student is saying.

Open and welcoming Attitude as well as Respect for What the Other is Saying: One must agree to the fact that expressing willingness to hear what the speaker is saying is vital. This determines the listeners' respect towards the speaker. Giving respect to each other's view point rather than getting into of what is right or what is wrong.

Response is must rather than an Answer: Give a hint to the speaker that you are further interested in listening to his/her point of views. Express this by saying, "Please tell me more about that."

If required touch and express reassurance: Communication becomes quite difficult when the presence of strong emotions is felt. One may show his/her support to the speaker just by a touch or a hug if required when one doesn't know what exactly to express or say.

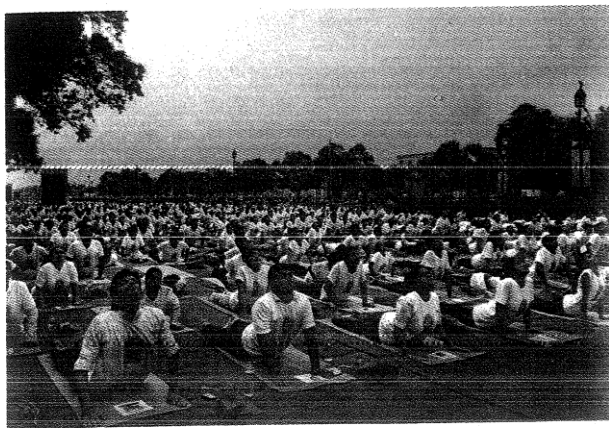


Fig. 11.6: Yoga Aspirants Performing Yoga

Presence

The sign of an accomplished and matured yoga teacher is revealed by his/her ability to communicate realistically and authentically. The communication should be from heart revealing the main purpose. A skillful communication is a combined package of usage of words by speaker, the tactic of speaker to show his/her presence, touch (if and when) required and vision. An expert teacher of yoga has full knowledge of how to do effective communication for telling the beauty and depth of yoga teachings to students by using skills of verbal and non-verbal communication, all this is done keeping in mind making class a comfort zone for all levels of participants. Now-a-days advance teaching methods and skills are used to make teachers understand how to serve their students best by accepting them as they are and meeting them as per their convenience, and last but not the least connecting with them with consciousness and ethics.

Healthy and effective touch has the power to encourage insight at all levels of experience and to cultivate deep presence. As yoga teachers, we use touch to communicate with our students, and invite them to feel the present moment and all that it offers physically, emotionally, and energetically.

The sense of holding space in teachers derives from a thoughtful and sensible understanding of both qualities of touch, i.e., the physical and energetic touch, as well as the powerful experiences that can result from our connection with one another. As we become more fluent holding space for our own experiences, we gain skills and confidence to hold space for others.

Directive and Non-Directive Dialogue

The dialogic is probably the most pressing issue for the training because everyone could never be a master of memorization.

What is non-directive dialogue? For example, if someone asks, why do you love yoga? it means he uses non-directive and non-judgmental dialogue. This always comes easily to a person who wants to learn this art. It is something that one should tend to do naturally in life. It feels much more supportive when someone really listens to what the other person is saying rather than trying to think of what he/she is going to say next, or to spit out some pre-conditioned mechanical response that he/she is supposed to say. It feels supportive to have someone say, I hear that you are upset, and I am still here supporting you....I see that you are angry, or depressed, or fearful, and I am not going to tell you to "look at the bright side", to "focus on the positive", or to "let it go". In essence, this is what a skilled yoga instructor does in his classes. He genuinely listens and offers his students support. He does not judge what they are saying or feeling. He does not tell them how to "fix" their problems. He does not suggest that they should look at things differently, or be different. So, how does this work in sessions? The process is actually very simple, and from a practitioner's standpoint, it involves two main phrases: "What's happening now?" and "tell me more."



Most-common Mis-conceptions

It is a general belief that there is no risk involved in practising yoga. But the point to note here and pay attention to is that the low-impact form of yoga practice is safe for almost all the people practising it only when it is performed correctly. Although risk due to injuries from yoga is less, but in some exceptional cases they may be there. The key to a risk-free and injury-free yoga is to practise it in a proper way and style, be hydrated, modify postures as per your knowledge and skill and pay proper attention to your body.

Handling of Different Aspirants

Practitioners of yoga are categorized into three levels/degrees: (1) *Adhama Adhikarin*, one who is just initiated into yoga practice, (2) *Madhyam Adhikar* in, one who has been practicing yoga for a few year, and (3) *Uttama Adhikarin*, one who is an adept at yoga.

Students are able to learn properly and improve postures when teachers do demonstration of yogic poses. Injuries can be prevented when detailed and accurate instructions were given. Practising yoga awakes and realigns the whole body and also helps in building up the strength of the body and movement in stiff areas.

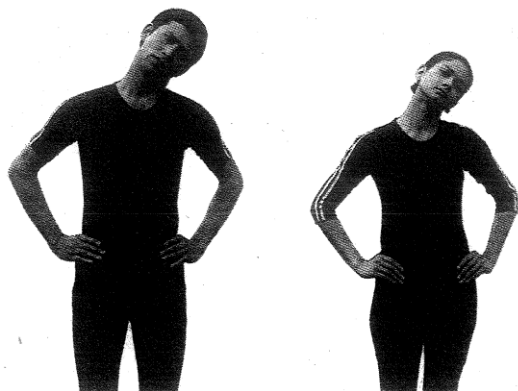


Fig. 11.7: Demonstration of Yoga Poses

Demonstrations from teachers help students learn and improve poses. Accurate and specific instructions also help prevent injuries. Yoga encourages weak parts of the body to strengthen and stiff areas to release, thus awakening and realigning the whole body.

Vital Need for Moral Strength and Courage

In general a spiritual person has to be prepared to handle and face misunderstanding, calumny and misrepresentation in a bold manner. Any spiritual aspirant who wants or tries to achieve better than his/her fellows has to go through such situations. To cope up with such situation courage and enough strength at moral level is required, this will help aspirant to sustain his/her position as per his/her integrity and thoughts of what is right and what is wrong. Competitors and non-competitors both will try to pull down the person growing in professional life for this people may hate and may maltreat the aspirants. If any aspirant who want to grow spiritually he/she has to work according to his/her own principles having a good reason for the same.

Yoga can be made accessible to a range of student ability. The size of Yoga classes should be kept small so that proper attention can be paid to all the aspirants. The primary aim should be to help the aspirants to find peace and stillness in their work.

11.2 Principles and Skills for Educating Aspirants

Teaching is a complex and multifaceted activity. Effective teaching is about helping the students/ aspirants to achieve the best results. It requires an instructor to juggle multiple tasks and goals simultaneously and flexibly.

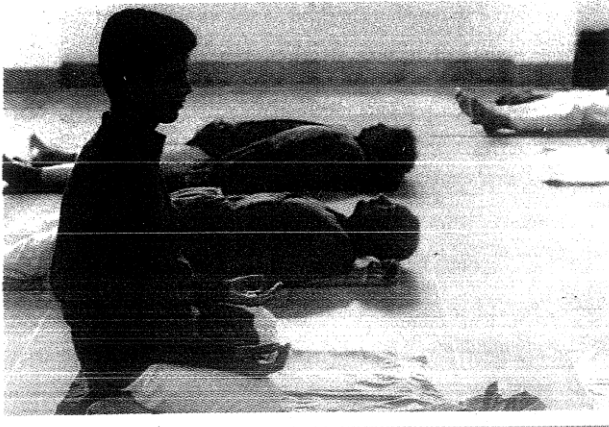


Fig. 11.8: Yoga Instructor

Role of yoga instructors/teachers is not restricted only to teaching aspirants different yoga poses, their role are many in numbers, which are listed below:

- Leading group of yoga aspirants/students in a comprehensive and approachable sequence related to breathing exercises, postures, contemplations and meditations.
- Creating a space which is safe and nurturing which encourages students/aspirants to participate in yoga class.
- Responsible of giving proper, safe and understandable demonstration and guidance to aspirants/students for a series of postures.

Principles followed for Educating Aspirants

The principles mentioned below make teaching effective and more efficient:

- Three vital elements of instruction, i.e., learning objectives, instructional activities and assessments must be aligned.
- Skills and knowledge segment chosen to focus on must be given priority.
- Implementing teaching as an important task must go with the subject matter knowledge of teacher.

- Students' involvement and motivation depend on the students and teacher's interaction.
- Development of reciprocity and cooperation among students/aspirants should be in place.
- Students/aspirants should relate what they are learning to something in real life.
- Teachers/instructors should set up problem solving activities in small groups.
- Teachers/instructors should use a wide variety of intellectually challenging teaching procedures.
- Assessment should be promoted as part of the learning process.

Skills Required for Educating Aspirants

A yoga teacher/instructor role scope also encompasses the creating, developing and implementing such training sessions of yoga which are fit and appropriate as per level of students in the class. A yoga teacher/instructor should also possess the ability to explain, illustrate, modify and give demonstration of *asanas* in such a way which is approachable and understandable for all participants in the class in that particular session. An expert yoga instructor on his/her individual base should be able to change the postures as per the requirement of aspirant/student.

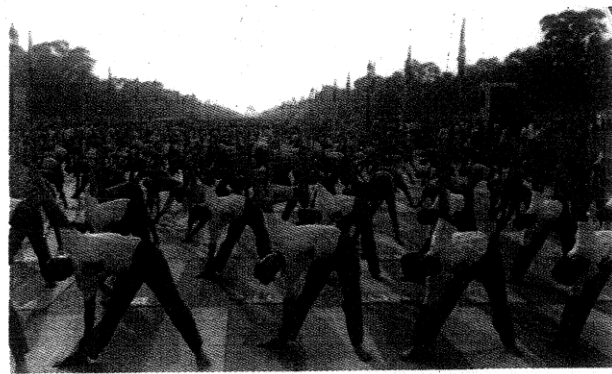


Fig. 11.9: Yoga Training Session

During the training session if instructor notices that some aspirant/student is really finding it tough to get into a certain posture, then it is his/her responsibility to quickly modify and adjust the alignment of the aspirant/student to build up a trust and safe feeling in the aspirant/student for the teacher/instructor. This will help participant to be relaxed and fully attend all the sessions.

Teaching Principles

Effective teaching depends on the knowledge of important principles of anatomy, physiology, psychology, pedagogy and yoga so that the teacher may be flexible in modifying the method. These principles also provide sound base for selection and formulation of methods.

Yogic Principles

Let us discuss the yogic principles:

- Yogic practices should not be misunderstood with 'exercises'. Vigorous physical movements are generally applied in exercises. As in practice of yoga no vigorous movements are involved, so any type of violent action must not be included during yogic practice.
- Yoga practices are of diverse nature and encompass various mechanisms which help in achieving and obtaining results from different yogic practices. Same channels are not used by the Meditation, *Asana*, *Bandhas*, *Pranayama*, *Mudras* and *Kriyas* for achieving the yogic practices results.
- The 'static stretching procedures' which are known for the vital and best yogic practices are known as *Asanas*. In order to influence the tonic system of body rather the physical system of body the *asanas* should be practised slowly.
- One should maintain a particular *asanas*' position for certain time by using less effort. The main feature of *Asanas*' technique is to

perform effortlessly and attain maximum relaxation in the final position.

- 'Breathing exercises' are quite different from *Pranayamic* practices in terms of purpose and technique. Unlike breathing exercises, *pranayama* practices involve controlling and manipulating of *prana* in the body.
- Practice of Yoga should not be done in such a way that it leads to unnecessary exhaustion and tiredness. In case fatigue is felt then relaxation by practicing *Shavasana* must be achieved.
- The performance of yoga by individuals must be performed as per the *yathashakti* (own capacity) of practitioner's.

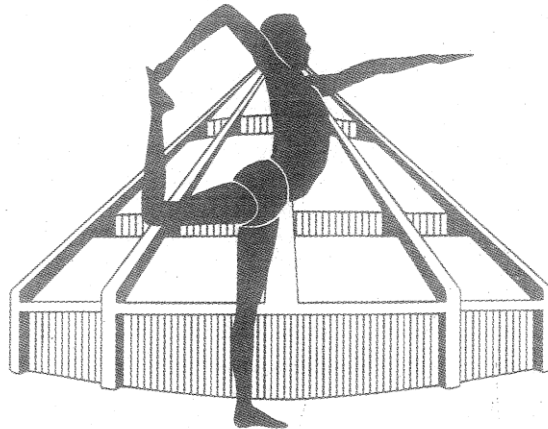


Fig. 11.10: Yogic Routine with Psycho-physical Relaxation

- Practitioners peace of mind must be the main aim of person practicing yoga.
- A routine of yoga should start with relaxation in terms of psychophysical or by reciting some prayers actually or centering attention as done in prayers.

Psychological Principles

- Interest is the best motivation for learning. The teacher should teach in such a way that students maintain their interest and motivation to learn.

- Activity is necessary for learning. Learning is a process of experience. Unless the student is involved in the experience of activity he/she may not be able to learn. Therefore practice is essential, especially for motor-learning or skill-learning. Again it is not mere practice but the correct practice that is important. Complex motor skills require more repetitions of correct practice.
- All learning has a neural basis. Unless proper neuromuscular coordination is formed one cannot expect further developments in any motor skills.
- For efficient learning the material to be learnt must be within the range of experience and abilities of the learner. Learning is highly individualized and results in progressive changes in behaviour. The ability to learn depends upon the innate capacity and previous experiences of the student. All individuals do not learn at the same rate.
- Learning of motor skills is hastened if the performer is able to grasp an intellectual understanding of the nature of the task before beginning the practice.
- Regular practice of an activity resulting in pleasure and satisfaction contributes to the most effective learning.
- Occasional short periods of rest between the practice periods produce superior results in learning motor skills. Brief rest period prevents fatigue in the muscles and efficiency of the muscles is not decreased.



Did You Know?

The centre of gravity in female bodies is lower than that of in males. This should be taken into consideration in practices involving stability and balance.

Teaching Methods

The process of teaching several methods have been tried over many years and we find that they fall into two main categories:

- (i) Instructional methods used in the classroom for teaching theoretical subjects.
- (ii) Methods used for teaching practical skill.

The classroom methods are variously named as the lecture method, the recitation method, the project method, the laboratory method, the dramatic method and the group discussion method. The methods for teaching skills or physical activities, however, have not been properly categorized. Each method used in the classroom situation has many implications for teaching physical activities and skills, but they cannot be directly applied to teaching physical activities and skills. Even in respect of classroom teaching, no single method or pattern could serve as the best method for all teaching situations. The method of teaching yogic practices comes closer to that of physical activities rather than of theoretical subjects.

Traditionally, there have been two approaches towards successful teaching: the first is a teacher-centered approach and the second a student-centered approach.

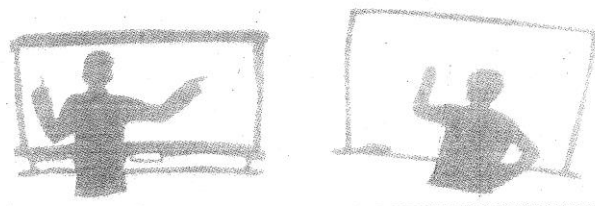


Fig. 11.11: Classroom Method of Teaching

The teacher-centered approach was the main method in the past, even in Yoga. But today scientific thought focuses its attention on and emphasizes the student-centered approach. So naturally, the principles and concepts which underlie the methods are expected to involve this student-centered approach, the main emphasis of

which is due consideration of the needs of the students.

Methods of teaching must be compatible with the goals sought or the outcomes expected. The purpose of any method is to create learning in the student. The teacher should know how a particular method he uses affects the student's learning ability.

The following are some of the basic methods of teaching:

(a) **Lecture Method:** It is perhaps the oldest method used for formal teaching. It is valuable in organizing large fields on material, separating a particular type of information for immediate use, presenting new information and synthesizing information from a wide variety of sources.

It is more useful with mature students who have a high degree of auditory perception since it involves problems of attention, voice level, clarity, use of rest period and vocabulary level.

The lecture has considerable use in teaching yogic practices. It may be used in presenting any type of information related to particular activity in the perspective of yoga in general. When extensive lecture is necessary for the achievement of a specific goal, the students should be able to hear the teacher clearly. A lecture can be stimulating, interesting and motivating to the students if the teacher prepares it properly.

The lecture method proves of greater advantage when combined with other methods. The use of visual materials is of considerable help in aiding students to retain the content of the lecture.

When using the lecture method the teacher should also be aware of the limitations of this method, which are mentioned as follows:

- (i) It is a teacher-centered activity and may encourage lack of participation on the part of the students.
- (ii) Many student lack ability to learn by this method.
- (iii) It may lead teachers to ignore more effective methods.

The attention span of more immature students is too short to benefit from a long lecture.

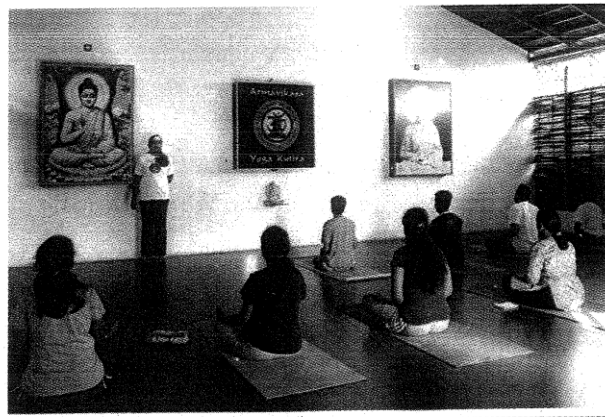


Fig. 11.12: Lecture Method

(b) **Response-to-Instruction Method:** In this method the teacher gives precise instructions which precede, follow or are concurrent with a demonstration, and all students respond to the instructions in the same way.

There is very little attention paid to the individuals. The emphasis is on the subject matter of activity that is introduced. This method has a formal approach. An information approach with this method is more favourable in teaching such activities where there is some

variation in the performance of individuals. This method can be profitably used after due attention to problems of individuals.

- (c) **Individualized Instruction Method:** It is based on the principle that learning is highly individualized. In this method attempts are made to provide by different means for individual differences within the pattern of the group structure.

Directed-Practice Method

Assignments for extra practice of selected yogic practices out of class hours enhance skill and performance levels of the students. Necessary introduction along with the preliminary practice of selected yogic exercises like *Sirasasana*, *Uddiyana*, *Kapalabhati*, *Nauli*, Purificatory processes, etc., may be done in the class and the efficiency could be developed through out-of-class practice. The students should be encouraged to do out-of-class practice and the teacher may check the results during subsequent classes and give additional suggestions for further practice. Obviously, the success of this method depends upon the motivation the students get and their rapport with the teacher.

- (a) **Project Method:** The aim of this method is to enable the students to put into practice what they have learned in the class. It may also be of help for students to learn related information. When the time is short in the regular schedule the projects such as preparing note-books on the yogic practices undergone, collection of related material from various sources, preparing models and the exhibits of the yogic practices, planned observations of seminars, conferences, as well as visits to different well-known yoga centres represent valuable help to teaching under this method.

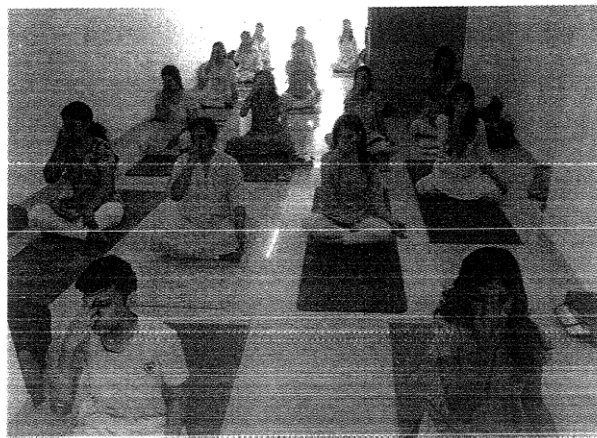


Fig. 11.13: Yoga Demonstration in Class

- (b) **Demonstration Method:** Demonstration refers to non-competitive type performances with emphasis on skill and form. Demonstrations are of value, if properly directed to both performer and viewer. Demonstration Method as a technique for the use of the class has some disadvantages. The scope of learning is restricted. It utilises existing talent rather than developing new skills. However, the Demonstration Method serves as an excellent group method.

Unfortunately, there appears to be no simple formula for selecting the best methods. This depends on the conditions available, such as time, space and equipment. The teacher should have the skill to use a particular method and adapt it to prevailing conditions so that the students receive proper orientation and understanding of the technique and purpose of the method. In other words, a method should always be considered as a means to an end and not the end in itself. The method should allow for individual differences and stimulate both creativity and independent thinking in the students. In yoga, the teaching method has to be eclectic, drawing upon useful vital contributions from several existing methods.

11.3 Teaching Yoga in a Group Setting

Teaching yoga in groups is a different ball game. The focus a private yoga teacher can have in a group yoga setting can still be intentional and mindful of the independent needs of the person with regards to individual sequencing. Sequencing to the individual is possible in a group yoga setting. It is not as effective as one-on-one sessions, and it is certainly not easy to address the needs of many at once. You cannot customize a group lesson to please everyone, but you can begin to develop skills of teaching many at once.

Demonstration ability in group depends upon precise instructions by the teacher. Formal instructions are best suited during the initial stage of practice. Instructions could be divided into those that are given verbally before the beginning of the yogic practice, those which accompany performance of the activity individually or by the group and those that are extended by way of information or corrections after the completion of the activity. Initial instructions prevent the student from adopting incorrect habits which might have to be unlearned later. Practical instructions guide the students for correct and efficient performance.



Fig. 11.14: Yoga in Group Setting

The following guidelines in a group setting can help the teacher convey instructions clearly:

- Be sure that you have the attention of everyone in the class before any instructions are given.
- When a long explanation is needed it is better to make the learner sit down and it will be even better if they sit close to the teacher.
- Ideally, explanations can be best provided in the relaxation phase between two *asanas*.
- Make your instructions brief, perfectly clear and your voice must be audible to the learners.
- The instructions should be given for only one thing at a time.
- Try to use different words and expressions to catch the attention of the students. For example, if students do not understand your words in the first attempt, use different words while repeating the instructions.
- Describe the technique and procedure of any activity before the students are actually asked to practice.

If students are provided with suitable lesson content in a competent and stimulating fashion, they will take interest in learning and rarely cause trouble. One essential step which can be taken to reduce the problem of control is to create an atmosphere of natural freedom, friendliness, mutual help and understanding. These qualities in a class should emanate from the leadership of the teacher. This develops social consciousness in students and makes them aware about their responsibility to the group.

The students or participants of Yoga may be grouped under the following headings:

- **Beginners' Group:** This group may involve persons of all ages, males and females, young and old and special individuals who are making their first acquaintance with yoga. They need a general background of yogic discipline and motivation to continue with yoga.

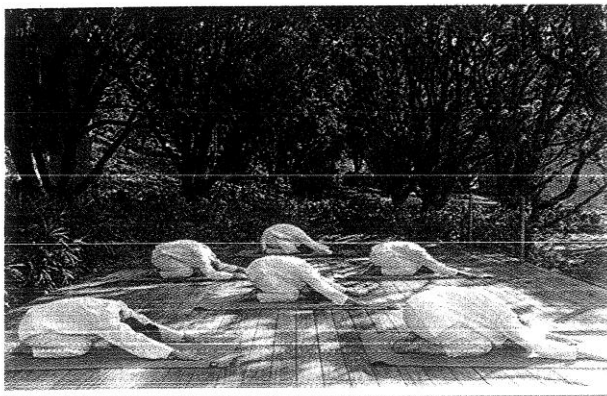


Fig. 11.15: Group Programs

- **Experienced or Advanced Group:** This group may consist of persons who have some experiences with yoga and wish to advance further to gain more varied and deeper experience. Their expectation is to acquaint themselves with a greater number of yogic practices and indulge in subtler and higher practices intensively.
- **School Children:** This is a select group ranging from the age of 6 years to 16 years. School children need exposure to the field of yoga based on their immediate needs of their age and temperament.
- **Special Attention Groups:** These individuals can vary on the basis of age like children and adults, on the basis of gender, on the basis of individual problems of health, abnormality or handicaps, etc. All these individuals need special attention which is possible in a homogeneous group but not in a heterogeneous group.

Designing and Implementing Group Program

Yoga training program controlled in a group setting is as powerful as the one managed exclusively, in view of both the subjective perception of the aspirant and objective measurement of performance. One clarification for the comparable

results is that every program approach has its own that actuates constructive outcomes on ability. While individual-based program is ventured to give the most extreme chance to rehearse with negligible waiting time and diversions from other individuals, group based yoga training may have its own advantages.

To begin with, the group setting gives chances to social interaction. Besides, practitioners are essentially competitive, and this inspires them for better performance. In the group, a stronger sense of proficiency can be established if a practitioner can effectively exhibit the procured skills in front of his/her peer. Moreover, this apparent skill may facilitate support the practitioner's involvement in physical activities influencing their fitness and in training of yoga.

It has been found that the group setting may give extra social benefits, as group interaction encourages practitioner's motivation to achieve goals and to be succeed.

Communication Skills, Time Management, Priorities and Limits

A proficient yoga instructor/teacher should be competent to explore the mind of each student and one should be a good communicator. The yoga student who learns predominantly by listening will be able to verbally communicate the finer techniques to others in the future.

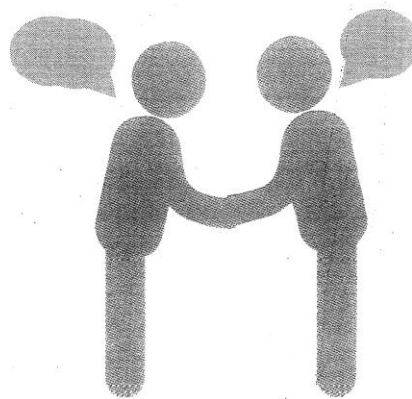


Fig. 11.16: Communication

Not all yoga students have the same ability to pay attention and grasping power. There are numerous learning ways such as listening attentively to teachers' cues, learning by assistance from teacher and learning just by copying teachers through which different students learn. On the part of a yoga instructor, it is required by him/her to be a good listener when students' ask questions.

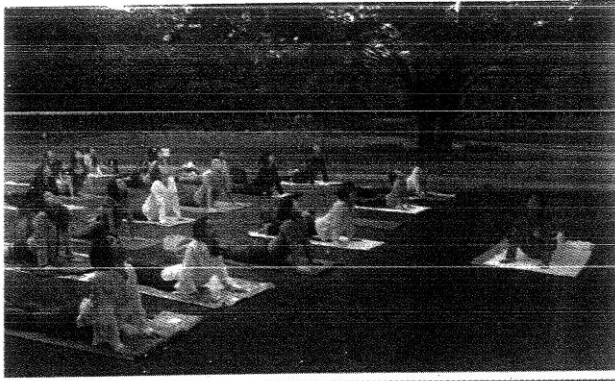


Fig. 11.17: Visual Demonstration of Yoga Postures

There is individual difference related to the manner in which various kinds of sensory information are effectively used by the students. Some students have remarkable ability to quickly organize visually presented information. It is desirable that the teacher himself should give the demonstration of a particular yoga practice. The teacher can communicate with his/her students better through the demonstration staged by him/her. At the same time he/she should verbally explain clearly the fundamental principles underlying the yoga practice. Any practice by the students must be preceded by visual demonstration to be more effective.

Yoga offers some great insights and reminders. Yoga can help with time management in the following five ways:

1. **Be Focused:** Remember to be focused. Suppose one is practising balancing in *Vrikshasana* or the Tree Pose, then at that point of time do not ever try to think anything else because this will cause you to lose your

balance and you may fall. Similarly, one would not be able to get work done or practice well the yoga posture if he/she stops every five minutes to check on social networking sites or emails. So remember to do one thing until that work is finished, and then focus on another task.

2. **Be Disciplined:** Meditation or yoga practice on a daily basis requires a lot of discipline in the practitioner's life.
3. **Giving Priority:** One should prioritise the most significant things to be done on their to-do list and then start with those things which always help in achieving balanced life. The things which make one satisfied and relaxed such as practising yoga, eating healthy food, going on long walks, and enjoying and laughing with friends and family, should be given priority, as this will make the person feel happy and have a balanced life.
4. **In need ask for help:** It is not easy for any practitioners to learn the yoga postures without others help, *asanas* integrity and subtle nuances.
5. **Living life as per yoga *asanas* practiced:** It is appreciable for yoga practitioners to do yoga in their own way and avoid any kind of comparisons with anybody else.



Learning ACTIVITY

Assume that you are a yoga instructor. Some students are not able to do some yoga *asanas* as per your instructions. What will you do in such a situation?

Question-Answer Session

A small question-answer session is very helpful at the end of the unit to evaluate the effectiveness of the session and remove any difficulties/doubts of the students.

The following hints will be useful in conducting a question-answer or discussion session:

- Encourage the students to ask their questions or address their comments to the group for discussion.
- Never discourage or ridicule any student's question or contribution howsoever small it may be.
- Try to draw all students into discussion rather than those few who are always ready to talk.
- It is wise to limit the discussion to a few important points.
- The teacher is expected to know more than the students on the points of discussion. If the teacher is not prepared to answer any question or does not know about a particular point, he should not hesitate to say so. Instead he should say that he will find out the answer and explain that in the next class.
- Remember that young children are not mature enough to participate in a group discussion so a different approach is necessary in encouraging them to share their experiences.
- Exercise some control over the time spent on questions. Steer the discussion to important and relevant questions. Do not sacrifice valuable time on those points that are not important.



SUMMARY

- Teaching yoga transmits dual benefits apart from its wonderful concepts of learning. The person who teaches yoga to others benefits learners by making a contribution to their good health and for ultimately bringing about happiness in their lives.
- A yoga instructor can experience a growth in his/her personality. The recent popularity in the field of yoga has provided many new

opportunities for yoga professionals to work as instructors in resorts, gym, schools, health centres, tourist resorts, housing societies and also in large organizations.

- Activity is necessary for learning. Learning is a process of experience. Unless the student is involved in the experience of activity he/she may not be able to learn. Therefore practice is essential, especially for motor-learning or skill-learning. Again it is not mere practice but the correct practice that is important. Complex motor skills require more repetitions of correct practice.
- Observing capacity is a way of emphasizing attention, awareness, self examination, intention, and skilful action. Behaving mindfully involves communicating from a place of awareness, while maintaining an intention to hold space for others.
- Visual demonstration of the practice is one of the most effective way to enhance the learning of a motor-skill. However, the learning is hastened if the student is able to grasp an intellectual understanding of the nature of the task before the beginning of the practice and is given sometime to integrate the initial cues from observing the demonstration and listening to instructions. Brief, clear descriptions of the activity with repeated demonstrations and pointing out likely faults bring good results in yoga.
- An effective teaching depends on the knowledge of important principles of anatomy, physiology, psychology, pedagogy and yoga so that the teacher may be flexible in modifying the method. These principles also provide sound base for selection and formulation of methods.
- The lecture method proves to be of greater advantage when combined with other methods. The use of visual materials is of considerable help in aiding students to retain the content of the lecture.

- In response-to-instruction method the teacher gives precise instructions which precede, follow or are concurrent with a demonstration and all students respond to the instructions of the teacher in the same way.
- The aim of project method is to enable the students to put into practice what they have learned in the class.
- In group settings, there may be persons who have some experience with yoga and wish to advance further to gain more varied and deeper experience. Their expectation is to acquaint themselves with a greater number of yogic practices and indulge in subtler and higher practices intensively.
- The progress of science in various fields has developed techniques that have made knowledge widely available. These radically alter our systems of communication. The use of computers, for example, has reduced the need for man-power in the area of teaching.
- The teacher is expected to know more than the students on the points of discussion. If the teacher is not prepared to answer any question or he is not sure on any point, he/she should not hesitate to say so. He/she should instead say that he/she will find out the answer and explain it in the next class.



KEYWORDS

Aspirants: A person who aspires to do or to be something.

Demonstration: It is the act of exhibiting the yoga practice as a method of teaching.

Discipline: It is a system of rules of conduct or method of practice.

Principles: A fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behaviour.



SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Short Answer Questions

1. Write down the difference between a lesson and a session.
2. Name the different methods of teaching yoga.
3. Justify in brief the need of demonstration for a yoga teacher.
4. Differentiate between directive and non-directive dialogue.
5. What are the benefits of group classes?

Long Answer Questions

1. Explain the factors that go into well-developed communication skills.
2. Discuss the various methods of teaching yoga.
3. How do the methods of teaching help students get good classes? Elaborate.
4. Describe sitting arrangement in terms of yoga teaching classes.
5. How can a yoga teacher deal with difficult students? Discuss.
6. Discuss 'good listening'.
7. Yoga teaching can be a successful career option. Discuss.



FURTHER READINGS

- Teaching Practices – published by Kaivalyadham
- The Heart of Yoga: Developing a Personal Practice – T. K. V. Desikachar
- The Yoga of the Yogi: The Legacy of T. Krishnamacharya - Kausthub Desikachar

Appendix

1.9 Teachings of Prominent Gurus and Yogis*

Maharishi Dayananda Saraswati* (page no. 47)

Maharshi Dayananda is an exquisitely enriched personality, who had rejuvenated the most ancient tradition of the *Vedās*. The pioneer had worked with the power of celibacy, intelligence and unshaken fidelity in the adoration of the Supreme God to let the glorious rays of the Vedic Sun shine in an inimitable way again, with an unusual brightness. He is a holy personality who enlivened the principle, practically, in which it is said, 'The primary object of *Arya Samaj* is to do good to the whole world, i.e. to promote physical, spiritual and social progress of whole mankind.' He wrote *Satyārtha Prakāsika*, to bring 'Thought movement' and *Samskāra Vidhi* to build a well-refined human being and the *Rigvaedādibhāshyabhūmik*, to establish universalism, universal application and scientific approval on the base of logic. The clarion call of Maharshi Dayananda is '*Vedās, Satyam* (truth), *Brahmacharyam* (abstinence, celibacy)'.

Now-a-days, there are so many illusions and misapprehensions in the name of *yog* and spirituality, prevalent in the society. As the general public did not know the fundamental principles the *Vedās*, they used to regard all those texts which are written in Sanskrit language as authentic texts, without any logical stand, without any authenticity and scientific reason. They took even unscientific traditions and opinions of religion and spirituality as *yog*. In fact, every perspective of the *Vedās* and the Vedic culture meets the needs of universalism, scientific value and secularism. Therefore, here we are giving seven principles of Maharishi Dayananda Saraswati, precisely –

1. The perspectives of *yog* and spiritualism are greatly supported by Maharshi Dayananda Saraswati. He considered that the practice of *Hatha yog kriyās* only purify the physical body. This aspect is unanimous in Maharshi Dayananda and all our ancient saints. In their opinion, *Asanas, Kriyās, Mudrās, Prānmayās* provide a strong base to *yog*. Practizing these different activities is merely the first stage of *yog*, not the ultimate. The final destination of *yog* is to achieve *Atma sāksātākār* or *Brahma sāksātākār*, attaining the real form of *Atma*, freeing the self from the five *klishta vrittis*, difficult moods, namely pseudo wisdom, ignorance, pride, love, hatred, persistence; from the five defects lust, anger, misery, fascination, and ego. Just by practising the *Hatha yog kriyās*, one cannot be free from the *panca vikārās*, (five defects), and his defects are not burnt, to make them as *dagdhabeeja* or the seeds that are burnt or *nirbeeja*, the seeds which do not sprout again. Without incessant practice of *Astanga yog, Kriya yog, Vivaeka* and *Vairāgya*, the *Hatha yog* alone can never help in attaining *samādhi, buddhatwa sambodhi* or *nirbeeja samādhi, nirvana* or salvation.
- For the practice of meditation, chanting of *Gayatri Mantra* is the best method. The treasure and the glory of the God should be spread widely and at last the non-form of *Brahman* should be reached. The ultimate goal of *yog* is to submerge oneself into the oneness of the *Brahman* and represent it.
2. Maharshi Dayananda thought strongly that *Yogi* should not avoid doing his *karma*. He opines that due to the misconception of *karma* one is bonded with either love or hatred, which becomes a cause for taking a birth. The *karma* should be done with wisdom; it should be selfless. This is what our ancestors said and they lived their words.

3. The spiritual perspective of Maharshi Dayananda is that this world is not reproachable. This is the creation of the Supreme God. His creation represents this form and His features only. The God is the form of piety and peace and so is his creation.
4. Maharshi Dayananda accepted only such statements of religion, spiritualism and *yog* which are logical, truthful, authentic, and on the criterion of creation on the basis of universalism, scientific temperament and secularism. He agreed only the *Vedās* are true. Hence, he accepted their authenticity. And he was always free from the narrow-minded thinking of untouchability, fraudulence, grandiosity, superstitions, categories, sexual differences, hypocrisy, dishonesty, deceits and traditional limits. He used to think that we are all children of God. He thought that God is *Sanatana*, who has no birth and no death.
5. In the opinion of Maharshi Dayananda Saraswati, *jnāna*, *karma* and *bhakti* are not three separate paths, but they always flow together and they are one and the same. He considered *suddha* (pure) *jnāna*, *suddha karma* and *suddha bhakti* is a pious *triveni*, where all the three unite. Without *Jnana* and without *karma*, *bhakti* is only a gaudy show. That kind of *bhakti* would not provide us the salvation, in turn it fastens us with bondages. Hence, without having *bhakti*, *karma* also can not be a cause for the attainment of *Mukti*. So the *karma* which is inclusive of *jnāna* and *bhakti* can only be the means of getting salvation.
6. Maharshi Dayananda Saraswati cleared the unsolved complex statements of *Dwaitavād*, *Adwaitavād* and *Visistadwaitavad*, etc. He established the *Traitavād* and spiritual unity of the *Vedās* and science and explained the authentic perspective of spiritualism. In the creation there are three entities – the God, *jeeva*, the individual soul and *prakriti*, the nature. The God is omniscient, formless, omnipotent, supreme sovereign and He is the creator, nourisher and destroyer of this whole creation. He is the bestower of *karmaphala*, the result of the deeds, and judge. *Jeeva*, the individual soul, can't be an omniscient, omnipotent, All-prevalent, Supreme being like God. But *jeeva* can attain divine powers with the practice of *yogsadhana*, *samadhi* and reside permanently in the ultimate abode, which is a pure, prudent, blissful state. *Jeeva* has two states. 1. To experience the pleasures and pains, love and hatred, etc and 2. Free *jeevatma*, which is independent of all states and is blissful.
7. Just like our ancient saints, Maharshi Dayananda Saraswati also had great reverence for the adage, *vasudhaiva kutumbakam' aekatva* and *sahāstitva* theory. Therefore, he had a great faith in unity, integrity, sovereignty along with the social, political and economic systems that reflect law, equality, harmony. He experienced the godliness in all animate and inanimate entities.

Maharshi Dayananda was a great sage, who lived a magnanimous life, which was an admixture of wisdom, righteous behaviour and *yog*. We may have a glimpse of three channels of *jnāna*, *karma* and *bhakti* in him. He was *āptapurusha*. He was an embodiment of great *yogis*, *siddhās* and sages. He was disinterested, selfless, *karmayogi*, *Āpta kāma*, who has gained his wish, *ātmakāma*, having desire to attain the *ātma*, and *akāma*, having no desire. He lived in this world with his yogic energy. And when he realized finally that his life was going to end, he went into meditation, singing hymns of God, praying, adoring the Supreme Lord, chanting 'OM' and left his body intentionally. He had conquered death, and became *mrityunjay*.

Maharshi Dayananda spent all his life in rejuvenation of the *Vedic Dharma* and dedicated his services to awaken the humanity in the mankind.

2.7 Concept of Chakras (Ashtachakrās and its Correlation to stages of Consciousness) (page no. 72)

Clearing the doubt about chakrās, whether they are six or eight

In the *Atharva Veda*, there is a description about *chakrās*. The portrayal of *Asta chakrās* are can also be seen in *Gorakhbāni*-

E ashta kamala kā jānai-bhaesha, āpai karatā āpai daekh.

Iti ashta kathamta jatee gorakhanātha'

After *Shatchakra bhaedana*, the classification of six *chakrās*, it is considered that both *manaschakra* that resides in Consciousness, (*lalanā chakra* or *bindu chakra*) and *sahasrāra chakra*, are the higher centers of apparent consciousness and the central source of the superior power. Hence, undoubtedly, the prime centres (*Sakti kaemdrā*) are eight in number. And it is undisputable that a practitioner has to attain bliss, awakening his inherent power from *mulādhāra chakra* taking up to *sahasrāra*, dispelling the illnesses.

There are eight *chakrās* in a human body. They are the centres of Marvellous powers. These *chakrās* are situated in spinal card beginning from downwards to upwards. In the normal position, these *chakrās* are facing downwards in an unbosoming and undeveloped position. By following *brahmacarya*, practicing *Pranāyama*, meditation and other Yogic methods, these *chakrās* get divine inspiration, and they turn slowly upwards and start blooming. Then so many divine powers are attained by the practitioner. Thus Pelvic Plexus, etc., English names are also do not indicate the actual places of them. They are used only to indicate the points of *chakrās*.

Brief description of chakrās

Atharvavaeda described about chakrās like this-

Ashtāchakrā navadvārā daevānām purayodhyā,

Asyām hiranyāyah kosah svargo jyotishāvrtah. (atharvavaedam- 10.2.31)

In this body which is the city of *Ayodhya*, the city of Gods, is unconquerable, equipped with eight circles and nine portals (two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, mouth, anus and genitals). In this city there is *Hiranya kosa*, the treasure of brilliance, which is the source of infinite, unbounded peace and pleasure and an abode of bliss and sojourn of divine radiance, containing the soul full of a myriad power. It is ever marching on to blissful God, surrounded by the realization of the Supreme Being. *Yog* practitioners, who are always in the pursuit of this *divyakosa*, the divine abode, can only achieve it.

Here, we are giving the brief description of *chakrās*

1. *Mulādhāra Chakra* (Pelvic Plexus i.e. Root Plexus vis-a-vis Reproductive System): The *Muladhara chakra* is situated two inches up to the base anus and two inches down to genital organ. *Sushumna* (*Saraswati*) *nādi* goes through the centre of *chakrā*, and *idā* (*ganga*) from *vama kona*, the left angle. Hence, this *chakrā* is called 'mukta triveni' threefold flow of liberation. *Kundalini shakti*, the power of *Kundalini*, the serpent that lies in 'coiled' shape. It is the energy centre for the whole body. The meaning of the

name *mulādhāra* is self explanatory, as it is the source of whole energy of the body. Health, ability, skill performance like many more benefits can be achieved and enhanced by concentrating on this *chakra*. One can be *urdhwareta*, (the one, whose semen starts upward journey, which is the prime symptom of celibacy), strength, vigour and brightness. All the ailments of body would disappear. This first *chakra mulādhāra* is illuminated by the '*mānas-kiran*', the rays of consciousness, which get stimulus from *savita*, the brightness of mind. The mild brightness, which is observed at this place in the shape of a fountain or torch, has its source in *svādhishthāna chakra*, which ends up in *mulādhāra*. Impenetrable darkness is prevailed here all around. Through the practice of *prāna Sādhana*, enacting the life force and *dharana*, concentration, this darkness can be scattered and illumined *Mulādhāra chakra*. A glimpse of the grossness and Subtlety grid of *mulādhāra* can be seen through this mild brightness. This is known as '*kundalini jagarana*', awakening of *Kundalini*.

2. *Svādhishthāna chakra* (Hypogastric Plexu vis-a-vis excretory System): The *chakra* is situated two inches upwards near abdomen. Concentrating on *svādhishthāna chakra* one can create, nourish, and destroy anything. Goddess Saraswati speaks through the practitioner's mouth. His word shows miraculous effect.
3. *Manipura chakra* (Epigastric Plexus or Solar Plexu vis-a-vis Digestive System): The *chakra* is situated in the source place of navel. *Manipura chakra* provides energy to the whole digestive system including liver and nerves and Pancreas. According to *yogdarsana*, '*nābhichakrae kāyavyubhājanam*' (3.22) *sutra*, if we meditate on *nābhichakra*, he can perceive the structure of the body, i.e., the knowledge of different limbs of the body.
4. *Hridaya Chakra* or *nimna Manaschakra* (Lower Mind Plexus vis-a-vis Skeletl System): *Hridaya chakra* is situated in between the two breasts. This heart is not a physical one, hence is not seen with naked eyes. This is an illusionary heart. The Upanishads described this as '*Atma*', the individual soul. *Tantric* scriptures say, 'Concentrating on *hridaya Chakra* one can achieve powers like, eloquency of speech, poetic power, winning the senses.' In '*sivasāratamtra*' it is said that the sound of *anabada* (the unbeaten) sound, which is heard in this *chakra* is nothing but the *udgeetha* (syllable) form of 'Om' of *Sadāshiva* (ever auspicious form). Concentration on this *chakra*, is particularly beneficial for women and for the devout practitioners.
5. *Visuddhi chakra* (Carotid Plexus vis-a-vis Respiratory System): The *Chakra* is situated in Throat. By the practice of concentrating and awakening this *chakra*, one becomes a poet, erudite, healthy, griefless. It provides a longlife. When this *chakra* is awakened, ailments related to Thyroid, lungs would be dispelled and do not recur.
6. *Ājnā chakra* (Medullary Plexus vis-a-vis Nervous System): The *Chakra* is situated in between the eyebrows. Concentrating on this *chakra*, by practicing of *Kapālbhāti*, *Anuloma*, *viloma prānāyāmās*, *Nadi sodhana*, like methods, *prāna*, the life force and *mana*, consciousness attain bliss. Then autonomic and voluntary nervous system becomes healthy, gets peace and remains in a balanced state. The whole nervous system is associated with *ajñā chakra*. Hence, when the *ajñā chakra* is awakened, the nervous system would get healthy and becomes strong. All the three channels, namely *ida*, *pingal* and *sushumna* flow in separate directions from *mulādhāra* to this junction, and unite. Therefore, *ajñā chakra* is known as *triveni*. The *Chakra* is situated in Throat. By practice of concentrating and

awakening this *chakra*, one becomes a poet, erudite, healthy, griefless. It provides a longlife. When this *chakra* is awakened, ailments related to Thyroid, lungs would be dispelled and they never occur also.

Idā bhāgeerathee gangā pingalā yamunā nadee,
tayOrmadhyagatā nāDee sushujnākhyā sarasvatee.
trivaeNee-samgamO yatra teertharājah sa uchyatae,
Tatra snānam prakurveeta sarvapāpāih pramuchyatae.
(jnānasamkalineetamtram)

Ida, *pingal* are known as *Ganga* and *Yamuna*. *Sushumna* nerve goes in between them, and is called as *Saraswati*. This *triveni*, where all the three channels are united, is known as *teertharāja*, the auspicious pilgrimage. Bathing (meditating) in the river *ganga*, the practitioner can cleanse up all his sins (*karmās*). And this *triveni* is nowhere-else outside, it resides in our inner world. Actually, physical bathing of the Ganges can not make one a sin-free person. This is a hypotheses. If such miracle happens, anybody can kill a Brahmin, guru and brother and go directly to the river *ganga*, and bath in it to cleanse his sin. Here 'sin' means, crime, in which the other person gets hurt. Hence the result of sin is to be experienced. After committing a crime, eventhough you atone for it, you should suffer the result of the crime and enjoy the result of righteous thing, separately. Therefore, the scriptures say- *avasyamaeva bhoktavyam krtam Karma subhāsubham*. Yes, if you really bathe in river *Ganga*, and take an oath that in this life, you would not do any sinful act, and keep your word in future, then you would be saved. But one has to suffer the result of his past sinful acts. We are talking this about the river *Ganga*. If one would bathe in the radiant wisdom (*ganga*), through the means of *Dhyāna* (meditation) *triveni* by concentrating his mind in perfect devotion in *ajñā chakra*, then even he would not think about the sin, doing is of it by all means, impossible. Therefore, if we want to liberate ourselves from misdeeds, we have to restraint our consciousness, practice *yog*, chant *Om*.

7. *Manaschakra* (*bindu* or *lalanā chakra*): This *chakra* situates in Hypothalamus. The function of this *chakra* is manufacturing necessary cerebrum fluids and salts, etc, associating with the consciousness, according to the emotions, thoughts and culture. We can call this place as *mana*, where all the moods and thoughts emerge.
8. *Sahasrāra chakra* (endocrine system, crown plexus): This *chakra* is situated in mind which is above the palate. It is the centre of the whole divine powers. Concentrating on this *chakra* abstaining the *prāna*, the life force and the consciousness and practising- *pramāna* (right knowledge), *viparyaya* (indiscrimination), *vikalpa* (verbal delusion), *nidra* (sleep), *smṛiti* (memory), one would attain *Asamprajnāta Samādhi*, cognitive union. All the secretory fluids, including pituitary and pineal glands, are associated with *sahasrāra chakra*. When *sahasrāra chakra* is awakened, the whole endocrine system acquires balance.

4.7 Asanas and Their Benefits (Research backing Yoga practices) (page no. 119)

Evidence Based Effects of Hatha Yoga Practices on Different Systems of The Body

Evidence based on yoga practices on Joints and Bones

1. Yoga program shows therapeutic benefits on osteoarthritis [Cheung C.2014.BMC Complement Altern Med. 18.14.160]
2. Complementary therapies (tai chi acupuncture yoga and massage therapy) can reduce pain and improve function in adults with OA [Shengelia R. 2013. Pain Manag Nurs, 14(4):e274-88]
3. Iyengar Yoga along with conventional therapy provides better results in chronic unilateral knee osteoarthritis in terms of pain and functional disability [Nambi GS. 2013, Int J Yoga 6(2):123-7].
4. Integrated approach of yoga therapy is better than physiotherapy exercises as an adjunct to transcutaneous electrical stimulation and ultrasound treatment in reducing pain, morning stiffness, in patients with OA knees [Ebnezar J. 2012. Int J Yoga, 5(1):28-36].
5. Yoga improves range of motion in shoulder abduction, horizontal shoulder extension, lumbar spine flexion, Hip flexion, hip extension, and knee flexion [Goncalves LC, 2011, Arch Gerontol Geriatr, 53(2): 158-62].
6. *Hatha yoga* therapy is better than therapeutic exercises as an adjunct to transcutaneous electrical stimulation and ultrasound treatment in improving walking pain, range of knee flexion, walking time, tenderness, swelling, crepitus, and knee disability in patients with OA knees [Ebnezar J, 2012, J Altern Complement Med, 18(5): 463-72].
7. Yoga shows greater improvement in osteoarthritis of the hands and carpal tunnel syndrome in pain [Garfinkel M.2000, Rheum Dis CLIN North Am, 26(1):125-32].
8. 8 weeks yoga program was effective in providing relief in hand OA [Garfinkel MS, 1994, J Rheumatol, 21(12):2341-3].
9. Yoga postures can contribute to extreme strain on spines with bone loss [Sinaki M, 2013, Pain Pract, 13(1):68-75].
10. Magnetic resonance imaging showed that long-term practitioners of yoga studied had significantly less degenerative disc disease than a matched control group [Jeng CM, 2011, Eur spined 20(3): 408-13].
11. The weight-bearing yoga training had a positive effect on bones by slowing down bone – resorption which was a very essential indicator for human health; because it reduced the osteoporosis risks in the postmenopausal women [Phoosuwan M,2009, J Med Assoc Thai, 92 Suppl5:S102-8].

Evidence based benefits of yoga practices on muscles

1. High *Chaturanga asana*, Low *Chaturanga asana* and *Adho Mukha Svanasana* are effective for strengthening external abdominal muscle.

- Utkatasana* and *Virabhadrasana* poses for targeting gluteus muscle, and *Utkatasana* and *Ardha Uttanasana* for strengthening back muscle. And these three muscles could be strengthened by the *Urdhwa Mukha Svanasana* [Ni, 2004, Complement Ther Med; 22(2):235-43].
2. Yoga can improve muscle strength and endurance in the elderly [Fan, 2011, Int Psychogeriatr;23(8):1222-30; Volger, 2011, Int J Yoga Therap;(21):61-72].
 3. Yoga can improve peripheral muscle strength in cancer survivors [Yadly, 2015, Integr Cancer Ther;14(2):125-32].
 4. High frequency yoga breathing (*kapalabhati*) can improve grip strength [Telles, 2014, Indian J Physiol Pharmacol;58(1):22-9].
 5. *Suryanamaskar* can improve muscle strength [bhutkar, 2011, Asian J Sports Med;2(4):259-66].
 6. Yoga can decrease musculoskeletal discomfort [Tellas, 2009, Work;33(3):297-306].
 7. Yoga can improve hand-grip strength [Madanmohan, 2008, Indian J Physiol Pharmacol; 52(2): 164-70].
 8. Yoga training and a single bout of yoga appear to attenuate peak muscle soreness in women [Boyle, 2004, J Strength Cond Res; 18(4):723-9].
 9. Yoga can improve hand-grip strength in rheumatoid arthritis patients [Dash, 2001, Indian J Physiol Pharmacol;45(3):355-60].
 10. Yoga can improve respiratory muscle function in institutionalized frail older adults [Iranzo, 2014, J Geriatr Phys Ther;27(2):65-75].

Evidence based benefits of yoga practices on cardiovascular system

1. Alternate nostril yoga breathing increases the heart rate variability and reduces systolic and diastolic blood pressure in normal healthy volunteers. {Telles, S. 2014. Med Sci Monit Basic Res 19;20: 184-93}.
2. Alternate nostril yoga breathing reduces systolic and diastolic blood pressure in patients with essential hypertension. {Telles, S. 2013. Med Sci Monit. 21:19:61-6}.
3. *Bhastrika pranayama* (respiratory rate 6/min) reduces blood pressure with a slight decrease in heart rate. {Pramnik, T. 2009. J Altern Complement Med 15(3):293-5}.
4. *Bhramari pranayama* (respiratory rate 3/min) decrease systolic and diastolic blood pressure. {Pramanik, T. 2010, Nepal Med Coll J 12(3):154-7.}
5. *Kapalabhati (respiratory rate 2 Hz)* increases sympathetic activity. {Raghuraj, P. 1998. Indian J Physiol Pharmacol. 1998 Oct;42(4):467-72}
6. *Kapalabhati (respiratory rate at 1 Hz)* withdraws vagal activity. {Telles, S. 2011. Biopsychosoc Med 13;5:4}.
7. Headstand (*Sirsasana*) increase sympathetic activity. {Manjunath, N.K. 2003. Indian J Physiol Pharmacol. 47(1):34-42.}

8. *Sarvangasana* practice reduces resting heart rate and left ventricular end-diastolic volume (LVEDV). Konar, D. 2000. Indian J Physiol Pharmacol. 44(4):392-400.
9. Meditation (*dhyana*) reduces sympathetic activity and increases vagal activity. {Telles, S. 2013. J Altern Complement Med 19(1):35-42
10. Following meditation, a significant reduction in mean arterial blood pressure was noted, {Steinhubl, S.R. 2015. Front Hum Neurosci. 2015 Mar 18;9:145}.

Evidence based benefits of yoga practices on brain

1. *Bhastrika pranayama* reduces reaction time of the practitioners [Telles, 2013, Percept Mot Skills; 117(1):1131-40].
2. Both *kapalabubali* and breath awareness can improve fine motor skills and visual discrimination, with a greater magnitude of change after *kapalabhati* [Telles, 2012, Int J Yoga; 5(1):37-41].
3. Alternate Nostril Breathing has a balancing effect on the functional activity of the left and right hemisphere [Stancak, 1994, Int J Psychophysiol; 18(1)75-9].
4. *Bhramari pranayama* enhances response inhibition and cognitive control [Rajesh, 2014, Int J Yoga;7(2):138-41].
5. Meditation leads to activation in brain areas involved in processing self-relevant information, self-regulation, focused problem-solving, adaptive behaviour, and interoception [Boccia, 2015, Biomed Res Int;2015:419808].
6. Body-mind relaxation meditation induction helps patients construct reappraisal strategies that can modulate the brain activity in multiple emotion-processing systems [Chen, 2015, J Affect Disord; 183:75-82].
7. In older person, yoga improves memory performance (McDougall et al., 2015).
8. Yoga improves primary working memory [Laverestsky, 2013, Int J Geriatr Psychiatry; 28(1):57-65].

Mental health

9. In older person, yoga improves sleep (Manjunath, 2004, Indian J Physiol Pharmacol;48(3):353-6].
10. Yoga induces positive mental state (Wood, 1993, J R Soc Med;86(5)254-8].
11. Yoga improves GABA level which decrease anxiety and depression level [Streeter, 2007, J Altern Complement Med;13(4):419-26].
12. Yoga practice was found positively correlated with grey matter volume which is associated with the promotion of neuroplastic changes in executive brain systems (Froeliger, 2012, Evid Based Complement Alternat Med;2012:821307].

Evidence based benefits of yoga for mental health and well-being

1. Comprehensive yoga (including postures, breathing techniques, meditation and relaxation) improves mental health and promotes well-being [Hadi, N., 2007; *Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal*. 13(4):829-837].

2. Yoga helps in improvements in children's perceived well-being [Berger, D.L., 2009; *Alternative Therapies In Health And Medicine*. 15 (5): 36-42].
3. *Kripalu* yoga benefits in psychosocial well-being in students [Noggle, J.J., 2012; *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*. 33(3): 193-201].
4. Total, general and parental self-esteem improved after yoga in pre-adolescents school children [Telles, S., 2013; *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*. 7:37].
5. *Kapalabhati pranayama* improves attention [Telles, S., 2008; *Indian journal of medical sciences*. 62(1): 20-22].
6. *Anuloma-viloma pranayama* increases spatial memory [Naveen, K.V., 1997; *Psychological Reports*. 81(2):555-561].
7. Right and alternate nostril yoga breathing improves focused and selective attention and increases visual scanning ability [Telles, S., 2007; *Perceptual and Motor Skills*. 104(3 Pt 2):1289-1296].
8. Following *bhastrika pranayama* reaction time decreases [Bhavanani, A.B., 2003; *Indian Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology*. 47(3):297-300].
9. Breathing through the left nostril increases performance in a spatial cognitive task [Joshi, M., 2008; *Indian Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology*. 52(2):197-200].
10. *Bhastrika pranayama* reduces impulsivity and inhibits unnecessary responses [Telles, S., 2013; *Perceptual and Motor Skills*. 117(1):89-98].
11. Yoga practice reduces physiological signs of mental stress (e.g., a reduced skin resistance value, reduced heart and breath rates with rhythmic breathing in children [Telles, S., 1997; *Perceptual and motor skills*. 86(1):251-257].
12. Yoga is effective in reducing anxiety [Kuttner, L., 3-2006; *Pain Research Management*. 11 (4) 217-233].
13. The integrated yoga is an efficacious means of improving the quality of life of pregnant women and enhancing certain aspects of their interpersonal relationship [Rakhshani, A., 2010; *Quality of Life Research*. 19(10): 1447-1455].
14. Yoga is valuable in helping to achieve relaxation and diminish stress, and increases the quality of life in cancer patient [U]ger, O., 2010; *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice*. 16(2): 60-63].
15. Yoga improves work performance by relieving tension and job stress as the workplace [Gura, S.T., 2002; *Work* 19: 3-7].
16. Yoga can be considered as a complementary therapy in the treatment of anxiety disorders in women [Javnbakht, M., 2009; *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice*. [15(2): 102-104].
17. Short term yoga based life-style intervention leads to remarkable reduction in the anxiety [Gupta, N., 2006; *Indian Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology*. 50(1): 41-47].



The benefits of various asanas on different parts of the human body Sirsasana

- The practice of the headstand in a traditional way (without any support) and those who used the support of the wall (a present day adaptation), had an increase in the power of the low frequency component (LF) and a decrease in the high frequency component (HF) of the HRV spectrum, increased LF/HF ratio, and decreased heart rate [Manjunath NK, 2003, Indian J Physiol Pharmacol; 47(1):34-42].

Group of postures

- Following yoga *asanas* (*Surya Namaskar, Trikonasana, Tadasana, Sukhasana, Padmasana, Bhastrika Pranayama, Pashimottanasana, Ardhamatsyendrasana, Pawanmuktasana, Bhujangasana, Dhanurasana and Shavasana*), a significant decrease in waist-hip ratio and changes in insulin levels were observed suggesting a positive effect of yoga *asanas* on glucose utilization and fat redistribution in Non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM). Yoga *asanas* may be used as an adjunct with diet and drugs in the management of Type 2 diabetes [Malhotra V, 2005, Nepal Med Coll J; 7(2):145-7].
- Following four sets of *asanas*: (I) *dhanurasana + matsyendrasana*, (ii) *balasana + vajrasana*, (III) *naukasana + bhujangasana*, and (iv) *setubandhasana + pawanamuktasana*, an increased sensitivity of the B cells of pancreas to the glucose signal was reported [Manjunatha S, 2005, Indian J Physiol Pharmacol; 49(3)319-24].
- Following 2 months of both conventional (Symptomatic treatment with loperamide 2-6 mg/day) and yogic intervention which includes *Vajrasana, Shashankasana, Ushtrasana, Marjariasana, Padbastasana, Dhanurasana, Trikonasana in two variation, Pawanmuktasana, and Paschimottanasana* along with *Surya Nadai pranayama* two times/day a significant decrease of bowel symptoms and state anxiety was reported. This was accompanied by an increase in electrophysiologically recorded gastric activity in the conventional intervention group and enhanced parasympathetic reactivity measured by heart rate parameters, in yogic intervention group. This indicates a beneficial effect of yogic intervention over conventional treatment in diarrhea-predominant IBS [Taneja I, 2004, Appl Psychophysiol Biofeedback; 29(1):19-33].

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