

Yoga – a Key to Unlock the Secret of All Facets of Healthiness in Modern Time

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Abstract

Modern life style brings great threat to all the aspects of human life. The development of technology reduces physical as well mental labor of human being by providing machines and different gadgets to help in daily work and idle recreation. Yoga originated in India and the first sign appeared in ancient Shamanism that dates back to some 3000 B.C. Initially, this information was mostly oral and shared in traditional *gurukul parampara* of verbal teaching. The first step to put this all in printed and codified form was the classic treatise the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali dating from 200 BC commonly known as *Ashtanga yoga*. Traditional propose of yoga practice was to understand the life and phenomenon associated with it, to overcome the three-fold suffering completely and to achieve total integration with the Supreme, which would eventually lead to liberation. Now days, modern man who lacks patience and time and is running behind physical and material pleasure. Because of this mindset, tension, depression, premature aging and various mind-body disorders have become a part of modern life style. As a precautionary measure and also as a part of treatment to all these ailments, the modern health science has introduced physical activities. All these activities have also been presented in the garb of so-called Yoga. Human anatomy and physiology is unique in itself, and all the units – eternal or external – are interrelated in such a manner that a little change in one aspect affects the other either directly or indirectly. Thus it can be concluded that there is nothing wrong in it when people choose to practice only some asanas and Pranayama on the name of yogic practice. Because changes in physical and mental level will brings changes in social and spiritually health of an individual. Thus it can said that through modern yoga practices one can attain physical, mental, emotional, social as well as spiritual well being.

Key words: Yoga, *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*, Healthiness, *Āsana*, *Pranayama*

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Introduction:

Modern life style brings great threat to all the aspect of human life. The development of technology reduces physical as well mental labor of human being by providing machines and different gadgets to help in daily work and idle recreation. Now a days most of the work is being done by machines so that physical capacity as well as mental abilities of an individual are decaying day by day. On the other hand, social interaction, interdependence and circle, contact are also getting shrunked as the dependence on each other is becoming less, due to which the social values are also eroded gradually from the life of modern men. Earlier most of the work was done manually; therefore people were fit in all aspects either physically, mentally or socially. But now days, modern man lacks patience and time and is running behind physical and material pleasure. Because of this mindset, tension, depression, premature aging and various mind-body disorders have become a part of modern life style and the only treatment offered by modern medicine is medication through chemicals. So what is the alternative to medication? As a precautionary measure and also as a part of treatment to all these ailments, the modern health science has introduced physical activities. Varieties of physical exercises are available such as aerobics, weight training, gymnastics, different sports, adventure activities etc. As in modern time yoga has also become very famous among people as a means of physical exercises. Therefore all these activities have also been presented in the garb of so-called Yoga. It is noteworthy that everyone likes to keep himself fit and healthy throughout life. But fitness cannot be achieved through any machine, magic or by swallowing tablets. The problem for which this article is written begins from here as each type of physical exercises is not suitable for everyone and produces special effect only i.e. weight lifting produce muscular power but not suitable for children and old age, gymnastics improve strength and flexibility but as age increase it is very difficult and harmful to

performed. Different kind of sports produce different kind of benefit but after a certain age participation might be danger and for old age it is very difficult to participate in sports. While adventure sports is not easy for everyone as particular mindset and physique is prerequisite for that. This is true for athletics and swimming too. But as far as yoga is concerned, it provides a good option to everyone beyond age, sex, status (economic) and boundaries. As Yoga was originated in India and the first sign appeared in ancient Shamanism that dates back to some 3000 B.C. Initially, this information was mostly oral and shared in traditional *gurukul parampara* of verbal teaching. The first step to put this all in printed and codified form was the classic treatise the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali dating from 200 BC commonly known as *ashtanga yoga*. Patanjali has mentioned eight step of Yoga called *Yamas, Niyamas, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dhyana, Dharan* and *Smadhi*. There was a period, we can call a dark period, during which it disappeared from the daily life of Indian culture and it become mystery for laymen. In the 20th century, thanks to great yoga gurus such as Swami Vivekananda, Sri K. Pattabhi Jois, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Kuvalayananda, B.K. S. Iyengar, Swami Sivananda Saraswati, Swami Chidananda Saraswati, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Sri Ravi Shankar etc unveiled the mystery and brought yoga for the common men specially modern men who was suffering various mental and physical disorders. According to traditional texts of yoga, the prime aim of practicing yoga in early days was purely spiritual and the Yogic exercises were aids to the spiritual practices. Traditional propose of yoga practice was to understand the life and phenomenon associated with it, to overcome the three-fold suffering completely and to achieve total integration with the Supreme, which would eventually lead to liberation. But in modern time yoga practice focus on providing relief to the mind and body through combined practices of *asanas, pranayama*, meditations and chanting of different mantras. Thus, as today Yoga is being

practiced merely for fitness, healthy body and mind and emotional well-being, it is mere a method of overcoming certain diseases, a preventive measure. Therefore it has come out that only asanas, pranayama and meditational techniques of Yoga caught the interest of modern man, and significance for the modern man. This modern approach makes yoga accessible to everybody. Before going in to the details about how yoga brings health in modern mechanical men, we have to understand what we mean by health. WHO defines, "Health is a state of complete physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social well-being and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity". Most of the health expert and medical expert are unanimously agree with this definition. Here we will try to touch every aspect of health given in this definition before going how modern yoga practice bringing healthiness to modern men.

Physical health – it implies the notion of "perfect functioning" of the body. It conceptualizes health biologically as a state in which every cell and every organ is functioning at optimum capacity and in perfect harmony with the rest of the body. One should not get confused with physical fitness as physical health. Physical fitness refers to general fitness (a state of health and well-being) and specific fitness (a task-oriented definition based on the ability to perform specific aspects of sports or occupations). It is clear from the above classification that for layman general fitness is sufficient to avoid various physical problems and perform his daily work eagerly without undue fatigue.

Mental health – it is an optimum ability to learn and develop intellectual capabilities. It may also be defined as "a state of balance between the individual and the surrounding world, a state of harmony between oneself and others, a coexistence between the realities of the self, that the other people and that of environment" (Sartorius, 1983). For modern common man it refers to balance. In other words we can say that mental health is a state of psycho-physiological well being, which help one in taking right

decision and having coordination between thought, words and hand. This quality is must for hand and eye coordination and foot-eye coordination and coordination of different body parts as a whole.

Emotional health – it is an optimum ability to control emotions and expressing them only when appropriate, and avoiding the expression of emotions when inappropriate. Disturbance in emotion generally leads to imbalance in mental health. Sometimes people used emotional health as synonyms of mental health. But in fact both, are different and balance in-between both is very important for a healthy life.

Social health – it is an optimum ability of an individual to interact and develop satisfying interpersonal relationship. "Social health is quality and quantity of an individual's interpersonal ties and the extent of involvement with the community" (Donald et al., 1978). In other words, it can be said that it is the quality of an individual to adjust and cooperate with others without sacrifice their own esteem.

Spiritual health – the belief in a unifying force; a God like force for some, nature or scientific laws for others. Eberst (1984) describes spiritual health as "integrity, principles and ethics, the purpose in life, commitment to some higher being and belief in concepts that are not subject to the "state of the art explanation".

Therefore we can say that healthiness is the functioning of the brain, heart, and hands (thinking/thought, emotions and actions) at optimum efficiency. Optimum efficiency is the key. Studies have shown that yoga contributes to flexibility and muscular fitness. Also it can help correct the postural defects among school children. Also yoga helps in coping up with the concerns related to the process of growing up. It counters stresses and strains. Also it helps in reducing the stress. (Woodyard, 2011, Khalsa, 2013, Bhavanani, Udupa, Madanmohan & Ravindra, 2011, Crow, Jeannot, & Trehela, 2015, Gururaja, Harano, Toyotake, & Kobayashi, 2011, Bansal, Gupta, Agarwal, & Sharma, 2013).

Yoga embodies unity of mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfillment; harmony between man and nature; a holistic approach to health and well-being. Several studies shows the uniqueness of yoga practices for the better health and significance roll to achieve general aims of education in general, higher education in particular. (Mahaboobjan, 2010, Ross, Friedmann, Bevans & Thomas, 2013, Cho, Moon, & Kim, 2015 and Ni, Mooney, Harriell, Balachandran & Signorile, 2014). For college going generation yoga play very important role in academic achievements as well as personality development (Tikhe, Nagendra, & Tripathi, 2012, Deshpande, Negendra & Raghuram, 2009, Tikhe, Dash & Nagendra 2014 and Khemka, Nagendra, & Hankey, 2011, Menon, Doddoli, Singh, & Bhogal 2014).

It is impossible to work actively in life with an unhealthy mind and body. These apply to work and play as well as to spiritual aspiration. The fundamental requirement is the healthiest possible mind and body. The ancient yogis realized these thousands of years ago and for this reason developed the system of Yoga.

It is an issues of discussion whether the simply practice of asana, pranayama and some meditative practice is yoga or not. But in modern time people are practicing Asanas, Pranayama, and Meditations only. There is nothing wrong in it as the general aim of practicing yoga is to keep healthy them. To understand how yoga (asanas, pranayama and some kriyas) bring healthiness conditions, we have to understand human structure first. Man is a complex psycho-somatic structure of the universe. It cannot be separated in pieces i.e. physical, intellectual, spiritual, as it is integrated in such a manner that any change in one aspect leads to changes in others aspect positively or negatively. Changes in physical or physiological environment lead to changes in emotion or intellectual, whereas intellectual or emotional changes affects on body. The asana, pranayama were tested thoroughly by the personal experiences of the great pioneers. Asana and pranayama evolved slowly through practice, and because of this, they have

withstood the test of time. The body and mind of man thousands of years ago was little different to the mind and body of today's man. As such asanas, pranayama, meditations are useful in the present age as they were to the ancient originators. Many modern system (even ancient also) in the field of activity are often based only on a few years experience; they rarely last for very long periods and are usually modified because of inadequacies in their makeup. Yoga (asanas, pranayama, and other physical kriyas) on the other hand are a well-tested system for attaining mental and physical health.

Thus it can be concluded that through modern Yogic practices (anasas, pranayama and kriyas) one can attain physical, mental, emotional, social as well as spiritual well being. It is noteworthy here that in the modern time people are more concerned about physical and mental health and that is why they prefer to practice some asanas, pranayama and kriyas. As we cannot force everyone to follow yoga as it is explained in traditional texts and to attain spiritual goal. This is the quality of yoga that anyone can practice it and can unlock the gate of healthiness.

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