
YOGA AND MEDITATION: A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Yoga is timeless and ageless. It is an ancient science of well being. It is suitable to everyone to practice at any age. People do not grow old but become old when stop growing. You can do to feel younger and more energized. Yoga also refers to disciplining of the intellect, the mind, the emotions and the will. Thus in a broad sense, Yoga signifies spiritual discipline. It has been said in Upanishad that the life breath is the immortal wind of spirit and the body ends in ashes. "Meditation is the sixth and seventh steps of yoga. There are also some physical, mental and emotional benefits and we must follow some meditation techniques.

Keywords :- *yoga, meditation techniques, benefits, eight path of yoga.*

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INTRODUCTION

Yoga is a physical, mental, and spiritual practice or discipline that aims to transform body and mind. The term denotes a variety of schools, practices and goals in Hinduism, Buddhism (including Vajrayana and Tibetan Buddhism and Jainism, the best-known being Hatha yoga and Raja yoga. The origins of Yoga have been speculated to date back to Pre-Vedic Indian traditions, but most likely developed around the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, in the same ascetic circles as the early sramana movements. The earliest accounts of yoga-practices are in the Buddhist Nikayas. Parallel developments were recorded around 400 CE in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, which combines pre-philosophical speculations and diverse ascetic practices of the first millennium BCE with Samkhya-philosophy. Hatha yoga emerged from tantra by the turn of the first millennium.

Yoga gurus from India later introduced yoga to the west, following the success of Swami Vivekananda in the late 19th and early 20th century. In the 1980s, yoga became popular as a system of physical exercise across the Western world. This form of yoga is often called Hatha yoga. Yoga physiology described humans as existing of three bodies (physical, subtle and causal) and five sheaths (food sheath, prana-breath, mind sheath, intellect, and bliss) which cover the atman, and energy flowing through energy channels and concentrated in chakras.

Many studies have tried to determine the effectiveness of yoga as a complementary intervention for cancer, schizophrenia, asthma, and heart disease. Yoga enjoys widespread popularity throughout East Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia where the business is estimated to exceed US\$500 million in these regions.¹

Yoga is a word derived from “Yuj” root of Sanskrit which means union.² Yoga is the union of soul with spirit. This union of soul and spirit is long process which may take even many births.

(1) The meaning of the word Yoga is joining. What entities are joined? In the Traditional terminology; it is the joining of the individual well with the universal self.³

(2) It designates the joining of the lower nature to the higher in such a manner as to allow the higher to direct the lower or Union with the self, it also signifies communion with the supreme universal spirit to obtain relief from pain and suffering.” One who controls his mind, intellect and ego, being absorbed in the spirit with him finds fulfillment and internal bliss which is beyond the pale sense and reasoning' Bhagvad Gita.⁴

(3) Yoga also refers to disciplining of the intellect, the mind the emotions and the will thus in a broad sense. Yoga signifies spiritual discipline.⁵

MEDITATION

Dhyana or the state of meditation is obtained when the mind is trained to concentrate on an outer or inner object, long enough for all distractions to be eliminated and when the stream of thought flows in a single direction with no interruption towards a definite subject. During meditation, the body is silently resting so that thought is absorbed in to prana (vital force). As in dreamless sleep so here too, the only sign of life is breathing. The hypothalamus recharges its energy during meditation, as it does during sleep. We may deduce from this that whereas sleep is a compensating form of rest, meditation is a conscious and hence contains important therapeutic characteristics.⁶ Compiled by sage patanjali in the yoga sutras the eight limbs a progressive series of disciplines purify the body and mind ultimately leading the yogi to enlightenment. Among these eight limbs, concentration and “meditation” are the sixth and seventh steps of Yoga.⁷

MEDITATION TECHNIQUES

Chakra Meditation: By moving your awareness to the appreciate physical spot as the body you can meditate on a chakra. The chakra has a seed sound associated with it that you can use as a mantra.

Trataka : Trataka is a good practice for dharana or concentration the sixth limb of yoga may gaze at a lit candle, picture, symbol or deity to which you feel drawn over time, Trataka moves from being a concentration exercise to become a meditation.

Moving Meditation : Any action performed with mindfulness can be meditative

Mantra Meditation : Many people derive great benefit from using a mantra.

Themed Meditation : In a themed meditation you can expand your consciousness by further defining the form many thoughts around a subject, you can reduce down to a single thought on it.⁸

Eight steps of Yoga:-

- (1) Yama or (Prescriptions)
- (2) Niyama or (Proscriptions)
- (3) Asana or (Body Postures)
- (4) Pranayama or (Life control)

(5) Pratyahara or (Interiorization)

(6) Dharna or (Concentration)

(7) Dhyan or (Meditation)

(8) Samadhi or (Ecstasy)⁹

BENEFITS OF MEDITATIONS & PHYSICAL BENEFITS

- (i) The branch of your peripheral nervous system that helps your body return to a calm, relaxed state after the threat of danger or even daily stress, has passed when this branch is activated, your body can naturally, repair and rebuild itself.
- (ii) Clears your mind for better quality sleep.
- (iii) Improves athlete performance by refining your ability to focus on a goal or situation (another term for meditation used in this way is visualization).
- (iv) Slow your aspiration for longer, deeper breaths.
- (v) Boost your immune system by slowing the production of the stress hormone cortisol.¹⁰

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL BENEFITS

- (i) Reduces anxiety and depression by enabling your body to balance its own neurochemical system.
- (ii) Allows you to make better decisions and improve critical thinking.
- (iii) Break unhealthy habits by helping you detach emotions associated with an action from the action itself.
- (iv) Improve communication with yourself when you better understand your thought process you live 10 percent in the now. Which affects all aspects of your life and relationship?¹¹

CONCLUSION

- (1) Through meditation, participants had decreased their risk of heart attack by 1 percent and stroke by 8-15 percent.
- (2) Meditation would help to decrease stress related condition such as hypertension, heart disease, asthma, insomnia, digestive problem and so on.¹²
- (3) A study showed that student practicing transcendental meditation increased their IQ by five points in two year and by nine points in 4 year.¹³

(4) A study found that a group of 50 years old had practicing transcendental meditation for over five year showed a 12 year decrease in “Biological Age” as compared to controls.¹⁴

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