

Hello Learners

In this session, let us discuss on the Yoga and Pranayama

- Thousands of years ago yoga originated in India, and in present day and age, an alarming awareness was observed in health and natural remedies among people by yoga and pranayama which has been proven an effective method for improving health in addition to prevention and management of diseases. With increasing scientific research in yoga, its therapeutic aspects are also being explored. Yoga is reported to reduce stress and anxiety, improves autonomic functions by triggering neurohormonal mechanisms by the suppression of sympathetic activity, and even, now-a-days, several reports suggested yoga is beneficial for physical health of cancer patients. Such global recognition of yoga also testifies to India's growing cultural influence.
- Yoga is an ancient discipline designed to bring balance and health to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of the individual. It is long popular practice in India that has become increasingly more common in Western society. “Yoga” means union of our individual consciousness with the Universal Divine Consciousness in a super-conscious state known as Samadhi. The first book of humankind, Rigveda, mentions about yogic meditation by the wise, while Yajurveda exhorts us to practice yoga for enhancing mental health, physical strength, and prosperity. Upanishads are replete with yogic concepts. In addition, yoga-related terms like pranayama and samadhi occur repeatedly in Bhagavad-Gita. Ancient Indian rishis understood that performing Raja-yoga (procedure of concentration to liberate soul or atma from the bondage of maya into paramatma) always need a healthy body.
- So, they developed “Hatha yoga,” which includes asana, mudra, pranayama, etc. “Gharanda samhita” said there were 84 lakh asanas from which 16 000 were best and only about 300 are popular. “Hathayoga-pradipika” again differentiates all asanas into four basic classes – sidhyasana, padmasana, sinhasana, and vadasana. Besides, asana may be of two types – dhyanasana (a posture keeps spinal cord free and center of gravity shifts to other part like ribs) and shasthyasana (to get healthy body).
- Elementary courses of hatha yoga focus on physical exercises consisting of various postures and breathing techniques. A growing body of research evidence supports the belief that certain yoga techniques may improve physical and mental health through down-regulation of the hypothalamo pituitary adrenal (HPA) axis and the sympathetic nervous system.
- The stress and stress-induced disorders like hypertension and angina are fast growing epidemics and bane of “modern” society. The holistic science of yoga is the best method for prevention as well as management of stress and stress-induced disorders
- Regardless of the pathophysiologic pathway, yoga has been shown to have immediate psychological effects: decreasing anxiety and increasing feelings of emotional, social, and spiritual well-being. Several literature reviews have been conducted that examined the impact of yoga on specific health conditions including cardiovascular disease metabolic syndrome, diabetes, cancer, and anxiety

ASTHANGA YOGA

Yoga (asthanga) is often depicted metaphorically as a tree and comprises eight aspects, or “limbs” [Patanjali codified the ancient marvel of yoga as asthanga which is one of the six schools of Indian philosophy and is known as Yoga Darshan : yama (universal ethics), niyama (individual ethics), asana (physical postures), pranayama (breath control), pratyahara (control of the senses), dharana (concentration), dyana (meditation), and samadhi (bliss). Each limb is connected with the whole, in the same way that bodily limbs are all connected. If someone pulls the body by the leg, the rest of the body will automatically follow. In the same way, when one pulls one of the eight limbs of yoga, the others will naturally come.

1.Yamas

The yamas can be thought of as the ethical restraints that are necessary for achieving harmony with other beings. The first limb of Patanjali’s eight limbs of yoga is Universal Principles or Yamas and this includes five principles

- Ahimsa (Non-Violence)
- Satya (Truth)
- Asteya (Non-Stealing)
- Brahmacharya (Celibacy)
- Aparigraha (Non- Accumulation)

2. Niyamas – Observances

As with the universal principles or yamas, there are five niyamas. The niyamas are the actions necessary for achieving balance within oneself

- S a u c a (Cleanliness)
- Santosa (Contentment)
- Tapas (Forbearance of Opposites/ Perseverance)
- Svadhyaya (Self-study)
- Ishvara Pranidhana (Devotion to the Divine)

3. Asanas -Posture

- Asanas are the physical positions or postures of yoga. Asana should be done with three qualities: steadiness, comfort, and a spirit of joy. Through the practice of asana one naturally comes to experience and be in harmony with infinity. Asanas purify the body and mind, when practiced with full awareness; leave you with a feeling of expansion and lightness. Each asana works to open channels of energy in the body and in so doing releases blockages and tension which are held in the physical, mental, and emotional bodies.
- There are two types of asanas: dynamic and static. Static asanas are those that are held for a period of time with no movement. The body remains as still as possible. These asanas have a powerful effect on the life force (prana) and mental bodies, gently massaging the internal organs, glands, and muscles and relaxing the nerves, bringing tranquility to the mind. Dynamic asanas, which are more energetic, speed up the

circulation and loosen the muscles and joints, releasing energy blocks and removing stagnant blood from different parts of the body.

4. Pranayama

- Pranayama is not, as many think, something about the breath; breath, indeed, has very little to do with it, if anything. Breathing is only one of the many exercises through which we get to the real Pranayama. Prana, a word often used in yoga, is the vital life-force of life. When the prana in the body is low, one tends to be more lethargic, dull, and unenthusiastic. Toxins then accumulate in these areas and pain, stiffness or disease set in. Through the practice of yoga, prana begins to flow, allowing toxins to be released and removed. On the other hand, the body is just a gross form of the mind. They are not the separate entities often one thinks of them as and every mental knot has a corresponding physical knot in the body and vice versa. The aim of yogic practices is to release these knots and to connect us with the joy, love, and creativity, integrating, and harmonizing the body and mind.

5. Pratyahara – Sense withdrawal

- The word ahara means “nourishment”; pratyahara translates as “to withdraw oneself from that which nourishes the senses.” By quieting the senses and taking the mind inwards one can unite with the Self. Pratyahara means drawing back or retreat. In yoga, the term pratyahara implies withdrawal of the senses from attachment to external objects. It can then be seen as the practice of non-attachment to sensory distractions as one constantly returns to the path of self-realization and achievement of internal peace

6. Dharana – Concentration and cultivating inner perceptual awareness

- Dharma means “immovable concentration of the mind.” The essential idea is to hold the concentration or focus of attention in one direction. When the body has been tempered by asanas, when the mind has been refined by the fire of pranayama and when the senses have been brought under control by pratyahara, the sadhaka (seeker) reaches the sixth stage, dharana. Here he is concentrated wholly on a single point or on a task in which he is completely engrossed. The mind has to be stilled in order to achieve this state of complete absorption.

7. Dynana - Meditation

- Dynana or meditation is all about just “being.” Meditation takes us back to that space of “being” from where deep rest can be experienced and enormous energy and vitality gained. Whilst effort is required to build the body, for example one has to work out either at the gym or by doing various exercises and sports; it is quite the opposite with the mind. The mind requires effortlessness in order to meditate. The less effort that is applied in meditation, the deeper the meditation will be. To truly understand meditation, it has to be experienced personally and like anything, the benefits can only be experienced through dedicated practice and self-discipline.

8. Samadhi - Contemplation

- According to Patanjali, “losing consciousness of the body, breath, mind, intelligence, and ego” and residing in a state of peace and bliss in which wisdom, humility and simplicity shine through, one is in a state of samadhi. Enlightened beings, which are permanently in a state of samadhi, have the ability to illuminate all those who come to him in their search for truth.
- It is clear that at the beginning of the 21st century, by crossing the threshold from traditional spiritual discipline to modern medical treatment and enriched with scholarly evidence, yoga gets scientific justification as a useful practice for maintaining health. It is one of the very few traditional disciplines that has gone through this exam and gained confirmation. It seems that yoga has come full circle by providing the techniques for living a meaningful and purposeful life, which are important both from a medical and spiritual point of view. Moreover, through aspirations of health benefits, yoga has focused the individual on the spiritual aspect of existence.

So, learn yoga, Stay healthy

Thank you, learners, for listening this session