

## **UNIT : 1 Introduction to Yoga and Yogic Practices**

### **1.3 Guiding principles to be followed by Yoga practitioners.**

The guiding principles given below should be followed by the Yoga practitioners (Sadhakas) while performing the yogic practices. These are classified in 3 categories based on their time of performance.

#### **Before Yoga Practice, During Yoga Practice and After Yoga Practice**

##### **Before**

1. Shauch means purity, an important pre-requisite for Yogic practice. It Includes cleanliness of surroundings as well as body and mind. Yogic practices should be performed in calm and quite atmosphere with a relaxed body and mind.
2. Yogic practices should be performed on an empty / light stomach. Therefore early morning is the best suited for Yogic Practice. This would mean the digestive process is completed and there is no food in the stomach. If it is not possible due to our busy schedule, then one can perform any time of the day. However, It should be minimum 4 hours after meal is consumed. If it is light snacks, then 2-3 hours depending up on the quantity consumed.
3. Bladder and bowels should be emptied and evacuated before starting yogic practices.
4. Yogic practices should not be performed on uneven surface. A mattress, durry or folded blanket should be used. Preferably rubber mat which works as an insulator and not allow the energy generated during yogic practice to transfer to ground.
5. Light and comfortable cotton clothes are preferred to facilitate easy movements of the body. Wear comfortable clothing to class. Wear shirts or T-shirts that won't come off while you perform an inverted posture or backbends. This will also help to concentrate on the postures rather than worried about clothes slipping off. The lower garment could be a pair of loose pants or sports leggings.
6. These practices should be altered when in a state of exhaustion or illness. When one is not keeping well, one should avoid practicing difficult postures. However, one can perform Sukshma Vyayam as long as you feel comfortable to do it. Otherwise, give rest to the body.

### During

1. Practice session should start with prayer as it creates conducive environment thereby relaxes the mind. Worldly thoughts are kept away and the wandering mind is engaged with the body action.
2. Perform the practices slowly while breathing awareness along with relaxation. For example Breathing in while bending backward and Breathing out while bending forward.
3. Breathing should always be done through nostrils unless instructed otherwise. When feel short of short of breath the mouth automatically opens and we are not aware of it.
4. Do not hold the body tight.
5. Do not give jerks at any point of time.
6. Do not hold breath unless it is specifically mentioned.
7. While inhaling and exhaling, chest is to be expanded and compressed respectively.
8. Do not to be greedy, i.e., perform according to your own capacity. But everyday put efforts to increase your capacity.
9. Do not to get disappointed, if are not able to reach to the final position of the posture or even if you reach there, but can not stay for longer time. It takes some time to get good results. Therefore, patience and regular practice is very essential for good results.
10. There are contra-indications / limitations for each Asana, Pranayama, Kriya and Bandha. Such contra-indications should always be kept in mind. In case of chronic diseases or cardiac problems, doctor and yoga therapist should be consulted prior to the performance of yogic exercises.
11. During pregnancy and menstruation, yoga expert should be consulted prior to yogic practices.

### After

1. Bath may be taken only after fifteen to thirty minutes of yoga session.
2. Light food may be taken only after fifteen to thirty minutes of Yoga session.
3. After each practice session / sessions, shavasana may be practiced as per need.
4. Yoga session should end with a Meditation/ Deep Silence / Shanti Path.

## **The Five Major Principles of Yoga**

Yoga is a way of life. Yoga is not a religion, it is a science of uniting the mind, body and soul. It is also an art of living the right way.

The techniques of Yoga are very practical, so they can always be applied. This is the reason why Yoga has been practiced for thousands of years and is still valid today.

This practical science can be broken down into five major principles.

### **1. Proper Exercise : Postures (Asanas)**

Proper exercise is necessary to keep the body healthy, strong and flexible. The physical exercises or postures in Yoga are called asanas. Asanas are gentle stretches that help in lubricating the joints, muscles, tendons, ligaments, and other parts of the body.

They also help to improve circulation, release tension in the body, increase flexibility and tone the nervous system.

Asanas are meant to be performed in a slow, relaxed and methodical manner. In addition to developing the physical body, the mind is also impacted in a positive way.

Most people find it difficult to calm the mind. We start with asanas to help start the process of calming the mind and to create a good foundation for the next steps.

### **2. Proper Breathing (Pranayama)**

Due to our modern lifestyles most of us forget how to breathe. At best, our breathing becomes very shallow.

All the cells and tissues in our bodies thrive on oxygen. Without an adequate supply of oxygen, our cells and tissues become weak, leading to diseases. Deep breathing provides an abundance of oxygen, which keeps the cells and tissues healthy.

Upon exhalation, we expel impurities from our bodies. Lack of exhaling deeply does not remove enough impurities from our bodies. Shallow breathing then does not supply enough oxygen and does not expel enough impurities. The result is a toxic system, which is a perfect environment for diseases to form.

With proper breathing techniques (pranayama) we can teach the body to breathe again. Pranayama not only purifies the system, but it also helps to connect the body to the solar plexus area where a tremendous potential energy is stored. This vital energy or prana is then released, rejuvenating the body and mind. The benefits

of pranayama greatly outweigh those of asanas, so it is important to incorporate pranayama in one's regular practice.

### **3. Proper Relaxation (Savasana)**

In modern times our performance is measured by how much we can achieve in the least amount of time. This makes us, to be in constant motion.

This constant motion then causes our bodies and minds to overwork and as a result get stressed. Proper relaxation is yet another important factor we must incorporate into our regular practice in order to allow our body and mind to recharge and rejuvenate.

Rest and relaxation helps to calm the whole system. When we are in this state it is sometimes difficult to calm the system and even sleeping becomes difficult and doesn't help.

Yogic relaxation techniques or savasana helps to calm the system by retraining the mind and body to relax.

### **4. Proper Diet and Nutrition**

What we eat has a subtle impact on our health and wellbeing. For a number of reasons, a plant-based diet is optimal for good health. It enables the body to maximize the benefit from food, air, water as well as sunlight. It is also easy to digest and promotes good health. A Yogic diet is simple, natural and wholesome. Since the food we eat has a subtle impact, a Yogic diet helps to achieve better health as well as a sharp, yet calm mind.

### **5. Positive Thinking and Meditation**

Our mind is what drives our body. A calm and steady mind is required to keep our bodies in optimal condition. Positive thinking helps to purify the mind and experience inner peace. When we shift our focus from negative thoughts to positive thoughts, it changes our perception of the world around us. We start to see things in a more positive light and negative situations stop affecting us in a strong way. Along with positive thinking, incorporating a regular meditation practice helps to keep the mind clear and focused. All of the above is what Yoga is all about. It is not just about some poses. The idea is to have optimal physical and mental health, which then helps us to navigate life in a more graceful manner.