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## Yoga – Key of physical fitness

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### Abstract

Derived from the Sanskrit word Yuj, Yoga means union of the individual consciousness or soul with the Universal Consciousness or Spirit. Though many think of yoga only as a physical exercise where people twist, turn, stretch, and breathe in the most complex ways, these are actually only the most superficial aspect of this profound science of unfolding the infinite potentials of the human mind and soul.

The science of Yoga imbibe itself the complete essence of the Way of Life, including - Gyan Yoga or philosophy, Bhakti Yoga or path of devotional bliss, Karma Yoga or path of blissful action, and Raja Yoga or path of mind control. Raja Yoga is further divided into eight parts. At the heart of the Raja Yoga system, balancing and unifying these various approaches, is the practice of Yoga Asana.

**Keywords:** Yoga, physical fitness

### 1. Introduction

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 ancient India's ascetic circles, which are also credited with the early sramana movements. The chronology of earliest texts describing yoga-practices is unclear, varyingly credited to Hindu Upanishads and Buddhist Pali Canon, probably of third century BCE or later. The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali from first half of 1st millennium CE is one of key surviving major texts on Yoga. Hatha yoga texts emerged around 11th century CE, and in its origins was related to Tantrism.

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. Yoga in Indian traditions, however, is more than physical exercise; it has a meditative and spiritual core. One of the six major orthodox schools of Hinduism is also called Yoga, which has its own epistemology and metaphysics, and is closely related to Hindu Samkhya philosophy.

Many studies have tried to determine the effectiveness of yoga as a complementary intervention for cancer, schizophrenia, asthma, and heart disease. The results of these studies have been mixed and inconclusive, with cancer studies suggesting none to unclear effectiveness, and others suggesting yoga may reduce risk factors and aid in a patient's psychological healing process.

In Vedic Sanskrit, the more commonly used, literal meaning of the Sanskrit word yoga which is "to add", "to join", "to unite", or "to attach" from the root yuj, already had a much more figurative sense, where the yoking or harnessing of oxen or horses takes on broader meanings such as "employment, use, application, performance" (compare the figurative uses of "to harness" as in "to put something to some use"). All further developments of the sense of this word are post-Vedic. More prosaic moods such as "exertion", "endeavour", "zeal", and "diligence" are also found in Epic Sanskrit.

There are very many compound words containing yog in Sanskrit. Yoga can take on meanings such as "connection", "contact", "method", "application", "addition", and "performance". In simpler words, Yoga also means "combined". For example, guṇā-yoga means "contact with a cord"; chakrá-yoga has a medical sense of "applying a splint or similar instrument by means of pulleys (in case of dislocation of the thigh)"; chandrā-yoga has the astronomical sense of "conjunction of the moon with a constellation"; pum-

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yoga is a grammatical term expressing "connection or relation with a man", etc. Thus, bhakti-yoga means "devoted attachment" in the monotheistic Bhakti movement. The term kriyā- yoga has a grammatical sense, meaning "connection with a verb". But the same compound is also given a technical meaning in the Yoga Sutras, designating the "practical" aspects of the philosophy, i.e. the "union with the Supreme" due to performance of duties in everyday life.

According to Paṇini, a 6th-century BCE Sanskrit grammarian, the term yoga can be derived from either of two roots, yujir yoga (to yoke) or yuj samādhau (to concentrate). In the context of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, the root yuj samādhau (to concentrate) is considered by traditional commentators as the correct etymology. In accordance with Paṇini, Vyasa who wrote the first commentary on the Yoga, states that yoga means Samadhi (concentration).

According to Dasgupta, the term yoga can be derived from either of two roots, yujir yoga (to yoke) or yuj samādhau (to concentrate). Someone who practices yoga or follows the yoga philosophy with a high level of commitment is called a yogi (may be applied to a male or a female) or yogini (traditionally denoting a female).

### Benefits of Yoga

Weight loss, a strong and flexible body, glowing beautiful skin, peaceful mind, good health – whatever you may be looking for, yoga has it on offer. However, very often, yoga is only partially understood as being limited to asanas (yoga poses). As such, its benefits are only perceived to be at the body level and we fail to realize the immense benefits yoga offers in uniting the body, mind and breath. When you are in harmony, the journey through life is calmer, happier and more fulfilling.

With all this and much more to offer, the benefits of yoga are felt in a profound yet subtle manner. Here, we look at the top 10 benefits of yoga practice.

**1. All-round fitness.** You are truly healthy when you are not just physically fit but also mentally and emotionally balanced. As Sri Sri Ravi Shankar puts it, "Health is not a mere absence of disease. It is a dynamic expression of life – in terms of how joyful, loving and enthusiastic you are." This is where yoga helps: postures, pranayama (breathing techniques) and meditation are a holistic fitness package.

**2. Weight loss.** What many want! Yoga benefits here too. Sun Salutations and Kapal Bhati pranayama are some ways to help lose weight with yoga. Moreover, with regular practice of yoga, we tend to become more sensitive to the kind of food our body asks for and when. This can also help keep a check on weight.

**3. Stress relief.** A few minutes of yoga during the day can be a great way to get rid of stress that accumulates daily - in both the body and mind. Yoga postures, pranayama and meditation are effective techniques to release stress. You can also experience how yoga helps de-tox the body and de-stress the mind at the Art of Living Yoga Level 2 Course.

**4. Inner peace.** We all love to visit peaceful, serene spots, rich in natural beauty. Little do we realize that peace can be found right within us and we can take a mini-vacation to experience this any time of the day! Benefit from a small

holiday every day with yoga and meditation. Yoga is also one of the best ways to calm a disturbed mind.

**5. Improved immunity.** Our system is a seamless blend of the body, mind and spirit. An irregularity in the body affects the mind and similarly unpleasantness or restlessness in the mind can manifest as an ailment in the body. Yoga poses massage organs and strengthen muscles; breathing techniques and meditation release stress and improve immunity.

**6. Living with greater awareness.** The mind is constantly involved in activity – swinging from the past to the future – but never staying in the present. By simply being aware of this tendency of the mind, we can actually save ourselves from getting stressed or worked up and relax the mind. Yoga and pranayama help create that awareness and bring the mind back to the present moment, where it can stay happy and focused.

**7. Better relationships.** Yoga can even help improve your relationship with your spouse, parents, friends or loved ones! A mind that is relaxed, happy and contented is better able to deal with sensitive relationship matters. Yoga and meditation work on keeping the mind happy and peaceful; benefit from the strengthened special bond you share with people close to you.

**8. Increased energy.** Do you feel completely drained out by the end of the day? Shuttling between multiple tasks through the day can sometimes be quite exhausting. A few minutes of yoga everyday provides the secret to feeling fresh and energetic even after a long day. A 10-minute online guided meditation benefits you immensely, leaving you refreshed and recharged in the middle of a hectic day.

**9. Better flexibility & posture.** You only need to include yoga in your daily routine to benefit from a body that is strong, supple and flexible. Regular yoga practice stretches and tones the body muscles and also makes them strong. It also helps improve your body posture when you stand, sit, sleep or walk. This would, in turn, help relieve you of body pain due to incorrect posture.

**10. Better intuition.** Yoga and meditation have the power to improve your intuitive ability so that you effortlessly realize what needs to be done, when and how, to yield positive results. It works. You only need to experience it yourself. Remember, yoga is a continuous process. So keep practicing! The deeper you move into your yoga practice, the more profound are its benefits. Yoga practice helps develop the body and mind bringing a lot of health benefits yet is not a substitute for medicine.

### Need of Yoga

Many of the common health and social problems cannot be solved through germ theories, antibiotics, vaccines or surgeries. The fascinating diagnostic tools have started pointing to the role of mind on matter. Biochemical, psychological, neuro-physiological and immunological researchers are recognizing the role of lifestyle, stress, suppressed emotions and so on as the cause of many of the challenges faced today. Hence health professionals are forced to accept the paradigm shift in the approach of understanding human health problems.

As everyone knows, yoga involves different patterns of exercises and postures, practicing them appropriately help to improve muscle strength, stamina, immune stability, perpetual sharpness, intelligence, memory, emotional stability and altogether maintain a positive physical and mental health.

**Let's talk about why you (yes, you!) should do yoga - as little or as much as you want.**

- **Less anxiety and a better mood.** A 2010 study found that practicing yoga just three times a week increased levels of chemicals in the brain that help combat anxiety and depression.
- **Less stress.** An Ohio State University study found that long-term yoga might help you recover from stressful events more quickly.
- **Better control over medical conditions affected by stress.** Researchers earlier this year theorized that yoga may be effective in treating patients with stress-related psychological and medical conditions such as depression, anxiety, high blood pressure and cardiac disease.
- **Better management of rheumatoid arthritis.** Patients suffering from rheumatoid arthritis reported significant improvements in their quality of life after starting a gentle yoga practice.
- **Better balance.** The American Heart Association journal *Stroke* reported that post-stroke yoga may be able to improve balance, decrease fear of falling, and improve quality of.
- **Less back pain.** Back pain affects 31 million Americans (myself included), and it's recommended by the National Institutes of Health as a way to ease pain and stretch muscles. A study funded by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) found that after six months of yoga, those suffering from low back pain had significantly less pain, disability, and depression. And another study found that just 12 weeks of yoga had a greater effect than standard medical care in those who suffered chronic or recurring back pain.

**Conclusion**

Wherever we go, we take our body and the mind which is enshrined within it and works through the body as an appliance. Therefore, we cannot flee this intricacy in knowing anything. We cannot recognize even a sand subdivision on the Ganga bank. Not an insect, not an ant can be known as it is in itself. Here is the cause of our difficulties, our moods of melancholy, dissatisfaction, depression and retrogression in yoga practice, even with the earnest enterprises we enter into after years of grounding in yoga.

It is not for nothing that it is said that we need divine direction and a supernatural support, which we have to summon and invoke, because yoga is a supernatural effort on the part of that which is supernatural in man. It is not man that practises yoga; it is that which is super-physical and super-individual in him which encounters this world.

Primarily, and finally, it looks as if we are our own obstacles; and, our difficulties land upon our heads like a brutal circle. We cannot understand things because we have suppressed emotions, frustrated feelings and unconscious impulses.

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