

Effects of Yoga on Mental & Physical Health

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ABSTRACT

Modern life patterns affect our health in different aspects physically, psychologically, and socially. There is a need for increasing people awareness about the effect of modern life to control the effects of the patterns of life. Promoting healthy lifestyle includes proper eating, physical activity, and better way of communicating and socializing in the community. All these have positive impacts which we can easily get in practicing yoga. Yoga will reduce the risk of getting so many diseases which resulted from our day to day lifestyles. This paper, therefore, deals with the significance of yoga in modern life. This article is written on the basis of practical lesson I get in practicing Yoga while attending Yoga class in University of Kerala. And in this article I included what I observed in my own situation while training in the centre. Health is a primary goal of any individual and hence without spending lots of money by practicing Yoga one can achieve proper health. This article therefore, deals with significance of Yoga in modern life to encourage the reader to practice Yoga to sustain physical, social and spiritual health.

Keywords: Yoga, Modern life, Health.

INTRODUCTION

Before discussing the importance of Yoga in modern lifestyles. It is essential to discuss the problems associated with modern life. It is obvious that modern lifestyles are easing the life of today's man. However, it also has a negative effect on health both physically, socially, psychologically and

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spiritually. The reasons for such problems are multiple to mention some of them lack of physical exercises, using technology given machine for easing life and spending much of our time on these machines, moving with transportation from place to place and sitting long hours in the office and in front of computers are some of them. Modern lifestyle intensifies the risk of fatness or obesity. Accordingly, creating diabetes, heart diseases, and cancers. Pollution due to modern technologies causes different respiratory diseases which many are suffering. Psychologically, persons are susceptible to increased stress and depression. Social isolation will occur due to spending a long time on computer and internet. As a result, the health which WHO defines is affected. Hence, it is possible to conclude that the existing different modern lifestyle arrangements affect our health in many ways. The modern man has problems of tension due to fast life style driven by science and technology. The amount of rest he / she is taken is minimal to make the physical, mental, and spiritual happiness. At the time people think they are in rest, they make themselves busy in chatting on Mobil which create another mental stress in their life. In the modern life in addition to technological advancement and easing lifestyles, the habit of food is also be changed. In previous time people were using natural food fruits and vegetables. This habit is shifted to food produced in artificial ways in a factory like fast foods. The environment and work style is also changed and has the negative effect in the life of the people especially in the urban industrial setting. This paper, therefore, deals with the significance of yoga as a remedy for problems resulted from modern lifestyle patterns.

PHILOSOPHY

The overall philosophy of yoga is about connecting the mind, body, and spirit. There are six branches of yoga. Each branch represents a different focus and set of characteristics. These are:

- Hatha yoga: This is the physical and mental branch that aims to prime the body and mind.
- Raja yoga: This branch involves meditation and strict adherence to a series of disciplinary steps known as the eight limbs of yoga.
- Karma yoga: This is a path of service that aims to create a future free from negativity and selfishness.

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- Bhakti yoga: This aims to establish the path of devotion, a positive way to channel emotions and cultivate acceptance and tolerance.
- Jnana yoga: This branch of yoga is about wisdom, the path of the scholar, and developing the intellect through study.
- Tantra yoga: This is the pathway of ritual, ceremony, or consummation of a relationship.

TYPES

Modern yoga focuses on exercise, strength, agility, and breathing. It helps to boost physical and mental well-being. There are many styles of yoga. A person should choose a style based on their goals and fitness level. Types and styles of yoga include:

- Ashtanga yoga: This type of yoga practice uses ancient yoga teachings. However, it became popular during the 1970s. Ashtanga applies the same poses and sequences that rapidly link every movement to breath.
- Bikram yoga: People practice Bikram yoga, also known as hot yoga, in artificially heated rooms at a temperature of nearly 105°F and 40% humidity. It consists of 26 poses and a sequence of two breathing exercises.
- Hatha yoga: This is a generic term for any type of yoga that teaches physical poses. Hatha classes usually serve as a gentle introduction to the basic poses of yoga.
- Iyengar yoga: This type of yoga practice focuses on finding the correct alignment in each pose with the help of a range of props, such as blocks, blankets, straps, chairs, and bolsters.
- Kripalu yoga : This type teaches practitioners to know, accept, and learn from the body. A student of Kripalu yoga learns to find their own level of practice by looking inward. The classes usually begin with breathing exercises and gentle stretches, followed by a series of individual poses and final relaxation.
- Kundalini yoga : Kundalini yoga is a system of meditation that aims to release pent-up energy. A Kundalini yoga class typically begins with

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chanting and ends with singing. In between, it features asana, pranayama, and meditation that aim to create a specific outcome.

- Power yoga: In the late 1980s, practitioners developed this active and athletic type of yoga based on the traditional Ashtanga system.
- Sivananda: This system uses a five point philosophy as its foundation. This philosophy maintains that proper breathing, relaxation, diet, exercise, and positive thinking work together to create a healthy yogic lifestyle.
- People practicing Sivananda use 12 basic asanas, which they precede with Sun Salutations and follow with Savasana.
- Viniyoga: Viniyoga focuses on form over function, breath and adaptation, repetition and holding, and the art and science of sequencing.
- Yin yoga: Yin yoga places its focus on holding passive poses for long periods of time. This style of yoga targets deep tissues, ligaments, joints, bones, and fascia.

Role of Yoga in Modern Era

Mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, stress, and insomnia are among the most common reasons for individuals to seek treatment with complementary therapies such as yoga. Yoga encourages one to relax, slow the breath and focus on the present, shifting the balance from the sympathetic nervous system and the flight-or-fight response to the parasympathetic system and the relaxation response. The latter is calming and restorative; it lowers breathing and heart rate, decreases blood pressure, lowers cortisol levels, and increases blood flow to the intestines and vital organs.

One of the main goals of yoga is to achieve tranquility of the mind and create a sense of well-being, feelings of relaxation, improved self-confidence, improved efficiency, increased attentiveness, lowered irritability, and an optimistic outlook on life. The practice of yoga generates balanced energy which is vital to the function of the immune system. Yoga leads to an inhibition of the posterior or sympathetic area of the hypothalamus. This

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inhibition optimizes the body's sympathetic responses to stressful stimuli and restores autonomic regulatory reflex mechanisms associated with stress. Yogic practices inhibit the areas responsible for fear, aggressiveness and rage, and stimulate the rewarding pleasure centers in the median forebrain and other areas leading to a state of bliss and pleasure. This inhibition results in lower anxiety, heart rate, respiratory rate, blood pressure, and cardiac output in students practicing yoga and meditation. Consistent yoga practice improves depression and can lead to significant increases in serotonin levels coupled with decreases in the levels of monamine oxidase, an enzyme that breaks down neurotransmitters and cortisol. A range of therapeutic approaches is available for the of depressive disorders, but many patients turn to complementary therapies due to the adverse effects of medication, lack of response or simply preference for the complementary approach. A number of studies demonstrate the potential beneficial effects of yoga interventions on depression, stress, and anxiety.

Improved flexibility is one of the first and most obvious benefits of yoga. With continued practice comes a gradual loosening of the muscles and connective tissues surrounding the bones and joints; this is thought to be one reason that yoga is associated with reduced aches and pains. Yoga helps to build muscle mass and/ or maintain muscle strength, which protects from conditions such as arthritis, osteoporosis and back pain. During a yoga session, the joints are taken through their full range of motion, squeezing and soaking areas of cartilage not often used and bringing fresh nutrients, oxygen and blood to the area, which helps to prevent conditions like arthritis and chronic pain. Without proper sustenance, neglected areas of cartilage will eventually wear out and expose the underlying bone. Numerous studies have shown that asana, meditation or a combination of the two reduced pain in people with arthritis, Carpel Tunnel syndrome, back pain and other chronic conditions. Yoga also increases proprioception and improves balance. Yoga increases blood flow and levels of hemoglobin and red blood cells which allows for more oxygen to reach the body cells, enhancing their function. Yoga also thins the blood which can decrease the risk of heart attack and stroke, as they are often caused by blood clots. Twisting poses wring out venous blood from internal organs and allow oxygenated blood to flow in when the twist is released. Inverted poses encourage venous blood flow from the legs and pelvis back to the heart and then pumped through the lungs

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where it becomes freshly oxygenated. Many studies show yoga lowers the resting heart rate, increases endurance, and can improve the maximum uptake and utilization of oxygen during exercise. Consistently getting the heart rate into aerobic range lowers the risk of heart attack. While not all yoga is aerobic, even yoga

exercises that do not increase heart rate into the aerobic range can improve cardiovascular functioning.

While yoga is not a cure for a cancer, nor a definitive way of preventing it, yoga increases physical, emotional and spiritual wellness, and brings about a certain peace, of which many cancer patients desire yoga, breathing exercises, and meditation can reduce stress, promote healing, and enhance quality of life for patients with cancer. The growth of tumors and other cancer indicators are exacerbated by stress, thus it is especially important for people with cancer to reduce and manage stress effectively. Several premises exist as rationale for applying yoga-based interventions with cancer patients. Research suggests that yoga can produce an invigorating effect on mental and physical energy that improves fitness and reduces fatigue. Additionally, when practicing yoga, a fundamental emphasis is placed on accepting one's moment-to-moment experiences creating mindfulness and not forcing the body past its comfortable limits. Having this healthy sense of acceptance is especially important for individuals dealing with life-threatening illness as it decreases the stress one experiences from unpleasant symptomology. Initially, cancer patients likely benefit from the poses themselves which are designed to exercise each and every muscle, nerve and gland throughout the body. The postures precisely address the tension, holding, and blockage of energy in any particular joint or organ. As this tension is released, energy flows more readily throughout the body and allows patients to experience a sense of increased well-being and strength as well as a balance of mind, body and spirit.

CONCLUSION

The modern lifestyle is complex and filled with tension. As a result, people in urban areas are busy with work schedules to full fill what life demands survival. The modern man is living in a competitive environment due to technological progress. In the current lifestyles especially in urban industrial society the work style, eating habit and family life structure is completely

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changed. The extended family structure in this society is unthinkable, and administering the nuclear family structure itself is hectic due to the huge demands it requires. This lifestyle brought stress to the individuals which leads to different types of diseases. Therefore, practicing yoga is significant in controlling health problems resulted from modern life situation. Yoga is holistic which provide physical, psychological, social and spiritual benefits.

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