



HEALTH BENEFITS AND GENERAL ASPECTS OF ANCIENT PRACTICES OF YOGA AND PRANAYAMA

Dr. Vikas Jain*

Medical Officer, Dept. of Ayush, Govt. of MP, Community Health Centre, Baldeogarh, Dist-Tikamgarh (MP), India.

*Corresponding Author: Dr. Vikas Jain

Medical Officer, Dept. of Ayush, Govt. of MP, Community Health Centre, Baldeogarh, Dist-Tikamgarh (MP), India.

Article Received on 18/02/2019

Article Revised on 11/03/2019

Article Accepted on 01/04/2019

ABSTRACT

Yoga is a well-known discipline of Indian civilization and is regarded as the science of holistic life. The *Yoga* involves different practices including *Yama* and *Niyama*, *Kriya*, *Asana*, *Pranayama*, *Dharana* and *Dhyana*. *Yoga* consists of a schedule of *Asanas* and breathing techniques which affects health positively in various aspects. *Yoga* first appeared in later hymns of the *Upanishads* or *Vedanta*, in ancient Hindu scriptures. *Yoga* and *Pranayama* improves general health and helps to cure various illnesses. *Pranayama* (breath control) has attracted particular interest of the scientific community due to its enormous health benefits. Breath control comprises altering the rate of breathing, such as slowing or pacing it, fiddling with the nostrils, repeating humming sounds and holding your breath, etc. The *Yoga* helps to know inner strength and improves mental focus. It potentiates physical health and resists disease prevalence by increasing immune power. Present article explores health benefits and general aspects of *Yoga* and *Pranayama*.

KEYWORDS: *Ayurveda*, *Yoga*, *Pranayama*, *Asana*, *Breathing*.

INTRODUCTION

Yoga is a ancient practice that contributed towards physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. It has been a long-standing custom in India and is currently gaining popularity in western culture also. *Yajurveda* suggested *Yoga* in order to improve mental health, physical stamina and prosperity, etc. The *Upanishads* are rich in *Yogic* ideas similarly *Bhagavad-Gita* referred terminology connected to *Yoga*, such as *Pranayama* and *Samadhi*.^[1-4]

Asana, *Mudra* and *Pranayama*, etc. are major practices comes under the heading of *Yoga*. *Sidhyasana*, *Padmasana*, *Sinhasana* and *Vadrasana* are the main classes of *Asanas*. *Asana* in another way can be classified into two types as *Dhyanasana* and *Shasthyasana*.

General Health Benefits of Yoga

- The *Yoga* helps to balances life style and combat against the deteriorative effect of modern day living.
- Boosts energy levels by improving the quantity and quality of circulating *Prana*.
- Unblocks clogged *Nadis* and channels.
- Increases vitality, calmness and enthusiasm, etc.
- Supports happy decision-making process, mental fortitude in the face of challenges and inculcate power of superior judgment.

- *Yoga* establishes balances between the body, mind and spirit.
- *Yoga* enhances physical, mental and spiritual strength.
- *Yoga* improves mental clarity, memory and intellect.
- Reduces stress, enhances sleep and mindfulness.
- Lowers high blood pressure and improves lung function.
- Enhances cognitive performance and connects spiritually.

The Patanjali codified schools of Yoga Darshan as follows

- ✓ *Niyama* (individual ethics)
- ✓ *Asana* (physical postures)
- ✓ *Pranayama* (breath control)
- ✓ *Pratyahara* (control of the senses)
- ✓ *Dharana* (concentration)
- ✓ *Dhyana* (meditation)

Pranayama is described as combination of two words; *Prana* and *Ayama*, which mainly involve practice of control breathing. *Pranayama* is *Yogic* art of breathing, which is associated with alteration in breathing process. Rapid breathing, slow breathing, uses of alternative nostril for breathing and holding of breath are major processes of breathing. The various techniques of *Pranayama* are depicted in **Figure 1**. *Pranayama* is the

fourth limb of the holistic process of *Yoga* as described in *Yoga-Sutra* of *Patanjali*. *Yoga* has been performed from ancient time in India and its popularity increasing day by day due to its health beneficial effects.^[4-6]

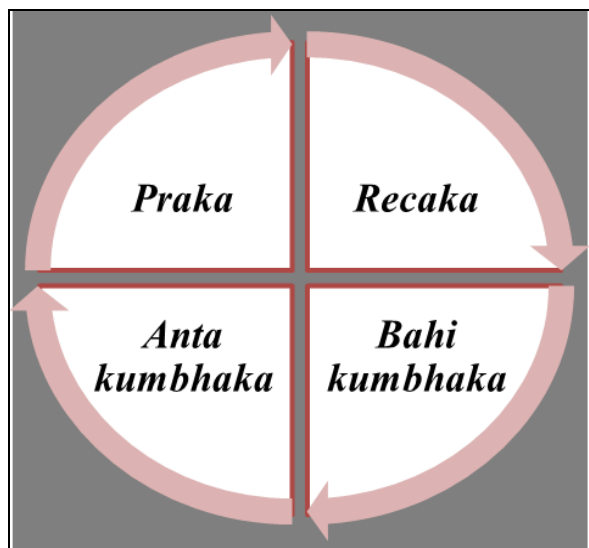


Figure 1: Various techniques of *Pranayama*.

Pranayama has been shown to provide a variety of positive health impacts, such as cardiovascular benefits, improvement in respiratory function, increased cognition and stress reduction, etc. The three phases of *Pranayama* cycle are *Puraka* (inhalation), *Kumbhaka* (retention) and *Rechaka* (exhalation), these three phases offers specific health impacts and helps to cure various pathological conditions. The different breathing technique of *Pranayama* includes *Nadishodhana*, *Ujjayi*, *Bhramari* and *Bastrika*. These breathing techniques can be practiced with an condition of empty stomach.^[5-7]

Benefits of particular techniques

- ✚ *Bhramari pranayama* calm racing mind and reduces hypertension.
- ✚ *Kapal Bhati* helps to clean energy channels and purifying the body.
- ✚ *Bhastrika pranayama* boost energy levels.
- ✚ *Nadi Shodan* calms mind and improves focus.

Pranayama technique enhances cognitive abilities, enhancing auditory and sensory-motor skills and improves lung volume. *Pranayama* involves respiratory muscles stronger and cure lung problems like asthma. *Pranayama* can improve mindfulness, improves focus and control stress.

Pranayama can reduce anxiety as well as negative emotions. Additionally, it can enhances areas of mental focus that are frequently impacted by anxiety, improves awareness and attentiveness. *Pranayama* lowers hypertension, reduces chances of developing strokes, coronary heart disease and peripheral vascular disease. *Pranayama* also helps to cure diseases like psoriasis, migraines, ulcers and psychological ailments.^[6-8]

Asana for Specific Diseases

- ❖ *Matsyasana* is recommended for triggering the thyroid gland.
- ❖ *Shirshasana* and *Shavaasana* are recommended for Asthma.
- ❖ *Dhanurasana* and *Matsyendraasana* advise for Diabetes.
- ❖ *Sukhasana* and *Padmaasana* are considered good for stomach disorders.
- ❖ *Mayurasana* and *Bhujangasana* are recommended for liver disorders.
- ❖ *Shirshaasana* and *Sarvaangasana* are advises for Insomnia.
- ❖ *Paad Hastaasana* and *Udyan Baudh Asana* are recommended for Obesity.
- ❖ *Vajra Asanas* is advises for Rheumatism.
- ❖ *Ardha Matsyendra* and *Janu Shir Asanas* are recommended for Gout.
- ❖ *Hanuman Asana* is considered good for Sciatica.

CONCLUSION

Yoga combines inward focus and physical efforts to induce a contemplative frame of mind. Additionally, it sets off neuro-hormonal systems that improve health as seen by the reduction in sympathetic activity. Thus, it lessens anxiety and stress, enhances the functioning of the autonomic and higher neurological centers, enhances the physical well-being and helps to treat many diseases. *Yoga* helps to balances life style, boosts energy levels, clears clogged channels, increases vitality; impart calmness and enthusiasm, etc. *Yoga* improves memory and intellect, enhances cognitive performance and boost up spiritual strength. *Pranayama* lowers hypertension, reduces chances of coronary heart disease and helps to cure diseases like psoriasis, migraines, ulcers and psychological ailments, etc.

REFERENCES

1. Ankerberg J, Weldon J. In: 'Yoga' in Encyclopedia of New Age Belief. Eugene OR, editor. United States: Harvest House Publishers, 1996; 593–610.
2. Chopra D. In: The Seven Spiritual Laws of Yoga. Hoboken NJ, editor. United States: John Wiley and Sons, 2004.
3. Raj VA. The Hindu Connection: Roots of New Age. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1994; 62–86.
4. Melton GJ. "Yoga" in New Age Encyclopedia. Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1990; 500–9.
5. Iyengar BKS. Light on Yoga. 2nd ed. New York: Schocken Books, 1976.
6. Raghuraj P, Ramakrishnan AG, Nagendra HR, Shirley T. Effect of two selected yogic breathing techniques on heart rate variability. Indian J Physiol Pharmacol, 1998; 42: 467–2.
7. Selvamurthy W, Sridharan K, Ray US, Tiwary RS, Hedge KS, Radhakrishnan U, et al. Anew physiological approach to control essential

hypertension. Indian J Physiol Pharmacol, 1998; 42: 205-13.

8. Damodaran A, Malathi A, Patil N, Shah N, Suryavanshi, Marathe S. Therapeutic potential of yoga practices in modifying cardiovascular risk profile in middle aged men and women. J Assoc Physicians India, 2002; 50: 633-9.