



ISSN: 2456-0057

IJPNPE 2017; 2(2): 690-693

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www.journalofsports.com

Received: 27-05-2017

Accepted: 28-06-2017

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Yogic science & its importance in 21ST century

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Abstract

Yoga is essentially a spiritual discipline based on an extremely subtle science, which focuses on bringing harmony between mind and body. Yoga is based on the philosophy that is practical and useful for our daily lives. Yoga constructs desirable physiological alterations and has sound scientific foundations. In this modern world we are struggling for survival and we human beings suffer from more and more physical and psychological stress and strains. We cannot always control them, but we can find out the ways to face them and to this end Yoga is a good creation. Human beings are so busy with their personal lives that they have even forgotten the correct way to breathe.

Therefore, integration of head, heart and hands is the theme of yoga in the 21st century, along with awareness of our spiritual nature, which has to be nourished like the roots of a tree. If you want to experience the depth of yoga, then immerse yourself in this idea: live, love and laugh. Have one thought in mind: "No matter how many times I fall, I will always get up smiling and keep on walking." So, smile and walk. Yoga is the only technique through which the body of any human being can be healthy without any trainer, equipment and medicine.

The study makes an attempt to analyse the role and importance of yoga as a science in 21st century.

Keywords: yoga, science, impacts, components, integration

Introduction

Yoga is essentially a spiritual discipline based on an extremely subtle science, which focuses on bringing harmony between mind and body. It is an art and science of healthy living. The word 'Yoga' is derived from the Sanskrit root 'Yuj', meaning 'to join' or 'to yoke' or 'to unite'. In this modern world of 21st century our environment is struggling for endurance and survival and we human beings suffer from more and more physical and psychological stress and strains. We cannot always control them, but can find out the ways to face them and to this end Yoga is a good creation. The aim of yoga is achievement of physical, mental and spiritual harmony. Yoga is an internal expedition that creates an awareness and understanding of yourself and leads you to self transformation. It is a primordial science of self-development that filters your mind and body and sustains perfect balance and harmony between them. In other words, it is an art of controlling your mind, body and breath and unlocking the hidden potential energies. Yoga can be in meditation form and it could also be a form of physical exercise. Many human beings are so busy with their personal lives that they have even forgotten the correct way to breathe. Yoga is a way of life for good living and for the benefit of the body. Yoga is the only technique through which the body of any human being can be healthy without any trainer, equipment and medicine. Thus, my purpose of this paper makes an attempt to analyse the role and importance of Yoga in Modern times of 21st century as well as its effect on human beings in this contemporary times.

Yoga as a Spiritual Science

Yoga is a spiritual science for the integrated and holistic enlargement and magnification of our physical, mental as well as moral-spiritual facets. Yoga is based on the philosophy that is practical and useful for our daily lives. Yoga constructs desirable physiological alterations and has sound scientific foundations. ("What is Yoga..."). The word Yoga originated from "the Sanskrit word Yuj' meaning to yoke, join or unite ("Wikipedia"). This entails unifying all facets of the individual - body with mind and soul - to achieve a balanced life. The practice of yoga may lead to the unification of the human with the celestial.

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The aim of yoga is the alteration of human beings from their ordinary form to an ideal form. The Yogic practices began in the ancient depths of India's past. From this early period the interior attitudes and disciplines which were later acknowledged and given logical expression by Patanjali.

Traditionally, yoga has always been a means of internalising the awareness and discovering the inner self. In the past, over thousands of years, the yoga practitioners developed a series of practices by which people could attain physical health, mental harmony and spiritual upliftment. In the course of time, due to changes in the social and global environment, the ancient tradition of yoga was lost in many countries, but it continued to be preserved in India by the sannyasins. Sannyasa is not a religion; it is an order of people who have renounced the material world to experience the spiritual world. Yoga should not be confused with religious concepts.

It should be understood that yoga is a science that deals with the management and development of human personality – harmony of body and mind, and experience of spirit.

An Yogic Saint, Swami Satyananda says, “The important part of a tree is not the external part that can we see, but the roots which are underground and invisible. The roots sustain the tree and as long as they are nourished, the tree can face any situation, but if the roots are neglected and forgotten, the tree will become weak and fall down in a storm.” Our life is like that too, because we identify with the body, the senses and the mind, which are the external manifestations of our personality. We ignore the realisation of the greater possibility or potential that exists within us, which is recognised as the spirit.

Spirit is not something abstract and vague, but part of the evolution of consciousness. Life is a process of constant evolution at different levels. Evolution is the outcome of a focused and illuminated mind. We all come with the same possibilities. God has been very generous to us. We have within us the same qualities as Christ and Buddha. The only difference is that they were experimenting with those qualities and we have ignored that aspect of our life. They were continually refining themselves while we have stagnated at one point. This is the barrier we all face as human beings, the limitation that we cannot overcome in our life.

Aim of yoga

So, when yoga appeared, it was to discover that inner potential, which is spiritual, not material. At the same time, those who developed yoga realised that growth had to take place in all dimensions of existence. The body needs to be harmonised so that it can manage illness and disease. In order to manage physical imbalances, the asanas or physical postures were developed. Physical harmony alters the activity of the brain. Cerebral and physical harmony influence the mental behaviour. In the process of harmonising the personality, the mind also comes in tune with its inner strengths. This is the beginning of yoga.

Impacts of Yoga

Due to modern life style man is suffering from various postural deformities and diseases like Obesity, Hypertension, Diabetes, Migraine, Cervical, Backaches, Depression, Anxiety, Cancer, Insomnia, Constipation, Allergy, Asthma, Cardiac diseases and etc. Various postural deformities like Kyphosis, lordosis, scoliosis, knocked knee etc. can be seen in the modern population. For these deformities congenital can be there, but the acquired especially the life style of an

individual is more responsible than any other reason. The population involved in the chair job and driving generally suffered from Khyposis and as a result cervical spondylitis occurs.

Yogasanas like Bhujangasana, Matyasayana, Chakarasana etc. yields best result, but in the advance stage of diseases suksham Yog is helpful as muscles are too weak to bear the stress of asanas. Obesity, wearing high heels shoes, carrying a heavy weight on the back and pregnancy in some cases results in Lordosis. These people generally suffer from back ache especially in the lumbar region. In lordosis, Scoliosis and knocked knee, whether acquired or genetic, Yoga provides the best solution. In the present era of Science, the human muscles are suffering from atrophy due to lack of muscular activity. This result in weakness, sprain and strain due to atrophy of skeletal muscle. Atrophy of involuntary visceral muscle results in constipation and other digestive ailments. Regular practice of Yoga eradicates them forever. Various types of stresses and pollution give birth to many diseases like Hypertension, Depression, Anxiety, Insomnia, Allergy, Asthma etc. They too are cured with Asanas, Sat Karmas, Pranayam and Meditation. The vibrations of the sound waves generated in the cranium by the reverberation of the word ‘OM’ during Bhramri pranyam cure many types’ headaches and mental disorders. The modern lifestyle is the slave of intoxicated drinks and drugs, social and moral ethics are harassing. In such condition Yam and Niyam of Asthang Yog come forward to suggest the right path.

Yoga has achieved wonderful popularity in the last few years, it is the quickest growing health movement, and despite it were developed thousands years ago. Age, religion, caste, sex has no bar with breathing and meditation techniques. There are many types of yoga and it may be hard for the beginners which type of yoga he or she wants to do. The most important advantage of yoga is the physical and mental therapy, the very essence of yoga lies in accomplishing mental peace, enhanced concentration power and a relaxed state of living. There are many health benefits of yoga, studies have shown that yoga can relieve many common and life threatening illness such as arthritis, chronic fatigue, diabetes, AIDS, asthma, high blood pressure, back pain, weight reduction, obesity, common cold constipation, epilepsy, skin problems and respiration problems. Yoga also helps in rehabilitation of new and old injuries. Regular yoga practice builds mental lucidity and coolness, boost body awareness, relives stress patterns, relaxes the minds and sharpens concentration. Yoga provides tools through which one can manage which the pain and helps contradict with the feeling of helplessness and depression.

Yogic breathing and stretching exercises have been seen to result in better mental and physical energy and improved mood. The mental performance also increases with yoga. Doctors also have suggested that yoga can enhance cognitive performance.

The entire system of yoga can be divided into four main components:

The first component is training and disciplining our mental behaviour, attitudes and involvement in the material world by practising the yamas (restraints) and niyamas (disciplines). These two are responsible for transforming the mental conditioning. Just changing a small habit requires a huge quantity of willpower. You can reduce its intensity, but you cannot eradicate or eliminate it. For this reason, yoga speaks of restraint and inner discipline to reduce the intensity and grip of these conditionings which hamper the expression of

our natural creativity. According to the classical texts, this is the beginning of yoga.

In the second part, we begin to work with our body to provide the physical organs with health and well-being. Research has shown that many psychosomatic illnesses and disorders can be managed through yogic principles and practices. In many countries yoga is in the front-line of therapies along with allopathic treatments. Yoga is used in the management of respiratory problems such as bronchitis, asthma and emphysema, circulatory system and heart disorders, digestive problems of the stomach, pancreas, kidney and liver, and for optimum functioning of the organs. Currently, the role of yogic practices in the management of cancer and AIDS is under clinical investigation.

The postures and breathing techniques help to remove the imbalances which cause illness and disease. But yoga is not a therapy, and should not be considered as such. Yoga is a process of managing oneself, not the symptoms of the disease. For example, a person with hypertension takes medicine to lower the high blood pressure. As long as the medicine continues to be effective, the pressure stays down, but when the effect goes away the pressure again shoots up. If we have diabetes, we take insulin. These are not therapies that cure but which manage the symptoms manifesting in the body. Yoga does not manage the symptoms. Yoga manages you. If you are able to lead a balanced life, these problems will leave you naturally. So yoga manages the person, not the disease. Therefore, yoga is not a therapy but a lifestyle. If you are willing to change and adopt that disciplined lifestyle, then you become a yogi.

The third component of yoga is mind management, which is the main theme of yoga. Only ten percent of the brain is active; ninety percent is still inactive. We live according to the dictates of this limited mind. When we are unable to meet our expectations and desires, insecurity, tension, stress, fear and conflict arise. We enter a state of high anxiety when dealing with the demands of the ego. To be happy, we think we need to have something and when we are unable to get it, frustration and aggression arise. Mentally, we are driven by a quest for happiness that satisfies our own needs without any consideration for others. This represents a mind that is totally centred on itself, its needs, ambitions and desires. Possessiveness and selfishness manifest. Clarity of mind becomes clouded, and confusion and conflict take hold of the human personality.

In the mental aspect of yoga, we become aware of the four components of the mind – strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs. We have the strength in us, but we are not aware of it. We identify with our weaknesses and shortcomings, and they become the reality. We have needs, but we identify with ambitions, and we pursue them and ignore our needs. We are more aware of our ambitions and weaknesses, and less of the strengths and needs.

How do we come out of this state? The yogic practices of relaxation and concentration increase awareness, observation and perception of the mental behaviour, regulating the mind and its expressions. One trick to manage the mind is to understand the nature of the mind, which is like a drunken monkey bitten by a scorpion, agitated and suffering from unfulfilled expectations and desires.

Mental yoga begins with a very simple relaxation practice, known as yoga nidra. With relaxation comes concentration, the focusing of the mental faculties and awareness to achieve what we need and aspire for in life. When the mind is illuminated, awareness spreads in all directions. If the light is

focused to a point, it becomes a laser beam strong enough to cut steel or soft enough to perform laser surgery on the eye. The same effect can be had by focusing the energies and the dissipated awareness of the mind at one point, in one direction, to fulfil one's objective. That is known as concentration. So relaxation and concentration are the means to transform the nature and behaviour of the mind.

The fourth aspect of yoga is spiritual understanding, which is the outcome of wisdom – applied knowledge. The knowledge is there, but it is never applied. You know what is right and wrong for you, but do you do the right thing? Smoking is one example. There are thousands of others where we know what is right and wrong, but cannot resolve the issue and be satisfied. Therefore, spiritual evolution begins with understanding and applied knowledge, which is the meditative process leading to an altered state of consciousness.

Meditation gives a broader perspective. The higher you go, the greater your vision and perception. That is spiritual realisation, not the handshake and encounter with God. What is necessary is to lift yourself from this level of perception and experience a higher dimension where you become a witness of yourself. You can keep going up as far as you want to go. God is infinity. Through the process of meditation you keep on growing in an infinite dimension.

Give evolution a chance

What is the relevance of yoga today? The moment we manage the intellect, emotions and actions, we give evolution a chance in our lives. If you want a fruit tree, you plant the seed in the ground, leave it and don't dig it up every day to see if it is sprouting or not. For the seed to sprout, you have to give growth a chance. In the same manner, instead of digging fifty holes one foot deep to search for water, dig one hole fifty feet deep. The key is to follow one chain of thought, experience and understanding, and allow it to evolve, to take over and guide your actions. If you want to excel in professional life, you pick one subject and master it. The same rule has to apply internally. Pursuing one direction gives evolution a chance to guide your life.

Therefore, integration of head, heart and hands is the theme of yoga in the 21st century, along with awareness of our spiritual nature, which has to be nourished like the roots of a tree. If you want to experience the depth of yoga, then immerse yourself in this idea: live, love and laugh. Have one thought in mind: "No matter how many times I fall, I will always get up smiling and keep on walking." So, smile and walk.

Conclusion

So Yoga is a multidimensional aspect and its scope has increased in the modern life of twenty first century. It is obvious that yoga is a boon for the 'modern' man of twenty first century, which has become a victim of everyday stress. Modern research has recognized the scientific roots of yogic practices and yoga has now achieved international recognition and acclaim. As we all know, 21st June has declared as Yoga Day in all over the world and it has celebrated in all over the world. Today, yoga is a painstakingly worldwide phenomenon, it has taken the world by tempest and is gaining reputation day by day. It is enviable that yoga must be made an integral part of our educational as well as health care systems. If our masses practice yoga, they will be physically, mentally and spiritually healthy. The rush and burden of our hospitals will be greatly reduced. Hence, there is an urgent need to popularize yoga among the human beings. Yoga is reliable with our ethnicity and harmonizing to science, so, it is our primary duty to endorse it further.

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