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PRINCIPLES AND METHODS OF YOGA PRACTICES

STUDY MATERIALS

COMPILED AND EDITED

BY

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YOGIC PRACTICES

Yoga is a science of right living, and as such, it is intended to be incorporated in daily life. It works on all aspects of the person. – the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual levels.

The word Yoga means “Unity” or “Oneness”. It is derived from the Sanskrit word YUJ which in spiritual terms mean the union of the individual consciousness with the universal consciousness. On a more practical level, yoga is a means of balancing & harmonizing the body, mind & emotions and this state need to be achieved before union with the higher reality takes place.



Maharishi Patanjali

In Yoga Sutras **Maharishi Patanjali** replies to the question of

"What is yoga?" as,

“Atha yoga anushasanam” - yoga is a form of discipline.

The word for discipline in Sanskrit is anushasanam. The word Anu means 'atom', the most tiny and subtle one. We know the nature of an atom is invisible yet potent. Shasanam means 'to rule over' or 'to govern'. So, the concept of discipline in Yoga is a process in which we learn to govern the subtlest aspect, the unknown aspect of our own selves.

Maharishi Patanjali quotes **the result of this discipline** as,

“Yogaha chitta vritti nirodhaha”

Through this discipline we will gain control over the different modifications of Chitta.

Chitta means the aspect which observes, which sees, which is consciously active in the world. The aim of the yogic discipline is to alter the Vrittis. Our mind is disturbed by the Chitta Vrittis (the five mental afflictions) which needs to be controlled.

The five Mental Afflictions are:

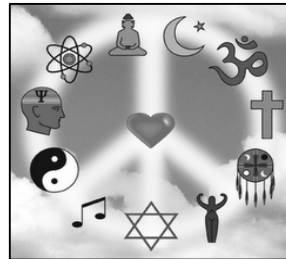
- Pramana : Right knowledge
- Viparyaya : Wrong knowledge
- Vikalpa : Imagination
- Nidra : Sleep
- Smriti : Memory

"What is the aim of Yoga?" - *The aim of Yoga is not only to control the Vrittis, but in turn by controlling the Vrittis obtaining a state of union with the Paramatma.*

DIVINE TRANSFORMATION



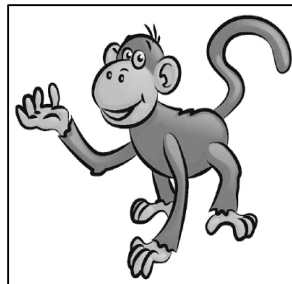
**Yogacharini Meenakshi Devi
Bhavanani**



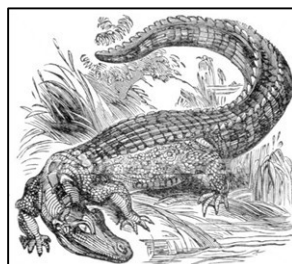
DIVINE



HUMANE



MAMMALIAN



REPTILIAN

Swami Gitananda defines Yoga as “Way of life”. He also gives us the four/ fivefold awareness:

- Awareness of body
- Awareness of mind
- Awareness of emotions
- Awareness of awareness itself

Of course before this we have to first have the

“Awareness of how unaware we are”



**Yoga Maharishi
Swami Gitananda Giri**

Yogic practices thus help us to develop kinesthetic awareness and lead a yogic life.

CONCEPT OF YOGIC PRACTICES

The term Yoga carries several technical meanings. One of its principal meanings is ‘Yukti’. Yukti means technique, trick or skill for achieving the goal indirectly when the goal cannot be achieved directly. Yoga as Yukti can also be termed as a junction in order to feel the divine within us.

Yoga as Yukti involves many different processes which require proper training. So the techniques or practices (i.e., yuktis) enjoined in yogic literature also go under the name of Yoga. Thus we get such terms as Laulika Yoga, Neti Yoga, Dhyana Yoga, Samadhi Yoga etc., for the individual yoga practitioner. When various such techniques or practices are systematized and formulated they are known as schools of yoga like Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Laya Yoga, Raja Yoga etc., all these schools of Yoga are only Yoga in the sense of so many techniques, Yuktis or Yogic practices.

The four major schools or streams of Yoga are:

- | | | | |
|-------|-------------|---|------------------------|
| (i) | Karma Yoga | – | Path of Self Sacrifice |
| (ii) | Bhakti Yoga | – | Path of self Surrender |
| (iii) | Jnana Yoga | – | Path of Self Analysis |
| (iv) | Raja Yoga | – | Path of Self Control. |

The nature of all Yogic practices is psycho-physiological. Although every Yogic practice is psycho-physiological in nature, those practices which emphasis control of mental processes directly are more psychological. Some yogic practices of Hatha Yoga are more physical or physiological than psychological. Only these yogic practices which predominantly are physical or physiological in nature could be referred to as exercises. Rather, they should be understood in the sense of what is called the hygienic exercises.

Some of the yogic exercises are Surya Namaskar, Asana, Pranayama, Mudras, Bandhas and Shat kriya.

TYPES OF YOGIC PRACTICES

Yogic practices begin to work on the outmost aspect of the personality. The physical body is the practical and familiar starting point for most of the people. When imbalance is experienced at this level, the organs, muscles & nerves no longer functions in harmony, rather they act in opposition to each other.

Yogic practices helps to overcome these imbalances and create harmony in the body and mind.

In Bhagavad Gita **Yogeshwar Krishna** defines yoga as

“Samatvam yoga ucchyate” - Equanimity of mind.

“Yogaha karmasu koushalam” - Yoga is skill in action.

Doing everything skillfully is also the main aim of Yoga. Yogic practices help in attaining the attitude of perfection in the mind.

The various types of Yogic practices from which everyone can get benefited are:

- (i) Yama and Niyama (Attitude Training Practices)
- (ii) Asana (Steady Postures)
- (iii) Pranayama (control of the breathing process)
- (iv) Mudras and Bandhas (seal and lock for energy)
- (v) Shat Kriya (six purification techniques)
- (vi) Dhyana (Meditation)

Attitude Training Practices (Yama and Niyama)

Yama and Niyama are the fundamental practices of yoga. Without them, other Yogic practices fail to give desired results. Yama and Niyama are self-imposed restrictions to govern our behaviour and thus develop a healthy attitude towards life, objects and circumstances.

The cultivation of correct psychological attitudes through Yama and Niyama bring about tranquilization of the mind. It is an attempt to cultivate and maintain mental peace. According to Yoga, the influence of mind over the body is much more than that of the body over the mind. So this lays a special emphasis on Yama and Niyama and gives the top priority among various yogic practices. The Pancha Yamas are the five moral restraints and Pancha Niyamas are the five evolutionary observances.

Asana (Steady Posture)

The term Asana is derived from the Sanskrit term Asi – ‘to be’ or ‘to sit’. Asanas are certain special patterns of postures that stabilize the body and mind. They aim at establishing a proper rhythm in the neuromuscular tonic impulses and improving the general muscle tone. Asanas help in the healthy functioning of the organism and also leads to suppleness and ease of movement. Asana benefits the physical body and brings in emotional stability in the human being.

Pranayama (Control of the Breathing Process)

The term Pranayama is derived from two root words ‘Prana’ which means vital energy or life force and ‘Ayama’ which means extension or expansion. So the word Pranayama means extension of the vital force (i.e. dimension of Prana) Pranayamas are practices that are designed to bring about voluntary control over respiration. The main purpose of Pranayama is to gain control over the autonomous nervous system through breath control and by it influence the mental function. It is useful in higher Yogic practices like Meditation.

Mudras and Bandhas (seal and lock for energy)

Mudras and Bandhas are certain specific locks and holds of the semi-voluntary and involuntary muscles in the body. By bringing these muscles more and more under volition, one could there by influence the activity of the autonomous nervous system as a whole. They also involve manipulation of internal pressure on the negative or positive side of the body. This tone up the internal organs, helps to decongest them, and stimulates their healthy functioning. Some Asanas are also called Mudras because of their specific effects and channels through which the effects are brought about.

Mudras that are used in the practice of Pranayama are called Bandhas. These Bandhas can also be practiced like other Mudras without having to resort to Pranayama and derive the same results as obtained from the various Mudras. Bandhas bind and channelize nervous activities in a particular place or direction in the body.

Shat Kriya (Six Purification Techniques)

‘Karma’ or ‘Kriya’ means Action. The Shat Kriya are the six purification techniques that help to cleanse the entire body that acts as a complimentary practice for Pranayama. Shat Kriya are also called as Shat Karmas. These are various cleansing process using water, air, cotton ropes, cloth, manipulation of abdominal musculature as well as respiratory practices, usually they are classified into six types:

1. Neti (cleaning of nasal passages with water or frictional movement of rubber catheter or cotton rope.)
2. Dhauti (Stomach wash using water, rubber tube or plantain stalks and cloth.)
3. Basti (colon flushing.)
4. Nauli (manipulation of abdominal muscles.)
5. Trataka (steady gazing to cleanse the eyes.)
6. Kapalabhati (Forceful breathing to ventilate and cleanse air passages.)

Dhyana (Meditation)

Meditation is a practice involving control of the mental functions. It starts from the initial withdrawal of the senses from external objects and culminates with a complete oblivion of the external environment. There are many types and techniques of Meditation. It is a process in which the person who meditates dwells upon a single object, sound, concept or experience.

Meditation is a great tranquilizer of the mind. One should prepare oneself for Meditation adequately through Asana and Pranayama, in the hierarchy of Yogic practices. Meditation occupies a higher position. The basic principle of Meditation is to develop internal awareness.

IMPORTANCE OF YOGA

Yoga is a fantastic remedy for overcoming problems that modern man is facing in his daily life. Yoga helps to enhance the auto immune system, to increase the vital energy in the body system. This will help to increase the vital energy in the body and help to develop the thought of mental efficiency. This will help to minimize the mental attitude of the human.

Yoga is a precious pragmatic science evolved over thousands of years which is dealing with physical, moral, mental and spiritual well being for man. The term Yoga is derived from Sanskrit meaning to bind, join, attach and yoke. It increases one's concentration and attention.

The system of Yoga teaches the individual soul (Jivatma) which can be united with communion with the Cosmos (Paramatma) and it will help to attain Moksha. Yogi will find grace within himself through his practice and he finds fulfillment in his life. Yoga will help to reach wisdom in work or skillful living and this will bring harmony in our life.

The practice of Yoga is not a course or exam which can be completed within a stipulated period of time. But it can be based on the dedication towards their practice. One cannot expect favorable results within an exact period of time. Yoga is based on the relationship between Guru and Shishya and really this is special when compared to other relationship like husband and wife or friends. A Guru should be free from world affairs and he should be a role model for Shishya. But Shishya should have higher realization and development and he is having more responsibilities and he should have more love and devotion towards his Guru.

BASIC TEXTS OF YOGA

Raja yoga and Hatha yoga are the two main schools of Yoga. The basic text of Raja yoga are the Yogasutra's of Maharishi Patanjali, the Yoga-Bhasya of Vyasa, the Tattvavaisaradi of Vacaspati Misra. The Hatha yoga is the yoga formulated by the Yogin Goraksanatha who lived circa 1200 A.D. He is the founder of the Saiva sect of the Goraksanathis. The basic text of this school is the Goraksasathaka or Gorakshapaddhati of this Yogin; the Hatha Yoga Paradipika of Swatmarama Yogindra of the 15th century and the later Gheranda Samhita and the Siva Samhita. Raja Yoga is fundamentally concerned with mental control, while Hatha Yoga lays greater emphasis on the discipline of the body.

The other basic text books are Bhagavad Gita, Yoga Vashistha, Shiva Swarodaya and Yoga Upanishads.

GENERAL BENEFITS OF YOGA PRACTICES

• **Physical Benefits:**

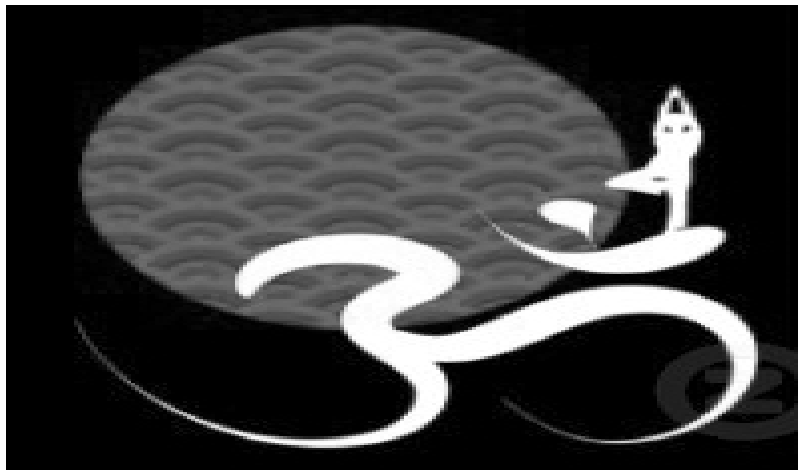
- Creates a toned, flexible, and strong body.
- Improves respiration, energy, and vitality.
- Helps to maintain a balanced metabolism.
- Promotes cardio and circulatory health.
- Relieves pain.
- Helps you look and feel younger than your age.
- Improves your athletic performance.

• **Mental Benefits:**

- Helps you relax and handle stressful situations more easily.
- Teaches you how to quiet the mind so you can focus your energy where you want it to go - into a difficult yoga pose, on the tennis court or golf course, or in the office etc...
- Encourages positive thoughts and self-acceptance.

• **Spiritual Benefits:**

- Builds awareness of your body, your feelings, the world around you, the needs of others.
- Promotes an inter dependence between mind, body, and spirit.
- Helps you live the concept of "oneness."



YAMA AND NIYAMA

PREPARING ONESELF FOR YOGIC PRACTICES

The influence of the mind on the body is far more profound than the influence of the body on the mind. The physical training in Yoga will give the desired result only when it is backed up by mental training through the cultivation of correct psychological attitudes.

This is exactly why in yoga, Yama and Niyama are placed as the first and second items correspondingly in the yogic curriculum and has assigned asana the third place. If followed faithfully, Yama and Niyama give supreme mental peace to a student of Yoga. He is freed from all violent emotions. He develops a robust optimism. He maintains a clear conscience and can carry the sunshine of happiness wherever he goes. In short he is able to ensure perfect health for his mind.

The Yama and Niyama were originally a part of the Yoga Sutras, which are a series of short sentences of wisdom through which Sage Patanjali conveys his teachings. Patanjali explains the steps through which even an ordinary person can realize God. According to the Yoga Sutras, the Yama and the Niyama are the first two steps in the eight-fold path of Yoga. The Yama and Niyama are eternal and can be applied in people's lives always, even though they were formulated as a practice thousands of years ago. The world of human beings always seems to have the same problems in different forms at different times, always with the roots in their egos.

The Yama and Niyama are self-disciplinary qualities that everyone should have and observe for their own spiritual development. They are the code of conduct for anyone seeking spiritual development. It would not be beneficial to practice the other steps of Ashtanga Yoga without mastering the Yama and Niyama simultaneously, as they are the base of the ladder leading to Self-realization.

One may practice Asana and have a fit body. One may practice Pranayama and balance the Pranic energy in the Nadis. One may practice Pratyahara and Dhyana and reach deeper states of consciousness, but it result with no use without the practice of Yama and Niyama. The Yama and Niyama create a fit and balanced mind. Most of all they establish a mental and physical Sanyam in our mind, actions and behaviour.

What is Sanyam? "If you want to generate electricity from a river, first you have to construct a dam to control the normal flow, ensuring that it becomes a source of greater potential energy. You do not block the passage of water or dry up the river, rather you create more power. That controlled and guided action is Sanyam."

The Yama and Niyama also correspond to some of the chakras and, therefore, through practicing them, one is also awakening the Kundalini Shakti.

YAMA

The Yama are mainly qualities that the spiritual aspirant should have in order to communicate and interact with the outside world and the people in it. They are also self-restraints from performing actions of the weaker lower mind.

ahimsaa- satyaasteya- brahmacharyaaparigrahaa yamaah – II:30

The Pancha Yama the five moral restraints or rules of social conduct are:

- | | | | |
|----|--------------|---|-----------------|
| 1. | Ahimsa | : | Non- violence |
| 2. | Satya | : | Truthfulness |
| 3. | Asteya | : | Non-stealing |
| 4. | Brahmacharya | : | Chastity |
| 5. | Aparigraha | : | Non Covetedness |

Ahimsa

Ahimsa, non-violence, not only means not causing harm or pain to any creature in thought, word or action, but also not having even a hint of aggression within your being.

Usually our actions in themselves are violent, though our purposes are not at all so. When a mother slaps a child, she does so because she wants to teach the child a lesson. It is done out of love, not hatred. Therefore, it is the purpose that matters, and not the action.

It is equally sinful if we encourage others to be violent or if we are violent to ourselves. Himsa (violence) is not only physical violence, but also includes manipulation, hurting someone's feelings, psychic influence and so on. The most important thing is not to directly deny people, even if they get violent, i.e. not getting into fights, arguments, disputes, quarrels. Himsa is not considered to be violence if it is to save your life, or if you kill one in order to save many. It is said that when you perfect Ahimsa, a sort of magnet will act around you, preventing anyone from doing you harm or being violent. People will start to enjoy your presence and feel no discomfort as long as they are in your presence.

In the Christian Bible, Christ says, "If one slaps thee on thy right cheek, turn to him thy left also." Christ, Krishna, Rama, Prophet Mohammed, Buddha and all other saints, prophets and messiahs were great followers of Ahimsa and Dharma. Great saints like St. Francis of Assisi and Ramana Maharishi, who could communicate with animals, were also great followers of Ahimsa. Aggression is a reaction to fear and, therefore if we overcome our fears, we can practice Ahimsa.



According to **Maharishi Patanjali**, The **fruit of perfection** in **Ahimsa** are

“There is no hostility in his presence”

A good example is the story of the Sufi saint who called his disciples together and said, “I have five birds, one for each of you. Take them and kill them in separate places, but no one must see you doing it. When you bring them here, we’ll have a feast.” So they all came back sooner or later and gave explanations about where they killed their birds and how no one saw them. When the last disciple came, he said “I’m sorry Guruji, I failed you. I could not kill it. Wherever I went, I felt as though someone was watching me.” He turned out to be the best disciple.



Satya

Satya, or truth, is the second Yama, and also a very important qualification. Let’s take Galileo as an example of Satya. He was caught by the Inquisition twice for his discoveries, but, in spite of the danger, he went on with his writing, teaching and research until he could no longer use his eyes and ears. He stuck to the truth of his discoveries till the end, because he knew they were true, and he wasn’t even prosecuted. **Swami Sivananda** says, **“God is truth, and He can be realized by observing truth in thought, word and deed.”** According to him, the thirteen forms of truth are: truthfulness, equality, self-control, absence of jealousy, absence of envious emulation, forgiveness, modesty, endurance, charity, thoughtfulness, disinterested philanthropy (being too public-spirited or civic-minded), self-possession, and unceasing and compassionate harmlessness. Under certain circumstances, telling a (white) lie to produce immense good is regarded as truth.



According to **Maharishi Patanjali**, The **fruit of perfection** in **Satya** are

“Whatever he utters will come true”

Vak Siddhi (Vak means speech, and Siddhi is a special power a Yogi receives through practising Sadhana and Tapasya) can be mastered by observing truth always and at all times. The Vak Siddhi gives, one the power to accomplish things by mere thought

A lie is not only a lie if you speak incorrect or dishonest words. If you acted foolishly and afterwards blinded yourself with the belief that you did the right thing, it is also considered to be a lie, even though it all happened in your mind. It’s the same if you exaggerate, or brag, in order to boost your ego. Satya is not merely abstinence from telling lies, but also the ability to see the truth, to be aware of the truth behind everything. If you tell people what they should or should not do and then do whatever pleases you,

you are a hypocrite. You say one thing and do another, thereby not being true even to yourself. Why should one lie? One lies to escape the consequences of the actions of oneself or one's associate. This is a manifestation of the petty mind. Therefore, Satya also helps in overcoming the petty mind.

Asteya

Asteya, the third Yama, is commonly known as honesty (in the sense of 'abstinence from theft'). To be able to follow Asteya, we must be satisfied with what we have, our personal belongings, our way of thinking, what we do, where we are, who we are, etc. In other words, we must not be greedy and should try to be contented. We steal things because we desire them. To be able or to be strong enough to resist the temptation to steal the object that one desires, one's mind must be strong. Hence, through mastering Asteya, one purifies the mind of desires and Vrittis.

Asteya makes the mind pure, like a mirror in which your divine mind is reflected. The very thought of gain through theft should not arise in the mind, because constant desire for objects not belonging to oneself is actual theft. We steal things because we desire them, so it does not necessarily mean that we steal physical objects. There are people who steal the ideas of others. That is the worst form of theft. Try to keep your desires moderate.



According to Maharishi Patanjali, The **fruit of perfection** in Asteya are

“All the riches will flow towards him”

Brahmacharya

Brahmacharya is usually depicted in books, discourses, scriptures etc. as celibacy. But Brahma literally means the 'divine consciousness' and charya, in this case, means 'living' or 'one who is established in'. Therefore, Brahmacharya actually means 'being established in divine consciousness', or 'being established in the higher (form of the) mind'.

Scientists have proved that only ten percent of the average human brain is active and freely accessed during daily activities. Spiritually evolved people said long ago that the human mind has an enormous capacity. Unfortunately, a large part of the ten percent is driven by instincts and indulges in sensual and petty activities. The four basic instinctive drives are: Ahara (food), Nidra (sleep), Bhaya (fear) and Maithuna (sexuality). These are dominant in our minds for the simple reason of survival. Since survival is not such a big problem in today's society as it was in ancient times, a sort of vacuum is created. Food is over-available, fear becomes an obstacle in daily life, and the world is over-populated and so on. Most people fill this vacuum by amplifying the fulfilment of these desires for sensual pleasure. Brahmacharya deals with filling this vacuum with spirituality.

To most people, following Brahmacharya would mean suppression of desires. Brahmacharya should not be suppression, and suppression is not the remedy for overcoming the lower mind or controlling any of its instinctive drives. Unless one is established in the higher mind, suppression is of no avail. One may be able to stop oneself from satisfying any of these instincts, but one cannot suppress the mind from dwelling upon them continually. That is not Brahmacharya, being established in the higher mind, and the higher mind does not waste time by dwelling on such matters.



According to Maharishi Patanjali, The **fruit of perfection** in **Brahmacharya** are

“Great Valour is gained and fear of death is lost”

There is a story about two monks on a pilgrimage in (supposedly) strict Brahmacharya. When they come across a lady unable to cross a large puddle, the senior monk carries her across to safety. Shocked, the younger monk eventually remonstrates with the senior monk, who replies, “You are still carrying her in your head while I left her by the banks of the puddle!” The younger monk is a perfect example of the opposite of Brahmacharya.



Aparigraha

Aparigraha, the fifth and last of the Yamas, is non-possessiveness (also known as abstinence from greed). It is actually complete freedom from greed or covetousness. You should not try to possess more than you minimally need. As **Swami Satyananda Saraswati** mentions in **Four Chapters on Freedom**, *“This keeps the mind unoccupied and also he (the aspirant) does not have to worry about anything because there is nothing (no possessions) there to be protected.”* When we become non-possessive, or non-attached, we become impartial and in that way the conditioned love, affection, compassion and so on becomes unconditional, and not merely restricted to family, friends, relations, etc.

The memories and habits of possessing objects must be first washed away from the mind, and only then can you start life anew. The mind also becomes pure by following Aparigraha,



According to Maharishi Patanjali, The **fruit of perfection** in **Aparigraha** are

“Knowledge of previous births and future births as well”

NIYAMA

The Niyamas are the self-disciplinary qualities which are entirely devoted to helping the aspirant on their spiritual journey. They are also fixed rules one should follow in order to do the practices of meditation (Dhyana) and to reach Samadhi

sauca-santosa-tapa-svaadhyaayevsvara-pranidhaanaani niyamaah – II:32

The five Niyama the five evolutionary observances or rules of self conduct are:

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------|---|--|
| 1. | Soucha | : | Cleanliness |
| 2. | Santhosha | : | Contentment. |
| 3. | Tapas | : | Austerity or Discipline |
| 4. | Swadyaya | : | Self-Analysis |
| 5. | Iswara pranidhana | : | Surrender to the divine will of God or
Devotion to the almighty God |

Soucha

Soucha, cleanliness, is the first Niyama. Not only external cleanliness, like having a shower, brushing your teeth, etc., but purity of actions, purity of mind from evil and distracting, unnecessary thoughts and from bad, haunting memories. Cleanliness of the environment and of oneself is necessary for hygienic reasons, but the state of the environment also affects your mind. If it is clean and tidy, you will become more centered and will be able to concentrate properly, but if it is an unhygienic, messy or untidy environment, your mind may become disorganized. That is why it is better to tidy up your room in the morning. Such things seem trivial, but they help to keep the mind free of clutter and make it sharp and clear.

In other words, practicing Soucha on the physical plane also affects the mind on the Pranic and mental levels.

According to Maharishi Patanjali, The **fruit of perfection** in **Soucha** are
**“Indifference towards the body and non-attachment as well as fitness
 for cheerfulness, one pointedness, sense control and vision of the self”**



Santhosha

Santhosha, contentment or satisfaction, is the second Niyama. Santhosha is being content with one's actions and with what one has, what one is, where one is, and with what one has done or what one is doing. It also means to be content about where one is, whether it

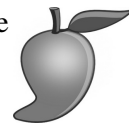
is concerning time or space. We should not day dream about the future nor should your mind linger in the past. Be content with where you are, or you will never be happy or feel true satisfaction. Also, *Santhosha* is being content with what one is. If you do not like being what you are, you won't find any happiness in life either. You have to be contented with what you do, if you have done your best.

A beggar is a king if he is contented with what he has, while a king is like a beggar if he still desires more riches to add to his treasure troves and vaults by imposing more taxes on the poor.

If you are dissatisfied, it causes psychic infirmity and many other complexes. In the *Yoga Vashishtha*, Sage *Vashishtha*, who was one of Rama's teachers, says that *Vichara* (reflection), *Shanti* (peacefulness), *Satsang* (being in the company of truth, in any form), and *Santhosha* (contentment) are the four sentinels at the gate of *Moksha* (salvation, or being completely freed from the cycle of birth and rebirth). He says that if you have mastered *Santhosha*, the other three will let you pass automatically.

According to Maharishi Patanjali, The **fruit of perfection** in **Santhosha** are

“Unexcelled Happiness”



Tapas

The third Niyama is *Tapasya* (or *tapas*), austerity or moderation – depending upon one's capacity. The main purpose of attaining *Tapasya* is to be able to meditate properly. It creates a controlled mind which will not accept any interference from the body, like “I'm thirsty!” or “I want food!” or “that hurts!” etc. It also hardens the body, so that these desires aren't too frequent. It strengthens the organs and makes them healthy in order not to experience painful distractions during meditation. Thus it leads to *Pratyahara* or abstraction of the senses.

In the *Bhagavad Gita* it is mentioned that there are three types of austerities:

- (i) Austerity of the physical body,
- (ii) Austerity of communication and speech (*Mouna*)
- (iii) Austerity of the mind.

Tapa includes control over one's thoughts in order to avoid unnecessary talking.

As a sculptor chips away all the unnecessary bits of rock to make a beautiful sculpture, so the hardships through which the body goes strengthen the mind and chip away all the unnecessary bits, leaving only the true essence of your real self. By practicing *Tapasya*, the body becomes immune to extensive heat, cold and even poisons and other hardships.

According to Swami Satyananda Saraswati in Four Chapters on Freedom, there are five types of tapas: (i) exposure to the sun to harden the skin, (ii) exposure to fire to make one's body slim and brown, (iii) doing Pranayama to heat the body, (iv) accumulating the fire of concentration at one point, and (v) the fire of fasting. These are the five fires which remove the toxins to make the body fit for meditation.

According to Maharishi Patanjali, The **fruits of perfection in Tapas** are

“Impurities are destroyed and the body and sense organs attain perfection”



Swadhyaya

Swadhyaya is the fourth Niyama, which I have defined as study of the self in the introduction. It is usually defined as ‘study of ancient spiritual scriptures’, but one can read the scriptures and not understand or apply a single thing from them in our daily lives. Swa means ‘self’ here; therefore, Swadhyaya is actually the study of the self, or self-analysis. One must be the Drashta, the witness, the observer. The higher type of knowledge is actual experience, while the lower form is learning directly from books and the even lower form is learning from books but not understanding a thing that one is reading. It is recorded in the *Essene Gospel of Peace* that Jesus said, “Seek not the law in your scriptures, for the law is life, whereas the scripture is dead.”

Through Swadhyaya we can improve ourselves and guide ourselves on the right path to some extent without the help of the guru. If you can see your life and observe it like a book, as in the yogic practice of Antar Mouna, we can observe Swadhyaya. One can observe and modify one's reactions, one can moderate one's negativity and improve one's way of perceiving things through observing the self.

From another point of view, chanting the name of God in the form of the Gayatri mantra, the Om mantra, a prayer, etc., or even your own initiation mantra, helps to focus the mind, which helps in Swadhyaya. When one chants a mantra from the heart, one does not necessarily need to understand what one is chanting in order to experience spiritual upliftment.

According to Maharishi Patanjali, The **fruit of perfection in Swadhyaya** are

“Union with the desired deity”



Ishwara Pranidhana

Ishwara Pranidhana, or complete self-surrender to God, is the last and one of the hardest Niyama. One gets to a stage on the spiritual journey when the Guru steps back and when one cannot proceed without help and one becomes desperate. Such is the human mind that one can develop complete faith in God only when a desperate situation arises, where none but God (by God which can be Ishwara, Allah, Yahweh, or any other) only can help, whether you believe in God or not. People understand God in many different ways. Some do not even believe in the concept of God. Yet everyone who seeks spiritual guidance and evolution reaches this stage if they are sincere in their quest. As God is different to many people, we reach this stage through different means and situations. It is the time when one completely lets go of all ego and surrenders to destiny

According to Maharishi Patanjali,
The fruit of perfection in Ishwara Pranidhana is
“Samadhi is attained”



There is a story about a dedicated monk deep in meditation in his cave. Suddenly there was a freak flood and the town nearby was filled with gushing water. Some good-natured people paddled laboriously on their little raft to try and save the monk. But when they reached his cave, the monk said, “Do not worry. I am a pious man who has been serving God all his life. God will not desert me now. Never fear, He will come and save me with His own hands.”



A few minutes later a yacht with five men arrived. They attempted to rescue the monk, but received the same reply. Finally, a rescue helicopter arrived and hovered outside the cave, but the monk sent them away.

The water rose, flooded the monk’s abode and he drowned. When he reached heaven he said to God, “I’ve been worshipping you all my life and yet you didn’t come and save me when I needed you the most!” And God replied “Well, I don’t know what you expected. First I sent you a raft, then a yacht, then a first class helicopter, and you only said silly things like ‘God will save me with His own hands.’ The raft, yacht and helicopter were my hands.”

It all seems to be a mental process; however, the physical outcome is that when one surrenders to and realizes Ishwara, one never remains the same because one cannot realize God if one has even the smallest hint of a human ego.

Conclusion

The Yama and Niyama are all in a way interrelated, so they don't allow you to skip any of them if you are sincere in your desire to master them. Also, the Pancha Yama and Pancha Niyama are not meant only for Yogis and Sanyasins, but for everyone to practice.

According to Yoga, the influence of mind over the body is much more than that of the body over the mind. For this reason, Yoga has laid great emphasis on the cultivation of correct psychological attitudes through Yama-Niyama. They bring about tranquilization of mind necessary for getting maximum benefit possible through various Yoga practices.

ASANA

Asana is one of the most ancient yogic practices. It forms the base for almost all the other practices of Yoga, namely, Pranayama, Kriyas, Meditation, Bandhas and Mudras, etc. it plays a very important role in Yoga training from the beginning to the end.

We can trace the origin of yoga asana to the prehistoric times of ancient India namely the Indus Valley Civilization. The archeological findings at Mohenjo-Daro shows deities seated in Yogic postures.

Today asana are the most popular aspect of yoga. Some people even mistake that Yoga means only Asana. Obviously this is a gross misconception about Yoga.



Definition

The term Asana is derived from the Sanskrit root “Aas” means “To sit” or “Asi” means “To be”

Maharishi Patanjali has provided the definition of Asana along with its basic methodology as well as effect in the following aphorisms in his Yoga Sutra:

“Sthirasukham asanam”

Asana is a posture held firm or stable with comfort.

From the above aphorism of Patanjali, the two key characteristics of an Asana should be stability and comfort. In practical terms stability here signifies immobilisation or stability of the body and comfort denotes a harmonious peaceful and serene mental state.

Thus the above definition of Asana brings out the essentially of it. Contrary to the common notion among people asana is not only a practice involving the human body but also the human mind. The methodology or mechanism of Asana given by Patanjali throws more light in this respect.

Maharishi Patanjali also tell us about how an Asana can be done:

“Prayatnasaithilya ananthasamapattibhyam”

Effortlessness and Contemplation on the infinite.

Effortlessness or relaxation of effort is the first requirement. It may involve relaxation of all those groups of muscles in the body which are not at all required to participate for the performance of a particular asana. Further even those muscles which are involved in the maintenance of Asana are made to relax consciously to the maximum possible extend. That is the best result can be achieved from the Asana by slackening of effort that is by performing the Asana in a very relaxed manner.

Together with such slackening of effort one should also contemplate or meditate on some infinite entity. For instance, feel oneself as a part and parcel of an infinite mightily ocean or the infinite sky, and totally identified with it and merging into it. This process leads one to the oceanic feeling which is also called Meditation on the vast ocean.

Maharishi Patanjali defines the benefit of Asana as:

“Tato dwandva anabhighaatah”

Thereby the power of the opposite ceases to have any impact.

Rightly performed, Asana makes one immune to clash of the opposite's tensions strife, stress and conflicts in life. It helps to overcome the disharmonies in the body and help to restore perfect harmony in the working of the whole body especially the neuro-musculo-glandular tone. Moreover, it also helps to restore mental and emotional wellbeing.

This point has been emphasized in Hatha Yoga as well. The text Hatha Yoga Pradipika of Swatmarama says.

“Kuryat tad asanam sthairyam arogyam ca angalaghavam”

Perform Asana to bring about stability in health and suppleness of the body.

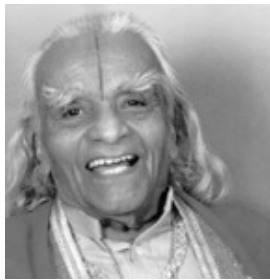
SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF ASANA

According to Yogic texts the number of Asanas runs into 84 lakhs. However they present the techniques of around a hundred Asanas or so. The texts also tend to differ in many minor points of detail in the techniques of these Asanas, but they are almost unanimous about the major benefits claimed for each Asana they describe. All of them recognize the worth of Asana in the restoration of health and their therapeutic utility.



Swami Kuvalayananda

The scope of Yogic Asana is so vast and all embracing that their limitations seem to fade into insignificance comparatively. Depending upon the anatomic limitations due to fat rigidity ageing process, illness etc., and one can choose the simplest from the vast array of Asanas with their modified variations to serve specific purposes of an individual. Asana take full advantage of the extreme range of movement made available due to the various



B.K.S. Iyengar

types of joints in the body. Asana further takes advantage of the flexibility of the body itself and the gravitational aspects of human body. Some texts even prescribe use of ropes and various mechanical aids in the performance of specific Asana. This has encouraged some outstanding Yogis like Swami Kuvalayananda and B.K.S Iyengar to develop mechano-Yogic-procedures to make the performance of Asana within reach of even patients.

The basic limitations about Asana are

- (i) It cannot be fully understood with the help of only the exercise Physiology or Physical Education norms. So one cannot expect to achieve the fitness factors considered most important by modern sciences at present.
- (ii) Lack of standardization of the techniques of specific Asana poor agreement among the experts on the basic principles underlying the concept and practice of Asana also put severe limitations in utilizing Asana appropriately in an objectively sound manner.

In spite of such limitations asana are found easier to learn and practice with least injury and maximum benefit.

CLASSIFICATION OF ASANAS

Asana can be classified in a number of ways. One of the most useful classifications is based on the physiological effects of different groups of Asana on the body. Accordingly the asana are classified into three types. They are

- Meditative Asanas
- Cultural Asanas
- Relaxative Asanas

MEDITATIVE ASANAS

Meditative Asana are the sitting postures, with a broad base, erect spine and symmetrical arrangement of the body. Asana like Padmasana, Siddhasana, Vajrasana, etc., comes under this group. They are primarily used for the practice of Pranayama, Meditation and similar higher practices of Yoga. One has to choose suitable meditative Asana as required and master it with long practice in order to maintain it comfortably for hours together. The posture thus obtained must be felt at ease in order to withdraw the self from the body and concentrate on the higher aspects of the Yoga

CULTURAL or CORRECTIVE ASANAS

These are various positions of the body which bends and holds the spine stretch various limbs, twists and bends different joints of the body etc. In general Cultural Asana revolve around the spinal column like bending it forward or backward or side wards, twist it to either side, stretch it fully or hold it in inverted position etc., Further they may increase or decrease the internal pressures in the various organs like the liver, pancreas, bladder, intestines and colon of the abdomen. They deploy the weight of the body segments as well as the force of gravity to drive physiological advantages. These Asana are generally utilized to strengthen various neuromuscular co-ordinations, functional efficiency of different systems and organs of the body purification or better elimination of waste products from body. Some Yogic texts claim the benefit of purifying the Nadis or Nadishuddhi as the main function of a few cultural asana like Kukkutasana.

The number of Cultural Asanas is innumerable. Sri B.K.S. Iyengar has described nearly 500 to 600 hundred Asana as important ones. But in usual practice 7 to 20 Asana of this kind should yield the maximum benefits. One key utility of the Cultural Asana is that they can be deployed as therapeutic measures in the treatment are of certain functional disorders of psychosomatic origin. For this reason they are also called as the therapeutic or remedial Asana. Some of the examples of Cultural Asana are Paschimottanasana, Chakrasana, Trikonasana, Ardha Matsendrasana etc.

RELAXATIVE ASANAS

These are the Asana that are designed to give complete relaxation to the entire musculature of the body. The two well-known relaxative Asana are Shavasana and Makarasana. They not only remove bodily fatigue they also remove mental strain and thereby brings about peace and clarity of the mind.

However it must be remembered that even the difficult Cultural Asana could and should become more and more relaxative with proper training and practice. Then only they can be called to be Asana according to the definition and procedure prescribed by Maharishi Patanjali.

Different types of Asanas

Asana also classified into different types they are

- Front bending postures Eg: Paschimottanasana, Hastapadasana.
- Back bending postures Eg: Chakrasana, Bhujangasana.
- Twisting postures Eg: Ardha matsyendrasana, Pasasana.
- Hand balancing postures Eg: Kakasana, Kukuttasana.
- Standing postures Eg: Vrikshasana, Ekapadasana.
- Topsy-turvy postures Eg: Sarvangasana, Sirasasana.
- Lateral bending postures Eg: Ardhakadi Chakrasana, Trikonasana.

ROLE OF ASANA IN YOGIC SPIRITUAL YOGIC CULTURE AND PHYSICAL CULTURE:

“Yoga is the unification of the individual psyche (JIVATMA) with the transcendental Self (PARAMATMAN)” – Yoga Yajnavalkya

Yoga was originally developed in ancient times as a spiritual discipline. Samadhi or becoming one with god was the main aim of yoga. Asana were profound for meditating on the divine comfortably as a Sadhana.



Jesus Christ says “the physical body (the stula sharira) is the living temple of the lord”

Hence the spiritual culture of Asanas used is in order to obtain the divine realization within ourselves.

However Swami Kuvalayananda had developed a system of yogic physical culture which consisted of few Asana, Kriyas, Bandhas, Mudras and Pranayama etc., Asana form the major part of this system. It has proved to be ideal system of physical culture which can be followed even by ordinary people who do not believe in spiritual aspects of Yoga.

Further this Yogic physical culture system has been found extremely valuable even by the spiritual culturists.

The objectives of the Yogic physical culture according to Swami Kuvalayananda include:

- a) To secure the largest percentage of energy with minimum energy expenditure.
- b) To secure increase in the vital index.
- c) To develop a healthy nervous system.
- d) To take special care of endocrine glands.
- e) To take care of the heart and circulatory system including efficient microcirculation in all the parts of the body.
- f) To develop the neuro-muscular system to the physiologically sound optimum level without taxing other systems in the body.

The physiological advantage sought through the Yogic physical culture system ensure at preserving and promotion of healthy and efficient functioning of various systems, organs tissues and cells in the body as a whole.

The Asana included in the Yogic physical culture are found to serve in the Yogic spiritual culture system as well. Here the spiritual aspects of these every Asana are emphasized more. Here the emphasize is made with a view to stimulate the Kundalini, to develop a well-trained nervous system to gain increasing control over the Pranic activities in the body, spiritual practices like repetition of mantra etc., the activities of spiritual culture are also required to study traditional texts and reflect on the spiritual implication contained in them with a devotional frame of mind.

DIFFERENT STAGE AND PHASES IN THE PERFORMING OF ASANA

Asana need to be understood as “programmes”. It has a pre-determined sequence of bodily actions or events and relaxation skill. As a learnt skill it can be considered as an acquired learnt programme.

In practical terms it is easily understood as step- by-step procedure like first step... second... third... etc., Different steps should be chained into a smooth chain progressing towards the destination in a simple economic and skilled manner.

Like in Pranayama, Asana can be thought of consisting three phases in their performance:

- Approaching phase
- Asana phase
- Reversal or Returning phase

Approaching phase

It is like brick-by-brick building up procedure, which takes the individual from the starting position to the desired Asana condition within his reach and ability.

Asana phase

When the practitioner relaxes his mind and body as required in the practice of Yogic postures for a comfortable period of time. The Asana is retained with total or partial relaxation of body musculature, with necessary locks and holds required as per the techniques of Asana, along with some sort of meditational condition of the mind. The phase is most important aspect of Yogic Asana. For this reason, longer maintenance of an Asana is advocated instead of its repetition as in other exercises.

Reversal or Returning phase

After maintaining an asana with maximum comfort and stability, the body segments are brought back to the starting position following a step-by-step climbing down procedure. If the approaching phase consisted of a step-by-step climbing up procedure, the returning phase involves the climbing down procedure like ...four...three...two...one.

STAGES

Though old yogic text does not talk of different stages for any Asana as such, as per the tradition developed by Kaivalyadhama, Asana should be performed with different stages.

For instance:

- (i) Ardha-Halāsana - It should be maintained at 30-degree, 60 degree and 90 degree angles during its approaching as well as returning phases. The ideal position of an asana will then be referred to as the final stage of the asana.
- (ii) Halāsana – It has four stages. It is maintained in 45-degree, 90-degree, sarvangasana-the shoulder stand posture and then fourth stage which is referred to as the final stage, Halāsana.
- (iii) Sirsasana, the final stage gives the full-fledged Sirsasana, whereas the other three stages are different body postures that help progressive development towards the final stage of Sirsasana.

Different stage of Asana makes it easy to master the Asana apart from giving the body additional advantages of the involved postural patterns, increased body control and coordination etc.

A proper insight into the steps, phases and stages of the “Asana programme” helps one to learn and teach Asana more easily and systematically with least effort injury and wastage of time and energy.

BASIC PRINCIPLE AND METHODS

Basic Principle

1. Asana is merely one part among many other practices of Yoga. It should facilitate the practice of later components of yoga like Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, etc. leading to the ultimate onset of Samadhi. As the third component of the Eight-limbed Yoga (Ashtanga yoga of Maharishi Patanjali) the student should have already developed/ cultivated correct psychological attitudes and healthy habits of body and mind.
2. In short, Asana should not be approached as a mechanical body skill, and it should be take up with clear understanding of its role and significance as a part of the entire Yogic curriculum. Consequently it should yield the benefits described by Patanjali and other Yogic savants, like immunity from conflicts, strike etc., easy mastery over Pranayama, Meditation and such other more advanced Yogic practices.
3. Research studies on Meditation had revealed that it brings about a hypo metabolic condition in the body. As a part of Yogic curriculum, Asana too should therefore contribute its bit towards the development of such meditational condition effect on the body. So, warming up exercise prescribe in physical education programmes find no place or importance in the practice of the Asana. On the contrary, as a spiritual training, a prayerful attitude or complete physical and mental relaxation should be brought about in preparation for Yoga session.
4. Relaxation of body and mind (care free or prayerful or meditative attitude of mind) is integral in the execution and performance of the Asana.
5. It may be found unnecessary, with proper guidance, to interfere with the free, relaxed flow of respiration.
6. Relaxed maintenance of various stages of an Asana is much more important than mechanical repetition of the Asana.
7. The Approaching and Returning Phases in the performance of each Asana should be free of jerks, jumps and falls, rash and hurried movements. Use of force by self or others etc. Speed is not at all important in the performance of Asana. Neuro-muscular coordination, appropriate locks and hold, ease of breathing, body balance at every stage, effortlessness and enhanced physical and mental relaxation, tension-free mental attitude and meditation etc. are of

key importance than the mechanical perfection of the placement of body segments.

8. Asana are 'Postural Patterns'. The student is to hold this pattern in mind and effortlessly attempt to advance towards the desired postural pattern in the longer run...
9. Breathing aspect is directly tackled in Pranayama. So it is advisable to allow the relaxed normal pattern of breathing while doing as Asana or make the necessary movements with effortless ease, breathing will become slow, smooth and rhythmic on its, own and calm him to perform the asana more thoroughly and comfortably.

METHODOLOGY OF ASANAS

Methods with regard to Asana refer to the exact technique involved in its learning. Most of the modern books on yoga appear to present alternative methods and variation in Asanas. Since most of the methods vary greatly from teacher to teacher and from books to books, there is great confusion with regards the proper method of Asana.

The first point with reference to methods here is the 'Principle of Progression' which means moving from the known to the unknown, easy to difficult with the simplifications and variations available now. So a student needs to do only that which is moderately difficult for him under various limitations, like age, rigidity of limbs, health status, etc.

As far as possible, the selection of technique must be as per the classical texts on Yoga which provide these methods.

An authentic Hatha Yogi exhibits the central and essential features of Asanas. It maintains Motionlessness and effortlessness for long period of time during the maintained phase of an Asanas. Absolutely motionless, without twitching muscles, one holds the position of the Asana with least discomfort. His face is as peaceful as a lake on a windless morning.

Such perfection is not within the immediate reach of the beginner. But he could aim at it, bringing about a degree of further progress, of increased ease, comfort and added sense of wellbeing.

Improve your technique, aiming at ease in movement and at immobility. Mastery of mind over body is the aim and the reward comes from proper understanding of the basic principles and method of the Asana and the Yogic perspectives in general.

In other words, the distinctive features that makes us to divide Asanas into relaxative or cultural or meditative disappears altogether and we will be able to derive heightened benefits of Meditation, relaxation and remedial benefits from almost every Asana we tend perform.

SHAT KRIYAS

The Sanskrit word ‘Kriya’ literally means ‘Action’, It has a technical meaning in Yoga. It means a purifying and reconditioning process. In Yoga it is specifically used for various cleansing processes

The Yogic kriyas are the first and foremost important practices in Hatha Yoga. They are said to cleanse the body internally. As Ashtanga Yoga emphasizes on Yama and Niyama, Hatha Yoga emphasizes on the cleansing process that is Kriyas, in belief that a healthy and clean body can only have a healthy and clean Mind. The Yogic Kriyas or cleansing practices are six in number hence called Shat-Karma (six-actions). These practices are not taught or even referred to in most schools of Yoga for several reasons. Firstly the practices look difficult, sometimes revolting, and unnatural and are definitely not as easy as standing on your head. There is some risk of harm to the Learner if something goes wrong.

Keeping all this in mind, most Yoga teachers conveniently overlook these practices. However, it cannot be forgotten that these practices are a part of traditional Hatha Yoga. In fact they are mentioned as pre-requisites. It is believed that these practices cleanse the body and prepare it for Hatha Yoga. It is as if you are cleaning up your house first before re-decorating it. Surely you will not bother beautifying a dirty house. Cleanliness comes first and hence the importance of kriyas.

The term Shat Karma or Shat Kriya means ‘six actions’. The ancient Rishis considered them as essential to the practice of Yoga: “In Yoga, control of the body starts with the cleansing processes known as the Kriyas, the first step to eliminate poisonous substances accumulated in the system”.

Those cleansing processes are powerfully and profoundly purifying, acting at all levels of ‘being’. When the body is purified, then one is trained in concentration. These six actions or Shat Karmas are the foundation of the Asanas and meditative practices of Hatha Yoga.

The six Kriyas are:

*“Dhautir-vastis-tatha netir, tratakam , naulikam tatha;
kapal-bhatis-c-aitani, sat-karmani samacaret !!*

(GS, I:12)

The body is cleaned with the help of the six following processes:-

- (i) Dhouti — cleanses the upper Gastro Intestinal Tract (GIT) upto the stomach
- (ii) Basti — cleanses the lower gastro Gastro Intestinal Tract (GIT) especially the rectum.
- (iii) Neti — cleans the upper nasal tract from the throat to the nostrils
- (iv) Trataka — cleanses the eyes and improves the eyesight.
- (v) Nauli — tones up the abdominal muscles and viscera.
- (vi) Kapalabhati — cleans the lower respiratory tract and activates the brain cells.

They helps to balance Tridoshas (three humors) and also helps to prevent various psychosomatic disorders. They are supposed to bring about purification of Nadis. Purification of the Nadis is considered as a necessary preparation for the practice of Pranayama.

Some Yogis believe that Kriyas are not necessary for the purification of the Nadis. They hold the view that Pranayama can bring about the cleansing of the Nadis as well as restoration of health. So they have prescribed a special kind of Pranayama done through alternate-nostrils known as NADISOHDHANA PRANAYAMA OR ANULOMA-VILOMA PRANAYAMA.

Dhouti

It cleanses various openings or cavities in the body, using water, rubber or catheter tube and muslin cloth. The different types of Dhouti are

- (i) Vamana Dhouti — It is used for washing the stomach by stimulating the vomiting reflex.
- (ii) Vastra Dhouti — It is used for cleansing and massaging the stomach and food-pipe using a long strip of cotton cloth.
- (iii) Danda Dhouti — Dhouti means washing and massaging the food pipe and stomach with stick or catheter tube and water.

Vaman Dhouti

- Prepare 2 to 3 litres of lukewarm saline water
- Drink 2 to 3 litres of this water as possible and as quickly as possible in a standing position.

- Lean forward and tickle the throat using index, middle and ring finger.
- Try to give vomiting sensation and vomit completely.
- Perform the practice until you feel that most of the water has come out.

Vastra Dhouti

- 'Vastra' means 'cloth' and 'Dhauti' means 'cleansing'.
- Sterilize the cotton cloth with the given measurement (twenty two feet length X two and half inches width)
- Fill a mug with lukewarm water
- Place one end of the cloth in mouth and then begin swallowing it.
- When the majority of the cloth except for the portion being held by you has gone inside the stomach perform the Nauli Kriya by churning the abdomen in both directions.
- The cloth should then be brought out slowly and carefully.

Danda Dhouti

- Prepare 2 to 3 litres of lukewarm saline water
- Drink 2 to 3 litres of this water as possible and as quickly as possible in a standing position.
- Take a rubber tube (Danda) about 1 cm in diameter and about a meter long.
- Slowly place the thin and tapered end of the tube in the back of the throat and push it down the esophagus into the stomach.
- It reaches the stomach, slowly bend forward.
- Perform a flapping action of the abdominal wall to help push the water out.

Benefits of Dhouti

- Relieves problems of upper GIT (Gastritis, acidity)
- Cleanses roughages from the stomach.
- Helps to activate appetite.
- Reduces Kapha disorders (Obesity, Asthma)
- It improves the strength of the body and growth.
- It heals tumors, enlarged spleen, liver and common fever.
- Balances the Pitta Dosha.

Contra-indication

- Patients of Peptic ulcer, Coronary Heart diseases should avoid this practice
- Hypertension, heart diseases, stroke or generally illness should be avoid this practice

Basti

It cleanses the colon through neuromuscular control.

The different types of Basti are:

- (i) Jala Basti — Contraction and relaxation of anal sphincter in order to clean lower intestine through water is called Jala Basti karma.
- (ii) Sthala basti — Contraction and relaxation of anal sphincter in order to clean lower intestine through wind or air is called Sthala Basti karma.

Jala Basti

- Jala Basti means “Yogic enema with water”
- Prepare ½ to 1 liter of lukewarm water
- Fill water in colon through anus (enema)
- Practice of Nauli may be done for better result.
- Hold water in colon for few minutes
- Finally try to evacuate filled water completely.
- After evacuation, it is traditionally taught to perform Mayurasana or Padma Mayurasana to further evacuate the colon completely as the pressure exerted stimulates further peristalsis and any water that may remain inside is thrown out.

Sthala Basti

- Sthala Basti means “Dry yogic enema”
- Take up a squatting position such as Utkatasana.
- This technique may be done, by sucking the air into the bowels, by performing Ashwini Mudra.
- The air is held in the colon for some time and then expelled out through the anus.
- Nauli Kriya may be done while holding the air in the colon for better results.

Benefits of Basti

- Basti cleans the colon by removing the gas and other accumulated waste material from the colon.
- Relieves constipation
- Cool down the body and strengthen abdominal visceral organs.
- Reduces Vata disorders.
- The body becomes light and active
- Old stool and gas is expelled.

Contra-indication

- Hernia and Severe piles patient should be avoid this practice.

Neti

Neti cleanses and acclimatizes the nasal passages.

The different types of Neti are:

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| (i) Jala Neti | — Nasal irrigation done with water. |
| (ii) Dugdha Neti | — Nasal irrigation done with milk. |
| (iii)Ghrta Neti | — Nasal irrigation done with ghee. |
| (iv)Sutra Neti | — Nasal irrigation done with thread or rubber catheter. |

Jala Neti

- Jala Neti means cleansing the nasopharyngeal tract with water.
- Prepare warm saline with 10 grams of salt per litre of lukewarm water.
- Insert the nozzle of the pot into your right nostril.
- Keep your mouth open and breathe freely through your mouth.
- Tilt your head slightly forward and sideward to the left, so that the water from the pot enters the right nostril and comes out through the left by gravity. Allow the flow till the pot is empty.
- Repeat the same on the left side.

Sutra Neti

- Check which nostril is flowing freely and perform the neti.
- Sutra neti means cleansing the nasopharyngeal tract with thread.
- Insert the blunt end of a thin soft rubber catheter or cotton thread from the front horizontally into the nostril that is open.

- Insert your right index and the middle fingers through the mouth and catch the tip of the catheter at the back of your throat.
- Remove the catheter through the mouth so that the thick end of the catheter pulls all the mucus into the throat and spit it.
- Repeat on the opposite side.

Benefits of Neti

- All the five special sensory organs (Jnanendriyas) are purified and activated by the Neti Kriya.
- It is a good preventive measure against cold, cough, sinusitis, hysteria, epilepsy, migraine and depression.
- Removes mucus and dust particles from the nasal passages and the sinuses.
- Neti, in general, purifies most structures in the head and neck
- Vision becomes more subtle.

Caution

- Neti Kriya is to be followed by few rounds of Kapalabhati, so as to keep the nasal passages clear of any stagnant water that may cause problems later.

Nauli

Nauli is the isolation and the manipulation of the abdominal recto muscles to stimulate the healthy functioning of the abdominal organs.

The different types of Nauli are:

- (i) Madhyama Nauli — It is the technique of compression and relaxation of the abdominal muscles at the centre of the abdomen.
- (ii) Vama Nauli — It is the technique of compression and relaxation of the abdominal recti muscles to the left side of the abdomen.
- (iii) Dakshina Nauli — It is the technique of compression and relaxation of the abdominal muscles to the right side of the abdomen.
- (iv) Nauli Chalana — It is the technique of compression and relaxation of the abdominal muscles in clockwise & anticlockwise direction
 - Pradakshina Nauli : Nauli chalana is the clockwise direction.
 - Apradakshina Nauli : Nauli chalana in anticlockwise direction.

Practice of Nauli

- Stand with feet separated by about three feet.
- Perform Uddiyana Bandha in the standing position. With a mock inhalation, contract the abdominal muscles and compress them in the centre. This is Madhyama Nauli.
- Then compress the muscles on the left(Vama Nauli) and then on the right side (Dakshina Nauli).The muscles right to left and right to left in a circular motion.
- Do not strain.
- When finished slowly stand up back in the Samastithi asana with deep breathing and relax for some time.

Benefits of Nauli

- Nauli purifies and strengthen the vital organs.
- It helps in removing most of the abdominal ailments
- The functions of liver, pancreas and spleen as well as the kidneys are activated by Nauli.
- It massages and tones the muscles of the entire abdominal area.
- It stimulates appetite, digestion, assimilation, absorption and excretion in the digestive tract.

Contra indication

- Persons suffering from High BP, peptic or duodenal ulcers, hernias or serious digestive disorders should avoid this practice.

Trataka

Trataka is a technique of gazing to cleanse the eyes. The different types of Trataka are:

- | | | | |
|-------|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| (i) | Jyothi Trataka | — | Gazing a candle light. |
| (ii) | Urdhava Mukha & Adho Mukha | — | Gazing the movement of hand downward and upward respectively. |
| (iii) | Vama, Dakshina & Ubhaya Jatr Trataka | — | Gazing the movement of the hand towards left, right and gazing the shoulder respectively. |
| (iv) | Brumadhya Trataka | — | Gazing on the bindu point of concentration. |
| (v) | Nasarga Trataka | — | Gazing on the nose region. |

Benefits of Trataka

- Trataka helps to correct weakness of the external ocular muscles.
- Helps to improve eyesight.
- Helps develop the power of concentration to an almost unlimited degree.
- Improves memory.
- Helps those suffering from insomnia and mental tension, if practiced before going to bed at night.

Kapalabhati

Kapalabhati is breathing at the speed of 120 breaths per minute through abdominal strokes to cleanse the entire respiratory passages as well as to stimulate blood circulation throughout the body.

- (i) Chandra Anuloma Kapalabhati
- (ii) Surya Anuloma Kapalabhati
- (iii) Chandra Bhedana Kapalabhati
- (iv) Surya Bhedana Kapalabhati
- (v) Both nostril variation
- (vi) Alternate nostril variation

Practice of Kapalabhati

- Sit in comfortable crossed leg position with back straight. Hands resting on knees in either Chin or Dhyana Mudra. Face to be relaxed.
- To start forcefully expel all of the air from the lungs while pushing the abdominal diaphragm upwards.
- The expulsion is active but the inhalation is passive.
- Inhale deeply through the nostrils, expanding abdomen and exhale with the forceful contraction of abdominal muscles.
- The air is pushed out of lungs by contraction of the diaphragm.
- Gradual practice will lead to do 120 strokes per minute.
- It cleanses the entire respiratory passage.

Benefits of Kapalabhati

- Kapalabhati cleanses the lungs and entire respiratory system.
- The blood is purified and body gets an increased supply of oxygen to all cells.
- Digestion is improved.
- Abdominal muscles are strengthened.

- Prepare the mind for meditation.
- Energizes the mind for mental work.
- Activates the brain cells
- Stimulates the abdominal organs.

Contra indication

- Persons suffering from heart disease, high blood pressure and Hernia should avoid this practice.

There is also Jala Kapalabhati which is more similar to Jala Neti Kriya they can be classified as Vyutkrama Kapalabhati and Seetkrama Kapalabhati.

Other important Kriyas are

- VARISARA - It is a process of cleaning the whole alimentary canal with water. Some call this a Sankhapraksalana. One drinks water to the capacity and practices Nauli Chalana to enhance the peristaltic movement and evacuate the water without it being absorbed by the intestines. When modified for therapeutic purposes one uses saline water added with salt and practices some poses including forward bending, backward stretching, twisting, lateral bending and pressing of abdomen.
- VATASARA - It is the process of subjecting the internal mucosa of the whole alimentary canal to the current of air swallowed by mouth and evacuated through the lower passage. It has been observed that when the stomach is filled with air, it reduces the gastric acidity.
- VAHNISARA OR AGNISARA- It is practiced with holding the breath after deep exhalation. The abdomen is retracted and protruded repeatedly, keeping the abdominal muscles tight throughout the performance. One repeats this process several times as may be found necessary.

Kriyas are commonly used as remedial measures in yogic therapy. But, originally, Kriyas are meant to assist and prepare one's body for the mastery of Pranayama. Practical experience with Kriyas will convince one and all the kriyas make the practice of Pranayama quite easy.

Precautions

- Swami Kuvalyananda and Dr. SL Vinekar refer to these kriyas as procedures for Naso-Pharyngeal Hygiene, Gastric Hygiene, Intestinal Hygiene, Colon Hygiene etc. from this it is obvious that the instruments and materials utilized in kriyas needed to be properly sterilized, free of germs and pathological substances and properly handled with due care and caution.
- All the Kriyas must be practiced with due guidance of the Guru until mastery is obtained.

PRANAYAMA

Pranayama is a Sanskrit word meaning "restraint of the Prana or breath". The word is composed of two Sanskrit words, Prana, life force, or vital energy, particularly, the breath, and "Ayāma", to suspend or restrain. It is often translated as control of the life force (Prana). When used as a technical term in yoga, it is often translated more specifically as "breathe control". Pranayamas are of primary importance in yoga. Some yogis feel that no other practice is necessary for attaining the purification of body and mind. Pranayama, by itself is sufficiently capable of eradicating all toxins.

Pranayama essentially constitute a volitional (conscious) control of breathing. In Pranayama the emphasis is on the development of Kumbhaka' that is the temporary suspension of breath.

There are three kinds of Kumbhaka:

- (i) Abhyanthara Kumbhaka (internal breath holding) or Puraka Kumbhaka that is the retention of breath after the Puraka phase
- (ii) Bahya Kumbhaka (external breath holding) or Sunya Kumbhaka that is suspension of breath after a full expiration.
- (iii) Kevala Kumbhaka -Suspension of breath at a mid stage, keeping the intra pulmonary pressures equal to that of the atmospheric pressure. Kevala Kumbhaka takes place of its own as result of the mastery of the other first two Kumbhakas.

Definition

Maharishi Patanjali defines **Pranayama** as

“ Tasmin sati svasa-prasvasa yorgati vicchedah pranayama”

Asana having completed cessation of inhalation and exhalation (Kevala Kumbhaka) is called as Pranayama

According to **Hatha Yoga School**, Pranayama is

“Breath holding is practiced systematically so that Pranic currents travel effortlessly upward through the Sushumna-Nadi situated in the spine”.

The benefits of **Pranayama** according to **Maharishi Patanjali** are:

“Tatah kshiyate prakashah aavaranam”

Thereby the covering of the inner light disappears.

“Dharanasu cha yogyatee manasah”

The mind develops fitness for higher practices such as concentration.

Now the body and mind are fit to go into the state of Meditation on the divine as self realization is obtained.

According to Hatha Pradipika , the eight varieties of Pranayamas are:

- | | | |
|------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Surya Bhedana | — | Sun Cleaving Breath |
| 2. Ujjayi | — | Victorious Breath |
| 3. Sitkari | — | Hissing Breath (Cooling Breath) |
| 4. Sheetali | — | Beak Tongue Breath (Icing Breath) |
| 5. Bhramari | — | Sound of Bee Breath |
| 6. Bhastrika | — | Bellows Breath |
| 7. Murchha | — | Fainting or Swooning Breath |
| 8. Plavini | — | Floating Breath |

Their techniques differ from each other with reference to the Purvaka and Rechaka phases. All these Pranayamas are also called Kumbhakas.

Even though Kumbhaka is a key to the technique of Pranayama, for an average man of health, the practice of breath holding or Kumbhaka is not recommended. A man of average health can get all benefits of Pranayama by following the Purvaka and Rechaka phases of different Pranayamas. By doing so, we can get the benefits of Pranayama in the long run without any complications or risks inherent in the practice of Kumbhaka aspects of Pranayama technique.

Different phases of Pranayama

Basically there are four phases in the practice of Pranayama. They are

1. Puraka — Controlled inspiration.
2. Antara Kumbhaka — Controlled suspension of breath after inhalation.
3. Rechaka — Controlled expiration.
4. Bahira Kumbhaka — Controlled suspension of breath after exhalation or Shunyaka

SAFETY MEASURES AND PRECAUTIONS

According to Hatha Yoga Pradipika and other texts on yoga, carelessly practiced Pranayama can lead to various complications and disorders. It can also wreck one's health both physically and mentally. Therefore, one earnest practitioner of Pranayama should take proper measures of safety and precautions.

1. First of all fully understand the need, significance and various risk-factors associated with the techniques from teachers, having insight, experience and also consult a physician to ensure the safety of one's health and wellbeing.
2. Master a selected routine of Asana, specifically one Meditative Asana like Padmasana, Siddhasana or Vajrasana.
3. Master some of the Kriyas that will cleanse the respiratory passages, the alimentary track and stimulate blood circulation in the body.
4. First master the Puraka and Rechaka phases with 1:2 ratios without undue strain.
5. Master the technique of different Pranayama without the Kumbhaka phase that is only the Puraka and Rechaka phases of Pranayama initially.
6. Later include the Sunyaka phase of Pranayama
7. Do not practice the application of the three Bandhas for the internal Kumbhaka as it can lead to serious problem indulged in without the supervision of an experienced yoga teacher.
8. Apply Jalandhara Bandha, Jihva Bandha and closure of nostrils as and when you start the mild practice of internal Kumbhaka.
9. Diet regulation, adequate sleep, correct psychological attitudes etc. have been prescribed to reduce the risk factors considerably. Tradition SUGGESTS SURRENDERING TO THE WILL OF THE ALMIGHTY GOD in this connection if your belief system permits you to do so. This can aid you profoundly if anything goes out of control by mistake and carelessness.
10. Regulate your practice according to your chosen objectives like treatment, physical culture, spiritual culture etc. Avoid purposeless approach. For an average man of normal health who wishes to maintain sound physical and mental health needs only the Puraka and Rechaka phases of Pranayama according to Swami Kuvalyananda.

Significance of Shat Kriyas and Pranayamas in Yogic curriculum

Kriyas constitute the preparatory cleansing processes that aids in the mastery of Pranayama techniques. Pranayama, on the other hand cleanses, fortifies and develops the body and mind for the advanced practices of Yoga like awakening of the Kundalini, higher meditational practices etc., both Kriya and Pranayama goes hand in hand with each other, supplementing each other. Thus both are for reconditioning of the psycho-physiological mechanism of man.

BANDHAS AND MUDRAS

In order to follow the technique of Pranayama, it is necessary to know about Mudras, and Bandhas. The Sanskrit word Mudra means “a seal for energy”. It denotes positions which close the body apertures. Bandha means “a lock for energy”, bondage, joining together, fettering or catching hold. It also refers to a posture in which certain organs or parts of the body are gripped, contracted and controlled.

For Eg. When electricity is generated, it is necessary to have transformers, conductors, fuses, switches and insulated wires to carry the power to its destination; otherwise the current would be wasted.

And so when Prana is made to flow in the yogi's body by the practice of Pranayama, it is equally necessary for him to employ Bandhas to prevent the dissipation of energy and to carry it to the right places without damage. “Without the Bandha, the Pranayama practice, and the flow of Prana can injure the nervous system”.

Bandhas and Mudras are a special feature of Hatha Yoga. Most of them consist of certain neuro-muscular locks and involve changes in the internal pressure to a very high degree. They directly influence the tone of the visceral organs, glandular secretions, endocrine glands and also the vital nerve plexuses.

Though these practices look very innocent, easy and harmless, the Mudras and Bandhas have to be restored very cautiously. Their physiological effects are at times so drastic that even a slight over dose may expose you to very great risks.

Some of the Mudras and Bandhas are definitely contra-indicated for children. They could be started only from the age of late adolescence onwards. That is, from the age of 15 or 16 for boys and 12 or 13 for girls.

Mudra - the “Seal for energy”

Hatha Yoga describes Mudras as gestures or mental attitudes, which induce the state of Pratyaharaa (Sense withdrawal) and results in spontaneous state of meditation.

“Mudra yati klesam iti mudra”

Mudra is that which removes pain and sorrow.

“Mudam rati iti mudra”

That which brings about happiness is called Mudra.

“Nasti mudrasamam kinchit siddhidam kshitimandale”

There is nothing in this world like Mudras for giving success.

Hatha Pradipika prescribes practice of Mudra as follows: One should practice the Mudras with all efforts in order to arouse the Goddess Kundalini sleeping at the base of Sushumna nadi.

Yogis texts describe supernatural powers that can be got with the practice of Mudras. However, they also warn that Mudras are difficult to accomplish without the blessings and guidance of a Guru.



Classification of Mudra

According to **Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri**, Mudras can be classified as follows:

Hatha Mudras, Prana Mudras, Hastha Mudras, Pada Mudras, Mukha Mudras, Chakshu Mudras, Kaya Mudras, Jnana Mudras, Mano Mudras, Pratyah Mudras, Dharana Mudras, Shanti Mudras, Shakti Mudras, Siddha Mudras and Puja Mudras

Mudras may also be classified as

- Kriya Mudra Eg: Simha Mudra, Bhujangini Mudra, etc.,
- Asana Mudra Eg: Yoga Mudra, Viparita Karani Mudra, etc.,
- Pranayama Mudra Eg: Chin Mudra, Shanmuki Mudra , etc.,

Bandha- the “lock for energy”

Bandhas are necessary for the practice of Pranayama, Bandha means energy lock. These locks are essential while doing the Kumbhaka that is retaining the air inside or outside of the lungs. If Kumbhaka or retention is done without Bandhas, it may have a very negative effect on the digestive system, excretory system, nervous system, brain etc ..

Bandhas can be defined as those Mudras that are applied as a part of various phases of Pranayama.

The three Bandhas thus applied during Pranayama are

1. Jalandhara Bandha or Chin Lock
2. Mula Bandha or Anus Lock
3. Uddiyana Bandha or Abdominal Lock

Application of these three Bandhas is essential in the advanced training of Pranayama technique in Hatha Yoga. However, Swami Kuvalyanandha has cautioned against the use of all the three bandhas by the yoga-sadhakas, as when practiced wrongly the internal pressure changes brought about by these bandhas may lead irreparable damages.

Swami Kuvalyananda also prescribed the adoption of Jalandhara bandha while performing the Kumbhaka phase of Pranayamic training to prevent various complications. He rather advocates the simple adoption of Puraka- Rechaka phases of Pranayama to derive the advantages of Pranayama devoid of risks.

JALANDHARA BANDHA

The first Bandha the Sadhaka should master is Jalandhara Bandha, Jala meaning a net, a web or a mesh, we may assume as the net of Nadis (energy channels) and the word "Dhara " means to stop or to hold the flow of the fluid (Amrut), flowing through the nadis. It also means "Glottis lock".

Steps for Practice

1. Sit in Padmasana or in any comfortable meditative posture.
2. Bend your neck a little forward (Performing the mayura mudra).
3. Slowly place firmly your chin on chest (jugula knotch) doing the swallowing action (Apraksha mudra) so that when you practice Pranayama with Kumbhaka, the inside retained air must not come out.
4. While returning, slowly raise your chin and straighten your neck.



Benefits

- This Bandha influences our vocal organs directly.
- The solar plexus is situated at the center. According to Yoga, it is the seat of the digestive fire (jagharagni), which burns food, and creates heat. The lunar plexus is in the center of the brain and creates coolness. By performing jalandhara bandha, due to the lock of the nadis around the neck, the cool energy of the lunar plexus is not allowed to flow down or to be dissipated by the hot energy of the solar plexus. In this way the elixir of life is stored. And life itself is prolonged.
- The bandha also presses the ida and pingala channels and allows the prana to pass through Sushumna Nadi. The Jalandhara Bandha clears the nasal passages and regulates the flow of blood and Prana (energy) to the heart, head and the endocrine glands in the neck (thyroid and para-thyroid).
- If pranayama is performed without Jalandhara Bandha, pressure is immediately felt in the heart, brain, eye-balls and in the inner ear. This may lead to dizziness. It relaxes the brain and also humbles the intellect (manas, buddhi and ahamkara).

Precautions

1. Those having complaint of neck pain or spondilitis should not practice it.
2. Persons suffering from breath related problems or high or low blood pressure, should practice the Bandhas under the supervision of the experts in the field of Yoga.
3. During Pranayama, the Bandha is to be observed after Puraka. Rechaka is to be practiced after Kumbhaka, by releasing the Bandha. Rechaka should not be observed while being in the Jalandhara bandha.

UDDIYANA BANDHA

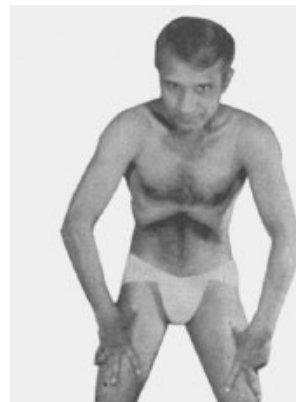
The Uddiyana Bandha is enumerated among the three bandhas and ten mudras. Uddiyana means “upward” or “fly up lock”; Bandha means bonding

The Gheranda Samhita says about the Uddiyana Bandha as "Of all the Bandhanas, this is the best. The complete practice of this makes emancipation easy"

"Even an old person can become young when [Uddiyana Bandha] is done regularly", says the Hatha Yoga Pradipika.

Steps for Practice

1. Stand erect
2. Spread out the legs. The distance between two legs should be 15" to 18".
3. Lean forward, place hands on the thighs or knees and now exhale fully, hold the breath out.
4. Expand the chest so that the abdomen would be drawn in and you will feel that the upper portion of the abdomen is being pulled towards the ribs.
5. After pulling it completely maintain for 5-10-15-20 seconds (according to your capacity). Now return.
6. Now slowly relax the abdomen and stand erect after inhalation.



Benefits

- Removes constipation, invigorates digestion pressurizes the navel plexes, and help to make retention of breath stable.
- Strengthens the abdominal muscles and diaphragm
- Massages abdominal viscera, the solar plexus, the heart and lungs
- Increases gastric fire; Improves digestion, assimilation, and elimination and purifies the digestive tract of toxins

- Stimulates blood circulation in the abdomen and blood flow to the brain
- Stimulates and lifts the energy of the lower belly (Apana vayu), to unite it with the energies localized in the navel (Samana vayu) and heart (Prana vayu).

Precautions

1. The waist should not lean much while bending forward.
2. The chest should be expanded, shoulders bent a little.
3. The legs should not be bent more at the knees.
4. Do not keep the abdomen tight. Let it relax.
5. Exhale fully (completely).
6. Always practice Uddiyana on an empty stomach.
7. Persons suffering from stomach ailments, heart troubles or defective blood circulation should not attempt to perform the Bandha.
8. Persons suffering from diseases like hernia too should not perform this Bandha.

Uddiyana, which means flying up, is an abdominal grip. In it, the prana or energy is made to flow up from the lower abdomen up into the thorax, pulling the abdominal organs back and up towards the spinal column. It is said to be *the lion that kills the elephant named death*

MULA BANDHA:

In Sanskrit, Mula means “root,” and Bandha translates as “lock” or “binding.” The action of Mula Bandha is a lifting of the root muscles, or pelvic floor muscles. This exercise, called Kegels in the medical community, has many benefits. It can help prevent incontinence and strengthen the vaginal walls after childbirth. It may also help stabilize the spine and improve posture. It means “Anal lock”.

Contraction of the anus is known as Ashwini Mudra. Ashwini Mudra indicates the movement a horse makes with its rectum during evacuation of the bowels. In the Gherand Samhita it is said to contract and relax the anal aperture again and again. This is called Ashwini mudra"

When Mula Bandha is initially practiced, there is a tendency to control the two areas, i.e. the perineum and the anus. Mula Bandha takes place in the center of the body, neither in the front nor back. Then Mula Bandha chakra is directly contracted.

Steps for Practice

1. Sit on the floor in a comfortable, cross-legged position. If possible, place the heel of one foot at the perineum, right between the anus and the genitals. This placement will help you identify the muscles to be engaged

2. Actively engage the pelvic floor muscles by pulling them upwards toward the spine.
3. Hold the contraction for five counts. Then slowly release the muscles for five counts
4. You can practice Mula Bandha in conjunction with Yoga breathing, or Pranayama, by slowly contracting the pelvic floor while inhaling for five counts, and then slowly releasing the muscles while exhaling for five counts.

Benefits

- The practice of Mula Bandha reactivates the areas in the brain controlling this region of the body, bringing the neuronal circuits responsible for its control into the sphere of CONSCIOUSNESS. Controlled systematic contraction of the perineal body/cervix produces heat in the subtle body, and this awakens the potential of kundalini.
- Mula Bandha focuses on the muscles that form a sling in the pelvis from the pubis to the coccyx. These muscles support the upper part of the vagina, the uterus, the bladder, the rectum, and the prostate. They also surround the sphincters of the urethra, vagina, and rectum, which can help protect against leakage.

The Physical Effects of Mudras and Bandhas

Out of the several mudras mentioned in Hatha-Yoga texts, Jalandhara, Uddiyana and Mula Bandha are essential to Pranayama. They help to distribute energy and prevent its waste through hyper-ventilation of the body. They are practiced to arouse the sleeping Kundalini and direct its energy up through the Sushumna channel during Pranayama. Their use is essential for experiencing the state of Samadhi.

The performance of Mudras and Bandhas in conjunction with Pranayama (breath and energy control) affects the whole body as follows:

- (i) They harmonize the efficient functioning of the endocrine system: Jalandhara Bandha directly influences the pituitary, pineal, thyroid, parathyroid, thymus; Uddiyana Bandha directly influences the adrenals and pancreas; Mula Bandha directly influences the gonads and the perineal body/cervix (which are said to be vestigial endocrine glands). All Bandhas have an indirect effect on the pituitary, pineal and brain.
- (ii) As a result of the direct effect that Bandhas have on the endocrine glands, certain biorhythms in the body are also regulated. For example, both Mula Bandha and Uddiyana Bandha are extremely useful in stabilizing menstrual periods.
- (iii) All Bandhas, when performed correctly, lower respiration rate, inducing calmness and relaxation.

- (iv) Blood pressure is decreased.
- (v) Heart rate is lessened.
- (vi) Alpha brainwave production, an index of profound relaxation, is increased, indicating slowing of nervous activity.
- (vii) Sympathetic activity in the body is decreased, a further index of relaxation.
- (viii) Confused and/or crossed neurological circuits in the brain are reordered, in effect for 'retraining the brain'.
- (ix) The digestive system is toned, massaged and revitalized via pressure on the internal organs.
- (x) Harmony in the activity of the neuro genital system occurs as a result of reflex action via the nervous system.

THE 25 IMPORTANT “MUDRA” AND “BANDHA” OF HATHA YOGA

(from the Gheranda-Samhita, Hatha-Yoga-Pradipika, and Shiva-Samhita)

There are twenty-five mudras, the practice of which gives success to the Yogis (*Gheranda-Samhita* 3.1).

Gheranda Samhita talks of 25 mudras. This includes certain techniques of Dharana.

Very little is known about the subtler aspects of Bandhas and Mudras today to make it adequately safe and beneficial wider application. Some of the Mudras are purely physiological by nature while others are purely psychological. Gheranda Samhita prescribed Mudras for the “Stability or Sthirata” of body and mind.

The ten mudras listed in the Hatha-Yoga-Pradipika “annihilate old age and death.” They have been explained by Lord Shiva as the give of eight kinds of divine wealth (i.e. the great “powers”: becoming small, becoming large, becoming light, becoming heavy, coming within easy reach of everything, wish fulfillment, mastery and control over matter and Nature).

According to the Linga Purana, the Ashta Siddhis are

- Anima - power to become as small as the Atom
- Laghima - Power of Extreme Lightness
- Prapti - Power to Obtain Anything
- Prakamya - Power of Irresistible will
- Mahima - power to Increase Size at Will
- Ishitva - Power of Superiority
- Vashitva - Power to Subjugate all
- Kamavasayita - Power to Control all Desire

“These Mudras should be kept secret by every means, as one keeps one’s box of jewelry, and should, on no account, be told to anyone, just as a husband and wife keep their dealings secret” (*HYP* 3.7-9).

- (i) The Gheranda-Samhita describes 25 Mudras and Bandhas.
- (ii) The 10 Mudras and Bandhas described in the Hatha-Yoga-Pradipika are indicated with a star (*).
- (iii) The 10 Mudras and Bandhas described in the Shiva-Samhita are indicated with a cross (+).

Sl.No	(iv)	(v)	(vi)
1.	ASHWINI-MUDRA (Dawn-horse seal)	Invigorates the body, cures diseases of the rectum, and helps awaken Kundalini-shakti.	Contract and dilate the anal sphincter muscle repeatedly.
2.	BHUJANGINI-MUDRA (Serpent seal)	Destroys all stomach diseases.	Extend the neck a little forward and draw in air through the esophagus.
3.	JALANDHARA BANDHA*+ (Water-pipe lock)	Closes the 16 adharas(vital parts); destroys death; “he who practices for six months, becomes an adept without doubt”	Press the chin and the top of the sternum bone together. The 16 vital parts are the: thumbs, ankles, knees, thighs, prepuce, organs of generation, navel, heart, neck, throat, palate, nose, middle of the eyebrows, forehead, head, fontanelle (brahma-andhra).
4.	KAKI-MUDRA (Crow seal)	Destroys all disease.	Shape the mouth like a crow's beak and then suck in air.
5.	KECHARI-MUDRA*+ (Space-walking seal)	Destroys disease, decay and death; the body becomes divine, it cannot be “burned by fire, nor dried up by the air, nor wetted by water, nor bitten by snakes, it becomes “beautiful”; Samadhi is quickly attained.	Sit in Vajrasana. Close the “holes of the nostrils opening into the mouth” with the tip of the tongue (thus stopping inspiration).
The next three bandhas must be performed together (in the order 7, 6, 8). “These three are the great secrets” (HYP 3.30):			
6.	MAHA-BANDHA*+ (Great lock)	Destroys decay and death; “by virtue of this Bandha a man accomplishes all his desires”	Press the left heel against the anus, put the right foot on the left thigh; slowly contract the muscles of the rectum and base of the pelvis (perineum); restrain the breath with Jalandhara

			Bandha.
7.	MAHA-MUDRA*+ (Great seal)	Cures all diseases, destroys death, confers Siddhis.	Press one heel against the anus, keep the other leg straight; hold the big toe of the straight leg (like janu-shirshasana). Restrain the breath with Jalandhara Bandha.
8.	MAHA-VEDHA*+ (Great piercer)	Destroys decay and death.	Sit in maha-bandha and restrain the breath (after exhalation) with Jalandhara Bandha. Then, with the support of the hands, lift off the ground and gently tap the ground with the buttocks several times.
9.	MANDUKI-MUDRA (Frog seal)	The body retains “perpetual youth”.	Press the tip of the tongue against the palette.
10.	MATANGINI-MUDRA (Elephant seal)	Destroys decay and death, confers great strength “like an elephant” (Gheranda)	Stand in neck-deep water. First draw in water through the nostrils and expel it out the mouth; then draw in water through the mouth and expel it through the nostrils.
11.	MULA-BANDHA* (Root seal)	Destroys decay; controls prana.	Press the left heel against the anus and contract the rectum (ashwini mudra); press the intestines near the navel against the spine; press the right heel against the pubis.
12.	NABHO-MUDRA (Ether seal)	Destroys all disease.	“In whatever business a Yogi may be engaged, wherever he may be, let him always keep his tongue turned upwards (towards the soft palate), and restrain the breath (Gheranda). Similar to

			kechari mudra (5).
13-17. PANCHA-DHARANA (“Five concentrations”). These are listed in the order of density of elements, earth being the densest element, ether the most subtle			
13.	PARTHIVI-MUDRA (Earthy seal(also called adho dharana))	Conquers the “Earth” and causes steadiness	
14.	AMBHASI-MUDRA (Watery seal)	Destroys all sorrows	
15.	AGNEYI-MUDRA (Fiery seal)	Destroys death	
16.	VAYAVI-MUDRA (Air seal)	Destroys decay and death	
17.	AKASHI-MUDRA (Ethereal seal(also called nabho-dharana))	Destroys death	
18.	PASHINI-MUDRA (Bird-catcher seal)	Awakens Kundalini	Wrap the legs around the neck, like Yoga-Nidrasana(Yoga sleep”).
19.	SHAKTI-CHALANIMUDRA+ (Stirring-the-power seal)	Destroys decay and death	Sit in siddhasana. There are two different descriptions of this seal. Rub the body with ashes and wrap the loins with a soft, white cloth, one cubit long and three inches wide. Restrain the inhalation, perform ashvini-mudra. Completes yoni-mudra (Gheranda).Sit in vajrasana, inhale through the right nostril and restrain the breath. Hold the ankles (Svatmarama).
20.	SHAMBHAVIMUDRA* (Shambhu’s seal)	“He who knows this Shambhavi... is Brahma (GS 3.66)	Fix the gaze between the eyebrows.
21.	TADAGI-MUDRA (Tank seal)	Destroys decay and death	Sit in paschimottanasana and hollow the abdomen

			like a “tank.”
22.	UDDIYANA-BANDHA* (Flying-up lock)	The “Great Bird” forced up into the Sushumna; makes emancipation easy; conquers death	Forcefully contract the abdomen and press the viscera up towards the diaphragm and back towards the spine.
23.	VAJRONI-MUDRA Sometimes called VAJROLI (Thunderbolt”)	Awakens Shakti, causes long life, emancipation	Sit with legs raised, hands on ground (looks like paripurna navasana with hands on floor).
24.	VIPARITA-KARANI MUDRA+* (Inverse action seal)	Destroys decay and death; yogi will not “perish even at Pralaya”. (i.e. dissolution of the universe)	Perform Headstand. Sometimes describes as Shoulder stand.
25.	YONI-MUDRA (Perineal seal)	Never polluted by sins	Sit in siddhasana. There are two different descriptions of this seal. Yoni-mudra is used as another term for what we call shan-mukhimudra: close the ears with the thumbs, eyes with the index fingers, nostrils with the mid fingers, upper lip with the ring fingers, lower lip with the little fingers. Draw in the breath with kaki-mudra (4). Contemplate on Shiva/Shakti, and realize selfidentity with Brahma, the “source” (yoni) within (Gheranda). Contract the perineum (yoni) (Shiva).
26.	UDDANA-BANDHA (Upward lock)	Destroys sins, sorrows, disease and death; purifies the navel (and thereby the “winds”), and kindles gastric fire; gives vighraha-siddhi (“power over the	Described only in Shiva-Samhita. The viscera below and above the navel are brought to the left side above the navel.

		microcosm”)	
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Swami Digambarji of Kaivalyadhama says that perfect physiological fitness and preparedness(training) are absolutely essential, lest these very techniques can trigger off diseases. For instance, Mula bandha lead to very severe constipation to begin with, that later leads to other complications. Viparitakarani may work like this cortisone therapy of modern medicine. In the case of blood pressure patients(HBP), Viparitakarani may lead to fatal consequence too.



DHYANA

Dhyana seems to be considered an essential process in yoga for the attainment of real emotional stability and integration of personality. This process of Dhyana has to be practiced in a very relaxed way to attain the beneficial results claimed for it.

On the other hand Dhyana is the stage of meditative trainings that lead to Samadhi.

Meditation is the work of consciousness aimed at the conscious development along the path to Perfection and to the Mergence with the Creator. Meditation is practiced at three stages of the Patanjali's scheme.

- (i) At the dharana stage adepts among other things learn how to expand consciousness in the subtlest and the most beautiful that exists in the world of matter. By means of such attunement a person establishes in sattva guna. (And through working with Yidam they may immediately come in contact with the Fiery manifestation of Divine Consciousness and experience Samadhi).
- (ii) At the dhyana stage adepts work at increasing the "mass" of consciousness and at obtaining power in subtlety. So that at the next stage their efforts will be focused upon interaction of individual consciousness with Consciousness of the Universal God and upon merging with Him in His Fiery Aspect as well as in the Infinity of the "trans-mirror realm".
- (iii) At the dhyana stage the meditative work is especially effective if it is performed at special "places of power" — areas on the Earth's surface that have an energetic impact on human beings. Among the variety of them only those should be chosen that makes the expanding of consciousness in the subtlest eons. A correctly selected subsequence of such places ensures that the most complex tasks of correct "crystallization" (i.e. quantitative growth) of consciousness will be solved easily and with little efforts.

For the same purpose one can meditate during athletic exercises, as well as practice winter swimming and "meditative running".

The structure of the human organism responsible for meditation is the lower "bubble of perception", the principal part of which is Anahata Chakra, supplied with energy by the complex of three lower Chakras. This is why success of the work at this stage depends on the level of purity and development of the entire system of seven chakras, which is combined into one complex by the meridians that have been mentioned above.

From the very beginning of meditative training until the absolute Victory of Merging with the Primordial Consciousness one should always remember that a person's main merit is measured by the level of development of his spiritual heart. This is by what a man can

merge with God. This is why it is the spiritual heart that a man should develop and keep pure in every possible way. What was said above allows us to take it not as a nice figure of speech or a metaphor, but as a quite practical knowledge and a guide to action.

The steps of the ladder of a spiritual ascent that we are discussing now are meant for teaching one how to position consciousness into Anahata first, then to ensure the growth of the Anahata within the body and after that beyond it — within the “cocoon”, within Earth and then beyond Earth in the highest eons.

This is how we can grow ourselves as Love. God is Love; this is why one can merge with Him only after becoming a Great Love, a Great Soul of Love (Mahatma). And there are no other ways of developing Divinity of oneself, except for those fundamental steps that we are describing here.

The usual preliminary procedures of yoga help bring in a balanced working of body and mind. As long as the body and mind are under strong divergent pulls and are in a highly imbalanced state. Dhyana should not be resorted to. One should resort to the practice of Dhyana only when the body and mind are a bit stabilized.

“Tatra pratyaya ekatanata dhyanam”

Meditation is the state when there is a steady and continuous flow of attention and concentration on that point, place, region or object

One key meaning of the term ‘Yoga’ itself is ‘Dhyana’ according to the Sanskrit, Lexicon Amarkosha. *Quoting Hatha Pradipika. Swami Kuvalayananda says the Dhyana is ‘seeing’ one’s mind with one’s own mind.*

“Dhyanam nirvishayam manah”

That is emptying the mind of sensual perceptions and objectives is Dhyana.

The process of Dhyana usually begins with the mastery of a selected meditational Asana with certain ‘cerebro-ocular mudras like Shambhavi-mudra or unmani-mudra, or khechari-mudra etc. Fixation of gaze on a point is common in all these cerebro-ocular mudras. If such a cerebro-ocular mudra is maintained in a meditative posture for some time, a few seconds only in the beginning, customary images get automatically eliminated. It has to be noted that every meditational posture requires its practitioner to fix his gaze in a particular way.

According to the instructions of Patanjali and yogic tradition, the correct practice of Asana the process of ANATHA SAMAPATTI or MAHAHRIDANUSANDHANA or PRANADHARANA assumes central significance. If these processes in the practice of the Meditational Asanas is taken to its logical end, this can lead to relaxed way to Dhyana.

Benefit of Dhyana

- It lowers oxygen consumption.
- It decreases respiratory rate.
- It increases blood flow and slows the heart rate.
- Increases exercise tolerance in heart patients.
- Leads to a deeper level of relaxation.
- Good for people with high blood pressure as it brings the B.P. to normal.
- Reduces anxiety attacks by lowering the levels of blood lactate.
- Decreases muscle tension (any pain due to tension) and headaches.
- Builds self-confidence.
- It increases serotonin production which influences mood and behaviour. Low levels of serotonin are associated with depression, obesity, insomnia and headaches.
- Helps in chronic diseases like allergies , arthritis etc.
- Reduces Pre- menstrual Syndrome.
- Helps in post-operative healing.
- Enhances the immune system. Research has revealed that meditation increases activity of 'natural-killer cells', which kill bacteria and cancer cells.
- Also reduces activity of viruses and emotional distress.

INTELLECTUAL CONCENTRATION VERSUS DHYANA

Intellectual Concentration

- (i) Intellectual concentration depends on the data and perception made through sense-organs.
- (ii) One develops stronger 'I-persons' leading to 'I'-versus 'you' dichotomy and conflicts in relationships.
- (iii) Finer and complicated analysis and arguments results from intellectual concentration.

Dhyana

- (i) Dhyana process begins with Pratyahara (that is, withdrawal of senses), signifying that one gradually transcends the need dependency on sense-data.
- (ii) One tends to transcend 'partite and fragmented thinking' and one's separate identity for 'I-persons'. This leads to harmonious relationships and cognition of a shared existence of self with other cosmic forces and beings.
- (iii) Dhyana tends to resolve all intellectual and emotional conflicts and brings in spiritual insights to the practitioner.

PRANADHARANA AND PRANAVANUSANDHANA

Pranadharana:

After gaining a certain mastery of a select meditational asana with its cerebro-ocular posture/gaze, one is required to pay relaxed attention to the gentle respiratory flow of breathing at the tip of one's nostrils. In due course of time, one is to regulate the flow of breathing to make it more and more harmonious and rhythmic. Later, the practitioner can resort to the technique of PRANAVANUSANDHANA as below:

Pranavanusandhana

With Puraka phase chant OOOMMMmmm mentally filling the Sushumana-nadi with prana which flow upwards to reach the Sahasrara-Chakra in the head. With every Rechaka phase, chant OOOMMMmmm., mentally as pranic currents move downwards towards the Muladhara-Chakra at the base of the spine.

The flow of pranic current is felt/seen as brilliant and dazzling light moving upwards or downwards.

Caution

It is always safe to limit oneself to the 'Pranadhara' technique unless and until one has the advantage of a trained Yoga Master. Pranavanusandhana must be resorted to by only those who have clear cut understating about spiritual reality and seek spiritual advancement.

Facilitating postures for Dhyana

As suggested by Swami Kuvalayananda, proper practice of select meditational asanas of Yoga with appropriate cerebro-ocular gazes can bring about some benefits of dhyana. Yoga texts prescribe several; mental devices to aid in the practice of dhyana. One need to get systematically initiated to any one of these mental devices and practice the same regularly. Cultural and Relaxative Asanas of hathayoga , along with certain kriyas and Pranayamas can bring about faster results and success in the practice of dhyana.

The most important asanas are siddhasana, padmasana, simhasana and bhadrasana because the main aim of asana is to facilitate Dhyana in reaching the divine.

MODERN RESEARCH FINDINGS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

The researches carried out of kaivalyadhama, by Tringent burrow and transecendental Meditation researchers point to one conclusion.

Meditation leads to a hypometabolic wakeful state of consciousness. Dr. Herbert Benson calls this as a relaxation response in contrast to the usual fight or flight response. Reduced rate of breathing, lowered metabolic cost, enhanced alpha-wave activity of the brain etc. are some of the other pointers that lead us to better understandings and insight into the process of meditation.

In any case, Swami Kuvalayananda calls Dhyana as "The great tranquilizer". It is the main technique of yoga that brings in a balanced working of body and mind, real emotional stability and integration of personality.

The study of Tringent Burrow suggests that man as a species is suffering from a certain kind of neurosis. The practice of Dhyana is an effective antidote to man's neurosis as it helps man transcend his restrictive 'I'-persona.

SIMILARITIES & DISSIMILARITIES BETWEEN YOGA PRACTICES AND OTHER SYSTEMS OF PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Similarities:

Yoga Practices

1. Various yogic practices like Kriyas, Asanas, Pranayams, Mudras and Bandhas involve bodily training to a greater or lesser extent.
2. Increasing control over one's body and mind is the aim of yogic practices.
3. Integration of personality at all levels is the goal of the yogic practices.
4. Pranayama is applied as an important aspect in yogic practices

Other Exercises

1. Other exercises involve almost the entire physical training through bodily movements like running, jumping, weight-lifting, gymnastics, rock-climbing etc.
2. Increasing control over the selected game, sport or physical activity is the goal.
3. Personality development is aimed at through physical education.
4. Deep breathing is only used but not systematized



Dissimilarities:

Yoga Practices

Other Exercises

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| <p>1. Yoga practices are described as Psycho-physiological training rather than mere muscular exercises.</p> | <p>1. Physical exercises in general emphasises muscular training though of late psychological factors are receiving some attention.</p> |
| <p>2. Some yogic practices like Yama and Niyama aims at attitudinal changes in order to cultivate correct psychological attitudes as a preparatory and concomitant aid to other Yogic practice.</p> | <p>2. Attitudinal training is not of mere importance in other exercises.</p> |
| <p>3. There are many schools and practices in yoga which can be termed to be as purely psychological techniques with minimal body involvement.</p> | <p>3. All physical exercises in any other systems basically insist upon body involvement</p> |
| <p>4. Physical and Mental health are cultivated for the sake of spiritual development and advancement.</p> | <p>4. Spiritual question finds no place in other systems of muscular exercises.</p> |
| <p>5. Standardization of yogic techniques and terminology are conspicuous by their absence. There is a lack of universal standardization in most of the yoga practices.</p> | <p>5. Modern physical education and sports are regulated and controlled by professional bodies and appropriate authorities everywhere. There is a universally accepted standardization of techniques and terminologies for each system of physical education activities the world over.</p> |
| <p>6. Unlike in the case of modern physical education activities, Physiology of Exercises; and similar other disciplines fail to explain the exact nature and mechanism of various yogic practices.</p> | <p>6. Physiology of Exercises, and similar modern scientific disciplines have been specially developed through research to explain the mechanisms and methods available in physical education and sports.</p> |

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| 7. Injuries are comparatively rare in the case of yogic practices when carried out with necessary caution. | 7. Sports injuries form an accepted integral part of training and performance in physical education and sports activities. The sports medicine is a specialty that has been found essential to tackle this problem. |
| 8. Yoga cannot be relevantly considered as recreation | 8. Recreation is a major purpose and goal of doing physical activities. |
| 9. Yoga research is at its infancy till date as only a few institutions or researches tackle yoga research with quality and seriousness as it demands. | 9. Research is fairly well advanced and scientific data, explanations and reports are being published from all over the world in increasing numbers. |
| 10. Facilities and equipments required for the yoga training are extremely limited. It is attended by extreme economy of energy, effort and expenditure compared to other systems. | 10. Other systems of physical activities are getting more and more dependent on money equipment, energy consumption etc. compared to yoga practice. |
| 11. Yoga practices are life oriented. | 11. Other exercises are goal oriented. |
| 12. Yoga practices involves both mental and physical awareness | 12. Other exercise involves only physical awareness. |
| 13. Many misconceptions are till date present with relation to yoga practices. | 13. Mostly no misconceptions are present in other exercise. |

COMPARISONS BETWEEN ASANAS & OTHER EXERCISES

Asanas

1. In Yoga Asanas can mean two things; the seat or mode of sitting. As the mode of sitting, it brings about stability and comfort in both mind and body.
2. It involves systematic and slow movements
3. It is static as well as passive postural patterns.
4. In the dynamic aspect of asanas, the movements are slow, steady and smooth. Muscle tension is gradually reduced. The static or maintenance aspect of an Asana is more important than the movements.
5. Nervous system and mind receive top-most priority in the performance of asanas.
6. Nerve-culture and mind-control is emphasised in Asana.
7. Physical aspect of Asana is of little consequence compared to its psychological consequences.
8. Asanas can be described as certain 'Passive-stretching procedures'. So passive stretching and muscular relaxation are integral to Asanas than muscular contractions.

Other Exercises

1. Etymologically 'Exercise' means movement. Exercise induces exertion.
2. It is not systematized and mostly involves only fast movements.
3. Exercises are dynamic and repetitive in nature.
4. By their very nature, most of the exercises are repetitive. Muscles remain constantly at active contraction.
5. Muscular system receives topmost priority in other exercises.
6. Muscle-building speed, physical skills etc., receives prime importance in exercises.
7. Physical aspects and recreation are more important in other physical exercises than the psychological consequences.
8. Physical exercises are based on 'Overloading Principle' whereby increased stress and strains are brought upon the bodily systems.

9. Asanas are preparatory to higher Yogic practices like Meditation etc. which demand increasing muscular relaxation, freedom from anxieties, tensions and similar disturbances.
10. Asanas directly influence the organ in the abdomen and chest, as well as brain and nervous system and the glandular system. Thereby, Asanas help in the restoration of the balance, well-organized working relationship between among the organs and systems of the body to the maximum.
11. Asanas attend to the physiological priorities inherent in the healthy individual. Systematic and symmetrical development of the body gets ensured. Accumulation of fat and excess muscle-mass is avoided by all means by the practice of Asanas.
12. The parasympathetic division of the Autonomic Nervous System is found to be stimulated through asanas.
13. Asanas are designed to lead one towards proper practice of higher Yogic practices like Pranayama, Pratyaharam, Dharana, Dhyana etc.
14. Most of the Asanas involve the deep muscles, nerve roots, ligaments and other important parts of the spinal column leading to the health and youthful condition of the individual.
9. Physical exercises may be preparatory to sports events, competitions etc. which can raise the anxiety levels, mental disturbances etc,
10. Such influences are rather indirect in other exercises. There is more attention aid to the movements of arms and legs, development of skeletal muscles etc.
11. Muscular system that too the skeletal musculature receives all the attention here which may led to lopsided asymmetrical development which can prove to be harmful for the health and fitness of the individual.
12. It is the Sympathetic Nervous System of Autonomic Nervous System that is stimulated in other exercises
13. Exercises can lead one towards increased excitements and activities of mind and body.
14. Involvement of spinal column is only incidental and not essential with other exercises. These exercises are more concerned with the movements of upper and lower extremities.

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| <p>15. Asanas require almost no equipments and elaborate infrastructural facilities as in the case of other exercises.</p> <p>16. Relaxation is a key aspect of almost all Asanas. According to Swami Kuvalayananda, some of them bring about a sort of Differential Relaxation, while some yield Total or General Relaxation to the body. Such relaxation affects the mind very much positively as well.</p> <p>17. Properly executed Asanas lead to a feeling of serenity, mental peace and a positive sense of well-being.</p> | <p>15. Though a few exercises may not require the any equipments and facilities, most of the muscular training programmes require specialized equipment, facilities, costly uniforms/dress like tracksuits, shoes etc.</p> <p>16. Such conscious relaxations as available in Asanas are not usually available through the muscular exercises. On the contrary, usually one gets too tired/ fatigued after these exercises.</p> <p>17. Exercises rather lead us to fatigue or mental excitements etc., depending on several factors like success or failure, loss or winning of awards and trophies etc.</p> |
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PRANAYAMA & DEEP BREATHING EXERCISES

Similarities

Pranayama

1. Involves the Respiratory mechanism directly, which can be practiced deliberately and later make it spontaneous through advanced conditions of Yoga.
2. Involves deepest possible inhalations and exhalations
3. Involves voluntary control of breathing activities.

Deep Breathing

1. Similar to Pranayama deep breathing too involves the respiratory system directly. It might be deliberate or spontaneous in certain conditions of the body during physical exercises.
2. Involves fairly deep inhalations and exhalations
3. Involves voluntary control when adopted as an exercise.

Dissimilarities:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pranayama as such is of prime importance in the Yogic curriculum. 2. It consists of Purvaka, Kumbhaka, and Rechaka phases. Kumbhaka phase of Pranayama is most important from the Yogic point of view. 3. It has been found that Pranayama reduces Oxygen consumption and increases the carbondioxide concentration in the blood. 4. The Rechaka phase of Pranayama takes twice as long time as compared to the Puraka phase. The ratio between Puraka and Rechaka being 1:2 5. Kumbhaka phase is of prime importance in the practice of Pranayama. 6. Number of Pranayamas performed during one minute may be one or two with specific time ratios between the three phases of Pranayama. 7. Pranayama is never done after muscular exercises. It is preferably done after the Asanas. 8. Traditionally Pranayama needs to be done 10 to 20 rounds, 3 to 4 times a day as a part of Yoga training. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deep breathing exercises may not be such importance in other exercise programmes as pranayama among Yogic practices. 2. Deep breathing does not involve Puraka, Kumbhaka and Rechaka phases. Breath holding need not be central to deep breathing exercises. 3. Deep breathing is aimed to provide more oxygen to the body and to get rid of accumulated carbon dioxide from the blood. 4. No such ratio or rule exist in the cause of deep breathing exercises. It involves deep inhalations and exhalations only and they are of almost equal duration 5. There is no Kumbhaka type breath holding techniques in deep breathing exercise. 6. Deep breathing can be done 12 to 15 times per minute. 7. Deep breathings is done voluntarily or involuntarily during or after muscular exercises. 8. Such prescriptions are not available in the case of deep breathing. |
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| <p>9. Air-way resistance is artificially created during Puraka and Rechaka phases of Pranayama</p> <p>10. Application of Mula Bandha, Uddiyana Bandha and Jalandhara Bandha are prescribed in Pranayama.</p> <p>11. Pranayama, except Ujjayi Pranayama must be done seated in any selected Meditative Asana like Padmasana, Siddhasana etc.,</p> <p>12. Pranayama is supposed to directly affect brain centres.</p> | <p>9. In deep breathing both mouth and nostrils are used, thereby removing any resistance to air flow during inhalations and exhalations.</p> <p>10. Such applications of any muscular locks are unknown in deep breathing exercises.</p> <p>11. No such bodily positions are prescribed in the case of deep breathing.</p> <p>12. The influence of deep breathing on the brain centre is rather indirect and modest</p> |
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PECULIARITIES AND SPECIAL UTILITIES OF YOGA PRACTICES VS. OTHER PHYSICAL EXERCISES

Yoga practices

1. Traditionally developed for spiritual development of man, though they are capable of bringing about physical and mental health and emotional well-being.
2. Yogis had a special concept regarding human body and its working. Yogic practices are said to work according to the Yogic view of human body and its working.
3. Psychological, attitudinal, emotional aspects and physical training are combined and integrated well in the system of Yoga training, as per the Yogic principles of body, mind soul etc.

Other Exercise

1. Might have developed as a part of military training, body building, etc. Certainly, not a system devoted to spiritual development though many have some health benefits.
2. Other exercises can be fully explained in terms of modern anatomy and physiology as well as specialized disciplines like Exercise Physiology, Sports, Medicine etc.
3. The training procedures are based on modern psychological concepts, principles of coaching, etc. and modified from time to time as required.

Importance of Nerve-Culture in Yoga

4. Nerve culture is progressively gaining control over the nervous system and mind which is aimed at by the Yogic practices.
4. There are only incidental and not direct outcome of Nerve culture exercises. Recreation, physical fitness, development of sports skills, etc. are aimed in this case.
5. Yoga practices gradually try to bring the semi-voluntary and involuntary mechanisms of the body under control.
5. Perfect muscle control, maximum speed, heightened strength and physical dexterity etc. are aimed to be developed gradually.
6. Yoga has included very special and strange practices like Khechari Mudra, Vajroli Mudra, etc. Which are unknown techniques and difficult to understand from the point of view of other exercises in sports and physical education.
6. Modern Physical Education and Sports tries to embrace and make popular all sorts of games and physical activities, including Asana, all over the world.
7. Yogic texts declare that Yoga to be known or understood properly only if it is put to systematic practice by an individual and learning from the intimate personal experience thereof. They declare that Yoga itself is the teacher. Yoga insist on the qualities like level of motivation and initiatives, self-initiated study and practice etc.
7. Modern Physical Education and Sports have become more and more dependent on modern technologies. Better performance mainly depends upon the professional support system made available to the individuals unlike in the case of Yoga.
8. Yoga is grossly misunderstood for many reasons like widespread misconceptions about its concepts, techniques, philosophies, etc., Lack of systematic research into its fundamentals, lack of appropriate research methodologies, impatience and ignorance among its followers. Are some of the main reasons for such misconceptions.
8. Better understanding and professionalization along with facilities for advanced and specialized training in every aspect of Physical Education and Sport helps to overcome many of its problems.

We should remember that,

1. Of all the systems working in the body the nervous system is recognised to be the most important in yoga.
2. It aims to build up a healthy nervous system.
3. Nerve-Culture mainly depends upon the care of the roots of the nerves. Yogic physical culture gives exercises principally for the roots of the nerves. Yoga promotes the health of the nerves by bringing liberal supply of fresh blood also by causing stretching , vibration and message of these tissues.
4. Yoga pays maximum attention on the head and the spine. It is there that the nerves have their roots. Asana ensures a rich blood supply to the brain and different parts of the spine. Sirshasana supplies to brain region, Sarvangasana to the Cervical region, Halasana to the dorsal and lumbar regions of the spine, Padmasana and Paschimottanasana supplies the sacral and lumbar regions etc. Asana give a sort of message to the spine by stretching and bending it in different ways and directions, promoting the health of the nerve-roots therein.
5. There are many Yogic practices like Asana which not only serve the nerve-roots but also take care of the nerve branches. For example, the Kapalabhati Kriya, the Bhastrika Pranayama etc.
6. Further Bhastrika Pranayama and similar many other Yogic practices take full care of the nervous system as a whole by attending to the nerve-roots, nerve-trunks and nerve-branches. Thus the Yogic system of physical culture has excellent exercises for developing the nervous system as a whole.

KARMA YOGA

Karma is a Sanskrit term. It means action or deed. Any physical or mental action is Karma. Thinking is mental Karma. Karma is the sum total of our acts, both in the present life and in the preceding births.

Karma means not only action, but also the result of an action. There is a hidden power in Karma or action termed 'Adrishta' which brings in fruits of Karmas for the individual. The consequence of an action is really not a separate thing. It is a part of the action and cannot be divided from it.

Bhagavad-Gita elaborately -talks about Karma Yoga. “Karma” means “work”; and “yoga” means “peace of mind”. So karma yoga is the methodology by which the work we do can take us to peace of mind. But karma is also used for a different meaning. People also refer to karma basically meaning “*the past activity we have done and its effect*”



One day Buddha went to a house and begged for some food. This is normal for a sanyasin, who has taken to the spiritual life in India. His requirements are very small: some food and few clothes. They do not have any attachments to anything. Buddha was a big king and he became a sanyasin. And then his requirement is just a morsel of food. Sanyasins do not have houses where food is cooked because it becomes an attachment. So the culture goes that these people go to a house and ask the house lady for food. So Buddha went to a house and asked for food. The lady, respecting the culture, wanted to offer food to him. She opened the door but then she saw a well-built, robust forty-year old man in good health. Obviously she did not recognize him so she at once got annoyed and started shouting at Buddha, “why are you begging food? Can you not earn? Why don’t you work at some place and earn your food? Why should you beg for it? You are a lazy fellow!” After she shouted all that at him, she slammed the door on his face. Buddha’s disciple Ananda heard all this and got angry. He told Buddha, “Why did you keep quiet? Look, you are the king of this place. If she is eating food, it is because of the king’s grace. Why did you allow her to shout at you?” Buddha smiled. “Maybe in some previous life I shouted at her. I’m glad that this debt is cleared now. I don’t want to shout at her now, so that I don’t create a fresh balance. She shouted at me and went back, and now I’m peaceful.” This basically shows how one’s behavior changes.

So Karma philosophy is not blaming somebody but seeing how one’s future has been planned. It gives a person a big relief. This is called *adhidaiva*. So the first one is the *adhibhuta*, we are responsible for what happens to us because we see immediately or in the immediate future which is in our memory range. The second is *adhidaiva*, which is beyond our memory, may be this life or may be in the previous but we are responsible. There is a third force called *adhyatma*. Bhagavad-Gita says that it is our own nature.

Adhibhuta is not spiritual; *adhidaiva* is also not spiritual, because they are cause and effect related, so it is bound, whereas *adhyatma* is a spiritual force, and that spiritual force is our nature.

Karma is of three kinds

- (i) *Sanchita* or the Accumulated works
- (ii) *Prarabdha* or the Fructifying works
- (iii) *Kriyamana* or the Current works

Sanchita is all the accumulated Karmas of the past. Part of it is seen in the character of man, in his tendencies and aptitudes, capacities, inclinations and desires.

Prarabdha is that portion of the part of Karma which is responsible for the present body. It is ripe for reaping. It cannot be avoided or changed. It is only exhausted by being experienced. You pay your past debts.

Kriyamana is that Karma which is now being made for the future. It is also called *Agami* or *Vartamana*.

In Vedantic literature, there is a beautiful analogy. The bow-man has already sent an arrow; it has left his hands. He cannot recall it. He is about to shoot another arrow. The bundle of arrow in the quiver on his back is the *Sanchita*. The arrow he has shot is *Prarabdha*. And the arrow which he is about to shoot from his bow is *Agami*. Of these, he has perfect control over the *Sanchita* and the *Agami*, but he must surely work out his *Prarabdha*. The past which has begun to take effect he has to experience.

Actions are of three kinds, viz., good, bad and mixed. Good Karmas make you a god or angel in heaven. Bad Karmas throw you in lower wombs. Mixed actions give you a human birth.

Karma Yoga is consecration of all actions and their fruits unto the Lord. Karma Yoga is performance of actions dwelling in union with the Divine, removing attachment and remaining balanced ever in success and failure.

Karma Yoga is selfless service into humanity. Karma Yoga is the Yoga of action which purifies the heart and prepares the *Antahkarana* (the heart and the mind) for the reception of Divine Light or attainment of Knowledge of the Self. The important point is that you will have to serve humanity without any attachment or egoism.

Action of some kind or the other is unavoidable. We cannot keep quiet without doing anything. What binds us to phenomenal existence or *Samsara* is not the action but the idea of doership and enjoyership. Karma binds when it is done with a selfish motive, with the expectation of fruits. But when action is done without the expectation of fruits, it is liberating. If you act as an instrument in the hands of the Lord, as a participant in the cosmic activity of Nature, without expectation of fruits, that Karma will not bind you.

Karma, then becomes Karma Yoga. Work unselfishly. Feel that you are only an instrument and that the Lord is working through you. Surrender the actions and their fruits to the Lord. You will be freed from the bonds of Karma and enjoy peace.

The practice of Karma Yoga prepares the aspirant for the reception of knowledge of the Self. It makes him a proper *Adhikari* (aspirant) for the study of Vedanta. Ignorant people jump at once to Jnana Yoga, without first having a preliminary training in Karma Yoga. That is the reason why they fail miserably to realize the Truth. Various impurities lurk in the fourfold mind (*Antahkarana*). They are

- Chitta – The Memory bank – the Subconscious
- Manas – The Conscious mind
- Buddhi – Intellect – possesses Viveka (discrimination).
- Ahamkara – ‘I am’ ness

Selfless service is the only way to remove the impurities lurking in the mind.

Two things are indispensably requisite in the practice of Karma Yoga.

- (i) The Karma Yogi should have non-attachment to the fruits of actions.
- (ii) He will have to dedicate his actions at the altar of God with the feeling of *Ishvararpana*.

Non-attachment brings freedom from sorrow and fear. Non-attachment makes a man absolutely bold and fearless. When he dedicates his actions at the Lotus Feet of the Lord, he develops devotion to God and approaches Him nearer and nearer. He gradually feels that God works directly through his Indriyas or instruments. He feels no strain or burden in discharge of his works now. He is quite at ease.

One such great example of Karma Yoga is Mother Theresa etc.,



BAKTI YOGA

“The grandest idea in the religion of the Vedanta is that we may reach the same goal by different paths, and these paths I have generalized into four – viz. those of work (Karma yoga), love (Bakti yoga), psychology (Meditation) and knowledge (Jnana yoga), --- remember that these divisions are not very marked and quite exclusive of each other. Each blends with the other. But according to the type that prevails, we name the divisions”. S.Vivekananda

Yoga means “link”, “bring together”. A yoga is a method or procedure by which this “linking” is brought about. What are the two that are brought together – the Jivatman (you) and the Paramatman (The Supreme Being). This union between the two brings a sense of oneness of all, one’s attitude changes from one of ego-sense or selfishness which brings separateness, to one of unselfishness (caring and sharing with others). This change makes one egoless and desireless and thereby transforms one from living with attachments to one of non-attachment making the aspirant selfless that is, one does, speaks and thinks without looking forward to rewards such as gains, name and fame, gratitude or even to achieve heaven.

The yoga of deep devotion and true love; for an ideal, of which, the pinnacle is the love of God; is known as Bakti yoga. True love goes above petty, trite confined “small” loves such as love of one’s blood, one’s race, colour, caste, creed and gender. It is all embracing, loving regardless of the above mentioned “small” loves. The diagram below illustrates the flow of love that transcends all.

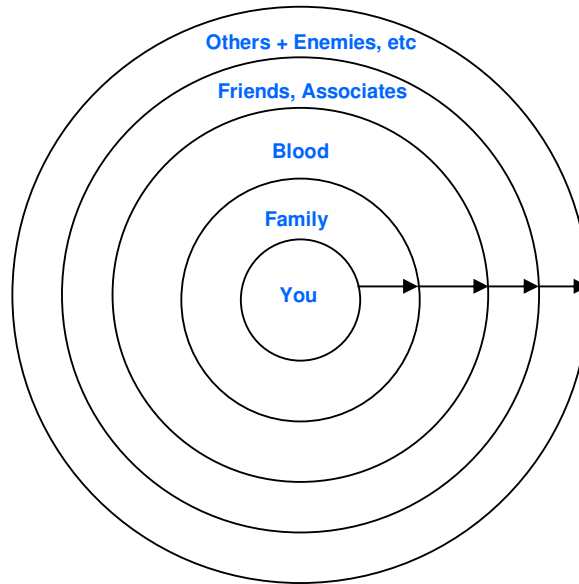
It flows outward from inside you to all the “layers” of relationships loving all equally without the usual bias and prejudices. This is the all powerful TRUE LOVE.



Bakti yoga is a real, genuine search after the heart, a search beginning, continuing and ending in love. Narada says *“Bakti is intense love to God, when a man gets it, he loves all, hates none, he becomes satisfied forever. This love cannot be reduced to any earthly benefit because so long as worldly desires last, that kind of love does not come.”*

Love – continuous flow from yourself into the universe. Commencing with family and flowing outwards towards all. The greatest love is one that treats all equally whether it is family, blood, race, caste, colour, creed or gender.

“Love for external things is an unconscious internal urge to become unified with everything” S. Sivananda.



Bakti yoga is divided into

- (i) Gaini or preparatory
- (ii) Para or the Supreme forms

In the preparatory stage [dvaita or dualistic- here we see God as separate from us] we stand in need of many concrete helps/ props to enable us to get on, and indeed the mythological and symbolical parts help the aspirant God ward. Thus we have in the Vedas the mantra and Brahmana parts which deal with praises of the Lord and rites, rituals and ceremonials respectively. These when performed sincerely and with dedication, in the proper way leads one to the Supreme. Poojas, abisegams and Homams, yajnas when performed properly brings much benefit. In this preparatory stage we worship concrete forms, such as idols of our Ishta Deivam etc to reach the abstract, the Brahman or Atman.

The invisible Atman, the underlying unity in the variety (universe) takes a form eg. Ganesa, Siva, Murugan, Parasakthi, Krsna etc. Together they are known as *karma kanda*. The Ishta Deivam is worshipped in grand ceremonials. The form and name are aids for initiate baktans to conceive the abstract in visible and tangible form. If this sort of worship is done without real faith, devotion and dedication they remain mere acts (not bakti), empty of love. If not done in a honest manner or “frame of mind” it is NOT bakti. This is the stepping stone, we move on to Para Bakti or Supreme Bakti.

The greatest baktan Hanuman of his love for his God (Lord Rama) says:

“When I identify myself with the body, O Lord, I am Thy slave, eternally separate from you. When I identify myself with the soul, I am a spark of that Divine Fire which you are. But when I identify myself with the Atman (Brahman) I and You are One. The union between the Jivatman (you) and the Paramatman[God] is complete.”

“In Bakti Yoga the central secret is to know that the various passions and feelings and emotions in the human heart are not wrong in themselves, only they have to be properly controlled and given higher and higher direction until they attain the highest condition of excellence. The highest direction which takes us to God, every other direction is lower”.
Swami Vivekananda.

Control of these passions, feelings and emotions are achieved through renunciation and non attachment or what is known as vairakiam in Tamil. Your senses are controlled with the help of Pranayama (breathing exercises) and thereby your mind and intellect are brought under control and given higher directions by practicing vivekam (or discrimination) with one pointed urge to know God. “Bakti Yoga is the science of higher love. It shows us how to direct it, it shows us how to control it, how to manage it, how to use it, how to give it a new aim and from it attain the highest – spiritual blessedness.” As this love for God grows all other little loves melt and dry up leaving this Supreme Love – all encompassing eternal.

Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita in the seventh chapter verse sixteen says:

“Four kinds of men worship Me, O Arjuna. They are the distressed, the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of wealth and the wise.”

- (i) **The distressed:** those who suffer from chronic and incurable diseases; whose life are in jeopardy.
- (ii) **The seeker of knowledge:** the enquirer. He is not satisfied with the world. Even after the Mercedes Benz, lands, palace, wife and children he feels a void, an emptiness looking for “something more” than just this meaningless material existence.
- (iii) **The seeker of wealth:** Those who crave for spouse, children, position, money, name and fame.
- (iv) **The wise man:** Those who seek God, their only motive. Your devotion will purify the motive in due course.

Bakti is a profound longing for God. The fulfillment of this longing is to experience Sat-Chit-Anandam state. Ramanaya prescribes eleven ways for development of Bakti.

- (i) **Abhyasa** - practice of continuous remembrance of God through Japa etc.

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| (ii) | Viveka | - | discrimination between what is right and wrong. Right would mean being unselfish. Wrong being selfish or egoistic. |
| (iii) | Vimoka | - | dropping desire for all else except God (The Ideal). Abandon seeking, penn, ponn and porul – only seek God. |
| (iv) | Satyam | - | Truthfulness. |
| (v) | Arjavam | - | straight forwardness, deceitless, guileless. |
| (vi) | Kriya | - | doing good to others. |
| (vii) | Kalyana | - | wishing the well being of others (all). |
| (viii) | Daya | - | compassion. |
| (ix) | Ahimsa | - | non injury of others in thought, word and deeds. |
| (x) | Dana | - | charity – giving. “Whoever offers Me with devotion and a pure mind (heart) a leaf, a flower, a fruit or a little water, I accept this offering.” – Bagavad Gita, Chapter 9, verse 26. |
| (xi) | Anavasada | - | optimism, positive thinking. |

Sri Aurohindo in his book **Upanishads** page 35: “*Unity is the eternal truth of things, diversity a play of the unity. The sense of unity has therefore been termed knowledge (vidya), the sense of diversity – ignorance (avidya)*”.

In the Srimad Bhagavata – Vishnu Puranam nine forms of Expression of Bakti are enunciated.

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| 1. | Sravana | - | hearing of Gods lilas (plays) and songs. |
| 2. | Smarana | - | remembering His name and presence and not engaged in any other thought, speech or deeds. |
| 3. | Padaserana | - | (service at his feet). Service to the world is service to God. |
| 4. | Archana | - | worship of God – pooja etc. in Temple or in one’s house. |
| 5. | Kirtana | - | singing of God’s glories. |
| 6. | Vandana | - | (prostration to the Lord). Purify the heart through surrender of the ego to God through ones one pointed love and devotion. |
| 7. | Dasya | - | be the Lord’s slave, his instrument to serve His creation: serving saints and sages, serving his devotees, serving the sick and poor. |
| 8. | Sakya | - | be a friend of God. Serve His devotees etc. Service to Jiva is to serve Sivam. |
| 9. | Atma-Nivedana- | - | complete surrender. The baktan offers everything to God, including his body, mind and soul. |

Knowing the Lord is in every being, you have to show unswerving love towards all beings. “As a result of this kind of intense all absorbing love comes the feeling of perfect self surrender, the conviction that nothing that happens is against us. All is for the good - *Ellam oon nanmaikku thaana [all is for your good]* – is engendered when we take up Bakti Yoga as our chosen way of life.

Some of the great people who followed the path of Bakti Yoga and their learnings on them are

When this supreme love comes to the heart of man, his mind will continuously think of God and remember nothing else.” - Swami Vivekananda.

Nindrum, irunthum, kidanthum, nadanthum

Ninaipatheyy unnai. – Abiraami Patter.

Namah Sivaya Vaalga

Nathanthaal Vaalga

Immaipoluthum en nenjil

Neengathan thaal vaalga

-Manikavasagar

Appan nee, ammai nee, Iyanum nee

Ippon nee, Immani nee

Immuthum nee

-Thirunavakarasar (Appar)

Though I live – yet not I –

But Christ lives in me.

- St.Paul



YOGA vs. COMPETITION

Should there be yoga competitions at all is an important question that needs to be closely examined. We are living in a highly competitive world. Over-population and scarcity of rewards and awards make competition a necessary evil. Theoretically, competition is to be welcomed if it can be termed as a “healthy competition”. Healthy competition is possible primarily when all participants receive equal opportunities in all significant factors relevant to the competition event.

One key aspect for yoga competitions should be the development of objective-criteria for the items selected for competition. This is not possible at present due to rampant disagreements among almost every concept and practice of yoga.

Does Competition have any role in yoga?

The Sanskrit word competition is Matsarya. According to Indian way of thinking. It is one of the six inborn enemies of man. In other words, Matsarya can breed lust, anger, greed, infatuation and Intoxication like superiority feelings. Development of Matsarya-buddhi, therefore, is not encouraged in India thought as such where in Ego transcendence is to be practiced for spiritual development.

Competition is a part of western thought where “Survival of the Fittest” is the accepted norm for everyone. With the Industrial Revolution as well as Scarcity as the driving force behind Modern Economic Theories. Competition has been accepted as the necessary evil in modern life. A person’s merit is to be measured in terms of his performance in relation with others.

Competition does not have any role in yoga in its true sense. Yet, it is common today to see “Yogasana Competitions” being organized in India than in any other countries of the world. The reasons forwarded by the organizers of these competitions are as below:

- i) To encourage more youngsters to take to the practice of Yogasanas.
- ii) To popularize the practice of yoga among common people.
- iii) To promote the cause of yoga in general, etc.

As a result of these competitions, many youngsters do win championships. However, such championships fail to project the true aims and purpose of yoga education to the general public. Further,

- i) No objective criteria acceptable to yoga institutions of repute have been evolved for these competitions. More often the championships are awarded on the basis of subjective reasons of the organizers.

- ii) A disagreement among yoga institutions and teachers has made standardization of the techniques and basic principles applicable to various items of yoga selected for these competitions.
- iii) These competitions tend to give a totally lop-sided and distorted picture about yoga and its various practices that yoga has become as one of the minor sports and games in the vast physical education and sports field. In fact, on the contrary, yoga by itself has got a very vast field of study yet unknown to even the institutions and teachers working in this area of study. For instance, the prevailing ignorance and neglect of its vast field of literature, partly lost or still perishing, by most of the teachers and institutions in a case in point.
- iv) Yogic competition tend to reduce it to a mere spectator sports status, where the majority watch it and a few performs like cricket, football etc.
- v) Yogic competitions are likely to breed the very psychological attitude yogic science of ancient sages wanted to destroy (namely, egoism, rivalry, aggressiveness, convecting awards and trophies) through genuine yoga education and training.
- vi) It will be interesting for the organizers of yoga competition to ponder why yoga competitions are not being organized of yoga in other countries than India. One reason is that they want to study genuine yoga as far as possible, even by studying the original texts and traditions whereas, in India, yoga is misunderstood as mere Asanas and such other physical juggleries. It is almost indistinguishable from the performance of the circus artists, street performers, gymnasts etc. So a reckless approach to yoga as sports competition can cause more damage to yoga than any good.

As there are many organizations that conduct yoga competitions for various reasons, and their numbers are increasing day by day, perhaps it is too late to put a stoppage to this trend. But in the best interest interest of yoga, at least, some fundamental thinking need to be initiated as as to bring about necessary changes in the conduct of competitions. The minimum requirements are as below:

- i) Develop acceptable and objective criteria for evaluation of competitive performance of various kinds of yogic practices.
- ii) Develop acceptable standardization of the techniques and the basic principles that are to govern the performance of these yogic items with the help of well-established yoga research institutions and experts.
- iii) Have statutory Authorities to control and regulate such competitions.
- iv) Tell and educate the people the difference between yoga performed as sports fit for competitions and the genuine yoga education and training undertaken for physical, mental and spiritual development of man.

From the point of genuine yoga, Yoga competitions can be said to be unnecessary and unwanted. Yet, in the context of modern set-up where competitions are encouraged by all, Yoga competitions need to be inevitable development and prepare ourselves for suitably regulating it in a more favorable / healthier manner from the yogic point of view. However, even such appeals are likely to fall on deaf ears as yoga competitions are being increasingly organized with rather commercial considerations in a market-oriented economy.

YOGA AND MODERN EDUCATION

Like yoga, modern education to keep evolving constantly. Formerly, yoga was taught under the Gurukula system of ancient Indian Education pattern, but today it is gradually adopting modern methods of teaching and communication technologies. Recently, as the educationists become more and more aware about the lacune and short-comings or ills of modern education. Some of them have started looking hopefully towards yoga education as a useful complementary to overcome such problems. Modern yogis too appear to be favorably inclined to ring about a sort of integration between yoga and modern education. The only hitch is on “How to bring about such an integration of yoga into modern education with maximum advantage:

- i) Modern educationists are convinced that yoga somehow can promote the aim of education.
- ii) Scientific studies have shown that yoga can be helpful in promoting health and fitness. So yoga education can be usefully integrated with modern health education.
- iii) Educationists are increasingly becoming aware of the affective Educational Objectives in education; Yoga can also play a significant role in effective education of students.
- iv) Yoga is found t provide strategies for successfully coping with various kinds of life stresses. This aspect can contribute much to the life-long education of students of all age-groups to confront stressful situation in life.

PROBLEMS RELATED TO INTEGRATION OF YOGA IN MODERN EDUCATION

- i) Lack of proper standardization of techniques and concepts of yoga is one of the stumbling blocks in the meaningful integration of yoga in education. Only increasing research, especially on this problem in particular, can bring about a better understanding amongst the institutions and teachers of yoga. Then it will be found easier and more effective for the proper integration of yoga in modern education.
- ii) There are no well-written, objectively presented, and relevant text-books for the use of students of different levels of their education. Text-books need to be written that can be useful, simple and objective by collecting the material available from the research studies carried out so far by different individuals and institutions of repute.
- iii) Yoga need to be integrated in education rather as a boon to the students than an additional burden. It is not necessary to add more and more yoga practices from lower to higher standards in schools, or colleges etc.

selected yoga practices can be appropriated for the use of different types of learners to meet their specific requirements and problems. Coverage of syllabus need not be insisted. Instead, maximum contribution towards the welfare of the learners could be aimed at while selecting various items and contents from a sort of flexible syllabus.

- iv) Integration of yoga into modern education calls for a research-oriented, objective approach than what has been attempted so far. Basically, yoga should be integrated in education to make it a source of relief and blessing to the students than an additional burden. Such integration should strive to present the depth and breadth of yoga science, its long history, vast literature. Its impact on physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of human beings – all presented objectively and insightfully.
- v) Relevance of yoga in modern life is likely to increase many fold with the sort of technological revolutions and the type of problems likely to emerge in future.

LIMITATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES OF YOGA IN MODERN EDUCATION

- i) At present yoga is wrongly clubbed together with physical education though yoga is totally different in almost all respects.
- ii) The institutions and teachers of yoga do not have any professional regulatory body to discuss and regulate their activities. Therefore, they are working with unhealthy attitudes and competitions towards each other for winning superiority over others.
- iii) Lack of objective approach make yoga a difficult subject for meaningful integration with modern education.
- iv) Practically no effort is made by the concerned people to bring about proper understanding among the different groups/ Institutions with regards to this problem.

POSSIBILITIES OF YOGA INTEGRATION IN MODERN EDUCATION

- i) If genuine yogic concepts and practices are properly integrated in the modern education, it can prove to be a great boon to the students and teachers and all others working in the field of education as such.
- ii) It will help promote positive hygiene and health practices if properly imparted as a part of modern education.
- iii) At present there is no appropriate strategies for taking care of the problems related to mental health of the student community as a whole.. Yoga can contribute a great deal in this direction.

- iv) It can possibly help the teachers, students, parents and all others to contribute much more effectively to the quality of education by ensuring abundance of energy, peace and freedom from anxieties, conflicts and frustrations that have been a constant companion of modern education in the Indian context.
- v) The advances made by modern science and technology in the field of educational technology, educational psychology, theories of instruction, various taxonomies on educational objectives, etc. can be most profitably utilized in yoga education too with great profit.
- vi) Educational channel on National T.V. Network, Computer Assisted Training and Multimedia, Stimulators, modern training technology and science etc. can combine together to make the integration of yoga in modern education very smooth, effective and useful one not only for the sake of regular students of educational institutions, but to the interested public at large as well.
- vii) Growing cooperation and mutual understanding in the larger interest of yoga among yoga institutions and teachers can help promote research activities, standardization of techniques, preparation of critically prepared dictionaries of yoga fostering / bridging the communication channels between students and teachers, researchers, institutions and public. It can also lead to preparation of sound and well written textbooks of yoga for the use of learners at different levels of maturity and understanding.

TRADITIONAL METHODS OF YOGA INSTRUCTION

We have very little information about the ways and methods resorted to by the teachers in ancient times for teaching various subjects. However, according to Bhagawad Gita the methods of learning consisted of persistent questioning, showing reverence and doing physical work for the teacher. There were no fixed hours of teaching. There were no examinations and no certificates. Being with the teacher was the best way to learn. The relations between the teacher and the students were free and frank. Often there were arguments between the teacher and the student but this never led to any acrimony. Before any lesson began, the teacher and the student would both pray together that they might derive the best results. The idea was to study together, not to compete with each other. The teacher always knew more than the student but he did not claim that he knew everything. A good teacher always expected that his student should prove his superiority. All learning took place in the residential situation. All education was completely free. Most of the teaching was oral, so this required recitation and cultivation of a good memory. The student not only learned from the content of the lessons but through personal conduct, which was expected to be above reproach.

Teaching of a practical subject involved observation, demonstration and practice on the part of the student and correction of the faults, giving positive suggestions by the teacher. There was also much use of the trial and error method on the part of the student.

Teaching was not a profession but a mission to enlighten innocent young children entrusted to the care of teachers.

Most of the teaching was individualized using instructional method on a one-to-one basis or at the most in a small group.

Today the times have changed. Like other professions teaching has also become a profession. However, the teaching of yoga differs from other forms of teaching. For the first time in history, Yoga has attracted the attention of enormous numbers of people all round the world and we find it necessary to devise different methods of instruction for class work in order to fulfill the needs of so many interested students. Hence we have evolved from our experience some methods of teaching yogic practices to train the maximum number of persons with minimum expenditure of time and effort.

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT YOGA

- i) Yoga is not meant for the ordinary person, the house-holder but is only for a select few.
- ii) Yoga is associated with the idea of the supernatural or linked with miracles.

- iii) Yoga is equated with mysticism, black magic, or various types of mortification.
- iv) Yoga is a system of therapy which can cure all diseases.
- v) Yoga is a system of philosophy dealing with metaphysical theories about the universe.
- vi) Yoga is just a system of exercise.

All these misconceptions indicate that most people are unable to see yoga as a whole concept, but are only aware of a fragment of its potential.

MEANING AND SCOPE OF TEACHING METHODS

Teaching is a part of the educational process which involves the following factors:

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|------|---------------------|---|
| i) | Teaching | - A process involving methods |
| ii) | Learning | - A process of adjustment through action |
| iii) | Teacher | - A person who directs the process |
| iv) | Student | - A person who adjusts himself through the action |
| v) | Subject or Activity | - Content of learning |
| vi) | Environment | - Class or situation in which the whole process is conducted. |

The Terminology

Education is a process of growth, development and adding something new to one's experiences. There are two phases involved in the educational process namely teaching and learning.

Teaching consists of 'Organization and conduct of learning experience ' by the teacher.

Learning is an adjustment of the whole organism by the student to a new situation created by the teacher.

Teacher is a person who stimulates learning in the student by organizing and guiding certain experiences of the individuals under his leadership. He is essentially an educator who 'leads out' all that is best in the student.

Student is a person who desirous of adjusting his whole organization to a new situation organized and guided by the teacher.

Methods are techniques or procedures used by the teacher through which an interaction between teacher and student takes places.

The Scope of Teaching – Learning

The purpose of teaching is to induce change in the student. There can be no teaching unless learning takes place. The teacher merely arranges the environment for learning and stimulates and guides the students' activity in that environment. It is the student who learns and each student has to do his own learning. Teaching servers to bring the student into a learning environment and enhance the efficiency of the learning process.

Teaching is a science in the sense that it involves logical and systematic arrangement based on certain principles. Teaching is also an art, meaning that it cannot be reduced to a formula. Teaching as an art requires sensitivity to factors affecting the student and his environment for learning and which must be suitably modified according to his needs.

The whole educational process involving teaching-learning centers round the most important factor – the student.

Methods of Teaching

During the process of teaching several methods have been tried over many years and we find that they fall into two main categories:

- i) Instructional methods used in the classroom for teaching theoretical subjects.
- ii) Methods used for teaching practical skill on the fields or in gymnasiums.

The classroom methods are variously named the lecture method, the recitation method, the project method, the laboratory method, the dramatic method and the group discussion method. The methods for teaching skills or physical activities, however, have not been properly categorized. Each method used in the classroom situation has many implications for teaching physical activities and skills, but they cannot be directly applied to teaching physical activities and skills. Even in respect of classroom teaching, no single method or pattern could serve as the best method for all teaching situations. The method of teaching yogic practices comes closer to that of physical activities rather than theoretical subjects.

Traditionally, there have been two approaches towards successful teaching: the first is a teacher-centered approach and the second a student-centered approach.

The teacher-centered approach was the main method in the past, even in Yoga. But today scientific thought focuses its attention on and emphasizes the student-centered approach. So naturally, the principles and concepts which underlie the methods are expected to involve this student-centered approach, the main emphasis of which is due consideration of the needs of the students.

Methods of teaching must be compatible with the goals sought or the outcomes expected. The purpose of any method is to create learning in the student. The teacher should know how a particular method he uses affects the student's learning ability. The following are some of the basic methods of teaching:

Lecture Methods

It is perhaps the oldest method used for formal teaching. It is valuable in organizing large fields on material, separating a particular type of information for immediate use, presenting new information and synthesizing information from a wide variety of sources.

It is more useful with mature students having a high degree of auditory perception since it involves problems of attention, voice level, clarity, use of rest period and vocabulary level.

The lecture has considerable use in teaching yogic practices. It may be used in presenting any type of information related to particular activity in the perspective of yoga in general. When extensive lecture is necessary for the achievement of a specific goal, the students should be able to hear the teacher clearly. A lecture can be stimulating interesting and motivating to the students if the teacher prepares it properly.

The lecture method proves of greater advantage when combined with other methods. The use of visual materials is of considerable help in aiding students to retain the content of the lecture.

When using the lecture method the teacher should also be aware of the limitations of this method, which may be mentioned as follows:

- i) It is a teacher-centered activity and may encourage lack of participation on the part of the students.
- ii) Many student lack ability to learn by this method.
- iii) It may lead teachers to ignore more effective methods.
- iv) The attention span of more immature students is too short to benefit from a long lecture.

Response-to-Instruction Method

In this method the teacher gives precise instructions which precede, follow or are concurrent with a demonstration and all students respond to the instructions of the teacher in the same way.

There is very little attention paid to the individuals. The emphasis is on the subject matter of activity that is introduced. This method has a formal approach. An information approach with this method is more favourable in teaching such activities where there is some variation in the performance of individuals. This method can be profitably used after due attention to problems of individuals.

Individualized Instructional Method

It is based on the principle that learning is highly individualized. In this method attempts are made to provide by different means for individual differences within the pattern of the group structure.

Directed-Practice Method

Assignments for extra practice of selected yogic practices out of class hours enhance skill and performance levels of the students. Necessary introduction along with the preliminary practice of selected yogic exercises like Sirasasana, Uddiyana, Kapalabhati, Nauli, Purificatory processes etc. may be done in the class and the efficiency could be developed through out-of-class practice. The students should be encouraged to do out-of-class practice and the teacher may check the results during subsequent classes and give additional suggestions for further practice. Obviously, the success of this method depends upon motivation of the students and their rapport with the teacher.

Project Method

The aim of this method is to enable the students to put into practice what they have learned in the class. It may also be of help for students to learn related information. When the time is short in the regular schedule the projects such as preparing note-books on the yogic practices undergone, collection of related material from various sources, preparing models and the exhibits of the yogic practices, planned observations of seminars, conferences, competitions related to yogic activities as well as visits to different well-known yoga centers represent valuable help to teaching under this method.

Demonstration Method

Demonstration refers to non-competitive type performances with emphasis on skill and form. Demonstrations are of value, if properly directed to both performer and viewer. The Demonstration method describes the organization of the teaching of the class with the sole purpose of public demonstration when concluded. Demonstration method as a technique for the use of the class has some disadvantages. The scope of learning is restricted. It utilizes existing talent rather than developing new skills. However, the demonstration method serves as an excellent group method.

Unfortunately, there appears to be no simple formula for selecting the best methods. This depends on the conditions available, such as time, space and equipment. The teacher should have the skill to use a particular method and adapt it to prevailing conditions so that the students receive proper orientation and understanding of the technique and purpose of the method. In other words, a method should always be considered as a means to an end and not the end in itself. The method should allow for individual differences and in itself. The method should allow for individual differences and stimulate both creativity and independent thinking in the students. In Yoga, the teaching method has to be eclectic, drawing upon useful vital contributions from several exiting methods.

Factors Influencing the Method

The following factors govern the selection of particular method or combination of methods:

Content

We have already seen that the method of teaching depends upon the nature of the subject and that the practical subject requires a different method from the theoretical subject. Even different practical skills require different methods. We know also that the method of teaching skills in Physical Education comes closer to the teaching of yogic practices due to the similarity of content.

Previous Background and Experience of the Student

The method of teaching differs according to the previous experience of the students. Progressive skills cannot be taught to those who have not already mastered basic skills. The teacher can save time and energy by enquiring about students' previous experience in the skill to be learned.

The Teacher

Efficiency of method depends on the teacher who uses it. Method itself is neither good nor bad. It turns out to be good in the hands of an able teacher. The teacher does influence the method selected. The teachers have the following qualities which are all reflected through the chosen method:

- i) A genuine interest in communication.
- ii) Love of the work of teaching.
- iii) A willingness to share interest and experiences with others.
- iv) An ability to put him or herself in the position of the student.
- v) The capacity for understanding expressed in an open, authentic way without blaming or condemning the students.
- vi) An attractive personality.
- vii) The ability to set a good example through lifestyle and behavior.
- viii) A sense of professional responsibility towards the students.
- ix) A pleasant, yet commanding voice.
- x) The awareness that, "The person in the teacher is more important than the method".

Suitable modifications in the method depending upon the needs of student and the time framework are possible only when the teacher is conscious of the situation he is handling.

The art of teaching on the part of the teacher depends on the suitable modifications in the teaching method routinely used.

Facilities

Availability of facilities greatly influences the teaching method. It becomes more efficient with the necessary facilities. In the absence of required facilities the teacher sometimes feels insecure, tense and is unable to give of his or her best. These facilities could be in the form of an adequate space, necessary equipment and congenial atmosphere. For example, if there is no hall for teaching Asanas and the class is required to be conducted on the open ground, the teacher will face the problem of introducing Asanas in the lying position. If there are no water facilities available, purificatory processes or kriyas will have limitations for teaching. If the atmosphere is noisy, introduction of meditation techniques will be found difficult.

Scientific Principles

An effective teaching method depends on the knowledge of important principles of anatomy, physiology, psychology, pedagogy and yoga so that the teacher may be flexible in modifying the method. These principles also provide sound base for selection and formulation of methods.

SOURCES OF TEACHING METHODS

The teacher should be well acquainted with the variety of important principles drawn from education, yogic discipline, psychology of learning, anatomy and physiology in order to formulate good teaching methods.

Yogic Principles

- i) Yogic practices are not 'exercises' as we understand the exercise. The exercise is generally applied to vigorous physical movements. Since Yogic practices do not involve vigorous movements any kind of violent action should be avoided during yoga practice.
- ii) The nature of yogic practices is varied and involves different mechanisms through which the results of particular yogic practices are obtained. The Asana, Pranayama, Bandhas, Mudras, kriyas and Meditation do not use the same channels for bringing the result of the practices.
- iii) Asana – one of the most important and best known of the yogic practices-are 'static stretching procedures'. They should be performed slowly and smoothly in order to influence the tonic system rather than the phasic one.
- iv) The position in a particular asana should be comfortably maintained for some time with least effort. Effortless performance and relaxing as much as possible during the final position are the chief characteristics of the technique of Asanas.
- v) Pranayamic practices are very different in purpose and technique from the 'Breathing exercises'. They are supposed to increase oxygen uptake. However, they are considered of little value in the literature of Physical Education.
- vi) Yogic practices should not lead to undue fatigue. If there is fatigue it should be overcome by the practice of relaxation in Shavasana.
- vii) All yogic practices should be performed according to one's own capacity and without competition with others.
- viii) All yogic practices should lead to peace of mind.
- ix) Any yogic routine should begin with psycho-physical relaxation, centering one's attention as one would in prayer, or actual recitation of some prayers.

Psychological Principles

- i) Interest is the best motivation for learning. The teacher should teach in such a way that students maintain their interest and motivation to learn.
- ii) Activity is necessary for learning. Learning is a process of experience. Unless the student is involved in the experience of activity he/she may not

be able to learn. Therefore practice is essential, especially for motor-learning or skill-learning. Again it is not mere practice but the correct practice that is important. Complex motor skills require more repetitions of correct practice.

- iii) All learning has a neural basis. Unless proper neuromuscular coordination is formed one cannot expect further developments in any motor skills.
- iv) For efficient learning the material to be learnt must be within the range of experience and abilities of the learner. Learning is highly individualized and results in progressive changes in behavior. The ability to learn depends upon the innate capacity and previous experiences of the student. All individuals do not learn at the same rate.
- v) Learning of motor skills is hastened if the performer is able to grasp an intellectual understanding of the nature of the task before beginning the practice.
- vi) Regular practice of an activity resulting in pleasure and satisfaction contributes to the most effective learning.
- vii) Occasional short periods of rest between the practice periods produce superior results in learning motor skills. Brief rest period prevent fatigue in the muscles and efficiency of the muscles is not decreased.

Anatomico-Physiological Principles

1. Age and Sex are the two important factors determining the anatomico-physiological conditions which need to be considered in the teaching-learning process of motor activities. There are anatomical differences between the male and the female. One of the main differences to be taken into account is the structure. Women are considered to be weaker in structure generally than men. This means that both bones and ankles are not as strong and their bodies have more fatty tissue. The male body is composed of 41.8% of the body weight of muscle, while the female body has 35.8%. The distribution of fatty tissue is 18.2% of the body weight in males and 28.2% in females. Hence this gives men more muscular strength than women.
2. The muscle strength is proportionate to the amount of fat to muscle tissue. The more fat there is obviously the less efficient are the muscles. Reduction in the fat therefore, contributes to building of muscle strength.
3. The abdominal wall can also be weaker in women from a mechanical point of view. Women's abdominal organs are not firmly situated and the abdominal tone is often lost through childbirth, miscarriages or other reproductive problems.
4. There are differences also in the proportions of the different segments of the spinal column. Specially in the lumbar region which affects performance of physical movements. The shorter lumbar and thoracic

regions in the female sometimes produce a more pronounced shortening of lower back muscles resulting in lordosis. The lumbo-sacral angle is also different: 138 in female and 133 in male.

5. The tone of the muscles influences to a considerable extent the posture and functions of the bodily organs of an individual. Muscle tone is a sort of sustained contraction of the muscle fibres. Cultivation of improved muscle tone implies relaxation of undue tensions as well as increase of tone of habitually slack muscles. It is accompanied by an increased awareness of the entire body. One becomes aware of undue tensions in the body and learns to relax more and more when one is attempting to regain proper tone. Improvement of muscle tone brings corresponding improvement in equilibrium, circulation and neuroglandular activity. Static stretching of the muscles contributes to the proper development of muscle tone.
6. Abdominal muscles pay an important role in holding the abdominal viscera in place. The tone of the abdominal muscles governs the efficient functioning of the organs situated in the abdominal cavity.
7. Muscle efficiency is lost during long periods of inactivity, especially, if the activity is caused by illness. Under such circumstances any physical activities demanding exertion should be introduced slowly and cautiously.
8. Fatigue is not confined exclusively to the particular muscles exercised. But it spreads through the body as a whole to some degree. Hence to remove the fatigue relaxation of the whole body is desirable.
9. The equilibrium of the body involves muscular co-ordination and proper functioning of the semicircular canals of the internal ears, the eyes, the receptors in the skin and nerve endings in muscles and ligaments around joints.
10. Minimum expenditure of energy is the criterion of simplicity and efficiency in any activity. Vigorous movements consume more energy, while static activities consume less energy.
11. The theory and practice of warming up needs consideration when one engages in vigorous, dynamic and jerky activities. It is not relevant in static activity.
12. The centre of gravity in female bodies is lower than in males. This should be taken into consideration in practices involving stability and balance.

Educational Principles

1. Learning depends upon impressions received by the necessary receptors. Five senses represent the avenues of learning. Therefore the presentation of a specific practice or skill should involve as many senses as possible to form an adequate image of the practice.

However, the most important cues in practice come from audio-visual aids. Motor learning is perceptual, cognitive, rational, thoughtful and involves mental as well as physical aspects of learning. The ideas must be translated into muscular action.

There are individual differences in effectively utilizing various kinds of sensory information. Some individuals have remarkable ability to organize visually presented information quickly. Others synthesis information and analyses the situation, hence appear to respond more slowly.

Visual demonstration of the practice is one of the most effective way to enhance the learning of a motor skill. However, the learning is hastened if the student is able to grasp an intellectual understanding of the nature of the task before the beginning of the practice and is given sometime to integrate the initial cues from observing the demonstration and listening to instructions. Brief, clear descriptions of the activity with repeated demonstrations and pointing out likely faults bring good results.

2. At the preliminary stages, 'Over learning' through repeated practice is necessary. The emphasis should be on aiming at right or correct practice. This can be done by specific instructions.

Instructions may also be divided into those offered before the performance of the activity, those which accompany performance and those by way of information or corrections at the end of the performance of the activity.

Formal instructions are best suited during the initial phases of the learning process. Initial instructions prevent the student from adopting incorrect habits that might later have to be unlearned.

Students should be instructed in the positive way of performing the activity rather than being informed initially what to avoid. However, best performance comes when individuals are informed both what to do and what to avoid.

This helps in learning the activity by eliminating possible errors as well as increasing such positive aspects as ease, comfort, efficiency, lowering of tension during performance and speed in some respects.

3. Adequate time should be allotted for actual practice without which learning cannot be effective. The practice period should be divided into informal practice and supervised practice in a group.
4. The 'Principle of Progression' is vital to learning. It means performance of any activity from "simple to complex" and from "known to unknown". This principle rests upon a sound neuro-muscular basis. Complex motor learning requires an order of pre-requisites, a background of specific attainments. The learning of co-ordinated movement patterns is dependent upon the possession of sufficient amount of fundamental physical abilities

such as muscular strength, flexibility, muscular endurance and cardio-respiratory endurance. This obvious relationship is sometimes ignored, but effective learning is possible only when this relationship is kept in mind. The whole programme of activities should therefore be planned and conducted in the light of the principle of progression.

5. Effective learning takes place through the use of the Whole Method, Part Method or a combination of Whole and Part Methods. The combination method is also called Progressive Part Method or Repetitive Part or Continuous Part Method. The use of any of these methods depends on the degree of complexity of the activity.
 - a) The Whole Method consists in presenting the activity in its entirety without any division. If the activity to be learnt is not complex and the learner is mature, the whole method is suitable.
 - b) The Part Method is based on analysis of the purpose and of identifying a logical sequence of parts for presentation from simple to complex. The part method is better if the student is immature and/or the activity complex.
 - c) Progressive Part Method is more often used than the part method. In this method a part is learned, paired with the second part and the two practiced together. Then the third part is practiced and three parts practiced as a whole until the entire activity is constructed.

Methods of presentation may stress formal instructions or informal suggestions. But the fundamental basis of all methods is the nature and need of the students, including their individual and group characteristics in learning. The nature of educational objectives and the type of activities used in the programme also dictate the choice of methods.

6. The teacher's interest and attitude towards the students determines to great extent adequate learning. There is a need on the part of the teacher to inspire the student to accurate and satisfactory performance. If the student is not performing correctly he should be shown the points where he/she makes mistakes in a positive way that encourages self-correction.
7. Learning does not take place unless there is some way for the performer to assess his/her relative success or failure. Although it is necessary to correct faulty performance, too many corrections at a time can confuse. The teacher should correct the most important fault first. Most corrections should be in the form of positive suggestions.
8. Immediately after the ideal demonstration of the activity the opportunity to try out and practice the activity should be provided for the students.

9. The teacher should encourage students to ask any questions related to the activity, listen to what each person has to say and try to understand his problem. Never discourage or ridicule even a trifling question. It may add to new thinking on the part of the teacher. Give a suitable answer to his satisfaction and/or use the question to open a discussion in the class as a whole if necessary.

Sociological Principles

1. Utility Value

The idea of utility need not necessarily be interpreted in the light of activities involved in earning a living alone. Many activities and experiences are of real practical use in helping the person to live happily and successfully that are not of any immediate vocational significance. Yogic practices may not necessarily be of vocational value but they are certainly of immediate practical use for a person of any age and sex in maintaining good health and physical fitness together

CLASS MANAGEMENT

Students rarely cause trouble when they are interested and when suitable lesson content is presented in a competent and stimulating fashion. One essential thing in reducing the problem of control to a minimum is to create an atmosphere of natural freedom, friendliness, mutual help and understanding. These qualities in a class should emanate from the leadership of the teacher. This develops social consciousness in students and an awareness of their responsibility to the group.

The students or participants of Yoga may be grouped under the following headings:

- Beginners
 - Experienced and advanced
 - School children
 - Special attention Groups
- a) Beginners Group. This group may involve persons of all ages, males and females, young and old and special individuals who are making their first acquaintance with yoga. They need a general background of yogic discipline and motivation to continue with yoga.
 - b) Experienced or Advanced Group. This group may consist of persons who have some experience with yoga and wish to advance further to gain more varied and deeper experience. Their expectation is to acquaint themselves with a greater number of yogic practices and indulge in subtler and higher practices intensively.
 - c) School Children. This is a select group ranging from the age of 6 years to 18 years and commands largest percentage of the society. School children need exposure to the field of yoga based on their immediate needs of their age and temperament.
 - d) Special Attention Groups. These individuals can vary on the basis of age like children and adults; on the basis of sex like males and females; on the basis of age and sex like boys and girls; on the basis of individual problems of health, abnormality or handicaps. All these individuals need special attention which is possible in a homogeneous group but not in a heterogeneous group.

Dealing with Difficult Students

The following techniques are useful in dealing with inattentive, talkative or difficult students.

1. Individual students who are disturbing the class may have their attention directed by pausing during instruction, glancing in the direction of the particular student, calling his or her name and asking a question, or if the disturbance is troubling the rest of the class, it should also be pointed out that they are preventing others who are paying attention and working well from hearing the instructions. Alternately, the class can be switched to another activity.
2. It may help to separate people who talk perpetually but if these students continue to cause disturbance after a few warnings, they should be sent out of the class for a short period. However, it is important to bring the person back soon in the class and to let him or her know that improved behaviour is expected.

In addition, the teacher will have more control if he or she avoids being too familiar with older students. Be friendly but maintain your dignity and social distance. Remember that you are their teacher.

Also never allow yourself to become antagonistic towards a student. Your effectiveness in helping him will depend upon your patience and understanding.

Seating Arrangement

The organisation of the class may have any suitable form of seating either in lines, rows, a semi-circle or small circle. Consider that each student needs about 40 square feet and arrange your room accordingly. (see Fig.1).

It is preferable if the floor is covered with a carpet but if this is not possible the floor should be clean and each student should use his own mat. In either case it is desirable that the mat or carpet is covered by a clean sheet of cloth of 6 feet x 3 feet.

The seat of the teacher should be such that the teacher is visible to every student. If the group is large a platform is necessary for the teacher to be visible. In a small group a semi-circle is more suitable as it allows every student to see the teacher clearly. When a platform is used, a revolving one is ideal.

The hall or room where the class is conducted should be well ventilated. It should be well lit so that not only is the class able to see the teacher but the teacher should have a clear view of the class when he is teaching from the platform and while moving about for teaching and answering questions.

The practice room or hall should be as quiet as possible and free from any disturbance.

Instructions

Learning of a particular yoga practice depends upon precise instructions by the teacher. Formal instructions are best suited during the initial stage of learning the practice. Instructions could be divided into those that are given verbally before the beginning of the yogic practice, those which accompany performance of the activity individually or by the group and those that are extended by way of information or corrections after the completion of the activity. Initial instructions prevent the student from adopting incorrect habits which might have to be unlearned later. Practical instructions guide the students for correct and efficient performance.

The following guidelines can help the teacher convey instructions clearly:

- i) Be sure that you have the attention of everyone in the class before any instructions are given.
- ii) When a long explanation is needed it is best to have the class sit down and if necessary closer to the teacher.
- iii) Make your instructions brief, perfectly clear and spoken slowly and distinctly.
- iv) The instructions should be given for only one thing at a time.
- v) Try to use different words and expressions to catch the attention of the students. For example, if students do not understand the first time, use different words in repeating the instructions.
- vi) Describe the technique and procedure of any activity before the students are actually asked to practice.

The Audio-Visual Aids

The progress of science in various fields has developed techniques that have made knowledge widely available. These radically alter our systems of communication. The use of computers, for example, has reduced the need for man-power in the area of teaching. Several groups of students in different locations can be served from a single source which can show the same programme to many different groups. There are many revolutionary possibilities opening up the field of communication through such media as television, video, satellite etc. This is a new phase in our history and these media have immense possibilities for teaching an enormous number of people.

Although sophisticated audio-visual aids are not always within the reach of the teacher, it is necessary to realize the importance of these aids in the learning process. A teaching aid provides quick information about the subject matter to the students. It gives the teacher a

better opportunity of conveying the meaning of what he is saying. It helps the students at all levels to grasp the important points in a class situation. It helps to make the lesson interesting and students are more receptive. Hence it is a very important aspect of teaching method. The response of the students is the best way to judge whether the aid is effective or not, but even if the teacher cannot tell this in advance he should, nevertheless, know the basic principles of preparing and using the aids.

The various teaching aids which are mostly used include backboards, bulletin boards, pictures of all kinds diagrams, sketches, drawings, charts, models, projected devices such as filmstrips, slides, motion pictures and recordings, video-cassettes and television.

Visual demonstration is one of the most effective aids to enhance the learning of a motor activity. There is individual difference related to the manner in which various kinds of sensory information are effectively used by the students. Some students have remarkable ability to quickly organize visually presented information. It is desirable that the teacher himself should give the demonstration of a particular yoga practice. The teacher can communicate with his students better through the demonstration staged by him. At the same time he should verbally explain clearly the fundamental principles underlying the yoga practice. Any practice by the students must be preceded by visual demonstration to be effective.

Discussion

A small question-answer session is very helpful at the end of the lesson to evaluate the outcome and remove any difficulties on the part of the students.

The following hints will be useful in conducting a question-answer or discussion session.

- i) Encourage the students to ask their questions or address their comments to the group for discussion.
- ii) Never discourage or ridicule any student's question or contribution whatever small it may be.
- iii) Try to draw all students into discussion rather than a few who are always ready to talk.
- iv) It is wise to limit the discussion to a few important points.
- v) The teacher is expected to know more than the students on the points of discussion. If the teacher is not prepared to answer any question or does not know any point he should not hesitate to say so, and should say that he will find out the answer and explain that at the next meeting.
- vi) Remember that young children are not mature enough to participate in a group discussion so a different approach is necessary in encouraging them to share their experience.

- vii) Exercise some control over the time spent on questions. Steer the discussion to important and relevant questions. Do not sacrifice valuable time on those points that are not important.

Extra-Class Practice

Once the yoga practice is introduced and techniques explained to the students, it is desirable that they are encouraged to practice on their own at home. All kinds of motivation for the practice at home should be given and they should be assured of all help for correction, modification, improvement from the teacher when they meet next.

LESSION PLANNING

We have seen earlier that the purpose of teaching is to cause desirable change in the student. Successful planning is necessary on the part of a teacher in order to fulfil this purpose. A plan of each lesson should therefore be prepared.

The advantages of a written lesson plan are:

- i) It helps the teacher to organize his thinking.
- ii) It increases the teacher's confidence and prevents him or her from losing direction during the lesson.
- iii) It helps the teacher to keep the teaching procedure and objectives in minds.
- iv) It ensures availability to necessary materials and saves last minute rush to provide adequate arrangements and anxiety caused by such a situation.
- v) It serves as a aid for future plans.

Essentials of a Good Lesson Plan

- 1) It should be prepared shortly before use.
- 2) It should be specific and detailed.
- 3) It should take cognizance of individual differences.
- 4) It should include (a) statement of objectives of the lesson; (b) statement of activities and experiences with instructional points; (c) a list of materials needed; (d) description of method and procedures to be used; (e) provisions for linking previous and future plans; (f) provisions for comments by the teacher after the lesson.

Whatever the type of method selected for teaching it should be compatible with the purpose or desired outcome and the best among available methods to bring the desired outcome. It should be adapted to the activity to be taught. It should also be feasible taking into consideration time, space and equipment available. The teacher should have the skill to use a particular method. Proper orientation and understanding of the technique and purpose of the method should be given to the students.

The immediate goal of any yogic lesson is to introduce a particular yoga practice and its correct technique and give the feel of that practice of the participants of the lesson so that they are motivated to continue further practice and derive maximum benefits. In order to attain these objectives the yogic lesson should be properly planned and executed.

Here are some guidelines for conducting yoga lessons successfully

1. *Setting the Atmosphere.* A yoga class should begin with a calm and quiet atmosphere. It may start with a short prayer or with a prayerful mood. As far as possible some meditative pose may be recommended for this purpose. The students are asked to take their seats in a suitable formation. The quiet sitting or prayerful mood creates suitable internal environment in the students conducive to the yoga lesson.
2. *Introduction to the Practice.* The main part of the lesson starts with the introduction of the yoga practice. This introductory part may be divided into two sections. The first part may be devoted to verbal instructions with the back-ground of the practice containing as much information about the practice as possible. This part is specially intended to create interest and motivation among the students. Depending upon the knowledge of the teacher about the practice and his/her skill in presenting the information, the teacher can make this more interesting and motivating.
3. *Demonstrating Practice.* The second part may be devoted to the ideal demonstration of the yoga practice as a whole. Although it is possible to take the help of Audio-visual aids like pictures, sketches, filmstrips etc., it is more impressive, practical and desirable that the demonstration is staged by the teacher himself. As far as possible this demonstration should be most efficient, faultless and complete so that an overall image of the practice is presented to the students. As compared to the presentation of a particular yoga practice through an audio-visual means, when the teacher himself demonstrates the practice the students can relate personally to the teacher and identify more closely with the practices shown. There is more appreciation and respect for the teacher generated through live demonstration.
4. *Analysing the Practice.* The whole demonstration of the yoga practice may be useful in forming an overall general picture. But it may not be enough to get into the detailed stages of the technique which requires analysis of that practice. The insight into the proper technique is gained only by analysing the practice is more essential when the technique is difficult. When the practice is simple a demonstration as a whole would be sufficient and the analysis may not be necessary. When the practice is analysed and demonstrated in parts, it is desirable to supplement it with a brief and clear description about the technique, bringing to the notice of the students salient points of the practice. These salient points should include hints about do's and don'ts.
5. *Students' Individual Practice Time.* When students see a technique demonstrated, they naturally want to try it out themselves. So allot some time for the students to try it on their own individually and to find out for

the students to try it on their own individually and to find out for themselves how successfully they are able to practice it.

While students are practicing the teacher should watch their performance and find out their difficulties, mistakes and deviations from the correct and ideal performance of the practice. He should correct the most obvious mistakes of those students who are practicing in a way that is detrimental to them and then point out common mistakes that are committed generally. A repeat demonstration of the practice as a whole and in parts should be given to ensure that the point of the corrections has been understood by everyone.

6. *Group Practice.* After getting the feel of the practice and becoming conversant with the technique the teacher may ask the whole group of students to perform the practice together under the guidance of the teacher in a formal manner. Collective participation in the group will give an idea to the individual about his performance in relation to the performance of others.
7. *Correcting Mistakes.* Performance in the group by the students helps the teacher to locate any performance that has deviated from normal and which needs correction. This saves the time of the teacher in checking every individual's performance. He can concentrate on the particular students who are not performing the technique properly. He can suggest necessary modifications in the performance of the students or suggest some lead-up practices in case of particular individuals, if necessary. Yoga practices being essentially individualistic, when they are performed by the group, individual capacities should be taken into consideration.
8. *Giving Instructions.* In the group practice when directions are used, it should be remembered that their purpose is to suggest different stages of practice to be undergone in succession by the group. The commands or instructions should, therefore, have a very slow rhythm so that the jerky motions in response to brisk instructions are avoided and due respect is given to the individual capacities. The emphasis should be on an informal way of performance rather than a formal one.
9. *Repeat Demonstration.* The performance of the yoga practice by the group should be followed by pointing out the lacunae still remaining in the performance of some individuals, suggesting proper corrections and avoiding the mistakes committed by the individuals and elaborating on some points which need clarification or explanation.
10. *Repeat Practice.* The group should then repeat the practice of the technique.
11. *Repeat Demonstration.* The teacher should demonstrate and clarify the main points again.

12. *Rest Periods.* After the group practice is over the students may be given rest in the form of Shavasana-the yogic way of relaxation.

When more than one yoga practice is introduced, it is desirable that Shavasana is practised at the end of the lesson and sometimes even after some yoga practices during the lesson, if necessary.

Before the end of the lesson the teacher would do well to sum up points considered as important for the correct and efficient performance of yoga practices. He could also induce students to ask any questions related to the practice so that there is a good imprint the introduced yoga practice on the memory of the students.

To sum up the precise steps in the conduct of a yogic lesson, the whole process includes –

1. Creating an environment suitable for the lesson by a prayer or prayerful mood.
2. Establish the concept of yoga practice by verbal introduction.
3. Giving the complete picture of the yoga practice through whole demonstration.
4. Analysing the whole performance into suitable parts or stages.
5. Allotting time for getting the feel of the practice by individuals.
6. Group practice under the guidance and supervision of the teacher.
7. Detection and correction of the mistakes in the performance.
8. Giving instructions with emphasis on the salient points analysing the performance again.
9. Giving complete demonstration with clear explanation of the various stages involved in the practice.
10. Again practice by the group.
11. Again providing complete picture of the whole practice by demonstration, discussion, modifications when necessary, lead up practices for weaker students.
12. Giving complete rest in Shavasana at the end.

Success of the teacher lies in how best he utilizes the above steps in his lesson, Remember, “Teaching is what you make it”.

The above mentioned ideas or considerations relate to the yoga lesson where new practice is introduced. But a yoga lesson could also be a practice session. Previously introduced practices are undergone during such a lesson. There would obviously be some different between the two types of yoga lesson. The main purpose of the first type of lesson would be to teach new practice with all details of its technique. The second type, on the other hand emphasizes the continuing practice of those techniques already learnt, so that the

original techniques are not forgotten and their appropriate health benefits are derived. In the practice type of yoga lesson.

- i) There are groups of yogic practices undergone.
- ii) The practices are meaningfully chosen from amongst the known techniques.
- iii) There is some sequence based on the principle of progression.
- iv) As far as possible variety of the groups of yogic practices are chosen for giving maximum benefits through stretching's, relaxation, breathing techniques and meditation.

The practice lesson should also follow the pattern given earlier, where the lesson begins with a calm and quiet mood and ends with general relaxation with Shavasana or meditation, so that the ultimate experience is given to the participants in the lesson.

A yoga lesson could be also a mixture of the above two types. After having conducted a practice lesson for some time, the teacher could switch to the introduction of the new practice along a similar pattern to the one discussed earlier.

Emphasis in advanced groups in practice session could be on a meditative mood throughout the lesson or more time could be devoted to practice of meditation at the end.

Some Hints for Conducting a Lesson on Meditation

“Meditation is a mental device that limits stimulus input by directing attention to a single unchanging or repetitive stimulus”. Throughout recorded history it has been used to alter state of consciousness. It forms a part of religious practices. Recently Meditation has been used for therapeutic purposes rather than as a religious practice. Meditation can be used as a noncultic practice.

The technique of Meditation is related to the biofeedback techniques and to the relaxation methods.

Characteristics of Meditation

1. During meditation one gets profound rest for the body and mind, Oxygen consumption can be lowered during 20-30 minutes of meditation to a degree which can be reached after 6-7 hours of sleep.
2. Heart and respiratory rates typically decrease.
3. There is a shift to parasympathetic dominance.
4. There is a lowering of anxiety at this time.
5. During Meditation EEG shows an alert-drowsy pattern with high alphas and occasional theta wave patterns as well as unusual pattern of swift shifts from alpha to slower (more sleep-like) frequencies and then back again.

6. Medication has been physiologically termed as ‘wakeful, hypometabolic state’.
7. When practiced regularly it appears that Meditation alters behavior suggesting number of beneficial changes.

Cautions

Meditation has its limitations. All persons cannot practice meditation even for 20 to 30 minutes. Overdose of meditation for such persons can be dangerous. The theory of “More the better” cannot be applied here.

Release of certain emotions that is difficult to handle may occur with prolonged meditation. In a person with an adverse psychiatric history, the beginning of meditation has been known to precipitate psychotic episodes. Even in relatively stable people, it is probably unwise to introduce prolonged sessions of meditation. To avoid such difficulties meditation should be practiced in moderation. It would be beneficial to start the practice of meditation after some amount of practice in stretching like Asanas, rhythmic breathing like Pranayama and relaxative technique like Shavasana.

It is doubtful whether meditation can really be ever taught effectively. In fact the state of meditation results out of the background prepared through variety of means contributing to a “meditative mood” which lasts not too long.

The Method of Teaching Meditation

The method of teaching meditation, therefore, requires creating an atmosphere of tranquility through pleasant voice and simple techniques leading to a meditative mood. All the yogic practices contribute to the building up of the meditative mood. Rather than introducing mechanical technique of meditation the participants be brought to “meditative mood” and left there for a comfortable time, the time being determined by the individual according to his capacity.

It is therefore, desirable that meditation should be introduced along with the group of yogic practices rather than as an isolated technique, so that it becomes more beneficial and less harmful. It should be remembered that in the hierarchy of yogic practices meditation occupies a higher position than other practices. However, all yogic practices are complementary to each other and each practice contributes to similar effects on a greater or a lesser scale. Stable, comfortable and erect sitting with head, neck and trunk in a vertical line and regulated breathing facilitates the practice of meditation.

Self Evaluation by the Teacher

When the teacher continually teaches the same activities in the same manner the teaching loses its interest within a very short time.