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HEALTHY MIND IN HEALTHY BODY

“One who is moderate in his diet, activities, exercise and duty, one whose periods of sleep and wakefulness are moderate, Yoga drives away his ailments.”

Body and mind are two parts of a whole. If mind is happy, we do our work actively and energetically. If the body is healthy, the mind also remains radiant, alert and enthusiastic. The Yoga school of thought tells us how to facilitate the body - mind functioning so that one may enjoy happiness, peace and fulfillment in life. Yoga, the science and art of life, was discovered by our forefathers and they handed it over to us as a priceless heritage. Its value is increasingly realized in today's world. Human life today is quite stressful. Yoga is a science that enlightens us regarding why we experience stress, tension and pain. It suggests a life style which is free from stress and pain. It makes our body and mind effective for leading a happy and healthy life.

In this lesson we will try to understand the meaning and nature of Yoga, the different types of Yoga and some techniques to keep ourselves physically and mentally fit.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, we shall be able to:

- explain what is yoga;
- explain different types of yoga;
- describe the breathing techniques that ensure physical and mental vitality; and
- explain certain ways of concentrating and meditating.



24.1 WHAT IS YOGA?

Yoga literally means 'union' i.e. being one with the Supreme Energy. It is communion of individual being with the universal being. It is a passage from ignorance to self-knowledge. Yoga is an effort towards self perfection. By helping the union of the body with the mind and mind with the soul, it creates an impressive symphony of life.

Yoga is a science which leads to health in the body, peace in the mind, joy in the heart and liberation of the soul. It also means the discipline of the body, mind, intellect, emotions and will, giving poise to the soul. It transforms the inert body to the level of vibrant mind into the union with the serenity of the higher consciousness or soul.

Yoga is of great benefit to the entire humanity. In its essence it is a passage from the ordinary consciousness in which we are aware only of appearances into a higher, wider and deeper consciousness.

Yoga is also considered as a discipline for happy and effective living. There are two aspects of Yoga: outer and inner. The outer aspect of yoga (*vahirang*) deals with the *yama*, *niyama*, *asana* and *pranayama* which revitalize our body and mind. The inner aspect of yoga (*Antarang*) includes controlling of senses (*Pratyahara*), concentration (*Dharana*), meditation (*Dhyana*) and Samadhi.

Maharshi Patanjali defines Yoga as "योगश्चित्तवृत्ति निरोधः" It means that Yoga is regulation of mental processes. It is only through self regulation one can excell in performance. That is why Yoga is also considered as the ability to perform actions with excellence: "योगः कर्मसुकौशलं". In broad terms Yoga may also be said as an integrated individual life style. Now, after knowing the meaning of Yoga, we shall try to know about the different types of Yoga.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 24.1

1. Define Yoga according Patanjali.

2. What are the two main aspects of Yoga?

24.2 DIFFERENT TYPES OF YOGA

Yoga has several types. Some of the main types of Yoga include the following. In general all systems of Yoga are meant for facilitating harmony, peace of mind, and self-regulation.

**Notes**

- (i) **Hatha Yoga** - This kind of Yoga aims at controlling the functioning of the body and helps channeling the flow of energy (Prana).
- (ii) **Raja Yoga** - It is meant for restraining the fluctuations in the consciousness (Citta).
- (iii) **Karma Yoga** - This is the path of selfless action (Anasakta karma) without expectation of rewards. In Karma Yoga, you learn to do all actions in relaxation.
- (iv) **Bhakti Yoga** - This refers to the path of devotion and surrender to God. The person forgets his own self and existence and merges with the identity of God or higher consciousness. Bhakti takes many forms of relationship (e.g. friend, servant, beloved).
- (v) **Gyan Yoga** - This form of yoga emphasizes on removal of ignorance and seeking of spiritual knowledge. People form wrong impressions about themselves and continue with masks that lead to egotism and conflicts of various kinds.

There are some other types of Yoga. Every practice of yoga requires some preparation and control over our food habits and other aspects of life, which will be discussed in a subsequent section.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 24.2**

1. What is Karma Yoga?

2. Explain the meaning of Raj Yoga.

24.3 YOGA TO KEEP FIT

The practice of yoga involves attending to the functioning at different levels of existence. Techniques to gain mastery over body, prana, and mind – diet, yogasanas, at body level, breathing practices and Pranayamas at Prana level and meditation at mental level have been developed. By following these practices one can remain fit, active and energetic without any medicine.

1. Diet

Yoga places great importance on diet because the kind and quantity of food that we eat determines our temperament. It is said that having right kind of food purifies the mind and soul (आहारशुद्धोसत्वशुद्धिः)



When the food is pure, the mind becomes pure. When the mind becomes pure, memory becomes firm. And when a man is in possession of firm memory, one is able to perform various tasks in competent ways.

Gita speaks about three types of food – *Sattwik*, *Rajasik* and *Tamasik*. *Sattwik* food is recommended because it is nourishing and warm. It does not trouble the digestive system. It gets assimilated in our body easily. *Rajasik* food is oily and spicy. It is hard to digest. *Tamasik* food is dry and stale. It is harmful for the system. Milk and sprouts are examples of *Sattwik* food. Spices and oils are *Rajasik* food. Left-overs and junk food are *Tamasik* food. According to Yoga, *Sattwik* food makes our mind benevolent, *Rajasik* food makes us restless, and *Tamasik* food makes us lazy and dull.

Besides food, proper rest and sleep are also necessary to keep oneself fit. Rest, fresh air and proper exercise are the needs of our body. Do you know why we need exercise? Without exercise body loses its elasticity. It becomes heavy, accumulates fat and toxins and gets rapidly worn out.

2. Yoga Asanas

You must have heard about various *Asanas*. They are body postures that make our body muscles supple and improve the blood circulation in the body. They tone up the activities of brain, glands, nerves, tissues and cells. If practiced regularly, *Asanas* can protect us against cold, fever, headache and stomach disorders. The *Asanas* are designed to bring the body into a condition where the healing forces of nature are able to do that work. Here, we are going to learn about some of the Yogic postures that help us keep fit.

Precautions while Performing Asanas

- *Asanas* should be performed preferably early in the morning in a well – ventilated room.
- Bowels must be cleared before starting the *Asanas*. It is not desirable to have bath immediately after the *Asanas*.
- *Asanas* must be performed on a mat spread on hard ground. Clothing should be as light as possible.
- Breathing should be normal while performing the *Asanas*.
- Do not eat immediately after *Asanas*.
- It is advisable that the *asanas* should be done after learning the proper methods of doing the *asanas* by a Yoga-teacher.
- *Shavasan* should be the last *Asana*, so that you get enough rest.

Let us learn about some of the main *Asanas*.



Paschimottan Asana (Stretching back and legs posture)

Technique - Sit on the floor with both legs stretched straight *in front of you* and take a few deep breaths. Exhale and extend the hands to catch the toes, keep spine and the legs straight. Extend the spine and keep the trunk close to the extended legs, Pull the trunk forward and touch the forehead to the knees and gradually rest the elbows on the floor, After you have gained flexibility, you will be able to have grip of the soles of your feet, resting the chin on the knee. Stay in this pose for 30 seconds to one minute according to your capacity and revert back to the starting position.

Benefits - This Asana tones the abdominal organs and kidneys and rejuvenates the whole spine and improves digestion. A good stay in this Asana will message the heart, spinal column and the abdominal organs. This Asana is strongly recommended for those suffering from high blood pressure. It also strengthens knees, improves the function of pancreas and corrects the functioning of regenerative system.

Sarvang Asana (Shoulder – Stand Posture)

Technique - Lie down with your back on the floor. Keep the palms down near the body. Bring the heels and toes together and keep them loose, and look towards the ceiling. Make your legs straight with toes stretched. Inhale and start lifting both legs towards the ceiling, Lift your back so that the weight of your body rests on the neck, give support to your lifted body by placing the palms on the back. Your elbows will be bent and will remain on the floor, let the hands help in pushing up the body so that it is balanced perpendicular on the neck. When the body has been raised to a maximum point, stay there and breathe normally. Stay in this position for 3 minutes in the beginning increasing the capacity upto ten to fifteen minutes. Then come down with caution after folding your legs from the knee slowly landing them on the floor. Raise your head and entire body to the resting position and breath normally.

Benefits - This Asana activates all parts and organs of the body. Because of the inversion, the gravity pull will enhance circulation of blood. It provides energy, inner strength and vitality. The greatest benefit of this Asana is that it nourishes and activates the thyroid and parathyroid glands. It also provides blood supply to the brain, improves lung functioning, throat and larynx functioning, enhances memory capacity and concentration and strengthens leg muscles.

Shavasana (Complete Relaxation Posture)

Technique - Lie down with your back on the floor keeping your feet a little apart forming a 30 degree angle. Keep your arms straight on either side, fingers a little curled up, Breath normally and close your eyes after an intent gaze on the roof. Start relaxing your feet, waist, chest, neck, arms, and head one by one with complete concentration. If relaxation is proper, your breathing will become slow and shallow with a feeling of bliss and sleepiness; stay for ten to fifteen minutes and then roll your body to the right and stay there for a minute before you get up.



Benefits - This asana is very beneficial. Its immediate effect is complete relaxation of all the muscles, nerves and nervous system, the brain and all the organs of the body. Persons suffering from insomnia, nervousness, tension, anxiety, acidity, high and low blood pressure and heart troubles benefit from this asana.

Shalabh Asana (Locust Posture)

Technique - Lie full length on the floor on the stomach, with the face touching the floor. Keep arms stretched on each side of the body and close to the hips. Now raise the legs, upward as high as possible, taking the support of the fisted hands by pressing them downward to the floor. Keep your chest and head on the floor and breathe normally. Stay in this pose for 10 to 15 seconds in the beginning and gradually increase the period according to your capacity.

Benefit - This Asana helps digestion and relieves gastric troubles and flatulence. It relieves pain in the sacral and lumber regions. Persons suffering from slipped discs are also benefitted. The bladder and prostate gland too benefit from this Asana.

Ushtra Asana (Camel Asana)

Technique - Kneel on the floor and keep your thighs and feet together. The toes should point backward and rest on the floor. Then bend backwards by lowering the head and hands, touch the heels with the palms of the hands, with your head looking up and backwards. Keep the thighs straight and the back arched. Feel more stretch in the chest, abdomen, neck, throat, shoulders and waist. Stay in the pose for 30 seconds or more according to the capacity.

Benefits - The posture improves the problems with shoulders. It corrects any deformity in the legs. The heart is massaged making it healthier. The chest is developed and abdominal organs and the back are toned.

Dhanurasana (Bow posture)

Technique – Lie on the stomach. Bend the knees while keeping them together. Take the ankles in the hands and rest the chin on the ground. Inhale as in complete Yogic breathing, then raise the legs, head and upper parts of the body while arching the back. Remain in this position as long as possible, breath regularly and direct attention to the lower part of the spinal column (pelvic region). Now, relax the body gradually and return to the original position. Repeat the exercise two or three times, then relax.

Benefits – This Asana loosens up the spinal column. It also tones up the abdominal organs. The exercise stimulates the endocrine glands and is excellent for women suffering from irregular or faulty menstruation. It also prevents fat from forming around the stomach and hips.



Notes

Halasana (The Plough Posture)

Technique - Lie on the back with the arms stretched by the side of the body, palms flat on the ground. Inhale through normal breathing, exhale and slowly raise the legs stretched vertically. Supporting oneself by the arms flat on the ground, gently lower the legs behind the head until the tips of the feet are touching the ground. Remain in this position for a few seconds and breath normally. Now return to the starting position.

Benefits - This Asana is extremely beneficial for the spinal column. The whole region receives an abundant supply of blood which revitalizes the nerves and muscles of the back. Exhaustion and fatigue quickly disappear. The position also has a regenerating effect on the glandular system, and clears up menstrual disorders. Regular practice may prevent fat forming around the stomach, hips and waist.

Bhujang Asana (The Cobra position)

Technique – Lie on the stomach, with palms on the ground underneath the shoulders. Inhale in yogic breathing. Supporting oneself lightly on the arms, slowly raise the head and trunk, leaning backwards as far as possible without raising the abdominal region from the ground. Hold this position for a few seconds, then exhale slowly and gradually return to the starting position.

Benefits – During the practice of this Asana, the muscles of the back are activated, exerting pressure on the vertebrae from the neck to the lower part of the spinal column, and provoking a copious supply of blood to this region, thus toning it up. This Asana may correct slightly slipped discs. It also soothes backaches, has a beneficial effect on kidney (adrenal glands) and stimulates digestion.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 24.3

1. How do Yogic postures help us attain health?

2. What are the benefits of performing Pashchimottan asana?

3. How many asanas have you learnt in this lesson? Name any three.



24.4 PRANAYAM

Yoga says that Prana is not merely breath but it is a form of cosmic energy. It is the life-giving principle which is everywhere. By breathing exercises it is possible to enhance the circulation of Prana in the body.

Activity 1

An Exercise in Concentration

Concentration is focusing our mind on a particular object-internal or external. Internal could be your heartbeat. External could be a candle flame.

Try this simple exercise in concentration. Look at the second needle of your watch or a clock on the front-wall. Remain aware of your breathing simultaneously. See how long it takes before your mind begins to wander. Very few people can focus their concentration for even a short period of time. Like any other skill, concentration improves with practice.

Unfortunately, most of us do not know how to breath, though we breath every moment in our life. Only babies know how to breath in a natural way. In natural breathing, when we inhale the navel and lower abdomen bulge out a little, and when we exhale, the navel and the lower abdomen sink down a little. It is called abdominal breathing.

In order to enjoy good health, a person needs at least 60 deep breaths in a day. Shallow breathing is directly or indirectly responsible for a number of physical and mental diseases ranging from common cold to nervous disorders. To function properly, our brain requires oxygen three times more than the rest of the body. If it does not get its share, it extracts it from the total supply to the body. That is why many intellectuals tend to have a poor physique and bad health.

Deep breathing not only refreshes the whole system but also cleanses it. We should learn deep breathing. We must re-educate ourselves in the ways of living in the light of Yoga system. The functioning of our mind is closely related to breathing. When we are calm, our breathing is deep and slow. When we are excited and agitated, our breathing is shallow and fast. Vice versa is also true. When we deliberately slow down our breathing rate and consciously take deep breaths, then our perturbed mind becomes quiet and is at peace.

Normally, we breath between 13 to 15 times per minute. It has been observed that the animals like tortoise breath 5 to 8 times per minute and live much longer than human beings. It is also observed that people with addictions like cigarette and liquor have greater breathing rates and their longevity is limited. When we run fast our breathing rate increases temporarily but with the exercise, our muscle tone and circulation increases. That, in turn, slows down and deepens our natural breathing and increases our longevity.



Notes

Activity 2

Observing your breath

Sit on a chair or on the floor, with your back and neck straight and your body relaxed. Take air in and let it out (inhalation and exhalation) as if you were on the seashore observing the ocean waves. With each intake of breath, feel that you are breathing in fresh energy and vitality with the oxygen. With each out take of breath, feel that you are breathing out tiredness, fatigue, negativity and toxins as you expel carbon dioxide. Feel the fresh, vitalizing energy permeating your body and mind as you continue with the exercise.

Sit quietly with your mind peaceful and calm.

Some more exercises in Pranayama are as follows:

1. **Pooraka** : Taking air in slowly and consciously – deep inhaling.
2. **Rechaka** : Giving air out slowly and consciously – deep exhaling.
3. **Kumbhaka** : After inhalation you keep the breath in for a few seconds or after exhaling you stop for a few seconds before inhaling. This should be done under proper guidance.
4. **Kapalbhati** : You exhale fast and inhalation is automatic. This clears the sinuses and provides a gentle massage to abdominal muscles.
5. **Bhasrika** : This is brisk breathing. Inhaling and exhaling is quick and fast.
6. **Sheetali** : Here we give a tune like shape to our tongue and slowly inhale through our mouth and slowly exhale through the nose. In summer this Pranayam makes our body cool.
7. **Seetkari** : Here our upper teeth line and lower teeth line touch each other. We inhale slowly through mouth and the air massages our gums gently. In the same way we exhale through mouth pushing air out gently through the passages between the teeth.
8. **Nadi Shuddhi**: Here we take air in from left nostril and give it out through right nostril (Anulom-Vilom). Then again we inhale from the right nostril and exhale from the left nostril. This is one cycle. One should do at least five cycles at a time three or four times during a day. This purifies our body. Simple deep breathing also helps a lot in gaining enough oxygen supply for your brain and the rest of your body.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 24.4

1. What is prana?



2. What are the effects of deep breathing?

3. List any four exercises of Pranayama?

24.5 MEDITATION

We have seen the place of exercise, eating, sleeping habits, *Asanas*, and *pranayama* in life. This is preparation for meditation. Yoga compares the mind with a lake. When agitated and restless, the lake can not reflect the sky. Only when it is calm and undisturbed, it can mirror the sky. In the same way, a calm and poised mind can reflect the universal energy. The final aim of meditation is to gain the vision of truth, to realize the oneness with all life and to enjoy peace and bliss.

Activity 3

An exercise in meditation

Sit straight with your back, neck and head in one line. Let the body relax. Observe your breath for about two to three minutes.

Later, imagine that there is a white lotus at the place where your eye brows meet, or at your heart. Internally feel the tender touch of the bud, see it blooming gently, opening up its petals and smell the lovely fragrance. Be with it as long as possible.

You can see a white flame instead of a bud. See it between your brows or at your heart. Mentally, feel its glow and warmth. Remain in this experience as long as possible.

For meditation, relax your body, sit comfortably in padmasana or sukhasana (squatting posture), keep your spine neck and head in a straight line. Let your chest spread out a little. First concentrate on your breath and breathe deeply. Exhale fully and inhale deeply a few times. Let the mind follow the breath and listen to its sound. Just listen to that and you will be able to hear the humming musical note within you. This is a part of cosmic vibration. By concentrating on this inner vibration, you will be in tune with the cosmic sound. Then all the ripples of thoughts and emotions will quieten. The lake of your mind will become still and you will experience peace and bliss. In this state of silence you will forget all differences and become one with all life.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 24.5

1. What is the final aim of meditation?

**Notes**

2. What posture do we adopt in meditation?

3. What are the benefits of meditation?

**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

- Yoga is a system of physical, mental and spiritual training for a healthy and happy life.
- Yoga teaches us what the good habits of eating, drinking, sleep, exercises, work, thinking and relaxing are.
- Being moderate in eating, exercise and enjoyment is necessary if we want to lead a healthy life. Asanas and meditation help develop mind and sharp intellect.
- Yoga is also defined as excellence in action.
- Yoga helps us in our studies, in improving our health and relationship with the world.
- Yoga teaches us about asanas which are beneficial to maintain our physical and mental health and prepare the ground for spiritual development.
- Yoga also teaches us how to breathe properly. Breathing exercises are to control our breath and bring us physical poise and mental peace.
- Meditation is for gaining the vision of truth, to realize the oneness with all life and to enjoy peace and bliss.

**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. Enlist the various Yoga types given in your text book.
2. Define Gyan Yoga.
3. What is the goal of meditation?

**ANSWER TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****24.1**

1. Study of consciousness and its operations.

2. Yoga is control of thought waves arising in the ocean of mind.
3. Outer and Inner.

24.2

1. Self-less (detached) action without expectation of reward.
2. Emancipations through spiritual knowledge.

24.3

1. Asanas make our body muscles supple and improve blood circulation.
2. Takes the abdominal organs and kidneys.
3. Eight – (i) Savang Asana (ii) Halasana (iii) Shalabh Asana

24.4

1. Prana is the cosmic energy.
2. Deep breathing refreshes and cleanses the whole system.
3. (i) Poorka (ii) Rechaka (iii) Anulom-Vilom (iv) Kapalbhathi

24.5

1. The final aim of meditation is to gain the vision of Truth.
2. Padma-asana or Sukha-asana.
3. In meditation we come in tune with cosmic sound then all the ripples of thoughts and emotions are quitted.

Hints for Terminal Questions

1. Refer to section 24.2
2. Refer to section 24.2
3. Refer to section 24.5

