



A Review on Yoga Therapy

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Abstract

The Sanskrit word “yoga” comes from root yug (to join), or yoke (to bind together). The word “yoga” has come to describe a method of discipline: to join the body to the mind and together join to the self or to union between the individual self and the spiritual self. Yoga is considered as an acceptable method for improving and maintaining physical and mental health.

A growing body of evidence supports the belief that yoga benefits physical, mental and emotional health. Over the last 10 years, a growing number of research studies shows that the practice of yoga can improve strength and flexibility and cures various types of diseases like hypertension, diabetes mellitus, depression, etc. Yoga is a comprehensive system that uses physical postures (asanas), breathing exercises (pranayama), meditation (dhyana), concentration (dharana) and reflective practices.

Keywords: Yoga; Asanas; Pranayama; Health; Fitness; Postures; Meditation

Introduction

Yoga is a perfect practical system of self-culture. Yoga is an exact science. It aims at the harmonious development of the body, the mind and the soul. Yoga is the turning away of the senses from the objective universe and the concentration of the mind within. Yoga is eternal life in the soul or spirit. Yoga aims at controlling the mind and its modifications. The path of Yoga is an inner path whose gateway is your heart. The practice of Yoga plays a vital role in the rehabilitation of physically and mentally handicapped person as well as those who are socially disadvantaged [1].

Yoga is an ancient mind-body practice that originated in India and is becoming increasingly recognized and used in developed nations as a health practice for a variety of immunological, neuromuscular, psychological, and pain conditions [2].

The word yoga comes from the Sanskrit term “yug” and directly translates as “to unite”; more broadly, it means to work towards a unified experience of the self and improved health [3].

It was observed that practice of Yoga improved joint flexibility [4], respiratory endurance, and strengthening of muscles in young [5].

There are many traditional paths of yoga, including tantra, mantra, kundalini, bhakti, jnana, karma, raja yoga, and others, all of which have their own techniques to awaken these connections. According to the classic text of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, “yoga” is the complete “inhibition of the modifications of the mind” [6].

Yoga practices can increase multiple neurotransmitters and hormones such as GABA, serotonin, and dopamine—all

natural anti-depressants. They have been shown to increase levels of melatonin, helping to initiate sleep, improving sleep quality and sleep regulation, as well as increasing levels of oxytocin, the “bonding hormone”, thus helping with feelings of connectedness and “being seen and heard” [7,8]. Yoga is a form of mind-body fitness that involves a combination of muscular activity and an internally directed mindful focus on awareness of the self, the breath, and energy [9].

The eight limbs of yoga

The Yoga Sutras, also known as The Eight Limbs (Ashtanga) of Raja. Yoga was the first fully developed and recorded system of yoga. Created by Patanjali around 400 BCE, this system influences much of the yoga that is practised today [10].

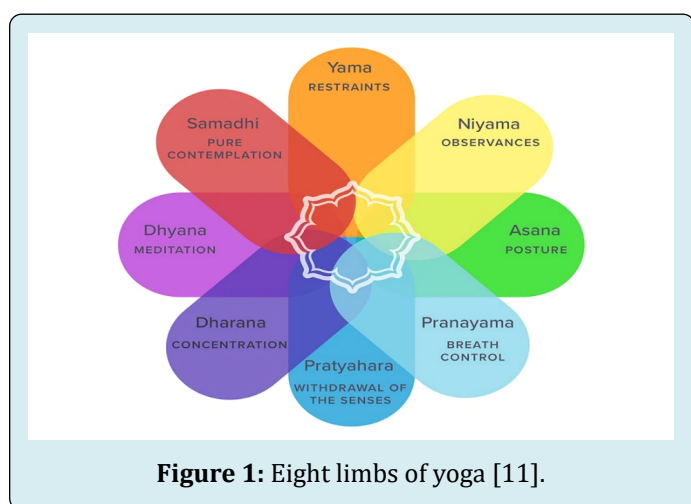


Figure 1: Eight limbs of yoga [11].

Types of Yoga

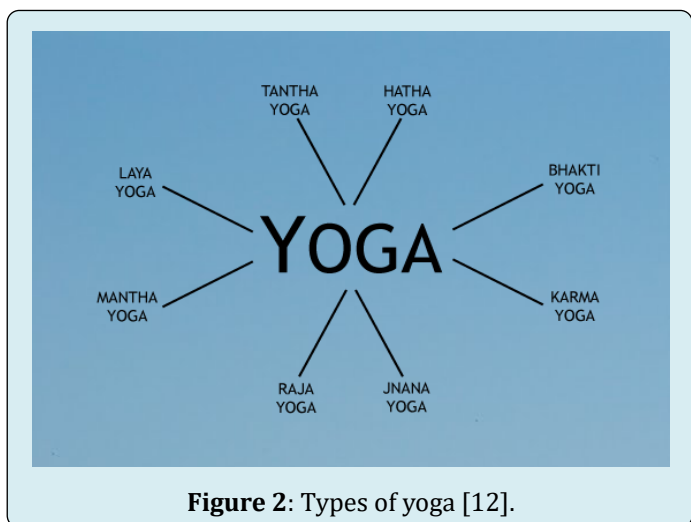


Figure 2: Types of yoga [12].

The different types of yoga that have developed in the history and the objectives and benefits of each type of Yoga. Schools of yoga or types of Yoga are set in terms of

the objectives to be achieved and some general terms are: relaxation, breathing, yoga postures (asanas), concentration, inner detachment and devotion to God. Neither type of yoga is tied to a specific religion, so that both the believer and the atheist can practice his/her methods without principles imposed against their religious convictions.

Chakras

Chakras offer a yogic explanation of the life force energy system, corresponding with the nervous and endocrine systems in the human body. Each of seven chakras corresponds with a unique colour and is responsible for a specific physiological function and emotional experience [13].

- Muladhara (Root chakra)- Basic taste, sense of safety
- Svadisthana (Sacral chakra)- Pleasure, creativity
- Manipura (Solar plexus chakra)- Self-esteem, personal power
- Anahata (Heart chakra)- Love, compassion and forgiveness
- Visuddha (Throat chakra)- Expression and communication
- Ajna (Third eye chakra)- Inspiration, awareness
- Sahasrara (Crown chakra)- spirituality, enlightenment

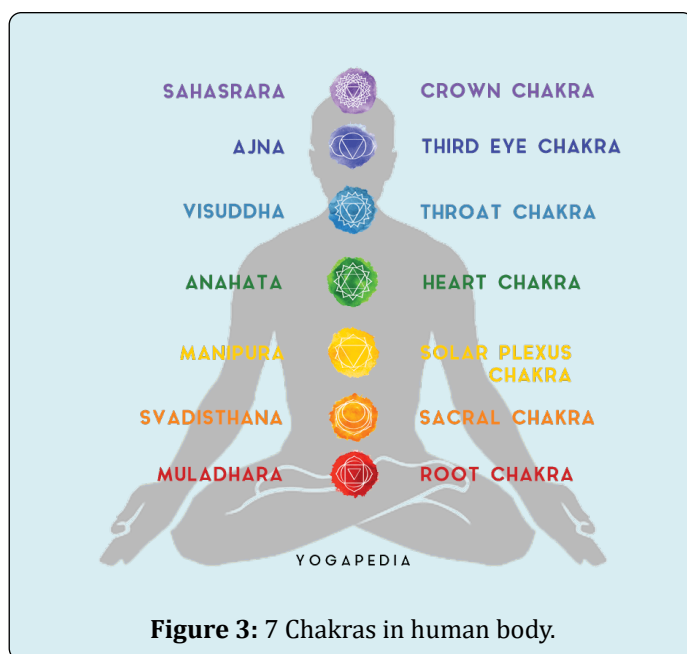


Figure 3: 7 Chakras in human body.

Different yoga Asanas and their benefits

Standing Asanas

- Trikonasana:** Benefits: Improve function of kidney and blood, stretches the hips, back, thighs and legs, gives flexibility to hamstring [14,15].



Figure 4: Trikonasana.

- ii. **Vrikshasana:** Benefits: This state brings equilibrium to mind, concentration and balance, strengthens the hips and legs.



Figure 5: Vrikshasana.

- iii. **Garudasana:** Benefits: Improves digestion, concentration, releases stress and calms the mind.



Figure 6: Garudasana.

- iv. **Virabhadrasana:** Benefits: Stretches, massages and stimulates all muscles, vital organs and flexes the body backward and forward.



Figure 7: Virabhadrasana

Sitting Asanas

- i. **Sukhasana:** Benefits: It has a relaxing effect on the mind and body which is helpful in reducing stress and anxiety. Improves focus and automatically makes you more attentive. It strengthens the back muscles and improves the overall body posture. Lengthens the spine and back muscles [16-19].



Figure 8: Sukhasana.

- ii. **Padmasana:** Benefits: Improves digestion, helps relax the mind and alleviates stress, eases childbirth, helps reduce menstrual pain and cramps.



Figure 9: Padmasana.

iii. **Vajarasana:** Benefits: helps to keep the mind calm and stable, cure digestive acidity and gas formation, helps to relieve knee pain, strengthens thigh muscles.



Figure 10: Vajrasana.

iv. **Bakasana:** Benefits: improved sleep quality in cancer survivors, self-management of chronic pelvic pain in women, enhanced health and quality of life when practicing yoga over an extended period, mind mastery, body boost.



Figure 11: Bakasana.

Lying Asanas

Halasana: Benefits: It is a great pose for nervous system, reduces stress and calms the mind, improves immunity, appetite and digestion [20].



Figure 12: Halasana.

Sarvangasana: Benefits: It has been considered as mother of all asanas. Cures hypothyroidism, headache, stress, keeps the spine flexible.



Figure 13: Sarvangasana.

Shavasana: Benefits: Effective in hypertension, anxiety, insomnia, excellent technique to reduce the vata dosha (imbalance of the air element) in the body.



Figure 14: Shavasana.

Setubandhsana: Benefits: Opens up the lungs, reduces stress, anxiety, depression. Helps with thyroid problems, improves digestion, immunity, helps with hypertension, asthma.



Figure 15: Setubandhasana.

Pranayama

Prana is the vital energy required for sustaining the dynamic operation and coordination of each organ within a body. Pranayama is control and smooth flow of prana through yoga exercises. Pranayama can be achieved by the modification of breathing patterns. Pranayama exercises is done through proper regulation of inhaling the breath and exhaling [19]. Many Pranayama techniques has been proven effective such as:

- NadiSodhana
- ShitaliPranayama
- Ujjayi Pranayama
- Bhramari Pranayama
- Bhastrika Pranayama
- Viloma Pranayama
- Kapalbhathi Pranayama

Conclusion

As we practice Yoga every day, it is natural to have a sense of our surroundings and inner self. Yoga as a philosophy advocate righteous, moral and an ethical approach to life. It encourages turning to inner self and translating into acceptance of self. The practice of yoga not only cures many diseases but also maintains the central principle of life which is awareness. The principle of yoga leads to development of thoughtful attitude and mindset in conflict situation, resulting in symbiotic and fruitful life. Yoga is reputed to improve balance and other psychological and physiological factors. This review suggests that yoga is not just about moving through the poses, it allows to be mindful and truly connected to a place of peace within.

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