

Block

2

SELF AND YOGA

UNIT 4

Introduction to Yoga and Yogic Practices **5**

UNIT 5

Yoga and Health **22**

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| BESL-124 UNDERSTANDING THE SELF AND YOGA | |
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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Block 2: Self and Yoga

This block on “Self and Yoga” focuses on fuller development of human personality through yoga. Yoga, when regularly and properly practiced, can transform an individual into a vibrant personality, full of energy and enthusiasm. This block aims to encourage B. Ed. students to adopt and practice yoga to enhance their abilities of body and mind, and develop sensibilities, dispositions and skills so as to help in the personal growth of their own students when they teach. This Block is divided into two units: the fourth unit – *Introduction to Yoga and Yogic Practices* – discusses benefits of yoga and yogic practices to enhance the professional capacities of B. Ed. students in the field of education. The unit also highlights use of yoga in different contexts by the B.Ed. students. This will help them in finding a mutual relationship with one’s surroundings for their well-being as well as self and professional development.

The fifth unit – *Yoga and Health* – aims at relating yoga practices with health. This unit also discusses role of yoga in preventing diseases and how yogic practices when practiced properly and regularly can bring wellness, happiness and tranquility.

The two units of this Block will initiate B. Ed. students into the field of yoga which is recognised, accepted and practiced all over the world *as a way of life*. The understanding of yogic practices can help them in attaining a fuller development of their personalities as well as achieving good health.

UNIT 4 INTRODUCTION TO YOGA AND YOGIC PRACTICES

Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Objectives
- 4.3 Philosophy of Yoga and its Role in Well-being
- 4.4 Yoga and Meditation
- 4.5 Yoga to Live in Peace and Harmony with One's Surroundings
- 4.6 Use of Yoga in Different Contexts
- 4.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.8 Unit-End Activities
- 4.9 Answers to Check Your Progress
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4.1 INTRODUCTION

Human beings are social beings and love to make moves, sounds and noises. Nature has a lot to offer to us. We are surrounded by living and non-living matter which helps us to be alive and to survive. We need various skills to survive successfully and being intellectuals, we are so blessed to work on our ideas and for the betterment and development of the society. Yoga practitioners have evolved various postures and moves out of the nature which help in the development of an individual. The understanding of Yoga will enhance the professional capacities of B. Ed. students in the field of education.

Teacher acts as a facilitator for the students. As a practising teacher you will understand the importance of self-realisation, knowing one's capabilities and curiosity to always learn more, so as to fulfil the requirement of the challenging teaching profession. Regular practice of yogic asanas and meditation will provide you a ground to achieve self-realisation, physical strength, emotional stability, social adjustability and strong intellect which will ultimately add to the professional growth. After going through this Unit, you will be able to understand the meaning of the term 'YOGA' and its benefits. The use of yoga in different contexts will help you in developing a mutual relationship with your surroundings. This will also help in your well-being as well as self and professional development.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you should be able to:

- explain the concept of yoga in the contemporary context as well as for personal growth and development;
- reflect on one's capabilities and ways to enhance them so as to utilise the same in a better way;
- develop physically, mentally, socially, emotionally and spiritually;

- use the benefits of yogic practices in different contexts in day-to-day life; and
- enhance self-realisation to successfully survive in the competitive world with optimum use of one's professional capabilities.

4.3 PHILOSOPHY OF YOGA AND ITS ROLE IN WELL-BEING

Before moving to the role of yoga in well-being or fitness or health of a person, we need to understand the meaning of the term 'Yoga'. What is yoga? from where this concept has been taken? from where it has originated? Then only one can move towards the understanding of its importance.

The word 'Yoga' has originally been derived from the Sanskrit word 'yuj' which means 'to unite' or 'to join'. The union of body, mind and soul. In Hathyoga, the ultimate aim of yoga and yogic practices has been derived as '*intergration of personlity*' at the highest level. There are various misconceptions attached as far as yoga is concerned. For some, Yoga is mere performing asanas but it is much deeper than that. It includes the practices of yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, kriya and meditation. It is a great tool to keep oneself physically fit, mentally sound, socially adjustable, and emotionally balanced and it also prepares ground for the spiritual development of an individual.

Yoga has been considered to have its roots in India thousands of years ago. The fossil remains of Indus Valley Civilisation indicate that yoga was prevalent in ancient India. The systematic philosophical reference of yoga is found in Maharishi Patanjali's Yoga Sutra. Patanjali gave a frame to yoga and after that many yogis and researchers contributed and continuing to find out the ways towards its development.

The Bhagavad Gita (the song of Divine) is a Sanskrit text from the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata epic. The Bhagavad Gita comprises of eighteen chapters. The text is in the form of a conversation between Krishna and Arjuna. It is on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, just prior to the start of the war. Krishna explains to Arjuna his duties as a warrior while responding Arjuna's moral dilemma and elaborates different Yogic and Vedantic philosophies with different examples and analogies. In particular, the following three types of Yoga have been emphasised by the commentators on the Bhagavad Gita:

- Bhakti Yoga (Yoga of Devotion) is summed up as a mode of worship, which consists of unending and loving remembrance of God.
- Karma Yoga/ 'Nishkam-Karma yoga' (Yoga of Selfless Action), where actions are done without attachment to the results. It is emphasised by many as the ideal path to realise the self.
- Jnana Yoga (Yoga of Self-transcending Knowledge) is a path to gain the true knowledge about the 'self'.

Nowadays, Yoga which originated in India, has spread all over the world. World has realised the benefits of yoga to a great extent. Yoga is an invaluable gift of ancient Indian tradition. It embodies unity of mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfilment; harmony between man and nature and a holistic approach to health and well-being. Yoga is not about exercise but to discover the sense of oneness with ourselves, the world and nature. By

changing our lifestyle and creating consciousness, it can help us to deal with climate change. Let us work towards adopting an International Yoga Day, Recognising the benefits and inherent potential of yoga, on December 11, 2014, the 193 member United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) approved the proposal by consensus with a record 177 co-sponsoring countries, a resolution to observe 21 June as “International Day of Yoga”. In its resolution, the UNGA recognised that Yoga provides a holistic approach to health, fitness and well-being and wider dissemination of information about the benefits of practising Yoga for health of the world population. Yoga also brings harmony in all spheres of life and thus, is known for disease prevention, health promotion and management of many modern lifestyle related disorders. Over a long period of time many yogis, philosophers and scholars such as Patanjali, Gandhiji, Sri Aurobindo and various others have accepted yoga as a tool for self-realisation. Gandhiji’s morality is purely grounded on the realisation of the actual self (atman), which includes identification with life which is, according to him, impossible without self-purification. The first step towards self-purification is self-analysis and the second is subjective moral purification. Awareness of one’s own motives precedes the possibility of choice between motives and goals. Self-analysis and self-purification may become more intense through fasting and prayer, says Gandhiji in the light of his own experiences.

Yoga education helps the students in self-discipline and self-control, leading to immense amount of awareness, concentration and higher level of consciousness. Briefly the aims and objectives of Yoga Education are to enable the students to:

- 1) have good fitness;
- 2) practice mental health;
- 3) possess emotional stability;
- 4) integrate moral and spiritual values; and
- 5) attain higher level of consciousness for oneself and the surroundings.

All these objectives could be dealt in an integrated manner to attain overall wellness.

Now in the contemporary times, everybody has conviction about yoga practices towards the preservation, maintenance and promotion of health. Yoga has spread all over the world by the teachings of great personalities like Swami Shivananda, Shri T. Krishnamacharya, Swami Kuvalayananda, Shri Yogendra, Swami Rama, Sri Aurobindo, Maharshi Mahesh Yogi, Acharya Rajanish, Pattabhijois, BKS. Iyengar, and Swami Satyananda Sarasvati. These different philosophies, traditions, lineages and Guru-shishya paramparas of Yoga lead to the emergence of different traditional Schools of Yoga e.g. Jnana-yoga, Bhakti-yoga, Karma-yoga, Dhyana-yoga, Patanjalyoga, Kundalini-yoga, Hatha-yoga, Mantra-yoga, Laya-yoga, Raja-yoga, Jainyoga, Bouddha-yoga etc. Each school has its own principles and practices leading to ultimate aim and objectives of Yoga.

ACTIVITY 1

- **Arranging visits of learners to Yoga Institutions:** Visits to different Yoga institutions will give a chance to the learner to experience hands-on learning. Learners will be able to realise the atmosphere, ethos, culture and sense of yogic practices.

Check Your Progress 1

1. What do you understand by the term Yoga? Elucidate the eight elements of Yoga.

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4.4 YOGA AND MEDITATION

In this section, the classical approach to Meditation (Dhyana) has been discussed. Bhagavad Gita and Patanjali Yoga Sutra should be referred to get the real sense of Dhyana, so as to understand its cognitive behavioural model of relaxation and the yoga meditation. Certain therapeutic features of Dhyana, as well as, general instructions, to be followed by the aspirants of Dhyana are also to be discussed. Finally, a model meditation technique has to be presented for the beginners in Yoga meditation.

Dhyana being the seventh limb in Patanjali Astanga Yoga, has been defined as, “A continuous and unbroken flow of consciousness. In the state of Dhyana, consciousness becomes all-encompassing and thereby our basic need of knowledge is fulfilled. This state, signifying non-judgemental and non-reactive awareness, remains transcendental. According to Bhagavad Gita, in such a yoga state, all miseries are vanished and the yogic joy effuses forth, the perfect *psycho-physiologically balanced* state.



Fig. 4.1: Practice of Meditation

Guidelines for the Practice of Meditation:

- Practice of asana and pranayama will help in developing ability to sit in one comfortable position for a considerable period of time in meditation.
- Select a peaceful, calm and quiet place for the practice of meditation.
- Allow your eyes to get closed gently so as to enter into an inner awareness of self.
- A meditative practice invites many thoughts, memories, emotions and ideas on the surface of mind. Try and remain nonreactive to them.
- As you continue with this process for sometime, you may feel an abstract and a non-specific awareness of the whole body. Now continue with the whole body awareness. In case you are not been able to settle your thought process for further body awareness go back to the breathing awareness, try and continue the process.
- In the beginning, it is generally difficult to observe the breath. If mind wanders, do not feel guilty. Slowly but firmly bring your attention to your breath.

Benefits of meditation

| SUPER MIND | HEALTHY BODY |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases mental strength and focus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves immune system and energy level |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases memory retention and recall | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves breathing and heart rates |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better cognitive skills and creative thinking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces blood pressure |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better decision making and problem-solving | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More longevity |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better information processing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessens heart and brain problems |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps ignore distractions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessens premenstrual and menopause disorders |

Many researches have shown very positive results for the growth and development of an individual by practising meditation. Benefits of meditation related to quality of life are as follows:

Increased intelligence – Scientific studies have shown that meditation improves the practitioner’s cognitive and intellectual abilities. This effect of ‘becoming smarter’ has been demonstrated by different types of intelligence tests. A study by Dixon et al titled “Accelerating Cognitive and Self-Development: Longitudinal studies with preschool and Elementary School Children” was published in Journal of Social Behavior & Personality in 2005. It was a six-month study with 37 experimental and 29 controls and reported increases in principal components of psychological differentiation and general intelligence in experimental, co varying for pre-test and control

variables. Secondly, a 45-week study with 25 experimental and 25 controls found increases in principal components of self-concept, analytical ability, and general intellectual performance among experimental participants (analysis of covariance). These techniques appear to accelerate the natural developmental consolidation of awareness at a deeper level—the thinking level versus the perceptual level—and may be important adjuncts to current educational interventions.

- ***Benefits for students*** – Regular meditation raises school performance (higher academic achievement, less absenteeism, better graduation rates), and that goes for all school levels from kindergarten to college.
- ***Work efficiency*** – Research has shown reduction in the stress levels and better decision making. This, in turn, leads to higher efficiency at work place in both small and big organisations.
- ***Creativity & problem-solving meditation*** – Leads to higher brain integration, which in turn sets the basis for mental alertness, original thought and creative problem-solving skills.
- ***Consciousness enlightenment*** – Whereas ordinary human experience is limited to three states of consciousness (wake, asleep, in deep sleep), one of the benefits of regular meditation practice is access to fourth more refined levels of being.
- ***Positive emotions and well-being*** – Research shows that meditation practitioners have 5 times greater clarified gamma output (positive feelings like love, happiness; well-being).
- ***Good personal relationships*** – Three months of Transcendental Meditation practice brings significant improvement in professional and personal relationships, based on increased happiness and reduced stress.
- ***Marital relations*** – Study measuring long-term marital happiness with Locke’s Adjustment Inventory. Subjects in the TM group showed significantly greater marital satisfaction.
- ***Life expectancy*** – Mortality rates from various fatal heart conditions were cut by 48% with regular practice of meditation was found in a key study with patients suffering from cardiovascular disease.
- ***Brain coherence benefit of meditation*** – Meditation leads to increased frontal coherence — that is, more harmonious and efficient brain activity — as measured during various computer tasks and eyes-closed rest.
- ***Good sleep*** – Lower levels of stress mean better sleep. Taking up meditation regularly, at least twice a day, is a natural home remedy against chronic insomnia (sleeplessness).
- ***Glowing skin*** – Keeping the hormonal levels well balanced and cutting radically down on daily stress leads, among other good things, to beautiful skin and radiantly beautiful looks.
- ***Stress and anxiety relief*** – Arguably the single biggest benefit of meditation is a more balanced nervous system and hormonal levels which eliminate any excessive flight-or-fight responses by our body. In other words, meditation has been shown to naturally lead to a calmer life.

- **Heart diseases and ailments** – Improved functional capacity for patients with various heart conditions / heart failure. Risk of heart disease cut by 30%; mortality from stroke decreases by 48%.
- **Normalised blood pressure** – Another crucial benefit of meditation is that it reduces blood pressure on an average by 7 mm/Hg. It also thus reduces such conditions as heart attack, aneurysm, artery damage, kidney failure etc.
- **Immune system** – Regular Transcendental Meditation practice strengthens the body's ability to resist disease by boosting immune cells fighting against viruses, bacteria and toxins.
- **Slower ageing** — Telomeres, the all-important chromosome endings which keep your cells fresh and healthy, have recently been shown to get a boost from regular meditation practice. This results in longer life and lower risk of falling prey to various ailments.
- **Cancer patients' care** – Transcendental Meditation and yoga practice are considered the most helpful of all available non-invasive therapies for supportive care of cancer patients.
- **Autism spectrum disorders** – Learning to let the mind calm down in a natural, easy-to-do way helps in growing from frequent temper tantrums into a happy, well-adjusted personality.
- **Treatment for quitting alcohol, nicotine and drug addiction** – Meditation significantly reduces addiction to and use of alcohol, cigarettes and drugs. With regular practice, the abstinence strengthens naturally.
- **Depression & burnout** – An interesting study with teachers confirmed that meditation significantly decreases work-related stress, burnout states, and various depressive symptoms.
- **Eating disorders** – Research shows that benefits of meditation include more effective recovery from food addiction, due to lower stress levels. Binge eating, as any other kind of addiction, is largely triggered by stress.

ACTIVITY 2

Start Practising 'Meditation' regularly. Do you feel any change in yourself? Notice the gradual behavioural changes within yourself.

Check Your Progress 2

You may want to pause here and reflect upon various benefits of yogic practices in light of following aspects:

1. Physical development
2. Mental development
3. Social development
4. Emotional development
5. Spiritual development

4.5 YOGA TO LIVE IN PEACE AND HARMONY WITH ONE'S SURROUNDINGS

Is there any difference between the modern and traditional lifestyles of living? This stimulus can be very useful to enlighten the mind of the students to think of the lifestyle patterns and that can be linked with the modern lifestyle disorders. One can easily relate this with their own experiences as they can be given an activity to compare experiences of different generations at their home.

“Yogic lifestyle alone would endow us with equanimity amidst all types of dissonance in our life and would make all our endeavours creative and skilful”

-Bhagavad Gita

All substances are made up of five Mahabhutas. The body is also composed of five Mahabhutas

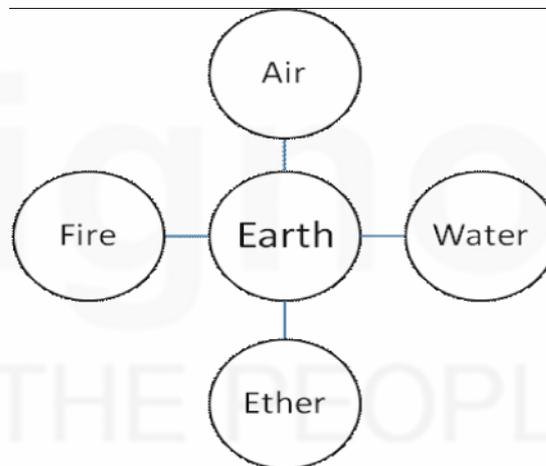


Fig. 4.2: Five Mahabhutas present in all substances

- Those derived from **Akasha (Ether)** are sound, auditory organ, lightness, subtleness and distinction;
- Those derived from **Vayu (Air)** are touch, tactile organ, roughness, impulsion, shaping of dhatus and physical activities;
- Those derived from **Agni (Fire)** are vision, visual organ, light, digestion and heat;
- Those derived from **Jala (Water)** are taste, gustatory organ, coldness, softness, unction and moistening;
- Those derived from **Prithvi (Earth)** are smell, olfactory organ, heaviness, stability and mass.

One needs to deal with all the elements in harmony so as to keep ourselves fit and survive successfully in this ever changing outer world. Every day we realise that things around us are changing. This world is moving at a faster rate than before. This is mostly due to the fact that science and technology are making tremendous progress in each and everything that surrounds us in the materialistic world. Undoubtedly this change is knowingly or unknowingly disturbs the natural sphere around us. For a successful survival one needs to maintain the balance between the outer environment and the inner self.

You do not have to worry about Nature because Nature is an intelligent force which takes care of itself. If man does not protect Nature but destroys it, Nature will punish him.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati

There is so much talk today about environmental protection and pollution, but how about the care and protection of our own inner physical, emotional, mental, psychic and spiritual environment? May be it is that which should be our concern now. How can we prevent the inevitable punishment which nature is on the verge of bestowing upon us for our constant misuse and abuse of her? As Swami Satyananda says, Nature can take care of herself, but how can we protect (and accept) our own nature, our own inner environment? How can we protect our own inner world from the chaos which is happening within as well as around us? How can we save ourselves from the inner environmental dangers of disturbed emotions, unruly passions and negative, aggressive thinking as well as saving our external environment? For even if we are presented today with the most perfect of natural environments imaginable in which to live, due to the state of our inner environment we would not be able to enjoy or appreciate it.

First we have to understand that the world is a projection of our own minds, which the external environment is only a reflection of the environment within our own selves, and that nature is all out of balance because our minds, emotions and nature are out of sync. We have lost control of the mind due to lack of right thinking and right acting in relation to ourselves, to the environment and to others. May be this is the time we start taking responsibility for this inner environment of ours rather than seeking outside for environmental solutions, because society and the world cannot be changed unless we first change and upgrade the quality of our own thinking patterns, emotional responses and consciousness. The mental and emotional pollution within us is a greater hazard than any external pollution, and it has to be cleaned up first. To bring about this change, to restore our own inner balance and to harmonise the inner and outer worlds is the work of yogic science.

Only yoga can successfully re-educate the twenty-first century mind and reveal the deeper qualities of peace, love, tolerance, acceptance and understanding which have become buried deep underneath the debris of selfishness and desire. Yoga means a complete life, both inner and outer. It means a life of opening up to oneself, to others, to the environment and to the cosmos. It brings the unruly mind and emotions back under our control and restores peace, poise and tranquillity to our inner world, thus deepening our understanding of, and relationship to, not only ourselves but also to nature and the world around us. Yoga elevates our consciousness, re-unites us with our own lost selves and also with our estranged surroundings. Through yoga we can rediscover our centre of balance, and then our whole angle of vision will change. With this new vision, this transformed consciousness, we can set about solving the pollution problems of both the internal and external worlds.

When we practice yoga our body, mind and emotions become more refined and subtle. Our whole way of acting and thinking changes and begins to undergo a transformation. We then begin to feel the environment as a part of our own selves, and therefore worthy of love and respect; if something is wrong outside we will very quickly feel it within ourselves due to the

heightened awareness which yoga provides. Conversely, if the environment is sick and depleted, we will also become sick and depleted. Yoga helps us develop an inner wholeness and integrity which is then projected outwards to the other parts of the whole of which we are only a minute fraction.

Through yoga we realise that it is our duty and responsibility to look after the two gifts we have been given, namely, the environmental complex upon which we depend for our survival, and the body-mind complex in which we live. How do we look after this body-mind complex? How does the yogic catalyst work? What is this transforming process? Let us start at the gross level by considering the role which is played by the food we eat.

A balanced mind, a yogic mind, is a *sattvic* or pure mind which thinks and acts positively, creatively and compassionately, and to attain this a sattvic diet is absolutely necessary. Food has a tremendous influence on our mind. It forms the mind as well as the body. The mind is made from the subtlest portion of food. If the food we eat is impure then our mind and thinking will be impure also. Thought is supplied to us by food; if the food is pure our thoughts will also be pure. When we bring yoga into our lives we bring in precious relaxation, and when we eat with a relaxed body and mind, with gratitude for what nature has provided for us, the food is able to nourish our more subtle bodies or koshas. And if we chant a few mantras before eating, we energise, not only ourselves and the food, but the environment also.

The yogi always prefers a sattvic vegetarian diet because it increases vitality, vigour and good health, and results in a healthy body and calm mind. Such sattvic foods are barley, wheat, cereals, milk, honey, almonds, butter, cheese, tomatoes, dates, fruits, honey and sugar candy – all the natural and wholesome products of a pure environment. Nature is without the tension, worry, hang-ups and ambition of which we are all full; she just exists in her own joyful acceptance of life. It is therefore beautiful and reassuring to know that her products, which vibrate with the joyful energy of being, can vibrate within us also to give us the joy of well-being and a more sattvic mind.

Meat is not prohibited by yoga, but it is highly *rajasic*, and causes many diseases like TB, cancer, kidney disease, etc., excites the mind and emotions, and makes them restless and unsteady by setting up discordant, rajasic vibrations in the physical body. The yogic process is meant to eliminate the gross animalistic tendencies from the mind and personality, and a non-vegetarian diet is a great hindrance to this, whereas a simple sattvic diet helps to refine our body-mind complex and, consequently, our nature. All the great saints and yogis lived on a yogic diet. Swami Sivananda says, “A vegetarian diet can produce supreme powers of both body and mind and is highly conducive to divine contemplation and the practice of yoga.” Of course, he was not including the pesticides and artificial processes for increasing yield and growth which are employed today.

A very important environmental point is that a non-vegetarian diet involves the cruel taking of innocent life, which the peaceful and sympathetic yogic mind cannot accept. Instead of killing and mistreating animals we can learn from them by living nearer to, and observing how they interact with, the environment. Animals are closer to nature and the divine than we are. There is a very beautiful quote in the Bible concerning animals which illustrates this and shows the insight ancient cultures had into the environment and also into themselves: “Ask the beasts to teach you; the birds of the air to tell you

and the fish of the sea to guide you. For which among them does not know that behind everything is the hand of God?” (Job 12, 7–9).

Animals follow nature’s laws and rhythms with perfect acceptance, eating the right amount of the right food at the right time, rising and sleeping with the sun, mating only at the fixed times, and taking from the environment only that which is necessary for their daily need. The yogic-minded person does the same. To quote Swami Satyananda, “Animals do not have to practice japa, kirtan, asana, pranayama, nauli, basti and other yogas, but you violate the laws of nature, and in order to compensate for that you practise yoga.” And most people start yoga with the practice of asana.

Yoga is an alchemical process which refines all that is animalistic in us, and transmutes the base metal of our vasana or cravings into the pure sattavic gold of divinity. But before we become divine we first have to become truly human, and this we can do with the help of yoga. Of course, the yogic process is slow, but it is sure, and we have to start at a point which is simple, easily available, and open to all. This point is asana or yogic postures. Yogasanas, which are designed to bring our inner environment back into alignment, are taken from the natural external environment, from the animals. They were devised by the rishis and yogis who lived peacefully amongst the animals in the jungle and who were therefore able to observe and monitor their movements at first hand.

The rishis understood the effects of a particular position on the mind and body, and how the hormonal secretions could be stimulated and controlled by it. They saw how animals live in harmony with their environment and with their own bodies, and that through the practice of yogasanas the human animal can do the same. As a result of their observations they were able to devise certain postures which influence the various glands and hormones in the human body, with a view to bringing about a balance in the body-mind complex and speeding up the evolutionary process. Take out time to do the following activities.

ACTIVITY 3

- Observe the nature and find out the disturbances made by man to the nature.
- Observe a novice and an expert yoga practitioner and record their adjustments in their outer environments. What difference do you notice?

Check Your Progress 3

Reflect on the following:

“Yoga helps in creating equilibrium between inner and outer world”. Justify this statement in light of the facts given in the above section and you can add your experiences through observations. Justify this statement citing your own experiences.

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4.6 USE OF YOGA IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

When we practice yoga, we often focus on technique alone. Techniques form the content of yoga; they create the body of the science and the philosophy. However, it is also important to remember the context of yoga. Yoga is contextualised by its aim, the environment in which it was originally developed, and the environment in which it is now being practised. Knowing context allows us to adapt the form of yoga with intelligence and an understanding of what we are doing. We can employ intelligent and creative flexibility to modify the practice to meet the needs of the moment while also fulfilling the aims of yoga.

Context is very important. Without context, we can never really master yoga or any other art or science. For example, an artist learns all the classic principles of their art form before learning to improvise and find true creativity. Without training in the classical skills of their art as well as understanding how their art has developed, there is no ground on which artists can base their creativity. Most of the great masters have developed their mastery in this way: by first learning the context.

Practising techniques with an understanding of context takes our yoga practice to higher level. One side effect of understanding context is that we develop a sense of being linked to a greater and deeper purpose. The highest aim of yoga is the awakening of consciousness, and ultimately it is this aim which contextualises all practices. Holistic health and profound inner happiness are side effects of practising yoga with this aim in mind.

Contextualising yoga: the six philosophies

One of the best ways to contextualise yoga is to understand the environment in which it developed. Yoga has always been thought of as one part of a process of self-development. It is one of six allied philosophical systems that support each other and create a mega-philosophical system called the *shad darshan*, the six philosophies.

The word for philosophy in Sanskrit is 'darshana', from the root drsh, which means 'to view or look at, contemplate, comprehend, and see by divine intuition'. Darshana translates as 'seeing, looking at, knowing, observing, noticing, becoming visible or known, doctrine, a philosophical system'. The term darshana implies that one looks at life and sees the truth; we see things as they are. Yoga teaches us to see life more clearly, to examine the body-mind and behaviours with greater awareness.

Yoga is one of the six major darshanas, or philosophical and cosmological systems, of India. These systems are:

Vaisheshika (scientific observation), formulated by Kanada

Nyaya (logic), formulated by Gotama

Samkhya (cosmology), formulated by Kapila

Yoga (introspection), formulated by Patanjali

Mimamsa (profound intuition), formulated by Jaimini

Vedanta (the end of the Vedas), formulated by Badarayana

Of these six philosophies, the two most important philosophies for the yogi are *Samkhya* and *Vedanta*. *Samkhya* provides knowledge of the components of the body-mind and was a strong influence on Patanjali. *Vedanta* gives us an understanding of the ultimate attainments possible through yoga practice. A good synthesis of all these philosophical systems can be found in the *Bhagavad Gita*, in which Krishna teaches Arjuna yoga and how to live his life from within the highest yogic vision.

So when we practise yoga techniques – the content of yoga – we need to remember that what we are learning is part of a bigger whole, that there is much more to life than we can see or experience with a limited perception. We need to remember the context in which yoga has developed and that yoga practised in modern times is very different to the yoga practised in times gone by. At the same time, we need to remember that the ultimate aim of all practice is higher awareness and a vision of Truth.

Yoga can mean different things to different people. For many it is a way to lead a peaceful life. For others it is a way to keep the body free from different ailments and disorders. For some it involves the practice of relaxation through meditation. However, according to the theory of yoga, its ultimate aim is to unfold our hidden qualities and awakening our dormant faculties. Time to time the concept has been changed and the users are modifying it as per their own needs keeping in mind the importance of yoga and its benefits.

The importance of yoga and yogic practices has been accepted worldwide and the interdisciplinary approach is being used to get the maximum outcome for betterment of the individual by teachers, coaches, athletes, physical-educationists, medical practitioners, lawyers, defence personnel, managers, field workers etc. This concept can be explained by giving various activities and assignments to the students where they are made to observe the relationship of yoga in different contexts.

Check Your Progress 4

On ‘International Yoga Day’, you must have seen in newspapers and TV that people from all fields whether defence personnel posted in the fields, office employees, administrators or thousands of school children in play grounds were seen doing yoga. Was it just a one day affair to celebrate ‘International Yoga Day’? Or have we understood in a real sense that yogic practices and meditation do help us in various contexts?

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4.7 LET US SUM UP

We started this unit with the introduction and definition of the term Yoga. After discussing its origin, we next moved to its journey in the contemporary context. We discussed the utmost benefits of yoga for self-realisation for all including the practising teachers. We also discussed the importance of yogic practices and meditation for wholesome development of an individual considering physical, mental, social, and emotional aspects. In this unit, we have also studied about the role of Yoga in various contexts. The approach to Yoga has taken an interdisciplinary shape and continuous work is being done to get maximum benefits out of this field to facilitate human beings in various aspects of life whether at personal or professional end.

4.8 UNIT-END ACTIVITIES

At the end of the Unit, reflect on the following questions:

- Make a list of the diseases, disorders and postural deformities and write down some yogic remedies for all.
- Plan a visit to a wildlife sanctuary to see how animals and nature coordinate. Reflect on the coordination between the nature and animals to have a successful survival. (Hint: You will be able to analyse now that why many of the asanas are named on birds and animals, and also try to point out what all benefits we get from these types of postures).
- Explain the benefits of meditation for sportpersons in the achievement of optimum performance. Do yogic practices affect them according to the game or event? If yes, list the asanas with their benefits in relation to different types of sports.
- Make a group data for various aspects of physiology to check the physiological development when indulging in regular practice of Yoga (Data can be taken every month and changes can be analysed).

Example of data collection:

| S.NO. | NAME | BMI* (1) | BMI* (2) | BMI* (3) |
|-------|------|----------|----------|----------|
| - | - | - | | |
| - | - | - | | |
| - | - | - | | |

*BMI- BODY MASS INDEX - It provides the proper height and weight proportion of an individual (standard chart given below).

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{(\text{Weight in kilograms})}{(\text{Height in metres})^2}$$

NOTE: The BMI obtained from above procedure can be checked for the category from the following table. Data can be taken on intervals 1, 2, 3..... And can be analysed for the development.

| BMI | CLASSIFICATION |
|-------------|-------------------|
| <18.5 | Underweight |
| 18.5 - 24.9 | Normal Weight |
| 25 - 29.9 | Overweight |
| 30 - 34.9 | Class I Obesity |
| 35 - 39.9 | Class II Obesity |
| >40 | Class III Obesity |

4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

Yoga has originated from the word 'Yuj' which has its basis in Sanskrit. It has been explained as the unification of the individual soul with the ultimate divine power. Patanjali defines Yoga as "checking the impulses of mind" and gives eight-fold paths or eight steps to achieve this ultimate aim. These eight elements are as follows:

- 1. Yama:** It can be taken as the type of attitude a yogi should possess towards others. The yogic ethics should consist of five elements such as non-violence, non-theft, truthfulness, sexual moderation and detachment.
- 2. Niyama:** It is the type of behaviour that a yogi should possess towards oneself. There are five niyamas such as purity, contentment, austerity, self-study, and surrender.
- 3. Asanas:** They are basically the bodily postures done to enhance the efficiency of body. Some examples are tadasana, mayurasana, chakrasana etc.
- 4. Prayanama:** These are basically breathing exercises done to prepare mind and body to move towards self-realisation. It includes the control on the inhalation and exhalation patterns of breathing.
- 5. Pratyahara:** It is the state of mind where one gets so involved in one's activity that no distractions reach the mind.
- 6. Dharana:** It is the flow where one will be able to get a point focus (internal or external) concentration.
- 7. Dhyana:** Dhyana is the complete control over body, mind and soul. It is the stage prior to Samadhi
- 8. Samadhi:** It is the union of the individual soul to the supreme divine soul and beginning of the divine pleasure.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1. Physical development through yogic practices:** Regular practice of yoga helps in the smooth functioning of the body which causes efficient performance of an individual. Yogic practices provide speed, strength, stamina, flexibility and a great neuro-muscular coordination. It improves the body's overall physical and physiological capacities.
- 2. Mental development through yogic practices:** Yoga asanas and meditation helps an individual to develop various mental faculties and hence improve mental capabilities such as attention, concentration, arousal, decisiveness, memory etc.
- 3. Social development through yogic practices:** Yogic practices give a sense of responsibility towards our surroundings. We feel more sensitive towards the living or non-living things around us. Socialisation is another significant component that adds to our life through practising yoga. It gives a capability of smooth social adjustability as it helps in developing the required elements for the process of an effective socialisation.
- 4. Emotional development through yogic practices:** Regular yogic and meditation practices help an individual to develop emotional stability. Expression of feelings such as anger, love, hate, happiness, pain are the basic instincts of an individual but to express these feelings in a right manner at an appropriate time is crucial. Yoga provides the proper sense and control for the expression of our feelings.
- 5. Spiritual development through yogic practices:** Yogic practices such as Padmasana, Siddhasana and Pranayama are very useful for spiritual development that brings peace in life. It also provides control over our thought process, ideas and beliefs. Mind becomes pure and calm which leads an individual soul to achieve its unification with the divine soul.

Check Your Progress 3

The world is ever changing. Things that surround us put an impact on the individual. Similarly the inner world, our thoughts, beliefs, ideas, attitude affect our surroundings. A proper balance between the inner and outer world is essential. Animals follow Nature's laws and rhythms with perfect acceptance, eating the right amount of the right food at the right time, rising and sleeping with the sun, mating only at the fixed times, and taking from the environment only that which is necessary for their daily need. The modern environment has given us a lot of problems as we are going indifferent with the laws of nature. Modern lifestyle causes many diseases and disorders to human beings. Regular yogic practices, attaining yogic behaviour towards others and towards oneself, having sattavic bhojan, paying gratefulness towards the nature provides our body the power of efficient working, mind the sense of control and soul the unification to the divine power. This way our inner body can attain the balance through the outer world with a sense of respect to the nature and its power.

Yoga develops an individual physically, mentally, socially, emotionally and spiritually. Yoga has a lot to give to us. Many researches have been conducted from time to time to find out various benefits of yoga. It gives strength to body, mind and soul. Researches have also shown that regular practice of yoga for children helps in improving their academic achievements. Yoga benefits all irrespective of their age and profession.

4.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 5 YOGA AND HEALTH

Structure

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Objectives
- 5.3 Need of Yoga for Positive Health
- 5.4 Role of Mind in Positive Health as per Ancient Yogic Literature
- 5.5 Concept of Health, Healing and Disease: Yogic Perspective
- 5.6 Potential Causes of ill Health
- 5.7 Yogic Principles of Healthy Living
 - 5.7.1 *Ahara* (Food)
 - 5.7.2 *Vihara* (Recreation)
 - 5.7.3 *Achara* (Conduct)
 - 5.7.4 *Vichara* (Thinking)
 - 5.7.5 *Vyavahara* (Behaviour)
- 5.8 Stress Management through Yoga and Yogic Dietary Consideration
 - 5.8.1 Stress and its Management
 - 5.8.2 Yogic Dietary Consideration
- 5.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.10 Unit-End Activities
- 5.11 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 5.12 Suggested Readings

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit we have already studied about different philosophies of Yoga and their role in well-being of man, role of meditation, role of Yoga to live in peace and harmony with one's surroundings and use of Yoga in different contexts. In this unit, we shall be focussing on role of Yoga in positive health. We shall be discussing the meaning of positive health, causes of ill health and stress management through Yoga and Yogic dietary considerations.

5.2 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you should be able to:

- explain the importance of yoga in day-to-day life;
- describe the ancient yogic perspective on mind for good health;
- explain the developmental mechanism of diseases as per yogic perspective;
- explain the potential causes of health problems;
- appreciate yogic principles for a lifestyle leading to good health;
- appreciate the role of yoga to deal with various types of stressors in life; and
- plan the diet with yogic consideration.

5.3 NEED OF YOGA FOR POSITIVE HEALTH

Yoga is not only meant for physical or mental exercises. As stated earlier, it is a philosophy – *a way of living life*. According to Patanjali, the main cause of all our pain and sorrow is *Avidya* (Ignorance) – lack of awareness. This is the ignorance for awareness and importance of living the life in an ideal manner. Knowingly or unknowingly our lifestyle has become bad and we are facing various kinds of health issues. And these issues are not restricted to *physical* (high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, obesity etc.) only. Rather, these consist of *mental issues* (such as anxiety, stress, depression, lack of confidence etc.) and *social issues* (such as crime, homicide, rape etc.) as well. Health of individuals have a direct relation with the health of a society and ultimately the health of the nation. But our health is directly related to our way of living, so the root cause of the entire problem is our lifestyle, our beliefs, our values and these can be termed as our *life philosophy*.

Check Your Progress 1

As per Patanjali’s understanding, lack of awareness towards lifestyle is the root cause of all the problems we encounter in our lifespan. Write the lifestyle factor and problem caused by it below:

| LIFESTYLE FACTOR | PROBLEM |
|--------------------------|---------|
| e.g 1. bad eating habits | Obesity |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |
| 4. | |
| 5. | |

Yoga which usually people consider for spiritual purpose, now has been accepted as a science of health. Practising yoga does not imply prevention and treatment of diseases but leads one to achieve positive health. Yoga helps in positive health because:

- it can help in prevention of diseases by strengthening the immune system of our body;
- yogic practices have curative value for various diseases as well;
- it is a medium to bring harmony between mind and body;
- yogic exercises are helpful in regulation of mental modification that helps in keeping a control on hyperactive state of mind;
- it further helps in emotion regulation;
- it has been scientifically proven that yogic practices can effectively manage the psychiatric and neurological disorders.;
- yogic practices reduce anxiety, insecurity and improve overall mental health;
- scientific facts are also available for positive effect of yogic exercises (*Dhyana*) on calmness, concentration, focus and relaxation of mind;
- shatkriyas/shatkarmas in yoga is an exercise of cleaning organs and systems of the body by removing the toxins that may have harmful effect;

- yogasanas are also useful as corrective measure for certain postural deformities such as sclerosis, lordosis, stoop neck, knock knee etc.; and
- yogasanas also help to improve flexibility of the muscles.

Ashtanga Yoga was enunciated by Patanjali as a way to control the mental modifications but as a matter of fact it is a way to healthy living also which leads to holistic approach of the health. The *Ashtanga Yoga* is actually a stepwise procedure leading to self-realisation. The first two steps form the basic principles of yoga. These steps are:

1. **Yama** – Self restrained. This consists of :
 - *Ahimsa* (practice of non-violence)
 - *Satya* (practice of truthfulness)
 - *Asteya* (practice of non-stealing)
 - *Brahmacharya* (practice of continence)
 - *Aparigraha* (practice of non-acquisitiveness)
2. **Niyama** – Personal code of conduct
 - *Shaucha* (practice of cleanliness)
 - *Santosha* (practice of contentment)
 - *Swadhyaya* (practice of study of self)
 - *Tapa* (practice of penance)
 - *Ishwarapranidhana* (practice of surrender to supreme power)
3. **Asana**
4. **Pranayama**
5. **Pratyahara**
6. **Dharana**
7. **Dhyana**
8. **Samadhi**

Check Your Progress 2

The importance of *Ashtanga Yoga* for good health has been depicted in various literatures. The *Ashtanga Yoga* is actually a stepwise procedure leading to self-realisation. Discuss.

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5.4 ROLE OF MIND IN POSITIVE HEALTH AS PER ANCIENT YOGIC LITERATURE

To initiate this topic one question needs to be explored first – what is mind? There was a time when psychology was considered as ‘the study of mind’. But later on this definition was discarded as scientists did not find any existence of mind. Some people use mind synonymously with brain. However, these two are entirely different from each other.

In yoga, mind is considered as ‘*Antarmann or chitta*’. Yoga has been defined differently by different scriptures. Patanjali’s yoga sutra states yoga as:

‘Yogashchittavritti nirodhah’

which refers to complete control of mental modifications. Here, the word ‘*chitta*’ refers to mind in totality which is composed of *manas* (mind), *budhhi* (intellect) and *ahamkara* (ego). *Vritti* refers to change or movements or modification and *nirodhah* means restriction or control. Bhagavad Gita defines Yoga as ‘*Samatvam yoga uchyate*’ which means ‘equanimity of mind’. According to Bhagavad Gita, yoga is the state of equanimity in which a person remains unaffected by different situations such as success and failure, ragas and dveshas in life. This equanimity of mind makes the person free from the imbalances of mind and helps to make him/her stable and relaxed. Mahopanishad defines yoga as ‘*Manah prashamanopayah yogah ityabhidhiyate*’ that refers to ‘control of the mind’.

Here, in all these scriptures the existence of mind is not only proved but has been given utmost importance and entire Yoga practice revolves around the word ‘Mind’. All these ancient texts reveal that controlling the mind is the key to good health.

We, even have heard some quote illuminating the importance of mind such as ‘*duniya ko kisne vash me kiya, jisne apne mann to vash me kiya*’ or ‘*mann ke haare haar hai, mann ke jite jeet*’. The ‘*mann*’ or ‘*antarmann*’ or ‘mind’ is the core issue of our life. Yogic practices bring about harmony among the body, mind and soul. And the ultimate aim of Yoga is self-realisation through which a person is able to secure best to himself and to the society.

Check Your Progress 3

Share any experience of your life where you won/lost something but you got the intuition for the same before witnessing the outcome

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5.5 CONCEPT OF HEALTH, HEALING AND DISEASE: YOGIC PERSPECTIVE

The most commonly used definition of Health is the definition given by WHO which goes like “*the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity*”. The state of physical well-being is characterised by optimal functioning of the body as a whole through co-ordination among different systems and their components. Mental well-being is a state of psychological and emotional health characterised by better understanding, positive self-concept, positive relationship with self and others, rational behaviour, quick perception, logical analysis, foresightedness, reasoning, correct and quick decision making, good memory etc. The state of social well-being is considered by concern and care of others in the society where thinking, emotions and actions are oriented towards well-being of all and not the self alone. Spiritual health is related to an understanding, exploration and actualisation of the self. In the state of spiritual well-being one is free from worldly phenomena like money, property, pleasure and pain, relations etc. and remains unaffected by any situation.

As far as Yogic approach is concerned, health is considered to be integration, harmony and balance among body, mind and soul. Yogic philosophy says that a human body is made up of three parts:

- Physical
- Astral
- Causal

These three parts are further sub-classified in to five layers also known as ‘*Panch Koshas*’. These are:

- *Annamaya kosha* – the physical sheath
- *Manomaya kosha* – the mental sheath
- *Pranamaya kosha* – the vital sheath
- *Vijnanamaya kosha* – the intellectual or wisdom sheath
- *Anandamaya kosha* – the blissful sheath

In order to obtain the state of complete health, all three parts need to be free from any ailment. The causal body is taken as the innermost body of a person. It is the source of physical and astral bodies.

The *annamaya kosha* (the food sheath) which is very first in classification is the part of Physical body. It says that our body is whatever food we eat. The food reaches to every cell to provide energy and ultimately become our body.

The second is *manomaya kosha* (the mental sheath) is exactly like the software of a computer whereas the *annamaya kosha* is the hardware. It is the medium of communicating experiences and sensations of the external world to the intellectual sheath.

The annamaya kosha and manomaya kosha cannot work until they have the life in the body which is provided by the third sheath known as *pranamaya kosha* (the energy or vital sheath). The vital sheath is composed of five pranas (life-energies) that have distinct functions in the working of the physical body. These five vital pranas/airs (vayus) are conjoined with the five subtle organs of action (speech, hands, legs, organs of evacuation and procreation) which have their gross counterparts in the physical body.

Then next is *vijnanamaya kosha* (the intellectual or wisdom sheath) is the reflection of radiance of soul consciousness. It comprises mind, intellect and the ego with the five organs of perception and is responsible for all the judgmental actions.

The innermost layer or sheath of all the koshas is the anandamaya kosha which is the reflection of blissfulness of the soul. It is the cause of both the subtle and gross bodies and is the result of harmony of all other sheaths.

As per the yogic perspective, a disease has been defined as the imbalance in the lower sheath that has been described above. According to the Yoga Philosophy, the disturbance occurs in *manomaya kosha* (mental body) as a result of interaction in the world. This is called *Adhi*. This further leads to disturbance in *pranamaya kosha* (vital body) and ultimately end up with manifesting itself in *annamaya kosha* (physical body).

Let us now discuss the developmental description of diseases. These diseases have been explained in following stages:

- ***Psychic phase or adhi***

This is the phase of mental trauma or excessive mental & emotional disturbance. As per the ancient view, any mishappening, whether physical or mental, is the result of past mental activities. The excessive mental disturbance further leads to residual anxiety, stress, depression etc. that are the bad emotions (as per emotional guidance system). All this occurs in the *manomaya kasha*.

- ***Psycho-somatic phase***

The disturbance in mental and emotional system due to bad experiences in life affects the internal functioning of body. The outcomes include hypertension, tachycardia, increased respiratory rate etc. This stage of disease is related to *pranamaya kosha*.

- ***Somatic phase***

The affected internal functioning puts extra work on body's systems that disturbs the organ efficiency adversely. This effect on system also affects the pranic flow in the body which is the *annamaya kosha*.

- ***Organic phase or vyadhi***

The residual effect of disturbance in the target organ soon starts manifesting its symptoms on physical body or *annamaya kosha* which is the indicator of developed disease. Examples of diseases include coronary heart problem, asthma, thyroidism etc.

5.6 POTENTIAL CAUSES OF ILL HEALTH

Avidya (ignorance) is considered to be the root cause of all diseases. In fact, yogic philosophy says, this is the cause of all the problems in our life. *Avidya* causes the disease firstly in the causal body and then it gives rise to the disease in the mind and the body. The disease of the mind is called *adhi* whereas, the disease of the body is called *vyadhi*. *Avidya* causes psychic or mental diseases in the form of conflicts, frustrations, greed, egotism and other impurities. This causes reactions at physiological level which are manifested in the form of physical diseases.

Avidya leads to *kleshas*, which affects the mind. This disturbance leads to various mental diseases (*adhi*). This affects smooth flow of *prana* in the *nadis*. The blockage in the pranic flow causes imbalances in the body and all physiological systems get affected. The malfunctioning of these bodily systems gets reflected in the form of physical diseases (*vyadhi*). Therefore, according to Yogic philosophy, *adhi* and *vyadhi* can be treated by the methods which can help in removing ignorance (*avidya*) and cure causal and astral bodies.

The *ashtang yoga* (Patanjali's yoga sutra) represents the system of lifestyle that consists of eight limb or steps which are successive in order. Practice of this system right from the beginning of life keeps us healthy and disease free. Indeed, the *ashtang yoga* is the method to achieve success in control of mental modifications which when not controlled leads to unhealthy life.

5.7 YOGIC PRINCIPLES OF HEALTHY LIVING

Lifestyle of a person is decided by the environment, surroundings, family, culture, eating habits, education, financial condition and day-to-day activities. A person is considered to be healthy when he is completely satisfied, has growth potential, joy of living and developing harmony among all layers of life (*annamaya kosha*, *pranamaya kosha*, *manomaya kosha*, *vijnanmaya kosha* and *anandmaya kosha*). Healthy living means how one lives, works, enjoys, and spends his/her time more constructively, happily and positively or deals with situations of life in a manner which does not interfere with normal functions of life.

Though, the concept of healthy living has been described in various texts like *Vedas*, *Upanishadas*, *Yoga Sutra*, *Hatha Yoga etc.* Ashtanga yoga of Patanjali described in Yoga Sutra provides solid techniques to attain holistic health – physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual. The *Ashtanga Yoga* is divided into eight steps or limbs in which first five steps – *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara* – are the part of *Bahiranga Yoga*; and last three limbs – *dharana*, *dhyana* and *Samadhi* – are the part of *Antaranga Yoga*.

All the texts explaining the yogic principles for healthy living are stressing on almost the same principles. Goal decides how the yoga will be practiced. These principles are often considered as *pillars of yoga* which are applicable even today. The yogic principles of healthy living have been categorised as:

5.7.1 Ahara (Food)

It is related to one's eating habits. In yogic practice, the ideal food is called 'mitahara' which refers to proper quality, proper quantity and proper mental set-up. It has been described in *Hatha yoga pradipika* as:

Susnigdamadhuraaharashchathurthansha vivarjitah

Bhujyate shivasamprityai mitaharah su uchyate

Mitahara is defined as agreeable and sweet food leaving one fourth of the stomach free and eaten as an offering to please *Shiva* (God)

This *shloka* explains that the stomach should never be completely filled with food. Rather, the one fourth part of stomach should be kept empty and that part of food should be offered to the lord *Shiva*. Food should be taken with a sense of *dharma* (duty), *jnana* (knowledge) and *vairagya* (detachment).

According to Yogic scriptures, there are three types of foods that we eat, which are explained below:

- **Sattavic:** This food is easily digestible. This is naturally grown, easy to digest and gives energy. The *sattavic* food includes milk, milk products such as curd, cheese etc. fruits, dried fruits, vegetables of the season, cereals, sprouts, pulses, honey, jaggery, sugarcane, natural and unprocessed sugar and oil.
- **Rajasic:** The food is essential for physically active people and is heavy to digest.
- **Tamasic:** These are nerve stimulating. They are usually unnatural in state. Stale, frozen, canned foods; bakery products of refined flour such as cake, pastries; chocolates, soft drinks, tea, coffee, wines and liquor, tobacco etc. fall under this category. This type of food disturbs the balance of nerves.

One should always eat for survival and for that purpose three-fourth stomach part filled with food is sufficient. Over eating leads to over burdening the digestive system and ultimately decreases its working efficiency. Besides, locally grown (natively) food should be eaten.

Yogic approach puts emphasis on how and when to eat. One should never drink water with food. A person should never eat when agitated, disturbed, stressed or worried. This is the reason why yoga puts stress on proper mental set-up for food intake. The timings for taking meals also should be fixed as far as possible. It can be four times a day with a gap of four hours between two meals. The timings can be adjusted depending upon the need and requirement of the person.

5.7.2 Vihara (Recreation)

It refers to such activities that are joyful, relaxing and creative in nature. These are the recreational activities one involves in spare time. This principle of healthy living gives immense importance to such activities. These may include painting, dancing, pottery, drawing, singing, gardening or playing. The activity should be based on the interest of the individual. Then only a person can enjoy it fully.

A person should be encouraged to perform creative activities like drawing, painting, singing or any other activity which would help in regulating and controlling the emotions in the long-run. A person must learn the art of conscious relaxation and should discipline himself/herself.

The relaxation includes sleep also. Sleep is a conscious relaxation. Mind should be calm and quiet for a good sleep.

5.7.3 *Achara* (Conduct)

These include the right habits, right attitude and behaviour with oneself and others. The yogic life style expects that a person would develop good habits and exercise self-discipline and self control in his life. It has been seen that most of the times external difficulties are caused by the inappropriate action in life and can be fixed only with his good conduct.

Yama and *niyama* are the systematic procedures that can improve one's personal and social conduct. This principle says that an individual need to be disciplined to self and the society to lead a happy life. This procedure makes a person well-organised. Once these two parts of *Ashtanga yoga* are internalised, a person can lead a happy life.

5.7.4 *Vichara* (Thinking)

In this principle, emphasis is laid on the importance of thinking. We have heard a lot about the value of positive thinking. As per yogic practices, our way of thinking is very important in achieving happiness in our lives. Our thoughts are very powerful. As per the law of attraction, whatever is happening in present with us is because we have thought about it, consciously or subconsciously, in past. And whatever we are thinking now, will decide our future. Everything happens with us, whether good or bad, is because of our mental set of attitude. We create our own world, good or bad, by means of our own thought process. In order to lead a happy life, one's thoughts should be disciplined, proper and channelised in the right direction. For this, things should be seen in the right perspective and integrated accordingly. A right perspective brings clarity and positivity in thoughts which brings optimism and courage to face the problems and the individual thus does not get unreasonably frightened and disturbed.

Yogic exercises help in controlling the *vrittis* (modification of thoughts) of the mind and thereby giving positive direction to the negative thoughts. The seventh limb of *Ashtanga yoga* which is *Dhyana*, when practiced, helps in control of mental aspects of life.

5.7.5 *Vyavahara* (Behaviour)

Vyavahara is considered as our conduct towards others. Yoga, in various texts, has prescribed how to behave with others. In this context, *Karma yoga* (of the Bhagavad Gita) and *Kriyayoga* (of Maharishi Patanjali) are very relevant. The Bhagavad Gita propounds that actions must be performed with a series of detachment and duty. Patanjali emphasises on *tapa*, *swadhyaya* and *ishwarpranidhana*. There should be regularity and detachment while doing the things in day-to-day life.

The person's behaviour or practical life or action is the result of his internal thoughts. The person should make friends with happy people;

behave compassionately with sad or unhappy people; be happy with the virtuous people and show indifference towards the evil persons.

Check Your Progress 4

On the basis of above prescribed yogic principles for healthy living, answer the following questions:

1. Will the yogic principles for healthy living be applicable on an average individual?

.....

2. How would you prescribe or implement these principles in the life of an average individual?

.....

3. In your opinion, how do these principles benefit an average individual?

.....

5.8 STRESS MANAGEMENT THROUGH YOGA AND YOGIC DIETARY CONSIDERATION

5.8.1 Stress and Its Management

Stress is the *demand of effort required for an activity or event*. It is a kind of load put on or taken by an individual against certain events. The stress can be *physical or mental*. It is called physical stress when physical activity is done. And when mental activity is done, it is called mental stress. However, stress is considered to be bad for our health. Indeed, if certain task is to be carried out then its optimal level is required. Stress starts creating problems when it reaches out of required limit and lasts for a long time.

Though, the technological advancement is at its peak these days, unfortunately, they have affected the mental peace and health of the individual. The urban life is more stressful in comparison to rural area. High competitiveness, unfavourable environment, polluted atmosphere, bad eating habits, intolerance among people are some of the contributing factors for such stressful environment.

Acharya Shri Ram Sharma has classified stress into three types:

- *Physical stress*

It refers to the muscular tension due to physical work. Excessive workload keeps the muscles tense and lack of rest leads to injury to muscles such as strain. Even, physical work beyond capacity may immediately harm our body.

- *Mental stress*

Excessive mental activity may lead to certain mental stress. These activities may include academic study, restless office work etc.

- *Emotional stress*

Disturbance in relationship with family members and in society causes inappropriate emotional reactions. A constant disturbance in the relationship creates a stressful environment which ultimately leads to various diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, thyroid hyperactivity/hypoactivity etc.

'Yogaschittavrittinirodhah'. The *shloka* given by Maharishi Patanjali in his first ever organised and systematic Yoga Practice text '*Yoga Sutra*' gives very first preference to our mind. The mind should be free from any kind of mental modification. For this purpose, Patanjali had prescribed the '*Ashtanga Yoga*' which has eight limbs or parts to eradicate all our pain and sorrow. '*Pranayama, Pratyahaar, Dharna and Dhyana*' are specifically structured for mental cleanliness and calmness. Some of the activities that are prescribed for stress management are as follows:

- *Shatkarma*

This yogic practice includes the procedure for purification of the body. There are *six* different techniques for body cleansing. These are:

Neti – Nasal wash

Dhauti – Cleaning of the digestive tract

Nauli – Intestinal cleansing

Basti – cleaning of colon

Kapalabhati - Skull polishing

Trataka – method of meditation that involve staring at a particular point.

- *Asanas*

'Sthir sukham asanma' means ability to sit in a position for extended period with ease. There are various kinds of asanas. Some are performed seated, some standing and even some lying. All the asanas are done with a purpose such as *Bhujangasana* is performed to remove back pain and strengthen the spine, *Vajrasana* is executed to improve the ability of digestive system. Meditative exercises can only be performed when asanas have been practiced properly.

- *Pranayama*

Pranayama refers to control of breath. Prana means breath and ayama means restrain or control. Practising *pranayama* brings our mental

activity under control and thereby master our body and mind complex in a complete way. For example: it is often suggested to count up to ten and take deep breath in between whenever you feel angry. In a matter of moment, you feel calm and controlled and there will be a clear change in your mental state. There are various kinds of *pranayama* techniques. Some of these are:

Deep yogic breathing

Intercostal breathing

Clavicular breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing

Shunyaka

Puraka

Kumbhaka

Rechaka

Anuloma-viloma

5.8.2 Yogic Dietary Consideration

In the first yogic principle of healthy living '*Ahara*', it was described that the right mental set to prepare and eat food is of utmost importance. Our digestive system gets affected by our emotions. Therefore, emotions like fear, anger, stress etc. have disturbing effects on the digestive system which ultimately decrease its efficiency to utilise the food eaten.

The *Sattvic diet*, gives due importance to vegetarian food because of the principle of non-injury. It has also been proved that low-protein, non-flesh diet provides more endurance.

Unlike the modern concept of diet that talks about nutritive value of diet such as: Carbohydrate – 60%, Fat – 20%, Protein – 20%. The composition of yogic meal is as follows:

30% - Grains (wheat, rice, corn, barley, oats)

20% - Dairy Products (milk, curd, cheese)

25% Vegetable and Roots (lady finger, spinach, bitter gourd, eggplant, parval, roots etc.

2% - Fruits & Honey

5% - Nuts

18% - others (pulses, oils & Fats)

We need to remember some points for yogic diet consideration:

- The food should be taken with calm and quiet mind and in slow and attentive manner.
- Purely vegetarian food should be taken to maintain the efficiency of the digestive system.

- The food should be chewed properly before swallowing.
- Water should be avoided one hour before and after the meal.
- Milk can be the substitute of water.
- The stomach should be filled half with solid food and one fourth with water. Remaining one fourth should be kept empty. The empty space is left for the air which is also considered important for food.

Check Your Progress 5

Keeping in mind the above dietary considerations, prepare a diet plan for an average individual.

| | |
|---|--|
| Breakfast | Evening |
| Mid-morning | Dinner |
| Lunch | Before sleep |

5.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed importance of health and role of ancient yogic understanding to acquire healthful living. The pragmatic approach of ancient yogic practices for better health has also been proven by modern scientific evidence. These procedures help one to eradicate all misfortunes whether it is related to physical, mental or social aspects of our life. The guiding principles of yogic practices and related activities are the concrete ways to overcome all the problems of day-to-day life.

5.10 UNIT-END ACTIVITIES

1. Write your perceptions about your concentration level, mental calmness, cognitive abilities and stress level of your life. Thereafter, start meditation for the duration of minimum three months and again write your experiences at completion of every month of training.

2. As per yogic perception, the development of diseases begins with excessive mental and emotional disturbances. Is any close friend or relative suffering from any disease? Discuss with them and find out about their past life and find out any mishappening that may have led to a mental trauma. Also try to find out if there is any correlation between the disease and that bad event.
3. It is always desirable to join an organised yoga course in order to acquire and experience the benefits of yogic practices and learn to teach others as well.

5.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- Bad eating habits - obesity
- Uncleanliness - various skin problems
- Lying - bad relationship with others
- Physical inactivity - lack of strength, vulnerable to injuries
- Bad living conditions - various health problems such as malaria, dengue etc.

Check Your Progress 2

Every part of Ashtang Yoga has a purpose of establishing us as a better human being and when followed by all, it leads to a better world. It is a step wise procedure that leads one to his ultimate goal of life. The first part is *Yama*. In this part we learn how to restrict ourselves from various social evils such as violence, lying, stealing, incontinence and non-acquisitiveness. The second part is *Niyama* in which we learn the personal conduct such as practice of cleanliness, contentment, study of self, penance and surrender to supreme power. This part is followed by *Asanas*. Practising asanas increases one's strength, stability, flexibility and also corrects the posture. Thereafter comes *Pranayama*. Here one learns to practice controlling own breathing. Then comes *Pratyahara*, which is the process of withdrawing senses from external sensation. Doing so, an individual learns to control his senses. Following that, the sixth limb of Ashtang yoga comes which refers to the introspective focus on a particular inner state other than senses. *Dharana* is the state that can be called refinement in *Pratyahara*. Then comes the seventh limb, known as *Dhyana*. It is integrally related to the sixth stage of Patanjali's yoga sutra. It is the process of constant and focused thought on a particular object which is uninterrupted by other thoughts. *Samadhi* is the last limb of Patanjali's yoga sutra which refers to oneness among meditator, process and thought. This state enables the person to get absorbed completely in the process of contemplation that a person is not aware of own identity. It is the highest state of meditation.

Check Your Progress 3

The answer to this question will be subjective based on the feelings/experiences of the individual.

Check Your Progress 4

Answer 1

Yes, because these principles are based on the regular activities of an individual.

Answer 2

These yogic principles are confined to activities such as the food we eat, the activities we perform, our conduct, our thinking aspect and our behaviour towards others. These principles can easily be implemented just by modifying the aforementioned activities. The best way is to implement or start practising Ashtang Yoga as it includes all these principles.

Answer 3

The yogic principles for healthful living are beneficial for all whether it belongs to physical, mental or social aspects of health. Its benefits are as follows:

Ahara (food): This refers to the kind of food we eat. According to this principle, food has been categorised into three categories: sattavic, rajasic and tamasic. Where sattavic food are natural and are obtained directly from nature and are beneficial for human digestive system, tamasic food are considered bad. Nowadays, these include: packed food, processed food, wine and liquor, tobacco etc. This principle also reveals the amount and time of eating. One should eat food that keeps his stomach's one fourth part empty as it increases the efficiency of digestion.

Vihara (Recreation): these activities are performed by a person in his/her leisure time. These activities should be joyful, relaxing, creative and productive in nature. The activities can be of any type. e.g. dancing, singing, painting etc. But it should be of personal interest. Such productive activities rejuvenate a person and clear off tiredness and negative emotions.

Achara (Conduct): the good conduct includes right habits, right attitude and right approach towards life. It is usually seen that most of our external problems are caused by our own inappropriate actions. Practising Yama and Niyama (part of Ashtang yoga) promote self-discipline that is a pre-requisite for a good conduct.

Vichara (Thinking): this principle emphasises on the positive thinking as our thoughts are considered to be very powerful. Negative thinking can destroy the life of a person whereas a positive mental set up brings optimism, peace and courage to face difficult situations appropriately.

Vyavahara (Thinking): this is a process of dealing with others. The appropriate approach in dealing with others leads one to a peaceful life. In order to attain the same, a person must perform his duties with regularity and detachment.

Check Your Progress 5

The diet plan of a sedentary person with normal body weight.

| | | |
|--------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Breakfast: | 1 cup of milk | 1 katori curd |
| | 1 bowl of daliya | ½ plate of salad |
| | 2 chapati/2 stuffed prantha | Evening: 1 fruit (any) |
| | 1 katori daal | Dinner:- ½ chapati/ ½ plate rice |
| | 1 handful of dried fruits | 1 katori sabzi (any seasonal) |
| Mid-Morning: | 1 fruit (any) | |
| | 1 handful of sprouts | 1 katori daal |
| Lunch: | 2-4 chapati/1 plate rice | 1 katori curd |
| | 1 katori sabzi (any seasonal) | ½ plate salad |
| | 1 katori daal | Before sleep: 1 cup of milk |

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