

The Implications of the Spiritual and Mental Wellness of Yoga Philosophy. An Epistemological Approach

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Abstract

Yoga is an ancient and complex practice, rooted in Indian Philosophy. It began as a spiritual practice but has become popular as a way of promoting physical and well-being. Yoga is essentially spiritual and it is an art and science of healthy living which focuses on bringing harmony between mind and body. Yoga is being practiced as part of healthy life style and has become part of our spiritual heritage. In the present era, yoga is popular world-wide because of its spiritual values therapeutic credentials, its role in the prevention of disease, promotion of health and management of lifestyle disorders. Several clinical studies demonstrated the potentials of yoga in the treatment of many life style related or psycho somatic disorders.

Keywords: Harmony, prevention, Integration, Self-realisation, mindfulness

Introduction

Yoga is a practice that originated in ancient India and is rooted in Hinduism. It has been passed down through generations. The word “yoga” comes from the Sanskrit word “yuj,” which means to unite or join. It is a practice that aims to unite the body, mind, and spirit through various physical postures, breathing exercises, and meditation. The Philosophy of yoga is based on the belief that we are all connected and that everything in the universe is interconnected. It teaches us to live in harmony with ourselves and the world around us. The ultimate goal of yoga is to achieve a state of inner peace, known as “samadhi,” through the integration of our physical, mental, and spiritual selves.

1. Originate Yoga Philosophy

Yoga, most people believe, is just asanas and pranayama's meant to keep a person in good health. But there's more to this ancient art and science that seeks to harmonize body, mind, and spirit. This misconception largely comes because the reality about the origin of yoga is relatively unknown. One of the oldest sciences in the world, yoga originated in India. According to mythology, Lord Shiva was the Adi Yogi, the first to impart the knowledge of yoga. Within this lens, then the question of who invented yoga some say that Lord Shiva is seen as the inventor of yoga. Archaeological evidence dating back to 2700 BC puts yoga as part of the Indus Valley Civilization that sought to promote both the material and spiritual well-being of the community.

The earliest mention of yoga is in the Rig Veda. The word "yoga" is derived from the Sanskrit word "yuj," meaning "to join" or "to unite." It is meant to help the individual overcome suffering and help them evolve

spiritually to the "state of liberation." The Atharva Veda mentions "breath control," but it is not possible to pin down exact dates because the Vedas were passed down orally. Much before this—around 2700 BC—several seals depicting yoga asanas were found in the Indus-Saraswati Civilization. The main sources that provide information about yoga and its historical development are available in the Vedas, Upanishads, Smritis, teachings of Buddha, Panini, the epics, the Puranas, etc. Though these texts offer invaluable insights on yogic philosophy.

2. Principles of the Philosophy of Yoga

Yoga is a holistic approach to living that incorporates physical, mental, and spiritual aspects. At its core, the philosophy of yoga is based on a set of principles that guide practitioners toward self-realization. One of the core principles of yoga is the concept of unity, or oneness. This means recognizing that everything in the universe is interconnected and that we are all part of a greater whole. By practicing yoga, we can cultivate an awareness of this interconnectedness and develop a greater sense of compassion and empathy for others. Another key principle is self-discipline. This means developing the ability to control our thoughts, emotions, and actions so we can live more harmoniously with ourselves and others.

Practicing yoga can help us develop this discipline by teaching us to focus our minds and cultivate a sense of inner calm. The principle of non-attachment is also important in yoga. This means letting go of our attachments to material possessions, relationships, and other external things that can distract us from our true selves and the concepts that truly matter. By practicing non-attachment, we can learn to be content with what we have and develop a deeper sense of inner peace. Yoga helps us become more aware of our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, so we can understand how they affect our lives. This helps us identify and overcome negative patterns of behavior and cultivate positive ones. Yoga philosophy also emphasizes the importance of mindfulness and present-moment awareness. By practicing mindfulness, individuals can learn to focus their attention on the present moment and let go of distracting thoughts and emotions.

3. Yoga and Spirituality

Yoga is a holistic practice that focuses on creating a balance between the mind, body, and spirit. While many people associate yoga with physical postures or asanas, it is actually a spiritual practice that has been around for thousands of years. The philosophy of yoga is rooted in the Hindu tradition. The physical postures, or asanas, that are commonly associated with yoga are just one aspect of the practice. These postures are designed to help individuals release physical tension and achieve greater flexibility and strength. At its core, the philosophy of yoga revolves around the concept of Prakriti, which refers to the material world and all of its forms. This includes everything from our physical bodies to the natural environment around us.

According to yoga philosophy, the material world is made up of three basic qualities or gunas: tamas (inertia), rajas (activity), and sattva (purity). These gunas are constantly interacting with one another, creating a dynamic and ever-changing universe. However, they can also lead to imbalances and disharmony within ourselves and our environment. By practicing yoga, we can learn to balance and harmonize these energies, bringing greater peace, clarity, and equilibrium to our lives. One of the key ways that yoga helps to balance these energies is through the practice of asanas or physical postures. As we move through different poses, we are not only strengthening and stretching our muscles but also bringing awareness to our breath and the sensations in our body. This helps us to become more present and embodied and to release any tension or blockages that may be holding us back.

4. Yoga Principles and Teachings

Yogic seek a state of freedom known as *moksha*. **Moksha** is liberation from suffering and the cycles of death and rebirth guided by the principles of **karma**. Karma is the resultant effects, or consequences, of a person's actions in life that determine their future existence. There are eight major principles of yoga that teach the practitioner how to achieve moksha through achieving supreme enlightenment. These yoga principles are codified in the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Patanjali was a great sage who systematized the teachings of yoga into sutras known as **yoga darsana**, which is the philosophical system of yoga. The sutras outline eight principles known as the Eight Limbs of Yoga, which are practical and moral steps one must take to achieve enlightenment. The Eight Limbs of Yoga are not meant to be worked on consecutively but all at the same time.

Yoga is a holistic practice that may provide a natural and sustainable solution to the treatment and prevention of chronic diseases and medical conditions and also life style that promotes positive outcome of sustainable health. The main objectives or effectiveness yoga are improving health, happiness, harmony, personality development ect... The mental techniques include breathing exercises or 'pranayama' and meditation or 'dhyana' to discipline the mind. Yogic concepts aid in the strengthening and promote good health, enabling us to survive better with stress [1]. Yoga is the science of living well, and as such it is meant to be practiced on a regular basis. It affects the physical, mental, vital, psychic, emotional and spiritual elements of a person. Yoga is a method of balancing and harmonizing the body, mind and emotions on a more practical level. Asana, Pranayama, mudra, Bhandas, shatkarma and meditation are used to achieve this. Yoga practice have been developed to allow for purification of the body, mind and emotions to bring about mental action [2].

5. The Eight Fold Yoga (Ashtanga Yoga)

Patanjali's 'Yoga-sutras' are the first and foremost systematic and authoritative presentations of yoga in both its theoretical and practical aspects. These two works are treated as commentaries on Yoga-sutras. The Yoga Philosophy is closely associated with Samkhya philosophy. Yoga philosophy prescribes eight-fold path which helps to control our passions and craving for worldly pleasures. These eight fold path are as follows.

Yama: - (Universal Morality) - Yama are the five rules of behaviour which purify one's mind And behaviour. 1. Ahimsa 2. Satya 3. Asteya 4. Aparigraha 5. Brahmacharya.

Niyama: - (Personal observances) - Niyama are mainly for purifying the body and mind. They are practiced on individual basis. They are. 1. Soucha 2. Santhosha 3. Tapas 4. Svadhyaya 5. Isvarapranidhan.

Following the Yama;

Ahimsa: (Non-Violence) or non-injury in thought, word and deed, including negative Abstention from inflicting positive injury to any being, as well as positive help Any suffering creature.

Satya: (Truthfulness) Is to be practiced in thought, word and deed and the same applies To other restraints. The practices of truth has both an outer component in our relation to others.

Asteya: (Non-Stealing) or to not steal, that is not to take by thought, word or action, anything to which one is not entitled.

Brahmacharya (Abstention) Abstention from self-indulgence by thought, speech or

Action.

Aparigraha: (Non-Possession) It refers to the tendency of the mind to be greedy, to be Grasping or to the extend the “tentacles of selfishness” outward.

Patanjali considered the Yama the great, mighty and universal principle. He instructs us that they should be practiced on all levels (action, words and thoughts).

Following the Niyama-

Saucha : (Purity) - Keeping your body and mind. Saucha also means purity of mind.

Santosha : (Contentment)-It means contentment joy is lies doing the work itself.

Tapas : (Self-discipline) -The literal meaning of tapas is penance. To achieve a goal we have to make sincere effort, and give up certain pleasure

Svadhyaya : (Self-study)- It literally means self-study. Here it means studying the principles related to yoga.

Isvarapranidhan:- (Devotion to God)- It means being in constant conduct with God by chanting or by keeping in mind all the time that our actions are in the worship of lord. Lord is the witness of everything we see, do and experience.

Asana : (Body Postures)

Asana is regarded as a steady and comfortable postures. It is an advanced stage of yoga. Various kinds of postures provides physical help to meditation. This is the discipline of the body. There are various types of Asana. Among them, a few includes, **Padma, Sirsa, Chakra, Garuda, Maura** etc... It is advisable to do regular practice of Asana. The reason is, it not only controls the body such as keeps the body flexible, increase the immunity, etc. but also keeps the body free from diseases and make it strong and healthy. By doing regular asana one can control the different external and internal organs of the body.

4. Pranayama: (Breathing Exercise and control of body): This is the fourth stage in the practice of yoga. Pranayama is understood as control of breath. It also deals with regulation of inhalation and exhalation. This helps the citta to remain concentrate and focused. Through pranayama one can control his/her body by doing some postures.

Pranayama has three steps. These are 1. Puraka 2 .Kumbhak 3.Recaka .

The first step Puraka conveys to take as much air as possible. It is known as inhaling. The second step Kumbhak expresses after inhaling as much air as possible tries to retain it for half of the time taken in inhaling. The third step 'Recaka' states that gradually exhale the air by taking the same time that your had consumed while taking inhalation.

5. Pratyahara: (Control of senses): It is regarded as control of breath. Our senses have a natural tendency to go to outward objects. They must be checked and directed towards the internal goal. They must be checked and directed towards the internal goal. To do this practice it requires strong determination and repression of the senses.

6. Dharana: (Concentration and cultivating inner perceptual awareness): It is fixing the mind on the object of meditation like the tip of the nose or the mid-point of the eyebrows or the lotus of the heart of the image of the deity. Here the mind is regarded as the steadfast.

7. Dhyana: (Devotion, meditation, on the Devine): Dhyana is the one step ahead to Dharana. It means Meditation and consists in the undisturbed flow of thought round the object of Meditation. It is the steadfast contemplation without any break. In this stage, the Yogi should become successful to remain concentrate on an object in a longer time. Here, the aspirant realizes the whole object by concentrating its one part. This step is known as meditation. It helps to realize the true nature of the citta.

8. Samadhi : (Union with Devine): The eight and last step of yoga is known as Samadhi. This is the apex stage of yoga. Here the mind is completely absorbed in the object of meditation. In dhyana the act of meditation and the object of meditation is remaining separate. But Here, the process of concentration and the object becomes one and identical. This stage is known as cessation of modification of the *Citta*. It is the ecstatic state in which the connection with the external world is broken and through which one has to pass before obtaining liberation. Patanjali compiled and codified the traditional yoga techniques that lead to true connections of humans with themselves, and their surroundings and their goals of mental freedom. [3].

But increasingly nowadays it is used for its incidental benefits such as stress reduction and managing life style related disorders. Apart from the benefits of yoga practice in preventing and managing disease, yoga has several applications in rehabilitation. Yoga, as a way of life, has helped persons with physical disorders to return to our sustainable health. Yoga by Patanjali is by way of an instruction that the mind has to be controlled *yoga-chitta -vritti-niroddhah*. Patanjali simply explains that yoga is control of the mind, restraint of the mind-stuff. Yoga is an experiential science. The philosophy of yoga includes Yama and Niyama. It is a general and individual moral thoughts and practices for self-improvement and “virtuous life [4]. Man is Physical, mental and spiritual being, yoga helps to promote a balanced development of all the three. Yoga was intended for spiritual evolution [5]. But increasingly nowadays it is used for its incidental benefits such as stress reduction and managing life style related disorders. Apart from the benefits of yoga practice in preventing and managing disease, yoga has several applications in rehabilitation.

6. Benefits of Yoga

The most important view benefit of yoga is it balances our physical and mental conditions. To get maximum benefits of yoga we need to combine the practices of Yogasanas, Pranayama, and Meditation. Through yoga, practioners experience improve states of well-being, including Physically, Physiologically, emotionally and mentally. Yoga offers flexibility to the body and relaxation to the mind. There are different asanas practiced by people, and each asana has its benefits on the mind and body. Yoga is designed to sharpen our minds and to improve our intelligence. Regular practice of yoga can help in controlling our emotions and promote well-being.

We live in an age where we struggle to get mental peace. Professional and personal stress takes a lot of us. Lack of physical activities further builds stress. Practicing yoga regularly can be bringing calm, increasing body awareness, relief from chronic sleep patterns and others. It is essential to practice yoga daily to get benefits out of it. In this stressful life style, practicing workouts or yoga is very much important, and it can be greatly helpful, irrespective of age. The main idea behind practicing yoga is to control the body part movement using breathing exercises. The yoga improves the quality of our life, and we need to work on it regularity.

Conclusion

Yoga is a generic term for physical, mental and spiritual disciplines, originated from ancient India. It is a spiritual and ascetic discipline including breath control, simple meditation and adoption of specific body postures, practiced for health and relaxation. We are living in uncertain times, social, environmental and financial instability is most of our worlds right now, majority due to the consequences of the ongoing Covid-19 crisis. Practicing of yoga can be our 'secret key' for achieving holistic well-being, as it can assist us in bringing our minds, souls and bodies back to a state of natural calm, rest and balance. Our findings confirm the importance of effectiveness of yoga on quality of life and positive outcome of our sustainable health.

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