

## Yogic Virtues and Holistic Health



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March, 2013

Life, in the modern age, has become so complex that seen and unseen risks for health have increased to a very great extent. Our environment has been so badly degraded that education for proper health-care has been given less importance. A healthy state is a pre-condition for a life of joy of which peace is the primary factor. Health care should be considered along with positive factors and not with negative factors. The definition of health is not the absence of diseases but it is a complete union of the body, mind and spirit. This kind of complete holistic health can be afforded by the regular practice of yoga.

The Yoga system gives special emphasis on nature, from the different steps of practice and many other important things concerned to it Yoga believes that attainment of holistic health is possible only if one manages to control the functions of the body, the sense organs, mind, and intellect. In this regard Maharshi Patanjali has devised some Yogic virtues technically known as Ashtang Yoga. These Yogic virtues provide us immense will power by which we can face the severe situations of our life full of sorrows. These virtues revitalize our health to lead a successful life. They are Yama, Niyama, Asana, pranayama, pratyahar, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi.

### Yama :-

It is a first discipline which includes Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya and Aparigraha.

**Niyama :-** It Consists in the cultivation of the following good habits -

1. Purity, 2. Santosh, 3. Tapas, 4. Swadhyaya, 5. Ishwar Pranidhana.

### Aasana :-

It is a discipline of the body and consists in the adoption of steady and comfortable posture. There are various types of Aasanas as Padmasana and Vajrasana e.t.c. This can be properly learnt only under the guidance of experts. These Asanas play an important role to keep the body free from diseases and for establishing the concentration of the mind. The main systems of body like digestive system, nerves system and respiratory system e.t.c and Jnanendriya and karmandriya, are controlled and maintained by making Asanas and kriyas. Hatha Yoga prescribes 84 types of

different Asanas for getting activated and becomes flexible and healthy. The prescribed Asanas preserve the vital energy and strengthen and purify the body and mind. These Asanas are the effective way to keep toned up the body and the limbs and control all the systems of body.

**Pranayama :-** It is a regulated suspension of the breathing processes either after Rechaka (exhalation), or Puraka (inhalation) or kumbhaka (simply by retention of the vital breath).

### Pratyahara :-

It deals with the withdrawal of the sense organs from their respective external objects and keeping them under the control of the mind. This is the stepping stone to the Antarang Sadhana. The five steps of Yogangas mentioned above are considered as external means to Yoga (Bahirang Saadhana). And the remaining last three are internal means of Yoga (Samadhi).

**Dhaarana :-** It is a mental discipline by which the mind is held upon desired object which may be one among the six Chakras (Shatchakra). Thus the act of detaching the mind from the worldly objects and indulging it on the subtle object of soul.

**Dyaana :-** A tremendous concentrated flow of superior knowledge is called Dhyana. Submerging the mind with supreme soul and no thinking of anything else. Only healthy and calm mind can achieve this.

### Samadhi :-

It is the final step of Yoga where the presence of body and mind goes down to nil and has no awareness of itself. In this stage he perceives the whole universe in own self. In other words the ultimate limit of knowledge is asceticism. This leads to the salvation of the soul. He has no fulfillments to achieve and is free from the circle of life and death.

The afore-said steps of Yoga, the first five i.e. Bahirang Saadhanas enhance the holistic health for worldly life. The rest are for higher level which lead to divine life. This can be attained only when the self is prevented from identifying itself with mental modifications. Svaatmarama in his Hathpradipika says- if a person maintains regularity and studiousness in his duty, he can Very well attain good reward irrespective of his age. In other words, age is immaterial in practic-

ing this yoga. The goal of this method in yoga cannot be attained just by studying scriptures of yoga without regular practice. Neither simply the dress of Siddha nor the discussion brings success in yoga. But it is the practice that makes him successful. Thus Yoga as a valid source, provides concrete technology for the entire mankind to reach the supreme goal through holistic health.

Yama, Niyama, Asana, and Praanaayama are the primary sources for worldly life. Samadhi leads to Mukti. Practising first four steps of Ashtang is necessary for attaining the last four steps like Prtyaahaara, Dhyaana, Dhaarana, and Samadhi. This will open the door to reach with hard steps the Mukti . It is quite difficult to continue in spiritual life, because Mukti will not be easily gained by common man. Therefore health is necessary to attain prosperous life. For that reason practicing first four steps of Ashtang yoga will bring good health by which our life will be full of peace and satisfaction.

This type of healthy environment can be maintained with the help of modern exercises, natural medicines and healthy food. But it doesn't fulfill the requirement of holistic health. Because holistic health can be attained only when we adopt the exercises (Asanas) prescribed in the system of Yoga. The practice of Yama, Niyama e.t.c will bring up a good condition of mind. It will train the mind in a spiritual method. It refines our bread and brain. Its prime goal is to maintain not only the health of the body but also to get control over mind. Healthy mind is a strong foundation for the health of the body. A healthy body without a healthy mind is deprived of its fare nature. Mental diseases are more serious in their effects than that of body oriented diseases. These two facts are inter-related.

Therefore, to make our mind stable and powerful practice of Yoga is necessary. Yoga is bent on making the mind unfickle and powerful. The role of yoga in the field of health is very significant. Yama Niyama, Asana and Pranayama these, if practiced regularly and punctually, bring gracious health to our body. These are different from the physical exercises advised in these modern

days.

Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, are inter-related and cooperative to Samadhi. A good deal of health is also maintained by the practice of Dhyana and Dharana. They are not much useful as prescribed above. But they are necessary to us to make the mind steady. Healthy food is very significance among all factors. In the beginning the yogic food is more important than the above said items. It forms an easy path to a holistic health. Without food it is difficult to maintain the functions of the body. Food is the source of energy to the whole system of the body. The regular supply of good food activates the physical system and even a smallest defect in food brings disorder in the health of the body. According to the Ayurveda three types of food are explained, viz. Satva, Rajas, and Tamas. The food related to Satvika guna is absolutely necessary to march on the path way to yoga. One scholar puts the SatvikaAhaara as mitahaara . The quality of the food is immaterial. Whatever may be the food if it is limited it is satvika. Even the food belonging to Tamas becomes Satvika if it is taken in a limited portion. If we take full meals its Rajas and if it is excess it is Tamas.

Generally the food which is light and easily digestible is Satvika. First of all it should be vegetarian food. The food which is submitted to God is a refine food. This food is also called Satvika food . Among the Yama, cleanliness and self-satisfaction or content ness are more important. Cleanliness is the core of health. If we keep clean our body it adds much to the purification of mind also. That is why twofold cleanliness is explained i.e Abhyantara and Baahya.

Among the Niyamas Ahimsa, Satya, and Asthey are necessary in leading the successful worldly life. Ahimsa is not only not harassing physically but also not hurting the heart by harsh words. It is called oral sin. We must be careful in not hurting the hearts of others by our harsh words. Thus these Yogic elements create a kind of environment full of Satvika feelings.

No doubt it is very difficult to implement all these points in our life but if we try a little bit we can achieve much in our life.

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