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# Pathways to Good Health and Emotional well-being through Yoga

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## Abstract

Most people know that the practice of yoga makes the body strong and flexible. It is also well known that yoga improves the functioning of the respiratory, circulatory, digestive, and hormonal systems. Yoga also brings emotional stability and clarity of mind, and self-realization, which is the ultimate aim of yoga. Yoga brings harmony between mind and body, Thoughts and Action. Yoga is not simply an exercise and stretching, it teaches us how to achieve a calm mind, and helps to channel energy throughout the body.

## Introduction

### The Origin and Basis of Yoga

The Sanskrit word YOGA is derived from its root “YUJ”, which means to join, to add, to bind, to attach. It also means union. It is true union of our will with the will of God. *Yuj* also means “the yoke” connecting all the power of body, mind and soul with the power of God. In simple language we can say yoga means to add good qualities and good karma to ourselves. According to Srimad Bhagavad Geetha: “*Yogaha Karmasu Koushalam*”. In my personal opinion - any task which is done sensibly is YOGA. Any GOOD KARMA which is done by us is YOGA.

Yoga is an Invaluable gift of ancient Indian Tradition. Yoga is a spiritual discipline based on an extremely subtle science which focuses on bringing harmony between mind and body, Thoughts and Action, harmony between man and nature. Yoga is an art and science for healthy living. Yoga is not about exercise alone, but to discover the sense of oneness within us, the world and Nature. The practice of yoga leads to the union of

Individual consciousness with Universal consciousness. The aim of yoga practice is to overcome all kinds of suffering that leads to holistic health, happiness.

Yoga was coordinated and systematized by Maharishi Patanjali in his classical work, ‘The Yoga Sutra’, which consist of 185 sutras.

In Srimad Bhagavad Geetha (2-48), Sri Krishna said to Arjuna:

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय ।

सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते

॥

*yoga-sthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṁ tyaktvā dhanāñjaya*

*siddhy-asiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṁ yoga uchyate*

Yoga has also been described as wisdom in work. Katha Upanishad describes yoga thus: “when the senses are stilled, when the mind is at rest, when the intellect wavers not – then the person reaches the highest stage.

This steady control of the senses and mind has been defined as yoga.”

In the second aphorism of the first chapter of the *Yoga sutra*, Patanjali describes Yoga as ‘Chitta vrtti nirodhah’. “Yoga is the method by which the restless mind is calmed, and the energy is directed into constructive channels.”

### Stages of Yoga

YAMA – Restraints, moral disciplines or moral vows.

NIYAMA – Positive duties or observances.  
ASANA – Posture.

PRANAYAMA – Breathing Techniques.

PRATYAHARA – Sense withdrawal.

DHARANA – Focused Concentration.

DHYANA – Meditative Absorption.

SAMADHI – Bliss or Enlightenment.

Asana keeps the body healthy and strong and in harmony with nature. By doing asanas yogi becomes conscious about his body.

### Aspects of Yoga

#### *Pranayama: Prana + ayama*

*Prana* means breath, respiration, life, vitality, wind, energy, or strength

*Ayama* means length, expansion. Stretching or restraint.

*Pranayama* means extension of breath and its control. This control is over all the functions of breathing, namely:

1. Inhalation - This is called puraka (filling up).
2. Exhalation - This is called rechaka (emptying the lungs).

3. Retention or holding the breath – a state where there is no inhalation or exhalation, which is called *kumbhaka*.

Pranayama is thus the science of breathing. It is the center point around which the wheel of life revolves. Through pranayama we control our breath.

The yogi's life is not measured by the number of his days but by the number of his breaths. Therefore, he follows the patterns that strengthen the respiratory system, soothe the nervous system and reduce cravings.

The emptying of the mind of the whole of its illusion is the true exhalation. The realization that “I am Atma” is the true inhalation. And the steady sustenance of the mind on this belief is the true Kumbhaka (retention of the breath). This is true pranayama.

Every living creature unconsciously breathes the prayer ‘Soham’ = I am the Immortal Spirit – with each inward breath. So also, with each outgoing breath creature prays ‘Hamsah’ (I am He). He offers up the very breath of his being to the Lord.

### Dharana

देशबन्धश्चित्तस्य धारणा

“Dharana is holding the mind to one place, object, or point” [1]

A sadhaka when reaches the sixth stage is called ‘Dharana’. Here he is concentrated on a single point or on a task in which he is completely absorbed. The Sadhaka concentrates upon OM, which is the symbol of divinity, to achieve ekagrata and then the yogi focusses his attention on his beloved Deity adding OM to the name of the Lord.

### Dhyana and Samadhi

The word DHYANA comes from the Sanskrit word “DHYAI”, which means “TO THINK OF “.

DHYANA involves concentration and meditation on a point of focus with the intention of knowing the truth .DHYANA leads to self-knowledge where one can separate illusion from reality and eventually reach the ultimate goal of yoga SAMADHI.

The first step to meditation begins with the practice of ‘Pratyahara’.

Our senses are attracted to external subjects. We need to redirect those inwards. This practice helps increase concentration and reduces instability in meditation, you are asked to close your eyes so that you no longer communicate with the outer world. By shutting your ears, you shut out all the noises. Your communication with the outer world has broken. To establish the restless mind, it must be fixed on a single point to enable concentration. Normally in medication this point of concentration is one’s breath. As the mind gets fixed on one object, your concentration power increases .Finally, there is the super or higher conscious mind. It is the level of the world beyond the senses.

Samadhi is the end of Sadhak’s quest. At the peak of his meditation, he passes into the state of Samadhi, where his body and senses are at rest as if he is asleep. The person in the state of Samadhi is fully conscious and alert.

ध्यानेनात्मनि पश्यन्ति केचिदात्मानमात्मना ।  
अन्ये साङ्ख्येन योगेन कर्मयोगेन चापरे ॥ 25 ॥  
“Some try to perceive the Supreme Soul within their hearts through meditation, and others try to do so through the cultivation of knowledge, while still others strive to attain

that realization by the path of action (Srimad Bhagavad Geetha – 13-25)”.

## YOGA - The way to good health

### Yoga and Stress

Stress is the main reason of diseases and can be a reason of why people find it difficult to reduce fat and weight. So, what exactly is stress? Through advances in technology and science we have been able to conquer a lot in many fields. But there is also a dark face of technology. It has increased the feelings of competitiveness and envy. Financial tension, emotional problems, environmental pollution and a sense of loneliness, have all increased the stress of daily life. All these factors strain the body, causing nervous tension, and affect the mind [3, 4 & 5].

Yogic science believes that the nerves control the unconscious mind and that when the nervous system is strong, a person faces stressful situations more positively. Asanas improves blood flow to all the cells of the body, revitalizing the nerve cells. This flow strengthens the nervous system and its capacity for enduring stress [5].

The practice of asanas and pranayama helps to unite the body, breath, mind, and intellect. Slow, effortless exhalation during practice of an asana brings calmness to the body cells, relaxes the facial muscles, and releases all tension from the organs of perception: the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin. When this happens, the brain, which is in constant communication with the organs of action, becomes *shunya*, or void, and all thoughts are stilled. Then brain becomes free from fears and anxieties. Your mind is free of

stress and is filled with calm and reach in the state of peace and quiet [4].

## Yoga Practices for Stress Management

### ‘Asanas’ for Stress Management

The Asanas are: Tadasana, Nokasana, Shashank asana, Youmudra, and Kayotsarg.

### Pranayama

Deep breathing (Dheerg shwas), Sukshma Bhastrika, Anulom- Vilom, Mahapran Dhvani, Shitali, Bhramri.

### Mudra

Gyan Mudra, Parivartan Mudra, Surabhi Mudra, Kaleshwar Mudra, and Khechari Mudra.

### Colour

Imagine white color on the body.

### Mantra

OM

## Yoga and Immunity

Our immune system is of most importance and plays a huge role in keeping us fit and healthy. The immune system is the defense mechanism of the body and protects us from disease. Its main agent is the blood, a fluid consisting of plasma and red and white blood cells. White blood cells are the soldiers of our body, which fight and protect us from diseases. When the blood flows in speed in our body, our immune system becomes stronger. Yoga helps to boost the rotation of blood in our whole body and gives strength to red and white blood cells [3].

Yoga is a holistic uplifting approach to our body and reduces stress level. Stress is one of the primary reasons for a weak immune

system. Apart from reducing stress levels yoga also helps in conditioning the lungs. It also helps stimulate the lymphatic system, thus helping and flushing out toxins and impurities out of our system and ensuring that fresh oxygenated blood reaches all the organs of the body so that they can function properly. The thymus gland is located above the heart between the lungs. It is very closely related to our immune system. It reduces white blood cell that helps us fight infection virus, foreign invaders and even bacteria. So, while doing yoga *Asana*, try and focus on the region where thymus gland is located.

**Setubandhasana** - It stimulates the thymus gland and helps an optimum production of healthy white blood cells. That will help strengthen your immune system.

**Bhujangasana** - While doing this asana focus just above the heart between the lungs greatly helps open up the lungs and helps us breath better.

**Ushtrasana** - Focus on thymus gland.

**Marjarasana** - This helps to flush out toxins and also helps stimulate the lymphatic system including our thymus gland.

**Dhanurasana** - It opens up lungs.

**Suryanamaskar** - These stimulate blood circulation in our body, and detox the body.

**Sarvangasana or Halasana** - It stimulates the thymus gland.

**Pranayama** - Kapalabhati, Nadishodhan,

**Anulom-Velom** - These are great forms of detoxification and greatly help strengthen the immunity system.

**Mudra** - Prana Mudra, Prathvi Mudra, Agni Shakti Mudra, Shivling Mudra, Hakini Mudra [8] (IMP).

**Mantra** - *Hram, Hrim* (concentrate on lungs and imagine orange colour).



## Yoga and Diabetes

Meditation, Pranayama and Asanas.

Meditation and Yoga Nidra will reduce stress....will reduce cortisol hormone....will increase insulin in body.....will improve the condition of Diabetes. It will also reduce the high blood pressure.

## Asana

With the help of Asanas, lower levels of fat in liver and pancreas are noted. That helps the cells to start working again to help pancreas to release insulin and control blood sugar start working again.

Ardha Matsyendrasana and Vakrasana

**Halasana** – It gives pressure on pancreas.

Mandukasana, Pashchimotanasana,

**Janushirasana** – It gives strength to pancreas.

**Pavanmuktasana** – It boosts the function of pancreas.

**Uttanpadasana** – This also boosts the function of pancreas.

**Agnisar** – It boosts the function on pancreas and produces more and more insulin.

**Suryanamaskar** – This reduces the fat. And also reduces L.D.L. levels in the body.

**Kriya** - Agnisaaar kriya.

**Bandha** - Uddhiyaan bandha.

**Pranayama** - Through Pranayama we take out in maximum oxygen and take out maximum carbon di oxide. And become more active, fresher, regenerative, and strong enough to take glucose into them. Pranayama balances the secretion of hormones. These are Bhramari, Bhramari, Nadi-Shodhan, Bhastrika, Surya Bhedi.

**Mantra** – *Hum, OM*

**Mudra** – Surya Mudra, Prana Mudra, Varun Mudra, Shakti Mudra, Ling Mudra, Vayu Mudra [8].

**Meditation** - Concentrate on Tejas Kendra with orange color with Surya mudra and chant the mantra... *Hum* or *OM*... for 5-10 minutes.

With giving positive suggestions that my pancreas are getting healthy, working actively.

**Diet** - Avoid sugar and food products made with sugar. Avoid potatoes, rice, and starch in diet. Avoid fruits which contain more sugar.

## Yoga to Balance Hormones

Our body is made up of trillions of cells. Each cell performs a different task in our body. These cells are useless if there is no communication in between them. Now what makes communication between each of cells in our body? They are called our hormones. These are chemical messengers. Each cell communicates with other cells to perform task in our body like lifting fingers, walking, heart health, kidney function etc. If the hormones are working in perfect condition and in balanced harmony, all the organ functions in the body work in good condition. When hormones are disrupted, every task in our body becomes imbalanced. So, communication is necessary and that depends on balanced hormones.

Hormones affect our Physical health; Emotional health; Moods; Mental health; Appetite; Reproductive system and all the other functions of our body. These all are managed by our Endocrine system, which regulates our hormones.

## What affects our hormonal balance?

### A. Life Style

1. **Sleep, sleep and sleep** - The deeper and sound we sleep, the better our health.

Sleep balances two hormones in our body. a. Leptin and b. Gratin. If we sleep less, these two hormones become imbalanced. If we sleep

less, insulin dips and insulin also get imbalanced.

2. **Exercise** - Exercise balances the secretion of Insulin. Insulin pushes extra sugar and amino acids to our cells. Cells get energy from them. So exercise is a must to balance hormones. Walking, jogging, aerobics, yoga and any form of exercise.
3. **Sugar and Junk Food** – The easiest way to imbalance hormones. More sugar – more carbohydrate – more junk food – more hormonal imbalance.
4. **Stress – Stress – Stress** - If we are stressed, we can't sleep, when we can't sleep well, our hormones become imbalanced. We sleep less, we become stressed. ....

If we are stressed, there is one hormone which is produced – Cortesol. In order to reduce stress, meditation, letting go, more sleep, self care etc. are essential in life.

### **Importance of Yoga to Balance Hormones**

Following are suggested Yoga practices to control Hormones:

#### **Asanas**

Ushtrasana, Bhujangasana, Setubandhasana, Bhadrasana, Marjarasana, Madhyapadshirasana, Vipritkarni, Padmasana, Deep breathing, and Shavasana.

#### **Pranayama**

Deep Breathing, Anulom Vilom, Mahaprana Dhvani, Brahmari, Sheetal, and Siskshma Bhastrika.

**Mudra** - Gyan Mudra, Kaleshwar Mudra, Khechri Mudra, Surbhi Mudra.

**Mantra** - AUM

**Meditation** - Relax the whole body. Concentrate on 'Jyoti Kendra'. Imagine bright white color on Jyoti Kendra. And also imagine a bright white color in the whole atmosphere. And feel extreme "Ananda and Shanti".

Yoga is not simply an exercise of stretching, but it is a philosophy of life that teaches the individual how to achieve a calm mind, which in turn helps to channel energy throughout the body.

### **Yogic Kriyas (Shuddhi Kriyas)**

Ancient yogis found that Kriya Yoga is a means through which it helps to clean and remove unwanted substances stored in the internal organs of the body. Yogic Kriyas are also known as Shuddhi-Kriyas. In other words, just as the external organs of the body are cleaned, cleaning the internal organs is also very important. It is achieved through Yogic Kriya [7].

Through Yogic Kriya, seven chakras of knowledge, intellect, and body are awakened, which in turn accelerates the process of spiritual development.

Yogic kriyas can be explained as following:

1. Trataka Kriya: Constant gaze on an object or point.
2. Neti Kriya: This kriya is used to keep the breathing system clean and to remove toxic substances from the nasal passages.
3. Kapalbhata Kriya: accelerates the entire brain and awakens the idle brain centers.
4. Dhauti Kriya: makes the digestive system powerful and also cleanses the stomach.

It helps in removing excess acidity and ends constipation, indigestion, gas, etc. This Kriya is also beneficial in curing diseases like piles. It also purifies the upper respiratory tract.

5. Vasti Kriya: practice to clean the lower abdomen, especially the digestive system.
6. Nauli Kriya: This is an important exercise for the stomach and internal organs.

All Kriyas and advanced Yoga practices should be initiated and practiced under the care and supervision of qualified teachers. Several Yoga Aasanas and Kriyas are mentioned in brief in this article, merely as a reference to their potential uses. The readers are encouraged to seek out further information available through the references listed below and through a wide array of other resources available in the literature.

### Conclusion

Yoga is a complete science. If practiced with dedication, yoga can draw out positive qualities and decrease our defects. Yoga helps to strengthen our internal organs, external body and its organs, our emotional balance and intellectual vitality. Yoga is a science that is able to bring together the body, mind, breath and awareness. This can be concluded as following:

योग स्वस्त् जीवित - Yoga is the healthy life.

सर्त्वायोगः उच्यते - Yoga is the balance of mind in all situations.

योगर्यी एकधचत्त - Yoga is fixing of one's mind

योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् - Yoga is skill in action.

योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः - Yoga is restraining the mind and its activities.

योगः सर् धधः - Yoga is meditation.

“Words fail to convey the total value of Yoga. It must be experienced”.

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### Attention

The present article is only a theoretical overview of Yogic practices. It is compulsory that all techniques of Yogic practices be learnt in person, from a competent yoga teacher who is a professional from a lineage of Yoga teachers only.



## About the Author



**Ms. Richa H. Gurnani** has a M.A. degree with Mastery in science of living, meditation, and human anatomy along with Yoga. She is a full-time Yoga teacher and a trainer in the N.J. Charitable Foundation, Surat, Gujarat. Her training skills include Yoga, Meditation, Power Yoga, Pilates, and Pranayama.



# Veda Samskruti Samiti

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Veda Samskruti is an inherent intellectual property of Bhaarata dEsham. It is the basic duty and right of every citizen in Bhaarata dEsham to protect this Intellectual property. Indian Constitution and Law provides provision for protection and preservation of its culture, its monuments, architecture etc.

The Chaturvedas said to have 1131 shaakhaas right up to the time of Aadi Shankaraachaarya and thereafter during last more than ten centuries, many shaakhaas are out of practice due to various reasons and presently only seven shaakaas are in the practice of Guru shiShya parampara.

There is a need to continuously preserve these available shaakhaas which may likely to disappear in future due to various external forces acting in the country vigorously with the power of money and global politics. It is time for the intellectuals of Bharata dEsham to wake-up and work collectively to protect and preserve Veda Samskruti of Bharata dEsham, by empowering the Youth of Bharat dEsham, the future care takers of this great Indian Heritage , with suitable education of our correct history and culture.

The above background lead to formation of this Veda Samskruti Samiti which is registered under Societies acts of Government of Telangana, with Regd. No. 961/2016 by Sri A.H. Prabhakara Rao, who is the Founder and President of the Samiti.

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