

# Study of Therapeutic Effects of Yogic Asanas

\*H.L. Sharma, \*\*S. Sharma, \*\*\*Ram TirthVishwakarma

\*2, Dyanand Block, Shakarpur Extn., Delhi-92, \*\* B-818, G.D. Colony Mayur Vihar Phase III, Delhi-96, \*\*\* House No.1, Shakar Mandi, Jaunpur, U.P

The word 'Yoga' means union between the individual (*Jivatma*) and the supreme soul (*Paramatma*), Yoga is to see oneself in others and others in one's self. The word 'Yoga' has been used in varied meanings in Indian traditions such as -

- (1) Compound of drugs in medicine.
- (2) The special situation of *Grahas* & *Naksatras* in *Jyotisa*
- (3) Proficiency in job in *Gita - yogah karmasu kausalam*<sup>1</sup>
- (4) Control of the fluctuations of mind in *patanjali's yogsutras- "citta vrtti nirodha"*<sup>2</sup>

However, as pointed out earlier literally the word Yoga means "Union" an union of the *Atma* with the *Paramatma* i.e. the finite with the infinite. According to *Yogabija* the union of *Prana* and *Apana* or that of one's own *Rajas* and *Retas* or that of the sun and moon or that of the *Jivatma* and *Paramatma* is called *Yoga*<sup>3</sup>

The word *Yoga* is a very widely used term with multifactorial meaning. It would be difficult to give one single definition to *yoga* which may represent all the meanings in which this term appears in the traditional and contemporary literature. In the context of recent revival of the interest in *yoga* throughout the world. The word *Yoga*

**Reprint requests: H. L. Sharma**

2, Dyanand Block,  
Shakarpur Extension  
Delhi-110092

appears to have been used in many more hitherto unknown meanings. Probably it is one term which has been repeated maximum with the most wider meaning in Indian literature as it is one of such thoughts which has been brought to the knowledge of the maximum number of the people of the present generation.

However in its most significant meaning referring to its spiritual aspects. Yoga is used both as the means as well as the object yoga is classified in different ways in different contexts, by different texts. which is given blow-

- (1) *Vaidicyoga*
- (2) *Jainayoga*
- (3) *Boudhayoga*
- (4) *Karmayoga*
- (5) *Jnanayoga*
- (6) *Bhaktiyoga*
- (7) *Mantrayoga*
- (8) *Layayoga*
- (9) *Hathayoga*
- (10) *Rajayoga*
- (11) *Jnanayoga*
- (12) *Karmayoga*
- (13) *Mantrayoga*
- (14) *Layayoga*
- (15) *Hathayoga*
- (16) *Mantrayoga*
- (17) *Layayoga*

- (18) *Hathayoga*
- (19) *Rajyoga*
- (20) *Mahayoga*, consisting of above four as its components.
- (21) *Asana*
- (22) *Pranayana*
- (23) *Dhyana*
- (24) *Samadhi*
- (25) *Karmayoga*
- (26) *Bhaktiyoga*
- (27) *Rajayoga*
- (28) *Jnanayoga* etc.

Besides a number of other categories of *yoga* appear in different contexts. Each of the eighteen chapters of the *Bhagavad-Gita* has been named as *yogashastra* and each chapter is named as *yoga*.<sup>11</sup>

The science of *yoga* though appears to have been described in several *Upanishads* but it appears to have given practical orientation in the writings of *Srimad Bhagavad-Gita* and the *Yoga sutra of Patanjali*. A large number of people specially from modern educated class has shown interest in the study and practice of *yoga*. This sudden arousal of interest in this ancient discipline is due to the popular belief that practice of *yoga* may provide mental peace and freedom from stress.

During last one and a half decade there has been an amazing arousal of interest in *yoga*, throughout the world specially in the industrially developed in this subject coincides with the rapid increase in the level of anxiety and tension in the modern society. With the growing urbanization and industrial development in western countries, the society has been

faced to varying degree of social conflicts, mental tension and stressful situations which have precipitated into a very highly incidence of major Psychosomatic disease like, Hypertension, Ischaemic heart diseases, Bronchial asthma, Diabetes mellitus, Peptic ulcer, ulcerative colitis etc. These modern medical profession has failed to prevent this class of ailments which has emerged as a dreadful problem before the modern society.

Thus the current trend of the study and Interest in *Yoga* is to evaluate the Physiological effects of various Yogic practices to establish its scientific basis so that such practices may be applied to tackle certain problems on mental and physical health. Another aspect of the current interest in this field is to evaluate the therapeutic utility of different practices and to use them as a method of treatment of different diseases specially those of psychosomatic origin. Thus there is a trend to use *Yoga* as a system of medicine specially its positive health aspect.<sup>12</sup>

Yogic-therapy is now known the world over as a technical and scientific system. It also uses the most modern equipments and is found useful by doctors as well. They are gradually adopting it in a big way. It is a boon to humanity and renders benefit of complete health. It is a rare means to prolong life and an invaluable technique to overcome the life struggle. Disappointed with other therapies, the suffering man is now looking forward to this therapeutic approach. Yogic therapy is a gift of the *yogashastras*. Yogic therapeutic system is based on the principles of psychology, biology, life science, chemistry,"

“*pancakosa*”, “*Panchapran*,” “*Upa-prana*,” glands and other elements. Our body has an inbuilt system of resistance, which is capable of removing from their very root. While it seeks to make us disease free in a natural way, it at the same time, helps us maintain the highest degree of efficiency of the body by keeping it physically fit to guard, in turn, against the invasion of any disease. Yogic therapy has certain special features of its own such as body cleansing activating endocrine glands, managing proper

functioning of all systems – nervous system, breathing, digestion, blood circulation, excretion etc.- laying more emphasis on prevention than on cure, controlling diet to remedy disease, giving importance to celibacy controlling the mind, intellectual purification and spiritual purification. Keeping the mind tension free through the six fold cleansing processes and practice of *Asanas*, *Pranayama*, *Meditation* etc. eliminates the very cause of disease.<sup>13</sup>

### The Therapeutic Practices of Yoga

Some *Yoga* practices are stated below

#### (1) *Mayurasana*

It cures quickly all diseases like *Gulmaroga*, *udar-Roga* etc. and overcomes the imbalance of the humors namely *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. It reduces to ashes i.e., enable, digestion of all food indiscriminately taken increases the gastric fire i.e., the *Agni* and digests even the *Kalakuta* i.e., a terrible poison. It is stated in *Hathayogapradipika*

“*Harati sakalaroganasugulmodaradinamibhavati ca dosanashanam srimayuram.*

*Bahukadasanamuktam bhasam kuryadashesam janayati jatharagnims Jaryetkalakutam.*”<sup>14</sup>

#### (2) *Viparitarani*

By practice of *viparitarani* increasing the duration gradually every day, after six months wrinkles and grey hair disappear. He who practices this for a *Yama* i.e., three hours daily conquers death. It is stated in *Hatha Yoga pradepika*

“*kshanacca kinchidadhikamabhyasecca Dine Dine.*

*valitam palitam caiva sanamasordhva Na drsyate.*

*Yamamatrm tu yo nityamabhyaset sa Tu kalajit.*”<sup>15</sup>

#### (3) *Pranayama And Banda*

Through the proper practice of *Pranayama* along with right food and proper *Bandhas* their freedom from all diseases. The practitioner may bring upon himself all diseases by a mistaken course of *yoga*, A wrong course of *Pranayama* produces hiccup, asthma, bronchial diseases, pain on the head, ears and eyes and various other diseases. It is stated in *Hathayogapradipika*-

“*Pranayamadiyuktena sarvarogaksayo bhavet.*

*Ayuktabyasayogena sarvarogasamudbhavah.*

*Hikkashvasashca kasashca sirah karnaksivedana.  
Bhavanti vividha rogah pavanasya prakopatah.”<sup>16</sup>*

#### **(4) Suryabhedana (Kumbhaka)**

It is stated in *Hathayogapradipika*-

*“Kapalashodhanam vatadosaghnam krimidosahrta.  
Punah punaridam karyasuryabhedanamuttamam.”*

The *suryabhedana (kumbhaka)* should be practiced again and again, as it purifies the brain, destroys diseases arising from excess of wind, and cures maladies caused by worms.<sup>17</sup>

#### **(5) Ujjayi**

It cures the diseases of *Nadis* and *Dhatus*, as also ascites. This *kumbhaka* called *Ujjayi* should be practiced while walking and standing. It is said -

*“Nadijalodara Dhatugadosavinashanam.  
Gacchatatisthata karyamujjayyakhyam Tu kumbhakam.”<sup>18</sup>*

#### **(5) Kumbhaka and Shitali**

The *Kumbhaka* and *shitali* cures diseases of the abdomen and spleen and other diseases as also fever, biliousness, hunger, thirst, and the bad effect of poisons. It is said -

*“Gulmaplihadikan rogamjvaram pittam ksudham Trsam.  
Visani shitali Nama kumbhikeyam nihanti hi.”<sup>19</sup>*

#### **(7) Mahamudra**

The practice of *Mahamudra* relieves consumption, leprosy, constipation, abdominal and anorectal diseases, indigestion, etc. It is said -

*“Kshayakusthagudavartagulmajirnapurogamah.  
Tasya dosah kshayam yanti mahamudram Tu yo' bhyaset.”<sup>20</sup>*

#### **(8) Mahabedha**

The practice of *Mahabedha* confers great *siddhi's*. It removes wrinkles, greying of hairs and trembling (consequent on old age).

It is said -

*“ Mahavedho's yamabhyasanmahasiddhipradayakah.  
Valipalitavaipaghnah sevyate sadhakottamaih” .<sup>21</sup>*

#### **(9) Khecharimudra**

Those who knows *Khecarimudra* there is no disease, death, drowsiness, sleep, hunger, thirst or, fainting. It is said -

*“ Na rogo maranam Tandra Na Nidra Na kshudha Trsa.  
Na ca murcha bhavettasya yo mudram vetti khecarim.”*<sup>22</sup>

#### **(10) Dhautikarma**

The practice of *Dhauti* cures cough, Asthama, Splenomegaly, leprosy and similar skin diseases and twenty other diseases caused by *kapha*. There is no doubt about it. It is said –

*“ Kasashvasaplihakustham kapharogashcha vimshatih.”  
“Dhautikarmaprabhavana prayantyeva na samshayah.”*<sup>23</sup>

#### **(11) Vastikarma**

Practice of *Vasti* cures *Gulmaroga*, splenomegaly and all diseases arising due to the vitiation *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. It is said –

*“Gulmaplihodaram chapi vatapittakaphodbhavah.  
vastikarmaprabhavana kshiyante sakalamaya.”*<sup>24</sup>

#### **(12) Jalavastikarma**

The *Jalavasti*, when practised appropriately refines the bodily tissues, sense-organs and the internal organ i.e. *Antahkarana*; it resolves all the *Dosika* vitiations. It is said-

*“ Dhatvandriyantahkaranaprasadam dadyaccha kantim dahanapradiptim.  
Ashesadosopacayam nihanyadambhasyamanam jalavastikarma.”*<sup>25</sup>

#### **(13) NetiKarma**

*Neti* purifies the region of the skull and makes the sight capable of perceiving subtle things. *Neti* also quickly removes all diseases of the head and neck. It is said –

*“ Kapalashodhani chaiva divyadrstipradayini.  
Jatrurdhvajatarogaugham netirasu nihanti cha.”*<sup>26</sup>

#### **(14) Trataka**

It relieves all diseases of eyes, *Tandra* etc. It should be carefully kept secret like a golden casket. It is said-

*“ Mochanam netraroganam tandradinam kapatakam.  
Yetnatastratakam gopyam yatha hatakopetakam”*<sup>27</sup>

#### **(15) Nauli**

It is the crown of *Hathayoga* practices stimulates the digestive fire, improves digestion, produces happiness and destroys all diseases and disorders of the humours. It is said-

*“ Mandagnisandipanapachanadisandhapikanandakari sadaiva.  
Asesadosamayashosani cha hathakriyamauliriyam cha naulih”*<sup>28</sup>

And also described-

*“Satkarmanirgatasthauhyakaphadosamaladikah.  
Pranayamam tatah kuryadanayasena siddhayti.”<sup>29</sup>*

Freedom from obesity disease, disorders of *Kapha* and other *Malas* etc., by the performance of the above mentioned *Satakarma*, one should practice *Pranayama*. Then success in *Yoga* is achieved without stain.

The skeletal muscles of the body remain always healthy as their tone is maintained by the voluntary nerves which are made more active by the practice of *Asanas*. The muscles are not merely strengthened by subjecting them to contraction and relaxation but their power of endurance and vitality is increased by educating them to maintain the poses for a longer and longer time.

The practice of *Asanas* will not make a person an athlete but it will make a man healthy and increase his reserves of energy so enabling him to bear any physical strain that the activities of middle life may make him liable to. In Yogic *Asanas* we hold the master-key to health and happiness throughout life- childhood, maturity and old age.<sup>30</sup>

Thus there is a trend to use *Yoga* as a system of medicine specially its positive health aspect. The current interest in *yoga* may be categorised under the following

- (1) Practice of *Yoga* as an anti-stress and anti-anxiety measure.
- (2) Practice of *Yoga* as a measure to prevent stress disorders and psychosomatic diseases.
- (3) Practice of *Yoga* as a method of treatment of certain psychosomatic diseases.
- (4) Practice of *Yoga* and some Yogic

practices as physical culture.

(5) Practice of *Yoga* as a system of physical medicine.

(6) Less commonly *Yoga* is practiced as a means of spiritual programs.

Emphasis must be given for developing *Yoga* as a health science and more and more studies may be conducted to verify the therapeutic claims of *Yoga* to further the scope of developing *Yoga* as a system of medicine. Thus *Yoga* develops as a system of curative medicine, while others believe that it could only serve as a positive health medicine.

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