

THEORIES OF YOGA AND MEDITATIONS



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UNIT – I

INTRODUCTION

a) MEANING OF YOGA

Yoga is a way of life. It is an ancient art which harmonize all the systems of the body for the development of body, mind and spirit. It is a practical aid but not a religion. yoga is one of the gifts of our rich Indian heritage. The continues practice of the yoga will help the individuals to lead peaceful life and well being and also the feeling of being in the society.

The word Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit term “**Yuj**” which means “to join”, or “to unite”, or “to bind”. Hence the basic meaning of the word Yoga is union or merger. It is a union of spiritual nature. It is the true union of the so- called human being, (**Jeevathma**) with the God (**paramathma**). According to The Hindu Holy Scripture **Bhagavad Gita**, Yoga is a Kind of practice in life. it is uniting the mind with God thus the individual is providing complete peace to the soul.

DEFINITION OF YOGA

1. Yoga is the process of controlling or stilling the mind’s movement - Patanjali.
2. Yoga is the best curative and preventive medicine for most of the ills of human resulting from so - called modern living
3. Yoga is a Practice through which the state unwavering mind is achieved - **Bhagavad Gita**.

b).HISTORY OF YOGA

Yoga is an ancient art developed for the purpose of harmonizing body, mind of spirit. Yoga in India has a long history. Yogic principles had been the foundations for Indian culture. It is a Science that regulates the individual’s physiological and psychological behaviors. The continued practice of yoga will lead one to a sense of peace and well being and also feeling of being in harmony with one’s environment.

The history of yoga can be divided into the following four broad categories. They are

1. Vedic yoga
2. Pre classical yoga
3. Classical yoga
4. Post classical yoga.

1. Vedic yoga

According to Mohenjo Daro excavations, there existed yogic meditative postures which were five thousand years old. Hence, it understood that the existence of Yoga predates the main Vedic period. But the teaching of yogic culture found only in the Vedic period between 1500 -1000 BC. The four ancient hymnodies are known as Vedic yoga namely Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharvana Veda. The Sanskrit work “Veda” means knowledge. Thus the following is the meaning of each Veda.

- a) Rig Veda – Knowledge of Praise of higher power (God)
- b) Yajur Veda – Knowledge of Chants.
- c) Sama Veda – Knowledge of Chants.
- d) Atharvana Veda – Knowledge of Atharvan (Fire God)

2. Pre classical Yoga

Pre classical yoga comprises many schools whose teaching can be found in India’s two great epics, the **Ramayana** and the **Mahabharata**. These various pre classical schools developed all Kinds of techniques for achieving deep meditation in which yogis can transcend the body and mind and discover their true nature.

3. Classical Yoga

The eight limbs of yoga also known as Astanga – yoga or Raja yoga taught by the great saint **patanjali** in his yoga – sutra is considered as classical yoga as it had been practiced by many peoples all over world. The great saint Patanjali was called as the “ **Father of Yoga** ”. Because he was the first man who wrote all the teachings of yoga in Sanskrit as yoga sutras between 300 and 200 BC.

4. Post Classical of Yoga

After Patanjali yoga sutra, there existed many types and schools of yoga. They are post classical yoga and are independent in nature. The following are some of the post classical yoga.

- i) Prajapita Brahma Kumari’ s practice of meditation
- ii) sri Aurobindo and the Mother dynamic meditation
- iii) sri Yoga Raja Vethathri Maharishi Simplified Kundalini yoga meditation
- iv) Vipasana meditation
- v) Tamil Siddha meditation .
- vi) Transcendental meditation advocated by His Holiness Maharishi Mahesh Yoga
- vii) Osho - meditation - the art of ecstasy.

c).AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF YOGA

Aim

The main aim of yoga is integrating the body, mind and thoughts so as to work for good ends. Through systematic and regular yogi practices, our mind will be made healthier and its resistance power to fight against the diseases could be enhanced, mind will be sharpened and the concentration and memory power will also be developed. Thus yoga pave the way for an individual to do any action action peacefully and perfectly.

Objectives

The objectives of yoga are given below.

1. Yoga improves posture, O₂ intake and enhances the functioning of respiratory, digestive, endocrine, reproductive and excretory systems.
2. It reduces the insomnia caused by restlessness.
3. It effects on emotion which helps in mental strength
4. It helps the peoples who are stressful in their work.
5. It helps the peoples to be away from headache, back and shoulder aches, allergies and asthma.
6. Yoga cures behaviour disorders, nervous breakdown and panic depression.
7. Yoga helps to face challenges in life.
8. It helps to maintain the acid – alkaline ratio on the blood.
9. Yoga helps to maintain the psychological level of an individual.
10. Long term practice of yoga can helps to lead long term health and well being.

MISCONCEPTIONS ON YOGA

Yoga has been connected with magic and miracles or with miraculous feats of endurance like being buried alive, flying in the air, walking on water or walking on burning coal, drinking an acid, chewing Glass etc., Quite a few persons still think it is a system of stunts, gymnastic skills and of limb – twisting.

To most people, yoga is a form of physical education wherein one has to attain proficiency in a few, difficult asanas, gain mastery over a few spectacular kriyas and to hold the breath in some form of kumbhak or retention for as long time as possible.

Many believe that there are specifics for each disease in yoga and that what the yogin has to do is merely to prescribe some special asanas or breathe in exercises or kriyas. Yoga is an obstacle for marital relations.

Many believe that yoga is tying your body in knots or standing on your head or following some arcane ritual, only for hermit; only for monks, only for vegetarians.

To most westerners, the term yoga brings to mind Indian gurus in long, flowing robes and the pretzel like poses of popular lore.

Many people look upon yoga as a stunt.

In the west, yoga is most often seen as a series of physical poses or postures only.

But behind these stereo types lies a rich, time – honoured teaching on how to achieve physical health, psychological well – being and spiritual peace. It involves a wide range of techniques including body, breath, voice work, diet, meditation, study and reflection. It is a tool for positive change. It is something for everybody whether young or old, fit or unwell, active or sedentary. It enhances the quality of life.

Some persons complain that the body gets heated up, producing burning sensation in the body and the eyes and also constipation while practicing Asanas. These results are not the outcome of the Asanas. Diet and habits if regulated nothing unpleasant will be produced. The best remedy is to reform the diet.

Yoga now is embraced as a way of life. Yoga has come into its own. Yoga is a Journey, not a destination.

e).TYPES OF YOGA

The different types of Indian's Yoga systems, by which a man can achieve the aims of yoga, are as follows:

Bhakti Yoga

In Bhakti Yoga, People who believe in God are involved. Through devotion they try to reach their personal God's For such emotional realization comes through sheer devotion. The true devotee is a follower of Bhakti Yoga.

Jnana Yoga

For some people realization of God or absolute truth is possible through knowledge, They are intellectual people and are called follower of Jnana Yoga.

Karma Yoga

The active man finds realization through karma Yoga, in which he/ she realizes his / her own divinity through work and duty. This is a path of selfless action and service done without thoughts about fruits of action. Mahatma Gandhi is called as Karma Yoga because he showed the world that one could find truth simply by rendering one's own duty.

Kundalini Yoga



Kundalini yoga is an integrated technique in which latent psychic nerve force within the body is aroused through intense concentration of mind. This psychic force is referred to a serpent power Kundalini, which remains in coils at the base of the spine. The aroused force is taken upward through the spine, through several power centres called chakras, until it finally reaches the Sahasrara Chakara in the crown of the head.

Mantra Yoga

Mantra Yoga is a attaining moral power by chanting a mantra. A mantra is an articulated sound of certain syllables. It may be a word or part of a word or a word phrase. The Transcendental Meditation taught by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, is based on Mantra Yoga.

Hatha Yoga

The word hatha is derived from two Sanskrit roots, 'ha' - meaning sun and 'tha' – meaning moon. The flow of breath- in through the right nostril is called the sun breath, and the flow of breath – in through the left nostril is called the moon breath. According to Patanjali, Hatha Yoga is the Practice of postures (asanas) and breath control (pranayamas) with a view to finding calm, mental balance and peace of mind. Bodily health is very important for mental growth. Hatha Yoga is a purificatory preparation for Raja Yoga.

Raja Yoga:

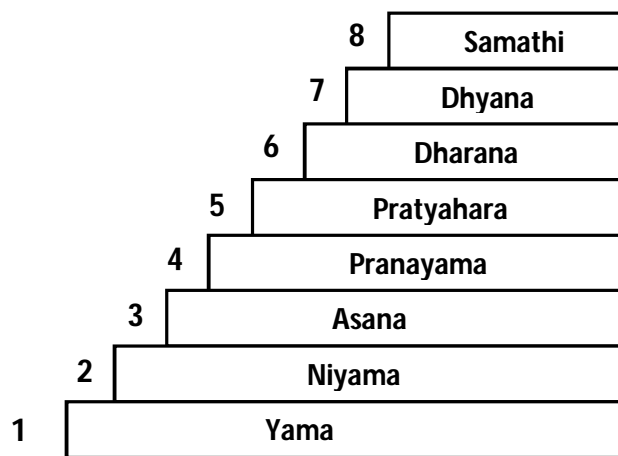
Hatha Yoga works upon the body, purifying and perfecting it, and through the body controls the mind. Raja Yoga attempts to refine and perfect the mind, Mainly it deals with dharana (concentration), dhyana(meditation) and Samadhi (self- realization).The Raja Yoga is nothing but mental control.

UNIT – II

EIGHT LIMBS OF ASTANGA YOGA

The Patanjali's Eight limbs of Yoga are Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. These eight limbs are inter linked with one another. Each limb has lot of facets within it. They can be realized or experienced only through the regular practice of the same in our life. Each limb leads progressively to the next higher stage of awareness and to spiritual life, Here all the eight limbs are constructed like a stair case so that an individual develops his / her spirituality in life.

Every step in the stair case is just a footstep to reach the goal of our life. We cannot leave even one of the above eight limbs to reach the final stage. Now let us see in detail about each step/ limb/ anga for better understanding about Patanjali's yoga or Raja yoga or Astanga yoga.



Stages of Astanga Yoga

1. Yama (Abstinence – code of character)

Yama is the first anga or step in the Raja yoga. It deals with the individuals moral discipline which is called as code of character for a person. The following are the various facets of Yama.

- i.) Ahimsa (Avoid lies – Follow truth)
- ii.) Satya (Avoid Greed – Abstain from stealing)
- iii.) Brahmacharya (Avoid lust – Practice celibacy)
- iv.) Aparigraha (Avoid adding possessions – Develop non- possessiveness).

2.Niyama (Observance – code of conduct)

Niyama is the second anga of Raja yoga. It deals with code of conduct such as good things to be followed in life. The following are the facets of Niyama.

- i). Saucha – Cleanliness of body and mind)
- ii). Santosha – Contentment (Peace of mind)
- iii). Tapas – Husterity (Strength of mind)
- iv). Svadhyaya – Strengthening the knowledge (study)
- v). Isvara pranidhana – Absolute surrender to God.

Hence, it is understood that both Yama and Niyama are the foundation stones for the yoga marga.

3.Asana – (Physical Posture)

The third anga of Raja yoga is Asana which means physical posture. It is a kind of static exercise performing with different positions. These postures develop suppleness and flexibility, toning of nervous system, stimulation of vital organs and glands, regulation of blood flow and strengthen the muscles. During the asana practice, the mind will be free from joys and sorrows and the body will be free from heat and cold waves.

4.Pranayama : (Breath control)

Pranayama is the fourth anga of Raja yoga. It means the breath control or regulation of breath. In other words it is the control of air by means of inhalation, holding the air and exhalation. Mainly pranayama is used to prepare the mind for meditation.

5.Pratyahara – (Sense withdrawl)

Pratyahara in the fifth anga of Raja yoga. In this stage, the sense organs of the body such as the eyes, the nose, the mouth, the ears, and the skin are controlled through self control.

6.Dharana (Concentration or focusing)

The sixth anga of Raja yoga is Dharana. Dharana means concentration. Patanjali says that concentration is the fixing of the mind on something which is very important for meditation. The following are the some the important practicing methods of concentration.

- a.) Nasal Gazing – The eyes focus at the tip of the nose
- b.) Frontal Gazing – The eyes focus at the centre of the forehead.
- c.) Jothi Gazing – The eyes are focused on the flame kept in front.
- d.) Object Gazing – The eyes are focused on the object kept in front.

7.Dhyana : (Meditation)

The seventh anga of Raja yoga is Dhyana which means the unity of mind or meditation achieved through contemplation. It is done very intensively so that the meditating mind is united with the object contemplated.

8.Samadhi : (Self - realization)

The final stage or anga of Raja yoga is Samadhi. Samadhi is highly integrated consciousness in which the person is totally unified into the object as a whole. This is such stage in which self realization is attained.

c) YOGA AND DIET

Diet plays a vital role in determining the qualities of man. A yogi has to carefully analyse the diet which he consumes in his day to day life. He can select his food by understanding the basic concept about the effect of the various kinds of food on our system. Through yogic diet the stamina of the body is developed, the prana should be brought to a balance, the mind calmed down, the emotion stabilized and the intellect under total control. Hence, according to yoga a balanced diet is the diet which restores balance at all levels. Such diet could provide an aid for a Holistic way of living.

Classification of Food

Yoga classifies food into 3 categories

- i). Tamasic food.
- ii). Rajasic food.
- iii). Sattvic food.

(i) Tamasic food

It is state, more or less spoiled food, containing foul smell (Oder), artificial additives and which is not useful to nourish either by body and mind. They make the body dull, lazy and reduce our immune power, filling the mind with dark emotion such as anger and greed. Tamasic food items include alcohol, tobacco, orisons, garlic and other fermented food items.

(ii) Rajasic food

It is very hot natured, spicy, butter, sour, pungent, dry and excessively salty. Such food items are real enemy of mind body equilibrium .They function as body stimulants, make the mind restless and uncontrollable. Food which is cooked a great deal to increase its taste stimulates and activities the nervous system and speed up metabolism. Coffee, tea, tobacco, green chilies, pepper, non vegetarian food, ect are considered as Rajasic food. Rajasic food is of good quality and costly. It is meant for Raja's the kings. It is accepted that a pushing, aggressive wordy kind of activity is appropriate for rulers who deal in the area of domination , forcefulness and warfare. According to our Indian traditions, the caste which ruled the country, The Rajput (son of the king) are permitted to take meat and wine where as the Brahmin who is not a ruler, but a scholar, teacher and spiritual seeker had always stayed away from taking Rajasic food.

(iii) Sattive food

It is the purest diet and is most suitable for yoga practitioner. It nourishes the body and maintains it in a peaceful state. It also purifies the mind, enabling it to function at its maximum effort. The sattvic food consists of cereals, fresh fruits, vegetables, milk products, ruts and honey. These food increase the life (Purity), Strength (health) and happiness (cheerfulness and good appetite).

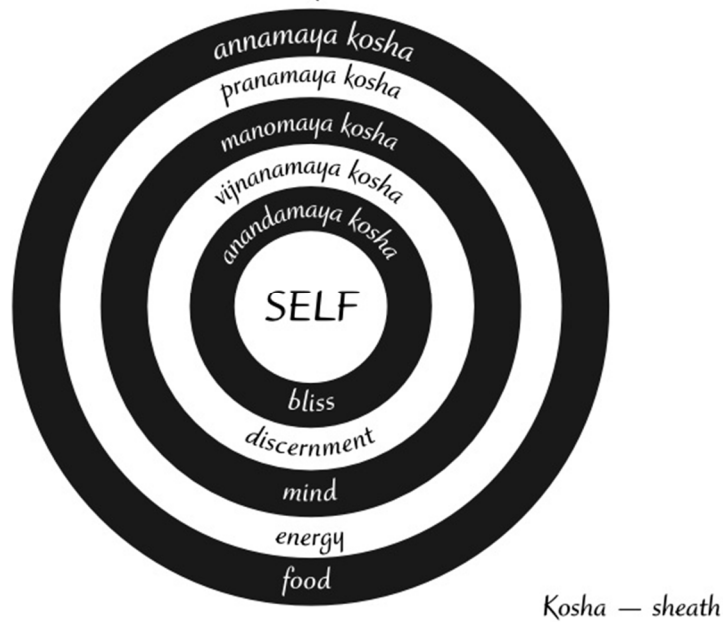
Hence, it is advised that everyone who aspires good health, longevity, mental control, eat must change their food habits towards sattvic diet.

a).YOGIC CONCEPT OF HUMAN BODY

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) the state of health is defines as a state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well being and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity.

As per the Yoga tradition and principles, there are five sheaths of existence of man. The sheaths are called 'Kosha', which means layers of existence. These five layers are called as Pancha Kosha. They are

The Koshas



1. Annamaya Kosha - Physical body
2. Pranayama Kosha - Pranic body
3. Manomaya Kosha - Mind body
4. Vijnanamaya Kosha - Intellect body
5. Anandamaya Kosha - Bliss body

1. Annamaya Kosha (Physical body)

The first and the grossest sheath is the physical frame, which we all are familiar, is called Annamaya Kosha. It is the physical body with its biological function and predominant material needs and wants. This physical body is made of solid matter consisting of Pancha Bhutas, the five elements (earth, water, fire, air and space).

2. pranamaya Kosha (Pranic body)

The second subtle sheath (Kosha) is the 'pranamaya Kosha' featured by the predominance of prana, the life force. In this sheath, the prana flows through the invisible channels called 'Nadis'. The vital energy (Prana) flows continuously in each and every cell. The balanced flow of prana in right proportion keeps the cells healthy.

3. Manomaya Kosha (Mind body)

Subtler to the prana is the mind, the thinking aspect called Manomaya Kosha. This sheath is the mixture of thoughts, emotions, desires, likes and dislikes, etc. Conflicts arising in the Manomaya Kosha are called Aadhi (stress). A chronic worry, tension or anxiety, leads to habitual imbalance at Manomaya Kosha. This over a period of time affects the pranamaya Kosha and the Annamaya kosha and leads to psychosomatic disorders.

4. vijnanamaya Kosha (Intellect body)

Vijnanamaya Kosha is the sheath of knowledge and wisdom. This is the concept that guides the Manomaya Kosha. This 'conscience', which is highly evolved in human beings, differentiates man from animals. This sheath is firm and there is no waver.

5. Anandamaya Kosha (Bliss body)

In Anandamaya Kosha, the subtlest sheath of the human existences, the person is established in internal bliss. This forms the basic stuff and core of every individual. This is alertful inner silence. Every one touches this state whenever they are happy. A yogi is a person who can dwell in that state of Anandamaya Kosha without an objective, for example good music for the ears to reach his deep silence.

b). PRINCIPLES OF YOGIC MANAGEMENT:

We have already seen the five Kosha. Among the five Kosha, Annamaya is the grossest one. All the other Koshas are subtler in their sequence and the Anandamaya Kosha is the subtlest one. An individual needs proper balance of all the five Koshas to be in a state of complete health.

According to the principles of yoga management the disturbance in the Manomaya Kosha (Mental body) due to the interaction with the world. This disturbance in Manomaya Kosha is called Adhi (stress). This stress disturbs the balance of prana in the pranamaya Kosha (pranic body) and finally manifest as a diseases in the Annamaya Kosha, the physical body. Due to this ailment the individual become unhappy and low in the intellectual caliber. Thus he become completely ill health and imbalance in all the five layers of existence.

Yoga management provides various techniques to bring back the balance of each Kosha. The techniques are as follows.

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Annamaya Kosha | - | Asanas, Kriyas, Diet & relaxation |
| 2. Pranamaya Kosha | - | Pranayama practices |
| 3. Manomaya Kosha | - | Meditation and devotional sessions |
| 4. Vijnanamaya Kosha | - | Notional correction through counseling |
| 5. Ananamaya Kosha
(Karma Yoga) | - | Practice of joy in all
circumstance and
work in relaxation |

PATANJALI YOGA

The systematic path that has been followed and practiced by our ancestors is called yoga. The great saint from our Indian culture, Patanjali, had developed the concept of “Raja Yoga” about 2,000 years ago. The Patanjali’s Raja yoga consists of eight fold path to reach the goal of life. They are referred to as Eight limbs of yoga or Astanga yoga or Royal yoga.

e). RAJA YOGA

“Yoga” is derived from the Sanskrit root “yuj” which means “link” or union and “raja” means “king”. Hence “Raja Yoga” means that the king of Unions or the link between the soul and the supreme power (God) through which soul become the controller of its mind is the key to success in almost all our endeavors. The practice of “Raja Yoga” develops the cultured mind or psychic control which helps to reach higher state of consciousness. This is otherwise called as Royal yoga because the practitioner of Raja yoga shall behave in a royal manner. They are very calm, silence loving, free from the disease of worry and stress of fear. They become “Carefree kings” unaffected by sorrow and joy, gain and loss, success and failure, praise and defamation. Their royalty and wisdom do not permit them to violate the laws of nature or the laws of God. This method of Yogic practice leads to the stage of super conscious which helps to realize himself the knowledge of Atma and finally merges it with the supreme power called Paramathma.

UNIT –III SURYANAMASKAR

Salutation to sun

Suryanamaskar is a well know vital technique within the yogic repertoire. It's versatility and application make it one of the most useful methods to induce a healthy, Vigorous and active life and at the same time prepare for spiritual awakening and the resultant expansion of awareness.

In recent years more and more people have moved away from mere ritual and are turning to yoga as a method for exploring and improving their inner lives. Through the need for techniques to enhance physical, mental and spiritual evolution has been recognized the fast pace of modern living makes it difficult for even its practice which is the most important and fundamental issue in terms of our betterment.

SALUTE TO THE SUN

Surya Namaskara is a series of twelve physical postures. These alternating backward and forward bending asanas flex and stretch the spinal column and limbs through their maximum range. The series gives such a profound stretch to the whole of the body that few other forms of exercise can be compared with it.

Prayer

“Hiranmayena Patrena Satyasyapihitam Mukham,
Tat tvam Pushan Apavnu Satya – dharmaya dhristaye”

(Like a lid to vessel, O Sun, your

Golden orb covers the entrance to Truth.

Kindly open the entrance, to lead me to Truth).

Mantra, along with the corresponding name of Sun God in the following sequence:

1. Aum Hram Mitraya Namaha
2. Aum Hrim Ravaye Namaha
3. Aum Hrum Suryaya Namaha
4. Aum Hraim Bhanave namah
5. Aum Hroum Khagaya Namaha
6. Aum Hrahm Pusne Namaha
7. Aum Hram Hiranyagarbhaya Namaha
8. Aum Hrim Marcaye Namaha
9. Aum Hrum Adityaya Namaha
10. Aun Hraim Savitre Namaha
11. Aum Hroum Arkaya Namaha
12. Aum Hrah Bhaskaraya Namaha

Each stage of Suryanamaskara is accompanied by regulation of breath. The 12 counts of the suryanamaskara are as follows:

Count 1 periyasana or raised arms pose

Stand erect with the legs together and palms together. Take the hands above the head and bend the trunk backwards. Here, inhale fully.

Count 2 Padahastasana or hand to foot pose

Bend the body to the front and touch the knees by the forehead. Keep the palms on the floor on either side of the legs. Exhale fully.

Count 3 Ashwa Sanchalanasana or equestrian pose

In this stage, kick the right leg back, take the left knee forward look up and inhale. press the buttock close to the heel.

Count 4 Dwi pada Ashwa Sanchalanasana or Inclined Pose

In the next step , take the left leg also back, resting only on palms and toes; keep the body straight from head to toes inclined to the ground. In this position inhale while backwards and then exhale completely. do not stretch the ankles.

Count 5 Shashangasana or relaxed Pose

Now, bend at the knee and rest the knees on the floor without altering the positions of the palms and toes. Rest the forehead on the ground. In this position inhale while moving backwards and then exhale completely. Do not stretch the ankles.

Count 6 Sashtanga Namaskara or salutation with eight limbs.

Without moving the hands and feet and rest the forehead. In this position Sashtanga Namaskara forehead, chest, be touching the ground. The buttocks will be raised up. Stay in ' Breath - (Bahya Kumbhaka)

Count 7 Bhujangasana or serpent pose

Inhale, raise the head and trunk making the spine concave upwards without changing the positions of the hands and feet. Keep the knees off the ground.

Count 8 Parvatasana or mountain pose

Exhale. Raise the buttocks, push the head down and have a complete arch with the heels touching the ground and palms on the floor.

Count 9 Shashangasana or relaxed pose

Same as 5 th step. Inhale and exhale.

Count 10 Ashwa Sanchalanasana or equestrian pose

Inhale and bring the right leg in between the two hands and in line with them. Arch the back concave upwards as in step 3.

Count 11 Padahastasana or hand to foot pose

Exhale and bring the left foot forward next to the right foot and touch the knees with forehead as in 2.



Count 12 Pranamasana or prayer pose

Inhale. Comp up, stand erect with hands along the body and relax.

ASANAS

The Sanskrit word “Asana” means posture. Asana means the different species using the different posture, for their comfortable sitting which are known as Asanas. By effort and stability Maharshi patanjali means the minimum use of force. In the beginning the postures which were used for prolonged sitting performing the spiritual practices like Sandhya meditation, pooja and fire ceremony known as Asanas.

Principles of Asanas

1. Asanas should not be performed with jerks, but slowly, relaxively go to final position.
2. Concentrate [awareness] on the effects of Asanas on the mind and the body.
3. Maintain the final position minimum 10 seconds.

Why for Asanas

According to physiology, there are three conditions of health of the human body.

1. Constant supply of proper nourishment and of the internal secretions of glands;
2. Effective removal of waste products; and
3. Healthy functioning of the nerve-connections. Cultural poses are fully capable of fulfilling these conditions.

Classifications of Asanas :

Asanas are many in nature. Some are easy and some are difficult .The value of asanas depends on its systematic and regular practice. Asanas are classified into several types based on final pose, difficulty and physical position.

i). On the basis of the movements and final pose, the asanas are classified as follows

- a) Meditative Asanas (Ex: padmasana, Vajrasana, Savasana, etc)
- b) Relaxation Asanas (Ex : Savasana, Sakhasana, Samasana, etc)
- c) Cultural Asanas (Ex : Halasana, Sarvangasana, Mayurasana, Sirasana, etc)

ii). On the basis of the difficulty of Asanas, they are classified as follows

- a) Beginner Asanas – (Ex : padmasana, Vajrasana, Tadasana, etc)
- b) Intermediate Asanas – (Ex : Halasana Dhanurasana, Sarvangasana, etc)
- c) Advanced Asanas – (Ex : Mayurasana, Sirasana, etc)

iii). On the basis of the starting position of Asanas, they are classified as follows

- a) Long sitting position – (Ex : padmasana, Paschimottasana, Samasana, etc)
- b) Supine position - (Ex : Halasana, Sarvangasana, Savasana, etc)
- c) Prone position (Ex : Bhujangasana, salabhasana, Dhanurasana, etc)
- d) Standing position - (Ex : Tadasana, Vrksasana, Trikonasana, etc)
- e) Kneeling position – (Ex : Mayurasana, Sirsasana, ect)

b).GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICING ASANAS:

We have to keep in mind that while going in for asana practice we have to follow the general conditions with regard to dress, time of practice, place of practice etc., so as to achieve the maximum benefits.

Dress :

The minimum possible dress is recommended .More area of our body should be exposed to the atmosphere. The dress should be loose and preferably elastic in nature.

Time:

It can be practiced both in the morning and in the evening. The morning session will be good, because during the mornings the atmosphere is pure and calm and it is very easy to focus our mind in a desired direction.

Place:

The place of practice is very important. While in practice you should not be disturbed by other external factors. The place should have proper ventilation , free from pollution, free dust , ants and quite calm in nature.

Body :

Body should be clean, particularly our stomach, and intestine should be empty. Finish morning routines, take bath, and after 15 minutes practice the asanas. The important instruction, the body should be light and fresh. Hence the asanas are done during in the early morning hours or during the evenings.

Sequence :

Usually the yogic asanas are done along with pranayama and meditation practices in the following sequence. Complete the asanas first, then follow it with pranayama and go for meditation at the last.

Spread:

The asana is done on a flat horizontal surface covered with a clean blanket preferably a cotton cloth.

Age Limit :

According to yoga literature, both male and female can practice the asanas right from the age of twelve. However, the children should not remain in their final pose for long duration as adult's do.

Priority:

For good results asana practice should begin with Savasana This helps the body to attain normal metabolism level which is a suitable stage for beginning the practice.

Concentration:

During the asana practice the concentration is a must, It is easily achieved through nasal or frontal gazing.

Initiation :

Yogic asana practice needs initiation from a teacher. In the initial stage the learning should be from an experienced 'Guru' is essential.

Diet:

There are no specific dietary rules for the asana practitioners. However, as far as possible, natural foods that are in light and easily digestible should be included in our daily diet. For any Yoga practitioner regulation of food is very much essential. He should never take a stomach full of food. Yoga teachers insist that two quarter of the stomach volume should be filled with food, one quarter with water and the remaining quarter should be kept empty.

During performing the asanas care should be taken to adhere to the following:

- Start with simple to complex asanas in a progressive manner.
- Do the asanas in pairs. That is forward bend followed by backward bend and vice versa, similarly on right and left side.
- Make the movements only with tolerable pain or discomfort.
- Don't jerk your body unnecessarily.
- Keep the breathing rate normal.
- Keep the body in complete relaxed position. Don't be tensed.
- Avoid any kind of talk. Don't swallow anything including saliva. If you feel like sneezing dismantle the asana and do it.
- Don't practice the asana when you are ill.
- Women should not practice during periods.

The Yogic practice is a scientific system. We must understand the proper method of doing each asanas through a Guru or from a qualified Yoga teacher.

C. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PHYSICAL EXERCISE AND YOGIC ASANAS

There are certain difference between yogasanas and physical exercises, which are discussed below.

S.No	Yogasanas	Physical Exercise
1.	Aim to achieve sense of Well-being	Aim to receive awards and trophies
2.	Static in nature	Dynamic in nature
3.	Movements are slow, steady and smooth	Involve very fast movement
4.	Oppose violent muscle	Emphasized violent movements
5.	Essentially individualistic	Involve group practice
6.	Space requirement is very less	Large playfield is required
7.	Requirement of equipments are extremely limited	Depend more and more on modern equipments
8.	Cultivate spiritual Advancement	Spirituality is not encouraged much
9.	Yamas and Niyamas aims at attitudinal changes	Such attitudinal training is not insisted

10.	Meditation and concentration are very important	Concentration alone is very important
11.	Asana are preparatory for higher yogic practices like meditation	Physical exercises may be preparatory for sports competition
12.	Psycho-physiological in nature	Emphasize on muscular training
13.	Parasympathetic nervous system is stimulated	Sympathetic nervous system stimulated
14.	Energy expenditure is minimum	Consume lot of energy
15.	Do not cause fatigue and injury	Leads to fatigue and injury
16.	Less spirit of competition	More spirit of competition
17.	Possible to practice throughout life without limitations	At old ages, possible to practice with limitations only
18.	Yoga research is in infancy stage	Research is fairly advanced

D.BENEFITS OF SELECTIVE ASANAS :

PADMASANA:



Posture:

Padmasana is a lotus posture. The name of this asana is called Padmasana because the final position of this asana seems to be like lotus.

Position :

Long Sitting Position. Sit with the legs extended forward.

Procedure:

Stage -1 : Slowly bring the right leg and place it on the left thigh. The heel of the right foot should as much as possible touch the groin.

Stage – 2: Slowly bring the left leg and place it on the right thigh . The heel of the left foot should as much as possible touch the groin.

If you are not able to perform this stage, just fold the left leg and place under the right leg at the initial practice. After a few days, or few weeks of practice, you can perform it properly.

Stage – 3: Keep the hands straight and rest them on your knees. Touch your thumb with your index finger, and spread out the other fingers close to each other, thus forming Chin Mudra .

Duration :

In the final position, relax the whole body as much as possible. Remain in the pose for minimum of 15 to 30 seconds , and at the maximum for 60 to 90 seconds.

Closure:

Slowly come back to the starting position by releasing the stages in the reverse order i.e. third , second , and first stages.

Remember and observe the following:

- 1) Care should be taken that the knees touch the ground.
- 2) The vertebral column and the body from the waist upward should be kept erect.
- 3) Keep the normal breath and normal eyesight.

Benefits :**General :**

- 1) Padmasana is used for meditation, prayer, and worship and for Pranayama practice.
- 2) It develops the physical and mental stability.
- 3) It relieves the stiffness of joints, particularly knees and guards from rheumatism.
- 4) This asana help for the players to obtain mental control.
- 5) Padmasana keeps a person young .

Physiological:

- 1) The abdominal region receives more supply of the blood.
- 2) Padmasana improves the digestion process.
- 3) It activates the functions of kidney.

Therapeutic:

- 1) Padmasana relieves constipation, and indigestion.
- 2) It is a very good asana for curing knee ailments.
- 3) Padmasana is useful curing the flatulence, i.e. gastric trouble in the stomach
- 4) It also cures pile complaints.

VAJRASANA:**posture:**

This asana is called the thunderbolt posture.

Position:

Long Sitting Position

Procedure:

- Stage –1:** Bring the right leg sideward, and then sit on the right heel.
Stage –2: Bring the left leg sideward, and then sit
Stage –3: Place the hands on the knee with palms facing downwards

**Duration:**

In the final position, relax the whole body as much as possible. Remain in the pose for minimum of 15 to 30 seconds, and at the maximum for 60 to 90 seconds.

Closure:

Slowly come back to the starting position by releasing the stages in the reverse order, i.e. third, second, and the first stage.

Remember and Observe the following:

- 1) The knees should be together.
- 2) The heels are placed apart.
- 3) The vertebral column and the body from the waist upward should be kept erect.
- 4) Maintain the normal breathing and eyesight.

Benefits:**General:**

- 1) Vajrasana strengthens the thigh and calf muscles.
- 2) It develops physical and mental stability.
- 3) It is used for prayer pose of the Muslims and the meditation pose of the Japanese Buddhists.
- 4) Vajrasana is used for meditation, prayer, and worship and for pranayama practice.
- 5) It relieves the stiffness of joints particularly at knee, hip and ankle.

Physiological:

- 1) Vajrasana improves the digestion process.
- 2) It regulates the function of the circulatory and respiratory system.
- 3) It activates the functions of the nervous system.
- 4) The abdominal region receives more supply of the blood.

Therapeutic:

- 1) Vajrasana is useful for curing the headache.

- 2) Vajrasana relieves constipation, and indigestion.
- 3) It is useful in curing the flatulence, i.e. gastric trouble in the stomach.

HALASANA:



Posture:

This asana is called the plough posture.

Position :

Supine Position.

Procedure:

Stage -1: Raise the legs slowly up to 90 –degree and hold them in the position for a few seconds. Raising the legs with straight and together,

Stage-2: Gently lower the legs behind the head until the toes are pointing the ground.

Stage-3: Extend the feet a little further behind the head with toes pointing outward.

Duration :

Be in the pose for minimum of 15 to 30 seconds, and at the minimum for 60 to 90 seconds. In the final position try to relax the whole body as much as possible,

Closure:

Then slowly come back to the starting position by releasing the stages in the reverse order.

Remember and observe the following:

- 1) Always keep the legs straight and toes together,.
- 2) Maintain the legs for few seconds at 90 degree position
- 3) When returning you should not raise the head from the floor .
- 4) It should never be performed with jerks.

Benefits:

General:

- 1) Halasana is extremely beneficial to the spinal column.
- 2) It develops the memory and concentration power.
- 3) It will reduce the excess fat at the stomach region.

Physiological:

- 1) It regulates the functions of circulatory and respiratory systems.
- 2) It activates the functions of pituitary gland, which is the master gland that controls all the ductless glands functions.
- 3) It increases the more amount of blood flow to the head region.

Therapeutic:

- 1) Halasana relieves backache, low back pain and rheumatism.
- 2) It regulates the nervous debility.
- 3) It is a good remedy for menstrual disorders and obesity.

DHANURASANA:**Posture:**

This asana is called the bow posture.

Position:

Prone Position

Procedure:

Stage - 1: Gently fold the right leg at knee and hold the ankle with the right hand.

Stage-2: Slowly fold the left leg at knee and hold the ankle with the right hand.

Stage -3: Raise the head, chest and thighs as high as possible by gradual application of force on the hands and legs.

Stage -4: Raise the body and make a perfect back arch on the vertebral column as much as possible.

Duration:

Be in the pose for minimum of 15 to 30 seconds, and at the maximum for 60 to 90 seconds.

Closure:

In the final position try to relax the whole body as much as possible. Keep your eyesight on the forehead. Then slowly come back to the starting position by releasing the stages in the reverse order.

Remember and observe the following:

- 1) In the final pose the arms should be straight.
- 2) The legs can be split apart in order to maintain the balance.
- 3) In the final pose keep your eyesight on the forehead.
- 4) In the final pose the lower abdomen only should touch the ground.

Benefits:**General:**

- 1) Dhanurasana loosens the spinal column.
- 2) It will strengthen the back and abdomen muscles.
- 3) It develops the balancing power in the body.

Physiological:

- 1) Dhanurasana stimulates the endocrine glands.
- 2) Particularly it activates the functions of liver, kidney and pancreas.
- 3) It brings a large supply of blood to the kidneys, heart and lungs.

Therapeutic:

- 1) Dhanurasana is useful for women suffering from irregular periods.
- 2) It is a very good asana for curing many disorders like asthma, diabetic, constipation, sexual debility etc.

SARVANGASANA:**Posture:**

This asana is called the shoulder stand posture

Position:

Supine Position.

Procedure:

Stage -1 : Raise the legs slowly up to 90-degree, and hold them in the position for a few seconds. While raising maintain the legs straight and together.

Stage-2: Raise the trunk slowly with the support of the hands with the palms placed at the centre of the back.

Stage-3: Hold the body at an angle of 90 degrees, with head, shoulder and upper arm alone on the ground.

Stage-4: Maintain the same body position .keep the total body perpendicular to the ground.

Duration:

Remain in the pose for minimum of 15 to 30 seconds and at the maximum for 60 to 90 seconds.

Closure:

In the final position, try to relax the whole body as much as possible. Then slowly come back to the starting position by releasing the stage in the reverse order.

Remember and observe the following:

- 1) Always maintain the legs straight and keep the toes together.
- 2) Maintain the legs for few seconds at 90 degree.
- 3) Should not make any jerking movement while raising the body.
- 4) When returning, you should not raise the head from the floor.
- 5) While returning bring the legs as slow as possible keeping the leg straight and together.
- 6) In the final pose chest should touch the chin.

Benefits :

General:

- 1) Sarvangasana develops the memory and concentration power.
- 2) It will reduce the excess fat at the stomach region.
- 3) It gives more flexibility to the spinal column.

Physiological:

- 1) Sarvangasana particularly stimulate the thyroid gland.
- 2) It has a beneficial effect on the endocrine and digestive.
- 3) It activates the functions of the pituitary gland, which is the master gland that controls all the ductless glands functions.
- 4) It increases the more amount blood flow to the head region.

Therapeutic :

- 1) Sarvangasana relieves headaches, asthma etc.
- 2) It is a very good asana to relieve impotency and throat ailments.
- 3) It is a good remedy for menstrual disorders, varicose veins and obesity.
- 4) It regulates the nervous debility.

SAVASANA:



Posture:

This asana is called the corpse posture. It is also called as Shanthiasana .Shanthi means peace.

Position:

Supine Position.

Procedure:

- Stage-1:** Split both legs slowly sideward's keep them one or two feet apart.
- Stage- 2:** Slowly move on the hands sideward's keep the arms as relaxed as possible. The palms should face upward with natural flexion at the fingers.
- Stage-3:** Take a deep breath. That is inhale deeply and then exhales deeply.
- Stage-4:** Close the eyes. keep your mind on your breathing. That is to see the breath through your third eye internally.

Duration:

Keep yourself relaxed all through the posture; Keep this position for about 60 to 120 seconds.

Closure:

Then slowly come back to the starting position by releasing the stages in the reverse order.

Remember and observe the following :

- 1) Keep the mind on the breath for a few seconds, the mind and body will be relaxed,
- 2) You should try and forget all external thoughts, while in the final pose .
- 3) In between other asanas practice, do this for a minute or two
- 4) Try to relax the body and mind as much as possible.

Benefits:**General:**

- 1) Savasana will give a complete relaxation to the whole body.
- 2) It will give the enormous mental peace to the practitioner.
- 3) It is useful to energize our body and mind for further actions.

Physiological:

- 1) Savasana brings the whole physiological systems to normal level.
- 2) It activates vital internal organs to great extent.
- 3) The entire nervous system is regulated.

Therapeutic:

- 1) Savasana will be helpful in curing many functional, organic, structural and psychological disorders.

UNIT – IV

YOGA AND RELAXATION

Yoga attracts many people as a means of relaxation physical and mental tension. You can achieve this Common methods of relaxing, such as watching relaxation through the practice of yoga poses, television or chatting with friends, serve more as breath awareness and relaxation techniques. In fact, a distraction than a means of achieving complete relaxation is so important in yoga that a portion of relaxation. Yoga teaches your body and mind to every practice should be entirely devoted to relax completely by consciously releasing both relaxation.

TYPES OF RELAXATION

1. Physical Relaxation
2. Mental Relaxation
3. Spiritual Relaxation

Physical Relaxation:

Yoga poses are extremely beneficial for relaxing your body. As you stretch and move your body in a yoga practice, you can release tension from your muscles, allowing them to relax. Yoga allows you to connect with your body and become aware of any tension that may be present. Through your yoga practice, you can focus on relaxing any areas that may require attention.

Mental Relaxation:

Yoga provides you with an opportunity to set aside time each day to allow your mind to relax and unwind. By taking time each day to practice yoga, you can help prevent your mind from becoming overwhelmed and fatigued. The practice of breath awareness is especially useful for relaxing you mind.

Spiritual Relaxation:

Once you achieve physical and mental relaxation, spiritual relaxation is also possible. Spiritual relaxation brings a feeling of inner peace and contentment. This type of relaxation also promotes a sense of inner awareness, which can help put you in touch with yourself and those around you.

YOGA FOR SENIORS

Yoga can be modified to suit the needs of seniors. Alternative to prescription drugs and invasive medical practicing yoga can help ease many of the physical procedures. If you are a senior citizen, make sure problems experienced by seniors. In fact, yoga you discuss practicing yoga with your doctor before is becoming increasingly recognized as a good you begin.

Why do seniors need yoga?

Seniors may not be very active and may also suffer from poor posture. These conditions can lead to weak muscles, back pain, joint stiffness, obesity, constipation, insomnia and depression. Also, seniors may experience problems with circulation, which can contribute to reduced mobility and general health problems.

What makes yoga a good choice for seniors?

Yoga is a gentle, easy and natural method of improving overall health and quality of life for all peoples, regardless of age or physical condition. May yoga poses can be modified so they can be performed in a wheelchair or even in bed.

What are the benefits of yoga for seniors?

PHYSICAL BENEFITS

Yoga involves safe and gentle movements that effectively tone and strengthen muscles, increase flexibility and restore vitality. These benefits provide greater control over the body, which can help improve seniors' ability to move round safely. Yoga can also improve breathing, encourage relaxation and help people better cope with discomfort or pain. In addition, practicing yoga can help alleviate specific physical conditions suffered by many seniors, such as the symptoms of arthritis.

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL BENEFITS:

Participating in yoga classes provides social interaction, which encourages senior to make new friends and feel a sense of community. The overall feeling of well-being the yoga offers can also lead to a positive attitude toward life. Yoga can provide the calm and serenity needed to alleviate depression and anxiety. Moreover, as people's flexibility, strength and energy increase, their confidence will grow.

YOGA AND PREGNANCY

Yoga can be very beneficial and therapeutic for pregnant women. Practicing yoga not only helps physically prepare a woman for childbirth, but it can also positively influence her mental and emotional state to prepare her for this life – changing experience. It is best to start practicing yoga before you become pregnant. This allows you to become more familiar with yoga and allows your body to adjust to your yoga practice before the onset of the changes that come with the early stages of pregnancy.

If you are pregnant, it is important that you discuss practicing yoga with your doctor before you begin, regardless of whether you have practiced yoga before. You should then try to find a prenatal yoga. Class taught by a qualified teacher.

PHYSICAL BENEFITS:

Yoga can ease many physical problems involved in pregnancy. For example, performing yoga poses can help relieve fatigue, nausea, heartburn, leg cramps and varicose veins. Practicing yoga also helps you maintain good posture throughout your pregnancy, which can help alleviate backache. Though practicing yoga, you can learn breathing and relaxation techniques that you can use during labour to help you cope with any pain you experience.

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL BENEFITS:

Yoga can help you deal with any mental and emotional stress you may experience during pregnancy and child birth. Yoga can teach you to focus and concentrate, which can help you through the course of your pregnancy as well as during labour.

Yoga can also help you deal with mood swings, as well as anxiety and fear about child birth. By heightening your awareness of your body, yoga can increase the confidence you have in your body's ability to give birth. You may also find that you can discover a deeper connection with your unborn baby through meditation.

CAUTIONS DURING PREGNANCY:

AVOID POSES ON YOUR BACK:

After the first trimester of your pregnancy, you should avoid poses that require you to lie flat on your back for a long period of time. When you lie on your back, the weight of the fetus can restrict the flow of blood in your lower body.

AVOID PUTTING PRESSURE ON YOUR ABDOMEN:

When you are pregnant, you should avoid poses that require you to lie on your belly or other poses that put pressure on your abdomen, such as forward bends and twists. However, you can modify forward bends and twists to make them safe for pregnancy. You should seek advice from a qualified yoga teacher to learn how to modify poses during your pregnancy.

LISTEN TO YOUR BODY:

If you feel any discomfort or strain while performing a pose, you should come out of the pose immediately. You should also move slowly between poses. You will probably need to modify most poses when you are pregnant to accommodate the changes your body is going through.

AVOID OVER – STRETCHING YOUR MUSCLES:

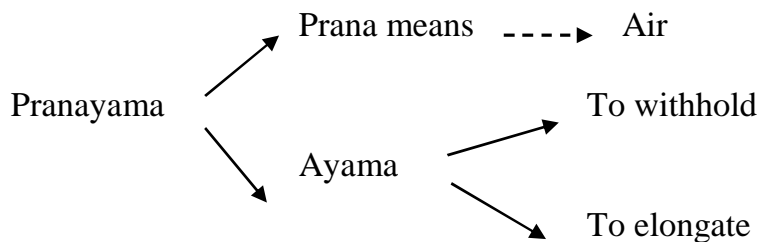
During pregnancy, try not to stretch as far as you normally would. You should avoid poses that involve intense stretches, especially poses that stretch your abdominal muscles. There is also an increased danger of straining your muscles when you are pregnant because pregnancy hormones loosen the connective tissues in your body.

AVOID INVERTED POSES AND BACK BENDS:

During pregnancy, you should avoid inverted poses, such as shoulder stand. However, you can lie on the floor with the soles of your feet against a wall or your calves resting on a chair, provided you are not lying on your back for an extended period of time. You should also avoid back bends during pregnancy. Because of the extra weight you carry on the front of your body when you are pregnant, these poses put additional pressure on your spine and lower back and can lead to back injury.

PRANAYAMA

The word Pranayama is derived from two Sanskrit roots called Prana and Ayama. This word “Prana” denotes the air that leaves from the body (or) life force and “Ayama” means to elongate or to withhold. The act of breathing has three different stages. They are inhalation, suspension and exhalation. Normally we think that breathing is just inhalation and exhalation. But there is a third stage which is a brief pause in between inhalation and exhalation. This is known as suspension of the breath. Hence, Pranayama is the control of air or breathing exercise which includes the three different stages such as inhalation, suspension and followed by exhalation. This is considered as an exercise that prolongs life time.



In yoga practice, control of breath is very much insisted in the fifth anga called Pranayama. The proper regulation of breathing exercise practice enhances longevity of an individual. Our ancestors, the Rishis and Saints, have observed that the breathing process is the basis of any living being. They observed that breathing rate and life span are inversely proportional to each other. Thus, it is known that lesser number of breathing rate enhances life span of an individual.

Statistics on Breathing Rate and Life Span

Concepts of Pranayama

Before going into the Pranayama practice one should understand the important concepts for the better understand of pranayama so as to attain the maximum benefits. They are:

These are very important for Pranayama practices Each point is discussd briefly hereunder.

NADIS

According to Siddhas there are 14 channels in our human body. Different magnetic waves are running through each of the channels, thus controlling the body in many ways. The pranayama practitioner must know about the three important Nadis, which are directly connected with the breathing process. They are : Ida . Pingala and Sushumna.

Normally we breathe through both the right and left nostrils. The two separate channels in the nose do both these functions.

Ida Nadi (Chandra Nadi)

While inhalation, the air passes through the left nostril, and it makes our body cool. The Ida Nadi Produces the cooling effect. In the yoga language it is also called Chandra Nadi , the Moon breath. Thus, the left nostril breath regulates the functions of the left (part) side of the body, and also control the human thoughts.

Pingala Nadi (Surya Nadi)

S.No	Living Beings	Breathing Rate Per minute	Life span in years
1.	Rabbit	38 - 40	8 -9
2.	Monkey	30- 32	10- 11
3.	Dog	28 - 30	12 - 14
4.	Cat	23 - 26	12 -13
5.	Horse	16 – 18	48- 52
6.	Human Being	12 – 17	100
7.	Elephant	11- 13	105
8.	Cobra	7-9	120
9.	Tortoise	3-6	150

While inhalation, the air that passes though the right nostril produce warmth to the body. It produces a heating effect. In the yoga language it is called Surya Nadi , the Sun breath. Thus , the right nostril breath regulates the functions of the right (part) side of the body. It also regulates the prana or life force in the human body.

Sushumma Nadi (Shakti Nadi)

When the flow of prana through these two Nadis meet in the body, Sushumna Nadi is supposed to exist there. This is the central canal. It is neither hot nor cold; it controls and balances the other two Nadis. Its main characteristic is Sattva Guna (central nerve channel carrying kundalini energy). This subtle Nadi provides light and knowledge. it is also called Saraswati or Shakti Nadi.

One must understand that the objective of Pranayama is to affect the proper balance between Ida and Pingala and to gain spiritual up liftment through the attainment of light and knowledge from

the Sushumna, From physical point of view, a proper balance among the three Nadis ensures health, strength, peace and longevity.

Closing the Nostrils

Any Pranayama practitioner should first understand the traditional method of closing of closing the nostrils.

While performing the kumbhaka in any Pranayama, it is necessary to close the nostril passages, Normally, the right hand is used for these purposes. Traditionally the right thumb finger is used to close the right nostril passage. The third (ring finger) and fourth (little finger) fingers are used to close the left nostril passage. The first (index finger) and second (middle finger) fingers are bent in such a way that they should touch the palm together.

Suppose the closing of the nostril passages is not required, you should keep both the hands on the knees with 'Chin Mudra' pose.

Controlling the Breath

In Pranayama practices, the prana is controlled by means of three ways. They are as follows.

Puraka (Inhalation)

This is a continuous process of breathing the air into the lungs at the maximum, through both nostrils or alternate nostril or through mouth.

Kumbhaka (Suspension)

This is holding the breathe or retaining the air in the lungs for a short time with a comfortable condition by applying all the three types of bandhas.

Rechaka (Exhalation)

This is a smooth and continuous breathing out the air from the lungs at the maximum, through both nostrils or alternate nostril.

Bandhas:

Bandha means lock. Proper holding of breath is very essential for obtaining the actual benefit of Pranayama practice. During the kumbhaka phase, all the inhaled air should be retained with in the lungs only. But naturally, when there is a high pressure, the air will try to come out to the low pressure area. Nine holes are present in our human body. In order to keep the air only at the lungs we are applying certain bandhas in our body. The following are important bandhas to be observed during the kumbhaka phase:

Jalandra Bandha (Chin Lock)

After the complete inhalation, the retention of breath starts. It is a lock applied at the throat region by slightly bending the head and making the static contraction at the neck and the throat particularly at the glottis. The chin is pressed against the chest. This lock will close the air that comes out from the lungs through the throat to upward direction to a great extent. This is also called as Chin Lock.

Mula Bandha (Anus Lock)

It is also one of the locks applied during the kumbhaka phase. This is used not to let out the air through anus. That is contracting the anal sphincter muscle upwards to the spine and feel the sensation that 'apanavayu' is drawn up. It is also called as Anus Lock.

Uddiyana Bandha (Abdominal Lock)

This bandha is mainly used during the exhalation of the air after the inhalation or holding the breath. But during the suspension period it is partially applied. Uddiyana Bandha is actually

performed by contracting the whole stomach inwards and upwards. This will aid the complete contraction or the squeezing of the lungs and diaphragm. According to the respiration mechanism, due to the perfect contraction, the residual air stored in the lungs will be reduced. At the same time following this, during the inhalation phase more amount of fresh air is likely to get into the lungs. This is also called as Abdominal Lock.

PRACTICE OF PRANAYAMA

a)Nadi Suddhi :(Sun or moon breath)

Meaning:

Nadi Suddhi means the alternate nostrils breath or Sun and Moon Breath.

Summary Inhalation : By both nostrils alternately Suspension : No suspension Exhalation : By both nostrils alternately.

Procedure:

Sit in a comfortable sitting posture. Close the right nostril by right thumb and slowly, smoothly and deeply inhale the air through the left nostril. Then close the left nostril by right hand little and ring finger. Open the right nostril by releasing the right thumb, now slowly and smoothly breath out the air through right nostril. Then slowly, smoothly and deeply inhale the air through right nostril. Then close the right nostril by thumb. Gently open the left nostril by releasing right hand little and ring finger. Now slowly and smoothly breathe out the air through left nostril. This is called one round or cycle. 3 to 5 cycles can be practiced in a practice session.

Benefits:

1. It cleans the right and left channels.
2. It is useful in curing some of the diseases of the lungs
3. It increases the amount of oxygen mixed with the blood.
4. It removes the carbon – dioxide from the blood to great extent.

b) Nadi Shodhana :(Alternate Nostril Breath)

Meaning :

It is also called as alternate nostril breath with suspension phase.

Summary

Inhalation : By both nostrils alternately

Suspension : It is practiced

Exhalation : By both nostrils alternately

Procedure :

Sit in a comfortable sitting posture. Close the right nostril by right thumb and slowly, smoothly and deeply inhale the air through the left nostril. Close both the nostril by the Yogic traditional method. Then hold the breath comfortably for a few seconds by applying all the three bandhas. Slowly open the right nostril by releasing the right thumb, now slowly and smoothly breath out i.e. exhale the air through right nostril. After completely exhale the air, then slowly, smoothly and deeply inhale the air through right nostril with closing the left nostril by right hand little and ring fingers. Close both the nostrils by the Yogic traditional method. Then hold the breath comfortably for a few seconds by applying all the three bandhas. Slowly open the left nostril by releasing the right hand little and ring fingers, now slowly and smoothly breath out i.e. exhale the air through left nostril

This is called one round or one cycle. 3 to 5 cycles can be practiced in a practice session.

Benefits :

1. It cleanses the nasal passages and purifies the blood.
2. It is very useful Pranayama for sinus problem.
3. This Pranayama tones – up and soothes the nervous system.
4. It increases the amount of oxygen mixed with the blood, thus purifies the blood to a great extent.
5. It brings calmness and steadiness in the mind.
6. It stimulates the appetite and improves the digestion.
7. It is very useful for the arousal and for the control of the latent psychic force within the body.

c) Surya Bhedana :(Sun Piercing Breath)**Meaning:**

Surya means sun and Bhedana means to pierce. Surya Bhadana means piercing the Pingala Nadi.

Summary

Inhalation : By right nostril alone

Suspension : It is practiced

Exhalation : By left nostril alone

Procedure:

Sit in a comfortable sitting posture. Close the left nostril by right hand little and slowly, smoothly and deeply inhale air through the right nostril. Close both the nostrils by the Yogic traditional method. Then hold the breath comfortably for a few seconds by applying all the three bandhas. Slowly open the left nostril by releasing the right hand little and ring finger, now slowly and smoothly breathe out i.e. exhale the air through left nostril. This is called one round or one cycle. 3 to 5 rounds can be practiced in a practice session.

Benefits:

1. Surya Bhedana practice produces heat in our body and thus purifies the blood to a great extent.
2. It activates the physiological function of liver.
3. It is useful in curing rheumatism and some of the skin diseases.
4. The constant practice of this Pranayama will arouse and increase the latent powers of the individual.

d) Kapalabhati (Cleansing Breath)**Meaning**

In Sanskrit **Kapala** means skull and **bhati** means light. The aim is to purify the channels inside the nose in addition to all the other parts of the respiratory system, thus allowing the brain to be cleared as well.

Summary

Inhalation : By both nostrils alternately

Suspension : No suspension

Exhalation: By both nostrils alternately

Procedure:

Sit in a comfortable pose. In this the inhalation and exhalation are performed very quickly like a pair of bellows of a blacksmith. Forcefully exhale the air through both nostrils. You should not take any effort to inhale the air through nose. It will take place naturally. Here we are giving much importance to the exhaling phase only. In the initial stage do it slowly. After some practice slowly increase the speed. For example, at the beginning the exhalation and inhalation to be at the rate of 20 to 25 times per minute. This can be slowly increased up to 100 to 120

times per minute according to one's capacity. After forceful exhalation counts are over, take a deep breath of in and out. This called one round or cycle. 3 to 5 cycles can be practiced in a practice session.

Benefits:

1. It purifies the frontal portion of the brain
2. It increases the concentration power, thoughts and visions
3. It is useful for curing asthma patient, by eliminating the cough accumulated in the windpipe
4. Mainly it controls the sense organs and keeps the mind at rest.

Caution:

Those in good health may perform this exercise , but those suffering from pulmonary or cardiac disorders should only undertake it under the guidance of experienced teachers of Yoga.

Sitali : (Cooling Breath Through Tongue)

Meaning:

Sitali means cool. Sitali Pranayama produces the cooling effect on the body and mind.

Summary

Inhalation : Through mouth

Suspension : It is practiced

Exhalation : By both nostrils.

Procedure:

Sit in any meditative pose. Extend the tongue and fold the side to form a narrow tube. Inhale slowly and deeply through the folded tongue. Close the mouth and keep the tongue as it is in the normal .Retain the breath for few seconds by performing jalendra bandha, uddiyana bandha and mula bandha, and close the nostrils by the traditional Yogic method. Slowly release the Jalendra bandha and open the nostril passages.

Gently let the air out slowly and continuously through both nostrils. After the complete exhalation of the air, slowly release the uddiyana bandha and mula bandha. This is called one cycle. 3 to 5 cycles can be practiced in a practice session.

Benefits:

1. Sitali Pranayama eliminates the thirst.
2. During summer it reduces the body temperature to a great extent.
3. It encourages free flow of prana through the body.
4. Sitali is very useful for the persons who are having very hot- temperament in nature.
5. It is useful in curing the ailments of high blood pressure and some of the skin diseases.

Sitkari : (Folded –up-Tongue pranayama)

- Sit in a comfortable posture, with an erect spine. Exhale from both nostrils.
- Fold the tongue backwards and press the tip of the tongue by the hard palate, leaving narrow openings on either side of the tongue. Inhale through these side-openings making a hissing sound.
- Allow the breath to be stopped with ease.
- Exhale slowly and continuously through both the nostrils.
- Then allow the breath to stop with ease and release. Repeat.

Sadanta : (Suck-Through –Teeth-pranayama)

- Press the upper teeth on the lower ones.
- Suck in air through the crevices of the teeth slowly and continuously.
- Allow the breath to stop automatically. Exhale through both nostrils.
- Hold the breath comfortably for a while before the next inhalation. Repeat the cycle.

Benefits:

All the above three - sitkari, sitali and Sadanta have the same benefits. They are cooling help in calming down the mind by removing the mental anxiety and tension. They increase the resistance to diseases of respiratory system. Sadanta is particularly useful for persons suffering from pyorrhoea and hypersensitivity of gums.

UNIT - V

b).KRIYAS :

There is no Yoga without cleanliness. We take our daily bath to remove the dust from our skin. Do we clean our internal organs? How to expel the dust and haste inside? Yogic kriyas remove waste materials of our internal organs which are not expelled out. Without first eliminating toxins and impurities from the body, it is very difficult to practice the higher Yoga techniques. For this sole purpose, six scientific Yogic techniques known as shat karma's (Kriyas) have been developed by the ancient Yogis.

Types of Kriyas

Kriya means cleansing techniques of the internal organ. The main six types of kriyas are as follow:



- **Neti**
A process of cleansing and purifying the nasal passages.
- **Dhauti**
A Series of techniques for cleansing the stomach
- **Basti**
Techniques for washing and toning the large intestine

➤ **Nauli**

A very powerful method of massaging and strengthening the abdominal organs by means of churning of the abdominal wall

➤ **Trataka**

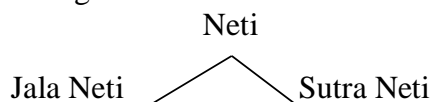
The practice of intense gazing at an object. It enhances the vision of the individual.

➤ **Kapalabhti**

Purification of the frontal brain by air. It involves fast breathing.

Neti:

The Neti practice will purify the nasal passage. When nasal membrane is treated first so that the sensation vibrates throughout the brain and it awakens the entire system.



Neti can be practiced by two means namely:

- Jala Neti : Cleaning with water
- Sutra Neti : Cleaning with thread or rubber catheter.



Jala Neti:

In this practice the nasal passage is cleaned by water.

Procedure:

For Jala Neti practices a specially made lota (a tumbler with a nozzle) is used. First fill the lota with lukewarm water and add half a teaspoon of salt and mix it well. It can be done in standing position(slightly feet apart) or in sitting position (sit with toes). Insert the spout into the right nostril. Slightly bend forward and tilt the head to your left so that the water runs freely and passes through right nostril and comes out through left nostril.

Now open the mouth and be conscious that the breath in and out or breathe the air are done through the mouth only. Gently raise the lota in such a way that the water flow is even. After emptying the lota, remove the lota from the right nostril and bend forward to allow the water to drain from the nose. Repeat the same process on the left nostril also. Finally dry the nostril passages by closing one of the nostril passages by right hand forceful exhalation and normal breathing in about ‘ 0 to 20 times on the other nostril. Then repeat the same process on the other nostril also. Then open both nostrils and repeat the same process for the complete drying of the nostril passages.

If you had mastered in Jala Neti practice with water you can do the same with also. It has a special effect in relieving the ailments of eyes, ears, nose and throat.

For the nasal diseases normally the doctors advise for cauterization but if you practice the Jala Neti kriya regularly, the nasal diseases can be easily curted. For the treatment of cold in India, people use to put a few drops of lukewarm oil into the nasal passages. This oil causes sneezing, removes congestion of the mucus membrane.

Sutra Neti:

In this type of practice the nasal passage is cleaned by cotton thread or rubber catheter. The cotton tread practice is somewhat difficult in the initial practice. In the traditional method of practice the pure cotton thread is used but nowadays instead of cotton thread the rubber catheter is used for the practice, because this is safe and comfortable device to practice. The rubber catheters of thickness number 3, 4 or 5 are available in any medical shop.

procedure:

Sutra Neti practice can be performed both in standing (slightly feet apart) and sitting positions (sit on toes) The thin rubber catheter is cleaned with saline water and lubricated with antiseptic



jelly. Gently insert one end of the catheter on one nostril until the end appears in the throat. Now use the right hand thumb and index finger hold the end at the throat, and slowly pull out through the mouth. while one end is projected from the mouth and the other end from the nostril, slowly and gently draw the catheter to and fro a few times so that it slides forwards and backwards in the nostril.

while doing this the breath in and out should be through the mouth only. Finally pulling the catheter out through your mouth. Repeat the same process on the other nostril too.

Benefits:

- 1) A Neti practice is useful to protect the body from the diseases of ear, nose and throat.
- 2) It will reduce the undesirable growth of the nasal bone.
- 3) It is very useful practice for the sinus problem.
- 4) It is helpful in curing asthma, headache and cold.
- 5) It also improves the vision power.

Dhauti:

The Dhauti is a method of cleaning the stomach. In dhauti there are three types namely Vamana Dhauti or kujal Kriya, Vastra Dhauti and Dhanda Dhauti. It means the cleaning of stomach by means of water, cloth and rubber tube insertion respectively. The first two are simple and discussed here. Considering the difficulty level, the third type is not advised here.

Vamana Dhauti:

procedure:

In this type the stomach is cleaned by means of water. Take six glasses of moderately warm water in a vessel and add one or two teaspoons of salt and mix it with water. Now drink all the six glasses of water (or as much as possible) one after another as quickly as possible while in standing position. If you are able to drink more, do it. Immediately after drinking the stomach full of water, just lean forward and place the middle and index fingers of the right hand as far back in the throat as possible. Rub and press the glottis. This will induce a strong urge to vomit and the water will be thrown out of the mouth in a series of quick gushes. press the glottis until the stomach is empty. This can be practiced early in the morning when the stomach is empty.

Benefits:

1. This will clean the stomach and throat region.
2. By this process the phlegm of the stomach comes out.
3. It is useful in curing diseases like cough, asthma, and headache.
4. The breathing problem can be solved
5. It increases the appetite and removes the other stomach troubles.

Vastra Dhauti:

This is also a kind of cleaning the stomach and throat region.

Procedure:

In this practice, specially made fine cotton cloth is used for this purpose. A cloth about two – inch width and several feet long is used to clean the stomach. First sit in a position that both feet are on the floor. The buttocks are seated in wooden block or a stone. put one end of the cloth into your mouth carefully and slowly swallow it in the same way as you mouth carefully and slowly swallow it in the same way as you eat foot. The cloth should be moistened well with salt water before swallowing. You can also drink a little water every minute so as to make the cloth go down easily.

Don't swallow all the cloth and hold one end so that it may be eventually withdrawn. keep the cloth in the stomach for some time, but not longer that twenty minutes. If you know nauli or agnisara kriya you should perform them. Then gently withdraw the cloth from the stomach. Suppose if there is any obstruction, chew a little more and then bring it out. If the pull out process is obstructed due to some reasons, drink salted water and vomit, and then take the cloth out

Benefits:

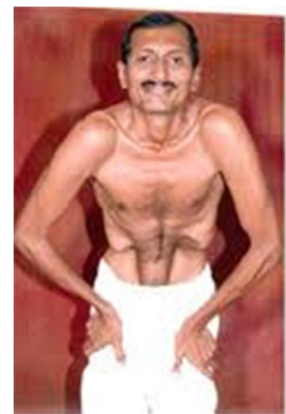
1. This will clean the inside lining of the stomach
2. By this process the phlegm of the stomach comes out.
3. It is useful in curing diseases like cough, asthma and headache.
4. The breathing problem can be solved.
5. It gives perfect health to a person and makes him strong.
6. It increases the appetite and removes gas and other stomach troubles.

Nauli:

It is one of the important kriyas to purify and strengthen the vital internal organs as a whole. Before going for nauli one should do the Agnisara Kriya and Uddiyana practices. Agnisara kriya is nothing but in the normal standing posture slightly bend forward and just contract the abdominal muscles inwards and relax it immediately, repeat the same for about five to six times in a single repetition. Take a deep breath in and exhale completely, then perform the uddiyana bandha. If you are master in this, then go for nauli practice.

Procedure:

Stand in normal standing position with feet slightly apart. Slightly bend forwards and place the palms on the thigh. Keep your belly in a loose position. Now slightly stretching the abdominal muscles towards your chest, in such a way that the whole stomach is to be made just like a tube shape in the middle. This central isolation is called as Madhyama Nauli. If you are able to master this practice, then slowly rotate the nauli in the middle of the stomach, slightly lean forward to the right and press hard on the right thigh with right hand at the same time keeping the left hand slightly loose. Now the nauli will move towards the right side of your stomach. The unilateral isolation on right side is called as Dakshina Nauli. In the same manner, if the left hand is pressed, the nauli will move towards the left side of your stomach. This unilateral isolation on left side is called as Vama Nauli. After few days practice, try to move the nauli to right and left side with full speed. In order to make this circular movements slowly rotate the pelvis along the direction of the Nauli. In this practice the churning of the rectus abdominal muscles massages all the vital internal organs and the digestive systems.

**Benefits:**

1. Nauli will be helpful in removing all the digestive ailments.
2. It is very useful in curing constipation and nervous diarrhea.
3. It will reduce the obesity in the stomach region.
4. It activates the functions of liver, spleen and other glands.
5. It increases the appetite.
6. It makes a person to be physically and mentally being alert.

Trataka:

In Sanskrit trataka means central fixation. It is one of the purificatory processes in the Hatha Yoga practices. Trataka is used to purify the vision of the individual. The eyes are the important sensory organs in our body. The vision and mind are directly connected internally. When the vision is stressed, or affected, the mind will also be disturbed. Actually, the image received by the retina is interpreted by the mind. It is necessary for the proper usage of eye vision in the normal life. Yoga literature says that the improper functioning of the eyes are the non-use, overuse and improper use of eyes. Trataka we are focusing our eyes on an object like candle flame, flower, an

idol, fire, water, a picture, or even a dot, and sky which is in front of us. Though it can be practiced in many ways, we employ the Candle – Flam Gazing Technique.

Procedure:

Sit in a comfortable sitting position either with Padmasana, or Vajrasana. Keep the breathing as normal as possible. Keep the lighted candle in front of you on a bench in line with your normal eye sight at a distance of three or four feet away from you. Now without blinking your eye, gaze on the candle flame. While focusing the attention on the flame you should look through your eyes.

You should not stretch the muscles around the eyes. Maintain the position until the eyes begin to water or to get a feeling of burning sensation. Now slowly close your eyes. Gently withdraw your attention on the flame and wash your eyes with cold water. Then gently rotate your eye balls by seeing upward, left side, downward and right side (anti- clock wise) for three times and repeat the same on the clock wise direction three times.

Benefits:

1. Trataka practice increases the sharp – sightedness.
2. It develops the power of concentration.
3. It will be useful in curing all the ailments of the eyes.
4. It will be helpful in removing certain cerebral congestions and reviving the memory.

C.MUDRAS

In the yogic practices, in addition to the eight steps of yoga(Astanga yoga),Mudras are also very important. Mudras are the developed forms of asanas.In asanas, senses are primary and pranas are secondary, whereas in Mudras, senses are secondary and pranas are primary.

The origins of Mudras are not very clear. Most of the practitioners agree that it is ancient but there is no consensus on dates.Mudras are very Indian. They probably spread to other parts of the world from here. The Hatha yoga pradipika considers mudra to be a yoganga, an independent branch of yoga.

The Sanskrit word mudra is translated as ‘ gesture’ or attitude’.

Concepts:-

Mudras are psychic, emotional, devotional and gestures or attitudes. Mudras are a combination of subtle physical movements which alter mood, attitude and perception, and which deepen awareness and concentration. A mudra may involve the whole body in a combination of asana, pranayama, bandha and other techniques. Mudras are yoga movements involving only the arms and hands. They are called the “ yoga of the hands”

Mudras influence five elements in the human body.The five fingers of the hand represent the five elements. There is a tremendous flow of energy in our hands and each finger represents one of the five elements – the thumb is agni(fire), the –fore finger is vayu (air), the middle finger is akash (ether), the ring finger is prithvi (earth) and the little finger is jal (water). Mudras balance the five elements to avoid diseases.

Mudras establish a direct link between annamaya kosha, the physical body, manomaya kosha, the mental body and pranamaya kosha, the energy body. Mudras enable to understand awareness of the flow of prana in the body, initially.They establish pranic balance within the koshas and enable the redirection of subtle energy to the upper chakras, inducing higher states of

consciousness. By creating barriers within the body through the practice of mudra, the energy is redirected within the body through the practice of mudra, the energy is redirected within.

Mudras thus provide a harmonious development of an individual. Mudras are really a holistic science.

Types of Mudras

Mudras can be categorized into five groups:

- 1) Hasta (hand Mudras)
- 2) Mana (head Mudras)
- 3) Kaya (postural Mudras)
- 4) Bandha (lock Mudras)
- 5) Adhara (perineal Mudras)

They are two kinds of hand Mudras, in general.

- 1) Asamyukta hastam (single –hand mudras)
- 2) Samyukta hastam (both the hands). There are 28 single – hand mudras and 24 double- hand mudras.

1)Hasta (hand Mudras):-

Hand mudras engage the motor cortex at a very subtle level. They generate a loop of energy which moves from the brain down to the hand and then back again. They redirect the prana emitted by the hands back into the body.

2) Mana (head Mudras)

Head mudras form an integral part and parcel of kundalini yoga. They help for meditation. They utilize the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and lips. Shambhavi mudra and Shanmukhi mudra are good examples.

3) Kaya (postural Mudras)

Postural Mudras uses physical postures combined with breathing and concentration. Good examples are vipareetha karani Mudra and yoga mudra.

4)Bandha (lock mudras)

Lock mudras combine mudra and bandha. They need for kundalini awakening Good example is Maha mudras.

5)Adhara (Perineal Mudra):-

Perineal mudras redirect prana from the bottom of the spinal cord to the brain. Ashwini mudra is a good example.

These five groups occupy substantial areas of the cerebral cortex approximately fifty percent.

Mudras are performed either in combination with or after asana and pranayama.

Practicing method

Chin mudra

Assume a comfortable and relaxed meditation posture; Fold the index fingers so that they touch the inside of the thumbs. Straighten the other three fingers of each hand; they are slightly apart. The palms of both hands face upwards with the backs of the hands resting on the knees.

It is an important psychoneural finger lock mudra; It makes asanas and meditations more powerful. The palms and fingers of the hands have many nerve root endings which constantly emit energy. The energy is redirected within, if we lock thumb and index finger, Knees create another pranic circuit and redirects prana within the body. Placing hands on knees stimulates Gupta nadi which enhances energies at mooladhara chakra. It improves lightness and receptivity.

Chinmudra in the psychic gesture of consciousness.

Chinmaya Mudra

Be in comfortable and relaxed meditative posture. Fold the index fingers so that they can touch inside of the thumb. Bend the other three fingers of each hand resting between folded index finger and the thumb.

Fingers emit energy.

The energy is redirected within.

It is good for proper respiration. It activates pituitary gland. It promotes knowledge and wisdom.

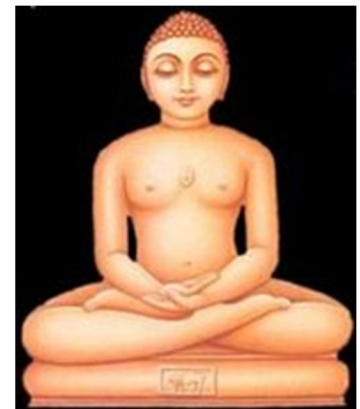
Brama Mudra

Bend the thumb inward and place the fingers over the thumb. Keep the back of the hand on the thighs which would be in vajrasana posture. They will be placed on either side of the navel with palms facing upwards and the knuckles touching each other. Keep the elbows bent.

d).Meditation:

The word meditation is derived from the Latin word “Medri” which means “to heal”. Hence, meditation is considered as a healing process against emotional, mental, and physical problems. In yogic practice, the meditation is the priceless technique that provide mental peace, and normal health and health and helps to be away from worries, stress, etc. It also help to relax both the body and mind.

At present most of the people are leading the mechanical and commercial life in the world. They are badly in need of mental peace and normal health in their life. Such people can follow the meditative practice to lead a healthy life. It also increases the positive thinking and human efficiency and reduces the hypertension, depression and nervous problems.



Approach to Meditation:

While we go for meditation practice we should keep some of the important principles in our mind, which are all essential for obtaining the actual benefits of the meditation.

Dress:

The dress should be loose and preferably in cotton materials.

Time:

The best time of practice is early morning. Also it can be practices before going to bed at night.

Place:

The place of practice is very important. While in practice you should not be disturbed by other external factors. So in such a way you can select pooja room or separate hall or better if you have open terrace. The place should have proper ventilation and should be a unpolluted, free from dust and quite in nature.

Posture:

The best suitable posture for the meditation practice is padmasana or Sukhasana. It is very important aspect in meditation practice. Mainly the mind should be free from all disturbances, ready to concentrate on a particular object or in action.

Types of Meditation:**Silent Meditation:**

Sit in a comfortable sitting position with the spine neck and head erect and centered. Keep your breathing as normal as possible. Close your, internally think of your body parts one by one from Head to Top by your third eye. Practice it for 10 to 15 minutes.

Mantra Meditation:

Sit in a comfortable sitting position with the spine, neck and head should be erect and centered. keep your breathing as normal as possible. Close your eyes. Select a mantra word (om, ram, ram, Krishna Krishna or select a word of your choice that can be easily pronounced) repeat the mantra, which may be spoken inwardly rather than aloud. Keep in this position for 10 to 15 minutes.

Object Meditation:

Sit in a comfortable sitting position with the spine, neck and head should be erect and centered. Keep your breathing as normal as possible, keep an object like a rose, or a lighted candle in front of you. Focus your mind on the object for some time and gently close your eyes. Now let the mind think of that object only for about 10 to 15 minutes.

Breathing Meditation:

In this type of meditation we are concentrating our mind on our breathing, Sit in a comfortable sitting position with the spine, neck and head should be erect and centered. Keep your breathing as normal as possible. Gently close your eyes. Try to observe the breathing process i.e. the way in which how the air goes in and out on the respiratory tract. Be in this position for 10 to 15 minutes.

BENEFITS OF MEDITATIVE POSTURES

5 benefits of meditation to the body

As an individual becomes regular with practicing meditation, there is a visible increase in joy, peace, and enthusiasm. This happens because of the increased prana (life force energy) in the body.

On the physical level, meditation:

- lowers high blood pressure
- lowers the levels of blood lactate, reducing anxiety attacks
- decreases tension-related pain (headaches, ulcers, insomnia, muscle, and joint problems)

- increases serotonin production that improves mood and behavior
- strengthens the immune system
- increases energy levels

11 mental benefits of meditation

Meditation brings the brainwave pattern into an alpha state that promotes healing. The mind becomes fresh, delicate and beautiful. It cleanses and nourishes you from within and calms you, whenever you feel overwhelmed, unstable, or emotionally shut down.

With regular practice of meditation:

- anxiety decreases
- emotional stability improves
- creativity increases
- happiness increases
- intuition develops
- gain clarity and peace of mind
- mental agility increases
- relaxes the mind
- Better memory and retention

Studies have shown that the brains of 50-year-old meditators have the same amount of grey matter in their prefrontal cortex as normal 20-year-olds do. This translates into the same abilities to remember things and decision-making.

What is the best way to get all these benefits of meditation?

- Regular practice is necessary.
- It takes only about 20 minutes every day. Once imbibed into the daily routine, meditation becomes the best part of your day.
- You will start experiencing the benefits of meditation within two months of regular practice.
- It's important to be on a light/empty stomach. Digestion requires high metabolism while meditation lowers the metabolic rate of the body.
- If you're a beginner, it's easier if you're sitting in a quiet, clean place. Once you become more adept at meditation, you can meditate anywhere.
- If you're getting thoughts during meditation, simply observe them. Don't resist them.

Meditation is like a seed; when you cultivate a seed with love, the more it blossoms.