



YOGA AS THERAPEUTIC FOR HOLISTIC HEALTH: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Yoga is the most valuable gift from ancient wisdom for the holistic development of mankind. Yoga is a philosophy and a living discipline to promote health and spiritual enlightenment for ages. In the *Vedic Gurukul* systems, disciples were exposed to and taught all the limbs of *Astang Yoga* making them sound at every level of personality and turning them into the best citizens throughout life. Keeping in view the role of *Yoga* in all life phases, all age groups, and every social stratum, a celebration of INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY has been started in 2016. Realizing the golden benefits of *Yoga* and meditation at in early age, many schools, colleges & organizations have started amalgamating them into the curriculum. Government & health organizations have started many programmes just to make *Yoga* a household thing for common people. The therapeutic potential of *Yoga* has made it a new-age medicine. *Astang Yoga* not only fulfils personal goals but is very helpful in maintaining a healthy society. DATA SOURCE- Details from *Yogic* scriptures & internet are taken. CONCLUSION- Holistic health is the single means to attain everything and how *Astang Yoga* maintains health at all levels has been covered in this review article.

Keywords: Yoga, holistic health, *Astang Yoga* as therapeutic

INTRODUCTION

Since eternity there flows a vast ocean of rich cultural heritage and wisdom in this land of sages where ancient Vedic literature originated. Our sages were extraordinary in all senses and envisioned concepts that are valid even after ages. Maharshi Patanjali when conceptualized *Astang Yoga*, he blessed humanity till infinity. It covers all aspects of healthy living. 'Yoga' word is derived from 'Yujir' literally means to unite. It has vast meanings in terms of the union of body with soul and soul with divinity as well as the attainment of one's highest goal. There are many literary definitions of *Yoga* mentioned:

Yoga :

- To achieve unachievable (*Taitariya Upanishad 3/10/2*)^[1]
- Self-realization (*Shwetashwatro upnishad 1/3*)^[2]
- *Karamsukaushlam, Samatvam, Dukhsamyogviyoge (Sheemadbhagvadgeeta 2/50,2/48,6/23)*^[3]
- *Chitavrittinirodha (Pa.Yo.Su.1/2)*^[4]
- *Mokshapravartaka (Ch.sha.1/137)*^[5]

Holistic health

Health is the most valuable asset of mankind and society. It is the basis of all endeavors in life. Since beginning long & healthy life is desired as said in *Jeevamesharadahshatam*-the famous Vedic hymn which prays for a long life of 100 years with sensorial and intellectual wellbeing.

In *Ayurvedic* classics too, not only long but *Hitayu* [useful] and *Sukhayu*[happy] are desired for humans and four ultimate goals for human life are advised viz. *Dharma, Artha, Kama & Moksha* whose root is said to be *Arogya* or absolute health. The foremost duty of human beings is said to protect their health and body and to maintain it as mentioned by *Acharya Charaka* as

Sarvammanyatparityajyashariramanupalyet Tadbhavehibhavanamsarvabhava sharirinaam (Ch. Ni. 6/7)^[6]

Leaving everything else, one should maintain the body. For if there is no body, there is nothing that can be made available to the individual. Holistic means in totality. In ancient times, our sages had given a broad-spectrum description of all the aspects of

health, not just the physical one. *Acharya Sushruta* has explained the condition of absolute health into four dimensions:

Samadoshahsamagnishchasamadhatumalkriyah Prasannatmendriyamanahswasthairyabhidheeyte (Su. Su. 15/48)^[7].

It was the trend in the *Samhita* period that *Acharyas* mentioned the importance of specific knowledge in hierarchical order. There will be no existence of spiritual, sensory, and mental health without physical existence so physical health has prime importance in all. That's why *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned the absolute physical health parameters firstly, after that *Prasannaatma* which is the condition of the blissful state of *Atma* (soul). Most of the parts of sensory and mental health are influenced by the condition of physical health.

WHO mentions

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not just the absence of disease or infirmity ^[8] Both of them described health in a holistic way i.e., at physical, mental, social, and spiritual parameters. One is completely healthy if a happy mind & blissful soul resides in a completely healthy body. Social health is equally important. In this modern age of utilitarianism, society is becoming value neutral, so intolerance, violence, hatred, and crimes are increasing as also the psychosomatic disorders. Our visionary Sages had already sensed this million of years ago, so Seer *Patanjali* conceptualized *Astang Yoga* which is the panacea to achieve holistic health at the individual as well as social levels. *Yamaniyamaasanapranayamapratyaharadharnadhya nasamadhayahastauangani (2/29)* ^[9]

Moral injections (*Yama*), fixed observances (*Niyama*), posture (*Asana*), regulation of breath (*Pranayama*), internalization of the senses (*Pratyahara*), concentration (*Dharana*), meditation (*Dhyana*) and absorption of consciousness in the self (*Samadhi*) are the eight constituents of *Yoga*. The first five aspects of *Yoga* are individual efforts for the evolution of the consciousness, while *Dharana, Dhyana,* and *Samadhi* are the universal manifestation or the natu-

ral states of *Yoga*. Although *Asana*, *Pranayama*, and *Pratyahara* are separate entities, they depend upon one another for expressing the hidden facets of *Yoga*. These stages enable the seeker to rise in the art of *Yoga*.

YAMAS-

Ahimsa satya asteya brahmacharya aparigraha yama (Pa.Yo.Su.2/30)^[10]

Non-violence, truth, abstention from stealing, continence and absence of greed for possessions beyond one's need are the five pillars of *Yama*. FRUITS-The principle of *Yama* involves wishing no harm in word, thought or deed; being sincere, truthful, and honest; no stealing or misappropriating another's wealth or possessions; chastity; possessing only what one needs, without being greedy. If we observe them, we can find their importance in making a society which is empathetic for each other, greed free, believe in coexistence and there is acceptance of equality & availability of resources for all. These rules and restraints are clearly laid down for us **to live healthily, harmoniously & happily in society.**

NIYAMAS-These are ethical observances meant for individual practices.

Sauca santosa tapah svadhyaya isvarapranidhanani niyamah (Pa.Yo.Su.2/32)^[11]

Cleanliness, contentment, austerity, self-study, and surrender of the self to the supreme are the *Niyamas*.

Cleanliness or purification is of two types, external and internal. Both are necessary for our material well-being as well as spiritual development. Being **content** makes one's life peaceful and away from material greed barring the rat race between different social statuses and checking the creation of different economic classes. This promotes the equality, availability & judicious use of resources for all and curbs the existential struggles in different populations. **Austerity** or **renunciation** develops endurance and strength in individuals making them unfathomable and stable-minded persons who could stand the adversities of life without shaking. Mental wellbeing is well-preserved and psychosomatic disorders can be checked in this way.

Svadhyaya means introspection. It is checking oneself to see if the principles of *Yoga* are being followed or if the person is heading on the right path or not. Owing to desires, anger, greed, infatuation, arrogance, and jealousy, the mind is engulfed in miseries & pain. Misled by these emotions, the person loses his balance of mind and behaves unethically.

Through daily introspection, one can restrain oneself from wrong emotions & deeds. Re-examination of his thoughts reduces the tendency to go wrong for oneself as well as for others.

Ishwarpranidhana means to surrender to God. It does not advocate indolence but feeling the supreme power. By this, all deeds & fruits are dedicated to Him. This spares over attachment to work. Many get disheartened if don't get the expected success in the work or get stressed easily in their workplaces. Overtly Competitiveness is another source of stress in modern society & stress is contributing to unhealthy mindsets, emotional poverty, poor social interactions & unproductiveness in every sphere of life. By practising *Ishwarpranidhana* balance in work and occupational health can be attained. Observance of **Niyama** develops friendliness, compassion, indifference, strength in character, and a balanced approach to life. It strengthens the person's character & personality. Its further aids in cleansing the body, mind, and intellect. Purity preserves the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of the individual as well as society.

IMPACTS OF PRACTIZING YAMA & NIYAMA-

- As *Yama* is a universal social practice, *Niyama* evolves from individual practices necessary to build up the own character.
- The ethical disciplines of *Yama* and *Niyama* transform the person's tainted mind and enable his consciousness to radiate in its own unalloyed purity.
- It is a method knowingly designed to lift each individual's awareness so that he may experience the vision of the core of his being (*Atma darshana*).

- This practice sustains the person's development and prevents his downfall; it lifts him when he slips.
- In order to follow these principles, one has first to decide whether one's own pattern of behaviour is aligned with them or not. If not, one has to prepare one's thoughts and actions in accordance with them and remove those faults. Therefore, *Yoga* stresses self-discipline and continuous practice of these rules. In short, it is mean Self-mastery.

ASANAS ^[12]—These are the specific yogic postures designed to impart physical stamina, flexibility, and power to one who practises them. They are inspired by nature and named after the resemblance they have with different entities (*Padamasana, Parvatasana, Vrikshasana Swastikasana, Setubandhasana*) & creatures (*Kukkutasana, Shalabhasana, Bhujangasana*), etc. Yogic postures not only impart physical fitness but mental wellness too. They expand one's dimension beyond limitation. Yogic postures impart lightness & strength in the body, mental stability & good health. (H. Y. P.1/17) ^[12]

PRANAYAMA –

Pranayama is the practice of breath control.

Tasminsatisvasaprasvasayohgativicchedah pranayamah (Pa.Yo.Su.2/49) ^[13]

It means to regulate breathing patterns. Modern *Yoga* consists of synchronizing the breath with movements between *Asanas* but is also a distinct breathing exercise on its own, usually practiced after *Asanas*. In texts like the *Bhagvadgeeta* and the *Yogsutra of Patanjali* and later in *Hatha_Yoga* texts, it meant the complete cessation of breathing. *Pranayama* is the fourth "limb" out of the eight limbs of *Astanga_Yoga* mentioned in verse 2.29 in the *Yoga_Sutras_of Patanjali*. *Patanjali* does not fully elucidate the nature of *Prana* but the approach and benefits are mentioned. He presents *Pranayama* as essentially an exercise that is preliminary to concentration. ^[14] The 15th-century *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* is a key text of this tradition and includes various forms of *Pranayama*

such as *Kumbhaka* breath retention and various body locks ^[14]. Other forms of *Pranayama* breathing include *Ujjayi* breath ("Victorious Breath"), *Bhastrika* ("Bellows Breath"), *Kapalbhati* ("Skull-shining Breath"), *Surya Bhedana* ("Sun-piercing Breath"), and the soothing *Bhramari* (buzzing like a bee). B. K. S. Iyenger cautions that *Pranayama* should only be undertaken when one has a firmly established *Yoga* practice and then only under the guidance of an experienced Guru. According to the scholar-practitioner of *Yoga* Theos Bernard ^[14], the ultimate aim of *Pranayama* is the suspension of breathing (*Kevala Kumbhaka*), "causing the mind to swoon". Swami_Yogananda writes, "the real meaning of *Pranayama*, according to *Patanjali*, is the gradual cessation of breathing, the discontinuance of inhalation and exhalation". ^[14] *Pranayama* not only imparts physical benefits but also mental & spiritual ones. It purifies the mind, body, and soul and imparts concentration. It activates metabolism and maintains good health.

PRATYAHARA ^[15]- It is an inward drawing of senses means we have to practise the moderation of senses so as to limit their focus to a limited field. *Pratyahara* is the withdrawal of the mind from its contact with the senses of perception and organs of action. When we limit our focus then the direction of the mind turns towards the soul. The relationship between mind and senses is aptly compared to that of bees following the queen bee. If the queen bee moves others follow. When she rests other rest, they don't function independently of their queen. Similarly, when the mind stops, the senses too stop functioning. **DHARANA, DHYANA & SAMADHI** ^[16].

Collectively they are called *Samyama or Antranga Yoga*. They are directly contributing to physical, spiritual & psychological transformation at grosser as well as minute levels. It depends upon the time, efforts & purity of intentions of the doer. When practised for a long time after adopting previous limbs of *Astanga_Yoga*, they even impart wonderful powers to doers. In *Yogsutra*, there are several *Bhoomi* or places for *Dharana* are mentioned (*P.Yo.Su.3/ 6,3/19,23-29*) ^[17] where the person is advised to do *Samyama on*

various qualities, notions, physical powers of animals, minute & hidden objects, galaxies, sun, moon & body parts like naval, as a result, emergence of supernatural powers are described.

- In *Shivsamhita*, *Chakra* meditation is mentioned. Various *Siddhis* or supernatural powers, physical, psychological, spiritual & supernatural benefits are described to be attained through *Dharana* on various *Chakras*. (*Shi.S. 5/88-188*)^[18]
- When we focus on one place directly discarding others, we train our mind & even our attitude is changed positively.^[19]
- With the help of meditation, good immunity and good health are maintained.^[20] Thus we see *Yoga* is not only a discipline of living, but it has enormous Therapeutic potential in eradicating the suf-

ferings of mankind at every level. There is a tremendous increase in psychosomatic disorders in society and they're rooted in the attitude of mankind which is grossly negative despite all education. The only light in the dark tunnel of ignorance is our Yogic tradition.

- *AsanenrujamhantipranayamenpatakamVikaram mansam yogipratyaharenmunchti(Yogchudamani upnishad 206)*^[21]
- *Harti sakalrogan (Hathyog Pradeepika 1/31)*^[22] There are thousands of references of the therapeutic value of *Yoga* in ancient Yogic literature. The time has come to explore it, to adopt it, and to make it attainable and assimilable to every last person in this world in order to achieve a healthy society and healthy nations.

HOW ASTANG YOGA MAINTAINS HOLISTIC HEALTH?

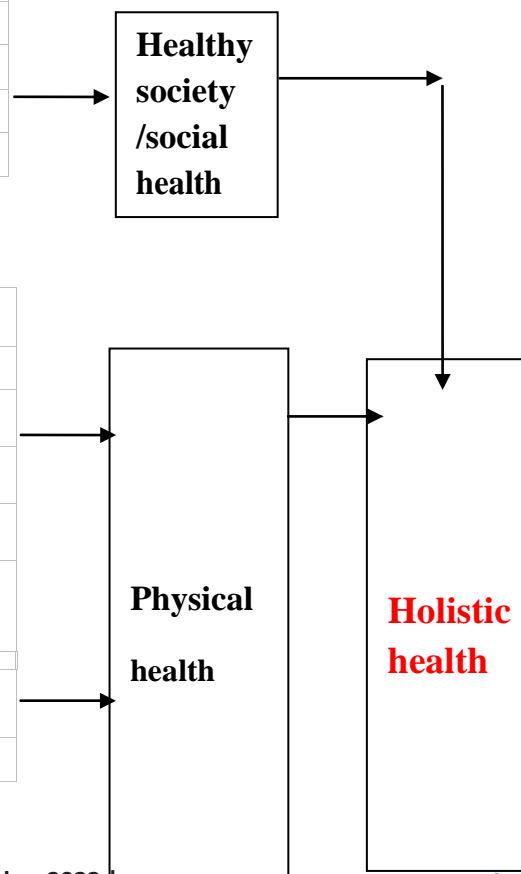
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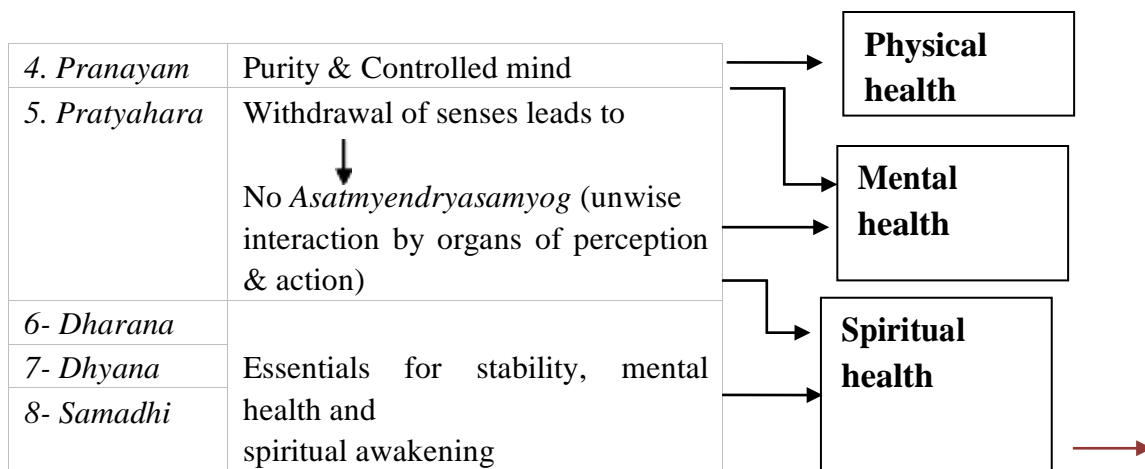
1. Yama

(Abstentions)	Fruits/results
<i>Ahimsa</i>	World brotherhood, acceptance
<i>Satya</i>	Empathy & character strength
<i>Asteya</i>	No materialism and greed
<i>Brahmcarya</i>	End of Sex based crimes
<i>Aparigraha</i>	Materialism ends

2. Niyama

(Observances)	Fruits/results
<i>Sauca</i>	Physical & mental purity
<i>Santosa</i>	No greed and acquisition
<i>Tapah</i>	Mental purification
<i>Svadyaya</i>	Intellectual purification
<i>Isvarapranidhanani</i>	Balance of work Spiritual illumination
3. <i>Asanas</i>	Energized & stable body, relaxed Mind





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