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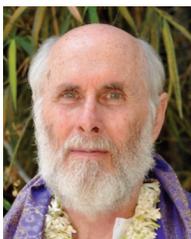
Brief note about Yoga Vijnana Advisory Board Members



Dr. H R Nagendra served a short stint as a faculty at IISc, joined University of British Columbia as Post-Doctoral Research Fellow. He was the Secretary of Vivekananda Kendra Yoga Research Foundation, Bangalore and the Director of Indian Yoga Institute. Currently he is the President of Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samasthana. Served as Vice Chancellor of S-VYASA (Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samasthana), the premier Yoga University from 2002 to 2013, and currently serving as Chancellor from 2013. Recipient of Padma Shri award, Government of India – 2016 and Bharata Ratna Sir M Visvesvaraya Science Award for the contributions in the field of Yoga Education and Yoga Therapy from Svadeshi Vijnana Andholan, Karnataka – 2010.



Dr. W. Selvamurthy is presently working with Amity University as President, Amity Science, Technology and Innovation Foundation, Director General for Amity Directorate of Science and Innovation and Chancellor, Amity University, Chhattisgarh. Dr. Selvamurthy has served Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO), Government of India for 40 years in which, all the health related and life science related technologies were developed and inducted in the Armed Forces for keeping the health and efficiency of soldiers even in extreme operational environments. This biomedical research immensely benefited the Armed Forces personnel and gave a lot of spin off benefits to the society at large. His R&D contributions include development of life support technologies for soldiers, NBC Defence Technology, Nano Technology Application for Defence, Application of yoga for the Armed Forces, Military psychology and others. He was the leader of the first Indo-Soviet scientific expedition to the Arctic Circle for polar physiology research.



Dr. David Frawley (Pandit Vamadeva Shastri) is a Vedic teacher (Vedacharya) and author of forty books published in twenty languages worldwide over the last several decades. His diverse fields of expertise include Ayurveda, Yoga, Vedanta, Vedic astrology and Vedic Studies, on which he developed several courses and training programs. Dr. Frawley is a recipient of the Padma Bhushan Award from the govt. of India. He regards Vedic knowledge as a guiding light for humanity for the planetary age.

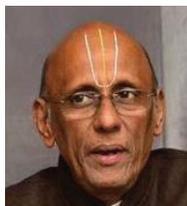


Dr. Avinash Patwardhan is Adjunct Assistant Professor in the department of Global & Community Health at George Mason University in Virginia, U.S.A.

Dr. Patwardhan's research interests are human sexuality, subjective wellbeing, violence and stress, yoga & Ayurveda, chronic diseases, health robotics, program evaluation, and women's health. In 2016-17, Dr. Patwardhan published seven articles on "yoga" in the context of "public health" in peer-reviewed journals. He has also published on topics like "syndromic surveillance" and "convenient care clinics".

Dr. Patwardhan is a non-practicing physician (Obstetrics and Gynecology) for 40 years with a Masters in Kinesiology and Health Promotion. His clinical and research work spans across three continents: Asia, U.S.A. and, Europe [work on a study for the W.H.O. (Traditional Medicinal Systems)]. Dr. Patwardhan is a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES), is an Experienced Registered Yoga Teacher (Yoga Alliance USA- ERYT500), and a Member of International Association of Yoga Therapists (IAYT). Before coming to Mason, Dr. Patwardhan worked in non-profit as well as for-profit sectors of the American healthcare system and had been mainly involved in programs evaluation research.

Brief note on Yoga Vijnana Editorial Board Members



Sh. S. Sridharan, 71 years old, is the senior most teacher of the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram (KYM). He is presently the Trustee, Yoga Therapist Consultant and Mentor at KYM.

Drawn by the desire to fully devote his time to Yoga, he gave up his position as a Merchant Banker and took to Yoga on full time basis in 1998. In 2002, he was directed to take the position of Managing Trustee of KYM, which was held by Desikachar for 25 years from the inception. In this position, he had to lead the KYM as the administrative and technical head. He held this position for about 8 years. This brought him to lime light in the world of Yoga.

He represented KYM in all the forums, conferences, seminars, etc. His career as Managing Trustee includes the distinction of getting ISO Certification and in KYM moving to its own building.

From 2010 to 2015 he served as a member of the Governing Body, Governing Council of the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga (MDNIY), the apex body for Yoga of the Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India. This gave an opportunity for him to spread the teaching of the tradition of KYM. He represents KYM in the Indian Yoga Association (IYA) as one of the founding members. He is a Life Time Member of IYA.

He is also on the Board of the Technical Committee of the Yoga Certification Board set up by the Ministry of AYUSH, which is active in bringing certification for Yoga Teachers. He Chairs the sub-committee constituted to draft a syllabus for Yoga Therapy Certification.

He was recently awarded the title 'Dronacharya' by the Rotary Club of Madras East.



Prof. Tanuja Nesari has completed her M.D. and Ph.D. in Ayurvedic Pharmacology (Dravyaguna vidnyan) from Gujarat Ayurved University, Jamnagar. Currently, she is working as Director as well as Head, Division of Translational Research & Biostatistic at All India Institute of Ayurveda, New Delhi. She is also heading Chair for Health Sector sub-skill Council for AYUSH, GOI. She has worked as CEO, National Medicinal Plants Board, Ministry of AYUSH, GOI. Currently she is member of Governing Council of IMS, BHU; member of General Assembly of ICCR; Member of Board of Governors, CCIM and Convener, Working Group-3 (Clinical Practice) on formulation of Integrative Health System; member, academic board of various universities like IPGT&R, Jamnagar; member, Scientific Advisory Board of CCRAS, member (Domain expert) of Technical Screening Committee (TSC) of NMPB; member, Scientific Panels in the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India. She has guided 33 MD, 20 PhD & 3 MPhil Scholars at post graduate level. She visited many countries for conducting CME courses and teaching Ayurveda.



Dilip Sarkar, MD, FACS, C-IAYT, D.Litt (Yoga) and Chairman of the Center for Integrative Medicine and Yoga, Taksha Institute, Hampton, Virginia is a retired Vascular Surgeon turned Yoga Acharya, Certified Yoga Therapist, Certified Ayurvedic Yoga Therapist and Ayurvedic Practitioner. He retired as an Associate Professor of Surgery at Eastern Virginia Medical School, Norfolk, Virginia and now teaches Yoga Therapy, Ayurvedic Philosophy and Ayurvedic Yoga Therapy both nationally and internationally to health care providers, with a focus on integrating Yogic and Ayurvedic wisdom with the science of Western Medicine. Dr. Sarkar started the first category one ACCME-approved CME (Continuing Medical Education) course in the USA for physicians: "Yoga Therapy for Medical Professionals" in 2010. He serves on several local and national healthcare boards as Past President of the Board of Directors for the American Heart Association, Hampton Roads Chapter, Virginia, Immediate Past President of the Board of Directors, International Association of Yoga Therapists (IAYT), Chairman of the Board, Life in Yoga Institute, Life Member, National Ayurvedic Medical Association (NAMA). Fellow, American College of Surgeons (FACS) and Fellow, American Associations of Integrative Medicine (AAIM). On January 12, 2019 during annual convocation he was awarded Doctor of Letters (D.Litt) degree in Yoga by the best Yoga University of the world SVYASA (Swami Vivekananda Yog Anushandhana Samsthana) of Bengaluru, India.

His new DVD "Yoga Therapy for Health and Healing: A Daily Practice" and his book "Yoga Therapy, Ayurveda and Western Medicine: A Healthy Convergence" published in April of 2017" has been well received by the Yoga Therapy, Ayurveda and Western Health Care community. The book will be translated in Bengali and will be published in India by Ananda Publisher of Kolkata, India in 2019.



Dr. K. K. Deepak obtained his MBBS degree from GMC, Bhopal in 1981 and Post Graduate Degree in 1984 & PhD Degree in Physiology in 1990 from AIIMS, New Delhi. He has been awarded DSc degree from SVYASA University from Bengaluru. He has been serving as faculty in the Dept of Physiology since 1987. Currently he is heading the department and also serving as Dean, Examinations at AIIMS New Delhi.

Dr Deepak set up the Autonomic Function Lab in the department of Physiology in 1989. It was the first lab of its kind in the country. This lab provides clinical services, research facility and training. He has been directing research into the Autonomic investigation of various clinical disorders. He pioneered the development of Heart Rate Variability (HRV) and disseminated it throughout the country. Realizing the need of vascular assessment in autonomic testing, he set up another lab for evaluating human vascular functions in 2000. His team led to the development of indigenous software for quantification of autonomic tone by HRV & vascular tone by Blood Pressure Variability (BPV). His team has developed a cloud base program for centralized HRV system for the country.

He has been interested in innovations in medical research and worked with Indian Institute of Technology (IITs) & other engineering institutions. He devised blood pressure simulation model and filed 3 patents on medical devices. He also devised the techniques of EMG biofeedback for patients of hand dystonia and electro-gastro-graphy (EGG) for irritable bowel syndrome.

Recently he has served as Chairman for the committee to finalize various Physical activity and their assessment protocols under FIT India program of GOI, where he supported the inclusion of yoga protocols for fitness for all age groups. The age appropriate protocols are available on Fit India website.

He has published 187 full length indexed research papers which have more than 3200 citations with H index of 30 and i10 index 74 in Google Scholar.



Dr. P. N. Ravindra is a neurophysiologist by specialized training has a passionate interest in integrating Indian psychological aspects pertaining to Yoga (meditation) with neuroscience with special focus in understanding neuroscientific aspects of meditation and its effect on sleep & cognition. Has many peer reviewed publications in national and international journals of repute. His work recognized with an National award from Association of Physiologist and Pharmacologist of India. Conducts seminar/workshops at various institutions and organizations on various contemporary subjects with integrating neuroscience with Indian psychology and philosophy with special reference to Swami Vivekananda. Is a national faculty in conducting courses on sleep and sleep medicine. Has traveled extensively for lecture and workshops in various countries.

As a founder Hon. Director of Swami Vivekananda study center, Karnataka University Dharwad, a curriculum for a course personal and professional skill development an open elective course. The curriculum based on the integration of neuroscience, yoga, Indian psychology principles. He is also a fellow of Mind and Life Institute.



Dr. Indravill Basu-Ray is a staff Cardiologist and Cardiac Electrophysiologist & the Director of Cardiovascular Research at the Memphis Veterans Medical Center in Memphis, TN, USA. Concurrently he is an Adjunct Professor at The School of Public Health, The University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, USA. Dr. Basu-Ray has learned meditation from multiple Himalayan gurus and has been practicing Kriya Yoga for over three decades now. His research centers on the use of meditation and yoga in cardiovascular diseases. He is also one of the cardiologists who wrote the American Heart Association's scientific



Dr Geetha Krishnan Gopalakrishna Pillai is currently the AYUSH expert in the World Health Organization. He is the first person to have been selected by the Govt. of India to this post, where as a Technical officer in the Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine Unit of WHO, he works on policies and guidelines of WHO for AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy) systems. Dr Geetha is a researcher, and clinician. His broad background expertise is in Ayurveda, with specific skills, training and experience Integrative Medicine and herbal drug development. He has proposed the Axial Model of Integrative medicine, a working model for integrating multiple systems of medicine in 2011. Based on this model, he successfully established the integrative medicine department in India's largest multispecialty hospital. Here he proved the clinical benefits and economic viability of Integrative medicine through successful application of the model and managed

more than 17000 patients in a period of seven years. He has experience and expertise in using clinical interventions of Ayurveda and Yoga in Integrative practice and research. He has several completed and ongoing clinical research projects, to his credit -as a Principal Investigator- in the areas of Cancer, Diabetes, and Infectious diseases. He also has several peer reviewed publications to his credit, from each completed project and has been awarded patents in US and Germany. His research has been supported by government, private, and institutional grants. He has been successful in initiating and establishing several effective collaborations.



Prof JS Thakur is Professor of Community Medicine at Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh, India. He is Member of Mission Steering Group of National Health Mission, MOHFW, Govt; of India. He has authored a book on Public Health Approaches to Noncommunicable Diseases released by Union Health Minister of India in 2015. He is expert member of India COVID-19 expert group. He is a strong votary of functional integration of Yoga with modern medicine.



Dr. Ishwar V. Basavaraddi is the Director of Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga, Ministry of AYUSH, Govt. of India, since June 2005. He has more than 32 years of teaching and research experience in the field of Yoga.



Dr. M. A. Alwar is a traditional Sanskrit scholar specialising in the Nyaya and Visistadvaita Vedanta Systems of Philosophy and is deeply interested and active in inter-disciplinary research of the traditional Indian knowledge systems with contemporary knowledge systems. He is, at present, working as Professor of Nyaya in the Maharaja's Sanskrit College, Mysore, and also as Honorary Project Director of the Trans-disciplinary University at Bengaluru



Md. Taiyab Alam is the Communication & Documentation Officer of Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga, Ministry of AYUSH, Govt. of India, since January 2018. He is involved in the promotion and propagation of Yoga both in Indian and abroad.



Dr. Vandana Singh is an Assistant Professor at Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga, New Delhi. Her area of interest is Film Studies and Comparative Literature.

Table of Contents

Editorial	ix-x
1. A Note on Breath <i>Dr. Parimal Devnath</i>	01 – 03
2. Āsanas and Human Physiology : An Essential Primer <i>Ms. Kala Chary</i>	04 – 14
3. Concept of Body According to Yoga Vasistha <i>Prof. Sridhar Melukote K, Dr. Samatha P</i>	15 – 18
4. Development of Yama and Niyama <i>Dr. Parimal Devnath</i>	19– 25
5. Yoga is of the body; by the body and mind; for the body, mind and soul y <i>Shri. Pritish Bhaskar Amolik,</i>	26– 30
6. Role of Yogic Values in Indian Alchemy/Metallurgy <i>Ms. Kala Chary</i>	31 – 36
7. Samādhi Yoga <i>Dr. Veena Amolik</i>	37 – 41
8. A Review of Yogic , Natural and Alternative Eye Sightimprovement practices <i>Shwetha T.H.M</i>	42-46
9. Understanding the Body Anatomy through Yogāsanas <i>Ms. Kala Chary</i>	47-59

Editorial

Yoga Vijnana – October 2021 to March 2022

MMorarji Desai National Institute of Yoga (MDNIY), Ministry of Ayush has carved out a niche for itself as a leading institute working in the field of Yoga. The institute is at helm for providing technical support and plays a pivotal role in disseminating practical training, planning for all possible propagation of Yoga, conducting research in ancient literature as well as modern scientific approaches in Yoga.

In recent years, Yoga has gained immense popularity across the globe. It has been due to the reason that Yoga has been found to be highly effective in resolving various health issues without medication. This has been so very widespread and consistent that Yoga has now been established as a system of (alternate) therapy.

However, popularity often entails distortion and defacing. Yoga has been disfigured, in some quarters so much so that it has been reduced to merely a method for losing weight. Therefore it is necessary to educate the people about the correct and complete picture of this ancient wisdom. Publication of the present Journal is initiated with this prime objective.

Yoga has a vast spread of literature coming from ancient times as well as the Medieval period. In modern times too, a lot of literary work has been produced based on scientific experiments, tests etc. Study of the available literature of Yoga opens the mind to its vastness and immense diversity. For offering knowledge to the enthusiasts of Yoga the present Journal is being published. Needless to say that the research articles are invited from the reputed scholars and experts from the field.

Here is a brief sketch of the articles:

- i. **A Note on Breath:** The article highlights that the practice of Pranayama may bring the mind to a balanced state in addition to spiritual evolution.*
- ii. **Asanas and Human Physiology:** An Essential Primer: The study elucidates that the practice of Asanas offers a profound state of neuro-muscular relaxation, furthermore systematic practice helps to fathom the therapeutic significance.*
- iii. **Concept of body according to Yogavasistha:** Yoga Vasistha is an Advaitic work which unravels Akasha, further dividing it into 3 parts: Cidakasha, Cittakasha and Bhutakasha.*
- iv. **Development of Yama and Niyama:** In this segment, the article calls attention to Yama and Niyama in the Yogic literature which are relatively new ideas. There are practical difficulties in real-life implementation of the components of Yama and Niyama.*
- v. **Yoga is of the body; by the body and mind; for the body, mind and soul:** Dissemination of traditional education on Yoga more often creates disinterestedness. An attempt is made in this article to establish the relevance of the age old proven methodology of Yoga into the modern period for better understanding without diluting the core concepts.*
- vi. **Role of Yogic Values in Indian Alchemy/Metallurgy:** In this section, Rasa Sastra gives substantial procedures for material transmutation that would help the user to attain the state of Brahma which is a Yogic goal.*
- vii. **Samādhi Yoga:** Yogasūtra leads towards the path of Kaivalya. An effort has been made in this article to decipher a simpler way of Samādhi and its kinds and fruition.*
- viii: **A Review of Yogic, Natural and Alternative Eye-Sight improvement practices:** Eyes are one of the most important senses. This article analyses both eastern and western practices which may help to maintain better eye health.*
- ix: **Understanding Body Anatomy through Yogāsanas:** Yogis of India were the first people who established a correlation of physical education to health, hygiene, ethics, meditation and even higher purposes of life. This essay delve into understanding the anatomy of body, step by step.*

I offer my sincere gratitude to the Hon'ble Minister of Ayush, Hon'ble Minister of State of Ayush, Secretary Ayush and all the senior officers of the Ministry as they continue to promote the cause of Yoga. This Journal has an Advisory Board and Editorial Board which have an array of eminent scholars and scientists who cherish Yoga as the cause at their heart. It is their contribution that makes this Journal a highly educational venture. I express my humble gratitude to each one of them for their wholehearted support and encouragement. My sincere thanks to all the authors for their invaluable literary contribution which makes this Journal a high class one. My thanks are also to the editorial team of the MDNIY who worked hard to make this edition a very educative, interesting and beneficial one.

We request all the readers to give suggestions for further improvement of this Journal.



(Dr. Ishwar V. Basavaraddi)
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A Note on Breath

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ABSTRACT :

Breathing is life and death. All that happens between life and death is a merely an expression of breathing—be is biological, psychological or physical function. Yoga, especially Hatha, has realised the importance of breathing and developed techniques practice of which might bring in advantages on physical, mental and even realizing the highest spiritual goal. It is worth noting that breath or Pranic flow can be made use of to attain the non-dual state which is Advaita.

Keywords: Prana, Pranayama, Advaita, Kaivalya.

1. INTRODUCTION

We breathe, or breath happens, therefore we live. We live so long as breath functions. The very moment breath ceases to function; the chapter called life comes to a close. Breathing is the most significant sign of life or it is the only sign of living. Or is it the only sign of life?

Though it is hard to find proof to substantiate the fact that breath occurs the very moment inception takes place, yet it may be noted that function of breath is predominantly evident in a growing foetus, which is evident even long before actual birth takes place. It is possible that since breath is a muscular function, this function may not be possible to observe in certain earlier stages of a growing foetus, since at such stages muscles are yet to develop to be noticeable.

How does breathing happen? As per a very simple deliberation made in the Satapatha Brahmana, breathing is a neuro-muscular activity which happens due to continuous contraction (sankocana) and relaxation (vikasana) of the lung capillaries or lungs muscles. What induces this so very simple function of contraction-relaxation popularly known as inhalation and exhalation? Brain impulse? Demand for oxygen from muscle tissues? May be so! Yet the answer is not fully satisfactory.

Not only breathing, alternate contraction and relaxation are everywhere in the human body: all muscles, cells etc. contract and relax almost all the time. Simply put, there is no other function/activity but contraction and relaxation in human body. This pair is integral to 'life'.

There is an advantage with breathing. It not only happens on its own, since it is the gift of the 'Supreme Providence', but one can breathe by making a conscious effort of lungs muscles which come also under volitional control. (This is not so with other organic and skeletal muscular systems and functions. Organic function is involuntary and therefore, it cannot be willfully controlled (it is different issue that some specially ordained yogis can do so), whereas skeletal muscles which are under volitional control, such as legs and hands do not act on their own without volitional control or guidance of the mind).

2.0 BREATH IN YOGA

The yogis have taken advantage of this typical status of breath while devising and evolving an array of pranayama techniques.

Normal or natural breathing has a disadvantage. It does not function to the fullest or maximum (85% is measured as the maximum that a man can breathe upto, there is no evidence of 100% breathing done by any human being as yet) of the capacity of the lungs. Normal breathing occurring at the optimum level is just enough to keep one alive. Practice of pranayama expands the lungs capacity (vital capacity) to a higher level offering number of advantages.

Accomplished Yogis made a very courageous effort: to achieve eternity by fully controlling breath. 'Living' eternally by stopping breath cycles completely.

Prana is a special word. It is also widely used. It has number of connotations as per the context it is used in. Sometimes prana stands for breathing process. Prana means air (prana vayu). Prana also means 'life' or life process. An emotionally inclined person addresses his/her enamoured partner at per prana. Many ancient savants say that prana is jiva (the embodied soul). Adi Shankaracarya has written quite extensively on the pair of prana and apana. His understanding on prana is so very vast and profound that it demands special concerted effort to just put all of it in a graspable way or in synthetic manner. One of his emphasis has been that, upward and downward movement of prana signifies bondage of the soul, its discomfort being in the world and resultant restiveness.

Prana vayu (breathing process which moves air in and out of the body) is the prime source of life. Food and drink are secondary sources. One can eat and drink if only breath is happening.

It will therefore not be proper to say that movement of prana is a mere movement of inert air. The 'life force' which is quite difficult to identify, uses the mediums of air, food, water etc. to keep us alive.

Yoga system holds that deep seated 'duality' (dvandva, an expression of disintegration in spiritual as well as psychic and behavioural context) is reflected in the form of the duo of inhalation and exhalation. Not just only in the case of dvandva in spiritual sense; even mental, emotional and external disturbances are represented accordingly by causing changes in the pattern of breath, be it calmness, placidity or restlessness.

Yoga has evolved pranayama with a view to bring the mind to a balanced state at first and thereafter overcoming 'duality' of all sorts— the main cause of human suffering. Duality can be transcended by establishing kevala kumbhaka which is a state sans duality of inhalation-exhalation. Kevala or kevali (the finest form of pranayama, but wherein no practice of pranayama remains to be done) – 'only', absolute, 'aloneness' is therefore equated with Advaita state, the state of Samadhi. For more details, consult Yogopanishads published by The Lonavla Yoga Institute (India). It is interesting to see that these Advaitic texts dealing in Yogic practices successfully integrate Yoga and Advaita.

The scripture of Vijnana Bhairava, an important text belonging to Kashmiri Shaivism, offers a host of meditational techniques through various methods of 'observations' of breath.

Breath is the gateway to life. In yoga, it can be used as a means to spiritual evolution. It is also the peeping hole to unresolved mystery of life. Through systematic and faithful tracing of the thread of 'breath' one can dive deep into the un-manifest, causeless cause of coming into being.

The classic Upanishadic texts narrate a simple story depicting the supremacy of prana in human body. All senses have gathered lot of arrogance. They thought that without them a human being will be either blind, lame, mindless or dumb i.e. completely handicapped. They one by one started moving away from the body to prove their significance. But to they found that without their presence one can still remain alive though handicapped. Finally, prana started to depart and then it was noted that along with prana all senses and faculties started to follow suite, just as all the bees follow a queen bee.

Swami Vivekananda compares prana with a fly wheel of a machine rotation of which is essential for all other parts in the machine to remain active. Similar is the case with human breath which keeps all organs and systems to remain in active mode.

To substantiate, Hathayoga correctly says that practice of pranayama is paramam tapah (finest of the penances).

3.0 NOSTRIL PREDOMINANCE

Breathing is quite mysterious. A certain section of Yogic texts throw some light on nostril predominance, its rationality, its close relation to birth and death, its relation to general health and disease, its favourable and

unfavourable impacts on one's material performance, success and failure in an endeavour, determination of gender of a baby at the very moment of inception and many more such issues. Some mainstream Hatha texts suggest that inducing alteration in nostril predominance as per prescribed method has the capability to alleviate certain diseases and disorders. Moreover, an unwarranted change in normal nostril predominance may indicate an ensuing health problem.

One may like to question propriety of such simplistic equations. Yet, a thorough investigation with genuine interest and effort will be of great use. Such a study may not be possible only through laboratory tests, but to substantiate this kind study serious and prolonged practice of higher practices of Yoga. It needs special efforts.

Alteration of nostril predominance through certain prescribed methods, it is claimed, would bring about desired relief from number of physical ailment and mental disorders. It has been held that nostril predominance has great therapeutic value. (For example, practice of pranayama is aimed at keeping all the major and minor channels of the body clean leading to all-round health).

Nostril predominance is a wonder, since it is controlled by changing phases of the moon in its waxing and waning periods (15 days) in consonance with sunrise time and one's dominance of bodily constitution (vata, pitta and kapha), age etc.

4.0 BREATH AND DIVINITY

The Vedic wisdom says that the entire creation is just like exhalation (nihsvasitam etat) of the Supreme Self. Such an understanding offers divine colour to breath. Breath is a divine process. One lives as per the divine wish.

Breath or flow of prana works like a bonding or connecting agent between matter and consciousness. Prana is a mysterious phenomenon. Prana is neither matter nor non-matter (or consciousness). It makes

matter (five elements: earth, water etc.) alive which otherwise are inert and lifeless. It also gives an identity or footing to Pure Consciousness by connecting it to matter thus making it possible for the 'life' form to evolve. Otherwise, Pure Consciousness, despite its being all-pervasive, Absolute, non-identifiable, without any dimension or relativity would not be finding any expression without prana.

It is an apparent irony that Pure Consciousness which is widely considered to be Supreme and Absolute is utterly helpless to do anything or express itself without the help of the medium of matter via Prana. This is vividly represented using the strong language of symbolism of Shakti (Goddess Kali as primordial matter) riding on the body of supinely grounded Shiva (as Consciousness) in the Indian mythology.

A very interesting account of jiva as prana servicing panca-bhutas (five elements) in human body round the clock has been presented in the text of Yuktabhavadeva (The Lonavla Yoga Institute, Lonavla, 2002). See the Introduction page no. li for details. Masters of Hathavidya present a sublime account of pranic moves in body by saying that its upward and downward movements are of the nature of 'ham and sa' which signifies prevalence of avidya (ignorance) reversal of which through pranayama would reveal vidya or spiritual wisdom making it 'so-ham' (I-am-That).

Not only prana works as a link between matter and consciousness, but it (practice of pranayama) also can bring the subconscious state of mind to the fore which is considered to be the seat of behavioural traits of an individual. This, thus lends good support in modifying one's behavioural patterns as the need be.

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Āsanas and Human Physiology : An Essential Primer

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ABSTRACT

Yoga is a practical science. Practice of Asanas offer large range of advantages by conscious management of mobility and stability through Asanas practised in various positions that human body can adopt, be it standing or lying prone. Asanas are essentially dynamic and this helps upkeep of physical health, mental poise and emotional balance.

Keywords: Asana, physiology, defence mechanism, emotions.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the course of our busy lives, we do not evince a deep awareness of our body and mind. The demands of the external world preoccupy us and our actions are often a reflexive response to these demands. Physical education is a proximate attempt to build awareness of the body. But it falls short of building harmony between the cognitive functions and other functions of the body.

The first people to correlate physical education to health, hygiene, ethics, meditation and even higher purposes of life were the ancient yogis of India. Three thousand years ago, Atharva Veda referred to this concept of body awareness. Gorakṣanātha, an ancient yogi of the 11th century asks “how can one who does not know his own body hope to acquire success in life?”

Yoga is a practice-oriented science, comprising of specific techniques that help harmonise the body and the mind. In this article, an attempt is made to understand how systematic practice of yagasanas could affect the body physiology. Specific yogic postures in the standing, sitting, prone and supine categories are discussed. This will not only assist the Yoga Sādhaka to practice the āsanas but also will help in developing body awareness simultaneously.

A steady and pleasant posture produces a profound state of neuro-muscular relaxation. They are designed to promote a state of mental and physical well-being. In this state all the organs function efficiently under the intelligent control of the mind. Hence, one requires tremendous concentration and sincerity while practicing Yoga āsanas.

There are endless poses, when done rightly, which benefit the body. However, equipoise (Samatva) has to be maintained in the final pose without jerks or tremors. A body which is good in flexion may not be good at extension or vice-versa. But constant practice will bring definite improvement.

Yoga āsanas should be practiced very slowly correlating with slow breathing, stretching smoothly the concerned muscles and relaxing completely while returning to original position.

The great sage Patanjali, the ‘Father of Yoga’ explains this aspect very aptly in his three ‘sūtras’ or ‘aphorisms’: Patanjali yoga sūtras II-46, 47, 48.

Sutra 46: “sthiram sukham āsanam” i.e. āsanas are postures which give steadiness, bliss and happiness.

Sutra 47: “prayatna śaitilya ananta samāpatti” i.e. one can consciously stretch and relax in the final pose to reach the universal bliss.

Sutra 48: “tato dvandhva na abhigātaḥ” i.e. when the final pose is achieved with effort and the body is stable resulting in mental happiness, the Yoga Sādhaka will never be affected by any ‘dvandhva’ or dualities. He will overcome all these dualities that create stress. Gradually the body mind balance is achieved with the experience of universal bliss i.e. “ananta samapatti”.

“Gheraṇḍa saṃhitā”, an authoritative text on Haṭha yoga says that there are as many asanas as living species! However, all these asanas, whether standing, sitting, prone or supine, involve muscle movement of the body in flexion, extension, lateral flexion, rotation, balancing or inverted pose etc. They give very good stretching and relaxation to various muscles in the body. They also tone up the subtler organ systems, improve blood circulation, digestion, stimulate the nerves and promote good health.

2. STANDING POSTURES:

Tādāsana (The Palm Tree pose)

Standing erect needs minimal muscular effort in our thighs, hips and backs. We relax while standing because we can lock our knees and balance on our hip joint without much muscular activity. In this posture, the hamstrings will be relaxed and ligaments exert less pressure. This is perfect when we stand in **Tādāsana** (The palm tree pose) with legs together, back straight, head erect. The whole body will be in balance. The body will stand perpendicular to earth's gravitational field. One should stand with eyes closed with complete inner awareness.

By keeping the feet a foot apart, in this pose one can practice **centering** (or swinging).

- In this sequence, you first put the whole body's pressure to the right by slightly leaning to the right till the edges of the foot.
- Next, lean to the left till the edges of left foot followed by leaning slightly forward to the tips of your toes and then leaning slightly backward to the edges of the heels.

- Come back to the straight **Tādāsana** pose at the end. During entire routine, make sure your hands are hanging slightly away from the body swinging like a pendulum.

This exercise is extremely soothing for the nervous system

Ardha ka i cākṛāsana (Lateral arc pose):

- In this asana, one should stand erect, raise your right hand above the head keeping a straight elbow and with deep inhalation gently elongate the spine.
- Next, while exhaling, bend the waist (kati) to the left side. Maintain the pose while breathing normally and keeping the elbow and the knees straight during the waist bend.
- After staying in the pose for 30 seconds, gradually return back to the straight position (sthiti). Repeat the same with your left hand. It is important to note that while bringing the hand down with exhalation, one experiences the blood gushing down from the arm to the finger tips.

The lateral bending of both the sides will stretch and improve the lateral muscles, strengthen the pelvic muscles and relieve any pain in the shoulders too.

V k āsana (tree pose)

- Stand on your right leg, fold your left leg and place it on your erect right knee.
- Hands are raised above the head in ‘namaskar’ pose.
- Maintain the pose for 30 seconds and repeat the asana on your left leg.

The posture tones up the leg muscles and gives one a sense of balance. It also focuses the mind and provides forbearance to the body.

Ardha cākṛāsana (Relaxed back bend)

- Before trying this asana, initially raise the hands above the head, interlock the fingers, stretch and slightly bend back, as much as you can, knees bent slightly forward.
- Observe the pressure on the lumbar and the waist region. Then come back slowly to straight position.
- After this initial back stretch exercise, one can try the Ardha chakrasana, the half wheel back bend pose, keeping the hands on the waist, gently bend backwards, as much as you can.

- Once in the final pose, maintain in normal breathing, gently stretching the throat wide with every inhalation.

This gives good concave stretch to the spine with ample blood supply to the spinal-cord. The neck also stretches with good stimulations to the thyroid and parathyroid glands.

Pādahastāsana (Forward bend):

After the concave bend in ardha cakrāsana, now you can try the convex forward bend.

- First stand straight in sthithi.
- Taking both the hands sideways up with inhalation, bend forward slowly exhaling, hands hanging down.
- Either one can catch the toes or place the palms on the floor in front. One can observe that in this position, most parts of the upper and lower extremities remain relaxed. With every slow exhalation, the bending becomes better and better. Relax in the final pose and maintain in the pose for one minute.

Pādahastāsana keeps the spine healthy and mobilises the joints. It stimulates the entire nervous system. The pressing of the abdomen to the thighs reduces excess fat in that region. It stretches the hamstrings and the calves. The abdominal organs are massaged gently and blood supply to the brain also increases. More concentration in this pose enhances the forbearance of the individual.

This asana can also be done with legs apart, feet firmly placed on the ground. This is called **Prasarita Pādahastāsana**. In this pose, the grains, thighs and legs get good stretch.

3. ANGLE POSTURES:

Triko āsana (Triangle pose)

- Spread the legs sideways almost a meter apart.
- Raise the arms sideways in line with the shoulders, palms down.
- Turn the right foot 90° to the right and left foot slightly to the right.
- Now bend to the right bringing the right arm down, left arm up, as you exhale.
- Place the right hand beside the right foot and look above at the raised left hand. If the right hand cannot reach the ground, the right hand can catch the right ankle for support.

This makes a good shape of a triangle, toning up leg muscles and removing the stiffness in the legs, hips and the thighs. The chest is also well extended. The arms are also well stretched. Practice the other side also.

Parivṛtta Triko āsana (Opposite Triangle pose)

Proceed further by practicing the opposite triangle pose namely, **Parivṛtta Triko āsana**.

- Spread the legs wide, a meter apart.
- Take the hands wide, bend down and touch the right leg with your left hand, and stretch the right hand above your head.
- Maintain the pose without bending the knee. Look through the hand which is raised above. After maintaining pose for 30 seconds, repeat the pose with the opposite side (i.e. touching left leg with the right hand, and stretching the left hand up)

This pose increases the blood supply to the lower part of the spinal region, and strengthens the hips. It relieves the pain in the back and stimulates the abdominal organs, as you twist your abdominal region gently.

In both the triangle poses, it depends on the practitioner, how he manipulates his breathing while stretching the arms apart (inhale) and bending down to one side (exhale). The beginner can start with leg support (the lower hand catching the ankle or leg). Gradually, as muscles get flexible with deep breath and slow exhalation the hand can reach the floor comfortably and can be placed beside the foot. Then, you can maintain the posture for a long time with stability.

Vīrābhadrāsana (Standing warrior pose)

- First, stand with legs apart, almost a metre wide.
- Turn your right foot 90° to the right side, with your body also turning to the right. Here, lunge the right leg and flex the knee at 90 degrees,
- Expand the chest and simultaneously spread the hands wide. Inhaling, take the hands up above head joining the palms. At this point it is called **Ardha Vīrābhadrāsana**.

When one bends the upper body forward, with stomach resting on the straightened leg in front, and lift the back leg off the floor, the posture is called **Paripūrṇa Vīrābhadrāsana**.

The standing warrior pose strengthens and stretches muscles throughout the lower extremities. When the

hands are raised to 90° the chest is fully extended and this helps in deep breathing. This also relieves stiffness in the shoulders and reduces fat around the hips.

In **Ardha Vīrābhadrāsana**, one can also twist the hips slightly while keeping the hands apart in both the directions. This twist is good for the blood circulation around the spine.

Parighāsana (Rod pose)

Another pose in this category is the side bend with one knee on the floor called **Parighāsana**.

- Kneel on the floor with ankles together.
- Stretch the right leg sideways to the right and keep it in line with the trunk. The right leg should be stiff at the knee. With an inhalation widen the chest bringing the arms sideways apart.
- Now exhaling slowly move the trunk and the right arm down towards the extended right leg.
- Now move the left arm over the head, upper arm touching the left ear. Gradually exhaling, extend the left hand to the right side, along with the head, after maintaining for 30 seconds or more slowly come back in the reverse order. Repeat the other side too.

In this pose, one can note the pelvis stretch. Also, one side of the abdomen pressed and the other extended. It removes sagging in abdomen. It also helps stiff back.

After this pose, one can try the complementary pose for extending the back muscles, concaving the spine and stretching the lungs wide. This is called **Uṣṭrāsana** or camel pose.

U rāsana (Camel Pose)

- In Ushtrasana, kneel down first keeping the knees, and feet a foot apart.
- Keeping the hands on the waist, gently bend backwards.
- Gradually release the hands and hold the ankles with respective hands. This allows good stretch for the entire body, the chest, the spine, the pelvis, thighs and arms.

This Asana is excellent for spinal cord, legs and arms.

Lastly, to build up the stamina of the lower half of the body, we can attempt a fierce posture namely **Utkaṭāsana** - a powerful posture.

Utka āsana

This āsana is like sitting in an imaginary chair.

- Stand in Tādāsana, stretch the arms over the head and join palms.
- Exhale and bend knees and lower the trunk until the thighs and parallel to the floor.
- Do not stoop forward. For 30 seconds, you can balance in this way normal breathing.

In this pose, the chest is developed and fully expanded. The diaphragm is lifted, which raises the pelvic girdle up. It corrects the minor deformities in the legs and removes stiffness in shoulders.

4. SITTING POSTURES

Vajrāsana (Diamond pose)

- Sitting postures are practiced generally on the floor on a flat surface. In any sitting pose, there is a solid base, more stability in the body and relaxation.
- If the knees are perfectly healthy, you can sit in Vajrāsana or Vīrāsana (The diamond pose).
- The legs are bent backwards 180 degree with thighs together, sit on the heels, which forces full extension to the ankles. A folded towel or pillow can be kept under the heels if there is discomfort. The back, neck and the head will be straight.

In Vīrāsana, the buttocks could be placed on the floor or over a small pillow and the feet are kept by the side of the thighs. The toes are pointed back and touch the floor. Wrists are to be kept on the knees, palms closed. This posture is suitable for prāṇāyāma practices and meditation. However, people with weak knees should be careful while doing these asanas for a longer time. Vajrāsana can be practiced even immediately after meals, as it will relieve the heaviness in stomach.

Śaśānkāsana (Rabbit pose)

The next variation would be a forward bend in Vajrāsana or Vīrāsana and this is called the rabbit pose or crescent pose, named **Śaśānkāsana**.

- Catch the fingers at the back, with a deep inhalation expanding the chest, gently go backwards.
- Then slow exhaling, bend forwards and touch the forehead to the ground. Observe keenly the expansion of the chest and curving of the spine as you inhale and contraction of the chest muscles and convexing of the back, as you exhale. Here the

abdomen is pressing the thighs, massaging the thighs and legs.

- We feel heaviness in the head region as plenty of blood gushes that region. Maintain in normal breathing for a minute even more and slowly come back to sitting position.

After this **Śaśānkāsana**, to complement it lock the fingers and stretch the hands above the head straight by breathing deeply. This will extend the chest up. The pelvic girdle is also raised, and the stomach muscles are relaxed after the experience of constriction and pressure in the previous **Śaśānkāsana**. The spine is stretched vertically relaxing every vertebra. This is called Parvatāsana in Vajrāsana.

Variations in a solid sitting base

Many people do not sit erect thereby damaging the alignment of the internal organs. Proper flow of blood to the internal organs is restricted. As a result, many organs will degenerate and that leads to quick ageing. By practicing the sitting asanas, the spine gets good strength, the ribs and inter costal muscles are well toned and breathing becomes easier. As there is less muscular movement, the nervous system gets smoothened. As a result, the mind also becomes calmer, enabling meditation.

Sitting asanas can be practiced by everyone, young and old, including pregnant women upto 4-5 months, unless there is any complication. The toning up of the pelvic organs is very useful in pregnancy. Labour pains decrease and delivery taken place with ease.

Padmāsana (Lotus pose):

This is the lotus pose and the most important and useful sitting asana in Haṭha Yoga. The Haṭha Yoga pradīpikā describes to practice breath control (Prāṇāyāma) in this pose so that the awakening the potential energy within will be possible (Kuṇḍalinī jāgrti).

- Sit on the floor with legs stretched straight in front.
- Bend the right leg at the knee.
- Holding the right in the hands, place it over the left thigh.
- Similarly hold the left foot and place it over the right thigh. This will lock both the feet together, pressing the thighs nicely.
- From the base to the neck the spine should remain erect. The palms can placed one over the other in front of the navel.

One gets maximum rest in this pose. The knees and ankle stiffness is released. Blood circulates more to the lumbar

and abdomen. For persons who sit properly in this pose, the balance is achieved wonderfully. The mind remains in peace enabling focus. One can change the leg positions after sometime, to develop the legs evenly.

Variations in Padmāsana:

For persons who cannot do the complete **Padmāsana**, after sitting in sukhasana, one leg can be placed on the opposite thigh and this becomes **Ardha Padmāsana**

Yoga Mudra – is a forward bend in **Padmāsana** keeping the hands interlocked at the back, inhale and slowly exhale simultaneously bending forward and touching the forehead to the ground.

This asana squeezes the stomach wonderfully, as we bend forward. It also supplies lot of blood to the brain cells. The asana massages the lower parts of the body relieving hip and low back pain. In this asana, one can minutely observe the vertebral pull in the back, as the back bends forward. One can also observe the sharp stretch in the arms, squeezing of the thigh muscles underneath.

Parvatāsana – is a variation of Padmāsana and it is a complementary pose for yoga mudra. In Parvatāsana or mountain pose, the arms are stretched over the head with fingers interlocked. hold there with deep breathing. Here, we find that the abdominal organs are drawn in, even the pelvic girdle is lifted up and the chest is expanded wonderfully. This asana, when maintained for some time, increases blood supply to the pelvic organs.

Sitting poses in stretched legs

The simplest leg stretching pose is the **Daṇḍāsana** or the stick pose.

For this pose, sit on the floor, legs stretched straight in front, knees, ankles, toes extended. Place the hands alongside the hips, palms on the floor. Sitting in this way will give hip flexibility and upper body strength.

To improve further the abdominal strength and hips bend. You can try the boat pose or **Naukāsana** or **Navāsana**.

- For this pose, from Daṇḍāsana lift the legs up simultaneously, keeping the knees tight and toes pointed.
- Balance the body on the buttocks, arms stretched in front, body takes the shape of a boat. There will be a grip on the muscles of the abdomen and the lower back.

Naukāšana is not only helpful for the organs of the stomach and the intestines, but also strengthen the back muscles. Regular practice of the āsana can keep the back quite strong for long years.

Variations in the posterior stretches of the sitting asanas:

Pascimottānāsana (Posterior forward bend):

- Sit on the floor, back straight, knees extended, leg stretched in front, heels and toes together.
- Then, inhale and raise the arms up, above the head. By flexing the hips slowly exhale and bend forward simultaneously extending the hands forward and catch the toes.
- At this point, you can wait, observing the pull behind the back and also underneath the thighs. With another deep breath, the head can be brought out further down to touch the knees.
- Elbows can be flexed and rest them on the floor, still holding the toes. One can perfect this asana slowly, by deep breaths again and again. After maintaining the posture for 1-3 minutes, one can slowly come out back to Dandasana step by step in the reverse order.

Pascimottānāsana is also known as “Ugrāsana” ‘Paschima’ or the west implies the backside of the body. In this pose, the back of the whole body is intensely stretched. This asana, considered one of the best among the asanas in haṭha yoga, tones up the abdominal organs, kidneys and improves digestion. Due to the complete flexion of the spine, the heart which comes below it is very well massaged. It stimulates the nervous system and brain cells. Thus, it enhances the mental endurance too.

Jānuśīrāsana

In this pose the head (shira) touches the knee (Jānu) in a single leg stretch forward bend.

- Sit with legs stretched straight in front. Take away one leg 90°. The other leg can be stretched straight or even folded at knee, its heel kept against the inner thigh of the out stretched leg.
- Lifting the hands up with an inhalation, forward bend while exhaling to catch the toes, forehead resting on the stretched knee.
- Feel the stretch all over the thigh, hamstrings and calf muscles. Here, one side of the abdomen is compressed against the thigh, toning the inner organs. After maintaining for some time in normal breathing, you can come out in the reverse order.

- Repeat with the other leg stretch and here the other side the abdomen gets a good compression.

Upavi tako āsana

‘Upaviṣṭa’ means legs stretch widely apart.

- Initially, spread the legs wide apart. With a deep by exhaling, slowly bring them down, and catch the respective toes. Pull the diaphragm up and hold the pose for few seconds.
- Next, exhale further ‘bring the upper body down, bringing the head to the floor.
- As the head reaches the floor, one can feel intense stretch in the hamstring, thighs and lower back. Pelvic organs are well toned up. It is a good asana for women, since it stimulates the ovaries.

Pūrvottānāsana (Anterior back bend)

This helps complement the forward stretch of Pashcimottanasana. It is also a balancing pose.

- Sit on the floor, with legs stretched in front. Place the palms behind the hips on the floor, fingers pointing in the direction of the feet.
- Bend the knees and place the soles of the feet on the floor.
- Now, taking the pressure of the body on the feet and palms exhale and lift the body off the floor, straighten the arms and legs.
- Now the body balances on the feet and hands. The arms will be perpendicular to the ground. Keep the neck relaxed and gently bend back the neck. Breathe normally and maintain the balance. Feel the stretch in the lower abdomen and lower extremities, pressure on the shoulder joints, slight pulling in the neck region. While returning, gently drop the hips on the floor and relax.

Apart from strengthening the wrists and ankles and shoulder muscles, this asana provides very good stretch to the pelvic organs and the lumbar regions. The chest also expands quite well.

Sitting spinal twists

Sitting spinal twists produce stretch in the hip joints, pelvis and spine.

Bharadvāja āsana

- In this āsana, both legs are folded. First, fold the right leg at knee from outside and left folded inside, left

foot touching the right thigh. Now twist to the left, placing the left hand behind the back on the floor. Place the right hand over the left knee. Twist further, putting pressure on both hands, left knee. Twist further, putting pressure on both hands. This squeezes the spine to one side.

- In the same sitting position, you can twist to the right side too, to complement the earlier twist. Here, the right hand is placed behind the back on the floor, left palm, on the left knee.
- Second, you can repeat the process, by folding the left leg at knee from outside and right leg folded inside.

This gives a very good exercise to the back muscles, particularly to the lumbar joints.

The other sitting twists:

Vakrāsana

In this twist, apart from the stretch we got in the shoulders, neck, chest, the abdomen too is well squeezed, stimulating all the organs inside particularly the pancreas.

- Here, sit straight, with legs stretched in front of you. Fold the left leg at knee and place the foot beside the right knee. Place the left arm behind the back, palm catch the left foot with your right hand.
- Twist to your left side, giving a squeeze to twist far left, stretching the chest and the neck too.
- Maintain the pose in normal breathing. Slowly come back to the original position by straightening the head, chest, releasing the hands and legs. Repeat other side in the similar manner.

In **Ardha Matsyendrāsana** there will be a slight variation.

- Sit straight with legs stretched in front.
- Pull the right heel in toward the upper left thigh.
- Place the left foot on floor in front of the folded right knees. Pull the left knee closer to the chest with the right hand forearm.
- Once comfortable in this position, lift the left foot and place properly on the right side of the right thigh. The left palm is placed on the floor, behind the back. Now grasp the left foot with the right hand, bringing it over the left knee, thereby pressing the left knee closer to the chest.
- Gently give a twist to your left side, looking through the left shoulder.

- Then after maintaining for a minute or so, come back in reverse order. Repeat the posture on the other side too in the similar way.

In **Vakrāsana**, you do the half spinal twist with one leg stretched and knee extended. Whereas in **Ardha Matsyendrāsana** you fold the leg and do the twist. Beginners should first practice **Vakrāsana** and then try **Ardha Matsyendrāsana**.

Both these twists give excellent flexibility to the spine and very good toning to abdominal muscles. Regularly practice, they can even influence the pancreatic secretions, bringing marked changes in the endocrinal system. The intestines benefit from these asanas. The abdominal flabbiness can also be reduced.

Other valuable sitting postures

Now we shall look into a couple of sitting asanas which enable us to slowly understand the stretching and relaxation of the upper and lower parts of our body.

Baddhakonāsana

- Sit in **Danḍāsana**, with legs stretched straight in front. Fold both the legs inwards, the soles touching each other, heels touching the perineum.
- Catch the big toes with respective hands or you can even clasp the hands over the toes. You will experience a very good stretch in the inner thighs, pelvis and perineum region.
- Keep the back straight and erect. That makes the lower lumbar region strong.
- Keep focussed on the lower back. You can also frap the thighs continuously, which will loosen thigh muscles and also reduces the flabbiness of the thighs.

In this pose, you can bend forward, touching the forehead to the toes or even the floor. Remember bend forward with slow exhalation. At this point the stretch between the thighs and the pelvic area will become more prominent. Maintain in this pose for 30-60 seconds and slowly inhaling come.

Gomukhāsana makes the entire body elastic.

- First sit on the floor straight, legs extended in front. Bent the left leg at knee, place it under the right buttock.
- Now, bend the right leg at knee, placing the right thigh over the left one. Rest the ankles, keeping the toes pointing back.

- Raise the left arm over the head, bending at the elbow, place the left palm over the back of the neck.
- Take the right arm behind the back, clasp the right palm with the left one.
- At this point watch the expansion of the chest. Sitting erect, observing the balance of the whole body, maintaining the pose for few seconds.

This asana brings very good flexibility to the muscles of the arms, as well as legs. All the time, you must keep the head, neck and back as straight as possible.

5. PRONE POSTURES:

The prone postures, particularly the back bending ones are very good for the cardiac system.

The vital capacity of the lungs can be kept throughout life by these asanas. Abdominal and pelvic organs are well extended. Liver, pancreas and gallbladder get better supply of blood. Kidneys squeezed and their functions are toned up. Muscular sheets of the diaphragm are toned up. The pelvic organ gets good blood supply.

Makarāsana

Makarāsana is the starting pose for all prone postures. **Makarāsana** or crocodile pose is the relaxation pose.

Here, you lie down on the floor on your stomach, the entire front portion of the body touching the ground, legs apart, heels facing each other, hands folded in front and chin or cheek resting on the folded hands.

This pose gives complete rest to the chest, heart abdomen and even the back muscles. It improves heart functioning and soothes the nerves.

To get more stretch in **Makarāsana**, gently lift the head and clasp the hands behind the head. This is explained in the Haṭha yoga text Gheraṇḍa samhitā (2nd chapter) Verse 40 : “lie on the ground face down, the chest touching the earth and both legs stretched out. Catch the head with the arms. This is the crocodile posture, which increases bodily heat”.

From **Makarāsana**, the different variations of the cobra pose or

Bhujangāsana, could be practiced.

For the classic **Bhujangāsana**:

- Place hands on either side of the chest, elbows closer to the body.
- Pressing the hands firmly on the ground, while inhaling - lift the head, chest, upto the trunk.

- Maintain up to 30 seconds in normal breathing. Then come back to the resting position in **Makarāsana**.

Bhujangāsana with hands in front – here, place the palms in front of the head facing each other. With inhalation lift the body up to waist level and maintain. Come back to **Makarāsana** after 30 seconds.

Śalabhāsana

Śalabhāsana or the locust pose is a complementary pose of **Bhujangāsana**. Beginners must start with **Ardha Śalabhāsana**. Head keeping the hands under the thighs, one leg is lifted up straight and maintained for 20 seconds. After bring it down, the other leg is lifted up. After this, complete **Śalabhāsana** can be tried by lifting both legs together, knees straight.

This asana aids digestion and flatulence. It relieves pain in the lumbosacral region. One can also lift the head up simultaneously with the legs in this pose. This gives us the shape of an inverted boat.

Dhanurāsana (the bow posture)

- This āsana curves the body like a bow. The head is lifted and chest is expanded.
- In the second stage, pull the knees up, widening the legs, lift the thighs too, off the floor.
- After the full stretch upwards has been achieved join together the knees and ankles. Maintain for 10-20 seconds. Breathing will be slightly fast, since the abdomen is extended.

This āsana is not recommended for high BP and cardiac patients. Even persons with weak knees cannot perform this pose.

Pārśva dhanurāsana (Side bend in bow pose)

In this variation of the bow pose, from the final pose of **Dhanurāsana**, exhale and roll over to one side, stretching the legs and chest, with hands well gripping the ankles. After coming back straight, do the other side rolling. The sideways roll in the bow pose massages the abdominal organs, pressing them against the floor. This also reduces the flabbiness of the abdomen.

Adhomukha Śvānāsana (the bent head Dog pose)

After doing the cobra, locust and bow variations, this down facing dog pose or **Adhomukha Śvānāsana** gives a wonderful relief to the whole body. This is an excellent semi-inverted pose, which can be tried before doing the

headstand or śīrśāsana.

- From the resting **Makarāsana**, come first to Bhujangasana with palms placed on either side of the chest, head lifted.
- Exhale and raise the trunk from the floor, straightening the arms, head bent down. The body takes the shape of a mountain.
- Place the feet firmly on the floor, the legs stretched with a slant.
- Stay in this pose for a minute or even more with slow breathing. Keep always the neck relaxed and hanging.

This is indeed a rejuvenating pose. It relieves leg pain, ankle pain and shoulder joints are strengthened. The abdominal muscles are drawn in, the diaphragm is lifted to the chest cavity and the rate of heart beat is slowed down. It supplies more blood to the head region too.

6. SUPINE POSTURES:

Most of the supine asanas, particularly the inverted ones prevent stagnation of blood circulation, sagging of organs and enhance oxygenation in the lower parts of the body. Blood, flows towards heart without strain and cardiac output increases. Persons with eye problems must be slightly careful while doing these asanas and they can wrap a crepe bandage around the eyes.

The capacity to withstand altitudes is derived from inverted poses. When practiced at high altitudes, the lungs are warmed up immediately.

For women these poses are very helpful. They remove pelvic congestions, prevent formation of fibroids, loosen adhesions and improve the muscle tone in the pelvis.

Supta pādānguṣṭāsana

The simplest practice in the supine posture is the **Supta pādānguṣṭāsana**.

- Here you lie down flat on the floor. Raise both the legs up 90°. Remain in that pose for some time.
- If possible catch the toes of the legs with respective hands. You can feel the pull in the back, arms, due to the stretching of the lower limbs.

As a next step, you can spread the legs wide apart, without leaving the hold on the toes. This is **Prasarita Supta pādānguṣṭāsana**.

Anantāsana

- In this posture, lie down on floor sideways, resting the head on the folded hand.

- Lift the upper leg up to 90°, perpendicular to the ground.
- You can catch the ankle or the big toe.
- After maintaining for 30seconds, comeback and turning to the other side repeat the same posture.

The pelvic muscles benefit in this āsana, hamstrings are we toned and backache is also relieved.

Jatara Parivartanāsana

This āsana is the stomach twist pose attempted lying supine on the floor.

- First stretch out the arms sideways in line with the shoulders, the body looking like a cross.
- Exhale and raise both legs up to 90°. Take a deep breath and while exhaling bring both the legs to one side of the body down on the floor, the feet reaching outstretched hand.
- If possible, you can catch the toes as well, to get better stretch. The stomach gets a good twist to one side of the body. The knees should be together and the legs straight. The lumbar should be on the floor and you should turn the legs only from the hip region.
- Stay for 30-60 seconds and come back to straight position, and relax. Then, repeat the other side too. Observe keenly the stretch felt on the lateral sides in this asana.

Due to the twist, the stomach, thighs and legs are well toned. The asana is good for liver, spleen and the pancreas. It enables proper intestinal peristalsis, leading to proper evacuation.

7. INVERTED POSES:

Before going to the inverted asanas, namely Viparīta karaṇi, Sarvāṅgāsana, Halāsana and so on, one can try the simple hip opening exercises.

This can be done in three ways, by lying down supine on the floor.

- Fold the legs, catch them with respective hands, gently press them against the abdomen keep pressing breathing slowly. This is just like we do pavanamuktasana.
- Next, grasping the knees from inside, pull them down laterally, making them wide apart.
- Third, grasping the ankles, pull the feet towards the head.

All these poses will make the hips stronger, enabling lifting them up to practice any inverted posture.

Viparīta karaṇi

This is a preparatory pose for the inverted pose Sarvangasana.

- Lie down flat on the floor.
- Fold the legs at knees, move the legs towards stomach until the thighs press it.
- Raise the hips off the floor with an exhalation, catching the waist both sides with respective hand.
- With another exhalation, raise the legs fully up, body weight falling on the elbows, which is resting on the floor.

One can use the support of the wall for coming to this posture.

In Sarvāṅgāsana the body (exclusive of the head and the neck) is positioned more or less perpendicular to the floor. To do this asana, the cervical region should be strong. The hands are moved up and placed on the back, than on the waist. Finally, with the body supported in a straight line by the hands and muscles of the trunks and hips, you get a complete chin lock, the chin pressing the neck.

Halāsana (Plough Pose)

From **Sarvāṅgāsana** or even **Viparīta karaṇi**, one can attempt the next pose, **Halāsana**, the plough posture.

- In Halāsana, from Sarvāṅgāsana position, the legs together are brought gently behind the head, first parallel to the floor and then slowly toes reaching the floor.
- The thighs and legs should be parallel to the ground, but the posture could be modified to meet the individual needs such as moderate flexion to the knees, less flexion to the hips or more flexion of the back.
- If the feet are flexed minimally overhead, the hips are flexed to the maximum and midback is more closer to the floor.
- If the feet are pushed further overhead, hips are flexed moderately and back is now perpendicular to the floor.

These types of variations could be attempted depending on the physical capacity of the practitioner.

By practicing the above Sarvāṅgāsana movements, the entire body is toned up, by increasing the flow of blood to every cell in the body. It helps a person to recover from weakness.

The effect of Halāsana, is the same as that of Sarvāṅgāsana. The spine gets extra supply of blood. The abdomen is rejuvenated due to contraction. Gas is relieved easily.

Regular practice of these āsanās will make the back muscles very mobile and enables the practitioner to perform the forward bend poses very easily, such as Paschimottānāsana and Pādahastāsana.

Matsyāsana (fish posture)

This posture can be initially moderately attempted by lying down straight supine. The chest and the abdomen are lifted as high as possible, by placing the palms under the thighs. As you lift the chest up, bend the head backwards, the crown touching the floor.

In the classic fish pose, you first sit in Padmāsana (Lotus) and with the support of the elbows, gently bend backwards, arching the lumbar, head bending back and the crown touching the floor. In this pose, the dorsal region is fully extended and the chest is well expanded. Since you are in Padmāsana, the lower extremities too benefit by this pose. The pelvic joints become elastic.

Sethubandhāsana (The Bridge posture)

In this pose, begin with supine position. Fold the knees, placing the feet firmly on the ground. Now lift the pelvis as high as possible, catching your waist with respective hands. The body takes the shape of a bridge. The posture gives a lot of relaxation to the back muscles. The āsana can be very complementary after performing the shoulder stand or the fish pose.

CONCLUSION

The Yogic path has been researched and laid down by our own ancient seers and it has given clear guidelines for prevention and cure of ailments. The authentic Haṭha yoga texts like Svātmārāma's "Haṭha yoga pradīpikā" and Gheraṇḍa Muni's "Gheraṇḍa saṃhitā" clearly underline the methods and steps of yogic practices, their benefits and also the precautionary measures. They found that the primary cause for many ailments is rooted in the mind. Today, the hectic modern life makes it true and we call these ailments as psychosomatic ailments. The relation between the 'psyche' and 'soma' is harmonized by the practice of yoga. Therefore, the yogic cure touches the deeper roots of the disease and a harmony is established, avoiding the recurrence of the same. The willpower and forbearance which yoga teaches improves

the immune system in the body.

Yoga gives importance for strengthening the inherent defensive mechanism of the body and the mind. It could be said that yoga, when practiced from a young age regularly will not only maintain the health of the person but also assists in the flowering of the personality at all levels: physical, mental, emotional, intellectual and spiritual.

Negative emotions generally interfere with the tonic rhythm of the muscles and blood vessels and there follows a chain of reactions. (Patanjali yoga sūtra 1:31). As a result the metabolism gets affected. During the upsurge of emotions, the blood vessels get constricted and the affects the heart and the lungs. Tissues may become sluggish and there could be disturbances in the glandular secretions. Practice of yoga will definitely control these chain reactions.

Therefore, the systematic practice of yoga asanas helps one to understand the therapeutic significance of each one of them and also the subtle changes that take place within the body.

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CONCEPT OF BODY ACCORDING TO YOGA VASISTHA

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ABSTRACT

Abstract: Yoga Vasistha, a voluminous treatise, is an Advaitic work. Advaita of this text is a bit different from that of the Upanishads and Adi Shankaracarya. Though Akasha is one, yet it may be divided into three parts: Cidakasha (Pure Consciousness), Cittakasha (mind space) and Bhutakasha (gross space). Bhutakasha is impermeant. Hence this should be transcended. Experience of Pure Consciousness brings in eternal bliss.

Keywords: Advaita, Akasha.

1. INTRODUCTION

YogaVasistha is one among the *Prakarana* texts of Advaita philosophy. It is purely a philosophical treatise. It is also called as Vasistha Ramayana, Arsha Ramayana, Maha Ramayana and Jnana Vasistha. As sage Vasistha elucidated the path of knowledge here, it gets an appropriate name as 'YogaVasistha'. Sage Vasistha who is pre-eminent among Advaita teacher tradition, gave this knowledge to Sri Rama for serenity of his mind stuff (*Citta Shanti*). Initially this was advised by creator Brahma at the beginning of the creation for establishing peace in the world and among people. Brahma narrated this to sage Vasistha. Sage Valmiki as per the command of Brahma, wrote this work. Vidyaranya, Nischaladasa and other Advaita preceptors have summarized a number of ideas and thoughts from YogaVasistha. Sri Rama of Ramayana epic, is the ardent disciple and Brahmarsi Vasistha is the preceptor who teaches philosophy. The context of this text which is in the form of dialogue between a teacher and pupil is as follows: Rama went for a victorious march across the length and breadth of Bharata, having seen the miseries of life, diseased, old persons and death, returned to Ayodhya, depressed. King Dasaratha having seen this untimely depression of young Rama, requested the Royal preceptor Vasistha to advice him regarding philosophy and spirituality. This text is a storehouse of many sub-stories. Several narratives and stories have been explained for elucidating philosophical principles. It is bigger than the Ramayana, the primordial epic. It has 32,000 verses and next only to the Mahabharata in size which has one lakh verses.

The predominant subject matter of YogaVasistha is elucidating of Advaita philosophy. The philosophy here is little different from that of Upanisadic or Shankara philosophy. YogaVasistha elucidates the non-dualistic Consciousness pervading the Universe (*Cidakasa Advaita*). Three levels of space (*Akasa*) are mentioned in YogaVasistha. They are Consciousness space/ domain (*Cidakasa*), Mindstuff space/domain (*Cittakasa*) and Gross space/domain (*Bhutakasa/ Sthulakasa*). *Cidakasha* is the basis for soul, world and universe. This is eternal and truthful in nature. This *Cidakasa/ Cidambara* is the *Parabrahman* which is

elucidated by the Upanishads. *Cittakasha* is the essence of integrated mind. *Bhutakasha* or *Sthulakasha* means the universe created by mind which is present 'within and without' and formless in nature.

Citta means state of Consciousness. *Citta* is derived from Consciousness (*Cit*). The flights of *Citta* are mind (*manas*), intelligence (*buddhi*), egoism (*ahamkara*) and others. This world is endowed with living and non-living, moving and stationary objects, which is an imagination of *Citta*. The *Cidambara* becomes *Citta* and gets transformed into the world and exhibits itself. Hence Yoga Vasistha philosophy is called '*Ajāta Vāda*' (theory of unborn). Yoga Vasistha elucidates this concept of *Ajāta Vāda* and Advaita through arguments-dialogues, through sub-stories (*Upakhyānas*) and narratives, in six sections through examples and illustrations, where the essence of life experiences become the metaphors. The sections are: Renunciation (*Vairāgya Prakaraṇam*), Aspiration for liberation (*Mumukṣu Prakaraṇam*), Origination (*Utpatti Prakaraṇam*), Sustenance (*Sthiti Prakaraṇam*), Conciliation (*Upaśama Prakaraṇam*), Salvation (*Nirvaṇa Prakaraṇam*).

2. THE CONCEPT OF BODY ACCORDING TO YOGAVASISTHA

The first section/book of Yoga Vasistha titled *Vairāgya Prakaraṇam* (section of Detachment) in which Sri Rama informs sage Vasistha about the body, its activities, its merits and demerits. At the outset, Rama explains about the futility and diminishing nature of the body through various similes and examples. The body undergoes modifications, decay and it is affected with diseases and gives only sorrow (Y.V. I.Vai.Pr.18.1). This body is neither animate nor inanimate nor intelligent. But it appears to be like a soul and hence ignorant people commit mistake and get deluded (Y.V.I. Vai.Pr.18.2-3). He censures the body as pitiable, abject, worthless and forsaken (Y.V. Ibid. 18.4). This body is made up of five gross elements and is a seat for both individual and supreme soul (Upanishadic ref: *Dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā..... Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣat* .4.6). Sri Rama compares the body to a tree in the forest called the worldly life. The sufferings are compared to worms and the mind is compared to a fickle monkey (*VilasacCitta markaṭaḥ* ...Y.V. Ibid. 18. 12). He compares the limbs of the body to branches of a tree, young shoots and the hands to a bunch of flowers. The fruits are auspicious and inauspicious in nature. The sense organs are compared to birds, the thighs to pillars and the lust to a traveler and egoism to a vulture

(Y.V. Ibid. 18. 13-16). The mental impressions and many desires are the pendant roots and fibers of a tree and bring-in unhappiness to an individual (Y.V. Ibid. 18.17). Sri Rama is disillusioned about the body and tells that for a person, the body is the big residence of its owner's egoism and is not interested whether it lasts or falls (Y.V.Ibid. 18.18). Sri Rama compares the sense organs to animals, thirst to a mistress, body to an abode of nerves, buttocks to wood, nerves to hollow nests, muscles to ropes, blood to muddy water, old age to lime, mind to a servant and delusion to big pillars called thighs (Y.V. Ibid. 18. 13-22). Sri Rama refutes his very physical existence or the body in a series of verses where he compares the body to various animate - inanimate objects and fauna and flora.

The interesting feature is that intelligence (*Buddhiḥ*) is compared to the mistress of the body, anxiety (*Cintā*) to her daughter (Y.V. Ibid. 18.26). He dislikes the body which is an abode of diseases, repository for wrinkles, decay and all pains (Y.V.Ibid.18.34). He is distasteful towards materialistic pleasures, wealth, kingdom as one day it gets destroyed by death (Y.V.Ibid.18.37). He distinguishes between body and soul and informs that this ungrateful body does not follow the soul which the learned are already aware of (Y.V.Ibid.18. 39). He compares the body to a big bubble of water which trickles down soon. He is desirous of abandoning the same (Y.V.Ibid.18.40). Yet Sri Rama explains that the body is very delicate, soft and tattered, bitter and pungent in nature (Y.V. Ibid.18.42). Generally large part of commonwealth succumb to six types of tastes namely sweet (*madhura*), sour (*amla*), salt (*lavana*), bitter (*tikta*), pungent (*katu*), astringent (*kashaya*) yet they relish them. But according to Rama, this body is bitter and tasteless in nature. Although people relish these six types of tastes and are under the impression that those would last forever and think that the body would attain softness and delicacy, they are not aware that finally the body leads to destruction only (Y.V.Ibid.18.41-42). Rama tells ironically that this body is not shameful although experiencing the fleeting happiness and unhappiness. He asks sage Vasistha as to why one should protect this body (*kāya*) which exercised authority and power, lived in grandeur would not attain prosperity or stability (Y.V.Ibid.18, 43-44). The body cannot understand either senility or death. Hence there is no difference between the rich and poor, who experience both senility and death (Y.V.Ibid.18.45). The body is compared to a heap of wood which travels on the waves of the world and finally fit for the funeral

pyre (Y.V. Ibid.18.47). Rama censures those people who have a desire on the body, world and passage of life owing to being intoxicated by drinking the alcohol called delusion (Y.V.Ibid.18.52). He heralds that a person who understands that he is not there for the body, neither the body is there for him nor the ego, would attain excellence (Y.V.Ibid.18.53). Rama compares the consciousness (*prajñā*) to a woman who is trapped by a demon called false knowledge (*Mithyā jñānam*, Y.V. Ibid.18.56). The body deteriorates like the drops of a waterfall or like the withered leaves or gets dissolved in the ocean like a bubble. It is trapped in the whirlpool of mental impressions (*vasana*) of once own actions (Y.V.Ibid.18. 58,59). Sri Rama has no interest in this materialistic life which undergoes various modifications owing to false knowledge and appear like an illusory city in the dream (Y.V.Ibid.18.60). He declares that he would reject this body (*Kalevarah*) and all its instability which appears like a blade of grass and remain reposed (*Sthita manah*) (Y.V. Ibid.18.61).

Sri Rama is viewing a woman who is composed of just nerves, bones, joints and nothing but a statue of flesh and a moving machinery of ribs and limbs (Y.V.I. Vai. Pr.21.1). Women charming on account of a pair of bosoms, with decoration would lose their charm at death and the same object becomes a food for pack of dogs (Y.V.Ibid.18.5,6). After all their body is a lump of blood, flesh and bones but still people get attracted owing to delusion (*Moha*). She raises the modification of passion in men like the wings which infuses arrogance. There is no difference between a woman and wine (Y.V. Ibid.21.9).

Bhanu, a character in YogaVasistha, mentions that any object created physically by hand can be destroyed and also we can control the impact of external objects influencing our perception but it is not possible to disregard those ideas and thoughts ascertained by the mind (Y.V.I.Vai.Pr.88.18). He further says that if a person thinks materialistically, then he would end-up in bodily experiences and pain. But if he understands that he is bodiless, he would be free from all evils. So a Yogi concentrating inward knows what is pain and pleasure, pleasant or unpleasant (Y.V.Ibid.89.3,4). Body can be tamed by one or other means (expedient) where as mind cannot be transformed either by boon or curse. Creator Brahma explains that all species of animals from the lowest to the highest are endowed with body and mind. Body is full of flesh which is dull and inactive in nature, whereas mind is active and fickle in nature. Generally body is overpowered by the influence of curses, charms

and practiced in tantric ways. Body energy will not be highly successful in all activities and undertakings but the intellectual activity will lead to success in all endeavors. This is a bone of contention and debate between brain and brawn here (*Saphalo māṃsa dehasya na kaścitpouṣakramaḥ | manodehasya saphalaṃ sarvameva svaceṣṭitam* || Y.V.Ut.Pr.92.16).

3. BODY, MIND AND SOUL

Vasistha while explaining the origin of mind, informs that the cosmic mind is the genius (*samaṣṭi*) and the soul becomes its part (*vyaṣṭi*). Therefore, the mind becomes a soul without personality where as the soul is the mind of a certain person. These souls thus born move freely in the sphere of consciousness (*Cidākāśa*). These get unfolded by atoms and reside in fourteen kinds of animated nature depending upon merit and demerit actions. Then they enter the bodies through the vital breath and express themselves over a period of time (Y.V.Ibid.93.13-14). It is the creator Brahma who creates all the living beings but their appearance and disappearance depends upon the actions of their previous births (Y.V.Ibid.93.21). The endless desires drive a soul to many places which is beyond space and time (*Nānādigdeśakālāntaśailakandaracāriṇī | racitottamavaicitryavivihitā āsambhramā asasti* || () Y.V.Ibid.93.23). According to Vasistha, various forms of living beings in this multiform world move freely in respective sphere by god's will. Their travel is transitory in nature like the sparks of fire (*Itthaṃ jagatsu vividheṣu vicitrarūpāstasyecchayā bhagavato vyavahāravatyah | āyānti yānti nipatanti tathotpatanti rūpaśriyah kaṭaghaṭā iva pāvakoṭthāḥ* || Y.V.Ibid.94.32). The living beings are produced from the same source i.e., supreme soul like young shoots, buds and leaves originate from the same tree (Y.V.Ibid.95.9,10). Vasistha advices Sri Rama not to have attachment towards the perishable objects of the world including the body. The pain and pleasures of the body would not affect or afflict the soul in anyway. Even the changing forms of the body will have no effect what so ever on the soul. It is like the bellows of a blacksmith being burnt, the wind that covered escapes without any effect (*Dehe naṣṭe kṣate kṣiṇe kātmanaḥ kṣatirāgatā | bhastrāyāṃ paridagdhāyāṃ bhastrāpūro na naśyati* || Y.V. Ibid.102.12). The body is non-sentient and is dull matter (*jaḍa*), whereas mind is neither sentient nor non-sentient (Y.V.Ibid.110.13). The sensorial organs are the products of the mind whereas mind is not a product of sensations (*Indriyeṇa mano dehi*

*manasendriyamunmanaḥ | indriyāṇi prasūtāni manaso
nendriyānmanaḥ || Y.V.Ibid.110.36). Vasistha consoles
Rama that whatever the miseries he is suffering is only
for the body and not to the intellect or the soul (Yānīmāni
vicitrāṇi dhuḥkhāni paripaśyasi | tāni dehasya sarvāṇi
nāgrāhyasya cidātmanaḥ || Y.V. Ibid.122. 44).*

4. CONCLUSION

Thus we see from the above account that Body as explained in Yoga Vasistha is transitory in nature, a repository of unhappiness and misery. Hence learned people should ignore *Sthulakasha* and move to higher dimensions of mind (*Cittakasha*) and consciousness (*Cidakasha*) and attain self-realization (*Atma sakshatkara*).

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Development of Yama and Niyama

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ABSTRACT

Abstract: Yama and Niyama, as we see them in the Yogic literature, are relatively new ideas. They evolved through the ages. The present study is predominantly historical in nature. But it is limited to literature of Yoga excluding vast source material of Puranas. There are practical difficulties in real-life implementation of the components of Yama and Niyama. Sometimes, true application of some of these moral codes might threaten one's life.

Keywords: Yama, Niyama, Dhyana.

1. INTRODUCTION

The pair of Yama and Niyama forms an integral practice in the tradition of Patanjala Yoga. According to the scheme of Ashtangayoga, this pair of personal purity, ethics and social conduct is the basis of all other further practices of Yoga. One without being well equipped with these practices may not be able to extract suitable benefits from the higher curriculum of Yoga as laid down in Yoasutras. Even one might discover that higher practice of Ashtangayoga like dhyana, dharana would be pretty difficult or impossible to practise if one is not well grounded in Yama and Niyama, the lessons of each components are fully inculcated in personal life.

However, a close study of the Indian traditional scriptures would reveal that advocacy for undertaking the practices of Yama and Niyama or such similar ethical and moral lessons had not been same through all the times and stages of Indian traditional history. The following paragraphs will clearly show that there had been remarkable changes in perception towards these personal and social rules from time to time. A time was there when there was no clear suggestion for such practices at all. But as the time changed, the sages felt the need to clearly put forward the guidelines for an individual to behave with one's own self as well as with others around him. These rules are not only mandatory for one's spiritual evolution but also necessary for personal and social enmity, peace and integrity.

1.1 Nature and limitation

- (i) The present study is predominantly historical in nature. But it is limited to literature of Yoga excluding vast source material of Puranas.

- (ii) A small discussion on the difficulties in practical application of the components of Yama and Niyama has been initiated.
- (iii) An effort to enter into the discussion regarding the values of various components of Yama and Niyama, their relevance in modern social context and such other issues has been avoided in this study.

2. FIVE MAJOR STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

On the basis of the texts of different periods of history, development of Yama and Niyama can be divided broadly in six stages. These are— I) Vedic period, II) Upanishadic period, III) Dharma-shastra period, IV) Epic period, V) Period of darshanas, and VI) Medieval period.

2.1 Vedic period

This period may be safely labeled as the earliest period of the available literature in human history. There has hardly been any clear guidance regarding the personal and social ethics on the line of Yama and Niyama. A reference to Yoga practices has been cited in Rigveda--V.81.1 wherein it has been described that 'a wise Yogi who is a vipra (brahmana) makes the manas (mind) and dhi (discriminative intelligence) one-pointed and thus explores the higher layers of consciousness'.

Comment: Perhaps the above narration holds the key to everything that the standard conventional Yoga practices involve in more an elaborate form—starting with stability of the body, mental stability and up to integration of the total persona—in its all possible dimensions. Therefore, it can be said to be generic in nature.

2.2 Upanishadic period

Almost the same narratives as in the Rigveda--V.81.1 have been echoed in the Upanishadic (in this group of Upanishads we have considered only those Upanishads on which Adi-shankara has written commentaries and therefore which are earliest of the Upanishads and are also widely regarded as authentic ones) literature when the Upanishadika sages describe a Yogi in 'his stature of total calm and composed state to explore the inner state of Bliss and eternal Beauty' --Shvetashvatara-upa—II.4.

In Shvetashvatara-upa—II.1 it is also described that 'a Yogi travel to the inner Self and gets associated with the Self'.

Mundaka-upa—III.1.5 tells that 'Self should be attained by Truth, by tapas (penance), by right knowledge and by sexual purity at all times'.

Comment: The statement of Shvetashvatara-upa. similar to vaidika period, is again generic in nature, but we see a little bit more of specification in the form of satya (truthfulness), tapas (penance) and brahmacharya (sexual purity) on the line of Yama and Niyama which were not seen in the earlier scriptures.

2.3 Dharma-shastra Period

In Apastamba-dharmasutra—I.8.23.306 we come across the following instruction in regard to overcoming certain doshas (demerits) which is as follows—'the total destruction of doshas (taints) is possible through Yoga in the present life itself. A wise person after removing all taints reaches moksha. Moreover, he overcomes all fifteen doshas such as anger, ecstatic feeling, greed, hypocrisy etc. Also he counters these taints through the opposite merits'.

Note: It will not be out of place to suggest that long before the 4th and 5th century BC Yoga as a discipline of the mind had been well developed.

According to vaikhyanasa-dharmashastra there are three categories of yogis—saranga, ekarsya and visarga. sarangas comprise four species of which the third category practise Yoga without Yama and Niyama.

Vaikhyanasa samhita--I.2.13.1 repeats the same as we have noted from Rigveda above.

Taittiriya-sam--IV.1.1.1 too repeats the same as that of Svetasvatara-upa—II.1 that we have seen in the above lines.

Gautamadharmashastra—VIII.23-25 provides much elaborate an account of the merits of an individual which can be seen in opposition to some of the prohibitive rules coming under Yamas. The eight personal merits which may be utilized to counter the demerits of Yamas are—'daya to all beings (kindness), kshanti (forgiveness), anasuya (absence of envy), sauca (physical purity), anayasa (effortless living), mangala (auspicious, wellbeing), akarpanya (charity) and aspriha (absence of craving). One who cherishes these personal qualities would reach the Blissful state'.

The above cited text may be seen more organized them before and therefore is giving a better shape of Yams in consonance with that of Yogasutras.

Comment: This period shows some more elaboration where several components of Yamas and Niyamas are named, though a lot more specification and elaboration is yet to come by.

2.4 Epic period (including the Gita)

- a) Mahabharata -santiparva—232.4-7 refers to certain Yogadosas (obstacles on the path of Yoga) which are five in number-- kama (desire, lust), krodha (anger), lobha (greed), bhaya (fear) and svapna (sleep, drowsiness) which should be countered with their judicious opposite i.e., merits.

These five are slightly different in Mahabharata-santiparva—289.11 as noted below—

raga (attachment, anger), moha (infatuation), sneha (attachment), kama (lust, desire), krodha (anger) and these are demerits which should be overcome through practice of Yoga.

It has also been suggested here to overcome svasa (breath) through consumption of moderate diet.

Mahabharata --santiparva—79.18 explains tapas which comprises ahimsa (abstaining from harming others), satya (truthfulness), anrisamsya (refraining from aggression to others), dama (self-restraint), and ghrina (hate).

Note: santiparva—304.7 says that Yoga is of eight angas (components).

It may be noted here that eight angas of Yogasutra are quoted as from mahabharata in the kityakalpataru (mokshakhanda) and also by apararka on Yogayajnavalkya.

- b) The Gita--VI.10 insists on practice of aparigraha (non-possessiveness).

The Git§-V.26 provides more lucid an account of personal conduct essential for the Yogis as follows—‘A Yogi is best advised to get rid of kama (lust, desire) and krodha (anger). He should remain self-contained. Thus he attains the highest state’. Moreover, ‘one is considered Free (mukta) if he is free from cravings, fear and anger’ Gita--V.28.

Comment: It is evident that in this period the concept of Yama and Niyama has taken a more concrete form which is clear from Mahabharata’s naming of eight components of Yoga though they differ very much from that of the well accepted components of Yogasutra.

2.5 Period of Yogadarshana

Yogasutras of Patanjali and very many commentaries written on them may be considered belonging to this period or group. All the classical Sanskrita commentaries (which are approximately eighteen in number, published and unpublished Mss.) starting from that of Vyasa’s

accept the eight components of Yoga having Yama and Niyama in which have five components each. Five Yamas are—ahimsa (non-injury), satya (truthfulness), asteya (non-stealing), brahmacharya (celibacy) and aparigraha (non-possessiveness).

Five Niyamas are-- sauca (purity), santosa (contentment), tapas (penance, austeriuty), svadhaya (study of the Self), isvarapranidhana (worship of God).

Comment: No doubt this is much systematized a pair of personal and social ethos in comparison to all the periods presented above.

Note: In the later period of the Yogic history, we witness a steady and divergent spurt in the evolution of Hathayoga, where the pair of Yamas and Niyamas and their components have been variously modified, interpreted and even several components are added to, as will be noted in the following paragraphs.

2.6 Medieval period

There are two sub-groups on the basis of propagation of (i) Ashtangayoga and (ii) Shadangayoga. The group of Ashtangayoga includes Yama and Niyama, whereas the group of Shadangayoga excludes Yama and Niyama from the practice of Yoga.

(i) Ashtangayoga--

(Here we exclude the literature of Patanjala Yogasutra and its various commentaries as they fall in earlier period). Some of the texts of Hathayoga that fall in this period are:

Siddha-siddhanta-paddhati (SSP), Hathapradipika (HP), Shiva-samhita, Hatharatnavali, Yogayajnavalkya-smriti, Yogayajnavalkya etc.

Components of Yama and Niyama:

SSP-II.32 – Yamas are upasama (tranquility), sarvendriyajaya (control of senses), ahara, nidra, sita, vata and atapa (control over food, sleep, cold, wind and heat).

SSP-II.33--- Niyamas are control over mind, living in seclusion, refraining from public contact, indifference, contentment, detachment and surrender to Guru.

HP does not name Yama and Niyama in the (eight) components of Yoga but it accepts them as essential part of Yoga. However, HP includes ahimsa in Niyamas and mitahara in Yamas.

Shiva-samhita-III.40-41 gives an account of Niyamas which are—listening to scriptural discourses, exercising

detachment while holding a family life, taking the name of vishnu, listening to nada, forbearance, forgiveness, penance, cleanliness, coy, determination and obeying a master.

It is important to note that Shiva-samhita does not make any mention to Yama but at III.36 it recommends one to eschew stealing, violence, envy, ego, guile, starving, telling lies, attachment and hurting animals.

Hatharatnavali—III.2-4-- Yamas are—pacification of mind, contentment, silence, control of senses, kindness, politeness, faith in God, straightforwardness, gentleness, forgiveness, purification of thoughts, non-violence, celibacy, memory, forbearance etc., while Niyamas are—bath, cleanliness, vow, truthfulness, recitation (of mantras), fire worship, libation of water, penance, self-control, endurance, reverential salutation, circumambulation, observance of vows, fasting etc.

According to Darshanopanishad—I.6, Shandilyopanishad — I.I.4, I.II.1, Yogayajnavalkya -- I.50-51 (Divanji) and Varahopanishad — V.12-14 Yamas are ten, namely, non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy, kindness, straightforwardness, forgiveness, forbearance, controlled diet, and cleanliness. These texts provide a list of ten Niyamas which are-- penance, contentment, faith in God, charity, worship of God, listening to spiritual discourses, coy, determination, repetition of God's name and vow.

Mandalabrahmanopanishad—I.I.3 says that Yamas are – 'to gain control over cold and heat, hunger, sleep, to keep calm at all stages, control of senses, while Niyamas are nine which are—faith in Guru, aspire to reach the Truth (Brahma), contentment, detachment to people, living in isolation, control of mind, detachment to results of action, and detachment.

Yajnavalkya-smriti and Yogayajnavalkya (of Divanji) both enumerate ten Yamas and ten Niyamas. The two provide a diverse list of their components.

Celibacy, kindness, forgiveness, charity, truthfulness, guilelessness, non-violence, non-stealing, tenderness, control (of senses) are ten Yamas. Bath, silence, fasting, worshipping God, study of scriptures, control of sex, serving a Guru, cleanliness, control of anger and mental clarity are ten Niyamas -- Yajnavalkya-smriti-III.312-313.

Note: The striking dissimilarities between the above two texts are-- sauca is in niyama in Yajnavalkyasmriti but a Yama in Yogayajnavalkya.

According to Yogatattvopaniṣad—28-29 moderate diet is chief among Yamas awhile non-violence is prominent

among Niyamas. This text does not provide any list of Yama-Niyama though.

Tejobindupaniṣad—I.15-18 gives an entirely different definition to Yama and Niyama. According to this text Yama means 'to realize that all this is brahma alone by controlling the senses', while Niyama means 'to experience transcendental Bliss'.

Similarly, Trisikhi-brahmanopaniṣad(mantra)—28-29 defines Yama as 'detachment towards body and senses', while Niyama is 'to get attached towards the Absolute'.

Note: Dattatreyaśamhita (32-33) and Yogatattvopaniṣad (28) also include ahimsa among Niyamas and Mitahara among Yamas although they give no further details of Yama and Niyama.

Paramartha (Origin and Development of Samkhya System of Thought by Pulinbhari Chakravarti, Metropolitan Publishing House Ltd., Calcutta 1952, p. 159) includes Mitahara in Yamas and Ahimsa in Niyamas. In this earliest commentary on Samkhyakarika translated into Chinese Yamas are – akrodha (absence of anger), gurushusrusha (respect for guru), sauca (bodily cleanliness), aharalaghava (moderate diet) and apramada (not to become addicted to license), while Niyamas are— ahimsa (not to kill), asteya (not to steal), satya (truthfulness), brahmacarya (continence) and akalkata (not to flatter).

Comment: This period obviously witnesses a very diverse range of components of Yama-Niyama. No uniformity can possibly be found regarding their aspects, numbers etc.

(ii) Shadangayoga--

Goraksha-sataka—I.4, Gherandasamhita, Dhyānabindupa—41.

Comment: No comment can be made on these texts as they don't make any mention of Yama-Niyama.

However, Upanishadbrahmayogi on his commentary on Trishikhibrahmanopaniṣad rationalizes the exclusion of Yama and Niyama by stating that these practices are understood to be obligatory for any Yogic or esoteric life, therefore do not qualify any special mention.

Note: Apararka (on yajnavalkya—III.110) quotes a Smriti text enumerating six components of Yoga (omitting yama, niyama, asana and adding tarka). The same is in evidence in Maitrayani-upaniṣad—II.18, Atrismriti—IX.6 and Dakshasmriti—VII.3.

Vayupurana-XI.76 mentions only five aspects of Yoga—pranayama, dhyana, pratyahara, dharana and smarana.

3. PRACTICAL GUIDELINES OF YAMA AND NIYAMA

From among all the components of Yama and Niyama Ahimsa and Satya assume maximum significance as has been emphasized in the traditional scriptures and as also we see in day to day life. In comparison to other components of Yama and Niyama these two aspects are chiefly responsible for internal as well as external harmony, social amity and integrity. Moreover, these are undoubtedly obligatory for spiritual growth of a person. This is the reason why Patanjali declared Yama and Niyama to be Sarvabhauma and Mahavratas.

However, putting Ahimsa and Satya into practice in real life is not an easy task. It has several complications. There are certain complex practical issues which need to be looked into and discussed with a view to suggest probable solution.

Let us first consider the practice of Ahimsa—

Ahimsa-- It means non-violence, absence of violence at all three levels of mind, speech and action against any and all living beings. It includes even absence of a iota of even a stray thought of perpetration of harm physical or mental or any other form of harm towards any living creature. According to Mahabharata (Anusasana—11.13) 'Ahimsa paramo dharmah'—non-violence is considered the 'supreme virtue'. This also forms an eternal virtue irrespective of time and space (geographical location), i.e. it equally applies to all times, all places and all living beings.

Supposing an assassin approaches to kill someone, then what the possible victim should do? Should he allow the assassin to kill or save his own life by killing the assassin which will amount to violence and therefore go against this set rule of Yama? In Manusmriti (8.350) a suggestion has been given for such complex situation. It is suggested here that even if a close person approaches to kill, one should take to arms and attack the offender to save his own life. Even though it goes against the principle of Yama, it has been recommended. Moreover, in the context of the Gita, a perplexed Arjuna was prompted by Krishna—who is considered to be Yogishvara-- to take to arms and fight with his very close blood relations like great-grand-father, Guru, cousins and such other relations. This is nothing but Himsa (violence).

Let us consider the statement of Arjuna in Mahabharata (Shanti—15.26) wherein Arjuna says that 'there are innumerable tiny living creatures which cannot be seen with eyes but can be imagined to be present all around, who might be getting killed all the time even by blinking

of eyelids, which (violence) is certainly not intentional'. What kind of a stand can one take in such cases?

To learn the meaning of Ahimsa a Brahmana was sent to a butcher. The butcher put forth—*Jivo jivasya jivanam* (Bhagavata—1.13.46) – *jiva* – a living creature-- is the food for another living creature. And this is a continuous cycle that we observe in the nature around us— an insect eaten up by a bird and so on. The same content has been found supported in the Upanishads also (Chandogyo-5.2.1 and Brihadara—6.1.14).

Moreover, if all give up violence at all levels, then how the virtue of a Kshatriya (warrior class) would be explained? If the Kshatriya (military) resolves to total non-violence, how the borders of the states would remain safe? How would the law and order condition be maintained? In such a condition, there would be widespread anarchy all around and the wicked and evil agents will gain ground. Innocents, weak and women will suffer immensely.

Therefore, in Mahabharata (Vana—28.6.8) Prahlada suggests to Bali—"It is improper to exercise force (violence) all the time. It is also inappropriate to exercise forgiveness all the time. According to the wise 'forgiveness' is considered an exception". An appropriate context to exercise violence or forgiveness would squarely depend on the discretion of the person involved and his situation.

Satya—Truthfulness. To speak the Truth. This makes another well-known and well-accepted universal virtue. Its importance is accepted in all times, in all sections of the society.

According to Rigveda (10.190.1), the creation has been evolved from Rita and Satya. Rigveda (10.85.1) also states that the universe is sustained and covered by Rita and Satya alone. Similarly, Mahabharata (Shanti-162.24) declares that there exists no Dharma superior to Satya. Satya denotes that which never changes, which remains consistent in all times. Mahabharata (Adi—74.102) eulogizes importance of Satya by saying that Satya is superior even to a thousand performance of sacrifices like Ashvamedha. Speaking truth should be upheld as a great virtue. Manu (4.256) said—"All human dealing is done through speech. There is no better medium of communication for men. Thence speech should be an integrated one". Such a stance has been also maintained in Taittiriya—1.11.1 – *satyam vada, dharmam cara*—speak the truth, do virtuous deeds. Bhishma while lying on the bed of arrows at the end of the Mahabharata war (Anu—167.50) says that there remains only one virtue to be followed and that is Satya which is also the only strength.

However, is there any possibility of exception in speaking truth in real life? If we look closely around, we notice that the world is certainly not full of virtuous people. There are more vicious people than virtuous truth-loving people. Therefore, will it be possible to speak truth for a virtuous person in all circumstances? Take an example of a situation wherein a bunch of assassins are chasing an innocent victim to take his life, and a virtuous person sees the victim hiding in a safe place. While being enquired by the assassins regarding the whereabouts of the victim, should the virtuous person speak the truth thus disclosing the victim and thus jeopardizing his life for sure. Commonsense says 'certainly no', simply because in this particular context to save the life of a person is more important than speaking truth. Here speaking truth will be equal to killing an innocent life. Take another example wherein the plunderers are brandishing swords and asking for the booty. What should a householder victim should do? Certainly to speak the truth and save his own life which is more precious.

It can be said that 'speaking truth' does not particularly mean only 'uttering a few words corresponding to certain facts'. One needs to consider whether speaking truth is serving good and wider purpose or not. Thence the very interpretation of 'speaking truth' or Satya has been given differently in Mahabharata (Santi—329.13;287.19) in the following words— 'undoubtedly one should speak the truth. Rather one should speak what is acceptable to all. According to me Satya is that which serves all purpose'.

In the above discussion with practical examples we can see that like in case of Ahimsa, Satya too has exception. Mahabharata (Anu—82.16) therefore tries to provide some exceptional occasions when one might speak untruth. It says, "While cracking a joke, settling a marriage, saving a life and property one may like to speak untruth". This provides only an indication and no way should be considered exclusive. For example, one may need to speak untruth to a severely sick person to save his life. Although these are exceptions and speaking untruth may be compulsion and demand of the situation, but 'speaking untruth' is still considered a sin by the ancient sages. To extol from such deviation from truth, the savants recommended Prayaschitta (atonement).

One should apply conscience to determine an appropriate context of exception in regards to other components of Yama and Niyama as well. Such a clue has been given by the ancients when they defined **Brahmacarya** (celibacy, sexual purity) differently (instead of recommending

complete abstinence from sex) as – Ritau ritau svadaresu-- to engage in physical relationship with one's life partner at an appropriate and prescribed time or Ritu (after the menstrual cycle).

Virtue of **Santosa** (contentment) and **Aparigraha** (non-hoarding) are closely interrelated. Aparigraha leads to Santosa or a person who is contented will not indulge in hoarding. It is to be considered that a person having no decent and consistent way of livelihood will hardly find it practicable to exercise Contentment.

As regards to **Sauca** (cleanliness—both external and internal), it can have an exception while a person is sick.

A Remark: Yamas are primarily prohibitive or negative practices, therefore are abstinences while Niyamas are instructive and therefore positive and are called observances. Both of these together may be termed as 'ten (or twenty) commandments of Yoga system of life', which lay firm foundation of personal merit on ethical as well as moral ground. These practices have not confrontation with intellectual progress of a person. By properly inculcating these values, one is sure to develop an 'impersonal status'. Such a status of the personality is necessary to be seriously effective. Because this impersonal virtue leads one to egoless state of the begin which helps in overcoming all personal and social evils. Surely this kind of a developed personality is ascetic in every respect. In tradition, such a personality is known as vairagya or detachment which leads to spiritual awakening. It is not possible to go to the depth of Yoga seriously without these two sets of components.

On a more general consideration, Indian classical spiritual system recognizes six serious vices which are internal against which every sadhaka needs to be at guard all the time. These vices are namely, kama (lust, desire), krodha (anger), lobha (greed), moha (infatuation), mada (blinded by pride) and matsarya (envy).

To overcome these one is supposed to counter the said vices with the opposites which are suggested as— shama (tranquility), dama (self control), uparati (detachment), titiksha (fortitude), shraddha (faith) and samadhana (contentment or single-mindedness).

From another angle we can say that there are only two basic pairs of vices from which all other vices would arise. These pairs are raga (attachment) and dvesha (aversion) or kshama (lust, desire) and krodha (anger). But the root still of these two sets is just ahankara or ego (arrogance). Ahankara (ego, arrogance) can be countered by developing the virtue of altruism. It means that Self

means all and all is but Self. This is also suggested in many of the traditional scriptures.

4. CONCLUSION

- i) There is hardly any uniformity to be seen in the number of Yamas and Niyamas and their components.
- ii) Certain component is included in Yama by some while in Niyama by other.
- iii) Even though at the period of Patanjali there was an effort to systematize or standardize these practices-- their number and definition, same has not been essentially followed by later literature on Yoga, especially Hathayoga. Lot of freedom was exercised by authorities on Yoga in this regard.
- iv) No reference is available to the practice of Yama-Niyama in the period of the Vedas.

- v) A little indication to Yama-Niyama is traced in the Upanishadic period, though it is inadequate.
- vi) The epic period provides a clear picture of these practices, their names and relevance.
- vii) From the above study it is clear that considerable changes/ additions in the content have taken at the medieval period. Perception towards this pair of practice altered drastically, may be due to demand of time. This demonstrates that the traditional outlook is fairly flexible.

5.0 REFERENCES

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Role of Yogic Values in Indian Alchemy/Metallurgy

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ABSTRACT

Yoga and alchemy walk hand in hand. The Rasa Sastra or Alchemical texts give many procedures for material transmutation that would facilitate the user to attain Supreme or the Brahma which is a Yogic goal. The reintegration of consciousness with supreme soul corresponds directly to transformation of metals in the alchemy. The alchemical gold considered as noble metal free from all the deformities, similarly according to Yogic texts the human body attains immortality when it is free from all the influences including life. Here an attempt has been made to correlate the alchemical transmutation process with Yogic goal of Moksha which is uniting a soul with the supreme soul thus becoming supreme.

Keywords: Alchemy, Ayurveda, Charaka Samhitha, Khechari Vaidya, Kundalini, Patanjali, Medieval Hatha Yoga, Mercury, Metallurgy, Moksha, Rasasastra, , Shakthi, Susrutha Samhitha, Transmutation, Yoga, Yogic Values, Yoga Sutras.

1. INTRODUCTION

The main goals of Yoga are to attain peace of mind, liberation of life and preserving health balance till the extinction of the body. When we look into the Patanjali Yoga Sutras One can undoubtedly say that ultimate goal of Yoga is to achieve Moksha, Samadhi which is nothing but uniting a soul with the supreme soul thus becoming supreme. The body of a human being arises out of five elements (the Pancha Bhutha) namely Earth, Fire, Wind, Water and Sky. When a person undergoes Yogic practice his principal aim is to liberate his body and conjoin it with these five elements.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

Now our prime focus will be on determining the importance of Alchemical processes to achieve these Yogic Goals. Here we try to keep our mind as openly possible so that we can arrive at a point where there will be a most plausible and logical reason for the utilization of these processes. Rasa sastra(Science of Alchemical Manipulation) is principally used to achieve health related goals and almost coincides with 'Ayurveda' a sub division of Rasa Sastra.

Rasa Sastra is considered to be consortium of texts like Rasendra Mangala, Rasa Hridaya Tantra, Rasarnava, Rasa Prakasa Sudhakara and Rasa Ratna Samucchaya, which were composed by the Alchemical practitioners from the Medieval India. Even though many of these practices are written in the medieval period, the concept of altering metals existed centuries before, in the ancient Indian treatises like Charaka and Susrutha Samhitha. These alchemical practices are used as part of Indian indigenous medicinal practice known as the "Ayurveda". Ayurveda and Rasa Sastra are closely related in many terms.

Rasa Sastra is a science in which various minerals, metals, indigenous herbs, animal products are combined, purified, powdered and/or manipulated in such a way that, a new byproduct is formed. The product thus produced is used for various applications such as medicine, treatments of various types of illnesses,

diseases and sometimes it has the capacity to become a new material altogether. The alchemical processes from the Rasa Sastra texts make use of the metals such as Gold, Silver, Iron, Copper, Zinc, Mercury, Bronze, Brass and also Gemstones, salts in many cases.

The powdered metals obtained through the processes mentioned are helpful in sustaining the human vitality, and this is known as Deha Siddhi. Also, a process where the metals are altered and used further applications is known as Loha Siddhi. Collectively, the aim of all the Rasa Sastra's mercurial preparations is to obtain perfection of the body and metal. Rasa Sastra also aims at achieving stability of mercury by combining with sulphur and transforming base metals into gold, which is believed to be the most pristine of all the metals. When a Yogi applies the mercurial preparation to own body the result will be perfection of body state.

There are innumerable methods described in the texts through which the ancient sages achieved transmutation of metals. The entire Rasa Sastra lays significant emphasis on the usage of mercury which can be used in internal administration to attain wholesome health. It will be surprising to note that ancient Indians tried to prepare an elixir using alchemical transmutation of mercury, which delivers its user an eternal life free from all the diseases.

According to the Verse 1.11-13 from the Rasa Hridaya Tantra metals which are unstable otherwise, even manipulated cannot produce the desired effect of attaining stability to the body. The same verse says that herbal drugs are dissolved in lead, lead is dissolved in tin, tin is dissolved in copper, copper in silver, silver in gold and gold in mercury. Just as the soul of all living creatures dissolves in the supreme soul, all organic and inorganic things dissolve in mercury. This means that to attain stability to the body the material used should be itself stable. Hence mercury which is on the top of all the metals, which is called as the king of metals has the capacity to bestow upon its user agelessness and immortality to the body.

Similar kind of reintegration happens through evoking necessary energy (Kundalini Shakti) by the Yogis for them to attain perfection for their bodies. The Khechari Vidya, a 14th century treatise on Hatha Yoga says, to generate the Kundalini "five constituent elements in the supreme Yogi's body should raise the first inner constituent and place it in second, he should insert the third innate constituent upwards into the fourth. After piercing the fourth he should enter the fifth inner constituent." This work of reintegration of the consciousness with the

universal soul corresponds directly to the transmutation process of metals in the alchemy.

The connection between parallel worlds of Yoga, Alchemy can be firmly established through Pancha Mahabhuthas (the five elements), five Chakras in the Yoga and Five metals in alchemy which is evident from the Rasa Hridaya Tantra's verse mentioned above. This similarity can be closely observed from the Rasayana Sara verse which says that "Mercury that has been calcined in sulphur is capable of integrating the body and is capable of producing all the elements. In the same way, that earth is absorbed into water, water is absorbed into fire, fire into air, air into ether, ether into Soul (Atman) and the soul into the absolute (Paramatman)."

The internal administration of mercury should be done following the Panchakarma procedures namely Pachana (Carmination), Snehana (Oilation), Svedana (Fomentation), Vamana (Emesis) and Rechana (Purgation) after which it can be consumed. There are eighteen types of facilitating processes (Ashta Dasa Samskaras) of mercury purify it and make it potentially viable for attaining both Deha Siddhi and Loha Siddhi. The prime usage of an elixir prepared out of mercury is to attain Moksha, Mukthi, Samadhi (Salvation), Jeeva Mukthi (Freedom from eternal life process) from where there will be no rebirth. Almost all the Rasa Sastra Texts contain Samskaras or procedures of metal/material transmutation that would facilitate the user to attain the supreme or the Brahma, which is a yogic goal.

These Samskaras starts from a process of Marana (incineration) and continues till the highest state Utthapana (regeneration), from where the Rasa achieves state, which is capable of dissolving the base metals into itself and taking them to a higher state of perfection. This state of perfection is alchemical gold in Loha Siddhi and Alchemist's own body into an immortal, ageless one in Deha Siddhi by transmutating Dhatus (Vital Elements). In this context of Alchemy, Mercury is known as the Bija (Seed) of Lord Siva, which re-attains its full potential for the purpose of Deha Siddhi (bodily perfection) and Loha Siddhi (transformation of base metals into gold). When viewed in the Yogic Perspective this kind of transformation originates inside the body, the vessel by the generation of Yogic Shakti which has the capacity to penetrate into the subtle elements of the container gradually and finally reaching its source. This methodology of self realization is considered as a technique of transformation in the dual perspective of Yoga and Alchemy.

The alchemical works stated above try to combine, incorporate the practical alchemy, meaning material alteration sometimes involving tantrik practice into the yogic procedures to achieve a state of Samadhi. As rightly said by Heretodus, the ancient Yogis in India used to live an extraordinarily long periods of life by the use of the same mercurial preparations that are mentioned in Rasa texts. There are many prerequisites that are to be followed by the instructor before he teaches it to the students. These fundamentals are to be followed in letter and spirit in order to attain the desired effect. The Rasa texts says that the practitioner of Rasa Sastra should have all his senses well developed, a control over all the Sensory organs and passions (Rasa Jala Nidhi Vol I Chapter I-1¹).

According to countless alchemical texts the success of metallurgical transmutation operations to a large extent depends on the practitioner having pure mind and body, which is possible only through Yoga Sutras. It is also said that the person with above exceptional qualities, who performs the eighteen different operations of mercury is free from physical decay that occurs through age looks handsome and is always happy (Rasa Jala Nidhi Vol I Chapter I- 10,11). In many terms Yoga and Alchemy are synchronous and mutually dependent on each other. Yoga is a medium through which the state of mind and body are altered to attain control over the body and senses which in turn leads to peace. The same kind of stringent proportionate discipline is needed to achieve the metallurgical transmutation or for instance transformation of any metal into gold, and hence Yoga is considered as a conduit for alchemy which is nothing but conversion of matter.

The concept of immortality mentioned in the alchemical texts which can be achieved through transformation processes is an allegorical expression of liberation of the living being and attaining connection with the cosmos or realization of the self. The Yoga Sutras are exclusively utilised in the preparation of alloys and compounds. The practitioner is required to lead an ascetic life free from all the disturbances in order to achieve the corresponding goal in alchemy. As we know this austere way of living by liberating the life and integrating with the five elements, will only be possible through the principles of Yoga. Metals and minerals are closely associated with the nature since they are naturally present in mother earth, which is one of the five elements. In Hindu alchemy the nature is considered as sacred, where the ores grow inside the earth. There is an important verse

in Sathapatha Brahmana (SB III, 8,2,27): अमृतं आयुर हिरण्यं which translates to gold is immortality. From this it can be understood that, the ultimate state of gold is interpreted in accordance with liberation of the soul and considered as immortality.

Just as the Gold achieved through metallurgical alchemy is considered as noble metal free from all the deformities the human being's body attains immortality when it is free from all external influences including the life. The alchemical texts aimed to create an elixir of life, prepared through mercurial transformations, for achieving immortality in life and soul, is recalled in Hatha Yoga as Vajra Deha (Diamond shaped body) which means an unperturbed body with supreme consciousness. The alchemical processes for immortality are assumed to be process of Jeevan Muktha (Liberation of Life). In accordance with the Yoga Sutras, this is achieved by subjecting the Yogi's body through similar process of transformation and attaining Kaya Kalpa (a new entity altogether, whose physical existence is integrated with psyche).

The being generated through the process of transformation which is circular is understood as dying and regeneration in terms of yoga and alchemy. This entity, the supreme being is known in Vedas as Purusha Prajapati (the god of all living creatures), and this state of the entity can be achieved through Hatha Yoga and Alchemy using different materials in both the conjectured fields. The word amrita(elixir) means that which is not dead or immortal. A metal transforms into amruta when it undergoes a cycle of alchemical processes using immortal herbs like Soma, thereby helps in attaining Siddhis. There is a process of preparation of an alloy of gold called Hathaka(fermented gold), which we come across in the innumerable Rasa Shastra texts is a symbol for Liberation of Life when looked in the Yogic framework. In the Indian Philosophical tradition, which incorporates the Yogic Sutras, there is no physical division of mind and body which makes a Yogi a being of integrated Physical psyche. Hence when viewed in Yogic perspective life is a complex process which integrates body and mind.

This entity Purusha (the person, one self) as understood in Yoga is knowledge source of the field body (Kshetragna), who acts according to the body, at the same time doesn't get affected by it, which then becomes a pristine consciousness (Paramatman) . These two aspects of body and mind are further conceived in Yoga as Nivrutti (Rest) and Pravrutti (Activity), the enjoyer and the enjoyed,

which are coexistent but do not intersect in each other's planes of reality. The vital goal of Yoga is to purify the soul from the deeds of Karma which are acquired by the self through the experiences of many lives thereby reinventing the original identity as Purusha.

The ultimate purpose of life is to liberate itself from the entanglement created by the mind (attaining Moksha) by separating from the nature and identifying with the Paramatman. According to Sankhya Yoga, the liberated Purusha becomes a member of Prakruti (Nature) since it allows the substance that constitutes the body to reintegrate into the primitive nature, thereby becoming Paramatman. Similarly, the transmutation operation carried out by the alchemists prepares an absolute body, in this case the metal gold, extricates that which is available to the nature itself, by simply altering the state of the material.

According to the Vedas, the Prajapati creates this world through Tapas (severe internal heat) and distributes himself throughout the creation, also the Satapatha Brahmana states that the Prajapati creates the world making it into a source of immortality. We can assume that the Agni(the fire) is a medium between the nature and celestial world. When we look at the Alchemy and Yoga together we can arrive at a definition which appears as a syllogism for both of them. Alchemy can be stated as the art of liberating parts of the nature from its material existence and achieving the state of perfection, for metals the state of perfection is gold, and for man it is immortality and redemption.

The physical practices mentioned in the classical Yoga helps to increase health and endurance which is called Mukti vada, used for preventing unnatural death, there by achieving a state of Jivanmukthi (liberation from life) and a state of Kaivalyapada (the final transcendence). The Rasa Sastra texts incorporated and integrated these concepts of Yoga into their alchemical processes, which also try to attain immortality by preparation of elixir of life through transmutation of materials. Maitri Upanishad gives us the definition of term 'Rasa' as the highest Guna (Quality) or the Sattva (essence). Based on these terms, when the combination of material-psyche practices the Yoga Sutras it will regenerate itself to the highest state.

The 14th century text Sarvadarsana Samgraha written by Madhava Acharya describes the primary objective of Alchemy in the framework of Yoga as liberation (Jeevan Mukthi) of the Soul, attained through the excellence

of body, in terms of mercurial, divine or cosmic body. It is also stated in Rasa Sastra that mercury can make a body ageless, hence the Yogi who seeks liberation (Jeevanmukthi) should first evolve himself into a highest bodily state which is produced by the combination of Hara and Gauri. The reintegration of body with the cosmos in the stand point of Yoga and Alchemy can be compared to completeness and injection of the cosmic being.

The Yogic aim of transformation occurs in the Yoga Agni(Internal fires of Yoga), which contains the process of refinement, evolution of the Pancha Bhutas(subtle elements of the body) and the container entity Deha (the body), in the context of alchemy the sublimation of mercury (Urdhva Patana) is a similar metaphorical concept. This idea is interpreted in Yoga Sutras as the evoking of Kundalini Shakti through the Yoga Agni(internal fires) of the Susumna Nadi. The Kundalini Shakti thus generated has the capacity to purify Chakras and Nadis of the body rendering it potent to achieve the state of Samadhi. In alchemy, the initial process of transmutation of metal will be carried out externally through processed mercury, progressively the transmutation of Naga(Lead metal) will undergo a metallurgical phase change leading its culmination state to gold. Developing the internal fire the tapas, through the yogic practices, the yogi achieves Siddhis beyond nature which doesn't agree with the conditions of our field of existence.

A yogi can achieve Ashta Siddhis or the eight powers of manipulating nature, space and materials by stringent practice (Sadhana) of the Yogic Postulates. According to the Siva Samhitha (3.60-61) these Siddhis are Animā (ability to shrink in size), Mahimā(to expand his size to infinity), Garimā (ability to become infinitely heavy), Laghimā (the ability to become weightless or to a negligible size), Prāpti (travel anywhere), Prākāmya (ability to achieve anything according to will), Tīṣṭva (the ability to control nature) and Vaśiṣṭva (ability to control materials). According to Hatha Yoga texts, Kala is perceived to be Kalakuta (poison) which refers to death. It can be understood from these texts that death in physical world is related with decline of bindu/ Amruta (essence of life) into the Kalagni (the fire of time). Amrita Siddhi a treatise based on Hatha Yoga states that The sun, Moon and the fire are inside the body of a Yogi, wherein the Bindu (the moon) is at the peak dripping nectar of life, Rajas (the sun) consuming this nectar through which life is produced. Pingala is the channel of the Sun and Ida

is the channel of the moon inside a Yogi's body.

The techniques such as Asana, Mudra and Pranayama mentioned in Yoga are used to make the breath enter the central channel and rise upwards. Mudra is used to control the flow of Prana (Vayu) and Bindu. According to the Hatha Yoga Mruthavastha (a state of death) is when the Yogi attains control over the breath, awareness and perish them the resultant state will be liberation. In alchemy a similar concept is given where mercury, awareness and air all undergo the process of death in order to give life. According to Hatha Yoga Pradipika the alchemical principle of mercury is connected to the mind.

A verse 4.26-27 from the Hatha Yoga Pradipika translates: "Mercury and Mind are naturally unsteady. What on earth is bound when mercury and mind are bound? When the mercury and breath are stable they away the diseases. When they are dead it they give life. When they are bound enable one to move to sky. Sthira (stable) mercury in alchemy corresponds to immobilization of Bindu (breath) in Yoga. The methods mentioned in Yogic texts of controlling breath and bindu aims at producing firm and steady state of awareness(Mercury in Alchemy and Mind in Yoga) which renders immortality. When the mercury and its equivalent in Yoga i.e., the mind (Chit Prana Amruta) achieves the original nature it becomes more stable and potent thereby increasing its power.

The alchemical process of stabilizing the unstable essence of mercury can be directly associated to the methods of binding and immobilizing breath/ bindu or awareness in Yoga, where the state of immobilization is achieved through the Pranayama, Mudra, Mantra and Bandhas. The alchemical process of Utthapana (resurrection) can be explained through a further Samskara(refining process) called Pathana or sublimation of mercury in a Yantra (alchemical apparatus). In Hatha Yoga the upper and lower hollows of the Yogi's body becomes the alchemical distillation apparatuses the yantra through which consciousness, breath become evolved.

When Mruthavastha (deathlike state) is read in lines of Alchemy it represents Murchana (faint) Samskara of Mercury. In this Samskara the mercury loses its potent and becomes lifeless or gets killed (Marana). In both the cases of Marana and Murchana mercury loses its nature or essence and achieves a lifeless state. Summing up, the deathlike state and ascent of Kundalini is synonymous to the alchemical transmutation of base metals to gold denoting the process of upward sublimation. The

regenerative descent evokes a process of downward sublimation which helps in giving life to others metals incase of alchemy and resurrection for Yogi.

3. CONCLUSION

Keeping these factors in mind, one can safely say that Yoga and Alchemy are analogous with each other in coexistent planes. All of these concepts depend upon one single fact that nothing can be created which isn't exists in nature. The duty of a Yogic or an Alchemist is to liberate himself or the material from current state to the highest possible pristine state through various techniques related to corresponding field. The energy generated in both the cases (Kundalini in Case of Yoga and evolved mercury in case of Alchemy) results in refinement of any subjective material (body-psyche in case of Yoga, metal in case of Alchemy) and through channeling it for necessary application.

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Yoga is of the body; by the body and mind; for the body, mind and soul

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ABSTRACT

As on date, there are a number of texts, commentaries and literature on Yoga. Having found from personal experiences while dealing with students since the last two decades, it has been understood that common individuals face issues due to lack of awareness and knowledge in the subject. Therefore, when the subject offers different points of view and usage of technical words it creates disinterest on the part of the student and drives them away rather than motivating them to stay in it. Thus, the need of the hour (during covid times) is implementation rather than teaching theory. Hence, an effort is made here to establish the relevance of the age old ancient proven system of yoga to the current period. Information has been compiled from various authentic sources and presented here keeping it devoid of technical words, lengthy explanations, multiple points of view, etc. The same is being simplified to the extent possible without diluting the fundamental principles and at the same time keeping in mind the importance to implementation / practicality.

Keywords: astānga yoga, common-man yoga, daily yogic practice, easy yoga, regular yoga, routine yoga, simple yoga, yoga, yoga for beginner, yoga for good health, yoga for immunity, yoga for prevention of diseases, yoga simplified, yogic practice.

1. INTRODUCTION

From ascent of mankind, intellectuals, scholars, rishis and sages have been making progress in scientific and technological development as regards materialistic needs were concerned. Inventions of various gadgets, machineries and infrastructure providing various amenities were developed to make human life more easier and comfortable.

Earlier than these developments, there were another set of intellectuals, scientists and rishis who were involved in one of the most or rather the most important area of us humans. Issues related to health of the body and mind. The oldest authentic and reliable text on materialistic, health and spirituality namely the four Vedas: Ṛg, Yajur, Sāma and Atharva and provided many answers to human problems. Yoga philosophy is an extract from Atharva Veda. The quest for knowledge and finding solutions to end pain and suffering was a major issue. Centuries after the compilation of the Vedas, an enlightened soul named Kapila compiled a text termed Sāmkhya keeping Veda as the base of all knowledge. In this text, he documented three causes of human sufferings. When there is a problem, there has to be a solution. When a problem is identified, the process of rectification begins and sooner or later, solution is also found.

Few hundred years B.C. later, another enlightened soul set his feet upon this planet. He was Maharṣi Patañjali. Having gone through the Vedas, and subsequent texts including Sāmkhya, Maharṣi Patañjali gifted mankind with a very practical hand-book for us humans to become better humans. This text is

called Patañjali's Yoga Sutra and is globally accepted as one of the best authentic source on Yoga Philosophy.

Centuries later, many enlightened souls entered this planet, and each gave their own interpretations and commentaries as per the system prevailing at that time. One among them was Maharshi Swātmārām. He documented his interpretation and findings in the text Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā. This text gave details, description and showed us how one should go about to derive health benefits by performing various yogic practices.

The three groups as mentioned by Sage Kapila identifying the problems of human pain and suffering were (Ballantyne, 1995):

- a) Due to unknown factors which include all natural calamities causing destructions and damage by floods, draught, earthquakes, wild fire and volcanoes.
- b) Factors include all illness and diseases caused by bites or infections etc.
- c) Factors include own wrong doing due to the one's own mind or congenital.

Sāmkhya provided theoretic support and Maharshi Patañjali compiled the practical aspect of Yoga Philosophy. He explains yoga as the restraint of modifications of the mind 'for relieving one from all present and future sufferings. In his text namely Patañjali's Yoga Sutra, the classic Eight Fold path mentioned therein gives a practical approach.

Yoga is a spiritual system and one of the six recognized systems of orthodox Indian Philosophy. Although it is not a therapy, health benefits derived are as a by-product by living the yogic way of life. The aim of yoga as per Yoga Sutra is 'restraint of the modifications of the mind' and its goal is 'ultimate freedom of soul and no more re-birth'.

2. THE EIGHT LIMBS OF YOGA AS PER MAHARSHI PATAHJALI'S YOGA SUTRAⁱ ARE

1. Five Restraints (don't-s) to be observed universally at all times irrespective of time and place.
2. Five Observances (do-s) to be performed as and when required.
3. Psycho-somatic Postures
4. Breath manipulation and regulation
5. Abstraction
6. Concentration
7. Meditation and
8. Trance Consciousness.

There are various techniques, of which just a few are to be performed by common people. The first accessories are a set of five refrains to be avoided in thoughts, words and deed. They are inter-personal rules and prescribe how one should live in a society.

The five refrainsⁱⁱ are:

- a) Violence, not just physical harm but also mental harm by use of harsh cruel words, hatred, envy and other negative emotions / acts which causes physical and mental harm to all living beings including plants and animals.

Benefit: Individuals who follow non-violence to the core; all hostilities end in their mere presence.

- b) Refrain from telling lies includes hiding facts and truth.

Benefit: Whatever a truly truthful person says, it happens.

- c) Refrain from stealing includes not just stealing valuables. It also includes taking away someone's credit or peace of mind.

Benefit: A strange paradox is that one who follows this; wealth is attracted towards such a person.

- d) Abstinence, from not only carnal sexual activities; but also to refrain from living a wanton and illicit adulterous life.

Benefit: One develops tremendous capacity to gain knowledge and wisdom dawns upon such individuals.

- e) Hoarding of things one does not need. Possessing anything beyond need is greed. It is said, "There is plenty of everything for all as far as needs are concerned. However, a greedy person is not satisfied even he / she has the whole universe with all its wealth in it.

Benefit: Strangely, individuals who do not hoard things beyond their need are never short of anything required for happy and healthy living.

The second set of observancesⁱⁱⁱ is also five in number. These are personal rules for individuals; to be observed as and when necessary. They are:

- a) Cleanliness, not just of the body but also purity of our thoughts, words and deeds.

Benefit: One should take care of the body and at the same time should not be obsessed by glorifying it.

- b) Contentment, Be satisfied with what you have.

Benefit: Best of things in life are free of charge. Only those who are truly content are the happiest.

c) Performing purification activities by removal of impurities from the body and mind.

Benefit: Completely purified body functions perfectly. One develops tremendous capacity to bear extremes equally like pleasure and pain, heat and cold, thirst and hunger.

d) Self-study of scriptures and texts imparting how to lead ethical, moral and spiritual life.

Benefit: Communication is established with the desired spiritual entity.

e) Perform all activities as if it has been performed for the Highest Supreme Being.

Benefit: The practitioner is made to take the path towards the highest good.

The third limb namely Posture^{iv}, specified in Patañjali's Yoga Sutra gives just a definition of Psycho-somatic Posture. It should be Steady and comfortable, by relaxation of efforts and total absorption of self into a steady object to master the posture.

Benefit: Postures are pre-requisite for the development of physical, mental, moral and spiritual aspect of human personality.

The Fourth limb is yogic breathing^v. It is control of bio-energy in inhalation and exhalation of breath.

Benefit: Through this practice, the mind becomes fit for concentration.

As by-product it enhances the functioning of respiratory system specifically and other body systems as well.

The first four set of accessories mentioned above are external parts of Yoga.

The fifth limb is Abstraction^{vi}. This part involves withdrawal of all the five senses from the object. Abstraction is the bridge between external and internal yoga.

Benefit: This practice prevents the mind from getting distracted.

The sixth limb is Concentration^{vii}. It involves fixing the mind for a long time on an object of meditation to gain one-pointedness.

Benefit: It leads towards meditative state of mind.

The seventh limb is Meditation^{viii}. This part follows when concentration exists for a long duration; it leads to meditation naturally.

Benefit: It leads to the highest good.

The last limb is Trance^{ix}, which is purely in the spiritual dimension. A practitioner who has devoted his / her

time and energy in studying the scriptures, following the instructions of his / her teacher with total dedication and sincerity enters this domain by the blessing of his teacher and by the grace of the Almighty.

The last three accessories namely Concentration, Meditation and Trance are grouped as internal or inner yoga.

Thus, from the Vedas emerged all knowledge of yoga. Sage Kapila's Sāṅkhya detected the problems and causes of human sufferings, pains and sorrows. Maharṣi Patañjali's Yoga Sutra is like a road map and gives guidance to avoid future pains and sufferings. Many centuries later Maharṣi Swātmārām's Hatha Yoga Pradīpikā gave directions and description of various yogic practices as regards health of body and mind is concerned.

In the period between the two texts namely Yoga Sutra and Hatha Yoga Pradīpikā, one very important and relevant text on Yoga philosophy, presumed to be documented by Maharṣi Veda Vyāsa is Śrīmad Bhagavadgīta^x. This text is revered as a holy scripture and is also referred as Yoga Śāstra. It contains an ocean of yogic knowledge with emphasis on yoga of action.

A famous personality had quoted "Democracy is of the people, for the people, and by the people." On similar lines, the compiler of the article feels that - "Yoga is of the body; by the body and mind; for the body, mind and soul."

It is to be noted that basically all yogic techniques have a central effect on the mind, direct effect on specific body part and indirect effect on the opposite body part. A competent teacher is the one who will suggest what is required and not required as per the present state of student's health. The group of techniques is divided into two main categories namely cultural (dynamic) for physical health and meditative (static) for spiritual purpose.

The fourth set of limb comprises of yogic breathing, traditionally eight, out of which just a few are sufficient for a common individuals. They are:

1. Alternate nostril breathing^{xi}
2. Mood elevating breathing^{xii}
3. Hissing breathing^{xiii}
4. Cooling effect breathing^{xiv}
5. The Bellows breathing^{xv}
6. Humming (as honey bee) breathing^{xvi}

Prior to performing any yogic technique, one should first practice preparatory techniques like loosening of joints

and muscles, different ways of inhalation, exhalation and holding of the breath. Relevant locks, symbols and supporting postures are recommended prior to commencing any yogic practice.

Till date there is no single pill or tonic or such drug which, if administered, will relieve all pains and diseases. Similarly, there is no single yogic technique which, if practiced will solve all health issues.

Even though Yogic practices is one of the best health regime, suitable for young and old, there is no such technique like “for headache, do technique ‘X’, for indigestion perform technique ‘Y’ and so on. Benefits derived from yogic practices are a collective effect of more than one technique. It is akin to a buffet with several dishes. One cannot eat or drink every item completely. It is choosing what is suitable to the consumer as per his/her present health status. Just as there are more than one starter, few main course dishes and some dessert, similarly, there are warm-ups, postures, breathing and relaxing techniques performed in yogic practices. Taking proper food and drinks is also a part of healthy yogic practice. Hatha Yoga Pradīpikā gives many tips on - the kind of food to be eaten, way of eating, and the amount one should eat and drink.

2.1 Generic daily routine for normal health

1. After waking, perform first posture called the stick pose 3 to 5 rounds, each round to be of one breath. One breath consists of one inhalation (breath in) and one exhalation (breath out).
2. Next, keeping eyes closed, get up and sit in bed. Take 3 to 5 breaths slowly and perform palming of the eyes 2 to 3 times. Gently massage your face with both palms and open your eyes.
3. Stand up and perform the palm tree pose 3 to 5 times.
4. Next, attend to nature’s calls if possible now or do it later as per your habit. Brush your teeth with up and down scrub. Wash your mouth and scrub the inner tongue gently.
5. Next, fill your mouth with plain water, keep lips closed to retain water in the mouth and bloat both the cheeks. Bloating of the cheeks can be done even with air instead of water.
6. Keeping the cheeks bloated with water or air, pop the eyes wide and gently splash plain water on the eyes a few times.
7. Next, perform alternate cleansing of both nostrils. Close one, say, right nostril, inhale from left nostril.

Keeping right nostril closed, exhale through left nostril with a gush (as if you are blowing off a candle flame) 3 to 5 times. Repeat by closing the left nostril 3 to 5 times. Then inhale from both nostril and exhale with a gush from both nostrils 3 to 5 times. Let all the slimy mucus be expelled from both nostrils.

8. Wash your entire face once again and go for the next practice.
9. Start with warm-ups by involving all the body joints (neck, hands, hips and legs). Next perform the suitable / recommended standing posture, followed by sitting and then lying down postures.

All techniques should be performed on an empty stomach. Choose a specific time, a clean, spacious, airy and silent place. Perform all practices at the same time every day. The session should last for about 45 to 60 minutes.

The general suggested sequence of postures and basic points to be kept in mind are as follows:-

Keep your back and neck straight, chin parallel to the floor and for standing postures also look at your eye level. Each technique has three stages.

1. Take proper position depending upon the posture to be performed.
2. Enter the posture till it is complete and stay in the final position for 3 to 5 breath. If possible close your eyes at final stay position for 3 to 5 breaths or as per your capacity.
3. Before releasing, if eyes were closed, first open your eyes and then release the posture in the reverse steps.

Each technique should be repeated initially for 2 to 3 times and should be completed within 1 to 2 minutes.

As yoga is a spiritual system, the sessions (optional) begin with chanting of ‘Omkāṛ’ 3 times, followed by the first set of meditative posture.

The above recommendation of yogic practices is for beginners.

3. CONCLUSION

The human body is without doubt the best bio-equipment or an amazing machine. If it is provided with proper intake not just food and beverages but also intakes from all sense organs, it will be healthy and free from all diseases. The best part about the body and mind is that it is just like a pharmaceutical factory

producing the right medicine (hormones) at the right time, required for treatment in the body free of cost and saving our medical expenses. This can happen by adopting the practice of Yogic techniques. In this modern era, practice of spiritual techniques has deteriorated to a very great extent due to lack of awareness of the best, tried and tested knowledge system our country has had through the ages.

Malady (ill health) is the result of disturbed Melody. All body systems function in a systematic rhythm and pace. If there is any disturbance internally, it leads to ill health. Yogic practices is one of the best health regime which can prevent illness and old age problems especially, in this Covid era.

In view of the above, if one is not able to appreciate requirement of spiritual progress as its effects are not cognizable directly to each and every one easily; none can deny at least the deterioration of mental and physical health. If the readers take note of the gravity of the situation as on date and adopt yogic practices and influence others to do so, this small effort made here will serve and benefit the society and protect or make us all win over the situations we are in.

4. END NOTES:

- ⁱ The Sadhakas, Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, The Yoga Institute, Mumbai, Book Centre and Publication Division, 1995, p.104, Sūtra no. II.29

- ⁱⁱ Ibid, p.105, Sūtra no. II.30
ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid, p.107, Sūtra no. II.32
^{iv} Ibid, p.114-115, Sūtra no. II.46-47
^v Ibid, p.116-117, Sūtra no. II.49-50
^{vi} Ibid, p.119-120, Sūtra no. II.54-55
^{vii} Ibid, p.123, Sūtra no. III.1
^{viii} Ibid, p.124, Sūtra no. III.2
^{ix} Ibid, p.124, Sūtra no. III.3
^x Dr. Jayadeva Yogendra, Cyclopedia Yoga, Vol.1, The Yoga Institute, Mumbai, Yogendra Publications Fund, 1997, p.26
^{xi} Swami Muktibodhananda, Hatha Yoga Pradipika (of Swātmārām Suri), Third Edition, Yoga Publications Trust, Bihar School of Yoga, Bihar, 1998, p.166-172, Verse no.II.7-10.
^{xii} Ibid., p.240, II.51-53
^{xiii} Ibid., p.243, II.54
^{xiv} Ibid., p.249, II.57-58
^{xv} Ibid., p.252-253, II.59-65
^{xvi} Ibid., p.260, II.68

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Samādhi Yoga

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ABSTRACT

Yoga is one of the six orthodox philosophical systems of India. The Yogasūtras were composed by Maharṣi Patanjali to guide the Yogic practitioners towards the path of Kaivalya (highest good), the fourth Puruṣārtha. Yogasūtras of Patanjali is divided into four parts namely, Samādhi Pāda, Sadhana Pāda, Vibhūti Pāda and Kaivalya Pāda.

Maharṣi Patanjali has enumerated the eight limbs of Yoga. Yama, Niyama, Āsana, Pranāyāma, Pratyāhāra, Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna and Samādhi.

An effort is being made in this article to explain in a simpler way the eighth limb of Yoga – Samādhi, its kinds and its fruition.

Keywords: Samādhi, types of Samādhi, result of Samādhi, samprajñāta, asamprajñāta, bija, nirbija, vitarka, vicāra, savitarka, nirvitarka, savicāra, nirvicāra, savikalpa, nirvikalpa, rtmbharāprajñā, mokṣa, kaivalya, highest goal, samdhiyoga simplified, liberation

1. INTRODUCTION

Freedom is the intrinsic desire of any being, herein limiting the scope to human beings; it is known that he has to adopt a certain way of life to achieve the highest goal.

According to the Indian Philosophical systems, the four goals of human life is Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa. Mokṣa being the highest goal, one must work and walk towards the same. Liberation is the closest commonly used English word. Our Scriptures guide us, to keep on the right path in this journey and Yoga is one such system.

Maharṣi Patañjali's Yogasūtra is a stepwise guide to make this journey a success. In Yoga System liberation is termed Kaivalya. To attain Kaivalya, one needs to follow the eight-fold path recommended by Maharṣi Patañjali and the eighth limb known as Samādhi is being explained in a simpler way in this paper.

2. SAMĀDHI

Samādhi is the total absorption in the object of meditation, where the mind becomes completely still. There are various stages of Samādhi each leading to a higher super conscious state of mind. Samprajñāta Samādhi and Asamprajñāta Samādhi are the two main types of Samādhi, which are being referred as Conscious Contemplation and Seedless Contemplation by some authors. Details of the same are discussed here.

Maharṣi Patañjali has enumerated the eight limbs of Yoga. Yama, Niyama, Āsana, Prāṇāyāma, Pratyāhāra, Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna and Samādhi.

After a person practices the first five limbs of Yoga, he turns to Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna and Samādhi. Concentration, Meditation and Contemplation are the nearest translations that can be used for the last three limbs. These are together called the internal aids of Samprajñāta Samādhi. They are the direct means to Samprajñāta Samādhi and are the indirect aids to the Asamprajñāta Samādhi. This comes into existence even in the absence of the three aids and that is why they are considered external to Asamprajñāta Samādhi¹. This is known by other names Nirbīja Samādhi.

To begin with, one must fix the attention on a physical spot and try to focus the wandering gaze on a span containing that spot, this is Dhāraṇā.

The next step is Dhyāna, wherein there is an uninterrupted flow of cognitions of the same object as the continuous stream of oil. It is an intense awareness of the object in which although there is complete elimination of other thoughts, yet the meditation retains the consciousness of the distinction between the object cognized and the Self. This means that the cogniser is aware that he is cognizing certain object, that is, he is different than the object.

When the mind loses the awareness of distinction and illumines the form of the object as it really is, that state is Samādhi. It is a mental state in which all actions of the sense-organs and the mind are restrained and concentrated towards the proper ascertainment from memory of the object under contemplation.

2.1 Samprajñāta Samādhi

The main aim of Samprajñāta Samādhi is to attain to a clearer cognition or knowledge of an object without error or misconception. When the mind is concentrated on an object in such a way that the other mental states get diminished, it becomes like a polished crystal. Then it becomes capable of resting on any object and assume its form, whether it be a knowable object, the process of knowing or the Self as the knower. This is Samāpatti, that is, the literal assumption by the mind of the form of object. It is the congruence of mind with the object under contemplation. When this congruence is perfect, its knowledge of the object becomes perfect.

Samprajñāta Samādhi has four following forms² depending upon the nature of its object under contemplation; but Patañjali does not describe the two later forms:

- a) Vitarkānugata: The contemplation of a gross object, which is attended with deliberation is known as Vitarkānugata.
- b) Vicārānugata: The contemplation of a subtle object, which is attended with reflection is known as Vicārānugata.
- c) Anandānugata: Joy is Ecstasy.
- d) Asmitānugata: Asmitā is the consciousness of being one with the Self.

2.1.1 Vitarkānugata:

The beginner should start contemplating upon gross objects and then proceed to subtle objects. Thus when he starts with the gross object he wants to ascertain its nature as that object is a product of the five elements of nature namely Ākash (Ether), Āp (water), Teja (fire), Vāyu (air) and Pṛthivī (earth) are the five gross elements. This includes the body made of gross elements, the Sun, the Moon, Stars etc., i.e. the whole universe. This contemplation is of two kinds:

- i. Savitarka: The gross object under contemplation is present in the mind full of misconceptions as between the word, the object and the idea (knowledge) about it³. Since this is full of misconceptions, it is also known as Savikalpa. For example, if someone contemplates on the Sun, it comprises of the name, form and knowledge (idea) of Sun.
- ii. Nirvitarka: With the purification of memory, it becomes free from all misconceptions derived from inference and testimony and the object comes into consciousness in its essential form, then, it is said to be Nirvitarka⁴. This is devoid of misconceptions, it is also known as Nirvikalpa.

For example, if someone contemplates on the Sun, purifies his mind and the consciousness becomes free of the impurities and distractions, mind becomes like a mirror which can reflect the Sun.

2.1.2 Vicārānugata:

When a person has mastered both forms of Vitarkānugata by contemplating upon gross objects, then he/she

can turn to contemplating upon subtle objects. Sound, touch, form, taste and smell are the five subtle elements. Organs of perception are eleven – 5 senses, 5 of locomotion, Manas (mind), Buddhi (intellect) and Ahaṁkāra. Samādhi that happens due to these subtle elements are included in Vicārānugata Samādhi. This is also of two types namely, Savicāra and Nirvicāra⁵.

The subtle elements (of contemplation) end with Prakṛti (primary matter)⁶. It is the source from which the material world manifests itself. Alīṅga means that which has no signs, no way to describe it and Liṅga that which has signs. The Liṅga is Mahat. Thus at the top is Alīṅga, next is the Liṅga and below is the Ahaṁkāra ('I' sense).

Swāmi Harirānanda Aranya states that Puruṣa does not suffer any changes as Prakṛti does. Prakṛti goes through the changes by being overseen by Puruṣa. Hence Puruṣa is instrumental for this, that is, Puruṣa is the efficient cause of Mahat, etc. Prakṛti manifests into Mahat and the rest of the factors that form part of the evolution of this universe.

i. Savicāra

When subtle object is contemplated upon in the mind, as particularized by its present qualities and attended with notions of place, time and causation, it is Savicāra.

This is the contemplation on subtle objects with the help of words. Except gross elements, all other things upto the Prakṛti, word and meaning, including knowledge (associated with misconceptions) are included under Savicāra Samādhi. Hence it is also categorized as Savikalpa Samādhi.

ii. Nirvicāra

When Savicāra Samādhi further perceives the object in all its modes of manifestation and under all conditions of place, time and causation, it is said to be Nirvicāra.

This is the contemplation on subtle objects without the help of words. Except gross elements, all other things upto the Prakṛti; modification of mind occurring on purification of memory gives rise to the state where the essence remains. This is called Nirvicāra Samādhi. Since there is no vikalpa it can be categorized as Nirvikalpa Samādhi.

Prakṛti in its manifested state i.e. the effect is known as a seed, Samādhi happening on this is known as Sabīja or Seeded Contemplation⁷.

2.1.3 Anandānugata:

Joy or ecstasy is the direct perception of the mind when it is concentrated on the gross sense-organs. It is known that the sense organs are characterized to illumine an object being the products of the Ahaṁkāra having Sattva as its dominating factor. As the Sattva conduces to pleasure, the sense organs and the direct perception relating to them becomes one of pure joy. The joy produced in the Antaḥkaraṇa (inner-sense organ which is mind) give rise to the modifications of mind such as priya, moda, pramoda; Samādhi occurring in these are Ānandānugama (Joy) Samādhi.

Aforesaid Vitarka and Vicāra Samādhis happen in things that are abiotic; but biotic and abiotic factors join together to produce Joy. When this joy is considered as Ātma then Viveka-Khyāti, that is, power of discrimination emerges which leads to Ātma Sakṣātkāra, that is, Self-Realisation.

Although this Samādhi happens by the joy created by joining together Puruṣa and Intellect; in this state the person realizes that Prakṛti and Puruṣa are different due to Viveka-Khyāti. The realised Puruṣa thus knows that the 'Knower' and the 'Known' are different. To him who is aware of the distinction between pure intelligence and self comes omnipotence and omniscience⁸.

2.1.4 Asmitānugata:

Asmitā is the identification of the knower with the instrument of knowledge⁹. It is the contemplation of the Self as the Knower. Then the contemplation becomes not limited to external objects only and equally applies to the contemplations of which the objects are the Self, as the Knower and the process of knowing.

The knower may be referred as Puruṣa and the instrument as intellect. They both are distinctly different from each other. When one perceives identity in both these and Samādhi happens, that becomes Asmitānugata Samādhi.

These are again further distinguished based on whether they are or are not accompanied by misconceptions.

When a person attains to the stage of Nirvicāra Samādhi, his mental faculty gains in range and depth and develops a mastery (Vaśikāra) which can extend without obstruction both ways to the minutest thing to the things of greatest magnitudes. Rajas, Tamas and the cover are destroyed and the bright intellect shines like a clear incessant flow, this is Vaiśāradya. Then it acquires a mental clarity, from

this Puruṣa is able distinguish between Prakṛti and its manifest forms. This is Adhyātmaprasāda¹⁰ and becomes capable of maintaining an even flow of thought on any subject, subtle or abstruse, to the exclusion of other subjects.

It then develops a contemplative insight (Prajñā), which is capable of penetrating to the truth without recourse to formal steps of deductive logic. This insight is superior to knowledge gained or the abstract. Ordinary perception clouded with misconception cannot cognize subtle and concealed or remote things. The contemplative insight is truth-bearing (Ṛta) and is superior to the ordinary means of knowledge, in as much as its specifications match up to that of the object. This is the state of Ṛtmbharāprajñā.

Thus our mundane knowledge is inferior (Aparapratyakṣa) as it is with notions and misconceptions of place, time and causation. True perception (Parapratyakṣa) should be entirely free from errors, misconceptions and false attributes and this is possible only in case of Yogin.

Due to these facts, Puruṣa gets detached, the ignorance which is the root cause of afflictions get destroyed and Puruṣa attains Kaivalya¹¹.

2.2 Asamprajñāta Samādhi

Asamprajñāta Samādhi is Seedless due to absence of concepts, likewise Samprajñāta Samādhi's Nirvitarka and Nirvicāra Samādhis are also named so due to the absence of misconceptions.

Samādhi occurring in the 'Knower' is being discussed, known as Asamprajñāta Samādhi. This happens in the Knower due to the absence of the 'Known' (object). Preceded by the practice of the cause of cessation (of mental states) is the other in which only the latest impressions are left¹². Its cause is higher non-attachment. The practice of contemplation with a supporting object does not tend to be its means and so the cause of cessation, which is devoid of a perceptible object, is taken as its support. This contemplation is devoid of any object. The mind, devoid of any supporting object, engaged in this practice, attains as it were, the state of void. This is Seedless Contemplation.

When the three factors (Guṇa-Sattva, Rajas and Tamas) and their effects are detached, entire set of objects (known) become absent in the mind. Mind gets disintegrated. Then the Triguṇātmikā (comprising of the three factors Sattva, Rajas and Tamas) Prakṛti liberates the Yogin and moves away. This is Kailvalya state of Yogin. This is Citiśaktirūpa Svarūpa Pratiṣṭa. The same is nothing

but Seedless Samādhi.

This is of two kinds –

- a) caused by effort which is known as Upāyapratyaya. This happens in the case of yogins.
- b) caused by birth which is known as Bhāvapratyaya. This happens in the case of Videhas (disembodied). They do not need Śraddhā (faith), Vīrya (Vigour), Smṛti (memory), Samādhi, Prajñā or any technique, as they would have already established these in their earlier births. They are divine beings. Birth is the cause of Samādhi for Videhas. They have the power of deep concentration and merge with the object.¹³

Samprajñāta yogi's fourth Samādhi is of Asmitā, in that state when Samādhi happens, that Puruṣa gains the knowledge to distinguish between Puruṣa and Intellect. From this knowledge the self is taken to be the knower and the Intellect means to know; sees the self distinctly from the body. Then he is called Videha.

Prakṛti laya are those in whom there is the ability to control the things upto Prakṛti through Nirvicāra Samādhi. So long as the mind has not attained to discrimination between the sattva and the Self, with its task still unfulfilled it returns to the world.

Persons who are not Videhas and Prakṛti laya, they can achieve Asamprajñāta Samādhi through faith, vigour, memory, contemplation and insight¹⁴.

- i. Faith (Śraddhā) is the most important means. It is generated by reading scriptures, hearing others and so forth. Mind must be as clean as possible and only then faith prevails. Faith plays a very important role in the persons desiring spiritual progress of their self. Faith helps Yogi through his difficulties. All subsequent activities depend upon Faith.
- ii. From faith comes Vigour (Vīrya) – energy and enthusiasm. Energy can be mobilized through faith, which otherwise may get dissipated. Vīrya is also perseverance, effort. One can control their sense organs and mind with vigour.
- iii. Memory (Smṛti) is necessary to work out the future. Constant remembrance is memory. Memory is equated with Meditation. From this flows discriminative intelligence leading to Samādhi.
- iv. Samādhi – where absence of object takes place, leaving behind the essence (knowledge) alone.
- v. Prajñā – Ṛtmbharā Prajñā is called here as Prajñā. As a result of aforesaid Samādhi Yogi attains Ṛtmbharā Prajñā. In this state, the Consciousness is truth

bearing¹⁵. There is no wrong knowledge or ignorance in this state. There are right perceptions, full of truth. This is a fully integrated state¹⁶.

Whatever is said and heard from Śruti, Smṛti and inferred by intellect, special essence means the real / actual meaning is experienced.

One has to develop pure awareness. A yogi had a unique experience when realizing the spirit. He comes to know all about things associated with it.

The latent impressions born therefrom inhibits other latent impressions¹⁷.

Impressions of the knowledge risen from R̥mbharā Prajñā kills the Impressions formed of the knowledge from generalised intellect.

Once the correct insight is developed it may be strong enough to overcome the past bad impressions. It is the prerogative of the mind to overcome falsehood. It is the purpose of the mind to help the Spirit to be realised. The mind works to strengthen the correct insight. At this time, the mind works towards disinterestedness and faith and converts energy from one area (wrong) to work in another area (right).

After prolonged practice of the absolute absence of the object of meditation, the modifications of the mind will automatically restraint the modifications; this leads to Asamprajñāta (Seedless) Samādhi and then the person attains Kaivalya.

3. CONCLUSION

Conclusively, it can be summarized as - due to the cleansing of mind, one develops faith, which leads to restraint of mind and sense organs followed by incessant meditation of the Lord (Paramātma). From such meditation, yathārtha jñāna, that is the knowledge of an object 'as it is', that is, real (right) knowledge of Paramātma happens. This is Bhagavatprāpti which is also emphasized in Bhagavadgīta.

4. FOOTNOTES

¹ Yogasutra III.8
तदपि बहरिङ्गनरिबीजस्य |

- ² Yogasutra I. 17
वतिर्कवचिरानन्दास्मतिनुगमात् सम्प्रज्ञातः |
- ³ Yogasutra I. 42
तत्र शब्दार्थज्ञानवक्लिपैः संकीर्ण सवतिर्क
समापत्तिः |
- ⁴ Yogasutra I. 43
श्रुतपिरिशुद्धौ स्वरूपशूनयेवार्थमान्ननरिभासा
नरिवतिर्का |
- ⁵ Yogasutra I. 44
एतयैव सवचिरा नरिवचिरा च सूक्ष्मवषिया
व्याख्याता |
- ⁶ Yogasutra I. 45
सूक्ष्मवषियत्वंचालङ्गिपर्यवसानम् |
- ⁷ Yogasutra I. 46
ता एव सबीजः समाधिः |
- ⁸ Yogasutra III.49
सत्त्वपुरुषान्यताख्यातमित्त्रस्य सर्वभावाधिष्ठातृत्वं
सर्वज्ञातृत्वं च |
- ⁹ Yogasutra II.6
दृग्दर्शनशक्त्योरेकात्मतेवास्मति |
- ¹⁰ Yogasutra I.47
नरिवचिरवैशारधेऽध्यात्मप्रसादः |
- ¹¹ Yogasutra III.50
तद्वैराग्यादपि दोषबीजक्षये कैवल्यम् |
- ¹² Yogasutra I.18
वरिमप्रत्ययाभ्यासपूर्वः संस्कारशेषोऽन्यः |
- ¹³ Yogasutra I.19
भवप्रत्ययो वदिहप्रकृतलियानाम् |
- ¹⁴ Yogasutra I.20
श्रद्धावीर्यसमृतसिमाधिरिज्ञापूर्वक इतरेषाम् |
- ¹⁵ Yogasutra I.48
ऋतमभरा तत्र प्रज्ञा |
- ¹⁶ Yogasutra I.49
श्रुटानुमानप्रज्ञाभ्यामन्यवषिया वशिषार्थत्वात् |
- ¹⁷ Yogasutra I.50
तज्जः संस्कारोऽन्यसंस्कारप्रतबिन्धी |

A Review of Yogic , Natural and Alternative Eye Sight improvement practices

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ABSTRACT

'... to see clearly is poetry, prophecy and religion all in one'

- John Ruskin (1819–1900)

Eye Exercises done in a Yogic way, in this pandemic situation when increasing screen time is having a telling effect not only on our general health but the most important sense organ "Eyes" is the need of the hour. In this review we will analyse the various schools of thought both eastern and western which can help us maintain better eye health in particular and general well being. We have examined eye improvement practices delineated by our Ancient Texts Hath Yoga Pradeepika and Gherand Samhita, Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj's treatise Yoga Asanas, Dr H R Nagendra and S-VYASA (Deemed to be University), Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and The Art of Living Foundation, The School for Perfect Eyesight, an initiative of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Dr. William Bates M.D. and Marc Grossman. These practices should be undertaken under expert guidance of the respective schools and are not a substitute for modern medicine. The significance of regular eye checkups by trained ophthalmologists is indispensable. The main aim of this paper is to bring to light other complementary eye practices through which millions of people have benefitted but which have to be still fully understood by modern science and undergo rigorous gold standard RCT trials but still can help people lead better "Eye Lives".

Keywords: Alternative, Eye Sight, Practice, Review, Yogic

1. INTRODUCTION

Kartum Shakyam, Akartum Shakyam, Anyatha va Kartum Shakyam.

This Samskrit verse means that humans have the freedom in action, i.e., performing the action, not performing the action or performing the action in a completely different way. In the 21st century, the plethora of information available especially on health related aspects of modern medical science makes it difficult to decipher the right choice for oneself and the family. It is in these situations that time tested, Yogic practices that act as preventive measures , nature cure methods and alternative medicine stand as a beacon of light.

Across the world, there are about 2.2 billion people who have vision impairment and in atleast half of them it could have been prevented or still needs attention. People in low and middle income areas are four times more susceptible to distance vision impairment. Watching television is known to be the highest contributing factor in causing defective vision in urban population especially among children. Experts predict that the craze of watching videos might turn more children blind than an imbalanced diet. The primary reason for defective vision is overstraining the eyes combined with stress, wrong use of the eyes and an unhealthy diet. Sitting in incorrect posture inhibits the blood flow to the head, neck and eyes causing them to have restricted range of actions making them less elastic, less resilient and easily fatigued. It is primordial that the body entails good, healthy and fresh blood circulation in the head to have good vision.

2. TRATAKA

The ancient Yogic text, Hatha Yoga Pradipika states that, “Trataka eradicates all eye diseases, fatigue, and sloth, and closes the doorway creating these problems.” In addition to improving concentration and memory, trataka cleanses both the eyes and the cerebral cortex, balances the nervous system, and relieves depression, anxiety, and insomnia.

धौतृबिस्तसित्था नेतसित्राटकं नौलिकं तथा |

कपाल-भातशिछैतानि षट्-कर्माणि परछक्षते ||२२||

dhautirbastistathā netistrāṭakam naulikam tathā |

kapāla-bhātīśchaitāni ṣaṭ-karmāṇi prachakṣhate ||22||

Dhauti, Basti, Neti, Trātaka, Nauli and Kapāla Bhāti. These are known as shatkarma or the six cleansing practices

अथ त्राटकम्-

नरीक्षेत्रअिलदशा सक्ष्मलक्ष्यं समाहतिः |

अशुरुसंपात्परवन्तमाचरयैख्राटकं स्वृतम् || ३१ ||

Being calm, one should gaze steadily at a small mark, till eyes are filled with tears. This is called Trataka by âchâryas. || 31 ||

मोछनं नेत्र-रोगाणां तन्दाद्रीणां कपाटकम् |

यत्नतसत्राटकं गोप्यं यथा हाटक-पेटकम् || ३२ ||

mochanam netra-roghāṇām tandādriṇām kapāṭakam |

yatnatastrāṭakam ghopyam yathā hāṭaka-peṭakam ||32||

Trātaka eradicates all eye diseases, fatigue and sloth and closes the doorway creating these problems. It should be carefully kept secret like a golden casket.

The two techniques adopted in Trataka are

(i) Bahiranga Trataka i.e., gazing at a candle placed two to three feet away from you

(ii) Antaranga Trataka that involves concentrating on a symbol or an object while keeping the eyes closed

Another yogic text, the *Gheranda Samhita*, states that the practice cultivates clairvoyance and inner vision.

Because sight, mental discrimination, and the fire at the *manipura* chakra are intricately interwoven, trataka also nourishes the subtle flame at the navel center, promoting vitality and inner health. In its more advanced form, as the Himalayan master Swami Rama said, “The practice of trataka eventually merges into *surya sadhana*, meditation on the solar energy.”

नमिषोनमेषकं त्यक्त्वा सूक्ष्मलक्ष्यं नरीक्षयेत् |

पतन्तयावदशरूणि त्राटकं प्रोच्यते बुधैः || 53 ||

एवमभ्यासयोगेन शाम्भवी जायते ध्रुवम् |

नेत्ररोगा वनिश्यन्ति दिव्यदृष्टिः प्रजायते || 54 ||

Gazing at a subtle object without blinking the eyes, until tears begin to fall, is known as Trataka. With constant practice of Trataka, Shambhavi mudra is achieved, defects of the eyes are removed and divine vision is attained.

The types of Trataka include:

Bahiranga or Bahir Trataka - is the external Trataka

Antaranga or Antar Trataka – internal or inner Trataka

Adho Trataka – eyes are half open and half closed

Yoga has its origins in the Sanskrit root word Yuj which means “to yoke,” “to unite,” “to add” or “to join.” Yoga for the Eyes is also a physical, mental and spiritual practice that originated in ancient India and seeks to unite the mind, body and spirit. As in the practice of Ashtanga Yoga, the practice of Yoga for the Eyes also requires adherence to the eight limbs i.e *Yama* - abstentions (or outer observances), *Niyama* - inner observances, *Asana* – referring to the “seat” or “pose” i.e the physical posture needed for meditation, *Pranayama* - Controlled or Suspended breath, *Pratyahara* - Withdrawal of the senses, *Dharana* - Single-pointed concentration, *Dhyana* – Meditation leading to *Samadhi* – Liberation. The different paths of yoga, including Raja Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga and Gyan yoga, are rooted in the yamas and niyamas, and also have the same goal i.e samadhi. The Taittiriya Upanishad describes human beings to be having five sheaths (Pancha Kosha) comprising of the material or gross body (Anamaya Kosha), the vital or instinctual component (Pranamaya Kosha), the mental or psychological component (Manomaya Kosha), the intellectual component (Vignanamaya Kosha), and the fifth aspect of pure bliss and happiness (Anandmaya Kosha) all of which are also part and parcel of Yoga for Eyes and get affected by each practice.

Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj considered sight to be the most abused of our five senses. The emphasis given to eye care is reflected in the first chapter of his treatise, *Yoga Asanas*, which describe an extensive series of eye exercises. The intent and purpose of these exercises is not only to ensure good eye health but to underline the need for normal vision for a major part of ones lifespan. The importance of natural living and regular exercises to improve the power, flexibility and usefulness of each eye muscle is highlighted. He delineates the correct techniques of Sun gazing Trataka when the Sun has just

risen to cleanse the eyes and increase concentration and getting over eye-fatigue by getting outdoors and gazing into the distance to revitalise the eye muscles. Focusing intently on a distant object by coaxing the eyes to see further, alternating between focusing on the finger tip and a distant object without blinking, focusing on the finger-tip slowly and then moving the finger towards the eyes in different ways are forms of *trataka* which need to be practised to improve concentration and one-pointedness of mind. The other practices are diagonal and circular eye movement with breath control and drawing endless shapes, letters of alphabet, squares, diamonds, figure of eight etc with the eyes.

The *sadhakas* (practitioners) are advised to practise in open air and not in direct sunlight, while doing palming and deep breathing after each round thus harnessing the pranic energy and increasing blood flow to the eyes. The do's and don't's are well explained and emphasis is on leading a simple, healthy and inspiring life.

Swami Vivekananda stated that liberation can be achieved by following Raja-Yoga, Karma-Yoga, Jnana-Yoga or Bhakti-Yoga. **SVYASA University (Deemed to be)** upholds these paths to Moksha through yogic practices that can build a holistic personality, with eye sight improvement being one of the most important. It is believed that the distortions in the eye ball are caused due to the differential pull of the rectus muscles and these exercises help draw in co-ordination between the eye muscles thereby bringing in normalcy. Errors of refraction and Glaucoma are conditions that can be corrected with these practices. The university believes that on the path of personality development while practicing eye sight improvement one should be able to develop the subtler aspect of "Insight" into the infinite inner self. Stress and imbalances generated in the *Manomaya Kosha* percolate into the *Pranamaya Kosha* creating a ripple effect on the overall wellbeing of the individual. Structured on the philosophy of "Stimulation and Deep Relaxation" and placed on a platform of an Integrated approach to Yoga Techniques the practices prescribed by the university are therapeutic at the physical, mental and spiritual level. The practices include :

- (i) Preparatory eye exercises – looking up and down – vertical eye movements, right and left – horizontal eye movements, diagonal movements (Right up- Left Down, Left Up-Right Down), diagonal movements in opposite direction (Left up- Right Down, Right Down-Left Up), rotation (clockwise and anti-clockwise)

- (ii) Asanas – Paadahasthasana and Ardha Chakrasana
- (iii) Eye relaxation techniques – Palming, Hand Cup Palming, Press and Release Palming and Palming with Brahmari
- (iv) Cleansing techniques – Eye cup washing, Tear Sac massaging, Blinking, Jala Neti, Washing using the palm
- (v) Pranayama – Quick Relaxation Technique, Nadi Shuddhi Pranayama and Brahmari
- (vi) *Trataka* – is a specialized technique that strengthens and cleanses the nerves connecting the eyes and the brain. *Trataka* not only calms down the mind but also silences the mind and slows down the breath. Practices include- Naasagra, Urdhvamukha, Adhomukha, Vāma jatru, Daksina Jatru Trātaka, Bhrūmadhya
- (vii) Jyothi *Trataka* – 5 step method of Candle gazing

Health is not a mere absence of disease. It is a dynamic expression of Life.

– Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

The Art of Living Foundation (AOL) founded by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar states that many eye disorders are related to the malfunctioning of the ocular muscles caused by chronic mental and emotional tensions. Yoga techniques help to alleviate these disorders related to defects in the eye muscles and practicing eye yoga exercises regularly for a few months can go a long way in facilitating the normal functioning of the eyes.

The practices delineated by AOL start with splashing the eyes with cold water a few times and keeping the head and spine straight throughout the exercises. They include Palming, Blinking, Sideways viewing, Front and Sideways viewing, Rotational viewing, Up and Down viewing, Preliminary Nose Tip gazing and Near and Distant viewing, all with breath control. It is recommended by them to lie in *Shavasana* (corpse pose) for a few minutes and relax completely after completing all the above exercises, to breathe gently and normally and not resist any thoughts or sensations during the exercise. They believe that glasses never cure bad eyesight, in fact, using powerful glasses can only worsen eye problems. Therefore, one should use glasses only when absolutely necessary.

It is stated that the practice of Yoga helps develop the body and mind, bringing in a lot of health benefits but is not a substitute for medicine and that it is important to learn and practice yoga postures under the supervision

of a trained Yoga teacher and in case of any medical condition, yoga postures should be practiced after consulting a doctor and a trained Yoga teacher.

The more the mind is quiet, the more the sight is good

– Blessings The Mother

The School for Perfect Eyesight, an initiative of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, was established in 1968 by Dr R S Agarwal, a believer in the power of the Dr Bates method at Puducherry. This alternative therapy provides an eyeopener into maintaining and rebuilding ones vision and teaches the correct way of using ones eyes and taking care of them. While sitting in front of the devices a majority of people do not blink their eyes which causes eye strain while reading and watching movies especially on computers and mobile phones. This causes headaches, swelling and redness of eyes, refractive errors and deterioration of vision.

The simple relaxation techniques taught at the school rejuvenate the eyes naturally. The experts at the school put the participants through a series of exercises – sun treatment, palming with breath awareness, ball exercises, candle light reading, eye massage and yoga. The school gets around 3000 participants every year some as young as Seven Years. Many people who had vision problems found solace at the school. Most come as a last resort when they have lost hope everywhere else. The service makes a difference in the lives of many who have faith in the system.

The participants are encouraged to wash their eyes using an eye cup and are also taught the correct way of reading. In the exercises mentioned above the movement of the eye ball and head is coordinated so as to cause minimum eye strain. The bar swing, eye movements up and down as well as left and right without moving the head, together with the pressing of acupressure and eye points, eye wash, steam bath, eye massage, swinging, shifting, rocking or practising on the Snellen Chart, vapour treatment and cold packs helps improve vision. The intake of foods having Vitamin A, C, E, Beta-Carotene and Omega 3 fats etc are emphasised as nutrition is critical for eye health.

Dr. M.S. Agarwal (son of Dr. R.S. Agarwal) recommends the practice of several yogic exercises which are helpful in keeping the eyes healthy and trouble-free. They are Pranayama, Surya Namaskar, Pavan Muktasana, Shalabhasana, Sarvangasana, Matsyasana, Bhujangasana, Jala Neti etc. The efficacy of these yogic practices

cannot be over emphasised. The candle exercise, the pencil exercise, central fixation on the Om chart and the cross chart are equally important and should be done regularly. He emphasises that regularity is very important for achieving the desired result. There is a Yogic saying, “tense eyes, tense body, tense mind”. It is not enough to try and keep our eyes healthy if our general health is poor and the mind is tense. Relaxation of the body and mind are important and we need to remember that exercises are only one part of the entire programme.

Dr. William Horatio Bates M.D. was well known for his practice as the Bates Method. His theory was based on the principle that the eyes do not focus by shifting the power of the lens but rather by stretching the eyeball while operating the extraocular oblique muscles. He believed that disturbances in the blood circulation was caused by thought leading to refractive errors, double vision, cross eye, lazy eye, cataracts and glaucoma. His techniques advocated the release of strain on the eyes by following the methods of Palming, Visualisation, Movement, Sunning, Memory and Imagination as an aid, Shifting and Swinging and the use of Snellen Chart.

The Natural Eye Care an Encyclopedia – Complementary Treatments for Improving and Saving your Eyes written by by Marc Grossman, O.D., L.AC. And Glen Swartwout, O.D encompasses a holistic and unique approach to Eye Care concentrating on the preventive aspect while borrowing from the wisdom of ancient healers and modern day practitioners. Emphasis is given to following a healthy and wholesome diet as detailed in the “Vision Diet”. One of the most important features is the theoretical learning about eyesight and vision. It is said that we need to think of ourselves as the “minding body” as every cell in our body is a neuro-transmitter. The skin is covered with minute electric eyes having an assembly of blood vessels and nerve cells called neurovascular bundle to act as acupuncture points. The eyes transform the quantum photo energies into electrical nerve signals accounting to two thirds of nerve current that enters the human brain. This makes eye sight highly dependent on circulation. Natural light gives about 400 to 500 percent rise in the discharge of enzymes, hormones, vitamins and minerals. The details of the body structure supporting the eyes enables us to understand the importance of developing a strong neck and spine.

Marc Grossman mentions that stress can lead to

deterioration of eyesight especially due to the modern lifestyle. He recommends an integrative solution to eye care through lifestyle, habits, diet, exercise, stress management, and family history. A few more tips include looking away from screen frequently to flex the eye muscles resilient, keep distance of 14 inches from the screen, to blink often, conscious breathing while working, to move out the eyes, getting as much sunlight as possible and smiling. The eyes require the highest levels of oxygen, Vitamin C and zinc among other nutrients. The key take away is that the eyes are incapable of being better than the condition of the crucial organs of the body. Imbalances any where in the body reflects in the health of the eyes. The authors have highlighted the vital role that consumption of water plays in having a good vision. Breathing is mentioned as the most significant and constructive to cleanse and revitalise the body. Deep breathing allows the eyes to receive the oxygen for healing. For acupuncture, it is recommended to practice slow, long and focused abdominal breathing.

The book captures the essence of eye care through the lens of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), acupressure, herbal remedies, homeopathic remedies, helping us understand that eye problems are a result of imbalances in certain elemental energies. Physical exercises and 6 eye exercises have been recommended. They include Palming, Sunning, Scanning, Near-far focus, Chinese massage and the eye stretch. TCM also concentrates on making spinal adjustments, importance of maintaining emotional health.

Remedial measures for Glaucoma, Cataract, Macular Degeneration, Dry Eye, Sties, Floaters and Conjunctivitis have been recommended along with theoretical understanding of it's causes, customised Vision Diet, Exercises, alternative medicine practices, case studies and detailed prevention program.

3. CONCLUSION

Given the myriad of schools of thought between ancient and modern day, one can notice that there are common

practices among them. We have the unique opportunity to blend and create a customised set of practices to be followed to match our lifestyle as taking preventive eye care measures is possible and within our reach. The eyes are considered as the windows to the Soul. Good vision is also important to lead a healthy and happy life, as Dr. Grossman has said "Expanding our eyesight can expand our worldview—and vice versa".

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Understanding the Body Anatomy through Yogāsanas

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ABSTRACT

The first people to correlate physical education to health, hygiene, ethics, meditation and even higher purposes of life were ancient yogis of India.

Āsanare postures that give steadiness or stability and bliss or happiness. This essay attempts to understand the anatomy of the body, step by step, by listing certain postures in the standing, sitting, prone and supine categories. It will enable the practitioner as to how to go about while practicing yogāsanas, simultaneously having the body awareness all the time.

Positive feeling of well-being is more important than the eradication of illness alone. The inner strength that yoga gives overcomes any acute pain and aids tremendously in curing a disease, much more than a medicine.

Keywords: Tadāsana, Vrikshāsana, Garudāsana, ArdhakatiCakrāsana, Ardchakrāsana, Padahastāsana, PrasritaPadahastāsana, Trikosana, ParivruttaTrikonāsana, Parshvakonāsana, ArdhaVeerabhadrāsana, Parighāsana, Ushtrāsana, Utkatāsana, Vajrāsana Or Virāsana, Śāsānkāsana, SuptaVajrāsana / SuptaVirāsana, Sukhāsana, Siddhāsana, Swastikāsana, Padmāsana, ArdhaPadmāsana, Yoga Mudra, Parvatāsana, UthithaPadmāsana, Dandāsana, Naukāsana, PASCIMOTTANĀSANA, Ugrāsana, Jānusirāsana, Upavistakonāsana Pūrvottanāsana, Bharadvajrāsana, Vakrāsana, ArdhaMatsyendrāsana, Baddakonāsana, AkarnaDhanurāsana, Gomukhāsana, Simhāsana, Makarāsana, Bhujangāsana, Śalabhāsana, Dhanurāsana, AdhomukhaŚvānāsana, Mayurāsana, Padangushtāsana, Anantāsana, JatharaParivartanāsana, Viparītakarani, Sarvangāsana, Halāsana, Matsyāsana, Setubandhāsana, Śirsāsana, Śāvāsana

1. INTRODUCTION

Yoga is a practice oriented science, which helps to balance the body and the mind by using certain techniques. Generally we do not have proper awareness of our body and mind. The demands of the external world preoccupy us and our actions are automatic response to these demands. Physical education is a conscious result of body awareness. In ancient societies, physical education meant acquisition of strength and vigor. Later on it became more purposeful, conscious and systematic.

The first people to correlate physical education to health, hygiene, ethics, meditation and even higher purposes of life were ancient yogis of India. Three thousand years ago, Atharvaṇaveda referred to this concept of body awareness. Gorakṣanath, an ancient yogi asks; how can one, who does not know his own body hope to acquire success in life?

YOGĀSANAS

The word 'Āsana' means posture. A steady and pleasant posture produces a profound state of neuro-muscular relaxation. They are designed to promote a state of mental and physical well-being. In this state all the organs function efficiently under the intelligent control of the mind. Hence one requires tremendous concentration and sincerity while practicing yogāsanas.

The physiology of ordinary exercises can be applied to the āsanas. We would be surprised, when we see that the ancient yogis physical culture. The aim of haṭhayoga is not to strengthen the muscles and the locomotors but also the entire human organism including human mind and the various organ systems- subtler body.

There are endless poses each when done rightly benefits the body. But balance has to be maintained in the final pose without jerks or tremors. A body which is good in flexion may not be good at extension or vice versa. But constant practice will bring definite improvement.

Yogāsana should be practiced very slowly correlating with slow breathing, stretching smoothly the concerned muscles and relaxing completely while returning to original position. The great sage Patañjali, the 'Father of Yoga' explains this aspect very aptly in his three 'Sūtras' or 'aphorisms' : Patañjala Yoga Sūtras II – 46, 47, 48 "sthiraṃśukhaṃ āsanam" i.e. Āsanas are postures that give steadiness or stability and bliss or happiness.

"prayatnaśaitilya anantasamāpatti" i.e. one consciously stretches and relaxes in the final pose reaching the universal bliss. "Tato'dvandanabhīhātaḥ" i.e. when the final pose is achieved with effort and the body is stable resulting in mental happiness, the yoga sādhanā will never be affected by any 'dvandvas' or dualities. He will overcome all these dualities which create stress and tensions. Gradually the body-mind balance is achieved with the experience of universal bliss i.e. "anantasamāpatti".

"Gheraṇḍa Samhitā" an authoritative text on haṭhayoga says that there are as many āsanas as there are species of living creatures! However, all these āsanas, whether they are standing, sitting, prone or supine, involve muscle movement of the body in flexion, extension, lateral flexion, rotation, balancing or inverted pose etc. They give very good stretching and relaxation to various muscles in the body. They also tone up the subtler organ systems, improve blood circulation, digestion, stimulate the nerves and promote good health.

With this background, this essay attempts to understand the anatomy of the body, systematically, by listing certain postures in the standing, sitting, prone and supine categories. It will enable the practitioner as to how to go about while practicing yogāsana, simultaneously having the body awareness all the time.

Standing postures:

Standing erect needs minimal muscular effort in our thighs, hips and backs. We can relax when standing because we can lock our knees and balance on our hip joint without much muscular activity. The hamstrings will be relaxed and ligaments exert less pressure.

This is perfect when we stand in TADĀSANA (The palm tree) with legs together and back straight. The whole body will be in balance. The body will stand perpendicular to earth's gravitational field. One should stand with eyes closed with complete inner awareness.

By keeping the feet a foot apart, in this pose one can practice CENTERING (or swinging). Here you put the whole body pressure by slightly leaning to the right, to the edges of the

right foot; by leaning to the left, to the edges of left foot; by leaning slightly forward to the tips of your toes; by leaning slightly backward, to the edges of the heels. Then come back to straight Tadāsana pose. Your hand will be hanging slightly away from the body and the swinging is done like a pendulum. This exercise is extremely soothing for the eyes and also the nervous system, as a whole.

For the beginners, the standing postures enable to experience and understand minutely the distal and proximal parts of the body. The feet are the foundation for the standing postures. One should always keep the feet firm on the ground while doing standing āsanas.

In addition to correcting muscular and skeletal imbalances, the standing postures as a whole form a complete and balanced practice that includes balancing, side bending, back bending, forward bending and so on.

For simple muscle movements, primarily one can practice side to side stretch i.e. raise the arms upto shoulder (with inhalation) parallel to the ground, feel the sensations in the upper body, and with exhalation bring them down. One can repeat it several times. Similarly do the overhead stretches, i.e. by bringing the hands overhead with fingers interlocked, palms pressed together, elbows extended. Stretch up with inhalation and bring down the hands with exhalation.

ARADHA KATI CAKRĀSANA (Lateral arch pose)

Standing erect, raise one hand above the head, elbow straight, with deep inhalation gently elongate the spine and while exhaling bend the waist to the opposite side. Maintain the pose with normal breathing. Elbow and the knees should be straight. After keeping the pose for 30 seconds or more, gradually return back to straight position. While bringing the hand down with exhalation, one experiences the blood gushing down from the arm to the finger tips. Repeat on the other side also.

The lateral bending of both the sides will stretch and improve the lateral muscles, strengthens the pelvic muscles and relieves pain in the shoulders too. The awareness of lateral sides of the body also improves.

VRKṢĀSANA— stand on one leg and the other leg be— at the knee, foot placed on the erect leg. Hands are raised above the head in 'namaskar' pose. The posture tones up the leg muscles and gives one a sense of balance. It provides forbearance to the body.

When one gets good grip over vrkṣāsana, one can try the next advanced balancing pose i.e. GARUDĀSANA. Here also stand on one leg and the other leg entwines over the erect leg. Hands are raised and interlocked, palms touching each other, in front. The face in this āsana, the pressure falls on the ankles, calves and good stretch is felt over the shoulders. The pose removes stiffness in the body.

ARDHA CAKRĀSANA – Relaxed back bend

Before trying this āsana, initially raise the hands above the head, interlock the fingers, stretch and slightly bend back, much as you can, knees bent slightly forward. Observe in pressure on the lumbar and the waist region. Then come back slowly to straight position.

After this initial backstretch exercise, one can try the Aradhacakrāsana, the half wheel back bend pose. Keeping the hands on the waist, gently bend backwards, as much as you can. Do not bend beyond your capacity. One in the final pose, maintain in normal breathing, gently stretching the throat wide with every inhalation. This gives good concave stretch to the spine with ample of blood supply to the spinal cord. The neck also stretches with good stimulations to the thyroid and parathyroid glands.

PĀDAHASTĀSANA – Forward bend with legs kept together. After the concave bend by the previous ardhacakrāsana, now you can try the convex forward bend. Taking both the hands sideways up with inhalation, bend forward slowly exhaling, hands hanging down. Either one can hold the toes or place the palms on the floor in front. One can observe that in this position, most parts of the upper and lower extremities remain relaxed. With every slow exhalation, the bending becomes better and better. Relax in the final pose and maintain the posture as per your capacity.

Pādahastāsana keeps the spine healthy and mobilizes the joints. It stimulates the entire nervous system. The pressing of the abdomen to the thighs reduces excess fat in that region. It stretches the hamstrings and the calves. The abdominal organs are massaged gently and blood supply to the brain also increases. More concentration in this pose enhances the forbearance of the individual.

This āsanacan also be done with legs apart, feet firmly placed on the ground. This is called PRASĀRITA PĀDAHASTĀSANA. In this pose, the groins, thighs and legs get good stretch.

ANGLE POSTURES-

The most simple angle pose is the TRIKONĀSANA. Spread the legs sideways almost a metre apart. Raise the arms sideways in line with the shoulders, palms down. Turn the right foot 90° to the right left foot slightly to the right. Now bend to the right bringing the right arm down, left arm up, as you exhale. If the right hand could reach the ground well or good, place it beside the right foot and look above at the raised lefthand. Otherwise one can hold the right ankle with the right hand for support.

This makes a good shape of a triangle, toning up leg muscles and removing the stiffness in the legs, hips and the thighs. The chest is also well extended. Practice the other side also. Proceed further by practicing the opposite triangle pose namely, PARIVṚTTA TRIKONĀSANA. Here, you be to the opposite side and hold the opposite leg. The palm can be placed beside the opposite foot.

This pose increases the blood supply to the lower part of the spinal region, and strengthens the hips. As you twist your abdominal region gently, it relieves pain in the back and stimulates the abdomen organs,

In both the triangle poses, it depends on the practitioner, how he manipulates his breathing while stretching the arms apart (inhale) and bending down to one side (exhale). The beginner can start with leg support (the lower hand holding the ankle or leg). Gradually, as muscles get flexible with deep breath and slow exhalation the hand can reach the floor comfortably and can be placed beside the foot. Then, you can maintain the posture for a long time with stability.

PĀRŚVA KONĀSANA or the lunging forward bend.

By lunging forward, we thrust the body down and forward. They involve 90° of flexion of the thigh and knee on one side and full extension of the thigh and knee on the other. The torso can either be twisted or bent and the upper extremities can be lifted overhead or stretched in other directions. These poses involve good flexion and extension and they develop good muscular strength.

In pārśvakonāsana or lateral angle pose, keep the legs wide apart, feet firm on the ground. Turn right foot 90° to the right side. Flexing the right-leg at knee, bend forward placing the right palm beside the right foot. The left arm can be stretched in angle either in front 90 degree or sideways or above the head 180°. The left leg is well extended behind. After maintaining the posture for a while, slowly come up in the reverse order. Stand straight and relax. Repeat the other side. While doing this posture, one should have lot of concentration on the ankles, knees and thighs. It reduces the sciatic and arthritic pains. Since abdomen is compressed, it increases the intestinal peristalsis.

One can also try this āsana will opposite hand placed on the ground. That is, if right leg is flexed the left hand is kept beside it and right-hand stretched in front in angle and viceversa. This is called revolving lateral angle pose i.e. PARIVṚTTA PĀRŚVAKONĀSANA.

VĪRABHADRĀSANA – standing warrior pose.

As a next step, standing lunging chest expansion i.e. warrior pose or Vīrabhadrāsana can be tried. First, stand with legs apart, almost a metre wide. To the right foot 90° to the right side, your body also turning to the right. Here, lunge the right leg for—flex the knee at 90° Expand the chest and spread simulta---the hands wide. While inhaling, take the hands up above head joinig the palms. At this point it is called Ardha-Veerabhadrāsana. After several practices one bend the upper body forward, stomach resting on the ---leg in front. As you stretch the hands in front, you should lift the back leg off the floor, parallel to the ground. This becomes a balancing pose.

The standing warrior pose strengthens and stretches muscles throughout the lower extremities. When the hands

are raised about 90° the chest is fully extended and this helps deep breathing. This also relieves stiffness shoulder and back and reduces fat around the hips.

In ArdhaVeerabhadhrāsana, one can also twist the hips slightly to the extent possible while keeping the hands apart in both the directions. This twist is good for the blood circulation around the spine.

PARIGHĀSANA–

Another pose in this category is the side bend with one knee on the floor called Parighāsana or beam/Rod pose.

Kneel on the floor with ankles together. Stretch the right leg sideways to the right and keep it in line with the trunk. The right leg should be stiff at the knee. While inhaling widen the chest by bringing the arms sideways apart. Now exhaling slowly, move the trunk and the right arm down towards the extended right leg. Now move the left arm over the head, upper arm touching the left ear. Gradually exhaling, extend the left hand to the right side, along with the head, after maintaining for 30 seconds or more slowly come back in the reverse order. Repeat same on the other side too.

In this pose, one can note the pelvic stretch. Also, one side of the abdomen pressed and the other extended. It removes sagginess in abdomen.

After this pose, one can try the complementary pose for extending the back muscles, concaving the spine and stretching the lungs wide. This is called UṢṬRĀSANA or camel pose.

In Uṣṭrāsana, kneel down first keeping the knees, and feet a foot apart. Keeping the hands on the waist, gently bend backwards. Gradually release the hands and hold the ankles with respective hands. This allows good stretch for the entire body, the chest, the spine, the pelvis, thighs and arms. This Āsana is excellent for spinal cord, legs and arms. It messages the heart and is good for the chest muscles too. Lastly, to build up the stamina of the lower half of the body, we can attempt a fierce posture namely UTKATĀSANA a powerful posture.

This āsana is like sitting in an imaginary chair. Stand in Tadāsana, stretch the arms strong over the head and join palms. Exhale and bend knees and lower the trunk until the thighs are parallel to the floor. Do not stoop forward. For 30 seconds, you can balance in this way with normal breathing. In this pose, the chest is developed and fully expanded. The diaphragm is lifted, which raises the pelvic girdle up and also gently tones up the muscles. It corrects the minor deformities in the legs and removes stiffness in shoulders.

In the standing category, the order of āsana practice are given below, that which I have explained in the above paragraphs:

Standing Āsanās:

- Tadāsana
- Centering

- Swinging
- Vrikshāsana
- Garudāsana
- ArdhakatiChakrāsana
- Ardhachakrāsana
- Padahastāsana
- PrasaritaPadahastāsana
- Trikosana
- ParivruttaTrikonāsana
- Parshvakonāsana
- ArdhaVeerabhadhrāsana
- Parighāsana
- Ushtrāsana
- Utkatāsana

Sitting postures:

Sitting postures are practiced generally on the floor on a flat surface. In any sitting pose, there is a solid base, more stability in the body and relaxation. If the knees are perfectly healthy, you can sit in VAJRĀSANA OR VĪRĀSANA (The diamond pose). The legs are bent backwards 180 degree with thighs together, sit on the heels, which forces full extension to the ankles. A folded towel or pillow can be kept under the heels if there is discomfort. The back, neck and the head will be straight.

In Vīrāsana, the buttocks could be placed on the floor or over a small pillow and the feet are kept by the side of the thighs. The toes are pointed back and touch the floor. Wrists are to be kept on the knees, palms closed. This posture is suitable for prānāyāma practices and meditation. However, people with weak knees should be careful while doing these āsanās for a longer live. Vajrāsana can be practiced even immediately after meals, as it will relieve the heaviness in stomach.

The next variation would be a forward bend Vajrāsana or Vīrāsana and this is called the rabbit pose or crescent pose, named ŚAŚĀŅKĀSANA hold the fingers at the back, with a deep inhalation expanding the chest, gently go backwards. Then slow exhaling, bend forwards and touch the forehead to the ground. Observe keenly the expansion of the chest, curving of the spine as you inhale, contraction of the chest muscles and as you exhale observe the convex shape of the back,. Here the abdomen is compressed to the thighs, massaging the thighs and legs. We feel heaviness in the head region as plenty of blood gushes that region. Maintain in normal breathing for a minute even more and slowly come back to sitting position.

After this śaśāṅkāsana, to complement it interlocked the fingers and stretch the hands above the head straight by breathing deeply. This will extend the chest up. The pelvic girdle is also raised, and the stomach muscles are relaxed after the experience of constriction and pressure in the previous shashankāsana. The spine is stretched vertically

relaxing every vertebrae. This is called PARVATĀSANA in vajrāsana.

Again, in Vajrāsana or Vīrāsana, one can try a reclining back pose called SUPTA VAJRĀSANA/ SUPTA VĪRĀSANA.

Here, recline the trunk backwards, and rest the elbows one by one on the floor. Slowly place the back of the head on the ground. The entire back should be resting on the ground. If for some reason, it is not possible, one can place some raised pillows or folded blankets for back support. interlocked the hands and place them over the chest. One can stay in this pose upto five minutes or even more while breathing slowly.

This reclining āsanastretches the abdomen and the pelvis and makes the uterus healthy. It relieves backpain. An excellent āsana for women, particularly for menstrual problems. This also helps for belching and gas. Hence, the āsanacan be practiced after meals. One gets a lot of relaxation in this pose.

Variations in a solid sitting base:

Many people do not sit erect thereby damaging the alignment of the internal organs. Proper flow of blood to the internal organs is restricted. As a result, many organs will degenerate and that leads to quick aging. By practicing the sitting āsanas, the spine gets good strength, the ribs and inter costal muscles are well toned and breathing becomes easier. As there is less muscular movement, the nervous system gets smoothened. As a result, the mind also becomes calmer, enabling meditation.

Sitting āsanas can be practiced by everyone, young and old, including pregnant women upto 4-5 months, unless there is any complication. The toning up of the pelvic organs is very useful in pregnancy. Labour pains decrease and delivery takes place with ease.

SUKHĀSANA is the easiest sitting pose with solid base. The yoga student should learn how to sit in this pose on the floor. Here, simply fold the lower extremities so that each leg rests on the opposite foot. Sit up as straight as possible. The Sukhāsana is good for sitting for few minutes, may be for prayers at the beginning and end of the class. It may not be well suited for prānāyāma or meditation. Because after sitting in this pose for sometime, one tends to stoop down, unknowingly, and this obstructs the breathing rhythm. This cross-legged pose is a bit unstable compared to the other cross legged postures such as Siddhāsana, Swastikāsana and Padmāsana.

SIDDHĀSANA is the inspired sage pose, which Haṭayoga describes as the most vital among āsanas, it stimulates the supernatural faculties of the individual.

It purifies all the energy channels (nādis) and takes the practitioner to the ultimate bliss (unmaniawastha).

The HaṭayogaPradīpikā by SwatmaramaSuri say that there is no āsana like the Siddhāsana, no kumbhaka like the kevala,

no mudra like the Kecharī and no laya (absorption of mind) like the nāda.

To do this Siddhāsana, sit on the floor, legs stretched in front. Bend the left leg at the knee, holding the left foot with the hands, gently place the left heel near the perineum and rest the sole of the left foot against the right thigh.

Now bend the right leg at knee, place the right foot over the left ankle, keeping the right heel against the public bone, the sole of the right foot touching the public bone, the sole of the right foot touching the left thigh. Hands must rest on the knees in chin mudra (thumb and forefinger pressed, other fingers stretched out). The back should be erect.

Siddhāsana is extremely relaxing and one can sit for a long time in this pose. It provides more blood circulation to the lumbar and abdominal regions and tones up the lower regions of the spine.

SWASTIKĀSANA – is another crossed legged pose, also called the auspicious pose. Here place the left foot toes pressing the inner part of the opposite knee. Now folding the right leg at knee, tuck the lateral side of the right foot between the left leg and thigh. The two heels are now separated by a width of about four fingers. Sit straight comfortably with hands placed over the knees in cin mudra.

To prevent imbalances in all the cross-legged sitting positions, the legs should be alternately placed in daily practice so that both the limbs are exercised equally. Swastikāsana too has the same benefits Siddhāsana.

PADMĀSANA – is the lotus pose and the most important and useful sitting āsana in haṭayoga. The HaṭayogaPradīpikā describes to practice breath control (Prānāyāma) in this pose so that the awakening the potential energy (Kuṇḍalini) within will be possible.

Sit on the floor with legs stretched straight in front. Bend the right leg at the knee. Hold the heel of right foot with right hand and toes with left hand. Gently place the right foot over the left thigh. Similarly hold the heel of left foot in left hand and toes with right hand. Gently place the left foot over the right thigh. This will lock both the feet together, pressing the thighs nicely. Ensure that the sole of both feet face the sky.

From the base to the neck the spine should remain erect. The hands can be stretched out with the wrists on the knees in cin mudra. Or, the palms can be placed one over the other in front of the navel.

One gets maximum rest in this pose. The knees and ankle stiffness is released. Blood circulate more to the lumbar and abdomen. For persons who sit properly in this pose, the balance is achieved wonderfully. The mind remains in peace enabling focus. One can change the leg positions after sometime, to develop the legs evenly.

Variations in Padmāsana –

For persons who cannot do complete Padmāsana, after sitting in sukhāsana, one leg can be placed on the opposite thigh and this becomes ARDHA PADMĀSANA.

YOGA MUDRA – is a forward bend in Padmāsana keeping the hands interlocked at the back, inhale and slowly exhale simultaneously bending forward and touching the forehead to the ground.

This āsana squeezes the stomach wonderfully, as we bend forward. It also supplies lot of blood to the brain cells. The āsana massages the lower parts of the body relieving hip and low back pain. In this āsana, one can minutely observe the vertebral pull in the back, as the back convexes forward. One can also observe the sharp stretch in the arms, squeezing of the thigh muscles underneath.

PARVATĀSANA – is a variation of Padmāsana and it is a complementary pose for yoga mudra. In Parvatāsana or mountain pose, the arms are stretched over the head with fingers interlocked. hold there with deep breathing. Here, we find that the abdominal organs are drawn in, even the pelvic girdle is lifted up and the chest is expanded wonderfully. This āsana, when maintained for sometime, increases blood supply to the pelvic organs.

UTHITHA PADMĀSANA – is a body lift pose in Padmāsana. First sit properly in Padmāsana. Rest the palms on the floor beside the hips. Now exhale and raise the trunk, balancing on the hands, stretching the arms. Hold for 20-30 seconds and gently come back to floor and relax. This āsana strengthens the wrists, hands and abdominal walls.

Sitting poses in stretched legs-

The simplest leg stretching pose is the DANDĀSANA or the stickpose.

For this pose, sit on the floor, legs stretched straight in front, knees, ankles, toes extended. Place the hands alongside the hips, palms on the floor. Sitting in this way will give hip flexibility and upper body strength.

To improve further the abdominal strength and hips bend. You can try the boat pose or NAUKĀSANA or NĀVĀSANA.

For this pose, from Dandāsana left the legs up simultaneously keeping the knees tight and toes pointed. Balance the body on the buttocks, arms stretched in front, body takes the shape of a boat. There will be a grip on the muscles of the abdomen and the lower back Naukāsana is not only helpful for the organs of the stomach and the intestines, but also strengthen the back muscles. Regular practice of the Āsana-keep the back quite strong for long years.

Variations in the posterior stretches of the sitting āsanās.

PAṢCIMOTTANĀSANA – in this posterior forward bend, sit on the floor, back straight, knees extended, leg stretched in front, heels and toes together.

Then, inhale and raise the arms up, above the head. By flexing the hips slowly exhale and bend forward simultaneously extending the hands forward and hold the

toes. At this point, you can wait, observing the pull behind the back and also underneath the thighs. With another deep breath, the head can be brought out further down to touch the knees. Elbows can be flexed and rest them on the floor, still holding the toes. One can perfect this āsana slowly, by deep breaths again and again. After maintaining the posture for 1-3 minutes, one can slowly come out back to Dandāsana step by step in the reverse order.

Paṣcimottanāsana is also known as “UGRĀSANA” ‘Paṣchima’ or the west implies the backside of the body. In this pose, the back of the whole body is intensely stretched. This āsana, considered one of the best among the āsanās in haṭhayoga, tones up the abdominal organs, kidneys and improves digestion. Due to the complete flexion of the spine, the heart which comes below it is very well massaged. It stimulates the nervous system and brain cells. Thus, it enhances the mental endurance too.

JĀNUṢĪRĀSANA – in this pose the head (ṣira) touches the knee (Jānu) in a single leg stretch forward bend.

Sit with legs stretched straight in front. Take away one leg 90°. The other leg can be stretched straight or even folded at knee, its heel kept against the inner thigh of the out stretched leg.

Lifting the hands up with an inhalation, forward bend while exhaling to hold the toes, forehead resting on the stretched knee. Feel the stretch all over the thigh, hamstrings and calf muscles. Here, one side of the abdomen is compressed against the thigh, toning the inner organs. After maintaining for some time in normal breathing, you can come out in the reverse order. Repeat with the other leg stretch and here the other side the abdomen gets a good compression.

UPAVIṢṬHAKONĀSANA – ‘Upaviṣṭha’ means legs stretch widely apart.

Initially, spread the legs wide apart. With a deep by exhaling, slowly bring them down, and hold the respective toes. Pull the diaphragm up and hold the pose for few seconds.

Next, exhale further ‘bring the upper body down, bringing the head to the floor.

As the head reaches the floor, one can feel intense stretch in the hamstring, thighs and lower back. Pelvic organs are well toned up. It is a good āsana for women, since it stimulates the ovaries.

To relieve the strain on the hips after doing these types of forward bends, one can do side twist with legs apart.

Sit with legs widely apart. Hold the toes of the left leg with the left hand, the right hand placed on the back of the waist. Now gently twist your waist to the right side, relieving the strain around the sacral region. Gently come back. Repeat the other side too.

PŪRVOTTANĀSANA – is the anterior back bend to complement the forward stretch of Paścimottanāsana. It is also a balancing pose.

Sit on the floor, with legs stretched in front. Place the palms behind the hips on the floor, fingers pointing in the direction of the feet.

Bend the knees and place the soles of the feet on the floor. Now, taking the pressure of the body on the feet and palms exhale and lift the body off the floor, straighten the arms and legs. Now the body balances on the feet and hands. The arms will be perpendicular to the ground. Keep the neck relaxed and gently bend back the neck. Breathe normally and maintain the balance. Feel the stretch in the lower abdomen and lower extremities, pressure on the shoulder joints, slight pulling in the neck region.

While returning, gently drop the hips on the floor and relax. Apart from strengthening the wrists and ankles and shoulder muscles, this āsana provides very good stretch to the pelvic organs and the lumbar regions. The chest also expands quite well.

Sitting spinal twists:

All sitting spinal twists are always upright hips are always flexed. They generally produce into stretch in the hip joints, pelvis and spine.

Four simple twists can be tried by the beginners. The first in SUKHĀSANA (the squat pose); second DANDĀSANA (Stick pose with legs stretched, third, sitting in UPAVISHTAKONĀSANA (legs apart) and the fourth BHARADVAJRĀSANA (folded leg twist).

In SUKHĀSANA, one gets a simple cross-legged sitting twist. It is easy and simple. Sit squatting with back straight keep the left hand behind the back on floor, arms straight. The right hand should be placed on the left knee. With an inhalation, slowly twist back, looking as far as you can.

Feel the stretch, starting from the base of the neck shoulder joints, mid back and down to hips. Maintain the pose up to 30 seconds breathing in normal way. Then slowly exhaling come back. Repeat same on the other side.

In the second twist, sit as nearly upright as possible with feet stretched straight out in front of you i.e. Dandāsana. Heels and toes should be together. From that position twist right placing the right behind you on the floor. Place the left hand in the right side of the right thigh. Keep the torso pushed upright, adjust the twist. Maintain the posture for half a minute or so and return back to starting position. Repeat the same on the other side.

This twist is more challenging than the cross-legged one. Here, the extended leg gives a nice stretch to the thighs and legs. The entire spine gets a good twist. The blood flow improves to the back muscles.

In the third twist, which is slightly difficult, you spread the legs wide a part (Upaviṣṭa). Twist the head, neck, shoulders

to the right, again placing the right hand on the floor behind the back. Keep the left hand under the right side of the right knee. Repeat the other side.

Here you can notice more stretch on the pelvis, upper thighs and hamstrings. The more the twist you feel more stretch in the lower parts of the body.

In the fourth type, i.e. Bharadwajāsana, both legs are folded. First, fold the right leg at knee from outside and left folded inside, left foot touching the right thigh. Now twist to the left, placing the left hand behind the back on the floor. Place the right hand over the left knee. Twist further, putting pressure on both hands, left knee. Twist further, putting pressure on both hands. This squeezes the spine to one side.

In the same sitting position, you can twist to the right side too, to complement the earlier twist.

Here, the right hand is placed behind the back on the floor, left palm, on the left knee.

Second, you can repeat the process, by folding the left leg at knee from outside and right leg folded inside.

This gives a very good exercise to the back muscles, particularly to the lumbo-sacral joints.

The other sitting twists:

VAKRĀSANA – In this twist, apart from the stretch, the shoulders, neck, chest, and the abdomen too is well squeezed, stimulating all the organs inside particularly the pancreas.

Here, sit straight, with legs stretched in front of you. Fold the left leg at knee and place the foot beside the right knee. Place the left arm behind the back, palm hold the left foot with your right hand.

Twist to your left side, giving a squeeze to twist far left, stretching the chest and the neck too.

Maintain the pose by taking normal breath. Slowly come back to the original position by straightening the head, chest, releasing the hands and legs. Repeat on the other side in the similar manner.

In ARDHA MATSYENDRĀSANA there will be a slight variation. Sit straight with legs stretched in front.

Pull the right heel in toward the upper left thigh.

Place the left foot on floor in front of the folded right knees. Pull the left knee closer to the chest with the right hand forearm.

Once comfortable in this position, lift the left foot and place properly on the right side of the right thigh.

The left palm is placed on the floor, behind the back.

Now grasp the left foot with the right hand, bringing it over the left knee, thereby pressing the left knee closer to the chest.

Gently give a twist to your left side, looking through the left shoulder.

Then after maintaining for a minute or so, come back in reverse order. Repeat the posture on the other side too in the similar way.

In Vagrāsana, you do the half-spinal twist with one leg stretched and knee extended. Whereas in Ardha-Matsyendrāsana you fold the leg and do the twist. Beginners should first practice vagrāsana and then try Ardha-Matsyendrāsana.

Both these twists give excellent flexibility to the spine and very good toning to abdominal muscles. Regularly practice, they can even influence the pancreatic secretions, bringing marked changes in the endocrinal system. The intestines benefit from these āsanās. The abdominal flabbiness can also be reduced.

Other valuable sitting postures:

Now we shall look into four sitting āsanās which enable us to slowly understand the stretching and relaxation of the upper and lower parts of our body. They are Baddakonāsana (The butterfly pose); AkarnaDhanurāsana (Stretching bow pose); Gomukhāsana (The cow pose); and Simhāsana (The lion pose).

BADDAKONĀSANA – sit in Dandāsana, with legs stretched straight in front. Fold both the legs inwards, the soles touching each other, heels touching the perineum. Hold the big toes with respective hands or you can even clasp the hands over the toes. You will experience a very good stretch in the inner thighs, pelvis and perineum region. Keep the back straight and erect. That makes the lower lumbar region strong. Keep focused on the lower back. You can also flap the thighs continuously, which will loosen thigh muscles and also reduces the flabbiness of the thighs.

In this pose, you can bend forward, touching the forehead to the toes or even the floor. Remember bend forward with slow exhalation. At this point the stretch between the thighs and the pelvic area will become more prominent. Maintain this pose for 30-60 seconds and slowly inhaling and return to the starting pose.

AKARNA DHANURĀSANA – indeed gives one an excellent stretch, particularly to the lower limbs.

Sit with legs stretched straight. Hold the big toes with respective hands. Now lift the left foot by bending the knee. Take a breath, exhale and pull the left foot, until the heel is close to the left ear. All the time the right hand must hold on the right big toe. The extended right leg should not bend at the knee. Hold the posture in normal breathing upto 20-30 seconds. Slowly exhale and come back to starting position. Release the hand and repeat on the other side too.

This graceful pose makes the leg muscle very flexible. The abdominal muscles are contracted and helps in the movement of bowels. Lower spine hip joints are well exercised. This āsana provides the appearance of an archer pulling an arrow from his bow.

GOMUKHĀSANA makes the entire body elastic. First sit on the floor straight, legs extended in front. Bend the left leg at knee, place it under the right buttock. Now, bend the right leg at knee, placing the right thigh over the left one. Rest the ankles, keeping the toes pointing back.

Raise the left arm over the head, bending at the elbow, place the left palm over the back of the neck.

Take the right arm behind the back, clasp the right palm with the left one.

At this point watch the expansion of the chest. Sitting erect, observing the balance of the whole body, maintaining the pose for few seconds. This āsana brings very good flexibility to the muscles of the arms, as well as legs. All the time, you must keep the head, neck and back as straight as possible.

After coming back repeat the other side.

SIMHĀSANA – CAN BE PRACTICED EITHER IN CROSSED Vajrāsana or Padmāsana.

Sitting erect, place the open palms over the knees and press them.

Open the jaws wide and stretch the tongue out towards the chin as far as you can.

Gaze at the centre of the eyebrows or at the tip of the nose (Bhṛūmadhyadhṛṣṭior Nasikāgradhṛṣṭi).

Stay in that pose for 20-30 seconds breathing through the mouth.

Withdraw the tongue inside relax your hands and legs-

In this **SIMHĀSANA**, focus should be on the facial region. The eyes, jaws, tongue and all the other parts of the mouth and face get a good stretching. It cleanses all these parts, providing more blood flows. It also rectifies stammering. Improves secretion of salivary glands necessary for proper digestion of food intake. When performed along with Jihvabandha, its practice improves vocal chords and regulate high and low blood pressure.

Understanding the body anatomy through some prone postures;

The prone postures, particularly the back bending ones are very good for the cardiac system. The arch of the aorta is extended by these postures. The arch of the aorta works as a pump pushing the blood into the coronaries. As age advances, this elasticity is lost. Practice of these āsanās retain this elasticity.

The vital capacity of the lungs can be kept throughout life by these āsanās. Abdominal and pelvic organs are well extended. Liver, pancreas and gallbladder get better supply of blood. Kidneys squeezed and their functions are toned up. Muscular sheets of the diaphragm are toned up. The pelvic organs get good blood supply.

MAKARĀSANA – or crocodile pose is the starting pose for all prone postures. Makarāsana is ideal relaxation pose lying down on the chest. Here, you lie down on the floor on your stomach, the entire front portion of the body touching the

ground, legs apart, heels facing each other, hands folded in front and chin or cheek resting on the folded hands.

This pose gives complete rest to the chest, heart, abdomen and even the back muscles. It improves heart functioning and soothes the nerves.

To get more stretch in Makarāsana, gently lift the head and clasp the hands behind the head. This is explained in the Haṭayoga text Gheraṇḍasamhitā (2nd ch. Verse 40) : “lie on the ground, face down, the chest touching the floor and both legs stretched out. Hold the head with the arms. This is the crocodile posture, which increases bodily heat”.

From Makarāsana, the different variations of the cobra pose or BHUJANGĀSANA, could be practiced.

For the classic Bhujagāsana, start with forehead on the floor, palms facing floor, placed on either side of the chest, fingers in line with the shoulders, elbows closer to the body. Pressing the hands firmly on the ground, inhaling lift the head, chest, up to the trunk. Maintain posture up to 30 seconds in normal breathing. Then come back to the resting position in Makarāsana.

Bhujagāsana with hands in front – here, place the palms in front of the head facing each other. With inhalation lift the body up to waist level and return to starting position of Makarāsana after 30 seconds.

Bhujagāsana with hands clasped behind. Here, stretch the hands behind the back, clasp them touching the lower back and inhaling lift the head up. In this pose, you notice that your abdomen and pelvis are pressing the floor, giving good toning effect to the muscles.

At the variations of Bhujagāsana have effect on the spinal cord. Persons with stiff back, lumbar problems and sciatica are recommended these āsanas.

Variations in Śalabhāsana-

ŚALABHĀSANA or the Locust pose is a complementary pose of Bhujagāsana.

Beggins must start with Ardha-śalabhāsana. Chin on the floor. Keeping the palms fist, placed them under the thighs. Lift one leg up straight, maintain the posture for 20 seconds, and bring the leg down. Do likewise with the other leg.

After this, complete śalabhāsana can be tried by lifting both legs together, knees straight.

This āsana aids digestion and flatulence. It relieves pain in the lumbo-sacral region.

One can also lift the head up simultaneously with the legs in this pose. This gives the shape of --- inverted boat.

DHANURĀSANA or the bow posture.

To begin with, lie prone, flex the knees, grasp the big toe.

This curves the body like a bow. The head is lifted and chest is expanded.

In the second stage, pull the knees up, widening the legs, lift the raised arch still up and the spine assumes a curved bow

look. After the full stretch upwards has been achieved join together the knees and ankles. Maintain posture for 10-20 seconds. Breathing will be slightly fast, since the abdomen is extended.

This āsana is (contra indicated) not recommended for high BP, cardiac patients. Even persons with weak knees cannot perform this pose.

PARŚVA DHANURĀSANA – the side bend in bow. In this variation of the bow pose, from the final pose of Dhanurāsana, exhale and roll over to one side, stretching the legs and chest, with hands well gripping the ankles. After coming back straight, do the other side rolling.

The sideways roll in the bow pose massages the abdominal organs, pressing them against the floor. This also reduces the flabbiness of the abdomen.

ADHOMUKHA ŚVĀNĀSANA – the bent head Dog pose.

After doing the cobra, locust and bow variations, this down facing dog pose or Adhomukha Śvānāsana gives a wonderful relief to the whole body. This is an excellent semi-inverted pose, which can be tried before doing the headstand or Śirsāsana.

From the resting Makarāsana, come first to Bhujagāsana with palms placed on either side of the chest, head lifted.

Exhale and raise the trunk from the floor, straightening the arms, head bent down. The body takes the shape of a mountain.

Place the feet firmly on the floor, the legs slantingly stretched.

Stay in this pose for a minute or even more with slow breathing. Keep always the neck relaxed and hanging.

This is indeed a rejuvenating pose. It relieves leg pain, ankle pain and shoulder joints are strengthened. The abdominal muscles are drawn in, the diaphragm is lifted to the chest cavity and the rate of heart beat is slowed down. It supplies more blood to the head region too.

MAYURĀSANA or the Peacock pose.

The haṭayoga text describes the peacock pose as supreme pose for developing abdomino-pelvic energy. The posture, maintained well for three minutes improve the powers of digestion and assimilation just like the peacock does.

It is done in the following steps:

- Kneel down with knees slightly apart.
- Bending slightly, keep the palms on the floor, fingers pointing towards knees.
- Now bending the elbows, lean forwards, gently placing the diaphragm on them.
- Stretch the legs behind straight, one by one, keeping them together. Now the body weight is resting on the palms and hands.
- Now slowly balancing the abdomen on the elbow lift the legs off the floor, parallel to the floor. Hold the pose for 30-60 seconds.

- For returning back, first lower the head down then the legs. Relax the hands.

Mayurāsana improves digestion, cures some of the ailments of stomach and spleen. It is also good for diabetes.

A successful peacock pose depends to a great extent on your body type and weight distribution. It is an advanced balancing pose, the forearm flexors support the entire weight of the body. If either the upper portion or lower portion is abnormally heavy or if the arms are weak, then it is difficult to do this posture. You may slip off, either forward or backward. Obviously, the peacock pose is suitable for persons with fine, proportionate, athletic body.

Understanding the body anatomy through some supine postures:

Most of the supine āsanas, particularly the inverted ones prevent stagnation of blood circulation, sagging of organs and enhance oxygenation in the lower parts of the body. Blood, flows towards heart without strain and cardiac output increases. Persons with eye problems must be slightly careful while doing these āsanas and they can wrap an elasto-crepe bandage around the eyes which prevents the risk in the pressure of the eyes.

The capacity to withstand attitudes is derived from inverted poses. When practiced at high altitudes, the lungs are warmed up immediately.

For women these poses are very helpful. They remove pelvic congestions, prevent formation of fibroids, loosen adhesions and improve the muscle tone in the pelvis.

The simplest practice in the supine posture is the SUPTA PADANGUSHTĀSANANA. Here you lie down flat on the floor. Raise both the legs up 90°. Remain in that pose for some time. If possible hold the toes of the legs with respective hands. You can feel the pull in the back, arms, due to the stretching of the lower limbs.

As a next step, you can spread the legs wide apart, without leaving the hold on the toes. This is PRASĀRITA SUPTA PADANGUṢṬĀSANA.

Here, observe the stretch in the lower pelvis, groins, thighs and legs. One feels relieved of leg pain and even lower back pain.

As a next step, one can do the lateral stretch of the single leg, by holding on to the toes.

Lie down flat on the floor. Lift one leg up 90° and hold on to the toes or ankle, by the same side hand. Gently bring the leg laterally down and place it on the floor still holding the leg. Do not leave the hold on the leg. A sharp pull is experienced in the lower lumbar region. After maintaining for some time, release the hold on the leg and bring the leg straight on the floor and relax. Repeat the other side too in same manner.

In this lateral stretch, blood circulation increases in leg and hips. It removes the stiffness in the hip joints and give relief from low back pain.

ANANTĀSANA— In this posture, lie down on floor sideways, resting the head on the folded hand. Lift the upper leg upto 90°, perpendicular to the ground. You can hold the ankle or the big toe. After maintaining for 30 seconds, come back and turning to the other side repeat the same posture.

The pelvic muscles benefit in this āsana, hamstrings are well toned and backache is also relieved.

JAṬHARA PARIVARTANĀSANA – This āsana is the stomach twist pose attempted lying supine on the floor.

First stretch out the arms sideways in line with the shoulders, the body looking like a cross.

Exhale and raise both legs upto 90°. Take a deep breath and while exhaling bring both the legs to one side of the body down on the floor, the feet reaching outstretched hand. If possible, you can hold the toes as well, to get better stretch. The stomach gets a good twist to one side of the body. The knees should be together and the legs straight. The lumbar should be on the floor and you should turn the legs only from the hip region.

Stay for 30-60 seconds and come back to straight position, and relax. Then, repeat the other side too. Observe keenly the stretch felt on the lateral sides in this āsana. Due to the twist, the stomach, thighs and legs are well toned. The āsana is good for liver, spleen and the pancreas. It enables proper intestinal peristalsis, leading to proper evacuation.

Inverted poses:

Before going to the inverted āsanas, namely Viparītakarāni, Sarvangāsana, Halāsana and so on, one can try the simple hip opening exercises.

This can be done in three ways, by lying down supine on the floor.

- Fold the legs, hold them with respective hands, gently press them against the abdomen keep pressing breathing slowly. This is just like we do pavanamuktāsana.

- Next, grasping the knees from inside, pull them down laterally, making them wide apart.

- Third, grasping the ankles, pull the feet towards the head.

All these poses will make the hips stronger, enabling lifting them up to practice any inverted posture.

VIPARĪTAKARĀNI—

This is a preparatory pose for the inverted pose Sarvangāsana.

Lie down flat on the floor.

Fold the legs at knees, move the legs towards stomach until the thighs press it.

Raise the hips off the floor with an exhalation, holding the waist both sides with respective hand. With another exhalation, raise the legs fully up, body weight falling on the elbows, which is resting on the floor.

One can use the support of the wall for coming to this posture.

In this full inverted action pose which is also called VIPARĪTAKARANI MUDRA. The weight the lower part of the body is supported by elbow forearms and wrists. Depending on the length of forearm and the exact placement of the hand the torso need not be perfectly perpendicular to the floor.

Whereas in this proper shoulderstand, i.e. SARVANGĀSANA the body (exclusive of the head and the neck) is positioned more or less perpendicular to the floor. To do this āsana, the cervical region should be strong. In this classic shoulderstand, the hands are moved up and placed on the back and not on waist. Finally, with the body supported in a straight line by the hands and muscles of the trunks and hips, you get a complete chinlock, the chin pressing the neck.

From Sarvangāsana or even Vīparītakarāni, one can attempt the next pose, HALĀSANA, the plough posture.

In HALĀSANA, from Sarvangāsana position, the legs together are brought gently behind the head, first parallel to the floor and then slowly toes reaching the floor.

In Halāsana, the thighs and legs should be parallel to the ground, but the posture could be modified to meet the individual needs such as moderate flexion to the knees, less flexion to the hips or more flexion of the back.

If the feet are flexed minimally overhead, the hips are flexed to the maximum and mid-back is more closer to the floor.

If the feet are pushed further overhead, hips are flexed moderately and back is now perpendicular to the floor.

These types of variations could be attempted depending on the physical capacity of the practitioner.

By practicing the above Sarvangāsana movements, the entire body is toned up, by increasing the flow of nutrients through blood to every cell in the body. It helps a person to recover from weakness.

The effect of halāsana is the same as that of Sarvangāsana. The spine gets extra supply of blood. The abdomen is rejuvenated due to contraction. Gas is relieved easily. It is contra-indicated by those having high blood pressure and thyroid disorder.

Regular practice of these āsanās will make the back muscles very mobile and enables the practitioner to perform the forward bend poses very easily, such as Paścimottanāsana and Padahastana.

MATSYĀSANA – or fish posture

At first this posture can be moderately attempted by lying down straight supine. The chest and the abdomen are lifted as high as possible, by placing the palms under the thighs. As you lift the chest up, bend the head backwards, the

crown touching the floor. This posture is supported mainly by the upper extremities.

In the classic fish pose, you first sit in Padmāsana (Lotus) and with the support of the elbows, gently bend backwards, arching the lumbar, head bending back and the crown touching the floor. In this pose, the dorsal region is fully extended and the chest is well expanded. Since you are in Padmāsana, the lower extremities too benefit by this pose. The pelvic joints become elastic.

SETUBANDHĀSANA– The Bridge posture.

In this pose, begin with supine position. Fold the knees, placing the feet firmly on the ground. Now lift the pelvis as high as possible, holding your waist with respective hands. The body takes the shape of a bridge. The posture gives a lot of relaxation to the back muscles. The āsana can be very complementary after performing the shoulderstand or the fish pose.

ŚĪRSĀSANA or Headstand.

Śīrsāsana is the most important of yogic āsanās. It has several variations. However, it has to be learnt carefully in stages. Beginners can learn with wall support.

- Spread the blanket fourfold on the floor near the wall, head facing it.
- Rest the forearms on the centre of the blanket. Interlock the fingers right upto the finger tips so that the palms form a cup.
- Rest the crown of the head on the blanket, so that the back of the head touches the palms, which are cupped, only the crown should be on the ground.
- Straighten the knees, toes on the floor, legs stretched well upto torso.

This is half headstand, which a beginner should practice till he gets confidence before attempting complete headstand. For the complete Śīrshāsana, bring the feet closer and closer to the head. Then, with a gentle swing, lift the legs off the floor, with knees bent. Take swing in such a way that both the feet are off the floor simultaneously.

After remaining in this position for a while, slowly lift both the legs up, soles facing the ceiling. If there is wall support, you can rest the legs on the wall.

For returning back, flex the knees and slide down to the floor in the reverse order.

Śīrshāsana is the most powerful āsana and is called “King of Āsanās”. This āsana is very difficult to practice”. One should attempt it with caution and under proper guidance.

The vital point to note is that, in the final posture almost 90% of the body weight is falling on elbows. Hardly any pressure should be taken supported by interlocked fingers. Patients suffering from B.P., eye, nose, ear, throat problems, and cardiac problems should not attempt this pose. Doctor should be consulted before doing this posture. Pregnant

women should not try to pose. Immediately after this āsana, one must relax in Śāvāsana or deep relaxation.

Śirsāsana gives the heart and circulation system a good rest, as the blood flows – in reverse direction. It makes the nervous system healthy. It revitalizes the endocrine system. It strengthens the respiratory organs. Above all, it gives tremendous courage, will power and self-control.

ŚAVĀSANA – The corpse posture.

This is a deep relaxation method in Yoga practice. Each yoga session must end with a complete relaxation by performing Śāvāsana or the corpse pose for at least ten minutes.

Although the āsana appears simple, it is indeed difficult to focus the mind completely on the body alone from toes to the top of the head, giving auto suggestions inwardly and relax.

Unless the mind removes all the unwanted thoughts and pictures (vikṣepas) and learns the art of concentration (ekāgrata), one cannot enjoy the benefit of Śāvāsana. The mind gets complete control of the body and learns how to relax. With regular practice, relaxation comes spontaneously. One forgets the body and without going to sleep, the mind experiences alert full rest. Lie down supine on the floor, legs apart, arms apart, fingers semi closed, palms facing upwards. Close eyes and relax completely, allowing your body to rest on the floor under the influence of gravity.

Initially when you lie down, the nerve impulses are still high, since your breathing is not under control.

Gradually, as you start breathing slowly, the number of nerve impulses per second to your muscles starts to drop. Concentrate minutely from the lowest part of the body namely toes, soles, heels, ankles and so on.

Do progressive relaxation step by step, giving auto-suggestions, sending messages to each group of cells to relax.

As you progress upwards, try to do abdomen or belly breathing several rounds.

Proceed further up and concentrate on chest thoracic breathing, with the expansion and contraction of the chest, bring down the pace breath.

Further, proceed with inhaling (gently opening up the upper lobes of lungs); as you are feeling the complete relaxation all over the arm while exhaling.

- This type of slow and steady breathing will bring down the metabolic rate, normalize the pulse and the heart beat.
- Removing all the wrinkles from the face, keep pleasant countenance.
- Once the body is relaxed, gently open up inner consciousness, rid your mind of any negative or unwanted picture. Here, you can use the imaginary method of focusing (dhāraṇa) i.e., fixing the mind on one object or a beautiful scenario. Merge yourself completely with that

object. In the process, you will reach a state of absolute silence and bliss.

- Śāvāsana, when practiced for 10-15 minutes provides immense relief to the body and mind.

CONCLUSION

The yogic path has been researched and laid down by our own ancient seers and it has given clear guidelines for prevention and cure of ailments. The authentic haṭhayoga texts like SwatmaramaSuri's "HaṭhayogaPradīpikā" and Gheraṇḍa Muni's "GheraṇḍaSamhitā" clearly underline the methods and steps of yogic practices, their benefits and also the precautionary measures. They found that the primary cause for many ailments is rooted in the mind. Today, the hectic modern life makes it true and we call these ailments as psychosomatic ailments. The relation between the 'psyche' and 'soma' is harmonized by the practice of yoga. Therefore, the yogic cure touches the deeper roots of the disease and a harmony is established, avoiding the recurrence of the same. The willpower and forbearance which yoga teaches improves the immune system in the body.

Primarily, yoga encourages positive hygiene and health. Positive feeling of well-being is more important than the eradication of illness alone. The inner strength that yoga gives overcomes any acute pain and aids tremendously in curing a disease, much more than a medicine. Again, the yogic approach is very steady and methodical.

Yoga gives importance for strengthening the inherent defensive mechanism of the body and the mind. It could be said that yoga - Āsanas and prānāyāma, when practiced from a young age regularly will not only maintain the health of the person but also assists in the flowering of the personality at all levels: physical, mental, emotional intellectual and spiritual.

Negative emotions generally interfere with the tonic rhythm of the muscles and blood vessels and there follows a chain of reactions. (Patañjala Yoga Sūtras 1: 31). As a result the metabolism gets affected. During the upsurge of emotions, the blood vessels get constricted and the affects the heart and the lungs. Tissues may become sluggish and there could be disturbances in the glandular secretions. Practice of yoga will definitely control these chain reactions.

Therefore, the systematic practice of yogāsanas helps one to understand the therapeutic significance of each one of them and also the subtle changes that take place

within the body. The following highlights should be noted for one to start the practice:

- Yogic Āsanashould never be practiced randomly or hastily.
- They should be practiced slowly and in proper order, always keeping in mind the physiological reactions they bring about.
- The practitioner must involve in the pose to such an extent that he shouldclosely connect himself to the nerves, tissues, muscles, blood flow and even the mental changes that it brings. This is possible only when there is absolute concentration. (Anantasampatti).
- When the order of practice is properly maintained, the body can be beautifully sculpted and a physiological rhythm can be achieved.
- Maintaining the Āsana in the final pose for sometime with stability (SthiramSukhamĀsanam) and without dualities (tatodvandvanabhighatah) is as important as relaxing completely after every pose.
- This systematic practice will surely make the physiological journey from the gross to the subtle an enjoying experience. Ultimately in the journey, the

mind sheds out all the dust and becomes very clear and still. This would naturally instill the feeling of wellness and good health.

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