



MATA SUNDRI COLLEGE FOR WOMEN, UNIVERSITY OF DELHI
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ASANAS AND IT'S BENEFITS

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INTRODUCTION

Yoga one of the six systems (darshans) of Indian philosophy. Its basic text is the Yoga-sutras by Patanjali (c. 2nd century BCE or 5th century CE).

The Yoga philosophy speaks about the theory and practice for the realization of the ultimate truth concerning human being and the world. In Vedanta, yoga is understood as 'union', i.e. spiritual union of the individual soul with the supreme soul. This view is not explained clearly. Patanjali, who is the founder of the Yoga System says, yoga is a spiritual effort to attain perfection through the control of sense organs, gross body, subtle mind, intellect and ego. It guides to achieve the highest wisdom through spiritual realization.

Patanjali's 'Yoga-sutras' are the first and foremost systematic and authoritative presentations of yoga in both its theoretical and practical aspects. Followed by Patanjali, Vasys's "Yoga-bhasya" and Vacavpati Mishra's 'Tattva-vaisharadi'" are the good additions to Yoga philosophy. These two works are treated as commentaries on Yoga-sutras.

The Yoga Philosophy is closely associated with Samkhya philosophy. The Yoga presents a practical path for the realization of the self-whereas the Samkhya emphasizes the attainment of knowledge of self by means of concentration and meditation. Thus, it won't be incorrect to state that yoga is the practice and Samkhya is its theory. The Gita says that Yoga and Samkhya are the practical and theoretical sides of the same system.

Although there are many similarities found between Samkhya and Yoga system yet a few dissimilarities are highlighted. The similarities are- Both the schools uphold that liberation can be attained through knowledge. And, to attain this knowledge it requires the power to control body, mind, senses, intellect and ego.

Yoga accepts three pramanas which are agreed by the Samkhya. These three Pramanas are; perception, inference and verbal testimony. There are twenty-five metaphysical Principles as viewed by the Samkhya and it is agreed by the Yoga.

The dissimilarities lie when Yoga states that there is only one and one Purusa is known as 'Supreme self' who is eternal, ubiquitous, beyond time and space. Rejecting this view, Samkhya expresses that there are many Purusas and hence, there are innumerable number of selves.

YOGA ASANAS-

SURYA NAMASKAR

Surya Namaskar or Sun Salutation is a technique of vitalization via solar energy. Invocation and worship of the Sun were one of the first and most natural forms of expression of awe and gratitude.

Surya Namaskar is a series of twelve different physical movements. These movements consist of alternate backward and forward bending asanas, thereby flexing and stretching the spinal column and limbs to their maximum capacity. It massages, tones, stretches and stimulates all the muscles and vital organs of the body. It loosens up all the joints, massages the internal organs, activates the respiratory and circulatory system as well as helps all other systems of the body to function optimally. It harmonizes the whole body-mind complex.

Surya Namaskar consists of five essential aspects-

- 1. Asanas:** There are twelve postures and the complete cycle consists of twenty-four movements, which have to be practiced in a sequence, one after the other, with retention of each position for a few seconds, if possible.
- 2. Breathing:** The complete cycle of Surya Namaskar is synchronized with breathing. Each posture is associated with either inhalation or exhalation or retention or suspension of breath.
- 3. Mantra:** Each posture is accompanied by a specific mantra repeated either silently or loudly. These mantras add to the benefits.
- 4. Awareness:** Awareness is a crucial part of this practice through which its effects are experienced at the level. It increases the capacity of concentration and chanting brings about harmony at all levels.

5. Relaxation

The twelve asanas culminate together to form the cycle of suryanamaskar are-

1. Sthita Prarthanasana—Standing Prayer Posture.

Chant mantra: ‘Om Mitraya Namaha’ (Salutation to the friend of All).

2. Hasta Uttanasana—Raised Arm Posture.

Chant mantra: ‘Om Ravaye Namaha’ (Salutation to the radiant One).

3. Uttanasana—Standing Forward Bend

4. Hasta Padasana—Hands to Legs Posture.

Chant mantra: ‘Om Suryaya Namaha’ (Salutation to He who initiates all activity).

5. Ashwa Sanchalanasana—Equestrian Posture

Chant mantra: ‘Om Bhanave Namaha’ (Salutation to He who illuminates).

6. Adhomukha Shvanasana—Downward Dog Posture

Chant mantra: ‘Om Khagaye Namaha’ (Salutation to the All-pervading One).

7. Urdhvamukha Shvanasana—Upward Dog Posture.

Chant mantra: ‘Om Hiranyagarbhaya Namaha’ (Salutation to the golden cosmic womb).

8. Adhomukha Shvanasana—Downward Dog Posture.

Chant mantra: ‘Om Marichaye Namaha’ (Salutation to the golden rays of the Sun).

9. Ashwa Sanchalanasana—Equestrian Posture.

Chant mantra: ‘Om Adityaye Namaha’ (Salutation to the son of Aditi, the Cosmic Mother).

10. Hastapadasana—Hands to Leg Posture.

Chant mantra: ‘Om Savitre Namaha’ (Salutation to the stimulating power of Sun).

11. Talasana—Raised Arm Posture.

Chant mantra: ‘Om Arkaya Namaha’ (Salutation to He who is worthy of praise).

12. Sthita Prarthanasana—Standing Prayer Posture

Chant mantra: ‘Om Bhaskaraye Namaha’ (Salutation to the One who leads to enlightenment).

MY EXPERIENCE-

BEFORE PERFORMING THE ASANA-

Lethargy is a grip that tough to loosen as a student. The most important skillset a student requires is concentration and ability of grasping concept while in a class. While spending maximum time on the study table, it is also tough to keep physical fitness in sync with a healthy lifestyle. Gaining weight with PCOS becomes all the easier and hence calls into the question getting into the running shoes.

In college, being a part of a society has its challenges along with jollification of

organising successful events. The additional responsibility sometimes doesn't jell well with the tight-packed schedule of making it to the class, gain attendance and eventually, preparation of exams. A common conclusion of such leads to stress and anxiety amongst students, which leads to shortness of breadth and increased heart rate.

AFTER PERFORMING THE ASANA-

My experience after performing the asanas of suryanamaskar was different than what I had expected. Initially, it was an arduous exercise but commenced without chanting the mantras and focussed on the breathing. The effort that went into the doing the cycles was the same as that of performing western exercises at home. It was certainly a task to jump out of bed early in the morning and commence the asana. It was a task to be consistent. My mother's persistence helped me out the bed. When I commenced the exercise, I felt a pressure in my head, an eventually I could feel the stretch in my hamstrings which we painful to hold even for a few seconds.

As I became consistent with 3 cycles a day, the paint in the thighs faded and I felt more relaxed, flexible and active throughout the day. The number of reps increased which seemed onerous and were tiring, but gradually mornings seemed more active and concentration improved. I was able to grasp better and experienced to have a calm mind. The short temper started fading and I was able to solve a problem which yielded better results.

One thing I understood along the process is a great of patience and consistency is required to yield results. There was an increase in height and was able to notice inch loss as well. The health issues gradually started to fade, which surprised the doctor as well.

SHISHUASANA-

The name is derived from the Sanskrit words "bala" and "asana", which translate to "child" and "pose" respectively. It quiets the mind and restores spent energy. It focuses the breath into the back body, the "rest and digest" (parasympathetic) side, and supports the natural outward expansion of the lungs on each inhalation. Because the mind is not overwhelmed by extreme sensation in Child's Pose, it is far freer to wander than it is in the more physically demanding asanas.

It is One of the vital yoga poses for PCOS is the child's pose that brings about relaxation by soothing the Central Nervous System. It also releases lower back

tension, menstrual cramps, and PMS symptoms and normalizes blood flow throughout the body.

MY EXPERIENCE-

BEFORE PERFORMING THE ASANA-

An anxious mind never lets the person sit or even sleep peacefully which leads to overthinking. As mentioned, breathlessness and increased heart beat leads to panic. I was irritable and lost my cool quick. The medication made it worse. I also felt hungrier than usual that led to my weight gain.

My family and I were affected by COVID and my stamina reduced significantly where my breathing wasn't normal as well. After we recovered, I felt as if I had no energy left in me to carry out simple tasks and calming down seemed like an impossible task.

AFTER PERFORMING THE ASANA-

As I started performing the asana, I felt, as the name itself suggests, like a child but only peaceful, and happy. Although holding it for a few minutes longer than 3 mins is difficult. It is an asana which I perform at home when I feel stressed out or anxious, for a few minutes. I am able to breathe and felt better and peaceful.

The after-effects of covid gradually depleted. I, sometimes feel my back ache after completing the cycles of suryanamaskar, so I perform this pose immediately after completing the cycle and my back feels stretched and better. The asana is one of my favourites and works like a charm. I feel it is a happy-go-lucky asana!

CONCLUSION

Practising yoga asanas helps control an individual's mind, body, and soul. It brings together physical and mental disciplines to achieve a peaceful body and mind; it helps manage stress and anxiety and keeps one relaxed. It also helps in increasing flexibility, muscle strength and body tone. It improves respiration, energy and vitality. Practising asanas might seem like just stretching, but it can do much more for your body from the way you feel, look and move.

Even The U.S. military, the National Institutes of Health and other large organizations are listening to — and incorporating — scientific validation of yoga's value in health care.

Numerous studies show yoga's benefits in arthritis, osteopenia, balance issues, oncology, women's health, chronic pain and other specialties.