

# Glimpses into the Science of Yoga

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“*paśyema śaradaḥ śatam*  
*jīvema śaradaḥ śatam*”

“We see (objects) for a hundred autumn (years). We live for a hundred autumns (years)” – so sung the ancient yogis or at the very dawn of the human civilization. Now modern medical science has also enabled man to repeat these words. Wonderful cures – surgical and medical have enabled man to fight diseases that seemed to be beyond control. Medical science has extended man’s longevity much more. But some darkness prevails under the lamp of modern medical science. Renowned physicians of the world have observed it and expressed their views in the following languages –

“There is not a single medicine in the world that does not carry harm in its molecule”.

Dr. J. N. Hurty

“I declare my conscious conviction founded along with experiences that if there were not a single physician, surgeon, midwife, chemist, druggist, nor drug on the face of the earth, there would be less sickness and less mortality than now prevail”.

Dr. James Johnson

“Take away opium and alcohol and the backbone of the patent medicine business will be broken in the forty eight hours”.

Dr. Woods Huckinson

This darkness of modern medical science can be dispelled by the science of yoga. Man may conquer death with the help of modern medical science and the science of yoga.

The word yoga comes from the Sanskrit verb root ‘yuj’ which means ‘unification’ or ‘union’. Patanjali defines ‘yoga’ as- ‘yogaścittavṛttimirodhaḥ’ ‘Yoga is the restraint of mental modifications’. ‘Yoga means the suspension of all the psychic propensities.’

Tantra defines it-

‘aikyaṁ jīvātmanorāhuryogaṁ’. ‘The union of the Self and the Absolute is called yoga’.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says, ‘samatvam yoga ucyate’, ‘Evenness of mind is called Yoga’.

Yoga is a group of physical, mental and spiritual practices which is originated in ancient India. Even it is said that not by severe austerity, not by the daily recitation of the Veda, not even by sacrifice can a man attain the state that one obtains by the practice of Yoga. Cf., VDS.,25.7.

*na tām tīvreṇa tapasā na svādhyāyairna cejyayā |*  
*gatiṁ gantum dvijāḥ śaktā yogātsamprānuvanti yām ||*

Yoga advocates control over the body, the senses and the mind. Sensuous attachment and passions distract the body as well as the mind. To overcome them, Yoga formulates the following Eight fold Path of Discipline, i.e., aṣṭāṅgayoga. These are viz.,

1)Yama (restraint), 2)Niyama (observance), 3)Āsana (posture), 4)Prāṇāyām (regulation of breath), 5) Pratyāhār (abstraction), 6) Dhāraṇā (concentration), 7) Dhyāna (meditation), 8) Samādhi (trance).

Yoga is mainly divided into four classes, viz., Mantra, Laya, Haṭha and Rāja. Though mantra, laya and rāja yogas are essential to the all round development of human personality, only haṭha yoga is directly connected with the physical and psychological development of human beings. So, haṭha yoga is briefly discussed in this article.

Haṭhayoga specially deals with āsana, mudrā and prāṇāyāma.

Āsana: Āsana means ‘a posture adopted in haṭha yoga’. Patanjali defines it as - *sthiraśukhamāsanam*, means ‘āsana is steadily easy’. Some of the important āsanas are- *cakra*, *bhadra*, *bhujanga*, *dhanu*, *gomukha*, *hala*, *jānu*, *kūrma*, *makara*, *matsya*, *mayūra*, *maṇḍuka*, *śiṛṣa*, *sarvāṅga* etc.

*Mudrā:*

Mudrā is a posture in which the whole body plays a part. Following mudras are practised by the yogis in order to cure themselves of diseases and bind youth forever. Some important mudras are- *aśvinī*, *uddīyāna*, *mahābandha*, *mahāvadhā*, *viparītakaraṇī*, *śakticālinī*.

*Prāṇāyāma:*

Prāṇa means ‘breath’ and āyāma means ‘restraint’. Prāṇāyāma is a practice of controlling the movement of the vital energy of a particular body. According to Patanjali, “tasmin sati śvāsaprasvāsaryogaticchedaḥ prāṇāyāma”.

Prāṇāyāma is the stoppage of the inspiratory and expiratory movement of breath. It is three types –

- 1) *Recaka* (expelling of air)
- 2) *Pūraka* (drawing in of air)
- 3) *Kumbhaka* (stopping of air)

Besides these important accessories of yoga, some other techniques are also adopted in yoga. These are –

*Dhouti* (washing and cleansing of the bowl), *neti* (drawing of a thread through the nose and mouth), *vasti* (the application of an enema; cleansing of bladder and abdomen), *trāṭaka* (method of fixing the eye on one object).

Some of the diseases that can be cured by Yogic Therapy are mentioned below-

AIDS, appendicitis, asthma, barrenness, bronchitis, cancer, cataract, cirrhosis, constipation, diabetes, elephantiasis, epilepsy, fistula, gonorrhoea, gastric ulcer, gall stone, leprosy, leucoderma, leucorrhoea, lumbago, menstrual troubles, nymphomania, obesity, paralysis, piles, pneumonia, psoriasis, rheumatism, sciatica, strangury, syphilis, tonsillitis, tuberculosis.

All the yogic postures and pranayam must be practised under the careful guidance of qualified and trained teachers. Much stress is also given on time and place of yoga and regularity.

Patanjali was the traditional founder of the yoga system. But Swami Ramadeva, founder of Patanjali Yoga Pitha, Haridwar, has won the hearts of millions and millions of people by organizing yogic camps in all the states of India. Yogic camps are also being organised by him in different countries and people are being cured of all kinds of diseases through simple yogic exercises demonstrated by him. Swami Sivananda Saraswati, Umchal Yogashram, Guwahati, was one of the greatest pioneers of Yogic Therapy in India. Physicians have already realised the importance of yoga. Many specialists and surgeons practise yoga and advise their patients to practise it. They have felt that yoga and modern medical science are complementary to each other. Probably it may not be absolutely impossible for man to make this world disease-free if yoga and modern medical science come closer in some near future.