

# Yoga Therapy for Holistic Healing

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## Abstract

Yoga is based on the premise that the body has an innate ability to heal itself. Given the right ingredients - appropriate nutrition, regular elimination of toxins, adequate rest and rejuvenation, intuned movement and mental/emotional balance – the body will heal, repair and recover into good health. A holistic approach to health addresses the underlying causes of health imbalances, clears toxic blockages and restores health through natural means. Yoga therefore strives to promote health rather than confront discomfort and disease. It gives you the tools to renew, recharge and take control of your own health.

**Keywords:** Yoga, Therapy, Psychosomatic Illness, Panch Kosha Model, Holistic Healing.

### Introduction

The human body is divided into three parts

- 1 the physical body (panch -mahabhatatmak deham)
- 2 psych (mann), and
- 3-The soul (Atma).

This combination makes a human being the chikitsiya-purush, that means is the combination of above-mentioned three stuffs make a human being suitable for treatment. The body and psych are treatable, but the soul cannot be treated because, a soul is supposed to be the materialization of all mighty BRAHM (or the supernatural being) the super power of cosmos. The treatments of the somatic problems (either psychological or psychiatric) cannot be sometime possible without combination of ayurveda and yoga or some time we cannot achieve early and maximum relief. The same thing applies with the physical maladies. Charak writes in his book the Charak sahita, (shaareersthān chap I, shloka 138-139) "happiness and melancholy arises because of the contact of soul, sensory and working organs (gyanendriya and karmendriya), Mann or psyche and objective subject. When they altogether come in the contact of each other only then the complete awareness immerses. Mann is supposed to be a dual (sensory and functional organ) indri (the organ). There for it called as ubhay indri while ubhay stands for dual. Control on Mann is very mandatory; the yoga is the best way to obstacle the evil or harm full activities of consciousness. These evil activities are the cause of sorrows, pains and illness, crimes and unlawful behavior. The Vidya or awareness is the instrument that can stop the injurious motivations of Mann.

"Throughout *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa was encouraging Arjuna to fight, for he was a warrior, and fighting was his duty. Although Kṛṣṇa delineates the meditational *yoga* system in the Sixth Chapter, He does not stress it or encourage Arjuna to pursue it as his path. Kṛṣṇa admits that this meditational process is very difficult." (Bhagavad Gita As it is, Srila Prabhupada)

*"śrī-bhaga vān uvāca  
asamśayam mahā-bāho  
mano durnigrahaṁ calam  
abhyāsena tu kaunteya  
vairāgyena ca grhyate"*

"The Blessed Lord said: O mighty-armed son of Kuntī, it is undoubtedly very difficult to curb the restless mind, but it is possible by constant practice and by detachment." (Bg. 6.35) Here Kṛṣṇa emphasizes practice and renunciation as ways to control the mind. But what is that renunciation? Today it is hardly possible for us to renounce anything, for we are so habituated to such a variety of material sense pleasures. Despite leading a life of uncontrolled sense indulgence, we attend *yoga* classes and expect to attain success. There are so many rules and regulations involved in the proper execution of *yoga*." (Bhagavad Gita as it is; Srila Prabhupada)



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Rishi Patanjali defines the yoga in his book the yoga darshan that is as follows. "YOGASHCHITVRITTINIRODH" (chap. -1, shloka 2 of rishi Patanjali's the Yoga-darshan).

Here is the simplification of the shloka word by word: -

**YOGA**— the yoga

**CHITTA** — the psyche, the power of thinking, the mind-stuff.

**VRITTI** — functions

**NIRODH.** — To organize, or to bring under control, to obstruct.

Yoga is restraining (NIRODH) the chitta (the psyche) from various forms of its activity (VRITTI).

There are five sensory-organs in our body; these five organs are called as GYAN-INDRIYAS Vedic language. They are here with their objects of senses: -

1. The GRAAHAN indri (organ for smell)- organ to Smell, odor, aroma the nose.
2. The SHRAVAN indri (the auditory system)- organ that is to hearing. The ears.
3. The RASANEN indri (the taste system)-The organ for taste the tongue.
4. DARSHAN-indri (the seeing system)- the organ to see or view, the eyes
5. The SPARSH-indri (the system to touch)- the organ to feel, the skin.

Lord Krishna says in the Shri mad bhagwat geeta that we are as if the rider of a chariot and the Indriyas or indris are as if horses as well as the chitta or the mind-stuff is as if the bridle. If you would lose the control then horse type indris will do the same, as their lust will regulate. This freedom might be prove injurious to you, therefore tug the rein properly so that you can move your indris according to your objects of life and they are beyond doubt, the tranquility, prosperity, education, health, success and moksha.

#### **Objective of the Study**

The primary objective of the study is to establish Holistic Health through Yoga Therapy and to enable people to lead a healthy life through a balanced Yogic lifestyle.

#### **The Yoga Therapy**

Yoga is often translated as "union" of mind, body and spirit. Classically, yoga is understood as the science of the mind. The yogic experience is that which is gained by controlling the modifications of the mind.[1] Bhakti Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga, Raja Yoga and Tantra Yoga are all regarded as main paths of Yoga. Then again there are many others. All the different Yoga schools of thought, techniques and practices are just ways of reaching the same goal.

Holistic health therapies including bodywork, nutrition, life-coaching and yoga therapy are healing modalities that take into account the multi-dimensional nature (physical, mental, emotional and

spiritual) of human beings and strives to bring balance to the 'whole' person. Yoga is a complete science of life that confers balance upon the practitioner. In recent years, plenty of research has been carried out on therapeutic the effects of Yoga. In fact, studies have shown that the practice of Yoga contributes enormously to one's physiological and psychological growth.

Yoga normalizes and regulates electrical and chemical impulses within the brain, heart rhythm, blood pressure, as well as the skin's capacity for resistance besides many other internal functions of the body.

On the psychological level, Yoga helps curtail anxiety, depression, irritability and moodiness. The continued practice of Yoga is known to enhance one's comprehensive ability, memory, heal old traumas, improve emotional stability and render joy and happiness to the practitioner. All said and done, the practice of Yoga leads to overall vitality and rejuvenation.

This, in fact, is just the tip of the iceberg; most of the abovementioned benefits are secondary to the original intents. Primarily, Yoga helps melt down the ego and, subsequently, the practitioner attains union one's Individual consciousness and the cosmic consciousness.

The ancient Yogis considered the physical body as a means or a medium, mind as driver and the soul as the absolute truth. Action, emotion and intelligence are the three forces that drive the means. Tall teachings work to

unite the body, mind and soul into a balanced existence by establishing balance of action, emotion and intelligence.

**Holistic Healing**

Practicing yoga can improve both your physical and mental health. “Yoga creates a healthy climate in your mind and in your body,” says Tess Lorraine, a Boulder, Colorado, certified yoga instructor. In addition to calming the nervous system, the systematic stretching of yoga postures releases muscular tension. Lorraine says yoga also helps increase circulation, enhances digestion and helps eliminate toxins more efficiently. These physical benefits make yoga a useful tool for treating a variety of health conditions.

According to yoga traditions, we are not just a bodies made up of individual parts. We are holistic, *multi-dimensional* beings made up not just by our physical form, but by many different, interactive levels. These include our body, our vital energy, our mind and emotions, our higher wisdom self, and our deepest essence of Self. Yoga therapy has such wide-reaching effects, because *yoga asanas* work multi-dimensionally, on all levels of our being.

Yoga Philosophy defines the different dimesions of being as the Five Koshas or sheaths. These include the physical body, the energy body, the mental-emotional body, the wisdom body, and the Bliss body. Normally these sheaths do not constitute the anatomy but give an insight into the nature of human body in the deepest sense.

True, lasting healing comes about by creating deeper integration and balance in all these fundamental dimensions of our being.

Yoga therapy facilitates multi dimensional or holistic healing, since our existence is balanced and harmonized. All the five koshas are interdependent and mutually affect each other. Thus, any imbalance or problem may be caused by a problem in one or more Koshas. Thus, Hoslistic healing or complete and balanced health can only be achieved by balancing all the facets of existence.

For healing to be complete and lasting, according to the yoga therapy tradition, it must affect change multi-dimensionally, involving all levels of our being. This is exactly what yoga therapy does and why yoga therapy can create positive changes for such a broad range of disease conditions.

**The Panch Kosha Model For Holistic Healing**

Yoga provides a multifarious healing on different levels, thereby facilitating holistic health. Yoga defines our existence at many different, interactive and interdependent levels.

In the yoga framework, these levels are referred to as the five sheaths of our being, or the Five Koshas. Starting from the outermost layer and moving towards the core, the Five Koshas proceed from outer to inner in greater and greater levels of subtlety:

**Annamayakosha-The Physical body**

This kosha mainly represents the physical body, or the means or medium through we can feel touch and express. Anna in Sanskrit means food, and maya means appereance. This kosha is nourished by the meals an individual consumes during the day. The *Annamayakosha* is physical body, the most simple form of existence and the means or medium through which we experience everything. (the first point of contact with the outside world)

**Pranamayakosha-The Energy body.**

Yoga therapy defines Prana or energy as the second layer . Literally *Prana* means energy, but the energy of life or the life force or jeevani shakti; which brings life to the physical body which would otherwise be lifeless. The breaths we take are the most literal and physical expression of prana. Thereby, *breathing practices namely pranayama*, enhance the flow of prana and render the lifeforces to align and operate in perfect balance.

**Manamayakosha-The Mental-Emotional body**

*Manas* means mind, and the *Manamayakosha* is the layer of our being expressed as mind, emotions, and feelings. These are the mental faculties with which we absorb, process, and interpret input from our life (presented through the senses of the physical body). It is like a supervisor in a factory, which unfortunately often mistakenly takes on the role as manager.

**Vijnanamayakosha-The  
Wisdom body**

The fourth Kosha is considered part of the subtle body. *Vijnana* means knowing, and this sheath represents the higher mind, the faculty of wisdom, which lies underneath the processing, thinking, reactive mind. This is the level of our being, that has the higher wisdom to guide us through life and lead us to higher and higher levels of truth and integration. It represents the reflective aspects of our consciousness, which allow us to experience a deeper insight into ourselves and the world around us.

**Anandamayakosha-The  
Bliss body.**

This is the fifth and final sheath of our being. *Ananda* means bliss, not bliss in the sense of emotions, such as happiness or pleasure, but an expanded, unbounded experience of reality. The ancients viewed the experience of the *Bliss body* as an experience of the deepest level of our being, an unbounded, blissful state of peace, joy, and love.

The Koshas are viewed as different, beautiful manifestations of our essential universal nature. According to yoga philosophy, this is known as *Atman*-the unbounded, universal Oneness of all that exists.

In practice, how do the different levels of our being interact? Take the example of depression. When we are depressed, we cannot help but slouch, rounding our shoulders and dropping our head forward. Our breath becomes shallow and more restrained. In this way, our psychological mood, associated with our mental-emotional body (*manamayakosha*), affects our physical body (*annamayakosha*), as well as our breath and energy body (*pranamayakosha*).

In a yoga therapy practice, we begin to bring greater integration to the physical body with yoga asanas and to the breath body with yogic breathing or *pranayama*. As the flow of vital energy is freed up in the physical body and breath body, this in turn creates greater vitality and integration in our mental-emotional body. This is why many people find that practicing yoga for depression often improves their mood and well-being considerably over time. Of course, such deep-level changes don't happen overnight. Over the long term, however, yoga therapy can create permanent healing, because it helps bring greater integration to the deeper levels of our being, leading to increased balance, wisdom, and spiritual enrichment in all areas of life

**Therapeutic Effects of  
Yoga**

*Sri Patanjali*, considered the “father of yoga,” is credited with compiling the Yoga Sutras (the threads of yoga), which date anywhere from 5,000 B.C. to 300 A.D. In the West, yoga is primarily thought of as asanas (postures), breathing (*pranayama*) and meditation (*dhyana*).<sup>[2]</sup> It is estimated that 14.9 million Americans practice yoga and some suggest that yoga has become a transnational world practice.<sup>[3,4]</sup> Because many experience relaxation and ease with the practice of yoga, yoga is considered a mind- body exercise. The underlying premise of mind-body exercises is that the physiological state of the body may shape emotions, thoughts and attitudes.<sup>[5]</sup>

The postures, also called asanas, belong to a branch of yoga called hatha yoga. They were developed to strengthen the body, improve health and prepare for meditation. In a modern yoga practice the postures may serve any or all of these purposes.

Some work has reported that yoga asanas ease symptoms associated with osteoarthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome and low-back pain.<sup>[7]</sup> Low-back pain is one of the most likely reasons why people seek alternative health care.<sup>[8]</sup> Others have found that yoga improves cardiovascular health.<sup>[9,10]</sup>

many scientific studies support the idea that yoga may be successfully used in treating essential hypertension, migraine, peptic ulcer, chronic sinusitis, intractable pain, anxiety, gastritis, bronchial asthma and headache, among others.<sup>[11,12]</sup> Others have argued that yoga is an effective system for weight loss and mild depression.<sup>[13,14]</sup>

Many researchers have found that yoga is effective for relieving stress and anxiety conditions that impact many physical and mental health conditions.<sup>[7]</sup> Especially, among those who reported mild to moderate levels of stress, researchers have found that practicing yoga significantly reduced anxiety.<sup>[15]</sup> Stress reduction programs have been conducted among healthy volunteers and among people with cancer, with data supporting the proposition that stress reduction decreases the cortisol levels.<sup>[16,17]</sup>

Yoga exercise that includes postures, breathing and meditation helps practitioners gain physical strength and flexibility as well as calm the mind.[18] In his work, Weil posits that correct breathing is critical to human health.[6] By adulthood, many have developed a pattern of restricted upper chest breathing. Hatha Yoga, the most widely practiced form of yoga in the West, encourages practitioners to learn various breathing exercises, including deep abdominal breathing, the three-part breath and lengthening the exhalation to mention a few.[19] Students of yoga frequently report a sense of deep relaxation, calm and happiness at the end of a yoga session

### **Yoga in Treating Psychosomatic Illness**

The term 'psychosomatic' refers to the connection or the interaction between the body and mind. Therefore, psychosomatic illness refers to a physical dysfunction that is primarily caused by some form of emotional or mental stress - mild depression, work-related stress and even extreme personality traits can cause psychosomatic illness.

Any disruption to our mental, emotional or spiritual health creates stress in our energy centres or chakras so the more extreme or pro-longed the stress is, the more likely we are to experience a change in our physiology. Sometimes these changes go unnoticed until there is a severe dysfunction that causes us pain or discomfort.

Psychosomatic disorders arise from high levels of stress and anxiety. Yoga is especially helpful because the yoga poses are scientifically designed in such a way as to relieve stress and bring about physical as well as mental and emotional balance.

Yoga helps to strengthen and tone the muscles, internal organs and glands. This makes them stronger, improves their function, and promotes good health. This cures many chronic diseases, which in turn helps mental and emotional well-being, thus enabling an individual to handle stress bet

Most psychosomatic illnesses are caused by strain, stress, anxiety, frustration, anger and other emotional imbalances. These can be tackled through the yoga postures which require concentration and meditation. The stretching and breathing techniques relax the muscles, leading to a release of stress from the body and mind.

The stretching provided by the yoga exercises also helps to improve the circulation of blood, and the muscle tone of the blood vessels. This aids removal of toxins from the body, which in turn promotes a healthy state of mind.

The deep breathing exercises of pranayama also contribute to better health because they increase the levels of oxygen in the blood and help remove carbon dioxide. Respiratory diseases like tuberculosis, asthma, bronchitis and cough can also be relieved.

Many of the yoga poses strengthen the nervous system, making the nerves stronger and improving willpower and powers of concentration, which in turn helps better mental and emotional health.

Since yoga therapy strengthens the body as well as the mind, an individual is better equipped to tackle emotional stress and thus find a cure for psychosomatic problems.

### **Conclusion**

Just about everyone can benefit from the physical exercise of a yoga practice. Yoga is noncompetitive and easily adapted to different ability levels. If you haven't exercised for a while, yoga can be appealing because it emphasizes the quality rather than the quantity of movement. Many fitness experts, including the American College of Sports Medicine, recommend a balanced exercise program that includes aerobic activities such as running, biking or walking that build endurance, along with strength and flexibility training activities. Pairing a yoga routine with an activity that gets your heart pumping (such as running, walking or biking) will improve your overall level of fitness.

Many competitive athletes incorporate yoga into their workout programs to take advantage of the flexibility training, which among other benefits, helps reduce risk of injury. And the more you practice, the more strength and flexibility you can build. Practicing a more vigorous style of yoga, such as ashtanga yoga, which keeps your heart pumping and includes challenging, stamina-building postures, also will quickly increase your level of fitness. Broadly Yoga provides a three way therapy to bring about holistic

healing. The Impact of Yoga on Physical, Mental and Spiritual Body can be summarized as-

**Physical Effects of Yoga**

1. Enhances muscle tone, flexibility, strength and stamina
2. Reduces fat, Improves circulation, Stimulates the immune system
3. Keeps one younger biologically, i.e. younger than one's chronological age
4. Reduces levels of chemicals connected to stress eg. Cortisol and lactate
5. Lowers blood pressure and cholesterol levels
6. Increases flow of air to the lungs, thereby resulting in better, fuller breathing, particularly useful to asthma patients

**Mental Effects Of Yoga**

1. Relax you and helps handle stress situations more easily
2. Stimulates positive thoughts and self-acceptance
3. Increases one's sense of self esteem
4. Perks up one's powers of concentration and creativity
5. Helps heal old traumas
6. Boosts emotional stability
7. Develops a sense of well being and calm

**Spiritual Effects of Yoga**

1. Develops comprehensive awareness
2. Furthers inter-dependence between body, mind, and soul
3. Encourages one live in the concept of "oneness."
4. Helps the practitioner discover one's
5. Sets you free from the illusions and preconceptions that prevents you from leading a fulfilled life

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